

Dr. Schwarzschild is Professor of Philosophy at Washington University. A prolific writer and contributor to theological literature, he served for many years as Editor of *Judaism*.

TWO LECTURES OF RABBI ISAAC HUTNER

Introduced and translated by Steven S. Schwarzschild ()*

Even most Jews, certainly almost all non-Jews have next to no idea of the real moral and intellectual forces at work in or of the religious, philosophical, and theological foundations of Judaism. There are, no doubt, many causes for this state of affairs. One of the most important of these is that the substance of Judaism is so different from the essential natures of other cultures, most especially Western-Christian culture, that the categories through which the latter are understood simply do not fit it. When, as is usually the case, those categories are nonetheless applied to it, Judaism is either fundamentally passed-by, distorted or misunderstood, or a combination of such maltreatments results.

With the respective categories go, of course, their own particular vocabularies and literary *genres*. Theoretical writings in the Occidental sense (*i.e.* philosophical, theological expositions, etc.) are thus quite rare in Jewish literature. Usually, whether in mediaeval or in modern times, when they occur at all they tend to be of an apologetic character; *i.e.* they translate the substance of Judaism more or less successfully into the languages of other cultures for the intended benefit of non-Jews or of alienated Jews.

The indigenous language of Jewish culture is *halachah* ("law") and *'aggadah* ("homiletics") and, most commonly, a combination of these two. These categories, especially when fully and deeply complexified, are themselves next to unfathomable in every non-Jewish setting. Add to this fact the further fact that they are invariably articulated in a Rabbinic Hebrew which has incorporated the technical vocabulary and subtle wealth of two millennia of literary allusions, — no wonder that all but the initiates are almost bound to ignore the existence or at best fail to appreciate the authentic substance of Judaism. This is then commonly expressed in the complaint that Judaism lacks a properly sophis-

* I am much indebted for his help to Rabbi Simchah Krauss of Congregation Young Israel, St. Louis, Mo.

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ticated intellectual foundation.

Obviously one way, perhaps the best way to respond to that complaint, is to present in translation characteristic writings out of the live *corpus* of authentically Jewish theoretical literature. The translation must try to be as loyal to the original and simultaneously as comprehensible to the potential students as possible. For a number of reasons the lectures of Rabbi Isaac Hutner can serve such a purpose most effectively.

Rabbi Hutner, head of the Rabbinical Academy Rabbi Chayim Berlin and its study-institute Gur Aryeh in Brooklyn, N. Y. (*rosh yeshivat R. Chayim Berlin, bet-medrash Gur Aryeh*) and of its influential counterpart in Jerusalem *bet hatalmud Gur Aryeh*, is a member of *Mo'etzet Gedolay HaTorah* (Council of Torah Greats) and of the Rabbinical Board of *Torah Umesorah* (the Orthodox educational organization), and he plays a major role in these circles in this country, in Israel, and throughout the Jewish world. (He does not appear among them physically very often.) An increasing number of his students occupy important rabbinical, educational, and organizational positions. While being committed to the centrality of the *halachah* in Judaism, which is the norm, R. Hutner is concerned much more than is usual with *medrash* (homiletical exegesis), *'aggadah*, and their product — *machashavah*, "Jewish thought." Combined with these factors are strong components of *kabbalah* (the "mystical" tradition), lyricism and poetry itself, and, as the following two lectures of his illustrate, a complex utilization of historical Jewish and general philosophy (though the last factor is rarely explicitly adduced*). Out of all these, and others, he fashions an extremely productive coherent synthesis.

R. Hutner's biography goes some way in explaining this versatile Jewish ecumenicity. He was born in Warsaw in 1907 into a distinguished family that belonged to the school of "the Kotzker Rebbe," that surely most extraordinary and daring of chassidic teachers. As a young prodigy (*'illui*) he was literally snatched away to the *yeshivah* of Slobodka, the most prestigious Lithuanian rabbinic academy and the spiritual successor to the *yeshivah* of Volozhin. Here he became the protégé of its dean, "Der Alte," Rabbi Nathan Tzevi Finkel, one of the great *ba'alay mussar* (exponents of "the Morality Movement"). Very early in life R. Hutner thus began to build the foundations of his life and teachings on the two pillars of traditional Eastern-European Judaism, chassidism and rabbinic Talmudism, which have often

* Cf. e.g. the Kantian unpacking given to one of R. Hutner's lectures by Léon Askenazi, "Un Enseignement sur le 'Chabatt'," *Tenth Anniversary Souvenir Journal, Gur Aryeh Institute, Brooklyn, N. Y., 1966*.

