SEEING AND NOT SEEING THE FACE OF GOD: OVERCOMING THE LAW OF CONTRADICTION IN BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

STEVEN KEPNES
COLGATE UNIVERSITY

Abstract. This paper attempts to illuminate and interpret the contradictory portrait of God as both seen and unseen in the Torah. Thus Moses is commanded not to look on the face of God yet also praised for having spoken to God "face to face". We seek ways to reconcile the contradictory portraits of God through the use of the term "doubled-mindedness" in the theology of Jerome Gellman, in the logic of "thirdness" in C.S. Peirce's semiotics, and in the use of both particle and wave models in Einstein's physics of light. The paper concludes by disusing the practical consequences of theological double-mindedness for the religious life and the philosophical meaning of redemption as the time when the contradiction of the unseen and seen God is resolved.

I. INTRODUCTION

There is perhaps no philosophical law more basic than the law of non-contradiction. Socrates gives the outlines of it in the dialogue with Euthyphro, when he tells him that piety cannot be both one thing and its opposite and Aristotle articulates it as a primary rule of logic. "A" cannot be both "B" and "non-B." In other words the two propositions "*A is B*" and "*A is not B*" are mutually exclusive. This logical rule is so basic that it can be called one of the self-evident assumptions and central principles of philosophy.

However, when philosophy meets religion, and in particular Biblical scripture, it is often the case that it meets contradictory statements, propositions, and assertions of truth. Thus we see this in two biblical quotations. In Exodus 33:20, God said, "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." But in Deuteronomy 5:4 Moses is praised as one whom "the LORD spoke to face to face." And in the concluding words of Deuteronomy we hear: "There has not arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face." (Deuteronomy 34:10).

In these three quotations the verbs "to see" and "to know" are brought together so that we can say that the great prophet Moses is instructed both to not look upon the face of God and also said to have seen Him and to not know God but also to have known Him. We can use this contradiction to discuss a larger and more extensive issue of the contradiction between a distant God who is un-embodied, non-temporal, one, unimaginable, and dispassionate and a God who is close-by, active, knowledgeable and willful, at times loving and at times angry.

In this paper we will first review the scope and contours of the contradictory portrait of God as we have it in Torah and as it is reflected and interpreted in Jewish philosophy. We then seek ways to reconcile the contradictory portraits of God as seen and unseen through the use of the term "doubled-mindedness" in the theology of Jerome Gellman, in the use of both particle and wave models in Einstein's physics of light, and in the logic of "thirdness" in C.S. Peirce's semiotics. We close with a discussion of the practical consequences of theological double-mindedness for the religious life of the Jew and the philosophical meaning of redemption as the time when the contradiction of the unseen and seen God is resolved.

II. THE DILEMMA OF THE UNSEEN AND SEEN GOD

Given the important effects of Greek philosophy and logic on Medieval Jewish philosophy, it is the burden of much philosophical theology of the Medieval period to establish that the God of the Bible is incorporeal, unique, perfect, and eternal. The most important scriptural warrant for this is Ex:3:4 *Ahyeh Asher Ehyeh*, which Maimonides and Aquinas translate as "I am that I am." For them the fact that God identifies Himself as "I am that I am," in short, "I Am," means that He is an absolute, eternal and perfect being, unchanging and essentially different from the limited or partial being He creates. This sets up the basic biblical dichotomy of God and human, heaven and earth, God as perfect and human as imperfect.

However, if we read the Hebrew Bible without the philosophical gloss, we are struck by the multiple times God is presented with a face, arm, eyes, legs, ears, voice, and is addressed not as "I am" or YHVH but as a king, shepherd, warrior, or father. Here, it is quite obvious that *God is presented as a person* or subject. I realize that the philosophical literature on what it means to be a person is extensive and I do not want to cover it at this time. But suffice it to say that God's will, actions, knowledge, and emotions are enough to suggest that He appears as a person in the Bible. And it is His attributes of personhood that make Medieval philosophers most anxious when they read the Bible.

