ABRAHAM JOSHUA HESCHEL'S THEOLOGY OF JUDAISM AND THE REWRITING OF JEWISH INTELLECTUAL HISTORY

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Abstract

Abraham Joshua Heschel's *oeuvre* deals with the continuum of Jewish religious consciousness from the biblical and rabbinic periods through the kabbalistic and Hasidic ones with regard to God's concern for humanity. The goal of this study is to show how such a "Nachmanidean" reading has partially displaced the discontinuous "Maimonidean" reading promoted by Yehezkel Kaufman, Ephraim Urbach, and Gershom Scholem. The result is that Heschel's understanding of the development of Jewish theologizing is more influential now than it was during his lifetime. This study traces the growth of that development and explores how Heschel became the scholar-theologian who most succeeded in bridging the gap between scholarship and constructive theology.

The most influential and widely-read Jewish theologians of the twentieth century were Abraham I. Kook (1865–1935), Martin Buber (1878–1965), Mordecai M. Kaplan (1881–1983), Franz Rosenzweig (1886–1929), Menahem M. Schneersohn (1902–1994), Joseph B. Soloveitchik (1903–1993), and Abraham J. Heschel (1907–1972).[1] The youngest of these, Heschel, who except for Rosenzweig also died the youngest, is the one most cited by scholars of Judaism when dealing with the history of the interpretation of Judaism, as opposed to discussing the theology of the thinker in

[1] For my comparison of Heschel and Soloveitchik, see Reuven Kimelman, "Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Abraham Joshua Heschel on Jewish-Christian Relations," *Modern Judaism* 24 (2004): 251–271. The essay is available online (http://www.edah.org/backend/JournalArticle/4_2_Kimelman.pdf) and has also been reprinted in *The Edah Journal, 3:1–4:2 (Elul 5763–Kislev 5765)* (2005), 1–21. A Hebrew version is forthcoming in *The Proceedings of the International Conference on the Thought of Joseph B. Soloveitchik* (held at the Van Leer Conference Center in Jerusalem, 2003), and in *Studies in the Influence of Rabbi Joseph Don Soloveitchick on Culture, Education, and on Jewish Thought*, to be published by Magnes Press and the Van Leer Institute.

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question. In fact, Heschel's understanding of the development of Jewish theologizing is more influential now than in his own day. This study traces the growth of that development and explores how Heschel became the scholar-theologian who most succeeded in bridging the gap between scholarship and constructive theology.

While much has been said of Heschel's religious genius and moral courage,[2] more needs to be said about his intellectual audacity. He challenged the whole academic model of doing the historiography of Jewish theology by offering an alternative reading of the history of Jewish theologizing. In doing so, he contributed as much as any scholar of the twentieth century to the theological understanding of all four pivotal periods of pre-modern Jewish existence: biblical, rabbinic, medieval philosophic, and kabbalistic-Hasidic.[3]

Heschel's *oeuvre* traces the continuum of Jewish religious consciousness from the biblical and rabbinic periods through the kabbalistic and Hasidic ones.[4] Despite their differences, Heschel argued that they are unified by the theme of God's concern for humanity. The different expressions of Judaism are not mutually exclusive, but rather moments in the dialectic of man's encounter with God. Where others saw dichotomies, he saw polarities. Our inclination to understand Judaism or to approach the divine through only one of the poles leaves us, according to Heschel, with partial understandings of Judaism and fragmentary visions of the divine. In contrast, Heschel's theology offers a historical as well as a conceptual framework for maintaining the dialectic without reducing one pole to the other.

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[2] See, e. g., Reuven Kimelman, "The Jewish Basis for Social Justice," in *Religion, Race, and Justice in a Changing America*, ed. G. Orfield and H. J. Lebowitz (New York: The Century Foundation Press, 1999), 41–47, 183.

[3] This claim, which I first made in 1972 in the wake of Heschel's death, is here substantiated based on the scholarship of the intervening years; see Reuven Kimelman, "In Memoriam: Abraham Joshua Heschel," *Response* 16 (1972): 15–22, and in Hebrew, "Avraham Yehoshua Heschel Moreh Ha-Dor," *HaDoar* (Shevat 5743 [= 1983]): 187–188; also in *The Melton Journal* 15 (Winter 1983), 3, 23–24; and as "Abraham Joshua Heschel—Our Generation's Teacher" in *Religion & Intellectual Life* 2, no. 2 (Winter 1985): 9–18 (http://www.crosscurrents.org/heschel.htm).

[4] The exception is the medieval philosophic period. As we shall see, for Heschel the medieval philosophic period was the exception, while for others it was the prism through which they perceived the other periods.

In this regard, *Torah Min HaShamayim BeAsplaqariah Shel HaDorot* qualifies as Heschel's magnum opus.[5] It guides the reader through the woof and warp of the classic texts that inform his writings on contemporary theology, *Man Is Not Alone*[6] and *God In Search of Man*.[7] These books that made Heschel such an insightful writer for the Jewish and to a great extent for the Christian audience restate his historical-theological vision of Judaism. He first presented this vision in *The Prophets*[8] and subsequently and more extensively in *Torah Min HaShamayim.*[9] This vision, which involves tracing the thread of God's interest in man throughout the fabric of Judaism, is reflected in his contemporary writings.

So much of Heschel's work is of one cloth. *Man Is Not Alone* is subtitled *A Philosophy of Religion*, while *God in Search of Man* is subtitled *A Philosophy of Judaism*. For Heschel, man is not alone because God is in search of man. By virtually beginning *God in Search of Man* with the statement, "Religion is an answer to man's ultimate questions," Heschel underscores his thesis that the philosophy of Judaism is an answer to problems in the philosophy of religion, indeed its ultimate problems. Not only do these two works on contemporary theology fit together, they also converge with his two major works of historical scholarship, *The Prophets* and *Torah Min HaShamayim*, in his statement that pathos in *The Prophets* "is an explication of the idea of God in search of man."[10]

Chronologically, *The Prophets*, based on his German dissertation of the early 1930s,[11] came first; it was not published in its expanded English form until 1962. It was followed by his two aforementioned

[5] *Torah Min HaShamayim BeAsplaqariah Shel HaDorot* (*Theology of Ancient Judaism*), 3 vols. (vols. 1–2, London: Soncino Press, 1962–1965; vol. 3, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1995). ET: *Heavenly Torah as Refracted through the Generations*, ed. and trans. Gordon Tucker and Leonard Levin (New York: Continuum, 2005).

[6] *Man Is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion* (1951; repr., New York: Harper and Row, 1966).

[7] *God in Search of Man: A Philosophy of Judaism* (1955; repr., New York: Meridian Books, 1961). HT: אלוהים מבקש את האדם (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2003).

[8] *The Prophets* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, l962).

[9] As noted by Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages: Chapters in Concepts and Beliefs* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1969), 14 n. 26 (ET: *The Sages: The World and Wisdom of the Rabbis of the Talmud* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987], 695 n. 20).

[10] *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: The Noonday Press, 1996), 160.

[11] *Die Prophetie* (Krakow: Nakładem Polskiej Akademji Umiejętności, 1936).

books on theology of the 1950s. In the early 1960s, the first two volumes of *Torah Min HaShamayim* were published. Nonetheless, it is clear that his two major works of scholarship, though published later, were conceptually prior.[12] For Heschel, scholarship and theology converged.

Heschel's position that the continuities in Judaism are as salient as the discontinuities also explains the impetus of much of his work in medieval philosophy and Kabbalah. His most controversial forays into medieval thought focused on prophetic inspiration. Whereas others argued that prophecy had ceased with the close of the biblical canon or earlier, Heschel provocatively titled two of his essays רוח הקודש בימי ביניים (Prophetic Inspiration in the Middle Ages) and ?ההאמין הרמב"ם שזכה לנבואה (Did Maimonides Believe That He Had Attained the Rank of a Prophet?). Both were printed together in English under the illuminating title *Prophetic Inspiration after the Prophets*.[13]

This same sense of historical connectedness allowed his study, "The Mystical Element in Judaism,"[14] to shift audaciously from a discussion of Kabbalah to one on prophetic consciousness.[15] Were a link to be established between prophetic and kabbalistic thinking, it would parry Gershom Scholem's influential thesis about the rupture in Jewish thought introduced by Kabbalah, a rupture so great

[12] Which is why a work of a lifetime took only several years to compose; see Susannah Heschel's foreword to *Heavenly Torah as Refracted through the Generations*.

[13] *Prophetic Inspiration after the Prophets*, ed. Morris Faierstein (Hoboken, NJ: KTAV, 1996).

[14] "The Mystical Element in Judaism," in *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion*, ed. Louis Finkelstein (1949; repr., Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1960), 2:932–953.

