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MYSTICAL SOURCES OF THE HEALING MOVEMENT

Arthur Green

I am surprised to be addressing this subject. A student and teacher for many years of the Jewish mystical tradition—a body of lore to which, and to the teachers of which, many have turned for healing over the centuries—I have always kept myself distant from this aspect of Kabbalah. I think it important, for the sake of full disclosure and honesty, that I explain why that is the case.

The crucial event of my psychological life, that which determined more of my future biography than any other single occurrence, was the death of my mother when I was eleven years old. She died of a terrible cancer, one the doctors in 1952 were unable to heal and one that even today, if allowed to advance as it did then, would be beyond medical help. The fact that my sister and I have now made our fiftieth *yahrtzeit* pilgrimage back to New Jersey allows me to speak about it, but of course it does not complete the healing.

A child already attracted to religion before this shocking event, one for which I was quite totally unprepared, I spent the next seven years seeking the solace of God's presence, the assurance that this death was not without meaning and somehow not final, and the embrace of various surrogate parents. My life as an adult began only as I broke free from the near suffocation of this embrace. I had to accept the arbitrariness of natural processes that often determine life and death as well as our inability to control them either by medicine or by appeal to divine mercy. This meant a denial of the faith in particular

providence that had sustained me through those years and a willingness to confront the possibility that life and death are indeed without meaning, other than what we construct out of our own aspirations and longings.

I came to Kabbalah several years later, having crossed a desert peopled by Friedrich Nietzsche, Franz Kafka, and Albert Camus. Nietzsche taught me of the death of God. Kafka taught me that the Nietzschean exultation at the death of God lasts but a moment, leaving you quite alone in an absurd and horrifying universe. From Camus I learned that meaning happens in that universe only as you fashion it yourself. That desert is the place that Rabbi Nachman of Breslov, one of my greatest teachers, calls the “void” or the empty space, from which God is necessarily absent, so that we can become ourselves. Although I have tried to follow Nachman’s invitation to live on the far side of that void—the world of faith beyond emptiness, the faith that stands in defiance to meaninglessness and chaos—the void is always there for me, as I believe it was for him.

There is no naïveté in my faith, no room for pretending that “God’s in His heaven and all’s right with the world.” My theological enterprise has been about articulating what I call a “Judaism for adults,” which means those who stand with me in having abandoned—or, perhaps more accurately, having been abandoned by—the naïve religion of childhood fantasy and yet seek meaning in the symbols and textual traditions of Judaism. I have marshaled the rich resources of Jewish mystical teachings in this effort, to which all of my theological writing, and much of my scholarly and educational work, is devoted.

My early attraction to the language of Kabbalah and Hasidism had to do both with the profundity of religious ideas, some of which I first encountered in the writings of Gershom Scholem, and the richness of metaphor and poetic imagination with which these teachings are sometimes graced. Later I came to appreciate the unitive mystical consciousness that underlay these and the ways they used all of Judaism as a path toward deeper rungs of human experience. All of these I have tried to reinterpret in our own language to render them accessible to seekers.

While engaged in this process, one that has now stretched over more than forty years, I was of course aware that other uses were

being made of the kabbalistic tradition as well. Jerusalem taxicabs and market stalls adorned with pictures of a Moroccan or Baghdadi Jewish saint told me that popular Kabbalah was alive and well among certain sections of the Jewish community. Over the years various tales would come to my ears of someone who was cured from illness or saved from disaster by the blessing of the Lubavitcher or another hasidic rebbe. These, of course, echoed a great deal of what was present in the sources I studied, but I remained uninterested in the alleged curative powers of either kabbalistic amulets or the blessings of hasidic masters. I considered this popular use of Kabbalah a betrayal of the deeper mystical tradition, that which saw all worship as an act of pure giving, not seeking even such reasonable earthly rewards as health and longevity.

