

הקדמה לפרשת
"שחי"ה

Contrasting Viewpoints on

הקדמה לפרשת
The Binding of Isaac

* Maimonides - רמב"ם

* Kierkegaard

~*~
Rabbi Jeffrey Katz

פרשת שמות
הקדמה לפרשת שמות

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הקדמה לפרשת שמות

CHAPTER XXIV

THE doctrine of trials is open to great objections ; it is in fact more exposed to objections than any other thing taught in Scripture. It is mentioned in Scripture six times, as I will show in this chapter. People have generally the notion that trials consist in afflictions and mishaps sent by God to man, not as punishments for past sins, but as giving opportunity for great reward. This principle is not mentioned in Scripture in plain language, and it is only in one of the six places referred to that the literal meaning conveys this notion. I will explain the meaning of that passage later on. The principle taught in Scripture is exactly the reverse ; for it is said : " He is a God of faithfulness, and there is no iniquity in him " (Deut. xxxii. 4).

The teaching of our Sages, although some of them approve this general belief [concerning trials], is on the whole against it. For they say, " There is no death without sin, and no affliction without transgression." (See p. 285.) Every intelligent religious person should have this faith, and should not ascribe any wrong to God, who is far from it ; he must not assume that a person is innocent and perfect and does not deserve what has befallen him. The trials mentioned in Scripture in the [six] passages, seem to have been tests and experiments by which God desired to learn the intensity of the faith and the devotion of a man or a nation. [If this were the case] it would be very difficult to comprehend the object of the trials, and yet the sacrifice of Isaac seems to be a case of this kind, as none witnessed it, but God and the two concerned [Abraham and Isaac]. Thus God says to Abraham, " For now I know that thou fearest God," etc. (Gen. xxii. 12). In another passage it is said : " For the Lord your God proveth you to know whether ye love," etc. (Deut. xiii. 4). Again, " And to prove thee to know what was in thine heart," etc. (*ibid.* viii. 2). I will now remove all the difficulties.

① The sole object of all the trials mentioned in Scripture is to teach man what he ought to do or believe ; so that the event which forms the actual trial is not the end desired ; it is but an example for our instruction and guidance. Hence the words " to know (*la-da'at*) whether ye love," etc., do not mean that God desires to know whether they loved God ; for He already knows it ; but *la-da'at*, " to know," has here the same meaning as in the phrase " to know (*la-da'at*) that I am the Lord that sanctifieth you " (Exod. xxxi. 13), i.e., that all nations shall know that I am the Lord who sanctifieth you. In a similar manner Scripture says :—If a man should rise, pretend to be a prophet, and show you his signs by which he desired to convince you that his words are true, know that God intends thereby to prove to the nations how firmly you believe in the truth of God's word, and how well you have comprehended the true Essence of God ; that you cannot be misled by any tempter to corrupt your faith in God. Your religion will then afford a guidance to all who seek the truth, and of all religions man will choose that which is so firmly established that it is not shaken by the performance of a miracle. For a miracle cannot prove that which is impossible ; it is useful only as a confirmation of that which is possible, as we have explained in our Mishneh-torah. (Yesode ha-torah vii. f. viii. 3.)

Having shown that the term " to know " means " that all people may know," we apply this interpretation to the following words said in reference to the

God already knows extent of Abraham's love of God ; the point is to demonstrate it, so others will know

③
extent
of
Love/
Fear
of
God

The account of Abraham our father binding his son, includes two great ideas or principles of our faith. First, it shows us the extent and limit of the fear of God. Abraham is commanded to perform a certain act, which is not equalled by any surrender of property or by any sacrifice of life, for it surpasses everything that can be done, and belongs to the class of actions which are believed to be contrary to human feelings. He had been without child, and had been longing for a child; he had great riches, and was expecting that a nation should spring from his seed. After all hope of a son had already been given up, a son was born unto him. How great must have been his delight in the child! how intensely must he have loved him! And yet because he feared God, and loved to do what God commanded, he thought little of that beloved child, and set aside all his hopes concerning him, and consented to kill him after a journey of three days. If the act by which he showed his readiness to kill his son had taken place immediately when he received the commandment, it might have been the result of confusion and not of consideration. But the fact that he performed it three days after he had received the commandment, proves the presence of thought, proper consideration, and careful examination of what is due to the Divine command and what is in accordance with the love and fear of God. There is no necessity to look for the presence of any other idea or of anything that might have affected his emotions. For Abraham did not hasten to kill Isaac out of fear that God might slay him or make him poor, but solely because it is man's duty to love and to fear God, even without hope of reward or fear of punishment. We have repeatedly explained this. The angel, therefore, says to him, "For now I know," etc. (*ibid.* ver. 12), that is, from this action, for which you deserve to be truly called a God-fearing man, all people shall learn how far we must go in the fear of God. This idea is confirmed in Scripture; it is distinctly stated that one sole thing, fear of God, is the object of the whole Law with its affirmative and negative precepts, its promises and its historical examples, for it is said, "If thou wilt not observe to do all the words of this Law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear this glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God," etc. (Deut. xxviii. 58). This is one of the two purposes of the *'akedah* (sacrifice or binding of Isaac).