[15] The irony is that Heschel in chap. 21 of *The Prophets* underscored the difference between mystical and prophetic experience. There, however, the contrast is in the context of a chapter on "An Examination of the Theory of Ecstasy." For Heschel the prophet was the object of a divine search, whereas for the mystic God was the object of a human search. This dichotomy of course breaks down in that classical Spanish Hebrew poet who so influenced Kabbalah, namely Judah Halevi, who famously described the religious experience as "in my going out to You I found You (coming) toward me" (בצאתי לקראתך מצאתיך לקראתי). In fact, Heschel appropriated the same language to describe the interface of the divine-human encounter, saying: "In turning toward God, man experiences God's turning toward him" (*The Prophets*, 487). Still, the contrast is in the experience, not in the awareness of God's interest in humanity. Whatever the case, it is not clear that Heschel would locate Kabbalists within his phenomenology of mystical consciousness. In that whole chapter, there is not a single reference to the sources of Jewish mysticism even though he had shown (and others were to show even more) elsewhere that there was a revival of prophetic consciousness in kabbalistic and Hasidic circles.

in Scholem's eyes that it demanded external influences to account for it. The contrast takes on added significance when one realizes that Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* was published in New York in 1941, whereas Heschel's essay was completed only four years later, albeit published in 1949 by the Jewish Theological Seminary of America in *The Jews: Their History, Culture, and Religion*.[16] Heschel finished his essay at the age of 38. Scholem delivered the lecture behind his essay in 1938 at the age of 41. In 1944, there appeared Heschel's bland summary-review of Scholem's book in *The Journal of Religion*.[17] In the first week of 1945, Heschel lectured at YIVO in Yiddish on "The East European Era in Jewish History," which became the basis of *The Earth Is the Lord's*, finished in 1948.[18] His discussion of Kabbalah there is, minus the quotations, lifted from his comparable discussion in "The Mystical Element in Judaism."

In "The Mystical Element in Judaism," Heschel takes on the two best-known authorities of the day, Gershom Scholem and Martin Buber. Scholem was his senior by ten years and Buber by twenty-nine. Despite their disagreement about the essence of Hasidism, "both considered kabbalah a gnostic phenomenon."[19] In his portrait of the mystical element in Judaism, Heschel, as is his wont, does not cite either.[20] He cites the *Zohar* some sixty times, and *Sefer Hasidim*

[16] See Edward Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*: *Abraham Joshua Heschel in America 1940–1972* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007), 98 and 403 n. 1.

[17] Review of Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, in *The Journal of Religion* 24 (1944): 140–141.

[18] *The Earth Is the Lord's: The Inner World of the Jew in East Europe* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1949). Reprinted in "*The Earth Is the Lord's" and "The Sabbath"* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 1960). See Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 59.

[19] Moshe Idel, "Martin Buber and Gershom Scholem on Hasidism: A Critical Appraisal," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), 389–404, at 392. According to Idel, the claim for the affinity between Kabbalah and Gnosticism stems from Christian kabbalistic sources in the Renaissance; see idem, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), 5–6. For an illuminating survey of Buber's and Scholem's understanding of Hasidism in this regard, see Ron Margolin, *The Human Temple* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 6–33.

[20] Scholem's *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* is mentioned in the bibliography. Scholem later reciprocated and added Heschel's article to the supplement to the bibliography under "Lecture I. General Characteristics of Jewish Mysticism" (p. 438), but not under "Lectures V and VI. The Zohar."

Heschel was, in the words of Harold Stern, an "irenic polemicist" (see *Proceedings of the Rabbinical Assembly 1983*, p. 169). In the late 1960s, his biweekly seminar on Jewish thought dealt at times with Kabbalah and Hasidism. The books included Meir ibn Gabbai, *Avodat HaKodesh*; Isaiah Horowitz, *Shnei Luḥot HaBrit*; *Sefer Baal*

and *Tikkunei Zohar* each once, but no Lurianic source. Not only does he not cite any source which might smack of gnosticism, he specifically defines the kabbalist as one whose "living with the infinite does not make him alien to the finite."[21] Whereas Scholem cites gnostic sources to establish the theosophic link, Heschel cites midrashic ones to substantiate his thesis that the paradoxical idea of Jewish mystics—"that not only is God necessary to man but that man is also necessary to God, to the unfolding of His plans in this world"—is rooted in rabbinic sources.[22] Heschel then reformulates this in his conclusion, saying: "The belief in the greatness of man, in the

Shem Tov; and Nahum Tchernobyl, *Me'or Einayim*. Once, he announced *tsimtsum* as the next topic. Prepared for a critique of Scholem, we instead heard an exposition of the idea in *Shnei Luḥot HaBrit* without mention of any contemporary discussion. Heschel saw his reading as an alternative to Scholem's reading albeit eschewing overt criticism. In general, he avoided mentioning the living targets of his critical barbs. Once when I asked him why he footnoted Clement of Alexandria in *Man's Quest for God*: *Studies in Prayer and Symbolism* (New York: Scribner's, 1954), p. 10, in his critique of prayer as dialogue when the obvious target was Martin Buber, he answered that it was not his practice to criticize his teachers. This despite his disagreement with Buber on almost every major point including revelation, prophecy, rabbinic Judaism, Kabbalah, Hasidism, observance, religious symbolism, and modern thinking; see the survey in Edward Kaplan and Samuel Dresner, *Abraham Joshua Heschel, Prophetic Witness* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 220–228. Buber is not even cited with regard to his statement: "Our relationship to Him is not as an I to a Thou, but as a We to a Thou" (*Man's Quest for God*, 45). His citation of Buber in *A Passion For Truth* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1973), 292–293, is not so much criticized as "contrasted with the Kotzker's statement." I recall a conversation in which he confirmed my admiration for the selection of Hasidic material in Buber's *Ten Rungs*. According to Maurice Freidman, Heschel so regarded Buber that he sought to prevent occasions for criticizing him and even objected to Scholem criticizing him in public; see his *Abraham Joshua Heschel and Elie Wiesel: You Are My Witnesses* (New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1987), 16–17. One can look in vain in Heschel's studies on Hasidism, gathered together in *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov*, ed. Samuel Dresner (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), for a comment on Buber's or Scholem's understanding of Hasidism, though they are mentioned by the editor. Similarly, *The Sabbath* lacks any reference to all those German Jewish thinkers who contributed to the understanding of the Sabbath, such as Samson Raphael Hirsch, Herman Cohen, Leo Baeck, Franz Rosenzweig, and Erich Fromm, though they are alluded to; see my review, "The Sabbath," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 26 (2007): 187–190.

[21] "The Mystical Element in Judaism," 934. As will be shown below, this formulation is vintage Heschel. Where others saw either-or, he saw both-and.

[22] On the issue of Kabbalah's relationship to Gnosticism and Rabbinism in Scholem and Idel, see Hava Tirosh-Rothschild's review of Idel's *Kabbalah*: *New Perspectives*, "Continuity and Revision in the Study of Kabbalah," *AJS Review* 16 (1991): 184–187.

metaphysical effectiveness of his physical acts, is an ancient motif of Jewish thinking."[23]

It would be illuminating to contrast in detail Heschel's essay with the comparable essay of Scholem in his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, "The Zohar II: The Theosophic Doctrine." For our purposes, it is enough to point out the difference in their treatments of the *Shekhinah* in the Zohar. Heschel has a section entitled "The Doctrine of the Shekhinah," in which he footnotes J. Abelson, *The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature* (1912), the only scholarly book cited in the whole article. He notes it to underscore the link between Zoharic and rabbinic conceptions. This contrasts with Scholem's treatment of the idea of the *Shekhinah*, which cites Abelson to underscore the difference between Zoharic and rabbinic conceptions. By underscoring the difference, Scholem was able to disassociate it from its rabbinic antecedents and align it with gnostic sources, pagan mythology, and post-Lurianic writings.[24]

Instructively, the two topics that lack any correspondence to Scholem's chapter are the second section of Heschel's essay, "The Exaltation of Man," and the seventh section, "The Mystic Way of Life," which contains a discussion of prayer and worship. Save for the discussions of the *Ein Sof* and the *Sefirot*, the differences exceed the commonality. By citing less than twenty percent of the pages of the Zohar cited by Scholem, Heschel sought to balance what he perceived as Scholem's skewed portrayal. Scholem's portrayal primarily expounds the Zohar's theosophic doctrine and its relationship to other theosophic doctrines.[25] Half of his footnotes deal with

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[23] "The Mystical Element in Judaism," 934–935. Apparently following Heschel, Green has also argued for seeing this idea as linking the prophets, rabbis, Zohar masters, and Hasidic masters; see Arthur Green, "Early Hasidism: Some Old and New Questions," in *Hasidism Reappraised*, ed. Ada Rapoport-Albert (London: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 1997), 444–445, and his articles cited at 443 n. 8.

[24] *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1946), 229–230.

[25] It is not that the experiential is neglected, but, as Elliot Wolfson noted, "Scholem placed primary emphasis on the doctrinal aspect of zoharic philosophy" ("Forms of Visionary Ascent as Ecstatic Experience in the Zoharic Literature," in *Gershom Scholem's "Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism" 50 Years After*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan [Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993], 214). As is obvious from the title of his essay, Wolfson seeks to correct Scholem's portrayal by rounding it out. Surprisingly, there is no mention of Heschel except in a reference (n. 42) to a different article. Although there are scattered references to Heschel in Wolfson's writings, especially in his "Suffering Eros and Textual Incarnation: A Kristevan Reading of Kabbalistic Poetics" (in *Toward a Theology of Eros: Transfiguring Passion at*

non-Zoharic literature. In contrast, Heschel's portrayal primarily expounds the nature of the religious life in the Zohar. His essay reflects his position that the books of religious thinkers are windows to their souls.[26] The difference between Scholem and Heschel is spelled out by Moshe Idel this way: "If preoccupation with the metaphysical and historical content of Jewish mystical writings is characteristic of Gershom Scholem's school, whether in the case of Kabbalah or that of eighteenth century Hasidism, Heschel prefers to illumine the evidence concerning a sense of contact between human and divine."[27]

Heschel's understanding of religious experience is essential to his thesis of continuity. In the same year (1944) that Heschel published his review of Scholem's *Major Trends*, he wrote in "Al Ruach Ha-Qodesh Bimei Beinayim" that "They still have not evaluated properly the place of mystical experience in Jewish life."[28] This shows that by 1944 Heschel was prepared to throw down the gauntlet before Scholem and undertake such an evaluation, of which the first fruits were his aforecited essays on medieval religious experience and "The Mystical Element in Judaism," all composed in the 1940s. His focus on the religious life rather than on theosophic doctrine, the center of the regnant academic model, made Heschel a pariah in the academic study of Kabbalah in Israel, notably at the Hebrew University, from the 1950s through the 1970s.

