

MYSTICISM and METHODOLOGY

A STUDY of ABRAHAM HESCHEL'S DOCUMENTATION of HIS PHILOSOPHY

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To My Wife and Daughter

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Chapter I

The Thesis Defined

This thesis centers about the thought of Abraham Joshua Heschel. Dr. Heschel presents us with what he calls "a philosophy of Judaism." His writings are laced with numerous references to the Bible, Midrash, Talmud and other traditional sources. Thus, it would appear, at first glance, that Heschel is giving us a traditional exposition of Jewish religious thought- especially when contrasted with other modern thinkers. The question can be asked, "Is it possible for a theologian, especially a mystic, to speak directly out of the tradition, or must he speak for himself, shaping the sources to this purpose?" I have examined the agadic documentation offered by Heschel in order to determine to what extent his religious thought does in fact arise out of the Jewish sources, and to what extent he is speaking for himself. In brief, I have examined how one major contemporary Jewish thinker uses the Jewish tradition to present his philosophy of Judaism.

This investigation has been limited to Dr. Heschel's chief work, God in Search of Man- a Philosophy of Judaism. Within this work, one section, Section III, Response (Chapters 28- 43 inclusive), was selected for an exhaustive and intensive analysis. Almost all the references to the Talmud and Midrash (numbering approximately 150) were carefully checked for accuracy and usage. Biblical references and references to Medieval works were omitted from this study.

Section III, Response, was chosen because the ideas contained in it are critical to the understanding of Heschel's thought. For example, if agada is not of fundamental importance to Judaism, then there is little justification for writing this book- for a "philosophy of Judaism," in Jewish terms, is nothing more than agada. In addition, this section was chosen because of its prolific documentation from traditional sources.

The specific concerns in studying this material included: How well does Heschel know the agada? Is he a good selector? Does he get to the heart of the passage? Does Heschel have the ability to find the pregnant, relevant or significant comment in what is otherwise a mass of unrelated material? Is there a pattern to the documentation? Does he raise questions for which we would like Jewish proof, but for which Jewish proof is absent? The sources that Dr. Heschel refers to are his strongest support. To what extent can we say that these sources do or do not support him, and thus to what extent does he speak for the Jewish tradition and for himself?

A summary of Heschel's ideas as stated in the selected section will be presented first. A detailed analysis of the documentation, with its strengths and weaknesses, will follow. And, in the concluding chapter, the results of the analysis will be discussed and evaluated.

Chapter II

Heschel's Thought Summarized

Before engaging in an analysis of the documentation, it is necessary to present a summary of Heschel's thought. This summary will provide the framework, the context within which the analysis can be understood.

Heschel presents his thought in a systematic form. The chapters are clearly labeled with the main thought of the chapter. Each chapter contains numerous descriptive sub-headings which clearly identify the flow of the argument. In effect, even before reading the book or any chapter in it, one is presented with an outline of the thought. Thus, it would appear that the task of summarizing a portion of this thought would be a mere perfunctory, mechanical one. This is not always the case. First, there is considerable repetition and recapitulation. It is not always easy to distinguish between a restatement of the same idea and the introduction of a new thought. The same idea may be presented as a dogmatic statement, as a question, through flights of what amounts to lyric poetry, and through the documentation. Sometimes, a given idea may need this heavy barrage of words in order to make contact with the reader. But, just as often, the verbiage tends to obscure or deaden the impact of what Heschel has to say.

Fortunately, among this mass of words, there is usually a sentence or phrase which cuts to the heart of the matter.¹ And the documentation, the midrash or agada quoted or referred to, saves at least several ideas from incomprehensibility.² Second, in order to express himself, Heschel is forced to give special meanings to words and he sometimes creates new words.³ This would indicate the highly personal nature of much of what he says. Thus, the task of summarizing is not what it appears to be. Although the same record is playing, every listener hears a different melody. What follows in the remainder of this chapter is what this listener has heard.

Heschel opens up Section 3 of God in Search of Man with a chapter called "A Science of Deeds." What does he mean when he says that Judaism is a "science of deeds?"

Judaism is not a science of nature but a science of what man ought to do with nature. It is concerned above all with the problem of living. It takes deeds more seriously than things. Jewish law is, in a sense, a science of deeds. Its main concern is not only how to worship Him at certain times but how to live with Him at all times. Every deed is a problem; there is a unique task at every moment. All of life at all moments is the problem and the task.⁴

How do we become associated with this science of deeds; how do we live with God at all times?

We do not explore first and decide afterwards whether to accept the Jewish way of living. We must accept in order to be able to explore. At the beginning is the commitment, the supreme acquiescence.⁵

A Jew is asked to take a leap of action rather than a leap of thought. He is asked to surpass his needs, to do more than he understands in order to understand more than he does. In carrying out the word of the Torah he is ushered into the presence of spiritual meaning. Through the ecstasy of deeds he learns to be certain of the hereness of God. Right living is a way to right thinking.⁶

By living as Jews we may attain our faith as Jews. We do not have faith because of deeds; we may attain faith through sacred deeds.⁷

It is in deeds that man becomes aware of what his life really is, of his power to harm and to hurt, to wreck and to ruin; of his ability to derive joy and to bestow it upon others; to relieve and to increase his own and other people's tensions. It is in the employment of his will, not in reflection, that he meets his own self as it is; not as he should like it to be. In his deeds man exposes his immanent as well as his suppressed desires, spelling even that which he cannot apprehend. What he may not dare to think, he often utters in deeds. The heart is revealed in the deeds. The deed is the test, the trial, and the risk. What we perform may seem slight, but the aftermath is immense. An individual's misdeed can be the beginning of a nation's disaster.⁸

Ontology inquires: what is being? What does it mean to be? The religious mind ponders: what is doing? What does it mean to do? What is the relation between the doer and the deed? between doing and being? Is there a purpose to fulfill, a task to carry out?⁹

Heichel offers us what he calls, "A Meta-Ethical Approach."

The ethical question refers to particular deeds; the meta-ethical question refers to all deeds. It deals with doing as such; not only what ought we to do, but what is our right to act at all?¹⁰

God and man are partners. They have a common task and a mutual responsibility.

What is at stake is the meaning of God's creation, not only the meaning of man's existence. Religion is not a concern for man alone but a plea of God and a claim of man, God's expectation and man's aspiration. It is not an effort solely for the sake of man. Religion spells a task within the world of man, but its ends go far beyond. This is why the Bible proclaimed a law not only for man but for both God and man.¹¹

A mitsvah is an act which God and man have in common. The spirit of mitsvah is togetherness. When we fulfill a mitsvah, we are not following a law of God, but a way of God. "Not particular acts but all acts, life itself, can be established as a link between man and God."¹²

The Bible speaks of man as having been created in the likeness of God, establishing the principle of an analogy of being. In his very being, man has something in common with God. Beyond the analogy of being, the Bible teaches the principle of an analogy in acts. Man may act in the likeness of God. It is this likeness of acts- "to walk in His ways"- that is the link by which man may come close to God. To live in such likeness is the essence of limitation of the Divine. We live by the conviction that acts of goodness reflect the hidden light of His holiness.¹³

Heschel concludes his discussion of Judaism as a science of deeds with a plea.

Human action is not the beginning. At the beginning is God's eternal expectation. There is an eternal cry in the world: God is beseeching man to answer, to return, to fulfill. Something is asked of man, of all men, at all times. In every act we either answer or defy, we either return or move away, we either fulfill or miss the goal. Life consists of endless opportunities to sanctify the profane, opportunities to redeem the power of God from the chain of potentialities, opportunities to serve spiritual ends.¹⁴

In Chapter 29, the theme is continued and amplified in a sermon called, "More than Inwardness." Heschel attacks the Christian view that salvation can be attained by faith alone. God may ask for the heart, but does He ask for the heart only? Is the right intention enough? Heschel answers, no! Judaism stresses the relevance of human deeds. The absence of the right intention does not necessarily vilify the goodness of a deed of charity.¹⁵ There is no dichotomy between faith and works.

The dichotomy of faith and works which presents such an important problem in Christian theology was never a problem in Judaism. To us the basic problem is neither what is the right action, nor what is the right intention. The basic problem is: what is right living? And life is indivisible. The inner sphere is never isolated from outward activities. Deed and thought are bound into one. All a person thinks and feels enters everything he does, and all he does, is involved in everything he thinks and feels.¹⁶

Heschel concludes this sermon with a plea for men's lives to be committed to God. Spirituality is not the way. The world needs more than good intentions. "God asks for the heart because He needs the lives.... Spirituality is the goal and not the way of man. In this world music is played on physical instruments, and to the Jew the mitzvot are the instruments on which the holy is carried out."¹⁷

In a lecture, Heschel introduces the vital question, "But how do we know what the right deeds are? Is the knowledge of right and wrong to be derived by reason and conscience alone?" No. Reason and conscience are inadequate by themselves because they can be unreliable. Conscience acts as a brake, not as a guide. Reason cannot cope

with all the problems of living.

It is the guidance of tradition on which we must rely, and whose norms we must learn to interpret and apply.... The good is not an abstract idea but a commandment, and the ultimate meaning of its fulfillment is in its being an answer to God.

We believe that the Jew is committed to a divine law; that the ultimate standards are beyond man rather than within man. We believe that there is a law, the essence of which is derived from prophetic events, and the interpretation of which is in the hands of the sages. We are taught that God gave man not only life but also a law. The supreme imperative is not merely to believe in God but to do the will of God.

What is law? A way of dealing with the most difficult of all problems: life. The law is a problem to him who thinks that life is a commonplace. The law is an answer to him who knows that life is a problem.

Judaism is meaningless as an optional attitude to be assumed at our convenience. To the Jewish mind life is a complex of obligations, and the fundamental category of Judaism is a demand rather than a dogma, a commitment rather than a feeling. God's will stands higher than man's creed. Reverence for the authority of the law is an expression of our love for God.¹⁸

Jewish law is not merely a series of individual enactments. It embodies a whole spiritual order of Jewish living. It is a distortion to reduce Judaism to a cult or system of ceremonies. The Torah is both the detail and the whole. In addition, Jewish tradition does not maintain that every iota of the law was revealed to Moses at Sinai. (This is later contradicted by other sources.) And, "Do not consider the hedge more important than the vineyard."

In Chapter 30, after previously building up Judaism as a religion of deeds, Heschel reverses field and asks, "Only Deeds and Nothing Else?"

No religious act is properly fulfilled unless it is done with a willing heart and a craving soul.

Jewish observance, it must be stressed takes place on two levels. It consists of acts performed by the body in a clearly defined and tangible manner, and of acts of the soul carried out in a manner that is neither definable nor ostensible; of the right intention and of putting the right intention into action. Both body and soul must participate in carrying out a ritual, a law, an imperative, a mitzvah. Thoughts, feelings enounced in the inwardness of man, deeds performed in the absence of the soul, are incomplete.

A good deed consists not only in what but how we do it.

God asks for the heart, not only for deeds; for insight, not only for obedience; for understanding and knowledge of God, not only for acceptance.¹⁹

Heschel continues the thought by asking, "If a deed is good in itself, why should it be considered imperfect if done without the participation of the soul? Why is kavanah necessary?" His answer is disarmingly simple. "A good deed without devotion, for all its effects on the lives of others, will leave the life of the doer unaffected. The true goal for man is to be what he does." A mitzvah is an act that embraces both the doer and the deed. "To perform deeds of holiness is to absorb the holiness of deeds. This is why in addition to halacha, the science of deeds, there is agada, the art of being."

Where is God to be found? "The world, the word, the sacred deed are full of His glory.

It is more meaningful for us to believe in the immanence of God in deeds than in the immanence of God in nature.

No one is lonely when doing a mitsvah, for a mitsvah is where God and man meet.²¹

Chapter 31 is a short essay on "Kavanah." In Judaism, a mitsvah is to be performed with kavanah. What is meant by this term? To have kavanah means "to direct the heart to the Father in heaven."

Kavanah is more than paying attention to the text of the liturgy or to the performance of the mitsvah. Kavanah is attentiveness ~~to~~ God.

It is the act of bringing together the scattered forces of the self; the participation of heart and soul, not only of the will and mind; the integration of the soul with the theme of the mitsvah.²²

Chapter 32 is a continuation and amplification of the discussion begun in Chapter 30- "Only Deeds and Nothing Else?" Here Heschel answers the question by stating that "Torah is more than law."

The Torah comprises both *halacha* and *agada*. Like body and soul, they are mutually dependent, and each is a dimension of its own.²³

He launches a scathing attack upon what he calls "religious behaviorism." What is "religious behaviorism?"

It signifies an attitude toward the law as well as a philosophy of Judaism as a whole. As an attitude toward the law, it stresses the external compliance with the law and disregards the importance of inner devotion. It maintains that,

according to Judaism, there is only one way in which the will of God need be fulfilled, namely, outward action; that inner devotion is not indigenous to Judaism; that Judaism is concerned with deeds, not with ideas; that all it asks for is obedience to the law. It is a Judaism that consists of laws, deeds, things; It has two dimensions; depth, the personal dimension, is missing. Accordingly, religious behaviorists speak of discipline, tradition, observance, but never of religious experience, of religious ideas. You do not have to believe, but you must observe the law; as if all that mattered is how men behaved in physical terms; as if God were not concerned with the inner life; as if faith were not indigenous to Judaism, but orthopraxis were. Such a conception reduces Judaism to a sort of sacred physics, with no sense for the imponderable, the introspective, the metaphysical.²⁴

He scorns the contemporary view that theology is alien to Judaism; that the law, "An ox who gores a cow," is Jewish theology. In an eloquent summary of his position, Heschel defines Judaism.

Judaism is not another word for legalism. The rules of observance are law, in form and love in substance. The Torah contains both law and love. Law is what holds the world together; love is what brings the world forward. The law is the means, not the end, the way, not the goal. One of the goals is "Ye shalt be holy." The Torah is guidance to an end through a law. It is both a vision and a law. Man created in the likeness of God is called upon to re-create the world in the likeness of the vision of God. Halacha is neither the ultimate nor the all-embracing term for Jewish learning and living.²⁵

To support his thesis that Torah is more than halacha, Heschel brings in considerable documentation from traditional sources. In fact, this is the most heavily documented section in the entire book. Through the documentation, Heschel seeks to assert that the tradition regarded agada at least as equal in importance to halacha.

