

Introduction to

**RABBI SAMSON RAPHAEL HIRSCH'S
COMMENTARY ON THE TORAH**

by

RABBI DR. JOSEPH BREUER

VOLUME I

From the Creation to the Death of Avrohom

הוצאת מרכז אינטרנט
www.hebrewbooks.org
ע"י חיים תשס"ד

PHILIPP FELDHEIM

Publisher

NEW YORK

1948

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by

PHILIPP FELDHEIM

45 Essex Street, New York 2, N. Y.

Printed in U. S. A. by

SHULSINGER BROS. LINOTYPING AND PUBLISHING CO.

21 EAST 4TH STREET, NEW YORK 3, N. Y.



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P R E F A C E

The following introductory remarks do not attempt to demonstrate the significance of Rabbi S. R. Hirsch ז"ר as an immortal leader and teacher of Torah Judaism. This is a fact which may be presumed to be commonly known. The more urgent is the necessity to make his (German language) writings accessible to a wide Jewish reading public.

The present popularized adaptation of Hirsch's Commentary on the Torah tends to develop the basic concepts and ideas of our Torah which characterize Torah Judaism in its ideological uniformity. From the extensive material the principal explanations to the individual chapters and verses were selected. As far as practicable, the topics are presented in concise and popular form, as they are intended for a wide circle of readers and, above all, for the mature Jewish youth. They should also serve as a welcome addition to the material of the teacher in his preparation for Torah-instruction.

The following parts of the Commentary will be published in ensuing volumes. Each will represent a complete whole.

The first part leads from the Creation over the early history of man to Avrohom; it characterizes the latter's significance for our people and all mankind. The headings of the individual chapters are indicative of the extensive material used in this adaptation.

Credit is due *Mr. Jacob Breuer* for his work in translating this commentary.

Rabbi Dr. Joseph Breuer

New York City
Tishri, 5708.

CONTENTS

VITAL QUESTIONS	9
בראשית—CHAPTERS 1-6	13-33
G-d and creation. Nature and man. The Shabbos of the creation. History of nature and man. Gan Eden (Paradise). Revelation. "The fall of man." Siluk Shechinah. Methods of education. Gan Eden. goal of the history of mankind. Man's history away from Gan Eden. Professions. Sacrifices. The "evil inclination." Murder. Culture and decline. Man (soul and body) and his increasing degeneration.	
נה—CHAPTERS 6-11	33-43
Destruction of the generation. Noah's building of an altar and his sacrifice. Earth and men before and after the flood. Noachidic laws. The rainbow. Noah's prophetic words and the history of mankind. The Kingdom "by the grace of G-d." The "Tower of Babel" in the history of mankind. From the history of mankind to the history of the Jewish people.	
לך לך—CHAPTERS 12-17	43-68
Avrohom's convocation. The Promised Land. Famine. Avrohom in Mizraim. Lot separates from Avrohom. The Jewish people—like the dust of the earth. War. "Palestine" in world history. Malkizedek. The Jewish nation—a new "creation." The life of Avrohom—a life of אמונה and צדקה. "The Covenant between the pieces"—significance and interpretation of the Galuth Mizraim. Sarah and Hagar. Hagar in the desert. Avrohom and Yishmoel. Avrohom becomes a Jew.	

The Divine Covenant. Avrohom—"Father" of mankind. The Jewish people and mankind Milah. The mother of the Jewish people. The "unbelievable" in the history of the Jewish people.

חיי אברהם—CHAPTERS 18-22 69-87

Prophecy and שמחה של מצוה. Jewish brotherhood. Avrohom's legacy: צדקה ומשפט — דרך ה'. Sedom and Amora. Avrohom praying for Sedom and Amora. Destruction. Lot. Abimelech. Prayers and תפלה. The birth of Yitzchak. The expulsion of Hagar and Yishmael. Avrohom—qualified for a political treaty! The oath. Avrohom plants a tree. עולם — מלך העולם. Akeda. "Tradition." "Fear of G-d." The "Akeda"—sacrifice. The Jewish people: people of the Akeda.

חיי שרה—CHAPTERS 23-25 87-95

Sarah's death. The cave of Machpelah. The Jewish marriage "contract." The betrothal of Yitzchak. Rivkah. The Jewish marriage. Avrohom's death. Immortality of the soul.

VITAL QUESTIONS

You are Jews because you were born of a Jewish mother. Jewish parents have reared you and taught you from early childhood to fulfill "Jewish" duties.

Home and School have taught you Torah: Torah is the Holy Book which G-d gave the Jewish people through Moshe and which, above all things, contains those duties which every Jew has to fulfill. To this add Mishna and Talmud and the manifold and detailed laws as laid down in the Shulchan Oruch, equally binding and important. You ask "Why?"

You are justified in asking this question, as you do not want to practice out of habit what you have been taught; especially since being a Jew often involves great sacrifices and heavy burdens. Moshe entrusts us this Torah, emphasizing that "our life and the length of our lives" depends on its conscientious fulfillment. (Deut. 30, 2). This is what we are praying daily in the evening: "We rejoice in the words of Your Torah and Your duties, for they determine our life and the length of our lives"—**WHY?**

You are Jews, sons and daughters of the Jewish people. Are the Jewish people a nation as other nations? If not, what makes them different? You see your people dispersed among other nations, suffering more than all of them. Why? You know that your people once occupied country and state: Palestine, Eretz Yisroel. That was a long time ago, almost two thousand years. Do we still have a claim to "our country"?

You see your people living in the midst of the nations. They all have their history telling them what they fought for and what they achieved, telling of struggles and victories and defeats, of rise and decline: World-History, History of Nations, History of mankind—is there a meaning to all this?

You ask: What does it mean to be a Jew? You should and could ask further: What is life for? Does human life have a meaning? Man is but a part of a gigantic nature, earth and all that fills it are but part of the universe—is there a meaning to the entire creation as it surrounds you? If there is no meaning to it, the greatest and the smallest creature in this world without purpose and goal, then your life is also meaningless.

Meaningless? Sound human judgment will deny this evaluation. And the scientist “discovers” wherever he searches, as Physicist or Chemist, Zoologist or Botanist, Physiologist or Astronomer—he discovers—laws, mysterious and immeasurable, true, but *laws*. And where there are laws there must be a “Law-Giver.” That is G-d.

You possess the Torah, the holy book which, you have been taught, G-d gave to your people through Moshe. Are you to believe in it? Belief is a state of insecurity, uncertainty—yet G-d’s Torah asks אמונה of you, confidence, a child’s faith which he offers to his guardian (אומן) or adult friend whose leadership he eagerly desires. For without it he would be hopelessly lost. It is this unre-served, boundless faith which the Torah expects of you. You must work on yourself to achieve this attitude, this faith. Torah is derived from ירה, “to teach” and at the same time from הרח “to plant a cell into an organism from which life blossoms.” Torah begets life, it is the pre-cept, the science of life—without it there would be no

sense and meaning to your life. Once you fully comprehend this thought you will not continue to merely *believe* in G-d's Torah. You will be firmly *convinced* of the Torah's supreme importance to your life. For without its guiding and shining light your life would be engulfed in a sea of darkness and emptiness. Only the Torah can help us to such firm conviction. Let us so read the Torah that it will become more and more G-d's Torah.

Then only will you truly comprehend Judaism, will you become Jews, *conscious* Jews, who know the meaning of life, its duties and demands, and who are cognizant of the tasks their people are being called upon to perform.

G-D AND CREATION

G-d's Torah need not teach us that there is G-d: "The heavens relate the glory of G-d. And the expanse tells of the works of His hands" (Ps. 19). The overwhelming regularity governing the orbit of the firmament's immense multitude, the never-changing course of day and night, the mysterious laws of nature which tie earth with heaven, light and rain, life and growth—all, the smallest and the largest, reveal an Almighty Creator: for there is no "law" without a "Law-Giver."

Yet G-d's Torah must show us G-d's significance for our lives. From the start (1, 1) we learn that G-d is בּוֹרֵא, creating this world out of nothing (יֵשׁ מֵאִין), an incredible miracle? Incredible as G-d Himself. G-d's creative will knows no bounds. He is the free Creator of His world. That is why we call G-d קְדוֹשׁ: His will is bound by nothing, all-powerful (absolute). If G-d were not "free," how could he call on man to strive for freedom (קְדוּשָׁה)? Only a "free" G-d can breathe the strength into man which enables him to fight for freedom.

This report of the creation makes us realize G-d as אֱלֹקִים. We find the root אלה "these" as a demonstrative pronoun (plural) indicating a multiplicity which has some common characteristics and thus is combined to a unit. (For instance: These chairs are brown. Chairs are a multiplicity which is combined to a unit through "these," inasmuch as their joint characteristics are that they are brown). To us G-d is אֱלֹקִים, i. e. this multiplicity in the world, the in-

finite multitude of laws which are at work—which lead to the heathen's belief in idols—they are governed by G-d as the sole אלקים whose Divine will has given the law to the smallest and greatest in His creation. Justly the Sages define אלקים as G-d using מִדַּת הַדִּין: G-d the Law-Giver, G-d, the Creator.

G-d said: "Let there be—and there was" (1, 3). הִיָּה is related to חִיָּה and both point to הִגַּה ("to think"): All that exists represents the realization of the creative, Divine will.

The often repeated "And G-d saw that it was good" (1, 4) is significant: not only is G-d the creator, but the future existence of each creation depends on His will; it exists because it is "good" i. e. it corresponds with the Divine intentions. But at the close of the report on the Creation it says: "And G-d saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good" (1, 31)—and "behold," the unexpected: it was not only good, but it was very good. Rabbi Meir comments that this refers to death and suffering. Man claims to be able to evaluate evil and good. Yet how often must he realize that many facts that appeared to be evil and disadvantageous turned out to be good and useful; and vice versa. Man is not able to judge because his judgement extends to the individual and momentary fact alone. If he, as G-d, could perceive the detail in its combination with the entity, view his temporary life in its connection with eternity—he would speak with G-d: it is not only good, but very good!

NATURE AND MAN

Man begins his existence as the last creature. G-d announces his creation: "Let us make man" (1, 26). "We" is the language of the ruler who speaks for the interests of his people; as if G-d spoke in the name of the rest of the

creation which is to receive its Adam in this "man." אדם, not derived from אדם (לאדם = אדם), is a name that ennobles man and expresses his task and aim. אדם is related to הדום, footstool: Man, "footstool of Divine Shechina," who, as it were, saves G-d the trouble of putting His "feet" on the earth—he is G-d's "substitute" who shall rule this earth-world according to G-d's will. But ירדן reminds of ירדן (to sink): as long as man takes this G-d given task to heart, he will be the ruler, the noblest creature in G-d's creation; if he evades this task, he "sinks" below the tiniest insect which was created before him.

In this first chapter of the creation the Torah dwells on the subject of the physical appearance of man. Through his body man belongs with the rest of the creatures. His body may even have a great deal in common with the animal—the Torah speaks of this body as the frame worthy of the Divine spark within it (as described in the next chapter). It is man's fault if his body grows "animal-like." The task remains to purify the sensual, animal-like body so that it may become the noble frame for the Divine soul. This—as we shall see later—is the goal of a great many Mizvoth in our Jewish life.

The Verse describes Adam's creation in singular terms (ברא אתו), but immediately adds: "male and female He created them"—both sexes, in equal dignity, can solve the common task of Adam only in harmonious unity.

Of the 6th day, on which Adam was created, it is said that it was "*the* 6th day" (1, 31), while of the previous days it merely says: yom echod, sheini, etc. There is a great difference between "this is a man" and "this is the man." In the latter case it is the man who was already expected, for whose appearance one was prepared and who is now here. The same is true for this verse: it was *the* 6th day for which the previous days, together with their creations,

waited, the day that should set for them their G-d-given aim. This 6th day, however, brought the creation of man, G-d's appointed ruler, who is destined to govern this world according to G-d's will. This also helps to explain the deep thought of our sages who teach us to see this 6th day in connection with the 6th of Sivan (the day of Matan Torah). It is as if G-d made the existence of his creation dependent on Israel's acceptance of G-d's Torah. Israel is destined—as we shall see later—to keep alive the original, G-d-willed conception of man's task which mankind either misunderstands or denies. In this sense we understand that the existence of the creation which counts on man of the 6th day, is closely connected with the day of Sinai.

THE SHABBOS OF THE CREATION

Chapt. 2, 1: "And completed were heaven and earth and all their host"—or better: they reached their goal, had become what G-d wanted to achieve with their creation. Because G-d is בורא, creator, everything has its תכלית, "ויכלו" (see תכלית שמים וארץ in the Shemone Essre of Friday night). This entitles also men to speak of Tachlith, the aim of their lives. If heaven and earth had no Tachlith, were without sense and aim—who gave man the right to talk of the "sense" of his life? It all depends on whether G-d is to us the בורא! Justly our sages accompany the first verse of the Torah with the quotation from the Psalms (119, 130): "The opening of Thy words gives light and understanding unto the simple."

G-d is בורא, sets תכלית to all. This makes all children of G-d's creation parts of G-d's "host." A multitude does not form an army on the strength of sheer numbers but only if it subordinates itself to the will and guidance

of a leader who commands every single move (צבא related to צוה: "command"). In this Divine creation all creatures form the rank of a tremendous host. G-d is Hashem Z'vooth, G-d of the "hosts," whose almighty creative will operates as LAW OF NATURE in his creations. If man is but a part in this great host, then must he not receive the law of his life from G-d who puts him on his post and gives him a chance to make his life meaningful i.e. serve the Divine Will faithfully?

"With the seventh day G-d completed His work—and ceased on the seventh day all his work" (2, 2): On the seventh day G-d ceased to work on His creation, as His intended work had been completed. The sages comment that God called to His work "enough" (די), so far and no further: Ever since this day there is "Shabbos" in the creation and no new creation comes into existence. Were there no בורא — "eternal" physical energies would be the decisive factors in producing the creation. Why is there Shabbos in the world since this seventh day—why have these forces ceased to re-create and pro-create further? Most impressively the Shabbos in the creation bears witness to the certain existence of an Almighty בורא, of G-d who, with his די, has clearly marked the world with the imprint of the Divine creation: G-d is אשרי!

As G-d is בורא and all creations in this world are parts of the great host of creation, the Torah calls this work G-d's *work* (מלאכה). This is not labor which involves a more or less exhausting effort. In מלאכה we find מלאך: As the "messenger" serves my will and executes all that he has been told, so is matter, shaped according to my plan, my work (מלאכה), my "objective" messenger. Behind everything that exists is the creative will of G-d which makes of it exactly what it had been planned to be: This whole world is G-d's מלאכה.

"God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it"—(2, 3),

i. e. G-d bestowed on the seventh day the power to succeed in its Divine destination and "sanctified it," i. e. raised it above any attempt to remove it from its appointed position. Long before Moshe put down these words for his people G-d had bound His people to **זכור את יום השבת** and **שמור את יום השבת** and had chosen Israel to be the bearer of the Shabbos in order to keep the world from destruction. Israel understood the meaning of: "G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it." They knew that only as long as men adhere to the Shabbos and are conscious of the "Shabbos in nature," they are conscious of G-d as **בורא**, as Master of the world and of their lives. They perceived the sense of their lives in the fulfillment of the Divine will. Yet a great mankind eliminated from their lives the "seventh day" and all it represents. They did not recognize G-d's rulership.

In their world, estranged from G-d, only man ruled, serving but himself and his own will. Therefore the curse is upon the lives of men. Yet G-d has blessed this seventh day, has hallowed it and thus proclaimed: never will men be able to remove the seventh day from G-d's world—it will find its champion, for all time to come, who will hold it high as an unimpeachable sanctuary. This seventh day and all that it means to mankind will succeed in its task to educate and win back an estranged mankind; for it is G-d's world, as is clearly stated towards the close of this "Shabbos-Document": G-d's work which He has created as **בורא**, "to form and develop it further (לעשות): G'd is not only **בורא**, He is also **עושה**. Ch. 2 illustrates this thought and expounds its meaning.

HISTORY OF NATURE AND MAN

After the seventh day the creation was finished. The functions of nature are "products" (תולדות) of heaven

and earth, i.e. all that develops through the joint operation of heaven and earth (rain etc.) We only observe developments, never experience new creations. These "products" are limited בַּהֲבֵרָאָם through their very dependence on the laws of "creation" that govern heaven and earth. As long as these laws exist heaven and earth will continue to bring forth and develop their "products."