②

The second purpose is to show how the prophets believed in the truth of that which came to them from God by way of inspiration. We shall not think that what the prophets heard or saw in allegorical figures may at times have included incorrect or doubtful elements, since the Divine communication was made to them, as we have shown, in a dream or a vision and through the imaginative faculty. Scripture thus tells us that whatever the Prophet perceives in a prophetic vision, he considers as true and correct and not open to any doubt; it is in his eyes like all other things perceived by the senses or by the intellect. This is proved by the consent of Abraham to slay "his only son whom he loved," as he was commanded, although the commandment was received in a dream or a vision. If the Prophets had any doubt or suspicion as regards the truth of what they saw in a prophetic dream or perceived in a prophetic vision, they would not have consented to do what is unnatural, and Abraham would not have found in his soul strength enough to perform that act, if he had any doubt [as regards the truth of the commandment]. It was just the right thing that this lesson derived from the

Rambam does not seem to address here -

* how can a perfectly ethical Gd have commanded this?

* proper value to be placed on family members + relationships?

* intrinsic pricelessness of human life?

* value of worldly possessions?

emerods" (1 Sam. vi. 5), for the chief object was the removal of the injury caused by the emerods, not a change of their shape. As, however, it must be admitted that the term *zelem* is employed in these two cases, viz. "the images of the emerods" and "the idols" on account of the external shape, the term *zelem* is either a homonym or a hybrid term, and would denote both the specific form and the outward shape, and similar properties relating to the dimensions and the shape of material bodies; and in the phrase "Let us make man in our *zelem*" (Gen. i. 26), the term signifies "the specific form" of man, viz., his intellectual perception, and does not refer to his "figure" or "shape." Thus we have shown the difference between *zelem* and *toär*, and explained the meaning of *zelem*.

Demut is derived from the verb *damah*, "he is like." This term likewise denotes agreement with regard to some abstract relation: comp. "I am like a pelican of the wilderness" (Ps. cii. 7); the author does not compare himself to the pelican in point of wings and feathers, but in point of sadness. "Nor any tree in the garden of God was like unto him in beauty" (Ezek. xxxi. 8); the comparison refers to the idea of beauty. "Their poison is like the poison of a serpent" (Ps. lviii. 5); "He is like unto a lion" (Ps. xvii. 12); the resemblance indicated in these passages does not refer to the figure and shape, but to some abstract idea. In the same manner is used "the likeness of the throne" (Ezek. i. 26); the comparison is made with regard to greatness and glory, not, as many believe, with regard to its square form, its breadth, or the length of its legs: this explanation applies also to the phrase "the likeness of the *hayyot*" ("living creatures," Ezek. i. 13).

As man's distinction consists in a property which no other creature on earth possesses, viz., intellectual perception, in the exercise of which he does not employ his senses, nor move his hand or his foot, this perception has been compared—though only apparently, not in truth—to the Divine perception, which requires no corporeal organ. On this account, i.e., on account of the Divine intellect with which man has been endowed, he is said to have been made in the form and likeness of the Almighty, but far from it be the notion that the Supreme Being is corporeal, having a material form.

CHAPTER II

SOME years ago a learned man asked me a question of great importance; the problem and the solution which we gave in our reply deserve the closest attention. Before, however, entering upon this problem and its solution I must premise that every Hebrew knows that the term *Elohim* is a homonym, and denotes God, angels, judges, and the rulers of countries, and that Onkelos the proselyte explained it in the true and correct manner by taking *Elohim* in the sentence, "and ye shall be like *Elohim*" (Gen. iii. 5) in the last-mentioned meaning, and rendering the sentence "and ye shall be like princes." Having pointed out the homonymity of the term "*Elohim*" we return to the question under consideration. "It would at first sight," said the objector, "appear from Scripture that man was originally intended to be perfectly equal to the rest of the animal creation, which is not endowed with intellect, reason, or power of distinguishing between good and evil: but that Adam's disobedience to the command of God procured him that great per-

man's noblest characteristic faculty
is the Intellect
(dominates in prophecy)