At the beginning of the section, Heschel posits the idea that Judaism is a science of deeds requiring a leap of action; that spirituality is not the way. One travels on the path-way to God through performing mitzvot. The Torah is an order of living. Thus, action, deeds, appear to be the essence of Judaism. Then he counters this proposition with another proposition- deeds alone are not enough. Mitzvot must be performed with kavanah. The Torah is more than law; there is agada as well as halacha; faith as well as works. This counter proposition is capped by the statement:

It is true, as said above, that the essence is a demand rather than a creed, that by faith alone we do not come close to Him. But the first demand of Judaism is to have faith in God, in Torah, and in the people Israel. It is by faith and love of God that find expression in deeds that we live as Jews. Faith is attachment, and to be a Jew is to be attached to God, Torah, and Israel.²⁶

Thus, it would appear that faith is the essence of Judaism. We have a contradiction! Which is the first demand of Judaism- to perform mitzvot or to have faith in God, Torah, and Israel? Are we supposed to believe or to do? Which is superior- halacha or agada? Logic would say that there can be only one first demand. Heschel resolves this seeming contradiction by abandoning abstract logic. He brings a synthesis to our thesis and antithesis by introducing the concept of "The Polarity of Judaism."

Jewish thinking and living can only be adequately understood in terms of a dialectic pattern, containing opposite or contrasted properties. As in a magnet, the ends of which have opposite magnetic qualities, these terms are opposite to one another and exemplify a polarity which lies at the very heart of Judaism, the polarity of ideas and events, of mitzvah and sin, of kavanah and deed, of regularity and spontaneity, of uniformity and individuality, of halacha and agada, of law and inwardness, of love and fear, of understanding and obedience, of joy and discipline, of the good and evil drive, of time and eternity, of revelation and response, of creed and faith, of the word and that which is beyond words, of man's quest for God and God in search of man. Even God's relation to the world is characterized by the polarity of justice and mercy, the promise of reward and the demand to serve Him for His sake. Taken abstractly, all these terms seem to be mutually exclusive, yet in actual living they involve each other; the separation of the two is fatal to both. There is no halacha without agada and no agada without halacha. We must neither disparage the body nor sacrifice the spirit. The body is the discipline, the pattern, the law; the spirit is inner devotion, spontaneity, freedom. The body without the spirit is a corpse; the spirit without the body is a ghost. Thus a mitzvah is both a discipline and an inspiration, an act of obedience and an experience of joy, a yoke and a prerogative. Our task is to learn how to maintain a harmony between the demands of halacha and the spirit of agada.²⁷

The remainder of Chapter 33 concerns itself with the specific polarity of halacha and agada. Meschel gives us one of the finest definitions ever written.

Halacha represents the strength to shape one's life according to a fixed pattern; it is a form-giving force. Agada is the expression of man's ceaseless striving which often defies all limitations. Halacha is the rationalization and

schematization

schematization of living; it defines, specifies, sets measure and limit, placing life into an exact system. Agada deals with man's ineffable relations to God, to other men, and to the world. Halacha deals with details, with each commandment separately; agada with the whole of life, with the totality of religious life. Halacha deals with the law; agada with the meaning of the law. Halacha deals with subjects that can be expressed literally; agada introduces us to a realm which lies beyond the range of expression. Halacha teaches us how to perform common acts; agada tells us how to participate in the eternal drama. Halacha gives us knowledge; agada gives us aspiration.

The interrelationship of halacha and agada is the very heart of Judaism. Halacha without agada is dead, agada without halacha is wild.²⁸

There can neither be halacha without agada nor agada without halacha. "It is impossible to decide whether in Judaism supremacy belongs to halacha or to agada, to the lawgiver or to the Psalmist."²⁹ They remain in perpetual tension.

Since each of the two principles, halacha and agada, moves in the opposite direction, equilibrium can only be maintained if both are of equal force. But such a condition is rarely attained. Heschel feels that the emphasis on halacha has gotten out of hand. He is trying to redress the imbalance.

Rabbis established a level of observance which, in modern society, is within the reach of exalted souls but not infrequently beyond the grasp of ordinary men. Must halacha continue to ignore the voice of agada?³⁰

Not content with trying to redress the imbalance, Heschel also makes a play for the superiority of agada.

In Chapter 34, we have a difficult rarefied discussion of "The Meaning of Observance." Here, Heschel gives full expression to the mystical bent of his philosophy. He recognizes the difficulty that a modern Jew has in observing the law. He feels that the difficulty is not in the Jew's "inability to comprehend the divine origin of the law; his essential difficulty is in his inability to sense the presence of divine meaning in the fulfillment of the law."³¹

Heschel rejects any discussion of the rational grounds for observance. Any sociological, psychological or esthetic reason that can be brought to bear to justify a mitzvah is beside the point. Other perspectives may be relevant, but he is only interested in the question of how observance is related to religious insight.

The problem of how to live as a Jew cannot be solved in terms of common sense and common experience... The essence of religion does not lie in the satisfaction of a human need. As long as man sees religion as a source of satisfaction for his own needs, it is not God whom he serves but his own self... Sacred deeds are designed to make living compatible with our sense of the ineffable. The mitzvot are forms of expressing in deeds the appreciation of the ineffable... It is not utility that we seek in religion but eternity. The purpose of religion is not to satisfy the needs we feel but to create in us the need of serving ends, of which we otherwise remain oblivious. (Therefore), the legitimate

question concerning the forms of Jewish observance is the question: Are they spiritually meaningful? Are they compatible with the sense of the ineffable? Yet, to say that the mitzvot have meaning is less accurate than saying that they lead us to wells of emergent meaning, to experiences which are full of hidden brilliance of the holy, suddenly blazing in our thoughts.³²

What is a mitzvah? A deed in the form of a prayer.

What does Heschel mean when he says, "compatible with the sense of the ineffable?" I do not know.

To Heschel, the universal theme of religion is how to answer the ineffable that calls on our souls. The world is full of wonder. Who will answer? Our reverence is no answer. The only answer to the ineffable is a mode of living compatible with the ineffable.³³ The mode of living, for a Jew, is fulfillment of the mitzvot. And, the only way to understand the mitzvot is to do them with joy.

All mitzvot are means of evoking in us the awareness of living in the neighborhood of God, of living in the holy dimension. The mitzvah is an encounter with the divine; a way of living in fellowship with God. Living is not a private affair of the individual. Living is what man does with God's time.³⁴

Heschel concludes the chapter on a highly mystical note. There is such a thing as an "ecstasy of deeds."

In Chapter 35, Heschel explains mitzvah again (on a much simpler less mystical level), and contrasts it with sin. There are many references to the tradition. Every act done in agreement with the will of God is a mitzvah. It is a good deed, using good in the broadest sense of the word.

It is a basic term of Jewish living, something substantial, concrete. "Life revolves around the right and wrong deed, but we have been trained to be more mitsvah-conscious than averah or sin-conscious." ³⁵ Christianity is just the opposite.

Both poles, mitsvah and sin, are real. We are taught to be mitsvah-conscious in regard to the present moment, to be mindful of the constant opportunity to do the good. We are also taught to be sin-conscious in regard to the past, to realize and to remember our failures and transgressions. The power of both mitsvah and sin must be fully apprehended. The exclusive fear of sin may lead to a deprecation of works; the exclusive appreciation of mitsvah may lead to self-righteousness. The first may result in a denial of the relevance of history, in an overly eschatological view; the second in a denial of Messianism. In a secular optimism. Against both deviations Judaism warns repeatedly.³⁶

We fail and sin not only in our deeds, but in our hearts. Evil in the heart is the source of evil in deeds. We must be careful.

In Chapter 36, Heschel digs in to the crucial problem of evil. The Bible more than recognized the existence of evil.

There is one line that expresses the mood of the Jewish man throughout the ages: "The earth is given into the hand of the wicked." (Job 9:24).

One great cry resounds throughout the Bible: the wickedness of man is great upon the earth.³⁷

What is worse is that evil thrives so well in the disguise of the good. There is great confusion between good and evil.

The dreadful confusion, the fact that there is nothing in this world that is not a mixture of good and evil, of holy and unholy, of silver and dross, is according to Jewish mysticism, the central problem of history and the ultimate issue of redemption.

The fate of mankind depends upon the realization that the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, is superior to all other distinctions. As long as such realization is lacking, pleasantness in alliance with evil will be preferred to unpleasantness in alliance with good. To teach humanity the primacy of that distinction is of the essence to the Biblical message.³⁸

Good and evil are not values among other values. Good is life, and evil is death. The good is a divine concern, a way of God.

We need help in our battle against evil. Good, especially when it is to be realized at a loss, is easily defeated. The Torah is our safeguard; the Torah is an
³⁹
antidote to evil.

Yet, evil is not man's ultimate problem. Man's ultimate problem is his relation to God.

We do not wage war with evil in the name of the abstract concept of duty. We do the good not because it is a value or because of expediency, but because we owe it to God. God created man, and what is good "in His eyes" is good for man.

We do not know how to solve the problem of evil, but we are not exempt from dealing with evils.⁴⁰

The answer to an evil is a mitzvah. Judaism constantly reminds us of the opportunities to do the good.

The idea with which Judaism starts is not the realness of evil or the sinfulness of man but rather the wonder of creation and the ability of man to do the will of God. There is always an opportunity to do a mitzvah, and precious is life because at all times and in all places we are able to do His will. This is why despair is alien to Jewish faith.⁴¹

The world is in need of redemption, but the redemption must not be expected to happen as an act of sheer grace. Man's task is to make the world worthy of redemption. His faith and his works are preparations for ultimate redemption.⁴²

Chapter 37 briefly sermonizes on what Heschel calls, "The Problem of the Neutral," and reiterates what has been said before. The problem of living does not begin with sin.

The problem of living begins, in fact, in relation to our own selves, in the handling of our emotional functions, in the way we deal with envy, greed, and pride. What is first at stake in the life of man is not the fact of sin, of the wrong and corrupt, but the neutral acts, the needs. Our possessions pose no less a problem than our passions. The primary task, therefore, is not how to deal with the evil, but how to deal with the neutral, how to deal with needs.⁴³

Religion is concerned with all of life. It cannot be compartmentalized.

Judaism is an attempt to place all of life under the glory of ultimate significance, to relate all scattered actions to the One.⁴⁴

One of our problems is to endow virtue with vitality. We should experience the simchah shel mitzvah. The power of evil can be consumed in the flames of joy.

Heschel is very concerned about the problem of integrity, the integrity of man (Chapter 38). Is genuine piety really

possible? Can one serve God unselfishly? Even when performing a good deed, do we serve Him for His sake? The problem of integrity concerns not only the character of our moral deeds but also the integrity of our thinking.

The modern version of the Golden Rule is: Suspect thy neighbor as thyself. Thus, the predicament of modern man may be characterized as an escape to suspicion. There is a tabu on the idea of objective validity, of sacredness or supremacy of a value. It is our implicit belief that there is a vicious underground beneath all action, that ulterior motives are the humus of all virtue, and righteousness is a camouflage of evil. There is no depth to virtue, no reality to integrity. All we can do is to graft goodness upon selfishness, to use truth as a pragmatic pretext and to relish self-indulgence in all values. In a world such as this, close as it is to being pandemonium, honesty must be held to be wishful thinking; purity the squaring of the circle of human nature; and the notions of objective validity, sacredness or supremacy of any value must be considered hypocrisy or superstition.

Self-suspicion looms as a more serious threat to faith than doubt, and "anthropodicy," the justification of man, is today as difficult a problem as theodicy, the justification of God. Is there anything pure and untinged with selfishness in the soul of man? Is integrity at all possible? Can we trust our own faith? Is piety ever detached from expediency? 45

The Bible and the Rabbinic tradition recognize the problem. The whole Book of Job is concerned with the theme of anthropodicy, the vindication of man. The tradition exhorts us to serve God without expectation of receiving a reward, and not to make of the Torah, "a diadem with which to boast."

Heschel asks the question over and over again. He does not answer it directly. But he strongly implies that it is not possible to serve God for His own sake.

God asks for the heart. Yet, our greatest failure is in the heart. Who can be trustful of good intentions, knowing that under the cloak of kavanah may hide a streak of vanity? Who can claim to have fulfilled even one mitzvah with perfect devotion?⁴⁶

Heschel's philosophy in this chapter seems to contradict the emphasis, expressed earlier, that the absence of a pure intention does not negate the value of a mitzvah.

Chapter 39 is an essay on the nature of man entitled "The Self and the non-Self." It is a purely personal expression. No attempt is made to find support for the ideas in the tradition. According to Heschel,

there is a perpetual tension in man between the focus of the self and the goal that lies beyond the self. Animal in man is the drive to concentrate on the satisfaction of needs; spiritual in man is the will to serve higher ends, and in serving ends he transcends his needs.

The essence of man, his uniqueness, is in his power to surpass the self, to rise above his needs and selfish motives.⁴⁷

Man has the capacity to convert his needs, to so modify and alter them that they may become the occasions for the attainment of universal ends. Yet, does this solve the problem of selfishness? Is it at all possible to overcome selfish motives? It would seem that we would have to suppress the self. This is not the answer. Giving up life,

committing suicide, is not a moral virtue. "Our task is not to renounce life but to bring it close to Him."⁴⁸ The answer lies, not in denying the self, but in going beyond the self.

The self is spiritually immature; it grows in the concern for the non-self. This is the profound paradox and redeeming feature of human existence. There is no joy for the self within the self. Joy is found in giving rather than in acquiring; in serving rather than in taking.

We are all endowed with talents, aptitudes, facilities; yet talent without dedication, aptitude without vocation, facility without spiritual dignity end in frustration. What is spiritual dignity? The attachment of the soul to a goal that lies beyond the self, a goal not within but beyond the self.⁴⁹

Regard for the self is not evil. There is nothing wrong in being conscious of and enjoying doing good. A man should enjoy the good. "The right relation of the self to the good is not that of tension but that of inner agreement and accord."⁵⁰

The beginning of the true love of God is to become aware of our inner enslavement to the ego. Once we realize that "ultimate meaning is found in deeds composed on the margin of the self, the greater is the chance of release at least for a moment."⁵¹

Heschel returns to Judaism (Chapter 40) when he urges the voice of moderation: "good deeds are precious even if their motivation is not pure." He denies the view that good deeds done out of impure motives are entirely inadequate. "Judaism insists upon the deed and hopes for the intention."

While constantly keeping the goal in mind, we are taught that one must continue to observe the law even when one is not ready to fulfill it "for the sake of God." For the good, even if it is not done for its own sake, will teach us eventually how to act for the sake of God. We must continue to perform the sacred deeds even though we may be compelled to bribe the self with human incentives. Purity of motivation is the goal; constancy of action is the way. It is useless endeavor to fight the ego in the open; Like a wounded hydra, it produces two heads for every one cut off. We must not indulge in self-scrutinization; we must not concentrate upon the problem of egocentricity. The way to purify the self is to avoid dwelling upon the self and to concentrate upon the task.⁵²

THE DEED REDEEMS- This is the heart of Judaism.

Heschel extends the Jewish concept of salvation through mitzvot by adding:

Alone we have no capacity to liberate our soul from ulterior motives. This, however, is our hope: God will redeem where we fail; He will complete what we are trying to achieve. It is the grace of God that helps those who do everything that lies within their power to achieve that which is beyond their power.⁵³

Chapter 41 is an essay on "Freedom." Is the will ever independent of the character of the person or the circumstances of the environment? The evidence would favor determinism. Yet, without freedom, there is no meaning in the moral life or to man. Freedom exists and is real if we assume that human life embraces both process and event. In life as a process, there is no freedom. Freedom is an event.

