

# The interrelationship between the individual and the community

S. Smiles

1 Vayikra - ch. 9:10

<sup>22</sup> Aaron lifted his hands toward the people\* and blessed them.\* He then descended from [the altar\* where he] had prepared the sin offering, the burnt offering, and the peace offerings.

<sup>23</sup> Moses and Aaron went into the Communion Tent, and when they came out, they blessed the people. God's glory\* was then revealed to all the people.

<sup>24</sup> Fire came forth from before God\* and consumed the burnt offering and the choice parts on the altar. When the people saw this, they raised their voices in praise\* and threw themselves on their faces.

<sup>1</sup> Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu,\* each took his fire pan,\* placed fire on it, and then incense on it. They offered it before God, [but it was] unauthorized fire,\* which [God] had not instructed them [to offer]. <sup>2</sup> Fire came forth from before God,\* and it consumed them, so that they died before God.

<sup>3</sup> Moses said to Aaron, "This is exactly what God meant when he said, 'I will be sanctified among those close to Me, and I will thus be glorified.'"<sup>3</sup> Aaron remained silent.

2 The Midrash Says - R. Weissman

Each of them took a pan, placed fire in it and k'tores (incense) above it and placed it on the mizbayach.

Our Sages teach that they were guilty of a number of offenses:<sup>43</sup>

1. As we explained above, they did not consult Moshe to determine whether it was correct to offer a fire of their own.

2. They also did not give their father the honor of consulting him.

3. They did not even consult with each other, but each acted independently of the other.

4. According to some opinions of our Sages, Nadav and Avihu, driven by their great longing to experience the Almighty's Presence, entered the kodesh hakodashim (Holy of Holies) in order to offer the k'tores (incense) there.<sup>44</sup> Only the high priest may enter the Holy of Holies.\*

3  Both Nadav and Avihu were unmarried.<sup>52</sup>

4

All their actions were motivated by their overwhelming love for the Almighty. When they witnessed the Heavenly fire descend, they felt the urge to contribute a fire of their own to express their love for Hashem.<sup>54</sup>

Despite their pure motivation, the full force of the Attribute of Justice stuck them. Immediately, a Heavenly fire emerged from the Holy of Holies and consumed them.

5 רב המסקיני

י (א) וישמע עליה כטרת משלהו, היינו: ויקריבו לפני ה' אש זרה,<sup>53</sup> שהרי אי אפשר לקטרת בלא אש, וכל קטרת שאינה כשל צבור נקראת זרה, אשר לא צוה אותם, פי' אשר לא לעשות צוה אותם, כדכתיב: לא תעלו עליו קטרת זרה,<sup>53</sup> דוגמת: לשרוף את בניהם ואת בנוהיהם באש אשר לא צויתו.<sup>50</sup>

6 "The Individual & the Community" R. Sobushchik [6-14, 18-20]

A The Bible tells us that God created a single individual, a lonely being:

וייצר ה' אלקים את האדם עפר מן האדמה ויפח באפיו נשמת חיים ויהי האדם לנפש חיה

Then the Lord God formed man of the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils a breath of life and the man became a living soul.<sup>1</sup>

B The Bible also tells us that the Almighty, having created Adam, said:

לא טוב היות האדם לבדו אעשה לו עזר כנגדו.

It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make a helpmeet for him.<sup>2</sup>

C God created Eve and brought her to Adam.

ויבן ה' אלקים את הצלע אשר לקח מן האדם לאשה ויבאה אל האדם

And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made He a woman and brought her unto the man.<sup>3</sup>

7 The originality and creativity in man are rooted in his loneliness-experience, not in his social awareness. The singleness of man is responsible for his singularity; the latter, for his creativity. Social man is superficial: he imitates, he emulates, Lonely man is profound: he creates, he is original.

8

Lonely man is a courageous man; he is a protester; he fears nobody; whereas social man is a compromiser, a peacemaker, and at times a coward. At first man had to be created לבדו, alone; for otherwise he would have lacked the courage or the heroic quality to stand up and to protest, to act like Abraham, who took the ax and shattered the idols which his own father had manufactured.

