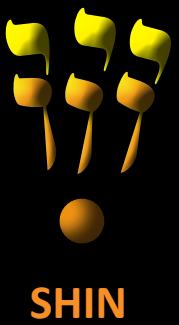




SYNAGOGUE SHIN Jonathan Block Friedman



Editors' notes
A new view of all objects in the universe
by Australian National University

Lead author Honorary Associate Professor Charley Lineweaver from ANU said he set out wanting to understand where all the objects in the universe came from.

"The relatively simple answer to where they came from is that, as the universe cooled, all of these objects condensed out of a hot background."

[illegible]

The researchers say the boundaries of the plots and what lies beyond them are also a major mystery.

"On the larger end, the plot suggests that if there were nothing—a complete vacuum—beyond the observable universe, our universe would be a large, low density black hole. This is a little scary, but we have good reason to believe that's not the case."

Journal information: American Journal of Physics

Credit: American Journal of Physics (2023). DOI: 10.1119/5.0150209

The result is the most comprehensive chart ever created of all the objects in the universe. The study is published in the latest issue of the American Journal of Physics.

Co-author and former ANU research student Vihan Patel said the project raised some important questions.



SHIN

The Eternal Flame

the flame
[Divine Revelation]
is bound to the coal
[Divine Essence]
the coal symbolizes
changeless essence



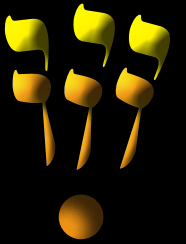
these two most
graceful letters of
soul and body spell
fire.

ALEF = the most
subtle grace "angular
symmetry"

SHIN = the most
"linearly" symmetric



AISH FIRE



this orange candle is the kind
of hanukah lights I remember
as a little boy in 1948 to 1960
and beyond -- the essence
of the holiday for me, the
essence of fire... and light...
why? How?



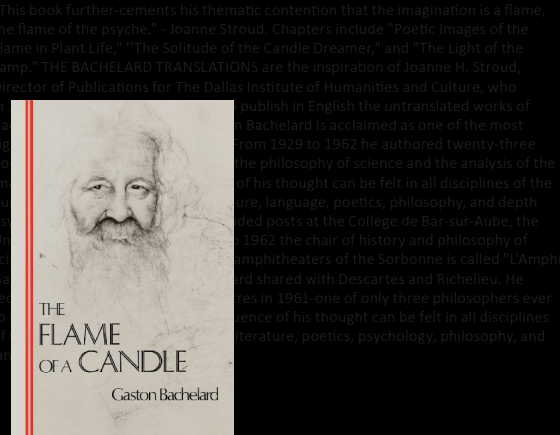
AISH FIRE

SHIN

The Eternal Flame

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The Flame of a Candle (Bachelard Translation Series)



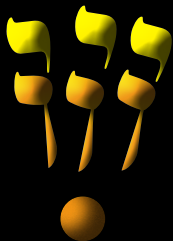
"This book further cements his thematic contention that the imagination is a flame, the flame of the psyche." - Joanne Stroud. Chapters include "Poetic Images of the Flame in Plant Life," "The Solitude of the Candle Dreamer," and "The Light of the Lamp." THE BACHELARD TRANSLATIONS are the inspiration of Joanne H. Stroud, Director of Publications for The Dallas Institute of Humanities and Culture, who in 1998 published in English the untranslated works of Bachelard. Bachelard is acclaimed as one of the most important philosophers of the 20th century. From 1929 to 1962 he authored twenty-three books on the philosophy of science and the analysis of the imagination. The influence of his thought can be felt in all disciplines of the human sciences: literature, language, poetics, philosophy, and depth psychology. He held posts at the College de Bar-sur-Aube, the University of Strasbourg, and in 1962 the chair of history and philosophy of science at the Sorbonne. The amphitheaters of the Sorbonne is called "L'Amphitheatre de Descartes et Richelieu." He died in 1961-one of only three philosophers ever to be elected to the Academie des Sciences. The influence of his thought can be felt in all disciplines of the human sciences: literature, poetics, psychology, philosophy, and science.



AISH FIRE

these two most graceful
letters of soul and body spell
fire.

