The Tibet Journal

The Tibet Journal is a quarterly publication of the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives (LTWA), devoted to the presentation of scholarly and general interest articles on Tibetan culture and civilization by Tibetans and non-Tibetans.

The Tibet Journal welcomes the submission of articles and research papers in English, adequately substantiated or otherwise documented, with the Wylie romanisation system of *The Tibet Journal*. Articles should be typed and double spaced. We request that all contributions sent to the journal have both the print and diskette copy.

Address articles, rejoinders, editorial enquiries, and books for review to:

Managing Editor,
The Tibet Journal,
c/o Library of Tibetan Works and Archives,
***Gangchen Kyishong, Dharamsala, H.P. 176 215,* India.**
Tel: 01892 22467, 24661 Fax: 01892 23723 E-mail: <ltwa@ndf.vsnl.net.in>

Distributing and selling agent
Please send all enquiries relating to subscriptions to:
Biblia Impex Pvt. Ltd.,
2/18, Ansari Road,
New Delhi, 110 002, India.

Annual Subscription Rates

India
Inland (includes mailing) Rs. 260.00
Single copy Rs. 70.00

Abroad
Overseas (Air-mail) US $ 30.00
Overseas (Sea-mail) US $ 25.00
Single copy (Air-mail) US $ 7.50

ABRAHAM, THE EASTERNERS, AND INDIA: JEWISH INTERPRETATIONS OF GENESIS 25:6

"But to the sons of the concubines whom Abraham had, Abraham gave gifts and sent them away from his son Isaac while he still lived, eastward to the east country."

Richard G. Marks

This is the verse from Genesis that I heard quoted several times by Orthodox Jews in Jerusalem when I asked them about the relationship between Judaism and Asian religions. They meant the verse to explain that Hinduism and Buddhism derive from gifts of knowledge which Abraham gave to children whom he sent east, and "east" means India. Two Torah commentaries currently on the Internet make similar allusions. Rabbi Kalman Packouz, writing from Miami Beach, states that Abraham sent his sons east "with the knowledge of mysticism," and Yaakov Fogelman, an American-born resident of Jerusalem, thinks that Abraham sent his sons to India, but that the influence worked in the opposite direction: "He sent all his kids from concubines east...These Easterners may later have influenced Jewish mysticism—e.g., the belief in reincarnation and haircuts for three year olds!"[1]

In its biblical context and Aramaic translations, Gen. 25:6 speaks of neither knowledge nor India. Nor do all medieval Jewish commentators define the gifts as knowledge. Rashi (Rabbi Shelomo Yiṣḥaki), the influential eleventh century commentator, cites an interpretation that has Abraham giving his sons the gifts which he himself received when he married Sarah. Abraham ibn Ezra (twelfth century), another commentator, thought Abraham had given gifts of money and sent his sons somewhere vaguely east of the Land of Israel. Then how did the verse become an Orthodox statement about the relation of Jewish to Indian wisdom? Was there a logic to this development? What do such interpretations show us about traditional Jewish views of "foreign wisdom?" What are the implications for interreligious dialogue?

The aims of this study are both historical and theological: to discover and understand the history of this verse's interpretation by Jews, and to learn whether the verse, with its specific history of allusions, can serve as a foundation for dialogue with other religions, particularly Hinduism and Buddhism. Hence, we shall not examine the history of Jewish thinking about India, a much broader topic, but focus upon the history of this one verse, which gained an association with India only in the last several hundred years.

Let us first note the function of the verse in its biblical context: it differentiates Abraham's relationship with Isaac from that with the children he begot through Keturah, the woman he married after Sarah's death (Gen. 25:1) and the "concubine" of Gen. 25:6.[2] In the previous verse Abraham had given "all that he had" to Isaac, the son of Sarah; in this verse he gives merely "gifts" to the sons of Keturah. The verse also establishes a spatial distinction: Isaac remains in the land promised to Abraham, whereas the later children live "east" of it. "East" signifies the lower importance and locale where the rejected relatives, the black sheep, live.[3]

But the verse simultaneously maintains Abraham's relationship with them. Though lower in worth, they remain his relatives and have received his gifts. Because of this particular function, Jews, viewing the world through Torah, employed this verse of Torah to explain the presence of valid knowledge or of real power among foreigners. (Gen. 25:6 has never been applied to Christianity or Islam.)

The verse has a fascinating history of interpretation, winding through worlds of menace, suspicion, impurity, evil powers, mysterious Easterners with their own ancient scriptures, and Jews searching for hidden sparks of Torah among foreigners. But the man who explicitly connected the verse to India, Menasseh ben Israel, chose to ignore earlier interpretations and took the verse in a new direction reflecting the great European explorations of his time, for a new purpose fitting his polemical needs in the seventeenth century. His interpretation reappears in two Orthodox books written recently in Jerusalem.[4]

This history began with the Babylonian Talmud, where "the children of Keturah" appear as sly competitors for ownership of the Land of Israel (b.Sanh. 91a) and as a taunting name for ignorant Jews (b.Zevaḥ. 62a-b). When the question arises of what Abraham gave to Keturah's sons, Rabbi Jeremiah bar Abba, apparently on the basis of the faulty way in the which *matanot*, "gifts," is spelled in the biblical text, and to belittle this inheritance, infers that the gifts were faulty. "This teaches," he said, "that he passed to them a name of impurity (*shem tum'ah*)," which Rashi later explains as a name to be used for "sorcery and [dealings with] demons" (b.Sanh. 91a). This interpretation then becomes the major current of meaning surrounding Gen. 25:6.

Two medieval commentators take up the theme, concerned particularly with the issue of ritual impurity. Hezekiah ben Manoah, writing in the mid-thirteenth century, asks in his *Ḥizzekuni* how such a saint as Abraham could transmit a holy name to "wicked ones" (as these sons are now called). He replies, reading the talmudic phrase as "a name in impurity," *shem b'tum'ah*, that he gave them merely a profane name to conjure demons through the powers set over them (rather than God), even when the sons were in an impure bodily state. Hezekiah identifies the "east" of the verse as the land of Aram, related to Uz where Job lived among "the Easterners" (Job 1:3). The *Tosafot* (thirteenth and fourteenth centuries) express similar views.

1. *The Zohar and Me'or Eynayim*

The Zohar (thirteenth century, Spain) moves the interpretation to another stage by connecting the children of Keturah in Gen. 25:6 with the "wisdom of all the Easterners" (literally, "Children of the East," *benei kedem*) mentioned in 1 Kings 5:10—"And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the Easterners and all the wisdom of Egypt." Three passages in the Zohar employ Gen. 25:6 to prove that these "Easterners" inherited their knowledge ultimately from Abraham.

Two of them connect the Easterners with sorcery and evil, their main characteristic in the Zohar. The first (Zohar 1:133b) asserts that Abraham gave Isaac the doctrine of high faith, *m'hemnuta 'al'ah* (that is, insight into the mystery of the Sefirot), whereas he gave the sons of Keturah "names of the sides of the unclean spirit" and sent them east. The writer then infers, because *kedem*, "east," appears also in 1 Kings 5:10, that this latter verse shows that "the descendants of the children of Abraham's concubine are the Easterners, who inhabit the 'mountains of the East,' where they instruct human beings in sorcery (*ḥarshin*)." Here another scriptural verse has been adduced, to connect the menacing "Balaam the Wicked" (a talmudic phrase) with these Easterners: "Balak, the king of Moab, has brought me [Balaam] from Aram, out of the mountains of the East (*me-hararei kedem*)" (Num. 23:7). Since Balaam worked an evil magic and came from the mountains of the East, the writer infers that *ereṣ kedem*, the east country, is a place of "unclean sorcerers" and that "the wisdom of all the Easterners" (1 Kings 5:10) consisted of unclean magic. This also expands upon the talmudic interpretation of Gen. 25:6.