As is the practice in the academic study of religion, Heschel was written off as a "theologian." While the convergence of religious convictions and scholarly assumptions is obvious with regard to Heschel, it is not uncommon among scholars of religion in general, especially among its theoreticians.[29] As often is the case, by writing

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the Limits of Discipline, ed. Virginia Burrus and Catherine Keller [New York: Fordham University Press, 2006], 341–365), I found no reference to Heschel's "The Mystical Element in Judaism" in any of the extensive bibliographies of his books. Nonetheless, Wolfson informed me of the profound influence that Heschel's writings have had upon him.

[26] See his *The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy* (New York: Philip Feldheim, 1954), 1.

[27] Preface to *Prophetic Inspiration after the Prophets*, ix–x.

[28] The essay was not published until 1950: "Al Ruach Ha-Qodesh Bimei Beinayim," *Alexander Marx Jubilee Volume* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1950), 175–208, at 186. See Kaplan, *Spiritual Radical*, 396 n. 7; and above, n. 15.

[29] For the cases of Rudolph Otto, Mircea Eliade, and Gershom Scholem, see Moshe Idel, "*Ganz Andere*: On Rudolph Otto and Concepts of Holiness in Jewish

off another as a theologian, one can mask one's own countertheological presuppositions. In a book revealingly titled *Religious Apologetics—Philosophical Argumentation*, Idel published his essay, "On the Theologization of Kabbalah in Modern Scholarship."[30] There he documents the theological assumptions that have informed the Scholem school of kabbalistic interpretation (including Isaiah Tishby, Joseph ben Shlomo, Zwi Werblowsky, and Joseph Dan) and its bias against the expressions of the religious life.

Recent research has vindicated Heschel's focus on the dynamics of the religious life, on the roots of mystical thought in ancient Jewish thinking,[31] and on the foundations of kabbalistic thought in prior Jewish theologizing (see below). A recent work on the Zohar is so sympathetic to Heschel's assessment of the Zohar as primarily a work of religious experience that it views "the sefirotic universe as a representation of inner religious experience."[32] Also, a published revised doctoral dissertation written at Hebrew University is subtitled in English *On the Language of Mystical Experience in the Zohar* which, as the author informed me, can also be translated as "On the Edge of Mystical Experience in the Zohar."[33]

The thesis that kabbalistic thought is rooted in classical thought had once been identified with Yitzhak Baer at the Hebrew University. More than a decade after Scholem's book, Baer argued

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Mysticism," *Daat* 57–59 (2006), xi–xiv. For Scholem's philosophical presuppositions, see Shaul Magid, "Gershom Scholem's Ambivalence Toward Mystical Experience and His Critique of Martin Buber in Light of Hans Jonas and Martin Heidegger," *Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy* 4 (1995): 245–269, with literature cited at 246 n. 2.

[30] Moshe Idel, "On the Theologization of Kabbalah in Modern Scholarship," in *Religious Apologetics—Philosophical Argumentation*, ed. Yossef Schwartz and Volkhard Krech (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2004), 123–174.

[31] See Rachel Elior, "Early Forms of Jewish Mysticism," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven Katz (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 749–791.

[32] Arthur Green, "Introduction," *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition*, vol. 1, trans. Daniel C. Matt (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004), p. lxx. Green develops this option on pp. lxviii–lxxii. For the argument that the sefirotic hypostases represent projections of psychological experiences or spiritual states, see R. J. Z. Werblowsky, "Some Psychological Aspects of the Kabbalah," in *God, the Self and Nothingness: Reflections Eastern and Western*, ed. Robert Carter (New York: Paragon House Publishers, 1990), 19–43. Note that this psychologization of the theosophical-sefirotic structure of the divine realm follows a distinctly Hasidic reading; see Moshe Idel, "Abraham J. Heschel on Mysticism and Hasidism," *Modern Judaism* 29 (2009): 80–105, at 84.

[33] Melila Hellner-Eshed, *A River Issues Forth from Eden* [Hebrew, ונהר יצא מעדן: על שׂפת החויה המיסטית בזוהר] (Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 2005).

for "the continuity of Jewish history and thought from the early pietists to the Enlightenment." For Baer, expressions of Platonism linked Jewish thinking from the Second Commonwealth to the rise of modern Kabbalah in the thirteenth century.[34] While much of his thesis has been criticized, especially by Ephraim Urbach,[35] more and more scholarship has gnawed away at the pillars of the thesis that Kabbalah is in the main a foreign import.[36]

This change in assessing Kabbalah's intellectual roots is part of a trend in recent scholarship underscoring continuities over discontinuities. Frequently, the perception of discontinuities in historical research is due to the lack of data. As more and more data is uncovered, so grows the perception of continuities. A generation or so ago, there was a tendency to distinguish rabbinic Judaism from its biblical counterpart, especially in the areas of theology exegesis, purity, beliefs in the afterlife, law, and liturgy. Thinking on each of these topics has undergone major revision due to a rereading and reconceptualization of biblical material coupled with the digesting of the full corpus of the Dead Sea Scrolls, especially the legal and liturgical material.[37]

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[34] See Idel, *Kabbalah*: *New Perspectives*, p. 13, especially his comment on Scholem's and Urbach's "deliberate ignoring of his assumptions." Baer was the only Israeli professor thanked by Scholem in his preface to *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. Baer's own book, *Israel Among the Nations* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: The Bialik Institute, 1955), published fourteen years later, is dedicated "to my colleague Gershom Scholem in loyal friendship." Irony of ironies: The Hebrew University's two great twentieth-century historians of Jewish intellectual history, one stressing rupture and the other continuity, dedicate their books on the subject to each other. If that were not enough, Scholem celebrated Baer's seventieth birthday by noting (*Haaretz*, Dec. 19, 1958) that in *Israel Among the Nations*, "Baer sought to present his opinions on the fundamental phenomena of Judaism in the last two thousand years" without expressing any opinion on their validity (repr. in Gershom Scholem, *Devarim Bego* [Tel Aviv: Am Oved Publishers, 1990], 2:508).

[35] See Urbach, *The Sages*, 9–11, 61–62, 218, 150 n. 43, and 201 n. 38 (ET: 12–15, 74–75, 246, 762 n. 51, and 787–788 n. 40). On the idea of divine omnipresence, however, Heschel (*Torah Min HaShamayim*, 1:55 n. 9) refers to Baer's comparison of rabbinic and Philonic conceptions.

[36] This is much of the thrust of Idel, *Kabbalah*: *New Perspectives*. For an example of the link between the Platonic-Philonic conception of the soul's relationship to God as opposed to the rabbinic, see Reuven Kimelman, "The Rabbinic Theology of the Physical: Blessings, Body and Soul, Resurrection, Covenant and Election," in *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, vol. 4, *The Late Roman-Rabbinic Period*, ed. Steven Katz, 952–953.

[37] For theology, see Benjamin Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*, New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009. For exegesis, see Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Interpretation in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, l985); and idem, *The Exegetical Imagination* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

A similar revolution has taken place in Hasidic studies. Rather than viewing much of Hasidism as discontinuous and as a reaction against Shabbatianism or Frankism as did Scholem, it is more and more seen, as Heschel argued, as a restructuring of Jewish mysticism already initiated by the Safdean Kabbalists, especially Moshe Cordovero and his school.[38] Thus his scholarly work on Hasidism emphasized the link between Kabbalah and the founders of Hasidism,[39] including the controversy over introducing Lurianic elements into the teachings of the Besht.[40] In his essay, "Hasidism as a New Approach to Torah,"[41] Heschel contended that the emphases of the Baal Shem Tov in particular and of Hasidism in general were: "renewal of man in Judaism" (p. 34), "to be in love with God and with what God has created" (ibid.), "the cultivation of the inner life" (p. 35), "the charismatic person" (ibid.), "the resurrection of prayer" (p. 37), and the consolidation of "the abstractions and philosophic reflections of Jewish mysticism into… a way of worship" (p. 38).

For purity, see Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus*, 3 vols., AB 3 (New York: Doubleday, 1991–2001), 485–487, 1004–1009. For the afterlife, see Jon Levenson, *Resurrection and the Restoration of Israel: The Ultimate Victory of the God of Life* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006). For law, see Yaakov Sussmann, "The History of Halakha and the Dead Sea Scrolls—A Preliminary to the Publication of 4QMMT" [in Hebrew], *Tarbiz* 59 (1970): 11–76. For liturgy, see Moshe Weinfeld, *Jewish Liturgy: From Psalms to the Prayers in Qumran and Rabbinic Literature* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2004); and Reuven Kimelman, "The Penitential Part of the Amidah and Personal Redemption," in *Seeking the Favor of God,* vol. 3, *The Impact of Penitential Prayer beyond Second Temple Judaism*, ed. Mark Boda, Daniel Falk, and Rodney Werline, SBLEJL 23 (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature; Leiden: Brill, 2008), 71–84.

