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"REINCARNATION" by DR. ISAAC ERTER:  
A PICTURE OF 19TH CENTURY JEWISH GALICIA.

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of the requirements for the Degree of  
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## HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

The world into which Isaac Erter was born in Galacia in the year 1792 was a world in the beginning stages of transition from a feudal agrarian society with its emphasis on the social collectivity to a modern society underpinned by investment capitalism, with its emphasis on the individual. The Jewish world mirrored this development. Enlightenment in Western Europe was undergirded by a developing capitalism which saw as a prime necessity the freeing of individual initiative from the confines of "estates" and static socio-economic positions based on class. The Jews of Europe, by stages, were divested of the individual restrictions imposed upon them in the Middle Ages because of their status as Jews. The process of enlightenment and freedom was a slow one for the Jew and ultimately not successful ending with the Holocaust of the twentieth century. Still from the late eighteenth century through the early part of the twentieth century, it seemed as if a new day was dawning on the Jews of Europe. The light rose in the west and progressed eastward. It proved, however, to be a mixed blessing.

The new age forced an identity crisis on the Jew whose world view was in many ways medieval. In the confines and sheltered (ideologically) world of the Ghetto he could create

and function within any structured identity system based on Jewish well springs, because the world he lived in was self-contained. But as the disabilities against the Jews began to break down with the destruction of the Ghetto walls, an intellectual process that had begun in Europe some years previous to the rise of Napoleon now rushed with ever increasing force upon the Jews of Europe who moved out into the new Europe created by Napoleon. The Jew found himself in a Europe teeming with the philosophical ideas of Locke, Hume and Spinoza. Ideas which saw a future for new governmental systems based on the concept that the individual is supreme and government exists for his sake. The ideas which swirled through the minds of the "new men" were ideas that saw ways of structuring truth which were out of phase with the system developed by the Jewish mind of a Medieval Europe now passing away (or so it seemed). Indeed even the definition of truth was being restructured on the exclusive basis of the human mind to know and judge reality. Revelation was no longer taken as truth, by the "new minds," unless it was first filtered through the mind of man by the process of reason and senses. Revelation was true only in so far as the mind acquiesced through reason to its validity. Such ideas had far-reaching effects on the Jewish "world view" which was based on the Revelation of a Written Law (Bible) and Oral

Law (Talmud, Codes, Responsa). The result of this aspect of enlightenment coupled with the extension of individual freedoms for the Jew, was to create a crisis of identity which to this day has not yet been satisfactorily resolved. This crisis eventually gave rise to the Reform Jewish Identity, and for the first time in our history a secular Jewish national identity which in turn influenced the rise of Zionism. These "identities" were an attempt to give the Jew to whom traditional Judaism no longer could be a satisfactory way of structuring reality, a way of seeing the world with the eyes of "enlightenment" and the heart of a Jew.

The Jews who spoke for and promulgated the "enlightenment" ideas of Europe and sought by means of their labors to re-structure economically, philosophically and spiritually the Jewish world bringing it into closer approximation with the new world dawning on Europe; these men were called maskilim. Their banner was Haskalah--Enlightenment.

The Haskalah in Europe was opposed by traditional Judaism as a matter of course. The ideas of the Haskalah if widely accepted, would mean a restructuring of Judaism. The greatest heads of traditional Judaism understood very well that the changes in form and ritual for which some of the maskilim in the Germanies and the Austrian principalities were calling, would eventually end in the destruction of the very basis

of Orthodox Judaism: Written and Oral Law as Revelation and the foundation of truth.

Traditional Judaism was joined in its battle by Hasidism a former enemy. Hasidism itself had been born as a mass movement less than a century before the French Revolution. It too, just as Haskalah, sought a regeneration of the Jewish people. It had been born in response to the almost total destruction of Ukrainian Jewry during the Chimelniki massacres of the middle sixteenth century. The Jewish communities of Poland and the Ukraine needed the new approach of Hasidism which saw in joy and fervor an authentic avenue of approach to God. Hasidism, in a sense, was similar to the Shabbtai Zvi Messianic movement of the late seventeenth century in that it turned to mysticism to ease the harsh realities of a world where God's Chosen were raped and murdered in the most horrible manner and the high culture of the Jewish communities of the Ukraine and Poland destroyed. Hasidism fed, to an extent, on the same well springs which fed the Shabbtai Zvi movement. Hasidism, therefore, not only made much use of joy, dance and ecstatic devotion as a way of worship, but it also drew on the Cabbalah--the tradition of Jewish Mysticism--for its view of the cosmos.

In the economically depressed area of Jewish East Europe (Ukraine, Poland, Galicia), spiritual life had decayed following the Chimelniki massacres. The massacres

had destroyed the great yishivot of Polish Jewry. The yishivot never recovered fully. These scholastic institutions never regained their former vigor. In this atmosphere the distance between educated and uneducated widened, to the point where actual antagonism developed between the two classes. Furthermore traditional Judaism had become so scholastic it was believed the more learned one was the better Jew he was. But most Jews living in an economic and political nightmare had all they could do to keep the body together. It was this yearning of the simple uneducated folk for communion with God which Hasidism satisfied. One did not have to be a scholar to communicate with his Creator. The most simple of men could achieve union with God if his heart was set sincerely on his goal and if he approached the Creator with joy and love. Hasidism spread quickly throughout East Europe being effectively opposed only in Lithuania.

There were three main themes of Hasidism. Two of them have already been alluded to. The first was Hitlahavut which saw ecstatic fervor and the joy of life as a most authentic form of worship. The second theme was D'veykut which saw as the purpose of worship, and indeed this life on earth, union with God which was to be achieved by means of Hitlahavut. Shneier Zalman of Ladi who died in 1813 probably kept Hasidism from becoming sectarian by re-emphasizing



traditional Jewish wisdom and learning through the formation of Chabad (chochma, beenah, deyah), but he did not save Hasidism from the excesses of the Hasidic court. This problem relates to the third theme of Hasidism: Yecheedus. This is the special relationship between the hasid and his rebbe which enables the hasid to unite with God. As their souls are intertwined so is God reached. The rebbe became in Hasidic tradition the intermediary between this world and the heavenly world. The idea resulted in the practical deification of the rebbe whose every action became holy (and so beyond question or reproach), with a sanctity that attached itself with magical proportions even to the meal leftovers on his plate. The rebbes, by means of their special powers, held court as petty kings and dukes passing down their special powers in hereditary lineage to their sons. On holidays and festivals the court of a well-known rebbe would be filled with his disciples who lived and ate together. Many men left their homes to attach themselves to the court of their rebbe eating the scraps off his table, listening to every word he uttered, moving through the same world as their leader and teacher. Some of the Hasidic courts were honest and a boon to the life of the surrounding area. Others gave way to the most deplorable kind of idol worship and slavish blindness which allowed the rebbe to extort the wealth of his adherents through the most dishonest and superstitious means.

One of the beliefs held by Hasidism was the belief in reincarnation or the transmigration of souls which was taken from the Lurianic Cabbalah. It is through the vehicle of this belief that Isaac Erter's "Reincarnation" explores Jewish life and forms in nineteenth century Galicia.

Hasidism too, as a matter of course, was opposed to Haskalah. Haskalah sought a renaissance in Jewish life but not by means of mysticism, ecstaticism and yecheedus which had the effect of denying the rational nature of man. It was by means of reason that Judaism and Jewish culture were to be purged of the superstition and ignorance which were keeping the Jewish people in a depressed economic state and preventing the Jewish people from taking its rightful position among the peoples of an enlightened Europe. Issac Erter was one of those who attached his heart and mind to the cause of Haskalah in Galicia. The means which gave expression to his feelings were attacks on religious fanaticism and Hasidism with an attempt at a reorientation of the economic realities in the body of the Jewish people.

Galicia, with its vast population of Jews, passed to the Austrian Empire with the first partition of Poland in 1772.

At this time, there were approximately 225,000 Jews in Galicia.<sup>1</sup> The majority of the Jews were retailers or

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<sup>1</sup>Simon Dubnov, trans. by Moshe Spiegel, History of the Jews (Cranbury, New Jersey, 1971), p. 461.

craftsmen, especially in household industries.<sup>2</sup> The Jewish community was by and large a poor community involved in petty trade when they could find work at all. The development of capitalism proceeded slowly in Galicia, in part perhaps because the peasants, who remained serfs until 1848, had a very low purchasing power. Nevertheless, Eastern Galicia on the Russian border became a center for the Austrian-Russian trade. Three cities in this area were located in such a way that they became centers for the wholesale trade of Galicia in the first half of the nineteenth century. The three cities were Lemberg or Lvov, Tarnopol, and most important, the free city of Brody. Through Brody raw materials were exported from Russia to Austria, Germany, Italy, and other European nations.<sup>3</sup> It was, therefore, natural for Jewish enlightenment from Germany to reach Galicia through these three cities, for in Europe "enlightenment" followed capitalistic innovation and growth. These three cities in Galicia became practically the only centers of Haskalah in Galicia,<sup>4</sup> and of these Brody was foremost.

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<sup>2</sup>Encyclopaedia Judaica, 1971, XVI, p. 1326.

<sup>3</sup>Raphael Mahler, "The Social and Political Aspects of the Haskalah in Galicia," in Studies in Modern Jewish Social History, ed. Joshua A. Fishman (New York, 1972), p. 58.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 59.

In an attempt to assimilate the Jews of his realm and to reform the life of the Jews, the "enlightened despot," Joseph II, of Austria, in 1782 promulgated his "Patent of Toleration." It carried one version for Vienna and lower Austria, and one for Bohemia and Moravia. It confirmed a series of restrictions under the "Code of Regulations Concerning the Jews," mainly in the form of special taxes. For those privileged living in Vienna, there was the Protection and Toleration Tax. The Property and Employment Tax and the Marriage Tax were kept in force.<sup>5</sup> Yet, Jews could engage in large-scale commerce on equal footing with Christians, and were allowed to establish factories that employed Christians. In Bohemia and Moravia, Jews were allowed to lease land, provided they farmed it themselves. If they became baptised into Christianity, then they were allowed to own this land outright. Two years after the decree, neither Hebrew nor Yiddish would be accepted in commercial or public documents; only German would be acceptable. All outward distinctions were abolished. The beard and distinctive dress of the Jews were no longer mandatory.<sup>6</sup> Jews were recruited into the army in 1788. The Jewish people at large, alienated for centuries from government interests, and with the prospect of their youth

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<sup>5</sup>Encyclopaedia Judaica, p. 1326.

<sup>6</sup>Dubnov, p. 338.

being drawn into a hostile environment that was for all purposes anti-Jewish, were horrified.<sup>7</sup>

The Jews of Galicia suffered from the reforms of Joseph II more than their brothers in other areas. The economic and social order of the previous Polish regime was disrupted. The attempt was made to transform the entire way of life among the Jews of Galicia as quickly as possible by a series of decrees from Vienna. The population of the Jews of Galicia dropped one third during the first years of the reforms of Joseph II. Jews had various branches of peddling prohibited to them. They were eventually enjoined altogether from maintaining taverns in villages and leasing various branches of agriculture. Tens of thousands became impoverished by these decrees.

By means of the various decrees and the "Patent of Toleration," the Jews lost the communal autonomy they had held under the Polish regime and became subject to the civil administration and court system.<sup>8</sup> Jewish economic life was severely restricted. They were forbidden to obtain leases on agricultural pursuits, on taverns, breweries, and flour mills. They could buy land only if they tilled it themselves. Marriages were subject to very strict controls. For one to be married, he first

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 460.

<sup>8</sup>Dubnov, p. 669.

had to show that he had graduated from one of the state "normal" schools. These schools were organized in 1787, under the attempt of the Austrian government to enforce an education of the type that would create a "new sort of Judaism."<sup>9</sup> In 1787, Herz Homberg, who had been part of the Haskalah circle of Berlin, was appointed chief inspector of the new Jewish schools. In these schools the Jewish element came second to the German element. The patent of 1789 compelled Jews to send their children to these schools. Without a certificate from such a school, or proof of having studied German and the general subjects taught in the schools, one could not marry nor study Talmud in a cheder.<sup>10</sup> The Jews hated these schools, especially since the leaders of the new system were held to be assimilationists.<sup>11</sup> Indeed ultimately emancipation in Galicia did not work to the advantage of Haskalah for it came to be associated with government measures aimed at assimilation.<sup>12</sup>

Homberg's name also became associated with the new candle tax imposed upon the Jews.<sup>13</sup> In 1797, a Jewish

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<sup>9</sup>Dubnov, p. 669.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 670.

<sup>11</sup>Encyclopaedia Judaica, p. 1327.

<sup>12</sup> *המזרח החדש* (1922), p. 292. המזרח החדש (1922), p. 292. ( *המזרח החדש*, 1922, v.1),

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

resident of Lemberg, Solomon Kofler, proposed that the government establish a new tax on candles that the Jews lit on Sabbaths and festivals. This tax was especially difficult for the poor. The tax levied on kosher meat, instituted in 1789, could be eased somewhat by the pious simply by not eating as much meat as one would eat normally. However, for the pious, there was no such choice open in regard to the candle tax. The Sabbath and festival candles were to be lit because of religious injunction. Even those who did not light candles still had to pay for them. The collection of these taxes was farmed out to Jews who received a percentage of the tax levied on these materials. Solomon Kofler suggested the candle tax, knowing that it would provide money for the Crown. He personally offered to act as the tax collector.<sup>14</sup> The government consulted Homberg, who readily approved of the tax. So the new tax was proclaimed in 1797. It proved to be especially grinding on the poor. As for the experiment with the new Jewish schools, they were closed in 1806. Such were the forces at work in the Galicia into which Issac Erter was born.

Issac Erter was born in a village near Przemyśl in 1792, His father was an innkeeper and very poor, but nonetheless schooled his son in Hebrew and Talmud. He was married very young, at the age of thirteen, which was not so unusual

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<sup>14</sup>Dubnov, p. 671.

in those days. His wife died soon after their marriage and he remarried. This second marriage was a good one. He seemed to be an especially sensitive individual who searched for his way in life. He became a hasid as a young man. At that time he made the acquaintance of Joseph Tarler, a maskil, who changed his life.

In his critique of "Bochen Tzedek," by Joseph Perl, which appeared in the periodical of the Haskalah in Galicia: Kerem Chemed, Rapport stated that a hasid had argued to an important maskil that the number of swindlers among the maskilim was greater than among the hasidim. In another place Rapport complains about the maskilim who make dirt out of their knowledge, exploiting that knowledge by slandering fellow Jews to the government and publishing lampoons. Among this group we could place Tarler. He was at least as much interested in gain as he was in knowledge. He sought position and money as the answer to everything. If it could not be obtained honestly, he did not recoil from dishonesty. When a wealthy man of his district died, he forged the deceased name to certain documents and acquired thereby a fortune. When the forgeries were discovered he fled, eventually becoming a censor for Hebrew books in Lemberg.

Tarler was introduced to Erter, while Erter was still a youth. He introduced the young hasid to Maimonides and Mendelsohn. Erter went the way of his contemporary Joseph Perl



and changed from a hasid to one who hated Hasidut.

He moved to Lemberg as a private tutor making the acquaintance of Rapport and other maskilim of the Galician school, such as Krochmal and Mises.<sup>15</sup> In 1815, Jacob Orenstein, the chief rabbi of the district, directed a secondary ban of excommunication against Erter and three others, Rapport, Natkes and Pastor, leaving Mises alone probably because he was too wealthy to disturb. The ban fell heavily on Erter. He was poor and depended for his livelihood on parents who entrusted their sons to him for teaching. With the ban, these parents refused to send their children to him. Erter eventually attacked Orenstein by means of the satire "Mozney Mishkal" which became very popular among the maskilim. In it he accuses a great rabbi of plagiarism. The satire was written at the time Rapport was trying to prove that Orenstein had taken great chunks of material from other authors without noting the sources. Erter manages to include the name of Orenstein's work "Yishuot Ya'akov" in the satire in such a way as to leave little doubt as to who the plagiarist was.<sup>16</sup>

Erter moved to Brody and for a time became manager of a new Jewish school. Realizing that in his position a livelihood

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<sup>15</sup> *עבודת ה' לרבי*, *לרבי* *אברהם* *הרמב"ם* (נידח - ל), 1960, v. 6), pp. 67-68

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 68.

would never be assured, at the age of 33 he went to Budapest to study medicine.<sup>17</sup> After five years he completed his course of study. He was not able to receive his Doctorate of Medicine because it was a law that only those who had completed "Gymnasia" could receive such a degree. Since he did not qualify he earned instead a Practitioner of Medicine.<sup>18</sup>

From 1829-1831, he practiced medicine in a small town in Eastern Galicia called Rava.<sup>19</sup> In 1831, a cholera epidemic broke out in Galicia. He went from city to city for the government of Austria fighting the epidemic. He prepared at that time several papers for the government on the outbreak and spread of the disease. When his friend Mises contracted the disease, Erter rushed to his bed side only to see him die within minutes of his arrival. In 1831, Erter moved back to Brody the most important center of the Galician Haskalah.

In Brody he practiced medicine spending much of his time with the poor. He worked all day and wrote his satires in the evening. All of them except "Mozney Mishkal" he wrote during this period. Some appeared in Kerem Chemed. Others were published separately.

<sup>17</sup>J. Chotzner, "Issac Erter--A Modern Hebrew Humorist," Jewish Quaterly Review (Volume III, 1891), p. 108.

