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HEBREW UNION COLLEGE - JEWISH INSTITUTE OF RELIGION
New York School

Report on the Dissertation Submitted by Richard B. Safran
for the Master of Arts in Hebrew Literature Degree and Ordination

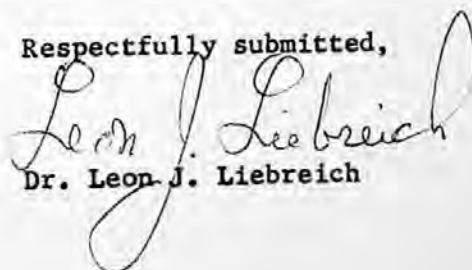
Some Theological Ideas in Midrash Tehillim
Books II-V

In the course of his quest for the theology underlying the Midrash on the Book of Psalms, Mr. Safran became strikingly aware of the two well-known difficulties which inhere not only in this particular Midrashic work, but also in Rabbinic and Midrashic literature as a whole. The first is that the nature of any given Midrash is such that inevitably any attempt at discovering a systematic theology therein is bound to prove well-nigh futile. A Midrash has a system all its own, following certain well-defined principles. By no manner of means, however, is it a neatly presented system of theology. The second difficulty which the student encounters in the pursuit of his study of a Midrashic work from the standpoint of theology is the multiplicity of parallels in various sources to ever so many passages in the Midrash under investigation. Consequently, the student is confronted on almost every page with the problem of determining the earliest occurrence of a particular passage.

With these limitations in mind, Mr. Safran concentrated on the themes of God, Torah, Israel and Prayer. His dissertation, though not presuming to offer a definitive theology of the Midrash on Psalms, examines a substantial number of passages for the light they cast on the several theological concepts mentioned above.

I am satisfied that Mr. Safran has worked conscientiously in the performance of his task, and find this thesis, the fruit of his efforts, both acceptable and satisfactory.

Respectfully submitted,


Dr. Leon J. Liebreich

April 15, 1960

SOME THEOLOGICAL IDEAS IN MIDRASH TEHILLIM
BOOKS II-V

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Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for
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INTRODUCTION

The midrashic statement "Behold, in forty-nine ways can the words of the Torah be expounded"¹ is the key to the understanding of the rabbinic mind. Without it, the reader is hopelessly lost in a vast sea of rabbinic exegesis. This exegesis is based upon the assumption that God revealed the complete and finished Law to Moses on Mount Sinai, who, in turn, handed it to the people.² As God's word, the revelation had to be sufficient for all times and places to guide, control and inspire the entire life of the Jewish people. As the divine and perfect revelation, it could not be merely understood in its simple or literal sense. The words must have a deeper meaning than appears upon the surface, a meaning which, if properly interpreted and understood, can furnish not only laws for all possible aspects of life but also answers to all conceivable religious questions and problems. Thus the sages of old were able to accommodate the Bible to the needs of their generation even though they were living in a different society and environment than the authors and editors of the Bible.

The process of exposition and exegesis of the Scripture used by the rabbis is known as "Midrash." Abraham Geiger adequately defines it as:

An exegesis which, going more deeply than the mere literal sense, attempts to penetrate into the spirit of the Scriptures, to examine the text from all sides, and thereby to devise interpretations which are not immediately obvious.³

II

The exegesis, which is concerned with the verification or derivation of legal enactments from the Bible, is given the name Midrash Halakah,⁴ while that exposition which is concerned with "the interpretation, illustration, and expansion, in a moralizing or edifying manner of the non-legal portions of the Bible is known as Midrash Haggadah."⁵ It is to this latter type of Midrash that we now turn our attention.

The haggadic Midrash is, in turn, divided into two categories - homiletical and expository. The former begins with proems to which is added an exposition which generally covers only a few of the first verses and verse texts of the Scriptural text, while the latter is a type of running commentary which follows the verses of the Scriptural text. It is into this latter category that Midrash Tehillim falls.⁶

The midrashic method of exegesis is very old.⁷ It appears to have received its first great impetus in the time of the Soferim and reached its point of highest development in the Midrashic-Talmudic period between 100-500 of the Common Era.⁸ No effort appears to have been made to compile its literature until the second century of the Common Era.⁹ Once the process of compilation began, it continued well into the Middle Ages. It is to the Midrashim of the later period that Midrash Tehillim belongs, even though some of its material points to a date in the time of R. Judah I.¹⁰

The first reference to Midrash Tehillim is found in the Arukh, a dictionary of the Talmud compiled by Nathan of Rome

sometime during the eleventh century. Other eleventh century rabbis, such as Rashi and Isaac b. Judah ibn Ghayyat, also refer to it.¹¹ The Midrash to Psalms has also been called "Agadat Tehillim" and "Shoher Tob."¹² Although there is a tradition that either R. Johanan or R. Simon, the son of R. Judah ha-Nasi, edited this Midrash, most scholars believe that this theory cannot be substantiated.¹³ Leopold Zunz claims that the work (up to Psalm 119) was edited in southern Italy during the later part of the Geonic period, some time in the second half of the ninth century.¹⁴ Solomon Buber suggests an earlier date (the Talmudic period) and would place its editing not in Italy but in Palestine.¹⁵ Both Buber and Zunz agree that the Midrashim on Psalms 119-150 were added at a much later date. William Braude tells us that "subsequent research has strengthened Buber's position against that of Zunz."¹⁶

Midrash Tehillim or Midrash to Psalms is a midrash based, as the name implies, on the Book of Psalms of the Bible. This first Book of the Hagiographa has always played an important role in the literature of the Jewish people, for it has always been the principal text for private devotion and the chief source of Jewish liturgy. As one of the richest sources of inspirational literature and the most important of the first three books of the Hagiographa, it has been regarded as a second Pentateuch:

Moses gave (Israel) the five books of Torah, and to correspond with them, David gave them the Sefer Tehillim, in which there are also five books.¹⁷

A midrash based upon such an important text gives a penetrating

insight into the midrashic mind.

This writer recognizes the difficulties involved in attempting to present a coherent picture of theological ideas in the areas to which this paper is limited. By western standards, the Midrash is anything but systematic and logical. Opposing and conflicting ideas are often found in different parts of the text. No criteria are available to determine the weight of one statement as opposed to another. Yet the Midrash contained enough passages, which when extracted and assembled, presented a fairly clear idea of its theology. My approach has been to allow the Midrash to speak for itself in order that the true meaning of the text may be seen in its entirety. I have attempted to summarize my general conclusions at the beginning of each chapter.

The Hebrew text used in this paper, and referred to in the footnotes, has been Midrash Tehillim, edited by Solomon Buber. In translating the necessary text, I have, generally speaking, followed the translation found in William G. Braude's, The Midrash on Psalms and that of the Jewish Publication Society's, The Holy Scriptures. In such instances where Braude's translation is questionable or not adequate, I have translated the passages in line with my own understanding of the text. Where Braude's Biblical quotations are significantly different from those of the Jewish Publication Society's translation, I have indicated the J.P.S. translation in the footnotes. The reader will note that the use of the term Midrash in this thesis refers specifically to Midrash Tehillim.

In conclusion, the writer wishes to offer his sincere thanks and appreciation to Dr. Leon J. Liebreich for the guidance which he has so graciously given and for the patience he has so kindly shown during the preparation of this thesis. Thanks must also be expressed to my wife, without whose efforts and cooperation, this paper would not have been completed.

CHAPTER I

GOD'S ESSENCE

To the rabbis of Midrash Tehillim, the philosophical problem of God's existence was never a subject for question or debate. The very existence of the world and life implied the existence of God:

R. Eleazar ben Pedat said: Note what is written, "To Him who alone doeth great wonders" (Ps. 136:4) - that is, He alone knows (the great wonders He does)! And why is it written in a second verse "To Him who divided the Red Sea sunder" (Ps. 136:13) for the (giving of) sustenance is as great a wonder as the splitting of the Red Sea. As in God's giving of sustenance, is it possible for a man to go out of the world and not have had the Holy One, blessed be He, do wonderful works and great deliverances for him....¹⁸

Although atheism and thoughts of skepticism were the product of philosophical thinking which was alien to the midrashic mind, some evidence is found that suggests the possibility that God's reality is dependent upon man's recognition of Him:

"Therefore ye are My witnesses, saith the Lord, that I am God" (Is. 43:12) - that is, "When ye are My witnesses, I am God and when ye are not My witnesses, I am not God." Similarly when you say, "Unto Thee I lift up mine eyes, O Thou who dwellest in the heavens" (Ps. 123:1) you are saying, "If it were not for me, Thou wouldst not be enthroned in the heavens."¹⁹

To be sure, the rabbis understood the difficulties involved in trying to explain or describe God's essence. They recognized His infinite greatness and their inability to describe it:

You are above all the praise with which men praise Thee and art high above every blessing and every praise. "Who can utter the mighty acts of the Lord" (Ps. 106:2) - that is, who can declare the praise of the Holy One, blessed be He. If a man endeavors to speak of (all) the praises of the Holy One, blessed be He, he shall perish. As Elihu said, "If a man speak, surely he shall perish" (Job 37:20).²⁰

Yet about one attribute, His unity, there was no vagueness. Stress was laid upon it because of the difficulties that were created by the Biblical text which often used several names to refer to God, as well as names whose structure was in the plural form. Every attempt was made to clarify the concept of God's unity for the sake of the heretics who alluded to His plurality, and for the disciples who were confused by the Biblical text:

"God, God, the Lord, He hath spoken and He called the earth" (Ps. 50:1). The heretics asked R. Simlai: What is meant by the words "God, God, the Lord, He hath spoken?" R. Simlai answered them: Scripture does not say here "They have spoken" or "They called," but "He hath spoken" and "He called." His disciples said to him: Master, these thou hast put off with a broken reed but what answer wilt thou give us? He said to them: His three names are one, as a man may say: "artisan, builder, and architect."²¹

Closely bound up with the doctrine of God's unity is the teaching that God had no bodily form. To assist in the understanding of this bodilessness of God, an analogy is drawn from the soul, the incorporeal part of the human being:

As the soul sustains the body so the Holy One, blessed be He, sustains the world; as the soul is unique in the body, so the Holy One, blessed be He, is unique in His world; and as the soul does not eat and does not drink, so the Holy One, blessed be He, does not eat or drink; and as the soul because it comes from

above stays pure in the body, so the Holy One, blessed be He, because He comes from above the world, is pure; and as the soul sees though it is not seen, so the Holy One, blessed be He, sees and is not seen....²²

Certainly, if God had no form, He could not be seen by man. And if He could not be seen by man, then it is reasonable to assume that no one could know His dwelling place:

It happened that a certain man asked Rabban Gamaliel in what place the Holy One, blessed be He, dwells, and Rabban Gamaliel replied: "I do not know." And the man said, "Is this your prayer and your wisdom, you who pray to God every day, and yet do not know where His place is?" Rabban Gamaliel replied, "Behold, thou asked me about something which is 3500 years journey away from me. Now I will ask thee about something which dwells within thee day and night, and do thou tell me where its place is." "And what is this (the man asked)?" "I refer to your soul which was set in thee. Tell me in what place it is set." The man said, "I do not know." Rabban Gamaliel (then) replied, "May you perish. Although thou knowest not the place of something which dwells within thee yet thou asked me about something which is 3500 years journey away from me."²³

Not only man but even God's celestial creatures who carry His throne do not know His place:

Another explanation of "Bless the Lord, O my soul" (Ps. 103:1). Just as no man knows the place of the soul thus no man knows the place of the Holy One, blessed be He. Not even the sacred creatures that carry the throne of glory know where God's place is or in what place God dwells.²⁴

Despite the Midrash's emphasis on the incorporeality of God, there are several passages which contain descriptions that hint at His anthropomorphic form.

