

Chapter Four

The Exile of the Presence and the ~~Presence of the Exile~~

<sup>the</sup>  
Presence of an Exile  
Exilic Presence

1.

The events of history move rapidly in this world: nations decline and nations arise. Every nation in its heyday holds the world firmly in the palm of its hand: it plucks the wool without tiring, devours the flesh ravenously, and at the same time tries to breathe in its soul and spirit, believing absolutely in the <sup>just merits</sup> ~~purpose~~ of this procedure....For while it knows no limit when it comes to material devouring, in the realm of spirit it does have its satiation point. So joyously exultant is it in the idolatries of "sovereignty" and "conquest" that it believes itself to be spiritually overflowing with "blessedness," to such a point that it is compelled to shower upon others its goodness and glory. Widely engaging in these two estimable practices---exploiting and plundering all men, and "teaching" and "guiding" all men---every ascendant nation for a certain time manages to boast and behave foolishly, until finally it descends from the pinnacle and its place is taken by another nation, also half despoiler and half "guide."

Through all this long history of the succession of nations, one nation in the world trailed in the wake, Israel by name. Time after time it was cast about and driven from one country to another. Even before it could catch its breath from the effort of its first voyage, already was it compelled to shoulder anew its nomadic equipment and take to the road. Its ruck-sack, always ready at hand, was filled largely with books---books for the study of the Torah. Within the bundle of books <sup>were</sup> ~~was~~ found also a small Siddur and a small wax candle. <sup>as</sup> ~~No soon~~ <sup>had</sup> ~~as~~ the wanderer/located a night's lodging, just so soon would he arise at midnight, find some corner in the inn, seat himself on a low stool, light the dim candle, open his tiny Siddur, and recite Tikkun-Hatzot. In his reciting he would, when half hungry and half shattered, cry and bemoan his physical sufferings.

But basically he poured out his heart because of his spiritual travail,  
because of "the Exile of the Presence." He would gasp bitterly and recite:

"Then was I His only beloved,  
And the Glory of the Most High was I called;  
Now to the depths have I descended,  
And my Most Beloved to the heights has ascended."

The "seventy nations" and the mockers see this tragedy and are content  
to explain it lightly and cynically. The tears shed by the unfortunate Jew  
because of his material misfortunes they regard as counterfeit; they negate  
this explanation even as they raise against the Jew a venomous and destructive  
charge: "Despite this the devil has not hied himself to the accursed Jew,  
for his scales remain filled with deceit and his pockets filled with money."  
Yet not withstanding this, the non-Jews do give credence to the Jews' lament  
over "the Exile of the Presence," accepting the lament simply and literally  
as the Jews' admission of their spiritual fall. "Quite so," say the non-  
Jews with sharp irony, "for you, accursed Jew, it is fitting indeed to  
bemoan and bewail 'the Exile of the Presence,' for you are plagued,  
smitten by the Lord and afflicted, having neither Presence nor God."

For many generations the uncircumcised have showered upon us <sup>in</sup> great  
quantity ~~in~~ the arrows of their scorn, intending thereby to establish  
within us "Exile" in the sense of ~~the~~ forsaken by the Presence, until of  
late they have managed to ~~hypnotize~~ some of the feeble among our own  
people. In these ~~last~~ generations our hearts have ached upon hearing even  
certain of our fellow Jews, just as uncomprehending and uncircumcised of  
heart as their non-Jewish counterparts, deprecating and dismissing the  
life of the Jew in Exile, scornfully spitting on "the Galut" by presenting  
it as the cause of "the lack of spirituality," and denying to the Jew in  
Exile all possibility of the finer life.

2.

With the uncomprehending among the non-Jews, whose charges against our persecuted people we have noted above, I shall neither argue nor debate. In fact, I have something to say in their defense....First of all, the ways of our inner life are strange to them since they stand on the outside. Secondly, even if once they were willing to make the effort of penetrating to the core of the life of our spirit, still it is very doubtful if it would lay within their power to understand us, they having been nurtured by a culture the opposite of ours, so that what in their opinion is exalted, in our opinion is lowly, and vice versa. In a word, those nurtured by the sword can hardly comprehend those nurtured by the Torah....And thirdly, there is this singular fact: the overlords who taunt us from their platform of mockery, the nations, change roles periodically, whereas that nation which is the object of their derision retains its role throughout. This fact alone is enough to discourage any hope we might have of knowing respite from the indignities which they inflict upon us.

But even with the few uncircumcised of heart among our own people I shall not quarrel at any length. For on the one hand, the hypnotic influence of the numerous powers which surround them is great indeed, and to free oneself from that influence requires both considerable intelligence and keen sensitivity; how, then, can one lacking intelligence and perception avoid ensnarement by pernicious opinions? And on the other hand, within the soul of the Jewish people the two aforementioned qualities, intelligence and sensitivity, are found in such measure, thanks be to God, that it is quite unnecessary to become angry or furious at our few unfortunate stumblers (said act of condemnation being always a sign of the inner weakness of the condemner himself in that very respect). For these weary and hypnotized of our people, concern and commiseration are more appropriate than condemnation.

It is this anguish over the alien, hypnotic undermining of our Exilic walls that the elderly Jews expresses each midnight through his tears shed for "the Exile of the Presence." Your old grandfather does indeed weep for you, oh confused grandchildren, but never does he curse you. And you, oh grandchildren, who provoke your grandfathers' tears, kindly be not so gross as to make fun of these sacred tears, neither dismiss them lightly with this kind of foolish explanation: the lament of the old man for the Exile of the Presence is to be taken simply and literally, and all it means is this---his Divine air has vanished in exile and the Holy Spirit has utterly abandoned him...

For anyone with even a bit of a brain in his head surely understands the matter in quite the opposite way: the sorrow of our people over "the Exile of the Presence" is an indication, not of its remoteness from God, but precisely of its nearness to Him. The solitary beloved, in sitting and shedding tears of great longing for her lover who for the time being is separated from her, by this surely does not prove that her lover has rejected her or forsaken her forever. And how much less does it provide even one shred of evidence that she, the beloved, has rejected her lover. Just the reverse. First of all, the tears are testimony to the fact that the soul of the beloved is still bound to the lover, and that without him she cannot live. And this being so, her tears are no evidence that her lover has left her forever or even for any extended length of time. It could just as well be that the strength of her love and devotion is so intense that the separation for even a single hour is sufficiently painful to provoke tears of longing.