[38] A major thrust of Moshe Idel's panoramic approach to the sources of Hasidism is the highlighting of Cordoverean influence over Lurianic; see his *Hasidism*: *Between Ecstasy and Magic* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995), especially the introduction and chaps. 1–2.

[39] Even some of its most extreme sexual theological images derive from kabbalistic literature; see Reuven Kimelman, *The Mystical Meaning of Lekhah Dodi and Kabbalat Shabbat* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2003), 65 n. 40.

[40] See Heschel's *The Circle of the Baal Shem Tov: Studies in Hasidim*, ed. Samuel H. Dresner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 4, 7, 19–20, 45, 83, 111, and 130 n. 80. This point has been emphasized by Rachel Elior, "Hasidism—Historical Continuity and Spiritual Change," in *Gershom Scholem's "Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism" 50 Years After*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1993), 303–323, esp. 316–317; and Immanuel Etkes, ibid., "The Study of Hasidism: Past Trends and New Directions," 447–464, esp. 463. For the controversy over whether the Baal Shem Tov was Luria's heir, see Aryeh Strikovsky, "Ha-Mahloket al Moreshet ha-Ari be-Dor ha-Besht, ha-Gra, ve-Rashaz," in *Turim: Studies in Jewish History and Literature Presented to Dr. Bernard Lander*, ed. Michael Shmidman (New York: Touro College Press, 2008), 2:59–95.

[41] "Hasidism as a New Approach to Torah," in *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, ed. Susannah Heschel (New York: The Noonday Press, 1996), 33–39.

Just as Heschel's thesis on Kabbalah has taken on new life, so has his thesis on Hasidism. Ron Margolin's recent Hebrew book on Hasidism, titled in English *The Human Temple*, is subtitled *Religious Interiorization and the Structuring of Inner Life in Early Hasidism*. The author not only credits Heschel for his emphasis on the cultivation of the inner life,[42] but much of the book's second part consists of expansive treatments of Heschel's points: chapters 7–9 correspond to Heschel's last three points, focusing on worship, prayer, and the charismatic Tsaddik. Even the title, *The Human Temple*, recalls Heschel's observation that "The Baal Shem . . . maintained that every Jew could be a sanctuary. The ancient Temple in Jerusalem could be rebuilt by every Jew within his own soul."[43]

Conspicuous by their absence are those elements that Scholem saw as characteristic of Hasidism, such as the transformation of Lurianic elements, neoplatonic negation of concrete reality, the initial role of *d'vekut*, and the neutralization of messianism. While these issues constituted much of the agenda of Hasidic studies at The Hebrew University in the forty years following Scholem's *Major Trends*, they have even there in the last thirty years made way for, if not given way to, Heschel's alternative.[44] The difference between them is seen in the relative weight given to Lurianic elements. In Scholem's *Major Trends*, Luria and his school along with—according to Scholem—its offshoot Shabbateanism takes up about a fourth of the book. In his books *Kabbalah* and *The Messianic Idea in Judaism*, both Luria and Lurianic Kabbalah as well as Shabbetai Ẓevi and Shabbateanism have the largest entries in the indices, dwarfing Cordovero, whose system did not even merit an entry despite his voluminous writings and comparable influence.[45] Heschel, for his

[42] Ron Margolin, *The Human Temple: Religious Interiorization and the Structuring of Inner Life in Early Hasidism* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 2005), 53 n. 201. This has become so central in Hasidic studies that Haviva Pedaya's review ("E. Etkes, Baʿal Hashem. The Besht—Magic, Mysticism, Leadership" [in Hebrew], *Ẓion* 70 [2005]: 248–265), revolves around making the proper distinctions between the religious experience of the Besht and that of Dov Baer of Merzeritch (pp. 249–254).

[43] Heschel, "Hasidism as a New Approach to Torah," 38.

[44] Cf. Esth 7:8b.

[45] Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter, 1974); idem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism and Other Essays on Jewish Spirituality* (New York: Schocken, 1971). Still, Scholem says "Of the theoreticians of Jewish mysticism Cordovero is undoubtedly the greatest" (*Major Trends*, 252). Nonetheless, Scholem's goal there was to reinstate Luria in the pantheon of Jewish theologians holding that the influence of his

part, rarely makes mention of Luria or Shabbateanism in his writings. Characteristically, chapter 10 of his *The Earth Is the Lord's*, entitled "Kaballah," begins: "In the seventeenth century the mystic teachings of the Zohar and of Rabbi Isaac Luria of Safed began to penetrate into Poland." There follows an exposition of Zoharic mysticism without a single reference to a distinctive Lurianic idea. It is even hard to find a discussion of messianism in Heschel's writings. About as close as it gets is his discussion of "Two Levels of Redemption" in chapter 5 of *Israel*: *An Echo of Eternity*.[46] Neither Luria nor Scholem figures in the discussion.

Simply put: Scholem and Heschel embody antipodal readings of Judaism. What was taken to be a scholarly debate turns out to be, as it so often does, a theological debate. On the one hand, there is, for lack of a better term, the "Maimonidean" reading represented in the previous generation of scholarship by Yehezkel Kaufman on biblical literature and Ephraim Urbach on rabbinic literature.[47] On the other hand, there is the "Nachmanidean" reading represented in the present generation by the likes of Fishbane, Levenson, Sommer, Gruenwald, Liebes, and Idel (see below).[48] The former excised, or better exorcised, the mythopeic and theurgic elements

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mystical system "on Jewish history has certainly been no less considerable than that of Maimonides' 'Guide of the Perplexed'" (251). In this he took up the challenge of Solomon Schechter, who had written thirty years earlier: "We are still in want of a good exposition of Loria's Cabbala, its strange and bewildering terminology, and how far it is to be considered a development of Cordovero's system" ("Safed in the Sixteenth Century—A City of Legists and Mystics," *Studies in Judaism, Second Series* [1908; repr., Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1938], 324). A major difference between Scholem and Idel is that the former accentuated the discontinuity between Luria and Cordovero and the latter the continuity. As noted, in general Scholem focuses more on the discontinuous and Idel on the continuous.

[46] *Israel: An Echo of Eternity* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1973).

[47] See Eliezer Schweid, "Demythologization and Remythologization of Judaism (Mythos and Judaism in the Thought of Kaufman, Buber, and Baeck)" [in Hebrew], in *Myth in Judaism*, ed. Havivah Pedayah (Ben Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1996), 342–364, esp. 346–350; and Urbach, *The Sages*, 30 (ET: 38).

[48] See Michael Fishbane, *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); Jon Levenson, *The Creation and the Persistence of Evil: The Jewish Drama of Divine Omnipotence* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1988); Sommer, *The Bodies of God and the World of Ancient Israel*, esp. 124–143. Itamar Gruenwald, "Reflections on the Nature and Origin of Jewish Mysticism," in *Gershom Scholem's "Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism" 50 Years After*, ed. Peter Schäfer and Joseph Dan, 25–48; and Yehudah Liebes, "Myth and Orthodoxy: A Reply to Shalom Rosenberg" [in Hebrew], *Jewish Studies: Forum of the World Union of Jewish Studies* 38 (1998): 181–185.

from Judaism, while the latter focused on it.[49] The Maimonidean reading allowed Scholem to view kabbalistic thinking as, in the words of Idel, "an intrusion of alien elements into the domain of rabbinism."[50]

Scholem appropriates the Kaufmanian analysis in these words: "Judaism strove to open up a region, that of monotheistic revelation, from which mythology would be excluded... the tendency of the classical Jewish tradition to liquidate myth as a central spiritual power is not diminished by... quasi-mystical vestiges transformed into metaphors."[51] In this regard, both Kaufman as has been repeatedly noted, and Scholem are students of Hermann Cohen. Note the choice of terms and personages in the following comment of Scholem: "Authoritative Jewish theology, both medieval and modern, in representatives like Saadia, Maimonides, and Hermann Cohen, has taken upon itself the task of formulating an antithesis to pantheism and mystical theology."[52]

Following a Nachmanidean reading, Heschel underscores the continuity between biblical-rabbinic and kabbalistic-Hasidic perspectives.[53] As Idel noted: "Hasidic values were not only ideals for Heschel, but a hermeneutical grid for his understanding of Judaism."[54] In a transcript of a talk entitled "Jewish Theology," Heschel spelled out the implications of his reading: "God is in need of man. The idea of God being in need of man is central to Judaism and pervades all the pages of the Bible and of Chazal, of talmudic literature, and it is understandable in our own time.... In the light of this idea, of God being in need of man, you have to entirely revise all the clichés that are used in religious language."[55] Heschel then referred to his work *Torah Min HaShamayim*, saying:

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[49] For Nachmanides himself, see the end of his comment to Exod 29:46. Idel presents an alternative, but related, formulation of what he titles "two major impulses in postbiblical Jewish theology"; see Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 8–11.

