

and woman has on his bosom a box or lovely leather pouch in which are a lime mash and leaves and the aforementioned nuts and enough to prepare this mixture at any time. Their mouths never rest from bringing up cud like cattle, even when speaking and talking. Their lips move⁶⁶ when they bring up cud, and from their stomachs they expel the heat with the vapor which rises to their mouths and they empty a flow of juice, and their lips are red like blood from this red spittle which they bring up from inside and from their mouths without measure. Therefore, they cannot speak in this way, but only half-words and moans come out of their mouths. And to them this is glory and honor!

(*Sapir's footnote: This is a type of fig tree (*t'énah*). Jews say about it that it is the fig-tree of Eve, identical with "They sewed the leaves of a fig-tree (*t'énah*) and made a girding for themselves" (Gen. 3:7), and "girding" means a waist-cloth which covers over, that is, half the body from the hips to the calves, like the custom of this land, as you saw above, and from three or four leaves they are able to make such girdings.⁶⁷

Chapter 31 The Journey within the Country

In Cochin I observed the Festival of Shavu'ot (and it was all according to the custom of all Israel, as related above), and two more Jewish sages from Jerusalem were with me there, and we planned our journey to travel together in this land which was foreign to us, whose language we did not know. We set our faces to go⁶⁸ by dry land to the great city of Calcutta, chief of the cities of the country of Bengal, in southeast India,⁶⁹ and months away from here even by sea, because steam ships did not go from here to Calcutta (only to Bombay, from which I had come). Only sailing ships, carrying to Bengal coconuts, sailing ropes, rice, sugar cane, spices, and other goods of the land, would leave from here at infrequent intervals to go straight to Calcutta. But in fact, on the New Moon of Tammuz⁷⁰ we did find a sailing ship loading its cargo which would be heading straight for Calcutta, and we paid to go with it after waiting about fifteen days until its loading was finished. But before its work ended, the rainy season came. And the rains come here in the month of Tammuz like a sweeping torrential flood, day and night, without ceasing for many days. And then the waves of the sea raise up mud and dirt and the sand makes a barrier and wall in the place where the river flows to the sea, and from the quantity of rain, the mud and sand become like a fortified wall across this, blocking those who would pass through, so that the sailing ships from the city find themselves blockaded in the river and are shut in and enclosed,⁷¹ unable to depart again until the end of the month of Elul, when the rain ceases and the sea rests from its rage. We waited until the fifteenth of Tammuz,⁷² which was when the captain had assured us he would dig himself a way out. But seeing that there was no longer any hope of journeying by sea, and unable to wait until the end of the month of Elul, we therefore said to ourselves that we would go by raft on the rivers to the coastal city of "Alleppey" (*'ilpa*), a great harbor on the Indian sea.⁷³ At this time, great ships traveling by wind from Jedda to Calcutta would be passing by way of here and would stop a few days to unload and then to load up the merchandise of the land and to prepare food and water. So we hired a raft with two boatmen steering it, to go on the great river Mangatah⁷⁴ which swells and passes in front of Cochin, and large ships and mighty craft⁷⁵ pass through it, and it is poured out to the great sea, the Indian Sea, near the coastal cities of Alleppey (*'ilpi*) and Quilon (*qalian*). (From this great river, other rivers and canals extend further in many directions. And upon them people pass in small ships and fishing barges.) And we passed through this way for a night and a day and a night, to the delight of our souls because we were passing through a land which is like the Garden of Eden, fruitful and verdant,⁷⁶ with gardens and orchards on this side and that. And all year long the fruit does not fail⁷⁷ and the plain is green with vegetation and lovely to the sight, and all day could be heard the joyful shouting of people and animals within the gardens and orchards where their homes are, in summer and in winter. Many times we went up onto the fields to buy fruit, drink,

and the live fish which were roasted on a fire which they lit on the field. In the morning before the evening of the Holy Sabbath, *Parashat Balaq*,⁷⁸ we came to the harbor of Alleppey.

Chapter 32

The Harbor of Alleppey and the Journey on the Canals

Here a Muslim king—"Raja"—rules, and he is subject to the British. The city is on the shore of the sea and is very large in measure, and most of its inhabitants are Muslims (*muslimanim*), and also Hindus (*hodi-im*) from all the families of this land.⁷⁹ And there is a great commerce in all the products of that land (as we said above) to all the countries.

On the morrow, the Sabbath Day,⁸⁰ two great ships approached this shore, coming from the city of Jedda (in the Land of Arabia on the Red Sea. Refer to *Even Sapir*, Part One [*Sapir's text*]) carrying merchandise of the land of Arabia to Calcutta, where they load a large cargo of merchandise of the land of India to bring back to the land of Arabia. The ships stayed here at Alleppey a few days to bring down some of their merchandise and to bring up cargo from the traders here, and to fill their containers with drinking water and provisions for the way, since the way is still great from here onward. The owners of the ships were from Jedda, and were Muslims like all its residents (refer to what I recounted about them in Part One), and also the captains and their sailors and all the laborers on those ships were all Muslims, and they were permanent slaves belonging to the owners of the ships, and there [in Jedda] Jews are strange and impure to them.

