

SHLOMZION

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I.1

The joke in our family was that Salome was an Alsatian. My father used to find my repeated remonstrations that “she was nothing of the sort” too amusing to let me in on the gag. I used to insist—with all the emphatic conviction of a four-year-old—that Alsations were dogs. And Salome was most definitely NOT a DOG!! She was a majestic woman who frequented our home in London for a number of years and to whom many of my fondest childhood memories are attached.

Salome’s father was an austere intellectual with the unlikely name of Leon Leon. As far as I could understand, he had been dishonorably discharged from the German army in 1916 when Salome was only one year old. He had been frequently reprimanded for what his superiors called “cowardice.” But the officers forgave his weakness, favoring his gentile manner and scholarly nature. Leon, who had lived his entire life in the border province of Alsace-Lorraine, simply could not bring himself to shoot his weapon at the French enemy. “He refused to hate anyone enough to do so,” his daughter explained. Instead he developed the eerie habit of wandering around the trenches muttering psalms. He used to huddle in corners and write lengthy letters in Hebrew to the infant Salome he had never met. He scribbled feverishly on scraps of paper that he stored in the pockets of his trench coat. The men in his company thought he was a liability. Some thought he was a spy. Comrades hissed as he passed and called him “Dreyfus.”

They campaigned to have him discharged. He endured a public humiliation at his barracks, then was sent home to Metz, to the unwelcoming society of his fellow Jews and to the embrace of his wife, Rose, and their five daughters.

This story is almost all I ever knew of Leon Leon. Salome told us very little. She would often quote things she had learned from him or mention his name bashfully, as if he were an excuse for all the things she knew. “C’est Papa,” she would say with a little laugh after referring to a biblical passage or a talmudic concept in polite conversation. She used to cover her face with her beautiful hand as if she were giving confession to her fingers for a sin she had not meant to commit. My mother found the allusions and the confessions equally discomfiting. “She shouldn’t know so much. Nothing good will come of it.”

From the little that Salome did tell, it was clear that Leon Leon was a man of books and not of society. He was very devout but privately so. I once overheard Salome confide to my father that Leon used to speak in their synagogue only with the rabbi. He isolated himself, and also his daughters, from everyone else. When he was at home, Leon kept to a small study where, alone for hours at a time, he wrote letters that he never seemed to mail. He was a distant and inadequate husband to Rose, for whom his early return from war brought little comfort. But though he *was* a father to Salome, she sighed when she spoke of him. I always wanted to know more. Had all her family been killed? Were we family? My mother used to scold my curiosity. “Don’t be so nosy,” she would say. But my father, when she was not listening, said that one day he would explain.

Salome read books with me on the long Saturday afternoons of the summer months. She would read to me while my parents slept. She would kneel on the rug, an array of books open before her. “All at once,” she would say, “that’s how to read!” I had a picture book of Bible stories that I loved to look at. But I could not read it with Salome the way I read it with my mother. Salome never put me on her knee to tell me stories or read from the page. She would open the book at the story of Abraham, Moses, or Noah, and next to it she would open commentaries that no one in my family knew how to read. On top of these she would pile more books, among them my grandfather’s leather-bound Chumash, which had Rashi’s commentaries printed in small squiggly Hebrew letters that Salome read easily. Her grasp of their meanings was immediate. She would point at the picture in my book with one finger and at Rashi in my grandfather’s with another. As she read from both together, she would keep a third finger in another that lay beside. Her father, she told me, would read five or six together. I stroked the soft skin of her face while she mimicked her father’s gestures. She sighed as she showed me how he would read a line from here and then a line from there, always cross-referencing and comparing one passage with another.

Salome read the more difficult commentaries and homilies to herself before, smiling, she would bombard me with questions. She showed me how the

pictures in my storybook were also commentaries, inspired by centuries of imagining. How does the artist know what Noah's ark looked like? Is he right? Did Moses have a beard? Why does God have a finger in this scene? Here is how the Midrash describes it. Have you heard of Michelangelo? Can you picture the look in Moses's eye? Where is the top of Jacob's ladder? Does the drawing get it right? Is this how it happens in the Bible? "Dream," she once said, as I struggled to answer her questions. Though she also said, "Reading is not for bedtime. It is for daytime. It isn't for sleepy heads. You know you're reading if it keeps you awake."

My father loved reading with Salome as I did, and she would sit with him—as she did with me—pulling books down from the shelves in our home. Salome read books with my father that my mother knew only as objects for dusting. He bought new books to discuss with her, because she knew their secrets. She penetrated worlds of ideas that he could hardly imagine. He was enthralled with her opinions on every subject. He loved that she knew exactly why she disagreed with Heidegger about Dasein and *being-toward-death*.

—He seems to soften thought, *n'est-ce-pas*?

—But he is a Nazi?

—Can you find out why? Is it there?

—There is perhaps an indictment against Nazism in his work? Perhaps hidden?

—And the influence of Husserl?

—Yes, Husserl was Jewish. Does it matter?

Sometimes, after Salome had gone, my father sat alone, as if in darkness, reading Krochmal and Hegel and waiting for her to return with the light. She had promised that comparing them would help him to pray. But without her he was blind.

It was a Sunday morning in 1947, as my father and Salome were sitting down to study, that they had their momentous disagreement. Voices were raised. I kept to my room where my mother sent me the moment it began, pretending to be absorbed in a tournament of solitaire draughts. I sat on the carpet, according to my own custom, with my back propped up against the side of my bed, my bare feet swaddled in a blanket. Salome and my father were in the sitting room directly below. When I heard my mother's shrill voice emanating upward I knew that she had joined them and it was now safe to drop the pretense of my game. I clambered up onto my bedroom windowsill and pulled back the heavy drapes (which mother had installed during the war to block out the light), and, perched with my feet safely entangled in the cords that attached a layer of quilt padding to my bedstead, I tried desperately to eavesdrop. My mother and father were now shouting at one another. Salome was for her part silent, or at least quiet enough so I could not hear her voice. I wondered if her English was inadequate to squabbling. Soon, though, it became clear this was no ordinary row. I could tell my mother in particular was furious.

I loved the sound of Salome's voice. I hung on her every word. She spoke quietly and gently with dignity and conviction. When she spoke to me I always felt calmed and unsettled at the same time. It was as if she were singing a lullaby to keep me awake. Her accent, familiar from the youngest days of my childhood, was still fresh and strange, but her enunciation was always clear. Now Salome was speaking, and I began to understand.

My father had offered to buy Salome a round-trip ticket to France. He wanted her to go to Metz in search of her surviving relatives. She did not want to go and resented his interfering in matters that were not his concern. He took her saying so as a rejection and was hurt.

In 1947 everyone spoke about the war all the time. Even as a child I knew the endless talk was a cover for ignorance. No one knew what to think. Amid the postwar chatter, Salome was completely silent. She never expressed an opinion about the Jews of Europe or said a word about the Vichy Republic, from which she had fled in 1940. She said nothing to me about her family and seemed not to know where they were or to care what became of them. My father wanted to penetrate the silence; Salome was offended. He was shocked by her ingratitude and, for the first time I could remember, raised his voice in our house above the level of normal conversation.

Salome had decided to settle in Palestine. She had no interest in visiting France, no desire to stay in London. The future was in Palestine. Father grasped her hand and begged her to stay. Mother walked in, and the squabble began. When the shouting stopped, Salome had nothing more to say to either of them. Listening from my windowsill, I heard her say as much. Rising to her feet, she walked out the front door, and I never saw her again.

Nothing was ever the same. I was nine years old, and my family had included Salome for seven of those years. Perched on the windowsill of my bedroom and clasping my mother's drapes, I stroked my cheek with my fingertips and pined for Salome, crying my eyes red for over an hour.

I.2

It is hard for me to imagine ever loving anyone so much as I loved my father. When I was very young, I used to think he was unusually tall. The fact that I grew to be a bit taller than he was has yet to change that childhood impression. Perhaps it had something to do with his long narrow cheekbones, his skinny torso, and his stringy legs.

Father, as I always called him, was mischievous, youthful, and affectionate—but not forthright. I spent much of my youth burdened by the feeling that I did not know him. Perhaps this is the source of the extraordinary love I still feel for him a full forty years after his death. My love of him seems always to have been

more a yearning than an attachment. He worked long hours at the Royal London Hospital. So long, that one wonders if he was not reluctant to come home at the end of the day.

I was my parents' only child yet almost never had time with my father alone. The watchful presence of my mother interfered time and again with my efforts to win father's attention. She seemed not to trust us together. She might ignore me all afternoon after I came home from school. She would idle her time away picking out tunes on her piano, painting her nails pink, or reading a magazine. But when father entered the house, she was everywhere. Her dotting knew no bounds. If I proposed a walk or a game, an outing or even a simple conversation, mother had to be included. She would call out in a shrill coquettish voice, "Don't start without *me!*" and father would always comply. When we sat together to dinner, the threesome felt unbearably awkward, the conversation always forced. Something between my father and me remained for years unsaid. It was a word, a name, that had become so sacred to each of us that I could hardly think it without breaking into a sweat—a word so protected from being heard, so wrapped in layers of synthetic silence, that I could barely imagine a haven safe enough for its utterance.

For many years, I did not know for certain if father felt as I did about Salome. I mourned her absence from the moment she left and longed for a letter from her that never came. I could not understand how someone I had loved so much had turned her back upon me so completely. I dared ask no one. But I cherished the thought that one day I might discover that father missed her too. Perhaps he knew where she was. Perhaps he might one day summon the courage to tell me why she left.

The day came. It was the eve of my marriage in August 1968. Mother and my bride-to-be had set aside the evening for last-minute wedding preparations. I had no interest in flowers and fabrics and did not care to spend the time fussing over trivialities. I stayed home with my ailing father, and, though she resisted a little, mother acquiesced to the idea of leaving the two of us alone. She smiled at us knowingly as she left: "You two have a nice evening together," she said, walking out of the house with the hand of my bride-to-be wrapped closed in her own.

That evening I sat holding my father's floppy hand as we talked. I played with his arm like a child, pressing the bulging veins that ran from his elbows all the way to his fingers. At first he spoke about his illness but soon changed the subject. He wanted to talk to me about love and marriage. He had been waiting for me to marry. My long bachelor years had been a terrible source of worry to him. He dearly wanted me to find happiness. "Never despair of being happy," he said. "It comes only through the conviction that there is happiness to be found." The intimacy of our conversation felt odd to me after so many years of awkwardness and distance. But, to him, we were like old friends. It was as if we were meeting

again after years of separation, only to discover that time had changed nothing between us. That evening was a glimpse of the relationship that for so many years we had not been allowed to enjoy.

We wrapped ourselves in each other's company like prisoners whispering through cracks in the wall while the guards were away. He told me how he adored my choice of wife. She was intelligent, diligent, studious, thoughtful, loving. She had a wonderful smile and soft, delicate hands. She would make a good mother. She was a Jewish girl, a religious girl. There would be a next generation of Jews in our family, though not a generation that he would get to know. As a physician he understood how sick his body was. He spoke urgently, as if trying to say something before death stopped him. And he was fearless. He wanted to speak about my mother. He spoke with extraordinary candor. My mouth fell open as I listened in shock to him comparing my auspicious choice of bride with the misery of his own.