showed, that thou mightest know that the Lord He is God" (Deut. iv. 35); "Know therefore this day, and consider it in thine heart, that the Lord He is God" (*ibid.* 36); "Know ye that the Lord is God" (Ps. c. 3). Thus the Law distinctly states that the highest kind of worship to which we refer in this chapter, is only possible after the acquisition of the knowledge of God. For it is said, "To love the Lord your God, and to serve Him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deut. xi. 13), and, as we have shown several times, man's love of God is identical with His knowledge of Him. The Divine service enjoined in these words must, accordingly, be preceded by the love of God. Our Sages have pointed out to us that it is a service in the heart, which explanation I understand to mean this: man concentrates all his thoughts on the First Intellect, and is absorbed in these thoughts as much as possible. David therefore commands his son Solomon these two things, and exhorts him earnestly to do them: to acquire a true knowledge of God, and to be earnest in His service after that knowledge has been acquired. For he says, "And thou, Solomon my son, know thou the God of thy father, and serve him with a perfect heart . . . if thou seek him, he will be found of thee; but if thou forsake him, he will cast thee off for ever" (I Chron. xxviii. 9). The exhortation refers to the intellectual conceptions, not to the imaginations; for the latter are not called "knowledge," but "that which cometh into your mind" (Ezek. xx. 32). It has thus been shown that it must be man's aim, after having acquired the knowledge of God, to deliver himself up to Him, and to have his heart constantly filled with longing after Him. He accomplishes this generally by seclusion and retirement. Every pious man should therefore seek retirement and seclusion, and should only in case of necessity associate with others.

Note.—I have shown you that the intellect which emanates from God unto us is the link that joins us to God. You have it in your power to strengthen that bond, if you choose to do so, or to weaken it gradually till it breaks, if you prefer this. It will only become strong when you employ it in the love of God, and seek that love; it will be weakened when you direct your thoughts to other things. You must know that even if you were the wisest man in respect to the true knowledge of God, you break the bond between you and God whenever you turn entirely your thoughts to the necessary food or any necessary business; you are then not with God, and He is not with you; for that relation between you and Him is actually interrupted in those moments. The pious were therefore particular to restrict the time in which they could not meditate upon the name of God, and cautioned others about it, saying, "Let not your minds be vacant from reflections upon God." In the same sense did David say, "I have set the Lord always before me; because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved" (Ps. xvi. 8); i.e., I do not turn my thoughts away from God; He is like my right hand, which I do not forget even for a moment on account of the ease of its motions, and therefore I shall not be moved, I shall not fall.

We must bear in mind that all such religious acts as reading the Law, praying, and the performance of other precepts, serve exclusively as the means of causing us to occupy and fill our mind with the precepts of God, and free it from worldly business; for we are thus, as it were, in communication with God, and undisturbed by any other thing. If we, however,

Man's intellect is the link to God
(ties into
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the pleasure derived from the knowledge of God and their great love for Him. When our Sages figuratively call the knowledge of God united with intense love for Him a kiss, they follow the well-known poetical diction, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (Song i. 2). This kind of death, which in truth is deliverance from death, has been ascribed by our Sages to none but to Moses, Aaron, and Miriam. The other prophets and pious men are beneath that degree; but their knowledge of God is strengthened when death approaches. Of them Scripture says, "Thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward" (Isa. lviii. 8). The intellect of these men remains then constantly in the same condition, since the obstacle is removed that at times has intervened between the intellect and the object of its action; it continues for ever in that great delight, which is not like bodily pleasure. We have explained this in our work, and others have explained it before us.

Try to understand this chapter, endeavour with all your might to spend more and more time in communion with God, or in the attempt to approach Him; and to reduce the hours which you spend in other occupations, and during which you are not striving to come nearer unto Him. This instruction suffices for the object of this treatise.

CHAPTER LII

WE do not sit, move, and occupy ourselves when we are alone and at home, in the same manner as we do in the presence of a great king; we speak and open our mouth as we please when we are with the people of our own household and with our relatives, but not so when we are in a royal assembly. If we therefore desire to attain human perfection, and to be truly men of God, we must awake from our sleep, and bear in mind that the great king that is over us, and is always joined to us, is greater than any earthly king, greater than David and Solomon. The king that cleaves to us and embraces us is the Intellect that influences us, and forms the link between us and God. We perceive God by means of that light that He sends down unto us, wherefore the Psalmist says, "In Thy light shall we see light" (Ps. xxxvi. 9): so God looks down upon us through that same light, and is always with us beholding and watching us on account of this light. "Can any hide himself in secret places that I shall not see him?" (Jer. xxiii. 24). Note this particularly.

When the perfect bear this in mind, they will be filled with fear of God, humility, and piety, with true, not apparent, reverence and respect of God, in such a manner that their conduct, even when alone with their wives or in the bath, will be as modest as they are in public intercourse with other people. Thus it is related of our renowned Sages that even in their sexual intercourse with their wives they behaved with great modesty. They also said, "Who is modest? He whose conduct in the dark night is the same as in the day." You know also how much they warned us not to walk proudly, since "the fulness of the whole earth is His glory" (Isa. vi. 3). They thought that by these rules the above-mentioned idea will be firmly established in the hearts of men, viz., that we are always before God, and it is in the presence of His glory that we go to and fro. The great men among our Sages would not uncover their heads because they believed that God's glory was round them

