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SELECTED WRITINGS OF RABBI JOSEPH B. SOLOVEITCHIK

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OUT OF THE WHIRLWIND



*Essays on Mourning, Suffering
and the Human Condition*



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Out of the Whirlwind

The Cosmic and Apocalyptic Orders

Faith is fraught with absurdities; otherwise, it would not be an act of faith but one of logic. Absurdity means the non-conformity to either formal logical criteria or the rules we infer from experience. However, is there only one logical discipline or perhaps several? Is there only one kind of experience or more than one? Perhaps faith is in full conformity with that different kind of logic and experience.

Let me spell out clearly what I mean. The image of man in Judaism is reflected in two experiences: the cosmic and the covenantal. At first, man emerges in the Bible out of the depths of nature; he belongs to the cosmic continuum; he is involved in the great drama which follows an unalterable order and sequence. His methods of thinking and experiencing were born out of these patterns in the unfolding of the cosmic process. He attuned himself to the great occurrence of which he is a part and tries to accommodate, through his intellectual gesture, his sense-awareness of creation. In a word, there is a *Bereishit*-logic which reflects the wisdom of God embedded in nature.

However, the Bible also sees man in a different role. Man, in his encounter with God who addresses Himself to him not from within but from without the cosmic continuum, is exposed to an experience wholly other from the cosmic encounter. This apocalyptic dialogue which takes place between man and God consists of entirely different categories and a singular vocabulary. A new awareness dawns upon man, one that is not rooted in the cosmic logic and regularities. Human existence is interpreted differently in cosmic and covenantal terms, since God's kerygma [messages] revealed to man through these two media—nature and prophecy—are not commensurate, at least as far as the structural patterns are concerned. The logos which rules cosmic events and which expresses itself in the system of ideas is not identical with the *devar Hashem*, the word which was disclosed to man in his meeting with God.

Hence, when we say the act of faith belongs to the absurd, we mean that faith cannot be understood in terms of the cosmic context. Faithful man is burdened with a new message that is not comprehensible in the terms of natural logic. There is a very strange logic of the word as such, and only in this perspective must faith be understood. Any attempt to rationalize religious concepts overlooks this unbridgeable gulf which separates the cosmic from the covenantal experience, the logos of creation from the logos of the revealed message.

When I speak of the conflict between religion and science, I have in mind not the discrepancy between dogma and scientific dicta but the incongruity of the experiences, which can be traced back to the duality of the addresses God delivers to man, the natural and the apocalyptic. For instance, man himself is experienced differently in cosmic-natural and apocalyptic-covenantal terms. His position in the world, his existence, his worth and destiny, his duties and prerogatives can all be seen in two perspectives—either in light of the event of creation or in relation to the event of the God-man confrontation. Neither experience must be rejected. The severance of man from the cosmic would

result in an unmitigated asceticism and monasticism. Denial of the apocalyptic experience would lead man to egotism and crude materialism.

Can a complete harmony be achieved? Certainly not, since the natural and the covenantal belong to different and incommensurate orders! They must engender in man conflict and strife. Man must wrestle with himself, or, cosmic man is engaged in combat with covenantal man. Man oscillates between the cosmic and covenantal experience like a pendulum swinging back and forth between two poles. Yet this schism in the personality is indicative not of a sick soul but of a great one that sees God in both the flames of a rising sun and the fire of the Sinai apocalypse. The religious teacher is charged with the task of teaching the apocalyptic experience to cosmic man. It is a difficult but great task.

The dichotomy between the covenantal and cosmic within man comes to its fullest expression with regard to the problem of evil or suffering—theodicy.

Suffering and the Covenant

Faith is a passional experience, an experience of suffering. From the very dawn of our history, with the emergence of Abraham, suffering was considered both the main challenge which the covenantal community was expected to meet heroically and the great means of realizing the metahistorical destiny of this community. Abraham, as the incarnation of the knighthood of faith, was a great sufferer, a martyr. His greatness is manifested through his superhuman capacity for endurance and acceptance of sorrow. As a matter of fact, the election of his seed as a covenantal community was to be realized through suffering. The birth of the charismatic community was accompanied by affliction and pain. When we read the chapter in Genesis dealing with the covenant and God's pledge

to Abraham respecting His involvement with Abraham's clan, we are impressed by the weird scene full of undefined dread and grisly uneasiness.

And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him. And He said to Abram, "Know of a surety that your seed shall be a stranger in a land that is not theirs and shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years" (Gen. 15:12-13).

The realization of the covenant is possible only if the people is tested in the crucible of affliction. The historical occurrence which is the realizer of God's covenant within His elected community is strange and enigmatic, containing the element of absurdity. It cannot be interpreted in simple human psychological and historical categories such as pleasure, happiness, etc., for these ideas were disclosed to man not through the apocalyptic-transcendental but through the immanent-natural revelation.

The basic tendency in man to avoid the painful and search for the pleasant belongs to the original scheme of creation and is implanted in man and animal alike. The Bible felt that to rank man as a pleasure-seeking and happiness-questing being, prone only to the natural order of things, would amount to a kind of denial to man of his transcendental-covenantal nature. What has revelation given man that his creatureliness (as a natural being) did not disclose to him? Why is a natural ethic not sufficient to regulate man's existence and to realize his destiny? Why do we feel that the philosophico-ethical norms are neither meaningful enough nor binding upon us? Why have all attempts since ancient Greece to reduce morality to a convention, to a construction of the human mind and experience without involving any outside intervention, failed in impressing and impelling society to accept it unconditionally?

The answer is a simple one. Most natural ethical codes seek human happiness and utility. They tell man to behave in accordance with certain norms in order to improve his condition, to better his lot. Revelation has opened up to man a new existential dimension, the one of suffering. It has endowed man with the capacity for sacrificial action—sorrow. The word handed down to man by God from His transcendent recesses enlightens him about a new mission which he is called to perform, a new role he is summoned to play as an actor in the great covenantal drama—the sacrifice through the passional experience.

The covenant is born through the dialectic of suffering, through the contradiction implied in a shattered existence, in the mystery of a torn and desolate being. The person receiving the covenant must rise above his naturalness, above the order of creation, and ascend to a new event, to a new experience, namely, revelation. This departure from the natural-historical to the covenantal-metahistorical is possible only if the covenantal personality learns the mystery of *consummatio mundi* [consuming his natural world] by the fire of suffering, if he is experienced in affliction and toil. In order to confront God, man must purge himself and pass through a catharsis.

Cosmic man, whose world is replete with orderliness and beauty, serenity and peace, who has fulfilled all his ambitions and desires, who is satisfied with himself and his destiny, must forfeit, at least for a while, his neatly arranged world in order to discover God. The mere meeting with God is, according to Judaism, not only a great and blissful but also a shuddering and horror-filling experience. Not only does a bright sun rise upon the horizon of human existence, but also a darkness of a grisly night, full of strange echoes and visions, envelops the finite being. Chancing suddenly upon God, man becomes aware of his evanescence and the absurdity of a conditioned and relative existence. Infinity swallows up finitude. What importance can we ascribe to the flickering candle-flame when the latter comes close to the great all-consuming fire? Little

man forfeits his identity when he is confronted by all-inclusive Divinity. Finitude is sucked in by infinity; a bounded being disappears in the eternal boundlessness. Temporality submerges in eternity.

Two Moments of the Revelational Experience

In describing the revelational experience, we have isolated two antithetic moments. First, there is the moment of shock, when finite man, upon being confronted with infinity, becomes aware of the ontic void, of the inner contradiction within his existential experience, and suddenly realizes that the very foundation of his existence has collapsed. In other words, man in his rendezvous with God is confronted by non-being, by nihility, since God, addressing Himself through apocalypse, negates any other existence.

Second, there is the moment of ecstasy and rapture which rehabilitates and reconstructs man to heights unattainable at a cosmic level. Meeting God is a glorious and the most blessed event; it helps man transcend himself and make him greater than he really is. Man becomes transported out of himself and suddenly awakens to new dimensions of reality that were alien to him before. Communion with God elevates the spirit, cleanses the heart and spurs on the mind to absurd greatness. At the cosmic level, the fellowship with the God whose image is reflected in the great drama of creation, in natural law and mechanical regularity, affords man a consummated and fulfilled existence. The rendezvous with the God dwelling within being brings the ideal of self-realization within his reach. The God of the cosmos is the well of the existential experience; to come close to this well is tantamount to the finding of one's self. Yet no act of rising above oneself is involved in the God-man relationship within the cosmos. However, the apocalyptic experience of God expresses itself in a leap outside of oneself, in a journey from a here-and-now reality to the numinous.

In recapitulation, let me state that the apocalyptic experience is paradoxical insofar as it manifests itself in an ambivalent state of mind. On the one hand, there is shock and violence which leave behind considerable mental anguish and horror. "And when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and lo, a horror of great darkness fell upon him" (Gen. 15:12). On the other hand, there is a feeling of endless grace that remakes man in the image of God, who is enveloped in mystery and transcendence. Man passes over the boundary of selfhood and becomes greater than he really was destined to be in the cosmic scheme of things. While the confrontation of cosmic man with God is fundamentally an intellectual achievement via the "idea," via knowledge—the greatness of cosmic man manifests itself in his being the bearer of the idea, or in his cognitive genius—the encounter of covenantal man with *Deus Revelatus* is an experiential performance in which the total personality is involved. It is more a "sense-experience" than a noetic, intellectual act. It is an ultimate reality rather than an "idea." It is a frightening and fascinating vision that is real, powerful and overwhelming. As R. Yehudah Halevi writes,

The Kuzari said, Now the difference between the names "E-lokim" and "Hashem," the Tetragrammaton, has become clear to me, and I comprehend how broad is the distance between the God of Abraham and the God of Aristotle. For Hashem is the object of yearning of those who have perceived Him with the senses and on the basis of visual evidence, while E-lokim is the object of logical inference (*Kuzari* IV:16).

Suffering and Nihilism

Let us understand this a little deeper. We stated above that there is no place for suffering within the system of a cosmic existence. Only through revelation, when man becomes involved

with God, does the former encounter sorrow. We must distinguish between pain and suffering. While pain is a physico-psychical sensation and is proper not only to humans but even to the animals, suffering is a spiritual experience which is characteristic of man alone. A mother in labor who fervently beseeches God to give her a child cannot forego the sensation of excruciating pain. But she is not a woman of sorrow; on the contrary, she is a happy woman whose most cherished dream comes true. On the other hand, one who suddenly discovers that he is afflicted with a fatal disease and is doomed, even though he is free from pain, is a man of suffering and his distress is overwhelming.

What, basically, is suffering? It belongs to the realm of the spiritual personality, in other words, man's existential awareness. He realizes his uniqueness and otherness as a being who, while possessing a complex structure and a highly delicate nervous system that provides him with certain capabilities which were denied to other animals, is not just part of the physico-chemical world. The existential experience of man is the experience of man alone, of man who rises above the natural form of existence and discovers a new existential dimension. This experience denotes an existence which is not just a successful offshoot of the animal family forming another link in the endless chain of biological emergence, one whose existence has not begun and will not end with himself. It is rather a lonely, closed-in being, whose existence is limited to the narrow confines of an I. This strange being who ran away from the natural order is a man of sorrow and passion. Sorrow is fundamentally the encounter with non-being.

This meeting with nihilism may take place in two ways. First, it occurs when the individual existence is threatened with extinction. The anticipation and fear of death is a singular trait of man alone, who was endowed with a strange time consciousness which runs out bit by bit, driving him gradually to his destiny—nihilism. Second, it takes place at the axiological level. The

existential experience is an awareness of something which not only is but is worthy of its unique form of existence. In other words, man not only exists as a spiritual being but also values his existence as precious. His existence is not a static factum but an actus committed to something which fascinates him.