The ה in בַּהֲבֵרָאָם is small, it changes the word into the passive state; taken off, the word is in the active form: of נִבְרָאִים becomes בּוֹרְאִים : creative forces. Through foolish delusion mankind forgot to see the ה and its was Abraham's credit to have restored this ה. He returned G-d to His world. אֲבֵרָאָם and בַּהֲבֵרָאָם have identical letters; therein lies the immortal deed of Abraham.

These "products of heaven and earth" however, were also shaped on the day when G-d created heaven and earth as עוֹשֶׂה. It is significant that to the Divine name אֱלֹקִים the name ה' is added here which, in the transitive, is the future tense of הָיָה; not: G-d "will be" (kal, future), but: G-d is ready, for all time to come, to grant again and again renewed "existence." That is the real meaning of the Divine מִדַּת הַרְחֵמִים, G'ds love and merciful care.

The Torah continues its report (5): Although the flora had existed since the third day, the plants did not yet grow as G'd waited with the first rainfall until the creation of the first man. Furthermore: The report on the creation, as contained in the first chapter, includes already the creation of man but limits itself to the emphasis that his physical frame was worthy of the "Divine." This chapter (7) tells us that this "Divine" spark is the soul which G'd breathed into the dead, earthly body. Thus the Torah proclaims the great contrast that divides man from animal: While the animal's entire living organism originates from the earth (1, 24), it is only man's body that

is taken from the earth, while everything else that makes him a living man was breathed into him by G'd Himself. This Divine spark in man is what makes him great, it gives him the power to express his will freely and secures his immortality. Man is, therefore, a "double-being (יִצְרָא: the Sages point to the double יי) in whom the Divine and the Earthly join so that the Divine shall place all that is Earthly (physical, sensual) at the service of the Divine will and thus make the body a worthy "frame of the Divine." With his body man belongs to the great earthly creations which are discussed in the first chapter. With his soul he forms a world of his own that raises him above the other creations. For while the creative will of G'd is alive and realized in all creatures as a *law of nature*, G'd directs His Will towards man and expects him to realize the Divine will in absolute *freedom* and thus serve G-d with his life. This naturally includes the possibility that man may deny obedience to the Divine will and finally renounce the "Shabbos" and with it Gd's position as בּוֹרֵא. But G-d, in His infinite mercy, brings man closer to Him and is always ready to help him to new life even if he forfeited this life. If man were not existent, heaven and earth would develop according to the laws that G'd set as אֱלֻקִּים; and G'd need not prove to be עֵוֶשֶׁה. G'd must be אֱלֻקִּים and ה' and as ה' must educate erring man for his creative aims; for it is He who has put the free man in His creation. Therefore, the "products" of heaven and earth develop not only according to the laws of the בְּרִיאָה but are also shaped by "the day, on which G'd shaped heaven and earth": This day is the seventh Shabbos-day to which man must adhere, towards which G'd leads man. G'd as עֵוֶשֶׁה shapes the "Products" of heaven and earth but He also interferes with them and even stops them, depending on the educational needs of mankind. To our Jewish mind rain not only falls as the

“natural” result of the joint operation of the laws of creation, but it is G-d as 'ה who grants or denies it, depending on the standard of our moral behavior (see Deut. 11, 13-14). Thus in this man's world heaven depends on the earth and on man who lives on it: “G-d shapes *earth* and heaven” (significantly not “heaven and earth”) accordingly to man's way of life.

These sentences (4-7) form the introduction to the history of mankind which now follows.

GAN EDEN (PARADISE)

Revelation

At the beginning of the history of mankind, Gan Eden greets us, the so-called paradise. G-d's love plants the garden of delight (עֵדֶן) for man, promising him rich blessings in gorgeous abundance. Man should find happiness and peace on earth and not only in the future life. With the word “paradise” one usually associates a dream-picture that is non-existent in reality. In the Jewish view, Gan Eden *is* reality. Man had the chance to secure it for himself for all time to come. When Moshe wrote down Gd's Torah for his people, he described the exact geographical location of Gan Eden (10—14): What men longed for, was reality; it can and will again become reality.

As far as the streams, mentioned here, are known to us, we know that they lie far apart. But it is said of them that they originate from *one* stream which springs from Gan Eden and, after watering it and losing itself in the ground, again breaks out outside of Gan Eden into four separate “beginnings” (רֵאשִׁיט, not arms).

This, however, is the condition on which Gan Eden is based: “G'd took man and commanded him” (15-16): Man must be ready to let himself be guided and commanded by G'd. G'd must reveal His will to him, to be fulfilled

faithfully. For man cannot anticipate the Divine will ("My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways Mine," Yes. 55) and man would be G'd if he anticipated Gd's will. The revelation of the Divine will is a most logical necessity. G'd would not be the "loving father" if he would have pushed man into a life that he will never fully comprehend. There is sense and meaning to life only if man's existence is dedicated to the Divine will which G'd must reveal to him. Therefore, if it says here that G'd wants man to "work and watch" the garden, it is significant that the Sages interpret these words in a more general way: G'd told man what to do (לעבדה) and what to avoid (לשמרה); these two words presuppose the whole rich contents of the original revelation of the Divine will to man. At the same time the Sages find in these verses 16-17 a hint for the so-called "seven noachidic laws" (blasphemy, idolatry, murder, moral purity, robbery and the law prohibiting the eating of a limb of a still living animal) which, comparable to the "ten commandments" to the Jewish people, include the whole ideology of the original revelation of the Divine will to mankind.

In Gan Eden was the "tree of life" (9) whose fruit renewed the strength of man and whose task it was to protect man from death. But there was also another tree of whose fruit it is said later (3, 6) that they were a delight for the eye and good to taste—yet G'd had forbidden man to eat from them. Why? Because it was Gd's will. The Torah calls this tree the "tree of knowledge of what is good and what is evil": This tree should teach man and be a steady reminder of what should be good for him or evil. To be guided by G'd means not to know or decide for oneself what is good and what is evil. As soon as man aspires to set himself the principle for good and evil, the conditions under which G'd prepared Gan Eden for mankind are void.

Marriage

Man is in Gan Eden but still G'd does not exclaim "it is good" (טוב) (see the other creations) for still missing in Gd's creation is the woman who should be at man's side as his "helpmate" (2, 18). Only with the woman at his side is man able to solve the task that confronts him. Man and woman are two halves (as indicated in the following description) whom marriage joins into a unity; only through this unity does man become a "human being" (1, 27). This bestows holiness on married life and guarantees the woman dignity and equality. And both "were naked and were not ashamed" (25). They did not have to be ashamed, for there was no reason to be ashamed of their bodies. As long as they both obeyed the Divine will and their Divine soul dominated all sense and sensual desires of their bodies, the body was the worthy frame of their souls.

"THE FALL OF MAN"

And now the Torah (Chapt. 3) reports the most tragic catastrophe in the history of man. The serpent, more cunning than all the other animals, allures and corrupts man and leads him to sin. The serpent's language has remained, for all time to come, the language of temptation. The description places us in the middle of the dialogue between the serpent and the woman: "and even though G'd has ordered you not to eat from all the trees in the garden" (1)—everything is denied you, nothing—no enjoyment is permitted! This is a lie—but it has always been the method of temptation. You will die if you eat from the fruit which appears to you to be good? You do not die so quickly. G'd tries to keep you dependent on him—do not act like small children who must be guided by the leading-string—just eat from the fruit and "your eyes will see, you will be God yourselves and

will, in the future, decide for yourselves what is good or evil!" (5) And the woman was befooled, she followed her impulses, ate and also gave her man to eat and their eyes were opened and they saw—not that they were G'd—but that they were naked and ashamed of their bodies for they had sunk to the level of the animal! For if man lets himself be dominated by his body, his senses and desires, instead of being governed by the Divine will, he has forfeited his human dignity. Yet this sense of shame, i.e. the feeling not to be as one should have been, was, in this hour of degradation, the first step to rebirth (6-7).

"Siluk Shechina"

At this moment they "heard the voice of G'd withdrawing in the garden in the direction of the Day (West)" (8)—this was, according to the Sages, the first sad Siluk Shechina in the history of man: The glory of G'd withdrew. שכינה, derived from שכן, neighbor, is the most intimate designation of Gd's nearness to man. As Jewish wisdom expresses it, it was the "neighborly" nearness of G'd עיקר שכינה בתחתונים that originally was to stay *on earth*. This proximity of G'd in the life of man (G'd talks to him) appears to us as something unnatural, incredible. The contrary is the case: Gd's talks with Moshe and all of Israel, the mission of the Prophets—that is not unnatural. Unnatural is the ever-increasing separation of man from G'd. From the beginning man was supposed to partake of Gd's nearness and this was the case as long as he was willing to be guided by G'd, to have G'd tell him what should be good or evil. Man had forfeited Gd's nearness.

METHODS OF EDUCATION

G'd is 'ה: His infinite love never gives up man, but tries to win him back towards his original destination and help

him to new life. G'd as 'ה, as עושה (2, 4) holds back the blessing from the "products of heaven and earth": No longer shall the earth smile at men as the Paradise, for G'd "curses this man-earth (אדמה) on account of man" for G'd He withdraws its original blessing; it offers man nothing but thorn and thistle and makes him sweat before he is able to draw the bread from the ground—the bread that has to be won through struggle (לחם): his life is filled with עצבון, with painful resignation—yet it is the only way to achieve the "good" that he strives for. To the logical mind sweat and work are "not good": yet they lead to the "good." Thus man learns not to evaluate "good" and "evil" as they appear to him: he learns through resignation. And from now on the life of the woman is also filled with "resignation" (16). For her maternal task is accompanied by painful resignation and yet it is the only way, "evil" as it seems, which leads to the happiness of motherhood. She induced her husband to sin and should have known that marriage and the woman's position can be protected only as long as the Divine will dominates their lives. If this is not the case—what gives the woman the guarantee that despite all her longing love to her man he will not prove himself "master" and destroy the peace in her marriage? Woman, too, learns through resignation. Later on Judaism returned to married life its original holiness.

Woman had forfeited "Paradise" for man and herself. Finally Adam realized that he would not live forever. Instead of being angry at the woman, he bestows on her the finest name which expresses all that he expects of her: Chawa, the one who gives life. She should help Adam, as "mother of all living" (20), to live on in children. The individual may die—mankind lives on—and the individual lives on in mankind.

Teachings foreign to Judaism thought to conclude from

this chapter that since the "fall of man" men are born in sin. They developed the idea that sin is inherited and that man is unable to redeem himself through his own strength. Our Jewish conscience rejects such teaching. "The soul that You gave me, it is pure" is our Jewish daily creed; we have to keep this soul pure to be able to return it to G'd in purity—and G'd is ready to help all of us!

However painful this life of resignation may be, there is not the slightest mention in the whole chapter of a curse pronounced by G'd over man. Only the man-earth (אדמה) is cursed, i.e. its development has been restrained but it is only for the good of man. The serpent, however, has received the curse (14-15); its task is to warn man, for all time to come, of corruption and sin. Man must flee the serpent and beware of it. For it bites his heel if he is not aware of the danger. Yet man will always be able to strike the serpent's vitals and to render it harmless. As ה' G'd wants to educate His men that they may find the way back to their erstwhile destination.

It is for this purpose that ה' now gives *clothes* to man (21). Man himself had covered his nakedness, for he was ashamed of his body; now, according to the Divine will, his clothes should not only be protection against the forces of nature, but should serve as permanent warning not to let himself be dominated by the sensuality of his body:—the clothes admonish man always to remember his human dignity and destination (later we shall view the great importance of "clothes" in Judaism).

GAN EDEN, GOAL OF THE HISTORY OF MANKIND

And then G'd "removes," "exiles" man from his Gan Eden (23-24). However it is ה'אלקים, not only the Divine sentence but the loving and educating providence

as well that deems his exile necessary. Its aim: to "preserve" for man the road to the tree of life so that he may find it again. That is why G'd stationed the "Cherubim and the flame of the turning sword" on the road to the Gan-Eden. As Moshe wrote down this sentence, his people knew what was meant by "Cherubim": not just angels, but messengers and executors of the Divine will—Cherubim protectingly spread their wings over the ark of Gd's sanctuary and here it is Israel who are to dedicate themselves as carriers of Gd's glory and Gd's will on earth. It is Divine providence that there should always be men, pure and great men, who know the only road that leads to Gan-Eden on earth. (This is, as we shall explain later, the teaching of Judaism and the destination of the Jewish people). These Cherubim point out the way which leads back to Gan-Eden. "The flame of the turning sword," however, shows admonishingly the way on which Gan-Eden will never be achieved. They are the consuming flames of the ever-returning suffering, brought about by force and the hunger for power which fills the history of mankind. Mankind, estranged from G'd, longs in vain for happiness and peace, longs for Gan-Eden—but they have chosen a way on which they will never find them!

Cherubim and the flames of the sword of suffering "preserve" for mankind the road to Gan-Eden. Their message: Men cannot win Gan-Eden through his own strength; this road is saturated with blood; he will find Gan-Eden again if he is willing to be led and commanded by G'd.

MAN'S HISTORY AWAY FROM GAN-EDEN

Professions

Let us trace the short lines in the Torah sketching the further development of mankind: Kain and Hebel, the

first fraternal couple. They had different "professions" to win their bread. Kain turned to agriculture, while Hebel became a shepherd (4,2). Could it not be that these diverse occupations influenced the character and intellectual outlook of the brothers which can still be traced in peoples that turned to either agriculture or sheep-breeding? Agriculture, soil cultivated in the sweat of the face, chains man, oppresses him and succeeds gradually in making him idolize the elements of nature to whom he seems to owe the fertility of the soil. It is here that the clear knowledge of G'd and therewith the human dignity are most easily lost. It is different with the sheep-breeder or shepherd: He is never entirely taken up by his profession, he is not chained to the soil and can enjoy freedom of mind and its enrichment—and so it is certainly no accident that we find our forefathers and also Moshe and David as shepherds with the flock.

Sacrifices

Each of the brothers brings a sacrifice to G'd. These sacrifices are as old as mankind itself. They are the natural expression of human emotions and thoughts. They represent the personality of their sponsors and their acceptance depends on the sponsor and the thoughts which accompany his sacrifice. Significantly it does not say "G'd turned to the sacrifice of Hebel" but "G'd turned to Hebel and his sacrifices but to Kain and his sacrifices he did not turn" (4-5). Kain offers "from the products of the land" without selecting them, just to sacrifice something, anything with which G'd must be satisfied. Hebel, on the other hand, pays homage to G'd with the "first" and the "best" because to him G'd and the service to G'd are the highest aims of his life. Kain's sacrifice is refused. He is humiliated, dejected. And he receives Gd's great message: It is

up to him, and to him alone, whether he will prove worthy of Gd's attention or not.

THE "EVIL INCLINATION"

He possesses שאת, dignity, he is the first-born, his will is free, it is up to him to use his advantages to do good or bad—the sin lies in front of the door, calmly waiting for his decision and longing to be ruled by him (7). This verse has often be misinterpreted as implying that the sin is the "evil inclination" which "lurks" like a wild beast for his prey. רבץ means to "rest calmly" (cf. 49,14). You have to open the door to the sin and it is your own fault if it becomes ruler in your house. And תשוקה is nowhere expression of a hostile greed but (as in marriage: 3, 16) expresses a longing desire: The sin longs to be dominated by you—that is the reason for man's ability to sin;—as the Sages comment so beautifully: G'd send the Yezer hora, i.e. the inclination to sin, in order to provoke man; but when man is defeated in the battle, the Yezer hora laments before G'd that man was unable to dominate it.

Murder

Kain disregards the warning and becomes—a murderer! (8) G'd: "Where is your brother Hebel?" Kain: "I do not know—am I the keeper of my brother?" (9) His terrible depravity and unbounded selfishness are expressed in this answer. "Do you hear the voice? It is the spilled blood of your brother! It cries up to Me from man's earth!" (10) G'd curses the murderer. Man's earth (אדמה) which should produce for the good man and now was forced to drink blood shall no longer serve him: Restless and shunned by the world he is to live his cursed life on the earth (ארץ). And even at this moment Kain does not realize the impact of his crime against his brother—he is only aware of a

crime committed against himself: He who murdered his brother, now fears for his own life! Yet he was to stay alive, according to the Divine decision: "Whoever wanted to kill Kain"—he will not do it! Alive shall he atone and thus the murder of Hebel will be avenged "seven-fold!" (15).

CULTURE AND DECLINE

Far away lies Gan-Eden. How far away it is for Kain! The "flames of the turning sword" have claimed their first victim.