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(ה' 1930, חמ"ט, כ"א, כ"ב, כ"ג, כ"ד, כ"ה, כ"ו, כ"ז, כ"ח, כ"ט, ל, ל"א, ל"ב, ל"ג, ל"ד, ל"ה, ל"ו, ל"ז, ל"ח, ל"ט, מ, מ"א, מ"ב, מ"ג, מ"ד, מ"ה, מ"ו, מ"ז, מ"ח, מ"ט, נ, נ"א, נ"ב, נ"ג, נ"ד, נ"ה, נ"ו, נ"ז, נ"ח, נ"ט, ס, ס"א, ס"ב, ס"ג, ס"ד, ס"ה, ס"ו, ס"ז, ס"ח, ס"ט, ע, ע"א, ע"ב, ע"ג, ע"ד, ע"ה, ע"ו, ע"ז, ע"ח, ע"ט, פ, פ"א, פ"ב, פ"ג, פ"ד, פ"ה, פ"ו, פ"ז, פ"ח, פ"ט, ק, ק"א, ק"ב, ק"ג, ק"ד, ק"ה, ק"ו, ק"ז, ק"ח, ק"ט, ק"י, ק"כ, ק"כ"א, ק"כ"ב, ק"כ"ג, ק"כ"ד, ק"כ"ה, ק"כ"ו, ק"כ"ז, ק"כ"ח, ק"כ"ט, ק"ל, ק"ל"א, ק"ל"ב, ק"ל"ג, ק"ל"ד, ק"ל"ה, ק"ל"ו, ק"ל"ז, ק"ל"ח, ק"ל"ט, ק"מ, ק"מ"א, ק"מ"ב, ק"מ"ג, ק"מ"ד, ק"מ"ה, ק"מ"ו, ק"מ"ז, ק"מ"ח, ק"מ"ט, ק"נ, ק"נ"א, ק"נ"ב, ק"נ"ג, ק"נ"ד, ק"נ"ה, ק"נ"ו, ק"נ"ז, ק"נ"ח, ק"נ"ט, ר, ר"א, ר"ב, ר"ג, ר"ד, ר"ה, ר"ו, ר"ז, ר"ח, ר"ט, ר"י, ר"כ, ר"כ"א, ר"כ"ב, ר"כ"ג, ר"כ"ד, ר"כ"ה, ר"כ"ו, ר"כ"ז, ר"כ"ח, ר"כ"ט, ר"ל, ר"ל"א, ר"ל"ב, ר"ל"ג, ר"ל"ד, ר"ל"ה, ר"ל"ו, ר"ל"ז, ר"ל"ח, ר"ל"ט, ר"מ, ר"מ"א, ר"מ"ב, ר"מ"ג, ר"מ"ד, ר"מ"ה, ר"מ"ו, ר"מ"ז, ר"מ"ח, ר"מ"ט, ר"נ, ר"נ"א, ר"נ"ב, ר"נ"ג, ר"נ"ד, ר"נ"ה, ר"נ"ו, ר"נ"ז, ר"נ"ח, ר"נ"ט, ש, ש"א, ש"ב, ש"ג, ש"ד, ש"ה, ש"ו, ש"ז, ש"ח, ש"ט, ש"י, ש"כ, ש"כ"א, ש"כ"ב, ש"כ"ג, ש"כ"ד, ש"כ"ה, ש"כ"ו, ש"כ"ז, ש"כ"ח, ש"כ"ט, ש"ל, ש"ל"א, ש"ל"ב, ש"ל"ג, ש"ל"ד, ש"ל"ה, ש"ל"ו, ש"ל"ז, ש"ל"ח, ש"ל"ט, ש"מ, ש"מ"א, ש"מ"ב, ש"מ"ג, ש"מ"ד, ש"מ"ה, ש"מ"ו, ש"מ"ז, ש"מ"ח, ש"מ"ט, ש"נ, ש"נ"א, ש"נ"ב, ש"נ"ג, ש"נ"ד, ש"נ"ה, ש"נ"ו, ש"נ"ז, ש"נ"ח, ש"נ"ט, ת, ת"א, ת"ב, ת"ג, ת"ד, ת"ה, ת"ו, ת"ז, ת"ח, ת"ט, ת"י, ת"כ, ת"כ"א, ת"כ"ב, ת"כ"ג, ת"כ"ד, ת"כ"ה, ת"כ"ו, ת"כ"ז, ת"כ"ח, ת"כ"ט, ת"ל, ת"ל"א, ת"ל"ב, ת"ל"ג, ת"ל"ד, ת"ל"ה, ת"ל"ו, ת"ל"ז, ת"ל"ח, ת"ל"ט, ת"מ, ת"מ"א, ת"מ"ב, ת"מ"ג, ת"מ"ד, ת"מ"ה, ת"מ"ו, ת"מ"ז, ת"מ"ח, ת"מ"ט, ת"נ, ת"נ"א, ת"נ"ב, ת"נ"ג, ת"נ"ד, ת"נ"ה, ת"נ"ו, ת"נ"ז, ת"נ"ח, ת"נ"ט, ת"ס, ת"ס"א, ת"ס"ב, ת"ס"ג, ת"ס"ד, ת"ס"ה, ת"ס"ו, ת"ס"ז, ת"ס"ח, ת"ס"ט, ת"פ, ת"פ"א, ת"פ"ב, ת"פ"ג, ת"פ"ד, ת"פ"ה, ת"פ"ו, ת"פ"ז, ת"פ"ח, ת"פ"ט, ת"ק, ת"ק"א, ת"ק"ב, ת"ק"ג, ת"ק"ד, ת"ק"ה, ת"ק"ו, ת"ק"ז, ת"ק"ח, ת"ק"ט, ת"ק"י, ת"ק"כ, ת"ק"כ"א, ת"ק"כ"ב, ת"ק"כ"ג, ת"ק"כ"ד, ת"ק"כ"ה, ת"ק"כ"ו, ת"ק"כ"ז, ת"ק"כ"ח, ת"ק"כ"ט, ת"ק"ל, ת"ק"ל"א, ת"ק"ל"ב, ת"ק"ל"ג, ת"ק"ל"ד, ת"ק"ל"ה, ת"ק"ל"ו, ת"ק"ל"ז, ת"ק"ל"ח, ת"ק"ל"ט, ת"ק"מ, ת"ק"מ"א, ת"ק"מ"ב, ת"ק"מ"ג, ת"ק"מ"ד, ת"ק"מ"ה, ת"ק"מ"ו, ת"ק"מ"ז, ת"ק"מ"ח, ת"ק"מ"ט, ת"ק"נ, ת"ק"נ"א, ת"ק"נ"ב, ת"ק"נ"ג, ת"ק"נ"ד, ת"ק"נ"ה, ת"ק"נ"ו, ת"ק"נ"ז, ת"ק"נ"ח, ת"ק"נ"ט, ת"ק"ס, ת"ק"ס"א, ת"ק"ס"ב, ת"ק"ס"ג, ת"ק"ס"ד, ת"ק"ס"ה, ת"ק"ס"ו, ת"ק"ס"ז, ת"ק"ס"ח, ת"ק"ס"ט, ת"ק"פ, ת"ק"פ"א, ת"ק"פ"ב, ת"ק"פ"ג, ת"ק"פ"ד, ת"ק"פ"ה, ת"ק"פ"ו, ת"ק"פ"ז, ת"ק"פ"ח, ת"ק"פ"ט, ת"ק"ק, ת"ק"ק"א, ת"ק"ק"ב, ת"ק"ק"ג, ת"ק"ק"ד, ת"ק"ק"ה, ת"ק"ק"ו, ת"ק"ק"ז, ת"ק"ק"ח, ת"ק"ק"ט, ת"ק"ק"י, ת"ק"ק"כ, ת"ק"ק"כ"א, ת"ק"ק"כ"ב, ת"ק"ק"כ"ג, ת"ק"ק"כ"ד, ת"ק"ק"כ"ה, ת"ק"ק"כ"ו, ת"ק"ק"כ"ז, ת"ק"ק"כ"ח, ת"ק"ק"כ"ט, ת"ק"ק"ל, ת"ק"ק"ל"א, ת"ק"ק"ל"ב, ת"ק"ק"ל"ג, ת"ק"ק"ל"ד, ת"ק"ק"ל"ה, ת"ק"ק"ל"ו, ת"ק"ק"ל"ז, ת"ק"ק"ל"ח, ת"ק"ק"ל"ט, ת"ק"ק"מ, ת"ק"ק"מ"א, ת"ק"ק"מ"ב, ת"ק"ק"מ"ג, ת"ק"ק"מ"ד, ת"ק"ק"מ"ה, ת"ק"ק"מ"ו, ת"ק"ק"מ"ז, ת"ק"ק"מ"ח, ת"ק"ק"מ"ט, ת"ק"ק"נ, ת"ק"ק"נ"א, ת"ק"ק"נ"ב, ת"ק"ק"נ"ג, ת"ק"ק"נ"ד, ת"ק"ק"נ"ה, ת"ק"ק"נ"ו, ת"ק"ק"נ"ז, ת"ק"ק"נ"ח, ת"ק"ק"נ"ט, ת"ק"ק"ס, ת"ק"ק"ס"א, ת"ק"ק"ס"ב, ת"ק"ק"ס"ג, ת"ק"ק"ס"ד, ת"ק"ק"ס"ה, ת"ק"ק"ס"ו, ת"ק"ק"ס"ז, ת"ק"ק"ס"ח, ת"ק"ק"ס"ט, ת"ק"ק"פ, ת"ק"ק"פ"א, ת"ק"ק"פ"ב, ת"ק"ק"פ"ג, ת"ק"ק"פ"ד, ת"ק"ק"פ"ה, ת"ק"ק"פ"ו, ת"ק"ק"פ"ז, ת"ק"ק"פ"ח, ת"ק"ק"פ"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק, ת"ק"ק"ק"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"י, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"כ"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"ל"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"מ"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"נ"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"ס"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"פ"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"י, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"כ"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"ל"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ"ב, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ"ג, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ"ד, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ"ה, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ"ו, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ"ז, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ"ח, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"מ"ט, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"נ, ת"ק"ק"ק"ק"נ"א, ת"ק"ק"ק"

<sup>19</sup>Meyer Lovitch, "Isaac Erter--His Life and Works," Hebrew Union College Annual (Cincinnati, 1904), p. 230.

Erter was not only a polemical writer. He was also a communal spokesman. During the Damascus blood libel of 1840, he wrote protests. During the revolutions of 1848, he worked to found an organization that would place Jews on the land as farmers. He also worked on behalf of the representative from his district to the Constitutional Convention in Vienna.

He labored on behalf of educational reform attempting to form an organization for the development of Hebrew and with Schorr, a religious reformer, a way of instilling in Jewish youth an "enlightened" religious outlook. Together with others they founded, to further these purposes, the periodical Ha Halutz. He had one son and two daughters. His wife, son and one daughter passed away during these years. In 1851, he went to Karlsbad where his daughter had taken him for a "cure" after he had become ill and almost totally blind. After becoming penniless because of the expenses incurred he died, followed soon after by his one remaining daughter.<sup>20</sup>

"Gilgul Nefesh" translated in this thesis as "Reincarnation," was completed in 1841, and published separately in 1845, in both Hebrew and Yiddish. It was not only his most popular satire, it was also his longest. By means of the framework of seventeen transmigrations of a soul (reincarnation

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<sup>20</sup>

2/5/10, O.P. CIT., PP. 321-325.

was a belief held by many hasidim) Erter paints his view of the Jew of his day.

Erter's written style was Biblical. Many believe "Reincarnation" has the right to be called a classic. His vocabulary is Biblical. Erter often incorporates entire phrases taken from passages in the Bible. He often began with a well-known phrase, but ended with an unexpected word to good effect. He also makes many plays upon words. He knew how to use Biblical language to evoke subtle, underlying Biblical images either as a contrast or comparison with the obvious image he painted with words. He did not write in the flowery style that was so popular in the "Berlin Enlightenment." He formulated a style of his own. To our eyes and ears it seems a bit heavy, but there is no doubt that the prose form in Hebrew was given birth in Galicia, due in great part to the efforts of Erter. He did much in bringing Hebrew to the level of a living language.

Erter saw little beauty in the Jacob of his day. Much is putrid, the atmosphere reeks. Erter's view is one-sided and restricted. He was not talented enough to reveal the roots of the manifestations against which he waged war.<sup>21</sup> But in all fairness one must first sound an alarm. Only then can one save others from the conflagration. Erter strove, more as a moralist than as a reformer, to bring

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272/18, op. cit., p. 72

Jewish institutions into closer approximation with the ideals of the "Age of Reason." In "Reincarnation" he attacks those elements of the Jewish world in Galicia which he believes are retarding the development of a healthy socio-economic religious society. While he is powerless to reveal and explain the essence of the Jewish mystique, still we see in his work "Reincarnation" a revelation of the religious, social and economic situation of the Jewish community in Galicia in the beginnings of its formulation of new Jewish identities.

The religious situation has already been alluded to above. It was interrelated with the social and economic state of Jewish society as any specific parts of a cultural complex are related to one another. Erter believed that the Jews of his country could not raise the level of their cultural--economic position as long as Hasidism conspired to keep the level of intellectual awareness among the Jewish community low by means of superstition and fear. Interestingly enough, he does not attack rabbinic Judaism in the same way that he attacks Hasidism. Hasidism receives a general and unequivocal unfavorable judgment from him, while it is only the over zealous rabbinical leaders who are attacked, not rabbinical Judaism as a whole. This is very much in keeping with the attitudes of his colleagues. The maskilim of Galicia considered the Jews to be a people whose foundation

was in religion, and in a common religious--cultural past. For Krochmal, the Jews were a "spiritual nation," founded on their religious past. Meyer Letteris in a letter said: ". . . [the Jews] bear with them the heritage of their fatherland, for their fatherland is not based on dusty earth. . . . The Law and the sacred books are their spiritual life and eternal possession."<sup>22</sup>

Perhaps for this reason Erter does not envision any sweeping renovations of Jewish ritual and practice. Even his attack on the cantorate, where he sees the cantor as a greedy, ignorant parasite, is not directed so much against the institution of the Cantor as against those individual cantors who were ignorant and greedy and who filled the Poland--Galicia of his day. Indeed, he reproaches the cantor who is devoid of taste and does not know the proper order of service or the traditional melodies.

His attack on those zealous for religion is not an attack on the rabbinate nor on orthodoxy. It is an attack on those rabbis who pursue the maskilim and others who support enlightenment. The specificity of this attack can be illustrated by the fact that the zealous rabbi who attacks the weak like a cur of a dog, but is afraid of those who fight back (an obvious reference to Orenstein who did not place Mises under the ban because he feared his wealth); this

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<sup>22</sup>Mahler, p. 66.

rabbi dies when he hears that one whom he hated and pursued in anger has become respected and honored in a distant city (a reference to Rapport who became chief rabbi of Prague). Erter attacks only the zealous rabbi, not the pious Jew. In a similar manner, Erter's judgment of the Chevra Kadeesha is not a judgment based on the structure or goals of the burial organization. The attack is made only against the over zealous who do not act as befitting persons in their station. The proper handling of the dead is most important in Judaism. The body must be washed gently and shown the respect and honor that all human beings deserve. The dead body is still human. Apparently in the days of Erter, as in our own, there were unscrupulous men who saw their position as a way of extorting money. Erter does not attack Jewish burial ritual or practice. He does attack those individuals who have used their honored stations to their own advantage fostering all kinds of "selling techniques" on those who are mourning the loss of a loved one. Erter, is in a sense, attacking the "Shadow Lawn" of his own day. He attacks crudity where there should be gentleness, and greed and selfishness where there should be kindness. The "spirit" that denigrates and humiliates the body of the "dead" maskil, is a spirit abhorrent to the truly pious of Orthodox Judaism. In a sense, in these three instances, Erter is supportive of the traditional

structure. Nowhere in regard to the over zealous Rabbi, or the grave digger, or the Cantor can we see in Erter a person who feels the world view of traditional Judaism and the structure of Law it developed are out of phase with true morality. His biting sarcasm on the contrary, is directed against those who do not measure up to the standards of Jewish law or intellectual integrity.

Only in one instance is it possible to see an attack on the ideological structure of the Orthodox Judaism of his day. This possibility is in regard to the contrast Erter makes between religious zeal and what I have translated as national zeal. Erter's explanation of national zeal is very much in keeping with the attitudes toward nationalism which were beginning to develop in Europe as a result of Napoleon's efforts and deeds. Erter wrote "Reincarnation" during the period of reaction in Europe which set in after Napoleon's defeat and which was engineered by the Austrian diplomat Metternich. Nonetheless we know national yearnings were burning in the hearts of many. These yearnings burst forth at various times and places in Europe from 1815-1850, the most noteworthy being the revolutions of 1836 and 1848, the latter being very widespread and occurring only three years after the publication of "Reincarnation!" It is not so surprising to expect that the national spirit which was animating the hearts of Hungarians, Germans, Slavs,



Poles, Croats, Czechs and Italians, could also animate the heart of an educated and enlightened Jew living in one of the main trade centers between Galicia and the rest of Europe. For Erter national zeal is the "mother of all the mighty men of war who fought with an iron sword when Israel dwelt upon its own land." Those who taught with arrows in their hands in olden days, those who protected the national state and its people are the spiritual forebearers of those who use the arrow of their tongues in his day for what is ultimately the same purpose: The protection of the best interests and goals of the Jewish people. Erter was trying to work a cultural renaissance among his people just as great Czechs and Poles were trying to work a similar renaissance among their people. He labored on behalf of this ideal through his attempts at the rejuvenation of the national language--Hebrew, through economic reorientations which would normalize the Jewish class situation, through his revelations of the ills and reactionary elements of Jewish society which were, he believed, holding back national progress. In this instance alone, can we see in "Reincarnation" an attack on orthodoxy and then it is not a basic attack, but one that sees only the zealousness of orthodoxy as an attribute detrimental to the continued survival of Judaism's traditional forms. Religious fanaticism and not Traditional Judaism hates its brother and drives him out of the community.

Not the Orthodox Jew but the religious fanatic--and the two are not the same for Erter--is the one who closes his mind to those of the opinion that certain changes must be made or the entire traditional structure will collapse. Erter writes as a man whose goal it is to save the traditional structure as a whole by clearing away from it all the accretions that were added during the years and have now become more harmful than helpful. The fanatics refuse to change anything calling even the filth that has attached itself to the traditional structure holy. Again, Erter here is attacking more an attitude that has become part of the traditionalist's view toward Judaism rather than the traditional structure of Judaism itself which he supports as the foundation of the Jewish people.

The ignorant Cantor, the over zealous Rabbi, the greedy and crude head of the burial society, the religious fanatic, these come under the biting satire of Erter. But the average pious Jew, the sincerely traditional Jew and the basis of the Orthodox Jew's world view is not attacked by Erter. The structure of rabbinic Judaism does not feel the arrows of Erter's tongue. Such is not the case with Hasidism. Hasidism as a religious structure is attacked.

The nature of the Hasidic movement has been outlined briefly above. Galicia for all practical purposes was the center of Hasidism. There it reached the greatest heights

of power and influence. By the nineteenth century the Hasidic court with all its attendant ostentatiousness and wealth had become commonplace in Galicia. Erter attacks the institution of the Tzaddik and Hasidism by not only taking issue with the "morality" and "honesty" of individual hasidim and their Tzaddikim, but also by attacking the belief structure of Hasidism by means of his biting satire which views the institution of Hasidism as being based on lies, and the structure itself as a tremendous sham perpetuated to the detriment of the folk for the material purposes of the Tzaddikim and the gratification of idiots and mad men.

We have already mentioned the excesses that the concept of Yechedus allowed in reference to the Tzaddik and his followers. Erter was writing at the height of these excesses. The Tzaddik retained his power and gathered great wealth onto himself by playing on the fears and blind loyalty of his people through the shrewd use of magic in which the ignorant believed. Erter's most searing prose is reserved for the "mystical" attributes of Judaism which have degenerated into superstition. "Reincarnation" begins with the "teller of the tale" (Erter himself) passing by the window of a recently deceased patient. He sees the patient "washing" his spirit by means of a glass of water set on the window sill for this purpose. Erter of course is using this superstitious custom of the Galician Jew in mock seriousness.

The spirit begins its story. We are told that the spirit's beginning was achieved through the miracle of one of the "wonder men." A barren woman, seeking a miracle, goes to a Tzaddik. Erter leaves no doubt in our minds that the Tzaddik performs the miracle by impregnating the woman himself while her husband remained sterile all the days of his life. In a similar vein Erter takes us through the world of the hasidim. We see drunkenness, mad rantings offered as prayer, blind superstition, greed and even cruelty, the abandonment of home and family to the elements for the sake of being near one's Tzaddik, sexual licentiousness, gluttony, extortion and ignorance as the real achievements of the hasidim and their Tzaddikim. He sees their movement as a degenerative process among the Jewish people--a most blind and wastefully foolish medieval form that the Jewish people would be better without.

Erter attacks the very foundation of Hasidism when he attacks Jewish mysticism and the Cabbalah through his tale of the Cabbalist, for the spiritual basis of Hasidism is mysticism. For Erter Jewish mysticism is a bastardization of Judaism; a mixture of foreign elements from Persia, Greece and Egypt intermingled with pure Judaism. The Jewish mystic and hence the hasid, is really an idol worshipper who warps into grotesque shapes the religion of Moses. Erter writes that the cabbalists practice fraud by calling their lies and

obscurities the writings of the holy men of the ancient past when indeed they are forgeries. The Book of the Zohar for instance, the foundation of Jewish mysticism, is attributed to Simeon bar Yochai but probably written much later, at least in part, by Moses de Leon in the thirteenth century. This bastardization of Judaism gave impetus to the rise of false messiahs who succeeded only in adding to the suffering and hardship of the Jewish people. One thinks of the Shabbtai Zvi movement, and the movement of Jacob Frank which only added to the despair of the Jewish people and drew their strength from the sources of Jewish mysticism. Enter at this juncture has the Cabbalist believe himself to be invisible. Believing himself safe thereby, he strikes a non-Jew and in turn is stomped to death.

The belief in invisibility by means of the proper formula was a popular belief held by the hasidim. It is said that a certain Leib son of Sarah of Podolia, a disciple of the "Great Maggid" of Mezeriez, was sent to challenge the Austrian king and the system of the "normal" schools. Leib galloped from Galicia to Vienna where he penetrated the palace invisibly. He demanded the king nullify the decrees relating to the schools and the recruitment of Jews into the army. When the king refused Leib stabbed him with a knife. The Emperor and the Tzaddik happened to die at the same time in 1790. Both were said to have perished in a final encounter.