A second passage (1:223a-b) fashions the Easterners into archetypal practitioners of evil detached from any sense of real geographical location. It interprets Abraham's gifts as two types of wisdom—a "higher wisdom" for Isaac, attained through knowing the holy name of God, and a much lower wisdom for the sons of Keturah, based on "knowledge of the lower crowns," that is, the emanations of the *sitra aḥra*, "the Other Side." This is the domain of dark and demonic powers and the source of the "unclean spirit," mentioned in the previous passage, which bring temptation and destruction upon the world. The Zohar speaks elsewhere of ten crowns of sorcery and uncleanness below, calling them "wisdoms," which correspond to the ten holy sefirot above (3:70a). Abraham's gift to Keturah's sons thus consists of demonic knowledge enabling them to practice sorcery.[5]

A third and much longer passage employing Gen. 25:6 (99b-100b), however, offers a different view of the Easterners and their wisdom, related perhaps to a more favorable image of Easterners found in rabbinic midrash.[6] In it Rabbi Abba, one of the main teachers appearing in the Zohar, speaks approvingly of teachings he personally heard from them.

> Once I happened to be in a town of the descendants of the Easterners, and they told me some of their ancient wisdom.

> They also possessed books of their wisdom, and they brought me one book in which it was written that, according to the goal that a human being intends in this world, so there is drawn to him a spirit (*ruaḥ*) from on high. If he intends a high and holy object, he draws that thing to himself from above, and if he cleaves to the *sitra aḥra*, he brings down that thing upon himself. They said that it essentially depends on the words, deeds, and intention to which one attaches oneself, for the side to which one attaches oneself is drawn down from above... It is the same for one who wants to attach himself to the Holy Spirit (*ruaḥ kodsha*) on high.

Rabbi Abba approves also of what the Easterners teach about the afterlife: "In accord with that which a human being seeks in this world, so he will be further drawn after he leaves this world. In that to which he attaches himself in this world, so will he be drawn in the other world: if holy, holy, and if unclean, unclean (*'i b'kodsha b'kodsha, 'i bimsa'aba bimsa'aba*)." Hence, if a person cleaves to holiness in this life, she or he will minister to God among the angels, and if a person clings to evil and impurity, the *sitra ahra*, then she or he will join the unclean spirits in Gehinom. The writer is thus presenting his Jewish readers with doctrines which he has Rabbi Abba later call "close (*k'riba*) to the words of the Torah." These Easterners understand the difference between holy and impure and how these categories structure the world, know a law of consequences operating in the universe and how the cosmos works to respond in kind to human thought and action, and they believe in an afterlife with reward and punishment. Like Jews, they possess an ancient wisdom written in books.

But in the end these books hold a serious danger to Jews. For Rabbi Abba also found written in them "rites for the worship of stars and constellations." His full response to Eastern wisdom takes the following form:

> My children, this is close to the words of the Torah, but you should keep far away from these books lest your hearts stray after their rites and all those sides (*sitrin*) just mentioned. Be on your guard lest, God forbid, you turn aside from the rites of the Holy and Blessed One, for all these books lead human beings astray.

Rabbi Abba then explains this wisdom as ultimately Jewish wisdom gone bad: "For the Easterners possessed a wisdom which they inherited from Abraham, who transmitted it to the sons of the concubine, as it is written (in Gen. 25:6). But later they were drawn in that wisdom in many [wrong] directions." Isaac, in contrast, received "all" that Abraham possessed (Gen. 25:5), meaning a "holy heritage of faith," which, presumably because it was a fuller inheritance (Abraham's "all"), prevented Isaac's descendants, the Jews, from distorting it. Finally, Psalm 24 is cited to suggest that the Easterners worship man-made

images, turn their hearts to the *sitra aḥra*, and defile their bodies with their own hands.

This interpretation of Gen. 25:6 offers a more complex view of the Easterners than the passages connecting them with sorcery. Easterners are portrayed here with valid doctrines and commendable ethics, founded in a kabbalistic theory of correspondence and reciprocity and the distinction between holy and profane forces in the world. Their "wisdom" derives from the same source as Jewish wisdom. Yet their religion is judged wrong because it does not worship the God of Israel and so stands ultimately aligned with the *sitra aḥra*. Its wisdom, lacking the revealed faith of the Torah, wanders away from its inherited truths. Indeed, its sharpest danger consists of its hidden mixture of truth and falsehood, since the truth in its confused teachings works an attraction upon the innocent soul.

Easterners appear in many later kabbalistic writings, mainly in association with Gen. 29:1 and 1 Kings 5:10, and usually in the image of sorcerers.[7] We turn now to one more interpretation of Gen. 25:6, also mentioning Easterners, found in the still-popular Hasidic work, *Me'or Eynayim* by Menahem Nahum ben Evi of Chernobyl (1730-1787), published in 1798 and frequently reprinted. In the book's homily on *Parshat Noah*, Nahum develops the concept of a fallen Torah hidden in the languages of all the non-Jewish nations—scattered fragments of Hebrew, the original language spoken by all humankind before separate languages emerged at the time of the Tower of Babel: "There remained in all the tongues something from the Holy Tongue, certain combinations written in the Torah, and from this is their existence." That is, the nations survive through these incomplete elements of Torah found in their languages, just as everything that exists does so only through the presence of God: "There is no place empty of him, for his life and his divinity are everywhere...so that all the worlds and all the nations have life only through the Torah." Holding on to its holiness, the nations "enslave the Torah that fell from the Torah." Nahum turns to Gen. 25:6 as another example of this phenomenon. When the Talmud says that Abraham gave the children of Keturah an impure name, *shem tum`ah*, this means that "they contaminate the holy combinations among the nations of the world, for the Torah is called *shem* (name) for the entire Torah consists of the names of God." That is, the children of Keturah took the holy Torah of their father and mixed it into the cultures of other nations, so that in a sense, it is no longer pure and whole.

Nahum assigns Jews the important task of reclaiming this fallen Torah: "The offspring of Isaac would have the power to sift out and purify it," just as Jacob, in heading "to the land of the Easterners" (Gen. 29:1), the location to which Abraham had sent the sons of Keturah (proved by Gen. 25:6), descended to their low rung of existence in order to raise the fallen sparks of Torah back to their roots in the Torah. "For this purpose was Israel exiled among the nations: to sift out the holy letters from the Torah mixed up among the nations,

doing this by means of their dealings and speech with them." Nahum describes the process of "lifting up" in several ways:

> The principle is that one must draw everything near to the Torah... And this occurs by means of engaging in Torah for its own sake, for the sake of showing a path to observe and practice it ...The sage understands that the engaging in Torah spoken of here, takes place in all things, and also when one converses with the Gentiles, so long as one remains directed to the proper intention.

