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FOREWORD

Dear NETWORK Chevre,

It is motze tisha b'av, and these summer greetings come to you in a spirit of change, hopeful yet sober. A complex day, is it not, for Jews in the scribal/pharisaic/rabbinic tradition of textual reasoning? A day of terrible loss, against a backdrop of ominous politics, that also became a time "to do for the Lord" – eyt la'asot lashem." Our tradition of oral Torah appears to have achieved cultural authority by way of suffering. After this day, according to the mishnah in Berachot 40a, the pharisaic sages recited "l'olam u'l'olam" after psalms once recited in the Temple, one "forever" for this world, one for the world to come. But also one, so it seems, for the present day of literal death, one for the day of life to come; one for the literal House, one for the one rebuilt in our hearts; and one for the literal Torah, one for the Torah she b'al peh. Does the oral torah arise only out of the sufferings of the other one? Does midrashic reasoning emerge only when and where the plain-sense is troubled?

You may note that there is a new name in the title of our journal: Textual Reasoning. The label "Postmodern" may have fulfilled its strategic usefulness. For reasons discussed in NETWORK 5.1, some of us think that after the travails of modernity, including Jewish thought in modernity, the reasoning that brings us into conversation may have refound its point of origin within our text traditions, with oral Torah as its prototype. The textual study that appears lately in this Network does not terminate at the margins of the page or at the boundaries of a particular reading community, but appears as well to stimulate, sometimes predictably, sometimes not, forms of reasoning that spread over margins and boundaries, at least some of them. This is Reasoning: not merely emoting, but also not disconnected from the whole range of human experience; not modernist reasoning, not medieval reasoning, but, well, we'll see. As for the term "philosophy," textual reasoners appear to be nourished by exposure to the traditions of Jewish philosophy along with their attendant varieties of contemporary theoria. But, as textual reasoning, our philosophy emerges from out of readings in the classic sources, disciplined by traditions of theoretical refinement, never irresponsible to the disciplines, but always placing them in the service of that which speaks/writes through texts and communities of text reading.

By the time we get to Volume 5.3, the new name should be matched by a new team of editors. After five years, I am retiring as editor of the Journal, to be replaced by the Editorial Team of Michael Zank, Boston U, (Michael had also previously joined us an additional book review editor); Jacob Meskin, Rutgers U; Rebecca Stern, (our 1995 Academy of Jewish Philosophy undergraduate essay winner, now working in NYC for the Pardes School); and Aryeh Cohen, U of Judaism (already our Talmud editor). We look forward to exciting developments and expansions in the work of the Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Network! Vol 5.3 will include more detailed introductions to the new Team, their interests and plans. For now just a note of gratitude to you all for joining this Network and to the new editors for offering us their energies and time: l'olam v'l'olam!

More changes, yet: the emergence of a larger institutional framework for expanding the directions of our Network and of textural reasoning as a focus of work in our various professions. We have founded a new umbrella organization called The Society for Textual Reasoning. It will sponsor four main activities:
A) this E-mail Journal;
B) a book annual (or bi-annual) in Textual Reasoning, with David Novak as general editor. The first issue, to be published by Westview/Harper Collins, will emerge out of next June's Conference on Textualities);
C) the annual Network meeting at the American Academy of Religion. This year, Sunday, November 24 at 9PM featuring discussion of Jacob Meskin's essay on Levinas (in this issue); and
D) a new society called the Society for Scriptural Reasoning — promoting Jewish and Christian philosophic theology. Its director will be Professor Robert Cathy of Monmouth College in Illinois, with assistant directors Daniel Hardy and David Ford of Cambridge University, Elliot Wolfson, and Peter Ochs. Its first meeting, taking place on 9 pm Monday night, November 25th at the Academy of Religion gathering, will be on the Unity of God.

Initially, I'll chair the Society for Textural Reasoning with the editors of this Journal, the SSR, and the book annual, as associates. On the one hand, we hope to promote our informal and much-deeper-than-professional discussion and fellowship in textual reasoning. On the other hand, we are also aware of the importance of professional influence to protect and foster the kinds of work we want to do in our various disciplines. Time to work for our common cause.

Among other changes we hear of, Robert Gibbs is happily in place in a wonderful new position in the philosophy department of the University of Toronto. David Novak will join him there in spring 1997 in a brand new chair in Jewish Studies. Philosopher Ken Green is already there. Well folks, guess where the new center for Postmodern Jewish Philosophy is? Let's send them our congratulations, future graduate students, and, by

way of compensation, let's also find a way to get them to do most of our hard work!

B'shalom, PO.

NEW MEMBERS INTRODUCTIONS

Zachary Braiterman: "I am currently a Finkelstein Fellow at the University of Judaism in LA. My current research looks at F. Rosenzweig within the content of aesthetic modernism. My dissertation explored theological and literary revision in post-Holocaust Jewish theology. I wrote it under Arnold Eisen's supervision at Stanford. Van Harvey and David Biale sat on my committee."

Chava Halberstam: "My area is Tanakh; I have published one book on the Song of Songs (Paradoxes of Paradise: Identity and Difference in the Song of Songs, Almond: Sheffield, 1983), and have just published another, a commentary on Hosea, as part of the Sheffield Readings series (simply called 'Hosea')."

Stephen Hood: "I am currently a graduate student in religious studies at Rice U. and an English teacher at Houston Community College. In 1994 I was graduated from the U. of St. Thomas with a B.A. in philosophy. Previously, I have worked as an electronics technician–tubes, not chips–and a musician. I am 'enthused' by mysticism, continental philosophy, Whorfian linguistics, cultural anthropology, and of course Judaism. Also, I have interest in space, time, and body metaphors and their relation to prepositions."

Inge Birgitte Siegumfeldt: "I am a Post Graduate Research Fellow at Odense University, Denmark, about to complete my Ph.D. dissertation on resemblances between postmodern and Jewish thought, provisionally

entitled 'The Judaization of Postmodern Theory.' My focus is on the one hand on the theories of Harold Bloom and Derrida, on the other on midrashic and kabbalistic interpretative modes and concepts of text. I am also involved in whatever frameworks of Jewish Studies we have in Denmark."

TALMUD AND TEXTUAL REASONING I

Critique and The Search for Connection
Jacob Meskin, Princeton U

[Ed. Note: Jacob Meskin's essay will be the centerpiece of our 1996 Meeting at the American Academy of Religion Now 24. The format will be the same one we enjoyed last year with Shaul Magid's paper. We invite you to submit responses to Jacob's paper in time for our early Fall issues; submissions for the first one are due Sept.10 – – but let us know in August if you plan something. Responses may be from 1-6pp and may address either Levinas's text, the Talmudic texts he cites, or Jacob's paper. We'll set up the AAR session as a study of Levinas, and of your responses.]

I. We read the authors who continue to annoy, intrigue, and inspire us. Some do this by frustrating the somewhat reasonable desire to classify their work. Levinas' texts, however, cut across a very basic and general distinction we use to ascertain who, and what, we are reading. Modern philosophy and Jewish tradition both infuse Levinas's work; his sensibility somehow defies our readerly and critical insistence that his work must, after all, be one thing or the other, "modern" or "traditional".

Though classed together with Levinas' "Jewish" or "apologetic" writings, the talmudic essays in fact display the same multifarious and rich sensibility found in his philosophical writings (to say nothing of his essays on literary, political, and cultural themes). Two genres–one creative

vision: Levinas moves beyond the standard dichotomies of modern western culture.

In one of his talmudic essays, Levinas identifies a prevalent modern notion of history as one factor that prevents us from appreciating tradition, and from possibly forging models of connection. Called "Model of the West" (BTV, 13-33; "Modele de l'occident", ADV, 29-50), it comments on slightly less than a page of BT Menachot, 99b-100a. In exploring different paradigms of what Levinas calls "permanence" (or enduring continuity) in contrast to "history", "Model of the West" (hereafter "MW", and "MO") introduces new directions in the search for ways beyond our too disjunctive modes of thinking. "MW" also links Jewish spiritual achievement with ethics and with humility, defusing the risk of self-righteousness that attends the religious quest.

II. The Critique and Some of its Levels

Before beginning to read "MW", it may be helpful to explain the claim that Levinas' talmudic readings contain a critique of modern western culture. The etymological echo matters here: "critique" comes from the Greek krinein, to distinguish. Levinas' critique must never be confused with wholesale condemnation or rejection. Levinas attempts, rather, to discern those basic differences "which still perhaps distinguish the fraternal humanities amongst which we rank Israel and the West" ("MW", 17, translation slightly modified; "MO", 32). This critique is multidimensional, addressing, inter alia, philosophy, and even spirituality. I will however discuss only two of its levels here: 1) the cultural, and 2) the methodological, or disciplinary.

1) Levinas challenges commonly accepted institutions, customs, or practices. A classic example of this occurs in "Judaism and Revolution" (NTR, 94-119; SAS, 11-53) on BT Baba Metzia, 83a-83b, where he reads the famous story about Rabbi Eleazar catching thieves in taverns in terms of the contemporary cafe.