The closing of the "normal" schools in 1806, and the easing of army recruitment were said to have been the direct result of the intervention of the Tzaddik in the heavenly spheres.<sup>23</sup> It is this kind of belief that Erter so expertly and with much biting humor denounces.

We see revealed through "Reincarnation" Erter's view of the religious tensions and dynamics then current in Galicia. While he deplores certain elements of traditional Judaism as not living up to its own expectations and demands, he does not cut away at the traditional structure. Such is not the case in reference to Hasidism which he believes is rotten at its base and spiritually deficient, dangerous to the soul of the Jewish people.

Erter's view of the hasidim also touches on the economic sphere which in turn helps us see the economic situation of the Jews of Galicia and what Erter believed the economic future to be. Erter's attitude toward the Hasidic court and its obscurity is quite obvious. If the maskilim were spokesmen for the values of the rising capitalist plutocracy, as the historian Raphael Mahler believed (see: "The Social and Political Aspects of the Haskalah in Galicia," Studies in Modern Jewish Social History, Ktav, 1972), then Erter's disapproval can readily be understood. The activities of the hasidim he described in

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<sup>23</sup> Simon Dubnov, trans. by Moshe Spiegel, History of the Jews (Cranbury, New Jersey, 1971), pp. 681-682.

"Reincarnation" took a man away from his work and gainful employment leaving his family without means of support. The activities of the hasidism prevented the believer's initiative from being realized in the economic sphere in a way advantageous to the people as a whole. Erter saw Hasidism as creating economic problems in an area and among a people already economically depressed. But especially severe criticism is reserved for those Jews who add to the economic problems of their people for the sake of personal gain. The Tzaddik and hasid, for Erter, are such persons. Another is the Jewish tax collector.

Two taxes were levied on the Jewish people by the Austrian authorities in the years 1789 and 1797 respectively. The tax on Kosher meat and candles. They fell especially heavily on the Jewish poor and even on the non-observant Jews. The non-observant Jew did not pay the tax on Kosher meat. The observant poor could avoid it by not eating meat. But whether one lit candles or not for festivals and Sabbaths one had to pay the candle tax. The taxes were farmed out to Jews who collected them for a percentage of the tax. The candle tax was suggested by a Jew, Solomon Kofler. This is what Erter refers to when he says: "This man was wiser than Solomon, for Solomon the King spoke about the trees and beasts, birds. . . and his verses number one thousand and five, while this Solomon /Solomon Kofler/ of a man spoke

only about candles and meat and his money numbers hundreds of thousands of shekels." Erter neglects to make known the fact that a well-known maskil was also involved in such matters. When Herz Homberg was asked by the Austrian government his opinion, he stated his support of such a candle tax. There was a close association between the government and the tax collecting parasites. If one could not pay the tax, then with the help of soldiers if necessary, it was collected in the form of household goods.

Erter felt that the economic and social position of the Jews within Europe was warped out of proper shape. European nationalists held that the basis of any national movement and the foundation of a healthy national life rested with the peasant class or farming class that lived and worked the land. The strength of the nation rested with these simple, honest people who expressed the simple values basic to civilization. The nineteenth century was an age when primitive man was viewed as being more pure, more honestly noble than the sophisticated urban dweller. Primitive man's godness was more readily evident because he was unencumbered with the sophisticated structures of civilization. This was, of course, the fantasy of the "noble savage" that was so much a part of the educated mind of the Age of Reason. Perhaps for this reason, at least in part, the peasant and farmer were viewed as the bedrock of true national strength since their blood



ran closer to the real beginnings of the national spirit. Their life was primitive, so too their nature.

Erter and the other maskilim were quite aware of the fact that the Jews in their beginnings had been an agrarian people. The forces of history in Diaspora had created an abnormal situation in the socio-economic sphere of Jewish life. There were very few Jewish farmers. Most Jews were traders, peddlers or merchants. Erter felt that if this warped class structure could be "normalized," the situation of the Jews in Europe could be "normalized." This meant the formation of a Jewish farming class of free land holders. Erter in later years lent his energies and support to plans for placing Jews on the land. In the sequence of the grave digger in "Reincarnation" Erter reserves some words of criticism for the Jewish abhorrence of farming. Without Jewish farmers the normal healthy social and economic development of the Jewish people would never be assured. Erter's ideas here sound very similar to those of A.D. Gordon and other Zionist leaders whom he pre-dated by two generations.

Erter sought to elevate the socio-economic situation of the Jews not only by placing Jews on the land, but also by reorienting the educational goals of the people. The relationship between the socio-economic problems of the Jews and education is illustrated in the section of "Reincarnation" that satirizes the man of noble lineage. Such a man looks

with disgust upon people with no money or rabbinical lineage. The social strata of European Jewry was determined not only by wealth, but also by learning. The poor learned Jew was considered as worthy a partner for marriage as the Jew of wealth. However this emphasis was deformed to extreme when lineage on the basis of rabbinical families and not intelligence became the most important factor. Erter reveals the absurdity and socially counter-productive nature of this attitude. Erter hates the snobbery of these "noble" families and likens their marriage arrangements to the breeding of pedigree Arabian horses. Only money compensates for pedigree. Yet those with pedigree can be incredibly stupid and lazy. Erter at this point espouses the educational program of the maskilim which is not based on traditional studies. For Erter the worth of an individual can not be based on pedigree but must be defined on the basis of what he produces in the socio-economic sphere. An exclusively traditional education is not suited for the developing capitalistic world of Europe. Hence the educational priorities must be reoriented. A knowledge of modern languages and basic sciences was crucial to the program of the maskilim. Without a knowledge of modern language social and economic intercourse with the rest of Europe was impossible. The author of "Reincarnation" asks the "spirit" that was once an ignorant man of rabbinical pedigree: "Why did your parents not teach you the nature of the world according

to its lands so that you could know the advantages and disadvantages of each country? Why did they not teach you the language of the peoples with whom the merchant dispatches his letters. . . ?"

The regeneration of the Jewish people into a position of normalcy in Europe necessitated for Erter a Jewish farming class and a Jewish professional and mercantile class educated in modern languages serving modern economic needs. The Haskalah in Galicia as the spokesman, either consciously or unconsciously, for developing capitalism could only view the state of the intellectual, religious, social and economic life of the Jews of Galicia as backward and depressed.

Only one more word in reference to Erter's views of Jewish life in his country. He did not neglect to criticize those of the more modern educated classes who instead of aiding their people, fed off them in a parasitic relationship. A striking example of this is found in the sequence in "Reincarnation" which deals with the physician. Many physicians, especially the most successful, used their wits to the disadvantage of the people and for the purpose of obtaining great wealth through the misery of others. The name of the game, again, is deception. For Erter this kind of physician is no different than the wonder working Tzaddik. Both prey on the ignorance of their people and manipulate

their minds and hearts through fear, intimidation and gimmickery. He abhors the arrogance, the pomposity, the lack of real concern and dedication for the common people he saw exhibited by these physicians. So Erter does not restrict his barbs to the more traditional parts of Jewish society, he also turns the weapon of his artistic talents against what might be considered the more progressive segments of Galician Jewry. He attacked whatever elements among his people he believed to be counter-productive to the development of the Jewish people so that they might take their rightful place among the other nations of Europe.

Isgão Erter's prose is manifestly social as was most of the prose of the Galician Haskalah. It is true that Erter's view of his world is one-sided and exaggerated as are some of the images he paints in "Reincarnation." He did not ask himself seriously enough the question as to how the Jew can survive as a Jew, distinctive, once he comes to fully share the cultural non-Jewish environment of the predominant society. But his purpose was not so much to solve problems and see the future as a prophet, as it was to reveal the weakening fabric of Jewish society in the belief that once the weak aspects of life's form are revealed, they can either be strengthened or consciously expelled, but they can not be disregarded. To solve problems one must first see them and understand them. While it is an exaggeration to compare

his literary artistry with a Heine, or his social acumen with an Isaiah, nonetheless his satires bear true literary merit and his efforts on behalf of the socio-economic life of his people have earned him a respected place in the history of the Jewish people.

## Note

Wherever it was felt that a word or phrase was used consciously by Erter so as to refer the reader's mind to its Biblical origin and context, a note referring to the Biblical book, chapter and verse was placed at the bottom of the page with reference to the line of the page in which the word or phrase occurred. A notation without "see" means that the words in point are a direct quotation. Where "see" does occur, although the quotation is not word for word, it was felt that Erter probably had in mind the chapter and verse noted.

## REINCARNATION

1 "Behold the Lord will hurl thee up and down with a man's  
throw; Yea, He will wind thee round and round."

I am a physician and so I must bind the wound and  
bring healing to the sick. If men of healing rise up  
5 against me through haughtiness and pride shall they  
ascend the dais to speak of any subject, because they are  
called physician, without understanding that of which they  
speak? For nevertheless I heal as much as they. My dead  
do not live just as their dead do not live. And if we  
10 take sweet counsel together and I accept the advice of  
these wise men then there are none to save, for my sick  
are lost forever through their great wisdom. The Lord  
has distinguished me from them, for I only travel on  
foot. They rumble through the streets on horses and in  
15 carriages, for in a great many horses there is great  
wisdom. One wise physician adds to his one horse and  
Israel says that he has added to his wisdom seven times  
over.

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1) Isaiah 22:17

10) Psalms 55:15

8-9) See: Isaiah 26:14

15-16) See: Eccl. 1:18

1 Precious in their sight is the dead of the wealthy for  
these great physicians go to the gates of nobles and  
fill their hands with gold through their death. I trod  
the houses of the poor; and when a poor man dies, his  
5 body is transported to the grave. He is exempt, freely,  
without money.

I passed by the window of a dwelling wherein some-  
one had died. He had not died suddenly, but had fallen  
ill of his sickness, and I was summoned to bring him  
10 healing. This man was wealthy. As I attended him at  
bedside a day or two, the neighboring women came, so  
too his woman relatives, and so too all the wise women  
of the city. And they came and had pity upon him  
(for he was wealthy) and they said: "Does he still lie  
15 on the sick bed? Has he not yet risen from his couch?  
You are silent? Will this one cure him, if so where is  
his horse, where is his carriage? Call the wise men  
and let them come forth and give you advice." The wise  
men came, saw, listened, observed, shook their heads,  
20 on their tablet wrote out a cure, and said: "Send to  
the apothecary, let it be brought, give it to him and  
let him drink of it." So they sent to the apothecary,

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1) Psalms 116:15

5-6) Ex. 21:11

2) Isaiah 13:2

9) II Kings 13:14



1 and it was brought and given to him. He drank it and  
was gathered to his people.

I passed by the window of that man's dwelling  
after he went to the grave. I looked, and lo, a  
5 burning candle stood in the window of the dwelling.  
Near to it was a vessel of water and a cloth tied to  
the window. And lo, the soul of the dead man was washing  
its flesh in the water. . . . Its flesh? That can not  
be right, for it washed its spirit in the water, and  
10 passed the cloth over its flesh. Over its flesh? Has  
my tongue again dealt falsely to utter with my lips  
these things which are not so? Not over its flesh, but  
it passed the cloth over its spirit until it dried the  
water from that very spirit.

15 I approached the spirit and said to it: "My heart  
is glad and my soul rejoices that upon my return I have  
seen your image. For to behold your presence while I  
still live, I thought not possible. Behold, before you  
are all hidden things brought forth to the light of day.  
20 Tell me therefore do you know that it was not my fault  
you passed on and descended to the abyss?"

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2) Gen. 25:8,17

21) See: Ez. 32:29

15-16) Psalms 16:9

19) Job 28:11

1       And the spirit answered me and said: "Why do you  
ask? Should I know? Could I exonerate your soul among  
the assembly of the people? If I do not know, could  
my mouth condemn you? Pay heed; the dead of the world  
5 are mute, and the seal of their lips cannot be torn  
apart to give voice to those of open eyes and ears like  
you. The dead will not praise you, neither shall those  
who descend to silence insult you. But the breath of  
all living will praise your name, or curse your  
10 remembrance. So why do you seek the dead? Heed the living,  
so they will believe you. There is no fault in you for  
the decree of my death. I know I was cut off from your  
hand. I died but you delivered your soul. When I was  
healing Israel no person said that one died because of  
15 my failing."

And I was shocked and cried out: "When you healed  
Israel? I know not whom you remedied when you walked  
here among us, among the living, unless you remedied  
the water which you drank, mixing into it honey or wine  
20 to improve the taste. Were you not a businessman, and  
as one of the merchants of the land? You bought,  
you sold, you loaned, and people loaned to you.

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7) See: Psalms 115:17

13) Ez. 33:9

9) See: Trad. Siddur

21) See: Isaiah 23:8

1 You accumulated wealth to your fill, and yet you said  
that the bag is full of holes so there could be no  
repayment. Furthermore, this break was never healed,  
for you departed the earth without paying back your  
5 creditors one for a hundred."

The spirit answered and said: "If you investigated  
me and you know my paths and all my ways, then tell me,  
what are the days of the years of my life?"

I was surprised and answered: "Should I not know  
10 this? Did you not say to me with your own mouth and  
lips when you were sick, that the days of your years were  
three score and ten?"

The spirit answered and said: "I have dwelt but a  
short time in this house of clay from which a man  
15 returns to dust I am, however, hundreds of years old."

I cried out: "What is this? Are the days of  
Enosh your days and your years like the days of Methuselah?  
How is it that you have walked upon the face of this earth  
healing the plagues of men, without substance and body,  
20 a spirit without flesh, standing as a contradiction to  
the wise men of our physicians, since they are flesh  
without a spirit among them?"

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2) Haggai 1:6

17-18) See: Gen. 5:9, 25-26

1       The spirit answered and said unto me: "Let naught  
surprise you! For hundreds of years I have walked  
upon the face of this earth, both spirit and flesh  
combined. For the hosts on high have hurled me up and  
5 down, from flesh to flesh, and have wrapped around me  
a coat of many bodies until I entered the body of this  
man which today has found the grave."

I answered and said: "If this is so, then how great  
your wisdom must be. For you have gathered like the sands  
10 of the seas the knowledge of man and the knowledge of this  
earth. You judge not by what your eyes see, for you know  
the deep recesses of the heart, the devices of each and  
every man. If, now, I have found grace in your eyes,  
will you impart also unto me some of your spirit by  
15 telling me what has befallen you during your lifetime."

And the spirit answered and said: "Behold, I  
respect you greatly because you healed me and brought  
me out of the prison, out of this house of clay, by the  
skill of your hands. Sit with me. Be silent and give heed."

20       The spirit recounted its many changes saying: Before  
I was born my parents were without child for many years,

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4)     Isaiah 22:17

15)    See: Joshua 2:23

11)    Isaiah 11:3

19)    Deut. 27:9

12)    See: Psalms 64:7

13)    Gen. 19:19

for a long time. The woman seeing she could not conceive said: 'Let me go unto the holy men, who are upon the land, for they will save me from the closing of my womb.' In these holy men the husband had no faith and thus would not go with her. So the woman set forth alone and a holy man blessed her. Whereupon her infertility ceased and she conceived. The husband, who had no faith in the holy man, remained sterile all the days of his life.

MA child of the holy ones was I, born out of the act of their wonders, and therefore loved the lifting up of their hands. I became a Hasid, a man who consumes brandy like water, who forsakes his father and mother, the wife of his youth and his progeny, and travels to his rebbe to listen to the darkness of his law and to snatch from his plate the remains thereof. My rebbe loved me. A man after his own heart was I for the purification which took place from the very depths of my bowels prevailed among my congregation. So much did I bathe in the mikva that I began to reek with an extra stench far above all who emerged from the bath. I howled like an ox when I prayed, and when I raised my voice in praise of my God I sounded the call of every beast of the forest. I leaped in prayer, jumped straight up and clapped hands running to and fro like a man gone mad.

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1 During the Sabbath and festival songs, all who heard me  
swore the owl and raven lodged in my Adam's apple. I  
shrieked to the high heavens, and upon chair and table  
I danced like a ram. And if my throat became parched or  
5 my tongue became dry, then brandy came as water unto my  
mouth and flooded my insides like a torrent. One day  
it happened when the moist swept away the dry, that a  
veritable Jordan flowed into my mouth. The wine within  
me ignited and the brandy became a fire brand in my  
10 innards. . . .a consuming fire in the chambers of my  
bowel. A vapor issued from my nostrils and a flame  
went forth from my mouth, a flame of devouring fire.  
And the congregation gathered about me, every man who  
pisses against a wall, and they emptied their vessels  
15 into my mouth. . . .all the waves of the Salt Sea.  
But their many waters were not able to extinguish the  
conflagration. And I rose up upon the altar and was

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4-5) See: Isaiah 41:17

16) Song of Songs 8:7

7) Deut. 29:18

16) Apparently urine

8) Job 40:23

was used as a

12) Isaiah 29:6

medicine in cer-

13-14) I Sam. 25:22  
(The English of the Bible  
is put more euphemistically  
than the Hebrew)

tain cases in

Poland at this

time. (Letteris)

15) See: Isaiah 48:18

1 but fuel for the fire. The smell of the fire was not  
pleasant. And the whole House of Israel lamented the  
conflagration which the brandy had caused. They eulogized  
me with a great and important funeral oration. The soul  
5 departed and from a Hasid became a frog, a frog with legs  
to jump like a Hasid, and like him wails and croaks,  
but never does it drink wine or brandy, only water.

"Finished is the Hasid; . . . removed is the man who  
drinks wine; . . . thus remains a frog dwelling in ponds  
10 of water. With a mincing walk I went forth on dry land  
and spread my hands and feet to swim in water. My lips  
rang and my tongue vibrated against my palate and the  
ears of men tingled to the sound of my groan, when I sang  
with my friends, as evening departed. We croaked each  
15 day of summer and our cry arose each night reaching to  
the very heights, to the boughs of the trees of the forest  
where the birds build their nests, to the stork whose  
home is in the fir trees. The stork heard our moan, flew  
and hovered over the swamp, and the whole pond hummed  
20 and said: 'Go and look at a bird of heaven, ruddy and  
with beautiful eyes. His legs and beak are long and  
are as red as scarlet. The pinions of its wings are  
darker than black, and the majesty of his neck and  
feathers are as white as snow.' All of them dared

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10) Isaiah 3:16

17) Psalms 104:17

15) Ex. 2:23

20-21) See: I Sam. 16:12

1 to look, rising upward. The stork grabbed them in his  
beak and devoured them. I also became its prey. As  
she devoured her prey, she lifted her mouth and eye  
upward like a Hasid praying the offering. Because of  
5 the great piety of the devouring bird, the soul of the  
frog rose upward and became a man; from a singer of the  
ponds to a cantor singing in the land of Poland.

"So the frog changed to a cantor. Suffering was  
transformed to pleasantness. As the frog drank water  
10 and consumed dust, so now the cantor satiated himself  
with spiced wine and dainties to the honor of every  
wedding and circumcision. The frog performed without  
compensation, but the cantor did not utter a sound without  
money. For a daily or yearly wage, I lead the prayers  
15 before the Ark. On the right, urchins hummed like flutes,  
while on the left, a man roared like a lion. I put my  
hand to my cheek, while my thumb stroked the windpipe  
of my throat. And I praised the Lord with melodies of  
drinkers of brandy and implored God with the songs of  
20 mocking women. A strange mixture arose from my throat,  
the sound of tumult without order. Many people of the  
city stood outside the synagogue for it was full.

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11) Gen. 49:20

20) Ex. 12:38

19-20) I Sam. 18:7



1 It was as if the House of Prayer was a besieged city.  
Crowds of people set themselves against her round about  
all thirsty for my words, my voice, the skill of my  
throat. Sometimes a man would come who understood and  
5 knew the order of the service prayers. He would speed  
up or pass me, and would say to brother and neighbor:  
'You are listening to a man void of taste, yea lacking  
in taste. His expression is contemptible and his song  
like unto that of a frog breaking the skin of an ear  
10 drum.' Yes the frog drank water and consumed dust, but  
I drank sweet beverages and ate dainties on a day when  
the groom rejoices going forth from the Chupa during  
the wedding. On that day I fell upon the bed deathly ill  
for I drank far beyond my every need eating like a cow.  
15 The doctor gave me drugs to make me vomit, but in my  
greed I refused to bring up from my stomach that which  
I swallowed. Thus the cantor expired.