Plato, who expounded the doctrine of man as a bearer of ideas, was right in the sense that man stands in relationship to something beyond himself. Yet he did not emphasize the dynamic, creative character of this idea. (Hellas did not know much about creativity.) Man is charged with a task; this feeling of responsibility is part of his existential awareness. Of course, the objectives of his responsible questing and the ways in which he tries to attain them vary. Yet man is a being committed to an idea, even though quite often this idea may be false, absurd and perverted—and the means of achievement degrading. Whenever man realizes that he has failed to fulfill his commitment or responsibility, thus forfeiting the worth of his existence, he turns into a man of affliction. In short, either the anticipated loss of our existential awareness or the forfeiture of its value is the source of suffering. Suddenly man sees himself confronted with nihilism at either a factual or axiological level.

To behold the "nothing," the "empty," the non-being, is to suffer. Man as the child of nature, carried by the biological tide and submerged in a senseless existence, is not subject to suffering. There is no commitment and hence no frustration of failure within the *Bereishit* scheme of things. As a matter of fact, before emerging from the fluid continuum of natural life and taking up a position of selfhood, man is unacquainted with the existential experience, both as a heroic creative gesture of unqualified commitment and bold realization, on the one hand, and in its tragic aspect as an encounter with the void and nothingness, on the other. He does not share the joys of a great existence and he is spared the anguish and the tragedy of the existential bankruptcy of man who has met with God—with the Being *per se* who both bolsters and negates other beings, whose existence is

all-inclusive and at the same time all-exclusive, who raises man to the pinnacle of exultation and also lets him sink in the abyss of nonsense, who gives man endless joy, tranquility of mind, inner peace and contentment, but also arouses in him fear and anxiety; the One for whom man is questing, searching and longing, and from whom he flees. With this encounter man discovers himself and his existence, and out of this discovery the passionate experience is born.

The Metaphysic of Pain

Was Judaism preoccupied with the problem of suffering? Of course! Let us not forget that in Judaism suffering poses a more pointed and complicated question than in any other system of thought. Polytheistic religions had a very convenient solution to the problem of suffering; they divided responsibility among a multitude of deities. Hence the God of light and day was not to blame for the darkness and the night, and the God of life and fruition could not be indicted for death and destruction. Even Greek philosophy (in the Platonic-Aristotelian tradition) availed itself of a dualism of form and matter, granting the latter a share in the endless process of becoming and emerging, finding in it the source of suffering which is due to its instability, transience and amorphous character. Judaism, with its strict monotheistic philosophy, could not tolerate such answers, and thus the problem of suffering became more poignant and perplexing. Christianity faced a similar situation.

The general answer to this question runs as follows. God's works are good; there is no evil element involved in the order of things and events. For goodness is being, and whatever exists is good. However, Being is not a monolithic, uniform system. There are various degrees of being—higher and lower. However, even the lowest level of being is good, since the equation of being and goodness is irrefutable. Since every form of existence, even the simplest one, is good, suffering is only an illusion, a mirage,

produced by comparing a low form of being with a higher one. Whatever contains less being is considered evil. The inequality in the natural order engenders in us sorrow.

This optimistic doctrine denying evil was advanced by Maimonides and the medieval scholars of the Christian world.

After these propositions, it must be admitted as a fact that it cannot be said of God that He directly created evil, or has the direct intention to produce evil; this is impossible. His works are all perfectly good. He only produces existence, and all existence is good; whilst evil can only be attributed to Him in the way we have mentioned. He creates evil only insofar as He produces the corporeal element . . . consequently the true work of God is all good since it is existence. The book which enlightened the darkness of the world says therefore, "And God saw everything that He had made and, behold, it was very good" (Gen. 1:31). Even the existence of this corporeal element, low as it is in reality, . . . is likewise good for the permanence of the universe and the continuation of the order of things, so that one thing departs and the other succeeds. Rabbi Meir therefore explains the words "and, behold, it was very good" to imply that even death was good (*Gen. Rabbah*, 9), in accordance with what we have observed in this chapter (*Guide* III:10).

Maimonides gives the paradoxical answer to the question, "Why evil?" There is no evil; the lesser good appears to us by comparison as evil. Evil, seen in the perspective of the whole, turns into good. Only if we segregate phenomena from each other and observe them in their particularity do we think that they are absurd. Death, for instance, is an evil experience if viewed from the level of individual existence. However, if seen under the aspect of the total destiny of man as such, the elimination of the old and obsolete or the departure of people who

belong mentally to a different age is the greatest of blessings. In a word, within the range of totality, all evils disappear.

Interesting is a strange substitution which our liturgists of old introduced into a prophetic text and which conveys the same idea. We read, "I form light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil. I the Lord do all these things" (Isa. 45:7). This sentence was incorporated in our daily liturgy preceding the recital of *Shema*. Yet our sages changed a word in this sentence and supplanted "evil" with "all things." In our prayers, we say, "Blessed art Thou . . . who forms light and creates darkness, who makes peace and creates all things." Instead of stating that God creates evil, we circumscribe it and say He creates all things. Apparently, in the expression "all things," evil is converted into good.

Physical Sensation and Spiritual Existence

All this, however, is fine if we consider evil within the frame of reference of creation, in the form of pain and corruption. Then we may say that evil is only a privation of the true good, but as privation of the true good it is still good. It is perhaps better for the natural primitive man to live a short period of time than for him not to live at all. Yet when we shift the perspective from creation to revelation, from pain to suffering, from a physical sensation to a spiritual experience, I do not believe that the metaphysical approach is applicable. For here the question is not "Why suffering?" and we are not trying to formulate a dialectic of sorrow, but rather "How should we handle suffering?" and our inquiry aims at a halakhah of suffering.

Revelation itself is a paradoxical experience which is not interpretable in terms of our natural reason. The encounter of man and God does not lend itself to rationalization and categorization at a cognitive level. It is a numinous awareness which is very little concerned with dialectics and the "why" question. The cognitive trend is typical of cosmic man, created on that

Friday afternoon as a part of the general order, but not of covenantal apocalyptic man, for whom reason is not a guide and who accepts the numinous and mysterious as superior to the familiar and comprehensible. Cosmic man asks "Why?" and is concerned with harmony in being; covenantal man inquires "What does it mean to me?" and is interested in the paradox in being. Cosmic man is interested in the causa and rationale, covenantal man in the norm, the kerygma, the message. Hence, suffering as a singular experience of covenantal man is subjected not to metaphysical but halakhic inquiry.

To the Halakhah, suffering is the great medium through which God, of the all-consuming fire of Mount Sinai, discloses Himself to man. "And the sight of the Glory of the Lord was like a devouring fire on the top of the Mount" (Ex. 24:17). He reveals Himself through the whirlwind, through the sharp pain and sorrow, and appears to man through the violent shock of encountering infinity. We have explained before that the apocalyptic trauma of revelation is due to the fact that finite-conditioned man, confronted suddenly by God, the numinous, all-powerful and all-negating, becomes aware of the suspension of his own selfhood. Man is tossed back from his existential position into the darkness of nihility. However, as is the case in mathematics, an equation works both ways. Not only is the apocalyptic experience catastrophic, but the converse is also true. Whenever there is a catastrophic experience, there is disclosure—man is confronted by God. Sorrow delivers a message to the man of sorrow; God addresses the sufferer through his suffering. God speaks to him through every trauma, every swing-back of peaceful man from his position, every sharp pain. Suffering is the whirlwind out of which God addressed Himself to Job. Whenever the sun sets and man feels the horror of darkness, he comes face to face with God. The apocalyptic revelation, in contrast to the cosmic, is not an ontic-eudaemonic but a nihilistic-passional experience. Whenever man catches a glimpse of the nothing—an agonizing experience—he meets God.

In this respect Judaism has sharply disagreed with the classical tradition. Plato and Aristotle identified deity with the harmonious and lawful, with the orderly, intelligible component in the world; they were completely perplexed when they came across the incidentally ugly, absurd and catastrophic in nature. Judaism, with its monistic rigidity, revolutionized the doctrine of divinity by introducing a new experience—that of revelation through the catastrophic. Judaism found God in the violent outbursts of a negating energy in the universe. The anxiety of the lonely, the sorrow of the man facing nihility and the dark night of an exhausted and despairing man are media of the great revelation. In short, pain is always kerygmatic; it bears a message.

A Halakhah of Suffering

This is, of course, not a dialectic or metaphysic of, but a halakhah of suffering. While the explanation of sorrow is not of much help to the afflicted person, a halakhic ethic of pain, the discovery and deciphering of its message, is very relevant—since suffering is not only a traumatic but also a redemptive experience. As a matter of fact, a redeemed personal existence is possible only if man set his foot upon the way of purgation and purification which suffering paves for him. Catharsis can be attained only through sacrificial action, which is nothing else but the experience of crisis, of failure and complete despair on the part of man. If man is capable of passing courageously through the valley of sorrow, he will emerge into bright sunshine rejuvenated and redeemed.

Judaism disagrees with all mental health doctrines which claim that the sooner man dismisses from his mind the catastrophic, the happier he will feel. On the contrary, it must sink into man's memory and be integrated into his existential awareness. To be means not only to enjoy or to rejoice but also to suffer and to carry the load, to experience great desolation and the dark night of affliction. The redemptive power which is inherent

in endurance and perseverance is effectual only when the experience is not dismissed from one's mind.

Of course, we must discriminate between the various components of the passional experience. There the shock transports man out of his usual self. This shock is a result of one's encounter with non-being, of his peeping into the abyss of nihilism. Man suddenly realizes that his existence is not secure and self-evident to the extent that the opposite, non-existence, is unthinkable. The man of sorrow begins to understand that the existential experience is an antithetic one. It contains its own contradiction—the awareness of non-existence. To exist means to know that this particular existence will at some future date be extinguished. However, this paradoxical awareness is of a metaphysical nature, without involving man in the fright and fear of death. It is more a metaphysico-axiological than a psychological shock. Metaphysical man suffers. There is no pain in the body, nor mental torment involved in this awareness. What occurs is a re-evaluation and reexamination of one's ontic consciousness.

Let me explain in psychological terms what transpires at the metaphysico-axiological level. We all know that we are mortal. Yet this bit of knowledge does not impress our existential consciousness. We simply do not experience our finitude. We speak of death, of the time when we all will be gone, we make out our wills, even buy cemetery plots; yet all this does not represent a real awareness of our limited existence, of nihilism. Our experience, paradoxically enough, exhausts itself in categories of exclusive existence. Tolstoy writes in *The Death of Ivan Illich* that although everybody knows the Aristotelian syllogism: "All men are mortal; Socrates is a man; hence Socrates is mortal"—yet we do not apply this syllogistic inference to ourselves. Application as used in this context means *experiencing* the negation, not mere knowledge. To us, death is a conception but not a human experience. Only sickness somehow transforms the conception into a living reality and makes

us encounter death in all its ugliness and sharpness, and this rendezvous with nihilism leaves a mark upon our existential consciousness. No more do we experience ourselves in terms of immortality. This shock, which has awakened us to a new vision of non-being, must never be forgotten. The heart engages in a dialogue with nihilism, and this dialogue should never be terminated. Recollection of our finite destiny is a part of the message of suffering.

A Personal Example

Let me illustrate this in terms of my own experience. My existential awareness was an absolute one. Non-being did not enter into it. I would not sustain my gaze upon nihilism. Whenever I started to think of death, my thoughts were dashed back and they returned to their ordinary objective, to life. When I looked upon my grandson, I always tried to think of him as if he were my contemporary. I believed that we would always do things and play together. Then sickness initiated me into the secret of non-being. I suddenly ceased to be immortal; I became a mortal being.

The night preceding my operation I prayed to God and beseeched Him to spare me. I did not ask for too much. All I wanted was that He should make it possible for me to attend my daughter's wedding, which was postponed on account of my illness—a very modest wish in comparison with my insane claims to life prior to my sickness. The fantastic flights of human foolishness and egocentrism were distant from me that night.