9

However, man was created a second time. He fell asleep a lonely man and awoke to find Eve standing beside him. God willed man to exist in solitude, to experience aloneness. He also willed man to break out of his loneliness, to move closer to the thou, and to share the existential experience with the thou.

To exist alone is not good — said the Lord God. Man is not only a protester; he is an affirmer too. He is not only an iconoclast, but a builder, as well. If man always felt remote from everybody and everything, then the very purpose of creation could not be achieved

10 How is the community formed? The answer is simple: two lonely individuals create a community in the manner that God created the world. What was God's instrument of creation? The word. The word is also the instrument with which man creates his own community. God, by saying יהי, which is identical with an act of recognition of the world, made it possible for a beside-Him existence to emerge, made it possible for finitude to co-exist with infinity, notwithstanding that, as a mathematical equation,  $\text{finitude} + \text{infinity} = \text{infinity}$ , or, in other words, that the co-existence of the infinite and the finite is an impossibility. God, in order to make "room" for the finite world, employed סרת הצמצום, the method of self-contraction or self-limitation, כביכול. He withdrew, and by engaging in a movement of recoil, כביכול, He precipitated "empty space" for the world. Otherwise the latter could not have come into existence, since it would have been "swallowed" by infinity. Thus, we may suggest the following equation:  $\text{creation} = \text{recognition} = \text{withdrawal} = \text{an act of sacrifice}$ .

11 The same is true of man. If lonely man is to rise from existential exclusiveness to existential all-inclusiveness, then the first thing he has to do is to recognize another existence. Of course this recognition is, *eo ipso*, a sacrificial act, since the mere admission that a thou exists in addition to the I, is tantamount to צמצום, self-limitation and self-contraction. A community is established the very moment I recognize the thou and extend greetings to the thou. One individual extends the *shalom* greeting to another individual; and in so doing he creates a community. The Halacha has attached great significance to casual greetings exchanged between two individuals. Rabbi Helbo said: "If his friend greets him and he does not return the greeting he is called a robber for it is said, 'It is ye that have eaten up the vineyard, the spoil of the poor is in your houses.'" What message does *Shalom* convey, if not encour-

14 "He gives bread to all flesh for His loving-kindness is everlasting." As we have said above, the same relationship should prevail between me and the thou whom I have recognized, and with whom I have formed a community. I assume responsibility for each member of the community to whom I have granted recognition and whom I have found worthy of being my companion. In other words, the I is responsible for the physical and mental welfare of the thou.

17 Ethics From Sinai - R. Binur.  
It is wrong to regard yourself as a "me" on one side of the fence, and the community as a "them" ranged on the other side. You are a part of "them." The problems of the community are as much yours as they are your neighbor's.

18 The community in Judaism is not a functional-utilitarian, but an ontological one. The community is not just an assembly of people who work together for their mutual benefit, but a metaphysical entity, an individuality; I might say, a living whole. In particular, Judaism has stressed the wholeness and the unity of *Knesset Israel*, the Jewish community. The latter is not a conglomerate. It is an autonomous entity, endowed with a life of its own. We, for instance, lay claim to *Eretz Israel*. God granted the land to us as a gift. To whom did He pledge the land? Neither to an individual, nor to a partnership consisting of millions of people. He gave it to the *Knesset Israel*, to the community as an independent unity, as a distinct juridic metaphysical person. He did not promise the land to me, to you, to them; nor did He promise the land to all of us together. Abraham did not receive the land as an individual, but as the father of a future nation. The owner of the Promised Land is the *Knesset Israel*, which is a community persona. However strange such a concept may appear to the empirical sociologist, it is not at all a strange experience for the Halachist and the mystic, to whom *Knesset Israel* is a living, loving, and suffering mother.

12 Quite often a man finds himself in a crowd among strangers. He feels lonely. No one knows him, no one cares for him, no one is concerned with him. It is again an existential experience. He begins to doubt his ontological worth. This leads to alienation from the crowd surrounding him. Suddenly someone taps him on the shoulder and says: "Aren't you Mr. So-and-So? I have heard so much about you." In a fraction of a second his awareness changes. An alien being turns into a fellow member of an existential community (the crowd). What brought about the change? The recognition by somebody, the word!  
\* To recognize a person is not just to identify him physically. It is more than that: it is an act of identifying him existentially, as a person who has a job to do, that only he can do properly. To recognize a person means to affirm that he is irreplaceable. To hurt a person means to tell him that he is expendable, that there is no need for him.