Following in the tradition of Martin Buber, I tended to skip over such promises when seeking materials for translation or teaching. For years I listened to the late Shlomo Carlebach make a very different selection from the hasidic teachings than I did, one that sought out and glorified naïve faith, while I was trying to pick up and paste together shards of meaning—“broken tablets,” as I called them—on the far shores of its destruction. While I might enjoy the account of child-like faith in the tales of one hasidic master or another, any move in that direction on my own part felt dishonest, as though I were abandoning the hard-fought truth that I had come to know.

Decades of involvement with mystic teaching do have their affect, however. I am engaged with a realm of human understanding that by definition goes beyond ordinary rules of reason or scientific explanation. I am not much attracted to those experiments that try to lend greater “scientific” credibility by measuring the alpha waves of meditators or analyzing the brain chemistry of apocalyptic visionaries. My approach is rather more phenomenological: I seek to take the mystic’s testimony seriously, to analyze it in its own terms, perhaps to compare it with language heard elsewhere, and to be especially wary of reductionist or dismissive explanations. This involvement with the realm of inner mystery has forced me to admit how much there is that I—dare I say we—do not understand. I certainly cannot judge whether the visions or recounted experiences of mystical teachers throughout the world are “true” or not on the basis of my meager ability to explain

them. I have come rather to accept them as strivings to express the ineffable, as attempts to describe an inner reality that makes powerful claims, both on the original visionaries who describe them and on later generations of faithful readers, sometimes including myself, who are inspired by them.

I have come to accept that there are forces or energies present in the world that we have not yet found ways to measure or describe. In ways we do not understand at all, there are people who have the psychic ability to “tune in” to the frequencies of these energies and come to see or know things that are otherwise beyond explanation. The field of psychic research is as yet very young and overwhelmed by both charlatanism and the excessive skepticism that comes in its wake. But I believe we still have much more to learn in this area than we know at present, and humility behooves our ignorance. This does not mean, of course, that we are to become patsies for the many spurious and suspicious claims in this area that appear every day.

The same has slowly come to be the case with regard to accounts of healing, whether based on the blessings of a tzaddik or simply the power of prayer. As I have become aware of the defensive role that a certain cynicism about such claims plays in my own psychic life, I have been forced to become more open to the reality of experiences recounted by others. This was best brought home to me in a conversation with a group of rabbis that I have had the privilege of teaching over the past several years. I went to them for help in preparing for my appearance at the “Mining the Tradition” conference. I wondered whether I could speak without somehow pretending to be a mystical healer, or without, at least by implication, lending support to something that might border on quackery.

“Suppose,” I said, taking a worst-case scenario, “there are cancer patients in the audience, there looking for hope of a cure. What shall I say to them? If I give them a sense that Kabbalah and its teachers do have healing powers, I’ll be sending them off to buy holy water from one or another quick-buck phonies. If I tell them I think it’s all nonsense, I’ll be unfairly destroying their hopes, something I surely have no desire to do!”

Had I looked around for a minute at these ten or twelve rabbis, most of whom I know quite well, I would have counted two cancer sur-

vivors among them, one other whose spouse had just survived a heart attack, and yet another who had lost her husband to illness at a terribly young age. And all of them wanted to tell me of the power of prayer in their lives and in confronting illness or loss, while none of them sought to make a naïve claim that it was prayer alone, rather than medical intervention, that stopped the cancer’s growth or saved the life.

Our conversation brought forth all kinds of important thoughts, some previously stored in my own memory, that belong to such talk. The Talmud’s declaration that “Outcry is good for a person, whether before or after the decree has been issued” makes it quite clear that what is “good” about outcry or prayer is not its ability to change the decree. A distinction that was crucial to our conversation is that between “healing” and “cure,” one surely familiar to many readers. The fact that we cannot offer a cure should in no way stop us from seeking to offer healing. This applies even to the use of materials from the mystical sources that indeed did claim to have curative powers; we may find them valuable resources for healing even without being literal believers in their curative effects.