2-way Tunnel
all intl ✓
 connection
 to Gd

position, they feel ashamed and confounded at their situation. They try with all their might to diminish this disgrace, and to guard against it in every possible way. They feel like a person whom the king in his anger ordered to remove refuse from one place to another in order to put him to shame; that person tries as much as possible to hide himself during the time of his disgrace; he perhaps removes a small quantity a short distance in such a manner that his hands and garments remain clean, and he himself be unnoticed by his fellow-men. Such would be the conduct of a free man, whilst a slave would find pleasure in such work;—he would not consider it a great burden, but throw himself into the refuse, smear his face and his hands, carry the refuse openly, laughing and singing. This is exactly the difference in the conduct of different men. Some consider, as we just said, all wants of the body as shame, disgrace, and defect to which they are compelled to attend; this is chiefly the case with the sense of touch, which is a disgrace to us according to Aristotle, and which is the cause of our desire for eating, drinking, and sensuality. Intelligent persons must, as much as possible, reduce these wants, guard against them, feel grieved when satisfying them, abstain from speaking of them, discussing them, and attending to them in company with others. Man must have control over all these desires, reduce them as much as possible, and only retain of them as much as is indispensable. His aim must be the aim of man as man, viz., the formation of ideas, and nothing else. The best and sublimest among them is the idea which man forms of God, angels, and the rest of the creation according to his capacity. Such men are always with God, and of them it is said, "Ye are princes, and all of you are children of the Most High" (Ps. lxxxii. 6). This is man's task and purpose. Others, however, that are separated from God form the multitude of fools, and do just the opposite. They neglect all thought and all reflection on ideas, and consider as their task the cultivation of the sense of touch,—that sense which is the greatest disgrace; they only think and reason about eating and love. Thus it is said of the wicked who are drowned in eating, drinking, and love, "They also have erred through wine, and through strong drink are out of the way," etc. (Isa. xxviii. 7), "for all tables are full of vomit and filthiness, so that there is no place clean" (ver. 8); again, "And women rule over them" (*ibid.* iii. 2),—the opposite of that which man was told in the beginning of the creation, "And for thy husband shall thy desire be, and he shall rule over thee" (Gen. iii. 16). The intensity of their lust is then described thus, "Every one neighed after his neighbour's wife," etc. (Jer. v. 8); "they are all adulterers, an assembly of treacherous men" (*ibid.* ix. 2). The whole book of the Proverbs of Solomon treats of this subject, and exhorts to abstain from lust and intemperance. These two vices ruin those that hate God and keep far from Him; to them the following passages may be applied, "They are not the Lord's" (*ibid.* v. 10); "Cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth" (*ibid.* xv. 1). As regards the portion beginning, "Who can find a virtuous woman?" it is clear what is meant by the figurative expression, "a virtuous woman." When man possesses a good sound body that does not overpower him nor disturb the equilibrium in him, he possesses a divine gift. In short, a good constitution facilitates the rule of the soul over the body, but it is not impossible to conquer a bad constitution by training. For this reason King

Man's highest achievement is forming correct notions about God

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no wonder then

at this point,

- we have not yet seen how
P²N² deals with our
1st question - how an ethical God
can command an act
like the D²P² -

- but we feel the other
questions have been addressed

- Love for
+ connection w/ God
ultimately

Trumps All
for P²N², etc,

- + that's a very
exalted level
+ an everlasting
demonstration of faith

includes
everything
of this
World

Soren Kierkegaard, 1843

published under ^{Fear and Trembling} pseudonym: "Johannes⁵³

Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt offering upon one of the mountains which I will tell thee of.'

So all was lost, more terrible than if it had never been! So the Lord was only making sport of Abraham! Through a miracle he had made the preposterous come true, now he would see it again brought to nothing. Foolery indeed! But Abraham did not laugh at it, as Sarah had laughed when the promise had first been proclaimed.²⁰ All was lost! Seventy years' faithful expectation, the brief joy at faith's fulfilment.²¹ Who is it then that snatches the staff from the old man, who is it that demands that the old man himself should break it? Who is it that makes a man's grey hairs forlorn, who is it that demands that he himself should make them so? Is there no compassion for this venerable greybeard, none for the innocent child? And yet Abraham was God's chosen, and it was the Lord who put him to this test. All was now surely lost! The glorious memory of the human race, the promise in Abraham's seed,²² it was only a whim, a fleeting thought of the Lord's, which Abraham himself must now eradicate. That glorious treasure, as old as the faith in Abraham's heart, many many years older than Isaac, the fruit of Abraham's life, hallowed with prayers, ripened in struggle – the blessing on Abraham's lips, this fruit was now to be plucked out of season and have no meaning; for what meaning could there be in it if Isaac was to be sacrificed! That sad yet still blessed hour when Abraham should take leave of everything he held dear, when he should raise his venerable head one time more, when his countenance should be radiant as the Lord's, when he should concentrate his whole soul in a blessing with the power to give Isaac joy all his days – that moment was not to come! For, yes, Abraham would indeed take leave of Isaac, but it was he that was to remain; death would divide them, but Isaac was to be its victim. The old man was not to lay his hand upon Isaac in blessing, but weary of life was to lay it upon him in violence. And it was God who tried him. Yes. Woe, woe to the messenger who came before Abraham with such tidings! Who would have dared be the emissary of such sorrow? Yet it was God who tried Abraham.