Like a man riding a horse and guiding it over the plain, the Holy One, blessed be He, rides upon the skies....²⁵

R. Berechiah, R. Helbo and R. Eleazar said in the name of R. Jose bar Hanina: In the time to come the Holy One, blessed be He, will arrange a dance for the righteous, and the Holy One, Himself, will dance with them and the righteous shall point Him out with their fingers....²⁶

"That Thy beloved may be delivered, save with Thy right hand, and answer me" (Ps. 60: 7). The phrase "with Thy right hand" alludes to the Torah which was given with God's right hand, as it is said, "From His right hand went a fiery law for them" (Deut. 33:2).²⁷

Although there are other passages, as well, which are anthropomorphic in content;²⁸ they are, indeed, surprisingly few in number. I cannot help but to conclude that these references are nothing more than the attempt to humanize God with qualities and attributes which will make Him more accessible to man.²⁹

A corollary of God's incorporeality is His Omnipresence. A finite body must, of necessity, be located in space, but to the infinite spirit space has no meaning. A term used for God in the Midrash is "makom" (place). Implicit in this term is the doctrine of the omnipresence of God, for it clearly shows that God encompasses space but that space does not enclose Him:

R. Huna said in the name of R. Ammi: Why is the name of the Holy One, Blessed be He, called "place"? Because He is the place of the world, as it is said: "Behold, there is a place by Me."³⁰

Even without the use of the term "makom", God's omnipresence is stressed:

R. Jose bar Halafta said: We did not know whether the Holy One, blessed be He, is contained in His world or whether His world is contained in Him until the Holy One, blessed

be He, came and explained it (by saying): "Behold, there is a place by Me" (Ex. 33:21), meaning that He is the place of His world and the world is not His place. Alas, His world is dependent upon Him and He is not dependent upon His world.³¹

Yet the omnipresence of God did not mean that God was far removed from man. It was true that the heavens and the earth could not contain God, yet if He did desire it, He could abide in the shadow of an edifice:

Moses said: Can man make a holy place for the Divine Presence to dwell within? "Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee" (I Kings 8:27). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: When I so desire, not even the whole world can support My glory, nor even the glory of one of My attendants. But of thee I require nothing other than twenty cubits in the north, twenty cubits in the south and eight cubits in the west.³²

Following the Biblical pattern, God is viewed in the Midrash as the Omnipotent power who created the world. As the Omnipotent God, no act or deed was too great for Him to perform. He was the great God of history who raised up the nations of the world and brought them low:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said (to Belshazzar): Thou sendest messengers to all the prefectures. But didst thou send one to Me? Yet I am He who shall put thee down, for I am He that puts down and He that raises up..." R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Levi: He (God) puts down one kingdom and raises up another kingdom; when the kingdoms of Media and Persia came up down went the kingdom of Babylonia.³³

He was a personal God who would create special miracles for those with whom He had a special relationship:

Could Abraham with only 318 men have fought against all of them (Amraphel and all his hosts)? Indeed, according to R. Johanan, the son of R. Jose ben Kisma, only Abraham's servant Eliezar, was with him and no one else, for

318 is the sum of the numerical value of the letters in the name of Eliezar. Who then, fought all the battles? It was the Holy One, blessed be He....³⁴

He could hear the prayers of all men even when they were being offered at the same moment:

A mortal king can give ear to two or three men. He cannot (however) give ear to all of them at once. No so with the Holy One, blessed be He. Though all men prayed at the same time, He would hear their prayers as if all were one.³⁵

He knew their innermost thoughts even before they formed them in their minds:

And thus says Scripture, "And thou Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a whole heart, and with a willing mind; for the Lord searcheth all hearts, and understands all the imaginings of the thoughts" (I Ch. 28:9). It does not say all "the thoughts" but all the "imaginings of the thoughts." What is meant by "all the imaginings of the thoughts?" That even before a man shapes a thought in his heart, the Holy One, blessed be He, understands it.³⁶

His works are so numerous and remarkable that they cannot be known:

"O give thanks unto the Lord; for He is good; for His mercy endureth for ever. Who can express the mighty acts of the Lord?" (Ps. 106:1-2). This (is to be understood with another verse) that says, "Many, O Lord my God, are Thy wonderful works which Thou hast done, and Thy thoughts toward us" (Ps. 40:6). What means "Many... are Thy wonderful works?" It means that every day Thou dost for us miracles and wonderful works, of which no man knows. Then who knows? Thou (alone) O Lord!³⁷

Nor can His works be comprehended:

No man can achieve (an understanding of) the ultimate purpose of the deeds of the Holy One,

blessed be He. Thus David said, "Who can express the mighty acts of the Lord?" (Ps. 106: 2), by which he means that no man can achieve (an understanding of) the mighty acts of the Holy One, blessed be He. Thus Moses said: Only He that abides for ever and searches out all things (can know the ultimate purpose)....³⁸

As the Creator of the world, God alone supports and sustains the whole world by means of His will and power. God, the sole, supreme power, created the universe without the assistance of any intermediary or helper:

R. Tanhum said: A mortal king - when he is praised to his face then the governors are praised with him. Why are they praised with him? Because they help him carry his burden. But it is not so with the Holy One, blessed be He, for no one helps Him carry His burden. Know that this is so for R. Hanina and R. Johanan taught: The angels were created on the second day, so that the nations of the earth could not say: Michael stood in the north and Gabriel in the south and together with Him they stretched out the heavens.³⁹

God created the world for only one reason and that was to have it and its inhabitants praise Him:

What parable does it (the creation of the world) fit? The parable of a king who had treasures filled up with good things and who asked: "To what end are these things laid up? I shall get me servants, give them to eat and to drink, so that they will praise me." Just so the world was waste and empty, and the Holy One, blessed be He, rose up and created the earth, and let man rule every thing.⁴⁰

The creation of the world caused no special problems for God even though it was created in a unique manner:

A mortal king builds first the foundation of a structure, and then its upper portion. But it is not so with the Holy One, blessed be He. With Him the upper portion of the structure is built first and then the foundations....⁴¹

It was also created without drudgery or effort:

And why was this world created with the letter "he"? To tell you that, just as the "he" comes forth from a man's mouth without movement of the lips and without pressure of the tongue, so God created the world without any labor....⁴²

Only a spoken word was needed since the word of the Lord is identical with the deed:

What is written (about Abraham)? "In that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying: 'Unto thy seed have I given this land'" (Gen. 15:18). Scripture does not say "shall give" but "I have given." But did Abraham already have children? At that time he had not yet begotten offspring! But the word of the Holy One, blessed be He, is identical with the deed. The Holy One, blessed be He, declares: "When I say a thing, behold, it is done...."⁴³

Nor did creation cease with the establishment of the world and its inhabitants for it is a continuous process through daily acts of sustenance which are, in essence, greater than the original creation:

"He giveth food to all flesh" (Ps. 136:25). This verse tells you that His providing of sustenance equals all the other works of creation.⁴⁴

He created man from the dust of the earth and blew the breath of life into him:

You find that Adam was created on the eve of the Sabbath: in the first hour, he came up as a thought; in the second hour, God took counsel with the ministering angels; in the third, God gathered the dust; in the fourth, God kneaded the dust; in the fifth, God made the figure; in the sixth, God formed the limbs; in the seventh, God blew the breath into him; in the eighth, God stood him on his feet; in the ninth, God commanded....⁴⁵

He could just as easily cause man's death and then bring him back to life once again:

"The earth trembled" (Ps. 68:9) and at once all the living in the land of Israel died: But the dead came to life as the Holy One, blessed be He, dropped the dew of resurrection on them...⁴⁶

The concept of creation involves the concept of God's eternity. The Bible views God as the Eternal Creator who created the world out of nothing. Even time was His creation, since it did not exist before the creation of the world. The Greek philosopher Plato sees an eternal matter co-existing with an eternal God, while Aristotle sees an eternal matter which is not subject to creation or decay, but simply takes on different forms, one after the other.

The authors of the Midrash have a view which is similar to that of the Biblical writers. God, to them, was the Eternal Creator of the world. Time, therefore, had no meaning in relationship to Him.⁴⁷ As the Omnipotent Creator of the universe, He, of necessity, had to be first and, therefore, had to exist before the world was created:

Another explanation of "Bless the Lord, O my soul, O Lord my God. Thou art very great" (Ps. 104:1). R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Eleazar and also in the name of R. Joshua: Thou wast great in the world before the world was created. But after Thou didst create Thy world, it is written: "Thou art very great."⁴⁸

This, (His throne) is one of the six things that were in God's Thought before the creation of the world. They are: The Throne of Glory, The King Messiah, The Torah, Israel, The Temple, and repentance.⁴⁹

For the same reason, He would have to be last in time as He alone could endure for ever and ever:

Another explanation for "Bless the Lord, O my soul..." (Ps. 103:1). R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama: A certain painter paints a

portrait; the painter dies, but his portrait endures. But with the Holy One, blessed be He, it is not so. For the Holy One, blessed be He, forms man, and man dies, but the Holy One, blessed be He, lives and endures. This neither the painter nor the silversmith can do. The silversmith casts an image; the silversmith dies; the casting endures. But the Holy One, blessed be He, formed man and it is man who dies; it is the Holy One, blessed be He, who lives and endures for ever and ever.⁵⁰

CHAPTER II
GOD'S CHARACTER

Jewish philosophers often attempted to preserve the purity of the concept of monotheism by denying positive attributes and characteristics to God.⁵¹ They looked askance at any attempt to attribute human characteristics to Him, for they believed it negated the concept of His unity.⁵² This, however, was not the attitude of the authors of the Midrash as ~~it~~ will be noted below. It is true that they often reflected upon His transcendental nature, but their relationship to Him was far from being abstract and theoretical. God, to them, was very real and very close. They knew Him not from their theological discussions but from their every day experiences and observations. The rabbis looked at the past and present world and saw it through the eyes of men who had an intense faith in a personal immanent God. They viewed Him with a familiarity that enabled them - nay forced them, to heap human characteristics and qualities upon Him. Thus it is that the Midrash often speaks about God's justice, wrath, mercy, etc.

The greatness of Judaism is found in its unique combination of religion and ethics. Both are so interwoven into the fabric of Jewish thought as to make their separation impossible. The very idea of God, therefore, necessitated the belief in a moral and ethical Creator, one who made justice the supporting pillar of His entire creation. This, in turn, led to the realization that God would never allow the wicked to go unpunished or the righteous to go unrewarded. His very name shows that He is a God of justice:

"In God (Ehlohim), I will praise His word - in the Lord (YHVH) - I will praise His word" (Ps. 56:11). What is the difference in meaning between "In God" (Ehlohim) and "in the Lord" (YHVH)? R. Nehorai says that where "God" (Ehlohim) is used it refers to God as a God of justice, thus Scripture says, "Thou shalt not revile God" (Ex. 22:27), or "The Master of the house shall come near unto God" (Ex. 22:7). (In both verses God is understood to mean "judge"), but where "Lord" (YHVH) is used it refers to God as a God of mercy, thus Scripture says, "The Lord (YHVH), the Lord (YHVH)...merciful and gracious" (ibid. 34:6).⁵³

He is one who desires to be praised by acts of justice and righteousness:

Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite..." (Ps. 89:1). These words are to be considered in the light of the verse "But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth (haskel) and knoweth Me, that I am the Lord who exercises lovingkindness, justice and righteousness, in the earth" (Jer. 9:23). Ethan the Ezrahite said, "I understand" - (hence it says) "Maschil of Ethan the Ezrahite" - the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Dost thou understand that "in these things I delight" (Jer. 9:23) and that any man who would praise Me must praise Me only with these things?⁵⁴

No man is able to escape His accounting:

When a mortal owes one hundred minas to his friend, and his friend says, "Give me my money," and he answers, "I have no money," what is there for his friend to do? He must go alone! Not so with the Holy One, blessed be He. He makes the soul pay. And when the soul goes forth, He makes the body pay, as is said, "He will consume both soul and body" (Is. 10:18).⁵⁵

Justice was more than a mere matter of human or state concern. The fact that only chaos and anarchy could exist as long as the infringement of right was allowed to go unpunished made it the concern of God. Therefore, as the God of justice, He often appeared among those who dispensed justice:

A Psalm of Asaph. God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; He is a Judge among judges (Ehlohim)" (Ps. 82:1).⁵⁶ These words are to be considered in the light of Moses' charge to the judges of Israel: "Ye shall not respect persons in judgment... for the judgment is God's" (Deut. 1:17). And when Jehoshaphat (had done) thus (namely, set up judges in the land) he said to the judges: "Consider what you do; for ye judge not for man but for the Lord, who is with you in the judgment" (II Chron. 19:6). "The judgment is God's" (Deut. 1:17) (means) that the judges should never say, "We sit alone in judgment," for the Holy One, blessed be He, says to the judges: "Know ye that I sit among you, as is said, 'For I the Lord love judgment'" (Is. 61:8).⁵⁷ If you push aside the right judgment, you push Me aside....⁵⁸

And aided the judges in the fulfillment of justice:

R. Eleazar taught: The Holy One, blessed be He, showed Himself in three courts of justice: in the court of Shem, son of Noah; in the court of Samuel the Ramathite; and in the court of Solomon. With regard to God's showing Himself in the court of Shem, it is said, "And Judah acknowledged them and said: She hath been more righteous than I (mimenni)" (Gen. 38:26). How did Judah know? If he had gone into her, another man might have gone into her! But it was a heavenly voice that came forth and said: "Because of Me (mimenni), went forth the secret things." With regard to Samuel it is said in a certain part of the Scripture: "And He said, 'The Lord is a witness'" (I Sam. 12:5). Does not the context require "And they said etc.?" The Scripture implies that a heavenly voice came forth and said: "I am a witness in this thing." In regard to Solomon it is said: "Give her the living child and in no wise slay it. She is the mother thereof" (I Kings 3:27). How did Solomon know? Perhaps the woman had spoken craftily so that Solomon would award the child to her? But it was a heavenly voice that came forth and said: "She is the mother thereof."⁵⁹

When the courts on earth render justice God is satisfied, but when they do not then God Himself sits in judgment in the heavens and renders justice:

R. Eliezer taught: When there is no judgment, there will be no judgment. How so? Because when courts on earth render judgment, there will be no judgment in heaven; but when no judgment is rendered on earth there will be judgment in heaven. For the Holy One, blessed be He, will sit "judgment upon the haughty and make them pay. But when judgment is rendered on earth, the Holy One, blessed be He, will say: "What is there for Me to do? This is My calling," as it is said, "For the Lord is God of justice" (Is. 30:18).⁶⁰

The rabbis had the utmost faith that God would mete out reward and punishment in a just and equitable manner:

"To declare that the Lord is upright, my Rock, in whom there is no unrighteousness" (Ps. 92:16). They asked Moses, "Who prevented thee from entering the Land of Israel?" He replied: "I prevented it." They asked him: "Was it not the Holy One, blessed be He, who kept thee out?" He replied: "Nay! Speak not thus. Even if one should see the Holy One, blessed be He, appear to justify the wicked man and condemn the righteous man, 'The Rock, His work is perfect; for all His ways are justice...' (Deut. 32:4).⁶¹

