

**IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF THE KUZARI:**  
**AN INTRODUCTION TO JEWISH PHILOSOPHY**

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## **CHAPTER 1: GOD'S CALL TO MAN**

### **Difficult Beginnings**

You have just finished writing a composition, a short story, a scientific article or a philosophical work. And yet, your greatest creative challenge remains before you. How to begin? How can you succeed in transporting your reader from his own reality, and entice him into this new world that is of your making?

This question, the plague of every writer, arises in areas far beyond the sphere of the pen and quill. The enigma of beginnings appears during any attempt to effect a profound change of direction. How can we break the chain of everyday experience and begin afresh? You long for someone to open his door to your new ideas. What course should you take? Should you ring the doorbell, or knock? Bashfully or boldly? And is there indeed only one correct approach, or are there many ways to begin? How must man approach his listeners? And how does God approach man?

Once upon a time, a righteous and upright man heard a knock at his door. The visitor was a heavenly angel. A messenger of God appeared to the king of the Khazars in a dream, and endeavored to change his life. The door remained unopened. And yet the angel knocked again and again, until his approach was acknowledged.

"This king...dreamed one dream repeatedly. In his dream he beheld an angel speaking to him and saying: 'Your intention is acceptable to the Lord, however your behavior is not acceptable to Him.' ...This caused the king of the Khazars to search and explore religion and philosophy, and finally he converted to Judaism along with many of his subjects." (Kuzari, Chapter 1, Introduction)

### **Gateways to God**

What is the significance of a dream? Certainly, a dream can be viewed as a miraculous beginning. God, in His benevolence, opened the door for this righteous man, opened the path to a relationship with the spiritual.

The Talmud (Berakhot 57a) tells us that a dream is one-sixtieth of prophecy. It confronts man with the spiritual mysteries that float beyond his reach. Through the prophetic dream, God approaches man. An appropriate beginning indeed, to a relationship with the divine: Man's religious faith is awakened through a supernatural extraordinary experience, which summons him into another world.

This, then, is our first lesson from the Kuzari. And this conception of God's relations with man does in fact tally with the other components of Rav Yehuda Halevi's philosophical methodology, as we will yet discover.

Our discussion of beginnings requires that we move past the issue of the dream and its significance, to address a larger existential question: What is the starting point, the original impetus, for man's search for God? As we consider this theme, we will probe the depths of the king's dream and its implications, beyond the specific instance which it describes.

A prophetic dream is indeed an invitation from the Divine, a spiritual beginning initiated from above. However, it is not the only option. The familiar midrashic tale tells of Abraham, who beheld an illuminated castle and concluded that the castle must have a proprietor. God's prophetic communication with Abraham stemmed from Abraham's previous religious inquiry. There are turning points whose sources lie within man, stirrings from below which precede the divine call from above.

And yet, perhaps Abraham had previously received a divine hint or call, which constituted the impetus for his spiritual quest. God can speak to man without the aid of dreams. He speaks to you, who have never heard God's word in your sleep.

The prophetic dream is only one of the divine hints. Other hints of Godliness abound. These hints compose a central theme in the writings of Rav Y.D. Soloveitchik, most particularly in his important work, "U-vikkashtem Mi-sham." The hints mark the numerous gateways to God and spirituality. Just as people's faces differ, so do their personalities and philosophical perspectives. Each individual must therefore discover his own personal gateway to God. One gate opens with a supernatural, miraculous key, and the dream of the Kuzari is a case in point. In contrast, Rav Soloveitchik describes other, more "natural" experiences, whose sources well up inside man - a stirring from within.

Let us examine one such hint, one which cannot be described as a positive experience. It is rather a result of and response to a negative state:

"Man is tired and weary, dissatisfied with his life and accomplishments. He wanders aimlessly along the pathways of existence. That which he most ardently desires, eludes him, and yet his failure does not prevent him from persistently groping after what he can never achieve. This "thing" gives him no rest, aggravates his nerves, pulls him with enormous strength. What is the essence of this desire? It is none other than the yearning for God. What is the mysterious thing that escapes man again and again? It is the connection to God, his ultimate

source. Through man's frustration and yearning, God is revealed." (U-vikkashtem Mi-sham, p. 131)

In other words, man is driven by an internal force which requires that he deviate from the mundane and search for something beyond the ordinary. We experience this force through the negative phenomenon of frustration with mundane daily life, a feeling common to all people to some extent. However, this experience can be termed a "negative" phenomenon only to the extent that hunger for bread and thirst for water are "negative". This is a thirst for something that daily life cannot provide. In the Selichot (penitential prayers) we speak of ourselves as "hungry for Your goodness, thirsty for Your benevolence, desirous of Your salvation." Here, we have reached a deeper level. We are hungry for God's word, thirsty for meaning, desirous of answers to the ultimate questions of existence. The frustration and discomfort that we experience as we move from stage to stage in our search, exist because what we are searching for is an encounter with God.

At times, we find ourselves caught in a trap. In the words of A. J. Heschel, we are like a small child who cries and does not know why, and refuses to accept the very thing that would dry his tears. Sometimes the hunger and thirst disturb us, and yet we are unaware of the fact. Water cannot relieve us. This thirst can only be quenched by God's word.

Rav Soloveitchik does not offer us a miraculous response or an angel from heaven, but he does teach us that another angel exists within each one of us. The call of the angel to the Kuzari is actually the call that wells up inside all of us. We need only listen. Our negative feelings are, at times, a blessing, just as hunger, thirst and pain can be blessings. Woe unto the person who senses no pain, or who experiences it too late.

Spirituality can quench our thirst. However, these divine waters cannot replace the fulfillment of man's basic needs. The greatest sin of Europe in the Middle Ages was the use of religion to conceal the poverty and misery of the masses. Instead of attempting to change and perfect the world, that society contented itself with soul salvation. The church joined forces with the royalty and gentry, robbing and trampling the masses. The focal message of the Bible is that the thirst for God cannot soothe the other, more basic thirst for water. Man's basic needs must be fulfilled. Nevertheless, we must always remember that there are needs beyond food and water, and that the satisfaction of mere physical needs will not grant man the happiness he seeks. We are faced with desires that transcend the physical, hunger and thirst not for bread and water, but for the word of God.

## **An Ultimate Yardstick - The Search for Objective Truth**

The Kuzari wanders through an existential "marketplace." Each stall offers the buyer a different point of view. The Kuzari searches the market for an opinion to call his own. What force compels man to approach the marketplace, to desert his daily life, leave his immediate pursuits behind? What force compels us to ask life's ultimate questions, and thus to immerse ourselves in the problem of faith and religion?

The ultimate existential questions confront man when, looking afresh at his own religious convictions, he wonders if they constitute the key to objective truth. It is possible to be absolutely sincere in one's religious sentiments, and yet be uncertain of their objective value.

Let me explain this idea with the aid of a parable: A man enters a town in which each and every store has its own weights and measures, its own yardstick. The obvious question rises to the stranger's lips: Is there no common yardstick to measure all these different yardsticks? The Kuzari worshipped his God according to his own "scale." His intention was acceptable: he did not cheat, he was scrupulous in his measurements. And yet the glaring question remains: Is this the ultimate true yardstick? What is the objective standard? It seems that the search for God is actually the search for objective truth.

Do you remember the story of the Little Prince? Traveling from one planet to the next, he investigated and probed the various lifestyles that he discovered. Each planet presented a microcosmic "human ideal." The Little Prince, like all of us, young and old alike, visits the existential marketplace, where every opinion and ideology spreads its wares. The stalls come together to form a cosmic fair. And where, among all those glittering offerings, does the truth hide? What is the objective yardstick?

This is the meaning of the Kuzari's dream. It is a divine call to the king, to abandon his safe dwelling-place, and venture into the marketplace of ideas.

## **Fit for a King - The Spiritual Need**

Now let us return to one of the basic ideas touched upon at the outset of our discussion. We must not overlook the intriguing fact that our protagonist is a king. In fact, the image of the king in search of spiritual meaning is hauntingly familiar. The Biblical Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) comes to mind immediately. The recurrent theme of the monarch deliberating the meaning of life is no coincidence, and it can in fact teach us something essential about the search for faith and meaning.

People suffer from hunger or lovelessness. We suffer from illness and physical pain. Religious commitment must never use those human miseries as its foundation. Many anti-religious thinkers have dismissed religion as a mere crutch, whose sole purpose is to comfort man in his weakness when he is overcome by life's trials. The Kuzari teaches us that the opposite is true. Beneath and beyond all those needs, a separate desire exists: man's desire for God, his thirst for spirituality.

Imagine that you have suddenly become king. You are rich beyond measure, no comfort is beyond your reach. It would seem that your troubles are over. All your problems are solved, all your needs fulfilled. Kohelet and the Kuzari remind us that riches will not wash away existential pain and suffering. The opulent monarch is lonely. He searches for something that floats beyond the void which he has filled. He searches for God. The king's misery exceeds that of the working man. He cannot even lose his pain in the sleep of the weary laborer. His need is intense, constant, unrelieved.

When speaking of spiritual inquiry, we must understand that the search for spirituality does not cancel the pursuit of other quests. Faith, as Judaism perceives it, is not the ally of empirical rulers; it does not substitute life in this world with visions of the world to come, and refuses to leave control of this world in the hands of the oppressor. Judaism promises salvation, but first and foremost it upholds the dream of redemption, the vision of changing the world.

To explain the Jewish perception of religion, we must find an appropriate model. Perhaps the most fitting model for the religious experience is the experience of love. The comparison between religion and love has much to teach us.

Love can be viewed as the fulfillment of a need. However, it can be seen from the opposite perspective as well. Love was not created to fulfill a need. Rather, the need itself was brought into existence to compel man to discover the love experience. Let us examine a more mundane example. We cannot say that eating exists in order to satiate hunger. A deeper look will clarify that we must thank God for the sensation of hunger, because it alone guarantees our survival. To use the words of Maharal (Rabbi Judah Loewe of Prague, 16th Century): There is a cause behind the cause. We must discover the need behind the need.

A desire for spirituality is planted deep within each and every one of us. The drive toward spiritual involvement exists as an independent human need. We may attempt to quell this desire through other means, but without ultimate success. Let me give you a revealing, if facetious example. If a person who is experiencing some sort of emotional difficulty, attempts to dispel his frustration by eating chocolate, we all know that his real problem is not hunger! Religious striving is a real need, an independent existential

desire. Of course, this need interacts with man's other emotions, but the spiritual quest exists regardless of one's other needs and desires.

Religion compels us to ask life's ultimate existential questions. Often, man finds himself pursuing goal after goal, without a spare moment to ask himself why. Each limited goal is motivated by another goal or desire, and man is thus effectively prevented from facing the question of his ultimate spiritual aims. This reality is a natural human condition, but it is aided and propelled by philosophies built upon the here and now, and by the hidden thesis of triviality proposed by certain elements of modern theater. The unstated purpose of these movements is to suffocate the ultimate questions. The search for satisfaction in the here and now is part of the chocolate that man must swallow if he would escape from life's ultimate questions.

And yet, in the end, the questions will not be silenced. This hope and belief is expressed most eloquently by Rav Kook in "Orot HaEmuna" (p.5):

"The idol worshipper lives in fear of the encompassing belief in God, because of the intense spiritual quality of its perception...he is afraid of being swallowed up and consumed in the endless fiery tide, and so he hides among the rocks of material desires, of passing time and hilarity, of all of life's involvements, both necessary and unnecessary, in his desire to conceal himself from the glaring light of Godly elevation which blinds him. But all his efforts are of no avail. The light fills every corner, it penetrates the depths, enters his very soul and demands that he adapt to its brightness, that he behold the pleasantness of God and visit His dwelling place."

## **CHAPTER 2: GOD'S UNIVERSAL CALL**

### **Faith and Love: True relationships versus false gods**

We have previously suggested that love is an ideal model for the religious experience. A person discovering spirituality is comparable to a person discovering love for the first time. He is faced with an entirely new phenomenon, radically different in every respect from his former childish games at marbles, dolls or basketball. A new world unfolds before his eyes, a world in which all of his unique potential may be realized. This new world has the capacity to grant him joy and gladness, or to plunge him into misery and despair. True love exists alongside illusory, idolatrous love. In the religious sphere as well, true spirituality exists alongside idolatry.

This fact compels us to alter our perspective. Until this point we have discussed the existential problems experienced by all of mankind. Now we begin to uncover the Jew inside of us.

The appearance of the dream to the Kuzari, a gentile, obliges us to open the discussion of a general problem, which we will address in greater depth at a later stage. The angel speaks to man in general, not to the Jew. This paradox must accompany us throughout our analysis, for this most "national" of all works of Jewish philosophy begins with a call to Everyman. The message, too, is a surprising one: their intentions are acceptable to God, while their actions remain unacceptable to Him.

To make sense of this paradox, we must examine both humankind and each individual from a dual perspective: ours, and God's. We will thus be faced with two distinctly different pictures. Let us look through the heavenly perspective, for example, at the natives of an island in the Pacific, who worship idols and have no inkling of our Torah. In the heavenly court they will be judged innocent, since they knew no better. Many idol worshippers actually intend to worship God; however, they are misled by their lack of religious knowledge. Their actions are not acceptable to God, but their intentions certainly are laudable. Allow me to explain this idea with a parable. A man mails a letter, incorrectly addressed. If the mail service is sophisticated enough, the letter will reach its intended destination despite the mistake. So, too, we can be certain that the prayers of the island natives will indeed reach God. And this is true not only of the inhabitants of an isolated island. It is equally true of a religiously lost person dwelling in the largest teeming metropolis.



Nonetheless, there are moments when the prisoner of ignorance does hear a knock upon his door. The Kuzari's dream represents the divine knock upon the door of mankind. The Lord of the Universe presents man with a challenge. One who has never heard the knock will be judged according to his subjective intentions. Whoever has not yet been faced with the challenge, whoever has not experienced the dream, cannot be judged objectively. But the moment a knock is heard, responsibility begins. Each of us hears the Godly call at some point in our lives. Whether the call is experienced in a dream or in daily life is of no consequence. Whether we are awakened by a stunning sunrise or sunset, after reading a new book, in moments of tragedy, joy or fear - no matter. God communicates with man in numerous ways. This is in fact one of the central tenets of the Hasidic movement. Perhaps, to our rationalistic taste, it seems that the Hasidim go too far, when they state that God speaks to man constantly, at every moment. However, it is certainly true that the history of mankind can be described as an ongoing dialogue with God. The question God asked of Adam in the garden of Eden - "Where art thou," echoes throughout the ages.

If you have not heard the question, you cannot be accountable to answer it. Yet once the question has been asked of you, even as you attempt to determine whether you have indeed heard the heavenly call, the process of response has already begun.

The Divine call constitutes the essence and soul of Judaism. The meeting point between the youth and the tradition of his forefathers, is one of these calls. This encounter, too, is a knock upon the door.

### **In Defense of the Despised Religion: The universal role of Judaism**

Rav Yehuda Halevi gave his book an expanded title: "The book of proofs in defense of the degraded and despised religion." Rihal [the author's acronym] explains that his book was written in response to a request. "I have been asked," he writes, "for the explanations and responses that I possess against the claims of those who disagree with our religion, both the philosophers and those of other religious persuasions."

These facts suggest that the book was written within a historical context, which immediately displays the beginning of the book in a new light. As Jews, one of the problems that motivates our spiritual quest is the issue of our Jewish identity. The very fact that we are Jews arouses questions within us. Rav Soloveitchik expresses this idea using two simple words: "fate" and "mission." Our actions are propelled by our given situation; and our situation in life is often constructed of many components which lie out of our control. Our situation is defined by our national history. This is our fate.

However, our behavior is also motivated by our aspirations, our plans and our goals. This is our mission. Daily we confront myriad existential questions. We are expected to respond to those questions not through a sense of fate, but rather with a sense of mission.

This is true of the individual, and even more so regarding the community. Each Jew is expected to reach an understanding of his destination in life even as he grapples with the questions along his journey. Thus he will come to understand that his status as a Jew was not decided by a blind fate which appears at times to be meaningless and cruel. The Jew must comprehend that his life has meaning as an element of a divine plan. The Jewish people are no less than God's messengers on earth. We are God's witnesses. Thus we see that the beginning of the book actually has a double meaning. The message is a universal one, and therefore the protagonist is a gentile. Yet at the same time, the beginning of the book possesses a unique meaning for the Jews. This is a book written "in defense of the despised religion". In actuality, however, as we shall see, it is a book written in defense of the chosen religion. For the Jew, this battle of defense is ultimately won through the exercise of free choice.

We will not enter here into a discussion of the concept of free choice. We will only preface by saying that the literary structure of the book coupled with the reference to the "despised religion," fully expresses the challenge of this idea. We have often played the part of the persecuted people upon the stage of history. Here, however, the scope of the problem is much larger. The term "despised" conjures up an infinitely more pejorative image than the word "persecuted." Persecution is a political, social, material state. To be despised is a much lower level. Therefore, as we shall see, the king does not initially consider asking the Jew about his religion, for he asks himself the obvious question: How is it possible that the truth be hiding within a tiny, despised nation, a nation which persists, against all logic and in the face of degradation, in considering itself the chosen people?

Like the Kuzari king, we all tend to follow the masses. We are convinced to buy a particular product simply because other people have purchased it before us. We must develop an awareness of the dangers of social consensus. As Jews, as believers, as ethical human beings, we constantly find ourselves in the minority. And as a result we are often criticized by society, criticism that seems at times too difficult to bear. Constant effort is necessary to hold fast against the tremendous social pressure of the majority. To be chosen means, in effect, to swim against the stream.

Our protagonist is faced with a similar social pressure. The philosopher presents himself to the Kuzari surrounded by the mystical aura of science. Before the division of the sciences into the various faculties, the philosopher was considered the universal and

ideal man of science. Beside the man of science, the Kuzari is presented with the two central world religions: Christianity and Islam.

And at this point Rihal surprises us. He could easily have attempted to convince us to ignore mere numbers. He could have taught us to close our eyes to the social pressure to conform. He does not. In fact, he does the opposite. He begins with the popular religions, Christianity and Islam, and through them he indisputably proves that a tiny, despised nation, who lived virtually unknown for hundreds of years in the Judean hills, changed the face of the entire world. It is impossible to understand either Christianity or Islam, or indeed any of the modern world, without the basis of Judaism. All the world leans upon the pillar constructed by this tiny, despised nation. Paradoxically, this same tiny nation covers the front pages of newspapers the world over. Christianity and Islam, for all their great numbers, must define themselves through Judaism.

The Jewish inferiority complex is therefore unjustified. However, neither is undue pride an appropriate response. There are those who speak with satisfaction of a "Judeo-Christian culture." We must recognize the failure within our success. On the one hand, the effects of Judaism and its contribution to the world are constantly felt. On the other hand, Judaism has largely failed in its efforts to affect the world, since it has not succeeded in transforming the world into an ideal place. The world remains unredeemed and incomplete. The monotheistic religions have grasped the Jewish message and tinted it various shades, watering down the belief in one God with idolatrous traditions and thus transforming the waters of Torah to dry and barren riverbeds, to religions which have betrayed their source. Hearing the representatives of Christianity and Islam can fill the Jew with a fraternal pride, but this pride is weakened by a keen sense of disappointment both because these religions have deserted true monotheism and because of their negative attitudes toward Judaism. Perhaps their attitudes can be described as a type of Oedipal complex: children who rise up against their father to the last degree, murder.

God has assured us "...it is not for your great numbers that God has desired you of all the nations." Our very existence proves that there is nothing to fear in mere numbers.

We must search for answers to our existential questions, answers built upon our national mission. The Kuzari was written in order to help us find those answers to the questions that stem from our Jewish identity.

## **The Need for Perspective: Jewish pride**

The discussion of Judaism's place in the world compels us to address an additional problem. Two opposite viewpoints exist among men. Both are natural, and yet man must attempt to free himself of both. The first is the standpoint of the child, who judges everything from his own personal perspective and is incapable of observing himself objectively. The detachment from this perception of reality is one of the central goals of the educational process. We attempt to teach the child to depart from the egocentric closed circuit and reach out toward others. Let us assume that man has achieved this goal and has moved beyond the self-centered primitive stage. He is capable of objective thought and can judge new situations with a perspective beyond his subjective viewpoint. The educational process has proved successful. However, at this point the opposite problem arises. We see the development of extremely sophisticated individuals who have become so far removed from their subjective perception that they find it impossible to rediscover that initial subjective response. They are overly suspicious of subjectivity, often unjustifiably so. This is the illness that man suffers from when he is so enamored of objectivity that he defends everyone's subjective responses save his own. His own subjective response, he feels, could not possibly be justified. He mistrusts it simply because it is his own. Indeed, there are times when self-criticism results from internalizing one's opponent's opinions. This attitude can cause one to despise himself, and in such a case self-defense is more difficult even than Rihal's defense of "the despised nation."

Oftentimes, this destructive response is true of our attitude toward Judaism. The process of outgrowing provincialism is an important one. However, at times this developing sophistication is expressed through self-deprecation and deliberate blindness to the greatness and beauty inherent in one's own position.

The comparison between Judaism and the other central religions comes to teach us that the Jews, despite their small numbers, are not an insignificant tribe or a "statistical error" among the populations of the world. The Jews possess a message of universal import. We will elaborate upon this message at a later stage. At this point, the Jew is called upon to stop mistrusting himself and to evaluate himself in a truer light. This is the beginning of the defense of the despised religion.

Clearly, the structure of the book is a literary tool. However, we must ask ourselves why Rihal chose this particular device. Through his book we become acquainted with Rihal as a man who delves into the eternal questions, with his eyes wide open to a harsh reality. In the real world a terrible battle is constantly waged between the knights of Christianity and the cavalry of Islam. Judaism exists on the periphery, almost, but not

quite, off the stage. Yet, Rihal does not deal with his current historical reality. The Kuzari constitutes a vision and a prophecy regarding the future of the entire human race. The book is constructed around the struggle for the conversion of the nation of Khazars, but the story represents all humanity in the messianic era. Can we indeed hope and expect that the messianic prophecies of the Bible will come true? The book wishes to restore that hope. It reminds us that one honest and upright man, the king of the Khazars, searched for God and reached the truth. That man is all of humankind. The hope of redemption, therefore, is present from the very beginning.

### **CHAPTER 3: JUDAISM CONFRONTS THE "ISM"S**

Prior to our formal introduction to the truths inherent in Judaism, Rav Yehuda Halevi takes us on a whirlwind tour through the marketplace of ideas. Three candidates are invited to display their spiritual wares before the king of the Khazars: the philosopher, and representatives of the two major religions, Christianity and Islam. In Rav Yehuda Halevi's time, these three ideological positions constituted the central opponents of Judaism. Since that period, the philosophical marketplace has altered significantly. If Rav Yehuda Halevi were to publish his book in our day, he would be obliged to swell the ranks of the ideological contenders, and to put new ideas in the mouths of those candidates that he would choose to retain in the fray.

No matter how comprehensively this chapter is written, it is fated to change with every passing generation. In fact, the relative importance of the participants may vary within a very brief span of time. The recent fate of Communism is an example par excellence.

The faces of the contenders change from generation to generation, while our mission as an eternal nation places us in continual conflict with the various "ism"s. The prefix to the "ism" will continually change; the struggle remains.

#### **Philosophical Climates: Dogmatism vs. Relativism**

At the first stall in the marketplace, we are presented with a philosophical methodology based on the teachings of Aristotle, a position which was considered the last word on truth for hundreds of years. We will discuss the philosopher's principles in depth at a later stage, and attempt to determine, as well, which of the classical philosophical theories still challenge us today. However, there is a more fundamental issue to examine first.

We are presented with various philosophical positions throughout the book, yet the Aristotelian concept enjoys a unique status among the others. This position claimed to have a monopoly on the truth. In fact, Aristotelian philosophy formed the basis of a philosophical establishment whose members firmly believed themselves the sole possessors of the key to absolute truth, to the exclusion of any other philosophical opinion.

This historical-social reality compels us to differentiate between two cultural climates: the climate of dogmatism, which leans upon the scientific and intellectual establishment, and the climate of anarchy, or relativism, which allows a chaotic chorus

of ideas to exist in concert. Historically, there are generations of dogmatism, in which one developed and accepted school of thought rules the philosophical arena and is respected by all who consider themselves enlightened and sophisticated persons. To doubt the accepted position in such a climate would immediately place one under tremendous pressure to comply with a philosophical consensus which claims that there exists no serious alternative to its point of view. The dissenter in this climate is seen by others, and often by himself as well, as a betrayer of the truth.

There are other historical periods which are characterized, instead, by a philosophical anarchy. These are generations of ideological chaos in which a wild, uncontrolled marketplace of opinions exists. The danger in such a period is not of dogmatism, as in the former case, but rather of relativism. All positions hold equal weight, and as a result no one position possesses true meaning or value. The difference between these two intellectual climates can help us explain the gulf between Rambam's work, *Moreh Nevukhim* (Guide to the Perplexed) and the *Kuzari* on the one hand, and Rav Sa'adia Gaon's work "*Emunot Ve-de'ot*" (Beliefs and Opinions) on the other. The former pair were faced with a dogmatic philosophical approach, whereas Rav Sa'adia Gaon, who preceded them chronologically, responded to a culture in which many philosophical positions contended for the truth, creating a cacophony of ideological claims. When one compares the *Kuzari* to parallel discussions in "*Emunot Ve-de'ot*", the striking differences between the two philosophical climates become apparent. Rav Sa'adia Gaon introduces us to an entire gallery of characters which includes among others, the atheist, the polytheist, and the pantheist. In contrast, Rav Yehuda Halevi presents us with a single philosopher who proposes a clear, official, socially accepted opinion with which we must contend.

Every student approaches the *Kuzari* against the backdrop of his own generation and cultural climate. We continually face new intellectual crossroads and debate the various options. If we compare the challenges faced by Rav Yehuda Halevi to the popular philosophical approaches of our generation, we will immediately discern that our opponents have completely changed their colors over the course of time. Rav Yehuda Halevi and Rambam were active during a period when the opinion market was virtually monopolized by one position. Our generation is culturally closer to a free marketplace, which of necessity includes some measure of chaos. All manner of merchandise is sold; however, forgeries and frauds are displayed as well, and we stand helpless, with no means of separating the genuine article from the sham.

Our modern intellectual opponent is worlds apart from the Aristotelian philosopher. Yet, despite this fact, his position is worthy of our attention. The *Kuzari's* philosopher

constitutes a first edition of the famous Jewish philosopher, Spinoza. We will yet discuss the many similarities between the two. However, even our most concentrated efforts to revive the petrified Aristotelian by blowing Spinoza's breath into his dry bones will not succeed. Although there are those who are tempted to return Spinoza's ghost to the philosophical fray, his thought does not constitute a serious challenge in our times. The idea of returning Spinoza to the spiritual or the political scene is reminiscent of the behavior of terrorists who take hostages in a desperate attempt to clear their path. Oftentimes great personalities are utilized as a focus of identification for the populace and thus unjustifiably win supporters for a particular position.

Our central opponent is of a completely different mettle. He is at times an atheist, often a naturalist, who refuses to accept any phenomenon which defies the laws of nature. Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages developed a specific ideological and explanatory tactic in response to opponents that we no longer face in our generation. If we fail to translate the principles of the Kuzari in order to apply them to our different reality, we will commit a grave error. The central theses of the book are eternal, yet there exists the need to change their form in light of the historical and cultural situation which is in continual flux. We must differentiate between the sections of the book which possess eternal value and those whose merit in our day is merely historical. If we do not make this distinction, we may perhaps become significant historical researchers, but we will not do justice to Rav Yehuda Halevi, who intended his work to lead the battle to uphold the Jewish national spirit in every generation.

Here, however, history takes us by surprise. Recent historico-political occurrences, especially the crumbling of the Communist empire, prove beyond a doubt that Rav Yehuda Halevi's battle against his original opponents maintains powerful significance in our day as well. The current disappointment with modern ideologies is so great that its impetus causes some sectors of humanity to lose hope utterly, while others swing from one ideology to the next or turn to superstitions and idolatry. In any case, one thing is abundantly clear: the Kuzari's meeting with the central religions cannot yet be abandoned to gather dust in the archives of history.

### **Philosophical Fossils**

I would like to examine a fascinating phenomenon with you. We have been discussing a section of the Kuzari which was written, unlike the other sections, in accordance with the scientific requirements of those times and dictated by the philosophical fashion of the period. Here we will begin to uncover one of the paradoxes which accompany the



developments of Jewish philosophy throughout the ages. At the time the book was written, the author could feasibly have been accused of championing outdated ideas whose time has passed. The biblical concepts in the Kuzari certainly left Rav Yehuda Halevi open to such criticism. In contrast, he was considered modern and up-to-date when he expressed the scientific conclusions of his period. Yet, hundreds of years later, we discover that the opposite is true. The scientific concepts of those times are hopelessly obsolete to the extent that we find it taxing to discover the simplest explanations for them, while the "outdated" biblical ideas expressed in the Kuzari have renewed relevance today owing to their eternal quality. Many works of Jewish philosophy exhibit a similar phenomenon. In order to teach these works, paradoxically, we must revive dead philosophical concepts. Since we aim to deal with the questions which are relevant to our generation, and we are not interested in history for its own sake, the "modern" sections of the works hold no meaning for us. This paradox contains a warning to those who judge ideas according to their "modernity". Today, philosophical fashions are much shorter-lived. Every few years, the pillars of our intellectual world crumble and are rebuilt in new forms. In the Middle Ages the hands of the intellectual clock moved much more slowly, and indeed, the Aristotelian formula presented here to us ruled the world for hundreds of years, seemingly etched in stone. Great courage on the part of Rav Yehuda Halevi was necessary to stand up against the intellectual establishment and the philosophical and scientific tradition. This, too, contains a warning and a lesson.

### **How must we approach the Kuzari's philosopher?**

#### Two alternatives lie before us:

##### a) The Historical Method:

We can attempt to understand the philosopher within the context of his own world. For this purpose we must leave the philosophy and science of the twentieth century behind as we enter the maze of the history of ideas. Moving eight hundred years backward in time, we can strive to comprehend a distant intellectual world.

##### b) The Philosophical Interpretative Method:

The second option is to imagine how the Aristotelian philosopher would respond to the questions which plague us today. Instead of learning his language, we can try to apply his ideas to our conceptual world, and force him to speak in our modern tongue.

In our analysis we will make use of both methods. However, we will expend a minimum of our time on the historical method, and attempt above all to comprehend the philosopher's position on the issues that we deal with today.

## **CHAPTER 4: IN THE MARKETPLACE OF IDEAS**

### **Wholesale and Retail Markets**

Countless ideals and lifestyles are displayed for sale throughout our world. The marketplace of ideologies teems with activity. We have previously glimpsed one attempt to describe this bustling marketplace in "The Little Prince". Each stall in the market was described as a separate planet where a particular philosophy of life was championed.

Among works of Jewish philosophy, similar descriptions abound. Rav Sa'adia Gaon defined the various options in the market in rigorous philosophical terms. In the final chapter of his book, *Emunot VeDe'ot*, he presents the reader with a copious and detailed summary of various moral approaches. A similar existential synopsis can be found in lyric form in Rav Shem Tov ibn Falkira's work, "Sefer HaMevakesh". The book describes the wanderings of a young man in search of an ideology, who interrogates expert after expert on an arduous quest for truth. This theme is similarly explored by Rabbi Nachman of Breslav in his parable "The Cantor." All these works examine the existential phenomenon of man's often halting and aimless journey among the stalls of the marketplace, as he hesitantly makes his choices.

Please note that our marketplace is composed of two distinct sections. The individual shopping for himself, can acquire ideals with relative ease. His problem begins when he attempts to transfer those ideals from the theoretical to the practical sphere, from abstract philosophy to morality. Reality informs us that although we may immerse ourselves in philosophy as individuals, we cannot thrive independent of any social structure. Most human ideals cannot be fulfilled by a lone individual. These goals can be achieved only within the confines of a community. This distinction compels us to divide our marketplace in two. Alongside the retail section stands a wholesale division. In this section man may examine those ideologies which have profoundly affected history for the last two hundred years.

### **Three Civilizations: Ideological Models**

The book of Genesis vividly describes the exploits of the generation of the dispersion. Through the construction of the tower of Babel, they attempted to pierce the heavens. A biblically sanctioned alternative to this idolatrous ascent can be discovered in Jacob's ladder. The ladder of Jacob's dream connected heaven and earth. It is due to this connection that we, mortals, can possess a divine Torah.

The conflict between ladder and tower is no coincidence. The truths of Judaism are continually revealed against the backdrop of failed ideologies which attempt, each in its own way, to scale the heavens. We accompany our forefathers as they journey through Ur Kasdim, Charan and Egypt, paving the way for the birth of a new civilization, a culture essentially different from that of the surrounding idolatrous nations. Chazal (our rabbis) viewed the initial chapters of Genesis as classic examples of the various ideologies teaching us that Judaism presents us with a unique alternative among all the "isms" of the world.

The book of Genesis describes the civilizations which set the stage for the birth of Judaism. These were the generation of the flood, the generation of the dispersion, and Sodom. Let us examine these three ways of life through the eyes of Chazal.

Our Rabbis characterize the generation of the flood as a culture in which corruption ruled. Following Chazal's lead, we can view this generation as one which controlled science and technology of people who saw themselves as "children of the gods", lifted above "ordinary" humanity. In other words, this culture worshipped a racist ideal, using technological advancement to sanction immoral behavior. Were we to permit ourselves a quick jump in time, we could say that the generation of the flood symbolizes the Nazi ideology.

Sodom is described by Chazal as a law abiding society. However, the laws which governed this group focused entirely upon the rights of the individual. To the citizens of Sodom, private property was the holiest of concepts. In the words of Chazal, the motto of Sodom was "Mine is mine and yours is yours". Chazal describe the behavior of Sodom as despicable, and teach us that Judaism staunchly opposes social and economical egoism. Sodom, then, can be seen as a classic capitalistic civilization, in which the sanctity of personal property overrides impulses towards charity and kindness. The poor and needy in this culture must be abandoned if economical success and advancement are to be achieved.

A third civilization that we meet in Genesis is the generation of the dispersion. We find a telling description of this period in the verse, "The entire earth had one language and uniform things."

Surprisingly, the midrash interprets this statement as a description of economic partnership. According to Chazal, the words "uniform things" imply that what was in one man's pocket was also in his neighbor's pocket. A modern translation would term this a communist society. The generation of the dispersion desired to construct a tower to prevent a collapse of the sky. This was, in fact, an essential component of the communist vision. Numerous disasters befell the capitalist world. The Great Depression of 1929 is indelibly imprinted upon the world's memory, because during that period the power of Sodom held sway. While people searched in vain for bread to satiate their empty bellies, pounds of coffee were being dumped into the ocean to maintain price stability. In response, a new generation arose and attempted to construct a secure tower. However, at the top of this tower they placed a statue brandishing an unsheathed axe in mute defiance of God. Communism espoused the belief that man can triumph and inherit God's throne.

The ideal man in Marxist philosophy is Prometheus, the mythological hero who stole fire from the heavens. The Jewish attitude is starkly contrasting, for on Saturday nights, we recite the blessing over fire. The fire of the havdala service is radically different from the candlelight of the Sabbath eve. The candles of Friday evening bring joy and light into the household, but the fire of Saturday night is the flame of technology. Our blessing is essentially anti-Prometheic. Our God did not deny us the use of fire. He entrusts it to us. God is not jealous of man's accomplishments; rather, He blesses us.

The modern expression of identification with Prometheus was revealed through the pride and arrogance which accompanied the launching of the first satellite in the communist world. The midrashic description of the builders of the tower is strikingly similar:

"It does not please us that He take the heavens for Himself and give us the earth. Rather, let us place an idol at the top of the tower to reach the heavens, so that it appears to wage war upon Him."

The communist atheism of the builders of the tower is succinctly expressed through the sad joke, "We photographed every inch of space and discovered no God." It is pointless to respond that a God who can be photographed is not worthy of our worship. The central issue here is the foolish pride of men who believe that they have successfully erased the distance between themselves and God. The catastrophe in the Chernobyl atomic reactor is proof that Prometheus has failed. And a more poignant expression of this failure can be seen through the tragic image of a ship sunk in desert sands, which were covered by an ocean before the advent of man's "civilizing" revolution.

The generation of the dispersion can teach us something else as well. They wished to create a society that boasted "one language and uniform things". In other words, they raised the flag of cosmopolitanism and internationalism.

God punished their transgression through the creation of numerous languages. To use the vivid midrashic description, "One said to another, 'Hand me your hammer,' and he gave him a sickle. 'Hand me your sickle,' and he gave him a hammer."

What was their sin? Chazal inform us that when a man would fall from this tower to his death, they simply termed it an unavoidable accident. However, if a block of stone fall, they would lament, "Woe is us, when shall we find one like it? ...Woe to us, the building plans will be delayed!" The construction of this society left no room for God, but neither was there room for man. The rejection of one necessarily implies rejection of the other. The centrality of the community grew to such proportions that the individual was entirely lost within it.

And yet, this society espoused a number of seemingly beautiful social concepts. Our Rabbis contrasted the generation of the flood, who were "flooded with robbery" with the generation of the dispersion, "who loved one another," or at the very least, claimed to do so. The utopian vision expressed by the modern day generation of the dispersion presented a formidable challenge to religious loyalists. As we witness the collapse of this contemporary generation of dispersion, we can discover its rotted core. Various artists have chosen to depict the Tower of Babel deserted in mid-construction. Similarly, the regimes which were symbolized by the Berlin Wall were abandoned, while mute testimony of the horrors remain in the scars that will never fade.

## **The Collapse of Ideologies**

The three cultures that we have been discussing can serve as a representative sample of all the various ideologies which promised the world salvation in the modern era. Eventually, each of these ideologies collapsed, either in the fiery tempests of revolution, or through persistent rotting at the core, as we saw in the case of communism.

How must we approach these ideologies? Rav Kook explains that those positions have consistently led humanity astray because they did indeed possess some sparks of truth. In Kabbalistic terms, these ideologies are "kelipot" (shells). In other words, they parasitically hang onto the coattails of truth. These ideologies are based upon ideals, the moral and the national. However, these ideals were corrupted by the attempt to construct entire belief systems upon minute sparks of truth, in order to usurp the place of religion.

These ideologies are, in fact, a modern form of idolatry. Both communism and nationalism strove for absolute rule in place of religion. Communism expressed this drive through the propagation of atheism. Torah establishments were persecuted by both Jewish and non-Jewish communist agitators. Nationalism and racism also aspired to become holy values, and in Nazism this process was heralded by the revival of early German mythology. To the German people, this revival constituted a restoration of their former glory, a celebrated return to the period before Judaism had conquered the earth.

Our account with European civilization is a long one indeed, with Christianity forming the focal point of this culture. According to Rabbi Avraham Isaac Kook, Christianity's most terrible sin was the construction of a false Judaism, a religion of darkness, of defining holiness as withdrawal from the world, and of anti-Semitism. Many modern thinkers view Nazism as a logical extension of Christianity. In their opinion, the swastika was merely an overdeveloped cross. However, it seems to me that this approach is too simplistic. In fact, Nazism was none other than a zealous return to idolatry. This revival commenced in pre-Hitler Germany and is eloquently expressed in the rich mythology of Wagner's operas.

### **The Ideologies vs. Religion**

These movements were not simply social philosophies. They attempted to take the place of religion through their impressive array of prophets and priests, their "holy writ" and its sanctioned interpretation, while educating their people toward self-sacrifice in the name of false ideals. Indeed, history notes the singular phenomenon of Stalin's innocent victims, who confessed crimes which they did not commit thinking that they were thereby forwarding the cause of the revolution. Even at death's door those people refused to accept the possibility that they had been duped by an illusion.

In the marketplace of modern ideologies reigns the claim that religion is dead. We will not dispute this position here. Suffice it to mention that we have been hearing the prophecy of the demise of religion for three hundred years. The numerous reiterations of this claim prove its ultimate worth, just as the number of times that a smoker quits tells us much about his willpower and intentions.

The knowledge of God, according to Rav Kook, is the central and essential knowledge in life. Every society since the dawn of history has searched for a religious faith. Our responses to religious questions lie at the center of our being. And in the absence of religion, idolatry holds sway. The sworn enemies, Nazism and Communism, constituted the two extremes of modern idolatry.

Throughout the history of changing ideologies, Judaism has served as a mystical "thermometer." Each ideology can be assessed based on its attitude towards Judaism. The fact that Judaism suffered at the hands of both these extreme ideologies teaches us that both were dangerous illusions. In his essay "Iggeret Teiman", Rambam posits that the Jewish people have been faced with two types of enemies throughout our history. We have contended with foes, such as Amalek and Haman, which endangered our physical existence; and we have met other enemies, such as Christianity, which threatened our spiritual well-being. Christianity's wish was to save the Jewish soul, albeit the quest for "spiritual salvation" often translated into physical persecution. In the modern world, matters have not changed much. Nazi persecution stemmed from Amalek, while our conflict with Marxism was none other than a struggle over the spiritual commitment of the Jewish people. Indeed, since its inception, Marxism kept up a peculiar rivalry with Judaism, despite the powerful attraction it had for many of our people. Karl Marx, whose parents converted the family to Christianity while their son was yet a child, claimed that the Jews worshipped at the altar of the coin. This is a difficult statement in and of itself, but in reality it is but a symptom of a more serious problem. Marxism attempted to achieve redemption without God.

The words of the Rambam words have attained a new significance in our generation. Nazism lacerated the Jewish body while Communism ravaged the Jewish soul. Judaism serves as a tragic measure of these ideologies, for their virulent anti-Semitism reveals their true colors and testifies that they are simply new forms of ancient idol worship. The twentieth century has proven fertile ground for a renewed idolatry. Thus, we have indeed returned to the starting point of the Kuzari.

## **Jewish Ideals**

Let us now move from ideologies to ideals. Rav Kook teaches us that four human ideals exist: the godly, the moral, the national and the religious.

The moral ideal within us laments in response to the many injustices in the world, while the national ideal motivates groups to the struggle for independence. Beyond these two ideals lies the godly ideal, which the prophets have taught since the beginning of time. Rav Kook clearly distinguishes between the godly and the religious ideals. The religious ideal translates lofty concepts to practical everyday life. The godly ideal embodies all the other ideals, and can be achieved only through the integration of all the others.

To explain this interaction, I will make use of a wonderful rabbinic homily of Rabbi Barukh Yashar. The Passover haggada quotes Rabban Gamliel the Elder, who states that a Jew who does not recite "Pessach, matza, and maror" has not fulfilled his religious obligation. Let us imagine Rabban Gamliel standing on the Temple Mount and observing three groups of pilgrims as they approach Jerusalem. The first group carries the Paschal sacrifice and thus expresses the religious significance of the holiday. The second group bears matzot, the symbol of national freedom. They perceive Passover as the celebration of our national independence. A third group brings the maror (bitter herbs), for they see the holiday as a commemoration of the slave revolution. Rabban Gamliel teaches us that whoever has not recited all three words Pessach, matza and maror, has not fully expressed the significance of the holiday. The meaning of Passover, then, is the integration of these three ideals.

Now, as of old, our people are divided amongst the various ideals. Those who sought the moral ideal blindly followed the socialist trend. Others who stressed the national ideal labored for the revival and national redemption of our people. Together with the search for the religious ideal, these divisions succinctly express the history of human ideas.

Rav Kook lived during the period when the Marxist illusion was in its glory. Communism had not yet gained the power it would ultimately wield, but neither had it become corrupt. In our day, we face the opposite problem. One of the greatest tragedies caused by Marxism is the utter disillusionment with all social ideals, the collective despair of ever effecting social change. Marxism destroyed the hope of social redemption, and its collapse may yet revive the nightmare of Fascism. On the other hand, Fascism destroyed the hope of national-moral redemption. The twentieth century has watched humanity waver between these two extremes, between the willingness to dispose of social reform in the name of nationalism, and the desire to destroy nationalism in the name of universal brotherhood. And at this telling juncture, while the world views both nationalism and social reform with a jaded eye, we must continue to champion our Jewish ideals of unity and communal responsibility. We must continue to uphold the moral and national ideals.

I cannot conclude without an additional note regarding the question of nationalism. Nationalism has the potential to be both a blessing and curse; it is both a wellspring of faith and the root of rebellion

The Torah presents nationalism as the divine retribution for the construction of the tower of Babel. It would appear, then, that nationalism contains a foundation of evil. If



this is true, how can we, in good conscience, speak of nationalism as an ideal? How can we continue to uphold the values of Jewish nationalism and Zionism?

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch answers this question, and through his response we can, incidentally, gain valuable insight into the entire book of Genesis. Rabbi Hirsch explains that God's punishments are not acts of vengeance; they are educational tools. This is the essence of both of the central biblical punishments in Genesis: labor and nationalism. Labor and nationalism are the building blocks of the two central ideas that we have previously addressed. They are punishments whose goal is education. Let me give you an example. Occupational therapy is used as a cure in our day, not for the purpose of producing goods, but because the work itself is therapeutic. This fact is true of all humanity, not only of ill and weak members of society. Labor is a means of correction and improvement of man. Nationalism, too, contains curative qualities; it grants us the means of expressing the uniqueness of each nation. The messianic era will erase the transgression of the tower of Babel, and the entire world will speak an unified language once again. This utopian vision will eventually be achieved through the vehicle of nationalism. Nationalism and labor can become a blessing or a curse. If abused, they set the stage for a tragedy.

Jewish nationalism can only be understood against the background of these ideas. And yet, we must remember that the Jewish people remains separate from the seventy nations of the world which came into being at the dispersion. We were not born of that sin. Our nation was created at a later stage in the world's history, a unique and miraculous creation of our God, who chose Abraham. Thus was granted the world a new beginning.

## CHAPTER 5: THE PHILOSOPHICAL TRIANGLE

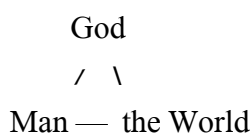
### In The Retail Market

We have already taken a glimpse at the wholesale market of ideas. Now let us move to the retail market, where one can attempt to infuse meaning into his personal life. Among the outstanding stalls we find the representatives of the various religions and philosophies, as well as scientists of various types. As in the wholesale market, our modern times require that we make room for a number of additional stalls. As we wander through the marketplace, our challenge is to distinguish between true and false prophets, between scientists and charlatans. Indeed, Rihal was well acquainted with the false sort of scientist, and despite his absence from the introduction to the Kuzari, we find ample mention of him in the rest of the book.

At times, our task seems all but impossible, for we soon discover that even honest merchants often peddle worthless wares. Before we venture further, however, I would like to mention a few introductory comments about the nature of the retail market.

Man must contend with countless philosophical riddles throughout his lifetime. These questions do not remain in the theoretical sphere; often, the solutions to life's philosophical dilemmas produce direct practical ramifications. Our future and our fate are intricately woven into the fabric of our philosophical bent. Oftentimes, we tend to ignore the numerous riddles of our lives. Judaism, however, strives to uproot this tendency, by focusing our attention upon these issues, as well as presenting such partial solutions as our intellectual capacities can grasp.

I propose to examine a number of central philosophical enigmas which have served as focal points throughout the history of human thought. As a useful visual aid, we can structure these issues into a triangle. Its three corners represent three concepts: God, Man and the World. These are the three ideals which man strives to understand, and indeed, our ability to distinguish between truth and falsehood rests upon a clear comprehension of these concepts.

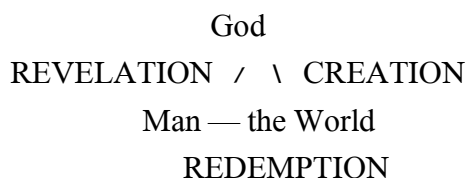


The first person to draw this diagram was a twentieth century philosopher named Yehuda Halevi Rosenzweig, better known by his German name, Franz. Rosenzweig viewed Rav Yehuda Halevi as his mentor and teacher, and deeply identified with both his philosophy and his poetry.

The triangular model teaches us that all philosophical approaches are actually varied attempts to solve these three basic riddles. A central theme which has concerned the human race since time immemorial is the query "What do we know about God?" Investigations into this question are termed theology. Humanity similarly hungers for a deeper understanding of the world (cosmology) and of man (anthropology).

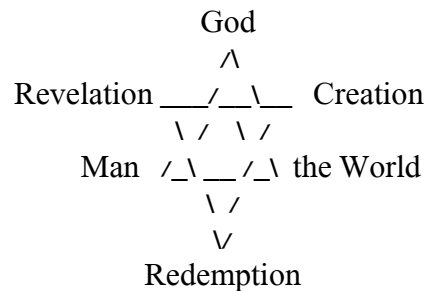
The search for the keys that will unlock the mysteries of Man and the World has spawned numerous new branches of science, such as physics, which attempts to reveal the laws that govern our world, and psychology, which investigates the inner nature of man. Both these fields are infinite in scope, and only a fraction of their potential discoveries is known. The one spreads endlessly upwards into the infinity which lies beyond man; the other moves endlessly inwards, penetrating the darkest recesses of human nature.

Until this point, we have placed these three separate concepts at the heart of our investigation. However, we must simultaneously attempt to define the relationships between these focal points. Rosenzweig shared the biblical assumption that such relationships do indeed exist, that an ongoing dialogue between these concepts is ever present. Let us name the three relationships. They are creation, revelation and redemption.



These three concepts form the backbone of Jewish philosophy. However, Jewish thought is not limited to the investigation of these themes. As we shall see, the concept of freedom, for example, is also of paramount importance. Within Rosenzweig's model, man stands alone and faces God and the world around him. He is not simply a part of the world around him; he contains elements which are, in fact, foreign to his natural habitat. Nor is he completely chained by the Divine decree.

Occasionally a philosopher will attempt to destroy this triangle, to nullify the significance of one of the central concepts. The most striking example of such an attempt is the development of atheism. In contrast, Jewish philosophy insists upon both the existence of the three central facets of existence, and the presence of a dialogue between them. If we now combine our two triangles, God, Man and the World, with creation, revelation and redemption, we will form the classic Jewish symbol, the Magen David (Jewish star):



We have no historical explanation to offer for this wondrous symbol. Rosenzweig granted the Magen David a philosophical dimension, and his powerful interpretation continues to enrich our understanding with each successive analysis. First, it constitutes the basic dictionary of Jewish thought, and succinctly mentions the concepts to be addressed in any Jewish philosophical forum. In addition, it successfully presents a complete picture of the issues, which greatly aids any discussion of their potential solutions.

At this juncture I propose to explore briefly the significance of the three central relationships in greater depth.

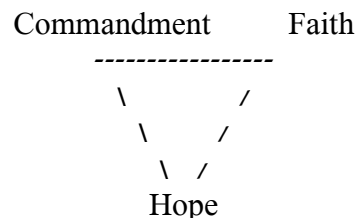
CREATION: We proclaim that the existence of the world is not a chance occurrence; divine fingerprints cover every inch of the earth.

REVELATION: We believe that man is not alone, that God maintains an interest in our lives. This relationship manifests itself through Torah and prophecy. Directly implied by this interaction is the existence of an absolute moral standard which defines Good and Evil.

REDEMPTION: Humanity progresses through history towards a preordained future. The world was created in an imperfect state, and is ever in the process of development.

Man is a significant partner in this task, for through revelation he can and must strive to redeem the world.

Let us now reconstruct our triangle using new terminology. The three central terms which form the basis for our dictionary of Jewish thought are faith, commandments and hope.



This new triangle reflects the three dimensions of Man. Man is composed of a dimension of consciousness, which Judaism calls upon for faith; a practical dimension, through which he endeavors to change the world, which Judaism calls upon for fulfillment of commandments. And finally, an emotional dimension, which Judaism calls upon for hope.

A brief note regarding the distinction between faith and hope: As various philosophers have informed us, "faith THAT" exists alongside "faith IN". The latter indicates the level of bitachon (trust). The statement, "I believe in the coming of the Messiah," is not simply a proclamation of knowledge. First and foremost, it is a feeling, an emotional certainty. This is hope.

Now let us return to the original relationships of creation, revelation and redemption. We will discuss each concept in light of its central opponents.

## Creation

The concept of creation teaches us that the world was deliberately created of God's free will. This belief places us in conflict with the Kuzari's philosopher, who maintains that the world is a necessary outgrowth of God's being. However, in our times, the idea of creation mainly stands in conflict with those approaches which attempt to erase God's name from human consciousness. In the modern world, belief in creation means confrontation with Darwinism.

This confrontation takes place beyond the scope of science. To explain this idea further, I ask you to accompany me on a brief journey into the sphere of science fiction. Imagine that a creature from another planet, possessing far more advanced knowledge than ours, lands on earth. He carries the three central symbols of science: an

encyclopedia, a master computer and an array of sophisticated scientific instruments. Our visitor arrives in Jerusalem on the eve of Remembrance Day (for fallen soldiers), and sets up his equipment on Mount Scopus. At eleven o'clock, the siren sounds. The stranger notes that the people are stopping their cars simultaneously, as though they are part of a well-rehearsed symphony. In confusion, he consults his computer. The computer responds, "The car stopped because the driver stepped on the brakes and then interrupted the electrical circuit." This response is based upon computations of energy conversions. The energy which originated in the driver's body was transformed successively from chemical, to electrical, and finally to mechanical energy. If our visitor insists upon knowing why this transpired, his faithful computer will provide him with the history of energy conversion from the creation of the world to the present day. In a sense, the computer's response is correct. But it fails to give us the reason for the stopping of the car. For this, physical equations will not suffice. To understand why, we must enter into the secrets of human behavior, into the world of language and symbols, in which the computer and its values have no part.

Now let us unravel the parable. There are two distinct ways of viewing the world. The sciences investigate scientific equations; we are interested in a perception beyond the physical. Even if we were to assume that science could explain how life first appeared on the planet, and even if it could create new life from organic material, it cannot answer the decisive questions. It cannot tell us if any occurrence is coincidental or the action of a guiding hand. Most important, it cannot answer the question, "Why?"

## **Revelation**

Judaism must often confront philosophies which see no significance in the concept of revelation. Leon Trotsky, one of the heroes of the Russian Revolution and himself a Jew, published a book in which he defended his vicious behavior towards the enemies of Bolshevism. When asked how he could act in this way, he responded that such questions may only be directed towards those who believe in biblical divinity, and hence in God-defined concepts of good and evil. For those who lack this belief, good and evil are relative terms. To Trotsky, all behavior which championed the revolutionary cause was good. All other behavior was evil. The distinction between absolute good and evil dissolved in the absence of a clear belief in God's relationship with man.

Parenthetically, I would like to mention a biographical note regarding Trotsky, which was pointed out by the Chafetz Chaim. Trotsky's mother wished to enroll her son in cheder (Hebrew school), but he was rejected on the grounds that his parents could not

afford the school fees. The Chafetz Chaim claimed that all the troubles which later befell the Jewish people at the hands of the Communists were brought on by the injustice of turning a child away from cheder simply because his parents were poor.

## **Redemption**

Our central opponent with regard to the concept of redemption was, until recently, Marxism. Marxism created an attractive alternative to the biblical concept of redemption. Upon a virulent materialism which negated any form of spiritual meaning, Marxism built the claim that man is destined to achieve utopia while still on earth.

Darwinism, unlike other forms of evolutionary theory which are based, in the words of Rabbi Nachman Krokhmal, on the same principle as the Jewish blessing "Blessed be He who makes the creatures different," insists that everything developed randomly. Thus, the appearance of man is meaningless. It is therefore odd that Marxism and Darwinism joined forces. What is bizarrely proposed by these ideologies, when united, is that man and the world came into being by chance, but the ultimate end of history, the redemption, is preordained and the result of fixed laws.

In addition to the perverted forms of redemption, further opponents of the Jewish concept include those who have despaired of any redemption of our world. Their approach demands existence in the "here and now," which has greatly influenced modern literature and theater.

Our three weapons in the modern arena remain faith, commandment and hope, while our opponents continually change their forms. In our day, the belief in science is rampant. However, beyond the facts of life lie the values. Our commandments, supplemented by our faith, command and inspire us to distinguish between good and evil, while our hope for redemption burns bright.

## **CHAPTER 6: BELIEF IN GOD AND THE DIALOGUE WITH PHILOSOPHY**

### **PART I**

"The philosopher said: The Creator has no favor and no dislike, because He is above all desires and all intentions."

Thus the philosopher begins his discourse. The philosopher appears before us, undoubtedly, as a firm believer in God's existence. Although other alternatives existed, and, even in Rihal's day, atheism abounded, the position presented by the philosopher to the king of the Khazars includes an unquestioning acceptance of the existence of God. This fact requires an explanation.

### **Religion and Philosophy: The Synthesis**

To understand the philosopher's position we must first recognize that religious philosophy is born of the marriage between two sources: Torah and Greek philosophy. The most significant effort to bring about this union was made by Philo of Alexandria, a Jew who was intimately acquainted with both worlds. Drawing upon these two sources, he attempted to create a synthesis between them. Philo's creation was the outcome of the ongoing conflict between autonomous human wisdom and God's word to man, as expressed through the Torah and the prophets. If this fusion of worlds had not occurred, religious philosophy would be a virtual impossibility, both for the believer in human wisdom alone, as well as for he who denies that mortal intelligence may offer a meaningful contribution toward the solution of life's riddles. At the moment that these two sources of wisdom touched, religious philosophy was born.

Philo of Alexandria can justifiably be called the father of religious philosophy. All subsequent philosophies stemmed, in some form, from his creative attempt. This is true of Christianity and Islam as well as of our medieval Jewish philosophers, whose familiarity with Philo's work was obtained through non-Jewish sources with no awareness of its true origin. We can describe Philo's philosophy as a stream which temporarily disappears from view, but continues to flow underground, unhindered. At some distance from the original stream, we discover a wellspring, without realizing that its source is the very same stream which we left behind.

The marriage of Torah and philosophy was made possible, despite the yawning gulf separating the two, by the background shared by both traditions. The concept of one God, which had previously served to release the Greek philosophers from the bonds of



idolatry, now served as the common ground for the historic union of Torah and philosophy. Greek philosophy was singularly influenced by idolatry, both in its content and in its chosen symbols. Yet, simultaneously, a profound desire to break free of mythological tradition became manifest. This need allowed for a fruitful dialogue with Jewish thought, culminating in the synthesis which Philo achieved in his philosophical work.

## **God and Rationalism**

The fusion of Torah and philosophy is actually but one example of an ongoing dialogue between God's voice and our human voices. One fact remains constant throughout the ages: the universality of belief in God. Within idolatry, within philosophy, indeed, at the core of every human endeavor, lies the eternal query, the longing and desire for an encounter with the Divine. Of course, alongside the internal call to apprehend our Maker, other calls are heard; the call of rebellion, the temptation to sin, the need to unclasp the yoke of heaven from our shoulders. The conflicting calls which man hears through the vehicle of his good and his evil inclinations reflect a universal reality. Man incessantly longs for contact with the Divine; and although the desire alone cannot solve the mysteries which plague us, and the longing alone cannot prove God's existence, still the desire remains, expectant and insistent. And its presence teaches us that the human heart will forever be incomplete and joyless unless it harbors a divine sanctuary.

Philosophy took one step further than religion. It based itself not simply upon emotional needs, but also upon the sound foundations of intellect and human wisdom. The existence of God is a logical conclusion of the intellectual thought process. This belief is an inseparable element of the classical philosophical tradition. It does not absolutely preclude the option of an atheistic philosophy; however, it does damage the rationale behind such a position. Let me explain this further with the aid of a parable. We can compare our world to a chain of metal links. Each link holds fast to its predecessor, yet these will not suffice to maintain chain in its place. The chain will fall unless it rests upon something which is essentially different from any of its links. We may use a nail in the wall, for example, to support the chain. All the world's events are interconnected and interdependent, like links in a chain. Our parable illustrates that an entity must exist beyond the chain of causes, beyond our scientific evidence. This entity is God.

The search for the "link" which exists beyond the chain is comparable to an exercise in geometry. One statement is based upon another statement, and so forth. The question is, at what point does the chain of proofs expire? A number of options exist:

- a) We may continue the chain of proofs indefinitely! In that case, however, we have actually proven nothing at all.
- b) We can prove statement A based on statement B, statement B based on statement C, statement C based on statement D and statement D based on statement A. This is a circular proof and is logically unsound.
- c) We prove statements based on an axiomatic system. In other words, we end the chain of reasoning with statements which we accept as true without demonstrating their veracity.

Geometry, and in fact all of mathematics, are based upon axioms. These are the nails in the wall which support the entire chain. This system also forms the basis of philosophical rationalism. Thus, the chain of causality in the world is dependent upon the First Cause, which exists outside the system.

A glance at the history of philosophy demonstrates that in each generation, and within every school of thought, numerous attempts have been made to translate this idea into precise philosophical terms. Each method leads to the conclusion that an entity exists which is entirely and essentially different from our world. We cannot reach this entity through any worldly medium, yet our worldly phenomena unquestionably attest to its existence. Let me give you an example. We see a piece of paper, upon which two lines approaching each other are drawn. Perhaps the page is too small to mark the meeting point between the two lines, yet everything points to the existence of such a meeting place. According to classical philosophy, our intellect attests to the existence of such points. This conclusion is commonly accepted as a necessary element of our mental makeup. Similarly, man's wisdom is incomplete if the concept of God is absent from his philosophical vocabulary. Classical philosophy has proven this idea in various ways, from the advent of Plato and Aristotle until our very day. God is the necessary basis of any understanding of the world.

This method, which allows us to reach the First Cause, is known as the "cosmological proof" of God's existence. Many additional proofs exist, two of which particularly stand out and will concern us next. One of these proofs is based upon the order of the world (the "teleological proof") and the other is based upon the fact that man is subject to an internal moral law.

## **The God of Philosophy**

Religious philosophy was not the only movement to undergo a radical change since the advent of Philo. General philosophy altered significantly as well. In fact, Rihal's philosopher himself was an indirect result of Philo's revolution, of the marriage between Jewish thought and Greek philosophy.

The philosopher's method stemmed from a combination of the Aristotelian and Neoplatonic schools, the medieval equivalents and successors of Aristotle and Plato.

Although he was a staunch rival of both Rihal and the Rambam, the philosopher does place God's existence at the center of his position. In fact, biblical terms abound in the philosopher's lexicon. For this reason, many great thinkers who were deeply committed to Judaism naively considered the possibility of a covenant between Judaism and this philosophical approach. Such attempts aroused Rihal's sharpest criticism. To Rihal, this was no family squabble between essentially similar approaches; he saw it as an uncompromising battle over nothing less than the meaning of life. The very closeness in language between the two positions only increases the danger that we be led astray. Spinoza, in fact, fell prey to this error.

Underneath the apparent linguistic agreement lies an essential difference of opinion. Rihal brought this latent conflict to the fore by emphasizing the differences between the philosopher's God and the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Both philosophies agree upon the centrality of God's existence. But what lies behind this concept? For the philosopher, God's existence constitutes an essential element of man's knowledge, but not of his emotional, existential, and active being. Rihal attacks this philosophical approach and exposes the trap it sets for the believing Jew. Rihal puts the following words in the philosopher's mouth:

"God has no favor and no dislike. God is raised above... the knowledge of details, for the details alter from moment to moment, while in God's knowledge no change is possible."

Rihal warns us to be wary of external similarities. It is true that the philosopher accepts the existence of a God who possesses many of the traits ascribed to Him by the Bible and by faithful Jews. Yet the underlying difference remains. We will address but one of the essential components of this conflict. The God of the philosophers does not know your name. In other words, he maintains no connection with you, the individual. The philosopher's method attaches tremendous importance to the explanation of the world's order, to science, to physics, etc. The philosopher believes in a hidden power which

orchestrates the apparent chaos of our world. However, this all-powerful Being takes no interest in you, your existence, or your destiny.

Philosophy proposes solutions to many complex problems, but at the same time it arouses many equally disturbing questions. Philosophy helps us understand our world, yet it leaves unanswered the existential query closest to our hearts. We still cry out: What of me? What is the meaning of my life? This question is defined as the issue of personal and general providence. It arises anew in every generation, including our own. To the philosopher, God is the concept underlying the system; yet, no dialogue, no relationship, exists between Man and God. Unlike the God of the philosophers, the Bible asserts that God does know our names, and that He is personally involved with each and every one of us.

Next week we will further explore the differences between the Jewish and the philosophic approaches.

## **PART II: Beyond the Common Language: Consensus and Conflict**

The consensus regarding the existence of one God allowed Judaism and philosophy to share the first triangle, constructed of God, Man and the World. However, Judaism speaks of another triangle as well. Its cornerstones are Creation, Revelation and Redemption. This second triangle is concerned not with realities but with relationships. It expresses the dialogues between the points of the first triangle. The philosopher makes liberal use of our lexicon of religious terms and of religious values. However, a serious inquiry into the issues at hand shows us that the seeming similarities do not penetrate beyond the surface. The philosopher does not appear as a destroyer of religion. He is willing to play the part and speak the language; however, he stealthily insinuates new meanings into our ancient terms. The voice is still "the voice of Jacob," yet the ideals emerge in a radically altered form. The philosopher exchanges the three central relationships of Jewish philosophy - creation, revelation and redemption - for other concepts, as we shall soon see.

An analysis of the philosopher's attitude towards the second triangle reveals the chasm between his position and that of the Jew. Therein lies the parting of ways. We will analyze these three concepts at greater length at a later stage. Here we will mention them only in order to aid our understanding of the philosopher's concept of God.

Let us begin with an analysis of the philosopher's concept of creation. The very use of the term "creation", even after an attempt to remove it from its simple context, is a

result of the interaction with Jewish thought. The retained Biblical terms are "fingerprints" which attest to the scriptural sources of the discussion. To the philosopher, creation means "stemming from God".

Now let us attempt to abandon semantics and look at the contents. The world stems from God. Is that a reasonable definition of creation? Surely, the concept of creation demonstrates a relationship, an interest which God takes in our world. The God of the philosophers has "no favor and no dislike because He is above all desires and all intentions." The God of the philosophical method is similar to a mathematical axiom from which many new statements stem, while the axiom itself has no interest in its progeny. We can compare this concept of God's relationship with the world to man's relationship with his shadow. Just as the man sunbathing on the beach has no interest in the shadow that he casts, so too God takes no interest in the lower world in which we dwell. And even if in some cases man does take an interest in his shadow, the Kuzari's philosopher is certain that God never takes an interest in His shadow, in the world. Beyond his particular place in the system, God maintains no personal or existential relationship with man.

Rihal vehemently objects to this deceitful use of religious terms, and overall rejects the philosopher's view as irrelevant. Rihal contends that this position is devoid of religious truth, and that it does not solve man's existential problems. The philosopher's ideal is to remain enclosed in an ivory tower. He bears a striking similarity to the egoistic, perfect God that he reveres. Rihal asserts that the philosopher will not find the happiness he seeks. The price that he, and his society, will pay for abandoning the world will be high indeed.

Since our only common ground with the philosopher is the belief in God, the deciding issue is God's interest in man. If belief in God is the first tenet of our religious faith, the second must be God's personal interest in His creations.

In the philosopher's view, the lack of Divine interest in man is absolute. We spoke of casting a shadow. A better example for the philosopher's viewpoint might be the image of a man discarding the remains of an apple over his shoulder. What interest does the man take in the remains of his apple, or his banana peel? According to the philosopher, the world stems from God because "He is the First Cause in the creation of every being, not because God intended to create the world." In contrast, Judaism maintains that God is interested in man, and that this interest does not expose a "lack" on God's part. As a great astronomer of the previous generation claimed, "The God that we believe in is so great that he can afford to show interest even in something as small and insignificant as myself. He has a little energy left for me."

For this philosopher, revelation and Torah have no meaning. Yes, the philosopher accepts the existence of a first cause which is separate from the world, but this belief has no practical ramifications. It does not compel the philosopher to draw any conclusions regarding man. Man remains alone in the world. As Rihal asserts in one of his poems, the belief in the God of the philosophers is like a flower that bears no fruit.

### **Perfection and Perfect Egoism**

A deeper look at the philosopher's position gives rise to a surprising idea. The philosopher claims that, paradoxically, the simple believer actually damages the concept of God. This point deserves some clarification. The words of the philosopher are as follows:

"Since desire demonstrates a lack within the desirer, and the fulfillment of his intentions will perfect him, and until his object is achieved he remains imperfect. And thus He is, according to the philosophers, above knowledge of partial facts, because facts constantly change and God's knowledge admits no change. He does not know you, and of course He is unaware of your actions and does not hear your prayers or see your movements."

God is the perfect Being who gives life to all the universe. Both believers and philosophers agree upon this point. However, the philosopher believes that God's perfection implies an inability to move outside of Himself and display interest in such imperfect creatures as ourselves. Why would God create a world if he needed nothing? The God of the philosophers is also above "partial knowledge," the stuff of our fragmented existence, such as my biography, or the history of your nation.

Ironically, we can say that the philosopher's God is perfect in His egoism. But the perfectly egoistic being cannot create a world.

### **Manic and Depressive Atheism**

We have been dealing with an issue discussed in the annals of history. However, the ramifications of this discussion are far-reaching and are not simply reflections on the past. The philosopher's view exudes a sense of man's lowliness and helplessness. He gives voice to a fundamental inferiority complex: God is uninterested in man because man is worthless. Thus we reach a paradoxical conclusion, that excessive humility can also be dangerous. This emotion is one of two moods which accompany human existence throughout intellectual history. It seems to me that atheism can be divided into

two types: manic and depressive. The first stems from man's drunken sense of superiority; he considers himself elevated and practically omnipotent. This position is held by philosophers of the "Idealistic" school, who view man as the founder of the world, the Being who contains the universe within himself. This is the atheism of the man who does battle with God, refusing to do His bidding and even denying His existence, all because of his arrogant belief that human wisdom is paramount. Depressive atheism stands in sharp contrast to this view; it is the lot of the man who claims that life is meaningless, that God is not interested in us and therefore life is devoid of sense and purpose. We find this position among the "Existentialist" philosophers. According to the first type of atheism, the world is mine. According to the second type - I am nothing, and the road from this sense of worthlessness to despair and depression is exceedingly short. The medieval philosopher considered himself immune to the pangs of despair, for he felt certain that he had discovered the source of salvation in his own intellectual prowess. However, he willingly abandoned the vast majority of humanity to the depths of emptiness and depression dictated by his philosophy. This illusion has persisted and is common in modern thought as well.

Our Rabbis repeatedly emphasized the necessity of striking a balance between pride and humility. We constantly vacillate between these two extremes, and the struggle continues in our day. The attempt to locate the delicate balance between humility and pride is, at one pole, our battle against Marxism, which considered itself the successor of a dethroned God, and against Nietzsche's vision of the superman who pronounced that God is dead. And at the other pole, we fight to reject existentialist despair. We protest against the claim that everything is permitted and reality only exists in the here and now. Those who give in to existentialist despair see themselves as aimless reeds blowing upon an endless sea. The French thinker Pascal proclaimed that people are indeed merely reeds, but reeds which possess the power of thought. The Kuzari's philosopher was somewhat comforted by the idea that man is the only animal capable of thought. However, this is an illusion which cannot console humanity. On the contrary, this unique ability of man simply means that he is the only animal capable of experiencing misery. The animal shares man's predicament and helplessness, for though it too will die, it is blissfully unaware of the fact. Man is trapped precisely because of his wisdom, wisdom which only intensifies his loneliness and despair. The philosopher cannot overcome this problem. With the concept of creation, however, religion can. Thus, Judaism teaches us that while man requires humility, he is also worthy of hope.

## **Chesed: The Foundation of the World**

What is our response to the philosopher? Judaism, too, views God as the perfect Being. However, our concept of perfection includes *chesed* (loving kindness). What is *chesed*? In a word, it is a free gift. The philosopher teaches us that all activity stems from a lack, that "desire demonstrates a lack in the desirer." Accordingly, the philosopher will explain that an act of *chesed* attests to a hidden personal agenda. Man may perform an act of *chesed* to receive honor. At the very most, the philosopher would concede that *chesed* stems from an internal lack, such as a feeling of pity: I suffer when I view the suffering of others. However, the Torah dares to propose another concept of *chesed*, the outcome of a desire to do good, despite the fact that the positive action will not fulfill any of the doer's needs. *Chesed*, then, is an attribute of perfection. The God of the philosophers is an egoist who thinks only of himself and is content with this state of affairs. In contrast to this view, the Bible informs us that "the world is created of *chesed*"; the first stage of creation was an act of *chesed*, a free gift, hiding no secret desire for personal gain.

The creation of the world, like all of God's acts, will always remain a mystery to us. However, we can and must comprehend that it all began with an act of *chesed*, or in the words of the Kabbalists, "God desired to bestow good." Creation was God's first expression of interest in man. Belief in creation, therefore, constitutes both the birth of hope and the triumph over despair.

Postscript: We have been discussing philosophical approaches. What motivates a person to adopt a particular philosophical position? This is a riddle which remains unsolved. Many people justifiably point out that a philosophical approach such as the one presented at the outset of the *Kuzari* absolves one of all responsibilities. And it seems plausible that such approaches were exploited by certain groups in order to rid themselves of religious and moral obligations. However, we must recognize that every ideology represents a "coalition" of intellectuals, whose interest lies in the concepts and ideas, and politicians, dealers, and public figures, who make use of the intellectuals and their opinions to forward their own selfish motives. Clearly, some philosophers were truly convinced that belief in a perfect God necessarily leads to a sense of one's worthlessness, and to a complete severance of any relationship with God. However, these thinkers were joined by others who chose to exploit their opinions to serve their personal ends.



## **CHAPTER 7: Torah and Philosophy: The Focus of the Conflict**

### **PART I**

We will now examine the central points of conflict between the philosopher and the man of religion, touching upon the three major themes which we have previously discussed. We will delve into the Jewish position on these issues at a later stage. At this juncture we will attempt a brief sketch of the fundamental issues which separate the philosopher and the Jew.

### **Creation**

As we have alluded to earlier, the philosopher opposes a scriptural understanding of creation. The concept of creation contains numerous elements. At present, let us analyze the conflict between religion and philosophy from a single perspective: that of creation and will. To clarify this matter, we will contrast three options which lie before man as he grapples with the riddle of the world's origin.

**A.** Epicureanism and the concept of chance: The first approach views the world as something which exists purely by chance. This was the opinion of Epicurus, the Greek philosopher, whose name has since become synonymous with the denial of religion. This approach has undergone various reformulations with each passing generation, including our own. Epicurus did not deny the existence of the gods. Yet his belief in them was rendered virtually meaningless by his confidence in their absolute detachment from our world. Unlike Aristotle, Epicurus denied even the power of the gods over nature. In his view, the laws of nature are governed strictly by chance. Epicurean tendencies are discernible in those philosophical approaches, particularly in our modern times, which deny the existence of God altogether. In Jewish tradition, the term "epicureanism" (apikorsut) evolved into an expression for any deviation from the principles of Judaism. However, Jewish philosophy uses this term to describe the complete dependence upon chance as the final cause of existence.

**B.** Aristotelianism and the theory of necessity: At the opposite end of the spectrum we find Aristotle's approach, which was adopted by many medieval philosophers as well. Their attitude was expressed through the theory of "emanation." They viewed the world and all its components as stemming necessarily from God. This system may be compared to a mathematical theorem in which each statement stems from the original

axiom. Thus, the necessity of God's existence implies the requisite existence of the world.

C. Judaism and God's Will: Between these two positions of chance and necessity stands the biblical interpretation of creation. According to the scriptural position, the world's existence is not a chance occurrence, nor is it a logical necessity. When one pays attention to the functioning of our world, an intricate system of law and order becomes manifest and serves as evidence of the existence of a Creator. This is a fact which must be reckoned with. We refuse to accept the statement that all of creation is simply a chance occurrence. In our view, the world's existence stems directly from God's absolute freedom and lack of external constraints. We use the term "will" to describe this state of reality.

In contradistinction to the positions of both chance and necessity, we perceive creation as the act of God's free will. The world, then, is not a logical necessity: its existence is not essential but possible, the result of God's desire and command.

In describing the world as a logical necessity, we have used a mathematical model, but additional models abound, such as man's shadow, or the heat and light bestowed by the sun. During the Middle Ages a unique philosophical term was used to explain this relationship: emanation. Necessarily, the world emanates, or stems from God. The concept of emanation has parallels in Jewish religious thought. The Kabbala, for example, uses the term; however, the kabbalistic meaning differs from the medieval concept.

Our belief in the biblical concept of creation compels us to wage battle on two fronts simultaneously. Although the opposing positions are opponents themselves, necessity being the opposite of chance, they join forces to combat our position. We can present these two opinions with the help of two models. Let us look, for example, at the formation created by a handful of windblown specks of dust. Although the structure may appear meaningful, we know that it was formed by chance. In contrast, if we observe the formation made by scraps of metal through their exposure to a powerful magnet, it becomes clear that this structure was formed according to the scientific laws of magnetism. Thus we see two examples of formations, one of which implies chance, while the other denotes necessity.

Now let us examine a third example: man. How must we perceive the complex function of the human body? Many variations, both sophisticated and simplistic, exist on these two themes. Epicurus and his successors viewed the world and man as dust in the wind, a completely chance formation. The Aristotelians and their followers saw the same formations as "emanations" from a magnetic field.

Medieval Jewish philosophers upheld a different approach. They preferred to compare the world to the third model: will. They believed that the world is arranged according to a necessary system of laws, yet the very creation and existence of the world are dependent upon the will of the Creator.

Despite the vast gulf between them, the first two positions both leave man in an existential void. Whether we owe our existence to chance or to necessity, our lives are equally meaningless. Within these systems, we are no more than a tiny bolt lost in the vast machinery. We are but a shadow, irrelevant even to He who casts it. In both these philosophical systems, man's existence is incidental. Man is thrown into a world which, for him, is entirely devoid of meaning. Creation teaches us that both man and the world he lives in possess significance.

## **Prophecy**

The second focus of conflict is revelation. Does a dialogue between man and his Creator exist?

The fact that the Kuzari king rejects the philosopher's position has its roots in his personal history. He cannot accept this blasphemous opinion since his spiritual quest began with a form of prophecy: a dream. The philosopher's position is easily discounted by the Kuzari's dream. The dream convinces the king of God's abiding interest in his creations, as well as of the significance inherent in God's commandments. In other words, not all actions are equal before God.

However, the dream cannot explain everything. The real battlefield does not lie in a chance biographical occurrence. Rihai, therefore, transforms the discussion into a more general one. And indeed, the philosopher's final statement does refer to prophecy in general:

"And then it is possible that the spiritual Being will prophesy to you and impart mysteries through true dreams and accurate imaginings."

The philosophers and the prophets continually contend with each other. The philosopher may choose, quite simply, to deny the possibility of prophecy, as indeed many have done. This is the Naturalist position, which denies the existence of the metaphysical. Our philosopher is faced with two options, and he must make his choice:

**a)** He can remain in a completely natural world. Any phenomenon which hints at metaphysical realities is a mistake, an illusion, a symptom of disease or an imitation.

**b)** He may accept the possibility of a metaphysical reality; however, he will explain it in accordance with his theories, and claim that a prophetic state can in fact only be achieved through his own philosophical approach.

These are the two tactics that philosophers have traditionally used. Many philosophers, particularly "enlightened" ones, wished to deny any metaphysical religious experience. However, serious philosophers could not avoid the fact that many levels of experience exist, including metaphysical ones. They therefore felt the need to explain these phenomena in various ways. The first "enlightened" philosophers, 300 years ago, claimed that Yeshayahu the prophet was deceiving the people. Modern day "enlightened" philosophers attempt to explain his prophecies in other ways. He did not consciously deceive himself, they claim; however, psychological or sociological forces compelled him to operate under a delusion. Both of these represent the first option outlined above.

The Kuzari's philosopher chooses to respond in the latter manner. He attempts to be a pseudo-religious philosopher, continually striving to incorporate the religious elements of the human experience into his philosophy and to explain them in accordance with his views.

However, this explanation, too, does not do justice to the religious experience. Every religious experience is based on the human conviction of having encountered something, or rather someone, beyond the natural boundaries of existence. The philosopher may endeavor to explain such experiences with irreligious solutions; however, we remain faced with a universal reality which demands a deeper explanation. The pinnacle of this phenomenon is the prophetic experience. And it is here that the Kuzari feels justified in discounting the philosopher's opinion. The philosopher may take pride in many accomplishments, but he has not attained prophetic vision.

The discussion of prophecy will occupy us later. At this point we will only mention that it is essential to differentiate between two types of prophetic phenomena:

**a)** Prophecy which brings us the word of God, the commandment, the rule that obligates us. This is normative, legislative prophecy.

**b)** Prophecy which breaks the barriers of time, and brings us information about the future. This is an informative type of prophecy, which contains an additional element - the possibility of miracles, of surpassing the natural laws which govern our world. This experience may be termed "miraculous prophecy."

An important element in Rihal's philosophy is revealed through this debate. The discussion of prophecy touches upon one of the central themes of the conflict. Rihal

maintains that the test of truth exists beyond the horizon of our lives. This world is comparable to an exam whose results will only be known in the next world. However, this is a unique type of exam. It is an open-book exam. We may use any source we wish, we may discuss, argue, we are even allowed to copy. Although we copy, we will still receive a just grade, because the real challenge lies in choosing the correct model to emulate. In this exam, we express our various opinions regarding all the essential existential issues. And yet, is it possible to know anything about the real answers here and now?

Many people demand that I adhere to their system of laws and attempt to present me with a philosophy which teaches me what I must do and where my responsibilities lie. The philosopher does the same. I remain confused; I cannot differentiate between true and false prophets. Rihai maneuvers between the different approaches. In the discussion of normative prophecy, informative prophecy comes to our aid. The experiment which most effectively allows us to uncover the true prophet is connected to a vision of the future and the ability to surpass the laws of nature. These are the undeniable modes of divine inspiration.

However, those are not the only indications of truth. Wise men do not depend on miracles. In this issue Judaism takes one step further, toward an Existentialist view. We will not deal with this sphere at present.

## **PART II**

After having discussed creation and prophecy last week, let us now examine the third area of conflict between philosophy and religion.

### **Redemption: Man's Ultimate Destiny**

Whenever we examine a philosophical position, we must not content ourselves with only an analysis of its world view; we must first and foremost examine the understanding of man which each position entails. And indeed, the philosopher leads us into a discussion of this issue. What is man's goal and purpose? Toward what ends should man strive? All answers to this question are based upon what may be termed "philosophical anthropology": the perception of man's inner character.

This topic is intrinsically bound up with a more general issue: What is man? What is his destiny? The analysis of this issue is necessarily connected to our belief in the world to come, since man's destiny is defined through all the various dimensions of his

existence, both in this world and the next. Man does not conclude his role and his life in this world. Death does not snuff out our existence.

We will, with God's help, return to this issue at a later stage, though the philosopher addresses the point at the very outset of his presentation. In this speech, Rihal succeeds in defining yet another area which stands in the center of the conflict between the Jewish faith and the philosopher's creed. The philosopher presents a position which can be termed aristocratic. To conceptualize the philosopher's view, let us imagine an expensive electronic instrument, encased in a box and surrounded by a protective cardboard filling. To the philosopher, the expensive instrument represents an elite group of thinkers. They are the best of the human race, the pinnacle of creation, and they alone can hope to attain their full intellectual potential. The rest of humanity simply fulfills the function of the cardboard cushion, existing solely in order to protect the elite group from harm.

According to this position - one of the medieval forms of Aristotelian philosophy - man is not divided into flesh and spirit, as we find in the Bible, or into body and soul as the terminology that we commonly use puts it, but rather into body and soul on the one hand versus intellect on the other. Man's physical being includes both the biological functions, such as digestion and breathing, and the psychological functions, such as emotions and imagination. All these elements are considered part of the physical side of man which he shares with the animals. Both man and animal, given their physical essence, are mortal beings. The function unique to man is his intellect, the only element of his make-up which breaks through the barriers of the physical world. And every person, or almost every person, possesses the potential to develop his intellect to its fullest.

This latent intellectual power is termed the "material intellect" or the "potential intellect." When man studies and attains scientific and philosophical development, his potential intellect is actualized, and he thus becomes worthy of immortality. Philosophy did indeed speak of the immortality of the soul; however, it did not speak of the immortality of the individual soul. To the philosopher's credit, we must note that this cognitive theory was often linked to an emotional element as well.

We do not do justice to the philosopher's position if we ignore the theory upon which it is based, the theory of the "active intellect," which attempts to explain the process of knowledge acquisition. The theory of active intellect developed during the Middle Ages, based upon Aristotelian philosophy. Later this theory was abandoned and left to gather dust in the archives of ancient philosophy, albeit some remnants of it can still be discovered among modern thinkers. Thus, for example, William James spoke of a

collective "attic" of human memory and Jung developed the concept of a collective subconscious which affects all of humanity.

We have accused the philosopher of aristocracy, and indeed, he can easily be proven guilty of this offense. His philosophical approach saw man's humanity, and thus his destiny, in the search for truth, particularly the truths of science and metaphysics. This, he believed, was the highest ideal, the ultimate goal.

Thus, all other human functions, such as emotion or morality, became secondary. At the very most, they serve only to pave the way for the intellectual advancement of the elite group. Human society exists solely for the purpose of creating and maintaining the ivory towers which house the philosophers. Their satisfaction is gleaned from joining the society of Hermes, Socrates, Plato and Aristotle. The philosopher's ultimate ambition is to gain admission to this exclusive club. Attaining such a membership is loosely termed "God's will."

The philosopher sees man's cognitive achievements as central, and therefore a man who has taken an intellectual wrong turn has forfeited his life. By this token, it is possible to cynically remark that the philosophers have managed to disqualify themselves! The philosopher categorically rejects any person who is unfamiliar with the tenets which form the basis of his knowledge, such as the astronomical and cosmological theories of Aristotelian science. However, today, after Copernicus, it has become abundantly clear that these theories are completely false and would not pass scientific inspection at even a high school level. Undoubtedly it is not his fault; nonetheless, the philosopher was mistaken. This error teaches us that we must search for man's worth not necessarily in the context of his knowledge of scientific facts, but rather in other, more basic areas which are human and eternal and are not dependent upon his state during a particular period. In other words, faith cannot be seen as knowledge of entries in an encyclopaedia, or as a sum of cosmological and psychological information.

The philosopher claims that man need not concern himself with the form of his worship of God, nor with the content of his actions in general. However, this is not because God is merciful, but because the practical side of life is completely irrelevant to Him in the scheme of things. What is important is man's intellectual ability to understand the truth. It is essential that law exist - i.e., religion in the broadest sense of the word. What law? It makes no difference. Man can choose from any of the systems devised by the wise, and then he must be given the freedom to involve himself in philosophy, while his basic needs are fulfilled and while being protected from external dangers by the surrounding society.

## **Faust and the Philosopher**

Rav Yehuda Halevi contends with the philosopher at his best: the man who searches for a moral path of his own and finds happiness in his "membership" in a small intellectual elite. This is his only goal. Rihal accents what can be termed "the democratic problem." The philosopher's answer is not an appropriate answer for all of mankind, nor is it sufficient for all aspects of any individual. Can the philosopher make good his promise, and grant man eternal joy? And assuming this ability, can his philosophical ideals help build a viable society? The philosopher speaks not of a Godly religion but of a humanistic religion, constructed solely upon the basis of human consensus.

The humanist who denies the divinity of the Torah is the philosopher's successor; however, an additional successor appeared on the scene as well, one who believed that anything and everything is allowed. His ideal lies not in the development of humanity but rather in the here and now. His terms are different. "Build yourself a religion," he suggests, implying that no binding code of ethics exists. No prophet can assist in your quest, nor is there a Father in heaven who can direct you. You remain forever alone, and all paths that you choose are equally valid. We will discuss this topic further at a later stage.

"Faust," Goethe's masterpiece, describes the spiritual fate of the philosopher.

Faust is a man who saw his life's work in the search for the truth, from logic and mathematics, to the secrets of astronomy. However, when Faust reaches the pinnacle of his career and looks back at his biography, he reaches a breaking point. This is the philosopher's crisis. He discovers that despite the fact that science provides for a number of man's basic drives - intellectual curiosity, wonder at the world, the attempt to solve its riddles, and the discovery of the keys to technology - it cannot infuse his life with meaning. Faust finds no alternative, and wishes in desperation to take his own life. At this point Satan appears and offers Faust a deal: the fulfillment of all his desires in return for the possession of his immortal soul. Faust agrees.

The covenant with the devil is the danger facing humanity in modern times. Its most tragic and extreme expression was found in Nazism.

The basic assumption of this philosophical system was that when man reaches his intellectual summit, he will achieve happiness as well. The philosopher viewed happiness as a function of attaining intellectual truth. Among the many principles that find their expression in "Faust," special emphasis must be placed upon the recognition that man cannot achieve fulfillment through scientific knowledge. However, Faust's



chosen option was destructive. Replacing his failed attempts to reach satisfaction through the intellect, Faust joined forces with the devil.

### **Faust's Jewish Successor**

We can suggest a number of modern thinkers as possible successors of the medieval philosopher. At his most developed, the "philosopher" wishes to achieve spiritual perfection, and sees the fulfillment of his role in the development of all his latent spiritual potential. His ideal is the construction of an intellectual elite whose members adhere to a humanistic code of ethics.

As we have seen, the philosopher makes use of familiar religious terms. Yet, on the other hand, he speaks the conceptual language of the Middle Ages, which sounds distant and obscure to modern ears. Thus, for example, the philosopher speaks of "the active intellect," a medieval concept which we will not expand upon here. However, modern versions of the philosopher continually appear upon the intellectual scene. The best known modern form of this medieval philosophy is found, with certain changes, in Spinoza's work. The difference between our philosopher and Spinoza is comparable to the difference between Aristotle and Newton. Physical and astronomical principles have changed, and as a result, the whole picture of the world has altered as well. In general terms, however, the conflict between the Jew and the philosopher in the Kuzari can be translated into the conflict between the modern believer and Spinoza.

Let us look back and trace the development of this philosophy. It was nourished not only by Greek sources: Jewish sources contributed to its development as well, and that is the reason that Spinoza took religious terminology and clothed it in a new philosophical mantle. We must be aware of the fact that we frequently meet such philosophers, whose language is almost religious, or pseudo-religious, yet at its core is fundamentally different from our religion. This ambiguity is the source of mistakes and problems in understanding Spinoza's approach. In any case, the problems which we have brought to light still exist: Both in Spinoza's philosophy and that of the medieval philosopher, man is alone, God is too great to possess an interest in him, and therefore no meaningful dialogue or relationship between Man and his Creator can exist.

## **CHAPTER 8: Intentions and Actions**

### **PART I: The Conflict**

Having reviewed the central components of the philosopher's position we must stress that our quarrel with him is not merely of a specific nature; its scope is, in fact, much larger. This conflict demonstrates the clash between he who searches for the keys to the mystery of life in religious sources and he who seeks them in human wisdom and pure philosophy.

This conflict is not necessitated by any inherent discordance between religion and philosophy. In fact, history displays an impressive array of religious philosophers who endeavored to bridge the gap between the two worlds and inhabit both simultaneously. Philo, the Alexandrian Jew who maintained this position, initiated the union between the Bible and Greek philosophy. This fruitful marriage yielded many children. The most prominent and successful among these - albeit not the eldest - was the Rambam. Rihal was well acquainted with a number of these offspring. Yet he staunchly refused to accept the synthesis, and intentionally strove to sharpen the conflict. Thus Rihal became the prototype of the thinker who rejects the tenets of Greek philosophy out of hand.

Rihal's refusal to concede to the philosopher's position is understandable. We have amply demonstrated the philosopher's deliberate misuse of religious terminology. However, Rihal had still more cause for skepticism. On the surface, the philosopher's position is able to claim superiority on the basis of its proven dependence upon logic alone. In reality, however, this assertion is far from true. Each and every philosopher constructs his position not only upon the tenets of formal thought and empirical evidence, but also upon prior assumptions which stem from his education, his culture, and even his language. The rational Aristotelian philosopher is no exception, and remains bound not only by his pagan milieu but also by his personal fears and desires, and his own individual brand of idolatry.

### **Which Road Will Lead to Happiness?**

The greatest defect in the philosopher's position, however, lies not in what it contains but rather in what it lacks. The philosopher's approach does not resolve the fundamental problems whose solutions must guide man throughout his life. This complaint is raised by the Kuzari king, who appears here as an advocate of religion. His response returns us to the point of origin, the dream, and thus to the laconic statement, "Your intentions

are acceptable; however, your actions are not." This is the source of the conflict between the philosopher and the proponent of religion. The king notes that although the philosopher is working towards an apparently worthy end, he lacks any standard by which to gauge the ultimate worth of man's actions.

Let us demonstrate our criticism of the philosopher through an analysis of one of the central moral commandments, "Thou shalt not kill." Despite the existence of certain exceptions, such as cases of self-defense, war, and perhaps even capital punishment, "Thou shalt not kill" is and remains an absolute prohibition. Yet, does the philosopher's approach imply this as well?

This problem is expressed in the dilemma faced by one of the classic figures of world literature, Raskolnikov, the hero of Dostoyevsky's "Crime and Punishment." Raskolnikov ardently desired intellectual fulfillment. Were we to translate Dostoyevsky's work into the philosopher's terms, we would say that Raskolnikov desired to merge with the "active intellect." However, he meets with numerous obstacles on his way. His social and economic realities seem to smother and restrain him, and his dream seems eternally out of reach. Raskolnikov's desires are hardly akin to those of coarse, unbridled people. He is, in fact, a model of sensitivity and refinement. And yet, his goal continually eludes him. He faces a difficult dilemma, the dilemma of a man who feels that he is destined for greatness but lacks the means to fulfill that destiny. And behold, a rich old woman, whose money could aid the achievement of his lofty goals, appears in his path. To lay hands upon this money, Raskolnikov murders the old woman.

Without unraveling the sequence of Dostoyevsky's plot, let us demand an honest and courageous answer of the philosopher: Why should Raskolnikov refrain from murdering the old woman? Would not your own court acquit Raskolnikov? Would you not grant him permission, before the fact, to commit the murder?

Jewish thought differs sharply from the attitude of the philosopher. Judaism demands that if we choose the Jewish path, we must alter our viewpoint and analyze actions from a different perspective: we must evaluate all behavior not only from our own subjective viewpoint, but also from an objective stance. The philosopher instructs each person to measure the worth of his actions in accordance with their effectiveness in the promotion of his goals. The only question one needs to ask is: "Do these actions help me attain self-actualization?" Judaism suggests that we ask another question: "Would God approve of my behavior?"

God judges us according to our actions, not according to our intentions or even our achievements. God rewards us for our efforts, not our successes. Judaism finds Raskolnikov guilty!

Judaism presents us with a dual system of ethics. On the one hand, we face a system of goals, which includes the worthy aim of Torah scholarship. This is the Jewish parallel to the philosopher's creed. On the other hand, to sanction the destruction of all that lies in our path in pursuit of this goal, is, from a religious perspective, patently absurd. Judaism is based upon a harmonious interaction between the fear of sin and the love of wisdom. While conceding that scholarship constitutes a religious ideal, Judaism maintains that an ignorant boor who nevertheless withstands temptation to sin, or who sacrifices his life for the sake of his God, reaps the rewards of the World to Come alongside the scholar who has arrived at the pinnacle of intellectual achievement and self-actualization. Righteous actions can have as profound an effect as the search for abstract truth.

### **Religion and Idolatry: Defining the Boundaries**

At this point the philosopher fights his battles not with one particular religion but rather with all religions at once. This fact brings up a significant question: Does a "coalition" in fact exist between the various religions?

I do not intend to define the attitudes of Jewish law to other religions at this point. This is an important issue, and to do it justice would demand a much broader forum. However, we must stress that such an automatic coalition certainly does not exist. While we respect the religious positions and phenomena of other nations, we do not consider ourselves to be covenanted members of the same society. Ironically, Rihai's words teach us something negative about religion in general. We discover that religion may in fact sink to the level of idolatry, while outwardly maintaining the appearance of monotheism.

What is idolatry? The category is difficult to define and we will explore the concept in greater depth at a later stage. At this juncture we will attempt to characterize idolatry through a single component of its many-faceted countenance. Idolatry contains a well-hidden trap which is brought to the surface through the problem of intention versus action epitomized by the Kuzari's dream. On the one hand, there exists within man - perhaps even in every man - an honest desire to worship God. This positive intention is universal. Yet on the other hand, man often actively expresses this desire through the worship of other objects. He worships people, inanimate objects, and often pays obeisance to modes of behavior worthy of his disgust, such as drunkenness, harlotry, drug abuse and human sacrifice. Oftentimes he worships himself, either covertly or openly. His religious intentions are laudable, yet his actual conduct leaves much to be desired. This behavior is, in fact, idolatry.

Now the words of the angel in the king's dream appears before us with their full intensity. Not only are philosophical intentions alone insufficient; religious intentions, as well, may fall short of the mark. Once a religious commitment has been made, we must still question whether a particular practice is capable of fully expressing the religious sentiment. In other words, we must continually ask ourselves whether our actions are acceptable in God's eyes. We cannot ignore the fact that the "Ayatollah" who sends his flock to certain death, and the cult leaders who are willing to commit murder, are motivated by "good intentions." They are clearly convinced of the divine character of their mission. And yet this internal conviction alone will not suffice. True, there always have been hypocrites who abused the trust of their followers in order to conquer, plunder or otherwise gain ascendancy under a religious guise. Yet history overflows with examples of activities and movements motivated only by the purest of intentions, which ultimately remained glaringly empty of religious worth. Good intentions are not enough. Intentions and actions constitute two dimensions which must come into play in any analysis of man's religious behavior.

## **PART II: Jewish Reckoning**

Although Rihāl calls his work "a defence of the despised religion," he does not engage in apologetics. His unapologetic stance forces us to judge not only others, but ourselves as well. In his formulation of the philosopher's position, Rihāl charges us with the mission of self-examination. Although the events depicted in his book take place a few hundred years prior to the book's composition, Rihāl hints at the tumultuous period in which the book was written: the Crusades, waged for the sake of the Church, revealed the emptiness and poverty of the religion which motivated them. In this matter, the humanistic philosopher expresses a justified criticism of religion. He asserts that "the doctrine of the philosophers does not cause the killing of human beings, since their goal lies in the intellect."

Paradoxically, the Kuzari king cites religious wars as a reason for his preference of the man of religion over the philosopher. Is this the opinion of R. Yehuda Halevi as well? The answer is unclear. We would surmise that the king's words do not represent Rihāl's true opinion. And indeed, according to the literary device employed in the book, only the Jewish representative reflects Judaism's views. This is not true of the king's explanations, however "positive" they may be. This distinction remains intact even after his conversion to Judaism and certainly exists before his first meeting with the "chaver" (the Jewish representative).

The Kuzari's claim must be understood differently. If we compare the philosopher with the proponent of religion, we find that despite the philosopher's sophistication and refinement, the religious man surpasses him in one basic area. The religious representative is not merely presenting an intellectual alternative to the philosopher. He is championing a completely different way of life. He is so convinced of its supremacy that he is willing to kill or to be killed for it. To be sure, it is important to stress that the Kuzari is not advocating warfare, but rather praising the unwavering faith and internal conviction which foster the willingness to make sacrifices. Thus, a previously mentioned point is relevant here too: The religious man's response must be acceptable to God! The small seed of truth in the Kuzari's claim germinates and comes to fruition through the principle of "kiddush Hashem" (sanctification of God's name through self-sacrifice). True faith finds its expression in the willingness to give up one's life, as well as on every other level of existence. Religion can often lead to fanaticism and the persecution of those whose opinion differ from one's own. Judaism directs us, instead, toward idealism: the readiness to stand by our faith in the face of persecution. This does not, of course, mean that we must seek out suffering. In fact, we are commanded to save the persecuted, including ourselves, even through such drastic means as brute force and warfare. However, we may never take on the role of the persecutor.

The Kuzari king makes no mention of war, and the issue could easily have been ignored. Perhaps the fact that Rihai has the philosopher bring up the question of warfare points to some implied criticism of religion. There are wars which are justified. However, here the representative of religion is confronted by the censure of the humanist: How is it that you have led the world through so many horrific wars in the name of religion? A number of movements developed in the wake of this trenchant criticism of religion, during the Enlightenment and at the height of the socialist struggle - movements which attempted to destroy religion and build a new world upon its ruins. Today we can look back and analyze these movements. At the end of the twentieth century we may safely state that the philosopher's vision has become a reality. His ambition to create a religion of the intellect has come to pass in the modern world. These approaches were based upon the creation of a man bereft of his God. They invented a new religion and made use of their human wisdom to conceive of a world in which there would be no bloodshed, because "their goal is the intellect." Yet these groups, who stopped their ears against the heavenly call and replaced it with human wisdom and emotion, sowed the seeds of two movements: Nazism on the one hand and Communism on the other. The secular wars waged by these groups, both internally and externally, make the religious wars of previous periods look like child's play.

Not all movements and revolutions are alike, of course; some contain positive elements. For example, the French Revolution and even part of the socialist struggle had "acceptable intentions." They desired the utmost development of the human intellect and they honestly wished to construct a new world, stripped clean of negative religious influence. Many Jews enthusiastically endorsed these movements. During the French Revolution, they waved the tri-colored flag and literally transformed their Torah scrolls into drums with which to herald the new age. During the Russian Revolution, many Jews raised the red flag and joyously transformed their synagogues into Communist meeting houses. Today, it is impossible to view these attempts without an awareness of their ultimate results. The French Revolution ended in terror, and the Russian Revolution in gulags and concentration camps, mass murders, exiles, destruction and irretrievable loss. In contrast to these movements, Nazism made a conscious attempt to return to the age of idolatry. Nazism saw its doctrine as a rebellion against the morality of Judaism and thus against religious morality as a whole. Therefore, the philosopher's opinions need correction, since reality has proved much more complex than he anticipated. Rihal's veiled criticism of religion remains valid; however, the philosopher's promise of hope has failed us as well. Man took the reins into his own hands and invented a religion; yet he fared no better, and actually much worse, than the proponents of religion

### **Humaneness and Humanism**

Let us stop for a moment and conduct a Jewish analysis of the conflict between religion and the secular humanist approach. Since the dawn of time, man has lived under tragic circumstances. We must eternally grapple both with heresy and idolatry, while remaining aware of the fact that wars often stem from idolatry hidden behind a mask of monotheism. The Torah attempts to help us navigate between these two dangers: heresy and idolatry.

The Torah's ideal is humane. However, humanity has two meanings. The Torah champions humaneness, not humanism. Allow me to explain. We often speak of the difference between a realistic and a humane, humanistic, approach. Etymologically, the difference between the two is comparable to the contrast between the Talmudic concepts of "cheftza" (object) and "gavra" (person). The realist approach deals with objects. The humanist approach involves itself with man and his human responses to reality. While realist studies focus on facts, humanist studies teach that there are things which resist scientific demonstration, but find expression in the human spirit. Beyond the facts lie the values. We are well aware that values are constantly disputed. When educating the next generation, we attempt to transmit all the factual information we possess, proffering the

benefit of our scientific and technological knowledge, so that our children need not start at the beginning. Similarly, we feel a responsibility to instill in them the values which guide us, in order to prevent a repetition of the mistakes of the past. Despite the continual debate over values, we feel the need to pass them on. We believe in their worth and must therefore bequeath them to the coming generations.

The Torah instructs us in humaneness, not humanism. This trait is one of the defining characteristics of every truly religious person. One who is guided by respect and love for his fellow man, believing that every person, no matter how badly misled or downtrodden, was created in God's image, is humane. To him, the value of human life is non-negotiable and unquantifiable.

The humanist, in the philosophical sense of the word, is a person who believes that these values stem from man and not from God. The humanist believes in man as the ultimate lawmaker, the final arbiter of ethical behavior. The religious person refuses to accept this premise. While often agreeing with the humanist regarding the content of his values, he disagrees about their origin. The source of humane behavior is not human; it is Divine.

We may choose between two possible approaches to humanism. There are those who dismiss it entirely, based upon its secular character. Rav Kook, in contrast to this position, stresses the idea that humanism's ultimate source is Divine although its proponents may be unaware of the fact. Using a kabbalistic model, Rav Kook explains that two types of light exist: the "surrounding radiance," which stems from without and is the light of Revelation, and the "internal radiance" which wells up inside of man himself. The ideal is to be found in the balance between these two spiritual forces.

The first approach was expressed by Rav Yaakov Krantz, the "Maggid (storyteller) of Dubno," through a parable which I will relate with some slight alterations.

Two neighbors were blessed with daughters at the same time. One man was a shoemaker by profession and extremely poor. The other was a thief, and strange as it may seem, despite his profession he was equally poverty-stricken. They would often lament their fate and discuss ways to help their daughters when they were to reach marriageable age. A friend advised them to save money, and the shoemaker took his advice. He bore a hole in a crate, locked it up, and would daily place a penny inside this safe. In those days, a long period of such savings would reap a goodly sum.

At the wedding of the shoemaker's daughter, the father of the bride and his neighbor the thief again discussed money matters. "How did you manage it?" inquired the thief.



"I locked up a safe and placed pennies in it day after day," responded the shoemaker. "And why did you not do the same?"

"I, who have no fear of other people's locks - why should I fear a lock of my own?" replied the thief.

Morality and law are the "locks" which govern man's behavior. A person who accepts the Torah believes that there are God-given "locks" in this world. The humanist maintains that all the locks are man-made.

The Maggid's story demonstrates the weakness inherent in this position. If man has locked the safe, he can just as easily unlock it. He can always break his promise, crack his own safe. We are faced with different people of various opinions: a liberal and a Nazi, a terrorist and a philanthropist, etc. How may one differentiate between the different locks if one lacks an objective yardstick?

Let us be specific. I refer to a lock, not a policeman. The religious Jew does not accept the Torah's rules merely out of a fear of punishment. This is a low level, albeit an important one. The believer accepts the yoke of heaven out of the conviction that it links him to Divine, not human, truth and goodness.

Rav Kook wishes to bring us to a wider perception of the problem. Although we disagree with the underlying philosophy of the humanist, we can still be party to many of his opinions. Until now we have spoken of cases where man's intentions were acceptable, while his actions were not. Sometimes, the opposite is true. Man's intentions are not acceptable and yet his actions are! This is possible since man is not always aware of the true motives behind his actions. Unconscious motives, composed of a higher and better mettle than man himself recognizes, exist nonetheless.

Here we discover one of the secrets of Rav Kook's philosophy which also found expression in various ways throughout Chassidic traditions. Freud teaches us that when we delve into man's subconscious, we discover egoistic motives and uncontrolled passions. The experience can be compared to that of entering a clean and beautifully kept room, only to discover dirt and dust under the rug. While Rav Kook may agree with this picture, he would claim that one had not dug deep enough. Under the carpet and the dust, beneath the foundations of the house, a wellspring of pure water flows. The unconscious contains positive elements as well as negative, demonstrating that each person is subconsciously connected to the sublime. In every moral and humane position, Godly footprints can be found, despite man's attempts to convince us otherwise.

We believe that modern human values stem from the biblical "revolution" and are a direct result of the original prophetic force. This force has not yet succeeded in fully

changing the face of humanity. Yet, we must be aware that modern society which speaks loftily of basic human values was built on the foundations of that elemental force. The biblical tradition, despite the dimming of its radiance, has had a decisive influence upon human development and has in many senses fashioned Western society which supposedly possesses the ideals of humanism.

## CHAPTER 9: THE DREAM AS PARABLE

As we have previously noted, the initial passages of the Kuzari emphasize the division between philosophy and religion regarding three central issues (I: 4):

- A. The concept of creation;
- B. The doctrine of prophecy, and such relevant questions as the nature of God's knowledge of man, the divinity of the Torah, and man's dialogue with his Maker;
- C. The anticipation of individual and collective redemption.

The legend which forms the underpinnings of the book compels the philosopher, albeit indirectly, to address the issue of prophecy. At this juncture the discussion revolves around the lowest level of prophecy, the dream. Yet despite its drab performance in comparison to the drama of a split sea or the Sinai revelation, the prophetic dream nonetheless successfully lures us towards the mystique of the supernatural. We are granted a glimpse of realities far too distant in time or space to be accessible through our natural senses.

The compelling nature of the prophetic dream leads to a discussion of the reliability of dreams and thus into the complex field of parapsychology. This problematic "science" has become the focus of a continual controversy. Many proponents of the field expected the eventual evolution of parapsychology into a legitimate channel for the scientific analysis of supernatural phenomena. Yet despite numerous startling advances and breakthroughs, parapsychology is and will remain a controversial and questionable science. We will return to this topic when we begin our discussion of the soul, and will treat it to the degree that the constraints of this forum will allow. At this point, however, we will stress a different aspect of the dream.

We have previously named Spinoza as a modern, sophisticated version of the Aristotelian philosopher. And indeed, Spinoza did champion a natural, physical view of the world. He perceived nature, and thus science as well, as the sole realities. All other experiences were, in his opinion, either fraud, willful self-deception, or delusions. By divulging the contents of his dream, the Kuzari king in effect compels us to confront the supernatural. However, the confrontation alone will not suffice. The Kuzari then points out the complete independence of the selfsame supernatural phenomenon from the development of those intellectual faculties lauded by the philosopher. To the philosopher's chagrin, the Kuzari maintains that despite its significant advances elsewhere, philosophy has consistently failed to penetrate the deeper levels of our reality which occasionally surface by dint of supernatural phenomena such as the prophetic dream.

This discussion takes place against the backdrop of the autobiographical motif of the Kuzari, who was himself motivated to embark upon his spiritual quest by a dream. A deeper look at the conflict reveals that we, as Jews, stand between the two viewpoints. Here, too, we must search out the golden mean between two dangerous and faulty exaggerations. The intellect is not the sole yardstick of reality, yet neither may we allow the supernatural to blot out the natural and intellectual. The Kuzari does not passively accept the sovereignty of the supernatural. Rather, he attempts to find its place alongside the natural and intellectual realities. This is an accurate reflection of the Torah's approach as well.

We can express this attitude with the aid of a classic example from the Talmud: the story of Achnai's oven (see Babylonian Talmud, Bava Metzia 59a-b):

Rabbi Eliezer declares it ritually pure and the sages declare it ritually impure.

It has been taught: "On that day, Rabbi Eliezer used all the arguments in the world, but they did not accept them from him. He said to them: 'If the Halakha is in accordance with me, let this carob tree prove it.' The carob tree was uprooted from its place one hundred cubits - and some say four hundred cubits. They said to him: 'One does not bring proof from a carob tree.' He then said to them: 'If the Halakha is in accordance with me, let the channel of water prove it.' The channel of water turned backward. They said to him: 'One does not bring proof from a channel of water.' He then said to them: 'If the Halakha is in accordance with me, let the walls of the House of Study prove it.' The walls of the House of Study leaned to fall. Rabbi Yehoshua rebuked them, and said to them: 'If Talmudic sages argue with one another about the Halakha, what affair is it of yours?' They did not fall, out of respect for Rabbi Yehoshua; but they did not straighten, out of respect for Rabbi Eliezer, and they still remain leaning. He then said to them: 'If the Halakha is in accordance with me, let it be proved from Heaven.' A Heavenly voice went forth and said: 'Why are you disputing with Rabbi Eliezer, for the Halakha is in accordance with him everywhere?' Rabbi Yehoshua rose to his feet and said: 'It is not in Heaven.'"

### **What does "It is not in Heaven" mean?**

Rabbi Yirmeya said: That the Torah was already given on Mount Sinai, and we do not pay attention to a Heavenly voice, for You already wrote in the Torah at Mount Sinai: "After the majority to incline."

Rabbi Natan met Elijah and said to him: "What did the Holy One, blessed be He, do at that time?" He said to him: "He smiled and said: 'My sons have defeated Me, My sons have defeated Me.'"