This healing begins with a gift of empathy, companionship, and being present. It shares an awareness of the pain, suffering, or fear that is the lot of both the patient and those fearing or experiencing the loss of a loved one. Teachings that speak of a deep, mystical faith, where the gulf between the divine and human is transcended, are an important part of the healing resources our tradition has to offer. We should indeed mine deeply that aspect of Jewish teaching, using it in this context as a tool of healing, without any pretense to curative powers.

A most striking comment offered by one of the rabbis was a rereading of the *amidah* phrase *refa’enu hashem venerape* to mean “Soften us up, O Lord, so that we may be able to receive healing.” Open our hearts so that we can receive the gift of those who seek to heal. Help us to break down our own resistance to Your healing love! This stimulated in me a memory of an old reading of my own of another passage in the *amidah*: *hamerachem ki lo tamu chasadecha*—“You are compassionate, Lord, even when Your love is not simple.” Help us to accept Your compassionate presence, Lord, even when compassion means just that—You are present with us in our suffering—and not that You will “avert the decree.”

Not long before that conversation, I had written in a book:

I do not know much about the power of prayer to affect others: to heal the sick, to bring home the lost, to protect those we love from harm. I remain somewhat neutral to the claims now being made again, on this far edge of the age of skepticism, for the efficacy of prayer in the external world. But I know that prayer heals the one who prays, restoring a wholeness or a balance that can be lost when we are beset by concern or worry. And since the One who lies within us, to whom we give the words of prayer, lies as well in the heart of the one for whom we pray, we would indeed be setting false and unnecessary limits to say that the energy of our love, expressed in that prayer, *cannot* reach the other.

After that conversation, I would probably add the line: Listen to the testimony of those who have been healed no less carefully than You listen to the outcry of those who have not.

But the conversation with my rabbi friends led me somewhere else as well, and that brings us closer to my subject. Our healing, as important as it is to us and those who love us, is ultimately a small matter. The world will go on without us. Generations in families will come and go, some longer and some shorter. The real healing that is needed is not only of the sick and the bereaved, but of the whole human situation. This leads me back to some of the great ideas of Kabbalah that I mentioned earlier.

The Kabbalists understand that the world is a broken place. Somehow, in the flow of energy from its boundless source into the finite beings that populate the world as we see it, there was a break, a flaw, or a moment of painful separation. There are various versions in kabbalistic lore as to how this loss of wholeness came about, and much of the myth-making creativity of the Kabbalists is devoted to this question. The human heart longs to return to its source, to unite with the wholeness of God, but it cannot, at least not for more than brief interludes. The human being longs to feel fully at home in the universe, to celebrate life as we once did in Eden, but this, too, is not given us; the gates to paradise are closed. Paradoxically, our very longing for

God, or oneness, or an undivided heart shows us how very far away we are. Nobody in Jewish literature, and indeed few among the world's religious teachers, has described this aspect of the human situation with the poignancy of Rabbi Nachman of Breslov:

There is a mountain, and on that mountain there stands a rock. A spring gushes forth from that rock.

Now everything in the world has a heart, and the world as a whole has a heart. The heart of the world is a complete form, with face, hands, and feet. But even the toe-nail on that heart of the world is most heartlike than any other heart.

The mountain and the spring stand at one end of the world, and the heart is at the other. The heart stands facing the spring, longing and yearning to draw near to it. It is filled with a wild yearning, and constantly cries out in its desire to approach the spring. The spring, too, longs for the heart.

The heart suffers from two weaknesses: the sun pursues it terribly, burning it because it wants to approach the spring. The second weakness is that of the longing and outcry itself, the great desire to reach the spring. The heart ever stands facing the spring, crying out in longing to draw near.

When the heart needs to rest a bit or catch its breath, a great bird comes over it and spreads forth its wings to shield the heart from the sun. But even at its times of rest, the heart looks toward the spring in longing.