Since they often saw the wicked prosper and the just suffer, they assumed that God would make the necessary adjustments in the world-to-come:

R. Hanina bar Isaac commented: If God-sent afflictions oppose a man in this world, he will have a share in the world-to-come.⁶²

and again:

The world-to-come was created with the letter "Yod," and even as the shape of the "Yod" is bent, so in the world-to-come the pride of the wicked shall be brought low, and they shall be pale with shame as it is said, "and the loftiness of man shall be bowed down" (Is. 2:17).⁶³

Whatever the reward or punishment, it would be given to the deserving person:

Nor will it help a man to say (in regard to the hour of punishment) "My father was a worthy man: Behold, I shall be delivered because of him. My brother was righteous; he will be the cause of my rescue." Even Abraham could not deliver Ishmael and Jacob could not deliver Esau, for Scripture says, "No man can by any means redeem his brother" (Ps. 49:8). And how is the word "ach" to be interpreted? On the day that one sees his son or his brother punished in Gehenna the righteous exclaim: "Alas (ach)! How hard is this day!" For one cannot deliver him (another).⁶⁴

Moreover, the punishment will be given in the proper measure:

Our masters taught: In a measure that a man measures out so is it measured out to him. For in the verse "In measure (seasseah), when Thou sendest her away, Thou dost contend with her" (Is. 27:8), the word "seasseah" implies "seah" for "seah" - that is, measure for measure. The verse seems to show that only for a "seah", a large deed, does God give measure for measure. Whence do we know that also for a "tarkab", a half "tarkab", a "kab", a "roba", a half "roba", a "toman", or an "ukla" is His measure for measure given? Scripture says, "For every "seon" a "seon" is returned in fierceness" (Is. 9:4).⁶⁵ Mark the variety of measures hinted at in the verse. The reference to them would seem to show that God measures only by bulk. Whence do we know that God also measures by small coins which can add up to a large sum? From Scripture which says, "Adding one to another to find out the sum" (Ecc. 7:27).⁶⁶

As a matter of fact there is an indication that even if God desired to punish man beyond the measure of justice He would be restrained:

"... Zion is become a wilderness; Jerusalem a desolation... Wilt Thou refrain Thyself for these things, O Lord?" (Is. 64:9-11). God replied, "Fury is not in Me" (Is. 27:4), as if to say, "I cannot do anything for you; the measure of justice requires that I be silent." And God went on: "Would that I were as the briers and thorns in flame (to the hostile nation)!" (ibid). By these words, the Holy One, blessed be He, meant: I could do something against them, but the measure of justice makes Me refrain in silence...."⁶⁷

Indispensable to the concept of justice is the realization that God cannot be responsible for all the actions of men. There must be an area that man alone controls and in which he acts for himself:

R. Isaac said, some say that it was said in the name of R. Hanina bar Abbahu: If a man has (two) hieifers, one willing to plow and the other unwilling to plow, and he wishes the second one to plow, what does he do? He takes the yoke off the two of them and forces the unwilling one to plow (alone). Likewise, any creature which does not want to accept the yoke, Thou dost compel it against its will and doest direct it whither it is meant to go. (Only) the evil inclination Thou cannot direct. Therefore, "Teach me, O Lord, Thy way" (Ps. 27:11).⁶⁸

Indeed, it would not be a just God that punished man for deeds which He willed; therefore, the rabbis of the Midrash insisted that man was responsible for his own punishment:

They asked Adam: "Who brought death to thee?" He replied: "I brought it upon myself." They asked him: "Was it not the Holy One, blessed be He, who caused thee to die?" He replied: "God forbid! It is like the sick man who was confined to his bed. When the physician came and looked at him, he told him: Thou mayest eat such and such a thing, but do not eat such and such a thing, which will be bad for thee and dangerous even unto death. But the sick man ate and was about to die. The people asked him: Was it perhaps the physician who is causing thee to die? He replied: I myself have caused my death. If I had given heed to what the physician enjoined me, I would not be dying."⁶⁹

The concept of justice in the Midrash demands more than a theoretical conformity to the principle of right; it demands that individuals and nations receive what is due them and merited by them. The righteous should be rewarded for their faithfulness to righteousness and, what is even more important, the wicked should be punished

for their transgressions. It follows, then, that the God of justice also becomes the God of wrath and punishment who strikes down the wicked and punishes the transgressors.

God's anger is provoked by the wicked:

In a different interpretation the verse is read "Like smoke that is made to come up," are the wicked. A parable of a king that had slaves in his palace. He was in the upper part of the palace and the slaves were in the lower part of the palace and they did things that caused smoke to rise up to him. So the wicked, as Isaiah says, are "A people that provoke Me to My face continually, that sacrifice in gardens, and burn incense upon bricks; that sit among the graves... These are a smoke in My nose" (Is. 65:3-5). Like makers of smoke are the wicked, and when they make smoke come up in My face, that is, provoke Me, then as it is said, "The anger of the Lord and His jealousy shall smoke against that man" (Deut. 29:19)⁷⁰

The wicked, as a result, suffer punishment in this world:

"For judgment shall return unto righteousness, and all the upright in heart shall follow it" (Ps. 94:15). Samuel the Little was asked: "What is meant by 'all the upright in heart shall follow it?'" He replied: "... the reward of the wicked is given to their faces (while alive)," as it is said, "God... repayeth them that hate Him to their face, to destroy them" (Deut. 7:10)⁷¹

The sinner receives his punishment in the world-to-come:

Woe unto the wicked who in the world-to-come will die out of envy of what they see, and out of anger as it is said, "For anger killeth the foolish man and envy slayeth the silly one" (Job 5:2). They will waste away on account of their envy and anger, as it is said, "Let them be ashamed...." (Ps. 70:3).⁷²

At times he is punished in this world and in the time-to-come:

R. Samuel bar Isaac taught: Because in this world, Pharoah was punished separately, Sisera was punished separately, Sennacherib was punished separately - indeed, every wicked man will be punished in one place and will be destroyed, as is said, "Sinners shall cease out of the earth and the wicked shall be no more..." (Ps. 104:35).⁷³

God is provoked by wickedness of all sorts, by those who do not abide by His word:

"I said: 'Ye are like godlike beings, and all of you are sons of the Most High'" (Ps. 82:6), the one and only precept I gave Adam, he did not maintain. So I drove him out of the garden of Eden and I imposed the decree of death upon him as is said in the next verse, "Nevertheless, ye shall die like Adam, and fall like one of the princes" (Ps. 82:7).⁷⁴

He is angered by those who are arrogant:

"The fire devoured their young men" (Ps. 78:63) - this refers to Nadab and Abihu. Abba Hanin said: Nadab and Abihu were deceiving men for they said, "What woman is worthy of us? We are sons of the High Priest, our uncle Moses is a king, our grandfather is a prince! What woman can possibly be worthy of us?" Accordingly, "The fire devoured their young men."⁷⁵

He is provoked by those who scorn, act a false part, slander and lie:

"He that telleth lies shall not be established before Mine eyes" (Ps. 101:7).⁷⁶ There are four companies of men who will not behold the presence of God: the company of scorers, for it is written, "He will not sit in the seat of the scornful" (Ps. 1:1)⁷⁷; the company of hypocrites, as it is written, "A hypocrite cannot come before Him" (Job 13:16); the company of slanderers, as it is said, "Whoso slandereth his neighbor in secret... him (oto) I will not suffer" (Ps. 101:5) - read not "oto" (him), but "itto" (with him); and the company of liars, as it is written, "He that telleth lies shall not be established before Mine eyes" (Ps. 101:7).⁷⁸

Sometimes the punishment involves the entire universe:

"Thou carried them away as with a flood; they are as a sleep (Ps. 90:5) refers to the nine hundred and seventy-four generations which existed prior to the creation of the world, but which were swept away in the wink of an eye because they would give themselves to wickedness."⁷⁹

Other times it involves a single nation:

"Therefore, He lifted up His hand against them" (Ps. 106:26).⁸⁰ R. Huna taught in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahman: Because of the deed at Peor, the children of Israel were doomed to have the kingdoms rule over them, as is said, "Therefore, He lifted up His hand against them...."⁸¹

Still other times it was limited to individuals:

A different comment "Suffer not thy mouth to bring thy flesh into sin" (Ecc. 5:5) refers to slander, for with their mouths men make their flesh sin; because of what they let escape from their mouths, they are smitten with leprosy... Who was such a slanderer? Doeg. When he slandered David he became leprous, for it is said, "God will likewise break thee for ever... and root thee out of the land of the living" (Ps. 52:7).⁸²

At times the punishment is limited to several generations:

"But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear Him" (Ps. 103:17). R. Johanan taught in the name of R. Levi: The mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting, but His righteous (punishment) lasts only for three generations, for the verse ends, "And His righteousness unto the children's children" (ibid.).⁸³

There are times, on the other hand, when the punishment is eternal:

"And their form shall be for the nether world to wear away, that there be no habitation for it" (Ps. 49:15). Even Gehenna will wear away, but they (the wicked of the nations) will not wear away. And why not? Because they laid their hands upon (the Temple), His abode.⁸⁴

Yet chastisement is often more than punishment. It appears to be almost a manifestation of divine love, for it is precious in God's eyes:

R. Jose bar Judah taught: Chastisements are beloved in the sight of the Holy One, blessed be He, for the name of the Holy One, blessed be He, identifies itself with him who is chastised, as it is said, "so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee" (Deut. 8:5).⁸⁵

Through chastisement atonement takes place:

R. Nehemiah taught that chastisements are precious, for as offerings are acceptable (to God), so chastisements are acceptable. Of an offering it is written, "It shall be acceptable for him to make atonement for him" (Lev. 1:4); and of chastisement, it is written, "The son's suffering (under chastisement) is acceptable (as an atonement for him)" (Prov. 3:11-12)⁸⁶; and again, "The land shall lie forsaken without them... while they accept the punishment of their iniquity" (Lev. 26:43). Not only this, but even more! (Chastisement) is better than offerings (in making atonement), for offerings come out of a man's property, but chastisements fall upon a man's body....⁸⁷

Because of chastisements, Israel received special gifts from God:

R. Simeon ben Yohai taught: Chastisements are good because of them three gifts came to Israel, gifts that the nations of the earth desired for themselves. Yet only because of chastisements were the gifts - Torah, the world-to-come, and the Land of Israel - given to Israel. And the proof that the Torah was so given? It is said, "To know wisdom and chastisement" (Prov. 1:2)⁸⁸; and also "Blessed is the man whom Thou chastenest, O Lord, for thereby Thou teachest him Thy Law" (Ps. 94:12). And the proof that the Land of Israel was so given? It is said, "As a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee" (Deut. 8:5) - that is, as a man chastens his son with a rod, so the Lord thy God chastens thee (with a rod). And what follows? "The Lord thy God bringeth thee into a good land"

(Deut. 8:7). And the proof that the world-to-come was so given? The verse "Reproofs by chastisement (instruction) are the way of life" (Prov. 6:23). Here Scripture says: Go forth and see for your self what way leads to life in the world-to-come, and you will have to admit that it is chastisement.⁸⁹

Yet the God of the Midrash is not a cold, impersonal force who mechanically punishes all who deviate from the path of righteousness. He is far from the stereotyped Biblical God of wrath and vengeance that has often been attributed to Judaism. Indeed, He is the God of justice and punishment, whose wrath is provoked by falsehood and transgression, yet He is pictured as the all-wise Master who desires not the punishment of the sinner as much as "the fulfillment of His great purpose in the universal reign of God."⁹⁰ In anger, He could quickly consume the wicked of the world, yet He does not, for He is long-suffering and merciful with His creatures, in order that the sinner may have an opportunity to repent and find his way back again to God. It is this combination of justice and mercy that gives the Jewish religion its essential moral basis.⁹¹

Rabbinical exegesis found in the most common names of God (Ehlohim and YHVH) a description of God's character.⁹² Thus it was that God's very name denoted His merciful and long-suffering character:

R. Jose taught in the name of R. Hanina: When the Holy One, blessed be He, sought to send Moses to Egypt, what did Moses ask? He asked: "Behold, when... the children of Israel ... shall say to me: What is His name? What shall I say unto them?" (Ex. 3:13). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Knowest thou not My name! Come, and I shall tell thee: "I AM that I AM; and He said: 'Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel: I AM hath sent me

unto you'" (ibid. 3:14). You find "I AM" written three times, and this means that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: I created My world with compassion, I will guide it with compassion, and I will return to Jerusalem with compassion, as is said, "I return to Jerusalem with compassion" (Zech. 1:16).⁹³

So important was this characteristic that the entire world was supported by it:

"For I have said: The world is built on mercy;⁹⁴ in the heavens Thou dost establish Thy faithfulness" (Ps. 89:3) not the heavens alone but the throne too, is established on nothing but mercy, as it is said, "And in mercy shall the throne be established" (Is. 16:5). With what is the throne to be compared? With a throne that had four legs and was tottering because one leg was short. Under the short leg was set a pebble and it supported the throne. Thus also the throne in heaven was tottering - if one dare say such a thing - until the Holy One, blessed be He, supported it. And with what did God support it? With mercy - hence it is said, "The world is built on mercy."⁹⁵