The estrangement between men and G'd increases. Away from G'd (16) Kain attempts to build his life, without G'd. As the soil does not support him, he becomes the father of an urban culture that is independent from the soil (17). And then the Torah lists a number of generations descended from Kain in whom mankind sees the fathers of trade, industry and even art (21-22). All of which we call "culture": But what is the sense of culture, if the "Divine in man is dying out?"

How Adam must have felt while he witnessed this sad development! He had lost both of his sons. He might have hoped to see in Shesh a chance for a new future for mankind (21). But here, too, the alienation from G'd and everything that G'd means to man is rapidly increasing. Contrary to אדם, the pure man, אנניש describes the sick man in his depravity. And Moshe characterizes this deepening estrangement with these words: "In those days it became necessary to call in the name of G'd" (26). Chacham Bernays explains this as follows: Of Avrohom's life it says later repeatedly: "He called in the name of G'd," i.e. he made mankind, which had completely forgotten G'd, again conscious of G'd and His significance for human life. But the immeasurable achievements of Avrohom's

life which made possible the rebirth of mankind were, in the days of Enaush, signs of a sad decay. How "sick" men must have become that it was necessary to announce to men the name of G'd! What should have been self-evident, now had to be *taught*.

MAN (SOUL AND BODY) AND HIS INCREASING DEGENERATION

Before the Torah continues the story of the further developments of man, we find at the beginning of the following paragraph two sentences (5, 1-2) which are of tremendous importance for the history of mankind.

For know: "This book of mankind's history shows nothing but the development (תולדות) of man (אדם), whom G'd has created in His image." You behold pure noble men—but also perverted and crooked ones who are worse than the devil; opposite types, yes, but pre-conceived with the creation of "Adam" whom G'd gave a Divine soul! The gift of freedom may raise him to towering heights but may also throw him into the abyss of fearful degradation. Furthermore, never forget: Man, as he emerged from Gd's molding hand, the so-called "Urmensch" was not the unintelligent "primitive man of nature" but answered morally and spiritually the highest requirements which man must meet to be worthy of Gd's nearness. And "G'd created them as male and female and blessed them," so that they may solve in unity mankind's task which was also "Adam's." The goal of the history of mankind is the return to this "original status," the return of mankind to their original destination.

While Kain's generation perverts ever more, the "good" is preserved longer in Shess' generation (Ch. 5). Noach descends from him. There was hope that this generation might improve and thus save the world. It is possible

that by "sons of G'd" (6, 1-2) the Torah means Shes' generation in which the "Divine" was preserved to a higher degree; perhaps by "daughters of man," the daughters of Kain's generation are meant who deemed it possible to live without G'd and thus fell victims to gradual perversion. What a misfortune it was that these two generations intermarried without restraint!

And thus G'd sees that "the Divine spirit in man (the soul) will not always be the judge." But G'd demands from man that the soul rule his sensual body and that he put himself completely at the disposal of Gd's will. G'd realizes that this will not come true as "he is also made of flesh" (3) and this "flesh" always increases in intensity. Here is the proof (4): at that time the physical growth of men assumed giant proportions. Some of them still lived in the days of Moshe and continued to live in the memory of mankind. It is possible that these giants belonged to Kain's generation where, at the expense of spiritual values, there occurred an unusual physical development. This growth continued even after the two generations had intermarried; they were giants whose "flesh" increasingly displaced the "Divine spirit" in man.

G'd intended to wait for 120 years (3) but the wickedness assumed such proportions that the destruction of this generation seemed to be the only hope for the survival of mankind. For "all structures of thought in his heart strove after the evil" (5). יצר means to form; (it therefore has nothing to do with the "evil inclination" that "impells" man) יצר (passive) is something that is formed by man; they are the conceptions and intentions which are created by men's thoughts and whose goal is the good or the evil: In this generation all "structures" of thought of man pointed solely towards the evil. G'd see this—and is obliged to change His intentions—and it pains Him (6): these are all human terminologies applied to G'd—purposely chosen by the Torah; for we should think

of G'd as the "living" G'd even though we can never apprehend Him who, Almighty as He be, is as close to His men as a father to his children.

DESTRUCTION OF THE GENERATION

G'd ה' in His "mercy" decides upon the destruction of this generation (7). This destruction also befell the entire animal-life and the whole surface of the earth, for nature fades if men fade; and nature (אדמה) blossoms if men exist in it (אדם) who live up to their human destination. This generation shall be "completely dissolved" (מחה), shall disappear without leaving a trace (this is why hardly any trace of this "pre-flood" generation can be found anywhere on earth). From Noah there shall arise a new generation for G'd which will live up to the meaning of the creation. For the doom of even a whole generation does not allude to G'd and the aim of the Divine creation.

Noah was a just man who had preserved his moral integrity because he let himself be guided by G'd. (6, 9). The "earth," however, was morally corrupted and social life was poisoned and full of injustice. This man-world had drifted towards its inevitable doom and endangered the entire creation of G'd—thus its destruction was the sole hope for G'd's creation. In these chapters (6-7) which describe the terrible catastrophe we find alternately the name אלקים and ה': for even as Judge G'd remains ה'. And so the report of the destruction of this perverted generation uses the mildest expressions: (7, 21-23) מבול came over them, a general "fading" (נבל), men became unconscious, stiff (גועי), they died (מתו) and their bodies disintegrated (מחה).

To save himself and his family and the animal-life, Noah did what "G'd commanded him to do" (6, 22) and left everything else to G'd. Therefore it is superfluous to discuss the problem of how the ark sufficed for everyone.

The Torah divides between clean and unclean animals (7,2). When Moshe wrote these sentences, this differentiation was known to his people. It refers to animals whose use is permitted or prohibited. But this distinction was of equal importance to the Noachides. G'd indicates to us those animals whose meat we are permitted to eat. For considering the interdependence of body and soul it cannot be immaterial what kind of animalic meat we use to build up our organism. Whatever is permitted to the Jew for his own use may be sacrificed by the Noachide because as sacrifice it expresses his own devotion to G'd (which is the purpose of the sacrifice). The Jewish table and the Noachidic altar are of equal rank.

NOACH'S BUILDING OF AN ALTAR AND HIS SACRIFICE

When Noach left the ark and stepped on the regenerated ground, his first action was to build an altar for G'd and to bring sacrifices of the clean animals. (8, 20). To build an altar for G'd means to raise earthly matter towards G'd. Noach vows that this earth shall be Gd's earth to him and to his descendants who will join stone to stone until this earth rises as "Gd's mountain" (Psalm 24). This holy vow is expressed in the sacrifices brought by Noach. The sacrifices of Kain and Abel were מנחות, "gifts of homage." But Noach's sacrifices were עולות (from עלה): he vows to strive always higher so that human lives shall dedicate themselves to serve the Divine will. His vow, as expressed in all sacrifices, is devotion to the will of G'd which alone helps man to true life. Each sacrifice is נוחה (derived from נוח, to give satisfaction through the granting of a wish) describes the satisfaction that is felt when one's demand has been met. Yet by offering sacrifices to G'd one is still far from complying with Gd's will. Sacrifice does not mean obedience.

It is and should be ריח נחמה, "the scent of obedience," Smell is the faintest perception, the faintest contact between the smallest parts of an object. Sacrifices express obedience, devotion to the Divine will. As such they are the very beginning, the first step to obedience—they symbolize obedience which is to find fulfillment in the human action. Thus it says here: "G'd perceived the expression of obedience" which Noach promised with his sacrifice.

EARTH AND MEN BEFORE AND AFTER THE FLOOD

Sentences follow (21-22) which are very important for the whole earth—and men-development that is to come: G'd is not going to "curse" the earth again and will not attempt to stop its further development. (מבול was the catastrophic interference of G'd in the development of nature!) No future generation will be destroyed even if the "structure of thought of man's heart" (see above) should strive after the evil "from earliest youth." That means that even if the corruption should be so great that even the youth, whose hearts could be expected to be susceptible to the good, perceive the aim of their lives in the evil alone—even then G'd does not have to bring total destruction over mankind. Traditions of our Sages should help to clarify V. 22. According to them the same climate existed on the whole earth before the Flood which was the cause for prolonged periods of life. Also, the earth was not divided into different continents. The so-called prehistoric excavations support this tradition. The astronomic position of the earth in relation to the sun must have been different before the Flood. Thus the Flood was the greatest revolution of nature that ever occurred on earth. It, therefore, is quite impossible to

draw any conclusions from present conditions to "pre-historic" conditions. It says here: from now on all days and seasons shall be "permanent" and shall "never end." This means that the position of the earth in relation to the sun shall be of a nature that makes days and seasons, temperatures and climates never-ending and always-present factors on earth: Day here, night there; winter here, summer there, etc. Could not this multiplicity of the earth, the variety in zones and climates have had an effect on the variety of nations resulting in a shorter life-period of men? In the future corruption cannot weaken all mankind as the nations are too different from each other. And as a result of the shorter period of life, there is hope that a perverted generation will soon be followed by a younger and better one. Thus Divine providence has guided the history of mankind onto a new course.

NOACHIDIC LAWS

And then, for the second time, G'd blesses His men (9, 1) whose task it is to educate themselves towards the recovery of Gan-Eden on earth. Until then, however, the position of man in relation to nature is different from what it was before. Nature does not serve him unconditionally. He must radiate "fear and terror" in order to subordinate the animal-life (2). The changed living-conditions result in a different form on nutrition: G'd now permits man the use of meat: Man shall be allowed to build up his organism through animal-meat (3). Does that not involve the threat of a growing brutality? Immediately there follows a limitation of what is permitted to eat, a prohibition of food for the Noachidic world. Thus the food that is forbidden to us concerns only animalic—and not plant-products. "Flesh, whose blood is *in* its soul, you may not eat" (4): The animal, too, has a soul, but it is part of the earthly and originates from the earth (1, 24).

This soul is not the blood, nor is the soul in the blood; but the blood of the animal is ruled by the soul and driven through the organism as long as the animal lives. G'd prohibits the use of meat or any part taken from the animal when its blood is in the soul and is ruled by the soul, i.e. when the animal is still alive. The meat is permitted only when the animal is dead. No part of the living animal and of the animalistic soul shall penetrate man's body.

At the same time Gd's word strongly warns of murder! G'd permits to kill the animals for man's use but the blood of man "belongs to the soul" (5)—the soul and with it man belong to G'd, for his body is the hull of the Divine soul (6) and G'd takes to account any spilled human blood. That makes suicide none-the-less murder, for man's life belongs to G'd and no one has the right to dispose of his life. Whoever sheds human blood has forfeited the right to exist and must be executed. With his death he atones for his crime.

THE RAINBOW

Divine Providence assures mankind and all living creatures (8-17) that there will be no more total destruction. This constitutes an irrevocable decision by G'd (ברית). The rainbow which was visible in the sky even earlier ("My bow which I have put in the sky") shall be a permanent reminder of this Divine assurance. It is to be a symbol, a visible bond between heaven and earth. There is perhaps a different definition of this symbol: The one white ray of light is refracted seven-fold in the rainbow. The Divine light lives in all men but it is refracted in several stages: The "red" ray of light (אדום) is nearest to Divinity while the violet ray loses itself in the darkness, as a symbol that this ray exists even in the perverted man whom G'd helps so that the Divine light be not extinguished entirely.

NOACH'S PROPHETIC WORDS AND THE HISTORY OF MANKIND

Even after the Flood, G'd counts on the possibility that men and whole nations may become perverted and cause their own downfall. Were not the three sons of Noach "who went out of the Ark" (18) entirely different in character? Referring to Cham, Moshe adds significantly: "Cham is the father of Kanaan," the perverted people whom Israel was destined to follow in the possession of the land of Canaan. The pages of the Torah immortalize an event which became important in the history of mankind. (9, 20-27). On the regained ground Noach, as "man of the soil," again plants the first vineyard. He becomes intoxicated and retires in order not to be seen. Cham gloats over the appearance of his father. ("Nakedness" is either to be taken literally or describes a disorderly, shameful condition). He "reports" to his brothers (he makes a fuss over it). But the brothers, their faces turned away, cover the nakedness of their father. Noach awakes and from his lips we hear prophetic words which G'd has given him the ability to pronounce and which touch upon the history of mankind throughout the centuries. In his sons he perceives the forefathers of descending families of nations as he recognizes their character and their (the nations') role in the realization of the human destination, shaped by Divine Providence.

The very names of the three sons mark their character and that of the descending families of nations. **חם**, above all, emphasizes spiritual values (which consists mainly of recognizing facts and things and the ability to give them "names"). **חם** ("hot") symbolizes pronounced sensuality; and in **יפת** lives the susceptibility for beauty. (**יפת** is derided from "**יפה**," beautiful, also from "**פתח**," "to be open," therefore the hiphil "to educe," "to force one's way into someone's mind"). Noach's keen eye per-

ceives Canaan, in Cham. He curses him (25), the future shall never be his. For Canaan represents nations dominated by sensual brutality which results in the complete subordination of all so-called cultural values to their lust for power. Their highest aims are conquest, destruction and enjoyment. They are slaves of their own sensuality and sink lower and lower to finally become "slaves of slaves": Because they are slaves themselves, it is easy for similar slaves of sensuality to rule them. Tyrants always enslave their people to make them blind tools of their selfish aims before subjugating them with brutal oppression. But they will never completely succeed, for G'd guides the development of mankind towards their G'd-willed destination.

More than any other nation, the Jewish people, looking to Shem as their ancestor, strive towards this goal. It is their task to bless G'd with their lives. For G'd blesses men, and He expects men to bless Him! And they *can* bless G'd. For G'd has given them the free will-power and thus may expect them to serve and realize His will in freedom. That means "to bless G'd!" Noach's prophecy predicts that "the G'd of Shem," i.e. G'd as Shem knows Him, will find ever-growing recognition and that even Canaan will finally bow to Him. This, however, will come gradually. Between Cham and Shem stands Yaphet. Yaphet has found his greatest perfection in the Greeks. With Greek culture we associate the worship of beauty. Cham finds his pleasure in brutal force but Shem and Yaphet turn away and cover the shame. "G'd will open the minds to Yaphet," i.e. Yaphet will gain in influence and eventually dominate the mind of the world. Greek culture has indeed succeeded in making the world appreciate the value of beauty. And Yaphet has always conquered Cham. Progress, indeed, if brutal force bows to the "law of beauty"! From Yaphet Cham learns to spread the veil of beauty over bestial nakedness. Still this is not the G'd-

willed goal for the development of mankind. Shem, i.e. the Jewish people must bring G'd to the world and G'd demands that men let their whole lives be governed by His will. It is not sufficient to spread the "veil of beauty" over brutal force—sensuality must be sanctified to make man worthy of being—man!

Judaism demands that men "build their huts on earth" that G'd may live in them (27) and their lives may again partake of Gd's Shechina (שכינה) and Gd's blessing and neighborly nearness—as in the beginning of mankind's history. Canaan will be conquered by Yaphet and will then, together with Yaphet, serve Shem. This is the road on which the G'd of history leads His men back to Gan-Eden.

THE KINGDOM "BY THE GRACE OF GOD"

Chapter 10 enumerates the families of nations which descend from the three sons of Noach. We hear of their settlements in many lands. The difference in climate and geographic conditions created a multiplicity of nations (this, as we explained, was part of Gd's plan) whose language was divided into manifold "tongues" (5).

Nimrod became the first "hero on earth" (9): He knew how to subjugate entire nations. He founded the first "kingdom" on earth. He did this by chasing and catching men through devilish tricks (this is what "he was a hero of the hunt" probably means). For this purpose he used G'd! He oppressed men in G'ds name as if G'd demanded it. Dictators "by the Grace of G'd," intoxicated by power and brutality, may find their prototypes in Nimrod. Like Nimrod, they know how to hide power-politics under the halo of pious devotion.

THE "TOWER OF BABEL" IN THE HISTORY OF MANKIND

There still moved *one* "lip" on earth (11, 1), although in various "tongues" (10, 5), which means that men spoke *one* language in several dialects; their words were "uniform," for, on the whole, their thoughts, expressed in the words of the language, were also "uniform." And then the Torah reports how men left the "East" where the cradle of the human race stood, and moved to the West and settled in Shinor where Nimrod had established his rulership. They lived on a plain where no building material was available. Together they worked to create the material with their combined strength: They shaped clay into bricks using for the fire all that is "fit to be burned." Normally one builds with bricks and cements them with clay. Here the clay (חמר) is formed into bricks (חומר). They built a city with a powerful tower. Therein would lie no harm. It was the basic idea that made this building a criminal act: "Its top shall reach unto the Heavens—we shall make a name for *ourselves*" (4)!

