

BREATH, KISS, AND SPEECH AS THE SOURCE
OF THE ANIMATION OF LIFE:
ANCIENT FOUNDATIONS OF RABBINIC HOMILIES
ON THE GIVING OF THE TORAH AS THE KISS OF GOD¹

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I

The Bible stresses the uniqueness of mankind as creatures endowed with the faculty of speech. H. W. Wolff, in his work on anthropological ideas in the Bible, shows that Scripture places special emphasis on the role of the mouth in speaking, unlike its emphasis on the role of the ear in hearing or the eye in seeing.² This is evident when we consider the wealth of synonyms Scripture has in its lexicon for the organ of speech. Aside from the mouth (פה), we also find mention of lips (Prov 4:24), lip (Isa 6:7), tongue (2 Sam 23:2), palate (Prov 5:3), and even throat (Ps 149:6).³ Scripture also has an astounding number of verbs denoting various tones of speech—a rich variety not found with respect to hearing or seeing.⁴ This lexical wealth is reserved uniquely to the faculty of speech and does not pertain equally to hearing or seeing, since the advantage of human beings over the rest of creation is not manifest in hearing or seeing, but only in speaking.

¹ I would like to thank Prof. Jacob Klein for reading the sections on Mesopotamian culture and offering corrections and additions to the text. I would also like to thank Prof. Albert Baumgarten for his comments and suggestions for improving the article.

² Hans Walter Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament* (trans. M. Kohl; London: SCM Press, 1974) 77-78.

³ I have only provided one example of the use of each term.

⁴ The particular sensitivities of a culture are brought out by multiple levels of lexical distinction. For example, the Eskimos are known to make fine lexical distinctions between different varieties of snow—distinctions which Hebrew does not acknowledge at all. See Benjamin Lee Whorf's analysis (*Language, Thought and Reality* [New York: Wiley, 1940/1956] 217) and discussion of verb declension in the Hopi language. Also cf. Leonard Broom and Philip Sleznic, *Essentials of Sociology* (New York: Harper and Row, 1975) Part 2, Chapter 2: Language and Culture.

The Bible has a rich variety of verbs pertaining to speech: אמר=speak; אָמַר=call; קרא=call; צוה=command; למד=teach; יָרָה=instruct; רִיב=accuse; שָׁבַע=swear; בָּרַךְ=bless; אָרַר=curse; שָׁיר=sing; הֵלֵל=praise; רָגַן=rejoice; פָּלַל=pray; צָעַק=cry, complain; to cite just a few.

This is brought out in *Tg. Onq.* Gen 2:7, which renders the verse about man becoming נִפְשׁ חַיָּה, a "living soul," as רוּחַ מְמַלְלָא or a "speaking spirit."⁵

Speech is important not simply as the technical ability of human beings to communicate via language; it is important as the creative force stemming from the divine use of speech—the utterance which creates. Thus, in Scripture we find that God created the world by the utterance of His mouth (Gen 1:3ff). We also find that the creative power which lies in speech is transferred to human beings associated with the Deity. For example, Joshua commanded the sun to stand still in mid-heaven for an entire day, until he and his army quashed the Amorites:

And there was no day like that before it or after it, that the Lord hearkened unto the voice of a man; for the Lord fought for Israel (Josh 10:14).

Although Scripture states explicitly that this was an exceptional cir-

⁵ *Targum Onqelos* seldom deviates from literal translation, therefore its rendition here is quite surprising. Rabbi Simon Baruch Schefftel (*Biure Onkelos* [Theodor Ackermann: Munich, 1888] 5) tries to account for Onqelos' rendition by explaining that he interpreted חַיָּה in the sense of חַיָּה, which also means "saying and speaking." But Samuel David Luzzatto (*Philoxenus sive de Onkelos* [Jerusalem, 1969] 9) believes *Targum Onqelos* deliberately deviated from the literal sense in order to "set the matter right as a point of honor, so that man and the animals not appear equal, since also the animals are referred to as נִפְשׁ חַיָּה (cf. Gen 7:22: 'all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life'). But Onqelos deliberately let the reader know that this spirit gave human beings the faculty of speech." This theme is developed in Nahmanides' commentary on the Pentateuch: "But Onqelos said: 'and man became a spirit that speaks.' His opinion seems to accord with those who say that man has various souls, and this was the soul of intelligence, inspired into his nostrils and making him a speaking soul." Also cf. Menahem M. Kasher, *Tora Shlema*, on this verse (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1929), 2.215, par. 161, and the collection of views cited by Shlomo Kasher in *Peshuto shel Miqra* (additions to *Tora Shlema* on Genesis; Jerusalem, 1963) 98-99. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* elaborates even further than Onqelos: "and He breathed into his nostrils the spirit of life, and the spirit in the body became a talking spirit, seeing and hearing." It should be added that the *amora* Rav, a leader of the Babylonian Jewish community in the late third and early fourth centuries, saw a religious precept in this verse. The fact that God is mentioned as inspiring the spirit of life into man leads him to conclude that this was not a present bestowed without a price. Rather, with the bestowal of the soul, man became the guardian of a precious item entrusted to him: "Rabbi Judah quoted Rav, 'What is the reason for R. Yose's opinion that a person is forbidden to fast individually in order to cancel an evil decree passed against the entire people? Because it is written: and man became a living soul. The spirit that I have given thee, thou must keep alive.'" (*b. Ta'ani* 22b)

cumstance, the theme of the power of speech is developed extensively in the mishnaic and talmudic period.

In the time of the Tannaim we find that the ability to change nature by the power of speech is granted to many of the righteous. The Holy One, blessed be He, told Moses: "decree it upon me, and I shall do it."⁶ We even find the following surprising words in the Babylonian Talmud, put in the mouth of God: "Who rules me? The righteous. For I make a decree and [he] cancels it" (*b. Mo'ed Qat.* 16b).⁷

The notion implicit here is that human speech has the power to create, as a continuation of the Deity's all-creating utterance.⁸ Even unintentional words issuing from the righteous are effective. Thus Eccl 10:5, "There is an evil which I have seen under the sun, like an error which proceedeth from a ruler," is interpreted as originally having been said of God, and then redirected towards the righteous.⁹

Moreover, in the Talmud we find evidence of the belief that the power to change reality does not lie only in the speech of the righteous or the wise, but that the utterance of the layman can also pose a danger.¹⁰ It should be noted that this faith in the power of words to

⁶ *Sifre* Numbers 135 (Horowitz 182). For additional sources, cf. Ephraim Elimelech Urbach, *The Sages: their Concepts and Beliefs* (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1971) 438, n. 16 [in Hebrew].

⁷ The words of Eliphaz the Temanite to Job, "Thou shalt also decree a thing, and it shall be established unto thee," (Job 22:28) are interpreted in the Jerusalem Talmud as follows: "What is meant by 'unto thee'? Even if He were to decree something, and you [Honi Ha-Me'agel, one of the *tannaim* known for the miracles he wrought by means of his prayers] were to decree something, yours [that of Honi] would be fulfilled and mine [that of the Holy One, blessed be He] would not be fulfilled." (*y. Ta'anit* 67a)

⁸ On the connection between *דבר* meaning "word" or "speech" and *דבר* in the sense of "thing" or "tangible object" cf. E. Crawley, *Oath, Curse and Blessing* (London: Thinkers Library, 1934) 3; Raphael Patai, *אדם וארצה* (*Man and Earth in Hebrew Custom, Belief and Legend*; Jerusalem: Hebrew University Publishing, 1943) 272; Johannes Hehn, "Zum Problem des Geistes im Alten Orient und im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 43 (1925) 220.

⁹ For example, the story in *b. Ketubot* 62b on Judah, son of R. Hiyya; and the conversation between Samuel's father and Samuel, *b. Ketubot* 23a.

¹⁰ The Talmud learns this from two incidents mentioned in Scripture. In one of these Scripture mentions that after a plague had broken out among the people the prophet Gad said to King David that the plague could be arrested by building an altar to the Lord on the site of the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite. So David sought to buy this threshing-floor from Araunah, and the latter blessed David with the words, "The Lord thy God accept thee" (2 Sam 24:23). This blessing indeed came to pass; after the altar was built and offerings made on it, the plague immediately ceased. In the second illustration, Darius, King of Persia who had been pressed by ministers who opposed to Daniel to throw the latter into the lions den, said to

determine reality by fiat is found in many heritages, not just the Jewish. Various nuances of the same are found in ancient Egyptian traditions, in Zoroastrianism, in Brahmanism, among the ancient Greeks and Romans, and elsewhere.¹¹

II

In Scripture we not only find the notion of creation through speech, but also the notion of creation by the *breath of the deity*. Gen 2:7 gives the following account of God creating man: "Then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the earth, and blew into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." Ostensibly this verse simply says that God created man from the dust of the earth,¹² after

Daniel: "Thy god whom thou servest continually, He will deliver thee" (Dan 6:17). Indeed, as we read there, Daniel was saved from the lions; for God sent an angel to close the lions' mouths: "My God hath sent His angel, and hath shut the lions' mouths" (Dan 6:23). These two incidents led R. Hanina (as reported in his name by R. Eliezer) to conclude: "Never make light of the blessing of a layman" (*b. Megilla* 16a).

The converse is learned from the Bible's account of Abimelech's words to Sarah after taking her as a wife even though she was a married woman. Having become aware of the gravity of his misdeed, in the wake of the punishment sent him by God, Abimelech gave Sarah "a thousand pieces of silver," telling her it is "a covering of the eyes to all that are with thee" (Gen 20:16), i.e. compensation to show people that he had not taken her as a wife with contempt, but "with honor did he take her, and against his will did he return her" (Rashbam on Gen 20:16). But since covering of the eyes can also mean blindness, R. Hanina concluded that also the curse of a layman is fulfilled; for as we know, Isaac, Sarah's son, suffered from blindness in his old age (Gen 27:1).

In a somewhat different context, in *b. Berakot* 55b dreams are also said to be dangerous, since their "solution follows the mouth." In other words, the utterance of the person who solves the dream will later cause it to be fulfilled in real life. Thus the perplexed dreamer becomes dependent on the words that issue from the mouth of the solver. See the story about the dream-solver bar-Hadaya in *b. Berakot* 56a. Likewise, one has the Talmudic aphorism, "a covenant is made with the lips." This is learned by the late third-century *amora* R. Johanan of Tiberias from the story of the binding of Isaac: When Abraham wanted to go alone to bind his son, without the young men who were accompanying him, he requested of them, "Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come back to you" (Gen 22:5). But Isaac had been destined to die and not return; hence one learns that the words a person says even have the power to deliver from certain death (*b. Mo'ed Qat* 18a).

