

THE TALKUT SHIMONI ON PSALMS; BOOKS II AND III

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Abbreviated "Y.S."

INTRODUCTION

The Yalkut Shimoni ("the compilation of Simson") is a haggadic thesaurus on the books of Scripture. The interpretations and expositions are compiled from over fifty sources and follow the sequence of those portions of the Bible to which they refer. Although the identity of the redactor has never been conclusively proven, various scholars believe him to be Simson Kara, "ha-Darshan," who flourished during the thirteenth century C.E.¹ This thesis deals with the treatment of books II and III of Psalms in the Yalkut (sections 741-840). The terms "the Midrash" and "our Midrash" are used in this thesis to apply to the latter exclusively.

At first glance the Midrash appears to be a purposeless conglomeration of haggadic material. It is less an organic whole than a collection of individual expositions which are isolated into many sub-groups, each referring to a specific Biblical passage. It seems to be a mass of disjointed material treating themes as disparate as prayer, eschatology, foreign nations, angelology, study, retribution, humility, evil, and so forth. These treatments are often characterized by hyperbole and an abundance of myth and fantasy. In many instances notions are set forth which are not wholly consonant with Scripture and the tradition. One might think, therefore, that the Midrash is a literary realm in which the rabbis--free of the limitations and rigidity which mark the halakha--take liberty to indulge in fanciful flights of speculation in any direction in which their scholarly intuition and curiosity may lead them.

In undertaking a study of the Midrashic treatment of the Psalms, I considered it necessary to begin by attempting to disentangle and classify these fragments in an effort to achieve an ordered method of presentation. When I had completed the preliminary work, however, I began to see the Midrash in a new light; and subsequent research confirmed, to a considerable extent, the view that although the fragments of the Yalnut appear to be substantially disparate elements, they actually have a firmly unifying bond, an intentional structure which grows out of the circumstances of their composition.

The very nature of the material in our Midrash, and the historical context from which it emerged, suggest that it was, substantially, a response to the most urgent needs of the people, and not a product of mere intellectual gymnastics.

The material compiled in the Midrash may be dated as early as the first century B.C.E. and as late as the twelfth century C.E.--a millennium of Jewish history marked by virtually unmitigated persecution and suffering. When a nation is in the midst of mourning and suffering, emerging from a tragic past and facing a dim future, it is almost unthinkable that the religious leaders, the rabbis, would indulge themselves in purely cerebral speculation irrelevant to the demands of reality; especially in the popular literature.

Despite the apparent looseness of the character and method of the Midrash, even a cursory cataloguing of the fragments reveals that a substantial percentage of them fall into one of five major categories: the relationship between God and the people of Israel; repentance; prayer;

study of Torah; the Hereafter. It appears to me that the heavy concentration on these themes implies a conscious, deliberate, and concerted effort to give the people of Israel what they needed most: a means of accommodating to the present, and a source of hope for the future. Above all, then, the Midrash is a literature of hope.

Survival depended on more than hope. The rabbis held the traditional religious and ethical values crucial to the collective well-being and survival of the people. Every device of education was therefore turned towards insuring that these principles would remain alive, so that the people would continue to think and behave in accordance with traditional Jewish values. Our Midrash, then, served also as a kind of "adult education" intended to insure the survival of Judaism.

I believe, therefore, that the Midrash grew out of the attempt to lend needed emotional support to the people, and to preserve and transmit the Jewish heritage.

It is in the light of the foregoing observations that this thesis endeavors to present a study of the treatment by the Y.S. of books II and III of Psalms. Part I of this thesis is concerned primarily with techniques employed in treating the Psalms. Part II deals primarily with Midrashic concepts.

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CHAPTER I

THE INTERPRETATION OF MUSICAL TERMS

Within the Psalms, particularly in the superscriptions, there appear terms designating musical instruments, and liturgical and musical directions and settings. The precise meanings of all these terms are generally obscure; many are unknown and may therefore only be conjectured.² Scholars generally contend that those terms that appear in the superscriptions were attached to the Psalms some time after their composition, and are therefore of little value for the interpretation of the individual Psalms.³

With few exceptions, the rabbis do not even pretend to a knowledge of what these terms mean, but rather employ them as pretexts for their homiletic expositions. Thus may be observed the rabbis' facility of taking obscure terms in the Psalms out of context and making them lucidly clear for their own homiletic purposes:

1. Masikil: The meaning of this term is obscure. One etymology suggests a "didactic" or "meditative" Psalm, although the most probable explanation is a "skilful Psalm."⁴ In the Midrash on Ps. 42: 1, the rabbis explain the term, not as describing the character or nature of the Psalm, but within the context of what follows in the superscription: "Masikil of the sons of Korah." Adducing Prov. 16: 24 as a proof text, the rabbis interpret "Masikil" to mean "wisdom," therefore rendering the verse: "the wisdom of the sons of Korah." (Y.S. 741.)

2. Shechanani: This term denotes the melody to which the Psalm

was sung; probably some well-known song beginning with the word "Shoshanim." By no means does the term denote a lily-shaped instrument by which the Psalm was accompanied nor does it refer to the beauty and purity of the bride described in Ps. 45.⁵ According to the Midrash, the "sons of Korah" are identified with the "Shoshanim" which appear in Ps. 45: 1:

The Holy One, blessed be He, applies to whoever atones for his sins, a loving epithet. Such was the case of the sons of Korah. As long as they did not repent they were not known as "lilies" or "loved ones." Once, however, they repented, they became known as "lilies" and "loved ones," as is said: "For the leader; upon Shoshanim . . ." (Y.S. 747.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 69: 1, the term "Shoshanim" is applied to the Israelites at the Red Sea who "became lilies when they beheld the Holy One, blessed be He." (Y.S. 801.)

3. La-m'na-tze-ah: There is little doubt that this word means "precentor" or "conductor" and refers to whoever trained the Temple choir and led the music in the Temple services. The preposition prefixed to the term, generally rendered "for," may be understood in the sense of "belonging"; that is, a Psalm belonging to an unknown precentor's collection.⁶ Since the stem, na-tze-ah, can mean either "lead" or "conquer," the Midrash on Ps. 45: 1 renders the verse, "For Him who gives victory to the sons of Korah because they are Shoshanim." The rabbis make this deduction as follows:

The sons of Korah, who were lilies [shoshanim], were gathered from among the thorns that they might not be consumed with the thorns; the Holy One, blessed be He, came swiftly and saved them. This is analogous to the story of a king who entered a city. When the men of the city came forth to crown the king with a crown of gold studded with precious stones and pearls,

they were met and told: "The king requires nothing from you except a crown of lilies." Thereupon, the men of the city rejoiced. So it was with the sons of Korah and his assembly. They said: "The Holy One, blessed be He, requires of you censers of gold," but the Holy One, blessed be He, replied: "What good are censers of gold to Me? 'Mine is the silver and Mine the gold' [Haggai 2: 8]. . . But what do I require? Lilies!" The sons of Korah said: "We are lilies!" The Holy One, blessed be He, answered: "You will be victorious," as is said, "For Him who gives victory to the sons of Korah because they are Shoshanim [lilies]." (Y.S. 747.)

4. Al-Alanot: This term means "dumplings," and probably denotes that the music of a particular Psalm was intended for women's voices. It has been suggested that those who render the term "for youth" or "concerning secret things" are entirely at fault as to the meaning.⁷ It is exactly in this latter sense that the Midrash on Ps. 46: 1 renders the term as though derived from the root meaning "hidden," to indicate that God's actions are "hidden" from man. Further on, in the same Midrash, the rabbis alter the vowels, thus reading the word as O-la-not (worlds), referring to the world of the wicked and the world of the righteous. (Y.S. 751.)

5. Al-Mahalat: The term is best explained as the initial word of some well-known song, to the melody of which the Psalm was set. The term may mean "sickness." It is doubtful that it denotes a mournful style of music or some kind of instrument. The IKX could only describe the word as unintelligible.⁸ The Midrash on Ps. 53: 1 overcomes the "unintelligibility" of the word by rendering it as derived from the root HAL, meaning "pardon" or "forgiveness." Inasmuch as the superscription includes the name of "David," the Midrash explains that Mahalat refers to the forgiveness (a'hile) that Abigail (I Sam. 25: 1-42) made possible for David by preventing him from taking Nabal's life. (Y.S. 769.)

6. Mikhtam: A musical term, the meaning of which remains obscure.

"In defiance of all grammar and analogy, Aquila, Symmachus, and Jerome treat the word as a compound, and render it as an epithet of David, 'the humble and sincere or blameless.'⁹ It is exactly in this latter sense that the Midrash on Ps. 56: 1 renders the term: "David was makh (meek or humble) and tam (perfect, upright or blameless)." In still another play upon the word, the Midrash interprets mikhtam as a composite of makkah and tammah, referring to David's wound (makkah) which was whole (tamma), since he was born already circumcised." (Y.S. 774.)

7. Al-Yonat Elem R'ho-gim: The term probably indicates the melody to which the Psalm was sung by reference to the opening words of some well-known song.¹⁰ The literal meaning of the terms is: "The silent dove of them that are afar off."¹¹ The Midrash on Ps. 56: 1 also translates Yonat elem as "the silent dove," which it applies to Tamar (Gen. 38); the term r'ho-gim is rendered in the sense of the pi'el of the root RHC (remove): "At the time that Tamar's proofs¹² were removed, she became like a 'silent dove.'" (Y.S. 774.)

8. Al-Tashbet: The term literally means, "destroy not." Isa. 65: 8 suggests that it was a vintage melody to which the Psalm was to be sung; "destroy not" being the first few words of the first line of one of the vintage songs.¹³ In the Midrash on Ps. 57: 1, the rabbis take the term literally to mean "destroy not." Since David's flight from King Saul is mentioned in the same verse, it is explained that David implored God "not to slay (or destroy)" him; not to allow him to be slain when Saul pursues him. (Y.S. 775.) In the Midrash on Ps. 73: 1, the term is again rendered, "destroy not," but this time it is applied by Asaph to

the plight of the people of Israel. The proof text is adduced from Deut. 10:10, wherein God tells Moses that He will not (hash-hitshe) destroy the people of Israel. (Y.S. 810.)

9. Al-Yedutum: The term, rendered "after the manner of Yedutum," probably means that a Psalm was set to a melody composed by or named after Yedutum, David's chief musician (I Chron. 16: 41), or by his great orders of Temple singers in charge of the Temple music from David's day down to post-exilic times.¹⁴ In the Midrash on Ps. 77: 1, the term is played upon:

When the Holy One, blessed be He, lets the prophets envision the trials that are to come upon Israel, the righteous stand up and complain to the Holy One, blessed be He. Hence it is said, "for Yedutum." To what does "Yedutum" refer? To the decrees [d'otot] and the judgments [dinim], which the Holy One, blessed be He, showed would befall them. (Y.S. 816.)