However, God's personhood is precisely what He wants to communicate with his own statement to Moses after He reveals Himself as "I am that I am." For here He says, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob" (Ex: 3,15). It is this formulation that Yehudah Halevi uses when He wants to juxtapose the faith of the believing Jew with the faith of the philosopher. At Sinai, God reveals Himself in the majesty and full power of the God of Being. But with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, He is more direct, easy to reach and talk to. In His relations with the forefathers He does, indeed, appear as a person. Certainly, He is a very powerful person, and also a unique one without a body in the way that humans have bodies, but a person with whom one can speak as Adam and Eve do, Cain, Sarah and even the lowly maidservant woman, Hagar, does. This God in Genesis seems particularly personal since He also does things like walking, talking, making mistakes and regretting, getting angry and loving, showing favoritism to one brother over another and, at times, acting like a rather inexperienced father or tribal elder. Here, I would even make the radical suggestion that God makes mistakes in Genesis precisely to let humans know that He wants them to know Him as a person.

However, it is not only in Genesis that we see God as a person. Even in Exodus after Sinai where He appears so austere and distanced, He also says, that He "spoke" to the people (Ex 20:1). This is repeated in other words in Numbers. "You, O LORD, are in the midst of this people, for You, O LORD, are seen eye to eye, while Your cloud stands over them; and You go before them in a pillar of cloud by day and in a pillar of fire by night (Num. 14:14).

Furthermore, as we read on in the Bible, God certainly appears to the prophets and speaks to them directly and unambiguously. Abraham Joshua Heschel expends quite a bit of energy arguing that what makes Biblical theology different from Greek philosophical theology is precisely the extent to which the Bible presents God as a person. Heschel focuses on the prophetic books of the Bible and there he contrasts the prophetic concern with the plight of the insignificant poor with the Greek philosopher's attention only to eternal ideas, with "great matters" of state and gods.

Heschel argues that the crucial distinction between the dispassionate, distant unmoved mover of Aristotle or the "One" of the neo-Platonic philosopher Plotinus, is that the God of the Bible is full of passion, anger toward the unrighteous and compassion and love for the poor, the widow, the stranger, and His chosen people, Israel. Heschel points out that the God of the prophets does not stand above the fray of human history in a passionless world of thought, but, rather, He involves Himself in the world as a being who acts to redeem the Israelite slaves and reveal the Torah with emotions of righteous anger and deep love.[1]

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1   Abraham J. Heschel, *The Prophets* (Harper and Row, 2001), 251.

III. IDOLATRY AND ADULTERY

In their book, *Idolatry*, Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit[2] sum up the contradiction of the God of absolute Being and the personal God of intimate relationship with their discussion of two aspects of the prohibition on idolatry. On the one hand, the prohibition on idolatry uses the model of monogamous marriage to describe the dynamics of the relationship between Israel and God. In this analogy, Israel is the wife and God the husband and there is even a suggestion here that "idolatry is a sexual sin."[3] Here, the worship of idols is akin to religious adultery of Israel with foreign gods. And this suggests the deeply emotional and intimate character of the relationship between God and Israel. The prophet who makes most use of the equivalence of adultery and idolatry is of course, Hosea.

On the other hand the commandment: "You shall make no graven images!" is taken to refer to false worship of God through images and statues. This interpretation is stressed in the Deuteronomic repetition of the Sinai revelation. At Sinai "You heard the sound of words but perceived no shape—nothing but a voice." (Deut. 4:12). This is explained. "Be most careful—since you saw no shape when the Lord your God spoke to you at Horeb, out of the fire—not to act wickedly and make for yourselves a sculpted image in any likeness whatever: the form of a man or woman" (Deut. 4:15-16). This view can be opposed to the earlier formulation of idolatry as worshipping other false gods to worshipping the real God falsely through the use of images and forms that are inappropriate to the imageless nature of God.

IV. THE PARADOXICAL NATURE OF JEWISH BELIEF IN GOD

Therefore, in the very heart of the prohibition of idolatry we have two important theological strands represented. On the one hand, God requires that Israel love only Him in an intimate relationship modeled on monogamous marriage relationship and on the other hand Israel cannot represent their God in graven images, especially in anthropomorphic forms that the marriage relationship suggests. Seeing this theological contradiction or paradox, the tendency of the philosophers is to resolve the contradiction and to do so on the side of the non-imagined, transcendent, non-personal God.