If this judgment be possible and logical when applied to tears of human love, which is not always mutual---for there are instances where she may



love him without his loving her---then applied to the tears of "the beloved" where both beloved and Lover are spiritual (the Community of Israel and the Holy One, Blessed be He), this assessment is not only possible but compelling. Since the Community of Israel longs for the Holy One, Blessed be He, this implies that He also longs for it.

"Those who love Me do I love,  
And those who seek Me shall find Me."

Seated on the ground at midnight, the tears which "His only beloved" sheds night after night for "her Most Beloved Who to the heights has ascended" are a clear indication of the intense nearness and the burning love which exists between the beloved and her Lover. For her, "the beloved," who "to the depths has descended," to the strait pit of the Exile, even a moment's separation from her lover is exceedingly hard to bear. That is to say: especially bitter for her is the momentary forgetfulness of the nearness of the Holy One, Blessed be He, at those times when the pains of servitude and the afflictions of exile mount so severely. And He, the Lover, even at those times of "His ascent to the heights," when He apparently stands far removed from the afflictions of His beloved---even then, and especially then, He never ceases cherishing her and longing for her. For she is His only stake in the world, and He has no other nation for which He can exchange her; and His giving her into the hands of oppressors is only because of His desire to hear her voice.

"Like a king who had an only daughter, and was desirous of hearing her voice. What did he do? He hinted to his servants, who at once fell upon her pretending to be highwaymen, and immediately she began to cry out, 'Father! Father!'" (Midrash Shir Ha-Shirim)

The intelligent man recognizes the nature of those tears of woe shed by the elderly Jew at midnight, seated on the ground in some corner of his house, bent and alone, reciting "Tikkun Hatzot" and bemoaning "the Exile

of the Presence"—that they pour forth from a mighty spiritual stream which dolefully wells up within him and which provokes in him a great longing for the Presence. But he who lacks the sensitivity to recognize the nature of the tears shed by the grandfather over the exile of the Presence at the time of "Tikkun Hatzot" each weekday night, and who may be deceived by the weeknight mournful countenance and plaintive chants of the grandfather, perchance mistakenly thinking that these tears are an indication of the emptiness of his soul and ~~and~~ an expression of his distance from the Presence (whereas actually there are an echo of the pain he suffers daily)—let such a one kindly take the trouble to observe the tears of this very same grandfather at the time of "Kabbalat Shabbat." Let him but take the trouble to enter the synagogue on the Sabbath Eve and see the tears of joy and ecstasy which the grandfather sheds as he welcomes the arrival of "Sabbath the Queen," the arrival of the Divine Presence. Then his error will become apparent to him, his error in so misapprehending the tears shed by the elderly Jew each weeknight over the Exile of the Presence. For surely now he must be convinced that this mourner is not in any wise forsaken by the Presence, but quite the contrary, the Presence is very near unto him, so near that he actually receives and welcomes It each and every Sabbath.

He who misunderstood the content of the lament recited plaintively by the beloved, the Community of Israel, the previous night, a weeknight: "Now to the depths have I descended, and my Most Beloved to the heights has ascended"—let him please mark well the demonstrative hymn, "Come, oh love, to greet the bride," sung by the self-same beloved (Israel) with great passion this night, the Sabbath Eve. Let him note, please, that her Lover Who wandered so far off, even ascending to the heights, returns to her dwelling time after time to rejoice with her in the delights of love.

Whoever the fool that, hearing the Jew carrying on over "the Exile of the Presence"; sighing, crying, and confessing "we have sinned" while beating his breast, might be prone to err in thinking that this is an admission of vanquishment by the defendant---kindly let his ear attend ~~in~~ the ecstasy and exaltation of spirit with which that very Jew proclaims "Thou didst select us" on the Eve of Sanctifying a Holy Day, or the stanza, "Awake, awake, for your Light has come," on the Eve of Sanctifying the Sabbath. Whoever the fool that, seeing the dark and mournful countenance of the exiled Jew during the week, might be induced to regard as soiled and impure the inner life and inner soul of the Jew---kindly let him note well the endless glow and satisfaction streaming from the face of the Jew on the Sabbath Eve.

"'And God blessed the seventh day and hallowed it...'  
He blessed it with the light of man's countenance,  
And He hallowed it with the light of man's countenance."

3.

This joy and ecstasy---which/ even in Exile seizes the Jewish people each Sabbath and Holy Day Eve by means of the glorious and exalted prayers and ~~by~~ hymns through which it expresses its soul---is the true mark of the sublime exilic creativity of the Jewish people. For although the Jew in exile was not especially creative in the material realm for reasons independent of him, he was, despite this, most creative in the spiritual realm. That is to say, the spiritual creation which he began two thousand years previously, before going into Exile, he continued thereafter in Exile in a most noteworthy manner. When the Holy One, Blessed be He, heeding the complaint of the Sabbath, "Sovereign of the Universe, every day of the week has a mate except me," satisfied her by replying, "the Community of Israel shall be your mate"---

by this the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave a clear demonstration of His supreme expertise, as it were, in match-making. For just as the Sabbath was appointed for the cessation from earthly wants and activities in order to engage in "heavenly wants," so her mate, the Jewish People in Exile, far removed from material concerns by the intervention of the Higher Providence for (for ends made known to ~~him~~ her), was set apart entirely ~~for the same~~ Divine spiritual creation.

And his true joy in this creative task the exilic Jew expresses in his hymns and prayers concerning the tranquillity he finds through his most pleasing mate, the Sabbath. This lovely mate, who on the seventh days soothes and stills all his material pains and tribulations of the six work-a-days, and ~~turns~~ his attention to the exquisite delights of the spiritual fruits of their marriage---the exilic creation of our people---finally places him in the bosom of the Lord, the chief attendant at their blessed mating, ~~back~~ of the Community of Israel and the Sabbath. Indeed, He is their third partner, continually giving life to their offspring.