The Jewish traders who were in Cochin who bought and sold with the most important Muslim merchants in that city and had a trade relationship with the owners of the ships, put in our hands persuasive letters to their acquaintances here asking them to endeavor for our sake to find us one of the ships passing through on their way, on which we could find passage to Calcutta. On the day we arrived we gave them the letters, and they promised to place us on the first ship that would be going there. Even so, we waited for nothing, and our hope of going on the aforementioned ship was disappointed, because when it became known to the leaders of the ships that we were Jews, they would not consent to take us, even for any price. Many times we pleaded with them, and one of the great merchants here was much to entreat them, but it was all for nothing and to no avail, since they said that they were slaves to the owners of the ships and if a catastrophe happened to them on the way, and they had sinned against their masters who owned the ships, they would say that the ship had become impure on account of the impure Jews, and so the evil had come upon them. With a broken spirit, we stayed here five more days,⁸¹ but after seeing these ships go on their way and no longer hoping that other ships would come soon, for the time of the passage of ships had just passed, and in this city there was not a single Jew, and the language of the land was strange to us—they therefore counseled us and we were counseled to go by dry land and by way of the rivers to the great city of Colombo, on the island of Ceylon,⁸² where could be found ships traveling further by way of the great city of "Madras," and from there even steam ships go to Calcutta.

In this land of Malabar are also found many beasts of prey and especially the tiger, the most ferocious of animals,⁸³ and also the terrifying amphibian—the crocodile (*timsah*—[*Sapir's text*] refer to Part One⁸⁴) found in these rivers, and therefore I was afraid to bathe in the rivers because terror had fallen over me from many incidents. And the tiger, I saw one here in an iron cage, terrifying to everyone around him. For its food, they would throw into this stronghold, every morning and evening, a living dog, and the moment that it fell at its feet it would become terrified and never rise again, and it [the tiger] tore it apart in its wrath. And the skins of tigers are found here in large number, and they set aside a district for them for sitting and sleeping and running about, and they are transported for trade to other lands, for they capture a lot of them here. Also the ivory one (*shenhav*)—the elephant (*pil*)—cleverest and strongest of all the beasts of the field, is found here in plenty. They train and teach him to do their tasks and all their work in home and field, for he is a faithful

servant and listens to the voice of his master. He has mighty arms,⁸⁵ and wisdom and understanding⁸⁶ to move himself smoothly.⁸⁷ His bones are like bars of iron,⁸⁸ and his teeth are polished ivory.⁸⁹ With his long snout he performs every task, even swinging it in battle.⁹⁰ On the back of the bulges of his armor,⁹¹ human beings ride with their loads. I too rode on him to roam around for a few hours, and I sat on his back as one would sit on one's bed, because he moves with gentleness and respect.⁹²

On this shore they build great ships, and the masts of the ships and large trees are brought from other countries by sea. They bring them down from the ships into the water close to the shore because the ships cannot come near the land, so they must bring them [masts] out of the water and move them to a place for building the ships on the dry shore. I saw a man riding on an elephant come toward the edge of the sea, and then come into the water, to the place of masts and large trees (each tree a burden for fifty men). The rider said to the elephant, "Tie this rope which is on your snout to the tree and drag it to the dry land." And he drew out his long snout and with it raised the tree at its middle and gathered under it the thick rope and tied it skillfully from above with a loop, and inside the loop he inserted his snout and turned his face back toward dry land, walking and dragging for about half a mile to the place of construction. Here the rider said to him, "Untie the rope" and more, and he took it out from under the tree and lifted it and placed it in the hand of the rider on his back, who then said, "Arise and go,"⁹³ and he returned to the shore to perform the same actions with the other trees. And some of the cleverness of the elephants is already known, and their height⁹⁴ and their courage; and they would even take them into battle. And they carry on a great business here with the tusk of the elephant, which has a high value and goes out to the breadth of the earth⁹⁵ and especially to the provinces of China.

In the evening of Monday,⁹⁶ the 18th of Tammuz, we again got down into shallow fishing barges on the canals, and we steered and went as we had steered from Cochin to here,⁹⁷ four days and four nights.⁹⁸ This journey too was for us repose and delight,⁹⁹ for the canals are not wide and on their banks, on this side and that, was a land fruitful and verdant,¹⁰⁰ with every plant and every herb and every good fragrance,¹⁰¹ like a garden of the Lord,¹⁰² full of delight, with a great many coconut, banana, and betel trees, and high, broad trees in the shade of whose vines¹⁰³ dwelt the keepers of the gardens and orchards, for all of the way, on this side and that, was all flat land and no part of it was empty, all of it planted up to the canals which water it all. And many people sit in huts among the gardens and the orchards, they and all their possessions. We had plenty of bread with us in our containers, and the boatmen regularly brought us sweet water to drink from places known to them—for the water from most of these canals is salty and not good for quenching the thirst—and when we lacked water, we had coconut milk to slake our thirst, and we also found a distilled liquor made from these nuts, strong and good, to buy among the inhabitants of these huts, and also a kind of light fermented drink which was useful at the time of burning heat, which they make for themselves from the fruit of trees, like apple wine in Europe. And this journey was for us a leisurely excursion and a delight,¹⁰⁴ with no fright or fear, because the country abided by the law, and fright of the government of Britannia and fear of European men falls even upon the rulers of the people of the land, who are subject to the government of Britannia.