And this we see in the philosophical tradition from Philo to Saadia Gaon to Maimonides, to Hermann Cohen in the modern period. We can say that the mystical tradition chose to take the other side of the paradox and attempted to develop the embodied, personal, and immanent side of God through fantastic imagery albeit presented in word and not plastic forms.

V. NOT EITHER/OR BUT BOTH AND

Although one can see why one might want to claim one or other of the philosophical or personal theological strategies toward God, we must preserve both. The God that is revealed in Torah requires us, if we are to do a theology worthy of the revelation of God in the text of the Torah, to move beyond medieval deductive logic of Maimonides to the more flexible categories of thought that include polarity, paradox, and even contradiction. These are categories that we move to precisely because they are so evident in the textual expression of the Torah.

This, of course, is not a comfortable position for a philosopher to be in, the position of embracing contradiction. Indeed, it is not only that our philosophical father Aristotle articulated the law of non-contradiction as fundamental to philosophy, but the Western philosophical tradition re-asserts this principle throughout its history up until today in the very way in which it goes about establishing arguments, asserting that one proposition is true, the other false, and judging that this thinker is good and that one less good or simply bad.

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2   Moshe Halbertal and Avishai Margalit, *Idolatry* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1992).

3   Halbertal and Margalit, *Idolatry*, 11.

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The analytic Jewish philosopher Samuel Lebens reviews[4] the work of one noted analytical philosopher, Graham Priest, who in his book *In Contradiction*[5] argues for the validity of what is called "*dialethism*" or the assertion of two contradictory truths. But Priest himself admits that dialethism is not a desirable position for a philosopher to take. Sometimes, however, we must simply adopt it because it is the best we can do and we hope that in the future we will find a way out. Lebens, himself, argues that dialethism has not found a particularly welcoming reception by philosophers and he too seems to want to attempt to preserve Aristotle's fundamental logical rule in his work on Jewish philosophy.

However, I simply see no real way out of the dilemma of accepting contradiction as the price to pay for a Jewish theology that is true to the fundamental source of Judaism, i.e. the Torah. In some way it comes down to this. What is your primary source for Jewish thought? Is it philosophy or is it Torah. Here, I often think of Augustine, who despite some anti-Jewish polemics, remains one of the most profound theologians of all time. In his *Confessions* he tells us that in the beginning of his religious journey philosophy was primary for him and the Bible was so full of contradictions, miracles, repetitions and lacunae that he could hardly read it. But as his thinking matured and his quest for God deepened, he returned to scripture and realized that its formulations of God were more true than philosophical ones and its description of the human condition and its prescriptions for the good life and genuine salvation were most compelling.

To embrace contradiction is something certainly that the intelligent thinking person cannot do lightly. It is not something you want to recommend to the young philosopher. However, perhaps we can say that religion, as a subject matter simply demands different things of the philosopher than other topics. Aristotle said that philosophy, in its search for truth, must adapt its epistemology to its subject matter. Different subject matter requires different epistemological approaches.

I would suggest that the philosophy of religion is one of the most interesting philosophical forms precisely because philosophy is stretched to its limits and even forced to go beyond its limits. Here I would like to speak of a few models in the philosophy of religion that I think are helpful for a Jewish theology that is adequate to the record of the Torah. I will say from the outset that what I like about these strategies is that they suggest that the contradictions of the Torah do not signal epistemological defeat but pushes us to adapt new epistemological and even logical forms.

The first model I will review is offered by the Jewish philosopher of religion and theologian Jerome (Yehudah) Gellman in his notion of "double-mindedness." The second model is found in Einstein's theory of light as both wave and particle. And the third model is offered by C. S Peirce and his semiotic system.