stood single and even opposed to one another. In 1926 he moved to Palestine, to study in Hebron. Here he became a close confidant of the literary mystic and first Ashkenazic chief-rabbi of Palestine, Rabbi Isaac HaCohen Kook. (R. Hutner's first major work, *Sefer Torat HaNazir*, Kovno 1932, an extended study of "The Laws of the Nazirite" in Maimonides' *Code*, was published with an introductory laudation by R. Kook.) That, on the other hand, he retained his intellectual independence is indicated, for example, by the fact that he was simultaneously close to Rabbi Joseph Chayim Sonnenfeld. After the Arab riots in Hebron in 1929 R. Hutner returned to Warsaw and then studied at the University of Berlin. From 1932 to 1935 he was back in Jerusalem, and in the latter year he settled in New York. At all times his Jewish study-subjects would range, in addition to the usual ones, from Rabbi Loeb of Prague (the Maharal) through the ideologists and mystics of the last generation, Hillel Zeitlin and Nathan Birnbaum. Such a wide range of influences could result either in a sterile eclecticism or in a genuine synthesis which would be strikingly fertile. Which of these two was in fact produced is best indicated by the work of R. Hutner's *yeshivah*, its students, and the character of his teachings.

The following two lectures are taken from R. Hutner's four-volume collection *Pachad Yitzchak — divray Torah be'inyenay hilchot de'ot vechovot hal'vavot* ("The Fearful Banner of Isaac — Torah Lessons concerning the Laws of Belief and the Duties of the Heart"), Gur Aryeh, Brooklyn, N. Y. ("Chanukkah," 1964, "Purim," 1966, "Passover," 1970, and "Pentecost," 1971, and "New Year's," 1974. To complete R. Hutner's bibliography, also his *Notes on Rabbenu Hillel's Commentary on Sifré*, in Hebrew, Jerusalem 1961*, should be mentioned.) These five volumes contain lectures which R. Hutner gave at special convocations at his *yeshivah* and which were transcribed from his students' notes. The two lectures here selected have been translated as accurately as possible, without explanations, added source-references, etc. They speak very well for themselves, although many significant inferences can and should, of course, be drawn from them. The English vocabulary of the translation has intentionally been drawn from current philosophical discourse (for example, "falsification" in lecture 21, where the Hebrew means literally something closer to "belying," in order to bring out the notion of refutative counter-instance to an hypothesis), so that the purpose of translating the concepts at issue may be better served.

* Rabbi M. M. Kasher, in *Torah Sheleimah*, vol. 25, Jerusalem 1971, "Introduction," p. 5, n. 3, describes this as a "great work of high value . . . , which reveals marvelous things and offers important *novellae*."

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INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 3, LECTURE 21

Here a highly dialectical philosophy of the nature and destiny of man is explicated.

The one initial truth is that "man was created single." From this initial truth result two supplementary and contradictory truths: a) all mankind is one, and, therefore, we must love all other men as we love ourselves (# 7f.); b) each single human individual has absolute, ultimate value (# 2). This ultimacy and absoluteness are, however, contradicted and destroyed by the reality of death. In effect, then, the reality of death falsifies and destroys no fewer than four truths (# 10): a) it destroys the ultimate and absolute value of every human individual (# 4); b) since the ultimate value of every individual stood in dialectical unity with the unity of mankind, the destruction of the absolute value of every human individual also destroys the unity of mankind (## 5, 8); c) since the unity of mankind resulted in the love of one's fellow-men equal with self-love, the destruction of that unity also destroys that love and is replaced by egotism (# 7f.); and d) God is held to cause only good — death, however, is clearly not good — thus death also destroys the unity of God (# 9). Conditions a-d describe the nature of human life in history. The singularity of man, and of God, are adumbrated as their extra-historical ultimate natures within history only as they manifest themselves in their "countenances." For this difficult doctrine the writings of the contemporary French-Jewish phenomenologist Emanuel Levinas on the visage should be consulted.

Since it is the fact of death which produces all of these consequences, only the abolition of death, *i.e.* eschatological resurrection, can and will overcome them all. That is to say, in the *eschaton* the absolute value of every human individual, the real unity of mankind, the love of one another equal with the love of self, and, indeed, the unity of God Himself will be restored (## 4, 11, 13). The people of Israel is an historical anticipation of the eschatological kingdom, inasmuch as what one might call "resurrectability," *i.e.* the fundamental inseparability of body and soul, has been built into it through the divine Torah.

S.S.S.

Chapter I.

1) "Bless us, o our Father, all of us together as one, in the light of Thy countenance" (Daily Morning Prayer). We

find here a singular emphasis on unity. "All of us together as one" — only as one. Though the thrust of this prayer asks for blessing in the light of the Countenance, the emphasis is placed on wanting to cleave to this blessing through the quality of unity. It is this adhesion through the quality of unity that I wish to speak about and interpret, for in no other benediction do we find such an addition about unity.

