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## JUDAISM AND GERONTOLOGY

### I

A personal experience clearly conveyed to me the tremendous difference in attitude to the aged between Biblical ideal and contemporary reality. A former congregant, now confined to a nursing home, turned to me with what he said was a deeply perplexing religious question. "Rabbi," he wondered, "Why does the Torah state a curse as the reward for fulfilling a *Mitzvah*?" When he realized from my puzzled look that I had failed to grasp his meaning, he sighed and rephrased his paradoxical question: "Why does God punish those who keep His commandments by promising to make them old?"

What the Bible believed to be a blessing has indeed, for all too many, turned into a curse. A tragic paradox of progress is that as we succeed in lengthening the life span, society simultaneously alters its attitudes toward the elderly to such a degree that death is often a preferable alternative. How poignant is the title of a recent book on gerontology: *Why Survive?* It is a question posed by millions of elderly people who are kept alive by miracle drugs while daily suffering from callous mistreatment and indifference.

When the Bible summarizes the definitive trait of a barbaric culture, it describes "A nation of fierce countenance, that shall not regard the person of the old" (Deuteronomy 28:46). It is by this standard, too, that we must engage in self-judgment—and unfortunately we find ourselves wanting. Saul Bellow may have overstated the case somewhat when he equated modern

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treatment of the old with "a kind of totalitarian cruelty like Hitler's attitude towards Jews." But there is undeniable truth in his recognition of societal prejudice against those we have, with verbal camouflage, cast out of our concern via the euphemism "senior citizens."

Sociologists have coined a new name for our phenomenon: "ageism." It is a far broader and more contemporary concept than gerontophobia,<sup>1</sup> the classic fear of old age. "Gerontophobia," as Palmore points out, refers to "an unreasonable fear and/or irrational hatred of older people," whereas ageism has reference to a "deep and profound prejudice against the elderly which is found to some degree in all of us."<sup>2</sup>

"Ageism" is rapidly being recognized as a problem as serious as racism with one major difference: While we will never change color, all of us will hopefully grow old and become a part of the aged. How ironic, and to our sages not without significance, that the source text which promises length of days as reward is the Fifth Commandment:

Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother, that thy days may be long upon the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

The second clause depends on the first not only for its fulfillment but its very definition. A society which honors its aged will, measure for measure, enjoy the blessing of longevity. Conversely, as my congregant so clearly understood, a culture which practices "ageism" finds that it in turn becomes the victim of its own ideology, suffering the curse of an undesirable life extension.

To be concerned with gerontology is to be pragmatically selfish. It is to insure our own future against the hostility of the generation which follows. It is to protect ourselves from the kind of reality which Edith Stern movingly describes:<sup>3</sup>

Unlike some primitive tribes, we do not kill off our aged and infirm. We bury them alive in institutions. To save our face, we call the institutions homes — a travesty on the word. I have seen dozens of such homes in the last six months — desolate places peopled with blanked faced men and women, one home so like the other that each visit seemed a recurrent nightmare.

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We have not come too far, after all, from the compassionless barbarians who dragged their unproductive old to their death on the mountain tops.

From the Biblical approach to gerontology, we may discover principles which make meaningful our religious striving for life; perspectives to ease our transition from middle age to senescence and to cushion the pain of physical decline and infirmity; precepts and prescriptions to give meaning to Browning's hope-filled lines in "Rabbi ben Ezra":

Grow old along with me, the best is yet to be, the last of life for which  
the first was made.

## II

Leviticus (19:32), in a text dealing with our special responsibility to the elderly, states:

Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the  
old man, and thou shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord.

For one Talmudic teacher, the command is synonymous with respect for wisdom:

You shall rise before the gray head. I might think that this includes even an old man who is an ignoramus. This is not so, for the verse continues with the words, "And ye shall honor the presence of the *zaken*, elder," and elder refers *exclusively* to a wise man as it is written "Gather unto me seventy men from among the elders of Israel" (*Kiddushin* 32b).

Age is thus deemed worthy of respect when it is accompanied by signs of wisdom. The simple, in view of this verse, have no Biblical claim to deferential treatment; the senile do not deserve special consideration.

