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From the Editors

Nathan Katz and Braj Mohan Sinha

Our seventeenth issue is the first to be published exclusively online. We are delighted that our work is now available globally and free of charge. We are also pleased to expand our collaboration with Middle East Institute, New Delhi (www.mei.org.in)

We present four articles in this issue, three on comparative religions and one on international relations.

Comparative studies examine ethics, mysticism, and texts. The first by Founding Editor Braj Mohan Sinha looks at Gandhi's and Buber's approaches to nonviolence. The second, by Zohar translator and Kabbalah scholar Daniel C. Matt, looks deeply at the mysticism of Ayn Soph and Shunyata, both terms translatable as 'nothingness.' An article by Bharat Jhunjunwala analyzes at length convergent themes in the Torah and the Veda.

Finally, Joseph Hodes examines a little-known topic in international relations, the halting diplomatic efforts at rapprochement between Israel and Pakistan.

Recent books by C. B. Duvakaruni, Shalom Wald and Reille Kadel, and Ithamar Theodor and Yudit K. Greenberg are evaluated and appraised by David Blumenthal, Navras Jaat Aafreedi, and Nathan Katz. These new books are testimony to the burgeoning field of Indo-Judaic Studies.

We sadly note the passing of three very significant figures in the worlds of Indian Jews. Zaithunchi was the chronicler, or narrator, of the Bene Menashe Jews of the Indo-Burmese border regions, especially in her home of Aizawl in Mizoram. Nathan Katz describes her unique contributions to that emerging community. Author and spiritual leader, Rabbi Ezekiel N. Musleah of Kolkata and Philadelphia, a man of remarkable talents and gifts, is remembered by his former congregant, Steven Heine. Sarah Cohen of Kochi became very well known, whether through her engaging personality and warm, welcoming nature, or because of a recent film about her life and copious attention from the media, The tribute by

Ellen S. Goldberg fondly recalls Sarah Aunty as her mentor in the rich culture of Kochi's Jewish women.

And we have two communications to offer. Navras Jaat Aafreedi's is about the growth of Jewish Studies in Kolkata recently, and the other by S. Kalayanaraman clarifies his findings about a suggestive maritime discovery off Haifa, Israel.

Our next issue will be our eighteenth, and 18 is a significant number in Jewish mysticism and in general. We would especially welcome reflections about numerology in the Dharmic religions and in Judaism to mark this milestone.

For valuable help preparing this issue, we note our gratitude to Ellen S. Goldberg and Bharat Jhunjhunwala.

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Buber: Two Approaches to Non-violence¹

Braj M Sinha

Non-violence and its role in the contemporary world are important questions, to be explored in this paper through a comparative look at the approaches of Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Buber. The impetus for the present comparative study comes from two sources.

First, my more-than-three decades' engagement in dialogue with Jewish people and Jewish thought; this engagement has been extremely rewarding for my intellectual growth and spiritual quest. India and Israel, with their respective religious and cultural heritages, including Hinduism and Judaism, represent two of the most ancient continuous philosophical and religious traditions of the world. These are two ancient cradles of civilization with two mother religions which gave birth to other civilizations and religions respectively in East and West. Gandhi and Buber are great people who have given to the world invaluable religious and philosophical perspectives, one with the important demand of spiritual transformation and the other emphasizing ethical transformation. Both traditions aim to create a new human reality free from self-centered existence and a divinely ordained peaceful and harmonious world.

The second pressing motivation for this study is our contemporary global context in which the ugly head of violence continuously recurs, with conflicts continuously emerging, now including the specter of nuclear war. These disturbing developments in the global arena certainly present an insurmountable threat to global peace and harmony confronting humanity. Consulting the resources of our religious, spiritual, and philosophical history, we need to rethink the parameters of

¹ The paper is a revised version of the Keynote address entitled *Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Buber: Hindu-Jewish Perspectives on Non-violence* delivered on 6 March 2020 at the Inaugural Session of the International meeting of Asian-African Philosophical Congress held at the North East Hill University, Shillong, Arunachal Pradesh, India.

the most valuable contribution to the contemporary world perspective. For this study I will highlight the Gandhian principle of *ahimsa* and *Satyagraha*, the non-violent non-cooperation or what Gandhi called Truth Force, especially in the context of a nuanced approach to the issue as proposed by Martin Buber in his response to the Gandhian notion of *Satyagraha*.

Gandhi and Buber: Preliminary Observations

Gandhi, by his own admission, was a deeply religious person who felt compelled to bring religion into politics. In significant ways his notion of Non-violence (*ahimsa*) and Truth Force (*Satyagraha*) were informed by an understanding of the Hindu faith in which he was deeply encultured from a young age. His deep faith did not keep him from reinterpreting his religious heritage, as he did in the case of the *Bhagavad-Gita* and Krishna's exhortations to Arjun to engage in warfare.² Gandhi had cultivated Jewish friends in his early days in South Africa and some of them remained his lifelong companions and admirers.³ Even though, according to his own admission, he not very well informed on Jewish thought and history, Gandhi admired Jewish people, especially their cohesiveness, creativity and their laudable contributions to world civilization.⁴

Martin Buber was a Jewish mystic and philosopher, deeply steeped in the prophetic biblical tradition. Buber had a strong social conscience, and considered one's affective loving relationship to the world as an engagement in an act of Divine worship. Like Gandhi, he never remained stagnant in his comfort zone; he continually experimented with ideas and ideologies of his Jewish heritage, moving from his early contemplative mystic life to a later active engagement in civic and communitarian goals – especially those of cultivating a tolerant, just, and peaceful

² See Mohandas K. Gandhi, *The Bhagavad Gita According to Gandhi*, trans. and ed. John Strohmeier (Berkeley: North Atlantic Books, 2009).

³ See Margaret Chatterjee, *Gandhi and his Jewish Friends* (McMillan, 1992).

⁴ Mohandas K. Gandhi quoted in Interview by the Jewish Chronicle, London, October 2, 1931. Source: *Jewish Virtual Library*, Reprinted with permission from the GandhiServe Foundation-Mahatma Gandhi Research and Media Service. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/interview-to-the-jewish-chronicle-london-by-gandhi-october-1931>

world order.⁵ Buber was a great admirer of Gandhi and his commitment to the spiritualization of politics and the greater cause of global non-violent transformation. Martin Buber had intellectually followed Gandhi from the South Africa days, was well informed on Gandhi's mode of thinking, and had read or tried to keep himself abreast with Gandhi's evolving thinking: keeping his eyes and ears open for guidance from the master of non-violent active resistance to evil in civic life.⁶

Buber's admiration of Gandhi was publicly expressed in a well-known piece that he wrote in 1930, entitled *Gandhi, Politics, and US*.⁷ In the article Buber deftly discussed the religious dimension of Gandhi's political act, expressed his deep appreciation for Gandhi's desire to engage with the allegorical 'Serpent' called Politics, and how Gandhi was trying to subdue this extremely treacherous and slimy Serpent. This laudable act of Gandhi, according to Buber, was informed by Gandhi's own religious convictions and engaging in political actions as an act of pilgrimage with a perhaps unrealizable end-goal. As he wrote "... the Mahatma has set out on his march—a far-reaching symbolical counterpart of the flight of the aged Tolstoy. Manifestly this is no political journey, but a pilgrimage."⁸ Whether the goal

⁵ See Ben Molloy, Ephraim Meir and Chaim Lavie; "An Integrated Strategy for Peacebuilding: Judaic Approaches"; *Die Friedens-Warte*; Vol. 82, No. 2/3, Religion, Krieg und Frieden (2007), pp. 137-158 ; Published By: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag; <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23773931>

⁶ The ease and felicity shown by Martin Buber about various stages in the development of Gandhi's thought and political strategies as well important developments in his South African experiments and unfolding Indian Political scenario under Gandhi's tutelage are remarkable. From his writings it is quite clear that Buber had followed stages in Gandhi's thought and political activities deliberately, conscientiously, and persistently. There are ample evidences to this effect in his two writings involving Gandhi, "Gandhi, Politics, and US" as well as "A Letter to Gandhi". See Martin Buber, "Gandhi, Politics, and US (1930)" and "A Letter to Gandhi (1939)" in Martin Buber, *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*, Tr. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper Brothers, 1957).

⁷ Martin Buber, "Gandhi, Politics, and US (1930)" in Martin Buber, *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*, Trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper Brothers, 1957), pp. 126-132.

⁸ Buber, "Gandhi, Politics, and US (1930)," 131.

was reached on not, Buber felt that the Gandhian journey itself is its own reward on account of being an act of worship, an act of surrender, an act of self-transformation that is the very fundamental prerequisite of a non-violent resistance to the forces of evil, of subjugation and oppression, of exploitation and persecution.⁹

In Gandhi's political pilgrimage, Buber finds an inspiration for the Jewish people in their quest for justice and redressal of their suffering of two thousand years of dispersion in diaspora and the untold misery of the persecution and destruction of the Holocaust. What he found most compelling in Gandhi's religious approach to politics was the promise of self-transformation of human reality, a goal which is not political but ultimately and utterly religious. This Gandhian goal of self-transformation Buber believed to be more important than the political goal anticipated at the end of this pilgrimage. Thus speaking of Gandhi's planned Dandi March of March 12, 1938 he wrote: "... I believe that this pilgrimage will essentially co-determine the nature of the man in an independent India, whenever and however that independence is attained. (However,) What would Swaraj amount to if it implied only a transformation of institutions and not a transformation of men also!"¹⁰

Gandhi, on his part, probably did not know much about Buber. He did not engage in direct correspondence with Buber, but definitely was in close contact with many of his own Jewish friends and kept himself abreast with the developments in Nazi Germany as it impinged on the fate and plight of Jewish people in Germany. Buber, with his religious and political writings and his socially responsive, conscientious acts of promoting the Jewish cause in Palestine, inhabited a special place in the contemporary Jewish psyche. It is quite probable that Gandhi had heard of Buber and his enormous work in Palestine during the 1930s: Jewish-Arab dialogue for creating mutual understanding, reciprocity, and a congenial atmosphere for the possibility of Palestine being a harmonious and peaceful home to both Jewish people and Arabs.

⁹ Buber, "Gandhi, Politics, and US (1930)," 132.

¹⁰ Buber, "Gandhi, Politics, and US (1930)," 132.

Gandhi on Non-violence, *Satyagraha* and the Jewish Question

In the later part of the 1930s, the world stood on the brink of an imminent war. Gandhi felt compelled to write on the issue of the plight of the Jews and their persecution.

Gandhi authored an opinion piece titled *The Jews* that appeared in *Harijan*¹¹ on November 26, 1938, addressing three specific themes:

1. Expression of undiluted condemnation of Nazi persecution of the Jewish people;
2. A prescription for a non-violent course of action for the Jewish people as a response to Nazi persecution; and
3. A recommendation for non-violent resolution of the Arab-Jewish conflict in Palestine.

The short piece in *Harijan* presents Gandhi's philosophy of Non-violence developed for India's struggle for independence in a highly succinct manner, with the specific purpose of showing its relevance to the Jewish struggle and implicitly establishing its universal relevance. It affirms Gandhi's proclamation of Non-violence and *Satyagraha* as the panacea of all the problems faced by the German Jewry.

Gandhi on his part expressed his unalloyed support for the Jewish people and expressed uninhibited condemnation of Nazi use of brutal force against Jews as well as age-long persecution of the Jewish people by Christians in Europe. In their plight in Europe and their treatment by Christians in Europe he saw similarities with the Indian discrimination toward untouchables in the name of religion. He wrote:

My sympathies are all with the Jews. I have known them intimately in South Africa. Some of them became life-long companions. Through these friends I came to learn much of their age-long persecution. They have been the untouchables of Christianity. The parallel between their treatment by Christians and the treatment of untouchables by Hindus is very close.

¹¹ Mohandas K. Gandhi, "The Jews" in *Harijan* (November 26, 1938) appearing in Mohandas K. Gandhi, *My Non-violence*, Compiled and Edited by Sailesh Kumar Bandopadhyaya (Ahmedabad, 1960).

Religious sanction has been invoked in both cases for the justification of the inhuman treatment meted out to them. Apart from the friendships, therefore, there is the more common universal reason for my sympathy for the Jews.¹²

Mahatma Gandhi felt an instinctive affinity with the Jewish people as he saw in their exploitation and oppression in Christian Europe a religious parallel with the Indian Hindu treatment of the untouchables. Gandhi's conscience rebelled against those who perpetuated discrimination against fellow human beings based on their religion or creed or race. He was aghast by brute force that had been released and the persecution that was being perpetrated against the Jewish people in Germany in the name of a militant nationalism that he termed as religious in its orientation and faith. Thus he declared:

German persecution of the Jews seems to have no parallel in history. The tyrants of old never went so mad as Hitler seems to have gone. And he is doing it with religious zeal. For he is propounding a new religion of exclusive and militant nationalism in the name of which any inhumanity becomes an act of humanity to be rewarded here and hereafter. The crime of an obviously mad but intrepid youth is being visited upon this whole race with unbelievable ferocity. If there ever could be a justifiable war in the name of and for humanity, a war against Germany, to prevent the wanton persecution of a whole race, would be completely justified.¹³

However, Gandhi, a prophet of Non-violence and peace proclaimed that he did not believe in war. He refused to even entertain the idea of war against Germany. However, at the same time he also did not want the world to accept the status quo of allowing Nazi Germany to continue with its acts of genocide against Jewish people. He stood against any alliance with Germany by England or any other nations of the world committed to justice and democracy. Gandhian Non-violence refused to acknowledge even tacit support for the unjust and immoral subjugation and oppression of the Jewish people in Nazi Germany.

¹² Gandhi, "The Jews."

¹³ Gandhi, "The Jews."

His answer to the Jewish quandary in Germany and European response to it was the same that he employed in his struggle against British in his quest for freedom of India and Indians from British subjugation, i.e., nonviolent non-cooperation. He demanded the same from England and other players on the world arena in their engagement with Nazi Germany and its, what Gandhi calls, unparalleled persecution of Jewish people.

Gandhi condemned the Nazi Germany's unbridled use of violence in no uncertain terms. Germany was showing to the world how efficiently violence can be worked when it is not hampered by any hypocrisy or weakness masquerading as humanitarianism. "It is also showing how hideous, terrible and terrifying it looks in its nakedness," Gandhi wrote.¹⁴

An important question is: What was Gandhi's advice to the German Jews? What did he want them to do in the face of this extreme violence? What was his prescription for their malaise? The unequivocal Gandhian prescription was non-violent Satyagraha: the Jewish people confronting the perpetrators of discrimination and persecution with courage and strength, with calm spirit and strong will, refusing to accept Nazi discriminating behavior and refusing to accept Nazi diktats.

Gandhi's prescription to the Jewish people was a course of non-violent response to the violent machinery that had the avowed aim of destroying the whole Jewish population through wanton force. To the Jews of Germany his exhortation was that as chosen people of God they must not feel helpless and forlorn but confront Nazi violence with non-violent response by standing in the way of the death machinery with strength and courage: "And for doing this, I should not wait for the fellow Jews to join me in civil resistance but would have confidence that in the end the rest are bound to follow my example. If one Jew or all the Jews were to accept the prescription here offered, he or they cannot be worse off than now. And suffering voluntarily undergone will bring them an inner strength and joy which no number of resolutions of sympathy passed in the world outside Germany can." ¹⁵

¹⁴ Gandhi, "The Jews."

¹⁵ Gandhi, "The Jews."

Gandhi was convinced that the only truly effective response to Nazi state oppression of Jews in Germany was a Jewish practice of non-violent non-cooperation – a practice of Satyagraha – as he had inspired to resist the British in South Africa and was replicating in India. Based on his experimentation, Gandhi strongly felt that “if someone with courage and vision can arise among them to lead them in non-violent action, the winter of their despair can in the twinkling of an eye be turned into the summer of hope.”

Gandhi’s belief in the efficacy of Non-violent *Satyagraha* as a universal principle of civil resistance against all forms of discrimination, subjugation, exploitation, and oppression was so strong that he refused to put any objective conditions or limitation on its practice in the wake of an avowedly evil, violent, discriminatory, destructive state machinery intent on the “ultimate solution”: the German pogrom that had no qualms about completely destroying the Jewish race.

Gandhi’s recommendation to Jewish people in Germany elicited cries of protests from the German Jewish people. Gandhi defended himself against these outbursts of protest against his exhortations of Non-violence.¹⁶ He did not discount the fact that the Jewish people have long suffered discrimination in the European Christian world in a non-violent manner without raising arms. However, he did not consider their history of Non-violence to be “active Non-violence.” Rather, Gandhi considered it a “passive Non-violence”: the nonviolence of the weak and forlorn, the Non-violence of the helpless and suffering who deep within their hearts hated the perpetrators of the persecution that they were not able to oppose and confront with strength. Responding to his German Jewish critics of his Nov 26, 1938, article in *Harijan*, Gandhi wrote: “Have I not repeatedly said that active Non-violence is unadulterated love – fellow-feeling? And if the Jews, instead of being helplessly and of necessity non-violent, adopt active Non-violence, i.e., fellow-feeling for the

¹⁶ Mohandas K. Gandhi, “Some Questions Answered,” in *Harijan* (Dec 8, 1938) appearing in Mohandas K. Gandhi, *My Non-violence*, Compiled and Edited by Sailesh Kumar Bandopadhyaya (Ahmedabad, 1960).

gentile Germans deliberately, they cannot do any harm to the Germans and I am as certain as I am dictating these lines that the stoniest German heart will melt.”¹⁷

The subsequent history of Nazi action in Germany and elsewhere proved Gandhi wrong. Within a span of short years between 1941 and 1945, Nazis and their collaborators persecuted, robbed, tortured, raped, maimed, and gassed, killing six million Jews as well as Roma (Gypsies), the disabled, homosexuals, and political opponents, in Germany and elsewhere in Europe. The Holocaust, the violent destruction of unarmed and peaceful people at the hands of the state terror machine shall ever remain the blackest spot on the conscience of humanity, and no act of expiation shall ever redeem world consciousness of this terrible tragedy.

Martin Buber on Gandhian Approach to Jewish Question

Martin Buber had stayed in Germany for almost five years after Hitler was appointed the Chancellor of the Nazi Germany in the year 1933. Martin Buber left Germany in the year 1938 to settle in Jerusalem. It is here that Buber apparently read the Gandhi's opinion piece regarding the Jews in Germany that appeared in the *Harijan* on November 26, 1938. Buber, extremely disturbed by the piece, took pains to write a well-pondered letter to Gandhi from Jerusalem dated February 24, 1939.¹⁸

¹⁷ Gandhi, "Some Questions Answered.

¹⁸ This Letter written by Martin Buber in 1939 -- along with a similar letter written by Judah Magnes -- were open letters written as public replies to Gandhi for his opinion piece appearing in *Harijan* (November 26, 1938). These two letters are published in Martin Buber and Judah Magnes, *Two Letters to Gandhi* (Jerusalem: Reuben Mass, 1939). Mahatma Gandhi certainly did not respond the Buber's letter. There is some debate as to whether he even received it or read the letter. However, there is some evidence that Gandhi at least received the letter: "In a letter from Martin Buber to his biographer Aubrey Hodes (4 August 1957), Buber writes, "Gandhi replied to Dr. Mapes and myself only in a postcard, in which he told us he regretted he didn't have time to write a reply." The whereabouts of this postcard are still unclear. See Chatted. (1992):170, note 3. Cited by Jonathan K Crane, "Faltering Dialogue," *Anashakti Darshan* (3.1, 2007). All citations in this paper from Buber's Feb 24, 1939 letter to Gandhi, unless noted otherwise, are from Martin Buber, "A Letter to Gandhi (1939)" in *Pointing the Way: Collected Essays*, Trans. Maurice Friedman (New York: Harper Brothers, 1957), 139-147.

Buber was aghast at Gandhi's proposal of non-violent Satyagraha against the Nazis, and lodged an unequivocal dissent to Gandhi's exhortation to German Jews to use non-violent civil resistance and not to seek intervention from world powers such as England, France, and the United States at this critical hour in the history of humanity. Buber had strong reservations about Gandhi's exhortation to German Jews to practice non-violent resistance. He felt betrayed by Gandhi, who had formerly been a source of strength in Buber's struggle for securing justice to his people. Alarmed by Gandhi's failure to see the ugly face of the state-sponsored terrorism and brutally destructive nature of Nazi Germany's approach to unarmed Jewish people, Buber felt compelled to respond to Gandhian perspective on Non-violence and its prescription for the Jews in Germany and Palestine within the context of the Jewish experience.

With deeply felt anguish at the plight of his own people in Germany, Buber countered: "Jews are being persecuted, robbed, maltreated, tortured, and murdered. And you, Mahatma Gandhi, say that their position in the country where they suffer all this is an exact parallel to the position of Indians in South Africa at the time you inaugurated your famous 'Force of Truth' or 'Strength of the Soul' (Satyagraha) campaign..... Now do you know or do you not know, Mahatma, what a concentration camp is like and what goes on there? Do you know of the torments in the concentration camp, of its methods of slow and quick slaughter?"¹⁹

Buber, along with many Jewish admirers of Gandhi and his Satyagraha, failed to see how the Gandhian approach of non-violent non-cooperation would ever be effective against an evil regime such as that of the Nazis. He believed in Gandhi, and he believed in Gandhi's indomitable spirit of struggle and resistance to evil. Buber believed in Gandhi's call for transformation of humanity by transforming the human heart and human nature.²⁰ But he did not think that Gandhi's prescription of non-violent *Satyagraha* to the German Jewish people was a viable way of dealing with this violent regime, a ferocious state machinery engaged in an act of genocide with no regard for human life and human dignity.

¹⁹ Buber, "A Letter to Gandhi (1939)," 139.

²⁰ See Buber, "Gandhi, Politics, and US (1930)."

To Gandhi's recommendations to the Jews to stand up to the Germans in brave non-violent defiance, Buber countered: "And do you think perhaps that a Jew in Germany could pronounce in public one single sentence of a speech such as yours without being knocked down? Of what significance is it to point to a certain something in common when such differences are overlooked? It does not seem to me convincing when you base your advice to us to observe Satyagraha in Germany on these similarities of circumstance."²¹ Buber posed to Gandhi the question of the context and circumstances of the German Jewish experience of violence and existential threat it constituted to them. He poignantly asked Gandhi: "But Mahatma, are you not aware of the burning of synagogues and scrolls of the Torah? Do you know nothing of all the sacred property of the community – in part of great antiquity, that has been destroyed in the flames? . . . Now, do you know, or *do you not* know, Mahatma, what a concentration camp is like and what goes on there?"²² Buber strongly protests against Gandhi's failure to see the extreme existential tragedy that German Jews were facing under the Nazi regime.

Buber was not convinced by Gandhi's argument that active Non-violence would have the impact Gandhi expected. Buber had his own reasons for such reservations. As he writes: "an effective stand in the form of Non-violence may be taken against unfeeling humans in the hope of gradually bringing them to their senses; but a diabolic universal steamroller cannot thus be withstood. There is a certain situation in which no 'satyagrah' of the power of the truth can result from the 'satyagrah' of the strength of the spirit. The word satyagrah signifies testimony. Testimony without acknowledgment, ineffective, unobserved martyrdom, a martyrdom cast to the winds – that is the fate of innumerable Jews in Germany."²³

In this circumstance of state-sponsored violence, practice of "active Non-violence" becomes a martyrdom without any tangible result of transformation of the other. Buber countered: "We do not want force. [However,] We have not proclaimed, as did Jesus, the son of our people, and as you do, the teaching of Non-violence, because we believe that a man must sometimes use force to save himself or even

²¹ Buber, "A Letter to Gandhi (1939)," 140.

²² Buber, "A Letter to Gandhi (1939)," 140.

²³ Buber, "A Letter to Gandhi (1939)," 141.

more his children. But from time immemorial we have proclaimed the teaching of justice and peace; we have taught and we have learned that peace is the aim of all the world and that justice is the way to attain it.”²⁴

In opposing Gandhi’s universal active Non-violence with his qualified Non-violence twined with principle of justice, Buber offered a significant conceptual framework for non-violent political action geared towards the specificity of the time, place, and context. In his Feb 24, 1939, letter to Gandhi, Buber urges the Mahatma to see the wisdom of the teachings of the *Mahabharata*. The *Bhagwat Gita*, Buber considers to be the greatest poem in the Mahabharata where Buber discerns Krishna’s reproach to Arjun, declaring Arjun’s unwillingness to fight against injustice and unrighteousness as an act of cowardice and shamefulness.²⁵ The right of self-protection and the principle of Justice are two interconnected elements in Buber’s nuanced approach to Gandhian Non-violence. Use of force to protect against life threatening wanton violence and bringing justice to those who violated the commandment of “thou shalt not kill” stand as two well considered maxims that Buber proposes to Gandhi for his consideration as a limit on prescription of unqualified Gandhian Non-violence. So he declares to Gandhi: “I am forced to withstand the evil in the world just as the evil within myself. I can only strive not to have to do so by force. I do not want force. But if there is no other way of preventing the evil destroying the good, I trust I shall use force and give myself up into God’s hands.”²⁶

Violence of Gandhian Non-violence

Buber strongly protested against Gandhian prescription of the so called “active nonviolence” to the Jews in their struggle against the Nazis. In a way he finds Gandhian prescription of active Non-violence without regard to the time and place, the context and situation of the Jews in Nazi German an act of violence against the

²⁴ Buber, “A Letter to Gandhi (1939),” 145.

²⁵ Martin Buber, “Letter to Mahatma Gandhi from Jerusalem”, February 24, 1939, retrieved from Jewish Virtual Library, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/letter-from-martin-buber-to-gandhi>

²⁶ Buber, “A Letter to Gandhi (1939),” 146.

Jews. I find myself agreeing with this quandary of Buber in ways that may be problematic in our assessment of Gandhian “active Non-violence” and its application to the contemporary context of terrorism and state sponsored violence against its own citizenry in many parts of the world including countries of Mid-east, Russia, China, and Myanmar to name a few current hot spots in the global arena.

It may be construed that any rejection of the right to dissent to an ideologically constructed and culturally constructed position in itself tantamount to violence. Violence is intrinsic to any insistence on acceptance of an ideologically construed truth without regard to the context and circumstances within which it is applicable. I suggest that violence of Gandhian Non-violence lies in its lack of sensitivity to and non- acceptance of the concreteness of the context of human existence. This contradicts the very dictum of Non-violence, *i.e.* the opponent bent upon enforcing their ways of thinking and believing. He robbed them of their human dignity to dissent and demand an explanation from Gandhi of the validity of his prescription to their malaise, an explanation that Gandhi was in no position to offer. From the evidence available, he did not respond to Buber’s Feb 24, 1939 letter. Gandhi steadfastly held on to his views expressed in his November 20, 1938 opinion piece in *Harijan* on the “Jews”.²⁷ The fact remains that Gandhi continued to hold fast to his views expressed in the November, 1938 article in *Harijan*, and even as late as 1946, after widespread terrible consequences of Holocaust were revealed to the world.²⁸

²⁷ See Mohandas K. Gandhi “On the Jewish Question” in *Harijan* (May 22, 1939). Retrieved from <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/gandhi-on-the-jewish-question-may-1939>. Apparently, the Managing Editor of the *Jewish Frontier* had sent Gandhi a copy of the March, 1939 issue of the magazine in which a reply to Gandhi’s November 20, 1938 article was published. While acknowledging that the reply to his article on the Jews in Germany and Palestine was very ably written, Gandhi did not consider the arguments to be persuasive enough to withdraw his earlier expressed opinion. Gandhi writes: “Having read the reply more than once, I must say that I see no reason to change the opinion I expressed in my article.”

²⁸ “Hitler killed five million [*sic*] Jews. It is the greatest crime of our time. But the Jews should have offered themselves to the butcher’s knife. They should have thrown themselves into the sea from cliffs.... It would have aroused the world and the people of Germany.... As it is they succumbed anyway in their millions”- Mahatma Gandhi, June 1946, in an interview with his

One may ask: did Gandhi's opposition to Zionism emanate from his political desire to befriend and cultivate Muslim minority in India for their allegiance to the greater cause of Indian independence movement? Was it the case that the Great Soul, Mahatma, was an astute political schemer and strategist who calculated each move that he made with specific goal in his mind? I suggest this line of thinking does not do justice to Gandhi. Gandhi expressly denied allegations of partiality towards the Muslim cause against Jews because of his avowed concern and dedication to Hindu-Muslim unity in India and its importance to India's independence movement under his stewardship.²⁹

However harsh and irreverent one may sound in raising these questions, the fact remains that Gandhi's response to the plight of Jewish citizenry in Nazi Germany and his recommendations to Jewish people in Palestine does raise questions about his understanding of the situation with respect to his recommendation of his version of Non-violence to the Jewish people in the struggle against the Nazi Germany as well as their quest for a homeland in Palestine.

With respect to Jewish quest for a homeland in Palestine, it is interesting that most of critical reflections on Gandhi's prescription of Non-Violent engagement of the Arabs in Palestine by the Jews are framed around his late 30s and 40s writings and comments. However, Gandhi had already formulated his aversion to Zionism as early as 1921 clearly indicating that he considered Arab claims to Palestine to be historically and politically justified. This he had done in connection with the Khilafat movement, among the Muslims of the world including India which sought Palestine to be the territory governed under an Islamic Khalif,³⁰ long before his

biographer Louis Fischer. Source: Quoted by Shmuley Boteach, "Repudiating Gandhian pacifism in the face of mass murder," *Jerusalem Post* (March 31, 2016), retrieved from the *Jewish Virtual Library*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/gandhi-on-the-holocaust>

²⁹ See Gandhi, "On the Jewish Question."

³⁰ Gandhi writes: "No canon, however, of ethics or war can possibly justify the gift by the Allies of Palestine to Jews. It would be a breach of implied faith with Indian Mussulmans in particular and the whole of India in general." in *Daily Herald* (March 15, 1921). Source: *Jewish Virtual Library*, reprinted with permission from GandhiServe Foundation. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/interview-to-the-daily-herald-london-by-gandhi-march-1921>

famous 1938 article in the *Harijan* that triggered vehement German Jewish protests and was the catalyst of Martin Buber's response to Gandhi in his letter to Mahatma of Feb 24, 1939. Gandhi, as far as we know, did not respond to Buber. Was this silence a strategic silence? Or, was it a silence of a tormented soul which was rung by the validity of Buber's concerns? We will never know.

Buberian Dialogue: The Gandhian Buber

We know that despite Buber's serious reservations and stricture against Gandhi's prescriptions to the Jews of Germany, Buber made it his life task to actually approach the Jewish-Arab relationship in Palestine in a manner that would have made Gandhi proud. In a somewhat analogous manner to Gandhi, Buber developed the ideological tool of "Dialogue" based on his religious convictions, and built around a profound reformulation of the self-centered human claim of the other as an object represented by the term "IT".³¹ The enigmatic and profound religious dictum formulated by Buber in the 1920s in his famous work *I and Thou* was to change our attitude to the world through transformation of the "I-IT" relationship into an "I-Thou" relationship. This transformation constituted the foundation of Buber's dedication to the cause of Arab-Jews dialogue in Palestine. Buber's work in Palestine in the cause of Arab-Jewish conflict resolution and establishment of Peace, reformulates what Gandhi was aiming at – a radical transformation of human nature where the "other" is not an opponent but a comrade, a dialogue partner, claiming a space next to me as my sojourner in my quest for meaningful relationship with the world out there.

Gandhi writes: "The Jews cannot receive sovereign rights in a place which has been held for centuries by Muslim powers by right of religious conquest. The Muslim soldiers did not shed their blood in the late War for the purpose of surrendering Palestine out of Muslim control. I would like my Jewish friends to impartially consider the position of the seventy million Muslims of India." in *Young India* (April 6, 1921), retrieved from the *Jewish Virtual Library*, reprinted with permission from GandhiServe Foundation. <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/notes-in-young-india-by-gandhi-april-1921>

³¹ See Seymour Siegel; "Contemporary Jewish Theology: Four Major Voices" in *Journal of Church and State*, Vol. 13, No. 2 (Spring 1971), pp. 257-27; Oxford University Press. Retrieved from <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23914360>

Buberian Dialogue, like Gandhian Satyagraha, Truth Force, is a quest for the transformation of the world through the transformation of self, in the spirit of well-known saying attributed to Gandhi: “be the change that you wish to see in the world.” Buber was convinced that Dialogue was the solution to the antagonistic Jewish-Arab relationship developed in Palestine as the Jews were re-settling in their ancestral home.³²

Buberian Dialogue involves mutual understanding and respect: not only for each other’s viewpoints, but of person, of physical presence, of sensuous engagement with a sense of affinity and closeness to the other. For Buber, Dialogue was the only solution to the current crisis of the world created by “I-It” relationality, rather than “I-Thou” perspective and presence. In the ideal “I-Thou” relation, “I” is not separate from the “other”, but is one with the “other”, giving no room for the antagonism and violence that the “I-It” relationship allowed for. Buberian “Dialogue” complemented his “qualified Non-violence” and brought him very close to Gandhian Non-violence which demanded practice of “active Non-violence” as an act of love, not hatred of the enemy. Echoing Gandhi’s exhortation, hate the evil, but not the evil doer, Buber states that there is nothing better for a man than to deal justly – but not in vengeance, but with love. “We should be able even to fight for justice - but to fight lovingly,” Buber declares.³³

Martin Buber was convinced of his existential destiny as a harbinger of a new age of Dialogue, like Gandhian Satyagraha, as the fundamental tool for establishing a new world order. Based on the twin principles of Justice and Peace for mutual understanding and cooperation in the New Jerusalem, he wrote the famous letter to Mahatma Gandhi in the new home of Palestine.

³² For a comparative treatment of Gandhian Satyagraha and Buberian Dialogue see V. V. Ramana Murti, “Buber’s Dialogue and Gandhi’s Satyagrah,” *Journal of the History of Ideas*, Vol. 29, No. 4 (U Pennsylvania Press, Oct. - Dec., 1968), 605-613. See also, “Faltering Dialogue? Religious Rhetoric of Mohandas Gandhi and Martin Buber,” *Anasakti Darshan*, Vol. 3, No. 1 (Jan-June 2007).

³³ Buber, “A Letter to Gandhi (1939),” 146

Buber genuinely felt that he was living up to the call of his hero, his spiritual mentor, his ideal and idol who was worshipped deep within.³⁴

Under Gandhi's influence of engaging the opponent in a nonviolent mode, Gandhi's emphasis of not hating the opponent, but lovingly engaging the opponent in Dialogue, Martin Buber dedicated his life to the cultivation of genuine Dialogue between the Jews and the Arabs to prevent the violent engagements that had resulted in Palestine.

Buber took pains to bring to Gandhi's attention what he was doing in Palestine and how he felt that in pursuing his mode of existential Dialogue he was living up to the Gandhian goal of Satyagraha. Buber sought alliance and support from Gandhi, to help the Jewish people achieve this goal. In Buber's February 24, 1939 letter to Gandhi he explicitly asks Gandhi to help facilitate this important task:

I belong to a group of people who, from the time when Britain conquered Palestine, have not ceased to strive for the achievement of genuine peace between Jew and Arab. We should seek, you say, to convert the heart of the Arab. Well, then - help us to do so! Among us also there are many foolish hearts to convert - hearts that have fallen prey to that nationalist egotism which only admits its own claims. We hope to achieve this ourselves. But for the other task of conversion, we need your help.³⁵

³⁴ "And on the other hand, you, Mahatma, wrote in 1922: 'I see that our Non-violence is skin deep.... This Non-violence seems to be due merely to our helplessness... Can true voluntary Non-violence come out of this seemingly forced Non-violence of the weak?' When I read those words at that time, my reverence for you took birth - a reverence so great that even your injustice toward us cannot destroy it." Martin Buber, "Letter to Mahatma Gandhi from Jerusalem", February 24, 1939, retrieved from *Jewish Virtual Library*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/letter-from-martin-buber-to-gandhi>

³⁵ Martin Buber, "Letter to Mahatma Gandhi from Jerusalem", February 24, 1939, retrieved from *Jewish Virtual Library*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/letter-from-martin-buber-to-gandhi>

It is most unfortunate that Gandhi did not respond to this request in a proactive and positive manner as the subsequent history proved. He expressly denied acting in any significant way to facilitate this task and advised his Jewish friends to seek Indian Muslim help in this important objective.³⁶

Concluding Observations

Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Buber were two prominent spokespersons for their respective constituencies, in a time when India engaged in its struggle for independence from the British colonialism, and the Jewish diaspora across Europe faced extinction at the hand of the brutal persecution of Hitler's Nazi Germany. Both men were, in significant ways, highly religious people, informed by their respective understanding of their own philosophical and intellectual heritages; they were also men of the globalizing discourses of the twentieth century, open and willing to engage other perspectives in dialogue in their search for a just and peaceful world order, free from violent interruptions and usurpations. They both believed in the power of interfaith dialogue with concern for the other, and engagement of the other as an extension of the self. They both believed in the ultimate goal of self-transformation as an important tool of world transformation, Gandhi with his message of "be the change the world that you want to be" and Buber with his exhortation for changing our relationship to the world around us from "I-It" relationship to "I-Thou" relationship.

Importantly, however, while they both were strong proponent of non-violent engagement of the other and response to the world around them, there was one significant difference. Gandhi was not willing to put any restrictions or conditions on his principle of Non-violence and Truth Force. Buber on the other hand, informed by his own religious context and the experience of the Jewish Diaspora

³⁶ "What I would say to you therefore is that unless you can gain the ear of the Indian Mussalmans and their active support, I am afraid there is nothing that can be done in India. I will not be of much use to you." From "Discussion with Mr. Silverman and Mr. Hornick," quoted in *Louis Fischer Papers*, (Poona March 8, 1946), available from *GandhiServe Foundation-Mahatma Gandhi Research and Media Service*, retrieved from *Jewish Virtual Library Collection*, <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/gandhi-discussion-with-mr-silverman-and-mr-honick-on-jews-and-arabs-march-1946>

that faced extinction in Germany and other parts of Europe under state sponsored Death machinery of Nazi Germany of Hitler, asked poignant question to his hero and Idol, Mahatma Gandhi about the efficacy of Non-violence in such a situation. He proposed to temper the principle of Non-violence with the principle of Justice. Herein lies Martin Buber's significant contribution to the conceptual framework within which the questions of principle and practice of Gandhian Non-violence in the contemporary global context needs to be explored.

About MEI@ND

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Varieties of mystical nothingness: Jewish, Christian and Buddhist

Daniel C. Matt

How can God be defined? It cannot. To define ultimate reality would deny and desecrate its infinity. Theologians, philosophers, and mystics have long wrestled with the problem of naming the ineffable. Though language relentlessly persists, God escapes its noisy clutches once again.

The mystics celebrate divine ineffability, and they are quite comfortable with a God who refuses to be trapped by language. Yet even mystics need to refer to the nameless one, if only to communicate their awareness to others, to express a bit of what they have uncovered. One of their favorite methods is to call God “Nothing.” I focus here on the Jewish mystical concept of *ayin* along with two parallels: Meister Eckhart’s *Nichts* and the Buddhist *sunyata*. These terms do not necessarily express an identical meaning, since each mystic is uniquely shaped by his own culture, training, outlook and language.¹

The word *nothingness*, of course, connotes negativity and nonbeing, but divine nothingness is a positive quality. God is greater than any *thing* one can imagine, like *no thing*. Since God’s being is incomprehensible and ineffable, the least offensive and most accurate description one can offer is, paradoxically, *nothing*.

The nothingness of God is a radical expression of negative theology. In the first century, Philo paved the way for negative theology by teaching that God is unknowable and indefinable. Plotinus, the mystical philosopher of the third century, maintains that the One surpasses our most basic categories. It is

¹ For more on *ayin*, see D. Matt, ‘Ayin: The Concept of Nothingness in Jewish Mysticism’, in L. Fine (ed.), *Essential Papers in Kabbalah* (New York 1995) 67-108; idem, *The Essential Kabbalah: The Heart of Jewish Mysticism* (San Francisco 1995) 65-72, 181-84.

unnamable. “We say what it is not, but not what it is.... [It is] higher than what we call ‘being.’”²

The negative theology of Plotinus had a decisive impact on Jewish, Christian and Islamic thought. In the fifth century the Christian mystic Pseudo-Dionysius writes that God is “the cause of being for all, but is itself nonbeing, for it is beyond all being.”³

John Scotus Erigena (ninth century) was deeply influenced by Dionysius and was apparently the first European to apply the term “nothing” to God. Writing in Latin, he calls God *nihil*, by which he means not that God is without being but rather beyond being. Because of “the ineffable, incomprehensible and inaccessible brilliance of the divine goodness.... it is not improperly called ‘nothing’” (*Periphyseon* 634d). When John says that the world was created *ex nihilo*, “out of nothing,” he means that everything emerged out of God’s own essence, the divine no-thingness. In its essence, the divine is said not to be, but as it emanates, it becomes all that is. “Every visible creature can be called a theophany, that is, a divine appearance” (*Periphyseon* 681a). Medieval Christian mystics who speak of divine nothingness, such as Meister Eckhart and Jacob Boehme, are indebted to John Scotus and to Dionysius.

The medieval Jewish mystics may also have been influenced by John Scotus, but their immediate teacher in the field of negative theology was Moses Maimonides. Building on Islamic formulations, Maimonides taught that God has nothing in common with any other being. God’s existence is totally unlike anything we conceive: God “exists but not through existence” (*Guide of the Perplexed* 1:57). Maimonides developed an entire system of negative attributes. He encourages his reader to progress in discovering what God is not.

The description of God ... by means of negations is the correct description.... You come nearer to the apprehension of God with every increase in the negations regarding God. (*Guide of the Perplexed* 1:58-59)

² Plotinus, *Enneads* 5:3:14.

³ Pseudo-Dionysius, *The Divine Names* 1:1; cf. 4:3.

The Jewish mystics adopted Maimonides' theory of negative attributes, at least as it pertains to the infinite nature of God. Yet, and here the paradox is born, the strategy of negation provides a means of indicating the ineffable. Negative attributes carve away all that is false and culminate in a positive sense of nothingness. The mystics now claim to surpass the philosophers. *Ayin*, "nothingness," is revealed as the only name appropriate to the divine essence.

In the words of Joseph Gikatilla,

The depth of primordial being ... is called Boundless. It is also called *ayin* because of its concealment from all creatures.... If one asks, "What is it?," the answer is, "*Ayin*," that is, no one can understand anything about it.⁴

The kabbalists taught that the infinite God manifests itself in ten stages known as the ten *sefirot*. The *sefirot* are aspects of God's personality; they reveal what can be conveyed of the divine nature. The kabbalists identified *ayin* with the first of these *sefirot*. Moses de Leon, the author of the Zohar, explains this identification and then draws an analogy between divine and human ineffability.