On the day before the Holy Sabbath, *Parashat Pinhas*, the 22nd of Tammuz,¹⁰⁵ in the evening time, we came to the great city of "Trivandrum" (*to vandrom*), the city of a king—Raja—from the idol-worshipping¹⁰⁶ peoples of the land, and I saw him on that day as he passed through the market sitting in his little carriage harnessed to two decorated Arabian horses.¹⁰⁷ Before him and after him, twenty soldiers from his personal guard rode on swift horses, but he alone sat in the wagon, the rider in front of him holding the reins of the horses and two stood behind on the wagon, and in front of the horses were three servants running on foot like gazelles (as likewise also before all the princes and the wealthy men, who have servants running before their carriages). The king looked swarthy like copper, and the build of his body was thin and lean, without form and without majesty.¹⁰⁸ His

clothes were of colorful silk extending below his knees, his head was shaven and covered by a small red turban inlaid with crown jewels of ruby, sapphire, and emerald with a wreath of gold inlaid around it. In this way he passed quickly through the streets among the large crowd of people who neither feared him nor were in awe¹⁰⁹ of his magnificence and majesty.

Most of the inhabitants of the city are idol worshipers, with a few Portuguese Christians and merchants of Britannia, and emissaries of Protestants from England who endeavor here, as in all this land, to bring the people of the land into the covenant of the new religion, and they have here (as in all the land) a large school by will of the government—the government of Britannia—for the young men of the city. And we rested here on the Sabbath day. On Sunday¹¹⁰ we hired a wagon drawn by oxen to travel further by dry land. Here most kinds of work in the field and the road are done entirely with cattle, which are very big and of great strength, and they have a large fat back [hump] like a camel and they sway this way and that, and also large horns overlaid with brass, and they are swift like horses. There are some which the people of the land would venerate, exalting and honoring them and covering their horns with silver, and they do not do work with them because they are holy to them.¹¹¹ This is the idolatry (*avodah zarah*) [called] “*Shor afis*,”¹¹² and the worshipers, the men and the women, would raise upon their heads an image of a horn. (*)

We went on this way for two days to the great city of Kottar (*kandhor*)¹¹³ and from there to the great city of Tuticorin (*tutegri*),¹¹⁴ which stands on the shore of the sea, and we arrived there on the day before the Holy Sabbath of *Parashat Matot*,¹¹⁵ the New Moon of [the month of] Av, in the morning. All along this way is flat land and small hills, and all the land is full of seeds and tender shoots,¹¹⁶ and every kind of food tree, rice, sesame, and cotton, and every fruit of the tree. The inhabitants of the province are numerous, and we passed many villages and people dwelling in huts and also cities and towns which multitudes of Indian people inhabit.¹¹⁷ And we stood still only to rest, to eat, or to lodge. In every street and market and at every corner and on the roofs of the houses stand gods (*elilim*), diverse and strange,¹¹⁸ graven images fashioned of wood and stone in wondrous forms, works of manual craftsmanship, and particularly on the roofs of the temples of their illusions (*batei ta'ato'ei hem*), all of them covered with graven images (*pesilim*) and gods (*elilim*) of all kinds of tame and wild beast, bird, loathsome animal (*sheqetz*) and creeping thing (*remesh*),¹¹⁹ and everything that is on the earth.¹²⁰ Outside before the gate of the city stand great wooden wheels (*galgalim*), of the height of three men, and they have small disks (*ofanim*), and upon them were all kinds of forms, and all the graven images of these shapes circled round and round the wheels and the disks.¹²¹ On the days of their festivals all the people of the city gather together and lift them on their shoulders, because they are an exhausting burden¹²² even for hundreds of men, and they move it about the city on every road, with a great tumultuous voice, songs, and dances.¹²³ (**)

In this city, Tuticorin (*tutegri*), we hired passage on a great ship, and on the second day in the evening¹²⁴ it spread sail and the wind assisted us.

(**Sapir's footnote*: And this is [the meaning of] what they said, “Write on the horn of an ox that they would have no place in the World to Come.”)¹²⁵

(***Sapir's footnote*: And this is [the meaning of] what they said about Manasseh, who made an idol (*avodah zarah*) weighing as much as a thousand men,¹²⁶ and likewise with the idol which Nebuchadnezzar set up.¹²⁷

Notes

¹ *Even Sapir*, Vol. I, L. Silbermann, publisher (Lyck: Mekitsei Nirdamim, 1868) and Vol. II (Mainz: Yehiel Brill, 1874).