¹¹ For a list of studies on the subject, cf. Patai, *אדם וארצה*, 2.274.

¹² Many scholars say Adam, the primordial man, was so called precisely because he was fashioned of the dust of the earth, *אדמה*. Cf. Patai, *אדם וארצה*, 1.151f.; Wolff, *Anthropology*, 94. In legends ascribed to the *tannaim* (although redacted much later) we read: "Why was he called Adam? R. Judah says after the earth, *ארצה*, from which he was taken" (*Midrash ha-Gadol* on Gen 2:7). Also cf. M. Kasher, *Tora Shilma*, 2.209, par. 129; S. Kasher, *Peshuto*, 98. An ancient Egyptian view was that the god Khnum

which He blew into him, i.e., inspired in this dust the spirit of life,¹³ and henceforth mankind, i.e., man, became a "living soul," i.e., a creature with life.

Indeed, the verse itself does not explicitly state through which organ this breath of life was inspired. However, since this נשמה חיים or breath of life was interpreted by the ancients as the act of breathing which indicates life, there are only two possibilities: either the mouth or the nose. We shall discuss this at greater length below. At this point, however, we can say that the view which associates the primordial act of inspiring with the mouth is naturally closer to the third interpretation which we discuss below, namely the creation of man by the *kiss* of God. This takes us to an interesting, new, and more erotic aspect of the issue. Note that in distant cultures the affinity between kissing and breathing is even more striking, as Ernest Crawley writes in his book, *The Mystic Rose*: "The typical primitive kiss is contact of nose and cheek; the Khoyoungtha, for instance, apply mouth and nose to the cheek, and then inhale."¹⁴

Regarding the connection between human life and the breath of God, we note that this biblical view is very ancient and can be traced back to the cradles of civilization in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Many inscriptions from ancient Babylon attest to the deity being the source of the spirit that gives life to mankind, this spirit of life being exhaled from the deity's mouth into other creatures in order to give them life. An ancient Sumerian-Akkadian hymn addresses the god Marduk with the words: "Your speech is a sweet breath, the life of the lands."¹⁵

was a creator-god and made living beings out of clay on a potter's wheel. Cf. Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1978) 246 and fig. 23.

¹³ The organ in the human body where this spirit was inspired is not explicitly identified. For various views on the subject as reflected in early Rabbinic literature, cf. W. Hirsch, *Rabbinic Psychology* (New York: Arno Press, 1973) 195-199.

¹⁴ Ernest Crawley, *The Mystic Rose* (London: Spring Books, 1965) 339.

¹⁵ Erica Reiner et al., *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago* (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 1992; henceforth *CAD*) 17/II.138. This source was cited by scholars many years back as proof of this notion. Cf. Hehn, "Zum Problem des Geistes," 218; Paul van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve, Source de Vie dans L'ancien Testament," *Revue Biblique* 44 (1935) 491. This does not necessarily provide conclusive proof that the ancient Babylonians perceived the source of life as coming from the deity inspiring the spirit of life, for the text at hand might be nothing more than a metaphorical expression. Even such a metaphor, however (as Prof. J. Klein has apprised me), would not have developed without some sort of belief that the spirit of life comes to humans from the mouth of the deity.

Similar expressions are found in Akkadian literature: "May your sweet breath waft hither," or "Always seek the sweet breath of the gods," etc.¹⁶ The closest parallel to our subject comes from the El-Amarna letters, in a phrase actually addressed to the king: "[Who can live] when breath does not issue forth from the mouth of the king, his lord?"¹⁷

Similar views are also found in ancient Egypt, as J. Hehn has shown, in praise of Isis coming with her tremendous powers, including that of speech, which is perceived as the life-giving breath of the deity to mankind. The words of Isis are a shield against dread disease; it is they that give life to mankind when human breath fails, i.e., when breathing becomes weak and is in danger, in need of renewed strength.¹⁸ Even more prominent in the Egyptian heritage are the findings attributing breath to its source, the breath of the gods. In a hymn of Akhenaten, Aten is praised in the following words:

You give life to the children among the women and among the men who give seed, you order the child in its mother's womb, . . . you give air to bring to life all that you create . . . from the moment the chick leaves the egg . . . you give it your breath to bring it to life.¹⁹

A more striking illustration is provided by the words one of the Egyptian kings addresses to the god Amon: "Your color is light, your breath is life . . . your body is a breath of spirit for every nostril, we breathe through you in order to live."²⁰

¹⁶ *CAD*, 138.

¹⁷ *CAD*, 139.

¹⁸ Hehn, "Zum Problem des Geistes," 218-219; Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 491.

¹⁹ Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 493.

²⁰ Hehn, "Zum Problem des Geistes," 216. The sun-god is addressed as follows: "The spirit of life and its warmth both come from your nose"; also "Eternal life is in you, to give life [by] your inspiration into the nose of living [creatures]" (*ibid.*, 216). Re addresses Osiris with the words: "May the breath of Re be transferred to your nose, and the vapor exhaled from the mouth of King Khepri be close to you, so that you be able to live" (*ibid.*, 217). Seti II is asked: "Turn to me . . . O rising sun, who lights the lands with your glow . . . O Seti . . . giver of breath" (*ibid.*, 217). Another Egyptian king similarly praises Ramses II: "He gives breath at his will; all the earth gives thanks unto him" (*ibid.*, 217). In Egyptian culture even the dead address the gods and pray for continued breath: "O Atum, give me the spirit that is in your nose"; "O, Atum, give me the pleasant breath that is in your nostrils" (Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 493, n. 4). Similar expressions are also found among the Phoenicians, indicating that they too viewed the breath of the gods as the source of human life. Cf. W. von Baudissin, *Adonis und Esmun* (Leipzig: Hinrich, 1911) 505; Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 492-493. The Phoenician notion, however, might have been derived from the Egyptian view (Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 492-493).

Van Imschoot²¹ aptly sums up the research on this question:²² the notion of human breath being the property of the deity, bestowed upon mankind by the breath of the god himself to give life, is found among the ancient Egyptians, Phoenicians, Canaanites (as seen in the El-Amarna letters), and in eastern realms, among the Babylonians and Assyrians.²³

III

The biblical notion associating breath (נשימה) and soul (נשמה) is not found in all languages today. In English, for example, these two words are not at all related. However a glance at earlier languages shows immediately that such an association was a natural part of the ancients' view of the world. This has been noted by several scholars, leaving us but to summarize their findings, adding our own insights with respect to the language of the Bible and further evidence from the language of the Sages, which has not yet been discussed in the literature.

Many languages throughout the world clearly identify the spirit or soul with breath. For example, in Greek there is a connection between *psyche* and *pneuma*. In Latin, *animus* and *anima* are fundamentally related to *spiritus* in the sense of "wind." Likewise, in Sanskrit there is an affinity between *atman* and *prana*.²⁴ Stephen Gaselee, who studied many related instances, claims:

I think that almost all the European Aryan languages have roots with the double meaning of "breath and spirit," Germanic *geist*, Slavonic *ducha*. So among the Semitic languages: in Arabic *ruh* = soul is near to *rh* = wind. I am told that in Chinese the character for breath = *ch'i* has

²¹ Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 496.

²² Also cf. Hehn, *Zum Problem des Geistes*, as well as J. Hempel, *Gott und Mensch im Alten Testament* (Stuttgart, 1926) 166, n. 1.

²³ A particularly interesting notion, although possibly only a folk belief, is found among the ancient Greeks, as well. They held that upon a person's death, when the spirit departs from the body, it goes to the wind that rules the outer domains (especially on blustery winter nights); from there it is scattered to the four winds, and thus it is lost. Cf. Plato *Phaedrus* 77e.

²⁴ Cf. Edward B. Tylor, *Religion in Primitive Culture* (New York: Harper & Row, 1958) 16-17; Franz Cumont, *Afterlife in Roman Paganism* (New York: Dover, 1959) 59. For further reading on ideas in the Classical world concerning the soul and its parts, see Menahem Nadel, *The Bible and Cultures of the Ancient World* (Tel Aviv: Poalim, 1962).

the primitive meaning of "vital force," as has the Japanese *ki*, represented by the same character.²⁵

Of course, in Hebrew we have נשמה—soul or spirit, and רוח—wind or spirit, whose bearing on this issue is perfectly clear. נפש, as the word for soul, has the same source, as the parallel Akkadian 'na-pishtu,' also meaning breath.²⁶ In Scripture a creature is said to be "living" when it breathes. Take, for example, the case of the Zarephathi woman's son, whose death is described as follows: "and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him (1 Kgs 17:17)." Or Job 27:3, where a person is alive "All the while my breath (i.e., נשמה or soul) is in me, and the spirit (i.e., רוח or breath) of God is in my nostrils"—where this spirit surely comes from God, as in Job 33:4: "The spirit of God hath made me, and the breath of the Almighty giveth me life."²⁷ When the divine spirit disappears from the living creature, that which is left is dust: "for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return" (Gen 3:19).²⁸ Thus life and death depend

²⁵ Stephen Gaselee, "The Soul in the Kiss," *Criterion* 2 (1924) 359. Tylor (*Religion in Primitive Culture*, 16-17) adds that among the aborigines of western Australian the word "waung" was used both in the sense of "breath" and in the sense of "spirit" or "soul." Similarly, in the language of the Netala of California, the word "pitus" has a similar dual meaning, as does the word "nawa" among the people of Java. Some of the Greenlanders, according to Tylor, use the same word to denote a person's shadow (in the sense of soul) as to denote breathing; and the Malays say that when a person dies the soul departs through the nostrils.

²⁶ Cf. Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, *Hebräische und Aramäisches Lexikon zum Alten Testament* (Leiden: Brill, 1983) 3.672; Hirsch, *Rabbinic Psychology*, 25. In examining the origins of the word נפש it should be noted that other "etymological" interpretations evolved later in order to explain the source of this word; for example, נפש as coming from the Aramaic נפשא, meaning growth and expansion. Cf. *Lamentations Rabbah* 3.6, on the appetite of R. Judah b. Bathyra.