ALEF = the most subtle grace
"angular symmetry"
SHIN = the most "linearly"
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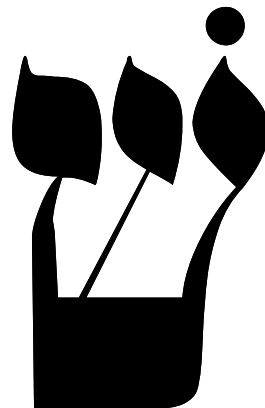
שְׁלוֹם

ש



God engraved — rather than etched — the letters on the Two Tablets because He wanted them to be read from both sides. Thus they would allude to two dimensions of the Torah — the revealed and the concealed one (R' Bachya, Exodus 32:16).

[209]



א	ב	ג	ד	ה	ו	ז	ח	ט	י	כ	
20	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1	
ל	מ	נ	ס	ע	פ	צ	ק	ר	ש	ת	
400	300	200	100	90	80	70	60	50	40	30	

$$17.34^2 = 300.6756$$

shin = 300.



shutterstock.com · 1410175457

FIRE, TOOTH, CONSUME
FLAME, MOLAR....

from MUNK
SHIN: symbol of divind power and script, also corruption.

ידי the Name Shadai: “It is I who said to My world [during Creation, ידי, enough].” יד Dai, = enough , (*dayenu*), with Dai, the Unlimited One fixed the measure of all objects, established the boundaries of all forces, and set the moral limits within which people are to live. Had God not called out ידי Dai, to the heaven and the earth, they would have continued expanding and developing as if they were the product of blind physical orces. Through the establishment of fixed laws to protect the integrity of creation, as He intended it to be, God reveaed himself in the attribute of ידי Shadai, the Omnipent Mster of the Universe.
Munk, p. 207

Shin also stands for the Name Shalom, שלום (wrong MEM) peace and perfection. As the essence of all harmony and perfection, Hashem is called Oseh Shalom, Maker of Peace. For man to thrive, he moust copy the attributes of his Maker. Especially with regard to shalom, since it is sentiaal for man survival to harmonize the diverse elements of the world. {Israelis vs Palestinians??? Sustainable vs. fossil fuels?} This lesson in the very form of th eSHIN, its 3 heads symbolize 2 heads standing in the extreme sides of a controversy, and the Divine mediator in the middle.

The prayerful מ Shin -- depicting natural phenomena surging heavenward, beseeching God for help and sustenance, such as tree branches stretching to the sky, bonfire with high shooting flames, bedof flowers growing upward ... the מ Shin is a silhouette of Moses, 2 hnds spread upward, head in the middle. Munk, p. 208

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t seem to surge These include a with its flames gging to receive

oses when Israel prevailed באשר (11). The ש is a d in the middle s’ hands which d the people of Hashanah 3:8).

with the idea of en combined — iree branches of

e Messianic era,

גו, body, upon

ly One, Blessed rael (Osios deR’

haral), who has father, and his

□ קשת — the Rainbow

The rain refracts light into the three primary colors, red, yellow, blue, which blend in different degrees to form all the colors of the rainbow. Arching from earth to heaven and back down to earth, the rainbow is a symbol of the bond God made between the celestial and the terrestrial beings after the Deluge (*Magen David*). The rainbow is a reminder of the covenant for all generations that God will never again decree the downfall of the whole human race, but will guide mankind to its ultimate goal (*Genesis 9:12-17*). The symbol ש for שלום, peace, is demonstrated by the fact that the rainbow appears to man like an inverted bow, not one aimed from heaven against earth, but one pointing heavenward from earth (*Ramban*). The manifold colors of the rainbow represent the manifold variety of living creatures which God united in one common bond of peace; they are the refracted “rays” of the One spirit of God (R’ Hirsch).

☞ Two Kinds of ש, Two Kinds of Script

In ordinary script, a letter consists of the ink or other substance from which it is made. Similarly, in raised type or embossing [נתיב בלשון], the letter itself is plainly visible and, because it is raised, it can even be felt. The writing of Torah scrolls is a case in point, because the ink is heavy and remains higher than the parchment after it dries. However, engraved script [נתיב חק] is just the opposite. The stone or other substance around the engraved letter is cut away; consequently, the letter is legible only because the outline remains in place. Since the letters of the Ten Commandments were carved into the Tablets, they were outlined by stone, but were not themselves tangible. In this engraved script, the three-headed ש is formed by four frames, one on each side and two in the middle. For this reason the ש of the Tablets is called ש של ארבע ראשים, a shin of four heads.