10. Nevel and Kinnor: The nevel and the kinnor were the most important instruments of the orchestra of the Jerusalem Temple. Without them, no public or religious ceremony could be held. According to Josephus, the nevel had twelve strings and the kinnor ten.¹⁵ For the first time in the Y.S. on Pes. 42-89, the rabbis define and describe a musical reference literally, and do not merely construct a homily: Thus in the Midrash on Ps. 81: 3, R. Hiyya b. Abba taught that the kinnor and the nevel were one and the same instrument. R. Simeon, however, taught that they were two distinct instruments which differed in the number of strings. R. Simeon further taught--playing upon the word nevel--that the nevel is so designated because it "put to shame [n'nevel] every other kind of musical instrument." R. Judah said in the name of R. Ilai that the kinnor had seven strings, which he forcibly adduces by reading

Ps. 119: 164: "With seven strings a day do I praise Thee."¹⁶ Further-
 more, in the days of the Messiah the kinnor will have eight strings,
 for it is said (Ps. 121: 1), "For the leader; on the sh'mi-nit eight
strings."¹⁷ And in the Time to Come it will be made with ten strings,
 as is said (Ps. 92: 4), "With an instrument of ten strings."¹⁸ (Y.S. 831.)

CHAPTER II

THE APPLICATION OF PSALM VERSES TO BIBLICAL PERSONALITIES

It is a frequent practice in the Midrash to detach a verse from its context in the Psalter in order to implement the effectiveness of a particular homily or exposition. In detaching a verse the rabbis did not purposely deviate from the literal sense of the Scriptural text and were aware of the principle that "the text cannot deviate from its literal meaning";¹⁹ in no way did they seek to falsify Scripture. This practice was then merely an accepted homiletic device.

These detached verses were often applied to Biblical personalities; a practice which contributed considerably to the pedagogic effectiveness of the teachings which the rabbis wished to set forth. The average or ordinary listener could more easily identify with the experiences of a familiar Biblical personality than with the most eloquent pronouncements of abstract ethical or religious doctrine. By embellishing and magnifying--thus further dramatizing--the already familiar personalities of Scripture, the rabbis more easily won the imagination and attention of an audience and thus rendered more memorable the virtues which these personalities exemplified.

Thus, in the ethical teachings of the Midrash, the rabbis, in many instances, use Biblical personalities to personify the abstract concepts of Good and Evil. There thus emerges the rabbinic tradition of praising the conduct of those Biblical personalities who are righteous

and condemning the conduct of those who are wicked--even beyond the Scriptural record.²⁰ Exegetically, motives and deeds are introduced which for the most part exaggerate those expressly recorded in Scripture. The desired effect was to stir the curiosity and imagination of the people; the prime objective was to impress upon them the principle that "virtue leads to virtue and transgression draws transgression in its train" (Avot 4: 3); to teach that when a man deviates even slightly from the way of the Torah there is the danger of still greater transgression. Hopefully, the people would be motivated to appropriate these teachings in the conduct of their own lives.²¹

Although throughout the Midrash verses in the Psalter are applied to Biblical personalities, the personality of David affords the most comprehensive single example of their treatment.

In as much as the authorship of the Psalms is traditionally ascribed to David and most of the seventy-three Psalms which bear his name in the superscriptions appear to portray circumstances which are in harmony with his career in Scripture, it is not unusual that numerous verses--including many which in context are totally unrelated to David--are applied to him. David therefore appears so often in the Midrash that he emerges as a composite of virtually all those traits which, in the rabbinic conception, identify the righteous man. These traits and virtues are not chosen indiscriminately but are carefully selected, reflecting those values which the rabbis considered vital to the people of their own respective generations. This may be observed in the Midrashic representation of the character of David.

Seeking to stress the importance of the study of Torah, the Midrash uses the term "harp" in Ps. 57: 9 as a pretext to convey the thought that

there was a harp hanging over David's bed, and when midnight came a North wind blew upon it so that it produced a melody. He would rise immediately and occupy himself with Torah until the break of dawn. (Y.S. 775.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 49: 6, the rabbis stress the equal significance of all mitzvot: David asserts that the minor mitzvot should be taken as seriously as the major mitzvot; people have a tendency to cast the former "under foot." The rabbis play upon the word "agevai" (my suppliants). Because of the resemblance of this word to gavy (a heel), they conclude that the minor mitzvot are too often "cast under foot [lit., "heel"/]." (Y.S. 758.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 86: 2 it is maintained that when a man hears himself reviled and remains silent, even though he has at hand the means to strike back, he is called a hasid (pious one). So David called himself a hasid because he heard himself reviled and kept silent. (Y.S. 834.) This Midrash was perhaps intended to caution Jews against open defiance in times when their persecutors had the upper hand.

Emphasizing the virtue of humility and respect for knowledge of Torah, the rabbis assert in the Midrash on Ps. 56: 1, that before David became king, "he made himself small [i.e. he behaved humbly] in the presence of one greater than he in the study of Torah." He acted in the same manner after becoming king of his people. (Y.S. 774.)

The Midrash on Ps. 89: 28 speaks of the reward granted to David for his righteousness:

"I also will appoint him first born /b'khor/, the highest of the kings of the earth." But was David a first-born /b'khor/? For it is written /I Sam. 17: 14/: "And David was the youngest." Why, therefore, is he referred to as b'khor? /Because/ just as a b'khor receives two shares of an inheritance, so David received two kingdoms: one in this world and one in the World to Come. David then said concerning the two of them /Ps. 51: 17/: "I praise Thee as follows: 'For the Leader for inheritances.'" (Y.S. 840.)

The reward of "life in the World to Come" which David and other righteous men of Scripture receive, reflects the effort on the part of the rabbis to comfort and reassure the righteous Jew that, like the righteous of Scripture, despite suffering, piety will not go unrewarded. This is a prime concern in the Midrash.

The rabbinic tradition of praising the righteous of Scripture includes the justification of the questionable acts of these godly men, or at least minimization of their guilt.²² Thus with help of the exegetical method, the Midrash on Ps. 51: 6 seeks to put a favorable construction upon David's sin with Bathsheba (II Sam. 2), adducing pious or at least mitigating circumstances and motives:

David's situation is analogous to one who was ill and came to a doctor. The doctor was astounded and said: "I am sorry for you, your injury is very serious." The patient replied: "You say you are sorry for me. I didn't break a limb for my own benefit but for your fee!" Similarly, David said before the Holy One, blessed be He: "I sinned for Thy sake,²³ for if Thou wilt accept my repentance, all sinners will make peace with Thee, as is written: 'Ye are my witnesses, saith the Lord, and My servant whom I have chosen.'" (Y.S. 764.)

Ps. 51: 6 is employed as the pretext of still another Midrash which seeks to portray David's deed in a more favorable light. David says to God:

Thou knowest full well that had I wished to suppress my lust I could have done so, but, thought I, let them not say, "The servant triumphed over His Master."²⁴ (Y.S. 764.)

Similar to the situation in which David found himself is that of Aaron. In the Midrash on Ps. 45: 8, the verse is used as a pretext to justify Aaron's part in the making of the golden calf as wholly the result of pious and benevolent motives. Aaron is characterized as seeking, by his action, to save Israel from exile:

R. Berekhia, in the name of R. Abba b. Kahana, expounded the verse as referring to Aaron. When the Israelites were about to commit the act, they went first to Hur and said to him: "Arise, make us a god." As he did not hearken to them they slew him. . . . Afterwards, they went to Aaron and said to him: "Up, make us a god." As soon as Aaron heard of it [Hur's death], he became frightened, as is said [Ex. 32:5] "And Aaron was affrighted when he perceived the slaughtered man [before him]." Aaron said [to himself]: "What shall I do? They have already killed Hur who was a prophet; if they kill me also, who am a priest, there will instantly be fulfilled against them the verse [Am. 2:20]: 'Should priest and prophet be slain in the sanctuary of the Lord,' Israel will immediately be liable to exile." (Y.S. 750.)

Likewise, the rabbis would have us believe that Aaron sinned in order to prevent Israel from sinning; an act which God Himself commands in the words of Ps. 45: 8:

If they make it [the golden calf], the offense will be theirs. Better that the offense fall upon me and not upon Israel. . . . Thereupon, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Aaron: "'Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness,' seeking to defend my children and hating to condemn them. 'Therefore . . . God hath anointed thee.' By thy life, from the entire tribe of Levi none greater than thou was chosen, as is written [Lev. 8: 2]: 'Take Aaron and his sons with him. . . .'" (Y.S. 750.)

This practice of seeking to justify the weaknesses of the righteous of Scripture may in some instances be accounted for by the rabbinic determination to counter the Christian polemic of the New Testament concerning the flawlessness of Jesus in contrast to the sinfulness of all who preceded him, which naturally included the most

righteous of Scripture.²⁶

It is more likely, however, that the justification of the deeds of the righteous was intended to reflect the fundamental principle that the greater the man the greater the power of his evil inclination,²⁷ and therefore how much praise is due him for his resistance in the face of temptation. A man in a position of authority, such as David or Aaron, was afforded opportunities and invitations to sin which, in reality, seldom try the average or ordinary man. If a man such as David could overcome his evil inclination in the face of such overwhelming temptations, how much more so, the rabbis wish to teach, should the average man succeed in overcoming his evil inclination in the face of inevitably lesser temptations.

Though on the surface, in Scripture, the righteous were overcome by the evil inclination, it is exegetically "proven" that their motives were virtuous and at no time did they lose their scruples.

On the other hand, when referring to the evil deeds of wicked Biblical personalities, the rabbis follow a similar principle, charging them with abominable deeds unrecorded in Scripture, thus accentuating the guilt of the guilty.²⁸

As David epitomizes the treatment of the righteous, so Esau affords the most comprehensive single view of the treatment of the wicked of Scripture. That this is so may be attributed to the identification of Esau with Edom and Rome,²⁹ and so Esau is the embodiment of all that is wicked especially so owing to his identity with Edom and Rome.

Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 63: 4, Esau is represented as having committed murder, incest and idolatry, for which there is no explicit basis in Scripture. (Y.S. 786.) The Midrash seeks, perhaps, to testify to the principle that "transgression draws transgression in its train."

In the Midrash on Ps. 80: 14 it is stated that for forty years Esau kidnapped and raped married women. (Y.S. 830.) A statement totally without foundation in Scripture.