The tavern, or the cafe, has become an integral and essential part of modern life, which perhaps is an "open life," especially because of this aspect!… The cafe… is a place of casual social intercourse, without mutual social responsibility. One goes in not needing to. One sits down without being tired. One drinks without being thirsty. All because one does not want to stay in one's room. You know that all evils occur as a result of our incapacity to stay alone in our room. The cafe is not a place. It is a nonplace for a non-society, for a society without solidarity, without tomorrow, without commitment, without common interests, a game society… without seriousness–distraction, dissolution… [I]t is because it is possible to go and relax in a cafe that one tolerates the horrors and injustices of a world without a soul. The world as a game from which everyone can pull out and exist only for himself, a place of forgetfulness–of forgetfulness of the other–that is the cafe. (NTR, 111-112; SAS, 41-42)

Levinas adds that the cafe "realizes an ontological category" which may be basic to western and eastern life, but not to Jewish life.

One might cite many other examples. Levinas mocks the super-sophisticated, utterly au-courant readers and writers of Le Monde, for whom the depths of complex Talmudic thought will be an occasion for great hualism for its immersion in the private, interior life of fascinating feelings and good intentions, attacking in particular its devaluation of action and indifference to the other. He questions other features of our modern western cultural life in the Talmudic readings: notions of time, ways of reading texts, emphases on "correct" ways to express youthful rebellion, the need to experience absolutely everything, interest only in "results", impatient and superficial demands for "immediate relevance", the dangerous tendency of "large", "generous" (ideological ideas to pass unnoticed into their opposites ("intellectual Stalinism"), and so on. Levinas may be making a virtue of necessity: in making ancient tradition speak to moderns who claim the Enlightenment as origin, he faces the

timeless clash of age and youth. This may help explain his pointed, sometimes playful, but always parental (grandparental?) tone.

2) The Talmudic readings locate and excavate that deep layer of intellectual presupposition–the soil–out of which the disciplines of the modern West grow. They offer a phenomenological critique, aimed at the invisible background which pervasively shapes our normal, taken for granted, disciplinary activities. Levinas would seem to be asking whether certain values or options might be missing from this modern background.

Textual questions provide the most important instance of this disciplinary level of critique. The Talmudic readings force us to ask whether the methods of the disciplines suffice to fix, or even to delimit, the meaning of inherited religious texts. Levinas does not question the validity of the disciplines, nor does he invoke faith's immediate certainties, yet he still manages to glimpse new, sophisticated, and possibly "legitimate" meanings. Might the text really lead an exciting life outside the disciplines and their well-lit, carefully patrolled precincts? Or is this just an obscure attempt to forget the work of Max Weber and the distinction between advocacy and scholarship? Levinas offers what can only be called a manifesto on this issue in the course of interpreting the Talmudic idea, found in BT Megillah 7a and Shabbat 14a, that hands which touch the uncovered scroll of the Torah become impure.

…is the hand just a hand and not also a certain impudence of spirit that seizes a text savagely, without preparation or teacher, approaching the verse as a think or an allusion to history in the instrumental nakedness of its vocables, without regard for the new possibilities of their semantics, patiently opened up by the religious life of tradition?… [a tradition] which is the opening up of horizons through which alone the ancient wisdom of the Scriptures reveals the secrets of a renewed inspiration. Touched by the impatient, busy hand that is supposedly objective and scientific, the Scriptures, cut off from the breath that lives within them, become unctuous, false or mediocre words, matter for doxographers, for linguists

and philologists…. One may indeed wonder whether the modern world, in its moral disequilibrium, is not suffering the consequences of that direct textual approach whose very scientific directness strips and impoverishes the Scriptures…. It may sometimes be necessary in today's world to "get one's hands dirty" and the specific merits of "objective research" applied to the Holy Scriptures must not belittled. But the Torah eludes the hand that would hold it unveiled. ("For a Place in the Bible", ITN, 24-25; "Pour une place dans la Bible", HDN, 33)

Levinas equates the cover of the Torah scroll with the discipline, preparation, and training provided by tradition. Touching the "uncovered Torah scroll" comes to mean approaching the Torah de novo, without any of this study and prior formation of mind and character (this is why it makes the hands impure, "The impurity returns to and strikes back at the hand from which it came").

In his remarks on the academic study of religious texts, I take Levinas to be raising the surprisingly significant issue of "tone". Let me explains what this means.

Levinas distinguishes academic text-scholarship from traditional rabbinic study. This separation may seem to be nothing more than the familiar "secular/religious" division, on the basis of which the academy marks off and legitimates its own secular inquiry. Levinas goes on to make the distinction "from the other side," so to speak. Not only must we not confuse religious study with the rigorous methodology of secular academic study (the familiar "secular/religious" division), but we must also not confuse what we do in the academy with the "seriousness and high stakes" of the religious quest (the less familiar "religious/secular" division). After all, Levinas points out, religious study demands many subtly transformative practice. The academic text scholar, as such, is not after such "big game": arguing about how to emend a text is one thing, arguing about how to emend a life another.

This differentiation between realms makes, as it were, the negative case– "x is not y" (said from x's side) and "y is not x" (said from y's side). When Levinas exhibits the revealing and poignant power of tradition, then, far from deriding academic text scholarship, he is rather going on to make the positive case. Tradition is not merely the avoided negative, it is also something of great value, even and especially relative to the academy's intellectual standards. Holding modernity and tradition together in a peculiarly fecund way, Levinas can demarcate the valuable work academic text scholars perform on religious texts from the unfortunate intellectual myopia that may sometimes accompany it.

Here we come to the problem of "tone". Academic text scholars seem to believe at time they can objectively define all "legitimate" meanings available in a text. The tone involved here is both sweeping and oddly foundationalist, as if all the creativity that has sprouted up around a text may be dismissed as mere fancy once a scientific edition, and its compositional history, have been established as the "real foundation" for any and all respectable consideration of the text in question. Levinas touches on this when he says in the above citation,

…approaching the verse as a thing or an allusion to history in the instrumental nakedness of its vocables, without regard for the new possibilities of their semantics, patiently opened up by the religious life of tradition…

The positivist/scientistic dream of complete control of a text, and especially of its possibilities, dies hard. Once, perhaps, such inflated rhetoric was strategically necessary to legitimate secular text scholarship. Now, though, it is brittle and rigid. Better now to celebrate twin richness: the academy's methodological profession and rigor, and tradition's stirring creativity and ingenious insight into the human predicament.

The Talmudic essays remind us of the historically and culturally constituted character of our work as academics. So reminded, perhaps we

could begin to move beyond our oppositional thinking; even with their profound and in some ways unbridgeable differences, the academic and traditional approaches continue to complement one another. After all, the Constitutional separation of church and state was intended to secure for us the benefits of both religious community and a free public forum; it was not intended as a celebration of the rich religious, communal, and soteriological content of the Constitution!

As we will see shortly below in "MW", Levinas also feels that modern western historicism has contributed to academic hostility to tradition. He holds that uncompromising dismissal of tradition easily becomes just as intellectually limited and limiting as its unthinking embrace.

III. "History" Versus "Continuity": An Analysis of the "Model of the West"

"MW" comments on a page of the Talmud devoted to the lechem ha-panim, or shewbread, set out every shabbat on a special, gold-overlaid table in the mishkhan or tabernacle (and the Temple), and left there until the following shabbat: all in fulfillment of the commandment that the bread be "set in order before the Lord continually", lifnei Adonai tamid (see Ex. 25:23-30, Lev. 24:5-9; on the question of the number of the tables in the Temple, see BT Menachot 98b, and Tosefta Menachot, 11:6). From the outset of "MW", there can be no question that Levinas intends to contrast the various paradigms of permanence ("before the Lord continually") he finds in the Talmudic discussion with one pervasive modern western conception of history.

Faced with the 'historical meaning' which dominates modernity, with the meaning of becoming which, for the Westerner, certainly carries the real to its conclusion, but a conclusion which is unceasingly deferred to the false Messianisms (times, however, which are defined as times of conclusions); faced with the 'historical meaning' which thus calls into question, relativizes and devalues every moment or which, envisioning a

supra-temporal eternity of ideal relations that remain, in reality, unattainable, lends itself to a mathematically perfect science in a badly made or un-made world; faced with all this historicism, does not Israel attach itself to an 'always'–in other words, to a permanence in time, to a time held by moments of holiness, by moments which have a meaning or are "so close to the goal'–and where not one such moment is lost, or to be lost, but are all to be deepened, that is to say, sublimated? ("MW", 17, I have altered Mole's translation; "MO", 33)

Relativizing each moment to its volatile place in a flux of change, the historicism of the modern West reduces reality to nothing more than momentarily identifiable patterns of coherence endlessly giving way to new patterns. Yet the modern western psyche insists that this continuous flux of old moments dying into new ones carries great significance, precisely because it brings us closer to some goal.

Here the paradoxical character of historicism emerges, for the actual arrival of any such endpoint has, in fact, been constantly deferred–as it must, given the basic claim that reality is nothing more than an unending historical progression. However, an impersonal process of historical succession is meaningful only if it leads to some conclusion (otherwise we have Henry Ford's account of history, "one damn thing after another"). Even in the midst of this paradox, we continue to regard modernity as the era of conclusions, of getting right all that our ancestors got wrong and in augurating the new age. This paradox, as "MW" will make clear, accounts for historicism's strange and untenable alternation between relativism and triumphalism.

Might there be something more than this naked sequence of moments, each one of which must succeed and obliterate its predecessor? Levinas contrasts history's relativized concatenation of moments with "holiness," moments none of which are lost, only deepened by future moments. This would be a form of persistence, or an "always". How might this come about?