But Abraham had faith, and had faith for this life. Yes, had

Interesting Take on
Abraham's Mental State & Faith

"Silentio"

our
same
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doubtful it always is that the movement is proper. To insist that a frigid, sterile necessity is necessarily present is to say that no one may experience death before actually dying, which strikes me as crass materialism. Yet in our time people are less concerned with making pure movements. Suppose someone wanting to learn to dance said: 'For hundreds of years now one generation after another has been learning dance steps, it's high time I took advantage of this and began straight off with a set of quadrilles.' One would surely laugh a little at him; but in the world of spirit such an attitude is considered utterly plausible. What then is education? I had thought it was the curriculum the individual ran through in order to catch up with himself; and anyone who does not want to go through this curriculum will be little helped by being born into the most enlightened age.

Infinite resignation is the last stage before faith, so that anyone who has not made this movement does not have faith; for only in infinite resignation does my eternal validity become transparent to me, and only then can there be talk of grasping existence on the strength of faith.

Let us now have the knight of faith make his appearance in the case discussed. He does exactly the same as the other knight, he infinitely renounces the claim to the love which is the content of his life; he is reconciled in pain; but then comes the marvel, he makes one more movement, more wonderful than anything else, for he says: 'I nevertheless believe that I shall get her, namely on the strength of the absurd, on the strength of the fact that for God all things are possible.' The absurd is not one distinction among others embraced by understanding. It is not the same as the improbable, the unexpected, the unforeseen. The moment the knight resigned he was convinced of the impossibility, humanly speaking; that was a conclusion of the understanding, and he had energy enough to think it. In an infinite sense, however, it was possible, through renouncing it [as a finite possibility]; but then accepting that [possibility] is at the same time to have given it up, yet for the understanding there is no absurdity in possessing it, for it is only in the finite world that understanding rules and there it was and remains an impossibility. On this the knight of faith is just as clear: all that

2 Simultaneous "movements"
 this is the 1st - "The Knight of Infinite Resignation"

ment. She will then introduce herself into that order of knight-hood whose members are not admitted by ballot but which anyone can join who has the courage to admit him- or herself, that order of knighthood which proves its immortality by making no distinction between man and woman. She too will keep her love young and sound, she too will have overcome her agony, even though she does not, as the song says, 'lie by her lord's side'.⁴⁶ These two will then be suited to each other in all eternity, with such a strict-tempoed *harmonia praestabilita* [pre-established harmony] that were some moment to come, a moment with which they were nevertheless not concerned finitely, for in the finite world they would grow old - were such a moment to come which allowed their love its expression in time, then they would be in a position to begin precisely where they would have begun had they been united from the beginning. The one, whether man or woman, who understands this can never be deceived, for it is only lower natures who imagine they are deceived. No girl who lacks this pride really knows what it is to love, but if she is so proud, then all the world's stratagems and ingenuity cannot deceive her.

In infinite resignation there is peace and repose; anyone who wants it, who has not debased himself by - what is still worse than being too proud - belittling himself, can discipline himself into making this movement, which in its pain reconciles one to existence. Infinite resignation is that shirt in the old fable.⁴⁷ The thread is spun with tears, bleached by tears, the shirt sewn in tears, but then it also gives better protection than iron and steel. A defect of the fable is that a third party is able to make the material. The secret in life is that everyone must sew it for himself; and the remarkable thing is that a man can sew it just as well as a woman. In infinite resignation there is peace and repose and consolation in the pain, that is if the movement is made properly. I could easily fill a whole book with the various misunderstandings, awkward positions, and slovenly movements I have encountered in just my own slight experience. People believe very little in spirit, yet it is precisely spirit that is needed to make this movement; what matters is its not being a one-sided result of *dira necessitas*;⁴⁸ the more it is that the more

reminiscent
of what
we saw
in J"n



"Infinite Resignation" to what God has decreed, acceptance of your fate as willed by God - this leads to a certain inner peace -- forget about all your dreams of riches, power, success or whatever -- resign yourself to your lot.

doubtful it is a frigid, steel one may expect me as concerned with to learn to do after another advantage? One would: such an attitude education? ran through does not wait by being born

Infinite resignation who has no in infinite resignation parent to non-existence or

Let us not the case disclose he infinitely of his life; but he makes or else, for he namely on the fact that for distinction a the same as the moment the ability, human standing, and sense, however finite possible same time to is no absurd that understands impossibility

BUT → now comes a

Fear and Trembling

~~Simon Hansson~~

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2d "movement"

renounce any prospect of coming further if only it were possible for me to come that far, however late in the day. Abraham can refrain at any moment, he can repent the whole thing as a temptation. Then he can speak, then all will understand him – but then he is no longer Abraham.