We are free at rare moments. Most of the time we are driven by a process; we submit to the power of inherited character qualities or to the force of external circumstances. Freedom is not a continual state of man, "a permanent attitude of the conscious subject." It is not, it happens. Freedom is an act, an event. We all are endowed with the potentiality of freedom. In actuality, however, we only act freely in rare creative moments.

Nor is freedom the same as the ability to choose between motives. Freedom is an act of self-engagement of the spirit, a spiritual event.⁵⁴

The concept of freedom depends upon the idea of creation and man's being more than the product of nature.

The ultimate concept in Greek philosophy is the idea of cosmos, of order; the first teaching in the Bible is the idea of creation. Translated into eternal principles, cosmos means fate, while creation means freedom. The essential meaning of creation is not the idea that the universe was created at a particular moment in time. The essential meaning of creation is, as Maimonides explained, the idea that the universe did not come about by necessity but as a result of freedom.⁵⁵

God cares for man. It is this concern that constitutes the greatness of man.

The prophets speak not so much of man's concern for God as of God's concern for man. At the beginning is God's concern. It is because of His concern for man that man may have a concern for Him, and that we are able to search for Him.

We must continue to ask: what is man that God should care for Him? And we must continue to remember that it is precisely God's care for man that constitutes the greatness of man. To be is to stand for, and what man stands for is the great mystery of being His partner. God is in need of man.⁵⁶

The Spirit of Judaism- Chapter 42

In this next to the last chapter of a Philosophy of Judaism, Heschel restates, summarizes, and synthesizes, in an attempt to express the heart of his thought. Heschel criticizes religion for having done more "to canonize prejudices than to wrestle for truth; to petrify the sacred than to sanctify the secular."

What is an idol? A thing, a force, a person, a group, an institution or an ideal, regarded as supreme. God alone is supreme.

Having passed the abyss of paganism, Judaism is often a lonely, unperceived voice raised against man's converting instrumentals into finals. We are a challenge to the sovereignty of any one value: whether it be the ego, the state, nature, or beauty.⁵⁷

Neither the laws of the Torah nor worship, itself, are absolutes.

Nothing exists for its own sake, nothing is valid by its own right. What seems to be a purpose is but a station on the road. All is set in the dimension of the holy. All is endowed with bearing on God.

To be a Jew is to renounce allegiance to false gods; to be sensitive to God's infinite stake in every finite situation; to bear witness to His presence in the hours of His concealment; to remember that the world is unredeemed. We are born to be an answer to His question.⁵⁸

What is the meaning of "spiritual?" "Spiritual is the reference to the transcendent in our existence, the direction of the Here toward the Beyond."

It is impossible to grasp spirit in itself. Spirit is a direction, the turning of all beings to God; theotropy. It is always more than- and superior to- what we are and know.⁵⁹

Is there a unique expression for the spirit of Judaism?

Yes, the Sabbath.

What is the Sabbath? A reminder of every man's royalty; an abolition of the distinction of master and slave, rich and poor, success and failure. To celebrate the Sabbath is to experience one's ultimate independence of civilization and society, of achievement and anxiety. The Sabbath is an embodiment of the belief that all men are equal and that equality of men means the nobility of men. The greatest sin of man is to forget that he is a prince.

The Sabbath is an assurance that the spirit is greater than the universe, that beyond the good is the holy. The universe was created in six days, but the climax of creation was the seventh day. Things that come into being in the six days are good, but the seventh day is holy. The Sabbath is holiness in time.⁶⁰

What is it to be a Jew?

To be a Jew is to affirm the world without being enslaved to it; to be a part of civilization and to go beyond it; to conquer space and to sanctify time. Judaism is the art of surpassing civilization, sanctification of time, sanctification of time, sanctification of history.

The consecrated man is he who knows how to sanctify time. Not deceived by the splendor of space, he remains attentive to the divine tangent at the whirling wheel of living.⁶¹

In the final chapter (43), Heschel gives us the mystique of The People Israel. What is the meaning of Jewish existence? Is it worth the price?

We are the most challenged people under the sun. Our existence is either superfluous or indispensable to the world; it is either tragic or holy to be a Jew.⁶²

The Jewish people did not come into being by accident
 "God's vision of Israel came first and only then did we
 come into the world."

What we have learned from Jewish history is that if a man is not more than human then he is less than human. Judaism is an attempt to prove that in order to be a man, you have to be more than a man, that in order to be a people we have to be more than a people. Israel was made to be a "holy people." This is the essence of its dignity and the essence of its merit. Judaism is a link to eternity, kinship with ultimate reality.⁶³

ISRAEL- A SPIRITUAL ORDER

Why is our belonging to the Jewish people a sacred relation? Israel is a spiritual order in which the human and the ultimate, the natural and the holy enter a lasting covenant, in which kinship with God is not an aspiration but a reality of destiny. For us Jews there can be no fellowship with God without the fellowship with the people Israel. Abandoning Israel, we desert God.

Jewish existence is not only the adherence to particular doctrines and observances, but primarily the living in the Jews of the past and with the Jews of the present. It is not only a certain quality in the souls of the individuals, but primarily the existence of the community of Israel. It is neither an experience nor a creed, neither the possession of psychic traits nor the acceptance of a theological doctrine, but the living in a holy dimension, in a spiritual order. Our share in holiness we acquire by living in the Jewish community. What we do as individuals is a trivial episode, what we attain as Israel causes us to grow into the infinite.

Israel is the tree, we are the leaves. It is the clinging to the stem that keeps us alive. There has perhaps never been more need of Judaism than in our time, a time in which many cherished hopes of humanity lie crushed. We should be pioneers as were our fathers three thousand years ago. The future of all men depends upon their

realizing that the sense of holiness is as vital as health. By following the Jewish way of life we maintain that sense and preserve the light for mankind's future visions.

Belonging to Israel is in itself a spiritual act. It is utterly inconvenient to be a Jew. The very survival of our people is a kiddush hashem. We live in spite of peril. Our very existence is a refusal to surrender to normalcy, to security and comfort. Experts in assimilation, the Jews could have disappeared even before the names of modern nations were known. Still we are patient and cherish the will to perpetuate our essence. Jewish faith consists of attachment to God, attachment to Torah, and attachment to Israel.

Israel's experience of God has not evolved from search. Israel did not discover God. Israel was discovered by God. Judaism is God's quest for man. The Bible is a record of God's approach to His people. More statements are found in the Bible about God's love for Israel than about Israel's love for God.

We have not chosen God; He has chosen us. There is no concept of a chosen God but there is the idea of a chosen people. The idea of a chosen people does not suggest the preference for a people based upon a discrimination among a number of peoples. We do not say that we are a superior people. The "chosen people" means a people approached and chosen by God. The significance of this term is genuine in relation to God rather than in relation to other peoples. It signifies not a quality inherent in the people but a relationship between the people and God.⁶⁴

Notes to Chapter II

Where no other reference is cited, the reference is to A.J. Neschel, God in Search of Man.

1. See below.
2. See below, Chapter III, p.
3. See below. For example: "meta-ethical", an "ecstasy of deeds".
4. p. 292.
5. p. 282.
6. p. 283.
7. p. 282.
8. p. 284.
9. p. 285. The agada quoted established the point beautifully. See below, p. 42
10. p. 286.
11. p. 287.
12. p. 288.
13. p. 289, 290.
14. p. 291.
15. p. 295.
16. p. 296.
17. pp. 296-7.
18. pp. 298-300.
19. pp. 306, 307, 309.
20. p. 310.
21. p. 312.
22. pp. 315-16.
23. p. 324.
24. p. 320.
25. p. 323.
26. p. 330.
27. p. 341.
28. pp. 336, 337.
29. p. 340.
30. p. 342.
31. p. 348.
32. pp. 349-351.
33. pp. 352-3.
34. pp. 354-7.
35. p. 363.
36. *ibid.*
37. pp. 368-9.
38. pp. 371-2.
39. pp. 374-5.
40. pp. 376-7.
41. p. 378.
42. p. 380.
43. p. 383.
44. p. 384.
45. pp. 389-90.

46. p. 393.
47. p. 397.
48. p. 399.
49. *ibid.*
50. p. 400.
51. pp. 401-2.
52. pp. 403-4.
53. p. 407.
54. p. 411.
55. pp. 411-12.
56. pp. 412-13.
57. pp. 414-15.
58. pp. 415-16.
59. p. 416.
60. p. 417.
61. p. 418.
62. p. 421.
63. p. 422.
64. pp. 423-26.

Chapter III

The Documentation- its Strengths

The most significant fact about the documentation is that it is there. This remark is not made facetiously. It would be fair to say that, more than any other major contemporary thinker, Dr. Heschel documents his philosophy of Judaism with references to Jewish sources. This does not mean that other thinkers are less Jewish. But, it does mean that the roots of Heschel's thought are more easily visible, both to the casual reader and to the serious student. The casual reader cannot read the numerous direct quotes and illustrations without being impressed, both by the extent of the Jewish tradition and by Heschel's knowledge of it. The serious student is given the opportunity to trace many ideas back to their original source in the agadic literature. Just by providing the documentation, Rabbi Heschel is performing a valuable service to Judaism. He is transmitting to the next generation of students a substantial portion of agadic source material relating to Jewish religious thought. The range and breadth of Heschel's knowledge of the sources is astounding. He uses innumerable Biblical quotes, makes frequent reference to medieval Jewish writers, and occasionally refers to a modern Jewish

author. (This portion of the documentation is excluded from the present study.) But his use of the rabbinic agadic sources is truly prodigious. In one section alone (the section under study) of his major work, God in Search of Man- a Philosophy of Judaism, Section III, Response, pp. 281- 426, Heschel refers directly to no fewer than 150 sources in the Talmud and Midrash. In addition, he is not content to restrict himself to just a few of the Midrashic and Talmudic books. In the Talmud, he refers to fifteen different tractates stressing Berachot and Shabbat. Of course, Pirke Avot is well mined; and there are dips into other mishnayot and Talmud Jerushalmi for good measure. In the Midrash, Heschel refers to just about every source book that is available: the books of Midrash Raba are combed; Meehilta, Sifre to Deuteronomy and Midrash Tehillim come in for more than a passing mention; while there are scattered references to Tanhuma, Sifra, Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, Pesikta Rabbati, Yalkut Shimoni, Midrash Mishle, Pesikta de Rav Kahana and Sifre to Numbers.

Despite the volume and variety of sources employed, not one instance of a direct misquote was found.¹ Almost all sources were faithfully transcribed and translated.² Where a source was paraphrased, the paraphrase was faithful

to the sense of the original. The translations were the same as, as good as, or better than the Soncino translations of the Talmud and Midrash Rabba. Only five references were incorrectly or poorly notated.³

In view of the fact that Heschel has selected his source material from the entire expanse of rabbinic literature, we would expect a variety of documentation. This is so. The terse pithy sayings from the Pirke Avot are easily spotted. Longer remarks by "the Rabbis" or various individual rabbis are included. Midrashim are used frequently but the reader is not usually encumbered with midrashic style. Unless they really add to the meaning of what is being said, the opening and concluding verses, and the proof texts are omitted. As will be noted below, Heschel often displays the knack of getting to the heart of a midrashic passage.

Heschel uses three methods of documentation. The first is the simple method of illustration. Heschel will state an important proposition, or he will make any kind of declarative statement. Then he brings in an agada to illustrate the point that he has already made. Occasionally, entire mashalim are quoted as illustrations. The second method of documentation is a most traditional one, heavy with revered precedent. Heschel will make a point, and then, in effect, cite an agada as a proof text. Thus,

Heschel uses agadic statements the way the rabbis of the agada used Biblical pisukim- as proof texts. In the third method, Heschel literally speaks through the documentation. Here, he withholds his own rhetoric, permitting the rabbis to speak directly for him. This is sometimes the most effective method of documentation.

There are many examples of each method.

The Method of Illustration

1. Heschel gives us a lengthy and eloquent definition of halacha and agada.⁴ Then, by way of dessert, he caps his definition with the following midrash.

When Isaac blessed Jacob he said: "God give thee the dew of the heaven, the fat of the earth, and plenty of corn and wine." Remarkd the Midrash: "Dew of heaven is Scripture, the fat of the earth is mishnah, corn is halacha, wine is agada."⁵

2. Heschel states that "when the law becomes petrified and our observance mechanical, we in fact violate and distort its very spirit." The person who observes the law mechanically is a "foolish pietist." The agada illustrates the term "foolish pietist."

What is a foolish pietist? A woman is drowning in the river, and he says: It is improper for me to look upon her and rescue her.⁶

3. Heschel states that in performing mitzvot, one goes beyond the idea of imitation of divinity. "Sacred

acts, mitsvot, do not only imitate; they represent the Divine. The mitsvot are of the essence of God, more than worldly ways of complying with his will." The midrashic selection succinctly brings out the point.

Rabbi Simeon ben Yohai states: "Honor the mitsvot, for the mitsvot are my deputies, and a deputy is endowed with the authority of the principle. If you honor the mitsvot, it is as if you honored Me; if you dishonor them, it is as if you dishonored Me."⁷

4. Heschel states that "God and man have a task in common as well as a common and mutual responsibility." An entire midrash (except for the opening verse) is quoted which gives traditional support to this philosophy.

For Thou wilt light my lamp (Psalms 18:29).
"The Holy One said to man: Thy lamp is in My hand, My lamp in Thine. Thy lamp is in Mine- as it is said: The lamp of the Lord is the soul of man (Proverbs 20:27). My lamp is in thine hand, to kindle the perpetual lamp. The Holy One said: If thou lightest My lamp, I will light thine."⁸

5. On occasion, Heschel shows us that a rabbinic mashal can be just as effective in a modern context as it was in its original context. He makes the significant theological statement that "the acceptance of God must precede, and is distinguished from, the acceptance of the commandments." (Apparently, this is Heschel's answer to those Jews who say that it is possible to be a Jew and observe the mitsvot without concern for God.)

At the head of the Decalogue stand the words, I am the Lord thy God. The Rabbis offered a parable. "The Emperor extended his reign over a new province. Said his attendants to him: Issue some decrees upon the people. But the emperor replied: Only after they will have accepted my kingship, will I issue decrees. For if they do not accept my kingship, how will they carry out my decrees? Likewise, God said to Israel, I am the Lord thy God- Thou shalt have no other gods. I am He whose kingship you have taken upon yourselves in Egypt. And when they said to Him: Yes, yes, He continued, Thou shalt have no other gods beside me."⁹

6. A beautiful parable is quoted as an introduction to an entire problem- the problem of evil.

How did Abraham arrive at his certainty that there is a God who is concerned with the world? Said Rabbi Isaac: Abraham may be "compared to a man who was traveling from place to place when he saw a palace in flames. Is it possible that there is no one who cares for the palace? he wondered. Until the owner of the palace looked at him and said, 'I am the owner of the palace.' Similarly, Abraham our father wondered, 'Is it conceivable that the world is without a guide?' The Holy One, blessed be He, looked out and said, 'I am the Guide, the Sovereign of the world.'"