And instead of remaining word, a purely theoretical view or doctrinal affirmation, or some sort of coexistence of moments of time passing, do not this predilection and this signification of the always call for a whole structuring of concrete human reality and a whole orientation of social and intellectual life–perhaps justice itself–which would render only such a signification possible and significant? ("MW", 17; "MO", 33)

A whole society, carefully articulated and pursuing justice would seem to be the practical condition through which permanence in time might become thinkable. Perhaps such concrete forms of interconnection between people across generations are the vehicle of a non-historicist temporal continuity.

Aside from its pre-conditions, Levinas must now begin to specify the form of this non-historicist continuity among moments: what might it look life? He starts with a reading of the details of the mishna.

There were two tables inside the porch at the entrance of the House, the one of marble and the other of gold. On the table of marble they laid the Shewbread [sic] when it was brought in, and on the table of gold they laid the Shewbread when it was brought out, since what is holy we must raise (in honor) but not bring down. And within (the Sanctuary) was a table of gold whereon the Shewbread lay continually. (BT Menachot 99b, "MW",20; "MO", 36)

The new showbread is first placed on the marble table, which stands next to a gold table outside the sanctuary. Then two sets of four kohanim (priests) entered the sanctuary. The first set enters, standing near (and to the South of) the gold table inside the sanctuary on which the old showbread rests. The second set takes the new showbread from the marble table and enters the sanctuary, standing near (and to the North of) the gold table. Two of the first set of four kohanim then removed the old bread, as two of the second set of four kohanim set down the new bread

right next to where the old had been. The old bread was then placed on the gold table outside the sanctuary, and was later eaten by the kohanim.

Levinas remarks that the essential point here is to raise and not lower the showbread in honor, from marble table to gold table for the new, and at least from gold to gold for the old. He sees here an insistence that even if "true values must change, the principle of this change must be one of elevation". The ritual reminds us to exalt aging values, to espy elevation in succession. Here is the form of a non-historicist temporal progression: a value changes by being enriched, it endures in a new, deeper version of its earlier self, and this generates an endless movement toward ever greater profundity and scope. This would be permanence.

The striving of the holy toward the holier… there is a distinction to be made between relative value and holy values which are defined precisely by this exaltation… not only the discovery of history… but a certain elevation of his everything is not a moment. Hence the Jewish independence concerning events others take for history. The West professes the historical relativity of values and their questioning, but perhaps it takes every moment seriously, calls them all historical too quickly, and leaves this history the right both to judge the values and to sink into relativity. Hence the incessant re-evaluation of values, an incessant collapse of values, an incessant genealogy of values. A history without permanence or a history without holiness…. this possibility of judging history… this 'eternity' of Israel is not a privilege but a human possibility. ("MW", 21, emphasis added; "MO", 36-37)

Whatever we may make of this Levinasian declaration, it reminds us that contemporary historicism makes it very difficult to defend certain values. With nothing but an unending temporal succession (and the paradoxical dream of some sort of "endpoint"), it is hard to view our values as anything but the most recent flotsam washed up on the beach, soon to be replaced by whatever the next wave may bring ashore. If we raise some values above history, in order to use them to judge and evaluate other

moments of history, then why those values and not some others? Indeed, why our moment of history now, and not that moment then?

From the mishna, Levinas would seem to have determined an appropriate form for a non-historicist continuity, a tradition of values ceaselessly enhanced and preserved over time. (This conception escapes the charge of "putting a beard and payot on Hegel" because while it is determinate, it is hardly negation: Jewish tradition never "overcomes" earlier versions of values, it rather endlessly returns to them, as if they were the seeds out of which one might constantly grow ever more–and new–trees.) Levinas now explores the nature of this continuity: how might it work? what efforts and conditions keep it functioning?

The showbread is called lechem ha-panim, "the bread of faces." The twelve loaves were placed in facing columns, so that they "gazed" at each other as they sat on the table. More, the old loaves and the new ones "looked at one another" as the transition took place: intergenerational collaboration and fidelity between youth and age. Here Levinas finds his first understanding of the nature of this continuity or permanence: it takes place only within the "small society" of interpersonal relations, where one is present to another face-to-face, and the two work in solidarity, unlike the impersonality of society at large.

Yet R. Jose introduces an important qualification to this model in the mishna, asserting that even if there is a gap between the removal of the old and the depositing of the new bread, this still satisfies the requirement of continuity. Levinas feels that this suggests an alternative understanding of perdurance: such continuity occurs within shared communal work dedicated to one task, even without interpersonal relations at each moment. In the baraita the gemara brings (from BT Megilla, 21a; Tosefta Menachot, 11:7) R. Jose goes further, stating that even if they take the old bread away in the morning and fail to replace it with the new until evening, the commandment "before the Lord continually" is still fulfilled–so long as the table does not remain empty overnight. Levinas reads this

worry about the night as reflecting a legitimate danger to the communal, but not necessarily face-to-face, work mentioned in the last understanding of continuity. In the evening, all return to their own private homes, to their personal, individual lives, and this might threaten the community"s continuity.

At this point the gemara introduces a new direction which will preoccupy Levinas for the rest of "MW".

R. Am mi said, From these words of R. Jose we learn that even though a man learns but one chapter in the morning and one chapter in the evening he has thereby fulfilled the precept of "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth" (Joshua 1:8). (BT Menachot 99b; "MW", 24; "MO", 40)

R. Ammi constructs an analogy based on the words of R. Jose: just as R. Jose rules that we may allow a temporal gap from morning to evening and still fulfill a commandment that requires permanence, so R. Ammi rules that we may similarly allow such a temporal gap and still fulfill our obligation to Torah study and its commanded permanence or continuity. Levinas seizes upon the arresting resonance of R. Ammi"s words.

But in daily regularity which suffices for the study of the Torah, is not this "always" of study similar to the always" of the cult, of the virtue of daily liturgical obligation…We are at the point in which liturgy and study are merged, the unique characteristic trait of Israel where intellectual life can become cult and the supreme form of spiritual life…. [The Shema] is through daily ritual and truth regularly repeated, a ritual rooted in truth, that the somniferous course of natural life is shaken up…. It is through the regular return of these sovereign moments–the crown of the Torah being added to the crown of the liturgy–that the dispersion of time is brought back together and retied into a permanence. ("MW", 24-25; "MO", 40-42)

Levinas sees great meaning in R. Ammi"s analogy. The permanence associated with Torah brings together both intellectual study and the disciplined regularity of liturgy (ritual): it synthesizes them into a rigorous kind of intellectual/spiritual life (one whose mental and physical discipline, incidentally, is quite similar to certain Buddhist and Hindu textual/meditational practices.) In this conception of Torah, where religious life becomes a constantly maintained interaction of intellectual and ritual devotion, Levinas finds another understanding of the nature of non-historicist continuity. The community makes possible an individual's structured and spontaneous perseverance in his or her continuous religious relationship with the Torah.

Yet Levinas will now discover in the gemara a challenge to this powerful understanding of the nature of continuity. Might "Greek wisdom" offer a different and seemingly alien model of continuity, to which one might go on after studying "the whole Torah"?

Ben Damah the son of R. Ishmael"s sister once asked R. Ishmael, May one such as I who have studied the whole of the Torah learn Greek wisdom? He (R. Ishmael) thereupon read to him the following verse, "This book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth, but thou shalt meditate therein day and night" (Joshua 1:8). Go then and find a time that is neither day nor night and learn then Greek wisdom. (BT Menachot 99b; "MW", 26; "MO", 42) *

Levinas first considers whether R. Ishmael means in this citation to ban Greek wisdom, or rather to point specifically to those uncertain "hours of dusk", times of hesitation and lack of Jewish self-confidence, when Israel may need Greek wisdom and its ability to "reduce multidimensional questions to the disjunction of yes or no" (as opposed to the more fluid pluralism of Torah).

Levinas goes on to examine how the gemara generally uses the term "Greek wisdom", for the gemara does not seem to be condemning Greek

science, or art, or clarity of reasoning. Rather, he says, when the gemara attacks "Greek wisdom," it

would concern a certain language (of)… courtesy and diplomacy… flattery and charm… rhetoric, the "virtue" of illusion that a certain language possesses… it perhaps concerns what today we call, with distrust, humanism, in its powers to abuse and betray. It concerns the Greek wisdom open to humanist eloquence… Greek wisdom, inasmuch as it is enveloped by ambiguity in a certain language, is thus a weapon of ruse and domination. In philosophy, it is the fact that it is open to sophistry; in science, that it places itself in the service of strength and politics. There would exist in purely human wisdom the power to invert itself into lie and ideology… in purely human knowledge without Torah, in pure humanism, this deviation already slips toward rhetoric… Perhaps the Talmudic style whose interpretation is causing us so much difficulty is also precisely this struggle with rhetoric. ("MW", 27-28; "MO", 43-44)

Here Levinas follows the distinction introduced in BT Sotah 49b and Baba Kamma 83a between Greek wisdom and Greek language: to the degree that one can isolate Greek language, this language becomes suitable for use–say in translating scripture. Yet Greek language, joined as it most usually is to Greek wisdom, cannot but become rhetorical and mislead. In a later Talmudic reading, "The Translation of the Scripture", Levinas will celebrate the indispensability of Greek language–even for denouncing the limitations of Greek language–because Greek is the "language of deciphering". One demystifies, depoeticizes, and demythicizes in "Greek". One demetaphorizes in "Greek", even if one must then demetaphorize the metaphors used in the prior demetaphorization, and so on (ITN, 53-54; "La traduction de l'ecriture", HDN, 64-65).