This story vividly portrays the conflict between the supernatural, represented by Rabbi Eliezer, and the human intellect, represented by Rabbi Yehoshua. The Talmud's decision to reject the authority of the "bat kol" (supernatural voice) teaches us that in some areas the supernatural does not hold sway. The Torah itself contains the synthesis between "Torah from heaven" ("Torah min ha-shamayim") and "it is not in heaven" ("lo ba-shamayim he"). We will make do with this limited analysis of the question, with the reservation that Rihal himself explains the cited Talmudic passages in another way.

Thus we discover that we are not faced merely with a choice between good and evil. Our alternatives are far more complex. We are indeed confronted by two options, but we must search for the third possibility: the golden mean, the synthesis between two extreme positions.

We disagree with the perception that all phenomena can be explained through natural means. However, we must exercise caution in our relationship with the supernatural. We must be on guard against the illusions and deceptions which are part and parcel of the supernatural revelation. The supernatural has caused grave mistakes, and cruel and evil actions have repeatedly been performed in its name.

### **The Dream: A Starting Point**

The book of the Kuzari is built around the encounter with the supernatural, yet the literary framework of the book takes the form of a rational argument. In the "Epistle of Repentance" of R. Chasdai ibn Shaprut, which also recounts this legend, the Kuzari king reveals that the dream was not simply a starting point; rather, it led him to the resolution of his spiritual conflict. The dream sufficed to convince the king that Judaism holds the keys to divine truth. Thus, the argument served merely as a useful literary vehicle. In contrast, Rihal's literary structure positions the dream as the point of departure, the initial impetus for a spiritual quest.

Let us examine a Talmudic passage which can serve as a fascinating background for our discussion. In Tractate Yevamot 24b, R. Nechemia argues with the Sages regarding the status of converts whose motives were impure, such as the converts of Mordechai and Esther's day, who converted out of fear, or the converts of King Solomon's period, whose motive for conversion was, in our Rabbis' words, "to join the company of kings." R. Nechemia states that "converts for lust, converts motivated by dreams, and the

converts of Mordechai and Esther's day - are invalid converts." Putting aside the argument, let us focus on R. Nechemia's example of an insincere conversion: he includes "converts motivated by dreams" in this category. A surprising statement indeed! If the Kuzari was inspired to convert by his dream, according to Rabbi Nechemia he joins the ranks of questionable converts! Although the Halakha (Jewish law) sides with the Rabbis' approach, stating that all the above-mentioned groups are considered fully-fledged converts, the distinction between the various types of converts remains significant. The Talmud wisely warns us to be wary of such "miraculous conversions." In contrast, Christian legend glorifies Constantine, the Emperor of Rome, who converted to Christianity after dreaming that the cross marched before his conquering army. Historians tend to doubt that the dream was Constantine's sole motivation, and they point out various political and economic interests which could easily have motivated him as well. The Halakha takes a different approach. It demands that the dream be accepted only after passing through the sieve of the intellect. In other words, while we must recognize the existence of the supernatural, we must be wary of heedlessly fulfilling its directives. The supernatural light must pass through the prism of the intellect, which in turn is influenced by Halakha. False prophets also speak in the name of supernatural revelations, and yet we must resist their call. In its conflict with Christianity, Judaism has consistently maintained that miracles could not induce a change in its views.

The classical Jewish philosophers claimed that the difference between miracles and prophecy is reflected in the revelation at Mount Sinai. The extraordinary events were indeed supernatural; however, our confidence in the divinity of our tradition stems not from the miraculous aspects of the event but rather from the actual giving of the Torah.

Perhaps the discussion of the dream can be viewed as a literary foreshadowing of the book, since its premise is, in fact, divine revelation. However, Rihal maintains that the divinity of the Torah is based upon the historic revelation to the nation as a whole, and not upon the prophetic dream of the individual. We must also note that Rihal is under no obligation to identify with every position expressed by the Kuzari. Even at those points where the Kuzari brilliantly defends Torah or Jewish nationalism, the differences between the Kuzari's position and that of the "chaver" (Jewish representative) can be radical, as we shall see.

The final words in this segment are significant indeed: "The Divine holds a different secret than the philosopher." A similar statement is found, surprisingly, in one of the gems of world literature. When Hamlet discovers the mysteries of the supernatural

encounter, he informs Horatio: "There are more things in heaven and earth ... than are dreamt of in your philosophy" (I: v).

## **CHAPTER 10: JUDAISM: WELLSPRING OF MONOTHEISTIC RELIGIONS**

As we have seen, Rihāl made use of the dream sequence found in R. Hasdai ibn Shaprut's epistle; however, he altered and weakened it somewhat by removing the recognition of the truth of Judaism from within the dream itself. For Rihāl, the dream simply provides the impetus for the philosophical quest. The fateful decision is reached at a later stage, following considerable debate and discussion. The Kuzari does not join the ranks of the Jews through ignorance of other options; rather, he embraces Judaism after an analysis and subsequent rejection of those options.

At this point, a great paradox becomes apparent. Judaism is perceived as a provincial, tribal religion, puny and insignificant. The natural tendency is to turn initially to the representatives of the "great religions." In addition, Judaism is seen through the eyes of an entrenched and socially sanctioned prejudice. And yet, it is from within this dismal picture that the sovereignty of Judaism becomes manifest. Through the addresses of the Gentile representatives, the Kuzari discovers Judaism at the root of all religions. Any religion which speaks of a relationship between man and his Maker, champions the doctrine of creation, and claims that life is imbued with meaning, locates its source in Judaism. This category often includes religions which adamantly oppose all things Jewish and actively wage war against the Jews. Their animosity notwithstanding, they draw their essence from Jewish roots. The attitudes of Islam and Christianity towards Judaism were long characterized by violent conflict and persecution. These reactions are typical of children rebelling against their parents. And despite their hostility, at times even while in the grips of this oedipal struggle, they are forced, to some extent, to acknowledge their Jewish parentage.

"The Kuzari" opens two avenues before us. Our first option is philosophical, a path based solely upon human intellect and man's search for the Divine. The alternate course begins with prophecy, or God's approach towards man. With this, a classic system of ideas was born: creation, knowledge of God, revelation, redemption. These ideas, universally accepted today in various cultures and tongues, were born of the Israelite revolution. Every person whose consciousness contains these elements, be it in complete or partial form, draws on the sources of Judaism, either consciously or unconsciously. Every position which is based upon the relationship between God and man - this being



what Rihāl terms "the Divine essence" - returns us in some form to the sources of Judaism and to the historic encounter between God and the Jewish people.

We have attempted to sharpen Rihāl's claim and to prove that even the words of the philosopher could not have evolved into the form they take in "The Kuzari" without Jewish influence. This merger between Jewish ideas and the philosopher's position was formulated long before the advent of Christianity and Islam.

### **The Christian Position**

To understand the gateway to Judaism that swung open before the Kuzari king, we must first analyze the opinions of the Christian scholar. However, we will take the liberty of altering his words slightly; we will explain this change at a later stage. Let us now read the "corrected" version of the Christian position.

"Then he called one of the Christian wise men and asked about his doctrine and his actions, and the scholar replied:

'The falseness of other religions: They do not have witnesses, whereas [the Jews] have witnesses. God calls out against the other religions and demands of them to show their proofs. (Isaiah 43: 9; 44: 8)

'The history of China: I only believe those histories whose witnesses are willing to be killed. (Who is more reliable in our eyes, Moses or China?)

'Mohammed has no authority. It would be necessary, therefore, that his claims be weighty indeed, since their validity stems solely from their own strength. Well, and what does he say? That we must believe in him.

'Who gives witness for Mohammed? He himself ... the essence of a witness is that he be present at all times and in all places; and he is forsaken and alone ...

'I do not expect Mohammed's case to be closed simply based upon his vague utterances, which could be interpreted in mystical and secret ways, but rather upon the basis of those clear statements which he has made, such as his concept of heaven. It is in these areas that his absurdity is apparent. And therefore, we must not interpret his unclear messages as mystical secrets, since those opinions which he states clearly are obviously ridiculous.

'This is not the case with the Holy Scriptures. I agree that they contain some vague and unclear passages which equal some of Mohammed's cryptic statements in their obscurity. However, they contain beautifully clear passages, and prophecies which

have materialized, as well. Any person can be a Mohammed, since he performed no miracles and no prophecy heralded his appearance.

'The idolatrous religions have no basis... the bases of the Muslim religion are the Koran and Mohammed, but this prophet who is destined to be the world's salvation, have any prophesied his coming? What proof has he which could not be adopted by anyone who chose to become a self-ordained prophet? What miracles has he performed, according to his own claim? What secrets has he disclosed, according to the tradition held by his followers? What morality, and what lofty felicity?

'The Jewish religion must be viewed differently, through the tradition of the Holy Scriptures and the tradition of the Jewish people... [which are] a wondrous basis for this religion... this is the most ancient and reliable book in the world.

'It is an indisputable fact, that while all the philosophers are divided into various sects, in a hidden corner of the globe there are people, children of the oldest race, who claim that all others are mistaken, and that God has revealed His truth to them alone, a nation which will exist forever on this earth. And indeed, all other sects have disappeared, while this nation continues to exist without a break for the last four thousand years... they state that it is their tradition that man has degenerated and exchanged his closeness with God for a complete separation, but that God has promised to redeem him...

'Thus I see a wealth of religions in many places and in all times; however, they possess no moral code which can charm me, and no proofs which may convince me. I therefore equally reject both the religion of Mohammed and of China, as well as the religions of ancient Rome and of Egypt, for the single reason that since none of them is more convincing than the others, and none hold absolute proofs for their superiority, the intellect cannot tend towards one over the others.

'Yet while I gaze at this ever-changing, unstable and strange panorama of ethics and faiths over the various periods of time, I find, in a hidden corner of the world, a unique nation, separate from all the other nations of the world, the oldest of them all, a nation whose history precedes that of the most ancient of the other nations by many hundreds of years.

'This great nation appears before me. Its origin lies in one man, who worshipped one God, and it functions according to a constitution which this man claims to have received from his God. The members of this nation claim that they are the sole recipients of God's secrets; that all men are depraved, and God withheld his grace from them; that they are all enslaved to their physical passions and their heart's

desires; and that here lies the source of all those strange perversions and all those incessant changes which forever take place both in religions and in customs, while the members of this nation do not budge an inch from their lifestyle; however, God will not abandon the other nations in darkness forever and a redeemer will come for all of them.

'The fact of this nation's existence amazes me, and it seems to me worthy of consideration. I have examined this constitution which they claim to have received from God and it is to my mind a wondrous constitution. It is the first constitution, to the extent that even before the word "constitution" was known to the Greeks, almost a thousand years had passed since this nation received their constitution, which they incessantly kept...

'The Jewish religion first attracts my attention because of the many wondrous and unique elements which it contains.

'First of all, it is a nation composed entirely of brothers... they create a great state from one family... it is unique also in its constant duration... the constitution which governs them is both the most ancient and the most sophisticated, and the only one ever to be kept with such constancy... yet this constitution is the most severe and rigorous of constitutions, in all things touching upon their religious ceremony; so that this nation will not forget their obligations... it is therefore wondrous and amazing that it was kept so regularly for so many years, by a nation so impatient as that one, while all other nations regularly change their laws, although theirs are infinitely easier to keep [than the Jewish law].

'When the creation of the world was fast becoming a fading memory, God sent a single historian and made an entire nation responsible for the preservation of this book, so that the most reliable history book be preserved, and in order that people may learn from it the thing which is so elemental and which cannot be gleaned from any other source.'"

Those words, which are clearly reminiscent of the opinion of the Christian representative in the book of the Kuzari, are authentic quotes from one of the leading Christian thinkers of the seventeenth century, the French philosopher Blaise Pascal (1623-1662). As the reader will note, some interesting differences exist between the words of the Kuzari's Christian and the words of Pascal (such as China instead of India); however, the overall content is strikingly similar.

Pascal's work mirrors Rihal in many ways. It is particularly interesting to note the parallels between the two regarding the differences between the God of the philosophers

and the God of the adherents of religion. The God of the philosophers serves as the anchor upon which all the eternal truths are based; however, these produce but a barren and useless knowledge, in Pascal's view. Not so the faith in the "God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

To be sure, Pascal felt certain that Christianity alone understood Scripture correctly. He considered the God of the Jews to be the God of providence, and the God of the Christians to be the God of love and mercy. Despite this love and mercy, we still find the dark side of Christian instruction in Pascal. As we will see later, Pascal attempts to prove that Jesus is the Messiah through the suffering of the Jews. Here we are interested only in one of the elements of his presentation, his sense of the Jewish roots which nourish his position. This is an honest and upright admission and as such is worthy of our respect.

Were the world unaware of the vast time gap between the two, we would certainly be witness to various attempts to prove Rihal's influence upon Pascal. The parallels are so striking that one could well imagine the existence of a literary debt owed by Pascal. In fact, Prof. Shlomo Pines has suggested that the parallels found in the passage from Hamlet quoted earlier are equally surprising and perhaps hint at a literary connection between the two works. This theory runs into an obstacle in the fact that the Kuzari was only translated into Latin at a much later stage. Despite this, it is possible that some sort of oral tradition existed that was transmitted through forcibly converted Jews. It seems to me that these parallels are examples of an influence which is not literary but rather a reflection of the sparks of Rihal's soul hovering over philosophical development. This idea may perhaps be somewhat too mystical, but then again - why not?

### **Jewish Roots: Who bears them witness?**

Two types of evidence point to Judaism's unique status in the world. The book of the Kuzari brings positive testimony in the form of independent discourse on the part of members of the various religions. On the other hand, we can easily locate evidence for the source of Judaism's position within the antagonism of her enemies. Thus the modern Haman, chief persecutor of the Jews, termed the conscience a "Jewish invention." Human morality in general cannot be understood without the Scriptures. Nazism pointed its finger at the Jewish source of morality, as part of its attempt to transform ethical behavior and values in both the private and the public spheres.

Other positions fall into this category as well. The admission of Judaism's contribution to religion and morality was often reluctantly made. Various groups which

identified with Nazism but stopped short of its declared goals, chose an alternate route and attempted to erase the signs of their Jewish origins. This was the method favored by antisemitic Christians who collaborated with the Nazis. Clergy of this sort attempted to construct a Christianity devoid of its Jewish roots. This task was, of course, impossible; however, those who sought an "Aryan" as opposed to a "Semitic" Christianity did not shy away from the alteration of history. This path was chosen as well by those who assumed a mantle of "objective science," such as some central elements in biblical criticism. In fact, part of the activity of biblical criticism - particularly in Germany, where it was influenced somewhat by modern antisemitism - was directed towards discovering the non-Jewish foundations of humanity and the Christian tradition.

It is abundantly clear that everything that exists in our world today is permeated with Judaism. Were we to wish for a truly non-Jewish philosophical alternative, we would be forced to resurrect idolatry. This is not surprising, since Nazism set out to do precisely that. Without a doubt, the world of idolatry is responsible for some wonderful creations, among which the Greek intellectual works stand out. Athens remains the symbol of the creative human intellect. However, Greek philosophy also represented an attempt to abandon the world of mythology and idolatry, which is why a "meeting of the minds" between it and Judaism was conceivable.

Another non-Jewish alternative exists in the Far East, in Hinduism and Buddhism, for example. This is a world which developed separately and parallel to our own. The conflict between East and West rages until our very day and we will yet discuss this matter. However, modern Western civilization, which includes the various branches of Islam and Christianity in addition to all the modern ideologies, is indisputably the fruit of the Jewish seed planted in its soil.

## **CHAPTER 11: The Jewish Response**

### **PART I: God and His People: Lover And Beloved**

We have now reached the encounter between the Kuzari king and the "chaver" (Jewish representative). The chaver purposely commences in an unexpected manner which arouses the king's wrath. He begins by addressing an exclusively national issue: "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" freed us from Egypt.

However surprising, this attitude is not new. The chaver's opening statement mirrors God's historic introduction to the Jewish people upon Mount Sinai in the first of the Ten Commandments. Yet noting this obvious parallel does not mitigate our puzzlement. Rabbi Abraham ibn Ezra voices a similar bewilderment in his commentary on the book of Exodus (20: 1). There he informs us that Rihel himself asked him the following question:

"Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, may he rest in peace, asked me why [God] declared 'I am the Lord your God who took you out of Egypt,' and did not say, 'who created the heavens and the earth and created you.'"

Upon hearing this statement, the Kuzari king responds with a dual charge:  
**A)** The chaver begins his presentation from the middle. The beginning is missing!  
**B)** This opening bears significance for the Jewish people who were taken out of Egypt and perhaps for their descendants. It is irrelevant to a Gentile, living upon the banks of the Don or the Volga.

**Certainly this is a planned surprise, and it demands explanation.**

The chaver informs us of two possible approaches to religion. The first consists of a man-initiated search for the Divine, utilizing one's intellectual capacities. However, another approach exists as well.

The difference between these two approaches constitutes one of the central topics of Rabbi J. B. Soloveitchik's essay "U-vikashtem Mi-sham." This work can be described as a commentary on the Song of Songs.

Allow me to say a few words regarding the exegesis of the Song of Songs. Those who believe in a literal reading of the Song of Songs do not consider the allegorical interpretation particularly daring. But one must wonder at the presumptuousness of a

work which adopts the language of human relationships to describe the deepest expression of spirituality - the love between man and God.

Judaism exults in the love between man and woman. In the proper context, this love is considered holy. Love songs contain elements that may elevate them to the level of holy liturgy. However, the Song of Songs is not simply holy: it is termed the "holy of holies."

Through this approach to the Song of Songs we can understand another plane of religious terminology. When we speak of our relationship with God, we borrow semantic tools from three areas. The two first areas are easily palatable, even for a youngster. They find expression in the phrase which echoes throughout our prayers: "Our Father, our King." These two basic human relationships are present in our interaction with God: the relationship between father and son, and the relationship between master and servant. We have borrowed the first image from family life, and it represents the initial example of authority to which we are exposed as children. The second comparison is taken from the societal sphere. Both these expressions possess practical and ideological ramifications of the first order. They form the basis of the central Jewish concept, "The kingship of Heaven," (malkhut shamayim).

Using only these two expressions, we can describe God both as our Father in heaven and as King of the entire world. However, the Bible teaches us that a third relationship exists which is in some ways more significant than the others. This is the boldest image of all - the image of lover and loved one, of man and wife. The first source of this image can be found in the second of the Ten Commandments: the reference to a "jealous" God hints at the suspicion of unfaithfulness which exists between lovers. The image appears repeatedly in the Prophets, and the structure of the Song of Songs is built upon it as well. Our prophets, seeking to admonish the people, tend to describe situations of tension between the "lovers." The Song of Songs portrays the love itself. Beyond the basic areas of respect and awe - respect for a father and awe of a king - the third dimension of love exists. This concept heralds the development of an entire area of Jewish thought: the doctrine of *deveikut* (cleaving), which reached its ultimate expression through Jewish mysticism.

To briefly summarize the long history of this rich treasure of ideas, we must stress that a number of possible interpretations exist beyond the literal plane. If we disregard the kabbalistic interpretation, we are left with two central approaches:

**A)** The Midrashic approach explains that the Song of Songs constitutes a dialogue between the Jewish people and God. This dialogue lyrically depicts all of Jewish history.

**B)** According to the second approach, the dialogue takes place between the individual soul and God. This interpretation also has its roots in Chazal (our Sages, the sources of our rabbinic literature) who used the Song of Songs to explain the spiritual ascent experienced by the Talmudic mystics. The possibility of a personal relationship with the Creator gave rise to the doctrine of *deveikut*. Rav Soloveitchik uses this model to describe the relationship between man and God in terms of the relationship between lovers.

The woman in the allegory represents the mortal in search of God. The history of philosophy documents this quest for the Divine. Man seeks and finds God, yet he does not encounter Him face to face. The method boasts but limited success. However, another avenue beckons: The lover searches for his beloved. God seeks man. The revelation upon Mount Sinai was a powerful manifestation of this truth. The reaction of the beloved reflects the history of the Jewish people and their response to the Torah. God conceals Himself from he who seeks him in philosophy, and reveals Himself through prophecy alone. Thus a new difficulty arises. For when the lover knocks upon the door, the frail mortal may fail to respond, and thus can destroy the possibility of intimacy and devotion forever.

### **Beyond Philosophy: The Boundaries of the Intellect**

Let us briefly survey the history of human spiritual development from a different angle. We will begin with the approach of the primitive idol worshipper who considered the natural elements his gods and felt that the meeting ground between man and God was nature. Wind and rain, lightning and thunder, were, he believed, the actions of the various gods. It was necessary for man to revolutionize this primitive conception, overcome his childish attempts to identify the gods with nature, and reach a higher plane. Man then achieved the level of the philosopher who leaps beyond the visible, and searches for God not with his senses but rather with his intellect.

Now, however, an additional question arises. Is this human tool, the intellect, indeed infallible? The Greeks, and the philosophy they constructed, believed in the all-encompassing power of the intellect. They had faith in its innate ability to eventually light up every dark corner of the world. This was the firm belief of the blind optimists among the philosophers, as well as the philosopher in "The Kuzari," to some degree, and Spinoza, whose system of thought echoes our philosopher's words. These thinkers believed in the unconquerable strength of the mind. They had faith in their ability to reach God through the scientific observation of nature. In their eyes, the intellect wielded



the power to construct a new "religion," a practical system capable of instructing men, a "religion" based upon logic and reason alone.

### **Rihal attacks this "religion." Why? Where is philosophy's weak point?**

It finds expression firstly in a historic lack of consensus: As the chaver states flatly, "If you ask the philosophers, you will not find them agreed upon any topic." In other words, we have seen that in the name of the selfsame intellect, humanity flounders helplessly in its various attempts to construct a way of life. Yes, there were periods in which one philosophy or another held sway and appeared to possess truth. However, Rihal claims that philosophy, by its very nature, is incapable of attaining unity. It is in a constant state of indecision and fragmentation. Each philosopher makes a fortress of his position and claims that his philosophy alone is true, and no philosopher can conquer another fortress. Thus, Rihal stresses that doubt remains the starting point of every philosophical position. Doubt is reflected not only in conflicts with others; it surfaces in man's internal struggles as well. This is an element of self-destruction since philosophy is based upon the search for certainty. Philosophy speaks of proofs. Spinoza's book, for instance, is written as though it were a work in geometry.

Philosophy lures us with promises of answers, and yet it cannot shake the ever-present doubt, which bodes a future of uncertainty. Rihal, through the words of the chaver, teaches us that "this religion [of the philosophers] is based upon claims of which only some can be proven absolutely." This is a reference to philosophy in its optimal state, which was the way it was commonly assessed in his day, and he divides human intellectual endeavor into three parts:

**A)** The matters which can be proven beyond a doubt, such as mathematics or those philosophical principles which can be scientifically proven.

**B)** The ideas which have sufficient evidence. While certain more or less convincing claims can be made in their favor, they have no truly scientific proof. Most human claims cited in ideological arguments fall into this category.

**C)** There are some areas in which, without articulating the fact, people construct conceptual edifices based upon assumptions which simply do not exist in reality. This is a constant and eternal fact. Perhaps the content changes over the generations; however, the human tendency to build without foundation remains constant.

In contrast to the doubts inherent in the intellectual approach, Rihal presents us with the complete certainty that can be achieved only through prophecy. This is an internal

certainty, an independent belief. The two foundations of medieval Jewish thought were miracles and revelation, or prophecy. We will yet discuss the relationship between miracles and prophecy in the systems of various thinkers. Rihal presents us with both proofs at once - the power of miracles, and that of Divine revelation or prophecy. Rihal refers to a revelatory process which did not terminate upon Moshe's death - a process which continued throughout the era of the prophets, and beyond.

## **PART II: Beyond Philosophy, History and Prophecy**

Rihal, in discussing the contents of the prophets' doctrine, stresses that they "called [the people] to the Torah with the promise of reward for its keepers and punishment for its transgressors." One major implication of this statement relates to the cohesiveness or coherence of prophecy. Each prophet demonstrates the other's veracity, and their messages complement one another. These important facts will be discussed again by Rihal in the fourth chapter. Here Rihal briefly alludes to one of his basic positions: he maintains that prophecy proves its own worth through the consistency and unity of the various prophets.

Let us approach the problem as though it were a question of verification of evidence. When we examine witnesses, we compare their versions. This allows us to reconstruct the events, with each witness not only informing us of what he has seen, but simultaneously strengthening or weakening the credibility of the other witnesses. If his version indeed corroborates those of the other witnesses, his own statement is verified. In a similar manner, the integrity of Moshe's Torah is not based solely upon Moshe's claims or those of the Jewish people who were present at the time of its revelation. When the prophet Mal'akhi instructs us to "remember the Torah of Moshe," these words and similar ones of the other prophets complete the original revelation. Therefore we must discuss the veracity of prophecy with the entire spectrum of evidence in mind.

In truth, there are other methods besides prophecy to demonstrate the truth of the Jewish position. For example, God has been hidden within nature ever since creation. This particular path can be dangerous, however, since one can easily fall into the abstractness of the philosopher or the concretism of the idol worshipper. But yet another type of revelation exists: God's continuous revelation through history. Rihal chooses this path, asserting that history leads unerringly to God.

Rihal constructs his historical proof of the Torah's divinity upon the foundations of the Jewish tradition, taking into account the difference between our generation and our predecessors. We are not prophets. We are but the children of prophets. We cannot

directly experience the miracle and the prophecy; we perceive it indirectly, through a medium. This medium is our tradition. Thus our challenge differs from that of the Sinai generation. We must use our intellect in order to address religious questions. When we examine the issue of prophecy, we are compelled to approach it in the same way that we cross-examine witnesses, for though our souls were present at the revelation upon Mount Sinai, our eyes did not behold the splitting of the sea or any of the other miracles. This fact forces us to cling to our tradition. This, incidentally, is a central principle in Rav Sa'adia Gaon's philosophical approach.

And yet, the central proof of Judaism's supremacy lies not in the past but in the future; not in the historical record, but in the historical process. The continued forward march of time will reach its pinnacle with the promised redemption, and it is this redemption which will furnish the final proof of the prophecies.

### **Man as An Individual**

Jewish history commences with the fact that God "took the Jewish people out of Egypt with miracles and wonders, and maintained them in the desert and bequeathed to them the land of Canaan." This introduction lays the foundation for God's continual appearance in history, and, moreover, constitutes the solution to an existential problem we have previously discussed. The philosopher's path is abstract and impersonal, allowing no opportunity for a direct relationship between man and his Maker. Their relationship can take the form only of a macrocosmic interaction with nature, what classical Jewish philosophy would term "general providence." Man is merely a part of the natural system, another insignificant detail submerged in the larger picture. His name, of course, is of no interest, and were he to disappear, another man could quietly take his place. However, in history, names do matter. History holds significance for individuals as well as nations, and it is within history that man meets his Creator. In this encounter we discover the greatest proof of a relationship with the Divine. This is the significance of the revelation at Sinai.

The emphasis placed upon reward and punishment reveals to us an additional facet of the prophetic message as summarized by Rihel. Religious truths are not abstract concepts which interest us in the same way that mathematics and law, for example, interest us - simply because they are true. The importance of Torah lies in the fact that it affects reality; it makes a difference. Rabbi Yosef Albo expressed this idea, a few hundred years after Rihel, when he formulated and defined the three central beliefs, or roots, of Judaism: the existence of God, the divinity of the Torah, and the idea of reward

and punishment. That God's existence is a crucial principle is obvious; it is the basis for all that religion holds dear. The divinity of the Torah is that which characterizes our religion and makes it unique. What of reward and punishment? The concept of reward and punishment implies that our religious worship has practical ramifications. We believe that the world will be a different place if we adhere to the Torah's commandments.

### **Lessons of History**

Our last remark bears special significance for the Kuzari king. Through the Kuzari's words, Rihāl demonstrates the world's eternal difficulty in accepting the message of the Jew. With brutal honesty, Rihāl expresses through the king's mouth his reluctance to consider Judaism in his quest for the true religion, since, in the infamous phrase of the British historian Arnold Toynbee, the Jew is in fact merely a "fossil." This is a dual charge. Not only has "their chain of tradition already been cut and their wisdom decreased," but, in addition, "their exile has not left them with any good qualities." In essence, the claim is that the lack of worldly success of the Jewish nation proves the falseness of its position.

This constitutes a significant thesis in the anti-Jewish campaign, albeit a less threatening one than that which we discussed in an earlier chapter, for it does not deny the fact that both Christianity and Islam are based upon Judaism. The Kuzari king himself bears witness to this fact (I: 10): "I see that indeed I must inquire of the Jews who are the remnants of ancient Israel, and I see that they constitute the proof that God has given a Torah to the world." He cannot deny that the very existence of religion is based upon the revelation to the Jews. However, it is still possible for an antisemite to distinguish between the historical Jewish people and the present day Jews. This is a tactic employed to this very day by those theologians who speak of the Israelite era as opposed to the Jewish era, with Toynbee's "fossilization" of the Jews giving political and historical expression to this specious religious claim.

Jewish tradition has become part of universal history. Not so the repulsed and persecuted contemporary Jew.

### **The Great Paradox: The Gentile Encounters Judaism**

The Kuzari king found what he sought: a direct encounter with the Divine. His dream became a micro-model of Godly revelation, one sixtieth of prophecy. However,

prophecy itself he finds only in the Jewish people. And yet, ethnic and biological and, above all, psychological barriers stand between the king and the Jews. He is faced with Jewish particularism, with the uniqueness of Jewish existence. The chaver presents him with the "calling card" of his faith, and thus the king discovers that it is based upon the distinctness of the Jews. The Kuzari king remains isolated. He is a Gentile.

This is undoubtedly an intentional paradox. We could easily soften this issue with apologetics, silencing the elements which stress Jewish uniqueness. However, Rihal not only does not mute them, he accentuates them. He purposely begins his discourse with these elements, and places the Kuzari in direct conflict with them. We must immerse ourselves in these questions. This is one of the important tasks which remain before us. The particularism will achieve completion through our historic destiny, a destiny which involves the entire world. At present, we are faced with a powerful question and to find the answer we must embark upon an arduous journey through the annals of Jewish thought, with the chaver as our guide.

## **CHAPTER 12: Particularism and Universalism**

### **PART I: The Chosen People**

The chaver's opening statements lead the Kuzari king to a disturbing conclusion. He becomes convinced that in the Jewish view, the Torah's underlying principle - namely, the encounter with God via history - is irrelevant to him as a Gentile. As a consequence, he rebels against the chaver's seemingly racist stance [A: 28]. This conflict re-awakens a central query which has concerned us throughout our perusal of the book: Does not this emphasis on nationalism and particularism imply that the Torah was meant solely for the Jewish people, and thus has no universal significance? To resolve this problem, we must discover the true meaning of the concept "the chosen people."

The idea of chosenness is both one of the most central and one of the most difficult in Judaism, and it is therefore not surprising that the Kuzari king puzzles over its meaning. To elucidate this issue, let us use as our starting point the book of Bereishit (Genesis), in which the initial paradox emerges. In it we meet Avraham, whose call to monotheism rang out to all the nations of the world. Avraham's basic message is universal in character. On the other hand, it is he who witnesses and in fact precipitates the development of the two concepts which appear completely opposed to universalism: the distinctness of the Jewish People and of the Land of Israel. And indeed, at the dawn of religious history, we find ourselves faced with the strange and surprising phenomenon of a universal Torah which nevertheless designates one people and one land as unique. This is indeed a paradox, and we must therefore begin our search at its root.

We will focus initially on the first-mentioned aspect: the uniqueness of the Jewish people. How must we understand the concept of a chosen people? We will cover a number of approaches to this question which have appeared throughout the history of Jewish thought. The opinions do not necessarily contradict one another; nonetheless, we must distinguish between them, as a very basic difference of opinion has surrounded this issue for generations.

### **Chosenness: Acceptance of the Torah**

One possible way to understand the connection between universalism and uniqueness lies in the intuitive and fundamental comprehension of our national destiny which finds succinct expression in our liturgy: "[God] chose us from among the nations and gave us His Torah." It is our acceptance of the Torah which bestows upon us our unique status.

Our distinction, then, is to be found in the fact that we must brave the persistent ridicule and opposition of the rest of the world in order to hold fast to what we know to be the eternal truth. That, and only that, makes us chosen.

We can understand this definition of chosenness with the aid of a simple parable. Let us imagine a fish who must swim upstream in order to reach the place to lay its eggs. Our fish sees all the other fish swimming in the opposite direction. They swim effortlessly, carried by the current. However, our fish is propelled forward by the imperative of its special mission. Allow me to emphasize that we are speaking not of elitism, but of chosenness. A sense of chosenness is necessary to maintain the momentum of any organism which dares to swim against the current. Any other explanation of the concept of chosenness is, according to this approach, irrelevant, for we are no different from any other nation save in the mission which we have pledged to fulfill - the preservation of the Torah.

In some liberal or secular versions of this approach, the underlying concept was applied not to Torah in its entirety but rather to certain sections of it, particularly its moral code. These opinions emphasize the existence of a unique Jewish morality and claim that our chosenness finds expression in the Jewish people's special sensitivity to moral problems. This approach was championed by Achad Ha'am and other thinkers in Eastern and Western Europe.

### **The Chosen Nation Rebels**

Before I begin to present an alternate approach, I would like to note briefly the transformation which has taken place in relation to the concept of chosenness in certain circles of modern Jewish thought. Some thinkers disapproved of the very employment of the term "chosen people." The concept was considered morally repugnant, since it sets us apart and causes us to view ourselves as different and perhaps better than others. As an example I will mention Mordechai Kaplan, the founder of Reconstructionism, a non-Orthodox Jewish group, who made one of his chief concerns the battle against the concept of chosenness. We also find many in the Zionist camp who defined Zionism's mission through the ideal of becoming similar to all other nations. The goal, as they saw it, was to achieve national "normalization" and thus destroy the concept of a chosen people. One recent expression of this tendency can be found in the works of A. B. Yehoshua, who claims that our historical pretensions to a mysterious mission have caused us to fashion our state as a framework for Jewish religious existence - but such a state cannot be normal.

This approach, which turns its back upon the "myth of chosenness," is seemingly healthy, well-adjusted and feasible. It was a dream shared by Zionists and assimilationists alike. However, tragic modern history has shown us that Jewish chosenness was a reality even for those who attempted to escape it. The most painful expression of this fact is found in the assimilated Jews who were forced by Nazism to reassume their Jewish identity. The poet Natan Alterman wrote a piece about this phenomenon entitled "Ata Bechartanu" (You Have Chosen Us). It contains an ironic attack upon the belief in chosenness, but concludes with a new perspective gained by those who finally understood history's lesson.

## **PART II: Chosenness and "Segula"**

History teaches us that if we wish to comprehend the uniqueness of the Jewish people, we must realize that an additional concept exists: the concept of "segula" (specialness), which preceded the idea of chosenness and which accompanies the Jew even when he has, for all intents and purposes, deserted the Torah and its commandments. This distinction originated with Rihal and was further developed by the Maharal and later by Rav Kook. To understand the paradox inherent in this dual status, we can consider briefly the concept of chosenness from a different angle, one which was stressed by various thinkers and critics, among them the late Israeli historian Ya'akov Talmon. These thinkers note the prominence of Jewish revolutionaries in various fields. A sociological interpretation can be given for this phenomenon, explaining their struggle on the basis of the historical situation of the ghetto Jew who was devoid of rights. However, as the Maharal says, this may be a reason, but it is not the first cause. Searching for this original cause will lead us to an understanding of the concept of segula.

### **The Maharal's Approach**

The idea of segula is basic to the Maharal's concept of "alienation." According to his perception, exile is neither a historical nor a sociological state. For example, he vehemently opposed the claim that it was because Jews lived in social deprivation that they were forced to develop in an original and creative fashion, instead of using their talents in public service or in academia. Exile, in the Maharal's view, is something much deeper. The Jews were alienated from the world because in the depths of their souls they harbored "something different." We call this "something:" segula.

Allow me to explain this concept with the aid of a somewhat daring example. A children's film which broke all the box office records is the movie "E.T." This film



describes the adventures of a creature from outer space who arrives on earth and meets children who help and protect him, while the adults persecute him at every turn. Our protagonist suffers because he comes from a much more advanced world than our own. In a way, we can sum up the Maharal's central thesis by saying that the Jewish people are a type of E.T. The Jew belongs to another world, to the world of the future. The world of the future is symbolized by our patriarch Jacob, while this world is symbolized by Esav. Despite the fact that the Jewish people's roots are not in this world, they have been sent here by God on a metaphysical mission. The Jewish nation's role is to implement change in this world, despite the fact that we must suffer by our very presence here.

This brings us to an interesting twist. Earlier, we mentioned the historian Toynbee who saw the Jews as a fossil from an ancient period, and claimed that we belong to the past. The Maharal, in contrast, emphasizes the fact that Jewish suffering stems from just the opposite: we belong to the future. It is as though a time capsule had transferred us here from the period of redemption. This is why we are currently in exile. The Maharal expressed this idea linguistically by noting that the Hebrew words "ga'al" (redemption) and "gala" (exile) come from the same root. The suffering and alienation of exile result from the fact that we belong to another world.

The Maharal's position is one of the two central ways to view the concept of chosenness. Although we described it in a whimsical fashion, it displays Jewish history in a new light and addresses questions which we still face today. Secular Zionism wished to return us to the land of Israel in order to transform us into "a nation like all other nations." This political goal is not far from the ideal of assimilation espoused by many Jews of the modern era. While the latter fought for this goal as individuals, the former preferred assimilation as a group. And yet, we now find ourselves alienated once again, this time as a nation and a state. Even after achieving independence and carving out a niche in the world community, we continue to experience the alienation of Jewish existence. Do not be fooled: this is not a complex! The Maharal attempts to teach us what E.T. illustrates so poignantly, that our sense of alienation should not discourage us or create feelings of inferiority; it must rather assist us in searching out our spiritual roots.

Whether or not we accept this extreme interpretation, we have learned that segula is different than chosenness. Chosenness comes as a result of man's actions, whereas segula is an intrinsic state of otherness. Rihal's basic thesis is that, whether we like it or not, we exist in a state of alienation. Segula precedes chosenness. Segula is what confers upon us the option of chosenness. On the one hand, we must call out "We shall hear and

we shall obey” - this is the chosenness; yet on the other hand, we were forcibly given the Torah - and that is the segula.

Our starting point is that we are different. We need not and cannot escape that fact. We must accept our identity, come to terms with our alienation, and ask ourselves why it is so. Rihal, who grasped this idea intuitively, attempted to express it using the limited terminology at his disposal. His only conceptual tools to explain the segula of our nation and land, were physical, biological and racial. It appears that Rihal seeks to locate the difference between us and others in our genetic inheritance and the uniqueness of our land in certain climatic-spiritual effects. Though he struggles to find the appropriate categories, this truth is greater than its scientific or pseudo-scientific expression. We are faced with a completely mysterious phenomenon. Mystery is the central component of the concept of segula.

Although the Maharal took Rihal's approach in one direction, next week we will examine a very different development of Rihal's ideology - the thought of Rav Shimshon Raphael Hirsch.

### **PART III: The Philosophy of Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch**

Until this point, we have focused upon one of two possible formulations of Rihal's position. The second option is built upon a different approach, one which was developed by R. Samson Raphael Hirsch.

Samson Raphael Hirsch saw himself as Rihal's successor, particularly in his attempt to construct a philosophy which stems solely from Jewish sources. Only if we ignore all preconceived notions, he claims, will our approach to Torah be truly open. Only then will we be able to read it without being tainted by foreign influences.

The Torah can be seen as a series of recorded covenants. The book of Genesis begins with the history of the failure of the first covenant, that which was established between God and Adam. This covenant continues after Adam's sin, but is terminated with the wayward Generation of the Flood. After that we read about the second covenant, the one between God and Noah, and it ends with the sin of the Generation of Dispersion: the Tower of Babel. With the failure of the Noachide covenant, which was intended to be a covenant with humanity as a whole, the need to forge a new path became apparent. The new way involved the creation of a new nation which would enter into a covenantal relationship with God. This nation would pave the way for the ultimate redemption of all of humanity. The covenant with Israel, then, is not an exclusionary one. Through its

role as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation," the Jewish people pave the way for the rest of the world.

The role of the Jewish people is to educate and lead "all people towards the worship of God, and to publicize His name in the world through its very life and destiny" (The Nineteen Letters, letter 16). Other nations do their part with contributions in the fields of art and science, conquest and trade. The Jewish people takes the world, such as it is, and attempts to open its eyes to God.

This description of the Jewish people as a teacher to the world is not merely a piece of religious propaganda; it is the Jewish people's "very life and destiny." This destiny is twofold. It is fulfilled through Torah, that is, through life centered around the experience of the service of God, and through our fate, the testimony of our religious message. This means that in a paradoxical sense the Jewish people fulfills its destiny even when sinning (The Nineteen Letters, letters 8,9).

This provides us a solution to the question we started with. It is through our very exclusivity, through the maintenance of the uniqueness of the Jewish people and the land of Israel, that the entire world will ultimately attain a universal redemption which transcends all borders. This stance of R. Hirsch is not a new one. It was previously developed by R. Ovadia Mi-Seforno, who writes:

"And the Torah initially describes that He created man in His image, in order that he choose to become as similar to his Creator as possible, because through this, His actions will be complete and more worthy of honor than any other creator, as is appropriate for Him, blessed be He, who is elevated above all others. And in His mercy he supplied man with all of his needs and placed him in the Garden of Eden, until he behaved badly, whereupon he ruined his livelihood, and God banished him from there, to work the land and to exert himself greatly to find his daily bread...

And then [the Torah] relates that despite all this, He did not choose to destroy him...

And then [the Torah] relates further that despite all this He had mercy upon the remainder [of mankind] and allowed them to eat all animals besides their own kind, and He gave the land to human beings by placing their fear upon all the animals of the land... until they gathered together to worship a foreign god, and placed its image in a tower, and nations directed their appeals to him, [until] God's name was no longer remembered among them...and since then they have consistently declined in worth...

And then [the Torah] relates that with the disappearance of the hope for the entire human race, since they attempted to destroy all Godly improvement three times, God set aside one person out of all the human race, and selected Avraham and his progeny to achieve through them the goal He intended for all the human race, as was explained. And the bond between Avraham and his two descendants [Yitzchak and Yaakov] who filled the world with His glory by calling His name, caused Him to be pleased to make a covenant to be their God and the God of their children after them forever, and to grant a place to their progeny when they become a large enough nation to require a land, and there they will be His unique people who will worship Him in unity."

As we have mentioned, R. Samson Raphael Hirsch saw himself as Rihal's successor. Another modern thinker who saw himself in a similar light was Shmuel David Luzzatto. Shadal (his acronym) identified with Rihal in a conscious fashion and viewed his battles against the Jewish adherents of Kantian and idealistic philosophies as a continuation of Rihal's battles against the Rambam and Ibn Ezra, who had "become enslaved to the philosophies of Greece and Islam." Shadal, too, perceives the essence of chosenness in a similar manner to that which we have been discussing; he identifies chosenness with destiny. This understanding conflicts with other, mistaken viewpoints which, he explains, stem from illegitimate comparisons to theories of chosenness espoused by other nations (Yesodei Ha-Torah, 33ff, Jerusalem 5707, p. 47ff; see also his commentary on Genesis 18: 19).

Shadal examines two invalid interpretations which represent the concept of chosenness among the ancient nations. The first is the concept of chosenness which is typical of the tribal religion:

"And... some of the early nations worshipped one specific god whom their neighbors did not worship... and they believed that that god watched over them and loved them... Not such is the position of Jacob, but rather [he believes that] the Creator of everything is God... if Israel is His firstborn son, all the nations are [also] His children."

The second direction is the theory of chosenness which stems from a sense of superiority:

"And others among the ancient nations hated and despised all nations other than their own because they had not attained their level in wisdom and art, and they would call them 'barbarians'... but the Jewish people and their forefathers did not hate or despise the other nations."

In contrast to these attitudes, the concept of chosenness in Judaism is actually the bestowal of a destiny and a vocation. The status of the Jewish people among the other nations is, thus, similar to the status of the priests among the Jewish people, "who were separated from the populace by the rules and commandments which were unique to them" (ibid, 31).

However, the concept of destiny can be misunderstood. This is in fact what occurred in the Reform movement. The religious reform in Germany chose to define the concept of destiny in a way which led inevitably to assimilation and the loss of Jewish identity. Therefore Shadal writes in a letter in 1858:

"And the faithful Jew believes in what Moshe said, that "if your scattered nation will be (in the ends of the skies, from there God will gather you)...," and in what Yeshayahu said, "The mountain of God's sanctuary will be firm etc..." and he does not deceive himself with idle dreams that people will change and become like angels, and certainly does not imagine that this great transformation will take place through his agency, and that the success of the human race depends upon him, and he knows that these are but lies and empty consolations which the false prophets manufacture for their own benefit" (Shadal's Letters, Cracow, 5651, pp. 1335-1336).

The destiny of the Jewish people is the creation of a Jewish state which will serve as a "kingdom of priests and a holy nation." This is the necessary next stage in the edifice we are attempting to construct.

Rav Ovadia Mi-Seforno's approach was later developed by Martin Buber. He emphasizes a significant fact: The Noachide sin continued to thrive in all the nations which succeeded Noah's children. Therefore, Martin Buber suggests that it was impossible to choose a nation who sinned with the Generation of Dispersion. A new nation was needed.

The important issue here is not the actual choice of one nation over the others, but rather the creation of a nation with no prior history. The Jewish people in a sense are not a "natural" nation like all other nations; our nation was born together with its destiny. Martin Buber, as entrenched as he was in humanism and universalism, heard and heeded the divine voice which singled out the Jewish people. This divine call creates a unique destiny and confers a special responsibility upon our people.

## **CHAPTER 13: Heart & Body: The Jewish People and the Nations**

### **PART I**

Until this point, we have examined the concept of chosenness through the perspectives of a number of significant Jewish thinkers. Now let us turn our attention to the "chaver" and attempt to elucidate R. Yehuda Halevi's position on this issue.

A cursory reading would lead one to conclude that a deep philosophical chasm separates Rihal from R. Samson Raphael Hirsch in their perception of chosenness. The source of their dispute can perhaps be traced to a divergence in their respective approaches to the meaning of Jewish existence. The elementary question is this: Do the Jewish people exist "a priori," or is their presence in the world merely a remedial measure taken in response to a negative situation? In the view shared by R. Ovadia Misesforno and R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, it appears that the birth of the Jewish nation stemmed from the failure of God's original covenant with Adam. Thus, the creation of a Jewish people was the divine reaction to an unsatisfactory state of affairs.

It seems, upon initial analysis of his opinion, that Rihal would oppose this approach. However, a closer look will demonstrate that Rihal agreed, in essence, with Hirsch's position, for, clearly, Rihal believed that had the Adamic covenant prevailed, Adam would have been the first Jew. In fact, Rihal develops the notion that the concept of *segula* has been in existence since Adam's day; thus, the potential for the *segula* could have developed earlier than it actually did. For Rihal, a developing *segula* constitutes the definition of the Jewish people. At the root of Rihal's position lie the possibility and the hope that all of humanity, without exception, may one day achieve the highest pinnacle of spiritual life.

The gallery of ideas which Rihal applies in his attempt to define the status of the Jewish people includes three central concepts: the Divine essence; the *segula* of Israel; and the symbolic description of the relationship between Israel and the nations as that of heart and body, the core and the outer shell, and the seed which rots while inseminating the ground. To understand the system in its entirety we must analyze each concept separately. We will discuss these concepts, God willing, at a later stage. At this junction we will examine these ideas not separately but rather as part of an organic system of Rihal's making. The individual concepts will be clarified through an understanding of the composite picture.

A look at the metaphor of the heart and body confronts us immediately with the dialectic between the concept of chosenness and the relationship between the Jewish people and the other nations. This famous metaphor establishes that the Jewish nation is the heart, yet the heart as metaphor can be interpreted in two ways. We can speak of the heart in contrast with the body or of the heart in contrast with a surrounding shell. These two options express conflicting approaches. The position which contrasts the heart and the shell views the Jewish nation as the elite of humanity, and the world merely as extraneous matter, created for the sole purpose of serving, obeying or setting the stage for advent of the Jewish people. According to the second approach, however, Israel in fact serves the world, and the chosenness itself consists simply of the obligation to serve as a divine tool for the furtherance of world development.

The metaphor of the heart and body (2: 36) stresses the centrality of the Jewish people in the cosmic plan. However, it equally emphasizes an organic, holistic view of the world, for all the nations are symbolized by the various anatomical sections of the body and the heart itself would be rendered meaningless without its constant interaction with the other organs despite its functional importance. The symbol of heart and shell (4: 23), too, does not separate the Jews from the other nations; rather it distinguishes between the nations themselves, dividing those who will eventually vanish from those who will evolve into new forms in the future.

### **Segula and the Divine Essence**

The role of the Jewish people in the world finds expression on various levels. On one plane, the existence of the Jewish people creates the possibility of God's presence in the world:

"... [The relationship between] the Divine Essence [and the Jews] is comparable to that of the soul and the heart. Therefore [God] states: 'I have known only you from all the nations, therefore I will punish you,' and this [refers to] the afflictions. But the [return to] health is [contained in] what our Rabbis said: 'He forgives the sins of His nation Israel, disposing of the first [sin] first' for He does not allow our sins to remain with us and thus cause our absolute destruction... And it should not appear strange to you that... we are tormented while the world is at rest, [for] the troubles that beset us come to improve our Torah and to remove the chaff from us, and when we are pure, the Divine Essence will cleave to our world (2: 44)."

The next level consists of the Jewish nation's influence upon the other nations. This refers to the development of a faith which is based on divine revelation, going beyond the confines of the intellect, and whose most profound expression is found in our firm belief in the creation of the world:

"...until [the Jewish] community attained the purity to make them worthy of receiving the light and to have miracles performed for them, changing the natural order, and [God] demonstrated that the world has a Ruler, a Keeper, an Arranger and a Creator... so that in our day all the inhabitants of the world admit that the world was created and [believe in] the eternal life of the Creator, and the proof for this is the Jewish people, and what occurred to them and what was decreed upon them (2: 54)."

I believe that we will not stray overly far from Rihal's stance, if we adopt the position of R. Ovadia Mi-seforno and R. Samson Raphael Hirsch. We retain, of course, the basic assumption of Israel's status as a chosen nation which underlies Rihal's approach.

The desire to grant philosophical expression to the uniqueness of the Jewish nation and the Land of Israel lies at the core of Rihal's position. This uniqueness is not considered significant within general philosophy; apparently, philosophy does not concern itself with specific cases. However, Rihal maintains that any religious philosophical position, whether Jewish or not, must relate to that which is singular and unique. Jewish philosophy must therefore relate to the unique existence of Israel and the revelation at Mount Sinai. Rihal searched for philosophical expressions for these realities and he found them in his own distinct fashion.

It seems to me that the second approach as well, mentioned earlier, which follows in his footsteps to some extent, also fulfills the basic demands of Rihal's thought. In any case, it is essential to note that the annals of Jewish thought contain numerous responses to the paradox of uniqueness vs. universalism.

This seems an appropriate juncture to discuss briefly our interpretation of the Rambam's view of this issue. It appears to me that the difference between the Rambam's approach and that of Rihal can be illustrated through an analysis of their respective approaches to prophecy. According to the Rambam, Moshe attained the highest possible spiritual plane, and from the heights of this spiritual achievement he brought the Torah to his people. Moshe earned the Torah's teachings due to his elevated status, while the nation somehow attained it as well. The midrash describes this gift of the Torah to the nation as an act of kindness on Moshe's part. According to Rihal, however, Moshe acted the part of a mere messenger, the nation's representative, and merited the gift of prophecy simply because of his function as the nation's tool. These two approaches



succinctly express the positions of the Rambam and Rihal regarding our issue. The Rambam stresses the prophetic gifts of the individual, the elevation of a chosen few. The community exists, in his view, only to permit the development of the individual. The community creates the necessary conditions to allow the individual to achieve perfection, and thus to attain prophecy; whereas, in Rihal's view, the entire nation is composed of prophets.

We have noted the difference between chosenness, which is related to keeping the commandments and commitment to the Torah, and *segula*, a spiritual reality which existed prior to any given action. Despite the obvious differences between Rihal and the Rambam, the latter's position contains a similar principle, as he emphasizes the eternal quality of the covenant and the promise of a prophetic relationship with the Jewish people. The concept of Jewish chosenness is not only the "property" of Rihal or the Kabbalists; it has its place in the rationalist school of thought as well. To be sure, differences between the two schools of thought remain. These will become clearer when we examine R. Kook's approach, which creates a synthesis of these two positions.

## **PART II: Chosenness in the Thought of Rav Kook:**

We have heretofore examined various approaches to the concept of chosenness. We must note that this ideal can be developed in both positive and negative directions. The unacceptable interpretation of chosenness is that which causes man to demand rights beyond his due; proudly, he sees himself as superior, as a born ruler. In sharp contrast to this approach we find the attitude underlying Jewish thought, in which chosenness means the acceptance of the Torah and commandments, over and beyond the seven Noachide laws. These duties might appear to some to be superfluous and burdensome. I believe that we must place ourselves somewhere on the continuum between the two extreme positions, for the obligations placed upon us are bound up with another principle. Chosenness means that the Jewish people are the world's "theological antenna;" we constitute the connection between God and man. Hence, the *segula* finds its most significant expression through the gift of prophecy.

It is fitting to pause here to discuss Rav Kook's approach to this issue. Rav Kook maintains that among every nation of the world one finds individuals who attain tremendous moral and spiritual heights. However, the Jewish people's uniqueness lies in its collective strength. The Jewish people are not merely a nation in which certain individuals may achieve greatness. It is a nation which must express its holiness in a public fashion and practice its values as a community. Here, in my opinion, Rav Kook fuses two different traditions: the position of Chazal on the one hand, which maintains

that prophecy was and always will be exclusive to the Jewish people, and the midrashic tradition expressed in Tanna Debei Eliyahu which claims that any person, Jew or Gentile, man or woman, slave or maidservant, may potentially achieve prophecy. Judaism finds expression in both those directions, and Rav Kook unites them in his overall view of mankind.

The issue of chosenness is rejuvenated and illuminated with a new light in Rav Kook's writings. In order to understand his view, we must touch upon a new topic.

## **The National Spirit**

Often, philosophers find themselves groping unsuccessfully for the appropriate terms to describe their perception of reality. As we shall see, modern Jewish thinkers face similar challenges. Jewish philosophers have not yet discovered a precise definition for the unique essence of the Jewish people. One of the terms commonly employed for this purpose is the expression "national spirit." This term allowed Jewish philosophers to speak of an inner motivator, of a collective being which exists beyond the mere sum of individuals. "National spirit," it must be noted, is not at all similar to "race." The concept of race is based upon biological and natural components, the concept of "national spirit" on psychological and historical elements.

The term "national spirit" thus became a useful tool to explain the nation's spiritual and cultural achievements. Many thinkers have used the term, the most well-known among them being Achad Ha'am. However, this term holds not only promise but great danger as well. Thinkers like Achad Ha'am saw the Torah and the Jewish faith in general as the fruits of the national spirit. In their concept of the national spirit we face a fresh pitfall which finds ample expression in the question of prophecy and revelation. If the Torah and religious values are, in essence, the outpourings of the national spirit, it follows that prophecy cannot be divine communication. There is, then, no Godly - or transcendental - revelation; there is rather the self-discovery of a nation, or immanent revelation.

This position flies in the face of one of the most basic tenets of Judaism. Furthermore, even those thinkers who understood the prophetic experience as a natural phenomenon, nonetheless believed it to be a revelation of realities which lie beyond man's self-contained knowledge. We can distinguish between the prophetic communication and the prophetic experience; the content possesses objective validity despite the subjective nature of the experience.

In Rihal's work we find two concepts which take heed of this dichotomy. They are the "segula of Israel" and the "divine essence." The "segula of Israel" represents the immanent, human element in his position, while the "divine essence" represents the transcendental or God-given component.

Now we are equipped to understand the full meaning of the doctrine of chosenness in Rav Kook's writings. However, to further our perception we must discuss a question of paramount importance which continues to reverberate through our world to this very day. I refer to the problem of autonomy versus heteronomy.

What is the source of the authority of the commandments, - the binding law [nomos]? Is it in hands of someone else [hetero] or is it perhaps in myself [auto]? How should the ideal law be constructed? These are central questions in the philosophy of ethics and education. Without entering into the complexities of this issue, we will attempt a brief summary of the topic.

It would seem obvious that the Torah is heteronomic, its authority stemming only and absolutely from the divine voice which exists beyond man. However, Rav Kook rejected the perception of the Torah as a foreign, coercive legal system that is in conflict with man's natural tendencies. Placing the Torah upon a heteronomic basis entails a recognition of its supra-human character and its divine origin, but it is at the price of continual tension and strife, of a lifelong existential trauma. This trauma with its severe psychological and social ramifications forms no part of the divine plan.

God's will lies not merely in having His words obeyed, but also in the healthy and complete development of the human personality, of human society and even of the cosmos. To borrow a phrase from R. Samson Raphael Hirsch, the Torah's interest in us is not theological but anthropological. In the words of Rav Kook, the central question that we must ask is not the question of "knowledge of God" - theology's question, but rather "the knowledge of God in the world" - "the moral influence of divine studies" (Eder Ha-yakar p. 37).

Rav Kook teaches us that the Torah contains two ideals which we must combine. And the unification of those two ideals spells chosenness. The essence of chosenness lies in the compatibility of the divine revelation with the Jewish people's national spirit. A nation fit for divine communication was chosen as the vessel for God's revelation. This is the meaning of the midrashic legend which relates that God offered the Torah to all the other nations of the world, and they refused to accept it.

The match between national spirit and God's word is not easy to guarantee. In fact, it is glaringly absent in many nations:

"And this is not far from the truth, in relation to most nations. Because... their divine knowledge, being dim and weak, is not an appropriate basis for their being and existence, and it is not their permanent nature or national cause."

Thus, the true meaning of the Jewish people's chosenness is that they do not see morality as a law enforced from without, but rather as an expression of their inner desires. The opposite of this harmonious relationship can be found in the rebellion of part of Western culture against the "Judeo-Christian" tradition, a rebellion whose most extreme expression took the form of Nazism.

It is not racial genes which grants the Jews this special affinity. In truth, it will someday be the happy lot of all. In this context, chosenness merely bestows the status of the firstborn, with the confidence that one day the other siblings will join the eldest. Thus, the harmony between our inner world and the divine law constitutes the quintessential experience of the eschatological end of days.

Of course, this harmony does not flow effortlessly throughout every Jew's daily life. At times there appears to be a conflict between the demands of religion and morality, on the one hand, and the individual Jew's natural tendencies on the other. Rav Kook explains that although those conflicts do exist, they are the result of cultural problems, deficiencies that have not yet "come under the influence of the Torah." Every problematic situation, according to Rav Kook, is "based either upon a distorted understanding of the Torah on our part, or can be traced to a specific cause." Morality and religion do not simply mean conformity to the revealed Torah; they are also an integral part of human self-actualization. The conflicts will lessen from "generation to generation, and the issues will unravel themselves in tranquillity and holiness." This, then, is part of our cultural mission: to create a society in which such conflicts cease to exist.

Rav Kook expressed this synthesis using the symbolism of the Kabbala in his commentary on the introductory prayer "Le-shem yichud: "

"The complete marriage of the Jewish people with the Holy One - this refers to the identification of God's will as expressed through the entire nation, at the root of its collective soul, with the revelation of divinity which lies at the heart of all of existence. ... And at the Jewish people's highest level no difference exists between the divine outpouring upon all of existence and the manner in which it is perceived through the Jewish nation. For this reason we pray in all our endeavors to achieve 'yichud,' the fusion of the Holy One and His Shekhina (divine presence)" (Orot Yisrael, Orot p. 141).

The congregation of Israel, a symbol of the kabbalistic sphere of "malkhut" (kingdom), here becomes the symbol of Jewish existence: "The congregation of Israel is the concentrated essence of all of existence, and in this world this essence is actually contained within the Jewish nation" (ibid., pg. 138). "Tiferet" (glory), the symbol of divine revelation, is not understood simply as the revelation of the Torah, but is the widest sense, as "the effect of the divine life upon all of existence." The transcendental element finds expression through all of existence, yet it still may conflict with "the divine will which is expressed in the nation as a whole, at the foundation of its collective soul." The merging of these two desires is the essence of the aspiration to "unite God with His Shekhina through all of our actions." Our segula is expressed through the "spirit of the nation" which is umbilically bound to the divine spirit. The immanent touches the transcendent:

"The national spirit which is currently awakening has supporters who boast of independence from divine spirituality, were it truly possible to foster a national spirit of this sort, it would be tantamount to placing the nation upon a pedestal of impurity, even destruction, but they themselves do not realize what they want ... [This is true] to the point that even he who claims that he needs no godly spirit, if he craves a Jewish national spirit, the godly spirit is manifest at the innermost heart of his ambitions, even against his will. The private individual may cut himself off from the source of life, but not so the nation of Israel in its entirety; therefore all of the nation's achievements, which are beloved to them because they give voice to the national spirit, hold the divine spirit within them: the country, language, history and leadership.

"And if at some future time such a spiritual awakening takes place, when people will say that all the above are due to the national spirit alone, and they will attempt to deny the influence of the divine spirit upon all these achievements and upon their apparent source, the national spirit, what must the righteous of that generation do? ... They must struggle to reveal the light and holiness contained in the national spirit, the light of God within all these outer trappings, until those who cling to the ideas inherent in the general spirit ... will find themselves rooted and living in the divine life, aglow with holiness and exalted strength" (Orot Ha-techiya 9, in Orot, p. 63)

When we say the introductory prayer of "Le-shem Yichud" in conjunction with prayer "Viyhi No'am" (May the pleasantness of God upon us ... and may our handiwork be established), we pray for peace, for harmony between the commandments that we fulfill, and our innate human ideals.

### **PART III: Judaism and Racism**

Allow me to say a few words about the problem of racism, since the text we have before us describes the status of the Jewish people with the help of racial - genetic, if you will - terminology. This is not a theoretical discussion. It touches upon a fierce debate which rages within the world of religious thought, especially in recent generations.

First, I wish to reiterate an earlier point: The Jewish entity is an anomaly within the geographical and cultural map of the world, qualitatively different from all other religious or national units. The definition of a Frenchman, an American, or a member of any other nationality is essentially territorial in nature; each nation is the resident of its particular tract of land and is defined by it. The Jewish people, on the other hand, is borderless and thus cannot be limited to the confines of a specific place. Definitions which are valid for other peoples do not permit an adequate description of Jewish identity. The Jews, dispersed among the nations, spoke all seventy languages of the world. This condition misled Jews and non-Jews alike into the belief that the Jewish people was extinct. Others, realizing the absurdity of this conclusion, began to search for a different way to understand the mystery of Jewish existence in exile.

This is the reason that for generations, and especially during the last two hundred years, people as diverse as Disraeli and Martin Buber at times made use of terms such as "race" and "blood" when they wished to indicate that the nation's uniqueness is created not by territory but by origin. However, this is liable to produce the mistaken impression that if territorial criteria do not define us, then racial characteristics do. Clearly, this definition is flawed. Race is not an appropriate model. Perhaps the concept of the "extended family" is closer to the truth. In any case, it is clear that the Jewish people have a unique existence.

When philosophy discovered the concept of nationhood as distinct from that of the "territorial entity," there came into existence a term which drew closer to - yet still only approximated - an appropriate definition of the Jewish entity. To be sure, even such a concept confronts us with ideological difficulties as Zionist and Jewish thought as a whole attempt to maneuver between the concepts of religion and nationality. These difficulties arise from the fact that we attempt to fit Judaism into categories which do not necessarily suit it. If the truth be told, Judaism cannot be defined by either of these two concepts.

Judaism, being a religion, contains the possibility of conversion. This is akin to a person becoming a naturalized citizen of a foreign state. And although, as the chaver notes, the convert will never be exactly like the nation he has joined, his children certainly will be. The phenomenon of conversion teaches us that the racial model is

completely inappropriate, as does the fact that Jews of all colors can join together to form a minyan (a prayer quorum). As mentioned above, we can see the model used by the Torah as that of the extended family - the children of Avraham, Yitzchak and Yaakov. As with any family, this one is perpetuated not only through the birth of children, but also in other ways such as adoption or marriage. This concept was expressed by our rabbis when they declared that although converts did not physically participate in the revelation at Sinai (or in modern terms: the converts' genes were not present at Sinai), their souls were there. They were like sheep who traversed great distances to heed the call of the heavenly herdsman and join his flock.

Judaism, then, is defined through concepts that differ entirely from that of race. Two doors stand at the entrance to the Jewish nation. One opens only by divine decree - birth. The other heeds human commands and opens to admit those Gentiles who choose to convert.

The concept of race does contain positive elements: it teaches us the imperative of noblesse oblige. However, to our sorrow, it has become tainted, and we must apply to it the verse, "Do not erect a monument which your God your Lord hates" (Deuteronomy 16:22). Rashi, the great medieval exegete, comments, "... and although it was beloved unto Him in the days of the forefathers, now He hates it, since these have made it a part of idol worship." The Torah here informs us that there are actions or objects that are not negative in and of themselves; however, they adopt negative traits at the moment that they turn into tools in the hands of idolators. The concept of race and origin, in bygone days, expressed the idea of lineage. This signifies the responsibility to maintain the chain whose first links are Avraham, Yitzchak, and Yaakov, and a commitment to the ideals which membership in that chain represents. However, since the advent of modern racism, when murder and various crimes are committed in the name of racial superiority, this concept has lost its credibility. We must not make use of a concept "which your God your Lord hates."

One can, in addition, interpret the words of the Kuzari in a way entirely unrelated to the concept of race. Rihal himself provides the key to this understanding at other points in the book. Thus in the fifth essay, he presents us with another model regarding the nature of chosenness, a model centered around the keeping of the commandments:

"And the lowest of the plants is on a higher level than the highest of the inanimate objects ... and similarly the lowest of mankind who keep the divine commandments is on a higher level than the highest of those who do not have the commandments, because the commandment which comes from God, grants to

souls the behavior and disposition of angels. And this cannot be achieved in any other way."

These words teach us two lessons. The first is the readiness for prophecy: "The consistent fulfillment of the commandments brings [one] to the level of prophecy." Secondly, it is the very fact of being commanded which creates the state of segula: "The one who is commanded, yet sins, is thus better than he who was never commanded. Because the divine command has already lent him angelic behavior ... and if, in fact, his sin confounded and negated this behavior, in any case he maintains powerful impressions for it which continually keep him in a state of fiery longing to retrieve it." We can now understand the meaning of the comparison of the Jew to the person devoid of commandments:

"Even more than this! If given the choice, he would not choose the level of those devoid of commandments, just as if a suffering man were granted in his dream the option to be a horse or a fish or a bird - with the knowledge that his life would be one of pleasure, with no suffering - and to thus distance himself from the intellect which brings him closer to the divine plane, he would not choose it."

This is the ultimate meaning of chosenness. If you could choose now to be reborn, would you choose to be born a Jew? If the answer is yes, you believe in the chosenness of the Jewish nation.

Later sages have expanded the Kuzari's perception. However, even if we insist that the simple interpretation of the Kuzari is different, we must state that although in their context the sources were innocent, the tragic history of recent generations has transformed them into danger signs. We must regard them in the light of the command not to erect a monument which God once loved but later hated.

We must always remember our Rabbis' lesson that there are two binding concepts: "Beloved are Israel, who are called God's children," but also "Beloved is man, who was created in God's image." The word man refers to all men, Jew and Gentile alike.



## **CHAPTER 14: AN APPROACH TO COSMOPOLITANISM**

We cannot discuss the nature and status of the Jewish people without relating, albeit briefly, to an additional facet of our uniqueness as a nation. We will deal with this issue here, as it reflects an ideological struggle which has plagued the Jew in every age.

In our discussion until this point, the question of universalism versus particularism centered around religious concepts. In the modern world, despite the fact that interfaith arguments continue at full force, additional, secular forms of debate have evolved. Many voices, Jewish and Gentile alike, accuse those who would champion the cause of Jewish uniqueness in the modern world of sustaining an idea whose time has passed; now, at "the apex" of history, it would seem that all national and social boundaries have effectively dissolved. This claim is an abstract one, but, it is easily rephrased and placed in the mouth of a typical teenager as the plea: "Don't treat me as a Jew; treat me as person!"

**In order to respond to this request, let us backtrack a bit.**

### **HOW TO AWARD THE NOBEL PRIZE**

The Nobel Prize was established approximately one hundred years ago. In creating this prize, Alfred Nobel sought to atone for his sin against humanity, the invention of dynamite. He set about this task this by establishing a prestigious prize to be distributed annually by the academies of Sweden and Norway. Although more pressing issues demand our attention, we will attempt a brief intellectual exercise: how would we choose the winning candidates for the prize? What tests ought we to employ?

The awards can be easily divided into two or three different categories which are separated by a basic, essential factor. The prizes for medicine, chemistry, physics, and the like, form one such group. For pioneers in these fields, the whole world constitutes one enormous common market. We find it relatively easy to descry the scientific discovery or invention that made history. However, the Nobel Prizes contain an award for literary accomplishments as well. How should this prize be awarded? What criteria should be employed? A scientific discovery is universal in character, can be translated from one language to another with ease, is able in fact to traverse any border. These criteria cannot help us distinguish the literary giant from the mediocre hack. The same tests do not apply.

How, then, must we proceed? A quantitative measure will not answer. Should we distribute the Nobel prize based on the size of the audience a given author enjoys or do we intuitively sense the yawning gap between the popular bestseller and the literary work that truly made history? Clearly, an entirely new definition is needed. The prize must be awarded to a person whose creativity is expressed within the framework of a particular language and literary style. The popularity of the language employed is irrelevant. (An Icelandic writer, for example, stands as good a chance of winning the prize as an American one.) The deciding factor is simply whether the author presents a probing expression of the human condition, coupled with an impressive command of the range and possibilities inherent in his chosen language. Beyond the very specific expression of a particular language, a literary creation must also give voice to its national culture. This represents one aspect of the multifaceted human personality; paradoxically, linguistic and literary particularism constitutes a means of expressing a universal dimension which expands beyond the narrow confines of particularism.

This example succinctly describes the essence of human existence. On the one hand, it contains numerous natural and universal dimensions which come to the fore in the sciences and in civilization as a whole. The struggle to improve human society, which finds expression in the Nobel Peace Prize, is a significant element of this aspect of the human condition. However, parallel to these realities we find other, particular planes of experience, the antithesis of the universal qualities. These particular aspects are necessary as well, for they express another facet of the human personality which completes the picture. Thus, for example, the world of symbols that comes alive in literature constitutes an aspect of the particular quality of human experience. Not all the springwaters of human existence can be drawn with a universal bucket.

Incidentally, the list of Nobel Prizes teaches us much about the Jewish contribution to civilization and culture. The large percentage of Jewish prize winners is particularly interesting. On the other hand, it is only in recent years that we have won prizes for works of a uniquely Jewish character. Among these are the Nobel Prizes for Literature awarded in 1966 to Samuel Joseph Agnon and Nelly Sachs and the Nobel Peace Prize that was awarded to Menachem Begin, former Prime minister of Israel. We may add to this list the name of Isaac Bashevis Singer, whose accomplishments are, in essence, a complete chapter in the history of Yiddish literature.

We will now return to the initial plea "Do not treat me as a Jew; treat me as a person." It is patently absurd to pit Jewish existence and human existence against one another. Such an attitude is comparable to a person who displays an object and claims that it is not green, but simply "colored." No object in the world is merely colored with no

particular shade of its own. Humanity is not composed of individuals of cosmopolitan character who speak Esperanto and use neutral symbols. Every person belongs to some specific, distinct unit, with its own array of symbols. If he abandons his own unique essence, he will immediately take on a foreign identity.

Allow me to illustrate this concept with the aid of a simple parable. Do you remember the high school physics experiment in which we filtered white light through a prism, and discovered that it was actually composed of a myriad of colors? This experiment became the basis for the science of spectography.

Now let us recall the second half of the experiment. Taking those same colors that we received, we then passed them through a second prism and beheld a new white light. However, were we to block one of the colors on its journey from one prism to the next, we would find that the white light had disappeared, leaving only the remaining colors.

The white light symbolizes universalism. It is the composition, the blending of the colors, the sum total of particularism. If one hides or denies the existence of any particular entity, inspired perhaps by a mistaken universalism, the paradoxical result would be the damage of universalism. The white light would disappear.

The Jew is but one the various colors of the human spectrum. It is through his battle to maintain his uniqueness that he contributes to universalism, to the lucidity and power of the white light. The converse is true as well, for the Jew who abandons his Jewishness in the name of his battle against particularism causes irrevocable damage not only to his own nation, but to all of humanity as well. Far from being a chauvinistic and self-interested act, the battle to maintain our national uniqueness is instead a means for the speedy development of all of humanity.

Until this point we have addressed the expressions of religious and cultural particularism. To complete the picture, we must add a third dimension: the struggle to maintain a Jewish national identity. I call this ethnic particularism. Emil Fackenheim, a contemporary Jewish thinker, expressed this with his injunction that in a post Holocaust era we must add one more commandment to the six hundred and thirteen: Thou shalt not allow the Nazis a posthumous victory. They attempted to obliterate the Jewish nation, constructing an exceedingly systematic and detailed plan to achieve this satanic scheme. Thank God, all their plans ultimately met with failure. Yet today, we in the free world face a different phenomenon which seems to be achieving the same grievous results. Assimilation threatens to continue where the Nazis left off, not through the physical annihilation of individual Jews, but by the destruction of Judaism and of all things Jewish.

Our mission is to combat this current threat, to save our people from collective annihilation. The threat may not take the tragic form of Nazi brutality, but it is nonetheless a "kiss of death" to the Jewish community.

Thus we discover that at times continued biological existence in itself possesses cultural and religious significance. Of course each and every person possesses a drive for survival. We call this energy the survival instinct. However, sometimes a man who fights for his survival discovers the full force of his humanity in this struggle. A man fighting for his life against a serious disease can teach us much about the power of human potential, a power that may even overcome the angel of death. A man who battles against natural calamities and builds a civilization upon the ruins expresses human supremacy over nature's cruel whims. Similarly, the very biological and ethnic existence of the Jew is symbolically significant. It is based neither upon vast numbers nor upon military power. It expresses a nation's struggle to swim against the tides of history which seek so persistently to overwhelm it. Thus, through its very survival, is written one of the glorious pages of world history. The struggle for continued existence is a protest against the cruel powers and ideologies that attempt to control history through violence and physical superiority. In this environment, mere biological survival holds tremendous significance for humanity, both culturally and morally. The Torah teaches us that it has religious significance as well; our national survival is indeed a holy endeavor.

## **CHAPTER 15: On Conflict and Tolerance**

### **PART I: The Tactics of the Struggle**

We have previously discussed the distinctly Jewish nature of the experience of divine revelation. This, to be sure, was not at all easy for Christianity and Islam to accept, and each religion adopted its own tactics in its struggle with this basic truth.

Islam, in an attempt to rewrite history, depicted the Koran as an ancient tradition bequeathed to Ishmael by his father Abraham. A glance at one small detail will clarify the larger picture: Islamic tradition converted the sacrifice of Isaac into the sacrifice of Ishmael. In this manner Islam freed itself from dependence upon the Jewish tradition; it exists parallel but not beholden to Judaism. This, of course, flies in the face of the unavoidable fact (justly stressed by the Kuzari) that the Koran is based on our Torah and explicitly continues the history of the Jewish people. On the one hand we find abundant mention of the biblical miracles and of the chronicles of Israel:

"Behold our holy book is full of stories about Moses, may he rest in peace, and the children of Israel, stories whose veracity cannot be doubted; all that God did unto Pharaoh and that He split the sea and lead those whom He desired through it safely ... and how He rained down upon the Jews the manna and the quail ... and how He spoke to Moses on Mount Sinai; and how He stayed the sun for Joshua ... and similarly all that happened before that: the flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorra..." (1: 9)

On the other hand, even a superficial reading will amply demonstrate that discrepancies between the Koran and the Bible abound. For this, Moslem scholars introduced a radical solution: they claimed that the Bible was originally identical to the Koran and was distorted at a later date by the Jews. The direct result of this assertion was the total estrangement of Islam from its roots.

Incidentally, although Rihal notes only the shared historical background, Islamic dependence upon biblical sources is equally apparent in another field - Islamic law is clearly derived from our halakha.

Christianity, on the other hand, battled with Judaism in a different way: not by claiming that Judaism was falsified, but by negating it altogether. In their view, the Christian Messiah abolished the "Old" Testament. In the words of the Rashbatz (Rabbi Shimon ben Tzemach Duran of 15th century Spain), of whom we shall have more to say at a later stage, "Because they admit that our Torah is divine and of heavenly origin, and [hence] to claim that it was altered ... is impossible ... they therefore attempted slyly to

discredit our Torah by saying that it was lacking and incomplete until the advent of Jesus and his disciples.”

These widely divergent tactics not only explain the differing attitudes of Christianity and Islam towards their Jewish roots, but shed light on the Jewish reaction as well.

Two of the Rambam's thirteen principles of faith teach us (a) that our Torah is the very one given to Moses at Sinai, and (b) that it is eternally valid. Islam tried to turn its back on Judaism by claiming that the Jews rewrote history and distorted the Scriptures, that the Jews of today are not the Jews of old nor is the Bible of today the Bible of old. The Koran, they claimed, is the authentic Bible. Christianity, on the other hand, asserted that Judaism was good for its time, but after the advent of Jesus became obsolete. These are mere theological apologetics, designed to obfuscate the very apparent Jewish source of Christianity. These alterations find expression in numerous ways. When a pious Pope meets with Jews and says to them, "It is my brothers that I seek," this statement contains, besides openness, a scarcely veiled claim on that Christianity is a peer and not an offspring of Judaism. In those possessed of a less pure and less responsible attitude, we find the penetration of antisemitism into the very core of the theology and the faith.

Therefore we must continually stress that the religions which are built upon the classic foundations of prophecy, creation, divine knowledge, and the assumption of a connection between God and man do indeed draw their sustenance from our Bible. The clearest example of the distortion of Jewish roots can be found in the Mormon religion. The Mormons rejected Christianity and instead identified themselves as descendants of the ten lost tribes. The great irony lies in the fact that the Mormons and their ilk feel so close to Judaism that they deny the real Jews. We have been witness to a similar phenomenon among the American "Black Hebrew" sect which has made its home in Dimona, Israel.

As we shall see, Rihal had an involved theory regarding the role of the various religions in the process of mankind's collective development towards monotheism. In the meantime, however, at this historical stage in our as-yet-unredeemed world, we must make a realistic accounting. From a theological point of view, we easily discover a greater closeness to Islam than to Christianity. Islam accepted both our uncompromising monotheistic beliefs, and our aversion to personification of God. In contrast, traditional Jewish theologians sensed a deep chasm and a clear contradiction between Jewish doctrine and the Christian formulation of the Trinity and the Incarnation: "God materialized and became a fetus in the womb of a virgin from an influential family in Israel."(1: 4)

On the other hand, there are ways in which Christianity is actually closer to Judaism than is Islam. Our meeting point with Christianity lies in the holy Scriptures, in the record of revelation. Though the Christians rejected the Bible as a binding document, they maintained a belief in its divine character. Islam, however, considered our Bible a forgery and renounced any association with the Hebrew text. A significant legal ramification stems from this distinction between Christianity and Islam: the Rambam ruled that it is permissible for a Jew to teach Bible to Christians but not to Moslems, for the Moslems are not interested in the text for its own sake and are liable to abuse their knowledge in order to make a mockery of Judaism. Seen from a historical perspective, the Rambam's ruling clearly demonstrates a dual attitude toward these two religions. Islam shares our monotheistic beliefs, yet its categorical rejection of the Bible created a divide that runs between us until this very day. Christianity, on the other hand, while remaining farther away from us in many of its beliefs, is capable of partially understanding the renewal of our nation and our return to the Land of Israel. This is because, despite its hypocritical and often hostile attitude toward the Jewish people, it did not totally reject the Bible as its own religious source. This difference between the Islamic and the Christian approaches to Judaism constitutes the key to understanding the difficulties posed by each of these religions.

### **The Eternal Covenant**

Our conflict with Christianity and Islam comes to the fore when the Kuzari king raises the question of the sin of the golden calf. This historic sin has been used by Christian theologians throughout the ages as Scriptural proof of the divine repeal of the covenant. As the Kuzari king asks, "What of the greatness [of the Jewish people] remained at the time of that sin?" (1: 96)

Rihal's answer teaches us that, paradoxically, the incident of the golden calf proves the total opposite, for even in the wake of this grave sin the chosen status of the Jewish nation remained constant. The transgression did not nullify the covenant:

"The manna did not stop raining down for the nation, and the cloud did not stop providing them with shade, and the pillar of fire did not cease to guide them. Prophecy remained constant and grew more powerful among them, and not one of the unique gifts that they received was repealed, except for the two tablets which Moses broke; however, he immediately prayed for their return, and they received two new stone tablets, identical to the original ones, as they were forgiven for this sin." (1: 97)

Rihal's reply reinforces the concept of a "segula" that exists beyond mere chosenness. As the Maharal and Rav Kook were later to express it, chosenness is dependent upon man's actions, and serves as a measure of his spiritual level, while segula portrays an internal state which mutely proclaims that the Jewish nation will serve as God's messenger on earth throughout the process of world redemption. This mission cannot be annulled. The divine covenant with our nation and our land will last forever.

## **PART II: Our Attitude to Christianity**

Rihal's discussion of Christianity compels us to briefly touch upon a problematic issue: Judaism's approach to Christianity. Our response to Christianity contains a dual argument: a dispute over facts and a debate regarding value-judgments. Thus, the Jewish response to Christianity contains a factual-historical argument about the beginnings of Christianity, and about Jesus' character in particular, as well as a question of religious values: how ought we as Jews to judge the historical occurrences.

Although this is not a historical work, the answer to the first question bears tremendous importance. I say this despite the fact that any explanation will necessarily be disputed. I believe that in order to establish our attitude towards Christianity, an examination of the historical background must be performed. Without entering upon a discussion of the details, I will simply state that we must differentiate between different stages in the historical development of Christianity. A large part of this lecture is based upon a historical and literary analysis of the sources of Christianity by the Rashbatz (Rabbi Shimon Ben Tzemach Duran), in his book *Keshet U-Magen* (Bow And Shield). The Rashbatz' analysis is in full accord with that of current major Jewish historians. Were we to attempt to delve into Christianity's past, as if it were an archeological site, we would uncover at least four layers: 1. Jesus' position; 2. the Apostles; 3. Paul; 4. the Christian Church. We can view this structure as an upside-down pyramid, in which each layer adds to the previous one. Our starting point will be Jesus' position.

### **1. Christianity's beginnings**

The historical problems regarding the beginnings of Christianity are far-reaching indeed. Did Jesus truly live and breathe or is his existence a mere legend? Responses to this question can be divided into two opposing camps. On the one hand, we find those who support a positive verdict, and on the other, those who claim that there is no historical basis for the legends concerning Jesus. This was the position taken by many German scholars, who viewed all the data found in the works of the ancients with



dubious skepticism. Nevertheless, in the name of many of these scholars we may cynically report that Jesus the Christian never existed, and yet the Jews killed him. The historical truth hidden in this remark is that the historical criticism surrounding the character of Jesus has not succeeded in calming the tempest of antisemitism; for the skepticism regarding Jesus' existence was actually a result of this antisemitism. Many people simply could not accept the fact that the central religious figure of Christianity was Jewish. As a result, some denied the historical dimensions of the beginning of Christianity, while others chose to ignore Jesus' Jewishness, or created theological theories to somehow justify this strange aberration.

On the other side of the spectrum we find scholars who claim that Jesus did indeed exist. These scholars actually use Jewish sources to prove the reliability of their position. The Rabbinic sources for many sayings and parables attributed to Jesus strengthen this point of view. Personally, I agree with this position. Jesus' Jewish background enables us to understand the differences and disagreements that existed between the Jewish community and Jesus himself. Thus, it appears that the Jewish traditions that speak of the historicity of Jesus were correct.

Of course, many points of controversy exist even among the scholars who maintain that Jesus was a historical figure. One such controversial issue is the subject of Jesus' death. There is no doubt that Jesus was crucified by the Romans because of their fear of the awakening of a messianic political movement. Crucifixion was a singularly Roman method of capital punishment. However, at a later stage the Christians developed the idea that the Jews were responsible for the death of Jesus. Jesus died a Roman death at the hands of the Romans, as a direct result of the decision of the Romans and perhaps some collaborators. There is no clearer proof for Jesus' death as a Jew at the hand of the Romans' than the crown of thorns that, according to Christian sources, the Romans placed upon Jesus' head. This was a mocking proclamation of Jesus as the King of the Jews, a King who wears a crown of thorns, in place of a crown of gold. In this manner, the Roman ridiculed Jesus' belief in himself as the messiah.

Apparently Jesus did believe that he was the Messiah. Clearly, the events of his life can only be understood on this background, and on the assumption that Jesus expected a last-minute miracle which would prove his messianic status. Jesus was a false Messiah; however, we must note that the various false Messiahs that Jewish history has known can be divided into two types: those who were consciously impostors, and those who succeeded in convincing themselves of their own messianic role. Jesus cannot be counted among the former; he was honest. He was simply mistaken in his unswerving belief that he was God's destined messenger. It is interesting to compare Jesus to Shabtai

Zvi, who also viewed himself as the messenger of God. At the critical moment, Shabtai Zvi faltered and converted. Jesus did not, perhaps because he expected a miracle, and believed that no evil could befall the Messiah. Therefore his last words were "My God, My God why have you forsaken me?" Jesus' followers remembered and immortalized these words, because they felt that every word that he uttered was significant. Yet, these words in fact bear witness to his failure; for the miracle failed to materialize, and Jesus died face to face with his own failure.

Jesus constitutes a chapter in the history of the Jewish nation's false messiahs.

With regard to Jesus' specific identity, allow me to quote from the Rashbatz' book:

"...and I heard that the Tosafists wrote, and I saw in the polemic of Rabbi Yechiel the son of Rabbi Yosef the Frenchman, that Jesus the Christian of whom our sages spoke, who lived in the time of Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Perachia, was not the one of whom the Christians spoke in their scriptures; rather, he is the one mentioned in the Talmudic chapter "Arba Mitot" (four types of capital punishment inflicted by Jewish courts) that they prepared witnesses for him, and his name was the son of Pandira. ...and as they said of Jesus that he was hung on the eve of Passover, as they said of the son of Satdai."

The Rashbatz himself accepts the identification of Jesus with the student of Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Perachia. Today, we tend to accept the opinion of Rabbi Yechiel the Frenchman.

## **2. - 3. The Apostles and Paul**

Jesus can be described as the classic figure of a problematic preacher. Some of his opinions conflicted with Jewish law, although the majority of his statements were firmly rooted in Chazal. However, as aforementioned, Jesus was not satisfied with the position of preacher or Rabbi. He saw himself as the Messiah, and he understood that his death meant the failure of his mission. His disciples explained their leader's death differently. They viewed his death as the end of one chapter in the divine plan. This belief inspired the concept of the second coming, the faith that Jesus will be resurrected and will complete his mission in the future. Jesus considered his messianic aspirations a failure; Paul interpreted the failure as a victory. It was Paul who devised and developed a comprehensive doctrine, explaining that the redemption need not be manifest in this world, and that Jesus' death was necessary in order to open the gates of Heaven to all.

Paul's significant innovation is rooted in two major upheavals that totally distanced Christianity from Judaism. The differences between Christianity and Judaism, according to the original disciples, revolved around the person of the 'Messiah.' Paul, however, stressed two principles which later became integral to Christianity:

1. The annulment of the required observance of practical commandments. Jesus' original disciples remained faithful to the practical commandments. For Paul, however, the belief in Jesus as the messiah became central, and took the place of the original commandments. Thus, a new religious option opened up and Christianity won the battle to convert the nations of the world. For this approach gave them a short cut, which in time turned out to be a long cut leading to a dead end. Rav Kook writes (Orot Ha-emuna 9):

"The essence of heresy is the separation of the concept of fear of heaven and the principle of closeness to God from the light of Torah and all its operative manifestations. And as a result of this separation, which was performed maliciously from within the Jewish nation, ...the world became polluted. Pagan impurity found a foothold and a source of sustenance, until the end of days, when 'with the drying of its branches, they will break.'"

Rav Kook describes this development, which was expressed through the approach of Paul and his followers:

"And the separation of the principle of the *fear* of God from the observance of the Torah grew to the point that separation alone did not suffice, but rather this poison [ous idea] reached the level of contradiction, to the extent that the evil maidservant dared to conclude that her fraudulent concept of Fear was the real one, and that it necessitated the nullification and destruction of the observance of the Torah and its study..."

The Pauline separation between faith and commandments, between Torah and prophecy, letter and spirit, created a legacy of hatred. Christianity attacked Judaism and its representatives, the Pharisees, in the name of faith ("the fraudulent concept of Fear") that rejects all the commandments and views them as mere external trappings. The inevitable result was that "the external world of the nations moved out of reach of the internal influence of the Jewish nation."

With the nullification of the operational commandments, Paul abandoned Jesus' principles. In the words of the Rashbatz: "When they saw that Jesus of Nazareth said that he did not come to nullify the Torah but rather to strengthen it, they found proof from his words that he nullified the Torah."

And even given a certain degree of ambiguity in Jesus' words, the Rashbatz maintains that, "from all this it does not appear that he contradicted the Torah."

Paul explained the commandments allegorically and nullified them. But as the Rashbatz explains, "The all-encompassing response to [the fraudulent Pauline doctrine] ... is that the Torah speaks plainly and not in riddles."

2. We have already alluded to the second principle, which later became a central theme in Christianity. I refer to the doctrine of original sin. According to this doctrine, the world began in sin. The original sin occurred as follows: Adam ate from the Tree of Knowledge, and therefore all of his descendants were to be forever tainted with guilt, a stain that could never be erased. Thus Jesus the son of God (a later development, the doctrine of incarnation, describes Jesus as God Himself, in human form) had to appear and die on the cross in order to atone for the sin of the Adam. The Rashbatz writes:

"And when they saw all of this they clung to their fraudulent ideas and claimed that the forefathers and the prophets and all of the greatest pious men were possessed by Satan as a result of the sin of Adam who was expelled from the Garden of Eden, and that they were descending to hell. Because [Adam's] ... sin was attached to him and his children at the outset of human procreation they called it 'original'... No one human being had the power to atone for this sin until God took on human form in the womb of a woman, and became both a God and a human, and then his blood was spilled and that blood atoned for the original sin... and our master the Ramban already remarked regarding this in his debate 'If one intends to lie, he ought to distance his witnesses,' for all of the curses that Adam and Eve and the serpent received because of that sin, we still see today [and therefore clearly] they remain and were not atoned for."

The Rashbatz demonstrates that these ideas were rejected by Jesus himself and by his student Simon Kifa-Patros who clearly stated that the Jews achieve salvation through the Torah. However, in its later development Christianity's path diverged from this original concept of salvation, and maintained that all humans share the verdict of perdition as the direct result of the sin of Adam. Faith in Jesus and the performance of the obligatory Christian rituals constitute the only possible escape from hellfire. This attitude clearly contradicts the biblical outlook, which defines messianism as the improvement of the world under the dominion of God. One of the elemental differences between Judaism and Christianity stems from this disparity. The Christians continued to speak of the kingdom of Heaven; however, a seemingly insignificant change in terminology took place. Our forefathers spoke of the kingdom of heaven as a kingdom which ruled OVER heaven and earth. The Christians, on the other hand, spoke of a

kingdom IN heaven. How can we believe in the messianity of a man who did not mend the world? If the world was not mended in his day, then clearly he is not the messiah. What has changed in our world as a result of Jesus' existence? As a matter of fact, the world has perhaps taken a turn for the worse. Paul's position attempted to solve this theological difficulty. Paul, and Christian theology in his wake, altered the concept of improvement and transferred messianism from the earth to the heavens. What was Jesus' accomplishment? He opened the gates of the Garden of Eden. Until his advent it was impossible for man to enter the Garden of Eden, and even righteous men such as the forefathers, Moses and the prophet Isaiah did not merit entry.

The Rashbatz explains that early Christianity developed with the belief that complete redemption would occur during the lifetimes of Jesus' disciples: "And (Jesus) then said 'I am truthfully telling you that this generation will not die out before all is completed.' And all this did not materialize, and [therefore] their intelligent ones had to interpret 'this generation' to mean from Jesus until the end of days and judgment day... but the plain meaning of his words is not like this... In another place it says that Jesus said to his students 'I am truthfully telling you that some those standing here will not taste death before they see the son of Man in his Kingdom' ...and behold the reality refuted this."

#### **4. The Church and Christian Antisemitism**

The fourth stage is the development of the Christian faith and its alienation from Judaism. At this stage, idolatry penetrated into Christianity and exerted its influence upon Christian theology. Jesus' transition from a Messiah and 'son of God' into God himself took place at this point. Belief in the trinity commingled with belief in monotheism, and the Virgin Mary, mother of the messiah, was granted a unique status.

This stage marks the complete alienation of Christianity from Judaism. This religious abyss developed into open hatred. As history was later to demonstrate, Christian antisemitism began its career at this juncture. Christian antisemitism stemmed, in part, from the fact that the Jews refused to accept the "new gospel" (this historical impetus for antisemitism would later repeat itself in Islam and Lutheranism). However, some content-relevant reasons existed as well. Allow me to explain. On the one hand, Christianity "attempts to approach the holy archetype, to wrap itself in the prayer shawl and rabbinical garb." But on the other, "it is worse than idol worship, for it clamors to alter the form of Jewish holiness into a monster." (ibid. 15)

Rav Kook tells us that Judaism and paganism are 'the two original elements' that contend throughout history (Le-mahalakh ha-idei'ot be-Israel, Orot 113). Christianity is

the result of the 'grafting' of these two elements. Two great thinkers realized this essential fact: Hegel, the great nineteenth century thinker, who saw himself as the vanguard of the new Christianity, and on the other hand, Rav Kook. A tremendous historical difficulty stems from the fact that although Christianity saw itself as advocate of the Bible and abdicator of the Talmud, in reality the opposite holds true. For Christianity abandoned the primary biblical concept, the 'Divine Idea' (see Le-mahalakh ibid.) which permeates and influences each and every sphere of life and extends far beyond the four cubits of religious observance.

This combination carries severe psychological ramifications. Christianity spread Judaism's roots throughout the nations. However, some nations "did not yet attain this level, and [therefore] what was infused into their surroundings from the light of Israel was the faith in God, not in accordance with [the progress of] their natural [moral] development, [and therefore it] contended with their individual personalities and clashed with their cultures, for [the light] was alien, external" (Orot, Orot ha-techiya, 88). However, Rav Kook assures us that we will witness a process "that will redeem the sparks of the spirit of Israel ... and this will cause increased hatred of Israel." Without a doubt this is a marvelous description of the revolution of idolatry.

### **Rihal's Presentation**

At the outset of the first discourse (1:4-5), Rihal presents the Christian position at the apex of its theological maturity: "However at the close of their history, in the last generation of the Jewish people, God become corporeal and transformed into a fetus in the body of a virgin from a important Jewish family and she begot him. Seemingly a person but secretly a God, seemingly a prophet, but secretly a God who dispatches prophets. He is the Messiah, whom we call the son of God, and he is the Father and the Son and the Holy Ghost. And behold, we are truly monotheists, although we speak of the trinity." (1:4)

(Incidentally, fear of the Christian censors impelled the classic Warsaw edition to eliminate important sections of Rihal's text. In order to further disguise the section's purpose, the Christian was called 'the Persian'.)

Rihal expressed the opinion of Jewish Sages throughout history when he placed the following response in the Kuzari's mouth: "Such a religion does not leave room for logic. Even more so - Logic repels most of your words." (1:5)

Since the days of Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon, Jewish thought has maintained that religion is built upon reason, but not upon its ruins, as Christianity actively prescribes. Reason is a

filter that we must use. It holds the power of veto, although it cannot assist us in actively verifying the truth.

How did Rihal arrive at this position? During the debate with the philosopher in the first section, we were given ample proof that logical difficulties with his own position did not distress Rihal at all. This fact reemerges at a later stage. In essence, Rihal is teaching us that two guides lead us on our existential quest: intellect and experience. An experiment in physics can compel us to discard an opinion which we thought was necessitated by common sense:

"After a fact has been proven to a man through what he has witnessed and through his experience, such that he believes in it with all his heart, and cannot find any other option other than the belief in this fact, he will find some weak pretense, which opposes logical reasoning, in order to justify his unlikely belief. This is also the course chosen by scientists when they uncover wondrous forces for the first time, forces which, had they been described to these scientists before they witnessed them with their own eyes, they would have denied their existence. However, after witnessing [these forces], they craftily found a reason for them ... and they will not negate that which they saw with their own eyes."

However, this is not the case with Christianity: "I do not find my mind able to accept these things as true."

## **PART III: The Paradox of Particularism**

### **The Missionary Question**

Christianity feels obligated to spread its spiritual message far and wide. A similar concept exists, at least in principle, in Islam. And yet, the Jewish religion does not seek out converts. Why?

The antisemitic explanation is that this separatist attitude stems from the egocentricity and "exclusivity" of Judaism. The Jew is interested only in the Jew, and does not concern himself with the spiritual fate of others. The antisemite interprets the concept of chosenness as the basis for the claim that God cares for the Jews and the Jews alone. Unfortunately, some Jews accept this explanation as well. They would perhaps change their minds were they to peruse the annals of Jewish history, which unveil the tremendous conversion efforts which marked previous generations. History describes a Jewish movement whose stated goal was to spread the Jewish religion among the Gentiles, however, it was terminated by bloodshed. In the course of history, our ancestors learned to be very careful, both for their own sake and for the sake of the converts themselves.

Although the original and authentic Jewish attitude towards conversion was positive, perhaps the current objection to Jewish missionary activity can help us uncover another dimension of this issue. Understanding the Jewish attitude toward conversion and toward members of other religions is linked to major issues in Jewish thought and Jewish law. However, our starting point must reach back to before the giving of the Torah. A number of covenants preceded the covenant at Sinai; a particularly significant early covenant was the divine pact with 'the children of Noah.' Our response to the question of missionary work is based upon the rabbinical statement that whoever accepts the seven commandments given to the children of Noah is counted among the righteous Gentiles. At Sinai the Jewish people accepted the Torah, and therefore the Torah and commandments obligate Israel alone. However, alongside the Torah's law we find a basic moral law which applies to all of mankind, the children of Adam and Noah, those who are not members of the Israelite covenant with God. The seven Noachide laws obligate all of mankind.

This is another dimension of the 'segulic' character of the Jewish nation. In the messianic era all of mankind will maintain a basic and universal religious and ethical awareness even without obeying the Torah's commandments. Only Israel, as 'a kingdom



of priests and a holy nation,' will be obligated to keep the Torah's six hundred and thirteen commandments.

Given this background, we can approach the enigma. Let us reopen the central question: why does Christianity need the Mission? The answer is simple. Christianity is convinced that salvation is impossible outside the church. A non-Christian, despite unwavering faith in God, and a life of prayer and moral behavior, will not merit the world to come, without accepting the Christian sacraments. This is true not only regarding those who have come in contact with Christianity and rejected the Christian position; a similar fate awaits persons who have never heard of Christianity, such as the natives of a distant island who are unaware of Christian doctrines, as well as those Jews who had the misfortune to live before the coming of Jesus! As a result of this belief, Christianity considers itself obligated to deal kindly with non-Christians by opening the gates of Heaven for them through missionary activity. This desire to 'save' others found tragic and often brutal expression in the ideology behind the Inquisition: The body must be burned in order to save the soul. This approach maintains that the Christian faith is the sole route to eternal happiness. Judaism views salvation in a different light. 'Chauvinistic and particularistic' Judaism offers other alternatives. The road to salvation through Torah is one option, which was granted to the Jewish people, while a second, universal alternative exists in the seven Noachide laws.

Thus we are faced with a paradox. The path which initially appeared universal is in essence particular. However, the 'particularistic' Jew is tolerant, and allows for pluralism, for he claims that there are many paths to salvation. The covenant at Sinai created a road to salvation which obligates the Jews and transforms them into the priests of the world, into a holy nation. However, the Jewish covenant with God does not preclude other routes to salvation. We must therefore acknowledge the potential for synthesis between particularism and universalism, between the commitment to a specific framework, and openness to the world. This balance is described in the introduction to the revelation at Sinai: "And now if you will surely listen to me and keep my covenant, you will be for me a 'segula' from all the nations, for mine is ALL the land" (Shemot 19: 5). This verse suggests the synthesis between these two principles, between a description of the Jews as a special nation and a kingdom of priests on the one hand, and the concept that 'mine is all the land,' all the land and all the nations belong to God. Our ultimate hope is that all the nations will eventually recognize the truth, however, even those who do not achieve this level can be saved if they attain the status of the children of Noah or of righteous Gentiles.

Christianity is universal and addresses the whole world, precisely because it is particularistic. Judaism, on the other hand, is particularistic because of its universal character. Judaism was the path given to the Jewish people. Yet the Gentiles may also merit their share in the world to come. The fact that we are not missionaries stems from our belief that all non-Jews are not automatically sentenced to eternal damnation. This is the ultimate significance of the Noachide laws.

### **Righteous Gentiles: The non-Jew's salvation**

The Jewish view of this issue can be understood through the analysis of a difficult passage in the Rambam's renowned work, the 'Mishneh Torah.' In the Laws of Kings (8: 11), the Rambam deals with the issue of the children of Noah, and with those who are destined to receive a portion in the world to come:

"Whoever accepts upon himself the seven commandments and is careful to fulfill them is one of the righteous Gentiles and has a place in the world to come. This is only if he accepts them and does them because God commanded thus in the Torah and informed us through Moses our teacher that the children of Noah were previously commanded [to keep] them. But if he did them out of the conviction of his reason, he ... is not [considered one of] the righteous Gentiles (but rather) (and not) of their wise men."

This is an interesting example of a case where accuracy to the letter is important not only for philosophical reasons. We have two versions of this last sentence in the Rambam. Should we read the sentence 'but rather' or 'and not?' It seems but a small difference, yet, this text holds the key to understanding the Rambam's position. According to one approach, Judaism demands that the nations of the world explicitly recognize the Mosaic revelation in order to merit eternal reward. According to the other, they need only accept the minimal content of the revelation.

Through the perusal of ancient manuscripts, particularly the manuscript of the 'Mishneh Torah' which can be found in the Bodleian library in Oxford, we have discovered that the words 'and not' are apparently incorrect. The correct reading of the text is 'but rather.' In other words, the Rambam is informing us that there are two potential religious levels of the children of Noah. On one level, the children of Noah merit the world to come by way of righteousness, because they are rooted in the revelation at Sinai, and the giving of the Torah. On the other level, they merit the world to come autonomously, through their intellect, as is the way of wise men and scholars.

The faith of the righteous man is fundamentally different from that of the wise man. This difference notwithstanding, both merit the world to come.

This position seems surprisingly liberal. However, it seems to me that our rabbis have clearly instituted this attitude through the concept of 'a baby that was captured' [in which case the Jewish child who was abducted by Gentiles is not considered liable for his lack of Jewish knowledge] for 'they follow in the ways of their fathers.' "God does not act with 'trunia' towards his creations" (Tractate Avoda Zara 3a). The word 'trunia' is the Hebrew adaptation of the Greek word 'tyrannia,' or in modern English, tyranny. God does not inflict harsh judgment upon a person who has done no wrong. However, every man has the option of understanding the ethical law and experiencing the immediate and almost instinctual relationship with God. These are universal and general commandments, and anyone possessing intellectual and logical capacities can easily arrive at them. The road to the world to come, to eternal salvation, is open to all children of Noah, in other words, to all of mankind.

Was this truly the historical position of the Rambam, or is this merely a modern, 'liberal' interpretation? From the context of Rambam's general approach, it becomes abundantly clear that he greatly esteemed all those who attained religious truth through the autonomous path of reason, such as Aristotle. However, a more appropriate and dramatic example can be found in the figure of Abraham the Patriarch, who discovered the truth through self study, even before he merited prophecy. Thus, we may infer that according to the Rambam, two legitimate types of religious knowledge exist: the religious knowledge of the righteous Gentiles, and the religious knowledge attained by their wise men. For the wise men of the nations of the world will also merit eternal life in the Garden of Eden. This interpretation was accepted by Rav Kook. In his footsteps, and in the footsteps of the Rambam, we may assert that salvation is possible even without the direct influence of the revelation at Sinai. Those who attain veritable beliefs through their intellectual endeavors merit the world to come as well.

Rav Kook writes: (Iggerot ha-Re'iya 89, vol. 1: 99-100)

"Regarding the righteous Gentiles of whom the Rambam wrote ... behold the correct version is 'but rather from their wise men,' and it seems to me that the Rambam's intention is ... that the level ... is specifically that of righteous Gentiles who have not mastered intellectual abilities, but rather accepted the faith with the purity of heartfelt emotions, and followed an honest path because of their acceptance that their commandments were given in this form by God; however, one who merited comprehension of the seven Noachide laws through the decisive power of his intellect is truly wise of heart and full of reason -- he is

considered to be of their wise men, for the attribute of wisdom is very great, and there is no need to say that he has a portion in the world to come.”

### **Some acquire their world [to come] in a single hour: Are good intentions good enough?**

Upon analyzing this question, you will immediately perceive that the Jewish approach does not constitute an ideological innovation. Let us begin our analysis. The struggle with idolatry is an essential Torah principle. And yet, we find a seemingly contradictory pronouncement in Malakhi's prophecy:

”From the dawn of the sun in the east until its setting in the west My Name is great among the nations, and in every place incense is presented for My Name and pure flour offering, for My Name is great among the nations, said the Lord of Hosts.” (Malakhi 1: 11)

We find different positions regarding the interpretation of this verse. There are those who claim that it refers to the Jews in the Diaspora, while others suggest that it hints at the Gentiles. Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra solves the problem by adding the word 'if' to the verse: 'If I had commanded, they would have offered me an honorable thing, incense would have been offered to me ... and they would have hearkened to me to praise my great name.” Rabbi David Kimchi (Radak), the classic medieval exegete of the Prophets, explained the verse differently:

”For even though they worship the constellations of the heavens, they acknowledge Me as the first cause; however, they worship them based on their opinion that they are intermediaries between Myself and them, and [thus] Chazal said, 'They call him the god of gods.’”

According to Radak's interpretation it is possible that even an idolater could possess misguided good intentions. This is similar to the Rambam's position (Hilkhot Avoda Zara Chapter 1) that the appearance of idolatry was a distortion of the original monotheistic ideal.

Now we must approach a complex issue. According to the Rambam, and prior to him, Rabbenu Bachaye, this question is related to what is termed the doctrine of Divine attributes. We will discuss this doctrine later. According to these thinkers it is essential that one form in his soul a proper and, as far as possible, an exact concept of God. Why should he create this image in his mind? Allow me to explain by way of a simple parable: Let us imagine that we are sending a letter. The most important part of the letter is the

address, which must appear on the envelope so that the letter will reach its destination. The letter symbolizes the worship of God. The concept of God which we serve is the address. According to this understanding, if the address is deficient, such as when one who worships a concept of God that is flawed because of corporealization, or because of another basic misunderstanding of the divine concept, we find ourselves mailing the letter, our service and love, to the wrong address. The Rambam's great contribution to this discussion was that the problem of attributes cannot be resolved with a linguistic solution. In other words, we may use different linguistic expressions that seem 'spiritual,' yet, the concept of God that comes along with those expressions does not meet the necessary standards of holiness. Man is not judged by the words that he uses in his religious worship (as is common in other religions, which were attacked by the thinkers of the Middle Ages concerning the fact that a mere isolated statement sufficed to allow one to join the fold) but rather by the purity of the divine concept that he holds within. In other words, the great significance lies not in man's words but in the divine image that one fashions from these words, as the Rambam explains in *Moreh Nevukhim* (I: 50). Thus, we have a religious commandment, for if we did not create this divine concept we would find ourselves, in a sense, discussing religious thought in a foreign language. The solution lies not in the language but in the content.

Parallel to this position, there is another that is not so rigid. I would describe it by saying that if the mail system is sophisticated enough, the letter will reach the addressee even with a mistake in the address. In other words, those same philosophers who did not do obeisance to the rational side in man were able to accept mistakes in the divine concept. It seems to me that this is how we must understand the argument between the Rambam and the Ra'avad in the Laws of Repentance regarding those great and naive people who worshipped God by corporealization.

We can glean an important principle from here. Perhaps we may say that God judges man and humanity in two different ways. To what can this be likened? Imagine that you see two mountain climbers. The question is, which one is more accomplished? A is at a higher point than B. If we were to judge by height, A has certainly achieved more. But on the other hand it may be that they were both skylifted to certain heights by a helicopter, and while A went further down, B went up. From this perspective B's achievement is more significant. In mathematics we differentiate between the function and the derivative. God judges the objective reality by the function, and man based on the derivative.

## **Our conflict with the East**

We continually jump forward and backward in time at each stage of our discussion, as though we were traveling in a time machine. We must return to the world of the Kuzari both in order to comprehend the man and his surroundings, and to bring the Kuzari to our world, as a symbol of modern man's struggle with his existential problems. At this point, the Kuzari recognizes the fundamental fact that no concept of religion may exist without the Bible. With the birth of modern Existentialism, Kierkegaard rediscovered the human encounter with God, and found himself compelled to return to the Bible. He shut the door on philosophy, and returned to Abraham and the Sacrifice of Isaac. Pascal before him did the same. Both returned to R. Yehuda Halevi.

The human quest for spirituality is comparable to a board game. However, this game, unlike chess, involves more than two players. Game pieces of many different colors decorate the board. The first piece is the product of the prophetic call; this piece represents the man who hears the divine summons. The second piece symbolizes the fruit of the human mind. This is the man who waves the banner of Rationalism and sets out to single-handedly construct rational laws. These players compete with each other. However, at times they sign a tactical agreement against the other players. Such is the pact between Shem and Yefet, which laid the foundations of Western culture.

Alongside the prophet and the rationalist, a third player participates in this game. He presents an alternative option in the continual duel between rationalism and divine instruction: idolatry. It is indeed shocking and alarming to discover that in our modern and progressive society, which views religion as a thing of the past, new idolatrous practices continually appear, such as Hare Krishna, the various Gurus, and even devil worship. Dealing with idolatry, then, is not merely a thing of the past. It is a continual and weighty undertaking, which must be accorded appropriate attention.

Besides these well-known players, we find the 'eastern options.' These religious possibilities are many and varied. Yet, if we wish to generalize, we may assert that they all share two fundamental components. One of these components is somewhat acceptable, while the other is, in our view, completely invalid. The idolatrous element and its remnants constitute the unacceptable ingredient; the valid component is the attempt to achieve a mystical experience. The mystical experience can be found in all cultures, and in and of itself is not invalid. Mysticism claims to a unique connection with the divine. We will examine this relationship at another juncture. Mysticism in our Jewish framework translates into Kabbala and Chassidism. Were we to compare Jewish mysticism with the mysticism of other religions, we would discover interesting similarities as well as enormous differences. Without entering upon a detailed discussion

of the topic, I will simply state that mysticism can not be considered the sole focus of Judaism. In order to understand this statement, we must understand the essential difference between prophecy and mysticism. Mysticism promises redemption for the individual, but forgets to redeem the material world; prophecy heralds the redemption of the world in its entirety. On a different note, mysticism unfettered by Halakha (Jewish law) can be dangerous. Jewish history has provided us with some fascinating examples of this truth.