It was the merciful and long-suffering God who limited the time of punishment for the wicked⁹⁶ and who chastened men less than his deed merited:

R. Meir taught: "And thou knowest in thy heart, that, as a man chasteneth his son, so the Lord thy God chasteneth thee" (Deut. 8:5).⁹⁷ (It means that God said,) "Thou and thy heart know the deeds which I have done for thee and the chastisements I imposed upon thee, and that the chastisements I imposed upon thee have not been proportionate to thy deeds."⁹⁸

The rabbis viewed God as a compassionate father who gives man every opportunity for righteousness:

R. Nehemiah says of "Thou renderest to every man according to his work" (Ps. 62:13), what is meant by the words "according to his

work"? Say that a man considers committing a sin, but does not commit it; the Holy One, blessed be He, does not write it down against him unless he commits it. But if he considers doing a good deed and is prevented from doing it, the Holy One, blessed be He, writes it down as if he had done it.⁹⁹

This is emphasized again:

"For Thou, Lord, art good and ready to pardon, and plenteous in mercy" (Ps. 86:5). R. Phineas the Priest said: When the pans of a scale balance exactly, with the evil deeds on one side and the good deeds on the other, what does the Holy One, blessed be He, do? He snatches a writ of debt out of the evil deeds and tips the balance toward the pan of good deeds....¹⁰⁰

God is even willing to pursue man in order to make him repent:

For it is said, "a woman shall compass a man" (Jer. 31:22)¹⁰¹ so in this world the Holy One, blessed be He, goes after the children of Israel in order to make them repent and do His will....¹⁰²

Thus we see that He does not desire the punishment of the sinner

but rather that the wicked turn back to the way of righteousness:

"O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear! ...And the Lord answered me and said" (Hab. 1:2; 2:2). What did the prophet Habakkuk do? He drew a figure (of a circle) and stood in the middle of it, and said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the Universe, I shall not stir from this place until Thou declarest to me how long Thou will continue to show forbearance to the wicked in this world. The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: Thou hast cried out to Me, but hast not doubted Me. As thou livest, I shall answer thee and cause thee to understand: I show forbearance to the wicked in this world so that they may come back to Me in repentance, and their willful sins will then be reckoned as unwitting sins.¹⁰³

Yet even when forced to take action against man, God is patient and long-suffering:

"The Lord is full of compassion, gracious, long-suffering and plenteous in mercy" (Ps. 103:8). R. Samuel bar Nahmani said: God prolongs His patience with the wicked, and rewards them for the few good deeds they have done in this world....¹⁰⁴

God turns His anger from the transgressor:

"But He being full of compassion, forgiveth iniquity and destroyeth not; yea, many a time doth He turn His anger away, and doth not stir up all His wrath" (Ps. 78:38). These words are to be considered in the light of the verse "O Lord, correct me but (ak) with judgment." R. Judah bar Simon taught that "ak" (but) is a disjunctive signifying restraint; hence here also "He... destroyeth not; yea, many a time doth He turn His anger away and doth not stir up all His wrath", means that God stirs up not all His wrath but only part of His wrath.¹⁰⁵

It is never too late to receive God's forgiveness:

R. Simon ben Yohai taught: When a man commits a sin and the angels come and denounce him, saying, "O Lord bow Thy heavens and come down; touch the mountains that they make smoke ... shoot out Thine arrows and destroy" (Ps. 144:5-6), the Holy One, blessed be He, replies: "At this moment this man is obdurate, but when he repents I will receive him."¹⁰⁶

Even after His wrath is kindled, God's mercy brings forgiveness:

R. Berechiah said in the name of R. Levi: Likewise, the angel that is given charge of God's anger is far off; as is said, "They come from a far country" (Is. 13:5). For the Holy One, blessed be He, said: When I am angry with My children, even as anger approaches to destroy them, the children of Israel come and bow down before Me and I receive them, and I - if one can impute such words to God - bethink Myself.¹⁰⁷

God demands little of man. He need only to repent and confess his sins in order to be forgiven:

Hence you learn that every man who knows that he has sinned, and prays because of his sin, and is in fear because of it, and his discourse with the Holy One, blessed be He, him the Holy One, blessed be He, forgives....¹⁰⁸

For only when a man confesses his sins, does God cancel His judgment against him:

R. Simon and R. Joshua ben Levi said in the name of R. Halafta: A mortal - when he confess - they pronounce judgment upon him; when he does not confess, they pardon him. But with the Holy One, blessed be He, it is not so, for when a man does not confess, He pronounces judgment upon him; but when he confess, He pardons him.¹⁰⁹

CHAPTER III
GOD AND ISRAEL

No concept is more fundamental to an understanding of the theology of the Midrash than an understanding of the relationship that exists between the people - Israel and God. This relationship has its origin not in rabbinical literature but in the fundamental text of Jewish life - the Bible.¹¹⁰ Rabbinic literature only rounds out this concept and moulds it to the later Jewish genius.¹¹¹

The relationship between Israel and God was no ordinary relationship between a nation and a deity. The very concept of the Abrahamic covenant implies a special relationship between the one and only God and a people whom He had chosen for a special purpose. It remained only for this covenant to be renewed and expanded over the centuries.¹¹² From these covenants arose Israel's sense of uniqueness and election that gave great meaning and purpose to its history, to its future and to the world in which it lived.

Underlying the fact of Israel's election is the conviction that God loves Israel even as Israel loves God:

Yea, I love Him and I love His house as is said, "Lord, I love the habitation of Thy house" (Ps. 26:8). No one knows how fierce is my love for my Maker as it is said, "Love is strong as death" (Song 8:6), and also "many waters cannot quench love" (ibid. 8:7). Yet "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66:18). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: You love Me, and I love you, as is said, "Because the Lord loved you" (Deut. 7:8) and "He will love thee, and bless thee, and multiply thee" (ibid. 7:13).¹¹³

Israel's love for God was expressed by its acceptance of His commandments without hesitation or question:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said further: I have given them positive commandments, and they took their performance upon themselves; and negative commandments, and they took obedience to them upon themselves. And although I did not explain to them what their reward was to be, they said not a word to Me. And so of all My commandments.¹¹⁴

God's love for Israel is seen in His concern for Israel's good name:

R. Levi taught in the name of R. Samuel bar Nahmani: What is meant by the verse "The Lord is for me as my helper; I see this in them that hate me" (Ps. 118:7).¹¹⁵ (It means that David, speaking for Israel, said): "I saw what He did to them who hated me. There were no men whom Thou didst favor as much as Moses and Aaron, yet merely because they said to Israel, 'Hear now, ye rebels' (Num. 20:10), Moses and Aaron were not permitted to enter into the land of Israel." Hence, "The wrath of God... cast down chosen men of Israel" (Ps. 78:31).¹¹⁶

It is also seen in the fact that God hearkens to Israel's prayers:

No more need be asked of the Holy One, blessed be He, than that He hear the prayers of Israel, for when He hears them He accedes, as it is said, "O Lord, hear; O Lord, forgive; O Lord, attend, and do: defer not..." (Dan. 9:19).¹¹⁷

and is merciful to Israel:

We know that the mercies of the Holy One, blessed be He, abide and that they are not consumed, because when the nations of the earth said, "Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation" (Ps. 83:5), His compassion for us did not fail. Hence it is said, "Surely the Lord's mercies are not consumed; Nay more, every morning Thou renewest and raisest us up, as it is said, 'They are new every morning' (ibid. 3:23).¹¹⁸

At the same time the world is dependent upon God's love for Israel. As a result of this love, the world is sustained:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, sought to give the Torah to Israel, the earth began to quake and totter out of fear that the children of Israel would not - God have mercy! - accept the Torah, and that the earth would turn back to emptiness and chaos. But as soon as the children of Israel said: "We will do and obey" (Ex. 24:7), the earth established itself again on its foundation, as it is said, "I Myself established the pillars of it. Selah" (Ps. 75:4).¹¹⁹

It is also given God's blessings:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Except for Israel there would be no blessing in the world, for it is said, "The Lord will command the blessing with thee" (Deut. 28:8). And except for Israel, no lights would shine in heaven, as it is said, "But for (the people) of My covenant I would not have established day and night, nor the ordinances of heaven and earth" (Jer. 33:25)¹²⁰; and the rain would not come down, for it is said, "The Lord will open unto thee His good treasure, the heaven to give the rain of thy land" (Deut. 28:12).¹²¹

And because of His love for Israel, God does not let loose His wrath upon the nations of the world:

R. Aha taught: As long as the people of Israel are in exile, the right hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, is held in thrall, if one dare speak thus. But when Israel is redeemed, mark that it is written, "His right hand, and His holy arm, hath wrought deliverance for Him" (Ps. 98:1). And it is also written, "The Lord hath made bare His holy arm in the eyes of all the nations; and all the ends of the earth shall see the deliverance of our God" (Is. 52:10). Hence it is said, "He hath remembered His mercy and His faithfulness toward the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the deliverance of our God" (Ps. 98:3).¹²²

Of course, the special relationship that Israel has with God presupposes that it has a special spiritual ability or capacity that makes it superior to the other peoples of the world:

Why is Israel likened to a horn? Because as the horn is set in the head, so Israel is set at the head of all the peoples, for Scripture says, "And the Lord will make thee the head" (Deut. 28:13). Hence it is said, "He shall exalt the horn of His people" (Ps. 148:14).¹²³

And again we read:

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the Law of the Lord (Ps. 119:1).¹²⁴ These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: "O My dove, that art in the clefts of the rock, in the secret places of the stairs" (Song 2:14).¹²⁵ R. Judah the Levite bar Shallum taught in the name of R. Judah bar Simon: Not "O dove" is written here but "O My dove", meaning that the Holy One, blessed be He, said: To Me, the children of Israel are like a dove, undefiled....¹²⁶

Nevertheless, several other reasons appear to substantiate its claim of election. Israel has the benefit of the special merit of its patriarchs:

"He bringeth out the prisoners because of good works" (Ps. 68:7)¹²⁷ - that is, the children of Israel who were prisoners in Egypt. God brought them forth because of the good works of their fathers....¹²⁸

So too, it hearkens to God's commandments:

Why does the conclusion of the verse speak of Israel as "a people near unto Him?" (Ps. 148:14). Because Israel is a people that draws near to Him through its obedience to the commandments, a people that the Holy One, blessed be He, draws nearer to Him than He draws any other people. As Israel says: "But as for me, the nearness of God is my good" (Ps. 73:28). Hence it is said, "The children of Israel, a people near unto Him" (Ps. 148:14).¹²⁹

Nor is Israel ever lacking righteous and merciful men:

Like the palm-tree whose leaves are used during the Hallel, whose branches are used for the booth - yea, even whose bast is used for binding together the lulab and whose twigs for lighting the fire on the altar, the people of Israel are never without their complement of saintly men, upright men and students of Torah: Yea, even the rudest among the children of Israel performs deeds of mercy.¹³⁰

God, however, was well aware of Israel's special qualities; therefore, He chose Israel even before the world was created:

"Remember Thy congregation which Thou didst make Thine own of old" (Ps. 74:2). What does the phrase "of old" prove? That before the world was created, the Holy One, blessed be He, had made the children of Israel His own, as is said, "Lord, Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth or ever Thou hast formed the earth and the world" (Ps. 90:1-2).¹³¹

Israel's election, however, is not for the sake of receiving special favors from God. It is only to make God's name known throughout the world:

The Holy One, blessed be He, does not save Israel because of their good deed, but only to make known His strength and His great name.¹³²

So again:

"For the leader; a Psalm of the sons of Korah. Maschil. O God, we have heard with our ears, our fathers have told us... times of old" (Ps. 44:1-2). These words are to be considered in the light of what Scripture says elsewhere: "He... to make Himself an everlasting name" (Is. 63:12). From this you learn that Israel did not have the (necessary) deeds by which to be redeemed when they went forth from Egypt for they were not as the deeds of the fathers. And not because of their own works was the sea rent before them, but only that God might make Himself a name in the world.¹³³

Far from being in an advantageous economic and material situation, Israel looks enviously at the prosperity of the other nations:

"O my God, my soul is cast down within me" (Ps. 42:7). The congregation of Israel said: "I am envious and cast down when I see (the prosperity of the nations).¹³⁴ Yea, I am angry. But Thou - of what concern is it to Thee? 'Thou, O Lord, art enthroned for ever, Thy throne is from generation to generation'" (Lam. 5:19).¹³⁵

As a matter of fact, Israel has a heavier burden and is liable to greater punishment than are the other nations. Thus we see that because Israel did not keep the Torah which had been given as its possession, it was banished from the Land of Israel:

The Holy One, blessed be He, will redeem the children of Israel for not other reason than that they are to keep the Torah. Had they not forsaken the Torah, they would never have been banished. Therefore, they said to God: Now that we are banished, redeem us and we shall keep the Torah. Hence it is said, "Quicken me after Thy lovingkindness, and I will keep the testimony of Thy mouth" (Ps. 119:88).¹³⁶

Israel is again chastised in order that it be eligible for three precious gifts¹³⁷ and that the hearts of the righteous be purified:

Asaph said: "I was envious at the arrogant when I saw the prosperity of the wicked" (Ps. 73:3). I did not realize before that the Holy One, blessed be He, brought afflictions upon the children of Israel in order to do good to them. But having realized it, Asaph began by saying: "Truly, God is good to Israel" (Ps. 73:1). He did not say "God is good" but "God is good to Israel" - that is, the afflictions which He brings upon them are good. Good to whom? "To such as are pure in heart" (ibid.) - that is, (it is meant) to purify the hearts of the righteous.¹³⁸

Nor does Israel's election give it any ethical advantages.