Heschel continues:

The world is in flames, consumed by evil. Is it possible that there is no one who cares?¹⁰

7. In one instance, Heschel transcribes an agada into poetry.

I am a creature of God,
My neighbor is also a creature of God;
My work is in the city,
His work is in the field;
I rise early to my work,
He rises early to his.
Just as he is not overbearing in his calling,
So am I not overbearing in my calling.

Perhaps thou sayest:
 I do great things and he does small things!
 We have learnt;
 It matters not whether one does much or little,
 If only he directs his heart to heaven.

This "poem" is used to illustrate a tangential point,
 namely, that the scholar and the peasant are equal in the
 eyes of God.¹¹

The method of illustration, although easy to use,
 requires a fine eye for selection. One's knowledge of
 the agadic sources would have to be broad indeed to pro-
 duce such a variety of directly illustrative passages.
 The examples described above and others which will follow,
 indicate that Heschel possesses such an eye for selection.

The Proof Text Method

This method is used in a most matter-of-fact way.
 It is possible that Heschel is not even consciously aware
 that he is employing it. Yet, it would be natural for
 any scholar, who is immersed in the rabbinic sources, to
 use this most traditional method of documentation. Heschel
 usually omits the phrase "וְכַךְ - as it is said." It is
 supplied in the following examples in order to make the
 parallel with the ancient method patently clear.

1. Heschel states what is really a Jewish dogma
 when he says:

We are taught that... the supreme imperative
 is not merely to believe in God but to do the
 will of God, (as it is written,) "Be bold as a
 leopard, light as an eagle, swift as a deer,
 and strong as a lion to do the will of your
 Father who is in heaven.¹²

There is a relationship between a mitzvah and its reward:

The deed and the reward must come together, (but, as it is written,) "Be not like servants who serve the master for the sake of receiving a reward, but be like servants who serve the master without the expectation of receiving a reward," (and, as it is written,) "The reward of a mitzvah is the mitzvah itself."¹³

We must always be aware of the temptation to sin.

The emphasis upon the consciousness of mitzvah must not in any way weaken our attentiveness to the fact that we are always ready to betray Him, that even while engaged in a righteous act we are exposed to sin. (as it is written,) "Be not sure of thyself till the day of thy death."¹⁴

Heschel opposes the overemphasis that the fundamentalists place on halacha, when he says that

The glorification of the law and the insistence upon its strict observance, did not lead the Rabbis to a deification of the law, (as it is said,) "The Sabbath is given unto you, not you unto the Sabbath."¹⁵

Several other proof texts used in conjunction with the question of mitzvah are:

The supreme dignity of mitzvah is of such spiritual power that it gained a position of primacy over its antonym, namely, sin or averah. Even the sin of Adam was described as a loss of a mitzvah. After the forbidden fruit, we are told, their eyes were unclosed and "they knew they were naked" (Genesis 3:7), (as it is said,) "One mitzvah was entrusted to them, and they had stripped themselves of it."¹⁶

Jewish tradition, while conscious of the possibilities of evil in the good, stresses the possibilities of further good in the good. Ben Azzai said, "Be eager to do a minor mitzvah, and flee from transgression; for one mitzvah leads to

(brings on) another mitzvah, and one transgression leads to another transgression; for the reward of a mitzvah is a mitzvah, and the reward of a transgression is a transgression.¹⁷

2. In the above examples, Heschel's statements and his agadic proof texts follow one upon the other. In the following example, the proof text is found in the notes, but the usage is the same.

Nor does the term mitsvot, commandments, express the totality of Judaism. The acceptance of God must precede, and is distinguished from, the acceptance of the commandments, (as it is written),¹⁸

אמר ר' יהודה בן קרחא למה קדמה "שמע" ל"והיה אק שמעו?"
כדי שיקבלו עולו של מלכות שמע רחוקה ואחר כך יקבלו עולו של מצוה.

3. No religious act is properly fulfilled unless it is done with a willing heart and a craving soul... Above all, the Torah asks for love... love is the purpose of all mitsvot, (as it is said,) "All ye do should be done out of love."¹⁹

This agadic reference is an excerpt from a midrash which reads:

לאברה אהר' אלהיכם שמעו תורת' אהר' תורה
רש' אלהי' גבול אקרא רבי גבול אקרא לבר לעולם
בבא תלמוד חזר לאברה אהר' אלהיכם, כל שמעו עולם
לא תהו עולם אלא מאברה.

The midrash is concerned specifically with the study of Torah, and not the practice of mitsvot. In this case, however, Heschel takes a general principle- all ye do should be done out of love- and applies it correctly to mitsvot. Heschel is saying that love is the exclusive motive for Torah. The midrash refers to unworthy motives.

4. Jewish tradition does not maintain that every iota of the law was revealed to Moses on Sinai. This is an unwarranted extension of the rabbinic concept of revelation, (as it is said,) "Could Moses have learned the whole Torah? Of the Torah it is said, 'Its measure is longer than the earth and broader than the sea' (Job 11:9); could then Moses have learned it in forty days? No, it was only the principles thereof (klalim) which God taught Moses," (and, as it is said,) "things not revealed to Moses were revealed to Rabbi Akiba and his colleagues."20

Here, Heschel uses excerpts from two midrashim as proof texts for a critical principle. In both cases, he gets to the heart of the particular midrash. This is good selection.
21

5. God asks for the heart. Yet, our greatest failure is in the heart..., (as it is said,) There is not a single mitzvah which we fulfill perfectly except circumcision and the Torah that we study in our childhood...22

Who can be trustful of good intentions... when even at the moment when our forefathers stood at Sinai, proclaiming "All that the Lord has spoken will we do and obey" (Exodus 24:7), they did not fully mean what they said... According to Rabbi Meir, at that very moment their heart was directed to idolatry.23

Other rabbis said that Israel spent 29 days, 11 days, 2 days, 1 day considering how to make the calf. Rabbi Meir said they didn't wait even one day. Heschel again got right to the heart of the passage.

6. To cap off the usage of agadic passages as proof texts, we have the following Talmudic epigram:

Life is lived on a spiritual battlefield, (as it is said,) "Woe to me for my yotser (Creator), woe to me for my yotser (the evil drive).24

Although all three methods of documentation are frequently employed, the proof text method receives the heaviest quantitative usage. A traditional subject like mitsvah, for example, would lend itself to this type of documentation. The above examples indicate that Heschel can use this method with the ease of the ancient Rabbis. It would also be fair to say that he uses agadic excerpts as proof texts with less distortion than the Rabbis used Biblical verses.

Moreover this is an important success. Many of his assertions seem strange and unusual to the modern Jewish student. He is apt to question their authenticity. The citation of a relevant text at once makes him realize that the idea is not the author's own, but is one derived from the tradition.

Speaking Through the Documentation

In this category of documentation, Heschel uses the traditional sources neither as illustrations nor as proof texts; he speaks directly through the sources themselves. Sometimes, he quotes verbatim but he likewise will not hesitate to give a precis.

1. For example, Heschel asks, "What does it mean to do? What is the relation between the deer and the deed? Is there a purpose to fulfill, a task to carry out?" He answers with an agada which is quoted almost in its entirety.

"A man should always regard himself as though he were half guilty and half meritorious; if he performs one good deed, blessed is he for he moves the scale toward merit; if he commits one transgression, woe to him for he moves the scale toward guilt." Not only the individual but the whole world is in balance. One deed of an individual may decide the fate of the world. "If he performs one good deed, blessed is he for he moves the scale both for himself and for the entire world to the side of merit; if he commits one transgression, woe to him for he moves to the side of guilt himself and the whole world."²⁵

The agada answers Heschel's question. There is a purpose to fulfill, a task to carry out. Man's task is to perform mitzvot. Why? Because even one mitzvah may tip the balance in favor of the good.

2. In the above example, an agada was used as the answer to a question. In the following example, an agada is used to state a proposition.

A view of the supremacy of agada is reflected in the following tradition: It is said of Rabbi Yohanan ben Zakkai that his studies included all fields of Jewish learning, great matters or small matters. Great matters means ma'aseh merkabah (mystical doctrines), small matters the discussions of Abaye and Raba (legal interpretations)²⁶

Although Heschel is speaking through the documentation here, it does not necessarily mean that this agada proves his point.

3/ In a third case, Heschel cleverly combines the essential parts of two agadot in order to state a proposition. Yet, he does not distort the meaning of either agada.

The soul which we receive is clean, but within it resides a power for evil, "a strange God," "That seeks constantly to get the upper hand over man and kill him; and if God did not help him, he could not resist it, as it is said, the wicked watches the righteous and seeks to slay him."²⁷

The agadot are as follows:

Anyone who rends garments in his anger, breaks vessels in his anger, and scatters money in his anger is regarded as an idolator because such are the wiles of the evil inclination. Today, it says to him, do thusly, and tomorrow it will say, do thusly, until it tells him to worship idols. Rabbi Avin asks, what is the gerse?

"There shall be no strange god in thee; neither shalt thou worship any strange god (Ps. 81:10). Who is the strange god that resides in man himself? The evil inclination.

Rabbi Simeon ben Lakish said, The evil inclination of a man seeks constantly to get the upper hand over man and to kill him, as it is said, "The wicked watcheth the righteous and seeketh to slay him." (Ps. 37:32); and were it not that the Holy One helps him, he would not be able to resist it, as it is said, "The Lord will not leave him in his hand, nor suffer him to be condemned when he is judged." (Ps. 37:33).

Although only one phrase is selected from the first agada, it is the key phrase. The latter agada is one of several on the theme of the yetser hara.

4. In another case, Meschel succinctly states the point of a midrash, when he says, "a Jew was commanded to study not only halacha but also agada."²⁸ This is one of the midrashim to

למד תורה ופסוקים ופסוקים ופסוקים

The full text of the midrash reads as follows:

למא תאמר הריני למד פסוק קשה ונלח את הקלה, תלמוד
לומר כי לא פבר רק הוא מבין (פברית, אב, מ"ו) פבר שאמר אומרין
ריקן הוא, הוא "חייבם" שלא תאמר למדת הלכות פניי, תלמוד
לומר מצאנו מצאנו כי המצאנו למד מידת הלכות והלכות
וכן הוא אומר כי לא על הלכות לבד יחיד האדם (פברית, ח"ג)
זה המדע, כי על כל מצאנו כי ה' אלו הלכות לאגדות.

We are told, in effect, that we should not neglect the study of agadot because they are easy. No word is empty of meaning. We should not say, "I have studied halachot; it is sufficient for me!" Thus, a Jew was commanded to study not only halacha, but also midrash and agada.

Similar usage is employed when Heschel says, "the purpose of all mitsvot is to refine man."²⁹ This is the essence of the midrash which reads:

"As for God, His way is perfect; the word of the Lord is tried" (Ps. 18:31). If His way is perfect, how much the more He Himself! Rav said: The mitsvot were given only in order that man might be refined by them. For what does the Holy One, blessed be He care whether a man kills an animal by the throat or by the nape of the neck? Hence, the mitsvot were given only in order that man might be refined (tried) by them.

The midrash turns on the meaning of the word פָּרָה = to refine, test, purify. All of these meanings fit in with Heschel's thought.

Another example of similar usage is where Meschel says, "Every mitsvah adds holiness to Israel."³⁰

וְכָל מִצְוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה
וְכָל מִצְוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה
וְכָל מִצְוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה הַיְּהוָה

5. There are several additional examples which show how Meschel uses midrashim in order to express certain propositions.

- a. Faith is so precious (in Judaism) that Israel was redeemed from Egypt as a reward for their faith. The future redemption is contingent upon the degree of faith shown by Israel.³¹

This whole midrash, that is, the midrash to "They believed in the Lord and in Moses, His servant" stresses faith and rewards for faith.

- b. In their zeal to carry out the ancient injunction, "make a hedge about the Torah," many Rabbis failed to heed the warning, "Do not consider the hedge more important than the vineyard." Excessive regard for the hedge may spell ruin for the vineyard.³²

The text upon which Meschel bases this statement is:

"And from the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God said you shall not eat from it and you shall not touch it lest you die"; this is what is written (Prov. 30:6), "Add not unto His words, lest He reprove you, and you be found a liar." R. Hiyya taught: Do not make the hedge more than the principle thing, lest it fall and destroy the plants.

תני רבי חייא כהן חסדא אבא רבא ורבי
ההוא דאמר חסדא ורבי חסדא

This is a significant statement. Heschel is apparently warning the pure halachists not to concern themselves so much about practice or they will lose the faith the practice is meant to guard and enshrine.

a. The following midrash is used to state what God will do with the problem of the yetser hara. We have mitzvot to guard against particular evils. "Yet, the problem of the evil drive is not solved by observance."³³ Heschel first quoted Jeremiah and Ezekiel to show that God will create a new heart for man. Then he brings in this midrash to tell us that God will do away with the yetser hara. The yetser hara is equated with darkness.

A definite period was set for the world to spend in darkness. What is the proof? It is written, He sets an end to darkness and searches out to the utmost end the stones of thick darkness and of the shadow of death (Job 28:3). For as long as the evil drive exists in the world, thick darkness and the shadow of death are in the world; when the evil drive will be uprooted from the world, thick darkness and the shadow of death will pass away from the world.³⁴

d. The Torah is to be studied for its own sake and not for the sake of any material advantages.

Vital, precious, and holy as dedication to Torah is, it is pernicious to study Torah for selfish ends, to study it so that we may be called rabbis, in order to obtain reward here or in the life to come...³⁵ (See above, page 31 for full text.) According to Hillel, "He who uses the crown of Torah to his own advantage will perish; he who derives a profit for himself from the words of the Torah takes his own life."³⁶

e. One further midrash in this section, which shows man's ingratitude to God.

The Holy One, blessed be He, says to the soul:
 "All that I have created in the six days of
 creation, I have created for thy sake alone,
 and thou goest forth and sinnest!"³⁷

Some Final Comments

In addition to the three methods of documentation already discussed, Heschel occasionally employs a fourth method. He takes an agada which is used frequently to support a view opposed to his, holds it up to examination, tries to demonstrate that the opposition distorted it, and then shows that the agada really supports him. This is akin to a defense attorney taking a piece of prosecution evidence and using it for his own benefit. In the following example, Heschel successfully knocks down a piece of agadic evidence cited by the "religious behaviorists,"³⁸ and turns it around to his benefit.