For my work of desecrating the Holy through  
melody,

20 God paid me a reward filled with irony.  
Into the insides of a fish He put my spirit.  
A fish with silent lips, no voice to  
transmit.

All of this I can aver.

25 And I again drank water."

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1) Isaiah 1:8

2) Psalms 3:7

1        Again I asked the spirit saying: "Why not speak  
like a normal person? For what reason do you exhaust  
your neck and throat with rhymes?"

         The spirit answered saying: "Has it not been told  
5 to you and have you not heard that I was a cantor? I  
called out and made heard rhymes without number; rhymes  
of Yotzrot, Selichot and rhymes of the fool who jests  
in order to make the bride and groom happy. My tongue  
learned to speak in rhyme. If this suits you not,  
10 forgive me, just as you have endured until now the  
poets who wrote the Yotzrot and Selichot. For what  
reason to you speak to me in the feminine gender?  
While a cantor I was a man, and praised God each day that  
He did not make me a woman. Even so, I loved women with  
15 all my being, and they loved me."

         And the spirit began again to recount its experi-  
ences: "The cantor died and became a fish whose throat  
was without voice box and chest without lungs. In place  
of bellows to suck in air so that the blood might be  
20 reddened, I took gills from the Lord, to draw water  
to keep my blood red and wore scales like a coat of  
armor with a fin in place of a hand. And the thumb  
which grasped my windpipe was no longer there. One  
comfort had I, my teeth had not been uprooted. For I was

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4-5) Isaiah 40:21

13-14) Morning Prayers

13) Psalms 68:20

21-22) I Sam. 17:38

1 a fish of prey, a pike with teeth like pruning knives.  
And I swallowed crawling and creeping things of the  
water. I also swallowed fish of my own kind, and  
swallowed all the lean and young of my family. And one  
5 day it happened that I swallowed a worm. The worm  
descended deep into my insides and the hook rose into my  
nose and pierced my cheek. In great pain I quickly  
descended to the depths, but despite my will, I rose  
upward. I looked and behold a man had caught me, a man  
10 who casts angle. This man picked me up and brought  
me home and gave me to one of the cooks to prepare for  
his food. The woman thrust a knife into my head to rend  
me to pieces and a sound issued forth from my throat.  
The cook fearful, turned around, letting out a scream;  
15 'Ah! Oy! Avoy! A fish silent in life has a voice in  
death! This could only have been because it has the  
soul of a man. As I live, he has called out "Shma" in  
my ears.' Horror gripped everyone in the house. They  
were afraid and trembled and rustled as in a storm.  
20 They sent for the rabbi and asked his opinion, saying:  
'What is to be done with a dead fish crying out "Shma"  
in one's ear?' The rabbi probed, contemplated to the  
depths of his soul, sought, considered, opened books,  
investigated writings, and finished by reaching the same

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2) Gen. 1:20

9-10) Isaiah 19:8

1 verdict as the cook. He commanded that the dead be  
treated as was its right, to be lowered into a grave.  
They went and clothed the fish in a burial shroud of  
fine linen and brought it to the cemetery. As the  
5 fish went to the grave his soul ascended and again  
became man. And it became a man who collects taxes on  
meat and candles; like the fish, a man who swallows  
his brothers and his people.

"The tax on meat and candles is the fruit of our  
10 soil; and our land yields this harvest. A man of Israel  
in this country has begotten it, has thought it out, and  
established for it statute and ordinance: 'A man of  
Israel pays it until he will be the poor of the land.'  
This man was wiser than Solomon, for Solomon the King  
15 spoke about the trees, and the beasts, about the birds,  
the crawling things, and about the fish. And his  
verses number one thousand and five while this Solomon  
of a man spoke only about candles and meat, and his  
money numbers hundreds of thousands of shekels.  
20 And his children, the collectors of the tax over meat  
and candles (they are his children even if they were  
not born from his loins), these his children are the  
two pillars of the House of Israel. The tax collectors

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4) See: Esther 8:15

12) Ex. 15:25

10) See: Lev. 26:20

1 have greater strength than the rabbis of the land, for  
the rabbis banish anyone who wears the clothing of a  
non-Jew and exile anyone who does not conform to the  
law of his community and congregation. But from the  
5 tax collectors' schemes there is no escape. And one  
will surely pay whether or not he wears clothing, whether  
or not he observes or changes the law. They ask a man:  
'What people do you come from?' If he says: 'I am a  
Jew,' they say instead of Shalom, 'Shalem - pay up!'<sup>\*</sup>  
10 And only does a man escape the tax if the priests  
sprinkle water upon his head and he no longer comes into  
the congregation, for he has forsaken the inheritance  
of his God and the inheritance of his fathers. But then,  
his flesh will give him pain and his soul (the soul  
15 being a light) will be extinguished. In any case, the  
pillar on the right, Yachien, is the tax collector of  
the candles, and the pillar on the left is the tax  
collector of the meat, Boaz by name. The tax collector  
of the meat searches for meat only in the home of a  
20 man who does not eat unclean meat. If he finds that a  
stranger killed his goose, then the man pays him his  
principal, and a fine is added to it. But a man of  
Israel who eats every unclean thing and has wrung the  
neck of his rooster with his own hand, doesn't pay for

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8-9) Jonah 1:9

11-12) See: Lam. 1:10

\* Play on words

16-18) I Kings 7:21

1 the trefah because the tax collector thinks of him as  
a Christian and will not visit his house. The tax  
collector of candles makes no such distinctions.  
Everyone who is called by the name of Israel will surely  
5 pay; he who eats trefah as well as he who does not eat  
trefah. If poor he will pay twice as much, and if wealthy  
he adds to the tax according to that which he is able to  
afford. If he refuses to add something, then false  
charges are made and a fine is laid down upon him. If he  
10 is the elect of the congregation, then he gives ten-fold,  
and the man who elects him will pay seventy-fold. A man  
will pay the tax on meat whenever he eats meat. When he  
buys it, the price and the tax are put together. The  
tax of the candles is paid apart from their purchase price.  
15 If a man lights the candles for the eve of the Sabbath,  
he pays; and if he doesn't light them, he pays two-fold.  
If he doesn't have any money to buy candles, he will  
pay the tax. If he doesn't have the price of the tax, the  
tax collector will take things in pledge. If there are  
20 no things in the house, then he will take his bed out from  
under him. If he cannot redeem it, then it is sold -  
one law for him, for the stranger, for the orphan, and  
for the widow - according to the deeds and the laws of  
the tax collector, so did I."

1       And I asked: "Did your poor brother bring out the  
pledge to you in the street?"

          And the spirit answered saying: "You are very wise!  
If I would have waited until he brought it out, then I  
5 would have waited until the sun set when the law of Torah  
says I must return the pledge - and there would be evening  
and morning on the second day; and my hands would have  
been utterly empty. So my collectors forced their way  
into his home, and with a soldier on their right hand  
10 supporting them, they took everything their hands touched."

          I shook my head and said: "Against the mouth of  
God you have done this! But perhaps you returned the  
pledge to your poor brother as the sun set, as the Lord,  
the Giver of your Torah, commanded?"

15       And the spirit answered me: "I did not return it,  
because I feared for my money."

          I answered: "You feared for your money, but your  
God you feared not? Are you not a Jew albeit a tax  
collector?"

20       The spirit answered: "I was a Jew as are all the  
tax collectors of meat and candles."

          "Do these men have earlocks? Do they have a beard?"

          And the spirit replied: "They have earlocks and  
a beard, but no heart!"

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1)     See: Deut. 24:10

6-7)     Gen. 1:8

9)     See: Isaiah 9:19

13-14)     Deut. 24:13

1       And I called out: "Do not lie! Without a heart there  
is no man."

          And the spirit answered me: "This I know, that they  
have not a heart of flesh like other men; they only have a  
5 heart of stone within their breast."

          And I answered: "Oh tax collector, I worry for your  
future in the after-life! Tell your experiences, and I will  
listen."

          So the spirit continued and said: "And all the women  
10 who did not know how to shed a tear in the synagogue,  
under my power shed a veritable torrent of tears." The  
women of the poor who did not know how to read the order  
of prayer let forth many a wail when I would put upon them  
a fine, and when I would take a pledge from them if there  
15 would be delay in payment. And they taught their children  
fasting and afflictions of the soul, because I took from  
their pocket all the money found therein, leaving not  
a penny.

          "One time I was walking down the street, happy and  
20 feeling good with my portion, when my ears heard that it  
was the intention of the king to do away with the tax  
across the land. The news for me was like a flying bullet  
shot into my heart. And I fell down upon the ground  
seized by apoplexy, (agony) and died.

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11)     See Lam. 2:18  
23-24)   I Sam. 28:20

24)    II Sam. 1:9



1 And I, a pillar of the House of Israel, was carried to  
the grave without a single man to follow behind the bier.  
No eulogy was given me, and the wailing women did not  
come to recount my praise. The women who had wept when  
5 I lived laughed when I died. They rejoiced that I had  
found the grave. So the Lord recompensed me according  
to my righteousness and cast me down to Hell. There is  
no word in my language to explain what was done to me  
there. The reward of spirits and the hand of the Lord  
10 which punishes them is inscrutable to the knowledge of  
man. Man is not able to understand it while he lives  
on Earth. This alone I am able to say: When the days  
of my wretchedness in Hell ended I again returned to  
this Earth, and I turned into an owl; a bird that does  
15 not see the sun or the light of day; that eats the meat  
of creeping things and of mice."

"The tax collector passed on and was no more. And  
the owl came in his place; a bird filled with feathers  
and hair with its face like the face of a man. His  
20 feathers are similar to ears. They rise up from his  
head on both sides. And the beak on his face takes the  
place of a man's nose. On both sides the fullness

1 of feathers are like cheeks. And the hands that used  
to take the tax changed to wings. I dwelt in darkness,  
In the ruins of a deserted palace I built my gloomy  
nest. When the sun was full my sight was diminished.  
5 Yes, the day was dark for me at the rising of the sun.  
I kept silent all day and did not venture out. I  
fasted from morning until evening, and before the sun  
descended did not wander about for bread. To me day  
was like night, while the night was light for me. I  
10 went out at night to the prey. I sought food in the  
darkness of night. I wailed over my prey giving forth  
the sound of weeping as I ripped the mouse to pieces.  
Holy men prophesied to the sound of my wailing, and  
witches foretold the future. They said I was calling  
15 for death and that my moans were the moans of the  
fallen. At my own death I gave forth the sound of  
lamentation as my soul expired. One of the holy men  
hearing my bitter cry rose up and said: 'Blessed  
be the true Judge.' Then he said to the gathering of  
20 his Hasidim: 'See, my opponent has died. He who rose  
against me has descended to the grave.' But the Zaddik

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3) Isaiah 32:14

10-11) See: Prov. 7:9

6) Job 31:34

20) See: Isaiah 41:12

7-8) Judges 14:18

20) See: Psalms 59:2

8) Job 15:23

1 erred in his observation. As a drunkard is misdirected,  
the holy man strayed in his vision, for his enemy had  
not died, but only I - the owl. But because the blessing  
of the Zaddik had come upon me, the soul of the bird  
5 flew high and went into the body of a man. The owl  
became a Cabbalist, a man for whom darkness is light and  
who has not yet seen the bright light in the heavens.

"Formerly today's Cabbalist was called in Israel:  
'heretic.' And the Greeks call him: 'One who knows' -  
10 'Gnostikos,' meaning someone who possesses the highest  
knowledge. And they have given his teaching and his  
law the name 'Knowledge' = 'Gnosis.' But you, O Israel,  
you have rejected this knowledge in the days of antiquity.  
Your scholars set you apart from it, from its branch,  
15 and the apostates of its lies. The Gnostics called  
themselves "believers," but our wise men, the "Tannaim,"  
conspired to convert their honor into disgrace and  
changed the name to a different one. They removed the  
head and "Maaminim" became "Minim" (the "believers"  
20 became "heretics"). This Cabbalism is Judaism, the  
faith of the House of Israel, when strangers sleep with  
her = Persia, Greece, and Egypt. They committed an  
abomination. They defiled her with their harlotry.  
She became pregnant and gave birth to this "knowledge;"  
25 a bastard that should not have come into the congrega-  
tion of the Lord. For after the Lord returned

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25) See Deut. 23:3

1 the captivity of Zion in the days of the kings of Persia,  
and the city of God and the Temple were rebuilt and re-  
established, the hosts of Greece and Macedonia rose up  
and took possession of the land of Persia and Egypt by  
5 their sword. With the subjugation, Alexander ruled in  
his might over satraps and kings. And there was built  
on the soil of Memphis, Alexandria, a city of his power,  
a city which would serve as his remembrance from gener-  
ation to generation. And there in this city dwelt a  
10 people gathered from many nations doing trade. Upon his  
death in the stress of the times his empire was appor-  
tioned to the captains of his hosts. These captains  
established kingdoms which were constantly waging war  
against each other. Israel also descended to Egypt and  
15 there was established in the city of the Sun a Temple  
to the Lord, and Onias served as priest in it. The  
land of Egypt belonged to the Greeks and their kings.  
The house of Ptolemy sat on the throne of Pharaoh and  
in that city there was erected a meeting place for wise  
20 men so they could take council together, meditate and  
investigate the world's mysteries. They established  
houses of study for teaching and instruction. And  
they made an archive. There in that place was gathered  
a collection of books without end. Into the house was

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9-10) Ez. 38:12

11) See: Dan. 9:25

1 gathered our sacred book, translated into Greek. And so it  
was that a part of the House of Jacob, the belief in one  
God, also became the portion of the wise men of Alexandria  
where previously the light of the Lord had shone only on a  
5 few of the wise men of Greece: Pythagoras, Socrates, and  
Plato. For this reason they called the wise men of  
Alexandria: "disciples of Plato." But, for the wise  
men of Greece great were the searchings of the heart, and  
their spirit would seek to know the way of the Lord; how  
10 He completed His law or whether He could create a creation.  
At this time they came together at the meeting place,  
and there arose one who knew mathematics. With words he  
made it clear to everyone that nothing begets nothing. And  
he said: 'If I add one to one, then the number will be two.  
15 But would there be anything in my hand if I joined zero  
to zero? And if I subtract one from three, there will be  
two left. But if none are left, am I able to take two  
from nothing? And any multiplication of nothing will again  
be nothing. And if nothing is divided, or if one divides  
20 by nothing, then like its sum it is nothing. If this  
matter is too hard for you, behold, I will give you an  
example. Look, my pocket is empty, and there isn't any

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8) Judges 5:16

1 money in it; and let us say my friends your purse is  
punctured and there is nothing in it. So now we are all  
friends - like one man. Are we able to pay according  
to our desire? And if a king be gracious to us and  
5 through his mercy gives us all that we lack to pay our  
creditors; then this money, in turn, will become nothing.  
For something can become nothing; but nothing begets  
nothing. Behold I have told you everything, and you  
should be convinced.'

10 "The wise minds considered, sought, investigated,  
and said: 'We have arrived at the secret of God, and we  
have found His way. His work did not come from nothing  
and his deeds from nothingness, but rather from His  
spirit for from himself He produced His creation. The  
15 pureness of His soul emanated from His spirit like a  
cistern with a hole from which waters spew forth. He  
made spirits: Ofanim and Chayot. From the power of His  
hand there emanated a multiplicity: generations upon  
generations, thousands upon hundreds of thousands, even  
20 unto us below - all from the power of His hand. Just  
as the waters which spew forth from the hole in the  
cistern become muddied as they travel from their source,  
so too all creatures of creation become more impure the  
further they travel from their source. And like the

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16) See: Jer. 6:7

1 spirit of a man which from the belly builds for itself a  
body - a place in which to dwell - so too the spirit of  
God made for Himself the "Ein Sof," a house built in the  
likeness of a man for the spirit of the Lord to dwell  
5 therein. The Cabbalists gave it names. The top, the  
head area of the skull, is the "Crown." And the cerebral  
cortex is "Wisdom," and the cerebellum "Intelligence."  
The part of the brain which descends to the middle of the  
neck is "Knowledge." The right arm "Mercy," "Power"  
10 His left, and the torso is "Beauty." The right leg is  
"Lasting Endurance," and His left "Majesty."<sup>14</sup> And  
"Foundation" and the "Kingdom" the lower parts. The  
Cabbalists ascribed male and female characteristics to  
all these things. Some of the parts have the way of women.  
15 They are all of them fathers and mothers in miniature.  
They made a drawing of the Holy One of Israel. They  
describe Him with a compass, and they measure His beard  
and they trim His moustache.

"And from Persia, those who believe in two gods -  
20 one who fashions light and one who creates darkness, one  
who makes peace and one who creates evil - from Persia  
they brought Arioman, the spirit of uncleanness, and  
they changed his name to Samael. And they made him an  
enemy of the Lord, His adversary who in his might  
25 contends with God every day.

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1) See: Eccl. 11:5

14) See: Gen. 18:11

3) See: Isaiah 44:13

1 And they gave him a helpmate; Lilieth, who is the mistress  
of his bosom. And his servants are demons, thousands upon  
thousands. These Cabbalists put their mouths toward heaven  
and speak a perverted language of puzzles, implications,  
5 and secrets. And they fabricate from their minds the books  
of the ancients. The works of the fingers of a lying man  
are taken as the writings of the hand of the holy ones  
on high. And as the lies multiplied one could no longer  
discover what was truth, and these men were called wise  
10 men of truth. From these have issued forth every false  
prophet, every false and deluding messiah, everyone who  
treads on air and behaves like a madman, everyone who  
commits deceit through wantonness or without intent,  
everyone who has led the Jewish people astray into the  
15 confusion of "no way" in order that he bring instead of  
redemption, a two-fold yoke to bend the head doubly.

"And in the body of the Ari I found honey. But its  
taste was like sour leaven, so it could not be used as  
an offering to the Lord. I harvested the honey into my  
20 palm. I made from it cakes to false gods like the Queen  
of Heaven.

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1) Gen. 2:18

2) See: Micah 7:5

16) See: II Kings 2:9

20) Jer. 7:18

17) Isaac Luria, the  
great Cabbalist of  
Safed, is called in  
Jewish tradition the  
"Ari" - the lion, and  
see: Judges 14:8 - a  
play on the Ari-Luria  
and the Ari of the  
Samson story.



1 For all the commandments of the Lord I perverted into  
magic; augury in Jacob, magic in Israel - not as a  
remembrance of the holy, that there is a God on Earth  
who judges and seeks justice, who does great wonders by  
5 Himself among Israel and man. Rather it is the weaver  
of spells who makes peace on high so that a woman can  
have intercourse with her husband and be fertilized by  
his seed. They sowed the spirit, a spirit of grace  
possessing benevolence like a river flooding with the  
10 abundance of its waters. Magic was upon my lips,  
calling God by a host of mystical names and derivations  
without end.

"And I rode upon the cherub of my imagination.  
And I flew and soared upon the wings of the spirit of  
15 its illusions, and like a man who has had too much wine  
my eyes saw strange things: Angels and spirits known  
to me by their tribes and specified by their names, each  
one by his ensign according to their hosts. And a winged  
angel told me something. He uncovered my ears, and

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3-4) Isaiah 16:5

6) Psalms 58:6

19) See: Numbers 2:2

1 only I heard. I stirred phantoms in my dream (I dreamed  
with open eyes). And the sleepers in the dust awoke  
and spoke with me. But my days were not long on Earth  
because now I put my nest on high and said: 'I am a  
5 son of the Highest, the anointed of the God of Jacob.'  
And who knows if I would not have drawn man after me,  
for the people feared me. They feared approaching  
me as much as approaching the Holy, and they said:  
'Behold, this man has power over the wind.' But before  
10 the abomination was done the end came, the end of the  
wonders, the end of the years of my life. For I  
began to test my power and the might of my hand to do  
wonders among men. The beginning of my work, the first  
of my acts, was doing the wondrous thing: to see  
15 without being seen. I afflicted my soul with fasting,  
and I descended into water, and I dipped my flesh and  
all my body, continuing to dip until the count of three  
hundred and ten, according to the law. And I multiplied  
prayer and I multiplied swearing by God's name. And  
20 when I had completed my task I went outside and said:  
'Behold, I am a man whose way is hidden, for no one can  
see me.'