[The first *sefirah*] is ... the totality of all existence, and all have wearied in their search for it.... It brings all into being.... Anything sealed and concealed is called *ayin*, meaning that no one knows anything about it. Similarly, no one knows anything about the human soul; she stands in the status of nothingness.... By means of this soul, the human being obtains ... the glory of *ayin*.⁵

The inner nature of both God and the human being is impenetrable. If the human soul could be defined, it would lose its divine likeness. By our nature, we participate in *ayin*. The kabbalists do not elaborate on this intriguing notion, preferring to emphasize the theosophical dimension of nothingness; in Hasidism, as we shall see, the discussion of *ayin* focuses precisely on mystical psychology.

⁴ Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Orah* (Warsaw 1883) 44a-b.

⁵ Moses de Leon, *Sheqel ha-Qodesh*, A. W. Greenup (ed.), (London 1911), 23-24.

For the kabbalist, one of the deepest mysteries is the transition from *ayin* to *yesh*, from “nothing” to “something.” Following in the footsteps of John Scotus and others, they reinterpreted creation *ex nihilo* to mean emanation from the hidden essence of God. “Something” does indeed emerge from “nothing,” but the nothing is brimming with overwhelming divine reality. The something is not a material object but rather the first ray of divine wisdom, which comes into being out of *ayin*. It is the primordial point that initiates the unfolding of God. The opening words of Genesis, “In the beginning,” allude to this first point, the *sefirah* of divine wisdom.

The transition from *ayin* to *yesh* is the decisive act of creation. As time proceeds, nothingness serves as the medium of each transformation, of every birth and death. *Ayin* represents the entirety of potential forms that can inhere in matter, each one issuing forth as a pool spreading out from a spring. As matter adopts new forms, it passes through *ayin*; thus, the world is constantly renewed. In every change, in each gap of existence, the abyss of nothingness is crossed and becomes visible for a fleeting moment.

The mystic yearns for this depth of being, this formless source of all form. Through contemplation, one is able to retrace the individual words of prayer to their source in *ayin*. Azriel of Gerona writes that a true prayer is one in which “we have directed the words to the nothingness of the word.”⁶

Can one know the reality beyond forms? Only by unknowing or, as one kabbalist puts it, “forgetting.” As the mystic ascends the ladder of the *sefirot*, she uncovers layers of being within herself and throughout the cosmos. But there is a higher level, a deeper realm, beyond this step-by-step approach. At the ultimate stage of contemplation, discursive thought, with all its distinctions and connections, dissolves. The highest *sefirah* is also called “the annihilation of thought.” Here the mystic cannot grasp for knowledge; rather, he imbibes from the source to

⁶ Azriel of Gerona, *Sod ha-Tefillah*, in G. Scholem (ed.), *Seridim Hadashim mi-Kitevei R. Azri'el mi-Gerona*, in S. Assaf and G. Scholem (ed.), *Sefer Zikaron le-Asher Gulak ve-li-Shemu'el Klein* (Jerusalem 1942) 215.

which he is now joined. In the words of Isaac, the Blind, “The inner, subtle essences can be contemplated only by sucking,... not by knowing.”⁷

Ayin cannot be known. If one searches too eagerly, one may be overtaken by it, sucked in by the vortex of nothingness. The soul will be severed from the body and return to her root.

There are both positive and negative aspects of the return. Another kabbalist describes cleaving to God as “pouring a jug of water into a flowing spring, so that all becomes one.” Yet he warns that one should not sink in the ocean of *ayin*. “The endeavor should be to contemplate but to escape drowning.... Your soul shall indeed see the divine light and cleave to it while dwelling in her palace [the body].”⁸

The mystic is vulnerable. Moreover, he is responsible for the divine emanation. He must ensure that the *sefirot* themselves do not collapse back into nothingness. Through righteous action the human being stimulates and maintains the flow of emanation; wrongdoing can have disastrous effect. “One who sins returns the attributes to *ayin*, to the primordial world,... and they no longer emanate goodness down to the lower world.”⁹

In eighteenth-century Hasidism the kabbalistic material is recast and psychologized; the *experiential* aspect of *ayin* becomes prominent. The emphasis is no longer on the inner life of God, but on how to perceive the world mystically and how to transform the ego. Dov Baer, the Maggid (preacher) of Mezritch, encourages his followers to change *aniy* (“I”) into *ayin*, to dissolve the separate ego in nothingness.¹⁰ As we shall see, this is not a destructive but rather a dialectical and creative process. Only by attaining the awareness of *ayin*, can one imitate and express the boundless nature of God.

⁷ Isaac the Blind, *Commentary on Sefer Yezirah*, in Scholem (ed.), *Ha-Qabbalah be-Provans* (Jerusalem 1970), appendix, 1; cf. 9, 13.

⁸ Isaac of Akko, *Ozar Hayyim*, MS Moscow-Günzberg 775, fols. 111a, 161b.

⁹ David ben Abraham ha-Lavan, *Masoret ha-Berit*, in Scholem (ed.), *Qovez 'al Yad 1* (1936) 39.

¹⁰ See G. Scholem, *The Messianic Idea in Judaism* (New York 1971) 214. On the kabbalistic roots of this play on words, see Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Or*, 103a.

One must think of oneself as *ayin* and forget oneself totally.... If one thinks of oneself as something,... God cannot be clothed in such a person, for God is infinite. No vessel can contain God, unless one thinks of oneself as *ayin*.¹¹

We must shed the illusion of being separate from God. There is, of course, a danger that the breakthrough to *ayin* will generate megalomania. Perhaps for just this reason, the Maggid emphasizes the link between *ayin* and humility. To defend an independent sense of self is a sign of false pride.

The essence of the worship of God ... is to attain the state of humility, namely,... to understand that all one's physical and mental powers and one's essential being are dependent on the divine elements within. One is simply a channel for the divine attributes. One attains such humility through the awe of God's vastness, through realizing that there is no place empty of God. Then one comes to the state of *ayin*, which is the state of humility.... One has no independent self and is contained, as it were, in the Creator.... This is the meaning of the verse [Exodus 3:6]: "Moses hid his face, for he was in awe...." Through his experience of awe, Moses attained the hiding of his face, that is, he perceived no independent self. Everything was part of divinity!¹²

Hasidic prayer provides an opportunity for the experience of nothingness. The words of the liturgy are reinterpreted and endowed with mystical content. For example, when reciting the first line of the *Shema*, "Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is *one*," the hasid "should intend that there is nothing in the world but God.... You should consider yourself to be absolute nothingness. Your

¹¹ Dov Baer, *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'akov*, Rivka Schatz-Uffenheimer (ed.), (Jerusalem 1976) 186.

¹² Issachar Ber of Zlotshov, *Mevasser Zedek* (Berditchev, 1817) 9a-b. Cf. John of the Cross, *The Ascent of Mount Carmel* 2:7: "When one is brought to nothing [*nada*], the highest degree of humility, the spiritual union between one's soul and God will be effected."

essence is only the soul within, part of God above. Thus, only God is! This is the meaning of the word ‘one.’”¹³

The immersion in nothingness engenders new mental life, through a rhythm of annihilation and thinking. “One [should] turn away from the [prior] object [of thought] totally to the place called ‘nothingness,’ and then a new topic comes to mind. Thus, transformation comes about only by passing through nothingness.” In the words of one of the Maggid’s disciples, “When one attains the level of ... gazing at *ayin*, one’s intellect is annihilated.... Afterwards, when one returns to the intellect, it is filled with emanation.”¹⁴ The creative pool of nothingness is described as the “preconscious” (*qadmut ha-sekhel*), that which precedes, surpasses and inspires both language and thought.

The mystic is expected to trace each thought, word and material object back to its source in *ayin*. The world no longer appears as essentially distinct from God. “This is the foundation of the entire Torah: that *yesh* [the apparent “somethingness” of the world] be annihilated into *ayin*.... The purpose of the creation of the worlds from *ayin* to *yesh* was that they be transformed from *yesh* to *ayin*.” This transformation is realized through contemplative action. “In everything they do, even physical acts such as eating, the righteous raise the holy sparks, from food or any other object. They thus transform *yesh* into *ayin*.”¹⁵

This mystical perspective is not nihilistic. Matter is not destroyed or negated but rather enlivened and revitalized. The awareness that divine energy underlies material existence increases the flow from the source (*ayin*) to its manifestation (*yesh*).

When one gazes at an object, one brings blessing to it. For through contemplation, one knows that it is really absolutely nothing without divinity permeating it. *By means of this awareness*, one draws greater vitality to that object from the divine source of life, since one binds

¹³ *Liqqutei Yeqarim* (Lemberg, 1865) 12b.

¹⁴ Dov Baer, *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov*, 224; Levi Yitzhak, *Qedushat Levi* (Jerusalem 1972) 71d.

¹⁵ Shneur Zalman of Lyady, *Torah Or* (Vilna, 1899), *Noah* 11a; *Va-Yeze* 22b; Dov Baer, *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov* 24.

that thing to absolute *ayin*, the origin of all.... On the other hand, if one looks at that object as a separate thing, *by one's look*, that thing is cut off from its divine root and vitality.¹⁶

World, mind and self-dissolve momentarily in *ayin* and then reemerge. Every object, every thought is revealed as an epiphany of *ayin*. Yet *ayin* is not the goal in itself; it is the moment of transformation from being through nonbeing to new being. The Maggid conveys this thought with the familiar image of a seed that disintegrates before sprouting. Annihilation is a natural process engendering fresh life.

Ayin is the root of all things, and “when one brings anything to its root, one can transform it.... First [each thing] must arrive at the level of *ayin*; only then can it become something else.”¹⁷ Nothingness embraces all potentiality. Every birth and rebirth must navigate the depths of *ayin*. As long as the human ego refuses to acknowledge its source, to participate in the divine, it is mistaking its part for the all. When this apparently separate self is *ayinized*, the effect is not total extinction but the emergence of a new form, a more perfectly human image of the divine. “Only when one's existence is nullified ... is one called ‘human.’”¹⁸

We have traced the concept of *ayin* from its roots in Neoplatonic mysticism through Kabbalah and into Hasidism. Now let us briefly examine two parallels: the *Nichts* of Meister Eckhart and *sunyata* in Mahayana Buddhism. Eckhart was perhaps the most daring Christian mystic. Given his Neoplatonic context, it is no surprise to find close parallels between his teaching and that of the Jewish mystics. Mahayana confronts us with the elusive emptiness of the East, a distinct variety of nothingness.

Meister Johannes Eckhart, who lived from approximately 1260-1328, was a Dominican. His teachers in Germany selected him to teach and represent the Dominican order at the University of Paris, a position held a few decades earlier by Thomas Aquinas. Eckhart went on to hold a number of administrative

¹⁶ Dov Baer, *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov* 124-25 (emphasis added).

¹⁷ Dov Baer, *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov* 49, 134.

¹⁸ Dov Baer, *Maggid Devarav le-Ya'aqov* 39.

Dominican positions. He wrote scholarly tracts in Latin, spoke passionately in convents and monasteries, and became one of the most famous preachers of his time, urging his listeners to seek the divine spark within the soul. In 1329, following Eckhart's death, Pope John XXII condemned twenty-eight of his propositions as heretical or dangerous.

Eckhart speaks of nothingness in two different senses. At times he emphasizes the nothingness of creatures as opposed to the being of God. On other occasions he speaks of transcendent divine nothingness. Thus, depending on the context, Eckhart's nothingness has either a positive or negative connotation.

Among Eckhart's teachings condemned as suspect of heresy is this formulation on creaturely nothingness:

All creatures are a pure nothing. I do not just say that they are insignificant or are only a little something: they are a pure nothing. Whatever has no being, is not. Creatures have no being because their being depends on God's presence. If God were to turn away from creatures for an instant, they would turn to nothing.¹⁹

For Eckhart, dependence on God is total; creatures possess their entire being in the divine being. Since, in his words, "God alone, properly speaking, exists," Eckhart feels justified in insisting on "the nothingness of creatures in themselves in relation to God" (LW 1:132; 2:290).

The purely negative aspect of nothingness is unambiguous in passages such as these. A mystical dimension emerges in Eckhart's preaching on detachment (*Abegescheidenheit*). Nothingness now becomes the goal of the spiritual life. "What is the object of this pure detachment? My answer is that neither this nor that is the object of pure detachment. It reposes in a naked nothingness." By abiding in nothingness, one opens up to the transcendent. "In this there is the

¹⁹ Meister Eckhart, German sermon 4, in J. Quint et al., edd., *Meister Eckhart: Die deutschen und lateinischen Werke* (Stuttgart 1936-), *Deutschen Werke* 1:60-74 (hereafter cited as *DW* and *LW*). See B. McGinn (ed.), *Meister Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher* (Ramsey, New Jersey 1986) 250. The first two sentences became article 26 of the papal bull 'In agro dominico', condemned as suspect of heresy.

greatest potentiality,... [and] receptivity.... If God is to make anything in you or with you, you must first have become nothing.”²⁰

The attainment of nothingness makes room for all that is.

If you could annihilate yourself just for an instant or even less than an instant, all that is in itself would be yours. But as long as in some way your mind is on yourself or on any other object, you know no more of God than my mouth knows about color or my eye about taste: so little do you know and discern of what God is. (DW 2:66)

Eckhart enjoys playing with the two different senses of nothingness. In order to assimilate to God, one must become nothing, but this is impossible if one is still encumbered by creaturely nothingness.

Since it is God’s nature not to be like any one, we must come to the point that we are nothing so that we may be transported into the identical being that he is himself. When I come to the point that I form myself into nothing and form nothing into myself,... then I can be transported into the naked being of God.... Consider what deficiency is. It comes from nothing. Therefore, whatever there is of nothing in a person must be eradicated. As long as there is deficiency in you, you are not the Son of God.²¹

The theme of the birth of the Son of God in the human soul has a long history in Christian spirituality, but Eckhart’s radical formulations incensed his opponents, for he stressed the identity of sonship between the good person and Christ. Five articles in the papal bull cite statements advancing this claim and condemn them

²⁰ ‘On Detachment’, in E. Colledge and B. McGinn (edd.), *Meister Eckhart: The Essential Sermons etc.* (Ramsey, New Jersey 1981) 291-92 (hereafter cited as *Essential Eckhart*); German sermon 39, in *Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher* 297. Cf. p. 287: “Whoever wants to be this or that wants to be something, but detachment wants to be nothing.” In a different context Eckhart exploits the erotic connotations of nakedness: “The greater the nakedness, the greater the union” (*The Book of the Parables of Genesis*, in *Essential Eckhart* 105).

²¹ German sermon 76, in *Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher* 329; cf. R. Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart: Mystic and Philosopher* (Bloomington, Indiana 1978) 134, 167-68.

as either heretical or suspect of heresy. Even more radical is Eckhart's notion of breaking through (*durchbrechen*) to the God beyond God.

[The spark of the soul] wants to know where this divine being comes from. It wants to penetrate to the simple ground, the silent desert ... where there is neither Father, nor Son, nor Holy Spirit.²²

There is a divine reality more transcendent than the Trinity, and it is here, in the hidden *Gotheit*, that the soul discovers its true ground.

When [the soul] sees God as he is God or as he is form or as he is three, there is something inadequate present in it; but when all forms are detached from the soul and she gazes only upon the One alone, then the pure being of the soul finds that it bears hidden in itself the pure formless being of divine unity that is being beyond being.²³

The name "God" is what we use to signify the relationship of the divine to the world, the aspect of the transcendent that can be known by our mind. *Gotheit* refers to the divine as it is in itself, prior to its being named or known, prior to any attributes or any duality of Creator and creation. The traditional concept of God is so inadequate that Eckhart is moved to invent a rather scandalous prayer:

Before there were any creatures, God was not God, but he was what he was.... Now I say that God, so far as he is God, is not the perfect end of created beings.... So therefore, we beg God to rid us of God so that we may grasp and rejoice in that everlasting truth in which the highest angel and the fly and the soul are equal.... I pray to God that he rid me of God, for my real being is above God.²⁴

Eckhart reaches new heights or, from the perspective of his critics, new depths, in his extreme version of negative theology. In his vernacular sermons he speaks passionately, recklessly, about the God beyond God:

God is nameless, because no one can say anything or understand anything about him.... So, if I say: "God is good," that is not true. I

²² DW 1:252; see B. McGinn, 'The God beyond God: Theology and Mysticism in the Thought of Meister Eckhart', *The Journal of Religion* 61 (1981) 12.

²³ DW 3:437-38; see McGinn, 'The God beyond God' 3.

²⁴ German sermon 52, in *Essential Eckhart* 199-203; Schürmann, *Meister Eckhart* 214-220.

am good, but God is not good. I can even say: "I am better than God".... And if I say, "God is wise," that is not true. I am wiser than he. If I say: "God is being," it is not true; he is a being transcending being and a transcending nothingness.... If you love God as he is God, as he is spirit, as he is person and as he is image - all this must go! "Then how should I love him?" You should love him as he is a non-God, a nonspirit, a nonperson, a nonimage, but as he is a pure, unmixed, bright "One," separated from all duality. In that One we should eternally sink down, out of something into nothing.²⁵

The parallels between Eckhart's formulations and those of Jewish mysticism are obvious. There is no evidence that Eckhart had any direct knowledge of Kabbalah, but he and the Jewish mystics share a common Neoplatonic heritage. As we have noted, some of the early kabbalists were probably indebted to John Scotus Erigena. Plotinus had a powerful impact on Kabbalah, as he did on all western medieval thought. Eckhart drew on Pseudo-Dionysius, and, like the kabbalists, he was influenced by Maimonides' negative theology.²⁶ In fact, Eckhart was more familiar with Maimonides, and more sympathetic to his views, than was any other Christian author.

Eckhart's teaching on nothingness combines features that appear separately in Kabbalah and Hasidism. We have seen, for example, that Kabbalah emphasizes the theosophical dimension of *ayin*. The experiential component is there, but to discover it one must scratch the surface, dig beneath the symbol. In Hasidism the experiential and psychological aspects are overt and primary. In Eckhart, nothingness is both an attribute of *Gotheit* and the goal of the spiritual life. The experiential dimension is prominent. Eckhart paid a price for his radical formulations and impassioned preaching. So did the Hasidim, who were excommunicated by various rabbinical authorities, whereas the kabbalists were

²⁵ German sermon 83, in *Essential Eckhart* 206-208.

²⁶ On Eckhart and Maimonides see J. Koch, 'Meister Eckhart und die jüdische Religionsphilosophie des Mittelalters', *Jahres-Bericht des Schlesischen Gesellschaft* 101 (1928) 134-48; H. Liebeshütz, 'Meister Eckhart und Moses Maimonides', *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 54 (1972) 64-96; *Eckhart: Teacher and Preacher* 17-25.

more circumspect and reticent, less eager to proclaim and celebrate their discovery of the divine within.

Eckhart and the kabbalists would agree that Nothingness with a capital “N” pertains to the hidden nature of God, while the personal features of divinity, namely, the Trinity or the lower *sefirot*, represent a later stage. According to both Eckhart and the Kabbalah, the personal God we normally speak of is born out of nothing, a pregnant nothingness.

Eckhart and the Hasidic Maggid would agree that creatures are absolutely nothing without divinity permeating them. Creatures have no independent existence. Both mystics urge that we leave somethingness behind and venture into nothingness. This nothingness has a positive dimension, for only by becoming nothing, can one become a vessel of the divine. We have heard the Maggid say this. Eckhart’s version demonstrates both his affinity with the Maggid and his distinctive style: One “who has annihilated himself ... has taken possession of the lowest place, and God must pour the whole of himself into this person, or else he is not God.”²⁷

Eckhart has a penchant for radical formulations. The Kabbalah is daring, the Maggid is extreme, but only Eckhart could demand: “God must do this or else he is not God.” Only Eckhart could claim that, since God is beyond all designations, he, Eckhart, is better than God. Only the Dominican mystic could pray “that God rid me of God.”

This is a difference in style and temperament. Furthermore, the path to *Nichts* and the path to *ayin* are distinct. Even if Eckhart speaks of a dimension of God beyond the Trinity, Christology is vital to him; he yearns to participate in the sonship of God. His radical formulations of this sonship highlight and enrich his own faith. For the Maggid, it is Torah, Jewish prayer and *mizvot* that lead ultimately to *ayin*. The symbol system of the *sefirot* serves to transform ritual and law into mystical practice, but the everyday structures of Jewish life are not abandoned--they are enhanced. As each mystic surfaces from the depths of nothingness, he inhales his own tradition. The yearning for *ayin* or *Nichts* is inspired by the particular even as it aims for the universal.

Still, *Nichts* and *ayin* are quite similar. The Buddhist term *sunyata*, usually translated as “emptiness,” offers an intriguing parallel, but the Eastern and Western varieties of mystical nothingness should be carefully distinguished. If we can resist the temptation to equate them, we will gain a clearer understanding of each one.

Sunyata has been called “the pivotal concept of Buddhism.”²⁸ Buddhist meditation aims at uncovering the true nature of reality, which is empty. This emptiness means that nothing exists in and of itself but only in relation to other “things,” which are themselves interrelated and thus empty of independent existence. There is no such thing as self-substantiated reality.

The word *sunyata* derives from the root *svi*, “to swell.” The adjective *sunya* means “relating to the swollen.” Something that looks swollen from the outside may be empty or hollow inside.²⁹ According to Buddhism the human personality is swollen by its constituent elements but is devoid of a central self. This *anatta*, or “not-self,” doctrine is the basis for the teaching of *sunyata*. Not only the self but all existence is *sunya*, “swollen” or “empty.” This statement is not nihilistic, not a denial of reality, but a denial of how we perceive reality, a way to free reality of artificial conceptual restrictions. The practice of perceiving existence in an empty manner becomes a technique to alleviate suffering. The Buddhist learns not to become attached to any material object or any mental construct, to any mundane or ultimate thing.

The term *sunya* appears in early Buddhist writings, but it was Mahayana Buddhism that emphasized emptiness as the nature of all existing things. The Mahayanists claimed that their teaching of *sunyata* conveyed the deepest meaning of the doctrine of the Buddha. In effect, Mahayana sharpened an old tendency that had taught ephemerality. The new formulation could lead to fear, cynicism or nihilism, but emptiness implies the complete interrelatedness of all things. The notion of emptiness is tied to compassion for all living beings. The Bodhisattva,

²⁷ German sermon 48, in *Essential Eckhart* 197.

²⁸ T.R.V. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism: A Study of the Madhyamika System* (London, 1960) 58.

²⁹ E. Conze, *Buddhism: Its Essence and Development* (Oxford, 1957) 130.

who has realized the empty nature of reality, could withdraw from the world and enter *nirvana*. His compassion, however, prevents him from immediately taking this step. Halting on the threshold of *nirvana*, he postpones his entry and devotes himself to the welfare of others. He learns to engage the conditioned world without being tainted by its evil and delusion.

Within Mahayana it was the Madhyamika school that offered the most radical formulation of *sunyata*. Nagarjuna, who lived in the late second century, is regarded as the founder of Madhyamika. He links *sunyata* with the notion of “dependent origination.” In earlier Buddhism this meant simply that all things depend on causes and conditions for their origin. Nagarjuna insists that “what is produced by causes is not produced in itself and does not exist in itself.” Through meditation one discovers the radical emptiness and relativity of all things. The self-existence of each phenomenon dissolves into the conditions of its happening. “Whenever existing things exist by nature of their interdependence, this is *sunyata*;... they lack self-existence.” The content of things belongs to the interplay of innumerable factors, which are also interdependent and empty.³⁰

There is a danger that emptiness itself will emerge as the one permanent “thing” or the absolute concept. Sensitive to this, Nagarjuna and his followers insist that “*sunyata* is the antidote for all theories. One who mistakes *sunyata* itself as a theory is incurable.”³¹ Although *sunyata* is the object of highest knowledge and accounts for the possibility of the conditioned world, it too does not exist ultimately as a separate entity. This is the realization of the “emptiness of

³⁰ Nagarjuna, *Vigraha-vyavartani*, v. 22; see F. J. Streng, *Emptiness: A Study in Religious Meaning* (Nashville, Tennessee 1967) 143; Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* (London 1962) 240-41.

³¹ See Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* 163-64. Cf. the commentary cited by R. H. Robinson, *Early Madhyamika in India and China* (Madison, Wisconsin 1967) 277: “The Great Saint declared emptiness in order to demolish the sixty-two views and all the passions such as ignorance and craving. If one again conceives views about emptiness, this one cannot be reformed. It is like someone who has an illness that can be cured if a medicine is taken. But if the medicine in turn causes illness, then this cannot be cured.”

emptiness,” *sunyata-sunyata*.³² *Sunyata* itself must not be cherished, must not become an attachment. It is the very nature of things, not another thing. If it is set up as something, it is “the emptiness perversely clung to.” Later Chinese Buddhists taught that the concept of emptiness is like a fish-trap, to be abandoned when the fish of insight is obtained.³³

Sunyata does not nullify things or make them disappear; it shows that their true nature is devoid of essence. The real is not denied, only doctrines about the real. The intuition of emptiness reveals the infinite relatedness of all that is, the “suchness” of reality, which is beyond all categories of thought, all designations. By destroying the definitions of things and their illusory self-existence, *sunyata* makes everything possible, including change. It is precisely because things lack selfhood that they are dynamic and full of possibilities. “When *sunyata* works, then everything in existence works; if *sunyata* does not work, then all existence does not work.”³⁴

Thus, despite the claims of Nagarjuna’s opponents, his teaching is not nihilistic. Yet one should not assume that Nagarjuna’s *sunyata* is some positive substance, an undifferentiated essence that lies behind every particular manifestation. Here we find the subtle but crucial difference between Eastern and Western mystical nothingness. Eckhart, the Maggid and Nagarjuna all agree that the ego and creation have no independent existence. But what lies behind the facade? What is the ultimate nature of reality? Western mystics speak in terms of *substance*, even when their language is negative. Buddhists speak of *relation*.

Ayin, for example, is absolute, divine essence, devoid of every attribute but more “something” than all somethings, enlivening all that is. In the words of one

³² See Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* 243; cf. Murti, *The Central Philosophy of Buddhism* 352-53.

³³ Robinson, *Early Madhyamika in India and China* 158, 208, 300-301. Cf. *Chuang Tzu*, chapter 26: “Fishing-stakes are employed to catch fish; but when the fish are caught, the people forget the stakes.”

³⁴ Nagarjuna, *Mulamadhyamaka-Karikas* 24:14.

kabbalist, “*Ayin* is the essence, the essence of all.”³⁵ It is the undifferentiated ground of being, pure potentiality. It alone is self-existent. In the West, even among the mystics, the category of substance is definitive. For Nagarjuna, reality cannot be conceived of as substance or essence. There is nothing which is in itself. Everything that is, is in relation to something else, coming to pass out of relation and dissolving into relation. This universal relation too is not any subsistent thing but rather a dynamic process. *Sunyata* is not some mysterious reality but the dissipation of the mystery, the realization that existence is without an ultimate ground. Nagarjuna hardly ever speaks of emptiness per se, but rather the emptiness of something. *Sunyata* is not an absolute essence beyond the phenomenal world; it eliminates the desire for such an essence.

It is true that later, in Chinese Buddhism, *sunyata* is endowed with a more substantial character. Here the Mahayana tradition was interpreted according to indigenous Taoism, which teaches that nonbeing is the source of being. In the words of the *Tao Te Ching*: “Heaven and Earth and the ten thousand things are produced from Being; Being is the product of Nonbeing.”³⁶ Here the basic principle of the universe is unnamable, beyond existence, yet all-embracing. Seen in this light, *sunyata* was understood as the primordial nothingness from which the myriad entities arise. It was now said that all things emerge from emptiness and return to it.³⁷ This brings *sunyata* into close accord with Western mystical nothingness, but it is not what Nagarjuna intended.

Nichts and *ayin* stand for divine essence. For Nagarjuna, *sunyata* can be no such thing because since there is no substance, there is also no divine essence. Buddhism is not atheistic, but it obviously does not share the Western notion of God. According to the Buddhist scriptures, one must not say that God exists nor that God does not exist. In its popular forms, the Buddha is deified, but Buddhism was not originally concerned with the idea of a personal God or the creator of the

³⁵ Joseph Gikatilla, *Sha'arei Zedeq*, E. Gottlieb (ed.), in J. Hacker (ed.), *Mehqarim be-Sifrut ha-Qabbalah* (Tel Aviv 1976) 140.

³⁶ *Tao Te Ching*, chapter 40.

³⁷ See Robinson, *Early Madhyamika in India and China* 113-14; 157; 312, n. 11; Conze, *Buddhist Thought in India* 61.

universe. The universe is without beginning or end. If ultimate reality is called “He” or “She” or “Thou,” it is, from the Buddhist point of view, no longer ultimate. The path to enlightenment does not allow for attachment to forms, even sublime ones. We hear similar warnings from Western mystics, but the stark command of the Zen master goes one step further: “If you meet the Buddha, kill him.”³⁸

In Buddhist meditation there is no sense of union with the divine One or any One, no reference to merging or melting into something greater. Mystical union presupposes God’s being as an object to be united with, but here there is no divine substance or being. Loss of self comes about not through absorption *into* something but through an emptying of what seemed to be real.³⁹

Sunyata is not an epithet of divine reality. It simply points to the true nature of things: their interdependence, coorigination and lack of selfhood. *Sunyata* awakens awareness of the relativity of all concepts, words and objects in order to undermine and overcome our grasping, to cure the human addiction to delusion. The goal is not to unite with the source of things but to become free of the attachments and the egoism that create our suffering.

Scholars such as Steven Katz and Wayne Proudfoot have argued that religious experience does not transcend concepts, doctrines and beliefs, but rather depends on them. It is because of the unique context of each tradition that we find different meanings, formulations and experiences of nothingness. By exploring each particular context, we gain an appreciation for the varieties of nothingness. Still, the distinctions should not blind us to the common features. The Mahayana Buddhist parts company with Jewish and Christian mystics over the nature of God and substance, but all three revel in negative language. In the East it is natural to approach ultimate reality by means of negation. Already in the Hindu Upanishads we read that the highest principle can be expressed only as *neti, neti*, “not this, not this.”⁴⁰ In Western thought, negative theology was a bold innovation, since there

³⁸ *Rinzairoku*; see Heinrich Dumoulin, *Zen Enlightenment: Origins and Meaning* (New York 1979) 64.

³⁹ Streng, *Emptiness* 165.

⁴⁰ *Brhadaranyaka Upanishad* 4:5:15.

was always a strong emphasis on the fullness of being. It comes as no surprise that in Jewish and Christian thought God is called “nothingness” only rarely, whereas *sunyata* is central to Buddhism.

Paradox, also, is shared by the varieties of nothingness. Through paradox, the mystic announces the discovery of a vast, uncharted realm where language and conceptual thought falter. One who dares to participate in this dimension must cultivate an appreciation of paradox and learn to unlearn the normal workings of consciousness. The Western mystic insists that by becoming nothing, one takes part in the all. Divine nothingness is the source of everything, the God beyond God. According to Buddhism, *sunyata* is not only empty itself but equivalent to form: “Form is emptiness, and emptiness is form.”⁴¹ The kabbalistic parallel is the realization that “*ayin* is *yesh*, and *yesh* is *ayin*.”⁴² The something is potentially in the nothing, and nothingness animates the something.

Through negative language and paradox, these three traditions teach us that we misunderstand and misrepresent reality. We do not know the true nature of things. Modern science advances a similar critique. The interchangeability of mass and energy boggles the conventional mind. As one physicist has said, “We should not say that matter exists, but rather that matter tends to exist.”⁴³ Nagarjuna, Eckhart and the Maggid all teach that we are blind to the dynamic nature of reality; we falsely believe that things are self-contained, static and independent. But *ayin*, *Nichts* and *sunyata* are not merely alternate theories or concepts; they are means of self-transformation. One who ventures in must be prepared to surrender images of self. Eckhart and the Maggid emphasize the immediate *experience* of nothingness. Zen Buddhism insists that one must “*become* emptiness.”

⁴¹ Nagarjuna, *Mulamadhyamaka-Karikas* 25:19; *Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra*; cf. Streng, *Emptiness* 69-81.

⁴² Azriel, *Derekh ha-Emunah ve-Derekh ha-Kefirah*, in Scholem (ed.), ‘*Seridim Hadashim*’ 207.

⁴³ J. Trefil, *The Dark Side of the Universe* (New York, 1988). See D. Matt, *God and the Big Bang: Discovering Harmony between Science and Spirituality* (Woodstock, Vermont, 1996).

How hard it is to become nothing! There is irony and paradox here--and humor. The ego does not surrender so easily. Proudly, it tries to claim even nothingness for itself. Let me illustrate this with an old Yiddish joke.

One *Yom Kippur* in a small, crowded synagogue, the rabbi stands in front of the ark, pouring out his heart like water. Having completed a litany of confessions, he adds his own spontaneously: "God, I am not worthy to lead this congregation! In my heart, I know that I am nothing, absolutely nothing!"

The cantor, witnessing such fervor, approaches the ark, too. "God," he calls out, "I have led Your children today in prayer and melody. Together we have offered sweet words to crown You on high. But in truth, I know that I am nothing, absolutely nothing!"

Silence reigns. And then, a simple Jew at the back of the synagogue, inspired by the rabbi and cantor, cries out: "God, I am nothing, nothing!" At which, the cantor leans over to the rabbi and whispers: "Look who thinks he's nothing!"

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Torah-Hindu Parallels in the Narratives of Five Persons

Bharat Jhunjunwala

Abstract: The contemporary theological constructs of the Biblical and Hindu religions are quite dissimilar. However, we find that 75 percent of the narratives of Five Persons—namely, Adam, Cain, Noah, Abraham and Moses of the Biblical religions and Swayambhu Manu, Indra, Vaivaswat Manu, Rama and Krishna of the Hindu religion—are parallel. More importantly 82 percent of the theological understandings at the time of these Five Persons are also parallel. The parallels suggest that these two religions had a connection at some remote time. They have evolved in different directions and today may look different. We can enrich the contemporary theological understandings of these religions in the sense of having a common heritage by examining their theological understandings at the time of these Five Persons in the light of each other. This can be the first step towards developing a deeper understanding between the religions.

Key words: Adam, Cain, Noah, Abraham, Moses, Swayambhu, Indra, Vaivaswat, Rama, Krishna, Parallelomania, Bible, Genesis, Exodus, Vayu Purana, Rig Veda, Mahabharata, Ramayana, Bhagwata Purana.

How I got here

I have grown up with the Bhagwad Gita—the teachings given by Krishna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. He speaks of the One All-pervasive Monist God. His teaching is bereft of idol worship and focussed, in my reading, on the need to undertake action in tune with the Will of God. I felt that although the concept of the All-pervasive God was distinct from the Monotheistic God of the Torah, the common understanding was of abjuring idol worship and the writ of One God.

Then, while I was reading the Torah, I happened to also read the descriptions of Mount Meru in the Hindu texts. The Hindu texts say that four rivers flowed in four directions from here and Brahma the creator lived here. I could not miss the parallel with the Biblical Garden of Eden. The frequently noted parallels between the flood narratives of Noah and Vaivaswat Manu further increased my curiosity. As I delved deeper, I found remarkable parallels between the narratives of Five Persons mentioned in the Torah, namely, Adam, Cain, Noah, Abraham and Moses; and the narratives of five persons mentioned in the Hindu

religion, namely, Swayambhu Manu, Indra, Vaivaswat Manu, Rama and Krishna. We refer to Swayambhu Manu as Swayambhu and Vaivaswat Manu as Vaivaswat in this paper for brevity.

The common belief in One God and the parallels in the narratives of the Five Persons made me wonder if the two religions may have some deeper connection in the remote past. This paper is the result of that exploration.

The present state of humankind has lent a sense of urgency. We are today embroiled in conflicts that often have roots in religious understandings: Hindus against Muslims and Christians in India; Buddhists against Muslims in Myanmar; Muslims against Jews in West Asia and so on. There is a sense of separation—“me” versus “you”—underlying these conflicts. I intuitively felt that this separation was not rooted in the scriptures. I felt the need to understand the Torah and Hindu texts so that the perceived distinctions in their theological understandings could be discussed with a sense of friendship and, if possible, resolved to move towards a common understanding. The narratives of the Five Persons as given in the Torah is acknowledged by the Abrahamic Religions—Judaism, Christianity and Islam; while the holiness of the Five Persons is acknowledged, with certain exceptions, by the Hindus, Jains, Buddhists and Sikhs. We use the terms “Biblical” and “Hindu” to denote the above two sets of religions. Tracing the connections between the narratives of the Five Persons could, therefore, help establish a dialogue between these two religions. The theological beliefs of the Hindus, for example, could be enriched by looking at the parallel teachings of the Torah and vice versa. I am aware that tracing the parallels is not likely “solve” the conflicts. Yet, it can anchor a dialogue with a sense of love and oneness as between “me” and “us” instead of “me” versus “you.” The purpose of this paper is to lay the foundations of such a dialogue between the Biblical and Hindu religions—anchored on the narratives of the Five Persons.

The narratives took place in the past. We are not delving into the historical authenticity of the narratives. It does not matter for the purpose of this paper whether Adam lived in Turkey or Iraq, whether he lived at all, or whether the same pattern is found in other primitive myths. The fact remains that his narrative lays the foundations of contemporary theology of the Abrahamic and Hindu religions. We can build building bridges between the contemporary theology of these religions irrespective how the parallels may have arisen. Our objective is to examine the present-day understandings of the past narratives.

For example, Abraham and Rama lay the foundations of the present theological understandings of the Biblical and Hindu religions. For example, we can examine the theological understanding about the nature of God as given in the narrative of Rama in the light of the theological understanding about the nature of God as given in the narrative of Abraham. We need not delve into the question whether they were historical persons or not.

Road Travelled so far

We follow an illustrious line of predecessors who have taken major steps in tracing the parallels in the Biblical and Hindu religions.

William Jones

Sir Williams Jones was a judge at the Supreme Court at Calcutta (now known as Kolkata) and the founder of the Asiatic Society. He traced the parallels between certain Biblical and Hindu persons in the Presidential Address given to the Society in 1788 titled “On the Chronology of the Hindus.”¹ He suggested that Biblical Adam was parallel to Hindu Swayambhu who were both born, in his reckoning, in 4006 BCE; Biblical Noah was parallel to Hindu Vaivaswat who both were born in 2949 BCE; and Biblical Raamah was parallel to Hindu Rama who both were born in 2029 BCE.

He noted that Adam and Swayambhu were the first human beings and that Noah and Vaivaswat lived at the time of the Flood in the two religions. However, he considered Biblical Raamah, son of Cush, to be parallel to Hindu Rama apparently on etymological considerations alone. He did not draw any parallels between the narratives of Raamah and Rama. He also did not discuss the parallels between Cain and Indra; and between Moses and Krishna. Further, he did not discuss the theological parallels between these persons.

T W Doane

Thomas William Doane was a pioneer of free thought. He published his sole literary work *Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions* in 1882.² He drew parallels between the narratives of the Bible and the Hindus but did not look at the genealogies, similarities of names and theologies. The non-

¹ Jones, William, *The Works of Sir William Jones in Six Volumes*, Vol I, G G and J Robinson, London, 1799, page 313.

² Doane, T W, *Bible Myths and their Parallels in other Religions*, J. W. Bouton, New York, 1882, <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/31885/31885-h/31885-h.htm>, Retrieved July 22, 2020.

consideration of genealogies made it possible for him to draw a parallel between narratives at different genealogical positions. Yet he made some fine parallels.

He drew a parallel between Adam and Swayambhu on the strength of both living at a place with four rivers;³ and Noah and Vaivaswat on the basis of the Deluge.⁴ These parallels are same as suggested by us. However, there are numerous cases where he jumps the genealogical position. We give two examples.

He associated the Tree of Life mentioned in the narrative of Adam with the Soma plant mentioned in the narrative of Indra.⁵ He ignored the statement in the Hindu texts that Indra lived in the fourth generation from Swayambhu—whom we show was more likely parallel to Adam.⁶ Thus there is a gap of four generations between the Tree of Life and the Soma Plant.

Second, he associated Abraham with Harishchandra on the basis of both having offered their son in a failed sacrifice.⁷ However, the main narrative of Abraham—going to the south, wife being taken to the Pharaoh, separation from Lot, and expelling Hagar have no parallels in the narrative of Harishchandra. There is no parallel between the names Abraham and Harishchandra either. Thus, while Doane furthered the study of the parallels, the specific parallels outlined by him left much to be desired.

Mircea Eliade

Mircea Eliade was Professor at Universities of Bucharest and Chicago. He published *Patterns in Comparative Religion* in 1958 and his seminal work *Myth and Reality* in 1968.⁸ In these books he brought together narratives from across the world and shew that underlying them were certain common patterns. Like

³ Doane, *Bible Myths*, page 26.

⁴ Doane uses the name Satyavrata for Vaivaswat, *Bible Myths*, page 37.

⁵ Doane, *Bible Myths*, page 26. Soma is mentioned early in the Rig Veda which eulogizes the deeds of Indra and does not mention Swayambhu or his creator Brahma even once (Griffith, Ralph T H, *Hymns of the RgVeda*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1973, 1:2:1).

⁶ Please see subsection “Genealogy” in the section “Cain-Indra” below.

⁷ Doane, *Bible Myths*, page 52.

⁸ Eliade, Mircea, *Patterns in Comparative Religion*, Sheed & Ward, New York, 1958; Mircea Eliade, *Myth and Reality*, Harper & Row, Publishers, New York, 1963.

Doane, we find that, in the context of Biblical-Hindu parallels, those drawn by him did not often match with the genealogical positions.

He said, for example, that the creation of Eve from Adam's ribs was parallel to the primeval pair of Yama and Yami described in the Rig Veda.⁹ He ignored though that Adam and Eve married while Yama and Yami did not marry. Eliade did not examine the parallel between Adam and Eve, and Swayambhu and Shatarupa. The creation of these primeval couples is associated with splitting of the body and they were the progenitors of the human race in both the religions.¹⁰

Like Doane, Eliade too associates the Tree of Life described in the Bible with the Soma plant mentioned in the Rig Veda.¹¹

Joseph Campbell

Joseph John Campbell was a professor of literature at Sarah Lawrence College in New York. He was influenced by Indian philosopher Jiddu Krshnamurti. He traced the parallels in the Hindu and other world narratives in *Oriental Mythology* published in 1962 which is part of his trilogy of *Primitive-, Oriental- and Occidental Mythology*.¹²

Unlike Doane and Eliade, Campbell rightly drew parallel between the making of woman from man's ribs in Genesis and the splitting of the primeval being into husband and wife as described in the Hindu texts.¹³

A number of other examples, however, face a chronological problem. Campbell identified the Tree of Knowledge of the Bible with the pipal tree (*ficus religiosa*) at the time of Buddha.¹⁴ However, the two mentions are separated by three millennia. Campbell did not explore the possible parallel between the Tree of

⁹ Eliade, *Patterns...*, page 423.