Now if the heart is filled with so great a desire to draw near to the spring, why does it not simply do so? Because as soon as it starts to move toward the mountain, the mountaintop where the spring stands would disappear from view. And the life of the heart flows from seeing the spring; if it were to allow the spring to vanish from its sight, it would die....

If that heart were to die, God forbid, the entire world would be destroyed. The heart is the life of all things; how could the world exist without a heart? For this reason the heart can never

approach the spring, but ever stands opposite it and looks at it in longing.¹

To be human is to be distant from God, so very distant, as one end of the world is from the other. Our deepest desire, our greatest need, is to stare into the divine face, to drink at the deep well of God's presence. Yet we cannot do so; we cannot come any closer than we are. Every prayer we utter, every time we say the vital word "You" in prayer, proclaiming God our beloved, we are also confirming our distance and separation from the One that we hope would embrace us all.

This is what needs healing, and it is to this work of healing that religion, in the profoundest sense, must address itself. This is its true message of salvation, the promise to bring us forth from the *mitzrayim* (Egypt) of *galut hada'at*, the narrow perception of ordinary consciousness, and to give us a taste of that deeper reality, the one on the far side of the void, where the oneness of being is total and where the "Thou" of our prayers gives way to the single silent sound of the divine *anochi*, "I am."

This general healing of human alienation cannot, of course, gloss over the unique situation of any single human being. Each of us needs to seek out and come into the arms of this wholeness in ways that are appropriate to who we are, to our needs, to our particular pains in life's journey. But each of us also needs to learn how to step beyond our individual situation and to see the ongoing process of healing, called *tikkun* by the Kabbalists, in its fullest ramification.

Indeed it is the process of individuation—the process that makes each of us into the unique self that we are—that separates us from our deeper root in being as a whole, which we later seek to recover. Individuation itself should be seen as a holy process: the emergence of a healthy, balanced ego is as much a revelation of God's image as is the conquest of that ego and its dedication to a higher purpose. The whole cycle of human life is thus nothing but the intake and outflow of divine, cosmic breath. Our healing lies in our becoming aware of that all-pervasive underlying truth.

Judaism is not primarily a religion based on the need to atone for an original sin. The rabbis mostly believed that the struggle with evil and temptation begins over again with each person. But the tale of Eden does belong to our scripture, and the faint memory of a lost par-

adise haunts our tradition. Indeed one way of reading the entire Torah is to see it as a response to our expulsion from Eden. The sin for which we were expelled, according to the Kabbalists (and later also discovered by Kafka), is that of having separated the two trees, having broken off the Tree of Knowledge from its own root in the Tree of Life. The quest to satisfy curiosity leads us to make that separation. Knowledge that is about mere curiosity, "just the facts," unaccompanied by a commitment to *live* the truth learned, to transform our lives into vessels that serve such truth, leads us down the path that will take us to "evil," knowledge in the service of self promotion, aggression, "my" truth arrayed against "yours." Torah as the new Tree of Life is given to us as the antidote to this alienation, a way of learning, a path of moral as well as intellectual development that leads us toward a new Eden, toward our Promised Land.

One piece of what needs healing in our lives, to say it differently, is our intellectual lives. Those of us who have spent large parts of our lifetime in academic communities know how true this is. As the Western university abandoned its claim to being a bastion of wisdom, becoming instead a temple of scientific detachment, "objectivity," and, finally, "professionalism," generations of young wisdom-seekers throughout the latter twentieth century have abandoned it for the ashram, zendo, madrasa, yeshiva, and monastery, places that had not yet given up the claim. Judaism, especially as reflected in the mystical tradition, is home to an ancient and venerable tradition of wisdom. It is access to this wisdom that we seek when studying Torah.

The Torah that we find in this quest is meant to lead us to a life of service. The commandments of Torah, the forms of religion, are there to provide shared outward structures within which the true *avodah*—a rich word embracing "work," "service," and "devotion"—is to take place. This work is nothing less than a transformation of the self into a mirror of divinity. To say it in a way more widely acceptable to the Western mind: a realization of the potential in each human being to truly become the image of God. This process of self-transformation requires *investigating* the deeper truth, *realizing* that truth in the way we live, both individually and in community, and *communicating* the value of that work to those around us. This three-part task is the true purpose of religion.