Double-Mindedness

Gellman takes the notion of double-mindedness from scripture itself. He uses it to explain Abraham's mind-set in going out to sacrifice Isaac after being commanded by God to do so. One the one hand, Abraham had to believe that he would not have to sacrifice Isaac, that God "would provide" a way out. And on the other hand, he had to believe that he would have to sacrifice Isaac. Without this "double-mindedness" we cannot understand the trial that God had put Abraham through. [6] Without this paradox we cannot understand the psychological and religious stress Abraham was under.

Gellman's notion of double-mindedness has some affinities with Kierkegaard's notion of Abraham making a "double movement" (*Fear and Trembling)*.[7] It also relates to Kierkegaard's use of the notion of the sacrifice of Isaac as "the absurd." However, Gellman wants to avoid the irrationality suggested by this term. Gellman suggests that "double-mindedness" is not absurd, irrational or a-rational. Indeed, he wants to say that there is a rationality to the position of double-mindedness. It is "rational" because it

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4   Samuel Lebens, *The Principles of Judaism* (Oxford Univ. Press, (forthcoming)).

5   Graham Priest, *In Contradiction* (Oxford Univ. Press, 2006).

6   "Abraham was of two minds. …Abraham truly expected to be losing Isaac, in virtue of the Divine command to sacrifice Isaac….But in addition, and quite paradoxically, also truly expected, …that this was not to be.", Jerome Gellman, *The Fear, The Trembling and the Fire* (University Press of America, 1994), 74.

7   Soren Kierkegaard, *Fear and Trembling and the Sickness Unto Death* (Princeton Univ. Press, 1954), n.124.

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helps us to understand in the clearest way, despite the contradiction, what was actually going on in the mind of Abraham as he traveled with Isaac to Moriah. It is rational because it helps bring understanding and insight into the mental state that Abraham was in as he traveled to Moriah with his son. It is rational because it displays most clearly Abraham's religious struggle. It is rational because it fulfills the function of reason — to make the strange familiar, the opaque clear, and the obscure distinct.

Although Gellman does not use his notion of "double-mindedness" outside of the Akedah story, I am suggesting here that the notion is helpful for us as we contemplate what is required to believe in the God of Israel, the Lord, YHVH. Double-mindedness is precisely what is required for belief in this God. On the one hand we know He is incorporeal, imageless, and utterly beyond our ways of thinking; on the other, we know we can talk to Him at any moment just like we would to a person. On the one hand, we think of Him as distanced, eternal, without connection to the earthly world where beings grow, become, and die; on the other hand, we think of Him as listening, speaking, getting angry, loving, dispensing judgment and mercy, like an involved and caring parent. We make use of these personal and embodied images to help us imagine Him, to contemplate His powers, and most importantly, to emulate Him, so that we can become more like Him. Therefore, double-mindedness is the complex mind-set required for belief in the God of Torah and Jews perform the cognitive gymnastics of double-mindedness whenever they read the Torah and worship in synagogue or study Talmud, where they are confronted with a mixed discourse of philosophical directives to think of God as distanced, and personal images to address Him as a Thou.

Gellman goes further in talking about the rationality of double-mindedness by discussing philosophical positions on inconsistency developed by philosophers Norman Rescher and Richard Brandom. They argue that despite Aristotle's logic which proclaims as one of its central positions the "law of non-contradiction" there can be a "logic of inconsistency." This logic helps us to see that "it can be perfectly rational to believe in the truth of (some) contradictions." [8]

Gellman gives us a phenomenology of double-mindedness that describes how we might come to accept it as a philosophical position. "I have a certain kind of occurrent thought …and I also have this other thought which may be contradictory to the first within a logical calculus. Since both positions make rational sense to me, I wish to hold both with "equal strength." [9] I then adopt the position of "double-mindedness." And I thereby "gain freedom from the imposition to demand to divest myself of mutually opposing categories of thought."[10]

Two Theories of Light

In science, a good example of double-mindedness is the way Einstein and most physicists understand light. On the one hand, light behaves like a wave and on the other hand it behaves like a particle. At times the wave theory is most helpful to explain what we see in light and at other times the participle theory makes most sense. So in order to explain the nature of light we need two opposed theories. Indeed, the two theories, even though opposed, are needed if we want to most comprehensively explain the nature of light. The two opposed theories are most adequate to the evidence we have. They therefore are the most rational option rather than choosing one over the other.