¹⁰ *Vayu Purana*, Editor, Ram Pratap Tripathi Shastri, Hind Sahitya Sammelan, Prayag, Samvat 2007, 10:7-8.

¹¹ Eliade, *Patterns...*, page 290.

¹² Campbell, Joseph, *The Masks of God: Oriental Mythology*, Secker & Warburg, London, 1962.

¹³ *Bible*, Genesis 2:21-22; *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Samvat 2058, 1:4:3-4; Campbell, *Oriental...*, page 9-10. The same narrative is found in *Vayu Purana* 10:7.

¹⁴ Campbell, *Oriental...*, page 167.

Knowledge or the Tree of Life and the Kalpa-vriksha or “wish-fulfilling tree” that is mentioned at the time of Swayambhu.¹⁵

He drew a parallel between the Biblical narrative of the Deluge¹⁶ and the Rig Vedic narrative of Indra killing Vritra and releasing waters that were held up by Vritra.¹⁷ Campbell ignored that Noah would have been mighty happy if the pent-up waters had been released and the Deluge abated. The clear parallel to the Biblical Deluge is available in the Fish Incarnation at the time of Vaivaswat which Campbell ignored.

These chronological problems notwithstanding the patterns delineated by Campbell indeed appear to be valid. However, we are looking for one-to-one parallels—as distinct from patterns—between the five persons in the Biblical and Hindu religions.

Our Small Step Forward

Our predecessor scholars do not place the parallels in a genealogical time frame with William Jones being the exception. They also do not consider the distinctions between two allegedly parallel narratives. Further, the parallels are limited to Adam-Swayambhu, Cain-Indra and Noah-Vaivaswat.

Our small step forward is to examine the parallels *and distinctions* in the lives of each of the five persons on each of the five parameters. Our presentation is consistent with genealogy.

Methodology

Rabbi Samuel Sandmel had warned us against extravagance in tracing parallels. He has called for giving special attention to the contexts of- and distinctions between the narratives.¹⁸ Thus, we examine the parallels in three categories:

1. *Parallel.* We describe the parallels in the two religions.
2. *Distinct.* We describe distinctions in the two religions.
3. *Silent.* We note where a narrative is mentioned in one religion and not in the other religion.

¹⁵ *Vayu Purana* 8:93-94.

¹⁶ Campbell, *Oriental...*, page 182.

¹⁷ *Rig Veda* 4:19:2

¹⁸ Sandmel, Samuel, “Parallelomania,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 81, No. 1, March 1962, page 2.

A narrative is considered to be a Silence if it can slip into the other narrative smoothly. It is considered to be Distinct if it cannot slip into the other narrative smoothly. For example, the Hindu texts tell of Krishna participating in the Mahabharata War after his return for studies under Sage Sandipani, who we suggest was parallel to Priest Jethro. The Bible does not tell of such participation by Moses. However, the narrative can smoothly slip into the Biblical narrative. Moses may have participated in such a War between his return from Midian and leading the Exodus. Thus, we consider this to be a Silence in the Bible.

On the other hand, the Ramayana tells of Rama undertaking a war against Lanka after Sita was abducted by Ravana. The Bible does not tell of Abraham undertaking such a war. On the contrary, the Bible says that the Pharaoh treated Abraham well. Thus, the narrative of war does not slip smoothly into the Biblical narrative and we consider this to be a distinction.

We examine the parallels for five persons on five parameters. In order to condense this vast matrix, we take a cue from Todd Scacewater, Professor of International Studies at Dallas International University. In his discussion of exegetical fallacies, he mentions that in one study it was found that the parallels only overlapped in 7 percent of the points which, he says, suggested that the parallels were “dubious at best.”¹⁹ In order avoid such a trap, we adopt the following method:

1. At the end of each subsection, we give a Summary Table classifying the foregoing descriptions in the categories of Parallel (P) and Distinct (D). We have marked the distinctions in italics in this table to enable quick appreciation.
2. In last line of the table, we give totals of P and D. Then we give a “net” value which is the ratio of “numbers of parallels” and the “numbers of observations.” For example, if P=3 and D=2, then the number of observations = 5, and Net Parallel = 3/5. This number tells us how many parallels are obtained in the total numbers of observations.
3. We convert this net value into percentages for easy appreciation.

¹⁹ Scacewater, Todd, “Exegetical Fallacies: Word Studies, Part 2,” February 2, 2016, <http://exegeticaltools.com/2016/02/02/exegetical-fallacies-word-studies-part-2/>, Retrieved April 27, 2020.

4. In the last section of this paper, we summarize these net values from the 25 Summary Tables and arrive at a comprehensive net value for the parallels. This final figure gives us an overall estimate of the extent of the parallels.
5. We use the term “observation” to only include observations on which both religions have something to say. We exclude the silences because our objective is to establish dialogue between the two religions. Such dialogue is helped by looking at the parallels and distinctions. A Silence could hide either a Parallel or a Distinction, therefore, it would not be appropriate to classify it as either.

Five Parameters

Now, we briefly mention the methodology used for each of the five parameters.

An overarching issue here is of multiple interpretations. For example, as we shall show, Adam was created from “aphar” which means “dirt” as well as “soil.” The meaning “dirt” is parallel to the Swayambhu having been created from “darkness.” Thus, we accept the meaning “dirt,” ignore the meaning “soil” and classify this observation as a Parallel. In doing so, we are not asserting that the meaning “dirt” is correct and the meaning “soil” is incorrect. We are only saying that the meaning “dirt” is parallel to the Hindu texts among the multiple meanings and this meaning could provide an anchor for dialogue between the two religions. Our purpose is to build bridges between the contemporary theological understandings between these religions. Thus, the “true” meaning of “aphar,” if we can ever fathom it, is not relevant. It is sufficient that one of the many meanings in parallel to serve as an anchor for dialogue between the two religions.

Context and Age

We begin each narrative by comparing the context of the person *as given in the text*. We do not bring in any extra-textual information from archaeology, astronomy and other sciences because the validity of that information can be questioned. To repeat, this is not a work of pre-history or history. This is a work of contemporary theology. Our purpose is limited to looking at the context and the theological understanding as given in the text.

Genealogy and Time

The time of the Five Persons is reckoned variously on astronomical, archaeological, genealogical, genetic, and literary considerations. Only the genealogical considerations are “within” the texts. Thus, we have limited

ourselves to reckoning the time of the Five Persons from genealogical considerations alone. We recognize that ignoring other considerations reduces the robustness of the estimates.²⁰ On the other hand, the estimates become questionable if we bring in non-textual evidences because of the validity of the non-textual evidences.

Narratives

We have not delved into the question whether an observed parallel is “close” or “distant.” That would require setting the standards between different levels of the parallels and stretch this work. Perhaps that can be done in a sequel.

We consider the narrative to be simultaneously Parallel and Distinct in case the content of the narrative is parallel but it is placed at a different chronological order. In doing so we consider a chronological distinction at par with the distinction in the narrative.

Names

Governments nowadays use parallels in the names to identify duplicate persons;²¹ and search engines use the parallels to present a more precise search result.²² They have also been used to trace the origins of the Hebrew Language by matching the person- and place names in the Hebrew and Canaanite, Amorite, Akkadian and Egyptian languages.²³ We apply this method to trace the parallels between the person- and place names given in the Bible and Hindu texts.

²⁰ We are thankful to Paul Himes, Professor of Bible and Ancient Languages, Baptist College of Ministry, Menomonee Falls, WI, USA for drawing our attention to the limitations of reckoning time by genealogical method.

²¹ Karakasidis, Alexandros, Vassilios S. Verykios, and Peter Christen, “Fake Injection Strategies for Private Names,” Springer Link, https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007%2F978-3-642-28879-1_2, Retrieved May 17, 2020.

²² Kant, Ranjan and Piyush Sagar Mishra, An Ensemble Approach to Large-Scale Fuzzy Name Matching, BCG Gamma, <https://medium.com/bcggamma/an-ensemble-approach-to-large-scale-fuzzy-name-matching-b3e3fa124e3c>, Retrieved May 17, 2020.

²³ Eytan, Eli, “Hebrew Language,” Encyclopedia.com, <https://www.encyclopedia.com/literature-and-arts/language-linguistics-and-literary-terms/language-and-linguistics/hebrew-language>, Retrieved May 17, 2020.

We have used the “Common Key Method,” which compares the sounds in the names; and the “Word Embedding Method,” which looks at the embedded meaning even though the words may be phonetically dissimilar. We have considered a name to be parallel if it is found to be so by either method. We have excluded the use of three other methods for the reasons given in the endnote.²⁴

Theology

Our objective is to enrich the contemporary theological understanding of the two religions. However, we have multiple theological understandings emerging from the same texts.²⁵ Let us say Abraham’s Yahweh could be described as a Monotheist or a Monist God; while Rama’s Brahman could only be described as a Monist God. In such case we consider their theological understandings to be parallel because the Monist God of Abraham and Monist God of Ram help create a dialogue between the religions.

Secondly, the theological understandings have evolved over time. Krishna, as we shall show, considers those persons worshipping idols to be like animals. Contemporary Hindu practice, however, engages in idol worship. In such a case we consider Krishna’s teaching to be parallel to that of Moses’ even though the contemporary understanding is distinct.

A Note on the Sources

We limit this study, in the main, to the books of Genesis and Exodus. Our study shows that the parallels between the Biblical and Hindu Texts are found until the Hebrews leaving on the Exodus in the narrative of Moses and until the Yadavas left Dwarka in the narrative of Krishna. Hence, we do not discuss the sources that describe subsequent events.

²⁴ The “List Method” is computationally intensive and does not work with names that the system doesn’t know about. The “Edit Distance Method” is useful if we were to look at different levels of similarity which is outside the scope of this work. The “Statistical Similarity Method” works across languages in contrast with specific names hence not suitable for our purposes (Rosette Text Analytics, An Overview of Fuzzy Name Matching Techniques, <https://www.rosette.com/blog/overview-fuzzy-name-matching-techniques/>, Retrieved May 17, 2020).

²⁵ We are thankful to Daniel Flores Albornoz for drawing attention to this aspect.

We have limited ourselves to the information given in the Bible. We have quoted from Net Bible translation.²⁶ We have ignored the Apocrypha unless the Bible is silent on the matter and it is especially brought to light by the Apocrypha.

No text gives the complete Hindu narrative at one place. We have had to, therefore, rely on multiple texts—Vayu Purana for Swayambhu, Rig Veda for Indra, Mahabharata for Vaivaswat, Valmiki Ramayana for Rama and Bhagwata Purana for Krishna. These texts could be considered to be like different books of the Bible. They are mostly consistent with each other.

There exists a disconnect in the context and composition of the Hindu texts. This can be explained by an example. The Vayu Purana gives the narrative of Swayambhu—first among the Five Persons—in greatest detail among the Hindu texts. The relevant chapters were composed before 200 BCE, probably in the late 1st millennium BCE.²⁷ The Rig Veda gives details of Indra—the second person among the Five Persons. It was composed in the 4th millennium BCE.²⁸ Thus, the earlier narrative of Swayambhu is available to us in a later text; and the later narrative of Indra is available to us in an earlier text. This disconnect does not create a difficulty in our assessment. The narrative of Swayambhu could have been transmitted orally for a much longer time and composed later, while the narrative of Indra could have been composed at the time of the events themselves. The long-time oral transmission of the narrative of Swayambhu does not falsify it. Our purpose, once again, is to create a contemporary theological dialogue between the two religions. The contemporary Hindu

²⁶ *Net Bible*, <http://classic.net.bible.org/bible.php>, Retrieved May 21, 2020.

²⁷ The *Vayu Purana* is among the earliest of the Puranas (Hazra, R C, *Studies in the Puranic Records on Hindu Rites and Customs*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1975, page 13, 174-175). The list of chapters added after 200 BCE does not include Chapters 8-10 that we have relied, in the main, to examine parallels with the Bible hence these may be from a period before 200 BCE (Page.

²⁸ Linguist Koenraad Elst says Vedic culture was incipient from the early 4th millennium (Elst, Koenraad, The Vedic Harappans in writing, koenraadelst.bharatvani.org/articles/aid/vedicharappans.html, Retrieved July 16, 2015). Greek scholar N Kazanas places the events of the Rig Veda in 4th millennium BCE (Kazanas, N, Final Reply, www.omilosmeleton.gr/pdf/en/indology/Final%20Reply.pdf, Retrieved July 16, 2015, Page 29). Sanskrit scholar O P Bharadwaj says Rig Veda is to be placed before 3000 BCE (*Studies in the Historical Geography of Ancient India*, Sundeep Prakashan, Delhi, 1986, Page 34).

religion honors the narrative of Swayambhu as given in the later texts. That is sufficient for us to examine parallels on the basis of this text.

With this methodological preface we now trace the parallels in the narratives of the Five Persons.

Adam-Swayambhu

Context: Food Gathering (Stone Age)

The context of Adam-Swayambhu in both religions is that of the food-gathering stage of the Stone Age in human evolution. God commanded Adam: “You may freely eat fruit from every tree of the orchard...”²⁹ The Vayu Purana in parallel says that in the beginning “People used to roam here and there. They ate the vegetation, fruits and roots of plants growing from the earth.”³⁰

After being expelled from the Garden of Eden, Adam started to till the ground.³¹ Likewise the Vayu Purana says that “the trees began to die at one time. The people meditated on the matter. Then trees began to grow again in their homes.”³² Use of the word “meditation” followed by “trees began to grow” indicates some human effort akin to tillage. Metals, as we shall show, are first mentioned later in the narratives of Cain and Indra. Hence, we assume this was homestead tillage with stone implements that were used in the Stone Age.

Summary Table 1.1: Adam-Swayambhu: Context.

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Food gathering	Food Gathering	P
2	Tillage	Homestead Tillage	P
	Summary: P=2, D=0, Net=2/2, 100 percent.		

²⁹ Bible, Genesis, 2:17.

³⁰ Vayu Purana 8:47-48, 57. The description is of the Krita Age in which Swayambhu lived.

³¹ Bible, Genesis 3:23.

³² Vayu Purana 8:83-90. The section from 8:74 to 8:179 describes the Treta Age that comes after the Krita Age that has been described by us till this point. Therefore, there is chronological continuity while there is discontinuity in the position in the text which we ignore.

Genealogy and Time: First Man

The Bible says Adam lived for 930 years.³³ The Hindu texts are silent on the life span of Swayambhu.

Bishop Ussher had arrived at a time for the birth of Adam on genealogical considerations at 4004 BCE.³⁴ Without ascribing this date to the creation of man, this gives one estimate of time for Adam. The Hindu texts are silent on the time of Swayambhu, however, as mentioned above, William Jones has estimated his time at 4006 BCE which is close to that suggested by Ussher for Adam.

Summary Table 1.2: Adam-Swayambhu: Genealogy and Time

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	4004 BCE	4006 BCE	P
	Summary: P=1, D=0, Net=1/1, 100 percent.		

Narratives: Creation of the Earth

The Bible says that at the earliest time “the earth was without shape and empty... but the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water.”³⁵ The Vayu Purana in parallel says: “Brahma assumed the form of wind in that darkness when the entire earth was covered with waters and [Brahma] kept roaming here and there.”³⁶ The “Spirit” mentioned in the Bible could be parallel to the “wind” mentioned in the Vayu Purana.

The Bible tells of God dividing the waters by a firmament.³⁷ The Vayu Purana is silent on this point.

The Bible then tells of appearance of dry ground.³⁸ The Vayu Purana in parallel says that “the Lord entered the undifferentiated matter and... established [the earth] above the waters.”³⁹

³³ Bible, Genesis 5:5.

³⁴ *The Open Bible*, The New King James Version, Thomas Nelson Publishers, New York, 1985, Page 1.

³⁵ Bible, Genesis 1:2

³⁶ Vayu Purana 8:2-3.

³⁷ Bible, Genesis 1:6.

The Bible tells of creation of vegetation immediately hereafter.⁴⁰ The Vayu Purana is silent on this. However, the Purana tells of the creation of humankind a few verses later hence we may safely assume that vegetation had been created before this time. However, we consider this to be a silence in view of absence of an explicit statement in the Purana.

The Bible tells of the separation of the day from the night.⁴¹ The Vayu Purana in parallel tells of the creation of moon, sun and other planets at this point of the narrative.⁴² “Day and night,” and “moon and sun” are two facets of the same creation hence we consider this to be parallel.

The Bible then tells of the creation of fish and birds followed by cattle.⁴³ The Vayu Purana is silent on this.

Then Bible says God made humankind.⁴⁴ At this point, the Vayu Purana says that Brahma created four sets of 1000 couples each from his mouth, chest, hips and feet, followed by the creation of nine mental sons.⁴⁵ All these creations could be subsumed in the “humankind” mentioned in the Bible.

The Bible says that there was no man to cultivate the ground.⁴⁶ The Vayu Purana says: “In this way Brahma made many populations but for some reason those people did not engage in the path directed.”⁴⁷ The Purana tells that subsequently those people started cultivation by ploughing.⁴⁸ We assume, therefore, that the “path directed,” which the earlier populations did not follow, included undertaking cultivation. Hence, the Bible’s saying that there was no

³⁸ Bible, Genesis 1:9.

³⁹ Vayu Purana 8:7-8.

⁴⁰ Bible, Genesis 1:11-12.

⁴¹ Bible, Genesis 1:14.

⁴² Vayu Purana 8:16-17.

⁴³ Bible, Genesis 1:20, 24.

⁴⁴ Bible, Genesis 1:26.

⁴⁵ Vayu Purana 8:37-40, 9:18, 67-68.

⁴⁶ Bible, Genesis 2:5.

⁴⁷ Vayu Purana 10:1.

⁴⁸ Vayu Purana 8:159. This verse is placed earlier in the text but describes the situation of a later period hence there is no chronological distinction.

man to cultivate the ground is parallel to those populations not engaging in the path directed.

The Bible says that God formed the Adam from the soil of the ground.⁴⁹ The Hebrew word for soil is “aphar.” It means “dust, dirt, ashes, dusty, debris, dirt-covered, scabs, grave” (88 times) as well as “soil, ground, earth, plaster and siege ramps” (22 times).⁵⁰ These two sets of meanings read together give sense not merely of “earth” but of “dirty earth.” In parallel, the Vayu Purana says that Brahma had three qualities—goodness, passion and darkness.⁵¹ Brahma divided his body of darkness into two parts—woman and man.⁵² The woman was Shatarupa and she married Swayambhu.⁵³ The creation of Adam and Shatarupa-Swayambhu are both related to a “low-quality”—“dirty” in the Bible and “darkness” in the Vayu Purana.

The Bible tells of God placing Adam in the Garden of Eden where one river parted into four rivers.⁵⁴ The Vayu Purana tells in parallel that Brahma lived where “one sky-flowing river fell on four mountaintops... of Meru and began to flow dividing into four.”⁵⁵ However, the Bible tells of Adam being placed at this place while the Vayu Purana tells of Brahma—the creator of Swayambhu’s wife Shatarupa—being placed at this place. However, Vayu Purana does not tell of Shatarupa-Swayambhu living at another place hence we assume they lived at the same place as Brahma and consider this to be a parallel.

God told Adam that he could eat freely eat fruit from every tree of the orchard but not from the Tree of Knowledge.⁵⁶ The Vayu Purana is silent on this.

⁴⁹ Bible, Genesis 2:7.

⁵⁰ Strong’s 06083.

⁵¹ Monier Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit-English Dictionary*, Southern Publications, Madras, 1987, page 863.

⁵² Vayu Purana, 10:6-8.

⁵³ The Vayu Purana does not explicitly say that the man created from splitting of the body was Swayambhu. Vayu Purana 10:7-8, 13.

⁵⁴ Bible, Genesis 2:10.

⁵⁵ Vayu Purana 34:46-96, 42:25-35. This description is placed later in the text. However, the Purana discussed all geography separately hence we do not consider this to be a chronological distinction.

⁵⁶ Bible, Genesis 2:16-17.

The Bible then tells of creation of Eve from the body of Adam.⁵⁷ This is parallel to the creation of woman and man from splitting on Brahma's body of darkness mentioned above. The distinction is that the Bible first tells of the creation of Adam; followed by the creation of Eve from Adam's body. In distinction, the Vayu Purana tells of the creation of Shatarupa from the body of Brahma and mentions Swayambhu later. Hence there exist one parallel and two distinctions here. The parallel is of the creation of woman from the body of another. The first distinction is that Eve was created from Adam while Shatarupa was created from Brahma. The second distinction is that Adam was created before Eve while Swayambhu is mentioned after the creation of Shatarupa.

The Bible tells of the snake inciting Eve and she, luring Adam into eating of the forbidden Tree of Knowledge.⁵⁸ The Vayu Purana is silent on this.

The Bible tells of God cursing the snake: "On your belly you shall go, and you shall eat dust all the days of your life."⁵⁹ At this point of the narrative, the Vayu Purana says that Brahma created numerous mental descendants including the demons. Then, seeing that unpleasant creation, "his hair got separated... It took the shape of a snake and it started to climb upon Brahma. It moved in a slanted way. Its place of residence was directed to be the part of the earth where the rays of moon and sun did not reach."⁶⁰ The snake was cursed to go on the belly in the Bible while it was cursed to live in the "earth where sun did not reach" in the Vayu Purana. This part is parallel. However, this event is mentioned after the creation of Eve in the Bible but before the creation of Shatarupa in the Vayu Purana hence there exists a chronological distinction.

The Bible says that God cursed the woman "to bring forth children in pain."⁶¹ The Vayu Purana says that previously women used to have the capacity to bear children only towards the end of their lives and they were prone to death.⁶² The phrases "in pain" and being "prone to death" both indicate a difficult physical situation and are parallel.

⁵⁷ Bible, Genesis 2:21-22.

⁵⁸ Bible, Genesis 3:4, 6.

⁵⁹ Bible, Genesis 3:14.

⁶⁰ Vayu Purana 9:24, 34-36.

⁶¹ Bible, Genesis 3:16.

⁶² Vayu Purana 8:43-44.

The Bible says that the man shall rule over the woman.⁶³ The Vayu Purana is silent on this.

At this point the Bible says that Adam was sent to till the ground.⁶⁴ The Vayu Purana, as mentioned in the subsection “Context” above, says that the trees began to die at one time. Then the people meditated on the matter and the trees began to grow again in their homes.⁶⁵ The term “meditate” could hide the tilling. Though these descriptions are parallel we do not give any points to here because this parallel is already counted in the subsection “Context.”

The Bible says God made tunics of skin and clothed Adam and Eve.⁶⁶ The Vayu Purana says that the people began to obtain clothes from the trees and began to make houses to save themselves of the pain from cold and heat.⁶⁷ The Bible is silent on the making of houses.

Summary Table 1.3: Adam-Swayambhu: Narrative

Sl	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Earth was without shape	Five elements were not separated	P
2	Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the water.	Brahma was wandering here and there.	p
3	Dry ground appeared.	The Lord established the earth above the waters.	P
4	Separation of day from night.	Creation of moon, sun and other planets.	P
5	God made humankind.	Brahma created nine mental sons.	P
6	There was no man to cultivate the ground.	Human beings did not engage in creation.	P
7	God made (only) <i>man</i> from dirty earth.	Brahma made <i>male and female</i> from his body of darkness.	P, D
8	God placed the man where one river parted	Brahma lived where “one sky-flowing river began to flow dividing into four.	P

⁶³ Bible, Genesis 3:16.

⁶⁴ Bible, Genesis 3:17-18, 23.

⁶⁵ Vayu Purana 8:87-89.

⁶⁶ Bible, Genesis 3:21.

⁶⁷ Vayu Purana 8:96.

	into four.		
9	<i>Adam was created first followed by the creation of Eve from the body of Adam.</i>	<i>Shatarupa was made from the body of Brahma and Swayambhu is mentioned later.</i>	P, D=2
10	<i>God cursed the snake to eat dust. This is said after the creation of Eve.</i>	<i>Brahma directed the snake to live in the earth where the rays of moon and sun did not reach. This is said before the creation of Shatarupa.</i>	P, D
11	<i>Woman to bring forth children in pain.</i>	<i>Women were prone to death in bringing forth children.</i>	P
12	<i>God sent Adam to till the ground.</i>	<i>People meditated and trees began to grow in their homes.</i>	Nil
13	<i>God made tunics of skin.</i>	<i>People began to obtain clothes from the trees.</i>	P
Summary: P=12, D=4, Net=12/16, 75 percent.			

Names: Adam-Manu, Moriah-Meru

The Bible begins with the verse: “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”⁶⁸ The Hebrew word for “created” in this verse is “bara.”⁶⁹ Nahum M Sarna, author of the JPS Torah Commentary says, “The Hebrew stem *b-r-* is used in the Bible exclusively of divine creativity.”⁷⁰ The Vayu Purana says: “Having spent the night of 1000 time-periods, desiring to create at the end of the night, Brahman acquires the form of Brahma.”⁷¹ The name Brahman contains the same stem “B-r-” hence we consider this as parallel.

We shall show in the next subsection that Biblical Yahweh is parallel to Hindu Brahma. It suffices here to note that these names are distinct.

Adam was the first man mentioned in the Bible. The name “Swayambhu” means “self-created,” or the first man. The embedded meaning is parallel.

⁶⁸ Bible, Genesis 1:1.

⁶⁹ Strong's 10254.

⁷⁰ Sarna, Nahum M, *Genesis, JPS Torah Commentary*, The Jewish Publication Society, Philadelphia, 1989.

⁷¹ *Vayu Purana* 8:1.

The name Eve, Hebrew “Chavvah,” means “life” or “living.”⁷² Shatarupa is also addressed as “Tanu.” Its variant Tanu-krit or “made by Tanu” means “forming the person, preserving life.”⁷³

The Bible does not disclose where Abraham went to till the ground after being banished from Eden. However, the Targum, a secondary Biblical text, says that Adam “went and dwelt on Mount Moriah.”⁷⁴ This suggests that Eden was located near Moriah. The Mahabharata in parallel says that Brahma’s seat was located at Mount Meru.⁷⁵ Thus, in absence of any information to the contrary, we consider that Brahma’s son Swayambhu also lived here. The names Moriah and Meru are parallel phonetically.

Summary Table 1.4: Adam-Swayambhu: Names

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	The creativity of Elohim is written as “B-r-.”	The name Brahman contains the stem “Br.”	P
2	<i>Yahweh</i>	<i>Brahma</i>	D
3	Adam was the first man.	Swayambhu was self-created.	P
4	Eve or “Chavvah” means “life.”	Shatarupa or “Tanu” means preserving life.	P
5	Adam dwelt on Mount Moriah.	Brahma’s seat was located at Mount Meru.	P
Summary: P=4, D=1, Net=4/5, 80 percent.			

Theology: Creation by God

The first verse of Genesis says, “God created the heavens and the earth.”⁷⁶ The Vayu Purana in parallel says Brahman takes the form of Brahma with the desire to create.”⁷⁷

⁷² Strong’s 02332.

⁷³ *Vayu Purana* 10:9, Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 435.

⁷⁴ *Targum Pseudo Jonathan*, Genesis 1-6, <https://juchre.org/targums/pgen.htm>, Retrieved September 24, 2017.

⁷⁵ *Mahabharata*, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Samvat 2067, 9:38:13-14.

⁷⁶ *Bible*, Genesis 1:1.

⁷⁷ *Vayu Purana* 8:1.

The name “Elohim” is used for God in Genesis 1:1 through 2:3. Hereafter, the name “Yahweh Elohim” or “Lord God,” or, later, stand-alone “Yahweh” is used. The Jewish Encyclopedia explains that name “Elohim” is used as the name of the “One” God of Israel while Yahweh is used as a “personal name” of the God of Israel.⁷⁸

The Hindu system proceeds in two steps in parallel. The name “Brahman” is used in Vayu Purana 8:1. It means “the Self-existent, the Absolute, the Eternal.”⁷⁹ The name “Brahma” is used from verse 8:2 through Chapter 10.⁸⁰ Brahma undertakes the creation of the material world. In the subsection “Theology” of section “Abraham-Rama” we shall show that Brahma gave boons to specific persons. In other words, Brahma is a personal God. In this way, the Supreme Power has a twofold nature in both the narratives. Elohim is parallel to Brahman—they are One God or Absolute. Yahweh is parallel to Brahma—they are personal God.

In the JPS Torah Commentary, Nahum M Sarna described the serpent as follows: “The serpent emphatically contradicts the very words God used in 2:17 [do not eat of the Tree of Knowledge] ... It then proceeds to ascribe self-serving motives to God, thus undermining His credibility in her eyes.”⁸¹ Sarna, therefore, portrays the serpent in a negative sense. The Vayu Purana in parallel says, the serpent “moved in a slanted way.” The word “apsarpana” used for “slanted” means creeping, crawling, a demon, a tribe of the Mlechha [those who speak indistinctly].⁸² Thus, both texts portray the serpent in negative terms.

The major theological issue is that of Adam eating of the prohibited Tree of Knowledge. There are a number of interpretations of this event. The Jews believe man enters the world free of sin, who yet sins because he is not a perfect being.⁸³ Saint Irenaeus, who lived towards the beginning of the first millennium

⁷⁸ Jewish Encyclopedia, “Names of God,” <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/11305-names-of-god>, Retrieved June 10, 2020.

⁷⁹ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 738.

⁸⁰ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 738.

⁸¹ Sarna, *The JPS...*, page 25.

⁸² Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 1184, 837.

⁸³ Kolatch, Alfred J. *The Jewish Book of Why/The Second Jewish Book of Why*, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 1989, quoted in “Issues in Jewish Ethics: Judaism's Rejection of Original

BCE, held that although Adam sinned, this was a necessary step for the education of mankind.⁸⁴ Saint Augustine believed that the sin incurred by Adam is inherited by all mankind.⁸⁵ All these interpretations are in agreement that Adam did disobey God. The Vayu Purana, however, describes Swayambhu entirely in a positive sense: He, “having got Shatarupa as wife, began to roam with her. They begot two sons and two daughters. This entire population has been born from these two daughters.”⁸⁶ The Bible portrays Adam as a sinner while Vayu Purana portrays Swayambhu as a beneficent person. This is a distinction.

Summary Table 1.5: Adam-Swayambhu: Theology

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	God created.	Brahman took the form of Brahma, the creator.	P
2	The serpent contradicted the words of God.	The serpent is portrayed as a demon.	P
3	Adam <i>committed sin</i> by eating of the Tree of Knowledge.	There is <i>no indication of sin</i> done by Swayambhu.	D
Summary: P=2, D=1, Net=2/3, 67 percent.			

Cain-Indra

Context: Metals (Beginnings of the Bronze Age)

The context of the narrative of Cain in the Bible is of the beginning of settled agriculture as distinct from mere tillage. Archaeological studies indicate that

Sin,” <https://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/judaism-s-rejection-of-original-sin>, Retrieved July 28, 2020.

⁸⁴ Zimmerman, Anthony, “Evolution and the Sin in Eden: A New Christian Synthesis, Chapter 12: Irenaeus on Original Sin,” http://www.lifeissues.net/writers/zim/ev/ev_01evolution_sin13.html, Retrieved July 28, 2020.

⁸⁵ St Augustine says, “And lo, there was I received by the scourge of bodily sickness, and I was going down to hell, carrying all the sins which I had committed, both against Thee, and myself, and others, many and grievous, over and above that bond of original sin, whereby we all die in Adam.” (The Confessions of Saint Augustine, Translator: E. B. Pusey (Edward Bouverie), Project Gutenberg, EBook #3296, Release Date: June, 2002. www.gutenberg.org).

⁸⁶ *Vayu Purana* 10:12-16.

civilization progressed from food gathering to tending non-domesticated nut-bearing trees and then to settled agriculture.⁸⁷ Adam could have tended non-domesticated nut-bearing trees while Cain may have started settled agriculture with bronze implements. Thus, the Bible says that Cain was tiller of the ground while Abel was keeper of the sheep.⁸⁸ The advent of Bronze implements places this narrative towards the beginning of the Bronze Age.

Indra, like Cain, was an agriculturist. The Rig Veda tells of him working with corn and barley, and undertaking ploughing, threshing, and yoking of animals.⁸⁹ On the other hand, the relative killed by him, Vritra, practiced animal husbandry. The Rig Veda says that Indra had captured Vritra's cows, meaning that the latter was a herdsman.⁹⁰

The word "Cain" means a spear or a lance in Hebrew and is associated with metalworking.⁹¹ The characteristic weapon of Indra too was the spear made of metal.⁹² The Rig Veda also speaks of a smeltery.⁹³ Thus both narratives tell of the metals—heralding the Bronze Age.

Summary Table 2.1: Cain-Indra: Context

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Beginning of settled agriculture.	Indra was an agriculturist.	P

⁸⁷ Encyclopedia Britannica, Origins of agriculture: How agriculture and domestication began, <https://www.britannica.com/print/article/9647>, Retrieved April 19, 2020.

⁸⁸ Bible, Genesis 4:2.

⁸⁹ On crop cultivation, please see *Rig Veda*, 1.140.13, 10.131.2, 1.117.21, 4.38.1, 4.57.4-8, 10.48.7. On yoking of animals, please see *Rig Veda*, 10.101.3, 8.21.3 10.149.4.

⁹⁰ Indra's colleagues "cleaved open the stall of cows;" Indra won the "spoil of cattle;" they "busted the cow-stalls;" and Indra found out the "stable of the milk giving cows" (*Rig Veda* 2:23:3, 3:31:20, 4:16:8 and 5:30:4).

⁹¹ The word "Cain" derives from the Hebrew word "qayin" which means spear or lance (Strong's 07014, 07013). The Jewish Encyclopedia says that descendants of Cain invented the art of working bronze and iron (Jewish Encyclopedia, Kenites, 1906, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/9279-kenites>). Wenham notes the possible association of Cain with metalworking but says there is too little information to be sure about the original meaning of the name (Wenham, Gordon J, *Word Biblical Commentary, Genesis 1-15*, Word Books, Waco, Texas, 1987, Page 101).

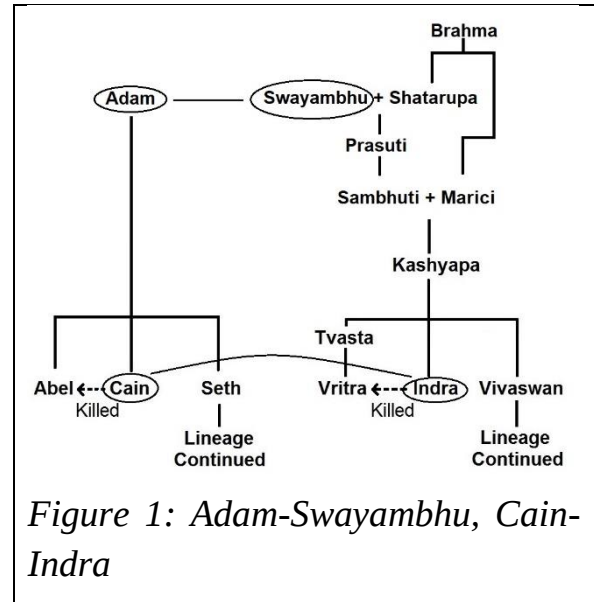
⁹² *Rig Veda* 1:52:8, 6:18:10.

⁹³ *Rig Veda* 4:2:17, 5:9:5, 10:72:2.

2	Metalworking.	Smeltery.	P
	Summary: P=2, D=0, Net=2/2, 100 percent.		

Genealogy and Time: Descent from Adam-Swayambhu

The Bible says that Cain, Abel and Seth were biological sons of Adam.⁹⁴ Three brothers or cousins—Indra, Vritra and Vivaswan—are mentioned in the Hindu texts as well. However, their descent from Swayambhu is more involved as shown in Figure 1. Swayambhu and Shatarupa begot Prasuti, who begot Sambhuti, who begot Kashyapa father of Tvasta, Indra and Vivaswan. Vritra, who was killed by Indra; and who, we suggest, was parallel to Abel, was son of Tvasta. Thus, the three persons in the narrative of Cain-Indra all descended from Adam-Swayambhu. The details are given at the endnote.⁹⁵



The narratives of Abel, Cain and Seth run parallel to those of Vritra, Indra and Vivaswan. The distinction is that the killed person Abel was brother of the killer Cain in the Bible; while the killed person Vritra was nephew of the killer Indra in the Hindu narrative.

Hereafter the lineage continued from the third brother who was not involved in the conflict—Seth in the Bible and Vivaswan in the Hindu texts.⁹⁶

⁹⁴ Bible, Genesis, 4:1.

⁹⁵ Brahma created nine mental sons. One of these was Marici (*Vayu Purana* 9:67). Brahma subsequently created a woman named Shatarupa who accepted Swayambhu as her husband (*Vayu Purana* 10:8, 11). Shatarupa gave birth to daughter Prasuti who, in turn gave birth to daughter Sambhuti (*Vayu Purana* 10:16, 27). Sambhuti married Marici (*Vayu Purana* 10:27-29). This couple gave birth to son Kashyapa who, in turn, had three sons Tvasta, Indra and Vivaswan as shown in Figure 1. Tvasta had a son named Vritra (*Mahabharata* 1:65:15-16).

⁹⁶ Bible, Genesis 5:3pp. Vaivaswat was born from Vivaswan (*Mahabharata* 1:95:7).

The time suggested for Cain on genealogical considerations is 3900-3200 BCE.⁹⁷ William Jones has estimated the number of generations between Vivaswan and Buddha as 118.⁹⁸ The mean length of generation for the Medieval Indian Kings has been estimated at 27 years and the mean length of reign has been estimated at 19 years.⁹⁹ The upper- and lower number of years between Buddha and Vivaswan is thus estimated as 3186 and 2242 years. Buddha was born in 470 BCE.¹⁰⁰ Thus, time for Vivaswan is estimated to be between 3656 to 2710 BCE. The Biblical and Hindu estimates have the common range of 3656 to 3200 BCE. Hence, we consider these to be parallel.

Summary Table 2.2: Cain-Indra: Genealogy

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Cain, Abel and Seth were <i>biological sons of Adam</i> .	Vritra, Indra and Vivaswan were <i>descendants of Swayambhu</i> .	P, D
2	Cain was <i>brother</i> of Abel.	Vritra was <i>nephew</i> of Indra.	D
3	The lineage continued from the third person Seth.	The lineage continued from the third person Vivaswan.	P
4	Time is 3900-3200 BCE.	Time is 3656 to 2710 BCE.	P
	Summary: P=3, D=2, Net=3/5, 60 percent.		

Narrative: Agriculturist Killed the Herdsman

The Bible says that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground while Abel brought an offering of firstlings of his flock to the Lord.¹⁰¹ The Lord respected the offering of Abel and not the offering of Cain. This made Cain angry and he killed Abel.¹⁰²

⁹⁷ Bible History, Noah & the Flood, The Bible Timeline, <http://timeline.biblehistory.com/period/noah-and-the-flood>, Retrieved January 26, 2020.

⁹⁸ Jones, *The Works...* Vol I, Page 297, 302 and 304. He estimated the numbers of generations from Vaivaswat to Buddha as 117. Accordingly, the numbers of generations between Vivaswan and Buddha would be 118.

⁹⁹ Trautmann, Thomas R, Length of Generation and Reign in Ancient India, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 1969, 89:3 Pages 564-577, Table 1.

¹⁰⁰ Violatti, Cristian, The Dates of the Buddha, *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, <https://www.ancient.eu/article/493/the-dates-of-the-buddha/>, Retrieved March 18, 2020.

¹⁰¹ Bible, Genesis 4:3.

¹⁰² Bible, Genesis 4:8.

Indra too killed Vritra but the provocation was that of kingship.¹⁰³ As said above, Tvasta was brother of Indra. He had a son named Viswarupa (not shown in Figure 1). Indra was afraid that Viswarupa may take over his throne and he killed Viswarupa while he was engaged in penance. Then Tvasta created Vritra to take revenge against Indra. However, Indra kill Vritra as well.¹⁰⁴

The narratives are parallel in the agriculturist—Cain-Indra—killing the herdsman—Abel-Vritra. The distinction is of the killed person being a brother in the Bible versus a nephew in the Hindu texts. This distinction has already been noted in the section “Genealogy” hence it is not counted here.

The Bible tells of Cain living at the land of Nod after killing Abel.¹⁰⁵ The Mahabharata says Indra took shelter in the Mansarovar Lake after killing Vritra.¹⁰⁶ The parallel is leaving the scene of killing and settling elsewhere.

Summary Table 2.3: Cain-Indra: Narrative

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Cain the agriculturist killed Abel the herdsman.	Indra the agriculturist killed Vritra the herdsman.	P
2	Cain lived at Nod after killing Abel.	Indra took shelter at Mansarovar after killing Vritra.	P
	Summary: P=2, D=0, Net=2/2, 100 percent.		

Names: Spear and Vajra

The name Cain means “spear.”¹⁰⁷ The spear is also referred to as “thunderbolt” which was the weapon of Indra.¹⁰⁸ The embedded meaning of the two names is parallel.

Origin of the name Abel is from Hebrew “hebel.” It means “vapour, breath.”¹⁰⁹ Indra released the waters after killing Vritra.¹¹⁰ The, Sanskrit word for “waters”

¹⁰³ Mahabharata 5:9:7.

¹⁰⁴ Mahabharata 5:9:47-48, 10:39.

¹⁰⁵ Bible, Genesis 4:16.

¹⁰⁶ Mahabharata, 12:342:42.

¹⁰⁷ Hebrew “Qayin” (Strong’s 07014) means “possession.” Its origin is Hebrew “qayin” (Strong’s 07013) meaning “spear.”

¹⁰⁸ Rig Veda 1:33:13, for example.

is “apah” which means “water, air, the intermediate region.”¹¹¹ Therefore, the name of the killed person has a connection with vapour in both the religions.

The names of the third person, Seth or Vivaswan, are distinct.

The names Nod and Mansarovar where Cain and Indra went after the killing are distinct.

Summary Table 2.4: Cain-Indra: Names

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	“Cain” means spear.	Indra’s weapon was the spear.	P
2	“Abel” means vapour.	Indra released the waters after killing Vritra.	P
3	“Seth”	“Vivaswan”	D
4	“Nod”	“Mansarovar”	D
Summary: P=2, D=2, Net=2/4, 50 percent.			

Theology: Sinner

The Lord banished Cain after he killed Abel indicating that he was a sinner.¹¹²

The Hindu texts give two different perspectives on this matter. The Ramayana says: the “killing of faultless Vritra was not justified.”¹¹³ In other words, Indra made wrong in killing Vritra. However, the Rig Veda eulogizes Indra’s killing of Vritra.¹¹⁴

The Biblical portrayal of Cain as a sinner is parallel to the Ramayana saying that Indra made wrong in killing Vritra hence, we consider this to be parallel despite the Rig Veda averring the opposite.