The Jewish esoteric tradition offers a particular set of tools through which this work can be done. Although Kabbalah is often presented as an abstract metaphysic or theosophy, it is best understood as the hasidic masters did, as a form of religious *avodah*, a way to do our inner "work." All reality, according to the Kabbalists, is constructed according to a tenfold pattern, a divine structure that unfolds from within the most hidden recesses of divinity. We humans can understand that reality primarily through our own inner experience, since the cosmic pattern is repeated in the soul-life of every person.

While there is not room here to explicate this system in full,² a very general outline can be offered. Within your deepest self (connected to the single Self of Being, or God), there are infinite resources of energy. You are initially unaware of these deeper levels of being; they belong to the self of the unconscious mind. Slowly they begin to filter into consciousness. In doing so, however, they necessarily become constricted, as the conscious self is so much smaller, narrower in focus, than the infinite realm of potential within. As the mind becomes aware of these inner energies, however, they begin to coalesce around two poles.

One is a center of love-energy; we feel loved and blessed by the Source of our energy and seek to pass that blessing on, whether to partner and offspring through the physical love-act or in sharing love with those around us. The other center feels the energy as a surge of strength, a way to build up the self, to achieve power. Human life involves a great struggle between these two, a tension between the impulse to give, to be generous in spirit, to let flow, and the impulse to hold back, to stand firm, to build for yourself a bastion of strength, even if that means withholding giving. As we mature we need to resolve that tension, to find a way of proper balance.

As we do so, however, a second great tension appears, that between the demands of perfectionism and the grace of self-acceptance. One side of us wants to accomplish it all; it is the Type A personality within us, striving for great accomplishments, improving our lives, maybe even improving the world and bringing the messiah. The other pole in this struggle is that of humility, a virtue not much known in our aggressive culture. Accepting yourself for who you are, loving yourself (and knowing that you are loved by God) even if you can't transform the world, cook like a Cordon Bleu chef, or write the great American

novel. When we resolve these two tensions—love versus power and demand versus acceptance—we are ready to be proper givers and receivers of the divine energy that continues to course within us. We learn the dynamic of giving/receiving from our sexual roles as male and female, although the experienced lover always learns to play the other role as well as his or her primary biological one. Thus we are all male and female, givers and receivers of love.

That is the essential kabbalistic system, read here as a textbook of religious psychology. The grid of the ten *sefirot* (primal numbers) and especially of the seven "lower" of these, known as the *middot* (personal qualities), is a set of tools for doing our inner work, for achieving balance, for making sure that one or another of these inner drives has not run amok, as they so often do. This achievement of proper balance is the healing work that each of us needs to do. While we must take great care never to blame the victim and imply that "your illness has come about *because* your spirit was out of balance," those who do this work know how much better illness can be managed and wholeness achieved by a person who is set on the course of proper balance among these forces.

Of course the great changes spoken of here in our intellectual life—Torah—and our struggle for moral growth—*Avodah*—have to lead us to the third pillar of what the ancient rabbis said would make the world stand firm: *Gemilut Hasadim*, or acts of lovingkindness. Ultimately it is only in the realm of deeds that our spiritual lives and struggles are tested. How we act with regard to others and where we stand on the great social issues of our time will be the only true reflections of our inner process.

I end this essay with a few words about broader issues, about the social context within which our discussion of healing takes place.

The illness with which we are afflicted, and from which we need to heal, is societal and collective, not just individual and private. All of us are shaped daily by our social context and the powerful forces that surround us. The very matters we have been discussing—how to love and accept ourselves, how to free ourselves from excessive pressures to achieve, how to be strong and yet generous, open to others' needs without becoming victimized by them—all of these are affected by such societal forces as advertising, peer pressure, and the expectations

of those around us. Our own struggle to maintain and communicate decent values must be seen against this backdrop.