²⁷ If one wishes to consider the *eros-thanatos* dimension, one may note that the spirit that emanates from the deity is not only life-giving, but also destructive; its purpose is also to punish, devastate, and rebuke. Several places in Scripture illustrate this catastrophic potential. For example, Ps 18:16, describes the devastation of the world "at Thy rebuke, O Lord, at the blast of the breath of Thy nostrils." This divine breath which also has the power to punish is apparently also the divine spirit that rules justly, as in Job 4:8-9: "According as I have seen, they that plow iniquity, and sow mischief, reap the same. By the breath of God they perish, and by the blast of His anger are they consumed." The spirit that God gave human beings from His own breath also makes God forgive the sins of mankind: "For I will not contend for ever, neither will I be always wroth; for the spirit that enwrappeth itself is from Me, and the souls which I have made" (Isa 57:16).

²⁸ Perhaps this is the reason many cultures refer to the earth as "mother": it is that from which, according to Scripture, all creatures were created; which man works all the days of his life to draw forth bread (Gen 3:19 and 3:23: "Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was

on the divine breath; if God gathers back his spirit, the person dies; Job 34:14: "If He set His heart upon man, if He gather unto Himself his spirit and his breath"; Ps 104:29 on God's creatures: "Thou hidest Thy face, they vanish; Thou withdrawest their breath, they perish, and return to their dust." But if God sends forth His spirit anew, they reawaken to life: "Thou sendest forth Thy spirit, they are created; and Thou renewest the face of the earth" (Ps 104:30).²⁹

Another etymological interpretation (albeit not an etymological search in the modern sense), important to our discussion because of its proximity to the Akkadian root, comes from *Genesis Rabbah*³⁰: נשמה

taken"); and to which all creatures created from it shall return. Cf. Wolff, *Anthropology*, 94, n. 10; Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 486-487, n. 3; and the extensive material collected by Patai, *אדם וארמה*, 65-120. Also cf. Eccl 12:7: "And the dust returneth to the earth as it was, and the spirit returneth unto God who gave it." The meaning of this verse in relationship to the subject at hand is discussed by Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 486.

²⁹ Perhaps this is best illustrated by the imagery of Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 37:1-14). The spirit of the Lord transports the prophet to the valley of dry bones and causes him to pass by them round about; finally the Lord promises that these bones will live: "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and ye shall live" (Ezek 37:5-6). (Note that the spirit of the Lord is portrayed here as if it were an autonomous entity, which the prophet is commanded to invoke to action, as if it were not actually the breath of the Lord: "Prophecy unto the breath, . . . Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe upon these slain, that they may live" [Ezek 37:9]. Compare this with the spirit of God hovering over the face of the waters in Gen 1:2, and with n. 36 below. But this may be purely symbolic; for the verses cited above say explicitly that the breath of the Lord that comes to the bones of the dead to give them life stems from the initiative and will of God, and is not due to the prophet's act.) Other Biblical imagery includes treasures of wind located in the heavens. In Psalms the Lord is referred to as He who "bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures" (Ps 135:7); in Jeremiah "He maketh lightnings with the rain, and bringeth forth the wind out of His treasures" (Jer 10:13); and in Job the connection of these elements with God's breath is made explicit: "Out of the chamber cometh the storm; and cold out of the north. By the breath of God is ice given, and the breadth of the waters is straitened" (Job 37:9-10). The distinction between physical wind and spirit in Scriptures is discussed by Van Imschoot ("L'esprit de Jahve," 497-499). In Wolff's opinion (*Anthropology*, 60), the function of all these Biblical images, closely associating human breath with God's breath, is to integrally bind human existence with the existence of God—on one hand a God of mercy who gives life, and on the other hand a God of wrath and retribution, as written in Scripture itself (Ps 150:6). This bond causes all living creatures to be more aware of their source of life, so that "everything that breathes praise God." On the breath/soul of other creatures, aside from human beings, coming from the breath of God, see Wolff (*Anthropology*, 60) and A. B. Davidson, *The Theology of the Old Testament* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1904) 194-195.

³⁰ Ch. 14 (Theodor-Albeck [Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1965] 133).

נשמה ("The soul is the breath; as people say, his breath is good").³¹

Further support for our thesis can be found in lexicon of the rabbis of the Mishna and Talmud, in the fact that in the Land of Israel the

³¹ See the explanation given in the London manuscript, cited by Theodor (ibid.), on נשמה = נושם = נשמה: "The homily explains that נשמה, soul, in its plain sense means the breath that a person breathes. This is the meaning of נשמה or נשמה in the Syrian tongue: just as people say, his breath is good." Also cf. *Genesis Rabbah* with commentary by Moshe Arye Mirkin (Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1986) 1.106, s.v. נשמה. *Genesis Rabbah*, however, tries to explain there that the soul (נשמה) is the blood, according to Deut 12:23: "for the blood is the life" (כי הדם הוא הנפש); or according to Lev 17:11: "For the life of the flesh is in the blood" (כי נפש כל בשר רמו בנפשו הוא). This exegetical problem in the Bible, i.e. whether the original soul instilled by God in human beings is the blood or the breath, is discussed by many scholars (cf. Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 496, and the sources cited there in notes 5 and 6). According to W. von Baudissin (*Kyrios als Gottesname in Judentum und seine Stelle in der Religionsgeschichte* [Giessen: Töpelmann, 1929] 3.487, n. 1), the notion associating life with blood is the more ancient perception, and the notion associating life with breath a later view. Van Imschoot ("L'esprit de Jahve," 482, n. 1) is inclined to think that these ideas existed side by side. Hehn ("Zum Problem des Geistes," 216) believes the view associating the creation of human beings and the essence of human life with breath actually originated in ancient Egypt and spread from there to all other cultures. According to this approach, the view that the blood is the essence of human life is perhaps of Semitic origin, and both views come together in the Bible. The logic for attributing the essence of human vitality to the breath is clear; obviously human life depends on breathing. Likewise with the blood; the ancients were well aware that loss of blood meant loss of corporeal life. Van Imschoot ("L'esprit de Jahve," 482, n. 6) raises an interesting point: in his opinion the ancients had no difficulty reconciling these two views, found side by side in Scripture, since they noted that as the warm blood leaves the human body, vapor (הכל), which they associated with the breath, also rises. Perhaps, in light of this, one should re-examine the association of the name Abel (הכל) precisely with the first victim of murder in the Bible. The Sages viewed this murder as man's first attempt to learn, to satisfy his curiosity, about whence a person's life departs and leaves the body. Cf. *b. Sanhedrin* 37b: "R. Judah son of R. Hiyya . . . that Cain made numerous bruises and wounds in Abel, since he did not know from where the soul departs, until he reached his neck." Another answer to the question of how Cain knew how to kill a person is offered by *Genesis Rabbah*, Ch. 22 (Theodor-Albeck 214-215): "R. Azariah and R. Jonathan in the name of R. Isaac: Cain observed how his father slaughtered the bull [the first bull which, according to legend, Adam sacrificed to God; cf. Theodor, *מנחת יחודה*, 132, 149, 197], 'and it shall please the Lord better than a bullock' (Ps 69:32), so he killed him there [on the neck], where the signs [i.e., the features indicating where the knife is placed in order to slaughter an animal] were." The relationship between these legends and the ancient Babylonian myth about human life being created from the blood of a slaughtered god has not yet been studied (according to Prof. J. Klein) but merits investigation. On the origins of this Babylonian myth see the articles cited by Wolff (*Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 93, notes); on Scripture's attitude towards blood in particular, see Wolff, 60-62. Note also that the Genesis story of the creation of man bears no resemblance to the Egyptian story, dating from the middle kingdom, that man was created from the tears of the sun-god (Wolff, *Anthropology of the Old Testament*, 60-62).

term נפיתה—blowing into, or inspiring—was used as synonymous with נשימה—breathing.³² Thus we may presume that the same primordial action of inspiring life in mankind was so deeply rooted in the perception of the ancients as integrally related to creating respiration in mankind that, in the Land of Israel, breathing was called נפיתה inspiring. Perhaps, as a result, the word נפיתה began to be used for movement of the spirit (and air) into as well as out of the body, so that there even developed a curse based on this word³³: חיפה רוחיה—דההו נברא—“May so-and-so’s spirit expire.”³⁴ This was noted by Julius Theodor,³⁵ in whose opinion “the word נשימה is foreign to the style of the Jerusalem Talmud and *Genesis Rabbah*.” In other words, rabbinic sources from the Land of Israel did not distinguish between the words נשמה=soul and נשימה=breathing, but called breath = נשימה “soul” = נשמה. As proof, Theodor cites *Genesis Rabbah*: “R. Levi said in the name of R. Hanina: The Holy One, blessed be He, must be extolled for each and every breath (נשמה = soul) a person breathes.”³⁶

Thus far we have presented two specific notions, but have not shown the relationship between them. The first was the ancient notion of creation by the word of the deity, and the second the idea of the divine breath bestowing life, i.e. breathing a soul into the human being. I believe that Scripture itself draws a connection between these two ideas, and even brings it out explicitly. This is seen in the parallel construction of the verse in Ps 33:6: “By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth.”

³² This is noted by A. Kohut in his edition of ערוך השלם לרכנו נהן בן חזיאל, Part 5, 363, s.v. נפסח, with respect to the ruling in *b. Megilla* 16b, apparently originating from the Land of Israel, in the name of R. Ada of Jaffa, as follows: “The list of Haman’s ten sons must be recited in a single breath.” The reason given there is that “their souls all expired together.” Therefore their names have to issue from the mouth in a single utterance, in one breath. Similarly, in *y. Megilla* 3:8-8b, R. Hiyya son of R. Ada, apparently the son of the above-mentioned rabbi, rules: “They must be said in a single breath (נפיתה),” and the text immediately adds that the words “the ten sons of Haman” must also be read in the same breath. This indicates that נשימה in the *Babylonian Talmud* is the same as נפיתה in the *Jerusalem Talmud*. (Incidentally, the *Jerusalem Talmud* provides the most ancient attribution of this practice. R. Hiyya son of R. Ada apparently received this tradition from his father, who received it from R. Jeremiah, who received it from R. Zeira. Thus this ruling was known at least since the third generation of *amoraim* in the Land of Israel, i.e., circa 280-320, C. E.)

³³ ערוך השלם (Kohut 5.363).

³⁴ In the *Babylonian Talmud* this expression is sometimes given in abbreviated form. Cf. *b. Sanhedrin* 97b: חיפשו עצמן של מרדכי קיצין (“May they expire who calculate the end”), which Rashi fills in as: חיפשו נשמו (“May his soul expire”).

³⁵ Cf. his comments on *Genesis Rabbah*, (Theodor-Albeck 133, l. 1).

³⁶ *Genesis Rabbah* (Theodor-Albeck 134).