At this point the status of Greek wisdom remains unclear. Yet Levinas now seizes on a radical turn in the gemara, bringing "MW" to its deepest insight. R. Samuel ben Nachmani reinterprets the pasuk from Joshua: instead of reading "this book of the law shall not depart out of thy mouth"

as a commandment, R. Samuel reads it rather as a blessing that God grants to Joshua because the latter so loves the Torah. This move does far more than remove the sanction against learning Greek wisdom; for Levinas, it suggests a new and ultimate model of continuity.

The idea of a blessing sketches a new form of continuity, one that can no longer be considered temporal. A blessing represents something that adds to, that crowns, that increases its recipient. Torah then becomes that which blesses all that comes from outside, it crowns what is not Torah, elevating it. A life of Torah represents a kind of ultimate home, the place in which one resides and into which one may bring the outside world. The world, and Greek wisdom, find their highest realization in the open life of the student of Torah; he or she becomes a container, a home, a self with such secure boundaries as to be able to welcome all else within. All becomes "continuous" with the Torah that blesses it.

Levinas pushes even further. This kind of continuity–that of the life of torah–is "dynamic", it endlessly overflows, increasing itself. The committed study of torah is a debt which can never be repaid: it only grows everytime you "pay." It is infinite: no one ever masters it, and its limitless extension both requires–and eventually compels–humility, transforming the life of its student both in learning, and in interpersonal commerce. Yet just such humility also marks great wealth. The overabundant, endless fecundation of Torah creates a "Divine organicism" growing, breathing, and "embodied" in those who devote themselves to it.**

This challenging vision of ultimate continuity discloses one of the profound human possibilities contained in tradition. It also advances the search for inclusive–for hospitable, generous–ways to forge connection where there is all too often only enmity.

* The gemara raises this question for reasons of considerable interest which I cannot discuss here.

** These ideas put one in mind of many sources. I will cite three: the Ramban on Ex. 25:30 (a very rich, kabbalistic Ramban on the lechem ha-panim); Peyrush ha-GRA on Mishlei 10:22, and (of course) Nefesh ha-Chaim, sha`ar bet, esp. p'rakim bet through hey.

ABBREVIATIONS
NTR: Nine Talmudic Readings, Aronowicz, A., trans., Indiana, 1990
HDN: A l'heure des nations, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1988
ADV: L'au-dela du verset, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1982
SAS: Du sacre au saint, Editions de Minuit, Paris, 1977
ITN: In the Hour of the Nations, Smith, M., trans., Indiana, 1994
BTV: Beyond the Verse, Mole, G., trans., Indiana, 1994

TALMUD AND TEXTUAL REASONING II

Towards an Erotics of Martydom
(A Second Response to The 1995 Princeton PMJP Talmud Institute)

Aryeh Cohen, U of Judaism

This paper continues the discussions that took place in the summer of 1995 at our Talmud Institute in Princeton. To expand the circle of discussants, I present here my reading of the sugya that formed the basis of the first day of study at the conference: Bavli Sanhedrin 74a-75a. This paper is a work in progress, emerging out of reactions to my presentation at the conference. I hope that in future issues of the Network, we will be able to circulate responses to this reading. In the paper, I set aside any notion of kiddush hashem as a stable concept, and interrogate its functions within this one sugya. Employing a reading method which emphasizes the poetics of the sugya and tarries at the places at which the sugya is most conflicted, I examine the ways that b Sandhedrin 74a-75a (one of the central halakhic or legal discussions of kiddush hashem in the Bavli) thematizes desire, power, pleasure, love and sex. This will move my discussion towards an erotics of kiddush hashem, according to which the

constructed meaning of the act of submitting to death, rather than worshiping idols, is embedded in an economy of fidelity, rape and adultery. The relationship of the "sanctifier of God's name" to God is understood along a spectrum of love and sex, licit and illicit. One of the tools/consequences of this discussion is a rereading of Esther's role–and an erasure of her agency–in the rescue of the Jews in the Book of Esther.

1. "But one who runs after an animal…" (M San. 8:7)
2. It has been taught [in a Tannaitic source]: R. Simeon b. Yohai said: An idolater may be saved [from sin] at the cost of his own life,
3. by [reasoning] from the minor to the major: If [in the case of] the damaging of a common person, [the violater] may be saved [from sin] at the cost of his own life, how much more so the damaging of the All-Highest.
4. But can we punish as a result of an ad majus conclusion? He maintains that we can.
5. It has been taught: R. Eliezer, son of R. Simeon, said: He who desecrates the Sabbath may be saved [from sin] at the cost of his own life.
6. He agrees with his father, that we punish as a result of an ad majus conclusion, and then he deduces the Sabbath from idolatry by [a gezerah shawah based on the use of] "profanation" [in connection with the Sabbath and idolatry].

The unique locution "damaging of the All-Highest" (p'gam gavo'ah) serves to frame this sugya. The sugya ends with the suggestion that damage to her family (p'gam mishpachah: "R Pap said: Because of damage to her family,"70) is a possible reason that we let the man sickened by lust not sleep with the unmarried woman that he lusts after. The sugya begins with the statement attributed to R. Shimon bar Yochai that onewho worships idols should be "saved with his life." This is justified by an argument a fortiori hinging on the idea that idolatry is a damaging of the All-Highest. The argument is that if one who is about to commit a crime, which is considered the damaging of a common person (p'gam hedyot)

(i.e. rape) might be "saved with his life," all the more so in the case of a damaging of the All-Highest.

The phrase p'gam is used on the previous folio (b San. 73a-b) to explain the unique qualities of the rape of a young girl (na'arah) as opposed to a young boy. The stam (anonymous, editorial voice in the Talmud) claims that the reason the Torah (Deut. 22:26) needed to explicitly state na'arah was "because he has damaged [pagim] her." The meaning of pagim there is sexual damage (her hymen is torn) which leads to embarrassment. As Rashi says: "He damages her [pagim lah] in her virginity and makes her despicable to her husband." The phrase "damage to her family," which comes at the end of the sugya, also has connotations of embarrassment as a result of sexual damage.

These sexual connotations of the p'gam are present in the phrase p'gam gavo'ah ("damaging of the All-Highest"). Moreover, the framing of the sugya between the two instances of sexual damage, or sexually caused damage, highlights the fact that the sugya thematizes sex, pleasure, and death. Further, it is the question of pleasure which informs the decision of whether one need die–or be put to death. While the two ends of the sugya are p'gam, the middle of the sugya is pleasure, or perhaps lack of it. The middle section of the sugya is the suggestion that Queen Esther needn't have let herself be killed–rather than submitting to sex with Ahaseurus–because she was as "ownerless property" (karka 'olam). This statement generates further discussion of the importance of pleasure in determining whether an action is actually transgressive to the point where dying is called for.

While the phrase "karka 'olam" means, in this context, that (as Rashi explains) she is totally passive, it also carries other important connotations. Land which is karka 'olam is not considered as tainted by idolator, even if the idol was attached to the land (b San. 47b). Nor can karka 'olam become impure. All this informs the way that Esther's role in

the Purim story is being reread in this context: emblematic of the way that kiddush hashem is dealt with in this sugya. But we get ahead of ourselves.

The sugya continues with the introduction, by way of a statement attributed to R. Yochanan, of the decisions reached at the conclave of bet Nathza.

7. R. Johanan said in the name of R. Simeon b. Jehozadak: By a majority vote, it was resolved in the upper chambers of the house of Nathza in Lydda:
8. Every [other] law of the Torah, if a man is commanded: "Transgress and be not killed" he should transgress and not be killed,
9. excepting idolatry, incest [which includes adultery], and murder.

This statement introduces a completely new facet to the discussion. Until now, the sugya was dealing with a situation where a person was him/herself going to commit a transgression. The bet nathza decision moves the sugya in a different direction. The potential transgressor is no longer active as in R. Shimon ben Yochai's statement (An idolater [2]) or as in R. Elazar bar Shimon's statement (He who desecrates [5]). The potential transgressor is passive. The whole point of the bet Nathza statement is the coercion. While the role of the outside observer/participant in the first two cases is to stop the potential transgressor, the role of the outside participant in this last case is to coerce the transgressor to commit the transgression. It is the transgressor here who must bring the death penalty down upon himself–at the hands of the coercive outsider– as opposed to the first case where it is the outsider who executes the death penalty (thereby saving the transgressor by killing him).

This reversal is immediately problematized. The stammaitic question of line 10, and the baraita (extra-Mishnaic text) that is introduced in line 11 make clear that this group of three is not as "natural" as it might seem. We have already seen Sabbath observance accorded the role of capital offense

in line 5. This is reinforced by R. Ishmael's statement which questions the status of idolatry as one of the three. Moreover, the stammaitic statement in line 20 groups incest and murder over against idolatry. There is a brief discussion of the basis of these latter two as capital offenses (21-28), and then the sugya reverts to a discussion of how the "kiddush hashem" status of these prohibitions and others is affected by "the time of decree."(29-41) The discussion of incest and murder (21-28) serves to distinguish them from idolatry and from each other, while at the same time conflating all three. It is to this discussion that we now turn our attention.

20. Incest and murder [may not be practiced to save one's life], – even as Rabbi's dictum.
21. For it has been taught [in a Tannaitic source]: Rabbi said, "For as when a man riseth against his neighbor, and slayeth him, even so is this matter."
22. But what do we learn from this [comparison with] the murderer?
23. Thus, that this comes to throw light and is itself illumined.
24. The murderer is compared to a betrothed maiden: just as a betrothed maiden–[where the ravisher's soul] must be saved at the cost of his life, so in the case of a murderer, he [the victim] must be saved at the cost of his [the attacker's] life.
25. And a betrothed maiden is compared to a murderer: just as [in relation to] a murderer-one must rather be slain than transgress; so also must she [i.e. the betrothed maiden] rather be slain than allow her violation.