He spoke with the dry irony of a man who knew that he had failed to find happiness in his marriage and confessed without pretense that he had given none in return. He said mother was his "chum." She had been his "pal," but there was no love between them. And as he smiled a bitter smile, my thoughts turned elsewhere. Had he and Salome been lovers? Had she loved me? Why did she never write? Where had she gone? At last I was sitting alone with my father and we were free to talk of Salome. Why had he spent so long talking about mother?

I am not sure exactly what my father was saying when I interrupted him. I appreciate now, though it did not occur to me then, that he had no way of knowing that Salome was still on my mind. No mention had been made of her in over twenty years. I blushed and shuddered. He stroked my head. The hours that followed were perhaps the happiest of my life until then. He talked about Salome, and I listened.

I.3

Salome entered my father's life in the summer of 1940, when the Jews of London were terrorized by the threat of an imminent German invasion. Churchill had declared in Parliament that the Battle of France was over and that he expected the Battle of Britain was about to begin. His rhetoric was rousing, but, then again, the calamitous outcome of the former did not bode so well for the upshot of the latter. The Jews of Germany had suffered much under the Nuremberg Laws; God alone knew what was happening now, under cover of war. The rumors were frightful. My father thought he might well have to die, after Hitler's conquest of England, for a religion about which he knew far too little. "Judaism" for my mother was a code name for "good society," and her husband's standing as a physician was Jewish enough for her. What more could one need from religion? At the hospital

where he worked, however, injured airmen who returned from the front bled in my father's arms; he anguished as their wounds turned black. Social standing had nothing to do with his interest either in medicine or in Judaism. For him, both were about suffering.

My mother found his "religious revival," as she called it, in poor taste. Most evenings, he attended a class in synagogue—different synagogues, he migrated from one to another—and "found nothing but stupidity, tribalism, inarticulate English, and small-minded, unimaginative legal pedantry." As he listened, one evening, to an especially detached and detailed discussion of Talmudic regulations concerning the separation of chaff from food on the Sabbath, he waited until the rabbi stopped for questions, then asked: "How will learning these laws help me find God?"

The rabbi plunged a finger into the depths of his black velvet yarmulke. This was a question he knew well. It came typically from the uninitiated—the "*kaddish* sayers," who do not understand how Judaism thinks. Judaism is about Judaism, and Jewish law is about Jewish law. My father had posed a *goyishe* question. The rabbi puffed on his pipe while wording his answer; he puffed as if his answer were a locomotive heading down a smoke-filled tunnel to his mouth. He opened his lips to let out words and smoke, but, before his answer reached the station, the attention of every man had been redirected elsewhere.

The distraction was a woman's voice. She spoke with an accent, sat with a small brown suitcase by her side, and enunciated her r's with a gurgle—a bit too soft for German and a bit too bold for French.

You have asked a beautiful question. I believe with all my heart—Reb, may I?—that the first premise of Talmud study is that one must not leave the page behind—even if one must study it for weeks and weeks—until one has found in it three things: a message of peace, a word of truth, and a reason for loving God. I imagine that this is how the rabbis of ancient Israel thought we should study even the laws of *Borer*. How else might we understand the sacrifices they made for their studies, the sacrifices their wives made for their studies? Think. Think what it means to celebrate the Shabbat as a day when the chaff and the food must not be separated.

The men, who gathered every day to learn forty minutes of Talmud with the rabbi (and were currently learning the laws of *Borer* in Tractate *Shabbat*), had never noticed this woman before, although she had been attending their daily services for weeks. She would enter quietly into the women's section at the beginning of the prayers and slip with imperceptible gentleness into the back of the men's section once the rabbi started to teach. Though strictly speaking not forbidden, her doing so was undeniably irregular.

The voice paused momentarily as if it had run out of air. The young woman breathed gently and, redirecting her gaze (from my father to the rabbi), she continued:

Think how the Tosephta in the first chapter of *Yebamoth* reads the verse, *Ha'emet vehashalom ebavu*—love peace and truth. Think how Rabbi Yose understands the psalms when they say, “great peace have they who love your Torah.” He means for us to learn to love the Torah and to find peace in its teachings, because only through this can you learn to love the God of Israel with all your heart. If you think hard, you’ll see that love of God and nearness to him are the ultimate purpose of Talmud study. *Reb . . . respectfully . . .* why have you not shared these beautiful mysteries with your disciples?

The rabbi had never been called *Reb* and had never thought of the mourners and regulars who attended daily prayer and study as disciples. He had perhaps never thought of himself as a teacher. He certainly did not mean to teach anyone the love of God through Talmud, and what was more, he had not understood what this young woman was talking about. *Which* Tosephta in *Yebamoth*? Rabbi Yose *where*? Who studies these things? My father, who understood even less than the rabbi, was enthralled. He was stunned. The thoughtful manner of this young woman’s delivery and the ease with which she carried her erudition were breathtaking. The long wooden benches of the small synagogue creaked as the gathering of middle-aged men in their narrow-brim trilbies and shabby woolen suits twisted their bodies to see who was speaking. They gaped at her, speechless; she covered her face with her hand. In a moment, though, she let it down again and looked at them. She seemed to my father composed yet passionate. His hand quivered in mine as he relived the moment.

The love of truth, peace, and God that had, perhaps for an instant, tempted the minds of these men was replaced by a more pressing concern—the swift removal of an intruder from their space. “You shouldn’t be here,” one said, pointing: “There is the women’s section. Can women study Talmud, Rabbi? *I* can hardly follow most of it.” Before my father could say a word, Salome had slipped away.

Father paused and looked at my face, as if asking my consent to go on. He rose to his feet and headed west, he said, exiting through the stone-floored foyer and through the heavy wooden synagogue doors. He flung them open and ran downstairs to the street. He caught up with the intruder and begged her not to run away. She readily agreed. She was hungry, and he offered her a meal. Though I have no recollection of it, that evening was the first I spent with Salome. My mother received her charitably, serving a home-cooked meal and offering spare clothes for the refugee to put in her case. Father begged her to stay afterward and explain what she had said in synagogue. She agreed.

It turned out, as they met almost daily from then on, that her mastery of European literature and history was staggering, as was her tangibly personal familiarity with the magnates of modern thought. My father had never encountered such accomplishment in a woman. She had first-hand knowledge of Europe, and she had visions of a Jewish state in Zion. “This is a critical time for our people,” she said. “The new decade will change Jewish history forever. Europe will be our past.” She hoped to be part of the future. Salome told my father how she had stalked the rabbi’s classes night after night, sitting quietly at the back of the men’s section, waiting in ambush for an opportunity to intervene. Father’s religious paranoia was the opportunity she had sought.

I.4

But why had she come to London? Why did she not return to look for her parents? Even now, my father could tell me very little about her past. He had only managed to prize a few details from her, and he only knew these because, as Salome put it, “they mattered.” She was born to Leon and Rose Leon in Metz while her father was away at the front in 1915. Salome’s earliest memories of her father were fond. Her mother died when she was eight and, apart from her name, my father knew nothing about her. Salome formed few close relationships as a child. She was isolated by her father’s attentions and by the insults and nicknames that others hurled at her family. Leon’s parenting of his small daughter consisted mostly in a strict regime of homeschooling. He quickly recognized her remarkable intellectual gifts and wanted to cultivate them. At an early age she had mastered the skills of reading fluently in French, German, English, and Hebrew. He soon gave her instruction in Bible, and, as she grew older, he ventured with her into the labyrinths of Jewish law, rabbinic literature, and Aramaic grammar. Leon had thought to write a book that might explain his conduct in the trenches, and he labored tirelessly at its composition. He believed himself to have acted courageously and in concert with his faith. He was convinced that the return of Alsace-Lorraine to French rule after the war would change the attitudes of those around him to his “cowardice.” But his ideas were very poorly received among the enlightened intellectuals whose good opinion he cherished. They seemed obsessed with proving to Christians that Jews were loyal to the nation-states in which they resided. Leon had other ideas that they did not care for. He sat writing drafts of essays and letters, year after year, but could never complete them. He feared the censure of others more than the accusations that he hoped his writing might refute. Locked in this prison, he took comfort in the stringent tutoring of his youngest child.

Salome was not entirely at ease with her sisters. When their father was out of earshot, they blamed her for their mother’s death. It was only with her eldest

sister, Moselle, that she formed a loving bond. Moselle was a full fifteen years her senior, and when Salome was only five years old Moselle married, though settling nearby. After the death of their mother, Salome planted her affections upon Moselle and her boys, but, like her sisters, Moselle was a little jealous of Salome. All the sisters thought it was unnatural for her to learn with their father as if she were a boy. The younger ones called her “garçon” and once snipped away with scissors at her flowing brown hair. Even Leon told her she had the mind of a boy.

Salome hated being a girl but not because she wanted to be a boy. She hated the humiliation of it. She had memorized much of the Mishna as a child, more than any boy in the congregation, but was never allowed to learn with them and the rabbi. The boys put up with the rabbi because he filled their pockets with treats if they performed tolerably well. Salome cared nothing for treats; she wanted knowledge and someone to test it. But the rabbi never agreed to let her stay. Even so, it was his Shabbat, Monday, and Thursday homilies that annoyed her the most. By the time she was fifteen Salome would come home feeling personally insulted by whatever he had said. He was ignorant. He was stupid. And the idea that God is not male was beyond his imagination.

It was around the same age, fifteen, that Salome began going to church. She devised an elaborate excuse each Sunday to sneak out and head for the Cathedral of Saint Etienne. Though she did so for several years, she was able to keep her religious adventures secret from her father. She went at first because she was drawn to the magnificence of the building. She felt there was space in there for God to breathe. There was room under the flying buttresses to imagine praying in the Third Temple, which would someday be God’s home. She felt God’s excitement at the limitless potentialities that her own life might come to fulfill. At Saint Etienne God shared her dreams.

Salome prayed in the church every Sunday without once contemplating Christianity. She prayed Jewish prayers in Hebrew without listening to the homily or readings. She kept her head down, except occasionally to glimpse a favorite statue of the Virgin Mother, and never once saw the Eucharistic Host. She came to church to be a Jewess in hiding. She chose the cathedral for more than the beauty of its architecture. She came to pray without the partition that, in synagogues, cut her off from the *bimah*, the ark, and the men in shawls addressing God. She came to Saint Etienne to deliver her prayers to God unmediated and without obstruction. She prayed in the bowels of the church so that her father’s God might find her.

In all other things, Salome subjected herself quietly to her father’s discipline, but she dared never let him know where she went on Sundays. Guilt feelings protected her discretion for three full years. An ebullient confession when she turned eighteen brought her childhood to an end. Giving her at most a day or two to gather her things, her father banished Salome from his home. He then

cursed her name publicly, tore his clothes, and sat on the ground for a week in mourning for a daughter who no longer existed. She was given no money and no farewell. With help from her grandmother only for train fare, Salome made her way to Paris.