It is true that G'd expects men, as individuals, to form communities and live together. But their task and aim in life shall be no other than that of the individual: To serve G'd. These men, however, adhered to ideas that were to jeopardize the entire future of mankind: If the individual is weak—the community is all-powerful. The individual dies—but the community is immortal. It is the task of the individual to serve the community and its purposes. And these tower-builders know but one goal: To serve, *not* G'd, but *themselves* and their glory. The life of the individual must be dedicated, *not* to G'd, but to the "nation," to its glory and greatness. The community becomes Deity itself whose tower reaches unto the Heavens—and dethrone G'd!

But G'd is unwilling to have human arrogance endanger His goals of Creation which He set for mankind. Divine Providence intervenes. Men are about to push G'd away from them, when "G'd descends—and beholds" (5) the results of this "Unity" and its consequences for the future of mankind. (At this particular moment G'd is "humanly" close to us, which explains these "human" expressions") They (the builders) will always continue "what they had started to do in order to realize their plans" (6). G'd intervenes and as a result "their language became withered" (שׁוּן), lost its "life" (7); for a language lives only as long as "its expressions are uniform," i. e. as long as one associates with the words the same conceptions, thoughts and ideas. Men may continue to speak the same language—yet they will fail to understand each other if they acquire different (i.e. opposing) views and ideas. This holds equally true for the community which can realize its plans and projects only if its individual members agree in their attitude and approach. Otherwise the community will break apart. Divine Providence caused men to develop traits that endangered the realization of the community's tasks: selfishness, obstinacy, defiance, passion and discord—all these "G'd mixed into the language" (9). Thus men were driven apart physically as well as spiritually. This resulted in a growing split-up and diversity of the language.

FROM THE HISTORY OF MANKIND TO THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

The "building of the Tower" remained undone. But time and again in the course of history "Nimrods" have attempted to lure the people into a trap with the mirage of "National glory," in the true spirit of the "let us make a name for *ourselves*." As these monuments of self-glorification continue to collapse miserably, they are replaced

by new and equally short-lived ones. Ever-returning wars and catastrophes tend to immortalize human misery. Yet Divine Providence saw to it that there should always be "Cherubim," i.e. men who perceive their task in the realization of the Divine will and who are able to lead a deceived mankind on the only road to Gan Eden on earth (see 3, 24).

Their leadership will bear fruit if the nations of the world learn to devote their lives and their work not to the perpetuation of their own honor but to the glorification of the Divine "name" which is mankind's G'd-set task.

The "convocation" of Avrohom serves the G'd-willed future of mankind. With the Divine call to Avrohom the Torah turns from the history of mankind to the history of the Jewish people.

AVROHOM'S CONVOCATION

This chapter is preceded by the enumeration of the generations from Shem to Terach and the latter's family (11, 10-32). According to Ramban, Terach's native place was Aram. Later he lived with his family in Ur Kasdim (Chaldaeae) where Haran and his son Lot as well as Sarai were born. From there he emigrates with the intention to move to Canaan. But he remains in Charan (Aram) and dies there.

Here G'd calls on Avrohom (12, 1-3) to give up his dearest ties, his homeland (מֵאֶרֶץ), his native place (מִמּוֹלַדְתּוֹ) and his family. (מִפֵּית אֲבִיךָ). (Notice the order, representing a gradual intensification of demand). For in the world of Avrohom, all around him, country and nation had become idols whom the individual served and whose glory and greatness were the highest aim in life. There was no room for G'd and His Divine will. The consciousness of Gd's existence had all but disappeared.

It was Avrohom's task to voice the loudest opposition against such a world. He had to renounce it, had to become a voluntary stranger and had to summon courage לך לך to walk alone. His life became meaningful by being devoted to G'd and through the fulfillment of His Divine will in deep confidence in the Divine leadership.

It is this courage and determination that have to motivate every true Jew whenever it should become necessary to walk "alone."

From Gd's hand Avrohom and his descendants are to receive all that he had to give : "I shall make you a great nation." While it is generally assumed that the land creates the nation, G'd will be, for all the world to see, the creator of this people on whom he bestows His Divine blessing. It will be "a great nation" among the other nations, as long as it fulfills, nationally and individually, the Divine will (2); as long as G'd remains to them the "G'd of Avrohom, the G'd of Yitzchok and the G'd of Yaakauv," i.e. G'd as perceived and worshiped by the forefathers during their individual lives.

The great task of this people, created by G'd through Avrohom, is expressed in the words: "Become a blessing." While other nations live but for their own welfare and glory ("let us make a name for *ourselves*!"), Avrohom and his people shall know no greater task than to "become a blessing" to a great world. Individuals and nations who bless Avrohom, recognize the inner greatness of his people and its G'd-willed aims in life and are willing to learn from it, will receive continued blessings. Those who "curse" Avrohom and his contribution to the world (the Torah expects this from the very beginning!) will learn by their own fate that they have forfeited their own future.

"All families of the earth shall be blessed through you" (3)—is the finest tribute to the life and achievement of

a lonely leader who had renounced the ways of the world—and brought it blessing. The same will hold true, for all time to come, for the people which has dedicated its life to “the G’d of Avrohom.” G’d has created this nation to lead mankind, by their example, on the road to ultimate blessing. For “the G’d of Avrohom” wants to help His mankind to regain Gan-Eden.

THE PROMISED LAND

Avrohom followed the Divine command and moved away. Where to? For the time being this was left entirely to his own decision. G’d was later to indicate to him through a visible sign where he should settle down, i. e. “to the land that I shall show you” (1). Avrohom chose the road to Canaan. Terach also intended to emigrate to Canaan (11, 31). Besides the degenerated tribe of Canaan (6) there also lived in the country Malkizedek (Shem, according to the tradition), in whom the knowledge of G’d was still somewhat preserved. Tradition also has it that Hebel and Noah offered their sacrifices at the same spot where the Akeda took place and where, later on, the sanctuary was to rise;—here was a land that was closely tied to the memory of men who were still near to G’d. Avrohom felt attracted to move there. He took his household with him whom he and Sarai had “formed” (5), i.e. the men, women and children who had come under their spiritual influence and were brought up by them.

Avrohom reaches Shechem, “the woods of Morei”—and here G’d appears to him (7). While G’d had talked to him before, he now appeared to him—it is not told *how*—we have to be satisfied with the fact *that* G’d appeared to him. G’d promises the land to Avrohom’s people in whose midst, as before, Gd’s Schechina-nearness is to find its place. Here the start shall be made to win mankind back to G’d. This was the land, where, according

to the Tradition, the first men lived and which had been spared from the Flood—yet a land which housed Canaan (as Moshe emphasizes again and again) which fell prey to ever-growing degeneration. The place where G'd became visible to Avrohom was Shechem whose inhabitants (later on) did not shrink back from murder (which is the subject of bitter complaints by the later Prophets). And near the "woods of Morei" rose the mountains of Ebal and Gerisim (V 11, 29-30), the former a desolate waste, the latter a picture of rich blessing;—did not the very sight of these two mountains express this earnest admonition ("morei" means to "teach"): This ground may become a blessing—or a curse to its population—not the land but the people who live on it are the source of blessing or of curse, depending on their willingness to build the altar to G'd, i.e. to raise their land to G'd dedicate it to Him and thus secure the proximity of G'd. Avrohom pronounced this vow as he erected the altar to G'd at the spot where G'd had become "visible" to him.

Although this fruitful land invited a further stay "Avrohom moved on," (8) ordering his people to continue their journey. He settled in the lonely mountainside, shunning the proximity of the cities: Only in absolute solitude could he search for G'd—and find him;—men had excluded G'd from their lives.

Here he pitches his tent (הללל has the feminine ending: it was Sarai's tent in which her spirit moved) and builds the Altar to G'd: With the "call to G'd" his life, dedicated to the Eternal One, shall attract a mankind which knew nothing of G'd but "served their own name" (11, 4). But the first task was the strengthening of this "Abrahamic tent." That is why he chose to move on to the South, the waste and barren part of Palestine (9).

FAMINE

Avrohom in Mizraim

His first experience in the land of the Divine Promise was—hunger (10). The prosperity of the land depended to a great extent on regular rainfall. Thus, for the time being, Avrohom seeks shelter in Mizraim. Did he do the right thing, especially since he thereby endangered Sarai's safety? Ramban considers it a grave "sin." This being the case we must realize that the Torah does not present the great of our people as infallible men. It does not conceal their mistakes, errors and weaknesses (not even Moshe's) and thus emphasizes the realistic truthfulness of its stories. These great men were people like all of us who had to work on themselves and fight their own weaknesses. They certainly do not need our "defense" (Apologetics).

In view of the circumstances, however, Avrohom's action seems justified: The spreading famine forces him to leave Canaan and to secure his livelihood in Mizraim. He does not wait for G'd to feed him in some miraculous manner. He does his duty in accordance with the Jewish principle: "Do not depend on miracles." He disregards the danger to Sarai and his family life. He felt compelled to act and does not hesitate to repeat his action later in the land of the Philistines. We know that Yitzchok acted in similar fashion.—In these immoral communities beautiful women—and especially those who were married—were always in danger of abduction and rape. Sarai's appearance as Avrohom's wife meant that, in order to lay hands on her, he had to be removed (even by murder). Being his sister one could hope to succeed by less drastic means—and in the meantime G'd will help. This is Avrohom's argument as he tells his wife: "If the Egyptians see you, they will say, she is his wife—and they will kill me and let you live (which for Sarai would be worse than death). Go and say that you are my sister; they will then do

good unto me in order to get to you" (בעבור) and thus I shall owe my life to you (בגללך) (11-12). And so it happened.

Even after Sarai had been taken into the house of Pharaoh, the king did not dare to touch her but tried to win her brother's "cooperation" by special favors. (That is why V. 16 throws together all kinds of presents he received, without naming them in order: Servants and maids are mentioned between donkey and she-ass!—they were just favors: today this, tomorrow that). But before it is too late, Divine help intervenes. A. is silent at the King's accusations. He could not very well tell him that he did not think of him more than of his people. The King sees to it that A. leaves the country—That was יציאת מצרים in the life of our forefather. After his return he went again to the place where G'd had appeared to him in a visible revelation. There he lived for the great task of his life: To call upon men in the name of G'd (13, 4).

LOT SEPARATES FROM AVROHOM

Soon he had to make the painful discovery that he did not even succeed in convincing or at least attracting his closest relative, Lot. Thus, V. 5 tells us: "Also Lot who went with Avrohom—" and here the verse pauses (the punctuation!): One would have expected that Lot, who was completely under Avrohom's influence (therefore not אָם עַם but אָת), would accept all that Avrohom was destined to teach a foreign world, and that he also would be lead by the lofty ideals to whom the life of A. was dedicated. Unfortunately this was not the case. True, one thing he had in common with Avrohom: He had "sheep and oxen and tents!" But there was not the slightest trace of understanding for Avrohom's spiritual aims in life. Moreover, he no longer lived with Avrohom, but had his own "tents," had become his own master. This was the

cause of all that happened eventually. As strangers, they could only settle on ownerless ground which was limited. While the Torah mentions before in general terms "at that time the Canaanite was in the Land" (12, 6), it says here, "then already the Canaanite and the Perizzite were *inhabitants* of the Land (7)" One tribe would have been satisfied with the area it needed, hoping to acquire more land later on. But there were already several tribes in the country, each of which rushed to take all that it could lay its hands on in order not to be outsmarted by its neighbor. Thus A. and Lot found the available land to be limited. Yet there would have been enough space for both of them if they had been really close to each other. As it was, distrust led to quarreling. This alone justified Avrohom's demand for separation. Although related to each other, they were אנשים אחרים "men" of different views of life (8). Avrohom had to demand the separation, if only to protect his family from Lot's bad example. "I cannot go wherever there is plenty, I have to isolate myself—alas, you do not have to choose: the whole country lies open before you—"whether you decide for the right or the left—I insist on isolation" (9). It seems that Lot had waited for this chance for a long time. He was anxious to avoid the difficulties that confronted him. "He raised his eyes" (10), beheld the rich, productive soil—and let his eyes decide for him. There he settled and spread his tents as far as Sodom. He was not bothered by the famed wickedness of the inhabitants who sinned as a matter of principle (this is the meaning of חוטא, while חוטא refers to a person who once has committed a transgression) and whose moral degeneration and wickedness towards G'd knew no limits! (13).

Such bitter experiences may have strengthened Avrohom's decision to remain in his isolation (12) from which G'd finally called him.

THE JEWISH PEOPLE—LIKE THE DUST OF THE EARTH

Although Lot had become estranged, the Divine Promise secured the entire land for A. (who had no children as yet) and his descendants עד עולם (15); it will be given to them as their land, for all time to come, even if they should not actually possess it at all times; has this not been promised to A., although he had never taken possession of it? And furthermore: His descendants shall be like the dust of the earth that cannot be estimated (16). Yet numerically the Jewish people were never especially important—and, on the other hand, it has been counted repeatedly. But מנה does not really mean “to count” (ספר); rather it is “measure,” to decide the size an object shall have. The dust of the earth cannot be measured or estimated by men; for it is the creation of G’d. This holds also true of the Jewish people: Its impact can never be checked by human power, for the Jewish Nation is also a Divine creation.

Avrohom already knows how to secure his individuality in the midst of other people and to live serenely on the land (18) which G’d promised him. He follows G’d’s demand and erects in Hebron the altar to the Lord.

WAR. “PALESTINE” IN WORLD HISTORY

Ch. 14. His first experience in this land was hunger. An even deeper impression followed: War, with Palestine as the battlefield. In this tiny strip of land alone there were five kings, living on the plain of the Jordan river. Every city had its king (31 of them in the days of Joshua!): the deeper people sink into immorality and self-degradation, the easier it is for despots of Nimrod’s type to establish their rule. Kedorleomer, powerful and cunning, subdues the kings (4). They revolt—and Kedor-

leomer unites with "Kings of Nations"; they conquer in quick victory all of Eastern Palestine (5-7), beat the kings of the Jordan-valley into hasty flight (8-10) and drag away all the people from Sodom and Amarah. Among the captives is also Lot. Avrohom's "brother's son" had become "inhabitant of Sedom" (12) where he enjoyed the "benefits" of citizenship—and thus also fell victim to the revenge of the enemy. Not so Avrohom. He remained "Avrohom, the Hebrew," who "stood beyond" (עבר) and who insisted on being "different." Although he lived in the woods of Mamri, the Emorite, he was only שכן, neighbor, who lived peacefully with them, without changing his individuality in the least. In spite (or because) of his isolation, Mamri and his brothers were so impressed, that they concluded a treaty of friendship with him, the stranger. Yet he did not seek this union, did not obtrude himself upon them: They were and remained "the masters of the treaty" (13). Avrohom did not seek to win their friendship by sacrificing his individuality and his G'd-willed destination in life. This verse contains a grave admonition to Avrohom's descendants who live among other nations: Be Jews, true Jews—and you may be sure of the respect and friendship of all men of good-will!

Avrohom hears of Lot's fate who, at this particular moment, becomes again his "brother" (14; see 13, 8). He rushes to save him with all who were "born in his house"—slaves? No! — חניכיו, men whom he had brought up, formed and "dedicated" for a life in the service of God (חנוך) and for whose sake he had lived in seclusion until now. וירק, (to empty,) he took them out from their surroundings, and, with G'd on his side, achieved with these 318 men the incredible, brilliant victory over the "kings of the nations"! Again A. has conquered the country; victoriously he marches from South to North, liberating the land from the enemy. Thus he lives to see the "I give it to you—" (13, 17)) literally come true.

For Avrohom and his descendants this event immortalizes an eternal truth: This land, "Israel's Land," will fall prey to famine and political dependence, if it is left to itself. Situated at the crossroads, the world's "navel," where Europe, Asia and Africa meet, Palestine has witnessed few events of world-historical importance which did not affect its very existence. *And just for that G'd selected it as His people.* For this is Gd's promise to His Nation: As long as it remains Gd's people, i.e. remains truthful to Gd's Torah—no enemy will threaten its land, even if three times a year its borders will lie open and unprotected (II, 34, 24); The enemy's sword will not ravish this prosperous, yet defenseless country (III 26, 6). From this land shall emanate the great message: Here rises the Ruler-Throne of G'd, Master of the World! Only Zion's G'd may give a great mankind the peace it longs so desperately to achieve!