God, who certainly lies beyond any cognitive system we devise, requires our understanding Him both as incorporeal, omnipotent, eternal simply one, and also personal, present, and intimate. We need the incorporeal notions of God to appreciate His power as creator of the world and His transcendence of the common boundaries of space and time. In addition, God's status as morally perfect or ideal assures His pure righteousness and presents us with a reliable foundation of morality and justice. On the other hand, we also need notions of personhood to understand God as a subject who acts in history, wills, knows, and responds to humans with compassion and love.

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8   Gellman, *The Fear, The Trembling and the Fire*, 80.

9   Ibid.

10   Ibid., 81.

Like light, these contradictory formulations are needed in order to understand the Divine reality as it is presented in scripture and also in human experience and thought. Thus double-mindedness is required if we humans are to believe in the God of Torah. And even though this theological double-mindedness violates the most basic of philosophical laws, the law of non-contradiction, scripture offers us something of a higher principle of logic whereby contradictory assertions of God as at once transcendent and immanent, outside of time and yet available to us in our temporal life, objectively true and an intimate subject serves to more accurately portray the infinite reality of God, than the more prosaic law of simple philosophic logic.

Peirce's Thirdness and the Work of Peter Ochs

We can identify double-mindedness logically with the "excluded middle" between A and non-A. Aristotelian logic prohibits the excluded middle from rational thought. However, the modern semiotician and pragmatist, C. S. Peirce suggests that the excluded middle represents a kind of thinking that is crucial to all thinking that pushes beyond the existing boundaries of present epistemological systems. First of all, when we turn to Peirce to illuminate our processes of thinking we are tuned to the workings of signs as the medium of thought.

For Peirce, signs function through a triadic relation in which a "representamen" — picture, sound, pointer, word — refers to an "object" — thing, person, concept — for an "interpretant" — human mind, interpreter, community of interpreters. [11] Peirce argues that these three elements are necessary for the process of "semiosis" or meaning-making to occur for humans. Where most theories of signs work with a dyadic "symbol-object" system of signs, Peirce's triadic model specifically adds the element of interpretation, "the interpretant" as a primary element in the process of signification. Interpretation as a constituent element and not an ancillary element of signification brings with it a dynamic temporal element, an element of cognitive action to the understanding of signs. It means that signs are devices we use in an act of thinking. It means that we are constantly negotiating meaning as we use signs in the act of talking, thinking, and speaking, both to ourselves and others. This element of action and use means that meaning making is not a static but a dynamic active capacity. This is highly suggestive for our thoughts about God.

God, unlike a thing or human person or philosophical concept, is an exceptionally difficult matter to signify. If we take the non-corporeal, unique oneness, non-imagistic and even non-conceptual aspect of God championed by the medieval philosophers seriously, we really cannot signify God at all. In fact, in Maimonides terms, signifying God is a form of idolatry. To give God attributes, or present Him in propositions, God is good, wise, etc. is for Maimonides a form of sin. Thus, we end up with negative theology. God is not corporeal, not temporal, not ignorant, not powerless, etc. [12] And, for Maimonides, reviewing the terms and logic of negative theology is a form of contemplation equivalent to prayer. [13]

But as the Talmud tells us, God does speaks "in the language of man." And most specifically, God speaks in the language of Torah. So we need not be satisfied with the thin theological gruel of negative theology alone and the process of semiosis of God can function in the ways of human speech and thought as it functions in everyday life. So despite Maimonides, the Torah does offer us propositions like "God is good" and it does give us analogies, "The Lord is my shepherd," and it does encourage us to seek God in the "still small voice" (I Kings 19:12) within us. How we negotiate the vast distance between Maimonides'

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11   Charles S. Peirce, *Collected Papers, Vols. 1-6* (Harvard Univ. Press, 1958), 5:484.