The anguish on my father's face as he repeated these details was clear, and I could imagine Salome describing them to him defiantly. It became obvious to me that this difference in their temperaments lay behind their argument in 1947. I asked if my father knew what happened to Salome's family after she had left, but he did not and wanted to move on. He had more to tell.

Salome's move to Paris was apparently good for her. She found lodgings with a Jewish couple near the rue de Rossiers. Madame Lévy was glad to take a young Jewish woman into her home. She asked nothing about her new lodger's family, assuming she had been swept to Paris from Alsace with the waves of German Jewish immigrants seeking refuge from Hitler. Regretting the impositions of motherhood, Madame Lévy came to love Salome for her boundless patience with children. Salome took the Lévy's children to school each morning and kept them usefully occupied in the evenings, in return for her room and board. She sat on the floor and read with the children, as she had with her nephews in Metz and as she would a few years later with me, in London. She fed them, cared for them, and taught them to ask questions. She taught them to dream and to pray. And when the children were at school, she was free to make the most of her day.

As for how she spent her days in Paris, my father was, I think, an unreliable narrator, or possibly Salome spoke to him in generalities that she assumed he would understand. He told me she was drawn to young radicals and intellectuals (he could not name names) whom she met in Latin Quarter salons and cafes. He had the impression they were painters and playwrights, poets and novelists, airing anarchist politics and revisionist ideas, day and night. They criticized the decadent and the wealthy, family life and religion. They spoke against the Germans but also against resistance and fantasized about new republics they would build when "the situation" would permit. Philosophers, students, and waiters lent her books in French, German, and even Hebrew. Among the bohemians and hedonists, nihilists and communists, there were Zionists as well.

My father turned to me with a look of special gravity. I had a barrage of questions, but he knew nothing more of the Lévy's, French Zionism, or Salome's artsy friends. He did not even know if she had ever loved. He knew only "what really mattered" to Salome. Her father had shown her how to read but not how to express herself. She learned to write in Paris, where she began to keep notebooks that were now in my father's possession.

I.5

Seemingly it was my father's intellectual inferiority that appealed to Salome. She showed nothing of what she wrote to him. Her notebooks were sealed. She would say, "They wouldn't really interest you." But the notebooks as physical objects were of great importance to him, and, though I had known nothing of them at the time, they were Salome's first concern throughout the years she lived in London. Father was a sounding board for her ideas. She chased moments of inspiration that my father's eagerness to listen encouraged. There were evenings when she was elated with her progress. At other times, she was quiet, depressed, and frustrated. Her mood never made any difference to him, so long as she was there. He could listen to her or read with her, or even watch her play with me on the floor; it did not matter. He needed to ask her questions and hear her answer.

I knew before he confessed it, of course, that my father had been in love with Salome. She was everything my mother was not. When I did not look shocked or even surprised, his look said he knew that he and I were guilty of the same crime. We both had loved Salome more; I think I even told mother once how much more I loved Salome than her. I was a child. Children do such things. But as my own wedding drew nearer by the minute and my thoughts turned for the first time to parenting, I experienced a sudden empathy with my mother's pain which I had not known before.

"We were never lovers," my father said, more with regret, I thought, than in self-absolution. "Except for one time, I never so much as held her hand. But I gave her my heart, and she accepted it." He knew how deeply he had hurt my mother, but he knew also that, if he had it to do over, he could only love Salome again. He asked my forgiveness, and, for what my forgiveness was worth, I gave it freely. His face drained from our happy evening, he took both my hands and said, "I met with her, one last time, briefly. Not at home."

Salome had sent father a message, a fortnight after their big argument, bidding him come to the East London synagogue where they first met. He found her sitting in the back row of the men's section, holding two notebooks. She explained her decision to leave England, to leave Europe, behind. Her notebooks were, she said, not worth a thing. Writing further was pointless. From the moment she chose her path of action, everything that she had read, all that she had studied from childhood until that instant, made suddenly coherent sense to her. It all came into focus the instant she resolved to leave for Palestine. Zion, she now knew, was her calling.

She opened one notebook and let him see the front page for the first time. The title was written clearly in both English and Hebrew characters. As they parted, she gave the notebooks to him, saying he must pass them on to me when I was ready for them. He pleaded for her not to leave, and she stopped him abruptly. "That you ask me to stay shows you could never understand what I have written

and also why it is that I must go.” These were her last awful words to him. She said them and left. He never saw or heard from her again.

My old father struggled out of his chair, left the room, and returned carrying the two notebooks, now leather-bound. Before he sat, he handed them to me. “These are yours,” he said. “I have never read them. But you must. They are for you.”

But *why* for me? was my first thought. What was this gift meant to say? Would the notebooks themselves tell me? Had Salome hoped I would bring them to her in Zion and then stay? Did my father expect me to make Israel my home? Was Salome still there? Could I turn up at her door? Would she recognize me if I did?

I was too confused to actually say anything, and father slumped back into his chair, clearly exhausted. While he recovered, I opened the first notebook to look at Salome’s gift for myself. The title page was as father had described it, though he had not mentioned the letters were garlanded with colored drawings (similar to ones that I now recall my daughters sketching on the title pages of their school workbooks). The handwriting was Salome’s but uncharacteristically tidy. She had written in small Hebrew characters that filled only the first few pages of the notebook. I was surprised by how little was there.

I turned to the second notebook—far messier and jammed with words, smeared with inkblots and scribbles of what appeared to be random thoughts sprawled over the pages in three languages, though mainly in Hebrew. The book was filled from cover to cover. She had written in the corners, and she had written in the margins; from left to right and from right to left, from top to bottom and from bottom to top. The inks varied in shade, and the letters varied in size. Sometimes her writing was large and bold; sometimes it was meek and very small. Some of the pages were stained with food, coffee, or wine. The Salome I knew had lived and breathed in these pages—she seemed to have written “all at once” here.

Returning to the less familiar, more formal Hebrew essay that she had started in the first notebook, I began to read. Before I got very far, father interrupted me. “Not now,” he said. “Read it after I am gone.” His eyes were half-shut. “Look at the inside cover,” he said. “Read that now.”

I reopened the notebook and found, taped to the inside front cover, an envelope with my English name on it, written in my father’s handwriting. “It is about time you saw it,” he said. Inside the envelope were two pieces of paper. One was a scrap. It had our family’s name and address written on it—once again, in my father’s handwriting. It was crumpled, though someone had obviously tried hard to smooth it out. The second was a letter, neatly folded, typed, official, and on stationery of the British Sixth Airborne Division, Palestine.

Dear Sir,

It is my unfortunate duty to inform you that Miss Salome Leon has been killed in Palestine. Miss Leon was caught in an exchange of fire between Jewish and Arab snipers in Jerusalem. The enclosed scrap of paper bearing your London address was found in her hand at the time of her death. H.M. Armed Forces would be most obliged if you would inform any (other?) of Miss Leon's next of kin as to these regrettable circumstances.

Likewise, it is my duty to inform you that Miss Leon's remains have been interred in accordance with Jewish custom, on the Mount of Olives.

The letter was signed apologetically by a Captain David Gardener and dated 22nd February, 1948.

I looked, speechless, at my father. For all these years he had known. I opened the notebook and looked once more at the title page:

S h l o m z i o n

II.1

S h l o m z i o n—Thoughts on the Purpose of Zionism

Anyone who has watched children at play knows that war is inevitably a part of the human condition. I have sat with them and have looked carefully at them. Their human capabilities are undeveloped, but they have eternal souls, mature and seasoned from birth. They do not know themselves yet (most of them never will), but from the earliest moments of infancy they are already experienced—like vintage wine in a newly made cask. Souls age through great cycles of time. Were it otherwise, we could never permit ourselves to find infants infuriating. How would we dare protest their misbehaviors when ours are so much worse? Is it simply because we see in them nothing but an image of ourselves? We watch in terror as we see our own flaws duplicated. But to imagine duplication is vanity. The flaws are simply there, and adults rejoice in the flaws of infants. Parents both love and resent their children, both kiss and slap them. We strike them for striking each other.

I sometimes wonder about how German mothers raise their children. “Do not fight with your sister.” “Keep your hands to yourself!” Germans surely use the same turns of phrase that the rest of us do. Yet have they not reared, are they not even now rearing, a generation of monsters? And even so, we cannot help but know that German mothers teach their children well enough and mean it when they say, “Do not strike your brother.”

The primordial moment when Jacob and Esau tussled in their mother's womb is known to us through our own experience of struggle. We all have

watched children rolling in the mud of their playground battlefields. One child cries, the other looks defiantly on; the indifference of the one infuriates or frightens us, but the weakness of the other annoys us no less, even as we run to his rescue. On the other hand, do we know that such “violence” is violence at all? Are stolen toys and scratches to the face—or, for that matter, the struggle of Jacob and Esau—the same as the crime of Cain?

Is watching children different from watching animals? The eyes of a tiger in chase have an intensity, but is it hatred? Perhaps hunger? Is hunger a conscious experience for a tiger? Can a tiger know herself as hungry? Does she know that hunger is why she hunts? Does a man think his need to procreate is the mother of his lust? Does the tiger hunt because she loves? Perhaps she fears? We do not know. We know only our own empathy and need to censure. But *are* these our own? We may scorn male lions for killing the young of a vanquished pride, or hamsters for eating unwanted offspring. But if we do, it is only because our empathy and outrage—but are they *ours*?—have confused us. We are blinded by the images of ourselves that we project around us. When we watch children at play, all we see is what we think we remember.

Every newborn is intent mindlessly on his own survival. From this fixation springs the logic of his inherent violence. Would it be fair to expect anything else? We see an infant’s future, never his present, which is why a baby’s death is so indefinite. Raw life—we do not know how to mourn its loss.

Do not misunderstand. I am no psychologist. I want to know only how far I must go to escape my own violence. How much distance can be put between myself and it? My hope is that it can be traced to the very source of human experience, but no farther. My hope is that the violence that permeates the creation is not inescapable for God. But who knows? We must know, however, that the answer matters.

II.2

Our earliest experiences are of separation. We are torn apart from things with which we long to stay combined. The desire for return is deep and leads us along paths whose directions we cannot understand, for we have lost our hold, our place, and cannot recall what being-at-one is, or was. Still, we continue to search and take exception to, feel threatened by, anything unrecognizable as at-one with the state of affairs that we cannot recall. Surely, this is the greatest secret of all—that the one, the one that *is*, is *all* there is.

I am not thinking of mothers, children, and Freud. We are ripped away from God and thrust into a world of light and darkness. We are dazzled before we know what we cannot see by light that blinds our eyes; we can remember nothing of the darkness where, perhaps, we *saw* nothing. It is as if nothing *was* (or as if

nothing was). Yet in our formative years we are encircled by people who defy this, our most fundamental experience of the world. They tell us about the world that existed before we were born. They remember things about the world that we had no part in. They insist that things happened that did not happen to us. They tell us stories of which we know we could not have been a part. History, whether it is family, national, or global, creates historical consciousness, which is to say, a questionable sense of being part of a past that we ourselves missed. Knowledge of the past contradicts and at the same time feeds our intuitive understanding that, despite separation, we once were, and will again be, at-one.