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9) See: Eccl. 8:8

13) See: Proverbs 8:22

10-11) Dan. 12:6

15) Psalms 35:13

12) See: Deut. 8:17

1 A non-Jew passed before me, a non-Jew not of the children  
of Israel, and I raised a hand and struck him on the  
cheek. And the man turned to me in great anger and struck  
me a death blow and wound. He lifted his hand against  
5 the Messiah and he cast him down to earth (he cast down  
from heaven to earth, the splendor of Israel) and he  
stomped him underfoot. And from the wound of his blow  
and the stomping of his feet I became ill and I died.  
And it was when the Cabbalist rode upon heaven in his  
10 pride that his eyes saw a delusive vision and his  
spirit in death declined wondrously in importance. His  
soul entered a mole, an animal of the earth without eyes,  
dwelling in the bottommost depths, in the bowels of the  
earth.  
15 "A mole, a mole! And this was my portion from all  
my labor which I suffered for the spirit. Surely you  
know that the breath of your nostrils is the Messiah.  
O, why do you not ascend the heights of the heavens?  
Why do you fling dust and swallow earth? And a pig's  
20 mouth you have in order to dig. And where is my holy

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5-6) Lam. 2:1

11) See: Lam. 1:9

9-10) Deut. 33:26

15) Ecc. 2:10

10) See: Ez. 13:7

19) See: Job 39:24

1 mouth with which I swore in the name of God? Have I  
sinned and have I taken the name of God in vain with  
my lips? I aroused loved among the hosts on high. I  
aroused Leviathan and declared the soldering to be  
5 sound. But, O mole, you hate clods of earth because  
they cleave fast together and you crumble those that  
are joined. I built a Tower of Babel for myself, its  
top in the heavens, and you built for yourself an  
elevation, ripples sticking out upon the furrows of  
10 the field. I passionately desired eyes in order to  
see without being seen. But you are blind, you are  
seen without seeing the enemy who lurks in ambush to  
snatch you. Behold he bursts forth from his place,  
this my redeemer, this my beloved; behold he comes.  
15 He stretches his hand into the hole in order to grab  
you. So you are found and are caught.

"And so the mole was captured and put into a  
container. The man brought it to his rooms and dis-  
played it before every eye. His children saw it and  
20 laughed and his young cried out with sounds of joy.  
But the woman of his bosom became afraid, exclaimed,  
recoiled, and retreated.

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4) Isaiah 41:7

14) Song of Songs 2:8

6) Job 38:38

16) Jer. 50:24

7-8) See: Gen. 28:12

20) See: Jer. 48:4

1 'Why do you fear, gracious woman? What is it that you  
flee? Why does your voice twitter like a bird descending  
to the chambers of the ear? Don't be afraid of me  
dark-eyed one! Behold I have spread my hands over you,  
5 since the fruit of your womb has been denied to you.  
So I will do a wonder for you, a salvation, and I will  
open your womb!' However, the graceful doe, tender  
and delicate, was afraid. She trembled and cried out  
because of the sight before her eyes. Her heart leaped.  
10 Her spirit was agitated and her voice did not stop.  
Her husband made haste to carry out his scheme which  
he had plotted, to make magic through me, to make  
himself potent with my blood. So he took a gold drachma,  
and he placed it upon my throat and then slaughtered  
15 me with it. And his lips uttered holy sayings. In  
his right hand was enchantment and in his mouth the  
name of the God of Jacob. And the man lifted me up and  
carried me during his talking (perhaps a euphemism for  
sexual intercourse). And so he brought me into the  
20 innermost parts of the pregnant woman. When her days  
were fulfilled, I separated from her insides, and the  
mole was born a man. The boy grew up and became a  
man who digs pits. But please do not think that I

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1) Psalms 114:5

7-8) Proverbs 5:19

7-8) See: Isaiah 47:1

16) See: Ez. 21:27

20) See: Proverbs 20:27

1 was a farmer, a man who cultivates with a hoe to make  
every seed which he has sown, grow. God forbid! Jacob  
who dwells in the land of Poland would be ashamed of  
being a farmer, and his face becomes pale with the  
5 thought of it. I was not a farmer, a man who works  
the soil, but rather one who digs pits, a grave digger.

"And the body of a man is the dwelling of the soul  
of God which gives him life. A house of dwelling for  
the soul, concealed in its bosom, a law of its honor,  
10 an ethical statute. And when a man dies, the spirit  
returns to God. Still, honor will be given to the  
carcass of a man. Majesty and glory they will lay upon  
it. They do not degrade it by treating it like a  
cadaver of any animal, for this is a reproach to God.

15 "Like the Temple of the Lord, the dwelling place  
of the ancient God, even after it became a heap of ruins  
and the glory of the Lord had lifted up from upon it,  
still His servants desired its stones and favored its  
dust. Forever after when a man raised his steps to the  
20 deserted Temple of God, in the House of God, as in  
previous times, he walked with a holy feeling and took  
his sandal from off his foot.

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5-6) See: Proverbs 26:27

12) See: Psalms 21:6

8) III Chronicles 6:2

16) Isaiah 17:1

1 There is a holy party founded in Israel. The fear of  
the Lord has founded its arches upon the Earth. Its  
members take care of all dead souls. They wash the  
body clean, they read holy words over it, they clothe  
5 it in festive attire, they lift it up upon the shoulder,  
and in the bosom of the ground, the eternal womb, they  
lay down the son who went forth from its inside, the  
body of man from the earth. The cemetery is their  
care and custody. Ravenous beasts will not enter it to  
10 disturb the dwellers of the dust from their secure  
dwelling places. To the wealthy they sell a piece of  
land for a burying plot, and from every willing heart  
they take free-will offerings of money for the building  
of a fence and for the building of a partition around  
15 it and to set markers upon the graves of the poor; to  
establish the name of the dead upon his grave plot so  
that his name will not be blotted out from Israel.

"And I entered into this covenant, and my honor was  
singled out in the community of the holy congregation,  
20 and I buried my dead, and I worked, and I carried, and  
I suffered, and after many days the men of my congrega-  
tion placed me at the head and I became their treasurer.  
And when the money came under my hand I was wiser than

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2) See: Amos 9:6

11-12) Ex. 35:22

9) Isaiah 35:9

1 all before me and I said: 'Why do we labor for nothing?  
This poor man cried all the days of his life for bread  
and there was none to help him. Is it to feast him  
that you put up a stone at his head? If during his life  
5 bread was not given him, the soul in death will not be  
sustained from the tombstone of his grave.'"

And I asked the spirit and said to it: "How is it  
you advised without wisdom? Is it perhaps that you want  
to give the value of a poor man's tombstone to his  
10 children and wife whom he leaves behind?'

And the spirit answered me. "What do we have to do  
with the living? We made a covenant with death. Is it  
to support the poor that we have united?"

"But what, therefore, was your advice, O honored  
15 counselor?"

And the spirit answered: "To restore our souls  
from the sorrow of our hands and to make ourselves at  
set times a great festival of drinking and eating."

I cried out: "You gave holy advice, O man of the  
20 holy Covenant!"

And the spirit continued to tell: "And the thing  
was good in the eyes of the congregation of my community.  
And I prepared a great banquet for them at regular

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1) See: Job 39:16

12) Isaiah 28:15



1 periods, and we ate the sacrifices of the dead. In order  
that there should not be anything lacking to make con-  
stant parties, I set the price of a grave dearer than  
gold. I pestered the family of every dead man, and I  
5 conspired, and devised a cunning scheme. I hid in my  
house at the death of a man. My household sought me,  
but could not find me until the end of the day. And  
so it was that people hastened to bury their dead  
before the sun set. And they gave a ransom when it was  
10 laid upon them. To me the dead were like fish caught  
in a net, and I took their worth in money. At the  
death of a wealthy man I cried out happily: 'Leviathan  
is hooked.' And if a poor man died, then I moaned  
in my speech, I would groan: 'A creeping thing of the  
15 sea has been caught. Alas, only a creeping thing.'  
And all my work became little in my eyes when I labored  
to multiply the money for the sacrifices. I was also  
zealous with the zealously of the Lord of Hosts. If  
I washed and purified in water the bodies of men with  
20 their ear locks cut off and with a shaven beard, then  
I struck their carcasses with a light clap. It happened  
one day that my hand was heavy upon a man who dressed  
during his life in the style of a gentile. I struck

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1) Psalms 106:28

12-13) Job 40:25

3) See: Isaiah 13:12

14) See: Lev. 11:10

9-10) See: Ex. 21:30

1 him on the buttocks with all the strength of my hand,  
so that the ringing of the blow could be heard all over  
the house. Almost as soon as my hand struck his backside  
the dead one stirred, and he glared at me, and he raised  
5 himself up in his fury, and he rose to his feet. Then  
my heart died inside me. The terrors of deep darkness  
approached me, and I sought to flee. But I was not able,  
for my strength had forsaken me. So I roared, cried  
for help, screamed bitterly because of the tumult of my  
10 heart. I became weak and fainted, and I fell to the  
ground and died. The spirit of the dead man had re-  
turned to him and he lived, but the soul of the one who  
struck him, the one who ate the sacrifices of the dead,  
left him and came into the body of a dog who eats every  
15 kind of cadaver and is struck and hit every day.

"Dogs are different according to species and breed.  
There are dogs whose flesh hair is like wool, whose  
looks are curled, and whose ears hang from the side  
of the head like flaps. And they clip him from his  
20 chest to the end of his tail so that he looks like a  
lion. This breed is a species with intelligence.  
All that they teach him he understands and is able to  
perform.

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4-5) See: Psalms 7:7

10) See: II Sam. 1:2

6) See: Job 24:17

18) Song of Songs 5:11

8-9) See: Psalms 38:8-9

18) See: Job 4:15

1       He can stand upright and spread out his paws like  
a man who is begging. He can jump over a stick, and  
carry objects in his mouth. He can run after anything  
which is thrown, search for it, retrieve it for his  
5 master. He even understands the speech of man. My  
fate did not fall with this breed. I was not an  
intelligent dog.

"There is the kind of dog that is spotted and patched.  
He goes out with the hunters to the field, and from afar  
10 he smells an animal or bird in the brush and approaches  
slowly. He walks slowly and like a mute does not open  
his mouth. And if he comes into bow shot distance, how  
still he stands, as if saying: 'Shoot, for the game is  
here.' The lot that falls to this species was not my  
15 lot. A quiet dog, serene, prudent and silent - I was not.

"And there is a dog broad of chest, and narrow of  
stomach. His waist looks like a bow. When he goes out  
to hunt game he leaps over the mountains, and skips over  
the hills; his legs are as light as the blowing wind.  
20 A greyhound like this was strange to me; a dog that can  
move well, I was not.

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11-12)       Psalms 38:14

12)       See: Gen. 21:16

14)       See: Numbers 36:3

15)       Amos 5:13

19)       Song of Songs 2:8

20)       Proverbs 30:31

1        "There are dogs short of height with pretty looks  
and form. And those daughters of Israel who are as  
haughty as the princesses of the gentiles choosing the  
folly of their ways, carry these dogs in their laps,  
5        lulling them to sleep upon their knees, feeding them  
dainties from the meal of their table, without sharing  
even a piece of bread with the starving poor. Such  
pleasant lots as these did not fall to me. My family  
was not the smallest of dogs. A small dog sleeping,  
10       pleasant to the sight - I was not."

And I cried out to the spirit and said: "Put an end  
to your words, O man full of talk. How long will you  
count and number the family of dogs according to their  
deeds in order that you let me know what Y O U were  
15       N O T. Please tell me, what species of dog were you?"

The spirit answered me and said: "I was loathsome  
and vile. More emaciated than every barking thing; a  
dog from the dogs of the peasants who are workers of  
the land, a large and despicable dog of no form and  
20       beauty, a stupid dog of little intelligence, an evil  
dog good for nothing who clutches garbage and lies in  
the water of sewage which is in the courtyard of the

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1-2) Gen. 39:6

8-9) See: I Sam. 9:21

7) See: Isaiah 58:7

12) Job 11:2

8) See: Psalms 16:6

19-20) See: Psalms 92:7

1 house, such a dog was I. And if a man approached the house,  
I was stirred and rose upon my legs and raised my voice  
barking in a great voice without end. And all my brother  
and neighbor dogs also barked along with my voice. And  
5 if a man approached and in his hand there was no stick,  
I bit him. And if he turned away from me, turned back  
from my way and fled, I chased him, grabbed him and tore  
at him. But if he rose against me and showed his stick,  
I crouched afraid to approach him stationing myself afar  
10 off and barking even more. And if he struck me or threw  
a stone at me, I whimpered and wailed and put my tail  
between my legs and made haste to flee, fleeing to save  
my life. And I hid in secret, and I lay upon the earth  
and shut my mouth and was silent. When my pain abated,  
15 I barked again. I also opened my mouth against the lion  
and bear when I met them, but from one of the blows of  
the paw of a young lion two of my teeth were uprooted.  
And the pain from the destruction of my incisors was  
very great, and wisdom entered my heart, and I schemed  
20 from that time forward. When a man approached the  
house I did not whet my tongue anymore, rather I ap-  
proached him slowly and I grabbed him by the leg and

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9) Ex. 2:4

19) See: Proverbs 2:10

13) See: I Sam. 19:2

21) Ex. 11:7

16) See: Amos 5:19

1 bit at his heel, fled and only then began to bark.

"And I swallowed blood, and gave my guts the taste  
of this red, red pottage, and it was sweeter than honey  
to my palate. And when there was no blood, and if there  
5 was neither meat nor blood, I ate the bone, gnawing it  
with the strength of my teeth.

"And in the city of my dwelling there was a holy  
man, and his Hasidim were gathered in the house to eat  
from his meal on the Sabbath at the appointed time for  
10 the offering of the mincha, the third Sabbath meal of  
his table. And I too entered among those who came to  
seek a bone underneath the table. And as I entered,  
behold, the holy one had finished eating and there was  
left on his plate a bone, and upon it there were the  
15 remains of meat. I leaped and snatched the leftovers.  
His Hasidim saw this and rose up, incensed. And they  
hurriedly surrounded me, striking me, beating me,  
trying hard to steal from my mouth that which I held  
and to divide the spoil among themselves - the sacred  
20 leftovers. I made haste to swallow my prey, and the  
bone stuck in my throat. I was strangled and fell to

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2) See: Job 39:30

3-4) Song of Songs 2:3

3) See: Gen. 25:30

19) See: Ex. 15:9

1 the ground. I stretched my neck, opened my mouth, stuck  
out my tongue, widened my nostrils, struggled with my  
hands and feet, and raised my tail shaking it back and  
forth. All my bones shuddered, for apoplexy had gripped  
5 me, and I died. And it came to pass that when the dog  
swallowed the leftover food of the holy man he perished  
eating the holy thing. So it happened that the spirit  
of the dog rose returning to the body of a man. And this  
emaciated, despicable dog, more loathsome than all the  
10 animals that bark, a large and vile dog, of no form and  
beauty, a stupid dog of little intelligence, an evil dog  
good for nothing who grabs at garbage, who drinks of  
blood -- this dog on the grounds of his justice and his  
his deeds -- this dog became a zealous man, zealous with  
15 the fire of religion, pursuing anyone who turned from  
his way, whetting his tongue at him like an evil, barking  
dog. Zeal for religion and zeal for a people are two  
different things, one good and one evil. One speaks to  
the heart and makes its words heard gently, teaching those  
20 who err in understanding. The other pursues in anger,  
hates its brother in its heart, and drives him out from  
the congregation and community if one's thoughts are not  
like its own thoughts. One is the mother of all the mighty  
men of war who fought with an iron sword, as when the

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16) See: Ex. 11:7

21) See: Lev. 19:17

1 people of Israel dwelt upon its own land. When strangers  
in other lands, their swords were but on their lips. In  
olden days the people of Israel taught with arrows in  
their hands. Today the only arrow is the arrow of the  
5 tongue. The zealots of nationalism are interpreters of  
the law to their people bringing them out from their  
distresses, raising their fortunes from the dust. They  
build a wall around the tabernacle of God, a high tower  
for times of trouble. If myriads rise up round about and  
10 set upon it, then the doors are closed so that the enemy  
will not do evil in a holy place. And when the days of  
the fury have passed they open the gate, saying to those  
enclosed: 'Go out, be joyous over the goodness of the  
Lord, for now the Lord has made room for us and we shall  
15 be fruitful in the land.' And he makes a window, saying  
to the sun: 'Send your light!' And to the wind: 'Come  
and blow in order that the dry bones may be revived;  
these dry bones that have been wasted by hunger and  
devoured by fire.' These are the mighty men who have  
20 always been men of fame.

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2) Psalms 59:8

9) See: Psalms 3:7

3) See: Psalms 127:4

14-15) Gen. 26:22

6) See: Psalms 107:28

15) Jer. 22:14

7) See: Job 16:15

15-18) See: Ez. 37:5-10

8-9) Psalms 9:10

18) See: Deut. 32:24



1 "Religious zeal is the mother of all darkness, the  
conception of all the obscurantists, saying: 'Every gate  
shall forever be closed and every window shut from gener-  
ation to generation; the sun shall not shine for us and  
5 the moon shall not cause its brightness to shine, for the  
Lord has said to dwell in thick darkness. They build  
towers every day in the walls of Zion, their heads are in  
the heavens, to make a name for themselves, and they do  
not see and understand that the wall is leaning and the  
10 fence is tottering; the main wall will fall down flat, for  
its burden is heavy upon it. And when the towers fall  
they will split the House of God. Against the hostile foe  
they do not go up to war, but rather in the gate of the  
daughter of their people they contend for the Lord. They  
15 kill the choicest of her mighty men. May the sword of  
their vengeance come into their own heart.

"A cup from the hand of the Lord is the religion of  
God. From it all the House of Jacob has drunk for thou-  
sands of years. But now the cup is polluted and strikes  
20 every hand that holds it. If the national zealot says:  
'Give it to the worker in metals and he will remove from  
it the filth upon its face so we shall again behold its

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5) Isaiah 13:10

10) Joshua 6:20

6) I Kings 8:12

17) See: Psalms 75:9

7) Gen. 11:4

21) See: Judges 17:4

9) See: Psalms 62:4

1 beauty and glory,' the religious zealot says in a thunder-  
ing voice: 'Turn away, do not touch, for even its filth  
is holy.'

"Whenever this zealous spirit rests upon a man who is  
5 haughty, whenever this zealous spirit rests upon a man  
contriving to be raised up above the masses of people so  
that he can magnify the splendor of his glory and the  
honor of his name, then the zealous spirit and the haughty  
spirit are joined together and they become an evil spirit;  
10 and there is nothing upon the earth like it. There is no  
God in the heart of this spirit, although His name is  
raised upon its lips. This evil spirit's zeal is really  
jealousy of one man against another, and the fear of God  
is but a mask upon its face. The religion of God is an  
15 avenging sword in the hand of this evil spirit wreaking  
vengeance upon all whom it hates. And who are the hated?  
Every man in whom there dwells a spirit, every man who  
rises above it, higher and higher, every man who hates  
smooth words and in whose mouth there is no deceit. The  
20 Cabbalists have said the evil spirits may have the image  
of any animal. Can not the haughty, conceited spirit  
coupled to religious zeal have the image of a dog? This  
I experienced with my own flesh because I was a dog.