Election could not interfere with the rule of justice.¹³⁹ Justice was to be demanded from Israel as well as any nation. It is true that God sympathizes and, therefore, suffers with Israel:

R. Ze'era taught in the name of R. Simeon ben Levi: You find that when the nations came into Jerusalem because of Israel's sins they seized the mighty men of Israel and bound their hands behind their backs. And so the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "I will be with him in trouble" (Ps. 91:15), as if to say, "When My children are seized by trouble, can I just look on?" Thereupon, if one dare so to speak, "God hath drawn back His right hand (behind His back) in the presence of the enemy" (Lam. 2:3). But at the end God will again make them (His right hand visible) for He said to Daniel: "Go thou thy way till the end be..." (Dan. 12:13).¹⁴⁰

It is also true that God attempts to persuade the children of Israel to repent¹⁴¹ and even prays for them:

R. Berechiah taught: At the very beginning of His creation of the earth, the Holy One, blessed be He, set a booth in Jerusalem within which - if one may use a manner of speaking - He prayed: "Let it be the will that My children do My will, so that I will not destroy My house and My Temple." But when sin did bring destruction about, what does Scripture say? "And He hath stripped His Tabernacle, as if it were a garden; He hath destroyed His place of meeting" (Lam. 2:6) - that is, destroyed the place where He met with Himself in prayer. And now that the Temple is destroyed, God prays: "Be it My will that My children repent, so that I may hasten the rebuilding of My house and of My Temple."¹⁴²

God is even patient and long-suffering with Israel:

"Many times did He deliver them" (Ps. 106:43). How many times did they provoke the Holy One, blessed be He, as is said, "And the children of Israel did that which was evil" (Judg. 6:1). Yet he was long-suffering with them and delivered them from their troubles. Thus it is written: "And Israel was greatly impoverished" (ibid. 6:6).¹⁴³

yet with all His patience, sympathy and love, God punishes the children of Israel when they sin¹⁴⁴ for their moral infirmities cause God to be separated from them:

When I remember my troubles and Thy miracles, I think of other things as when it was said, "The Lord is not able to bring this people into the land" (Num. 14:16), as if to ask, 'Where is the Spirit? and where is the Might?' And "It was said in the house of Jacob:¹⁴⁵ 'Is the spirit of the Lord straitened?' (Micah 2:7). Then I said: 'My infirmity is the changing of the right hand' (Ps. 77:11).¹⁴⁶ What can be meant by the phrase 'My infirmity'? That there is infirmity above? That the right hand of the Most High is changed? No, for the Holy One, blessed be He, says: "Behold, the Lord's hand is not shortened, that it cannot save" (Is. 59:1). What is meant then? That your moral infirmities have caused a separation between you and Me (as Is. 59:2 says, "between you and your God").¹⁴⁷

Nor do the children of Israel expect not to be judged:

David said: If you judge me with the attribute of judgment, I accept Thee by saying: "In God - I will praise His word"; and if Thou judge me with the attribute of mercy, I accept Thee by saying: "In the Lord - I will praise His word."¹⁴⁸

Their only request is that they be judged and punished in love:

"And though they still again tried God, they set bounds for (hitwu) the Holy One of Israel" (Ps. 78:41). R. Hanina taught that the children of Israel said to the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the universe, do Thou punish us like a man who says, "I myself shall strike my son." Let not children of men have power over us. Hence "set bounds for (hitwu) the Holy One of Israel" is read "longed for" (hitawwu) - that is, they longed for God's power alone over them.¹⁴⁹

The father and son relationship expresses well the God and Israel relationship. God is often pictured as the loving and concerned father:

"The Lord is my helper" (Ps. 118:7). The matter is like two men who come to the judgment seat, and they are afraid of the judge. It is said to them, "Fear not, let your hearts take courage." So Israel will stand at the judgment before God, and will be afraid because of the Judge. Then the angels of the service will say to them, "Fear not; do you not recognize Him? He is your fellow citizen, as it is said, 'It is He who will build my city'" (Is. 45:13); and then they will say, "Fear not the Judge; do you not recognize Him? He is your kinsman, as it says, 'The children of Israel, the people related to Him'" (Ps. 148:14).¹⁵⁰ Then they will say, "Do you not recognize Him? He is your brother, as it says, 'For My brethren and friends' sake'" (Ps. 122:8). And even more, "He is your father, as it is said, 'Is not He thy father?'" (Deut. 32:6).¹⁵¹

Just as a loving father helps his son in times of distress, so does God come to the aid of Israel in times of trouble:

Asa could not do this (pursue and overtake the heathen). Therefore, he said to the Holy One, blessed be He: "Master of the universe, there is no strength in me to pursue Zorah, the Ethiopian king." What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do? "The Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa" (II Chron. 14:11).¹⁵²

For a similar reason He also favors those who help Israel:

"When in the future, the Lord shall write up the peoples, He will count this man that he was born there" (Ps. 87:6).¹⁵³ (In the time-to-come) God will write up certain men of the nations who bring (to the King Messiah) the children of Israel as belonging with Israel. "This man that he was born there" means that it (will be) as if such men were newly born.¹⁵⁴

God longs for and takes pleasure only in the praises of Israel in a manner similar to a father whose life is bound up with children:

Yet though every single thing praises the Holy One, blessed be He, the Holy One, blessed be He, declares: Though every single thing praises Me, I take pleasure only in the praise

that comes from Israel. Hence it is said, "The Lord taketh pleasure in His people" (Ps. 149:4). Why? Because the Holy One, blessed be He, said: The voice of Israel praising Me is sweet unto Me, for it is said, "O My dove... let Me hear thy voice; for sweet is thy voice" (Song 2:14).¹⁵⁵

Unlike the autocratic father who alone sets down the rules and regulations, God, in His magnanimity, allows Israel to make some regulations of its own:

R. Simon taught in the name of R. Joshua ben Levi: Concerning three things, the Holy One, blessed be He, approved the decree of a court on earth... tithes, greeting with God's name, and reading the Scroll of Esther....¹⁵⁶

So too:

R. Phinehas and R. Hilkiah taught in the name of R. Simon: When all the ministering angels gather before the Holy One, blessed be He, and say, "Master of the universe, what day is New Year's Day?" He replies: "Are you asking Me? Let us, you and I, ask the court below."¹⁵⁷

Furthermore, God Himself conforms to Israel's decisions:

"When a statute for Israel, it is an ordinance of the God of Jacob" (Ps. 81:5)¹⁵⁸. Therefore, what is not a statute for Israel, is not - if one be permitted to speak thus - an ordinance of the God of Jacob. And so R. Hoshia taught: When an earthly court decrees, saying: "Today is New Year's Day," the Holy One, blessed be He, tells the ministering angels: "Raise up the dais. Summon the advocates. Summon the clerks. For the court on earth has decreed and said that today is New Year's Day." If, however, the witnesses of the new moon are delayed in coming, or if the court has decided to intercalate the year, and to advance New Year's Day to the next day, the Holy One, blessed be He, tells the ministering angels: "Remove the dais, dismiss the advocates, and dismiss the clerks, since the court on earth has decreed and said: 'Tomorrow is New Year's Day.'" And the proof? "When it is a decree for Israel, it is an ordinance of the God of Jacob."¹⁵⁹

In a literature written by Jews for Jews it is only natural to find special emphasis given to the people Israel. Yet the very concept of ethical monotheism, upon which Judaism is built, is universalistic in essence no matter how particularistic its interpretation may be. The concept of One God who is the One Creator of mankind and who is just, merciful and kind, necessitates the belief that God extends His justice, His mercy and lovingkindness over all His works - Jew and non-Jew.

To the rabbis of the Midrash, God, indeed, is a universal God, yet they derive this from their particular experience:

"A song; a Psalm of the sons of Korah.
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised,
in the city of our God, His holy mountain"
(Ps. 48:1-2). The ministering angels said:
"From the rising of the sun even unto the going down of the same My name shall be great among the nations" (Mal. 1:11); and the sons of Korah said: "Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised, in the city of our God, His holy mountain." Does this mean that our God is great only in His city? No- the sons of Korah really meant: Great is the Lord because of what He has done in His city and in His sanctuary. So too, Scripture says, "The Lord is great in Zion; and He is high above all the peoples" (Ps. 99:2) - that is, if He had done such a thing to His city, how much more will He do to the peoples of the earth....¹⁴⁰

His word was known by all the peoples of the earth:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, whose name and whose might are to be praised, gave forth the divine word, the voice divided itself into seven voices, and from the seven voices passed into the seventy languages of the seventy nations, so that all men understood it.¹⁴¹

He would save all those that would turn to Him:

"A Psalm of avowal,¹⁶² Make a joyful noise unto the Lord, all ye lands" (Ps. 100:1). R. Jacob taught in the name of R. Abbahu who taught in the name of R. Aha: The words "A Psalm of avowal, etc.," means that the Holy One, blessed be He, declared: Let all the lands of the earth avow Me, and I shall receive them, as is said, "Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is none else. By Myself have I sworn, the word is gone forth from My mouth in righteousness, and shall not come back, that unto Me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear" (Is. 45:22-23) - that is, when every knee bows to Me and every tongue swears, I will receive them.¹⁶³

Although Israel became a chosen people through its acceptance of the Torah, the Midrash relates that the other nations had been given an equal opportunity to receive the Torah but had rejected it:

Another comment: "Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise in the assembly of the saints" (Ps. 149:1). Scripture says of the giving of the Torah that "All the kings of the earth shall praise Thee, O Lord, for they have heard the words of Thy mouth" (Ps. 138:4). Does this verse mean that the kings of the earth listened to, and were willing to accept, Thy Torah? No! To this question Micah the Morashtite gave God's explicit answer, saying, "I will execute vengeance in anger and fury upon the nations, because they hearkened not" (Micah 5:14). From this you learn that the kings of the earth listened, but did not accept.¹⁶⁴

As a matter of fact, even though God knew that the nations of the world would not accept the Torah, He offered it to them so that they might have every opportunity to accept it:

R. Abbahu taught: It was known to the Holy One, blessed be He, that the peoples of the earth would not accept the Torah. Why, then, did He give it to them? Because the way of the Holy One, blessed be He, is first to give His creatures a chance, and only after (they refuse the chance), does He banish them from

the world. The Holy One, blessed be He, does not act like a tyrant towards His creatures.¹⁶⁵

On the other hand, it must be admitted that the text occasionally breathes a much more particularistic spirit:

"Thou art My portion, O Lord, I have said that I would keep Thy words" (Ps. 119:57). Moses said: "For thou art a holy people unto the Lord thy God: the Lord thy God hath chosen thee to be His own treasure" (Deut. 7:6). Note that Scripture does not say, "the Lord our God hath chosen you" but says, "the Lord thy God hath chosen thee" (ibid.) - that is, even a single one of thy people is more precious to the Holy One, blessed be He, than are all the nations of the earth. As Isaiah said: "All the nations are as nothing before Him; they are accounted by Him as things of nought, and vanity" (Is. 40:17).¹⁶⁶

Again the text states this view:

"The sun ariseth, they slink away" (Ps. 104:22): When the sun of the king Messiah rises, (heathen) nations of the earth will slink away, "and couch in their dens" (ibid.). Whither will they go? To Gehenna.¹⁶⁷

CHAPTER IV
GOD AND TORAH

The very heart of Jewish theology lies in the concept of divine revelation. God, according to Jewish tradition, revealed Himself to Moses on Mount Sinai and gave him the first five books of the Scripture - the Pentateuch. These five books became the foundation of inspiration for other divine messengers who expanded them from five into the twenty-four books of the Bible.

Yet the whole revelation of God was not solely found in the sacred books of the Bible. Along with the Scripture there has gone an unwritten tradition, which interpreted, applied and supplemented the Biblical text. The rabbis, whose elaborations comprised the unwritten tradition, would never admit that their interpretations were innovations of Jewish thought. They viewed their elaborations as excavations into the inexhaustable mine of Holy Scripture which brought to light treasures that had always been hidden underneath its surface. Thus it is that there developed the traditional belief in the divine origin, not only of every word of the Pentateuch, but also of every word of the accepted interpretation of later teachers.