However, this "fall" from the heights of an illusory immortality into the valley of finitude was the greatest achievement of the long hours of anxiety and uncertainty. Fundamentally, this change was not an act of falling but one of rising toward a new existential awareness which embraces both man's tragedy and his glory, in all its ambivalence and paradoxality. I stopped perceiving myself in categories of eternity. When I recite my

prayers, I ask God to grant me life in very modest terms. A more logical self substitutes himself for a self who was intoxicated to the extent of insanity with the vision of being. I do not have to tell you that modesty is perhaps the most relevant element in prayer, both as to the efficacy and dignity of the latter.

When one's perspective is shifted from the illusion of eternity to the reality of temporality, one finds peace of mind and relief from other worries, from his petty fears and from absurd stresses and nonsensical nightmares. At the level of the anti-thetic existential experience, man extracts himself from the throng of ghosts which keep on haunting him. At the root of our restlessness lies a distorted conception of ourselves as immortal beings. Hence, everything that causes pain or annoyance is placed in the wrong frame of reference. We foolishly imagine eternity to be affected by a particular event which disturbed us; we magnify the significance of incidents because we exaggerate our own worth. Man sees himself in the mirror of immortality. Hence his desires, dreams, ambitions and visions assume absolute significance, and any frustrating experience may break man. When one frees himself from this obsession, his perspective becomes coherent and his suffering bearable. He learns to take defeat courageously. His frustrations and disillusion are balanced by the keen sense of a here-and-now existence in which he is submerged, and he understands that no pain lasts forever.

Suffering and Loneliness

In addition to bringing man to confront nihilism, the shock of suffering opens up to man another dimension of being: loneliness. In this respect, the apocalyptic revelation and suffering display a common motif. The trauma is caused by the surprise of being singled out. When God revealed Himself to Moses, the latter argued with Him. "Who am I, *mi anokhi*, that You should send me?" (Ex. 3:11). The individual who was elected by the

Almighty out of the crowd with which he identified until the last instant finds himself suddenly different from others. In his dialogue with God he is lonely, since no one joined him in this paradoxical venture, no one shares the burden which was foisted upon his shoulders. He is even impotent to communicate to others the indescribable content of the great message which was delivered to him; it can never be told and explained. The elected remains a solitary figure, and the question which troubles his mind is a short one: *Mi anokhi*, Who am I, or to paraphrase, Why me? Why did You, great God, lift me to new heights while You left the multitude behind? Why should I be unique, different; why should I be the elected one? The pointing out of one in the crowd is a traumatic experience.

The same is true of the man of sorrow. When the blow strikes, the first question which pops up upon the lips of the sufferer is: Why me? Why should I be different from others? Why was I selected to explore the valley of sorrow? A feeling of envy fills out the heart of the afflicted. He envies everybody, pauper and prince, young and old. They were spared, while I was picked out.

When I eulogized my uncle, R. Velvel Soloveitchik, *zt"l*, in the auditorium of Yeshiva University while knowing of my affliction, one nagging thought assailed my mind. All these thousands of people are healthy and expect to live a long and happy life, whereas I am not certain that I will be able to accompany my daughter to the wedding canopy. While these thoughts are passing through one's mind with the speed of lightning, one feels forsaken, forlorn and lonely. I am different; I have met with a strange destiny. No one else is like me.

Gradually this feeling of loneliness pervades one's whole being with ever-increasing predominance; the whole self becomes immersed in solitude and the awareness of being taken away from the community. The man who is bound to others by countless invisible threads is torn loose from his social bearings. He makes his exit from the community and retreats into him-

self because he was singled out. Elisha, upon being elected, abandoned his father and mother. The elected retreats even from his closest friends and beloved ones, not excluding wife and children.

The night before my operation, when my family said good-bye to me, I understood the words of the psalmist, "*Ki avi ve-immi azavuni, va-Hashem ya'asfeni*, When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up" (Ps. 27:10). I had never understood this verse. Did ever a parent abandon his child? Of course not! Yet in certain situations, one is cut off even from his parents or his beloved wife and children. Community life, togetherness, is always imbued with the spirit of cooperation, of mutual help and protection. Suddenly one realizes that there is no help which his loved ones are able to extend to him. They are onlookers who watch a drama unfolding itself with unalterable speed. They are not involved in it. This realization brings to an abrupt end the feeling of togetherness. I stand before God; no one else is beside me. A lonely being meeting the loneliest Being in utter seclusion is a traumatic but also a great experience. These two experiences, that of non-being and that of loneliness, must not be forgotten.

Cosmic and Jobian Revelation

Let us return to our discussion of how God discloses Himself to man through suffering. Of course, we accept metahistorical revelation as a transcendental occurrence. Judaism originated in the revelation-experience, and to dismiss this event would mean to undermine the very foundation upon which Judaism rests. It is useless to rationalize it. It is a paradoxical event fraught with strangeness, horror and unknowability. Yet we believe that there is another revelational experience, one which is not associated with a metahistoric event.

This latter experience is revelational in the sense that it contains the element of the catastrophic. Disclosure and the cat-

astrophic (the act of instantaneous overturning or shattering of existential patterns) are identical concepts in Judaism. Any form of suffering, any sharing in the travail of the world implies a movement of recoil, turning away from the old and familiar, from viewpoints so ingrained that they have become part of the personality, from attitudes so clear that they assumed apodictic significance, from activities so frequent that they turned into routine. In a word, the passional experience is traumatic and as such it acts with catastrophic force—it tears man loose from his fixed attachments to himself and to others and shakes him out of involvement with his well-known environment. Wherever the catastrophic emerges, the great disclosure is made: man is confronted with God.

We know very well that Judaism distinguished between the natural and the visional revelation. Man may encounter God in His works, either in the external or in the spiritual order of creation. It is a commonplace in the Bible that the works of God attest to His existence, omnipotence and wisdom. Anyone who comes in contact with creation at all levels is *ipso facto* confronted with God. "The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament proclaims His handiwork" (Ps. 19:2). Both through the cosmic occurrence and through the spiritual drama of man, God makes His wisdom and will known. This revelation to which cosmic man is receptive is attained only in the rapturous experience of Being in all its glory and grandeur. Creation, abounding in orderliness, architectural magnificence and overpowering beauty, is the medium which is employed by God for disclosing Himself to man. In a word, God reveals Himself through the ontic experience, the experience of being, which abolishes the barriers of finitude and goes out toward the absolute. This cosmic experience of God is portrayed in Psalm 104: "Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord my God, Thou art very great; Thou art clothed with honor and majesty. Who covers Himself with light as a garment; Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain . . ." *Majestas Dei* represents the revelation of

God at a cosmic level. The Greeks were not immune to the majestic-ontic experience of God even though they did not know anything about creation.

Yet Judaism introduced another form of revelation: the Jobian catastrophic one, when God addresses Himself to man through the whirlwind. This doctrine of the catastrophic is most unique in the history of the philosophy of suffering: God's revelation in the dark night of existence, or—to phrase this idea in paradoxical terms—the revelation of God through His alleged abandonment and absenting Himself from man who finds himself suddenly *tête-à-tête* with nothingness. This motif was spelled out in the halakhic categories of repentance and prayer. The experience of the catastrophic in a variety of ways—and this occurs whenever one relapses to lower existential levels—must find its response in soul searching and prayer. Both *teshuvah* and *tefillah* are the outcry of man who has met catastrophe, whose joy and peace of mind are gone. There is no prayer and there is no soul-searching if man does not experience the “great desolation” (as the mystics called it).

When you are in tribulation and all these things are come upon you, even in the latter days, if you turn to the Lord your God . . . (Deut. 4:30).

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse, which I have set before you, and you shall call them to mind among all the nations where the Lord your God has driven you, *asher hidihakha*, you shall return to the Lord your God and hearken to His voice (Deut. 30:1).

The term *hidihakha* is of interest. *Hidiah* means to drive one away, in a physical sense, from home, or, as a metaphor, to make him abandon a belief, an opinion, an idea. “Certain men, wicked fellows, are gone out from your midst, *vayadihu*, and

have thrust out of the way the inhabitants of their city, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods,’ to drive you away from the path” (Deut. 13:14). *Dahoh* signifies moving something from its proper place, or turning over. In a word, it is the equivalent of the Greek “*katastrophein*,” to turn down or turn over.

In the dedication address by King Solomon, prayer is defined as the response of man to suffering. “Whatever prayer and whatever supplication is made by any man or by all Thy people Israel, who shall know every man the affliction of his own heart, and he spread forth his hands towards this place . . .” (I Kings 8:38).

“The affliction of his own heart” translates itself into prayer. What is prayer? The dialogue between man and God; they both address themselves to each other. And what is a dialogue if not the mutual revelation of those engaged in it? Through the catastrophic God reveals Himself to man, and the latter, out of the depths and darkness, calls out and discloses his heart to God who spoke to him through the whirlwind of distress. The whole idea of prayer rests upon the premise that God meets man through the latter's encounter with non-being. The nihilistic revelation calls for a response on the part of man. Man oscillates between the natural revelation, which is experienced by the cosmic man's illuminated, joyous ontic consciousness, and the catastrophic revelation, which addresses itself to the tormented nihilistic consciousness. The ontic revelation employs the medium of order, stability and knowability, the nihilistic—the *tohu va-vohu*, the formless void. God's spirit hovers over the *tohu va-vohu*.

In other words, the cosmic revelation implies an affirmation of man's existence, while the catastrophic expresses itself in pure negation. The paradoxical alternation between these two revelations is, as a matter of fact, a basic motif within our existential consciousness. Since the latter manifests itself in a finite experience, it is *ipso facto* a bounded-in consciousness and, as such, antithetic. Moreover, our existential consciousness is

interwoven in a time-texture, which, as the old Greeks pointed out already, is an anticipation or a remembrance of the opposite, of the contradiction of the factum upon which my consciousness at present is focused.

In a word, with the temporal-existential experience, the thesis and the antithesis coexist. Each joyous emotion reflecting God, the Creator and Sustainer of Being, contains its own contradiction, the painful realization that God negates the very order of creation. The blessed ecstasy enveloping man while viewing the great cosmic drama entails its own negation, the catastrophic ecstasy of confronting nihility. Never must one succumb to the temptation of absolutizing human experiences, of letting himself be swept away by the intoxicating awareness of "I am," forgetting the great contradiction involved in this very awareness. One's existence is a dialectical experience of positing and negating. The Psalms (2:11) speak of rejoicing while trembling, and Isaiah declares, "Then you shall see and be brightened up, and your heart shall stand in fear and be enlarged" (60:5). If man at the cosmic level of existence is not mindful of the dialectics of being, if he is prone to absolutization and hypostatization of experiences (which is an idolatrous performance) and does not identify God who called for him out of the ontic consciousness, then the great cosmic experience is supplanted by the nihilistic catastrophic. Many people have paid in this way, by the receiving of catastrophic communication of God's word, for the naivete they displayed while this word was waiting for them in the great affirmation at a cosmic level. The shocking experience of the apocalypse follows a period of grace, during which God had attempted to reach man through his ontic consciousness and man refused to receive the great communication. *Hesed* wasted, a Divine offer rejected, a message misunderstood: all these call for atonement—in other words, they call for the nihilistic revelation, which is out to accomplish what the ontic disclosure failed to do.

Job

Job, while he enjoyed the Divine blessings, rich, influential, respected by all, did not avail himself of this outpouring of Divine kindness in the interests of a great destiny which he was called to fulfill. The kerygma of the ontic revelation was not accepted by him. Power, riches and influence are given to an individual or to a community for the sake of utilization for a worthy cause. Each gift presented to man by God entails a summons. If the latter is ignored, the great swing back from ontic to nihilistic revelation takes place. This is exactly what happened to Job.