The history we are born to *in medias res* is responsible for violence, which is why the study of history tends to focus on violence. History is itself an act of violence. The yearning to be part of a history we were not a part of, though the yearning itself is learned, once it *is* learned is violent. We join what is offered us by lashing out at it. We seek contact. We join, but what we join tears us farther apart from what we hoped intuitively we were joining. And what we embrace *because* we hoped rebuffs our embrace as aggressive or vulgar. History will not be loved and eaten, will not be wounded, swallowed, digested. We embrace history only to be distanced from her. We are taught to put distances between this and that in order, by distinguishing, to understand them. Distinction lends, or is, dignity and honor. Each dignity has its place. So we are told. But we know that separation is an act of violence more violent than is any embrace.

No mother can endure being torn from her child. She screams for him not to be born. “L e a v e *him* i n s i d e!” The child is born, but only because there is no choice. To choose to be at-one is to remain at-one but briefly longer, and what is more dreadful than a woman’s thought of her womb as the deathbed of her child? Yet the separation that is life itself is torture more than any mother can endure. That first separation is followed by further separations. The mother is deluded by the child’s birth into thinking that he and she are no longer one. She is deluded enough to die while her child lives and thus accept a still further separation. What mother wishes to outlive her offspring? She chooses her own death and knowingly orphans her child. What child is not born with the dark blessing that he will one day mourn her loss?

Life, at the roots, is violence.

II.3

Our educations begin with the acquisition of the most basic skill of mammals. We are taught to eat by our mothers. These lessons in suckling are also violent. How many mothers have struck their children for stinging the nipple? A slap on a little cheek that no one will ever know of teaches the child to experience the violence of oneness and separation in a single moment. Can he know that his

suckling is an act of violence? Has he not been invited to suckle? Can he know that the nipple he stings already suffers the pain of carrying milk? Is there insensitivity, ingratitude, indiscretion in his infuriating and too intimate pinch?

His very presence at the nipple is an affront to a jealous elder sibling or to an unborn younger one whose time to enter the world is delayed by the suckling of an infant who happened to come first. How can a mother feed a child without also—at some time, if only for an instant—resenting him? Is there not a moment in the life of every mother and every child when both know they are at war? They are held together by so much love, so much caring. Who cannot know how much mothers sacrifice for their children? But even these sweet sacrifices are violent. No one can only give. As he sucks the life from her breast, she is weakened. She knows her weakness *for* the child is also weakness *from* him. The strength that she relinquishes to the child is needed by them both. The separation in their oneness, noticed by both, comes from this transfer of strength. Even the transfer of love causes weakness. It is exhausting to love. And debt accumulates. No mother thinks of or can imagine it until the day comes when she expects to be paid. The day always comes. In some mother/child pairs, it is there every day from the first day. It is there when the mother leaves her body behind for the child to wash and bury.

The child is not the mother, else how can she love him? But she can also come to hate him, as an other to herself. The love is as violent as the hate. The oneness is no less violent than the separation. Distance and detachment are violent, as is smothering. The happy medium is violently recalled as mediocrity. The child's resentment of the mother's otherness is echoed—perhaps only ever recognized—in the mother's knowledge that she must push the child away. She knows that “for his own good” she must thwart his deepest desire. This is not his choice, and one day it will not be hers, for their roles will be reversed, and she will crave his attention once he flees. This too is violence.

The mother must teach the child to eat—to eat her. This is a greater need even than her need to feed him. She must learn to recognize his hunger if he is to survive. He must teach her his hunger by screaming, by bullying, by disrupting her sleep. No matter how endangered, crafty, and courageous he may become later in life, this will remain his most heroic act against the most imbalanced odds that he will ever face. The force that lands him in the mother's bed at night is the power of oneness; the power that lands him in the crib is the force of separation. In neither will he come to rest until his mother has taught him to eat and sleep by himself. He must teach her to recognize his hunger as *his* and to accept he will make love to another. No mother, no parent, who has ever been schooled by an infant can think of the experience sentimentally. It feels more like physical abuse. Family love is laced with violence.

II.4

Fights mostly break up violently. There is violence in separation from violence; there is love in joining in. There is as much violence in joining as love in separating. These thought pairs read into each other as palindromes or mirror images do. The same, though opposite; one, but two. Separation and oneness are opposites that can be neither separated nor united. They are one, as justice and mercy are. Oneness and separation are two strategies for precluding war. Let us live as one; our daughters will marry your sons. Let us separate; if you go to the right I will go left, and if you left then I right. Each option is war and not war. Neither one is peace. We cannot but seek to be ourselves and separate; I must begin a history in which I belong from beginning to end. To do so is an act of separation that entails joining. Separation and belonging both entail violent change. Eating is violence. Feeding is violence. Suckling and screaming with hunger are violence. The baby in the father's bed and the baby in his own crib, the mother and the father in bed together, comprise a theater of war into which all are born. The desire of each is a return to oneness but also a victory over the others. We spend most of our time—all of it, in the true sense of *time*—believing in victory as redemption and success as return. But victory and success are not the same as redemption and return.

It is enough to make God weep.

II.5

We seek escape from our violence into words. *Compassion, civility, brotherhood, compromise*. Yet never is a word uttered that does not violate a silence kept in peace. Never is a word written that does not offend the innocence of an unscripted page. Still, we jump for joy as our children begin to speak. In a child's life, the moment of first articulation is one of deep confusion that adults confuse with the genesis of clarity and recognition. Does the child recognize or know his mother truly before he names her? This question too is unanswerably confused. The verb *know* cannot account for the possibility of pre- and nonlinguistic knowing, because *know* itself is a word that applies only to other words. *Know* is connected generically to a form of misunderstanding that it cannot transcend. Meanwhile, we jump for joy, as if meeting them for the first time, when our children begin to speak.

It is not a simple thing to accept that we enjoy our children's failings. But we do. What is sweeter to the ear of a bragging parent than her child's mispronunciations? The fumbled word that a mother cannot bring herself to correct is a reminder of how reluctant we are to recognize ourselves in children. Our reluctance is an act of separation that is also one of violence. The child is sweet but only because he has fallen in a place where we imagine that we would not.

His sweet stammer is a child's assertion of freedom to pronounce things as he likes. What, then, is it that parents find sweet rather than provocative? The child learns to say the words that he is taught, but they are children's words. The whole language he is taught is an obstacle to speaking adult language. He is confined to a linguistic universe in which dolls and teddy bears need to sleep, while toy cars and trains get thirsty or play together. The child's lisp in this small linguistic prison is his sign of submission to deception, and in exchange his parents find his fumbling sweet, his stupidity an early sign of genius. Nothing is more accomplished in a young child than his mastery over such tokens of submission.

How often does a parent exclaim "I could eat you up" to an unsuspecting child? Never said to a suckling infant, these words of threatening affection are reserved for children learning to speak. Empty threats guard the entrance to the language of adults, and empty words of affection show early visitors to the exit. What is sweeter than a precocious child, and what more threatening? Do we not wonder at the child's brilliance to obstruct ourselves from thwarting him? Is his precocity not publicized for his own protection? He knows, and his parents know, that he is in grave danger, not least from them. Everything they say and do to protect him is an act of violence. For the parent must protect himself from the child who dares use words beyond his station. Such children threaten their own survival by demonstrating an ability to be at-one, to separate themselves from family oneness and join a greater and more separate one—to leave the battlefield of the home for the battlefield of the world, in which adult language allows for oneness and separation to collide while approaching one another from greater distances.

The acquisition of language entails a learning of names already given. Naming is oppressive; things named are oppressed. A child is oppressed by memories that his given name carried before it was his. The child had no part in the world from which his name comes. His name is a foreign sound by which he is summoned or, as we say, called. Necessity forces him to accept it. He acquiesces in a foreign sound "standing for" himself. He accepts his name as part of himself. He "identifies with" it, even as it is used, by others, to identify—which is to say, limit—him.

Naming is part of our impulse toward oneness. Things that have no names are missing from the great web of language that ties the whole together. The names inside the web, of course, are discernible only because separable from each other. But pity the unwitting sounds attached unwillingly to objects they never knew and now must stand in for (or, in some sense, *be*). How can language liberate objects, feelings, persons, thoughts, from the confines of themselves—giving them places on a page or scroll that may well outravel and even outlive them—without also reducing them to symbols? Pity the poor symbols, which are nothing but stand-ins for objects that they cannot know and that may already be extinct.

How miserable a fate for a symbol to become transparent! But this is what we wish for symbols. Transparency of language is the fantasy of those who read and write, and the ambition behind Flaubert's obsession with the *mot juste*. Writers, though, wish themselves (and not merely their words) to be seen. The words are both a vehicle and an obstacle. This is not a simple matter. We sit down to read books and anticipate the pleasure of being lost between their covers. We read in the hope that our souls will sail to the world of the book. We dream of losing our minds, of reading after forgetting that we are doing so. The books we love most are the ones we do not see. Such a book is invisible once it has transported us to a world in which the book itself cannot exist. The words on the page "enchant" us into not seeing them as words.

How we rejoice in this violence we do to language!—just deserts for the violence that language does to us. We know that language is a weapon, and we use it as one. We know too that it is vulnerable, defenseless, and we manipulate its weakness skillfully to victimize it more effectively. Yet we jump high in the air for joy when our children start to speak. And we believe, or say we do, that words—*compassion, civility, brotherhood, compromise*—will save us from ourselves.

Show me one referent for *brotherhood*, and I will show you a thousand million for *fratricide*.

II.6

No reason, incentive, or induction will convince any child anywhere to settle for any lesser gift from his mother than her tongue—*his* mother tongue. Philosophers too have pinned all their hopes on language. It is embarrassing. The attempt to refer and address words to an absolute or universal presence reminds me of the hopeless efforts children make to become adults before their time. When with relentless integrity a thinker asks himself who is the addressee of his great ideas, will he answer himself, "Why, eternity!?" Surely, at night, on his cot, he admits to himself that his words are meant to taunt and provoke rivals. When we affect to converse with eternity, our enemies are our true audience. When addressing the universe, we are hoping to vanquish our enemies by pretending they are not there. We act, as if on stage in a farce, as though we do not know they are hiding in a closet plotting revenge while they listen to our soliloquy. But we must not allow ourselves to forget the truth (an actor always knows what, in character, he affects not to know). Those who speak of absolutes cannot have missed the contingencies they pretend are not there. The contingencies are bigger than whales. You cannot miss them.

Language has always an addressee, is always implicated in communication. When speaking of truth or justice to the pantheon, what the speaker means is *my* truth and justice for *me*. His enemies know this, hear what he is really saying,

and realize he is saying it to them and against them. When we address the pantheon with abstractions, we are playing at political maturity. But there is nothing mature about political philosophy; it is part of our species' adolescence. It is no coming of age. Adolescent fantasies of individuation, of separation, are upon us long before we are ready to abandon our yearnings to belong, to be known, and even to be owned.

Yes, slavery is a free man's yearning. What person or nation has ever transcended it?