Summary Table 2.5: Cain-Indra: Theology

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
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¹⁰⁹ Strong’s 01892.

¹¹⁰ *Rig Veda* 1.80.4.

¹¹¹ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 47.

¹¹² *Bible*, *Genesis* 4:11.

¹¹³ *Ramayana*, of *Shri Valmiki*, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Samvat 2044, 7:84:4, 6, 85:15.

¹¹⁴ *Rig Veda* 1:52:6.

1	Cain was a sinner.	Ramayana says Indra made wrong in killing Vritra.	P
Summary: P=1, D=0, Net=1/1, 100 percent.			

Noah-Vaivaswat

Context: Expansion of Population

The context in both the narratives is that of expansion of population. The Bible says that humankind began to multiply on the face of the earth.¹¹⁵ The Vayu Purana says that at the time of Vaivaswat, “rains began to take place... fruits, flowers and roots began to grow... people of that time lived hapily... the fourfold population of Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra came into being.”¹¹⁶

The sense of lawlessness is told of in both the narratives. The Bible says that “the Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind had become great on the earth...”¹¹⁷ The Vayu Purana says that those people captured areas, mountains, trees and plants according to their strength.¹¹⁸

Summary Table 3.1: Noah-Vaivaswat: Context

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Humankind began to multiply.	Fourfold population came into being.	P
2	Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind.	People captured areas, mountains, trees and plants according to their strength.	P
Summary: P=2, D=0, Net=2/2, 100 percent.			

¹¹⁵ Bible, Genesis 6:1.

¹¹⁶ Vayu Purana 8:131, 134, 135, 139. These developments are told to have taken place in the Treta Yuga. Vaivaswat Manu lived at this time (Mahabharata 12:348:51).

¹¹⁷ Bible, Genesis 6:5.

¹¹⁸ Vayu Purana 8:136. This is said in reference Treta Yuga in which Vaivaswat was born.

Genealogy and Time: Descent from Seth-Vivaswan

We have mentioned in the previous section “Cain-Indra” that the lineage continued from Seth or Vivaswan. According to the Bible, there were eight generations between Seth and Noah.¹¹⁹ On the other hand, the Hindu texts tell of Vaivaswat being the son of Vivaswan.¹²⁰ The parallel nevertheless is that Noah-Vaivaswat descended from Seth-Vivaswan. The distinction is that the Bible tells of eight generations between the two while Hindu texts do not tell of any intervening generations.

The Bible says that Noah had three sons—Shem, Ham and Japheth. The lineage continued from Arphaxad, son of Shem.¹²¹ The Mahabharata, on the other hand, tells of 10 sons of Vaivaswat. The lineage continued from one of these named Ikshwaku.¹²² The Parallel is that the lineage continued from one of the descendants of Noah-Vaivaswat. The first distinction is that Noah had three sons while Vaivaswat had 10 sons. The second distinction is regarding the genealogy of Arphaxad, who we suggest in subsection “Names” of this section, was parallel to Ikshwaku. Arphaxad was grandson of Noah while Ikshwaku was son of Vaivaswat.

The time for Noah suggested by Gerhard F. Hasel, Professor of Old Testament and Biblical Theology at Andrews University on the basis of genealogy is between 3402 and 2462 BCE.¹²³ As discussed in the subsection “Genealogy” in section “Cain-Indra,” the number of generations between Vivaswan and Buddha at have been estimated as 118 by William Jones. Thus, the numbers of generations between his son Vaivaswat and Buddha would be 117. The mean length of generation and reign, as suggested previously, has been estimated at 27 and 19 years respectively. Thus, the upper- and lower years between Vaivaswat and Buddha are estimated as 3159 to 2223 years. Taking the birth of Buddha at 470 BCE, the time for Vaivaswat is arrived at 3629 to 2693 BCE.

¹¹⁹ Bible, Genesis 5:6-29.

¹²⁰ Mani, Vettam, *Puranic Encyclopedia*, Motilal Banarsidass, Delhi, 1979, Page 879.

¹²¹ Bible Genesis 5:32, 10:22.

¹²² Mahabharata 1:75:15.

¹²³ Hasel, Gehrard F, “The Meaning of the Chronogenealogies of Genesis 5 and 11,” 1980, <https://www.grisda.org/origins-07053>, Retrieved August 16, 2020.

The range from 3402 to 2693 BCE is common to both the estimates and we consider this to be parallel.

Summary Table 3.2: Noah-Vaivaswat: Genealogy

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Noah was descendant in 8 th generation from Seth.	Vaivaswat was son of Vivaswan.	P, D
2	Noah had <i>three</i> sons.	Vaivaswat had <i>ten</i> sons.	D
3	Lineage continued from Arphaxad, <i>grandson</i> of Noah.	Lineage continued from Ikshwaku, <i>son</i> of Vaivaswat.	P, D
4	The time for Noah is suggested at 3402 to 2462 BCE.	The time for Vivaswan is estimated at 3629 to 2693 BCE.	P
	Summary: P=3, D=3, Net=3/6, 50 percent.		

Narrative: The Flood

The Bible says that the sons of God saw that the daughters of humankind were beautiful. Thus, they took wives for themselves from any they chose.¹²⁴ The Hindu texts are silent on this.

God told both Noah and Vaivaswat about the impending flood. God Himself spoke to Noah.¹²⁵ The Mahabharata tells a longer story. A fish sought the protection of Vaivaswat while he was taking a dip in the river. Vaivaswat decided to give protection to the fish and brought it home. The fish soon grew large leading Vaivaswat to put it in the sea. At this time the Lord in the form of the Fish told Vaivaswat about the impending flood.¹²⁶ The foretelling of the Flood is parallel. We do not consider the manner of telling to be distinct because the Bible is silent on this.

The Bible says that God asked Noah to make an ark in which he should enter with his wife, his three sons and their wives and two of every kind of living creature.¹²⁷ The Mahabharata says that the Fish Incarnation told Vaivaswat to make a strong boat in which he should sit with seven sages and all types of

¹²⁴ Bible, Genesis 6:2.

¹²⁵ Bible, Genesis 6:17.

¹²⁶ Mahabharata 3:187:28-32.

¹²⁷ Bible, Genesis 6:18-19

seeds.¹²⁸ The parallels are that eight numbers of persons climbed on the boat with the seed of other creatures.

The Bible says that the waters prevailed over the earth for 150 days and the ark came to rest on mountains of Ararat in the seventh month.¹²⁹ The Mahabharata says that the boat floated the waters for many years and came to rest on the Himalaya Mountain.¹³⁰ The long period of floating and the resting on a mountain are parallel. We do not consider the 150 days mentioned in the Bible to be a distinction because “many years” is amenable to multiple interpretations of time. We consider the distinction in the name of the mountain in the next subsection.

The Mahabharata tells of the Lord pulling the boat of Vaivaswat in the form of Fish Incarnation during the Flood.¹³¹ The Bible is silent on this.

The Bible tells of Noah drinking wine, uncovering himself, his son Ham seeing his nakedness, his sons Shem and Japheth covering his nakedness, and lastly Noah cursing Ham to be a slave to his brothers.¹³² The Hindu texts are silent on these events.

The Bible tells of the descendants of Noah spreading over the earth. The Mahabharata in parallel says that “Vaivaswat started the work of creation after the Flood. He began to make creation as it was previously.”¹³³ The Gita addresses Vaivaswat as “Father of Mankind.”¹³⁴

The Bible tells of descendants of Noah having a common language, of them making a tower, and the Lord confusing their language.¹³⁵ The Hindu texts are silent on these events.

Summary Table 3.3: Noah-Vaivaswat: Narrative

¹²⁸ *Mahabharata* 3:187:31-32.

¹²⁹ *Bible*, *Genesis* 7:24, 8:4

¹³⁰ *Mahabharata* 3:187:44-47.

¹³¹ *Mahabharata* 3:187:44.

¹³² *Bible*, *Genesis* 9:21-25

¹³³ *Mahabharata* 3:187:56-57.

¹³⁴ *Gita* 4:1.

¹³⁵ *Bible*, *Genesis* 10:32, 11:1, 4, 7.

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	God told Noah about the impending flood.	The Fish Incarnation told Vaivaswat about the impending flood.	P
2	God told Noah to make an ark.	Fish Incarnation told Vaivaswat to make a strong boat.	P
3	Noah entered the ark with his seven close relatives and two of every kind of living creature.	Vaivaswat entered the boat with seven sages and all types of seeds.	P=2
4	The waters prevailed over the earth for <i>150 days</i> .	The boat was floating on waters for <i>many years</i> .	P, D
5	The ark rested on a mountain.	The boat rested on a mountain.	P
6	Descendants of Noah spread over the earth.	Vaivaswat is addressed as “Father of Mankind.”	P
Summary: P=7, D=1, Net=7/8, 87 percent.			

Names: Noah-Manu

Noah’s Hebrew name “Noach” and the name “Manowach”—both have a common origin from the Hebrew word “nuwach.”¹³⁶ The two names are connected though their common root. In turn, “Manowach” is parallel to “Manu.” Both names have the common sounds “M,” “n” and “w/u.”¹³⁷ Thus Noah is related to Manowach, which is related to Manu.

1 Ur Chaldea	U	r (C)	h			a (l)	d	ea
	↑	↑	↑			↑	↑	
2 Arphaxad	A	r (p)	h (a)	x		a	d	
	↑			↑		↑	↑	
3 Ikshwaku	I			ksh (w)		a	k	u
	↓			↓		↓	↓	↓
4 Ikshumati	I			ksh (um)		a	t	i

¹³⁶ “Noach” (Strong’s 05146), “Manowach” (04495), “nuwach” (05118), “nuwach” (05117) and “manowach” (04494).

¹³⁷ I am thankful to a friend on Facebook who drew my attention to this parallel. However, I miss the name.

The Bible does not explicitly tell where Arphaxad lived. However, his descendant Terah had migrated from Ur Chaldea. Therefore, we assume that Arphaxad too lived at Ur Chaldea. This assumption is supported by the Jewish Encyclopaedia saying that the name “Ur Chaldea” could be derived from “Arphaxad.”¹³⁸ The common letters are “a/u,” “r,” “h,” “a,” and “d” as shown at Lines (1) and (2) in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Arphaxad and Ikshwaku

The names Arphaxad and Ikshwaku carry the same sounds “a/i,” “x/ksh,” and “a” as shown at Lines (2) and (3) in the figure.¹³⁹

The Ramayana does not tell where Ikshwaku lived. It does say though that Dasaratha’s grandfather and forefathers lived at a place named Ikshumati.¹⁴⁰ In absence of any information to the contrary, we assume that Ikshwaku lived at Ikshumati. The similarity of the two names, as shown at Lines (3) and (4) in Figure 2, lends credence to this assumption. Thus, Ur Chaldea is related to Arphaxad (Lines 1 and 2 of Figure 2); Arphaxad is related to Ikshwaku (Lines 2 and 3 of Figure 2); and Ikshwaku is related to Ikshumati (Lines 3 and 4 of Figure 2). Additionally, the names Ur Chaldea, Arphaxad and Ikshumati carry the same sounds “d/t” as shown at Lines (1), (2) and (4).¹⁴¹ Thus, we conclude that Ur Chaldea is parallel to Ikshumati, and Arphaxad is parallel to Ikshwaku.

The Bible says that the ark came to rest on the Ararat Mountain while the Hindu texts says the boat came to rest on the Himalaya Mountain. The names of the mountains are distinct.

Summary Table 3.4: Noah-Vaivaswat: Names

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Noah, written as Noach is related to Manowach.	Manowach is related to Manu	P
2	Ur Chaldea, Arphaxad	Ikshumati, Ikshwaku	P=2

¹³⁸ Arpakshad is the same as ‘Ur of the Chaldeans’ (*Ur-kasdim*). Both names agree in the consonants except one...” Jewish Encyclopedia, Arphaxad, <http://www.jewishencyclopedia.com/articles/1817-arphaxad>, Retrieved July 4, 2017.

¹³⁹ The similarity between “x” and “ksh” is demonstrated in the name of the goddess being written as either Laxmi or Lakshmi.

¹⁴⁰ *Ramayana* 2:68:17.

¹⁴¹ “d” or “ड” and “t” or “ट” belong to the same phonetic group in Hindi.

3	Ararat	Himalaya	D
Summary: P=3, D=1, Net=3/4, 75 percent.			

Theology: Covenant

The Bible says: “Noah was a godly man; he was blameless among his contemporaries. He walked with God.”¹⁴² The Mahabharata says Vaivaswat was engaged in penance on the banks of Cheerini River.¹⁴³ Walking with God and undertaking penance suggest that both were connected with- or trying to connect with God.

Noah made an altar to the Lord and offered burnt offerings on the altar after the ark resting on land at the end of the Flood.¹⁴⁴ The Mahabharata says that Vaivaswat created many types of sacrificial fires though it is silent on time when these fires were created.¹⁴⁵ The undertaking of burnt offering or sacrificial fire is parallel.

The Lord said to Noah after the Flood, “Whoever sheds human blood, by other humans must his blood be shed...”¹⁴⁶ We find an echo of such a social arrangement at the time of Vaivaswat in the Mahabharata: At one time “the people destroyed each other just as strong fish eats up the small fish... Then the people went to Brahma, the creator, who ordered Vaivaswat to rule upon them.”¹⁴⁷ The phrases “shedding blood” and “just as strong fish eats up the small fish...” both indicate people killing each other. Just as God prohibited such killings, the Mahabharata says Vaivaswat was appointed king to prevent such “eating” of the small by the big.

At this time God made a covenant that never again will all living things be wiped out by the waters of a flood.¹⁴⁸ The Hindu texts are silent on this.

Summary Table 3.5: Noah-Vaivaswat: Theology

¹⁴² Bible, Genesis 6:9.

¹⁴³ Mahabharata 3:187:6

¹⁴⁴ Bible, Genesis 8:20.

¹⁴⁵ Mahabharata 3:221:23.

¹⁴⁶ Bible, Genesis 9:6.

¹⁴⁷ Mahabharata 12:67:17, 21, 23-25.

¹⁴⁸ Bible, Genesis 9:11.

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Noah was a godly man.	Vaivaswat was engaged in penance.	P
2	Noah offered burnt offerings.	Vaivaswat created many types of sacrificial fires.	P
3	Lord said that one must not kill another.	Vaivaswat rules upon the people to prevent people destroying each “other just as strong fish eats up the small fish...”	P
Summary: P=3, D=0, Net=3/3, 100 percent.			

Abraham-Rama

Context: Kingship and Trade

The socio-political context in both the narratives is that of kingship. The Bible tells of the “Pharaoh” ruling upon Mitsrayim.¹⁴⁹ Rama too “ruled” over Ayodhya.

The Bible tells of Abraham being wealthy in livestock, silver, and gold.¹⁵⁰ Trade is also indicated when Hamor offered Jacob to live in his land, “travel freely in it, and acquire property in it.”¹⁵¹ Likewise, the Ramayana says that after Rama had left for the south, “there was no hustle and bustle in Ayodhya since businesspersons had closed their shops.”¹⁵² During the southward travels of Shatrughna, brother of Rama, he was accompanied with “businesspersons who establish shops of different types of goods.”¹⁵³ Thus, both narratives tell of trade.

Summary Table 4.1: Abraham-Rama: Context

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	The Pharaoh ruled upon Mitsrayim.	Rama ruled upon Ayodhya.	P
2	Abraham’s family engaged in trade.	Traders inhabited Ayodhya.	P
Summary: P=2, D=0, Net=2/2, 100 percent.			

¹⁴⁹ Bible, Genesis 12:15, 21:27, 40:11.

¹⁵⁰ Bible, Genesis 13:2.

¹⁵¹ Bible, Genesis 34:10.

¹⁵² Ramayana 2:48:35.

¹⁵³ Ramayana 7:64:3.

Genealogy and Time: Descent from Arphaxad-Ikshwaku

The line of Noah continued with Arphaxad-Terah-Abraham.¹⁵⁴ The line of Vaivaswat continued with Ikshwaku-Dasaratha-Rama in parallel.¹⁵⁵

Archbishop Ussher had arrived at year 1996 BCE for the birth of Abraham on genealogical considerations.¹⁵⁶ As discussed previously, taking the mean lengths of generation and reign as 27 and 19 years respectively; the generations between Buddha and Abraham are estimated to be 61 numbers by William Jones. Taking the birth of Buddha at 470 BCE, the upper- and lower years for Rama are estimated as 2117 to 1507 BCE. The Biblical year 1996 BCE falls within the Hindu range thus we consider this to be a parallel.

Summary Table 4.2: Abraham-Rama: Genealogy

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Arphaxad-Terah-Abraham	Ikshwaku-Dasaratha-Rama	P
2	Ussher has suggested the year 1996 BCE for birth of Abraham.	The years for Rama are estimated as 2117 to 1507 BCE.	P
	Summary: P=2, D=0, Net=2/2, 100 percent.		

Narrative: Travel to the South

The family of Abraham and Rama both descended from a place carrying the parallel names Ur Chaldea and Ikshumati as shown in the previous section “Noah-Vaivaswat.” Terah migrated from Ur Chaldea to Haran along with his family and Abraham travelled onwards to Ai.¹⁵⁷ In parallel, Dasaratha or an earlier ancestor of his migrated from Ikshumati to Ayodhya.¹⁵⁸ We shall show in the subsection “Names” of this section that the names “Ai” and “Ayodhya” could be parallel. Thus, the origin of the line at Ur Chaldea-Ikshumati and the

¹⁵⁴ Bible, Genesis 11:10-26.

¹⁵⁵ Ramayana 1:70:20-21, 39-43.

¹⁵⁶ Pierce, Larry, “The World: Born in 4004 BC? Ussher and the Date of Creation,” *Answers Magazine*, April 28, 2006, <https://answersingenesis.org/bible-timeline/the-world-born-in-4004-bc/>, retrieved May 19, 2020.

¹⁵⁷ Bible, Genesis 11:31.

¹⁵⁸ Ramayana 2:68:17.

destination at Ai-Ayodhya are both parallel. A distinction is that Terah did not travel to Ai while Dasaratha travelled to Ayodhya.

The Bible says Terah begot Abraham, Nahor and Haran at Ur Chaldea. Haran's son was Lot.¹⁵⁹ The Ramayana says Dasaratha begot four sons—Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna at Ayodhya.¹⁶⁰ Both narratives revolve around four sons-or-grandsons of Terah-Dasaratha. One distinction is that the four are born to Terah at Ur Chaldea while they are born to Dasaratha at Ayodhya. Second distinction is that the Bible tells of three sons and one grandson while the Ramayana tells of four sons.

Abraham was a rich herdsman as described above in the subsection "Context." On the other hand, Rama was a king. Both being powerful persons is parallel while one being a herdsman and another being a king is distinct.

The Bible says that there was a famine that led Abraham to sojourn in the south.¹⁶¹ The Ramayana tells of a palace intrigue that led Rama to sojourn in the south.¹⁶² The sojourn and the south direction are parallel while the provocation leading to the sojourn is distinct.

Abraham travelled to the south with his wife Sarah and nephew Lot.¹⁶³ Rama travelled south with his wife Sita and brother Lakshmana.¹⁶⁴ Travel of three persons is parallel while the accompaniment is distinct. However, we have already flagged this distinction in the subsection "Genealogy" hence, we do not count this distinction here.

The Ramayana tells of Rama crossing the Yamuna and Ganga Rivers, halting at Chitrakuta, visiting a number of hermitages and finally settling at Panchvati.¹⁶⁵ The Bible tells of this long journey in one half verse: "Abraham went down to Egypt" and is silent on the details.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁹ Bible, Genesis 11:27.

¹⁶⁰ Ramayana 1.18.

¹⁶¹ Bible, Genesis 12:10.

¹⁶² Ramayana 2:18:33.

¹⁶³ Bible, Genesis 13:1.

¹⁶⁴ Ramayana 2:2:34.

¹⁶⁵ Ramayana 2:55, 2:56, 3:5, 3:7, 3:12, 3:15.

¹⁶⁶ Bible, Genesis 12:10.

Abraham asked Sarah to tell the people of the South that she was his sister.¹⁶⁷ Later Abraham clarified that Sarah was his father's daughter, but not his mother's daughter.¹⁶⁸ The Ramayana does not disclose the parents of Sita. However, the Malayan Legend of Rama says:

As Ravana was visiting his first wife Sekanda Maya, Dasaratha slept with the pseudo-Mandodari. He then disappeared through the air... The horoscope (of Sita, the child thus born) was drawn up but with the shake of his head Bibu Sanam related that whoever marries this child would kill his father and rule over the four worlds. Ravana is naturally unhappy at this prophecy and wanted to kill the girl immediately, but the mother suggested that it should be put into an iron box and thrown into the sea and so it happens.¹⁶⁹

This legend says that Sita was the daughter of Dasaratha and Mandodari, wife of Ravana; and she became Rama's wife. Thus, Sita was Rama's father's daughter but not his mother's daughter. This narrative is supported in the Ramayana to the extent that Sita was born in Lanka in the house of Ravana though it says she was born from a lotus flower.¹⁷⁰ Thus, Sita was half-sister of Rama from the father's side just as Sarah was.

The Bible says that the people of the South took Sarah to the Pharaoh.¹⁷¹ The Ramayana says that the Ravana, King of the South, abducted Sita from Panchvati and took her to his palace.¹⁷² Thus, Sarah-Sita was taken to the palace of the king of the south in both the narratives. The term "took" used in the Bible could hide within it an abduction hence we do not consider this to be a distinction.

¹⁶⁷ Bible, Genesis 12:13.

¹⁶⁸ Bible, Genesis 20:12.

¹⁶⁹ Stutterheim, Willem, "The Malayan Legend of Rama" in *Rama-Legends and Rama-Reliefs in Indonesia*, Indira Gandhi Centre for Arts, New Delhi, Page 33. We have used the names for these persons in the Hindu narrative: Dasarata=Dasaratha; Mandu Daki=Mandu Dari=Mandodari.

¹⁷⁰ Ramayana, 7:17:35-36.

¹⁷¹ Bible, Genesis 12:15.

¹⁷² Ramayana 3:49.

The King of the South treated Abraham well for the sake of Sarah.¹⁷³ On the other hand, the Ramayana tells of continuous conflict between Ravana and Rama. Rama made an alliance with Sugriva; crossed the sea; attacked Lanka and killed Ravana.¹⁷⁴ This narrative is distinct.

The Bible says that the Lord struck Pharaoh because of Sarah.¹⁷⁵ The Ramayana says that Rama killed Ravana because of Sita.¹⁷⁶ The term “struck” could also mean killed, hence we do not consider this to be a distinction.

While returning Sarah to Abraham, the Pharaoh, according to the King James Version, said: “I might have taken Sarah for wife.”¹⁷⁷ Thus, according to this version, the Pharaoh had not touched Sarah. Ramayana says in parallel that Ravana said to Sita “I will not touch you till you want me.”¹⁷⁸

The Pharaoh returned Sarah to Abraham while Rama retrieved Sita after killing Ravana. In both cases the wife was got back.¹⁷⁹ Then the couple returned to Ayodhya in both narratives.¹⁸⁰ However, the Ramayana gives this return travel in considerable detail while the Bible is silent on the details.¹⁸¹

There arose a conflict between the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot after their return from the South and the two decided to separate. Lot went to live at Sodom.¹⁸² A separation of Rama and Lakshmana is also indicated in the Ramayana but both the context and chronology are distinct. At one time Rama had appointed Lakshmana as the doorkeeper and instructed him not to let any

¹⁷³ Bible, Genesis 12:16.

¹⁷⁴ Ramayana 4:5, 5, 6:22, 6:108.

¹⁷⁵ Bible, Genesis 12:17. The Net Bible translates this as struck “with severe diseases.” The word for struck is “nega” (Strong’s 05061) which is translated as “infection.” Its origin is “nega” (Strong’s 05060) which means “to touch, to strike” and could be used for a war.

¹⁷⁶ Ramayana 6:108:21.

¹⁷⁷ Bible, Genesis 12:19. The Net Bible translates this as “I took.” We rely here on KJV since it is parallel to the Ramayana.

¹⁷⁸ Ramayana 5:20:6.

¹⁷⁹ Bible, Genesis 12:19; Ramayana 6:118.

¹⁸⁰ Bible, Genesis 13:3; Ramayana 6:122.

¹⁸¹ Ramayana 6:122.

¹⁸² Bible, Genesis 13:12.

person intrude in the secret conversation he was having with the representative of a particular Sage. At this same time, another Sage named Durvasa wanted to meet with Rama immediately. Lakshmana allowed Durvasa to meet with Rama despite the latter's prohibition. Then Rama broke off his relations with Lakshmana for the latter having committed this indiscretion.¹⁸³ Subsequently, Lakshmana went to the riverfront, held his breath, and died. While the main event of separation is parallel, we see two distinctions here. The separation was due to a conflict between their herdsmen in the Bible while it was due to an indiscretion in the Ramayana. Secondly, the Bible tells of this event taking place before the death of Sarah while the Ramayana tells of this taking place after the death of Sita. Thus, chronology is also different.

The Biblical narrative of Lot continues with a battle between four and five kings. The King of Sodom, for whom Lot was fighting, was defeated and Lot was taken captive. Abraham came to know of this. He attacked the victorious kings, defeated them and liberated Lot. Abraham then met with Sage Melchizedek.¹⁸⁴ The Hindu narrative is silent on these events.

Hagar, the maid-wife of Abraham, fled since she was dealt harshly by Sarah. However, she returned at the advice of an Angel and gave birth to Ishmael, Abraham's first son.¹⁸⁵ Subsequently Sarah gave birth to Isaac after Abraham had travelled to Gerar.¹⁸⁶ Yet later, Abraham took Keturah as a concubine and begot five sons from her.¹⁸⁷ Thus, Abraham had two "principal" sons, and three women partners among whom he had expelled one for a time. The Ramayana says that Rama expelled his only wife Sita who gave birth to the two sons Lav and Kush in a hermitage.¹⁸⁸ However, the Jaina religion tells us that Rama had four wives—Sita, Prabhavati, Ratibha and Sridama.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸³ *Ramayana* 7:106:14.

¹⁸⁴ *Bible, Genesis* 14:16-18.

¹⁸⁵ *Bible, Genesis* 16:15.

¹⁸⁶ *Bible, Genesis* 21:1.

¹⁸⁷ *Bible, Genesis* 25:1.

¹⁸⁸ *Ramayana* 45:16, 66:1. We shall discuss the birth of Kush subsequently.

¹⁸⁹ *Paumcariyam of Vimalsuri*, Edited by Herman Jacobi, Prakrit Granth Parishad, Ahmedabad, Samvat 2062, 91.18.

The two parallels here are that there were two “principal” sons; and that one-woman partner was expelled. We can see three distinctions here. One, the two “principal” sons were born to two wives in the Biblical narrative while they were born to the only wife in the Hindu narrative. Two, these two sons were born when the mother was living with Abraham in the Biblical narrative while they were when the mother was living away from Rama in the Hindu narrative. Three, there were three women partners in the Bible against one- or four in the Hindu narrative.

The Bible tells of the destruction of Sodom and the escape of Lot to the mountain where his daughters were pregnant with him;¹⁹⁰ Abraham travelling to Gerar in the south; Sarah being taken to King Abimelech there;¹⁹¹ and Abraham attempting to offer his son in sacrifice.¹⁹² The Ramayana is silent on these events.

The Ramayana tells of Shatrughna, brother of Rama, travelling west to conquer the Land of Mathura;¹⁹³ Rama undertaking a sacrifice; his sons Lav and Kush coming to the sacrifice as bards;¹⁹⁴ and Bharata travelling west to conquer the Gandharvas.¹⁹⁵ The Bible is silent on these events.

The Bible says that Abraham came to mourn for Sarah when she died and she was buried in a cave.¹⁹⁶ Abraham’s *coming* to mourn for Sarah suggests that he was living away from her at the time of her death. The Hindu narrative says Rama had expelled Sita and she was living in a hermitage. Then Rama summoned Sita at a sacrifice he was undertaking, and she was carried into the earth at this time.¹⁹⁷ The parallels here are that the wife was living away at the time of her death, and she was buried in the earth. As said in the previous para, the Bible is silent on Abraham undertaking such a sacrifice.

¹⁹⁰ Bible, Genesis 19:24, 30, 36.

¹⁹¹ Bible, Genesis 20:1.

¹⁹² Bible, Genesis 22:10.

¹⁹³ Ramayana 7:65:4.

¹⁹⁴ Ramayana 7:93:5.

¹⁹⁵ Ramayana 7:101.

¹⁹⁶ Bible, Genesis 23:2.

¹⁹⁷ Ramayana 7:97:20-22.

The Bible says that Lot lived at Zoar in isolation, away from Abraham. We presume he died there. As said above, the Ramayana says that Lakshmana came to the riverfront, held his breath and died after Rama broke relations with him.¹⁹⁸ The parallels are that both died away from Abraham-Rama in not so favorable circumstances. We have already counted the distinction in the events leading to the separation and the same is not counted here.

Abraham had settled at Gerar in the south. Isaac too had settled at Gerar after the death of Abraham.¹⁹⁹ The continuity of residence of Abraham's family at Gerar suggests that Abraham died there—away from Ai, in the south. The Ramayana tells of Rama leaving Ayodhya for good towards the end of his life. He entered the Sarayu River which he saw facing west.²⁰⁰ The Ramayana does not tell when and where Abraham died. The parallel is that both died away from Ai or Ayodhya. We do not consider the direction of “south” and “west” to be a distinction since both could be used to denote the southwest direction.

Jacob settled at Mitsrayim in the south.²⁰¹ Kush in parallel was anointed as the King of South Kosala.²⁰² A possible distinction is the Jacob was only an immigrant into Mitsrayim while Kush was king of South Kosala. However, Jacob's son Joseph was Minister of the Pharaoh and was given the title Zaphenath-Paneah.²⁰³ Thus Joseph's father Jacob would have been highly respected person as well. Thus, both Jacob and Kush were highly respected persons in the south hence we do not consider the kingship of Kush to be a distinction.

The Bible gives the subsequent events in the lives of Jacob and Joseph in great detail culminating with the death of Jacob at Mitsrayim. The Ramayana is silent on these events.

Summary Table 4.3: Abraham-Rama: Narrative

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
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¹⁹⁸ *Ramayana* 7:106:15-17.

¹⁹⁹ *Bible, Genesis* 20:1, 26:6.

²⁰⁰ *Ramayana* 7:110:1.

²⁰¹ *Bible, Genesis* 46:26.

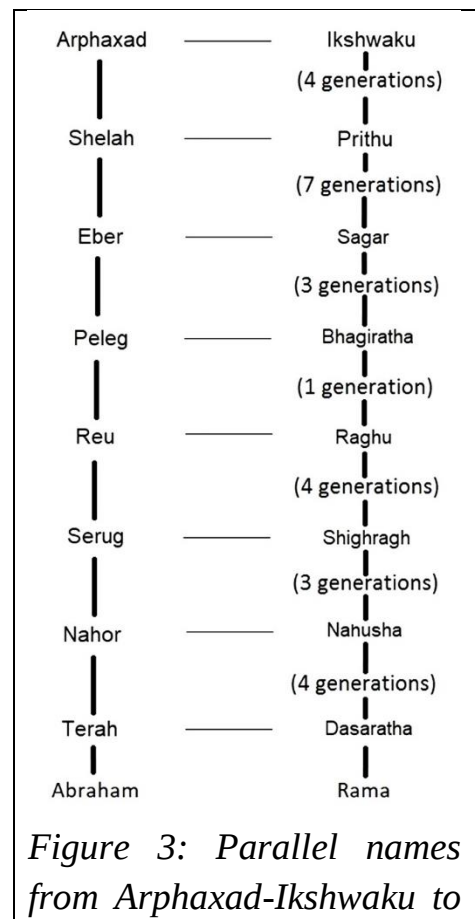
²⁰² *Ramayana* 7:107:17.

²⁰³ *Bible, Genesis* 41:45.

1	Terah migrated from Ur Chaldea to Haran <i>and Abraham went onwards to Ai.</i>	<i>Dasaratha</i> , his father or grandfather <i>migrated</i> from Ikshumati to Ayodhya.	P=2, D
2	Terah begot Abraham, Nahor and Haran at <i>Ur Chaldea</i> ; and <i>Haran's son was Lot.</i>	Dasaratha begot <i>four sons</i> Rama, Lakshmana, Bharata and Shatrughna <i>at Ayodhya.</i>	P, D=2
3	Abraham was a powerful <i>herdsman.</i>	Rama was a powerful <i>king.</i>	P, D
4	<i>Famine</i> led Abraham to sojourn in the south.	A <i>palace intrigue</i> Rama to sojourn in the south.	P=2, D
5	Abraham travelled south with his wife Sarah and Lot.	Rama travelled south with his wife Sita and Lakshmana.	P
6	Sarah was Abraham's father's daughter but not his mother's daughter.	Sita was Rama father's daughter but not his mother's daughter.	P
7	People of the South took Sarah to the Pharaoh.	King Ravana of Lanka abducted Sita.	P
8	<i>The Pharaoh treated Abraham well.</i>	<i>Rama attacked Lanka.</i>	D
9	The Lord struck Pharaoh because of Sarah.	Rama killed Ravana because of Sita.	P
10	The Pharaoh did not touch Sarah.	Ravana did not touch Sita.	P
11	Pharaoh returned Sarah to Abraham.	Rama retrieved Sita after killing Ravana.	P
12	Abraham returned to Ai.	Rama returned to Ayodhya.	P
13	Abraham and Lot separated due <i>conflict between their herdsmen; before the death of Sarah.</i>	Rama and Lakshmana separated <i>due to an indiscretion</i> on the part of Lakshmana; <i>after the death of Sita.</i>	P, D=2
14	The two "principal" sons were <i>born to two wives</i>	The two sons were <i>born to one wife</i>	P, D
15	The two <i>mothers were living with Abraham</i> when the two sons were born.	The <i>mother was living away from Abraham</i> when the two sons were born.	D
16	One-woman partner (Hagar) was expelled;	One-woman partner (Sita) was expelled;	P

17	there were <i>three women partners</i> .	There were <i>one or four women partners</i> .	D
18	Abraham was living away from Sarah at the time of her death; and she was buried.	Rama was living away from Sita at the time of her death; and she was taken in by Mother Earth.	P=2
19	Lot died away from Abraham in not-so-favorable circumstances.	Lakshmana died away from Rama in not-so-favorable circumstances	P=2
20	Abraham left Ai and died in the <i>South</i> .	Rama left Ayodhya and entered the Sarayu <i>facing west</i> .	P, D
21	Jacob settled in the South.	Kush settled at South Kosala.	P
Summary: P=22, D=12, Net=22/34, 65 percent.			

Names: Abram-Rama



The numbers of generations between Arphaxad and Abraham was eight, while the numbers of generations between Ikshwaku and Rama were

Abraham-Rama

33. Despite this difference, we find remarkable parallels between the names of seven descendants of Arphaxad and the names of seven of the 33 descendants of Ikshwaku. The parallel names along with the numbers of intervening generations are given in Figure 3. The names of the first three of these seven descendants of Arphaxad are parallel to certain descendants of Ikshwaku on the basis of the embedded meanings. The son of Arphaxad was “Selah” which word means “to sprout.”²⁰⁴ He could be parallel to Prithu. The Hindu texts say, he “milked all the cereals from the earth”²⁰⁵ that is, he made the seeds of the cereals sprout. The embedded meaning “to sprout” in the name Selah is parallel to Prithu having made the seeds of the cereals sprout.

The son of Selah was “Eber” which means “the region beyond.”²⁰⁶ He could be parallel to Sagar who extended the ocean’s boundaries.²⁰⁷

The son of Eber was “Peleg,” the origin of which name is “peleg,” which means channel or canal.²⁰⁸ He could be parallel to Bhagiratha who brought the Ganga River from the mountains and the river got divided into seven channels.²⁰⁹

The names of the latter four generations are parallel on phonetic matching: Reu could be parallel to Raghu with the common sounds “r” and “u;” Serug could be parallel to Shighrag with the common sounds “s,” “r” and “g;” Nahor could be parallel to Nahusa with the common sounds “n” and “h;” and Terah could be parallel to Dasaratha with the common sounds “r” and “h/th.”

The parallel names continue in the family of Abraham. The early name of Abraham was Abram, which can be written as “Ab”-Ram meaning “Father-

²⁰⁴ Strong’s 07974.

²⁰⁵ *Vishnu Purana*, <http://hinduonline.co/Scriptures/Puranas/VishnuPurana.html>, Retrieved August 19, 2020, 1:1:8.

²⁰⁶ Strong’s 05677.

²⁰⁷ *Ramayana* 5:1:89.

²⁰⁸ Strong’s 06389 and 06388.

²⁰⁹ *Ramayana* 1:43:12.

Ram” since father is written as “Ab.”²¹⁰ Thus, the name “Rama” is embedded in Abraham.

The names Sarah and Sita are phonetically similar with the sound “s” and “a.”

The names Haran and Bharata both mean “mountaineer.”²¹¹

We do not find parallels in the names Nahor-Shatrughna, Lot-Lakshmana, Esau-Lav and Jacob-Kush. We also do not find parallels to the names Hagar, Keturah, Prabhavati, Ratnibha and Sridama—the wives other than Sarah-Sita in the two religions. We consider these names to be distinct.

The names Ai and Ayodhya have much in common. Ai is also written as Ayath.²¹² The names Ayath and Ayodhya have common letters “a,” “y” and “th/dh.”²¹³ Further, both “Ai” and “Ayodhya” both mean fortified places.²¹⁴

The place names Mitsrayim and Lanka are distinct.

The Hindu texts are silent about a large number of places mentioned in the Bible such as Haran, Shechem, Sodom, Gerar and Hebron. The Bible is silent about a large number of places mentioned in the Ramayana such as Sringeripur, Chitrakuta and Kishkindha.

Summary Table 4.4: Abraham-Rama: Names

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	“Selah” means “to sprout.”	King Prithu milked the cereals from the earth.	P
2	“Eber” means “the region beyond.”	Sagar extended the ocean’s boundaries.	P
3	“Peleg” means channel.	Bhagiratha divided the Ganga into seven channels.	P

²¹⁰ Strong’s 0001.

²¹¹ Strong’s 02039, Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 747

²¹² *Bible, Isaiah* 10:28.

²¹³ “Th” or “थ” and “dh” or “ध” belong to the same phonetic group in Hindi.

²¹⁴ The Hebrew word used for Ai in Joshua is “ryi” (*Bible, Joshua* 7:2). The meaning of this word “is a fortified site” (Briggs, Peter, “Testing the Factuality of the Conquest of Ai Narrative in the Book of Joshua,” Academic Monograph Series No. AR-2, Institute of Archaeology & Biblical History, April 12, 2004, Page 8). The meaning of Ayodhya is “unconquerable” that too indicates a fortified city (Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...* Page 86).

4	Next four generations are: Reu, Serug, Nahor and Terah.	Next four generations are: Raghu, Shighrag, Nahusa and Dasaratha.	P=4
5	Abraham was called Ab-Ram	“Rama” is contained in Ab-Ram.	P
6	Sarah	Sita	P
7	<i>Hagar, Keturah</i>	<i>Prabhavati, Ratinibha and Sridama</i>	D=2
8	Haran means “mountaineer.”	Bharata means “mountaineer.”	P
9	<i>Nahor, Lot, Esau and Jacob.</i>	<i>Shatrughna, Lakshmana, Lav and Kush.</i>	D=4
10	Ai is also written as Ayath.	Ayodhya.	P
11	<i>Mitsrayim.</i>	<i>Lanka.</i>	D
Summary: P=11, D=7, Net=11/18, 61 percent.			

Theology: Monotheism and Monism

The Bible says that Terah worshipped “other gods.”²¹⁵ Terah thought there were gods other than the One God. The same is indicated in the Hindu narrative. The Ramayana says that Lord Vishnu was invoked and appeared at the Yajna undertaken by Dasaratha for begetting a son.²¹⁶ Vishnu could be one of the “other gods” worshipped by Terah.

An apparent difference in the two narratives is that Abraham was a human being while Rama is considered to be an Incarnation of God (Avatara) in contemporary Hinduism. However, Rama did not see himself as an Incarnation. When the gods said to Rama that the latter was the “creator of the Universe,” Rama replied, “I consider myself to be son of Dasaratha [only].”²¹⁷ This statement is followed by Lord Brahma again telling Rama that he was Brahman-in-person but Rama remaining silent on this.²¹⁸ Thus, Abraham and Rama both considered themselves to be human beings.

The theological understandings of Abraham and Rama both suggests two levels or manifestations of God, as shown in Figure 4. It appears to us that Biblical

²¹⁵ Bible, Joshua 24:2.

²¹⁶ Ramayana 1:15:26.

²¹⁷ Ramayana 6:117:11.

²¹⁸ Please see subsection “Theology” in section “Adam-Swayambhu” for parallels of Elohim, Brahman, Yahweh and Brahma.

Elohim and Hindu Brahman could be Monist, while Biblical Yahweh and Hindu Brahma could be Monotheist. These are not watertight compartments, however, and there may be overlaps at different points. We use these terms as explained by Theodorus P Van Baaren, Professor of Science of Religions, State University of Groningen: for Monism “there is only a single kind of reality” while for monotheism “there are two basically different realities: God and the universe.”²¹⁹ Our understanding is that God can be conceptualized as vapour-cloud in the sky. The vapour is an all-pervasive entity as in Monism, while the cloud and the sky are two realities as in Monotheism. The Monist God, in turn, has two qualities—all-pervasive and creative. We discuss these from the Biblical and Hindu standpoints below.

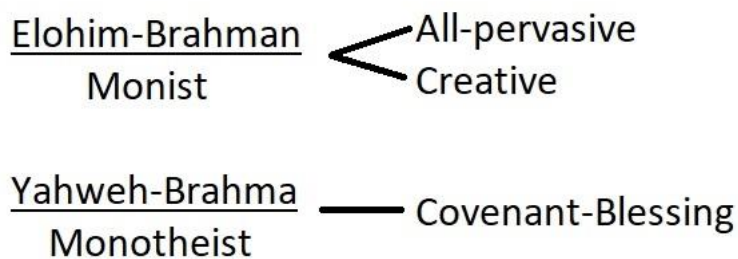


Figure 4: Monist and Monotheist understandings of One God.