Had the Jewish people remained faithful to its G'd-willed convocation, it would have been spared infinite sorrow, and world history would also have taken a different course. Our Sages, however, see in the defeat of the "four kings of Nations" through A. an indication of the future course of world-history, dominated by the four "World-Monarchies": May Palestine temporarily succumb to their world-conquering plans—final victory will come from Erez Yisroel, paving the way for Gd's rulership on earth.

MALKIZEDEK

A significant event concludes this chapter (17-24). The King of Sodom comes to meet Avrohom after the latter's victory: He did not even participate in the pursuit of the enemy and now deems it a great honor if he graciously consents to meet A. as his "equal." The Master of Sodom does not think of offering bread and wine to the exhausted victor! The King of Salem, on the other hand,

who was not even involved in the war, sends bread and wine, presumably in view of his being "the priest of the Highest G'd!" (18). There still seemed to live in these polytheistic nations a faint memory of an "All-mighty G'd" (אלהא דאלהא). The place of worship was "Salem" and the priest of the "highest G'd" was Malikezedek: צדק and שלם are the two concepts that include all that Judaism has to offer mankind: The G'd-willed Righteousness must be recognized and accepted in the lives of men, if they are to achieve the peace they long for. In Avrohom's days the memory of a "highest G'd," the G'd of "Righteousness and Peace" may still have been alive, but there were also other Gods: a God of war, a God of revenge, God of sensuality etc., each requiring special places of worship. Malkizedek may always have followed Avrohom's life with deep admiration, as he became conscious of the latter's message: This G'd is not only the "Highest G'd," but also "owner of heaven and earth" who, as Creator and Master, demands universal recognition and service. Now, however, he had seen with his own eyes how Avrohom, with the visible help of this "highest G'd," had won a victory that seemed impossible to achieve—he was overwhelmed by the impact of this event which the Prophet Yeshayo (41) celebrates in these words: "G'd caused nations to surrender to him (Avrohom) who proclaimed G'd with each of his steps through a life of righteousness—He caused him to triumph over nations and yet made his sword like dust—and like empty stubble his bow."

Malkizedek goes to meet Avrohom, offers him wine and bread and does him homage with the following words: "Blessed is Avrohom, visibly blessed, but he uses all the blessings in the service of his G'd!" (היה ברכה) He now realizes that this "highest G'd is the only Master and Owner of heaven and earth; this highest and only G'd who has helped Avrohom to Victory, will be increasingly

blessed to find devout recognition on earth! (19-20). At this moment Malkizedek stood before Avrohom as the true "Jewish" כהן who is called upon, by teaching and example, to show the way (כּוֹן, מְבִיִן) which G'd prescribes for our lives. G'd demands that men shall dedicate to Him all that they have acquired. This dedication is expressed in the "Tenth." Avrohom presents it to Malkizedek (20). With great dignity, however, he refuses the offer of the King of Sodom who wants to give him the booty as a reward: He did not enter the war for selfish purposes—in oath he raises his hands high up to G'd: Sodom cannot make him rich—his hands are dedicated to G'd who is to him not only the "highest G'd," but who, as "owner of heaven and earth," brings mankind closer to the goal that He (ה') has set.

THE JEWISH NATION—A NEW "CREATION"

Ch. 15. Avrohom's life enters a new and significant phase. Therefore אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה (1): All that he had experienced in the past was leading up to the events that now follow. He was to receive the revelation of the future Galuth, the sad history of his people's sufferings. Not as usually "did G'd become visible to A." (וַיֵּרָא), not "G'd spoke to A." (where the speaker is present) but "Gd's words was unto A." (where the speaker does not necessarily have to be present); the Divine Word directed A.'s attention to visions that were beyond the capacity of the human eye (חִזְוֵה מִחִזְוֵה from חִזָּה)—all this filled his heart with fear and anticipation of great hardship and sorrow.

"Do not fear, I shall remain your shield (in the face of all suffering and grief)—as long as your life is nothing but service to Me, yours will be infinite reward"—this is the Divine promise. And A. looks up to G'd (2): He is to him אֲדֹנָי, sole Master and Ruler of his life (therefore the

plural: he knows no other master— whatever else may dominate life centers in G'd!) and for the first time the name of G'd is written here as 'ה but read as אֱלֹקִים, signifying the combination of מִדַּת הַדִּין and מִדַּת הַרַחֲמִים:— Even in Gd's "strict rule" he perceives His "veiled love." Reward? One great longing fills his being: To have the child that had been denied to him for so long. As to his earthly belongings, the "Damascus of Eliezer," i. e. the relatives of his servant Eliezer who lived in Damascus waited greedily for the day when they could lay their hands on his wealth (משק is derived from שָׁקַק, to wait, long for something: "He who longs for my house (the heir)—"; and even the "children" whom he had brought up in his spirit (בן ביתי) were not the descendants he longed for (3). Here the Divine Word suddenly interrupts his thoughts (4): He is to have the long-awaited child in which he will live on with his ideals and spiritual forces such as can only be received from "real" parents (אשר יצא ממעיך). It is true that he had given up hope as he could not, in view of his wife's age, expect a child any longer--G'd however, teaches him to look up at the sky (5): There is no more actual Divine creation on earth—there, all being came into existence through natural developments: According to the "natural" conditions which are bound to precede earthly developments, A. could not hope ever to have a child. Yet there, in the sky, we see the stars and the planets, direct creations of G'd, children of the Divine creative Will unto this very day which are beyond human conception and interference—כה "so your seed shall be, so your Nation *will* be": Created directly by G'd in the face of utterly unnatural conditions, the Jewish Nation is to become a new "creation" in the history of mankind. This view of the starry sky imprinted itself deeply in the soul of A. who was to transmit this impression to his people. Thus Avrohom and Sarah have to

remain childless for thirty more years, the last hope of parental joy must fade away and their slightest expectation make them the "laughing stock" in the eyes of the world—unwillingly Avrohom and Sarah had to laugh at the mere thought of the idea; and the whole world laughed (21,6)—before the first child was born that was to become the father of Gd's nation!

THE LIFE OF AVROHOM, A LIFE

OF ' אמונה and צדקה

Yet, inspite of ridicule and laughter, A. accepts this Divine promise with indestructible confidence. (6). אמונה is the basic conception of our Jewish consciousness. It does not mean "belief." Belief is an attitude that is insecure and uncertain; mind and feelings accept something hesitatingly as true. אמונה is derived from אמן, the educator. To serve G'd with אמונה means to trust him with childlike confidence, ready to be led and educated by G'd and to submit one's lives to his dominating will. (In responding to a ברכה with אמן, we express our readiness to recognize not only all that this ברכה implies as being true, but also to so absorb these truths as to make them the guiding principles of our lives).—G'd accepted A.'s אמונה as צדקה (6). משפט, "justice," describes an attitude of complete social equality. Yet G'd demands more: that men join in harmony (צדק) and be kind and charitable to each other! He who acts accordingly, practices צדקה: G'd demands *love* as a *duty* which we have to practice towards others. A's life, a source of blessing to his fellow-men (היה ברכה), was filled with צדקה which he practiced because he met Gd's demands with infinite אמונה.—This exemplary אמונה was the greatest "charity" (צדקה) which he demonstrated with his life and from which his children and his people drew infinite benefits. During the bitter

centuries of suffering which G'd now reveals to our forefather, his people was to preserve and perpetuate this אמונה.

“THE COVENANT BETWEEN THE PIECES”— SIGNIFICANCE AND INTERPRETATION OF THE GALUTH MIZRAIM

G'd reminds A. that He has “brought him out of Urkasdim” (7). This could not be a normal exodus. According to tradition, G'd had saved A. from the burning furnace in which Nimrod threatened to kill him (the אור in Urkasdim might serve as a hint). Thus this reminder by G'd gains special significance as A. owed his “Exodus from Urkasdim” to Divine assistance, so that his descendants should learn from his experience to rely on G'd, in calm confidence, to redeem them from “the flaming and smoking furnace” (17) that was their long night of suffering in Egypt.

Earlier G'd already had promised A. (12, 7; 13, 15): “I shall give this land to you and your descendants”—and A., in his childlike אמונה, did not doubt this promise for a moment and did not ask for a sign to reassure himself. Yet here we read: “I, G'd, have led you out of Urkasdim in order to give you this land *that you may take possession of it.*” For the first time we find here this formulation; לרשתה means to claim ownership, to conquer (in this sense it is frequently used in 5. B.M.). This leads to the following conclusion: Helped by G'd, A. had just won his glorious victory; consequently he might have believed that he was to gain possession of the Promised Land in a similar way. That is why he asks (8): “How shall I know that the Divinely appointed moment has come when I am to conquer this land?” With G'd choosing the right moment he is sure of victory, for he is moved by infinite אמונה and—as is repeatedly mentioned here—he sees in

G'd the sole Master of his life whom he joyfully entrusts his future.

His inquiry *במה אדע* is met by Gd's *ידוע תדע* (13-16): Neither you personally nor your descendants are to take possession of the land (at once). Three generations must come and go, be slaves in a foreign land, completely crushed. The fourth generation will return to take possession of the land. Moreover the moral degeneration of the present population of the country has not yet reached the point when total destruction will follow. You were only the partner in a covenant (18). You will be gathered to your forefathers in peace (15); the covenant will find its fulfillment in your descendants.

This Proclamation (*ידוע תדע*) is nothing but the interpretation of what A. had just experienced through signs and ceremonies; They pictured the endless night of sufferings with its terror and fears which will befall his descendants and from which only Gd's almighty help will be able to redeem them. The animals mentioned in this verse (9) are to be found later in the laws of the sacrifices where they symbolize certain qualities in man who, with these offerings, gives himself to G'd. The calf, *עגל*, belongs to the class of the cattle, it is the working animal: as sacrifice it symbolizes the dedication of the creative powers to G'd. The ram, *איל* and the goat, *עז* are among the flock on the pastures; as sacrifice they symbolize the devotion to Divine guidance and leadership: in the full power of his physical strength the ram forcefully takes the lead; *עז* (*עז*, strong) stubbornly shows its horns and resists any intruder and subordinates willingly only to its master.

Here A. is told: "Take these animals three times (*שלוש*, to do something three times). They represent the coming three generations whom Gd's will has destined for great sufferings. G'd cuts them into pieces (*ויבתר* in Verse 10 refers to G'd!); during three generations the *איל* forfeits

every claim to right and possession—"they will be *strangers* in a land that is not their own"; during three generations He breaks the 777's force, preventing its free activities—"they will be slaves"; during three generations He ends the resistance of the 77—"they will be tortured" until their complete impotency (13-14).

Furthermore A. had to present "a turtle-dove and a young pigeon": In the language of the sacrifices they are the weak, defenseless creatures which, nevertheless, possess the driving force that enables them to elude the enemy. These three generations were robbed of everything except the "driving force" (Schwungkraft) with which they hopefully rise up to G'd: "it was nit cut into pieces by G'd"—The pieces lie on the ground like "corpses," open to the birds of prey—but A. protects them (11): it is to his credit that his descendants do not perish in the terrible misery. For these dismembered pieces face each other (10) as if they expected, as parts of a whole, to be rejoined together. And it will come true. For "when the sunset and deep darkness prevailed, behold, there was a steaming oven and a flaming torch that were passed through and divided the pieces" (12)—: This deadly separation was but temporary, it served the purification and enlightenment of men whom G'd selected as His people, waking them from death to life.

All this is not only proclaimed to A. but experienced by him with the terrors of an endless night. With the certainty of an actual experience he is to pass on to his children this Divine proclamation and promise which should give them the courage and the confidence to await the hour of their final redemption.

SARAH AND HAGAR

Chap. 16. We have seen how deeply A. was hurt by his being childless. How much more must this condition af-

fect Sarah. She was אשת אברהם (1), his wife in every way, worthy of his ideals, glowing with the same enthusiasm for their lofty tasks. But the one thing that he had the right to expect of her was denied to her: She had not born him any children. And children בנים (בנה build) are cornerstones which parents add to the G'd-willed monument of humanity. Thus the terms בית אברהם "the house of A," בית ישראל "the house of Israel" include all the generations which participated in the erection of this "house".—Finally "Avrohom's wife" approaches him with a request in which the imploring נא (2) is repeated twice. A. never betrayed any anxiety, he seemed not to notice it—but she knew that she had to act—it was her fault that she did not bear him the longed-for child. She had a maid whose mistress she is (שפחה שרי)—and even if A. will not do it for his sake, she is sure that he will comply for her sake: As mistress of the house she hopes to be able to so bring up the child as to make him the cornerstone through which she will also live on for all time to come. And A. follows "Sarah's Voice"—it does not say "his wife"—he is called to meet her personal request, for he does not expect the child of the future from Hagar. They waited 10 years for this child before Sarah made her decision. She acted as "A's wife" (as it says here (3) so emphatically) and she now gave to "A. her husband" Hagar "as a wife"!— Sarah gave the relationship between A. and Hagar the character of a genuine marriage and at no time did she deserve more to be called A.'s wife. Hagar, however, had to remain "her maid," for in this way alone could she hope to reach her goal. But when Hagar felt that she was about to become a mother "her mistress became low in her eyes" (4): As the future mother of A's child she ceases to see "the mistress in Sarah." Sarah painfully felt the injustice done to her: Did not Hagar know that it was she, Sarah, who caused her to become A's wife? Did not

A. attempt to make this clear to Hagar? Was it not also his fault (5) if Hagar began to look down on her mistress? And Sarah humiliates Hagar, (6) she makes her feel that she is still her maid; Sarah felt that she had to act this way if the expected child was to come completely under her influence. But Sarah wanted the impossible, for she had not considered that "A's wife," the mother of his child, could not remain a maid. A's spirit and personality had changed Hagar's slavish servility, had aroused in her the yearning for freedom—she can bear it no longer to be treated like a slave—and she flees.

HAGAR IN THE DESERT

She escaped into the desert where she hoped to avoid being found by anyone who knew her. But an angel of G'd found her (7). To his question she replies: "I am in flight from my mistress Sarah" (8). And the Angel addresses her in three different versions; three times it says ויאמר (9-11): Voluntarily she is to return to Sarah, voluntarily she is to submit to her. Hagar does not move. She is to become the mother of a numerous family. Hagar does not react. Her descendant shall become *free*, the most independent among men. This was sufficient. At this price she is ready to submit to Sarah. The child is to be called ישמעאל, for "G'd has heard her suffering": she is to implant in him the knowledge that Gd's Omnipresence not only sees but also listens when men suffer—which is more than seeing. For Hagar was not mistreated physically; only the words of Sarah made her feel her dependence. Her son is to be a פרה אדם (not פרה אדם which would mean a free, unrestrained man), "a free one among men" (12): his descendants are to be men who will not submit to the restraint of foreign rule and urban life; they will fight each other but each one will hold his

ground on earth. Here the basic social character of the Ishmaelites is expressed.

Hagar had experienced G'd. She had fled to the lonliest desert, believing that no one would see her. Now she knew that one can escape from men, but never from G'd. "Do I also have to look around here," i. e. will somebody see me (ראי) in the desert? G'd had seen her. From now on G'd is to her "the G'd of seeing" (ראי: noun), G'd who sees all (13).

AVROHOM AND YISHMOEL

This experience, so significant to Hagar's descendants, is immortalized by A. who bestows a name on the well in the desert (14): This well is to remain a monument to G'd by Hagar's descendants—G'd, who should be the "living" G'd to them, source and climax of all being and living. And furthermore: He is not only ראי א' (13) (13), "G'd of seeing" who sees all, but ראי, G'd "who sees me and whose eye is focused on each and everyone."

This true knowledge of G'd has been preserved among the Arab peoples seed of A. and Hagar. Still, Yishmoel did not become the heir of the Abramitic life-ideals, as they demanded not only knowledge and recognition of G'd but also the free submission of the whole life, even the sensual one, under Gd's dominating will: Only then does one begin to be a *Jew*. Yishmoel received from A. the consecration of the mind, but he lacked Sarah as a mother! And who can measure the wealth of spiritual values that a *Jewish* mother gives to her child on his way through life, enabling him to realize the great demands of the Milah?

AVROHOM BECOMES A JEW

Ch. 17. A. was already 99 years old. A full life lay behind him in the course of which he practiced all the vir-

tues which G'd expects from the pure man, the pure "Noachide"—but he was not yet a Jew. For one does not become a Jew by being humane and good—even if one practices all the virtues that distinguished A's life up to that time. Now A. is about to become a Jew. Which new demands must his life meet from now on? They are laid down in V. 1.