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10) See: Job 41:25

18) See: Deut. 28:43

1 And I became a zealous man with a haughty nose and a fiery religious zeal.

"And the manner of the man and his deeds are like the manner of the animal and its deeds. Formerly, I grabbed  
5 at garbage, I made a pile of dung my heavenly abode. Now I liked wavering minds. Apostates of those who fell away treacherously were the dwellings of my confidence. And if a man approached the house of wisdom, then I stirred as in former times, and grumbled as previously, and as the  
10 days when I was a dog I raised my voice, a great voice, and it went on no more and all the congregation of zealots, my brothers and neighbors, encouraged me with their mouths, and they raised their voices like me. And if a man approached who had no power and who was lacking strength,  
15 then I excommunicated him. And if he turned aside from me, turned away from my way and went on his own, then I pursued him, I grabbed him and descended upon his cheek. But if he stationed himself to fight, then he displayed to me that it was a matter of strength. Behold he is  
20 mighty, and while I continued to insult and curse, I trembled and was fearful of touching him because I was afraid of courage and a strong arm. And if he turned toward me and stretched out his hand to destroy me, then

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6-7) See: Psalms 40:5

10) Deut. 5:19

1 I wept and begged and humbled my pride. I retreated from  
my plots in order to save my life. I bandaged my anger  
and fury in private, and I ingratiated myself, humbled  
myself, shut my mouth and was silent. However, when no  
5 longer in danger, I returned to cursing and shrieking.  
Once I opened my mouth and whetted my tongue against a man  
of both wisdom and strength, against a man who was under-  
standing and successful. With his strong arm he set my  
teeth on edge, and with his ability he oppressed my strength.  
10 And since I was almost finished by his blow, there came into  
my heart knowledge and discretion, and thus I plotted from  
that time forward, and devised a plan. No longer did I  
challenge a man with whom I quarreled by the gate with a  
high hand in the sight of the sun, but rather I devised  
15 an evil scheme against him. I disputed in secret, and I  
stirred up strife in hiding. And I sent against him the  
teeth of beasts - the fury of the people who walk in  
darkness. From the first I deceived and oppressed, and  
humiliated. And after his calamity I made much rejoicing.  
20 I had fullness of joy when they filled him with insult.  
In the disgrace of men of understanding my heart was glad

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9) See: Jer. 31:29

16) See: Proverbs 29:22

11) Proverbs 1:4

17) Deuteronomy 32:24

14) Ex. 14:8

19) See: Proverbs 17:5

15) II Sam. 12:11

20) Psalms 16:11

21) Psalms 16:9

1 and my soul rejoiced in changing their honor to shame.  
From their split blood my zeal was quenched. But I  
spent my strength for nothing, and my toil was worth-  
less, for my opponent overcame me, and he was successful  
5 and made a name in the land. The dwellers of the far  
parts and distant islands made his praise heard. In a  
distant city he sat upon a great throne and was a  
righteous judge. The governors of the land honored him,  
and all those who were parched sat down at his feet.  
10 And when he spoke in the gate, from the expanse of his  
heart and the sweetness of his lips, his enemies were  
changed to those who love him. I was angry unto death.  
My eyes dimmed from anger. Jealousy broke my heart,  
and I breathed my last because of anger. And because I  
15 pursued with my zeal every enlightened and wise man, I  
became a fox. So he became my replacement, slyer than  
any animal of the field, chased by dogs of the hunter  
without restraint.

"It is better to be a fox than a man of zeal. Be-  
20 cause of my zeal, I inherited shame instead of honor,  
disdain and disgrace instead of glory. In the generation

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3) See: Isaiah 49:4

12) Jonah 4:9

9) See: Deut. 33:3

13) Psalms 6:8

10-11) Proverbs 16:21

17) Gen. 3:1

1 following my name will be blotted out, and if it is remembered, it will be as an abhorrence to all flesh.

However, from the day I became a fox roaming the earth, storytellers will speak my praise among the people.

5 From generation to generation they will exalt my deeds and they will gladden the heart of old and young with tales of my cunning. For the spirit of man glimmers inside me, while the soul of man instructs me. And I was wiser than any fox, and I opened my lips and spoke,  
10 and I led astray the animals of the earth stripped, and confounded the birds of heaven. Still I rejoice, happy in the remembrance of all my tricks.

My heart at last was gladdened after the many changes I had passed through.

15 "I saw a raven, his visage blacker than coal, standing upon a tree, and in his mouth there was cheese. I desired the delicacy. So I sat under the tree, and I flattered him calling out: 'How great is your beauty, bird of heaven! The earth is filled with your praise, and  
20 among the nations the glory of your beauty and the pleasantness of your songs of praise are heard. And now, after God has shown me your sight, please let me hear your voice.' Every fool believes the flattery. Words of flattery succeed with a fool. In his foolishness the raven opened  
25 his mouth and began to sing in his raucous voice.

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1) Psalms 109:13

2) Isaiah 66:24

10) See: Job 12:17

15) See: Lam. 4:8

1 As he opened his mouth the cheese fell at my feet and I  
ate it. The tongue of the crafty can bring forth what-  
ever it seeks from the mouth of the fool.

"Parched with thirst, I came to a well of water.

5 The well was deep, very deep, and hanging over a bar of  
wood were two pails, one on each end. And it was like  
unto scales. I entered the first pail and descended  
toward the water, drank to full satisfaction, refreshing  
my soul. When finished drinking, I looked about, and lo  
10 and behold I was imprisoned in the well. And along came  
a goat thick of belly and beard, all of which bespoke of  
his honor. The goat is heavy of flesh, bone, and horns.  
And he stationed himself next to the well and called out:  
'Who will give me water to drink from this well, for I  
15 am thirsty!' And from the straits I called up to him and  
said: 'Why do you ask this? Get into the pail, and des-  
cend to the water as I have done, and you will drink and  
be satisfied according to every desire of your soul.  
Arise, ride on and prosper.' So the goat mounted the bar,

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2) Job 15:5

15) Psalms 118:5

4) Isaiah 5:13

18) Deut. 12:15

8-9) Lam. 1:16

19) Psalms 45:5

1 entered the pail, and descended. And by his descent,  
I was lifted up from the depths of the water. Now the  
goat was left imprisoned in the depths of the well, but  
I escaped and went forth free; - a crafty person is  
5 able to put a fool's life as ransom for his own.

"I saw grapes on a vine, and desired them. I  
jumped, leaped, and sprang up, all to no avail, for naught.  
My hand was too short to reach them. And I feared lest  
those who saw might mock me. So I spoke aside: 'Why  
10 do I reach for these worthless things? They are poison  
grapes, bitter grapes, which set one's teeth on edge when  
he eats them.' - Even the eye of the wise can be blinded  
by a fool so that the fool's disgrace is not revealed.

"And I invited the stork to a banquet which I made,  
15 and I set the delicacies which I had prepared in a  
generous dish, and the both of us ate together. I opened  
my mouth wide and filled it, but the stork's beak was  
too long for the plate allowing only the end of her nose  
to reach the delicacies, and she wearied of the task."

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4) Ex. 21:5

11) See: Jer. 31:29



1       As the spirit related the story, I called out: "Boast  
not of your evil, long tail; for your dealings will come  
down upon your own head. One day the stork will invite  
you to a banquet which she has prepared, and will pour wine  
5 into a flask of great height, long of neck and narrow at  
the mouth. And the stork will put the full length of its  
beak into the flask and fill her mouth with wine. But  
you will stretch out your lips, and lengthen your tongue,  
and lick round and round, and not a thing will come to  
10 your mouth."

And the spirit answered me and said: "You have found  
my sin, and that which was my stumbling block you have  
called by name. In my desire to display my wisdom I acted  
foolishly, and on account of the length of my tail was  
15 I seized. Ahay! As even the heart of the wise is not all  
wise, so too the fox has its defect, his tail, a tail which  
was given into the hands of its pursuers. The dogs sur-  
rounded me, and the hunters riding upon their horses  
whetted their tongues. The hunters blew on their horns,  
20 and the sound echoed through the mountains and the trees  
of the forest, and they resounded with the call to war.  
They all pursued me, a pursuit without let-up. I  
made fast to flee upon the face of the entire valley.

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2-3) Ob. 15

8) See: Isaiah 57:4

8) See: Proverbs 13:3

19) See: Ex. 11:7

1 Now the dogs drew near to my soul, they stretched their  
necks, opening their mouths wide, revealing the double  
grille of their teeth which were like unto swords, as  
they sought to sink their incisors into my flesh. I  
5 looked about but there was no refuge, and no shelter.  
So I jumped over their backs landing behind them, and  
made haste to flee, to run away while they continued to  
chase after me. Soon they realized that my tracks had  
disappeared. Then they heard the sound of the hunters,  
10 the blast of their horns calling them back from the  
wrong path. They turned their faces, and behold there  
was a great distance between myself and them. But they  
returned and pursued, even with more effort. They took  
long strides, front and back their feet flew. I escaped  
15 and went into the cleft of a rock and hid. The dogs  
came and sought me, searched for me by the smell of their  
nose. They looked but did not find me. But my tail  
stuck out from the hole, for a tail apportioned to a fox  
is big in size. And it happened that the hunting dogs saw  
20 it and made haste and grabbed my tail, and they pulled  
me with all the grasping power of their teeth and with  
all the strength of their power, an exhausting attempt,

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3) See: Proverbs 30:14

1 bringing me out from the burrow in which I had hidden.  
I cried out bitterly while I bit at all sides with my  
teeth. I lacerated their flesh, my claws slashed to  
no avail, for the dogs were enraged. They grabbed me  
5 in the neck with their jaws, and the pipes of my throat  
were clamped shut, suffocating out the breath of life.  
And the archers turned against me, and they shot the  
children of their quiver into my sides. My blood  
gushed upon the ground like water, and I fainted. And  
10 the blessing of a worshipper of the worship of the Holy  
One did not come upon me on my death, so my soul went and  
wandered upon the face of the plains. Naked, I walked  
without dress and without covering of body. And I became  
a wandering spirit, irritating every soul. The sound  
15 of every animal of prey I gave voice to from the recesses  
of the forest: the roar of the lion, and the growl of  
the young lion, and the bear, and the howl of the wolves  
of the night. And I rose up like light from the wilder-  
ness, and the passers-by on the road walked to the  
20 brightness of my glow, to brighten the darkness of the  
night. And I led them astray to a place of mud and ponds  
of water; and the plain became panic-stricken, horror  
to all its inhabitants. But my tail outweighed me in the  
end, for my tail lifted me up as a result of my skin  
25 being stripped from me. A man, a dweller of villages,  
a renter to travelers, the owner of a hotel for guests,

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22) See: I Sam. 14:15

1 a man of no knowledge, but of great faith, bought it.  
And the man made it into a garment for his rabbi against the  
cold; silk and embroidery he sewed upon my hide, and my tail  
was upon the edge of the garb for beauty. And the Tzadik  
5 put it on, and he covered and wrapped himself in it. And  
so it was that my tail, which was upon the edge of the garb,  
touched against the flesh of the holy man, against the nape  
of the Tzadik, and the soul of the animal rose up and became  
a man. And so it was that the fox became holy and a rabbi,  
10 a man as sly and as much a scoundrel as a fox.

"I, I am he, as I was before so I am still. I did not  
change. A misleading spirit I was when I was the soul of  
a fox, wandering without a body, and a misleading spirit  
I was when I was the soul of a fox covered over with the  
15 body of a man. As I was previously like a light leading  
astray travelers from the path to a place of mud and ponds  
of water, so now I was a light to the children of Israel,  
misleading Jews from the way, leading them into confusion  
and outspread thick darkness. And the voice of every  
20 animal of prey which I had previously sounded from the  
recesses of the forest, I now uttered from the depths of  
the house of prayer. I growled like a bear "Mizmor  
L'David," and I screamed like a wolf "Halleluyah."

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19) Isaiah 8:22

22) See: Isaiah 59:11

- 1 And all ~~the~~ people saw the sounds and said 'holy and blessed,'  
saying: 'Holy is the One on high, Blessed is the Lord. Our  
rabbi's praise goes up to the very heavens. Before the Lord  
it will come to His ears, and upon every head which He rests  
5 His hand will come God's blessing.' And from east and west,  
north and south, people came to me. And I, like the fox  
deceitful in tricks, answered the fool according to his  
folly, to bring out a prisoner from the dungeon - a gold  
shekel from the money purse. By the deeds of my tricks  
10 I lived. From the erring and simple I brought forth my  
bread. The fools of the young, these were my flock.  
From the fleece of these sheep I warmed myself. I still  
am overjoyed when I remember all my schemes, my heart  
happy after the many changes I had passed through.
- 15 "To shear my flock, these man-sheep, I walked around  
the land and came one night to a hotel in a town. And  
the community of my Hasidim, those who went around with  
me, made haste and said to the owner: 'Please prepare,  
for a holy man of God has come under the shadow of your roof.

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1) Ex. 20:15

12) Job 31:20

7) See: Proverbs 26:4,5

19) See: Gen. 19:8

8) Isaiah 42:7

1 So now, kill the offering and prepare the meat. Make  
savory food, meat and fish, roasted by fire and boiled,  
wines well mixed, one of the brandies which the holy  
man of Israel likes.' Now the man knew that the Tzadik  
5 would take and not pay, so he said: 'Where do I have  
meat? My house isn't anything except a place of lodging;  
there isn't even a dry piece of bread. There isn't  
even straw and fodder for the horses.'

"When I heard his words I said to myself: 'This  
10 is no good. It forebodes evil for me. Trickery,  
watch over me lest I be for scorn.' The man had a  
small child, one who still suckled at his mother's  
breast. I walked from one corner of the house to the  
other and I approached the baby slowly, no one saw it,  
15 and I put a grain of barley into the anus of the child.  
When I had done my plot I went into the bedroom and  
called the community of my Hasidim: 'Let us lie down  
in our shame and the Lord will establish our revenge.  
Arrange my couch, prepare my bed, and I will sleep.'

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1) Gen. 43:16

6) Proverbs 17:1

2) Gen. 27:4

10) Eccl. 2:17

2) Ex. 12:8

11) Proverbs 2:11

3) Psalms 75:9

17) Jer. 3:25

1 "I had hardly laid down when the baby began to cry,  
shrieking bitterly. And the mother of the child came  
quickly and drew out her breast to calm him. But the child  
scorned the milk of her breast. He did not grasp her  
5 nipples with his lips. He cried, shrieking bitterly.  
So she turned him, laying him down in his crib, and  
moved him around and sang songs to him. But the child  
did not hold back his voice from crying. He yelled all  
through the night, so that his throat was parched from  
10 crying and yelling. And the both of them, the husband  
and wife, were afraid, and they said: 'Our darling boy  
is sick. An evil eye is consuming him. Lilieth is  
lying in wait to snatch him.' So they quickly came to  
my bedroom and called out: 'Please, O man of God, save  
15 us! Deliver the soul of my child from death.' And I  
called to him in my fury: 'Get away evil one! Turn  
away from me, worker of evil! Because of your many sins  
I am not able to see your face.' And the man fell at  
my feet, and he begged me crying: 'Please, O man of  
20 God, do not fix upon me a sin which I was foolish to do  
recently and which I sinned against you. Arise now  
Holy One of Israel! Bless the boy; redeem him; save  
his soul, and I will give all the wealth of my house,  
because he is my only child.' And when he had entreated

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11) See: Jer. 31:20

24) See: Gen. 22:2

1 me with his words, I granted it to him, and I poured  
water upon my hand to thrust away from my nails the evil  
spirit. I arose from my bed and came to the child, and  
behold he was still crying. He did not rest for a  
5 moment. I made my hands wise, and prepared them with  
intelligence. I put the palm of left hand under his  
loins. I gave my blessing from above, and took out the  
barley from below. I had not yet pulled my hand away  
from his head when the child ceased crying and was quieted  
10 from his ill humor. And the baby, a suckling, slept the  
entire night until morning.

"The incident became a wonder completely astounding.  
A sign for the rebellious children. And they told of  
it in the assemblies, and they discussed it in the gate.  
15 And they exaggerated it. The miracle grew as it went  
from mouth to mouth, and the miracle became more mar-  
velous. Some said I had wrestled with the Angel of Death,  
that I had wrestled with him and stolen his sword from  
his hand while all the people saw. And others related  
20 that I had stolen the soul of the boy by my struggle  
with the Angel of Death, and that I restored the spirit  
of the boy to him after his death. And my name went out  
through all the land, and they came, dwellers from the



1 ends of the earth, and they asked my blessings and sought  
my miracles and they filled my treasuries. And every  
hotel owner hastened to meet me from that time forward when  
I went out on my trips. And they made savory foods, meat  
5 and fish, roasted by fire and boiled, and full mixed wine,  
as the father of the boy had done the next morning before  
I separated from him, bringing out the choicest of his  
money - a gift to the man of God, a full hand of gold coins.

"I did marvelous things such as these from the first  
10 until beyond count. And I was sanctified and honored  
through them before all the people. And they believed  
in me, and their faith was great. I spoke wonders, and  
without doing miracles I enlarged wonders and signs.

"I built a great house for myself, a palace of a  
15 king, and I put a great sandalwood chair in one of the  
rooms of the house. The chair had two arms on either  
side of the cushion, and a back behind it. In front of  
it was a table, and chairs on both sides of the table  
round about it. And I called out to the men who stationed  
20 themselves about me: 'This is the palace of the Messiah.  
Here on the seat by the wall upon a throne high and lifted  
up sits the king Messiah; all the holy ones are with him  
sitting on their thrones to his right and left.'

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9) See: Job 5:9

22) See: Zech. 14:5

21) Isaiah 6:1

1 And I called the name of every holy one on high which  
is written in the Sefer Torah of God and His prophets  
from the day man was put upon the earth until the  
time of the cessation of the vision. And the people  
5 believed my words as a man believes the sight of his  
eyes. And they were amazed and astounded at the deeds  
of my wonders, and they did not realize that my words  
were false. They called the room of the house, 'The  
Palace of the Messiah.' And they brought, as I had  
10 schemed, silver and gold articles, and all manner of  
things made of sandalwood and precious stones to beautify  
the palace of the king, the Messiah. When I saw at the  
end of days that people were bringing much more, then I  
added to the scheming and I took from the hand of one,  
15 but refused taking from the hand of another. And the men  
became angry, and each one was jealous of his fellow.  
They implored me, and they counted out silver into my  
hand, to take from their hand the articles of their glory  
and to bring them to the house, the palace of the king  
20 the Messiah."

And I called out to the spirit and said: "Rabbi,  
hear me! Truth it is that you are a foxy man in our  
midst, and your Hasidim, they are a man-flock, animals  
they are. But please tell me, in all your days weren't  
25 you trapped by the words of your mouth? And in your

1 telling of the signs of the future, or in your guaran-  
teeing to a man that which was a lie and the issue of  
your lips was not so, weren't the eyes of the people  
opened so that they knew that you were sly, a master of  
5 deceit and a fraud?"

And the spirit answered and said: "You do not know  
the soul of the simpleton, for it wants darkness; he  
does not desire an opening of the eyes. And even if  
the sun shone as the light of the seven days, there would  
10 be no brightness for him; for upon the closing of his  
eyelashes he would put yet his hands and hold fast the  
lids of his eyes. The fool will find an answer in any-  
thing that will strengthen his foolishness. If I gave  
a blessing to a man, and curse came upon him instead  
15 of my blessing, then the simpletons answered and said:  
'The Lord has struck him with his sin and changed the  
blessing to curse because of his erring way. And so  
what can we complain against our rabbi?' And if I  
said: 'this thing will surely come about,' and my words  
20 did not come true and never would, then I put my face  
toward heaven and I spoke falsehood from on high, and  
the thing was amazing in their eyes, and they returned  
and were at peace - I will tell you, hear me and I will  
tell it:

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9) Isaiah 30:26

23) See: Job 36:2

1 "Harvest had passed, summer had finished, and it was  
winter - the time of rain upon the land. And a man came  
to me and said: 'Please, holy one of Israel, call to  
your God that He withhold the rain so that the snow will  
5 be upon the land.' And I said to him: 'My son, why is  
it you seek snow?' The man replied to me and said:  
'I have undertaken the job to buy wheat, gather grain  
and to provide at the appointed time groceries and pro-  
visions for the armed men of the king who are in camp  
10 a distance of one month's march from here. And 500,000  
pieces of silver will be given to me from the coffers  
of the king. And now with the falling rain I must  
transport the goods in wheeled wagons with horses which  
will then become mired in the mud. But if snow would  
15 fall, then I would run the grain in wagons without  
wheels which would make haste gliding upon their under  
chases on the snow like rafts on the water, so they will  
flow.' And I said to him: 'Tell me, what is your name  
and what is the name of your mother, and I will entreat  
20 on your behalf that the Lord fulfill your requests.' So  
he told me and counted out 500 shekels of gold into my  
hand.