Elohim-Brahman. Monist. All-pervasive. The first verse of the Bible says: “In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.” The first part of this verse implies that in the beginning only Elohim was. There was nothing other than Elohim. The Psalms elaborates on this point: “Whither shall I go from thy Spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend to heaven, thou art there! If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!” Although figurative terms like “wind,” “face” and “spread out” are used for God here, the reference is to an all-pervasive God. The same all-pervasiveness of Brahman is told in the discourse given by Sage Vasishtha to Rama. It is available to us in the text named Yoga Vasishtha: “This entire vision is quiet and immaculate Brahman.”²²⁰

²¹⁹ Van Baaren, Theodorus P, “Monotheism,” in Encyclopedia Britannica, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/monotheism/The-spectrum-of-views-monotheisms-and-quasi-monotheisms>, Retrieved August 2, 2020.

²²⁰ *Yoga Vasishtha*, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Samvat 2053, 3:13, Page 111.

Elohim-Brahman. Monist. Creative. The second part of the first verse of the Bible says: “Elohim created the heavens and the earth.”²²¹ In parallel, the Yoga Vasishtha says: “This Brahman obtains to growth in-itself by-itself.”²²²

Yahweh-Brahma. Monotheist. Covenant-Blessing. The Bible says, “Yahweh made a covenant with Abram...” and again “I (Yahweh) will confirm my covenant between me and you...”²²³ Here Yahweh is described as an entity distinct from Abraham. The Ramayana does not tell of Brahma making a covenant with Rama. However, it tells of Brahma giving blessings. At one time Vishrava, father of Ravana (who we suggest was parallel to the Biblical Pharaoh), was engaged in penance. At that time Brahma appeared to him and said: “I am very satisfied with your penance. Please ask for a boon.” Vishrava replied: “I want to become sustainer of people.”²²⁴ Then Brahma said: “Very good. You will become sustainer of people.”²²⁵ Here Brahma and Vishrava interact with each other in the sense of “me” as distinct from you” just as Yahweh interacted with Abraham. A distinction here is that Yahweh made covenants with Abraham while Brahma gave boon to Vishrava, not Rama.

Rama was a firm believer in rebirth if we are to rely on the discourses of Yoga Vasishtha. In one of the stories narrated in the text, Princess Leela says, “I am clearly able to remember 800 of the various births I have had till now. I was once wife of a celestial king. Then I was born as a tribal woman using leaves as clothes...”²²⁶ The Bible does not explicitly tell of such rebirths taking place in the narrative of Abraham. However, the Kabbalists believe in rebirth.²²⁷ Further

²²¹ Bible Genesis 1:1.

²²² Yoga Vasishtha 3:13, Page 111.

²²³ Bible, Genesis 15:18 and 17:2.

²²⁴ Lokpal. Lok=people, pal=protector or sustainer.

²²⁵ Ramayana 7:3:15-17.

²²⁶ Yoga Vasishtha 3:27, Page 134.

²²⁷ “Ramban, one of the greatest commentators on the Torah (and on the Talmud), and a seminal figure in Jewish history, hints several times that reincarnation is the key to penetrating the deep mysteries involved in the mitzvah of yibum (the obligation of the brother of a childless, deceased man to marry the widow). In his explanation of Gen 38:8, he insists that Yehudah and his sons were aware of the secret of reincarnation, and that this was a major factor in their respective attitudes towards Tamar” (Yerachmiel Tilles, “Judaism and Reincarnation,” https://www.chabad.org/kabbalah/article_cdo/aid/380599/jewish/Judaism-and-Reincarnation.htm, Retrieved August 25, 2020); “The kabbalists, on the other hand, do

study is needed to ascertain whether the Jews believed in rebirth or not at the time of Abraham. We consider this to be a silence in view of the silence of the Bible on this question at the time of Abraham.

Abraham's grandson Jacob had set up a sacred stone and poured oil on top of it.²²⁸ Rama, in parallel, established an idol of Lord Shiva during the war of Lanka.²²⁹ To clarify, Shiva is worshipped in form of a cylindrical stone not having a human image. It could be similar to the stone worshipped by Jacob.

Abraham's grand daughter-in-law Rachel had stolen the household idols of her father.²³⁰ This indicates prevalence of idol worship, at least, among some of the Abraham's descendants. We do not find an explicit description worship of idols having a human form in the Ramayana hence we consider this to be a case of silence. We would like to draw attention here to the double disconnect with the situation at present. The Bible tells of idol worship at the time of Abraham while the contemporary Biblical religions decry this practice. The Ramayana does not tell of worship of idols of human form at the time of Rama while the contemporary Hindu practice is deep into this. These disconnects underscore the need to look at the theological understandings at the time of the Five Persons and not to extrapolate those to the present.

Summary Table 4.5: Abraham-Rama: Theology

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
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believe in reincarnation. The Zohar [the great 13th-century kabbalistic text] refers to the doctrine in a number of passages (e.g. ii. 94a, 99b). Nahmanides [1194-1270], in his commentary to the Book of Job (Job 33:30), speaks of reincarnation as a great mystery and the key to an understanding of many biblical passages" (Rabbi Louis Jacobs, "What Judaism Says About Reincarnation," My Jewish Learning, <https://www.myjewishlearning.com/article/reincarnation-the-transmigration-of-a-jewish-idea/>, Retrieved August 25, 2020); "So when someone passes away, we pray that their soul find rest in heaven, because that's where the already-used part of the soul is found. As for the unused part of the soul, it will come back down for another go-round. Source: Arizal, Shaar ha-Gilgulim, chapter 14" (Aron Moses. Do Jews Believe in Heaven or Reincarnation (or Both)? Chabad.org, https://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/4216494/jewish/Do-Jews-Believe-in-Heaven-or-Reincarnation-or-Both.htm, Retrieved August 25, 2020);

²²⁸ Bible, Genesis 28:18.

²²⁹ Ramayana 6:123:19.

²³⁰ Bible, Genesis 31:19.

1	Terah worshipped “other gods.”	Rama saw “places” of the elements like Fire, Air and Water...	P
2	Abraham was a mortal man.	Rama says he was only son of Dasaratha.	P
3	Elohim is all-pervasive and creative.	Brahman is all-pervasive and creative.	P
4	Yahweh made covenant with Abraham.	Brahma gave boon to Vishrava.	P, D
5	Jacob set up a sacred stone and poured oil on top of it.	Rama established (cylindrical stone) idol of Lord Shiva.	P
Summary: P=5, D=1, Net=5/6, 83 percent.			

Moses-Krishna

Context: Drying Rivers and Oppression

The climatic context in both narratives is that of stagnant rivers. The first plague brought by Moses was of the water of the river becoming “blood.”²³¹ The Hebrew word for “blood” also means “silent or still.”²³² The plague, therefore, could be that of the water of the river becoming still or stagnant. In parallel, the Yamuna River appears to have stopped flowing at the time of Krishna. The Bhagwata Purana says that the water of a *pond* in the Yamuna had become poisonous because of a snake.²³³ Again, during the travel of Krishna to Mathura, the Bhagwata Purana says that Akrur, who was accompanying him, took bath in a *pond* of the Yamuna.²³⁴ The making of a “pond” indicates that the river had stopped flowing. Hereafter we have referred to Bhagwata Purana as Bhagwata for short.

²³¹ Bible, Exodus 7:20.

²³² The word “dam” is derived from the word “damam” which means “to be dumb..., to stop; to perish; to cease, to be cut down, to rest, to be silent, to be still...” (Strong’s 01818, 01826).

²³³ This is likely to be a pond in the Yamuna River because the word used in the Hindi translation is “in the Yamuna” (*Bhagwata Purana*, Gita Press Gorakhpur, Samvat 2053, 10:16:4).

²³⁴ *Bhagwata Purana* 10:39:39-40.

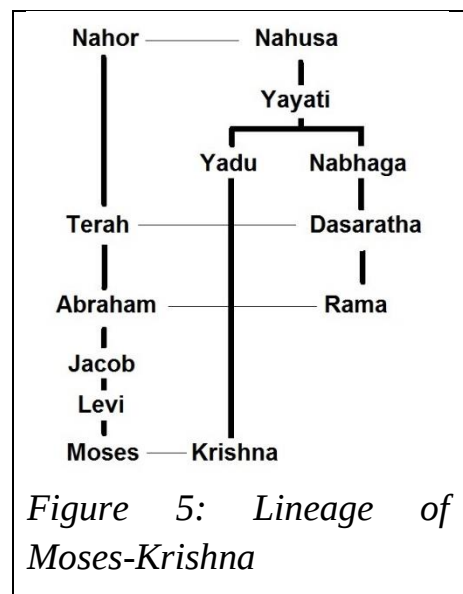
The oppression of the Hebrews in Mitsrayim is too well known to be repeated here. The Bhagwata says that the earth was groaning under the weight of arrogant kings.²³⁵ It also tells of Nanda, the foster-father of Krishna, coming to Mathura to pay the annual taxes to Kamsa, the King of Mathura.²³⁶

Summary Table 5.1: Moses-Krishna: Context

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Water of the river became still.	Ponds formed in the Yamuna.	P
2	Oppression of Hebrews.	The earth was groaning under the arrogant kings.	P
Summary: P=2, D=0, Net=2/2, 100 percent.			

Genealogy and Time: Descent from Nahor-Nahusa

We have shown in the section “Abraham-Rama” that Nahor occupies the same position in the genealogy of Abraham as Nahusa occupies in the genealogy of Rama. The Biblical narrative tells of a single line of descendants of Nahor that included both Abraham and Moses as shown in Figure 5.²³⁷ The Hindu narrative, on the other hand, tells of two lines of descendants from Nahusa. Rama was born in the line of Yayati and Nabhaga,²³⁸ while Krishna was born in line of Yayati and Yadu.²³⁹ The descent of Moses-Krishna from Nahor-Nahusa is parallel. The distinction is that Moses descended from Abraham while Krishna did not descend from Rama.



²³⁵ *Bhagwata Purana* 10:1:17.

²³⁶ *Bhagwata Purana* 10:5:20.

²³⁷ *Bible*, *Genesis* 29 :34, *Exodus* 1 :2, 2 :1.

²³⁸ *Ramayana* 1 :70 :39-43

²³⁹ Mani, *Puranic...* Page 889.

The Bible says that Moses' father Amram married his (Amram's) father's sister Jochebed.²⁴⁰ The Bhagwata says that Krishna's father Vasudeva married Devaki who was his cousin at the 10th generation on father's side as shown in Figure 6.²⁴¹ The marriage of Amram-Vasudeva with a relative on father's side is parallel while the precise relationship with the said relative is distinct.

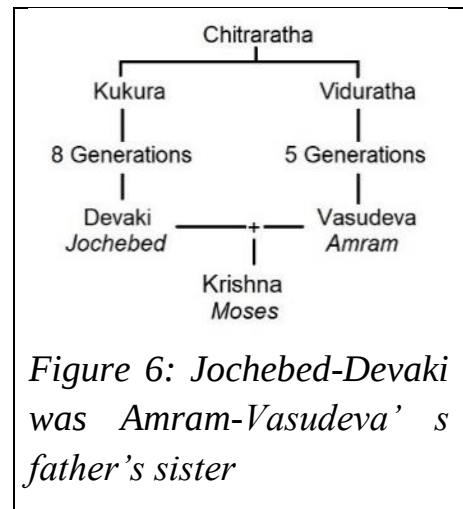


Figure 6: Jochebed-Devaki was Amram-Vasudeva's father's sister

Archbishop Ussher has suggested the date of 1491 BCE for the Exodus on genealogical considerations.²⁴² Moses was 80 years old at that time hence would have been born around 1571 BCE.

The number of generations from Krishna to the extinction of the Lunar Dynasty—in which he was born—have been estimated as 32 by the living Mudiraj Community belonging to that Dynasty.²⁴³ As said previously, the mean length of generation for the Medieval Indian Kings has been estimated at 27 years and the mean length of reign has been estimated at 19 years. That would make it 864 to 608 years from Krishna to the extinction of the Lunar Dynasty. The Mudiraj Community believes that the Lunar Dynasty became extinct in 4th century BCE.²⁴⁴ Thus, Krishna would have lived, on the higher side, 864 years from 400 BCE or around 1210 BCE. Given the uncertainty regarding the numbers of generations, the length thereof, and the time of extinction of the Lunar Dynasty, we consider the time of 1571 BCE for Moses and the high estimate of 1210 BCE for Krishna to be parallel.

²⁴⁰ Bible, Exodus 6 :20.

²⁴¹ Vasudeva was born in the 8th generation-, while his wife Devaki was born in the 10th generation from Chitraratha, Mani, *Puranic...* page 889, 804, 210.

²⁴² Pierce, op cit.

²⁴³ The Dynasty became extinct in 4th century BCE, 29 generations from Janmejaya, or 32 generations from Krishna (Brief History of Mudiraj (Koli Samaj), http://mudirajseva.com/main/about_us, Retrieved August 23, 2020). Jones estimates these to be 30 generations (*The Works...*, Page 303-304). However, we rely on the statements of the Mudiraj Community to maintain consistency.

²⁴⁴ Brief History of Mudiraj...

Summary Table 5.2: Moses-Krishna: Genealogy

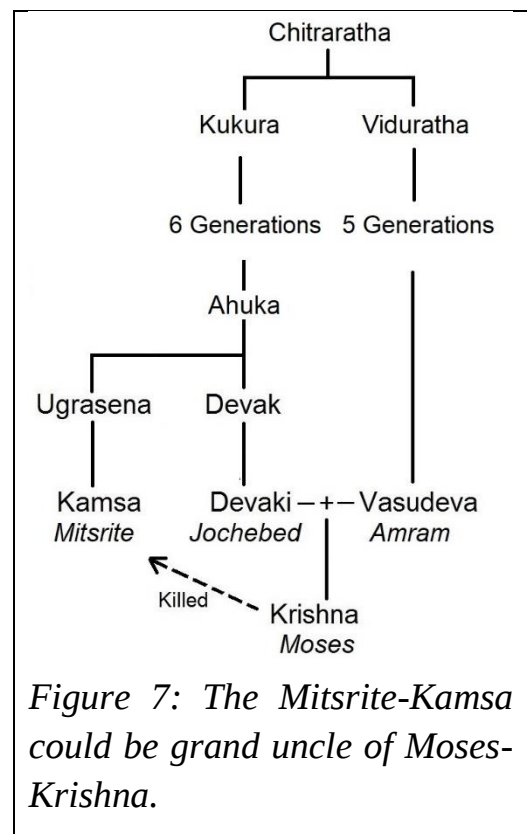
No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Descendant of Nahor <i>from Abraham.</i>	Descendant of Nahor <i>not from Rama.</i>	P, D
2	Moses' father Amram married his father's sister Jochebed.	Krishna's father Vasudeva married his <i>cousin at the 10th generation</i> Devaki.	P, D
3	Moses's birth at 1571 BCE	Krishna's birth at 1189 BCE	P
	Summary: P=3, D=2, Net=3/5, 60 percent.		

Narrative: Exodus

We have shown that Vasudeva wed his cousin Devaki in Figure 6 above. Now we give more details in that picture to show that Kamsa, the King of Mathura, too was a cousin of Devaki as shown at Figure 7.

Kamsa was driving the chariot carrying his newlywed cousin Devaki to her husband's home. A voice from the sky said at this time that the eighth son of Devaki would kill Kamsa. Thereupon, Kamsa wanted to kill Devaki immediately so that his future enemy would not be born at all. However, Vasudeva persuaded Kamsa to let Devaki live since he faced threat from her eighth son, not from her. Thereupon, Kamsa imprisoned Vasudeva and Devaki. He killed the first seven sons of Devaki. The Bible is silent on these events.

Jochebed gave birth to Moses in secrecy. She was not able to hide him from the Mitsrites for a long time, however. Thus, she put him in a basket and laid the basket by the bank of the River of Mitsrayim.²⁴⁵ Moses' sister stood watching to see what happened to the basket. It so happened that the Pharaoh's daughter



²⁴⁵ Bible, Exodus 2:3.

recovered the basket. Then Moses' sister approached the Pharaoh's daughter and suggested she might get a wet nurse from among the Hebrews to bring up the infant. The Pharaoh's daughter agreed to the suggestion. Moses' sister then brought her mother Jochebed to the Pharaoh's daughter, who gave infant Moses to Jochebed to wet nurse for her. In this way, Moses' biological mother brought up her own child by posing as his foster mother.²⁴⁶

The Bhagwata says that Devaki gave birth to Krishna in the jail, as said above, after her seven sons were killed by Kamsa. Vasudeva managed to come out of the jail with infant Krishna. He crossed the Yamuna River, laid Krishna on the bed of Yashoda at Gokul across the River, came back with Yashoda's newborn daughter and lodged himself back in the jail as if Devaki had given birth to the girl. Krishna was then brought up by his foster mother Yashoda.²⁴⁷

Three parallels that can be seen here. One, infant Moses-Krishna faced a threat to his life from the Pharaoh-Kamsa. Two, he was flown in- or taken across a river to save his life. Three, he was brought up by a foster mother. Three distinctions too can be seen here. One the Bible suggests that Moses' mother was *not* lodged in a jail, unlike Devaki. Two, Moses was flown in the river while Krishna was taken across the river. Three, Moses was brought up by his biological mother posing as his foster mother while Krishna was brought up by a foster mother who was not his biological mother.

The Pharaoh ordered the Mitsrite midwives to kill all the newborn sons of the Hebrews at Goshen.²⁴⁸ Kamsa in parallel ordered the demoness Putna to kill the male children of the Yadavas at Gokul. The Bhagwata says she "used to roam in the villages and settlements of the cowherds to kill the male children."²⁴⁹

After becoming an adult, Moses killed a Mitsrite who was beating a Hebrew.²⁵⁰ The Bible is silent on the identity of the Mitsrite. The Bhagwata, however, tells of Krishna killing Kamsa, the King of Mathura, who was oppressing the

²⁴⁶ Bible, Exodus 2 :9.

²⁴⁷ Bhagwata Purana 10 :3 :8, 47-51.

²⁴⁸ Bible, Exodus 1 :16.

²⁴⁹ Bhagwata Purana 10 :6.2.

²⁵⁰ Bible, Exodus 2 :12.

Yadavas.²⁵¹ The parallel is that of Moses-Krishna killing an oppressive resident of Mitsrayim-Mathura.

Moses fled and joined the household of Jethro the Priest at Midian after killing the Mitsrite. Krishna, in parallel, went to study with Sage Sandipani at Avantipur after killing Kamsa.²⁵²

The Bible says that Moses married Zipporah, daughter of Jethro, at Midian. In distinction, Krishna married eight women after returning from Avantipur—none of whom were daughters of Sage Sandipani.²⁵³

While staying at Midian, Moses took the flock of Jethro to Horeb. He had an encounter with God here and God told him to return to Mitsrayim.²⁵⁴ The Bhagwata is silent regarding any such encounter.

Moses returned to Mitsrayim after he had spent considerable time with Jethro since the latter said to Moses: “all the men who were seeking your life are dead.”²⁵⁵ Krishna, however, returned to Mathura quite soon. The wives of the deceased Kamsa were alive at this time.²⁵⁶ The return to Mitsrayim-Mathura is parallel while the time elapsed is distinct.

Moses was accompanied by his wife Zipporah and son Gershom when he returned from Midian to Mitsrayim.²⁵⁷ The Bible is silent on the whereabouts of his family after the return. They are mentioned again only during the Exodus. At this time they came from Midian to Mount Sinai and joined Moses on his way to Yisrael.²⁵⁸ This suggests that Zipporah and Gershom lived at Midian, away from Moses, during, at least, part of this intervening period.

The Bhagwata suggests the same though in an involved manner. A demon stole Krishna’s 10-day old son Pradyumna and cast him into the sea.²⁵⁹ A fish

²⁵¹ *Bhagwata Purana* 10 :44 :38.

²⁵² *Bhagwata Purana* 10 :45 :12, 31.

²⁵³ *Bhagwata Purana* 10 :53-58.

²⁵⁴ *Bible, Exodus* 3 :10.

²⁵⁵ *Bible, Exodus* 4 :19.

²⁵⁶ *Bhagwata Purana* 10 :45 :49, 10 :50 :1.

²⁵⁷ *Bible, Exodus* 4 :20.

²⁵⁸ *Bible, Exodus* 18 :2.

²⁵⁹ *Bhagwata Purana* 10 :55 :3.

swallowed the boy. A fisherman caught the fish and offered it to the same demon who had stolen the boy. The cook of the demon found the child alive in the stomach of the fish and gave him to the housemaid of the demon.²⁶⁰ The housemaid brought up the boy and married him after he became an adult. Then Pradyumna killed the demon and joined his father Krishna.²⁶¹ The parallel is that the son lived away from the father for some time. The Bible is silent on the son being swallowed by a fish. The Bhagwata is silent on whether Rukmini was living away from Krishna for some time and whether she joined him after he had left Dwarka.

The Hindu texts tell of a number of events that took place after the return of Krishna to Mathura: Jarasandha attacked Mathura; Krishna left Mathura and settled at the island of Dwarka;²⁶² he abducted and married his first wife Rukmini; he married seven other women; and he participated in the Mahabharata War.²⁶³ Thereafter he left Dwarka in an unknown direction, as we shall show shortly.

The Bible is silent on these events that may have taken place between the return of Moses from Midian and his leaving on the Exodus. However, the Biblical narrative suggests that considerable time may have elapsed in this time. Verse 4:29 of Exodus says that Moses brought together all the Israelite elders on his return from Midian. Two verses later, Exodus 5:1, says “*Afterwards* Moses went to Pharaoh...” and asked that the Hebrews be released to hold a feast to the Lord in the desert. The Hebrew word for “afterwards” is “*achar*.” It is used elsewhere to denote a long passage of time such as in Genesis 17:7: My covenant “will extend to your descendants *after* you throughout their generations.”²⁶⁴ Thus, it is possible that considerable time may have elapsed between Moses’ return from Midian his leading the Exodus and the events told to have taken place in the Hindu texts in this period may have indeed taken place but not recorded in the Bible. Hence, we do not consider these to be a distinction.

²⁶⁰ *Bhagwata Purana* 10:55:6.

²⁶¹ *Bhagwata Purana* 10:55:25.

²⁶² *Bhagwata Purana* 10:52:23.

²⁶³ *Bhagwata Purana* 10 :79 :28.

²⁶⁴ Strong’s 0310.

We again find parallels hereafter. The Bible says that the Lord brought ten plagues of the river becoming still, frogs, lice, flies, disease, boils, hail, locusts, darkness and death.²⁶⁵ Then the Pharaoh allowed the Hebrews to leave. The Bhagwata also tells of natural troubles: “Krishna saw that great disturbances were taking place in the earth, sky and space.” He said to his fellow Yadavas: “See great upheavals are taking place at Dwarka. These are indications of coming of the Deity of Death.”²⁶⁶ Then the Yadavas left Dwarka. We may note three parallels in this narrative. One, troubles of natural events took place. Two, the last of these troubles was that of death. Three, the Hebrews-Yadavas left their home. The Hindu text is silent on the nine plagues before that of death and the permission granted by the Pharaoh allowing them to leave. The distinction is that these events take place at Mitsrayim in the Bible while they take place at Dwarka in the Hindu texts.

The Hebrews undertook the feast of the Passover, put blood on the doorposts and left Mitsrayim. The Hindu texts are silent on these events.

Then the Hebrews crossed the sea on dry land;²⁶⁷ while the Yadavas crossed the sea on boats.²⁶⁸ The parallel is of crossing of a water body. Distinction is of crossing on dry land or on boats.

The Bible then tells of the Hebrews living off manna, drawing water from a rock at Horeb, defeating Amalek and camping at Sinai.²⁶⁹ The Bhagwata is silent on these events.

The Hebrew were encamped at Mount Sinai after crossing the sea on dry land. Here, Moses went atop the mountain to worship and delayed coming down. At this time Aaron molded a calf of gold and the Hebrews began to dance around it. Moses was angered when he saw the calf and the dancing on his return.²⁷⁰ He took the calf, burnt it in a fire, ground it to powder, mixed the powder in water and made the Hebrews drink it.²⁷¹ Then Moses said to them:

²⁶⁵ Bible, Exodus 7-11.

²⁶⁶ Bhagwata Purana 11 :30 :5.

²⁶⁷ Bible, Exodus 14 :22.

²⁶⁸ Bhagwata Purana 11 :30 :10.

²⁶⁹ Bible, Exodus 16 :24, 17 : 6, 16, 19 :1.

²⁷⁰ Bible, Exodus 31 :18, 32 :4, 32 :19.

²⁷¹ Bible, Exodus 32 :20.

Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, kill his companion, and every man his neighbour.²⁷²

The Bhagwata says that the Yadava youth played a prank on the sages at Dwarka. The sages then pronounced a curse that a particular iron pestle would lead to the destruction of their clan. The Yadavas ground the pestle to powder and dispersed the powder into the sea in order to avoid such a fate.²⁷³ They abandoned Dwarka soon thereafter and were camped at Prabhasa located at the confluence of the Saraswati River and the sea.²⁷⁴ Here they drank liquor and a terrible quarrel arose among them. Then:

Son killed father, brother killed brother, nephew killed uncle, grandson killed grandfather, friend killed friend... When their arrows were exhausted and weapons were broken, they started pulling out reeds from the seacoast. This grass grew out of the powder of the pestle.²⁷⁵

Four parallels can be seen here. One, an unruly act took place. The Hebrews made a calf of gold while the Yadava youth played a prank on the sages. Two, a metal object was ground into powder and mixed with water. Three, the powder-in-water became the instrument of the killing. Four, brothers killed one another.

The Bhagwata is silent on Krishna having gone atop a mountain to worship.

Three distinctions can be seen here. One, a golden calf was found in the Biblical narrative, while an iron pestle was found in the Hindu narrative. Two, the Biblical killings took place near a mountain, while the Hindu killings took place on the seacoast. Three, Moses “asked” the Hebrews to kill each other, while they did this due to intoxication in the Hindu narrative.

The Bible hereafter tells in great detail about the journey of the Hebrews from Sinai to Israel including travels through Kadesh, spending 40 years in the wilderness and entry into Israel. The Bhagwata is silent on these onward journeys. It is only told that after the killing at Prabhasa, Krishna left towards an

²⁷² Bible, Exodus 32 :27.

²⁷³ Bhagwata Purana 11 :1 :13-21.

²⁷⁴ Bhagwata Purana 3:4:3, 6. Skanda Purana, Sankshipt, Gita Press, Gorakhpur, Samvat 2064, 437:1224.

²⁷⁵ Bhagwata Purana 11:30:13, 19-21.

unknown direction.²⁷⁶ The leaving from Sinai or Prabhasa for a distant place is parallel.

Aaron, the elder brother of Moses, died at Mount Hor while Moses was alive.²⁷⁷ Balarama, Krishna's older brother died at Prabhasa while Krishna was alive.²⁷⁸ We do not count the distinction of the place of death here since the distinction between Prabhasa and Sinai has already been counted above.

Moses died at Moab after the death of Aaron. The Bible says, no one knows of his grave to this day.²⁷⁹ The Hindu narrative points in the same direction in a round-about way. Krishna was sitting on the ground under a tree after the death of Balarama. A hunter saw his red colored feet, shot an arrow thinking it was mouth of a deer, and killed him.²⁸⁰ The Bhagwata, like the Bible, is silent on the place of death.²⁸¹

Summary Table 5.3: Moses-Krishna: Narrative

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Infant Moses faced a threat to his life from the Pharaoh; he was born <i>not in a jail</i> ; he was <i>flown</i> in a river; and was brought up by his <i>natural mother</i> posing as his foster mother.	Infant Krishna faced a threat to his life from Kamsa; he was <i>born in a jail</i> ; he was taken <i>across</i> a river; and was brought up by an <i>unrelated</i> foster mother.	P=3, D=3
2	Pharaoh ordered midwives to kill newborn sons of the Hebrews at Goshen.	Kamsa ordered demoness Putna to roam the villages to kill the male children at Gokul.	P
3	Moses killed a Mitsrite.	Krishna killed Kamsa.	P
4	Moses fled and joined the household of Jethro the Priest.	Krishna went to study with Sage Sandipani.	P
5	Moses married Zipporah,	Krishna married eight women	D

²⁷⁶ Mahabharata 16:6:17, 24-25.

²⁷⁷ Bible, Numbers 33:39.

²⁷⁸ Bhagwata Purana 11:30:26.

²⁷⁹ Bible, Deuteronomy 34:6.

²⁸⁰ Bhagwata Purana 11:30:33, 46.

²⁸¹ Hindu living religion says he died at a place named Bhallak in Gujarat. We ignore this because we are considering only the textual information in this paper.

	<i>daughter of Jethro.</i>	who were <i>not daughters of Sage Sandipani.</i>	
6	Moses returned after spending <i>considerable time</i> with Jethro.	Krishna returned after spending <i>a short time</i> with Sandipani.	P, D
7	Son Gershom lived away from Moses for some time.	Son Pradyumna lived away from Krishna for some time.	P
8	Moses brought nine natural plagues; followed by the tenth plague of death; and then left <i>Mitsrayim.</i>	Natural disturbances took place; followed by the coming of the Deity of Death; and then Krishna left <i>Dwarka.</i>	P=3, D
9	The Hebrews crossed the sea on <i>dry land.</i>	Yadavas crossed the sea on <i>boats.</i>	P, D
10	An unruly act of molding the <i>golden calf</i> took place; a metal object was ground and mixed with water; the powder-in-water became the instrument of the killing; and <i>Moses asked</i> the brothers to kill one another <i>near a mountain.</i>	Yadava youth played a prank on the sages; <i>a pestle</i> was ground and mixed with water; the powder-in-water became the instrument of the killing; and the <i>Yadavas got intoxicated</i> and killed one another <i>near the sea coast.</i>	P=4, D=3
11	Moses journeyed from Sinai to Israel.	Krishna left from Prabhasa for an unknown direction.	P
12	Aaron died while Moses was alive.	Balarama died while Krishna was alive.	P
13	No one knows of Moses' grave to this day.	The Hindu texts do not tell of Krishna's place of death.	P
	Summary: P=19, D=10, Net=19/29, 67 percent.		

Names: Mitsrayim-Mathura

Moses' father's name was "Amram," which means "exalted people."²⁸² Krishna's father's name was "Vasudeva." The root "vasu" means "excellent,

²⁸² Strong's 06019.

good, beneficial” while the suffix “deva” means god.²⁸³ Thus “Vasudeva” means “excellent gods”—which is similar to “exalted.”

Moses’ mother’s name was “Jochebed” which is derived from “Jehovah” or God.²⁸⁴ Krishna’s mother’s name was “Devaki” which means “daughter of Devak,” which name, in turn, means “celestial, divine, god, deity.”²⁸⁵ Both names have a close association with God.

The etymological root of the name Moses is not clear.²⁸⁶ Yet we find a possible parallel in the color of Moses’ skin. During his encounter with God at Mount Horeb, God asked him to put his hand into his robe and when he brought it out it was “leprous like snow.”²⁸⁷ This suggests that the natural color of his skin was dark. In parallel, the name Krishna means “dark.”²⁸⁸

The name Jethro means “abundance, excess.”²⁸⁹ The name Sandipani derives its meaning from the root “sandeep” meaning to “kindle, flare, arouse.”²⁹⁰ Both meanings suggest growth or increase. However, the meanings are only implicitly similar hence we treat this as a silence.

The names Aaron and Balarama have common sounds “A,” “r” “n/m.”

We do not find parallels in the names Zipporah and Rukmini, and Gershom and Pradyumna. These are distinct.

The place names Mitsrayim and Mathura have common sounds “M,” “t” and “r.”

The name Midian means “strife, contention, quarrelsome.”²⁹¹ The name Avantipur, where Krishna went at this same time, is derived from the root “av”

²⁸³ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 930

²⁸⁴ Strong’s 03115 and 03068.

²⁸⁵ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 495.

²⁸⁶ Huddleston, John, “Was Moses’ Name Egyptian? Bible Odyssey, <https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/people/related-articles/was-moses-name-egyptian>, Retrieved May 19, 2020.

²⁸⁷ *Bible, Exodus 4 :6.*

²⁸⁸ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 306.

²⁸⁹ Strong’s 03500 and 03499.

²⁹⁰ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 1143.

²⁹¹ Strong’s 04080 and 04079.

which means “to drive, impel, animate as a car or horse.”²⁹² The energetic meaning of the word is common though Midian indicates conflict while “Avantipur” is neutral hence we classify this both parallel and distinct.

Sinai, where the killings took place, means “thorny.”²⁹³ However, Moses had his encounter with God in form of a burning bush here. The name Prabhasa means “shine, glitter, brilliant, irradiate, illuminate, enlighten.”²⁹⁴ Thus, the contextual meaning of the name Sinai and the etymological meaning of the name Prabhasa are parallel.

One finds a large number of names on which one or the other text is silent. We have ignored them in this discussion.

Summary Table 5.4: Moses-Krishna: Names

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	Moses’ father’s name “Amram,” means “exalted people.”	Krishna’s father’s name “Vasudeva” means “excellent gods”	P
2	Moses’ mother’s name “Jochebed” is derived from “Jehovah” or God.	Krishna’s mother’s name “Devaki” means “celestial, divine, god, deity.”	P
3	Moses’ skin color was dark.	The name “Krishna” means “dark.”	P
4	Aaron	Balarama	P
5	<i>Zipporah, Gershon.</i>	<i>Rukmini, Pradyumna.</i>	D=2
6	Mitsrayim	Mathura	P
7	The name Midian suggests energetic and <i>quarrelsome</i> .	The name Avantipur suggests energetic but <i>neutral</i> .	P, D
8	Sinai was the place of the burning bush.	Prabhasa means “shine, glitter, brilliant, irradiate, illuminate, enlighten.”	P
	Summary: P=7, D=3, Net 7/10, 70 percent.		

²⁹² Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 96.

²⁹³ Strong’s 05514.

²⁹⁴ Monier-Williams, *Sanskrit...*, page 684.

Theology: Laws*Eternal God*

God in form of the burning bush atop Mount Sinai said to Moses: “I am that I am.”²⁹⁵ Sarna explains: “Either it expresses the quality of absolute Being, the eternal, unchanging, dynamic presence, or it means, “He causes to be.”²⁹⁶ The difficulty is that if God is “unchanging” then he cannot “cause to be” because that would mean a change. For this reason, perhaps, Sarna says it is one or the other. Krishna resolves this difficulty in his discourse given during the Mahabharata War known as Gita by saying: “My nature is eternal, supreme and imperishable. Yet less intelligent persons consider Me to have accepted a material form.”²⁹⁷ Thus, the Lord, or the Essence of creation is unchanging though the creation itself is considered to be changing. The intelligent focus on the unchanging Essence while the less intelligent focus on the changing creation. We could render both the Bible and Gita as follows: “I am the unchanging who pervades the changing world.” Thus, we consider these statements to be parallel.

The Ten Commandments

Now we consider the Ten Commandments that God gave to Moses at Mount Sinai.²⁹⁸ The First Commandment is “I am your God.” Now, God is obviously everyone’s God, including Moses’. The purpose of God saying this was to get Moses to recognize God’s underlying omnipresence which God wanted Moses to recognize. To bring attention to this same point, Krishna says: “Mentally resigning all deeds to Me, regarding Me as the Supreme, resorting to mental concentration, do thou ever fix thy heart in Me.”²⁹⁹ We suggest that “I” in “I am your God” is parallel to “Me” in “fix thy heart in Me.” A distinction here is that the Bible portrays God as external to Moses while Krishna uses the term “Me” the sense of an all-pervasive Reality: “Know that to be imperishable by which all this is pervaded.”³⁰⁰

²⁹⁵ Bible, Exodus 3:14.

²⁹⁶ Sarna, *The JPS...*, Exodus 3:14, Page 17.

²⁹⁷ *Gita, The Bhagwad*, Translator, Alladi Mahadeva Sastry, Samta Boos, Madras, 1977, 7:24.

²⁹⁸ Bible, Exodus 20:2-17.

²⁹⁹ *Gita* 18:57.

³⁰⁰ *Gita* 2:17.

The Second Commandment states: “You shall not make for yourself a carved image... You shall not bow down to them or serve them.”³⁰¹ In parallel, Krishna spoke to the Sages: “Only watery pilgrim places are not pilgrim places and only idols of mud or stone are not gods... those persons who consider objects of mud, stone or wood as gods and watery places as pilgrim places and not the wise Sages—such person is an animal though a human being.” Hearing this deep talk, the Bhagwata says, the “Sages remained silent. They could not understand what the Lord was saying.”³⁰² This narrative indicates a tension between the worship of idols, as probably practiced by the Sages, and Krishna who considered such persons to be like animals. Perhaps, just as Aron made a golden calf, the sages may have worshipped objects of mud, stone, or wood.

We are unable to find explicit statements in the Hindu texts that may be parallel to the Third Commandment, “Do not make wrongful use of the name of the Lord;” the Fourth Commandment: “Keep the Sabbath;” and the Fifth Commandment: “Honor your parents.” We consider these to be silences.

The Sixth Commandment is “You shall not murder.”³⁰³ This is exemplified in the narrative of Balarama, brother of Krishna. At one time Balarama killed a particular Sage because he was, in Balarama’s opinion, wrongly occupying the seat of the Principal Sage. The other Sages then told Balarama that he had done wrong in killing the Sage without provocation. They asked him to undertake penance for his act—which he did.³⁰⁴ The undertaking of penance indicates acceptance of the dictum “you shall not murder.”

The Seventh Commandment is “You shall not commit adultery.”³⁰⁵ Krishna said in parallel: “To be astray in adultery is in all cases something contemptible: it harms the reputation, creates fear, and gives trouble.”³⁰⁶

We are, again, unable to find explicit statements in the Hindu texts that may be parallel to the Eighth Commandment: “Do not steal,” and the Ninth Commandment: “Do not bear false witness”. We consider these as silences.

³⁰¹ Bible, Exodus 20:4-5

³⁰² Bhagwata Purana 10:84:11-14.

³⁰³ Bible, Exodus 20:13.

³⁰⁴ Bhagwata Purana 10:78:28-33.

³⁰⁵ Bible, Exodus 20:14.

³⁰⁶ Bhagwata Purana 10:29:26.

Sarna says that the Tenth Commandment “Do not covet” “does not signify the general human proclivity for acquisitiveness and cupidity, rather it always focuses upon a specific object of desire.”³⁰⁷ Krishna’s approach is more focused on the general human acquisitiveness: “There are three paths to reach Me—worship, thought and action. Those who, bereft of these, are driven by the senses keep wandering in this world.”³⁰⁸ Thus, while the Tenth Commandment focuses on specific objects, Krishna focuses on general acquisitiveness. We consider this as distinct.

Fire

God gave the Ten Commandments to Moses speaking through the burning bush. There exists, therefore, a spontaneous connection of God and fire. Thus, the sacred fire has a central place in the Mosaic religion.³⁰⁹ The parallel is found in the Hindu narrative of Vasudeva, father of Krishna. At one time Vasudeva asked the sages: “Please tell me by which rituals it is possible to attain salvation?” Thereupon, the sages replied: “The best way is to undertake fire sacrifice, charity, study and giving birth to children.” Then it is told that Vasudeva undertook fire sacrifice—indicating that this was the preferred method among the many.³¹⁰

Reincarnation

Two types of rebirth mentioned in the narrative of Krishna require separate attention. First, is rebirth of all living beings. The Gita tells of this quite clearly:

For, men of wisdom cast off the fruit of action; possessed of knowledge (and) *released from the bond of birth*, they go to the place where there is no evil (italics supplied).³¹¹

We have already mentioned in the subsection “Theology,” in section “Abraham-Rama,” that the Kabbalists believe in rebirth, and it requires further study whether the Jews at the time of Moses believed in it. We consider this as a silence in view of the silence of the Bible on this question.

³⁰⁷ Sarna, *The JPS...*, Exodus 20:14, page 114.

³⁰⁸ *Bhagwata Purana* 11:21:1, 3.

³⁰⁹ Wellhausen, Julius, *Prolegomena to the History of Ancient Israel*, 1885, <https://www.sacred-texts.com/bib/cv/phai/index.htm>, Chapter 4.

³¹⁰ *Bhagwata Purana* 10:84:29, 35, 38-39, 43.

³¹¹ *Gita* 2:51.

The second type of rebirth is the Incarnation of Krishna as God. In an oft-quoted verse Krishna says: “Whenever there is decay of religion, O Bharata, and an ascendancy of irreligion, then I manifest Myself... I am [thus] born in every age.”³¹²

Here, Krishna is speaking of His being Incarnated as God or Avatara. This verse is to be understood in the light of Krishna’s other utterances. In a discussion with his father Vasudeva, he says:

We [Krishna and Balarama] are only your sons. Yourself, myself, brother Balarama, all residents of Dwarka, entire universe—all this we must understand as form of Brahman. O Father! The soul is only one. It imbibes qualities and although being without qualities, it appears as with qualities... Therefore, what I am, that alone is everyone.³¹³

Hare Krishna is explaining two facets of his incarnation. As son of Vasudeva he has taken rebirth just as all other living beings. As the soul being only One, he is propounding the Monist philosophy. Thus, when Krishna says, “I manifest Myself in every age” he is simultaneously saying that he was born as the son of Vasudeva as any other person while at the same time He is manifestation of the One Soul.

We have already discussed that the Torah is amenable to a Monist interpretation in the section “Abraham-Rama.” However, Moses does not claim to be part of the One Soul and he also does not deny this. Therefore, we consider the utterance of Krishna to be a silence in the Bible.

Summary Table 5.5: Moses-Krishna: Theology

No	Biblical	Hindu	Points
1	God said to Moses: “I am that I am.”	Krishna said, “My nature is eternal, supreme and imperishable.”	P
2	<i>God is external to Moses.</i>	<i>The Reality is all pervasive.</i>	D
3	First Commandment: “I am your God.”	Krishna said: “Mentally resigning all deeds to Me... do thou ever fix their heart in Me.”	P
4	Second Commandment: “You	Krishna said, those who consider	P

³¹² Gita 4:7-8.

³¹³ Bhagwata Purana 10:85:23-25.

	shall not make for yourself a carved image.”	objects of mud, stone or wood as gods [are] an animal[s].	
5	Sixth Commandment is “You shall not murder.”	Balarama admitted doing wrong in killing a Sage without provocation.	P
6	Seventh Commandment is “You shall not commit adultery.”	Krishna said: “To be astray in adultery is contemptible.”	P
7	Tenth Commandment: Do not covet <i>specific objects</i> .	Krishna said: Do not be driven by the senses <i>generally</i> .	P, D
8	God spoke to Moses through the burning bush.	Vasudeva undertook fire sacrifice.	P
	Summary: P=7, D=2, Net=7/9, 78 percent.		

Overall Assessment

We now bring together the 25 tables of the five persons and five parameters in a 5x5 matrix. However, we have varying numbers of observations in each cell of this matrix as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Numbers of Observations by Persons and Parameters

Sl	Person	Context	Genealog	Narrative	Names	Theology	Total
1	Adam-Swayambhu	2	1	16	5	3	27
2	Cain-Indra	2	5	2	4	1	14
3	Noah-Vaivaswat	2	6	8	4	3	23
4	Abraham-Rama	2	2	34	18	6	62
5	Moses-Krishna	2	5	29	10	9	55
6	Total	10	19	89	41	22	181

We have total 181 observations that are distributed unequally between the persons and parameters. For example, the parameter “Context” has only 10 observations while the parameter “Narrative” has 89 observations.