Interesting is the aggadic approach to Job. The aggadah (*Bava Batra* 15a-b) tried to have the chronology of the events narrated in the book of Job coincide with the most outstanding periods in the biblical history of our people. One aggadic scholar maintained that Job was a contemporary with our Patriarchs; another advanced the guess that Job lived at the time of the Exodus; a third one identified him as living during the period of Ezra. (There are other opinions as well.) The aggadah was emphasizing the relevance of events which transpired during Job's life, the destiny-charged moments in our emergence as a people. Job could have contributed greatly to them, accelerating the historic tempo of realization and relieving the heroic figures who were involved in these dramatic developments of the great burden they carried. He could have, had he wanted, used his influence and spared Jacob, Moses or Ezra agonizing moments of frustration, impotence and mental distress. He had the means to alleviate their suffering, to promote the cause to which they were dedicated, to help them realize the covenantal vision.

God addressed Himself to Job through abundance and wealth, through the ecstasy of joy. Job missed the message. The pendulum swung toward the catastrophic revelation, to the dia-

logue not via the universal harmony of the ontic consciousness but through the whirlwind whose fury is perceived in horror by the nihilistic consciousness. "And behold, there came a great wind from across the wilderness and it smote the four corners of the house and it fell upon the young men, and they are dead; I only am escaped alone to tell you" (Job 1:19). The cosmic address was supplanted by the apocalyptic address. When Job complained and questioned the intelligibility of the dark night of the apocalypse, the absence of God, the Creator, he suddenly was confronted by God, again appearing in the whirlwind, in the catastrophic. "Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind" (38:1).

And what was the gist of the answer which Job received from the whirlwind? "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth? Declare if you have understanding. Who has laid the measures thereof, if you know? . . . Know you the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth?" (38:4, 39:1).

In short, Job did not grasp the meaningfulness of the cosmic drama to man; he did not encounter God in creation, nor did he comprehend His summons which was communicated to Job through the magnificent order of cosmic grandeur and might. He failed at the level of the ontic experience. Hence God addressed Himself to him through the cataclysm.

The Message of Suffering

What is the kerygma which suffering delivers to man? I believe that the essence of the passionate message consists in a simple sentence: Do not disown the passionate encounter with God. Instead of rejecting it, assimilate the remembrance of suffering into the all-embracing existential awareness. Let the catastrophic experience be placed in the framework of your spiritual personality. Assign to it a position within your inner world. For the risk is great that man, driven by his innate tendency to

immerse in spiritual joys, to keep away from himself the memory of any unpleasant sensation, to repress disturbing thoughts and to escape from a past that abounds in sorrow, will let the catastrophic event drift aimlessly in a vacuum without finding anchorage in the total personal experience. This would amount to wasting the catastrophic disclosure, to an admission that God was absent from the whirlwind that thwarts man's drives and dreams. In consequence, man would, after meeting God in the whirlwind, return to his routine which operates exclusively at the level of affirmation, refusing stubbornly to relate itself to the negation. The antithetic character of our existential experience would be lost if the sufferer reverts to old practices. Hence the fundamental norm inscribed in pain is: Forget not. Let the passionate experience always be the other pole towards which the experiential pendulum swings from time to time.

The Halakhah formulated several *mitzvot* pertaining to remembrance. Two of them emphasize the passionate experience: "You shall remember that you were a servant in the land of Egypt . . ." (Deut. 5:15 and elsewhere). "Remember what Amalek did to you by the way . . . How he met you by the way, and smote the hindmost of you, even all that were feeble behind you, when you were faint and weary" (Deut. 25:17-18). As a matter of fact, the event of our affliction in Egypt forms the foundation of the Jewish ethos: our deep understanding for the trials and tribulations of the stranger; our keen sense of justice and fairness; our dislike for brutality; our demand for equality. Quite often, in conveying to us an ethical norm the Bible refers us to our historical experience in Egypt. Apparently, the ethical gesture is born out of the assimilated passionate experience.

Isaiah and Ezekiel

There are two narratives in the Bible in which Isaiah and Ezekiel respectively describe the apocalypse which they beheld. The theme, the vision of God, is almost identical; but the pre-

sentations vary in their basic features. Isaiah was confronted by a simple vision; Ezekiel encountered a very complex and mysterious image. Isaiah's narrative is short and terse; Ezekiel's is long and abounding in details which, instead of clarifying, make the narrative more enigmatic and awesome.

In the year that King Uzziah died I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up, and His train filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim; each one had six wings; with twain he covered his face, and with twain he covered his feet, and with twain he did fly. And one cried to the other and said: "*Kadosh, kadosh, kadosh*, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory." And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried and the house was filled with smoke . . . (Isa. 6:1-4).

The historical setting for Isaiah's vision was one of relative peace and serenity. The kingdom of Judah still enjoyed freedom and prosperity. The Temple, abounding in magnificence and beauty, stood firmly atop the fair mount. The Jewish historical drama was not yet interrupted by any cataclysmic events. Exile, the disaster, defeat and national humiliation were yet unknown to the Jewish people rooted in their soil and leading a normal life. Isaiah and his people were at home and he beheld a vision of God abiding in His home in circumstances similar to those which accompany the cosmic revelation—through the display of God's might and glory. In a word, Isaiah saw *majestas Dei* reflected in the historic drama as well as in the cosmos. "The whole earth is full of His glory, *kevodo*" (6:3). Let us not forget that *kavod* signifies weight, impact. His power is universally felt. His will guides the cosmic occurrence and the historical events. *Kavod* in Hebrew denotes also light, radiation. "God's *kavod* was revealed in the cloud" (Ex. 16:10). God's majesty-light-beauty penetrates the whole earth. The skirts of God fill

the temple. He is ubiquitous, and not even a single aspect of creation can afford to free itself from His might and control. He is the Lord of the Hosts. He is the king; His dominion is the whole of reality.

Of course, as an apocalyptic experience, the encounter with God was not lacking some numinous aspects. We face here a dichotomy. While the confrontation of Isaiah with God is apocalyptic, transcendental and numinous, his response was this-worldly. Isaiah saw God outside creation—high and exalted—and he rediscovered Him within creation. Isaiah saw God's skirts filling every phase of Being. Even the *seraphim*, transcendental intelligences, in the second half of their cry announced the cosmic majesty of God. As we pointed out before, the encounter was not completely devoid of the numinous. The mere attributes of *kadosh, kadosh, kadosh* denote distance, separation and distinction. Moreover, not only was the vision itself mysterious and awe-inspiring, but it also contained a traumatic element. The vision of God filled Isaiah with fear. The doorposts trembled and the house was filled with smoke, representing of the wholly other character of an event that evokes a dramatic response. Isaiah continued, "Then said I, 'Woe is me! For I am undone, because I am a man of unclean lips; . . . for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts'" (6:5).

Yet neither the numen nor the trauma have succeeded in stripping the experience of its ontically affirmative motif. The vision in all its strangeness and otherworldliness focused Isaiah's glance upon the here-and-now reality and he began to explore not the beyond but the various dimensions of the cosmos, searching for God who addresses Himself to man not through the apocalyptic trauma but through the joyous cosmic experience. During the first commonwealth, the prophets did not hear God speaking to them from the whirlwind, since the cataclysmic or catastrophic events were unknown to the nation as a whole. God spoke to His servants and His message was an encouraging one and became immediately related to a stable

order of creation. When we proclaim in *Kedushah*, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory," we discover God in our ontic awareness. "*Sum ergo Deus est*"—since we exist, we find at the very root of our existence God, who is Being *par excellence*. Of course, God is also distant, He is holy, and yet this remoteness does not somehow negate our existential experience. Rendezvous with God enhances our own existence. The ontic cosmic awareness emerges out of the apocalyptic confrontation.

Ezekiel was the first prophet who encountered God in the whirlwind. He experienced the catastrophic revelation; God addressed Himself to Ezekiel through the fire of disaster and the hurricane of the north. "And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud and a fire unfolding itself and a brightness was about, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber out of the midst of the fire" (Ez. 1:4).

God revealed Himself out of the storm-wind, the destructive hurricane that left in its wake ruins and debris in the hills and plain of Judea and uprooted an entire people from its native soil, converting free, proud men into slaves and prisoners. Out of this cataclysmic whirlwind that wiped out Judea, the sanctuary, the glory and pride of Israel, out of the fire that caused havoc, out of the cloud of a dark, gloomy, lonely night, God addressed Himself to Ezekiel. Where did the prophet behold the great apocalyptic vision? In the temple, in the courtyard, surrounded by the pomp and glory of an independent people like his predecessor Isaiah? No! He met God in a prison camp, in the land of the Chaldeans by the river Kevar. And the vision he saw lacked the simplicity of the Isaiah encounter, the direct apprehension of God's glory and the majesty of God's skirt filling the temple. He sees first not God but holy creatures whose visage is like burning coal, and like the appearance of torches; he notices wheels which went with the creatures—a strange apocalypse, filling the viewer with grisly fear. The whole vision is weird and frightening.

At the outset, Ezekiel missed God; he was confronted by mechanical forces in action. He perceived the tremendous energy potential entailed in this heavenly mechanism which is engaged in perpetual motion. "It went up and down among the living creatures, and the fire was bright and out of the fire went forth lightning" (1:13). Yet he did not see God in these heavens which were wide open to his searching glance and exploring mind. The creatures ruled; they set the wheels in motion, "for the spirit of the living creatures was in the wheels." And yet there was no vision of God. He heard the noise of the wings, like the noise of the great waters, as the noise of a host—but was there something behind all this activity, drive and movement, or was there nothing in the background? The creatures, the wheels, the fire, the lightning, the torches, the roar and tumult originate and end in a great void. They are born out of nothingness and move on to their own doom.

For the fraction of a second, Ezekiel beheld a weird vision: "And the likeness of the firmament was over the heads of the living creatures like the color of the terrible ice crystal stretched forth over their heads above" (1:22). It seemed for a short moment that the terrifying vision beheld by Ezekiel was projected against an icy, cruel, insensitive and insensate reality. All prayers bounced back, all petitions echoed through the empty black spaces. The warm human voice which rose out of the depths of a yearning soul questing for God was chilled upon reaching the icy heavens. Man with his aspirations, dreams, petitions and supplications seemed a nonsensical, displaced being drifting along bleak uncharted lands, lonely and abandoned. Above his head spread forth an icy heaven, indifferent and irresponsive.

When catastrophe strikes man, when the whirlwind sweeps across his private world leaving wreckage behind—he first hears the tumult of the *hayot* and *ofanim*, the noise of mechanical, nonsensical forces ruling the universe. Beyond this insensate, unalterable, causal nexus he sees the cold indifference of

empty, bleak heavens. Satan's laughter can be heard out of the roar of the whirlwind. Yet Ezekiel suddenly perceived something new, a strange sound coming from afar, from a remote corner of Being, from above the icy firmament, penetrating this terrible icy spread which shut everything out of sight. This voice was not drowned out by the tumult of the wheels, the noise of the living creatures, the host of the great waters. It prevailed in spite of the roar of the tempest.

"And there was a voice from above the firmament that was over their heads; when they stood still, they let down their wings" (1:25). Everything suddenly came to a standstill. Ezekiel saw a new vision, reminiscent of Isaiah's encounter.

And above the firmament that was over their heads was the likeness of a throne, in appearance like a sapphire stone; and upon the likeness of the throne was a likeness . . . As the appearance of a bow that is in the cloud in the day of rain, so is the appearance of the brightness round about. This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord (1:26, 28).