With these words we have laid the foundation for the assumption readily assented to by all the initiated among our people who have penetrated to the inner spirit of ~~our~~ people and ~~of~~ its sacred literature: that not only did the Exile not remove from our people its exalted task and mission, to bear witness to the Providence which in the first instance established it as a people; but, on the contrary, it has in fact assisted it in this task, easing its work in assuming this mission. It is not at all as the erring would have it, that "Exile" has <sup>laid waste</sup> ~~weakened~~ the creative power of the Jewish spirit.

This in general terms. We shall now proceed to portray the exilic creation in greater detail.

4.

Two thousand years ago, at the time of the renowned Revelation~~k~~ at Mount Sinai, the hour had arrived for the Creator of the Universe to give to the world His Torah, i. e., to ~~give~~ give to the world below the Divine Emanations of Faith in and Cleavage to God (Emuna and D'vekut): that singular treasure which purifies the soul of man more than all the conclusions of academic ethics which the detached philosophical investigators may come up with after ~~all~~ their sharp philosophizing, more than all the rarified notions of "morals" which the dispassionate academicians may balance on their intellects even while their eyes remain fearsomely icy---congealing and hardening the heart even more than at the beginning!

And when the hour had come for the Divine Emanation to appear in the world, the Holy One, Blessed be He, sought some nation through which this gift might be relayed to the world, some nation which would become a living organism bearing this Divine knowledge faithfully forever. The Holy One, Blessed be He, went seeking with His Torah to every land and people, but there was not to be found among them even one willing to accept it. Nor did He, in His quest, recognize among them either the ability or the inclination to be bearers of the container of spirituality; and so He left off entreating them and turned to the Jewish People, which the Holy One, Blessed be He, found more suited for this mission than any other people...

The Jewish People responded to His call by hastening to express its willingness immediately in these words: "We will obey and we will hearken." Therefore the Torah was conveyed to the Jewish People, creating a ~~firm~~ firm bond and covenant between the People and the Holy One, Blessed be He.

For the people the ~~covenant~~ covenant had as its goal their becoming "a kingdom of priests and a holy people," i.e., their becoming a People each of whose

individual members would have within his heart purity and nearness to God to such a degree that it would be, as a whole, a kingdom all of whose members were priestly and holy: every member serving nobly in the Divine sanctuary and comporting himself with the holiness befitting such ministering.

The spirit which reigned then among those entering the covenant, as well as the place where the covenant was established, were both well suited to arouse in the people the desire to accept upon themselves the aforementioned charge. The people had just escaped from the burdens of Egypt and had <sup>collapse into nothingness</sup> just seen, with its own eyes, the absolute ~~defunction and termination~~ of material might and "national", "sovereign" pride; and it was itself situated in the midst of a dry, barren desert with neither "national territory" nor an established army... These factors made the hearts of the people ready to welcome the covenant. Their total removal from the <sup>tight trap</sup> ~~materialistic nationalism~~ of materialistic nationalism well prepared them to respond, "We will obey and we will hearken," to proclaim ecstatically their complete readiness to become "a kingdom of priests and a holy people."

But after this, when Israel came to the land of Canaan, seized it, spread itself like a leafy tree in its native soil, and established for itself a sovereign political life "like all the nations," there began hovering over its head the danger which Moses our teacher had warned against: "lest when thou hast eaten and art satisfied, and hast built goodly houses, and dwelt therein... then thy heart be lifted up, and thou forget the Lord thy God, who brought thee forth out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage." The Holy Spirit—which dwelt among them at the time of their departure from Egypt and was found among them in the desert, stirring in their souls the longing for God and tightly binding every individual

soul among them to the Presence, to such a point that "even a handmaiden at the Red Sea pointed her finger at the Holy One, Blessed be He, and exclaimed, 'This is my God!'"—this Holy Spirit began to be driven away and separated from them by the gross spirit of "political nationalism" which took their hearts. And as the Holy Spirit fled from the people, the imprint of the Torah also faded, the trace of the Divine ordinances they had received at Mount Sinai. Rather than the Torah/<sup>eventuating</sup>~~issuing~~ in an Immanent Godhead dwelling in the midst of the children of Israel, a Divinity Whose abode was the heart, the heart of every individual Jew—rather than this, the children of Israel began viewing the Divinity as exclusively external, with Its abode in the midst of political protocol and propriety.

From that point on the children of Israel became "political," and the Torah became merely a kind of constitution, similar to those constitutions from "cultured nations" that we today know all too well: on paper, handsomely drafted and signed, but in practice, the complete opposite.

Corruption begets corruption. The corruption of the ethical sense, which followed in the wake of the invasion from without by the spirit of "political nationalism," soon brought them to request that a king be set over them also, "like all the nations surrounding them."

The appointing of a king should have banished completely from their midst the Inner Presence; should have turned the entire Torah, from A to Z, into an official document possessing glamour and glitter but no heart; should have caused to be forgotten the source and place of issue of the Torah, the Holy One, Blessed be He, at Mount Sinai: all this so that the people could receive it proclaimed by a king wearing a golden crown, standing high on a platform, surrounded by the masses there assembled for the greater glory of the king!

The prophet, representative of the Intimate Presence, cried out bitterly against the clamor for the appointment of a king, the clamor to make of the Torah "an official document." And the Holy One, Blessed be He, expressed His full participation in the prophet's sorrow by saying to him: "for they have not rejected thee, but they have rejected Me, that I should not be king over them." But to destroy them because of their gross cravings was not the desire of the Holy One, Blessed be He, according with the well known principle in "Yefat Toar" that He does not burden ~~his~~ creatures with edicts running contrary to their character before their hearts are properly prepared.

The Jewish People fulfilled its intention to be "like all the nations," and performed its <sup>part</sup> ~~share~~: it saddled itself with kings. And the kings performed their part: they involved the nation in cruel wars though absolutely nothing required it ("optional wars" in Rabbinic terminology), and thus the people were killed and killers, slaughtered and slaughterers, "felling with axes of iron," "measuring among the wounded one to be rescued and two to let die." All of it, the whole business exactly as carried on in the surrounding nations!