Rabbi's dictum, in illuminating the case of the raped betrothed maiden and her rapist from the case of the murderer, and vice versa, ends in a paradoxical or at least problematic statement. This statement, however, has the ability to shed light on the sugya as a whole. Line 25 is the claim by analogy that the maiden must allow herself to be slain, rather than to allow herself to be raped. This is problematic for a number of reasons. First, there is no basis for it. She is assumed to be a powerless (if not, Biblically, passive) victim. She is not doing anything. Her case is much more akin to the case (cited by the Tosafot) of a person who is thrown on top of a child to kill the child. In that case the rationale that is cited in the

next few lines of our sugya (28)–namely: "He answered him: Let him rather slay you than that you should commit murder; Who knows that your blood is redder? Perhaps his blood is redder"–doesn't apply. As it is not the person being flung atop the child who is deciding, the opposite reasoning might equally hold: "Who knows that the child's blood is redder?" Similarly with the betrothed maiden: she is not involved in the decision to be raped, why should she force her own death rather than rape? How would she engineer it anyway (as the rape itself is against her will)? Second, this is not at all analogous to the case of murder to which it is compared. There, it is a case where the murderer has the ability to decide whether he kills or is killed. The maiden is not given the choice. She is violated either way. Third, in the first part of the analogy (24: "The murderer is compared to a betrothed maiden…"), the perpetrators are compared one to the other. What is the logic now to compare the perpetrator in one case (the murderer) to the victim in the other case (the maiden)?

In fact, most manuscripts and most of the early commentators (including the She'iltot of R. Achai which is not in the conventional sense a commentary) have the reading:

25. …so also must he be slain rather than allow the violation [of the betrothed maiden].

In the original this is not such a large orthographic switch ("tehareg ve'al ta`avor" to "yehareg ve'al ya`avor"), but it should not be put down to merely a scribal error. There is evidence of the version in "our" printed text (Venice 1527 edition leading to the Vilna edition) as early as the Tosafot. While the Tosafot (b. San. 74b s.v. veha Esther) dismiss the reading "so also must the betrothed maiden rather be slain than allow her violation," they still proffer a rationale for that reading. R. Menahem Hame'iri, after articulating some of the problems with the reading "so also must he be slain rather than allow the violation [of the betrothed maiden]," states that because of these difficulties there are some who

prefer the reading "so also must the betrothed maiden be slain rather than allow her violation."

Rather than attempt to adjudicate these conflicting interpretive strategies, I would like to pursue the textual/cultural logic that led this line into being a sustained site of conflicting interpretation. That is, why did this alternate reading persist, to the point that it became the "accepted" reading of the Venice and Vilna editions-despite the many problems with it? The first thing to answer is: what is the difficulty with reading the line as it is in the MSS and the Sheiltot, etc. "so also must he be slain rather than transgress [i.e. rape the betrothed maiden]?" There is an important intertext which I think sheds light on the problem with this line. This is part of a sugya in b. Yebamoth (53b) generated by the mishnah which states that a levirate marriage is efficacious even if the sexual act which consummates it is performed under duress ('ones). The stam asks: what could it mean that the man is forced? What is the case of "one who was under duress" of the mishnah? If you would say that idolators forced him and he had sex with her, Did not Raba say, There is no coercion in the case of incest since a man cannot have an erection against his will? Raba's statement that there can be no forced intercourse for a man, since a man cannot have an erection against his will, seems to supply the cultural grounding for the difficulties with reading of a man forced to rape a woman. According to this line of thinking, sexual intercourse is deployed by a man at will. Therefore a man cannot be forced into raping a woman. The only other possibility is the culturally (though not textually) more amenable one: that it is the woman who is being raped, and it is she who should submit to death rather than allow her violation. It is culturally easier to picture a woman being violated, than picturing a man being forced to deploy his sexuality against his will, since the latter is a cultural oxymoron.

Reading the lines with our printed editions ("tehareg ve'al ta`avor") additionally eases the reading of the exchange about Esther. (42-44)

42. But did not Esther transgress publicly?

43. Abaye answered; Esther was merely natural soil.
44. Raba said: Their personal pleasure is different.

What does this question mean? Is this a continuation of the general discussion of kiddush hashem–that in a time of oppression even a small act necessitates dying (as one might assume based on a knowledge of the Esther story)–or a continuation of the discussion of gilui `arayot [incest/adultery]? This question is complicated by a further one. To what act of Esther's does this question refer? Some commentators and the translations seem to understand it as referring to Esther's marriage to Ahaseurus. This is untenable for two reasons. First, this wasn't in any sense "public." Essential to the story line is that no one knew that she was Jewish. This must have included most of the Jews also, or else the king would have ended up knowing it too. Second, this was not at a time of shmad (oppressive religious decrees). The decrees against the Jews are broached in Chapter 3, while Esther is married in Chapter 2. Third, there is no transgression involved in sleeping with an idolator not during the time of shmad (see Tosafot s.v. Veha 74b). In the time of shmad, it is akin to tying shoe laces differently (i.e. even a small transgression for which in time of persecution one must give up their life.) Therefore, it seems to be referring to Esther's manipulations in the time of the decree of persecution.

If we read line 25 with the printed editions: "so also must the betrothed maiden be slain rather than allow her violation," this question about Esther seems to have a stronger foundation. When read in the light of the fact that the betrothed maiden must somehow have herself killed rather than be raped, Esther's sexual manipulations are seen as questionable. That this line is "unreadable" is obvious from the discussions in the medieval commentators, who have extreme difficulty in adducing the basis of the question. (It is for this reason that Tosafot prefer the reading "tehareg ve'al ta`avor"). What the question does is introduce the strong idea that Esther was actually radically passive or, according to Raba, merely an object of pleasure and not an agent.

Lest we think that, when faced with "problematic" sexual manipulations, the sugya had no choice but to interpret them into neutrality, we cite the following (b Nazir 23b). This is a discussion of another case of sexual manipulations for the good of the people of Israel, where the agency of the woman–Yael–is strengthened and affirmed, rather than played down:

Said R. Nahman b Yitzhak, Greater is a transgression to good purpose than a commandment [done] not for good intentions. But did not R. Yehudah say in the name of Rab: A person should always engage himself with [studying] Torah and [performing] commandments-even without good intentions; for by [performing the commandments] without good intentions [he] comes to [performing them] for good intentions? Say rather that it is like a a commandment [done] not for good intentions, since it is written: "Most blessed of women be Yael wife of Hever the Kenite, most blessed of women in tents." (Judges 5:24) Who are the "women in tents?" Sarah, Rebecca, Rachel, and Leah. Said R. Yochanan: Seven intercourses did that evil man have at that time. As it says, At her feet he sank, lay outstretched, etc. (Judges 5:27) But did she not have pleasure from the sexual acts? Said R. Yochanan: All the good of evildoers is merely evil to righteous. As it says, Beware of attempting anything with Jacob, good or bad. The [warning against attempting] bad is justified. But why not "good?" But rather, learn from here that his [Laban's] good is evil.

Yael, it will be remembered, invites Sisra–who is running from the Israelite army–into her tent, gives him water and milk, and then lets him fall asleep. When he is fast asleep, she slays him thus assuring victory for the Israelites. By reading this story midrashically through the lens of Deborah's song (Judges 5), the Bavli ascribes to Yael the seduction of Sisra. In fact, according to the story in the Bavli, it is the seduction that ultimately tires him out and puts him to sleep. This act is seen by the Bavli as an act of bravery. Although it is a transgression, it is one on par with the acts of the matriarchs who wheeled and dealed in order to get the patriarchs to sleep with them, thereby creating the people Israel (see Rashi to b Nazir

23b). In contrast, Esther's act of bravery is seen in the sugya of b San. as not even an act.

Lest we suppose that the difference lies in the acts themselves, we need remember that the same strictures which make Esther's sexual manipulation of Achaseurus problematic, make Yael's equally problematic. (All the problems are hashed out and unresolved in the Rishonim to b San 74b). The question remains, why is the possibility of Esther's agency repressed here? While the reading "tehareg ve'al ta`avor" leads to Esther's passivity, the reading "yehareg ve'al ya`avor" leads to the end of the sugya. The final part of the sugya is a ma'aseh attributed by R. Yehudah to Rab. (ll. 62-77)

Said R. Yehudah said Rab: A ma`aseh: A man once conceived a passion for a certain woman, and his heart was consumed by his burning desire [his life being endangered thereby]. They came and consulted the doctors. They [the doctors] said, 'His has no cure until she submit to him.' Sages said: 'Let him die rather than that she should submit.' [Said the doctors] 'Let her stand nude before him;' [they answered] 'Let him die, and she should not stand nude before him.' [Said the doctors] `let her converse with him from behind a fence'. `Let him die and she should not converse with him from behind a fence.' Now R. Jacob b. Idi and R. Samuel b. Nahmani dispute therein. One said that she was a married woman; the other that she was unmarried. Now, this is justified according to the one who said that she was a married woman, But according to the one who said that she was unmarried, why such severity? R. Papa said: Because of the damage to her family. R. Acha the son of R. Ika said: That the daughters of Israel may not be immorally dissolute. Then why not marry her? – Marriage would not assuage his passion, according to R. Isaac. For R. Isaac said: Since the destruction of the Temple, sexual pleasure has been taken [from those who practice it lawfully] and given to transgressors, as it is written, "Stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant" (Proverbs 9:17)

This story provides the culturally amenable way in which a man might be forced to have sex against his will. A man might have sex against his will if he is under the spell of a woman, or if he is lust-sick. The interesting thing here is that the woman is totally passive, yet the man is so taken with her that he must have some sexual contact with her or die. This "woman-as-dangerous-seductress" trope is also tied in interesting ways to the Esther story. (Without saying anything explicit, Esther has both Haman and Ahaseurus doing her bidding, and then she destroys Haman at least partially through Ahaseurus' jealousy: Esther 7:8.) It also might explain how Esther could have been completely passive and yet active. I will not indulge in a complete analysis of this ma'aseh but just make a number of suggestive remarks.