13 Once I have recognized the thou and invited him to join the community, I ipso facto assumed responsibility for the thou. Recognition is identical with commitment.  
Here again we walk in the ways of our Maker. God created man; God did not abandon him; God showed concern for him. God cared for Adam; God said: It is not good for man to be alone. He provided him with a mate; He placed him in Paradise, and allowed him to enjoy the fruit of the Garden. Even after man sinned and was exiled from the Garden, the Almighty did not desert him. Of course, He punished him. Yet He was concerned with man even while man was in sin. In a word, God assumed responsibility for whatever and whomever He created:

15 (י"ט, ב) ויקחו אליך פרה אדמה. פרה אדומה מסמלת לפני הפכים בנושא אחד, מצד אחד צריכה להיות הפרה אדומה חמימה, ז.א. שלימה באדמימוחה שלא יהו בה אפי' כי שערות שאינן אדומות, וידוע שהגוף של אדמימות מורה על פשע ועון ושפיכות דם כדה"כ אם יהיו חטאיכם כשנים כשלג ילבינו, ומצד אחר נגור, אשר אין בה מום, ז.א. שהיא מסמלת לדבר השלם שאין בה שום פגם חסרון. וכיצד יתכן שאותו הדבר שכולו רע יהיה כולו טוב בלי שום חסרון? ונראה שחשובה כצדה, אשר לא עלה עליה עול.

16 וזוהו אפשר להבין כיצד שימשה הפרה אדומה לכפרה על חטא העגל כדבריהם ו"ל תבא האם ותקנה צואת בנה, שלכאורה אין ענין א' לשני.

אמנם י"ל שכאן לכפר על רוב העם שלא השתחרפו בעשיית העגל ולא רקדו במחולות סביבו, אבל גם לא מיהו בעושי העגל, ולא נשאו בעול עם וולחם למונעם מחטא, וחשבו שרי כזה שהם עצמם נוגעים כצדיקים, ומה לנו עם הערב רב, ולאנשים כאלה באה הלקח מסרה אדומה שאף אם יהיה איש שלא יהיה בו מום, אבל אם לא נשא בעול לשפר וולחו, הרי הוא כולו אדום, כולו רע כעושה הרע עצמו, ושפיר אמרו, תבא האם ותקנה צואת בנה.

In conclusion, a heroic life means a sacrificial life. The highest form of sacrifice by a human being is not only to give his life. The highest form of sacrifice the

way understood it is his readiness to leave the stage after he has played his part assigned to him and vanish in anonymity. More than a person wants to live, a person wants to be remembered. Remembered by individuals, remembered by society, remembered that he accomplished something. This quest for not being forgotten is very powerful.

G-d requires of man the highest of all sacrifices, genuine anonymity. G-d hates glamour and certainly vain glory. The actor appears on stage for a short while, plays his or her part humbly and disappears immediately without receiving applause. Man stands in the limelight as long as he is the anointed and consecrated to the covenantal community. The very moment he finishes his job, the light are dimmed or rather extinguished.

The hedonistic society as well as the tyrannical arrogant society attempt to overcome human finiteness, the awareness by substituting public memory for metaphysical immortality.

They did not accept it. On the contrary, it considered the quest for having ones name recorded in history as sheer vanity. The individual as such can never become a historical figure. Only the covenantal community is perpetuated by history and has claim on historical immortality. The service rendered to the community is recorded. The private life of the individual is never recorded. The very moment the service is completed, history is not concerned with him anymore.