Of himself G'd says: "I am G'd," שדי (די from די "enough") who, according to the Sages, has said "enough" to the world and all that is in it. This "enough" reveals "Myself." Were heaven and earth the products of eternal forces—why do they not "create" on and on, constantly producing new "creations"? This "Shabbos" in Nature reveals Him who called it into being with His free will and set it the goal (ויכלן see 2, 1), the די of His Almighty Will.

And also those forces which are active in Gd's creations' from the tiny to the gigantic, have been marked by His די with the "Laws of Nature" that govern them, for they are all limited by these laws in whose sphere alone they can work.

I, G'd, שדי, now demand of you: "Prove yourself before My Countenance," i. e. go before Me in freedom, have Me, who sets measure and goal to all (די), always before your eyes and become "complete" (תמים), i. e. all your functions, even the most sensual ones, shall *freely* develop within the limits that I set them. That is what it means to be a Jew. To the Jew the Divine will of the Torah is nothing but Gd's די to all phases of his life. It is a sin to him (עבירה) if he "transgresses" (עבר) the limits set for him by Gd's Torah. If until now A. was the pure Noachide, he now was to become a Jew with the voluntary submission of his *whole* being (תמים) under the Divine Law.

THE DIVINE COVENANT

ברית is a promise and a destination which is to find its realization under all circumstances. It does not say here that G'd intends to conclude a Covenant with A. but "I shall *give my* Covenant between you and Me" (2). The following interpretation may be adopted: G'd had concluded the "Covenant" with Noach and mankind as a whole which descended from him (9,9) and had promised as a certainty that mankind, despite its sad estrangement, would finally find the way to G'd and thereby their "Paradise on Earth". For this goal and treaty-assurance (ברית) G'd needs the tools: A. and the people descending from him are to be these tools: "This My Covenant I "want" to *give* between Me and you".—Before G'd A. falls on his face (3), submits entirely to G'd, ever ready to meet the Divine demands.

Now he is to learn which Divine rule and promise this covenant contains (4-8) and the obligations they entail for him and his descendants (9-14). Therefore, G'd speaks as the "G'd of Justice" (אלקים), ordering A. to hand down (לאמר) to his descendants the entire contents of this revelation.

AVROHOM AS "FATHER" OF MANKIND

Gd's message to A. implies that he is to become the spiritual father of the nations of the earth. Without him they constitute an aimlessly "mingling crowd" (המוץ)—he is to provide them with the wings and the driving force (אבר) that will enable them to aim towards the lofty heights, as shown by G'd to all men. Therefore his name shall henceforth be אברהם (4-5).

THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND MANKIND

A. is also to become the founding father of a great nation which will be an example to all mankind. This nation shall be גוים (6), a multitude of nations, i.e. it shall consist of tribes each of whom is to possess its specific individuality in character and profession. For the Divine Covenant must be realized in the lives of all men, different as they may be in character and profession. Thus the Jewish people is a small sector of a great mankind. G'd shapes this people into Gd's nation, regardless of how far away it may be from this final destination: G'd "maintained His covenant—it is an eternal Covenant" (7). G'd secures Erez Yisroel for *His* nation: as Gd's nation they shall take possession of this land in which G'd is to be "its G'd" (8)!

It is A.'s and his descendant's great responsibility to meet the conditions which the Divine promises entail. A.'s descendants, the Jewish people, are to know that they owe their existence only to this Divine Covenant. Yitzchok and the Jewish people will only be born for this Covenant. (9)

MILAH

To this Covenant G'd dedicates and demands the Milah. It is called אות ברית, the "sign of the Covenant" (11) and also ברית "Covenant" (10); whoever rejects this *symbol* of the Covenant "destroys the Covenant" itself (14). This is to say: it is true that the Milah is a sign, a symbol which expresses a great challenge that must be met. Yet it is not sufficient to only practice the ideals which the Milah symbolizes; whoever rejects this sign which the Divine Law demands, has destroyed the "Covenant! (The same is true of the other symbolic acts demanded by the Torah, as T'fillin, Mezuzo, Lulov etc).—The Jewish K'lall has to see to it (המול לבנם) that the male child receives the Milah on the eighth day, its actual execution being the

particular duty of the father (13). If the Milah did not take place, the son himself is obliged to have the Milah consummated upon himself (14). If he refrains from doing so, he ceases to exist within the Abramitic Nation (כרת).

The Divine Law seals this sign of the Covenant upon the sensual body. ערל (14) means to be curbed, restrained from executing complete control over a limb or an object: One is ערל אזניים, ערל שפתים, ערל אוזניים if one is not able to control the lip or the ear, one stutters or one is deaf; ערל לב is one whose heart, with all its passions and emotions, will not subordinate itself to the mind—his heart is ערלה (Deut. 10, 16). Thus the fruits of the first three years which are forbidden to be used are called ערלה, the owner is ערל in relation to the fruit (Lev. 19, 23).—To be a Jew means to subordinate one's entire being to the demands of the Divine Will: Let no one become an ערל in relation to his sensual body. If it is the case, the Torah refers to the sensual body as ערלה! The Jew has to *oppose* this ערלה. And this opposition is expressed in the act of the Milah. מילה is derived from מול "opposite" and in the Hiphil-form "oppose" (see Psalm 118, 10: בַּשֵּׁם ה' כִּי אֶמְלֹךְ "in the name of G'd I opposed them (the enemies)"). The Milah on the flesh opposes, fights against the ערלה of the body and demands its removal. For only if one's *whole* being (תמים) conducts itself "in freedom before G'd" (1) one has met the demands of the Divine Covenant and has become a Jew.

THE MOTHER OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

15-16. Although the sign of the Divine Covenant was given to the male sex only, its final realization is not possible without the women of the Jewish people. At this significant moment, Sarah stands in complete equality besides A. As the change of the name אברהם to אברהם ex-

presses A.'s importance in this Divine Covenant, so the change of שרי into שרה indicates what a Sarah meant for the realization of this Divine Covenant.—Both names have their roots in words which denote the “prince”. שרי (root is שרה as is שדי “field” from שדה) signifies the outstanding, surpassing (שרה being related to סרח which means “to be longer”). Thus Sarah is the outstanding one.

שרה (root is שור from which משורה, the measure; שרה (feminine): Sarah is the one who keeps the standard, she is the authority for all that is moral, pure, just and, therefore, beautiful and good.

And now it says of A. ויהי שמך אברהם “His name *shall* be A. (5): He is to become A., a destination which has yet to be reached. Of Sarah it says differently שרה שמה (15): Her name *is* Sarah, she already meets the demands which this name implies and she is called upon to pass on to her children and to the Jewish mothers the noble wealth of ethical values. — For it is not sufficient for Jewish children to have A. as a father—they must also be born of a Jewish mother who is like Sarah—mothers who implant in their children’s souls the susceptibility for everything that is good and pure.

Thus Sarah receives the same blessing as A. (16): She alone can and shall bear the long-expected child for A. and it is her pure character that is to live on forever in the “nations” i.e. the individual tribes of the Jewish people. Jewish women of the noble standing of Sarah wield a quiet yet “authoritative” influence within the internal social life of the Jewish people (עם from עם refers to the internal existence of a people and its individual members) as well as in its appearance towards the outside world (גוי), even if they do not take their place in public life.

THE "UNBELIEVABLE" IN THE HISTORY OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE

A. accepted the Divine promises in complete confidence (as signified by his prostration, see V. 3)—yet he could not help laughing at the very thought of a centenary and a ninety-year old woman having a child on whom the future of an entire nation rests and whom G'd has set lofty tasks in the service of mankind. For this was nothing short of "ridiculous" (i.e. קצף) in the eyes of men (17). This "laughter" is so significant that the Torah emphasizes it repeatedly and immortalizes it in the name of the first Jewish child. The very beginning of the Jewish people was "ridiculous"—and its history and hopes are still ridiculous in the eyes of those who can conceive of nothing as possible and thinkable that does not conform to *natural conditions*, "judges" who eliminate G'd from their judgment. Yet G'd alone is the Creator of the Jewish Nation, G'd alone can explain the mystery of its continued existence—and because it is G'd who sets the goal for this nation for which it is to live among the nations of the earth, the hopes of this nation are—a *certainty!*

These promises were bound to make A. feel happy—yet the very thought of Yishmoel saddened him—: Was this child entirely worthless? "Oh, may Yishmoel live before Your Countenance" (18), even if he is not worthy "to walk before Gd's Countenance (see V.1)—may he prove worthy to *live* before G'd! And Gd's reply: Not in vain does Yishmoel bear the name "G'd hears"—he has also received the Divine blessing—but the final realization of the "Divine Covenant" will be left to Yizchok (20-21).

"On the same day" (23-26), without hesitation, A. performs the Milah upon himself and the men in his house. On "the same day"—not secretly in the night: The first Jew did not attempt to conceal his "Jewishness" which set the entire world against him.

PROPHECY AND שְׂמֵחָה שֶׁל מִצְוָה
JEWISH BROTHERHOOD

Ch. 18. אֱלֹהֵי G'd becomes visible to him who has just performed the Milah upon himself; we learn later what G'd revealed to him. Although he had become a Jew, he continued his stay in "the woods of Mamre" with the men who had offered him their friendship (see 14, 13). "The day was hot"—yet A. does not seek the cooling shade but sits in the sun hoping for wanderers to appear whom he might welcome in the cool twilight of his tent. For, as the Sages suggest, he was troubled by the thought that people might shun him, now that the Milah had taken place. At this moment G'd becomes visible to him—while he also notices the wanderers (2)—he is in high spirits for his is the joyfulness that flows from the fulfillment of a Mizva (שְׂמֵחָה שֶׁל מִצְוָה)—and at this moment G'd becomes visible to him. This fact is of tremendous importance for the understanding of the true character of the Jewish Prophecy: Prophecy has nothing to do with "rapture" or "ecstasy"; neither does one partake of Divine revelations by an "escape from life": Men who are in the prime of their G'd—serving lives are selected by G'd as tools of His Prophecy.

A. sees the wanderers, rushes towards them, letting G'd quasi wait for him, asking Him (3) not to withdraw from him—for, say the Sages, to receive wanderers hospitably is a far greater duty than to "receive Gd's Shechina". Thus A. practices Jewish brotherhood on "uncircumcised" idolators. And how he practices it! No one would so hotly pursue profit as A. seeks an occasion to demonstrate brotherly love to his fellow-men! His entire household is set into motion, wife and child, everything is made ready as A. seizes the first chance to practice brotherly love as a *Jew*. For as a Jew he was called upon to bring to men—in the name of G'd—the message of brotherly love. This spirit

of love and of charity can be found in his late descendants—and it is due to this “Abramitic” heritage that this “humane” spirit has taken root in the non-Jewish world and has become a “blessing” to all mankind.—**בִּי עַל כֵּן**, “therefore” (to be completed by:) I beg of you to rest in my house—You have passed by and I wish to receive you hospitably (5).

קִמַּח סֶלֶת (6): Through repeated filtering, the flour was cleaned from all inferior substances (**קִמַּח**). The purified flour is called **סֶלֶת**. Menachoth 76b explains that 1 **סֵאֶה** ($1/3$ Eyfa) yielded, after considerable sieving, $1/10$ Eyfa of the finest flour for the “show-bread” (**לֶחֶם הַפְּנִיּוֹת**). $1/10$ Eyfa = 1 Omer was the daily portion of the Manna allotted to every individual in the desert. Thus it means here: take quickly from 3 **סֵאֶה** “unsorted” flour (**קִמַּח**) the finest (**סֶלֶת**)—which would be $1/10$ Eyfa for each guest, an amount that was befitting of the hospitality of an Avrohom.

The Angels had received the Divine mandate to announce to Sarah the birth of a son (10, on). It seems that A. did not consider himself authorized to inform Sarah of the revelation he had received (17, 19-21). (At the covenant it says **לֵאמֹר** (17,3); at the announcement of Yizchak’s birth (17,19) this word is missing). Sarah is to hear it now, suddenly and unexpectedly, with the result that she also found it “ridiculous” (as could be expected): She is worn out (**בַּלְהָא**), old and faded—and now she is to receive **עֵדֻנָּה** (**עֵדֻן**) delight, the satisfaction of her deepest desire! (12) — There is no need denying (15) — she and her descendants are never to forget it—that to the first Jewish mother the very thought of ever becoming a mother appeared “ridiculous”!

But G’d had appeared to A. to tell him of the coming downfall of the richest cities in the country—at a moment when he had performed the Milah upon him-

self and his household and demonstrated a brotherly love that was to be an example for all time to come. This insight in the Divine workings was necessary. For A. was to transmit to his people this great truth: "Sedom and Amorah" will always face destruction. G'd has chosen A.'s descendants that through them "all nations of the earth shall be blessed" (18). This will only come true if they continue to live in the spirit of A. G'd has "recognized" him (ידעתיו) (19): ידע describes the intimate union between man and wife (4,1). If men "recognize" G'd (דעת ה'), i.e. if they dedicate themselves faithfully to the Divine Will, G'd will be close to them and grant them His love and His care. "Strive for such "dedication" "is the great message of A. to his descendants, the Jewish people.

AVROHOM'S LEGACY: דרך ה' — צדקה ומשפט

His descendants are to "preserve the way of G'd", i.e. the demand "Walk before Me and strive for moral integrity" (17,1) will be realized if men choose the road on which G'd leads them. Towards such a goal G'd has given the Milah to His people which symbolizes the demand for moral and ethical conduct before G'd. To this belongs the fulfillment of the חוקים, the Divine statutes which aim to purify and sanctify our sensual lives (מצות שבין אדם למקום: Laws governing the relationship between men and G'd). They are the pre-requisites for the realization of the second demand: "Practice love and justice" (מצות שבין אדם לחברו:—Laws governing the relationship between men).

Man is entitled to demand משפט, just treatment from his fellow-men. צדקה signifies love and charity which one cannot demand but is entitled to expect in the name of G'd because it is G'd who demands them;—thus צדקה is a brotherly love which G'd demands from us! In this the Jewish concept of צדקה differs from the practice of charit-

able distribution of "alms", that curious sort of "generous donations" given haughtily by the wealthy, humiliating the receiver. צדקה is an *obligation* to which the poor are entitled in the name of G'd and whose acceptance does not humiliate them. For the rich are to consider themselves but administrators of their wealth, given to them by G'd, of which they are to contribute to the poor as much as they are entitled to receive in the name of G'd.— Usually משפט precedes צדקה: first practice justice, then צדקה: to be dishonest with one hand and give "alms" with the other is considered an abomination by Jewish truth! Here צדקה precedes משפט, obviously contrasting the Jewish concept of righteousness with the degeneration prevailing in Sedom. For without a certain measure of "legal order" society cannot exist. In Sedom there was such an "order" but it defied all common conceptions of humane conduct! In Sedom the practice of brotherly love and charity had become a criminal act! Jewish truth, however, maintains that men are never in a position to judge for themselves what is "just," and that it is G'd alone who can delegate to man the "right of the truth". Thus the great Abramitic legacy prescribes ושמרו דרך ה' לעשות צדקה ושפטו. It does not say ויעשו but לעשות: These demands are not independent of each other but rather condition each other: the demands of justice and love cannot be realized unless men are ready to preserve "the way of G'd"; men must be willing to recognize G'd as Master of their lives whose Divine Will directs their individual lives (חוקים) before they are called upon to meet the Divine demands of justice and love in their (sociological) lives!

SEDOM AND AMORA

At the moment when the cornerstone of the Jewish Nation has been laid through Milah and the doctrine of brotherly love, G'd directs A.'s attention to the Divine

Judgement which is to take place against Sedom and Amora: The nation of G'd shall always bear in mind the fate of Sedom and Amora on the soil of Erez Israel as a warning as to what will be its own fate if it ceases to be faithful to the "Abramitic Legacy" (see Deut. 29,22).

V. 21 and 22 belong together: "and be the noise over Sedom and Amora very loud and their depravity severe—I will still consider—". The excitement over their abominable crimes against mankind, ridiculing love and justice, was considerable; their moral degradation—which was in sharp contrast to "the way of G'd"—had become unbearable;—one crime follows the other as it happened at the time of the Flood. Here again the crimes against society which follow in the wake of moral degradation decided their fate.—*צעקה* is intensified *זעקה*: the cries of the people (*זעקה*) against their inhuman treatment reached G'd as *צעקה*. — *צעקתה* (21) refers to *זעקה* (20): G'd judges whether in view of the cries (*הכצעקתה*) which reached him, they have forfeited their lives, i.e. whether they themselves caused the destruction that was bound to befall them. And G'd "waits to see whether they have accomplished this self-destruction." He lets them pass a final test to determine whether the entire population has fallen victim to the degradation;—should this not be the case, then "I will judge," punish the culprits and spare the innocent inhabitants!