A second Talmudic opinion (*Kiddushin* 32b) takes a different approach:

Rabbi Yossi, the Galilean, said "Elder" (*zaken*) is only one who has acquired wisdom (independent of whether he has, in addition, years

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as well) as it is written, "The Lord make me (*kanani*) as the beginning of His way" (Proverbs 8:22 — a play on the word *kanani*, similar to *zaken*).

In what way does Rabbi Yossi differ from the previous interpretation? Both views take the position that age alone has no claim on our "respect responsibility." The first, however, recognizes the validity of chronology insofar as it must be added to wisdom. Both the aged fool and the young scholar are sufficiently deficient to make them unworthy of this verse's favor. The opinion of the second sage, however, is that intellect *alone* is the sole Biblical criterion of *zaken*. One may be young in years, yet have an "old head on his shoulders"—thereby deserving special respect.

Neither of these Biblical interpretations has been adopted as normative Jewish law. The opinion which the codifiers have unanimously accepted as law is:

Issi ben Yehudah said, "You shall rise before the gray head" (includes anyone who has attained advanced age—including even an ignoramus).

The criterion is not how much one has learned but simply how long one has lived. The reason is stated succinctly:

Rabbi Yohanan would rise even before non-Jewish elders because he said, "How many adventures have befallen them"—that is to say how much have they experienced.

Judaism took the legal position that there is a form of wisdom implicit in simple survival; what the school of life teaches is as worthy of respect as books of learning.

### III

How do we define our responsibility to the elderly? The first, and perhaps broadest principle, derives from the last phrase of the Biblical source-text concerning the aged quoted earlier. Why, the rabbinic commentators ask, does the verse conclude "I am the Lord?" Because God's greatest fear is that in dealing with the helpless elder, "One may shut his eyes as though he has

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not seen him" (*Kiddushin* 32b). Therefore man is reminded, "I am the Lord" — who knows not only the deed of the hand but also the neglect of the heart.

One need not search far to recognize the contemporary relevance of this concept. An imaginative Rand Corporation study, entitled "The Post Attack Population of the United States,"<sup>4</sup> suggested methods the United States should initiate for old people, chronic invalids, and the insane in the event of nuclear war. The author, Ira S. Lowry, stated that after a nuclear war policy makers would be presented with a difficult problem because

The working members of the society would insist on transferring some part of their personal advantages to members of their families who are not directly contributing to output.

The report continues by saying,

The easiest way to implement a morally repugnant but socially beneficial policy is by *inaction*. Under stress, the managers of post attack society would most likely resolve their problems by failing to make any special provision for the special needs of the elderly, the insane, and the chronically ill. Instead of medicare for persons under sixty-five for example, we might have medicare for persons under fifteen. Instead of pensions, we might have family allowances. To be sure, the government would not be able—nor would it be likely to try—to prevent the relatives and friends of old people from helping them; but overall the share of the elderly in the national product would certainly drop.

"Benign neglect," it seems, also has a non-racial application. The easiest method of dealing with the problem of an unwanted, non-productive segment of society is to disregard it; the simplest way to treat expendables is—not to treat them at all. That is why the Jewish tradition recalls: I am the Lord—who will hold you responsible for what you *do not* do; indifference, from religious perspective, is comparable to inhumane behavior.

What does Judaism demand we do for our elders? The specifics have their source in two other Biblical verses given in context of primary responsibility. The direction of obligations

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in Jewish law moves from immediate family to successive levels of kin and then geographic proximity. For this reason the major texts defining the nature of responsibility refer to one's own parents.

The fifth of the Ten Commandments reads: "Honor Thy Father and Thy Mother" (Exodus 20:12). *Kabed* is the key word in this commandment. In Leviticus this commandment reads: "Ye shall *revere* every man his mother and his father." *Tira-u* is used instead of *kabed*. Why are different words used? The commentaries answer that each word connotes different legal obligations. The first, *kabed*, honor, requires a child to provide his parents with physical needs: "to give food and drink to clothe and to cover" (*Kiddushin* 31b). *Tira-u*, however, requires a child "not to stand or sit in their place nor to contradict them" (*Kiddushin* 31a). The first therefore designates what we today place under the broad heading of "Social Security"; the second is a yet to be realized ideal we might call "Personal Security."

Jewish law is firm in specifying which of these concepts is more important. In a painfully relevant illustration, one rabbi tells us that providing for parents may at times be perverted from *mitzvah* to sin — if performed in such a way that "Social Security" is fulfilled while "Personal Security" is forfeited.