[50] Idel, *Kabbalah*, 156. See idem, "Rabbinism versus Kabbalism: On G. Scholem's Phenomenology of Judaism," *Modern Judaism* 11 (1991): 281–297.

[51] *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1970), 88.

[52] *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 38; see also p. 36.

[53] With regard to the advocates and rejecters of Jewish theological continuity, see the helpful formulation of Jonathan Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism from Rabbinic Literature to Safedian Kabbalah* [in Hebrew] (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 2005), 28–29.

[54] Idel, "Abraham J. Heschel on Mysticism and Hasidism," 83.

[55] *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, 159. An exception to this is Buber's perspective on the reciprocity of the divine-human relationship. He wrote: "That you

> In Volume I there is an entire section dealing with the *Torat Hashekinah*. Without the principle of God in search of man, the whole idea of *Shekinah* is not intelligible.... It permeates rabbinic literature, and post-rabbinic thought in Judaism, and [*sic*, for "but"?] it is missing in our discussion and in Maimonides's list of dogmas. Actually the idea of *pathos*, which I consider to be the central idea in prophetic theology, contains the doctrine of the *Shekinah*... without an understanding of the idea of *Shekinah* we fail completely to understand the field of Jewish theology or the theme of God in search of man which I consider to be the summary [*sic*, for "sum"?] of Jewish theology.[56]

Much of Heschel's work seeks to free Jewish theology from the constraints of Maimonides' philosophical concept of God as independent of humanity. In contrast, he develops the idea of divine pathos, which for Heschel means that God is in search of man, indeed in need of man. This is a relational statement, not a substantive one. It focuses on the relationship of God to man and underscores the interdependency of the divine and the human. As Heschel says in *The Prophets*: "To the biblical mind the denial of man's relevance to God is as inconceivable as the denial of God's relevance to man."[57] This idea of interdependency does not sit well with those who advocate absolute divine omnipotence and impassibility. Thus its absence in Maimonides' list of dogmas is obvious. Heschel deals with this by stating:

> The whole conception of God's omnipotence, I suspect, was taken over from Islam. God is almighty and powerful. Man has nothing to say and nothing to do except keep quiet and to accept. But, actually, God needs man's cooperation. There will be no redemption without the cooperation of man. Omnipotence as such will not work. God cannot function in the world without the help of man. And this is where *halacha*, *agada*, and *mitzvot* begin to assume their crucial role. But all this has to be seen in relation to God. In a very deep and strong sense God cannot be conceived by us in complete detachment from man. God and man have to be thought of together. I once suggested

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need God more than anything, you know at all times in your heart. But don't you know also that God needs you—in the fullness of his eternity, you? How would man exist if God did not need him, and how would you exist? You need God in order to be, and God needs you—for that which is the meaning of your life" (Martin Buber, *I and Thou*, trans. Walter Kaufman [New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1970], 130). Kenneth Kramer discusses this under the rubric "Divine-Human Partnership"; see his *Martin Buber's "I and Thou": Practicing Living Dialogue* (New York: Paulist Press, 2003), 136.

[56] *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, 160. I take the liberty of suggesting corrections since this work is a transcription of an oral presentation.

[57] *The Prophets* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, l962), 259.

> the definition of a prophet. A prophet is a man who holds God and man in one thought and at one time. He does not think of God without man and he does not think of man without God. In a Hellenized theology we witness a complete split. God is there, and man is here.[58]

There is a sense in which Maimonides was Heschel's lifelong theological protagonist, far outshadowing the moderns mentioned in this essay. Already near the end of the first chapter of *God in Search of Man*, he critiques Maimonides for promoting the position "that it is in ideas that ultimate reality comes to expression" when "a philosophy of Judaism… is a *philosophy of both ideas and events*" (Heschel's emphasis).[59] As usual, Heschel critiques a position not by negating it but by showing its inadequacy. Heschel's approach to Maimonides was two-pronged. One was to circumscribe his alleged vaunted rationalism, the other was to bring him into the orbit of the prophetic-mystical continuum. This was achievable for Heschel since he did not dichotomize the habit of analytical thought from the intuitions of integral thinking. On the contrary, for him, as he argued for Maimonides, analytical thinking is a propaedeutic for integral thinking. Heschel's argument is helped by the Platonic model that saw mathematics and dialectics as training for contemplative thought, holding that mystical insight is not a substitute for disciplined cogitation but its crown and goal. Of course this position was advanced by Plotinus and his disciple Porphyry and exemplified by Pascal. The link with Maimonides, however, was missed by many due to his vaunted rationalism. In his biography of Maimonides, already published in Berlin when he was twenty-eight, Heschel showed how Maimonides' limitations on inquiry by reason alone would disqualify him from being a strict rationalist in the modern sense.[60] And while he conceded that Maimonides "fought the exaggerated conceptions of omnipotence… he did not go far enough. I tell you that the idea of divine omnipotence, meaning holding God responsible for everything, expecting Him to do the impossible, to defy human freedom, is a non Jewish idea."[61]

What Heschel found lacking in Maimonides, as in other medieval Jewish philosophers, was "the profound doctrine of the immanence

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[58] *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*, 159.

[59] *God in Search of Man*, 21.

[60] Heschel makes a similar move in discussing "Reason and Revelation" in Saadia; see *The Quest for Certainty in Saadia's Philosophy*, 50–67.

[61] Ibid., 160.

of God emphatically taught by Rabbi Akiva and his disciples.... The doctrine of the Shekhinah found no echo."[62]

With regard to the prophetic mysticism of Maimonides, Heschel argued that his self-perception bordered on the prophetic, not just the sober philosophical. According to Idel, Heschel's essay on the subject "illustrates Heschel's effort to detect an organic link between what are, *prima facie*, distinct spiritual phenomena: Jewish Philosophy and Kabbalah."[63] Idel there notes how his own work and that of David Blumenthal reinforce Heschel's portrayal of Maimonides.

David Blumenthal in his discussion of the philosophical mysticism of Maimonides in his book, *Philosophical Mysticism: Studies in Rational Religion,*[64] points out how the standard non-mystical image of Maimonides carved out by nineteenth-century scholars and deepened by Harry Wolfson, Shlomo Pines, and Scholem was undermined by the work of Georges Vajda and Heschel.[65] To support his reading of Maimonides, Blumenthal adduces many writers of Jewish mysticism who saw in Maimonides a fellow-traveler. He then attributes the origin of his take on Maimonides to Heschel:

> My interest in philosophic mysticism stems from a reading of Heschel. Heschel's view is that religious experience precedes religious knowledge, and he cites both Maimonides and Hasidic texts to prove his point. He also wrote a philosophic mystical biography of Maimonides. I personally agree, for as I see it, personal awareness of God logically precedes theological reflection.[66]

Nonetheless, Heschel still manages to cluster Maimonides, Islamic theology, and Hellenized theology in contradistinction to biblical, rabbinic, and kabbalistic thought, which converge on the idea of the interdependency of the divine and the human.[67] By underscoring this convergence among the three, Heschel challenged the tendency

[62] *A Passion For Truth* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1973), 300. Yair Lorberbaum, in *Tzelem Elohim* (Jerusalem: Schocken, 2004), also credits Heschel for having liberating him from the thrall of Maimonides on the question of the image of God. In this, Heschel also followed Rabbi Akiva; see *Torah Min HaShamayim* 1:220–223.

[63] Preface to Heschel, *Prophetic Inspiration after the Prophets*, x.

[64] *Philosophical Mysticism: Studies in Rational Religion* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 2006).

[65] Ibid., 43, 74 with n. 2, 96–97.

[66] Ibid., 227.

[67] For an exposition of these contrasts, see Fritz Rothschild's introduction to his anthology of Heschel's works, *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism* (New York: The Free Press, 1959), 23–26.

of modern scholarship to accentuate the chasms that separate concepts of God among biblical, rabbinic, philosophical, and kabbalistic thinkers. No one took greater advantage of these differences to justify his own concept of God than Heschel's theological nemesis at the Jewish Theological Seminary, Mordecai Kaplan. Despite the cogency of these arguments, Heschel contended that the picture as a whole was skewed for having disregarded those strands held in common by thinkers from the Bible to the Kabbalah.[68]

It is because of Heschel's focus on the interdependency of the divine and the human that he can conclude his study, "The Mystical Element in Judaism," with a discussion of prophecy. What was once an academic scandal has become a theological insight and a historical bridge. Forty-five years afterwards, Gruenwald wrote: "With the rise of classical prophecy in ancient Israel, all those special states of mind are restricted to real prophets only. It is from here that the discussion of Jewish mysticism should start."[69] In fact, "as one can pass from the cognitive aspects of prophecy to those of Merkavah mysticism, one can also make inferences from Merkavah mysticism to prophecy."[70] Finally, he asserted that "the mystical kinds of interpretation, as developed in the circles of the apocalyptists and the rabbinic sages prefigure their counterpart as inaugurated by the medieval Qabbalists."[71]

Both Gruenwald and Heschel see a bridge that extends from biblical through rabbinic to kabbalistic thought. Heschel, however, focused more on the interdependency between the divine and the human. He writes:

> In the phrase "we need each other" is embedded the concept of Israel's power to diminish or enhance God's might. This opinion, which served as a cornerstone of Kabbalistic teaching, is already alluded to in a homily in *Sifre* (319): "You neglected the Rock that

[68] Often Heschel's implied readers are Kaplan, Buber, Scholem, and their followers. Much of Heschel's attenuation of symbolism in Judaism should be thus understood in light of their positions, especially Scholem's pan-symbolism; see Idel, "Abraham J. Heschel on Mysticism and Hasidism," 93–95. This, as Idel suggests, may explain the intensity of Scholem's response: see his *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, 22. Scholem's response is even more forceful in the Hebrew rendition, *Pirqei Yesod BeHavanat HaKabbalah VeSemaleha* (Jerusalem: Mosad Bialik, 1980), 26 n. 15. For other ways of contextualizing Heschel's writings, see Michael Marmur, "In Search of Heschel," *Shofar* 26 (2007): 9–40.