"A day passed, two days passed, and no snow. The  
man came to me and complained, and called out: 'Please,  
25 man of God, where is the snow?' I said to him:

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11) See: Esther 3:9

1 'Wait a bit, wait a little while, for it will surely come  
and not be late.' So he waited one week, and he waited  
two weeks, the rain did not cease, and there was no snow,  
and the roads deepened and were ruined. And the man  
5 came to me and cried in my ears: 'Ah, holy one of  
Israel! You have brought me very low! The agreed-on  
date will come before I will be able to bring the grain  
to the place which I agreed. They will levy upon me a  
fine of all the wealth of my house, and they will put me  
10 into prison.' I said to him: 'Quickly, lift your feet  
and flee from your place; for behold the Lord has made  
changes in heaven and has pushed the angel of snow from  
his pedestal and placed the angel of rain in his stead;  
therefore, the rain will fall, and the snow will be shut  
15 up. And this is the sign for you: Take a calendar and  
read in it that these days have been determined for frost  
and snow.'"

"Look, I told you this one, and there is another I  
can tell you, and it will delight and satisfy your heart  
20 when you see how a man of deceit delivers his foot from  
the net.

"My son was sick, the issue of my loins had fallen  
upon the bed. And my wife came to me, the mother of the

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1) Hab. 2:3

20) Psalms 25:15

6) Judges 11:35

1 child, and told me saying: 'Please my holy one! Pray  
on behalf of your son, whom you love, lest he perish in  
his sickness.' And I said to her: 'Do not worry. God  
will hear my prayer and will not allow the son of his  
Tzadik to see the grave, to die in childhood.' I spoke  
5 my words and the sickness grew stronger and stronger.  
And my wife came to me on the second day and cried:  
'Please call to God with strength, because the sickness  
is very severe, and when he lay down he will not rise up  
again, he will not have the strength to sit anymore.'  
10 And I spoke to her heart a second time, and said to her:  
'Do not be afraid! Behold, I redeemed him from descend-  
ing into the grave, I have made redemption for his soul,  
the issue of my loins will not die.'

"And on the third day she tore the doors of the upper  
15 chamber, and came in haste to me in my room and she  
screamed and cried out: 'Cry aloud, make your voice heard  
on high, stir earth and heaven, for behold the child is  
dying.' And I reproached her and cried: 'Rest and be  
still, don't be silly without understanding. I told  
20 you once, my son will not die.' And then in the

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2) Gen. 22:2

16) Isaiah 58:1

7-8) See: I Kings 17:17

18) Jer. 47:6

12) See: Ex. 21:30

19) See: Hosea 7:11

14) Judges 3:23-24

1 heat of the day before morning had passed, my wife re-  
turned to me, crying and mourning: 'Woe, the Almighty  
has dealt very bitterly with me and has taken my son,  
the delight of my eyes! What shall I do? Where shall  
5 I go? Why am I alive?' And I stood startled before  
the assembly of my Hasidim who had gathered before me,  
and I called out: 'What has God done to me? Would not  
the sick one still be near me among the hosts of the  
dwellers up above? They have made it known to me on  
10 high. They have not disclosed it to me from heaven."  
If it be so now, do what is good in your eyes with my  
son. I do not know that he has been gathered to his  
people. They have not informed me from above; therefore,  
I do not know - I am not willing to know.'"

15 "And they went and they lifted up the deceased and  
they brought him out and buried him. I did not tear my  
clothes for him. I did not walk behind his bier. I did  
not sit on the ground, nor did I take my shoes from off  
my feet. I did not lament, not did I mourn."

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1) Gen. 18:1

11) Gen. 43:11

3) Ruth 1:20

1        "Many days after the death of the boy I sat in the  
midst of the congregation of my Hasidim, and I spoke in  
their ears amplifications of my teachings, darkness,  
cloud and thick darkness, and I perverted all equity  
5 (as was my want). And as I spoke, tears descended from  
my eyes, and I began to weep and cry out: 'Ah, my son  
is dead! Now they have informed me from the heavens  
above that my son is dead!' Then I mourned for my off-  
spring, and I did according to the law relating to the  
10 mourning for the dead. And all the people saw; they  
were astounded and had faith."

And I called to the spirit: "O holy one, listen!  
These, your Hasidim, are not sheep-men, but rather the  
calves of a cow. They are jackasses, double asses,  
15 triple heifers."

And the spirit answered: "Would that all the Lord's  
people be jackasses! May the Lord take the spirit of His  
wisdom from them. This was the sanctity of my wishes  
and desires the whole time I was a holy man. For who  
20 would believe in our miracles and fill our barns? Would  
the knowledgeable believe, those who understand science,

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3) Deut. 4:11

15) Gen. 15:9



1 those who know the rotations of the world and its off=  
spring and the laws of the host of its changes? Would  
they not deride our miracles and mock us and our wonders?  
Therefore, in my eyes all the enlightened of the people  
5 and all learned ones were undesirables. I pursued them  
in my anger, and I trampled them in my fury, and I sent  
against them fiery serpents, the assembly of my Hasidim,  
those who are smitten with fiery brew. But in the mul-  
titude of the jackasses of man there was reverence of the  
10 holy one and rabbi. I dwelt like a king among the troops,  
who gathered themselves to me during Sabbaths and festivals,  
in the days of the seventh month, on the Day of Remembrance,  
Rosh Hashanah, and at the end of the Holiday of the In-  
gathering, the Eighth Day of Solemn Assembly, and Simchat  
15 Torah.

"And it happened on this day, on Shmini Atseret, in  
the evening, that I circled the bimah with the voice of the  
multitude rejoicing according to the law. And I danced  
like a ram and I lead the house of my God, as usual, and  
20 I drank from the wine and became drunk, as usual, and sang  
out as usual: 'Abraham was glad on Simchat Torah,' and I  
cried out: 'Make way! Widen the path! For behold all

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5-6) Isaiah 63:3

17) Ez. 23:42

7) Num. 21:6

21) Part of the Liturgy

8) Proverbs 14:28

1 these holy ones have descended upon me. Together they  
will go to my house of prayer to make happy with me in  
the joy of my law. "Let us rejoice and let us be happy  
in this the Torah, because it is our strength and light;  
5 Abraham was glad on Simchat Torah" - A toast to life, our  
father Abraham! The cup of salvation I lift up, and to  
the health of my guests I drink - To life, our father  
Abraham! And I drink a cup to the Holy One, a cup to  
the Holy One, unto the last that are written for life in  
10 the book.' And as I finished drinking, behold a vision  
appeared to me. I saw in the vision my house of prayer  
going round and round. Turning, it rolled over opposite  
my eyes. And I became afraid because of the vision, lest  
I fall to the ground drunk in the midst of the congre-  
15 gation and assembly. So I cried out: 'Come my guests,  
come to my upper chamber. There we will reason together,  
take sweet council, confer together concerning our hidden  
secrets. And I went up to the room, and I closed the upper  
doors and locked them behind me.

20 "Then my Hasidim spoke, each one to his fellow, saying:  
"There is none like our Lord, none like our rebbe! The  
holy of holies is He, very exalted! For our holy fathers

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3) From Simchat Torah Liturgy

16=17) See: Psalms 55:15

6) Psalms 116:3

18) See: Judges 3:23

22) Ex. 30:10

1 rise up from their thrones in Eden, the garden of the Lord,  
and come to his house of prayer to rejoice with him in the  
joy of his law. And he speaks with them before our very  
eyes, as a man to his friend. He prances with them, and  
5 he whirls with them, calling them by their names, and drinks  
to them, and our eyes behold it. Now let us assemble  
together in his upper chamber, there they will deliberate  
upon our redemption and the redemption of our souls. They  
will impart knowledge of the secret to throw off the yoke  
10 from upon our necks and to bring the Redeemer to Zion, our  
righteous anointed one. And our rebbe will strive with  
the angel, the prince, and every nation and king, casting  
them down, humbling them unto the dust. And just as the  
heavenly princes subdue, our rebbe subdues peoples under  
15 us. Samael, the spirit of uncleanness, our rebbe will  
seize him with his strong arm and crush him under his feet.'

"They were still talking these things, riding through  
the heavens with the imagination of their spirit, when a  
youth came screaming to his father, saying: 'Father, I  
20 went out between the buildings to relieve myself, and I  
found there our rebbe fallen on the ground dead!'

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10) Isaiah 59:20

14) Psalms 47:4

1 all the assembly of my Hasidim trembled, and all of them  
went out in great haste, pushing themselves through the  
front door and windows of the house. They found my  
corpse, the body of the most holy man, sprawled out  
5 between the buildings, a place of filth, vomit, under-  
neath the window of the upper chamber. Then they raised  
a cry of destruction, wailing and lamentation, and they  
said: 'Woe, because of our sins the Tzadik has been  
gathered up. Due to the multitude of our wrongs he has  
10 died and is no more! Because of our transgressions  
Samael has overpowered him. While he struggled with him,  
he picked him up, and threw him outside through the window.'

"But I surely did not fight with Satan and the angel  
of evil, but rather I wrestled one of the fiery ones with  
15 mighty wrestlings; the fire in my stomach. When the  
upper doors were closed behind me I attempted to put  
away my wine from me in order to return my spirit to its  
former state. So I struggled to vomit the wine which I  
had drunk out my upper window between the buildings. And  
20 because I was drunk and my head was heavy, I fell through  
the porthole and broke my neck. Because I led my people  
with folly as long as my breath was in me, I became the

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5) See: Isaiah 28:8

17) I Sam. 1:14

15) See: Gen. 30:8

22) See: Job 27:3

1 foal of an ass with the conversion of my body - a stupid  
jackass.

"The Tzadik perished, and a jackass took his place -  
a jackass bent under the weight of its burden. I bent  
5 my shoulder to a jackass's burden instead of orthodoxy.  
I had to carry burdens upon my shoulder, because I had  
previously placed the weight of my burdens upon the  
neck of the assembly of my fools. Thorn and thistle was  
my food in return for all the toil I suffered, because  
10 when I was a Tzadik I ate meat and fish through the sweat  
of the brow of every fool. I crouched among the ash  
heaps in place of my previous dwelling, the beautiful  
palace which I built for myself with the money of strangers.  
I made my way slowly, lazily ambled about, in place of  
15 flying high through deceit. And the entire day I heard  
the voice of urging while one struck my back with wrath,  
with the lashes of a whip, with the blows of a staff, and  
with the piercing of the spur against my skin and my flesh.  
And of all the animals of the field and forest I was the  
20 least; foolish and stupid. Yet with all my folly, I  
clothed myself in pride. I adorned myself with conceit  
and haughtiness, for when the animals of the forest  
gathered to crown a king over them, I said: 'I will rule.'  
And when they derided and mocked me, I grabbed a lion  
25 skin and put it on, and all of them were terrified

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10) See: Gen. 3:19

1 before me, and they were afraid. But when I raised my  
voice and called out, they recognized me, and saw that I  
was a jackass.

"One day a crazy man, a man of the spirit, mounted me  
5 and said: 'Here am I, the Messiah!' And the house of  
Israel followed after him. It was made known to the king,  
and he became angry and said: 'Destroy!' So the fusiliers  
shot him with thunder sticks, and they hit him and killed  
him; him and his jackass, and I died. Because I was  
10 carrying a holy man at my death, my soul ascended and  
returned to a man. So the jackass became a physician, a  
wise physician and teacher, a man who knows and under-  
stands like a mule does not understand."

And I cried: "I am sorry for you, O mortal! I have  
15 compassion for you on behalf of the redemption and the  
exchange! For all the years which you were a man upon  
the Earth up until now, you were a successful man. But now  
you walk gaunt with want and hunger. For which man in  
his sickness, desirous of life, will seek the advice of  
20 a jackass?"

And the spirit answered me: "Enough with your words.  
Do not be moved to pity me. Restrain your lips. I know  
that you speak to me only out of jealousy. Your flesh  
crawls from fear, lest I be a physician of your people

1 in your city. But let your sadness and your anxiety be  
calmed. Remember that when I was healing Israel your  
mother had not yet given birth to you. I was successful,  
and I rode the heavens in my pride. And I was 'doctor'  
5 and master of mysteries in the eyes of the congregation  
of my community; yet, like before, I was a jackass."

And I answered: "Do not deceive me. Give true  
answers to the one who questions you. Tell me now in  
truth and in honesty, were you really a jackass-man of a  
10 physician, and yet you were exalted, respected and  
very haughty?"

And the spirit answered and said: "I spoke lies and  
mockery all the days of my life, but now in death my mouth  
will utter only truth. I swear! Upon my word! I was a  
15 mule of no understanding in the work of my healing. But  
with all this I was magnified over all. They believed in  
me and feared my majesty. If this surprises you, keep in  
mind that I was a fox and a dog. I was shrewd like the  
fox in covering my nakedness, and like a dog I mistreated  
20 all my colleagues."

And I replied: "Your words are riddles to me, enigmas  
from darkness. I do not understand them! Can a man be  
wise as a fox, and at the same time be ignorant of knowledge  
like a jackass?"

1       And the spirit answered: "A fox-man and yet a  
scoundrel without wisdom. For the wisdom of the fox is deceit whereas  
a man's wisdom makes his face shine. But please do not  
stop me from telling my story, for then you will under-  
5       stand all my words."

"The wisdom of healing is still a portion reserved  
to the Lawgiver. Healing's corner stone is the deepest  
darkness. Even today portions of wisdom are not yet  
revealed. A man may search his heart and still not come  
10       into wisdom's dwelling place. Therefore, her pillars are  
unstable. Upon the highest heights of all knowledge does  
healing build her house. She hews her pillars from all  
knowledge. The art of healing is a spider's web. How can  
man find the key to its knowledge before knowing the  
15       deepest secrets of creation? Can you attain its under-  
standing before knowing the basis of all science? Now the  
wise have done great things. Those who explore the enduring  
foundations of the Earth will attain some wisdom. They  
attempt to change every natural element through their devices.  
20       They should like to bring forth fire from water, make water  
from wind and heated gasses, and yet they have not penetrated  
to a knowledge of the basis of all life. Man has not yet  
created a sprout nor an ear of corn. Nor does he possess

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3)    Ecc1. 8:1

18)   Micah 6:2

13)   Job 8:14



1 the secret of every living creature, nor how the elements  
are formed and creatures given life. The straight way,  
the path of life itself has not yet been leveled properly.  
We do not know the forces that move creatures from birth  
5 to death. We are still not able to comprehend the causes  
of sickness, nor to know the secret processes of the  
chambers of the stomach and bowels, to enable us to score  
a bull's eye, and not miss the mark. Cures arise, but a  
medicine, which wise men strip bare to its foundation in  
10 order to understand all its processes, we do not have.  
Many are the pains we cure, we raise up healing for a  
thousand sicknesses. But the number of the hosts of ill-  
nesses which we are unable to cure is beyond counting.  
So the work of healing is still not a science, but rather  
15 a knowledge of experiments which our fathers attempted,  
and which they explored over a period of years from gen-  
eration to generation. So if a man says: 'I am wise,  
I have risen to the highest limit, I have found the  
source of life, and from my understanding I will heal,'  
20 behold his cured are greater in number than the locusts,  
but his slain are enormous in number. The pen of physi-  
cians is a double-edged sword in his hand; the ink stand  
is a bent bow which is upon his shoulders. Therefore, the

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1 wise men of healing who really understand do not praise  
their wisdom. But the foolish ones who glorify themselves,  
they are called wise. So if you see a haughty physician  
who has the reputation of being a wise man, then you know  
5 that he is a jackass.

"And I was a haughty jackass even when I was a physi-  
cian, a hollow man, a young ass, a wild ass of a man.  
For in medical school I did not incline my ear to my  
teachers, and my heart walked after my eyes. And I chased  
10 after every cook, and seamstress of featherbeds. To them  
I swore, to them I vowed, saying: 'If you give me your  
money and your wage, then I will betroth you unto me  
forever, and you shall become my wife. I will be wise,  
and you will be called a wise woman.'"

15 And I called out: "Why do you multiply your words to  
me, master of lips? I believe, I believe that you were a  
jackass of a man, a stupid man. But explain this to me  
so that I may know; how did you rise up so high in your  
stupidty, and how were you exalted and raised up in your  
20 folly?"

And the spirit answered me, and said: "Behold, you  
are a physician. With all of your experience, your going  
in and out among the people, you still do not know their

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7) Gen. 16:12

12) Hosea 2:21

9) See: Num. 15:39

17) See: Psalms 92:7

1 soul? You do not know the way of the rabble which is in  
its midst? The common people judge according to the sight  
of their eyes. The great multitude will value you on the  
basis of the beautiful shining gleam of your possessions.  
5 The scale of its judgment are these: The splendor of the  
dwelling place and habitation, and the spread on the table,  
the presence of servants and attendants, the beauty of  
clothes and house utensils. And a jackass who wears clothes  
of beauty and walks around with his nose stuck in the air  
10 is wise in the eyes of the multitude. All this I know,  
and even more, for I steered my course by these observa-  
tions and became rich thereby.

Hypocrates wrote his lessons and his teachings in a  
book. One who has fallen upon his bed can rise up and be  
15 cured of his sickness by them. I wrote better teachings  
than those in a book. They are statutes and laws which  
the physician can use and live by. Pythagoras called  
his sayings, 'Golden Adages,' a name which is not faithful,  
words which do not fit together nicely on the lips. For  
20 what has his adages to do with gold? They are parables of  
morality, parables of wisdom and knowledge, but not parables  
of gold. So I called my sayings appropriately, 'Sayings  
of Gold,' for by them even a jackass, who heals, can fill  
his treasuries with gold. The sum of these sayings I will  
25 announce to you, and then you will no longer wonder at me.