God disclosed Himself suddenly to Ezekiel. After an allegedly futile search for God in the heavens, after vainly exploring creation for Him, at least for a trace of His glory and might, wisdom and beauty, after encountering living creatures, wheels, automatic senseless movement, a tumult and noise, after confronting a cold, indifferent heaven, after resigning himself to an absurd existence in a prison camp, after plunging into the abyss of black despair, the scenery changed suddenly. He heard a voice of one that spoke, a meaningful voice and not an absurd noise, not the tumult of mighty waters. He saw God in the likeness of a man; the questing I met a lonely Thou, not in the temple, but in the camp of downtrodden, homeless prisoners. The words were addressed out of the whirlwind, and the likeness of the glory of the Lord emerged out of the frightening fire. God spoke

out of the catastrophic event, out of the distressing encounter with nihility, out of the seeming void and emptiness, from above the icy firmament, from nowhere. It took Ezekiel a long time to make the great leap from an insane existence to the throne of God that stands above the ice crystal firmament, from the absurdity of a historical cataclysm to the great dialogue with the hidden, numinous, mysterious God, abiding behind the heavens. Suddenly a new light was shed over everything he beheld before. The weird creatures, the wheels, the great noise, the host, the mighty waters—these did not fill him with grisly fear any more; a spirit lifted him and he heard the voice (not the noise) of a great rushing, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place" (Ez. 3:12), from His transcendence. Blessed be the Lord who speaks to man out of the whirlwind and horrible fire. In our *Kedushah* we profess our faith in the cosmic and also in the catastrophic revelation of God. We are always confronted through our ontic and nihilistic experiences.

We shall sanctify Your Name in the world as it is sanctified on High, as it is written by Your prophets: "And they call one to another and say: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory'" (Isa. 6:3), while opposite them they proclaim, "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from His place" (Ez. 3:12).

God's Summons to Service

When we experience the swing back from an illusory eternity to a temporal reality, a new category is discovered, namely, that of service. God summons us to His service; we are called upon to serve Him. We are appointed as the servants of God. "Hallelujah, praise O you servants of the Lord" (Ps. 113:1), "O Lord, truly I am Thy servant; I am Thy servant the son of Thy handmaid" (Ps. 116:16). There can be no religious experience if it does not entail the element of service. Our existence is not

just a coincidence, a mechanical fact, a meaningless caprice on the part of nature or providence, but a meaningful assignment which abounds in responsibility and commitment.

The aggadic literature considered man as a day laborer who is paid for his creative time, for the utilization of his days to their fullest extent. "Is there not a time of service to man upon earth? Are not his days like the days of a hireling?" (Job 7:1). Existence equals one's service to God or creative action.

Judaism believes that every individual is capable of qualifying himself for Divine service. Rich and poor, genius and simpleton, master and slave—they are all fit to serve God in some capacity. Every person possesses something unique, by virtue of which he differs from the thou, making him or her irreplaceable and indispensable—the inner worth of a one-timely, unique, never-to-be-duplicated existence, which can and must serve God by self-involvement in the drama of redemption at all levels. This is Judaic humanism, or Judaic democracy. All men are equally worthy as God's servants. The great intellectual may discover new rules guiding the cosmic occurrence and thus serve God by explicating unknown aspects of His primordial will imbedded in creation. The dull mind serves God by trying to learn about elementary truths, by displaying humility, perseverance and patience, by receiving instruction from others better informed, by improving his mind as much as possible and widening his knowledge. In a word, the call is issued to all. God calls: Abraham, Abraham, Moses, Moses; you are elected. And the individual must answer: *Hineni*; here I am!

If one lives in an illusory eternity, he may miss the call; he may not hear the voice which addresses itself to him; he may not realize that God Himself turns to him and summons him to His service. For in eternity nothing passes, nothing is lost; there is no time which lies behind us; everything persists and endures. There is eternal repetition. Yet if the time awareness is awakened in me, if I suddenly become cognizant of an existence which has been withdrawn from the realm of my influ-

ence, where I convert the present moment into creative performance, potentiality into an event and time into service, I realize that I have missed the call, that I am late for the execution of my task, for the fulfillment of my mission. I also begin to comprehend the responsibility which my time-experience entails, the norm of vigilance and alertness every moment, since the call comes through often, at very short intervals. I anticipate the future with trepidation and anxiety, because it is the time in which I may act and serve. Every fraction of the infinite stream of time becomes precious. For this moment I am alive and capable of action; what will happen the next minute I do not know.

Judaism was always very sensitive to the flux of time. God's rendezvous with man occurred at an appointed time. "And Moses said, 'Thus says the Lord: About midnight will I go out to into the midst of Egypt . . .'" (Ex. 11:4). "And the Lord said unto Moses: Go unto the people, and sanctify them today and tomorrow . . . and be ready by the third day, for on the third day the Lord will come down" (Ex. 19:10-11). Be ready!—this is the command of Judaism. Each moment of a conscious existence is a Divine gift out of which the summons to the service of God emerges. Judaism believes that each person has a fixed place in creation. If I find myself thrust in here and now, it is because God thinks that I can act here and now efficiently. If I had been born a hundred years ago or if I would come into this world a century later, my contribution as a servant would be nil. God wills me to act right here and now.

On Yom Kippur, we pray, "My Lord, before I was created I was of no worth, and now that I have been created it is as if I have not been created." Before I was created there was no need for my service, I had no place in the order of things and events and I could not serve God. My creation implies a twofold message: my service is required and I have the ability to act here and now. With the birth of every person, a situation is formed within which he can serve God; otherwise he would not be born. However, I misunderstood the call rising out of my existence

and did not accomplish anything. Hence the miracle of birth was wasted—"and now that I have been created, it is as if I have not been created."

If man comprehends the role of a servant of God, then his life is one long service, and death is the conclusion of this hallowed service. However, if the Divine call is ignored, he lives in vain and dies in a very absurd manner. "Dust am I in life, and all the more so in death." There is a great capacity in me; yet it is filled with vanity. "Before Thee, I am like a utensil filled with shame and disgrace." In a word, every man has a fixed place in space and in time where he can serve best. He must not misread the kerygma.

The Crisis of Human Finitude

The Philistine Personality

Judaism has always insisted that man recognize not only his great God-given abilities and his capacity for self-transcendence, but also the tragic fact of his own finitude and the consequent incompleteness of his existential experience. Not everyone, however, is willing to confront these truths. For example, the philistine personality (so common in *bourgeois* society) leads a narrow, shut-in existence, focusing all his efforts on a single object: self-preservation. He recognizes no value beyond this, and is animated by the belief that, with sufficient effort, the attainment of this goal is within his grasp. When faced with evidence of his own inadequacy and vulnerability, instead of revising his philosophy, he is driven to invent new means of safeguarding and protecting himself against defeat (v. Emil Brunner, *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 22-23). The philistine must always be successful, the first to attain and the last to lose, or, better yet, the one who need not relinquish anything at all. This drive for conquest and security is the motivating force of our civilized effort.

I must add that it does not matter what methods the philistine employs in order to succeed in both the acquisition and the protection of his privileges. He may utilize his intellect to this end, as scientific society recommends, constructing intelligent means of attainment and preservation; or he may turn to God for help. He worships the Almighty, prays to Him and complies with His commands because, by so doing, the religious philistine hopes to appease his Creator and thus secure success and safety for himself and his family. He expects God to do for him what the agnostic anticipates science will accomplish—to promote self-survival in the most comfortable way. Seeking security and conquest, he takes in God as a partner. Whatever he gives to God, he expects to receive back with a considerable dividend. This religious egotist cannot sacrifice anything to God, since he is incapable of sharing anything with anybody—not even with his Creator. Whatever he brings to the altar is a capital investment rather than an offering. Fundamentally, the religious act of the egotist is an expression of a utilitarian, economy-minded individual. He never feels the unique, redeeming and uplifting power of man's transcendent adventure, nor has he the capacity to transcend his self-centered life.

Job, the Religious Philistine

The religious egotist and philistine is represented by Job. The Bible portrays him as a very limited personality, a law-abiding citizen who "fears God and turns away from evil" (1:8). He did not engage in evil, but did not commit himself to God. His efforts were directed toward a circumscribed goal: maintaining the *status quo* of his family. He served the Lord sincerely and conscientiously, not because the service itself conveyed to him a singular meaning, but for egotistic reasons, as a way to preserve his sense of security.

It was the custom of his sons to hold feasts, each on his set day in his own home; and they used to send and call for their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when a round of feast days had ended, Job sent word to them to sanctify themselves, and he rose up early in the morning, and offered burnt offerings according to the number of them all: for Job said, "It may be that my sons have sinned, and despised God in their hearts" (1:4-5).

This passage portrays a close-knit family, egotistic and self-centered. Community existence was alien to them, the act of giving and relinquishing—unknown. They lived bounded in, distant from others, in retreat, happy and complacent as an independent entity—a Robinson Crusoe life, without responsibilities and bonds, without the fellowship and love which manifest themselves in giving. Of course, Job brought offerings to God. But this ritual was not a natural manifestation of the religious experience, expressing itself in the dignified act of giving away one's own self, his precious possession, of deliberately losing the battle which he has won at so high a cost. It was, rather, a business venture, a pragmatic affair of *quid pro quo*. The burnt offerings were supposed to enhance the safety of his children.

This kind of life went on until Satan struck. Instead of Job giving voluntarily, uncontrolled forces wrested everything from him. He had enjoyed conquest, triumph and continuous acquisition, without going through the agony of defeat, failure and loss. The tragedy was bound to happen; it was inevitable. Tenuously holding on to oneself, continually triumphing over opposition without being defeated even once, steadily clinging to a definitive pattern of existence without manifesting readiness for change, surrender and deviation—this mode of existence must end in catastrophe. Job lacked the dignity and majesty of being which can be attained only through the dialectical experience of victory and voluntary defeat.

At the conclusion of the story, we are told that a new Job emerged out of the cataclysm which had so mercilessly punished him; a heroic personality appeared instead of the old philistine. The tempest that swept him out of his complacency and egotism raised him to a new level of dialectical existence, where triumph is interwoven with defeat, success with failure, and receiving serves a higher end—relinquishing. The Job who was isolated and shut in, living for himself and concentrated into himself, descending deeply into the abyss of his own being, is replaced by a Job who has opened up to and is bound up with others, who has stepped out of his hidden recesses, moved toward the outside and plunged into a community existence. The second Job has abandoned his self-containment, self-sufficiency and self-absorption, and has awakened to a new existence which is not only for itself but also for something or somebody else. Job learned the art of dialectical living. "And the Lord returned the fortunes of Job, *when he prayed for his friends*; and the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before" (42:10).

The turning point was the prayer. What is prayer, if not returning to God whatever man has received? The successful Job, who could not imagine failure, did not understand the significance of prayer. The latter shatters man's security and self-satisfaction, since it concedes defeat and admits bankruptcy and a frustrated existence. Job certainly did not grasp the meaning of friendship. At this phase, even communal and social relations served the purpose of utility and safety. Real friendship is possible only when man rises to the height of an open existence, in which he is capable of prayer and communication. In such living, the personality fulfills itself.

Kohelet, the Daemonic Personality

While Job represents the limited existence of the egotist and philistine, Kohelet (Ecclesiastes) characterizes another form of living, namely, the daemonic (to use the term coined by Emil

Brunner in *The Divine Imperative*, pp. 23-24). The daemonic existence is graced with beauty and fantastic sweep, while the philistine way of living is dull and unimaginative. The daemonic personality indulges in adventures, risks and spectacular things; he dreams of vastness and unlimited expanses. In contradistinction to the philistine, he is never satisfied with his accomplishments. His imagination is stimulated and inspired by success, and his appetite is never stilled. Regardless of the territory over which he roams in his incessant quest for daring projects, conquest and triumph—be it warfare (Alexander the Great, Napoleon, Communist Russia), be it finance (the robber barons, the financial wizards and manipulators), be it science (man's technological aspirations, his unquenchable thirst for knowledge, his insatiable curiosity, e.g. Faust), be it hedonic pursuits (Don Juan, Cleopatra)—the driving force is the same: self-glorification, reaching out for the impossible, the desire for an endless existence, for infinity. When he sinned, paradisiacal man became involved with the serpent, the daemon. There is a daemonic origin to his arrogant quest to equal God, to be greater and bigger than He is, to transcend finitude and plunge into infinity. "And you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Gen. 3:5).