² For example, Barbara Johnson Hudson, *Shingli or Jewish Cranganore in the Traditions of the Cochin Jews of India*, M. A. Thesis, Northampton: Smith College, 1975; *The Jews of India: a story of three communities*, ed. Orpa Slapak (Jerusalem: Israel Museum, 1995); J. B. Segal, *A History of the Jews of Cochin* (Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 1993); Ezekiel N. Musleah, *On the Banks of the Ganga—The Sojourn of Jews in Calcutta* (N. Quincy, MA: Christopher Publishing House, 1975).

³ The first major study of Sapir was written by Y. Y. Rivlin, "R. Ya' aqov Sapir," *Moznaim*, 11 (1940): 74-81, 385-99. For a short summary and discussion of *Even Sapir*, see Meyer Waxman, *A History of Jewish Literature* (New York: T. Yoseloff, 1936), Vol. 3, 632-36. Some additional material on Sapir appears in A. Yaari, *Sheluhei Eretz Yisrael* (Jerusalem: Mosad Harav Kook, 1951), 820-22; in the introductory section of Raymond Apple, "Rabbi Jacob Levi Saphir and His Voyage to Australia," *Australian Jewish Historical Society*, 6 (1968): 195-215; and Yehiel Nahshon and Leah Bornstein-Makovetsky, "Saphir, Jacob," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 2nd ed, 22 vols., ed. Michael Berenbaum and Fred Skolnik (Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA, 2007), 18: 35-36. Noah S. Gerber studied Sapir in a central chapter of his recent book, *Ourselves or our Holy Books? The Cultural Discovery of Yemenite Jewry* (Jerusalem: Ben-Zvi Institute, 2012). Gerber analyzes Sapir's ethnographic descriptions of Yemenite Jews to illuminate his methodology and goals as well as his varied and complex attitudes toward them. My article, "Hinduism, Torah, and Travel: Jacob Sapir in India," in *Shofar* 30:2 (Winter 2012), analyzes Sapir's ideas about Hinduism in relationship to categories that I call Torah and travel.

⁴ Rivlin, 77. As Immanuel Etkes has demonstrated in *The Gaon of Vilna: The Man and His Image*, trans. Jeffrey Green (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002), Rivlin's simple formulation of the Gaon's "system" of combining holy and secular studies may be problematic.

⁵ Such as *Yossifon*, and the travel writings of Benjamin of Tudela (*Even Sapir*, Vol. I, 8b, 45b, 47b, etc.) and Obadiah of Bertinoro ("in his travels from Italy to Jerusalem," I, 3a, 20b, etc.).

⁶ For example, I, 3b and I, 8b.

⁷ I, 28a. Sapir calls Bloch "the great Torah sage and scientific researcher (*hoqer mada'i*)," which may reflect Sapir's own ideal for himself, combining Torah and "science." His interpretation of Hinduism, however, differs radically from Bloch's and shows no influence; see the section, "Another Interpretation" in my "Hinduism, Torah, and Travel."

⁸ II, 35.

⁹ II, 35 and 97.

¹⁰ *Guide of the Perplexed*, 3.29, trans. Shlomo Pines (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 515.

¹¹ Comments on Ex. 8:22 and 19:9 (Long Comm.), Psalms 2:12.

¹² Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 13:5.

¹³ Sanh. 103b

¹⁴ As suggested by Rashi in his commentary on this passage.

¹⁵ II, 51.

¹⁶ Such as II, 51 and II, 109.

¹⁷ Consider, as just three examples, Isa. 41:7, "In that day you will reject the *elilim* of silver and the *elilim* of gold which your sinful hands have made"; Jeremiah 10:15, "They are vanity, the work of delusion (*ma'aseh ta'tu'im*)"; and Psalm 97:7, "All who worship *p'silim* are put to shame."

¹⁸ *Sifra Qedoshim*, Parasha 1. *Mekhilta D'Rabbi Yishmael, Mishpatim*, Tractate *Kaspa*, Parashah 20. *Mekhilta* merely lists the names, but *Sifra* finds derogatory meanings in them: "*Elilim* because they are hollow (*halulim*), *pesel* (graven image) because they are invalid (*nifsalim*) ... *gilulim* because they are disgusting (*megu'lim*)."

¹⁹ For further discussion, see the section "Sapir's Vocabulary of Hinduism" in my article, "Hinduism, Torah, and Travel."

²⁰ II, 113.

²¹ II, 51.

²² Num. 20:12 speaks of Aaron's failure to honor God as holy. In rabbinic literature, the Torah, its commandments, the Sabbath are holy. The Talmud speaks of degrees of holiness, and of things acquiring or losing holiness. Nevertheless, this holiness is not a matter of mere opinion or perspective.

²³ For a fuller discussion of this topic, see the section "Holy to Them" in my article, "Hinduism, Torah, and Travel."

²⁴ Rivlin, 390.

²⁵ Rivlin, 392.

²⁶ This footnote required extensive annotation on my part, and the results in this case are even longer than the author's footnote!