2) The course of our considerations is as follows: The fundamental fact upon which the entire edifice is built is the fact that "man was created single" (tractate *Sanhedrin* 4:5). From this fundamental fact emanate two different alternating voices. The first voice proclaims: "We all are, all of us, sons of one Father" (*Genesis* 42:11) — the beginning of the relationship among all of us is a single man. From this it surely follows that all of us are only fragments, fragments of one configuration — that we are all only parts, parts of one totality. This is the true source of human unity. The second voice, on the other hand, proclaims: the nature (*teva'*) of the cause transmits itself to the effect. *I.e.*, since the beginning of the relationship among us all is a single human being, it follows that in every single individual among us is embodied (*tevu'ah*) the quality of singularity out of which we are *primaevally* hewn. "Flesh and blood is minted (*tuva'*) into many coins with one seal; all resemble one another, and the Holy One, blessed be He, mints every man with the seal of the First Man. Yet no one resembles another" (*Sanh.* 4:5). This is the true source of the singularity of man. Thus we see that the fundamental fact of "man having been created single" is the over-arching principle for two dialectical consequences: we have a common source for the singularity of man and for the unity of man.

3) Here also opens up the possibility, for one who deeply considers it, to transcend the contradiction between man's singularity and man's unity into absolute reconciliation. The quality of singularity and the quality of unity are rooted in the production of the quality of singularity in the very creation of man. But for this singularity we would be dealing with creatures "each according to its kind" (*Gen.* 1:21 ff.). In the class of "each according to its kind" there is neither singularity nor

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unity; here there are only different collections of different species each of whose "survival inheres not in the individual but in the kind" (an expression of earlier Sages). Maimonides, *Guide*, III, 17.

4) The appropriate place in which man's singularity is revealed is his countenance. The Sages express this as follows: Even as faces do not resemble one another, so neither do beliefs (tract. *Berachot* 58a). This makes it clear that the face is the image of man inasmuch as it displays his singularity. In the *Psalms* the phrase occurs: "Shine forth Thy countenance so that we will be saved!" (*Ps.* 80:20). The Sages commented on this: "We have nothing but the illumination of Thy face alone" (*Yalkut* to *Ps.* 80:2, #830). This is to say, a man's singularity requires him to say: "the world is created for me" (*Sanh.* 4:5).

It is certainly the case that in the situation of the First Man at the time of his creation this truth, that "for me the world is created," was clear to him in all of its full simplicity. But after the Holy One, blessed be He, imposed upon him his reduced status and decreed his mortality — since then this truth that "for me the world was created" comes to man only when he proves himself under trial. For is it not obvious that the fact of death must seem to contradict the truth that "for me the world was created"? The world continues to exist even after the passing and death of a man. Only out of the faith that ultimately the decree of death is but contingent and transient (as it is written: "I have wounded, and I shall heal" [*Deuteronomy* 32:39]) — that the Holy One, blessed be He, will in the future heal the wound inflicted on the world — and that death is thus a temporary phenomenon while the law of life is an eternal one — only out of this faith can a man ready himself for the truth that "for me the world is created."

Moreover, although in our situation as it really is, the truth that "the world is created for me" is attainable only out of a spiritual consideration and out of inward faith, nonetheless we retain some after-impression of a fragmentary and vestigial kind of man's ultimate situation, of the meaning of the singularity out of which the truth that "for me the world was cre-

ated" consistently emerges. What is the name of this after-impression, which is only a fragment and vestige of the essential meaning of human singularity? It is "the light of a man's face." The light of a man's face is the only place which, in a small and very indirect way, reveals man's singularity to us in our situation. Since faces do not resemble one another (these are the words of the Sages), therefore, "we have naught but the light of the face alone." We can put it as follows: even a man's palms can extinguish the course of the sun; his entirety is, therefore, surely the revelation of singularity for the sake of which the world is created; we have, however, only some kind of after-impression of this, and that impression is hidden in the light of a man's face. "We have naught but the light of the face alone."

5) Now that we understand that the light of the countenance is the chosen place where we recognize that man was created singular, and we have previously seen that human singularity and human unity were created together and that they function as one — from this it follows that when we pray for the blessing of the light of the Countenance we must include in it this prayer for unity, which is chiseled into and inextricable from the significance of the light of faces. The Sages expressed this in the phrase, "Bless us, o our Father, all of us together as one, in the light of Thy face" — only as one.