Nahum then interprets Ps. 106:35 as King David urging Jews to "fashion teaching and Torah through their deeds, and engage with the nations." In relation to the fallen Torah, this means that "what was swallowed among the seventy languages from the Torah is given to Israel to draw near to the great source [the higher Torah] by means of the good which they will do by their deeds."

A later homily in *Me'or Eynayim* offers an example of what Nahum means by "engaging with the nations." There he says that Israel was scattered among them "so that through dealing with them in such matters as business and in conversation with them, we would be able to bring forth the sparks garbed in those things." Business must be conducted in absolute honesty, and God gains greater joy from acts of raising the holy sparks through honest business dealings and other lowly things than even the direct study of Torah, for after all, Torah exists in all things.[8]

This homily marks the first time that Gen. 25:6 appears in a kabbalistic passage urging Jews to approach, rather than ignore or reject, the people who inherited Abraham's gifts to Keturah's sons. On the one hand, the nations contaminate the pure higher Torah and by holding onto it, prevent the coming of the Messiah and an end to Jewish suffering. Yet on the other hand, Jews should struggle against them in the paradoxical manner of serving them—conversing, absolute honesty in business transactions, doing good deeds, teaching Torah through their conduct. Only this will release the sparks of Torah entangled among the nations. Yet we should also notice that the nations remain the realm of the impure, having no valuable wisdom or holiness of their own, but only sparks of Torah hidden in their culture.

2. *Isaac Abravanel and Menasseh ben Israel*

The exegetical history of Gen. 25:6 now changes abruptly. The meanings which Isaac Abravanel and Menasseh ben Israel found in the verse reflect not the Zohar but Classical and Christian literature and a new sense of geographical and historical realism.

Writing his *Commentary on the Torah* (*Perush Ha-Torah*) in Venice around 1505, Abravanel shows particular interest in the origin of mathematics and the natural sciences when he discusses the descendants of the three sons of

Noah.[9] The nations that descended from Ham, he writes, lack political life and the ability to reason, whereas the descendants of Yafet, namely, Greece and Rome, are beautiful in their manners, bravery, and political life. "But among the sons of Shem...are to be found the investigative sciences (*he-ḥokhmot ha-mekariyot*) in their entirety, for the Hindus, Babylonians, and Assyrians are founders of mathematics (*he-hokhmot ha- lamudiyot*), people who first investigated the natural and divine sciences."[10] Then Abravanel explains how the knowledge of Shem, having reached Abraham, was transmitted to the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans:

> And from Abraham to the children of Ishmael and the children of Keturah came the science of magic (*ḥokhmat ha-kishuf*) and the hidden elements and astrology and the rest of the investigative sciences. They are the ones who brought these sciences to Egypt. According to the sages, "Abraham gave gifts to the children of the concubines" (Gen. 25:6) means that he passed to them a name in impurity, for by means of these names they wanted to acquire all the science and knowledge which will not come through the paths of divine prophecy pure from every dross and error. Yet the children of Esau were the ones who brought the sciences to the Romans and Greeks, the children of Yafet.

In contrast to the other writings we have examined, Abravanel's commentary sees nothing evil in the magic obtained by the children of Keturah; it is clearly as valid as "the investigative sciences" and astrology. This attitude may reflect the respect for "high magic" and the occult held by many European intellectuals of the late Renaissance.[11] Abravanel also ignores the negative moral connotation of "impurity" intended by the exegesis of Gen. 25:6 which he quotes from the Talmud.

Yet he does consider the knowledge of the children of Keturah, and indeed all the sciences, contaminated with the impurity of "dross and error" and thus inferior to the knowledge which Jews have received through divine prophecy.

> And over all of them, like the height of the heavens over the earth, the wisdom of the children of Israel was raised high. And the glory of God shone on them and in its light they saw the light of the sciences and their attainments, and they (Israel) were all holy descendants praising God [from Isa. 6:13, 44:13].

The knowledge achieved by the descendants of Shem, such as the Hindus and sons of Keturah, and of people who inherited this tradition, such as the Greeks and Romans, is knowledge gained by human investigation and therefore inherently fallible, whereas the knowledge held by the Jews, including "the sciences and their attainments," derives from prophetic

revelation and is, hence, complete and perfect. In the background of this passage stands the concept of Hebrew revelation as a higher and different order of knowledge than that available to the limited human mind, for the sciences acquired solely through human reason are merely preparatory and subservient to revelation derived from beyond it.[12]

Menasseh ben Israel, living in Amsterdam a century and a half later, studied Abravanel's writings closely and often quoted them. It is therefore not surprising that the theme of Jewish priority reappears in Menasseh's citation of Gen. 25:6 in his book, *Nishmat Ḥayyim* (*The Soul of Life*, 1652), although he applies it to a specific psychological doctrine. In the fourth section of the book, in Chapter 21, in the course of arguing for the truth of "the survival of the soul and the transfer of souls from body to body," he demonstrates that these beliefs are acknowledged over most of the world, including China and India, and are evidenced particularly in the books of the great classical writers like Plato, Virgil, and Plotinus, and the Church Fathers. Menasseh, however, also seeks to show that the doctrine of rebirth originated with Abraham even though it has commonly been associated with Pythagoras: "For the whole world believed that souls disappear and 'a man is no better than a beast' (Eccl. 3:19), until Abraham our father came and spread in the world the subject of survival and transmigration (*ha-hisha'arut v'ha-gilgul*)." For the Egyptians, who preceded Pythagoras in their belief in transmigration, learned this truth from Abraham. Pythagoras himself either learned it from Ezekiel or was himself a Jew, so that "all that he compiled, he stole and took over from our holy Torah and true Kabbalah."

In Menasseh's educated circle in Amsterdam, in an age of exploration and increasing awareness of the world outside Europe, it was generally known that the people of India also believed in rebirth. So Menasseh proceeds to defend his claim that Abraham originated the doctrine:

> Afterwards, the sons of the concubine whom he had, he sent away from his son Isaac while he still lived, eastward to the east country (Gen. 25:6), which is India. They too spread this belief. Behold, you will see that the Abrahamites (*abrahaminim*), who today are called Brahmins (*brahaminim*), are the children of Abraham our father. They were the first in the land of India who spread this belief, as Apollonius of Tyana testified, who spoke face to face with them and with King Iarcas about the truth of this belief in transmigration, and who said that they [the Abrahamites] were the ancient priests and sages who taught them this principle. And they spoke the truth because from the sons of Abraham our father this belief was newly established there and from them, it extended to all the land of India, as is known to all writers of the times.

Menasseh's interpretation of Gen. 25:6 follows from his new "insight" that "eastward to the east country" must refer to India, since that meaning solved the question of how Abraham could have fathered the doctrine of rebirth if he had never traveled to India. He sent east his sons begotten by Keturah. Menasseh also takes as a clue the similarity of the words *abrahamini* and *brahamini*, concluding that the descendants of Abraham are now Brahmins teaching rebirth.[13]

Menasseh intends Philostratus' *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* as indirect corroboration, for the book portrays Apollonius, a first-century Greek who adhered to monastic rules ascribed to Pythagoras, journeying to India where he observed Brahmins who lived inland at a mysterious high castle and instructed kings in how to rule their kingdoms (2:33, 3.10, 3.15). He also conversed at length with a King Iarchus about rebirth (3.19-22). Although nothing appears in the book about a Hebrew named Abraham, Iarchus does claim that the Egyptians knew the doctrine before Pythagoras did (3.19). Menasseh's entire picture of India in this chapter comes from this third-century source.

