Open Your Eyes

בס"ד

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Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel (1907-1972), *Man is Not Alone: A Philosophy of Religion*

The greatest hinderance to knowledge is our adjustment to conventional notions, to mental clichés.

Genesis 24:62-64

סב וְיִצְחָק בָּא מִבּוֹא בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי וְהוּא יוֹשֵׁב בְּאֶרֶץ הַנֶּגֶב: סג וַיֵּצֵא יִצְחָק לָשׂוּחַ בַּשָּׂדֶה לִפְנוֹת עָרֶב
וַיִּשָּׂא עֵינָיו וַיַּרְא וְהִנֵּה גְמַלִּים בָּאִים:סד וַתִּשָּׂא רִבְקָה אֶת–עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרֶא אֶת–יִצְחָק וַתִּפֹּל מֵעַל הַגָּמָל:

62 Isaac had just come back from the vicinity of Beer-lahai-roi, for he was settled in the region of the Negeb. 63 And Isaac went out walking in the field toward evening and, looking up, he saw camels approaching. 64 Raising her eyes, Rebekah saw Isaac. She alighted from the camel....

Genesis 21:14-19

יד וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אַבְרָהָם | בַּבֹּקֶר וַיִּקַּח–לֶחֶם וְחֵמַת מַיִם וַיִּתֵּן אֶל–הָגָר שָׂם עַל–שִׁכְמָהּ וְאֶת–הַיֶּלֶד וַיְשַׁלְּחֶהָ
וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּתַע בְּמִדְבַּר בְּאֵר שָׁבַע: טו וַיִּכְלוּ הַמַּיִם מִן–הַחֵמֶת וַתַּשְׁלֵךְ אֶת–הַיֶּלֶד תַּחַת אַחַד הַשִּׂיחִם:
טז וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתֵּשֶׁב לָהּ מִנֶּגֶד הַרְחֵק כִּמְטַחֲוִי קֶשֶׁת כִּי אָמְרָה אַל–אֶרְאֶה בְּמוֹת הַיֶּלֶד וַתֵּשֶׁב מִנֶּגֶד וַתִּשָּׂא
אֶת–קֹלָהּ וַתֵּבְךְּ: יז וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶת–קוֹל הַנַּעַר וַיִּקְרָא מַלְאַךְ אֱלֹקִים | אֶל–הָגָר מִן–הַשָּׁמַיִם וַיֹּאמֶר
לָהּ מַה–לָּךְ הָגָר אַל–תִּירְאִי כִּי–שָׁמַע אֱלֹקִים אֶל–קוֹל הַנַּעַר בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא–שָׁם: יח קוּמִי שְׂאִי אֶת–הַנַּעַר
וְהַחֲזִיקִי אֶת–יָדֵךְ בּוֹ כִּי–לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשִׂימֶנּוּ: יט וַיִּפְקַח אֱלֹקִים אֶת–עֵינֶיהָ וַתֵּרֶא בְּאֵר מָיִם וַתֵּלֶךְ וַתְּמַלֵּא
אֶת–הַחֵמֶת מַיִם וַתַּשְׁקְ אֶת–הַנָּעַר:

Gen. 21:14 Early next morning Abraham took some bread and a skin of water, and gave them to Hagar. He placed them over her shoulder, together with the child, and sent her away. And she wandered about in the wilderness of Beer-sheba. 15 When the water was gone from the skin, she left the child under one of the bushes, 16 and went and sat down at a distance, a bowshot away; for she thought, "Let me not look on as the child dies." And sitting thus afar, she burst into tears.
Gen. 21:17 God heard the cry of the boy, and an angel of God called to Hagar from heaven and said to her, "What troubles you, Hagar? Fear not, for God has heeded the cry of the boy where he is. 18 Come, lift up the boy and hold him by the hand, for I will make a great nation of him." 19 Then God opened her eyes and she saw a well of water. She went and filled the skin with water, and let the boy drink.