Chapter II

6) We have often in the past dealt with the equivalence on the Tablets of the Law of the relations "between man and his neighbor" and the relations "between man and God." There are five commands on each tablet — five commands corresponding to five commands — five concerned with the relations between man and God corresponding to five concerning relations between man and his neighbor. In no other place do we find such an equi-valuation of the correspondence between the relations "between man and God" and those "between man and his fellow." And since nothing in the Torah is ever repeated but that the repetition adds something new (tract. *Baba Kama* 21),

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the present repetitive correspondence, too, has the value of providing us with a precious pearl for this subject-matter.

7) We begin by pointing out that it is written in the Torah: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself" (*Leviticus* 19:18). In his commentary Nachmanides (to *Lev.* 19:17) points out that the phrase "as yourself" is an exaggeration, — and this would, therefore, appear to be a case of inflated language. He justifies his statement in two ways. In the first place he states that it cannot seem reasonable to a man to love another as much as he loves himself. Secondly, this command seems to be against the law, for is it not stipulated that "your life takes precedence over your neighbor's" (tract. *Baba Metzia* 62a)?

Nachmanides' statements arouse a storm in our hearts and amaze our eyes: how can one possibly say about the language of the Torah, especially in one of the commandments, that it is in the form of exaggeration and hyperbole, which do not have a grip on true reality! And the accusation that it is against the law scarcely helps in this connection.

8) On the other hand, we have explained in the preceding chapter that the two aspects of human singularity and of human unity are rooted in the fundamental fact that the First Man was made single, in distinction from the rest of the creatures that came into the world only and each "according to its kind." Clearly the pinnacle of the notion of human unity is the command concerning love "as yourself," for it is impossible to value the unity of man more greatly than through the love of the other in complete equality with the love of oneself. The truth of the matter is that this equality of the love of the other with the love of oneself is entirely impossible unless our genealogical record, taking us back to the First Man who was created single, lies open before us, revealing its meaning in its full simplicity.

But we have also seen in the discussion of the preceding chapter that the reduced status which the Holy One, praised be He, imposed upon man is the greatest obfuscation of and the most profound contradiction to the singularity of man. For does not man's singularity say, "the world is created for me," whereas the fact of death, which constitutes the reduced status

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of man, contradicts that truth, since the world continues to exist also after a man's death and passing! In no way is it then possible for man sincerely to believe in the truth that "the world is created for me" other than by inner faith in the resurrection of the dead and the cessation of death in the world. (Thus we can also understand that since faith in the resurrection of the dead has vanished among secular men they could not rest nor halt until they reduced the value of man to equality with the other animals.)

As a result we see a chain of falsifications whose links are connected with one another. The fact of death falsifies the truth that "for me the world is created"; from this results a falsification of the singularity of the First Man; from the latter results the falsification of human unity; and this finally darkens and with absolute completeness falsifies the degree of "as yourself" in the love of the other, to the point where it even invalidates the very conception of the equality of the "love of the other" with the love of self. The first link in this chain of falsifications is that wound in the strength of the world which is the fact of death.

9) Prophecy declares: "On that day the Lord will be one and His name one" (*Zechariah* 14:9). To this the *Gemara* (tract. *Passover* 50a) objects: "Is the Lord not one even now?" The reply is given that at present, upon the receipt of good news, we say: "Praised be He who is good and causes good," whereas about bad news we say: "Praised be the truthful Judge"; on the other hand, "on that day" He will be entirely good and cause only good (*ib.*).

A perceptive man will easily see that there is no possibility of eliminating the blessing of "the truthful Judge" until the fact of death has vanished from the world, — and the complete realization of the revelation that describes "the Lord as one" will be lacking as long as the benediction of "the truthful Judge" continues to have to be recited. In this there is a wondrously new truth. For although we are even now prepared to sacrifice our lives for the unification of the name of the one Lord, nonetheless, in terms of the laws about benedictions, we hold that this revelation of "the Lord as one" is not established

with such clarity and definitiveness as to bless Him "who is good and causes good" also upon hearing bad news. This lack of clarity and definitiveness is what creates the present situation — a situation in which it is *also* true that He is good and causes good but which equally falsifies and darkens the situation of the exclusivity of Him who is good and causes good. Also this falsification and contradiction arise from the institution of death.

10) We must now take note of the fact that the falsifications of the two kinds of singularity which we are unpacking, namely the singularity of man and the exclusivity of Him who is good and causes good, produce two sides of one coin. The coin is the fact of death in the world. This fact is what contradicts, falsifies, and darkens both the singularity of man and the exclusivity of Him who is good and causes good. Have we not previously discovered that the falsification of the singularity of man is synonymous with the falsification of that level of the love of the other which is described by the phrase "as yourself"? Thus the interconnection between these two falsifications is immediately clear, for the falsification of "the exclusivity of Him who is good and causes good" in the relations between man and God is now interconnected with the falsification of the level of the loving relationship between a man and his neighbor described by the phrase "as yourself."