The Divine four-headed ש, which comes into existence only because it is framed by exterior walls, alludes to the ways of HASHEM which are concealed, incapable of perception by the limited human mind. But God’s ways do exist. They are hidden within the so-called natural functions of the universe. Though we cannot see nor understand God Himself, we can gain an inkling of Him by observing His guidance of man and his world.

In the *Song of Songs* (2:9), King Solomon allegorizes the revealed way as if God were looking through a window, through which He can be seen, as well. The concealed Providence is likened to God peering through latticework, through which He can see but not be seen (R’ Saadia Gaon).

Homiletically, the inner spaces of the letters in the Tablets symbolize the

When we see the rainbow in the sky we feel assured that God remembers His covenant with us, and a blessing is recited thanking God for fulfilling His pledge to Noah (*Berachos 59b*).

God engraved — rather than etched — the letters on the Two Tablets because He wanted them to be read from both sides. Thus they would allude to two dimensions of the Torah — the revealed and the concealed one (R’ Bachya, Exodus 32:16).

עולם האותיות [209]

synagogue as assembly hall??
meeting of peace?
UN! United Nations, pas perdus? labyrinth?
FIRE and **ICE**
together melt and heat warm
to find a central mean,
the human comfort zone...
68 -72 F, 30 to 70% humidity

from MUNK
SHIN: symbol of divine power and script, also corruption.

שקר Sheker, falsehood

Although in the AlefBet the Shin comes after **ק** QOF and **ר** RESH, nevertheless it appears at the head of Sheker, Falsehood, because even the most heinous lie attempts to clothe itself with a semblance of truth, even divinity in order to give iteslef credibility.

Michael Johnson, Speaker of the House -- what a fucking lie!--
not the American House , not the House of all the people...

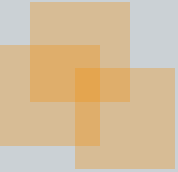
The 3 letters of **שקר** Sheker remain in alphabetical order, giving a deceptive impression of order, but the Shin is moved ahead, to symbolize the distortion of reality in a world of deception.

The 3 letters of **שקר** Sheker are adjacent to one another in the AlefBet, a closeness that symbolizes society. When people gather together, they are eager to sound interesting and important. When such are one's goals, it does not require great effort to find falsehood and misrepresent the truth. Men readily slip into fabrications of untrue sensational news and their neighbors prick up their willing ears to listen. To defend his first false statement, the speaker must justify himself: *thus falsehood generates falsehood.* (*Shocar Tov* Palms 7) This cycle of distortions spirals into a **labyrinth** of falsehood doomed to eventual collapse. Munk, p. 211

The Current American Clamor and Confusion [reddit news]
{On Bullshit!}



Flame Towers, Baku 2007, HOK
a bit literal, yes?



name תִּשְׁרֹף the first time it appears in the Torah, and in subsequent passages pronounce it תִּשְׂרֹף, while some always pronounce it as תִּשְׂרֹף. The prevailing custom, however, is always to pronounce it תִּשְׂרֹף.

אֵל The Form of ש
ש is related to שֶׁן (shen), tooth (Osof R' Akiva). The shape of the ש resembles a molar, which crushes food with its three sharply edged cusps. The word שֶׁן is also related to שָׁן, sharpen. Hence תִּשְׂרֹף (Deuteronomy 6:7) means, teach your children so intensively that they understand the Torah clearly and its words are sharply defined in your mouth beyond any double (Kiddushin 30a). As the tooth grinds the food to make it digestible for the body, so shall תִּשְׂרֹף, teaching, transmit the Torah in such a well-analyzed manner that it can be absorbed by the mind. As R' Hirsch points out, תִּשְׂרֹף also implies the obligation to implant the mitzvos of the Torah in its adherents with the full sharpness of their definite orders (R' Hirsch).