In justification of their view, exponents of religious behaviorism cite the passage in which the Rabbis paraphrased the words of Jeremiah (16:11), They have forsaken Me and have not kept My Torah in the following way: "Would that they had forsaken Me and kept My Torah." However, to regard this passage as a declaration of the primary if not exclusive importance of studying Torah over concern for God is to pervert the meaning of the passage. Such perversion is made possible by overlooking the second part of the passage which reads as follows: "since by occupying themselves with the Torah, the light which she contains would have led them back to Me." "It was not an ideal that the Rabbis envisaged but a last resort. Having forsaken all commandments, if the people had at least continued to study Torah, the light of the Torah would have brought them back to God."³⁹

Moreover, Heschel has an extraordinary knack for getting to the heart of a comment. Several such passages were referred to above, and others may easily be cited:

1. An excerpt from a midrash is brought in to support the general idea of the fundamental importance of agada.

Unlike the First Tablets of the Covenant, the Second Tablets contained agada as well.⁴⁰

This is a long midrash which discusses the breaking of the Tablets. The key verse is, "And that He would tell thee the secrets of wisdom" (Job 11:6). What are the secrets of wisdom? At the end of the midrash we are told:

The Holy One blessed be He said to him (Moses): 'Do not be sorry about the First Tablets; they only contained the Ten Commandments, but in the two Tablets I am about to give you now, there are Halachot, Midrash and Agadot.' That is the meaning of, 'And He would tell thee the secrets of wisdom,' that sound wisdom is double.⁴¹

Thus, we can conclude that in as much as agada is included in the Tablets along with halacha and midrash, agada must be of fundamental importance. Heschel gets to the heart of the passage in this fine selection.

2. In using the proof text method, Heschel refers to the punch line of a rather amusing agada.

Piety is at times evil in disguise, (as it is said), The greater the man, the more he is exposed to sin.⁴²

The story tells about Abaye who followed a young couple into a field, ostensibly in order to restrain them from transgression. The couple parted company innocently. Abaye said, as he leaned in deep anguish against a doorpost, "If it were I, I could not have restrained myself." A certain old man came up to him and taught him, "the greater the man, the greater the Evil Inclination."

3. In speaking through the sources, Heschel quotes:

"Unto Thee, O Lord belongs righteousness, but unto us shamefacedness" (Daniel 9:7). Why is this so? Said Rabbi Nehemiah: Because even when we perform righteousness, we survey our actions and are filled with shame.⁴³

This is but the beginning of a long midrash contrasting His bounty and the little He asks from us, which should make us ashamed of ourselves. There are several interpretations to the verse from Daniel, of which the one selected is the best. It corroborates Heschel's idea that the way to begin to purify the self is to detect the taints in our virtues.

4. The more we do for His sake, the more we receive for our sake, (as it is said), "He who does a mitzvah lights a lamp before God and endows his soul with more life."⁴⁴

This is the heart of a very worthwhile passage which discusses how the words of the Torah give light to the man who studies them... Just as a person who walks in the dark without a lamp will stumble and fall, a person without Torah will stumble against averah and die. But he

who studies the Torah gives forth light wherever he may be; he will not stumble nor fall.

Finally, Heschel also has the talent to select the relevant or significant comment in what is otherwise a mass of unrelated agadic materials. In a sense, every source used reflects this talent. Every agada or midrash that is referred to is of necessity plucked out of what is otherwise a mass of unrelated material. The agada as a literary genre, is neither a systematic work nor a series of systematic works. Its ideas are not logically developed; they do not flow one from the other. The midrashim are often expositions based on almost "free association" with the pisukim. The agadot in the Gemara appear at random. Even the Pirke Avot is a collection of variegated sayings (significant though they may be); it is not a systematic theological or philosophical treatise. Without a mastery of the material, based upon years of study, (or a fantastically good index), it is impossible to use the agada this widely for documentation in any treatise offered as "A Philosophy of Judaism." Thus, every source used indicates a general skill in selecting the relevant out of the irrelevant.⁴⁵

In Chapter I, the question is asked: "How well does Heschel know the agada?" I think it would be fair to say that Heschel knows the agada very well indeed. "Is Heschel a good selector? Does he get to the heart of the passage?

Does he have the ability to find the pregnant, relevant or significant comment in what is otherwise a mass of unrelated material?" At this point in the investigation, each question can be answered with an unqualified "yes."

Notes to Chapter III

1. There was one basic exception. In many instances where Heschel states, "the Rabbis said...", the source reads, "Rabbi _____ said," thus identifying its author. I believe that this is not a question of misquoting but of misusing the midrash or agada. See below, Chapter IV, page 61ff for a full discussion of this matter.

There are two tiny infidelities to the text which betray Heschel's mystical bent. On p. 324, he quotes, "...study agada for hereby will you recognize the Holy One..." The text reads אמר ה' ויהי עולם i.e., the Creator, not the Holy One. On p. 304, footnote 4, he quotes, "...the Holy One, blessed be He, gives the assurance of a blessing..." The text reads, קרבן וצדקה i.e., the Terah, not the Holy One.

2. On P. 309, Heschel quotes a beautiful agada from Berachot 17a. He translates the phrase כך הוא קולו מתעלה וקולו מתעלה as, "Just as he is not overbearing in his calling, So I am not overbearing in my calling." A more correct rendering would be: "Just as he does not presume to do my work, I do not presume to do his work." The correction does not affect either the meaning or appropriateness of the citation. On p. 289, in the midrash attributed to R.S. b. Yohai, the phrase "The Holy One, blessed be He said to Israel" is omitted. See below Note 7 for full text.
3. Footnote 12, p. 302 is a reference to Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer, ch. 21. There is nothing in ch. 21 relating to the theme under discussion.

Footnote 11, p. 324 is a reference to Yalkut Shimoni, Psalms 672. The source cannot be located on the basis of this reference.

Footnote 3, p. 362 is a reference to Sanhedrin 17a. There is nothing here relating to acquiring mitsvot, or anything about mitsvot, the theme under discussion.

Footnote 8, p. 362 is a reference to Genesis Rabba 3, 7. There is nothing here about one being naked without mitsvot. Either this is an incorrect reference or Heschel is giving his own midrash to Genesis 3:7.

Footnote 8, p. 392 is a reference to Sifre Deuteronomy 48. Heschel says that "in rabbinic literature Abraham is the only person of whom it is said that he served God 'out of love.'" This is a very long midrash, yet there is no reference to Abraham.

4. See above Chapter II, p. 13 ff.
5. Heschel, op. cit., p. 337. The midrash is from Genesis Rabba to 27:28 (66, 4). The verse is:

עוֹלָם הָאָרֶץ כְּחֵלֶב הָאֵשׁ וְכֶסֶד הָאֵשׁ כְּחֵלֶב הָאֵשׁ
The midrash is:

וְכֶסֶד הָאֵשׁ כְּחֵלֶב הָאֵשׁ וְכֶסֶד הָאֵשׁ כְּחֵלֶב הָאֵשׁ
There are other midrashim to the same verse. Dew of heaven, fat of the earth, corn and wine are also compared to manna, fat fish, young boys and young girls; and to Zion, sacrifices, first fruits and libations. Heschel naturally selected that midrash which pertained to what he wanted to say.

6. p. 339. Sotah 21b. There are other agadot which speak in the same vein- some referring to outright deception and some to hypocritical acts. For example, on p. 310, Heschel states that "Judaism is not interested in automata." The note leads us to Sotah 22b. This is a very interesting historical agada. It discusses the seven kinds of Parushim who observe the obligations to an excess. The Rabbis (Rabanan) are criticizing this type of punctilious but hypocritical observance. The historical implications of this agada are outside the scope of this study, but the agada does aptly illustrate Heschel's statement.

Heschel illustrates another point similarly when he says (p. 362), "In Hebrew we speak of the mitsvah as if it were endowed with sensible properties, as if it were a concrete entity, a thing. We say, for example... 'Adorn thyself with mitzvot before Him.' ...Mitsvot are 'man's friends....' The former illustration is a random comment by Resh Lakish in Sanhedrin 37a. The latter is a properly used excerpt from a long mashal in Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer ch. 34.

7. p. 289, Tanhuma to Genesis 46:28. The Hebrew is:
 אמר רשב"י אמר רבקה לשרה הן מוכרין את הארץ ואת
 עמלק ואת כל בני ישראל; אמר רבקה; אמר רבקה; אמר רבקה;
 אמר רבקה; אמר רבקה; אמר רבקה;
 The remainder of the midrash is irrelevant, concerning
 itself with the verse and some other matters.

8. p. 287. Leviticus Rabba 31,4.

9. p. 325-6. Mechilta to 20:3.

In the same manner, Heschel makes the statement that,
 "In Judaism even the word Torah is not all-inclusive.
 "A man who has Torah but no yirat shamayim (awe and
 fear of God) is like a treasurer who was given the
 keys to the inner chamber but not the keys to the outer
 chamber." This is only the opinion of one rabbi, but
 two other rabbis offer parallel opinions reinforcing
 this view. "Rabbi Jannai proclaimed: Wee to him
 that has no courtyard yet makes a gate for same!
 (Torah is a gate whereby one enters the court of piety.
 Wee to him who prepares the entry without the court
 itself.) Rabbi Judah said: The Holy One Blessed Be
 He created His world only that men should fear Him,
 for it is said (Ecc. 3:14), 'and God hath done it,
 that man should fear before Him.'" (Shabbat 31 a-b.)

10. p. 367. The mashal is from Genesis Rabba 39,1.

11. p. 309. Berachot 17a. The Hebrew is:

מלך אלוהים יתברך יושב כבודו ויגדל
 אל מלכותו ואל מלכותו יושב כבודו ויגדל
 ואל מלכותו יושב כבודו ויגדל
 כב אל אל מלכותו ואל מלכותו יושב כבודו ויגדל
 עליו: אמר רבקה; אמר רבקה; אמר רבקה;
 אמר רבקה; אמר רבקה; אמר רבקה;

12. p. 299. Avot 5, 20.

13. pp. 355-6. Avot 1,3; 4,2 (in part).

14. p. 365-6. Avot 2,4.

15. p. 326. Meghilta to 31:13. The Hebrew is:

וְהָיָה כִּי תִּפְגַּע בְּאִישׁ אֶת חֶמְדּוֹ וְהָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְיָשָׁר וְיָדוֹעַ בְּמִצְוֹת ה' וְהָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְיָשָׁר וְיָדוֹעַ בְּמִצְוֹת ה' וְהָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְיָשָׁר וְיָדוֹעַ בְּמִצְוֹת ה'.

The remainder of the midrash discusses the problem of saving a life on Shabbat. It is permitted, nay, it is a duty, to save a life even if you have to violate all the laws of Shabbat. "The ancient Rabbis knew that excessive piety may endanger the fulfillment of the essence of the law." (p. 326).

16. p. 362-3. Genesis Rabba 19, 17 or 19, 11.

This is a short midrash of one line quoted fully.

The text is:

וְהָיָה כִּי תִּפְגַּע בְּאִישׁ אֶת חֶמְדּוֹ וְהָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְיָשָׁר וְיָדוֹעַ בְּמִצְוֹת ה' וְהָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְיָשָׁר וְיָדוֹעַ בְּמִצְוֹת ה'.

17. p. 377. Avot 4,2.

18. p. 325; p. 333 Note 21. Mishnah Berachot 2,2.

An additional example of the use of an halachic passage as a proof text is when Heschel attacks those who claim that Judaism is a religion of law and not of faith. He asks (p. 329),

What if not the power of faith, is the motive behind the injunction of the Mishnah, (as it is written), A man is obliged to bless God for the evil things that come upon him as he is obliged to bless God for the good things that come to him?" (Mishnah Berachot 9,5.)

19. p. 307. Sifre Deuteronomy 41 (to 11:13).

20. p. 302. Exodus Rabba 41, 6. Numbers Rabba 19,6.

The Hebrew is

וְהָיָה כִּי תִּפְגַּע בְּאִישׁ אֶת חֶמְדּוֹ וְהָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְיָשָׁר וְיָדוֹעַ בְּמִצְוֹת ה' וְהָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְיָשָׁר וְיָדוֹעַ בְּמִצְוֹת ה' וְהָיָה לְפָנֶיךָ אִישׁ חָסֵד וְיָשָׁר וְיָדוֹעַ בְּמִצְוֹת ה'.

21. However, Heschel misses the opportunity to discuss the authority of our own contemporary sages. Although he uses these midrashim well, he could have used them even better.

22. p. 393. Midrash Tehillim 6.1.

The midrash reads in part:

It is true of every precept we are obliged to follow that we do not observe it according to its proper manner and rule. Were we to examine the way each of them is observed among us it would be difficult to understand why the Holy One continues to sustain us and his world. For we hold fast to no precept except the precept of circumcision and the precept of the study of Torah by school children who are without sin, as it is said, "If not for My covenant (and for what is to be studied) day and night, I would not sustain the ordinances of heaven and earth." (Jer. 33:25ff.).

Heschel pulled this comment out of a long midrash concerning various ritual commandments.

23. p. 393; Note 13, p. 395. Exodus Rabba 42,6.
In another interpretation of, "But they beguiled Him with their mouth, and lied unto Him with their tongue. For their heart was not steadfast, neither were they faithful in His covenant," Rabbi Meir said, "God, if one may say so, exclaimed, 'Who will grant that they had such a heart,'" (i.e., that what they now said they really meant in their hearts). (Deuteronomy Rabba 7,10.) This is the best interpretation of the pasuk, "Who will grant that they had such a heart" (Deuteronomy 5:26).

24. p. 366. Berachot 61a; Erubin 18a.
This midrash is a play on the word 224.

"ויצור ה' אלהים את האדם בצלם יוה"ו, שני יוה"ו, שני יצור, ברא הקדוש
אלהים יצור טוב ואלהים יצור רע... האם רבי שמעון בן יוחאי
אולי יצור טוב ואולי יצור רע?"

25. p. 285. Kiddushin 40b.

26. p. 340. Sukkah 28a. The Hebrew is:

אחריו עליו לו רבן יוחנן בן זכאי שלא פתח מקרא ומלך אומר
היכות ואלה הן בקדוקי תורה ובקדוקי סופרים קלים וחמורים
ובגרות שוות תקופות ואמלכות בית מלכא וסדרה וסידור
שנים... דבר אחר ודבר קטן, דבר אחר מלפני מרכבה דבר
קטן הינות בלוגי ורבא....

27. p. 365. The agadot are taken from Shabbat 105b and Sukkah 52, respectively.

Further on down the page, Heschel quotes a midrash (Leviticus Rabba 18,1) as follows:

See I am pure, My abode is pure, My ministers are pure, and the soul I have given thee is pure...

This midrash functions as a proof text for "The soul which we receive is clean..."

28. p. 324-5. Sifre Deuteronomy 48 (to 11:22).
 29. p. 357. Genesis Rabba 44,1.
 30. p. 359. Mechilta to 22:30.
 31. p. 329. Mechilta to 14:31. In the same vein, Heschel adds:

The Rabbis denied a share in the life to come not to those who were guilty of wrong deeds, but to those who asserted views that contradicted fundamental beliefs.