11) This is the deep and precise meaning of what Nachmanides wrote in commenting on the phrase "as yourself." Let us now explain his words.

He writes that "as yourself" is an exaggeration. This actually implies that it is, of course, true, except that it overstates the truth, even as it is an exaggeration, in the context of the laws of benedictions, when we say that "He is all good and causes only good." Thus also it is certainly the truth when we "unify" the name of Him who is to be blessed and say that the Lord is one (the explanation of "the Lord is one" being that He "is all good and causes only good"); yet in the context of the laws of benedictions this is an exaggeration, for it conflicts with the reality of the benediction of "the true Judge." And so it is with respect to "as yourself." The truth of the matter is that a man

and his neighbor stand in complete equality, but with reference to love this is an exaggeration. Thus we have begun to explain Nachmanides' commentary.

Nachmanides justifies his statement that "as yourself" is an exaggeration in two ways. The first explanation is that it is not humanly reasonable to love one's neighbor as oneself, — and this is perfectly true, precisely as we also say that it is not humanly reasonable to say the blessing "He is good and causes good" about bad news. The second explanation is that it violates the law, which stipulates that "your life takes precedence over the life of your neighbor." This is also perfectly true, precisely as we also say that the law prohibits the recitation of the benediction "He is good and causes good" about bad news. Thus it turns out that everything that Nachmanides wrote in commenting on the phrase "as yourself" is perfectly true along exactly the lines on which we have commented on the phrase "the Lord is one." Even as the full meaning of the phrase "the Lord is one" is realized only "on that day," while today it is an exaggeration (for nowadays we do not say that "He is all good and causes only good"), so also the complete meaning of "as yourself" will be realized only "on that day," while nowadays it is an exaggeration (for at present we say that your life takes precedence over the life of your neighbor).

Let us say it with even greater clarity: The level of loving your neighbor "as yourself" is the pinnacle of human unity. We have here an analogy between creature and Creator, as it were: even as the complete significance of the unity of God is established only in the vision of the end of days, of "that day," so also, the complete significance of the unity of man is established only in the vision of the end of days, of "that day."

12) When the Tablets were given the Torah says that the words were *charut*—"chiseled on the tablets" (*Exodus* 32:16). The Sages explained: "Read not *charut*—'chiseled' but *cherut*—'freedom' from the angel of death" (*Exodus Rabba* 32).

The explanation of their statement is as follows. Israel and the Torah are one. The general law is that anyone seeing a man whose soul is about to depart must act in precisely the same way in which one must act when one sees a scroll of the

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Torah being burnt. The law concerning someone who sees a scroll of the Torah being burnt provides that he must rent his garment twice — once for the parchment and once for the writing thereon. Since the departure of the soul is regarded as and compared to the burning of a scroll of the Torah, we conclude that there is an analogy between the soul in the body and the letters on the parchment: as the letters on the parchment are susceptible to erasure and separation from the parchment, so the soul is susceptible to separation from the body. It is different with the Tablets, however: the letters of the Tablets were chiseled, not written letters, and chiseled letters are not like something added onto the parchment but part of the substance of the stone. They are of it and in it. Therefore also they are unsusceptible to erasure or separation. By the same token, at the revelation of the Giving of the Tablets a relationship between the body and the soul was created in Israel on the pattern of chiseling: no possibility is left of separating the letters from the place into which they have been chiseled. This is what the Sages (their memory is for blessing) meant when they inferred from the word *charut* that there is liberation from the angel of death in the giving of the Tablets. Chiseling, *i.e.* engraving, is the mystery of the unification of the soul with the body such that they cannot be separated. Israel and the Torah are one.

13) Let us now return to the beginning of our considerations. We began by considering the correspondence of the relationship between “man and God” and the relationship between “man and his neighbor” on the Tablets of Revelation. Now that we have brought together all the principles of this lecture we see the Giving of the Tablets as the revelation which combines our service “between man and God” with our service “between man his neighbor.”

We have learned that the fact of death raises a partition in the soul between inner faith and inner feeling. This partition exists both in the realm “between man and God” and in the realm “between man and his neighbor.” “Between man and God” the inner feeling does not quite attain to the inner faith, for with inner faith we know that God is “all good and causes

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good," while our inner feeling compels us to acknowledge the reality of the blessing of "the true Judge." In the same way and fashion the situation obtains "between a man and his neighbor." The inner feeling does not quite attain to the inner faith. The inner faith brings us to recognize the unity of Israel on the level of loving the neighbor "as yourself," while by inner feeling we are forced into the reality of the law that "your life takes precedence over the life of your neighbor." This is what Nachmanides wrote.