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14) See: Ex. 21:18

17) See: Lev. 18:5

- 1 Incline your ear to me and hear, and you too can become  
successful. After my death I am not envious of a  
colleague. Here are my words:

SAYINGS OF GOLD

- 5 1) Whiten your hair with powder, and put a camel saddle  
over your stomach, and you will be wise in the eyes of  
all who see you. For they will say: 'Great are the  
searchings of the heart, they have whitened his hair.  
And his scholarship is in his bowels.
- 10 2) Put a human skull upon your desk, and embryos with  
double heads, and feet into glass jars containing formal-  
dehyde on your window. All who pass by and see them  
will be amazed at your wisdom.
- 3) Buy books without end. Dress them in covers of animal  
15 skin, ram skins dyed red. Guild their tops and sides with  
gold, and put them in a cabinet locking them up forever.  
Do not ever read from them, but make transparent windows  
for the doors of your cabinet. When people see the beauty  
of your many books, they will say there is no end to your  
20 understanding.
- 4) Give a pledge and buy horses for yourself. Even if  
the creditor seize your pledge, buy a carriage. Then,  
even if you kill this people as one man, when your horses  
and carriage stand at every door, all those who pass by

1 will say: 'He heals all flesh, doing wonderous things.'  
5) When you go into the house of a sick person, do not  
take concern in investigating his sickness, to know his  
pain, but discern well the people who stand around him,  
5 those who are stationed around his bed, and you will know  
what you shall say to them. If you go out and say, 'I do  
not believe he will live,' and he does in fact die, then  
they will say: 'Did he not tell us this from the beginning?  
He understood it, he investigated it, and he also deter-  
10 mined it.' And if the sick one rises and walks around,  
they will not say you are a jackass, that you did not  
understand, but rather they will speak of wonderful deeds,  
saying: 'He restores breath to the cadavers of the dead.'  
6) The poor and the destitute seek a prescription only  
15 after they have already reached the gates of death. So,  
to cure a poor man of his sickness is very difficult.  
If he does live, there is no reward for your labors.  
So what profit is there in his blood, when he goes down  
to the pit? Only that your name will be called in his  
20 death. Therefore, put them far from you, and do this out  
of your wisdom. Deck yourself with majesty and excellency,  
and when you speak with them, make your haughty voice

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9) See: Job 28:27

18) Psalms 30:10

10) Ex. 21:19

21) Job 40:10

- 1 fulminate so that they will tremble and be in anguish  
because of you and be afraid to approach you.
- 7) Make appointed times for the poor to come to you, to  
seek your advice in your house. They will assemble for  
5 you at this same time every day, and station themselves  
at the door of your dwelling. And everyone who passes  
by will look at this pillar of a cloud standing at the  
door of the dwelling, and say: 'He is a great physician  
and very praiseworthy! All these people from everywhere  
10 watch at his gates!' But choose and bring near, gather-  
ing into your room first the wealthy who have come with  
the poor. Examine their pain, and write out their pre-  
scriptions. Speak with them and take their tribute, and  
when they go, say to the poor who are standing outside:  
15 'Return tomorrow at the right time. Today the appointed  
time has passed. There is no time now to accept anyone else.'
- 8) Your colleagues are your enemies, those who rob your  
bread. Humiliate them, humble them, grind them muddy.  
Always speak evil against them. Heap up their disgrace,  
20 and convert their honor to shame; he has no reputation as  
a knowledgeable physician and wise man. For the sake of  
the honor of your reputation, disgrace him. If he reads  
current books, journals, history, then you say:

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1-2) Deut. 2:25

10) See: Proverbs 8:34

7) See: Num. 12:5

20) Hosea 4:7

1 'His action is strange. His work is alien. When he visits  
someone ill, he looks to the ends of the Earth. He does  
not give heed to the narration of the sick person, for he  
hears in his ears the utterance of speakers in the houses  
5 of the land of Britain and in the rooms of France and in  
the dwelling of old men which is in Spain.' If your  
colleague is a young man, then you say: 'He is young in  
days. His eyes have not yet seen the trials which your  
eyes have seen. There will yet fall at his side a thousand  
10 and ten thousand at his right hand before he will be a  
physician.' If the man is older than you, say: 'His  
action and his work has become antiquated, and he did not  
remove the old before the new. Also, his hair has grown  
white, his eye has dimmed, his vigor has abated, his reason  
15 has waned.

9) If a colleague offers to take sweet council with  
you, to confer together, and he tells you what he has done  
until your arrival, then distort your mouth and turn up  
your nose as he speaks to you. Condemn him with your very  
looks, saying: 'What has been done is bad in my opinion!'  
And if the people will not understand the thoughts of  
your heart, so speak with your lips and bring forth words

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9) Psalms 91:7

16) Psalms 55:15

1 from your mouth, and answer and say to him in earshot  
of all who are present around you: 'You have done ill  
for your patient. You did things with him which should  
not have been done! Your ways are the ways of death!  
5 Your paths have strayed! You do not know!' You press  
your enemy to the ground, and you rise up to the heavens  
in your pride. For if the patient dies, it was because  
of your enemy that he expired. By your colleague's sin  
he will die. But if he rises up and is cured of his  
10 sickness, then you have worked a miracle through your  
wisdom, and you will have saved him from the hand of  
Sheol through the understanding of your hands.  
10) If another assists you, putting advice into your soul,  
do not consent to him, and do not listen to him by turning  
15 from your path, so that your nakedness will not be un-  
covered; lest you heed, and in his heart he understands and  
returns and heals him. Until the end of all hope and until  
the cessation of all expectation, only then make haste to  
listen to the voice of anyone who has counseled you. Then,  
20 when your patient dies, you can say: 'The fault does not  
lie with me. He has died and is no more, because of the  
mistake of the man who counseled me.' All the people  
will believe you and your carriage.

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9) See: Ex. 21:19

15) Ex. 20:23

14) See: Deut. 13:9



1 I conducted myself on the basis of these things. I  
managed myself in connection with this skill, and the people  
of the city thought of me as the head of their physicians.  
I was as Hypocrates in their eyes. Iniquity and sin was  
5 their part when they did not call me in their sicknesses.  
And when a wealthy man died, and I was not called to him,  
then the whole city would complain about it. And my  
cures grew more numerous than the hairs on my head, and  
no one opened a mouth against me. And I succeeded greatly,  
10 and amassed great wealth, and as my wealth increased, so  
my wisdom also became great in the eyes of the people of  
my place, and I was honored as second only to the King  
among my congregation; and in reality, I was second-to-the-  
King, to the King of Terrors, a first-born of Death. Daily  
15 did I ride in the carriage of his second in command, pass-  
ing through the streets and broad ways, coming to the houses  
to smite with plague. His drawn sword he set down in my  
city, and he put in its place reed and feather between  
my fingers. And that which he would do with his sword, I  
20 did with my pen and ink stand. However, as I became

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8) Psalms 40:13

15) Gen. 41:43 (New translation)

12) Esther 10:3

16) Song of Songs 3:2

14) Job 18:14

17) Ex. 12:23

14) Job 18:13

17) See: Num. 22:23

1 old and grey, from many years, wisdom came into my heart,  
and I came to understand in the later days my profession,  
and I healed a man from his pains for the first time  
in the days of my old age. I caused him to survive his  
5 sickness through the cunning of my hands, and the King of  
Terrors became dismayed, for it was evil in his eyes, so  
he quickly gathered me to my fathers, and he took me from  
the Earth."

"And because I had become arrogant in my foolishness,  
10 on account of my knowledge, I became a turkey after my  
death, a bird arrogant in its folly, and blown up for  
nothing.

"This was my change, this was my recompense - this  
turkey! A blown-up turkey whose home is the land of India.  
15 And I boasted the whole day long, and I enlarged my crop  
like a bellows, and I thundered forth in its expanse with  
the sound of my conceit. I extended my nose, and issued  
forth a sound from my beak. And my face looked angry when  
I blew it up, and the wattles which were about my neck  
20 turned red as scarlet. And when I caused the sails of  
my wings to descend earthward, I erected the feathers of  
my tail in a circle around me. And when I heard the sound  
of a flute, I called: 'Glory, glory!' And I hated all

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1) I Sam. 12:2

20) See: Isaiah 1:18

1 worms in my great arrogance. And if my eyes saw it, then  
I became filled with rage, pursued it, flew upon it, beat  
it with the poles of my wings, and pecked at it. By such  
deeds of foolishness as these I pursued pride. And I  
5 appeared to everybody as a fool, just because I was clothed  
with arrogance from of old, in order to hide my folly.  
And whereas in former times, the old rose up before me, and  
they honored me, and they feared my utterance, now the  
young laughed at me, children mocked and teased me. So  
10 the days passed, and I grew fat and thick in my arrogance  
and in my foolishness. And a holy man passed by, a rabbi  
in the land, and he came to the place where I was. The  
men of my place made haste and prepared a slaughtering  
for him, and they made good things for him to eat. So  
15 they grabbed and slaughtered me too. They roasted me,  
and placed me in front of him. The Tzadik ate me. He  
ate me in his righteousness as the tongue of fire  
devoureth the stubble, he did not leave a thing. So the  
holy one caused me to rise up through his eating, and the  
20 soul of the bird was brought into the fruit of a woman's  
womb. And so I was born a man one more time, and I became  
one who had lineage, a man puffed up like a turkey.

1 "Have you ever in all your days seen an Arab in the  
desert? Have you seen the magnificent horse on which he  
rides? The horses of the Arabs and children of the East  
are pleasant to the eye, a magnificent breed, the best  
5 of any steed. The likeness of their form is a delight  
to the eyes. Their neck is held high when they walk.  
Their thighs are rounded, and the lifting up of the hooves  
of their legs is pleasant to the sight. They are as  
light-footed as the deer on the mountains. And like a  
10 faithful dog, their spirit is with their riders. And  
their stallions produce offspring in their likeness and  
in their image, the fruit of the belly equal to them.  
In this way, these horses pass down their noble lineage  
to their generations. Letters of pedigree are written  
15 for them: Which horses have gone out from which belly,  
and who fathered the offspring. All of them are of  
distinguished birth. Officers and kings of the land give  
thousands in gold and silver for their price, so as to  
breed them with their horses to improve their offspring.  
20 Now the children of the rabbis are of distinguished birth  
also; they are the Arabian horses of the House of Israel.  
The wealthy of the people give thousands in gold and  
silver for dowry and gift so that one can marry among them."

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4) See: Lam. 2:4

5-6) Gen. 3:6

7) Song of Songs 7:2

8) See: Gen. 2:9

9) See: II Sam. 2:18

23) Gen. 34:12

1       And I cried out: "Are the children of the rabbis  
born like the offspring of swift horses, a living creature  
after its kind? Would the rabbis bequeath the spirit  
that is in them to their seed and descendants like the  
5   Arabian horses leave as a legacy their splendid magni-  
ficence to the offspring of their loins?"

      And the spirit answered me: "They do not bequeath  
their spirit, and they do not leave as a legacy their  
magnificence. It happens that a rabbi writes a book and  
10   his son does not know how to read a book; and there are  
rabbis, men of renown, and their descendants are people  
of no reputation; and a rabbi's wife, a woman of beautiful  
form, gives birth to a daughter who has no form and no  
beauty, black as a raven who looks like an Ethiopian;  
15   and the wealthy people give thousands in gold and silver  
for the dowry and gift, so that one can marry among them.

      "Therefore, every offspring of a rabbi is haughty;  
he raises his nose up to the clouds: 'I am, and there is  
none else like me among all His schemes;' and the high of  
20   the land only bequeath to their children their pride and  
a haughty look.

      "Now I was stricken with boils, a man of scabs and  
scurvy, a stupid man who does not know, a fool who does

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2-3)    Gen. 1:24

12-13) Deut. 21:11

14)    Song of Songs 5:11

21)    Proverbs 21:4

22)    Lev. 21:20

23)    Psalms 92:7

1 not understand; but my fathers and fathers of my fathers  
were of a group of rabbis. An offspring of their loins  
I was, with boils and leprosy; therefore, I was haughty,  
and my eyes were elevated, and I walked around the house  
5 all day, and my hands were at my sides, and my stomach  
stuck out in front of me, and I said to myself: 'Who is  
like me, who is equal to me, who is as worthy as I?'

"Every person who did not have a rabbi in his family  
was a worm and not a man in my eyes, and I would give  
10 him a look like the look that would rest upon a crawling  
thing of the dust from above. And I wanted to know but  
was not able to understand why he lived?

"And to my sons and daughters I commanded, saying:  
'Stay away from the man who does not have a rabbi as his  
15 redeemer, a relative, because on what basis is he esteemed?  
Depart from the tents of these men, for they are unclean  
for you. You will not come into their congregation, do  
not walk in the street with them, do not talk with them,  
because it is disgrace for us. Remember, do not forget,  
20 my children, who you are and who are their fathers.'

"And if a man desires to arrange a marriage with me,  
to take from among my daughters for his sons, or to give

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10) Deut. 32:24

16) Lev. 11:8

16) Num. 16:26

1 from among his daughters to my sons, then I put the  
rabbis of his house on the scales and I weigh them on  
the scales. And if the number of the rabbis of his house  
is less than my rabbis, or if there would be lacking in  
5 the weight one of his fathers, then he must add silver  
according to his value, for the equivalent of rabbis.  
So by the purchase of a family will he marry. If there  
are many rabbis, then the price is lessened, and if there  
are less rabbis, then the bride price is enlarged. And  
10 if there is no rabbi in the house at all, then he must  
give silver without end, gold like ashes he must scatter."

And I cried out: "What is this thing? You would be-  
come related by marriage to these unclean men to whom you  
refuse to open your lips?"

15 And the spirit answered me: 'Money is cleansing  
water. The unclean soul shall be cleansed by it by giving  
ransom for his soul. Thousands in gold for the dowry and  
gift will purify, for silver answers all, and gold will  
make complete all lack, and it will fill every deficiency.  
20 An empty man, lacking ethics, devoid of knowledge, but  
filled with money...his reputation is great Israel.  
Before all the people he is honored. From the young to

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2) From the High Holy Day Liturgy 15) Num. 31:23

6) See: Lev. 5:15 17) See: Ex. 30:12

11) See: Psalms 147:16

1 the old they will bow down and bend their knees in front  
of him, and like the days of their exodus from the land  
of Egypt, they bow down to the golden calf.

"Thus, a man of Israel, an inhabitant of the land  
5 of Poland will become exalted on both counts; on account  
of his birth, and on account of his money. And for both  
of these he will marry. And the man in whom the pride  
of money and the pride of birth is joined, you cannot come  
near on account of pride and haughtiness. He is king over  
10 all the proud beasts."

And I said to the spirit: "I know, I understand your  
great pride, for these two are also accounted to you, the  
pride of birth and the pride of money."

And the spirit answered me: "So it was according to  
your words! I was of distinguished birth, loaded down  
with pieces of silver. And I amde business with my money  
and my birth, a business of rabbis by my arranging marriage,  
and a business of money when I brought from afar my in-  
heritance and my merchandise."

20 And I asked: "And why were you not a rabbi like all  
your fathers?"

And the spirit answered me: "Have I not told you?  
Because my fathers did not bequeath to me their spirit.

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1) See: "Alemu" prayer in daily liturgy

9-10) Job 41:26

14-15) See: Gen. 44:10



1 However, in the days of my childhood and youth I studied  
in the books of the Talmud in the rooms of my teacher."

"And you despised his words?"

And the spirit answered: "I did not understand a  
5 single thing."

And I continued: "And how is it your parents dealt  
falsely, telling you to study a book in which you did not  
understand a single thing? And why did they not do well  
to teach you that which would be useful for you as you  
grew older? Why did they not teach you the nature of the  
10 world according to its lands, to know the advantage of  
each and every land, and its deficiencies? Why did they  
not teach you the language of the peoples with whom the  
merchant dispatches his letters?"

And the spirit answered me: "Be silent! Do not mention  
15 it! Should men of breeding instruct and teach their  
children profane things? The habits of the lands of the  
non-Jews and the language of the uncircumcized? God  
forbid! It would be a disgrace for us! And it would be  
a shame for our families if the issue of our loins be  
20 without instruction in the books of the Talmud from the day  
of his leaving the womb to the day of his leaving the  
wedding canopy on the day of his wedding to the day of  
his turning away from the table of his father and father-  
25 in-law."

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24) In Europe it was a custom for  
families to provide room and  
board for a couple if the groom  
was a student.

1       And I called out: "My ears hear strange things!  
Perversities without limit! Is it a shame not to instruct  
a child in a book in which he does not understand a single  
thing, and is it a disgrace to teach him that which would  
5       be useful to him as he grows older? And what was conse-  
quently your end? You were lacking commerce - your sub-  
stance wasted. And were you not impoverished?"

      And the spirit answered me: "As your words! My com-  
merce was lacking, my substance wasted, and I . . . I  
10       grew rich."

I was astonished.

      And the spirit added: "When I saw that my means failed  
and my business was going bankrupt I made haste to borrow  
thousands in silver from all my merchant friends. And  
15       afterwards I raised my voice and cried out: 'The purse  
has a hole, my pocket is empty, and there can be no  
repayment.'"

      When I heard these words I said to myself: "And this  
is the man whom I have treated." And I lifted up my voice,  
20       and I asked: "Will you not tell me how you were gathered  
to your people?"

      And the spirit answered me: "Like one of man I was  
gathered to my fathers. I became sick. And I called for

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1) See: Proverbs 23:33

23) See: Judges 2:10

1 physicians, and they wrote out their prescription for me.  
And I drank from the mixture, and I died. You must know  
the sickness which I had, for you administered healing  
to me."

5 And I said: "Is this then the conclusion of your  
reincarnations?"

And the spirit answered me: "This is the end of my  
reincarnation until this day; but who knows what the day  
will bear? Perhaps in order to humble my pride and haugh-  
tiness over my holy kindred, tomorrow I could be the soul  
10 of an unclean animal or the smallest of worms."

And I asked: "What can be done to you so that they  
will no longer hurl you around and come to rest?"

And the spirit answered me: "Write all the things  
which you have heard in a book. Print them and spread  
15 them throughout Israel, and when a man who would do  
according to my deeds and walk in my ways will read them,  
he will return from his evil way and from his foolishness:  
A Hasid may return from drinking his brandy, and from  
abandoning the souls of his house in order to travel to  
20 his rebbe; and a cantor may forsake the melodies of beer  
drinkers and songs not according to proper order, and  
thereby his songs will become holy in God's house; and the  
collector of the tax on meat and candles may have mercy  
upon his people and congregation; and the Cabbalist

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12) See: Isaiah 22:17

17) See: II Chronicles 7:14

1 may return and believe in the Lord God of Israel. One  
God will he recognize, without form and without any  
image; and he who buries the dead may return and do his  
holy work without any bending after unjust profit, and  
5 without profaning any dead soul; and the zealot may be  
zealous for the Lord and His people, and stop pursuing,  
in his zealousness, after all who turn from his way, for  
judgment belongs to God; or one of the rabbis of the  
Hasidim may give thanks to the Lord, and say to the congre-  
10 gation of his Hasidim: 'Turn away the asses from me, for  
I am an imposter;' and the physician may return and cease  
to make mistakes for the sake of blinding every eye -  
perhaps he will not become haughty because of his wisdom,  
his colleague he will not envy even before he dies; and  
15 one of the fine born of the land may come to the insight  
that the value of a man is to be found in his soul and  
inside him, and that the wisdom of his heart and the good  
of his deed and the aptness of his works - these are the  
glory of a man, and that to an unrefined man he will not  
20 give nor add any honor because of the house of his fathers.  
When he puts all these into his heart, and ceases from  
being haughty, does not despise his brothers and the sons  
of his people, and gives his daughter to a valorous man  
even though he be one who has nothing; and if even one of  
25 these is done, then I will rise up on high, I will ascend

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1 to heaven, and I will rest from my lot to the end of days."

And I answered: "I will do according to your words. But I will ask you one more thing. Answer me so that I  
5 may know how to answer those who ask me something. Your reincarnations have been seventeen. From the time that God on high made you wander about, to go and dwell in these houses of clay, how many years has been the life of your dwelling until this day?"

10 And the spirit answered me: "Five hundred years."

"And the number of days from your first birth as a man until the day of your death as a collector of the tax on meat and candles after your fifth birth?"

And the spirit answered me: "Two hundred years."

15 "And now see if your words fit that which you have spoken to me. Five hundred years ago, when you were first born a man, you were a Hasid, who dipped his flesh in water, and traveled to his rebbe; and three hundred years ago you were a collector of the tax on meat and candles.  
20 But in every gate of my people they know that it has only been a hundred years since Israel Baal Shem Tov lived on earth, the father of the Hasidim and their rebbes. And it is only fifty years since the tax on candles has been put on the land."

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1) See: Dan. 12:13

20) See: Micah 1:9

1       And the spirit mocked and said: "Behold you investigator! A man of intelligence! A man who knows the  
future! You bring everything in judgment. You balance  
everything in the scales of your intelligence. Do you  
5 know what you are in being this way and in your doing  
all these? If you do not know, I will let you know. You  
are a heretic! You are a freethinker! Behold a spirit  
speaks with you. Your eyes see that it is its mouth  
which speaks to you, and you lean on your understanding?  
10 You ask such things as these, and you do not believe the  
words of a spirit? If I had known that you were a heretic,  
then I would not have opened my mouth to speak with you.

"But what is there to do now? My words will not  
return to me anymore. Why should they go up in  
15 nothingness to be lost? Therefore, do what I have com-  
manded you; perhaps I will be redeemed. Write all the  
words which you and I have spoken in a book, distribute  
them in Jacob, spread them among Israel. And the people  
will read, and they will believe all my words, no word  
20 will be difficult for them. For I know the soul of my  
people. Despite the eyes of their intelligence and the  
eyes of their flesh, they will believe the words of a  
spirit."

And I did that which I was commanded, and, I wrote  
25 all these things in a book.

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