These two principles are of paramount importance. The mystic resides at the peak of a hill, and invites the world's unique and singular individuals to join him. Yet, the world remains what it was: a vale of tears. The mystic looks down upon the common man's needs: children, livelihood, and food. These concerns appear to him as trivial as a game of marbles or dolls. When a man reaches the hilltop he will view everything from the proper perspective, and realize that these petty concerns are truly insignificant. The conclusion from this vantage point is obvious; it is futile to waste effort and energy on meaningless things. And yet, these meaningless things translate into millions of people dying of poverty and famine.

This brings us to discuss another player. Among the numerous Jewish figures who dramatically altered the face of the world, one man's influence extended as far as the eastern world. This is a Jew who belonged to a group that we, who remain faithful to the Torah and its commandments, discredit and justifiably term "marginal Jews." And yet, it is impossible to deny the fact that this group drew much of its content from the principles of Judaism and the prophetic tradition. It is astonishing to notice, among the banners of the parade marking the first of May in China, pictures of a classic 'bearded Jew,' Karl Marx. This fact reiterates, albeit with the necessary qualifications, one of Rav Kook's basic axioms: remarkable individuals exist in all nations and civilizations, yet, the religious history of the world has always been uniquely and decisively influenced by a single collective entity: the Jewish Nation. This is the essence of Israel's chosenness.

World history could have developed in numerous directions. The direction of history was decidedly influenced by the existence of the Jewish nation, and that is precisely the sum and substance of the chosenness of Israel. There are other aspects of the doctrine of chosenness, and we will deal with them in the future. In any case, the unique status of the Jewish people stems, first and foremost, from a simple historical fact: the quest for religious meaning requires an encounter with Judaism.

## **PART IV: Global Brotherhood**

The French Revolution symbolized the advent of the modern era. It upheld the desire to achieve three great ideals: liberty, equality and brotherhood fraternity. At a later stage we will discuss the conflict between these different ideals, such as the tension between freedom liberty and equality. However, here I would like to turn our attention to another aspect of the problem. Since the French Revolution we have developed a growing awareness that human societies are merely human, or in other words, that they are imperfect. Freedom does exist. However, it must be noted that freedom appears on the backdrop of tremendous pressures. On the other hand, equality is limited. As George Orwell put it, all are equal, but some are more equal than others. There are those who are less equal, the weak and the elderly, the sick and the retarded. We must give our hand and help to these groups, for there is no such thing as total freedom or absolute equality.

The third ideal remains; it is the epitome of biblical ideals: fraternity, or brotherhood. Even if at times doubts arise, brotherhood must continually be stressed, when equality and freedom have been curtailed or eliminated. The brotherhood which I extol does not prescribe any blurring of the differences; rather, it instructs us: "Behold we all have one father, behold One God created us." (Malachi 2: 10).

For the relativist, who does not believe that truth exists, tolerance comes easy. "To each his own" is his motto. Yet, what is the meaning of tolerance for a math teacher who knows that a certain student is wrong? In this case, tolerance changes from a philosophic concept to a moral one.

We are not relativists. We will never compromise even minimally on the truth of our position. Yet, we wish to exemplify brotherhood in humanity, even outside the borders of our religious affiliation. We must not be blind to the erroneous elements in other religions and recognize that they are primitive mistakes that are probably the results of blindness, lack of sensitivity or stubbornness. Despite all this, however, these religions are not representatives of Satan. We pray for their repentance. Only then will the verse in Zechariah (14: 9) be truly fulfilled (Zechariah 14, 9): "On that day God will be one and his name will be One." The religions that were born of Judaism worship one God, but they do not recognize His name.

Our unique historical situation as a Jewish people who have returned to their homeland, is indeed the dawn of hope for a new era. History testifies in countless examples to the difficult lives of the Rishonim (early medieval Jewish commentators legal authorities). They dwelt among the Gentiles and their foreign religions. Their position was of necessity one of struggle and constant contention. Therefore, it became



imperative that their creative writings contain religious polemics. This blend of religious writings and religious debate finds ample expression in the Rambam's works. How is it possible to speak of tolerance when your brothers are persecuted because of their faithful adherence to the religion of their forefathers? And even without the effects of persecution, Jewish education in the Diaspora meant, first and foremost, education for self-defense: defense against the religious and cultural pressure from without. And this resistance would have been impossible without contention and struggle.

Survival as Jews in exile would have been impossible without polemics and apologetics. When living amongst the Gentiles, even in a ghetto, one must first of all explain to one's children the difference between us and them, and give one's his offspring emotional and intellectual provisions so that they may rise to the challenge. Jewish independence means the existence of a political basis which serves as the key to spiritual development without continual conflict, and without the need for polemics as our central weapon. Polemics and emotional aggressiveness are part of the price that Jewish thought was obliged to pay for life in the Diaspora. For us, the modern-day students of the Rambam and Rihal, who live during the establishment of the state of Israel, a new possibility exists: that of developing our faith free of conflict.

"And it will come to pass in the end of days..."

I would like to end this unit with the story of Aime Palieri, a Gentile who converted to Judaism.

In his autobiography, "The Hidden Temple," Palieri relates his life story. His encounter with the Jewish faith seemed almost destined from Above. His first meeting with Judaism took place when he was yet a child, who loved to look at his parents' giant album of Dore's biblical pictures. His second meeting with Jews was when, while strolling with a friend one day, he chanced upon a synagogue. He entered precisely at the time of the Ne'ila prayer on Yom Kippur. He saw the Jews at prayer and felt that they were all priests. He also instinctively felt that they longingly awaited something: forgiveness and redemption. At the time Palieri was studying for the priesthood, but slowly and after many adventures, he recognized the Judaism that appeared to him as part of the Christian heritage, and was drawn to it. He wished to convert, but when he turned to Rabbi Eliyahu Ben-Amozaegh, the Rabbi of Livorno, Italy, Rabbi Ben-Amozaegh explained that righteous Gentiles will also merit the world to come, and he entrusted Palieri with a different task: the renewal of the doctrine of the children of Noah. He felt that only an innovation such as this could generate new religious life in the future. Aime Palieri indeed became a 'child of Noah.'

## **The Dilemma**

A conference of 'Noahides' children of Noah recently took place in the United States. Various Orthodox Jewish groups consider this the key to the betterment of the world. To be a child of Noah, then, means to accept the concept of divine revelation, the centrality of the Bible and of Jewish thought, without accepting the yoke of the commandments. This brings us to one of the dilemmas of modern Jewish thought, a dilemma which has not been resolved. How will the redemption that we have placed our faith in actually come about? Will redemption occur through the agency of the Monotheistic religions which stemmed from Judaism, or rather through their disappearance?

Rihal witnessed the singular works of Christianity and Islam, and he developed an innovative approach, which was later accepted by the Rambam. In Rihal's view, both Christianity and Islam are history's tools to pave the way for the process of redemption; their reign constitutes a stage which must precede the victory of the Torah and Jewish messianism:

"Every religion that came after [Judaism]...alters, in truth, to be like it. Although on the surface they seem to be appear to distant from it, these religions are really only a preparation and introduction for the awaited messiah, who is the fruit, and in the end of days when they defer to him, they will be his fruit. And the tree will be wholly one. Then they will revere the root that they previously scorned..."(4: 23, 178).

Rihal explains this idea with the parable of the seed. The Jewish Nation in exile appears to be a seed rotting in the soil. And yet, this seed is destined to change the face of the earth. Rihal develops this parable in a radical manner:

"This grain falls into the ground and there it changes and seemingly becomes soil, water and mire. And to one who looks at it there is no evidence of what previously was the seed. However, after a time it turns out that this very grain will alter the dirt and water to adopt [the seed's] nature, and [the seed] will change them stage by stage until the elements are rarefied and it will make them similar to itself, and then it will bring forth husks, leaves and more. Until this seed will become cleansed and worthy of having the divine essence reside within it, and [become] the likeness of the first seed. Then it will become a tree which bears fruit of the type which dispensed the seed." (Ibid.)

It is interesting to note that here Rihal apparently concludes that in the end of days the divine essence will reside within all who will become a "fruit-bearing tree;"; in other words, all of humanity.

This is one position. However, another approach is conceivable as well. This second position claims that although the Christianity and Islam brought the tidings of

monotheism and the Bible to all four corners of the earth, the ultimate redemption of the world will take place without them. For the Aantisemistism that they perpetuated is the proof that they abused the duty entrusted to them. This was evidently the opinion of Rav Kook. He did not believe in the possibility of a Christian revival returning Christian faithful to Judaism; he felt that the redemption and return would stem from a source outside of Christianity. Indeed, he considered it possible that the redemption was more likely to arise from the nations who never accepted what is termed the 'Judeo-Christian tradition.'

We present these two positions without attempting to choose between them. In any case, this debate does not affect the prevailing fundamental idea that if Israel's redemption is the initial stage of the process, the second stage involves the return of all the nations of the world to the age old truths of Judaism. Rabbi Nachman of Breslav expressed this beautifully in his explanation of the fact that Moses was buried outside the borders of the land of Israel. Rabbi Nachman explains that it is because he is waiting for the arrival of all the nations of the world. Rabbi Nachman writes: (Likutei Moharan 17: 6):

"And this is the meaning of [the phrase in the 'Aleinu' prayer,] 'to correct the world with the kingdom of Sha-dai (God; literally, "has enough") and all flesh will call your name,' this is the element of the concept of return, where the good returns to its place... for Sha-dai is the category of one who has enough in his Godliness for every creature and does not desire any other form of worship, 'to turn towards You all the evil ones of the earth' [refers to]... the category of the converts, 'all the inhabitants of the earth will recognize and perceive [God's dominion].'"

## **CHAPTER 16: Jews and Gentiles are Called Man: The Jewish Attitude to Gentiles**

### **PART I**

I chose this title, which is an adaptation of Rabbenu Tam's statement (Tosafot, Yevamot 61a: "Gentiles fall under the category of 'Man'"), in order to express the Jewish position regarding this problematic topic. Public debate, political interests, and naivete can sometimes transform technical legal issues, precise wordings, hints and subtle and sophisticated parables, into weapons of war in any ideological struggle. In such cases, clarification of the issues becomes a necessity, even if it compels the reader, accustomed to consuming wholesale slogans, to deal with the issues themselves once and for all.

#### **Let us begin our discussion with a telling quote from the Midrash:**

"Rabbi Akiva said: The verse, 'Love your neighbor as yourself' (Leviticus 19: 18) is a great principle of the Torah. Ben Azai said: The verse, 'This is the book of the history of mankind' (Genesis 5: 1) is a greater principle still." (Bereishit Rabba, Theodor-Albeck edition, Jerusalem 1965, page 237)

I will not enter here upon an analysis of the argument between Rabbi Akiva and Ben Azai, nor will I attempt to clarify the conclusions which these two principles generate. I will simply note that we are faced here with two examples of a larger family of 'great principles,' or maxims, which generate additional commandments and rules. The commandment "Love your neighbor as yourself" cannot be limited to a mere emotional obligation or even to an obligation to perform a specific type of action. Were we to interpret our obligation in this manner, this commandment would take on the properties of any other particular commandment. We are faced not with an individual commandment but rather with an encompassing principle, from which we may derive specific commandments and prohibitions. These principles serve as the key to understanding every philosophical problem relating to ethics and mores. This concept is prevalent throughout the Rambam's writings, and particularly in the Book of Commandments (second principle), in his critique of the method used by the author of the Halakhot Gedolot:

"Those who rely on this reasoning count among the 613 biblical commandments visiting the sick, comforting the mourners and burying the dead because of the exegesis mentioned above, as God said 'And tell them the path to follow [lit., to go in it] and the action that they should perform' (Shemot 18: 26), and the Rabbis said - 'the

path" - this refers to acts of kindness; "to go" - this refers to visiting the sick; "in it" - this refers to burying the dead; "and the action" - this refers to the laws; "that they should perform" - this refers to acts beyond the letter of the law (Bava Kama 30b). And they thought that each and every one of these actions was a commandment unto itself, and they did not know that all these actions and other similar ones come under the rubric of one commandment out of [the 613 commandments] that are written in the Torah explicitly, namely God's statement, 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

This idea is repeated in the Rambam's explanation of Positive Commandment #206, in his Laws of the Mourner (14: 1), as well as in his commentary on the Mishna (Pe'ah 1: 1), in which he states: "All of the interpersonal commandments are included in the category of gemilut chasadim (acts of kindness); meditate on them and you will discover them. Consider what Hillel the Elder said when the Gentile asked that he teach him the whole Torah while standing on one foot: 'What is hateful to you, do not do unto your friend.'" The Rambam warns us: Do not expect to find all these particulars in infinite detail, for they are all included within the larger principle.

### **"Walk in His ways:" Imitatio Dei**

At first glance, it seems that "Love your neighbor as yourself" is the highest moral principle in the halakhic system; however, a closer look will demonstrate that this is untrue. An additional principle, one that we oftentimes forget, takes precedence over the first rule. The Rambam worded this principle as follows (Book of Commandments, Positive commandment 8):

"[This commandment is] that God commanded us to resemble Him as much as possible and that is the meaning of "and you shall walk in his ways" (Deuteronomy 28: 9). This commandment was repeated [in the verse] "...to walk in all His ways," and the explanation was given that just as God is called compassionate so you should be compassionate; just as God is called merciful so you should be merciful; just as God is called kind, so you should be kind. This idea was reiterated in different words [in the verse] "Follow the Lord your God" (Devarim 13: 5) and the explanation was given that one should resemble [God] in the good deeds and honorable character traits that may be used to describe God Almighty by way of parable [although in reality] He is very much above all this."

We are faced with two similar principles, which seemingly generate exactly the same laws. Therefore, it is important to distinguish between them. And the difference is indeed significant. The rule, "Love your neighbor as yourself" has a limitation (Laws of the

Mourner 14: 1): "Behold, these are included in 'Love your neighbor as yourself:' all the things that you would like others to do for you, do them yourself for your brother-in-Torah (i.e. non-apostate Jews)." "Love your neighbor as yourself" is limited in its scope, and is undoubtedly based on the idea of the covenant, the desire to create a community, a nation, that will achieve its religious objectives through the principle of mutual responsibility. The idea is confined within the borders of the concept of "your neighbor." The members of this community are considered, in an allegorical sense, to be limbs of a single body, and must view themselves as such. In the words of the Radvaz, the relationships within the nation can be likened to a man "who struck his own hand with a knife. Can he strike the hand that struck him? The meaning of this is that all of Israel is one body and their souls were hewn from the Place of Unity, and [therefore]... all of Israel are guarantors for each other" (Metzudat David, Berakhot 3b). To walk in God's ways, on the other hand, creates a moral system based on the sanctity of every individual, not on the idea of community. "And you shall walk in His ways" is a broad moral rule without any boundaries, for God bestows His goodness upon wicked and righteous alike.

The Rambam bases his attitude to the Gentiles on this principle. Our obligation to behave morally knows none of the limitations that encumber other rules. The Rambam writes (Hilkhos Melakhim 10: 12):

"Even [regarding] Gentiles, the Rabbis commanded [us] to visit their sick and to bury their dead along with the dead of the Jews, and to support their poor along with all the Jewish paupers, because of "ways of peace." Behold it was said: 'God is good to all and His mercies are on all His creations' (Psalms 145: 9), and it was said: 'Its [the Torah's] ways are ways of pleasantness and all its paths are peace' (Proverbs 3: 17)."

The verse from Psalms, "and His mercies are on all His creations," teaches us the deep meaning of the principle, "and you should walk in His ways." We choose the 'ways of peace' since God's ways, which we are commanded to emulate, are the ways of peace.

It is a well-known fact that we uphold a halakhic principle, which is particularly relevant in our attitude to the Gentiles, known as "darkei shalom" - "ways of peace." On the surface, it seems that this is merely a pragmatic principle: to avoid potentially dangerous situations involving angering the Gentiles; out of fear for our lives, we must relate to the Gentiles with patience and tolerance. However, the Rambam teaches us a different concept altogether. We do not chose 'ways of peace' out of fear or utility. The Rambam writes (Hilkhos Melakhim 9: 8): "And thus regarding the attributes of God, [through which]... He commanded us to resemble Him ... He says: 'and His mercies are on all His creations.'" The source for this idea can be found in the Talmudic story about Rabbi Yehoshua Ben Levi (Berakhot 7a), who desired to curse the apostate who was

harassing him. When he failed to curse him even at God's moment of wrath, he understood that God had taught him a lesson. He then said: "We learn from this that it is not the way of the world to do so; 'and His mercies are on all his creations' [Scripture] says, and it says, 'Punishment is not good for the pious as well' (Proverbs 17)," meaning that even the case of a pious man punishing an apostate constitutes a moral fall!

There are several other factors which need to be discussed when formulating the Jewish attitude to Gentiles. We will elaborate on this theme in the next three lectures.

## **PART II: "Israel, through you I shall be glorified": The Jewish role**

The principle of "You shall walk in His ways" in fact teaches us much more. The prophets and the sages claim that walking in God's ways is in essence the defining characteristic of the Jewish people. The Jewish nation bears God's name: "Hearken My Nation and I will speak, [hearken] Israel and I will testify to you... I am your God..." (Psalms 57). The midrash explains this verse as follows: I am God to all people, nevertheless I have granted My name to Israel alone (Mekhilta De-rabbi Ishmael, 20). Thus, the original order is reversed. Initially, the obligation to walk in God's ways took the form of a commandment; however, for the rest of the world it has become a fact. The world learns of God's attributes through observing the ways of the Jewish people. This is the source of the idea that the Jewish people's behavior necessarily entails either the sanctification of God's name or, God forbid, the opposite.

One may infer the connection between our moral attitude to Gentiles and the sanctification of God's name from the words of Shimon Ben Shetach upon returning a Gentile's lost object (Jerusalem Talmud, Bava Metzia 2: 5). He responded to his students' query thus: "What do you think, that Shimon ben Shetach is a barbarian? Shimon ben Shetach wished to hear: More blessed is the God of the Jews than all of the reward in this world." Later on, the Jerusalem Talmud brings other examples. Another case that can teach us much is the story of Rabbi Samuel Bar Susrat, who did not return the King's lost object by the time the King had specified, and returned it later, in order "that you should not say that I acted out of fear of you, but rather out of the fear of God." The attitude of the sage to the Gentile is not enforced by the fear of the government; rather, the opposite is true. He mocks the Government, and returns the lost object because Jewish morality compels it. Because of the behavior of this sage, the Gentile declared: "Blessed is the God of the Jews." The moral attitude is adopted in the name of God, AS OPPOSED TO THE PERSONAL INTEREST of the individual. This behavior expresses a definite awareness that, through his deeds, the Jew represents God's name

and His attributes, and that in effect he is the subject of the verse in Isaiah, "And He said to me, you are My servant, Israel, through you I shall be glorified." (Isaiah 49: 3)

However, this fact leads us to another principle which must guide us in our attitude to the Gentiles. Certain actions are sometimes necessary for political reasons or security purposes. Yet, we may not free ourselves from the concern that these actions might corrupt us. This claim is not a modern one, stemming from Western liberalism. We find a similar attitude in the writings of the seventeenth-century sage, the Chakham Tzvi. After summarizing the different laws regarding the moral attitude of the Jew to the Gentile, he writes: (*Responsa Chakham Tzvi*, 26, Warsaw 1876, 18a):

"And when laying siege to a Gentile city we were commanded to leave one side without siege... and even [regarding] animals, who cannot talk, [the Torah] commanded us not to cause them pain... and even [regarding] flora we were commanded 'Do not destroy its trees' and all this is not due to the [wrongness of the] act as much as for us the actors to acquire in our souls true knowledge and honest and good character traits in order to merit us for our own good, and this is very clear."

There are actions that objectively are justified. Nonetheless, we may not carry them out, lest they corrupt us, God forbid.

Thus we have discovered three principles which must guide us in our attitude to the Gentiles.

An attitude of reciprocity obligates us to extend the sphere of our moral behavior because of "ways of peace." However, this principle is encompassed and defined by the highest Jewish principle - sanctification of God's name, which is linked to the commandment to walk in God's ways. The gemara teaches us (*Bava Kama* 113b): "... R. Pinchas Ben Yair says, [in a situation] where there is [potential for] desecration [of God's name, it is forbidden to take] even ...[a Gentile's] lost object [which would have otherwise been considered ownerless]." In addition, the Jerusalem Talmud teaches us (*ibid.* 4: 3) that "at that time Rabban Gamliel forbade robbing Gentiles, [claiming that] it should be prohibited because of the desecration of [God's] name." And in the Tosefta we find the following statement (*ibid.* 6: 15): "Whoever steals from a Gentile must return it to the Gentile; it is worse to steal from a Gentile than from a Jew because of the desecration of [God's] name." The Tosefta believes that beside the Torah prohibition, stealing from a Gentile involves the additional transgression of desecrating God's name.

A mysterious bond links the Jewish nation to God, a connection that is expressed through the concept of the sanctification of God's name. When the Jewish people follow



God's ways, God's name is sanctified; when the Jewish people sin, it is desecrated. Moreover, the behavior of the Jewish people obligates God, as it were. In the words of Isaiah the prophet, whoever looks on the Jewish nation must say: "These [people] are God's nation," the nation that follows the ways of God. On the other hand, when the Jewish people suffer, the suffering itself contains an aspect of desecration of God's name: "Why should the Gentiles say, Where is their God?" (Psalm 115). The redemption of the Jewish people, then, involves sanctification of God's name. This concept appears in many places, and reaches its most extreme expression in the words of the prophet Ezekiel, who maintains that Israel's redemption will occur solely for the sake of sanctifying God's name. This connection is thus a reciprocal one, which cannot be severed: "His glory is on me, and my glory is on Him." This is the true glory, the connecting thread that weaves through the destiny of God's nation. This relationship can be described as a two-sided equation. On the one side of the equation we find Jewish destiny, testimony to the workings of heaven. We, the children of Israel, bear witness to God's existence and to the creation of the world. On the other side of the equation we find the behavior of the children of Israel. We must behave righteously, for if we sin, God forbid, we desecrate the name of God. The nations judge God based on our actions. The commandment to "walk in His ways" creates a similarity to God, both on the part of the individual and the whole. The Jewish nation must achieve a collective resemblance to the Almighty.

Thus, we have found that in each particular case different laws may apply. The Jew who speaks of humane behavior towards the Gentile does not present an extra-halakhic position; he expresses the halakhic ethic itself. The halakhic system embodies morality and justice, both in an ideal and in a less-than-ideal reality. Were we to remain within the realm of ethics alone, we would become barren 'bleeding-heart liberals.' Halakha permits aggressive action in certain situations. This is a realistic approach, for mercy may easily become brutality. We are, however, commanded to maintain a moral standard of behavior even while exercising this right. The Talmud (Tractate Ketuvot, 37b) states: "Rav Nachman said in the name of Rabba bar Avuha: the verse says 'Love your neighbor as yourself;' [this means:] select an easy death for him." Although war and capital punishment seem to manifest the absolute failure of moral principles, their halakhic sanction does not nullify the general moral principle which applies explicitly to those sentenced to death by the Jewish courts: 'select an easy death for him,' and do not humiliate him. You may need to take undesirable action at times. Nevertheless, moral principles must guide you.

### **PART III: Sanctification of God's Name**

The concept of sanctification of God's name is comprised of several aspects. An understanding of these components will serve us well.

The first dimension is the simplest one. Unfortunately, people judge one another based on success. The nations of the world judged their idols in this manner, and they similarly judged the God of Israel based on His success. The practical translation of this judgment is simple. The modern world measures God's success and greatness based upon the achievements of the Jewish people, for they are God's nation. The suffering of the Jewish people in exile contains a desecration of God's name. Therefore, the prophet Ezekiel prophesies that in the end of days the redemption of the Jewish people will be essential, for the redemption itself holds the proof of God's truth. By the same token, desecration of God's name is manifest in the suffering of the Jewish nation.

The second level is that of those willing to suffer death for the sanctification of God's name, who sacrifice themselves for its sake. Rihal elucidates this principle in his claim that all religions venerate the individual who is willing to suffer for the sake of his religion.

This concept is expressed in Psalm 44:

"...[Though] You make us into a shameful spectacle for our neighbors, an object of scorn and derision for our surroundings; [though] You make us a byword among the nations, a [cause for] nodding heads among the peoples; and my disgrace is before me all day long, and the shame of my face has covered me, before the voice of the taunter and blasphemer, before the enemy and avenger. All this has come upon us, and yet we have not forgotten You, and we have not been false to Your covenant. Our heart has not turned back, even when our steps veered from Your path, when You allowed us to be oppressed where serpents dwell, and covered us with the shadow of death. Had we forgotten the name of our God, even when we spread out our hands towards a strange god, God would have discovered it, for He knows the secrets of the heart. For it was for Your sake that we were killed all the day long; we were considered as sheep for the slaughter... Arise, come to our aid, and redeem us for the sake of Your loving kindness."

The third definition refers to the person who LIVES for the sanctification of God's name, someone whose entire life revolves around a holy focal point, whose life, in essence, constitutes a showcase for Judaism. Since he represents the name of God, he is incapable of desecrating the holy name. God's name is desecrated as the result of the Jewish people's immoral behavior. It is connected not with the torment that a Jew

suffers, but with the evil that he may commit. This level is parallel to another, possibly higher level of the principle of sanctification of God's name. Our Rabbis teach us that this sanctification finds expression through performing the commandments.

Thus we can understand the term 'glory' in the verse, 'Israel, through you I shall be glorified.' This is the glory that God enjoys from the Jewish people, when we live our lives not according to the standards of egotism, but rather by the standards of an ideal, by the principles of holiness. We spoke of a showcase, and once again, the use of this image is due to a certain trait of the world at large. In practice people judge ideas not for their own worth, but rather on the basis of those who uphold them. This necessitates the sanctification of God's name through our responsibility to conduct ourselves in accordance with our beliefs. This obligation on our part will clearly never do justice to the ideal, for we are well aware of our sinful and weak natures. Yet, despite the difficulty of achieving absolute success, we must make the effort.

In his "Epistle Regarding the Sanctification of God's Name," the Rambam stresses a fourth perspective, to which our Rabbis gave particular weight. It is in essence an extension of the third dimension, regarding the obligation upon sages and people of standing. A wise man must be particularly careful of his behavior, because his behavior can cause the desecration of God's name, through what we would call 'demoralization:' when one man's actions cause others to stray from proper moral conduct. This fact places a very heavy responsibility upon people of standing, a responsibility which must find expression not only through truly moral actions, but also in prudence regarding actions which only appear to be transgressions, for these actions have the power to influence others.

This concept may be expanded still further. The scholar must be mindful of things that may estrange him from the people. Thus, for example, the Talmud maintains that a scholar commits a sin merely by wearing stained clothing. This is not a moral blemish, however he must be sensitive to the human tendency to judge ideas not solely based on the ethical conduct of their advocate, but also based on his esthetic appearance. People do not appraise ideas based upon mathematical proofs, nor even, at times, by existential analysis. The development of mass communications has intensified the problem. A debate between presidential candidates can be won or lost because one of the candidates was not well-shaven. Acceptance or rejection of an idea is influenced by the attractiveness of the presenter. This is an irrational, subjective factor, yet it is a common motivator in the decision-making process. The scholar must not hinder the masses in their attempts to reach the correct decision. Although taking this responsibility to extremes can bring us to absurdity, and given that each individual must be granted the

right to maintain his individuality and equilibrium in all areas, yet the scholar must understand that his behavior is to be amended through this concept. The fourth dimension of sanctification of God's name places an unshirkable responsibility upon the elite who guide the masses. For through this responsibility, the leaders determine the fate of their followers. The Rambam teaches us that only the elite understand what it means to become similar to God. The masses understand what it means to become similar to the elite. The masses attain ideals through their relationship with key figures, focal points with whom they can identify.

The covenant between God and the Jewish people lies at the base of the concept of chosenness. Thus, we must see ourselves as God's ambassadors on earth. This role obligates us to maintain a higher standard.

#### **PART IV: The Image of God**

The rabbinic injunction to "select an easy death" for the person sentenced to capital punishment demonstrates that our behavior under extreme circumstances is indicative of the underlying principles of our faith. Joshua commanded the Jews to hang the five kings that he had bested in battle, "and let them be hung upon the trees until evening" (Joshua 10: 26). Joshua took them down in the evening, thereby maintaining their human dignity since all people, including Gentiles, were created in the divine image. The author of the eighteenth-century Mishna commentary *Tif'eret Yisrael*, in a special composition which he included in his commentary on *Ethics of the Fathers* (3: 14), explains the mishna which states that mankind is beloved to God because they were created in God's image, and the Jews are beloved since they are called God's children. This contrast teaches us that the term 'Adam' (Man) includes the children of all nations, all of whom were created in God's image.

As we know, the law regarding the ritual impurity of a Gentile dead body is dependent upon the words of Rabbi Shimon, 'You [the Jewish people] are called Man' (which interprets the verse, "When a man shall die in a tent... all that is in the tent shall become ritually impure"). The Chida, in his work "Yair Ozen," states that the halakhic ruling in this issue is dependent upon the outcome of an additional debate. The Rambam rules according to Rabbi Shimon's view, while Rabbenu Tam disagrees with him. The Chida logically concludes that this is due to Rabbenu Tam's well-known opinion that '[the term] Man includes Gentiles as well.' And it is interesting to note that that even the Rambam, who rules in accordance with Rabbi Shimon, refrains from explicitly using the statement 'You [the Jews] are called Man' as his rationale.

Thus, we must not imbue the assertion 'You are called Man' with significance beyond its precise halakhic meaning. In contrast to Rabbi Shimon, Rabbi Meir interpreted the verse 'that which Man [Ha-adam] shall do' to mean that a Gentile who is involved in the study of Torah is equal to a high priest. And based upon this, Rabbenu Tam distinguished between the terms 'Adam' [the indefinite article] which refers to Israel and 'Ha-adam' [the definite article] which includes Gentiles as well. We differentiate between Israel and the nations. The Torah sets aside a unique destiny for the Jew. In this sense, we believe ourselves to be a chosen people. One who believes in the truth of the Torah is bound to distinguish between the person who possesses its truth and the person who does not. However, this inequity is built upon a universal common denominator: the belief that all of mankind were created in the image of God. For Jew and Gentile alike share the title of Man.

### **Civilized Nations:**

I do not intend to discuss the halakhic aspects of the problem of our attitude toward Gentiles. I am not qualified to discuss practical halakhic questions. However, we are morally obligated to respond to statements made by unqualified persons, when these affirmations cause a desecration of God's name. These people's mistake is grounded not in a lack of knowledge of the sources; it stems rather from lack of application of these sources, which necessarily causes a lack of understanding. Oftentimes, the halakha contains implicit conditions, in which case a person who is guided by the books alone and is uninvolved with the living oral tradition of our rabbinic giants, will not extract these conditions, which are often only explicitly stated in obscure commentaries and responsa. The Meiri (13th-century Talmud commentator) wrote in many places that one must distinguish between idol worshippers and "the nations who are bound by religious behavior and civility." At times, halakhic rulings are brought which contain an implicit condition: the existence of a state of war with idol worshippers who live outside of civilization and 'culture.' A contemporary example would be of course the situation of the Jew living in Nazi-occupied Europe, under the rule of nations who were not "bound by civility," meaning without a reign of law and justice, who "are not concerned with societal responsibilities." In contrast, the Meiri writes in his commentary on tractate Bava Kama 113:2: "Any person who is a member of the nations who are bound by religious behavior and worship the one God in some form, although their faith is far from ours, are not included in this category [of idol worshippers], but rather are considered as complete Jews regarding these issues, including [the laws of returning a] lost object ...and all other things without exception." These words were not written because the

Meiri feared the censor; they stem from a deep understanding of halakha. And similar examples can be found in the hundreds in the responsa and the writings of the mussar teachers, such as Rabbi Eliezer Azkari, who stressed that whoever keeps the seven Noachide laws is not considered an idol worshipper, or the Chavot Yair, who states simply that "Gentiles of our day are not [in the category of] idol worshippers with regard to every issue, since they believe in the Creator of heaven and earth..."(Frankfurt edition, pg. 5: 2).

Discriminatory behavior is sometimes the result of a historical situation. We are not obligated to listen to preachers of morality who belong to nations which discriminate between one person and another, and determine fates according to the color of one's passport, which is the current state of affairs in all the countries of the world. However, we must heed the call of Jewish morality, which is also part of the halakha, and which says that the representative angel of the Gentile cries out when a Jew misleads a Gentile, and that God does justice to the oppressors whether they be Jews or Gentiles (Sefer Chassidim, Mekitzei Nirdamim edition, section 133). Rav Kook summarized this as follows:

"This [concept of] 'ways of peace' is founded upon the depth of the truth from every angle. And in no shape or form is there justification for any nation to curtail the rights of its neighbor without a general exalted aim. Therefore, the advocates of Israel were right in their claim that we are all 'children of one father,' besides the fact that the truth lies with the Meiri's opinion that all the nations that are bound by just behavior between man and his fellow man are considered proselytes with regard to all human obligations" (Igrot Ha-ra'aya 89, part 1: 99).

## **Between Ethics and Esthetics**

Regrettably, there are times when the use of violence is inevitable. The Rambam teaches us that this violence must never become a character trait. The Shulchan Arukh states that "he who is insolent and cruel and hates PEOPLE and does not behave kindly towards them, we fear greatly for him." We are forbidden to be cruel to merciful people and one must protect the innocent at the cost of the lives of many murderers. And yet, the spilling of blood - any blood - maintains its severe character and demands atonement. In the words of the famed rabbi of Brisk, the Griz (Rabbi Yitzchak Ze'ev Soloveitchik), man must make a judgment and an accounting. He must judge whether his reaction to the situation was appropriate, and he must account for the fact that he found himself in the situation in the first place. Judgment and accounting must be given by those who

distort the Torah by using holy words as political slogans. Yet, an accounting must also be rendered by the person who is not motivated by ethics but by the esthetics of ethics, and is more concerned with 'how we look' than by determining the correct course of action. This is the revolting syndrome particular to those people who take lessons in morality from the pages of the world's newspapers. In the esthetics of ethics the battle is lost in advance. For there are many nations indeed who cannot forgive us for the fact that they have murdered us.

I would like to conclude this section with the words of the revered Rabbi Avraham Grodzinsky, may he rest in peace, the spiritual leader of the Slobodka yeshiva at the time of its destruction in the Holocaust (Torat Avraham, pg. 139):

"Not only Israel, but also all other nations, since they were created in the image of God, have the potential to reach the highest levels. How wonderful are the words of the [midrash] Tana Debei Eliyahu, which says: I bear witness before heaven and earth, that Jew or Gentile, man or woman, slave or maidservant, all receive holy revelation according to their actions."

## CHAPTER 17: The Parable of the King

In order to explain his system of thought, Rihal relates a parable, the parable of the Indian King. The purpose of this parable is to instruct us in Rihal's method, rather than to impart content. It attempts to teach us which proofs we must seek in order to distinguish truth from falsehood. We are not dealing with knowledge or with science; we are dealing with scientific methodology. We will embark upon an exploration of a technique which we will employ to reach our conclusion.

### Different versions of the parable

Other sources contain similar tales, and even variations upon this very same story. Thus, the Rambam relates a similar parable in his "Guide to the Perplexed" (II: 46), a parable which, conceivably, was written under Rihal's direct influence. A comparison between Rihal's version of the story and the Rambam's rendition can teach us much. In the Guide to the Perplexed we read as follows:

"At times you may demonstrate His existence through circumstances that are that are of a more hidden nature than those that have been mentioned. For instance, if someone asks you, has this country a ruler? You shall answer him, Yes, undoubtedly. [And should he ask you], What proof is there for this? You shall tell him, that while Behold this money-changer, who is, as you see, a weak and small man, and this great amount of dinars is placed before him. A poor man, who is this other big and strong, poor individual stands before him and begs for a single grain of wheat, yet and that [the money-changer] does not give him, and even reprimands him and drives him off with words. And but for his fear of this ruler, the poor man would have killed the money-changer immediately or pushed him and taken the money that was in his possession. Behold, this is a proof that this country has a king. Thus, you would have proved the existence of the king through the fact that matters in the city proceed in an orderly fashion, the cause of which is the fear of the ruler and the fear of punishment at his hands. Now in all that we have said by way of parable there is nothing to indicate the ruler's essence and his true character as expressed through his kingship. A similar situation has occurred with regard to the knowledge of God, may he be glorified and exalted, given to the multitude of the prophets ..."

The central question which the Rambam's protagonist faces is the question of the king's existence. Is there in fact a king in the country? However although, as we shall expound later, this question is connected to another discussion: What can we say about the king? Rihal, on the other hand, is concerned with a second stage, just as prophetic Judaism



took an additional step forward, beyond the philosophical knowledge of God. The Rambam's conclusion is too modest. Rihal, in his parable, does not want to lay philosophical siege upon his intellectual opponent, and vanquish him in a war of attrition, using philosophical proofs. He wishes to take the enemy by storm, by sweeping assault. Therefore, he begins by addressing the most problematic issue, and desires to triumph through it. The issue he addresses is how to recognize the king's true messenger. Does anyone truly associate with the king? Rihal attempts to solve this riddle, in the manner in which one solves an empirical scientific puzzle. The key to proving this claim lies in an experiment, a grand -scale experiment which must take place in history:

"If the king's messengers came to you with gifts which are to be found, without a doubt, only in the palaces of the king of India, and with a letter which is clearly only from the king of India. A; and to the letter are added medicines which cure all your ills and maintain your health, and death potions for your enemies and for all those who wage war against you, so that you will vanquish them as you approach them without armies and without weapons; , would you not then be obligated to obey him the king?"

Only he who is capable of bringing Indian gifts is the messenger of the king of India. The proof lies in the substance of the items that the messenger brings.

The two parables have much in common. As we have seen, both Rihal and the Rambam build a model which helps us discuss the essence of the proofs which we seek with greater, almost intuitive ease. The Rambam's parable speaks of the great philosophical riddle, in which Man looks at the world and asks if the world has a king, or in the words of the legend which describes Abraham's discovery of God, if there is a "Master of the castle." We observe the world and behold a wondrous order. From the order in the world, we conclude that there is someone who put it in order. In the Rambam's parable, the order in the country finds expression both figuratively and tangibly through obeying the law of the land. The strong do not rob the weak of their riches for fear of the king. If we translate this to the interpretation of the parable, we find that only the divine decree explains the wondrous law and order in nature. Only the divine decree explains the puzzling fact that everything functions according to a causality and a system which rules on all levels of reality. According to the Rambam, then, when we look at the world we find proof of a creator who exists beyond our world, but upon whom the world and its activity depends.

Despite the similarities between the two parables, one significant difference separates them. The arguers in the Rambam's parable exist in the world, in the kingdom, while in the Chaver's version, we are searching for a proof for something which exists beyond

us, for the king of India lives at a great distance from us. The proof lies in the fact that someone appears bringing us things that undoubtedly come from his kingdom. The gifts that the messenger brings came from a distant world, from a king whose existence and accessibility we doubted only moments before. Deviation from nature constitutes the historical evidence for the prophetic mission. In the Rambam's parable, we realize that there is a God in the world, and that his utterance finds expression through nature; while in Rihal's parable, we search for a God who exists beyond nature, and we seek out the proof of his existence and accessibility not in natural circumstances, but rather in occurrences which deviate from the natural order. The Indian gifts are none other than miracles, which completely violate the natural order.

At first glance, the Rambam's version appears to approach that of the philosopher in the Kuzari. However, despite the similarity, there is a decisive difference. The king, in the Rambam's view, is interested in creating order. His dominion extends far beyond the royal court, the heavenly cycles and angels, beyond the great scientific principles, and reaches our world as well. As Rabbi Yosef Albo so trenchantly put it, the wisdom that we find here testifies not only to the existence of an order, but to an order that someone created on purpose. We learn of the king's intention to maintain the natural order. This is contrary to the opinion of the philosopher who opens the discussion in the Kuzari.

In Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's philosophy we find a different approach. We learn that the evidence for the relationship with the king of India, contains a proof that the king of India exists; or in our terms, that the world has a king, the King of kings. This version is adopted by those who base their faith upon the bursting of the miraculous into the process of history. The philosopher's quest does not suffice them, for they thirst for the encounter with the Master of the Universe, for the mission and the prophecy. The problem under discussion in Rihal's version, then, focuses on the question of the source: "Do the items that you bring originate from here, in the country that you are in, or are they foreign to this place and come from originate from elsewhere, from India and its king."

### **The gifts and the letter: an interpretation**

The gifts represent things that exist beyond our normal reality in this world. The letter 'which is clearly only from the king of India' is the Torah, a letter that God sends to Man through a messenger. We are presented with a dual thesis which touches both upon the essence of the letter, and the possibility of changing the world through its agency. The statements regarding reward of loved ones and punishment, loved ones and of enemies,

are only a fragment of an entire system which advocates the belief that this letter can alter reality, and redeem the world.

We have spoken earlier about the two dimensions of the encounter with the king of India: **A:** Prophecy and revelation, and **B:** Miracles. The Rambam saw revelation and prophecy as the central element. The Torah verifies the validity of the miracles as well as the proofs; miracles do not verify the validity of the Torah. If a prophet were to appear, perform miracles and attempt on the basis of their authority to invalidate the Torah, wholly or in part, we are forbidden to believe him. Miracles are not undefeatable weapons, since the basis of our faith is revelation. Revelation is so focal that it examines prophecy by its own criteria. In contrast, Rihal builds his approach upon both pillars, upon revelation and miracles. In his view, prophecy is not of this world, and it has the power to influence the world and change the face of reality. This proves that prophecy comes from an autonomous world beyond our own.

### **Portrait of a king**

Until this point we have probed the question of the king's existence of the king. We have not spoken at all about the king's personality, a personality that we create when we relate to him. Can we learn anything about this enigma through the parable? The Rambam remains consistent. We have not seen the king of India, and his character will remain hidden from us. The Rambam concludes that we may achieve an understanding of the king's existence, but not of his essence. Rihal, on the other hand, speaks of prophecy as an encounter with the king. The parable presents us with a general formula, which is the key to the rest: it is the theory of attributes, a topic which Rihal will discuss at the beginning of the second section, and to which we will dedicate a number of units/lectures at a later stage. However, at this point we must stress one central idea: God searches for and encounters Man. "For the divine essence connected with them, and watched over them, and performed miracles with them." In technical terms this is a 'personal' concept.

Allow me to mention an additional facet of the king's personality. Both parables contain a practical side alongside the academic element, since life is built upon the fact that actions are bound up with ideas. In chapter 1:22 we read an additional detail of importance:

"The Kuzari: Yes, and my original doubt as to whether the people of India had a king would leave me and I would then believe that his kingship and his words affect me."

The fact of his existence generates practical conclusions, and the practical side relates to the individual. We must read the words of the chaver in chapter 19 according to this principle:

"If you were told that the king of India was a compassionate man, and that you must worship him and glorify his name and speak of his compassionate deeds, all only according to a rumor that has reached you regarding the righteousness of the people of his country and their good qualities and their honesty in trade, would you feel an internal need to do so?"

It is interesting that the adjective Rihal uses to describe the king of India is 'compassionate.' Perhaps we would have expected the king to be described by his greatness, his strength, his might or his brave deeds. Here, the king is described through his moral attributes. This fact connects in my mind with the letter that the king sends. The letter, or in other words, the Torah, expresses the fact that the king is a compassionate ruler. Through our actions we must imitate the king and walk in his ways. This emulation finds expression in the king's letter, the Torah.

Rihal teaches us that history is the test of the encounter with the king of India. However, another test awaits us, the ultimate test which will take place in the future: the test of redemption.

## **CHAPTER 18: Rational Proof - A look at logic, experience and revelation**

During the course of this lecture we will analyze selections from the Kuzari which address the theme of creation. However, a variety of relevant issues necessarily arise in this context, which will broaden the scope of our discussion. Rihal, in fact, expounds upon the topic of creation in other places, particularly in the fifth section. The student who is interested in the philosophical discussion itself is referred to those sources. In the texts which we will examine, Rihal does not deal with the actual proof of the theory of creation; here he concerns himself with establishing the ground rules. Thus, he attempts to define the status and significance of the theory of creation within the framework of Torah precepts, while demonstrating the ground rules for a philosophical method of proof. Rihal's discourse, thus, grants us insight into a number of significant issues.

### **Creation or eternity: the logical stalemate**

We have already discussed the first idea that Rihal develops in this section. As previously noted, this concept reaches its fullest development in the Rambam's writings [Guide to the Perplexed, part II: 15-17]. The Rambam's claim is that logical proofs lack the ability to establish or refute the theory of creation. From the standpoint of philosophy and science, the question of creation will forever remain unresolved. We face a philosophical dilemma, and we will not be able to prove either side in the present or in the future. There is no rational preference for one position over the other. No proof exists that could compel us to follow one direction. We face the dilemma with complete freedom to choose. As far as philosophy and rational thought are concerned we may construct two alternative world views, one based upon the assumption of creation, and the other on that of eternity. The Rambam claimed that Aristotle was also aware of the aura of doubt surrounding this issue. Aristotle chose one of the two equally likely alternatives, eternity, without basing himself upon any decisive proof. His decision was arbitrary. Clearly, it was influenced by a Greek philosophy of life.

Would Aristotle agree with this statement? This is a historical and literary question which does not concern us here. The Aristotelian philosophers with whom our rabbis contested sincerely believed that decisive proofs ("mofet" is the philosophical term of their period for such indisputable proofs) for the claim that the world has been in existence for eternity did indeed exist, while Rihal and the Rambam maintained that no such proof existed, and the riddle of the world's inception remains in a philosophical stalemate. The truth cannot be rationally derived as one of the two alternatives. As far

as the intellect is concerned, we have the right to freely choose either one. We are faced with a doubt which neither philosophy nor science can solve, and we have the right to choose our subjective position freely. This position is influenced by the divination of prophecy.

Why is it impossible to reach a conclusion? To translate the Rambam's words into the language of our day, the central reason for this is that in the argument for the eternal existence of the world, we extrapolate, we make an irresponsible leap of logic, beyond the boundaries of legitimate experience. Any attempt to prove the eternal existence of the world is based upon the assumption that what is true today was equally true in the past, and the laws of nature which are operative today were equally valid at the time of nature's inception. The Rambam illustrated this with a (now classic) parable, about a parent and child, sole survivors of a shipwreck, who found shelter on an island which is completely uninhabited. The father educates his son himself, and at a certain stage even attempts to explain to him how children come into the world. The father explains the process of development of the fetus in the womb and how, after nine months, it is born. The child sees this explanation as patently absurd. In fact, the theory that children are brought to the world by a stork, or that they are born in a large cabbage appear to the child more reasonable. How is it possible that for so many months my mouth was sealed? he asks himself. It goes against empirical experience, which proves the opposite. This child's 'healthy' claim is based upon that leap of logic from our experience today, the experience of existence, to the unknown, to the experience of coming into existence. The child does not imagine that the development of the fetus could be different from the development of an adult.

The same may be said of the world. Is today's nature, 'resting' nature,' in the Rambam's terms, the same nature that determined the ways in which the world came into being, or did other principles, what the Rambam calls 'acting' nature,' rule during the world's inception? This extrapolation can be illustrated through another example. Let us consider the elections which take place in our country every few years, simplifying the process slightly for clarity's sake. Let us imagine, for example, the thirteenth Knesset announcing the elections for the fourteenth Knesset. Let us assume that this is the standard procedure. Thus, the twelfth Knesset announced the elections for the thirteenth Knesset ... the fourth Knesset announced the elections for the fifth Knesset, etc.. What will we suppose when we reach the first Knesset? Will we assume the existence of Knesset assemblies with negative numbers, or must we assume the existence of a revolutionary beginning for the whole process; that this chain, whose links are identical and are interrelated in a particular way, begins with a completely different stage. The first Knesset was not established as a result of the legitimate decision of the

previous Knesset, but stems rather from an act which is in a sense illegitimate, for of course, it is not "legal," according to contemporary law.

An examination of the philosophical questions themselves is beyond the scope of this discussion, and belongs, as previously noted, to the fifth section. Our central question is whether we can indeed assume the existence of an endless chain of Knesset assemblies, each of which announces the elections for its successor; or does such a process contain an irreparable logical flaw. Those philosophers who maintain that creation is provable assert, among other claims, the impossibility of such an endless repetition. Others believe that this flaw may be overcome. In any case, without entering into the claim itself, we learn from these examples that all potential responses must be viewed as mere speculation, fraught with the difficulties inherent in taking the leap beyond nature, with only our natural experience to guide us. In this instance philosophy must stand as a sinner at the gates of repentance, and humbly admit that while it can suggest theories, it lacks the ability to prove them.

### **Who is rational: Logic and tradition**

Until this point we have discussed Rihal's first thesis, the impossibility of proving the theory of creation or of eternity. Now we shall focus upon his second assertion. As we delve into the Chaver's discourse, we discover that Rihal adds a seemingly irrelevant historical basis to his claim.

"The Chaver: We may not reproach the philosophers, since they are persons who did not inherit wisdom or religion, for they are Greek, and Greece (Yavan) is a descendent of Japheth who resided in the east, while wisdom, which is an inheritance from Adam, [I refer to]... the wisdom which is supported by the divine influence, was transferred from Adam only to the descendants of Shem, the chosen son of Noah, and which [wisdom] has and always will remain among these chosen ones. As regards the Greeks, this wisdom only reached them after they conquered the nations that fought against them. Only then was that wisdom transferred to them from the Persians, who received it from the Chaldeans. Only then did the famous philosophers arise in that kingdom; and what's more, since the Roman conquest, the Greeks have not produced one philosopher of note." [1: 63]

The Kuzari claims that Greek culture was cut off from ancient tradition, the tradition of the children of Shem. Greek science is none other than a development of ancient Babylonian science, the science of the Chaldeans. The Greeks received the principles from the Chaldeans, and later developed them themselves. Of course, even if this is true,

it does nothing to solve the central problem, that the philosophical claims are not based on tradition at all but rather on logical proofs. Rihal is not trying to deceive us here. He is, in fact, warning us of a logical error. No claim should be disqualified because of the personality or the character traits of the person who suggests it. And indeed the Kuzari responds appropriately: "and should this fact obligate us not to believe Aristotle's wisdom?" A stolen proof is still a proof. Aristotle's authority does not stem from the existence of a tradition but rather from his wisdom, from the fact that he discusses the questions and demonstrates his solutions with rational proofs. Thus, the Chaver informs us that the theory of eternal existence is viable even if it is not based on any tradition. The Kuzari's question regarding Aristotle's credibility, receives the following noteworthy response:

"The Chaver: Certainly [Aristotle loses credibility because he lacks a tradition]! Because he had no reliable tradition from people whose word he trusted, Aristotle exerted his mind and applied his faculties to investigate the origins and end of the world: he found it equally difficult to imagine that the world had a beginning, or that it had existed for eternity, and only through his abstract analysis did he decide in accordance with the proofs which lean toward the theory of eternal existence - and therefore he saw no need to concern himself with the generations that preceded him, nor with the attitude of [other] people; however, if the philosopher was a member of a nation in which true opinions were passed down through a well known and irrefutable chain of tradition, he would have employed his logical proofs to bolster the faith in a created world, with all the difficulties in [this theory], just as he did in his attempt to strengthen the idea of the world's eternal existence,[which is] a less likely idea." [1: 65].

Rihal emphasizes that while the Greeks developed philosophy, the origin of that philosophy was decisively influenced by the Jewish people. This position, which maintained that philosophy originated in Jewish writings [2: 66], was prevalent among many medieval thinkers, and it is present in Alexandrine Jewish thought as well. I support this theory in a different form. As we have seen, history teaches us that the origin of religious philosophy lie in that same momentous encounter between Greek philosophy and scripture, which took place at the close of the ancient times, particularly in Alexandria. Philo of Alexandria is viewed as the most prominent representative of this encounter.

Clearly, philosophy itself must be viewed as a universal phenomenon which appears and develops to some extent in all times and all places. Various philosophers would no doubt disagree with my "modest" opinion. Perhaps Rihal's modern successors may



accept this position in a different form. Philosophy was born in Greece under the influence of the encounter with the east, the wisdom that Greece "received from the Chaldeans;" or in the words of Rihal's modern successors, the encounter with the east is represented by what our Rabbis termed the "yeshiva" of Shem and Ever, the great philosophical compositions of the children of Shem, which influenced the development of cultures the world over.

It would be difficult to convince me of a religious obligation to credit the Jews or God with the creation of classical philosophy. Yet, the fact that the ancients thought so is not difficult to understand. They belonged to a culture which believed that philosophy held the key to truth, happiness, meaning; indeed, to immortality. Therefore, it was imperative to know who received the key from the master of the house. We, the children of the modern world, view the meaning of philosophical works in a different light, and are willing to credit other nations for their contributions, and to accept the fact that philosophy is actually based upon the contributions of all nations. The significance of the Jewish contribution is found in prophecy. However, a final note regarding the origins of philosophy was necessary: "Since the Roman conquest, the Greeks have not produced one philosopher of note." [1: 63]

This simple statement has important ramifications, which would later be developed in the thought of Rabbi Nachman Krochmal, known by his acronym, Ranak. The Greeks developed a philosophy; however, in their eyes it was a temporary invention. Their philosophy was public property, yet, for them it was purely of historical interest. There are no more Greeks, in the classical sense of the word. However even if you are told, "there is philosophy in Greece," do not be fooled. As Ranak expressed it, Jewish history teaches us that despite its temporary decline, Jewish philosophical creativity rises anew and with greater force in each new epoch.

## **Part II: The Vogue of Rationalism**

The section that we have been discussing constitutes a historical note. It teaches us something very sad about the pretensions of human intelligence. Until this point, we have considered the fact that the theory of eternal existence cannot be logically proven within the general framework of philosophical thought. However, Rihal is not satisfied with this, and he presents us with an even more extreme position. Philosophical thought means the application of the principles of logic. This is the meaning of the great revolution wrought by Greek philosophy: logic examines the questions and chooses answers according to its principles. It knows from the outset, *a priori* (to use the philosophers' term), that certain things are impossible. However, this is misplaced arrogance. There is a famous folk legend, in which a peasant sees a giraffe for the first time and claims that such an animal cannot possibly exist; similarly, according to Rabbi Yehuda Halevi, the philosopher is faced with certain realities and claims that they cannot possibly exist. Rabbi Yehuda Halevi questions the presumption of human logic in invalidating things which are not "logical." This presumption comes naturally to mankind, and one ought therefore to be forgiving towards it. However, this absolutism must be tempered by the knowledge that we are often faced with facts which force us to reopen the discussion of our perceptions, even at the cost of unsettling and significantly altering our basic assumptions.

Rihal's starting point, then, is that there is no logic that can discount empirical facts. This idea can find expression in our conflict with miracles, as well as our conflict with any reliable tradition which tells us of logically irrefutable facts, which our experience refuses to accept unequivocally. Rabbi Yehuda Halevi was not radical enough here. He still maintained that a conflict between reality, our principles of thought and the elements of logic was impossible. He claimed that there was no absolute proof for the theory of eternal existence. However, if such a logical proof did exist, we need not dispute it, for neither reality nor Torah contradict the theory of eternal existence.

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi believed, then, in the basic unity between our the three pillars: human logic, our empirical perception of the world, and the Torah. However, many other thinkers in various periods have taken a less optimistic view than Rihal.

Rihal will yet expound upon the topic of prophecy. Here he proclaims that prophecy is a source of higher consciousness, "reliable as testimony for the logical proof." Rihal also believed in the existence of a domain which logic cannot reach. Thus, we have two different sources of consciousness, which are expressed in the pair of terms, experience and logical proof. The logical approach assumes the credibility of axioms and derives

logical conclusions from them and from natural realities. The experiential state constitutes a higher, more direct source of divine consciousness.

In Rihal's view, no contradiction exists between these spheres. Logic must endure, and maintain its independence, while admitting its shortcomings. Logic and Torah are not sworn enemies. However, the history of philosophy does remind us that such conflicts took place, and that contradictions between Torah and logic were raised more than once. These conflicts were grounded in basic logical assumptions; however, the empirical facts altered the picture. The result was interesting: following every such crisis people believed that what they had originally considered logical and obvious, was merely the result of a primitive and fanciful perspective, which could not stand up to critical analysis. Therefore, they concluded, rationalism of one type must be substituted with rationalism of a different sort. Then, they felt, everything would work out. What happened in practice is that logic would periodically change its principles and adjust itself to the various empirical discoveries. Rabbi Yehuda Musksato, the noteworthy commentator on Rihal and author of the book "Kol Yehuda," brings us an interesting example. The Ralbag, in "Milchamot Hashem" (II: 7) tells of a youth who could prophesy the future. This being, in Ralbag's view, an indisputable fact, he developed a philosophical theory to interpret parapsychological phenomena, which mundane psychology could not explain. In other words, the reality which he faced compelled the Aristotelian philosopher to change his mind.

This principle was confirmed once again in recent generations through the two great revolutions of modern physics, the theory of relativity and particularly quantum mechanics. These revolutionary theories evince discoveries that compel us to alter our entire intuitive system, even, according to some versions, our most basic logical principles, a result which would hardly have pleased Rihal. In our world phenomena take place which remain inexplicable when approached with traditional human principles. Thus, our rational principles remain helpless and incapable of explaining the facts. A thousand year old argument surrounds the question of whether the world may be explained rationally, and as a result of this question religious philosophy grapples with its most formidable problem: does human logic have the right to veto the claims of religion?

Does rationalism indeed hold the ultimate right to sanction or disqualify theories? Rihal denies this authority, and in his vision of synthesis, he wishes us, without abandoning the embrace of logic, to open our eyes to the reality before us, and not automatically discredit facts that appear to be illogical.

Now let us reread Rihal's words: "If the philosopher were a member of a nation in which true opinions were passed down through a well-known and irrefutable chain of tradition, he would have employed his logical proofs to bolster the faith in a created world." Clearly, Rihal is favorably judging Aristotle's great accomplishment, namely, that he did not have a tradition and despite everything reached the perception of the existence of God. However, this quote may be read with a cynical slant as well. The truth is that philosophy, in the hands of a logical genius such as Aristotle, would have incorporated the concept of creation as well, had Aristotle been faced with a fact which he considered indisputable.

This accurate statement compels us to do much soul searching, especially regarding the essence of rationalism. Rationalism always reaches some form of compromise with its weighty and dangerous partner, the empirical knowledge of the world. As a rule, philosophy managed to deal with disturbing facts by explaining them. Legend tells us that Plato's bequest was to "save the phenomena," by which he meant that we must suit the astronomical facts to the principles of ideal cyclical movement in Platonic theoretical astronomy, which, of course, guide the movements of the planets. And, indeed, through these explanations logic has achieved great victories by means of the various sciences. However, all of these victories, which enlarged the philosophical empire unceasingly, occasionally ended in a catastrophic defeat, which meant losing everything and beginning anew on a completely different basis. Descartes' modern philosophy is only one of the examples of this process of destruction and beginning anew, almost from scratch. Rihal commands us to be vigilant; we must not blindly follow any a priori rational conception. We must not allow such conceptions to hold sway over our opinions and actions. We must always remember, that one day we will have to leave these conceptions behind.

## **CHAPTER 19: The Concept of Creation**

### **PART I**

As we have previously noted, belief in God stems from the perusal of the four tomes that we have before us: the soul, the world, history and the Torah. The search for God in nature finds expression in the term "providence." This quest involves an examination of the world, which can lend to several conclusions. However, the heart of this approach is undoubtedly to be found in the wondrous order that we behold. It cannot be accidental. The order teaches us of the existence of an organizer. This is the most elementary, simple proof; yet, at the same time it is the most powerful. In the fashion of Rabbenu Bachye, in his work "Chovot Ha-levavot," we may ask whether, if a man throws letters randomly, these letters will form the encyclopedia. Would we seat a line of monkeys before typewriters and expect them to accidentally type out the telephone directory? The order bears witness to the organizer. It reveals the existence of God.

We will now attempt to summarize the theory of creation in Jewish thought. This summary will demonstrate that the concept of creation contains at least four elements: generation, "yesh me-ayin" [creatio ex nihilo, the creation of something from nothing], dependence, and will.

### **Generation**

In order to understand the concept of generation, I invite the reader to join me in a simple mental exercise. Let us assume that we are traveling back in time in a time machine, passing through human history as though we were rewinding a film. What will happen? Let us imagine that we are passing through the history of the earth even before the appearance of mankind. Will the rewound film ever reach its beginning, or will the rewinding process never end? We do not know the answer; we must guess. Conceivably, if we were to ask our wise and sophisticated friends we would hear three opinions that describe three potential scenarios. In this lecture we will discuss the first two opinions. The third opinion, cyclical history, will be addressed at a later stage.

#### **A: Generation:**

This approach claims that in rewinding every film we will reach a point where we must stop.

## **B: Eternal existence:**

This is the second possibility, which claims that the film is endless and if we stop rewinding and glimpse at it we will always see the same theme: people, animals, civilizations, cultures, just as we find them today. This is the "orthodox" Aristotelian approach.

In our day any attempt to recreate the intellectual significance of the claim of eternal existence faces enormous difficulties. Although, as we shall see later on, other positions were prevalent, this theory was dominant in its day. In its most consistent form, the theory of eternal existence claimed that humanity always existed. The world has followed the same course forever. Those philosophers loyal to the Torah battled this approach. Some even believed this issue to be paramount in any discussion of the world's origins. Surprisingly, in today's intellectual atmosphere the scriptural approach, which claims that both the world and mankind had a beginning, has generally been accepted. The world is not eternal. The findings of archeology and geology constitute a crushing disproof of Aristotelian doctrines. These disciplines would have confounded not the Torah faithful but the strict Aristotelians, since, ironically, modern science has made use of their methods in order to conclude that man is created, meaning that he did not eternally exist. Although the big bang theory does not agree with our traditional computation of the world's age, it does teach us once again that there was a beginning. The claim that the world had a beginning, returns us to the enigma of creation and the creator. Thus, after almost a thousand years of winding roads full of twists and detours, arguments and theories, we have returned to the basic scriptural thesis regarding the world's origins. Although Rihl's picture of the world's beginnings may not be completely acceptable to us, were we to transpose that picture from one world onto another, we would find his central concept appearing, this time, as a proven scientific theory.

Jewish philosophers of the Middle Ages attempted to prove the theory of generation. We will attempt to explain the approach of medieval philosopher Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon, known by his acronym, Rasag, which agrees with the approach brought by Rihl in the fifth section [5: 18]. The central thesis is based on the principle that endless time is a logical impossibility. It is an absurdity. We will attempt to illustrate Rasag's proof with a parable, which is a variation on one of his major themes.

Imagine two planets, A and B, separated by the distance that we will call  $x$ . What is the value of  $x$ ? We cannot be sure. We only know that if we were to send a mail rocket from planet A towards planet B it would never reach its destination, no matter how great its speed. Can the inhabitants of planet B send a rocket to planet A that will reach its

target? Obviously, if both rockets were to travel at the same speed, their fate would be identical. However, on second thought, even were we to increase the speed of the rocket leaving point B over and over, it would not reach planet A. If I cannot get from point A to point B, then the opposite possibility is equally remote. This is the meaning of infinite distance.

Now, we will discuss the interpretation of the parable. Let us conjure up a time machine and return with it back in time. Of course, if the world has existed forever, we will never reach the starting point. However, if this is how matters stand, how did the world reach us? How did it travel across infinite distance? How is it possible that an infinite process that already concluded has taken place? For, in order for us to exist in the present, in a world which has existed forever, infinite time has passed, and an infinite number of changes must have occurred. If so, how has the world reached this point in time?

In his commentary on the Book of Creation, Rasag built an alternative model. Let us assume that Reuven, who has never entered Shimon's house, swears that he will not enter Shimon's house unless he has previously entered Shimon's house. Reuven can only enter Shimon's house if he has fulfilled the condition. However, the condition is entrance to Shimon's house, which compels him to perform the condition once again ... and so on into infinity. The conclusion: an action which requires the fulfillment of an infinite number of conditions such as these can never take place, because the fulfillment of the conditions can never begin. Time, according to the theory of eternal existence, constitutes a bizarre chain such as this.

This is the initial difficulty inherent in the theory of eternal existence which was discussed by the medieval sages. The theory compels us to accept an odd concept: infinity which has materialized and passed. This proof stood at the center of a fierce argument during the Middle Ages between those who accepted it, such as Gersonides, and those who negated it, such as the Rambam. The proof is based on the distinction between active and potential infinity. To explain this, let us imagine a balloon being blown up. Let us assume that we have a balloon made of a unique elastic material which self-inflates, and its diameter increases by one centimeter per minute, without any danger of popping. This is not irrational. This is potential infinity. On the other hand, if we were to imagine a balloon that had been inflated since the world had come into existence, we will face a very peculiar result; a balloon whose diameter is infinite. The theory of the big bang sees the world as such a balloon, and therefore scientists felt certain that the world was "created" such and such years ago.

Is this proof valid? We will leave the decision to the reader. Some sages were willing to make peace with the perplexity and live with the paradox. The Rambam was unconvinced by this argument. He spoke of an "accidental infinity" which didn't cause any such philosophical difficulties. However, it is hard to understand why he was willing to sanction such an "infinity." This is the focal point of Gersonides' criticism. He thought that the proofs for the existence of God were much stronger than the proofs for creation. Therefore, he felt that the construction of a system of faith upon the concept of creation was a mistake, just as it is a mistake in chess to endanger a queen in order to defend a rook. Creation is a fact; however, the logical proofs that we discussed previously are problematic, and must therefore be discussed separately. Whatever one's opinion about the age and origin of the world, the existence of God is not in doubt. It is not dependent upon the system of considerations that guide one's decision regarding creation.

If someone were to tell me that he cannot be convinced of the fact of the creation of the world, or that he cannot prove it with his intellect, I would accept his statement. He would have proven once again that the intellect is not omnipotent. I would accept his statement; however, I would demand honesty of him, the honesty to proclaim that anything he will consequently profess is a statement of faith. If the intellect were to stubbornly insist that it has a complete monopoly on reality and can solve any riddle, given the time, I would be less tolerant. Then, I would insist that the very concept of infinite time THAT HAS ALREADY PASSED is absurd.

The question of infinity is one of the most important focal points of human thought, and is deeply and significantly connected to basic theological questions in general. It is possible to view the span of philosophy according to each generation's approach to the concept of infinity. In some generations the negation of infinity was absolute. They could not accept the existence of infinity, even with regard to God. Contrasting approaches saw in infinity the ultimate divine trait. The Kabbala, for example, uses the term "ein-sof" [infinity] in this manner. Jewish philosophers tended not to use the term ein-sof; they preferred the phrase, "bilti ba'al takhlit" [without end].

The Ancients believed in a finite world. Aristotle posited that our world was finite in terms of space, yet infinite in terms of time. Gersonides demonstrated that Aristotle's position placed him in a logical bind. How may we accept the claim that the world is infinite in terms of time while remaining finite in terms of space?! This is not a logical approach, claims Gersonides, since any statement that is appropriate for space is equally appropriate for time. Aristotle was imprisoned in his conception of an eternal, yet finite, world. Rabbi Chasdai Crescas broke through the boundaries of Aristotle's claim, and



ushered in the picture of the world that was later to be developed by Newton. Einstein restored the concept of a finite world, which is nonetheless limitless. We continue to oscillate between the two theories.

The question of creation leaves us, of course, with a conundrum: "and what came before this?" However, this question loses significance if we assume that the world and the concept of time were created simultaneously. Rabbi Eliyahu, the Gaon of Vilna, and Rabbi Ovadia Mi-sforno before him, explain that the term "Be-reshit" ["in the beginning"] rather than the term "Ba-rishona" ["at the start"] is used in Genesis because "Ba-rishona" denotes a relative beginning whereas the term "Be-reshit" indicates that time itself was created, that prior to this "beginning" absolutely nothing existed. The world exists in time, yet for God the concept of time is meaningless. A thousand years are the same as yesterday, future is past; God exists beyond the fetters of time. This fact will have important ramifications in the realm of foreknowledge and free choice, which we will discuss later.

### **"Yesh Me-ayin": Something from Nothing**

We have spoken until this point of one of the dimensions of the theory of creation, that of time, or generation. In order to understand the issue of creation we must discuss another dimension, which, although connected to the theory of generation, is not identical to it. The conflict surrounding this issue has been explicitly raised in the writings of our sages. In Bereshit Rabba (parasha 1) we read of a debate with a philosopher of that period:

'A philosopher questioned Rabban Gamliel. He said to him, your God was a great artist but he had good materials to help him; [Rabban Gamliel] said, where? [lit. what were they?] He answered, "matter and form and darkness and water and wind and chasms" (Genesis, 1: 2). [Rabban Gamliel] said to him, may the spirit of this man depart! [For] is it not written that [these things] were created? [Regarding] matter and form and darkness and water [it says]"and creator of evil" (Isaiah 45: 7); [Regarding] darkness", maker of light and creator of darkness"; water, "Praise Him, heavenly skies and water..." (Psalms 148: 4) Why? Because "He decreed and they were created" (ibid., verse 8); wind, "behold [He is] the maker of mountains and the creator of wind" (Amos 4: 13); chasms, "[When] no chasms [existed] I came into existence" (Mishlei 8: 24).

The same anonymous philosopher vividly expressed the position that believes in a creation that made use of preexisting materials (known in Jewish philosophical terms as

"yesh me-yesh," literally, something from something), a position that was identified in the Middle Ages with the Platonic school. And, indeed, the problem can be defined in strict philosophical terms. However, I prefer to view the problem from a different angle. Let us look at the ancient cultures and ask ourselves a question that touches not on the concepts themselves but rather on the language used to express these ideas: how did different people speak about creation? What models were used to understand this concept?

I have found three basic models which have been utilized to express the concept of creation:

1. In various idolatrous cultures, such as the Far East, we find the model of birth. The god or goddess give birth to the world, with pregnancy and labor. This is a primitive position; however, this model expresses an approach which achieves its ultimate, sophisticated and subtle form in the philosophical concept of emanation, as well as in the Pantheistic approaches.
2. The model of the artisan. This model finds a more sophisticated expression in the words of that philosopher who argued with Rabban Gamliel, which we mentioned earlier. Creation is likened to the work of an artist who uses colors and natural extracts in order to paint, or to a potter who uses raw materials to create his pottery. Thus, God, in the philosopher's view, created the world from the elements that were at his disposal. This is the doctrine of the hylic inchoate or ageless) matter which formed the basis of Greek thought.
3. In contrast with these two models we find in Scripture a different model, the model of speech. It finds expression in prayer and blessings, such as the blessing over food, "Blessed are You, our God ... who created everything with His utterance." God created the world, without strain or effort and without pre-existing materials, with utterances, through speech. This is the fundamental expression of the doctrine of creation.

The blessing, "who created everything with His utterance," constitutes a Jewish philosophical declaration, which conflicts with the other positions. It gives voice to the approach that would eventually clash sharply with Greek thought, which made a clear and marked distinction between matter and form; between that which rules in the lower world, the matter, and what in their view was typical of the upper world which contains the angels and God: the form. The idea that the lower world could stem from the upper world seemed logically absurd to the Greeks, although they were willing to accept the assumption that the upper and lower worlds interrelate and affect one another.

The conflict with the doctrine of pre-existing matter can be described as a chapter in the history of an ongoing conflict. The first act describes the conflict with classical idolatry, which reached a system of many gods from observing the manifold phenomena of nature, and claimed: the source of light cannot be the source of darkness, nor can the ruler of earth be the ruler of heaven. The second act can be seen as the conflict with the religion of Persia. Persia's many gods represented not the physical properties of the world but rather its ethics. The prophet Isaiah's words, "producer of light and creator of darkness, maker of peace and creator of evil," express the protest of the belief in divine unity against those who claimed that the existence of good and evil in the world necessitate the existence of two divine powers. In the Middle Ages we find the third act in the biography of this idea. This time, the gap between the two powers surrounds the metaphysical distinction between matter and form. Matter is perceived by the body and the senses while form is perceived only by the intellect. These are two separate worlds. Rabbi Chasdai Crescas was the first to note that this distinction stems from an inability to perceive the unity which hides behind numbers. He demonstrated that the position that believes in preexisting matter in essence assumes the existence of two parallel gods: God, and the inchoate matter.

## **PART II: Divine Will**

We must now add a third dimension to the problems that we have already described. Until this point, we have viewed the time-related question of the advent of the world, as well as the material problem of the creation of matter, either from an earlier, cruder substance or from nothingness. To these, we must add what may be termed the problem of the procedure, or modality, of creation. In this issue, too, we face two extreme models; Jewish thought has had to combat both. On one side, we encounter Epicurus's model, the advocate of coincidence. Let us imagine a man with five numbered blocks in front of him. He may try to build a particular structure out of them, such as a tower, or arrange them in numerical order. On the other hand, he may also throw them and obtain a random combination of numbers. Our case is actually the opposite situation; we constitute a particular arrangement of blocks and we ask ourselves, is this the result of an intentional action or just a coincidence? The Epicurean thesis claims that our world appeared by chance.

An opposing explanation exists as well; it describes the emergence of the world as an inevitable reality, forged by a necessary and definite relationship between the world and its Creator. We have already witnessed this in the philosopher's presentation at the beginning of the Kuzari: just as statements are necessarily derived from a system of axioms, thus the world stems from God, or just as a certain object casts a shadow, thus God casts a shadow, and His shadow is none other than the cosmic system, in which we constitute but a small part.

In contrast to these two approaches, Jewish philosophy presents a third approach, the doctrine of Divine will. The doctrine of Divine will accentuates the existence of intention and an objective. The world did not appear against God's will; nor did it emerge from a Divine indifference to our existence. The world appeared as a result of Divine will and providence.

## **Dependence**

The three components of the concept of creation that we have discussed until now - generation, creation yesh me-ayin, and creation from divine will - have already been presented by Rav Sa'adia Gaon. These concepts accord with the ancient Jewish perception of creation that had found expression in earlier periods, and preserve the classic Jewish tradition regarding the concept of creation.

However, creation finds expression in another idea as well: the concept of dependence.

The Rambam in his Laws of the Foundations of the Torah (1: 1) writes:

"The foundation of foundations and the pillar of wisdom is to know that there is a first cause and [that] He is the creator of every existing [entity]."

Seemingly this statement refers to the concept of generation; God is the first cause and He created all that exists. However, the Rambam implies more than that. He interprets the concept of creation here in a different way:

"He is the creator of every existing [entity], and all who exist in heaven and earth and what is between them only exist from the truth of His existence. And if one were to imagine that He did not exist, nothing else could exist. And if one were to imagine that all other entities other than Him did not exist, He alone would exist and would not be nullified in their nullification. For all who exist need Him and He ... does not need any of them, therefore the truth [of his existence] is not comparable to ... [theirs]." (Laws of the Foundations of the Torah, 1: 1,2)

This is the concept of dependence. All of reality is one chain of existence, which rests upon its first link, which is the first cause. The concept of dependence is not a historical concept. Thus, creation was not a one-time event. It is a relationship that continues to exist at each moment. Or in other words, "And if one were to imagine that He did not exist, nothing else could exist."

The central concept of creation, according to the Rambam in his classic work, the Mishneh Torah, is the concept of dependence. The Rambam explains that reality comes in different forms and levels. We must distinguish between the reality of the world's existence and that of God's existence. These are two distinct types of existence. Regarding this idea the Rambam writes:

"He is the creator of every existing [entity] and all who exist in heaven and earth and what is between them only exist from the truth of His existence."

In halakha 4 of the Laws of the Foundations of the Torah he continues: "The prophet [Jeremiah] says, 'The Lord God is truth.' He alone is the truth, and no other has a truth such as His." This is a difficult statement. We generally apply the term 'truth' to claims or statements that can be either true or false. In contrast, when we apply the term 'truth' to God, we use it with a different meaning. The Torah declares, "There is no other besides Him." According to the Rambam's understanding, "There is no other besides Him" means that the essence of everything other than God is merely an apparent or a seeming reality but is not a true reality.

In order to understand this, let us compare two different situations: A) I am in class. B) I am dreaming that I am in class. Where is the class in the second case? The class is

in me. The existence of the class that I am dreaming of is not a true reality. The existence of the dreamed class is not of the same sort as the existence of the dreamer. The Rambam says that we must apply this approach to our case. The dream relates to reality in the same way that our reality relates to the truth of God's existence. Just as the dream is an illusory reality in relation to true reality, so too the existence of the world is not true existence. The only One who truly exists is God. This is the meaning of "The Lord God is truth;" God's existence is true existence.

In other words, all the other things exist, but their existence is not true existence. Just as the existence of the things in the dream depends on the dreamer - and if the dreamer disappears the dream disappears as well, since the dream has no independent reality - thus, the world is dependent upon God. Now, we understand that the dream is not only dependent on me to begin it, but that every moment that the dream exists, it is dependent on me. In his Guide for the Perplexed the Rambam writes that this is the difference between the world, whose existence is contingent, and God, whose existence is necessary. This is the meaning of God's statement "I will be what I will be." This is God's business card: when Moses asked Him His name, God answered "I will be," meaning that God's existence is the true existence; all else lacks the quality of true existence.

The concept of dependence of the world upon God can be expressed in a number of ways. It reached its peak in Chassidism. When the Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, explained the verse, "Your word abides forever in heaven," he was actually clarifying the meaning of the concept, "All was created through Your word." Let me explain this concept through an example. If a person writes a word, the word has an independent existence. Even if the writer of a word, 'heaven' for example, were to disappear, that does not mean that the written word 'heaven' would disappear. In contrast, if someone merely said the word 'heaven,' it would exist only as long as he said it. Creation was accomplished through God's word, which means that God's word continues to exist.

This idea, which had previously appeared in the writings of the Ibn Ezra, became a cornerstone of the creed of the Ba'al Shem Tov. The world is not similar to a vessel made by a craftsman; it is rather a thing whose existence depends upon the existence of God. In another form, the idea of dependence finds expression in the work of Rabbi Chasdai Crescas, who linked the concept of dependence to the concept of creation ex nihilo. He writes of continuous creation, and suggests that God creates the world forever, and always from utter nothingness, yesh me-ayin. As we say in the daily prayers, God "in His goodness daily renews the works of creation." We will try to understand this concept

through the technique used to make animated films. The illusion of movement and action is created through the presentation of still pictures in rapid succession. Imagine that we are the stars of an animated film. Our existence seems normal to us, yet in reality we exist because the film is renewed yesh me-ayin at every moment. If the film were to be stopped at any given moment, we would disappear. The phrase, "In His goodness He renews the works of creation every day" can be understood in accordance with this principle.

The principle of creation links the concepts of yesh me-ayin and generation. On the one hand, it speaks of a beginning to the film, and on the other hand, it refers to the fact that we are all participants in the film. The two concepts do not contradict each other; rather they complete each other. This theory opens the option of constructing an admirable model for miracles. Let us assume that in one of the frames of our animated film Mickey Mouse is holding an eraser, and in the next frame he isn't. As far as we, the characters in the film, are concerned this would be a miracle; however, to the artist this is not a miracle. Nothing that was in the last frame must be in the next one. At every moment the world is renewed, and what will occur at this moment is not necessitated by what happened previously.

This was not the Rambam's approach. The difference between the two views is interesting. The Rambam includes the concept of a natural order in his world view. This concept is inherent to the Rambam's perception of the Sabbath, in contrast to the six days of creation. In the Rambam's doctrine one must explain the existence of miracles; whereas in this theory, one has to explain the existence of nature. The fact that nature exists and that there is a link between the frames is the miracle, the extraordinary phenomenon. What is "dangerous" here is the risk of completely negating the actions of the protagonists and attributing everything to the artist who is outside of the film. Thus, the words of Rabbi Akiva, "All is foreseen and [yet] freedom [of action] is granted," take on greater significance: all is foreseen by the artist; however, freedom is granted, and the heroes of the film influence and alter its course.

The Ramban espouses a similar approach. In a number of his writings he develops the idea that the doctrine of nature is not absolute, and what happened in the previous frame does not impose the contents of the next. The Rambam maintains that a natural order exists; according to the Ramban, such a concept has no validity, since firstly, the fact that continuity exists in the cosmos is itself a miracle, and secondly, it is not at all certain that this continuity will endure. The Rambam, in contrast, asserts that there are fixed principles that function in nature. The laws of nature accurately describe nature. There is almost a logical necessity that it be so and not otherwise, except that the very

existence of the world and the natural system in its entirety is not requisite. It depends on God's will, or in other words on creation. This issue of continuous creation is reminiscent of the well-known debate between the Acharonim regarding the essence of kiddushin (nuptials). Is it one event which transpires at one point in time, and continues afterwards, or are the kiddushin renewed at each moment?

### **PARE III: Creation and Infinity**

The idea of creation contains a paradox, which we express daily in our prayers: "King of the world, who reigned before any creature was created;" not only did God exist, He also reigned, before any creature was created. "When all was created through His will, then was He named King;" after the world was created, what was added was that we call Him king. "And after all will cease to be, the Awesome One alone will reign" - here we express in fact a deep paradox; from our point of view we exist, yet from another perspective we seem not to exist. We are faced with the task of gauging the relation between the finite and the infinite. For example, the relation between the sum and substance of Man and that of God in essence describes the relation between the finite and the infinite.

Let us allow ourselves to go a little wild with numbers. How much is five divided by zero? The very question endangers us. Mathematicians forbid dividing by zero. They forbid it because division by zero creates a tremendous paradox. It reveals infinity. The prohibition is intended to save us from the paradox.

How do I know that five divided by zero is infinity? If I have five apples and in order to satisfy one person I must give him an apple, then I can satisfy five people. If one tenth of an apple is enough to satisfy one person, I can satisfy fifty people. If one thousandth of an apple would be enough, I could satisfy five thousand people. If zero apples were enough, I could satisfy all people. Let us assume that 'five divided by zero' is a certain number. Let us assume that I want to add four to that number. The equation would be  $5/0 + (4 \times 0)/0 = 5 + 0/0 = 5/0$ . In other words, if I have infinity and I add four to it, I will get the same number again. This is in effect the meaning of the paradox. As far as infinity is concerned nothing has changed. For the four, a lot has changed. In other words, from our perspective, we are the 'four' that has been added to infinity. From our perspective we exist, yet from the standpoint of infinity no change has taken place. In other words, it depends on your perspective. Perhaps, the guiding principle could be that infinity is composed of many levels. Possibly, the whole world is infinite; however, God is such a large infinity that when we add the minute infinity to it, the large infinity is not altered.



## **Creation: A principle of faith?**

Let us take another look at Rihal's statement about creation (1: 67):

"However, the question of the eternal existence or creation of the world is a difficult question to resolve, and the proofs for both claims are equal, and what tipped the scales toward creation is the tradition from Adam, Noah and Moses, may they rest in peace, prophetic testimony, which is more reliable than the testimony of logic. And despite all this, if the believer in the Torah felt logically compelled [to accept] ... the opinion about previously existent crude material coupled with the opinion that our world was preceded by many other worlds, it would not taint his belief that our world came into being only a certain period of time ago, and that its first human inhabitants were Adam and Noah."

The Torah accepts the position of generation. However, is this a truth of such stature that all who deviate from it would be considered heretics? No. Rihal allows for other interpretations of the text. We have mentioned two positions: Eternal existence and generation. However, other positions exist, and among these approaches Rihal's words direct us to a third position, the doctrine of sabbaticals. In order to understand it, let us imagine a tape that can be rewound, rather than a film. Each time the tape is finished, it is replayed. This parable represents a cyclical approach, which maintains that the world repeats its own history over and over, is destroyed and rebuilt. If this tape were flawless, the same history would repeat itself over and over, in a never-ending cycle. And, in fact, such a position does exist, called the theory of eternal repetition, which is found among Greek philosophers, medieval astrologists and modern philosophers, such as Friedrich Nietzsche. A similar approach was accepted by various medieval Jewish philosophers such as Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra.

Of particular importance is a similar approach in kabbalistic thought, which emphasizes the concept of a spiral rather than a circle, not an eternal precise repetition of the past but rather a repetition within a process of advancement. To return to our model, the doctrine of sabbaticals can be described as a rescreening of the tape in which new motifs appear on the screen within the original production. This example demonstrates the doctrine of sabbaticals, which maintains that many worlds existed before our own and that many more are yet to come. In the words of our Sages: "The Holy One ... creates worlds and destroys them."

This statement and others like it do not compel us to adopt the doctrine of sabbaticals. Important thinkers such as Rabbi Isaac Arama, author of the *Akedat Yitzchak*, who were opposed to this doctrine, interpreted the statement to refer not to real worlds, but rather "draft copies," plans of worlds that were considered and not created; and their

presentation comes to teach us that our world possesses unique qualities, and was created for the sole purpose of realizing those qualities. These characteristics allow man's free will to find expression, or in the words of Rav Kook, they permit the process of human actualization to be realized alongside Divine perfection.

The author of the Tiferet Israel used this theory to understand fossils. We may indeed discover relics from those worlds in our own.

Rihal addresses a significant question here [1:67]: is the concept of creation a fundamental principle of our faith? What would be the verdict upon a person who doubted it? Would another interpretation of the scriptural description of creation have religious validity? The Chaver's answer here is brief. It would later be developed in the Rambam's philosophy, which was undoubtedly influenced by this segment. Rihal's response is that although the general position that we have developed above is correct, whoever does not accept the severe version presented here, would not be charged with heresy. Post facto, two other approaches are also acceptable: the theory of eternal existence, or yesh mi-yesh, and the theory of sabbaticals. The first is the approach mentioned earlier: the theory of preexisting material. The second is the model of the cyclical world, in the words of Rihal: the "opinion that many worlds preceded our world." These opinions do not mar the faith of their proponents, the "faith that this world came into being only a certain period of time ago, and that its first human inhabitants were Adam and Noah." They do not impair the simple meaning of the text; one might even say that they agree with it, as certain philosophers before and after Rihal explained.

### **The Rambam's Approach**

However, some thinkers did not relate to the whole chapter of creation as a cosmological description. Thus, for example, a number of the Rambam's more extreme students maintained that the scriptural descriptions of the origins of humanity are to be taken allegorically. Have the gates to novel interpretation been closed? We will return to the question of the legitimacy of a novel interpretive position at a later stage. The Rambam related to the problem itself and suggested a vantage point from which we must answer the question. The real problem is not found in the question of the scriptural interpretation. It is a question of principle: does the theory of pre-existing matter accord with the Torah's principles, does it permit the belief in Divine revelation? The Rambam constructs his thought on the fact that the Torah is based on two principles, prophecy and the existence of miracles. Prophecy would exist, according to the Rambam's view, even in a world which had existed forever. However, this would not be the case

regarding miracles. For miracles to be feasible, one must assume God's complete sovereignty, or in other words, the idea of creation from nothingness (yesh me-ayin). If the world existed forever and functions according to its own rules, then God cannot even trim a fly's wing. The existence of miracles teaches us that we must not accept the idea of eternal existence.

Possibly Rihal referred to these ideas [1: 67]:

"Indeed, the Torah mentions miracles which contain alterations of the natural order, either in the manner of creation of objects or in the transformation of one object into another. However, all these only come to demonstrate that the Creator of the world can, from His will, do whatever He chooses whenever He chooses. "

Thus, we discover that the possibility of miracles defines the relationship between the world and God. And this depends on the fact that the world was created from Divine will. Out of the three fundamental components of the concept of creation: the time component, the issue of creation of matter, and the issue of Divine will, Rihal chose to emphasize the third factor. The central thesis is not, then, the time or the material issues; the central issue is God's will. What's done is done: the history of the world is interesting, and the riddle of creation, the cosmological question, is a fascinating riddle, but religion does not need it, except to perceive God as an omnipotent creator functioning out of His own will. The central content of creation is the idea of creation from Divine will; all the rest is secondary.

## **CHAPTER 20: The Four Books and the Book of Books**

### **PART I**

In the previous lectures we discussed the question of creation. Regarding this question the Kuzari states:

At present I am satisfied with these claims, which will do for this chapter; if the days of our companionship last long, I will again request that you bring me clear proofs [1: 68].

Thus, we may conclude that the discussion until now was an introduction, in which the various religious alternatives, as well as the central concepts that define Judaism, were presented. The Kuzari reserves the option to re-open the discussion of these issues at a later stage, and to request clear proofs for the principles of Judaism. And, indeed, we shall return to this discussion in the fifth book [5: 17,18]. We now are moving away from the issue of creation, and towards a central and related question, the concept of nature. Since its inception up until our day, this concept has not lost its significance, and therefore maintains its difficulties as well. In this discussion, we will once again depart from the atmosphere of the Middle Ages, and approach the battlefields of today, the struggles against our modern opponents.

### **Conscience, Nature and History**

Despite the fundamental conflicts that exist, as we have seen, between the Chaver and the philosopher, one element is common to both: the belief in God. This is a significant similarity, despite the discrepancy between them regarding the image and characteristics of God. This similarity permits the Chaver to begin his discourse with the exodus from Egypt and not with the more general question of the source of religious certainty and the belief in God.

To summarize the section about the central positions of Jewish thought, we must state that God communicates with mankind, and with the Jew in particular, in various ways. The wellspring of all these ways is the Torah. It is the Book of books, which directs us in our approach to other books which bear the word of God. There are three such books: the book of nature, the book of history, and the book of the human soul. These are the four "stages" wherein Man may encounter his God. We will now enter upon a discussion of the last two "stages." Until this point the discussion was focused on the first two levels. The philosopher's initial words stem from the perspective of nature: he speaks of the "God of heaven and earth." The Chaver adds history to nature: he refers to the "God who has taken [the Jews] out of Egypt."

## **History**

The Torah instructs us by requiring us to pay heed to both general and Jewish history. This is in fact one of the fundamental elements of Rihal's approach. Yet, at the same time it is one of the most far-reaching statements that may be made regarding Judaism. History does not only teach us the concept of Divine providence; it instructs us in actual commandments as well. People the world over attempt to preserve their lineage and prove that they are descendants of kings, of famous folk, of heroes. Yet the Torah commands us to recollect that we are the progeny of slaves and foreigners, a fact that most people would probably prefer to forget. The Torah bids us to remember it, and from this consciousness reach conclusions that in turn influence the way we lead our lives. Clearly, the recent history of the Jewish people until our day is a book we must study, and the pages about the holocaust and our national re-birth must be read again and again.

## **Perception and Conscience**

The Torah commands us to "understand the years of each generation;" we are expected to learn from history. However, at one and the same time the Torah commands us to look to the heavens and ask "who created these?" The cosmic glow that we receive is one of the intimations that have reached us from the creation of the world. However, there are other traces. Nature still displays the mark of the Divine. Rabbi Bachye Ibn Pakuda called one of the chapters of his book the "Gate of Perception." Perception implies a keen observation of the world, the gleanings of knowledge from the world, and discerning the hand of God that finds expression in the world.

However, Rabbi Bachye's book contains an additional phrase: the doctrine of conscience. The "conscience" that Rabbi Bachye speaks of is not conscience in the modern sense of the word. "Conscience" for him is that hidden world which exists in Man, his private psychological world, a world that a stranger has no access to. My thoughts, my feelings, my pain, even my mind - exist in my conscience. We exist in that private world, remain in it, but from it we reveal and define facts about the furthest galaxies. Wise men have discovered planets using only pencil and paper, without any need of a telescope. And from within this private world they guided others as they searched the skies for the new planet.

The wisdom of the conscience implies that human intelligence has much to teach us, that much of our knowledge comes from within ourselves. A number of commandments are based on this concept. They are generally termed "sikhliyyot," or rational commandments. Our conscience teaches us what is called the "fifth volume of the

Shulchan Arukh" (the four-volume code of Jewish law). We must take our internal world seriously, for God speaks through it as well. However, our internal world is richer than our mind reveals. Our Sages state that each day a heavenly voice calls out to people to repent. The Ba'al Shem Tov, founder of the Chassidic movement, was asked regarding this: why do we not hear the heavenly voice? The Ba'al Shem Tov responded that thoughts of repentance that we sometimes feel within us, are actually that heavenly voice. In other words, there are things that come to us from above, but enter us through our internal world, through our conscience.

Perception is the basis of empirical, experimental science. However, our conscience tells us to close our eyes to the outside world and learn something from within our internal world.

This idea, that a person can learn from within himself, is seemingly odd, but it constitutes one of the foundations of the Talmud.

Let us read a section from the introduction to Rabbi Bachye's book, Duties of the Heart (Chovot HaLevavot):

And the gates that the Creator opened for the sake of His Torah and his religion are three:

the first is the intellect that is saved from all harm; the second is the Torah given to Moses our teacher; and the third is the traditions received by the ancients which they received from the prophets, may they rest in peace.

On the surface this seems like a section that points to philosophical "chutzpa." Rabbi Bachye makes the intellect a partner to the Torah. However, it is interesting that these three sources are precisely the Sages' three sources. The Talmud contains three epistemological terms, and they are: svara (hypothesis), kra (Scripture), and gemara (Talmud). The svara is the fruit of intellectual study. The kra is the scriptural verse. The gemara is the tradition we have received from our Sages.

In the Talmud the svara is of central importance. Svara teaches us the primary principle of Jewish law regarding human life: "One soul may not forfeit another." This is the basis for all the laws that fall under the rubric of the rule, "yehareg ve-al ya'avor," be killed rather than transgress. It is interesting that the verse bases itself on a svara when it compares different examples of "yehareg ve-al ya'avor." We learn the principle of blessings from a svara, as well as many of the laws of swearing in court. However, at the basis of the talmudic discussion lies the idea that the human intellect reaches a certain level, beyond which we need the kra, the scripture, which gives us the level above thought.

We return here to the problem of our attitude towards the power of the intellect. Rabbi Bachye does well to say that the source of consciousness is "the intellect that is saved from all harm." These words are ambiguous and can be understood on different levels. However, there is no doubt that they point to the fact that the intellect is exposed to the danger of "harm." And, indeed, many thinkers, such as Rabbi Saadia Gaon, emphasized that the intellect is always faced with the danger of doubt. Other thinkers have taught us that we must fight against the psychological forces that endanger the intellect and try to steal its crown. Imagination is an example of one of the forces which endanger the intellect. The struggle against the dangers in imagination runs from the Rambam all the way to Rabbi Israel Salanter, founder of the Mussar movement. However, Rihal does not identify absolutely with this approach. The war between intellect and imagination is not like the conflict in westerns between the hero and the villain. It is a more complicated war.

Mazes have always interested man. It was an ancient custom to build a maze of hedges, and we hear of the maze as early as Greek mythology.

Rabbi Bachye uses the model of the maze in order to explain the task of a man who searches for his path in life with his intellect. The Torah assists us in this search. In other words, it constitutes a sort of map that accompanies and guides us through the maze, despite the fact that theoretically we could have found our way alone. Yet occasionally, the time it takes us to find our way out of the maze is longer than the length of our lives.

Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato, known by his acronym, Ramchal, uses the model of the maze in a slightly different way in his book, *The Path of the Just* (*Mesilat Yesharim*). A person who is above the maze can guide the person who is in it. The person above the maze is the person who has achieved his spiritual perfection, and can therefore see what the man in the maze cannot.

The awareness of the dangers that beset the intellect were always apparent to the leaders of the Mussar movement. Descartes, the great philosopher who revolutionized philosophy, opens his book with the imaginary theory that perhaps there is an evil spirit who tricks him whenever he is involved in logic or mathematics. However, this theory is not as outlandish as it appears at first glance. Sometimes there really is an evil spirit that tricks us. Sometimes there are a number of spirits. This is one of the central principles of the Rambam's thought. Why do we make mistakes? One of the answers is that the evil spirit is sometimes inside of us. This evil spirit is in fact our personal interests which distort our perception of reality.

This is the difference between rationalism and rationalization. Rationalism means looking at things logically. Rationalization is an approach to things which appears to be

rational; however, it has a hidden agenda, a bias, something within us that causes us to make mistaken judgments. In that case, our intellectual theories are not rational; they are merely rationalizations.

## **PART II: A Pauper at the Gate: Intellect and Intuition**

We have spoken of intellectual power; however our internal world is larger than intellect alone. Rav Avraham Yitzchak Hacohen Kook taught that beyond the intellect lies what can be termed, perhaps, healthy intuition. Rav Kook's son, Rav Zvi Yehuda, used a beautiful image to express this idea. The source of this image is in the beginning of Tractate Shabbat: the philosopher who searches for a way to Judaism and passes through Greek philosophy, is comparable to the pauper who stands at the door begging alms. Rihal is the homeowner inside.

This idea was admirably expressed by Rihal himself in the fifth part of his book. The difference between the rich man and the pauper in the previous parable is similar to the difference between the poet and the literary critic, or between the artist and the art critic. Some people instinctively know how to write poetry, from within themselves, without ever having learned the rules. In contrast, the literary critic who is an expert on poetry, is extremely adept at differentiating between the different types of poetry, may successfully analyze and appraise it, but cannot write poetry. In fact, people often comment ironically that every unsuccessful poet becomes a critic. The man of the house is the poet, and the pauper extending his hand for alms is the critic.

Instinctive faith is the unique gift of the poet, the rich man, the man who reaches the truth on his own. In contrast, the philosopher is like the critic who tries to understand the wonder of the poetry, to understand how the literary miracle transpires, and how words impact upon us. It seems to me that Rihal attempts to synthesize the two approaches. Despite the fact that the poet's genius cannot be learned, we may well understand the poet better if we listen to the critic's explanations. There is potential for a relationship between the two, between the prophet and the philosopher. Jewish philosophy is an attempt to understand and interpret poetry, as though one were lead through the intricacies of the poem with a guide. It is an effort to construct criticism in the positive sense of the word, to deepen our understanding of those enigmatic gems that the genius of prophecy has laid at our feet.

However to a certain degree, this genius exists in each and every one of us as well. This genius, in essence, is the faith that is rooted in the heart. Following Rihal, Rav Kook developed this idea. He emphasized religious sentiment rather than the wisdom of



intellectual inquiry. Allow me to illustrate this point with a parable. Imagine a group of students whose English grades were mediocre, yet who may surprise and even exceed the literary abilities of the very teachers who tried to enforce rules of grammar, or forms of written expression that they considered superior. Similarly, in the history of opinions, philosophers attempted to "critique" religious and prophetic positions, when in fact they ought to have behaved more humbly. Truth, like the beauty of poetry, is not necessarily the domain of the critics; it is the domain of the prophets and the poets, even if generations pass before this truth or beauty receive recognition.

Rav Kook emphasized another point as well. In brief, he maintained that every person draws on his inner world in a different way. There are other societies with different cultures, and even different psychologies. People's inner worlds are affected by this social psychology. Each society brings man to extract something different from his inner world. As we have already seen, Rav Kook claims that chosenness implies a basic correspondence between the Torah and the Jewish conscience.

Rihal attempts to bridge the gap between poetry and criticism in the fifth section of the book. Rihal presents the level of the naive, unsophisticated man as the highest. He is the intuitive believer, the poet who has no need to learn the rules of poetry, who has no need of philosophical proofs. The course of the artless believer is the healthiest and the loftiest path. It is simple good-hearted faith; however, under our circumstances, if we were to be "thrown" into the world without the training to relate to intellectual inquiry and philosophical concepts, the situation would be worse. Philosophy is comparable to certain medicines; the sick person must take them, but the healthy person does not need them, and they might even cause him damage. Even if we have no intention to buy, we pass through the market of ideas, and inevitably something of the various stalls sticks to us, undetected. Rihal writes (5: 2):

"The Chaver said: but do we have within us a tranquil soul that is not tempted towards the various opinions that abound in the world - the opinions of the scientists and the soothsayers, the opinions of the talisman holders and the practitioners of witchcraft, the opinions of the believers in the eternal existence of the world and the philosophizers, and such? In our day man does not achieve faith until he has passed through all the many levels of heresy, but "the days of life are short and the task is great" and only individuals, and they are few, have been granted the gift of natural faith. These [individuals] are not at all damaged by these opinions, for they immediately perceive the error in them."

Rihal here refers to the philosophers, to the various men of science, but also to the prophets of pseudo-science and the prophets of the false sciences, who change their garb

in each generation. These are the people who believe in astrology, magic and witchcraft, who try to construct an alternative to religion [1: 79]. This reality uncovers a strange paradox; intelligent people attempt to disregard religion, while they confuse scientific rationalism with superstition. These people are astute and exacting when involved in scientific inquiry, while their personal lives are chock-full of superstition. However, the great danger still lies in the lack of faith, in heresy. It accompanies us and surrounds us, and this is one of the central reasons why we need philosophy; it accounts for our need of literary criticism as well as poetry. Man must work hard indeed to escape from this influence, the unconscious influence that he acquires from the marketplace. I often find myself humming a tune without realizing that it is an advertisement jingle that I heard on the radio. Despite my self-development and despite my will, I cannot successfully avoid the influence of these tunes that I despise. This is what happens to each and every one of us when he goes out into the world. And herein lies the importance of Jewish philosophy. This is its therapeutic, and perhaps hygienic role.

### **Does this mean that the religious position is weak?**

Absolutely not, and I will illustrate this with another example. As the Rambam already stated, philosophy must invest tremendous effort in convincing us of the trivial. The first famous example are the paradoxes of Xeno, the student of Parmenades, who tried to prove, with brilliant logic, that there is no movement in the world. Xeno's famous paradox runs as follows: Achilles and the tortoise are running a race. Achilles allows the tortoise, in a moment of mercy, to start first. It can be logically demonstrated that Achilles will never be able to catch up to the tortoise! Until this very day, philosophers devote tremendous efforts to prove that movement does indeed exist, a fact that every child knows.

This paradox is mentioned by Rav Sa'adia Gaon in the first essay of his book, in the fourth proof of creation. We have received a number of answers to this age old query. Rasag informs us that "one of the investigators was forced to say that there is a part that does not divide". In other words, he concluded that there are indivisible units of measurement, and reality is composed of a collection of such quantum units. Others claim that movement is not continuous: "Some of them say [that movement occurs] at intervals" as though people and animals do not walk continuously but rather jump from place to place. This was the beginning of the debate about the nature of the world. Through Xeno's paradoxes we discover some of the most interesting and important riddles of reality. For example, what is reality composed of? Is it composed of consecutive and continuous things or of atoms? This was the basic debate between the

Aristotelians who believed in continuity and the Atomists, who influenced, via Indian philosophy, the Islamic "Medabrim" - the Kalam school.

In the last two sections of the Kuzari, Rihal speaks of the attempts to reach the truths of the Torah philosophically. One of the serious problems with this method is that there are many philosophical approaches. The Aristotelians mocked the Atomists. Today we are disciples of quantum theory, and to a certain extent we have returned to the approach of the "Medabrim," who were mocked by the Rambam. The fifth section nears the approach of some of the "Medabrim." We must add here that in ancient and medieval times philosophy could be divided into three central approaches. These three positions differ on fundamental issues, not merely in their final conclusions. They are the Kalam, the Aristotelians, and the neo-Platonists. The conflict between them touches on problems of epistemology, ontology, etc.

The paradoxes promise philosophers constant activity. Every generation brings its own solution, and the succeeding generation disproves it. On this background we can once again ask ourselves, which option is preferable? Is it better to construct our world view simply, without spending time solving these sophisticated paradoxes, or to devote the time, under the assumption that man develops and benefits by solving these philosophical riddles?

A large percentage of philosophical thought is devoted to apologetics, to the attempt to defend what we know intuitively or instinctively. Often these apologetics are simply incorrect, full of logical errors. If we leave the paradox of infinity, and search for a current example, we can point to a very difficult issue, the question of "thou". If I had to prove that the person I am talking to now is not a robot but a person, and that he has an inner world just as I do, I would not succeed. The existence of others, of another soul, is an enigma in philosophy. In fact, one great philosopher of our century claims that the belief that other humans exist is merely a "primal belief."

The Kuzari says that this is actually the case in very many areas. This situation resembles that of a country which must devote much of its gross national product (GNP) to defense and preventing infiltration. The Kuzari says that we must almost instinctively understand the truth and not permit others to mislead us.

The three key words in the Book of Creation, Olam (world), Shana (year), and Nefesh (soul) point to the three additional books that the Torah both commands and helps us to read; nature, history and the human soul are the key to understanding Jewish philosophy. Jewish philosophy is an attempt to continue to read those three books, with the aid of the Torah.

## CHAPTER 21: Nature and other Magic Words

### Nature: Activity or Intelligence?

We observe nature and conclude that the remarkable order it displays tells us of the existence of a Creator and an "organizer" outside of nature. The forces of nature are blind, mechanical forces, unlike man, who sees, plans and contrives. Our world is guided by forces and causes. Rihal termed this mechanistic reality "avoda," literally, work, or activity. In the human sphere of consciousness, we find intention and objective; in Rihal's words, "chochma," or intelligence. The striking order in the world bears witness to the presence of an intelligence, of a hidden hand, which leaves its fingerprints on our world. It confirms that non-mechanical components have had an influence on our surroundings.

Regarding the question of nature Rihal attempts to teach us a significant principle that must guide us on our philosophical path. Often people use a technical, scientific or philosophical term, which only serves as a screen to shield them from facing the actual problem. The term becomes a route to run away from the problem, and escape from the inevitable answer.

A man observes an ant and feels that he is encountering the marvels of creation. The wonders of creation know no limits. The advice to observe the ant is an ancient suggestion. Today we can examine much smaller creatures than the ant. The cell, any cell, is no less complex and wondrous, despite its small size. It is actually an entire city. Man is amazed by the wonders that the complex and complicated system of the cell reveals. And he asks: what is the explanation for the marvels that we witness daily? If we were to ask the average person, who is not interested in hearing the religious response, he would use the magic word: "nature." Let us stop here to discuss this and other magic words. This type of usage, Rihal claims, is a mistake, or even worse, a lie. There are two options, and two options only:

1. By the term "nature" we refer to a hidden reality possessed of wondrous qualities which make it similar to or even identical with God. In that case the solution is merely semantic; we assign God a different name:

I see that with these names the wise men have fooled us and caused us to view nature as [God's] equal partner, since we say: "Nature is wise", "Nature acts", and in their view it is possible to say, "Nature creates." [1: 76]

2. When we use the term "nature," we are trying to construct an actual alternative to God. In that case, we must account for the way this alternative functions. However the seeker will not receive such an accounting, in the deep sense of the word.

'Nature' is thus a magic word. The use of such magic words deludes and deceives us in a number of different ways. This deception succeeds in "making an impression on the listeners" [1: 75], and on us as well, because through it we transfer the question to a different domain. We believe that there is some meaningful content to what we refer to as "nature." It is similar to paying a check without money to cover it, or using a currency that has suffered from inflation. Sometimes we hint with this word to another group whom we "believe" has the answer. Consciously or unconsciously, we assume that there are experts in this field, and that the experts certainly can solve the question that we cannot answer. Or, and this is a third option, we assume that in the future, in ideal science, the question will be resolved in a rational way without compelling us to accept the assumption that we find uncomfortable. The common denominator between all of the options is that we are relieved of the obligation to deal seriously with the facts, and can go on with our lives. Rihal endeavors to teach us that in dealing with this question we must stop leaning on experts who do not exist, or on theories that have not yet been born, and accept what simple logic teaches us almost instinctively: the ant bears indisputable witness to the existence of its Creator.

## **Nature and the Divine Plan**

What is deceptive about the term "nature"? Rihal explains this in detail when he points out the need to distinguish between two different concepts [1: 77]:

Indeed so! The elements, the sun, the moon, and the stars have mechanisms such as heating and cooling and wetting and drying, etc. However these actions require that we ascribe to their executors not intelligence but merely activity.

We must begin with the assumption that objects such as simple elements, complex materials, etc., exist in nature. Each one of these is activated and functions according to rules that science investigates and formulates. All these actions may be included in an overall framework, which, echoing Rihal, we may call "activity." The conglomeration of acts that are performed within the framework of the natural order are functions of activity and not intelligence. Until this point, the natural explanation fits perfectly. Whatever occurs, occurs according to nature. And indeed, the role of science is to study these traits and laws, that are essential and not accidental.

Let us assume that these forces exist. So far the meaning of the term "activity" is clear. However, even assuming that this concept poses no difficulties, it cannot explain how actions and forces become arranged in greater units, whose structures bear witness not to "activity" but to intelligence. Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch, in his admirable commentary on the vision of Isaiah (chapter 5), explains that the cherubim who hide their eyes with their wings represent the blind forces of nature, which do not appreciate or recognize their own purpose. They do their Creator's bidding, fulfilling the Divine mission, but they do so blindly. In this they are different from Man, who is (or can be) mindful of the objective. The big picture, the desire to better the world, does not interest them. The forces of nature that Rihal spoke of are blind forces; they do not know how to create an ant, nor are they interested in creating one. Each of them functions in utter blindness.

We will use a simple analogy to explain both the terms which we have used and Rihal's position. Think of a commonplace object, a spring. This spring has various physical properties, such as flexibility. These are the natural properties that science investigates, and in medieval philosophical terms they are called qualities "in the object" or "in nature." The spring has other qualities that are "accidental," "biographical" facts, such as the fact that the spring was constructed in a certain factory, and sold at a particular store. These are, as we said, accidental qualities, as opposed to the physical properties of the spring that are essential, and define its role, such as the type of vibrations it can produce.

A significant philosophical distinction is made here between essential and accidental motion. Thus for example the movement of the spring from the store to the watch is an "accidental movement," and it would be futile to search in physics books for the underlying principle. However the release of the taut spring, and the resultant motion of the cogwheels in the watch, is essential motion. It is a function of the flexibility of the spring. This is the type of motion that the natural sciences investigate.

We must add that the concept of motion in classical thought is very encompassing and comparable to the concept of an "event" in our modern language. Every event has a cause. In the words of Rihal, nature is a general name for all those essential and not accidental qualities and laws which explain motion and rest.

Physics discusses these traits that are "in the object" and "in nature." However this discussion is only a first stage. Let us assume that I have achieved a comprehensive knowledge of springs. I have still not solved the problem of the invention of the spring-operated watch. When I think of the watchmaker putting together different parts and making them into a watch, I know that the watchmaker uses the physical properties of

the various parts, but these physical properties are not enough. The watchmaker adds to the parts and their characteristics the arrangement of the parts into a greater whole. To the activity of the parts he adds his intelligence. Nature, then, may be the basis for the watchmaker's activity, however the watch is not a solely natural creation. It is a product of engineering, the result of the operation of intelligence upon activity, upon the properties and laws of natural objects. Causality responds to the past. Intentionality responds to the future. Human activity in general, and engineering in particular, constitute examples of the attempt to channel the blind forces of nature, and arrange them so that they may help the "seeing." Thus intentionality makes use of mechanical forces. We witness this in every field of human endeavor.

Our situation is similar to that of a Robinson Crusoe, who has been shipwrecked on a desert island and finds a watch. Rihal claims, no matter how strenuously we resist, that this watch is proof of the existence of another person, despite the fact that the island appears to have been completely uninhabited since the six days of creation. And if a watch proves this, how much more so does an ant. Rihal's claim is that the life and activities of the ant are not to be compared to the saltiness of salt or the qualities of an amino acid, but rather the result of a wondrous organization, that bears witness to a guiding intelligence. Intelligence is the irrefutable divine stamp. Rihal adds, "the formation of a shape, the determination of size and character, any action which demonstrates intelligence, can only be attributed to the Master of intelligence, who is Master of capability and rulership as well."

In truth, the example of the watch does not express the situation in all its complexity. Perhaps we will be more successful if we think about the creation of a newborn. His parents are, of course, the cause of his creation, despite the fact that they know nothing about embryology, the process of fetal development. The parents act upon the basis of a complex system of law which they do not understand. The causes that function in nature are causes in the same manner that the mother and father are causes, causes which function on the basis of more penetrating forces, which are marks of the divine: "And let not it seem improbable to you that grand marks of the divine appear in this lower world when the materials have been prepared to accept them." We have called this divine evidence fingerprints of Godly activity. By either name, it is this intelligence that enables the fetus to develop, or allows the creation of that organic "watch" that we meet at every step.