אֵל Enlarged ש
ש holds a notable position in Scripture. It is selected from all letters for the opening words of תְּשִׁיבָה, King Solomon's holy Song of Songs, the most eminent song in Scripture, with which all of Israel joins the Heavenly Hosts in praise of God (Midrash Sota). What makes the ש more distinguished than the other letters? It is the emblem for the alliance between God and Israel and therefore was also chosen to be embossed on the tefillin. As such it is the most fitting letter to stand at the head of the holiest song, which depicts in loving words the praise of the eternal, unseverable bond between the Almighty and His Children of Israel. ש, the first letter of תְּשִׁיבָה, is written large, as is the א, in בְּרֵאשִׁית, the first word in the Torah (Osof R' Akiva). א and ש are partners in the alphabetical system א-ש (see p. 366). The enlargement of both letters in beginning their respective books indicates a combined message: א, the letter of Creation, stands out prominently to signify that the purpose of the Creation is for the sake of Torah and Israel, which are called reishit, first, because they join to manifest God's Name in the world (see p. 57). ש is written large in תְּשִׁיבָה, the book that describes the mutual love of God and Israel. Thus, both א and ש give glorious testimony to the Manifestation of God in the Universe and to the fulfillment of His purpose.



The letters of שֶׁקֶר do not appear in the full spelling of any of the other letters, so that no other letter will contain even a suggestion of falsehood.

אלף	חית	סמך
בית	טית	עין
גימל	יוד	פה
דלת	כף	צדי
הא	למד	תיו
וואו	מם	
זין	נון	



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The Prophets record that the tribe of Ephraim could not pronounce the ש properly. Members of Ephraim fleeing from the battlefield were identified by being forced to pronounce the word שֶׁבֶלֶת; they pronounced it שְׁבִלֵת (Judges 12:6; Bereishis Rabbah 97:3).

partner. The only one willing to consider an association with Falsehood was the מַזְלֵךְ, bad luck. When the prospective partner asked what benefit it would derive from the alliance, Falsehood replied, 'Whatever I produce will be given to you.' From then on, the result of falsehood has been bad luck (Maharal).

□ Maharsha (Shabbos 104a) observes that the letters of שֶׁקֶר do not appear until almost the end of the Aleph-Beis in order that they be far removed from מ, the centerpoint (axis) of the Aleph-Beis, which represents stability (see p. 218).

However, the Aleph-Beis does not end with קִירֶשׁ. Had ש, denoting שֶׁקֶר, been the last letter, men would be left to their own fabrication of lies and could not endure. But ש cannot have the final word, since the purpose of Creation is built on the covenant of morality.

To counteract the dangerous ש with its potential power to ruin mankind, the Aleph-Beis ends with the letter ת, which alludes to אֱמוּנָה, Truth. [The concept of שֶׁקֶר, falsehood, as contrasted with אֱמוּנָה, truth, is discussed in chapter 22.]

שֵׁן — שִׁין שֶׁן

The ש with a dagesh, dot, on its right side is pronounced shin; ש with a dot on the left side, sin. Since ש and ש have the same sound, they are often interchanged in alphabetically arranged compositions, such as Psalms 111, Lamentations, ch. 3, and the Hoshana stanzas. The Talmud discusses the שָׁלֵךְ, quails, which God caused to descend upon the Israelite encampment in the wilderness. Since the Torah scroll is written without vowel points, the word שָׁלֵךְ, correctly read שָׁלֵךְ, may also be read שָׁלֵךְ. As R' Chanina homiletically explains: The righteous ate the quails בְּשָׁלוֹה, with serenity, while to the wicked they tasted בְּשָׁלוֹה, like thorns (Yoma 75b).

□ In the name of Jacob's son יִשְׂשַׁכָּר, Issachar, one ש is silent. One reason advanced for the silent ש is that Issachar had a son named יוֹב, Yov (Genesis 46:13), which Issachar later learned was a disgraceful name [inasmuch as it was the name of a heathen god (Devek Tov to Numbers 26:24)]. Issachar thereupon gave his son a letter (ש) of his name, and renamed him יָשׁוּב, Yashuv [see genealogy in Numbers ibid.]. Hence, Issachar's name is pronounced as if it were spelled with only one ש: יִשְׂכָּר (Daas Zekeinim).