Some scholars even find evidence of this connection in Gen 1:2-3: “...and the *spirit* of God hovered over the face of the waters. And God said: ‘Let there be light.’”³⁷ Whoever is not convinced of such a connection existing in Scripture itself, can see the point proven most explicitly in the homilies of the Sages, which we turn to below, where the word of God—which they perceive as the words of the Torah—has a life-bestowing quality, giving breath.

IV

All that we have said thus far is but an introduction to the main thesis of this paper, based on Mishnaic and Talmudic sources: the inspiration by which Man was created—equated to the divine word, as in the words of the psalmist cited above—is perceived in many sources not simply as inspiration of living spirit, but as the ancient source of the *kiss*. From this we easily deduce that the human kiss, as well, is far more than an act of etiquette. A kiss (apparently only mouth to mouth)³⁸ transmits the essence of vitality and spirituality of one per-

³⁷ Van Imschoot, “L’esprit de Jahve,” 491. Some Biblical commentators draw a connection between the words “by the breath (רוח) of His mouth” (Ps 33:6) and “the spirit (רוח) of God hovered over the face of the waters” (Gen 1:2); although others disagree and refuse to ascribe importance to the “spirit” that “hovered” in the creation of the world. Cf. Van Imschoot, “L’esprit de Jahve,” 491, and Charles Augustus Briggs and Emilie Grace Briggs, *The Book of Psalms* (The International Critical Commentary; Edinburgh, 1976) 1.287.

³⁸ Also cf. n. 13 above. The sources that provide evidence on the placement of the kiss in ancient times are few and far between, nevertheless we shall try to compare what can be learned from these sources with the information obtained from Scripture. In Ugaritic literature both erotic kisses and motherly kisses are delivered on the lips. Cf. Mayer Irwin Gruber, *Aspects of Nonverbal Communication in the Near East* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1980) 1.322-327. Herodotus (*Histories* 1.134 [trans. Aubrey De Selincourt; Classics Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1954] 69) provides information on much later practices in 5th-century B.C.E. Persia: “When Persians meet in the streets one can always tell by their mode of greeting whether they are of the same rank; for they do not speak but kiss . . . their equals upon the mouth, those somewhat superior on the cheeks. A man of greatly inferior rank prostrates himself in profound reverence.” As for ancient Greece, we read that when Odysseus returned from his voyage his friends kissed him on the head, hands, and shoulders (Homer *Od.* 21.224). In the Bible the verb נשק, kissed, in the sense of a kiss on the lips, appears only once, in Prov 24:26: “He kisseth the lips that giveth a right answer.” Even this verse has been understood in a variety of ways, some commentators interpreting נשק as sealing the lips, i.e., being silent. Cf. Jeffrey M. Cohen, “An Unrecognized Connotation of NSQ PEH, with Special Reference to Three Biblical Occurrences,” *Vetus Testamentum* 32 (1982) 416-424. The kiss expected from her lover, in Song of Songs, also is not explicitly stated as being mouth to mouth: “Let him kiss me with the kisses

son to another. But before we can discuss the kiss, *per se*, we must return to the breath and how it was perceived, as an introduction to the notion of the kiss in the world of the Sages.

of his mouth" (Cant 1:2), and "When I should find thee without, I would kiss thee" (Cant 8:1). These verses give reason to believe that the kiss is an allusion to the sexual act itself. See M. Fishbane, *The Kiss of God* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1994) 14; also see the interesting parallels in Akkadian literature, noted by Gruber, *Nonverbal Communication*, 344. For later interpretations of the kisses in Song of Songs as kisses on the mouth, see below. Even in the case of the most explicitly sexual kiss, in Prov 7:13, from the impudent harlot to the young man—"so she caught him, and kissed him"—the text does not spell out that it was given on the mouth. From the manner in which Joab son of Zeruiah kissed Amasa son of Ithra (2 Sam 20:9), taking him by the beard to kiss him, it seems that this kiss was meant to be given on the cheek. The lack of clarity in the Scriptural text as to where these various kisses were given led several medieval commentators to try to establish some general rules. Rashi, for example, addresses himself to the placement of certain of the kisses. With respect to Cant 8:1, he says, "'Would that he kiss me' . . . from the kisses of his mouth as before; for there are places where one kisses on the back of the hand or on the shoulder (*b. Berakot* 8b), but I passionately yearn for him to follow the earliest custom with me, as a groom kisses his bride, mouth to mouth." Another example comes from Laban kissing his nephew Jacob. Gen 29:13 says only that he "embraced him, and kissed him"; but Rashi, following a homily of the Sages (*Genesis Rabbah* 70 [Theodor-Albeck 813]) also locates the kiss, explaining that the purpose of the embrace was first and foremost to check whether Jacob was hiding riches in his clothing, and having failed to find anything there, he then kissed him to see whether he was hiding rubies in his mouth(!). Thus, according to Rashi's citation of the Sages, this kiss was delivered on the mouth, and even so impudently as for the host to feel around with his tongue in his guest's mouth in search of imagined jewels. There may also be a sexual allusion here. This is explicitly mentioned in a manuscript of *Yalqut Shimoni* at the Jewish Theological Seminary library in New York. In this manuscript, written by R. Jacob Manzur Albihani, we read: לקרתי [thus in the variant R. Albihani had, lacking the letter א]—because he wished and intended to defile him." (M. M. Kasher, *Tora Shlema*, 5.764, par. 43; Kasher also refers the reader to similar allusions elsewhere in midrashic literature.) In *Kallah Rabbati*, a work edited in the time of the *geonim*, this kiss—or more precisely (according to the Midrash), Jacob's reluctance to kiss Laban on the mouth—had clear sexual overtones. This is discussed at length in my article, "נישקה המתים: לנגילוי ותהפוכותיו של מנר" ("Kissing the Dead: Variations in the Development of a Custom") *Tarbiz* 65 (1996) 483-508. Ibn Ezra, another great medieval commentator, went further than Rashi and tried to formulate a general rule indicating where exactly the kiss was delivered, for each instance of kissing in the Bible. His commentary on Gen 27:27 reads: "When the kiss is mentioned with the preposition ל, it means on the hand, shoulder, or neck, but without a ל it means on the mouth." In other words, if Scripture says "וישק לו..." we are to conclude that the kiss was on the hand, shoulder, or mouth; but if it says "וישקהו" or the like, we are to conclude that it was on the mouth. There is no proof, however, that Ibn Ezra's hypothesis has any foundation. In fact his protégé, R. Solomon ha-Cohen, in his commentary entitled *אבי עזר*, wrote on this verse: "His [Ibn Ezra's] remarks here are based neither on grammar, nor on logic. Perhaps he received the tradition from his ancestors. Cf. Rashi, וישק לו וישק, 'perhaps he brought rubies with him and has them in his mouth.' All of Rashi's comments are taken from the Midrash, but those of the Rabbi [Ibn Ezra] are null in comparison."

The notion of the deity breathing a soul into the human being in the act of creation has a deeper significance than immediately perceived. Many Jewish sources understand this inspiration of spirit not as a one-time event, but as an ever-continuing act of bestowing the spirit and breath of life. As early as the second century, the view is ascribed to Rabbi Meir that the soul of a sleeping person rises and "draws life from on high."³⁹ Similarly, R. Simeon bar Abba, a third-century sage from the Land of Israel, offered the following commentary on the verse: "They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness" (Lam 3:23).

From the fact that Thou doth renew us every morning, we know that Thou keepeth great faith to redeem us.⁴⁰

In other words, this Sage believes that the daily miracle of restoring the soul to the body every morning is proof of God's power to redeem the Jewish people in the future. A similar comment is cited in the name of R. Alexandri,⁴¹ another Sage from the same period, active primarily in the Land of Israel:⁴²

From the fact that Thou doth renew us every morning, we know that Thou keepeth great faith to revive our dead.⁴³

Elsewhere,⁴⁴ in the name of the same rabbi, we find another interesting variation:

³⁹ *Genesis Rabbah* 14:9 (Theodor-Albeck 133-134). Also see the opinion of "the Rabbis" in lines 5-6, p. 133, and Theodor's comments there. Likewise in Urbach, *Sages*, 220. The comments ascribed to R. Meir in *b. Horayot* 13b and *b. Gittin* 52a, however, indicate that he believed dreams were not important; cf. also *b. Sanhedrin* 30a. Moreover, there is evidence that by the Tannaitic period some rabbis considered dreams irrelevant, as shown in *t. Ma'aser Sheni* 4.9: "He wondered where the second tithe of his father was; and a dreamer came and told him, 'They are as follows, in such and such a place.' So it happened that they went and found money there. They came to the rabbis to inquire, and they [the rabbis] said the money was not sanctified [as a second tithe] since dreams make no difference." On this subject, cf. Jacob Bazak, *למעלה מן החושים* (*Beyond the Senses*; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1968) 38, n. 9 (sic), as well as the entire chapter (35-41).

⁴⁰ *Genesis Rabbah*, Ch. 78 (Theodor-Albeck 915).

⁴¹ On the different names associated with these traditions, cf. Theodor's notes, *ibid.*; *Lamentations Rabbah* 3.23 (Buber ed.; Vilna, 1899) 132; Benjamin Ze'ev (W.) Bacher, *אגדה אמוראית ארץ-ישראל* (*Legends of the Amoraim of the Land of Israel*; trans. A. Z. Rabinovic; Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1925) 199, n. 7; and the version of the Midrash on Psalms cited below.

⁴² For theories on the origins of this rabbi and his unusual name, cf. Bacher, *Legends of the Amoraim*, 193, n. 1 and 194, n. 3.

⁴³ *Genesis Rabbah*, Ch. 78 (Theodor-Albeck 915).

⁴⁴ *Midrash Tehilim* known as *שורר טוב* (ed. S. Buber; Vilna, 1891) 210, on Ps 25:2.