AVROHOM PRAYING FOR SEDOM AND AMORA

During all this time A. had remained standing before G'd (22), even while practicing his unique hospitality. Now he hears that the degenerated population is threatened with annihilation by G'd. He sees in G'd a righteous Judge. To harbor even the slightest doubt about this seems

to him a "desecration of G'd" (25). Yet there might live a number of righteous men בתוך העיר (not בעיר) "within the city," i.e. men who are not satisfied with being just and righteous for themselves and witnessing passively the general degradation but who do everything in their power to influence their fellow-citizens and to admonish them to change for the better, thus attempting to save them from destruction. Do not such righteous men deserve that for their sake (למען) G'd spare the cities from final doom?—Thus A., the man "formed from the dust, disintegrating into ashes" (27), stands before G'd, the "World-Judge" and his "sense of Justice," demanding a "just" treatment, meets with Gd's approval. G'd is ready to spare the city if there are but ten such "righteous men in the city."—Thus in our own Jewish present the "estrangement" of so many of our brothers, painful as it may be, must not frighten us. And even if the adherence to G'd and His Torah should be reduced to the small circle of the faithful—if *they* do their duty and do not tire in their efforts to call their fellow-Jews to their duty, they will pave the way for the final salvation of the K'lall Jisroel.—

DESTRUCTION OF SEDOM AND AMORA. LOT

Ch. 19. "Lot sat at the gate of Sedom" (1); he had been elevated to "Citizen" of Sedom where he occupied an influential position (for that means "he sat at the gate"). In Sedom hospitality was strictly prohibited. The travellers knew that and expected to have to spend the night by the roadside. Lot, however, dares to oppose the prohibition. He does the unexpected—this is contained in the words "הנה נא — —" (2): for even though he had become estranged from A. in many ways, the example of A. had had some effect on him. The travellers followed his invitation. He prepared the meal for them,

baked the cake—What a contrast to the spirit of hospitality that prevailed in A.'s house! Here neither wife nor children partake of the Mizvah—Lot found himself quite alone with all that he had learned in A.'s house.

G'd delays the final destruction of the city (see 18, 21)—but the events of this night furnished the decisive proof of the true extent of their inhumanity and immorality (רעים והטאים). The "men of the city, men of Sodom" (not a mob) surrounded the house (4) in order to set an example which was to be a lesson to anyone who would ever again attempt to commit the crime of hospitality. They were resolved to treat the strangers with inhuman, bestial cruelty.—It is true that young people are often susceptible where immorality is concerned; but they usually possess a sense of dignity that rebels against brutality. Even the so-called "lower classes" which might be attracted by course immorality are opposed to the mistreatment of the helpless, being themselves oppressed. The older generation, on the other hand, although hardened by "experience," usually does not tolerate excesses where young people are involved although they themselves used to practice them. And also the so-called "upper classes," outwardly unmoved by the suffering of the underprivileged, usually do not tolerate scandals, a tendency which is supposed to spring from their celebrated "sense of decency" as the "educated class." Here in Sodom, however, "young and old," "the entire population from every end" (4) i.e. the lower and the privileged classes were unanimous in their intent to commit the worst crime of immorality. This unanimity sealed the fate of the "men of Sodom."—During the entire account of the downfall of Sodom G'd is called 'ה: in view of such degeneration, destruction was the work of "merciful love."

Lot turns to his sons-in-law and begs them to save themselves—yet when he speaks of G'd and the approach-

ing catastrophe they laugh at him and ridicule his fears. They had "taken his daughters" (as emphasized in V. 14), they had married them but they were far from being sons-in-law in the usual sense of the word. After thus being rejected, Lot does not even attempt to talk to his own sons (12). How alone he was in his own house! And the cause of all this was his separation from A. Even he himself hardly deserved to be saved and he owed his life fully to the "Divine mercy" (16). He should have never lived in Sodom. Now he got his punishment. He is forced to leave behind his wealth and all that had attracted him to Sodom. Death pursues him, he must flee, never to turn back (17)—he should have never possessed what he now had to leave behind. As for his sons—he had lost them even before they perished. — He is to seek refuge in the mountains but he fears that he will never reach them; he asks to be allowed to remain in a town which, as he puts it, "is insignificant" (20), offering none of the attractions which lured him to Sodom. Permission to stay in the town means that he will have saved his naked life, nothing else. His request is granted.

Looking over the Dead Sea and its vicinity the observer will notice the vulcanic nature of the soil. He will be inclined to classify the destruction of Sodom and Amora as an ordinary natural phenomenon. He will ascribe the origin of the Dead Sea to vulcanic eruptions which account for the vulcanic nature of the soil. In contrast to this theory stands the Divine word: "G'd lets rain fall—from G'd, from the sky" (24). The observer mistakes cause for consequence: the present condition of the soil was not the cause of the catastrophe but its result, emanating not from the ground but "from G'd, from the sky".

Lot's fear drives him from Zoar into the mountains. There, far away from the world, the daughters of Lot fell easy prey to the belief that they were the sole surviving

human beings on earth; if the father were to die, they would be all alone in the world (31). It was this terrifying prospect that drove them to their crime (32). Perhaps they thought that under the circumstances their act was no crime.

ABIMELECH

Ch. 20. After witnessing this catastrophe (19, 27-28), A. resumes his journey and travels—as he had done once before—to the barren, lonely South near the desert of Shur. There he settles down (וישב) but lives temporarily (ויגר) in Gerar, the residence of the King of the Philistines (1). The following consideration might serve to explain the motive for this “move”: Yizchak’s birth was approaching. A. wants his son to grow up protected from bad influences. Yet he realizes that it would be a mistake to keep Yizchak out of contact with the differently orientated world. From time to time he should enter the “non-Abramitic world,” acquaint himself with its thinking and customs and gain the strength to realize and adhere to the Abramitic concept of life in the midst of strange and even hostile surroundings. The young man who has never left the parental home with its warm comfort often falls easy prey to the diverse influences of a “non-Jewish” world. A constant shutting-off from fresh air is the surest means of catching cold at the first exposure.

As to A.’s attitude in Gerar we refer to Ch. 12, 10, on. Here G’d also intervenes. (3) Abimelech is threatened by death. But he considers himself innocent. Sedom and Amora might have deserved their fate—but did not A. and Sarah settle peacefully in his land? As for his attitude towards A.’s unmarried sister there was, in his eyes, no offense: He feels completely innocent regarding both his intentions and actions (5). G’d, however, makes it quite clear that although he may have acted in the “innocence of

his heart" (6), his way of acting was far from innocent. And what if Sarah were really A.'s unmarried sister—what gives Abimelech the right to accost her? And even if this were the "custom" in Gerar—it is a sin before G'd, it is G'd who has kept him from committing this sin (—מחטן לי—).

And G'd demands (7): "Return the wife of this man—for he is a Prophet,—that he may pray for you." A difficult sentence. Already the Sages ask the question (B.K. 92a): And if he had not been a prophet, had he been the lowliest beggar—were he not equally obliged to return the woman? — He had to return her under any circumstances. But more is demanded from him: The word **בשח** (return, give back) implies the obligation (as in each instance of an insult) to pacify A. and to so satisfy him that he will even pray for him. For Abimelech alone is the guilty one. A., for his part, is entirely innocent; he is a tool in the service of G'd (as expressed in the words "for he is a Prophet") from whom Abimelech might have learned how to receive strangers and practice hospitality. He might have learned that the first question directed to a stranger must not be "is she your wife or your sister"—and act accordingly! — For the first time G'd demonstrates the significance of A.'s mission to an as yet uncomprehending world: A. is in the service of G'd, he is Gd's **נביא** and so are his descendants. They are referred to in Gd's warning to the nations in whose midst they live: "Do not touch my anointed ones, do not wrong my Prophets"—(Ps. 105, 15).

For a moment Abimelech forgets himself and reproaches A. instead of apologizing to him (9). But he gives in quickly and asks for an explanation of A.'s attitude (10, on). A. could not act differently in surroundings "where there is no fear of G'd". Although physically Sarah was not his sister, she was close to him in a sisterly way and thus became his wife. — The King endeavored to the best of

his ability to compensate Sarah for the wrong done to her. Henceforth (16) she will be protected from obtrusive eyes (כסות עינים "eye protection") and she will not have to conceal her "identity" as A.'s wife (נוכחת means to have a frank discussion with someone). —

PRAYERS AND תפלה

A. "prayed" for Abimelech (17). התפלל is derived from פלל, to judge, meaning: to judge oneself, to examine whether our thinking and aspirations stand up before the eternal truths which are to shape our lives. It means to let these truths "penetrate" our minds (פלל related to בלל, mix, penetrate). This is the task of our תפלה. If תפלה were nothing but an expression of our thoughts and emotions, it would obviously be impossible to pre-formulate its texts and to demand its recitation at fixed times. The תפלה offers us eternally valid truths which have to dominate every phase of our existence. The less we are "inclined" towards the "prayer", the more important the תפלה becomes. We have a right to "prayer" only if we realize the truths of the תפלה. For תפלה formulates the conditions our life must conform with if ours is to be the happy knowledge that G'd is close to us, that G'd hears us. For we have the right to pray to G'd only if He is close to us.

THE BIRTH OF YIZCHAK

Ch. 21. As for Sarah, the Divine Promise comes true. The world laughed (6). But hers is a knowledge and an insight that is unknown to the world at large and she lends expression to her sentiments at the climax of her happiness (7): With this one child she will bring up "sons," for she has born to A. "the child of his old age, i.e. the son whom A. longed for in his old age, in whom he is to live on for all time to come. This child will be the cor-

ner-stone of the future nation of A. Thus, at this moment, Sarah feels that she is the mother of "sons," mother of an entire nation.

THE EXPULSION OF HAGAR AND ISHMAEL

Sarah had once cherished the hope that A. might have a son by Hagar, a son she (Sarah) would be able to bring up in A.'s spirit. She had made a mistake. She realizes this ever more: "Yishmael was the son of Hagar, the Egyptian" (9) — his "hamitic" traits could not be denied. She saw him "making fun" (מצחק). She could not tolerate that A.'s way of life was the target for ridicule in his own house, a way of life that might be ridiculous in the eyes of an uncomprehending world. — Sarah realized that Yishmael was not capable of administering A.'s heritage together with Yizchak. She demands that they be separated (10). It was hard, but it had to be. Twice the expression האמה הזאת returns in V. 10: Sarah had hoped Hagar's son might become *her* son; this might have been possible with another maid, certainly not with *this* one. She calls upon A. to use his master-rights, in the interest of the family. To A. this appeared cruel and bad. He thought of his son and his future (11). Certainly he had also noticed that Yishmael was a מצחק; but he told himself, if this happened in my house how much worse will it be if the boy is on his own, away from my influence and under the complete domination of his mother. G'd saw how worried A. was (that is why the Divine word mentions the maid-mother besides the boy) — yet A. is to "listen to the *voice* of Sarah" (12) although he does not at all agree with her demand (i.e. to listen to voice of someone else, to obey regardless of the nature of the demand). For Sarah was right—"Yishmael is your physical son (זרעך היא) (13) but he will never be the descendant in whom

your spiritual heritage will live on. Do not let it be too hard on you to separate from this son" — "your name will be called in Yizchak" (ביצחק) (12): and even Yizchak's descendants will not all be true bearers of your spiritual heritage — quite a few (Esau etc.) will prove worthless.

AVROHOM—QUALIFIED FOR A POLITICAL TREATY! THE OATH.

"At this time" (22) when A. had sent away his oldest son and the entire future of his house rested upon his younger son who was just weaned—at this time Abimelech, the King of the country, and his general approached A. with the following request: A. should swear to offer him (Abimelech), the second and third generation after him and the entire country, the same kind of friendship that he himself had found in the land! Thus Abimelech considers A. not a private individual but the ancestor of a nation whose friendship and goodwill he is eager to secure. This indicates that he had heard of the great manifestations that A. had received from G'd. "G'd is with you in all that you do" (22).—Abimelech must have put great trust in A.'s influence with his descendants as he obviously cherished the belief that A.'s descendants would still consider themselves bound to the oath of their forefather! (Politics often means a frivolous play with treaties and promises but the Jewish state was always known to live up to a given promise).—A. swears. השבע, to swear from שבע seven. After six days G'd concluded His visible creation. The seventh day, the Shabbos, is a monument to the invisible Master of this creation. With the number seven Jewish thinking associates the idea of G'd, the invisible Master of the Universe. השבע (Nif'al, reflective) means literally "to devote oneself to the "seven" ", i.e. to the invisible Master, G'd and His judging Providence.

(G'd may punish me **לא אם** if this or that is not true, i.e. what I say is really true; on the other hand **אם**: if this or that is true, i.e. it is not true; — that is the actual meaning of this striking grammatical construction).

AVROHOM PLANTS A TREE

A. immortalizes this event by calling the place **באר שבע** in order to remind his descendants of the oath that he swore as their representative (31). Here he also plants a tree and proclaims in the name of G'd, the G'd of the future (33). According to the Sages, A. continued to demonstrate brotherly love in the shade of this tree, a practice which had ceased in the rest of the world. And when travelers would thank him, he "referred" them to G'd, Master of the Universe, whose children men are. Brotherly love as practiced by A. is a G'd-willed duty.

עולם — מלך העולם

There may also be a deeper reason for A.'s planting of a tree at this particular moment. In the past he had proclaimed G'd as "the owner of heaven and earth". Here (as nowhere else in the Torah) it says: He proclaimed G'd as Master of a veiled future (**עלם** "to be veiled"). It is true that G'd had announced to him that he was to become the ancestor of a people destined to be called into Gd's service. At this particular moment he *experienced* the unfolding of the realization of his destiny: A stranger without privileges, he had to fight for the possession of a well that he himself had dug (24-30) — yet the ruler of the country approaches the centenary and his two-year old son to conclude a "political" treaty far-reaching in scope! As the tree develops from insignificant roots to giant proportions, so did A. see a great future emerging from small beginnings. At this moment he *experienced* G'd as the Master who shapes the veiled future.

The great teachers of our people have seen to it that this particular name of G'd—as no other—should become familiar to us. Therefore it returns in all prayers and ברכות. We are to be continuously aware of the fact that not only the future is veiled (עלם) but that nature, the world and its unchanging motions are no less “hidden” from us. Thus the world is called עולם, the “hidden”, puzzling world. The Sages teach us to perceive G'd at every moment and in every “function” of this world as the מלך העולם who is Master and Ruler of time, Master and Ruler of all the mysteriously functioning forces (laws of Nature) — G'd who desires to be *our* G'd in this “world of mystery” and whose will we must realize faithfully if our lives are to have meaning and purpose.

AKEDA

Ch. 22 “And it was after these happenings—” (1). A. had proclaimed G'd as א' עולם who paves the way for a still undisclosed future; he was justified in considering Yizchak the guarantor of this G'd-willed future; and he saw his future already taking shape, for the ruler of the land had just concluded a solemn treaty with the descendants of this child (Ch. 21);—at this moment האלקים, the *same* G'd who had assured A. of his future, confronts him with a strange demand: Tear down, with your own hands, the tree which you have planted! A trial without comparison! G'd calls—and A. exclaims הנהני “I am ready,” even before he learns of the nature of the Divine demand!

“Please take—” (2), meaning: I know that what I demand is hard and that your entire being will revolt; it is your son whom I demand, your only son whom you love with all your soul, it is Yizchak on whose life the purpose of your life depends;—לך לך, with this call A.'s life begins, finding its highest achievement in the faithful fulfillment of this Divine demand! —

According to the Sages מוריה refers to the place where Kain and Hebel brought their offerings and where Noah sacrificed on "new-born" ground — this place was to "teach" (הוראה), for all time to come, what Gd's sanctuary, the Divine Law and sacrifices demand from us: To serve G'd, i.e. to devote one-self without reservation to the Divine will.