Kohelet also leads a closed existence of repose within himself. He is interested only in his own greatness and his own pleasures, even when he engages in charitable deeds on a grand scale (whatever Kohelet does is flamboyant and spectacular). In helping others, he asserts his own power and genius.

That Kohelet did not fulfill his destiny is a truism, and this is the lesson which this strange book seeks to impart to us—"This also is vanity and a striving after wind" (Eccl. 2:26). Why was Kohelet disappointed in his glorious career and his stupendous exploits, why did he lament the vanity of all efforts, why this pessimistic note which reverberates throughout the whole book? Why the skeptical mood which, because of failure, doubts everything? The answer is simple. The human existential expe-

rience is intrinsically incomplete; finitude means the absence of wholeness and fullness. The existential thesis is always bounded in by the antithesis, by the negation.

For example, the ontic awareness (“*ergo sum*, therefore I am”) contains the moment of nihility, nothingness; life is encompassed by death and is always beheld as if it were running to its own doom. Similarly, the cognitive gesture points towards the unknown, towards the *mysterium magnum* which escapes our comprehension. Man’s knowledge rests upon substitution of the known for the unknown, the comprehensible quantity for the qualitative phenomenon; the immediate sense experience will remain an eternal enigma. The wider the areas our intellect explores, the greater and more challenging becomes the mystery of Being as a whole. Science explores reality only within; it never tries to explain it from without. The intellectual adventure inspires man with awe before the great unknown Being as such. God’s response to Job is, “*Ha-yadata*, Do you know?”

The moralist’s performance, too, is incomplete. One can never realize his moral destiny. The greater the moral power of the person, the more distant is the goal, the promise. Moses could not enter the promised land. Likewise, aesthetic enjoyment always ends in the encounter with satanic gluttony, ugliness and vulgarity, as in the cases of Samson and Delilah, Amnon and Tamar, and so forth. The ontic experience is never complete; it is fraught with its own negation. The awareness of being is absurd, since it contains a *contradictio in objecto*, or, in Hebrew, *shenei hafakhim benosei ehad*, two opposites in one subject.

The Humanistic and Religious Solutions to Human Finitude

Man, facing this problem, has at his disposal two solutions.

1) *The humanistic answer*: He may deny the very truth and try to convince himself that everything is perfect and full, that he moves toward his ultimate end along a straight road, with-

out having to detour or retreat. Fundamentally, this solution underlies all humanistic secular utopias, including that of Communism—an unshakable faith in the perfectibility of man, in his gradual emergence as an omniscient and omnipotent being. Disappointments, handicaps and failures must be expected, since the evolutionary process of emergence is a long one and we have not yet reached the final stages. However, the term “progress” is the shibboleth of these humanistic creeds, and gradually our experience will expand and become more and more consistent and complete.

Of course, it is hard to foresee future developments, but, judging by past experiences, we are impelled to assume that the humanistic approach is wrong and self-deceiving. It is a fraudulent solution. The problem posed by Kohelet has lost nothing of its poignancy and acuteness, notwithstanding the fact that civilization has covered such an endless distance since the days of that skeptic. Apparently, cultural ascent and scientific achievement do not relieve man of the curse of vanity and incompleteness which presses on his frail shoulders. The restlessness which drove Kohelet to his bold adventures rushes with us in the same direction.

2) *The religious-metaphysical answer*: The incompleteness of our existential experience at all levels is rooted in the nature and destiny of man. He is a creature and, as such, a part of a finite reality—and finitude is incomplete, deficient and impregnated with paradoxes and absurdities. Death is an integral part of the biological process. The “x” cannot be separated from the equation—there is always an unknown quantity involved in the cognitive performance. Beauty is somehow projected against the dark background of ugliness, and absolute goodness is engaged in an eternal contest with Satan. Maimonides and Leibniz termed the incompleteness of our being *malum metaphysicum*, a metaphysical evil, from which man can never free himself. Intoxication with our given existence is accompanied by disillusionment.

Yet we can somehow relieve ourselves of this burden of despair brought on by the tantalizingly full existence which recedes into vast distances like a mirage as soon as we think that we have found our destination. We can accomplish this by consecrating this incompleteness as an offering to God, giving up our illusions of grandeur and glory, of success and conquest—not like Kohelet, forcibly, because we have tried all recipes for happiness and found them ineffectual, but on account of our craving for dignity and majesty: for fulfillment not through accomplishment without, but through ascent within. We find dignity and majesty not in the madness of “draining” one conquest “to the dregs” in order pass on to another, but in self-conquest and self-giving; in the quest for catharsis, for redemption by returning my existence to its Owner; in the heroic sacrifice.

If this singular being called man is caught in the incessant pursuit of the intellectual mirage, he must finally admit defeat. He must turn to God and say, “He who increases knowledge, increases sorrow” (Eccl. 1:18). The more knowledge I accumulate, the more the mystery deepens, the more complex is the problem, the more fascinating is the unknown. I shall restlessly explore, investigate, search and try to comprehend, but I know that the radius of the scientifically charted sectors will grow one-dimensionally, while the area of the problem will expand two-dimensionally. I am not regretting my search for knowledge, but I am renouncing my arrogant desire for a complete cognitive experience, for conquest which is not followed by defeat.

If he happens to be a *homo religiosus*, the person should say: God Almighty, the closer I try to come to You, the greater is the distance that separates me from You; the more troublesome becomes my conscience; the less worthy of communicating with You I find myself. I shall never stop seeking You and clinging to You. However, I must dispel the illusion of possessing You. Is not the drama in the Song of Songs a portrayal of the disturbed

depths of the God-intoxicated person, of the fugitive satisfaction of meeting God for a while and then losing Him forever?

If he is an ethicist, a moralist in quest of the full realization of the good, let him confess his frailty and helplessness as far as the moral act is concerned. Let him declare: God, I shall never cease striving for the realization of the ethical goal, the *summum bonum* (highest good). However, I know that I will never attain the peace of mind and tranquility which comes with the most cherished and yet most transient of all desires—the full ethical life. I am ready to forego this great experience; accept it, Lord, as my offering.

Actually, when Judaism demands a sacrifice from man in fulfillment of his charisma, it wants him to give away something which he has never received, something for which he stretches out his hand, something he aspires to attain yet which will always remain outside of his reach. In a word, he must relinquish an illusion, a dream, a vain hope. By renouncing an unfulfilled wish to God, man finds self-actualization.

This paradoxical, dialectical act of winning and losing may be realized in a twofold way: first, at the subjective experiential level, as a crisis-awareness spelled out in prayer; second, at the objective level, as a sacrificial decision.

Prayer and the Crisis Awareness

Let us analyze the dialectics in our inward experience in terms of a crisis consciousness and prayer offering. Interesting is a halakhic thesis which expresses a basic biblical motif: *tefillah* (prayer) is closely knit with *tzarah* (distress). A person should engage in prayer only when he finds himself in trouble, in a predicament or in need. The act of praying is the religious response to the experience of *tzarah*, distressing existential narrowness, the awareness of being shut in and sealed off, of being trapped and defeated. Many passages in the Bible confirm this conjunction of *tefillah* and *tzarah*:

When you are in distress, and all these things come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to the Lord your God . . . (Deut. 4:30).

And it shall come to pass, when all these things are come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, you shall take them to heart among all the nations into which the Lord your God has driven you (Deut. 30:1).

If you go to war in your land against the enemy who oppresses you, then you shall blow an alarm with the trumpets; and you shall be remembered before the Lord your God (Num. 10:9).

Solomon defines prayer as the outcry of a person in dire need, overcome by anguish:

When Thy people Israel are smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against Thee, they shall turn again to Thee, and confess Thy name, and pray, and make supplication to Thee in this house (I Kings 8:33).

When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee; if they pray towards this place . . . (I Kings 8:35).

If there be famine in the land, if there be pestilence, blight, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatever affliction, whatever sickness there may be: whatever prayer and whatever supplication is made by any man or by all Thy people Israel, who shall know every man the affliction of his own heart, and he spread forth his hands towards this place . . . (I Kings 8:37-38).

David, in his Psalms, identifies prayer with the feeling of anxiety and despair:

You did call in trouble, and I delivered you (Ps. 81:8).

Out of the straits, I called upon the Lord (Ps. 118:5).

Out of the depths, I have called to Thee, O Lord (Ps. 130:1).

A prayer of the pauper, when he faints, and pours out his complaint before the Lord (Ps. 102:1).

My God, my God, why have Thou forsaken me? Why art Thou so far from helping me, from the words of my loud complaint? (Ps. 22:2).

Prayer is warranted and meaningful only when one realizes that all hope is gone, that there is no other friend besides God from whom one may expect assistance and comfort, when the soul feels its bleak despair, loneliness and helplessness. However, if one is not haunted by anxiety and brute fear, if one does not look upon his existence as a heap of debris, if his self-confidence and arrogance have not been undermined, if neither doubt nor anguish assails his mind—then prayer is alien to him and any recital of a fixed prayer-text is meaningless. Success and prayer, impudence and prayer, are mutually exclusive.

Prayer as a personal experience, as a creative gesture, is possible only if and when man discovers himself in crisis or in need. That is why the Jewish idea of prayer differs from the mystical idea, insofar as we have emphasized the centrality of the petition, while the mystics have stressed the relevance of the hymn. Since prayer flows from a personality which finds itself in need, despondent and hopeless, its main theme is not praise or adoration, but rather request, demand, supplication. True prayer comes to expression in the act of begging and interceding. However, we must always keep in mind that the concept of crisis has a twofold aspect. We must discriminate between the external crisis and the inner crisis, or, in other words, between the surface experience of *tzarah* and the depth experience.

Surface Crisis

The surface experience of *tzarah* applies to an external or accidental crisis which develops automatically, independently of man. This sort of crisis is engendered mostly by environmental forces, which are not always friendly to man's interests and desires. Many a time, nature proves to be uncooperative and hostile; it attacks man and crushes him under its stupendous mechanical impact. Man is hungry, toils his plot of land and expects a bountiful harvest; the drought or the hurricane destroys his crop. "When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain . . . if there be pestilence, blight, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar . . ." (I Kings 8:35, 37).

A man earns a living and supports his family; a cruel malignant disease strikes and cripples him. This type of crisis comes suddenly, with the speed of lightning, uninvited by the individual who succumbs to its destructive might and overwhelming power. This kind of disaster strikes man with the force of a hurricane and destroys him ruthlessly.

This *tzarah*-crisis feeling is a community experience. As an emotion, it is a public response to stress and suffering. First, the experience can be shared by many at the same time. Illness, famine, war, poverty and death may strike the many and expose them to common suffering and torture. The external crisis at times overwhelms the multitude. Its experience is universal in essence and character. There is nothing in the encounter of the individual with antagonistic and cruel forces of nature which would lend it a quality of peculiarity, of being unparalleled. There may be some characteristic properties attached to these experiences which differ in the various individuals who live through an external crisis. However, these differences pertain to concomitants of the crisis awareness, to the attendant reactions, but not to the essence of the experience itself.

Second, the plight of the afflicted person is obvious, exposed to the public eye. Its apprehension is as natural as the percep-

tion caused by thunder or lightning. One does not need to be very sensitive nor to be extremely skilled and observant in order to realize that the other fellow is in distress, that his very existence is menaced and his chances of survival are very slim. Therefore, the misery or misfortune of others excites our sorrow and brings forth the conjunctive, inclusive feeling of sympathy. We share, to some degree, the emotional responses of our fellow men who are wronged and ill-treated by the unalterable law of nature. Quite often, we imagine ourselves tormented and grieved by similar circumstances, and our sympathy reflects some foreboding with regard to ourselves.