Although the term "Torah" is often used to refer to the Pentateuch, the Midrash appears to use it as a comprehensive name for the entire divine revelation, both written and oral:

Let not a man say: The Psalms are not Torah. They are Torah as books of the Prophets

are also Torah - therefore, it is said, "Give ear, O my people, to my teaching (my Torah)" (Ps. 78:1). And not only the revelations, but even the riddles and the parables, they are also Torah. Hence the Holy One, blessed be He, gave this admonition to Ezekiel: "Son of man put forth a riddle and speak a parable..." (Ezek. 17:2). And Solomon admonished: "To understand a proverb, and a figure; the words of the wise, and their dark sayings" (Prov. 1:6).¹⁶⁸

So fundamental is Torah to Jewish theology that the Midrash speaks of it as preceding creation by two thousand years:

R. Huna said in the name of R. Simeon ben Lakish: These together with the Torah preceded by two thousand years the creation of the world for Torah says: "Then I was with Him, as a nursling; and I was day by day His delight" (Prov. 8:30), one day of the Holy One, blessed be He, being a thousand years, as is said: "For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past" (Ps. 90:4).¹⁶⁹

The Torah was handed to Israel with God's right hand.¹⁷⁰ It originally consisted of fire and was written on God's knee:

And how was the Torah written? With black fire upon white fire as it rested on the knee of the Holy One, blessed be He.¹⁷¹

The Torah was made known to all the peoples of the world through the divine voice of God which divided itself into seven voices and from seven voices into the seventy languages of the seventy nations that the Midrash claims inhabited the world at the time of revelation,¹⁷² but it was rejected by all the nations of the world¹⁷³ except Israel who received the Torah in the wilderness:

"Blessed are they that are upright in the way" (Ps. 119:1) - the generation that wandered in the wilderness. Hezekiah bar Hiyya taught: The Holy One, blessed be He, saw that no other generation would be as capable of

receiving the Torah as this generation, and so He laid up the Torah for its people as is said, "He layeth up sound wisdom for the upright" (Prov. 2:7).¹⁷⁴

Israel received the Torah unconditionally:

These things were given conditionally (by the Lord): The Land of Israel; the Temple; and the throne of the house of David. The Book of Torah and the covenant with Aaron, however, were given unconditionally....¹⁷⁵

It was given for all eternity:

"Thy testimonies are righteous for ever" (Ps. 119:144). The book (of Torah) which was given to Israel was given not for a year, nor for two years, nor for a hundred years, but for ever, as it is said, "My words... shall not depart out of thy mouth, nor out of thy seed... saith the Lord, from henceforth and for ever" (Is. 59:21).¹⁷⁶

Because of Torah, the world was saved¹⁷⁷ and kept on its proper course:

"There go the ships" (Ps. 104:26) - that is, the followers of the Torah, one saying: "This is permitted", and another saying: "This is forbidden", thereby keeping the world on course as if it were a ship.¹⁷⁸

For the same reason did God enter into a covenant with Israel:

The Holy One, blessed be He, made a covenant with the children of Israel only for the sake of the Torah, that it might not be forgotten out of their mouths as Scripture says, "He established a law in Israel" (Ps. 78:5) to the end that "It shall not be forgotten out of the mouths of their seed" (Deut. 31:21).¹⁷⁹

God also swore to be merciful with the world:

"Thou hast commanded Thy testimonies in righteousness and exceeding faithfulness" (Ps. 119:138). Can the phrase "and exceeding faithfulness" refer to anything other than the greatness of Torah for whose sake the Holy One, blessed be He, created the universe, swearing

by the Torah (to be merciful), for it is said, "Where are Thy former mercies, O Lord, which Thou didst swear unto David by Thy faithfulness" (Ps. 89:50) which, behold, is Torah.¹⁸⁰

Since Torah is the revelation of God's word, it is the means by which man can learn to understand that which God has chosen to make known to him, of His character and His way. Through the study of Torah, man learns what God requires of him. Thus it is of fundamental importance.

So important is Torah study that it is considered to be equal to the service with which the priests occupied themselves in the Temple:

"Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord which by night stand in the house of the Lord" (Ps. 134:1). What is the intention of "by night?" R. Johanan said it refers to the disciples of the wise who occupy themselves with Torah at night, and of whom God says: I shall reckon it for them as if they occupied themselves with the priest's work (in the house of the Lord).¹⁸¹

And, moreover, it is more desirable than a thousand burnt offerings offered by King Solomon himself:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere" (Ps. 84:11) - that is, I prefer a single day in which thou occupiest thyself with Torah to a thousand burnt offerings which thy son Solomon will offer up before Me on the altar.¹⁸²

It is even more valuable than gold:

"Therefore, I love Thy commandments above gold, yea, above fine gold" (Ps. 119:127). David said: I love Thy Torah more than gold, even the finest gold. Wherefore? Because neither riches, nor gold, not the finest gold, can support man in the day of judgment.¹⁸³

It leads to many rewards in this world¹⁸⁴ and in the world-to-come:

Again and again the Holy One, blessed be He, returns to reward the children of Israel because they labored diligently at Torah, giving them for their labor abundance in the world-to-come. In that time Israel will say to the nations of the earth: We merit this award because we were diligent in the study of Torah. What did you use to say to us? You labor in vain! But now see how great is the reward given for study of Torah. See how many good things are done for us on its account, for in "Hear this, all ye peoples," the word "this" clearly refers to Torah as in the verse "This is the Law" (Deut. 4:44).¹⁸⁵

It brings God's presence into the midst of men:

When Israel engages continuously in the study of Torah, the Holy One, blessed be He, makes His presence dwell within Israel.¹⁸⁶

The study of Torah has practical value, for it saves Israel from afflictions:

Why are the children of Israel called dove-like? To tell you that as a dove does not struggle when it is killed, so the children of Israel do not struggle when they are killed for the hallowing of the Name; and that as a dove can save itself only by its wings, so the children of Israel can save themselves only by merit of Torah....¹⁸⁷

It strengthens one in time of war:

"Our feet are standing within thy gates, O Jerusalem" (Ps. 122:2). R. Joshua ben Levi said: What made our feet stand firm in war? The gates of Jerusalem where we occupied ourselves with Torah.¹⁸⁸

It also saves man from death:

"Riches profit not in the day of wrath; but righteousness delivereth from death" (Prov. 11:4). That is, even when the sentence pronounced upon a man is death, the fact that he studied Torah will serve to save his life as it is said, "The Law of the Lord is perfect, restoring the soul" (Ps. 19:8).¹⁸⁹

Since the study of Torah has a protective effect, it is

likened to medicine:

"For He established a testimony in Jacob, and the Law is a prescription (sam) for Israel" (Ps. 78:5).¹⁹⁰ What does the word "sam" mean? It means that the Law which the Holy One, blessed be He, prescribed for the children of Israel is a medicine of life, as is said, "It shall be medicine to thy navel" (Prov. 3:8).¹⁹¹

It banishes the evil inclination:

"Thy word have I laid up in my heart, that I might not sin against Thee" (Ps. 119:11). The inclination to evil has no power in the presence of Torah. And so the inclination to do evil has no power over him who has Torah in his heart, and cannot touch him.¹⁹²

And provides the student with a protective armor:

R. Simeon ben Lakish taught that God said: I provide armor for any man who gives himself to the truth of Torah. R. Simeon ben Yohai said: The truth of Torah is itself a coat of armor.¹⁹³

Men long for Torah:

"I opened wide my mouth, and panted; for I longed for Thy commandments" (Ps. 119:131). I opened wide my mouth for Thy Torah and why? Because "I longed for Thy commandments," as do men who open wide their mouths for the latter rain: as Scripture says, "And they waited for Me as for the rain; and they opened their mouths wide as for the latter rain" (Job 29:23). Why open their mouths to the rain? Because the rain is Torah. As Moses said: "My doctrine shall drop as the rain" (Deut. 32:2). Hence "I opened wide my mouth and panted;" as whales pant for air so I pant for Thy Torah.¹⁹⁴

They long for it because it is equal to the very love of life:

When a man loves Torah, he loves life itself.¹⁹⁵

and because it is a song:

And because I have never put it aside, it (Torah) has not been a burden to me but a song: "Thy statutes have been my songs" (Ps. 119:54).¹⁹⁶

Torah is a delight to those who have it (i.e. study it):

The children of Israel said: But for Thy Torah which was with me and was my delight, I should have perished in mine affliction.... When Pharaoh said: "Let heavier work be laid upon the men... and let them not delight in (regard) lying words" (Ex. 5:9), he had in mind that the children of Israel owned books in whose words they took delight from Sabbath to Sabbath.¹⁹⁷

Thus it is that in its highest sense Torah is to be observed out of love not fear:

"I hate them that are of a double mind" (Ps. 119:113). These are they who ponder over the fear of God because of their sufferings, but not from love. David said, I am not like them; not from compulsion, or from fear, but from love, do I fulfill Thy commands, as it says, "Thy Law do I love" (ibid.). I hate what Thou hatest; I love what Thou lovest. An earthly ruler publishes his decrees, and all obey them, but though they obey them, they do so out of fear only; but I am not so: from love of the Law I fulfill the Law.¹⁹⁸

So vast and endless is the content of the Torah that it is compared to the earth and sea:

"Yonder sea, great and wide" (Ps. 104:25) is the Torah, of which it is said, "the measure thereof is longer than the earth, and wider than the sea" (Job 11:9).¹⁹⁹

Even Moses, the greatest prophet, who stood on Mount Sinai and received the Torah, could not understand all the ramifications of it:

R. Huna the Priest taught in the name of R. Jeremiah, who taught in the name of R. Hiyya the Great: "Then I beheld all the work of God" (Ecc. 8:17) - that is, beheld the Torah, as in the words, "And the tables were the work of God" (Ex. 32:16). Although some say that the

end of the verse, "That a man cannot find out the work that is done under the sun; because though a man labor to seek it out, yet he shall not find it; yea further, though a wise man think to know it, yet shall he not be able to find it" (Ecc. 8:17), speaks of the Messiah, the "wise man," in truth, is Moses, the master of wise men, who, nevertheless, could not make out all the meaning of Torah.²⁰⁰

The vastness of Torah is due to the many different ways by which its hidden treasures can be approached:

Torah is also termed "treasure," as in the verse, "There is a treasure to be desired" (Prov. 21:20), and Torah is also termed "hid treasure" as in the verse, "If thou... searchest for her as for hid treasures" (ibid. 2:4). The Torah is also described as having a multitude of gates and a multitude of doors leading into it, and hence it is said, "Blessed is the man that hearkeneth to me, watching daily at my gates, waiting at the posts of my doors" (Prov. 8:34).²⁰¹

There are also many ways by which they may be expanded:

"Thy word is very pure, and Thy servant loveth it" (Ps. 119:140).²⁰² What is meant by "Thy word is very pure?" What parable best explains it? The parable of a king who had a silver dish. He gave the silver dish to a silversmith, and said to him: "Purify it for me." The silversmith put the silver dish into the furnace, purified it, and took it out. Then the king said: "Purify it a second time;" and later said: "Purify it a third time." So, too, the Holy One, blessed be He, purified the Torah - purified it forty-nine times. As Scripture says, "Every word of God is purified (tried)" (Prov. 30:5).²⁰³ And again, "The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth purified seven by seven" (Ps. 12:7) - that is seven times seven. Behold, in forty-nine ways can the words of the Torah be expounded. Hence it is said, "Every word of God is purified;" and also "Thy word is very pure."²⁰⁴

Nevertheless, knowledge of the Torah is not too great for men:

And so David said: Knowledge of the Torah is too wonderful. But Moses said: It is not too wonderful, as is written, "It is not too wonderful, except for thee" (Deut. 30:11)²⁰⁵ - that is, knowledge of the Torah is too wonderful for thee, because thou hast not labored in it. Accordingly, it is said, "I may behold wondrous things out of Thy Law" (Ps. 119:18).²⁰⁶

Any neglect of God's word is to be considered a serious sin equal to the worship of other gods:

"Depart from me, ye evil-doers" (Ps. 119:115). These were Doeg and Ahithophel to whom David kept saying: Why are you driving me out? Give me one hour to sit still and occupy myself with Torah. And to Saul he said; "Now, therefore, I pray thee, let my lord the king hear the words of his servant... for they have driven me out this day from abiding in the inheritance of the Lord, saying: Go, serve other gods" (I Sam. 26:19). Could David possibly have served other gods? No; what David meant was this: Because Doeg and Ahithophel persecuted me, I could not occupy myself with Torah, so that it was as though I served other gods. Hence it is said, "Depart from me, ye evil-doers."²⁰⁷

Therefore, men are constantly admonished to study Torah at all times:

"It is time to act for the Lord; they have made void Thy Law" (Ps. 119:126).²⁰⁸ What is meant by the words "It is time to act for the Lord?" They mean that you should not say, "When I have leisure time, I will study Torah," for you ought to be studying it at any and all times.²⁰⁹

It is incumbent upon them to be even more diligent during a period of neglect:

The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Do not read the verse as it stands, but turn it about and interpret it as follows: When they have made void Thy Law, it is time to act for the Lord. That is to say: When you see the people of your generation neglect the Torah and in their slackness avoid living by it, so that

the Torah is on the verge of being forsaken, then you must act according to its precepts. Hence it is said, "It is time to act for the Lord, etc."²¹⁰

Neglect of the Torah brought about the banishment of the children of Israel from the Land of Israel.²¹¹ Rejection of the Torah brought about punishment:

Woe to the wicked for the Holy One, blessed be He, punishes them for no other reason than that they had nothing to do with Torah.²¹²

and doom:

As for the conclusion of this verse "and the Hermons, from the hill Mizar" (Ps. 42:7) - "Hermons" refers to Sinai from which all the nations were doomed because they did not accept the Torah....²¹³

CHAPTER V

PRAYER

Any meaningful theology which portrays God as the ineffable Creator of the universe whose might and being is immeasurably removed from the limitations of the finite world must, of necessity, have some method of closing the gap between the finite, transcendental Creator and His finite, struggling creations. There must be some avenue of communication for the human being who yearns for a relationship with his Maker and Comforter as he grapples with the frightening problems of every day life.