The children of Keturah thus perform a valuable role in world history, according to Menasseh. They have transmitted one of the most important Jewish doctrines to the people of India, playing their part in the spread of this belief to the whole world. The Brahmins of India appear in this chapter as people adhering to a profound truth.

Although Menasseh read widely in the Zohar, recommending it repeatedly in *Nishmat Ḥayyim*, and was well-versed in the classic rabbinic writings and commentaries, his use of Gen. 25:6 ignores the earlier interpretations in every way other than the general view that Abraham had transmitted knowledge to his sons. Most remarkably, the recurring and traditionally essential issue of impurity is nowhere to be found.

India appears also in the next chapter of *Nishmat Ḥayyim*, which addresses the doctrine of human rebirth into animal bodies. Menasseh constructs an argument for the truth of this doctrine again on the basis of consensus, and his evidence comes again from classical writers such as Pythagoras, Homer, Plato, and Empedocles, but a large segment of the chapter comprises information taken from a contemporary report about Indian customs.

> And even today Indians living between the Gihon River and the Indus, believing in transmigration, act according to his [Pythagoras'] custom. And they show great compassion for animals. They walk to the streets of the city and purchase birds from their captors and send them away free. And among them when a bull mates with a cow, it is their custom to spend a great expenditure [in celebration], as Pedro Teixiera testifies. And in their hour of death, they take in their hands the tail of the cow which they have fed in the thought that they would immediately enter inside it [when

> they die]. And in Cambay there are buildings full of all good things which will cure all their [the animals'] wounds and illness, all this in their thought that they would perhaps not only help an animal but also perhaps the soul of a human being reborn there [in the animal]. And thus they say that according to the merits and sins of a man, so he is reborn into an animal of good and healthy body or thin and bad, wounded from the afflictions of God. In the Kingdom of Gujarat, the men called among them Banians do not eat any animal at all. And there are among them pious ones and men of deeds who put a mask on their faces because they fear to kill with their breath the small flying creatures which for their smallness cannot be seen by the eye. And thus almost all the people of India believe in the transmigration of animals.

The Pedro Teixeira cited by Menasseh was a Portuguese who visited South Asia and the Middle East in the late sixteenth century and recorded his observations on Indian customs as an aside in a book on Persia published in 1610.[14] Teixeira expresses only disdain for the religious practices he observed, calling them "absurdities," "follies and superstitions," and "diabolical ceremonies," and saying of Yogis, "What pains they take to go to hell," whereas Menasseh records the same practices with approval because they attest to an underlying doctrine which he considers universally true. At the end of the chapter, however, he draws one distinction between Jewish and Indian knowledge: "We have sufficiently proven that also among the nations of the world, the matter of transmigration in animals is accepted, although they did not speak of the matters of *Ibbur*[15] and of transmigration in minerals and vegetation, because the rabbis already said that God swore never to reveal this matter of *Ibbur* to the nations. And a secret of God is for His believers."

These two chapters from *Nishmat Ḥayyim* show how Menasseh identified all the deepest knowledge of the world with Jewish knowledge, possessed by Abraham and revealed to Jews "from our holy Torah and true Kabbalah." Menasseh defined this ancient knowledge as theories of the human soul, whereas Abravanel identified it more with the sciences. Both, however, held that all valid science and philosophy derived ultimately from the Jewish people. In this contention, as Benzion Netanyahu and Moshe Idel point out, they were repeating a claim made by important Christian, Muslim, and Jewish thinkers before them.[16] Justyn Martyr, for example, contended that Plato had borrowed his ideas from Moses and the prophets, and Clement of Alexandria asserted "the plagiarizing of the dogmas of the [Greek] philosophers from the Hebrews,"[17] a thesis appearing later in Augustine's *The City of God* (18.37). Roger Bacon declared that Prometheus, Atlas, and Apollo had studied with Abraham, and that Pythagoras, Plato, and Aristotle derived their philosophies from Solomon; and also that the nations of the world obtained their sciences

from the Hebrews, who were especially skillful in astronomy.[18] Al Ghazali made the same claim about Greek philosophy, and Averroes asserted the origin of all sciences from the Israelites and "their perfection in the sciences."[19] The Jewish writer who stated this theory most forcefully, and in a form closer to Abravanel than Menasseh, was Judah Ha-Levi in the twelfth century:

> Did he [Solomon] not, with the assistance of divine, intellectual, and natural power, converse on all the sciences? The inhabitants of the earth traveled to him, in order to carry forth his learning, even as far as India. Now the roots and principles of all sciences were handed down from us [the Jews] to the Chaldeans, then to the Persians and Medians, then to Greece, and finally to the Romans.[20]

Seen, then, from the perspective of this long tradition of thought about the Jewish origins of philosophy and science, Abravanel's and Menasseh's views on the role of the children of Keturah in spreading Jewish knowledge to the non-Jewish world is not exceptional, or even pretentious. To them Jewish priority and preeminence were a long- and widely-acknowledged fact of history. Menasseh simply extended the notion to the customs and beliefs being discovered in India and China.

We can, however, recognize a social utility to this notion for a European Jew living in the middle of the seventeenth century. *Nishmat Ḥayyim*, unlike Menasseh's other books, was written in Hebrew specifically for a Jewish audience, at a time when the Inquisition in both the Old and New Worlds was still torturing New Christians and burning them at the stake, and Cossacks had massacred a terrible number of Jews in the Ukraine. England and most of western Europe still excluded Jews from residence, while the churches excluded them from salvation, and millenarian-inspired Christians in England and Amsterdam were increasing their proselytizing efforts. Skeptical Jews such as Spinoza and Uriel de Costa, moreover, were challenging basic traditional beliefs. To demonstrate, then, particularly from Christian and classical writings and from observations drawn from world explorers, that nearly the whole world agrees with the most fundamental Jewish doctrines, that Jews originated these doctrines and spread them to the world, and hence, that Jews have a great and splendid role in world history, reaching even to India and China, is to reassure discouraged Jews and sustain their sense of worth in a hostile world, even as Menasseh in his other books pointed to signs of imminent messianic redemption.[21]

We should, finally, notice in these two chapters of *Nishmat Ḥayyim* the underlying tolerance in Menasseh's approach to other religions. What essentially concerns him in his picture of India is not the religious rituals he describes, which differ from Jewish law, and not the divergent scriptures which he would infer to exist, but a doctrine, an understanding of the human soul. Although he did not think that non-Jews had acquired the whole truth, as he states in

concluding Chapter 22, they nevertheless had been given a very important truth. This view accords with the tolerance appearing in another form in Menasseh's *Piedra gloriosa*, written mainly for a non-Jewish audience. According to Henry Mechoulan and Gerard Nahon, he thought it right and reasonable that all good people of every nation would partake of the World To Come. "The non-Jew," he wrote, "who is virtuous and has the Law fresh in his mind, will not fail to gain his reward." However, by "Law" he meant a universal natural law of morality, the demands of which he defined in the following manner: "live with fairness and justice, do wrong to no one, do not encroach on the good of another...behave charitably to others, live soberly."[22] Thus, a place in the World To Come is gained through high moral standards rather than through any specific Jewish ritual or doctrine, although Menasseh does foresee a higher position for Jews during the preceding period of the messianic age.[23]

3. *Two Jerusalemites Today*

After 1652 *Nishmat Ḥayyim* was not printed again until the nineteenth century, when it was printed four times between 1852 and 1862 in eastern Europe—in Lemberg (Lvov), Leipzig, and twice in Stettin.[24] Although I lack the resources to find an answer, we might wonder whether Menasseh's interpretation of Gen. 25:6 influenced Jewish thinking in those areas.