And the "official Torah," carried in full view on the arm of the king like an amulet, "to banish the evil spirits who might rebel against him"--- this Torah, the crowning glory of her bearers, was quiet and submissive in the face of the absolute demand for "discipline," and she raised not a protest against these deeds.

The Father in Heaven, the Holy One, Blessed be He, sat mourning the straying of his sons in the paths of the nations, but, as is His wont, He granted them freedom to follow their own hearts to the very end. But,



with the passing of time the kings had their fill of the delicacies of "the nations," of the dainties of war, and then there came to their minds the memory of the God of Israel. One king especially was mindful of the Holy One, Blessed be He, one who in his childhood was a shepherd in the desert, after that a refugee hiding in the forests, and who carried within him two souls: one "kingly," i.e., mighty, fit to "lift up his sword against eight hundred, whom he slew at one time;" one saintly, cleaving to the Presence, which "did sound the harp at midnight, busying himself with Torah." This king did remember the Holy One, Blessed be He, and decided to build a house in His honor.

At that point, when the "king" began concerning himself with a "house" for the Lord, the Holy One, Blessed be He, was no longer able, as it were, to contain the wrath long pent up in His heart due to the vain mockeries committed by His people through kingship, and He immediately rejected the idea: "Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars; thou shalt not build a house unto My name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in My sight." (I Chron. 22:8)

The reason for the rejection according to Scripture is this: it is not for kings, wagers of war, to build houses for the God of Israel, for His ways and attributes are the complete opposite of kings' sovereign ways and wars. And according to the Talmud, the Holy One, Blessed be He, did even suggest to the aforementioned king that the very core of his intention, to erect a special palace for the Lord where he would offer Him sacrifices, was more appropriate to the "kingly" soul than to the saintly soul. For in the opinion of the latter he had a more worthy task to undertake: the task of "sitting and studying Torah" in whatsoever place, of assimilating within him the Divine wisdom and the Divine holiness, of accepting sustenance for his spirit from God—a task including within its

compass greater nearness to God than could possibly result from feeding God the flesh of sacrifices in whatever mansion he might establish for Him.

"More pleasing to Me is one day which you spend sitting and studying Torah, than the thousands of burnt offerings which in the future your son Solomon will offer before Me on the altar." (Shabbat 30a)

5.

The work of building the Temple was taken out of the hands of the king who had engaged in the work of kings, i.e., the active waging of war, and was transferred to his son, the "peaceful king."

But a king, even if he be peaceful, is still a king. And if, by virtue of the numerous victories already won by him or his forefathers in subduing all the neighboring nations, he be slack in waging new wars which would demonstrate further the prowess of his sword (a process indeed very tiring and troublesome)---still that characteristic desire of royalty, to expand over all the surroundings, in no wise abandons him. But he can express it, now that the nations are subjugated, in more gentle ways: by extending a "humble" hand to his submissive neighbors and by going about with them "like a brother." He pays them a visit on their feasts and festivals, and invites them to his own feasting and celebrating. ~~When~~ And when he <sup>requests</sup> ~~that they~~ pay respect to "the majesty of the king," he joins them at the same table, eating and drinking with them....And when the heart of the victorious king becomes merry with wine, he will even condescend to grace their lowly backs with a friendly embrace delivered by his proud, ~~his~~ <sup>his</sup> hand, a gesture having a dual bidding for the recipients: "lowliness" and "intimacy!" His every "intimacy" with them increases his own reputation for being "a gracious king;" and from every "kindness" there can come but one

result: by bestowing his spirit upon them he comes to rule all areas of their lives, not only the material but also the spiritual.

This same disposition to expand by means of intimacy served this "peaceful king" also in building the Temple. In every item of its construction, from preparing the materials right through<sup>to</sup>/composing the prayer for its dedication, he constantly looked to the kings and nations around him; as if the erection of the Temple were a collective project, his and theirs. ¶ When he first began preparing the materials he hastened to inform, "in warm friendship, Hiram, King of Tyre" (king of that nation which in the future would say to Jerusalem: "Aha! let me fill my sword!"), that he had begun to "erect a house to the name of the Lord his God," that his father had not been able to build the house because of his preoccupation with wars, but that he, already "having the nations underfoot," felt it his duty to put an end to the wanderings of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and to make for Him a dwelling place; and that he did consequently invite the King of Tyre to participate with him in this exalted project by "decreeing" that "his subjects" cut trees for the building.

And in his prayer at the dedication of the Temple, even then did he place his expectations on "the stranger" who might hear reports of his God, of His mighty hand and outstretched arm, and so come also to pray at "this house."

His rejoicing over the great palace he had built for his God, over the reverent spell which the building cast on his subjects and neighbors, over the throne greater than the throne of any king, over his own exceptional liberalism and generosity in living in peace and friendship with all the nations and drawing them near by "his great kindness"—this rejoicing reached such a pitch that he finally expressed his intimacy with his

neighbors in a most extreme fashion, marrying the Pharaoh's daughter: an act combining all his various "virtues", from which he compounded a most wondrous mixture! He set his marriage with Pharaoh's daughter for the very dedication day of the Temple! And so "the Egyptian beauty danced eighty dances the night preceding" the opening of the great Temple which Solomon had built for his God; he thinking that by this he could marry his God, as well, to the nations!

Thus did our king seize the sleeve, as it were, of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and pull Him into the dancing with him...For in his "great wisdom" our "peaceful king" had arms extended to embrace all, ready to combine all manner of immiscibles beneath his royal sceptre.

The Holy One, Blessed be He, refused to enter the circle of these dances, disdainfully averting His face from them as one would turn aside from filth; and filled with wrath at Jerusalem, He was desirous of destroying both the city and the dwelling which the king had erected for Him, the Holy One, Blessed be He. For in this spacious dwelling which the king had built for Him—opening it to the four winds, standing on the threshold winking and beckoning to all the surrounding nations to come offer sacrifices in ~~this~~ this house which he had built for his God, all the while his heart knowing that these deeds were alien in spirit—in this great dwelling our Father in Heaven had ~~not~~ true satisfaction, ~~desiring~~, as He did, to be alone with His loved ones, the children of Israel.