Thus, the difference between activity and intelligence is parallel to the difference between the mechanistic, causal system and the intentional, teleological system.

## CHAPTER 22: Nature and Evolution

### PART I

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi guided us through the complexities of the usage of one magic word: nature. However history has continued to gallop forward, and the battle of the believer against the dissident shows no sign of waning. Thus we see that Rabbi Yehuda Halevi analyzed the situation accurately. The greatest proof of this lies in the fact that his opponent was forced to respond to the questions implied by his own words with more sophisticated techniques than the mere reciting of the word, "nature." Today, the man in the street who wishes to present a non-religious option will use the word evolution in place of nature. Although we must undoubtedly contend with this question in detail, it may be stated at the outset that Rihal's response is appropriate to these new versions as well.

Let us first briefly relate to the new stance of the opponent, to the change in the answer itself. Let us construct a contemporary version of the classic Kuzari, between the two characters who never conversed directly in the original Kuzari:

The Chaver: Let us look at the watch that I wear on my wrist. It is actually a tiny computer. Imagine its tremendous sophistication, the sophistication of simplicity, which arouses us to amazement and awe; we might indeed call this a digital miracle.

The Philosopher: Indeed, the watch that is before us arouses much wonder, but only because we have forgotten the history of the development of watches. If we were to study its history from the earliest times, we would understand how the watch developed. Once upon a time there was a hourglass, or perhaps a sundial, which transformed over time into a water clock, until the appearance of the first spring watches. A particularly interesting development took place during the lifetime of the spring watch. You must realize that these minute, quietly accumulating changes, are in fact responsible for the appearance of this sophisticated watch that you are wearing at this moment. The passage of time and the powers of the market determined which of these changes would survive. The unsuccessful watches have disappeared. Only those that suit our needs have remained. I am astonished by your amazement. Why do you marvel at this "digital miracle"? You have merely forgotten to take the nature of evolution into account.

The magic word that miraculously solves problems has changed. It is no longer nature, but evolution. We will return to this parable, for in my opinion it has much to teach us. However now we will move on to the interpretation of the parable. Our opponent the philosopher claims that all of life, be it the life of the ant or of man, develops in the same way. I will not enter here into the heart of the religious question



that this issue arouses, namely, whether the coexistence of religion and evolution is possible. At present we must give our attention to the fact that the theory of evolution, just like the use of the term nature, constitutes an attempt to escape from dealing with the divine fingerprints that appear in our world.

How does this escape come to pass? True, the creation of the ant is a wondrous thing, the creation of man even more so. However if enough time is given to natural processes and the principle of natural selection, these small chance changes can bring about the creation of a complex and complicated creature, even one that appears as wondrous as man. Natural selection in effect describes the powers of the market that function in the world. In accordance with their activity, the creatures that are not fitting for the environment will die out, and thus the more suitable ones will remain.

I will not enter here into a description of the details of the Darwinian theory, which in one guise or another dominates science up to our very day.

Darwin belongs to the nineteenth-century world of thought. And undoubtedly there is a significant difference between the nineteenth century and the twentieth. To a certain degree, the nineteenth century can be compared to one of those classic realistic paintings, which contain a clear depiction of a portion of reality. This is a transparent picture, through which we can seemingly view reality as it is. We "understand" the picture. The twentieth century is more easily likened to a modern picture, by Picasso or Dali, which demands that we exert much effort, not in order to bring the picture closer to our minds, but to bring our own intuitions to the picture. The last century was a materialistic century, which believed that it had discovered matter as the foundation of the world, and through it had "almost" found the solution to all of the world's riddles. The key to the riddles of the world were to be discovered in matter, not spirituality.

The crumbling of this naive belief stemmed from a series of revolutions which took place in almost every area, and utterly altered the classical theories. The most well-known revolutions belong to the world of physics: the theory of relativity, and particularly quantum physics. However significant revolutions took place in the field of biology as well. In those days, the Darwinists could assume that if by chance I had found a live cell, I could extract the entire tree of life from it, including man. This idea is based on the naive belief in the existence of simple life forms. Today this belief has come into question. The electron microscope has begun to show us that the cell is actually a whole city, no less complex and wondrous than man. The idea that primitive animals are simpler and therefore can be explained more easily as a result of a chance occurrence, had already evoked the resounding reaction of the Chaver [5: 20]: "The wisdom of God

in giving a form to a fly or a mosquito, is no less [spectacular] than his wisdom in arranging the celestial system."

The first element that changed is related to the starting point. The second element is the process of change itself. A new field has been discovered, which Darwin had never heard of, and therefore never dreamed of the significance of its implications. Heredity is determined by a very clear map which is inside the cell. This discovery in essence brought about the end of classic Darwinism. It had to be replaced by "neo-Darwinism" or by other theories. The result of this change is that a new word appeared, which Rav Kook combatted and zealously fought against in his work, *Ikvei Hatzon*. The key must lie in the term mutation, a jump or "dilug," to use the language of Rav Kook. The conflict between the believer and the atheist does not and will not end with this transition. Neo-Darwinism will claim that every occurrence can be compared to a throw of the dice. The throw is random, and yet the results persuade me that some cheating has been going on. Some changes have taken place in the atoms of the DNA. These changes are chance occurrences, yet suddenly because of them a new pattern emerges. Actually, every positive and successful mutation is in fact a mini-creation that occurs before our very eyes. It is too coincidental to be a coincidence.

Evolution and natural selection have a place. But in light of what we know today, we can understand their role differently. I will explain this through a theory which I regard with respect and hesitation, with doubt and deference. Recently scientists have reexamined some of the fossils that were used to draw up the tree of evolution. And behold they discovered that the earlier work that was done was erroneous. Those fossils demonstrate that in very ancient times strange life forms existed, which were very far from what we know today, as though a mysterious element, "nature" - with Rihal's reservations - conducted different experiments, and history, or natural selection, did what it does best: disqualifying possibilities and destroying species. Natural selection is significant specifically because of its destructive power, while the constructive power must be explained by another element, an element whose source lies beyond the natural plane.

It is clear today that evolution seems to function in what may be termed "explosions." For long periods of time evolution seems quiet, and then suddenly it erupts. On the other hand, scientists are having second thought regarding one of the fundamental bases of Darwinism, the existence of useless remnants which seemingly prove that they originated from a different species. Today this theory is doubted as well. Let us look, for example, at the wing feathers of birds. Birds who do not fly have wings too. The remnants of the past show that all birds share a common origin. And it is true that birds

that do not fly have wings, and these wings have feathers. However the feathers differ from bird to bird. The feathers of flying birds have an aerodynamic and hollow build. Not so the other birds, such as the ostrich. The structure of the feathers apparently takes the different functions of different birds into account. It seems that in the development of living species a single plan prevails, which continually divides and makes use of different materials. An interesting example of this is the eye. The eye develops in the fetus. However its origin differs from species to species. Sometimes it develops from skin cells, sometimes from nerve cells, and sometimes from another source. And yet in these three species, the eye itself appears exactly the same.

In the scientist's lexicon there is no term that expresses more than coincidence. However, this is the place where the advocate of religion must step in and say his piece. I don't think that the evolutionists have proved these things to be chance occurrences. They disregard the significance of the facts. Let us imagine that I see fingerprints in the sand. How did these marks appear? The world has rocks that were carved by the wind, or stones that water has smoothed. Who formed the fingerprints? The hand that touched the sand, or the wind? Our argument with evolution is about this phenomenon. The thesis that what took place occurred by chance is founded in error. For me, the powers that function in the world are the angels of God. There are chemical, physical and biological angels, and perhaps there are evolutionary angels. Science is appointed to the post of investigating the angels. But behind these angels stands their sender, the Lord of the universe. The angels act blindly, therefore their activity seems arbitrary, but it is not arbitrary. Some single cell organisms have eyes that have the same properties as the human eye.

This is true regarding technology as well. Let us assume that a synthesized cell could be constructed. What will this teach us? Will such an action disprove creation? Absolutely not! It will teach us that wise men have used information and techniques that thousands of investigators gathered and created with great sophistication, and with their help, created a cell.

Precise, non-arbitrary technology united with science and a cell was synthetically formed. Let's assume that that is the way the cell was generated in nature as well. It did not occur as an accident from our perspective, nor was it accidental as far as nature is concerned. The chemical synthesis is not a chance occurrence, despite the fact that all kinds of molecules of different organic materials may be formed accidentally. The cell itself is not a chance occurrence. Why not judge nature exactly as we judge scientists? The angels of evolution also made use of science and technology, with God's help.

Regarding the specific issue of the synthetic generation of life, I would like to bring here the Kuzari's opinion on the possibility of genetic engineering, which is in essence the possibility of utilizing the laws which determine the appearance and influence of life.

For the fact that a plant differs from its fellow or an animal from its fellow, is not one of the fundamental elements, but rather the form, which is one of God's actions that the philosophers term nature. It is true that the elements prepare the types of material to receive that action according to the proportion of heat and cold, moisture and dryness which is in them. And according to this, one of them will become a date and the other a grape, one a horse and the other a lion. However we cannot determine these proportions, for if we could determine them, we could create animals who would have life in them, or we could generate from things that are not at all foodstuffs ... something that could replace bread.

At the base of these words lies the claim that we could succeed in generating life if we could discover the exact formulas. Man does not create; he finds his way into an existing system. It is essentially no different than the process of bringing children into the world. The essential difference between the birth of a child and genetic engineering is a difference on the level of knowledge alone. Rihal does not believe in the possibility of human engineering of life. This remains a mystery. However, despite this, the question is not one of religious significance for us. Perhaps those people who claimed to possess hidden wisdom and believed they could create a Golem, and whose abilities were denied by Rihal, were right after all.

## **PART II: Activity and Intelligence**

Let us return to the example of the blind forces which we spoke of earlier. The common denominator between the various Darwinist formulas is the attempt to explain the creation or appearance of intelligent beings by means of blind forces. This approach attempts to account for the existence of the universe with the concept of activity and to bypass intelligence, to use Rihal's terms. This is the source of our disagreement with the proponents of the theory of evolution. Can these blind forces in fact create a world, particularly the miraculous world of living creatures that we witness daily? If we apply Rihal's conclusion to our modern problem, we can rephrase his words and let Rihal speak through a contemporary Chaver, the modern descendent of the Chaver in the Kuzari:

The Chaver: Let us assume that what you say is true - evolution does influence nature. It is impossible to explain the appearance of man, or the appearance of any animal, according to evolutionary principles alone, without some involvement of intelligence,

which grants each being its particular needs without excess or lack. He who labels all the processes which refine the material world as "evolution" has lost nothing, on the condition that he has not attributed them intelligence, just as a man and woman should not be attributed the creation of the fetus by their copulation, since the truth is that they only facilitate the receipt of the human form to material which is primed for that purpose, whereas the form itself emanates from an intelligent creator.

Blind forces cannot create a man unless another, seeing force lies behind them. In other words, even were we to accept the existence of developmental processes, these processes cannot, on their own, explain the appearance of life in general and of man in particular. It is possible (and this is a scientific and not a religious problem) that evolution accurately describes the course of events, however, in that case, an intelligent force must be moving these forces. The essence of the belief in creation is a religious proposition, whose defenders are willing to wager with absolute confidence that any other theory is simply mistaken or misleading. Other theories may explain the procedures of certain changes that have taken place in the world; this is perfectly legitimate. However, the religious view rejects the additional claim that the appearance of the world and the wonderful order that it contains is to be attributed to evolutionary changes occurring completely at random. This would be too coincidental, if it were a coincidence. It is simply too unlikely to be reasonable!

Imagine that you are in a desert, and you discover a handprint in the sand. You could assume that the wind randomly arranged the sand granules into this form. On the other hand, you could assume that someone passed by, put his hand in the sand, and the indentations in the sand are simply the result of that action. Intention is the handprint of intelligence.

If we reentered a room that we had left in disarray, we could probably tell if someone else had been there in our absence. How would we know? If the room had been reorganized, we would know that someone else had been there. If creation can be defined as the appearance of something out of nothing, then generation is the passage from chaos to order. The essence of the generation of something from something is the creation of order. Indeed, the whole cosmos is replete with order. And the most wonderful order exists in the world of living creatures. Each living being is an immense system, in which each part serves the whole. Primitive biology did not understand this sufficiently. Each new discovery brings us closer to an improved understanding of the functions of the various components.

I will bring one example to illustrate the issue of intention, or purposefulness. Examples of intelligence in the world of insects abound. The classic examples are, of

course, the bee hive, the ant hill, etc. However I will use one of the examples chosen by the great French-Jewish philosopher, Henri Bergson, in his criticism of the Darwinist approach. He brings the example of one particular insect, who, like all insects, lays eggs and must care for them. In order to develop, the eggs need nourishment. The insect lays the eggs and leaves them alone, however he first takes care of them: he stalks a cricket and lays the eggs on its back. At this point the insect faces a dilemma: should he kill his victim? If he does, the cricket will rot and not last long enough to serve as food for the insects that will emerge from the eggs. If he doesn't kill the victim, it will escape. What is the insect's solution? He stings his victim, poisoning only his motor nerve centers. Thus that the cricket remains alive, yet paralyzed, and he cannot escape before the insects consume him.

These facts teach us two things: we learn of nature's intelligence, and also of its cruelty. This cruelty caused the prophets to proclaim that the final redemption of the world necessarily entails the rectification of nature. The Torah does not deify nature. It does not claim that nature is perfect; in fact, the Torah teaches us that the opposite is true. The legend of the Garden of Eden informs us, in contrast to idolatrous approaches and to the Greek ideal, that nature is not perfect, and cannot serve as a yardstick of moral behavior. Nature includes cruel elements; the lion devours the lamb. Thus in the final redemption nature itself will be redeemed: the lion shall lie down with the lamb.

Contemporary development of tools for scientific research, particularly the development of the microscope, have only recently introduced us to the world around us. The insect functions mechanically; it is programmed to act in an ignorant manner, without awareness. Were we to alter its surroundings slightly, it would not know how to proceed. However this apparent imbecility once again highlights the vast powers of its programmer. The world of insects cannot be explained by evolution; however the attempts at explanation are irrelevant in any case. Throughout the world of insects we find striking signs of intelligence, and yet these insects lack a learning mechanism comparable to that of a human. Let me give you an example. We know of insects that build their homes by cutting a leaf according to a particular mathematical equation, which allows for the leaf to be folded and thus become a satisfactory nest. The great skill of the bee is not its ability to make honey. It is the fact that the angles of the cells of a honeycomb are very closely suited to the mathematical demands for creating a maximum of space with a minimum of wax.

Had I witnessed a person doing these things, I would conclude that this person had intelligence, and was employing it. In the behavior of insects, we have a word for it: instinct. However this word does not, of course, solve the puzzles; it merely covers them

up. Insects act on instinct. The argument is not whether a plan exists; it is about the identity of the master planner. Reality teaches us that the intelligence is not in the insect, but in nature, and its origin stems from a source beyond nature. We face the fingerprints of something or someone outside the realm of nature who is influencing our world.

Physical and chemical explanations will not suffice if we wish to understand life, just as it is not enough to understand mechanics in order to understand a car. We must assume that there was an engineer who planned the car and brought it from theoretical potential to practical application, in accordance with a particular intention and purpose. The Darwinian version of the theory of evolution constituted a heroic philosophical attempt to deny this verdict, and to avoid assuming the existence of intention and purposefulness in the world. It presented an alternative: everything developed as a result of evolutionary processes; in the final analysis, the world evolved by chance.

Since its inception, modern science has perceived the world as a mechanistic system, while studiously avoiding the obvious approach, namely understanding the world based on the concept of intention.

Scientific advancement in all fields meant discovery and investigation of the mechanical causes. The prime example is classical physics, which completely abandoned any goal-based approach since Newton developed the theory of gravity. Modern science learned to beware of falling into the trap of intention, yet intention does exist. However, we must keep to the boundaries of each branch of science. Physics is not to be interpreted in terms of intentions, whereas in psychology an intention-based approach is essential. Anyone who attempts to explain human behavior without involving intentions - and such psychologists existed - is a liar, whom we can only excuse if we assume that he also lied to himself. Man is motivated by goals and intentions. The principle that characterizes man is that of thought before action. If causality changes the future, then in human activity the opposite process takes place: the future alters the present. The final stage of action was planted with the first seed of thought. In the realm of physics, mechanical forces function. People function according to goals.

Between physics and psychology lies that admirable field, the study of life. Biology is in a valuable and problematic place in the middle. It must be approached in two stages. Let me give you an example. The fact that the body regulates the amount of sugar in the blood demonstrates a certain teleological characteristic of the body. If I were to be satisfied with investigation of intentions, I would sin towards my scientific quest, which is to investigate how the mechanism of regulation of sugar functions. In contrast, I would not understand what I had before me, even if I understood all the mechanisms and

materials, if I didn't know that we were dealing with a mechanism with a goal and a function. I must approach biology on both levels.

Newtonian physics can be compared to a game of pool. Forces hit balls and they move. Although physics has altered to the extent that it is no longer recognizable as the same science, the principle of activity of blind forces is still valid. Yet in biology, we find a miraculous state of order. The student of biology sees that he must fit intentions and goals into his interpretations.

Suppose that tomorrow we will discover a new substance in the human body. We can be certain that we may ask what purpose it serves. The thesis that claims that the human body contains nothing that does not have a purpose, and all its parts contribute towards the effective functioning of the whole, will assist us in successfully understanding the role of the new substance. We can also ask a different question. If we discover a substance or an organ in the body, we may assume that it fills some function or goal. Admittedly, this assumption also has a limit, but before we reach this limit we will discover so many functions that even scientists feel compelled to describe the wonders of life. True, we cannot understand why the fly exists, but we can easily see that an incredible amount of intelligence has been invested in the fly.

Let us return to the example of the watch. The watch has a certain function, it has a purpose. How does it fulfill this goal? Through the employment of a large number of mechanisms and techniques. The oldest and most ingenious of these mechanisms is clearly the wheel. However beyond it there exist many mechanisms, which we can use to direct it and adjust it, to light it up in the dark, even to turn it into an alarm clock. These mechanisms function mechanically, since this is the only way that a mechanism can function. These mechanisms fulfill their actions for a purpose of which they are unaware, and yet the watch is a remarkable expression of intention (teleology) that hitches a ride on a mechanical system.

Immanuel Kant, the great philosopher, contemplated this question. Like many others he also bent over backwards to find a compromise with teleology. His conclusion was that there is no such thing as teleology, yet we are allowed to act as though it exists. In his philosophical system, intention is a "regulative idea." This concept is based on the assumption that study of mechanics is true science, while intention only helps us along in our scientific inquiry. In other words, Kant chose a code word, similar to the slang phrase, "like." Everything happens like, or as though intention were a motivating force. But why?

It is thus that we must understand the common use of the term evolution. The tendency towards the natural sciences and the current intellectual fashion do not permit



the life sciences and the human sciences to speak the language of intention. And yet, there is no other way. Here the concept of evolution comes to their aid. The theory of evolution give scientists an excuse to continue to investigate all the purposeful functions in life, within each species and also in the relationships between species, without actually pronouncing the "holy name." This concept allows them to involve themselves in teleological explanations without admitting it by the explanation or fiction (choose your term) that the amazing teleology that exists in nature stems from a blind process of trial and error. In this sense evolution is a great blessing. It is similar to certain children's games that can be stopped at any given moment by saying some key word, at which point you can do whatever you want, even something that goes against the rules. Thus evolution becomes an "alibi," a sort of code word which allows the scientist to move to a different level of explanation, and give a perfect intention-based explanation for every aspect of our world, without deriving the obvious conclusions from the existence of intention and purpose in nature.

In any case, we must admit that the concept of evolution gives scientists the option to continue investigating the wonderful phenomena of nature, without needing to negate them. People have often wished to deny the existence of an intelligent force behind the mechanical function of our world. However, the existence of the theory of evolution actually proves that man cannot negate intelligence, and we must invent "something" in order to explain it. The dispute is about the essence of the explanation. One of the fronts of the religious argument today is located here, while the facts themselves are undisputed. We are faced with a dilemma: how must we judge the facts before us, how must we judge the reality that we see? Faith cannot be forced upon people; we can only place the alternatives before them. The Kotzker Rebbe used to relate that the Torah says: "Let these words that I am telling you today be upon your heart;" ideas can be put on the heart, but not in the heart. If man opens his heart, the words will go in. If he doesn't, the words will not enter. We can only point out the facts. The decision is a personal one, which each individual must make on his own.

### **Part III: Evolution: Coincidence or Design?**

#### **The Positions of Classical Thought:**

Let us briefly review the three classical and conflicting positions. The first position is the Aristotelian approach, which maintains that goals and intentions are a moving force in the physical world. In other words, the Aristotelian position claims that goal-oriented behavior characterizes not only man, but nature as a whole. This is in fact an outgrowth of what was known as the Vitalist approach, which actually claimed that organic chemistry was essentially different from inorganic chemistry. This position was effectively overthrown by the modern scientific revolution, which is mechanistic at its core. Various scientists have attempted to resurrect this position, in a theory they called Neo-vitalism; however, it remains a difficult approach, as it disregards an essential layer of explanation.

The second position is the theory of evolution, which endeavors to explain nature's goal-oriented behavior as resulting from random causes, since mechanisms clearly are not goal-oriented. Allow me to illustrate the difference between the two approaches with a simple example. According to the first approach, nature causes rain to fall in order to make life on earth possible. On the other hand, the theory of evolution would claim that rain is the outcome of a particular random mechanism; however, since rain does happen to fall in our world, the appearance of life became possible. Rain does not fall in order to make life possible; rather, the evolutionists maintain that because of certain random phenomena, such as falling rain, life appeared on earth. The entire theory of evolution is an attempt to escape from the discovery of purpose and intention in nature, since purposeful behavior implies planning, and bears witness to an intelligent designer.

The believer chooses a third position. He claims that intelligence is a force involved in our world. This is the teleological argument for the existence of God; just as a watch or a car bears witness to its creators, and an article of clothing bears witness to its tailor, so too the world bears witness to the existence of its Creator. The teleological approach proclaims that an intelligent force subsists at the world's core. This position is similar to the Aristotelian approach, but is not identical to it. It is not a scientific claim, implying that within the world itself there is an independent purposeful system. According to the Aristotelian approach, which the Rambam espoused, purpose and intent are inherent in the world. This is an almost mystical position, because it brings the existence of intentions into nature, which finally leads us, link after link, to the existence of a first cause: God. They were mistaken; we must search out the entire mechanical basis of the world. However, others are equally mistaken when they deny that purposefulness exists as well. Purposefulness points to its source; and its source is God.

Can a watch appear by coincidence? It is not a question of the materials of which it is composed but rather of the process of assembling it. The miraculous quality of the watch and the car, all the more so of the living cell or the eye, is found in their design.

However, if we are honest with ourselves, we must admit that traces of purposefulness are apparent not only in human endeavor, but also in less likely places. The eye is comparable to the watch, yet much more complex. The eye sees according to optical, physical, chemical and other principles. But the arrangement of the eye points to a goal. Is this the result of intention or chance?

The existence of purposefulness bears undeniable witness to a planner and engineer. No one intelligent could believe that the watch came into being on its own. Here once again the magic word, evolution, appears, graciously allowing us to deal with the amazing reality without amazement, in other words: without searching for mystical explanations; or to put it more simply: without admitting that my scientific method impels me to believe in God.

Evolution teaches us to look into the history of the watch. And this is significant. There are car experts who deal, without announcing it, in a sort of science of paleontology. From pieces of a shattered headlight, these experts can discover almost everything about the car it was taken from. Such is the case with watches as well. From studying the watch that is before us it would definitely be possible to discover its specific make, the particular machine that manufactured it, the methods of marketing and the war between the various models. Yet we will not have touched upon the most significant question. What hides behind the construction of watches? A plan or a coincidence?

Let me give you an example. Imagine that a fire broke out and the insurance company sends its promising young investigator on his first mission. The investigator examines the traces of the fire and prepares his report. The insurance company, of course, wished to know the answer to the crucial question: why did the fire break out? The investigator prepares a report, and answers the critical question using the best of his chemical knowledge. He writes out the chemical formula describing the original emergence of the fire. Of course, this response will not satisfy the insurance company. The insurance company is not interested in chemistry; they need to know if the fire broke out by chance, or by design. Chemistry is useful, but it doesn't hold the real answer. Such is the case with all of science, including biology. Science can teach us about the mechanism of life. But we, as the insurance company, are interested in a different question: how did reality emerge? How did life emerge? By chance or by design?

We can approach the world of nature in a similar manner. We can ask the questions that the theory of evolution asks; we can even believe that evolution exists, that species

change, that new species appear. All these questions are scientific. Important, interesting, but secondary. From this point onward, we are faced with the crucial question, the religious question. Did life appear like a chance fire, or was there a hidden hand that guided the entire evolutionary process, that lit the fire? The belief in the hidden force is the thesis of the believers in creation.

Our great battle in the modern world is not with evolution, but with those who believe that everything happened by chance. This is the focal point of the battle. The most important lesson that we learn from the theory of evolution is perhaps the idea that was expressed by Rabbi Nachman Krochmal, known by his acronym, Ranak, when he explained the meaning of the blessing, "Blessed are You ... who alters creatures." It means that God changes his creatures so that they may adapt to the different surroundings and conditions under which they live. Rabbi Akiva expressed a similar thought, when he stated that he expected God to create creatures out of fire, meaning that in all possible surroundings, in different temperatures and different climates, God altered his creatures to adapt them to their changing conditions. How did God do this? That is a scientific question. We can imagine that God implanted the possibility of change in the genetic makeup so that the various species, and man among them, would adapt themselves to different climates. We do not believe in mere coincidental, passive adaptation, but in the employment of the elements and the possibilities that God placed in nature, in order to change and adapt.

Rav Kook teaches that the evolutionary principle is valid in the entire cosmos; however it is not random evolution, but guided evolution. Rav Kook's idea is important and we will try to explain it with a parable that originated with his student, Rabbi David Hachohen, commonly known as the Nazir. The religious perception of evolution can be compared to a group of vessels whose bases are interconnected. Let us assume that these containers are connected to a large reservoir of water. Let us also assume that we are inside one of the vessels. We don't see the whole picture. We see that the water in our vessel is rising, and we are amazed. For our experience teaches us to expect the water to descend, and yet we see it rising before our very eyes. This would be a riddle to someone who doesn't know about the connection between the water in the vessels and the larger body of water in the reservoir. Only someone who knows that he is actually part of an interconnected system could figure out the riddle.

Rav Kook teaches that evolution is a similar process, in which the water rises. This is contrary to all the laws of nature. The whole world, it seems, is improving, developing, passing from a less perfect state to a more perfect state. We agree with the scientists who recognize the reality of evolution. Perhaps we can even agree with them about the actual

process of evolution. We do not agree with their conclusion. The interconnected vessels connect us with God. God is perfection, and therefore a process of perfection is destined to appear in the world.

Thus, we must differentiate between evolution and Darwinism. Evolution explains the processes. It is a theory which deserves to be debated and have its methods and conclusions scrupulously examined. However, Darwinism tried to do something beyond this. It tried to explain this theory based upon chance, struggle, death, and survival of the fittest. It is possible that this process occurred in certain segments of nature, but we cannot generalize and explain the appearance of all of life through it. In particular, we cannot agree that this process is a random process. How do these processes occur? The riddle remains unexplained. We believe that these processes are not random, but rather they are directed by a guiding hand. This is the claim that the proponents of religion affirm with certainty and conviction.

#### **Part IV: Chance and Probability**

Do you remember the insurance investigator from last week's lecture? Perhaps his chemical research is not as absurd and superfluous as it originally appeared. He can make use of it to ask what the chances are that such a fire would occur by accident. Essentially, this is the question of probability. However, probability theory teaches us something additional, a very significant lesson about theories in general. Although we are discussing the probability of occurrences, we can apply what we learn to the probability of theories as well. Bayesian statistics informs us of the following fact: if according to your theory, the probability that a particular occurrence will take place is a thousand to one, and it does take place, this means that the probability that your theory is correct is a thousand to one. In other words, we can note the probability of the theory itself, and according to its success, predict what will happen. If according to the theory of evolution the probability of man appearing is very slight, that means that if man does exist, then the probability of this theory being true is equally slight.

Various thinkers have tried to give a quantitative expression to the question of probability. However, it seems to me that a quantitative expression would actually weaken the direct experience of reality. The essence of things is what is important here and not their quantity. Let me explain: the evolutionary approach is based upon the principle of transition from simple beings to more and more complex ones. The development of scientific equipment has shown that the complexity of the most elemental cell is not much inferior to that of man in his entirety. The cell is not an amorphous "piece of flesh," a collection of chemical materials which possesses chance

characteristics. It is closer to a complex and highly organized system. One might say that the cell resembles a city more than it resembles any object from our daily life. It has a power plant, libraries for information and groups of laborers. The concept of the simple and complex is a simplistic one. Already at the outset, the wisdom that is so apparent in the bigger things can be clearly perceived. The stars and constellations are not alone when they proclaim the glory of God; divine wisdom is evident at what seem to be much lower levels of sophistication. If this is true, then the parable of the watch is misleading. The sundial is much simpler than the spring watch. The most primitive life forms are more similar to a wondrous digital watch than to a sundial, even one that evolved by chance.

When we make the transition from chemistry to life, the reality becomes even more remarkable. If we were dealing with a small number of conditions that make life possible, the Darwinian theory of evolution would be reasonable. However today we know that the number of conditions necessary to make life possible is enormous. Could it possibly have occurred by chance? The chance of the world evolving by coincidence is like the chance of winning the lottery, or guessing the outcome of a throw of dice. If I have to guess one number out of six, my chances of winning would be reasonable. But the more complex the gamble, the less likely I am to win. As we become aware of the enormous complexity of life, the possibility that life would appear by chance becomes completely unreasonable. The very fact that life exists becomes more and more remarkable; in other words it becomes a proof that someone planned it all.

Let us return to the example of the watches; it can teach us something from a different angle. All watches serve the same purpose; they measure time. We can see how water watches or hourglasses developed, and sometimes these developments are the results of chance occurrences, or even of mistakes that certain designers made, which later turned out to be better ideas than the intentional ones. We can also think of the progression from the large watches enjoyed by Louis XVI before his decapitation, to small spring watches, which we all wore up until a few years ago. We would be mistaken if we overlooked the fact that the history of watches is not fully explained by its natural development, but must also include the fact that every so often a revolution takes place. There is a fundamental difference between the regular spring watch and the digital watch. Here an intelligent element interfered with the "natural" development, and thus caused a revolution. Just as with the transition from the hourglass to the water watch, or from the sundial to the spring watch, the transition that we have witnessed with our very eyes with the appearance of the digital watch hints at the existence of great revolutions caused by an outside factor who intervenes in the process. Evolution does function according to the Darwinian method, and the watch which is most suited to the market will remain

while the others disappear. However beyond this process there is another process, one of true innovation. Every so often a new invention appears, and it enters the evolutionary process and revolutionizes it. Rav Kook described the case accurately when he said that the theory of evolution is correct in assuming the existence of all the middle stages, of all the possibilities. But it must add, Rav Kook claims, another option, the mutation, which is no less than a jump into a new reality.

These jumps constitute great riddles that cannot be solved with the standard explanations. The appearance of plants, the appearance of life, the appearance of intelligence and the appearance of language are such mutations, which create fundamental differences which themselves are parallel to Rihal's division of reality into levels of existence. If we add the riddle of the appearance of matter, then we have before us four beginnings that are parallel to Rihal's categories of animal, vegetable, mineral and human. The appearance of religion is also a revolution which, perhaps, cannot be explained according to the earlier principles, and brings us, in a sense, to Rihal's fifth level of existence. In short: beyond the evolutionary development there exists a factor which intervenes and effects change in our reality.

I repeat, I do not claim that the mechanisms of the theory of evolution do not operate. They do, and it is very possible that we can learn much about the emergence of life from this theory. However, I deny that these things could have happened by chance. Would the scientist who believes in evolution be willing to play cards against a gambler who is dealt cards with the same luck as the development of life? If it were me, I would conclude that there were trick cards or some other kind of deception. Or perhaps, that this gambler had supernatural powers.

There are forces in the world that function as God's messengers. There is a hidden power that functions through chance. The appearance of life, creation and divine providence appear and exist in our world with the miraculous powers of that lucky gambler.

The probability of life appearing on earth is close to zero. The whole of life can be seen as a defiant response to the theory of probability. One could theoretically argue that the chances of winning the lottery are just as slight, and yet people do win the lottery. This seems like a good question, but the answer is clear. The two cases are different. The comparison itself is erroneous. Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz once put it well: the chance of winning the lottery is not zero but one, in other words, it is certain. In order to understand what he said, we must remember that the lottery is built in such a way that if we had bought all the combinations, we would definitely win. This is not the case with the appearance of life, which is statistically absurd. Let us imagine a million people

buying lottery tickets, while the lottery machine contains additional infinite random combinations which do not appear on the tickets. The probability of someone winning the lottery would then be zero. The chance of explaining life through examining physics, chemistry and biology, is impossible. It is simply too coincidental to be a coincidence.

### **Divine Providence**

We can now glance historically at the issue of evolution. As we have seen, Rihal did not want to present his Jewish calling card at a natural or cosmic event, such as creation, but rather in history; he chose to present it at the exodus from Egypt. The exodus from Egypt teaches us about what classical Jewish thought has called hashgacha pratit [individual, or personal providence]. In the issue of evolution we are reminded of the importance of another concept: hashgacha klalit [general providence]. The theory of evolution in its atheistic form battles with the belief in general providence, against the recognition of God's hand in nature.

### **The Emperor's New Clothes**

There is a word of Greek origin, which is periodically thrown at anyone who is involved in Jewish philosophy and attempting to answer eternal or contemporary philosophical questions: apologetics. The dictionary definition of apologetics is "advocacy, words of justification or defense." Whether we want it or not, apologetics create a sort of philosophical tool which man uses to defend a particular position from which he is unwilling either to retreat or to progress. This lethargy stems from an intellectual fatigue, a lack of initiative, or other psychological reasons. Apologetics is a word that is used to throw darts at a man who is unable to see reality as it is, and tries to explain it through various methods of escape.

All this is true here as well: the use of the term evolution is an example of anti religious apologetics. It sees many things that do indeed exist, but like the word nature, it constitutes a sort of defense line or escape route that people use. As the Chaver succinctly put it, it is the hope of simple people, who think that somewhere there are wise experts who can provide support for the threadbare phrases that we use. Nature and evolution are examples of those phrases, and regarding them the Kuzari said, "This is one of the powers" - and perhaps we might add, one of the processes - "that the wise men know of. We do not understand its essence, but there is no doubt that the wise people know its essence." This "no doubt" is the basis for the peace of mind which many people feel when approaching a discussion of these issues. However this "no doubt" is



completely false. With regard to those experts the Chaver said, "Their knowledge of it is no greater than our own." This dependence on experts who have the solutions in their hands is actually a religious position in disguise, naivete or pretended naivete. It is not far, in its powers of explanation, from the statement of that wise man who said that opium induces sleep because it has a sleep inducing quality.

The Kuzari had to respond to this explanation. He responds not to the discussion itself but rather to "faith" and the dependence upon the wise men. This dependence has psychological rules of its own. For example, if a man were to go to a park and see a bench with a sign on it that says "wet paint," it is very possible that his natural inclination would be to put his finger on the bench to ascertain that the bench is indeed wet. In contrast, if he were to read in the paper that a green creature had arrived on earth in a shining spaceship he would often be inclined to believe it. The difference between what a person will believe and what he will not believe is a psychological difference that we must account for. Of course we must at times depend on some scientific positions, and this is the basis for scientific tradition. However the dependence on an answer that exists out there but is not in myself, is trap set by the evil inclination.

The scope and complexity of science in our day no longer permit us to be encyclopedists, experts in all field. However despite everything, we must judge the judges, investigate the investigators and critique the critics. The deciding question that we must ask is whether their positions in the various areas are scientifically self-evident, or are they only results of fashion and the prevailing mood. Perhaps their source is not in their own area of expertise, but beyond the boundaries of that field, and must therefore be classified as religious or philosophical claims, not scientific ones. Perhaps the Kuzari's approach to this issue can be defined as a philosophical interpretation of the emperor's new clothes. On many occasions the emperor does wear royal garb; however sometimes, and such is our case when he discusses the problems of nature and evolution, the innocent child is right when he cries out that the emperor is wearing nothing at all.

## **CHAPTET 23: Science and Religion**

### **PART I: Rav Kook's Approach**

We have previously examined Rihal's approach, which relates to philosophical solutions as models which can guide us, despite the fact that we can never be certain of their merit; for in the final analysis every theory is a fallible and transitory creation.

An understanding of Rav Kook's approach is essential in any contemporary discussion of science and religion. We will use Rav Kook's book *Eder Hayakar* as our base, with occasional references to his other writings on the subject.

The uniqueness of Rav Kook's approach lies in the claim that this "conflict" must be approached with an emphasis on the historical context, and particularly what Rav Kook calls the "moral foundation." He writes:

All human conflicts of opinion, within each particular nation, and within the Jewish nation most particularly, are based only on the moral foundation.

In other words, contradictions between science and religion stem from a severe moral problem involving the "religious establishment," which is revealed through social and economic injustice and political oppression.

Scientific development has caused religious problems, and we will discuss them later on. However, Rav Kook maintains that these problems were meant merely to be stages in the conceptual development of humanity:

... If not for the hatred, which was planted [in the hearts of many people] by the corrupt leadership of Catholicism ... [against] the glory of faith in divinity and in the sacredness of the Scriptures, by its corrupt moral leadership ... as well as [by] the rest of the religions who sanctify the Scriptures, [who inspired hatred of their religion] by their corrupt behaviors with regard to human morality, in the name of faith, it would have been inconceivable to supplant the [original] faith with new approaches, neither past ones, nor present ones, nor future ones.

Judaism's openness to the new world brought about the "rise of blasphemy" among Jews in the form of an "unnatural disease." However in this "infiltration" we must distinguish between two levels - the intellectual and the ethical. If I understand Jewish Thought correctly, it does not contain anything that could cause a fundamental conflict with science. We will discuss this thesis at greater length later on. However this is not true on the ethical level. The conflict has succeeded in "infiltrating" the Jewish world and "finding a stronghold through the protection of some moral rights, which [are only in need of protection because of] incidental deficiencies and dereliction in the

[development] ... of the positive attributes." Indeed, deficiencies have been found in the social structure of the Jewish nation, not essential deficiencies in the Torah, but rather "incidental dereliction" in "the [development] of ... the positive attributes." These deficiencies contain the source of the conflict. The responsibility of the religious person is twofold. Not only is his Torah to be pure and uncorrupted; this obligation applies to him personally as well.

### **The Torah as a Source of Information**

What does Rav Kook have to say about our central question - the conflict between religion and science?

We sense this naturally. For example, every intelligent person knows that the existence of faith, both in its general assertion of the divine foundation [which asserts the potential for human] ... knowledge of God, and in the sanctity of the Torah [as it is manifest] in practice, is completely unaffected by the state of [human] knowledge about characteristics of geology. And that in general the Torah, in its revealed perspective, relates only to the knowledge of God and of morality and their extensions in life and in behavior, in the life of the individual, the nation and the world, which knowledge is essentially the apex of all of life, the basis for everything and the receptacle for everything. However, with regard to the forms of investigative and experiential information, which are minor sparks in relation to the general apprehension of divine knowledge and holiness of life, their [constantly changing] relationships to the Torah is [of no consequence], and there is no difference between their various relations to the Torah, and there is no distinction [in these relationships], for example, between the position of Ptolemy, of Copernicus and Galileo etc.; [in this assertion I] include all the newest information, which exists at present, and which may develop; and such is the case with all knowledge which is discovered through research and investigation in each period.

It is already quite well known that prophecy chooses parables for human instruction, according to what is well known in the language of the people at that time, to give the ear what it is capable of hearing at the present, since "time and justice are known to a wise heart." ... And the truth which stems from the depths of the Torah is much higher and more exalted than this, because human conjecture, however it relates to reality, certainly also contributes to man's ethical development and his other higher faculties, in each generation, according to its ideas, which continually change, and adapt to the goal of the general good and the everlasting divine benevolence. [Yet] the inner concept,

which is pure divine knowledge and practical and intellectual morality, exists forever, [as it is written,] "Indeed the nation is as grass; grass dries, blossoms wilt, and the word of our Lord will stand forever." [Isaiah 40: 8]

In this section Rav Kook stresses the eternal quality of revelation ["the word of our Lord"] in contrast with those transitory elements - the faiths of each passing generation - which are expressed both in scientific theories, and in the ideas which inspire each new generation, and which serve as a backdrop for the revelation. If so, we need not claim prophetic authority for the explanations of those scriptural passages which seem to us to correspond with the Ptolemeic approach, and to reject a newer approach based on those passages.

In one of his letters, Rav Kook uses the kabbalistic term "tzimtzum" (contraction) in order to deepen this explanation. The creation of the finite world is the result of tzimtzum, the transition from the infinite to the finite. Rav Kook saw tzimtzum not only in creation but in revelation as well:

The midrash has already stated that it is impossible to communicate the essence of the creation of the world to flesh and blood, and therefore the scriptures are muted [and merely say] "In the beginning God created." And the essential thing is the knowledge which arises from this issue, [contributing to] the achievement of knowledge of God and true morality ... God takes this into consideration even [with regard to] the spirit that falls upon the prophets; he limited [the spiritual revelation], because only when the divine concepts are clothed in these [familiar] images can people draw out, with all of their ability, whatever is useful and elevating for them. (Letter 19)

"The essence of the creation of the world" - the true substance of creation - cannot be adequately described. Any description is bound to be incomplete and somewhat distorted. The creation of the world that is described in the Torah is none other than tzimtzum, the tzimtzum of the hidden into the revealed. According to Rav Kook's approach, to solve the problem of the relationship between Torah and science one must begin with the premise that a fundamental distinction exists between the hidden and the revealed. The concepts in the scriptures are not "revealed" but "hidden," and their true meaning is very far from the plain reading of the text. In contrast, in the "revealed" Torah we find only commandments and moral exhortations based on the fundamental axiom of "divine knowledge," which is the true content of the "revealed" Torah's description of the creation of the world. The answer to our question is simple: there is no conflict, for the revealed Torah does not pass on information that could in any way generate a conflict with the claims of science. On the other hand, the information in the hidden level

of the Torah can possibly be termed philosophical, but in no way could we justifiably call it scientific.

Another issue regarding the "information" that the Torah passes on is discussed in the Ramchal's (Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato) essay about the Aggadic legends.

The rule that the Torah "speaks the language of people" is true for the Sages as well. They also used the language of the everyday people. This is why it is important to research the method in which the legends were written. The Ramchal explains this method to us. He stresses the form of the parable, a device well known to writers, who often make use of images taken from other areas. A second method is the method of omission, in which various legends are written with certain facts that are necessary to understand the story glaringly absent. These are facts that exegesis must supply. This method of the Ramchal is important because it describes the state of the text. One of the central problems in understanding a written text, or another person speaking, is that we will always be missing information.

A classic example of these methods are the stories of Rabba Bar Bar Hanna. We, as modern people, understand the significance of the absurd story, or what our Sages termed "leshon guzma ve-havai." The absurd story is one of the literary devices that only we today can properly understand. One of Rabbi Nahman of Breslov's important contributions was the return to the absurd story.

Here we reach the third, most important method, which deserves our attention and emphasis. The Ramchal writes:

The third method is lightness. This is when some great principle is hinted at using things that seem to be trivial and insignificant, similar to the parables of simple folk. They use this method to illustrate exalted and significant issues which the trivial things can illuminate, just like a person who is familiar with these hints knows how to flow in his conversation and his thoughts from the revealed to the concealed and from the lowly to the exalted.

In other words, sometimes we use a colloquial expression in our conversation, and it is clear that we don't mean to express that phrase but to express a different idea which we clothe in the colloquial expression. This much is obvious; however, the Ramchal's conclusion is interesting:

You must also know that many of the principal secrets are hinted at by the Sages using issues from natural science. They used teachings that were taught in those days by the experts on natural science. In fact, the scientific issue was not important to them, but only the secret that they wished to convey by its means.

Sometimes we don't use phrases but rather scientific facts to explain things that are beyond science. Science changes, and there are statements in our Sages' writings which are seemingly connected to science, and which are therefore no longer meaningful to us. We are faced with two options, both of which are mistaken. One option is to absolutely disqualify the legends as meaningless. Another option is to stick to the simple explanation of the text, and insist on defending an outdated scientific position. The Ramchal teaches us that the truth is found in a third possibility, which is actually expressed in the simple mathematical principle:  $a/b = c/d$ . Let us assume that  $b$  is a particular piece of scientific information. If the intention of the Sages was to teach us  $b$ , then  $b$  is not true. However the Sages did not want to teach us  $b$ . They wanted to teach us  $a/b$ . They wanted to teach us how we try, through looking at certain facts, to convey a spiritual-religious, and not scientific message. Today we do not accept the information in  $b$ , just as we do not accept the position of Ptolemy, who claimed that the sun rotates around the Earth, and in its place we accept something else, a doctrine which we will call  $d$ . The background has changed, however the relationship of  $a/b$  has remained constant. The purpose of the legend was to try to understand  $c$ , which is learned from the relation of  $a$  to  $b$ . The same spiritual truth that we received thousands of years ago continues to be true today as well. In the language of the Ramchal, the point is not the "scientific issue, but the secret that they wanted to allude to through it." The Ramchal adds:

Therefore it is irrelevant to the truth of the issue that is alluded to whether or not the outer clothing of the parable is true, because the intention was to clothe that secret in what was well known ... among the wise men The matter itself could have been dressed in another garb according to what was well known in other generations; and the originator of the statement would have done so, if he had said it in those days."

This is the unique quality of our Holy Scriptures and the legends of our Sages. Holy matters continue to be true even if their outer garb alters. The content that is clothed in a scientific background continues to be true when the background changes. One might say that in a sense the famous miracle that occurred during the exodus from Egypt is recurring in our time: the clothing continues to grow along with its wearers.

## **PART II: Creation and the Age of the World**

In this and the following lecture, I will attempt to illustrate the principles that we discussed last week through a concrete discussion of creation according to Rav Kook. As we have seen so far, the comparison between the Torah and the findings of geology can be divided into two levels:

A. the differences between the traditional pronouncement of the age of the world as against the radically different measurements of time that are found in cosmology and geology;

B. the meaning of the concept of creation as opposed to the theory of the development of species.

Until now we have discussed the second point, and we will soon return to Rav Kook's opinion on this issue. However, we must first deal with the first point. As we shall see, Jewish thought is divided on this question. One position maintains that the traditional stance must be accepted literally. The other approach claims that we are not obligated to take the traditional figure literally; instead, we may interpret the scriptures in a manner which allows us to assume that the world is much older than the approximate six thousand years claimed by the tradition. To my mind, this difference of opinion is legitimate. I feel that those who do not accept the ordinary interpretation have not gone beyond the pale of traditional Judaism. We will soon read Rav Kook's approach to this question.

On the surface, it seems that the interpretation that does not follow the simple meaning of the scriptures conflicts with Rihal's position. The Chaver is trying to boost the integrity of the Jewish tradition on the basis of the fact that the Torah has a continuous and encompassing tradition regarding the age of the world, and on the basis of the Hebrew language [1: 44-52]. We will return to the issue of the language later. However, with regard to the age of the world, it seems to me that we must not unequivocally state that Rihal explicitly opposed any interpretation that was not in strict accordance with the simple meaning of the text. In fact, a closer look will hint that opposite seems true, and as we shall soon see, Rihal himself states that there is no necessity to compute the age of the world according to the simple interpretation of the text. This is one of the issues in which Rihal's thought allows us to explore new options while his overall position remains consistent.

This leads us to a broader issue. This difference of opinion is actually contingent upon another conflict. A close reading of our text will reveal that two possible positions are

hidden in Rabbi Yehuda Halevi's words: the first is that the number of years stems from tradition, and the second is that it stems from prophecy. The Chaver says [1: 43]:

He described the creation of the world, and how the people before the flood related to man, and the flood ... and how the languages were divided.

If the number of years is written as a historical tradition, then we must accept it literally. However, if it is written in prophetic language, then we must be more careful. We must always remember that prophetic description must undergo prophetic interpretation. It must be approached as we approach prophetic texts in general, according to the rules of allegorical interpretation, which distance the scriptures from their literal meaning.

However, Rihal also suggests the second possibility, meaning that in addition to the prophetic description, a living tradition existed within the nation [1: 47]. Rihal presents a theory that is worthy of our serious attention. He claims that the Torah had to encounter and withstand the idolatrous traditions:

For it is impossible that the wise men of Egypt did not disagree with Moses ... for have we not seen that [even]... his own nation challenged him? How much more so [would we expect it of] people who are not of his nation! [1: 51]

Rihal insists that we are in possession of a tradition which has been kept by humanity itself, about its own beginning. This issue is of course connected to the picture of the history of humanity which historians, and actually all of us, try to build, and to our perception of the prehistoric era. There is no doubt that, regarding this issue, Rihal opposes the accepted modern theories, which base themselves on the claim that mankind's beginnings were in mere animalistic primitivity. Rihal's central claim is that man began his course in life with a divine spark, "the image of God," which finds expression in the act of his creation.

### **The Beginning:**

There are two approaches to human history. The first accepts the general structure of history that is recognized today. It claims that the Torah is not a history book but a book of prophecy, and it must be understood according to its own rules and dimensions. Another approach exists, which remains loyal to Rihal's approach, and defends the literal interpretation of the Genesis stories regarding the beginning of humanity, opposing theories that seem to them to be based on the assumption of an arbitrary and variable historical development. This approach objects to the assumption that man must



have been an animal in his early stages of development, and that only after slow painstaking development did he achieve his current state.

The two descriptions of the beginning of history are also relevant to the question of early religion and the origins of monotheism. Did primitive man believe in one God, or did he possess idolatrous beliefs? Between the two approaches various intermediate positions can be found. One such intermediate position approaches Rihal's opinion as expressed in the sections before us, and to a certain extent coincides with the Rambam's opinion as well. This approach asserts the existence of an ancient tradition, which was lost at some stage and was in need of renewal. Man's initial spiritual state was not idolatrous; it was monotheistic, while idolatry actually appears at a later stage as a deterioration. This tradition is expressed through the concept of the generation of Enosh, in which, Scripture tells us, people had "begun to call God's name."

We must mention that a number of twentieth century anthropologists agreed with such a historical description, and attempted to display indications of primitive monotheism in very primitive tribes. This was true regarding the Indians of South America, which they believed to be proof of the claim that the most primitive tribes did not uphold the wild pagan polytheism of the later period, but rather espoused a simple monotheism. Clearly, any discussion of these issues becomes mere conjecture and hypothetical reconstruction. However, we must be cognizant of the fact that there are stories in distant cultures which bear a striking resemblance to the stories of the Bible. One could see in this a sort of common cultural background for all humanity, the ancient tradition of Adam, Noah, etc. Of course this was understood by early researchers as proof of the ancient roots of the pagan tradition, and the fact that Judaism drew its ideas from the pagan tradition. However, when we discover such a tradition in the writings of the Mayan people, the Native American tribes who resided in Central America before the continent was discovered by the West, this explanation is not reasonable. It is astounding to discover descriptions of the biblical flood in Mayan writings.

The only possible explanation for this strange fact, if we do not want to assume the existence of an ancient tradition, is that these stories express psychological mechanisms shared by all of humankind. The descriptions that appear in so many varied cultures, and bear witness to the human memory of a flood, are explained by various zealous psychologists as symbolical descriptions of birth, which is accompanied by something like a flood, and which was later expressed in various myths. In truth, these psychologist also depart from the literal interpretation of the text.

Probably Rihal would have disputed this approach, however it seems to me that that his approach is built on an appraisal of history, and not of the prehistoric era. In other

words: no matter what we say about man's beginnings, the truth of the Torah is neither strengthened nor weakened by it. The Torah is beyond any specific scientific theory. We do not have adopt particular scientific theories in order to prove the truth of the Torah. However, we must not bow our heads before every theory. Our discussion plants us face to face with riddles that science has not solved, and perhaps never will. One of the outstanding examples of such a riddle is the origins of language. We will discuss this issue in next week's lecture.

### **PART III**

Rav Kook addresses the question of the world's true age in his letters (#91). He points out the existence of various statements in early rabbinical literature and in the classical commentaries which imply a chronology much longer than tradition seems to permit; and although some of these statements can be interpreted in a number of ways, they open the option of accepting the scientific age of the world without rejecting the traditional Jewish approach.

However, this response is only a preliminary solution. To reach a comprehensive understanding of the topic we must begin by distinguishing between the hidden and the revealed aspects of our religion. The core of the Jewish world view is only to be found in the hidden side. What is known as scientific information is completely absent from the revealed element, for the revealed side is but a framework for the achievement of divine knowledge and the performance of the commandments. This reality does not prevent us, however, from accepting the literal interpretation of the revealed Torah, for practical purposes:

"Regarding to the issue of the number of years since creation in relation to the geological findings of our time, it is generally assumed that there were already many periods prior to our own. It was well known among all the ancient kabbalists, and in the Midrash Rabba, [that God] 'built worlds and destroyed them,' and in the Zohar ... that there were a number of types of people besides Adam ... however in this regard one must comprehend all of the deep symbolism, which require very extensive clarification ...

We keep count according to the literal interpretation of the Scripture, which touches us much more than all the ancient knowledge, which we do not hold in great esteem. And the Torah of course silenced itself on the topic of creation, speaking in hints and parables, since everyone knows that the original act of creation is part of the mysteries

of the Torah, and if all the things were to be taken literally, what mystery is here?"  
(Letter 91)

However, the age of the world is a minor problem. Rav Kook progresses from it to the essential problem. The theory of paleontology seemingly contradicts not the details but the essence of the biblical description of creation. A complete understanding of Rav Kook's response requires that we refer to scientific theories which were prevalent in nineteenth century paleontology. Although the debates surrounding these problems are dated, Rav Kook's position is not essentially bound up with them. It demonstrates an interesting conceptual alternative, which can contribute to our own understanding of the problem.

Rav Kook was faced with two alternative theories, which were connected to the names of Cuvier and Darwin, respectively. According to Cuvier, the father of modern paleontology, the development of species is the result a process of creations, which are followed by destruction, whose remnants can be seen in the findings of paleontology. In contrast with Cuvier's approach, Darwin's theory emphasizes the development of the species without intermediate leaps, and without the interference of supernatural elements.

However, Cuvier's understanding of creation as formed by a series of creations and destructions forms a striking parallel to the midrashic statement attributed to Rabbi Abbahu: "From here [we learn] that God creates worlds and destroys them" (Bereishit Rabba, 9). The midrash extrapolates this from the verse, "These are the chronicles of heaven and earth when they were created" (Bereishit 2: 4), explaining that "Wherever it says 'and these,' it is an addition to the first, and wherever it says 'these,' it disqualifies the first."

This approach, which sees creation as a series of creations and destructions, was accepted by certain nineteenth century Jewish sages. Such was the opinion of Rabbi Yisrael Lifschitz, author of the famous commentary to the Mishna, "Tiferet Yisrael." In his treatise "Drush Or Ha-chayim," which is appended to his commentary on Nezikin, he elaborates his interpretation of the scriptural account of creation. The first verse, in his opinion, refers to the first creation, while the second assumes the existence of a destroyed cosmos: "'And the land was in chaos:' this means that it became barren and desolate once again." Regarding the prehistoric era, Rabbi Yisrael Lifschitz writes: "In my humble opinion, it appears that those people who existed in the ancient world ... I refer to those people who were in the world before the creation of Adam ... they are the nine hundred and seventy four generations that are mentioned in Tractates Shabbat and Chagiga, who were created before the contemporary creation of the world."

Rabbi Lifschitz maintained that his position was in keeping with the geological findings of his day. The remains of prehistoric animals are so bizarre "...that it cannot be assumed that such a creature came into being simply through the revolution that God performed at one point in time ... Similarly, sea animals have been discovered in the deep in the higher mountains, which have hardened and become stone. And one wise natural investigator, by the name of Coffier, wrote that from all the seventy eight types of animals that have been found in the depths of the earth, there are forty eight species, that cannot be found at all in the present world ... From all of the above it seems clear that what the kabbalists have been telling us for hundreds of years, that there existed a world previous to ours, and it was destroyed and recreated ... all of it has become proven in our day to be true..."

A similar approach can be found in the writings of Rabbi Eliyahu Benamozegh. In his commentary on the Torah, the significant alteration in his interpretation of the statement "The Holy One ... creates worlds and destroys them" is particularly striking. Jewish philosophical thought in the middle ages vacillated between belief in the eternal existence of the world and the belief in creation. The creation and destruction of worlds is a puzzling issue for the proponents of either approach. The accepted solution was to relate to these worlds as possible worlds, our world being the most perfect of them all. This Liebowitzesque interpretation supported the accepted rationalistic explanation. In contrast, the kabbalistic interpretation accepted this statement, in addition to a symbolic interpretation, with all its import. If we ignore specific claims, the new geological theories seemed particularly fitting to that hidden Jewish doctrine, in Cuvier's version, which speaks of destructions and creations.

Rav Kook discusses this doctrine, although he does not mention Cuvier explicitly:

"If so, those excavations teach us that creature from certain periods were discovered, and people among them, but that there was not a general destruction and a new creation in the interim: for this there is no proof, but only empty suppositions, which should not be noticed at all." [Letter 91]

These words seem to imply that Rav Kook failed to see any decisive proof in favor of the Darwinist approach. However, Rav Kook did not feel that his role was to offer a seemingly "scientific" answer to the question. Rather, he desired to emphasize the fundamental claim that the Torah is not to be harnessed to any scientific theory, despite any apparent suitability to the text:

"But truly we do not need all this, since even if it would become clear to us that the process of creation occurred in the fashion of the development of species, there is still no contradiction... for the basis of everything is what we teach in the world, that

everything is an act of God. And the means, whether many or few, up to thousands upon thousands, are all acts of God, who did not leave in his world anything lacking, and whose heroism, strength, wisdom and glory are infinite, blessed is He and blessed is His name for ever and ever. And sometimes we declare the means to be God's work, in order to widen our conceptions, and sometimes we say... "and God created," as we say "then Solomon built," and we do not say that Solomon commanded the ministers, and the ministers those beneath them, and they the architects and the architects the artisans and the artisans the simple workers, because it is a known process, and is also unimportant. So too all that will be investigated in the course of many thousands of years, with the expansion of methods and means, which add to our knowledge and intelligence of the divine genius, are, for the most part, shortened." (Letter 91)

Rav Kook places an alternative before us, without choosing or rejecting it explicitly himself. The two positions are different not only in the fact that they are different paleontological doctrines, which in turn causes their differing approaches to certain texts. The difference between them is much deeper. These are two distinct perceptions of the concept of creation. In the first approach, creation is a historical occurrence, a break in the natural order, which is transcendental in origin. In the second approach, the concept of creation lies beyond the boundaries of the scientific discussion, which can only explain the intermediary causes.

These two approaches are parallel to two positions regarding the doctrine of creation which were formulated in medieval Jewish philosophy. Rabbi Saadia Gaon, for example, represents one type of position, according to which creation can be proved by relying on the laws of nature and certain empirical facts, or even from logical-mathematical considerations. According to the Rambam's position, however (and indeed, the fact that Rav Kook bases himself on the Rambam's Guide for the Perplexed is no accident), creation is not to be proven through the natural sciences. The relations between a world which is rationally possible, to a reality which is rationally imperative, is completely beyond the scope of the scientific debate.

An informed look into Rav Kook's analyses of these issues teaches us that one must not seek an absolute position which describes the facts and a single authoritative interpretation of the scriptural account of creation. In this issue we are faced with a doubt, which, perhaps, our generation will never overcome. This doubt opens various possibilities before us, all of which are legitimate within the framework of Jewish thought.

What was Rav Kook's personal opinion regarding this alternative? Letter 91 seemed to imply support for the position that sees creation as a break in the natural order. In

contrast, in "Orot Hakodesh" (pg. 537), Rav Kook points out that perhaps the theory of development of species is suited to "the weighty secrets of the Kabbala more than all the other philosophical doctrines."

An in-depth study of his approach, including all its diverse sides, certifies that this was indeed his true opinion. However, here as well, one must take care not to simplistically identify Rav Kook's position with the Darwinist approach. My objection is not related to facts but to the philosophical explanation of development. It is possible to view the process of development and improvement as guided by a supernatural force:

"The development that treads the path of improvement ... we discover the divine shining within it with absolute clarity, when the operative infinity succeeds in activating what is infinite in its potential."

Rav Kook's discussion of the scriptural account of creation, which we mentioned earlier, is essentially one instance of the problem of religion and science in general. However, in addition to specific claims in each of the problematic areas, we must state two fundamental conclusions, which express the history of the conflict between religion and science within the framework of the spiritual development of humanity:

**A:** The changing understanding of truth is in itself a part of the divine revelation, continuous revelation; there is meaning to what is revealed and also to when it is revealed, just as there is significance to what was hidden in certain generations:

"But all these require times and preparations, and the narrative imagery - both those that are drawn by the power of the intellectual perusal of creation ... and those that emerge from the revelation of the hand of God by his prophets - must always carry with them the power that strengthens life and true success, and not offer mankind a harvest of fragmented information with which to amuse himself in childish play. And when you understand this, you will understand that there is an exalted worth to what is revealed, and also to what is concealed, and the manners of concealment are many..." (Letter 91)

**B:** The alterations in religious thought, which occur as a result of a conflict, are also part of the continuous revelation:

"In general, this is an important rule in the war of opinions, that every opinion which comes to contradict something from the Torah, we must initially not necessarily contradict it, but rather construct the palace of the Torah upon it, and thus we are elevated by it. Because of this elevation, the information is revealed, and afterwards, when we are not pressured by anything, we can with a heart full of confidence battle it as well." (Letter 134)

The phrasing here has two meanings: the construction of "the palace of the Torah upon it" can seem like a mere tactical move. However there is much more here. For the idea itself is elevated as a result of the conflict.

#### **PART IV: Religion, Torah and Morality**

The other side of the tension between religion and science, which relates to the revealed part of the Torah, is the ethical significance of modern scientific discoveries.

The discoveries of astronomy and geology have widened mankind's time-space horizons; miles have become light years. This extension incurs a sense of the lowliness and insignificance of man, which was expressed not in humility towards the Creator and in a humble bearing, but in the negation of the value and values of human reality. This goes against the central element of the scriptural account of creation and of the belief in the scriptures. Rav Kook writes:

"The community of Israel needed to be involved with all the idol worshippers, to explain to them that despite the magnitude of creation, man is not despicable to the point that there would be no value to his moral behavior; rather, man's ethical creation is very important, immeasurably more than the more numerous creatures."  
(Letter 91)

In *Orot Hakodesh* (vol. 2, p. 541), Rav Kook again emphasizes the importance of this problem:

"Cosmological thought has brought about a tremendous change in the process of spiritual life. The ideas which were absorbed through the tiny picture of the general world, according to the old qualities and in a state of quiet and smallness, are appropriate for the smallness of restricted surroundings. The encompassing new spirit, [which] comes as a result of the scientific extension of the sense imagery towards the tangible reality, must renew with its enlargement among the masses a new form of the spiritual world and its related thoughts, which requires much study, [to determine] how to re-establish everything from scratch in the best possible manner, successfully inspired by all the basic good that exists in the former state."

From here stems the new need for study which will "place the entire spiritual content on its shining pedestal, which will continually brighten through the goodness, which will be gathered by the extension of all the new encounters, after [they] will make appropriate all the good that is concealed in all the old forms..." (ibid).

This role is given to religion: "Divine providence is the basis of human morality and its success" (letter 91). In other words: pure religious faith constitutes the only theoretical basis for morality and the single motivator which can bring humanity to moral life. And when this basis - providence - "will be well clarified in the world in a great and clear knowledge, it will be the foundation of joy: 'They will not do evil or destruction on all of my holy mountain, for the land will be full of the knowledge of God.'" This is knowledge of God, the central component of the revealed aspect of the Torah's account of creation. This general approach allows us to view the entire issue of the relations between science and morality in the modern world:

"Everyone knows that wisdom and talent refer to the ability to strengthen and fortify man's intellectual or practical abilities. Morality exists to improve human desire, that it will desire good. Thus, if the human ability will grow sevenfold, but man's good will does not develop according to the guidance of complete morality, then his increased abilities will be put only to iniquitous use."

Modern man's development is largely expressed in the strengthening of human ability, and it is dependent upon constant progress in two areas: science - "wisdom" and technology - "talent." The industrial revolution, with all its various compartments, the new scientific equipment, the machines, and, we may add anachronistically, computers, "refer to the ability to strengthen and fortify man's intellectual or practical abilities." However, until this point we have discussed only one side of reality. Human activity is measured not only by its potential, but also by the direction of its activity. This additional aspect, which chooses the goal of human endeavor, is expressed in the text we have before us in placing the "desire" opposite the "ability;" just as at the core of the "ability" lies science, so too within the essence of the "desire" lies morality. The central problem of progress lies in the danger, that "if human ability will grow sevenfold, but man's good will does not develop according to the guidance of complete morality, then his increased abilities will be put only to iniquitous use."

This point relates to the problem of the relationship between ethics and science. It is accepted and clear to us today that every attempt to create a theory which will unite science and morality, and which will draw moral commands from scientific statements, is doomed to failure. This is true not only on a practical level, as stated above - since scientific progress does not bear witness to moral progress - but also from a purely conceptual perspective. A bridge between science and morality can never be constructed. There is no passage from the "is" to the "ought," from fact to commandment. There is no bridge between the reality and the ideal.



Rav Kook understood this fact well; he saw it as one of the crucial problems of our time. Behind this fact hides the incomplete state of man and his world. Despite their seemingly parallel nature, these forces "unite in their source", "and as man continues to improve his intellect, thus he will more clearly recognize the unity of the forces that are revealed in different forms."

This unity between morality and science is a kind of "personal connection;" it is apparent in the person who is both a scientist and a moral human being. However, Rav Kook believed that an "objective connection" is possible as well. The revelation of this unity is, without a doubt, part of the meaning of redemption. Human history is the road to redemption, but this road is not necessarily a straight one. The existence of the modern world is dependent on the necessity that scientific progress be accompanied by the development of morality and justice. Here the role of the Torah comes in, which is "close" to that "One," the source of all existence. "The improvement of man," the building of a righteous world, will be possible only through "the complete union of both forces - the ability and the desire at their best." Without this union, science and technology are but harmful gift, a poisoned apple.

## **CHAPTER 4: Man and the Cosmos**

### **PART I: What is Man, That You Should Remember Him? (Psalms 8:5)**

One of the central issues raised in the first half of the Kuzari is the marvel of God's relationship with man: is it possible that "the Creator of the bodies and spirits and the souls and the intelligences and the angels, who is too sublime and holy and exalted to be comprehended by the intelligences, still less so by the senses, has a connection with this lowly creature, composed of despicable matter?" [1: 68].

This question is clearly a central one: can it be possible that a relationship exists between God, the most exalted of all beings, and man? The Chaver does not answer this question, because he feels that the Kuzari himself has already answered it. The question is based on a mistaken assumption. How do we know that man is a lowly being? What principle guides us in judging what is important? Our tests of significance are usually greatly mistaken.

Sometimes we err on the side of grandiosity; sometimes on the side of a misplaced inferiority complex. A grandiosity complex can be discerned in various philosophical positions, particularly in idealistic approaches. In contrast, science has in various periods created a kind of inferiority complex within us. This conflict gained momentum during the Copernican revolution. It grew and expanded still more later on. With the astronomical revolution that took place in the beginning of the modern age, when the vastness of the cosmos was spread before us, this conflict acquired a particular character. Scientists informed us that the world is not the center of the universe; it is merely a satellite circling one of the many suns in our galaxy, itself one of many galaxies. In such a vast universe, how could it be possible that God would show an interest in minuscule man?

This question is not merely a philosophical one. It connects to a circumstance which took place at the beginning of the modern era and which became the prototype of the conflict between science and religion: the story of Galileo.

The popular description of this conflict is well known. The discoveries and theories of Copernicus and Galileo transformed the earth from the center of the cosmos to a planet which serves a master, the sun. This was a complete cosmological revolution. The conceptual world modeled after Dante's Divine Comedy collapsed, and with it the theology that had been built upon this position. Can man in fact be viewed as the center of the world? "What is man that You should remember him, the son of man that You

should take notice of him?" (Psalms 8: 5). Now we must speak not of angels, as Rihai did, but of planets and constellations. The inner reason for the breakdown, which explains the fact that Galileo's books were banned by the Catholic church (and were removed from the index of forbidden books only in 1835), was indeed the sense that man was no longer the crown of creation; he had become a mere reed growing on the banks of an ocean which was rapidly spreading into infinity.

This became the accepted position, and it is this view that stands in the background of Rav Kook's response to the problem, as we saw in last week's lecture. Rav Kook defines Judaism's object as the wish to proclaim that "despite the vastness of creation, man is not despicable to the extent that his ethical behavior should be regarded as worthless; rather, man's ethical creation is very important, immeasurably more so than the other creatures who are greater than him in number." According to this approach, the conflict between religion and science as typified by the case of Galileo is only an illusory problem. Its severity stemmed only from an inherited tradition of idolatry which did not differentiate between matter and spirit. Man must overcome this complex. Our generation is uniquely equipped to understand the meaninglessness of size, while understanding that two oceans stretch before us: one is the ocean of the ever widening reality, and the other is the ocean of the microscopic reality which is continually growing and unfolding before us.

However, this opinion was not alien to Jewish philosophy in the middle ages. Actually this issue had already been discussed, in a different form, in Jewish philosophy. We will illustrate this below by viewing sections from 'Bechinat Olam,' a well-known philosophical poem by Rabbi Yedaiah Hapnini. The position of medieval Jewish philosophy was entirely different from the position which fought against Galileo. The problem of man in the universe was strongly felt by them, and from their perspective man's place at the center of the cosmos was not at all a place of honor. Thus, in his Guide for the Perplexed (I: 72), the Rambam compares the cosmos to man: "Know that all that exists is like one person ... that the outermost sphere with all that it contains is one person." These spheres are the heart of the world, "and just as if the heart were to rest for the blink of an eye, the person would die and all his movements and powers would be nullified, so too if the spheres were to rest it would cause the death of the world in its entirety and the nullification of all that is contained in it".

Not all the details contained in this analogy are correct, and in fact the Rambam lists three central differences. The second is relevant to our discussion:

"And the second, that the heart of every being possessed of a heart, is in the center [of its body] ... [whereas] in the world in general the opposite is true, the important

[element] surrounds the insignificant ... and [therefore] the state of the world in general is that the closer the physical elements are to the center of the world, the more turbid their essence, heavy their movements, and [the more] their radiance and clarity departs."

As can be proven from these lines, the geometrical center of the world is not in any way associated in the Rambam's thought with the "metaphysical" center, or what we might call the center of merit. And indeed, the question regarding man's place in the cosmos arose even then, and demanded an answer.

A beautiful expression of this response can be found in Rabbi Yedaiah Hapnini's philosophical poem, "Bechinat Olam" (chapter 12). While looking at the cosmos, the poet proclaims:

"And when I raise my eyes and behold their loftiness, wondrous beyond my comprehension and their myriad battalions which bedeck myself and my people at the extremity of the cave sitting at the end of a minute point, the lowest of places... my place is the size of a gnat in relation to my size and the shelter of my small roof unifies the houses of a small city...How may a weakling such as I scorn those who dig my grave before I come into existence... How may the youngest of flies, clipped of wing be proud sunken in prison, quashed in a cage while all the celestial bodies stand above him on my right and my left how may my time release me from the fear of one of the small snares which are quarried at my feet from above which from the moment of creation lay in wait to lead me to them..."  
The heavenly bodies make human life possible:  
And in addition with ability their Creator imbued them... which compels them to affect the lowliest in the movement of dead bodies at rest...To return a shamefaced human from his nakedness..."

However, we must not draw the conclusion that the heavenly bodies serve man and that he is the crown of creation:

"Not that they were created for this purpose to serve bewildered creatures whom they exceed in significance and loftiness heaven forbid that their Creator should humble the exalted before the lowly and the upright before the bewildered. And he would not be considered a wise artisan who prepares vessels weighing ten thousand silver coins to make one iron needle rather [He] created them with wisdom known only to Him..."  
However, in contrast to man's physical lowliness, we must emphasize his intellectual prowess:

"[Scaling the] skies to their heights and earth to its depths [Bearing the] unfathomable width of a wise heart he who loves to explore the roots of the quarry of his humanity there is no fathoming his wisdom many are the secrets of the heart that he holds... can the heart of heaven penetrate can the heart of the seas fathom the knowledge encompassed within the walls of a heart can the wings of the wind encompass the wind of wisdom which hovers over still waters and Arcadian streams can the expanses of earth encompass a thought whose [resting] place is... small as a man's palm behold this is man's divine endowment and the divine part of his world. God rules in heaven and this being alone on the earth strides forth and probes texts of truth great are his actions in religion and law were he not beset by the terrors of his time nor terrorized by the winds of his day he would not be hindered from riding the heavens from embracing the entire world until he become as God, knowing good."

This medieval thinker could never have understood the metaphysical problem which was seemingly created with the new heliocentric hypothesis, which transformed the world into the sun's satellite. He dealt with the problem through the astronomy in which he believed, and solved the problem in his own way, a way which holds significance for us as well.

## **PART II: The Third System: The Anthropic Principle**

Until this point we have viewed two different approaches to the question of man's place in the universe. However, in the middle age and the modern era, three positions have battled for prominence. The first sees man as the center of the universe, the second transforms him into an insignificant grain of dust, and the third tries to emphasize his importance despite the fact that he does not constitute the geometrical or the astronomical center of the world.

Where do we stand today? In order to approach an understanding of this query, we must return to the critical question which we posed in our intellectual chess game with the proponent of the theory of evolution. Is what took place, if it did take place, the result of chance?

What would be our opponent's answer? He would of course respond that this is indeed the case, and indeed there is enough time for any probability, even the smallest one, to materialize. In nature we are not playing chess but rather dice. The players are order and chaos. "Order" is a simple player, generally as unsuccessful as I. I see him constantly losing. Yet oddly enough, in the game against chaos, he acquires a "lucky streak," and his dice show sixes, time after time.

Let us assume that such is the nature of things; in any case our proponent of chance is faced with a much more severe problem. And this problem has already been raised, in principle, by the Rambam in his discussion of creation. His approach to the problem constitutes, in his view, a most important proof, bearing witness to creation. Despite the danger of imprecision, I will try to simplify the problem.

In physics we study equations, however we also study a significant number of givens, such as gravity, the charge of electrons or the mass of neutrons, the age of the world according to the theory of the big bang, the mass of the world, etc. These are basic numbers which do not stem from the theory; they are in effect arbitrary numbers that enter into the theory.

Let me give you an example. When we study mathematics, we learn the equation  $ax+by+cz=0$ . However, a specific equation will be written as  $5x+2y+7=0$ . These numbers are arbitrary numbers. And here we come upon a very strange phenomenon. Were we to multiply these measurements by ten, by one hundred, by one thousand, a modest multiplication which from a mathematical perspective does not change a thing, we would make an interesting discovery: the world as we know it, which permits life and consciousness, could not exist. In other words, everything takes place only, so to speak, in theory. Certain givens were planted in the original design of the laws of physics, which allow the existence of a particular chemistry, in order to allow for the consequent appearance of biology. These givens are seemingly planted in the world from the start, in order to make the existence of man possible. This is an anthropic, or human, principle, which is hidden in the cosmic creation. Incidentally, I refer here not to one world but to all the worlds, which depend on these same physics and organic chemistry. Of course I could amuse myself by saying that perhaps other chemical systems could exist, which could also make the existence of life possible. But this is a speculation. Happy is the believer.

## **The Cosmos and the Human Observer**

Modern physics has presented us with some very strange phenomena. The conclusions which stem from some of these well-based experiments teach us that our observation of occurrences actually alters reality, even retroactively.

There are a number of experiments which have been proven more conclusively than any physical theory, yet they are particularly paradoxical. There are, for example, phenomena which will occur differently if observed. Not only that, but if you were to observe the phenomena tomorrow, things will occur in it today, that are different from

those that would occur if you did not look at it tomorrow. In other words, to borrow a talmudic concept, in physics we rule that "yesh brera" (lit., there is specification) from an experimental point of view, or in other words, there is a "retroactive addition." This can be compared to a man who wears pajamas in his house if there are no visitors. In our interpretation, the electron then appears in the form of a wave. If we look at it, it will put on more representative clothing; the electron will appear in the form of a particle. However, let us conduct a simple mental experiment. The hour is late, and someone knocks on the door with no advance warning in order to catch the man wearing pajamas. Thus the scientist discovers to his astonishment that the particle is always ready. Even if the time elapsed from the moment of knocking at the door until the moment the door is opened is smaller than the time needed for the man to go to the closet and change clothes, nevertheless, this man, who goes about all day long in pajamas, is always ready. There is something very peculiar about particles, something related to time.

Today we know that quantum theory contains a mysterious principle, which was first mentioned by the Rambam. We had become used to hearing explanations and theories which claim that psychology is based on biology, biology on biochemistry, chemistry on physics, etc. But in the wake of the recent experiments in physics, it seems that at the basis of physics lies ... a sort of psychology. Quantum phenomena are dependent on the fact that there be an observer. In other words, the physics of the world is built as a sort of movie with sensors, which is shown in a movie theater. The moment there are spectators, the film begins. This means that if quantum physics is correct, it expects the presence of a spectator. We can only draw one conclusion from this - it creates a doubt regarding the anthropic principle. The anthropic principle assumes that the world seemingly "expects" the appearance of man. It expects man not only in the area of biology, but even in the area of cosmology, before the development of chemistry. Earlier we saw the world functioning "in theory;" its existence was dependent upon the existence of a spectator. The rules are created in such a way that allows for the existence of a spectator, yet on the other hand, only if there is a spectator can the world exist. These two extremes meld in our reality. On the one hand, there is a starting point, a world that has rules and an initial state. And on the other hand, we reach the final point, where man, the spectator on the world, appears on the scene. And behold, "the end is included in the beginning." In other words, this end is not coincidental. This approach is completely opposed to the principles of evolution.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov writes a story about the heart of the world and the spring. The heart of the world is based upon the wondrous concept that psychology preceded physics.

## **CHAPTER 25: The Unity of the Human Race**

### **PART I**

Rabbi Yehuda Halevi believed in a single origin for all humanity, and he attempted to prove it [I: 53ff.]. Despite the vast differences separating nations and languages, races and ethnic groups the world over, Rihal believed in the unity of the human race, and was convinced of the presence of traces of this unity. We can in fact point out three examples of these hints: the structure of language, the seven day week, and the decimal system. These three cases can be divided into two components: a natural element, necessary for all of humanity, and an arbitrarily determined element, which could just as easily have been different. The natural element must be general and universal, but the determined element is completely random, and therefore should reasonably differ from nation to nation. However, this is not the case; the arbitrary element is universal as well. This is a coincidence which is impossible to understand unless we assume that humanity shares a common origin. We will illustrate this through the example of the decimal system.

### **The Cycle of Ten and the Cycle of Seven**

Our elementary school teacher taught us that although we use the decimal system, this fact is completely coincidental. What do we mean when we speak of the decimal system? We count from one to ten, and when we reach ten, we stop adding new symbols or names, and instead use the former ones in a cyclical fashion. We count by starting from one once again: we use the symbols for the number one to signify the number eleven, we use one and two to express the number twelve, etc. And when we reach one hundred, we begin again from one. In other words, this is a cycle built on the decimal, or ten, system, and it allows us to express any possible number with the use of ten symbols, ten figures. It is remarkable that language employed the decimal system before symbols for numbers were created. Actually, there is a very slight difference between the system used in spoken language and the decimal system. This is because our written system needed a zero to allow the writing of any number.

It is very easy to understand that our use of the decimal system is coincidental. We can imagine a person counting until eight, and beginning a new cycle. Thus, for example, in computers we count to two, or sixteen, and begin a new cycle. Rabbi Yehuda Halevi writes:



"...and such is the case also with decimal computation; people agreed upon it from the east to the west, and what nature caused them to stop counting specifically at the number ten? The fact is that this [form of] counting is a legacy..." [1: 59]

In other words: people could have created various cycles, and yet the entire world agreed upon the decimal system. This fact, in Rihal's opinion, bears witness to the basic unity of all of humanity. The second example is the use of the number seven for the division of the week. The third example is taken from the structure of language.

## **The Essence of Language**

Classical philosophy abounds in disputes regarding the essence of language, and many different positions on this question were expressed. Most approaches maintained that language was a convention, meaning that it was the result of an arbitrary decision. This forms a sharp contrast to the language of animals, which is natural; animals express sounds naturally as a result of certain events. We know, for example, that in order to avoid collisions between airplanes and birds, there are airports in which the sound of birds in distress are played. The birds who near the airplanes hear the sounds and are frightened, because whatever their origin, they naturally understand these sounds specific to their species.

In contrast, human language is a convention. We can clearly differentiate between a cry of pain and the statement, "I am in pain." The cry of pain is a natural response, while the statement, "I am in pain" is a convention. It is not a direct expression of a feeling, but rather a symbolic response, which is formed in accordance with a certain structure. Thus classical philosophy divided language into three parts: nouns, verbs, and prepositions. The other difference between the cry of pain and the statement, "I am in pain," is based on the fact that language can be divided into atomic parts, both structural and phonological; these parts are called morphemes and phonemes. What the king of the Khazars teaches us here is that language is built like a assembly toy, in which we build a structure using basic building blocks. Thus we construct language from the letters taken from the utterances of human speech.

The existence of a structure proves, in Rihal's view, that all languages "came into being during a certain period and were established by general consent" [1: 54]. This fact proves, in his opinion, that language is not a response such as a scream or tears; rather it is constructed, artificial and functional, comparable to a vessel. The general consent regarding language finds expression through the fact that many different languages exist. In other words, a particular thing is referred to in different languages using

different words, when in actuality there is no reason for us to use these particular words with regard to these certain things. However, chaos does not rule absolutely. If we pay attention, we will discern that there are families of languages. This teaches us that there are a number of source languages which later developed into the other languages. The fact that there are a few such basic languages is shown in the Torah, in the story of the Tower of Babel. The Torah teaches us that although humanity is one, it is divided into languages and therefore into nations, as the result of a sort of recreation, or to be precise, a re-confusion, and beyond those basic languages one cannot discover other links between languages.

Human speech is characterized by many languages. However, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi draws our attention to the fact that despite their many differences, the various languages share a common structure. The Chaver inquires of the Kuzari whether he thinks that the current division of languages always existed [1: 54]. The Kuzari responds according to what common sense teaches him, and his response is absolutely opposed to the philosophical approach which claims that the world has always existed. There is no doubt, claims the Chaver, that an intuitive view shows us that languages had a beginning. Languages are not eternal; they have a history and a birth certificate.

Here the Chaver presents one of the most difficult riddles facing man: how was language formed? The Chaver asks the Kuzari whether he had ever heard of a person who had made up a language. The Kuzari answers: "I do not believe so, neither have I heard of it, however there is no doubt that human language came into being at a particular time, and before that there was no language in the world that was agreed upon by any nation" [1: 56]. This is odd indeed. We can certainly provide examples of artificial languages that were created by man, the classic example being Esperanto. However, such an answer is irrelevant. Zamenhoff created Esperanto, but only thanks to the fact that he worked in another language. He produced tongs, but to forge them in the fire he used another set of tongs which he already possessed. How is it possible to make the first set of tongs? There are a number of turning points in cosmic history which contain a miraculous element, a creation of "something from nothing" which cannot be understood in simple rational terms, which leaves us amazed. These are the appearance of matter and energy, the appearance of life, the appearance of man and the appearance of language. And those who refuse to see the wonders of creation, and use the word evolution to explain away all questions, cannot give even a fig's leaf of coverage to these questions. One can speak of the development of the first seed, but the appearance of that seed cannot be explained by evolution. Prior to the evolution of natural phenomena, something came into being which was absolutely different, the creation of something from nothing. Before us are two remarkable wonders: the enigma of the beginning, and

the existence of a uniform structure to all languages despite their vast number. This is a very strange phenomenon indeed, and it points to the unity of the human race.

Philosophy plays a significant role here. We are used to a particular world and demand an explanation for the extraordinary. However, philosophy teaches us that at times the opposite of what we are used to is in fact the more logical conclusion. Things which seem to us to be completely normal, simple and obvious, are in fact very difficult riddles. The existence of language is a wonder. However as we shall soon see, the fact that children are capable of acquiring language is in itself a wonder. A look at this wonder opens the door to understanding the essence of the human experience.

Does the existence of a common structure to all languages prove the unity of the human race? In modern thought there is an alternative to the Kuzari's approach, however it solves one riddle by creating an even greater one. A cursory comparison between languages seems to show them fundamentally different from each other. However recent studies have demonstrated that underneath the difference a very basic similarity exists, and it is this that was hinted at by Rabbi Yehuda Halevi in the philosophical terms of his period, when he pointed to a fundamental similarity between the structures of all languages: nouns, verbs and prepositions. These modern studies are connected with the name of Noam Chomsky. In order to understand his central claim we must be conscious of an additional wonder: the way that a child acquires language. With astounding ease a child conquers any spoken language that he was born into, be it the most difficult and complex of tongues. The accepted position was that the child did this according to the method of trial and error. The theory was that the child gains experience in the world of objects, and learns through beginning to connect between the names he hears and the objects he sees. However, recent theories have revealed (until we hear otherwise) that the child acquires language because he has a mental structure which is appropriate for any human language that he may learn.

This means that despite the differences between languages, all languages share a common structure. Let us assume that the unity of the human race is a principle which cannot be historically proven. And let us assume this, despite the fact that in our generation scientists have reiterated various claims and speculations which may prove that genetically there is only one source to the human race. However, here we have found, through the wonder of language, a different claim. All of humanity constitutes one species, not only genetically, but also from the perspective of language. Humanity is of one structure, a structure that God placed within us from the start of creation, and which remains unified even after the formation of a multitude of languages. Despite the large number of languages, they share a common unified structure and form.

The question of the unity of the human race is important from another perspective as well. In the Mishna (Tractate Sanhedrin 4: 5), we read that we were all created in the image of God, from one man, and "therefore man was created singly." The sages explain the reason for this unity from various perspectives. One of the answers is of paramount importance: "So that a man should not say to his friend, my father is greater than your father." And indeed we must take note of the fact that certain racist doctrines were based on the opinion that such human unity does not exist. In the nineteenth century even the Darwinist theory was used to claim that different monkeys developed into different races, and we are not connected by blood ties, and thus are also exempt from any moral obligation towards a different type of person, in other words another race. This is of course absurd, and the simple proof of it is that two people from any two races can have common descendants. The Mishna in Sanhedrin says, in effect, that we are all brothers, and despite the fact that Cain killed Abel, he was his brother.

The new approach teaches us, then, that despite the fact that the historical conclusions will always remain unclear and surrounded by question marks, we can reach one other important conclusion. Man carries within him an elementary programming which he employs to acquire language. To use a simple example, we could compare this to the use of a computer. We buy a computer, and write various programs on it. However, a little intelligence and humility will soon teach us that the computer did not get to us only as hardware but rather came with a basic operating system, which we use when we start to work on the computer. Such is the case with man as well; God "planted" a basic program in him which he uses when he acquires language. It is interesting to note that although we cannot historically prove the unity of the human race, we can prove that there is a basic program common to all of the human race. Not only the hardware that the geneticist works on is common; the program which allows us to grasp and learn language is shared as well.

## **PART II: The Dawn of Jewish History**

To sum up our discussion until this point, we must emphasize once more that in Rihal's view, the history of the human race has one unified beginning. Let me give you an example. The human race is comparable to leaves which sprout on the different branches of a single tree. We cannot leave our place on the branch to search out our common source. However the keen observation of our own development leads us to believe that our branches have a common root. If we could but move backward, we would discover that all the branches are united in a shared tree trunk. Similarly, by examining a number of basic characteristics common to different cultures, we can prove the unity of the

human race. We do not belong to parallel chains, but to a tree which has one root. This is in fact the fundamental message which emerges from the story of Adam and Eve: there is one origin to all of humanity, and this origin is Adam; a concept which, according to Aristotle's worldview, is patently absurd. Rihal endeavors to demonstrate this principle in various ways. Perhaps some of his claims might be challenged today. Such is the case, for example, regarding the division of the week into seven days or the use of the decimal system. Yet despite these disputes, the thesis itself is worthy of discussion. I would even go so far as to say that it arouses an intuitive trust within us. Observation of history will teach us of a single, unified human race. Thus the crime of racism becomes absurd as well as evil.

Language is a good illustration of the dead end which all other alternatives reach. On the one hand, we cannot claim that language is as natural to man as his biological functions. On the other hand we cannot say that language developed, because its artificiality and its conventionality prove that it could only have evolved after beginning at a particular point, a beginning which man can only imagine. We can speak about development only after we have established the original basis of language, yet the appearance of this original basis arouses a question which we cannot answer. Language constitutes a pitfall for the naturalistic interpretation of the world. To a certain extent one could claim that language is a wonder by its very nature.

### **The Hebrew Language**

At the end of the second section [2: 67-68], Rihal returns to the problem of language. Here he chooses to discuss the Hebrew language in particular. The Chaver is asked whether there is truth in the claim that the Hebrew language is superior to all other languages, particularly in light of the sorry state of the Hebrew language in the days of Rihal himself. The comparison between languages is natural given the richness of Arabic, which caused the Arabs to see it as the holy language. Rabbi Yehuda Halevi answers this question with the assertion that the Hebrew language went through a parallel process to the Jewish nation, becoming more meager and sparse through the exiles. From a linguistic point of view, we must approach the scriptures as a mere representative sample of the great richness that existed then, a richness which was lost because exile distanced us from our sources. However, despite our enduring exile, Hebrew has retained certain characteristics which unite to make it the noblest of languages.

This explanation is related to some interesting biographical facts about Rihal. The *Kuzari* was written in Arabic, but Rihal's poetry was written zealously in Hebrew. In

fact, in the text before us Rihāl accuses those poets who were captivated by esthetic techniques of Arabic poetry and imitated them blindly while disregarding the uniqueness of the Hebrew language. These poets did not attempt to renew the esthetic technical possibilities of the Hebrew language, which differ from those of the Arabic. Rihāl distinguishes between the languages by differentiating between their objectives. The Kuzari responds: "But where is this superiority which you mentioned? On the contrary, the other languages are superior to it in the poetic meter which is suited to the music to which [these poems] are sung" [2: 69]. The Kuzari raises the claim that the metric technique seemingly proves the superiority of Arabic to Hebrew. In response to this, Rabbi Yehuda Halevi teaches us that language has two basic characteristics.

The first aspect is form, which allows us to transform language into a musical instrument, to become part of a musical creation. Rabbi Yehuda Halevi stresses the importance of music, the language of the soul. This claim repeats itself over and over in the history of Jewish thought up until the Chassidic movement, which taught that melodies descend to our world from celestial chambers, chambers so exalted that words cannot reach them. Rabbi Yehuda Halevi speaks, then, of the necessary connection between melody and word. However, the affirmation of this relationship does not compel us to be bound by an artificial regime of meter or even of rhyme. The scriptures chose to be free of all such constraints.

However, the relationship between music and poetry is only one aspect of linguistic expression. The other element is the primary one. Can language express what is within man, can it serve as a link between man and his fellow man, while maintaining all the original meaning of the thought? Here, Rihāl describes a unique attribute of scriptural language, which has no counterpart in any other language: the "ta'amim." I refer to the unique system of musical notes which accompany the text. The ta'amim are not merely a musical addition. They are signs of syntax, which assist us in understanding the full meaning of the text. Our Sages explained how language alone can often remain obscure. In human interaction we use many additional media, such as hand movements or facial expressions. This is in fact one of the reasons why a Jewish court of law does not accept written testimony: "From their mouths and not from their writing" (Tractate Gittin 71b). Similarly, it is forbidden to accept testimony through translation. This is the source for the preference of oral testimony. The ta'amim are a technique which help us write that which cannot be written. The Hebrew language is composed of three levels: letters, vowels, and ta'amim.

In the philosophy of modern language we must differentiate between three levels. There is the level of syntax, which refers to those characteristics of the language which

can be can be learned even without understanding, and which can even be "taught" to a computer. Beyond this we find the level of semantics, which connects language with the world and presents us with the rules of governing the relations between the linguistic creations and the events and state of affairs in the world. The third level is the pragmatic level, which completes the triangle, for here we add the third element, the speaker. People do not speak with words alone.

Jorge Luis Borges, the great Argentinian writer, once told me in conversation that one of the fundamental problems of language is that while it recognizes the question mark and the exclamation point, it does not recognize other necessary signs such as signs of amazement or of irony. Various textual analyses have been constructed on such subtle differences in the reading of texts. Without amazement and irony, language remains ambiguous, because the speaker is not present. Borges responds to the problem of the ta'amim with the claim that modern writers tend to write poetry without punctuation, when actually they should doing the opposite - adding more punctuation to their poetry; instead they destroy what does exist.

The ta'amim are a completely different form of punctuation. The structure of the Hebrew language is thus much richer than other languages, and grants us the opportunity to study the text in a unique way. Rihal's position illustrates an important general principle. We tend to judge language as well as values and other things according to standards which we acquired from other languages and foreign cultures. We must return to the original Hebrew perception and to the true character of Jewish creativity.

## **CHAPTER 26: Tradition in Conflict [I:60-67]**

### **PART I**

Rihal bases his opinions upon the testimony of Jewish tradition. However, he does not conceal the fact that Jewish tradition up to our very day subsists in a constant state of conflict. Rihal refers explicitly to two of these conflicts. The first dispute is with alternate religious traditions. The most notable of these is the tradition ostensibly held by the people of India, which claims human history to be of greater length than our scriptures acknowledge. The second conflict is with a different tradition: the assumptions of the academic consensus. With this group we challenge the truth of philosophical theses which are allegedly the outcomes of logical speculation. This latter debate is much more fundamental, as it does not dispute the age of the world; it challenges the actual doctrine of creation.

Rihal mentions these two conflicts the first section of the Kuzari. In the third section, he returns to a more internal conflict: our dispute with the Karaite sect regarding the authenticity of the Oral Law. The first two conflicts which we mentioned belong by now to the annals of history. However, we stand to gain much from simply examining the discussion itself, since every battle has rules of its own. For in every period of history, tradition faces a new conflict with opponents and enemies which typify that period. However, we will also see that at times the old challenges change their garb, and outfit themselves in keeping with each passing intellectual vogue.

### **Confronting the Tradition of Idolatry**

Our first encounter is with the Indian tradition [I:60-61]. Thus, a conflict with the religions of the Far East is now added to our conflict with Christianity and Islam. However, we must be cautious; although India does in fact possess traditions which date history farther back than our chronology, in this section Rihal actually creates an intentional deception. We are presented with a literature which expresses the battle of idolatry against the monotheistic religions. The material quoted as the Indian tradition is in fact a sort of philosophical conglomeration of various Eastern groups which attempted to present an alternative to the biblical account of history. These philosophers "reconstructed" Indian belief, describing its creed as a religion which was not based on revelation. The Chaver expresses it well: "Their statements regarding the computation [of the world's age] are intended only to anger the religious people, just as they anger them with their idols and their incantations and their tricks, which they believe are beneficial to them" [I: 61].



One striking example of this is the new idolatrous literature which was fabricated during the assault upon the Scriptures. The Chaver describes it to us thus: "The book 'Nabatean Agriculture' in which the names of Yanvoshad and Sagrit and Davena are mentioned, who, according to the book, existed before Adam." We find ourselves contending with an intentional, controversial attempt to create an imaginary history of the period prior to the existence of Adam, interwoven with many Scriptural elements. Thus the story of Yanvoshad, Adam's teacher, was created, a story which seemingly testifies to the existence of a history prior to the creation of Adam, and which is intended to undermine the reliability of the Scriptures. This "new" idolatrous literature is not history but bogus propaganda, an attempt to revive idolatry.

In his "Guide to the Perplexed," the Rambam used these books in order to discover the practices of the idolatry which ancient Judaism fought against, and thus to enrich our understanding and exegesis of the Bible. And indeed, if not for the deciphering of archeological remains, and the remnants of pagan literature, the idolatry of the biblical period would have been eternally hidden from medieval philosophers. For this reason, the Rambam used these pseudo-classical books in his attempt to reconstruct the lost idolatry. And indeed, despite the lack of authenticity in this literature, the Rambam made good use of it for his purposes. In any case, the Chaver is certainly correct when he states that this literature is historically insignificant, and cannot prove a thing. At the same time, the Chaver introduces us to an entire literature consisting of fabricated attempts to fill in the gaps, the empty chapters of history, not as they truly were, but as they should have been according to the writer's theory.

The fact that a tradition exists does not guarantee its authenticity; there are other phenomena to be taken into account. For although various Indian traditions have been discovered, they were based on the ideas of individuals. These individuals proposed their theories. Cults evolved around these theories, each one jealously guarding a so-called "tradition." This sheds no light on the actual authenticity of any of these traditions. Rihal's example of Indian religions proves this point. Rihal's generation was not aware that this literature was fraudulent. Therefore, Rihal calls our attention to the fact that these books were written by individual people, whose goal was to perturb the religions with their opinions, "just as they anger them with their idols and their incantations and their tricks." These books are not historical. They fall under the category of fictional or mythological works, in company with astrology books.

We must realize the full implications of Rihal's statement. Rihal teaches us that the main test of a tradition's authenticity lies in its acceptance by the public, by the nation as a whole. Although this is not the only prerequisite, it is essential. We must be wary of

so-called "traditions" which are merely the chimera of an individual, or the artificial creation of a interest group. Rihal will further develop the characteristics of revelation later in his essay. A central component among these characteristics is that the revelatory experience is a sudden breakthrough; it does not come about through the slow evolutionary change which characterizes the growth and development of opinions.

Idoltrous traditions are not grounded enough. They contain mythological traditions which have no historical basis; and they contain traditions, such the Indian tradition quoted by the Kuzari, which are obvious fabrications. The common link between all these traditions is that they are not based on a reliable chain of transmitters and receivers.

### **Confronting the Philosophical Tradition**

This time we are not speaking of India, which was negated as a challenge to the thinker because of its unreliable tradition, but of Greece, which bases itself on philosophical speculation, not history. The discussion moves from the historical to the philosophical plain, to the prevailing question of the eternal existence of the world. Greece does not speak of a history of hundreds of thousands of years; it discusses the infinite perpetuity of the world:

"The Kuzari said: Insofar as I have argued with you regarding an uneducated rabble, and people who do not concur upon a single opinion, your answer has been appropriate. However, what will you answer with regard to the philosophers, who have reached the levels they have attained through research and investigation, [who] do not agree with [your] opinion [negating] the eternal existence of the world; and eternity is not an issue of [the difference between] tens of thousands of years and thousands of thousands; [it]... has no end." [I: 62]

In this section, the Kuzari responds to the Chaver's words. Faced with the general consensus which lies at the base of the biblical tradition, the Kuzari presents us with an opposing consensus, the consensus of the philosophers regarding the eternal existence of the world. This, of course, is a consensus of a different kind. The first consensus is historical, which gives evidence of the reliability of the testimony, whereas the second is a philosophical consensus, seemingly based on proof. Yet, here as well a "general consensus" exists. True, a mathematical statement does not become truer if it is proved one hundred times over. However, despite the rationality which underlies its approach, scientific investigation functions according to the test of consensus. However cynical it sounds, we must admit that the scientific community actually decides what is true and what is not.

Of course, this does not alter our position. For the philosophical consensus has not necessarily solved the problem. Has the eternal existence of the world been proven? Or is this an ongoing error based on the pseudo-tradition of a community of experts who continue to err in the footsteps of their teachers?

At this point Rihal adds a historical principle:

"The Chaver: We may not reproach the philosophers, since they are persons who did not inherit wisdom or religion, for they are Greek, and Greece is a descendent of Japheth who resided in the east, while wisdom, which is an inheritance from Adam, [I refer to]... the wisdom which is supported by the divine influence, was transferred from Adam only to the descendants of Shem, the chosen son of Noah, and which [wisdom] has and always will remain among these chosen ones. As regards the Greeks, this wisdom only reached them after they conquered the nations that fought against them. Only then was that wisdom transferred to them from the Persians, who received it from the Chaldeans. Only then did the famous philosophers arise in that kingdom; and what more, since the Roman conquest, the Greeks have not produced one philosopher of note." [I: 63]

The Kuzari claims that Greek culture was cut off from the ancient tradition, which was the tradition of the sons of Shem. Greek science is no more than a development of the Babylonian science that preceded it, the science of the Chaldeans. Of course, even if this is true, the central problem remains unresolved, namely, that the philosophical claims are not based on a tradition at all but rather on logical proofs. Rihal does not attempt to deceive us. He himself warns us of a logical pitfall. No claim deserves to be disqualified simply based on the personality or the qualities of the person who suggests it. And indeed, the Kuzari responds appropriately: "And does this compel us not to have faith in Aristotle's wisdom?" [I: 64]. A stolen proof is still a proof. Aristotle's authority does not stem from the existence of a tradition, but from his wisdom, from the fact that he discusses the questions and proves them logically. Thus, the doctrine of the eternal existence of the world could be true even if it is not based on any tradition. As an answer to this question, we read a very important section:

"The Chaver: Certainly [Aristotle loses credibility because he lacks a tradition]! Because he had no reliable tradition from people whose word he trusted, Aristotle exerted his mind and applied his faculties to investigate the origins and end of the world: he found it equally difficult to imagine that the world had a beginning, or that it had existed for eternity, and only through his abstract analysis did he decide in accordance with the proofs which lean toward the theory of eternal existence - and therefore he saw no need to concern himself

with the generations that preceded him, nor with the attitude of [other] people; however, if the philosopher was a member of a nation in which true opinions were passed down through a well-known and irrefutable chain of tradition, he would have employed his logical proofs to bolster the faith in a created world, with all the difficulties in [this theory], just as he did in his attempt to strengthen the idea of the world's eternal existence,[which is] a less likely idea." [I: 65]

This response would later be developed by the Rambam in his "Guide to the Perplexed." Creation cannot be proved or disproved logically. If we use the instruments of philosophy, the enigma of creation will remain forever sealed. We cannot prove either position to be true. Both responses are conceivable, and logic cannot help us choose between them; both bear equal weight. Neither has rational precedence over the other, and no proof could compel us to adopt one over the other. We face the dilemma with complete freedom. In terms of philosophy and rational thought, we may build two alternative world views, one based on creation, the other on eternal existence. Faced with the two possibilities, Aristotle decided in favor of eternal existence, without the support of any logical proof. His choice is arbitrary. Thus we read later on:

"The Kuzari: And what [arbitrary] decision is possible when a logical proof exists?

The Chaver: Has a logical proof ever been found [with regard to] this question? Heaven forbid that the Torah contradict something which is obvious, or something which has been logically proven! The Torah does mention miracles, which involve some alteration in the natural order, either through the creation of new objects or through the transformation of one object into another; however, all these [changes] only come to demonstrate that the Creator of the world can do whatever He desires, whenever He so desires. However, the question of the eternal existence or creation of the world is a difficult question to resolve, and the proofs for both claims are equal, and what tipped the scales toward creation is the tradition from Adam, Noah and Moses, may they rest in peace, prophetic testimony, which is more reliable than the testimony of logic. And despite all this, if the believer in the Torah felt logically compelled [to accept]... the opinion about previously existent hylic matter coupled with the opinion that our world was preceded by many other worlds, it would not taint his belief that our world came into being only a certain period of time ago, and that its first human inhabitants were Adam and Noah."

Rihal emphasizes the fact that although the Greeks did develop philosophy, the genesis of this philosophy was significantly influenced by the Jewish people. This accepted position, which claims that philosophy stems from Jewish writings [II: 66], was recognized by many medieval thinkers, and can also be found in Jewish writings from

Alexandria. I believe in this theory in a different form. As we have mentioned before, history teaches us that the source of all religious philosophy lies in the encounter between Greek philosophy and the Scriptures, which took place at the end of the ancient period, in Alexandria in particular. The outstanding representative of this synthesis is Philo.

Philosophy itself must certainly be viewed as a universal phenomenon which appears and develops at varying levels of technique and sophistication in all periods and places. Some thinkers might disagree with my opinion. Rihal's modern successors might accept this position in a different form: let us say that philosophy came into being in Greece, under the influence of the encounter with the East. Rihal calls it the wisdom which they received "from the Chaldeans;" his modern successors would have called it the great philosophical work transmitted through the descendants of Shem, which our Sages like to call the "yeshiva of Shem and Ever," a work which has influenced the development of cultures the world over.

It would be difficult to convince me of a religious obligation to maintain that the Jewish people or the heavens are to be credited for classical philosophy. But it is also possible to understand why the ancients thought that this was the case. They were part of a culture which believed that philosophy was the key to truth, happiness, meaning, even immortality. Therefore, it was of paramount importance to know who had received the key to these gifts from its owner. We of the modern age understand the significance of philosophy differently, and are willing to "allow" other nations their contribution, and accept the fact that philosophy stems from the contributions of all the nations. Prophecy is the hallmark of the Jewish contribution.

"Since the Roman conquest, the Greeks have not produced one philosopher of note."  
[I: 63]

This simple statement has important ramifications, which would later be developed in the thought of the nineteenth-century Jewish philosopher Rabbi Nachman Krochmal (known by his acronym, Ranak). The Greeks developed a philosophy, however, for them it was a temporary creation. Their philosophy was the whole world's inheritance, yet from the Greek perspective it was only significant historically. There are no more Greeks, in the classical sense of the word; neither is Greece itself a center of philosophy any longer. Whereas, Ranak writes, Jewish history teach us that Jewish philosophical creativity suffered a decline, yet this creative force revives again and with greater force in each new phase of history.

## **PART II: Germany: The Challenge of Biblical Criticism**

Rihal's depiction of history according to an innocent and simple reading of the Scriptures has come into conflict of late with the alternative approaches championed by modern historical theories. This conflict brings us to one of the most difficult recent controversies in the relationship between religion and science. The center of gravity of this relationship, where both elements complement and conflict with each other has shifted from the natural sciences to the arts and humanities. Historical analysis played a pivotal role in this alteration. This becomes evident when we compare various historical texts which describe the biblical period. These positions cover a wide spectrum of opinions, ranging from the absolute rejection of scientific findings, to those who read the Scriptures completely out of context, and reject their status as transmitters of historical information. In the range between the two extremes, we find various attempts to synthesize the two perspectives. I described the characteristics of these positions in my book on science and religion; however, here I must make a point regarding the historical perspective, without making any attempt at a halakhic ruling on the issue. The problem of the believer who is involved in this field is of course the difficulty of proving his opinion. Strange as it may seem, the only possible proof is the one which the historians themselves will accept. For the reality, cynical as it sounds, is that truth is defined by what the scientific community accepts as truth, until further notice.

To discuss all the problems of the recent changes in historical perspectives would extend beyond the scope of this lecture. However, I feel the need to briefly comment on this issue, and explain the positions of Rihal's modern successors, who continue to follow his lead in modern times, while suggesting new versions of his doctrine; for a look at their development will demonstrate that Rihal's approach has not brought us to a dead end, even in the wake of the great changes in the historical sciences. His approach continues to serve as fertile ground for philosophical development up to this very day; it challenges those who dare to reexamine the facts from a new perspective.

Let us begin by summarizing a number of central theses in Rihal's approach.

Rihal maintained that the Jewish people are the descendants of Ever (great-grandson of Shem son of Noah). This fact is essential to Rihal's understanding our ethnic roots and the origin of the Hebrew language.

This lineage gives us our national identity card. We are different from the inhabitants of Canaan. We reached the land of Israel after the exodus from Egypt. We will not enter into the question of the ethnic origins of the Canaanites, whether they are the descendants of Shem or Cham. It is reasonable to assume that the inhabitants of the land

of Israel were made up of a hodgepodge of different nations descending from Cham, although the language they spoke was a Semitic one. This does not disprove the claim that both ethnic and linguistic characteristics distinguish us from the Canaanites. As we shall see, this is one of the issues under debate in all the attempts at historical reconstruction undertaken by the scientific establishment.

Rihal's second central thesis is the belief that we are linked to the ancient social tradition of the descendants of Shem. In other words, this links us to an ancient monotheistic tradition. This ancient tradition included both a history and a legal system, the system of law which served as the background for the activities of the Patriarchs. The Mt. Sinai revelation was both a continuation of this tradition and a revolutionary event which left the ancient tradition irrevocably behind.

Surprisingly, religious reasons may prompt us to discard this approach. Our religious tradition emphasizes the complete originality of the Torah, a uniqueness which separates it absolutely from everything that preceded it. Rihal's position unites these two approaches. On the one hand, Rihal assumes the existence of a tradition, while, on the other hand, he stresses the biblical revolution, describing it not as an evolution but as a break in history, a new beginning.

Historical texts and popular scientific publications create an alternative history. We often find ourselves in conflict with these depictions, which can deviate radically from the biblical tradition. Their origins are shared, and reached their full expression in biblical criticism. Biblical criticism attempted to reconstruct history through a new developmental approach, which viewed the transition from idolatry to monotheism as a slow process. Rihal fought against this very conception. Biblical criticism used literary analysis as a means to uncover the traces of this development in biblical literature. The first result of this approach was that that biblical literature lost all its historical value, and was perceived as a sort of biased legend, attempting to reconstruct history on the basis of the religious, cultural and possibly the status-related interests of later periods. This approach is particularly evident in the biblical criticism of the book of Genesis.

The great change resulted from the discoveries of archeology. The historical and literary descriptions of biblical criticism came into conflict with the new realities uncovered by recent archeological findings. The new discoveries prompted a new interpretation of the past. This revolution enabled Rihal's modern successors to prove the need to reexamine the book of Genesis.

The book of Genesis is strikingly similar to the culture of the descendants of Shem and Ever, who preceded those civilizations which are thought to have existed in Abraham's day. A good example is the war of the four kings against the five kings, a war

which had been lost to history already in the days of the later great kingdoms which were situated in the place of the earlier ones. The Scripture not only preserves ancient testimony about events which undoubtedly took place, but also is exact regarding the names, which are preserved in their ancient form, and not as they were used in later periods, when these languages changed. First and foremost, these discoveries open up the possibility of the existence of a tradition of the descendants of Shem and Ever. This is particularly interesting, since certain medieval philosophers interpreted many chapters in the book of Genesis allegorically, as describing spiritual realities or philosophical truths. These interpretations stood at the core of a fierce debate between the proponents of peshat - literal interpretation, and the proponents of philosophical interpretation. In any case, the new discoveries compel us to reexamine the literal interpretation of the stories of the Patriarchs. Thus, we can attempt to reconstruct Rihal's position on the background of these new historical realities.

Of course, even after positive developments such as these, many questions remain unsolved. We must contend with the fundamental question of the need to construct the edifice of Torah upon the foundations of scientific knowledge, in any case as a temporary response. The reason for this becomes apparent when we compare what would plausibly have been the position of the religious historian at the end of the previous century, and the position of the new historian, whom archeology has permitted to reinterpret the Scriptures. For the first historian, biblical history was not proof of the truth as Rihal taught us; quite the contrary, it created religious doubts. In this, as in many other areas, the final word is yet to be said.