The Midrash recognizes this problem. It appears to hold that even though the gap between man and his Creator is vast, it is not absolute. The Midrash offers a method by which man can have a relationship and communion with God. This method of communication, by which man overcomes all distance, removes all obstacles and reconciles all difficulties that stand between him and his Creator, is prayer. Through prayer man communicates directly with God. Into it man pours out his wishes, thoughts, fears, sorrows and joys and so shows his dependence on and adoration of the Most High. The infinite, transcendental Creator now becomes the immanent, personal God whose love and compassion inspire man with confidence and zeal.²¹⁴

Fundamental to the concept of prayer in the Midrash, is the belief in its efficacy. Thus it is that the Almighty hears the prayers of all those who turn to Him and give Him praise.²¹⁵ He hearkens to the children of Israel when they call to Him.²¹⁶ He receives the prayers of the repentant sinner even when they are not mouthed:

The verse, "My heart overfloweth with a goodly matter" (Ps. 45:2) means to teach you that even when men are unable to confess with their mouths but their hearts are overflowing with repentance, the Holy One, blessed be He, receives them.²¹⁷

He hears the prayers of the righteous of the world:

"A prayer of the afflicted, when he fainteth and poureth out his complaint before the Lord" (Ps. 102:1). Elsewhere, this is what Scripture says: "The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord; but the prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov. 15:8). Of the wicked, the Holy One, blessed be He, seeks neither sacrifice nor burnt offering. What does God seek? The prayer of the upright.²¹⁸

He hears the prayers of men up to the moment that He is to punish them for their evil ways.²¹⁹ There is some indication, however, that God rejects the prayers of those whom He believes to be wicked:

"Fill their faces with shame" (Ps. 83:17) - like one who feels ashamed to face the public because of sins that are weighing heavily upon him - "that they may seek Thy name, O Lord." But Thou wilt not be found by them, for it is said of them, "They cried, but there was none to save them; even unto the Lord, but He answered them not" (Ps. 18:42).²²⁰

True prayer is more than the mechanical utterance of the lips; it must be a sincere and heartfelt petition:

"O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee doth all flesh come" (Ps. 65:3). Scripture does not say "all men," but "all flesh." From these words the Sages inferred that unless a man makes his heart as yielding as flesh, his prayer will not be heard.²²¹

That the act of prayer must be performed in a reverent and humble manner is strongly urged:

And so our rabbis taught: A man must begin to pray only in a mood of humility - not in a mood of frivolity, not in a mood of levity, nor in a mood of banter - so that the Holy One, blessed be He, will listen to his prayer. For in saying, "Then David the king went in, and sat before the Lord" (II Sam. 7:18), Scripture means... not that he sat, but that he set his heart to pray.²²²

Even the physical position of the worshipper should be considered:

"A song of ascents. Out of the depths have I called Thee, O Lord" (Ps. 130:1). R. Jose ben Hanina said in the name of R. Eliezer ben Jacob: A man should never stand on a high place to pray, but should pray from a low place because it is said, "Out of the depths have I called Thee." It is also taught: A man should never stand upon a bed, upon a chair, upon a bench, upon a stool, or upon any high place but should pray from a low place for there must be no haughtiness in the presence of the Lord.²²³

But once man has truly opened his heart to God, he can be assured that his prayer will be heard:

R. Samuel bar Nahmani taught: If you have prayed with sincerity, you may be assured that your prayer will be heard by the Holy One, blessed be He.²²⁴

Prayer is the service of man to God:

R. Johanan taught: What is the service of the Holy One, blessed be He? It is prayer. Moses implied this when he said: "And it shall come to pass, if ye shall hearken diligently unto My commandments which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, to serve Him with all your heart" (Deut. 11:13). What, then, is the service that a man may render to God? It is none other than prayer; as Scripture says, "Serve the Lord with gladness; come before His presence with singing" (Ps. 100:2).²²⁵

The duty of praying is incumbent upon man in this world and in the world-to-come:

"Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth and for ever more" (Ps. 113:2). In this world they praise Him, and they anger Him. But not so in the time-to-come, for then they will praise Him "from this time forth and for ever more."²²⁶

However, in the world-to-come, only the prayer of thanksgiving will have to be offered:

R. Phinehas taught in the name of R. Levi, and R. Johanan taught in the name of R. Menahem the Galilean: In the time-to-come all prayers will cease except the prayer of thanksgiving. This will never cease.²²⁷

Prayer is one of the major reasons that Israel is to be saved from destruction:

"Nevertheless, He regarded their affliction when He heard their cry" (Ps. 106:44). R. El-eazer taught: Israel is to be saved only on account of affliction, on account of the cry of prayer, on account of the merit of the fathers, on account of repentance and on account of the time of the ingathering (of the exiles).²²⁸

Prayer is that for which the world was created and man given dominion over it,²²⁹ and it is that alone that does man good and sustains him:

"Maschil of David, when he was in the cave" (Ps. 142:1). What is meant by the words "Maschil of David?" They mean that while Saul and David were in the cave, David meditated and saw that no man stands firm by virtue of his wealth, by virtue of his wisdom, or by virtue of his strength. But what does sustain him? His prayer. David understood (hiskel) this after he had meditated and thereupon said that nothing but prayer does a man good.²³⁰

Although prayer can be offered at any time it is expected to be offered at three specific times during the day:

"Evening and morning and at noonday, will I pray" (Ps. 55:18).²³¹ R. Samuel taught: From this verse we learn that a man is required to pray three times daily.²³²

This tradition was attributed to the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob:

And who instituted them (the three times when men are to pray)? The Patriarchs instituted them: Abraham instituted morning prayer... Isaac instituted afternoon prayer... (and) Jacob instituted evening prayer....²³³

In reality, however, prayer was a substitute for the rites of the Temple:

"Let my prayer be set forth before Thee as the incense; and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice" (Ps. 141:2). What did David mean by the words, "Let my prayer be set forth...?" It is as though David said: "My Lord, as long as the Temple was standing, we set forth incense before Thee. But now that we have neither altar, nor High Priest, accept Thou my prayer: let the firmament open so that my prayer can come before Thee."²³⁴

There are times when prolonged prayer is looked upon favorably:

You will find that many prophets and many righteous men prayed before the Holy One, blessed be He, and yet Moses is the only one who, at prayer, is described by Scripture as "a man of God." And why so? Because the actions of Moses differed from those of all other mortals. How? An ordinary man will stand and pray for one or two hours, and if he be an exceedingly righteous man, for a whole day; Moses, however, prayed for forty days and nights. Accordingly, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to the ministering angels: I liken Moses unto you, as it is said, "Bless the Lord, O angels of His, O mighty in strength...." (Ps. 103:20).²³⁵

There are other times when prolonged prayer is considered inopportune:

R. Judah taught in the name of R. Ilai: when the children of Israel stood at the (Red) Sea, they stayed there, disputing one with the other. One said: "Must I go down first into the sea?" and the other said: "Must I go down first into the sea?" Meantime, Nahshon, son of Amminadab jumped into the waves of the sea,

and it came over him. At this, Moses began to pray: "Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul... I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me" (Ps. 69:2-3). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: "My beloved are perishing in the sea, and thou tarriest at prayer!"²³⁶

Although private or individual prayer is possible, there are certain prayers that must be said as part of public assembly:

R. Judah said: And all four²³⁷ are under obligation to give thanks in an assembly of ten men, as is said, "Let them exalt Him also in the assembly of the people" (Ps. 107:32).²³⁸

For this public prayer to be valid, no less than ten men are necessary:

Among the people of Israel, all assemblies to be legally valid, require the presence of ten men, even as the harp upon which David played had ten strings.²³⁹

Although the essential element in prayer is the direction of the thoughts and desires, the outward form of the prayer appears to play an important role as well:

R. Ze'iri said in the name of R. Huna: All admit that a man should pray for his own needs only in the benediction which ends with the words, "Blessed art Thou... who hearkenest unto prayer."²⁴⁰

Also important is the order of prayer:

There are three occasions that require one action to follow immediately upon another... the blessing over the bread must be said immediately after the rite of washing the hands, for it is said, "Wash your hands..."²⁴¹ and bless the Lord" (Ps. 134:2). The Eighteen Benedictions must be said immediately after the Blessing of Redemption, for it is said, "Let the words of my mouth and the meditations of my heart be acceptable before Thee, O Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer" (Ps. 19:15).²⁴²

When the proper order of prayer is followed, Satan's accusations against man are nullified:

R. Jose bar Bun taught: ... When a man pronounces the blessing over bread immediately after the washing of his hands, Satan will bring no accusations against him during the meal. And when a man says the Eighteen Benedictions immediately after the Blessing of Redemption, Satan will bring no accusations against him in the course of the day.²⁴³

The prayers of the children of Israel have special merit, for God hearkens to them when they call upon Him.²⁴⁴ Indeed, no prayer is as pleasing to Him as is the prayer of Israel.²⁴⁵ The very angels of the heaven wait until Israel has completed its prayers to God before they offer their prayers to Him:

After Israel offers praise, the angels follow them in offering praise, as is evident from the next verse in the Psalm, "Bless the Lord, all ye His hosts" (Ps. 103:21), these being the angels, of whom it is said, "The Lord will punish the host of the high heaven on high" (Is. 24:21).²⁴⁶

Often God allows Himself to be influenced by the intercession of special righteous individuals in behalf of His children:

Another comment. The verse "In multitudes, etc."²⁴⁷ alludes to Rachel. Thus the words "so that none came nigh me" (Ps. 55:19) mean that the design of Esau came not nigh Rachel, though the arrangements were that Jacob was to take Leah and that Esau was to take Rachel. And who brought it about that Rachel was delivered from him? Those who "In multitudes... were with me" (ibid.), by which it is meant that Jacob and Leah also put prayers together for Rachel. Thus we read, "And God remembered for Rachel. Thus we read, "And God remembered even the person of Rachel" (Gen. 30:22).²⁴⁸ In this verse the word "Rachel" by itself implies that God remembered her because of her own merit, and the phrase "the person of Rachel" implies that He remembered her also because of the merit of the Patriarchs and the Matriarchs.²⁴⁹

And at times God obeys the demands of these righteous individuals:

"A prayer of Moses, the man of God" (Ps. 90: 1). As Israel was going forth out of Egypt, Moses stood still and prayed, saying: I do not know the way, as is said, "Show me now Thy way" (Ex. 33:13). The Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "Behold, I send an angel before thee to keep thee in the way" (Ex. 23:20). Moses said to God: Even if Thou shouldst send many angels, "If Thy presence go not with me, carry us not up hence" (Ex. 33:15). The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: Behold, I shall obey thy charge, as is said, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest" (ibid. 33:14).²⁵⁰

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NOTES

1. Midrash Tehillim, ed. Solomon Buber, New York: Om Publishing Company, 1947, p. 502 (Ps. 119:71).
2. Daily Prayer Book, trans. Joseph H. Hertz, New York: Bloch Publishing Company, 1954, pp. 612-613.
3. Jewish Encyclopedia, New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1901, Vol. VIII, p. 548.
4. Ibid., p. 569.
5. Ibid., p. 550.
6. Ibid., p. 552. See also Hermann L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1931, pp. 204, 223.
7. Jewish Encyclopedia, ~~op.cit.~~, Vol. VIII, p. 549. This appears to have a Biblical origin. See Leviticus 10:16; 24:12 and Numbers 15:34.
8. Jewish Encyclopedia, ~~op.cit.~~, Vol. VIII, p. 551.
9. The Midrash on Psalms, trans. William G. Braude, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1959, p. x.
10. Ibid., p. xxv.
11. Jewish Encyclopedia, ~~op.cit.~~, Vol. VIII, p. 248.
12. Ibid., see also The Midrash on Psalms, ~~op.cit.~~, p. xxv. From the twelfth century, it was known as Shoher Tob because the text begins with the words "Shoher tob."
13. Midrash on Psalms, ~~op.cit.~~, p. xxvii.
14. Ibid.
15. Ibid., see also Strack, ~~op.cit.~~, pp. 223-224.
16. Midrash on Psalms, ~~op.cit.~~, p. xviii.
17. Jewish Encyclopedia, ~~op.cit.~~, Vol. X, p. 242.
18. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 453 (Ps. 106:1).
19. Ibid., p. 509 (Ps. 123:2).

20. Ibid., p. 439 (Ps. 104:2). The Holy Scriptures, Jewish Publication Society of America, Philadelphia, 1917. (Hereafter, this text will be referred to as J.P.S.) It reads: "Shall it be told Him that I would speak? Or should a man wish that he were swallowed up?" (Job 37:20).
21. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, pp. 278-279 (Ps. 50:1).
22. Ibid., p. 433 (Ps. 103:4).
23. Ibid., p. 433 (Ps. 103:5).
24. Ibid.
25. Ibid., p. 316 (Ps. 68:3).
26. Ibid., p. 277 (Ps. 48:5).
27. Ibid., p. 305 (Ps. 60:3).
28. see, for examples, page 40, note 171; page 33, note 147.
29. Solomon Schechter, Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology, New York: Macmillan Company, 1909, p. 36.
30. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 391 (Ps. 90:10).
31. Ibid., pp. 390-391 (Ps. 90:10).
32. Ibid., pp. 395-396 (Ps. 91:1).
33. Ibid., p. 338 (Ps. 75:3).
34. Ibid., p. 466 (Ps. 110:4).
35. Ibid., p. 312 (Ps. 65:2).
36. Ibid., p. 270 (Ps. 45:4).
37. Ibid., p. 453 (Ps. 106:1).
38. Ibid., p. 527 (Ps. 139:1).
39. Ibid., p. 373 (Ps. 86:4). Although the rabbis of the Midrash recognized the existence of heavenly creatures, they were completely subservient to the will of God.
40. Ibid., p. 381 (Ps. 89:3).
41. Ibid., p. 373 (Ps. 86:3).