Numbers 15:37

טו:לז וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל–מֹשֶׁה לֵּאמֹר: לח דַּבֵּר אֶל–בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְאָמַרְתָּ אֲלֵהֶם וְעָשׂוּ לָהֶם צִיצִת עַל–כַּנְפֵי בִגְדֵיהֶם לְדֹרֹתָם וְנָתְנוּ עַל–צִיצִת הַכָּנָף פְּתִיל תְּכֵלֶת: לט וְהָיָה לָכֶם לְצִיצִת **וּרְאִיתֶם אֹתוֹ וּזְכַרְתֶּם** אֶת–כָּל–מִצְוֹת ה' **וַעֲשִׂיתֶם** אֹתָם וְלֹא תָתוּרוּ אַחֲרֵי לְבַבְכֶם וְאַחֲרֵי עֵינֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר–אַתֶּם זֹנִים אַחֲרֵיהֶם: מ **לְמַעַן תִּזְכְּרוּ וַעֲשִׂיתֶם אֶת–כָּל–מִצְוֹתָי וִהְיִיתֶם קְדֹשִׁים לֵאלֹקֵיכֶם**: מא אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם אֲשֶׁר הוֹצֵאתִי אֶתְכֶם מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לֵאלֹקִים אֲנִי ה' אֱלֹקֵיכֶם:

The LORD said to Moses as follows: 38 Speak to the Israelite people and instruct them to make for themselves fringes on the corners of their garments throughout the ages; let them attach a cord of blue to the fringe at each corner. 39 That shall be your fringe; **look at it and recall** all the commandments of the LORD **and do them**, so that you do not follow your heart and eyes in your lustful urge. 40 **Thus you shall be reminded to observe all My commandments and to be holy to your God**. 41 I the LORD am your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt to be your God: I, the LORD your God.

Talmud Bavli, *Menachot* **43b**

וראיתם אותו וזכרתם,,, ועשיתם - ראיה מביאה לידי זכירה, זכירה מביאה לידי עשיה.

"Look at it and be aware...and observe them..."-- Looking leads to awareness, awareness leads to doing.

Nahum Sarna, *JPS Commentary to Exodus*, on vs. 2:24

The Hebrew stem *z-k-r* connotes much more than the recall of things past. It means, rather, to be mindful, to pay heed, signifying a sharp focusing of attention upon someone or something. It embraces concern and involvement and is active not passive, so that it eventuates in action.

To Be a Jew, What is It?

-Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel, זצ"ל 1951[1]

.... Indeed, life appears dismal if not mirrored in what is more than life. Nothing can be regarded as valuable unless assessed by something higher in value than itself. Our survival depends upon the conviction that there is something that is worth the price of life. Our survival depends upon a sense of the supremacy of what is lasting. That sense or conviction may be asleep, but it awakens when challenged. In some people it lives as a sporadic wish; in others it is a permanent concern.

What I have learned from Jewish life is that if a man is not more than human, then he is less than human. Judaism is an attempt to prove that in order to be a man, you have to be more than a man; that in order to be a people, we have to be more than a people. Israel was made to be a 'holy people.' This is the essence of its dignity and the essence of its merit. Judaism is a link to eternity, kinship with ultimate reality.

What are the roots out of which we draw that consciousness, that contact with the sublime? A sense of contact with the ultimate dawns upon most people when their self-reliance is swept away by violent misery. Judaism is the attempt to instill in us that sense as an everyday awareness. It leads us to regard injustice as a metaphysical calamity, to sense the divine significance of human happiness, to keep slightly above the twilight of the self, ready to perceive the constant dawn in our souls.

We are endowed with the consciousness of being involved in a history that transcends time and its specious glories. We are taught to feel the knots of life in which the trivial is intertwined with the sublime. There is no end to our experience of the dangerous grandeur, of the divine earnestness of human life. Our blossoms may be crushed, but we are upheld by the faith that comes from the core of our roots. We are not deceived by the obvious, knowing that all delight is but a pretext for adding strength to that which is beyond joy and grief. We know that no hour is the last hour, that the world is more than the world.

Why is my belonging to the Jewish people the most sacred relation to me, second only to my relation to God? Israel is a spiritual order in which the human and the ultimate, the natural and the holy enter a lasting covenant, in which kinship with God is not an aspiration but a reality of destiny. For us Jews there can be no fellowship with God without the fellowship with Israel. Abandoning Israel, we desert God....

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[1] "To Be a Jew, What is it?," *Zionist Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Summer, 1951), pp. 78-84. Found in: Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Moral Grandeur and Spiritual Audacity*. Ed. Susannah Heschel. New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux. 1996. p.7.