There are two methods of putting the parallels together. First method is to give equal weight to each parameter irrespective of the number of observations therein. In this case the 10 observations in “Context” are given the same

importance as 89 observations in “Narrative.” To give an example, we give equal importance to the five legs in a table irrespective of the strength of each leg.

Second method is to give equal importance to each of the 181 observations, which would mean that we are giving less weight to the parameter “Context” and more to the “Narrative.” This would be like giving importance to the five legs in proportion to their strengths. We think both methods are justified. Hence, we are given calculations below by both methods.

We have taken the percent figures from each of the 25 Summary Tables in the subsections and put them together in the Table 2 below. In doing so we have ignored the different numbers of observations lying behind each figure and thereby we have given equal weight to each parameter.

Table 2: Equal Weight to Parameters

Sl	Person	Context	Genealog	Narrative	Names	Theology	Average
1	Adam-Swayambhu	100	100	75	80	67	84.4
2	Cain-Indra	100	60	100	50	100	82.0
3	Noah-Vaivaswat	100	50	87	75	100	82.4
4	Abraham-Rama	100	100	65	61	83	81.8
5	Moses-Krishna	100	60	67	70	78	75.0
6	Average	100	74.0	78.8	67.2	85.6	81.0

The last column of this table tells us that the parallels between the Five Persons Adam-Swayambhu etc.

are 84.4, 82.0, 82.4, 81.8, and 75.0 percent respectively. The similar numbers suggest that the parallels in all Five Persons are equally placed. There is no imbalance here as would have been the case, for example, if Adam-Swayambhu gave 20 percent parallels and Moses-Krishna gave 95 percent parallels.

The last row of this table tells us that the five parameters (Context, Genealogy, Narrative, Names and Theology) show 100, 74.0, 78.8, 67.2 and 85.6 percent parallels, respectively. Here, we continue to ignore the difference in the numbers of observations lying behind each of these figures. The average of these five numbers is 81.0 percent. This is the overall level of parallels if we give equal importance to each parameter.

Next, we have taken the numerator and denominator from the last line of each of the 25 Summary Tables in the subsections and put them together in the Table 3 below. Then we have added the numerators and denominators separately and given these in the second-last column and the second-last row both titled “Total.” These column and row give us the total numbers of parallels as a ratio of observations for each person in the second-last column, and for each parameter in the second-last row. Then for easy comparison we have converted these figures into percentages in the last column and row.

Table 3: Equal Weight to Observations

Sl	Person	Context	Genealogy	Narrative	Names	Theology	Total	Percent (of row)
1	Adam-Swayambhu	2/2	1/1	12/16	4/5	2/3	21/27	77.8
2	Cain-Indra	2/2	3/5	2/2	2/4	1/1	10/14	71.4
3	Noah-Vaivaswat	2/2	3/6	7/8	3/4	3/3	18/23	78.3
4	Abraham-Rama	2/2	2/2	22/34	11/18	5/6	42/62	67.7
5	Moses-Krishna	2/2	3/5	19/29	7/10	7/9	38/55	69.1
6	Total	10/10	12/19	62/87	26/39	18/22	-	72.9 (average of above)
7	Percent (of column)	100.0	63.2	71.1	66.7	81.8	76.6 (average of left)	74.7 (average of above and left)

The last column of This table tells us that the parallels between the Five Persons, Adam-Swayambhu etc. are 77.8, 71.4, 78.3, 67.7 and 69.1 percent respectively. These figures are less in four out of five persons, excepting Abraham, when compared to Table 2. The reason is that there are large numbers of observations with lesser numbers of parallels in the parameters “Narrative” and “Names.” This lowers the final figures. Yet, the similar numbers when

compared with Table 2 suggests that the parallels in all Five Persons are equally placed by both methods.

The last row of this table tells us that the five parameters (Context, Genealogy, Narrative, Names and Theology) show 100.0, 63.2, 71.1, 66.7 and 81.8 percent parallels, respectively. Here we have implicitly ignored the differences in the numbers of observations in each parameter. The average of these five numbers is 74.7. This is the overall level of parallels if we give equal importance to each observation irrespective of the variation in the numbers of observations in each parameter.

In conclusion, we find 81.0 percent parallels if we give equal weight to parameters and 74.7 percent parallels if we give equal weight to observations. Thus, on the conservative side, 74.7 percent of the narratives of the Five Persons in the Biblical and Hindu narratives are parallel.

We find that 85.6 percent of theological understandings are parallel if we give equal weight to parameters and 81.8 percent are parallels if we give equal weight to observations. Theology has highest level of parallels except for “Context” in both the reckonings. This finding is encouraging. It suggests that the two religions share a similar theological understanding even though the narratives have more distinctions.

Conclusion

Our journey had been triggered by the conflicts that often have roots in theological understandings of different religions: Hindus and Muslims, and Hindus and Christians in India; Buddhists and Muslims in Myanmar; Muslims and Jews in West Asia and so on. There is a sense of separation—“me” versus “you”—in these conflicts. The parallels in the narratives of the Five Persons could help establish a dialogue between these religions with a sense of “me” and “us.” Thus, the theological beliefs of the Hindus could be enriched by looking at the parallel teachings of the Five Persons in the Torah and vice versa. That is the task ahead of us.

Our study has been confined to the parallels between the Torah and the Hindu texts. However, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam—all accept the authority of the Torah; and Buddhism and Jainism are both offshoots of Hinduism and share much affinity with it. Thus, in establishing the parallels between the Torah and the Hindu texts, we have implicitly established parallels between the Abrahamic Religions and Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism.

We are not delving into the historical authenticity of the narratives in either religion. It does not matter for the purpose of this paper whether Adam lived in Turkey or Iraq or India or whether he lived at all; whether the parallels fit into patterns found in other primitive myths; or whether the Torah borrowed the narrative from the Hindu texts or vice versa; or there was yet another common origin such as the Sumeric Civilization which is known to have affinities with both the religions. The fact remains that the narratives and theological understandings of the Torah and Hindu texts are parallel.

We have tried to place the facts before the reader as dispassionately as we could. The distinctions and silences notwithstanding, we feel that the parallels warrant a deeper examination of the possible connections of the Biblical and Hindu Religions in the remote past. We place this paper before the reader not as a “proof” but only to underscore the need to undertake such an examination.

We are aware that tracing the parallels is not likely “solve” the conflicts. Yet, it can anchor a dialogue, to repeat, with a sense of “me” and “us.” The purpose of this paper is to take a small step towards establishing such a dialogue.

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About MEI@ND

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Israel and Pakistan: Between the State and Non-State Players

Joseph Hodes

On March 3, 2015, while discussing the threat of a nuclear Iran, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, in a speech to a joint meeting of the United States Congress, declared: “We must always remember—I’ll say it one more time—the greatest danger facing our world is the marriage of militant Islam with nuclear weapons. To defeat ISIS and let Iran get nuclear weapons would be to win the battle but lose the war. We can’t let that happen.”¹ If this statement is to be taken seriously, one must look not only at Iran, but at Pakistan, the only Islamic nation that currently has nuclear weapons. This article will examine Israel’s relationship with Pakistan, identifying how, on the one hand, Pakistan is run by a pragmatic regime which is highly unlikely to pose a nuclear threat to Israel, and how, at the same time, non-state Islamic fundamentalism is a very strong political force in Pakistan that uses an anti-Israel rhetoric. Pakistan has one of the fastest growing nuclear programs in the world, with over 120 nuclear weapons, and it is not clear that the regime will be able to keep their weapons out of the hands of non-state players in the long run.

Pakistan and Israel have much in common. The two nations were formed within nine months of each other—Pakistan on Aug 15, 1947, and Israel on May 15, 1948; both were created for a religious community; both are former British colonies; both nations were born into partition; and both saw large migrations accompanying their births, which lead to future strife. Despite these commonalities, Pakistan and the Muslim League, which negotiated the creation of Pakistan with the British colonial forces, was opposed to the creation of Israel. In fact, Pakistan was a member and leader of the UN sub-committee that approved the Arab proposal for a unitary Palestine against the Federal Plan put forth by India. Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the father of Pakistan, opposed the founding of

¹ Melanie Hunter “Netanyahu: Greatest Danger Facing World Is Marriage of Militant Islam with Nuclear Weapons, csnnnews.com, March 3, 2015 accessed February 13, 2016.

Israel even before it became a state. He expressed his opposition at the UN in 1947:

The partition plan will be rejected. Otherwise, there is bound to be the gravest disaster and unprecedented conflict, not only between the Arabs and the authority that would undertake to enforce the partition plan, but the entire Muslim world will revolt against such a decision, which cannot be supported historically, politically, or morally. In such a case, Pakistan will have no other course left but to give its fullest support to the Arabs.²

When Israel became a state, Pakistan condemned it in the strongest terms. An official statement from the Pakistani government declared that recognition of Israel was “constitutionally wrong and morally unjust,” that it amounted to “placing a premium on armed aggression and the use of brutal force,” and that the UN partition resolution “lacked legal and moral justification” and was “contrary to justice, equity, and the right of self-determination.”³ Pakistan has never officially recognized Israel.

On the Israeli side, upon its creation, despite security concerns, Asia remained marginal for the new nation, which set its sights and energy on procuring relations with the West, particularly the United States, Britain, and France. Asia was so marginal that the historian Howard Sachar described Israel’s diplomatic activities as follows, “Israel’s inability to win recognition from the “Third World” in Asia, to receive credit for its emancipation from colonial tutelage was probably the nation’s most grievous diplomatic failure.”⁴ He also wrote, “Had greater insight been shown, it is conceivable that that Israel’s overtures of friendship might have evoked something more than a resentful Asian indifference.”⁵

² Mohammad Ali Jinnah, *Speeches and Statements as Governor General of Pakistan, 1947-48*. Islamabad: Ministry of Information and Broadcasting p.114

³ Umbreen Javaid and Malik Tauqir Ahmad Khan, “Pakistan and the Question of Recognizing Israel: Historical Issues and Future Prospects,” *South Asian Studies* 29.2 (2014): 61–71.

⁴ Howard Sachar, *A History of Israel from the Rise of Zionism to Our Time* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1996), 470.

⁵ *Ibid.* 471.

Pakistan's Pragmatic Regime

Despite the perceived hostility to Israel from Jinnah and the Muslim League, and despite Israel's seeming neglect or indifference to what is today Pakistan, the two nations do have a history of working together, even if that work has been unofficial. In 1952, Zafarullah Khan, the first foreign minister of Pakistan and the man who led the Muslim representation in the United Nations in opposition to the partition of British mandate Palestine, made peaceful diplomatic overtures towards Israel. He said that "Israel was a limb in the body of the Middle East," and called on the Arabs to reach a peaceful settlement.⁶ By Jan 14, 1953, however, with a change of government in Pakistan, improved relations with Israel became more difficult as the new government of Khawaja Nazimuddin was weaker and more susceptible to pressure from extremist Muslim elements. Khan acknowledged this, saying there would be no improved relations between the nations, "despite the fact that the Pakistani government does not bear any hatred towards Israel and understands that it is a factor in the Middle East that must be taken into consideration."⁷ This change of government, however, did not altogether stop the informal relations between the two nations. In 1954, the Haifa municipality allowed the Pakistani government official, Sheriff Ul Haq to enter Israel in order to study social programs, particularly those related to refugee rehabilitation, as both nations faced the challenges of refugee absorption upon their respective births.⁸ In 1956, after the Suez Canal conflict, despite Pakistan's support for Nasser and the nationalization of the Suez Canal, the foreign minister Feroz Khan Noon said that "Israel is a reality" and that "We cannot push 1.5 million Jews into the Mediterranean."⁹ In 1964, there was cooperation between labor unions when the President of the Pakistan Trust Employees Union, Haq Vavsi, arrived in Israel as a guest of the Histadrut.¹⁰ Thus, although there has not been official recognition,

⁶ Jacob Abadi. *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in in Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 335.

⁷ Moshe Yegar. "Pakistan and Israel" Jerusalem center for Public affairs October 25, 2007

⁸ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in in Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 335.

⁹ Ibid. 337.

¹⁰ Ibid. 338.

Israel and Pakistan have seen some cooperation.

Moreover, positive exchanges have not been limited to the early decades of both nations' existence. The CIA's operation cyclone provided weapons to the Afghan fighters between 1979 and 1989, so that they could fight the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. The CIA wanted the weapons to never appear to have come from the United States. The sale of non-U.S. arms to Pakistan for destination to Afghanistan was facilitated by Israel. This operation was later glorified in the Hollywood movie *Charlie Wilson's War*, starring Tom Hanks and Julia Roberts. As well, according to Ambassador Moshe Yegar, Assistant Director General, head of the Hasbara Department and head of the Asia-Africa Department, the Pakistani ambassador in Washington, Sayyidah Abidah Hussein, on Jan 31, 1992, mentioned that there was no reason Pakistan should not have diplomatic ties with Israel.¹¹ During that same year, spontaneous meetings also took place between Israeli and Pakistani diplomatic representatives.¹² As well, in the early 1990s, Israel's ambassador to the United Nations, Gad Yaacobi, had frequent contacts with Pakistani representatives, and on March 17, 1993, held a meeting between Jamshi Merkar, the Pakistani UN ambassador, and then Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin.¹³ That same year, the vice president of the World Jewish Congress, Isi Leibler, visited Islamabad, where Leibler met with Shahabaz Sharif, the brother of then Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif.¹⁴ According to Moshe Yegar,

Leibler told him that that a change in approach toward Israel would help improve Pakistan's deteriorated image in the United States. At the end of the meeting, the two agreed that further contacts between them would be arranged via Pakistan's ambassador in London.¹⁵

As late as 2005, a public meeting was held in Istanbul between the then Israeli

¹¹ Moshe Yegar. "Pakistan and Israel" Jerusalem Center for Public affairs October 25, 2007

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Ibid.

minister Silvan Shalom and his Pakistani counterpart Kushid Kasuri. The meeting was reported as a “source of great encouragement and hope for the Israeli people and aids in strengthening the moderates on the Palestinian side.” Israeli journalists called it a “historic meeting” and Pakistan’s gift for the evacuation of the Israeli settlements in Gaza.¹⁶ As well, thanks to Wiki leaks, we are aware that in 2009, Pakistan tipped Israel off to potential attacks of Israeli targets in India.¹⁷

Therefore, although Pakistan does not officially recognize Israel, there has been a steady and slow history of non-aggressive interactions between the two nations. However, Pakistan faces the challenge of a powerful Islamic fundamentalist enterprise within its borders, and those forces have a very different opinion of Israel. Before focusing on the Islamic fundamentalist position within Pakistan, it is necessary to reflect on why Israel plays a peripheral foreign relations role for Pakistan, which is due primarily to India, and secondly to the Arab nations.

India is Pakistan’s primary foreign relations concern. The two nations were born into conflict generated by the Partition of British India in August 1947. They have since fought three major wars, have had almost constant border tensions, and have a long-term, unresolved, and violent land dispute over Kashmir, with both India and Pakistan claiming sovereignty over the land. In May 1998, India and Pakistan both successfully exploded five underground atomic bombs, and today they are easily within striking distance of each other, with both nations having over 100 nuclear bombs.¹⁸ For Pakistan, over the last several decades it seemed that Israel was aiding India, making relations with the Jewish state difficult.

The relationship between Israel and India has not been one of constant friendship. There was no official recognition of Israel on India’s part until 1992. Until this point of the establishment of diplomatic relations, the relationship between the nations was cool and even hostile; even after 1992, Israel never had unanimous

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ <https://www.haaretz.com/1.5147672>

¹⁸ Stanley Wolpert. *India and Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 2.

support from the Indian population.¹⁹ Despite cool relations, however, India has asked Israel for military aid in the past. In 1962, during the India-Sino war, India requested and received military assistance from Israel in the form of small arms.²⁰ Pakistan viewed this cooperation with contempt and publicly villainized Israel for aiding its enemy. Since 1992, India and Israel have grown considerably closer, which is not lost on Pakistan. In 2002, India and Israel signed a billion-dollar deal for 18 spider missiles.²¹ More recently, on November 16, 2016, India signed two contracts worth \$1.4bn with Israel Aerospace Industries (IAI) for the purchase of two additional Phalcon/IL-76 Airborne Early Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) valued at \$1 billion, and 10 Heron TP unmanned air vehicles (UAVs), made during the recent visit of Israeli President Reuven Rivlin to India.²²

The relationship between the two nations is not limited to military ties; it also includes commercial agreements. *Tablet* magazine published an article in 2013 which noted that

Ties now extend to India's civilian technology industries. Commercial trade has boomed in the past 20 years, from \$180 million to \$6 billion, and both nations have invested heavily in technology industries. In May Israel opened its third Indian consulate in Bangalore, the country's technology center.²³

The Pakistani media, following all of this very closely, reported that Israel offered India an unmanned aircraft designed for intelligence purposes. They also reported that Israel was in the process of upgrading India's Mig-21 aircraft. They alleged that Israel helped India develop a nuclear device, which exploded in Rajasthan in

¹⁹ P.R. Kumaraswamy. *India's Israel Policy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2010), 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.* 199

²¹ Mark Bergen, "Israel and India, a Match Made in the U.S., Develop Their Own Military Romance", *Tablet*, October 8, 2013. Accessed, Jan 21, 2017, <http://www.tabletmag.com/jewish-news-and-politics/147934/israel-india-military-romance>

²² "Israel Signs \$1.4 Billion Contracts with India", *Israel Defense*, November 25, 2016. Accessed November 25, 2016 <http://www.israeldefense.co.il/en/node/27690>

²³ *Ibid.*

1974,²⁴ and that Israel helped train Indian military personal in Kashmir, which Israel denies. In 2015, Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri, Pakistan's Minister of Foreign Affairs from 2002-2007, stated in a TV interview that "India was building up a very good defensive relationship with Israel and it was a threat for Pakistan's security, because Israel was selling high technology weapons to India that even the US was not selling to India, weapons like 3 Falcons IX, the Barak 2 missile, and the Heron 2 missile."²⁵ He went on to say in the same interview that "Pakistan was trying to achieve a civil nuclear deal with US, but there was a resistance from the Israeli Lobby in the United States."²⁶ The fact that Israel is not in control of America's foreign policy is irrelevant. What is relevant is the portrayal of Israel as a threat to Pakistani security. The most damaging condemnation of Israel, however, was the claim made by Pakistan that Israel has a plan to destroy the Pakistani nuclear facility in Kahuta.²⁷ This report emerged in a prestigious London weekly, which claimed that Israel had requested India's cooperation in destroying the Pakistani nuclear reactor three times and that India refused the request three times.²⁸ In Pakistan, this was seen as an overtly hostile gesture. Seeking to diffuse the tension over this issue, Israeli diplomats reassured their Pakistani counterparts that Israel had no such intentions. Despite this, however, a feeling of mistrust between the two nations was hardened, making close official ties between Pakistan and Israel that much more difficult.

But it is not only in relation to India that Pakistan views Israel with suspicion. It is also in relation to the Arab nations and the greater political theatre of the Middle East. Pakistan's identity as a Muslim nation, or as the Muslim nation on the Indian

²⁴ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in in Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 342.

²⁵ Khurshid Mahmud Kasuri. "Why Pakistan So Desperate to Build Relation with Israel but not yet succeed". Filmed December 11, 2015. You Tube video, duration 21:03. Posted December 2015. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OO9GGKpUQkc>

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in in Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 342.

²⁸ Ibid.

subcontinent, has shaped its need for recognition from the Muslim Middle East. Pakistan was created as a place where “Muslims of the subcontinent were to secure territory where Islamic ideology could be practiced and demonstrated to the world, and since a cardinal feature of this ideology is to make Muslim brotherhood a reality, it was part of the mission to promote fellowship and co-operation between Muslim countries.”²⁹ Thus, from birth, Pakistan has always supported a pro-Palestinian stance, alongside many of the Arab nations. Pakistan shares an attitude of support for the Palestinian people which ideologically maintains that a just, comprehensive peace cannot be achieved unless Israel withdraws from the territories gained in the 1967 Six Day War/June War, including East Jerusalem and the Temple Mount.³⁰ Along with most of the Arab nations, Pakistan calls for an independent and sovereign Palestinian state with a just solution to the Palestinian refugee situation. Pakistan has, since its inception, championed the Palestinian cause and advocated the Arab stance.

Pakistan has enjoyed fruitful relationships, for the most part, with the hegemonic Arab states. The Arab nations supported Pakistan in its 1971 war with India, and Pakistan returned the favor by supporting the Arab nations in their war against Israel in 1973.³¹ So again, animosity towards Israel by the Pakistani government can be understood not so much as outward hostility towards the Jewish state, but more as part of the necessary alignment between Pakistan and the greater Islamic world. This alignment mandates supporting the Palestinian cause as well as fostering good relations with the hegemonic Arab powers.

The Pakistani government views Israel as a secondary consideration. Its relationship with India and the Arab nations is more important for her. The paradox, however, is that Pakistan has very powerful non-state players which exert tremendous influence over many sections of the population and government apparatus which hold Israel in a more central focus. These are the Islamic

²⁹ S.M. Burke *Pakistan's Foreign Policy: An Historical Analysis* (London: Oxford University Press, 1991), 65.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Jacob Abadi, *Israel's Quest for Recognition and Acceptance in in Asia* (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 341.

fundamentalist movements.

Islamic Fundamentalism as a Powerful Political Force

The fundamentalists are more focused on Israel than the official government. For all Muslim fundamentalists, Jewish control of any Islamic land is extremely problematic, but their control over Jerusalem and the Temple Mount, Islam's third holiest place, makes Israel very high on their list of priorities. Abd Al-Salam Faraj, a chief ideologue of the Jihad movement in Egypt, noted that, "There are some who say that the Jihad effort should concentrate nowadays on the liberation of Jerusalem. It is true that the liberation of the holy land is a legal precept binding upon every Muslim."³² The Zionist presence in the holy land is often referred to as a cancerous growth which destroys the body, and since Israel embodies the essence of the Western offensive at the very heart of the Muslim world, the struggle against it is seen by the fundamentalists as obligatory for every believer who is sound in mind and body.³³ Jerusalem emerged after 1967 as a unique unifying symbol for all Muslims, a symbol which bridges all political and religious cleavages. It is a concept capable of mobilizing the Muslim masses, and has been manipulated as a rallying point for Islamist ideology as well as for state political purposes.³⁴ There exists a fear that under Israeli rule, the third holiest mosque, which stands on the spot believed to be where Muhammad ascended to heaven, will be destroyed. Indeed, there have been Jewish religious leaders who have expressed the desire to destroy both the Al-Aqsa mosque and the dome of the Rock, both on the sacred Temple Mount, so that they can rebuild Solomon's temple. In 1984, Jewish extremists in Israel came "very close" to successfully carrying out bombings against multiple Islamic holy sites on the Temple Mount.³⁵ Thus, for fundamentalists, the

³² Fouad Ajami. *The Arab Predicament* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 23.

³³ Meir Hatina, *Islam and Salvation in Palestine* (Tel Aviv: The Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies 2001), 118.

³⁴ David Zeidan. "Jerusalem in Islamic fundamentalism." *Evangelical Quarterly* 78, no. 3 (2006): 237.

³⁵ Yuval Yoaz, Nadav Shragai & Jonathan Liss. "Yatom: Jews Nearly Succeeded in 1984 Temple Mt. Bomb Plot" *Haaretz*, July 24, 2004. Accessed May 8, 2017. <http://www.haaretz.com/news/yatom-jews-nearly-succeeded-in-1984-temple-mt-bomb-plot-1.129418>

prioritization of Jerusalem and Israel is not simply faith-based symbolism, but a tangible goal to be pursued vigorously.

One of the most important fundamentalist religious political parties in Pakistan is the Jamaat-e-Islami. In 2011, Qazi Hussain Ahmed, leader of Jamaat-e-Islami in Pakistan, described the organization as similar to the Muslim Brotherhood.³⁶ Jamaat-e-Islami shares many attitudes with Hamas, an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, as well as Hezbollah and the Palestinian Islamic Jihad organization.³⁷ This party was founded by Maulana Abdul Ala Maududi who lived from 1903 to 1979. Maududi was one of the most important and influential Islamic intellectuals of the 20th century and his ideology can be understood as part of the historical development of Islamic political thought. The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw the emergence and proliferation of Islamic intellectuals, of whom the most important was the Egyptian, Muhammad Abdu. He wrestled with the question of whether Islam is compatible with modernity, secularism, and nationalism and attempted to establish a synthesis of Islam with modern science and the western notions of progress. From this effort arose the problematic argument that Islam has no real contradictions with modern science or the West. Abdu's disciples interpreted his teachings in two very different, conflicting ways. Rashid Rida, a great contributor in this tradition of Islamic intellectuals, contended that Islam was not the problem of Muslim societies but their only salvation - and humanity's at large, particularly the morally declining West.³⁸ Of Zionism, Rida wrote that the ultimate ambition of the Jews was to convert the Al-Aqsa mosque into a Jewish temple and cleanse Palestine of all its Arab inhabitants.³⁹ Alternatively, Ahmed Lutfi el-Sayed, arguably Egypt's greatest secular intellectual and another of Abdu's disciples, asked if there were no contradictions between Islam and western-style modernity, why not adopt western-style

³⁶ Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof (eds.) *Contemporary Debates in Islam, An anthology of modernist and Fundamentalist thought* (New York: St. Martins' Press, 1999), 270.

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Uriya Shavit "Zionism as told by Rashid Rida", *The Journal of Israeli History*, Vol.34, No.1 (2015), 23-44.

³⁹ Ibid.

modernity completely? El-Sayed was a great supporter of western style-secularism and nationalism. He wrote,

New basic principles must be introduced to our Eastern philosophy. For while it is true that knowledge has no fatherland, never the less the marriage of the sciences of the East and those of the West is the means of our acquiring civilization, while at the same time preserving intact our own moral character.⁴⁰

From one teacher, then, emerged two very different interpretations and conclusions. The consequences of this divergence in Islamic political thought have been enormous.

Ahmed Lutfi el-Sayed's work in Egypt brought forth intellectual challenges to tradition during the 1920s. Books criticized the Prophet Muhammad, and authors, such as Taha Husain, wrote about the possibilities of Egypt becoming a secular nationalist state. He wrote,

Why should I simply repeat what the ancients said or publish what they said? Why should I spend my life praising the Orthodox Sunnis or berating the heretical Shi'ites and Mutazzala and Khawariji, without any gain or any scientific purpose? Who can compel me to study literature to become a preacher of Islam or a guide to infidels when I do not wish to preach nor to argue with the infidels, but am content to keep my own religion as a matter between God and myself?...When we undertake the investigation of Arabic literature and its history we must forget our national feelings and all their peculiar tendencies, we must forget our religious feelings and all that is connected with them.⁴¹

He goes on to write:

Constitutional and representative government has been adopted from Europe, but has at once become so deeply rooted in Egypt that no one would wish to return to the earlier stage of our political life. In organizing

⁴⁰ Afaf Luftin Al-Sayyid-Marsot. *Egypt's Liberal Experiment 1922-1936* (London: University of California Press, 1977), 223.

⁴¹ Nissim Rejwan. *Arabs Face the Modern World : Religious, Cultural, and Political Responses to the West* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1988), 49.

our democratic institutions, which we are borrowing from Europe, we are trying to establish that very equality which is the birthright of all members of one state. To reach these goals there is only one way: to share European civilization in its good and its bad aspects.⁴²

These writings were seen as attacks on tradition, which prompted an Islamist response, particularly Hassan Al Banna's founding of the Muslim brotherhood in 1928. Banna sought strength through Islam as an all-encompassing ideology that would encompass not only religion but all forms of government. He wrote:

Internationalism, nationalism, socialism, capitalism, Bolshevism, war, the distribution of wealth, the relationship between producer and consumer. . . . Everything related, directly or indirectly, to those questions that concern politicians and philosophers alike, we believe that Islam has thoroughly dealt with, establishing the systems that allow the world to benefit from everything that is good and avoid dangers and calamities.⁴³

Ever since this intellectual debate, modernists and Islamists have been in fierce competition, not only in Egypt but throughout the Islamic world. The Islamic world after 1928 saw the radicalization of the Islamist position. The two greatest intellectual contributors to this radicalization were the Egyptian Sayyid Qutb, who was later executed by Nasser, and Pakistan's Maududi. Maududi, then, fits into a category of profound thinkers who had significant impacts on the Islamic political world and radicalized an already problematic Islamist position.

Maududi's ideology is largely consistent with those of contemporary Islamist political parties. He wished to create an Islamic nation based on Sharia law and to do away with any form of secular government.⁴⁴ He wrote that:

The basic principle of Islam is that human beings must, individually and collectively, surrender all rights of overlordship, legislation, and exercising

⁴² Ibid. 52

⁴³ Ana Belen Solage. "Hasan al-Banna and Sayyid Qutb: Continuity or Rupture?" *The Muslim World*. Vol. 99 Issue 2, (2009), 294-311.

⁴⁴ John Schmidt. *The Unraveling* (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2011), 60.

of authority over others. No one should be allowed to pass orders or make commands on his own right and no one ought to accept the obligation to carry out such commands and obey such orders. None is entitled to make laws on his own authority, and none is obliged to abide by them. This right vests in Allah alone.⁴⁵

Thus, the foundational platform of Islamic politics in Pakistan emerged out of one of the two most influential Islamists writers, not only in the Asia, but in the entire Islamic world. His position is clear that law can only come from God and that no human has any right to create any law that has authority over others. While Pakistan is not governed solely by religious law, the Jamaat-E-Islami have had an enormous impact on the political culture of Pakistan influencing many other Islamists groups which have developed in the nation. They also paved the way for the radicalization of Pakistan's government and for Muhammad Zia-ul-Haq to become president from 1977 to 1987.

In order for Zia to take power in Pakistan, the military and the fundamentalist movements had to join hands.⁴⁶ This was done, in the aftermath of Pakistan's 1971 defeat in its war against India. This defeat resulted in East Pakistan slipping away and forming its own nation of Bangladesh.

As a result, Pakistan faced large scale protests against the military rulers and political movements along ethnic and class lines.⁴⁷ This was followed by the electoral victory of left-leaning political parties. In order to combat this, the more right-wing political parties needed the support of the fundamentalists. The fundamentalists lent their ideological fervor, political support, and militant cadres to the anti-left initiatives on university campuses and urban streets, in the electoral arena, and in neighboring Afghanistan. In 1977 the fundamentalists mounted a movement against the elected government, backed by the military and financed by

⁴⁵ Mansoor Moaddel and Kamran Talattof (eds.) *Contemporary Debates in Islam, An anthology of modernist and Fundamentalist thought* (New York: St. Martins' Press, 1999), 270

⁴⁶ Laila Bushra. "Globalization and the Rise of Islamic Fundamentalism in Pakistan" (PhD. Diss., Johns Hopkins University, 2012.)

⁴⁷ Ibid.

some of the wealthiest businessmen in the country. This resulted in Zia's ascension to power in the 1977 coup, representing the triumph of the military-fundamentalist alliance backed by the business community.⁴⁸ It represented the beginning of the non-state fundamentalist players' growing influence over the state apparatus.

A devout, austere Muslim, Zia was called the army's best sycophant and "the devil."⁴⁹ When his predecessor, Bhutto, enraged Pakistanis by corrupting the democratic process to receive 90percent of the vote, he turned to Zia to restore order in the country. Zia did so by taking over the military and arresting Bhutto, who was later convicted by the highest court and executed.⁵⁰

Zia considered all Western culture and philosophy sinful and the primary cause of Pakistan's weakness. The purity of Islamic prayer and practice alone could save Pakistan from the devil's temptations. Zia dissolved the Bhutto government and declared a state of emergency, which allowed the military to expand its already considerable powers.⁵¹ Zia advanced authoritarian policies, which led to the sectarian and ethnic fragmentation of the nation and society and caused harm to democracy, women, and minorities. His 11 years in power (1977–1988) constituted one of the worst times for Pakistan and saw a profound rise in religious intolerance.⁵² An Islamization movement quickly began under his rule. He suppressed all democratic opposition to his party through a secret service police (The ISI) and public floggings. He censored the media, art, literature, and all related areas of public life, using Islam as the justification. Democracy was labeled a western, un-Islamic concept, and women were advised to stay indoors and live in a segregated fashion.⁵³

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Stanley Wolpert, *India and Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 49.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Malik Iftikhar, *The History of Pakistan* (London: Greenwood Press, 2008), 169.

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid. 172.

In 1984 a referendum was held in which Zia was the only contesting candidate. The question put to the voter was:

Do you endorse the process initiated by the President of Pakistan, General Muhammad Zia ul Haq, for bringing the laws of Pakistan in conformity with the injunctions of Islam as laid down in the holy Quran and the Sunnah of the holy Prophet (Peace be upon him) and for the preservation of the ideology of Pakistan, the Constitution, and the consolidation of the process and for the smooth and orderly transfer of power to the elected representatives of the people?⁵⁴

Zia easily won the referendum with a reported 97 percent of the vote.⁵⁵ He implemented Sharia law in many aspects of life under what were called the Huddood ordinances. These ordinances instituted stoning and lashing as punishments for legal infractions, made women's testimony worth only half of that of men's, and did not clearly differentiate between rape and adultery, so a raped woman was considered guilty of adultery. Soon Pakistan's prisons were filled with women. Many conservative Muslims idealized this treatment of women in the name of chaadar and chaardiwari (strictly domestic, segregated roles for women). Under these ordinances, the cities became volatile. Ethnic militants engaged in random and selective killings, and criminalization of ethnicity spread, while tensions between Sunni and Shia increased throughout the 1980s.⁵⁶

Zia also eagerly pursued the nuclear ambitions nursed by his predecessor. In 1975, only two years before Zia took power, Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan came to Pakistan and greatly advanced the process of building a nuclear weapon. In this case, timing was on Pakistan's side because in 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan, and Pakistan became vital for U.S. interests in the Cold War. Between 1981 and 1986, the United States gave Zia and Pakistan \$3.2 billion to help fight the Soviets in Afghanistan. Pakistan was deemed necessary to the fight against communism, so the United States largely looked the other way while Pakistan vigorously

⁵⁴ Khalid Mahmud Arif. *Working with Zia: Pakistan's power politics 1977-1988* (Karachi: Oxford University Press: 1995),229.

⁵⁵ Malik Iftikhar, *The History of Pakistan* (London: Greenwood Press, 2008), 169.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

pursued its nuclear ambitions, eventually creating and testing a nuclear weapon in 1998. Zia died in a plane crash in 1988, leaving his nation a hotbed of Islamic fundamentalism and well on the way to becoming a nuclear power. After his death, many in Pakistan accused Israel of killing him. Israel denied the allegations, calling them baseless.

During the 1990s, after the defeat of the Soviet Union in Afghanistan, the Jihadist movement in Pakistan was focused entirely on supporting the regional strategy of the Pakistani military establishment: to liberate Kashmir from India and install a Pashtun (ethnic group which lives both in Afghanistan and Pakistan) government in Afghanistan.⁵⁷ At this time, Pakistan's secret service, the ISI, paid and trained the most militant Islamic Fundamentalists, the Lashkar-e- Taiyba, to fight both in Afghanistan and Kashmir.⁵⁸ After 9/11 however, Pakistan's support for the American war on terror was seen by the Islamists as a betrayal, which triggered a massive political shift in Pakistan's North West frontier area, a nerve center of Jihadist activity. Radical Islamic parties in the region united under the banner of the Muttehid Majlis Amal (MMA United Council for Action). It was the first time in Pakistan's history that squabbling religious groups representing different sects had joined together in this fashion. The Alliance swept the election polls in the North West Frontier area and in the neighboring province of Baluchistan in the nationwide general elections held in 2002. With its new seats in Parliament it emerged as a formidable force at the national level.⁵⁹ Further sharia law was called for, and in the provinces the Islamists now controlled, movie theatres were shut down, intellectuals and artists were attacked by zealots, female education was opposed, and Islamic texts were introduced into the school and college curricula, amongst other legislation.

Anti-Israel Rhetoric

This new era also featured anti-Jewish and anti-Israel rhetoric coming from

⁵⁷ Zahid Hussain. *The Scorpion's Tale: The Relentless Rise of Islamic Militants in Pakistan and how it threatens America* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 25.

⁵⁸ Stanley Wolpert, *India and Pakistan* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2010), 49.

⁵⁹ Zahid Hussain. *The Scorpion's Tale: The Relentless Rise of Islamic Militants in Pakistan and how it threatens America* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 29.

Pakistani religious leaders. Mufti Muneeb-ur-Rehaman, in an interview with *Roznama Nawa-e-Waqt*, said, “Terrorism anywhere is not acceptable. Government should focus on their policy, but Jews and Hindus can never be friends with Muslims.”⁶⁰ Mufti Munner-ur-Rehaman is not even what anyone in Pakistan would consider an extremist, but is the Grand Mufti. Because his opinion is so authoritative, it is, perhaps, remarkable to consider the non-traditional views he has stated. Traditionally, Islam views both the Jews and the Christians as people of the book and traditionally offered protection to those communities under the pact of Umar. But the Mufti has argued that in fact the Jews are not people of the book, saying,

As it was said by Islamic Scholar Tahir Ul Qadri, there are two categories in general, believers and non-believers. In the non-believers’ category, these are kafir people and in the believers’ category Muslim and Jewish people, which means people who follow one of the Holy Books of Allah. But it is clearly mentioned in Quran that Jewish people are in the category of non-believers because they don’t believe that Prophet Muhammad is the last Prophet.⁶¹

So, we see a pattern of noting that the Jews are not people of the book and that Muslims can’t be friends with Jews. While this would certainly seem a non-traditional, extreme stance, the fact that it came from what in Pakistan represents normative tradition is very problematic. If these views had been uttered by the Jamaat-E-Islami, the public might be able to understand them as a radical, non-traditional view, but as it came from the Mufti, it would then be seen as authoritative, and would be understood on a basic level that the Jews are non-believers and that one cannot be friends with the Jews and by proxy cannot be friends with Israel. The rhetoric, however, does not stop there but quickly

⁶⁰ “Government Does not have ability to disgrace criminals”, *Roznama Nawa-e-Waqt*, July 5, 2010 Accessed March 4, 2017 <http://www.nawaiwaqt.com.pk/E-Paper/Lahore/2010-07-05/page-1/detail-1>

⁶¹ Imtiaz, Ali Khan. “Tahir ul Qadri Exposed by Mufti Muneeb ur Rehman & Others Ulma” Filmed December 12, 2014 YouTube video. Duration 12:08 Posted December 2014 <http://www.eyenub.com/video/tahir-ul-qadri-exposed-by-mufti-muneeb-ur-rehman-others-ulma/x2ce3l5>

devolves into conspiracy theories, which seem straight out of the Protocols of the Elders of Zion.

One such conspiracy theory is that the Jews created the polio vaccine to kill Muslims. According to this theory the polio vaccine is not a vaccine at all but a Jewish plot. On Jan 25 2014 this theory was propagated in Pakistan by Dr. Abu Adnan Saheel, who said,

Currently, one of the biggest polio vaccine companies, “Le Darley,” which is a Jewish company, is making these vaccines by using monkey’s kidney cells. Through Jewish organization like UNICEF, the bulk of infected polio drops are kept in an American warehouse. These infected polio drops, labeled under the “Le Darley” company, are being reused by changing the company label, and have been used for free against non-Jewish nations (such as Pakistan), especially to make the future generations of Muslims handicapped.⁶²

What becomes clear here is the vilification of the Jew and by proxy Israel as the socially accepted rhetoric moves from first saying that Muslims cannot be friends with the Jews to then faulting the Jews for completely fictional misdeeds. But it is not only fictional misdeeds that get blamed on both the Jews and Israel.

Via this type of rhetoric, Israel becomes wrapped up in conspiracy theories where the Jews are masterminds of evil intent in the world. An example of this can be seen in how the Arab Israeli conflict is reported to the Pakistani people. When reporting on Operation Protective Edge, a military operation between the Israel Defense Force and Hamas in the Gaza strip which was prompted by the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teenagers by Hamas, the Pakistani newspaper, *Daily Urdu*, published an article On July 15, 2014 saying that Israel kidnapped and killed its own people in order to provoke a war against Gaza so that Israel could kill Palestinians. The paper noted that

On June 14, three Jews were kidnapped and after a long period, on June 1st they were found dead in the city of Gaza. After that, Israel declared war on Gaza and started an air strike on a large scale. On the one side they targeted

⁶² Abu Adnan Saheel “Two Drops for Life, Polio Movement in One View”, Islamicleaks, Jan 25, 2014. Accessed March 29, 2017 <https://islamicleaks.wordpress.com/2014/01/25/do-boond-zindagi-ki-polio-muhim-ek-nazar-me/>

leaders of Hamas and on the other side they started an assault on the Palestinian people of Gaza. Israel blamed the kidnapping of those three people on Hamas and started proceeding against them. This shows that Israel had already planned against them. Israel was waiting for an excuse, then Israel created its own excuse. First they kidnapped their own citizens, and after they killed them, they threw the dead bodies in the most populated city of the Palestinian people so that they could blame the Palestinians.⁶³

While these types of conspiracy theories are common in the Middle East, Pakistan is not often understood as a place that propagates them. This understanding, however, seems to be changing. According to the Middle East Media Research Institute, “The new generations of Pakistani youth are being taught by the influential Urdu-language press that all major problems facing the society and state of Pakistan are created by Israel, the U.S., and India – or Jews, Christians, and Hindus respectively.”⁶⁴ These groups are referred to as the three Satans. According to the same report, “Maulana Abdul Ghafoor Haideri, secretary-general of the religious organization Jamaat Ulema-e-Islam, blamed India, American agents such as Blackwater, and the Jews for the terror attacks in Pakistan, stating: “Blaming the Taliban for every terrorist activity serves the purpose of the United States. The fact that Blackwater and Jewish elements are involved in terrorism gets ignored.””⁶⁵ It goes on to say, “The government of Pakistan needs to check the involvement of India and Israel in the current stream of terror attacks in Pakistan. India and Israel... are patronizing the terrorist activities in Pakistan.”⁶⁶ While the rhetoric is coming from both state officials and non-state players, the relationship between those two groups is problematic and often blurred.