R. Alexandri said, with man of flesh and blood, when new garments are placed in trust, the clothes remain a while in the person's possession, then are returned old and worn; but with the Holy One, blessed be He, the weary and worn is entrusted to Him, and he returns it new. Know that this is His way, for a laborer toils all day, and his soul grows weary and worn; but when he sleeps, exhausted, he restores his soul, which is entrusted to the Holy One, blessed be He, and by morning it returns to his body, newly created, as it is said: "They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness."⁴⁵

Josephus attributes an interesting description of this belief to Eleazar:⁴⁶

In slumber, the corpse does not draw the soul after it; then is an hour of pleasant repose for the souls, which are left to themselves; and they enter the secret of God which is nigh unto them, and roam freely and foresee much that is to come.⁴⁷

The Talmud itself has several references to the belief that in slumber people foresee the future.⁴⁸ In this connection, we must mention E. B. Tylor's theory that animism, the belief in spiritual entities, stems from primitive man's observation of being split into two domains: our waking hours, and our sleeping hours, during which we dream. This assumption led primitive people to distinguish the soul from the body, the soul being able to separate from the body and wander through distant realms while the body sleeps.⁴⁹

An even more extreme view is found in the Midrash, in homilies that completely identify physical respiration with inspiring the soul into the body. Inhalation and exhalation are viewed as processes which, in addition to their overt physical dimension, also entail the soul being removed from the body and, finally, restored to the body upon drawing breath. As we read in *Genesis Rabbah*, "R. Levi said in the name of R. Hanina: the soul ascends repeatedly, hence, with

⁴⁵ Similarly in *Seder Eliahu Rabba (Tanna D'be Eliahu Rabba)*; ed. M. Friedmann; Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1969) 8: "Every day a person's spirit is taken from him and entrusted with the owner of the pledge, and in the morning it is restored to him, as it is said: 'Into Thy hand I commit my spirit' (Ps 31:6)."

⁴⁶ *Bell.* 7.349-350.

⁴⁷ This leads to the conclusion that death delivers the soul from the suffering of this world. *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ For example, *b. Ta'anit* 24a, and many other places. Hence the fear of a bad dream. Cf. s.v. *הַמַּחְשָׁב הַחַלְלוֹם*, *Talmudic Encyclopedia* 8 (ed. Shlomo Joseph Zevin; Jerusalem: Talmud Encyclopedia Publishing, 1957) 753-758.

⁴⁹ Edward B. Tylor, *Primitive Culture*, chs. 11-18; Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (trans. Joseph Ward Swain; New York: Free Press, 1915/1965) 66-67.

each and every breath (נשמה = soul) that a person breathes, one must praise the Holy One, blessed be He."⁵⁰

An appropriate place to look for verification of the presence of this belief is the Jewish prayer book, where we find an interesting development of the notion of the soul being returned to the body. We shall not discuss this source in depth here, since the subject merits a separate article. Suffice it to say, that according to Jewish tradition, the first thing a person says upon opening the eyes is: "I give thanks to Thee, Ever-living King, for mercifully restoring me my soul—great is Thy faithfulness."⁵¹ This formulation is based on Lam 3:23: "They are new every morning; great is Thy faithfulness," and on R. Alexandri's homily, cited above,⁵² indicating that every day the Deity restores us anew when we awaken from sleep, from which we learn that the same will happen in time to come, when God shall reawaken all the dead from their "sleep."⁵³

V

We mentioned before that there are only two apertures through which the spirit of life from God could reasonably have been

⁵⁰ *Genesis Rabbah* (Theodor-Albeck 134).

⁵¹ The most ancient source that I have found for this prayer comes from סדר היום of R. Moses Ibn Makhir (משה נ' מכיר), a rabbi from Ein Zeitun in the Galilee. Many formulations originating in the Kabbalah found their way to the Jewish prayer book via this book, as Prof. Joseph Tabori informs me. R. Makhir's book, first printed in Venice in 1599, was later reprinted in numerous editions—testimony to its wide distribution. Friedberg's bibliographical lexicon (כיה עקר ספרים) lists 14 printings, and recently yet another printing was made. For biographical details on the author, cf. Hayyim Joseph David Azulai, *שם הגדולים השלם* (New York, 1986) 1.150. The text in סדר היום reads as follows: "Upon awakening, immediately recite 'I give thanks to Thee, Ever-living King, for mercifully restoring me my soul—great is Thy faithfulness.' Ritual hand-washing is not necessary [before reciting the prayer], because even if one's hands are dirty, this is no problem because one does not mention the name of God or any epithet of God" (p. 1). Later this formulation was copied by R. Hayyim Benbenisht (כנבנשית), in his highly influential work, *בנסת הגדולה*, where he comments on the *Tur*, אורח חיים 2, who quotes extensively from סדר היום (cf. Azulai, *שם הגדולים*, 1.150). Then it was copied by R. Abraham Gombiner in his commentary on the *Tur*, שולחן ערוך 4.28. Since Gombiner's commentary, *שולחן ערוך*, was printed in most editions of the *Tur*, the formulation in סדר היום eventually spread to all Jewish communities, without exception.

⁵² *Midrash Tehilim* known as *שחר טוב* (Buber 210), on Ps 25:2.

⁵³ For the halakhic implications of this idea, see the discussion of the *tosaphists* on *b. Berakot* 46a, s.v. כל. For other explanations and homilies on this verse in *Lamentations*, cf. Dov Sadan, *פרכים קטנים*, *Sinai* 90 (1985) 80-81.

breathed or inspired into the man whom He created: either through the nostrils or through the mouth.⁵⁴ Let us return, therefore, to the biblical verse from which we started—"and He breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul,"⁵⁵ and see how it has been interpreted. In the Septuagint it is rendered: "And God formed the man of dust of the earth, and breathed upon his face the breath of life; and in the Vulgate: *Formavit . . . et inspiravit in faciem eius spiraculum vitae.*" Both, we see, render כאפיו as "in his face." Van Imschoot⁵⁶ did not discern this, and thought that the Septuagint was lacking the word אפיו; since, as he understood it, the translation did not indicate that the breathing was into the nose. In other words, since it was clear to him that the original כאפיו referred to "nose," he noted that it was missing in these translations. Clearly, however, no word is missing here; these translations simply understood כאפיו to mean בפניו = "in his face."⁵⁷ Thus, these translations are not explicit whether the inspiration of the breath of life passed through the nose or the mouth.⁵⁸

The Aramaic translations of Scripture are not of one mind. *Targum*

⁵⁴ Scripture, however, gives the impression that this breath, as the ancients perceived it, emanated from God's mouth as well as His nose (in time of wrath), as it is written in Ps 18:9 (and also 2 Sam 22:9): "Smoke arose up in His nostrils, and fire out of His mouth did devour."

⁵⁵ On the difficulties of Biblical research into the source of this verse, cf. Van Imschoot, "L'esprit de Jahve," 482-483, n. 5; Wolff, *Anthropology*, 60, after n. 6. Only the soul (נשמה) is mentioned in Genesis, and only the spirit (רוח) in Zech 12:1 ("The saying of the Lord, who stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundation of the earth, and formed the spirit (רוח) of man within him"), and no distinction is made between soul (נשמה=נשמה, breath) and spirit (רוח); Isa 42:5, however, mentions both ("Thus saith God the Lord, He that created the heavens . . . He that giveth breath (נשמה) unto the people upon it, and spirit (רוח) to them that walk therein"), although the use of these two words might simply be a poetic way of referring to one and the same thing.

⁵⁶ "L'esprit de Jahve," 482-483.

⁵⁷ For further notes on the fine points of translating this verse (including Philo's rendition) see Hans Conzelmann, James W. Leitch, James W. Dunkly, and George W. MacRae, *I Corinthians: A Commentary on the First Epistle to the Corinthians* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 284, n. 33.

⁵⁸ Likewise the words of Isaiah, "Cease ye from man, in whose nostrils (כאפו) is a breath; for how little is he to be accounted," (Isa 2:22) cannot be cited as proof, because here too the question arises whether אפו is used in the sense of face or in the sense of nose. One must admit that since the word in question—אפו—appears in Isaiah in the singular, one is more inclined to interpret it as nose, as R. David Kimhi does in his commentary on this verse: "It says in his nostrils because the spirit of life is dependent on the nose," etc. Also cf. Amos Hakham, *ספר ישעיהו מפורש (Isaiah with Commentary, Da'at Mikra; Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1992) 1.33.*

Pseudo-Jonathan renders כאפיו as "in his nostrils" (בנחיריהו),⁵⁹ whereas *Targum Onqelos* renders it as "his face" (אפיהו).⁶⁰ Perhaps these translations were alluding to a specific organ on the face; but more likely *Tg. Onqelos*, the Septuagint and the Vulgate saw no need to distinguish between the different respiratory passages on the human face, and thought that the act of blowing the spirit of life into the body occurred through the nose and the mouth alike. As the exegete S. D. Luzzatto notes:⁶¹ "כאפיו does not mean nostrils, but face, as in the Aramaic . . . for the air goes in and out via the face, i.e. via the mouth and the nose."⁶²

⁵⁹ Another variant of *Targum Onqelos* gives באפיהו. Cf. Alexander Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, vol. 1: *The Pentateuch according to Targum Onqelos* (Leiden: Brill, 1959) 2. *Targum Neofiti I*, like *Pseudo-Jonathan*, renders the verse as: ונפח בנחיריהו נשמתו (א) רוחו.

⁶⁰ As in *Tg. Onqelos* on Deut 29:5, בפניו, "in his face," is translated as באפיהו, "in his nose."

⁶¹ Samuel David Luzzatto, *S. D. Luzzatto's Commentary to the Pentateuch* (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1965) 23.

⁶² Cf. also Solomon Aaron Wertheimer, *אור הזרנום (The Light of the Targum; Jerusalem: Zuckerman, 1935) 6: ונפח באפיהו* ('and He blew into his nostrils')—apparently [the *Targum*] interprets כאפיו ('in his nostrils') as בפניו ('in his face'); but *Jonathan* rendered it as ונפח בנחיריהו (blew into his nostrils), . . ." Likewise, R. Zekharya Agmati, *ספר הנר [Book of the Candle; Jerusalem: Tora Shlema Institute, 1958] 7*, writes: "As it is said, 'טורף נפשו כאפו' (Job 18:4), כאפו means in his face, as it is said, 'and he breathed into his face the breath of life.'" Jonah Ibn Janah (ed. W. Bacher, *Sefer haschoraschim of Ibn Ganah* [Amsterdam: Philo, 1969] 43), however, writes: ". . . for the nose is the passage of the spirit, as it is said, 'and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life.'" A similar view is taken by Solomon ben Abraham ibn Parhon (*Lexicon Hebraicum* [Pressburg: Argonesis, 1884] 5d) on the word אפו: "וּנְפַח בְּכַאפֵּי" ('and he breathed in his nostrils') means in the nose."