## **Language**

Another of Rihal's principles which we must consider is the issue of the status of the Hebrew language. Here, Rihal's modern successor is faced with a new challenge, a different chapter of history: the history of culture. The history of linguistics tries to view the Hebrew language in the context of other languages. It seems to me that Rihal's successors are faced with two alternatives. The first is to maintain Rihal's original position, which views the Hebrew language as the most fundamental and ancient tongue. The second alternative is to differentiate between the ancient Hebrew spoken by the descendants of Shem and Ever, and scriptural Hebrew, which is a later creation. Rabbi Aaron Marcus maintains that scriptural Hebrew is an additional revelation which can be seen as a part of the revelation to Moses. According to this approach, scriptural Hebrew constitutes a kind of revolution within ancient Hebrew. The ramifications of this revolution are significant indeed, for it enables us to unearth the wonderful architectural



structure hidden in the Hebrew language. This structure demonstrates that the three letter root words of the Hebrew language are actually the result of the combining of smaller, two letter root words. This principle, which was spoken of in the Middle Ages, returned to the academic consciousness in the last century, and was taken up by Jewish and non-Jewish scholars alike. Among them, we will mention Rabbi Aaron Marcus once again, who tried to develop a modern version of Rihal's approach, by synthesizing the findings of the linguistic analysis of ancient languages with the a priori conceptual analysis of the Hebrew language.

If our first conflict occurred as a result of the encounter with India, and the second, with Greece, the third conflict is characterized by the encounter with Germany. As we have already hinted, this encounter was not lacking in anti-Semitic elements. Our return to the land of Israel and our national rebirth have created a new opportunity to overcome this conflict. However, this is not history; it is reality.

### **The Birth of Religion [I:80-81]**

These issues lead us to discuss the birth of the Jewish religion.

The Chaver's central thesis is that there is a fundamental difference between the birth of the Jewish religion and the general history of religions. He considers this the most important and central testimony to the uniqueness of the Jewish religion. Every religion is born as the result of development. A group forms around a charismatic leader. He leads it, spreads its religion, sends emissaries to expand its activities, and at the end of the process, the religion is spread among various nations, usually with the aid of the sword. This process certainly faithfully describes the formation of Christianity and Islam. The Chaver maintains that the birth of the Jewish religion was different, because it was not the result of a process, but of a revolution, a revelation, something akin to the creation of the world. It was a new creation, and not a development or a change in a given reality. This is the central content of the book of Exodus.

Another idea which Rihal develops in the sections before us, particularly in chapter I:91, is the idea that with the birth of the Jewish religion came the stamp of its authenticity, which is expressed through two different phenomena: miracles and revelation. These two phenomena have a common characteristic, and both together can serve as the basis for the Jewish faith. In fact, the Kuzari explains the central message of the book of Exodus to be "that whoever has witnessed those events, it is clear to him that this thing came from the Creator with no intermediary, all these things being similar to the first proof and the first creation." The central message is that we are faced with

something that is not fraudulent, and cannot be interpreted as such. This section of the Kuzari is a detailed version of this central claim.

Another important principle is found here, which we have already seen elsewhere in the Kuzari. The Chaver tells us in chapter 91: "I do not conclude that the thing occurred exactly according to this description; it is possible that it occurred in a deeper way than I could possibly imagine." The Chaver stresses that his claims are not necessarily historical. The Kuzari uses this section to discuss the issue of the divine voice. However, this concept may be expanded. In fact, the central claim which arises from these sections is that whatever the explanation for these unnatural occurrences, it is clear that these are descriptions of the entrance of the divine into the sphere of nature, and the revelation of God to the nation, in a manner which leaves no room for doubt. The Jewish people experienced phenomena which human speech, normal human perceptions, and the historical background of the people who saw these things, cannot describe. Just as the creation of the world beggars description, so, too, the power of the miracle cannot be described, and we must search out models which will help us to describe these phenomena before we look for their explanations. Divine forces invade the natural world. The natural order of things, described by natural science and history, stands helpless when faced with the entrance of a different, divine system; this is the one and only explanation for all that is taking place before our eyes.

Now we must examine these two bases of our religion, miracles and revelation, in greater detail. The book of Exodus is testimony not only to the phenomena, but also to additional characteristics of the phenomena, which define their unique character.

The common denominator between these two religious experiences is that they take place in public, before the nation. This is true both of miracles and of revelation. We will return to a more detailed discussion of each of these phenomena.

## CHAPTER 27: The Battle over Jewish Tradition

### **PART I: In Shai Agnon's story, "Pat Shelema," we hear of an interesting encounter:**

"As I hurried along against my will, an old man knocked on his window to get my attention. I turned my head and saw Dr. Yekutiel Ne'eman standing in the window. I ran to him and was joyous indeed, as he was a wise man and his words were pleasant. As soon as I approached him, he disappeared. I looked into his house, until he came and stood with me and greeted me. I returned his greeting and waited to hear those great things which people were accustomed to hear from him."

Dr. Ne'eman inquired after the health of my wife and children. I sighed and told him, 'You remind me of my sorrow; they are yet in the Diaspora and desire to return to the land of Israel.' He said, 'If they desire to return, what deters them from returning?' I sighed and said, 'There is a delay here.' He replied, 'Deceit is the cause of this delay.'

His lips were slightly ajar, and it seemed as if a silent remonstrance were hanging upon them, and his great beard, streaked with gray, bent and became waves, like the raging ocean. I was sorry to have raised his anger against me and caused him to discuss petty things with me. I thought of an idea and began to speak of his book.

This book was the center of much controversy. Some of the sages claimed that everything written in it was from the mouth of Lord ....; Yekutiel Ne'eman wrote it and neither added nor subtracted a thing from his words. And thus claimed Yekutiel Ne'eman. And there were those who disagreed, claiming that Ne'eman had written it himself, and credited it to a lord whom no one had ever set eyes upon.

This is not the appropriate place to expand about this book. However, I must say that from the day of its publication the world has changed somewhat for the better, that some people have corrected their behavior and altered their natures somewhat, and that there are those who focus their energy on doing everything as this book proscribes.

In order to please Dr. Ne'eman, I praised his book highly and said, 'Everyone admits that it is a great work with no peer.' Yekutiel turned his face away from me and left me and went on his way. I stood and tore my heart with sorrow and remorse over all that I had said.

Dr. Ne'eman did not remain angry with me. And when I was about to leave, he returned and gave me a package of letters to bring to the post office and send registered mail [Hebrew: be-achrayut, literally, to send with responsibility]. I placed the letters

under my arm and placed my hand on my heart as a pledge that I would fulfill my mission faithfully."

This story has inspired countless research papers and literary analyses. We will leave the theories aside and try to interpret the story on its most basic level. In fact, this is one of the most transparent sections of Agnon's writing. Yekutiel Ne'eman clearly represents the figure of Moses, the loyal [Heb.: ne'eman] servant of God, to whom our Rabbis gave the name Yekutiel. Dr. Ne'eman informs us that "what is written [in the book] is from the mouth of lord...." Four dots replace the three which are normally used to represent a missing word. This is a hint at the Tetragrammaton, the four-lettered name of God. Dr. Ne'eman has given us a book. His book is none other than the Torah. Opinions are divided about it. We struggle with the heretics: "And there were those who disagreed, claiming that Ne'eman had written it himself, and credited it to a lord whom no one had ever set eyes upon." Dr. Ne'eman is not interested in my assessment of the book: "[I] said, 'Everyone admits that it is a great work with no peer.'" Dr. Ne'eman is not interested in positive critical reviews. His concern is truth.

Dr. Ne'eman demands our commitment, and our first responsibility is to our family, our children - a responsibility which the modern desire for self-actualization often obscures. He also gives us "a package of letters to bring to the post office and send registered mail [be-achrayut, literally, with responsibility]." The correct term in modern Hebrew for registered mail would have been "mikhtav rashum;" however, the archaic Hebrew term "be-achrayut" will prove useful in our further interpretation of the story. In any case, we who have studied the parable of the Indian king, are equipped to solve the riddle. There, too, the king sends letters. These letters, mailed with responsibility, clearly represent the Torah and the commandments.

### **Now for the central focus of the story:**

"A short time later I was standing before the post office ... as I was about to enter, a carriage passed and I saw a man sitting inside: I stood amazed, that now when there was not a horseshoe in the city, a man was traveling in a carriage with two horses. And what was most surprising was that he was sporting with the passersby, by turning his horses into their path. I raised my eyes and saw that it was Mr. Gersler. This Mr. Gersler was the head of an agricultural school in the Diaspora; however, in the Diaspora he rode a horse and here he rode in a carriage ... and he was an educated and well-bred man, and although he was overweight, his flesh was not noticeable on account of his learning.<sup>236236</sup>"

This Mr. Gersler was a particular acquaintance of mine. How long have I known him? Perhaps from the day that I first knew myself. I will not exaggerate if I claim that our affection had remained constant since our first acquaintance. And although he is beloved of the whole world, I can say that I am dearer to him than all others, since he made efforts with me and showed me all kinds of pleasures. And when I tired of them, he amused me with words of wisdom. Mr. Gersler had been granted great wisdom, which could uproot all the wisdom you had acquired elsewhere. And never in his life did he ask for payment, but would give and be glad that his favors were accepted. In the old days, I was but a lad and he was quick to amuse me until that night when my house was burned and all of my possessions went up in flames.

The night when my house burned down, Mr. Gersler was sitting with my neighbor, playing cards. This neighbor, Israel Mumar [lit. the heretic], was a cloth salesman. He lived below among his merchandise and I lived above with my books. Between rounds, my neighbor told him that his merchandise was not selling, since all of his cloth was made of paper, having been made during the war, and since the end of the war people had once again begun to weave cloth of wool and linen, and no one wants to make a garment from fake cloth which will stretch and tear while you wear it, when he can get real cloth. Mr. Gersler asked him, 'Are you insured [Hebrew: are you promised responsibility - "achrayut"]?' He answered, 'I am insured.' As they spoke, Mr. Gersler lit himself a cigarette and said, 'Throw this match into this trash can and collect the insurance money.' He went and set fire to his merchandise and the entire house burned down. This Mumar, who was insured, received the money for his merchandise and I, who had not insured my possessions, was left frustrated and undone, and what was left me from the fire I spent on lawyers, since Mr. Gersler tempted me to sue the city for not saving my house, for they even added to the flames. For on that night, the firefighters had made themselves a party and got drunk and filled their vessels with whiskey and brandy and when they came to put out the fire they added to it.

For these reasons, I distanced myself afterwards from Mr. Gersler, and it seemed to me that I was rid of him forever, because I was angry at him, since because of him my house burned down, and because I had immersed myself in Yekutiel Ne'eman's book. In those days, I prepared myself to move to the land of Israel and in my abandonment of worldly pleasures I abandoned Mr. Gersler. When I moved to the land of Israel who did I come across first - Gersler, since he was traveling in the same boat as myself, except that I traveled in the lower compartment in the fashion of the poor, and he traveled in the upper compartment in the fashion of the rich."

Mr. Gersler joins our cast of characters; beyond the shadow of a doubt, he represents Satan. Ironically, our hopes to escape from his clutches through the redeeming arms of idealism are crushed when we find ourselves in his company even after our move to the land of Israel. The Hebrew term "achrayut" reappears at this point. Modern Hebrew would have offered the term "bituach," insurance, here. Since the store was insured, it was burned, and thus our hero's garret was destroyed as well. This "achrayut" refers to the moral system based upon the letters. Our hero's lack of this "achrayut" becomes a responsibility of a different kind. The fire was a biographical incident in Agnon's life; however, in my mind it symbolizes the destruction of European Jewry, while the firefighters, the nations, complacently look on, perhaps even adding to the flames.

Gersler's personality is a fascinating study. He appears in two different masks. On the one hand, he is the one "who showed me all kinds of pleasures." He promises us pleasures; yet, ultimately he will jeer and laugh at us. Every adolescent is acquainted with the struggle against the evil inclination: "and although he is beloved of the whole world, I can say that I am dearer to him than all others." Each of us is intimately acquainted with our own darker side. However, Agnon has a more serious message for us. The same enemy wears another mask as well: "and when I tired of them, he amused me with words of wisdom. Mr. Gersler had been granted great wisdom, which could uproot the wisdom you had acquired elsewhere." We must meet the challenge of false wisdom. We will continually face questions and problems. This experience is the other dimension of the great challenge of life.

### **The Essence of the Tale**

Rabbi Nachman of Breslav was perhaps the classic conveyer of this mode. We know that one of the basic vehicles of expression in Chassidism was the story, or "tale." In relating the tales told by or about a tzaddik, we discover the true meaning of our ultimate obligations. Rabbi Nachman tells us that just as we tell tzaddik stories, others relate anti-tzaddik stories. Today and forever, we will continue to face that someone who, consciously or unconsciously, tries to create a false option, with all the outer trappings of truth. The true prince will always be challenged by a commoner who claims the throne. We will always have to distinguish between truth and deception. This is our primary task. There are those who reach what is termed a relativistic conclusion from this state of affairs; they maintain that truth simply does not exist. This approach constitutes an even greater danger, which we must fight at all costs. Although many may claim the crown, there is but one true prince!

This is not merely an intellectual problem; it is a deeply existential difficulty as well. I will try to describe our situation through an example which many of us witnessed. Not long ago, through the media or in actual presence, we followed the trial of a Ukrainian murderer, one of the angels of destruction who tortured our parents and brothers in the valley of death called the Holocaust. The traumatic experience and the resultant trial in Jerusalem conducted by judges who represented the victims' children, was obscured in a legal discussion replete with irrelevant technical details, and in the constant battle surrounding them. We also witnessed the attempt made within the framework of the trial to create an alternative truth, to the extent that at many moments doubts arose even in the minds of those convinced of the integrity of the witnesses, and the correct identification of the accused. The public exposure of the trial brought us face to face with the full power of the legal system, but also with its limitations.

Let me take this example one step further. Let us imagine a different situation. A person who is very dear to us, a person who we know well, is on trial for a serious offense. We know with absolute certainty that he is innocent. We feel it, we are convinced of it, and all of our acquaintance with him bears witness to it. Let us assume that this time the prosecution, not the defense, attempts to convict the person dear to us. The prosecution invites "experts" who "stretch" the evidence in their possession, while others "innocently" point out various suspicions, which slowly raise the probability of guilt. The defense attorney must construct a defense strategy. He may wish to present proofs in favor of the accused. However, some of the proofs may not be legally binding. For example, my certainty of the integrity and innocence of my friend will not be accepted in court. For the sad reality is that we are often faced not with clarification of the truth, but with clarification of the truth according to particular rules.

Now for the interpretation of the parable. Something very precious to us is on trial - the authenticity of the Scriptures, the basic truth of the Bible and our tradition. In a lengthy trial such as this we have been dealing for years with what is known as biblical criticism. Our trial has gone through many and varied stages. The defense has presented excellent alternatives to the thesis of the plaintiff. However, before we deal with the issues themselves, we must remember that they are discussed in the framework of a trial with its own set of rules. The quest is not for truth, but for truth that has been proven in a manner which is acceptable to a particular discipline of science.

When will the trial end? Our first responsibility is not to wait for the verdict, and not to be influenced by the populists who flippantly discuss things which are sub judice to scientists and religious people. However, we are not afraid of the verdict of the scientists either. We must approach the conflict from the perspective of faith, with the belief that

within these processes as well, the historical truth will come to light. We must always remember that there is an elemental difference between confidence in someone, and proving his innocence in court. This means that we are faced with a struggle in which an objective verdict will not easily be achieved. From the cornerstone of our faith we reach out to the chain of generations which Rihal describes. We also believe in the prophetic origin of the chain, as described in the Scriptures. The Scriptures teach us that the birth of the Jewish nation constituted a break into the laws of nature and of history, and that the Torah contains a revelation of the divine. We cannot correctly and precisely express the details. The final history of this period has not yet been written. Yet, even in our day, we view history as the outgrowth of faith and inner conviction. This truth does not spring solely from historical evidence. It is based on the very existence of the document which demonstrates the relationship; it is based on the letter which we have received from God. We are willing to discuss the interpretation of the document. However, just as with a letter from a loved one, we are willing to discuss its meaning but not its authorship. His fingerprints are evident to us in every word.

It seems that we are trapped in a certain sense, and will remain so. One of the criteria historians employ to disqualify or accept historical evidence is the issue of miracles. If the Scriptures describe a miraculous event, many people will automatically define the text as false. The miraculous quality of the event is, for many people, the greatest proof of its lack of historical authenticity. This is a serious problem indeed, which will only be resolved when we discover parallel documentation; even in that case, the problem will not wholly disappear. We must realize that no absolute proofs exist which can help us establish our position. A leap of faith must precede all our logical proofs.

## **Truth and Faith**

Rabbi Nachman of Breslav compared the exodus from Egypt to a flash of lightning in the dark of night, which gives us a glimpse of the world as it is. However, after the lightning we return to darkness. The difference between the state of light, when we see reality, and the state of groping our way in the darkness, is the difference between truth and faith. Truth is the vision of an indisputable reality. This was the experience of the revelation at Mt. Sinai. Our generation must respond to the challenge of faith.

We cannot achieve a full comprehension of reality; however, we can reach out to the link in the chain which preceded us, reaching backward in time, until we reach the lightning itself. The establishment of this link is truly an act of free will. Joining hands with the chain of generations is an act of freedom, of decision. This, in Rihal's view, is



our mission. My hand is not held by force; I must give it. I must overcome my doubts and make a decision of faith. In the very acceptance of the tradition, there is an act of faith, a victory over the temptations of Mr. Gersler, a triumph of the letters of Dr. Yekutiel Ne'eman. This is the path described by Rabbi Nachman in his parable "The Wise Man and the Simple Man." In order to understand it we must return to the parable of the king of India. We will discuss this in next week's lecture.

## **PART II: The Clever Man and the Simple Man**

Each generation and each individual experiences an existential state all its own. Various thinkers have employed the parable as a means to express these conditions. So far, we have seen two of these attempts; both the Rambam and Rihel have used the parable to describe existential states.

Our generation has moved beyond the revolution of the modern world, beyond Newton. It was in need of a new parable; this new vehicle of expression was supplied by Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav, in the parable entitled "The Clever Man and The Simple Man." These two devote their entire lives to the resolution of an existential argument. They wish only to know if the king indeed exists. The wise man employs his great wisdom to form all kinds of theories which explain the functioning of society, without assuming the existence of the king. The simple man reaches the opposite conclusion and feels certainty in the intuitive approach, discerning the presence of the king through the order in the kingdom. He desires to meet the king, and rejects the clever man's repeated attempts to escape from this conclusion.

Rabbi Nachman describes the clever man as follows [the following translation was taken from "The Tales of Rabbi Nachman of Bratslav," by Rabbi Adin Steinsaltz, published by Jason Aronson, 1993]:

"Now when the letter from the king had been delivered to the clever man, he said to the clever messenger, 'Wait. Stay here *overnight*. We shall discuss the matter and come to a decision.'

That night the clever man made a grand dinner for the messenger, and over the meal he began to analyze the situation, using all his learning and philosophy. 'What can it mean,' he exclaimed, 'that such a great king sends for a lowly person like me? Who am I that the king should send for me? What can it mean? He is a great king, who rules a vast dominion and wields much power, and I am as nothing compared with him. Does it stand to reason that such a king would send for me? One could say that he summoned me on account of my wisdom, but what

am I to the king? Has the king no wise men about him? The king himself must surely be a great sage! Why, then, should the king send for me?' The matter confounded the clever man. As he wondered about it, he declared to the clever messenger, 'Do you know what I think? There is no king, and everyone in the whole world is mistaken in believing that there is. Listen, does it stand to reason that the whole world should submit itself to one person and make him king over everything? No, it is clear that there is no king.' 'But I brought you a letter from the king!' protested the messenger. 'Did you receive it from him personally?' the clever man asked him. 'No, someone else gave it to me.'

'There! You can see for yourself that I am right. There is no king. Now tell me. You are from the royal capital, and you grew up there. Have you ever seen the king?'

'No.'

'Now you can see that I am right. There is no king, for even you have never seen him.'

'If that is so,' returned the clever messenger, 'who governs the country?'

'Ah, I can easily explain that. I am an expert in such matters, so you've asked the right person. I've traveled a great deal, and I spent some time in Italy, where I was able to learn the local customs. The whole country is ruled by seventy counselors who remain in office for a limited period of time. All the citizens of the country take turns holding office, one after another.' His arguments began to influence the clever messenger, and finally the two agreed that there was no king.

The clever man goes from person to person and tries to convince them that that there is no king. 'Come, let us travel around the world! I'll show you more examples of how everyone in the world is deluded by folly.' They departed together and traveled around the world, and everywhere they went they found the world to be in error."

Rabbi Nachman creates an ironic encounter between the clever man and a "Ba'al Shem" [holy personage] who is known for his wondrous deeds:

"The clever man thought that this must be the residence of a physician. As he was a great physician himself, he wanted to go in and make the other's acquaintance. 'Who lives in there?' he inquired of the people. 'A Ba'al Shem,' they replied.

The clever man burst out laughing. 'This is another lie, a further folly,' he said to his companion."

Rabbi Nachman wishes to create an encounter between the clever man and the miraculous. The end of the story is an encounter with Satan, the epitome of evil. Here Rabbi Nachman's irony reaches its peak. The clever man desired to deny the existence of God, and this desire brought him to the very depths of evil. In contrast, the simple man followed a different path:

"'Why did he hit you?' asked the minister.  
'Because I was talking about the Ba'al Shem,' he replied.

'I said that he was a liar and that the whole thing is nothing more than a big swindle.'

'So you still cling to your cleverness!' exclaimed the simple minister. 'Listen, once you said that you could easily reach my level, but that I could never reach yours. Now look. I attained yours long ago, but you have not yet reached mine. Now I can see that it is indeed more difficult for you to attain my simplicity.' The clever man expounded his opinion that there was no king.

'What are you saying?' cried the simple minister. 'I've seen the king myself!' 'How do you know he is the king?' answered the clever man with a laugh. 'Do you know him, and his father and his grandfather who were also kings? How do you know that he is really the king? People told you that he was the king, but they deceived you.'

It greatly angered the simple man to hear his friend deny the existence of the king."

The faith that our generation needs, according to Rabbi Nachman, is simplicity. This simplicity is not a childish faith. It is the result of scrutiny, of discussion and of stirring debate with the philosopher within us and outside of us. However, in addition to the great sophistication of the philosopher, an act of faith is expected of man as well. He is commanded to achieve this simple faith.

The simple man exemplifies more than faith alone; his simplicity has become a way of life. Let us move backward in time, and discover the contrast between the clever man and the simple man:

"After several years [the clever man] said to himself, 'Now the time has come to decide what I'm going to do with my life.' He began to think philosophically about the profession he should take up ... he apprenticed himself to a cutter of precious

stones, and since he was so clever, he mastered this craft, too, in a short time, about three months.

Thereafter he reflected, 'I have mastered these two trades, but who knows, perhaps someday neither of them will be required. It would be prudent to study a profession that will always be needed.' Deliberating with all his understanding and philosophy, he decided to study medicine, which is always needed and important. In order to study medicine, one must first learn Latin, both to read and to write it, and philosophy as well. Since he was so clever, he learned all this in a short time, just three months. He became a great physician and philosopher, a master of all the sciences.

After a while, he began to find the whole world worthless. He was so clever, so skilled a craftsman, so wise a sage, and so great a physician, that everybody else in the world seemed of no account ...

Let us now put aside the story of the clever man and begin to tell the story of the simple man.

The simple man learned shoemaking. Since he was simple, it took him a long time to acquire the skill, and even then he did not master it entirely. He took a wife and made a living by his trade.

Since he was a simple man and was not skilled at his craft, he earned his living with great difficulty. He had to work all the time and had no time even to eat. He would snatch bites of bread as he sat over his leather, piercing holes with his awl and sewing the heavy stitches.

The simple man lived in great happiness. He knew nothing but joy. He had every kind of food and drink and clothing that he desired. 'My wife,' he would say, 'bring me something to eat.' She would give him a piece of bread. When he had finished eating it, he would say, 'Bring me some chicken soup with kasha.' She would cut him another slice of bread, and he would eat it, praising its fine taste. 'How delicious and satisfying this soup is,' he would say. Then he would tell her, 'Bring me some meat.' Again she would give him bread, and as he ate it he would enjoy it and praise it handsomely. 'This meat is delicious!' he would exclaim. Every time he asked her to bring him a fine dish, she would give him a piece of bread. He would enjoy it immensely, praise its quality, and talk about how delicious it was, exactly as though he were really eating the fine dish he had asked for. Because of his great innocence and happiness, he actually tasted in the bread he ate the flavor of any food he desired. After the meal, when he said, 'My wife, bring me a drink of beer,' she would bring him a glass of water. 'How delicious this beer is,' he would exclaim. Next he would

say, 'Bring me some mead.' She would give him more water, and he would praise the fine quality of the mead. 'Bring me wine,' he would demand, or perhaps he wanted some other beverage - whatever it was, she always gave him water, and he would enjoy and praise it exactly as if he were really drinking the beverage he had requested. And so it was with clothing ... and he was always filled with joy and happiness. As he was not a master of his craft, it sometimes happened that when he finished a shoe it had three points instead of two. He would take the shoe in his hand, praise it highly, and take great pleasure in beholding it. 'My wife,' he would say, 'how pretty and fine this shoe is, and how sweet. It is a shoe of honey and sugar.'

'If that is really so,' she would answer, 'why do the other cobblers take three kopecks for a pair of shoes, and you take only a kopeck and a half?'

'What does that matter to me? What they do is their business and what I do is my business ...'"

### **A Narrow Bridge**

The difference between Rabbi Nachman's approach and that of Rihal is significant. Rabbi Nachman felt that whatever proofs one uses to support his position, the ultimate prop for our beliefs can be found only in faith. The leap of faith is the only way to sustain our beliefs. However, this holds true not only for us, the believers. The position of every man, believer or dissenter, is based upon intuitions which cannot be proven.

Faith is not the exclusive domain of the prophet; it is each individual's personal mission. The individual who encounters the prophet must grapple with the prophet's message. The Jewish people encountered God at Mt. Sinai. This encounter dispelled any doubts entertained by that generation. However, it is no accident that Rihal chose the Kuzari as his protagonist. The Chaver responds to an individual with no experience or tradition of an encounter with the divine, who has as yet no faith in the reality of such an encounter. The story frame of the Kuzari is significant. The parable of the king of Persia teaches us that beyond the inner certainty created by the encounter with the divine, there is also an objective, public test of the truth of this encounter. The authenticity of the historical encounter can be evaluated. The Chaver turns to the Kuzari with this test in mind.

The Rambam opens with the divine encounter in nature; Rihal claims that religious certainty can be achieved not through nature but through history. Rabbi Nachman, however, maintains that doubt will continue to gnaw at our hearts, that we will must begin our spiritual journey with a leap of faith. We must leap alone, into the unknown

which lies beyond our own experience. Spiritual attainment will always mean negotiating a very narrow bridge; and the main thing is not to fear the passage.

What is the meaning of the "very narrow bridge?" I reached an understanding of this famous Bratslav saying thanks to a childhood experience. Many years ago, my father took me to a certain place across a certain river. We couldn't return the way we had come, because rain had fallen in the interim, and the bridge was flooded. The only option was to go up the mountain and cross a very narrow train bridge. Someone took me by the hand and helped me across.

Why couldn't I do it alone? Neurologically, I certainly was capable of fulfilling such a task. How is it that I easily walk between two close lines; yet, I cannot walk across a bridge much wider than that? The answer is, because I am afraid. It is not the impossibility of the task which stops me, it is the fear. This is what Rabbi Nachman meant when he said, "The whole world is a very narrow bridge, and the main thing is not to fear."

Man's greatest enemy is not outside himself; it lies within. Man invests tremendous energy to repel powerful enemies; yet the most powerful enemies are inside of us. This idea has psychological ramifications; however, we are interested in the philosophical aspect. Philosophers have tried to teach us philosophically proven truths. Rabbi Nachman teaches us that help will not come from the outside, but from within ourselves. Just as I can cross the narrow bridge if I do not fear, so too can I reach the truth if I choose to believe.

We can add a continuation to Rabbi Nachman's story, a motif taken from cartoons. Remember the fox chasing the rabbit? The rabbit reaches the valley, where there is a rope bridge. We see the rabbit cross the bridge. Then he loosens the ropes and the bridge falls down. The fox does not know this, and he continues to run on the bridge as though it were there. Only when he reaches the middle of the "bridge" does he stop, look down, see the bridge and then... he falls. This is the continuation of Rabbi Nachman's story. This is, in essence, the concept of faith. Faith builds the bridge.

## CHAPTER 28: The Commandments [1:79]

### PART I

"Four entered the Orchard; one looked and expired, one looked and was injured, one looked and uprooted the field [i.e., became a heretic], another entered in peace and left in peace; and who was he? Rabbi Akiva. The one who looked and expired could not stand the glow of that world - to the extent that his body disintegrated. The second went mad and spoke confusedly of divine matters, words of no benefit. The third disdained the practical commandments after having looked upon the higher spiritual spheres, saying to himself: 'The practical commandments are merely tools and means which bring one to this spiritual level, and I have already achieved it; therefore I have no need of the practical commandments.' In this manner he became corrupt and he corrupted others, erred and caused others to err. Whereas Rabbi Akiva entered both worlds and left without being struck by calamity ... and he was the man who, at the moment of his execution, asked his students if the time had come to recite the Shema and he recited it..." [3: 65].

In Rihal's admirable interpretation, Elisha Ben Abuya represents the philosophical position, which views the commandments merely as a means to achieve intellectual perfection. Rabbi Akiva's personality creates a striking contrast to this approach, for it was Rabbi Akiva who performed commandments even at the exalted moment of sanctifying God's name.

This brings us to one of the central themes in Jewish thought: the reasons behind the commandments [1: 79]. We will try to understand Rihal's position on the background of the various possibilities. Rihal presents an alternative which repudiates other possible interpretations of the commandments - an alternative understanding, in fact, of law in general.

Delving into the reasons for the commandments means we must try to understand why we are obligated to perform a particular commandment. We will understand this better in the context of other commandments or obligations. Let us begin this discussion by comparing the commandments to two actions: the soldier wearing a beret, and the obligation to wear seat belts.

## **The Beret Model: Discipline and Meaning**

One approach compares the commandments to the wearing of a military beret. A soldier doesn't wear a beret to protect himself from the sun or the rain; it is rather a vehicle to express the discipline to which the soldier is committed. Similarly, we can describe a philosophical approach which sees the commandments as expressions of the Divine will and emphasizes the disciplinary character of the commandments: "What does God care if [the ritual slaughterer] slaughters from the nape or from the neck?" The meaning of the commandment is discipline; its significance lies in man's surrender to the King of Kings. Fulfillment of the commandments means accepting the yoke of Heaven, obeying God and acting in accordance with His word. The content of the commandments themselves is irrelevant, and could easily have been different. However since we were commanded, these commandments became an obligation and we are forbidden to alter them in any way. This approach views our relationship with God as the relationship with a king, ruler and commander. Man's central difficulty is his position in relation to God, with only two alternatives: acceptance of the Heavenly yoke, or rejection of it which amounts, essentially, to rebellion. According to this approach, the value of the commandment depends upon its acceptance as an order; the value lies in the discipline itself, just as the value of a soldier's beret lies first and foremost in the discipline it symbolizes and not in the practical purpose it serves.

## **The Seat Belt Model: Law as Compulsory Advice**

The second position considers the commandments to be similar to the obligation to wear a seat belt. We are legally obligated to wear it, and although the seat belt can be uncomfortable or inconvenient at times, and although we rebel against the punishments meted out to us when we don't fulfill the obligation, in the final analysis the law is for our own good. It is simply good advice. The law compels us to what is best for us. The Rambam approaches the commandments in a similar vein. His approach stems from a rational world view. The commandments, claims the Rambam, have intrinsic value beyond the merit of obeisance to the Creator. He maintains that one must attempt to discover the rational meaning behind the commandments. In his explanation of the commandments, the Rambam speaks from his own unique philosophical and historical perspective. Although one may accept his opinion in principle, one must not emphasize the details of his explanation. His rationalistic students understood from his words that the human mind - the only judge that we have - is capable of explaining the reasons for the commandments. According to this principle, logic underlies the entire legal system. The sole difference between those laws which we easily understand [mishpatim], and



those which seem oblique [chukim], lies not in the commandments themselves, but only in our perception of them. These explanations are hidden from us at times, due to certain psychological or sociological circumstances; however, they do exist, and our minds are capable of grasping them. The basic model of the rationalist is mathematics, the pinnacle of human intellectual achievement.

Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon developed a synthesis between the various positions. He differentiated between discipline based [shim'i] and logical [sikhli] commandments. The discipline based commandments express the first approach, the logical ones the second.

The seat belt model is an example of the rational position, which reached its height in the writings of the Rambam. He felt that the reasons for the commandments explain the principle concept of the commandment but not its details. It is simply impossible that the details not be arbitrary. Thus, we once again return to the distinction between discipline-based and logical commandments. The details are discipline-based, while the principle of each commandment is logical.

### **The Medicine Model**

Rihal presents us with a third position. Rejecting the approach which places all the value of the commandments in human subjugation to the Divine will, Rihal assumes that the commandments possess intrinsic meaning, just as there is logic and meaning to the medicines which a sick person takes in order to be cured. What makes medicine unique? In order to understand this we must return to example of military discipline. Often a new recruit is punished for failing to fulfill the demands of his commanding officer. If he didn't stand in the line up exactly according to the orders, didn't march in proper time, or didn't fold his army blanket properly, he will be duly punished. However, this punishment is completely different from the punishment which will be experienced by a person who uses medication improperly, or fails to take it altogether. Unlike the first case, this punishment is intrinsically connected to the medication he is taking. There is no need for a judge to punish him with a disease, for not having used his medication. This is not something disciplinary and arbitrary; it is intrinsically connected with the person's behavior. This, Rihal tells us, is the case with regard to the commandments.

However, the medicine model is not appropriate for the Rambam; for the Rambam, and with him many of the rationalists, believed that the commandments could be understood and explained logically. Rihal attempts to teach us that there are things in this world which the human mind cannot explain. The efficacy of medication is usually discovered by experience, while its essence often remains a riddle to us, either

temporarily or permanently. The effectiveness of the medication does not depend on our awareness or theoretical understanding. It is a reality. A medicine which needs our awareness to function is not a "real" medicine. It works through psychological persuasion. It is actually an illusion. Investigation of a drug's effectiveness is scientifically accomplished in a group with a number of control groups. The testing is carried out using a double-blind method, in which the doctors do not know to whom they are administering the drug, and the patients do not know if they are receiving it. The drug works even if the expert does not understand it, and even if the patient does not always know that he is taking it. For many philosophers, medicine was the model of a profession which does not always have a theoretical basis to explain its success - yet it constitutes a rational science. Medicine in fact makes use of another method. The effectiveness of certain drugs are ascertained by experimentation, and only afterwards, in some cases, do we reach the stage of understanding why these drugs function as they do. In fact, sometimes we are surprised by explanations of phenomena which had remained mysterious for thousands of years.

### **The Doctor and the Lawyer**

The model of medicine teaches us the possibility of human action, despite the inability of the human mind to explain the reality it faces. However, the medicine model does not accord with the approach based on human subjugation to the Divine will, which we expressed in the model of the military beret. This idea will be clearer if we compare the medicine model to another model: the model of the lawyer. Let us examine the law through the eyes of the zealous jurist. The theoretical scientist is successful when he "proves" something in the framework of a theory: the doctor is successful when he cures his patient. When is the lawyer successful? Let us assume that a lawyer is fighting for a client in a certain trial. What is the meaning of success here? This success is not in the mathematical heavens, nor beyond the sea of experimentation. We must keep the law, but the law is independent; and to the extent that the judge will rule in his favor, the world will change in accordance with the verdict. Rightfully, the lawyer sees the law which obligates him as a world which exists in its own right. That which the judges finally decide is the truth.

Let me give you an example. A doctor is about to take an exam in which he has to treat a certain case. The examiners will decide if his diagnosis was correct. However, the doctor of our reality is not being tested by his eminent peers, nor by judges who were appointed by the system. He does not face the judgment of man but the judgment of nature. If he does not succeed, the patient will die - even if medical committees, judges

and clerks of the ministry of education decide that he was right. Let us look at a more extreme case; let us assume that someone secretly bribed a corrupt judge, and the judgment was given in his favor. The true culprit goes scot-free. If we compare this to the model of the doctor, we will immediately understand the absurdity. A corrupt doctor can be bribed to move one to the head of a waiting list or to cause him to make a greater effort, but it is impossible to bribe a doctor to succeed, or to lessen the severity of the patient's disease. The judge's verdict creates a legal reality. The doctor's diagnosis, his verdict, does not create reality, it merely describes it. The Halakhist is similar to the doctor; he does not create halakhic reality, he merely describes it. Halakhic reality is not the same as the rational reality of mathematics, nor the fictitious reality of law. The Halakha describes a reality no less real - facts and powers which affect the human soul and the world.

The medicine model expresses Rihal's position. It also opens a pathway to additional approaches which are similar to Rihal's. The most outstanding among these is the kabbalistic approach, although we must stress that there are significant differences between the two, differences which we will explore later on. However, the principle is the same. Man, through his actions, by keeping the commandments, alters reality.

### **The Sorcerer's Apprentice**

Rihal uses the parable of the doctor to clarify his position. The doctor in this parable is none other than Moses, and the later prophets and sages after him. This is the man who receives inspiration from heaven in his halakhic ruling. Our Sages maintained that the Torah is "not in Heaven," meaning that it is interpreted by halakhic legislators who are subject to human fallibility, yet despite this all the Torah is "from Heaven," and thus every halakhic decision must be directly or indirectly ensconced in the word of God. In our story there is another character, an impostor who pretends to be a doctor [1: 79]. This character reminds us of the famous legend of the sorcerer's apprentice, a man who learned a few magic words, and begins a process which he cannot stop. The sorcerer's apprentice commands the broom to draw water for him, but he does not know the magic words to stop it. Even after he rips the broom to shreds, the pieces continue to bring him water. The doctor's apprentice in Rihal's parable is essentially similar to the sorcerer's apprentice. He is man who learn a little from a doctor and dares to compete with him, without possessing either his erudition or his responsibility. Possibly, in some cases the doctor's apprentice will succeed, but in the long term his success will not become established, since the apprentice has no access to the doctor's supernatural sources of knowledge.

Often we find living examples of the sorcerer's apprentice, both within Judaism and outside of it. Some religions accept Judaism's halakhic principle without possessing the basis to develop this principle. This is particularly evident in the case of Islam; however, it is also true from within, for example in the approach of the Jewish Reform Movement. Rihal will discuss the status of Halakha in the third section of the book.

## **PATR II: The Wellspring of Faith and of Heresy**

Now we must clarify one central assumption which lies at the base of our entire discussion. Rationalism is our sole guide during a significant part of our lives. Rihal teaches us that the Torah addresses us from a vantage point which exists beyond this rationalism. Its source lies beyond logic, and some of its messages cannot be grasped in logical terms. This is the true meaning of the "Shim'i" commandments. They are not the arbitrary decrees of an capricious ruler; they are expressions of the mysteries which the mind cannot fathom.

Rihal negates the omnipotence of the intellect, the unchallenged dominion of rationalism. Yet, Rihal's position certainly does not champion all irrational approaches. The Chaver wisely notes that the wellspring of faith and of heresy are one and the same [1: 77]. Ideas which transcend the rational realm must not be identified with those concepts which are inferior to it. Logic sometimes functions as a dam, and faith means opening a pathway for the waters of post-rational wisdom to flow through. However, we do not desire the destruction of the dam, lest the pre-rational waters flow more freely than they should, at the wrong time, and in an improper way. Thus, we must carefully stress the distinction between faith and astrology, magic, and other similar phenomena:

"In this manner people behaved ... they would be tempted by the foolishness of astrology and the opinions of the sages of nature in their generation and move from one futile doctrine to another ... and there are those who believed in the powers of nature as in gods, while forgetting the leader and ruler of these powers" [1: 79].

The source of faith can become the seed of heresy, and in the name of the same deviation from rationality, people find a refuge for many false and harmful superstitions. The danger of drawing comparisons, of granting a collective sanction to many "mysterious" approaches which the mind refuses to accept, always exists. Once again, we see the clarity of Rihal's analysis, an analysis which compels us to distinguish between things which appear, at first glance, to be identical. Thus, we must always measure the potential dangers that lurk within movement beyond the boundaries of logic. Despite the necessity

and the blessing inherent in this transition, the source of our faith, we must always be wary of the dangers it holds.

### **Commandments and Flowers: A Fourth Model for the Commandments**

Until this point we have looked at three models: the beret model, the seat-belt model, and the medicine model. We will now return to the first model, in order to learn about a fourth approach which bears some similarity to it.

The main difference between the beret and the seat-belt is not the punishment; it is rather the intention of the legislator. Through the beret the commander wished to establish discipline, to create a symbol for a particular lifestyle. The seat-belt commandment is different. This commandment attempts to guide man to do what is best for him, even if it sometimes enforces this through punishment.

In contrast, the perception of the commandments as similar to the military beret implies that our central mission is to submit to the Heavenly command. This is the perspective of fear. However, another type of compliance also exists. Adherence to the Divine voice can take on an entirely different meaning. This is adherence out of love, the desire to worship God "lishmah," for the sake of the action itself, without thought of reward or punishment. This approach is associated in our generation with the philosopher Yeshayahu Leibowitz. However, as we shall see, the basic idea exists in the Kuzari. And, indeed, Rihal himself views certain commandments, or components of certain commandments, with the same approach. In order to understand this, let us pay close attention to the background to Rihal's words.

The Sages taught us that there is a need to blend love and fear. When we stand before authority, both love and fear can cause a departure from the ideal course. Fear can become hatred of the commandment; love can cause disrespect for the law. Judaism synthesizes these two elements.

One of the most impressive aspects in the history of our ancestors in the black period of the Middle Ages was their ability to face the monumental cathedrals, large mosques and impressive works of art, and overcome the temptation to be drawn in. They struggled against the pull of a foreign culture, and they succeeded. These ancestors were not coerced by force of arms. None of their contemporaries faced them, sword in hand, to demand that they join the prevalent religion. This group faced a different type of coercion, that of a great civilization trying, consciously or unconsciously, to force itself upon them through the power of its imposing presence. The tourist visiting a large modern city has a similar feeling, when he senses his own smallness in comparison to

the skyscrapers that surround him. Rihal teaches us that a different type of strength exists as well. Our ancestors' strength was not theatrical; their mode of worship was not encompassed "in the beauty of the poetic phrase, in sighs, in wails accompanied by the raising of eyebrows and the hiding of pupils ..." A different force can be divined in the simple desire of the heart to worship God. These are things which the tourist cannot capture with his camera; yet, their importance and essential reality far surpass those of the most monumental edifice.

We must express ourselves differently. This was apparent to Rihal when he passed by the Cordova mosque or stood before the great cathedrals. Christianity itself accepted this idea at a later stage, when the Protestants rebelled against the opulence of the church, and desired to return to the simple prayer of the Bible. They perceived the potential emptiness of these theatrics, and realized that when the actor goes home, the show is over.

How do we express what is in our hearts? "These [feelings] are expressed only through actions which are naturally difficult for man; yet, the worshipper of God performs them with infinite desire and love." This concept helps us understand another level of the commandments.

Let me give you an example. If I were to present my wife with a broom or a needle and thread as a birthday gift, she would certainly think I was contemptible. This gift is not an expression of love, but an instrument for the work which I apparently expect from her. I could give her gifts which would be useful only to her. But we do these things differently. Sometimes a gesture which has no practical use best expresses love or friendship. For example, we often give flowers as a symbolic gesture. This could be a merely theatrical gesture, which only teaches us what price was paid, or displays a stranger's talent for arranging flowers. Judaism wants us to bring flowers to God, but only unique flowers, which we must work hard to discover. We Jews have not expressed ourselves in the Diaspora with the esthetics of flower arrangement; we have climbed up steep and often dangerous mountains, in order to pluck one flower and thus express our love for God.

When we perform the commandments, heed the advice or take the medicine, we do it for our own good. In a sense, we are bringing a button and needle as a gift to have our button sewn on. This is the meaning of reciprocal love: "Ani le-dodi ve-dodi li" - I am for my Beloved and my Beloved is for me. God gives us advice and we bring him flowers. However, when we perform the commandments, we hope not only for a personal Divine response; we seek to alter history. We believe that the commandments act upon the world.

The Kuzari asks the Chaver: "Are you not overwhelmed today by all these responsibilities, and what nation could possibly keep such a regimen of commands?" [2: 57]. Bringing these flowers seemingly makes life difficult. However, just as in the love between husband and wife, fulfillment of the difficult obligations protects something far more valuable than the loss incurred by the payment. The true reward in our religious life is our continuous national encounter with God.

Our closeness to God means that Jewish history is not similar to general history. There, geographical, economical and sociological laws hold sway. In Jewish history a different system exists. Think of a mother who has no time for her children, and leaves them with a nanny. In contrast, another mother is connected to her children and gives them her time and her love. Perhaps she punishes them more often than the successful nanny of the other mother, but her children feel her love. The other children's room is more beautiful, but according to Rihel, in our meager room - in Jewish history - the mother is present. This is the true meaning of cleaving to God. God does not leave us in the hands of an angel or a messenger of normal historical laws. He accompanies us Himself.

According to this approach, when we fulfill rabbinical ordinances, or when we are careful about the details of the commandments, we express our love. We find this idea in Jewish thought throughout the generations. Outstanding in this approach are Rabbenu Yona in the medieval period, and Rabbi Tzadok Ha-kohen of Lublin in Chasidism.

## **The Multifaceted Character of the Commandments**

Perhaps everyone is right.

We have examined various schools of Jewish thought, and each one presented us with a different philosophical approach to the commandments. Perhaps these philosophers have actually misled us through their insistence that all the commandments be interpreted according to a single principle. Often, we are faced with an approach which is built upon generalizations or an extreme form of an idea which is true in certain cases, and not true in others. Every great philosopher demonstrated the existence of various directions in understanding the commandments. The Rambam, for example, did this in his Guide for the Perplexed and in the Mishneh Torah. It would make sense to assume that a number of approaches are correct, since the commandments themselves contain many different principles. In addition, it is possible that certain commandments can be understood on various levels, each of which could have a different meaning. Just as our actions are varied, as they are dictated by various values, so too are the commandments.

For this reason we may perhaps accept Rabbi Samson Rafael Hirsch's division, which classifies the commandments according to different principles. Rabbi Hirsch uses biblical terminology to form this division: torah, edut (testimony), mishpat (human ethics), chok (non-societal law), mitzva (commandment) and avoda (worship).

However, the important point here is neither the terminology nor the principles, but rather the multidimensionalism of the principles. Thus, for example, Yeshayahu Leibowitz suggests that we read the entire Torah as worship of God, viewing the encounter with the Divine Being as the core of the Torah, and not necessarily the reasons for specific commandments. We will return to this position shortly. This may be true with regard to a certain group of commandments, which we will call commandments of avoda. In contrast, we must also stress the existence of mishpatim, a system of commandments whose goal is to create a functional society, and the mitzvot, as a system which develops the individual and obligates him to norms beyond the demands of society (mishpat). To all these we must add the chukim, which define our ethical relationship to the non-human world. The final element is what the medieval rationalists searched for: the torot, a system of commandments which teach us basic concepts in Jewish thought.

Through the mishpatim, the chukim and the mitzvot, we achieve goodness. Through the eduyot [testimonies] we reach truth. Jewish thought expresses the truth, and concretizes it in life through symbolic language. The avoda, such as the worship in the Temple, or prayer, constitutes in Rabbi Hirsch's view, "a departure from the life of action in order once again to comprehend the life truths which we must consider." These truths elude us at times due to preoccupation, illusions, or ordinary forgetfulness. Our modes of worship create a sort of oasis in the desert of life.

We have seen that the commandments express various principles. However, perhaps the division ought not to stop at categories of commandments; perhaps each particular commandment contains various diverse elements as well. To truly understand this idea, we must follow in Rabbi Hirsch's footsteps and explore the position which sees the commandments as messages written in symbolic language. We will devote the next unit to this approach.



## CHAPTER 29: Symbols and Realities

### PART I

In last week's lecture we mentioned R. Samson Rafael Hirsch's presentation of the commandments as a system of symbols. R. Kook criticizes this approach in a number of places. R. Kook's criticism is clearly directed towards those people who treated the symbolism lightly. However, as we shall see there are two possible meanings to symbols. The second changes them to facts.

The symbolic approach bears an affinity to Rihal's approach as well as the approach of the Kabbala. However, it is important to emphasize the differences. There is a fundamental difference between symbols and facts. The difference between them is similar to the difference between a "no-entry" sign and a roadblock which makes entry impossible. The sign is a symbol; it teaches us something, but it doesn't affect us or alter our will. A roadblock is something tangible, real. Of course the roadblock can be knocked down, yet despite this the roadblock is different than the sign. This difference in essence expresses two dimensions of reality. The sign is different than the roadblock, just as energy is different than information.

A glance at any car shows us that it has two systems. One system decides the direction of travel: the steering wheel and its various accessories. The second system supplies energy and controls it: the gas and the brakes. We need both systems. Without gas we cannot move, but without a steering wheel we could drive over a cliff.

Let me explain the parable. If it is true that the commandments are symbols, then apparently all they give us is more information - information which could be obtained in another way. However, today we know more about symbols, and this new knowledge allows us to perceive them differently. As we shall see, symbols have a dimension of energy, and they act upon us, change our personalities, and to some extent the world as well.

The concept of the commandments as messages written in symbolic language, greatly influences the Jewish philosopher Erich Fromm. The importance of the symbol was augmented by all we have learned from modern psychology. Man knows much more than he thinks he does. This paradox can be explained only in the wake of the modern discovery of the subconscious layers that exist in man. Man thinks he doesn't understand, yet something within him responds. This modern concept is not at all new to classical Jewish thought. The Talmud speaks of an inner layer in man, which knows

and sees things which his conscious self does not recognize, which is termed his "mazal" (here mazal is used in the Talmudic, not the astrological sense). This hidden knowledge makes its appearance not in man's philosophy but in the stories he tells on those occasions when he is completely at ease.

We are familiar with many forms of such subconscious activity. The most classic example is advertising and propaganda. We are accustomed to thinking about messages which are directed towards our intellect, our thought and perception. In contrast, symbols influence deeper layers of consciousness, which are no less important. The language of symbols is a language which our intellect does not understand; yet, something within us does understand it. In his book, "The Forgotten Language," Erich Fromm brings various examples from both the Talmud and modern psychology, which express these facts. Thus, for example, the Talmud in tractate Berakhot informs us that dreams have no effect, either positive or negative, except in three cases. One of these cases is when a person dreams the interpretation of a dream. This teaches us that although the person doesn't understand his dream when conscious, when he is in an unconscious state he understands the dream so well that he can interpret it. This means that there is something deep inside man which speaks a different language.

This idea can be understood from another angle as well. We must distinguish between allegory and symbol. They do share characteristics, since they both stand in place of something else and describe it, but there is a fundamental difference between them. Allegory describes things which could be formulated in a different language, a language that the intellectual side of me understands. For example, if I relate the tale of the fox and the wolf, it is clear to me that it is an allegory, because I can interpret it and replace it, for example, with the conflict between cunning (the fox) and strength (the wolf). In contrast, symbols point to and hint of things which I cannot formulate in my own language. Symbols help me to understand and perceive these things. In order to communicate an emotion, I must use a symbol. I have no other choice.

We are all familiar with one example of a creation written in a language which we do not understand, and which affects us powerfully nonetheless: music. We do not understand how it works and yet it affects us so intensely. In this regard music may be compared to the commandments. Possibly music can be interpreted as symbol which describes a different reality, something that was written in a special language which has the power to express things which have no other outlet, such as the condition of the human soul. Music becomes a mode of communication. R. Kook suggests that music is not made up of symbols but of very special facts, which we do not understand. In any

case, a melody can affect us because it speaks to us. Thus, the Chassidim claimed that the source of all melody is in the spiritual sanctuaries which are higher than words.

The rationalists were mistaken in thinking that it is possible to speak to man in a rational, intellectual language of abstract concepts. They did not sense the fundamental fact that a certain layer of the personality simply does not understand this conceptual language. This is comparable to an excellent lecturer who is speaking to an audience which is not capable of understanding him. He can speak about philosophy, mathematics, or a complex theory replete with difficult concepts in the technical terminology of differential equations. Perhaps the lecture is true, or even practically applicable; however, the audience does not understand the terminology in it. Thus, within man himself there are two audiences. The rational audience hears the conceptual philosophical discourse, the ethical arguments. But man has within him an irrational audience as well, which does not comprehend the things he is presented with, and even if he does understand them, they make no impression upon him. How does one address this audience, an audience which has tremendous influence?

However, here reality changes. A new lecturer gets up on the stand and speaks about soccer or basketball, or other things which the intellectual elite does not understand, while the other audience understands these things perfectly. The more sophisticated audience does not understand what the simple man understands. Man's inner world is composed of two such audiences. He has within him rational and sophisticated tendencies as well as irrational tendencies. We must speak to him and influence him, but not through conceptual language. The deep layer of his personality understands a different language, the language of symbols. Symbolic actions which seem incomprehensible speak to the deep level of the personality, guide it and influence it. Through this medium we speak with our soul in order to alter ourselves.

If the commandments were symbols for rational things, the criticism of them would be justified. But perhaps the commandments are not symbols for rational things. They address a different audience. It doesn't matter if the mind understands or not, because the commandments are not addressed to that audience. There are two levels of irrationalism. One level is beneath the rational, and the other is above it.

## **Consciousness and Subconsciousness**

It is clear to every one of us that there are unconscious abilities in man. Let us perform a simple experiment. We can ask whoever uses a computer which finger he uses to type the letter "s." Of course, he will not be able to respond immediately, but he will carry

out a simple exercise. He will imagine that he is writing the word "see," for example, and move his fingers, and then he will see which finger he used. He doesn't know with which finger he is writing and yet he can type! Man has all kind of internal mechanisms which function automatically, mechanisms which function without our conscious awareness. However, these are not only physical mechanisms. These are also mechanisms of the soul. If I wish to truly change a person, both internally and externally, I must address him in a different language. Enter the language of the commandments. This idea was expanded by the various branches of the Mussar movement.

We are accustomed to looking up at the sky and seeing infinity spread out before us. But we forget that infinity spreads out endlessly within us as well. We reach into ourselves, as though into a deep sack, and take out all kinds of things, but we must remember that the border is just as far as the hand can reach. The "sack" is much deeper than our hand can extend. The hand is our consciousness, which does not comprehend the end and essence of our inner world.

Two large Jewish movements uncovered the subconscious layers of man. One source is in the Mussar movement, headed by R. Israel Salanter. He attempted to solve the riddle of man through the assumption that "dark," subconscious forces are at work in man. Another source is in the Chassidic movement, and prior to this, in the Kabbala.

R. Aaron Marcus, the Jewish sage who tried to offer the philosophy of Chassidism in the language of modern philosophy, draws our attention to a cryptic passage, a kind of riddle, found in R. Chaim ben Atar's commentary, *Or Ha-chayim* [Lev. 17]. I will bring it here so that the reader can also attempt to interpret it. (There are, unfortunately, a number of variations of the text, and part of the solution lies in choosing the correct version. Therefore, I have brought the possible changes in parentheses. When a word is missing in a certain version, I put a question mark after it.)

"And it will be known to the investigator of the inner essence of the understanding of knowledge, that the perception of knowledge will enlighten the intelligence and in his knowledge he will know that the knower of knowledge [?] is bereft of knowledge. And when he shall succeed in enlightening [explaining] himself to himself, he will know that the knower is informed by a knowledge which is not informed by the intelligence ..."

I will not attempt to interpret the riddle, but it clearly is written here: "knowledge bereft of knowledge." This seems to hint at something similar to the existence of unconscious knowledge in man. This means that he knows things that he doesn't know he knows. This is similar to a man who thinks he has overdrawn from the bank when in fact he

actually has more money than he thought he had, and this money gives him an advantage of which he is unaware.

We need not necessarily depend upon this wonderful source. In Chassidic thought we find the concept, "kadmud ha-sekhelel," knowledge behind the intellect. Thus, the Maggid of Mezritsh tells us that thought "is comprehended by the person himself, and is not comprehended by others; but the kadmud ha-sekhelel is not comprehended even by the person himself." This idea was further developed by Chabad Chassidism.

R. Aaron Marcus was a Jew of Ashkenazi origin who migrated to the East, and there became a chassid. He was a student of the tzaddik R. Shlomo of Radomsk, and was also connected with Chertekov Chassidism. R. Marcus publicized Chassidism in the west, and wrote a book about it which was translated into Hebrew, entitled "Sefer Ha-chassidut." Today, we know that the theories he presented regarding the identification of various authors of anonymous Kabbalistic works were incorrect; however, the book maintains its significance, though not easy to read.

R. Marcus is also an important figure due to his attempt to bridge the gap between Zionism and the ultra-orthodox world. He wrote a letter to Herzl and told him that it was very likely that Chassidism would join forces with the Zionist movement. Unfortunately, a historical accident interfered and the match did not take place.

R. Marcus also was very interested in the meaning of the new archeological discoveries in the Near East. He viewed them as a slap in the face of the wide-ranging speculations of biblical criticism. He also devoted much time and effort to the development of the theory of root words in the Hebrew language. He can be defined as one of Rihel's modern successors, trying to formulate a middle road to connect Rihel's central ideas and the latest discoveries of historical and archeological research.

To return to our topic; an earlier source for the idea of the subconscious is in the Talmud, in the concept of the mazal which we mentioned earlier. The Talmudic "mazla" notes a basic element of man, which sees, remembers and knows things subconsciously, and which affect him despite his own ignorance of their existence.

R. Israel Salanter spoke of the subconscious to teach us an important lesson in his Mussar thought. He taught us to look at one of the most difficult problems of our lives: why does man recognize good, and yet he continues to do evil? Let me give you a trivial example. Why can't a person stick to a diet which he knows will save him from illness? Why can't a person stop smoking, or why did he even begin this dangerous practice in the first place? This is a philosophical question which has remained with us since the days of Aristotle and Plato.

Plato naively thought that whoever recognizes the good cannot help but do it. In other words, every sinner is misguided, as our sages say, "a person does not sin unless a spirit of foolishness enters him." This approach is interesting, but it is not realistic. It doesn't take into account the fact that although we know the truth, yet there is still a struggle within us. The question remains: why does man not succeed at behaving morally, even though he knows he should? We could blame our will power. Aristotle indeed spoke of the weak-willed, the weak personalities who cannot resist temptation. He thought we have a way to measure the strength of someone's personality, and that people were born with different amounts of will power. Those whose will power is impaired cannot resist temptation.

The Rambam teaches us that despite the difficulties, which differ from person to person, everyone is capable of overcoming his personality and changing it. This is precisely the point of moral education. R. Israel Salanter added another idea. The reason for the moral failure, in his view, is in the fact that we are not familiar with the field of battle and the fighting forces. Our case is similar to that of a strategic analyst who is asked about a particular war when he doesn't know the power division or the weapons which are supposed to be participating in the battle. The classic sage giving moral advice does not understand that other forces are at work in man. The mistake occurs when we think that if we understand the rational sides, we will understand man.

Moral education and self education must touch our subconscious as well as our conscious selves. We do not understand that we educate through the use of all kinds of conscious and unconscious symbols. We know today, for example, that we educate people through television, or other means such as advertisements, in an indirect way, without the people's knowing what is happening, which leaves them all the more open and vulnerable to these subconscious influences. The most extreme form of this type of influence is brainwashing. Then, man is not being educated, for even his freedom is taken from him. Judaism believes in maintaining the institution of freedom.

## **Part II: Tzitzit - Symbolic Language**

The commandment to wear tzitzit [ritual fringes] constitutes a good example of symbolic language use in the commandments. Our sources are full of stories of individuals who were miraculously saved from sexual temptation by their own tzitzit, which rose up and struck them at the moment of their imminent downfall. It seems to me that these stories illustrate the relationship between tzitzit and the avoidance of sexual sin. This relationship also helps clarify some of the details of the laws of tzitzit. The tallit [prayer

shawl] and tzitzit are symbols for our religious sexual restrictions, a symbol of male sexual purity.

The fringes and knots of the tzitzit express this idea through symbols, which we do not consciously understand. The concept is not spelled out in conceptual language. Our Sages did not explain the symbolic meaning of tzitzit in a philosophical or psychological discourse; they demonstrated the action of tzitzit upon the deeper layers of the human soul through the stories and legends they told.

Rihal interprets the meaning of the commandment of tzitzit in a similar fashion: "Thus he wears tzitzit so that his senses will not trouble him with the interests of the base world, as it is written, 'Do not stray after your hearts and after your eyes'" [3: 11].

The commandments are symbols, but they are symbols which have their own powers, symbols which act upon our subconscious, without touching our intellect and consciousness. For this reason the commandments touch every area of life. Every area of life has its own Jewish message, which is expressed through the accompanying commandment. Thus, two important goals are achieved. Holiness is added to every area of our life, and our inner self incorporates the holy values through dress, food, sex and all other areas of life.

According to this theory of symbols, the commandments and their details do, in fact, alter reality; however, this reality exists first and foremost in man's inner world. The outer world will change afterward. This is the underlying concept of Rabbi Hirsch's symbolic interpretation of the commandments. The Kabbala teaches that the commandments and the attention to detail, in the laws of Shabbat for example, cause cosmic change. Rabbi Hirsch teaches us that the commandments affect our souls, our consciousness. His successors demonstrated something of even greater significance: the commandments affect what is beneath our consciousness, the deeper levels of our personality which man cannot reach. Logic speaks to the human mind, and indeed, rational claims can impress us very deeply, but as we learn from the proponents of Mussar as well as modern psychology, they do not touch the deepest layers of the personality. The commandments are written in a different language, which penetrates deeply and alters the individual. This power is generated both by the general concepts and the accompanying fine details of the commandments.

### **Rihal's Position**

This psychological approach to understanding the reasons for the commandments is of course a new, reworked version of the ideas presented by Rihal and the Kabbalists. This

new version is clearly different from Rihal's position. According to the simple interpretation of Rihal's approach, different layers exist. Scientific methods are appropriate for the natural side of man. When we act on this level, the only legitimate tools are the tools of logic and normative scientific research. However, Rihal claims that beyond normal causality, and beyond the normal rules that govern the natural world, there is another, more mysterious system of rules. The commandments are the appropriate ways to function within the framework of this distinct system. Thus, two parallel systems exist.

However, Rihal's approach may be understood somewhat differently as well. Let me give you a simple example. When we implant clouds with silver iodide in order to make it rain, we function within the framework of science and technology. However, this is not the whole picture. Rain is not the only substance known to fall from the sky; so does fire. When Elijah the prophet brought fire down from the heavens, it was a miracle. Or, perhaps, one could say that a completely different set of rules was functioning at that point, a system from a different plane; this system is beyond rationality, or perhaps it has its own rationality. Here too, as in other places, we must understand that Rihal is trying to build a model using what is familiar to us in order to explain something which is beyond our understanding and perception. Perhaps it is possible to be "Rihalists" without conceding that two parallel systems exist. This was the path taken by a number of Rihal's modern successors. The most outstanding of these was Rabbi Kook. His basic assumption in this issue is that the world changes as a result of changes in man. Man serves as a bridge through which the commandments affect the world.

If we return to the previous example, we see three personalities. The person who implants clouds with silver iodide, the magician who dances his rain dance, and the man who prays for rain. Prayer and commandments belong to a different category than both the natural category of artificial rain making, and the occult category of the magician. The difference between prayer and the natural category is obvious. Man, with his rational theories about the efficacy of means and causes, will not assume that mere speech could change the structure of the clouds and transform them into rain clouds. The Torah emphasizes the shift into an area beyond the rational, to something in a different area, but it wants us to understand very clearly that there is a fundamental difference between the supplicator and the wizard. The Torah is not magic. Here we must repeat that faith and heresy spring from the same source. Zealots of rational thought view whatever lies beyond it as one homogenous group. We must understand that beyond the boundaries of logic the road forks. One path leads to faith; the other, to heresy.



What is the boundary between Torah and sorcery? Rihal gives us a formal criterion. It is impossible to distinguish between the groups through observing their actions. Whoever looks from the outside at the three rain makers will be unable to distinguish between them with confidence. This is similar to the weather forecast. Sometimes the forecast is completely inaccurate. Although we instinctively feel that we ought to differentiate between climatological forecasting and astrological forecasting, it is very difficult to formulate this difference in a satisfactory manner. One possibility is to depend on science. What the academic establishment decides upon, is scientific, although we are not informed why. Rihal teaches us something similar. When one follows the path of the Torah, by definition he is not involved in magic.

This formal criterion is true, yet it does not seem satisfactory. We would like to define the difference between Torah and magic more precisely, for we know that sorcery is both a rebellion against logic and a form of religious heresy. The difference between faith and magic or superstition is significant and its discovery is an important and weighty mission for religious philosophers in each generation. This need has become particularly evident in recent generations. Rationalism has proved itself to be helpless regarding many essential problems, and this lack of success finds expression in the return of the masses in some form or another to magic, idolatry, devil worship, etc. We believe that only faith can stem the tide of this renewed idolatry. And we who are the allies of logic, perhaps its only allies, have the power to halt the surge of superstitious beliefs and anti-logical movements.

If we put these ideas together with what we have already seen in our discussion of rationalism with regard to creation and nature, we will realize once again that Rihal sees the concept itself as questionable. We question claims which do not fit in with our basic assumptions. Yet, these basic assumptions, which seem to us to be axiomatic and have no need of proof are very often merely the result of a social and cultural framework or of a philosophical fashion, which like all other fashions, has changed in the past and will change in the future. The conclusion which Rihal teaches us is that we must learn to recognize our reality. We are expected to see reality as it is despite rationalist dogmatism, and to continue beyond it, just as sometimes a taxi or a bus can take us to a certain point, but beyond that point we must continue on foot. Rationalism has certain travel lines. There is taxi rationality, which is more flexible, and bus rationality, which is more rigid. However, beyond both of these the individual must continue on foot. Here lies the seed of religious existentialism. Science cannot solve our personal problems, and man must move on.

There is another response, that of blind faith which completely disregards the possibility of judging the facts and understanding reality. However, Rihal does subscribe to that approach. In order to explain this, I would like to refer to a book which we will return to again later: the book of Job.

God tests Job. Rational philosophy, represented by his three friends, cannot answer his questions logically. The answer lies in faith, in the very encounter with God: in revelation. In other words, in deviation beyond both scientific and everyday thought. However, the book does not end with the description of this meta-logical encounter. It adds a last chapter, which informs us that God restores Job's riches. This chapter plants the seed of Rihal's philosophy, intimating that the true answer, the real test of truth, lies in history: history not only of the past, but also as a description of the future. The real proof lies in redemption, in the alteration of the social and natural reality. The real test of truth is an empirical one.

According to Rihal, Judaism proves itself not only through its pure faith, but in the belief in God's kingship which will one day change the world. Faith, despite the suffering and the doubts, was the great Jewish response to the Job-test which has been the challenge of our national history. This was a faith beyond despair, a faith in which the Jewish people had to side against the friends of Job, in other words against the other religions, which tried to prove their legitimacy through the suffering of the Jews. Their military success and their political and economical success seemed to them to be ample proof of the truth of their religion. However, the Jewish faith refused to see religious proof in the power of the sword and temporary success. It was sure that history would change, and that the resurgence of the Jews, the parallel to the resurgence of Job, heralds the redemption of the entire human race. Thus, the promises of our prophets will be fulfilled. Redemption is the real miracle which holds the key of truth. It is the final outcome of the system of the commandments.

## **CHAPTER 30: The Effects of the Commandments**

### **The Development of Man**

Until this point we have been dealing with the reasons for the commandments; however, now we must redefine the topic of our previous discussion. Of course, we can attempt to explain why each commandment was given. However, I believe that the answer must be reached primarily on a different plane, not through detailing the reasons why the commandment was given, but rather by looking at the way the human personality is molded through each commandment. The first approach asks why BEFORE the action. The second tries to understand the results AFTER the action. What kind of person do the commandments create? How does the commandment alter the individual? The question "Why is this commanded?" can be explained through the assumption that this is a divine decree. However, this still leaves us room to interpret the results of the commandments.

The effects of the commandments become apparent through the reality of Jewish history. Our history demonstrates that the commandments have tangible, far-reaching results in the philosophical sphere within the individual, and in the sociological sphere in society. Among their many effects, I will discuss three historical accomplishments of Judaism which are closely connected to three central commandments. Although there have been exceptions to the rule during the course of history, and in certain periods particular commandments took on different casts, it seems to me that they present an accurate picture of historical Judaism.

The most important sociological achievement of historical Judaism was the tradition of peace and nonviolence. Historically, the Jewish people disapproved of violence and detested it, even in those cases when they were compelled to use it. Thus, the king of Aram called the Jewish kings "kings of mercy." The second accomplishment was the preservation of the value of the family. The third achievement was the avoidance of drunkenness in all its types and forms. In my opinion these achievements are connected with the laws of Shabbat, kashrut (the Jewish dietary laws - particularly the prohibition of consuming blood), and the laws of family purity.

In order to understand the meaning of these accomplishments, we must compare "ghettos." Today there are poor neighborhoods which are also called ghettos by their inhabitants, and which are generally inhabited by various minorities, such as the black neighborhoods in large American cities. The common denominator between all the ghettos is the poverty, congestion and tension, and in some cases a kind of "apartheid," a separation from the outside world. However, despite the outward similarities, modern

ghettos are very different from the ghettos that our ancestors constructed. This becomes clear through a look at Jewish history. Even under the destructive pressure endured by the Jews throughout the generations up until modern times, the life of our people was characterized by these sociological values. This stands in complete contrast to the modern ghetto, in which internal and external violence, promiscuity and the disintegration of the family, drunkenness and drugs rule with a high hand.

Jewish family values are built upon the laws of family purity. The tzitzit "tie" the man, so to speak. According to the legends our sages teach us, the tallit represents Jewish family values. On the other hand, the laws of family purity create a holy, constant and continually renewed relationship between husband and wife. This relationship constitutes the basic building-block of the family, and consequently has a tremendous impact on the children. In order to achieve these values, man pays a price, the price of self-minimalization. He imposes the law upon himself. However, the benefits he and his family, as well as the society in general, receive are much greater than his sacrifice. The existence of the family cannot be assured by catch phrases and slogans. The family can exist only through man's self-restraint and development, which are accomplished through the framework of Jewish law. Society can thrive only when its values speak to the depth of man's soul, giving society the power of influence over its members.

### **Kashrut: The Jewish Dietary Laws**

In his article, "Talelei Orot," Rabbi Kook explains that the laws of kashrut express the Jews' relationship to taking a life, to the fact that man is nourished by killing animals. Although these are animals and not people, we must feel some pricking of our conscience for causing their death.

Kashrut is, in essence, a war against violence. Judaism has educated us to a certain attitude towards blood. Blood symbolizes the soul, even with regard to animals, and therefore we are forbidden to drink it; it belongs to God. Under certain circumstances we are even obligated to cover up the blood, as a burial of sorts, or to symbolically beg forgiveness for the vestige of sin involved in the taking of an animal life. The most outstanding example of the education of the commandments is the shochet (ritual slaughterer). The character of the Jewish shochet is completely different from the character of the animal slaughterer in the general world.

I have no wish to idealize Jewish life in the Diaspora. Life in the Diaspora and in the ghetto had many negative effects upon us. However, we must realize that historical Judaism created a tremendous phenomenon, and transformed life in the mire and poverty

of the ghetto into a life of benevolence. This is the ultimate expression of the essence of the commandments. This idea is beautifully described in Chaim Hazaz's story, "Shlulit Genuza."

Hazaz tells us a wonderful story about a Jew who loaned money to his friend. While walking in the street, he sees the person to whom he loaned the money coming toward him. He turns into a side street so as not to embarrass his friend, and finds himself in an alley full of mud. Just then the town priest drives by in his carriage and offers to give him a lift. However, the Jew knows that the carriage will drive in the direction of the person who borrowed the money, and he refuses to get in. The priest reacts jeeringly, "The Jews are so primitive, I try to lift them out of the mud, but they refuse to get into my carriage!"

This is the magnificence of historical Judaism. The person looking from the carriage cannot see the great event taking place here, that a Jew is choosing to walk in the mud rather than embarrass another person, and refuses to respond to the great modern temptation. The town was muddy, but these were its Jewish inhabitants.

In the modern world, emancipation and Zionism meant escaping from the mud; these processes, however, also caused mass abandonment of the commandments, and thus lead to the destruction of the values upheld by the commandments. With all the achievements of normalization, of getting out of the mud, decadence has invaded modern Judaism. Thus, we see three great catastrophes unfolding before our very eyes: violence, promiscuity and drunkenness are deeply penetrating our society.

The laws of kashrut contain a number of intertwined principles. The Torah explicitly informs us of the reason for the prohibition of ingesting blood. Blood represents the soul. In other words, this prohibition applies even to animals. This principle expresses the respect we feel towards animals. Our refusal to consume blood contains a very significant educational message: we are educated to be repelled by blood. The education towards respect of blood, even that of an animal, encourages a non-violent society. Our refusal does not stem from a belief that blood has harmful qualities. The Torah tells us that chelev [forbidden fat] and blood do not belong to man, but to God. And indeed, when we cover up the blood as required under certain circumstances, we are actually performing a symbolic burial ceremony. We are burying what symbolizes the life of the animal.

The Torah teaches us that Adam was a vegetarian in the Garden of Eden. Rabbi Kook maintains that in the end of days we will return to vegetarianism. Apart for some exceptions, man is not yet ready for this today. We have a problem, for man is nourished by killing animals, and people who become experts at killing are very likely to develop

an insensitivity to life itself. This is the reason that the Torah attempts to make the slaughterer into a unique personality. It defines him as a type of technician, a kind of doctor, a spiritual personality. At present, we are in the middle of the road between the unattainable ideal and the cruel reality. The reality is that people eat meat. It is even possible that during certain periods of history, when the secrets of correct nutrition were not yet known, it would have been forbidden not to eat meat. Even today, much sophistication is necessary to create appropriate vegetarian nutrition. Kashrut is the middle of the road between the ideal and the reality. This experience teaches man, despite everything, not to become a beast of prey.

Violence finds expression even in the act of eating meat. Kashrut is a system which is based on the obligation to respect life. This is also connected to the prohibition of eating meat and milk together. The combination of the two is an expression of sadism. Milk represents motherhood. Through it the mother gives life to her child. The Torah gave us a significant example: "Do not cook a kid in its mother's milk." Through this it expressed the inner meaning of our attitude to the world. Whenever we are faced with a situation of meat and milk, we must imagine that the meat is a kid and the milk is its mother's milk. In mixing the two, man not only steals the kid from its mother and kills it, he also forces the mother to kill her own child. This law is a protest against sadism. There must be a limit to cruelty, even if it is based upon violence which we cannot prevent. The mixing of meat and milk symbolizes cruelty, as though we were forcing someone to kill her child herself. In a certain sense, every time that we separate milk and meat we are protesting against cruelty and trying to limit it. This law teaches us the responsibility to develop the same moral sensitivity which forbids us to slaughter an animal and its child on the same day, or to take away a newborn from its mother before seven days have elapsed. We are taught to respect the mothers of the animal world.

The prohibition against eating certain species is also undoubtedly connected with the question of violence. A beautiful story which appears in the book *Shevet Yehuda* describes arguments between the kings of the world and the sages of Israel regarding various details in Jewish law. If we rework this story to apply to our topic, we will be able to understand why certain birds, such as the turtle dove and the dove are permitted for human consumption. These are not birds of prey. This is a symbolic expression of our abhorrence for this type of behavior; we do not wish to transfer the characteristics of the birds of prey to ourselves.

All these laws have taught us a central Jewish principle, which differentiates Judaism from Christianity. In a clear attack upon the laws of kashrut, we find in the New Testament that what is important is not what goes into the mouth but what comes out of

it. This is only half the truth. And it is interesting that the Rambam in a similar context explains the verse "He who is careful of his mouth and tongue protects his soul from harm" as hinting at two matters. "His mouth" refers to what goes into his mouth, and "tongue" refers to sins of speech, to what goes out of the mouth. Kashrut and slander! This is the integral approach of Jewish law.

Clearly, food has a powerful effect on man. Harnessing this effect demands refinement in eating - not refinement regarding the taste of the food, but of our own sensitivity. The sensitivity to what one eats is a moral trait of the highest degree. Rabbi Nachman of Braslav teaches that man is beset by the two strongest desires: the desire to live, which is expressed in food, and the desire of our species to exist, which is expressed in sexuality. Rabbi Nachman teaches us that it is not so easy to refine sexual desire, nor is it simple to refine our desire for food, which accompanies us from the moment of birth until the day of death. This is an area of tremendous importance in human behavior, and it cannot be dismissed. A theoretical morality can never replace the significance of moral behavioral development in these areas.

## **CHAPTER 31: The Human Ideal**

### **PART I: Captain of the Car**

Now that we have covered a number of the principles which are central to an understanding of the commandments, we may step back and survey what may be termed the human ideal. To illustrate this I will use the example of the car, a model which seems important to me both as allegory and as exposition. Philosophers and moralists in generations past often compared man to the captain of a ship. Today, we can translate the ancient parable into modern reality by employing the car. The tragic daily reality of accidents brings the dangers of the roads close to home and shows us the need to understand our weaknesses and potential failures. However, in principle, the problems and dilemmas of driving can serve as a model for the problems and dilemmas of life in general. They have much in common; yet, there is also a fundamental difference between them. The difference between the allegory and its meaning lies in the fact that, to a certain extent, we are actually both the car and the driver.

The first requirement that we must fulfill in order to be able to travel in a car is, of course, that the vehicle be in good working condition, enabling the car to move. How may we define this condition? Among all the possible definitions and perspectives, I have chosen one, which is in essence a summary of R. Sa'adia Gaon's approach as he expresses it in the last essay of his book *Emunot Ve-de'ot*. Good working condition means that each part of the car is capable of carrying out its particular function in full, and also will limit itself to that function, so that the various parts will function together in harmony. Some of us are all too familiar with a car which spends most of its time being repaired. This is comparable to the state of a person who has not achieved physical or intellectual harmony, or of a person who experiences psychological problems.

However, let us assume that man has reached a minimal state of harmony. Inside the car sits the driver, who provides each of the car's needs in the appropriate measure: gas, oil, water, etc. Until this point, we have described the driver's technical responsibility. Or, in the explication of the parable, until now we have described the responsibilities of science and technology. This is the limit of their utility. The various branches of medicine and psychology can minister to the health of the body and the mind; however, beyond these goals lie other questions which they cannot answer. The mechanic can give the driver a car in good working condition, but he cannot make the driver adhere to traffic laws. On the other hand, no sane person will ask his mechanic, "where should I go?" unless he needs the address of a garage. These are the questions involving signs and



goals, commandments, values and meaning, which are neither within the authority of the mechanic, nor of the doctors and the psychologists. These are our religious and ethical dilemmas.

These are the central ideas for Rihal, as we see in his description of the devout Jew. After man has given each component of his car what it needs, he must define the purpose of the journey: "to cleave to ... the Divine level which stands above the intellectual level." This, then, is the Divine essence. The natural and intellectual sphere deals with taking care of the car. The journey's ultimate goal is decided within the sphere of religious faith.

### **The Mt. Sinai Experience**

The appropriate human attitude towards the goals of life finds expression, in Rihal's view, in the historical encampment around Mt. Sinai. Mt. Sinai symbolizes the goal. Our apparent existence on the plain is only an illusion. Mt. Sinai symbolizes man's ascent. This ascent occurs when one moves beyond the fulfillment of mere physical needs. To return to the parable of the car, if we recall that the car is actually the individual himself, we can imagine the person who finally gets his own car. He takes care of it, polishes it, washes it, and emphasizes the goal not of driving but of his having a relationship with the car. The absurdity of his behavior is obvious. There must be something else beyond simple maintenance. Knowing where to drive means knowing the goal and aim of our lives. This is the meaning of the Sinai encampment.

This parable, which originated with Rihal, continued to develop after his time. The Rambam wrote that the ascent to Mt. Sinai represents human development. Just as at the time of the Sinai revelation, the multitude stood in one place, a higher spot was allocated for the priests, a higher place for Yehoshua and a higher one than that for Moshe, each individual achieves a different level of development. The next to develop this parable was R. Yitzchak Arama in his philosophical commentary on the Torah entitled "Akedat Yitzchak." He teaches us that the concept of the center of life and its ultimate goal is symbolized by Mt. Sinai and later by a new symbol, that of the Tabernacle. The Tabernacle becomes a sort of traveling Mt. Sinai which remains with us.

However, the commandment to ascend the mountain is also accompanied by a warning. No one may ascend the mountain of Divine inquiry unprepared. This is a common mistake, and holds within it the seeds of ruin. This word has a dual meaning. The language of the Torah refers to the ascent of one who is unprepared; however, in more recent Hebrew, it denotes the ruin which man perpetrates through this act.

This ruin constitutes the polar opposite of the concept of the burning bush. The Rambam gives a wonderful interpretation of the vision of the burning bush, Moshe's first vision. But as we shall see when we discuss the issue of prophecy, every prophetic vision contains elements which originate from the imaginative faculty, or in what one might call the subjectivity of the perceiver. Moshe does not experience any other visions of this sort, besides the vision of the crevice in the mountain, which is actually the complete opposite of a vision. Moshe hides his face; in other words, he refuses to look at the burning bush, because he knows that the vision is tainted by his own imaginative faculty; therefore, Moshe merits a different type of prophetic experience. The Rambam maintains that the prophetic experience does descend upon man, but that man apprehends this experience through his own subjective perception, using, among other things, his imagination. His imaginative faculty allows him to receive the prophetic message, but to a certain extent it also distorts the message. Moshe refuses to look upon the burning bush not because of its holiness, or because God was hidden within it, so to speak. Rather, he refuses to accept the distortion caused by the imagination. Because he covered his eyes, our Sages teach us that he merited to perceive God directly.

The Rambam gives us a new perspective on opening our eyes. From here we learn a great lesson regarding all the professedly prophetic phenomena about which we often hear. From time to time we hear of a prophet of sorts, who has created a new religion based on a personal revelation. Certainly, supernatural phenomena exist. A Heavenly voice speaks out daily and makes announcements, sending telegrams. However, people read these telegrams through the distorting spectacles of their imagination. The message that they perceive is not at all identical to the message that was sent from on High. The Torah could only be given after the imaginative faculty had been subdued.

Thus, we must deal with truth as we relate to other commodities that are up for sale. We must wave a large banner warning everyone to beware of imitations. However, other dangers beset us as well. Rihal warns us to be constantly on guard against the imaginary realities which surround us. For just as man is sometimes given to hallucinations, so too life presents imaginary ideals.

### **The Human Ideal: The Chassid**

Rihal maintains that the ultimate human ideal is embodied in the Chassid. The model he employs to describe the Chassid is the model of leadership: the Chassid is the successful leader.

This parable is based on the comparison between man's approach to himself and his approach to the leader of the country or the society. This parable has both biblical and philosophical origins. Both the Scriptures and the writings of the Sages abound with comparisons between the ruler of a city and the ruler of one's passions. Similarly, the parable of the foolish king and the wise king serve as a common allegory for man's approach to himself. The classical philosophical source for this idea is found in Plato's Republic.

Plato wished to define the essence of morality. In order to succeed at this task he moved from the individual to the collective, from man to the republic. His method can be compared to a person who unsuccessfully attempts to read tiny letters. Since he cannot read the writing, he moves on to a different copy, in which the same text is written in large type. The transition from the individual to the group constitutes a kind of magnifying glass. Man's ideal approach to himself will be clearer, if we investigate the problem not on the plane of the individual but on the plane of the republic. The justice of the republic is parallel to the justice in man's comportment of himself. The solution in both cases must be a search for harmony. Man must develop all of his faculties, and not stunt any of them.

The just ruler uses the great principle of justice: "give each person what is suitable for him." If we move to the interpretation of the parable, from the leader of a country to the individual guiding himself, we find an interesting parallel. According to Judaism, man must give each of his personal strengths its due and not destroy or blight certain powers in order to develop others, even if the preferred powers are higher faculties and they are developed at the expense of lower gifts. In the classical tradition we have found various theories regarding the makeup of the soul. The common denominator between them is that the soul is composed of many powers. Some approaches even speak of different souls that coexist in man. As we know, the Rambam came out against this idea in the first chapter of his "Eight Chapters." The Rambam concedes, though, that the one soul has many attributes. In every situation, our role remains the same: we must establish a harmonious relationship between these powers.

Rihal maintains that man is composed of various attributes. Man and the animal world share the attribute of desire, the demand to satisfy one's basic needs. The second quality is the animal force of anger. The third power is the intelligence. Rihal claims that even higher characteristics exist in man, and one of these is the attribute of divinity.

## **PART II: Optimum and Maximum**

In his third essay, Rihal begins his exposition of the ideal worshipper of God. The Rambam developed these concepts in his "Eight Chapters" and in his "Guide For the Perplexed." In the second part of the Guide (2: 39) the Rambam speaks about the Jewish human ideal against the backdrop of the ideals extolled by other religions.

The Rambam describes Moshe's prophecy and mission. In this context, he writes about the conflict between Moshe's mission and that of those who present themselves as the messengers of a new religion, or as the last prophets. Moshe's secret strength lay in the fact that his message was God's word, utterly and completely. His very being expressed the statement, "God's Torah is complete." Moshe's Torah was the optimum. And we must remember that optimum does not mean maximum. All other attempts to create a system based upon the original create some deviation from it, either by adding or subtracting from it. The Torah's commandments exist in a state of equilibrium; every change departs from the equilibrium, thereby creating a lack or an excess. This is how the Rambam interprets the phrase "just laws and statutes." "Just" means with the correct balance between opposing forces. Thus the Torah has always stood between two possibilities. One group errs on the side of excess of commandments to follow, "such as the worship of the person who secludes himself in the mountains and abstains from meat and wine and many of the body's needs." The other errs by lacking commandments, and causes "gluttony and dissipation, to the extent that the individual deteriorates in his character and his intellect."

The Rambam refers to two positions, to two groups. On the surface, he appears to be referring to Edom and the idolatrous nations which preceded the rise of Islam. However, if we compare his words here to what he writes in other places in the Guide, we can perhaps conclude that the Rambam simply employed a political maneuver; he is in essence accusing the nations that existed before Islam of the same deficiency which he saw in the Ishmaelites of his own time. This could not, of course, be safely stated openly; however, the implication was clear to anyone who had read the Guide and other writings by the Rambam. This is clearly a part of the Rambam's ongoing dispute against Islam. Islam incorporated much from the principles of Jewish lore and law. However, these principles underwent a dramatic change through the interpretation of Islam's prophet and his successors. Thus, we find that on one hand the Jewish motifs are clearly recognizable in Islam, and on the other, there were times when they underwent so radical a change, as to become unrecognizable.

In light of these realities we can understand the meaning of the statement "God's Torah is complete." It is very hard to achieve the optimum, and the possibilities for

deviation are very numerous. Judaism exists between the two extremes and tries to remain on the middle road.

### **The Chasid and the Nazir**

At the beginning of the third section, Rihal presents us with a conflict of ideals, and he denounces the approach which tried to imitate and "improve" the Jewish halakhic ideal. Conflicts of ideals, Rihal felt, can be resolved by focusing on different points. In the next section we will speak about one of these focal points, love and sexuality. Here Rihal focuses the discussion on a different topic, the topic of seclusion.

Christianity and Islam both extol the ideal of the person who leaves his society and secludes himself in the wilderness. This practice is particularly common in Christian sects in the East. In the West we find monasteries, but ones which possess their own communal life as well. In the East, in contrast, we find many more examples of monks who live in absolute solitude, and see this as an ideal of devotion to God.

This reality compels us to try and distinguish between authentic religious phenomena, and pathological religious phenomena. The difference between these two phenomena lies in a concept which Rihal upheld as central to understanding man and his role in this world. Judaism does not sense any contradiction between this world and the next. Seemingly, the Jewish principle that this world is a corridor to the next one, which, in turn, is viewed as a palace, implies that this world is secondary to the next. However, perhaps the passage through the corridor is a prerequisite to entry into the palace. If we prepare ourselves in the corridor, we will reach the palace. And in our case, the existence of society and community are one of the experiences which man must cultivate to reach his ultimate destiny.

Rihal presents us with three examples of seclusion, two of them positive and the third negative. In both philosophy and prophecy we have found praise of seclusion. Rihal sees the ideal example of seclusion in the cases of Chanoch and Eliyahu. They lived and functioned as normal people, reached the highest possible human level, and used their position for the common good. Thus, they completed their walk through the corridor. They had no more need for this world on their spiritual path. For them, death was a natural continuation of life. It is interesting that in the biblical narratives regarding these two personalities, we explicitly see the meaning of the World to Come in the Scriptures. They are taken by God. This "removal" means existence after death.

The second type of seclusion is the seclusion chosen by the philosopher. This is the seclusion of the person who desires to delve into the world of intellectual wisdom, and

wishes to remain undisturbed by society. He exists within the community and does not negate society altogether; although, he chooses a select community, the society of scholars. Our Sages clearly felt the need to find the synthesis between seclusion and communal life; they express it beautifully in the statement, "I have learned from all of my teachers, and from my students most of all." This is precisely the idea of the yeshiva, which, according to Jewish lore, continues to exist in the World to Come.

Rihal now addresses himself to the monk, and does not spare him criticism. He maintains that absolute religious seclusion expresses arrogance and self-deception and is the hallmark of the individual who believes he has reached a level which he has actually not yet attained. These are phenomena which stem from an attempt to imitate the prophetic phenomenon, a miserable and illusory attempt to re-experience the encounter of Mt. Sinai. We too must be cautious in our judgment in both directions. The opponents of the prophets considered the prophets foolish and deranged, yet the truth was on their side. On the other hand, sometimes certain people are viewed as holy, although their behavior is actually not a religious phenomenon, but a pathological one. Rihal maintains that this idealized seclusion causes pathological phenomena, which people sometimes perceive as signs of holiness: "such a person will exhibit the dejection of mental illness, but people will consider this the dejection of humility and submissiveness, and thus he becomes a prisoner who loathes life because he abhors his confinement and his suffering, not because he find pleasure in seclusion." The idea which Rihal develops here is reminiscent of certain modern psychological experiments, which examine the responses of a person who has been deprived of human contact for an extended period of time or has been deprived of sensory stimulation. These situations impair psychological health. Rihal's criticism gives us a different perspective. We must realize that sometimes the psychological criticism of religious phenomena is justified. It is justified with regard to those positions which cause one to escape from life. A religion which encourages this type of behavior is unsound, and results in a disgust for life. Judaism forges a path between this aberration and the opposite pole, idolatry.

The danger of the ascetic approach was twofold. Both to itself, and because of the reaction which it aroused. As Rihal said, this type of seclusion caused the person to "systematically distance himself from the Divine essence to which he wished to draw near." Rihal's criticism was far-reaching, and it heralded the reactionary phenomenon against Catholicism; however, this reaction produced a return to idolatry and the deification of nature. As Rav Kook realized, the lowest streams of modern idolatry and the appearance of Nazism were also the result of a similar reaction.

Rihal calls our attention to the fact that some types of seclusion are actually the manifestations of psychological illness which others may interpret as manifestations of holiness. The prophets were not diseased; they lived within the community. Rihal teaches us that Jewish religiosity does not mean running away from the world, but rather living within it. This is the approach of mental health against a religion which has struck a covenant with mental illness. The Torah is the human ideal, which contains respect for the body and the senses as well as the soul.

The Chaver, the representative of Judaism, is fighting a battle on two fronts. He is battling religious Christianity, but at the same time he is also contending with those who feel that the search for pleasure necessitates the removal of the yoke of the Torah. Paradoxically, the obligatory blessings "bring pleasantness into the life of the Chasid and strengthen it, and add pleasure to his pleasure" [3: 13]. Here, Rihal teaches us a very basic chapter in what one might call the laws of pleasure, and he puts this lesson not in the mouth of the Chaver, but in the mouth of the Kuzari [3: 17]. Human enjoyment is connected with awareness. If we enjoy ourselves when we are drunk, we do not consider it meaningful or significant. In fact, the opposite is true, and one generally considers that enjoyment as "a loss and not a gain, since these pleasures did not come to him when he was in full consciousness and complete feeling." This is the reason that we attribute pleasure to animals "more than to plants, although the plant constantly receives nourishment" [3: 16]. Thus, the blessing of "she-hecheyanu," a prayer of thanksgiving to God for keeping us alive until the present time, teaches us to enjoy the greatest pleasure, life itself, and the hundred blessings which we recite daily compel us to notice, feel and respect what we experience through our hearing, our sight, our speech, and our intellectual pursuits.

## **The Corridor and The Palace**

The parable of the corridor and the palace teaches us about the transitory nature of the corridor; however, it also shows us that man must pass through the corridor in order to enter the palace, and that he should not fool himself into believing that he can jump into the palace without passing through the corridor. Chanoch and Eliyahu are examples of people who reached the end of the road, the corridor. But human life is a fruit which must ripen. At the end of the path man must reach the level in which he sees all of his previous life as mere preparation. This is the experience of the World to Come. Whoever has reached this level has experienced the World to Come already in his lifetime, just as Eliyahu did. We can illustrate this with the example of dolls and marbles. It is clear to us that playing with dolls and marbles is very important in the development of each

person. They are appropriate for a certain age. It would be a terrible tragedy if the dolls and marbles were taken away from us. But we get older and leave these toys behind, but we understand that they served an important function. They were not only a foolish diversion coming from our evil inclination, (although of course this inclination was also involved, judging by the wars which broke out between us and our friends about a paltry marble, or actually because of pride and the drive to win). Maturity is the possibility of seeing the earlier stage as important only as a preparation. Possibly, it is important that we keep something of those feelings which we developed in our games. However, it is clearly infantile to remain at that earlier stage. When we are in the middle of a stage, we cannot be convinced that these things which are so important are merely marbles. We cannot see this because we must play the game seriously, since that is the essence of the corridor. Yet, despite the importance of the corridor we must also take the palace into consideration. Only then will we understand our own true needs.

We will further discuss the concept of the World to Come later on. Here, I would like to emphasize that in our discussion of the ideal man, Rihal refers to the relationship between this world and the World to Come. Awareness of the World to Come can sometimes endanger the health of this world. In the name of faith in the World to Come many injustices are done. Many of the exploiters of this world allied themselves with those who promised a glittering World to Come. This is the essential difference between mysticism and prophecy. We are familiar with the Gurus, the great mystics of the Far East who look down at man from the height of their mountain top and invite him to ascend. They view human struggle and strife, the pains of child-raising, the struggle for food, and claim that it is all a game of marbles, and therefore meaningless. Many of these mystics are impostors, who are actually after our marbles themselves. Others are honest people, who promise to redeem us from our troubles through mysticism by removing both our sensitivity to suffering and our love of marbles. But I cannot accept their therapy. I protest against a reality of mysticism and spirituality which lives alongside immeasurable poverty, without the improvement of society becoming a religious issue and responsibility. And this is because the mystic thinks that the improvement of society healing sickness, finding a roof for the heads of the homeless, and saving the sufferer, are worthless pursuits. Prophecy, on the other hand, teaches us that in order to reach God we must care not only for our personal sublimation, but also improve our society.

Rihal mentions that together with the needs for food, sex and economic activity, one must also involve himself in "the improvement of his home and helping the poor." Economic activity is sublimated when the person is honest in his business dealings, and when he uses them to give love to his children and assistance to the needy.



In Judaism, mysticism maintained a connection with Jewish law. Jewish mysticism did not advocate separation from society, as did other religions. We must stress that the concept of mysticism is used by many different people in many different ways. However, there is one meaning which all the groups share. Mysticism claims that man can enter a different state of consciousness. When we dream, our consciousness is in a different state. We seem to be in a different reality. When we awaken, we return to the "normal" state of consciousness, to alertness. Mysticism is based on the idea that there is another state of consciousness, beyond alertness. It claims that when we awaken from alertness, we will discern the world as it truly is. The mystic claims that another state of consciousness exists and that he has reached it. When man reaches this state he perceives the world differently, he sees the true reality; his experiences are much deeper, and they bring him great joy.

Mysticism contains both a promise and a danger. As we have seen, the danger is that a large part of the mystical tendency is expressed in an escape from reality. On the other hand, many of the ideologies of drugs tried to connect drugs with mysticism. This attempt is illusory and deceptive. Drugs are one of the greatest dangers threatening humanity. They do grant man a true mystical experience; they merely furnish an imitation of the real thing. As Rihai has told us time and again, the impostor always builds his ideology using elements taken from the realm of holiness.

The mystics described the perception of the truth as the knowledge of the Tree of Life. If we allow ourselves a modern interpretation, we might suggest that the flashing sword of the Keruvim which guard the path to the Tree of Life, is none other than the drugs which blind man with their light but do not give him life. Drugs have become a dangerous and destructive pseudo-mysticism.

## CHAPTER 32: Judaism and Love

### PART I: The Middle Road

In a number of his writings, Rihal distinguishes between "Da'at Elokim" [divine knowledge] and "Da'at Elokim Ba-aretz" [lit., divine knowledge on earth]. The first concept refers to theology, to an abstract philosophical world view. The second refers to the ramifications of this world view. Rihal opens the Kuzari with a philosophical-religious conflict between Judaism and Christianity. To complete the picture, we must add our own discussion of the Jewish and Christian attitudes toward the human ideal. This is one of the most fundamental elements of the conflict between Judaism and Christianity.

Judaism's legal and philosophical uniqueness finds expression in its attitude toward sexuality. A good example of this approach can be found in our Sages' commentary regarding the wives of Lemekh, an interpretation brought by Rashi as well:

"And Lemekh took two wives, the one named Ada and the second named Tzila" - R. Azaria said in the name of R. Yehuda ben Simon: This is what the people of the generation of the flood used to do: each of them would take two wives, one for procreation and one for copulation. The one which was for procreation dwelt like a widow, and to the one for copulation he would give a drink which caused infertility so that she would not have children. And she would dwell with him adorned like a prostitute ... as it is written, And Lemekh took two wives,' 'the name of the first was Ada [Heb: pregnant]- because she was with child from him 'and the name of the second was Tzila'- because she sat in his shadow [Heb: tzilo]."

Our Sages thus explain that the purpose of the infertile wife was for beauty, while the second wife fulfilled the purpose of childbearing, and lived the life of a widow. This approach could only be taken by a person who was capable of separating two "functions," of distinguishing between woman as mother and as lover. Judaism rejects this approach out of hand.

Lemekh and his wives represent the approach of idolatry. However, a similar approach can be discovered, surprisingly, in Christianity. Christianity emphasized Mary's motherhood, while negating her sexual side by seeing her as a virgin mother. This "miracle" represents the Christian religious attitude towards women. The source for this approach lies in the assumption that sex in and of itself is a base, negative thing.

Thus, according to this view, the world is by definition populated by those mediocre individuals who cannot control their carnal desires.

Jewish law states that although we are permitted to slaughter a bull, we may not castrate it. This approach is the complete opposite of the attitude of those priests who considered castration a holy duty. Sexuality is an integral part of our personality, and it ought to assist us in our development.

The phenomenon of castration was known both in Edom and in Ishmael. In Edom, priests castrated themselves in order to worship God. Sadly enough, the phenomenon of child castration also existed. Its purpose was to ensure that the young boys' voices would not change with their sexual development and thus impede their singing abilities in religious choirs. However, in Ishmael we find the practice of castration as well. This was simply the continuation of the idolatrous practice which kings and wealthy people used to "create" safe guards for their harems. This practice is mentioned in the tale of Esther. In Edom, castration served the purposes of religion and art. In Ishmael, it fed the appetites of the privileged few. Judaism forbids it absolutely in any case.

Judaism views the sexless person as a withered tree. Yeshayahu comforts the eunuchs, and promises the God-fearing eunuchs that they will be remembered after their death. However, the Torah blesses man with sons and daughters. Christian celibacy actually brought about Lemekh's repentance. A double standard was accepted. On the one hand, officially, purity and holiness were displayed. On the other hand, in secret, corruption and prostitution ruled. However, the Jewish approach to sexuality is not only an attempt to be realistic. It is the expression of an ideal which exists in the middle ground between celibacy and sexual anarchy. Judaism succeeded in this attempt by emphasizing the holiness of the couple and the holiness of the family structure, its most important foundation.

In the philosophical approach which was influenced by Greek thought, we find a comment about the sense of touch:

"... Aristotle said that this sense [of touch] is shameful to us. And how proper is his statement. For truly it is shameful, since we have it because we are animals, nothing else, like all other beasts. And we have nothing in us of humanity" [Guide For The Perplexed, part 2: 33].

However, an important work was written on this topic, called Iggeret Ha-kodesh, ascribed to the Ramban. In this epistle, we find the emphasis on the need to avoid the following mistake: "And man should not think that in the proper union there is offensiveness and ugliness, God forbid, for this union is called knowledge ... and it is

clear that if it did not contain great holiness the union would not be called knowledge." Following up this idea, the author of the Iggeret attacks the opinions of the rationalist philosophers regarding the sense of touch and sexual relations. In an apt comment the author of Iggeret Ha-kodesh maintains that their approach is connected to Aristotle's belief in the eternal existence of the world, which sees in matter an entity absolutely independent of God.

The Ramban's philosophy is the prototype for the Jewish approach to sex. We can see this in various places in his commentary on the Scriptures. Thus in his explanation of the ritual impurity which is connected to the sexual act: "And a woman with whom a man shall lie ... they shall wash in water and shall be impure until evening" [Leviticus 16: 18]. It would seem from here that the sexual act contains some element of impurity. The Rambam interprets it differently: "[This impurity occurs] even though it [the wasting of sperm] is inherent in the nature of the procreative act, similar to the reason for the impurity of a dead body, because the source [of life] was destroyed, and the ... [participant in the sexual act] cannot know if his seed will be destroyed or whether a child will be created from it. And in thinking about the impurity of a dead body ... you will understand the [concept of] wasted seed." From here we see that impurity is connected to death (death of the sperm in this case, or of the egg in the case of a woman's ritual impurity), and to disease.

The Ramban wished to distinguish between pleasure and lust. He believed that lust became a stronger force as a result of Adam's sin. "And behold at that time sexual relations between man and his wife were not a fulfillment of lust; rather at the time of mating they came together and had children, and therefore all the organs were to them like faces and hands and they were not ashamed of them, and behold after they ate from the Tree, [Man] was granted the choice, and it was given to his will to choose to do evil or good to himself or to others; and this is a Divine attribute on the one hand, but bad for Man since [Man] is [burdened with]...desires and lust" (Ramban on Genesis 2: 9). According to this approach, evil is not connected to sex itself, but to lust, which is sinful, and is at times connected to sex. Before the sin, sex and the pleasure which came along with it were functional. They were another of the natural human functions. After the sin, lust became associated with sex. There are thus two types of desire, which parallel, to a certain extent, natural desires and perverted desires, such as homosexuality.

The best way to summarize this issue is to cite the Talmud in tractate Avoda Zara, which describes the correction of Adam's sin through the experience at Mt. Sinai, a temporary reality which reverted back to sin after the sin of the Golden Calf. During that brief period, Man was granted immortality. The need for childbearing was over. And

behold despite all this, sexuality and love continue to exist. The Jews returned to their tents. At this point, Moshe's behavior is exceptional in that he remains with God. He had reached a different level. This was the only exception, bearing witness to Moshe's unique status as the receiver of the Torah.

## **Love and Law**

Now we can return to our attempt to understand the commandments in the sphere of marital relations. Here, too, we are not trying to find reasons for commandments; rather we are trying to uncover the human personality and society which these norms attempt to construct. Instead of a theological goal, we must search for an anthropological goal: what human personality does Jewish law create?

It seems to me that it would be accurate to describe the Jewish approach in this area as an attempt to create a system which will take four groups of values into account. These values surround the individual, the couple, the family, and Man in his relationship with God.

The schematic approach will help us understand the complexity of the problem and its historical development. Sexuality had great, sometimes overwhelming, importance in various areas. The way we live our lives has many ramifications. To use a trivial example, in addition to the obvious effects upon the life of the individual and the couple, our sexual lives have a powerful influence upon the existence of the family, the nation, the human race and even upon life on earth.

These relationships directly influence the structure of the family and the relations within it. Therefore, the Jewish system cannot take into account only one interest or ideal, but rather must take into account a collage of different ideals. These ideals complement one another, yet their coexistence also creates contradictions and tensions, which explain the problematic nature of this issue.

It is hard to exaggerate the importance of the family, the basic unit of society. The attempts to create other units to replace the family have failed miserably. The creation of the family becomes possible only through surrounding one's sex life within the boundaries of law. Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon and the Rambam spoke of this in their respective discussions of the reasons for the commandments. Although Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon includes the prohibition against sexual relations between certain people among the "mitzvot shim'iyot" i.e., "that the main reason for their existence is God's command," he admits that they possess "useful details," which he discusses briefly. This is clear with regard to the prohibition of prostitution and incest: "and it is wise to prohibit

prostitution, so that people will not be like beasts to the extent that no one will know his own father to give him respect as a return for bringing him up, and [so that] the father will bequeath to [his child] what God has granted him just as [the child] inherited his existence from [the father] ... but the mother and the sister and the daughter, because one is obliged to be alone with them, and the freedom to marry them would encourage incest with them." The Rambam explains these commandments in a similar fashion [Guide for the Perplexed, part 3: 49]. The restrictions upon our sex lives are not arbitrary. Their purpose is to ensure the existence of various social institutions, with the family at their core. A large part of our practices are, clearly, the "burden of inheritance" of religion. These are the remnants of prohibitions which religion placed upon humanity. However this "remnant" is actually a potent social cement, perhaps the only one which protects the social structure from collapse. What is true with regard to the family is even more so with regard to the nation. The prohibition of mixed marriages is the only guarantee we have for the continued existence of our people.

## **PART II: The Joy of Bride and Groom**

Beyond the communal needs we have been discussing, we must look at the couple themselves. Let me point out something interesting: in the seven blessings recited at the marriage ceremony, we state that God makes the bride and groom happy. We know how we try to give joy to the bride and groom. We dance, entertain, give them gifts. But how does God make them happy?

We have already discussed the importance of the family and how its existence is necessary for the survival of society. The family is a necessary component for the psychological well-being of every child and adult. The existence of the family unit allows the child to develop normally. Growing up in a hospital, an orphanage, or an institution is clearly a psychological catastrophe and possibly a health hazard as well. The family and the daily struggle connected with it are necessary for growth and success. Were there a commandment to "be fruitful and multiply in order to have a family," we would fulfill it as we fulfill other religious obligations such as fasting or cleaning for Pesach. If this were the case we would still make a wedding celebration, just as we celebrate the completion of learning a tractate of Talmud or of writing a new Torah scroll. However, God gives a unique gift to the couple who are fulfilling his commandment: sexual pleasure. We must realize that this gift is very fragile indeed, and we must protect it from harm. Judaism sees sexuality as a gift and tries to help us maintain its power and spark.

The Torah views sex as a significant plane of reality for the individual as well as the couple. In this realm, the individual reaches into a deep part of himself and progresses toward self-actualization, both biologically and psychologically. The Divine plan, which finds expression in nature as well, gives man the means to achieve his goals. In the process of man's development, sexual energy plays a significant role. This emphasis upon the significance of the sexual avenue can help us understand the prohibition against castration and sterilization of animals, and, of course, of human beings. We may slaughter a bull, but we may not castrate it!

Sexual energy is expressed when a couple comes together to form a unit. The basis for this commandment lies in the belief that man and woman are only half of their true selves when each is alone. Love is the essential component here, love which transcends but does not negate sexual pleasure. R. Eliyahu Dessler writes about the basis of marriage in his famous work, *Mikhtav Me-Eliyahu* [part one, pg. 38]. He maintains that love must be forged at a level beyond mere lust. Of course, physical and biological needs play a large part in this area; however, R. Dessler teaches that we must change our perception of these needs. Our psychological and biological makeup is "a deep idea of the Creator of the world to maintain the existence of the world - just as He planted hunger within us to ensure the existence of the body." This idea explains the physical desire but it does not explain the need for love. On the other hand, this love does not fall into the general category of love between people. The experience of love between a man and a woman cannot be placed alongside the general fraternity and friendship between people "who will both admit how they help each other to fulfill the law of their natures." Obviously, these two types of love are not alike, since "the people who are ungrateful are so numerous and we have not noticed that they lack sexual love." R. Dessler explains the essence of love through the idea of mutual completion, the return to the original unity: "therefore they give completion to one another, as we shall see, for the giver loves." The problems involved in the decline of this love result from the fact that "those who joined together at first to be givers have now become takers."

Here we find one of the fundamental differences between Jewish law and other legal systems. Jewish law is not solely concerned with the protection of society. Its first concern is to protect the relationship between the couple themselves. It seeks to protect the fragile, Divine gift of sexual love. At the same time, it endeavors to create a relationship of loyalty and trust between man and woman; it creates a covenant.

The maintenance of the relationship between the couple is indeed a logical commandment. Marriage is first and foremost a covenant. In the description of the *sota* [errant woman] the Torah describes the adulterous woman as treacherous, "should a

man's wife err and treat him treacherously" [Numbers, 5: 11]. The Maharik notes that the Torah describes the woman's act as treachery towards her husband, not towards God [Responsa of the Maharik, section 167]. The Vilna Gaon makes a similar point: "It is not written that she acted treacherously towards God, that she intended to act treacherously toward God, but toward her husband" [Commentary on the Shulchan Arukh Orach Chaim]. This idea was developed in the responsa literature surrounding the question of unintentional adultery. In addition to the prohibition against adultery, our Sages believed that an additional principle connects the couple, which can be described as a covenant. Thus, adulterous behavior is a breach of this sacred covenant.

Let us now return to our general discussion of human dilemmas. R. Sa'adia Gaon [acronym: Rasag] would discuss every area of human dilemmas in light of the wide spectrum of possibilities it presents. In the tenth essay of his master work, *Emunot Ve-de'ot*, the Rasag presents us with various ethical alternatives in human behavior. The first is "perishut" (separation), according to which one ought to "repulse this world and not build a house nor plant, not take a wife and not have children, and not live among people who choose these actions ... rather one ought to seclude oneself in the mountains until he dies in anxiety and bereavement." Although much of what they say is true, the proponents of perishut "were mistaken in leaving the community and people," for by refraining from marriage, they ensure the ultimate demise of the human race, the very beings for whom the entire universe was created. The other extreme which Rasag discusses is homosexual love. Rasag was well aware of the Greek origins of homosexuality, and its prevalence among the Greek philosophers. Rasag's description is based on the myth brought in the "Symposium," Plato's famous dialogue. In contrast to this type of love, Rasag presents the ideal of complete love: "And this thing is not good except with a man's wife, that he love her and she love him, [thus contributing to] the normal functioning and development of the world...." Rasag's picture of the human ideal is that of an individual who is not enslaved to a particular ideal or a single value; rather he integrates all of the various ideals into his life. Rasag concludes, "and when he shall include all these actions which we have mentioned, he shall be praised in both worlds."

### **The Yoke of The Law**

The Jewish strictures concerning sexual relations are not easy to obey. Nonetheless, their ability to connect man and wife with unique and powerful ties give the "laws of family purity" paramount importance. The prohibition against any sexual relationship outside the family framework is not only a social norm. It is also excellent advice. The laws of



family purity create a rhythm of renewal in the couples sexual relationship. This is perhaps the only glue protecting the family framework without destroying it from within. However, it is also good "advice" from a simple egoistic point of view - advice as to how to protect the Divine gift of sexual love. This is one of the great tests of time which religious marriages have withstood.