The reference is to Mishnah Sanhedrin 10,1.

כל אדם חייב להאמין באלו חמשה דברים... וכל מי שדחה אחד מהם, חסר חלק לעולם הבא.
 חלק לעולם הבא, האדם אינו נשפט על דעותיו, אלא על מעשיו, וכל מי שדחה אחד מהם, חסר חלק לעולם הבא.

The fundamental beliefs enumerated are that resurrection of the dead is decreed by the Torah and that the Torah comes from God. For denying these beliefs, or for being an Apikoros, one is denied his share in the world to come.

32. pp. 302-3. Genesis Rabba 19,3.
 33. p. 379.
 34. Genesis Rabba 89,1.

35. p. 391. Sifre Deuteronomy 41 (to 11:13).

This is the full midrash to לאברה אה"י אלהים but the midrashim on the other verses are also gems.

36. p. 391. Avot 4,5.

37. p. 365. Leviticus Rabba 4,2.

Most of this midrash speaks about the laying up of mitzvot. This is the punch line at the end.

38. See above, Chapter II, p. 107.

39. p. 329-30. The sources cited are Lamentations Rabba proemium, and Jerushalmi Hagigah 1,7, 76c. In Lamentations R. we read:

ה' הוֹלֵךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל יְמֵי חַיָּהוּ בְּכָל יְמֵי חַיָּהוּ
(יחז"ל 50, 51) וְלֹא יִשְׁכַּח אֶת אֶתְנֵי
וְיִשְׁכַּח אֶתְנֵי, מִתּוֹךְ שֶׁנֶּחֱמָדָן בָּהּ שֶׁאֵינוֹ שֶׁנֶּחֱמָדָן מִתּוֹכָן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ

According to this source, the light of the Torah would not have brought them back to God, but to "the right path"- אֶתְנֵי. "The right path" normally means observance of the commandments. This view that the light of the Torah would turn them from the wrong path to the right path is supported by the commentator-

וְיִשְׁכַּח אֶתְנֵי. However, in Jerushalmi Hagigah, we read ה' הוֹלֵךְ אֶת יִשְׂרָאֵל בְּכָל יְמֵי חַיָּהוּ

See below, Chapter IV, p. 107 for an unsuccessful use of this method.

40. p. 333, Note 13.

41. Exodus Rabba 46,1.

42. p. 370. Sukkah 52a.

43. p. 402. Exodus Rabba 41,1

44. p. 311. Exodus Rabba 36,3.

לֵךְ ה' וְיִשְׁכַּח אֶתְנֵי (שם 50, 51) אֵלֶיךָ בְּכָל יְמֵי חַיָּהוּ
וְיִשְׁכַּח אֶתְנֵי. וְיִשְׁכַּח אֶתְנֵי בְּכָל יְמֵי חַיָּהוּ בְּכָל יְמֵי חַיָּהוּ
וְיִשְׁכַּח אֶתְנֵי (שם 50, 51). מִתּוֹךְ שֶׁנֶּחֱמָדָן בָּהּ שֶׁאֵינוֹ שֶׁנֶּחֱמָדָן מִתּוֹכָן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ
שֶׁנֶּחֱמָדָן בָּהּ שֶׁאֵינוֹ שֶׁנֶּחֱמָדָן מִתּוֹכָן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ
שֶׁנֶּחֱמָדָן בָּהּ שֶׁאֵינוֹ שֶׁנֶּחֱמָדָן מִתּוֹכָן מִלְּפָנֶיךָ

45. For some specific examples, see above, Note 27. The selection from Leviticus Rabba 18,1 was dug out of a very long midrash with many ramblings on the verse, "Remember then thy Creator in the days of Thy youth (Eccl. 12:1).

See above, Note 7. This beautiful midrash was pulled out of random remarks concerning the lighting of the candle on Shabbat, expositions on Psalm 138 and other irrelevancies.

Heschel says (p. 377), "At the end of days, evil will be conquered by the One; in historic times, evils must be conquered one by one." This remark is based on a comment in Numbers Rabba 15,16:

Israel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Sovereign of the Universe: You know the power of the evil inclination, how strong it is!" Said the Holy One, blessed be He to them: "Dislodge him a little in this world and I will remove him from you in the future,"...

This comment is found in the midrash with the pious story about King David who got up at midnight to study Torah and kept at it until dawn.

Chapter IV

The Documentation- Its Weaknesses

If it is fair and proper to laud a scholar for his astuteness in using the traditional sources for documentation, then it is also fair and proper to criticize him for any weaknesses, shortcomings or outright distortions that may be found in the documentation. Such shortcomings and distortions have been found. There are situations of over-documentation and under-documentation. Sometimes, one is left groggy after reading the numerous references cited in support of one proposition. This is not a serious shortcoming. Far more serious are the situations where we would like Jewish proof but for which Jewish proof is weak or totally absent. As shown above in Chapter III, Dr. Heschel can use the sources with telling accuracy and precision. Yet, we find cases where the sources that he selects are ambiguous or unclear, or cases where they support the proposition only partially or weakly. There are also some choice examples where the agada cited in support of some statement can be turned right around and used against him. Moreover, there are many examples of different kinds of distortion or misuse of agadic or midrashic passages. Therefore, in this chapter, I propose to examine in some detail these weaknesses in the documentation.

Distorting the Documentation

1. A very special kind of distortion has already been alluded to.¹ Heschel has a tendency to refer to "the Rabbis." When quoting a midrash in support of some point, he will say, "The Rabbis said" this or "the Rabbis said" that. Upon reading the midrash, we sometimes find that a particular rabbi made the statement, and not The Rabbis. For example, Heschel says, "The Rabbis maintain that 'things not revealed to Moses were revealed to Rabbi Akiba and his colleagues.'" The quote is correct but it is not by "The Rabbis." It is by R. Huna.²

Heschel says, "To the ancient Rabbis the pursuit of learning, of Torah, was one of the highest goals."³ It would seem that a statement of this sort could be easily documented from the tradition. Yet, in this mishna,⁴ the reference is to a statement by a particular rabbi.

רבי יוחנן אמר מניח אלף ב' מילין ופוסק אלף ג' מילין
אלף ד' מילין ור' חנניאל אמר פוסק אלף ד' מילין
והוא חסידא דר' יוחנן

It is all the more reprehensible to misuse a mishna, because in this mishna, as well as in many others, there are statements by "the Rabbis." But this is not one of them. This statement is merely the opinion of one rabbi who says that it is more important to study Torah than to make a living.

In the following examples, Heschel distorts the midrashim on two counts: first, he claims that they are statements by "the Rabbis," and second, he distorts their

meaning. Both midrashim can be used against Heschel very effectively. In the first example, Heschel states,

The preciousness and fundamental importance of agada is categorically (italics mine) set forth in the following statement of the ancient Rabbis: "If you desire to know Him at whose word the universe came into being, study agada for hereby will you recognize the Holy One and cleave unto His ways."⁵

אמרו חכמי אגדה כי רצונך להכיר את מלך
אברהם העולם הזה עומד בך אלה מביא את
מלך אלה וזה העולם והעולם והעולם והעולם.

Heschel refers to this as a statement of "the ancient Rabbis." The text states: "אמרו חכמי אגדה - the Agadists say." Who are these Agadists? It is not certain, but apparently, they were a special school of rabbis who devoted themselves exclusively to the expounding of agada.⁶ Therefore, it is not surprising, nor is it particularly significant to find agadists praising agada. In any event, they are not the group usually referred to as "the ancient rabbis." The ancient Rabbis are the halachic masters, and are usually referred to by the appellation פוסקים or פוסק. In fact, in the context of the full midrash, we have a contrast between the פוסקים and the אמרי אגדה. (See the full text of the midrash below.) The statement made by Heschel that you will find God in the agada is not the categorical pronouncement of the ancient Rabbis. It is merely the opinion of the Agadists. Thus, Heschel has given us a false impression.

First, the Rabbis did not apply the verse; Rabbi Joshua did. Thus, this pre-agada source reflects the opinion of only one rabbi, not a consensus. Second, the midrash can be used more correctly to refute Heschel than to support him. Only one rabbi applied this verse to the agada, whereas the Rabbis applied the verse to the Shema as follows:

וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמָא יְיָ יִשְׁמַע
וְהָיָה כִּי יִשְׁמַע יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁמָא יְיָ יִשְׁמַע

The authoritative opinion is that the person who "doesn't give heed to the works of the Lord, nor to the acts of His hands is the person who does not recite the Shema, i.e., who does not follow the halacha.

As can be seen by the above cases, Heschel sometimes distorts a midrash by claiming the Rabbis as the author rather than name the particular rabbi. Perhaps some would pass it off as poetic license or preacher's privilege, but for a scholar this is a distortion. It is also possible that Heschel, consciously or unconsciously, chose to distort a given midrash in this way in order to lend greater authority to it. For the reader, the phrase, "The Rabbis said," is much more authoritative, more formidable than a mere "Rabbi X said."

2. The two midrashim just analyzed above are excellent examples of how a source, selected by Heschel, can be turned against him. This is not done through forced interpretations but by a simple reading of the

plain meaning of the texts. There are a few additional examples of this type. Heschel states:

A mitzvah is where mind and mystery mate to create an image of God. A sacred deed is where earth and heaven meet.⁹

As an illustration of this point, Heschel quotes a midrash:

The heavens are the heavens of the Lord, but the earth hath He given to the children of man (Psalms 115:16). "It is as if a king had decreed that the citizens of Rome should not visit Syria, nor the citizens of Syria visit Rome. Thus when God created the world, He decreed, 'The heavens are the heavens of the Lord; but the earth hath He given to the children of man.' Yet, when He was about to give the Torah, He rescinded the first decree and said: 'Those who are below shall ascend to those on High, while those who are on high shall descend to those that are below and I will begin,' as it is said, And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:20), and later it is written: And unto Moses he said: Come up unto the Lord (Exodus 24:11)."¹⁰

Although the section of the midrash that is quoted, is quoted faithfully, it is taken out of context. The key verse is, "Whatsoever the Lord pleased, that hath He done in heaven and earth" (Psalms 135:6). The plain meaning of the entire midrash in context, and the mashal, is to demonstrate the omnipotence of God, to show that anything that God wants to do He does- even to the extent of rescinding a previous decree or giving power to Moses to rule over the heavens. It is true that God and man, heaven and earth do meet- but only at the giving of the Torah on Sinai. The midrash intends this to be an exceptional case. Heschel misuses the midrash by generalizing it, by saying that every mitzvah is a meeting between God and man. This may be a fine sentiment, but it

is Heschel's and not that of the midrash. Heschel is writing his own midrash. The original says the opposite of what he wants to say and can be used against him.

Another example- In building up the importance of the agada, Heschel states that the "agada was one of the treasures which were promised to Israel at Marah."¹¹

Indeed it was. The reference is to that part of the verse which reads *וְעָשָׂה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ*, The interpretation is

וְעָשָׂה לְךָ אֱלֹהִים יְיָ אֱלֹהֵינוּ

"If you will do that which is right in His eyes," meaning these excellent agadot which are to be listened to by all men. But, further on in the same midrash, we have the interpretation to "you shall keep all his statutes-

וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת, which are the halachot- *וְשָׁמַרְתָּ אֶת כָּל הַמִּצְוֹת*

Apparently, the midrash is trying to tell us that listening to agadot is alright in God's eyes but keeping His statutes means keeping the halachot. This is the opinion of Rabbi Joshua. Rabbi Eleazar of Modin gives another set of interpretations to the verse. He mentions the halachot but does not refer to the agadot. So, if the agada was one of the treasures which were promised to Israel at Marah, how much more so was the halacha. Thus, this midrash can be used more effectively to build up the importance of the halacha.

3. In Chapter III above, (p.47), I noted that Heschel occasionally attempts to knock down a piece of agadic evidence cited by the opposition. This is done successfully

on one occasion, but in the following case, Heschel fails to refute the argument of the opposition. In failing, he distorts the meaning of the agada. Heschel quotes a statement which "seems to express an anti-agadic spirit." The statement is by the Babylonian Amora Ula and reads:

Since the day the Temple in Jerusalem was destroyed all that is left to the Holy One are the four cubits of halacha.¹²

Then Heschel tries to soften the literal meaning of the statement by saying:

Those who quote this passage as a statement of disparagement of agada fail to notice that the passage is hardly an expression of jubilation. Its intention rather is to convey profound grief at the fact that man's attentiveness to God became restricted to matters of halacha; that God is absent in world affairs, in matters that lie outside the limits of halacha.

We might be tempted to accept this interpretation. But, if we read Ula's statement in context, it would appear that it means just what it says. There are other statements by Chisda, Abaye, Ammi and Assi which are also anti-agadic in spirit. It would be fair to say that Heschel's interpretive qualification is his own. Neither the literal text nor the context support him. The text comprising all the statements is as follows:

Thus said R. Chisda: What is the meaning of the verse: "The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than the dwellings of Jacob?" (Ps. 87:2). The Lord loveth the gates that are distinguished through halacha more than the Synagogues and Houses of Study. And this conforms with the following saying of R. Chiyra b. Ammi in the name of Ula: Since the day the Temple was

destroyed, the Holy One Blessed be He has nothing in this world but the four cubits of Halacha alone. So said also Abaye: At first I used to study in my house and pray in the Synagogue. Since I have heard of Ula's saying... I pray only in the place where I study. R. Ammi and R. Assi, though they had thirteen Synagogues in Tiberias, prayed only between the pillars where they used to study.

As a challenge to the statement of Ula, Heschel brings in the contrasting statement, "all that the Holy One has in this world is the awe and fear of God."¹³ These contrasting statements by Ula and R. Jochanan do no more than demonstrate that there are conflicting opinions in the agada; that the agada is neither definitive nor authoritative. Heschel would like us to believe that the latter statement by R. Jochanan has more validity, because he quotes it anonymously.

4. In addition to those special types of distortion that can be categorized, there are several miscellaneous examples of distorting the plain meaning of the text.

a. Heschel states:

To meet a mitzvah is to discover His presence as it is meant for me, and in His presence is "fullness of joy." What is piety? "A song every day, a song every day."¹⁴

The agada refers to chanting the Torah and not performing the mitzvot. The "song every day" is the melody with which one chants the Torah. Apparently, Rabbi Akiba is telling us to sing the Torah portions not for any pietistic reasons, but because it is easier to remember them

that way. According to the apparent pshat of the agada, the "song every day" is a mechanical aid to memory. Thus, Heschel is giving us his own midrash.

b. On the same theme, Heschel says:

In the words of Rabbi Yohanan, "If one reads Scripture without a melody or repeats the Mishnah without a tune, of him Scripture says, 'Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good (Ezekiel 20:25).'" A mitzvah without a melody is devoid of soul; Torah without a tune is devoid of spirit. Kavanah is the art of setting a deed to inner music.¹⁵

The quotation is correct as far as it goes. But, we continue;

Abbaye strongly demurred to this saying, "Because he cannot sing agreeably are you to apply to him the verse, Wherefore I gave them also statutes that were not good?" No, the verse is to be applied to scholars who live in the same town and don't treat each others halachic pronouncements respectfully.