[69] "Reflections on the Nature and Origin of Jewish Mysticism," 44.

[70] Ibid., 46.

[71] Ibid., 47.

> begot you" (Deut. 32:18). The word *teshi* ("neglected") can be understood in relation to the word *teshishut* ("feebleness"), whence the interpretation "You weaken the power of the One above." . . . This approach achieved its classic formulation in the mouth of Rabbi Judah b. Simon, an amora of the third to fourth generation of Eretz Israel: "As long as the righteous comply with the Divine will they augment the Power above, as it says 'And now, I pray Thee, let the strength of the Lord be enhanced' (Num. 14:17). But if not, then, as it were, 'You enfeebled the Rock that begot you' (Deut. 32:18)." Similarly: "As long as Israel complies with the Divine will they augment the Power above, as it says: 'In God we shall make [= create] power' (Ps. 60:14); and if not, as it were, say, "and they [i.e., Israel] are gone without strength before the pursuer" (Lam. 1:6).[72] According to the *Zohar* (2:33a), this idea is intimated in the verse "Give power to God" (Ps. 68:35).[73]

Both rabbi and kabbalist, contends Heschel, held that human compliance with the divine will augments divine power. In fact, these very rabbinic sources appear in his essay, "The Mystical Element in Judaism."

One might think of the divine-human relationship as analogous to that of a general and soldier, where the power lies with the general and the soldiers merely follow orders. In reality, every command implemented by the soldier extends the general's power. The growth of the power of the general thus corresponds to the increase in compliance by the soldiers and vice-versa. An order that commands no compliance is a voice in the wilderness. Judaism is so commandment-oriented precisely because through the fulfillment of the commandments God's kingship is realized on earth. In fact, according to the Midrash, God gave Israel so many commandments because Israel had made God king first.[74] Since the fulfillment of commandments not only acknowledges divine sovereignty but also extends it, Heschel titles a chapter in volume one with the rabbinic expression, "If my people does not enthrone me on earth . . ." To make this point with a different metaphor, Heschel would cite the midrashic gloss to Isa 43:12, "So you are my witnesses—declares the Lord—and I am God," to wit: "When you are my witnesses, then I am God, but when you are not my witnesses, then I am, as it were, not God."

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[72] *Pesikta DeRav Kahana* 26, ed. Mandelbaum, p. 380.

[73] Heschel, *Torah Min HaShamayim*, 1:74–75.

[74] *Pesikta Rabbati* 10, ed. Friedmann, p. 39b, and parallels.

In sum, for Heschel the idea of divine-human interdependency is the thread that weaves its way through the Hebrew Bible, rabbinic literature, and Kabbalah, creating the tapestry called Judaism.

It is revealing to examine how scholars who lack this orientation deal with the same material. A good example is Solomon Schechter, who in his *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* misses the connection between this rabbinic material and Kabbalah even though his opening comment should have made the connection obvious. He writes:

> This intimacy of relationship is reciprocal. "He (God) needs us even as we need him" was a favourite axiom with certain mystics. In the language of the Rabbis we should express the same sentiment thus, "One God through Israel, and one Israel through God. They are his selected people, and he is their selected portion" (p. 47).[75]

This is exactly Heschel's position. Schechter, despite being an adept student of Kabbalah, left it at that, leaving for Heschel the task of demonstrating how kabbalistic theology is a flowering of a branch of rabbinic theology.[76]

The midrashim cited by Heschel also appear juxtaposed in Urbach's *The Sages* at the end of the fifth chapter on divine power. With regard to the comment in *Sifrei Deuteronomy*, Urbach writes somewhat defensively:

> This dictum is directed against oversimplified faith. The non-manifestation of God's power is not indicative of the absence of that power, and one must not come to God with the complaint "where is Thy power?," but there is a nexus between the revelation of this power and the actions of human beings.[77]

With regard to the second comment from the *Pesikta*, Urbach writes in a manner reminiscent of Heschel without, however, the linkage to Kabbalah:[78]

> Evil deeds and transgressions can banish the Shekhina, as it were, from the world. In the view of the Sages, the ethical and religious

[75] *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (New York: Schocken, 1965), 47. As the High Holiday *piyyut* states: אנו מאמיריך ואתה מאמירנו.

[76] Schechter does show elsewhere ("Safed in the Sixteenth Century," 268–269) how kabbalistic thought expanded rabbinic assumptions.

[77] *The Sages*, 80 (ET: 96).

[78] Still, he does refer to the *Arugat HaBosem* of Abraham b. Azriel, who belonged to the circle of Ashkenazic Hasidim in the thirteenth century.

> conduct of man determines both the manifestation of God's presence in this world and the revelation of His power and might.[79]

In contrast, Moshe Idel uses the above material in his chapter "Ancient Jewish Theurgy"[80] to demonstrate how kabbalistic conceptions evolved out of rabbinic ones. He then concludes:

> The extensive use by the Kabbalists of the theurgy of augmentation can be seen, on the basis of the above discussion, to be a continuation of authentic rabbinic traditions, well know in the circle of Ashkenazic Hasidim, who were in close proximity to the earliest Kabbalists. The perception of ritual as performing the details of the divine will and as aiming at a theurgical operation, is therefore organic to Jewish thought. But scholars of Kabbalah have either ignored the importance of augmentation theurgy or else neglected its importance as a basic Jewish concept.[81]

In the Hebrew translation of the book, Idel footnotes Heschel's article, "The Mystical Element in Judaism," saying: "Greater receptivity to the theurgic element in Kabbalah is found in the survey of Abraham J. Heschel on Jewish mysticism which in the main is based on the Zohar."[82]

Idel goes on to cite the prayer of Rabbi Ishmael, the high priest, "Let your mercy conquer your anger, and your mercy overflow onto your attributes, and may you behave regarding your sons according to the attribute of mercy" (*b. Berakhot* 7a), along with other sources and concludes:

> the blessing is explicitly requested by God himself. As we shall see below, the theurgical influence of the blessing recurs in some Ashkenazic texts. We can conclude that the theurgical activity had already received a theosophical nuance in the Rabbinic sources: the channeling of the power into one of the divine attributes in order to structure the divine activity has theosophical overtones.[83]

He then adds: "Thus, man is conceived of as an active factor able to interact with the dynamic Divinity. Kabbalistic anthropology and

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[79] *The Sages*, 81 (ET: 96).

[80] *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 158–159.

[81] Ibid., 161.

[82] *Kabbalah: Hebetim Ḥadashim* (Tel Aviv: Schocken, 1993), 373–374 n. 47. The reference is absent in the original English.

[83] *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, 165.

theosophy, then are both similar and complementary perceptions."[84] Moreover,

> This talmudic-midrashic emphasis on the centrality of the divine will represented a continuation of Biblical thought… the myth of the will of God. The major focus of this myth was history as the revelation of the dynamic will of God. In a later layer of Jewish thought, a central issue was the view of the Torah as pointing the way to the augmentation of the divine *Dynamis.*… Put this way, there is no major difference between midrashic and Kabbalistic theurgy.[85]

Idel, professor of Kabbalah at the Hebrew University, thereby links up biblical, rabbinic, and kabbalistic thought by tightening the links in the chain forged by Heschel in his essay on Jewish mysticism and expanded upon in his books.[86]

To return to *Torah Min HaShamayim*,[87] the distinctiveness of Heschel's contribution to rabbinic thought can be gauged by comparing his chapter headings with those of three other major works on rabbinic thought: Solomon Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology* (1909); George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era* (1927);[88] and Ephraim Urbach, *The Sages: Chapters in Concepts and Beliefs* (1969).

Schechter, *Aspects of Rabbinic Theology*:

1. Introductory
2. God and the World
3. God and Israel
4. The Election of Israel
5. The Kingdom of God (Invisible)

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[84] Ibid., 166.

[85] Ibid. Similarly, see Garb, *Manifestations of Power in Jewish Mysticism from Rabbinic Literature to Safedian Kabbalah*, 31–32.

[86] As expected from the title *Biblical Myth and Rabbinic Mythmaking*, Fishbane cites the same material to show how "the divine structure may be empowered or impoverished by the nature of human obedience" (181). He notes (182 n. 89) Idel's discussion without any mention of Heschel's. This is all the more striking since the second half of Fishbane's discussion, "Rabbinic Myth and Mythmaking," and part of appendix 2 (377–388) overlap chap. 5, "The Doctrine of the Shekhinah," of vol. 1 of *Torah Min HaShamayim*. Moreover, in his "Final Conclusions" (312), he cites the same midrashim that Heschel cites (*Torah Min HaShamayim*, 73–74) in the same order. Heschel is neither cited nor listed in the bibliography. See top of *b. Hor.* 14a.