The prayer associated with this kind of crisis is intercessory in character, seeking answers which are supposed to take place in the outside world. We petition God to effect changes in the objective order of things.

Depth Crisis

In contradistinction to the public experience of a surface crisis, there is the private experience of a depth crisis. This experience deals with unknown, undefined and clandestine distress, a crisis which is not encountered at random and of which man is not at all aware unless he wills to acquaint himself with it. Children do not come across this crisis at all. Only the adult, the mature personality who has outgrown childhood with all its characteristics—substitution of fantasy for reality, cowardice in admitting errors, emotional shallowness, moodiness and whimsicality—may discover this dilemma and problem. The crisis is not brought about by extraneous factors, by coincidental entanglement in precarious and distressingly complex situations, nor is it imposed upon man by elemental forces which are unleashed by Satan (as in the case of Job [1:19]—"And behold, there came a great wind from across the wilderness, and it smote the four corners of the house"). It is found and accepted freely by man.

The crisis is the result of a great heroic adventure on the part of the man who discovers himself. This experience is not something against which man tries to protect himself, nor is it something into which he is dragged compulsorily because of his stupidity—such as war, illness or famine. (If mankind possessed more knowledge, it would be able to control these destructive forces.) Rather, it is an experience of a man of independent thought and deed, self-reliant and emancipated from the trammels of superstition and self-deceit, who has developed all of the competencies and magnificent abilities which God has bestowed upon him. This experience of the depth crisis stems from the most crucial encounter of man—as a spiritual personality—with his destiny. Man is not cast into the crisis, but rather finds it within himself. It belongs to his very existential experience.

This crisis eludes our conceptual grasp in terms of social, economic or environmental forces. It can be experienced only within our existential-transcendental awareness. Human existence exhausts itself in the experience of the perennial crisis which comes to an end with the termination of human self-consciousness, in the continuous discovery of a distressed and tormented self, in the steady awareness of an incomplete existence and an unfulfilled destiny, in experiencing defeat, despair and failure. This depth crisis is woven into man's ontic consciousness. The Cartesian dictum of *cogito ergo sum*, "I think therefore I am," does not convey the full truth. It is an incomplete sentence. We must always qualify it by adding two words at the end: "I think therefore I am *in distress*."

Judaism wants man to be fully cognizant of this tragic aspect of his existence, to explicate and spell out the deep-seated crisis in his very existence. On the one hand, Judaism has recommended an activist philosophy with regard to man's environment. Man must try to combat evil and entrenched wrong at all levels—social, political and natural. God, according to our viewpoint, has charged man with the great mission of completing and supplementing the Divine act of creation by improving

nature and himself, by organizing a defense system against disease, poverty and other disasters. Our outlook is optimistic, summoning man to resist the onslaught of an inimical environment and to deliver himself from his bondage to mechanical coincidence. However, on the other hand, man was told not to try to disengage himself from his involvement in the depth crisis. To the contrary, he was commanded to deepen his involvement and to confront the crisis courageously and intelligently. Man must know that there is no escape mechanism which may help him rid himself of this inner feeling of distress. He should condone and accept it voluntarily. Any attempt to flee this experience must end in real disaster.

Job and Kohelet sinned in this respect. Job tried to escape from reality and drugged himself into an illusory sense of serenity and security. He did not understand that the genuine existential experience is fraught with incompleteness and the feeling of distress. He mistook a fantasy for a fact, a mirage for a reality. Although he thought that he had attained the very ultimate and final end, he lived in an unreal world, since there can be no reality-awareness without experiencing the very antithesis of this awareness. What worried Job was not his inner distressed personality, but rather external dangers: Satan's malice, foreign enemies, the natural elements, hurricanes, diseases, death and so forth. His fear was unpurged of its primitive terrors, and this ominous blood-chilling dread of forthcoming disaster moved him to bring burnt offerings every week in order to placate the wrath of the Creator. To Job, crisis meant only external catastrophe. Inwardly, he was contented and happy. Then Satan struck. The external crisis which he had feared became a reality. When man adopts a false sense of happiness and perfection, when he is complacent and lacks self-understanding, when he is too proud to admit failure because he can live only at the plane of majesty, in triumph and victory, refusing to acknowledge inner defeat—this attitude must end in external failure and a holocaust.

Kohelet realized the absurdity of being, the incompleteness of his life and the inner contradictions implied in his total effort of self-activation and self-actualization. However, he too lived in a dream world. He thought that it is possible to overcome this crisis by adopting an aggressive policy. The incompleteness may be superseded by the fullness and perfectedness of the existential experience if man—mature in wisdom and knowledge, and wielding great power—decides to do so. In his pride, Kohelet wanted to reassert himself and to deny the idea of defeat. Arrogantly, he attempted to conquer the invincible, to achieve the unattainable and to realize the impossible. He enjoyed the adventurous for the risk it involved, the daring experiment, the quest for the distant, for the sake of the performance itself. He sought fulfillment not so much in the achieving of his object but in the attempt to realize his desire. Fundamentally, Kohelet did not grasp the essence of the depth crisis, since he believed in complete self-realization and in the possibility of resolving the existential crisis.

The depth crisis is a private affair. It is a unique feeling that cannot be shared by others. Each individual suffers in a way peculiar to himself. The experiences of various individuals are incommensurate; every individual is a shut-in entity. Each person is plagued by something else; each is engaged in a crisis which the other does not experience. Since this crisis is an integral part of the ego-awareness, it necessarily must contain all the singular traits which make a person an individuality, a one-timely strange existence, inaccessible and incomprehensible to others. Each individual, in his own peculiar way, meets his antagonist, who emerges not from the uncharted spaces of the external world, but from within; each individual grapples with the paradox hidden in his own existence. The individual alone comes to grips with the antithesis that is born out of the thesis, and only he himself can feel the sharp pain caused by the conflict between the acts of positing and negating.

Prayer flowing from a heart filled with the inner misery and despair of this contradictory experience is not intercessory petition, which is intended to relieve one of his trouble, but rather has more of a subjective character. It does not ask for help, nor does it try to resolve the crisis. The prayer consecrates the defeat, redeems the misery and elevates it to the level of sacrifice. Prayer flowing *mi-ma'amakim*, from the depths, is a sacrificial service. The supplication imparts meaning and directedness to the crisis experience. The majestic personality of a while ago (at the hour of triumph) acquires dignity, and, of course, greatness through prayer, during which the free surrender is brought about or the defeat accepted. What this prayer accomplishes is remarkable.

Mood vs. Experience

I wish to emphasize that when I speak of the depth crisis from which man is unable to disengage himself, a crisis which expresses the very gist of the human existential awareness, I am not referring to a mood of defeat and forlornness, but to an experience in which the affirmation is indissolubly bound up with the negation, the thesis with the antithesis. The difference between a mood and an experience is basic.

A mood—in its connotation as a frame or cast of mind, an emotional behavioral pattern, or a specific state of mind—is confined to the surface of the mind, without striking roots in the innermost recesses of the human personality. Usually, a mood is an unreflective and unrestrained emotional reaction to some external factor, a response to environmental events whose significance and meaning the person has not understood or assimilated into his total existential experience. This sort of reaction may give a person unlimited joy or boundless misery. However, it is transient; sometimes it comes like a hurricane, but blows over quickly, not leaving any trail behind. The moody

person reacts easily and quickly; yet, in most cases, such an unrestrained emotional response is degrading. It lacks intellectual insight, intuition of higher values and direction of spiritual energy into the right channels.

One enters the cemetery and is overcome by a melancholy mood. All the aspirations, hopes and dreams of the living seem to lose their worth and to evaporate into thin air. The next moment, one finds himself back in his office, and all the gloomy thoughts about the nihility of man and the vanity of his undertakings are gone; one is again engaged in the feverish pursuit of his daily routine and is completely unaware of death. The shouts of joy on a hilarious occasion or the tear of a sad eye at the bier of a friend do not necessarily reflect a sincerely joyous or grieving soul. Rather, they express a passing mood, an unworthy, alas degrading, emotion, motivated by selfish fear.

Judaism disapproves of all unrestrained affective responses, and instead tries to discipline emotion and convert it into an experience which, in contrast with the mood, is assimilated into one's character and possesses personal value. The very essence of the personality manifests itself in the experience, which is not a detached emotion but an I-feeling, an existence awareness in all its uniqueness and strangeness. When in the sphere of the mood, we are bondsmen, enslaved to our own compulsory responses to a variety of phenomena. When emotion is raised to the level of experience, we gain the upper hand or control over our own emotions. We acquire the freedom to integrate feelings or to disown them, putting them at a distance from us (to use Adler's term). We gather up in our experience those emotions whose worth is meaningful to us, and we reject the feelings which are disjunctive and negating as far as our existential adventure is concerned. We accept or detach ourselves from fleeting moods and over-expanded, void emotions. Freedom of will, according to Judaism, is not limited to external action. Its application extends to the inner life of man. Man freely forms

his living experience by selecting ennobling and worthwhile emotions out of a pile of unorganized and amorphous moods, and molds them into a great experience, endowed with constancy and directedness.

Moodiness in Religion

Judaism resents moodiness even in the field of religion. We have never attributed much significance to the impulsive religious emotion, to the impetuous onrush of piety, the sudden conversion, the headlong emotional leap from the mundane and profane into the sacred and heavenly; we are reluctant to accept all kinds of precipitate moods as genuine expressions of God-intoxications of the soul. Judaism is interested in a religious experience which mirrors the genuine personality, the most profound movements of the soul, an experience which is the result of true involvement in the transcendental gesture, of slow, painstaking self-reckoning and self-actualization, of deep intuition of eternal values and comprehension of human destiny and paradox, of miserable sleepless nights of dreary doubt and skepticism and of glorious days of inspiration, of being torn by opposing forces and winning freedom.

Therefore, Judaism has always avoided bringing man to God by alluring him with some external magnetic power or charm. It does not try to gain entrance to his soul by creating around it a soft, gentle and serene atmosphere, full of quieting beauty and tender charm, in which it should almost spontaneously feel relieved of all its worries; nor by suggesting the idea of the numinous and mysterious through different artistic means, in order to render the soul docile and submissive; nor by a display of majestic glory and splendor. Man, according to Judaism, must meet God on realistic terms, not in an enraptured romantic mood, when the activity of the intellect and the free exercise of the willpower are affected by hypnotic influences.

That is why the Jewish service distinguishes itself by its utter simplicity and by the absence of any cultic-ceremonial elements. It lacks the solemnity and magnificence of the Byzantine Greek Orthodox service, the moment of awe-struck wonder of the Roman Catholic Mass of transubstantiation, and the rhythm and streamlined quality of the Protestant church ceremony. It is nothing but a dialogue between God and man, a conversation—ordinary in its beginning, simple in its unfolding and unceremoniously organized at its conclusion. There was never an attempt to use architectural designs (like vaulted halls, half-dark spaces, and lofty gothic sweep), decorative effects (such as the stained glass through which light filters, losing its living brightness and mingling with a magical darkness), or tonal effects (from the hardly perceptible soft *pianissimo* to triumphant hymn singing), in order to suggest to the worshipper on the one hand the great mystery, and on the other hand the heavenly bliss, of the God-man encounter.

Judaism sees in all these esthetic motifs, which are designed to intimate the greatness and ineffability of God, merely extraneous means of creating a fugitive mood which will disappear with the departure of the worshipper from the cathedral into the fresh air and sunshine. Instead, Judaism concentrates on feelings which flow not from the outside, but from within the personality, on emotions which are exponents of much more deep-seated experiences, enhanced not by external stimuli but by the inner existence awareness.

When Judaism portrays pagan worship, it projects it against a specific landscape: high verdant hills, under the shade of green foliage, and blossoming gardens.

You shall utterly destroy all the places in which the nations, whom you are to dispossess, served their gods, upon the high mountains, and upon the hills, and under every leafy tree (Deut. 12:2).