This ma'aseh is tied back into the rest of the sugyah in two important ways. First, the sexual pleasure that is taken away is given to "`ovrei `aveirah" (transgressors). This explicit connection of sexual pleasure to transgression uses the same word as "yehareg ve'al ya`avor", thereby reinforcing the notion of the sexual overtones of transgression. Second, the phrase "stolen waters" in Hebrew is lechem STaRim, which ties back to eSTheR. (This connection is made explicit in many midrashim, though not with this verse.) These remarks allow us ask the question that troubles the whole sugya. Why is there so much interweaving of lust, pleasure and sexual coercion in a discussion of kiddush hashem?

As we remarked above, the sugya starts with the idea of idolatry as [sexual] damage to God. I bracket "sexual" since it is, of course, not the surface meaning. However, damage–"p'gam"–in this sugya, as we saw, is sexual damage. This is connected to R. Eliezer's midrash. A person is obligated to sacrifice that which is beloved to him, as a sign of love of God. "And you shall love the Lord your God." As Rashi comments in our sugya on this midrash, "this implies that you will not exchange Him for idolatry." On the continuation of the midrash (ll. 16-19) Rashi comments, "That is to say, His love should be more dear to you than all that is dear to you." I suggest that, reading with Rashi, idolatry is constructed in this

sugya as adultery, sexual infidelity. Resisting this adultery, not transgressing, not "tasting pleasure" is sanctifying God's name.

The sanctification of God's name, as constructed in this sugya, is only passive. Not engaging in adultery/idolatry is kiddush hashem. There is no way of active kiddush hashem since the sanctifier is constructed as Esther is: if he has no pleasure he has sanctified God's name. If he is like "natural soil," he resists the impurity of idolatry/adultery. The idea of an active sanctification of God's name is foreign, since that pleasure (of actively sanctifying God's name), like the pleasure of sexual intercourse, is given only to transgressors.

[There is no room here to reproduce Cohen's translation of the entire sugya from Bavli Sanhedrin 74a-75a. Readers who would like a copy of the translation should email a request to him at: "_____"]

Notes

1. This according to the MSS and early textual witnesses (i.e. Gaonic literature). The printed editions (and the Soncino translation) has so also must she [i.e. the betrothed maiden] rather be slain than allow her violation." But see the discussion in the article.

VALUING INTERPRETATIONS AND INTERPRETIVE VALUES

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The 1995 Postmodern Jewish Philosophy Talmud Workshop provided a wonderful opportunity both to immerse in textual study for three days, and to reflect a bit on concerns of texts, interpretations, and communities. The following represents an initial development of one of my reflections on evaluating interpretations, given what I take to be a plurality of interpretive values.

An interpretation of a text can have value in different ways. One criterion of excellence is fit with the text; what in traditional Jewish hermeneutics is termed peshat. Yet texts also have value for their communities of readers, in inspiring, explaining, amusing, and so forth. The most helpful reading for the community may not be the reading that most tightly fits the text, and the reading with greatest textual value may not be useful for the community.(1) Some interpreters would anoint one criterion of value as definitive. Other criteria would be subordinate at best, irrelevant at worst. Thus, for example, a Wissenschaft scholar might seek the reading that best fits the text in itself. The value or lack of it for a current community of readers is irrelevant (at least officially). Conversely, an ideologue, for example, might evaluate a text solely on the basis of its contemporary usefulness.

Many readers (myself among them) reject both monistic extremes, and opt for an approach that is richer, if messier. Concern with both text and community is appropriate, given a view such as Gadamer's fusion of horizons, or Ricoeur's hermeneutic circle. Such an approach fits the model of living dialogue between a text and its readers. It also enhances the ability of a text to say something both new and relevant.

Philosophically sophisticated ways to attend to both text and community have been developed by Peter Ochs, among others. An approach he suggested at the Talmud workshop would be to include criteria of peshat and community value by invoking them sequentially.(2) Thus, one might have an initial screen for an interpretation, determining that it meets a minimum standard of fit with the text, or peshat, to qualify as a legitimate reading. Among readings qualifying, the one with the greatest value for the community would be the selected reading. It might not be the best peshat in absolute terms, but would be, of the peshat-adequate readings, the best for my community.

Such a strategy is reasonably clear (at least at a schematized level), and has the virtue of attending to both criteria. In confining attention to one

criterion at a time, however, such an approach may not yield the "best" reading. Imagine a graphic representation of readings with textual value along the y-axis, value for a community along the x-axis. (3) Three readings are candidates. Reading A has some value for the community, and meets a basic peshat level (12, 10). Reading B has slightly less value for the community, but excels as peshat (11, 20). Reading C does not quite make it as peshat-adequate, but would be of tremendous value for the community (30,9). Perhaps it is the type of interpretation suggested by Rashi's statement that his commentary attends not only to peshat, but also to aggadah that fits well with the text ("aggadah hameyashevet divrei hamikra davar davur al ofnav", to Gen. 3:8).

In the sequential approach, C would be eliminated in the playoffs, its value to the community being irrelevant; and B would lose out to A in the finals, its textual value now irrelevant. But it is far from obvious that A is the best reading. Perhaps, since the loss of immediate community value is small, it is worth retaining B for its strong peshat–for its own sake, or perhaps in the hope that the vigorous peshat will challenge the community, provoke other new readings, or in other ways now unforeseen produce value for the community in the long run. Or perhaps the issue is of such importance to the community, and C such a substantial contribution, that peshat can be stretched on this occasion. Or perhaps all readings should be maintained, as the traditional Rabbinic Bible (Mikraot Gedolot) retains Ramban, Ibn Ezra, and Rashi together on the same page. Given a plurality of interpretive concerns, a plurality of interpretations may provide the best reading/s.

Community value

NOTES

1) This essay uses the term 'peshat' loosely to indicate plain sense, literal meaning, or intratextual integrity, without pressing distinctions among these. Cf. Peter Ochs, "Postcritical Scriptural Interpretation in Judaism," in Interpreting Judaism in A Postmodern Age, ed. Steven Kepnes (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 55-81. My discussion of two criteria of value, text and community, represents a simplification; a similar analysis would work for any number of criteria.

2) Ochs's model is likely familiar to readers of this journal; one good source is the above-cited essay. The specific approach mentioned at the conference seems to fit generally with his presentation of David Weiss Halivni and Michael Fishbane in that essay (pp. 69, 71).

3) This model draws on discussions of pluralism of values in ethics and other fields. Thomas Nagel, for example, addresses "problems created by a disparity between the fragmentation of value and the singleness of decision" in "The Fragmentation of Value," in his Mortal Questions (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 128-41. While his essay focuses on ethical action, analogous problems arise in interpretation. Relevant issues are also discussed by economist Amartya Sen in numerous works, including Inequality Reexamined (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 130-37.

PEDAGOGY AND TEXTUAL REASONING

I. A Book Introduction:

Michel Rosenak (Hebrew U) discusses his new book, ROADS TO THE PALACE, JEWISH TEXTS AND TEACHING (Providence and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1995)

This is the second volume of a project in which I have been engaged for a decade: to delineate what "Philosophy of Jewish Education" is and how it can be made to work. There are several problems that characterize this project. To begin with, philosophers and educators have notoriously scant regard for Philosophy of Education. On the basis of their experience, they think of it as a mere medley of edifying ideas, the stuff of after-dinner speeches, exhortation and vaguely "enriching," but signifying nothing. Teachers know it to be not really practical; theoreticians, as not really serious. When such philosophy is presented as normative, it tends to sound preachy and apologetic; when it is analytic, pretentious. In any case, someone will invariably come along and ask why a midrashic tradition is comprehensible only when (mis?)translated into the idiom of the Greeks, and someone else will ask why a field that is alien to Western philosophy, being "only a midrashic (i.e., homiletic) area of concern," deserves translation into "Greek," i.e., REAL Thought.

Hence, the problem of translation is central: How shall the Jewish educational tradition be made widely communicable and comprehensible with regard to fundamental principles and to social and individual ideals? How may one arrive at a "Jewish Paideia" and yet do so without reductionism? Peter Berger has described the translation of religious tradition as its reformulation "in terms appropriate to (a) …new frame of reference." He finds this to be a form of "cognitive surrender," as a largely futile attempt to rehabilitate religious traditions and to salvage their relevance. I argue for the plausibility of partial translation: one that expresses a specific cultural and religious world-view in varied literary and philosophical modes without sacrificing its character and authenticity and that midrashically insists that a particular translation is merely "one way of looking at it."