In the end, however, justice triumphs. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 58: 11:

This verse refers to Jacob at the time they carried him to be buried in Canaan. Esau came along and did not allow them to bury him. Thereupon, Naphtali sped to Egypt to bring the title-deed of the cave so that his father could be buried. While he was gone there came Hushim the son of Dan, who was deaf. When he saw that they were being restrained from burying Jacob, he smote him [Esau] with his hand through the neck and struck off his head. His [Esau's] two eyes fell upon the bier of Jacob who thereupon opened his eyes, saw vengeance, and rejoiced, as it says [Ps. 58: 11]: "The righteous shall rejoice when he seeth the vengeance." Thus was fulfilled Rebekah's prophecy when she said [Gen. 27: 45]: "Why should I be bereaved of you both in one day?" (Y.S. 777.)

Thus, the punishment too of the wicked is even more terrible than is recorded. From Ps. 78: 43 it is inferred that the plagues were "engraved" upon the bodies of the Egyptians (Y.S. 820.), and in the Midrash on Ps. 78: 50, that "every plague was measured and weighed." (Y.S. 820.)

The rabbinic tradition of condemning the wicked of Scripture includes, though infrequently, the reassurance that there is good in every man, as reflected by the few righteous deeds of even the most wicked of Scripture. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 73: 24, the rabbis, playing upon the word shar (afterward), query: "Who delayed [shar] the

glory due Jacob in this world?" It was, they respond, Esau, because of the "the great honor which he accorded his parents." (Y.S. 808.) The rabbis may here wish to set forth that even if the wicked Esau was so rewarded for filial piety, it is a duty to be hardly taken lightly. The rabbis are not concerned with upgrading Esau for his own sake, but with conveying their notion that no man is completely wicked; every man possesses the potential for doing good and reaping reward therefrom.

Similarly, in contrast to the more frequent practice in the Midrash of condemning the wicked to Gehenna as "all bad," the Midrash on Ps. 49: 8 implies the higher Jewish ethic, based on Genesis, of the sacredness of all human life:

"Thou hast loved righteousness and hated wickedness [Ps. 49: 8]."
 R. Azariah in the name of R. B'rekiah applies to the verse to Abraham when he sought mercy for the Sodomites. [Abraham said to God:] "It is written: 'That he far from Thee to do after this manner, etc. . . . [Gen. 18: 25].' 'Thou hast sworn not to bring a deluge [again]. Wouldest Thou evade Thine oath? Not a deluge of water wilt Thou bring but a deluge of fire? If so then Thou hast not acted according to Thine oath. 'Shall not the Judge of all the earth do justly [Gen. 18: 25]?' If Thou desirest the world to endure, there can be no absolutely strict judgment, the world cannot endure, yet Thou wouldest hold the cord by both ends, desiring both the world and absolute judgment! Unless Thou forgoest a little, the world cannot endure." The Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "'Thou hast loved righteousness,' that is, thou hast loved to justify my creatures; 'and hated wickedness,' that is, thou hast refused to condemn them. 'Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows' [Ps. 45: 8]." (Y.S. 750.)

In certain instances, when the rabbis speak of Biblical personalities as exemplifying good or evil, they may possibly have meant their own contemporaries. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 80: 14, when the rabbis speak of Esau as the "bear of the wood," they may well have meant Rome; "Rome" and "Esau" being often used synonymously in rabbinic literature.³⁰

According to the Midrash on Ps. 55: 24:

A certain min /heretic/ said to R. Hanina: "Hast thou heard how old Balaam was?" He replied: "It is not clearly stated, but since it is written /Ps. 55: 24/, 'Men of blood and deceit shall not live out half their days,' /it follows that/ he was thirty-three or thirty-four years old." He rejoined: "Thou hast said correctly. I personally have seen Balaam's Chronicle in which it is stated: 'Balaam was thirty years old when Phinehas the Robber killed him.'" (Y.S. 773.)

One modern scholar would attribute a historical context to this Midrash, for there is the view that inherent in most Balaam passages is an undercurrent at least of reference to Jesus. Accordingly, Balaam is used as an alias for Jesus; Phinehas the Robber is taken to represent Pontius Pilate, and the Chronicle of Balaam to denote a Gospel.³¹

It should be noted, however, that some instances of the immersion of Biblical personalities in myth and fantasy may simply be outgrowths of folk fancy and the repressed "art-creative instinct"³² of the Jew; intended purely to amuse and stimulate the imagination rather than to convey a lesson. For example, in the Midrash on Ps. 69: 32, it is derived that following his sin, Adam

offered up a bullock whose horns were developed before its hoofs, as it is said /Ps. 69: 32/: "And it shall please the Lord better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs." Rab Judah said in the name of Samuel: "The bullock which Adam offered had only one horn in its forehead, as is written: "And it shall please the Lord better than a bullock that hath horns and hoofs." But does not "horned" imply two horns? Said R. Nahman b. Isaac: "'Horned' is spelled here /defectively/." (Y.S. 802.)³³

To derive a moral or religious teaching from such a Midrash would require exegesis of the first order or an insight not apparent to this writer.

In the final analysis, the application of verses to Biblical personalities was not only of mnemonic and illustrative value but

also provided the people with a sense of continuity with the past in that the Biblical personality was represented as the prototype of what the Jewish character had once been and could still be. Furthermore, as illustrated below,³⁴ when the rabbi wished to inculcate views which were not as yet explicitly or widely articulated within the tradition, Biblical personalities were forced, exegetically, to endorse and thus lend Scriptural authority to these views. When these newer thoughts were made to come out of the mouths of the revered Scriptural founders of the tradition, they were easily won the confidence and allegiance of the people.

Interspersed throughout the chapters that follow are numerous examples of this method of applying verses to Biblical personalities which serves to highlight, dramatize, exemplify, lend authority, and thus render more lucid, memorable, and meaningful the rabbinic doctrines and speculations of the Midrash.

CHAPTER III

THE INTERPRETATION OF LETTERS AND WORDS

To understand the formulations of rabbinic exposition in the Midrash, it is necessary to appreciate the underlying philosophy that the words of Scripture be made--through every manipulative technique--to yield the maximum amount of grist to the mill of speculation, explication, homily and analysis. An understanding of the nature of some of these manipulative techniques may be had through the examination of those most frequently used in our Midrash.

Many of the Midrashic expositions are based upon the hermeneutic rule al tikre, "do not read so, but so." In most cases, the al tikre is characterized by the alteration of vowels or punctuation, or by the transposition or alteration of consonants.³⁵ According to Maimonides, the exegetical expositions of the rabbis, particularly those which are based on the rule al tikre, were expressed in poetic form to impress more memorably upon the people the need for the appropriation of virtues, and to warn them against the practice of vices.³⁶ Changes were suggested in vowels or consonants merely to augment the force of the homily, thus serving simply as a mnemonic device which did not impair the integrity of the text. The following are examples of the al tikre as employed in our Midrash.

Since in pre-masoretic times the Biblical text was unvocalized, it was a simple matter for the rabbis to read the text as it suited them for homiletic purposes. There may therefore be observed the frequency

of the transposition of the consonants sh(shin) and s(sin). For example, in the Midrash on Ps. 68: 15, "do not read b'fara (scattereth), but b'farash (when one pronounces distinctly), stressing the importance of the recitation of the Sh'ma." (Y.S. 795.) Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 46: 9, the vowels are altered so that "do not read shamot (desolations), but shemot (names)." (Y.S. 753.)

A frequent use of the al tikre involves the interchange of letters belonging to the group of gutturals. Possibly as a result of their similarity of sound, there was little hesitation by the rabbis in transposing the letters h(he) and h(het), as in the Midrash on Ps. 45: 5: Do not read vahadarkha (and in thy majesty), but vahadadkha (and in thy sharpening), referring to "scholars who sharpen each other in halakha." (Y.S. 750.)

In some instances, the words "al tikre" are not expressly mentioned, although one can easily discern that the rabbis actually employed this device. Thus in the Midrash on Ps. 84: 7: "'Valley' is an allusion to Gehenna which is made deep for the wicked; ha-bakha signifies that those who are to descend to Gehenna weep and shed tears." In effect, therefore, the rabbis are saying: "Do not read habakha [of Baka], with the letter aleph, but habakha [of crying] with the letter hay." (Y.S. 833.) Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 80: 6, the rabbis seem to be saying: "Do not read shalish [large measure], but shalosh [three], referring to three tears presumably shed by Esau. (Y.S. 828.) Another example of an "implicit" al tikre involves an alteration of vowels in the Midrash on Ps. 83: 9: "Do not read lot [Lot], but l'vat [a curse]," in Aramaic.³⁷ (Y.S. 832.)

Another Midrashic method of verbal analysis for the purpose of exposition is the notarikon. According to the Talmudists, this system "existed as early as the time of Moses; they hold that the latter used it in the composition of the Pentateuch. The law concerning notarikon is the thirtieth of the thirty-two hermeneutic rules laid down by Eliezer ha-Gelili for the interpretation of the Bible. . . . It was used in haggadic interpretations only, not in halakic matters."³⁸

"Notarikon" means "abbreviation."³⁹ Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 81: 6, the rabbis interpret the letter h (hay) in bi-ho-sef (in Joseph), as the abbreviation of God's name which was added to the name of Joseph by the angel Gabriel so that he could learn seventy languages, thus having "royal characteristics." (Y.S. 831.)

Another form of notarikon is the acrostic, as exemplified in the Midrash on Ps. 77: 21, in which each letter of the word na-hi-ta is rendered as the initial letter of a phrase dealing with the Biblical content of the verses:

N -- Nif-la-ot a-si-ta la-nu.
H -- He-pet na-ta-ta la-nu.
T -- Tan ba-ha-ta la-nu.
A -- Te-ra na-ta-ta la-nu. (Y.S. 818.)

A favorite method of notarikon is that which breaks up a single word into two or more elements. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 56: 1, the rabbis derive from the word nichtan (Nichtan) the idea that David was nakh (humble), and tan (upright). (Y.S. 774.) Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 63: 11, shu-a-lim (foxes), is rendered she-al yan (that are upon the sea), referring to the drowning of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. (Y.S. 786.) In the Midrash on Ps. 78: 47, dealing with the Ten Plagues,

the word ba-ha-na-mal (with frost), is read by the rabbis as made up of the words: ba (he came), chan (he encompassed), and mal (he cut down). (Y.S. 820.)

In still other examples of notarikon, letters are added, dropped, or rearranged in forming several words from a single word. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 68: 28, the word ra-dan (ruling them), is read by the rabbis as made up of rad (he descended) and yan (the sea). In this manner the rabbis deduce that while the tribes hickered at the Red Sea as to which tribe would enter first, "the tribe of Benjamin leaped forward and descended /rad/ into the sea /yan/; as is written, 'There is Benjamin, the youngest descending /radan/.'" ⁴⁰ (Y.S. 799.) Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 72: 20, the word halu (are ended), is read as made up of the words kol (all) and e-lu (these), rendering the verse: "All these are the prayers of David son of Jesse." (Y.S. 806.)