This age-old controversy emerges even among modern Biblical scholars. Naphtali Herz Tur-Sinai (Harry Torczyner; *מטעמי שושן של מקרא* [Jerusalem: Kiryat Sefer, 1962] 1.11) suggests that "in the Bible אפו, and certainly the plural אפים, does not necessarily mean nose, but, as in the Aramaic אפיהו, primarily face and sometimes a part of the face, be it the nose, mouth, or cheeks." Elia Shmuel Hartom (*חניך מפורש* [Tel Aviv: Yavneh, 1970]), however, interprets ונפח כאפיו as meaning "blew a breath into his nostrils, making him capable of breathing air." Note that 1 Cor 15:45-46 presents a homily which seems to bear on the verse in question: "It is in this sense that Scripture says, 'The first man, Adam, became an animate being,' whereas the last Adam has become a life-giving spirit. Observe, the spiritual does not come first; the animal body comes first, and then the spiritual." According to this passage the breath of life that was instilled in Adam, the first man, was only physical, whereas the breath instilled in the "last Adam" was spiritual. Let me add that Nicolas James Perella (*The Kiss Sacred and Profane* [Berkeley & Los Angeles; University of California Press, 1965] 5) believes that the 12th-century mosaic found in a church in Monreal, near Palermo, shows this infusion of soul/breath coming as it were coming from the mouth of God to the mouth of man, since a straight line is drawn there from the mouth of the deity to the mouth of man; in short, this is a view of creation by means of the kiss. Perella's excellent book introduced me to the full breadth and depth of the subject of

The everyday speech of the Sages also refers to respiration through the nose.⁶³ Indeed, if asked to identify the organ in charge of breathing, we spontaneously point to the nose, not the mouth. So did the Sages, as is evident from many of the sources dealing with issues concerning breathing. For example, *b. Yoma* discusses the case of a person who is found buried under a heap of stones on the Sabbath or the Day of Atonement.⁶⁴ The Halakhah determines that, because of the overriding importance of saving human life, one should clear the stones even though such work is generally forbidden on sacred days. However, when checking whether the person is alive or dead, one examines only as far as the person's nose. Rashi explains, "If there is no vitality in his nostrils—i.e., if no air comes out—then the person is surely dead and should be left alone."⁶⁵

the kiss in the ancient world. It is largely thanks to this work that I was able to address specifically Jewish perceptions of the kiss, which Perella does not discuss extensively, although his references to the subject should be noted (Perella, *Kiss*, 272-273, n. 12). Perella, whose great expertise in Christian sources is evident in his book, does not point to any other Christian exegetical source, save for the above-mentioned mosaic, which holds that the Divine inspiration was from mouth to mouth. Indeed, in my own study of exegesis by the Church Fathers, I too found no source explicitly supporting this view. Quite the contrary, Tertullian (*The Five Books against Marcion: Book II* [trans. A. Roberts and J. Donaldson; Ante-Nicene Fathers 3; Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1973] 304), the only source that is explicit on the question of where the breath was inspired, mentions in passing, "In fact, the Scripture, by expressly saying that god 'breathed in Man's nostrils the breath of God . . ."

⁶³ For example, in the exposition in *t. Shabbat* 15.2 (16 in the first printed Tosefta and in the London manuscript) of the Jewish practice for assisting an animal that is foaling on a Festival, it says that the owners of the animal "blow into its nose." Apparently this means they blow wine into the mucous-plugged nose of an animal in order to help the animal breathe, as we learn from the parallel in the Jerusalem Talmud (end of Ch. 18, 16c, which reads: "What assistance [is permitted on the Sabbath to an animal foaling]? One brings wine and blows it into its nose." For further explanation, see Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Ki-Fshuta* (תוספתא כפשוטה), part 3: *Moed* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962) 242-243. One also finds the phrase נפח בפה ("blew in the mouth"), as in *y. Ma'aser Sheni* 4.8.55c: "I saw in my dream that they said to me as follows: let there be a blowing (of wind) in your mouth"; but that text does not refer to an act of inspiring, of breathing in spirit via the mouth, but rather to spirit, or wind, filling the mouth. See the commentaries on the same.

⁶⁴ 85a.

⁶⁵ I.e., since the person is surely dead already, one may not tend him on the Sabbath; for the principle which permits violation of the Sabbath in order to save life is not pertinent to the situation. There are difference of opinion in the matter. Some authorities hold that it suffices to examine as far as the heart in order to establish whether a person is alive or dead. The *amora* Rab Papa, who lived in Babylonia in the latter half of the fourth century, further restricts the argument. He claims that the entire discussion only pertains to the case where the examination begins from the

The aggadic sources that have come down to us differ precisely over this question. The ancient anthology of legends, *Genesis Rabbah*, does not address itself directly to the question, although it provides the following mythical elaboration on the words "and He blew in his nostrils":

buried person's feet and proceeds to his head, and that everyone concurs that when the examination begins at the head it suffices to check the nose. The Talmud tries to draw an analogy between this discussion and another argument elsewhere in the Talmud: the disagreement over the first organ formed in a fetus. Some say it is the head, but the second-century *tanna* Abba Saul claims that the fetus begins to form from the umbilicus, whence "the fetus sends out its roots in all directions." The Talmud points out the similarity between Abba Saul's view and the approach that vitality be tested only as far as the heart; those rabbis who held that the formation of the fetus begins from the head also believed that vitality should be checked as far as the nose. In the end, however, the Talmud distinguishes between the question of fetal development and that of vital life signs, and holds that these two questions are not necessary related. Presumably even Abba Saul would admit that "the essence of vitality is in the nose, as it is written, 'all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life' (Gen 7:22)." The nose was also considered the most relevant feature in identifying a person—a fact apparently connected with the discussion at hand. We read in *m. Yebamot* 16.3 that "one does not give evidence except from the face together with the nose." In other words, evidence that a certain person has died, thus releasing the wife to remarry, is only accepted if the witness has seen the deceased's nose and on this basis has identified the deceased. The parallel early text from the Land of Israel, namely *y. Sota* 9.3.23c (and *b. Sota* 45b), clarifies the connection to which we have alluded and indicates that the controversy just reviewed in the Babylonian Talmud may be even more ancient, dating to the beginning of the second century. (An apparently even older source attributes a similar debate to the School of Shammai and School of Hillel, but the answers given there are different. Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 14.5 [Theodor-Albeck, 129]; *Leviticus Rabbah* 14.9 [ed. Mordecai Margulies; Jerusalem, 1954] 314-315, cited in n. 71, below. Also compare the description of fetal development in *b. Niddah* 25a.) *M. Sotah* 9.4 discusses the case of a murdered person's body being discovered between two cities. According to Deut 21:1-9, the elders of the closer city must perform a rite which begins with taking a heifer that has not yet been yoked and breaking its neck by the side of a stream in an area that has not yet been plowed or sown. To determine which of the two cities is closest to the corpse, the distance has to be measured. On this point the Mishna asks from what point one should measure, since this distance has to be figured very precisely. From what point on the body of the murdered person? R. Eliezer answered from the umbilicus, and R. Akiva, from the nose. The Mishna presents no substantiation for either of these two positions; however a third position, taken by R. Eliezer b. Jacob, is presented with its reasoning: "From the place at which the person became a corpse; from the neck." The Jerusalem Talmud explains the positions taken in the Mishna as follows: R. Eliezer said from the umbilicus, because that is where the fetus begins developing; R. Akiva said from the nose, because that is where a person's identification is established. As proof, R. Hiyya Bar Ba recounts that in the time of Ursicinus, the Roman general who put down unrest, or perhaps even actual revolt, by the Jews of the Land of Israel in the fourth century (cf. Moshe David Herr, *The History of Eretz Israel*, vol. 5: *The Roman-Byzantine Period* [ed. Yaakov Shavit; Jerusalem: Keter, 1990] 64-66), the rebels used to wear masks over their noses so that they would not be recognized and captured.

This teaches us that God set up man as a golem extending from earth to heaven, and that he threw the soul into him.⁶⁶

Further on the legend explains why the soul is not retained in the body for all eternity:

Since, in this world the soul was bestowed by breathing, therefore man dies; but in time to come, it shall be done by giving or putting, as it is said in Ezekiel 37:14: "And I will put My spirit in you, and ye shall live."

This leads us to understand that in the homilist's perception there was some sort of technical flaw in introducing the spirit through breathing.⁶⁷ Hence the soul is not retained in the body; but in time to come this will be set right.⁶⁸

Other legends, whose redaction dates later, treat this matter more explicitly. For example, *Midrash ha-Gadol*, redacted in Yemen in the Middle Ages, although known to contain some very ancient material, reads:

"And He breathed in his nostrils the breath of life"—when the Holy One, blessed be He, created primordial man, he was extended before Him as a golem. God said, where shall I breath into him a soul? Perhaps his mouth? But he uses it to gossip. Perhaps his eyes? He leers with them at transgression. Perhaps his ears? He hears blasphemous insults with them. I see only one suitable place in man, and that is through his nostrils. Just as the nose expels contamination and takes in pleasant odors; so, too, the righteous run away from foul transgression, and cleave to the fragrant Torah.⁶⁹

This legend, of unknown and possibly ancient origin,⁷⁰ presents in no uncertain terms the exegetical view that the first inspiration of the breath of life into man was via the nose, not the mouth. However, another Midrash, *Song of Songs Zuta*,⁷¹ takes a completely different tack:

⁶⁶ Theodor-Albeck 132. On the mythical image of Adam, the primordial man, see Gershom Sholem, *Elements of the Kabbalah and its Symbolism* (trans. Joseph ben-Shlomo; Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1980) 384-386.

⁶⁷ Cf. R. David Luria, *ביאורי הרד"ל* (*Commentary of Rabbi David Luria*; Warsaw, 1852) on *Pirke de-R. Eliezer* 11.39, who clarifies the term נפידה in the Midrash, explaining that it is a sort of casting action and that even though God cast breath into man's nose, the force of this act caused the breath to spread throughout the entire body.

⁶⁸ Cf. Mirkin, *Genesis Rabbah*, s.v. מלמד.

⁶⁹ *Midrash ha-Gadol; Genesis* (ed. Margulies; Jerusalem, 1947) 78-79.

⁷⁰ As Margulies notes there, l. 16.

⁷¹ *Midrash Zuta* 1[2] (Buber ed.; Tel Aviv photocopy ed., 1964) 8.