II.7

Gog and Magog are lying on the ground, both of them unconscious. How should we understand this bizarre state of affairs? What should we do? How did this absurdity occur?

Well, it seems to me that first Gog knocked himself out. Then Magog found him. Thinking Gog slain, Magog was duped into believing Gog dead. A little as when Romeo gazes upon Juliet, Magog imagines he understands what his eyes purport to see. "Perhaps someone has killed Gog," he thinks. "Perhaps he has killed himself." Either way Magog is sure that Gog is slain. But Magog is stupid. Gog is cunning. He has made sure to knock himself out cold so that no one can tempt or torture him into divulging his secret. Now he lies in wait while Magog—thinking Gog is dead—destroys himself, slowly. Magog has no idea that his destiny is in Gog's hands. Magog is a dumb, gigantic fool without the wits to know he is under threat. Believing that he acts of his own will, thinking he has won his freedom, he follows Gog's plan to its cynical end. Magog pulls out a bottle, toasts his own success, and drinks himself into oblivion.

So, Gog and Magog both lie on the ground unconscious before us. Magog is persuaded he is the only one alive. He cannot imagine that he might not be the first to reawaken.

II.8

In our time, we have a great concern. We are assured—because Joseph Stalin has assured us—that Adolf Hitler is dead. Even if so, however, we must know that Hitler is not vanquished. The capacities of mankind that he exposed and cultivated will not easily be forgotten. Indeed, we Jews will insist on their commemoration, an insistence that could one day be our undoing. We will define ourselves as Hitler defined us and permit our destiny to be clutched and throttled by his left hand. If we do so we will have succumbed to a perversion of creation, and the day will come when Jews will call each other Nazis.

Hitler spoke of an idea that would shape humanity for a thousand years—it

was uncharacteristically an understatement. By changing humanity forever, Hitler's legacy is unlimited and immortal. His vision was unconfined to the destiny of a single nation. It was universal: a parody of the universe entire. Only the Jews, he understood, would not be caught up automatically in his carnival. They would need to be raped by every living being in Europe and by half the dead before they would abandon their good God, who created, out of nothing but his own goodness, a world that is very good.

We delude ourselves if we believe the struggle that has only begun has already been decided—if we imagine, for even a moment's respite, that justice has prevailed. Hitler understood, even before Martin Heidegger realized, that it is not to a pantheon or to eternity that the thinking man speaks, but always and only to his enemies.

The war lasted the full thousand years that Hitler said it would, and he has yet to concede his first defeat to posterity. As long as even he himself is the one exception to “love your enemies,” Hitler will be laughing.

I know that this seems the inevitable conclusion of a French-speaking Jewish girl who lost her home and family without a trace, her country ransacked and her people reduced to smoke. I have lost everything. Poor me, you hear me say, but it is not the unfortunate likes of me over whom I am losing sleep. There are refugees from the past, millions around the world fleeing from the whole past, who will put their faith in a peace—a peace based on victory and defeat—that will poison them and their descendants for generations to come. How could it be otherwise, when the firestorm that burned Hiroshima is the guarantor of their “better future”?

Gog has delivered his first blow, that is all, and has knocked himself out, according to plan. Magog is stupid, confused, and wholly fooled. Having toasted his supposed victory at Hiroshima, Magog too now lies unconscious. He is drunk and unafraid.

II.9

Hitler was a deliberate caricature of *Homo sapiens*. Need I do more than mention his mustache? Could there be a figure less credible or more preposterous? What with all of his Germans and his Viennese dressed up in their silly costumes and perverted boots, their long shiny coats and tightly worn britches . . . surely, behind closed doors, Hitler laughed himself sick, day after day. So brilliant a sham! And they all fell for it. The whole of Europe, from Mussolini to Churchill, wore fancy dress for Hitler. They pranced around in tightly worn costumes for his uproarious entertainment. Dressing up and clicking their heels, extending their arms and stomping their feet, shooting their guns and dropping their bombs, the regime that seemed so disciplined and severe was actually an

orgy. Painted, dressed-up, and lipstick-wearing soldiers relinquished their manhood for the Führer's good fun. The peoples of Europe played at war and murder like party games—like musical chairs or charades. Hitler enticed the Allies to sacrifice their humanity on the altar of—an orgy, a carnival, a parody.

The huge giggle that was Nazism will ring in my ears until my dying day and perhaps beyond it. I try hard to forget but will never succeed. I have been made a fool of, and so have all the souls and things I love. It is embarrassing to live in a world that has been so thoroughly and so capably mocked.

. . . Justice? Did I hear the word *justice*? It will not be long before all agree that these trials at Nuremberg are a farce. Even revenge cannot be had on men whose cherished aim was to make us take revenge. And how is justice done to a carnival or farce? To a farce that lives on inside us?

II.10

So! What will become of us? Of those who believed in the science that was mocked? Who believed in progress toward maturity and the rule of law? What will become of the modern state and nation? The bricks and mortar that held the Reich together—will anyone use such again? What happens when science proves that no other materials can do the job? What happens when history shows that our victory in this war was the commencement of our unconditional defeat?

Will future generations—not here, but beyond Europe—term all of us now alive Nazis? Can the Asian and the African long delay recognition that the World War was but a civil war, fought in their backyard and at their expense? Can anyone not expect Mr. Gandhi to put flesh upon this argument? And when he comes to say it is time for the torch of civilization, or the thing that Hegel called History, to pass out of Europe forever, who in Europe will have the gall to disagree?

But no one, not even Mr. Gandhi, has the standing to make this argument in the presence of a single Jew. The Indian may turn his back on Europe, but the Jews of Europe now have to leave, taking with them—nothing.

II.11

Many Jews who might have cast off Europe for Zion have since been annihilated. The Jewish state they would have populated will be built without their counsel and without the scars they would have borne to Zion. I worry if, without them, the builders of Zion have the spirit to accomplish what must now be done. Without remarkable spiritual fortitude, they will fail to find the hand of God and reach out for it. That failure would reduce to nothing the meaning of their presence on that soil—consecrated for that purpose precisely.

As Gog lies feigning death, we must watch him carefully, but the greater

threat now is from Magog. Who would have thought it? How cunning Gog is! Magog is his unwitting trap. We Jews must never entrust ourselves to him, no matter what shape he assumes. Our purpose instead must be to awaken Magog from his stupor in the hope that he will know what any drunken fool knows—that he is drunk. He will know it, so we may hope, even as he protests his sobriety. And we can help him to know. But just as Gog made a mockery of Magog, so will Magog make a mockery of us if we permit it. We must hope that Magog, that democrat drunk with powers proved at Hiroshima, can be saved. For if Magog can be saved—shocking as it is to contemplate—so can Gog. Magog, Gog, and God might all be reconciled. Indeed, that is the purpose of Zionism.

II.12

The purpose of Zionism is to bring peace to all of humanity and, in the process, peace between humanity and God. But in this great mission Zion will fail if it is built in the image of the modern Western state. Doing so would drag the Jewish people back down into conditions that nearly destroyed us forever. Zionism must reject the political sublime.

The modern nation-state was supposed to resolve the conflict between the drive for unity and the drive for individuation, and to accomplish this by sublimating those energies to form and power its own institutions. But the nation-state, which is based upon a monopoly on the use of force, is in its essence a violent construct, thus unlikely in the extreme to sublimate drives that could be directed with less strain to violent ends. What appears (to more sanguine observers) to be the transformation of dangerous energies into beneficial ones is really nothing but patience. An enduring state is patient in awaiting outlets for its violence, whether violence directed against civilians at home or, by sending them abroad, against its own conscripted youth. However patient it may be, though, the state eventually but always goes to war and relegates the heartiest of its citizens to violent deaths. This price is too high to pay even for democracy and the rule of law.

The builders of Zion must permit nothing of this nature to develop. Their responsibility must be to conceptualize statehood in a wholly new way; otherwise, a state in Zion would accomplish nothing but the vindication of Jewish victimhood. It would give expression to nothing greater than the claim that enmity has a basis in ontology and objective morality. Espoused by the elders of Zion, that claim would fulfill to the letter the last will and testament of Adolf Hitler. It would become his gift, his legacy, his dark blessing, to the Jews, on whom he lavished such attention in his lifetime. It would sanctify nothing and spoil everything. It is Gog's plan.

The Zionist state must instead fulfill the visionary heritage of Moses, Sam-

uel, and Isaiah, which only a Jewish state in Zion can ever realize. Doing so will be redemptive for the Jewish people but not for them alone. Being nearby, seeing it unfold, will soften the hearts of the world. Jewish nationalism must have a weaker and more diffuse—one might say feminine or even effeminate—nature than the nationalism forged in Europe. Jewish nationalism must not seek forcefully to create a perfect, a sublime society that others will resent. The identity of the new social order must not be self-serving. The Jewish state must shine a harsh light on its own imperfections and hypocrisies (for no state is without them). It must carry the humility learned in exile and statelessness into politics. It must embody and celebrate every irony, paradox, and oxymoron attendant on its creation. It must laugh at its good fortune as Sarah our matriarch laughed in disbelief at the Almighty's promise, as the exiles returning to Zion from Babylonia laughed, and as the refugees flying from Europe on eagles' wings must laugh until their dying days. The postwar Jewish state must be a home for the giggling wounded and the laughing penitent. It must never become a barracks for the vengeful.

The Jewish state must be universal—not the state of all its peoples, of whom naturally there will be more than one, but a state for all peoples everywhere to come to worship the God of Isaiah, who prophesied that they would come. Everyone who needs to laugh should come and be welcomed with laughter. For any complaint the laughing pilgrims bring to us about Jewish conduct in our long, miserable exile in their lands, the Jewish state must take responsibility and, laughing with relief, atone. There must be no armed Jewish polity unless its task, sworn in laughter (and also tears, no doubt) to the Almighty, is to take responsibility for all those whom Isaiah called *ha-goyeem*, in Hebrew and in jubilation, but whom we Jews in exile have called “goyim,” in Yiddish and contempt.

II.13

In its modern Western form, the nation-state, functioning sanely, assumes power over its civilians and monopolizes their access to violence, in order to protect them from anarchy. Willingly they become its subjects, yielding their freedoms to an imaginary collective body that, as individuals, they now believe will nobly serve their higher—higher because collective—interests. The state is trusted to protect these interests more fully and more justly than any individual would or could do.

No part of this textbook definition seems impossible on the face of it, yet it describes the actual functioning of no modern state. One element is missing from the definition: there is no mention of *other* states. It is one thing to define a nation-state, and another to describe a nation-state in its malign ecology with other states. At all times, nation-states are at war. Peace is, for them, an alignment of violent interests. There are always others—not only states, but individuals

too—who do not belong and predictably become enemies of the state. Since the state’s power is in essence imaginary, it naturally calls upon its citizens to protect it from the enemy. The rule of law becomes a machine of war, fueled by the lives of citizens whom it claims to protect. When states clash, every hidden nook of their civilian societies may be militarized, and, as we have seen, all may be called upon to sacrifice their lives to stoking the great mechanism of destruction that the state inevitably becomes. The power extracted from its citizenry is never sublimated by the state. The violent capacity does not disappear. The state stores it up in its feral form. Thus empowered, the state can turn on its civilians at any time. When threatened from without, the state will destroy its vital innards to protect its hard, dry shell. And when the state has prevailed and, *qua definitione*, justice has been served, the myriads of the unburied may be sought and laid to rest in peace.