We must distinguish between sexuality, even eroticism, and pornography. Pornography means viewing sex as a market commodity. These ideas were well expressed many years ago by Professor Bonventura, a religious psychologist who was killed before the establishment of the State of Israel in a convoy going up to the university campus on Mt. Scopus. Jewish law tries to build a different family life than the one created by the "free market." In the free market, a brutal economy rules. The strongest wins and the strongest makes changes in each period. The Torah removed sex from the market economy. It created a system which does its best to avoid the rule of the jungle. Pornography is the use of human beings for commercial purposes, a sale of human merchandise. Jewish law tries to limit another element which holds sway in Western society: the visual element. Beauty and manliness are a trap. Judgment on the basis of appearances, according to what catches the eye at first glance, is often a great injustice. In contrast to the attempt to draw attention through sexual attraction, the Talmud stresses the woman's obligation to make herself beautiful for her husband, and the responsibility of the man to gratify his wife. These are romantic gestures, but they have erotic meaning as well. Judaism does not negate, and often emphasizes the importance of these gestures.

The Talmud states that "age twenty is [the age of] pursuit." As a person matures, he either pursues or is himself pursued. He pursues his goals; he tries to fulfill his ambitions, his desires, and gain respect. He runs from his fears. When two people form a young couple, they enter into a new stage. Family life becomes a constant struggle, sometimes a war, a struggle in which there will always be defeats, failures and problems. As a child matures he finds himself in conflict with his parents, with authority. This is the great danger of adolescence. The conflict with one's parents can potentially become a conflict with Judaism. One's father is a Jew, and the rebellion against one's father could become a rebellion against Judaism. However, when a man becomes a father and a woman gives birth to a child, they discover the other perspective: things look different from the vantage point of a parent. Responsibility looms large and a person discovers the need to fill his life with meaning. Then, he understands that in order to achieve independence he challenged authority, his father, his religion; but in order to build a home and a society, in order to be a father himself, he has only one choice. He must learn to rely on his Heavenly Father. If the Torah cannot educate, other educators labor in vain.

This reality helps us understand the psychological issues which people must face in order to mature and develop, as well as the need for a legal system. As I heard once from the French-Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, if there were only two people in the world, love would suffice. Since in the world there are always at least three, law is necessary. Personally, I doubt if any relationship can last long without mutual obligations. Without law, without rules, no process of education is possible.

### **Taharat Ha-mishpacha: Jewish Marital Law**

In order to truly understand the laws of family purity, we must define two separate perspectives contained in this commandment. One aspect of the commandment involves the actual laws of impurity. The other relates to family life and the relationship between the couple. However, there is also a third perspective. The Talmud in tractate Sanhedrin discusses the verse in the Song of Songs: "Your belly is a mound of wheat surrounded by a hedge of roses" [Song of Songs 7: 3]. Our Sages associate this verse with the laws of family purity. "A hedge of roses" refers to the red barrier of ritual impurity, of nida. This is the obvious explanation of our Sages' statement. However, their explanation has a more general meaning, which is discussed by various philosophers, among them Yeshayahu Leibowitz and Emmanuel Levinas.

Imagine a garden filled with lovely flowers. A person sees these flowers, and wishes to enter the garden and pick these flowers which do not belong to him. How do we deter him? We erect a fence, at times even a solid wall, which bars the entrance to the garden. Now imagine a garden which is protected by a hedge of roses. This is our ultimate goal: we must learn to avoid breaching even a frail hedge of roses.

This is the first and most significant stage in one of the most important concepts in ethics: autonomy. Lack of autonomy constitutes an ethical problem. The law is kept only because an authority enforces it: the police, the court, the jails and the penal system. Judaism wishes to create individuals who choose good over evil not because of external causes such as the fear of a policeman, but because of an internal cause: his personal sense of responsibility, his respect for the commandment and its author. The Talmud explains that the couple who desire each other will keep Jewish marital laws not because of outer pressures but because of their inner convictions. The Torah trusts the couple and does not forbid them to be alone together at times when they may not touch. Someone from outside the system would find this impossible to believe. How can people overcome their greatest desires, and how may we be sure that they will keep these laws in the privacy of their own homes? This is the meaning of the term, "a hedge of roses."

This is the highest moral level, in which man's true authority lies within himself, not in the government or police force.

Emmanuel Levinas maintains that this is the central concept of the Jewish religion. The world cannot improve, unless this process goes hand in hand with education based on such principles as these. Jewish law educates man towards self-control; this is the path to the improvement of the world under the divine rule. Think of a person walking a tightrope between two mountains, high above a ravine. The first requirement for success is self-control, control over one's body and over each of its muscles. Society cannot exist, either, unless this self-control exists. The rational laws and the decrees thus suit two aspects of our nature. The rational laws suit our rational side, while the decrees suit our irrational side. Jewish self-education is a practical process, rooted in reality.

## **The Love of God**

The values which we have discussed until now fashion the individual, the couple, and the community. However, we are guided by an additional value: the desire to stand unabashed before God. We are expected to overcome our evil inclinations in order to face our Creator with confidence.

At the core of all the other relationships is the encounter with God, the commandment of love which connects us to Him. Human love must leave some room for divine love. R. Tzvi Hirsch Kalisher, the famed religious harbinger of Zionism, expresses the conflict between these two loves beautifully. R. Kalisher discusses one of our Sages' legends:

"Rava brought a gift for Bar Sheshak in honor of his festival. ... He went and found him sitting up to his neck in roses, with naked prostitutes standing in front of him. He [Bar Sheshak] said to him: 'Do you have such things in the World to Come?' He said to him: 'Ours is greater than this!... you have the fear of the king.' He said to him: 'What fear of the king oppresses me?' Just then the messenger of the king came and said to him: 'Rise, for the king wants you...'

Rav Papa said: 'He [Rava] should have answered him from this verse: 'The daughters of kings in your finery, your queen stands to your right in jewelry from Ophir.' (Psalms 45: 10)"

Rav Nachman Bar Yitzchak said: 'He should have answered him from here: 'No eye has seen God other than you, He will do for he who waits for him' (Isaiah 64: 3) (Avoda Zara 65a)"

This legend can of course be interpreted on a simple level. Rava and Bar Sheshak seem to be arguing over who can expect the better lot. Is the pleasure of the Jewish World to Come greater than the pleasures of this world which the rich Persian enjoys? Rava demonstrates that Bar Sheshak's hold on life is fragile, and the fear of the king oppresses him.

R. Kalisher discusses the deeper interpretation of this story. Bar Sheshak actually prides himself not on the pleasure itself but on the very existence of passion. The pleasure itself cannot exist if desire is lacking. Pleasure is only a function of desire. And thus he says, according to R. Kalisher's interpretation [Sefer Emuna Yeshara 423 pg. 5]: "Does there exist a greater passion than I possess now, for my passion is like a burning furnace inside me ... for the passion of the flesh is greater than the passion of the mind, since the mind does not desire things which are against the will, and the desire of the flesh overcomes the desire of the will." To this, Rava responds: "The fear of the king oppresses you," - "for every material thing has a limit and an end." The obligation to stand before the king caused him to completely lose his passion. Fear overcomes passion.

However, says Rava, there is another passion, the passionate love of God. This is a passion which overcomes fear. The fact of holy martyrdom proves this point, for martyrdom is a situation in which the love of God overcomes the fear of death.

## **CHAPTER 33: The Theory of Divine Attributes**

### **PART I**

In our last few lectures we have discussed two topics, which demonstrated the close and somewhat complex relations between the doctrine of prophecy and the philosophical tradition. The first of these topics is the theory of Divine attributes. Rihal discusses this topic in various places in his book; it is mentioned at the beginning of the second and fourth sections and elsewhere as well. The second subject is the topic of miracles. For the sake of convenience we will begin with the theory of attributes.

I do not intend to delve into the philosophical problems raised by this approach. We will simply attempt to gain an overall understanding of the issue. We will start by examining the topic of the Divine attributes as presented in the Scriptures; we will look at the various traits, characteristics and names attributed to God throughout the Scriptures.

### **An'im Zemirot: A Song Of Praise**

The Shabbat Musaf prayers conclude with the congregational singing of a philosophical poem entitled An'im Zemirot. The poem expounds upon religious language in general and the Divine attributes in particular. The poem refers in particular to the origin of religious language, and to the way in which the Scriptures describe God, both in prophetic visions and in biblical thought and poetry. In essence, this poem is a justification of the use of religious language, a plea for forgiveness for the fact that we dare pray at all. The same message is actually expressed in the Kaddish, in which we state that God's Name is blessed above all other blessings. God exists on a plane beyond the reaches of humanity, yet we desire and continually attempt to surpass our limitations. This is the ultimate goal of the theory of Divine attributes, which employed various methods, in the various stages of Jewish philosophy, to teach us how to perform the miraculous act of transcending the limitations of human knowledge and language.

However, An'im Zemirot teaches us that this is not a purely philosophical issue. We use it to express our feelings, our ambitious desire to comprehend the Divine. This ambition contains a certain amount of audacity, an aspiration towards understanding that which is beyond our reach. Of course we must not interpret the plea, "to fathom ALL the mystery of your secrets" literally. Even in the little that we are capable of understanding, we must be cautious indeed. However, another desire hides behind the quest for

understanding. This request of ours is simply an expression of a deeper desire: "for my soul longs for You." We pray and speak to God and about God, we weave poems, sing melodies, use religious language, and through these methods we wish to express our longing. Beneath our desire for comprehension hides a deep and abiding love.

### **A Child's Question**

On Pesach we use the symbol of the Four Sons. One of these is the wise son, the one who knows how to ask. I would like to use one of his questions to illustrate the theory of Divine attributes which we will be studying during the next few lectures. The child who knows how to ask asks wisely indeed. We try to search independently for the right answer. However, there is much to be learned from the various answers that our Sages have given to these same questions. Although they sometimes disagree with each other, they can teach us much about the many facets of truth.

We will begin with a discussion of one of the questions every child asks: "Where is God?" - or, to use the language of the angels, "Where is the place [Hebrew: makom] of His glory?"

One of the classic answers given to every child - an answer whose origin is in the Scriptures - is that God is in Heaven. We will return to this answer shortly. But before we explain this concept, we must mention a phrase connected to this question, a term we use as a name for God: "ha-Makom" [literally, the Place].

Our Sages tried to explain this in their cryptic statement, "He is the place of the world, and the world is not His place." This is a philosophical explanation, to which we will return at a later stage. Its accepted explanation is that God is beyond the concept of location or space, and yet He is the One who allows our spatial reality to exist. Various thinkers have related similarly to the concept of time. This idea can be illustrated through the example of a teacher and his classroom. An entertaining anecdote tells of a teacher who dreamed that he gave a class, woke up, and found it was true. This description, which is not very complementary to teachers, demonstrates that we must distinguish between two different situations. Generally speaking, the classroom is the teacher's place. However, when the teacher dreams of the classroom, the relationship between the teacher and the classroom reverses. The classroom is located within the teacher's mind, but the teacher is not located inside the classroom. In our case, by the use of the term "Makom," we claim that the dimensions of, and the very concept of "Makom," do not apply to God. On the other hand, we claim that spatial reality, or the concept of makom as we know it, is possible only because God exists.

This is the unique message of the concept of Makom. The heavens and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain You" (Kings 1 8: 7). Yet, despite all this talk of God being beyond the confines of space, the Scriptures refer to "the heavens" as the Divine abode: "And You will hearken from the heavens" (Kings 1 8: 32). What does this concept of heaven mean? In order to explain this we will must interpret two concepts. We encounter these concepts in various guises, both in philosophical terms and scriptural ones. In philosophical terms we speak about imminence and transcendence. The Scriptures speak of kedusha (holiness) and kavod (glory). The concept of kedusha creates for us a sense of distance. According to our Sages' interpretation of the angels' cry, "kadosh, kadosh, kadosh" (holy, holy, holy), an explanation which was accepted by the philosophers, these words describe our journey through each of the spiritual worlds, in search of God. In each world we inquire if God is to be found there, in that world. Each world answers us in turn, "kadosh" - God is beyond me. This is transcendence: God is beyond. However, along with the cry of "kadosh, kadosh, kadosh," we repeat the angels' additional cry: "The world is filled with his glory." The concept of glory creates in us a feeling of closeness, that God is near. This is the concept of imminence. God is transcendent, yet the world is suffused with His glory.

One of the great Chassidic masters, R. Tzadok Ha-kohen of Lublin, used these principles to explain the beginning of the talmudic tractate of Eruvin. The Talmud wrestles with two terms: "mikdash" (temple) and "mishkan" (sanctuary). Mikdash and mishkan express the dual meaning that we found above. In the mikdash, God is transcendent. Mishkan, on the other hand, literally means "that which dwells with them." These two perspectives of distance and closeness express a central religious assumption. Every blessing we recite contains the formula "Blessed are you God ... Who sanctified us ...." At the beginning of the blessing we refer to God in the second person, and at the end we refer to Him in the third person. These are the two aspects of our relationship with God.

This interpretation can help us understand why we refer to the heavens as God's abode. Perhaps when we say that God is in heaven, we mean that He is above us, He sees us, and we do not see Him. The concept of a God in heaven expresses the experience of a transcendent God.

### **Chassidism and the Existential Makom**

Chassidic legend relates how R. Menachem Mendel, the Kotzker Rebbe, answered the question, "Where is God?" R. Menachem Mendel responded, "Wherever he is allowed

in." This idea is well-developed in Chassidic thought; however, it originates from the Scriptures themselves: "God is near to all who call Him, to all who call Him sincerely" (Psalms 145, 18). This is a different concept of closeness. God is close to whomever calls Him sincerely. This is not an objective place, but a place in the heart. This is beautifully expressed in the writings of R. Nachman of Braslav. R. Nachman used the medium of a tale to express the complexity of the concept of Makom. He relates the story of seven maimed beggars who tell wondrous stories. The blind beggar presents the secrets of Time, and the hunchback presents the secrets of Makom. This beggar expounds the secret of tzimtzum [Divine constriction] - the tzimtzum of Makom. He explains the paradox of the smaller vessel containing the larger one. We often find such paradoxes in the writings of our Sages. For example, they write of the Temple that the people "stood crowded and bowed down comfortably ... and no one said 'it is too crowded for me to find a place in Jerusalem'" (Avot 5: 7). Another example is the paradox of the tiny land capable of containing the entire nation of Israel. These strange statements try to teach us that there are some things which are not measured by miles, things which seem to exist in another dimension.

When we presented the child's question, "Where is God?" we were actually asking a metaphysical, philosophical question. We asked something about God's concept of space. Chassidism is not merely interested in metaphysical questions. It is more interested in human existential questions. Certainly, R. Nachman's story has a metaphysical interpretation. However, R. Nachman's student, R. Nosson, revealed the existential meaning of the story: the secret of Makom is different; our Sages said, "there is no man who does not have his hour, and no thing which does not have its place [makom]." To understand this, we must recall another phrase, "Do not judge your friend until you reach his place [makom]. In other words, the true Makom is the subjective location of each of us. Every person looks at the world from his place, from his perspective. Every point of view creates a world, and if we change the point of view, the world changes. Our subjectivity is our inner perspective, from which we look at the world around us. This perspective does not permit us to correctly judge another person, who sees his problems from his own point of view. We cannot enter the subjective "makom" of another person, his perspective, his intimate inner world. Do not judge your friend until you reach his place, his subjectivity. We call God "Ha-makom," the Place, because he is with every person in his place. He is the only one who can judge me from within my subjectivity, because he is with me in my internal world. God is the world's place, meaning that he looks at every situation and every problem from the subjective perspective of each of us. In every child's development, he reaches the Chassidic stage,



when he moves beyond metaphysical questions and deals with existential questions. At this point his central interest shifts to the inner, personal issues.

## **PART II: "The World Is Not His Place"**

Now let us return to the philosophical question. When we refer to God as "Ha-makom," or the Place, we express a central idea in Jewish philosophy: the rules which apply to us do not apply to God; the strictures of time and place do not apply to Him.

As we shall see, this is the meaning of what the philosophers called "negative attributes." However, here too, the philosophers used their particular language to express a basic Scriptural principle.

The Scriptures oppose the human model of Divinity. This objection was the origin of the traditional opposition of what would later be termed anthropomorphism. The Scriptures impress this upon us in various ways. For example, the Scriptures teach us that sexual identity, one of mankind's central and defining characteristics, does not apply to God; God is neither male nor female. Idolatry projected human experience onto the Divine, and created gods in human form. The mythological system is based upon the concept of gods and goddesses who have sexual relations. Judaism completely eradicated this concept from its creed.

This fact is of paramount importance, particularly since we attribute a grammatical sex to God; we call God "He." However, God is not a he or a she, for He is beyond this distinction. We pray in masculine form, because Hebrew grammar has no neutral sex, and therefore even sexless objects are attributed a grammatical sex.

Thus, the fact that God is grammatically a male is a "historical accident." The use of the masculine form ought not to affect us. However, the Kabbala does not believe in historical accidents. The Kabbala sees meaning in language, and perceives it as a vehicle for the expression of mystical wisdom. Certainly, Judaism possesses a tradition of referring to God in the feminine gender, as the "Shekhina" (Divine Presence). We must be wary of the dangers of referring to God in the masculine form. This is an injustice to the text, for God is neither one nor the other.

The Kabbala ascribes both "masculine" and "feminine" attributes to God. These attributes are symbolically represented by Hebrew letters. In the Tetragrammaton, the letter Yud is masculine and the letter Heh is feminine. Similarly, in the structure of the Sefirot, Chokhma (wisdom) is masculine, while Bina (understanding) is feminine. Tiferet and Yesod describe God's masculine attributes, and Malkhut describes God's feminine side.

I do not want to enter into the symbolic world of the Kabbala as of yet. R. Kook wrote that entrance into the world of Kabbala must be preceded by spiritual and intellectual cleansing, just as all of a surgeon's instruments must be sterilized before an operation in order to avoid infection. If this spiritual cleansing were lacking, the entry into the world of kabbalistic mystical images could be dangerous indeed. If our concept of God is not maximally dematerialized, we are in danger of reaching absurdities through a simplistic understanding of the kabbalistic texts. Therefore, religious philosophy teaches us that God is utterly beyond sexual identification. The kabbalists agree with this assumption; however, they claim that if we must speak of God, the language we use must incorporate both sexes. Just as we present the attributes of Chesed [lovingkindness] and Gevura [restraint] as being on the right and the left, thus we must present the divine attributes in general in masculine and feminine form. Thus, the Zohar writes that man was created "in God's image, and in His form" - "His image" being masculine, and His form feminine. The kabbalistic solution to the problem of an accurate expression of the divine attributes is to view religious symbols as both masculine and feminine. Interestingly, the transcendent and immanent experiences of divinity are represented in the Kabbala in terms of sexual identification. The Shekhina, represented by the Sefira of "Malkhut," describes God's immanence, while the Sefira of Tiferet describes the Transcendent God. Mankind is composed of two sexes. God forbid that we see only one of them as created in the divine image. Only in unity between the two sexes can humans achieve the image of God; therefore, the Bible states, "and He called THEIR name Adam."

## **Holiness**

Some people have an intuitive sense of holiness. They perceive it as though it were a sort of electric current present in defined places, things or situations. Is this an accurate description of holiness? What is the meaning of holiness in Jewish thought? What do we mean when we speak of the holiness of the Land of Israel?

## **Holiness and The Commandments**

I would like to open this discussion with an approach which was represented in our times by the late professor Yeshayahu Leibovitz. This approach maintains that the Jews are holy by virtue of the fact that they are obligated to perform the commandments. This view strips holiness of its independent character and makes the concept of holiness dependent upon the concept of the commandments. The commandments constitute the

fundamental concept in this approach. Holiness means to be sanctified through the commandments.

However, it is important to note that Jewish law distinguishes between the implements used to fulfill commandments, and holy articles. Jewish law does not see them as identical. A lulav is an article utilized for the performance of a commandment, while a Torah scroll and tefillin are holy articles. After we have used the Four Species and we no longer need them, we can discard them. We may not dishonor them; however, they no longer have any independent value. This is not the case with holy articles. If we apply this distinction to our case, we can say that the commandments are instruments which serve other goals, while holiness characterizes the values which have their own independent worth. The concept of human holiness teaches us that we may not use people as raw material for industry. Or, for example, when we speak of the Land of Israel as a holy land, we mean that the Land of Israel is not merely an instrument, a neutral base for a Jewish state, but that it has its own value. According to this explanation, holiness means that the holy entity has its own independent value and purpose.

### **Holiness And The Encounter With Divinity**

What is the meaning of the term "Holy Land?" In the previous section we spoke of the meaning of the Land of Israel. We will now return to this issue from the perspective of the concept of holiness.

R. Nachman Krochmal [known by his acronym Ranak], discusses this problem when he tries to understand the meaning of holiness. If indeed, "the whole world is filled with His glory," what is the difference between one place and another, one thing and another? This paradox was well expressed by R. Nachman of Breslov. As his student. R. Nossan put it, this is the difference between tzitzit and tefillin. A person can enter filthy places wearing tzitzit, but not wearing tefillin. God's presence is everywhere, yet holiness exists. There are differences between one place and another. The Ranak tried to explain this using an important model. He explains that God's presence is pervasive; however, at particular times, or in particular places or situations it becomes more apparent. Man's vision of the Divine Presence in the world is clouded. This is what our Sages called "aspaklaria she-eina me'ira" (the opaque glass). When we perceive reality more clearly, we experience holiness. We differentiate between days in which the encounter with God is less and more apparent. This idea was nicely expressed by Rihal [4: 16, 172]. Rihal explains the difference between the holy names, a difference which to we will return later, through a parable. He illustrates this idea through the various appearances of light

to the human eye. Under certain circumstances the light is refracted, in others it is reflected, while in still other situations it is neither totally refracted nor totally reflected. We perceive the light from above in a similar way. When we see this divine light, we experience holiness.

### **Holiness And Religious Sentiment**

Imagine that you are walking in a dark place and suddenly experience an intense fear of something you cannot see and cannot exactly define. We have all experienced this emotion at some time or another. A similar emotional response exists, in which one is conscious of being in the presence of something not threatening but holy. One feels that he is in the presence of a Being which is beyond all that is ordinary, everyday and human.

Imagine a man walking with a compass. The compass will always show him which way is north. However, in close proximity to a strong magnetic field, the compass will begin to behave in strange ways. The theory of holiness assumes that man is sensitive to the encounter with that which is beyond nature. This reality explains the surprising fact that religions appeared all over the world. If we investigate and study all the religions we will discover that they all bear the marks of this same basic feeling. All religions contain the joy of apprehending immanent divinity on the one hand, and the religious awe of transcendent divinity on the other.

### **Holiness As The Ultimate End**

We each perform many actions during the course of our lives. We must ask ourselves why we do these things. The Rambam reminds us that many of our actions are actions of folly, meaning that they have no real goal. One of the traps in which a person is often caught is the race to act without asking himself what his ultimate goals really are. He is so busy with the intermediate goals and the problems of making a living, that he never reaches the question of "what is it all for?" This is similar to a person who spends his whole life repairing and preparing a car, without ever driving it.

Holiness, in essence, means the focus of our ultimate goals. If a person's goal in life is making money, then he worships money. That is his holiness, because everything else serves this end. He makes money holy, and by doing this profanes holiness.

## **Holiness As Moral Perfection**

Yet another concept of holiness exists. This term can be used to describe a person who has transcended a "war of passions." This inner battle is waged in each and every one of us; however, a person may achieve a state of perfection which places him above and beyond the battle. This, according to Lubavitch Chasidism, is the difference between a "Beinoni" (literally, "in the middle") and a Tzaddik. A Beinoni is someone who wins the inner battle. A Tzaddik is someone who is already above and beyond the scene of the war.

## **Holiness As A Progression Toward The Realm Beyond Human Experience**

One might say that the Rambam was the originator of this level of holiness. All the relations between man and his fellow man are based on Jewish law. Beyond this we have commandments which are based on the principle "and you shall do what is honest and good." Just as there is permissible and forbidden behavior between Man and God, permissible and forbidden behaviors direct our personal lives. However, beyond this legal reality lies the realm of holiness. The prohibition of drug abuse, like that of alcohol abuse, stems from the category of commandments founded on the verse, "you shall be holy" (Vayikra 19: 1) When using drugs, man loses his humanity and his freedom. Thus, drug abuse is a desecration of holiness. The concept of holiness allows us to broaden the concept of commandments, and it serves as a new category which expands the sphere of our religious behavior.

## **CHAPTER 34: Attributes and Archetypes**

### **PART I**

During the Middle Ages the theory of divine attributes was associated with some very interesting logical and philosophical questions. We will discuss some of these questions later on. In order to do so, we will have to sort the various types of attributes into categories. However, before we proceed, we must realize an important fact: our religious language in general and our language of prayer in particular is based upon the Scriptures. In the Song of Glory we say "through the hands of Your prophets, through the mystery of Your servants, You have displayed Your glory." Our religious language is rooted in the prophetic vision. Therefore we must return to the prophetic vision and gain a deeper understanding of it.

We will begin with a discussion of the most fundamental type of divine attributes, those which reflect human traits. The term for this type of description of God is anthropomorphism.

### **Anthropomorphism**

These attributes use characteristics borrowed from the world of human interaction. This anthropomorphism need not be physiological; it may take a psychological form as well. Thus, for example, we find phrases reflecting the human body, such as "the eyes of God," or psychological ones, such as "God's anger." Of course, these divine attributes are not to be interpreted literally; it is a known fact that the Torah uses human language terms. As our Sages put it, "the Torah spoke the language of people."

This phrase is important, but it does not say enough. The Kuzari, and the Rambam in his wake, taught us that this phrase is only the opening for a discussion of biblical language. First of all, it is worth noting the position of Abraham Joshua Heschel; he maintained that the Bible contains no actual anthropomorphisms; for the Bible never describes God's physicality, only His apparent emotional response to our actions. This distinction helps us understand the importance of the "psychological" attributes, such as the statement that God "loves the convert" or "abhors evil." These phrases explicitly direct us to their ethical meaning, and demand that we not use them to reach anthropomorphic conclusions.

Given this background, we ought to take note of the statement made by Benno Jacob, a modern Bible commentator, who draws our attention to an interesting paradox. As we,

the readers, proceed through the Scriptures, we notice that the use of anthropomorphism increases. The reason is simple. We must be wary of anthropomorphisms when they pose a danger, when people are liable to be misled by them. However, as we reach a level of distance from anthropomorphism and it loses its religious philosophical menace, it becomes more and more permissible, if it helps us express what we cannot express directly in words. This is the reason that the prophets used human language much more freely. If we combine these two statements, we will better understand the Rambam's guiding principles in this area, which we would do well to follow. They are as follows:

1. The Scriptures do not attribute importance to a simplistic interpretation of anthropomorphisms.
2. We must be exact as to the meaning of the anthropomorphism by examining the other potential options for expression in the textual context.

### **Why Use Anthropomorphisms?**

The Rambam fought a stubborn war against anthropomorphism. However, his great achievement was not merely the disqualification of these adjectives in their simple form, but rather the wonderful explanation of why anthropomorphism exists, and why the Torah chooses to use these terms. The Rambam explains that the goal of all the Scriptural descriptions of God is to communicate a sense of God's flawlessness. When two descriptive options exist, the Scriptures choose the one which best conveys the sense of God's flawlessness. The Torah desires to impart the concept of an utterly perfect God, and therefore it uses terms which infer perfection, even though they do not accurately describe God. Let me give you some examples of this principle.

The Torah uses terms taken from the human senses. Thus, for example, God is attributed sight, hearing, and even the sense of smell. These attributions are not coincidental. The Torah wishes to teach us that God is familiar with and interested in mankind, and responds to man's behavior. However, the Torah does not use all the possible terms in the sphere of the senses. Terms connected with the sense of touch and of taste are totally absent. This requires an explanation, since this striking omission is clearly intentional. The senses which the Torah uses to describe God's responses maintain the sense of distance for us. People can hear and see across great distances. This is not the case with our other senses. The Torah wished to convey the sense of God's presence and watchfulness on the one hand, while avoiding the potential pitfalls of the anthropomorphism of the senses. In this area idolatry failed, for the intimate

anthropomorphisms which it allowed itself gave legitimacy to the belief in physical relationships between the gods and their human subjects.

### **Anthropomorphism In Language**

We can attribute characteristics to God, because we use various indirect linguistic and poetic forms of language. The metaphor is a good example of such a tool. I would suggest that there are two types of metaphor. One type of metaphor is the intentional use of a word in order to evoke associations from another area and apply them to the area under discussion. For example, one might say, in reference to a politician, "So-And-So is a real snake." We describe a particular situation in the social or intellectual sphere by using terms taken from the world of the jungle. There the snake is the wily, slippery trickster. We mean to say that this particular person demonstrates characteristics similar to the snake's. We borrow a word from one field, and move it to another, bringing all its associations along. Another type of metaphor would be the use of a word in order to apply only one narrow aspect of it to our situation. For example, when we say that we have completed "the lion's share" of the work, we do not mean to arouse all the associations of the lion in the jungle. We merely refer to the single aspect of the relatively large size of the lion's share. Generally, the first type of metaphor is the one we commonly use when defining attributes of God.

### **PART II: Holiness**

Up to this point we have analyzed isolated elements of the question of anthropomorphism. Now, we must expand these elements to form complete units. Allow me to present another example, which seems very significant to me, because it focuses on a prayer which is recited daily, the Kedusha. When reciting the Kedusha, we join together with the angels and pronounce a fundamental truth. These pronouncements originate from the visions of the prophets Yechezkel and Yeshayahu who heard the angels proclaim: "Holy Holy Holy ... blessed is the glory of God ...." In this prayer we mention the "Ofanim" (celestial wheels) and the holy "Chayot" (beasts). What do these terms mean? Every child asks this question upon reading this prayer; however, soon after the question we tend to forget it, and lay it to rest with all our other unanswered queries. Consequently, we fail to grasp the depth of these concepts. Let us attempt to reach this deeper understanding together, following the footsteps of the Rambam.

As we all know, this description of the Chayot and the Ofanim originates in Yechezkel's famous Vision of the Chariot. The Rambam explains that this vision is a



depiction of the relationship between the world, including the angels, and God, and a demonstration of the impenetrable barrier between the two spheres. Without delving into the issue of the celestial beings, we will assume the existence of spiritual entities above man, just as we know of there are beings that are beneath him. The prophet first describes the impassable chasm between the Creator and the world through the image of the distance between the rider and the chariot itself. He then proceeds to illustrate the gap between God and the angels. The chariot is composed of beasts, a type of horse, and of technology. The most significant and revolutionary technological element of the chariot is the wheel, or what the prophet calls the "Ofan." The image of the chariot conveys the sense that the components of our world are merely an insignificant cog in the machinery. The Chayot appear in the vision in place of the horses drawing the chariot, except that the image is augmented by an additional element. These Beasts are different than their earthly counterparts, for they are actually composites of various animals. The angels are not described as additional passengers in the chariot, but as the Chayot and Ofanim which pull it. They are merely a part of the chariot's mechanism, while the distance between them and their passenger remains constant and unbridgeable. In the vision, a kind of platform is described, which separates the chariot from everything beyond it. This platform symbolizes the heavens, which in turn illustrates the unbridgeable gap between the Creator and all other creatures. God is symbolized by the man in the chariot; however, we must remember that the human form is one of the faces that appear among the Chayot.

I would like to point out another detail, which is relevant to one of our previous lectures. In his description of the Chayot, Yechezkel the prophet says that "their leg was a straight leg." This is the position that we imitate in the Kedusha and in the Amida prayer. This means that the angels have only one leg, which teaches us that they are beyond a division into sexes. How much more so is God beyond such distinctions.

This description of the chariot illustrates the full meaning of the barrier that separates the creature from its Creator. The prophet uses physical representation; however, the vision is carefully constructed, and is actually a statement opposing any physical representation of God. The utter gap between the creature and the Creator is expressed in the fifth principle of the Rambam's thirteen principles of faith.

Do the angels belong to a sphere beyond our own? This question is disputed among Jewish thinkers. However, clearly the assumption of the existence of angels means that just as we know that distant galaxies exist in the natural world, we believe in the existence of a spiritual reality that is not of our own creation.

Rabbi Avraham Ben David of Posquieres, better known by his acronym Ra'avad, opposed a number of aspects of the Rambam's approach. His opposition stemmed from the perspective of the Kabbalist. We have seen, for example, that when the Scriptures write, "the eyes of God," we take human reality and try to apply it in the expression of religious ideas. However, there are two possible approaches to this type of interpretation. To understand the difference between the approach of philosophy and the kabbalistic approach, we must point out the difference between allegory and symbol. After the allegory is written, it can be translated, for example by writing "Divine Providence" in place of the "eyes of God." The eye is an allegory. However, the Kabbalists say otherwise. In fact, the opposite is true, and the fact that man has eyes is not coincidental. All of our earthly reality is a reflection of its archetype in the spiritual world. The symbol is not a mere linguistic invention; it is an expression of the relationship between our everyday reality and the spiritual world. This does not mean that God has eyes, but that Divine Providence possesses a characteristic which is expressed in the eye. The eye is a symbol. The symbol and the object symbolized are much more closely connected than the allegory and its interpretation. The philosopher claims that the use of the term "the eyes of God" is meant to explain the spiritual reality to people in terms that they can understand. This is anthropomorphism, the use of human language. However, for the Kabbalist the direction is reversed; the lower world can be seen as a model for the spiritual reality of the higher world. In a similar vein, some doctors claim the ability to discover diseases through an eye examination. A doctor of this type does not use eyes as an allegory. He sees them as intrinsically significant and necessary, for his method is based upon the assumption of a parallel between the appearance of the eye and the state of the entire body. The Torah uses the language of symbols.

The Kabbala perceives everything in our world as a distorted, imperfect reflection of the upper world. Man has two hands which function differently, one hand being stronger than the other. This asymmetry reflects the fact that in the upper world there is a lack of symmetry between the divine attributes of Law, symbolized by the Left, and of Mercy, symbolized by the Right.

One final example. The lowest Sefira is called Malkhut (royalty, or dominion). The Sefira of Malkhut is symbolized by the Hebrew letter Dalet. The letter Dalet is the symbol of dearth (Hebrew: *dalut*), or passivity. The Sefira of Tiferet is the symbol of activity, represented by the Hebrew letter Vav. The connection between them is, in essence, the connection between the giver and the recipient of charity. This is symbolized by the graphic connection between the letter Vav and the letter Dalet, which creates the letter Heh, the symbol of true Malkhut. According to the Kabbala, this

connection is reflected on every plane. Thus, when a person gives charity, he gives to the Dal, the needy, and forges a connection between the Vav and the Heh.

This compels us to see the larger picture in a different light. Take the example of the word "book." We can view this word as a pointer referring to all books. In this simple approach, the written word, made of letters, suggests the reality. However, this is only half the truth. The Kabbalists claim that reality itself is composed of letters. In other words, our reality is also a written text, which suggests the existence of something deeper than itself. It would be a mistake to think that our perception of reality is the end of the analysis. Reality itself is a text, which hints at a deeper reality.

### **PART III: The Voice Of God: Various Models [1:88-91]**

In the context of his discussion of revelation as the basis of the Jewish faith, Rihal touches upon the problem of physical descriptions of God. How do we balance the concept of revelation with our basic belief in God's incorporeality [1:89]? We will discuss this issue and discover its basic implications, before we move on to Rihal's theory of divine attributes (which is discussed in the beginning of the second book).

As we have seen until now, many of the physical descriptions of God are merely linguistic expressions. Their interpretation is bound to the framework of language. Regarding these phrases, religious language approaches the language of poetry. However, there are phrases which compel us to seek out another explanation; these phrases are connected to the prophetic experience. What, for example, was the voice of God heard at the revelation at Sinai or by the prophet in his vision?

All that the text permits us to say is that we hear God's voice. This was indeed a unique voice, which was described in the mysterious form of the verse, "All the nation saw the sounds;" in other words, the text informs us that the Jews perceived an auditory experience through their sense of vision. Although a literal interpretation of this phrase is certainly possible, and this is what the Ibn Ezra attempts to do, our Sages emphasize the unique quality of this "voice." The use of the word kol (voice) is surprising. It is not as problematic as the concept of seeing God, yet it is difficult as well. When we speak of someone's voice, we refer to a quality of his, or even to a particular physical function which his body performs, which creates the sound of his voice. Even were we to disregard the mechanism and claim that the presence of a voice does not imply that God possesses an "anatomy," we are still left questioning the meaning of the voice of God. Jewish philosophers have attempted to answer this question in various ways; each

one is characteristic of each thinker's approach to prophecy in general. We will discuss this point later on.

## **The Models**

Before we turn our attention to the possible answers, we must reiterate one of Rihal's important principles. Rihal points out that although various options are plausible, the important element here is not the answer itself but the direction it gives us. The answer itself is merely a building block, a model which helps us on our path to understanding, but does not obligate us exclusively to its content:

"We do not know how the divine essence became physical and became a voice which tore our ears. And we do not know if at that time God created something which was not in existence until that point, or if He used for that purpose something which was in existence, since God does not lack the ability to do either of these things."

Rihal teaches us that various models exist to explain the phenomenon, and we are free to choose among them. This principle was adopted by the Rambam.

Both Rihal and the Rambam accepted the possibility of the perception of the divine voice as explained by the Theory of Glory, which we will describe shortly. However, they both offered alternative explanations as well. In summary, we are faced with three possibilities.

1. The vision is a phenomenon which takes place through a different medium, which is not the regular medium which physics and chemistry research.
2. The vision takes place in the soul of the prophet.
3. The vision is deeper than the reality.

## **The Theory of Glory**

The first answer is known as "The Theory of Glory." It has taken a number of forms, which Rihal discusses. The classic answer speaks of "the created voice." Onkelos used this idea of the created voice in his translation. A person of our generation can illustrate this in a simple manner. It is similar to the synthetic voice generated by a computer. A person, whom we will call Moshe, can speak through typing on the computer's keyboard. This voice is Moshe's voice, but it is not Moshe's voice in the true meaning of the word. We can speak of a "created voice" and "created light." These are the realities that God

creates and utilizes, which do not express His essence, but constitute a mode of communication with the prophet.

In order to explain this approach, Rav Sa'adia Gaon (Rasag), and various others in his wake, taught that the prophetic vision takes place not in the space-time reality, and not in the prophet's psychological world, but in a distinct reality, which he termed "Ha-avir Ha-sheni" (literally, the other air). Think, for example, of a hologram, a sort of picture which seems to hover in the air. Were I to attempt to touch it, I would discover that I was faced with an optical illusion. I cannot touch it, yet it exists. In Rasag's view, prophecy is a kind of unique hologram which affects the prophet and has objective existence. However, in another sense it is not similar to a hologram. The prophetic picture appears before us, but it is not located in the atmosphere, in the air. Underneath the physical atmosphere another reality exists. This is a kind of second atmosphere, Rasag's "other air," which is generally inaccessible and which can open at particular times.

Another version of this approach brings us closer to the second approach, and this is the opinion of the Ramban. The Ramban accepts the possibility of seeing angels, since they can take on a physical form, although this "physicality" is different than the one studied in physics.

Rihal accepts this approach in principle, but he doesn't try to build theories upon it, as Rasag does. Rihal placed this problem before us in the a larger context, and gave us a surprising answer. His answer is that, in essence, even Moshe's real voice is not his real voice. A good example might be the voice we hear through a telephone receiver. The voice we hear is indeed amazingly similar to the voice of the speaker, yet it is not really the voice of the speaker. The voice is not the voice of the speaker traveling, so to speak, across the telephone lines. It is the result of a change, a transformation. The voice is coded, passed on in a completely different way, and deciphered. Only afterwards do we perceive the new synthetic creation. Rihal teaches us that the same process occurs when a person is standing before us and talking to us. Here too, encoding and deciphering are the essential tools of communication. The paradox which we posited regarding God is true of each and every person. We do not commit a new "sin" of personification when we ascribe to a voice to God. We have committed the exact same sin by ascribing a voice to Moshe. Rihal writes:

"For what does Moshe use to speak to us, teach us and guide us? It is not his tongue, not his heart, nor is it his mind; all these are but tools for Moshe, while Moshe himself is a soul with the power of speech and consciousness, which is not a body and has no boundaries." [1: 89]

A person's appearance is not what we see. His body is a vessel, a sort of computer, which synthesizes voices in a marvelously accurate fashion. This is a process whereby the hidden thought, which is beyond our comprehension, is transformed into an audible voice. The essence of this process is unknown to us. Behind the scenes hides "the real Moshe." Behind the brain is the brain's owner. There is a hidden being here, which for simplicity's sake we will call the soul. This is a being which does not exist in space, and it does not push aside other things which share its space. It does not exhibit the characteristics of physical objects. The opposite is true as well: "The thing itself would not be strained if all the creatures in the world were contained in it;" it creates a space of its own, and can contain an entire world within itself.

### **The Psychological Theory**

As we have seen, Rihal's approach contains the approach developed by Rasag. According to the "Theory of Glory," the prophet does not see a reality which is inside himself, but a different, incorporeal reality, which is created for him. This is a kind of private screening which God presents, and which is not part of our daily reality. This reality of prophecy is not physical, yet the experience is real.

Another option is presented by Rihal at the beginning of the fourth section. It can be understood in two different ways. According to one interpretation, prophecy does not occur in an external reality, but in a sort of personal psychological screen belonging to each prophet. This would later become the Rambam's approach. According to another interpretation, the prophet sees the true reality, which hides behind our daily experience. However, in order to understand these approaches, we need a brief philosophical introduction, and therefore we will return to this discussion only after we have finished presenting the theory of Divine attributes.

## **CHAPTER 35: Religious Language**

### **PART I: The Classic Theory of Divine Attributes**

The discussion of the theory of Divine attributes was of crucial importance both in medieval Jewish philosophy and in kabbala, as well as in other religious writings. The roots of this debate can be traced to the Scriptures themselves, translations of the Scriptures, and the writings of our Sages. Thus, for example, the Rambam points out the story in tractate Berakhot about a person who was harshly criticized by R. Chanina for applying so many descriptive terms to God. In the writings of the Sages we find ample analyses of the Divine attributes and their meanings. For example, our Sages discuss the attributes of divinity as derived from the scriptural use of the Divine names. This discussion is reflected in the Kuzari.

In the Middle Ages, the theory of Divine attributes was very popular. Clearly, the Sages wished to underscore the battle against anthropomorphism; however, this battle was not the central topic of debate in medieval times. Although the Rambam writes much about his objections to physical descriptions of God, he stresses that the point he wishes to make is not about an issue which has already been discussed and satisfactorily resolved, for example in Rasag's book *Emunot Ve-de'ot*. In the Rambam's view, the problem lies not in the physical descriptions of God, but at a higher level. These descriptions or Divine attributes must pass the philosophical critique. Perhaps even more sophisticated terms such as wise, capable, living, omnipotent and omniscient, also describe a human reality, albeit not as obviously. In fact, the wording and formulation of the Divine attributes creates more complex religious and theological problems.

What can we say about God? This question addresses the essence of the theory of Divine attributes. What caused philosophers to take such extreme positions on this issue? We will choose to focus on one of the many causes which influenced this development: the idea of Divine unity.

### **Divine Unity**

The Rambam writes that the concept of Divine unity is the axis of our faith; all of the Jewish religion revolves around this idea. The centrality of the commandment to declare God's unity, in the phrase "Hear O Israel the Lord our God the Lord is One," illustrates and emphasizes the religious significance of this concept. The concept of Divine unity can be interpreted in four different ways.

1. Aggregate numerical unity: God is one and not two.
2. Sequential numerical unity. This is the source of the great emphasis in philosophy on God's being the first, and its scriptural parallel, "I am first and I am last."
3. Medieval philosophy chose to emphasize the indivisibility of God's unity. This focus had a powerful effect upon the development of the theory of Divine attributes. Unity means something which is not a composite. There is no compound in God's essence, and therefore physical description of God is absolutely forbidden. The belief in God's unity compels us to read the biblical text more accurately and honestly, and, at times, to depart from the more obvious interpretation of the text. However, the belief in Divine unity not only forbids us to assume the existence of a Divine anatomy, such as eyes and hands; it also prohibits the assumption of philosophical complexity. The culmination of this position appeared in the claim that no statement containing a subject and predicate may refer to God. If we claim that God is wise, we have given Him a particular quality. Philosophical thought struggled with the problem of creating a religious language without violating this principle. This philosophical problem is the source of the statements that God's wisdom is not separate from His essence, or that His wisdom is not additional to His essence, or that His wisdom is of a different genus than our own, or that He and His wisdom are one.

The danger which Jewish philosophers detected in describing Divine qualities finds expression in Christian philosophy, which used them to justify the doctrine of the trinity.

4. The fourth principle is central to the Rambam's thought: God's oneness is totally different than any other. Unity becomes uniqueness. We may not attribute to God a quality used to describe a created being.

## **Rihal and the Rambam**

To understand the approaches of these two great philosophers, we must first create a kind of catalogue, defining what may be said about someone or something, about a person or an object. Various philosophers have used this approach, and each one had his own manner of classification. The Rambam had his own unique method of categorization. We will try to briefly describe the various categories defined by these philosophers. They cover the following range of possibilities:

Incidental qualities

Essential qualities

Relative qualities



Behavioral qualities

Negational qualities

### **Incidental Qualities**

To understand this concept, we will compare these qualities to their philosophical counterpart, essential qualities. We may say that John is blond or tall. However, we can imagine that John has undergone an operation and is no longer blond or tall. These qualities change in any case during the course of one's life. They do not define John's essence; they merely attach themselves to his essence. These are incidental qualities. To borrow a phrase from Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, we could say that to speak of the incidental qualities of a particular being is like speaking about its anatomy.

### **Essential Qualities**

This is a much more limited group of qualities, which actually define John; if we were to alter one of them, the person before us would no longer be John. For example, if we were to change the fact that John is a rational, thinking being, he would no longer be John.

All the philosophers have agreed in negating the possibility of Divine incidental qualities, because these qualities assume the compound nature of the being described. Essential qualities remain to be discussed. These are particularly interesting, and there is no reason not to assume that they may be attributed to God. However, here we must say, following the Rambam's footsteps, that we are blocked by the limitations of human knowledge. This fact is expressed in the classic medieval phrase "Lu yeda'ativ, hayitiv" - if I understood Him, I would be Him. In other words, if I knew God's essence, then I myself would be God. Only God can know His true essence.

When we objected to literal interpretations of the physical descriptions of God, we claimed that God is beyond the perception of the senses. When we begin to doubt the possibility of knowing the essential qualities of God, we are stating that God is beyond human perception and understanding. In the words of the religious poem, An'im Zemirot:

"I speak of Thy Glory,  
and I have not seen You;  
I liken You, name You,

and I do not know You."

I compare You to other things, and I call You various names, but in essence, I do not know You.

## **Relative Qualities**

Relative qualities are beyond essential qualities. For example, if we say about John that he is a grandfather or an uncle, it is possible that a nephew may be born to him and he would not know about it. It is therefore difficult to say that he has changed since becoming an uncle. We can assume relative qualities for God, but here the Rambam once again objects. The Rambam maintains that if there is a particular relationship between A and B, this means that A and B have a common quality.

### **Behavioral Qualities**

"An'im Zemiroth" continues:

"Your greatness and power

are described by the strength of Your actions.

You have been likened, and not according to Your essence

and You have been described according to Your actions."

The essential qualities ("according to Your essence") are inaccessible to man. However, another path is open: "according to Your actions," the perception of God's behavioral qualities. Next, we will add the negational qualities to these.

When describing behavioral qualities we do not speak directly about God but about His actions. Let me illustrate this idea by way of a parable. We use electricity in our kitchens, and it acts upon various appliances, such as the oven and the refrigerator. The electricity actually does opposite actions in these appliances: heating and cooling. We can learn many things about electricity, its magnetic and chemical effects, but we still do not know anything about its essence. Most of the biblical descriptions of God describe His behavior, and not His essence.

## **PART II: Negative Attributes**

We have one category of descriptions left to explore - negative attributes. This approach negates the existence of attributes in God. Here too, the Rambam has much to teach us. He claims that this negation of attributes from God is itself informative. Our case is similar to that game in which someone leaves the room, and the people who remain in the room choose a concept. The person who went out must discover the concept by asking a set number of questions. Let us imagine a case in which he receives negative answers to all of his questions. It is possible that, even though he received negative answers to all his questions, he might discover the concept and win the game.

How is this possible? We can illustrate this reality through the statistical method known as lion trapping. We choose a continent, and divide the area into two parts. The lion must be in one of the halves. If we repeat the division many times, we will eventually "catch" the lion. The principle here is that we can use the negative attributes to gain knowledge. If we know where the lion is not, we will progress towards our goal.

### **What Is Negation?**

Rihal defines negation beautifully in his explanation of its use as a divine attribute. We use negation in everyday language; for example, we speak about a person as "intelligent" or "unintelligent." Of course, this negation is completely relative. Linguistic negation does not describe absolute negation in reality. The possibility of formulating things using opposites such as these, teaches us that negation in and of itself does not express any absolute value. Negation is merely a linguistic form which we can utilize to create one term on the basis of another, in order to express the absence of a quality.

In many cases we use negation appropriately; thus, for example, we say that a person "does not see," meaning that he is missing the quality of vision. However, at other times, a grammatically positive term hides a negation within it. The word "blind" is a good example of this. The term blind does not describe any positive quality; it actually points out the absence of a quality, the ability to see. The Rambam points out that many philosophers have fallen into this linguistic trap. Thus, for example, the Muslim theologians, whom the Rambam often disputes, made this mistake and erased the difference between negation and positive description.

Until this point we have discussed one type of negation, in which we negate the existence of a possible situation or trait. However, there is another type of negation, which we will, for the time being, call infinite negation. This negation does not claim

that someone or something is missing a particular quality. It negates the very possibility of the application of a quality at all. For example, when we say, "The wall can't see," we don't mean that the wall is blind and it lacks a particular quality; rather, we mean that the question of seeing or not is not applicable to the wall at all. We can illustrate this with endless examples, in which the question itself becomes absurd. What is the color of the note c? What is the sound of the cold? Although there are people who would use such imagery in their poetic language, we would claim simply that the property of color does not apply to sounds. We must develop the awareness that there are things to which we simply cannot apply certain paired descriptions such as hot and not hot, tall and not tall. Sometimes this understanding is obvious; yet, sometimes, we may be deceived, and we must use all of our intellectual powers to avoid falling into a trap.

Infinite negation does not point out a lack; it is absolute negation. We must use this type of negation when talking about God. However, here we must apply another principle, that of value. If we say that God is alive, we seem to be describing God using a concept from human experience. Yet we do use this term, says Riha1, because we use it as a negative attribute. This description negates the application of the very human pair of words, life and death, to God. Riha1 writes: "Just as when you say, 'The stone is not wise,' it does not follow that you would describe the stone as foolish; it is at too low a level to be described either as wise or foolish; thus the Divine Being is too elevated to be described by the terms life and death. God is beyond these qualities, just as He is beyond light and darkness. If we were asked the question, 'Does the Divine Being exude light or darkness?' we would answer through transference: Light!" [2:49]. We should really give the complicated answer that God is beyond every description; however, religious language leads us in a particular direction and from each possible pair of words we choose the term which denotes the higher value. Since we instinctively feel the superiority of light to darkness, we use transference and say that God exudes light. The Chaver continues: "This response stems from our fear that the questioner will think that whatever is not light is darkness. However, in truth, we would have to say more: Light and darkness apply only to physical bodies, but the Divine Being is not a body. Therefore, He should not be described in term of light and darkness except as a literary device, or in order to negate a description which we consider a deficiency" [ibid.].

To understand the meaning of negative attributes, I invite the reader to join me on an imaginary journey within the warm room which he currently occupies. In this trip, we will take a fresh look at the objects in our daily lives; however, this time we will wear glasses, earphones, scientific clothing and gloves which will display the world according to the theories which we study in physics, chemistry, etc. This unique garb will also enable us to grow and shrink, like Alice in Wonderland, in order to reach these otherwise

invisible worlds. The only condition to this trip is that we take what we learn there seriously.

If we look through these glasses at the table, at the chair, etc., we will begin to see a strange world. Instead of objects we will see strange structures, until we reach the chemical elements and begin to see molecules, atoms and then a dense forest of sub-atomic particles. As Rav Sa'adia Gaon expressed it, we reach a reality which is "thinner" than reality as we know it. In other words, on the way to these strange worlds we lose what we call the "physicality" of our concrete everyday world. In the room we hear sounds and see colors. On our journey we will discover that the harmony between the various sounds is merely a function of the relationships between the wavelengths of various chords; and color is merely a different wavelength. The concrete world is merely a surface layer, and whenever we dig into it and go deeper, we lose more and more of our basic intuitions.

We will illustrate this with a simple example. Let us assume that we have shrunk to the extent that we can travel on an electron. As we wrote above, our trip takes place in a warm room. We have measured the temperature before starting out on our trip. However, now that we have reached one of the electrons of the table, we will measure the temperature again. What result will we get?

Of course, we will get no result at all. Not because we do not know how to measure, but because the concept of temperature in that world is meaningless. Temperature describes a particular phenomenon in a world which contains molecules in perpetual movement, as we learned in physics. When we speak about a single sub-atomic particle, temperature has no place. The concept of temperature cannot be applied there. However, this ought not to surprise us, since on this trip we have lost our sense of touch, our ability to discern color and virtually all of our conventional perceptual abilities. We have reached a state in which all of our normal frameworks of perception have deserted us, to the extent that we would definitely be convinced by that great mathematician of the beginning of the century who claimed that particles are merely holes in absolute nothingness, holes filled with mathematical formulas.

Is our perception incorrect? If we are mistaken, where is our mistake? Various philosophers try to save the warm room in which we began our journey; however, we have promised to be loyal to the scientific theories we learned in high school. These theories teach us, among other things, the negative attributes of many objects whose existence we never dreamed of at first. This is both the blessing and the curse of science. Science begins from the world close to us, from the world of the simple honest man, who believes in realism and plain logic, and ends in abstractions and theories which are very

far indeed from our original perceptions. We experienced this reality in our search for scientific truth; how much more so is this sensation present in our search for God. This feeling is expressed in our use of negative attributes in relation to God. God is distant, perhaps infinitely distant, from our perceptual channels.

What do we accomplish with the application of negative attributes? The Rambam teaches us that we create a system of negative attributes, which does not only concern itself with the neutralization of attributes, but also creates a certain concept of God, as a Being which is beyond the assignment of these attributes. Let me give you an example involving the concept of time.

What do we mean when we say that God is eternal? Of course, on a basic level we mean thus to teach people that God has existed forever. He was not born at a certain time, He has no biography as people do. This is clear. However, the Rambam teaches us, we must reach a higher level in order to understand that the category of time does not apply to God at all. God is beyond time. This understanding that God is beyond time entails tremendous effort and intellectual development. We may understand the full meaning of this statement through an examination of man. Man's body exists in space and time, while his soul does not exist in space, but only in time. Emotional episodes, such as fear or joy, can be "located" in time, but not in space. We could say that the fear preceded the joy, or that the joy preceded the fear; however, since our spiritual life does not exist in space, we certainly cannot say that the joy is to the left of the fear. This is an example of a reality which stands outside a certain category. God is beyond the categories of space and time. Incidentally, this understanding helps us deal with the question of divine foreknowledge and free will; in other words, with the problem of God's knowledge of our future; for from the divine perspective, our future is in essence an eternal present.

## **Divine Perfection**

Lastly, we will discuss an attribute favored by philosophers of all generations, the attribute of perfection. We can think of God as the most perfect being. The Rambam referred repeatedly to this divine attribute, particularly in his thirteen principles of faith. In the Guide For The Perplexed, the Rambam explains that the selection of divine attributes is guided by the desire to bring about the recognition of this idea. This teaches us that in the Rambam's view, the attribute of perfection is a psychological and pedagogical description.

### **PART III: Divine Attributes in Our Times: Religious Language**

Is the theory of divine attributes relevant today? Surprisingly, the philosophical discussion of the theory of divine attributes has shown much more vitality than other philosophical discussions. A definite influence in this direction is the recent interest in the linguistic aspect of philosophy. Modern philosophy is more and more aware, not only of the problems of proving claims and constructing systems of thought, which were its classic goals, but also of the language used to formulate these claims.

This linguistic direction, which developed largely in the English-speaking world, reached its height (or what some would call its low point) in the claim that the exclusive role of philosophy is the clarification of the language used to formulate various statements in different fields. Thus, for example, the philosophy of science deals with scientific language, etc. These directions were very destructive with regard to a particular development in philosophy; however, they left behind an important message: the need to take note of religious language. In this context, the theory of divine attributes developed in the direction of understanding the language we use to speak about God, and the differences between this and other types of languages, such as scientific language.

We spoke earlier about divine unity as the dividing point between the Creator and His creatures. Many discussions in medieval Jewish philosophy revolved around this topic. This claim was under debate among our sages, who were divided into two camps: those who spoke of division and those who spoke of analogy. The first group maintained that the difference between the Creator and His creatures was absolute, and no description of the Creator may be attributed to His creatures. The second group felt that the creatures had characteristics which have the "fingerprints" of God, and therefore we can speak of analogy. In order to describe this analogy, medieval philosophers used the term 'relationship.' We use these attributes to compare human wisdom to divine wisdom, but we continually point out the tremendous gap that must necessarily exist between the two. There are two possible approaches to understanding this gap. The first possibility is that the very relationship between the Creator and His creatures produces the divine "fingerprints," and that is all we can say. This was the approach of the Raibag (Rabbi Levi ben Gershom). The second possibility is that the relationship between the Creator and His creatures is comparable to the relationship between the finite and the infinite. This was the approach of Rabbi Chasdai Crescas.

## **The Ralbag**

We will explain the Ralbag's approach with a simple example. Imagine that you are walking through an art gallery, and when stopping before a particular picture, you hear the person behind you say that it is a sad picture. This teaches us that we can use the word "sad" in two ways. The picture may be sad, but in a different way than the person who is looking at it. We attribute to the picture a quality which it definitely does not possess. The qualities of pictures can be described through perspective, color, and other physical realities. And yet, it is not absurd to attribute "sadness" to a picture. In essence, through the use of this term we are stating that the picture creates a certain response in us. When we use the word "sadness" regarding a picture, we point out that the picture is the source of our own sadness. Similarly we can attribute wisdom to God. He is the ultimate source of human wisdom, while the source itself is so very exalted that we have no power to describe it in our language.

## **Rabbi Chasdai Crescas**

Rabbi Chasdai Crescas believed in the analogy model as well. However, he felt that we must place infinity at the center of this analogy. Infinity has various meanings. It is one of the basic kabbalistic concepts, where it is used to express the idea that we cannot attribute to God any characteristic within the sphere of human comprehension.

In this sense the Kabbalists are more extreme than the Rambam. However, on the other hand, these same Kabbalists maintained that we can and must create a religious language. They accomplished this using the doctrine of the Sefirot. (A description of the Kabbalistic approach would be beyond the scope of our present discussion.)

Rabbi Chasdai Crescas bases the difference between human attributes and divine attributes upon the unbridgeable gap between the finite and the infinite. Let me use a kind of mathematical analog to explain this idea. As children we all learned the famous formula of  $a/b=c/d$ . If we transpose this formula, we could say that human wisdom (A), in relation to divine wisdom (B), is equal to the finite (C), in relation to the infinite (D).

## **The Pauper's Hymn: Our Religious Language**

Let us return to the An'im Zemirot prayer, and look at a telling passage:

Bring my multitude of songs near to You

And my glad song shall come close to You.



May my praise be a crown of glory for Your head

And may my prayer be accepted as incense.

May the song of a pauper be acceptable to You

As a song sung over Your offerings.

This section clearly can be understood both on a simple and on a mystical level. On the simple level, our song is the "song of the pauper," for the Temple has been destroyed. Yet we plead that our pauper's song be accepted just as God accepted the song of the Levites in the Temple.

However, this passage contains a mystical meaning as well: the pauper's song is the song sung in man's own poor language. All of philosophical endeavor is a pauper's song which cannot succeed in describing reality.

This idea is expressed in parallel in the writings of three of modern Judaism's deepest thinkers: Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, Rabbi Kook, and Martin Buber. Each one independently claimed that the construction of all of these theological concepts is only a temporary stage, and when man reaches a higher developmental stage, he will have to abandon this level, for at the higher level he will feel that the earlier stage is too corporeal. This was expressed by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov when he said that in the future we will repent over our repentance. From our loftier perspective we will look at theological intellectual definitions as the creation of teenagers who investigated the issues on a superficial level, and created a philosophy of adolescents. Yet, this is actually the deeper meaning of the last sentence of the An'im Zemirot prayer, in which we ask God's forgiveness for using our religious language, for it is thus that we express our love for God:

May my speech be pleasant to You

for my soul longs for You.

## **CHAPTER 36: The Principles Of Faith**

### **PART 1:**

David Kaufmann, the great researcher of Jewish philosophy in the last century, demonstrated that Rishon developed a system of principles through his discussion of prayer [3: 17]. The principles are described in the recitation of religious truths that we affirm after reciting the Shema: "After this, the pious ought to recite the principles which complete the Jewish faith." If we juxtapose the prayer and the principles, we will receive the following list:

### **The Prayer The Principle**

1. Truly You are the Lord our God admission of God's sovereignty
2. Your Name has existed forever and His eternal existence
3. [You have been] the support of providential guidance of our forefathers our forefathers
4. Blessed is the man who adheres He is the giver of the to Your commandments Torah
5. Truly You redeemed us from Egypt The Exodus from Egypt as proof of this

This approach to the prayers between the Shema and the Amida (the Silent Devotion) as a summary of the principles of faith is later repeated in the writings of Rabbi Isaac Arama. He saw these truths as our response to the divine message of the Shema. We will not develop this direction here. Instead, we will return to principles two through five in the Rambam's classic formulation. This section constitutes an excellent summary of the basic elements of the theory of divine attributes. As you know, the thirteen principles can be divided into definite sections:

1-4: The divine attributes

6-9: Torah as divine revelation

10-13: Reward and punishment and redemption

The fifth principle, as we shall see, is actually an independent section, and it constitutes a sort of practical-pragmatic definition of the essence of the individual's faith.

## **The First Principle: God Must Exist**

We will explain the first principle according to the Rambam's ideas in his Code (Sefer Mada) and in the Guide of the Perplexed. In our previous lectures we noted the Rambam's opposition to the use of positive attributes in relation to God. Yet despite this, the Rambam "allows" us to use a positive concept which hides a negative concept within it. This seemingly negative concept is actually the single most significant positive concept: it is the assertion that God must exist.

I will attempt to explain this concept with a simple parable. When we explained the concept of creation, we used the example of a film to illustrate that idea. Let us return to this example, and think of ourselves as creatures projected in a film onto a screen. According to this approach, our world is similar to a three-dimensional film, not the two-dimensional ones we are used to. We can learn much about the world from this comparison. We, the characters of the film, are trying to understand our reality. We develop science, history, psychology, etc., in order to become familiar with the world of the film, which is our reality. However, even if we succeed in the development of these fields, our perception of reality will be incomplete if we do not realize that there is someone or something "outside" of our film, which is projecting us onto the screen. We must realize that even if we are capable of action, and can choose to change the screenplay (in other words, if we have "free will") our existence will still be dependent upon the person activating the projector. We will never truly understand our reality unless we realize that our existence is secondary compared with the existence of the person activating the projector. If we were to imagine that this person died or that the projector broke, we would disappear. Yet nothing that occurs in the film can harm the projector.

This relationship differentiates between two types of existence: the world, which is contingent, and God, Who must exist. The fact that our world is contingent means that our world is a reality which does not have its own independent existence, and it requires something outside itself to make its existence possible. Through this analysis, we understand something of the philosophical significance of the Tetragrammaton. This name teaches us not only the eternal nature of God as existing concurrently in the past, present and future, it teaches us also the true essence of God's statement, "I will be what I will be," which means that His existence is enough to sustain Him. He does not require anything outside of Himself in order to exist.

This concept is described in various forms throughout Jewish philosophical literature. In Chassidism, we find the astute idea that our existence resembles the spoken word, as opposed to the written word. The writer of the word may disappear, yet the

word remains. The spoken word exists only as long as the speech continues. Even if the speaker were to draw out the word for a long time, it would only exist for as long as he was speaking. In this manner, the Ba'al Shem Tov interpreted the verse in Psalms, "Forever Your word, God, stands in the heavens." The heavens exist only because they are a manifestation of the divine Word. The existence of the heavens is thus similar to that of the spoken word. This interpretation uncovers a deeper meaning in the blessing, "Blessed are You ... our God, at whose word everything came into being." The divine speech which created our reality did not cease with the completion of creation; that original speech continues to exist through every object and organism in our world.

Our reality is a chain. Each link is a stage which is dependent upon a previous stage. It remains suspended, despite its many links. It remains suspended because of an outside support. The chain is contingent; the supporter is God, Who must exist. The proof that something must exist outside of the chain to support it is, in essence, the proof of God's existence.

Another version of the same idea is found in the writings of Rabbi Chasdai Crescas. In order to explain this idea we will return to the example of the film. This approach emphasizes the idea that God's relationship with the world does not find its only expression in the creation of the world at one point in history; God is also the reason for the world's continued existence. The film does not become an independent entity after we begin to project it onto the screen. We must continue to project it in order for it to continue to exist. The explosions in the film are not dangerous to the viewers. In essence, what we are describing here are two levels of existence. The entire world, with all its physical and spiritual components, needs God in order to exist.

## **PART II: The Second Principle**

Our belief in divine unity finds expression in the second principle of the Rambam's Thirteen Principles. As we have seen, this principle has various meanings. The Rambam stresses that unity does not mean only "uniqueness" (one as opposed to many); it also means "oneness" (unity as opposed to complexity). If we carefully examine this principle, we will discover that God is the only "one" that exists.

Let us set out on a journey in quest of oneness. We will soon find our mission is fraught with difficulties. True, many things in our world are called one. For example, we speak of one humanity; however, humanity, of course, is composed of many individuals, of many people. In other words, the unity of humanity is abstract and conceptual. A person visiting a school enters a room and is told that he is observing one class. The unity of the class is not in the children; it is in our mind. We create unity by projecting our thoughts onto the world. We could easily divide the class in half, according to reading levels, or according to those who wear glasses and those who don't, light-haired and dark-haired students, etc. The reality would have remained the same; yet, the unity about which I spoke earlier would disappear. This is the unity of species and types, which the Rambam refuses to classify as true unity.

Until this point we have dealt with abstract ideas. One might think that the situation would be different regarding objects which appear to be a single unit. We see a single human being standing before us. There is unity here, but is it complete? This is doubtful, since the unity is composed of such immense complexity. Is man indeed one? No, because man has an anatomy. We can speak about his limbs and organs, his cells, his molecules, etc. However, the problem does not lie only with man's complexity. Let us assume that a chemistry expert were to present us with one unified block of pure and totally homogenous chemical material. This pure chemical body can also be divided. All physical bodies have the capacity for division; it is the result of our presence in space. Geometry allows for infinite divisions.

In other words, whatever we observe can be magnified into larger and larger categories; yet, by the same token, these same components can be divided infinitely into smaller parts. As early as Greek times, people spoke about the atom. The word atom means that it cannot be divided [a-tom]. Science divided the atom, each time discovering more elemental particles, which are of a divisible character in three different ways: they are many particles, they have many characteristics, and they are themselves, perhaps, complex. To what extent, who knows? Are there particles which cannot be divided? This is an interesting question. However, even if they exist, those particles are not single units; they are complex. They have a mass, an electrical charge, momentum, etc. And if

that were not enough, recent research has discovered other characteristics, comparable to our color and taste, which are beyond our comprehension. There are particles which are identical in all their recognizable characteristics, and yet they behave differently. These theories teach us that, apparently, additional characteristics exist which we cannot perceive.

Thus, we see that in our world there is no unity. We have the unity of the number one, but this unity is also abstract. When we create one from many, we ourselves are combining disparate elements; we are placing all these parts in imaginary brackets in our mind, creating compartments and groups. They exist only in an abstract sense. We view them as units; however, there is no true unity in the world. It is just one of the conceptual constructs that we create in our minds.

The Rambam's conclusion is interesting. Our recognition of God as One is enough to make Him completely different from anything else that exists in the world. The trait of unity is attributable to God, and to God alone.

This idea is typical of the philosophical approach of Rabbeinu Bachye Ibn Pakuda, who develops this concept in his book "Duties of the Heart," in the section entitled, "The Gate of Uniqueness." He distinguishes between "passing unity" (meaning the unit which is only apparently one), and true unity. The Rambam accepts this idea; however, his approach extends further, and (as we have seen) he emphasizes the concept of God as a Being which must exist, as opposed to all other beings, which can, or may exist. Thus, we can define the distinction between the two approaches as a difference of opinion regarding the most elemental divine attribute. According to one approach, we essentially say that "God is one," meaning God equals one. According to the second approach, which we discussed earlier, the basic attribute is that of existence: "I will be what I will be." In other words, God must exist.

### **The Third Principle: Negation of Physicality**

The Rambam's third principle of faith negates the possibility of divine physicality. However, this principle must be elaborated. The Rambam teaches us that God is not a physical body, and not a physical force. In this way, he seeks to warn us against approaches which can be termed pantheistic - in other words, approaches which that connect God with the world. Some philosophers perceive God as the soul of the world. Judaism is built on the assumption that God is absolutely outside of the world; He does not need the world and He is not connected with it. We must not relate to God as a kind of magnetic field. This is sometimes expressed in a very innocent way, by those who

speak of God in terms of nature, a cosmic force, etc. Thus, for example, in the movie "Star Wars," the hero saves the world, using the powers given him by a mysterious power that he calls "The Force." Man must achieve a kind of state of harmony with it, and then he connects with the Force. The assumption in the movie is that there exists in nature an additional force besides the electro-magnetic, a force that we can perceive. This approach reflects a particular idolatrous tradition.

Although we do find in the Kabbala and Chassidism descriptions of a God who is present in the entire cosmos, these positions are not identical. Chassidism wishes to teach us that there is holiness in nature, but not that nature and holiness are identical. Thus, for example, Chabad Chassidism teaches that God fills all the worlds, but He also surrounds all the worlds. In other words, holiness finds expression in nature; however, there is holiness which is absolutely outside of nature. This principle serves to deter us from following mistaken views.

### **PART III: The Fourth Principle: Eternal Existence**

We have discussed negative attributes at length in the previous lectures. The best example of negative attributes is that of eternal existence. In the Rambam's view, eternal existence does not mean that God exists in time, but as opposed to mortals like us, is immortal; rather it means that God exists outside the realm of time altogether, that time has no meaning for Him. This concept is related to the age-old question of foreknowledge and free choice. We will discuss this issue later on.

### **The Four Attributes**

The four divine attributes - existence, unity, non-physicality and immortality - are interrelated. The philosophers explain that they are interrelated in a similar manner as those mathematical axioms which are connected in a sort of interdependent ring. We can prove axiom one on the basis of axiom two. Afterwards, however, we can prove axiom two on the basis of axiom one, as well. This proves that they are expressions of the same truth. Thus we learn that these four attributes are really one.

This idea is parallel to the Rasag's central claim, that the multiplicity of divine attributes is a result of the problems of human language. The limitations of language cause us to use various words, such as alive, willing, and capable. If we were of higher intelligence, we would be able to say alive-willing-capable in one word. For, in truth, God has only one attribute.

## **The Fifth Principle**

The Rambam's fifth principle is essential to our understanding of monotheism. This principle teaches us that our relationship with God is not only intellectual; it is, first and foremost, a relationship which finds expression in action. Let us assume the existence of creatures which are superior to man. We can easily imagine the existence of additional spiritual beings. Does this possibility damage monotheism? Yes, this danger does exist. The fifth principle explains the boundaries of faith in this area. The simple claim that other beings exist besides man does not necessarily constitute idolatry. It depends upon how man perceives these beings and the practical ramifications of his perception. Jewish monotheism means that we do not worship any other element in the cosmos. We do not worship any creature; we worship the Creator. In the final analysis, the issue of worship is what defines monotheism. Idolatry can be based on a very spiritual and abstract idea, which was nonetheless drawn into practical idol worship. The most outstanding example is Buddhism. Buddha's philosophy was extremely abstract. In a sense, he could even have been accused of atheism. Yet, his approach created a new paganism. For people who are not aware of the very abstract philosophy of the originator may enter a Buddhist temple; they see idols and sacrificial rites. Thus, a very abstract, philosophical religion, containing definite elements of truth, may be expressed in practice through idolatrous decadence. This is typical of many Eastern religions. It echoes in the voices of the meditation masters who demand a sort of symbolic sacrifice while at the same time denying any element of idolatry in their practices. Perhaps the intentions are good, but these phenomena prove that without the fifth principle, extreme abstraction encourages paganism.[1: 96-97]

We will return to the fifth principle again when we discuss the phenomenon of idolatry. Here we must focus on a topic which is connected to this issue - the sin of the golden calf.

## **The Dangers Of Monotheism**

The sin of the golden calf damaged not the first principle but the fifth. Monotheism constantly faces two dangers. The first is idolatry, paganism: "You shall not have other gods before Me." The second can be termed fetishism: "You shall not make for yourself any statue or graven image."

This analysis is the basis for the Rihal's interpretation of the sin of the golden calf. We must first paint a different picture of the sin from what it appears at first glance. This picture is now popular, but this is only due to the Kuzari. The sin, says Rihal, is not



rebellion against God or an attempt to revive idolatry. Actually, from a subjective point of view, from the perspective of the feeling of the people, the nation did not sin; rather they tried to worship God in this manner. And yet, despite this positive desire, the action they took contains an objective mistake, perhaps even a crime. The sin of the golden calf should be understood as a sin against the fifth principle, a sin of fetishism. This was not a betrayal of the God who took us out of Egypt. It was a transgression of the prohibition against making idols, idols which do not represent God but are different, incorrect forms of serving Him.

The Kuzari's position is clearly the obvious interpretation of the text, since it points to the essence of the calf as a sort of throne for God. The golden calf has an interesting parallel in the Ark. The Ark and the keruvim constitute the true throne, which symbolizes the fact that God continues to accompany the nation on all of its journeys, even after the Jews leave the place of revelation, Mt. Sinai. A structural similarity between the calf and the ark exists; however, the difference between them remains in evidence. The similarity cannot hide the significant difference. The calf retains a pagan flavor and meaning, a remnant of a world that the freed nation ought to have left behind.

### **The Essence Of The Sin**

The commentaries on the topic of the golden calf can be divided into three approaches:

A. The sin is the result of the nations' inability to accept upon themselves the most abstract form of divine worship, without the mediation of physical images and symbols. In their minds, these symbols constituted giant magnets attracting positive divine influences. Sometimes man sins out of love, similar to the great love of an elephant who enters a china shop to buy a gift for his beloved and the sin of the simpleton in the pharmacy. It is the folly of the person who, although guided by good intentions, does not know how to express them appropriately.

B. The sin is the result of not fulfilling the divine command. The Jews did not follow the divine instructions. The essential difference between holiness and defilement lies in the faithful fulfillment of the divine command.

C. The third approach emphasizes the idea that this commandment is not a decree with no reason. This idea is also expressed in Rihal's parable about the doctor and his impersonator. We must be aware of the fact that there are connections and interactions in reality that man cannot rationally understand. We must reject our preconceived ideas, for these assumptions are usually conceived from the perspective of the rational man. With openness and humility, we must face facts and discoveries which alter our

perceptions. In retrospect, we will recognize that our previous positions were not rational but rather a result of our imaginative faculties.

These three principles were developed by different commentators. The first approach was developed thoroughly by Rabbi Ovadiah Mi-sforno, who saw the sin of the golden calf as a fall from abstract consciousness to a need for tangible symbols. According to this explanation, the Tabernacle and the worship focused therein were not part of God's original plan. Originally, God distanced the Jewish people from any relation to a tangible, physical symbol. However, now, after the sin, the Jewish people must return to the physical and tangible in divine worship. This approach may possibly reflect the opinion of the Rambam.

The second position is formulated in principle by various commentators, who emphasized that the essence of keeping the Torah lies only in performing the will of God.

The third opinion is represented by Rihal, who reiterates it later on [3:23]. The tabernacle and the Keruvim represent a different causality, not a natural one. This position would later find expression in kabbalistic literature and also seems to be the position of Rihal. He writes:

"All this came to them at the advice of the magicians and talisman holders among them, who considered their worship, which they followed according to the logic of their imagination, to be close to the true worship. However, their way in this was none other than the way of the simpleton which we mentioned earlier [1:89] who entered the pharmacy of the doctor and killed people with the same drugs that formerly had cured them." [1:97]

The fact is that divine commands are not arbitrary. The apparently meaningless command covers a deeper meaning which cannot always be understood. When a person disobeys God he not only commits a sin; he also destroys a reality which he cannot properly understand. Rihal formulated this difference succinctly when he said that "the source of faith is the source of rebellion."

### **The Eternal Covenant**

The sin of the golden calf is a central pivot in the debate regarding the eternal or transient nature of the covenant. This issue lay at the heart of all our religious polemics. Christian theology, and, to a certain extent, Muslim theology as well, claimed that the Jews were chosen by God, but because of their sin God despised them. Rihal teaches us a paradoxical truth. It is the sin of the golden calf which teaches us the eternity of the

covenant. It was a horrible sin. Our sages see it as an appalling betrayal, immediately following the establishment of the covenant. Yet, despite this, the covenant was not annulled, and God forgave the Jewish people. Thus the very extent of the sin teaches us, paradoxically, that the covenant is eternal.

## **CHAPTER 37: Scriptural Semantics: The Divine Names [4: 1-9]**

### **PART I:**

In the fourth section [4: 1-9], Rihal interprets the various divine names used by the holy scriptures.

#### **Elokim [4:1]**

We will begin our discussion, as did Rihal, with the divine name "Elokim." This choice is not arbitrary. This name expresses the concept of God which man may discover not through prophecy, but through the application of his logic and intellect, without direct divine assistance. As we have already demonstrated on many occasions, there are two ways to reach God: through logic, which Rihal calls "hakasha," and intuitively, which he calls "ta'am" (4: 17). This refers to a direct human experience, as opposed to an indirect, logical conclusion of divine existence. "Ta'am" is, of course, a description of prophecy; however, it is not limited to the prophetic sphere. Rihal explains that this experience occurs at the encounter between the plain humble individual and the prophet: "and their souls find rest in their complete faith in the prophet ... and yet the masses are not attracted to follow [the philosophers] as though the truth had been revealed to the masses as a sort of prophetic vision [4: 17]."

The terms "ta'am" and "hakasha" originated in the Hebrew translation of the Kuzari by Rabbi Yehuda Ibn Tibbon. Rabbi Yehuda Even Shmuel, in his translation, uses the words "chush" and "hekesh." Often the terms used in classical translations of Jewish texts have become an integral part of the Jewish philosophical tradition.

The term Elokim can help us pinpoint the difference between "the God [Elokim] of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob" and the "god of Aristotle" (4: 16). The perception of God as "Elokim" was achieved by the great philosophers in their investigations. However, this understanding was also reached by all nations, from the most primitive to the most sophisticated. The recognition of a higher power is a universal phenomenon, common to all places and periods, since the beginning of human existence. However, this universal character also teaches us much about the nature of this understanding. The pagan idol worshipper achieved some understanding of what exists beyond his sensory perceptions; yet, he did not actually reach a perception of God. This is demonstrated by the fact that the pagan never discovered the unity of the Creator. The pagan searched for God, but he found His servants and was content to look no further.

The name Elokim is used for mundane purposes as well, when it denotes, for example, the ruler or the judge. This is because they are individual instances of a larger principle, that the name Elokim denotes power and rulership, particularly powers which we cannot perceive with our senses because they exist in a realm beyond our palpable reality. Thus, this name is an instance in which we use one term to express a number of ideas. In this case, we apply the semantic principle known in Jewish thought as "bi-khlal u-veyichud" - in general and in particular. The word Elokim refers generally to the powers that operate in our world, and refers in particular to the ruler of the entire world. The reality of Elokim thus makes our relationship with the world possible. How, then, do we explain how we differ from pagan idolatry and other religions? We share a common, almost neutral term, "Elokim," which we all use. However, like a person returning to his home on a stormy day, we must be careful not to track in the philosophical mud we have contended with outside.

Pagan idolatry recognized the forces of nature and enslaved itself to them. Much of pagan mythology is merely the anthropomorphism of natural events, such as climatic phenomena. The death of Tamuz or of Adonis represent the change of seasons and the withering of plant life. The same is true of the other forces of nature. However, it is important to note that this anthropomorphism is retained in abstract Greek philosophy. In Aristotelian philosophy, we find an explanation of the migration of the stars, or, more specifically, the constellations in which the stars were located according to their astronomical system. According to the Greeks, the explanation was that every star has a force, a soul or intellect which propels it. These are the souls of the separate constellations or intellects of Medieval philosophy.

For Aristotelian philosophy the concept "Elokim" became identical with the concept of "unmoved mover." Philosophy inherited the pagan perceptions and retained them in the post-pagan cultural world, while giving it a philosophical interpretation. The common denominator between the philosophical and pagan models is that they both recognized the existence of super-human forces which rule the world.

The philosopher who speaks at the beginning of the Kuzari believes without a doubt in the oneness of God. This is a legacy from the philosophical-religious synthesis which was created by Alexandrian Jewry. God is part of the scriptural heritage. And indeed, without the scriptures, the philosophical development of the world would have been drastically different. If we delve into the philosophy of Aristotle, for example, we will notice that despite the special place reserved for the concept of Elokim, his identification of Elokim with the unpropelled propeller actually means that the existence of many gods is possible. Each god is in charge of one constellation and the star or stars inside it. These

are clearly mythological remnants which have penetrated into the most abstract Greek philosophy.

Rihal relates to this question in the fifth section [5: 22, pg 232]:

"And what brought the philosophers to the assumption of many gods is the investigation of the movement of the galgalim, which they counted and found to be over forty ... they came to the conclusion that these movements came from free will, and this proves that each of them comes from a soul, and that every soul's origin is in an intellect, and this intellect is an angel, separate from the physical, and these intellects they called gods."

Classic philosophical thought was founded upon the Greek principles of physics and math. They are characterized by the absolute absence of the principle of inertia. In this early physics, there is no explanation as to why an object in motion, like a constellation or a star, continues to move. There was a need to assume a constant reason for the movement. We explain this continuation through the principle of inertia. Aristotle did not recognize this principle and therefore assumed the existence of souls which propel the heavenly bodies. These souls are guided by tendencies which can be termed 'intellectual.' This is the origin of the system of the souls and the incorporeal intellects.

Rihal's approach, and the Rambam's in his wake, teaches us that philosophy became idolatry. Rihal felt that all the theories about the angels and the constellations were merely "intricacies which help to sharpen the mind, not to recognize the truth, and the one who is enticed, in the end becomes a heretic" [5: 22]. The Rambam also thought that this was the way humanity moved away from belief in one god to idolatry. It is interesting to note that this was also the position of Aristotle in one of his lost dialogues, a book which was not known in the Middle Ages. He perceived paganism as the remnants of a philosophy which developed in a previous civilization before it was destroyed. We can build an opposite model! It was the pagan heritage which caused Aristotle to formulate laws of movement according to which the planets move because gods move them. The monotheistic philosophers thought that the movers were merely angels.

Aristotle's cosmic approach was totally overturned with the advent of new physics, and the discoveries of Galileo and Newton. Since then, the astronomical system has been perceived not as a system of living bodies, but as a very complex system similar to the inner workings of a complex clock.

As Newton explained, this system makes sense only if we assume the existence of a superior watchmaker who wound it up in the first place.

However, Newton's revolution is also outdated. Relativity and quantum physics inform us that the truth may be much more complicated, and the watch model is not at all satisfactory. For now it seems possible that human awareness may have an affect on the "winding up" of our world.

Thus we see that the unity of God was a problem in the Aristotelian philosophical system. Later, at the beginning of the fifteenth century, Rabbi Chasdai Crescas expressed his vehement opinion that there is absolutely no philosophical possibility of proving divine unity. He strengthened the approach of Rihal as it is expressed here. The concept of divine unity thus becomes the result of faith, the very content of the Shema prayer.

As Rihal implies, it would be easy to reach a kind of aristocracy of gods from the philosophical position. What was missing here was the concept of a highest god, or "god of the gods". The name Elokim allows us to formulate our conflict with paganism. The nations of the world use the name "gods" when they speak of the powers that rule the world. However, their perspective is always specific. Each god is a partial power, an expression or an explanation of a particular natural phenomenon. They saw the gods in the phenomena, for they perceived each phenomenon as itself and not as an expression of its source. We can assume that if the idol worshippers had known about electromagnetic fields, there would have been enough people to worship them. They certainly would not have felt that what they saw was only part of the whole system, and that God must be searched for outside the system as a source for the entire system. This is the "God of the gods," the source of all the forces. The belief in divine unity compels us to look for the source of the entire system. However, this source lies outside the system, unlike the idol worshippers who believed that one could worship the forces and affect them magically. In this way, the forces of nature became gods.

If we use language to emphasize the differences between our approach and those we oppose, however, we have before us two semantic possibilities. The scriptures used both.

1. We use the name Elokim because it is true that there are forces in nature beyond the phenomena. However, we believe in one God, who is behind and beyond all phenomena. He is "Elokim," or, if you will, "the God of gods."

2. We give a new meaning to the collective term "Elokim." Let me give you an example to explain what I mean. Reuven and Shimon are arguing about the origin of a certain object. Reuven claims that a group of people manufactured it. Shimon knows that this is not true, as a single individual, Yehuda is responsible for the object. When Yehuda approaches, Shimon says to Reuven, "here comes the group." The scriptures

took a term which was originally collective and transformed it to the representation of unity, a unity which supersedes all the forces in the world. The word underwent a transformation, which made its use possible by the professors of monotheism, as well.

## **PART II: The Tetragrammaton**

The essential quality of the name Elokim is its generality. The main difference between it and the Tetragrammaton is comparable to the difference that exists between a proper and a common noun. This distinction has various grammatical ramifications; yet, beyond this, it also has an emotional impact upon us. We can relate in all kinds of ways to strangers that we happen to see on the street. However, the central expression of our acquaintance with them and the prerequisite for verbal contact is that we know their name. Of course, we can speak to them as a passenger speaks to a driver, a cashier to a customer; however, this type of interaction is not what one would call personal acquaintance. Learning the other's name is akin to the transition from speaking about someone far away, a "he," to speaking to someone close, a "you." The phrasing of the blessing, "Blessed are you God" expresses the creation of a personal relationship, and direct connection with God. The prophet, as opposed to the philosopher, knows Him directly. The knowledge of God is one of the marks of the Jewish nation, and it allows for the calling of God's name, prayer and the hope of divine response.

In his "Book of The Name," Rabbi Avraham Ibn Ezra analyzed the differences between proper and common nouns. He also demonstrated that the Scriptures were careful to preserve these distinctions. For example, common nouns are not preceded by "the." In Hebrew, it is correct to use the term "the Elokim," while "the" cannot precede the Tetragrammaton. A common noun cannot be conjugated, nor can it be articulated in the plural.

Medieval grammarians compared the relationship between the Hebrew alphabet and the vowels, which are not part of the alphabet but added under the letters, to the relationship between bodies and souls. This is because one written word may potentially have a number of meanings, depending upon the vowels affixed to the letters. A word without vowels is like a body without a soul; it is not yet alive. Similarly, Rihl teaches us, the letters of the Tetragrammaton are like souls.

Rihl adds a trifling but very important point. We are forbidden to pronounce the Tetragrammaton and its expression was always a unique one. This is because the Tetragrammaton is made up of a combination and arrangement of letters which are quite



difficult to pronounce together. In addition, the appropriate vowels for the Tetragrammaton are unknown to us.

We can now return to the difference between the two types of nouns through a different parable. A blind man tries to master the streets of the city in which he lives. With great effort, he will succeed in doing so perfectly or almost perfectly. Yet, despite this, there remains a difference between the blind man and the person who sees the city with his eyes. This is the difference between the philosopher and the prophet. As philosophers, we grope in the dark and attempt to construct a map of the city. We have reached the conclusion that God exists, but as philosophers we cannot know God personally and directly. The blind philosopher knows God in the general sense represented by the name Elokim; while the direct petition - that of the sighted prophet - the unmediated encounter between God and man, finds expression in the Tetragrammaton. The God of the Jews is not the God known to the blind philosopher: "and all those who walk in the path of the divine Torah are attracted to follow those who have the prophetic vision" [4: 17].

However, there is another component to the difference between prophecy and philosophy. The blind gropings of the philosopher - despite the fact that they are usually successful - inevitably lead to the trap "which gave birth to heresy and the worthless [religious] approaches." The examples are as many and varied as the history of ideas. We will mention only two, which are brought by Rihal. The first is the mistake of the Dualists, those who believed in the existence of two gods, such as the Persian religion and later the Gnostic groups, who believed in the existence of two divine entities. The second is the error of another group - the Jahariya - which believed that God exists but only as a physical force, bringing us back to the third of the thirteen principles. These are errors which strew the path toward a logical solution to the eternal questions. Of all the human attempts to find God, the finest of all was the philosophical way. It was powerful, logically consistent and very careful to avoid pitfalls and errors. It did, in fact, reach the truth, but not the whole truth. The philosophers sometimes reached partial and incorrect conclusions. As we have already seen many times, the god of the philosophers does not know, and is not interested in, man. Thus, the follower of the beliefs of the philosophers has found neither religion nor existential meaning. Here we return to the Kuzari's response, to the philosopher's presentation at the beginning of the book. The importance of truth is measured by its ability to create devotion: "and this intuitive knowledge ["ta'am"] brings whomever experiences it to give up his soul and die for his love [whereas] the logical knowledge ["hakasha"] of God demands only an obligation to raise God up as long as it does no harm and one does not suffer from it" [4: 16]. The final test of truth lies in the sanctification of God's name in its two senses: sanctification by

man, in his willingness to suffer for his beliefs, and sanctification by God Himself, through the final redemption.

### **PART III: The Power Of Language:**

Until this point we have spoken of prophecy as a method of encountering the Divine Presence; however, there is another way of arriving at the knowledge of God. This is through the prophetic bequest, the acceptance of a prophet's testimony. This indirect encounter with prophecy can indeed grant man certainty in his knowledge of God. This experience is most apparent in the "secondary" phenomena which accompany prophecy. If we think of prophecy as a fire, then these phenomena are the smoke which informs us of its presence. These phenomena are known to us by various names: Kavod, Shekhina, Malkhut, Esh, and so on. These were supernatural phenomena which appeared when the Divine Presence descended upon a person.

As we have already seen, the theory of Kavod is an approach which explains that the prophetic vision takes place on a different level of reality. Prophetic visions can be described as holograms which exist in a parallel stratosphere. Man sees them; yet, they are not real in the physical sense of the word. An audio tape or a video camera could not record the vision. At the same time, these phenomena do exist and bear witness to the existence of prophecy. Prophecy itself is entirely spiritual; however, it leaves a trail that we can perceive.

This perceivable trail accompanies us in language as well. Let me point out an important semantic phenomenon. Many times, when the Scripture refers to the Tetragrammaton, the subject is often absent from the sentence. When we say, "when the Ark was carried" we absent the subject in this manner. The phrases "arise Lord" and "Return Lord" must be understood as: "arise, Ark of the Lord" and "Return, Ark of the Lord." It is forbidden, indeed impossible, to relate phrases such as these to God; God does not sit or stand. These phrases refer to the Ark, and the verses are merely written in shorthand, with the subject absented from the sentence. In other examples the words "nation," "covenant," "Torah" and others are missing. The reason for this style of writing is because the text is referring to phenomena which are specific to God. Thus, when we say, "the nation of God" we refer to the Jewish nation which is consecrated to God, a nation which is different from the rest of the world. We describe this connection grammatically through the connection to God's name.

## **I Will Be What I Will Be**

Now we will move on to a name which God uses to "present" Himself to the nation in compliance with Moses' request. The divine name "Eheyeh Asher Eheyeh" (I will be what I will be) is clearly related to the Tetragrammaton. However, the meaning of this name must be understood in its context. Moses asks God for the divine name which he ought to use to present His message to the Jewish people. Of course, Moses was not asking merely for a name. He was asking for a definition of God's essence. God answers with one word: "Eheyeh" (literally: I will be). Man cannot attain an understanding of God's true essence. The investigation of God's essence is completely beyond him. Despite this, it is possible to fall into the illusion that man is capable of comprehending God's essence. This is a dangerous illusion. The true meaning of this name lies not in philosophy, but in history. God accompanies the Jewish people throughout its history. This is the meaning of the name "I will be what I will be:" I will be with the Jewish nation whenever they turn to me.

It is on the stage of history that we feel the presence of God.

## **A-donai**

We now reach the last divine name, the name depicting God's lordship: A-donai. Rihal's interpretation is innovative and interesting. The person experiencing a prophetic vision sees a being or a sight. However, we do not address the vision but God who is hidden behind these phenomena. To understand this, we must point out a common, but significant semantic phenomenon of using one word when we mean another (known as synecdoche). For example, we speak of a person "without a roof over his head" when we mean a homeless person. Although the two words do not have the same meaning, through the use of one word we refer to something else, while the word we use is merely related to the word we mean, or is a part of the concept we intend to convey.

Rihal illustrates this by using the phrases which are connected to the Hebrew word "lev" [heart]. Thus when we say "va-yit'atzev el libo" [and He was saddened in His heart] or "amarti be-libi" [I said in my heart, i.e., to myself], we do not mean to refer to a specific organ called the heart. We use this term in order to create an image of the "world" inside us, as though in this organ our souls, minds or feelings are reflected; therefore, when we say "heart" we mean our souls, minds or feelings. Of course, we cannot really suggest the intellect through an organ, since it is not located in a specific place. However, our feelings are expressed through the heart, and we can say that the heart feels. The soul exists or acts in the entire body; yet, we attribute its location to the heart.

Consequently, we must divide our experiences into two groups. According to Rihal, the distinguishing element between the two must be the level of immediacy and directness of the encounter with God. God affects many things indirectly. Thus, on a deep level, God is the one who made the car which I see before me; however, I can create an illusion that the car was man-made. Man is a link in an immense chain of causes, which brought this car into being. However, regarding other things, the heavens for example, the chain is much shorter. The cosmic phenomena are not in our hands; they are in the hands of God. Because of the immediacy and directness of the relationship between God and the heavens, we use the term "God in heaven," or to use the Rihal's excellent example, "Fear of heaven." Here is another example of the way language expresses one idea through another related word. We appeal to the heavens, but of course we are actually appealing to God. We do not fear the heavens, we fear the One who rules over them.

#### **PART IV:**

Until now we have described the use of one word to represent a different word or concept. In the Scriptures we often find that this can work in both directions. To use the example we mentioned last week, we often speak of the heart when we actually mean the mind; but many times we speak of the mind and we actually mean the heart. Imagine a surgeon who jokingly tells his patient before open-heart surgery, or brain surgery, that he is going to operate on the patient's "intellect." Rihal illustrates this phenomenon with the help of the phrases "a seeing eye" and "a hearing ear." These phrases are actually absurd, because the eye itself does not see. Rather, the soul that uses the eye sees, just as it is not the violin that plays, but the violinist. When we say that the eye sees, we are transferring the traits of the one using the eye to the eye itself. In the same way, we transfer traits of God to the things which we see. This is a linguistic form of transferring the cause to the object it affects. This holds true for the symbols in prophetic visions as well, such as the pillar of fire. People bow before the pillar; yet, they are really prostrating themselves before the One who commanded the pillar into being.

Another example which Rihal gives, explains the concept "Ish Elokim" [Man of God]. People who reach a certain spiritual level become God's messengers or agents in this world. These agents become vessels in the hands of God, following all his commands and disregarding their own personal desires and interests. A person who achieves this level merits the title of "Ish Elokim;" he has reached the highest level a

human can achieve. God uses him as an agent and messenger, and the Divine traits apply, or are passed on to him as well.

In light of these ideas, we can turn our attention to an ambiguous biblical narrative. When the angels appear to Abraham (Genesis 18), Abraham says, "My lords [Heb: A-donai], please do not leave your servant." Interestingly enough, the Hebrew vowels used for the word A-donai imply that the word refers to the Divine name, and not to the visiting angels. This can be interpreted in many ways. Our Sages explained that Abraham asked permission from the Divine Presence to go and welcome his guests. Rashi raises another possibility: perhaps Abraham was speaking to the eldest of the angels. However, this explanation does not explain the implication of the vowels. Rihal presents a third possibility: the visit of the angels is actually a prophetic vision. And since the angel is a messenger of God, the vowels imply that Abraham is indeed addressing the Divine Presence.

When discussing the Divine names, Rihal returns to the topic of the angels. He explains the phrase "the image of God" to mean in the image of the angels. The element that people and the angels have in common, is their rationality. However, there is another dimension to this comparison. An angel means a messenger. Both prophets and angels fulfill this role, for prophets are also agents of God. There are two additional concepts which can help us understand the angels. The angels are phenomena in the sphere of "kavod," a concept we have referred to earlier. These are phenomena that the prophets see in their visions. There are also angels which are spiritual beings. In the first meaning, the angels are beings whose presence is transient, for the vision exists only for a short time. In contrast, in the second meaning, the angels are spiritual beings which exist on a higher plane than mortal man; they are a part of "the heavenly company."

When viewing the prophetic vision, the prophet uses the divine name of A-donai, for behind the vision is God. Similarly, we use a number of phrases which imply that God is in a particular place, although in reality He is beyond all locations. Since many prophetic phenomena occur in the Temple in Jerusalem, we describe it as God's dwelling place.

## **Kadosh**

The word "kadosh" describes the concept of Transcendentalism. "Kadosh" means "separate." God is "separate," that is, he is beyond the field of human comprehension. As the An'im Zemirot prayer puts it, "I will tell of your glory yet I have not seen You, I will compare You, name You, yet I do not know You." In human speech we use words

as tools through which we perceive things. We use our word like missiles, trying to hit our target. We are often successful, and the missiles reach their target. However, sometimes this is an impossible task, we want to hit something far and transcendental, which is beyond the range of the missiles of words and thoughts. Human thought cannot grasp or explain God, he is "kadosh." God is "too lofty and sublime to be described by humans in their terms."

God is sublime, but not only to us. It is interesting that Isaiah hears the angels incessantly calling "kadosh, kadosh, kadosh." According to Rihal, the thrice-repeated formula expresses the idea that the angels repeat their statement infinitely. It is similar to the current use of the word etcetera. The angels' cry teaches us that God is higher than everything. As the Kaddish prayer puts it, he is "above all blessings and song, all praise and comfort which we express in the world." Rihal's interpretation is repeated in the writings of Rabbi Soloveitchik. To return to the context of the lecture, let us look at the entire landscape of the vision. Isaiah sees God sitting on a high and lofty throne. The throne is another expression of the idea that God is beyond our understanding. However, the phrase "and its edges filled the hall" teaches us that despite the high and lofty throne, the divine presence is in the hall, in other words, on the earth, and essentially in the entire cosmos. God's presence is the Kavod: "the whole world is filled with his Kavod [glory]." If we look closely, we will see this glory not only in extraordinary events such as prophecy, but also in the ordinary events of life. Thus, Rabbi Soloveitchik teaches us that one can translate the angels' statement into a philosophical creed: "transcendental, transcendental, transcendental is the Lord of Hosts, the entire world is filled with His immanence."

An initial reading informs us that God is separate even from the angels. Isaiah proclaims that He sits within a nation of defiled lips; He is present within the impurity. As a response to this, the angels proclaim that God is exalted, and that we, the people, cannot taint Him with our impurity.

The concept of Kedusha [holiness or separateness] teaches us something else. There is no doubt that the soul is spiritual, in the same way that the angels are spiritual. However, the soul is an interesting example of a reality which has been an enigma to the human intellect from ancient times until this very day. The soul is not physical; yet, it is clothed in a physical body. Thus, it is possible for spiritual phenomena to be clothed in a physical sheath. This is what distinguishes man from God. God is purely spiritual, He has no physical raiment. This lack of physicality is kedusha. This explanation reminds us of the position Rihal presents which maintains that a connection exists between God

and the cosmos. This connection is an expression of the attempt to clothe God in physicality, which detracts from God's Kedusha.

### **Kedosh Yisrael**

According to this explanation, the combination of words "Kedosh Yisrael" [Holy One of Israel] is paradoxical. Rihal tries to solve this paradox. On the one hand, God is "separate," but on the other hand, He is connected to the Jewish people. This is not the physical connection which trapped the Christians in a religious snare. This is a paradoxical connection. To describe one's relationship to the kadosh is a paradox, as though we had said "my distant one." We know what distance is, but what is "my distant one?" This is an expression that only a prophet can use. For a prophet the distance remains even though the relationship is possible. We cannot say "my kadosh" or "my distant one" unless we use the language of prophecy. Now perhaps we can shed more light upon our understanding of the Divine presence in our world. It is the relationship with someone who is shrouded in the distance. What is dear to us is far away, and yet we manage to establish a relationship with it, an emotional-spiritual connection, through the letter He sent to us, the Torah. It is the Torah which makes the paradoxical relationship possible.

On the basis of these ideas, we can try to understand the meaning of the word "kedoshim" when it is used to refer to the Jewish people, particularly in the context of the commandment "kedoshim tiheyu," you shall be holy, or separate. The commandment "kedoshim tiheyu" is based on the principle of imitating God. From our perspective, the kedusha describes both the distance which separates Man from God, and the relationship which is expressed in prophecy, and to some extent in the nation which is led by God. This type of closeness is expressed in the commandments, guidance and supervision which the Jewish people receive, and which create their reality of crime and punishment. This explains Jewish history, and also its tragic quality. The other nations are within the natural system, and we are distanced from it by Providential guidance. This is the type of closeness which, despite all the tragic events in our history, will ultimately bring about our redemption.

## **CHAPTER 38: Beyond The Senses: A Chapter In Metaphysics**

### **PART I: Another Look At The Theory Of Divine Names**

We will now return to the problem of the numerous divine names. Rihal compares this to the sun. The sun is far away, but it is reflected in many different houses. There is only one sun, but its rays are many. Imagine different houses with different colored window panes. In this case, the light of the sun is perceived in many different ways. There is only one sun, but the sun's rays are discerned differently in each location. This is an interesting model to explain the existence of so many divine names. God has one name, just as there is only one sun. However, the many variations we see are the result of our different perceptions. Although the thing itself is one, everyone sees it differently. Similarly, we attribute many titles to God; yet, His essential unity remains intact. Different people perceive different colors even though there is only one sun. Imagine a theater in which we use different spotlights. One option is to use a different spotlight for each color. However, there is another technique. The spotlight always displays the same light, but we use a system of filters in order to achieve the desired effect. Alternatively, imagine that the changes take place not because of the existence of filters, but because we put on different pairs of glasses. The many variations do not emanate from the source, but from the glasses we are wearing. This teaches us that having many titles does not imply that God is not one. God has one name, but this unity is perceived in many different ways.

[If we examine this example in light of modern science we will realize that the two cases are not really alike. Today, we understand that we perceive different shades of light because white light is actually a combination of all the colors, and is not itself a single color. The unity of white light is perceived since it is a combination of all the colors. This example would be appropriate if the sun itself was imperceptible to the senses, and only its rays shone in different colors. Then the true light could not be perceived at all, and only the colors, the result of the activity of the filters, would be visible.

This idea is upheld by a number of modern-day scientists. One common theory teaches that certain elements, such as electrons, cannot be perceived; yet, we can and do discern their results.

In any case, we must learn from here to be cautious with the examples we bring; examples are soon outdated.]



## **A Philosophical Walk About The Room**

These ideas moved Rihal to develop a unique philosophical theory. He teaches that what we experience through our senses is not exactly identical to what exists in reality. Let us explain this by means of a comparison. Assume that we used to wear special glasses which distort reality. We know that we had a picture of reality, but it was not accurate. We too perceive a reality, but the portrait is not faithful to the original. On the other hand, we must realize that filters do exist. We do not have the ability to see other wave lengths besides visible light, such as infra-red or ultra violet. If we could see infra red, we could perceive that when two people approach each other, one can very slightly penetrate into the other. This is because the heat of infra red spreads a little beyond the boundaries of the body. Let us take another example: if we could "see" electricity, the whole world would look completely different; we would see that all of space is filled with waves, and a new colorful ocean would appear to us, which would block our view of anything beyond it. The opposite is also true, for we cannot perceive shorter waves either, such as X-rays. This means that the world we experience is not actually the real world. It is strained through filters and is processed by our senses. Our senses do this, apparently for our own good, so that we can function in the world. We perceive a small fraction of reality, but it is a useful fraction, which aids our ability to survive, support ourselves and function in the world.

Another example will emphasize the difference between the two approaches. Various attempts have been made to create three dimensional films. To see them successfully one must use special glasses. If we were to take off the glasses we would see strange things, which would not create the impression of three dimensions. If we put them on again, we will feel or "see" the third dimension. So too, in reality, the sensory world that we experience is the result of a particular pair of glasses - the mechanism of our senses. The information we receive helps us in our daily lives, but it does not show us the true essence of the things around us. However, perhaps what we have seen until now is not the end of the story. Perhaps reality can be perceived in a totally different way. This is Rihal's assumption. According to this approach, our sensory perceptions conceal something which lies beneath them, but is not identical to them. This is the reality which is perceived by the prophets. To illustrate this we will use one of Rihal's examples.

Imagine that we are drops of water in a river. Each of us knows of the existence of other drops, but none of us knows the river. However, the river contains not only its current state but also its past and its present. According to this approach, beneath the biography of the river lies a different reality. The reality which we perceive with our

senses, is merely one expression of that hidden reality. The same is true with man. We can perceive man from the outside and obtain a series of images which show us the traits belonging to him at various times. However, there is something concealed behind all these pictures. We will call the hidden reality the essence. Our senses are built to perceive the traits. If we could perceive the essence, not the traits, we would "see" the world totally differently. We would not see people, things, events, but rather the essence which is harbored beneath the sensory perceptions. This is the way a prophet perceives reality.

We can examine a human being minutely, we can even take X-ray pictures of him, and yet remain far from his essence. A doctor can give a complete physical description of his patient, and yet know nothing about him. The prophet views the same reality from a completely different perspective, a perspective beyond time and place.

According to Rihal's description, the prophet looks with an inner eye, which sees beyond the externals and penetrates the essence of reality. Rihal uses another model, also taken from our visual world. The relationship between our vision of reality and that of the prophet is comparable to the relationship between a person with impaired vision and a person whose vision is excellent. The vision impairment can cause the sufferer to be unable to focus his vision; each of his eyes presents a different picture to his brain, and he cannot merge them to create the real picture of reality. Sensory perception is a type of vision impairment. In contrast, the prophet sees the true reality. He cannot directly demonstrate the correctness of his perception to us, because of our impairment; only a prophet can bear witness for another prophet. However, the Torah's signs of a true prophet can help us determine that he does indeed see the essential reality.

## **PART II: Imagination: The Mind's Tool**

What exactly is the prophet's inner eye? I would suggest that it is a kind of sixth sense. However, Rihal suggests another possibility which brings us closer to the Rambam's approach. The prophet's inner eye is actually his imagination, which the mind uses. The imagination is held in high regard with this approach. The co-operation between the mind and the imagination makes prophecy unique. However, we must clarify the nature of this partnership.

The tremendous power of the imagination is expressed in dreams. The imagination presents us in dreams with a vision which has characteristics of prophecy. We see things that do not exist in reality, yet we cannot deny their actuality. We were really there. In dreams, the imagination is autonomous. It is involved only with reconstructing materials

which it finds ready-made in our daily lives. However, if we could connect between the imagination and a different source, it could show us worlds that the senses cannot perceive, and to some extent it could reach a more fertile state than the mind. In any case, the imagination could serve the intellect, improving its capabilities and scope. Indeed, in prophecy the imagination can capture the vision which comes from without, from above. It creates sensory images of a different reality. The mind stands beside it and tries to decipher what the imagination sees. This is the Rambam's understanding.

Imagine that I have to pass on a message to Reuven. I could give him a verbal message, which would be very limited. However, I could also present a much more complex message, by drawing him a picture. And if I am an artist, perhaps the message will be so replete that all I wanted to convey to him would be included. A picture has many more dimensions than language does. On the other hand, when Reuven receives the letter, he will generally understand its main message immediately, while the picture needs to be interpreted. This does not mean that the entire letter will be understood immediately, or that various levels of verbal understanding are not possible; but the essence of the message in the picture needs to be deciphered and explained. This is true not only of a Picasso, but also of a Rembrandt, which seems on the surface to be much more readily comprehensible. The message in the picture is not given to us explicitly. The information must be extracted from it. The greatest artist, greater even than Rembrandt or Picasso, is the imagination - the great artist that resides within each and every one of us. And if the mind, which is the philosopher, and the imagination, which is the artist, can work together, they can perceive realities that would otherwise have remained hidden. A hidden message reaches man from above. The artist can paint it. The mind can understand it. If this co-operation exists, prophecy is possible - given, of course, that there is no blockage in the pipeline from above.

This necessary cooperation can teach us why prophecy is perceived in images and sensory visions, similar to the dream experience. The philosopher alone is helpless at times, while the artist alone is liable to lead man into idolatry. The mind is necessary to save us from the dangers of the imagination. However, language has its dangers as well. We transform images into words; but language remains full of the creations of the imagination, which has left its imprints there. That is where the importance of deciphering comes to the fore.

The prophet perceives God in physical or human images: "and one sees in You age and youth, and the hair of Your head [we see] graying and black." Sometimes, as an old man teaching Torah to the Jewish people, "aged on the Day of Judgement" and sometimes as a "youth on the day of battle." This is what the artist can do. But the

prophet continually underscores the fact that what he sees is only a vision. Thus, for example, in Ezekiel's vision of the Chariot, the prophet repeatedly emphasizes that what he sees is an "image" and a "vision." We must understand that the vision is a picture which needs to be interpreted. And even if our attempts are not successful, we must accept that the vision hints at a hidden reality.

[This reality creates a need to examine the essence of the biblical image. Thus, for example, one of the images we use for God is light. Perhaps this image expresses the divine immanence, in other words, the fact that God is with us in every place. On the other hand, the approach to the heavens which is discussed by Rihai, may be interpreted differently. The heavens describe divine transcendence, the fact that God is beyond all of reality.]

### **The Picture Within A Picture**

I would like now to illustrate another important principle in the theory of prophecy, by using a technique employed by many artists. A simple example can be found in the classic picture of the laying of the cornerstone of the Hebrew University, an event which all the great leaders of the period attended. In one of the corners of the picture, which was painted on the Mount Scopus campus, we see a person painting. This is the artist himself, who put himself into his own picture. Although logically this is a paradox, we see that the small picture is a copy of the big picture. Similarly, the Rambam teaches us that the prophetic picture contains a representation of the actual process of prophecy. In it, too, there appears a picture within a picture. In most prophecies, the prophet meets with darkness, and within it, light, and usually an angel. This angel in the vision is, according to the Rambam, an expression of the process in which we receive prophecy. The angel who speaks to the prophet is a messenger of God. He represents the mechanism which exists in our inner world; he is like a painter painting the picture which reaches him from above.