These two partitions are the result of the fact of death. However, the Giving of the Tablets, whose sum and substance consists of the identity of legislation and liberation, removes, through the revelation of its light, these two partitions which cleave apart faith and feeling. At this point feeling attains entirely to faith, and this attainment unifies the service "between man and God" with the service "between man and his neighbor" with the illumination of the light of "that day." And because the giving of the Tablets creates this unifying illumination it follows that this giving of the Tablets turns singularly into the correspondence of the relationship between man and God with the relationship "between man and his neighbor."

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME 1, LECTURE 35

This is an highly dialectical exposition of the metaphysico-historical relations between Israel and Christianity. (Its essential point is repeated in vol. 3, lecture 33.)

Rabbi Hutner is often concerned with the relations between Jews and non-Jews (note his unusually frequent discussions of Noachitism). In his attitude to Gentiles in general and to Christians in particular he may fairly be said to pull no punches and to be quite hostile. No doubt the experience of the Holocaust is related to this.

For this lecture two preliminary points must be recalled: a) R. Hutner follows the traditional Jewish exegetical equation: Esau=Edom=Rome=Christianity. b) The non-Jewish claim "We are Israel," which is his primary concern here, clearly refers to the New-Testament-based classic Christian claim (comp. *Romans* 9, *Galatians* 6:16) that the Church is "the true Israel" according to the spirit.

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Jacob as the proto-type of Israel, Esau as the proto-type of Christianity, the two are not only Biblical brothers but, on this reading, even identical twins. R. Hutner's dialectical theory of the interconnectedness of similarity and difference reaches its apogee in the conclusion that the most radical difference, even opposition, arises from total identity (# 3). Thus Christianity, sprung from the identical source as Judaism, is the latter's most extreme opponent. When this opposition has been most fully realized, as is the case in the present historical era, then the total inversion (antithesis) must be about to result. *I.e.*, on the basis of the present dominance of Christianity the immediate triumph of Judaism is in the offing (# 6). This classically dialectical process is exemplified in the liturgical gesture of praying with spread hands: originally a Jewish posture of attack on idolatry, it was, paradoxically, adopted by the latter and, therefore, abandoned by Jews (# 7f.), — and it will, in the fast approaching messianic kingdom and with the triumph of Judaism, return from its alienation by Christians into Jewish possession (# 9).

In this lecture, as in the preceding one and elsewhere in his writings, an extremely urgent messianism, one might almost say adventism, is conspicuous in R. Hutner's faith: note "soon in our days" (# 4, end), the extended *Daniél* exegesis (# 5f.), especially the language of passionate chiliasm in # 9. Also the previously mentioned preoccupation with Noachitism may be connected with this messianic ambience. It is perhaps noteworthy as well that the present lecture constitutes the last chapter, and thus in a sense the climax, of the volume in which it is published. In Lecture 21, Vol. 3, above, the cleavage between the true metaphysical natures of God and of man and their historical conditions is transcended, "sublated," in the eschatological estate (## 11, 13).

One can, perhaps, summarize R. Hutner's philosophical methodology as one of emphasis on the contradictions which characterize human and Jewish, and even divine, existence within history, for the purpose of resolving and overcoming these contradictions messianically.

S.S.S.

1) Rabbi Akiba Eger, in his "Notes to 'Orach Chayim" (*Shulchan Aruch*), #89:1, wrote: "The reason that we do not spread our hands while praying, although this practice is several times described in the Bible, in the holy *Zohar*, and in the *Chapters of Rabbi Eliezer*, is that nowadays Gentiles act in

this fashion. This fact can be compared to what the Sages said about the Biblical verse: 'Do not set up a sacred stone' (*Deut.* 16:22)." Rabbi Akiba is here referring to the statement by the Sages that in the age of the Patriarchs sacred stones were a favorite practice, but to the descendants of the Patriarchs this became hateful because the Canaanites adopted it as an idolatrous rite (*Sifré Deut.* 146).

It is, however, an astounding idea to apply this notion of love-turned-to-hate to the liturgical practice of spreading the hands. From the time of the revelation at Sinai onward no comparable case can be found, it seems, of an item in divine worship, stipulated according to the Torah as holy, that is over-turned and rendered religiously impure only because of fools who have corrupted and usurped it for their own silly purposes. Furthermore, note well how the Sages labored to stress the abominableness of sacred stones more than all the other implements of idolatry, such as their altars, etc. Nachmanides explained this in several places as being due to the fact that sacred stones are more idolatrous than altars — see his commentary to the verse "Do not set up a sacred stone" and to *Gen.* 28:18. Thus certainly we will be profoundly outraged that, of all things, so precious and favorite a ritual practice as spreading the hands has come to be regarded as a more idolatrous institution than all the other implements of the worship of the various non-Jewish priests.

The fact and the truth of the matter is that many of the fundamental principles explained in the present book come together on this point. Let us explain.