²⁷ Rivlin, 390: "A style in which it is possible already to recognize the beginning of that Hebrew style which developed afterward in the Land of Israel, after several alterations occurred in the days of "Halevanon" and "Judah and Jerusalem" and "Havaztelet" and other newspapers of the Land of Israel."

²⁸ Or adds the word "king" to the biblical term, "the cedars of Lebanon" (found in Judges 9:15, Isa. 2:13, Ps. 29:5), to convey the astounding height of coconut trees: "king among the cedars of Lebanon."

²⁹ A grant from the Lenfest Fund enabled me to travel to Kochi/Ernakulam in 2008 and follow Sapir's route to Tuticorin. Some of what I saw appears in the notes to the following translation. Maps and photos correlated with quotations from *Even Sapir* can be seen at <http://home.wlu.edu/~marksr/Road.htm>

I convey my gratitude to Timothy Lubin, Professor of Religion, Washington and Lee University, for his advice about various Indian realities related to Sapir's descriptions, such as gopurams, veshti, "aninas" leaves, and historical records of festivals in Tinneveli; and to Laju Paul K., Ph.D. in Plant Molecular Biology, University of Delhi, a native of Kerala and author of the blog, "Jewish Monuments of Kerala," for his suggestions about geography and flora in Sapir's account. I also thank Joanna Weinberg, James Mew Lecturer in Rabbinical Hebrew at the Oriental Institute, Oxford, and translator of Azariah de' Rossi's *The Light of the Eyes*, for commenting on an initial version of this translation.

³⁰ *Goyei ha-aretz*: this phrase in the Bible and rabbinic literature refers to the nations of the world, but Sapir uses it to indicate the various peoples who inhabit the land of India, somewhat like the term "natives." In the chapter title and here, Sapir is using the vocabulary of Gen. 10:5: "the isles of the nations, divided into their lands, each man according to his language, after their families, in their nations."

³¹ Ps. 12:4, "a tongue speaking great things [boastfully]," which Sapir transforms into a statement about a language, another meaning of "tongue."

³² The Jews of Cochin, who were categorized as either Black or White Jews.

³³ Sapir is mistaken about the longitude.

³⁴ A biblical phrase usually translated as "shield and buckler" (Jer. 46:3, Ezek. 39:9, Ps. 35:2).

³⁵ Sapir intends "mosquitoes." See Chapter 34 (II, 97).

³⁶ Prov. 30:27, "the locusts ... go forth all of them in battalions."

³⁷ *'Amei ha-'aretz* is a phrase in rabbinic literature referring to uneducated Jews who were lax in observing the commandments. In the Bible it refers to foreigners or Canaanites living in the Land of Israel. Sapir, however, does not seem to differentiate the term much from *goyei ha-'aretz*.

³⁸ Judges 18:7.

³⁹ A proverb, found also in *Mishnah Berurah* and *Kitzur Shulhan Arukh*.

⁴⁰ *Magen shemesh*, Sapir's phrase for a parasol.

⁴¹ Based on the meaning of q-d-r as "penetrate"; another possible meaning is that the sun "darkens" them. The phrase echoes Micah 3:6, but with a different meaning.

⁴² Isa. 8:1, "Take a great roll and write on it with a common stylus."

⁴³ This phrase, *kappot temarim*, is associated with the palm branches used during the ceremony of *Sukkot* (see Lev. 23:40), to which Sapir may be comparing these Indian leaves.

⁴⁴ This note, and others appearing in this translation in similar form, are printed in *Even Sapir* at the bottom of the relevant pages, and are indicated there by asterisks.

⁴⁵ *Mishnah Kelim* 13:2, "A writing instrument (*makteiv*) whose writing point (*koteiv*) is missing is still susceptible to impurity on account of its eraser; if its eraser is missing it is still susceptible to impurity on account of its writing point."

⁴⁶ Maimonides, in *Perush Ha-Mishnayot*, on *m.Kelim* 13:2, writes this: "The *makteiv*: a stylus of metal; with one end they write and engrave, and it is called *ha-kotev*, and the other end is wide and sharp like a knife, with which they scrape [erase] whatever is necessary to scrape of the writing, and it is called *moheq*."

⁴⁷ In this dictionary composed by Rabbi Nathan ben Yehiel of Rome (c. 1035-1106), we find under the entry, *dagal*: "*Mekatva* which is an iron pen" (Vol. 3, p. 16); and under the entry *mahaq*: "a brass writing pen (*qolmos*) whose one head is thin and made for writing and one is thick and made for erasing and they write with it only upon wax or powder" (Vol. 5, p. 113): *Sefer Arukh Ha-Shalem*, ed. Hanoch Yehudah (Vienna: Menorah Press, 1926).

⁴⁸ This is a legend about school children living in Betar during the Bar Kokhva rebellion who bravely promise to attack the approaching Roman soldiers with only the points of their writing instruments.