This dwelling and everything connected with it was arranged just the opposite of what it should have~~n~~ been were it to realize its purpose, that of being a dwelling place for the Presence in this earthly sphere. This ideal of the Presence resting upon and influencing the earth despite Its

being high and uplifted, great and wide, embracing the entire universe--- despite and precisely because of this, the realization of the ideal requires a contraction and a joining to a people chosen for this end. For, since this ~~Ideal~~ Presence is high above the heavens and wide beyond the earth, the hearts of men are too small to encompass It. Thus It requires for Itself one people which will concentrate on It, cherish It, and absorb It within themselves; then, from the splendor of that people, light will emanate to all peoples. But in the Temple which Solomon built just the opposite happened. The Ideal Itself became so confined and debilitated that It itself required fattening by thousands of cattle and sheep; and despite this and because of this, the arms of the Ideal finally stretched and extended until It, too, embraced all the nations and went forth to join in the dance with them...

6.

This mingling and trafficking with the nations, the upshot of the people's desire to be just like "the nations," ("give us a king like all the nations"), was set in the very foundation of that king-~~erected~~ Temple, <sup>with</sup> and/~~in~~ time ~~it~~ became more and more prominent. With the establishment of the Temple many exchanges were begun between Israel and the nations: both daughters and gods. The stream of foreign wives, of whom the Lord had said, "ye shall not go among them, neither shall they come among you," reached the court of King Solomon immediately after he had built the Temple. "~~From~~ all the nations they came to Jerusalem to hear the wisdom of Solomon" and to see "the food of his table." But it would appear that their interest lay primarily with the latter (if indeed there remained anything for them to learn in such matters!). As for the former, in greater measure than they carried wisdom from Jerusalem they brought their "wisdoms" and notions to Jerusalem. That

same king who built in Jerusalem a house for his God, inviting all the nations to visit it---in his old age built "a high place for Chemosh the detestation of Moab, in the mount that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestation of the children of Ammon."

The process of mixing and assimilating the God of Israel with the idols of the nations continued so long as a king reigned in Israel. The kings of Israel planted abherot and erected images in the midst of the Sanctuary, and all the nations came and sacrificed to the God of Israel. It would even appear (for so we may infer from the fact that the written Torah did finally gain currency among the nations) that they also grabbed for themselves a few fragments of the Torah---those easiest to become accustomed to---and proceeded to ape them. This very Torah which they had refused at Sinai when it was offered to them, in ~~hum~~ility and intimacy, by the Holy One, Blessed be He---now, when that people which had accepted it, the Jewish people, had taken possession of a land and <sup>was</sup> ~~were~~ leading the political life, appointing kings and waging wars like all the nations, and settling accounts with the Torah by enclosing it in a Sanctuary in the midst of such pomp and external display as one would bestow upon a deceased who would soon perish from all hearts and souls---at this time the nations came to realize that they really need not tremble so before the Torah.

Thus fared the Torah of Moses all the while that Israel sat upon its land, its king upon its neck, and the Temple atop both: famous throughout the world, ~~its~~ its true followers ~~were~~ now as if spread among the nations. In that measure to which the Torah extended over the superficies of the earth, ~~just~~ to that degree did it become more superficial within the camp of Israel. In that measure to which some of its customs with external glitter, suitable for political officials, made their way in the world, to

to that degree did the Inner Spirit flee from the Jewish nation itself; and the materialistic craving for the tastes and temptations of the nations grew apace.

The prophets, men of great souls and inspired intellects, the Teaching of the Lord in their mouths, their hearts filled with ~~The~~ Intimate Presence from Mount Sinai—great was their sorrow over the foolishness of their people, and they stood warning the children of Israel that they were drawing ever nearer the precipice beyond which lay nothingness. There the prophets stood, casting fire and brimstone upon the kings and officers, nor would they regard favorably even the Temple and its sacrifices (used as they were; ~~for~~ a stronghold and support for the government, and ~~as~~ an amulet to entice, for the ruler, the hearts of the people); rather did they prophecy a bitter end for the kings and all those who followed them. Not for this had the Holy One, Blessed be He, selected the children of Israel when He brought them forth out of Egypt and gave them the Torah at Mount Sinai, and certain it was that He would not tolerate forever their backsliding and turning aside from the mission assigned to them. Certain it was that He would soon lay hold of severe means to ~~drive~~ His people toward the goal He desired, shattering and destroying in wrath and fury all the crude contrivances and paraphernalia of alien "nationalism" from which were issuing influences damaging to and destructive of the Torah. That is, the Holy One, Blessed be He, would raze the palaces of the kings, pull down the Temple, and exile Israel from its land.

Then, in those first days after the catastrophe, the children of Israel would suffer terribly; but from that darkness would shine forth a great light for them: from their bodily woes would be raised and established their spiritual world. Then would the Torah return to its

proper lodging: in a parched desert was it given, and to the desert of Exile would it return. And there, in its traditional home, it would once more blossom forth in the hearts of the people. The nearness of God and the Intimacy of the Presence would return to them as in days of old, ~~as~~ as in the days of their departure from Egypt. But with this tragic difference (which, however, made it even better suited to its purpose): previously they had seen the calamitous end of "sovereign national" pride in the case of another, the Pharaoh; whereas this time they would see it in their own case, ~~happening to~~ affecting their very persons. "Therefore, behold, I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, And speak tenderly to her." (Hosea 2:16) "I shall go and return to My place, until they be smitten and seek My face; for when it is strait for them, then will they seek Me."

In these words of warning the prophets expressed most pronouncedly the purpose of the destruction of the Temple and the Exile, of which events they ~~expressed~~ did forewarn Israel continually. It is clear from this that Exile was not exclusively or even primarily a punishment for the past, but rather, and essentially, a constructive measure for the future: the return of the Presence to "Her place"—the hearts of all who are in a state of loneliness and solitariness.