2) God knew beforehand that the Gentile nations would one day translate the Bible into Greek and thus come to overpower it and to claim that "We are Israel" (*Pesikta Rabbati* 14b). The general impression is that the claim "We are Israel" is merely one of the several defamations that the Gentile nations level at Israel throughout the Exile. In truth this impression is entirely incorrect. Only about this particular defamation is it said that God anticipated it from the outset. Thus we can see that, correctly understood, this is not a defamation similar to others. Rather it is integral to the total conception of the

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relation of Israel and the nations. What is the upshot of this conception?

3) Let your ear heed carefully, and let your palate taste fully! Let us conjoin the sense of spiritual taste with the sense of spiritual hearing, and with this conjoined power let us study the Biblical verse: "There are two peoples in your belly. Two nationhoods will emerge separately from your womb" (*Gen.* 25:23).

We have previously explained in this book that there is a way of identifying things such as to emphasize their profound distinction. For example, if we look at two objects that resemble one another in all respects and yet I say that they are absolutely distinct it follows necessarily that this distinction must underlie and undercut all their manifestations. If two trees resemble one another completely, in their fruit, their branches, and their trunks, and if, nonetheless, they are different, then the difference must perforce reside in their roots. This is an illustration of the method of identification for the purpose of emphasizing the depth of difference.

A splendid example of this method is found in the law regarding the worship of the Day of Atonement: the two sacrificial goats that are used must be identical in height, appearance, and value. Notice, however, that there can be no more profound distinction than being destined for God or being destined for Azazel (*Lev.* 16). Yet it is precisely in such a case of an absolute and abysmal distinction that the condition of complete sameness is stipulated. The explanation is that the depth of difference is emphasized by means of the rule of similarity on the higher plains built over the depths. Let us continue this line of pursuit!

When we wish to say of two things that they are entirely similar to one another we say that they are twins. Hence "twinhood" is the epitome of similarity and the summit of sameness. Now we can understand the secret meaning of the twinhood of Esau and Jacob. Actually one would think that the whole Esau-Jacob episode could have happened equally well if these two had merely been brothers, without being twins. Only for the purpose of deepening the furrow of distinction between

them to the greatest depth was it necessary to plough it through the stage of the most perfect identity, the absolute identity of twinhood.

Let your ear heed deeply, and let your palate taste well! Let us hear, heed, and taste the words of the verse: "Two peoples are in your belly. Two nationhoods will emerge separately from your womb." This means that the separation here must be essential, quintessential, pertaining to the very purpose of their basic vitalities. Therefore, in order to reveal this character of the distinction it had to be produced by one and the same combined productive power, by one and the same productive power of maternity. The continuation of the verse is then to be explained thus: precisely because the distinction between the two nations had to refer to the deepest root of their being it had to arise from the identity of twinhood. The first part of the verse, "two peoples are in your belly," is the precondition for the kind of separation that was to arise between the two nationhoods.

4) The Sages spoke truthfully when they said: "No human face resembles another" (tract. *Berachot* 58a). When, nonetheless, we sometimes wish to trace the resemblance of faces to its extreme we say that these faces are so much twins that occasionally the mistake of a confusion between them is engendered. Now we have reached the innermost core of the Gentiles' claim "We are Israel." Here we are at the very basis of the awesome mystery of "the twinhood of Esau and Jacob."

The mistake of the confusion of identities with one another cannot occur except under the perspective of the twinhood of the two goats one of which is destined for God and the other for Azazel. Now we can also understand why we must not regard the Gentiles' claim "We are Israel" as merely one among several similar defamations. That view of the matter is not correct, either in whole or in part. The substance of the claim "We are Israel" resides in the fact that it illuminates most clearly the twinhood of Esau and Jacob, for without the similarity of twinhood the lie of the confusion of respective identities could not occur. And precisely by this claim, "We are Israel," is the height of preparation and the peak of readiness attained

for the perception of the depth of the difference between Israel and the nations which will be revealed soon in our days.

5) All these notions are translated into reality before our very eyes. Do we not know very well who it is that has overpowered Holy Scriptures and therefore roar like the roaring of the seas (*Isaiah* 17:12): "We are Israel"? Is it not the men of the Fourth Kingdom of the Book of *Daniel*, after whom our present exile is named, *i.e.* the Roman Exile! Examine carefully the phraseology of the Sages when they said: "The nations of the world will in the future say, 'We are Israel'." The Sages were careful to say "the nations of the world," in the plural; they made this statement not about one nation, as they did when speaking of the kingdoms that preceded the Roman kingdom. By using the plural they alluded to the war of the four kings with Abraham our father. The Fourth Kingdom among them will consummate the Gentile aeon. The Sages here spoke of many and used the plural number to designate the Kingdom of Rome which sends out missionaries to all the nations. All the earlier kingdoms subjected Israel within their respective territories, but the Fourth Kingdom is differentiated from them by virtue of the fact that its rule is not limited to one nation or one country; rather its seduction grasps many nations and many countries. Because the claim that "We are Israel" is specified for the Fourth Kingdom, which spreads from Rome to all the countries, therefore our Sages attributed this claim, "We are Israel," to the nations of the world in general rather than to one nation in particular. Thus this defamation is connected with the consummation of the Gentile aeon, precisely the king of plural peoples.