שאינו הכללי רק ריבוי של עבודת יחידים בלבד. אלא על ידי עבודת רבים מאוחדת מתהווה גילוי רוחני חדש ונשגב. שאיכותו עולה בכפלי כפלים. לאין ערוך. על סיכום הכמות של עבודת וגילויי היחידים. כתבו הספרים הקודשים שלכל אחד ואחד מששים רבוא נשמות ישראל

השרשיות (הנשמות הבאות הן ענפים להן) יש אות אחת בתורה. התורה היא כלל גילויי רצון השי"ת בעולם. אות התורה היא בחינה מסוימת בגילויים אלו. כאשר מצטרפות כמה וכמה אותיות, נעשים מזה חיבה ופסוקים המגלים ענינים שלמים בתורה. הגילוי שיוצא מצירופי האותיות לתיבות ומשפטים, אינו מבטא את סכום מספר האותיות בלבד, אלא הוא בחינת גילוי חדש של איכות הרבה יותר גבוהה. כן הוא בהתאחד גילויי היחידים. לכל אחד תפקידו המיוחד בגילוי כבוד שמים. לשם מילוי תפקיד זה קבל את מוג כחותיו ומדותיו וכל כלי. ובהצטרף כל הגילויים של כל היחידים מבני ישראל, הרי זה גילוי חדש מיוחד ונפלא של קידוש שמו יתברך.

כלל ישראל וההתקשרות אליו הינם בעיקר מושג וקשר רוחני, דהיינו, המציאות הרוחנית המקבלת את כל השפע מהשי"ת היא "כנסת ישראל" הכוללת את כל נשמות ישראל, וכאשר בהיותם בעולם הזה הם מאוחדים בשאיפה אחת לעשות רצונו של מקום בכך הם קשורים לשרשם - כנסת ישראל (על פי "קל"ח פתחי חכמה" עמ' קצט). לכן מי שמתחבר לכלל (וכפי מידת התחברותו) יש לו קשר ושיוכות אל השרש הרוחני העליון - כנסת ישראל, ומשם הוא מקבל סיוע ועזר לשוב בתשובה על אף שיש לו סמטום לב. אבל הגאותן הנפרד מהכלל (ואפילו מי שמתבדל מהכלל שלא מתוך גאווה) אין לו את הזכות והסיוע שניתן למי שמחובר לכלל.

סיבת הדבר היא כי כל השפעותיו ית' הן לשרש הרוחני העליון של כלל ישראל - כנסת ישראל, ומשם יורדת ההשפעה הרוחנית והגשמית לכלל ישראל בעולם הזה, ומתחלקת לאישים הפרטיים כפי מידת התחברותם לכלל, כמו שכתב רמח"ל ("דעת תבונות" עמ' קפ) "מתוך עוצם ההתדבקות" - התלויה בריבוי מעשי המצוות של ישראל. - "ישפיע הקב"ה לנסת ישראל ולכל כללות נמצאיו שפע של קדושה, דהיינו שפע אלוקי ורוחני, ושפע של ברכה, שהוא שפע להצלחות אפילו בעולם הזה... ותתחדש הברכה בכלל התחוננים, ואח"כ יגיע אל האישים, כל אחד כראוי לו". כלומר "התרצות זו ושפע זה הם לעומת הכלל כנסת ישראל, וכל אחד מקבל בדרך זה את השפע, לפי מה שהוא חלק מהכלל, ומקושר אל כנסת ישראל" (שם, ביאורים 445).

לא זו בלבד שהנבדל מהציבור מפסיד את רחמי השי"ת על הציבור, יתירה מו, מדקדקים בדינו יותר מהרגיל, מפני שאמרו חז"ל (סוטה ח): "במידה שאדם מודד בה מודדין לו", ומכיון שמחשיב ומעריך את עצמו טוב יותר מכלל הציבור בהתאם לכך דנים אותו, וכמו שמי שקיבל מהשי"ת כלים ואמצעים רבים יותר

In fact, the greatness of man manifests itself in his inner contradiction, in his dialectical nature, in his being single and unrelated to anyone, as well as in his being thou-related and belonging to a community structure.

19 The personalistic unity and reality of a community, such as Knesset Israel, is due to the philosophy of existential comple-

mentarity of the individuals belonging to the Knesset Israel. The individuals belonging to the community complement one another existentially. Each individual possesses something unique, rare, which is unknown to others; each individual has a unique message to communicate, a special color to add to the communal spectrum. Hence, when a lonely man joins the community, he adds a new dimension to the community awareness. He contributes something which no one else could have contributed. He enriches the community existentially; he is irreplaceable. Judaism has always looked upon the individual as if he were a little world (microcosm);<sup>5</sup> with the death of the individual, this little world comes to an end. A vacuum which other individuals cannot fill is left.