A book published in 1990, however, opens with an English translation, printed in large bold type, of the section in *Nishmat Ḥayyim* explaining how Abraham's sons brought his knowledge to India, and even employs Menasseh's theory of Hindu dependence on Judaism as the recurrent motif of its 110 pages, expanding this dependence, however, from transmigration to all higher truth.[25] This book, *From Hinduism Back to Judaism*, was written by Rabbi Matityahu Glazerson, an Israeli who directs much of his teaching efforts toward *ba`alei teshuvah*, Jews converting to Orthodoxy from a secular life or from other religions. In the book's introduction, Glazerson speaks of Jews returning to "staunch observance of the Jewish faith after encounters with...Eastern schools of spiritual practice" and their failure to attain "the total bliss promised to them by their mystic teachers." Glazerson places the main thesis of his book into his summary of what Jews returning from Hinduism discovered: "We never knew that the Torah deals with all matters found in the Eastern teachings...and not only this, but it is our view now that Judaism is the source of the wisdom of the East."[26]

The first part of this thesis, that Judaism possesses the resources to address all the issues that Asian religions address, occupies most of the book. Glazerson shows with topics like absolute bliss, karma, self-discipline, use of the mind, higher consciousness, divine illumination, and inner contentment that the same issues are addressed by Torah, Kabbalah, or (his main method of argument) the very form of Hebrew letters and words, and that Judaism often teaches the same

answer as Hinduism. Happiness and joy are the most important goals discussed. Defining the relationship between the two traditions, Glazerson uses the terms, "same philosophy," "similar," "both," "also," "comparable with," "also found in," and "common to both." But this similarity lies for Glazerson in comparable goals and concepts rather than in the means of attaining them. Since Jews possess an innately different soul from that of non-Jews, "the Jewish soul...can attain happiness only through allegiance to the whole Torah and the 613 commandments."[27] This is why meditation and other eastern disciplines, though effective for non-Jews, cannot bring happiness to Jews. Within isolated chapters Glazerson uses this theory to portray Hinduism and Judaism as merely different means to similar goals, suited to different types of people.

But when demonstrating the second part of his thesis, Hinduism's reliance on Judaism, we learn that this deep distinction between Jews and other human beings corresponds to his view of a general and critical difference between the two religions. This is where Gen. 25:6 enters. Glazerson speaks of the children of Keturah six times in the book. For example,

> Abraham transmitted to his sons, from his wife Keturah, keys to understanding creation and the spiritual forces which are at work within the framework of nature...Abraham presented the sons of Keturah with wisdom in a form which could be used within the framework of nature and which was appropriate for their spiritual level... It is true that eastern religions' attempt to bring man to a state of harmonious balance with the forces of nature, thus enabling him to promote the good in himself and in others. This method was bequeathed to Avraham's sons by [sic] Keturah...Hindu concepts consist of those less advanced methods of implementation which Abraham communicated to Keturah's sons in order that their binds on the material world be lessened.[28]

Like Menasseh, Glazerson uses linguistic similarities to support his claim of Jewish influence: the word "Veda" resemble the word *yada*, knowledge, in Hebrew; "Abraham" resembles "Brahman;" the Sanskrit word *tamas*, impurity, resembles the Hebrew word of comparable meaning, *tame*.[29] Glazerson asserts repeatedly that various Hindu concepts and names "have their source in," "are derived from," "stem from," or are "based on" Judaism. In the book's conclusion he writes, "We have attempted to isolate certain details that shed light on the wisdom of Judaism as the well from which other cultures of the world draw their ideologies"—cultures which "only have the seeds of truth which were taken from Judaism."[30]

Glazerson's statements about Keturah's sons show his ultimate theory of how the two religions differ. "While the Hindu disciple is taught to identify with the flow of nature to achieve innocence, a Jew does so only by elevating himself above nature through keeping the Torah and mitzvot... The laws

governing the Torah and the Jewish soul totally contradict the logical and natural flow of events."[31] Glazerson believes that Hinduism focuses on gaining happiness through harmony with nature and moral behavior, whereas Judaism focuses on higher worlds "above nature" and seeks to influence the state of the universe as a whole (as understood by Kabbalah) rather than directly helping other human beings.

Although he once calls "eastern wisdom" a "pathway to truth for non-Jews,"[32] and usually respects Hinduism's value for the non-Jewish soul, he nevertheless characterizes Abraham's gifts to India as "less advanced methods" and a wisdom "appropriate to their [lower] spiritual level." His final view appears at his book's end as a statement of Judaism's absolute superiority: "While both Judaism and Hinduism maintain the importance of closeness to G-d, only the path of G-d's Torah reveals to humanity the true and therefore the best way to come near to Him."[33] This is the path given only to the descendants of Abraham's son, Isaac.

This use of Gen. 25:6 fits the general structure of the verse's history of interpretation, its force of distinguishing the knowledge possessed by real Jews from that of distant relatives, but, oddly enough for a rabbi claiming to present Jewish tradition and Kabbalah, it reflects no specific influence from earlier Jewish exegesis, including the Talmud and the Zohar, except Menasseh's. Also like Menasseh, it totally disregards the issues of impurity and magic. On the other hand, Glazerson employs the verse for purposes far beyond what Menasseh intended.

Another assertion of Hindu reliance on Judaism, again proved by Gen. 25:6, appears in *There is One*, published a year earlier than Glazerson's book but clearly not its source. Gutman Locks, the American author, spent nine years studying and meditating in Japan and India, eventually traveling internationally to teach his insights. But he now says that he was just performing tricks without any deep wisdom. He did not discover real truth until he ended up in Jerusalem at the Western Wall, discouraged and disillusioned, and a Jew suggested "laying tefillin" and attending a yeshivah. He learned much of value from his Jewish teachers and yet, he writes in the book's introduction, "I have found this point, God's Omnipresence, to be completely hidden from the majority of even 'learned' Jews...they cannot understand that He is All." He wrote *There is One* to demonstrate this concept "so a Jew can hear" (in an Orthodox theological idiom) and also to convince assimilated Jews, with special attention to those pursuing Asian wisdom, "to seek out your roots."[34]

Section 126 of the book, in which Gen. 25:6 is cited, opens with the question of whether Indian gurus really possess the power to "materialize diamonds" and "zap devotees." Locks replies, citing Gen. 25:6 and Rashi's explanation, "These definitely do occur! Not only are they really happening, but this power comes through the hand of Abraham, our father, as explained in

the Torah. These gifts are defined as the names of unclean powers." Locks demonstrates this Abrahamic source of Hinduism in a manner similar to Glazerson's but with different evidence: One of Abraham's grandsons descended from Keturah was named Asshurim (Gen. 25:3), which became the *ashram* of a guru with "mystical powers." Another grandson, Sh'va,' is the source of the Hindu deity Shiva. The Hindu chant, *AOM*, is "one of the mystical names of God revealed in the Torah... Aleph Vav Mem." "Hebrew" and "Hindu" both mean "from the other side of the river." This all shows that the ancient fair-skinned people from beyond the Indus river who brought the religion practiced in India today were the sons of Abraham, and thus teaches an important lesson for Jews today:

> When a Jew travels to India to seek out the knowledge of this power and even acquires it, he has spiritually ceased being Isaac the son of Abraham and his wife, Sarah. Rather, he becomes *Asshurim* the son of Abraham and his concubine. In effect he gives up the inheritance of "everything he had he gave to Isaac" and instead inherits, "But unto the sons of the concubine that Abraham had he gave gifts and sent them away...unto the east country."[35]

So Hinduism derives from Judaism. The problem is, however, that "most spiritual practices today, although possibly stemming from truth, have degenerated into harmful distortions."[36] The truth in its purest form is to be found in the Torah, but the truths found in Hinduism and Buddhism are mixed with many errors and are therefore confusing and dangerous.[37]

One danger is that the guru replaces God, and "the guru's private brand of spirituality" replaces truth and ethical behavior. This is Locks' interpretation of the "unclean name" of Rashi's exegesis of Gen. 25:6. Locks tells several stories in his book about misery resulting from "Eastern spiritual practices," such as being unable to rid oneself of an inner light attained through meditation,[38] and about corrupt gurus. For example, "The *gurus* became rich while the devotee was left with a perpetual half-smile. Many Jews ended up wasting ten to fifteen years of their precious lives cleaving to leaders who, when ultimately exposed, were seen to be demented."[39] Locks concludes his Section 126 by arguing that although "Eastern wisdom" may induce real supernatural powers in the Jewish seeker, these are only lower powers compared with what the Torah offers, and they are "spiritually unclean" and never bring the happiness sought.

In contrast, Locks demonstrates the supernatural power of traditional Jewish practice by telling many stories of miracles occurring to Jews who practice the commandments or follow the instructions of Hasidic rebbes.[40] And through a series of touching portraits of the Jewish ritual life practiced in the Old City and its pious holy men, Locks conveys his own appreciation of the simple beauty and contentment to be gained from a traditional Jewish life—a

far deeper joy than he found in Zen or Hinduism: "How simple holiness is. How easy and pleasant are Your ways!"[41]

The meaning given to Gen. 25:6 by *There is One* reflects the history of its interpretation far more than does Glazerson's book. Along with the theme of Hindu dependence, we find the old sense of menace, uncleanness, and dangerous powers. The Zohar's image of Easterners offering Rabbi Abba a deceptive mixture of truth and falsehood echoes strongly in Locks' own image of "Eastern teachings." The book thus represents, probably without its author's knowledge, a fitting summation of the verse's exegetical history.

Before leaving this book, however, I should like to speculate about affinities between the Judaism which Locks teaches in it and the Hinduism he explicitly rejects. For Locks clearly believes in rebirth in a kabbalistic form, and he insists often on explaining life's events through a theory phrased in a way less like retribution and more like a law of karma: "good brings good and evil brings evil."[42] The issues of how perspective shapes our experience and of overcoming the ego's self-important views of the world echo, I surmise, his Hindu meditational experience,[43] and he also teaches a Jewish mode of meditation the second step of which involves discovering the emptiness of all things. His theological disagreement with other Orthodox Jews consists of the assertion, supported by a long series of vividly reasoned passages based mostly on physical analogies, that "the One that exists in all, as all, is God"[44]—a view resonating with the *Bhagavadgita*'s concept of Krishna in Chapters 7-11, but also, as Locks knows, with the Hasidic assertion that "there is no place empty of Him," which he interprets as "God is within everyone and everything" and "there is nothing else besides God."[45] At the same time, however, he seems to be rejecting conclusions reached in his Indian period when he argues for the validity of the perspective of distinct existence apart from God, and insists that we must not entirely reject the ego, for it has its own value and role in creation. Buddhism's mistake, he told me, is that in teaching "emptiness" as the ultimate reality, it misses the larger picture of things. Yes, from a certain perspective we are nothing, just atoms and mostly space; but all of those atoms also form a larger pattern that has reality when seen from beyond—the reality of the One. Another important theme of *There is One* is the contrast between the physical and the spiritual, but Locks argues strongly that the physical should not be overcome (through ascetic exercises) but "rather we are to elevate the physical until we are able to see the spiritual in it."[46] His own form of meditation ends with integrating the experience of nothingness with the physical realities of everyday life, family and friends, and Jewish ritual, realized most fully through the Sabbath.[47]

4. *Interreligious Dialogue*

In the texts we have studied, the foreign knowledge associated with Gen. 25:6 has a validity and power, but is always inferior to the knowledge possessed by Jews. We have seen a range of interpretations. Jeremiah bar Abba considered it powerful but unclean. The Zohar connected it with the formidable realm of evil, the *sitra aḥra* and its "unclean spirits," but adds the new theme of Easterners luring innocent Jews by a deceptive mixture of truth and falsehood, corrupted wisdom supporting idolatry. Nahum of Chernobyl viewed this knowledge as contaminated sparks of truth hidden in foreign cultures. For Abravanel, however, the contamination was merely the fallibility of human reason unsupported by revelation. Menasseh saw Jewish knowledge taking an Indian form, true but derivative. Glazerson, too, views foreign knowledge as derivative, but also as a lower and less-advanced knowledge suitable for foreigners. Locks recapitulates earlier themes by portraying it as powerful, impure, derivative, and deceptive. These scholars also locate this foreign knowledge variously in a specific Aram, the cosmic realm of the *sitra aḥra*, a vague "East," and a geographically realistic India.

One strand of these interpretations of Gen. 25:6 totally rejects any truth in foreign knowledge, finding it totally alien. Foreigners possess a real power but it is absolutely profane and evil, and deeply menacing. The Zohar carries this line of thought furthest. Another strand of interpretations recognizes in foreign cultures a lower degree of truth which is independent of Judaism. The main example is Abravanel's judgment that Babylonian and Hindu science is useful human knowledge, but far below that acquired by Jews through revelation. A third strand discovers a mixture of Jewish truth and foreign falsehood in other cultures. This is represented in the Zohar by R. Abba's discovery of profound truth in Eastern scripture, yet a truth derived from Judaism and corrupted into dangerous paths. Locks' picture of Hinduism echoes this idea. Nahum of Chernobyl also discovers a mingling of the holy and profane, truth and emptiness, in foreign cultures, which hold value only insofar as they distantly reflect Jewish truth. A fourth strand, represented by Menasseh ben Israel, sees only Jewish knowledge, although in dimmer form, in foreign cultures. He finds validity in Hindu knowledge only because it is Jewish, but, in the chapters we studied, he finds no fault in its foreign form. Glazerson portrays Hinduism as lower and incomplete Jewish knowledge, but not dangerous or corrupt.

Could these conceptions of foreign knowledge support any sort of open-ended dialogue with Hindus and Buddhists?[48] The first strand, demonizing the other, obviously cannot, but even the other strands assume flaws and inferiority from the beginning. The inferiority might be the inherently lower source of knowledge held by others (Abravanel), or it might be the totally derivative nature of another's religious traditions (Menasseh, Glazerson, Locks). One might consider the other religion a sad tangle of Jewish truth and foreign falsehood (R. Abba in the Zohar, Nahum, Locks). But in all cases, one denies the possibility of an independent validity, wisdom, or piety in the other religion. One could only try to show Hindus how their religion points faintly to a fuller light shining most brightly in Judaism.