According to the Rambam, we combine the input of the personal senses in our everyday lives and thus create an image of reality. This image exists inside us, where there is a kind of movie screen upon which reality projects itself. However, sometimes, we project onto this screen things which are not real, such as when we dream. In prophecy, a similar process takes place. In order to explain it, we will try to continue the parable of the movie screen. The first requirement which will allow us to watch a movie in a movie theater, is that we put out the lights, that it be dark. Only then do we lose our connection to daily reality, and create the possibility of viewing another reality. Such is

the case with the prophet as well. The first requirement is that it be dark, in other words, the prophet must be cut off from the outside world. He loses his regular consciousness, or he is already in a state lacking consciousness, like sleep. Then the outer world stops affecting the prophet. When the outer world is turned off, so to speak, a different, deeper world can appear to the prophet. The prophet sees a reality which is inside his inner world, but this reality reveals secrets to him that he would not otherwise reach.

Rihal teaches us that when we look with our eyes, we see reality, but not all of reality. In fact, perhaps we see a distorted reality. The world appears before us as it does because we use our senses. If we could find a different mechanism, we would see the world differently. If we had a third eye, we would see a different, much truer reality. This third eye exists but it is not turned outward, it is turned inward. This is the "inner eye" [4: 3, 161]. Our psychological world is no less rich and important than the factual outer world. This "inner eye" shows the prophet the true reality hidden from the senses. The mind can try to understand the true reality, but this is an indirect way of perceiving these realities. The owner of an "inner eye" can see them directly, and palpably.

How does the prophet see with his inner eye? We can give two answers to this question, which do not contradict one another.

1. The "inner eye" shows us the reality as it is. This is comparable to a person who is sent for an X-ray. The X-rays penetrate and show us a different reality which we cannot see with our regular senses. The prophet sees the reality which is before us but he sees it with such a penetrating perception, that it looks totally different.

However the X-ray example is not exact. Rihal prefers the example of the short-sighted person, who is not wearing his glasses and sees a distorted reality. This is our perception of the world - "without glasses." In contrast, the prophet sees a different reality with his "healthy" vision.

2. We spoke about X-rays, however, there are other ways one can receive information about man's inner self. For instance, today experts use machines built on the principles of magnetic resonance. What both these possibilities have in common is that it is not enough to see. We must understand and interpret.

God displays a message for the prophet. The message is not physical, yet it is real. The message describes facts, but it describes them in such a way that they need to be interpreted. This principle, which Rihal hints at, was developed by the Rambam. According to his approach, the vision of the prophet is formed by the paintbrush of the imagination, and the picture that is received needs interpretation. In order to understand the prophecy, we need the power of interpretation, the ability to explain. Now we can

return to the parallel between prophecy and dreams. Dreams are one-sixtieth of prophecy. In dreams we see a "private" reality which we use to learn about our inner reality, our fears and hopes. In the prophetic dream and vision we also learn much, not about our own inner reality, but about the entire world.

## **CHAPTER 39: Idol Worship**

### **PART I**

The Kuzari's starting point is idolatry, or paganism. Although this seems like a dead option for our generation, we must devote a few lines to the idea.

### **Idol Worship Interpreted**

In a certain sense, idol worship has not disappeared. Many modern thinkers look at it in a larger, more figurative sense. According to their approach, an idol worshipper is a person who has many foci in his life, and has no one central ideal which directs his actions. Such a person can be compared to a weathercock, which changes direction with each gust of wind. A person who is lacking a center in his life is governed by each passing whim. He cannot account to himself for his own life.

### **Modern Idols**

This description is basically a portrayal of polytheism. However, it seems to me that there is another current interpretation of idol worship which is much closer to the mark. Perhaps, modern-day idol worship is the doctrine which makes the means into an end. This is a position which discards the faith in God as an absolute barometer, and replaces it with other values which become absolute, such as money, sex, respect, sports, etc. Thus money and wealth become an idol. Both Chasidic and Mussar [Ethics] Masters interpreted the verse "Gods of silver and gods of gold ye shall not make" to mean, do not make silver and gold into gods. Sports and entertainment also become idolatrous when they take over the center and meaning of life. While we must understand the importance of sports to a person who is actively involved in them, we must realize that sports and entertainment can become, or have already become, a form of idol worship, which continues to develop its own idols.

All these values are not negative in and of themselves, if they serve greater ideals. One of the most powerful examples of this is patriotism, when it becomes the ultimate value, without relation to any other goal and without being subject to the criticism of any outside source. In Judaism, the concept of the nation is closely connected to the religious ideal. When this interdependence disappears, the nation becomes a religion, and in essence it becomes an idol.

One of the best examples of this type of idol worship was the philosophy of Achad Ha'am (a Jewish author and thinker at the turn of the century). He believed that we must turn our perceptions inside out; we must understand reality differently - that religion merely serves the nation. We know that the nation is of great importance, but as Rav Kook teaches, this is also because God reveals Himself through the nation.

One of man's central problems is that sometimes he is so involved in achieving the means that he stops thinking about the goal. Sometimes we stop asking why we need the means, and we get stuck at some intermediate point. The classic example of this is the man who works in order to support himself; yet imperceptibly, his work becomes the central goal in his life. Consequently, when this man retires, his life loses all meaning. Certainly, one of the objects of the Shabbat is the battle against this strange type of idolatry.

Rav Kook maintains that the moment we place a single value as our goal, instead of making God, who contains all values and ideals, into our focus, we are worshipping idols. Monotheism means unity of ideals. Every pagan idol represented a particular ideal. If God is one, this means that we are expected to fulfill all the ideals. The belief in Divine unity means not only that God is One, but that He is complete. The Jewish ideal must be a complete model, containing all the ideals. Therefore, God will not accept the sacrifices of one who exploits his fellow man, because he is emphasizing one ideal and ignoring another.

The meaning of our belief in Divine unity is expressed in the conflict between mythology and Torah. Let us look for example at Homer's account of the Trojan War. The war begins with the capture of Helen, wife of Menelaos the king of Sparta, by Paris, the son of the Trojan king. However, the war is actually sparked by the jealousy which exists between the three goddesses of Olympus. Hera, the queen of the heavens, Athene, the queen of wisdom, and Aphrodite, the queen of beauty; their differences arose over the question of which goddess was the most beautiful of all. This story foreshadows what will become clear later on: that the fact that there are many gods means that there is no single moral standard. The gods on Olympus who must judge this act are of different opinions. The god of justice of course is against it. However, the goddess of love disagrees. The Jewish prophet demands that one change one's entire life. The Jewish alternative to the story of Troy is the story of David and Batsheva, in which the prophet stands before the king representing the unequivocal quality of justice.

This is also the meaning which our Sages use when they teach us that the man who worships his evil inclination worships idols. "Let there be no foreign god within you" means, on the most basic level, that the Jews should not worship any foreign gods.



According to our Sages, however, the interpretation is: let there be no foreign gods within you, and the only foreign god that could possibly be inside you is the evil inclination.

Thus we see that even lofty ideals can be transformed into idolatry. Communism took the social ideal and made it into idol worship. It created a church with holy books, accepted readings and interpretations of the sacred texts and outlawed interpretations; it also created an inquisition. Millions of sacrifices were offered up on the altar of this idolatry.

### **Actual Idol Worship In Our Day**

Until now we have discussed allegorical interpretations of idol worship. However, in the modern world we are witness to the revival of genuine idol worship.

The most outstanding expression of the revival of pagan mythology is found in Nazism. Wagner chose motifs from early German mythology for his compositions. In this way, he expressed his opposition to Christian culture, and indirectly to its Jewish origins. In his music, Wagner returned to German myth, which was a world of gods of war, and thus he heralded the revival of German mythology in Nazi philosophy.

Another, no less important example, is connected to the phenomenon of witchcraft and Satan worship, which often go hand in hand. In my opinion, these customs explain the strong opposition in the Torah and the Sages to the phenomena of witchcraft. There are various customs that are forbidden because they are groundless superstitions. However, other things are forbidden because they are dangerous, to individuals and to society in general. We know of the existence of groups all over the world, which continue to worship Satan through cruelty and torture. Every so often we even hear that human sacrifices are still offered to Satan, even in our modern world.

### **PART II: The Fifth Principle Of Faith**

The fifth of Maimonides' thirteen principles of faith commands us to worship the Creator and not any of His creatures. This principle translates faith into action. Sometimes idolatry can be identified in faith; however, at times it is apparent only in practice. The fifth principle ensures against this danger. The final border between idolatry and monotheism is found in one's form of worship. If man worships any other creature, he mars the monotheistic faith. However, idolatry's greatest offense is not only the creation of alternatives to God. Leafing through the Prophets we read of lechery and wine which

"take" the heart. Here lies another deep source of our battle with idol worship. We are faced with an imperfect world that has suffering and injustice; and the injustice may be combated, except that the priests of idol worship, instead of contributing to the battle against injustice, create an artificial paradise of emptiness. They use sex, drunkenness, and in many places, drugs as well, to attract people in the name of religion and remove them from the continuum of suffering. However, this is done in a way which leads them to sink deeper into the very miseries they wished to escape. The classic example of this approach is those people who get drunk from Friday to Sunday, and in this way find themselves an "artificial paradise" which allows them to forget their families and their poverty stricken surroundings. Too often the drunkenness itself is the cause of the poverty.

Idol worship means replacing God. This is like betraying one's spouse. But idolatry has still other negatives. We sometimes create imaginary and artificial beings which do not allow us to see and solve the real problems that we face. Rav Kook teaches us in *Ikvei Ha-tzon* that this idea was expressed in the Midrash. As is well known, the Ibn Ezra interpreted the phrase "elohim acherim" [lit: other gods] as what seem to others to be gods. This is a subjective claim. There are no other gods, but there are those who accept these imaginary beings as gods. In contrast Rav Kook brings a wonderful idea from the Midrash: "Why are they called elohim acherim? [Acherim can also mean "late"] because they delay [me'acharim] the entrance of good to the world." True, there are no other gods, these are illusions but they are dangerous illusions, because they obstruct the good. If a person takes the wrong yet harmless medication, it can still be dangerous, not because of what it contains but because of what it is lacking: It stops the person from taking the real medicine. Idolatry is not competition for God; there is no foreign god who wants to sit on God's throne. Yet the Torah fights against idolatry, because through its influence man loses so much potential good for idol worship delays the realization of ideals.

This is the great danger of idolatry. Idol worship was not based on the goal of bettering the world, but on escaping from it. However, unlike Christianity, this was an escape not to the beyond, but to physical excess. This approach is of course also found in the modern world. The most outstanding example is the carnival. We find a society filled with problems, guided by the idea that the central point of the year are those days on which we "let loose." This is a kind of idolatry which does not allow - or at any rate does not help - man to extract himself from his real difficulties. Sometimes it is even worse. The most outstanding example is again found in a monotheistic religion. We hear that in certain Islamic groups, drugs were used in order to create a group of fanatic murderers with no restraints, who were promised a "paradise" that the drugs created for

them. They had experienced "paradise" and would do anything to return. The Torah wants man to achieve happiness, but not happiness which is artificial and destructive.

## **Overcoming Anthropocentricity**

The Torah teaches us that God created man in His image. The atheist responds glibly: man created God in his image. This battle of slogans expresses two opposing philosophies. However, the truth is more complicated. I am convinced that both sides are right. "Man created god in his image" is precisely the definition of idolatry. In contrast, prophecy is an attempt to present us with a concept of God that is utterly divorced from our ideas about ourselves. "The image of God" is a kind of sign-post to us in this regard.

The perception of God as a reflection of our image is indeed idol worship. man projects what is in him onto the image of God that he constructs. One of the messages of prophecy is the need to overcome this type of projection. We will bring the simplest example of the struggle of prophecy to free itself from this trap. Prophecy totally removed the concept of gender from God. God is neither male nor female. He is completely above sexuality. This is particularly noticeable when we compare this approach to pagan mythology, and see its overpowering sexuality. The Bible does use "grammatical gender identification" for God; we say "ata" the masculine "You" and not "at" the feminine version, but this grammatical sexuality does not mean a thing. God does not have a gender at all. This fact distances God from human concepts. This is of course only the first stage, which would later develop into an attempt to construct religious concepts which are not a projection of our human lives. This would develop as we saw in one of the earlier chapters, in the theory of divine names.

The desire to overcome anthropocentricity is expressed in the battle against the many gods. The gods constitute a kind of family in heaven which contains lust for power, sex and war, just like the human family.

The conflict between the gods describes the different sides of human emotions and it in essence gives expression to, or a projection of, what exists inside man. We learn from here that God is beyond the vices and petty desires of man.

Judaism fought against perceptions like these, yet Christianity returned to them. And indeed, in Christianity once again a family appears. The concept "son of god" which in the Scriptures is a completely allegorical concept, now once again becomes a realistic concept. Later in the history of Christianity the mother also appears, the Virgin Mary.

The idea of the Virgin Mary is a projection. Not only that, but here we have again the projection of the image of man onto God.

This is a human projection which fits into the psychological mechanism that Freud investigated. This means that indeed, the Freudian approach is applicable here. The gods are a projection of human desires, weaknesses, and limitations. This is the essence of idolatry. Clearly, Freud's analysis was correct to a great extent with regard to Christianity as well. In Christianity, for example, we find sacraments, holy rites, which alter man's status. One of these sacraments is related to the Last Supper. Jesus, as we know, died while eating the Paschal sacrifice. Jesus the Jew ate matza and drank wine, as was the custom; however, this eating received a very different interpretation in later generations, when the matza became Jesus' body and the wine became his blood. I will not go into the issue of the drinking of the wine, which is an issue of contention between the various churches. However in classic Christianity the person swallows the holy bread, which is the body of Jesus. This is clearly a custom with idolatrous origins, which can be traced to various ethnic tribes, whose rites include a holy meal. In the meal the group eats the god which is identified with a certain holy animal, the Totem. The image of the god is a human projection.

### **Idolatry and Nature**

Idolatry is based on a number of guiding principles. The first principle is the mythic image of the world, which means the projection of the human reality onto the world and onto God.

However, there is another central element in idolatry: the recognition of nature as a divine being. Rabbi Akiva fought against this principle in his debates with the pagan philosophers. One of Rabbi Akiva's counterparts claims that if God created poor people, we must not "disturb Him" and try to alter their poverty. When we give charity we are opposing the divine decree. This type of view is in essence a recognition of nature as a power, and thus also a recognition of the rights of the powerful. The "right of the strong" is an idolatrous principle. This leads us to the question of our attitude towards nature, which we will discuss in the next lecture.

### **Saving The Princess**

The world of mythology found expression through two great mediums: art and tragic theatre. Remnants of the connection between idolatry and these two worlds remain until

today. This is the reason for the historical antagonism that exists between them and Judaism.

Here lies the significance of one of the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav: he speaks of the need to save the "chen" [beauty] in the world. For many of the great artistic expressions were vehicles for idolatry, but they are not idolatrous themselves.

In Rabbi Nachman's writings we find a recurring motif, about the princess who is captured by the "Sitra Achra" [lit. The Other Side, meaning the kabbalistic concept of the power of evil] and must be saved. One of the levels of interpretation here, is that the princess is art. In other words these are the means which idolatry employed in order to express its mythology. One of the missions of redemption is, perhaps, to redeem this princess.

The debate over the status of the arts is part of a larger argument about our understanding of reality. To use a kabbalistic phrase, we could say that the great debate is whether the concept of tzimtzum is to be taken literally or not. Phrased according to the interpretation at the center of the Hasidic revolution, is the world indeed "empty" of God's presence, and therefore God's word can be heard only through the study of Torah, or, as Chasidism teaches, the divine voice emanates from the world as well, even if this voice (in the words of Rabbi Nachman) is not a direct voice but an echo of the first divine voice heard at the creation of the world.

One of Rabbi Kook's central ideas was the concept that indeed in all the world's phenomena there is a divine spark which we must uncover. The human ideal, according to this idea is not to confine oneself to the four cubits of Halakha, but to search for religious meaning in the various levels of human existence.

The prophets taught us to look to the heavens and ask who created all this. Nature is God's creation, culture is man's. The connection with nature exists even if its status is problematic. The attitude toward human creativity is even more problematic. Often man's baser and more primitive drives find expression in art. Here we must remember again what we learned from Rabbi Kook, that human creativity must be respected. We must separate the baser drives from the artistic creation and search for the holy spark inside it.

## **CHAPTER 40: Judaism and Nature**

### **PART I: Shem and Japheth**

Rational religious philosophy is the outcome of the fruitful marriage of two sources. This is the union of Shem and Japheth, the biblical perspective and the Greek conceptual language. The matchmakers lived in Alexandria, with the most outstanding of these being Philo of Alexandria. To some extent one could claim that the Rambam was the wonder-child of this match. And indeed, it seems to me that the Rambam himself was happy with the match, from the harmony that he felt existed between his two sources.

However, this harmony was not complete. Every so often there arose thinkers who wanted to bring about a divorce. The greatest contestor for the dissolving of the relationship was Rabbi Nachman of Braslav, who wanted to free the Jewish spirit from the bonds of the synthesis with Greek thought. Without going into this issue, we will discuss the relationship between the two sources and we will point out the two central foci which this pair shares from the start.

### **The Common Denominator: Philosophical Language**

Philosophy helped Judaism in its fight against anthropomorphism. This was the continuation and development of the prohibition against making graven images and creating physical images which describe God. This common ground created the opportunity for Shem and Japheth to walk a long way together. The expression of this is found in the theory of divine names, which we dealt with earlier.

The pagans created gods in the image of man. The outstanding expression of this is the fact that they created gods and goddesses. The gods have human strengths and frailties, but on a larger scale. The Scriptures negate any image and present us with a different ideal. We must strive to become similar to God by ethical behavior and keeping the commandments. Walking in God's ways is itself the image of God that we can reach.

In the world of idolatry the imagination rules with no limits or boundaries. The message of prophecy is the power to overcome this childish type of imagination. This spiritual maturity is directly parallel to our scientific maturing process. In science we slowly abandon our childish perspective, the world of legend built upon the forays of imagination, and we begin to achieve wisdom. However, this process is ongoing. We succeed in it with great difficulty, and it is possible that we will never completely abandon the imagination. Let me give you a simple example. Astronomy was one of the

first sciences to develop. As we saw earlier, Aristotle's approach assumed that the planets, or to be more exact, the mechanical systems of the astrological world, have souls and/or intellects. Aristotelian astronomy still contained much of the naive and childish outlook which is based on imagination. In this perception, there were dangerous remnants of idolatry. Aristotle could not overcome these remnants in his philosophy. Therefore, we had to wait for the new physics and particularly for Newton, who abandoned the Aristotelian concepts and spoke of the power of gravity. And in our generation, Einstein appeared, and demonstrated that Newton's perception was also imaginative and primitive. It spoke of powers, and the concept of power is itself a term which is anthropomorphological. There seem to be powers, but Einstein shows that they are actually an expression of the fact that the geometry of the world is changing.

Slowly but surely we purify the scientific language. In this sense, both prophecy and Greek philosophy could have joined together to fight against the slogan "you shall not see any graven image." The prohibition against the image is expected of us both in science and philosophy. The sophisticated Greek astronomer, who sees the mechanical systems in the sky, despite all the scientific sophistication, has not overcome the trap of the human image. His language has not been purified. The need for constant purification of our language compels us to develop constantly. Rabbi Nachman of Braslav calls this process "Repentance on the [earlier] repentance."

### **The Source Of The Conflict: Nature**

Until now the common denominator was of benefit for both sides. Many were the Jewish sages who, knowingly or unknowingly, benefited from the advantages that the philosophical language gave them. However, Greece brought with it a very problematic dowry: the worship of nature that is at the basis of Greek thought.

As we have already seen, the Scriptures teach us a truth that actually contains an "anti-nature" element. This idea that the Rambam taught in his theory of divine unity, was explained well by the Jewish thinker Ezekiel Herman Cohen, and was developed by Ezekiel Kaufman, who made it the basis of his approach. The concept of divine unity is the focus of prophecy. In fact, it is the focus of the Scriptural revolution. But what is the idea of divine unity?

The idea of divine unity is much more than a "numerical" claim. True, the pagans believed in many gods, and we believe there is but one Father in heaven. However, the Scriptural revolution is much more than a change from aristocracy to monarchy. The idea of divine unity means a much more fundamental revolution: the common

denominator between all idol worshippers is the idea that the gods exist inside the world and that they are governed by its laws, the laws of nature. If, for example, we were to draw the world as a circle, we would have to draw the gods inside the circle. It reminds me of those stories in which the protagonists are dogs. In some of these stories, the dogs refer to the people as the gods. If I were a dog, I would reach the conclusion that people were stronger than me, if not because of their muscles, then because of their sticks, particularly those who blow smoke out of their mouths! In any case, although they are stronger than me, they are also limited by hindrances and weakness. They, too, are subject to forces and laws. I can bite the person or I can fawn on him. I can act against him, since although he is stronger, he is not omnipotent.

This was also the case with idolatry. The gods are stronger than man, but they do not have absolute power. They are under the power of the laws of nature. There are many strings which move us about without asking our opinion, as though we were puppets in a theater. But if I am a puppet who thinks a little, I know that if I myself pull at the strings that move me, I can move the finger of the one who is manipulating me. Strings are a two-way street. If I knew how to move the right strings, I could manipulate the gods; this movement is preternatural. It is magic. Magic means that the gods are not free. To some extent magic is the father of science, because it claims that there are laws that govern the world. But it is wrong when it believes that this system of laws controls God. In contrast, the Scriptures teach us that God is beyond nature and outside of it. The laws of nature do not place obligations on God.

Divine unity does not only mean that God is one, but that He is unique. God is totally different from everything that exists in the world. The Scriptures teach us that we must believe not in magic, but in miracles. Miracles are an expression of the idea that God is above nature. This is the case with regard to prayer as well. Rabbi Nachman writes: "Prayer is above nature because nature mandates and prayer changes nature."

[To add just a bit of irony, when we ask for miracles, we are asking for nature to change. However, do not fear, this won't cause many problems. When the miracle does take place, we will find a way to explain it naturally.]

In philosophical language, we could call this the principle of transcendence. This is the philosophical position of the Rambam. Chasidic thought teaches us that this is only a half-truth. God is beyond nature, but we must not conclude from here that God is distant. This idea is expressed in the Scriptures by the words holiness and glory. We proclaim, "Holy holy holy is the Lord of hosts, the entire world is filled with His glory." Holiness implies the distance of the transcendent God, but on the other hand, His presence is near; that is the glory, the Divine Presence.



## **PART II: Nature And Beyond**

The Rambam felt that the position which views nature as a necessary framework concurs with the Scriptures. We will illustrate this here, and will discuss his dispute with Rihal. However, we will try first to place ourselves, modern people, in the context of this issue. It would seem that we are closer to the position which sees nature as the highest judge. Rihal and his successors protested against this view. Yet, some interaction exists between what is beyond nature and nature itself. We have not totally erased our consideration of nature; yet, we believe that this is not enough. We will bring three examples which will help us clarify the matter.

### **The Messianic Age**

The first example focuses on the question: how are we to understand the concept of the Messianic era? The Rambam, since his philosophy is the offspring of the union between Shem and Japheth, was a realist, or in less positive terms, a captive in a particular conception of nature.

Nature is not merely a conglomeration of mathematical formulas. Nature also has a non-mathematical reality - the law of the jungle, of continuous warfare. One of the outstanding expressions of this war is the fact that the lion devours the lamb. Yet, we are told of the prophet's vision "and the lion shall lie down with the lamb." How are we to understand this verse? Should it be taken literally or figuratively?

The Rambam believed that this verse should not be understood literally. Fundamental changes in nature were impossible in his view. Nature is a reality so basic that one cannot even conceive of the possibility of change within its realm. Therefore, the Rambam felt that the prophet could not possibly have been saying that in the Messianic era the lion will undergo a hormonal change and he will no longer attack the lamb. What, then, is the meaning of the verse? It is a parable. It does not speak of nature but of history, and it refers to the place where future changes will take place, in society. Civilization will no longer be based on warfare, and the lion, Russia/Germany and the lamb, Poland, will live together in peace.

Viewing the messianic era through normal historical eyes was one of the Rambam's important contributions to our modern philosophy. Religious Zionism was nourished by this approach. However, Rav Kook teaches us that the hope for a normal historical redemption and social utopia ought not to make us forget the utopia in nature: and the lion shall lie down with the lamb. The vision of the end of days judges nature according to divine criteria, which are beyond nature.

## **Reality and the Ideal**

Another example of the enslavement to nature is found in Spinoza's theory of ethics. One of the central distinctions in his theory of ethics is that made between what is and what ought to be, between the reality and the ideal. Morality is not built on the power of dominion, nor on social norms, but on our perception of the ideal state. This is one of the important messages of the Scriptural revolution, and it means that we must perform certain acts although we are at times in a state of conflict with nature. Sometimes, we are in conflict with the nature that is outside and sometimes we are in conflict with desires and certain psychological structures that are inside us.

When we defy the law of the jungle, and we do so not out of fear but from conviction, we express the fact that we are guided by ideals that are not in nature.

## **Nature As An Idol**

And now for a final example. How must I act in my financial affairs? Should I let nature take its course, or ought I to defy the natural course of the world's economy, and give charity? The nature of the business man is to act only on the principle of his own good, and no more; while I must act according to a vision.

## **The Rambam and Spinoza**

Spinoza was consistent in his approach to nature. He believed that God is nature. This approach is called Pantheism. The formula has metaphysical significance, but it also has practical and moral importance. The Rambam, on the other hand, believed in the middle road between Pantheism and Aristotelian philosophy. He claimed that miracles are within the bounds of possibility, and they are dependent on the idea that the world was created. In other words, since the world was created and has not always existed, miracles are possible. The Rambam explains, that if the world had always existed and God had not created it, He would not even have the power to clip a fly's wing. We will explain this, and through it we will see the basic difference between the Rambam and Spinoza.

One of the games that television programs for small children use, is this: they take two objects, such as an elephant and a fly, and switch their traits. They make the fly big and the elephant small, switch the ears, and so on. We will not continue till the last stage, which hides within a very paradoxical question: what are we left with at the end of the process? We will stop after the first stage, where we change the size of the fly. This is one of the examples, the Rambam explains, where imagination plays a part, but logic

must reject it. Why? Because the person who changes the size of the fly's wings and thinks that the fly will continue to fly, doesn't understand a thing about aerodynamics. We must understand the fly in the context of the relationships between its various parts. The possibility of flying is a function of size. Here, the Rambam asks whether a miracle can take place. Is another reality possible, in which the fly could fly using longer or shorter wings than the current fly has? It depends, says the Rambam, on our fundamental belief. If we believe that the world was created by God, then the world could have been different. The world is not God. It could have been different.

## CHAPTER 41: Miracles [1:80-91]

### PART I

This is a concept, like many others, which we cannot define in advance. Its definition and understanding are under debate. In other words, the definition will not be the starting point, but the concluding point of our discussion.

Looked at simply, we can say that miracles are a completely extraordinary phenomenon, which cannot be explained within the natural system. However, on second thought, as both believers and philosophers have stated, the greatest miracle is the very existence of the laws of nature. The order, the fact that the world functions according to unvarying laws, constitutes the greatest miracle of all. However, man must reach a high level of development to understand how extraordinary of the order of nature is; the miracle of the behavior of the planets, which "adhere" to the laws of mathematics and physics; and the wonder of the movements of subatomic particles. Macrocosmos and microcosmos alike sing the praises of the Creator. Certainly, it is a wonder! However, we have grown used to this wonder, and are like a child who thinks that amazing inventions, the result of thousands of years of scientific and technological development, are to be taken for granted. Thus we are not amazed at the works of creation which surround us. One of the results of this lack of amazement is that we transform nature into an independent being. Nature, the conglomerate of principles which control the world, becomes all powerful; the ruler of the world. This was, phrased differently, the position of the idol worshippers. However, it has not disappeared from the world. It is returning in a modern form, in Pantheism on the one hand, and, on the other, in the beliefs of those (whom we have already met earlier in our series), who find an explanation for everything in nature. Our tendency to see in nature the final and undisputed law and principle, must come to a crisis, in order for us to recognize the existence of a power which is beyond nature. This power is the divine essence. When it penetrates into nature, inexplicable events occur.

Humanity has often witnessed wondrous and amazing phenomena. However, the Chaver teaches us here that although these experiences can bear witness to the existence of a level above nature, we must not base our religion upon them. This surprising claim is found explicitly in the verses which warn us of the possible appearance of a false prophet who can perform miracles. We must not blindly follow a mistaken mathematical proof, which will teach that  $1=2$ , nor should we follow a miracle which will try to prove the truth of idolatry, or religions which are in essence the modern versions of idolatry.

We must distinguish between miracles and phenomena which are the result of hallucination, illusion, or extraordinary sensory perception. We must further distinguish between miracles and legitimate phenomena which are not miracles, and belong to the field of parapsychology. It is possible that some people possess certain powers not only to bend spoons or forks through a mental exercise, but also have the psychic power to change things in reality; it is possible that some people have the power to set a compass using only their thoughts, or to light a fire without using their hands. These things merely teach us that there are other natural powers that we must study, if they do exist. This is clearly a breakthrough to spiritual powers which materialism has tried blot out, but this is not a breakthrough into the world of divinity. The breakthrough into the divine is expressed in commands which only the Creator of the world can give and carry out. The connection with the divine is expressed mainly through revelation, in the encounter which contains in its essence something that will one day dispel all doubts. The existence of collective revelation is based on the principle that we must neutralize personal error, subjectivity and the fact that we could be faced with an illusion or a hallucination. There are miracles that are connected to individuals such as healing the sick, and the resurrection of the dead. However, in the exodus from Egypt, we are faced with changes in the powers of nature, we are witness to truly cosmic phenomena. The miracles refer to powers that are beyond human existence and even beyond the universe itself.

### **The Natural Explanation of Miracles**

There is often a tendency to try to give natural explanations of miracles and it can be done. Surprisingly, this does not detract at all from Rihal's proof. In order to understand this, we will discuss the approach of Rabbi Yitzchak Breuer, one of the greatest of Rihal's modern successors. Rabbi Breuer wrote a book (in German), called "The New Kuzari," in which he presents his position. In this book, he does not argue with the Aristotelians or the Karaites. However, it is interesting to state that, despite the differences, there is a basic similarity between Rihal's Kuzari and the "New Kuzari." The philosophical basis of Breuer's approach is found in the writings of the modern philosophers, particularly Immanuel Kant and Arthur Schopenhauer. We cannot get into the depths of this discussion, however will still try to present his approach in general, without getting into the maze of fine lines and details.

The approaches that we are presenting now are based on the idea that we must distinguish between reality itself, and the way we perceive it. Nature, the cause-and-effect reality that we perceive, according to this approach, is not the true reality; rather it is the result of our perception. Let me give an illustration of this idea. Think of a person

wearing sunglasses. The color of his vision is determined by the color of his glasses. This is also true of optical glasses which distort one's vision. If we want another example, we can think of a device for night vision, in which the information that the machine receives is processed such that we see before us images which mimic the original day-time images.

In our perception and our consciousness there are two elements: the thing itself, and the way we process it. We do not understand how very important this processing is. It is like a person sitting in a theater innocently watching a play, who does not notice that this sophisticated theater is built in such a way that the observer is also the director of the play. Part of the action on the stage takes place according to the actions and reactions of the observer. He is not an objective observer who is not involved. The very fact of his presence involves him in the play. We know today that the fact that the observer interferes in reality, and that the "play" changes in accordance with the presence or absence of observers, is one of the most amazing elements of quantum physics. It is important here to point out that according to this approach, as Rabbi Breuer says, the very fact of our encounter with reality, creates a framework of cause and effect. Human perception places reality in a natural framework, which will later create the illusion that miracles can be explained. Rabbi Breuer uses a number of models to express this duality. One of the best models is the relation between the Tetragrammaton and the other names of God. We do not pronounce the Tetragrammaton, for it is the "real thing," while the other names are our perceptions of the Tetragrammaton. In this way, wonder of wonders, there is a Tetragrammaton, which expresses the true reality, while the laws of nature stand at the opposite pole, expressing the other divine names, our perceptions of reality.

Rabbi Breuer points to the possibility that certain miracles may be explained naturally, and still retain their miraculous character. Prophecy is in essence a breakthrough to the true reality. If we return to the example of the theater, we are familiar with the curtain that rises to reveal the play, but we are not aware of the fact that behind this curtain there is another curtain. This is the entrance to backstage, where the illusion of reality which we see behind the first curtain, is created. We do not sense, either in theater and or in the actions of the magician, the other side of things - the people without their costumes and the source of the various sound and light changes which create our illusion. Rabbi Breuer claims that God created the world such that we will always construct this framework, so that we will not be able to see behind the scenes. Prophecy is the breakthrough to backstage. If a regular person sees a miracle, even if the miracle is clearly significant, he can try to explain it, but the meaning which is beyond the miracle can be given only by the prophet.

Let me give a "trivial" example: Was the salvation of the Six-day war a miracle? Whoever lived through it and his eyes were open, will say that it was miraculous. Yes, in hindsight, explanations can be given, proving that all the events were completely natural and inevitable. However, despite this, whoever lived through that experience knows that it was miraculous. If we return to the example of the theater, it is similar to the story of the actor who shouts "Fire, fire!" and the audience claps in appreciation of his extraordinarily realistic acting, without understanding that a fire has really broken out. The audience remains stubbornly convinced that this is a part of the play, although really what is going on is outside the framework of the play. Thus we sometimes find a person persisting in explaining the miracle, without sensing that something outside the framework of the play is taking place. Seeing is no guarantee that people will understand that what they are seeing is extraordinary. Man, or actually his perceptive abilities, insist on putting events into the framework of a known system. And yet, a miracle can be seen. Sometimes things are just too coincidental to be a coincidence.

The Sages distinguished between a hidden miracle and a revealed miracle. Rihal teaches us that a miracle is a one-time historical event, and its role is to shake man out of the closed scientific play he is watching. The Torah wants to explain to him that what appears to be nature, is really a costume and a disguise. As the Chasidim say, the world is an act of concealment, and the role of miracles is to remove us from this concealment. The first obligation is to prevent the concealment of the concealed, in other words to understand that the concealment exists.

## **PART II: Nature And The Divine Names [part 2:2]**

Rihal begins by discussing divine attributes which relate to God's actions in the world; and he later relates this to an additional area: the attributes attached to God's true name, the Tetragrammaton. There are really two categories of divine attributes. Rihal distinguishes between attributes which express God's intervention in our world through the forces of nature, and attributes which express His behavior as a creator of realities which transcend the laws of nature.

Rihal relates: "The active divine attributes are borrowed from the actions which come from God through the medium of natural causes." In other words, we use these descriptions to attribute the events in our lives to divine causes. For example, when we speak of God as the One who makes us rich or poor, or as a jealous and avenging God, we are describing the effects of a normal life, with its social, financial and other aspects, except that we attribute these powers to God, their original source.

The second category of divine attributes appears at first to be very similar to the former group. However, upon closer examination we will find that the difference between them is not merely linguistic but fundamental. This second group consists of the attributes "attached to the Tetragrammaton." Attributes such as Creator and Maker of Great Wonders fall into this category. These titles suggest God's absolute freedom, and His ability to transcend the laws of nature.

The difference between these two categories is expressed well at the beginning of the Book of Exodus. God appears to Moshe and states, "I appeared to Avraham Yitzchak and Yaakov [using the name] E-l Sha-dai, and using the name Tetragrammaton I did not appear to them." Rihal explains that the lives of the forefathers were guided by God through the forces of nature; this type of guidance is described by the name Sha-dai. Sha-dai means the divine power which acts through the laws of nature as opposed to the Tetragrammaton, which represents a complete departure from all natural laws. A miracle is a departure from the laws of nature; even more so is the creation which preceded the laws of nature.

In his commentary on this verse, the Ramban quotes the opinion of the Ibn Ezra, which is similar to the position of Rihal: "Using the name E-l Sha-dai refers back to the first part of the verse and it means "I have shown Myself to Avraham ... using the name E-l Sha-dai and through my name Tetragrammaton I did not make Myself known to them." Until this point, we have a precise parallel. However, the Ramban continues in the name of the Ibn Ezra:

"The verse that says that [God] appeared to the Forefathers with this name, [expresses] that He is the conqueror of the systems of the skies and performs great miracles with them in which the natural order of the world is not nullified. During a famine He saved [the forefathers] from death, in war from the sword, and gave them wealth and honor and all manner of good things; these are all mentioned in the promises in the Torah, both the blessings and the curses. For man receives good as a reward for a good deed and bad as a punishment for a bad deed only through miracles; and if man were to be left to his nature and luck, his actions would not add nor detract. However, the rewards and punishments of the Torah in this world are all miracles and they are hidden [such that] the observers will think that this is the way of the world and man does not really receive reward and punishment. Therefore, the Torah expounds upon the warnings in this world and not the promises for the soul in the world of souls for these are miracles and are against the natural progression. While given the existence of the soul, and its devotion to God it is fitting that it would return to the God who gave it."



The Ramban teaches that it does seem as though nature is following its own set of laws. The world follows its natural course, and everything is left to chance. Nature's random behavior cannot contain any concept of reward and punishment. The behavior of the righteous person constitutes a natural cause which affects the behavior of nature. The germs and the white blood cells that fight them, do not recognize this behavior, according to the laws of nature. When ethical realities are expressed despite everything, this is a hidden miracle, a hidden system which fits itself onto nature. Divine providence can be discovered in cosmic and human history; we detect consideration and relation to the actions of man, to justice and evil. This fact, that hidden miracles exist, as an additional system of laws beyond the laws of nature, is what is described by the name, "E-l Sha-dai." This is an additional force which enters the natural system, and it has a name: divine providence.

Thus, the Ramban teaches that we have three systems: there is the normal, natural system. Although God is hidden behind it as well, this system is expressed (for instance) in the rains falling as a result of climatic changes, near or far. At the opposite end, we have the revealed miracle which is the absolute departure from the laws of nature, and the classic examples are the great miracles and the creation itself. Creation founded the laws of nature and did not act according to them itself. Between these two systems stands a third system. Within the recesses of nature there is another element: divine providence. This element does not express itself through a dramatic breakaway from the natural framework; it functions within the system of apparently random events; in the meeting between various causes it becomes apparent that God directs nature. The biblical descriptions of the lives of the forefathers are an example of the providential presence in nature. This is a hidden miracle. The story of Purim is a classic example of this type of hidden divine direction.

Thus, we are faced with three possible types of dominion: the dominion of nature, the dominion of hidden miracles, and the dominion of revealed miracles. The Rambam generally stresses two of these levels, the natural world, and the revealed miracle, although in his "Epistle Regarding The Resurrection of the Dead" he speaks explicitly about hidden miracles. The Ramban coined the term "hidden miracle," and thus succinctly expressed Rihal's distinction between the attributes which are "borrowed from the actions which come from God through the medium of natural causes" and the "attributes which are attached to the Tetragrammaton," in other words, the action which take place as a result of the principle of the Tetragrammaton, the absolute departure from the boundaries of nature and its laws.

Rihal teaches us something paradoxical at the end of this section in the Kuzari. The forefathers were on a very high level. Therefore, God did not need to use revealed miracles and could guide and direct their lives with hidden miracles.

### **The Existential Miracle**

The topic of miracles would not be complete without a final point from the teachings of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav. In Rabbi Nachman's thought, the Land of Israel symbolizes faith. Egypt symbolizes nature. In existential translation, Egypt symbolizes the narrow pass that reality shows us. [This is a play on the word Egypt, in Hebrew - Editor.] We are sometimes locked into a situation of distress and pain, in narrow atraits. Yet even then, the Exodus can occur.

We are shut into our particular situation, like Noach shut in the ark. However, even if everything is shut and locked, there is always a window. There is way out. Our affliction is the rule of nature, from which we can escape. Health is a miracle. And we must believe that miracles can happen.

## CHAPTER 42: The Divine Image

### PART I: The Kuzari and the Rambam

At the end of the section discussing the divine attributes [2: 2], Rihāl mentions two specific attributes: "wise of heart" and "courageous in power" (Job, 9,4). Courageous in power is clearly a description of action. "Wise of heart," Rihāl claims, demonstrates that "intellect is His essence."

It seems that a similar belief is to be found in the Rambam's writings. Indeed, the first chapter of section one in the Guide For the Perplexed is dedicated to the clarification of the concept of the "divine image." However, as we shall see below, there is a fundamental difference between Rihāl and the Rambam. Loyal to his theory of divine names, the Rambam negates even this similarity and accepts the definition only after interpretation and qualification.

The Rambam begins by clarifying a point which is clear to us all in our day; that the term "divine image" does not refer to man's physical form, but to his essence, which is the intellect. Man is in the image of God because he has an intellect. It would seem that this approach fits in well with Rihāl's attitude. However, the Rambam continues to elaborate on this idea. He writes:

Man was made unique in an area in which he is very strange, which cannot be found in any other creature under the moon; I refer to the intellectual perception which does not make use of any sense or action of the body or of hand or foot. [God] made him similar to the perception of the Creator which does not go through a medium, and if this is not a true similarity, it nevertheless appears so to the mind at first.

This comment of the Rambam's comes to help us avoid a mistake. It would seem that the concept of the "divine image" means that there is a similarity between man and God. However, here the Rambam puts up a warning sign. God's perception is not like man's perception and there is a tremendous gulf between the two. The philosophers' tendency was to compare the two essences and speak of God in the image of man's perception. Although they did assume that there was a distance between them, they understood that God's mind was merely a more complete form of man's mind, in quantity or quality. This is the rationalist philosophy. The Rambam claimed that between man and God there is an essential and fundamental difference and that they are not to be compared at all. There is a similarity, but this similarity can only be described by a process of elimination. What characterizes the human mind? It is unique in the world. The human mind is something

completely different from all other things that exist "under the moon." It is strange and foreign in this world. Man and God share this strangeness. They are similar in their very uniqueness and difference from everything else! There is but a weak analogy between man and God, which allows us to compare them only through negative aspects. Both are different from all other existing things. This negative similarity touches the limit of what we are permitted to say. It is interesting therefore to state, that according to what we read in the first chapter of the Guide For The Perplexed, the Rambam did not accept Rihah's opinion that the "intellect is the essence" of God. Perhaps here we are faced with one of the places that are sidetracks in Rihah's thought; perhaps these are even the remnants of what could be termed his philosophical first drafts.

### **The Uniqueness Of The Intellect**

What is unique about the human mind, which makes it so very different from everything else that exists in the world? Many people simply deny this uniqueness. Their immediate reaction is to claim that the intellect is merely a conglomeration of processes that take place in the human brain. The Rambam from his perspective can easily attack this claim and prove that the actions of the intellect cannot be explained through the actions of the brain. In our times, we can describe this through a simple example: we cannot explain the telephone operator through the central operating station, or the engineer through the computer, despite the fact that they use them. The reality of the intellect is a totally different reality; it is an abstract reality. The human intellect is self-contained and creates a reality inside itself. It constitutes, according to the Rambam, a kind of wondrous camera which does not need film to record images.

The uniqueness of man lies also in the immortality of the soul. Someone could destroy the telephone switchboard, or cut the wires and leave the operator with no connection on the outside, yet unhurt. Before us is a totally independent reality which does not rely on physical, chemical or biological implements, as the Rambam says: "which does not make use of any sense or action of the body or of hand or foot." This abstract quality, not an attribute in its own right, but in essence a common lack of a particular attribute, is what man and God share.

### **The Garden Of Eden**

In the first chapter of the Guide For The Perplexed [1: 1], the Rambam discusses the issue of the "Garden Of Eden." This interpretation is important not only because of the

importance of the subject, but also because it is an example of a philosophical interpretation of the Scriptures.

Our starting point will be a legend from the world of Greek mythology, the story of the discovery of fire. Prometheus is a Titan, a cross between a man and a god. He feels sorry for the humans, and steals fire from the gods to give it to the people. The world of the humans is cold, hard and dark until Prometheus brings the redeeming fire from the heavens. The idea of this legend is that in giving the fire, Prometheus performs an action which is against the will of the gods, and he is therefore punished. The gods are "jealous," they don't "give the people a break." They keep the fire for themselves, because they don't want the people to enjoy it as they do. For us, fire is the basic tool and the classic symbol of human technology. And perhaps it is not their jealousy, but their fear which guides them. Perhaps, the gods feared that people might be able to use their technology to enter the sphere of the gods, and demote them from their status. According to this, science and technology are a provocation to the gods.

As we have seen before, there is a system which has made Prometheus its symbol: Marxism. Prometheus appears there as a symbol of the man who reaches his goal through struggle and rebellion against the gods and against religion. From their perspective, the provocation was positive, the symbol of man conquering nature. This is the same Prometheus who proved himself in the atomic reactor in Chernobyl.

In light of this approach, we can understand the symbolic significance of fire in Jewish law and lore. The Friday night candle is the symbol of holiness, joy and spirituality. In contrast, fire is the symbol of human technology. The prohibition against kindling a fire ends on Saturday night in a blessing over a kind of torch, over fire and technology. The blessing of Saturday night means that man does not steal the fire. He makes a blessing over it every Saturday night because God gave it to man in His benevolence.

It is impossible to explain the story of the Garden Of Eden as a description of divine jealousy. However, it is accepted to interpret it as hinting at the danger and pain that originate from wisdom. Many people have read the text in this way. This interpretation follows us to this day: is science a dangerous treasure? We live in a period of genetic discoveries - is this activity positive or will it create a new danger to second the atom bomb? Genetic engineering can be dangerous not only because of its biological results but also because - and here we get into science fiction - it can create a way for despots to transform humanity into a flock of slaves. Is the alternative to live in a paradise of fools, where the central condition is really not to know? Or perhaps we must understand the

account of the Garden Of Eden differently. The sentence upon the world of science and technology therefore lies in one's explanation of the story.

The Rambam suggests a different interpretation. He believed in the basic covenant between Torah and intellect. Man was created in the divine image, and this means that his intellect did not come into being as a result of the sin. The Rambam developed his enlightening interpretation in the Guide For The Perplexed, particularly in the second chapter of the first section. He writes as follows:

Many years ago a learned man asked me a wonderful question, and it is worthwhile to look at the question and its answer. It seems from a simple reading of the text that the original intention was that man should be like the other animals without a mind or an intellect and would not be able to differentiate between good and evil, and when he rebelled ... his rebellion brought him perfection.

**This questioner assumed that the gift of the intellect was a result of the sin.**

The Rambam refused to accept the questioner's perception. He explained the "divine image" as referring to the intellect. Man is the only creature who has a dialogue with God. This dialogue takes place based on the assumption that man is free and has an intellect. Man faces the conflict and choice between the divine command and the snake. The very fact that man faces the test, means that the possibility of sin exists, and therefore so does logic and freedom. He can decide and he must decide.

The Rambam is teaching us a basic principle in biblical exegesis. We must not read the Scriptures in the same way that we read a story or a poem. We must look more deeply into it. The tree of knowledge of good and evil did not grant man his intellect. In order to understand this, we must distinguish between two types of evil. We must distinguish between the "knowledge of good and evil" and the "knowledge of truth and falsehood." What is the difference between them? We must search for a solution in the Scriptures. Truth and falsehood were realities in man's consciousness even before the sin. But what is the good and evil that they discover? This we must learn from the rest of the story. Man discovers the meaning of shame.

The Rambam teaches us that the knowledge of truth and falsehood refers to objective knowledge, such as mathematical knowledge. In contrast, in other areas, such as esthetics, there is no such objective reality. The first knowledge, that of the Garden of Eden, was in the area of objective knowledge. After the sin, man fell to the area of subjectivity. This is the meaning of the eating of the fruit. The consumption of the forbidden fruit taints our world view with subjectivity and our vision becomes distorted.

The Mussar teachers explain this taint of subjectivity with a pithy example. If we place a small coin over our eye it can hide the supplicant's face. Our interests are represented by the Tree of Knowledge.

We must realize that wisdom and science are constantly in danger of falling under the snake's influence, and are in danger of being guided by personal desires and selfish interests. Only when man overcomes these and reaches an objective viewpoint, can he discover the truth and free himself. Knowledge is freedom; however, there is a different kind of knowledge, a subjective knowledge that endangers both man and the world.

## **PART II: Freedom And The Divine Image**

As we have seen, one of the ways to define man's divine image is through his intellect. However, other philosophers and commentators felt that the divine image is manifest in other human attributes. The Ramban and the Maharal emphasized the importance of freedom as describing the essence of man. This was beautifully expressed in the writings of Rabbi Meir Simcha HaCohen of Dvinsk, author of the "Meshekh Chokhma." The divine image is reflected in human freedom.

### **Oedipus and Rabbi Akiva**

The Jewish concept of freedom will be better understood through a comparison of two stories, the Greek myth of Oedipus, and the legend of Rabbi Akiva's daughter.

In the Oedipal myth, representative of Greek thought in general, man is ruled by powers which he cannot escape. Not only that, but even foreknowledge of the danger cannot help. Oedipus is prophetically informed that he will murder his father and marry his mother. Both Oedipus and his father fight against this prophecy, but to no avail. In the end, Oedipus brings his fate upon himself.

The Sages relate that Rabbi Akiva had a daughter. The Chaldeans told him, "On the day of her wedding she will be bitten by a snake and will die." Rabbi Akiva grieved over this news.

On the wedding night, his daughter took her golden pin and thrust it into the wall for safekeeping. The pin pierced the eye of a snake and remained there. In the morning, the pin slid out and the dead snake with it.

Her father asked her, "What did you do?"

She answered: "On the eve of my wedding, a beggar came to the door, and everyone was so preoccupied with the wedding feast that no one noticed him. I took the portion that you gave me and I gave it to him."

He said to her, "You did a good deed."

Rabbi Akiva went out and explained, "Charity saves from death" - not merely from an abnormal death, but from death itself.

This story is a powerful statement against the belief that everything is predetermined. The contrast between these two worlds is evident. The Chaldeans, in other words the astrologers, have predetermined man's fate. It would seem that they were right. Yet, their prophecy is not absolute; escape is possible.

## **Astrology**

We will not discuss the question of astrology; rather we will focus on the claim, which is often clothed in scientific garb, that man's fate is marked out in advance. Sometimes this claim is clothed in the language of astrology, sometimes in biological or psychological garb. We will yet discuss other angles of the problem; however, the general direction was given by our Sages, when they stated that whoever is born under the planet Mars is destined to be a murderer, unless he becomes a butcher or a surgeon. Perhaps this can give us a new perspective on Rabbi Akiva's statement, "Everything is preordained, yet freedom of choice is granted." The accepted interpretation, which is found, for example, in the Rambam's commentary on the Ethics of the Fathers, is to explain this statement as an answer to the question of divine foreknowledge and free choice. However, in light of the story about Rabbi Akiva's daughter, it can teach us that although there are constraints which affect the future, man is given the opportunity to overcome them. Freedom thus means the possibility of escaping one's fate.

Jewish philosophers have held differing opinions with regard to the merit and significance of astrology. The Rambam saw astrology as a superstition presuming to be a science, and was therefore totally opposed to it. Others, such as Rabbi Abraham Ibn Ezra, for example, believed in the truth of astrology; however, most of those who believed in it were convinced that nevertheless "Israel has no sign." In other words, he who behaves like a Jew is not controlled by the stars.

The theoretical question, however, is only one aspect of the problem. The central question, even for those who grant astrology some merit, is our attitude towards it. Are our fates in fact sealed by the movements of the stars? Ought we to make the critical



decisions of our lives based upon it, or ought we to follow the logical path and make decisions based on the reality before us and the values that guide our lives? In the long term, we will certainly reach the conclusion that this type of "science" is totally destructive, and will cause humanity terrible misfortunes. It is well-known that Hitler had an astrologer and that he followed his advice in planning his battle strategies. Apparently, the English also used an astrologer, but his job was to try and decipher what the suggestion of the enemy's astrologer would be.

An important expression of these ideas was given to us by the Ramban. On the one hand, the Ramban believed that there might be some truth in astrology. However, our approach to it must be established within the very general framework of the commandment, "You shall be whole-hearted with your God." According to the Ramban, this is a positive commandment, and it teaches man to act according to the Torah and not according to this type of "supernatural" guidance. The Ramban believed that the future is predetermined, but in a very relative manner. Our fate exists in the form of "letters" and through our actions we combine them into words. For example, imagine that the heavenly decree consisted of the letters Gimmel, Ayin, and Nun. They can be read in two different ways: Nega [plague] or Oneg [pleasure]. The formation of the letters into words is not determined by the stars. The future is preordained to some extent; however, the practical ramifications are not decided by the constellations.

Astrology is an interesting, often pleasant, amusement; yet, we must be wary of it. As we mentioned earlier, the Rambam completely negated all of these superstitions. A society which adheres to such futile and empty ideas is in some way self-destructive. Thus the Rambam, in his epistle to the sages of Marseilles suggests the hair-raising idea that part of the terrible events of the destruction of the second Temple occurred because, instead of studying war, our ancestors were preoccupied with astrology and the like. Man must search for realistic solutions, in this case a military solution, and not look to irrational illusions. They are forbidden because they are false, and lies are dangerous when they take the place of truths which can offer salvation. People stop thinking when they depend upon such phenomena. In addition, for every real phenomenon, we will meet a thousand phenomena of falsehood and deception. This is the approach that we have received from the Rambam, who consistently negated any form of dependence upon magic and soothsaying. A rich tradition of sages stood behind this approach, but there were others who were more open to these hidden phenomena. In this regard, it is important to stress the essential difference between astrology and phenomena that stem from parapsychology. This brings us once again to what can be termed "practical Kabbala." In these cases, the person giving the guidance does not receive his information from any science, but rather from what is revealed to him in his own soul, sometimes

through all kinds of facts which serve merely to give him inspiration. Parapsychology is much closer to Kabbala, and it is possible that the soul can grant us glimpses of the future. The Kabbalists don't use the facts in the same way one would solve a mathematical problem; rather the facts that they know serve as a kind of inspiration to find the solution. There are difficult situations in which fateful decisions are made and there is no way to know what will happen. Turning to a source which deviates beyond the rational is understandable then. However, even in such cases one must be very careful. In particular one must ensure that realistic solutions are not overlooked as a result.

Rihal discusses astrology in a number of places and explains to us unequivocally that the stars have an effect on the earth, but as part of the natural order. In other words, their effect is part of the general order of things, while the astrologers want to learn the details from the stars. "The astrologer claims that he knows the details, but we contradict him in this and bear witness that this thing cannot be perceived by flesh and blood" [4: 9]. The statements about astrology in the writings of our Sages are to be understood in a totally different way. Astrology is merely "conjecture and casting of lots in the heavens, which has no more truth in it than in casting lots on the earth."

### **PART III: Freedom And Its Ideological Antagonists**

If we think back to one of our earlier lectures, we will recall the central philosophical triangles which make up the Star of David. The first triangle demonstrates the assumption shared by many philosophers, that man is linked to types of chains. The first is a chain connecting him to God, which we will call Fatalism, and the other a chain that tying man to the world, which we will call Determinism.

Fatalism is an essential component of Islamic thought, which maintains that all is preordained and consequently man is not free. Interestingly enough, one can live two totally opposite ways of life based on this belief. On the one hand, Fatalism can bring man to total despair and indifference. On the other hand, the Fatalist belief can lead one to bring people to total fanaticism, such as the suicide groups which we have witnessed in recent years. Everything is set in advance anyway, and so it becomes possible to perform the most daring acts without danger.

Judaism, in contrast, believes that man is an architect who participates in the construction of his own world, and in the building of the world in general. Thus, the Rambam writes in the Laws of Repentance: "This is a great principle ... as it is written, 'Behold I have placed before you today life and goodness, death and evil,'" - in other

words, life and goodness are indeed in the hands of man. "And it is written, 'Behold I have placed before you today a blessing and a curse,'" - in other words, the choice is yours. "Whenever man desires to do a human action, he does it, whether good or bad. And regarding this issue it is written, - and this is the Rambam's proof - "I hope that this will be the state of their hearts." This is the ultimate proof that human freedom exists: God says, "I hope;" this is paradoxical in the extreme. When God says "I hope," it means that this choice is not in His hands. Here the rabbinical phrase "Everything is in the hands of Heaven, except the fear of Heaven" receives its most strange and paradoxical interpretation.

We will discuss the question of foreknowledge and free choice later on. At this point, I will relate only to the Rambam's statement. The Rambam teaches us that "Every man is given the choice, if he wishes to incline himself towards the good and become a righteous person, he may, and if he wishes to incline himself towards evil and be an evil person, he may." This is Judaism's approach. We must accept this truth and not be misled by "this thing that the simpletons among the nations of the world and the majority of the fools [lit: Golems] among the Jews say", that Fatalism is a reality, and everything is preordained.

The Rambam uses two interesting terms here: simpleton [Heb: tipesh] and Golem. In Jewish law, a golem is a vessel which has not yet been completed. When one who subscribes to a different opinion is a Fatalist, we may call him a simpleton. He has reached the end of his religious development, and believes completely in the tenets of his religion. Thus, for example, most of the theories of Orthodox Islam are Fatalist: everything is in the hands of God, and one's actions will not make any difference. Such a person cannot be accused of being a bad Muslim; one can only claim that his opinion and position are false. However, when a Jew is a Determinist, he does not make this claim as a Jew. In taking this position he proves that he has not reached the end of his Jewish development. Therefore he is essentially a Golem; his religious development is not yet over, and he is mistaken in his understanding of Judaism.

### **The Pinocchio Ideal**

The golem's mission to become a person, is the great mission of mankind. We are not a being but an evolution. Two Jewish psychologists spoke of this idea, each in his own way. Erich Fromm wrote about the difference between two ideals, that of Being and Having. In the first the goal is "to be" and in the second it is "to own." Silvano Arieti, an Italian Jewish psychologist, stressed a third ideal, which he formulated not as "to be"

but "to become." Man is not born a whole and perfect entity; he must continue to form himself. When he came to America after the Holocaust, Arieti understood that this is the inner content which made the story of Pinocchio a universal children's story. For him Pinocchio expressed the idea that we are not born perfect, but that we evolve and become. We are like wooden puppets who have to become people. The story of Pinocchio is a kind of symbolic archetype of this evolution.

This idea is expressed in various ways by classical Jewish philosophy. The Rambam expressed it through the Midrash, which states that the store of souls before birth is not identical to the one after death. The divine image is not something we are born with. It is something we must reach by walking in God's ways. That which is truly human in a person, must undergo an evolution.

One of man's big problems is his tendency to look at the here and now, which essentially expresses the desire to be, without effort and evolution. To become, means that one must occasionally forego the now, for the sake of the future; sacrifice current desires for the goal that one has set, for an ideal, or even for oneself, for something that one will need tomorrow.

It seems to me that the difference between having and being is easy to understand. However the transition between being and becoming is difficult. In this context, Arieti mentions the great danger which was described in the book "The Lord Of The Flies." This is a cruel world created by children. Cruelty is a danger which lurks on our path, indeed on the path of all those who cannot educate themselves.

## **CHAPTER 43: Foreknowledge And Free Will**

Our belief in the principle of freedom brings us to an age-old question: the question of foreknowledge and free will.

It would seem that we are not free in our actions. Let us assume for example, that on the first of Nissan, in a given year, a horrible murder will take place. Does God know beforehand, that the murder will take place? We cannot say that He does not know, for that would limit our conception of God. If, on the other hand, He does know, then it would seem that the murderer was not free to choose his actions.

### **Three Options**

**There are three possible philosophical approaches to the topic of freedom.**

1. The first option chooses knowledge over free will. The classic example is found in Islam and in various Protestant groups, who claim that human freedom is a blow to the greatness and omnipotence of God. The Rambam furiously opposed these positions, in the Laws of Teshuva and in his work "Eight Chapters." In the Laws of Teshuva, the Rambam writes that this approach, which limits human freedom, is accepted by the simpletons of the world and the fools [lit: golem] among the Jews. The reason for this distinction is significant. These are not mere derogatory phrases. The Rambam is hinting that in other religions and theologies we do in fact find a belief that man's freedom is limited. The Rambam felt that whoever believes in such things is a simpleton. However, among the Jews, this is not part of the theology, and whoever accepts these things is a Golem; in other words he has not completed his religious development [see previous shiur - Editor].

Despite this, we must say that there were a small number of philosophers who thought that Judaism could admit the negation of human freedom. The most outstanding of these were Rabbi Chasdai Crescas and Rabbi Tzadok HaKohen of Lublin. The true meaning of their position is under debate. It seems to me that although they limited human freedom, they left a small area of life in which man is still free.

2. The second possibility is to limit the knowledge of God. This was the position of the Ralbag. It is well-known that his position aroused much anger. It has been said of him that the name of his book, "God's Wars," describes its contents correctly, however he is not fighting for God, but against Him.

## **The Theory of the Continuous Present**

3. The third possibility is essentially the search for theories. One of the most interesting theories is the theory of the continuous present, which we will describe here briefly. This is the classic answer that religious philosophy has given to the paradox.

If we return to the example with which we began, I must admit, according to this theory, that I have actually made a mistake in the formulation of the question. I asked if God knows in Adar about a murder which will take place in Nissan (the next month). The expression "God knows in Adar" is based on a mistaken idea. For God's existence is not within the framework of time, therefore I cannot say that He "knows in Adar." He knows what has happened and what will happen; it is an eternal knowledge. Let me give you an example just to explain this idea, even if it is far from accurate. Imagine that we are traveling on a mountainous road and we do not know what awaits us beyond the next turn. This is true for us, but the person who is above, at the top of the mountain, has the correct perspective and can see the road in its entirety. Similarly, God has a different time perspective, a perspective above and beyond all of time.

The application of these ideas in order to foresee the future, has much to teach us. If I were to prophesy which hand Mr. Jones will lift in five minutes time, then one of two interpretations of the events will be possible. Either he is not free, or I do not know but am merely guessing. If I were to combine these two things, and claim that I do know and yet, he is still free to choose, I would reach a paradox. However, let us assume that I am looking at Mr. Jones in what we call today "real time," in other words while he is doing the act. If I look not at the future but at the present, then both his raising of the hand, and my knowledge of it, are two things which happen simultaneously and do not contradict one another. God exists in a continuous present, in which knowledge of the future is the same as knowledge of the present. This is the philosophical meaning of the description of God as He who "was, is and will be."

## **The Rambam's Position**

The Rambam did not construct the entire theory of the continuous present; in his opinion we are faced with two different concepts of knowledge. The paradox stems from our attempts to create analogies between our knowledge and God's knowledge. However since this is an invalid analogy, we cannot solve the paradox; we cannot even formulate it.

Rabbi Meir Simcha of Dvinsk, author of the *Meshekh Chokhma* and the *Or Sameach*, understands that the theory of eternal truth is in fact the Rambam's theory. Rabbi Meir

Simcha added an important dimension to the above description. The theory of the continuous present solved the paradox; however, the correct solution is that knowledge is God's alone. If this knowledge were given to a prophet, then the paradox arise once again. This has an important and surprising implication: there are dimensions of the Torah that cannot be understood by prophets nor by previous generations. These levels are revealed to us from time to time. These revelations constitute "chidushei Torah," inspired novel interpretations of the Torah.

To past generations, this approach to the paradox seemed peculiar. In our day, the relativity of time and the theoretical possibility of time travel, as presented in popular movies such as *Back To The Future*, have become so accepted that these wild possibilities no longer frighten us. And perhaps the reader will not even be frightened by another model and by the wild possibility which apparently is included in the Rasag's writings, that God receives information from the future, information which flows in the opposite direction to time. One of the speculations of modern physics speaks about tachyons, particles which travel in the opposite direction to the arrow of time. In these particles the movement towards the past becomes a reality!

The theory of the continual present claims that the paradox does not exist. However, there were philosophers who did not believe in the power of the human mind to solve the paradox, and felt that we must accept that this inability is not going to change. This was the position of Rabbi Nachman of Braslav.

[Rabbi Nachman taught us that there are two types of paradox. The difference between them is described in the language of the Kabbala. One type is the type of paradox whose origin is in the "breaking of the vessels." These are paradoxes that can be solved, although the process is continuous. Another type is connected to the empty space that was created through the "tzimtzum." These are questions that were born with creation, and no human intellectual effort can solve them.]

## **Determinism**

We will not go into the second half of the problem here, the question of determinism. I will only mention that this is a problem that man has constantly had to deal with. Here too, twentieth-century science has opened new vistas in our understanding.

Classical science believed that the world is run by absolute determinism. The future is set absolutely. This faith reached its height in the nineteenth century. It was well formulated by the French mathematician Laplace, who said that if he knew the placement of all the molecules at the initial state of the world and had a complete

description of all the laws of physics, all of universal history could have been written in advance. This is mechanicism.

The twentieth century discovered that determinism is not absolute. This is one of the outcomes of the discovery of quantum physics. In various microscopic phenomena nature is faced with two alternatives, and chooses one of them at random. Take, for example a block of radioactive material. If we ask whether a particular atom in this block will break up within a certain time frame or not, there is a certain probability that it will break up, and that is all. We cannot formulate any absolute law. We have not denied the existence of a set of laws, but we know that this system of laws is not absolute. Completely random events do occur.

This opens a new gate to understanding the question of free will. It does not solve all of the riddles; yet, it is clear to us today that the system of laws which exists in the world is neither absolute nor universal. Today this is a definite truth.



## **CHAPTER 44: Redemption And The Cycles Of Existence**

### **PART I: Redemption**

We will now begin a new topic: redemption. As we shall see, redemption is multifaceted. Redemption is the triumph of good over evil. This means that if we could catalogue the tragedies, we could also catalogue the redemptions, or to be more exact, the various dimensions of redemption. We will allow ourselves to do just that. But how does one make a catalogue of troubles? What principle ought we to use in constructing this catalogue? I have chosen the concept of area as a guiding principle. We will define the central areas of life, and we will subsequently identify the elements of suffering and evil within each area.

### **The Four Cycles And Ideals**

To illustrate this, picture a square representing the cosmos, and inside it three circles, one inside the other: humanity is the large circle, inside it is the circle representing the Jewish nation, and inside it, the circle representing the individual. These are the four worlds in which we live and act. Granted, we have ignored secondary circles that exist inside the big circles, sub-systems that we belong to such as the family. Nevertheless, we will simplify the problem and speak of four circles: the cosmos, humanity, the nation, and the individual.

This division will help us understand the principles of Judaism. In the Ethics Of The Fathers, Rabban Shimon Ben Gamliel teaches us that "The world rests on three things: on justice, on truth and on peace." And indeed, it seems to me that this means that Judaism has three ideals. As an individual, my ideal is truth; as a nation, the ideal is justice, and as humanity, the ideal is peace. But not only in humanity. Peace is also an ideal of the cosmos - we speak of "He Who makes peace in on high."

These are three values that must guide us in the various circles of our existence. In my opinion, an additional value must be added to the list. This value is freedom. It has three distinct aspects to it: freedom for the individual, for the nation and for all of humanity.

1. Individual, personal freedom; free choice.
2. Freedom in society; the freedom experienced by slaves emerging from slavery.
3. Freedom of a nation among nations.

Our lives are guided by many values, which come into conflict with each other. Conflicts can be divided into two types: horizontal and vertical. How does the individual live within society? How do the nation and nationalism find their place within humanity? What is the relationship between all of humanity and the cosmos? How do we fulfill all three ideals at the same time: truth, justice and peace? These are the vertical relationships. However, there are also horizontal conflicts between ideals. For example, every Israeli knows that the big dream that we share is peace. However, this is an oversimplification, because what we truly want is freedom and peace. We are looking for freedom for society, which will not, God forbid, become a house of slavery, but we are also looking for justice, and justice means that each individual is granted the right to his minimal needs.

Our century has been torn between two ideologies in the shadow of a threatening conflict, a conflict that was symbolized by the iron curtain which divided the world in two. This was the conflict between the ideology, on the left of the curtain, which believed that in order to achieve justice one must forego freedom, and the right of the curtain, for whom freedom was so important that social justice may be ignored for its sake. The first group created a throng of people, with a secret police to maintain order; whereas the others pronounced freedom to be so great and holy that man is even free to die of hunger in the street, and no one will convince him otherwise.

History has proven that when ideologies are put into practice, they abandon much of their content. In any case, I have given this introduction to illustrate the need for synthesis, this time between justice and freedom. This need exists on all levels. The Torah teaches that we must strive towards the ultimate synthesis. On the one hand, the Torah emphasizes that man is free. The image of God is freedom. We learned this from the Rambam, the Maharal and Rav Kook. They reiterated the idea of freedom as our divine trait in various ways. Every one of us has this divine spark within him. Judaism champions freedom. On the other hand, it is clear that it does not agree with certain approaches which believe in freedom without limits or boundaries. This is because we also believe in truth. Here we reach the great conflict which we all feel, the conflict between freedom and truth. Judaism teaches us to strive towards a synthesis between freedom and truth. This is the most difficult task.

I will illustrate this simply, using Chaim Potok's book, 'My Name Is Asher Lev.' In this work, we read of a young boy, growing up in a family with many problems. The child, who is very talented artistically, is encouraged by his family, and even the family's Rebbe encourages him to continue painting. The young man develops his talent and eventually exhibits his art work in a show. His parents come to the exhibit and are

astonished to see that the central painting is of a crucifixion, a fundamental component of the Christian faith. However, in the painting the protagonists have been changed and in it, his father is crucifying his mother. The content is clear: the artist wanted to express his feelings. Whether he was justified is not the issue at hand. What is important, is that he chose an exclusively Christian medium to express it.

My first thought when I read the story was bitter disappointment because the hero and the artist had another option: he could have painted his father SACRIFICING his mother. Or he could have used a different form of martyrdom, in which Jewish history is well-versed. However, the author wanted to express the problem of the artist who refuses to be bound by any limitations. The artist speaks in the name of absolute freedom of expression, which becomes his ultimate value. We could accept this if we believed that freedom was the only value. However, we are convinced that at least one value stands on par with freedom, which we cannot measure against freedom: truth. And we allow ourselves to approach the artist in the name of this truth and say: Do not use this image. Use an image of your own, not only because the image you have used has difficult historical associations, but also because this image is connected to something we have fought against in the name of truth, and to which we are justifiably opposed. We have given the artist a difficult task, but he may not ignore the dilemma. A person who creates a synthesis and is finding his way between freedom and truth does not betray freedom.

This dilemma is not limited to religious content alone. We are faced with similar dilemmas every day in all areas. In the name of freedom and artistic expression, anything can be sanctioned. I have heard someone describe an imaginary Roman play, in which the director used a slave as one of the actors in order to express the suffering of slavery. However, in order to make the drama more thrilling, the director cut off the slave's hand, not as a theatrical action, but in reality. This artist was not satisfied with art as an imitation of life; he wanted his art to occur in reality. Similarly, we find artists who think that art expresses itself in tattoos or various types of body mutilations, to the extent of castration. It is no secret that there exist underground films which document immoral acts culminating in actual murder. What would be the opinion of the artist about this freedom and this art? Clearly, there is a practical question about the limits of artistic expression. This is an issue which is under debate. However, we cannot help but cry out in protest against those who speak in the name of freedom and neglect the call of truth.

## **PART II: What Is Freedom?**

Each one of us is the captain of a ship. Yet we are both the captain and the ship. The ship is tossed on a stormy sea, the sea of life, and we must bring it safely to shore. We use maps to aid us in this purpose. The captain's status is one of freedom; the map is truth. We can sink our ship in the sea or bring it to shore, we can hit a snag by accident or on purpose, by force or by choice. This is freedom. However, we believe that there are maps. We are free and we can alter reality, by building a new port, for example. However, the maps exist; this is the truth. To find our way we need maps. Our relationship with the maps is described by the concept of autonomy.

Those of us who are not intimately familiar with the problems of the captain, like me, can translate the parable to a better-known model, that of driving. Driving is a good allegory for life, because for driving we need three things: knowledge regarding the car and the roads, skill, and morality. Knowledge and experience are not enough, we also need rules of behavior, so that we know which moral principles to apply when we find ourselves in difficult situations. In other words, in addition to the technical skills we also need facts and values. I used the example of driving because it can help us clarify the existence of different levels of autonomy.

On the first level, autonomy gives expression to the fact that the driver must learn to drive without a driving instructor. The driving instructor should sit in the car with the student for a certain amount of time, but the goal is that the student will eventually drive alone. This is the most basic, primary level of autonomy. Of course there are various stages within this level, however this is its essence. Translated to our reality, the first skill is cognitive skill, in other words that the child be able to recognize and distinguish between good and evil on his own, without his mother or some other guide making decisions for him.

Beyond the first level there exists a different type of autonomy, which has ethical significance. We expect the driver to stop at a stop sign, not because he sees a policeman, but because he knows that this rule is important; not only because it is an obligation, but because disobeying this law could have disastrous results.

However, we have still not finished teaching our student freedom and autonomy. We can teach him to use the car technically and to adhere to the rules of traffic. However we must still teach him to make choices within the framework of these laws. Autonomy in Judaism follows the same pattern. There are paths from which man must choose to find his own way. There are lanes that man must open for himself. This is in essence the Hasidic idea expressed by Rabbi Zusha, that he will not be judged because he was not Moses, but because he was not Zusha. This wise saying can be interpreted in perhaps a

hundred and one valid ways. However, the simple and basic interpretation is that every person in the world has his own path, his own vocation, and he must find that vocation. Self-actualization is not collective, it is not the same for everyone. Every person has his own purpose, and God expects him to fulfill it. The third level of autonomy means that each person has individuality.

Beyond all this, there is a fourth level of autonomy, a different level of freedom. This is the freedom of sages and righteous people. This is the autonomy of the person who can make halakhic decisions, who can decide with regard to very serious dilemmas, or even of the person who can, in a moment of danger, go against the stream, against traffic, and even transgress the laws of traffic in cases which deserve special measures. This type of autonomy exists as well; however, the sages have taught us that it is absurd to think that a person who has not yet gone through all the prior stages of his development could achieve this type of autonomy. This autonomy requires knowledge, self-control and self-criticism; it means that God makes man into a partner. This is the greatest autonomy of the sage who renders an innovative halakhic ruling.

### **PART III: Jonah and Freedom**

Of course, there are other levels and forms of freedom than the ones we have discussed. However, just as we must weep for the person who has not reached freedom, so must we weep for the person who has magnified his freedom beyond ordinary proportions and has not discovered his responsibilities. This is a person who has not reached self-actualization. We will clarify this through psychologist Erich Fromm's wonderful interpretation of the book of Jonah. Erich Fromm drew largely on Jewish sources and although he altered and interpreted his sources, his writings are saturated with Jewish tradition.

We read in the scriptures of Jonah the runaway. Jonah is the symbol of the person who runs away from his calling, his vocation. Among the commentators there are those who defend him, perhaps justifiably. However in the final analysis, he does run away from his mission; he runs away from his responsibility towards others. If we read the book correctly, we will discover that Jonah was sent to others, and that the term "mission" actually denotes anti-freedom. Jonah refuses. What happens to Jonah? He enters the bowels of a ship and falls asleep, he hides. He escapes to a situation which he thinks is safe. His adventures end when he is thrown into the sea and finds refuge in the belly of the fish. Here Jonah finds his reward and his punishment, which turn out to be

one and the same. Inside the fish Jonah is alone. There is no longer anyone to disturb his peace.

Thus Jonah symbolizes the person who is called to responsibility, to have a relationship with others. The person refuses. Usually, although this is not the case with Jonah, the person refuses because it limits his freedom, just as some young people refuse to enter the yoke of marriage, or young couples who refuse to take responsibility and become parents. However Jonah also teaches us the end of the process. The true punishment for refusal to accept responsibility is loneliness. A person lives in a city populated by millions, but he lives in a closed and locked apartment. He receives the goods he orders from stores by messengers and can even watch good programs on television. He is protected, but he is lonely. There is a feeling that modern man has become free because he has freed himself from the pressure of the tribe, of the small town, of the family. In the big city, in the megalopolis, he is apparently free, he can be an individual, not part of a group which determines his life. However the truth is different. Man has freed himself and has achieved individuality, but at its height he has reached complete isolation. The person who runs away from responsibility ends up in the belly of the fish, protected and lonely.

## **Merging Values**

The use of these two words together teaches us that a single value does not govern our lives rather there are many values which we try to incorporate into our lives, and we must try to merge them together. The young person growing up, discovers this call to freedom and also experiences the trauma of not being able to fulfill his desires. Time will pass until he feels something else, the problematics of freedom.

Many people see birds or other animals as symbols of freedom. However they are not aware of the saddening fact that birds and animals in general, although they seem free, are tied by many invisible strings. They are actually similar, within certain limits, to fish in an aquarium. They have a certain level of freedom of movement, but even birds have very tough territorial boundaries. Man too, although he thinks he is free is sometimes bound as tightly as a prisoner. Actions that seem to us to be the result of our free and spontaneous decisions, are merely the result of external pressures which we internalize, an invasion from the world surrounding us which penetrates us. Advertising functions according to the same principle: it repeats and emphasizes the name and qualities of a particular product, to the point where when we need to buy, it will be the first name that rises to our lips and we will buy it. We often find ourselves singing a line from some

commercial, which has invaded our thoughts. Sometimes the voice which comes seemingly from within actually comes from without. Regarding the ten commandments which were inscribed on the tablets the Sages say, "do not read 'harut' [inscribed] but 'herut' [freedom]." This implies that man is perhaps free to do what he wishes, but sometimes he is not free in those very desires. His desire is the result of the influence of the surroundings. The "harut" which becomes the "herut" means that only education, personal work, and sometimes the adherence to the rule of the "harut", grants us the "herut".

Let me give you an example. Imagine two people: one lying on his couch, watching a soccer game on television and drinking can after can of beer; the second exercising or playing basketball for exercise and health purposes. The first seems relaxed, while the second is perspiring profusely. Which is the free man? Our first reaction will be that the free man is the one lying on his couch. However that man cannot even raise himself up. In contrast, all the work of exercising - if it is not done for commercial reasons - gives the person total control over his body and complete development of his ability and possibilities. In other words, it grants freedom. The person who exercises in order to give his body the necessary freedom, fulfills the injunction, "do not read harut but herut." He shows that paradoxically and strangely enough, we reach freedom through self-subjugation and self-discipline. The second way sometimes promises much, but actually enslaves one. It is freedom which brings to enslavement.

The encounter of these two paths that we have described reminds me of the beautiful way that Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch explains the two goats used in the service on Yom Kippur. There are two goats; one is sent to be a sacrifice in the Holy Temple, the other goes seemingly to freedom, but it actually falls down the cliff of Azazel. Both goats had to be as similar as possible, to show that they are really one according to Rabbi Hirsch. They are two options which each person is faced with. One option is the option of bringing the sacrifice. It does contain an element of self-sacrifice, but it is a self-sacrifice that brings one into the holy of holies. The second option creates an illusion of freedom, but actually ends in a fall and deterioration, as we see in many areas of life, particularly in the use of drugs.

## **PART IV**

The ultimate aim in Judaism, which we find expressed in Hassidism (among others), is that at the end of the process of development a person will not fulfill his or her obligation through a struggle and conquest of the internal self; ultimately we hope to see a person

fulfill religious obligations through a drive which stems from this inner self. This is expressed in the Hassidic idea that each and every one of us has an inner world which is essentially good.

In order to understand this, I would like to draft three models of prayer. The first model depicts free prayer, as though I were to go to a person and say: Take this flute and play what comes out of your heart. The flute is an expression of spontaneous prayer. And indeed we find a great emphasis upon prayer that comes from the heart in Hassidism.

It would seem that this first type of prayer is the greatest and most important. However, there is a different kind of prayer in which everything is turned around. The siddur plays its music through us, and we become its instrument. As we see in a choir, no single person can sing all that comes out of his heart nor all of the song. Each person has to sing within the framework of an arranged group.

The music produced in the second model is beautiful, but not spontaneous. Rav Kook describes these two states in the language of the Kabbala as inner light and surrounding light. The inner light comes from within the person, while the surrounding light is received from the outside, just as the conductor of a choir or an orchestra stands before me and sets the pace. However, Rav Kook defines the essential quality of prayer, as it was expressed by A.J. Heschel, through the idea of resonance. Sometimes a certain musical instrument will strike a note, and then another instrument which is in tune with the first, will begin to play on its own. The trick is for there to be agreement between the surrounding light and the inner light. One day, at a certain stage of our development, we will reach the recognition that the obligations imposed upon us from without, agree with our inner dictate, and that there is harmony between them. We have melodies within us that ought to be aroused by the music from without. This is true prayer.

What is hidden within Man's inner world? This has been a topic of debate for generations. Freud claimed that the inner world is similar to what we find when we lift up the carpet - dust and dirt. There were also ethicists of the school of Rabbi Israel Salanter who felt the same. And we find other ethicists, particularly in Hassidism, and Rav Kook among them, who inform us that we are really in a house that has a carpet, and under the carpet there may be "dirt," but if we continue to dig, we will reach a spring of fresh water. There are various levels in the "inner world." Many things which happen within us are actually "dirt" which comes from outside. The great Hassidic thesis, as found for example in the writings of the Sefat Emet, and the approach of Rav Kook, is that behind this inner world there is a deeper inner world. This is a kind of spiritual umbilical cord that unconsciously connects us to a different world. The Torah is not merely a commandment coming from the outside. It grants Man the opportunity to



uncover inner levels of his personality. This is what is termed by many thinkers, "achieving authenticity."

### **Education as a Tool**

The example of the melody, which we used to illustrate the meaning of prayer, is the best model for a further reason. Sometimes we take a child, put a violin in his hands and force him to do tedious exercises. What will be his response? He will be angry at me, he will work with many difficulties, and he will, justifiably, see in my actions not only coercion and robbery of his freedom, but also cruel limitation of all kinds of other activities that he wished to do. We only hope that the day will come when the child will realize he has been given an instrument for the expression of his inner world that he did not possess before. The violin, which was a symbol of coercion from the outside, will become an expression of the inner self. He will then feel that the music which was inside him, can be expressed - a thing which was not possible before. He will have an instrument to express his inner self, as well as fame and fortune, if he is successful.

Of course these things should be done without coercion, but rather, gently and pleasantly. Yet, despite this, it is clear that any human advancement is connected first of all with self discipline. One must be honest with oneself and clarify whether this self-discipline causes one to give up, or if it allows one to gain new ways to discover one's inner world. We can also fall into the opposite trap. To borrow an allegory from the Chanuka story, all the oils have been defiled, except for the one small flask. Many times we use holy things for unholy purposes. A great idea such as the idea of education has often been used for evil. In various countries and cultures education has been used to make people into animals or robots. These dangers exist, but they cannot make us forget the true educational ideal. Coercion is not a goal; it is sometimes the only means to try to give a person freedom, to help him to create channels that will give expression to his true freedom, to his inner world, and to the truth. People have always used beautiful and ethical ideas to defend evil actions. This is the reason for the great commandment to distinguish between the holy and the profane, between the pure and impure. With regard to our issue, we must differentiate between different types of education and freedom.

We have learned from Hasidism and from the writings of Rav Kook, that freedom is one of the basic ideals of Judaism: political freedom, social freedom and also individual freedom.

Political freedom means the liberation of the nation. The month of Nissan is the month of Spring. Rav Kook sees it as the month of the "Spring of Nations". This name

refers to a period, in 1848, when many revolutions broke out in Europe. This was the Spring of Nations, however like the Spring of Prague more than a hundred years later, this Spring that predicted change in the world, ended in utter failure. Rav Kook teaches us that the Spring of Nations is actually Pesach, the holiday of Spring. It is the national symbol of a nation's liberation, and a social symbol of freed slaves, a successful slave revolution. Individual freedom is an ideal as well. Sometimes we have to give it up for the sake of the other freedoms, however we must aim for integration. Just as we must be aware of the supreme value of martyrdom, we must also know that life is a value, and we must strive to live, as we were commanded, "and you shall choose life;" similarly we must understand that in every act of self-discipline there is a type of martyrdom for the sake of Heaven. However, the final goal of these acts is an integration and melding of truth and freedom.

## CHAPTER 45: Four Expressions of Redemption

### PART I

To understand the idea of redemption, we must first discuss its multi-dimensional character; we will then try to isolate its dimensions, and analyze them one by one. This analysis of the various dimensions might seem artificial, yet as I will try to demonstrate, it is productive and necessary.

From the outset, the Torah hints at the meaning of redemption. The Torah opens with the divine statement that everything that is created in the world is good, and in the final summary of the story of creation, the world in its entirety is termed "very good." This sets the background for understanding the second story, the story of the Garden of Eden, in which evil makes its appearance. In the Garden of Eden we find a tree: the tree of knowledge of good and evil, a tree that contains the potential for the existence of evil. When we look at the world today, we do not see it as "very good" but as "good and evil;" this is a world in which good and evil both function, and in which, at times, the shadows are more apparent than the light. Evil appears before us with its double face: it is natural evil, in other words the evil that man suffers, but also moral evil, evil that man causes.

The contrast between the two stories demonstrates the assumption that there is a divine plan for a world that is all good, however when this plan is put into action and man appears, evil appears as well. This description has been the basis for all of the philosophical interpretations of the Scriptures and in Judaism in general. The Torah paints an ideal state for us, in which there is only good, and a realistic state, in which there is good and evil. But it will teach us that repentance and redemption are born together with sin. The return to the Garden of Eden, the redemption and the End of Days are present in potential from the start. This potential reality gives us hope for the day that is all good, the day on which good will triumph over evil. The existence of good and evil is a fact. But the Scriptures refuse to accept and agree to this fact. They give us hope for an ideal world, a world that is all good. This is essentially the definition of redemption. The world of evil is merely a stage in the process. Evil will be wiped out, "and God will wipe the tear from every face."

And now we can present the central model, which will help us understand the multi-dimensional character of redemption. The key to building this model is what I would call the sphere principle. Exile represents evil and our national suffering. War represents the evil in humanity, the sin of the nations. To represent the suffering of the individual,

we have chosen Job's question, the question of evil that besets a righteous man. The evil of the entire cosmos is without a doubt death, which rules over humans and galaxies.

Redemption in Judaism means correcting the evil in the world. This is the source for the four principles, or if you wish, the four expressions of redemption. Personal evil is corrected through the idea of immortality. In this world, the reward for keeping the commandments is not always apparent and sometimes does not exist at all, but there is a "tomorrow" when reward will be received. The national evil is resolved in the messianic idea. The international evil - in the vision of the End of Days, in which "nation shall not lift a sword against nation, neither shall they study war any more." Beyond these, there is a final utopian vision, of the correction of the entire world, of triumph even over death, of the return to the Garden of Eden. The lion and the lamb living in peace are a parable for peace among the nations, however they also reflect the fact that there is violence in the non-human cosmos. The final vision of the prophets means triumph over this violence as well.

There are in fact parallels between the dimensions of redemption and the entire sphere of human life. The various components can be arranged in a diagram that might clarify their relationships, as follows:

Sphere	Evil	Redemption
Individual	The righteous suffer	Immortality of the soul
National	Exile	Messianism
Humanity	War	The end of days
The cosmos	Death	The world to come

Classical Jewish tradition, that of the Scriptures and the Talmud, present these four ideas without clearly defining the relationships between them. Various Jewish philosophers have attempted to structure the various ideas into an integrated system. The classic example is clearly the work of Rabbi Sa'adia Gaon, who tries to unify the ideas, and create a consistent historical continuum of the events of the future. The positions of the philosophers are essentially theories. We are free to find our place among them. However we must retain the four basic ideas. These can be seen as atomic ideas, that the philosophers have used to construct various theories. These ideas can be presented in a different way that will allow us to explain a different part of the problem:

The historical axis has on it the end of days - the historical tendency of all of humanity, and the messianic era - the historical tendency of the Jewish people.

The meta-historical axis comprises of the world to come: utopia - of the cosmos that is "all good," and the immortality of the soul - the immortality of the individual.

The four expressions of redemption are arranged along two basic axes, the historical axis [the Messiah and the End of Days] and the meta-historical axis [immortality and the World to Come].

These two axes constitute two possible answers to one basic question: Where and how will the redemption occur? Does redemption means fixing this world or does it mean a transition to another world? In other words: does the redemption occur in historical, realistic time, or in another world [the immortality of the soul], or through a basic and general change in the cosmos [the resurrection of the dead]?

With a slight change we can speak of three different ideas of redemption:

1. Individual redemption
2. Historic redemption
3. Cosmic redemption

This schema allows us to understand the great debates in the history of the idea of redemption. The Rambam's ideas can be summarized as an attempt to focus the idea of redemption on two perspectives: the individual perspective (the immortality of the soul); and the historical perspective (the messianic idea and the End of Days). In contrast, the Ramban saw these two perspectives as an introduction to the true meaning of redemption, the alteration of the entire cosmos.

## **PART II**

The Jewish concept of redemption has had a definitive influence upon world culture. The model I am suggesting here allows us to observe and investigate these developments. Christianity generally applied all of the redemption ideas outside the realm of history, negating the tangible historical foundations of the idea of redemption. The idea of redemption beyond history became a reality in Christianity, in a world where history followed its natural course. In other words, in an unredeemed world, oppression, slavery, poverty and suffering reign.

In contrast, in the modern world, cosmopolitan and national movements have arisen, which revolve around ideas of historical redemption. These ideas can be paralleled to the two sides of the historical axis. It is important to emphasize the conflict that existed between these two sides.

Judaism unites all these dimensions. It presents us with the vision of national liberation and a social utopia that encompasses all of humanity. In this sense it is similar to all the modern movements that dream about changing the world. However, Judaism also believes in personal immortality, alongside the vision of an altered world.

The model we have used is not perfect. It does not cover a group of approaches, for example the mystical approach. It does not discuss the changing of history, nor cosmic change, nor even a spiritual world after death. The mystical experience was perceived as redemptive: as a revelation in which man perceives the true reality. This mystical approach is similar to the existential approach which sees redemption in the encounter between man and God. Rabbi Soloveitchik uses a similar concept in his book "The Lonely Man of Faith."

It is particularly surprising that even Professor Yeshayahu Leibowitz, who rebels against the historical use of the term redemption, used this term in a sense not far from the one suggested here:

"Religion seen as Torah and commandments redeems Man from the bonds of nature. This is not redemption in the Christian sense, in which man is redeemed because of his awareness of his redemption; it is true redemption, liberation from the bonds of meaningless natural cause and effect. This man who lives in the world of halakha...does not act only according to the natural realities and his life is not the result of only natural causes, which act through his body and his mental tendencies as they do in the life of an animal. Instead he devises his life, meaning that he is autonomous in the precise meaning of the word... and only an autonomous creature is worthy of the title Man... this is the power and greatness of religion as halakha, which transports Man from the natural world of necessity to a world of choice, intention and aim." (Y. Leibowitz, JUDAISM, "A Jewish Nation and the State of Israel," pg. 60).

This position has a parallel in the thought of Rabbi Soloveitchik, as well as in early Hassidic positions.

## **Negation of Redemption**

The concept of redemption has made its mark on all of humanity. However, this idea conflicts not only with those who would see it one dimensionally. It conflicts also with those who are trying to negate it absolutely. This negation stems largely from the failure of modern utopian visions and from corruption of ideologies that we have witnessed in the last century. The faith in redemption conflicts with nihilist ideas and believes that

history has a goal. There are philosophers who think that there is no such goal, and therefore the concept of redemption is meaningless. However, in various works of literature and theater we are exposed to the idea that it is the longing for a utopia itself that is the source of the problems and troubles. In these works the here and now become the preferred contenders and take precedence over the tomorrow, the redemption and the destined land.

Although it is somewhat comparable, Yeshayau Leibowitz's opinion is different. He speaks of the messianic ideal as an idea that cannot be actualized in the real world. And therefore we must distinguish between the messianic idea and the attempts to make it a historical and political reality, which can lead to the rise of false messiahs. According to Yeshayahu Liebowitz, the messianic idea is a principle for judging the reality, a measure against what exists, which forces us to recognize the negatives in our reality and rouses us to combat them. In this, his opinion is opposed to those who believe only in the here and now. However, in his view the messianic idea cannot be actualized in our flawed reality, and therefore its fulfillment is its destruction.

## CHAPTER 46: Immortality of the Soul

### Part I: Personal Redemption - The Paradox

As we have seen, redemption has many facets. However, at the core of the concept of redemption lies one central idea: the redemption of the individual and the immortality of the soul. Rihal devoted to this issue his discussion at the end of the first section, as well as other passages, particularly in the third section [3: 21].

The discussion of the immortality of the soul must begin with the question of the place of this concept in the Scriptures. However, even before we address this question, we should note the historical paradox surrounding this issue. Rihal writes:

"Regarding the ultimate aim of the other religions which impressed you, our Rabbis preceded these religions in this regard, they were the ones who described Heaven and Hell." [1: 196]

This is a historical truth, that many people tend to forget. The nations of the world have accused the Torah of materialism, as it speaks of reward and punishment in this world, but mentions nothing of the spiritual reward in the world, of the spirit. Rihal points out the absurdity that we have accepted: those same monotheistic religions which have accused the Jewish religion as such, actually owe their "spiritual" doctrines to Judaism. All other doctrines are based on those of our forefathers in the days of the Mishna and the Talmud - in other words, the doctrines of our Sages. This accusation is one example of the absurd paradoxes which have accompanied us throughout our long history.

Our Sages have stated that belief in the world to come is one of the principles of Judaism. But, what place does this belief hold in the Scriptures? Why is it never mentioned explicitly? The explanation of this phenomenon is found, in my opinion, in Rav Kook's remarks on this topic in his great essay, "Le-mahalach Ha-ideot Be-Yisrael." Rav Kook's answer will help us understand how faith in the soul's immortality fits within the larger framework of Jewish thought.

Rav Kook speaks about the immortality of the soul in the Scriptural vision as a "candle in the afternoon." This Aramaic phrase describes a candle burning during the day, whose light is not seen because of the greater effect of the sunlight. If we allow ourselves to translate it into more modern terms, we can consider a car emerging from an underground parking lot. Once he is out, he cannot see that his lights are on. Imagine his car driving for many hours with the lights on, until the sun sets, or if we want to be more dramatic, until the onset of a solar eclipse. Suddenly, he becomes aware of the



headlights. People might even think that the driver had first turned on the lights at that moment. In truth, however, the lights were on all the time; we were just not aware of them until the sunlight vanished. If we are careful to note the differences - and we will discuss the most important of these soon - we can say that that belief in the immortality of the soul is present in the Scriptures as well. Yet, in the Scriptures it is like a candle burning in the middle of the day, when another light is shining and does not allow us to see the burning candle. This great light, the sun, is none other than the general, collective redemption, the redemption of the nation. The fate of the nation, its future and redemption, are such central foundations that the insensitive reader may not notice the many lights shining along the way. Only the observant driver notices these lights. Sometimes we see a procession of cars with their lights on, usually following a coffin to the cemetery, the lights signifying a state of mourning. At other times, lights are a symbol of protest against a particular phenomenon. The belief in the immortality of the soul has all of these elements, because it teaches us that the cosmic accounting is far more complicated than many people would like us to believe. There are at least two types of account books: the collective and public account book, which calculates and determines the fate of the nation, and the personal account book, which involves not history, but the personal biography of each and every one of us. In this book there is either a light which accompanies man on his final journey to the cemetery - the faith in the immortality of the soul - or a light which constitutes a protest and a refusal to accept the world as it appears to us, through the lens of our physical existence.

## **The Religious Conflict**

Methodologically, we ought now to follow in Rihal's footsteps and look more closely at these lights which shine in the daytime. However, I would like first to discuss certain problems that arise from this belief. Although the immortality of the soul serves as a significant building block of personal belief, at the same time it can become the source of many dangers. In order to understand this, we must look back to before Christianity, to our classic adversary, idolatry.

The Jewish belief in the immortality of the soul is one of the beliefs belonging to the general heritage of humanity; it comes to mankind as an inheritance from Adam. The expression of this belief is the grave, which has accompanied civilization from the beginning. The existence of the grave is the most outstanding expression of the idea that man is not like all the animals, his body is not all, and death is not the end for him. Idolatry related to this belief in terms of its own categories and frames of reference. One of the central concepts of idolatry is the compartmentalization of the world, the belief in

a different god ruling over each aspect of existence. According to this theology, in the underworld, the world of the dead, there rules a god who imprisons the souls. This belief is expressed in many myths, among them the well known myth of Orpheus and Eurydice. Pagan philosophy perceived death as the entrance into the kingdom of a different god, with no way out for either the person or the god. This belief directly clashes with the basic Jewish principle of divine unity, the belief in God's absolute dominion which extends beyond death and the abyss. As such, the possibility of resurrecting the dead constitutes one of the basic components of our belief in God.

## **PART II**

### **The Pitfall: Forsaking This World**

The greatest danger posed by the belief in the immortality of the soul is manifest in our conflict with Christianity. This belief can form the basis for a society which despises this world and searches for a safe haven in the world to come. Judaism teaches that we must not build the world to come at the expense of the destruction of this world. If put into practice, the ramifications of the belief in the immortality of the soul would be catastrophic. The Church, particularly during the period of its reign in the Middle Ages, preached faith in the world after death, where one can find solace from all the misery of this world. Consequently, it abandoned this world in the hands of flesh and blood rulers, who used it for the satisfaction of their evil desires. What emerged was an unholy pact, in which the kingdom and the Church divided up the world, a pact, whose drawbacks far outweighed its benefits. Thus, the idea of redemption, translated into perfecting this world under the rule of God, clashed with the faith which spoke only of the world to come and thus abandoned this world. In addition, the belief in the immortality of the soul at times became a tool of deception in the hands of dishonest connivers. Judaism refused to pay this high price for the belief in immortality. It insisted that this belief should not come at the expense of the perfection of this world, but rather as its complement.

The image we described earlier, of lights shining in the daytime, is, to my mind, illuminating. Rav Kook tells us that in the time of the Second Temple, with the decline of prophecy, the loss of political independence, and the consequent decline of the hope of altering society and the world, the belief in the immortality of the soul became more prominent. This was precisely the time when Christianity was drawing its sources from Judaism. Christianity saw itself as drawing from the world of the bible, while it differed with Judaism regarding the Oral Law. Herein, explains Rav Kook, lies one of

Christianity's fundamental errors. Judaism draws from both sources, the vision of the prophets and the teachings of the Sages. Christianity's great failure stemmed from the fact that it drew its inspiration from that state of weakness, in which the totality of life was already inadequate. It grasped the personal, heavenly idea, thus losing the biblical vision of the perfection of the world. This renunciation was tragic and impaired all human development. Only the entirety of perspectives of faith can bring blessing to mankind and truly perfect the world under the rule of God.

### **The Occult And Its Dangers**

The danger we have spoken of until now is not the only one we faced. There is another pitfall that we have known since the times of common idol worship, and continues to accompany us to this very day. This danger is expressed most noticeably in the belief among certain nations that the souls of the dead can be gods. This belief was common, for example, among the Romans, but is also present in many Far Eastern cultures. In less extreme manifestations of this phenomenon, the souls of the dead became a source of sorcery. The Torah strongly objects to such beliefs, and the story of Shaul at Ein Dor is a classic example. Despite the changing times, these phenomena have not disappeared, and continue to express themselves in various forms of spiritism. The Torah objected to any communion with spirits and forbade these practices under the general title of consulting the dead. The belief in the immortality of the soul oftentimes became a source for superstitions, a focus which detracts from man's true spirit, his intelligence and freedom. Reacting to the sense of uncertainty engendered by this world, the search for the spirits of the dead endangered prophecy, the search for communication with God.

I would like to discuss the dangers of the occult through the example we mentioned earlier, the story in the book of Shmuel about the medium in Ein Dor. The verse says that the medium was frightened when she saw Shmuel. Whatever our interpretation might be, the medium was clearly surprised when she succeeded! The verse [Shmuel I 28: 12] tells us: "And the woman saw Shmuel and she cried out in a loud voice, and the woman said to Shaul, why did you trick me, for you are Shaul?" Only then did she realize that it was Shaul who was standing with her this whole time. The Talmud in tractate Sanhedrin tells us that whereas all the dead would rise upside-down, Shmuel arose in an upright position, and that is why the woman was frightened. It seems to me that the Talmud's statement is based on what was a common practice among the conjurers. It is reasonable to assume that they used a simple principle of physics, the principle of the "camera obscura," which explains the way the camera and the eye

function, a principle which the Ralbag discovered and explained. Imagine we made a hole in the wall of a dark room and make a hole in the wall, thus connecting it to another room, which is brightly lit. When a person walks around and light comes through that hole a very primitive form of film projection has been achieved. However, according to very simple optical principles, the pictures will be upside down, just as our eyes actually see reality as an upside-down image. Most of the cases of conjuring of the dead were frauds. They used this method in order to fool people. Therefore, the souls that they "conjured" always appeared upside-down. In the case of Shaul, when the medium saw Shmuel appear upright, she realized that this time it was real. Shmuel appeared in a vision, but later the interactions continue without a medium. Shmuel did not appear for the medium; he appeared for Shaul.

This hypothetical analysis of the Talmud's comments is an example of an important rule regarding mystical phenomena. Although, they contain an overwhelming percentage of lies, tricks and illusions, they also contain some truth, truth that is couched in trickery.

## CHAPTER 47: Scriptural Sources of the World to Come

### Part I

We have briefly discussed the immortality of the soul from three perspectives:

1. In terms of content: what does the Torah teach us about this issue?
2. Our philosophical and scientific outlook upon this principle of faith.
3. The origins of this belief in the Torah.

We will not attempt here to present the claims, interesting in and of themselves, with which Jewish philosophy has attempted to prove the immortality of the soul. Most of them are built on psychological principles which were widespread in the Middle Ages and are of purely historical interest. Although these claims have retained their importance and meaning, from a philosophical perspective pointing to the absolute separation that exists between the material and physical, the mental and spiritual, we must recall Rihal's statement about this issue [5:14, pg. 214] which nullifies the significance of these proofs. Everything came into being through the will of God. Therefore, since according to Rihal there is no necessary rational order, it is meaningless to reach conclusions from what appears to us as such. If God decreed it so, then the soul would be immortal, even if it were physical.

In the following lectures, we will discuss the third perspective. At first glance, it seems that the "World To Come" is not mentioned anywhere in the Scriptures. It is impossible, however, not to see therein any fewer than three dimensions of the theory of redemption: the immortality of the soul, the resurrection of the dead, and the redemption of the cosmos. Regarding the first dimension we follow in the footsteps of Rihal, who considered Elijah's ascent to the heavens the test case and model for Scriptural faith. We will attempt to follow the Scriptural heroes that are "gathered to their people," and follow the soul of Samuel which returns to earth to prophesy once more. We will also attempt to listen to the Psalmist who hopes and waits for God to redeem him from Sheol. Regarding the second dimension, we will listen to the Scriptural descriptions of the Messianic era. Third, we will listen to the words of the prophets as they speak of the redemption of the world. Before we begin, I will only add that in order to fully understand this issue, we must accept a fundamental assumption: the existence of the Oral Law, which completes the written Torah and helps us understand it properly. And it must be made clear that these are not two separate entities, an Oral Law completely

detached from the Scriptures. The Oral Law helps us read the Scriptures and understand them, while it is hinted at within the Scriptures as well. We will illustrate this later on.

We find many Scriptural references to Sheol, to where souls depart after death. Sheol exists; it is an actual place. Sheol is figuratively described as the lower land, bearing resemblance to the grave. We cannot describe the exact essence of Sheol, but we will not be mistaken if we view it as a place of static existence. This is existence without life, a static existence with no action, anger, or injustice. If our world is the world of action, Sheol is the world of rest for the weary.

However, in order to understand the meaning of Sheol in the Scriptures, we must first understand its meaning in pagan mythology. It is true that, with certain limitations, the pagan gods were immortal and therefore free of the dominion of Sheol; they did not, however rule over Sheol. Sheol was under the reign of a specific god. Even if at times the gods could grant immortality to humans whom they favored, they could not revive the dead; this key was not in their hands. Paradoxically, in Sheol man was free of the rule of the gods.

This approach, according to the Scriptures, means a corruption of Monotheism, of God's absolute control as the Creator. Just as the borders of the land of Israel do not confine the power of God, neither are the dead "free" of divine control. The Scriptures emphasize that God's hand reaches Sheol: "If they dig their way to Sheol, from there My hand will take them, and if they ascend to the heavens, from there I will bring them down" [Amos, 9: 2]. God's dominion is not only in heaven, but also in Sheol, for "if I search the heavens You are there, and if I descend to Sheol You are there" [Psalms 139: 8]. In a cryptic passage, the prophet Isaiah suggests asking for a sign from Sheol [Isaiah 7: 11]. "Go down to Sheol or rise up," since essentially, "Sheol is naked before Him and there is no shelter for ruin" [Job 26: 6 and Proverbs 15: 11]. Sheol offers no protection or asylum from the divine presence.

The stories of Elijah and Elisha teach us this idea through the concept of miracles. Their lives feature many achievements that demonstrate their control over nature. They have been given all the keys: bringing down rain, granting fertility to the barren, and resurrection of the dead - the three symbols of God's control over nature and its laws [Bereishit Rabba 77]. Their control over leprosy also may be seen as a type of control over death, as it is essentially the ability to revive dead flesh. This triumph over nature finds its ultimate expression on the day of Elijah's departure from this world. Indeed, "There is d-- on the day of death."

The centrality of Elijah's ascension was emphasized by Nachmanides:

"...and those who leave behind all the interests of this world and disregard it as if they are not bodily creatures, and all their concentration and thought focus on their Creator alone, as was the case with Elijah, when their souls cleave to... [God], they live forever in their bodies and souls, as it appears from the Scriptures regarding Elijah..." [Nachmanides' commentary on Leviticus 18: 5].

## **Reward and Punishment in Sheol**

The existence of Sheol teaches us that the naive approach, which views the Scriptures as a book devoid of faith in the immortality of the soul, is fundamentally wrong. One critical question, though, remains. Are reward and punishment parts of the experience of immortality? At first glance it would seem that the answer is no. I intend to prove that this answer is entirely incorrect. In order to prove this we must return to the existence of Sheol, only from a different perspective.

The dead occupants of Sheol, maintain certain characteristics of their lives even after death. The classic example is of course Samuel's dress: "an old man arose and he was clothed in a cloak" [Samuel 1, 28: 14]. Moreover, death reflects and reinforces the state of the person during life. Jacob laments, "For I will go down to my son in mourning to Sheol" [Genesis 37: 35]. This does not merely refer to anguish unto the point of death; it refers to anguish which the person continues to experience after death. This fact itself carries with it a particular view of reward and punishment, that the dead in Sheol remain in the same state which typified their lives. We will continue to develop this idea in our next lecture.

## **Part II**

I believe that the story of Jezebel will illustrate the concept of She'ol which we developed in last week's lecture. Jezebel hears that Jehu the rebel is on his way to Jezre'el, "and she placed powder on her eyes and arranged her hair" [Kings 2, 9: 30]. Why did she do this? Not to find favor in the eyes of Jehu, whom she receives with scorn. Nor does she do it only to appear beautiful in her own eyes at the final moment. She adorns herself before her death, I believe, in order that she remain beautiful in She'ol, forever. The Scriptures, however, emphasize her punishment: when she is to be buried, only her head, feet, and hands are found. Jezebel will remain in this distorted form forevermore.

We find various sources for the idea that punishments meted out on earth will remain constant in She'ol. David commands his son Saul to punish Joab Ben Zeroyah: "See that his white hair does not go down to She'ol in peace" [Kings 1, 2: 6]. It is no exaggeration, therefore, to assume that according to the original perspective of the Scriptures, the dead sages sit and study Torah, and when a law is mentioned in their names in the world of the living, "their lips move in the grave." The Judge Who administers justice does so in She'ol, as well. The punishment and reward in She'ol thus continue the existence in this world.

There are, however, reward and punishment that are not a continuation of this world; they serve as a reparation. God punishes there in order to rectify what happened here. We learn this from the lamentation over Egypt in chapter 32 of the book of Ezekiel. Egypt believes that she will live on in She'ol as a valorous warrior, yet the prophet mandates that the appropriate location for her is "among the dead by the sword" [32: 21]. This serves as punishment for their "placing fear in the hearts [lit. land] of the living" [32: 23]. The prophet teaches us that there is no correspondence between a person's fate in She'ol and the circumstances succeeding his death. A person's fate in She'ol is determined by his behavior throughout his life. Thus the prophet writes, "and warriors... who have gone down to She'ol will not lie wearing their implements of war, and they will place their swords under their heads." Instead, "their sins will be [inscribed] upon their bones..." - the sins of the evildoers will be inscribed upon their bones and remain with them forever.

This leads us to the concept of various "chambers" in She'ol. This belief is found explicitly in the apocryphal and Midrashic literature, whose descriptions are consistent with the Scriptural account. For example, the book of Hanoch [Hanoch 1: 22] states that springs of water shine for the righteous, since She'ol is made of chambers. As we shall see, the righteous will be redeemed and returned to the Garden of Eden from this same She'ol, if they triumph on the day of judgment. Returning to the prophecy of Ezekiel, the prophet repeats over and over again, in various forms, the call to Pharaoh: "who are you more pleasant than? ...Go and lie among the uncircumcised" [Ezekiel 32: 19]. Pharaoh hopes to dwell in a special chamber, and the prophet sends him to the chamber of the uncircumcised! This reminds us of the idea of "karet," being "cut off," as opposed to the blessing that the righteous person is "gathered to his people."

The arrangement of the graves symbolizes existence in She'ol. This accounts for the forefathers' desire to be buried in the Holy Land (compare also to Amos 2: 1). The burial of Elisha and the resurrection of the dead that he performs after his own demise further demonstrate this concept. No other person can dwell with Elisha in the same grave, since



no one is as holy as Elisha; therefore the dead person arose immediately upon his contact with Elisha's corpse [Kings 2, 13:21]. The fate of the deceased's children and their recollection of him also affect the soul after death, as is clear from many verses in the Scriptures. Thus, when God "visits the sins of the fathers upon the sons," or "remembers lovingkindness for thousands of generations," He causes the parents to actually suffer through suffering of their children. Rachel cries over her children [Jeremiah 31: 14], and God comforts her, "there is hope for your final end" [ibid., 15]. These two words - "tikva" (hope) and "acharit" (end) may very well refer to existence after life.

If with respect to the living hope expresses itself in the anticipation for eternal life, then for the dead, hope means the yearning for resurrection: there is hope for the final end of Man. Indeed, this belief arises in a number of places in the Scriptures and its most direct formulation is, "God puts to death and resurrects, brings [souls] down to She'ol and raises them up" [Samuel 2, 2: 6 and elsewhere]. Even if we understand these verses as mere literary imagery to express the healing of sickness, the protection from the danger of death and travail, etc., if we compare it to another figurative phrase, such as "all those who enter shall never return," (Proverbs 2:19) we will see that our expression must also refer to a description of reality. If not, what significance is there to the imagery employed?

### **Escape from She'ol**

Until this point we have looked at various Scriptural mentions of She'ol. I would like now to discuss a different idea: the release from She'ol. As we see in various places in the book of Psalms, the righteous person will be redeemed from She'ol. God will remove him from She'ol and bring him close to the Almighty Himself. There he will bind his soul in the bonds of life, and it will live forever. Man will not die, or if he does, God will then bring him up, and he will live a new life, an immortal life.

Other verses in Psalms suggest this possibility, as well. "Therefore my heart will rejoice...even my flesh will dwell in security, for You will not abandon my soul in She'ol..." [Psalms 16, 9-11]. Realizing that the soul's existence in She'ol, which has dominion over the dead, hides the vision of God from the human soul after death, the psalmist prays that he may enjoy the divine presence forever. These verses clearly relate to the vision of personal redemption, part of the ancient Oral Torah.

The most obvious Scriptural symbol of the soul in She'ol is Jonah in the belly of the whale. If we turn the parable into reality, we can perceive more clearly the fate of the soul in the misery of the bowels of She'ol, far from the world of the living and from God.