We live in a society struggling collectively, and often not very wisely, with such issues as benefits for the unemployed and impoverished, medical care for the elderly, the provision of a “safety net” for all those most in need. Supporting the creation of a caring and generous society—in the midst of the great collective wealth we as a nation enjoy—is an essential part of our work as healers and as Jews. One of the favorite Yiddish expressions I recall from childhood is *me'tor nit araynlegy a gezunten kup in a krenken bettl*: “You mustn't lay a healthy head down in a sick bed.” This advice applies to our situation as well. The comfortable circumstances in which we discuss Judaism and healing should inspire us to ever greater concern over the growing gap between rich and poor, between privileged and forgotten, in those societies where we live and for which we bear responsibility. Healing is not just for ourselves, but reaches, as the prophets would say, to the ends of the earth, to the humblest and lowliest places.



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WISDOM, BALANCE, HEALING: REFLECTIONS ON MIND AND BODY IN AN EARLY HASIDIC TEXT

Eitan P. Fishbane

We live in a marketplace of spirituality and wellness. Charismatic holy men, fueled by the engines of commercial outreach, sell the promise of health and cures for physical illness. The right price, the right incantation, the right belief will secure that most coveted of all human desires: the ability to evade the grasp of ailment and weakness. Hold on to this holy object, recite the following divine names, stand in the presence of the energy-bestowing master, and you shall be healed. The appeal of such promises often translates into a cult of the holy man, the belief that the sainted figure has more power to save the individual from disease than does the science of modern medicine.

As Arthur Green notes in his essay, it is this disturbing trend among contemporary manipulators of kabbalistic teaching (though such beliefs are by no means new to Jewish piety and folk belief) that leaves others of us so wary about utilizing the mystical tradition in the formulation of a contemporary spirituality of health and healing. Such New Age phenomena are a fascinating intrigue to us as historians and anthropologists of religion—and there can be no doubt that very similar beliefs and practices were pervasive in the golden periods of

32. Saul Bellow, *Humboldt's Gift* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996). All page numbers given in the text refer to this edition.

2. Health and Healing among the Mystics

1. From his "Tale of the Seven Beggars." Translation from my discussion in *Tormented Master: A Life of Rabbi Nahman of Breslov* (Birmingham: University of Alabama Press, 1979).
2. The reader is referred to a more extended discussion in my book *EHYEH: A Kabbalah for Tomorrow* (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights, 2002), especially the chapter on the *sefirot*, pp. 39–60.
3. This nexus between spiritual centeredness and physiological balance has been developed with nuance in several contemporary works on the meditative practice of mindfulness. Representative among these are: Thich Nhat Hanh, *The Miracle of Mindfulness: An Introduction to the Practice of Meditation* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1976); Jack Kornfield, *The Path Is the Heart: A Guide Through the Perils and Promises of Spiritual Life* (New York: Bantam Books, 1993).
4. This work was published in Benson's *The Relaxation Response* (New York: Random House, 1992 [first published by HarperTorch, 1975]).
5. Consider the potent and knowledgable integration of these dimensions in Melinda Ribner, *Everyday Kabbalah: A Practical Guide to Jewish Meditation, Healing, and Personal Growth* (Sacramento: Citadel Press, 1998).
6. See, for example, Moshe Cordovero, *Pardes Rimmonim*, 17:4; Isaiah Horowitz, *Shnei Luhot ha-Brit*, Commentary on *Masekhet Pesachim*, 6:8.
7. The classic source for this tradition is *Genesis Rabbah*, 1:1, but it was preserved as well through the Aramaic translation and interpretive paraphrase of the Hebrew Bible, the *Targum Yerushalmi*.
8. It is important to note the clear correlations between this early Jewish exegesis and that of early Christianity in the opening lines of the *Gospel of John*: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God." In the Christian interpretation, the pre-existent Word was the spiritual nature of Jesus Christ, and the metaphysical word of God became manifest in the physical world through the incarnation of the Christ—and thus Word became flesh. It would not be much of a stretch to see the parallel exegeses of *Genesis Rabbah* and the *Gospel of John* as competing interpretations of the correlation between Genesis 1 and Proverbs 8. To frame the matter in the discourse of Late Antiquity: was the wisdom that antedated the world and accompanied God in primordial times the spiritual and pre-existent Torah (the rabbinic-midrashic view), or was it the spiritual and preincarnational Christ (the Judaeo-Christian view of the New Testament)? Both of these views reflect a logos-oriented theology. For more extended reflection on this relationship, and on the *Gospel of John* as a text of Judaeo-Christian