Some limited support for dialogue, however, is offered by Nahum's advice to Jews to actively engage with non-Jews in conversation and practical exchanges in everyday life. His view that foreign cultures hold sparks of hidden truth could be developed into a rationale (which he himself would reject) for learning about and from them.

These are not at all the only views of foreigners or foreign religions expressed in traditional or Orthodox Jewish thought, but simply a line of thinking associated with one biblical verse, when Abraham's gifts are defined as knowledge.[49] We have examined some of the long and diverse history of this thinking, speculated on the logic of its development, and asked what it implies about how Jews have envisaged their relationship to other religious communities.

NOTES

1 As of January, 1998: Kalman Packouz, Shabbat Shalom Weekly, Oct. 29, 1994, Chayei Sarah, "http://aish.edu/shabbat-shalom." Yaakov Fogelman, on the weekly Torah reading, "Chaye Sarah," no date of first publication, "http://www.israelvisit.co.il." Most Internet commentaries ignore Gen. 25:6 or interpret it otherwise, as one would expect considering the audience and exigencies of the World Wide Web.

2 Among traditional Jewish commentators, Rashi and Nachmanides thought *ha-pilagshim*, a plural form of "concubine," referred only to one person, Keturah, but Rashbam thought it referred to both Keturah and Hagar Most of the interpretations in this study follow Rashi, and the preceding biblical verses, listing the sons of Keturah, seem to support this.

3 In biblical geography *ereṣ kedem* might have referred to a specific area called *kedem*, possibly east of the southern Lebanons, or more loosely to desert areas on the eastern fringes of the Land of Israel.

4 My subject thus differs from that of David Flusser in his article, "Abraham and the Upanishads," *Immanuel* 20 (Spring 1986): pp. 53-61; also in *Between Jerusalem and Benares*, Hananya Goodman, ed. (Albany: SUNY Press, 1994).

5 Balaam, the *b'nei kedem*, and impure names appear together in another passage This one (2:180b) defines three levels of powerful names that people can call upon: upper holy names, lower holy names, and lower impure names, the last of which derive from the *sitra aḥra* and "the impure side," and work only on the level of worldly profane actions that make the agent impure, namely, through sorcery "in the way of Balaam and those Easterners and all those who engage in the *sitra aḥra*." See also 3:208b.

6 This tradition recurs in midrashic works edited from the fourth or fifth centuries to the twelfth—Midrash Gen. Rabbah 64.2, *Pesikta d'Rav Kahana* Piska 4.3, *Tanḥuma Ḥakah* 5, Midrash Eccl. Rabbah 7.19 on Eccl. 7:23, and Midrash Num. Rabbah 19.3 on Num. 19:2, where both the terms *b'nei kedem* and *b'nei ha-mizraḥ* are used. For example, Eccl. Rabbah, discussing 1 Kings 5:10, says: "What was the wisdom of the Easterners (*b'nei kedem*)? They knew astrology and augury with birds and were experts in divination." Then R. Simon b. Gamaliel praises Easterners (*ani m'shabeaḥ et b'nei ha-mizrah*) for three practical customs—kissing on the hand instead of the mouth, cutting food with a knife, and taking counsel in an open field (to maintain privacy).

7 One example with a contemporary twist appears in Part 3, ch. 19, of the often-reprinted *Avodat Ha-Kodesh* (late eighteenth century) by Hayyim Yosef David Azulai. "The wisdom of all the Easterners," according to Azulai, is a superficial, analytical, and self-contradictory rationalism harnessed to "the stubbornness of the heart," attacking faith and undermining the deeper Inner Wisdom of Kabbalah.

8 *Parshat Vayetze*—See Arthur Green, trans., in *Upright Practices, the Light of the Eyes* (NY: Paulist Press, 1982), pp. 236-39. For his translation of Nahum's homily on *Parshat Noah*, see pp. 89-102.

9 *Perush Ha-Torah* (Venice, 1542), comments, "These are the generations of the sons of Noah" (Gen. 11:19), 58b.

10 Note that I translate *Ḥokhmah* here as "science," based on the new context of Abravanel's thought, whereas in earlier passages in this essay I translated it as "wisdom."

11 See Richard Cavendish, *A History of Magic* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1977), pp. 83-107, and D. P. Walker, *Spiritual and Demonic Magic from Ficino to Campanella* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1975).

12 "Investigation is proper for man as such in order to prepare his reason to emerge from a potential to an actual state, but that association with God which was manifest on Mount Sinai, and especially prophecy, was not given to man as such, but to man as higher than man, as similar to the first separate intelligence or to the uppermost sphere" *Yeshu`ot Meshiho*, 73b, quoted by Benzion Netanyahu, *Abravanel, Statesman and Philosopher* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1953), p. 291.

13 Could Menasseh have been influenced by Guillaume Postel's interpretation of Gen. 25:6, a century earlier in *De Originibus*, according to which Abraham sent his sons to India with knowledge of astrology, founding the Brahmins whose very name reflects their Abrahamic origin? See William Bouwsma, *Concordia Mundi: the Career and Thought of Guillaume Postel*, (Harvard Press, 1957): p. 61. Since Menasseh, who tends to gather as many sources as possible for authority, does not cite Postel, we might doubt a direct borrowing. And was Menasseh aware of Nachmanides' identification, in the mid-thirteenth century, of *kedmet eden*, "east of

Eden," with India and its environs? In *Sha ar Ha-Gemul*, a text similar in subject-matter to *Nishmat Ḥayyim*, Nachmanides recounts the story of Ispalkinus seeking the Garden of Eden *me ever l'hodu*, "across (from) India," which he identifies with "the land of the Easterners" (*arṣah b'nei kedem*) of Gen. 29:1.

14 *Relaciones de Pedro Teixeira del origen, descendencia y succession de los reyes de Persia, y de Harmuz, y de unviage hecho por el mismo avtor dende la India oriental hasta Italia por tierra* (Madrid: Miraguano Ediciones, 1994), ch. 22, particularly pp. 80-89; John Stevens, trans., *A History of Persia* (London: Jonas Brown, 1715), pp. 93-95, 104. Teixeira mentions Pythagorean belief, charity for animals, celebration when a cow and bull-mate, the animal hospital, the idea of behavior determining rebirth, and abstention from meat (although he actually says that while some sects in Cambay abstain, others do not). I could not find, however, in either this book or his other book mentioning India, the customs of releasing birds, holding a cow's tail at death, or using masks. William Sinclair, trans., *The Travels of Pedro Teixeira [from India to Italy by Land]* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1902). We might guess, then, that Menasseh either read about them elsewhere or, more likely, heard oral reports from travelers coming to Amsterdam. The word "Banian," which Menasseh finds in Teixeira's text, comes from the Gujarati word, *vaniyo*, man of the trading class. Many merchants in Gujarat were Jains.

15 Gershom Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House, 1974), pp. 348-49. On the theory of *Ibbur* (literally "impregnation," but meaning the entrance of a soul into the body of a living person), see this source.