The power of rhetoric is not to be taken lightly. The preeminent scholar Bernard

⁶³ Sabir Karbalai “Ghaza Per Sehuni Yalghar” The Daily Urdu, July 15, 2014 Accessed March 29, 2017 <http://www.dailyurducolums.com/datColumn.aspx?ColumnID=23953>

⁶⁴ Tufail Ahmad “Pakistan's Jewish Problem” Middle East Media Research Institute March 20, 2011 Accessed April 2 2017 <https://www.memri.org/reports/pakistans-jewish-problem>

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

Lewis, when writing about anti-Semitism, noted that “Hatred of the Jew has many parallels and yet is unique- in its persistence and its extent, its potency and virulence, its terrible final solution.”⁶⁷ He went on to write

In its extreme form, the anti-Semitic view of history portrays the Jew as a satanic force, as the root of virtually all evil in the world, from the earliest time to the present day...Since it is manifestly impossible to maintain these and similar propositions on any rational basis of evidence, the anti-Semite resorts to another characteristic device-the invention of facts and the fabrication of evidence to support them. The most famous of these is undoubtedly the so-called protocols of the elders of Zion. Concocted by the Russian czars’ disinformation service, this book has served as the basis for worldwide anti-Jewish propaganda. It was successfully used by the czarist police, the Whites in the Russian civil war, the German and other Nazis, and certain Arab governments and organizations in their anti-Jewish propaganda. Because of its enormous impact, and the actions taken by those who believe in it, it has been accurately described as a warrant for genocide.⁶⁸

We are now seeing the increase of this rhetoric in Pakistan. While this rhetoric is not new for Judaism nor Israel, the combination of this oratory with a powerful Islamic militant force that exists in the same nation with nuclear weapons is unique to Pakistan.

Pakistan’s Nuclear Weapons

The Pakistani government was forced to recognize how powerful Islamic fundamentalists had become when in December 2003 two assassination attempts were made on President Musharraf’s life. On Dec 14, Musharraf was on his way from an air force base when a huge blast from explosives planted under a bridge that his car had just passed through propelled his bulletproof Mercedes into the air.⁶⁹ Musharraf escaped harm when anti-jamming devices fixed to his car delayed

⁶⁷ Bernard Lewis, *Semitism and Anti-Semites* (New York: WW Norton and Company, 1987) 21.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ “Musharraf eludes assassination bid” CNN.com December 14, 2003 accessed Mar 28 2017 <http://www.cnn.com/2003/WORLD/asiapcf/12/14/blast.musharraf/>

the blast for a few seconds.⁷⁰ Eleven days later, on Dec 25, another assassination attempt was made when two suicide bombers plowed their vehicles into his motorcade and detonated car bombs.⁷¹ He was unhurt, but Pakistani officials said the bombs had killed at least 14 people, including both bombers, wounding 46 others.⁷² The investigation that followed concluded that the attacks were perpetrated by members of the fundamentalist group the Jaish-e- Mohammad and a group of Pakistani air force personnel, providing evidence that the militants had developed a significant following among soldiers and lower-ranking officials.⁷³ This was further complicated by the fact that both assassination attempts had been made in the high- security zone, where supposedly not the slightest movement could go undetected. Thus, fundamentalists can infiltrate the highest security zones in Pakistan.

By this time, Pakistan had become home to 24 Islamic fundamentalist militant groups who were highly trained and were acting with impunity in pursuing both their own internal and external agendas.⁷⁴ By 2012, the MMA as a political force had disbanded as rival groups split from the organization over internal disputes, but not before demonstrating how the ISI had been funding Islamists, how they were able to penetrate security surrounding the highest political offices, and how available government positions have been for them.

The relationship between the military and the Jihadists raises many questions about the safety of the country's nuclear weapons. A report by the *Washington Post* entitled, "Top-secret U.S. intelligence files show new levels of distrust of

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Salman Masood, "Pakistani leader escapes attempt at assassination" , The New York Times, Dec 26, 2003. Accessed Jan 14, 2016 <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/12/26/world/pakistani-leader-escapes-attempt-at- assassination.html>

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Zahid Hussain, *The Scorpion's Tale: The Relentless Rise of Islamic Militants in Pakistan and how it threatens America* (New York: Free Press, 2010), 65.

⁷⁴ Hassa Abbas, *Pakistan's Drift into Extremism* (New York: M.E. Sharpe, 2005) 169-75.

Pakistan,⁷⁵ published on September 2, 2013, reported that

U.S. intelligence agencies are focused on two particularly worrisome scenarios: the possibility that Pakistan's nuclear facilities might come under attack by Islamist militants, as its army headquarters in Rawalpindi did in 2009, and even greater concern that Islamist militants might have penetrated the ranks of Pakistan's military or intelligence services, putting them in a position to launch an insider attack or smuggle out nuclear material.⁷⁶

This concern is shared by some within Pakistan. A prominent Pakistani scientist, Dr. Parvez Hoodbhoy, has also warned that the country's nuclear weapons could be hijacked by extremists.⁷⁷ This fear has been confirmed by scholars as well. Dr. Shaun Gregory, a professor of international security at Durham University, published a paper entitled "Terrorist Tactics in Pakistan Threaten Nuclear Weapons Safety"⁷⁸ in 2011. It stated that "several worrying trends in Pakistan are coming together to suggest that the safety and security of nuclear weapons materials in Pakistan may very well be compromised at some point in the future."⁷⁹

The article further stated:

Terrorist groups have now shown themselves capable of penetrating even the most securely defended of Pakistan's military bases and of holding space within those bases for many hours even against the elite SSG, more than enough time with the right equipment and sufficient numbers to carry out terrorist acts with enormous political or destructive pay-off,

⁷⁵ Greg Miller, Craig Whitlock and Barton Gellman, "Top-secret U.S. intelligence files show new levels of distrust of Pakistan" Washington Post https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/national-security/top-secret-us-intelligence-files-show-new-levels-of-distrust-of-pakistan/2013/09/02/e19d03c2-11bf-11e3-b630-36617ca6640f_story.html?utm_term=.0a22dc9fcb3e accessed December 15, 2016.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

⁷⁷ Musa Khan Jalazai *The Prospect of Nuclear Jihad in Pakistan* (New York : Algora publishing, 2015), 17.

⁷⁸ Shaun Gregory "Terrorist Tactics in Pakistan Threaten Nuclear Weapons Safety" Combating Terrorist Center, June 1, 2011 <https://www.ctc.usma.edu/posts/terrorist-tactics-in-pakistan-threaten-nuclear-weapons-safety> accessed December 15, 2016.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

from video broadcasts with the attention of the world's media, through potentially destroying by explosions nuclear weapons or materials and the creation of a radiological hazard, to the possibility of the theft of nuclear weapons components or materials for subsequent terrorist use.⁸⁰

Pakistan is believed to have the world's fastest-growing nuclear weapons program, possessing 100–120 nuclear weapons.⁸¹ Today, the nation is vigorously pursuing, if it has not already achieved, second-strike capacity, a reliable warning system, and refinement and development of delivery and command-and-control systems.⁸²

In response to India's growing military power, Pakistan developed a tactical battlefield nuclear weapon: the Nasr, officially called Hatf IX, which means Vengeance IX. The missile was successfully tested in 2011, can carry a nuclear warhead, and is highly accurate with a range of 60 km.⁸³ Its 30-kiloton explosion could cause 52,160 immediate civilian deaths and 54,920 severe injuries, according to an analysis published in the Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists. (In a 30-kiloton low-altitude nuclear explosion, the deaths and injuries are caused by multiple effects: (1) a fireball with a radius 0.24 km; (2) an air blast wave of 20 psi with a radius of 0.88 km; (3) a radiation ring of 500 rem with a radius of up to 1.51 km; (4) an air blast wave of 5 psi with a radius of 2.16 km; and (5) a thermal radiation region causing third-degree burns within a radius of 2.72 km.)⁸⁴ If more than one weapon were used, the casualties would be much higher.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Daniel DePetrus, "Atomic nightmare: Welcome to Pakistan Nuclear Weapons 101", The National Interest September 26, 2015. Accessed Feb 14, 2016 <http://nationalinterest.org/feature/welcome-pakistani-nuclear-weapons-101-13942>.

⁸² Mahmud Ali Durrani, *India and Pakistan: The Cost of Conflict and the Benefits of Peace* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 32.

⁸³ Jaganath Sankaran, "Destroying Pakistan's Nukes to Deter India," Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists 70.4 (2014): 74–84.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

Since 2001, Pakistan has tested the Nasr missile four times, most recently on November 5, 2013. The Nasr system is most likely a four-tube adaptation of a Chinese-designed multiple-rocket launcher on an eight-wheeled truck, which can carry four ready-to-fire, 20-ft-long ballistic missiles of approximately 300-mm diameter. It is unclear if Pakistan has developed a warhead small enough to fit in the missile, although Indian experts agree that creating one is possible.⁸⁵ One challenge for Pakistan is that a 60-km range would result in some nuclear blowback into the country.

According to the *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists*, Pakistan continues to grow its arsenal. Since developing the Nasr in 2011, it has deployed two new nuclear-capable short-range ballistic missiles and a new medium-range ballistic missile. The country is also developing two extended-range nuclear-capable ballistic missiles and two nuclear-capable cruise missiles. With several delivery systems in development, four operating plutonium production reactors, and uranium facilities, Pakistan likely will continue to increase its stockpile.

The *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* also notes that Pakistan appears to have five operational nuclear-capable ballistic missiles, three more than in 2011: the medium-range Ghauri (Hatf-5) and Shah-eeen-2 (Hatf-6) and the short-range Abdali (Hatf-2), Ghaznavi (Hatf-3), and Shaheen-1 (Hatf-4). At least two other nuclear-capable ballistic missiles are under development: the short-range Shaheen-1 A and medium-range Shaheen-3. After six test launches, including one on February 15, 2013, Pakistan appears to be close to introducing the short-range, solid-fuel, single-stage Abdali (Hatf-2) into the armed forces. This 180-km (111-mile) dual-capable missile needs several training tests before it is fully operational, but warheads might have already been produced for it. The missile has been displayed on a four-axle, road-mobile Transporter Erector Launcher at several parades. The Bulletin estimates that Pakistan's stockpile realistically could be increased to 220–250 warheads by 2025, which would make Pakistan the world's fifth-largest nuclear-weapons state.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ Hans M. Kristensen and Robert S. Norris, "Pakistani Nuclear Forces, 2015," *Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists* 71.6 (2015): 59–66.

Pakistan and International Terrorism

What, though, has Pakistan contributed to global jihadism and, specifically, to jihadism waged against Israel and Jews? A close look reveals that jihadists from Pakistan have used anti-Israel ideologies as legitimization for a number of activities. To mention only a few examples, on September 5, 1986, a Pan Am 747 Jet was hijacked at the Karachi airport by four Palestinian and seven Pakistani men from Abu Nidal, a splinter group of Yasser Arafat's Fatah. The plane had arrived from India with 320 passengers on board and was scheduled to go to Frankfurt and then JFK International Airport in New York City. In the attempted hijacking, which led to a 16-hour siege, 20 civilians were killed, and 120 others injured. Businessman Mohammed Amin, a passenger on the plane, reported that he heard one hijacker tell another, "The moment of the Last Jihad has arrived. If we are all killed, we will all be martyrs."⁸⁷

On January 25, 1993, a Pakistani man shot and killed two Central Intelligence Agency agents with an AK-47 outside CIA headquarters in Langley, Virginia. The gunman, Mir Kasi, said that he acted because he was angry about U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East, particularly regarding the Palestinian people. According to the official CIA website, Kasi bought the gun he used locally and returned to Pakistan after the shooting. His family then smuggled him into Afghanistan, where a warlord gave him protection.⁸⁸ After four years, believing that the world had forgotten about him, he returned to Pakistan, where he was captured by the CIA. He was brought to the United States and put on trial. In court, Kasi acknowledged his role in the shootings but pleaded not guilty. Convicted in a jury trial, he received the death penalty, carried out by lethal injection at the Virginia State Penitentiary on November 14, 2002.⁸⁹

On September 26, 1993, a truck bomb was exploded in an attempt to destroy the World Trade Center in New York. The plot was masterminded by Kuwaiti-born

⁸⁷ "On this Day" BBC. Accessed Feb 27, 2016

http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/september/5/newsid_4576000/4576765.stm

⁸⁸ <https://www.cia.gov/news-information/featured-story-archive/murder-at-cia.html>.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

Ramsi Yusef, who was the child of Pakistani and Palestinian parents. He, along with Jordanian-born Eyad Ismoil, drove a 1,300-pound nitrate–hydrogen gas bomb stuffed with cyanide into the underground parking garage of the World Trade Center.⁹⁰ The attack was intended to kill tens of thousands of Americans, but only six died, while more than 1,000 others were wounded. Yousef’s original plan was to detonate several explosive devices in various Jewish neighborhoods in Brooklyn, but he changed his target to a single, larger explosion at the World Trade Center.⁹¹ After the failed attempt, Yusuf fled the United States, going first to the Philippines and then to Pakistan. He was arrested two years later in 1995 in Islamabad, Pakistan, and extradited to the United States. At his trial, he reportedly said, “Yes, I am a terrorist and proud of it as long as it is against the U.S. government.” He denounced U.S. government officials as “liars and butchers” for their support of Israel.⁹² He was sentenced to life in prison without parole.

On August 7, 1998, a massive, coordinated attack on the U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania killed 223, including 12 Americans, and wounded more than 4,000 others. The attacks were carried out by Al Qaeda and were linked to the second fatwa issued by bin Laden. He issued his first fatwa, the “Declaration of War against the Americans Occupying the Land of the Two Holy Places,” in 1996, and published it in the London newspaper *Al Quds al Arabi*.⁹³ His second fatwa, issued in 1998, repeated the declaration of war against the United States, Israel, and their allies but went further. The fatwa called it a “ruling to kill Americans and their allies (Israel)— civilians and military”⁹⁴ and labeled this an “individual duty for every Muslim who can do it in any country in which it is possible to do.”⁹⁵ Bin

⁹⁰ Joshua Norman, “The 1993 world trade center bombers where are they now” CBS News, February 26, 2013 Accessed Feb 27, 2016 <http://www.cbsnews.com/news/the-1993-world-trade-center-bombers-where-are-they-now/>.

⁹¹ Accessed on Feb 26, 2016 <http://www.investigativeproject.org/profile/105/ramzi-yousef>.

⁹² Peg Tyre, “Proud Terrorist gets Life for World Trade Bombings”, CNN, January 8, 1988. Accessed Feb 20, 2016 <http://www.cnn.com/US/9801/08/yousef.update/>.

⁹³ David Aikman, *The Mirage of Peace* (Grand Rapids Michigan: Baker Books, 2009).

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

Laden was clearly very serious about this fatwa and demonstrated his organization's intent when, soon after issuing the second fatwa, it committed the coordinated attacks on the U.S. embassies. The bombs went off at the same time in a precise, highly successful attack. Among the perpetrators, planners, and accomplices was Ahmed Khalfan Ghailani. He fled from Africa after the attacks and was on the Federal Bureau of Investigation's most wanted list from 2001 to 2004 until he was captured in Pakistan, where he had believed he would be safe.

On November 26–29, 2008, Mumbai, India was attacked by an Islamist group from Pakistan known as Lashkar-e-Tayyiba. Nine gunmen went on a spree, killing 164 people, specifically targeting westerners and foreigners. They attacked areas in Mumbai frequented by tourists and went room to room, killing whomever they could find at the Taj Mahal Hotel, a landmark waterfront hotel frequented by tourists from throughout the world. In the enormous city of Mumbai, with a population of more than 22 million and an estimated one million people per square kilometer, the attackers sought out the Chabad house, a tiny Jewish center. According to the Chabad website, "The Chabad House was run by Chabad-Lubavitch emissaries Rabbi Gavriel Noach Holtzberg, 29, and Rivkah Holtzberg, 28. The center was especially popular with Israeli backpackers who visit India in the thousands every year after finishing their national army service."⁹⁶ The gunmen went on a shooting spree at the Chabad center, killing the Holtzbergs, Bentzion Kruman, Rabbi Leibish Teitelbaum, Yoheved Orpaz, and Norma Shvarzblat Rabinovich.⁹⁷ The mastermind of the attacks was in contact with the terrorists via cellphone from Pakistan. He is on tape specifically telling the terrorists while they are in the Chabad house to remember that killing a Jew is worth killing 50 non-Jews.⁹⁸

In addition to these examples of Pakistan's connection with international terrorism, much of the Al Qaeda leadership was also found in Pakistan. In 2011, bin Laden was discovered in Abbottabad, Pakistan, in a house where he had been living

⁹⁶ "The Events at the Mumbai Chabad House and the Immediate Aftermath", Chabad.org/news November 17, 2009. Accessed on Feb 20, 2016. http://www.chabad.org/library/article_cdo/aid/1041916/jewish/The-Events.htm.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JDROrLtc6GM> . Accessed on March 18, 2018.

comfortably since 2006.⁹⁹ Abbottabad, is home to the Pakistani military academy (equivalent to the U.S. West Point), which suggests he might have received aid from the Pakistani military. Ilyas Kashmiri, a Libyan and senior member of Al Qaeda, was found and killed in Pakistan's North-West Frontier Region, where he had been living.¹⁰⁰ Similarly, two other senior Al Qaeda members—Kuwaiti-born Abu Zaid al Kuwaiti and Libyan-born Abu Yahya al-Libi—were found and killed in Pakistan.¹⁰¹

Israel has not been exempted from terrorist attacks linked to Pakistan. At midnight on April 29, 2003, two suicide bombers attacked Mike's Place, a beachfront Tel Aviv bar. The bombers, Asif Muhammad Hanif and Omar Khan Sharif, had moved from Pakistan to the United Kingdom and entered Israel through the humanitarian organization called International Solidarity Movement. They entered Israel via the Allenby bridge from Jordan.¹⁰² The bombers were connected with Hamas, though both Hamas and Fatah's Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades claimed responsibility for the bombing. The night of the attack, fifty people were injured and three killed.¹⁰³

The Stability of the Pakistani Regime

Pakistan is run on the one hand by a pragmatic regime, but has on the other hand extremely powerful jihadist forces within its borders. Can that regime maintain

⁹⁹ "Death of Osama bin Laden Fast Facts" CNN May 12, 2015. Accessed Feb 20, 2016 <http://www.cnn.com/2013/09/09/world/death-of-osama-bin-laden-fast-facts/>.

¹⁰⁰ Robert Windrem "Six Potential al Qaeda Leaders Eliminated Since bin Laden Raid" NBC News, Feb 26, 2014. Accessed. Feb 20, 2016. <http://www.nbcnews.com/news/investigations/six-potential-al-qaeda-leaders-eliminated-bin-laden-raid-n38171>.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² "Hamas Officially Claims Responsibility for Mike's Place Bombing " Ha'aretz, March 08, 2004. Accessed Feb 20, 2016. read more: <http://www.haaretz.com/news/hamas-officially-claims-responsibility-for-mike-s-place-bombing-1.116160>

¹⁰³ "Details of April 30- 2003 Tel Aviv suicide bombing-3-Jun-2003" Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Accessed on Feb 20, 2016. <http://mfa.gov.il/MFA/PressRoom/2003/Pages/Detailspercent20ofpercent20Aprilpercent2030-percent202003percent20Telpercent20Avivpercent20suicidepercent20bombing.aspx>.

power and keep the jihadists away from the country's nuclear weapons? *Foreign Policy* magazine has released its annual ranking of the world's least stable countries, now known as the Fragile State Index, and has Pakistan ranked as the 10th most fragile state in the world. The rankings are based on 12 metrics, including access to public services, the prevalence of refugees and internally displaced persons, human rights, and the legitimacy of the state.¹⁰⁴ The Fragile States index of 2016, "is an annual ranking of 178 nations based on their levels of stability and the pressures they face, (they put nations into one of eleven rankings, those being very sustainable, sustainable, very stable, more stable, stable, warning, elevated warning, high warning, alert, high alert and very high alert.)"¹⁰⁵ put Pakistan in the category of "high alert", with only 13 other nations in a more dire situation.

The report goes on to state that in fact, the situation in Pakistan was getting worse, not better. That was in 2016. As of November 25, 2017, radical clerics were able to bring the capital city to a standstill. The *New York Times* reported the incident as follows: Thousands of Pakistani police officers in riot gear fired tear gas and rubber bullets on Saturday as they tried to clear out supporters of a firebrand cleric who have paralyzed the Pakistani capital for weeks with a protest on a main highway.¹⁰⁶

The article went on to make the obvious point that "The violence and spreading protests present a grave challenge to the country's governing party, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz."¹⁰⁷

The ability to bring a capital city to a standstill in other nations often comes from economic factors. Or, in the case of the revolutions which swept across the Arab world from 2010 to 2011, sometimes called the Arab Spring or Arab Awakening, other factors were identified. The Arab Human Development Report identified three main deficits at the root of those revolutions; lack of political freedom,

¹⁰⁴ <http://www.businessinsider.com/the-worlds-25-most-failed-states-2014-7>

¹⁰⁵ <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/fragilestatesindex-2016.pdf>

¹⁰⁶ <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/25/world/asia/pakistan-protests-khadim-hussain-rizvi.html>

¹⁰⁷ Ibid.

education and the deficit of women's rights.¹⁰⁸ In 2017 Pakistan, however, the protests which brought the capital to a standstill and which saw social unrest in many other cities throughout the nation were not over these issues. The clerics were able to stage mass protests because of a proposed oath to be taken by lawmakers that omitted mention of the Prophet Muhammad.

By April 2018, that same group, the Tehreek-e-Labaik, turned the city of Lahore into a no-go zone by staging protests at the entrances and exits of the city.¹⁰⁹ That is only one organization run by a radical cleric. There are today more than 40 terrorist organizations operating both inside and outside of Pakistan.¹¹⁰ According to the 2016 Global Terrorism Index, it is among the world's top five countries most affected by terrorism. The country had over 12,000 terrorist attacks between 2009 and 2016, resulting in 16,526 deaths.¹¹¹ Patterns of terrorist activity in 2016 suggest that militants who have been pushed out of the tribal regions are moving into Pakistan's urban areas, such as Karachi, Lahore, and Quetta, to carry out large-scale attacks.¹¹² It would not be unreasonable to be concerned about Islamic fundamentalists gaining access to nuclear weapons.

One need not only look at the current statistics on instability. Pakistan has a long history of instability. Created in August 1947, Pakistan immediately had to deal with the absorption of millions of immigrants. Although Pakistan absorbed more than 4 million refugees and took their rehabilitation and relocation seriously, the economic and social strains were overwhelming. The government took the official stance that it did not consider "migration to this country [to be] an unlimited process" and could not "make provision for unlimited migration for all times to come".¹¹³ While it struggled to absorb the refugees, by October 1947 it fought its

¹⁰⁸ <http://www.arab-hdr.org/>

¹⁰⁹ <https://tribune.com.pk/story/1683784/1-tlyra-protest-threatens-grow-govts-deadline-expires-today/>

¹¹⁰ <https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/Pakistan-StateofConflictandViolence.pdf>

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Bipan Chandra. *India after independence* (New Delhi: Penguin Books, 1999) 84.

first war with India, a war that it lost. It would fight a second war with India in 1965, this time losing as well. In the aftermath of the 1965 war, civil unrest in East Pakistan (what is today Bangladesh) grew and by 1971 East Pakistan was openly calling for independence. In response West Pakistan sent in the military and murdered three million of their own people and raped an estimated 400,000 women, every one of them a Pakistani citizen. This was done in an attempt to squash notions of separation but despite these violent actions against their own people they were still unable to hold on to East Pakistan, which did separate and formed the independent nation of Bangladesh in 1971.

The standard of living is also unstable. The developmental model from 1947 until 1971 was based on the principal that an impoverished labor force and increasing inequality were necessary for industrialization, and industrial development was necessary for economic growth.¹¹⁴ This has had a devastating effect on the population. The estimate average per capita purchasing power in Pakistan is approx. \$7.03 a day. The poorest ten percent of the nation consume only 3.7percent of total national goods and services while the wealthiest ten percent consume 28.3percent¹¹⁵ According to *A History of Pakistan* edited by Roger Long:

By the multidimensional poverty index, which takes into consideration such factors as whether a child has died in the family, whether no household member has more than five years of schooling, and whether the household floor is made of dung, dirt or sand, few countries -- only Ethiopia, Tanzania, Bangladesh and Nigeria -- have a larger portion of the population living in poverty than Pakistan.¹¹⁶

At the same time that this situation persists, Pakistan is the sixth most populous country in the world with a population of over 207 million people. It has a growth rate of 2.3 percent per year and is expected to grow to 350 million people by 2050, when it will become the fourth most populous nation in the world.¹¹⁷ Millions of

¹¹⁴ Roger, Long, *A History of Pakistan* (Karachi: Oxford University Press, 2015) 742.

¹¹⁵ Ibid. 746.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. 747.

¹¹⁷ Ibid. 745.

people die from preventable illnesses and injuries in Pakistan every year. Every day, thousands of people, mostly children and disproportionately girls, die from treatable illnesses such as malaria, diarrhea and water-borne diseases. In cross-national surveys, satisfaction in Pakistan with education and health is the lowest in South Asia and is lower than the average in Sub Saharan Africa, the world region whose populations report being least satisfied with educational and health services. For women, one of the most life-threatening experiences will continue to be the act of giving birth. By all indications, the likelihood of Pakistan's regime maintaining control in the long run is tenuous.

Conclusion

Under the current regime, it would be highly unlikely that Pakistan would engage Israel in any type of military conflict. The current regime is involved in a prolonged conflict with India, a formidable nemesis on its border, and hostility towards Israel seems a peripheral concern.

However, there is a very powerful Jihadist movement in Pakistan that in the recent past has assumed government positions, has been trained and aided by the Pakistani secret service and has been able to infiltrate high security zones. It seems there are two powerful institutions in Pakistan as far as Israel is concerned. On the one hand a pragmatic government that has no great focus on Israel and on the other an Islamic fundamentalism that understands the liberation of Jerusalem as a sacred duty.

When Pakistan was created nine months before Israel, it was not created as a theocracy. Yet almost immediately there ensued a battle between those in the new nation who wanted a modern democratic government and Islamists, influenced by Maududi, who sought a theocracy. That battle has never ceased. Over the seventy years since its inception there has been an ebb and flow of power, where sometimes the secular regimes were in a greater position of strength and at other periods the jihadists seemed to gain power. What is clear is that over these 70 years the Islamists have learned how to gain and retain strength. What is also clear is that the government of Pakistan over the course of its history has not been the most stable. Pakistan has seen three military coups in its short history, multiple failed coups, and over 30 political assassinations. As long as the current regime is able to maintain power, it would not seem that Israel has a problem; however, if there is a

military coup and Pakistan's nuclear arsenal, or even parts of the arsenal, fall into the wrong hands, Israel certainly would have cause for concern. Pakistan's powerful militant Islamic forces would love to harm Israel (as would all militant Islamic forces) and as of 2018 they are closer to having access to nuclear weapons than other militant Islamic groups throughout the globe. Pakistan has one of the fastest growing nuclear programs in the world, with over 120 nuclear weapons, and is a player in international terrorism; it is not clear that the regime will be able to keep their weapons out of the hands of Islamic militants in the longrun.

Islamic militancy in Pakistan seems to be getting stronger while the pragmatic Pakistani regime seems to be facing an—increasingly unstable situation. If Benjamin Netanyahu's words, “We must always remember—I'll say it one more time—the greatest danger facing our world is the marriage of militant Islam with nuclear weapons”—are to be taken seriously, one must look not only at Iran, but at Pakistan, the only Islamic nation that currently has nuclear weapons.

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C. B. Divakaruni, *The Palace of Illusions* (Anchor Books, New York: 2008, ISBN: 9780385525435), 360 pp.

Review by David R. Blumenthal

Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni is a well-known novelist who writes from the Hindu tradition. Her work sparkles with the strangeness (to the western imagination) of spells, magic, dreams, deep beauty, poetic images, many gods, and a free movement through time. As Divakaruni writes, life in all its complexity unfolds; the epic of existence is disclosed. In addition, Divakaruni writes in the voice of a woman – not to reveal the abuse of women, not to demand feminist rights, but to give voice to the woman, to see the world from the point of view of the woman, and to acknowledge, and use when needed, the power of the woman.

The Palace of Illusions is the most “religious” of Divakaruni’s books that I have read. It is her retelling of a part of the great Mahabharat epic, an epic that has been told and retold over the millennia. Her story deals with the fierce rivalry between two branches of the Kuru dynasty, the Pandavas and the Kauravas. The story begins *in medias res*: there has been a drought, there have been wars, and there is the memory of very good and fruitful times. The princess, Panchaali / Draupadi, who is the chief character and the narrator of Divakaruni’s interpretation, is beautiful and wise. She marries royally to ten brothers and works out an agreeable marital way of living! And she builds her palace, which is the palace of illusions. As fate would have it, the men gamble and the chief brother gambles away the kingdom. The debt must be repaid but the conditions for that are degrading. And, thus, ensues a series of wars between the members of the two families which ends tragically.

Divakaruni tells the story with great art. (Fortunately, she provides a genealogical chart so those of us not already familiar with the characters can follow.) The supernatural palace of beauty is strikingly told as are the wars waged by human and divine powers. The interaction of the personalities is alternately fierce and touching. The tragedy of the characters on both sides of the conflict is deep. The ending is a surprise (at least to western readers).

As a western reader, I find the complexity confusing, but life is like that. I am not offended by the calling upon many gods, nor by the resort to magic, dreams, and spells. That is part of the otherness of Hindu culture, and I accept that.

At the key moment in the drama, the princess is shamed publicly by her lover and her husbands. She responds with a curse: “All of you will die in the battle that will be spawned from this day’s work. Your mothers and wives will weep far more piteously than I’ve wept. This entire kingdom will become a charnel house. Not one Kaurava will be left to offer prayers for the dead.” She, then, reflects on her role as a woman: “All this time I’d thought myself better than my father, than all those men who inflicted harm on a thousand innocents in order to punish the one man who had wronged them. I’d thought myself above the cravings that drove him. But I, too, was tainted with them, vengeance encoded into my blood...” (194-95). The rest of the story, including the ending that exculpates the princess, unfolds from this moment with ineluctable force.

For a Jewish reader, this is incomprehensible. Jonah prophesies doom for Nineveh, but the city repents, and the decree is voided. People make vows, but the final chapter of Leviticus provides for the annulling of vows and, in rabbinic tradition, the High Priest is rebuked for not annulling the vow of Jephthah (Judges, chapter 11). No gambling debt, no curse binds human beings so tightly as to make war unavoidable. Repentance is the way out of ineluctable karma. In the book, Krishna who is king and god at the same time says to the princess: “Only a fool meddles in the Great Design. Besides, your destiny is born of lifetimes of karma, too powerful for me to change” (40). In Jewish tradition, this too is incomprehensible. There is no “Great Design” that transcends God. Even God is bound to be fair and just. This is the lesson of Abraham’s argument over the destruction of Sodom (Genesis, chapter 18) as well as the thrust of the Book of Job – that God can, and must, be held responsible for evil; fate is not above God. Even the Shoah must be viewed in this light (see *Facing the Abusing God: A Theology of Protest*). Finally, in Jewish tradition, the one whose vanity and whose curse has been central to the story cannot simply be cleansed of all responsibility at the end.

A very beautifully told interpretation of a powerful Hindu epic that both captivates and raises serious questions for inter-traditional dialogue.

Shalom Salomon Wald and Arielle Kandel, *India, Israel and the Jewish People: Looking Ahead, Looking Back 25 Years after Normalization* (Jerusalem, The Jewish People Policy Institute, 2017, ISBN 978-965-7549-16-2), 253 pages.

Review by Navras Jaat Aafreedi

There are several books on India-Israeli relations; the most prominent being the ones written by P R Kumaraswamy and Nicholas Blarel. There is no scarcity of books on Jews in India, written by scholars like Nathan Katz, Joan G. Roland, Shalva Weil, Shirley Berry Isenberg, Schifra Strizower, Yulia Egorova, Benjamin J Israel, Nissim Moses, etc. There are also a few books on Indian Jews in Israel, authored by Joseph Hodes and Maina Chawla Singh. Yet, there was hardly any book to put the relations between the two countries in the historical perspective of ties between the ancient civilizations of India and Judea, and later the Jewish Diaspora. Shalom Salomon Wald and Arielle Kandel's *India, Israel and the Jewish People: Looking Ahead, Looking Back 25 Years after Normalization* (2017) not only does this, but also makes policy recommendations to the State of Israel. It is in this respect that it breaks new ground, for which Wald and Kandel are to be commended. Part of the Jewish People Policy Institute's ongoing project on emerging superpowers without a Biblical tradition and no history of antisemitism. It is preceded by a similar work by Wald, *China and the Jewish People – Old Civilizations in a New Era*, published a decade ago and translated into Mandarin in 2014.

For strengthening relations with India, the book proposes to Israel a ten-year plan focused on six different domains: Political and Strategic Ties, Economic and Technological Ties, Cultural and Media Ties, Academic, Educational, and Religious Ties, Ties with India's Intellectual Elites and Israeli Tourists and Tikkun Olam in India.

The book, divided into five chapters, viz., Why India?; India Marches West: Fast Growing Links with the Middle East; The Development of Indo-Israeli Ties; India, The Jewish People, and Israel: A Triangular Relationship; and Excursion into History: Ancient and Medieval Traces, is primarily based on 120 interviews, but also draws heavily from secondary sources, with a bibliography of 131 texts. It has

a foreword by Reuven Rivlin, president of Israel, and a preface by Avinoam Bar-Yosef, director of the Jewish People Policy Institute.

The first chapter of the book underscores the importance of India and draws our attention to how “old history provides a favourable framework for growing links between the Indian and Jewish civilizations”. It points out that the “relations between the two are among the oldest continuous links between any living civilizations”. It reminds us that David Ben Gurion, the first prime minister of Israel, “exhorted Israel and the Jewish people to reach out to China and India because (written in 1963) ‘the two Asian states – China and India – would become the greatest powers in the world’”. Another reason for us to consider Ben Gurion absolutely right in this attitude of his towards China and India, is the fact these two Asian giants are the only such countries where Jews could live in absolute peace and harmony with their non-Jewish neighbours for centuries. This was unlike anywhere else in the world. They were helped in this by the non-proselytizing nature of the religions predominantly practised in these countries, for neither the Confucians and Taoists in China nor the Hindus in India ever made any attempt to convert the Jews in their midst to their religion. Although both China and India established diplomatic relations with Israel in the same year, 1992, yet in sharp contrast to India, where no university, except one, offers any course in Jewish Studies, a dozen universities in China have Jewish Studies, with four of them awarding doctoral degree in the subject. Even the one university in India, the two-hundred-year-old Presidency University in Kolkata, that offers an undergraduate course in Global Jewish History and a postgraduate course in Holocaust Studies, might be compelled to discontinue these courses because of the latest directive from the University Grants Commission aimed to bring about uniformity in curriculum at the tertiary level of education across the country. It would be a big loss. The chapter cautions against ignoring the 180 million Muslims in India, fifteen percent of its population. Wahabi extremism is infiltrating some of India’s Sunni community rapidly through returning expatriates from the oil-rich Persian Gulf states, increasing the danger of terrorism in India and beyond. At the same time a failed attempt to assassinate an Israeli diplomat in Delhi displayed Iran’s influence, for it was abetted by at least one Indian Shia acting on Iranian instructions. Wald and Kandel emphasise that no matter who forms the government in India, its Muslims will continue to “carry a lot of weight, both

domestically and internationally”. Hence, according to them, it is reason enough for world Jewry, “together with but even more than Israel,” to strengthen relations with India’s “moderate Muslims and their leadership” to “mitigate the potential hostility” from them and “its future impact on Indian history”. In fact, one of the three who are considered the originators of Pan-Islamism, was an Indian – Shah Wali Allah (1702-1763). The person who is considered the father of Jihadist militant ideology, Abul Ala Mawdudi (1903-1979), was also born in India, and lived there until he migrated to Pakistan, the state carved out of India in 1947. His Urdu writings were translated into Arabic by Abul Hasan Ali Hasani Nadwi (1914-1999), the rector of Nadwatul Ulama in Lucknow, a highly prestigious Sunni seminary. He was also the founding chair of the board of trustees of the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies, and this was in spite of the fact that even his own publications were full of antisemitic rhetoric. Mawdudi in Arabic was read by Sayid Qutb, the figurehead of the Muslim Brotherhood of Egypt. He not only embraced his ideology of Jihad against the “Judeo-Christian” West, but also popularised it across the Arab World. The only way to eliminate antisemitism is through the spread of education. “The ignorance about Judaism and Jewish history is, of course, a particularly fertile breeding ground for anti-Semitism...,” as Robert Wistrich, author of *Antisemitism: The Longest Hatred*, cautioned us. As a matter of fact, Israel has done little for the promotion of Jewish Studies in India and it also does not seem to figure in its list of priorities when it comes to India. The only Indian scholar to have taken the study of Jews in India as his life-long vocation and the one who has done more than anyone to bring about a positive change in Indian Muslim attitudes towards Jews, Israel and Zionism has hardly received any Israeli support to his activities, even when he has approached them.

The second chapter is a critical appraisal of the five major developments that explain India’s evolving relationship with West Asia: Its need for oil and natural gas, expansion of economic exchanges with West Asia, the domestic Muslim influence on India’s policy towards West Asia, political and military links in West Asia, and India’s desire for recognition as a global power.

The third chapter is devoted to the study of the development of Indo-Israeli ties, from 1947 to today. It explains as to why India refused to have diplomatic relations with Israel for more than four decades even after recognising it in 1950, while it

continued to have diplomatic relations with the countries it fought wars with, China and Pakistan. It also explains as to how India came to establish diplomatic relations with Israel and how the relations have progressed. The chapter is insightful in its commentary on constraints and challenges in Indo-Israeli relations. The authors are right in pointing out that “there is no continent where Israeli and Jewish cultural outreach has been as weak and insufficient as Asia”. It laments the lack of Jewish and Israeli cultural outreach in India. The authors are conscious of the fact that insufficient funding severely constraints Israeli cultural outreach. “The overall cultural budget of Israel’s Foreign Ministry is far too small to enable Israel to conduct appropriate and effective cultural diplomacy abroad. The budget allocated for the promotion of Israeli and Jewish culture in India is miniscule considering India’s size, increasing global importance, and rapidly growing population.” But, at the same time the authors rightly indicate Israeli diplomats’ lack of appropriate fluency in the cultural fields, and their generally greater interest in dealing with political matters. There have been instances when they have even failed to provide endorsements and recommendations that did not involve any finances, to those seeking to contribute to the promotion of Jewish Studies in India. The authors wisely advise that student and scholars exchange programmes in the humanities should be expanded, for “these students and scholars could play a positive role in advancing Indo-Israeli ties.”

The fourth chapter discusses at length the triangular relationship of India, Israel and the Jewish Diaspora. The first section of the chapter is devoted to a historical overview of the Jewish presence in India. The second section of the chapter discusses the Zionist efforts to lobby the Indian political leaders in pre-independence India. The third section of the chapter looks at the role played by American Jewry in the establishment of diplomatic relations between India and Israel. The fourth section is devoted to a discussion of relations between the Jewish and Indian diasporas in the United States and the United Kingdom. The fifth section draws our attention to Jewish dialogue with Hindus and Muslims. The sixth section devotes itself to the engagement of Jewish NGOs with the Indian civil society. The last section of the chapter is devoted to how Jews figure in Indian fiction and how India is depicted in Jewish fiction.

The fifth and the last chapter of the book is an exploration of ancient and medieval links between India and the Jewish World, right from the First Temple Period. It concerns itself with Biblical references to spices, fragrances, and animals from India, how India came to be idealized in the Hellenistic imagination of Jews (300 BCE – 200 CE), how Mishnah and Talmud deal with the Indian reality (150-500 CE), Jewish India traders in the Middle Ages (1100-1300 CE), and how India in the medieval Jewish thought (900-1300 CE) fluctuates between admiration and rejection.

The book is a welcome addition to the field of Indo-Judaic Studies for the significant contribution it makes by drawing our attention to all the lacunas in our pursuit for greater Indo-Judaic engagement. It proposes a roadmap for Indo-Israeli relations and Indo-Jewish engagement for the next one decade. The authors are entitled to our ungrudging gratitude for this. The entire text of the book can be read and downloaded from here: www.jpji.org.il

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Ithamar Theodor and Yudit Kornberg Greenberg, eds. *Dharma and Halacha– Comparative Studies in Hindu-Jewish Philosophy and Religion*. (Lanham: Lexington Books, 2018, vii + 262 pages, ISBN 978-1-8985-1279-4).

Review by Nathan Katz

This is a very welcome volume, the first edited collection of comparisons of Hinduism and Judaism since Hananya Goodman's pioneering 1994 book.¹ It is welcome because of its range and the quality of the contributors' scholarship, and also because there are many fewer book-length studies than one might imagine. There are several single-author works, most notably contributions by Margaret Chatterjee's breakthrough work,² Alan Brill's soon-to-be-released work,³ and Alon Goshen-Gottstein recent work on Jewish-Hindu dialogue.⁴ There are other notable books as well, and numerous scholarly articles and countless popular contributions.

Before delving into this book, itself, I would like to mention a contextual observation, the distinction between Hindu-Jewish Studies and Indo-Judaic Studies. Simply put, the former deals with two religions, and the latter with two cultures or peoples. The latter includes but is not confined to studies of religious interactions and comparisons and is explored in the *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* in particular, which encompassed historical, literary,

¹ Hananya Goodman. *Between Jerusalem and Benares: Comparative Studies in Judas and Hinduism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994.

² Margaret Chatterjee. *Studies in Modern Jewish and Hindu Thought*. Houndmills: Macmillan Press, 1997.

³ Alan Brill. *A Rabbi on the Ganges*. Forthcoming.

⁴ Alon Goshen-Gottstein. *The Jewish Encounter with Hinduism: Wisdom, Spirituality, Identity*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

and other fields, and the former is the focus of the “Comparative Studies of Hinduism and Judaism Group” within the American Academy of Religion.

As for the current book, after Greenberg’s concise and clear Introduction, the first section explores “Ritual and Sacrifice” in three fine chapters: one about the use of *murtis* or images in Hinduism, juxtaposed against the biblical prescriptions about “idolatry”; another that compares the “holy ark” (*aron hakodesh*) in synagogues to the *garbha* (literally, “womb,” where *murtis* are stored);⁵ and the third explores hospitality in texts of the two traditions, for which hospitality is itself a normative sacred act.

The second section is about ethics, and the first chapter, entitled “Dharma and Halacha,” very successfully introduces the subject. The next two deal, in one way or another, with animals and vegetarianism. This is the most difficult topic in the entire book, as there is a paucity of normative Judaic writings on the subject, which has always been marginal to Judaism. The fourth chapter opens an important discussion about widows, who are differently problematic in both traditions.