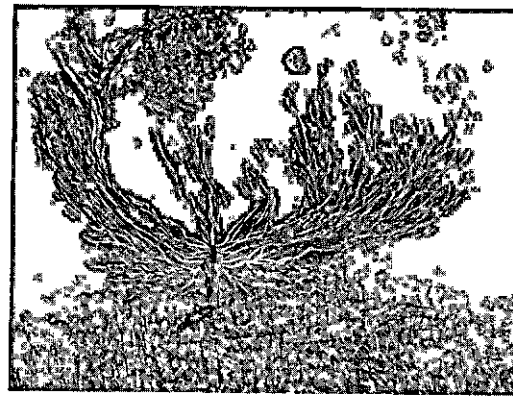
Midrash, see Daniel Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004).

9. See, for example, William Collinge, *The American Holistic Health Association Complete Guide to Alternative Medicine* (New York: Warner Books, 1997).

3. Hope and the Hebrew Bible

1. As W. H. McNeill points out in his book *Plagues and Peoples* (Garden City, NJ: Doubleday, 1976): p. 284, disease has always been more lethal than enemy weapons among premodern armies. See also Carol Meyers, *Discovering Eve: Israelite Women in Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988): pp. 64–71 for specific applications to the biblical world.
2. Mary Douglas, *Leviticus as Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).
3. Jocee Hudson, "D'var Torah" (Los Angeles: unpublished paper, 2003).
4. Douglas, *Leviticus*, p. 45.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 46.
6. Hector Avalos, *Illness and Health Care in the Ancient Near East: The Role of the Temple in Greece, Mesopotamia and Israel*, Harvard Semitic Monographs (Cambridge, MA, 1995).
7. Arthur Kleinman, *Patients and Healers in the Context of Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980): p. 72. Cited in John Dominic Crossan, *The Birth of Christianity: Discovering What Happened in the Years Immediately after the Execution of Jesus* (San Francisco, CA: Harper, 1998): p. 294.
8. Arthur Kleinman and Lilia H. Sung, "Why Do Indigenous Practitioners Successfully Heal?" *Social Science and Medicine* 13B (1979): pp. 7–26.
9. McNeill, *Plagues and Peoples*.
10. F. Brown, S. Driver, and C. Briggs, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1996).
11. The expression comes from the title of Phyllis Trible's book, *Texts of Terror: Literary-Feminist Readings of Biblical Narratives, Overtures to Biblical Theology* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984).
12. *The New Oxford Annotated Bible* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001).
13. JPS translation with one modification: I render "person" instead of "woman" to represent Koheleth's message in a gender-neutral fashion. Koheleth throughout seems to be specifically addressing a young man (see 11:9).
14. The lecture format, the original setting of this essay, did not allow enough time to develop this section on Esther and other parts of the Megillot in great detail. For a fuller exposition, see my forthcoming book, *The Bible and the Seasons of Life*.
15. On Esther as a book of "laughter and liberation," see Chapter 3, "Liberation and Laughter: Exodus and Esther," in J. William Whedbee's book, *The Bible and the*

HEALING and the JEWISH IMAGINATION



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