Ibn Ezra to Exodus 1:3 defends this pronunciation grammatically by stating that since the two consonants follow one another, the second may be silent, as in the word מַחְצִיצִים in I Chron. 15:24 which is pronounced מַחְצִיצִים. This is the only other such case in Scripture.

[There are various customs regarding this matter. Some pronounce the

FLAME
WATER
GREEN
HOUSE

The image contains three abstract geometric compositions arranged in a triangular pattern. Each composition is made of overlapping shapes in four colors: blue, green, orange, and grey. The top-left composition features a large orange triangle at the top, a blue square on the left, and a grey circle in the center. The top-right composition has a large green triangle on the right, a blue circle at the top left, and a grey circle in the center. The bottom composition is a more complex arrangement with multiple overlapping shapes, including a large orange triangle at the top, a blue triangle on the right, and a grey circle in the center. The shapes are semi-transparent, creating various shades where they overlap.

NAME

The word *shin* (שׁוּן) means "a tooth" (שׁוּן), "change" (שׁוּן), "victory" (שׁוּן) or "second" (to the king) (שׁוּן), "change" (שׁוּן), especially in the sense of "to teach (diligently, שׁוּן)" (as in *וְשׁוּן* "and you shall teach them diligently to your children," *לְשׁוּן* (רַב) "old" (רַב) "scarlet" (שׁוּן), "rest" (שׁוּן) or "serene peace" (שׁוּן). The spectrum of meanings associated with the name of the *shin* is the richest and most *apud* all the letters of the *alef-beit*.

THE word שנה, "year," derives from the root which means "change," שני. In *Sefer Yetzirah*, "year" is the term used for (the changes of) time in general.

In physical nature, the "teeth of the wicked," discussed above in the form of the *pei*, represent the power of decomposition and deterioration, or the law of entropy. This natural "breaking down" of all matter in pursuit of the "lowest energy level" is the continuation, in the present, of the primordial stage of Creation referred to in Kabbalah as the "breaking of the vessels." The fire of the *shin* is the power that breaks matter apart, in contrast to water that acts as glue to cause matter to stick together. In esoteric, the *shin* reflects the *beit*, the secret of splitting into "two," שני, as in the phenomenon of cellular division. The fire of the *shin* is reflected in the secret of אש, one, one of the materials used in the clothing of the *kohanim*.

The *Zohar* explains that in the time of exile "I [the Divine soul] am asleep..." The present Lubavitcher Rebbe *shlita* states that even when returning to the holy Land of Israel, if one is unconscious of the significance of its deep essence, one may be carried on clouds to Israel "asleep in bed," as it were, and in this same state of spiritual slumber enter Jerusalem, and so on until, with the rebuilding of the Temple, he will suddenly awaken in shock, to find himself in the Temple itself.

Some things (such as wine) become better with age (שן) while others deteriorate. In general, the secret of life is "staying young." Asleep (שן), one grows old and "outmoded," (שן); awake (שן), one stays young and "modern" (צעיר). So do we find that when Choni HaMelekh slept for seventy years, he awoke to find himself old and "out-of-place," and so preferred to die rather than be "friendless." Had he, for the same period, remained awake, he would have "stayed young" with the time, naturally

transfusing" to the changes of generations. Old wine is superior because its vital ("youth") process continues without wearing. So by the power of ever-new insight ("awakeness") into the depths of Torah does the true Torah Sage remain young while continually maturing. Of the Guardian of Israel it is said: "He does not slumber nor sleep."

The letter shin equals three hundred.

WORDS

After the Philistines had deceived him and stolen his wife, Samson took his three hundred foxes, turned them tail to tail, tied a torch to each *צוואר*, and with a *shin* symbolizes word(s) cunning. Here Samson, used two *shin* by beginning with a *shin* the fox together with the element of fire (the shin), to burn down the "hold" of evil on nature itself. Samson, *שמונ*, means "small sun." The secret of *שמן*, sun, is water (*mem*, hydrogen) transforming into the fire of solar energy and radiation (a *shin* on both sides).