21 Worldmask - R. Tatz

The third type of order, sefer l'shem achdus ha'peula, order for the sake of unity of function, is a higher level of order. Here, the components of a whole are organized and connected in such a way that they blend into a unified entity. This composite entity functions precisely because of the harmonious blending of its components.

An example of this type of order would be a complex machine - the parts of the machine are interconnected in such a way that the machine functions properly. Each part would be useless on its own, but together they achieve their purpose.

22

In an engine, for example, there may be a small screw in the carburettor which is almost insignificant in terms of its intrinsic value - it may be worth less than the smallest coin. But without it the engine does not run; and if that small screw were to fall out when the vehicle powered by that engine were in an inhospitable and dangerous place, the hapless driver may feel that it is worth the value of the entire vehicle. Without that tiny part he has nothing at all. While the engine was running smoothly that part was unconsidered and unappreciated; now that it is missing its value has become apparent.

23. Systems which are set up in such a way that all the parts are needed before any become relevant have a unique quality: each part manifests a paradoxical duality. Each part is at one and the same time nothing and everything: nothing because it is only a part, without the rest of the system it is utterly useless; and everything because when all the other parts are in place and functioning, it becomes essential and critical. Each part depends on all the others entirely, in this it is utterly subservient; and yet all the others depend on it, in this it is utterly controlling.

20

These two traits of the community (individuality and complementarity), we find in the Biblical portrayal of the marriage-community. The latter consists of two unique personalities. The male and the female represent two different existential experiences; man and woman differ, not only as natural beings, but as metaphysical personae as well. Man is man in all his thoughts and feelings, while the same is true of the woman: she is a woman in her whole existential experience. When both join in

matrimony a community of two "incommensurate" beings is formed. Woman and man complement each other existentially: together they form, not a partnership, but an individuality, a persona. The marriage-community is like the general community; its strength lies, not in that which is common to the participants, but in their singularity and singleness.

24

Such a system is the Jewish people. Each individual Jew is essential and unique, utterly necessary for the cosmic purpose which the Jewish nation must manifest, and yet lost in his merely biological smallness when not fulfilling his destiny as a Jew. In fact, at a broader scale, all of mankind and the Universe constitute such a system: everything in the world is created unique in its position and function and will ultimately reveal how critically necessary it is in the greater scheme of reality.

25 We respond in these two seemingly opposite ways because that is exactly the nature and purpose of the human experience: each of us is unique, cosmically important; yet we achieve our uniqueness precisely when we fit into a larger order perfectly. Remarkably, it is exactly when we blend into the Universal picture exactly as we should in terms of our private, unique qualities and abilities that we thrill to the realization that no-one else could fulfill this particular function, no-one else could stand exactly here and do what must be done here. I fit in perfectly so that I become indistinguishable as an individual, and yet in so doing my individuality swells to the proportions of the Universe. I am nothing, and yet I am everything. Each person reflects the uniqueness of the image of the Creator; the totality of the Universe reflects the Oneness of the Creator; and in depth, the two are not in contradiction.

26 This idea gives rise to insights into the work of each individual. First, one must strive to discover one's uniqueness. What is my particular task? What essential part of the Universe is mine to build? This question is critically important - a life spent pursuing some unrealistic and inappropriate goal is a life wasted, and worse, damages the entire structure. When that small and seemingly insignificant screw in the carburettor of that engine which we considered previously falls out of place and rattles around in the cylinders, for example, the entire engine may be irreparably damaged.

27

רסב 'גד' 'ג' R. Sobvettik

Prayer signifies a consecrated life. ה' believes that man is not cast into this world in vain. He is burdened with an assignment. Each man, in the opinion of ה' is anointed by the Almighty to contribute something to redemption, to a great redemption. In other words, a drop of the holy oil, שמן המשחה, was placed on every Jew. He is called to participate in the great march of generations who have been blazing the trail for the מלך המשיח since the dawn of our history. Each Jew is the herald, the harbinger of the מלך המשיח. Each Jew is a מלך המשיח in miniature because he blazes the trail for the great מלך המשיח. Each Jew has a messianic assignment. And each Jew should think I was born for one purpose only, to serve G-d. This is the prayerful way of thinking.