16 Netanyahu, pp. 99-100; Moshe Idel, "Kabbalah, Platonism, and *Prisca Theologia*: the case of R. Menasseh ben Israel," in *Menasseh ben Israel and His World*, Kaplan, Mechoulan, and Popkin, eds. (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), pp. 207-14.

17 William Wilson, trans., "The Miscellanies," I21. in *Clement of Alexandria*, Ante-Nicene Library, Vol. 4 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1867), p. 421.

18 Robert B. Burke, trans., *The Opus Majus of Roger Bacon*, Vol. 1 (Philadelphia: Univ. of Pennsylvania, 1928), I:4 (p. 65) and IV:16 (p. 301).

19 Cited by Netanyahu, p. 100

20 Judah Halevi, *Kitab Al Khazari*, Hartwig Hirschfeld, trans. (London: M. L. Cailingold, 1931), II:66 (p. 109). See also I:63 (pp. 46-47). In contrast, Abraham ibn Ezra quotes "the sages of India" as valuable sources of scientific information in his astronomical works.

21 I refer to *Piedra gloriosa o de la estatua de Nebuchadnesar* (1655), which interprets the five monarchies appearing in the second chapter of Daniel, and *Esperanca de Israel*, (*The Hope of Israel*) (1650), inspired particularly by explorations in South America and the good fortune that individual Jewish communities were beginning to experience in several parts of

Europe, including Amsterdam. The Jews of India and China appear in the latter book as proof that Jews, in the form of the lost Ten Tribes, have spread to nearly all parts of the world, thereby fulfilling messianic prophecy.

22 Menasseh presumably finds authority for this idea in the "seven laws of Noah" (b.Sanh. 56a), and in Tosefta, Sanh. 13, where Rabbi Joshua states, "There are righteous people among the [foreign] nations who have a place in the World To Come."

23 Henry Mechoulan and Gerard Nahon, eds. and introduction, *Menasseh ben Israel: the Hope of Israel* (Oxford: Oxford Univ. Press, 1987), pp. 42-44. Mechoulan, "Menasseh ben Israel and the World of the Non-Jew," in *Menasseh ben Israel and His World*, pp. 87-90. Quotations from the *Piedra*, p. 43 of the book, p. 87 of the article. During the messianic age, says Menasseh, "the peoples will serve us," which Mechoulan explains as an exclusive Jewish prerogative for "holy service": p. 90 of the article. Apparently, natural moral law was a truth discernible to all, without need for Jews to reveal it, unlike doctrines such as survival of the soul and transmigration.

24 Yeshayahu Vinograd, *Osar Ha-Sefer Ha-Ivri*, 2 Vols. (Jerusalem: Institute of Computerized Bibliography, 1993). *Nishmat Ḥayyim* was also printed in Jerusalem in 1968, based on the Amsterdam text, which is my own source.

25 Himelstein Glazerson, *From Hinduism Back to Judaism* (Jerusalem: Himelsein Glazerson, 1990), 2. Glazerson's translation of *Nishmat Ḥayyim* includes only the terms "this faith" and "this philosophy" without identifying the doctrine of transmigration as their sole reference, even though he includes Menasseh's statements about Pythagoras and Apollonius of Tyana. Glazerson's summary of Rashi's commentary on Gen. 25:6 is also very loose, lacking any reference to impurity and magic.

26 Glazerson, p. 1. The book cover states that he was born and educated in Israel, and is associated with the yeshivah, *Ohr Somayach*, in Jerusalem. He has now written fifteen books, his latest being *Above the Zodiac: Astrology in Jewish Thought*, published in 1997. In early 1999 "Amazon.com" listed eight of his books.

27 Glazerson, p. 7.

28 Glazerson, pp. 6, 51, 86, 23. See other references to the sons of Keturah on pp. 16-17, 22-24, 27.

29 Glazerson, pp. 16-17.

30 Glazerson, p. 110.

31 Glazerson, pp. 51, 86-87.

32 Glazerson, p. 106.

33 Glazerson, p. 109.

34 Gutman Locks, conversation, June 22, 1994, Old City, Jerusalem; and Introduction, *There is One* (Jerusalem: published by author, 1989), pp. 11-

13. For me, this book has more personality and liveliness, and the feel of hard-won insights, than Glazerson's better known book.

35 Locks, p. 173.

36 Locks, p. 39 n.67.

37 Locks, Interview.

38 Locks, *There is* One, pp. 97-100, 151, 174.

39 Locks, p. 61. See also p. 174.

40 Locks, pp. 121-22, 125-27, 161, 164-65, 177-78, 185-86, 191-93.

41 Locks, p. 153. See Sections 38, 70, 82, 83, 112, 113, 114, 142, and 143.

42 Locks, p. 78. Rebirth: 34-35, 114, 160. Good brings good: 32, 47, 68, 159, 160.

43 Locks, pp. 67-68, 91-92.

44 Locks, p. 136. His main arguments appear in the first sixteen sections of the book.

45 Locks, p. 56. Locks alluded to the *Gita* in his conversation with me. He told me that when Krishna says that he is in all things everywhere, there is truth in that, but not the whole truth. Not Krishna, but the one immaterial God is all things everywhere.

46 Locks, p. 37. See also pp. 39-40, 90-91.

47 Locks, pp. 139-43.

48 Leonard Swindler, "The Dialogue Decalogue: Ground Rules for Interreligious, Interideological Dialogue," in *Journal of Ecumenical* Studies 20:1 (Winter 1983). I define such dialogue in the way of Martin Buber's "I-Thou" relationship, and along the lines of Leonard Swidler's system.

49 Harold Kasimow, "The Jewish Tradition and the Bhagavadgita," in *Journal of* Dharma 83 (July-Sept., 1983): pp, 298-301, 310. For references to Jewish sources from a range of historical periods which assert value in foreign religions or their adherents, see the opening of this essay.

Origins of Desire

PATAÑJALI		LURIA
fundamental dyad: consciousness (*purusa*) and the non-conscious (*prakrti*)	*status prior to manifestation*	fundamental oneness: Divine Consciousness (*YHWH*)
	primary cause of manifestation	divine Will-To-Impart (*hesed*)
agitation of consciousness and the non-conscious in proximity to one another (*nirodha*)		divine self-restriction which is the emergence of duality as Being-and-Nonbeing or Light-and-Dark (*tsimtsum*)
consciousness' mis-identification of itself with the non-conscious: the erroneous conflation of the two into one conglomerate identity (*avidya*)	*primary result*	nonbeing's urge to reunite with the divine, to undo separation: the impulse for oneness manifested as the Will To Receive
consciousness' urge to undo the conglomerate identity: the impulse for separation	*primary reaction: desire arises in response to first result and motivates next happening*	
separation attempted, bungled	*secondary cause of manifestation: the (botched) effort to restore the unmanifest*	oneness attempted, bungled
smaller sub conglomerates are distinguished from the whole by consciousness (*buddhi*)	*secondary result: discreet entities arise (including human selves)*	smaller sub unities condense into themselves (*bushekh*)
distinct sub conglomerates misidentify with the original fundamental consciousness	*what the human "I" sense is*	individual sub-unities see in themselves a spark of consciousness, and misidentify those sparks as the original fundamental consciousness
the longing for separation persists and is experienced as attraction and aversion	*secondary reaction: conceptual desire is translated into concrete desires*	the longing for unification persists and is experienced as isolation and incompleteness