There were two kisses: one in this world, and one in the world to come. In this world: "and he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life" (Gen 2:7); the kiss for the world to come, as it is said: "And I will put My spirit in you, and ye shall live" (Ezek 37:14).⁷²

This homily immediately leads us to understand that the first inspiration was believed to have been from the deity's *mouth* to man's *mouth*, since this inspiration is called a *kiss*. Accordingly, this first kiss is what inspired the breath of life in man. Such an exegetical approach enables us to identify the act of breathing, or exhaling life-giving spirit from God's mouth to man's mouth, with kissing.⁷³ Thus we add the divine kiss which gives life as a third component to our equation identifying the word which gives life with the breath which gives life.

VI

It comes as no surprise to discover that the homilists repeat these basic ideas on the birth of the world through a kiss in their treatment

⁷² Cf. Solomon Schechter, *Agadath Shir Hashirim* (Cambridge: University Press, 1896) 11. On these two variants see Albeck's comments on Leopold Zunz, *דורשות* (Hebrew trans. of *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden historisch entwickelt*, ed. Hanoeh Albeck; Jerusalem: Mossad Bialik, 1974) 404, n. 28. In my opinion one cannot ignore the close resemblance between the previous homily which we cited from *Genesis Rabbah* and this one. Both compare the verse in Genesis with the verse in Ezekiel on spirit being placed in the dry bones. Chronologically, I believe the homily in *Genesis Rabbah* is earlier, and the one in *Song of Songs Zuta* but a summary or interpretation by a later homilist of the homily in *Genesis Rabbah*. All of these homilies seem to be nothing more than a reworking of the ancient discussion between the schools of Hillel and Shammai comparing the inspiration of life into primordial man and the revival of the dead in Ezekiel. Cf. *Genesis Rabbah* 14.5 (Theodor-Albeck 128-129): "ויצרך" ('And He created')—there were two acts of creation; the creation of this world, and the creation of the World to Come: the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel differed. The School of Shammai say: His creation of the world to come was not like His creation of this world. In this world He began with skin and flesh and finished with sinews and bones; but in the World to Come, He begins with sinews and bones and finishes with skin and flesh. For He says of the dead in Ezekiel, 'And I beheld, and, lo, there were sinews upon them, and flesh came up' (Ezek 37:8)." Also see the parallels in *Leviticus Rabbah* (Margulies 2.314-317); *Midrash Tanhuma, Tazria* 2 (Buber ed.; Vilna, 1913) 32; *Tanhuma, Tazria* 1.

⁷³ An interesting comparison can be made between God inspiring life-giving breath into the human body, and the prophet Elijah reviving the son of the woman of Zarephat. As we understand from Scripture (1 Kgs 17:19-22), Elijah lay on the body of the dead child, "in whom there remained no breath," i.e. life, and prayed that his spirit return, which it ultimately did. Even more explicit is the account of the prophet Elisha bringing the son of the Shunamite woman back to life. In 2 Kgs 4:34, we read how he "went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands; and he stretched himself upon him; and the flesh of the child waxed warm."

of another event which, in their eyes, was on a par with creation: namely, the giving of the Torah at Mount Sinai. To cite one example out of many, in *Yalqut Shimoni*⁷⁴ a parallel is drawn between the entire primordial act of creation and what God did for the Israelites. In the process, the homilist also draws a parallel between breathing a soul into man on the sixth day and giving the Torah to Israel.⁷⁵ For the Sages, the resurrection of the world at Mount Sinai was completely analogous to the bestowal of life to primordial man in Creation. The same can be seen from the homily in the Babylonian Talmud, presented in the name of Rabbi Yehoshua son of Levi, an early third-century Sage from the Land of Israel:

Each and every of the Ten Commandments that issued from the mouth of the Holy One, blessed be He, made the soul of Israel depart, as it is said in Song of Songs 5:6: "My soul failed me when he spoke." But if their soul departed with the first commandment, how did they receive the second commandment? He caused dew to descend, destined to resurrect the dead, and revived them.⁷⁶

The homilies cited next illustrate a complete analogy between the breath of life, the divine word, and the kiss. The homilists refer to revelation at Mount Sinai as a kiss. For example, in *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1.12,⁷⁷ Rabbi Johanan, a leading figure in the Jewish community in the Land of Israel in the mid-third century, says that the kiss in Song of Songs 1:2—"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"—was originally "said at Mount Sinai: May he bring forth kisses for us from

⁷⁴ *Yalqut Shimoni* (Jerusalem, 1960) 10-11, par. 17. The redaction of this work is ascribed to R. Moses ha-Darshan, who lived in southern France in the first half of the 11th century.

⁷⁵ "Just as I created Man—and breathed into his face—so, too, [I gave the people of Israel] 'a tree of life to them who uphold it'" (a well-known metaphor for the Pentateuch; cf., for example *Mekilta de-R. Ishmael* [Horowitz-Rabin 156] *Beshalah* 1; and other sources). On the parallelism between creation of the world and giving of the Torah, see Urbach, *Sages*, 175, where he discusses the Torah as the foundation for Creation; and Louis Ginzberg (*Legends of the Jews*, vol. 3: *Moses in the Wilderness* [trans. Paul Radin; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1942] 106): "The Ten Commandments were said as against the ten utterances by which the world was created." Also see the sources Ginzberg lists in n. 237 (Ginzberg, *Legends*, 6.43).

⁷⁶ *b. Shabbat* 88b. Also see Ginzberg's comments and the variants he lists (*Legends*, 3.96; 6.38-39, n. 210).

⁷⁷ *Song of Songs Rabbah* (ed. Dunsky; Jerusalem: Dvir, 1980) 12. For a brief overview of this Midrash and its dating, see Joseph Heinemann (אברהם הירשצוויץ) [*Aggadot and Their History*; Jerusalem: Keter, 1974] 206), who conjectures that this Midrash was redacted in the 6th century. For a general introduction to obtain familiarity with the group of Midrashic works to which this book belongs, see the study by Hananel Mack, מדרש האגדה (*The Aggadic Midrash Literature*, Tel Aviv: Ministry of Defense, 1989) 90ff.

his mouth." That is to say, the life-giving words of God were kisses. The notion that these kisses, the kisses of God's Word, of the Torah, had the function of giving life, is found in a homily attributed to Rabbi Nehemiah:⁷⁸

When the Israelites heard "Thou shalt have no [other Gods before me]" (Ex 20:3), their evil inclination was wrested from their hearts. Then they came to Moses and said to him, "Moses, our Teacher, be our intercessor," as it is said, "Speak thou with us, and we will hear; [but let not God speak with us] lest we die" (Exod 20:16). Immediately their evil inclination returned. So they turned to Moses again, and said: "Moses, our Teacher, would that He be revealed to us again; would that he 'kiss me with the kisses of his mouth!'" Moses responded, "That shall not be now, but in time to come, as it is said: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh" (Ezek 36:26).

Thus we see that these homilists perceived the kiss as having a cathartic effect, as cleansing a person of evil inclination. The kiss is the act that connects man and the creative utterance of God; it is the primordial kiss that inspired the soul; it is the power of God's sacred utterance. This sacred power of speech is also transferred from the Deity himself, from the Law-giver, to those whose calling is the Word of God, the Sages who study the Torah. It should be mentioned that these Sages generally studied by reading aloud; speech was a central tool, since there were hardly any written texts of the Oral Law, which at that time was transmitted only by mouth and retained only by memory.⁷⁹ Thus in *Song of Songs Rabbah*⁸⁰ we have a homily which (by punning on words in Song of Songs and Isaiah, and alluding to one of the requisites for a ritual bath used for purification) seems to say explicitly that the spiritual kiss has an element of catharsis, that it bestows purity and vitality:

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"—that is, let Him purify me; like a person who makes two cisterns touch (משיק שני גבין), adjoining them,⁸¹ as it is said, "Like the lapping (כמשק) of [water in] cisterns (גבין), the water laps (שוקק) in it" (Isa 33:4).⁸²

⁷⁸ *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1.15 (Dunsky 15). The reference is apparently to the fourth-generation *amora* from the Land of Israel (early 4th century), although this is not completely clear.

⁷⁹ Cf. Saul Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1962) 83-99.

⁸⁰ 1.16 (Dunsky 17).

⁸¹ Commentary entitled כהונה כהונה. To have a *mikve* or ritual bath, used for purification, two pools of water must adjoin.

⁸² This homily involves a play on words from the verse in Isaiah. משק can mean

The notion of the special power of the Divine word, bestowed upon the Israelites by a kiss, is further elaborated by R. Johanan:⁸³

"Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (Cant 1:2)—R. Johanan said: an angel used to take the Word, or Commandment, from the Holy One, blessed be He, Commandment by Commandment, and repeat it to each of the Israelites, saying, "Do you accept this Commandment? It entails the following rules, and the following punishments; it has the following decrees⁸⁴ and the following precepts, thus many minor ones and thus many major ones; and such and such a reward." Then the Israelite would answer yes, and the angel would ask whether he accepts it by oath to the Holy One, blessed be He, and he would answer him yes indeed. Then the angel would kiss him on the mouth forthwith.⁸⁵

Similarly, the utterances, or words, of studying Torah are a sort of kiss: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth"—if you study Torah, ultimately all will kiss you on the mouth."⁸⁶ In other words, if you occupy yourself with the Torah, which is like the kiss of God, then ultimately all humans, as well, will kiss you on the mouth for love. This kiss from the mouth of the Deity, i.e. from His word, from the spirit of His mouth, from His vitality, is not quick to depart from the heart because of its spiritual quality, but leaves a strong and everlasting impression, as explained in a homily of Rabbi Judah:

When the Israelites heard the words, "I am the Lord, thy God" (Ex 20:2), study of the Torah was implanted in their hearts, and they did not forget what they had studied. They came to Moses and said, "Moses, our teacher, please act as our intercessor." Then, when they studied they would forget. They said, "Just as man of flesh and blood is transient, so, too, is his learning." Immediately they returned to Moses, requesting "Would He reveal Himself to us once more, would that He kiss me with the kisses of His mouth, would that He implant learning of

the sound of wings flapping, or the lapping sound of water running together; נבקים can mean locusts, as in the E. V. rendition of the verse, but also cisterns or pools of water.

⁸³ *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1.13 (Dunsky 13).

⁸⁴ Apparently meaning גזירות שו"ת, i.e., certain rules of interpretation related to the logical approach of the Midrash; cf. Dunsky 13.

⁸⁵ This connection between the Ten Commandments and the kiss recurs in many homilies, which differ only in their details. For example, *Song of Songs Zava* 1[2] (Buber 8) reads: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth" (Cant 1:2)—These are the Commandments that Moses received first." *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 1.11 ([Saul Lieberman ed.; Jerusalem, 1964] 9) reads: "He gave them two commandments from His mouth: 'I am [the Lord...]' and 'Thou shalt not have,' as it is said: 'Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth' (Cant 1:2). But since they sinned, He gave the remaining eight via Moses."