Abimi, son of Rabbi Abbauhu recited: One may give his father pheasants as food, yet this drives him from the world; whereas another may make him grind in a mill and this brings him to the world to come (*Kiddushin* 31a-b). The son who fed his father expensive pheasants on being asked by his father how he can afford them, answered, "What business is it of yours, old man: Grind and eat."

He metaphorically sent a check to his "old man," paid his bills at the home — but made clear his contempt and lack of regard. The other son was engaged in grinding in a mill when his father was summoned for royal service. The son pleaded,

Grind please for me, and I will go in your stead. Service is too demeaning and difficult for you.

What the second man's father lacked in cuisine was more than

compensated for in self-respect.

This explains the peculiar choice of term for financial obligation of support to parents. *Kabed* does mean honor. When it is used to teach responsibility—to “feed, clothe and cover,”—it is to convey that these acts of physical concern only have meaning when they are performed via “honorable” methods.

How significant in this light is the text already quoted concerning treatment of aged beyond one's family. Support and respect were the two pegs upon which were built Biblical responsibility to parents. Of these two, one was singled out for special emphasis *vis-a-vis* the aged of the world: “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man.” Ask the sages: What constitutes honor? And the answer is: “One shall not sit in his place nor speak before him nor contradict his words.”<sup>5</sup> Not medicare or medicaid but care rooted in concern for sensitivity and personal status is the Torah's major geriatric slogan. Food may keep the aged alive; only respect will make their lives meaningful.

To grasp this fundamental truth is to recognize the basic error underlying most programs and projects for the aged. While agencies speak of care for bodies, the soul goes unheeded, misunderstood and anguished.

To be old is to be heir to the disabilities of age. The author of the Book of Ecclesiastes (Chapter 12) draws a vivid picture of those days

When the keepers of the house shall tremble, and the strong men shall bow themselves, and the grinders cease because they are few, and those that look out shall be darkened in the windows . . . Before the silver cord is snapped asunder, and the golden bowl is shattered . . . And the dust returneth to the earth as it was and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it.

Even as Judaism took note of age's disabilities, however, it emphasized that there were positive dimensions to life's final stage which might well prove to be far more significant. To identify these is to have a different perspective on a number of problem areas in the field of gerontology.

IV

The Midrash gives a fascinating account of the way in which old age was first introduced into this world. The Bible describing the life of Abraham says, "And Abraham was old, well stricken in age" (Genesis 24:1). Previous to this, no one had been spoken of in this manner. The rabbinic commentators remark:

Abraham introduced old age to the world. He came before the Lord with a plea. Master of the Universe, a man and his son walk together and no one knows unto whom to give honor. I beg of you, make a distinction between us.<sup>6</sup>

In the traditional view, old age was not a curse but a positive response from God to a human request. It answered a need. How else would people know whom to honor? It is God's gift of a visible badge of identification to those who deserve the honor age ought to inspire.

A parallel to this Midrashic tale is the famous story of Rabbi Eliezer ben Azaryah mentioned in the Passover Hagaddah. "Behold I am as a man of seventy years old" — the rabbi did not say he was seventy, only that he was like a man of those years. According to the Talmud, the rabbi was really a lad of eighteen. At that tender age he was appointed, in recognition of his brilliance, to head the academy. He feared to accept because of his youth. A miracle occurred, and overnight he grew a full beard. Now he was like a man of seventy — and capable of inspiring the necessary reverence in order to serve in his newly designated capacity (*Berakhot* 28a).

In both instances, the manifestations of turning old, rather than presenting a problem, were indicators of increased worth and status. Gray hair was meant not to be camouflaged but to be flaunted as a "crown of glory." Wrinkles were to be viewed as the rewards of experience; the disappearance of youthful visage, the mark of growth and maturity.

That is the way Abraham had hoped it would be. But our modern culture perverted this idea into a mockery. As Lin Yutang, in *The Importance of Living*, points out perceptively:



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I have found no differences that are absolute between Eastern and Western life except in the attitude toward age. In China, the first question a person asks the other on an official call is: "What is your glorious age?" If he replies apologetically that he is twenty-three or twenty-eight, the other generally comforts him by saying that he still has a glorious future, and that one day he may become old. Enthusiasm grows in proportion as the gentleman is able to report a higher and higher age, and if he is anywhere over fifty, the enquirer drops his voice in humility and respect. People actually look forward to the celebration of their fifty-first birthday.