For such a state, the Jewish people need not return to Zion.

II.14

Should we subject the concepts of *Am Yisrael*, *Knesset Yisrael*, and *Netzach Yisrael* to the ideas, alien to the Jewish people, of sovereignty and common interest? Is the *segula*, the special destiny of the Jewish people, that it should become a nation like all others? Is *Eretz Yisrael* simply the territory of its inhabitants? Is the Holy Land nothing more than a national home? Who knows better than Jews how temporary a thing a home is? Worse, a Zionism that offers nothing more than a home for homeless Jews would offer nothing to the world. In such a home, the Jewish people would lose the sense of purpose that has inspired its perpetuation through millennia of exile. We would soon suffocate. A state built on a foreign conception of our collective purpose would soon become our grave. What is more, it would never take root in our ancestral sand.

Jewish nationalism must be the political embodiment of monotheism. Since the Jewish people were elected to proclaim the unity of God to the world, the Jewish state must embody the politics of that unity. Thus, the Jewish state must be Jewish in a unique sense—Jewish in its design and purpose but not in its nationality. Ethnic purity, in any case, will never be possible in a land that has forever attracted the attention of so many nations and faiths. More crucially, ethnic purity is anathema to the God of all nations. Since so many nations and faiths come to the land to affirm and praise the one and eternal God, the Jewish state must be Jewish primarily in the sense that it is not a state exclusively for Jews. How so? One must see that Jewishness is a self-deprecating trait. No state, not even one established within biblically assigned borders and constitutionally respectful of Jewish law, will be truly Jewish if it is a mechanism for serving Jewish self-interest.

The Jewish state must be saturated with the flavors, colors, tastes, and sounds of the exile. It has to be an ingathering not only of the Jews but of all the nations among whom they have ever lived, from China to Peru, South Africa to Siberia. Like the home of an explorer, the Jewish state must be adorned with the keepsakes of its travels overseas. Through Zionism, Jewish identity will so metamorphose that it will be hardly a particularistic or ethnic identity at all. Hitler defined us narrowly. We must defy him. We Jews are a multicolored people; our identity is synthetic and has nothing like purity of origin. Judaism, like the creation itself, came to be mysteriously and out of nothing. A complex Jew of no Jewish faith suggested, not long before the war, that Moses himself was an Egyptian. In any case, Moses learned he was a Hebrew from a nurse claiming she was his mother, when he lived as Pharaoh's adopted grandson. We know too that he married a Kushite and, therefore, that his sons were "half-breeds."

Judaism should be defined neither genetically nor even historically but with reference to the destiny of the Jews to bring about the future for which humanity was created. The Jewish collective is unique in that it seeks not to be unique. It is distinguished by its desire not to be distinguished. The Jewish people are chosen to become unchosen. They are elected to elect others, appointed to live with and, by their presence, to educate and soften the most intolerant of others. Jewish particularism has universal horizons. Should every living Jew be ingathered to Zion now, the skeletons and ashes of millions will never come. They will remain behind, scarring the smooth face of the new world that Magog will deliver. There will be Jewish cemeteries and unmarked Jewish graves throughout the world until the end of time. Wherever they remain will be assurance that the One God and the brotherhood of man were at some time in history proclaimed there.

"The land is mine," God said to Moses, while implying that it has a mind of its own. The land "vomits out," God added, any people whom it cannot bear. If the Jewish people return there to make nothing better than a political home in it for themselves, that will be a mistake for which we will pay a heavy price. If the Jews wish for a collective return, they will need to care both for the land and for all of the peoples who yearn and pray for it. The ingathered Jews must accept the essential unity of mankind even when expressions of that unity pose a threat to their own well-being. Those posing physical threats may be warded off. Problems arise when symbolic threats are posed. We must not make the mistake of resisting the presence of symbols—the crescent, the cross—whose permanent place will never be removed by any sword. Why should they be? For all souls for whom the Holy Land is a symbolic home, its symbolic place in their lives must be ensured and made tangible. No Jewish state can be truly Jewish that has not enough imagination to transcend the differences between peoples and to provide unfailing care for pilgrims who are not Jews. Therefore, the Jews who return to Zion must develop a weaker sense of self-identity and mutual self-identification

than one observes currently among us. We must develop a culture of humility, penitence, and service.

Judaism is only Judaism insofar as its concerns are not exclusively Jewish. It is the religion of the perennial other. It is the role of the Jew to point the pilgrim's path to the Temple Mount. The Jew's vocation is to make beds for the night, wash the pilgrims' feet, and endure.

II.15

Jewish nationalism is self-constituting and not self-evident. It has a constructed purpose and is not an end in itself. Zion must be home to the kingdom of priests, of which Moses speaks in God's name. Zionism must be the arm of its political institutionalization. For the land cannot be possessed, neither by the Zionist movement nor by anyone else. Was not the point of exile the separation of the people from its land so that it could learn the limits of its dominion? The people experienced separation from its land, as a child is separated from its mother at birth. This act of individuation can be borne when its purpose is understood. The purpose of separating is individuation, but only in part. The child must wander afar and yearn to return. The child must grow in exile before returning, and the mother must yearn in his absence. These experiences must not be denied or forgotten. They are the source of the wisdom needed for the child's ultimate homecoming. The child may return only when he is wise and bruised from the antics of his travels. The mother can only accept the child's return after she has yearned for him long enough for her truly to welcome it.

The Jewish people must not declare independence on returning to the land. They have had more than their share of independence. They must return in search of dependency. They must return respectfully to the mother they have abandoned and hurt, ready to make amends and to depend on her succor. They must return a better people, better sons and daughters, than they were when they departed. Their mother must be assured that the painful years of separation were worthwhile.

This is Zionism. Is it not clear that a land is not owned by a people with such a purpose, any more than a mother is owned by her grown-up, repentant child?

II.16

With the dispersing of monotheism among the nations came the dispersal of the Jews. Now it must be the aim of Zionism to ingather the exiles while welcoming the monotheists of all nations. The Jews will build a Temple where the nations of the world may come to worship the God whom, now, they all acknowledge. It

is not for the Jewish people to own the Temple. It is, however, for them alone to build it. . . .

“But this does not sound to me like the recipe for a successful state. How will a ‘kingdom of priests’ and innkeepers defend its borders and provide protection to its citizens? Will self-effacement sustain a modern economy? Is it realistic to dream of utopia when life in Palestine is even now a nightmare of hatred and violence?”

These are objections that we must not fear. Will the Jewish society in Zion succeed as other societies succeed? Is it not, rather, our purpose that it should not? In a land where everyone, however rich and successful, is a squatter—where property per se does not exist, because every dunam “goes out” in the Jubilee and the fruits of the land belong first of all to God—success cannot be measured comparatively and statistically. As for the Arab Question, so called, it has been inaptly formulated. The real question we must ask and answer is what the purpose of Ishmael’s presence in the land of Isaac and Israel might be. We must ask, “What are we to learn from them?” and not, “How can we thwart or be rid of them?” In any case, the Jewish national movement must understand that the only satisfactory answer to the Arab Question is an Arab Answer of “yes” to our presence. What would make them not only accept but welcome our presence?

The Arab peoples that have sustained the land in our absence must be acknowledged as its benefactors and as our teachers. We must ask them, first, to teach us about the land: what do we know about it after so immensely long an absence? We must learn from them, second, how we can enhance their lives on the land. We must appreciate them for their persistent reminders when we fail. It is they alone who will rescue the Jewish national movement from being fooled by Gog to trust Magog. It is they who will prevent us, with all their energy, from failure in our national calling. It is to them that we must be grateful for reminding us that the emulation of Europe and America entails the duplication of their fatal flaws. They will ever remind us of our debt to exile. They will remind us how many of our people have lived, from Grenada to India, among the children of Ishmael. It is our history—a history that Ishmael will flaunt the first instant we afflict him—that forbids us to build a Jewish state on the model of states that oppress the stranger. No precedent learned from Europe or America will ever help us to meet the challenge of formulating the national politics of a monotheist and philanthropic kingdom of priests. We must win first the confidence of those whom we will serve. We must learn to accept what we might at first glance prefer to reject. We must acknowledge the value even of what we find hateful so that we may live with it in peace.

It is to the Arabs above all to whom we should look for guidance. God has chosen them to greet us on our return, as Esau greeted Jacob, and to ensure that we live up to our calling. They will teach us that we cannot possess the land and

that we must return to it as a weeping child to his offended mother. If we fail, Ishmael will never forgive us—and his wrathful disappointment will be filled with the fury of the God of Hosts. The Arabs will haunt us until we live up to the charge of our God. They will punish our every betrayal until they appear to our eyes as if Amalekites, Midianites, Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans—the destroyers of Israel. But those nations, evil as we care to portray them, were all servants of God as well. And, very unlike any of them, Ishmael is no idolater. He is a loyal son of Abram our father, and as the child of maltreated Hagar he is to us an elder half brother, to whom we owe a mounting debt of shame.

II.17

Hitler has seen to it that the Jews are no longer an Occidental people. Zionism is, and it must be seen to be, the collective attempt of the Jews to exit the West for good. If Zionist leaders decide to compete with Western states as one among them—if they build or buy fighter planes and warships and atomic weapons—they will do grave damage to Jewish history. Zionism must not emulate, but instead cultivate an alternative to, the modern Western model of statehood. By thinking like victims of Hitler, anxious to manifest strength in the face of our enemy, the Jews will become accomplices to his plan. If we can avoid completely the discourse in which Hitler's parody of politics rang true, we can thwart his plan and vindicate the fear of us that led him so obsessively to seek our destruction. If there is anything that will instill fear in the hearts of the Godless, it is peace, because peace is the politics of God.

Is there a government that relinquishes rather than accumulates power? The Zionists must not permit the state that they found to *stand for* anything. There should be less emotional content to, less machinery involved with, and less power invested in the central state than pertains to the government of Switzerland, where no one you ask at any time can say who is the current federation president or even what his function is. If we let our politics become our culture, we soon will have no culture to politicize. If our debates and our discussions are about our practical needs and concerns and not about our greater purpose, then our purpose will be aborted. Our state would be only one more entity wielding power for its own sake and prowling aggressively in search of a “mission” with which it can dupe the gullible.