A favorite hermeneutic device of the Midrash may be generally referred to as the "play upon words." Most of the examples of al tikre and notarikon are characterized by the play upon words. A similarity in pronunciation, origin, or spelling easily "played upon" the imagination of the rabbis, and the Biblical text was consequently "played upon" for the purpose of homiletic exposition. Most often this method is grammatically fanciful and extravagant. The following are examples of plays upon words:

In the Midrash on Ps. 50: 2, the rabbis play upon the word nikhil (perfection), as a pretext for their discussion of Creation. Gen. 2: 1, which deals with Creation, is adduced as a proof text, in that the word va-y'khu-lu (were finished), is similar in sound and

spelling to nikhlal. The two words, however, are in fact derived from distinctly different roots. The root of nikhlal is KLL, and the root of va-y'khu-lu is KIH. (Y.S. 759.)

Another form of play upon words is the use of the homonym. For example, in the Midrash on Ps. 78: 5, the rabbis alter the letter g (sin) in the word gan (appointed) to the letter g (asmakh), thus altering the word to gan (medicine). The verse is thereby rendered: "The Torah is a medicine for Israel," rather than "And appointed a law in Israel."⁴¹ (Y.S. 819.)

Still another frequently employed method of exposition is the interpretation of words and letters. To the rabbis, not a word or a letter in Scripture occurs through accident. Even the appearance or structure of a letter provided a pretext for a homily. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 57: 2, the rabbis question the repetition of the word hagadli (be gracious unto me). They interpret this repetition to mean that David said to God: "Be gracious unto me, so that I shall not fall into the hands of Saul," and again, "Be gracious unto me, so that Saul will not fall into my hands, and the evil inclination entice me to slay him." (Y.S. 775.) Similarly, the rabbis explain the repetition of "Amen" in Ps. 89: 53: "The first Amen refers to those who say 'Amen' in this world, and the second Amen refers to those, who, by virtue of their merit, will enter the World to Come and say 'Amen' there." (Y.S. 839.) In the Midrash on Ps. 50: 23, the rabbis explain the significance of the double n (nan) in y'khab-dan-ni as indicating honor in both worlds for the person who conquers his evil inclination.

(Y.S. 763.) In the Midrash on Ps. 63: 6, the rabbis similarly interpret the repetition of the letter n (nun) in the word r'na-not (joyfully), as referring to "this world," and the "World to Come."⁴² (Y.S. 786.)

In the same manner, the word libkham provides a pretext for a homily on the doctrine of the two impulses. In the Midrash on Ps. 48: 14, the rabbis query as to why there is only one letter b (bet) in the word libkham? Why isn't the word rather l'vaykham? To indicate that in the Time to Come there will be no "evil inclination," which would be represented by a second b (bet). (Y.S. 757.)

Even the structure of a letter was grist to the mill. In the Midrash on Ps. 68: 5, the rabbis say that God created the "two worlds" with the two letters, y (yod) and h (he), of the word b'yah which appears in Isa. 26: 4:

"For the Lord is God b'yah, an everlasting Rock." [Meaning]: by these two letters did the Lord create His world.⁴³ Now we do not know whether this world was created with a he or the next world with a yod, but from what R. Abahu said in the name of R. Yohanan, viz. [Gen. 2: 4], "These are the generations of the heaven and of the earth b'hi-bar-am," [B'hi-bar-am] means: "With a he He created them."⁴⁴ It follows that this world was created by means of a he. Now the he is open [sic]⁴⁵ on all sides and is open underneath: that is an indication that all the dead descend into Sheol; its upper hook is an illustration that they are destined to ascend; the window at the side is a hint to penitents. The next world was created with a yod: As its stature is bent so are the wicked: their stature is bent [i.e., their pride is broken] and their faces blackened [with shame], as is written [Isa. 2: 11]: "And the loftiness of men shall be bowed down, and the haughtiness of men shall be brought low." (Y.S. 794.)

Another method of interpreting the letters of the Biblical text is known as gematria. Gematria is a "cryptograph which gives, instead of the intended word, its numerical cipher, produced by the permutation

of letters. The term occurs in literature in the twenty-ninth of the thirty-two hermeneutic rules of R. Eliezer b. Jose ha-G'illii.⁴⁶

In its form, gematria is a simple arithmetic equation, by which a word is changed into a number or a person, or an object of a similar numerical total to yield an interpretation. This process is employed in the Midrash on Ps. 68: 21: Because the word to-tsa-ot (issues) has the numerical value of nine hundred three, the rabbis infer that there are nine hundred three varieties of death, as is said, "la-ma-vet to-tsa-ot." (Y.S. 777.) In another example of gematria, the rabbis express the idea that because Ps. 81: 6 commences with the letter ayin, which has the numerical value of seventy, we may infer that Joseph was taught seventy languages in Egypt. (Y.S. 831.)

Still another exegetical device may be described as "inference by analogy of terms." For example, in the Midrash on Ps. 89: 20, it is pointed out that the root of va-hur (chooses) occurs in Nsh. 9: 7 with reference to Abraham. It is therefore inferred that because of the occurrence of the same term in Ps. 89: 20--which makes no reference even remotely to Abraham--this latter verse too must refer to Abraham. (Y.S. 840.) Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 80: 15, it is inferred that the verse refers to God's promise to Sarah, "And the Lord remembered Sarah," (Gen. 21: 1) because of the occurrence in both verses of the root QDR (remember). (Y.S. 829.) Or again, in the Midrash on Ps. 84: 9: "Hear my prayer," refers to Moses' farewell to Judah (Deut. 33: 7) because the word "hear" appears in both verses. (Y.S. 833.)

CHAPTER IV

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN GOD AND THE PEOPLE OF ISRAEL

Throughout our Midrash the rabbis express a deep-seated faith and confidence in the continued existence of a uniquely intimate relationship between God and the people of Israel. In doing so the rabbis did not seek to expand upon the Scriptural conception of this relationship; in the last analysis the Midrashic embellishments merely serve to magnify that which is already explicitly stated in Scripture. The rabbis rather intended to educate the people as to their obligations and duties under the Covenant which guaranteed such a relationship; to buttress the faith and hope of the people in times of despair when their sufferings appeared to belie the continued existence of such a relationship; to remind the people of their former dignity and splendor and thus preserve them inwardly with pride and dignity, despite their outward degradation at the hands of their enemies.

That the doctrine of Israel's⁴⁷ election always retained at least the character of an "unformulated dogma in the Jewish consciousness"⁴⁸ may largely be attributed to these efforts of the rabbis, as reflected in our Midrash.

The rabbis point to Israel's acceptance of the Covenant at Sinai as their major claim to the privileges of the "first-born," and thus to the close and warm relationship which, according to the Midrash, such a claim engenders. In the Midrash on Ps. 50: 7, God declares:

Although I am the God of all creation, nevertheless I have dedicated My name to My people Israel. . . . Until the event at Sinai you were called "Israel," as other nations are called by their respective names, but, following the event at Sinai you became known as Ami /My people/. (Y.S. 760.)

In rabbinic literature the term E-lo-him (God) connotes justice, or God in His character of the judge; the term A-do-nai (Lord) connotes mercy, or God in His merciful and gracious character. There are not antithetical attributes "between which God is . . . distracted but are harmonious and complementary aspects of His character."⁴⁹ Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 47: 6:

When God arises and sits, he goes up upon the throne of justice. And when Israel blows the shofar, the Holy One, blessed be He, rises up from the throne of justice and sits upon the throne of mercy, as is said /Ps. 47: 6/: "God /of justice/ is gone up amidst shouting, the Lord /of mercy/ amidst the sound of the horn." (Y.S. 794.)

More often, however, the rabbis personify God according to His various attributes, as the "Father," and Israel as His "children." This lends an utterly human dimension to the relationship; a sense of reciprocity unique to the parent-child relationship. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 77: 4: "When the people of Israel bring God to remembrance they are agitated and troubled; when the Holy One, remembers the children of Israel, His heart is troubled for them." (Y.S. 816.)

The relationship between God and Israel is eternal, for no matter how grave the children's transgressions be they unconditionally remain dear to their father, and are spared:

A parable is told of a king who had a stubborn son who would not obey. . . . When the king became filled with wrath he went into his son's pavilion and cut and tore . . . the hangings until they were ripped to pieces, and then he cast out his son. The king said: "Have I not done well? I have torn apart my

son's pavilion, but I can make another pavilion more beautiful, but I have not slain my son in my wrath. Had I slain my son, my brother's son would be my heir." So too, Aseph said: "Did not the Holy One, blessed be He, do well venting His wrath upon sticks and stones and not upon His children?" As Scripture says /Lam. 4: 11/: "God hath accomplished His fury." How? "He hath kindled a fire in Zion." /Lam. 4: 11/. Therefore it is said /Ps. 79: 1/: "The heathen are come into Thine inheritance; they have defiled Thy holy Temple."⁵⁰ (Y.S. 824.)

However, the reality of suffering appeared to belie the existence of such a relationship. Adhering to the implications of God as father, the rabbis reason that Israel, being His children, are chastised for their sins even more severely than other nations for theirs: "God's terror strikes those closest to Him, as is said /Ps. 90: 3/: 'And round about Him it stormeth nightly.'" (Y.S. 760.) Israel's suffering, then, is merely another proof of God's fatherly love.⁵¹ But, while Israel's suffering abundantly reflected chastisements by the father, the fatherly attributes of mercy and love were nowhere apparent. Israel appeared virtually abandoned.

Because the paternal relationship is thus weakened through the absence of an essential component, some rabbis, adducing other Scriptural texts as proofs, posit other bases than the paternal as underlying the relationship between God and Israel: The election of Israel was said to be the result of God's need for an agent to promulgate His name and glory.

Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 44: 2, the rabbis remind the people that the Israelites were not redeemed out of Egypt because of the merit of their fathers or as a result of their own righteousness, but rather, in order that they might relate the story to their children, thus

perpetuating God's name and manifesting His greatness among the nations.

Isa. 63: 14 and Ps. 96: 3 are adduced as proof texts.⁵² (Y.S. 796.)

Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 67: 3: "The Holy One, blessed be He, does not save the people of Israel because of their good deeds, but only to make His strength and His great name known." Ps. 76: 2, Ps. 106: 8, and Ps. 77: 15, are adduced as proof texts. (Y.S. 792.)

When, at times, the rabbis felt that Israel's special claim to election--based upon their or their fathers' exceptional merit--was insufficient for their deliverance, they often re-inforced this claim attributing it to God's own nature. Thus, the rabbis interpret Ps. 44: 27, "Arise for our help," as meaning: "If we have good works, redeem us for Thy name's sake and out of Thy steadfast love."