Heschel is entitled to select the opinion of Yohanan rather than that of Abbaye. But, he uses Yohanan's statement more poetically than literally. Again, Heschel is giving us his own midrash on the text rather than the text itself.

c. Again, on the theme of halacha and agada,¹⁶ Heschel states:

It is impossible to decide whether in Judaism supremacy belongs to halacha or to agada, to the lawgiver or to the Psalmist. The Rabbis may have sensed the problem. Rab said: The world was created for the sake of David, so that he might sing hymns and psalms to God. Samuel said: The world was created for the sake of Moses, so that he might receive the Torah.¹⁷

Note that Heschel interpolates "so that he might sing hymns and psalms to God" and "so that he might receive the Torah." These statements are not in the text; they are taken verbatim from the commentary. By adding these remarks, Heschel turns David and Moses into symbols for agada and halacha. The text simply says David, Moses, Messiah. Moreover, Heschel omits the key remark by R. Yohanan that "the world was created for the sake of the Messiah." This is a key remark because it caps a long discussion on the Messiah. There is nothing in the discussion concerning David and Moses. They are introduced at the end only to provide contrast for R. Yohanan's concluding statement on the Messiah. Thus, Heschel distorts this selection on two counts: first, he converts David and Moses into symbols for agada and halacha, and second, he lifts his selection out of context. Now, Heschel does qualify his statement when he says, "The Rabbis may (italics mine) have sensed the problem." But even this qualification is misleading. The commentator may have sensed the problem, but certainly not the Rabbis. And, Heschel bases his interpretation upon that of the commentator. This example represents a misuse of a rabbinic source; a rather clever and deliberate misuse.

Weak Documentation

1. There are certain cases where the documentation only partially or poorly supports what Heschel is saying.

a. In one place, he says that "the narratives of the Bible are as holy as its legal portions."¹⁹ The note leads to a cryptic reference which reads,

R. Huna said: The sequence is disarranged so that it might not be said that the narrative is mere fiction, and that all might know that it was composed under divine inspiration.

אין אנו יודעים מהו הדין הנכון
על פי חז"ל ומהו הדין הנכון

R. Huna is telling us that the narrative of Er and Onan, which interrupts the story of Joseph, is not nonsense. Even it was composed ע"פ חז"ל. This comment only inform us, indirectly, that every portion of the Bible is holy. It does not say that the narratives are as holy as the legal portions.

b. On the same theme, Heschel adds:

According to one rabbi, "the conversation of the servants of the patriarchs is more beautiful than even the laws of the later generations."²⁰

אין אנו יודעים מהו הדין הנכון
על פי חז"ל ומהו הדין הנכון

The quote is correct but in context with the full midrash, it is hardly a convincing argument. The midrash says והוא. What does this mean? The example of a "והוא" given in the midrash is that the blood of a reptile is as unclean as its flesh. So, the servants' conversations are more beautiful than this particular law. ~~No~~ what! Second, and more important, Heschel shifts the terms of the argument. The question is not whether the agadot are "holy" or "beautiful." Are they critical, important, mandatory, binding?

c. In an interesting example, Heschel states:

The Psalmist prays:

The Lord send forth Thy help from holiness
And support thee out of Zion.

Psalms 20:3

Help comes from holiness. But where is holiness? Is it embodied somewhere in space, in a celestial sphere? This is how the Rabbis interpreted the verse: "The Lord send forth thy help from the holiness of the deeds which thou hast done, and support thee out of Zion (mitsiyon), from thy distinction in deeds; from the sanctification of the name, from thy sanctifications of deeds which is within thee."²¹

This is an interesting example for several reasons. First Heschel does not translate the first part of the verse עֲזָרָתִי מִקֹּדֶשׁ in the usual manner. It is obvious from the context of the verse that "עֲזָרָה" means "sanctuary" referring to the Beit Hamikdash. Accordingly, both JPS and RSV, do render עֲזָרָה as "sanctuary." But Heschel translates it as "holiness," and then proceeds to discuss the verse on that basis. This is an outright distortion of a Biblical text. Apparently, Heschel feels justified in misreading the Biblical text, because in doing so, he is following the midrash. But (second) he does not follow the main sense of the midrash which is that any good, any blessing, and comfort that God will give to Israel in the future will not come except out of Zion. This is a nationalistic midrash; all of the Biblical proof texts refer to Zion.

Said Rabbi Eleazar ben Azariah: "Scripture says (Deuteronomy 24:19), 'When you reap your harvest in your field, and have forgotten a sheaf in the field, you shall not go back to get it; it shall be for the stranger, for the fatherless and the widow.' You see, it states immediately afterwards, 'that the Lord your God may bless you.' Scripture thus gives the assurance of a blessing to one through whom a meritorious deed came about (the feeding of the stranger), though he had no knowledge of what he was doing (since he forgot to remove the sheaf from the field). You must now admit that if a Sela (a coin) was tied up in the skirts of one's garment and it fell from it and a poor man finds it and supports himself by it, the Holy One, blessed be He, gives the assurance of blessing to the man who has lost the Sela."²⁴

What has been demonstrated by the midrash is only the absence of any intention, not specifically the absence of right intention.

2. Another category of weak documentation is where the documentation is ambiguous, unclear or difficult to understand. There are several examples of this type.

a. Heschel states:

Significantly, though the Bible, like rabbinic literature, embraces both legal and non-legal teachings, the distinction between halacha and agada was never applied to it.²⁵

The note refers to a midrash which tangentially calls certain portions of the Bible hagadah. The context is irrelevant.

הגדה היא חלק מהלכה
אבל הלכה היא חלק מהגדה

The reason for this citation is unclear. Perhaps, Heschel has found the only instance where the distinction was made, where the term hagadah was applied to a portion of the Bible.

b. In another example, Heschel states an important proposition for which we would like strong documentation.

Rules are generalizations. In actual living, we come upon countless problems for which no general solutions are available. There are many ways of applying a general rule to a concrete situation. There are evil applications of noble rules. Thus the choice of the right way of applying a general rule to a particular situation is "left to the heart," to the individual, to one's conscience.²⁶

Heschel is saying that, in the last analysis, halacha is carried out by the heart, by individual definition and decision. This may be so. But, the documentary source referred to is of doubtful support.

אשר יראה בן אדם כעין נפשו (ל"ח פ"ב הל' א')

I might think that one may shut his eyes as though he had not seen him; therefore it is taught, "...thou shalt rise up...and thou shalt fear thy God" (Lev. 19:32); of what is known to the heart only it is said, "and thou shalt fear thy God."²⁷

The proof text, "and thou shalt fear thy God," means that God will know what you are doing. You cannot escape a difficult situation, because you know in your heart that you are avoiding it. There is no justification; God will know. Thus, the source appears to be saying: "When you know that it is your duty, you cannot avoid it by a deception." If this is the case, then Heschel is using the source improperly. On the other hand, the situation may be one of doubt. Thus, the source might be saying: "In situations of doubt, rely upon your heart." If this is

the case, then Heschel is using the source correctly. What are we dealing with here- willful disobedience or doubt as to whether the halacha is to be applied or not? It seems to be willful disobedience, but the source is unclear.^{27a}

Heschel's statement that "the choice of the right way of applying a general rule to a particular situation is 'left to the heart,'" is critical to his argument. He is answering the religious behaviorists, the pure halachists, who say that all one has to do is follow the law. Better documentation would have added strong support to the argument. As it is, we have to accept it largely as Heschel's own point.

c. Continuing the same theme, Heschel brings in this illustration:

Where is the sage that would understand it?
Where is the prophet who is able to declare it?
Wherefore is the land perished and laid waste
like a wilderness?

This question was asked of the sages, but they could not answer it; it was asked of prophets, but they could not answer it. Until God Himself resolved it.

And the Lord said: Because they have forsaken My Torah.

Said Rav Judah in Rav's name: It means that they did not approach the Torah with a blessing.²⁸

אם לא ברכו את התורה לא יברכה אותה

Heschel interprets the agada to mean that the Land was destroyed because of the wrong inner attitude. Rabbi Nisim, whom Heschel quotes, gives a nice darash on the agada to the effect that "though they studied Torah, they did not bless

it, though they performed the Torah, they did not consider it to be a blessing." ²⁹ Yet, the pshat of the agada appears to be that if you don't say berachas, don't give deference to God, you are punished. It is unclear as to what Rav really meant.

3. Another category of poor documentation consists of those cases where a particular source could have been used better or where a minor point was picked out of a significant midrash.

a. On the theme of the preciousness and fundamental importance of agada, Heschel states that

On the Day of Judgment one would be held accountable for having failed to study agada.³⁰

This is a very long and significant midrash. The main sense of the text is that on the Day of Judgment, one will be held accountable to the Holy One, blessed be He, for having failed to study any part of the Torah, whether it be Mikra, Mishna, halachot, Torat Kohanim, Chamisha Chumashel Torah, agada or Talmud. All add up to "words of Torah." The penalty for failure to study any of these is to be sent to Gehinnom. Agada is not stressed in any special manner. If any part of the Torah is stressed, it is

אין, for it says:

(גמרא) כל מי שלא למד אגדה יפלוטו לו כל המצוות
31. אין, כל מי שלא למד אגדה יפלוטו לו כל המצוות

Although what Heschel says is true, this midrash could have been used far more effectively to support the idea of the breadth, the totality, the essential oneness of the Jewish tradition.

Heschel refers to two other midrashim which are brought in to support the same theme- the importance of the agada. Both of them could probably have been used to better advantage.³²

b. Heschel states correctly that in Judaism we speak of the mitsvah as if it were a concrete entity, a thing. One of the proof texts is "Adorn thyself with mitzvot before Him."³³ It is correctly quoted.

But further on there is an interpretation by Abba Saul that I'm surprised Heschel didn't use somewhere in the book.

Abba Saul interpreted, I will be like Him: be thou like Him; just as He is gracious and compassionate, so be thou gracious and compassionate.

c. Heschel, in talking about the yetser hara, relates a mashal:

The life of man was compared with "a lonely settlement which was kept in disorder by invading bands. What did the king do? He appointed a commander to protect it." The Torah is a safeguard, the Torah is an antidote.³⁴

The reference is correct, but Heschel omits key parts of the midrash. A fuller use of the midrash would have given stronger support to the idea as follows:

If you walk in my statutes (Leviticus 26:3), Rabbi Levi in the name of Rabbi Hama b. Rabbi Hanina said: They are called "hukkin" because they are engraved (Hakukin) as a safeguard against the evil inclination... Rabbi Levi expounded: It is like the case of a lonely settlement which was kept in disorder by invading bands. What did the king do? He appointed a commander to protect it. In the same way the Holy One, blessed be He said: "The Torah is called a stone and the yetser hara is called a stone"... Thus, the Torah is a stone and the yetser hara is a stone. The stone shall watch the stone!

Over-Documentation and Under-Documentation

Heschel is guilty both of over-documentation and under-documentation. There are certain propositions which receive more support than they need, while others are left bereft, without a word from the rabbinic tradition. Examples of specific themes which are very heavily documented are: "The Fundamental Importance of Agada," "The Meaning of Mitzvah," and "The Failure of the Heart."³⁵

As was noted above at the beginning of this chapter, over-documentation is not a serious shortcoming. In fact, if a proposition or a theme is both heavily and accurately documented, we cannot call this a shortcoming. ~~at all~~ It just means that Heschel is speaking directly through the tradition. This is possibly the case when he discusses the meaning of mitzvah or mitzvah in general. In one way or another, the rabbinic sources more than amply bear out Heschel's point that Judaism is "more than inwardness," that mitzvah is "the basic term of Jewish living."

But, when a theme is heavily documented and the documentation does not hold up well under examination, we can say that Heschel "protests too much." This is the case when he discusses halacha and agada and their relationship.³⁶

While it is true that the agada is important, and is a fundamental part of Jewish learning, there is little substantiation from rabbinic sources that agada is equal to or more important than halacha. The idea of the polarity of halacha and agada (as well as the polarity of all of Judaism) is apparently Heschel's own contribution to Jewish thinking. Why did Heschel feel that he had to over-document the theme of agada? Why was it so important for him to prove his point? The answer is that Heschel is addressing Conservative rabbis who are more concerned with law and practice than with theology. He wants to redress what he feels to be an unwarranted and unhealthy over-emphasis on halacha.

Far more important than over-documentation, is the question of under-documentation. Are there propositions or themes for which we would like Jewish proof but for which Jewish proof is weak or totally absent? Yes. For example, Heschel discusses the Jewish concepts of mitzvah and sin, the yetser hara and the Torah as an antidote to the yetser hara.³⁷ These concepts are amply documented.

A summary of Heschel's position on this could be:

The fate of mankind depends upon the realization that the distinction between good and evil, right and wrong, is superior to all other distinctions. ...To teach humanity the primacy (italics mine) of that distinction is of the essence to the Biblical (Jewish) message.³⁸

We know we are on firm Jewish ground. Yet, in the very next chapter, Heschel appears to contradict himself by saying,

What is first at stake in the life of man is not the fact of sin, of the wrong and the corrupt, but the neutral acts, the needs. Our possessions pose no less a problem than our passions. The primary (*italics mine*) task, therefore, is not how to deal with the evil, but how to deal with the neutral, how to deal with needs.³⁹

There is no Jewish proof for this idea. There is almost no documentation for the sermon, which Heschel titles, "The Problem of the Neutral."⁴⁰ Other themes for which Jewish documentation is absent are "The Self and the Non-Self" and "Freedom".⁴¹ The important undocumented theses which are posited in these three chapters can be summarized as follows: 1) The primary task is not how to deal with man's passions, but how to deal with his needs. 2) The essence of man lies in his power to rise above his needs and to attach himself to a goal that is beyond himself. 3) Freedom exists and is real if we assume that human life embraces both process and event; in life as a process, there is no freedom, but freedom is an event, albeit rare. These propositions are neither extraneous nor peripheral. Discussions of the essence of man or of freedom would be critical to any philosophy of religion. And, they certainly form an integral part of Heschel's A Philosophy of Judaism. Had they been deleted, Heschel's philosophy would have been somewhat incomplete.

There are several additional important propositions for which Jewish proof is absent such as the following:

There can be acts of piety without faith.
We do not have faith because of deeds; we may attain faith through sacred deeds.⁴²

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Right living is a way to right thinking.

A Meta-Ethical Approach- The ethical question refers to particular deeds; the meta-ethical question refers to all deeds. It deals with doing as such; not only what ought we to do, but what is our right to act at all?⁴⁴

The problem of how to live as a Jew cannot be solved in terms of common sense and common experience. The order of Jewish living is a spiritual one.... Life must be earned spiritually not only materially.⁴⁵

Good deeds alone will not redeem history, it is the obedience to God that will make us worthy of being redeemed by God.⁴⁶

(What does "obedience to God" mean except the doing of good deeds?)