Abraham *cannot* speak. What would explain everything, that it is a trial – though note, one in which the ethical is the temptation – is something he cannot say (i.e. in a way that can be understood). Anyone so placed is an emigrant from the sphere of the universal. And yet what comes next he is even less able to say. For, as was made sufficiently clear earlier, Abraham makes two movements. He makes the infinite movement of resignation and gives up his claim to Isaac, something no one can understand because it is a private undertaking. But then he further makes, and at every moment is making, the movement of faith. This is his comfort. For he says, 'Nevertheless it won't happen, or if it does the Lord will give me a new Isaac on the strength of the absurd.' The tragic hero does at least get to the end of the story. Iphigenia bows to her father's decision, she herself makes the infinite movement of resignation and they now understand one another. She is able to understand Agamemnon because his undertaking expresses the universal. If on the other hand Agamemnon were to say to her, 'Even though the deity demands you as a sacrifice, it's still possible that he didn't – on the strength of the absurd', he would instantly become unintelligible to her. If he could say it on the strength of human calculation, then Iphigenia would surely understand him. But that would mean that Agamemnon had not made the infinite movement of resignation, and then he would not be a hero, and then the seer's utterance is just a traveller's tale and the whole incident a piece of vaudeville.

So Abraham did not speak. Only one word of his has been preserved, his only reply to Isaac, which we can take to be sufficient evidence that he had not spoken previously. Isaac asks Abraham where the lamb is for the burnt offering. 'And Abraham said: My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering.'¹²¹

This last word of Abraham's I shall consider here a little more

the "Knight of Faith"

everyone, as I believe, should feel able to change their mind before beginning on such a thing, that it is possible at every moment to retract and turn back. If one does this I see no danger; nor am I afraid of arousing a desire in people to be put to the test like Abraham. But if one wants to market a cut-price version of Abraham and then still admonish people not to do what Abraham did, then that's just laughable.

What I intend now is to extract from the story of Abraham its dialectical element, in the form of *problemata*, in order to see how monstrous a paradox faith is, a paradox capable of making a murder into a holy act well pleasing to God, a paradox which gives Isaac back to Abraham, which no thought can grasp because faith begins precisely where thinking leaves off.

for Kierkegaard,

Faith is not rational,

- Like one Falls in Love,
+ it's not "rational"

so one "Falls into
Faith"

- not a rational-
based process

one takes a

"Leap of Love"

or a

"Leap of Faith"

→

Kierkegaard coined

Gulf between them:

Maimonides §135

* Greatest Faith is recognizing supremacy of true connection to Gd ABOVE ALL ELSE

* Ultimately, Love of Gd = Knowledge of Gd,

b/c one can only love what he knows

* Reason-Intellect is the Link to Gd

Kierkegaard

* Greatest Faith is ability to hold on to everything temporal

* Love of Gd + Faith are non-rational paradoxes

* One needs an irrational Leap-of-Faith

→ Differing meanings of "Faith"
פ"אנך: DO I Love Gd enough to give up other things?
Kierkegaard: Does Gd Love me enough to give me what I want?
→ אנך vs. אנך; אנך vs. אנך

(Ezek. xxx. 1); "And the word of the Lord came" (2 Sam. xxiv. 11); "And behold, the word of the Lord came unto him" (1 Kings xix. 9); "And the word of the Lord came expressly" (Ezek. i. 3); "The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea" (Hos. i. 2); "The hand of the Lord was upon me" (Ezek. xxxvii. 1). There are a great many instances of this class. Every passage in Scripture introduced by any of these four forms is a prophecy proclaimed by a prophet; but the phrase, "And Elohim (an angel) came to a certain person in the dream of night," does not indicate a prophecy, and the person mentioned in that phrase is not a prophet; the phrase only informs us that the attention of the person was called by God to a certain thing, and at the same time that this happened at night. For just as God may cause a person to move in order to save or kill another person, so He may cause, according to His will, certain things to rise in man's mind in a dream by night. We have no doubt that the Syrian Laban was a perfectly wicked man, and an idolater; likewise Abimelech, though a good man among his people, is told by Abraham concerning his land [Gerar] and his kingdom, "Surely there is no fear of God in this place" (Gen. xx. 11). And yet concerning both of them, viz., Laban and Abimelech, it is said [that an angel appeared to them in a dream]. Comp. "And Elohim (an angel) came to Abimelech in a dream by night" (*ibid.* ver. 3); and also, "And Elohim came to the Syrian Laban in the dream of the night" (*ibid.* xxxi. 24). Note and consider the distinction between the phrases, "And Elohim came," and "Elohim said," between "in a dream by night," and "in a vision by night." In reference to Jacob it is said, "And an angel said to Israel in the visions by night" (Gen. xlv. 2), but in reference to Laban and Abimelech, "And Elohim came," etc. Onkelos makes the distinction clear; he translates, in the last two instances, *ata memar min kodam adonai*, "a word came from the Lord," and not *ve-itgeli*, "and the Lord appeared." The phrase, "And the Lord said to a certain person," is employed even when this person was not really addressed by the Lord, and did not receive any prophecy, but was informed of a certain thing through a prophet. E.g., "And she went to inquire of the Lord" (Gen. xxv. 22); that is, according to the explanation of our Sages, she went to the college of Eber, and the latter gave her the answer; and this is expressed by the words, "And the Lord said unto her" (*ibid.* ver. 23). These words have also been explained thus, God spoke to her through an angel; and by "angel" Eber is meant here, for a prophet is sometimes called "angel," as will be explained; or the angel that appeared to Eber in this vision is referred to, or the object of the Midrash explanation is merely to express that wherever God is introduced as directly speaking to a person, i.e., to any of the ordinary prophets, He speaks through an angel, as has been set forth by us (chap. xxxiv.).