[87] What follows is an expansion of my "Review of Abraham Joshua Heschel, 'Heavenly Torah as Refracted through the Generations,'" *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 26 (2007: 225–229).

[88] George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era, the Age of the Tannaim* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1927–1930).

6. The Visible Kingdom (Universal)
7. The Kingdom of God (National)
8. The "Law"
9. The Law as Personified in the Literature
10. The Torah in Its Aspect of Law (Mizwoth)
11. The Joy of the Law
12. The Zacuth of the Fathers. Imputed Righteousness and Imputed Sin
13. The Law of Holiness and Law of Goodness
14. Sin as Rebellion
15. The Evil Yezer: The Source of Rebellion
16. Man's Victory by the Grace of God, over the Evil Yezer Created by God
17. Forgiveness and Reconciliation with God
18. Repentance: Means of Reconciliation

Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*:

Introduction
1. Historical
2. The Sources

Part I: Revealed Religion
1. Nationality and Universality
2. The Scriptures
3. The Unwritten Law
4. The Perpetuity of the Law
5. The Synagogue
6. The Schools
7. The Conversion of Gentiles

Part II: The Idea of God
1. God and the World
2. The Character of God
3. Ministers of God
4. The Word of God. The Spirit
5. Majesty and Accessibility of God

Part III: Man, Sin, Atonement
1. The Nature of Man
2. Sin and Its Consequences
3. The Origin of Sin
4. Ritual Atonement
5. Repentance
6. The Efficacy of Repentance
7. Motives of Forgiveness
8. Expiatory Suffering

Part IV: Observances
Part V: Morals

Part VI: Piety
Part VII: The Hereafter

Urbach, *The Sages*:

1. The Study of the History of the Beliefs and Concepts of the Sages
2. The Belief in One God
3. The Shekhina—The Presence of God in the World
4. Nearness and Distance—Omnipresent and Heaven
5. The Epithet Gevura [Might] and the Power of God
6. Magic and Miracle
7. The Power of the Divine Name
8. The Celestial Retinue
9. He Who Spoke and the World Came into Being
10. Man
11. On Providence
12. The Written Law and the Oral Law
13. The Commandments
14. Acceptance of the Yoke of the Kingdom of Heaven, Love and Reverence
15. Man's Accounting and the World's Accounting
16. The People of Israel and its Sages
17. On Redemption

Heschel, *Torah Min HaShamayim BeAsplaqariah Shel HaDorot*

Volume 1

1. Introduction
2. Two Approaches to Torah Exegesis
3. Miracles
4. The Sacrifices
5. The Abode of the Shekhinah
6. Teachings concerning the Shekhinah
7. Afflictions
8. Torah and Life
9. In Awe and Trembling
10. Duties of the Heart
11. Issues of Supreme Importance
12. Scriptural Language Not Befitting God's Dignity
13. The Language of Torah
14. Transcendental and Terrestrial Perspectives
15. Going round the Orchard!
16. Beholding the Face of God

Volume 2

1. The Torah That Is in Heaven
2. Moses' Ascent to Heaven
3. The Descent of the Divine Glory
4. Torah from Heaven

5. The Ways of the Sectarians
6. Moses Did Things on His Own Authority
7. Two Methods of Understanding "Thus Says the Lord"
8. Is It Possible That It Was on His Own Say-so
9. The Book of Deuteronomy
10. The Maximalist and Minimalist Approach
11. Is the Prophet a Partner or a Vessel
12. "See, How Great was Moses' Power!"
13. Moses' Prophecy
14. How the Torah Was Written
15. The Maximalist Approach to the Principle "Torah from Heaven"
16. The Minimalist Approach to the Principle "Torah from Heaven"
17. Lost Books

Volume 3

1. A Summary of Volumes One and Two
2. It Is Not in the Heavens
3. Renewal of Torah
4. Both These and Those are the Words of the Living God
5. Against Multiplying Rules
6. Stringencies and Leniencies
7. Former and Latter Authorities
8. Theology in the Legal Literature
9. Interpersonal Relationships

Schechter's work revolves around four axes: God, Israel, Torah, and issues in human nature. The structure of parts 1 to 3 of Moore's book also basically is: Israel, God, Law, and issues in human nature. Parts 4 to 6 deal with the religious life and part 7 with the future. The general structure of Urbach's work also reflects the order of God and the heavenly realm, man, Torah, their interrelationship, and the future. In this sense, Urbach's work consummates Schechter's project. In fact, Schechter's title famously begins with the words "Aspects of," and Urbach's subtitle begins with the Hebrew equivalent, "Pirqei."[89]

Heschel's first two volumes were published five or so years before Urbach's book. At first blush, they seem to have made no impact. This is clearly the case with regard to structure and topics. A glance at Urbach's chapter headings shows how much his agenda differs

[89] Urbach writes of his appreciation for Schechter's book in his introduction; see *The Sages*, 4–5 (ET: 5–6).

from Heschel's. Heschel's material in volumes 2 and 3 hardly appears in Urbach's book. What did make an impact is Heschel's highlighting of *Shekhinah* in rabbinic theology. Schechter does not even dedicate a chapter to the subject, subsuming it in the chapter "Sin as Rebellion" (pp. 223–33). Moore also offers no chapter on the subject, relegating it primarily to the chapter "Majesty and Accessibility of God." Urbach, however, titles a major chapter "The Shekhinah." It would be worthwhile making a systematic comparison between Urbach's chapter 3 on the *Shekhinah* with Heschel's fourth and fifth chapters.[90] Here it will suffice to point out the telling differences in the subtitles and subheadings. Urbach subtitles his chapter "The Presence of God in the World," whereas Heschel uses subheadings such as: "Redemption is Mine and Yours," "The Exile of the Shekhinah," "*Ani Vaho Hoshiʿa Na*," "We Need Each Other," and "Does God Really Need Support?" From the subheadings alone, it is evident that for Urbach the *Shekhinah* signifies God's presence in an independent fashion, whereas for Heschel it is relational, expressing the divine-human interdependency. Urbach remained captive to the Maimonidean reading of rabbinic Judaism that underscored God's independence of the human, whereas Heschel unabashedly adopts the kabbalistic reading that holds that God needs man, and indeed partakes of the human plight. In actuality, Urbach is following Rabbi Ishmael and Heschel Rabbi Akiva.[91]

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[90] There are several places where Urbach subtly distinguishes his understanding of the sources from Heschel's. For a not so subtle example, compare Urbach, *The Sages*, 48 n. 85 (ET: 708 n. 91), with Heschel, *Torah Min HaShamayim*, 1:54.

[91] Meir Eyali ("God's Sharing in the Suffering of the Jewish People" [in Hebrew], in *Studies in Jewish Thought*, ed. Sara Heller Willensky and Moshe Idel [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1989], 29–59) also underscores the role of R. Akiba (33, 39) and his disciples in the development of Shekhinah theology while allocating a role also for R. Ishmael (49 n. 103). Heschel's colleague at Jewish Theological Seminary, Shalom Spiegel, in a posthumous book (*The Fathers of Piyyut*: *Texts and Studies*, *Towards a History of the Piyyut in Eretz Yisrael* [in Hebrew] [New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1996], 311, 317, 321), also attributes the idea of God's sharing in the human condition to the school of R. Akiva. Although Professor Spiegel's work was selected from his literary estate by Professor Menahem Schmelzer and published some forty-five years after Heschel's, the dates of the literature cited by Spiegel himself (see the added note on p. 187) indicate that the bulk of the essay must have been completed by the early 1950s. Much of the analysis and sources cited overlap Heschel's. Indeed, it is entitled "The Exile of the Shekhinah" (308), and, like Heschel's, extends from the Bible to the Kabbalah. Any discussion between the two would have been most illuminating; in fact, they occupied almost adjacent offices on the sixth floor of the Jewish Theological Seminary. Twice (311 n. 116, 321 n. 161) Spiegel acknowledged the

Heschel's work on rabbinic thought continues his work on biblical thought, what Heschel called "God's anthropology." Both focus on the category of pathos in the divine-human relationship and how revelation results from the interaction of the divine and human. Although the biblical work is concerned with the prophetic understanding of the divine and the rabbinic work with the rabbinic understanding of Torah and Shekhinah, especially as articulated in the school of Rabbi Akiva, the presentations overlap. There is even a sense in which *Torah Min HaShamayim* serves as the sequel to *The Prophets.* (Note that *The Prophets* and the first volume of *Torah Min HaShamayim* were both published in 1962.) *The Prophets* ends with "The Dialectic of the Divine-Human Encounter." The third volume of *Torah Min HaShamayim* begins with "It Is Not in the Heavens," and its opening subheadings are, "Without Sages There Is No Torah" and "The Sages are the Finishing and the Completion to the Torah."[92] This last volume of *Torah Min HaShamayim* thus starts where *The Prophets* ends, making the sages the successors of the prophets. This fits Heschel's overall thesis that as prophecy emerges from the encounter between prophet and God, so Judaism emerges from the encounter between sage and Torah.