The prediction of the prophets came to pass: the leopard of the north strode forth from his thicket and fell upon Jerusalem. He burned, killed, and ravished, performing terrible deeds in Israel; and the survivors he exiled to Babylonia. There in those first days they suffered sufficient chastisements and woes to square accounts for the past—and there also their hearts were humbled and their souls purified and made fit to avoid, in the future, their past mistakes; so that when they would recover and



become somewhat accustomed to their new, lowly state, their attention might turn in some measure to inner reflection. And so it was.

7.

The cessation of their pride in national sovereignty on the one hand, combined with strong feelings of loathing and rejection for the neighboring nations of those times, (whose image, indelibly engraved on their hearts, was the figure of Nebukhadnezar the despoiler)—stirred within the children of Israel powerful longings for the God of their fathers. At these times of longing there was born a strong urge to return to their source, to separate themselves from the nations, to center around themselves, and to concentrate deeply on their Torah in order to achieve through ~~it~~ it an intimate relation with the Presence of Israel.

This urge did not weaken but in fact became even stronger in the reign of "the gracious king, Cyrus," despite the pleasant face he showed Israel.

That this was the case becomes obvious from the behavior of the leaders of our people when the "magnanimity" of the "gracious king" reached the point of his permitting them to return and rebuild "the house of God in Jerusalem."

For behold, the returnees from Exile built the Second Temple ~~in a fashion~~ ~~completely different from~~ by a scheme completely different from that used by Solomon in building the First Temple. Solomon stood inviting the nations from everywhere to come and take part in the building of the Temple, while the returnees from Exile made every effort to keep the nations far removed from every aspect of the project.

Even the idea of setting part of the subjugated Jews building a Temple

"to whatever God promenades there in Jerusalem" originated entirely with the King of Persia himself ("the Lord awakened the spirit of Cyrus"); for it had not occurred to a single Jewish leader to appeal to "the gracious king" that the house of God might be rebuilt with the help of an alien king.

The kind offer of the king---the head "arranger" in the matter of rebuilding the Temple---to provide them with soldiers and horsemen for their protection on the way to Jerusalem, was refused by the exilic leaders with apparent humility but hidden sarcasm: "The hand of our God is over all those who seek good from Him; but His wrath and fury is upon all those who forsake Him." And to the other foreign volunteers who offered their services in the project, they replied simply and without further explanation: "It is not for you but for us to build a house for our God."

Solomon dedicated the Temple by marrying Pharaoh's daughter; the leaders of the returned exiles dedicated it by convoking an assembly to purify the families of Israel: "to separate themselves from the peoples of the land and from the foreign women."

But the contrast was felt most of all in the matter of the study of Torah. For Solomon the sacrificial worship was the principal activity of the house erected to God, and within it he offered such quantities of cattle and sheep---thousands upon tens of thousands---that "the altar was too small to contain them all." For the exilic leaders, the sacrifices were merely incidental (a fact which will emerge clearly obvious to anyone who takes the trouble to inspect the spirit of the Scriptures with a perspicacious eye). It was practically a case of having to comply with the expectations of the Persian king, the inspirer and supervisor of the whole matter, who instigated the practice and also contributed toward it from his treasury. For the leaders of the people, the main purposes in erecting the Temple were: that they might

thereby create a center for the study of Torah and the observance of the commandments, (for upon these they had set their hearts in returning to Jerusalem—"For Ezra had set his heart to seek the law of the Lord, and to do it, and to teach in Israel statutes and ordinances." Ezra 7:10); and that all the returnees from exile might collectively pour out, here in the midst of this holy center, all the tears of longing ~~which~~ for their Father in Heaven which had accumulated in their hearts all those days ~~during~~ which they had been so far removed from His altar. And the tears of anguish at that exalted moment when the words of the Torah were read to them (Nehemiah 8), combined with the tears of joy of those same ecstatic moments, would water well the garden of Torah that it might give forth its fruit everlastingly.

This new-old, fresh yet venerable idea espoused by the returnees from exile—the concentrating of the People within itself and the craving to live in intimacy with the Presence through the study of Torah, the original intent of the giving of the Torah—earned for itself, from that point on, permanent residence in the midst of Israel, and became a decree never to be transgressed, neither during that period of the Second Temple, nor in the time immediately after, nor ~~for~~ all time to come.

This is the ideal that was widely realized in the days of the Second Temple through the study of the "Oral Torah," the Oral Torah being both the partition which separates Israel from the other nations and that which strengthens its covenant with the Holy One, Blessed be He.

"Some words are written and some words are oral, and we do not know which are the more precious. But since it is written, 'for by these spoken words do I establish with you my covenant,' one must say that those which are oral are the more precious." (Jerusalem Talmud, Hagigah)

"'For by these spoken words'---these are the Mishnah and the Talmud, which distinguish Israel from the nations." (Midrash Rabbah, Tisa)

These dicta of the Rabbis may be understood thusly: the Oral Torah, diligently studied and practiced, is the means whereby the Presence is brought to rest upon the heart of the individual Jew; and the giving to the Jew of this most precious gift for meditation---this wonderful, wise, and inspired collection of laws and legends in the Talmud---is also the expression of both the intimacy and affection of the Presence for him. And since spiritually the other nations of the world are all still involved to some extent with the Official Divinity, they are not yet prepared, because of the circumstances of their lives, for the Intimate Divinity (as this following fact will testify: that our Written Torah did gain more or less currency among them, whereas our Oral Torah has not spread at all). Because of this, the nations have no desire for our Oral Torah, and so the marks of Jewish integrity (yihud) are protected from idolatrous currents, from official, "sovereign national" currents, and from all kinds of other currents alien to the Jewish spirit.

8.

This principle---the preservation of Jewish integrity (yihud)---was placed in the very foundation of the Second Temple, and because of it the vocation of the Oral Torah held the chief place in the spiritual life of the people; so much so, in fact, that the whole business of the Sanctuary and its sacrifices was reduced to second rank before it. "Greater is the study of Torah than the daily sacrifices." (Erubin 63a) And how indescribably less still was the value placed on the alien pleasure of "national sovereignty" as compared with the satisfaction of Torah.