12   The more radical version of Maimonides' negative theology recognizes that even placing God's attributes in the negative form "not not-x" is bestowing on God a kind of attribute and therefore should be avoided.

13   Maimonides, himself, points to the value of contradictory statements about God when he quotes the famous rabbinic dictum "Everything is foreseen. And freedom of the will is given." *Pirke Avot*: 3:14. Here, regarding the contradiction between divine determinacy and human freedom, he says that what humans see as a contradiction, God knows what we will do yet we must see ourselves as freely choosing it, God perceives as no contradiction at all. Since His knowledge is not comparable to our knowledge what we see as a contradiction He sees as clear knowledge. Moses Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed*, ed. Shlomo Pines (Chicago, IL: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1963), III:13, III:20.

distant God and Elijah's "still small voice" of God within is, as we have been discussing, one of the great theological challenges of Judaism.

But here I think that Peirce is helpful in his suggestion that the semiosis or sense making of God is a process that involves us in a series of steps of synthesis so that our minds can put together the contradiction of a distant and intimate God and see it or hear it together-- now as harmony, now as dissonance, depending on the moment, the context of congregational prayer, or the setting of the particulars of our lives as we use the word "Adonai," God, in prayer, or contemplation.

Peirce also has another term that is helpful for us in addressing our contradiction, that is, his notion of "thirdness." [14] Thirdness is the term Peirce uses to address the most complex challenges of semiosis. Firstness [15] addresses signs when they want to be as clear as possible. The green light means go, the red stop. The knock at the door means someone is there. Secondness [16] addresses signs that point to its object, the arrow points to the road to the North, the picture over the door shows a big shoe — thus it is a shoe store. The plant is green; the pillow is soft. Secondness functions with descriptives and known categories. Thirdness employs multiple signs in combinations to form complex often abstract ideas. Thirdness is about mediation, harmony, dissonance, the vague yet knowable semiotic space of "the between." Thirdness is metaphor and the poetic use of language. In logic, thirdness is the "excluded middle" between yes and no. Thirdness is the space of contradiction that defies Aristotle's law of contradiction. In science, thirdness is the hypothesis making moment when the experimenter is thinking "perhaps it is this," "perhaps that." "Let me try it this way," "perhaps this is the solution, the answer." Pierce, who loves to make up terms, calls this moment of hypothesis making "abduction" [17] and distinguishes it from deduction and induction in the toolbox of scientific epistemology.

To refer back to Gellman's notion of "double-mindedness," thirdness involves not only complex signifying content but also involves a state of mind, a "mind-set" in Gellman's terms. Thirdness is the mind set of contemplation and reflection and extended interpretation of multiple signs.

The philosopher Peter Ochs's has dedicated much of his work to applying Peirce to scripture. [18] Ochs argues that Peirce supplies us with the tools to develop a "logic of scripture" that helps us to understand Torah as a complex system of signs aimed at understandings of God. Given the complexity of scripture and its obvious gaps, repetitions, contradictions and dichotomies, scripture, as a religious medium, requires a different logic than traditional philosophy with its law of contradiction presents. Ochs argues that the reasoning of scripture is neither primitive nor confused but that scripture displays a logic ruled by Peirce's terms "abduction" and "thirdness". It uses these logical forms to push human logic toward divine logic. The pragmatic dimension of a sign's use, the element of the interpretant and community of interpretation provides a way to understand the rich Jewish traditions of interpretation of scripture in Midrash, Aggadah (stories) and medieval exegesis, as ways of generating new understandings of God diachronically through tradition.

Ochs helps us see that the semiosis of God is no simple matter. Indeed, it requires a complex use or signs that rivals the use of signs by mathematics and physics to express the fundamentals of our knowledge of reality. Given this, it is no wonder that the Torah and the Jewish theological tradition stretches our normal use of language to its limits in its attempt to express the inexpressible.

VI. THE PRACTICAL REASON OF SEEING AND NOT SEEING GOD

If the Torah pushes us toward a double-mindedness about God as both a transcendent and immanent reality we might still want to ask what this paradox yields practically for the religious life. In the modern

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14   Peirce, *Collected Papers, Vols. 1-6*, 1:337.