They who sanctify themselves, and purify themselves in the gardens. . . (Isa. 66:17).

. . . when upon every high hill and under every green tree you did sprawl, playing the harlot (Jer. 2:20).

This type of worship avails itself of the ecstatic moment in the aesthetic mood; beauty may produce a state of exaltation and an overflow of emotion. By encountering a fair landscape and lovely scenes, one feels attracted to the object of adoration—a deity. This technique has been rejected by Judaism. Either the religious experience flows from a heart filled to the brim with love of God, and from a soul stirred to its inmost roots, or it is non-existent and artificially produced.

The way of every Jew to God must not differ from the trail along which Abraham moved toward his destiny, which had to be blazed through the wilderness of a brute and nonsensical existence. The experience is attained at the cost of doubts and a restless life, searching and examining, striving and pursuing—and not finding; of frustrating efforts and almost hopeless waiting; of grappling with oneself and with everybody else; of exploring a starlit and moonlit sky and watching the majesty of sunsets and sunrises, the beauty of birth and also the ugliness of death and destruction; of trying to penetrate behind the mechanical surface of the cosmic occurrence and failing to discover any intelligible order in this drama; of winning and losing and yet surging forward again; of conquering, giving up and reaching out again; of being able to put on a repeat performance of something which I had and lost; of asking questions and not finding answers; of ascending the high mount like Moses and falling back into the abyss, shattering everything one has received, and yet pulling oneself out of the depths of misery and trying to climb up the mountain again with two new stone tablets.

The Polarity of Existential Awareness

Moods, as detached emotions, are subject to the principle of contradiction—for instance, exultation is irreconcilable with a depressive mood, and fear with serenity. However, when properly chosen and freely accepted by the individual into his total life awareness, emotions may all merge into one experience, interpenetrating and crossing like the weaving of warp and woof in a piece of cloth. This experience is fraught with dichotomies. There is no dialectical mood; a mood is homogeneous and simple. However, there is a dialectical experience, which consists of heterogeneous and even contradictory elements. The joy of victory may somehow be combined with the melancholy of defeat, the pride and majesty of conquest with the humility of surrender.

For the sake of illustration, let me introduce two examples—one halakhic, one aggadic.

We know that the Halakhah requires that the worshipper bow at the beginning and conclusion of the thanksgiving benediction of the *Amidah*—“*Modim tehilah va-sof*.” (In the silent prayer, one must bow five times: twice at the first blessing, *Avot*, twice at the *Modim* benediction, and once when he concludes the *Shemoneh Esrei* and takes leave of his Maker.) We also recite a thanksgiving benediction whenever we say Grace After Meals. In the second benediction of Grace, we express gratitude to God for all the benevolence and mercy He has bestowed upon us. We say a similar passage in *Hallel*, which is centered around the keynote of praise and thanksgiving. Yet the Halakhah, which recommended the practice of genuflecting during the thanksgiving benediction within the silent prayer, has strictly forbidden the same performance during the recital of *Hallel* and Grace.

One *baraita* says that whoever genuflects at the saying of the thanksgiving benediction is to be commended. In another *baraita* we find that he should be reprimanded!

... [The answer is that] the *baraita* approving of genuflecting refers to the *Modim* in the silent prayer, while the other *baraita* [containing a reproach for any kind of bowing at the recital of praise and thanksgiving] speaks of Grace and *Hallel* (*Berakhot* 34b).

This dictum reflects the halakhic philosophy of prayer and its understanding of other forms of worship, such as Grace and the *Hallel* hymnal service.

Prayer is inseparably bound with crisis. Prayer is supplication and begging; it means admitting complete failure, vain hopes and dissipated aspirations. In it, the feeling of absolute dependence (which Schleiermacher considered the fountainhead of the religious experience) comes to full expression:

A song of ascents. To Thee, I lift up my eyes, Dweller of the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, and as the eyes of a maidservant to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God, until He shall be gracious unto us (Ps. 123:1-2) .

It also highlights the creature feeling (to use Rudolf Otto's term), an awareness of destitution and impotence, a sense of worthlessness and insufficiency. Abraham, who according to Jewish tradition instituted prayer, said in the introduction to his plea on behalf of Sodom: “Behold now, I have taken upon myself to speak unto the Lord, though I am but dust and ashes” (Gen. 18:27). Complete self-deprecation is the most important moment in the prayer experience. Of course, this frame of mind is symbolized by genuflection, which is, in an abbreviated form, identical with prostration—an act demonstrating humility and submission, full surrender and dependence:

And his brothers went and fell down before him; and they said: Behold, we are your servants (Gen. 50:18).

A prayer of the pauper, when he faints, and pours out his complaint before the Lord (Ps. 102:1).

However, the emotional backdrop of Grace After Meals and *Hallel* is completely different. Grace is recited on the occasion of full satiety and satisfaction, and *Hallel* on the occasion of a great event which has saved the people from disaster. Instead of feeling that existence is desolate, one is aware of a full and blessed life. The dominant motif is one of abundance. The creature consciousness, "I am but dust and ashes," is superseded by a sense of importance, since God has brought about the great redemption. Apparently, the community is under special Divine care and guidance. Worthlessness turns into a feeling of centrality, self-esteem and self-respect.

The terms in which the Torah describes the idea of Grace are characteristic of a happy emotional climate; they refer to a sovereign people leading a life of security and abundance on the rich soil of a land flowing with milk and honey.

For the Lord your God brings you into a good land, a land of water courses, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley and vines and figs and pomegranates; a land of olive oil and date honey; a land in which you shall eat bread without scarceness, you shall not lack anything in it; a land the stones of which are iron, and out of whose hills you can mine copper. When you have eaten and are replete, then you shall bless the Lord your God for the good land which He has given you (Deut. 8:7-10).

The benediction of *Nodeh lekha* in the Grace After Meals reflects courage and joy, hope and contentment. Man knows that God is with him; he is confident as to his destiny and his future, and is aware of the significance the Creator attributes to him. He is not a pauper any more, but rather a king and a mag-

nificent being who is indebted to the King of Kings, his Creator. According to the Halakhah, therefore, genuflection—representing utter humbleness, self-negation, the feeling of a shattered and bankrupt life—is out of place. In the Grace, man in his full majesty appears before his Creator, while in prayer the supplicant beggar, abject and lost, cast down in spirit and hope, rejected by everybody and exiled from everywhere, comes crawling before God.

Experiential polarity is thus a principle which expresses itself in halakhic externals. In conjunction with the dialectical quality of our self-awareness, I would like to introduce a passage from the *Midrash Tehillim* (102:1) which raises the problem of the paradoxical antithetical experience in a very picturesque manner.

Rabbi Reuben stated: I cannot grasp the personality of David. Sometimes he calls himself a king—"Lord, the king rejoices in Thy strength" (Ps. 21:2)—and sometimes he calls himself a pauper—"A prayer of the pauper, when he faints" (Ps. 102:1). [The explanation of this is that] when David peered and foresaw with Divine inspiration righteous men coming forth from him, such as Hezekiah and Josiah, he called himself a king, and when he saw evil people coming forth from him, such as Absalom and Manasseh, he called himself a pauper.

The midrashic scholar Rabbi Reuben said that he could not comprehend David: he exhibited contrasting moods, opposite aspects of self-appraisal. At times, he spoke of hope and joy, of himself being a king, successful and triumphant; yet frequently, he looked upon himself as a pauper, destitute and totally wanting. The answer Rabbi Reuben gave does not solve the problem of polarity in the existential experience. Rabbi Reuben only pointed out that David's self-appraisal changed from time to time because his historical experience and the emergent des-

tiny were not monolithic or unalterable. He experienced both triumph and defeat, victory and downfall, Divine grace and wrath; he indeed was both a ruler who commands and a beggar who entreats others for support. The experience of life is ambivalent because existence itself abounds in dichotomies and contradictions. No one can change the dialectical fate and destiny of man. The existential awareness must not mirror ideal conditions, but everyday realities. Therefore, it should not reflect only one or two of the multiple aspects, but the total adventure of man, which contains both affirmation and negation, triumph and loss.

Job lacked the dialectical experience. He did not understand the possibility of emotional polarity, when contrasting states of mind, contradictory value judgments, incongruous awarenesses of the innermost I, are interwoven into one fabric, against which one sees in his own reflection the conflict between the king and the pauper. The absence of the dialectical moment in his existence brought disaster on Job's household.

Job was contented with himself. He thought that his ritualistic performances would somehow protect him against external disaster and appease a wrathful adversary who menaces his well-being. The philistine in him sought security, safety, external peace. He never attained them. In his aloofness and isolation, he always was haunted by the foreboding of doom, by the prescience of something dreadful threatening him from the outside. He was always conscious of Satan lurking behind every bush. He never found happiness and peace. This is the price that the philistine pays for not understanding himself, for covering up his inner crisis, for not experiencing the dialectical tension of affirmation versus negation, for centering his personality around the external event and not the inward experience.

Finally, Job's outside world collapsed. However, if a person recenters his personality about a new experience, namely, that of self-related, inward, dialectical existence, when the I becomes

aware of the intrinsic negation that is involved in reality and renders all our acts incomplete, all our wishes unfulfilled and all strivings, however noble, unconsummated, when he discovers the richness of the antithetic and antinomic, the creativity fostered by conflict—then a new wisdom wrought in the deep recesses of his personality may come to the surface: the wisdom of losing everything I attained by the sweat of my brow in order to gain everything, of accepting defeat voluntarily for the sake of triumphing over failure, of inviting distress in order to eliminate disaster, the mystery of living in continuous tension, in perennial crisis, in the *ma'amakim*, the depths of inner contradiction and negation, and, by so doing, finding oneself but-tressed and strengthened by the contradiction itself. In your self-denial, you find life:

And when I passed by you, and saw you weltering in your blood, I said to you: "In your blood live!" Yea, I said to you: "In your blood live!" (Ez. 16:6).

Let me add an observation regarding the anxiety so characteristic of modern man. If, in treating neurotic anxiety, modern psychiatry holds the view that what makes us fearful is not a particular threat to one's physical existence but rather a threat to a certain value with which one identifies himself and to which one is unconditionally committed, it has hit upon a central truth. Modern man is axiologically minded. He can live as long as he thinks that he is in the service of a value or system of values, that he makes a substantial contribution toward the realization of some axiological order. The objective worth of this axiological order is irrelevant, since it represents to him the finest in life. Whether he is dedicated to the political, social, intellectual or even the materialistic-hedonic order is not essential. It is important only that he bases his life upon some set of values, and when he feels that the latter is about to collapse, he becomes anxious and frightened.

If you ask me what is the educational preventative of such a form of anxiety, I will tell you: the dialectical experience of the reality of finitude. The value, however deeply rooted in one's mentality, must not exhaust the very content of one's life. One should know that, regardless of the courage and strength he may draw from a particular value, his existence may and can go on after this good has been lost, as long as the God-man fellowship is maintained. The soul has befriended some value, yet the bond must always be considered dissoluble. There is only one in whom man finds his salvation—God. "When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up" (Ps. 27:10).

A Theory of Emotions

Criteria for Judging Emotions

The Halakhah has used this theory of the polarity of existential awareness [discussed in the previous chapter] for practical purposes. According to this theory, each of us, like King David of old, must be able to see in his own reflection the conflict between the king and the pauper (II Samuel 12). According to the Halakhah, two major advantages accrue from the dialectical nature of our experience of living.

In the first place, the dialectical character of our existence and our total experience manifests itself in the halakhic principle of the *totality of our emotional life*. Judaism has insisted upon the integrity and wholeness of the table of emotions, leading like a spectrum from joy, sympathy and humility (the conjunctive feelings) to anger, sadness and anguish (the disjunctive emotions). Absolutization of one feeling at the expense of others, or the granting of unconditioned centrality to certain emotions while demoting others to a peripheral status, may have damaging complications for the religious development of the personality.