Four chapters comprise the final, compelling section on Theology, perhaps the most successful in the book. It begins with a look at holy persons, and the second chapter on eros and divine love is a careful, suggestive reading of *Shir ha-Shirim* (“Song of Songs”) and the *Gitagovinda*. The role of aesthetic consciousness in Jewish and Hindu mysticisms is the focus on the third chapter, and the concluding one views an obvious but generally overlooked phenomenon: the mysterious names of OM and the Tetragrammaton. This insightful essay is by Rabbi Daniel Sperber, to whom this work is appropriately dedicated.

An interesting epilogue unpacks the “whence and wither” of Hindu-Jewish Studies.

⁵ Some connections between the *aron* and the *garbha* were discussed in Nathan Katz and Ellen S. Goldberg, *The Last Jews of Cochin: Jewish Identity in Hindu India*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), pages 180-188.

I have only two criticisms, minor ones. The first is that this book is mistitled. As its chapters discuss the range of religious comparisons, it is not limited to Halacha, or Jewish law. The term “Dharma” subsumes all of Hinduism (and Buddhism and Jainism as well), but the term “Halacha” refers to one particular aspect of Judaism. This being said, I cannot suggest a better title, and the misnomer is a very minor distraction.

One of the challenges for both Hindu-Jewish and Indo-Judaic studies is embracing authentic voices from each side of the comparison. The current work does not do a very good balancing job, as there is only one chapter by an Indian. Despite its skewed balance of contributors, this is a very well done and important work that will advance its field significantly. I recommend it highly for scholars, students, and other interested persons.

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Obituary: Zaithanchhungi



We just learned from her daughter, Annette, that Zaithanchhungi passed away a few months ago at her home in Aizawl, Mizoram. She is the author of *Israel-Mizo Identity: Mizos (Chhinlung Tribes) Children of Menashe are the descendants of Israel* (2000) and several books on the same topic in her Mizo language, the first work on an intriguing community.

A Christian herself, she takes great pride in the emergence of the Bene Menashe from among her own people. The good Christian folks of Mizoram are all staunch Zionists and Israel lovers. Around Aizawl, one notices streets and shops bearing names like Zion, Solomon, Israel, and the like. Zai, as she was known to all, gladly helped visiting Jews connect with the Bene Menashe. My wife and I are among the fortunate ones to have been befriended by her. With great enthusiasm, she took us to Aizawl's two synagogues, the miqveh, and facilitated our 2015 visit there. We learned a lot!

I first came to know her during the 1980s when I was in the early stages of my research about Indian Jews. She gifted me then with an earlier edition of her book, which complemented my meager knowledge of Bene Menashe in Burma. She was the pioneer, she was the inspiration, she was the one who introduced me, visitors such as Rabbi Eliahu Avihail, author Hillel Halkin, and activist Michael Freund, and thereby played a large role into the affirmation of a Bene Menashe Israelite identity. The rest, as they say, is history.

Those of us who new her will long remember her pioneering work, her passionate embrace of her Jewish neighbors, her tireless energy in promoting

their cause, and her remarkable kindness in hosting us. For all of this, I am eternally grateful and honor her memory.

Nathan Katz

Obituary:

A Remembrance of Rabbi Ezekiel Nissim Musleah, (1927-2020)

When he passed away of COVID-19 at age 92 on July 14, 2020, Rabbi Musleah was best remembered for his style of chanting Torah, which it is said put him in a class by himself. After leaving his native Kolkata, Musleah spent more than half a century ministering to several congregations in Philadelphia, including historic Mikveh Israel, the fourth oldest congregation in the U.S. and the second longest standing synagogue in the Sephardic tradition after Shearith Israel in New York. For nearly 70 years altogether, he enthralled congregants at four synagogues on two continents by bringing the expertise of a scholar and the dramatic flair of a storyteller to his reading of Torah through precisely pronouncing phrases in order to convey the full meaning of the Biblical account.



Having dedicated his efforts at age 10 to a meticulous three-year undertaking to learn to chant the entire Torah, in part to console himself after the untimely death of his mother, Musleah further developed his skills while studying at the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York for five years beginning in 1947. According to his daughter Rahel Musleah, who was 6 when she came to America and has been well known for her studies of Indian Jewry, “His Torah reading was masterful. Every letter, every vowel, every trope was resonant with his understanding of the text.” Adam Laver, a lawyer who began studying with the rabbi as a teenager, recalls, “When Rabbi Musleah read Torah in the synagogue, it was like hearing the voice of God.”

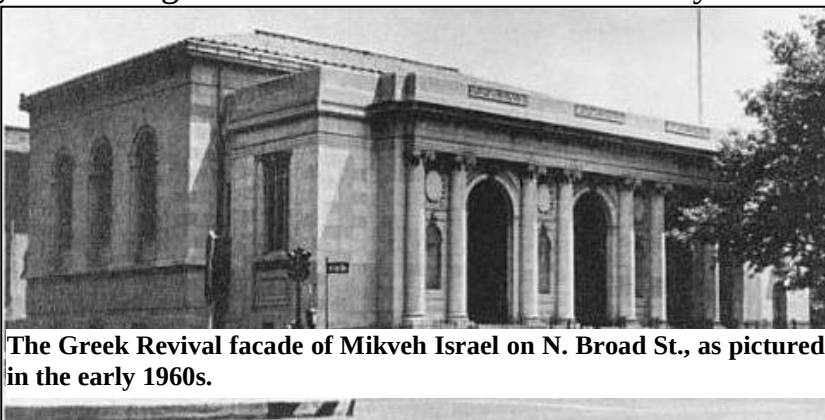
Two Remarkable Rabbis

The way timing and fate worked out, I was the first American student to work closely with Rabbi Musleah when he arrived at K.K. Mikveh Israel in 1964, just a year after my bar mitzvah in January 1963 under the training of Rev. Alan Corr  (1931-2017), an eminent linguist who left soon after to take a university position. This was a rather brief but very intense period of learning, or actually relearning, Torah reading that had a profound impact, along with other rich and valuable experiences, on a young and unknowing teenager taking part in a congregation that was founded in 1740 and played a key role in the War of Independence but was

going through a turbulent phase. Only in retrospect, with the recent passing of these remarkable teachers, Ezekiel Musleah and his predecessor Alan Corré, who represented very different components of the Sephardic tradition—South Asian and Spanish Portuguese, respectively, with their distinct customs and procedures, both contrasted with mainstream Ashkenazi styles—did I come to appreciate deeply the significance of what it meant to work so intimately with the two rabbis.

The Mikveh Israel synagogue building at that time was an extraordinary edifice

that was constructed in 1909 in limestone in the Greek Revival style, with stately Ionic columns, mammoth arched bronze doors, 40-foot ceilings, and marble floors. The Bimah faced the ark from a distance, with the congregants sitting in



The Greek Revival facade of Mikveh Israel on N. Broad St., as pictured in the early 1960s.

pews to the left or right of a central walkway used for carrying the Torah and women seated in balconies. The opulent design, which created a genuine allure filled with awe and mystery, was at first suited to the location on North Broad Street and York, near Temple University, that was becoming a fashionable neighborhood. In the 1960s the congregation had prominent members like William Chomsky, father of Naom, who ran the Hebrew school and also led Gratz College, built right behind the synagogue, and taught at the prestigious research facility on Hebrew and Cognate Languages at Dropsie College situated next door. In addition, Arlen Specter, then a rising politician who later served several terms as U.S. Senator, regularly attended the High Holidays.

However, this building had become outdated by the early sixties, because of its meager office space, inefficient washrooms, and the absence of other expected amenities, plus the surrounding area was greatly affected by urban decay. It was difficult to find suitable housing for the rabbis to be able to walk to the synagogue on Shabbat and holidays. Mikveh Israel, with its historical importance, was awaiting an ambitious plan to be relocated to the newly redeveloped colonial district in downtown Philadelphia. Due to various complications, including a series of ten unrealistic designs offered by famed architect Louis Kahn, the move did not take place until 1976, as the nation's bicentennial celebrations in that area were getting underway.

Meanwhile, other older synagogues on N. Broad Street were moving to suburban locations. This included the Reform congregation Knesset Israel, based in a magnificent building a mile south of Mikveh Israel, which found a modern home in Elkins Park, and the Conservative congregation Beth Sholom, which moved to the same area in 1959. Beth Sholom occupied the grand new building that was designed by Frank Lloyd Wright to resemble the Star of David and offer nighttime onlookers the appearance of a “luminous Mount Sinai.” The Reform congregation Rodeph Sholom founded in 1795, on the other hand, has stayed in its Moorish Revival edifice designed by Frank Furness in 1866 near City Hall, with a branch center opened in Elkins Park in the 1950s. For a while, Mikveh Israel had a facility nearby in a charming old mansion, where the Hebrew school was located, but this was torn down in the early sixties to make way for the widening of Cheltenham Avenue.

Bar Mitzvah and Post-Bar Mitzvah

My preparations for the bar mitzvah, beginning in the summer of 1962, were quite intense as I studied over a period of months, practicing several hours daily, with Alan Corré, who had joined the congregation in 1955 as a 24-year old ordained in London by The Haham, Rabbi Dr. Solomon Gaon, Chief Rabbi of Sephardic Congregations of the British Commonwealth. A couple of years later he married Nita Levy Corré, who hailed from Gibraltar. At the time, my understanding of Sephardic tradition, which seemed to be totally unfamiliar to my Jewish friends from public school who invariably were members of Ashkenazi congregations, was rooted in the Spanish Portuguese way that had passed on to London, Amsterdam, and New York. It seemed that the prayer books and other reading materials were all produced by Portuguese rabbis.

The main element that disrupted this view was the presence of the cantor from Morocco, Isaac Edrehi, who served for nearly fifty years beginning in 1927 and wore a fez-like black head covering. Edrehi was a solitary individual, who it seemed only opened his mouth for singing, so there was not much to be learned about his background other than a vaguely exotic feeling based on intriguing interactions involving liturgy. On the other hand, because Corré had laryngitis the day of my ceremony, Edrehi did, as a rare occasion, address the congregation to offer a sermon. I learned decades later that he hailed from a long line of Moroccan rabbi-scholars, whose ancestors were forced to flee their native country because of a pogrom and spread to Europe, Israel, and America.

I also eventually realized that another mysterious but inspiring figure, Rev. Mr. Leon Haim Elmaleh (1873-1972), who was the religious leader of Mikveh Israel

from 1898 to 1929 and Reverend Emeritus until his death, had a family background from the Ottoman Empire. He was a founder of the Levantine Jews Society of Philadelphia that looked after Ottoman immigrants, in addition to the Philadelphia Board of Rabbis, which further demonstrated the extensive outreach of Mikveh Israel during the early twentieth century.

Meanwhile, we all knew that Alan Corré was a charismatic leader and teacher, who was also becoming a highly esteemed scholar of ancient medieval Hebrew, Semitic languages, and comparative linguistics. According to the obituary written for H-Judaic by Jonathan Sarna, an eminent historian of American Judaism at Brandeis University who once studied with Corré, “Alan’s world was a world of genius, of unparalleled memory and linguistic abilities.” Sarna also said, “Alan Corré was a rare polyglot. In addition to knowing Hebrew and Arabic, he lectured and published widely on Portuguese, French, Italian, Spanish, Russian, and Judeo-Arabic.”

Moreover, we understood that, while serving the congregation, Corré would receive a Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania. But my brother and I simply had no idea, until we saw the obituary a few years ago, that his dissertation was not on Hebrew or cognate languages. The topic was “The Structure of Tamil,” as supervised by leading scholars Zellig Harris and Leigh Lisker. This intriguing Indo-Judaic connection was probably due to the orientation of the linguistics department at Penn, the first of its kind in the U.S. founded by Harris in 1948. Harris was originally a Semitic studies scholar who got involved in studies of other classical languages, especially Sanskrit and Dravidian languages, and Lisker was also closely linked with the department of South Asian Studies, which was established decades before.

Following Corré’s departure from the congregation to take a position at the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee, where he remained as professor of Hebrew Studies until retirement in 1993, my sense of the breadth of Sephardic Judaism was greatly enhanced by the process of the search conducted for his replacement. The candidates selected for interviews, who led a sample service and gave a homily about their vision for the future of the congregation remaining vital and not turning into an archive, came from different parts of the globe, since there was no training program at the time in the U.S. After spending a dozen years in his home country following his stint at JTS, when he led the congregation Maghen David in Kolkata, established by Baghdadi Jews fleeing persecution and seeking fortune, Ezekiel Musleah was recruited to become the new rabbi of Mikveh Israel, where he served for fifteen years.

Rabbi Musleah and his wife, Margaret, and their three young daughters moved to Philadelphia and found housing within walking distance to the synagogue. One of his first acts was to change the term that was used for religious leader since the nineteenth century from “reverend” or “minister,” which seemed overly Americanized, to “rabbi.” By the time he arrived, it was decided by my elders that I would follow in my brother's footsteps by performing, with all the trimmings, a kind of one-year-later “post-bar mitzvah,” but for a new service.

For the bar mitzvah I learned to read Torah without vowels or tropes appearing on the scroll and also performed the Musaf. My brother had done even more preparation than me, but our friends at various Conservative or Reformed congregations could hardly understand the extent of learning that was involved. In my heart of hearts, an appreciation of the significance of the accomplishment was muted by a sense of fear and trembling at the daunting task. This uneasiness was compounded by the fact that my parents had found us a new home in the suburbs, which required a major social and educational adjustment right at the time I needed to dedicate my time to studies.

Prior to the first meeting with the new rabbi, I had practiced every day with my brother and presented to Rabbi Musleah my knowledge of Torah reading based on the style we knew from Alan Corré. I will never forget that as I merrily started chanting, Musleah stopped me after about thirty seconds and said simply, “You would do well to learn it a different way.” Even though the way of pronouncing syllables and vocalizing tropes was basically the same, or so one would think, it became a brand-new preparation. So, I started all over, based on his reading of the liturgy that was recorded on my father's office wire recorder, which was a primitive machine that did work well for the constant stopping and starting needed to replay the dulcet tones.

On some level I knew that something wonderful and magical was going on, especially in the juxtaposition of what was gained from two giants. However, for better or worse, my contact with Rabbi Musleah fell off shortly after this. When my grandmother, who spent much of her life at Mikveh Israel, died, my parents who were already living nearby switched membership to Beth Sholom. What a difference in the way services were done there! The ark was behind the Bimah so there was no long procession to take out and return the Torah, the seats were much more comfortable, and the *tallit* worn were a bit fewer. The style of the service was distinctive, though by no means unfamiliar from time spent visiting similar synagogues attended by cousins. I did find that Wright's ingenious design was impressive not only for the exterior, since the sanctuary layout fostered a profound feeling of intimacy between the congregants and the rabbi.

In 1999 it came time to help teach my son, Samuel, to read Torah for his bar mitzvah, which I did according to my recollection of what I had learned at Mikveh Israel. By then the device used for recording the melody had improved, although the need to stop and start it frequently had not. The service was performed at the Western Wall on a Monday morning, and the night before Samuel practiced by chanting for my father back in Philadelphia over the phone. Following the recital, granddad remarked that, after thirty years at Beth Sholom, this tone sounded quite unique.

After leaving Mikveh Israel in 1979, a couple of years following the opening of its new building in the colonial district, Musleah led Congregation B'nai Abraham Synagogue in Society Hill and also served on the Conservative movement's local and national rabbinic court, helping administer Jewish divorces. For the last thirty years of his life, he was the weekly Torah reader at Temple Beth Zion-Beth Israel in the Rittenhouse Square district of Philadelphia, where he taught Margaret to read Torah at age 65.

May these two eminent rabbis, Ezekiel Musleah and Alan Corré, of blessed memory לברכה זיכרונם (zikhronim liv'rakha, or lib'rahkha in Sephardic style), find comfort among all who study and read and listen to Torah and Hebrew literature, no matter the style of pronunciation and vocalization but infused with a profound knowledge and appreciation for cognate as well as Indian and other classical languages. These two giants were so distant yet so very much linked. I only wish I could have served as a better vessel for their knowledge.

Steven Heine

Obituary: Sarah Cohen



Sarah Cohen lighting *tiryah*, or ceremonial lamp, for Rosh Hashanah. Photo by Ellen S. Goldberg

Jew Town, Mattancherry, Kochi, Kerala, India – Upstairs in the 16th-century Paradesi Synagogue, Sarah Cohen leaned forward during *Shabbat* morning services to whisper, "Can you hear it? Something is going on at the Hindu temple next door."

Indeed, was is hard to miss the fusion of liturgies between this congregation and the one next door. "We often hear their music and prayers," she smiled. "And they can hear us, too."

The intermingling of Hebrew and Sanskrit chants may seem incongruous to outsiders, but to residents of all faiths here, it's long been a way of life. Sarah Cohen not only understood this, she embraced it. As most of her Jewish friends left the community for Israel or elsewhere, she wanted none of that.

"India is my home," she told me in no uncertain terms. "There's no place else I'd rather be."

Sarah lived for nearly a century – just four days shy of her 97th birthday when she died August 30, 2019 – in the tiny Jew Town neighborhood, her home just a few hundred feet from her beloved synagogue. "At least four generations of her family lived in Mattancherry before her," said Kochi native Thoufeek Zakriya. "She wanted to rest here and was emotionally connected to this land and people."¹

While Sarah and her late husband Jacob did not have children nor immediate family in the area, her funeral was well attended. Her grandnephew Yaakov Finkelstein, Israel's Consul General in Mumbai, flew in. So too, remaining Jews from nearby Ernakulam as well as many non-Jewish friends came to pay their last respects. "Even in death, she brought us all together," said Thaha Ibrahim, a Muslim neighbor and close friend who, with his wife Jasmine, cared for Sarah in her later years and ran her embroidery shop for her when she could no longer do so.²

Friendly and outgoing, Sarah never met a person she didn't like. The feeling was mutual judging by the streams of people who made their way to her door on Synagogue Lane to visit, hear her stories about Jew Town traditions, or to buy her handmade embroidery, *kippot* and *challah* covers. "She kept history alive," said Zakriya, now a Dubai-based calligraphy artist and chef who first met Sarah in 2009 while working on a project on Jewish food and history. "She would tell us about Jewish weddings, functions and food."³

And much more. Sarah was my mentor-*guru-balabus* extraordinaire for nearly a year, from 1986-1987, when my husband Nathan Katz and I lived in Jew Town to document its waning community. Kind and energetic, Sarah took me under her wing to show me life there from a Jewish woman's perspective. Researcher Barbara C. Johnson had worked with Sarah several years prior and described her generosity of spirit and open-heartedness in much the same way.⁴

Almost from the get-go of my tutelage, just before Rosh Hashanah, I saw how important traditions and friendships were to Sarah. Standing alongside her in her kitchen, I watched her whip together a rich confection called "wedding cake," something of a misnomer since it was made for the Jewish new year and was actually many small cakes fashioned in cylindrical aluminum tins. Why so many? As was her custom, she gave them as gifts to her Jewish, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, Jain and Parsi friends who eagerly came to her door to claim their sweets. I can say from personal experience, it was delicious. And yes, I got the recipe.

While helping Sarah clean one morning prior to the holiday, I unexpectedly learned an important piece of Kochini Jewish women's history. Taking a break to look at old family photos together on Sarah's bedroom dresser, my eyes rested on a pile of yellowed notebooks. Gesturing for me to have a look, I gingerly flipped through the lined pages to see each contained handwritten verses neatly penned in the local Malayalam script.

For centuries, Kochini women composed and sang Jewish songs, from playful tunes about parrots that must be coaxed with milk and fruit in exchange for a story or a blessing, to biblical narratives spiced with *Midrash* retelling familiar stories of the matriarch Sarah, baby Moses and the exodus from Egypt. Others included

devotional hymns, blessings for special occasions and later, some Zionist songs preparing the community for *Aliyah* to Israel.⁵

While Kochini men and women sang together a unique repertoire of Hebrew *piyutim*, or religious songs, it was the women alone who wrote and performed Jewish songs in Malayalam. The notebooks show the women's literary prowess, something not surprising in Kerala, which historically has emphasized literacy in general and the relatively high status of its women in particular. Passed down through the generations, all Kochini women preserved these songs, hundreds of which are now housed in the Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem.⁶

A deeply committed Jew, Sarah showed personal and religious strength on Yom Kippur when she took on the *chumra*, or voluntary stringency, of standing throughout the day-long synagogue services, all the while fasting and praying fervently in ferocious tropical heat. Trying to keep up with my mentor who was some 30 years my senior, I too stood and prayed for the duration, which, for this then-unobservant Jew, resulted in a profound spiritual awakening.

Early on in our relationship, I got a peek into Sarah's character. After a week of shadowing her to observe painstaking, hours-long Shabbat preparations, by Friday afternoon I figured she'd put her feet up for a well-deserved rest. Instead, she was intent on giving *tzedakah* (charity), a *mitzvah* (religious obligation) before Shabbat. Looking outside, she spied her opportunity: a beggar woman perched on steps across from her home. Without hesitation, Sarah carried a pot of freshly prepared food to the woman, ladling out a generous portion for her onto a plate. Despite the late hour, Sarah didn't rush the woman. Instead, she engaged her in conversation, making sure she had her fill. Finally, by the time the sun's last rays slipped below the palm fronds and her husband Jacob and brother-in-law Shalom had gone off to synagogue, Sarah had finished her chores, bathed, dressed, kindled the Shabbat lights and, in the uncommon quiet, chanted her prayers. I sensed there was pride and relief that her duty to G-d had been fulfilled for one more week.

Not long after the Chanukah candles cooled, Sarah's preparations began in earnest for Pesach. This involved myriad back-breaking projects, including a thorough housecleaning; *kashering* the indoor and outdoor kitchens; swapping out every day dishes, cutlery and pots and pans for stored kosher-for-Pesach versions that were

scrubbed, sun-dried and placed in the newly-*kashered* kitchen; varnishing all wood furniture; and painting the house, inside and out. All Pesach foods were made from scratch, including wine and grape juice, and huge quantities of rice were cleaned three times.

And then there was *matzah*, or *massa*, as the Kochinites pronounced it. As was custom, the women and children baked *matzah* to supply the entire community for the seven-day festival. There had been great talk and buildup among the community about *Massa Day*. Joining Sarah and the other women, I learned firsthand how grueling the process was, made all the more so by the sweltering, pre-monsoon heat. Eight hours later, our “sweat equity” resulted in every household carting home containers filled to the brim with freshly baked, rounded *matzot*.

“Now that you have made *matzah*,” Sarah told me with authority, “you *know* what is Pesach.”

I know that, as surely as I know how much I owe to Sarah Cohen for all she taught me about Jewish life in Kochi. The intent of my year-long stay in Jew Town was to document the history and transformation of a community. I did that. What I hadn’t expected was to be transformed in the process. Thank you, Sarah. May your memory be a blessing.

Ellen S. Goldberg

¹ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/sarah-cohens-death-marks-the-end-of-an-era-in-kochi/article29303672.ece>

² <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/sarah-cohens-death-marks-the-end-of-an-era-in-kochi/article29303672.ece>

³ <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/sarah-cohens-death-marks-the-end-of-an-era-in-kochi/article29303672.ece>

⁴ Barbara Cottle Johnson. “Our Community in Two Worlds: The Cochin Paradesi Jews in India and Israel.” (Ph.D. dissertation, Dept. of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts, 1985)

⁵ Barbara C. Johnson. "Cochin: Jewish Women's Music." *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. 27 February 2009. Jewish Women's Archive.

⁶ Barbara C. Johnson. "Cochin: Jewish Women's Music." *Jewish Women: A Comprehensive Historical Encyclopedia*. 27 February 2009. Jewish Women's Archive.

About MEI@ND

Formally launched in February 2010, the Middle East Institute, New Delhi seeks to promote the understanding of contemporary Middle East. It is India-based and not India-centric and its main research focus is geopolitical dynamics of the Middle East including, but not limited to, military matters, economy, energy security, political system and institutions, society, culture and religion, and conflicts in the region. The institute also encourages research on burgeoning Asian interest in and engagements with the Middle East. MEI@ND documents bilateral relations amongst the Middle Eastern states and strives to produce updated analysis of the region's changing strategic landscape.

MEI@ND

Communication: Emergence of Kolkata as a Centre of Jewish Studies in India

Navras J. Aafreedi

Although Kolkata has neither the largest concentration of Jews in India nor the highest number of synagogues and Jewish schools, yet it has more scholars of Indian Jews than any other city in the world. During the last few years more works on Indian Jews have been published by scholars from Kolkata than from anywhere else. During the last couple of years more scholarly events focused on Jews have taken place in Kolkata than at any other place in India. Kolkata has also emerged as the only city in perhaps all of Asia, if we do not take into account Israel and China, to have an undergraduate course in Global Jewish History and a postgraduate course in Holocaust Studies, both offered by the Department of History at Presidency University there.

Calcutta, as Kolkata was formerly called, developed as a metropolis under the British, and served them as the first capital of their Indian colony, before the capital was shifted to the more centrally located, Delhi. Between the decades of 1790s and 1830s a large number of Jews from a number of Middle Eastern countries settled in Kolkata; their number reaching as high as ten thousand just before the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948. They came to Kolkata both in search of greener economic pastures and safety and security, and came to be known by the umbrella term Baghdadi. Today their population has dwindled to merely twenty-two individuals, as a result of mass exodus to Israel, United Kingdom and Australia. Jael Silliman in her sixties is the youngest member of Kolkata Jewry. After enjoying an academic career of several years as a tenure track Associate Professor of Women's Studies at Iowa University in the US, she is now settled for good in her hometown, Kolkata. Although several books on Jews in Kolkata have been published, yet it is her *Jewish Portraits, Indian Frames: Women's Narratives from a Diaspora of Hope* (2001), which has come to be acknowledged as the best of them all. She is also the author of a couple of novels that depict Baghdadi Jewish life in Kolkata, *The Man with Many Hats* (2013) and *The Teak Almirah* (2016). In addition to the several books that Silliman has written, she has also produced a digital archive on the Jews of Calcutta, which has received rave reviews in leading publications across the world, like *The New York Times*, the *BBC*, *TIME*, *The Jerusalem Post*, *Business Standard*, *The Times of India*, *The Telegraph*, *Outlook*, *The Hindu Business Line*, etc.

Assistant Professor of History at City College, Kolkata, Kaustav Chakrabarti is the author of *Glimpses into the Jewish Life of Calcutta 1798-1948*, Kolkata

(2015), which embodies his doctoral thesis, and *A Brief Introduction to the Rise and Rhythm of Zionism*, Kolkata. He has been a Visiting Research Fellow at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, Israel, on an Israel Government Scholarship, for the academic session 2005-06. He submitted his M.Phil. dissertation on the history of the Jews of Calcutta at the University of Calcutta. A strong proponent of stronger Indo-Israel ties, Chakrabarti has published several articles on Jews, Israel and Zionism.

Priya Singh is another scholar who has published extensively on Zionism and Israel's foreign policy. She serves a research centre in Kolkata, Asia in Global Affairs, as its Associate Director.

Kolkata based independent scholar, Dalia Ray is the author of *The Jewish Heritage of Calcutta* (Kolkata, 2001) and *The Jews of India* (Kolkata, 2016), and several research papers, like "Jews in Indian History after Independence", published in the proceedings of the Indian National Congress, Volume 57 (1996),¹ and "Cochin Jews in Calcutta", published in the diamond jubilee volume (Volume 60) of the proceedings of the Indian National Congress in 1999.²

On March 15, 2017, Jael Silliman and Kaustav Chakrabarti, the two scholars mentioned above, were brought together with Ian Zachariah at a panel at the Department of History, Presidency University, to discuss the Jewish Contributions to Calcutta. The discussion was moderated by Navras J Aafreedi, an Assistant Professor in the Department of History at Presidency University. Just a fortnight before this event he had convened an international multidisciplinary Holocaust focused conference at Presidency University, Kolkata, held on February 27 and 28, 2017. It was entitled: "Prevention of Mass Violence and Promotion of Tolerance: Lessons from History". The conference attracted some of the most eminent scholars from the fields of Holocaust Studies and Interfaith Studies, like Charles Ehrlich, Reuven Firestone, Edward Mortimer, Dina Porat, David Rosen, Stephanie Rotem, Suzanne Rutland, and Sarva-Daman Singh, et cetera. Just two weeks before this conference he had organized an international multidisciplinary conference on South Asia, which had a couple of presentations from the field of Indo-Judaic Studies. Jael Silliman presented a paper on Jewish Women Pioneers from Calcutta and Margit Franz presented a paper on Jewish Refugees in Calcutta during the Holocaust.

Silliman pointed out in her presentation that much of the written history of Baghdadi Jews in India is from a male perspective, focused on "male leaders who played dominant roles in both the colonial project and within the community," and that the Baghdadi Jewish community is mostly known for its

trading enterprises. She told us how in the archive on the Baghdadi Jews of Calcutta she had “featured the numerous other professional and political engagements of Baghdadi Jewish men and women which demands a revision of the many roles that men and women played in India’s development.” Her paper highlighted the role that the Guha sisters – Regina and Hannah – played in law and politics. The other pioneering activities of Calcutta’s Baghdadi Jews were also discussed in the context of nation building in the twentieth century.

Margit Franz gave an overview of the general political, economic and social conditions of exile in British India from 1938 to 1945, with a particular focus on Jewish refugees in Calcutta. In particular, the architects Hans Glas and Victor Lurje, the educationist and musician Elise Braun, the pianist Liesl Stary and the physician Edmund Ronald were briefly portrayed. Her presentation also shed light on initiatives of the Bata company to generate escape options for their Central European workers at risk to be transferred to the companies overseas centres, like Batanagar in India.

The conference also had a presentation by the eminent Jewish artist Gerry Judah. Now based in London, Judah was born in a Baghdadi Jewish family in Kolkata. Israeli scholar Menashe Anzi also presented a paper at the conference. Its title was: “From Agra to San’a: Indian Muslim Literature in Yemen”.

Since Aafreedi joined Presidency University in June 2016, he has managed to get a number of eminent scholars to the university to give lectures on Jewish themes. The list includes Alvin H. Rosenfeld (Indiana University), Yulia Egorova (Durham University), Shimon Lev (Hadassah College), Anna Guttman (Lakehead University), and Heinz Werner Wessler (Uppsala University) among many others. Rosenfeld was a Scholar-in-Residence at the Department of History, Presidency University from October 29 to November 3, 2017, during which he gave a series of lectures on the Holocaust and Antisemitism. In a lecture on October 19, 2016, Shimon Lev spoke on the “Representation of Tagore in Jewish Literature”. Yulia Egorova gave a lecture on February 9, 2017, on Jewish-Muslim relations in the twenty-first century. She presented a case study of the United Kingdom, where most of the Muslims are of South Asian origin. On April 10, 2017, Heinz Werner Wessler gave an interesting talk, entitled “Mutual Misunderstandings? Gandhi, Bose and Nazi Germany”. Anna Guttman, in a lecture she gave on July 19, 2017, under the title, “‘There and Not There’: Imagining Indian Jewish History”, argued that Indian Jewish literature challenges national and communal histories, both Indian and Jewish, offering in their place global and cosmopolitan visions of identity, community, and history.

Besides the above-mentioned lectures on Jewish themes, a photographic exhibition on Anne Frank was also held at Presidency University. It was on

display from January to March 2017 in commemoration of the bicentenary of the institution.

Navras J. Aafreedi is the author of *Jews, Judaizing Movements and the Traditions of Israelite Descent in South Asia* (New Delhi, 2016) among many other publications in the field of Indo-Judaic Studies. He aspires to introduce an MA Programme in Jewish Studies in India and establish a Centre of Jewish Studies in the country.

On December 17, 2017, two of Kolkata's three synagogues, Beth El, built in 1856, and Maghen David, built in 1884, were rededicated after the completion of their restoration work. The restoration project was undertaken by the Society for Heritage Conservation and Preservation. A commemorative brochure was also released on the occasion. Besides the messages from the presidents and secretaries of the synagogues, it has messages from Ephraim Mirvis, Chief Rabbi of the United Hebrew Congregations of the Commonwealth, Nissim Moses, Honorary President and Avener Isaac, Chairman of the Indian Jewish Heritage Center, and David Harris, Chief Executive Officer of the American Jewish Committee.

The very next day, December 18, 2017, a panel discussion on "Revisiting Calcutta's Diasporic Communities" was held at the Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies (MAKAIAS), Kolkata, in association with the American Jewish Committee Asia Pacific Institute, at which Navras J. Aafreedi spoke on the Baghdadi Jewish Community of Kolkata.

From February 14 to 16, 2018, an international conference, "In Global Transit: Jewish Migrants from Hitler's Europe in Asia, Africa, and Beyond" was held at Loreto College, Kolkata, under the joint auspices of Max Weber Stiftung, German Historical Institutes in London and Washington, DC, and its India Branch Office in Delhi. The three-day-conference had five panels, divided thematically as: Refugee Identities in Colonial India, Local Interactions and Anti-Semitism, Knowledge, State Power, and Non-governmental networks and organizations during and after the Holocaust. Each panel had a couple of presentations, except the last one (the one on non-governmental networks and organizations during and after the Holocaust), which had three. There was also a roundtable on "Jewish Refugee History Outside the University: Archives, Collections and Exhibitions."

As part of the panel dedicated to Refugee Identities in Colonial India, Maria Framke (Universitat Rostock) gave a presentation entitled, "India a safe haven for Jewish refugees? Exploring the entangled web of Indian anti-fascism, anti-colonialism and humanitarian solidarity in the interwar period". While Pragya

Kaul (University of Michigan, Ann Arbor) as part of the same panel presented a paper entitled, “Between Colonizer and Colonized: Nationalism, the War, and Refugee Identity Formation in British India”.

Under the panel dedicated to Local Interactions and Anti-Semitism, Floral Roberts (Universitat Tübingen) spoke on Jews in wartime Central Asia: migrants, locals, and the spectre of anti-Semitism”, while Atina Grossman (Cooper Union) presented a paper entitled, “Trauma, Privilege, and Adventure in Transit: Jewish Refugees in Iran and India”.

The panel on Knowledge had a presentation from Sebastian Musch (Hochschule für Jüdische Studien Heidelberg) on “Jewish Migrants from Germany to British Ceylon and their Networks of Knowledge, 1933-1950” and one by Swen Steinberg (TU Dresden) on “Destinations in Asia and Africa in Newspapers and Journals of the German Political Exile”.

The panel on State Power was comprised of presentations by Susanne Heim (Institut für Zeitgeschichte München-Berlin) on “Resettling Jews” and Gerhard Wolf (University of Sussex) on “Fantasies of Settlement and Civilization”.

The last panel, which was dedicated to Non-governmental networks and organizations during and after the Holocaust had three presentations unlike any other preceding panel at the conference. Both Sarah Hagmann (University of Basel) and Tobias Brinkmann (Penn State University) focused on Shanghai. While Hagmann spoke on relief organizations in Shanghai during the Second World War, Brinkmann shed light on the fate of Jewish refugees in Shanghai and other Treaty Ports after the end of the war. Margit Franz (Universitat Graz) gave a presentation on the experiences of Central European Exiles in the Partition of India.

An exhibition, “The City as Refuge: Jewish Calcutta and refugees from Hitler’s Europe” also took place alongside the conference. A brochure documenting the exhibition, with the same title as that of the exhibition, was also released on the occasion. It is written and edited by Indira Sengupta, who hails from Kolkata, and Joseph Cronin.

On March 20, 2018, Kolkata saw the launch of Israeli scholar Shimon Lev’s latest book, *From Lithuania to Santiniketan: Schlomith Flaum & Rabindranath Tagore*, published by the Lithuanian Embassy in New Delhi. The event took place at the Indian Council for Cultural Relations building in Kolkata under the joint auspices of the Lithuanian and Israeli embassies in India. The embassies were represented by Lithuanian and Israeli ambassadors to India, Laimonas Talat-Kelpsa and Daniel Carmon respectively at the book launch. There was

panel discussion on the subject with Shimon Lev, the author of the book, Uma Das Gupta, historian and a biographer of Tagore, Hari Vasudevan, historian from the University of Calcutta and Faina Kukliansky, Chair of Lithuanian Jewish Community. The chief guest at the event was Bratya Basu, Minister of Information Technology & Electronics, Government of West Bengal.

One only hopes and wishes that Jewish Studies continue to thrive in Kolkata, which enjoys the reputation of being the intellectual nerve centre of India, at a much more accelerated pace.

¹ Pp. 568-574

² Pp. 872-876

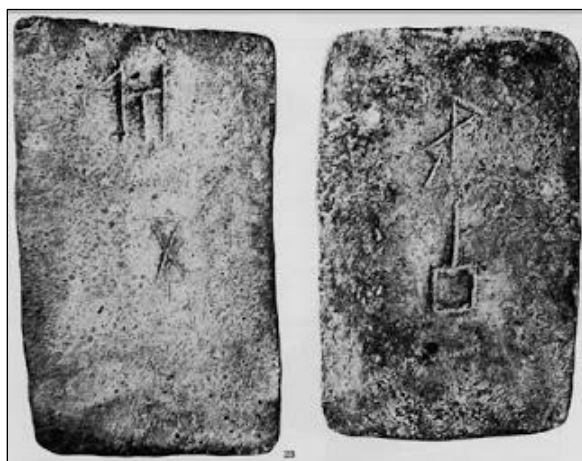
Communication:

Three tin ingots of Haifa shipwreck with Indus (Sarasvati) hieroglyphs reinforces the Meluhha rebus reading *ranku dhatu mūh*, 'tin mineral-ore ingot'

S. Kalyanaraman

This is an addendum to my article: The Bronze Age Writing System of Sarasvati Hieroglyphics as Evidenced by Two “Rosetta Stones” By S. Kalyanaraman in: *Journal of Indo-Judaic Studies* Volume 1: Number 11 (2010), pp. 47-74.)

This article of 2010 had present rebus readings of inscriptions on the following two tin ingots:



Tin ingots in the Museum of Ancient Art of the Municipality of Haifa, Israel (left #8251, right #8252). The ingots each bear two inscribed “Cypro-Minoan markings”. (Note: I have argued that the inscriptions were Meluhha hieroglyphs (Indus or Sarasvati writing) denoting *ranku* ‘antelope’ (on left ingot) *ranku* ‘liquid measure’ (on right ingot) *datu* ‘cross’ read rebus as: *ranku* ‘tin’ *dhatu* ‘ore’.

Another tin ingot with comparable Indus writing has been reported by Artzy:

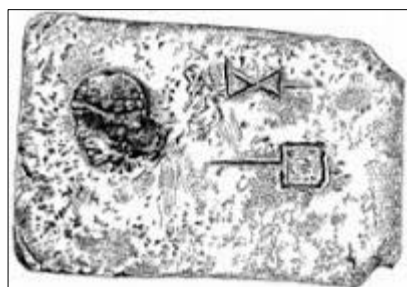


Fig. 4 Inscribed tin ingot with a moulded head, from Haifa (Artzy, 1983: 53). (Michal Artzy, 1983, *Arethusa of the Tin Ingot*, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, BASOR 250, pp. 51-55) <https://www.academia.edu/5476188/Artzy-1983-Tin-Ignot> This figure indicates the head of a woman as a hieroglyph. Some scholars have suggested that this signifies Arethusa.

The author Michal Artzy (opcit., p. 55) who showed these four signs on the four tin ingots to E. Masson who is the author of *Cypro-Minoan Syllabary*. Masson’s views are recorded in Foot Note 3: “E. Masson, who was shown all four

ingots for the first time by the author, has suggested privately that the sign ‘d’ looks Cypro-Minoan, but not the other three signs.”

If all the signs are NOT Cypro-Minoan Syllabary, what did these four signs, together, incised on the tin ingots signify?

The two hieroglyphs incised which compare with the two pure tin ingots discovered from a shipwreck in Haifa, the moulded head can be explained also as a Meluhha hieroglyphs without assuming it to be the face of goddess Arethusa in Greek tradition: Hieroglyph: *mũhe* ‘face’ (Santali) Rebus: *mũh* ‘ingot’ (Santali). The three hieroglyphs are: ranku ‘antelope’ Rebus: ranku ‘tin’ (Santali) ranku ‘liquid measure’ Rebus: ranku ‘tin’ (Santali). *dāṭu* = cross (Te.); *dhatu* = mineral (Santali) Hindi. *dhāṭnā* ‘to send out, pour out, cast (metal)’ (CDIAL 6771). [The ‘cross’ or X hieroglyph is incised on both ingots.]

All these hieroglyphs on the three tin ingots of Haifa are read rebus in Meluhha:

Hieroglyph: *ranku* = liquid measure (Santali)

Hieroglyph: *raṅku* m. ‘a species of deer’ Vās., *rankuka* id., Śrīkaṇṭh. (Samskr̥tam)(CDIAL 10559). *raṅku* m. ‘a species of deer’ Vās., °*uka* -- m. Śrīkaṇṭh.Ku. N. *rāṅgo* ‘buffalo bull’? -- more prob. < *raṅká* -> s.v. **rakka* -- . **raṅkha* -- ‘defective’ see **rakka* -- . RĀṄG ‘move to and fro’: *raṅgati*. -- Cf. √*riṅg*, √*rikh*2, √**righ*.(CDIAL 10559)

Rebus: *ranku* ‘tin’ (Santali) *raṅga*3 n. ‘tin’ lex. Pk. *raṅga* -- n. ‘tin’; P. *rāṅg* f., *rāṅā* m. ‘pewter, tin’ (← H.); Ku. *rāṅ* ‘tin, solder’, gng. *rāṅk*; N. *rāṅ*, *rāṅo* ‘tin, solder’, A. B. *rāṅ*; Or. *rāṅga* ‘tin’, *rāṅgā* ‘solder, spelter’, Bi. Mth. *rāṅā*, OAw. *rāṅga*; H. *rāṅg* f., *rāṅā* m. ‘tin, pewter’; Si. *raṅga* ‘tin’. (CDIAL 10562)

Hieroglyph: *dāṭu* = cross (Telugu)

Rebus: *dhatu* = mineral ore (Santali) Rebus: *dhāṭnā* ‘to send out, pour out, cast (metal)’ (Hindi)(CDIAL 6771).

Hieroglyph: *mũh* ‘a face’ Rebus: *mũh*, ‘ingot’ or *muhā* ‘quantity of metal produced at one time from the furnace’ (Santali)

Indus Script hypertexts thus read: Hieroglyphs: ranku ‘liquid measure’ or *raṅku* ‘a species of deer’ PLUS *dāṭu* = cross rebus: plain text: *ranku* ‘tin’ PLUS *dhatu* ‘cast mineral’ Thus, together, the plain text reads: tin mineral casting. The

fourth ingot with the hieroglyph of a moulded head reads: *mũh* 'a face' Rebus: *mũh*, 'ingot' or *muhã* 'quantity of metal produced at one time from the furnace' (Santali).

Thus, together, the message on the three tin ingots discovered in the Haifa shipwreck is: *ranku dhatu mũh* 'tin mineral-ore ingot'.

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