Torah Min HaShamayim argues an overarching thesis about rabbinic Judaism, but differs from standard academic approaches in its modality of presentation. Whereas Schechter and Urbach summarize rabbinic thinking, Heschel explores its inner dialectic and for that reason adopts the strategy of exegeting it from within by writing it in rabbinic Hebrew, using religious categories native to it. The subsections of the treatise are frequently titled with rabbinic quotations. All this reflects his understanding of the intersection between language and thought, holding that as words and language inform thinking, so categories structure thought.[93] By organizing his thinking

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help he received on the subject from Professor Saul Lieberman, whose office was on the same floor on the other side of the building. Lieberman read closely Heschel's discussion of the place of the *Shekhinah* in *Torah Min HaShamayim*, because p. 55 of his copy (housed in the Schocken library in Jerusalem) contains a marginal comment that takes issue with Heschel's attribution of a source to the school of R. Ishmael, claiming instead that it belongs to the school of R. Akiba. The problem of mixed attributions plagues Heschel's work.

[92] The English translation of *Torah Min HaShamayim*, *Heavenly Torah as Refracted through the Generations*, renders this as "The Sages Finish and Complete the Torah" (xv).

[93] This drive for linguistic precision and authenticity is also reflected in Heschel's

according to rabbinical categories, the language and structure of the book projects the reader into the minds of the sages. Once inside their mind, one finds that they were not of one mind—indeed, most theological issues receive at least two resolutions, which are frequently at odds with each other as they represent two schools of thought.

Heschel employs the rubrics of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Ishmael to illustrate these contrasting schools of thought. Sometimes the rubrics are used historically, other times typologically.[94] The heavenbound school of Akiva with its emphasis on *Shekhinah* is contrasted with the more earthbound school of Ishmael, with its emphasis on the more mundane. The Akivan perspective was more mystical, visionary to the point of bordering on the apocalyptic, unbounded, and blatantly paradoxical. The Ishmaelite perspective was more critical, rationalistic, restrained, and pellucid. Together, according to Heschel, they form a dialectic, not just a dyad, in which the human encounter with the divine is played out. A case in point is Akiva's focus on the biblical instances of God's immanence and Ishmael's focus on those of God's transcendence. The point is not either-or but both-and, as Heschel says, "the dichotomy of transcendence and immanence is an oversimplification," for "God remains transcendent in His immanence, and related in His transcendence."[95]

By contrasting the two sides of an issue under the rubrics of Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiva, Heschel presents material dialectically. Sometimes whole chapters are in dialectical relationship. For

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decision to compose his religious poetry in Yiddish and to write his books on Rabbi Mendel of Kotzk in the Yiddish dialect of the Polish region of Kotzk.

[94] For an assessment of the exegetical distinctions, see Menahem Kahana, "The Halakhic Midrashim," *The Literature of the Sages, Second Part*, ed. S. Safrai, Z. Safrai, J. Schwartz, and P. Tomson (Netherlands: Royal Van Gorcun, 2006), 18 n. 68, 26 n. 104.

[95] *The Prophets*, 486. This insight characterizes much of Jewish theology. Heschel's comment referred to the prophets. Also according to the Talmud, "God appears distant but there is nothing more close" (*y. Berakhot* 9:1, 13a; *Midrash Psalms* 4.3, ed. Buber, p. 43.) Heschel attributes to the Baal Shem Tov the teaching "that His remoteness is an illusion capable of being dispelled by our faith" (*Man Is Not Alone*, 154). Heschel himself says: "when we long for Him, His distance crumbles away" (ibid., 153). Still, as my Brandeis colleague Edward Kaplan has noted: "For Heschel *transcendence* must be acknowledged before God's *immanence* becomes available" (*Holiness in Words*: *Abraham Joshua Heschel's Poetics of Piety* [Albany: SUNY Press, 1996], 79). In fact, according to the great Russian Jewish theologian of the Napoleonic era, R. Shneur Zalman of Liadi, Jewish theology differs from Gentile theology precisely in its grasp of God as both transcendent and immanent, while the latter grasps God only as transcendent; see his *Torah Or* (Brooklyn: Kehot Publishing Company, 1954), 50.

example, chapter 2 of volume 2, "Moses' Ascent to Heaven," contains the subsections "Rabbi Akiva's View: Moses Was in Heaven" and "Moses Ascended to Heaven," along with "Moses Did Not Ascend to Heaven," and "How Could a Person Ascend to Heaven?" On a more mundane level, chapter 5 of volume 3 contains a subsection "Against Those Who are Stringent," whereas chapter 6 begins, "Beloved Are Prohibitions."

Heschel's perspective is infused with this sense of polarity. In the introduction to his anthology of Heschel's writings, *Between God and Man*, Fritz Rothschild, citing Morris R. Cohen's phrase, refers to polar concepts as "scissor words," since they only cut together like a pair of scissors and not singly like a knife.[96] While Heschel may advocate "a covenant between opposites" or a "melding of opposites," he is quite cognizant of the difficulty if not impossibility of holding both ends of a stretched rope. Heschel entreats those who cannot rise to such dialectical heights to realize that a half a loaf is not a full loaf, and that no perspective exhausts reality. For Heschel, there will always be a tension of opposites, since "there is always a polarity of two principles."[97] Neither the practical, this-worldly pole represented by the school of Ishmael nor the mystical sense of God's need for man represented by the school of Akiva can be reduced to the other. Nor can they be totally integrated. It is the limitation of human vision that causes us to see God and the world in two different ways at different times. The goal of Heschel's presentation is to expand our horizons, keep alternatives open, and prevent premature closure by training us to theologize dialectically.[98] The problem is that a person strong in one pole of the dialectic may be disinclined to do full justice to the other. Each pole needs the other to correct itself. Only together do they embrace the full reality of the encounter with the divine.[99]

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[96] Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Between God and Man: An Interpretation of Judaism*, ed. Fritz A. Rothschild (1959; repr., New York: Harper, 1997), 18.

[97] See his chapter on "Disagreement among the Sages," *Torah Min HaShamayim*, 3:92–96, esp. 92–93.

[98] See Alan Brill, "Aggadic Man: The Poetry and Rabbinic Thought of Abraham Joshua Heschel," *Meorot: A Forum of Modern Orthodox Discourse* 6:1 (Shevat 5767 [= 2007]): 1–21, esp. 13.

[99] On this issue, see Reuven Kimelman, "Review Essay: Irving Greenberg, *For the Sake of Heaven and Earth: The New Encounter between Judaism and Christianity*," *Modern Judaism* 27 (2007): 103–125, esp. 117–118.

One never knows when it might be the case that, as the third volume is subtitled and chapter 36 titled, "Both These and Those Are the Words of the Living God." Sometimes, a different perspective, yea a competing one, can supplement one's understanding of the truth. Since the fullness of the divine word cannot be contained in a single human perspective, a plurality of understandings is needed to fill out the human grasp of divine truth. The whole truth remains elusively human, exclusively divine. Accordingly, the rabbis designated truth as God's signature, indicating a unique characteristic of divine cognition that exceeds the human grasp. In fact, since any human perspective is necessarily limited to part of the truth, the whole truth may not be humanly graspable without contradiction.

This underlying insight allowed Heschel to take issue with so many of the conventional truths of modern scholarship and to be so generous to alternative theological viewpoints. It was not so much that various scholars were wrong in their analysis of biblical, rabbinic, kabbalistic, or Hasidic theology, as that they saw only part of the picture. Whatever the cause of their impaired vision—cultural blinders, unconscious agendas, psychological makeup, or inability to theologize dialectically—rather than faulting them for partial vision, Heschel sought to round out the total picture.[100]

In this respect Heschel's way of doing theology has an inherent affinity for scholarly and theological collaborative pluralism. That perspective contributed to his openness to Jewish-Christian dialogue.[101] For a pluralism to be collaborative, however, the convergence of ends must exceed the divergence of means.[102] Heschel's pluralism is firmly bounded by the dialectic within the classic Jewish texts. It is not simply that Heschel is bound to the tradition, but that he understands the tradition itself as an aspect of God's encounter with the people of Israel. His pluralism thus reflects his understanding of both the dialectic of the tradition and the dialectic of the divine-human relationship. With non-finality as his watchword,[103] Heschel

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[100] He even attributed much of the "opposition to Hasidism" to those who have "never been in love" ("Hasidism as a New Approach to Torah," 34).

[101] See Kimelman, "Rabbis Joseph B. Soloveitchik and Abraham Joshua Heschel on Jewish-Christian Relations."

[102] See Reuven Kimelman, "Judaism and Pluralism," *Modern Judaism* 7 (1987): 131–150.

[103] Heschel mentioned to me that he intended to write on nonfinality as an epistemological category of thought in Judaism. Early on, he described the kabbalistic perception of the world as "nothing here is final" ("The Mystical Element in

invites one to engage in the ongoing quest for the meaning of revelation and of God's involvement with humanity. This conclusion is as applicable to Heschel's three-volume work, which he titled in English *Theology of Ancient Judaism*, as it is to his entire *oeuvre*, historical scholarship as well as contemporary theology.

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Judaism," p. 933). Later, he used "nonfinality" as a category for depicting the human situation; see *Who Is Man?* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1965), 40–42.

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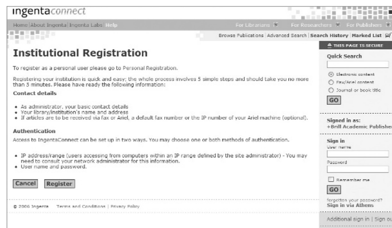

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