6) Now that we have understood that the defamation "We are Israel" is peculiar to the Fourth Kingdom, which spreads out from Rome, we can extend our consideration yet further. Was it not accepted among our early Sages that the first men who founded that kingdom in Rome were Edomites! (See, for example, Ibn Ezra to *Gen.* 27:40, and Rashi about what Isaac said to Esau: "Of the fat of your land will be your dwelling" [*Gen.* 27:39], which Rashi identified with Greek Italy, *i.e.* Rome.) We also know that it is the Kingdom of Edom which

will one day restore the Kingdom of Israel. The belief in the restoration of the Jewish Kingdom by the Kingdom of Edom is derived from the verse "and his hand grasps the heel of Esau" (*Gen. 25:26*). From all this we learn that the very power which will one day restore the Kingdom to Israel is also the power in and through which the twinhood of Esau and Jacob becomes manifest. It is for this reason that the return of the Kingdom to Israel is part of the revealed mystery of the separation between Israel and the nations, — for we have previously learned that this separation has to arise from their similarity and identity, which is to say their twinhood. It is as part of this syndrome that this Kingdom has overpowered Holy Scriptures and hollers and harangues: "We are Israel."

7) We must realize that also this defamation "We are Israel" takes shape in degrees. Let us search our ways and examine what the highest degree is of the defamation "We are Israel."

We know that the Patriarchs established the prescribed prayers. From the time of its Patriarchal institution to this day prayer has not ceased among their descendants. How many different terms we have for prayer: "lament," "cry," "sigh," "imploring," "beseeching!" By means of all such terms we appropriated the profession of our forebears: "The voice is the voice of Jacob." But to spread hands in prayer, to pray with raised hands, this was not done until the war with Amalek — "when Moses will raise his hand — and his hands will be trusty" (*Ex. 17:11f.*). Now go and learn, stand and consider, examine and understand that the height and peak of the defamation of "We are Israel" resides precisely in the fact that they usurped for themselves the very form of prayer which was created and introduced at the time of the first war *against them*. This is the height of the confusion of identities. The very spreading of the hands which was created exclusively *against them* they took and made an instrument of their cult. We ourselves see that those very nations to which the Kingdom of Rome sends its missionaries are the ones that raise the claim "We are Israel" — they are also the nations that pray with spread hands.

8) Thus, since the principle of distinction is most effective in a case of greatest similarity, we dispense with the favorite

and beloved form of prayer with spread hands, and we increase the strength of our distinction precisely at the point where they attained the height of similarity. Because we dispense with this favorite practice, out of the sacred striving to separate ourselves and to distinguish between Israel and the nations, therefore we declare that what was once beloved is now hateful. Since we are now in the Roman Exile the love and the preciousness of praying with spread hands is transferred at present to the sanctity of, to the contrary, dispensing with that love and that preciousness.

9) Only a man in whom the depth of the Roman Exile shakes all his bones and in whom the fire of the expectation of salvation crouches like a lion on the altar of his heart can fully understand all these things. Only such a man can understand, conceive, feel, and truly know that in the end all these things are but silent signs that point to the sectors of the powerful vitality of the awesome "struggle" between Jacob and Esau, between Amalek and the Congregation of Israel. Only such a man will grasp clearly that all these things are included in the few lines of Nachmanides at the end of the Biblical pericope *vayishlach* (*Gen.* 32-36). This is what Nachmanides there says: "This is why Moses was needed for this entire prayer and petition against Amalek, for of this kind of war are the first and the last wars of Israel. Amalek is of the seed of Esau, and from him originates the nations' war of the beginning against us. As our Sages said that nowadays we are in the exile of Edom, . . . thus it is that everything that Moses and Joshua did about them in the beginning will be done about them by Elijah and the Messiah son of Joseph in the end. Therefore, Moses strengthened himself in this matter."

Since they will do about them in the end what was done about them in the beginning, the hands of Jacob will then again be joined to the voice of Jacob, and the beloved form of praying with spread palms and raised hands will be restored.

This accords with what R. Shimeon bar Yochai, over and over again (on the Zohar), said: I will raise my hands in prayer.