(Y.S. 746.) Similarly, according to the Midrash on Ps. 71: 2, if God will deliver the people of Israel, it will not be as a result of the good works which they have accumulated, but on account of God's inherent righteousness. (Y.S. 503.)

Occasionally the rabbis express wonder and even a measure of indignation at Israel's having been virtually abandoned by God. In the Midrash on Ps. 42: 10: "They [the Israelites] who were in Egypt obeyed but a single commandment and went forth."⁵³ But what of me? I obey all the commandments. . . . Why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Y.S. 745.) Their disappointment is at times marked by a touch of sarcasm. The rabbis maintain that the clause in Ps. 44: 26, "For our soul is bowed down to the dust," refers to God's promise to Abraham (Gen. 13: 26), "And I will make thy seed as the sand of the earth." (Y.S. 746.)

Israel's feelings of disillusionment and self-pity at being forlorn are epitomized in the passage: "It is I who am envious and cast down. . . . It is I who am angry. But Thou, of what concern is it to Thee? As is said: 'Thou, O Lord, art enthroned for ever' [Lam. 5: 19], so of what concern is it to Thee?" (Y.S. 743.)

In still other instances the rabbis seek consolation in the belief that death and suffering atone and reconcile the sinner with God. In the Midrash on Ps. 73: 3, the rabbis infer that "the afflictions which God brings upon Israel are for their benefit." (Y.S. 807.)

Finally there may be observed the eschatological solution to the suffering of the people of Israel: Their reward for their righteousness is not meant to be enjoyed in this world but in the Messianic Future. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 71: 1, David hopefully exclaims, speaking for the people of Israel: "We have been put to shame enough in this world, but we will not be put to shame in the World to Come." (Y.S. 803.)

The people of Israel, then, have only to trust God. Thus, when in the Midrash on Ps. 78: 8, Abraham asks distrustfully of God, "Whereby shall I know that I will inherit the world?" (Y.S. 819.) the rabbis are not whimsically mentioning Abraham in such a context, but are imploring the people of their own generations to trust in God and keep His Covenant. Although God metes out great suffering to His people,⁵⁴ He will not permit them to perish.⁵⁵

CHAPTER V

REPENTANCE

At no time do the rabbis of the Midrash doubt the pre-eminence and efficacy of repentance. According to the Midrash on Ps. 47: 8, "there is nothing greater than repentance." (Y.S. 754.) From Ps. 51: 19 the thought is derived that the penitent is credited as having gone up to Jerusalem, built the Temple and the altar, and offered sacrifices. (Y.S. 766.) In the Midrash on Ps. 45: 1, the rabbis expressed the idea that the penitent becomes the beloved of God, as did the sons of Korah upon their repentance. (Y.S. 747.)

God did not merely provide repentance as the remedy for sin and then step aside, but urges men continually to avail themselves of its power. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 50: 23, the rabbis interpret the verse, "And to him that ordereth his way aright," as meaning that God shows the way to those who wish to repent. (Y.S. 763.)

God is easily moved to forgive by His own character, being "plenteous in mercy unto all that call upon Thee [Ps. 86: 7]." In fact, when the pans of a scale balance exactly, with the evil deeds on one side and the good deeds on the other . . . the Holy One, blessed be He, snatches away several evil deeds and thus tips the balance towards the pan of merit. (Y.S. 835.)

The Midrash on Ps. 62: 13 illustrates God's leniency and willingness to make allowances for the sinner. The question is raised as to whether a man's ten good works cancel out his ten sins: "Our masters taught that God pays him a reward for his good works, but does not deal

strictly with him for the sins he has accumulated; that is, God does not minutely examine the sin and punish him exactly as he sinned."⁵⁶

(Y.S. 784.) God's leniency is further attested to in the Midrash on Ps. 62: 13 in which the rabbis maintain that if a man

considers committing a sin but does not commit it, the Holy One, blessed be He, does not write it down against his name unless he commits it. But, if he intends doing a good deed and is prevented from doing it, the Holy One, blessed be He, writes it down in his favor, as though he had done it. (Y.S. 784.)

In the rabbinic conception, repentance is not confined to a particular time. God is ever waiting to receive the confession of the penitent sinner. The figure of a gate or door or other representation of "access" or "openness" frequently occurs in the Midrash to illustrate and emphasize this point. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 65: 6, the verse suggests to the rabbis the comparison of repentance to the sea, "which is open at all times." (Y.S. 789.)

The rabbis often assume that the great moral failures of the righteous of Scripture were almost providentially brought about in order to set the good example to sinners that no sin is so great as to render repentance impossible.⁵⁷ David's sin of adultery is a case in point. The verse "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned" (Ps. 51: 6) is interpreted to mean that David sinned "for Thy sake." That is, David said to God:

Shouldst Thou receive me, then if Thou sayest to transgressors, "Wherefore have ye not repented?" all transgressors will submit to Thee, for all of them will behold me and I shall surely bear witness that Thou receivest the penitent. (Y.S. 764.)

Even when men sin and thereby provoke God's wrath, He searches for one to plead in their behalf and "paves the way for him."⁵⁸ Thus,

in the Midrash on Ps. 50: 21, the rabbis propound the notion that God overlooked the golden calf which Israel made in the desert, because Moses had besought God to forgive them. (Y.S. 760.) Similarly, the rabbis interpret Ps. 45: 8, as referring to Abraham pleading to God to forgive the people of Sodom. (Y.S. 755.)

Although according to the rabbis God "seeks for one to plead" in behalf of the sinner, the entire process of repentance itself is a personal one between God and the penitent sinner, allowing for no intermediary power or influence. Though men may seek forgiveness of their sins by appealing to the merit of their fathers, they cannot "claim their demerit offset by the merit of the fathers."⁵⁹ Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 46: 1, the rabbis warn that

it will not help a man to say, "because my brother or my father was worthy I shall be delivered." Even Abraham could not deliver Ishmael, his son, and Jacob could not deliver Esau, his brother, as is said [Ps. 49: 8], "No man can by any means redeem his brother." (Y.S. 751.)

The obligation to confess one's sins is explicit in Scripture: "When a man or a woman shall commit any sin that men commit . . . then they shall confess their sin which they have done." (Lev. 5: 6f.)

According to Maimonides, one "must confess with his lips . . . removing it [the sin] from his mind and determining in his heart not to repeat the evil action again."⁶⁰ Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 50: 2, it is maintained that he who conquers his evil inclination after being induced to sin, and confesses his sin, is considered as having honored God in both worlds. (Y.S. 763.) Although repentance in its rabbinical definition includes both a contritio cordis and a confessio oris on the part of the penitent sinner,⁶¹ greater stress is placed upon the

former, which is characterized by an inner transformation of the heart and spirit. Thus, in expounding Ps. 45: 2, the rabbis maintain that "when the hearts of men are overflowing with repentance, although they may not confess verbally, the Holy One, blessed be He, accepts their silent confession." Adducing I Chronicles 28: 9 as a proof text, the Midrash infers that this is especially so when one considers that "even before a man shapes a thought in his heart, the Holy One, blessed be He, already comprehends it." (Y.S. 749.)

Further stressing the significance of the penitent's motive and consequent inner metamorphosis, the rabbis, in their discussion of forgiveness through the atonement of sacrifices, put emphasis upon the purity of intention with which the sacrifice is brought. For example, in the Midrash on Ps. 50: 12, the rabbis attempt to prove that the sacrifices have not the purpose of providing God with food and that "it is immaterial whether a man offers much or little, so long as he directs his heart to Heaven." (Y.S. 760.)

According to the Midrash on Ps. 85: 5, the nature of one's repentance is such that a mutual consummation is implied.⁶² The sons of Korah ask:

How long wilt Thou say [Jer. 3: 14], "Return, O backsliding children," while Israel saith unto Thee, "Return to us first," as is said [Ps. 90: 13], "Return O Lord; how long?" To which Thou saith, "No, let Israel return first."

The Midrash, thus combining the two verses, emerges with: "But neither Thou wilt return by Thyself, nor we by ourselves, but we shall return together, as is said [Ps. 85: 5], 'Restore us O God of our salvation.'" (Y.S. 834.)

In the majority of cases in our Midrash, death and suffering are considered as punishments for the sins of the individual. "For God is not suspected to execute judgment without justice."⁶³ Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 89: 33, the rabbis maintain that "there is no death without sin, and there is no suffering without iniquity." (Y.S. 840.)

However, death and suffering are not only viewed as punishments satisfying the claims of justice, but also as atonements bringing pardon and forgiveness.⁶⁴ This view is expressed in the Midrash on Ps. 79: 2, in which the rabbis ask:

Who are meant by "Thy servants," and who are meant by "Thy saints?" Surely, by "Thy saints" is meant "saints" literally, whereas, by "Thy servants" is meant those who were at first liable to the sentence of death but having been slain, are designated "servants." (Y.S. 826.)

It is thus implied that death brings forgiveness. (Y.S. 826.)

The atoning and cleansing nature of suffering is attested to in the Midrash on Ps. 73: 3, wherein the rabbis assert that "the afflictions brought by God upon the people of Israel are for their benefit. 'Surely God is good,' is not written, but 'Surely God is good to Israel' (Ps. 73: 1), which means that the afflictions He brings upon them are for their benefit. How so? The afflictions purify their hearts." (Y.S. 807.)

The rabbis give their assurance, that as regards the efficacy of repentance, each man starts anew; the sinner is reborn. In fact, as set forth in the Midrash on Ps. 51: 2, the repentant sinner merits life in the World to Come, as had David as a result of his confession to the prophet Nathan. (Y.S. 764.)

CHAPTER VI

PRAYER

The rabbis often sought to inculcate the significance and urgency of a particular idea or view by attributing its practice to God Himself. This method was in keeping with the teaching that holiness is identical with the imitation of God, as derived from Lev. 19: 2: "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord am holy."⁶⁵

Thus, in placing stress upon the primacy of prayer, the rabbis suggest that since God prays, how much more so should His creatures do likewise. In the Midrash on Ps. 82: 1, the rabbis query:

How do we know that the Holy One, blessed be He, is to be found in the Synagogue? For it is said /Ps. 82: 1/: "God standeth in the congregation of God." How do we know that if ten people pray together the Divine Presence is with them? For it is said /Ps. 82: 1/: "God standeth in the congregation of God."⁶⁶ (Y.S. 831.)

That God Himself engages in prayer is further attested to in the Midrash on Ps. 76: 3:

At the very beginning of His creation of the world, the Holy One, blessed be He, set up a Tabernacle in Jerusalem, within which, as it were, He prayed: "Let it be the will that My children do My will, so that I will not destroy My house and My Temple." But now that the Temple is destroyed, God prays: "Be it My will that My children repent, so that I may hasten the building of My house. For behold it is said, 'Even them will I bring to My holy mountain, and make them joyful in My house of prayer.' (Isa. 56: 7.) "Thy house of prayer" is not written, but "My house of prayer," which teaches that the Holy One, blessed be He, prays. (Y.S. 813.)