King Yoshiyahu, *יושיהו*, one of the most righteous kings to arise from the house of David and referred to as "the *Mashiach* of G-d", was killed—due to the great transgressions of Israel—in line with Pharaoh Necho by three hundred Egyptian arrows. Three hundred arrows is the secret of *שון שן*, the "sharp-ended arrow," mentioned above. (The fact that *שן*, "arrow," also means "half" alludes to the splitting of Samson's three hundred foxes into two halves of a hundred and fifty each and then tying their "tails" together by the power of the flame.) The death of Yoshiyahu, the thirteenth generation from Abraham, marks the temporary disappearance of the "moon" of Israel. After having risen to "full moon" in the generation of Solomon (*שמונ*) of Israel, in reduced numbering, equals fifteen, the fifteenth generation from Abraham, it then descended gradually until the days of Yoshiyahu, the end of the "month."

In the days of the Judges, the Jewish people worshipped idolatry for a period of three hundred years. For three hundred years the people were "asleep" in the land of Israel itself, as mentioned above. Physical nature, even Israel, can hide consciousness of Souls and Divinity, to the extent of seducing one to bow down to nature. Nonetheless, the inner "nature" of Israel (both the People of Israel and the land of Israel) is not to stand for such concealment indefinitely, and ultimately G-d will "work salvations in its own evil manifestations. He therefore brought the three hundred idolatrous and relatively anarchic years of the days of the Judges to an end—he was the last Judge of Israel—and paved the way for the revelation of true Kingdom (Souls in Divine control) of Worlds in Israel.

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תאריך: 11.01.2024

Wellsprings of Empathy

November 9, 2023
Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D.

So many of the ancestral foundation stories in the Torah take place in the **רִבְדָּה**/midbar, translated sometimes as wilderness, sometimes as desert. Even as the midbar is a place of revelation—suggested by the etymology of its root **רִבַּד**/dalet-bet-resh, which is the same as the noun **דָּבָר**/davar/word and the verb **לְדַבֵּר**/ledaber/to speak—it is also a place of aridity and barrenness. Sources of water are essential in the desert and therefore, wells are extremely important locations in the Torah. Wells are gathering places where encounters happen. Consider Abraham’s servant meeting Isaac’s future bride Rebecca (Genesis 24:13-27), or Jacob spotting Rachel for the first time (Genesis 29:1-11). Theological and existential undercurrents inform these encounters. These are the stories of our patriarchs and matriarchs, so in a way they are our stories as well, and we are meant to understand that God’s will flows through these meetings at the well.

In Genesis, some of the most significant of these well moments happen not to the progenitors of the Jewish story, but to Hagar. Pregnant by Abram and at odds with Sarai, Hagar flees to the desert, where she finds a well and is addressed by a **מַלְאֲכָה**/malakh/messenger of God. Hagar is commanded to return and receives a blessing of abundant descendants that parallels the blessing that Abraham receives multiple times, and she is given the name of her future son, Ishmael, God hears. Not only does God speak to Hagar, but God will listen as well. Recognizing the potency of this encounter, Hagar adds to the auditory and oral experiences by layering in the visual. Hagar names God **אֱלֹהֵי רֹאִי**/El Roi, God of seeing, and the well **בְּעֵר לְהַי רֹאִי**/Be’er Lehai Roi, the well of the living one (Genesis 16:7-14)

After the miraculous birth of Isaac, Sarah drives Hagar and Ishmael away and Hagar returns to the desert, despondent and fearful for Ishmael’s life. As promised, God hears Ishmael’s cries and then God opens her eyes to show Hagar a well that will sustain them (Genesis 21:13-19). Commentators, ancient and contemporary, mull over whether the well was newly revealed or whether Hagar was so blinded by her grief that she was unable to see it in front of her. And though the well is not named in this passage, there is the tantalizing possibility that it is the same well from her earlier encounter, Be’er Lehai Roi.



In Judaism, it is Sarah and her son Isaac who are chosen to continue the lineage and the story, not Hagar and her son Ishmael. Yet they are included in the Torah, and Hagar especially is featured. Cuban-American anthropologist and writer Ruth Behar teaches that, in not being chosen, Hagar is presumably “thrown away.” However, by not being erased from Jewish canon, Behar observes that it is clear we should not forget Hagar. The question becomes: how is it that we should remember Hagar?