CHAPTER XLII

We have already shown that the appearance or speech of an angel mentioned in Scripture took place in a vision or dream; it makes no difference whether this is expressly stated or not, as we have explained above. This is a point of considerable importance. In some cases the account begins by stating that the prophet saw an angel; in others, the account apparently introduces

"P'AN" provides an elegant solution to the ethical issues associated with the נר"ב -

a human being, who ultimately is shown to be an angel; but it makes no difference, for if the fact that an angel has been heard is only mentioned at the end, you may rest satisfied that the whole account from the beginning describes a prophetic vision. In such visions, a prophet either sees God who speaks to him, as will be explained by us, or he sees an angel who speaks to him, or he hears some one speaking to him without seeing the speaker, or he sees a man who speaks to him, and learns afterwards that the speaker was an angel. In this latter kind of prophecies, the prophet relates that he saw a man who was doing or saying something, and that he learnt afterwards that it was an angel.

This important principle was adopted by one of our Sages, one of the most distinguished among them, R. Hiya the Great (*Bereshit Rabba*, xlvi.), in the exposition of the Scriptural passage commencing, "And the Lord appeared unto him in the plain of Mamre" (Gen. xviii.). The general statement that the Lord appeared to Abraham is followed by the description in what manner that appearance of the Lord took place; namely, Abraham saw first three men; he ran and spoke to them. R. Hiya, the author of the explanation, holds that the words of Abraham, "My Lord, if now I have found grace in thy sight, do not, I pray thee, pass from thy servant," were spoken by him in a prophetic vision to one of the men; for he says that Abraham addressed these words to the chief of these men. Note this well, for it is one of the great mysteries [of the Law]. The same, I hold, is the case when it is said in reference to Jacob, "And a man wrestled with him" (Gen. xxxii. 25); this took place in a prophetic vision, since it is expressly stated in the end (ver. 31) that it was an angel. The circumstances are here exactly the same as those in the vision of Abraham, where the general statement, "And the Lord appeared to him," etc., is followed by a detailed description. Similarly the account of the vision of Jacob begins, "And the angels of God met him" (Gen. xxxii. 2); then follows a detailed description how it came to pass that they met him; namely, Jacob sent messengers, and after having prepared and done certain things, "he was left alone," etc., "and a man wrestled with him" (*ibid.* ver. 24). By this term "*man*" [one of] the angels of God is meant, mentioned in the phrase, "And angels of God met him"; the wrestling and speaking was entirely a prophetic vision. That which happened to Balaam on the way, and the speaking of the ass, took place in a prophetic vision, since further on, in the same account, an angel of God is introduced as speaking to Balaam. I also think that what Joshua perceived, when "he lifted up his eyes and saw, and behold a man stood before him" (Josh. v. 13) was a prophetic vision, since it is stated afterwards (ver. 14) that it was "the prince of the host of the Lord." But in the passages, "And an angel of the Lord came up from Gilgal" (Judges ii. 1); "And it came to pass that the angel of the Lord spake these words to all Israel" (*ibid.* ver. 2); the "angel" is, according to the explanation of our Sages, Phineas. They say, The angel is Phineas, for, when the Divine Glory rested upon him, he was "like an angel." We have already shown (chap. vi.) that the term "angel" is homonymous, and denotes also "prophet," as is the case in the following passages:—"And He sent an angel, and He hath brought us up out of Egypt" (Num. xx. 16); "Then spake Haggai, the angel of the Lord, in the Lord's message" (Hagg. i. 13); "But they mocked the angels of