And indeed, just as the whale discharged Jonah, God will redeem the worthy soul from She'ol. "But God will redeem my soul from hand of She'ol, for He will take me, Selah" [Psalms, 49: 16]. The previous verse states, "a brother will not redeem another person, nor will he pay God his bail" [Ibid., 8]. Even if no man shall redeem his brother, God will redeem the soul from She'ol, "for He will take me, Selah." God's "taking of a man" refers to the level of spirituality found in the texts regarding Hanoch and Elijah.

### **Part III: The Garden of Eden**

To understand the meaning of the release from She'ol, we must first look at the story of the Garden of Eden and its place in the Scriptures. As we have seen numerous times, this story deals with the emergence of evil in the universe. Our situation in the world is represented by the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. As we shall see later on, the experience of She'ol constitutes a similar type of expulsion. The release from evil is redemption, and redemption is in essence a return to the Garden of Eden, that lost perfect world. The concept of the Garden of Eden and the End of Days thus explains the actual phenomenon of evil, and not merely the suffering of the righteous. Evil originated in sin, and sin did not exist in God's original creation; it will therefore disappear when all the sins and sinners will likewise vanish. This marks the annihilation of cosmic evil and also the end of human suffering, which, as part of the cosmic evil, originated from sin. As explained in previous lectures, during the period of the Jewish sovereignty, the national experience of evil and the suffering of nations brought about the formulation of the belief in national redemption and peace among the nations. Similarly, cosmic evil, which is also personal evil, has implanted the faith in cosmic redemption and the return to the garden of Eden within the fabric and fiber of Jewish faith, since its inception.

The prophets emphasized mainly national redemption. However, many principles regarding the national vision of redemption point to another issue raised in the oral Torah - the vision of the individual's ultimate culmination, the return to the Garden of Eden. Jewish faith teaches that each individual will return to the Garden of Eden and achieve immortality. It is no coincidence that the traditional name for the world to come is "The Garden of Eden." It merely annihilates death, and eternal life is then automatically achieved. As the prophet says, ...awake and rejoice, dwellers of dust...[Isaiah 26: 19]; "Death will be destroyed forever and God will wipe the tear from every face" [ibid., 25: 8].

Without going into a thorough analysis of the entire topic, I will mention a few details regarding the perception of redemption as a return to the Garden of Eden. My first comment relates to the actual essence and location of the Garden of Eden. The

biblical description of the Garden refers to somewhere beyond this world. It identifies four rivers that merge together, apparently at some central point between Egypt [Gichon and Pishon] and Mesopotamia [Perat and Chidekel]. From this description it is reasonable to suggest that this place is a kind of ideal Land of Israel, before the sin. This means that the new Garden of Eden will be located in Israel. At present the Land of Israel lies somewhere in between sin and redemption and therefore its general state and conditions deviate from this ideal. This imperfect reality will change at the End of Days.

The expulsion from the Garden of Eden means death. This expulsion has a dual meaning, as manifest in another type of expulsion from God's Presence - She'ol. The souls in She'ol exist in a kind of prison, which frees and shelters them from the outside and from others [Job 3; 17,18]. On the other hand, it locks them in, and they have no ability to act on their own. Even if the entire world and all its secrets are revealed to them, even if the future is revealed to them with no boundaries of time and space, if it is forbidden to discuss and analyze them, this knowledge and wisdom cannot save them from the oppressive imprisonment, an imprisonment which is also religious by nature. The creation of She'ol, or the world of the dead, resulted from the expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

The meaning of ritual impurity and its laws are also connected to the expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The Temple is a kind of Garden of Eden disconnected from death, and we create this reality by observing the relevant laws. We relate to ritual impurity in the same manner. The outcome of ritual impurity is a kind of exile and distancing from the divine Presence. The ritually impure individual, as well as anyone who has been involved or connected with the results of ritual impurity, is distanced from the Temple, and sometimes also from the camp, itself a dwelling place of the divine Presence. The place designated for the leper is a "prison" of sorts, similar to She'ol itself. He has been distanced from the divine Presence. The sources of ritual impurity in its technical sense (except for idol worship, whose impurity is essentially different) are the direct results of the original sin: death, certain illnesses which also cause distancing, menstruation and birth which are also accompanied by bleeding. Ritual impurity is indeed a result of sin, and it means distancing from God, expulsion from the holy nation.

It is interesting that certain immersions must be performed specifically in "living waters" (natural water sources). In a certain sense, the immersion affords him new life, or re-creation, certainly at least in part because of the return to the presence of God and to holiness. Here once again the implicit ideas of the Scriptures are incorporated explicitly into the writings of the Sages: the purity of the world in the End of Days involves the idea of the resurrection of the dead. The final stage of this total purity in the

age of redemption is expressed in Rabbi Akiva's statement that God is the 'mikveh' of the Jewish people, it is He Who purifies them. The hebrew word "mikveh" has two meanings. One is the springwater bath used for ritual immersion, and the other is the word "hope." Thus Rabbi Akiva turns the word which hints at Man's final hope into the implication of Man's ultimate, absolute purity.

#### **Part IV: Ascent to Heaven**

In light of our previous analysis, perhaps we may suggest another level of interpretation. Sometimes an interpretation is far from literal, yet this very reading is suggested by the Torah itself. We find the concept of the ascent to heaven in a number of places. It clearly underlies the entire incident of the Tower of Babel. Why the ascent to heaven? Perhaps because its goal is to achieve immortality. With the path to the Garden of Eden closed, the ascent to heaven is an attempt to break through. Scriptural history is full of the tension surrounding the concept of human ascent to heaven. Chanoch merited this ascent. He did not die; God took him, and like Elijah after him, he lives on in heaven. The builders of the Tower of Babel tried to make this ascent on their own. Our Sages interpreted the text in Genesis to mean actual ascent, and even if the literal meaning of the text is different, the conclusions remain the same. The text makes use of a satiric play on the word Babel. The original meaning of the word, "gateway of God," is transformed into a negative term, "The place where God confused (lit: balal) all the languages." Both this original meaning of the word babel and the description of Jacob's ladder of angels as reaching to the heavens, point to this attempt to ascend to the heavens, as mentioned in the books of the prophets. Jacob's ladder serves as the biblical antithesis of the Tower of Babel. As opposed to the Tower, its head truly does reach the heavens (Genesis 28: 12), and Jacob indeed proclaims that this spot is "the gate of heaven."

What is the meaning of Jacob's dream? Before he leaves the Land of Israel, Jacob has a dream informing him that the Land is holy. Although the vision took place in Bethel, it pronounces the holiness of the entire Land and the Land of Israel is described as the House of God. And what is the house of God if not the Garden of Eden, the place where God walks, as it were, "the Land which God observes from the beginning of the year to its end?"

The Scriptures themselves suggest a somewhat "midrashic" interpretation of the Garden of Eden, identifying it as the Land of Israel. However, this identification is not spelled out directly, but rather through an intermediary stage: the Mountain of God. From the high mountain of Eden flowed a river that watered the Garden (Yechezkal 25:14-15). In the End of Days, as well, a river will flow from the Mountain of God

(Zachariah 14: 8). As Abravanel - among the early commentators - and Kassuto - among the later ones - demonstrated, the Torah describes the Garden of Eden as existing in our world. Our reality is, however, drastically different, for we live in the world after the sin. Does the Mountain of God not exist in this world after the sin? It does. It is the House of God, the Gateway to the heavens, the Mountain that God Himself chose. It is the place to which God took Abraham from Aram Naharayim, and the holiness of which was proclaimed at the binding of Isaac, on that same "Mountain that God shall choose."

Jacob sees the holiness of the Land in his dream; the Land emerges as the House of God. The heavens belong to God and the Earth to man, yet there are still the proverbial "four cubits" on this earth that belong to God: the Gateway to heaven which God chooses. For a brief period, Mount Sinai served as the mountain of God, as it possessed several of the characteristics of the Garden of Eden. Regarding both, ascending and touching are forbidden. Just as the path to the Garden Of Eden - which is the way up to the Mountain of God - is closed, so too does the verse state regarding Mount Sinai, "and the people shall not attempt to go up, lest God burst out among them" (Exodus 19: 24). However, Mount Sinai was a temporary Mountain of God. The Land of Israel and specifically the home of the Shekhina - the Mountain of God in Jerusalem, were chosen permanently, while the Tabernacle was a kind of traveling version of Mount Sinai which accompanied the Jews until their arrival in The Land of Israel.

Do these concepts appear in the Scriptures? Yes. The book of Psalms retained these two principles. It speaks of the Temple as the Mountain of God, as God's holy sanctuary in heaven: "God is in his holy sanctuary, God's throne is in the heavens" (Psalms 11: 4 and 2: 4). Presumably, this gateway can be used in the opposite direction as well: "Who will go up to the Mountain of God, and who will rise in his place of holiness?" (Psalms 24: 3). What is the Mountain of God and his holy place? The Psalms which ask, "Who is the man who desires life" (Psalms 34: 13) and especially "who will dwell in Your tents and who will live on Your holy mountain?" (Psalms 15: 2), speak about traits that a person must possess to succeed in judgement: "Who will stand before You?" (Psalms 76: 8). Regarding the man who fears God it is written, "his soul will rest in goodness" (25: 12). Although the verses may refer to an ascent to the physical mountain, they undoubtedly involve as well an ascent to the real Mountain of God. This is immortality.

From this discussion, we may conclude that the Temple and the Tabernacle also contain something of the image and symbolism of the Garden of Eden. Although this conclusion requires further research, of particular interest to us here, is the fact that the gems in the Garden of Eden (18: 28) appear on the breastplate of the High Priest. Even if

this should be purely coincidental, the Temple was the place of life and ritual purity, and ritual purity means the triumph over ritual impurity, which represents death. Another interesting parallel is that both in the Temple and the Garden of Eden the cherubim protect the treasure. In the Garden of Eden they protect the Tree of Life, while in the Tabernacle they protect the stone tablets, the Torah itself. According to this parallel, the Torah is indeed the Tree of Life.

## **Part V: The Tree Of Life**

The Hebrew verb for living, "chai," actually refers to the continuation of life rather than to the state of being alive. This is the source for the evolution of the verb to mean recovery from illness, etc. The fate of this verb was similar to the fate of many Hebrew words, which we have difficulty understanding accurately since we have become accustomed to European verb forms, which are much more static than Hebrew verbs. A good example is the verb "haya" [to be]. In Hebrew this verb means "to become" or "to evolve" rather than "to exist." We find the use of the verb "chai" in the sense of continuing to exist in Samuel Book 2,12: "may God grant me my desire and the child shall live," as well as in Exodus: "for no man shall see Me and live" [33: 20]. This is the case in other places as well [Bamidbar 21: 8,9, Deuteronomy 4: 42, 21, 19: 4,5, Jeremiah 21: 9, 38: 2, and many others). This meaning of the verb also takes the form of a commandment: "and your brother shall live [chai] with you" (Leviticus 25: 36). Adam and Eve were banished from the Garden of Eden lest they eat from the Tree of Life "and live [chai] forever" (Genesis 3: 22). The Tree of Life was inside the Garden, and it had the power to grant immortality. When Adam and Eve ate of the Tree of Knowledge, they were banished from the Garden of Eden, thus ensuring that they will not begin or continue to eat from the Tree of Life and live forever.

Now that the entry to the Garden is barred, is there any way to achieve eternal life? The Scriptures teach us that there is. The phrase "eternal life" appears a number of times in the Scriptures. It appears in its most marked form in Daniel's prophecy regarding the resurrection of the dead: "and many of the sleepers in the earth of dust will awaken, some to eternal life and some to shame and degradation" [Daniel 12: 2]. However, in quite a number of places this phrase refers to the Torah and its wisdom. According to King Solomon, wisdom is the way of life and the source of life [Proverbs 2: 19, 6: 13, 13: 14]. Does the word life here refer to eternal life?

It is certain that at some point this interpretation was accepted, for it is found in the Apocrypha and in the writings of the Sages. Do the Scriptures themselves imply this connotation? It seems so, and at least one verse from the Psalms proves it: [Psalms 133: 3] "for there God commanded the blessing of eternal life." The psalm looks for the meaning of the blessing of life in the Torah, and finds it in the promise of eternal life. This type of explanation permits a different understanding of many verses. The wisdom of the Torah is "a tree of life for those who cling to it" [Proverbs 3: 18]. The Torah has become a way of life, and it is the lost Tree of Life. Perhaps this is the meaning of other phrases in the Scriptures, such as "the fruit of the righteous is the tree of life" [Proverbs 11: 30]. The phrase "way of life" (Orach Chayim) also appears once in an unequivocal reference to eternal life [Psalms 16: 9-11]:

"Therefore my heart shall rejoice and my honor be glad

my flesh will also dwell in safety...

for You will not forsake my soul to She'ol

You will not permit your disciple to see destruction

You will teach me the way of life...

pleasantness is forever at Your right [side]."

Similarly in Proverbs, [15: 24]: "[adopt] a way of life above to avoid She'ol below." And more explicitly: "through the way of charity is life and a chartered path [leads to] immortality" [ibid., 12: 28].

These explanations shed light on the final verses of the Torah. The Torah ends with almost the same words as found in the beginning: "see I have placed before you life and goodness and death and evil" [Deuteronomy 30: 16]. The two trees appear before us once again. The preceding verses seem to refer to a search for the elixir of life: "it is not in the heavens...nor is it across the sea" [ibid. 12,13]. Particularly interesting is the phrase "it is not in the heavens." The Torah did actually come down from the heavens, from the mountain of God, which Moses ascended, and that Torah holds within it the key to immortality.

In the Garden of Eden there was no choice between good and evil. Evil was originally unknown to man. This is the obvious meaning of Adam and Eve's partaking of the Tree of Knowledge and its aftermath. After eating from the tree Man became

aware of evil. Thus arose a problem which had never before existed, the need to choose between good and evil. As one of the great leaders of the Mussar movement, the "Saba" of Novardok, said, one might say that in the Garden of Eden man was faced with the choice of having a choice. With the banishment from the Garden of Eden, good and evil became intertwined; it was as though the fruit of the tree suddenly mixed together, and Man must now choose his fruit with care. Indeed, the fruit of the Tree of Life became intermixed as well. From now on there is no more Tree of Life; there is a tree of Life and Death together: "if [one] merits, it becomes his potion of life, and if [one] does not merit, it becomes his potion of death" [Tractate Megilla 18, Shabbat 88 and elsewhere]. The Torah teaches Man the commandments, the way of life, the way of the Tree of Life. The Torah is actually the Tree of Life itself, and the symbol of the covenant is the Tablets which are guarded by the Cherubim, who likewise guarded the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden. In the Temple we construct a halakhic Garden of Eden. The commandments, which are connected to holiness, ritual purity and impurity, transform the Temple into the symbol of the Garden of Eden, and thus into the place where the Divine Presence dwells among the Jewish people. The Temple is the place of life and of holiness, within which there can be no death.

## **Part VI: The Fate of the Individual**

Complete redemption must include redemption from the results of the three original sins: the sin of the Tower of Babel, the sin of the generation of the flood, and the sin of Adam. In the end of days, death will be annihilated as the people will repent and consequently will return to the Garden of Eden, through their repentance, in the end of days, where they will eat of the tree of life and live forever.

These ideas can help us understand a traditional interpretation of the punishment of "karet" [lit: being cut off]. According to the traditional explanation, the soul deserving of this punishment is cut off, or excluded, from the World to Come. The Torah writes that the sinning soul will be "cut off from its people." This phrase represents the phrase commonly used in the scriptures in reference to death, "gathered unto his people." Beyond the national and universal hope of redemption, the additional dimension of personal redemption, emerges in the book of Malakhi, where the prophet promises us that all the righteous will be rewarded on the Day of Judgment. The Book of Remembrance is inscribed with the names of the righteous, a "list" of righteous people who will rise again at the resurrection of the dead, thus vividly illustrating this idea. Malakhi's description of Elijah the Prophet relates to this idea as well. What is Elijah's role? Among his actions during his lifetime, the resurrection of the dead is paramount,



and it is only fitting that he return just before the righteous are brought back to life. Needless to say, Elijah's return is connected to the fact that he did not die. He is the scribe who records people's good deeds, he is the first citizen of the new world.

What will people be like after the resurrection? Will they be the same as they were - flesh and blood - or will this image be altered? In most places our Sages emphasize their own lack of knowledge regarding the Messianic era. However, our sources do speak of an altered appearance, a sort of "raiment of light [in Hebrew: 'or' with an aleph]" as opposed to our worldly "garment of leather ['or' with an ayin]": "in the World to Come there is no eating, drinking, copulation, jealousy, hatred, or competition. Rather, the righteous sit with crowns upon their heads and enjoy the radiance of the Divine Presence, as it is written, 'and they saw God and they ate and they drank'" [Talmud Berakhot 16: b]. The use of this verse, which refers to the princes of Israel, according to this unique interpretation, implies that mystical experiences are an example of another life; the mystical experience is viewed as a brief experience of the World To Come. Moses' sojourn on Mount Sinai and Elijah's ascent to the heavens also must have been examples of spiritual life in a "purified body." This idea is reiterated in the Midrash and Zohar and a similar concept exists in the Scriptures themselves: only Elisha witnesses Elijah's ascent. This is a prophetic vision, upon which the fulfillment of Elijah's promise depends.

She'ol was created as a result of Man's sin; it signifies the banishment and distancing from the Divine Presence. Therefore death, like other outcomes of sin, is the source of impurity and distances man from what is holy and Godly. However, Man's soul will be redeemed. Just as exile is followed by redemption, so too the soul of the dead will be redeemed from She'ol. If the soul is deserving, it will live again in the next world. In fact, the Scriptures indicate that even prior to the resurrection, the soul is not completely abandoned in She'ol, for the souls of the righteous will not even see She'ol. Even in She'ol a distinction between the righteous and the sinners is made. The fate of each person after death is determined the actions he and his family performed in their lifetimes [see for example Hasmoneans 2, 12, 46]. His fate will be a just one. Justice follows man even after death, and Ezekiel formulated the final statement of this belief when he declared that neither sorcery nor rites of worship can alter the ultimate fate of the sinner.

Nevertheless, She'ol is always a prison, a place of punishment. The soul in She'ol awaits redemption. Can man achieve immortality? Indeed, this is a central question in Scriptural history. Although there have been unsuccessful attempts to reach the heavens, a path does exist. What can Man do to live forever? Where is the Tree of

Life? The commandments are the way, the Torah is the Tree for those who cling to it. God will create the Garden Of Eden on the Mountain of God as in days of old. That Mountain is "the place which God chose"; it is the place of holiness, the land of the living, the place of purity where death will vanish forever. Death exists; it is the end of each human life. However, the Scriptures speak also of hope, hope for both the living and dead. It is the hope that was never lost, of the recovery of the Garden Of Eden during the final redemption. Man will live once again, on the Great Judgment Day.

## **CHAPTER 48: The Problem of Evil and Divine Providence**

As we have seen, the first portion of the Book of Genesis – the story of creation - ends with an announcement of the "grade" that God gives the world: "and behold it was very good." Only in the second portion, in the story of the Garden of Eden, are we introduced to the presence of both good and evil. Evil makes its appearance in the world as a result of Adam's sin. This moment in history created both the presence of evil in our world and the source for ultimate redemption. It gave birth to the hope of return to the "very good" and to the ultimate "day that is all good." Today good and evil are intermixed; mankind must conquer and alter reality. This has an important impact on our attitude towards the world. We are not judged by the world; we judge the world. We do not see nature as a yardstick by which to assess ourselves; we look at nature and proclaim that it contains both good and evil. Thus the idea of redemption is born - God expects us to amend the evil in our world.

The concept of evil can be explored from various perspectives. The book of Genesis poses the question at the outset: how can evil exist if God is completely good? The prophets command us to destroy evil, but they also ask the classic question: why do the righteous suffer? This is the question of divine providence. We cannot deal with this question without examining the Scriptural source of this issue - the Book of Job. The debate regarding Job, in essence the discussion of the question of good and evil, is an existential question. Whoever expresses a position enters the fray, for this is no abstract discussion; it touches on our most sensitive and basic existential problems.

The great surprise of the book of Job is that we are forbidden to simply assume that suffering is a function of sin. The book teaches us that the righteous suffer and that the suffering is a test. The righteous person is not punished; he is faced with a test. As we will see, the book does present an answer to the basic question, but this answer in no way eliminates the concept of God's testing of the righteous. answer as well. The different answers exist on different levels, and they do not contradict one another. In fact, they may even compliment one another.

There are different types of tests. In its most basic form, we place money in front of the person to see if he will take it or not, to find out if he is trustworthy or not. However in Job's case, there is no need to check if the man is righteous or not. We are actually evaluating something completely different. Job is an instrument for a purpose much greater than himself. God expects Job to succeed at an impossible task. God has entered into a wager with Satan, and thus "needs" Job to respond correctly, for cosmic reasons.

Job must prove that man can worship God under these terrible conditions. Is this possible? Or perhaps worship of God is ultimately judged according to principles of success and utility? As we shall see, this was one of the central questions of inter-religious polemics throughout history. The story of Job teaches us not to be tempted to judge truth according to success. A child instinctively calls out to someone who was hurt "You deserved it!" Let us not judge people according to their suffering, nor according to what we see as their "punishment." Life is a little more complicated than simplistic scorekeeping can teach us. The book of Job also teaches us that the final accounting must end with redemption. However before we reach chapter forty-seven of Job, we must first face the test.

### **Suffering, Not Passivity**

There is a vast difference between acceptance of suffering, and apathy or passivity. Passivity means giving up on the attempt to change the situation. As Rabbi Soloveitchik has commented, this is a situation in which the free subject becomes an object of manipulation by forces greater than himself, over which he has no control and no ability to respond effectively. This response is very far from the response of Judaism. Jewish law sanctifies the war against suffering, sickness and death. The prophets command us to fight the war against suffering, particularly when caused by moral or social injustice. We cannot remain indifferent in the presence of others suffering. We are forbidden to "stand idly by our brothers blood" and we may not refrain from extending a hand to the poor and the sufferer. When a person faces suffering he must attempt to correct it. At the same time, however, we must recognize the fact that we must know that beyond what can be corrected, there is suffering, particularly personal suffering, which we cannot mend. Then we ask for a miracle; we ask for God's help with those problems whose solutions lie beyond the scope of our abilities.

### **The Answer of the Book of Job**

The book of Job questions the meaning of suffering. What is its answer? Although the commentators are divided with regard to the essence of the answer, it seems to me that we can look for it in four places:

1. Chapter 28, the chapter of wisdom: "and wisdom from whence shall be produced, and what is the place of understanding?"

2. Elihu's response [32-37]
3. The most important place - God's answer "from within the storm" [38-39].
4. Job's redemption.

In each of the three first places, we are faced with the limitations of human knowledge. Despite its presumption, human wisdom disappoints. It solves the mysteries of science and technology, it investigates the origins of silver and copper, and helps us overcome darkness and want. Yet, despite all this, we cannot find the true wisdom, the answer to the question of why good people suffer. According to our Sages, this is the question Moses asked of God when he pleaded, "Show me Your ways" [Exodus 33: 13]. To this question Moses receives the mysterious answer, "I will grant the grace that I will grant and show the compassion I will show." The answer ultimately remains hidden from human understanding. This is expressed also in God's response to Job, which the Talmud expresses through a play upon a different verse in the book. If we were to translate God's answer to Job into our language, we could say: "can the One who can distinguish between quarks of different types, between an electron and a positron, not distinguish between Job [in Hebrew, Iyov], and an enemy [in Hebrew, Oyev]?" We are in a state of suffering with no rational explanation, but we must nevertheless realize, that God accompanies us in these situations and participates in our suffering. Even in suffering, Iyov is no Oyev.

And yet, God's answer is not complete unless He returns Job to his former state. In an as yet unredeemed world, we are faced with a test. God wishes that we not only emerge from it successfully, but also that we feel that He is with us. This is a difficult demand when directed to the Job who stood facing the gas chambers at Auschwitz, however this is essentially the imperative that emerges from the book: to know and understand that God is not an enemy and that He has not abandoned His world.

## **Part II: Rabbi Soloveitchik's Approach**

Rabbi Soloveitchik discusses the question of evil and suffering in his work "Kol Dodi Dofek." His interpretation echoes the book of Job in rejecting the answer of philosophy. There is an answer, he claims, but are we capable of understanding it? In a wonderful analogy he compares the divine cosmic plan to a gorgeous wall hanging, similar to the Chagall wall hangings in the Knesset. Each thread has significance as part of the complex tapestry. However, we see the wall hanging from the wrong side. All we see

are thread ends, and the beautiful picture is meaningless to us. Any attempt to solve the riddle is doomed to failure. This is our state, the state of faith. In other words: despite the fact that I am on the wrong side, I must believe that there is a picture, and that my suffering has meaning.

We cannot attempt here to summarize the history of the search for the meaning of suffering in Jewish thought. Rabbi Soloveitchik tries to direct our gaze towards a different direction, so that we may rediscover the halakhic meaning of suffering. Our Sages state that one ought to repent as a result of suffering. Here Rabbi Soloveitchik presents us with a halakhic-philosophical approach to the issue. There are two types of repentance. The first type is the repentance that must follow a sin. The second type of repentance is a response to suffering, rather than to any specific sin. After one suffers, he must repent not because he is aware of his rating on the divine scoreboard and understands which sin has caused him to be sentenced to suffer, but because of a different principle. Suffering is a terrible "gift" that was given to mankind, which we must use to create a different, better life for ourselves.

Despite the difference between their approaches, we can connect Rabbi Soloveitchik's idea to the beautiful parable created by Rabbi Nachman of Breslov. Rabbi Nachman was sensitive to the danger of sadness and emotional suffering. Imagine, says Rabbi Nachman, a wedding where a circle of people are dancing, and one person stays outside and refuses to join the circle. Sometimes we force him against his will to join the dance. Who is it who stays outside the circle of dancers? Sadness. We must force sadness too into the dance of joy. In the same way, Rabbi Soloveitchik teaches us that although we do not know the explanation of suffering, we must use it in a positive way. This is why we must repent. The person who does not repent "wastes" his suffering! Our sages expressed this approach with a daring term: "suffering [which comes] from love." However, they set a limit to this type of suffering: when one can no longer study Torah because of the intensity of one's suffering, the suffering is no longer from love.

This approach must not lead us to a masochistic conclusion. As we have seen, the faith in our ability to overcome suffering is a central Jewish idea. Pleasure is not a crime, nor is attempting to relieve suffering. When someone we know is sick, we must try to cure him, and if this is not possible, we must at least try to lessen his pain. We know that we ought not to prolong his life artificially. However, when a person's suffering simply cannot be relieved, Jewish law tells us that he may not take his own life. Why not commit suicide? Adherence to this law must not be viewed as a masochistic decision. The suffering is heaven sent, and man must take advantage of it, so to speak. Suffering helps build humanity. Suffering, more than riches and pleasure, gives man the

ability to understand and forward the development of humanity. In this context, suffering also becomes a pedagogic punishment, like work after the sin in the Garden of Eden and nationalism after the sin of the Tower of Babel. Man cannot know why he suffers. But he must construct an answer to a second question: what is the purpose of his suffering?

We will not give up our belief in divine justice; therefore, we must say that a complete understanding of what happens in this world is not possible, unless we take the world to come into consideration as well. We do not receive this belief in divine justice as philosophers but as believers receiving their legacy of faith. The Kabbala understands divine providence differently. The sages of the Kabbala connected divine providence to the concept of reincarnation.

### **Rihal and Suffering**

The study of a great book is similar to an attempt to scale a mountain peak. We are not yet familiar with the path we must take: the content of the book. Yet we climb under the pressure of the attempt to find the right path. Once we are already familiar with the path and we ascend a second time, we are capable of noticing the roadsides, blossoming with flowers, which we did not notice the first time around. We can write a general structure of Rihal's book, composed of theories about the divine essence and the uniqueness of the Jewish people. However there are roadsides everywhere, which blossom with stunning flowers. One of these flowers touches on the question of suffering. What does the Kuzari say regarding this question?

We have seen that one of the central principles of Judaism is the belief that God accompanies us on our life's journey. Biographical events are not mere coincidence. Divine providence exists. However, we cannot construct the human biography because we do not have a general picture.

Redemption is the plan for the nation and the world as a whole, but there is also justice for the individual, through the immortality of the soul. The story does not end in this world.

Rihal discusses this question in the third section of the Kuzari [3: 11, pg. 109]:

"...Afterwards he accepted the concept of 'tziduk ha-din' [faith in divine justice], so that it might serve him as shield and shelter against the dangers and troubles that occur in this world. And he also came to accept the justice of the Creator towards all animals."

The Chaver discusses the question of divine justice and suffering in this section. However, he uses as a model the question of justice with animals. This brings us, indirectly, to the question of evolution. As it is generally understood, evolution constitutes an attempt to deny divine providence over the world in general. In other words, it is an attempt to deny that the order in the world, in nature and in each living organism proves the wondrous involvement of God or His messengers. God, not chaos, is responsible for biology. However we are children of prophets and not children of philosophers, and this is not enough for us. We are interested in one stage higher than that. God is interested not only in biology, but in biography as well, and of course in history. This is individual divine providence.

Let us use general divine providence as a model. We look at the animal kingdom and see wonders which only a blindly stubborn, evil or hypocritical person could deny, or claim that they are the result of coincidence. Rihal presents us with a creature. It is perfect on its level, and this perfection is made possible by the harmony between its various parts. However, this harmony is not merely internal. It exists in relation to other animals as well. And it is even more amazing than that, for we find that a certain type of flower needs a certain type of insect for its fertilization, and that this insect needs this same flower for its food. In the context of the history of species, we find ourselves faced with a paradox, for we find that two species are in need of each other to exist, and neither could have existed at any time without the other. And yet both exist! Rihal also draws our attention to the fascinating fact that the psychology of animals is fitting and appropriate to their anatomy and physiology.

Now we begin to discuss the question of justice in the animal kingdom. Immediately, the devil of the intellect pops up and brings up [Kuzari 3: 11] "the injustice done to the hare when it is eaten by the hyena, like the fly eaten by the spider." The Chaver does not believe that this reality is the result of mere chance. It is impossible to see this wonderful order in nature and at the same time claim that "the hunting of the hare by the hyena and the hunting of the fly by the spider are [the results of] chance." The Chaver sees that a wise planner has given "the lion courage and ability, and given him hunting weapons, teeth and nails, and has given the spider the talent of cunning" - meaning the technology - "to make his web like a garment without having learned this, so that he may weave snares for the fly, and given him appropriate tools for this task, and presented him with the fly for his sustenance...and presented many of the fish of the sea with other fish for their food." In other words, everything has been planned intelligently, and "what can I say if not that this is all from an intelligence that I cannot comprehend?"



Rihal did not accept the position mentioned by Nachmanides, which claims that divine providence controls the fates of the spider and the fly as well. Maimonides as well as Rihal disagreed with this position. They did not give human significance to the workings of nature. Rihal's discussion is of general divine providence, and it constitutes a model for the problems of man.

### **Part III: Rihal - Two Interpretations**

Let us now return to a section of the Kuzari which we mentioned earlier. In this section, Rihal explains that evil is not a chance occurrence but rather part of the divine plan, even if the plan is inexplicable to us. This section can be understood in two different ways. We will begin with Rambam's thesis.

According to Rambam's approach, evil is an absence. Light is true presence; darkness is simply the absence of light. To use a banal everyday example, we could call this the doughnut hole approach. One cannot make a doughnut without making a hole. It is impossible to create a reality without the existence of an imperfect reality as well. This imperfection is what Rambam calls evil. Before creation, God had two options:

1. To create a perfect world, without people.
2. To create people, with the knowledge that the world will be imperfect.

Our conception of reality is one of imperfection. We could not exist in a perfect world, and we have no visa to a perfect world until we have perfected ourselves. God, the benevolent, created all possible worlds, and thus He also created the imperfect world in which we live.

To our sorrow, sometimes the time comes to pay the dues of imperfection. We must accept evil as well, because evil is also part of reality. In and of itself, it is really the absence of goodness; imperfection is an absence. Evil has no meaning. It is a kind of doughnut hole that is necessary for existence.

Although this approach seems to be optimistic, Rabbi Kook criticized it. He felt that at its root this position expressed despair. He chose to identify with the Kabbalistic approach, in which evil is not an absence but a reality, a structure built of Sefirot, the same spiritual building blocks God uses to manifest Himself in His world. What does this mean? If evil were the necessary result of reality, it could never be uprooted and destroyed. However, since evil is not an absence but a reality which God created so that

we will have to pit ourselves against it and win, the possibility of obliterating evil begins to develop.

Rihal's words can be interpreted from the perspectives of each of these two approaches. In Rambam's view, we must accept suffering as an unavoidable reality. This is stoic acceptance. The only help we can hope for is from psychologists. In contrast, Rabbi Kook teaches us something different. Evil exists, but it is not merely a part of nature; rather, it is in some way part of the divine plan. Even Satan is God's messenger, and not merely a remnant of evil in a world which can never hope to achieve perfection.

## **The Transformation Of Evil**

We can read the rest of Rihal's explanation in light of these two approaches. He writes:

"and the person who has accepted all this will reach the level ascribed to Nahum of Gimzo, who would say about every difficulty he underwent, 'this is also for good' and he will live a life of continual quietude for troubles will seem trivial to him."

What did Nahum of Gimzo do? He turned suffering into a jumping point; he transformed the status of suffering.

"And he may rejoice in them, when he feels that the sin that was upon him is thus forgiven, s a man feels when he pays his debts, he is relieved and happy in it."

How are we to understand Rihal's language? Does this mean that suffering is really the result of sin? Or perhaps we should understand it differently. Without presuming to understand the balance between sin and punishment, Nahum of Gimzo transformed suffering into a vehicle for the correction of sin. As Rabbi Soloveitchik taught us, the Halakha has given us the ability to transform suffering into repentance.

"And he will be happy in the reward and recompense awaiting him, and he will give others through his joy the training to withstand suffering and believe in divine justice, and he will be glad of the fame and glory he will receive from this."

This comment gives us an insight into human psychology, and is another of the flowers Rihal planted by the wayside in the Kuzari. When a person believes and experiences the meaning of suffering, then to a certain extent his suffering diminishes, and he can view his situation differently. The person's perception of reality influences his experience of suffering, as well as influencing the general status of suffering.

Thus, Rihal teaches us that when we experience suffering, there are a number of stages through which we must pass. The first stage is accepting the approach of Nahum

of Gimzo. We do this when we believe that there is meaning to our suffering, even before we understand this meaning. The second stage is making personal biographical calculations of our own sins and suffering. I don't think that we can do this for others - unless we are prophets - but certainly each person must do it for himself. This second stage of awareness is the level that Rabbi Soloveitchik particularly emphasizes. He does not believe it is possible for man to reach an understanding of the larger theory of evil; rather, he places his emphasis on the personal calculation that one must construct.

I cannot conclude without mentioning the unique Chassidic approach to this question. This is not a popular approach, and it demands a tremendous effort to experience it, but I will describe it nonetheless. It forms the basis of early Chassidic thought, and draws on the philosophy of the Ramchal [Rabbi Moshe Chaim Luzzato]. The reality we think we are seeing and experiencing is in truth a play. We are so deeply involved in the theater experience that we cannot see it for what it is, and we perceive it as reality. We are like children or simple minded people who watch a play and get angry at the behavior of one of the actors. For them, this is reality and they are a part of the play. Our reality, the reality of exile and suffering, is merely a nightmare. When we reach redemption, we will understand that we were "in a dream" (Tehillim 126). This does not mean that we will not be able to believe that the redemption has really come; in fact, we will then realize that the exile was just a bad dream from which we are awakening. We will awaken from our earlier perception of reality, and then we will be able to truly understand our history and the suffering we underwent. This is the mystical approach. At the height of a spiritually uplifting moment, there is no evil. We suffer, of course, because we are inside that reality, as though we are in a dream from which we cannot awaken. The ascension of the Tzaddik's soul is the possibility to see reality as it really is. The Exodus from Egypt was a revelation of this type, witnessed by the entire nation. It was the moment when night turned into day, and was a presage of the day "which is neither day nor night." In the light of that day we will see world history differently. Then we will have the possibility of retroactive redemption, and the evil of the past will be erased.

## **CHAPTER 49: Cinderella**

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov was well known for composing remarkable stories, full of Kabbalistic and philosophical allusions. He also taught us to pay careful attention to ancient tales, which contain deep secrets as well, even though those who relate them have lost the keys to understanding them. Not only have the keys been lost, but the very awareness that there is a lock to be opened, that the story contains a secret to be sought, has been lost as well.

I will attempt to return the lost keys to three stories that you must remember from your childhood. I will do this because I believe in them.

### **Cinderella**

I believe in Cinderella.

Once upon a time there were three sisters who lived together. One dressed in silk, the second in satin, and the third in torn rags. The two older sisters made their little sister's life miserable, and they made her into their servant. The third sister had no friends save the mice in the kitchen. Since she spent most of her time washing the floors and removing the ashes from the stove, she was called Cinderella.

One day, the royal heralds announced a great ball in honor of the prince, heir to the throne. The elder sisters, gorgeously arrayed, prepared to attend the ball...

The rest of the story is well known. The prince searches for the owner of the glass slipper. Cinderella wishes to try it on. Her sisters laugh at her:

"Do you consider yourself a princess? You are the queen of filth; the prince will marry me."

"The prince will not marry rags and tatters. The prince will marry me."

The prince places the slipper on Cinderella's foot, and discovers that she is the mysterious princess.

### **Cinderella's Sisters**

Many chapters of the spiritual history of humanity have been written by Cinderella's two sisters. The sisters have said harsh things to Cinderella:

"It is astonishing, and it is worthy to consider the strange sight - to see this Jewish nation continuing its existence for so many years, and to see it always downtrodden and tattered; however there is a purpose in this, as a proof for Jesus the Messiah, both for [the Jewish people] to be constant in its existence, to be chastised, and to be downtrodden and tattered, for their children crucified Him. And although it is contradictory that there be a nation which is both downtrodden and tattered and constant in its existence,...the Jews have no redeemer, they wait for him in vain." (Blaise Pascal *Pense'es*, 640, 747)

"The existence of the Jews, as is generally known, is an acceptable proof of the existence of God. It is an acceptable proof of the depths of human guilt and paucity, and thus also of the inconceivable greatness of God's love, in the event in which God through the Messiah conciliated between the world and Himself. The Jews in the Ghetto bear witness to this without intention, enjoyment or fame, yet they bear witness. They have nothing to give witness about, save the shadow of Jesus' cross which falls upon them." (Carl Barth)

"The Christian message says in this context: God desired all this, Jesus the Messiah was rejected by his nation, prophesied the destruction of Jerusalem, Jerusalem was destroyed and it will never again return to Jewish sovereignty." (Carl Ludwig Schmidt, in a debate with Martin Buber, 14.1.1933)

"Since the prophets predicted that the Jews would suffer these tragedies because of the Messiah, and that they did indeed suffer them, and since we see them in exile, it is clear that it is because of the Messiah that these things happened to the Jews, and there is a correlation between the writings and the events and the order of the events in time...however if the Messiah has not yet arrived...Judea will be returned to the state in which the Messiah ought to find it, only then he will claim that another Messiah is to come in the future." (Tertullianus)

The debate continues. Whom will the prince marry? Is it possible that the prince might consider the queen of filth, whose only friends are mice, and will abandon her more successful sisters? The encounter with the prince is the redemption, and as for the slipper - it is mentioned in a book which hints at the final redemption: "Now this was formerly done in Israel in cases of redemption or exchange; to validate any transaction, one man

would take off his sandal and hand it to the other" (Ruth 4: 7). This is the slipper which heralds the footsteps of the true Messiah.

### **Exile and Trial [1:112-115]**

Cinderella's fate returns us to what Rihal has written about exile [1: 115], and to the more general issue of suffering, and thus again to the book of Job. As we have seen, the book of Job describes the suffering of a righteous man. His friends respond to the catastrophes that befall him, and accuse him of being a sinner, deserving of God's punishment. The beginning and the end of the book are familiar. They describe two concurrent realities, as though they are taking place on two stages. On the higher stage, God is testing Job to prove to Satan that there is one righteous person on earth, that there is one person capable of worshipping God not in order to obtain reward and blessing. There, everything is clear. However on the lower stage, from Job's perspective, we see the person suffering, and his feeling is that he suffers without cause. The book of Job is the story of man's trial as man perceives it.

This holds true for the individual as well. However, in the Midrash, and later in the commentaries, we see another interpretation of the story of Job. Job is the symbol of the suffering of the Jewish people. Along come the friends, and his friends are the theologians and sages of various nations, who use suffering as immutable proof that the Jewish people have sinned, and are not beloved to God. According to them, the history of the Jewish people proves that the Jewish faith is false, and the nation suffers because it did not accept the Christian Messiah or the Muslim prophet. Thus the exile was not merely an experience of physical suffering, but also a spiritual, psychological and intellectual trial of the first degree. The gentiles used the exile, the alienation, the dispersion and the degradation of the Jewish nation, to prove that this is a punishment from heaven for the Jews' refusal to accept the Messiah or the Prophet.

### **Part II: Job**

Over the centuries, Jewish thought has looked at Job from various perspectives. There were those who saw him as the symbol of Man, and others - such as Franz Rosenzweig - as the symbol of the world. In contrast to these approaches, Martin Buber felt that the questioning "I" is not the "I" of the individual, but the collective "I" of the Jewish people. Job's question, "Why do You hide Your face and consider me Your enemy?" (Job 13: 24), is the question of the Jewish people, which echoes and resounds in times of darkness.

The identification of Job with the Jewish people originates in the Psikta Rabati (chapter 26): "Your affliction is similar to the affliction of Job. Job's sons and daughters were taken from him and your sons and daughters were taken from you...for Job I doubled his sons and daughters and for you I will double your sons and daughters."

However, the one who developed this idea was the saint Shlomo Molcho in his book "Sefer Mefoar." The starting point of Shlomo Molcho's discussion is the section in the Torah of "va-yehi binsoa ha-aron" (Bamidbar 10: 35-36). This section is enclosed by brackets, composed of two backward facing forms of the Hebrew letter Nun. The talmudic sages in tractate Shabbat (116a) explained that "[this section] is considered a separate book." The Talmud brings the otherwise cryptic statement in Mishlei (9: 1) to explain that there are actually seven books of the Torah. The inverted Nuns divide the book of Bamidbar into three separate books, bringing the total number of books in the Torah to seven. Shlomo Molcho disagrees, and claims that the explanation lies in a statement in tractate Bava Batra (14b), "Moshe wrote his book and the story of Bil'am and Job." This teaches us that just as the story of Bil'am is included in the Torah, the book of Job is included in the Torah. For even though the book of Job is outside of the Torah, it is actually included in the story of Bil'am; the stories of Bil'am and Job record the sufferings and trials that the Jewish people will undergo throughout history.

The stories of Bil'am and Job contain the meaning of Jewish history. The messianic interpretation of the story of Bil'am is well known to us from early and late sources. However, Shlomo Molcho understands the book of Job in this light as well. This interpretation is implied by the Talmudic statement, "Job never existed; he was a parable" (Bava Batra 15a). According to Shlomo Molcho, this statement is not a discussion of Job's historical existence but rather an attempt to emphasize the fact that the book of Job does not discuss the suffering of the individual but the fate of the Jewish people. This is the key to a new vision of the book of Job. Job is the Jewish people, and the three friends are the nations, as is hinted by their origins. The friends' indictment of Job as responsible for his plight is mere foolishness. Thus, God responds: "And God said to Eliphaz the Yemenite, my anger is aroused at you and your two friends for you have not spoken to me correctly as has my servant Job" (Job 42: 7).

Thus Shlomo Molcho explains the section of "va-yehi binsoa ha-aron." Referring to the inverted Nuns, which enclose the section, he writes: "and their heads are bowed, to demonstrate that the goodness and divine benevolence that Israel received at first will turn around, and the holy ark will travel from its place, and Israel will be lowered from their former height and be stricken with suffering, and their lands will be settled by their enemies...and afterwards it says "rise up, God"...and we do not say rise

up except to one who has fallen, to hint at the toppling of the haters of Israel and when God rises up to help Israel their enemies will disperse and run away."

### **What is the book's answer to Job's question?**

A cursory reading immediately shows that the end of the book of Job opens up various options for focusing the solution or the conclusion. Where are the answers? In the words of Elihu, in God's response from the whirlwind, or in the end of the book, in Job's redemption? Or perhaps in the words of Job himself, when he asks the place of wisdom? There are indeed various answers that complement each other.

Herman Cohen read the book of Job through the perspective of the Rambam's interpretation. He saw the suffering as "a kind of prophecy." Job "suffers for the sins of others," and so do the Jews. This is essentially "representation of suffering" as proposed by Yishayahu. This "representation" is not punishment but martyrdom, a sanctification of God's name.

The high point of the book of Job is arguably chapter 28. Wisdom is not within Man's reach; however, Job finds justification for his life in the acceptance of the commandment, "Awe of God contains wisdom" (28: 28).

God's words from the whirlwind, "Where were you when I established the earth?" (38: 4) do not uncover the justice hidden in creation; rather, they prove Man's lowliness. Man cannot answer the question. However, the main thing is that Man receives an answer. Evil has not disappeared; the mystery has not been solved. However, God is close to Man and participates in his sorrow. "As for me, the closeness of God is good for me" (Tehillim 73: 28) is a continuation of the book of Job. Here too, the "I" is the collective "I" of the Jewish people.

However, for the book to end without redemption is impossible. We will discuss this aspect further next chapter.

### **Part III**

The book of Job represents the conflict between Judaism and the other central religions. Both Islam and Christianity, throughout the generations, have continually employed a claim in the anti-Jewish argument that can be termed "the exile proof." The success of these religions is seemingly a proof that God is on their side. I propose to prove the opposite theory, that it is the anti-hero who is God's ally.



Our forefathers knew that the exile was a trial to be overcome. The Jew refuses to accept the claims of his friends; he insists upon the justice of his path. This insistence has a sublimity to it, which is expressed in the Jewish existence in exile. The members of the Great Assembly recognized this when they coined the phrase we use in our prayers, "the great mighty and awesome God." When the prophets saw the destruction, they omitted parts of the formula one by one, and questioned His might and greatness. These omissions are built upon the approach that says that truth is revealed on the battlefield, or through political or financial success. The members of the Great Assembly re-instituted the authentic phrase "the great, mighty and awesome God" and claimed that paradoxically, through Jewish existence in exile, God's greatness and might are expressed. On the one hand, the irrational existence of the Jews in exile is the miraculous existence of one lamb among seventy wolves. Yet on the other hand, the exile expresses the fact that the Jewish people accepted the yoke of Heaven, not from a state where God made sure they lacked for nothing, not from a state of military success or financial abundance, but from poverty and suffering, without even the hope of change in the foreseeable future.

Cinderella's sisters found proof of their preferred status in their success. However, their success was, of course, helped by the sword. Christianity and Islam used the sword, and their covenant with the sword, to take over the world. Job, who worships God within his suffering, reaches the highest level of divine worship. Whenever Jews chose to suffer rather than utter the one traitorous word that could have altered their fate, it was a constant sanctification of God's name. Putting the Jewish people (and Job) through suffering was God's great gamble against Satan, and cosmically, their continued acceptance of God was a greater proof of the truth of Judaism than a triumph on the battlefield. This perhaps sounds surprising. However, if we would possess a consciousness of the truth, we would be able to understand the profound value of our exile and our suffering. It is for the lack of this consciousness of the truth that the king is justified in his criticism of the Jewish people; as the Chaver says, "You have found the place of my shame, King of Khazar" (1: 115).

We are sometimes missing an awareness of the significance of the life that we live. We sometimes live with no awareness of our position and no understanding of what is really taking place in our lives. The Jew always knew that he could escape his fate by uttering one word, yet he refused to do it. We must be aware of this heroism, that we accepted our suffering out of love and longing for God. The Jew knows this, yet sometimes he does not know that he knows it.

Rihal teaches us that the suffering of the Jews in exile was a sacrifice for the sake of the Torah. It was a life of martyrdom, the highest level exalted by the Christians and Moslems. Rihal reiterated the principle (2: 34, 4: 22) that many of the values extolled in Christian and Moslem theology are Jewish values that were fulfilled by the Jewish people. The most obvious example is the section in Yishayahu (52: 13-53-12) that speaks of the suffering servant of God. God's suffering servant is actually the Jewish people. The Christians applied this section to their Messiah. Rihal restores the section to its authentic meaning.

Rihal fought against a phenomenon that can be termed stolen identity. The phenomenon has many levels. Christianity claimed to be the true Israel. Islam claimed that the Koran is the authentic holy writ. Our return to the land of Israel was accompanied by a similar process. The Palestinian charter is a reworking of the principles of Zionism.

Despite this re-evaluation of suffering, there is no doubt that it is impossible to discuss history without also speaking from the perspective of chapter 42 of Job. Judaism believes that redemption is assured. It is not possible that God will suffer evil forever. However, we are discussing reality from the perspective of an earlier chapter. We don't have the perspective of the ending. Our generation must view itself as fortunate because we can read the first few verses of the final chapter, the first glimmerings of redemption. We see the course of history changing. Rihal, in contrast, lived at a low point of Jewish history, when the Christians and the Moslems were at the height of their power. Each ruled over half the world and claimed that their success was an expression of divine blessing. Judaism is Job's great gamble against his friends. It is the gamble of the sufferer when redemption is beyond the scope of his horizon. The response of Job/the Jewish people is "Even if He kills me, I still hope to Him" (13: 15), and at the same time, "I will wait for [Messiah's] arrival every day."

#### **part IV: Exile and Redemption**

The faith in redemption is paramount in our theology. The Torah, stamped with divine truth, prophesies the redemption of the Jewish people. God has foreknowledge of world history. Therefore, we pray to Him to involve Him in our redemption.

Rihal teaches us that the process of world redemption continues to take place, even while the Jewish people are in exile. Divine providence functions in ways that are mysterious to us, and seem to bring about the complete opposite of redemption. Rihal and the Rambam after him (Rambam, laws of kings, chapter 11), teach us that the mysterious workings of divine providence stand behind the success of Christianity and Islam as well. The message of Judaism was spread to the ends of the earth through these messengers. Thus Rabbi Abraham, son of the Rambam writes in his father's name:

"By keeping my Torah, you will be world leaders, your relation to them as that of a priest to his flock, the world will follow in your footsteps and imitate your actions and follow your paths. This is the explanation I received from my father of blessed memory." (Rabbi Abraham son of the Rambam, commentary on Bereshit and Shemot)

This idea is repeated in Rabbi Bachya ben Asher's "Kad Kemach: "

"And the reason for the dispersion in my opinion...is that the Jews be spread among the nations...and they will teach them the belief in the existence of God and of the divine providence that hovers over every detail of human existence." (Kad Kemach, Redemption)

Later this idea was expressed by Rabbi Chayim ben Betzalel, brother of the Maharal. In his interpretation of the prophecy of Isaiah the servant of God he writes,

"And we may also explain: God wished to oppress the Jews and disperse them among the nations for the sake of the goodness of the other nations who are also the work of His hands; through the Jews who are dispersed throughout the world the true faith will also be spread throughout the world...for God desired the nations also to hold the true faith...for this reason they [the Jews] are called children of Yizrael, [literally, God will plant], for they are the seed that God planted throughout the world, like the person who plants his wheat and does not throw it down in one place but spreads it to all the edges of the fields, so the Jews were dispersed to the four corners of the earth, so that through them the true faith would spread throughout the world. (The Book of Life, Book of Redemption and Salvation, chapter 7)

Exile is a trial, a trial that is part of a divine plan of history. However, the proof of the truth lies also in the ending of the book of Job, which closes, despite everything, with redemption. The key to understanding this ending lies in the verse that tells us that God "returned the exiles of Job" (Job 42: 10). This verse loses its meaning if it does not create an association with other similar verses: "when God shall return the exiles of Zion...Return, O God, our exiles." The return of the sons and daughters of Job represents the return of the nation after the exile. The end of the book prophesies the redemption, and bears witness that despite everything, history owes a debt to the Jewish people. Ultimately, history will be altered, and the world will witness the redemption and the return.

We cannot think about the history of our ancestors in exile without an awareness of their greatness. However here too, thank God, our situation has changed. We, the modern successors of the Kuzari, must emphasize different things today. These are the ideas Rihal will teach us in the end of the fifth section of the Kuzari. We must understand that in our day the exile is a trap, and our attitude towards it must be one of repudiation and aliya (literally, going up) to Israel. The status of exile today can be summed up in one sentence: exile today is not a punishment, it is a sin.

### **The Dry Bones**

Rihal discusses the question of the fate of the Jewish people in his discussion of the suffering of the individual (3: 11). He teaches us that the meaning of suffering for the individual must reflect the meaning of the suffering of the group as well.

"For when the confusions of logic arouse in his heart the length of the exile and the dispersion of the people and the dwindling of their numbers - he must first comfort himself with accepting divinely proscribed fate as I have said, and then with the attempt to punish sins, and then with the reward and punishment which await in the World to Come and cleaving to the Divine Presence in this world."

A third stage is added to the first two responses to suffering. To the philosophical stage in which we accept the meaning of evil, we add the understanding of reward and punishment, and to these we add a third stage, the persuasion that the sufferings of the past build us up towards the future. This is true both with regard to the individual and the nation. To this Rihal adds:

"And if Satan brings him to despair by saying, "shall these bones live?" for our imprint among the nations has been greatly reduced and our memory is forgotten, as it is said, "our bones have dried up we have lost hope, we are doomed," he must think of the miracle of the exodus from Egypt...and then it will not seem impossible to him that we will return to our former state even when there will be only one person left of us, as it is written, "fear not, worm of Ya'akov." for what is left of man after he becomes a worm in his grave?"

Here we meet once again with Rihal the daring commentator. There are many ways that the term "worm of Ya'akov" is commonly explained. Particularly well known is the explanation of the Sages that, like the worm, our power is in our mouths. However, Rihal takes an amazing leap of interpretation here. He takes "worm of Ya'akov" to mean a worm on a dead body, the final sign of life. Despite it all, we will rise again.

Here we see, regarding both the individual and the nation, that suffering is first and foremost a trial. This is in essence Job's question. Job asks the question of suffering, and refuses to accept the standard philosophical answers. Yet, he believes. In next week's lecture, we will analyze the meaning and essence of this faith.

## **Part V: Exile and Redemption**

I would like to explain the meaning of Job's faith by means of a contrast between two situations in modern literature. I will bring the first example from a short story by a well-known author, who inherited the Jewish tradition from his parents' home. This tradition has not disappeared despite the power of the evil inclination. He himself is very aware of this struggle, and does not want to lose his Jewish roots. I am speaking of Isaac Bashevis Singer. I will refer to one of his stories, entitled "Zeidlus the First." Zeidlus is of course a Latin play on the Yiddish name Zeidel. Singer tells us of a man named Zeidel, a learned Jew whom Satan attempts to lead astray. All of his initial efforts fail. The regular temptations do not work on Zeidel. However, the temptation of pride is too strong for Zeidel to resist. How does one tempt a Jew with pride? If you convert, says Satan, you will go far; you will become Pope Zeidlus the First. Zeidel falls into the trap. However, his life does not turn out exactly the way Satan promised him.

Rabbi Nachman of Breslov teaches that Satan is like the person who shows a child his closed hand and promises, "if you do such and such I will give you what is in my hand." The child does what he is asked, and afterwards, when the hand opens, the child sees that it is empty.

We will not go into all of Zeidel's adventures. We will only say that he failed at everything, and when Satan appears at the moment of death to take his soul, and Zeidel sees him, he exclaims,

"Is it you Satan, angel of death?"

"Yes Zeidel," replies the Tempter, "I have come for you. And it won't help you to repent or confess, so don't try."

"Where are you taking me?" he asked.

"Straight to Gehenna."

"If there is a Gehenna, there is also a God," Zeidel said, his lips trembling.

"This proves nothing," I retorted.

"Yes it does," he said. "If Hell exists, everything exists. If you are real, He is real. Now take me to where I belong. I am ready."

This idea, of the discovery of God beyond evil, is completely opposed to a message that appears in one of Ingmar Bergman's "philosophical" films, "The Seventh Seal." In the film – which has a Christian background - a knight appears who asks the final questions, and in one of the dialogues of the film someone who has seen the angel of death claims that he looked into his eyes, but beyond them one could see nothing. In contrast to this, the meaning of the story of "Zeidlus the First" is that beyond evil one can see good. This is the great leap that we must take: the leap from the absurd into a meaningful existence.

The Torah concludes with a commandment to study a song and remember it from generation to generation, so that it will exist forever. This is the song of "Hearken" ("Ha'azinu"). The Torah explains that days will come when

"I will hide My face from them and they will be prey, and will be beset by many evils and troubles and they will say on that day, 'it is because my God is not with me that we have been beset by these evils'... And now, write this song for yourselves and teach it to the children of Israel, place it in their mouths, so that this song will be a witness for the Children of Israel." (Devarim 31: 17-19)

A time of great suffering will come, and the nation will ask the question, is God indeed among us? Or in a more modern version, "Can one believe in God after Auschwitz?" The Torah commanded us to study this song, so that we will know that despite the pain

and evil, God is with us. This is the song that comes to teach us that even in the midst of evil, God is with us.

"How can one [man] chase a thousand and two [men] pursue ten thousand, if their Rock had not sold them, and God had not trapped them." (Devarim 32: 30)

Despite everything, the world is not left to its own devices. This is a prophetic promise given to us so that we will not give up hope.

And here I will dare to make the terrible leap, towards the eyes of the Angel of Death. In our generation we have learned something beyond what Rihal has taught us. We can learn about the truth, as Rihal said, from the fact that God revealed himself at Mount Sinai and chose the nation that He loves, the Chosen People, and gave them the Torah. However, to our sorrow, in history there is another way as well. If Satan appeared, and I was indeed certain that he was Satan, I could learn, paradoxically, from him, that the Chosen People are the nation that Satan recognizes and announces to be his enemy. History has shown us many anti-Semites, great and small. However, Satan himself was none other than Nazism. Nazism appeared and, pointing at the Jewish people, announced, "This is my enemy." We have learned that the Jewish people are the Chosen People - from the evidence given by Satan. Satan did not hate the Jews because we were opposed to his political ideas or because we disturbed his plans. The child and the old man, who were powerless to harm anyone, were also Satan's enemies. To some extent, the Holocaust was an Encounter at Auschwitz, parallel to the Encounter at Mount Sinai, in which Satan appeared and showed us the way to the great leap, the need to see beyond the empty eyes of the Angel of Death. Beyond them there is something else. It is not emptiness. Zeidlus the First was right: "If you are real, He is real."

The world understands this logic, even if only subconsciously. We can understand this if we analyze different reactions to the Holocaust. The anti-Semite complains that the Nazis did not finish the job. We are also familiar with the attempts of Nazi sympathizers who want to deny the Holocaust, and sometimes we hear both claims at once. This is one side of the range of responses. However, on the other side we hear more sophisticated denials. For many years we have been witnesses to an attempt, by the Poles for example, to deny the fact that the Jews were the victims of the Holocaust. However, the most evident attempt in this area is without a doubt the establishment of the Carmelite monastery at Auschwitz. Here we are faced with an attempt to rewrite history: Christianity was one of the victims of Auschwitz. The Church did this, for example, by making a Jewish convert to Christianity into a Christian saint. This is because, consciously or subconsciously, everyone whose conscience was not destroyed

by Nazism understands that every honest person should have been at Auschwitz. There Satan made the selection. And whoever was not chosen by him to be wiped out, cannot possibly be the chosen one of God.

### **Cinderella and her sisters**

Today we can understand this because of the perspective that we have on the first verses of the last chapter of the book of Job. From this perspective, which stems from a sense that we are at the beginning of the Redemption, we ought to reread the end of the story of Cinderella. How did Cinderella treat her sisters after her rise to greatness? I leave the reader to do his own homework, but I promise him that a look at the various versions will be very interesting. What God expects from Job is clear. God expects Job to pray for his friends who have constantly directed their arrows at him. This is a very difficult moral paradox. However, it helps us to understand the secret of the ending of the book. The redemption of Job represents the return of the Jewish people to their land. The verse actually uses the phrase "returned his exiles" (42: 10), which is essentially a national term. Now we also understand another difficulty. His first children are lost to him, yet Job's comfort - a comfort that does not erase the pain - is in his second children. The Holocaust was an event that can never be forgotten, and we are left with problems that cannot be rationally explained away. However, now we see the return of Job's exiles, and the prayer that he wishes for the whole world: may sins, not sinners, be obliterated.

Job's friends, Cinderella's sisters, are the other religions that point an accusing finger at Job: Job, you are suffering, this is proof that you have sinned, this means that God has rejected you. The book ends with the meeting with the prince: "and God returned the exiles of Job" - this is the Redemption.



## **CHAPTER 50: Sleeping Beauty**

I believe in Sleeping Beauty.

Once upon a time an evil witch cursed the princess. On the princess's fifteenth birthday she climbed up an old tower, pricked her finger on a spinning wheel, and immediately fell into a deep sleep. The king and queen fell asleep as well, as did the horses, the dogs, the pigeons on the roof, and the flies on the wall. Thorny rosebushes grew tall and spread around the castle, concealing it from view.

One day a prince arrived in the country and heard from an old man about the castle hidden behind the thorny rosebushes, and that inside the castle the beautiful princess lay sleeping. He also heard that many had attempted to awaken the sleepers, and had lost their own lives in the attempt. The prince was not afraid. He reached the castle. The thorns made way for him but closed up after him, the dangers of the enchanted castle threatened him as well, but he was not deterred. He reached the tower and found the sleeping princess. He kissed her and she awoke.

The prince and the princess married and had children. The sleeping beauty is the Land of Israel. During the years of exile, it was asleep, and its castle was overrun with brambles and wasteland. Both vegetation and animals disappeared. Was this indeed the same princess who was described as a land flowing with milk and honey? The prince, the Jewish people, believed in the legend and awakened the slumbering princess.

### **The Love of the People and the Land**

Today we use the term homeland. The Bible and our Sages used another term: "Mother." The Land of Israel, Zion, is a "mother," and our Sages play with this term. However, the true relationship between the Jewish people and Zion, as it is expressed in the spirit of the nation, cannot be understood unless we add to the mother relationship a relationship of love and marriage between Zion and the Jewish people. Avraham reaches Jerusalem led by the heavenly call, "go...to the Land which I will show you" (Genesis 12:1), like one who is unconsciously drawn to a mysterious being. The yearning, the love whose vague image appeared in our dreams, gave meaning to our lives.

The relationship between the nation and the Land is one of love. This relationship has lasted for over a thousand years, and Jerusalem was and remains at its core. The destruction of the Temple and the years of exile have distanced the Jewish people from

their land. This was the basic tragedy. But a deeper tragedy took place when the conquerors were not satisfied with separating the lovers, and tried to erase the love itself, its remains, its memories, even its name. The Romans were not satisfied with building a shrine to Jupiter in the Holy Temple. They felt the need to change the very name of the land. The Philistines - a nation no longer in existence at the time - called it Palestina.

This name represents the battle against the love between the Jewish people and the Land of Israel. The conflict with the Romans, like the earlier conflict with the Philistines, was at its core a conflict between nations. Judah's rebellion was the uprising of a nation that preferred freedom over the oppressive peace of Rome. Yet even then the conflict had connotations that strayed beyond the political plane. However this was a conflict between strangers. When Abraham became the "Father of Many Nations," and his faith spread beyond the boundaries of his nation, even more tragic chapters were added to the annals of this love.

The Scriptures have become, in one way or another, the inheritance of all of humanity. Scriptural terms and concepts became the foundations of both Western and Eastern civilization. Christianity and Islam both see themselves as the ultimate heirs of Judaism, the ones who will fulfill the Universalist idea.

However, Christianity and Islam did not battle Judaism from the outside. The tragic irony from the perspective of Judaism lies in the fact that the descendants of these religions did not feel it was enough to establish religious centers in Rome and Mecca. They received much of the content and symbols of their religion from Judaism, but were not satisfied. They saw themselves as legitimate inheritors of the father, and in an Oedipal act wished to conquer the Mother, Jerusalem. The murder of the father, the Jewish people, was carried out in various ways, some biological, some theological. There were those who persecuted the Jews passionately. More tolerant theologians satisfied themselves - like Cham the son of Noach in the Aggadah - with castration of the father. He is allowed to remain alive merely as an aged witness, who cannot even die until he witnesses the success of the son who has risen against him. To the political conflicts, the most difficult conflict was added: religious conflict.

## **Part II**

In Bereshit we read of the significant encounter between Avraham and Malkitzedek, king of Shalem. According to the biblical commentator Moshe David Cassuto, the Torah intends to convey "that Jerusalem was a holy city. [This was] an eternal holiness, extending since time immemorial, and even when it was populated by idol worshippers,

who were accustomed to worshipping many gods, its inhabitants could not but worship their highest God," who is essentially identical to the one God of Scriptural monotheism.

Rashi gleans something else from this encounter. Our rights to the land are not the result of a divine promise accompanied by military conquest. Our Sages emphasized our "historical rights" to the land. Rashi describes how the children of Shem lived in the Land according to the original division among the sons of Noach, and how "the Canaanites were conquering the land of Israel from the children of Shem." On the background of this unjust conquest, which destroyed the original harmony between the peoples of the world, Avraham, a descendent of Shem, appears upon the stage of history. He meets with one of the last Shemite kings of Jerusalem, before they were destroyed by the Jebusites. This was Malkitzedek king of Shalem (Bereshit 14: 18-20): "And Malkitzedek king of Shalem brought out bread and wine, and he was a priest of the highest God. And he blessed him and said, blessed is Avraham of the highest God, ruler of heaven and earth." In this encounter, the last remaining Shemite monotheistic priest meets Avraham and prophesies, "[God] will someday return [Jerusalem] to your children, who are the descendants of Shem" (Rashi, on Bereshit 12: 6).

The Rambam teaches an additional unique aspect of Jerusalem. In his "Guide For The Perplexed" [3,45] he suggests that Jerusalem is referred to in the Bible as "the place which He will choose," without calling it explicitly by name, for political reasons. The name of the place was hidden so that "the nations would not hold onto it and fight a powerful war over it, as they would if they knew that this place on earth was the source of the Torah." Sadly, this attempt did not help, and the struggles over Jerusalem continue to this day. Political struggles have a mechanism of their own. In Jerusalem, a religious struggle exists as well.

The Jewish people return to their land with a demand for justice that is beyond law. No one disputes the spiritual ownership of other religions. This is one of the great tests of humanity. Will they recognize the rights of the father who has returned to life and to youth, to live in his own land?

Jerusalem was conquered by Christians and by Muslims. However, Jerusalem is holy to the Jews not because of an event that occurred in it, nor because of a building in it, but because of very essence. The Temple could burn down, foreign temples could be built in its place, and yet the connection with the land remains, as though nothing has changed. Thus, the Jewish people mourned over Jerusalem, and thus Rihel expressed the longing of Jerusalem for its people:

"Zion, will you not inquire after your prisoners who inquire after you, and are the remnant of your flock...

I cry endless tears to bewail your suffering, and when I dream of the return of your exiles, I am a violin for your songs.”

Whoever has read Mark Twain’s description of the parched land, so barren that he felt this could not possibly be the land of which the Bible speaks, understands what the renewal and rebirth of the land means.

The Ramban saw the double tragedy as the symbol of the deepest expression of the love between the people and the land. The nation could not rest peacefully in any other place in the world, and the land would not bear fruit for any foreign conqueror. It patiently awaited the return of its people.

## **CHAPTER 51: The Land of Israel**

### **The Paradox**

We will now reopen our discussion of the uniqueness of the Land of Israel, the great paradox we have been living since the birth of Judaism in the first pages of the Scriptures. Before God there are no political or geographical boundaries, there are no boundaries of nations or of countries. And yet, the great message of this universalism is expressed in two particularisms, two uniquenesses: the uniqueness of the People and the uniqueness of the Land. The paradox teaches us that uniqueness is the path to universalism. The uniqueness of the Jewish people is part of a plan that will lead us and the nations of the world to the end of days, a plan for the redemption of the entire world. In this plan, the descendants of the Forefathers hold a unique place and position.

This paradox was a focal point of constant debate with many thinkers, particularly those who have stemmed from Judaism and have accepted some of the general principles of our Torah. The Scriptures proclaimed that Avraham would become the father of many nations. And indeed, many nations have accepted the Torah of the Forefathers. However, many of them wished to accept these principles while erasing the name of the Jews. Sometimes this was done by actual killing of Jews, and generally it was done by stealing their identity, by claiming that they themselves are the true Jewish people.

### **Models**

The paradox of uniqueness demands an explanation from within as well. Rihal uses biological and climatic models to explain his central thesis. In my opinion, the reader has a certain amount of freedom here. He can accept these explanations as they are, or he can suggest corrections that lift these explanations to a higher plane. Rihal attempts to analyze a difficult and central issue, but he lacks the tools for the job. He saw the biological and climatic theories as models to explain his reality. Thus, for example, Rihal used the fact that certain traits are present in the grandfather, disappear in the father and reappear in the third generation.

In this way, Rihal wished to convey the surprising idea that traits can reappear despite an apparent break in continuity and education: that there can be resurrection after surcease. What Rihal describes is a return to something that does not come from without but that already exists within. The biological model is wonderful, because it

demonstrates that potential can exist, for example in genetic makeup, and not be expressed outwardly. The difference in genetics between a genotype and a phenotype is the difference between uniqueness and choseness. There are traits that remain hidden because of the environment in which the organism develops; however the genotype, the uniqueness, the inner potential, continues to exist. This description is true of the nation as well. This is the essence of the principle of eternal uniqueness in the philosophies of Rihal, the Maharal and Rav Kook.

## **Territory**

This topic brings us to the place of territory in Jewish thought. We are better equipped, thank God, to discuss this question than previous generations, who read Rihal's philosophy regarding the land of Israel yet were severed from it. Here in the land of Israel we face the full significance of Rihal's writings on the subject, as well as the difficult dilemmas that the topic raises.

One can view the land of Israel as the place where the Jewish state resides. This is an instrumental view, in which territory becomes a vehicle. Like a house, a country is a place in which we live, and it constitutes, in the largest sense of the word, a vehicle, a tool necessary for our survival. This is a rational approach, and stands as one of the principles of Zionism. This principle implies that Jewish existence in the Diaspora was abnormal and unhealthy, and that the nation must be healed and rehabilitated through Zionism. This can be compared to a cripple who has lost the use of his hands and legs, and who hopes for the return of their powers. The hands and legs represent the two central characteristics of political existence in an independent state. The hands represent the nation's ability to defend itself militarily, while the legs symbolize the connection to the territory. If we were to go in this direction we would reach the territorial basis necessary for the justification of the Zionist idea, and seemingly this would be enough. However, here we must learn the great lesson of the Kuzari.

Let us jump to the end of the book. At the end of the book, the Chaver bids farewell to the king and prepares to journey to the land of Israel. "After these events the Chaver decided to leave the land of the Khazars and journey to Jerusalem." The king is astonished:

"And the departure of the Chaver was difficult for the Kuzari and he spoke to him of it, saying, 'what is there to find in the land of Israel today, since the Holy Presence has left it? And since the closeness of God can be achieved in any location by a pure

heart and a strong desire; and why should you place yourself at the peril of the deserts and the seas and the hatred of the various peoples?" (5: 22)

This question of the Kuzari king must amaze us. Since the very first discourse, Rihal has emphasized the significance of the Land of Israel. His journey to the Land of Israel is the necessary and logical result of all he has been saying and writing. If so, why is the Kuzari king surprised? The answer lies in the recognition of a paradox, which is expressed at the end of the book, and sheds a different light upon the entire book. The Chaver had built a Jewish state in the land of the Khazars! Not only that, but his place in that state is comparable to the role of the philosopher, who guides the king in his leadership of the ideal kingdom. We can understand the significance of this ideal state when we read the letter that Hasdai Ibn Shaprut wrote to the Kuzari king. He writes:

"If there is a place where there is a beacon and a kingdom for the exiles of Israel and they are not tyrannized or controlled, and if I knew that this was true, I would despise my own honor and depart from my greatness and desert my family and would speedily go up mountains, over land or sea, until I would reach the place where my lord the king rules to see his greatness and his glory and the residence of his subjects and the superiority of his servants and the repose of the exiles of Israel. And upon seeing his greatness and glory, my eyes would alight and my innards rejoice and my lips would praise the One who had not withheld His bounty from my forlorn nation."

Hasdai Ibn Shaprut, the Jewish minister of the highest personal and political status in the Caliphate in Cordova, claims that he would abandon all of his honor and become a simple subject in the Jewish state in which the Jews have independence. This state has religious significance as well:

"For how can I bleed for the destruction of our glorious House and for the few saved from the sword who went through fire and water, who are but a small remainder and have lost our honor and dwell in exile, and God does not assist us against those who say to us all the day, 'every nation has a kingdom and you have no remembrance in the land.'"

And a Jewish state exists, the kingdom of the Khazars. However, Rihal instructs us through the paradox of his own life and choices. The Chaver abandons a Jewish state, nobility, independence and everything that goes along with it, in order to travel to a place that is under foreign rule. This place is the Land of Israel. Here we learn the great lesson. Our attitude towards the Land of Israel is not one of territory, in which, by chance, a Jewish state exists. We relate to it as our destiny, and view the encounter with it as part

of our essence as Jews. Jewish sovereignty and independence are significant, but so is our relationship to the Land of Israel. At the end of the book we will learn how Rihal envisioned the ultimate return to the Land of Israel and the redemption. Herein lies the mystery and the paradox. The return to the Land of Israel is not a tool or a means. What we have here is here a relationship of encounter, a cosmic meeting of those intended for each other from the beginning of time. Just as it is written that every person's marriage partner is announced in Heaven forty days before his birth, so too it is announced that a particular field in the Land is intended for a particular person. Our Sages wished to teach us the romantic idea that the connection between a couple exists before they meet for the first time, and that their meeting is not a chance occurrence. So too the relationship between the People and the Land is more than a chance occurrence. The relationship was written in the books of destiny.

## **Part II**

What mysterious force lies behind the relationship of the People and the Land? What makes a particular union successful and unique? Here we enter into theories and models. Rihal attempts to describe it through a unique approach to the climate of the Land of Israel. We find a similar approach in the writings of Rambam. However, he limits the explanation, when he claims that this climate is not unique to the Land but characterizes the entire region. This is actually stated explicitly by Rihal:

"And Ever was the designated progeny of Shem...since his inheritance was the lands of comfortable climates, at the center of which is placed the coveted land, the land of Canaan, the land of prophecy." (1: 95)

Thus, we find that the climatic condition is necessary but not sufficient. The Land of Israel is unique in that its climate integrates heat and cold. In other words, it unites the characteristics of those places lacking the conditions for creating a great civilization and a sophisticated culture. And indeed, both the inception and the development of civilization took place in the temperate climates.

Beyond the geographical conditions there is a mystical reality, a spiritual uniqueness of the Land, which makes it a place where prophecy can become a reality. The Land of Israel is the destined location of the ultimate encounter between the Jewish nation and God, the place destined for prophecy and redemption.



This approach to the Land of Israel perhaps can only be understood in categories of love. A person can consider a prospective mate according to the size of the dowry or other monetary interests, as a means to advance one's career or one's social status, etc. These are purely rational reasons. However, we all know that this is not enough, and justifiably so. Beyond these things we expect something more, something irrational and emotional, something we can only describe as love. The word love describes the relationship between the People and the Land. The book of Bereshit describes how the Great Matchmaker, the Creator himself, took Avraham, the father of the Jewish nation, and brought him to the Land of Israel. There he would found his nation, and there the great encounter between the Jewish people and God will ultimately take place. The encounter between the People and the Land is also a condition of redemption.

Thank God, for us no contradiction exists between the instrumental approach and what we might term the romantic approach. We must realize how fortunate we are, to live in the age where, after so much trial and suffering, these approaches finally merge. The distinction between the two approaches to the People and the Land was illustrated through a historical dilemma: Uganda or Palestine? The instrumental approach demanded searching for territory somewhere. This was called the territorial position. It was opposed by the position that spoke about the Land of Israel. Both approaches are important, and the Kuzari state and the other Jewish states that arose in the Diaspora were not a crime, but neither did they bring salvation. There were many Jews who did not think it a crime to live in the Diaspora but who considered the creation of a Jewish state in the Diaspora a betrayal of their allegiance to the Land of Israel.

These issues are important because of their current implications. We are faced with dilemmas that center around the ideals of the redemption of the People and of the Land. We will not enter into politics here. Politics means solving these dilemmas in a particular way. However, understanding the dilemmas is beyond politics. We must always be aware of the two-sidedness of our relationship to the Land. On the one hand, the instrumental relationship to a home, and on the other hand, the relationship to something that cannot be replaced. This relationship is represented in the Scriptures and in later literature by the classic image of the relationship to a mother. The Land is perceived as a mother to some individuals, and as a wife to the nation. We express this relationship through loyalty, love and respect.

## **The Land of Israel**

As we have seen, the content of Jewish thought focuses around three central points: Creation, Revelation and Redemption. History is a process with many twists and turns; however, it ultimately leads us from Creation to Redemption through Revelation.

The Land of Israel symbolizes creation. The Land of Israel is also the land of prophecy.

The sacrifice of Yitzchak connects to the second point: Revelation. Just as Avraham was called to the Land of Israel from a foreign country, "Go ... to the land that I will show you" (Bereshit 12: 1), so too he is called forth after entering the Land of Israel: "Go ... to one of the mountains that I will show you" (ibid. 22: 2).

Here, too, Avraham follows the call to a place that he does not know, and only when he reaches it does God inform him that this is the place that God had destined for the great drama of the sacrifice of Isaac. Avraham's going reveals the holiness within the holiness. Avraham learned to recognize the holiness of the Land of Israel when he reached it. The holiness of Jerusalem had to be revealed much later, at the final trial.

The mount of the sacrifice, say the Scriptures, is the "mountain where God appeared," the place of revelation, the encounter with God. On this mountain the Temple will be built, the Temple in which man will encounter the Divine Presence. The Scriptures themselves are aware of the paradox in this claim. In king Shlomo's prayer in the Book of Melakhim we read,

"For can it be that God resides on the earth, behold the heavens and the highest firmaments cannot contain You, how can this House I have built [contain You]?" (Melakhim I, 8: 27)

However, divine transcendence left room also for the immanence that is connected to "this place...and You will hearken from the heavens" (ibid. 8: 29-32).

Revelation is expressed in two ways: in the personal encounter, and in the collective revelation of the Torah. Next to the Temple sat the Great Court, whose role was to teach Torah to the entire people of Israel.

The third point that is encompassed in Jerusalem is connected to the future: the Redemption. This idea means the triumph of good in the various circles of human activity: the national, the human-universal and the cosmic.

The national redemption is the return of the Jewish people to their Land. When the Jew prays for redemption, he prays to the God who "will rebuild Jerusalem," and adds, "may our eyes witness Your merciful return to Jerusalem. Blessed are You God,

who will return His Presence to Zion." The redemption is the renewed meeting of the three: the People, the Land and the Divine Presence, the divine immanence.

Jerusalem is also the axle upon which the human-universal redemption turns as well. The mountain that was the center of spiritual heights for the Jewish people will become a center of inspiration and education for the entire world.

"And in the end of days the mount of the house of God will be placed above all mountains and rise above all hills and all the nations will swarm towards it. And many nations will go saying, come let us go up to the mountain of God, to the House of the God of Ya'akov, and He will teach us of His ways and we will follow in His paths, for Torah will go forth from Zion and the word of God from Jerusalem." (Yishayahu 2: 2-3)

The particularism of the choosing of a People and a Land are thus merged with absolute universalism. The People and the Land preserved the Torah, so that it would spread among all the nations, and whose central expression is universal peace: "And they shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they study war any more" (ibid. 2: 4).

In Jewish tradition, Jerusalem is also the center of the cosmic redemption. Yishayahu's vision, "and the wolf shall dwell with the lamb" (Yishayahu 11: 6) is obviously an allegory for the ideal international relations that will reign in the messianic era. However, it is also a hint at a religious utopia, in which even the natural reality will change.

Various verses in Yechezkel hint at future changes in Jerusalem. A spring will gush from it, and from it powerful rivers will stream forth, which will even heal the Dead Sea. Clearly, these are references to the ancient Garden of Eden.

And indeed certain commentators have understood it in this way. According to their interpretation, the Garden that God planted in Eden underwent a catastrophic change as a result of the sin; however, with the advent of the redemption it will revert to its original state. The Garden of Eden is the Land of Israel, and its center is Jerusalem.

If this motif exists in the Scriptural tradition, then the symbolism of the Holy Temple can be understood in its light as well. At its center, as in the Garden of Eden, the Keruvim protected the Tree of Life, which is none other than the Torah - the word of God.

## Chapter 52: The Ugly Duckling

### **I believe in the ugly duckling.**

The eggs have just hatched and the ducklings have clambered out. All but one, which hatched late, and revealed a very different looking duckling indeed.

"What an ugly duckling! Look at his hawk nose, his curly feathers..."

"He is so strange and odd, we must beat him into shape."

"I hope a cat pounces on you, you disgusting thing!"

Hans Christian Andersen did not tell you the whole story. If I were to try to complete it, my pen and ink would not suffice. Andersen did not say that on his way the ugly duckling met chickens that strutted like geese. Nor did he tell us that on the way he met an insect, whose story was told by Kafka.

"Once I was a man, my name was Gregor Samsa," said the insect to the ugly duckling, "and the changes of Nirenberg transformed me into an insect..."

The Scriptures teach us of the problem of the ugly duckling. Rihal put it this way:

The Chaver said: [...in Yishayahu 52-53, the Jews are likened to one who] "has no beauty and no glory," "people hide their faces from him." In other words: a person whose odd appearance and ugly visage are at the level of filthy things that a high soul avoids gazing upon and hides his face from them, "degraded and repulsive, a man of pains and illness."

The Kuzari said: And how is it possible to see this chapter as referring to the Jewish people? For it says there, "indeed he carries our illness", while the Jews suffer for their own sins!

The Chaver said: For the Jewish people among the nations are like a heart among the other organs, which has both more illness and more health than all the others.

The rest of the story of the ugly duckling is well known. One evening, a flock of beautiful large birds appeared. The ugly duckling had never seen anything so beautiful. He discovered that he was in fact a swan. The ugly duckling is the Jewish people. His fate is exile. Zionism was the realization that he is not a duck but a swan.

## **Chapter 53: A Covenant of Fate**

### **, Part I: Anti-Semitism and Zionism**

The ugly duckling's life is deeply affected by his encounter with anti-Semitism. And indeed, anti-Semitism and the Holocaust are very basic components of our identity. For many of our brethren, this is the starting point of Jewish and Zionist awareness. Must this be the case? We must answer in the negative, and emphasize that this popular position expresses only a partial truth, and therefore is erroneous, even damaging.

The picture must be complete. We will attempt to reconstruct it using the concepts established by Rabbi Soloveitchik in his seminal work, "Kol Dodi Dofek."

Rabbi Soloveitchik's *Weltanschauung* contains a wonderful synthesis of classical Jewish thought and modern, particularly existentialist, philosophy. "Kol Dodi Dofek" is a summary of Rabbi Soloveitchik's approach to contemporary history. The work itself is divided into two parts. The first part is a direct analysis of the events that led to the establishment of the state of Israel. The second part contains a more general analysis of Jewish history.

"Kol Dodi Dofek" is written in a unique style. Rabbi Soloveitchik uses biblical characters who actually represent various contemporary Jewish characters. It is in a way a continuation of classical Midrashic literature. The Scriptures are a source of inspiration that help us relate to the world around us, but also provide a framework and create a terminology for use in expression of our responses to our experience of the world.

The ugly duckling faces the problem of his identity. Rabbi Soloveitchik points out a biblical character who faces the same situation:

"And they cast lots and the lot fell upon Yona. And they said to him, please tell us for whom has this evil befallen us, what is your trade and from where have you come, what is your country and of what nation are you? And he said to them, I am a Hebrew and I fear the God of the heavens, who created the sea and the land." (Yona 1: 8-10)

Rabbi Soloveitchik sees in Yona the Jew who is faced with the question of his identity. Yona is the Jew trying to run away from God, trying to escape his fate, and be "swallowed up in a different reality outside of it," but he cannot. The storm brings him back. The storm is anti-Semitism.

Yona is commanded to identify himself, to recognize his Jewish identity. He must decide about his future. The modern Jewish reality in which we live is the result of the coalescence of two similar decisions. These decisions are expressions of two covenants that have been with us since the birth of the Jewish people: the Covenant of Egypt, "and I will take you to be My nation and I will be your God," and the Covenant of Sinai, "and he took the Book of the Covenant...and he said here is the blood of the Covenant which God has established with you..." These are the two covenants that match two types of reality, both in the individual and in the nation. The first is a covenant established in the wake of a new reality that is beyond man's control: "the Covenant of Fate." The second is established out of desire and choice: "the Covenant of Destiny."

### **The Covenant of Fate**

What is the meaning of this sense of loneliness? Yona experienced what the Maharal writes of the Jewish fate. Thus, Rabbi Soloveitchik writes:

This sense of a fate-laden existence of necessity gives rise to the historical loneliness of the Jew. He is alone both in life and death. The concept of a Jewish burial-plot emphasizes the Jew's strange isolation from the world. Let the sociologists and psychologists say what they may about the incomprehensible alienation of the Jew. All their explanations are naught but vain and empty speculations which do not shed any intelligible light on this phenomenon. Jewish loneliness belongs to, is part of, the framework of the covenant of fate that was made in Egypt. In truth, Judaism and separation from the world are identical ideas. Even before the exile in Egypt, with the appearance of the first Jew – our father, Abraham – loneliness entered our world. Abraham was lonely. He was called Abraham the Hebrew, Avraham ha-Ivri, for "all the world was to one side (ever echad) while he was to one side (ever echad)" (Bereishit Rabba 42: 8). When Balaam saw the Jewish people dwelling tribe by tribe, he apprehended the mystery of the solitary mode of Jewish existence and proclaimed in a state of amazement: "Lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone, and shall not be reckoned among the nations" (Bamidbar 23: 9). Even if a person achieves the pinnacle of social or political success, he will still not be able to free himself from the chains of isolation. [From the translation of the Hebrew by Lawrence Kaplan.]

Jewish history is a mystery. The explanations of the unique Jewish experience of loneliness are, in the final analysis, useless. Nevertheless, let us indulge in a little such

analysis with psychologists and sociologists. We have much to learn from them, although the problem itself will remain unsolved.

## **Part II**

### **Anti-Semitism and Its Causes: The Psychological Background**

Anti-Semitism is a multi-faceted phenomenon, which lends itself to various analyses. I would like to demonstrate that the various dimensions of analysis do not contradict one another; in fact, their juxtaposition creates a complete picture.

Here we will discuss the first level, the psychological dimension. To explain it I will use a simple allegory. Psychologists often employ the Rorschach Test in their analysis of patients. The test uses a well-known technique known as the projective technique. The patient is asked to look at a series of pictures and explain what he sees. These pictures have no intrinsic meaning. In fact they are simply ink blots on paper, which created symmetrical designs when the paper was folded in two. As aforesaid, the pictures do not represent anything, yet people look at them and explain them. The explanations do not exist in the pictures; they exist in the person's mind. This is an opening, through which the psychologists try to enter the inner world of the person, who "projects" what is inside himself onto the pictures.

This mechanism, according to many psychologists, can shed light on the phenomenon of anti-Semitism. The anti-Semite sees in the Jews negative qualities that threaten and endanger him. These characteristics don't exist in the "picture;" they only exist in the mind of the beholder. They are the projections of the anti-Semite, who uses the Jew as an ink blot of his own making, and upon which he projects the black sides of his inner world.

This, in very general terms of course, refers to the psychological background of anti-Semitism. The fact that the Jew is a minority, a foreigner who is relatively easily identified, was a psychological cause which contributed to the choice of the Jew as the screen upon which the anti-Semites projected their fears and hatred. This is actually the explanation for a number of noticeable characteristics of anti-Semitism. We find many types and forms of attacks on Jews. In one place the Jew is described as having one trait, and in another place he is accused of the opposite characteristic. This is true regarding both his personal traits and his social and political traits. Thus, for example, the Jew is portrayed as the capitalist trying to take over the world, and on the other hand as the revolutionary, who is attempting to weaken the power of wealth and utterly abolish personal ownership. The fact that we are faced with a psychological phenomenon means



that we must not search for logic here. All anti-Semites project their various and contradictory fears upon the Jew.

### **Anti-Semitism and Its Causes: The Social Basis**

Whoever thinks that this analysis has exhausted the topic of anti-Semitism is fooling himself. Anti-Semitism is a social, not an individual, phenomenon. In addition to its psychological aspects, we must study anti-Semitism from its social and general perspectives as well. A view of history and philosophy in recent generations will be of help in our attempt. Let us therefore move on to the second level of our analysis, the collective, political and social level.

Until now we have examined a phenomenon which has already been expressed by the earliest thinkers of the last century. They viewed anti-Semitism as part of xenophobia, and indeed, the phenomena we have expressed until now are merely details within a much larger context, that of the tensions that exist between various groups, between the majority and the minority, and even between various races who live together within one society. From this perspective there is no essential difference between the hatred of Jews and the hostility that exists towards others, such as blacks. However this is but one level of the explanation. Until now we have identified the roots of the problem, and its individual expressions.

If anti-Semitism were only an individual psychological phenomenon, it would be similar to other forms of discrimination and hostility; however, in the modern world anti-Semitism takes on a different hue. Various groups have used it for political purposes. We can trace clear attempts to use psychological hostility - which, it seems, has deep religious roots - to forward political aims. Thus modern anti-Semitism was born, and acquired a more and more tragic and satanic form. The widespread use of this technique began in Czarist Russia, in the struggle to smother those revolutionary attempts which finally toppled the Czarist rule. Through the Czarist secret police, they attempted to identify revolutionary action with the activities of the Jews. The rulers of Czarist Russia fought against certain phenomena, and in this fight they created a kind of equation, which was supposed to prove their claims. The Czarist secret police created one of the documents which became an anti-Semitic classic, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion. This book reveals the so-called secret plan woven by the leaders of the Jews to take over the entire world. The Protocols of the Elders of Zion became a holy book among the anti-Semites.

The Protocols of the Elders of Zion was simply a rewriting of a French book, which attributed ambitions to take over the world to Napoleon. This booklet is called "A Dialogue in Hell between Machiavelli and Montesquieu" or "Politics of the Nineteenth Century." These accusations were not at all directed towards the Jews and Judaism, however the dialogue was adopted and transformed into the protocols of an imaginary group whose members were the world leaders of Judaism, attempting to take over the politics of various European countries.

Even the Czar himself, Nicholas II, although far from bearing the Jews any fond feelings, saw that the book was a fake and opposed its publication. Despite this, the first Russian edition appeared in 1905. A number of years later, other editions began to appear. Some of the editions were altered and corrected in order to make it possible to accuse the Jews of various catastrophes, which took place between one edition and another. At various opportunities it became the topic of public court cases, in which the book was proved to be a forgery. However, this of course did not check the book's growing popularity, particularly in the wake of Nazi influence. The book influenced various writers, who were mistakenly taken in and convinced of its authenticity. Thus, for example, Henry Ford was inspired by the Protocols of the Elders of Zion to write "The International Jew," in which he continues these accusations. Various other books were written in its wake until recent years.

This is an example of a lie and forgery, which the power of truth could not effectually surmount. This abominable book became a justification of Nazism and the genocide which followed in its wake. This is an example of the phenomena that we must deal with. Forgeries spread throughout the world, and people are convinced.

### **Part III: The Mystery of the Covenant of Fate**

Now we have done with useless conjectures. The rational explanations try to erase the powerful impression of the paradox. However, this is not possible.

"Our neighbors accuse us of the sins of our fellow Jews, and make the Talmudic adage, "If Tuvia sins, should Zigud suffer?" into an everyday reality which is challenged by no one. The identification of the actions of the individual with the actions of the nation is a great principle in the history of our people. Our detractors do not permit the individual to isolate himself within his separate sphere. They remove him from his four cubits to the public arena, and there they severely criticize the majority because of him. This yardstick is used only for the Jewish people and not for other nations.

I repeat, the scientific explanations of this phenomenon are not satisfactory. It makes no difference if its source is psychological or political-historical. The scientific explanation does not solve the mystery. The phenomenon remains unsolved. For us, religious Jews, there is one explanation for this riddle: the hand of the Covenant of Fate, which was sealed in Egypt regarding the absolute uniqueness of the nation, is revealed through this baffling reality." (Rabbi Joseph Soloveitchik, "Kol Dodi Dofek")

Rabbi Soloveitchik speaks of two explanations: the psychological and the political-historical. These are more or less parallel to the two levels of explanations of anti-Semitism which we have described. Rabbi Soloveitchik does not consider them to be satisfactory. What these explanations accomplish is a kind of scientific organization of the phenomena, which does not explain them. "The phenomenon remains unsolved." Anti-Semitism is connected to the "Covenant of Egypt," which was made with our nation, and still applies to us. This is the loneliness which is expressed in the term "Ivri: " for "All the world was on one side [Hebrew: Ever echad] while he [Avraham] was on the other side [Ever echad]."

### **Cain and Anti-Semitism**

Rihal relates to anti-Semitism in the framework of his approach to the divine influence. "The divine influence" [Ha-inyan Ha-eloki], as we know, refers to the relationship between man and God. The appearance of the Inyan Eloki also means the beginning of the tension that came into being because of the uniqueness of our people.

Beyond the political, economic and social hostility of anti-Semitism, there hides a metaphysical principle. The prototype of this tension, according to Rihal, is the conflict between Cain and Abel [1: 95]. To understand this we will have to explain the concept of the "son of God" which the Torah uses. The children of God are a unique race. Abel is one of them, and he reaches the divine influence. Cain does not. Thus religious jealousy, which is stronger than economic jealousy, is born. This enmity was the cause of Cain killing Abel. The Rambam would later repeat this idea in his "Epistle to Yemen."

## **The Four Principles of the Covenant of Fate**

Loneliness is expressed in anti-Semitism, yet it is also present in the "the individual's embrace of the group," an emotion which connects the Jew to the nation, "and the sense of severance from the foreign world which cannot be explained." It takes place in Egypt, and the exile of Egypt becomes a kind of model for the future. It is in Egypt that the congregation of Israel rises to the level of a nation. Rav Soloveitchik defines the word nation, *Am*, as "togetherness" - the Hebrew word *Im*. This is an etymological interpretation, which claims that the Hebrew word "*Am*" points to the unity between brothers, and what was for Abraham the destiny of the individual, now became the destiny of the nation. Most interesting is the fact that this destiny follows the Jew even when he abandons his religion, "even if he desecrates his Sabbath, defiles his table and his bed," meaning even if he abandons the commandments connected with forbidden foods and family purity, even if he "denies his nation," despite all this he cannot abandon the God of the Hebrews.

Jewish law expressed this separateness with a symbol, which was intended to stay with the Jew even after death: the concept of a Jewish burial. Thus Joseph made his brothers swear an oath that was intended to be passed on from generation to generation, so that the grandchildren would take Joseph's bones with them when they left Egypt.

Jewish burial is an example of the fact that we must study not only the reasons for the commandments, but also their effects. Jewish burial is a commandment that was maintained, similar to circumcision, even after many other commandments were abandoned, and in many cases, even after the entire religious system was discarded. This was a commandment that even Jews whose lifestyles were far from traditional tried to keep. This can be demonstrated in the histories of various communities in the world, particularly in North America, where communities were born through the struggle over the existence of Jewish burial. Paradoxically, communities were born on the basis of the "*Chevra Kadisha*," the Jewish Burial Society - in other words, out of the concern that Jews be given a Jewish burial.

The Covenant of Fate symbolizes the Zionist response to anti-Semitism. Zionism means overcoming the negative through a positive response. Rav Soloveitchik enumerates four expressions of this awareness:

"1. Awareness of a joint fate: the first component is our feeling that we have a common history.

We are all part of a unified fate which connects all the groups in the nation, with all its parts and tribes, and does not distinguish between one status and another or between one individual and another. The common fate does not distinguish between nobles and peasants, between rich and poor, between the purple-robed prince and the beggar who collects charity door to door, between a religious Jew and an assimilated one. Although we speak a plethora of languages, although we are residents of different countries, even if our appearance is different, although we live under different economic standards and different living conditions, we share a common fate. When a Jew is beaten in a cave, the security of the Jew who stands in the courts of kings is threatened. "Do not imagine that you will escape the fate of the Jews in the palace," Mordechai warns Queen Esther. Queen Esther dressed in royalty and Mordechai dressed in sackcloth share the trap of a historical event. We are all either persecuted to death or saved with ultimate salvation."

This unity of fate is represented by biblical heroes. A good example is the Scroll of Esther. Two people act in it, Esther and Mordechai: Mordechai who knows of Haman's evil plan, wearing sackcloth, while Queen Esther is dressed in royal clothing. Yet they are both connected. In a cave or in the courts of kings there is a common future of danger or ultimate salvation.

"2. Second, the awareness of shared historical events creates an experience of shared suffering.

The feeling of sympathy is a fundamental feature of the consciousness of the unifying fate of the Jewish people. The suffering of one part of the people affects the people as a whole. The scattered and dispersed people mourn together and are comforted together. The texts of our prayers, our laments and our spiritual comfort are all formulated in the plural. The pleas that ascend from the abyss of affliction are not restricted to the suffering and pain of the individual supplicant. They include the needs of the entire community. When a person has a sick relative, he cannot pray for him alone but must pray for all the sick of Israel. If one enters a mourner's home to comfort him and wipe the tears from his grieving face, one directs one's words of comfort to all who mourn for Zion and Jerusalem. The slightest disturbance in the condition of a single individual or group ought to grieve all of the various segments of the people in all their dispersions. It is both forbidden and impossible for the "I" to isolate himself

from his fellow and not share in his suffering. If the premise of shared historical circumstance is correct, then the experience of shared suffering is the direct conclusion of that premise...

The same holds true with regard to the question of the unity of the Jewish people. The authoritative ruling is that as long as there is shared suffering, in the sense of "I will be with him in trouble" [Psalms 91: 15], there is unity. If the Jew upon whom divine Providence has shone, and who believes that, at least with respect to him, the venom of hatred and rejection has been removed from his surroundings, still experiences the troubles of his people and the burden of a fate-laden existence, then his link with the nation has not been broken."

This phenomenon brings about the experience of shared suffering. The pauper must experience the suffering of his brethren. The third element is the conclusion of the earlier one. It discusses mutual involvement, obligation and responsibility. From here comes the concept of "arvut" - mutual responsibility, which is a legal term.

"3. Third, joint suffering creates a feeling of joint obligation and responsibility... Shared responsibility constitutes not only a theoretical halakhic concept but also a central element of Jewish history in the Jews' relationships with the nations of the world."

The third dimension is connected to the concept of Kiddush Hashem - sanctifying God's name. Rabbi Soloveitchik describes a life of Kiddush Hashem, in the sense that the individual is not alone. His actions are recorded on the roster of the nation. In other words, he does not act as an individual, an anonymous person, but as a representative of the nation at every moment, and thus also of God, who is connected to the nation. This is a serious responsibility, yet on the other hand it makes the life of the Jew into something unique and full of significance. We will discuss Kiddush Hashem in the next section:

The commandment to sanctify the divine Name and the prohibition against desecrating the divine Name can be explained very well in the light of this principle of shared responsibility and liability. The actions of the individual are charged to the account of the community. Any sin he commits besmirches the name of Israel in the world. The individual must therefore answer not only to his personal conscience but also to the collective conscience of the people. If he behaves properly, he sanctifies the name of Israel and the name of the God of

Israel; if he sins, he casts shame and disgrace on the people and desecrates the Name of its God.

4. We now move on to the fourth element: cooperation. This is expressed in one of the most important phenomena in Jewish tradition: the activity, the mutual help, the charitable works which help overcome suffering, and which express the participation in the suffering of the other. Here the reader is given the opportunity to learn about this historical phenomenon, and the wide variety of Jewish charity institutions throughout Jewish history.

Fourth, shared historical circumstances give rise to shared activity. The obligation to give charity and perform deeds of loving-kindness derives its force from the all penetrating and all encompassing experience of brotherhood. The Torah, in laying down these commandments, uses the term *Ach*, brother, instead of the term *Reah*, fellow.

"And if thy brother be waxen poor... then thou shalt uphold him... and he shall live with thee." [Leviticus 25: 35]

"Thou shalt not harden thy heart, nor shut thy hand from thy needy brother... thou shalt surely open thy hand unto thy poor and needy brother in thy land." [Deuteronomy 15: 7, 11]

The confrontation with the people's strange and unusual fate-laden existence endows the Jew with a unifying consciousness in the field of social action. The common situation of all Jews without distinction - whether manifested on the objective level as shared historical circumstances or on the subjective level as shared suffering - opens up fountains of mercy and loving-kindness in the heart of the individual on behalf of his brethren in trouble, which indirectly affects him as well. Maimonides formulated this idea in his unique style, at once highly concise and overflowing with idea:

"All Jews and those who have attached themselves to them are to each other like brothers, as it is said, "Ye are the children of the Lord your God" [Deuteronomy 14: 1].

If brother shows no compassion to brother, who will show compassion to him? And unto whom shall the poor of Israel raise their eyes? Unto the heathens, who hate and persecute them? Their eyes are therefore uplifted solely to their brethren." (Hil. Matnot Aniyim 10: 2)

We have stated that it is the consciousness of the fate imposed upon the people against their will and of their terrible isolation that is the source of the people's unity, of their togetherness. It is precisely this consciousness as the source of the people's togetherness that gives rise to the attribute of *chesed*, which summons and stirs the community of fate to achieve a positive mode of togetherness through ongoing joint participation in its own historical circumstances, in its suffering, conscience, and acts of mutual aid. The lonely Jew finds consolation in breaking down the existential barriers of egoism and alienation, joining himself to his fellow and actively connecting himself with the community. The oppressive sense of fate undergoes a positive transformation when individual personal entities blend together to form a new unit - a People. The obligation to love one another stems from the consciousness of this people of fate, this lonely people that inquires into the meaning of its own uniqueness. It is this obligation of love that stands at the very heart of the covenant established in Egypt.

## **Identity and Essence**

Until now we have discussed the "Covenant of Fate" of Jewish existence throughout the generations which united Jews who were far from their religion. The covenant of fate expresses a coerced existence. However, the discovery of Jewish fate is not all there is. In his "Meditations on the Jewish Question," Sartre, the great existentialist philosopher, writes of the Jew:

"What is it, then, which creates in the Jewish community an image of unity? To answer this question we must return to the concept of the state of being. Neither the past, nor religion, nor land are what unifies the Jews. If something binds them together, and grants them all the name of Jew, it is their common state of being. In other words: they all live within a society which sees them as Jews... the Jew is a person whom others see as a Jew: this is the simple truth, which must be accepted as a starting point... the anti-Semite makes the Jew."



And indeed, this conclusion was correct with regard to the assimilated Jews who had abandoned their Jewishness and thought that they had achieved complete integration into gentile society. They discovered the essence of Judaism against their will, and their Judaism was expressed only through their being the object of anti-Semitic hatred. Sartre was not acquainted with the believing Jew, living the Covenant of Destiny. Here we must return to a basic concept in Jewish identity.

In order to clarify the relationship between the impact of anti-Semitism and the Jewishness of the Jew, it is possible to use a number of concepts which were developed by Professor Shimon Herman in his research of Jewish identity. When he speaks of the identity of the Jew, Herman suggests that we distinguish between two different concepts: prominence and worth. We will simplify the concepts, which he defined very stringently, in order that they may be easily understood. Prominence describes the relation between a particular content in the consciousness, and the overall consciousness itself. Prominence can slide between zero and "all." This prominence does not mean a thing with regard to worth. Thus we can find a person who is very uninterested in his Jewishness, but thinks that Jewishness is a positive thing. In contrast, there could be someone else who is very interested in his Jewishness, but his attitude towards a Jew is negative.

Thus we can find Jews who are assimilated, yet who identified with their Jewishness, such as Einstein, Freud and Buber, while others tried to erase every last remnant of their Jewish identity. At times, historical events will highlight the prominence of the Jewish phenomenon. Anti-Semitism is an example of such an event. This was the situation of the assimilated Jews at the time of Hitler, when they were suddenly forced to recall something they had always tried to forget - their Jewishness.

Such an assimilated Jew could find himself in a very difficult anti-Semitic situation because of his Jewishness. Jewishness becomes especially prominent for him. It takes up his entire awareness, but it does not necessarily raise the worth of Jewishness for him. In fact, it can often cause self-hatred and hatred of Judaism. The tragic fate of the assimilated Jew did not always alter his perception of the worth of Jewishness. In contrast, Kiddush Hashem is a phenomenon of maximal worth and maximal prominence.

Thus an equation of prominence and worth can be described as the strength of the individual's Jewish identity. Anti-Semitism can alter the prominence, but usually it does not alter the sense of worth.

Identity does indeed have two dimensions: worth and prominence. Worth describes the relationship of the person to his identity, while prominence describes the amount of his personality this identity takes up. The assimilated Jews who were the inspiration of Sartre are a tragic example of people for whom the worth of Jewishness was zero. However, suddenly, because of historical events and because of hatred of the Jews, the prominence of their Jewishness reached its maximum.

If, God forbid, this were all there was to Judaism, Sartre's analysis would be correct. He reached his conclusions through extrapolation. Of course, he had not truly analyzed Judaism, and his misperception is not only false but dangerous. We do not view ourselves merely as an object for the projections of strangers. We see ourselves first of all as having an essence, a goal, as fighting for our existence, and discovering our identity and the meaning of our own existence. We do encounter anti-Semitism and try to fight against it, but this is a tragic phenomenon outside of us, and we do not construct our identity upon it. Fate affects prominence, while destiny affects worth. We believe in both the Covenant of Fate and the Covenant of Destiny. Only Jewish destiny adds the essential meaning and significance to our identity.

### **The Covenant of Destiny**

The difference between the Covenant of Fate and the Covenant of Destiny can be understood with the aid of a simple example. In a car there are a number of different systems. Thus we can speak about the system which directs the car: the steering wheel, and another system which generates the energy necessary for movement. There are other systems, which allow us to begin the movement: the starter, or to stop the car: the brakes. This simple example can explain the role of anti-Semitism in modern history.

Let us compare the movement of the Jewish people to the movement of a car. Anti-Semitism was often the starter, and sometimes the energy, but never the steering wheel. It's like a car which is stuck and can't get started. The cars that can be started through pushing, we push. To our sorrow, anti-Semitism was the push which stirred many Jews into action. However, if this push is employed without the use of the steering system, the car may roll off a cliff. This is true regarding anti-Semitism as well. Anti-Semitism can bring the Jews to deterioration, insanity, despair and even self-loathing. However, in many cases anti-Semitism paradoxically became a source of positive energy, which has brought many Jews to perform great deeds.

Anti-Semitism alone could never be an answer or a direction. To find direction one needs other sources. This can be learned from a simple fact. The Dreyfus trial

spurred Herzl on towards his Zionist viewpoint, however, it did not alter the beliefs of Dreyfus himself. Dreyfus died far from Judaism, despite the fact that he was the central figure of the "affair." If one studies Herzl's biography, it becomes clear that the source of his Jewish and Zionist position was not the Dreyfus trial. Its roots were much farther back, and various events in his life foreshadowed the change that was to take place. These examples illustrate that anti-Semitism can spur us on, but it cannot give solutions to problems. These must come from a different place, from an inner source. Zionism is not a result of anti-Semitism. It is a modern expression of the eternal desire to return to Zion and the resurrection of the Nation and the Land.

Zionism organized the political means, which made this return possible. In contrast, the Zionism which is rooted in the sources of Judaism is the Covenant of Destiny. There is no better way to present the Covenant of Destiny than the words of Rabbi Soloveitchik:

What is the nature of the Covenant of Destiny? Destiny in the life of a people, as in the life of an individual, signifies a deliberate and conscious existence that the people has chosen out of its own free will and in which it finds the full realization of its historical being...

What is the content of the Covenant at Sinai? It consists in a special way of life which directs man's existence toward attaining a single goal, a goal beyond the reach of the man of fate, namely, man's imitation of his Creator through an act of self-transcendence. The creative activity which suffuses the Covenant of Destiny flows from a source unknown to the man of fate. It derives from man's rebellion against a life of sheer facticity, from the desire pulsating within him for more exalted, more supernal modes of being. The deeds of loving-kindness and brotherhood, which are interwoven into the covenant at Sinai, have as their motivating force not the Jew's strange sense of isolation, but rather his experience of the unity of a people forever betrothed to the one true God. The absolute unity of God is reflected in the unity of the people bound to Him eternally. "Thou art One and Thy name is One, and who is like unto Thy people Israel, one nation on earth?" Jewish fellowship in this dimension is a result of the special filial relationship the members of this people enjoy with God...

How do fate and destiny differ? In two ways. First, fate entails an existence of necessity; destiny is a freely willed existence, created by man himself as he chooses and

charts his own path in life. Second, fate expresses itself in a bare, teleologically blank existence; destiny possesses both significance and purpose... A shared destiny means the unconstrained ability of the will to strive toward a goal; it means the free decision to devote oneself to an ideal; it means yearning for God. Jonah, in the end, cast off the blind fate pursuing him and chose the exalted destiny of the God of Israel. "I am a Hebrew and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven" [Jonah 1: 9].

To be sure, there is an element of separation present even in the experience of a shared destiny, however, the separation entailed by destiny differs completely from that entailed by fate. It is not the negative feeling described in the prophetic vision of Bilaam,

"Lo, it is a people that shall dwell alone" [Numbers 23: 9],

but rather a unique consciousness vouchsafed by Moses, in the last hours before his death, to Keneset Israel,

"And Israel dwelleth in security, alone the fountain of Jacob"  
[Deuteronomy 33: 28].

In truth, this separation is naught but the solitude of a pure and holy, splendid and glorious existence. It is the solitude that finds its expression in a person's uniqueness, in his divine image, and in his existential "I" experience... it is the solitude concerning which Abraham spoke when he told his young men,

"Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship"  
[Genesis 22: 5].

While isolation involves harmful inferiority feelings deriving from self-negation, a person's solitude testifies to both his greatness and his sanctity, the greatness that is contained within his private domain and the sanctity that permeates the inner recesses of his unique consciousness. Loneliness robs man of his tranquillity; solitude bestows upon him security, worth and dignity...

Judaism has always believed, as we emphasized at the beginning of our remarks, that a person has the ability to take his fate in his hands, and to mold it into destiny, into a life of freedom, meaning, and joy, that he has the power to transform isolation into solitude, a sense of inferiority into a feeling of worth. It is for this reason that Judaism has emphasized the importance of the principle of free will; it is for this reason that it has attached such great value to human reason, which enables man to liberate himself from subjugation to nature and rule over his environment and subject it to his will. The Jewish community is obliged to utilize its free will in all areas of life in general, but in particular on behalf of the welfare of the state of Israel. If secular Zionism should finally realize

that the state of Israel cannot terminate the paradoxical fate of Jewish isolation - that, to the contrary, the incomprehensible isolation of "and I will take you to Me for a people [Exodus 6: 7] had become even more pronounced in the international arena - then it must put to itself the ancient query: "What is thine occupation? And whence comest thou? And of what people art thou?" [Jonah 1: 8]. This question will be asked of us one way or another. If we do not ask it of ourselves, then the non-Jew will put it to us; and we must answer proudly, "I fear the Lord, the God of Heaven" [Jonah 1: 9]. Our historical obligation today is to raise ourselves from a people to a holy nation, from the covenant of Egypt to the covenant of Sinai, from an existence of necessity to an authentic way of life suffused with eternal ethical and religious values, from a camp to a congregation.