We, however, have in Hechinger's phrase, become a nation of "youth worshippers." Grandmothers in their eighties persist in calling each other "girls" and try to dress accordingly. Elderly men refer to themselves by the self-demeaning descriptive "boys" and in self-negating behavior which ignores reality in order to better fulfill contemporary ideal.

This is the "Peter Pan" "Syndrome" described by Taves and Hansen.<sup>7</sup> In a study of 1700 elderly persons, one-sixth thought of themselves as old between the ages of 54 and 69, one-third between the ages of 70 and 79, and only forty percent by age eighty and over. About one person in seven said they never thought of themselves as old. They refuse to accept what Abraham prayed for and so they affect the modes and behavior patterns of the young, pretending like Peter Pan, that they have never grown up. And, parallel to the racial counterpart which Negro civil rights spokesmen so correctly recognized, the real tragedy of mature individuals being referred to as "boys" is when the individual internalizes that designation, with all of its ramifications and begins to believe it himself.

Judaism deals with the problem of age by granting it status. Our culture copes with it by denying its existence. In the implicit absurdity of this approach lies the reason for our inevitable failure. Peter Pan is a fairy tale; respect for age from others, leading to self-respect, is the only viable possibility.

Negative feelings to the aged express themselves in our culture not only as an attitude *defining* interreaction but even further as cause for *preventing* interreaction from taking place. It has become common practice to keep the old out of sight in their homes, in institutions, or in retirement communities. It is a seg-

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regation which seeks almost total separation. And its ultimate evil is that the victimizers are quite possibly more harmed than the victims.

Urie Bronfenbrenner, in his insightful comparison between the United States and Russia in *Two Worlds of Children*, states:

It is our view that the phenomenon of segregation by age and its consequences for human behavior and development pose problems of the greatest magnitude for the Western world in general and for American society in particular . . . We cannot escape the conclusion that if the current trend persists, if the institutions of our society continue to remove parents, other adults, and older youth from active participation in the lives of children, and if the resulting vacuum is filled by the age segregated peer groups we can anticipate increased alienation, indifference, antagonism, violence on the part of the younger generation in all segments of our society — middle class children as well as the disadvantaged.<sup>8</sup>

For the Bible, the old had a special role assigned to them:

Ask thy father, and he will declare unto thee, thine elders, and they will tell thee (Deuteronomy 32:7).

Opportunities to learn from those who have accumulated the wisdom of life should be treasured. It is not simply an act of cruelty to dismiss the old from our sphere of communication; it is stupidity for which we as a society pay a price.

Moses, in his attempt to bring about the deliverance of his people, sought out the elders first. When leadership was required, God said to Moses:

Gather unto me seventy men of the elders of Israel, whom thou knowest to be the elders of the people, and officers over them; and bring them unto the tent of meeting that they may stand there with thee (Numbers 11:16).

The Hebrew word for old, *zaken*, is possibly an acronym for the words *Ze She'kanah Hokhmah* — he who has acquired wisdom.

To disregard our most important living natural resource is to deprive ourselves of innumerable benefits. We do not learn from those most fit to teach us the nature of the entire life experience,

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of survival to old age. We miss a sense of ancestry, history and roots, and so lose a valuable understanding of ourselves. We fear the natural process within ourselves of growing and maturing to old age because late life is unfamiliar and forbidding territory. We are strangers to the accumulated wisdom of personal experience because we chose to make strangers of those who could enlighten us.

How much better to reflect upon the wisdom of Ethics of the Fathers:

He who learns from the young, to what is he like? To one who eats unripe grapes, or drinks new wine from his vat. He who learns from the old, to what is he like? To one who eats ripe grapes, or drinks old wine.