How much more so, then, should his creatures pray in their houses of worship.

The paramount position which the rabbis believed prayer should hold in one's daily life is exemplified in the Midrash on Ps. 85: 14:

It is forbidden to a man to engage in business before reciting his prayers, as is said, "Righteousness shall go before him, and shall make his footsteps a way." (Y.S. 834.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 55: 16 it is stated that as regards even the statutory prayers themselves, "a man must first say the Tefilla [the first three benedictions] before asking for his own requirements [in the middle benedictions]." (Y.S. 771.)

For the rabbis, the sense of "dependence on God for one's needs and of gratitude for His constant goodness are renewed by giving thanks for the food He provides."⁶⁷ The rabbis held that formulas for this purpose were to be rigidly adhered to. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 71: 8,

R. Huna said: If one forgot and put food into his mouth without saying a blessing, if it was liquid he spits it out, if it was solid food he shifts it to the side of his mouth and then says the blessing. R. Jose b. R. Abin, quoting R. Johanan said: "Even if it is solid food he must spit it out, for it is written /Ps. 71: 8/: 'My mouth shall be filled with Thy praise.'" (Y.S. 803.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 68: 20, the rabbis interpret the verse to mean that "every day we should give Him the blessing appropriate to the day. So here too, in the case of vegetables as for every species, we should give Him the appropriate blessing." (Y.S. 797.)

Basic to the rabbinic conception of prayer is kavannah, a frame of mind or a disposition which includes attention and intention.⁶⁸ The importance of kavannah is expressed in the Midrash on Ps. 78: 36: "A man's prayer is only answered if he takes his soul into his hand, as is written /Iam. 3: 41/: 'Let us lift up our heart with our hands.'" (Y.S. 820.) The prime importance of requiring detachment from worldly

concerns while praying is further stressed in the Midrash on Ps. 84: 5:

The pious of old used to wait an hour and then pray, in order to fix their minds on their Father in Heaven. On what is this based? . . . On the text Ps. 84: 5, "Happy are they that dwell in Thy house. . . ." One who says the T'filla should also wait an hour after his prayer, as is said Ps. 140: 14, "Surely the righteous shall give thanks in Thy name; the upright shall dwell in Thy presence."⁶⁹ (Y.S. 833.)

Not only is a proper frame of mind essential to the act of prayer, but according to the Midrash on Ps. 55: 18, while praying, one must face towards Jerusalem (cf. Dan. 6: 11) and pray silently (cf. I Sam. 1: 13). (Y.S. 771.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 65: 6, the rabbis assert that there are set times for prayer: "While repentance, like the sea, is open at all times, prayer, like a public bath is at times open and at times closed." (Y.S. 789.)—This is especially so as regards the rabbis' view of "individual" prayer as opposed to "communal" prayer. The rabbis vigorously and adamantly insisted upon the latter. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 69: 14, God tells David that his prayer, the prayer of an individual, is acceptable only because it was uttered "in an acceptable time." However, "the prayer of a congregation I will never reject, as is said Deut. 4: 7: 'As the Lord our God is, whosoever we call upon Him.' But when man prays alone, at times it is acceptable and at times it is not." (Y.S. 801.) Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 55: 19: "A man's prayer is acceptable only in the company of a congregation, as is said Ps. 69: 14, 'But as for me, let my prayer be unto Thee O Lord, in an acceptable time.' When is the time acceptable? When the congregation prays." (Y.S. 772.) The efficacy and superiority of communal worship is further emphasized in the Midrash on Ps. 55: 19, in which

"The Holy One, blessed be He, says: 'If a man . . . prays with a congregation, I account it to him as if he had redeemed Me and My children from among the nations of the world.'" (Y.S. 772.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 55: 18, Dan. 6: 11 is adduced as proof text to the rabbis' assertion that a man should pray three times a day. The question is raised as to whether one may "combine all three Tefillot in one." The rabbis explain that "it has already been clearly stated by David [Ps. 55: 18]: 'Evening and morning and noonday.'" (Y.S. 771.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 55: 18, the rabbis discuss the question as to when the three Tefillot were instituted and by whom. One view is that the Tefillot were instituted by the Patriarchs: Abraham instituted the morning Tefilla, Isaac the afternoon Tefilla, and Jacob, the evening Tefilla. By the side of this Midrash is to be found the opinion that the hours of prayer in the morning and afternoon correspond to the times of the regular daily sacrifices, "but the evening service does not correspond to anything." As regards the latter, R. Tanhuma suggests that "the evening service corresponds to the limbs and fat which were consumed in fire on the altar during the night." Other rabbis suggest that the three Tefillot correspond to the "three changes in the day": from the darkness to light, light to darkness, and the intermediate stage of the afternoon. (Y.S. 771.)

The efficacy of prayer is attested to by exegetically applying Ps. 55: 19 to personalities of Scripture whose prayers were answered. The verse is applied to Rachel. "So that none come nigh me" means that wicked Esau's thoughts about Rachel never came to realization.

For it was originally planned that Jacob would marry Leah and Esau would marry Rachel. What saved Rachel? Jacob and Leah prayed for her, as is written [Ps. 55: 19]: "For there were many who strove for me." Therefore it is written [Gen. 30: 22]: "And God remembered Rachel." (Y.S. 772.)

The recompense for diligence in prayer is to be had in the World to Come. Thus, in the Midrash on Ps. 68: 15, we are told that "if one, in reciting the Shema pronounces the letters distinctly, hell is cooled for him. (Y.S. 768.) Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 63: 5, the rabbis maintain that one who recites both the Shema and the Tefilla diligently, "inherits two worlds, this world and the next, as is said, 'And my mouth doth praise Thee with joyful lips.'" (Y.S. 786.)⁷⁰

CHAPTER VII

THE STUDY OF TORAH

In rabbinic literature the study of Torah was considered an integral part of Jewish piety,⁷¹ as well as the highest ideal of every Jew. The Torah, having come from God, represented the source of all true knowledge. In fact, according to the Midrash on Ps. 76: 9, God made a condition with the works of Creation to the effect that if Israel accepted the Torah all would be well, otherwise, all would be reduced to a state of chaos. Thereupon, in the words of the Psalm, the earth "trembled" and "was still." (Y.S. 811.) It is thus implied that without the law and morality of the Torah, the world cannot exist but must destroy itself in anarchy and evil.

With the destruction of the Temple and the loss of a permanent political and religious center, the Torah became, in effect, the Jews' portable homeland, sanctuary and rallying point. The rabbis thereafter intensified their efforts at encouraging the study of Torah; they sought to foster a greater love for its teachings among the people and thereby prompt them to think and behave Jewishly even when out of sight of Jerusalem.

The study of Torah came to replace various institutions in the lives of the people. Thus, according to the Midrash on Ps. 87: 2, following the destruction of the Temple, Jews received pardon for their sins through their occupation with the study of Torah:

Saith Rab Hinda: "What is the meaning of Ps. 87: 2? 'The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob?' That the Lord loveth the gates of those distinguished⁷² for halakha more than of Synagogues . . ." That agrees with what R. Hiyya b. Ami said in the name of Ulla: "Since the day the Temple was destroyed, there are left to the Holy One, blessed be He, in His Universe the four cubits of halakha alone." (Y.S. 836.)

It is thus inferred that the study of Torah had taken the place of the Temple Service as a medium of communion with God.

Seeking to impress the study of Torah more deeply upon the minds of the people as a duty of first rank, the rabbis assert that when Jews assemble to study Torah, God Himself is in their presence:

It is written Ps. 82: 1: "God standeth in the congregation of God." And how do you know that if two are sitting and studying the Torah together the Divine Presence is with them? For it is said Mal. 3: 16: "Then they that feared the Lord spoke one with the other; and the Lord hearkened, and heard, and a book of remembrance was written before Him, for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon His name." And how do you know that even if one man sits and studies the Torah the Divine Presence is with him? For it is said Ex. 20: 21: "In every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come unto thee and bless thee." (Y.S. 831.)

Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 82: 1:

When God appeared before Abraham our father, he was seated, as is written Gen. 18: 1: "He sat in the tent door in the heat of the day." When Abraham sought to stand, the Holy One, blessed be He, said: "Be seated," as is written Ps. 110: 1: "The Lord saith unto my lord: 'Sit thou at My right hand.'" Whereupon Abraham said unto Him: "Is it right that I remain seated while You stand?" The Holy One, blessed be He, said: "Do not be troubled, for you are old, one hundred years old, therefore sit. By your life, just as you are sitting and I am standing, so in the future will your children, at the ages of three and four, sit in the Houses of Assembly and Houses of Study, and I shall stand over them, as is written Ps. 82: 1: 'God standeth in the congregation of God.'" (Y.S. 831.)

In the study of Torah, as in the case of every religious duty, the rabbis make much of motive: one's Kavvanah--concentration. They

maintain that the study of Torah should be pursued "for its own sake"; the one true motive being the love of God. Illustrating this point, the rabbis apply Ps. 50: 16 to the Biblical personality of Doeg:

What is meant by the verse [Ps. 50: 16]: "But unto the wicked God saith, 'What hast thou to do to declare My statutes, and that thou hast taken My covenant in thy mouth?'" The Holy One, blessed be He, said to the wicked Doeg: "'What hast thou to do to declare [i.e. study] My statutes?' When thou comest to the sections dealing with murderers and slanderers, how dost thou expound them?"⁷³ 'Or that thou shouldst take My covenant in thy mouth.'⁷⁴ R. Ammi said: "Doeg's learning was only from the lips without."⁷⁵ (Y.S. 760.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 57: 11, however, it is taught that the study of Torah, even when founded upon an imperfect motive should be encouraged in the hope that it will ultimately result in a higher motive or in "study for its own sake":

Rabba resolves an apparent contradiction: It is written [Ps. 57: 11]: "For Thy mercy is great unto [ad] the heavens," whereas it is also written [Ps. 108: 5]: "For Thy mercy is great above [ma-al] the heavens." How is this [to be explained]? The latter refers to those who perform God's behest for its own sake; the former refers to those who perform [it] with an ulterior motive. And [this is] in accordance with Rab Judah. For Rab Judah said in the name of Rab: "A man should always occupy himself with Torah and the observance of the precepts though he do so not for their own sake, for out of [the doing of good] with an ulterior motive there comes [the doing of good] for its own sake. (Y.S. 776.)