The Zionist state must be protected, in its very form, from the deceit of statehood. Its constitution and governing bodies must be so arranged as to contradict each other on every question. With no Western model in mind, the Jewish people would naturally evolve a self-contradictory and self-disrupting government, on the model of Jewish law, where the schools of Hillel and Shammai agree about nothing, and yet “the words of both are the words of the living God.” The

laws of the land must include all of the laws and customs of all of the monotheist communities represented there. Given that multiple legal systems in flat-out contradiction will undermine any prayer of centralization, the state and its judiciary will have to operate like an empire of old, with levels of autonomy and sovereignty and complexity that gave rise to the adjective *byzantine*. The aspiration to consolidate a national identity or to define who is Jewish will provide another rich source of local comedy. Politically, constitutionally, the Zionist state will be regressive; it will back away from every advance that has soaked the soil of Europe and its colonies in blood. There can be no army and no militia, not even clear boundaries. Constitutional disorder will be the foundation of unity—our solidarity in self-derisive laughter—and thereby the foundation of peace. Zionism will call the fundamental assumptions of modern statehood into question by succeeding everywhere that modernism has failed. The Jewish people's success will arrive when the rest of humankind recognize the organic relation of disarray to peace, and when they admire, against their settled prejudices, the flourishing of a collective that has neither cohesion nor consistency. The collective will be thick with humanity and, therefore, a witness to divine oneness.

Zionism must be about more than statehood; it must scarcely be about statehood at all. It needs to be a form of nationalism capable of dismantling itself if a greater cause would be served by doing so. It must build a country that accepts new immigrants perpetually and waves of pilgrims who overturn its never settled culture. “Love ye therefore the stranger” should become the national motto. And an *ibrik* pouring coffee into badly mismatched cups should become the emblem of the Jewish state.

II.18

“But, my dear, be serious. Is this vision practical?”

Interlocutor, be warned: the alternative is more terrible and less practical than any of us dares to imagine. If you cannot see that, then you have learned nothing from Hitler and all the history of the world preceding him.

The Holy Land will always be a land of paradox and contradiction. It will never settle, never let us rest. Attempts to put it in order will always fail. Efforts to build modern skyscrapers, a perfect society, and a just political structure will collapse in a series of earthquakes. Physical and metaphorical earthquakes will come to the shifting sands of Zion to undermine and bury any such construction. No tower of Babel will ever stand tall in the land that can never be owned. Empire after empire has been built amid its silent sanctuaries; each one has come and gone. Why should ours be different? Nation after nation has failed to own the Holy Land. The Jewish people will be no different, unless they *are* different. The only claim the Jewish people can have on the land is the sanctity of the culture

that they build in the land. Sanctity means, in this case, “broken.” Being already in pieces is the only defense against what the land always does to any pretense of completeness.

It is the destiny of the Jewish people to return the exile to the land. Exile, planted in the Promised Land, will not be overthrown. The open and blatant paradoxes and self-contradictions of the messy legal tradition of the Jews are one key to entering the land. The lessons of the exile—things learned, like recipes, from the nations who hosted us for centuries—comprise the second key. Its gates unlocked, the land will permit cities to rise, halls of power to be filled with magnates and soldiers, and seeds to be planted in the soil. But nothing will be built that cannot collapse. Nothing will stand that cannot fall.

It seems to me that God is unimpressed by the hearty realism and practical know-how of the Jews who so far have come to settle in his land. If there is no faith in the mystery of the land, there is no point in returning to it. If Zionism is not about tailoring the culture of statehood to the uniqueness of the land, let it not take the risk of defiling the land. The eros of realism, practicality, and power will, yes, bring the Jewish people to their feet, but it will also bring them to war after war after war after war, until nothing is left of the gentle people who yielded to the mysteries of history and survived them in submission to the logic of what cannot be understood or controlled. Nothing is less practical than a good plan. God laughs at them all.

II.19

The Jewish state must be to the modern Western state what woman is to man. A Jewish state will be an opportunity to give expression fully to its distaff contribution to human civilization. It is the militaristic masculinity of today’s Zionists that frightens me most. It is so inauthentic to the history and culture of the Jewish people, so foreign to the ethos of open-endedness that is our legacy and (I suppose) our gift from God. Bravado is so misplaced in the climate of the Holy Land, where rain is scarce and hence resources must be cherished and replenished, never stripped and freely used.

Adding *shalom* to the aura of Zion must be our project. Call it *Sblomzion*. The current thrust of Zionism must be reversed. We need not reinvent the very idea of politics, but we must reinvent the feel of it. Its flavor and its priorities must feel different in a Jewish state. I see so much that is exciting and promising, but also so much that discourages and worries me. What should I make of Deganya? Is the kibbutz eros caring or violent? Does it nurture or crush? Does it individuate or smother? I see both extremes in the same phenomenon. The unique culture of a people that has spent its vast history in exile cannot survive in a state of politics that forgets its skepticism of power. How ironic it is that the

most vocal of our dreamers and visionaries are the most determined not to learn from our history as they begin to act. They who may well lead the Jewish state are building a tall and hefty edifice on the surface of a living land unused to weight. They shout and march in a place that must be listened to in the still of night as it whispers. They seek to reclaim an ancient heritage as if it were a plow or hammer, or a shovel. They are mistaken in the culture they build, the songs they sing, and the ideas they espouse. I fear they will do great harm to the legacy of a people whose very existence testifies to the transience of this world and to the limitations of any power that is accumulated in it.

Now is the time when a woman's voice should be heard in Zion and among the nations. Men are in such a hurry to construct and plow. They have no patience with quiet voices speaking about transience and gentleness. I wonder, will my voice ever be heard? Will my words ring true for anyone who might one day read them? I fear not. What more need happen in the world for my words someday to gain credence? It is certain that my viewpoint, were it known, would be unpopular now. In any case, I will not lend my voice to the anthem they have written for this state they are intent on building. It is an anthem like any other; it could be sung by soldiers on the march, or by mourners at the soldiers' funerals. Some new sound must emanate from Zion, one fit for a woman's voice to sing.

II.20

What love is to the family, peace should be to the state. When family relationships are governed by love, it does not matter how the resources of the home and its chores are distributed, how places are allocated at the dinner table, or how space is divided up for sleep and dreaming. Families must cultivate love not order, compassion not discipline, mutuality not hierarchy. Order, when it evolves gently, seems trivial to those engrossed in their affections. It is in this fashion that the transcendental liberates the political from violence. Generations will suffer before such order is achieved. Although ultimately it must happen, the road is long.

A nation cannot be built, as a family may be, upon an emotion, though a nation could, perhaps, be built upon an ideal. But beware of the ideal. Can we make do with democracy and the rule of law as our ideal when we have been told that our destiny is to bring peace on earth? As ideals go, democracy and legality are very fine, yet also parochial, merely consensual, and focused perhaps too much on self-interest. Sharing existence without violence is a mystery that transcends the power of democracy or legality to fathom it. Sharing existence without violence is the mystery of creation itself.

We are blind about the world because we cannot see the people in it. Instead we see their collective representations, the symbols and banners that they make

up precisely in order to be seen. The state is infused with an ideal that is the state itself. Vehement believers in the nation-state (or, rather, in the nation-state to which they belong) believe that social cohesion is a product of the state. Such people are dangerously misled. I know, because I have been crushed by states before and—as I watch this new state taking shape—I become ever more fearful that I will be crushed again. I feel my bones grinding even now.

Like the supportive structures that enable a beautiful building to be seen, the state should allow the people it serves to be seen. We celebrate buildings that are especially beautiful or provide special conditions for the people who live in, work in, or visit them. It is not the mere fact that a building stands that makes it stand out. In the same way, it will be a mistake if, one day, we celebrate the mere fact that a Jewish state exists. There is much else to ensure before we celebrate. The Jewish state will be filled with Jews. Another cause to celebrate? That depends on who or what those Jews are. Some believe they must be “new Jews,” meaning hardy, outdoorsy, no-nonsense warriors. But those are not Jews; they are Edomites. Isaac tried to choose Edom, but Jacob was God’s choice, for the blessing. Jacob, like his descendants, knew what it meant to be driven hither and thither at others’ will or whim. When such exiles are ingathered home, they will all be ambassadors from somewhere else—a League of Nations uniting all cultures of the world and every period of world history in which they have sojourned. Jews have lived on every continent, spoken every language, tasted every cuisine on the globe. The Jewish state, if it is to be the culmination of Jewish history (and not its negation), will be a coexistence of all nations in the heart of the oldest nation of all.

A new national identity among the nations will serve no unique purpose. The Jewish state must combine all existing identities. Therefore, the people who live within it must remain connected to their countries of origin and to the peoples who have lived alongside them for centuries. The Jewish state will allow the Jewish people to reconcile the nations of the world through the process, however arduous and lengthy, of rediscovering itself. The Jews once taught the world that God is one. Zionism is their opportunity to prove to the world that, likewise, humanity is one and can live, with all their differences, in peace.

II.21

In the rebuilt Zion, the Lord and the Shechinah can be reunited in space as they are in time by the Sabbath day. So also Zion may be united with Shlomzion, its ancient lost sister. Shlomzion *is* the Shechinah, who has waited for her children in the land they fled so long ago in search of safe havens elsewhere—indeed, *everywhere* else. The Jewish people must reencounter its abandoned mother in her land and discover that she is the mother of all humanity.

III

Shlomzion's Temple—Further Thoughts on the Purpose of Zionism

Shlomzion is a dream. She is my dream. She is a vision that I see sometimes, as I lie awake at night. My mind reels and my heart pounds as I watch her taking shape in my mind's eye. She is a vision of the Temple in Jerusalem. By the time the dream is over, she is beautiful and sparkling. I see her so clearly I could cry out. But instead I lie completely still, motionless and silent, frantic with excitement. My fingers itch. I want to go to her, to show her to the world, to share her with everybody. But I cannot move. My heart is with Shlomzion, and I lie, restlessly motionless, in my bed.

I have glimpses of the Temple sometimes when I pray. I think about her, conjure her up, until I actually can see her. Why am I struck with this yearning? When I have the courage to immerse myself fully in prayer, I can let my mind wander, but not astray. My mind wanders like a pilgrim meandering toward Shlomzion. A vision of God's return to Jerusalem takes form and floods my body. Sometimes it feels as if God were praying to me, beckoning to me, beseeching me to dream of Zion. Sometimes it feels as if God were inside of me, coursing through my veins and bursting through my skin. I am washed away by his dream, unable to resist it.

But part of me tries, hopelessly and helplessly, to resist. I do not like all that I see, and often the sensation of dreaming is agony. I feel my own pain, but also I dare wonder if some of the pain I feel is God's.

When the dream begins, Shlomzion is unbuilt. It feels as if the Temple was never destroyed, and yet its remnants are still in full view. What I see is only a hilltop, but the hill is where the world's umbilical cord lies severed and still bleeding. I do not know if I see the hilltop as it is at the beginning of its future, or as it was before antiquity began. Past, present, and future intermingle in my dream. What is there was there and will forever be there. What I imagine may be the Temple as it was before the creation of time.

In the visions that accompany my prayers, the top of the hill is drenched in rain. It is exposed, cold, and windswept. From a distance, I see the umbilical cord of the world blowing in the wind, or call it *ruakb*. Really the cord is only a wound or a scar in the sand. But it bleeds. The hill is drenched in blood; it is not raining. Sometimes I can hear the wound crying. I yearn to comfort its agony of loneliness, its fear of abandonment. I cannot reach into the dream with my hands. My hands cannot touch the hilltop. I cannot comfort an image, a shadow, a vision, a prayer, an inconsolable metaphor beyond my reach. I reach out to the hilltop (as generations have done before me) but can touch it only with my prayers.