Segregation deprives the young and harms the old. Senility, it now appears, is often an expression of what one assumes is an expected norm of behavior. Robert Butler describes surviving in America:

The elderly's part in eliciting the kind of response which they receive from the young and from society at large is often a subtle but powerful factor in the public's general disparaging view of them. They collaborate with their ostracizers. Some individuals act senile; others may deny their true feelings in an attempt to "age graciously" and obtain the approval which is otherwise denied them.<sup>9</sup>

We have created self-fulfilling prophecies by telling the old what we expect of them—or, better put, why we expect nothing of them. It should not come as a surprise that they live up to our expectations. Psychologist Margaret F. Singer observed similarities between the Rorschach test findings of aged volunteers who are resigned in the face of aging and those of American G.I. prisoners of war who collaborated with their captors in Korea.<sup>10</sup>

The psychological impact of age segregation is an area that must be discussed. Self-image is often the key to self-actualization. Biblical concern for honor of the aged may intend primarily to enable the old to honor themselves. This would be in line with the sequence of the significant verse in Leviticus (19:18), "Love thy neighbor as thyself." For one can only love others

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if he is able first to feel positively about himself.

Our culture casts the old into a preconceived mold of decay and decline, cheerlessness and childishness. In response, many have assumed characteristics deemed appropriate for them:

Regarding the elderly, some of the phenomena we have observed include pseudo-senility, a "Peter Pan" syndrome (refusal to grow up), and leadership pre-empted by the middle-aged, with neglect or "mas-coting" of elderly and young (necessitating therapeutic intervention.<sup>11</sup>

To believe the Biblical proverb that "The hoary head is a crown of glory" may well prove to be the first step in making it a reality.

### V

Closely related to the negative self-image of the aged is the popularly fostered misconception that advanced age and creativity are mutually exclusive. Forced retirement is seen not only as a function of economics but of ability. The late Rabbi Abraham J. Heschel, at the 1961 White House Conference on aging, put it well:

Our work for the advanced in years is handicapped by our clinging to the dogmatic belief in the *immutability* of man. We conceive of his inner life as a closed system, as an automatic, unilinear, irreversible process which cannot be altered, and of old age as a *stage of stagnation* into which a person enters with his habits, follies, prejudices. To be good to the old is to cater to their prejudices and eccentricities.

May I suggest that man's potential for change and growth is much greater than we are willing to admit and that old age be regarded not as the age of stagnation but as the *age of opportunities* for inner growth?

The years of old age may enable us to attain the high values we fail to sense, the insights we have missed, the wisdom we have ignored. They are indeed formative years, rich in possibilities to unlearn the follies of a lifetime, to see through inbred self-deceptions, to deepen understanding and compassion, to widen the horizon of honesty, to refine the sense of fairness.

Heschel aptly summed up both the traditional Judaic view

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as well as the fruit of contemporary research. Psychologist Harvey C. Lehman, in his classic work on the subject, *Age and Achievement*, conclusively demonstrates that "evidence of any stereotyped conception of later maturity is quite untenable" and, in a chapter entitled "Older Thinkers and Great Achievements," briefly describes an appreciable number of individuals who did notable creative work late in life, in some instances their most important.<sup>12</sup> Lehman's thesis has ancient antecedents. The Bible is a chronicle of achievements by those well-advanced in years. "And Moses was four score years old and Aaron four score and three years old, when they spoke unto Pharaoh" (Exodus 7:7). Two old men fostered a dream of redemption and brought it to fruition. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob as well as dozens of other Biblical heroes personified man's ability to turn age to advantage as they progressively rose to greater heights with increased years.

Human dignity has many dimensions. For Jewish law, the manner in which someone is addressed is an area of special concern. Neither one's parents, scholars nor the aged should be called by their first names. Significantly, this simple courtesy is usually one of the first to be disregarded by those dealing with the aged. As Pryor points out, patients, no matter what their past profession, are routinely and patronizingly called by their first names by nursing home personnel.<sup>13</sup> What is often difficult to bear for the old is to be stripped of their social standing. Slave owners understood this well when they deprived their charges of family names and titles. The Nazi system which sought to dehumanize victims replaced names with numbers. For this reason, Jewish law forbids counting individuals by number, since to do so is to negate the uniqueness of every person, to turn soul into cipher.

The old deserve the right to maintain their full names as well as whatever titles they achieved during their lifetimes. Former professionals and people of prominence, although well past their prime, dare not be treated with disregard. Beautiful is the Talmudic dictum:

Both the Tablets and the broken Tablets rested in the Ark together (*Berakhot* 8b).

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The holiness of what is intact and what once was whole ought to be treated with equal reverence.