add the explanation that it was in a dream. The ordinary reader believes that the acts, journeys, questions, and answers of the prophets really took place, and were perceived by the senses, and did not merely form part of a prophetic vision. I will mention here an instance concerning which no person will entertain the least doubt. I will add a few more of the same kind, and these will show you how those passages must be understood which I do not cite. The following passage in Ezekiel (viii. 1, 3) is clear, and admits of no doubt: "I sat in mine house, and the elders of Judah sat before me, etc., and a spirit lifted me up between the earth and the heaven, and brought me in the visions of God to Jerusalem," etc.; also the passage, "Thus I arose and went into the plain" (iii. 2, 3), refers to a prophetic vision; just as the words, "And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them" (Gen. xv. 5) describe a vision. The same is the case with the words of Ezekiel (xxxvii. 1), "And set me down in the midst of the valley." In the description of the vision in which Ezekiel is brought to Jerusalem, we read as follows: "And when I looked, behold a hole in the wall. Then said he unto me, Son of man, dig now in the wall; and when I had digged in the wall, behold a door" (*ibid.* viii. 7-8), etc. It was thus in a vision that he was commanded to dig in the wall, to enter and to see what people were doing there, and it was in the same vision that he digged, entered through the hole, and saw certain things, as is related. Just as all this forms part of a vision, the same may be said of the following passages: "And thou take unto thee a tile," etc., "and lie thou also on thy left side," etc.; "Take thou also wheat and barley," etc., "and cause it to pass over thine head and upon thy beard" (chaps. iv. and v.) It was in a prophetic vision that he saw that he did all these actions which he was commanded to do. God forbid to assume that God would make his prophets appear an object of ridicule and sport in the eyes of the ignorant, and order them to perform foolish acts. We must also bear in mind that the command given to Ezekiel implied disobedience to the Law, for he, being a priest, would, in causing the razor to pass over every corner of the beard and of the head, have been guilty of transgressing two prohibitions in each case. But it was only done in a prophetic vision. Again, when it is said, "As my servant Isaiah went naked and barefoot" (Isa. xx. 3), the prophet did so in a prophetic vision. Weak-minded persons believe that the prophet relates here what he was commanded to do, and what he actually did, and that he describes how he was commanded to dig in a wall on the Temple mount although he was in Babylon, and relates how he obeyed the command, for he says, "And I digged in the wall." But it is distinctly stated that all this took place in a vision.

It is analogous to the description of the vision of Abraham which begins, "The word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying" (Gen. xv. 1); and contains at the same time the passage, "He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now to the heaven and count the stars" (*ibid.* ver. 6). It is evident that it was in a vision that Abraham saw himself brought forth from his place looking towards the heavens and being told to count the stars. This is related [without repeating the statement that it was in a vision]. The same I say in reference to the command given to Jeremiah, to conceal the girdle in the Euphrates, and the statement that he concealed it, examined

it after a long time, and found it rotten and spoiled (Jer. xiii. 4-7). All this was allegorically shown in a vision; Jeremiah did not go from Palestine to Babylon, and did not see the Euphrates. The same applies to the account of the commandment given to Hosea (i.-iii.): "Take unto thee a wife of whoredom, and children of whoredom," to the birth of the children and to the giving of names to them. All this passed in a prophetic vision. When once stated that these are allegories, there is left no doubt that the events related had no real existence, except in the minds of those of whom the prophet says: "And the vision of every one was unto them like the words of a sealed book" (Isa. xxix. 11). I believe that the trial of Gideon (Judges vi. 21, 27) with the fleece and other things was a vision. I do not call it a prophetic vision, as Gideon had not reached the degree of prophets, much less that height which would enable him to do wonders. He only rose to the height of the Judges of Israel, and he has even been counted by our Sages among persons of little importance, as has been pointed out by us.

The same can be said of the passage in Zechariah (xi. 7), "And I fed the flock of slaughter," and all the incidents that are subsequently described; the graceful asking for wages, the acceptance of the wages, the wanting of the money, and the casting of the same into the house of the treasure; all these incidents form part of the vision. He received the commandment and carried it out in a prophetic vision or dream.

The correctness of this theory cannot be doubted, and only those do not comprehend it who do not know to distinguish between that which is possible, and that which is impossible. The instances quoted may serve as an illustration of other similar Scriptural passages not quoted by me. They are all of the same kind, and in the same style. Whatever is said in the account of a vision, that the prophet heard, went forth, came out, said, was told, stood, sat, went up, went down, journeyed, asked, or was asked, all is part of the prophetic vision; even when there is a lengthened account, the details of which are well connected as regards the time, the persons referred to, and the place. After it has once been stated that the event described is to be understood figuratively, it must be assumed for certain that the whole is a prophetic vision.

CHAPTER XLVII

It is undoubtedly clear and evident that most prophecies are given in images, for this is the characteristic of the imaginative faculty, the organ of prophecy. We find it also necessary to say a few words on the figures, hyperboles, and exaggerations that occur in Scripture. They would create strange ideas if we were to take them literally without noticing the exaggeration which they contain, or if we were to understand them in accordance with the original meaning of the terms, ignoring the fact that these are used figuratively. Our Sages say distinctly Scripture uses hyperbolic or exaggerated language; and quote as an instance, "cities walled and fortified, rising up to heaven" (Deut. i. 28). As a hyperbole our Sages quote, "For the bird of heaven carries the voice" (Eccles. x. 20); in the same sense it is said, "Whose height is like that of cedar trees" (Amos ii. 9). Instances of this kind are frequent in the language of all prophets; what they say is frequently hyperbolic or

The
ethical
issue
vanishes

David's prophetic vision
symbolized his reaching the level
where he knew that his relation with God
was supreme.