...Indeed Messianism implies that any course of living, even the supreme human efforts, must fail in redeeming the world. It implies that history for all its relevance is not sufficient to itself.⁴⁷

Where there is no documentation from the tradition, we have the right to ask: Is this Judaism? Is this Heschel? Or might this be a creative contribution by Heschel to Judaism?

Once again, the question is asked: "How well does Heschel know the agada?" I still think that it would be fair to say that Heschel knows the agada rather well. The number of cases where the documentation is unclear, or poorly supports what he is saying, or where a particular

source could have been used better, comprises only a relatively small portion of the total documentation. But here, we can also ask: "Does Heschel use the agada correctly?" The answer is, "yes and no." He has a tendency to give greater authority than warranted to several passages by ascribing their authorship to "the Rabbis." Other passages that he cites can be used more tellingly against him than for him. He will, when he feels it necessary, lift passages out of context and reinterpret them according to his needs. Nevertheless, although all of the foregoing is true, Heschel does use the agada correctly for the most part. In the greater majority of cases, his illustrations, proof texts and other selected passages, are used accurately and effectively.

Notes to Chapter IV

1. See above, Notes to Chapter III, 1.
2. p. 302. The quote is from Pesikta Rabbati, ed. M. Friedmann, Wien, 1880, p. 64b and Numbers Rabba 19,6.

משה רבינו היה נביא וקבלה עליו כל המצוות והוא היה הראשון שהוציא את ישראל ממצרים
 והוא היה הראשון שהוציא את ישראל ממצרים והוא היה הראשון שהוציא את ישראל ממצרים
3. p. 309.
4. Mishna Kiddushim 4,14.
5. p. 324. Sifre Deuteronomy, 49 to 11:22.
6. In the Jewish Encyclopedia, Vol. VIII, p. 551, it says:

During the third and at the beginning of the fourth century the masters of Halacha were also the representatives of the Haggadah; but side by side with them appeared the haggadists proper ("rabbanan di-Agada," "ba'ale Agada") who subsequently became more and more prominent, attracting with their discourses more hearers than the halachists.

In the same article (p. 550), the midrashim of this midrash are referred to simply as "the old haggadists."

"The Haggadah, which is intended to bring heaven down to the congregation, and also to lift man up to heaven, appears in this office both as the glorification of God and as the comfort of Israel..." (Zuna "G.V." pp. 349 et seq). This quotation is a paraphrase of a famous sentence in which the Haggadah was praised by the old haggadists themselves (italics mine). "If thou wishest to know Him at whose word the world came into being... (Sifre to Deuteronomy 11:22).

It is possible that this is the only source where the term מדרש רב is used. The Jewish Encyclopedia is the only standard reference work which even mentions it. The other reference works, such as the Ben Yehudah and Jastrow dictionaries, Otzar Lashon Hatalmud, Otzar Lashon Tosefta and Erchei Midrash by Bacher, do not mention this source or any other source where the term מדרש רב is used.

7. p. 324, Midrash Tehillim 28,5.
8. Another example: On p. 359-60, Heschel says, "This is how the Rabbis interpreted the verse..." Upon checking the reference (Leviticus Rabba 24,4), we find that there is some question as to the authorship of this particular interpretation. It is either R. Levi or anonymous. See Chapter IV p. 72 for a full discussion of this midrash.

Another example: On p. 281, Heschel says: "Jewish tradition interprets the words..." This is true in the sense that the indicated author, Rabbi Elazar (see Shabbat 88a), is part of Jewish tradition. Nevertheless, this is loose usage.
9. p. 353.
10. Exodus Rabba 12,3 and Tanhuma to Exodus 9:22. (Both sources are identical.)
11. Note 13, p. 333. Meghillta to 15:26.
12. p. 331. Berachot 8a.
13. p. 333. Shabbat 31b.
14. p. 355. Sanhedrin 99a-b.
15. p. 355. Megillah 32a.
16. See above, Chapter II, pp. 13-14.
17. p. 340. Sanhedrin 98b.
18. A simple example of somewhat careless usage is in the statement (p. 324),

It was said that just as the written Torah consists of three parts, the Pentateuch, the Prophets, and the Hagiography, the oral Torah consists of midrash, halacha and agada.

The statement is undoubtedly true but the source (Jerushalmi Shekalim V, beginning) does not make such a comparison.

וְהַיְיָ יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַבָּנִים וְהַבָּנִים יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַיְיָ
 וְהַיְיָ יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַבָּנִים וְהַבָּנִים יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַיְיָ
 וְהַיְיָ יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַבָּנִים וְהַבָּנִים יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַיְיָ

An example, both of a possible misuse of the text and of fine selectivity, is as follows:

For "the son who serves his father serves him with joy, saying, Even if I do not entirely succeed (in carrying out His commandments), yet as a loving father, He will not be angry with me. In contrast, a hired servant is always afraid lest he may commit some fault, and therefore serves God in a condition of anxiety and confusion." (p. 406. Tanhuma Noah 19.)

וְהַיְיָ יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַבָּנִים וְהַבָּנִים יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַיְיָ
 וְהַיְיָ יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַבָּנִים וְהַבָּנִים יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַיְיָ
 וְהַיְיָ יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַבָּנִים וְהַבָּנִים יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַיְיָ

We can quibble about the translation, but with one significant exception, it is faithful to the meaning of the text. The mashal beautifully illustrates the point that Heschel wants to make (the Jew is taught to serve God with joy), yet, at the same time, it was denationalized (omission of "וְהַיְיָ יֵשׁוּעַ בְּעֵינֵי הַבָּנִים") and lifted out of context. The full midrash gives us the Rabbi's attitude toward the nations. Because of its yetser hara, God divided mankind in this world into 70 languages so that one man could not understand his neighbor. But, in the world to come, God will make mankind into one, so that they can call unto His name and serve Him. However, there will be a distinction between Israel and the idol worshippers. God will end Israel's bondage, and they will serve Him with joy. But the idol worshippers will serve Him with trembling. Heschel ignores the main point of the midrash, which reflects the Rabbi's attitude toward the nations, and uses the mashal alone for his own purposes. Nevertheless, this does not really spoil the meaning of the mashal itself.

19. p. 324. The note reads, "Compare Genesis Rabba 85,2.
20. p. 324. Genesis Rabba 60,8.
21. p. 359-60. Leviticus Rabba 24,4.
22. It is possible that there is a text of Leviticus Rabba which includes these words. But they are not found in any of the ordinary editions or in the Soncino translation.
23. p. 295.
24. Sifra to 5:17, ed. Weiss, p. 27a.
25. p. 325. Genesis Rabbah 44,8.
26. p. 327.
27. Kiddushim 32b.
- 27a. The previous examples in the same source are ones of doubt. Thus, it is easy to be confused.
28. Nedarim 81a.
29. p. 328.
30. p. 325. The reference is to Midrash Mishle, to 10:3.
31. It is difficult to tell whether in this midrash the word אין refers to a specific body of learning or all studying of Torah.
32. Note 13, p. 333. Exodus Rabba 47,1 and Leviticus Rabba 22,1.

The use of the source in Exodus Rabba 47:1 is an example where Dr. Heschel selects a minor point out of a significant midrash. And, even this point might be able to be turned against him. The midrash does indicate that the agada was one of the things that Moses received during the time he was on Mount Sinai.

אין זהו שם המדבר
אין זהו שם המדבר

At the hour when the Holy One, blessed be He revealed Himself at Sinai to give the Torah to Israel, He communicated (said) it to Moses in order- Bible, Mishna, Talmud, Agada. What does the phrase mean? Does it merely mean the order in which the books should appear on our bookshelves? Or could it refer to the order of importance, the

order of authority, beginning with the Bible and ending with the Agada? If so, a halachist could use this midrash to refute Heschel by demonstrating that the tradition regarded halacha as more important than agada. The midrash continues by saying, "even that which a student may ask his rabbi was revealed by the Holy One Blessed Be He to Moses at that same hour." It would appear that the rabbis who wrote this anonymous midrash are saying that the whole tradition- past, present, and future- is of divine origin. All is of divine origin, therefore all is authoritative and should be taken into account- but, there are progressive degrees of authority. (A study of this entire midrash shows that what we have already discussed is only one of two fundamental theological viewpoints which are expressed by the rabbis. The second, and main point of this midrash, reveals to us the attitude of the rabbis to the nations. We are told that only the Bible is to be written; the Mishna, Talmud and Agada ~~were~~ to be oral. Why? Because the nations will take them from Israel and despise them. This oral tradition is to be the sole property of Israel and is to serve to differentiate Israel from the nations, who are idol worshippers. Apparently, this midrash reflects the feelings of the rabbis toward the Christians who stole the Bible.)

Heschel says, "On the belief in the divine origin of agada, see Leviticus Rabba 22:1." Like the midrash in Exodus Rabba 47:1, this midrash makes the point that not only is agada of divine origin, but that all of Judaism (Mikra, Mishna, halachot, Talmud, Tosefot, haggadot, and even what a faithful disciple would in the future say in the presence of his master) was communicated to Moses on Sinai. This is a sound doctrine which could be used by tradition-oriented rabbis to make changes in and additions to the Torah. Heschel fails to use this midrash to best advantage.

33. p. 362. Shabbat 133b.

34. p. 375. Leviticus Rabba 35,5.

A similar example is found on p. 385. Heschel says, "Jewish experience is a testimony to simhah shel mitsvah, to 'the joy in doing a mitsvah.'" The reference is to Midrash Tehillim 112,1. The midrash could have been used more effectively by quoting with

just a little more sensitivity, as, for example:

Happy is the man... that delighteth greatly in
His commandments... Such a man is one that does
not perform a mitzvah by force but in joy.

35. pp. 324-5, 361-3, 393-4, respectively.
The theme "failure of the heart" is well documented,
but most of the significant documentation is from
Medieval sources. Therefore, this theme cannot be
evaluated.
36. pp. 322-346 incl. See above, Chapter II, pp. 13 ff.
37. See above, Chapter II, pp. 13-14; pp. 364-5 and
374-5 respectively.
38. p. 372.
39. p. 383.
40. See above, Chapter II, p. 19.
41. See above, Chapter II, pp. 21-22 and pp. 23-24
respectively.
42. p. 282.
43. p. 283.
44. pp. 285-6.
45. p. 349.
46. p. 379.
47. *ibid.*

Chapter V

Conclusion

In the concluding paragraphs of Chapters III and IV, an answer was given to the question, "How well does Heschel know the agada?" It has been stated that Heschel knows the agada very well, that he is a good selector, and that, for the most part, he uses the agada correctly and effectively. The question was asked, "Is there a pattern to the documentation?" First, we can safely say that Heschel will document whenever and wherever he can. If a source is not cited in support of a point, then the probability is that there is no such source, and thus, Heschel is speaking for himself. Second, it has been demonstrated in Chapter III that Heschel uses three methods of documentation: The Method of Illustration, The Proof Text Method, and Speaking Through the Documentation. And third, all three methods are used to substantiate specific points. The rabbinic sources are rarely used for general documentation, only for specific documentation. Thus, there is a definite and discernible pattern of documentation.

In Chapter I, I made the comment: "The sources that Dr. Heschel refers to are his strongest support. To what extent can we say that these sources do or do not support him, and thus to what extent does he speak for the Jewish tradition and for himself." For the most part, the

rabbinic sources do support him. Thus it would appear that Heschel is giving us a traditional exposition of Jewish religious thought. This is only partly true. As mentioned above, certain needed sources do not hold up under close examination. For example, when Heschel says that mitzvah is an important term of Jewish living and that it has primacy over averah, he is supported by the sources.¹ But when he says that God and man meet in the fulfillment of a mitzvah, the one source cited fails him.² When he says that a Jew is commanded to study agada as well as halacha, he is correct.³ But when he says the Rabbis tell us that the way to know God is through the agada, he is distorting the midrash.⁴ Moreover, a respectable portion of Heschel's thought is not documented.⁵ Therefore, I cannot say that God in Search of Man is simply a traditional exposition of Jewish thought. Nor can I say that it is a purely personal expression. Abraham Heschel is speaking both for the Jewish tradition and for himself.

Where is the dividing line between that which is traditional and that which is personal? This is very hard to determine. However, it would appear that at that point where mysticism enters Heschel's thought, the rabbinic sources depart.⁶ (This would indicate that Mysticism did not enter normative Jewish thought until after the close of the Talmud and Midrash.) How much of Heschel's thought is traditional and how much is personal? Is it largely

traditional with a veneer of mysticism? Or is it largely a personal expression with an undercoating of Jewish thinking? The answer is, "Neither the one nor the other." There is a balance between the two. The roots of Heschel's thought lie firmly imbedded in the bedrock of the traditional Jewish sources- Bible, Talmud and Midrash. Upon this foundation, he builds, develops and elaborates his own thought. As a Jew, I can rejoice that he has chosen to use the tradition as the base and basis for his thought. And as a liberal Jew, I can rejoice that he has chosen to speak from his own soul.

Thus, Heschel joins a long and distinguished list of rabbis and scholars who, while standing firmly on the solid base of the ancient tradition, have added their own creative contributions to Jewish religious thought. Rabbi Heschel has written a new agada. May it take its rightful place, for better or for worse, among all the others of our day and of days gone by.

Notes to Chapter V

1. See, for example, Chapter III, page 38.
2. See above, Chapter IV, page 65.
3. See above, Chapter III, page 43ff.
4. See above, Chapter IV, page 62.
5. See above, Chapter IV, page 81.
6. On occasion, Heschel will cite the Zohar or another medieval source as support for a mystical comment. For example, Heschel states (p. 312):

The presence of God is a majestic expectation, to be sensed and retained and, when lost, to be regained and resumed. Time is the presence of God in the world. Every moment is His subtle arrival, and man's task is to be present. His presence is retained in moments in which God is not alone, in which we try to be in His presence, to let Him enter our daily deeds, in which we coin our thoughts in the mint of eternity. The presence is not one realm and the sacred deed another; the sacred deed is the divine in disguise.

The source cited is the Zohar.

In another instance, Heschel discusses "the confusion of good and evil" (p. 369ff.). In speaking through the documentation, he quotes the Zohar as follows:

"When God came to create the world and reveal what was hidden in the depths and disclose the light out of darkness, they were all ~~wrapped~~ in one another, and therefore light emerged from darkness, and from the impenetrable came forth the profound. So, too, from good issues evil and from mercy issues judgment, and all are intertwined, the good impulse and the evil impulse...."

In another case, when discussing mitsvah and the reward for it, Heschel says (p. 356):

The reward of a mitsvah is eternity. But do not be like those who expect eternity to follow the deed: in the life to come. Eternity is in the deed, in the doing.

The source cited is Meor Ainyim, Rabbi Nahum of Tschernobil.