God is close in these stories, speaking to our ancestors, sometimes directly and sometimes through **מַלְאֲכָה**/malakhim/messengers. God hears their cries. Hagar is a regular interlocutor and a namer of God as El Roi, which Tikvah Frymer-Kensky teaches can mean both “The God I have seen” and the “God who sees me.”

All of us want to be seen. All of us want to be heard. All of us want to be recognized. The Torah teaches that, in remembering Hagar, we are invited to see the humanity and the **תְּזֵלֶם אֱלֹהִים**/tzelem elohim/image of the divine in other people, even the ones not chosen, even the ones who might become our foes. In remembering Hagar, we are invited into empathy.

Drawing on millennia of Jewish teachings, we aim to recognize and draw out the godliness in every person and in every situation.

The French Jewish philosopher Emmanuel Levinas placed face-to-face encounter and relationship at the heart of ethics; for him the gravest human sin is when we depersonalize the “other,” when we refuse to see their faces. Levinas’ ethical teaching is urgent in this time when we are facing unbearable violence and brutality.

New York Times columnist David Brooks recently wrote a column titled “How to Stay Sane in Brutalizing Times.” Brooks draws on many sources, beginning with the ancient Greeks. Brooks suggests that Greek philosophers and playwrights offered a “tragic sensibility,” which he describes as a forthright understanding of the fragility of society and the equally forthright recognition that, in the face of social instability and even repeated civilizational shatterings, we nonetheless have a choice in how to respond. Brooks draws five lessons from this tragic sensibility. It teaches us a sense of humility, which he defines as the ability to “cast aside illusions and vanities and see life as it really is.” It cultivates a “prudent” approach to life and fosters resilience. It promotes caution. It teaches us to be suspicious of our own rage, which can engender cruelty and which, he warns, “hardens and corrodes the mind of its bearer.” Finally, a tragic sensibility exposes us to the suffering of others and, in encountering their suffering, we can find our common humanity. These lessons combine exponentially to teach us compassion, at all

times, even the cruelest.

Brooks then offers up a core teaching of what he calls the Abrahamic faiths, namely, “audacity of the heart,” that invites us to lead with love, even in the harshest moments. Brooks channels Levinas, writing, “As much as we need bread and water, human beings need recognition. The essence of dehumanization is not to see someone, to render him inconsequential and invisible.” He urges open-heartedness, curiosity and even vulnerability, all in the service of social repair, which is an abiding preoccupation of his.

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For me, Brooks’ counsel resonates deeply with a Reconstructionist approach, which is grounded in intentional optimism. Drawing on millennia of Jewish teachings, we aim to recognize and draw out the godliness in every person and in every situation. We are at once pragmatists and activists. We emphasize a partnership with the divine that commands us to act in ways that make manifest God’s attributes (mercy, love, justice and so many more) and in this way demonstrate God’s presence in our world. We acknowledge our ancestors’ messianic vision for a redeemed world and transmute it into modern and post-modern expressions, neither retreating from the world in tribal separatism or nor wrapping ourselves in fundamentalist certainty. Instead, we bring it to life in our day-to-day existence, in our interactions with others, in the communities we build and the work that we do. I am adamant that our optimism is not naïve. It is an ongoing set of intentional choices about who we are, who we want to be, what kind of world that we want to live in and that we want to create for the next generation.

David Brooks shared that he was recently asked, “Isn’t it dangerous to be vulnerable toward others when there is so much bitterness, betrayal and pain all around?” He acknowledged the legitimacy of that question and responded: “Yes, it is dangerous. But it is also dangerous to be hardened and calloused over by hard times. It is also dangerous, as C.S. Lewis put it, to guard your heart so thoroughly that you make it ‘unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable.’” We cannot truly know the effect that this stance will have on other people. Ultimately, it is about us: “[T]his is about who you are becoming in corrosive times.”

There is so much we do not know and we cannot see. Hagar was deep in the midbar, a bleak and barren place where she could not imagine sustenance, despairing of a future for herself and her

son. God opened her eyes to a well that brought her and all her descendants life, quite possibly the same well where she previously encountered and felt seen by God.