Roads to the Palace continues my project of building frameworks for philosophy of Jewish education, as begun in my earlier work, Commandment and Concern (Philadelphia, The Jewish Publication Society, 1987). In that book, I treated religious education philosophically by distinguishing between "explicit" religion and "implicit" religiosity, representing normative and existential and heuristic features of religious life and teaching, respectively; I also showed what moves were required to translate theological orientations into theoretical-educational ones. In this book my central working concepts are "language" and "literature." LANGUAGE represents the basic assumptions, aspirations and modes of understanding of a culture. It establishes its forms of rhetoric, its symbolic "key words," its paradigms of order, coherence, and norm. LANGUAGE bestows a collective identity on those who "speak" it (i.e., are inside it). It exposes to view the culture's stores of what is "self-understood" among its participants, its forms of communication and articulation. In the world of Judaism, the central term for Language is TORAH. Those who know it to be a supremely worthwhile language, declare that it is "from Heaven." But in a PARTIAL TRANSLATION, that is not all they mean.

Language enables those who know it to show its power to shape reality and to provide a home within reality for those who speak it. As ever new "literature" is created within the "language", its funds of potential meaning are explored and broadened. In the world of Judaism, the terms MIDRASH and PARUSH express what "literature" is. To illustrate: "Language" includes value-concepts like Eretz Yisrael; the pre-dominant "literature" of Eretz Yisrael in the contemporary world is Zionism. Mitzvot are language; TA'AMAI HA-MITZVOT, literature. I suggest that the aim of education is to teach young people the language, to bring them into literature through initiating them into ways that their community "does literature," to expose them to varieties of exemplary literature, past and present, and to enable them to "do" literature, wtihin the language of Judaism, in their own lives.

Roads to the Palace elaborates and comments on "language" and what the possibilities of "literature" are for Jewish education by examining several issues:

a) How can "Philosophy of Judaism" be translated into educational philosophy? The philosopher chosen for this exercise in translation is Maimonides.

b) What is the significance, as an educational ideal, of YIR'AT SHAMAYIM, Fear of Heaven? Here, the exercise consists of moral and existential translation from the midrashic level to a philosophic-educational one.

c) How can we distinguish between two levels of "value education," that which distinguishes between values and "anti- values" on the one hand, and that which requires deliberative decision-making in the presence of cogent yet irreconcilable values in a specific situation, on the other? The neglect of either set of opposites, I argue, creates a forced and false choice between dogmatism and vacuous "value clarification."

d) What is the normatively grounded yet morally defensible relationship between commitment and openness? Talmudic insights are here drawn into confrontation with modern philosophical ones. Finally:

e) I suggest theoretical guidelines for a modern Jewish curriculum. My assumption is that it will be based on dialectical relationships between authenticity and relevance, commitment and openness, "language" and "literature." I also suggest that YIRAT SHAMAYAIM does, despite modernity and within it, represent a sublime character ideal for Jewish education, of obedience and autonomy, wisdom and humility, responsibility and human decency.

I shall be happy to hear comments.

II. A Publication Note: "Jewish Studies in America Today"

Network readers may be interested in the feature article of the latest issue of WELLSPRINGS No. 44, Summer 1996. WELLSPRINGS is the quarterly journal of the Lubavitch Youth Organization. The article is "Sacred

Studies in Secular Settings: Jewish Studies in America Today": a roundtable discussion with Yaakov Elman, Peter Ochs, Lawrence H. Schiffman, and discussion facilitator Susan Handelman. The topic is "What are the implications of the multi-cultural phenomenon for Jewish Studies in the secular university?" For Network readers, the focal issue is: how does postmodern Judaism change the role of religious study–or indigenous study?–in the university classroom? Our thanks to Susan Handelman for inventing and facilitating this roundtable, and to Baila Olidort for very patient and talented editing. For reprints contact Wellsprings Editor Baila Olidort, c/o Student Affairs Office, 770 Eastern Parkway, Brooklyn, NY, NY 11213.

KABBALAH AND TEXTUAL REASONING
Kabbalistic Responses to Postmodern Jewish Philosophy
Barry Hammer, Orono, Me.

[Ed. Note: Dr. Hammer has made a challenging contribution to the NETWORK: responding in a kabbalistic voice to previous NETWORK articles by Shaul Magid and Bernard Zelechow. Here is a performative argument against the potentially reductive and secularizing effects of postmodern theory in Judaism, on behalf of a form of inquiry readers may label, variously, kabbalistic, spiritual, theosophic, Torah-true, or, is there here also a form of postmodern intratextuality, whose text may be, in Magid's terms, meta-textual? Readers are welcome to respond. This issue of the NETWORK leaves room for only part of Hammer's text; with his indulgence, we offer excerpts.]

I. The Living Torah vs The Conceptual Torah

Response to Magid's "Kabbalah and Postmodern Philosophy: Rereading as Rewriting in Lurianic Scriptural Exegesis," PMJN 4.2: June, 1995, pp. 16ff.]

Shaul Magid offers a significant suggestion: that Lurianic scriptural exegesis took as its starting point not the written Torah, but rather a "predetermined meta-text," supposedly the esoteric Torah "revealed at Sinai along with the exoteric Torah." In order to clarify this issue and address its implications for Postmodern Jewish Philosophy, I am restating the issue as follows: For purposes of enhancing the soul's holiness and enlightenment.., is it better for it to focus exclusively on the written Torah–WHICH I IDENTIFY WITH THE "CONCEPTUAL" TORAH – or to move away from the conceptual Torah in order to achieve direct, non-conceptually mediated contact with the Living Torah, i.e., the living Spirit of God, the fully radiant spiritual Light or Glory of God's absolute Being, to which the written texts of the Holy Scriptures only point symbolically? Although Magid subtly suggests that these are two mutually exclusive approaches, I will argue that the conceptual Torah and the Living Torah are both necessary for enhancing the soul's enlightenment…

The Scriptures tell us that the written, conceptual Torah can be a tree of life, but only for those who grasp it (Prov. 3:18), meaning that the soul must come to a deep understanding of the essential truth of the Scriptures if the soul is to awaken as a branch of the tree of everlasting spiritual Life…. The great truth of the conceptual Torah is that only God IS, which means that He alone is the absolute Reality…. As Abraham Heschel put it, "God is one means He alone is truly real." (1) That is the message of God's pronouncement that He is the I AM (Ex. 3:14)…. The implication of this truth is that there can be no other reality presence, power, goodness, intelligence, being, or voice for the soul to know or to be …(Isa. 43:10,12,21; 44:8): "So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him"(Gen 1); "Though has made him little less than God" (Ps.8:5). The soul, that is, is of the same nature as God's spiritual Substance, but of a lesser magnitude, like the flame of a match when compared to the sun's fire. As suggested by Deut. 32:4, God's work is as perfect as He is, without any finite good and evil…. If, in His Holy Spirit there is no evil (He is of "purer eyes than to behold evil" (Hab. 1:13), then there can truly be no finite good and evil in his world, either: the entire

creation was "very good" (Gen. 1:31), meaning with no wrongness or evil of any kind in it. All of this suggests that the soul can never actually be separate from, or fall from, God's spiritual Presence into a world of finite good and evil. The early Hasidic tzaddikim taught that if it were possible for the soul to become separate from God's all-pervading Presence, then the soul would cease to exist. (2)

Although the soul cannot truly separate itself from God's infinite Substance, the soul's consciousness can fall or become immersed in the personal-life-story daydream [we call]… an ego: constructed out of finite self-concepts and self-images, relatively positive and negative, or what Scripture refers to as the "tree of knowledge of good and evil" (Gen. 2:17), the consciousness of which provides the soul an illusory experience of separation from God's substance. In the words of Mikhal of Zlotchov, "What stands between you and God like a wall is your Ego. This I, this consciousness of a separate existence, is a wall between you and the Divinity."(3) Constructing a self-image, the soul constructs a psychological graven image, bearing witness to itself, which is a means of self-worship. That is why God says of such soul in Isa. 44:9, "They are their own witnesses," i.e., they are not bearing witness to His Glory…. The Hasidic master Shneur Zalman noted, "The essence and root of idolatry is that (the individuality) is regarded as a thing in itself, sundered from the Divine holiness."(4) The soul's projection of concepts … onto the world produces appearances of finite good and evil [in place of God's] absolute Goodness. As Shakespeare noted, "There is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so" (Hamlet, Act 2, Sc.2). In Arthur Green's words, the soul may "pretend that God does not pervade all… but the ultimate truth of realizing our oneness with that all-embracing Being can only be postponed, not denied."(5) Redemption is therefore merely a matter of undoing the soul's identification with its false sense of self…

[As intimated in the written or conceptual Torah,] God's covenant with the Jewish people displays the interrelatedness and interdependence in function of God and His community of soul forms. As the Hasidic master

Menahem Nahum asserted, God and the community of souls within spiritual Israel comprise a unitary "single whole": "(God) is unwhole without us. Surely we (the spiritual community of Israel) without Him are also incomplete…."(6) This community of souls is God's means of self-knowledge; His divine images reflect back to Him unfolding potentials of His spiritual Being. God's part of the covenant is to shine into the soul ever higher levels of His Perfect Being, to give the soul ever higher levels of spiritual blessing. In return, the soul's function is to reflect [them] back to God…. In other words, the soul's part of the covenant is that it must undo the cause of its presumed fall….