"TRADITION"

Yizchak was not a child any more, he was a man of 37 years and independent; his greatness of mind and spirit equalled that A.: he had not received the divine command directly from G'd but from the mouth of his father as a תורה שבעל פה "oral tradition." Here the first Jewish son sacrificed himself for a "tradition" which he had received from his father. This was so because his father's character and greatness of mind guaranteed the truth of all that was handed down to him in the name of G'd. Thus each generation sees in the previous one the guarantor for the truthfulness of its traditions. —

"On the third day" (4) — there is no hint of the feelings in the hearts of father and son during these three days. "Stay here by yourselves (5)" — A. and Yiz. leave their companions at the foot of the Moriah: Only Jews who are inspired by the spirit of A. and Yiz. possess the strength to climb the heights of the "mountain of G'd", even if the divine will demands the incredible. This strength—according to the Sages raises them high above the angels, who serve G'd without a mind of their own, while the Jew, truly serving G-d eliminates his own insight and will-power, ever ready to obey the divine law.—

A. merely informs his companions that "we want to go there, bow down and then return" — he makes little ado of his plans! His servants know that he wants to offer a "sacrifice". A. describes this act as "bowing down," de-

voting oneself (השתחוה), which is indeed the meaning of every Korban: one does not sacrifice the animal; the sacrifice symbolizes the devotion of one's life and entire being to G'd.

A. and Yiz. "both go together," as it says repeatedly (6, 8). Both father and son calmly face a task equally hard for either of them and they set about it in unshakable grandeur of mind—the prototype of father and son, pointing the way the older and the younger generations are to go in harmony and mutual confidence.

The father's silent and grave demeanor may have indicated to Yizchak that the task they were about to perform was a hard one. Twice ויאמר is repeated (7), twice he tries to inquire—and says merely "my father"—only then follows the question — "where is the lamb for the sacrifice"? Whereupon A. replies that one has to be ready for every sacrifice and has to leave it to G'd *which* sacrifice He demands—"my son"—"and they both walked together" (8).

"FEAR OF G'D"

At the last moment (11), an angel of G'd orders him to stop, informing him that this was a test. G'd Himself had to tell him about his son's sacrifice as he would not have believed this incredible news coming from an Angel; but Angel sufficed to inform him of the retraction of the order. In this sacred hour A. met the greatest possible test, achieving for himself the title ירא אלקים (12), as he got ready to sacrifice his only child upon the Divine command. This "Akeda of Jizchak", this readiness to have himself "bound" (עקד) by the Divine Will, regardless of his own feelings, has become a shining example, to the world demonstrating what true "Fear of G'd" demands of every Jew.

THE "AKEDA"—SACRIFICE

In this solemn hour A. feels the need of expressing the emotions which move him and his son Yizchak: He beheld a ram and "offers it as a sacrifice in the place of his son" (11). Here we have the irrefutable proof that sacrifices have only symbolic significance. If this were not so, A.'s sacrifice would be nothing but a ridiculous ceremony: He slaughters an animal that he finds accidentally in the wilderness and that was not even his own "in the place of his son"—at a moment when the dearest possession of his life had been returned to him! It is as if someone received a most generous gift—and picks up a pin from the street and presents it as a token of his gratitude!—

With this sacrifice, however, A. vows that his life shall be devoted to the Divine Will, for all time to come. Later on the Jewish nation renewed this vow daily in the Tamid-offering on Mount Moriah. This daily "national" offering had to take place on the "North-side, before G'd", at the "Midnight-side" of the Altar.—In the midst of night and darkness we have always to be cognizant of the fact that although *we* do not comprehend, "G'd sees", G'd perceives—and ours is nothing but obedience! And G'd remembers "Akeda of Jizchak" — for to be a Jew means to offer G'd continued Akeda-obedience. That is why A. calls the location of the Akeda ה' יראה "G'd sees" (14), G'd understands even if we never comprehend His Will. When G'd revealed His Torah to His people at the Sinai, Moshe added the significant words: "Today it must be said: One is "seen" on the Mountain of G'd" (14): G'd sees but everyone of us is also "seen", evaluated by Gd's judging eye whether his life constitutes obedience to the Divine Will of the Torah. Three times a year every Jew had to appear on Moriah, the place of the Sanctuary, in order to "be seen by G'd" (Ex. 23, 17) and to renew with the "sacrifice" the vow of his life's Akeda. —

THE JEWISH PEOPLE: PEOPLE OF THE AKEDA

In the Akeda A.'s life finds its climatic perfection. His devotion was such that his farthest descendants still were to benefit from its merits. Thus, in this hour, G'd was able to confirm by oath the great promises to A.'s descendants, the Jewish people (16-17): The Akeda-spirit will be alive in his descendants, for all time to come. It will never be completely lost even in the time of the most degrading assimilation. The future belongs to this Akeda-spirit, for it will conquer a hostile world, estranged from G'd. To instill this Akeda-spirit in the world—letting it partake of the greatest possible blessing — is A.'s testament and the task of his descendants, the Jewish people (18).

A. returns to his servants whom he had left behind (19). In the hour of the Akeda A. and Yizchak "went together." Now that they have achieved the highest ethical goal that men can attain, they rise and "go together" with their servants — they do not consider themselves more elevated than they—they return as if nothing had happened.—They set the example of true modesty which is so characteristic of the truly great.

"After these happenings" A. was told: "behold, Milka has also born children to your brother Nachor" (20-24). This seems to have been the answer to an inquiry that A. made; — he was thinking of Yizchak's future.

SARAH'S DEATH. THE CAVE OF MACHPELAH

Ch. 23. The Torah reports the death of Sarah. It does not say (1): she lived to be 127 years, but 100 years and 20 years and 7 years—these figures represent her childhood, her adult phase and her old age: the "life of Sarah" preserved all the aspects—the good ones—that are charac-

teristic of these phases; the Sages suggest that her beauty as a woman was that of a child and that she preserved the innocence of a twenty-year old woman until her death. The Sages speak of the child's beauty and of the innocence of a young woman. They do not speak of the "innocence of a child," for true innocence presupposes the possibility of guilt, of fighting and conquest, an achievement of maturity. All of Sarah's years were "years of her life," significant years which met the demands of a life of Mizvoth of which not a single day had to be entered as a failure. Yet they were but "years taken *from* the life of Sarah," they were but part of her life, her earthly life—for "G'd recognizes the days of those that strive for perfection—their heritage reaches until eternity" (Ps. 37, 18).

ויבא (2). "A. came", i.e. he retires to mourn for Sarah: He does not exhibit his grief but carries it within him, for only he knows what Sarah meant to him.—Then he "rises" (3), leaves the deceased only long enough to take care of her burial. — For years he lived in the land as a stranger without acquiring a piece of land. Wandering was his destination. But now Sarah is to find her rest in her permanent property and he, therefore, asks for the right to acquire a piece of land (4). He approaches the sons of Chet who in turn seek advice with the עם הארץ (7), the people of the land, i.e. the administration which had to approve the sale of land to a stranger. They inform A. (6: לאמר לו): we consider you a "Prince of G'd"; it will be a privilege to let you have a grave for Sarah. But A. is insistent in his request to *acquire* the cave which is located in the field of Ephron (8). The latter manages to hide his selfishness behind a front of extreme politeness. A. only wanted to acquire the cave (9). But Ephron gave him to understand that he was unwilling to sell the cave without the field in which it was located (13). And the price he asked seemed

to have been such that Ephron does not dare to present his demands himself (14; לאמר לו)!

According to the tradition Adam and Eve, the ancestors of mankind, were already buried in this cave. That is why A. decided upon its acquisition. It consisted of several pairs of caves (מכפלה — כפל, double, pair). Here A. and Sarah, Yizchak and Rivkah, Yaakov and Leah are buried.—The Jewish People's first piece of Promised Land were graves, the graves of their fathers and mothers; — for this reason alone the land was dear to them. Perhaps the name of this spot originated from its being a burial place (19): Chebron (חבר) to be close to someone or something)—reminding of the "intimate relationship" which brings together man and wife, parents and children of the Jewish people.

THE JEWISH MARRIAGE "CONTRACT"

The acquisition of this burial-place and the manner in which it was executed exemplifies the Divine Law of the Torah. With regard to this "acquisition of the cave of Machpelah" the Jewish marriage is also contracted through a symbolic "acquisition": It is as though Jewish marriages were taking place at Sarah's burial place in order to be inspired by the spirit that was alive in the house of A. and Sarah and finding its permanent expression in this purchase of the burial-lot.

THE BETROTHAL OF YIZCHAK. RIVKAH

Ch. 24. A. had become a זקן (1); (this is not זשן which signifies the weakness of old age)—this expression refers to the achievements of his life: With his G'd-serving life — according to the Sages — he had won both worlds for himself, this world and the one to come; he had "come into the days", i.e. he had passed through all the days of his earthly life which leads towards eternal life. Devoted to

G'd and destined to be a blessing to the world, his life was a blessed one: He felt "blessed by G'd in everything". And all he could think about now was the future of his son. His faithful servant (עבדו) who had "matured" (זקן) in his house and had gained his fullest confidence, is to "put his hand under the hip" (2) of his master; — A. is resolved to rely completely on his servant's "hand" in helping him to secure the future of his people. He lets him swear that he will not select any of the Canaanitic daughters as a wife for his son. He does not fear Canaan's idolatry but rather its moral degradation. Idolatry also ruled in Aram. Yet it was more or less the result of spiritual mis-direction and confusion which could be cured in the Abramitic house, provided the girl in question preserved her moral integrity and purity. A. hoped to find such a girl in Aram, in the circles of his family, "for my son, for Jizchak" (4) i.e. a girl who is worthy to become the wife of "my son" and who fits to "Yizchak" in character and temperament. But under no circumstances is Yizchak to return to Aram. This he makes his servant promise in the name of "G'd of the heaven" who is also "G'd of the earth" (3) who had called him into His service, assuring him of a secure future. He has always experienced Gd's loving care and he is confident that He will not fail him this time and thus prove truly that He is "G'd of the earth" (therefore אלקי הארץ needs no repetition in V.7).

By the well before the city-gate, the goal of his journey, Eliezer prays for Divine guidance and assistance (12). For his master had taught him — and he had experienced it in his house — that Divine Providence shapes every moment according to Gd's will (אלקי אדוני אברהם). A.'s house was built on love for humanity which he preached as a G'd-willed duty. It is this trait of brotherly love that he hopes to find in the girl whom he likes to see as the worthy mate for Yizchak. (14)

He notices Rivkah. Her whole appearance was that of an unusually charming girl, possessing a certain quality of aloofness that was a warning to any man who might dare to accost her (16). The "servant" approaches her (17) humbly and asks for the favor of "sipping some water". She replies, "drink", and calls him "my master" although he stood like a servant before her (18). We find here another characteristic trait: For the time being — as Eliezer might have expected — she does not mention the fact that she is also willing to water the camels. Only after she has seen to it that the stranger's thirst was quenched, she speaks up (19): "I will also draw water for your camels". Had she brought up this matter before, Eliezer would have realized that she was one those typically gossiping women who like to dwell on their charity. Rivkah was different. Having completed her first "job", she pours the rest of the water into the trough (20), hurries back to the well and is satisfied only after each of the 10 camels has drunk as much water as it could hold (19). (a camel drinks so much that it is able to go on for many days without drinking); and later (25) she again thinks *first* of the animals which now have to bed.—Love for animals need not be taught us by strangers.—Rivkah's personality radiates joyfulness and kindness. Eliezer follows her activities with growing amazement — he likes everything about her — "G'd has made him succeed in his endeavors" (21) — but will she meet A.'s condition as to her descent? — Before inquiring about this and before asking her to let him stay at her father's home, (23), he presents her with some of the riches that he has brought with him (22). He did not doubt the good-will and the natural kindness of the girl. But he did not know whether her family would be ready to open their house to a strange servant who arrived with 10 camels. And he proved to be right. For in Rivkah's house it were not the parents who ruled but her brother

Laban who — according to the Sages — possessed nothing that was “white” (לבן) except his name. His whole attitude was dictated by selfishness and greed. His sister’s report (28) and the glittering Jewels (30) affect him strongly. While the family admires the Jewels, he questions his sister closely and runs out in the hope to find a “Kozin” whom one could profitably exploit. But when he meets “the man” who still stands humbly by his camels (30), he quickly reverses his attitude as he realizes that this man was not the rich master himself but only his servant; — he hardly greets him, speaks harshly to him (!אם) and in the house he makes him take care of the camels himself (32), orders the food “to be put before him” (33) and graciously grants him permission to speak! — It is characteristic for Laban that he likes to speak frequently of G’d (31, 50): “pious” speeches serve as an excellent cover for one’s true sentiments.—While V. 29-30—in contrast to earlier verses — refer to “the man” (not servant), Eliezer’s first word is (34): “I am a servant of A.” — he wants to be nothing but A.’s servant and be considered as such. As A.’s servant” (52) he gives his thanks to G’d who has helped him to complete his mission successfully.

Before Rivkah leaves her parental home, Laban and his mother pronounce words of blessings (60) which indicate their knowledge of the Divine promises regarding the future of the Abramitic seed. (see Abimelech’s visit after the birth of Yizchak, Ch. 21).

THE JEWISH MARRIAGE

“Yizchak returned from visiting the well of להי ראי (62)—“he dwelled in the Land of the South” which bordered on the desert. Following the wishes of his father, he intended to erect his house far away from the populated districts of the land, exactly as his father had done before

him. He awaited Eliezer's return who was to bring with him the companion for whom he longed. At this moment he is drawn to the well where once Hagar experienced the visible and loving proximity of G'd (16, 14). Was Eliezer not entitled to this same Divine assistance in an undertaking that was of decisive importance for his entire future? Yizchak wished to strengthen and deepen his confidence at "Hagar's well". And as he returns home "towards evening, walking on the field in meditation (prayer)" (63), he meets Rivkah whom Gd's loving care has brought to him.

It was not passion but calm reflection that led to this marriage. Too often disappointment follows in the wake of passion. Here it says (and this holds true for every truly Jewish marriage): "She became to him a wife and he loved her" (67): The more she became his wife the more his love for her grew;—"and Yizchak was comforted about his mother"—: here is a man of forty who is inconsolable at the death of his old mother and who finds consolation in his wife through whom he regains the mother! Here is the supreme concept of woman's dignity — written on a page of the oldest Jewish history!

Now A. takes Ketura as his wife (25, 1) — one opinion among the Sages hold that she was identical with Hagar and that Yizchak had gone to the well in the desert (24, 62) in order to bring Hagar to her father. Yet while going there he was still inconsolable at his mother's death! Judaism does not associate sad thoughts with the word "step-mother".

Yizchak was A.'s heir (5) and he also took over his spiritual legacy. A. gave presents to the children he had with Ketura and made them choose dwelling-places far away from Yizchak (6). It should not surprise us that A. did not succeed in bringing up these children in his spirit: the influences of a strange and uncomprehending

world in whose midst A. had to erect his house were too strong.

AVROHOM'S DEATH. IMMORTALITY OF THE SOUL

Thus A.'s earthly life reached its final stages; every day of his life was significant; at every moment of his life (7) he had done as he was expected to do — A. departed from this life "ripe and satisfied" (8): "When a צדיק dies, G'd lets him feel the happiness that awaits him; this feeling of happiness is so overwhelming that the צדיק succumbs under its impact and sleeps away"—This wise saying of infinite beauty shows us what Judaism thinks of death.

A. died "and he was gathered to his companions" (8) and then buried (9), i.e. his earthly body was turned over to the earth after his soul was gathered in the circle of the other human souls. — Our Torah does not *teach* the immortality of the soul. To a people which adheres to the Torah the immortality of the soul is an understood pre-supposition: the soul is immortal because it is the Divine spark which G'd breathes into the body (see 2, 7); it is the Divine driving-power that enables man to strive for liberty and to serve the Divine Will in freedom. Judaism of the Torah is unthinkable without this precept. The Torah does not *teach* the immortality of the soul as little as it *teaches* the existence of G'd; the very first sentence of the Torah בראשית ברא אלקים pre-supposes the existence of G'd (see there). And while Koheleth exclaims (12, 8) "and the spirit returns to G'd," he also does not *teach* the immortality of the soul: Koheleth *describes* life and death, and the return of the soul to G'd forms one part of this description. Only when in later centuries un-Jewish sects

attempted to disprove the concept of immortality, it became necessary to *teach* immortality of the soul as one of the foundations of Divine Judaism. —

As G'd once blessed A., so He blesses "his son" Jizchak after A.'s death (11). As to the descendants of Yishmael (12-18), the Divine Promises which Hagar had received came true to the last (18).