Consequently, at the time of the destruction of the Second Temple the scholars were disinclined to wage a stubborn, all out war either for their

political status or for the Temple---knowing full well that these possessions, which could be taken from them by the power of others, could not stand without such bloodshed, whereas their everlasting inheritance, the Torah, no power on earth could succeed in taking from them. And when Rabbi Johanan ben Zakai was given the opportunity to salvage something by his influence, he asked for no national concessions, but only for "Jabneh and its scholars"---a refuge for the Torah. He asked nothing from the besiegers which was in reality theirs, for the granting of such a request would have been an act of grace on their part and so would have created the expectation of perpetual gratitude. Instead he requested from them something which, whether or not they were willing to grant it, would in the final end remain in our hands.

Take note. The Second Temple was destroyed. The Higher Providence had found, apparently, that the good influence which dwelling in the land had on the spirit of the People---its being sanctified by the commandments connected with the land as well as its taking upon itself the promissory seal of the "Covenant of the Parts" (Gen.15:13-16), in these ways strengthening the bond between the People and its Heavenly Protector---that such influence had already done its maximum to insure that, even though far from the land, the good effects of the land should not thenceforth cease from among the People. The sacred memories of the land and the turning toward it at the hour of prayer would suffice to preserve its influence upon their hearts. And their further actual dwelling upon the land as a "kingdom" would bring, from that point on, greater spiritual loss than gain. For even those few remnants of the gross, outer shell, those mere fragments of the material paraphernalia of "nationalism"---i.e., even the dimmed example of the power-political life which still held sway at the time of the Second Temple---served to prevent the true inner Substance of the people

from being revealed, which was its mission yet from the time of Mount Sinai. Therefore did Providence cast down even the vestiges of the paraphernalia of that "nationalism" and sweep them from the path.

Then did the Jewish people sprout wings truly free, rising to the uttermost heights, building for itself, in the great, ~~empty heavens~~ spacious buttress heavens, a platform on the skiffs of the wind, far from the reach of the earth-dragon---that dragon which stands ever ready to make spectacles of the nations and monarchies: spurring this one against that one, stirring that one against this one, establishing "countries" and overturning them, enlarging "nations" and swallowing them!---Its earthly base need trouble it no longer, and the spray of filth from the earthly base of "territory" need soil it no longer. Its mind is now free and its soul ready to dedicate itself entirely to its ancient mission: "I did bear you on eagles' wings...and ye shall be unto Me a kingdom of priests, and a holy nation."

At that hour when Titus the wicked packed all the vessels of the Temple for transfer to Rome by "ships of the sea"---then did our people take the Inner Substance of those vessels, the Holy Spirit, and carry it to its ships plying the air of the heavens, and establish there "the Heavenly Jerusalem."

Even before the calamity, it had occurred to our people to return to itself and to the source of its mission---which now, since the recent destruction, was in the very heights of the heavens. The longing for intimacy with the Presence took hold mightily within our people; and the means by which intimacy with the Presence could be achieved, the study of the Oral Torah, became very widespread in Israel. They studied Torah by day, they studied Torah by night; they studied in groups, they studied singly. They studied where there were large ~~Jewish concentrations~~ concentrations of Jews, studied where there were small ~~Jewish concentrations~~ concentrations of Jews. Even a solitary Jew forced to live alone among non-Jews, even he studied.

Wherever Israel was exiled, wherever the people were sent, even though thousands of parsangs from Jerusalem, two images accompanied them: the image of "Jerusalem, the holy city," which the people would engrave on the tablets of their hearts, sealing therewith the memory of "the love of her espousals" with the Holy One, Blessed be He, in earlier times, in the days of her youth; (cf. Jeremiah 2:2); and the image of "the Academy of Jabneh," which provided a living copy for every place of settlement as they established, everywhere they went, a House of Study in which they could continue their life with the Holy One, Blessed be He.

In these tiny academies the life of the couple, the Holy One, Blessed be He, and the Jewish people, was established in most wonderful fashion. The Holy One, Blessed be He, found greater contentment in the air of Torah in these tiny schools—unique to Israel and uniquely uniting Israel to Him—than in His former spacious mansion where they fattened Him with burnt offerings of living flesh, even while the boundaries distinguishing Israel from the rest of the nations became indistinct. "From the day the Temple was destroyed" it was clear that "the Holy One, Blessed be He, had in the world"—ie., found satisfaction from—"only the space of four cubits of Halachah"—confined and limited to the Jewish people.

The Holy One, Blessed be He, found contentment in being alone with His people in the four cubits of halachah; and the people increasingly purified itself before Him and made heard its sweet voice, the voice of rejoicing in the Torah, all the while never ceasing to weave garlands of flowers for the Torah. Should it receive a slap in the face from some arrogant, scornful non-Jew, to the Academy would it run to study Torah, to banish the insult by recovering inner status and respect. Should it meet the cruel eyes of a scornful non-Jew flashing contempt at it, to the Academy of Torah would it flee, to that spring which trickled forth such gentle pleasures. These

in the wake of  
delights it recorded on the tablet of its heart; and/~~after its~~ rejection by  
the faces outside, which provoked terror, the impression was even more indelible.  
Were it to feel "an evil decree" approaching from the government, also then  
would it rely on its tradition: "So long as the voice of Jacob is heard in  
the synagogues and houses of study, the hands of Esau shall not have dominion."  
And so it hardly moved at all from the House of Study.

And the House of Study performed its work of perfecting the people in a  
wonderful way. In the Academy~~xxx~~, on a diet of "cakes of Halachot," the  
intellect of the Jew was sharpened. In the Academy, on "fruits of Aggadot,"  
his feelings were refined. And the two together---Laws and Legends---cast  
their scent, the scent of the Intimacy of the Presence, from the Academy into  
the homes of the Jews; and by this means all the Jews, from one end to the  
other, became in recognized measure "a kingdom of priests and a holy nation."  
And in the Academy the Jew renewed/~~his~~<sup>his</sup> strength by which he survived/~~his~~<sup>all</sup>  
pursuers, and so the presumption was confirmed: that the Jewish nation was  
the work of God.

9.