⁴⁹ *M.Avot* 5:9 states that ten things were created on the evening of the first Sabbath, among the original works of creation, and these include the *ketav* and the *m-k-t-v*. Commentators disagree on how to vocalize *m-k-t-v* in the Mishnah, whether as something written (*miktav*) or something which writes, but Rashi (commentary to *b.Pesakhim* 54a) and some others vocalize it like Sapir, as a writing instrument, *makteiv* or *mekhateiv*.

⁵⁰ On the printed page of his book, Sapir adds vowels to the consonants "m-k-t-v" to clarify his vocalization of the word: *mekhateiv*.

⁵¹ Here, since *miktav* is associated with engraving, the verse means to Sapir that this kind of writing is performed by a stylus. Or he may have vocalized *m-k-t-v* differently, so that the verse would say, "The writing instruments were the writing instruments of God, engraving upon the tablets."

⁵² *b.Gittin* 19a, *m.Gittin* 2:3: "The divorce papers may be written on anything—on the leaf of an olive tree." Quoted incorrectly by Sapir.

⁵³ This lengthy footnote was meant to prove that the Jews of biblical and rabbinic times used the same writing instrument as Indians do today. See the section "Interpretative Assumptions in the Footnotes: Ancient Indian Culture" in the preceding discussion to the translation.

⁵⁴ Ezek. 19:10 (literally: fruitful and branched).

⁵⁵ The prayer over bread is commonly called *Ha-Motzi* on the basis of one of its words. The double portion is a phrase in Ex. 16:22.

⁵⁶ Written in the text as *egozei* "*kako*," with quotation marks around *kako*.

⁵⁷ *K'shemem ha-tov*, in 2 Kings 20:13 and Ps. 133:2, interpreted by Rashi as oil for anointing.

⁵⁸ *Sheikhar saruf* or *seiruf*. This is the beverage mentioned in Chapter 32 that Sapir drinks on his river journey. Aquavit, also called schnapps, is a northern European drink distilled from grain mash or fermented potato. Sapir may be referring, here and in Item 9 of his list,

to various forms of "toddy" (based on a Hindi word), a beverage drunk fresh, fermented, or distilled, which is made from the sweet sap yielded by young flower stalks of certain palm and coconut trees.

⁵⁹ *'Alafim revavot*: a numerical phrase based on Gen. 24:60 (echoed in 1 Sam. 18:7, Dan. 7:10, and elsewhere) but found frequently in this specific form in rabbinic and medieval writings.

⁶⁰ A phrase from Ezek. 47:12.

⁶¹ As suggested by Marcus Jastrow contrasting *y'raqot* with *zer'onim* (Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim* [New York: Pardes, 1950], Vol. 1, 414.

⁶² 2 Chron. 16:14.

⁶³ *'Aninas*—Sapir seems to mean "bananas," which, however, he spells as *bananim* in Chap. 32. But, as Timothy Lubin points out, banana leaves fit well his description of *'aninas* leaves and the uses to which Indians put them. Dr. Laju Paul, while agreeing, observes that, contrary to Sapir's statement, Keralese people value banana trees highly. So Paul suggests other possibilities for *aninas*: "The most common fruit trees in Kerala are the Mango and the Jackfruit," but since they lack large leaves, Sapir may have meant "the breadfruit tree (*Artocarpus altitis*), which has large leaves that can easily reach 2 feet long. In addition, the breadfruit leaves resemble very much the fig leaves one finds in the region of Palestine."

⁶⁴ From Joshua 24:31.

⁶⁵ Song of Songs 4:14, "saffron, calamus, and cinnamon." Sapir is identifying biblical spices with spices he sees in India.

⁶⁶ 1 Sam. 1:13.

⁶⁷ This is an example of Sapir finding "signs" of Torah in Indian customs and vegetation. See the section "Interpretative Assumptions in the Footnotes: Ancient Indian Culture: in the preceding discussion to the translation.

⁶⁸ A phrase from Jer. 44:12.

⁶⁹ Although later chapters show that Sapir knows that Calcutta is far to the northeast, he (or his printer) mistakes the direction here and on a few other pages.

⁷⁰ June 21, 1860.

⁷¹ *Sogrot umesugrot*, from Joshua 6:1.

⁷² July 5, 1860.

⁷³ A distance of about 38 miles by water, according to a detailed map produced in 1866 by C. R. Markham, "Map of a portion of the Travancore Coast and Back Waters showing the anchorage at Alippee" ("On the Inland Navigation of Travancore: An Account of the Alippee Mud-Bank and the Warkallay Barrier," *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London*, vol. 36 [1866]: 195-98). This map shows a clear and open route by water between Cochin and Allepey, and a waterway designated "canal" entering into the middle of Allepey from the "Back Waters." A system of canals inside the city remains today, connecting it to the backwater lakes and canals and to the harbor.

⁷⁴ Although Sapir probably meant the water called today Vemband Lake, Sapir's word *Mangattah* refers, according to Dr. Laju Paul, basing his interpretation partly on the 1862 publication, *Letters from Malabar* by Jacobus Canter Visscher (Madras: Adelphi Press, 1862), to the "River Mangatti" which "is one of the branches of the Periyar River which joins the backwater system and continues to Alleppey (Alapuzha)." He adds, "The name 'Mangattu' may also be derived from an earlier 'Mangattu Kingdom' whose rulers belonged to the Nair caste. In modern Kerala, the Mangattu region is known as Alangad or Alengattu."