While the study of Torah out of an ulterior motive is not without merit, study for its own sake is more praiseworthy and brings greater recompense:

When two scholars sharpen each other in halakha, the Holy One, blessed be He, gives them success, for it is said [Ps. 45: 5]: "And in thy majesty [va-ha-dar-kha] prosper." Read not va-ha-dar-kha but va-ha-dad-kha [thy sharpening]. Moreover, they ascend to greatness. . . . One might think [that this is so] even if it is not for its own sake. Therefore it is taught [Ps. 45: 5]: "In behalf of truth. . . ." They are privileged

to acquire the Torah which was given by the right hand, as it is said [Ps. 45: 5]: "And thy right hand shall teach thee awe-inspiring things."⁷⁶ What is meant by the verse [Prov. 3: 16]: "length of days is in her right hand; in her left hand are riches and honour?" Is there in her right hand length of days only, but not riches and honour? But to those who go to the right hand thereof there is length of days and riches and honour "a fortiori"; but for those that go to the left hand thereof there is riches and honour, but not length of days.⁷⁷ (Y.S. 750.)

Though knowledge of Torah is properly an end in itself, it can never, even for its own sake, be divorced from the doing of God's will.⁷⁸

Thus, "rich and poor together" (Ps. 49: 3) is interpreted:

He who is rich in Torah and he who is poor in Torah [may alike go down to Gehenna]. "Rich" refers to such as Boaz and Antiochus. Although they were heads of Sanhedrins,⁷⁹ [because they kept not the Torah] they go down to Gehenna. (Y.S. 757.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 68: 11, the rabbis deal with the method of learning or good study habits, emphasizing the fundamental pedagogic principle, "repetitio est mater studiorum":⁸⁰

R. Ruma said: "What is the purport of the Scriptural text [Ps. 68: 11], 'Thy flock settled therein; Thou didst prepare in Thy goodness for the poor, O God?'" If a man behaves like an animal that treads upon its prey and eats it,⁸¹ or, as others say, that drags it and eats it,⁸² his learning will be preserved by him, otherwise it will not. If, however, he does behave in this manner, the Holy One, blessed be He, will Himself prepare a banquet for him, as it says in Scripture [Ps. 68: 11]: "Thou didst prepare in Thy goodness for the poor, O Lord." (Y.S. 795.)

In as much as the ultimate objective was the perpetuation of Judaism, a solemn responsibility was placed upon the scholar to pass on his erudition to future generations. Thus, the malediction of Ps. 59: 20 is applied to "one who leaves no student [of Torah to succeed him]."⁸³ (Y.S. 772.)

Seeking to awe the people into an appreciation of the seriousness

of this religious duty, the rabbis condemn those who neglect it, and predict their downfall:

"Verily there is a God that judgeth in the earth." [Ps. 58: 12] R. Simeon b. Eleazar used to say: "He who is diligent over the words of the Torah is given [agents] that are diligent in his behalf; but he who neglects the words of the Torah is given over to [forces] that will make him idle. For example: the wolf, the bear. . . . Robbers or brigands come and surround him, and they settle accounts with him." (Y.S. 775.)

On the other hand, psalms are sung to those who are diligent in its fulfillment: "If one occupies himself with [the study of] Torah, it is as if he acts kindly towards God." (Y.S. 767 on Ps. 52: 3.) Similarly, "one who on leaving the synagogue goes into the House of Study and studies Torah is deemed worthy to welcome the Divine Presence." (Y.S. 833 on Ps. 84: 8.) "A day occupied in the study of Torah is better than a thousand occupied otherwise." (Y.S. 833 on Ps. 84: 11.) And, "whoever loves the Torah, the Torah loves him in return." (Y.S. 785 on Ps. 63: 2.)

The study of Torah is a religious duty carrying with it a reward. Thus, the thought is derived from Ps. 45: 5 that those who study Torah in this world receive long life as well as wealth and glory. (Y.S. 790.) The full reward, however, is reserved for the World to Come:

He who is in the habit of entering houses of worship and houses of study in this world, earns the right to enter houses of worship and houses of study in the World to Come, as is said [Ps. 84: 5]: "Happy are they that dwell in Thy house [in this world], they will ever be praising Thee [in the World to Come]." (Y.S. 833.)

Similarly, in the Midrash on Ps. 42: 9:

Whoever occupies himself with the study of Torah in this world, which is like the night, the Holy One, blessed be He, draws over him the chord of loving kindness in the World to Come, which is like the day, for it is said [Ps. 42: 9]: "By day the Lord will command His loving kindness and in the night His song shall be with me." (Y.S. 745.)

CHAPTER VIII

THE HEREAFTER⁸⁵

The reality of suffering and persecution became increasingly irreconcilable with the popular notion that obedience to the law would be rewarded and its transgression punished. This problem of the theodicy was given impetus especially by the Maccabean war of the second century B.C.E. in which Jews became martyrs.⁸⁶ Thereafter, the belief in the eternal national continuance of the people of Israel no longer afforded adequate compensation to the individual sufferer.

Out of the despair and consequent wishful thinking of the people for the existence of an ideal world, there emerged a notion of a "next" world, a Hereafter, in which the righteous who suffered unjustly in this world would be rewarded, and the wicked who prospered in this world would be punished.

There are few explicit references to a Hereafter in Scripture.⁸⁷ The need of the people, however, for reassurance as to its existence led to the magnification of mere hints within the tradition. Thus, by the first century B.C., despite opposition,⁸⁸ the notion of a Hereafter became a cardinal doctrine of Judaism.⁸⁹ Nurtured by the rabbis this doctrine became an integral part of the thinking of the people so that the theodicy no longer posed as perplexing a threat to their faith and hope.

Essentially, the abundance of references to the Hereafter in

our Midrash reflects a response to the needs of the people; an effort to reassure them that ultimately there is meaning in history and that the good do not suffer in vain.⁹⁰

The paucity of explicit Scriptural references led the rabbis to extract, exegetically, Scriptural proofs for the justification of such a concept.

Perhaps the most dramatically impressive Scriptural endorsement of the existence of a Hereafter is the "proof" that the righteous of Scripture and even God Himself suffer in this world, to be rewarded finally, however, in a "World to Come":

"And to the wicked, 'Lift not up the horn.'"⁹¹ [Ps. 75: 5]
 The righteous were never happy in this world of Mine and you seek to be happy? Adam was not happy in My world. . . . Abraham was not happy in My world. . . . The Holy One, blessed be He, if the expression be permitted, did not enjoy happiness in this world of His, as may be inferred from the fact that it does not say [Ps. 104: 31] "The Lord rejoiced in His works," but "The Lord shall rejoice." When shall He rejoice? In the Time to Come, in the works of the righteous. Israel did not enjoy happiness in this world of Mine, as may be inferred from the fact that it does not say [Ps. 149: 2] "Israel rejoiced in his Maker," but "Israel shall rejoice."⁹² That is to say, they are destined to rejoice in the works of the Holy One, blessed be He, in the World to Come. Therefore it is written [Ps. 75: 5]:
 "I say unto the arrogant: 'Doom not arrogantly.'" (Y.S. 811.)

Similarly, the Midrash on Ps. 84: 5 seeks to prove that the concept of the resurrection of the dead is derived from the Torah by interpreting verbs in the imperfect tense as literally pointing to the Future World:

R. Joshua b. Levi said: "Whence is the resurrection derived from the Torah? From the verse [Ps. 84: 5]: "Blessed are they that dwell in Thy house; they shall ever praise Thee." Hi-l'lukha [praised Thee] is not written but I'ha-l'lukha [shall praise Thee]. Whosoever uttereth song [of praise to God] in this world shall be privileged to do so in the World to Come. (Y.S. 833.)

In the Midrash on Ps. 68: 10:

R. Joshua b. Levi said: "At every word uttered by the Holy One, blessed be He at the revelation at Mt. Sinai, the souls of Israel expired, for it is said [Song of Songs 5: 6]: "My soul went forth when he spake." But since their souls expired at the first commandment, how could they receive the second commandment? He brought down the dew with which He will resurrect the dead and revive them, as is written [Ps. 68: 10]: "A bounteous rain didst Thou pour down O God; when Thine inheritance was weary, Thou didst confirm it." (Y.S. 795.)

In the World to Come only strict justice will prevail. Though at times God tempers His acts of justice with mercy even for the wicked, this mercy is confined to this world only:

Woe to us on the Day of Judgment; woe to us on the Day of Reproof. Balan, the wisest among the nations could not stand up before the reproof of his ass. . . . Also in the case of Joseph, although he was the youngest, his brothers could not stand up in the face of his reproof. . . . All the more so when God will come to judge His creatures, as is said [Ps. 50: 21]: "But I will reprove thee and set the cause before thine eyes." (Y.S. 762.)

Unlike the Greek conception or that of Philo,⁹² rabbinic thought, in some instances, believed in the real restoration or reunion of the body and soul after death, standing before the judgment seat of God. The Midrash on Ps. 50: 4 illustrates the rabbinic notion that sin is the sin of the whole man; body and soul are judged as one in the Hereafter:

Antoninus said to Rabbi: "The body and soul can both free themselves from judgment. The body can plead: 'The soul has sinned, [the proof being] that from the day it left me I lay like a dumb stone in the grave [powerless to do aught].' Whilst the soul can say: 'The body has sinned, [the proof being] that from the day I departed from it I fly about in the air like a bird [and cannot sin].'" He replied: "I will tell thee a parable. To what may this be compared? To a human king who owned a beautiful orchard which contained splendid figs. Now, he appointed two watchmen therein, one lame and the other blind. [One day] the lame man said to the blind, 'I see beautiful figs in the orchard. Come

and take me upon thy shoulders that we may procure and eat them.' So the lame bestrode the blind, procured and they ate them. Some time after, the owner of the orchard came and inquired of them, 'Where are the beautiful figs?' The lame man replied, 'Have I then feet to walk with?' The blind man replied, 'Have I then eyes to see with?' What did he do? He placed the lame man upon the blind and judged them together, as is written, 'He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that He may judge His people.' [Ps. 50: 4] 'He shall call to the heavens from above,' this refers to the soul; 'and to the earth, that he may judge His people' to the body." (Y.S. 760.)

The rabbis differ considerably throughout rabbinic literature as to who will be raised from the dead.⁹³ Will it be a universal resurrection or that of Israel or of the righteous only? Many sources abide by the latter view, according to which the wicked, including the wicked of Israel, would be consigned to the eternal torment of Gehenna. The "orthodox corollary," however, to the "dogma" of the resurrection is that every Israelite will ultimately be saved: "All Israel has a portion in the World to Come."⁹⁴ Thus, according to various rabbis, the nature of the Covenant relationship releases all Israelites from the fire of Gehenna;⁹⁵ the wicked as well as the righteous. The Midrash on Ps. 55: 21, however, in seeking to harmonize this latter belief with that in the prevalence of strict justice in the Hereafter, resolves what is to be done in the case of an Israelite who must inevitably be sentenced to Gehenna for excessive wickedness:

In the Time to Come Abraham will sit at the gate of Gehenna and will not allow an Israelite that is circumcised to enter. What will he do with those who have sinned excessively? He will remove the foreskins of babies that died uncircumcised and give them to them [the sinful Israelites] and send them to Gehenna [thus uncircumcised], as is written [Ps. 55: 21], "He hath put his hands against them that were at peace with him; He hath profaned his covenant." (Y.S. 773.)