Thus were "Exile" and the "House of Study" two wonderful catalytic agents  
for the Jewish people, for by means of them it progressed in the task which  
the Lord had assigned it at Mount Sinai. And  
/These two catalytic agents were  
interdependent. Academy without Exile would not have survived, for its light  
would have been extinguished by the thick shadows of government and nations;  
and Exile without Academy also could not have existed, for its subject, the  
people in exile, would not have survived. That is to say, a people without



a Torah---and many such peoples suffered exile---yields to the indomitable power of its conqueror and becomes assimilated within the invincible ruling nation. With this the Exile ceases, and with it also the correction and purification of Exile. The result of such an exile is merely that the exiled people is removed from its own Molech idolatry and transferred to the Molech idolatry of another. That is the meaning of the Midrash on Lamentations 1:

"True, Judah was exiled; but were not <sup>idolatrous</sup> ~~the~~ nations also exiled?

But even though exiled, their exile was not really Exile. For the <sup>idolatrous</sup> nations, who eat of their captors' bread and drink of their captors' wine, their exile is not Exile. But Israel, which does not eat of their bread nor drink of their wine, its exile is Exile."

Exile in this sense at once terrible and blessed is, therefore, the unique treasure of the Jewish people only because it has the Torah. For when Torah and Exile are joined, great wonders are born in the soul of their bearer.

The combination of these two precious factors the Holy One, Blessed be He, gave only to that people which He had chosen; and this combination, by implanting in the heart of every individual member the nearness of the Presence, was that which truly made it "the chosen people."

"The Holy One, Blessed be He, said to them, 'My children, if the words of Torah will be near to you, then I shall call you intimates;' as it is written, 'the children of Israel, the people of His intimacy.'"

This nearness of the Presence revealed itself through the recognized

purity of soul~~x~~ of the exilic Jew. That the exilic Jew is a fine creature is not to be denied, even if the circ~~u~~stances of his life have forced him to behave like a ped~~a~~ler and engage at times in connivery and deception in commercial affairs; but that he should hatch cruel intrigues and dramas of blood-letting, like those met with frequently among the nations, is completely uncharacteristic of him.

Until very recent times, so long as the recognition of the Exilic mission was strong among Jews, there was found hardly a single murderer among our people, not even as an exceptional case. But in recent times--- since certain shallow ones among us have begun to cast aspersions on the Exile, by the same token also abandoning the study of Torah---there have already been several isolated incidents of Jews launching fearful sieges, just like true citizens of a political state. But every exception merely confirms the rule. The Jewish community is still permeated by the recognition of its Exilic mission, and so its soul has remain~~ed~~ uncontaminated by the poisonous corruption.

And since the individual soul~~x~~ is an offshoot of the collective soul of its people, the desires of the heart of every individual Jew are still drawn to the side of holiness. And if there be one whom circumstance compels or impulse drives to commit a sin, be it ever so minor a transgression, at the very time of committing the deed he feels himself to be a betrayer of the mission of his people. In any event, his private evil acts are not nourished by the collective soul of his people, and so they are as a passing bad odor which, having no source, cannot greatly befoul the air. But just opposite obtains with these who are reared on the knees of governments and nations; for among them the individual sins, and especially the grievous ones, are directly nourished by the collective soul~~x~~ and the ~~unholy things~~

program of the government. The foul odor which rises from the sins of the "citizen" has its source and anchorage very high up, and for this reason will greatly pollute the air.

Justly, therefore, does the Midrash say, in reckoning the ethical balance of all that happened to us as a result of our losing our land: "Said the Holy One, Blessed be He, 'When it was destroyed'"—ie., when the kingdom was destroyed and the root bearing gall and wormwood plucked out—"you raised for me righteous men; and when it was established, you raised for ~~me~~ wicked men." (Song of Songs)

11.

And thus it was that between two fires---the flaming light of Torah within our Houses of Study and the flaming eyes of the wolves outside---for two thousand years there was ceaselessly cast a singular and unique culture, one without parallel anywhere in the world: a culture soft as wax in material interests and hard as iron in matters of the soul; "submissive as a dove before the Holy One, Blessed be He" (before inspired ideals), and "resisting mightily ~~great strength~~ before the nations of the world" which ~~it~~ <sup>goaded</sup> it to transgress its ideals; permitting itself to be tread on by all, and in the end outlasting all.

And this culture grew and developed and presented before the <sup>whole</sup> world a people wonderful and legendary in its very existing, but wonderful and legendary also in the quality of its soul and its way of thinking: a nation with ears attending and senses awake to every good idea; a nation which, if humanity sometime be ordered to make an ethical journey to bring redemption to the world, will without doubt march at the head.

The purification of the ~~soul~~ of our people in Exile and its being made receptive to every inspired idea---through which came about the possibility of understanding the previously proclaimed prophecy of our prophets, "nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore," not as prose resounding in the air but as compelling and perceptible logic---this purification/<sup>was</sup>itself the Exilic creation of our people, and this ~~itself~~ was the very secret of our survival in Exile.

The sublime hymn, "Awake, awake, for your Light has come," sung ecstatically on the Eve of the Sabbath in synagogues wherever Israel is dispersed, is the spirit-in-song of our people's Exilic creation; and as night appears to elevate the seventh day to its station as the Sabbath, the crowning glory of all Jewish creations, the hymn proclaims of its creator, the Jew: he has not stopped making his Divine creations from the material of the commandments and the Torah of his God, nor will he stop creating!

And the pleasantly sad melody of the "Gemarah chant," heard in our Houses of Study weekday nights---this is the living voice of our people's long sustained support in Exile, proclaiming prophetically that so long as the Jew will sit beside his venerable Gemarah: the Jew did exist and even will exist!

And the purification of the soul and the being made fit to gather in the seeds of the visions of the prophets, the Exilic creation of our people---this is that very "habitation of the Messiah" within the Jewish pale to which we referred earlier. (p.39)

May the erring in spirit now realize that the lament of our people over "the Exile of the Presence" is no proof whatever of our people's having been, in Exile, emptied of the Holy Spirit; ~~in Exile~~ but, on the contrary, is an indication of

its being abundantly filled by the flow from the Holy Spirit. And that even while our people laments the Exile of the Presence and fervently longs for Its extension over all the world, it at the same time rejoices and takes great pride (for in this it may well take pride) in its own Exilic Presence!

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