This covenant is [revealed] in various ways in the Torah, for example, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct they paths" (Prov. 3:6); and the statement of the new covenant in Jeremiah 31:34, "Know the Lord." Likewise, the soul is told to acknowledge no other voice but God's: "Obey my voice indeed, and deep my covenant…. and ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation" (Ex. 19:5-6); "hearken diligently unto me… and I will make an everlasting covenant with you" (Is. 55)….

My view is that the conceptual Torah and the Living Torah are both required to redeem the soul…. By Living Torah, I mean the living Spirit of God, which is the immanent spiritual Presence of God … to which, at best, the finite written word of the Holy Scriptures metaphorically points. Although the conceptual Torah can be very useful…, it is not sufficient by itself to redeem the soul. As Magid suggests, abandoning the written Torah as one's starting point can lead one away from the truth of the Torah, as suggeted by the "bizarre" aspects of Lurianic exegesis (pp. 12, 15)…. The conceptual Torah helps the soul to recognize the infinite Being of God, and thus its true identity as a divine image of God…. [However,]… holding exclusively to the conceptual, written Torah will limit the soul's consciousness to the conceptually conditioned mind and thereby maintain the soul's dualistic sense of separation from God's infinite Spirit. Acquiring … more conceptual information about the nature

of God and the soul's relationship to God obstructs the soul's receiving higher levels of enlightenment and holiness. To attain spiritual redemption, one must [therefore] turn away from all conceptual knowledge, ..to directly experience the infinite spiritual Presence of God immanent within the soul…. Thus, the Psalmist tells the soul, "Be still, and know that I am God" (Ps. 46:10, cf. I Kings 19:12)…

Just as reading a menu cannot satisfy the stomach's hunger, the conceptual Torah along cannot satisfy the soul's hunger for direct spiritual experience. That is why Scriptures tell the soul, "O taste and see that the Lord is good" (Ps. 34:8), and "Truly the light is sweet" (Eccles. 11:7)…. Thus Heschel notes that silence is the only real praise of God.(7)

Notes

1. Abraham J. Heschel, Man is not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion (NY: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1951), 117-18.
2. See, e.g., Dov Baer, Maggid Devarav l'Yaaqov, Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer, ed. (Jerusalem: Magnes Press of the Hebrew University, 1976), 124, and 197-198. Cf. Shneur Zalman, "Shaar Hayichud Vehaemunah," Chapter 3 in Tanya (New York: Kehot Publishers, 1981), 293. Cf. Levi Yitzhaq of Berdichev, Qedushat Levi (Bnei Brak: Heikhal ha-Sefer, no date), 47B-48A (Parashah Mishpatim).
3. Arthur Green, "Judaism for the Post-Modern Era," The Samuel H. Goldenson Lecture (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College-Jewish Institute of Religion, Dec. 12, 1994), 12.
4. Lewis Newman, Hasidic Anthology, 427, quoting Mikhal of Zlotchov in Chaim Bloch, Priester der Liebe (Vienna, 1930), 84.
5. Green, "Judaism," 12.
6. Menahem Nahum of Chernobyl, Upright Practices, The Light of the Eyes, Arthur Green, trans. (New York: Paulist Press, 1982),
7. Abraham Heschel, God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism, (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1955). 123.

I. Jewish Relationality vs. Derridean Individuality

[Responses to Zelechow's "Derrida and Postmodern Jewish Philosophy: Revelations/Derrida," PMJPN 4.2,pp.19ff.]

Inherent in Deconstructionism's view of the exclusivity of personal experience and hence "the undecidability of textual meaning," is the presumption that human beings are independent of one another…. However, if human life is inherently relational, then that would enable individuals, even of diverse personal backgrounds, to emphatically understand one another's experience of reality, and agree upon the message intended by the author of a particular text.

The prevalence of relational views of reality in Jewish thought suggests that Derrida's Deconstructionism [is not happily situated in Judaism]. Prominent Jewish philosophers have expressed the view that all individual souls are inherently related to one another because they share in the same macrocosmic soul.(1) Along similar lines, the Kabbalah portrays all individuals as being rooted in the same soul, Adam Qadmon, joined to one another like cells within His unitary spiritual body, which serves as the one Divine Image of the one Creator God.(2) According to the Kabbalist Moses Cordovero, as well as Hasidic teachers such as Schmelke of Nikolsburg and Levi Yitzhaq of Berdichev, the commandment to "Love thy neighbor as thyself" (Lev 19:18) means to love thy neighbor not as something separate from oneself, but (in Schmelke's words), "as something that thou art thyself, for all souls are one. Each is a spark from the original soul, and that original soul is in each of you."(3)

[If souls are united in this way, then] agreement in regard to text interpretation is truly possible. By entering into a state of one-mindedness with an author's experience, as reflected in the text, a reader may empathically understand the meaning intended by its author. Hasidic teachers maintain that one's ability to understand a message by another

individual is enhanced if one's conscious attention is fully invested in that other's message rather than in one's own conceptual self-consciousness.(4)… No reliable agreement in text interpretation will be possible as long as readers project their own conceptually derived personal beliefs onto the text…. Some Hasidic teachings suggest that the spiritually-illumined creative understanding of a text, or of another individual, is a form of spiritual blessing that God bestows upon those who reflect His Holy Oneness. (5) There is no way to bring God's blessing into the world without engaging in loving connection, or consciously acknowledged relatedness, with the world. Individuals who overly identify with the ego's sense of independent individuality thereby separate themselves from God's Holy Oneness of Being and do not receive the blessing of God that, in the form of spiritual Light, creatively illumines a given text. When consciousness is fully invested in direct, non-conceptually mediated contact with some objective reality, then one may experience this from the inside, as if it were a related part of one's own being.

Creative insight therefore comes directly from "seeing into" the nature of reality, rather than from projecting one's own biased interpretations onto it. The greater the degree of empathic relatedness between reader and text, the deeper the reader's consciousness will penetrate beyond the surface appearance of the text into more essential levels of the author's psyche, bringing profounder insight into the basic meaning, or message, of the text. For many centuries, students in yeshivas have studied Jewish religious texts in hevrutas, or collaborative learning partnerships. These are based upon the understanding that empathic dialogue, in the context of collaborative relationship, produces spiritually illuminated understandings of the texts being studied.

Until we learn how to live in loving communion with other individuals in the world, we will not be able to live in communion with God's much more subtle spiritual Presence. Since that spiritual Presence is the basic source of divinely inspired writings such as the Torah, only it can provide

individuals with an optimal understanding of those texts. It creatively imparts this understanding to individuals who lovingly commune with it, by way of its visible expression in the written text [and by way of communion with learning partners.]

Notes

1. For example, Howard Kreisel, "Imitatio Dei in Maimonides' Guide of the Perplexed" AJS Review 19(4) (1994), 187. cf. Moses Maimonides, The Guide of the Perplexed, Volume I, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1963), 184, 187, 190, 192; Alexander Altmann, "The Ladder of Ascension" in Studies in Mysticism and Religion Presented to Gershom G. Scholem on his Seventieth Birthday (Jerusalem: Magnes Press of the Hebrew University, 1967), 9, 16, 24; Shmuel Hugo Bergman, Dialogical Philosophy from Kierkegaard to Buber, trans. Arnold A. Gerstein (Albany, New York: State University of New York Press, 1991), 196.
2. Gershom Scholem, Kabbalah (New York, New American Library, 1974), 162 and cf., idem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken Books, 1961), 215.
3. See, for example, Scholem, Major Trends, 279; and also Louis Newman, Hasidic Anthology (New York: Schocken Books, 1963), 222, quoting Schmelke of Nikolsburg from Reflex, May 1929, 65, and from Spiegel 120, 147, v.s; Levi Yitzhaq of Berdichev, Qedushat Levi (Bnei Brak: Heikhal ha-Sefer, n.d.), 141. Among Jewish philosophers with related views are Heschel, Man is not Alone (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1951), 117, 120; Martin Buber, I and Thou, trans. Walter Kaufman (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970), 62 and passim; Bergman, Dialogical Philosophy, 196; Arthur Green, Seek My Face, Speak My Name, (Northvale, New Jersey: Jason Aronson Inc, 1991), 9, 26.
4. The Maggid Dov Baer of Mezritch, Maggid Devarav le-Ya`aqov, ed. Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1976), 224, 230. cf. Elimelekh of Lizhensk, No`am Elimelech, ed. Gidaliah Nigal (Jerusalem: Rabbi Kook Institute, 1978), 252.

5. See, for example, Dov Baer of Mezritch, op cit., 46, 171, 224, 305; Elimelekh of Lizhensk, op cit, 252, 379- 380, 452-53; Levi Yitzhaq of Berdichev, op cit, 141; Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Tanya (New York: Kehot, 1981), 145-46. In Newman, op cit, see 229, quoting Rabbi Ezekiel of Kozmir from S. Rapaport, Vayakhel Shelomo (Piotrkov, 1908), 45; ibid., 499, quoting Raphael of Bershad in Midrash Pinchas (Warsaw: 1876), 43-44; In Wolf Zeev Rabinowitz, Lithuanian Hasidim (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 29, quoting Shlomo of Karlin.

FUTURES

TALMUD, PHILOSOPHY, AND TEXTUAL REASONING: Please join us for the annual gathering of the Network, Sunday November 24, 9-11pm, at the New Orleans Marriott. Jacob Meskin will lead the discussion.

TEXTUALITIES: AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON JEWISH TEXTUAL REASONING: The Dates are set now: June 15-17, 1997, at Drew University, Madison, NJ.