### VI

William Schofield has popularized what he described as the "YAVIS" syndrome — the tendency for psycho-therapists to treat only the Young, Attractive, Verbal, Intelligent and Successful (that is to say well-paying) clientele.<sup>14</sup> The elderly are not treated, and so their "sickness" is considered untreatable. Those deemed not worthy of therapy become therapeutically "unreachable."

Self-fulfilling prophecy here too explains why the old never seem to be able to get any better. One wonders whether those who comprise the fortunate YAVIS group would fare more favorably than the aged if they were given similar "care."

The Talmud believes that the old are not beyond help, they are still capable of personal growth. "As the wise grow older so too is wisdom added to them" (*Shabbat* 125a). Sholom Aleichem put it in the form of a Yiddish folk-saying. In the ghetto, he said, there was an unusual phenomenon: The young were old and the old were young. The young were old — because they absorbed so much study from youth. And the old were young because, ever thirsting for more knowledge, they were dynamic, vibrant, and capable of constantly "becoming."

Mental health professionals often choose to ignore this capacity. Psychiatrists and social workers are impatient and irritable with their older patients for not responding swiftly to their ministrations while it would not occur to them to push for similar rapid improvement in younger patients. They fear that there will not be enough time in which to achieve their goal. Paradoxically, the truth of the matter is that the old are very often able to change more rapidly because they know there is so little time left to them.<sup>15</sup>

In a Talmudic parallel to the Rip Van Winkle story, we are told of Honi the Circle Drawer who went to sleep and awoke seventy years later. He searched for his contemporaries but could not find them. In despair he prayed for death and was

granted his wish. At the conclusion of the tale are the words of Raba: "Hence is derived the saying, either companionship or death" (*Taanit* 23a).

To deprive the old of their friends is to deprive them of their reason for living. Companionship for those yet engrossed in a full schedule of daily activities is a bonus. For the retired, it spells the difference between unbearable boredom and possible happiness.

Judaism not only recommends but in at least one instance demands companionship in fulfillment of Biblical commandments. The obligation to marry remains in force even for the aged who can no longer procreate because aside from the injunction to be fruitful and multiply, God indicated that "It is not good for man to dwell alone" (*Yebamot* 62b). To discourage marriage between the aged, as Social Security laws do, is Biblically sinful. To separate those already joined in wedlock, as some nursing homes do, is to deprive them of a basic right rooted in God's plan of creation in Genesis.

Sex, too, is viewed by Jewish law as a basic "pleasure need" independent of childbearing factor. Sexual relations are not only permitted but required, even in situations where no possibility exists for conception. *Onah*, regular intercourse, is in addition to food and shelter, one of the three basic requirements of marriage which may not be voided though it be mutually agreeable to both partners. Those already pregnant, for whom sex is obviously non-procreative, can engage in sex, provided there is no potential harm to the fetus. The aged similarly ought not to be made to feel that sexual stirrings are out of place for them. On the contrary, the Jerusalem Talmud tells us that after death one of the things every person will be asked to give an accounting for is any legally permissible pleasures on earth of which one did not take advantage. The "dirty old man" is not a Jewish descriptive just as sex itself is never demeaned by the use of that adjective.

Highly significant, too, in this regard is the Bible's attitude to remarriage of the old after loss of spouse. Few people remember that after the matriarch Sarah passed away, Abraham took another wife by whom he bore a number of children (Genesis

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25:1-2). Commentators consider this a great accolade that Abraham paid to his good marriage — by being anxious to repeat the experience. Families who try to prevent their old parents from “being foolish” and “not acting in accord with their years” are expressing prejudices unacceptable to traditional Jewish practice.

These are but some of the major ideas implicit in the Biblical verse: “Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head, and honor the face of the old man, and thou shalt fear thy God: I am the Lord.” They all emphasize the emotional-psychological aspects rather than those of physical-material support. The final phrase, “I am the Lord,” is given two additional interpretations by the rabbis which serve as fitting summary: I am the Lord — I am the one who first fulfilled the *mitzvah* of standing for an elder, when I visited Abraham following his circumcision. So too, I expect you to be scrupulous in observing this commandment. Further, I am the Lord — oldest of all in the universe. Therefore I am anxious about the way you treat those who share this Divine quality — for attitude to the aged ultimately reflects upon attitude to the Eternal.

### NOTES

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