⁸⁶ *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1.16 (Dunsky 16).

the Torah in our hearts as before." Moses answered, "That is not for now, but for time to come, as it is said: I will give my Torah in their midst, inscribing it in their heart" (Jer 31:33).⁸⁷

Now we can readily understand the explicit Tannaitic source where the notion we have introduced is deeply rooted. In *t. Horayot* 2.7 we read:⁸⁸

Whence do we learn that whoever teaches his fellow is given credit as if he had created him, formed him, and brought him into the world? As it is said: "If thou bring forth the precious out of the vile, thou shalt be as My mouth." (Jer 15:19) As the very mouth which cast a soul into man (כאורו הפה שזרק בו נשמה כאדם),⁸⁹ thus whoever brings a single creature under the wings of Heaven is given credit as if he had created him, formed him, and brought him into the world.

This homily ties together the first inspiration of life into man by the mouth of God and the daily act of inspiring life by the Rabbi who instructs his disciples in the Torah, likening the Rabbi's mouth to the mouth of God, to wit "thou shalt be as My mouth." The kiss, the life-giving contact between the Deity and the dust from which the body of man was fashioned, and the Divine Word, conveyed through the words of the Torah, engender the special vitality of the human being.

Thus far we have seen the kiss as transmitting the vitality of sanctity. There is, however, another possibility, which is illustrated by the following ancient legend, found in several midrashic renditions. It tells us of two sisters who resembled one another:

One was wed in one city, and the other in another city. One of the husbands suspected his wife of infidelity and wished her to undergo the trial by ordeal of bitter water in Jerusalem. So they went to the city where she had been wed, and there her sister asked, "What brings you here?" She answered, "My husband wishes to try me by the ordeal of bitter water." Her sister responded, "I will go in your stead and drink the water, and you go hence." Dressed in her sister's clothing, she went to drink the bitter water, and of course was found to be innocent. Then she returned to her sister's home. The other sister came out to greet her,

⁸⁷ *Song of Songs Rabbah* 1.15 (Dunsky 15).

⁸⁸ *Tosephta* (ed. Moshe Shmuel Zuckerman, based on the Erfurt and Vienna Codices; Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1970; photocopy edition of the first Berlin printing, 1899) 476.

⁸⁹ According to the Vienna manuscript of the *Tosephta* and the printed edition this appears to be the correct version. The same version is also found in ספר מצוות גדול 13, 98c (Saul Lieberman, חומש ראשונים 1 [Jerusalem: Mossad Harav Kook, 1937] 22). Also see *t. Baba Metzia* 2.29 (Zuckerman 375, lines 21-25).

and hugged and kissed her for joy. But the moment they kissed one another, the second sister smelled the bitter water and fell dead, thus fulfilling the words, "There is no man that hath power over the spirit to retain the spirit; neither hath he power over the day of death" (Eccl 8:5).⁹⁰

A similar message is found in the explanation given in *Kallah Rabbati*, apparently redacted in the geonic period. The author of this work wonders about the way Jacob related to his beloved son, Joseph, after having been separated so many years. Scripture describes their meeting in the following words: "Joseph made ready his chariot, and went up to meet Israel his father, to Goshen; and he presented himself unto him, and fell on his neck, and wept on his neck a good while."⁹¹ All the verbs appear to pertain to the subject mentioned in the beginning of the verse, i.e., to Joseph; thus the Bible does not say a word about Jacob's actions throughout this moving encounter. This gave rise to the midrashic notion that Jacob was reciting the *Shema*, and according to the Halakhah could not interrupt this important recitation even for such an emotional meeting.⁹² Of course, it is difficult to understand why Jacob would have decided to recite this prayer precisely at that moment. Indeed, the Scriptural text is surprising and quite exceptional. Recall, as I mentioned in my introduction, that biblical encounters between relatives who have not met for a long time begin with the rite of a kiss. Indeed, the author of *Kallah Rabbati*⁹³ is not satisfied with the above explanation, but elaborates on it, adding a deeper analysis of why Jacob evaded his son's kiss, as follows:⁹⁴ He says that Jacob feared that his handsome son Joseph had fallen into the net of the Egyptian women and had been polluted by transgressing sexual proscriptions. Therefore Jacob would not let his son kiss him, despite his son's strong desire to do so. Later, in a comment attributed to Rava, it is explained that Joseph "had been excited" by the enticement of Potiphar's wife, apparently meaning that his arousal had made him emit several drops of semen; and this gave him a sexual imperfection, as a result of which Joseph was not included with the special saints whose bodies would not decompose

⁹⁰ The version cited here is from *Tanhuma, Numbers* (Buber 31). Also cf. *Numbers Rabbah* Ch. 9, s.v. וַיִּשָּׁקוּ.

⁹¹ Gen 41:29.

⁹² See the literature referenced by Kasher on Genesis 46, *Tora Shlema*, (Part 7) 8.1697-1698, par. 177.

⁹³ *Kallah Rabbati* 3 (M. Higger ed.; New York, 1936) 237-241.

⁹⁴ *Kallah Rabbati* (Higger 237-238).

after death.⁹⁵ Jacob, who had no imperfections in this regard, was afraid that the internal spirit of Joseph's impurity would be transferred to him by a kiss from his mouth, and therefore avoided it. Indeed, as the author of *Kallah Rabbati* explains, this was why Joseph kissed Jacob only after he had died, and precisely on the mouth, as stressed by Scripture: "And Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept upon him, and kissed him."⁹⁶ On this *Kallah Rabbati* comments: "Thirty-three years elapsed, and now he is dead; and in all that time I never kissed my father on the mouth; but now that I must bury him, how can I not kiss him?"⁹⁷

To sum up briefly: in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, and among the Semitic peoples in the region in ancient times it was an accepted notion that the breath of human beings originated from the breath of the gods. Similarly, in Genesis we read that God fashioned the body of man out of dust and blew or inspired into him the breath of life. Likewise, we find that the source of creation is through the Word, which according to biblical sources, such as Psalms, parallels the breath which gives life. This combination of breath-soul-word is also related to the *kiss* in certain homilies of the Sages, who took the divine act of inspiring כַּאֲפִי (which can mean "in his nostrils" but could also mean "in his face"), to mean not in man's nose, but in his face, or mouth. The parallel which is drawn between the divine act of breathing life into man by means of a kiss, and the divine Word, i.e., the Torah, sets the necessary background for understanding the Sages' homilies on the verse in Song of Songs, "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." These homilies portray the words of the Torah being given to the people of Israel in the bestowal of the Torah by God by means of a kiss, and they are explicitly associated with the notion of bestowing vitality, of giving life, which is the root and foundation of the primordial mythical kiss from which, according to this account, all human vitality began.

Let me conclude with a particularly beautiful passage from the Book of the Zohar on the essence of the kiss:

⁹⁵ For further discussion, see my article cited *supra* in note 37, "Kissing the Dead," n. 42.

⁹⁶ Gen 50:1.

⁹⁷ See my article, "Kissing the Dead," for an analysis of the homily in *Kallah Rabbati* and its later influence, as well as a more detailed discussion of this subject.

⁹⁸ *The Book of the Zohar*, Exodus, *Mishpatim* 124b. On death with a kiss, see Fishbane, *The Kiss of God*, and Kosman, "Kissing the Dead," n. 12.

Rabbi Isaac opened with: "Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth." What is the reason for saying "Let him kiss me"? Should it not have said let him love me? So why does it say "let him kiss me"? Because, as we have learned kisses are the communing of one spirit with another, mingling through a kiss on the mouth. For the mouth is the egress and source of the spirit. Therefore, kisses on the mouth are dear, since spirit cleaves to spirit, not to be cleft. Therefore, one whose soul departs with a kiss, is adhered to another spirit.⁹⁸

FINDING ONESELF IN A SECTARIAN CONTEXT: A SECTARIAN'S FOOD AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

Albert I. Baumgarten

Ancient Jewish Sectarianism

This paper originates in research done as preparation for a monograph length study of sectarianism¹ in ancient Judaism, titled *The Flourishing of Jewish Sects in the Maccabean Era: An Interpretation*. That study seeks to answer the question of how and why groups such as Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and the Qumran covenanters² pros-

¹ For purposes of the larger research project, my use of the terms "sect" and "sectarianism" follows the definition employed by B. Wilson, *Sects and Society* (Berkeley, 1961), 3-4. See further the discussion in B. Wilson, *Religious Sects* (London, 1970), 14-17. The Jewish groups which concern me are all examples of what Wilson, in a later work (*Magic and the Millennium* [London, 1973], 18-26) calls "responses to the world." Wilson would probably classify Pharisees and Sadducees as "reformist" responses, while the Dead Sea Scrolls Covenanters would fit his category of "introversionist." The difference between these classifications, as their names imply, involves the extent to which a group has given up on the likelihood of convincing the mainline institutions of society to follow their way, and turned inwards. To put the matter in terms of the walls a group erects around itself, those of an introversionist sect are higher, wider and less permeable, while those of a reformist group are the opposite. For the same conclusion concerning the Pharisees, see A.J. Saldarini, *Pharisees, Scribes and Sadducees in Palestinian Society: A Sociological Approach* (Edinburgh, 1988), 286.

² In my view Essenes and Qumran covenanters are to be distinguished, with the sources on each group having no privileged position in attempts to understand the other. See further A.I. Baumgarten, "The Rule of the Martians as Applied to Qumran," *Israel Oriental Studies* 14 (1994), 121-142; "The Temple Scroll, Toilet Practices, and the Essenes," *Jewish History* 10 (1996), 9-20. For a slightly different perspective on these issues, but reaching a conclusion I share wholeheartedly, see M. Goodman, "A Note on the Qumran Sectarians, the Essenes and Josephus," *JJS* 46 (1995), 161-166. In candor, the Sadducees play no role in the discussion that follows. The ways in which they fit into the framework outlined, if at all, are beyond our knowledge. Nevertheless, they are included at the outset, in the formulation of the question, as they appear regularly on the lists of groups presented by Josephus.

The focus in the larger study, as in this paper, is on groups which flourished in the second century BCE. There is another group of sects which arose and flourished in the first century CE, such as Zealots, Fourth Philosophy, the followers of John the Baptist, and the early Christians. As the political and geographic contexts in which they emerged were different (in the aftermath of Roman conquest, and outside of Jerusalem), they are less my concern here.

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