⁷⁵ *Tzi 'adir*, from Isa. 33:21.

⁷⁶ Ezek. 19:10.

⁷⁷ This and the previous sentence uses phrases from Ezek. 47:12—"And by the stream upon its bank, on this side and that, shall grow every kind of tree for food, whose leaf shall not wither, nor its fruit fail."

⁷⁸ Friday, July 6. *Parashat Balaq* is the name of the section in the Torah scheduled to be read on this particular Sabbath in the year. In 1860 it occurred on July 6-7. Sapir always managed to avoid traveling on the Sabbath.

⁷⁹ "Families of this land"—a phrase probably based on classification derived from Gen. 10:5.
⁸⁰ July 7, 1860.

⁸¹ This claim does not fit his other dates.

⁸² Sapir means traveling by rivers and dry land would bring them to an Indian port, from which they could sail to Colombo.

⁸³ Isa. 35:9.

⁸⁴ In the Egyptian section, Vol. I, 28a.

⁸⁵ Cf. Ps. 89:14.

⁸⁶ "Wisdom and understanding" are given by God to Bezalel in Exodus 31:3, 35:31, 36:1.

⁸⁷ Prov. 23:31.

⁸⁸ Job 40:18.

⁸⁹ Song of Songs 5:14.

⁹⁰ *Milhemet t'nufah*. Cf. Isaiah 30:32. JPS Bible translates as "do battle as he waves it" but declares, "meaning of Hebrew uncertain." Some Jewish commentators suggest that the phrase refers to the waving of the sheaves at the time of harvest; others suggest shaking musical instruments at the time of war. Sapir may have thought he had discovered the true meaning of this obscure phrase: elephants waving their trunks in battle.

⁹¹ Job 15:26.

⁹² *Nahat vekavod*, a phrase found, for example, in *Sefer Ha-Hinukh* in regard to treating widows and orphans "with gentleness and respect."

⁹³ A phrase found seven times in the Bible, e.g., Gen. 28:2, Num. 22:20, Joshua 7:10.

⁹⁴ Ezek. 1:18, "rims." Interpreted as height by Midrash *Tanhuma*, *Parashat Toldot*, *Siman* 14.

⁹⁵ Hab. 1:6.

⁹⁶ After sunset on Sunday, thus the beginning of Monday, July 8, 1860.

⁹⁷ Sapir's wording here and in the previous chapter ("with two boatmen steering it") seems to suggest that the boatmen propelled the boat by means of punting, which is possible in the narrow canals and can be seen today.

⁹⁸ A distance, on the backwaters, of between 160 and 200 kilometers.

⁹⁹ *Nahat v'oneg*: words reminiscent of Shabbat. *Menuhah* another form of the first word, appears many times in the Shabbat liturgy and table hymns, as does the word *'oneg*.

¹⁰⁰ Ezek. 19:10, a phrase used in the previous chapter.

¹⁰¹ *Rei-ah tov*, "a good fragrance," is the occasion for a blessing in the prayer book: Blessed be Thou . . . who gives a good fragrance to fruits. This same phrase is associated in the Talmud, midrash, and Rashi with the fragrance of the field, spices (*b'samim*), apple and etrog, and the Garden of Eden.

¹⁰² *Gan ha-Shem*: The Garden of YHWH appears twice in Scripture: Gen. 13:10 and Isa. 51:3. The former emphasizes water: "well-watered like the Garden of the Lord." Isa. 51:3 identifies the Garden of the Lord with Eden, contrasting it with the dry desert and associating it with joy.

¹⁰³ *Daliyot*: vines, trailing branches. Sapir was describing Banyan trees, whose roots hang down from their branches; these would look like vines to him.

¹⁰⁴ *Tiyyul v'oneg*.

¹⁰⁵ Thursday, July 12, 1860.

¹⁰⁶ *'Ovdei 'elilim*. Here this term distinguishes Hindus from Muslims.

¹⁰⁷ This ruler was the Maharaja Uthradom Thirunal, who ruled from 1846 until his death on August 18, 1860, a month after Sapir saw him.

¹⁰⁸ Isa. 53:2.

¹⁰⁹ Echoing Isa. 44:8.

¹¹⁰ July 15, 1860.

¹¹¹ *Qedoshim heimah lahem*. Sapir uses the same phrase, "holy to them," twice again in *Even Sapir* to interpret Hindu practices. See the section "The Other's Perception" in the preceding discussion to this translation.

¹¹² Sapir's use of the phrase "*shor afis*" is puzzling because no such term appears in rabbinic writings. He may have mis-remembered the name, spelling it wrong, or we may be seeing a misprint.