In the Torah, shortly after Ishmael’s salvation comes the binding of Isaac, a moment where another child’s approach toward death is miraculously interrupted. There is much speculation—in ancient midrash, in modern poetry, in essays—about the impact of the **אֶדְהָה**/akedah on Isaac. While we know little about Isaac’s agency before that point, in this week’s Torah portion we learn that afterward Isaac, in his adulthood, chose to live right near Be’er Lehai Roi. It is there where he meets his bride Rebecca, whom he loves—the sole mention of love in the stories we have inherited about the patriarchs and matriarchs (Genesis 24:62-67). The well is a place of being sustained, seeing and being seen, a place of love, a place of redemption.

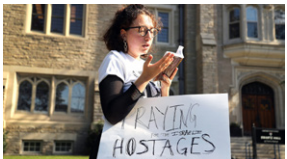
May we find wellsprings of empathy and move toward love. May we all see and be seen. Even in the hardest of times, may we find ways to be our best selves. May we find unexpected moments and locations of redemption. In the midst of deep uncertainty, may our eyes be opened to new paths forward.

Rabbi Deborah Waxman, Ph.D.

“Drawing on millennia of Jewish teachings, we aim to recognize and draw out the godliness in every person and in every situation.”

“Brooks then offers up a core teaching of what he calls the Abrahamic faiths, namely, “audacity of the heart,” that invites us to lead with love, even in the harshest moments.”

https://www.reconstructingjudaism.org/news/wellsprings-of-empathy/?goal=0_86482ec089-923aa93696-62632250&mc_cid=923aa93696&mc_eid=f5c4b52754



A woman prays aloud for the Israeli hostages outside the Harvard Divinity School, Oct. 25, 2023. (John Tlumacki/The Boston Globe via Getty Images)

(JTA) — Like Jews around the world, I have spent the last days glued to my news sources, refreshing my screen every few minutes to find out if, as had been rumored for some time, there is a plan for the Israeli hostages to be released. I know I will continue to keep my eyes peeled as we wait for the moment that the hostages go free.

As one who is keen on using brachot, Jewish blessings, to infuse special moments with kedusha, or holiness, I am very much prepared to make two brachot when that moment finally arrives: Shehechyanu and Dayan Emet.

With Shehechyanu we say thanks for the privilege of experiencing an extraordinary joyful moment.

With Dayan Emet we subserviently accept the evil that has befallen us. Those two blessings do not necessarily seem like they would belong in the same moment. But Judaism recognizes that there are moments in life when we experience competing emotions simultaneously, sad and joyous at the very same time. During such rare moments, halacha, or Jewish law, advises a person to say these two contradictory brachot.

The point being: One can hold two competing emotions at once.

Jews have a long history of doing just that. And we hope we will be doing it again any day now — when the first of the hostages set to be released under a truce deal cross back into Israel.

We will undoubtedly be thrilled for those who will be released, rejoicing with the people who will finally be reunited with their loved ones. But there is no denying though that there are also those who are going to be devastated when they learn that their loved ones were not included in this round of hostage exchange. We therefore need to be extremely careful not to let our gloating blind us to their pain, even as we rejoice.

Therefore, the proper way to sanctify the moment when some of the hostages are released is to mournfully rejoice. To partake in the joy of the privileged few, without for a moment forgetting those less privileged whose pain has in fact been made more acute by this partial release.

One eye will cry tears of joy and the other will shed tears of heartbreak.



FAROE ISLANDS
LAKE ABOVE THE SEA
SORVAGSVATN

שָׁלוֹם

WATERFALL -- SHALOM, PEACE, waterfall = **MORE THAN ENOUGH** water
2 SIDES SEEKING RESOLUTION, ON EITHER SIDE OF THE WATERFALL??
SHIN = 300; $300/2 = 150$. $2 \times 144 = 288$;
 $288 + 12 = 300$ 12 tribes $\times 2 = 24$. add 1 more: $24+1 = 25$, or 13th tribe?

WATERFALL -- SHALOM, PEACE, waterfall = **MORE THAN ENOUGH** water
WHEN THE ICE MELTS?? GREENLAND???
OR WHEN THE EARTH COOLS AGAIN?