42. Ibid., p. 307 (Ps. 62:1).
43. Ibid., p. 462 (Ps. 107:3).
44. Ibid., p. 381 (Ps. 89:2).
45. Ibid., p. 403 (Ps. 92:3).
46. Ibid., p. 317 (Ps. 68:5).
47. Ibid., p. 392 (Ps. 90:12). For example: One day of the Holy One, blessed be He, being a thousand years, as it is said, "For a thousand years in Thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past" (Ps. 90:4), p.392.
48. Ibid., p. 440 (Ps. 104:4).
49. Ibid., p. 414 (Ps. 93:3).
50. Ibid., pp. 431-432 (Ps. 103:2).
51. Guide of the Perplexed of Maimonides, trans. M. Friedlander, New York: Hebrew Publishing Company, pp. 207-208. Also see Book of Kuzari, Judah Halevi, trans. H. Hirschfeld, New York: Pardes Publishing House, Inc., 1946, p. 74.
52. Guide of the Perplexed of Maimonides, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 175.
53. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, pp. 294-295 (Ps. 56:3).
54. Ibid., p. 381 (Ps. 89:1).
55. Ibid., pp. 360-361 (Ps. 79:5).
56. J.P.S., ~~op. cit.~~, reads: "God standeth in the congregation of God; in the midst of the judges, He judgeth" (Ps. 82:1).
57. Ibid., reads: "justice" in Isaiah 61:8.
58. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 368 (Ps. 82:1).
59. Ibid., p. 325 (Ps. 72:2).
60. Ibid., p. 325 (Ps. 72:3).
61. Ibid., p. 412 (Ps. 92:14).
62. Ibid., p. 393 (Ps. 90:16).
63. Ibid., p. 472 (Ps. 114:3).

64. Ibid., p. 272 (Ps. 46:1).
65. J.P.S. reads: "For every boot (seon) stamped (seon) with fierceness." See Braude's note 3 on Psalm 81.
66. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 365 (Ps. 81:2). J.P.S. reads in Ecc. 7:27 "account."
67. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 312 (Ps. 65:1).
68. Ibid., p. 374 (Ps. 86:5).
69. Ibid., p. 412 (Ps. 92:14).
70. Ibid., p. 315 (Ps. 68:2). J.P.S. reads in Deut. 29:19, "be kindled."
71. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 418 (Ps. 94:4).
72. Ibid., p. 322 (Ps. 70:2).
73. Ibid., p. 488 (Ps. 104:27).
74. Ibid., p. 369 (Ps. 82:3). J.P.S. reads in Ps. 82:7, "men."
75. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 356 (Ps. 78:16).
76. J.P.S. reads: "He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house" (Ps. 101:7).
77. Ibid., reads in Psalm 1:1, "sat in."
78. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 428 (Ps. 101:3).
79. Ibid., p. 392 (Ps. 90:13).
80. J.P.S. reads: "He swore concerning them, that He would overthrow them in the wilderness; and that..." (Ps. 106:26).
81. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 456 (Ps. 106:7).
82. Ibid., p. 382 (Ps. 52:1).
83. Ibid., p. 437 (Ps. 103:15).
84. Ibid., p. 278 (Ps. 49:3).
85. Ibid., p. 417 (Ps. 94:2).
86. J.P.S. reads: "My son, despise not the chastening of the Lord, ... for whom the Lord loveth He correcteth, even as a father the son in whom he delighteth" (Prov. 3:12).

87. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 418 (Ps. 94:2). This entire midrash can be understood only if read in the light of the midrash that precedes it.
88. J.P.S. reads: "instruction" in Prov. 1:2.
89. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 417 (Ps. 94:2).
90. Judaism, George Foote Moore, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1954, Vol. I, p. 388.
91. Ibid., p. 387.
92. See page 12, note 53.
93. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 324 (Ps. 72:1).
94. J.P.S. reads: "Mercy is built for ever."
95. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 381 (Ps. 89:2).
96. See page 19, note 83.
97. J.P.S. reads: "And thou shalt consider..." (Deut. 8:5).
98. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 417 (Ps. 94:2).
99. Ibid., p. 308 (Ps. 62:4).
100. Ibid., p. 373 (Ps. 86:2).
101. J.P.S. reads: "court a man."
102. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 335 (Ps. 73:4).
103. Ibid., pp. 342-343 (Ps. 77:1).
104. Ibid., p. 436 (Ps. 103:11).
105. Ibid., p. 348 (Ps. 78:8).
106. Ibid., p. 418 (Ps. 94:4).
107. Ibid., p. 375 (Ps. 86:7).
108. Ibid., p. 281 (Ps. 51:2).
109. Ibid., p. 425 (Ps. 100:2).
110. Jewish Encyclopedia, ~~op. cit.~~, Vol. IV, p. 3. See also Gen. 15:18; 17:2,7.

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112. Jewish Encyclopedia, ~~op.cit.~~, Vol. IV, p. 320.
113. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 476 (Ps. 116:1).
114. Ibid., p. 488 (Ps. 119:1).
115. J.P.S. reads: "I shall gaze upon them that hate me" (Ps. 118:7).
116. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 346 (Ps. 78:5). J.P.S. reads: "When the anger of God... smote down the young men of Israel" (Ps. 78:31).
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118. Ibid., p. 314 (Ps. 67:1).
119. Ibid., p. 337 (Ps. 75:1).
120. J.P.S. reads: "Thus saith the Lord: If My covenant be not with day and night, if I have not appointed the ordinances of heaven and earth."
121. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 465 (Ps. 109:4).
122. Ibid., p. 422 (Ps. 98:1).
123. Ibid., p. 537 (Ps. 147:1). J.P.S. reads: "He hath lifted up a horn for his people" (Ps. 148:14).
124. J.P.S. reads: "Happy are they that are upright in the way" (Ps. 119:1).
125. J.P.S. reads: "covert of the cliff" in Song 2:14.
126. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 488 (Ps. 119:1).
127. J.P.S. reads: "into prosperity" in Ps. 68:7.
128. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 316 (Ps. 68:7).
129. Ibid., p. 537 (Ps. 147:1).
130. Ibid., p. 409 (Ps. 92:11).
131. Ibid., p. 335 (Ps. 74:2).
132. Ibid., pp. 314-315 (Ps. 67:1).
133. Ibid., p. 268 (Ps. 44:1).

134. Braude adds this from another edition. See Braude's note 5 on Psalm 42 and 43.
135. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 266 (Ps. 42:5).
136. Ibid., p. 497 (Ps. 119:34).
137. See pages 20-21, note 89.
138. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 333 (Ps. 73:1).
139. See page 15, note 67.
140. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 525 (Ps. 137:7).
141. See page 23, note 102.
142. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 341 (Ps. 76:3).
143. Ibid., pp. 456-457 (Ps. 106:8). J.P.S. reads: "And Israel was brought very low" (Judges 6:6).
144. See page 19, note 81.
145. See Braude's note 6 on Ps. 42-43. J.P.S. reads: "Do I change, O house of Jacob?"
146. J.P.S. reads: "And I say: 'This is my weakness, that the right hand of the Most High could change.'"
147. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 267 (Ps. 42:5).
148. Ibid., p. 295 (Ps. 56:3).
149. Ibid., p. 348 (Ps. 78:9).
150. J.P.S. reads: "near unto" (Ps. 148:14).
151. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 484 (Ps. 118:10).
152. Ibid., p. 358 (Ps. 79:1).
153. J.P.S. reads: "The Lord shall count in the register of the peoples: 'This one was born there'" (Ps. 87:6).
154. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 380 (Ps. 87:7).
155. Ibid., p. 540 (Ps. 149:4).
156. Ibid., pp. 296-297 (Ps. 57:2).

157. Ibid., p. 368 (Ps. 81:6).
158. J.P.S. reads: "For it is a statute for Israel..." (Ps. 81:5).
159. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 367 (Ps. 81:6).
160. Ibid., p. 274 (Ps. 48:1).
161. Ibid., p. 317 (Ps. 68:6).
162. J.P.S. reads: "Thanksgiving."
163. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 424 (Ps. 100:1).
164. Ibid., p. 540 (Ps. 149:2).
165. Ibid.
166. Ibid., p. 495 (Ps. 119:21).
167. Ibid., p. 445 (Ps. 104:18).
168. Ibid., p. 344 (Ps. 78:1).
169. Ibid., p. 392 (Ps. 90:12).
170. See page 4, note 27.
171. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 391 (Ps. 90:12).
172. See page 36, note 161.
173. See page 37, note 164.
174. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 490 (Ps. 119:4).
175. Ibid., p. 516 (Ps. 132:1).
176. Ibid., p. 503 (Ps. 119:75).
177. See page 28, note 119.
178. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 446 (Ps. 104:22).
179. Ibid., p. 344 (Ps. 78:1).
180. Ibid., p. 502 (Ps. 119:69).
181. Ibid., p. 518 (Ps. 134:1).
182. Ibid., pp. 507-508 (Ps. 122:1).

183. Ibid., p. 501 (Ps. 119:58).
184. See page 28, note 121.
185. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 277 (Ps. 49:1).
186. Ibid., p. 318 (Ps. 68:9).
187. Ibid., pp. 317-318 (Ps. 68:8).
188. Ibid., p. 508 (Ps. 122:3).
189. Ibid., p. 501 (Ps. 119:58).
190. J.P.S. reads: "...appointed a law in Israel" (Ps. 78:5).
191. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 344 (Ps. 78:1). J.P.S. reads: "health" in Prov. 3:8.
192. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 492 (Ps. 119:7).
193. Ibid., pp. 396-397 (Ps. 91:2).
194. Ibid., p. 502 (Ps. 119:62).
195. Ibid., p. 498 (Ps. 119:41).
196. Ibid.
197. Ibid., p. 498 (Ps. 119:38).
198. Ibid., p. 499 (Ps. 119:46).
199. Ibid., p. 446 (Ps. 104:22).
200. Ibid., pp. 453-454 (Ps. 106:2).
201. Ibid., p. 493 (Ps. 119:9).
202. J.P.S. reads: "tried."
203. Ibid.
204. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 502 (Ps. 119:71).
205. J.P.S. reads: "It is not too hard for thee, neither is it far off."
206. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 493 (Ps. 119:9).
207. Ibid., p. 500 (Ps. 119:47).

208. J.P.S. reads: "It is time for the Lord to work..." (Ps. 119:126).
209. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 501 (Ps. 119:57).
210. Ibid.
211. See page 31, note 136.
212. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 501 (Ps. 119:61).
213. Ibid., p. 267 (Ps. 42:5). See Braude's note 8 on Psalm 42.
214. Jewish Theology, Kaufmann Kohler, New York: Macmillan Company, 1918, p. 261, 271.
215. See page 37, note 163.
216. See page 27, note 117. The midrash hints, however, at the possibility that prayer is not always heard:

What is meant by the words, "Thou hast covered thyself with a cloud so that no prayer can pass through"? (Lam. 3:44). R. Samuel bar Nahmani answered: there are times when the gates of prayer are open and times when the gates of prayer are shut, but the gates of repentance are never barred. (Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 313 (Ps. 65:4)).

217. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 270 (Ps. 45:4).
218. Ibid., p. 429 (Ps. 102:1).
219. See page 24, note 106.
220. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op.cit.~~, p. 370 (Ps. 83:3).
221. Ibid., p. 312 (Ps. 65:2).
222. Ibid., p. 463 (Ps. 108:1).
223. Ibid., p. 515 (Ps. 130:1).
224. Ibid., p. 463 (Ps. 108:1).
225. Ibid., p. 314 (Ps. 66:1).
226. Ibid., p. 470 (Ps. 113:4).
227. Ibid., p. 295 (Ps. 56:4).
228. Ibid., p. 457 (Ps. 106:9).

229. See page 7, note 40.
230. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 531 (Ps. 142:1).
231. J.P.S. reads: "complain" (Ps. 55:18).
232. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 291 (Ps. 55:2).
233. Ibid., p. 463 (Ps. 107:5).
234. Ibid., p. 531 (Ps. 141:2).
235. Ibid., p. 389 (Ps. 90:6).
236. Ibid., p. 340 (Ps. 76:1).
237. See Ibid., p. 462 (Ps. 107:5). This refers to persons who wander in the wilderness, who are freed from prison, who have recovered from illness, and who sail the seas.
238. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 463 (Ps. 107:5).
239. Ibid., pp. 406-407 (Ps. 92:7).
240. Ibid., p. 430 (Ps. 102:2).
241. J.P.S. reads: "Lift up your hands... and bless ye the Lord."
See Braude's note 2 on Psalm 134.
242. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 518 (Ps. 134:4).
243. Ibid.
244. See page 27, note 117.
245. See page 34-35, note 155.
246. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 439 (Ps. 104:1).
247. J.P.S. reads: "For there were many that strove with me."
248. J.P.S. reads: "remembered Rachel" (Gen. 30:22).
249. Midrash Tehillim, ~~op. cit.~~, p. 292 (Ps. 55:4).
250. Ibid., p. 390 (Ps. 90:9).