¹¹³ In the 19th century this was "a town with considerable traffic, visited by merchants far and near," according to *The Imperial Gazetteer of India*, Vol. XVI (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1908). Today Kottar is a thriving market and residential area with its own distinct architecture, now encompassed by the newer city of Nagercoil, situated near the southern tip of the Indian subcontinent.

¹¹⁴ *The Imperial Gazetteer of India* of 1885 (London: Trübner & Co.) described Tuticorin as the only port of importance in the District of Tinneveli, exporting cotton, coffee, jaggery, and chillies (Vol. 13, p. 307); the *Gazetteer* of 1908 deemed Tuticorin the second most important seaport in the Presidency of Madras, noting its "very large passenger traffic with Ceylon" (Vol. 24, pp. 64-66).

¹¹⁵ Num. 30-32, which was recited in 1860 on July 20.

¹¹⁶ Translation uncertain. Compare m.Ma'asrot 4.5, "seeds and plants," and Isa. 37:27, "tender shoots."

¹¹⁷ Which route did Sapir take between Kottar and Tuticorin—the road along the seacoast or the inland route? Probably the inland route, from Kottar to Tinneveli to Tuticorin, since Sapir describes "flat land and small hills." The inland route is flat, passing through wide plains, and one sees hills both to the east and west. Possibly, even, Sapir was describing religious architecture in Tinneveli (Tirunelveli), since it was and is a major religious center that holds a regular car festival in the month of Aani—around the time of Sapir's journey.

¹¹⁸ *Shonim um'shunim*—two words from the same root, a rhetorical pun.

¹¹⁹ The vocabulary for Hindu images in this sentence derives particularly from two sources: Chapter 11 of Leviticus and Ezek. 8:10. See the section "Word Choice: Idolatry and Eden" in the preceding discussion to this translation.

¹²⁰ Sapir seems to be describing a typical structure gracing many temples in the south of India called a *gopuram*, a towering gateway bearing many layers of sacred images. It is intriguing to guess that Sapir had witnessed the large *gopurams* of the ancient Nellaiappar Temple in Tirunelveli and one of its massive sacred chariots. Indirect corroboration appears in A. J. Stuart's *A Manual of the Tinnevely District of the Presidency of Madras*, published in 1879, which reports that one of the two principal festivals of Tinnevely Taluk (the central area of this district, containing the cities of Tinnevely and Palamcottah) was "the procession of the car in Tinnevely in July" (pp. 90 and 257). Thanks to Tim Lubin for identifying this source.

¹²¹ Sapir is describing a sacred car or wagon (*ratha*) used for transporting deities around a city during certain festivals. But how should we picture Sapir's description of it? What difference did Sapir intend by his two words for "wheel": *galgal* and *ofan* (the second having connotations of heavenly spheres and angels). Upon what part of the vehicle did "all kinds of images" reside—only the wheels, or the entire vehicle? For example, the sacred vehicles of the Meenakshi Temple in Madurai today have plain wheels (painted with concentric circles) but a multitude of elaborately carved figures decorating the sides of the wagon. Surya's chariot in Konarak, on the other hand, has images embedded in many of its stone wheels. If this is what Sapir meant, then the images would, as he wrote, "circle round and round the wheels and the disks." And did Sapir mean that the sacred vehicle had both large

and small wheels supporting it, like the chariot of Velluvar? Or did he mean that the large wheels had smaller concentric wheels painted on them?

¹²² Isa. 46:1, *masa' la'ayeifah*, referring to the heavy images of Babylonian gods.

¹²³ What ("they, them") do the people lift? What ("it") do they move around the city? In fact, people do not lift either the vehicle or the wheels; they pull the vehicle with ropes drawn over their shoulders and sometimes also push it.

¹²⁴ Apparently the same week, on the evening that begins the second day of the week, thus the 4th of Av but still 22 July 1860. Sapir's entire journey from Cochin to Tuticorin, beginning on 5 July, lasted seventeen days.

¹²⁵ The ritual of holding an ox horn over one's head led Sapir to think he could now understand another sentence in rabbinic literature. Midrash Leviticus Rabbah 13:5 had asserted that Greece "persisted impudently with its edicts against Israel, and said to them: 'Write on the horn of the ox that you have no share in the World to Come.'" See the section "Interpretative Assumptions in the Footnotes: Ancient Indian Culture" in the preceding discussion to the translation.

¹²⁶ 2 Kings 21:16: "Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides the sin that he made Judah to sin so that they did what was evil in the sight of the Lord." The Talmud, Sanh. 103b, records a "Western" interpretation of this verse: "he made an image as heavy as a thousand men, and every day it killed all of them," which Rashi takes to mean that its enormous weight crushed 1,000 men every day.

¹²⁷ Dan. 3:1, "Nebuchadnezzar the king made an image of gold ... he set it up in the Plain of Dura." This verse is discussed extensively in Midrash Levit. Rab. 33:6, where Nebuchadnezzar speaks of "my idolatry" (*avodat kokhavim sheli*), and Midrash Songs Rab. 7:14, in which Nebuchadnezzar sets up an image (*he'emid tzelem*) and commanded the nations of the world to worship it.