Just as the reward for Israel's righteousness is to be enjoyed

in the Time to Come, so at that time will God deal with Israel's enemies on account of their wickedness:

The Holy One, blessed be He, pretends to be asleep in this world because justice does not allow the children of Israel to be redeemed. . . . Verily in the Time to Come, the Holy One, blessed be he, will shake and arouse Himself, so to speak, against the nations, as is said: "Arouse Thyself to punish all the nations." (Y.S. 777.)

This vindictive aspect of God's dealing with Israel's oppressors is not prominent in rabbinic literature.⁹⁶

The stages of the Future as well as its conception remain obscure in the Midrash. Beyond the reassurance of its existence, the Midrash is virtually empty of flights of speculation as to exactly what will occur in the Hereafter. This may be attributed to the generally "this worldly" orientation of the mainstream of Jewish thought.

Above all, the doctrine of a Hereafter integrated and synthesized national as well as individual destinies, so that at the End of Days, not only the righteous of Israel then in existence, but all the righteous of Israel of all generations would participate in the "universal reign of God."⁹⁷

NOTES

¹H.L. Strack, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1931), p. 230; S. Cahser, "Talmut Shimeoni," The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Company, 1905), XII, 585-86.

²A.F. Kirkpatrick, The Book of Psalms (Cambridge: The University Press, 1937), p. xviii.

³The Interpreter's Bible (12 vols.; New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), IV, 8.

⁴Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p. xix.

⁵Ibid., p. 243.

⁶Ibid., pp. xxi-xxii.

⁷Ibid., p. 225.

⁸Ibid., p. 301.

⁹Ibid., p. xx.

¹⁰Ibid., p. xxvi.

¹¹Ibid., p. 316.

¹²the signet, cord, and staff: See Gen. 38: 18.

¹³Kirkpatrick, op. cit., p. 321.

¹⁴Ibid., p. xxvi.

¹⁵A.E. Idelson, Jewish Music (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1929), pp. 8-9.

¹⁶J.P.S. - "Seven times a day do I praise Thee."

¹⁷J.P.S. - "For the Leader; on the Sheminith."

¹⁸S.B. Finsinger, "Musical Instruments in O.T.," Hebrew Union College Annual, III (1926), 38-39.

¹⁹E.H. Chajes, The Student's Guide Through the Talmud (New York: Philipp Feldheim, Inc., 1960), p. 161.

²⁰Ibid., p. 162.

²¹Ibid., pp. 166-68.

²²Ibid., pp. 162-63, 169.

²³J.P.S. - "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned."

²⁴This Midrash is understated only in the light of its original context in Sanhedrin 107a: In the preceding text David asks God why the prayer, "God of Abraham, God of Isaac and God of Jacob," does not include "God of David?" God replies that the Patriarchs were tested while David was not, and that David would be tested "in a matter of adultery." Had David not yielded, his pleas for inclusion at the beginning of the Amidah would have been justified. David chose to "fail the test" so that people would not say, "The servant triumphed, etc."

²⁵This is a Midrashic rendering which presupposes reading vayar (and he saw) as if vocalized vayira (and he feared), and taking the noun nizbeah (slaughtering) as "the slaughtered man."

²⁶Suggested to the author by Dr. Aris Kahana, Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion.

²⁷Chajes, op. cit., p. 169 where Sukkah 52a is referred to.

²⁸Ibid., p. 164.

²⁹L. Ginzberg, The Legends of the Jews (7 vols.; Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909), V, 271-72, 278, 280, 309, VI, 66.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹R.T. Herford, Christianity in the Talmud and Midrash (London: Williams Worgate, 1903), pp. 48, 71-73.

³²H. Slonimsky, "On Reading the Midrash," The Jewish Institute Quarterly, IV (January, 1928), 2.

³³Shor por (a bullock)--literally, a "bullock ox," implying an animal which was mature in form though young in age; shor denotes an ox of tenderest age; por denotes a mature ox.

³⁴See Chapter VIII, "The Hereafter."

³⁵Chajes, op. cit., p. 189.

³⁶Ibid., p. 159.

³⁷Other examples of al tikre: Y.S. - 774, 795, 800, 819.

³⁸H. Seligsohn, "Notarikon," J.E., IX, 339.

³⁹M. Jastrow, A Dictionary (2 vols.; New York: Parades Publishing House, Inc., 1950), II, 886.

⁴⁰J.P.S. - "There is Benjamin, the youngest, ruling them."

⁴¹Other examples of plays upon words: Y.S. - 757, 776, 816, 832, 836.

⁴²That it is the double n (nan) in r'nanot which leads to this interpretation is merely implied. Such an interpretation is also suggested by a play upon the word sifte to sh'te (two), or by the plural tense of the word r'nanot.

⁴³Thus rendering Isa. 26: 4: "For the Lord, by means of yah (yed he) is the Rock (i.e., Creator) of the worlds," viz., this world and the next world.

⁴⁴The rabbis play upon the word b-hi-bar-am (when they were created), rendering it: "B'he (with the letter he) bra-am (He created them)."

⁴⁵Should logically read: "Now the he is closed." See Midrash Rabbah (10 vols.; London Soncino Press, 1951), I, 96: "Now the he is closed on all sides and open underneath."

⁴⁶Caspar Levi, "Gematria," J.E., V, 589.

⁴⁷By "Israel" in the remainder of this chapter, is meant "the people of Israel."

⁴⁸S. Schechter, Some Aspects of Rabbinic Theology (New York: Behrman House, Inc., 1936), p. 57.

⁴⁹G.F. Moore, Judaism (3 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), I, 392.

⁵⁰In both Lam. 4: 11 and Ps. 79: 1 it is Zion or the Temple that is destroyed, but not the people themselves.

⁵¹cf. Isa. 63: 16, 64: 7; Ps. 103: 13.

⁵²cf. Ex. 13: 8.

⁵³possibly "circumcision." See Ginsberg, Legends, V, 414.

⁵⁴cf. Amos 3: 2.

⁵⁵cf. Isa. 41: 10-14 and Jer. 31: 36.

⁵⁶That the punishment is not commensurate with the sins is derived by noting that the verse does not say ka-a-se-hu, but k'mo-a-se-hu, i.e., not "according to his work," but "something like his work."

⁵⁷Schechter, Aspects, p. 317.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 295.

⁵⁹Moore, Judaism, I, 544.

⁶⁰As quoted by Schechter, ibid., p. 335.

⁶¹Moore, op. cit., I, 514.

⁶²Schechter, op. cit., p. 327.

⁶³Ibid., p. 307.

⁶⁴Ibid., pp. 307-08.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 201.

⁶⁶That "congregation" signifies at least ten is derived from Num. 14: 27 where the word is applied to ten of the spies.

⁶⁷Moore, op. cit., II, 216.

⁶⁸Ibid. II, 233.

⁶⁹The rabbis deduce the idea of "waiting" before and after prayer from the word yesh-ve (dwell) in Ps. 84: 5, and yesh-vu (dwell) in Ps. 140: 14, both of which are understood in the sense of "tarry" or "linger."

⁷⁰Literally, "lips of songs," i.e., two songs, thus, two worlds.

⁷¹Moore, op. cit., II, p. 239.

⁷²The rabbis play upon the word tzi-yon (Zion) in the sense of "distinguishing themselves" (m'tzeyania) in the study of Torah.

⁷³I.e., seeing that both are murderers and slanderers.

⁷⁴J.P.S. - "And that thou hast taken My covenant in thy mouth."

⁷⁵I.e., it did not penetrate his heart and mould his character.

⁷⁶J.P.S. - "And in thy majesty prosper, ride on, in behalf of truth and meekness and righteousness; and let thy right hand teach thee tremendous things."

⁷⁷In Shabbat 63a, from which this Midrash is derived, Rashi explains that "to the right hand" refers to those who study Torah for its own sake, and that "to the left hand" refers to those who do not study Torah for its own sake.

⁷⁸Moore, op. cit., II, 246.

⁷⁹And thus learned in Torah. See Ginsberg, op. cit., IV, 74, VI, 236.

⁸⁰Moore, op. cit., II, 247.

81 This Midrash, found in Erubin 54, is elucidated upon by Rashi: "As the animal proceeds to eat its prey as soon as it has trampled it on the ground, so does the student proceed to revise his lessons as soon as he has them from his master."

82 I.e., (according to Rashi, ibid.): "As the animal consumes its prey, despite the unpleasantness of taste that it contracts in the course of being trailed in the dust or mud, so does the student persist in his studies, despite the unpleasantness he experiences in understanding or memorizing them."

83 The word "changes" (ha-li-fot) is rendered: "a pupil who takes his teacher's place."

84 J.P.S. - "Happy are they that dwell in Thy house, they are ever praising Thee."

85 Eschatological terms such as: the Future, the Hereafter, the World to Come, the End of Days, the Time to Come, are used synonymously in our Midrash. All are indefinite expressions. See Moore, op. cit., II, 378.

86 S. Baron, A Social and Religious History of the Jews (8 vols.) 2d ed. rev.; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1952-1958), II, 38-39.

87 The most explicit Scriptural references: Isa. 26: 14, 19; Ezek. 37: 12-14; Dan. 2. See A. Marmorstein, Studies in Jewish Theology (London and New York: Oxford University Press, 1950), p. 146.

88 Parties opposed to the doctrine: See Marmorstein, ibid., pp. 145-49; Moore op. cit., I, 68, II, 381.

89 Marmorstein, op. cit., p. 161.

90 H. Slonimsky, "The Philosophy Implicit in the Midrash," Hebrew Union College Annual, XXVI (1956), 238.

91 J.P.S. - "Let Israel rejoice in his Maker."

92 Moore, op. cit., II, 292-93.

93 K. Kohler, "Resurrection," J.E., X, 383.

⁹⁴Moore, op. cit., II, 387, where Sanhedrin 11b is referred to.

⁹⁵Kohler, op. cit., X, 384.

⁹⁶Moore, op. cit., I, 400.

⁹⁷For other eschatological references see Y.S. - 790 on Ps. 66: 1; 767 on Ps. 52: 7; 763 on Ps. 50: 23; 755 on Ps. 48: 4.