15   Ibid. 2:85.

16   Ibid. 2:84.

17   *Ibid.* 5:172.

18   Peter Ochs, *Peirce, Pragmatism, and the Logic of Scripture* (Cambridge Univ. Press, 1998).

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period, there has been a turn away from notions of God's transcendence toward His embodiment and thus we see the popularity of Kabbalah which offers access to God through the various images, characteristics, and personages of the *Sefirot* and the felt presence of God as the *Shekinah*. Here, practical religious reasoning seems to want a variety of access points to God that make God present in life so that God's power, knowledge, wisdom, beauty and spirit is accessible. Indeed, the kabbalistic notion that the *sefirot* are matched by tendencies, powers, and cognitive dimensions in the human being herself allows for a kind of embodiment of God in the human individual's body. The religious life then becomes a matter of balancing human higher powers and abilities and realizing dimensions of soul and spirit that lie within persons themselves. Here, seeing God becomes a kind of seeing the self in its fulfilled and elevated spiritual form.

The Zohar provides a kabbalistic midrash of Torah that explains also God's embodiment in scripture so that God is presented as an immense and dynamic process pulsating with different energy sources that Jews help to balance out in their ritual practice. The parallel between the body of God and the human body brings the distant God as *Ein Sof* or infinite, close enough to "see" and "know" as we see and know our very self. And in addition, in popular Kabbalah or Hasidism, Jews are presented with models of spiritual fulfillment in the figure of the Tsaddik who literally becomes a point of mediation between God and Jew. Thus the Tsaddik can be "seen" and "known" as an everyday spiritual guide and teacher whose every word and bodily movements are presented as avenues to divine wisdom.

But here the philosophers see great dangers and the wisdom of "not seeing" and "not-knowing" God presents itself as a much needed corrective to the over-reaching and self-aggrandizing pretensions of seeing and knowing too much or rather thinking one sees and knows too much about God. Here the biblical warning against images of God and Maimonides' utterly transcendent God who cannot be represented in any human cognitive formulation serves an important theological function. Here, although Maimonides often functions in the realm of theoretical reason which addresses metaphysical issues of first causes, we see the practical religious importance of his thought. The practical religious import is that God is shown to be beyond representation and the normal ways of cognition so that we do not make the mistake of seeing and knowing Him in terms that are too human. Here, the philosophical interpretation of the prohibition on idolatry rises us to purify our theology of the all too human desire to see and know God in our own terms.

However, in addition to its role in criticizing the human tendency to make all too human representations for God in images and schemas like the map of the kabbalistic *Sefirot* and the desire for a mediating human figure like the Tzaddik, the God of the philosopher provides ideals and ethical principles and the assurance of an eternal and providential power that is also important to the practical religious life of the Jew.

Therefore, it is important to say that the omniscient, omnipotent, eternal God who cannot be seen in the Bible is not merely a figment of the mind of the philosopher but also God who, in His very Being, represents ideals and hopes that lie beyond easy human access. Like the unseen God, the ideals that the distant God represents are fundamentally un-seeable. So that even as we strive for them and hope to achieve them, they remain beyond our grasp. These ideals represent the very meaning of the notion of messianic redemption which, because it has not yet happened, is unknown even as the distant God remains the guarantor of that redemption which is sure to come.

VII. THE ONE GOD

There is one more thing that I must say however, before ending this paper. And that is that the condition for the possibility of God's contradictory status as both distant and present, transcendent and immanent, the condition for the double-mindedness I am arguing for, is God's oneness. If God were two there would be no problem, no contradiction, since we could say that God A is transcendent and God B is immanent. However, the Shema teaches us that we must remain with God's oneness. And maybe the prophet Zacharia

is addressing the hope of the philosopher when he says. Biyom hahu, ihyeh Adonai Achad u Shemo echad. "In that day shall the LORD be One, and His name One."

This means that redemption is not only the solution to the problem of exile and sin, suffering and evil, it is also the solution to the philosophical problem of the contradiction of seeing and not seeing God.

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