I want to spread a canopy over the hilltop. I want to protect her and shield her from those who would build on top of her. Is a canopy enough? Would a shielding canopy be enough Temple? Is this instinct to shelter, swaddle, and cover

the hilltop the one that first led men to build here? I fear not. I have read the annals of Moriah and have found no concern among men for her well-being. Has anyone given a moment's thought to what adoration does to a hill? Does anyone spare a thought for the rocks and stones that have been moved, removed, piled up, and used for construction?

Underneath the Temple the wound is always there, slashed in the surface of the ground. The unbuilt Temple bleeds like an abandoned wound; the wound is prehistoric, outside of time. It has been there longer than time has existed. Here is a place of birth and ancient pain, where crying can be heard, a longing to be healed, to be reconciled, to be at peace at last.

But then the architects with their constructions come. They proclaim the accomplishments of men. They humiliate the wound, cover it up, and plaster over it with grandeur. The wound lies concealed under a glossy shrine, left to fester as it absorbs the blood of warriors and animals.

I dream of Shlomzion, and my mind is stirred by memories (they are not mine) of a dead mother whose body has decayed. All that is left of her is a footprint. Yet somehow, too, she waits patiently to be loved, cared for, healed . . . healed so she may love, again care for, and heal her children. Shlomzion is the mother of many nations. But she is unconscious. She lies downtrodden in a stupor, moaning as she breathes. She has many children who have never known her caress. They see only her carcass, embalmed in silver and gold. Even now as I dream of her, they are there. They come to salvage and to dig. But what are they looking for if not for Shlomzion? They must find the wound, bind the wound, heal the wound from whence they came.

The gold and ivory palaces that they build atop her smother Shlomzion. Clashing swords and bleating sheep, trumpets and ram's horns, the Levite chorus—and the noises made routinely by kings and priests, prophets and rabbins, pilgrims and imams, knights, monks, mullahs, sultans, generals, and politicians, who have come to cry but not to listen—stifle the gentle sound that courses upward through the trampled earth. The sobbing can be heard only in dreams or, sometimes, like a chorus humming, during private prayer.

They build and they destroy temples, sanctuaries, churches, shrines, and mosques to celebrate their conquests. One after another, they pour stone, salt, flesh, bone, and blood onto the hill and down into the open wound. They look up to the sky instead of down, thinking only of the breach above from whence power descends. They build *up*. They build up their religious passion, reaching for the God who hovers somewhere above. They wail upward to him for mercy, vindication, and triumph. They wail also between battles, wearing their swords. They stand their ground, encircling, eyeing one another, without a thought spared for the wound that bleeds beneath them. In the ground.

I see Shlomzion unconscious, lying under the rubble, her heart still beating.

As my heart beats in my own breast, I feel her slow enduring rhythm. I hear her as she sighs and sometimes gasps for air. Her gasping is the song she sings as she waits to be remembered. I could go to the hilltop, clear away the rubble, help her back on her feet. She should stand upright. What would she say if she could? Or what would she sing? How would she look if she rose from the sand, our mother once again? Would she not be exquisite, standing tall, her feet rooted in a gash in the earth leading down to the route beyond time? Would she not glisten in the sun and shimmer in the rain?

I have the strangest feeling, as I dream, that I am not alone. There are others in my dream; they are seeing it with me. How odd to feel in company, dreaming! How comforting too. Still, these others—if they were not strangers, I would dare not name them.

I know for certain that Zion is calling home its children. I am but one of many who can hear that call. In the salons of Paris, Vienna, London, and Odessa, Zion is on countless lips. But who else hears the sound of Shlomzion singing in their dreams? There is Zion, and there is Shlomzion. One is awake, the other is dreaming. They are not one, they are not the same. Shlomzion must become Zion. Zion needs her. What kind of world would this be if Zion were rebuilt while Shlomzion stayed behind, unrescued?

Multitudes are moved by Zion. They approach the land carrying plowshares and sickles. They dig and plow, build and scar the land, forcing it to bear fruit. War weary and exhausted, bruised, burned, branded, beaten, and blind, they come home to Zion. But have they turned their backs on blood and steel? Can they restore without destroying? Do they know how delicate an unshaped destiny is placed in their hands? Have they the patience to care? My duty may be to tell them that they must.

I cannot see their faces in my dream, though I can see the way they walk. They file along eastward paths in long meandering lines, making their way over the horizon like silhouettes of history, or like prayers. They tread gently, I am pleased to say, but their feet leave prints in the sand as they go. They are unnoticed and, I think, invisible; inside the dream, though, I can see their souls. They waft along in song as their bodies remain mechanically in line with the crowd. They walk toward the sunrise. Great things are perhaps happening. This generation may be different. They come perhaps not to settle scores but instead to make amends. They come perhaps to make things new. I can see they come bearing ghosts. They carry the dead in their souls. They seek new life for them. I cannot say who any of them are.

There is much yet to discover. How to build without destruction? How to do without undoing? Where is the path that is not the rejection of another path? What the strength that is not a brother's weakness? Must every object be a noun?

If so, what sanctuary could be meek enough to stand upon a bleeding hilltop? What blueprint could prepare a home for Shlomzion?

My dream has meanwhile reached its peak. I see the Temple they are building atop her. A catastrophe! Blood is spilled! War ensues. One construct is raised upon another. They collide like locomotives on a single rusted stretch of track. The track melts, the buildings return to dust, and suddenly there is room to breathe. Shlomzion stands up straight like a pipe, or like a tube. More like a silent standing letter. She stands up and then disappears.

Now there is nothing but a hilltop full of people. There is no Sabbath and no week now. The people need shelter from the sun and rain. They take shelter where it is offered and give shelter to others. They are Jew and Arab, dark and fair, tall and small, male and female, African, Asiatic, and Caucasian, all come to take refuge from the rain and sun. They seem a thousand, perhaps a million particles come together but not united. They simply are one. I look at them and see them as one. I blink and they are particles. I blink again and they are one. They belong somehow to each other. The men belong to the women, the Jews to the Muslims and Christians. They all belong to one another's faith. They are all deluded in this blissful ignorance. Each believes the other is his brother. They are one as God is one. Their oneness *is* God. They are united in this blissful belief.

The land would rather that they fought together than that they lived apart anymore. But there is no fighting. The letters of all alphabets unite here to pray. No sound is heard, for they are all ashamed. Their silence is the name of God.

The ancient mother is upon her feet. Cousins hold up her arms. She begins to glow. My heart leaps; I cannot look upon her face. Where the light shines brightest, all I see is darkness. Or, rather, she is invisible. She is nothing my eyes can see. I look inward and, from within, toward the place in which I already am. The sound is so great, now, that my ears cannot receive it. The hilltop is silent and invisible. This cannot be a dream. It must be real! Millions upon millions of souls are hiding from it. And so, my soul begins to sing.

The sun shines through its cataract in the sky, drying up the blood on the hilltop below. Shlomzion is a dazzling glass tent spread over Mount Moriah. She is a tabernacle, a sukkah of peace, a pyramid pointing to the sky. All that lives beneath her is covered and protected. All that lives above her is refracted. She is a tent of glass and light. She has glass walls but no limit to her size or reach. She has height but goes beyond it. She stands tall but offers shelter to the smallest, who feel the air inside her pressing closely to their faces.

Can a temple be a tent of glass? She glows and glistens, blowing cool wind and warmth through her lungs, breathing a song that no one can hear. The sun glints on her walls, as words of Isaiah engraved in the thick glass sparkle. They can be read from any distance as they circle the glass walls of the pyramid, chang-

ing from language to language at a wink of the eye. They shine in the sky as if there were no pyramid. All that can be seen are the letters of the words of Isaiah as they glint and sparkle.

For my home shall be a house of prayer for all nations. כי ביתי בית תפילה יקרא לכל העמים:

Nation shall not lift sword up against nation, neither shall they learn war anymore. לא ישא גוי אל גוי חרב ולא ילמדו עוד מלחמה:

Am I dreaming now? I must be. I can see their eyes see each other from within. With new eyes they see themselves in one another (and God everywhere). My inner eye is dazzled by the pyramid as she spreads her wings beyond the limits of the glorious hilltop. She is an *obel moed* of glass, not skins and precious metals, standing like a canopy over Moriah, Tyropoeon, and Golgotha, creating a great open space beneath.

Nothing was built and nothing destroyed to make her stand. She appeared like a drape lowered from heaven, providing warmth in the cold and shade from the heat. A breeze, warm in the winter and cool in the summer, blew through her. Inside, all is calm. Inside is a miracle of space. She is more spacious on the inside than the world outside her, than the whole of history; there is room for everyone. No one need ever say, *tsa'ar li hamakom*—I have no room. Her doors are open. There are no doors. Thus *obel* stood until she disappeared. All that remains of the dream is light.

The sanctuary of God was once, and will be again, a tent of meeting, built without digging in the earth, without foundation, with no history or imagined future. Before the land and agriculture, before its soil and produce, before the politics of independence, there was this tent for meeting in the wilderness. It will be set one day upon the hilltop over the wound that has called me to take cover. A wound whose cry hails from the future tells me that I must come.

Now the dream fades, and I am back in my bed. I must leave now. I am breathless to get there before it is too late, before *Kavod* stands bereft of *Shechinah* in Zion. The land is filled with pilgrims calling themselves pioneers. They have come to leave a home, or make one. They are hopeful and sad. I must tell them about Shlomzion. No time can be wasted. Shlomzion must stand upon her hilltop and extend her wings over Tyropoeon and Golgotha before war seeps out below her. The Temple Wall, Holy Sepulchre, and Noble Sanctuary must stand under a single glass tent. How could anything else be worthy of the Hebrew God whose names conceal his essence? How could anything less bring comfort to a mother whose children have so profoundly misunderstood her? Her children share noth-

ing but herself and a minute space between their backs when they pray. All speak to her at once, each in his own language, according to his own custom. Accord among the children would leave souls hungry and unsatisfied. Harmony would leave Shlomzion incompletely cherished. She needs them close now, all of them. The cost of discord among them will not matter. For she herself is peace.

IV

Hesped—Eulogy for Salome Leon

12 Adar 5768 (8 February 2008)

Family and friends:

For some of you this is not the first time I have brought you here to stand with me next to Salome Leon's grave on the day of her *yahrzeit*. Ever since I first settled in Israel, I have been coming each year to this beautiful spot on the Mount of Olives to remember a woman—a sort of mother figure for me, actually—who I loved very deeply as a child [PAUSE].

But this year I have planned things a little differently. Today we commemorate the sixtieth year of Salome's tragic death here in Jerusalem. And, as we stand next to her grave, we look around us at the beautiful city of Jerusalem that has sprung back to life after generations of slumber. It shines proudly now as the vibrant capital of a modern Jewish state. This sight was the dream of many generations and—in one way or another—it was Salome's dream too. My children and even some of my grandchildren are now well versed in the stories I customarily tell about Salome on this occasion. They know about the memories I have of her from those strange and emotional years of World War II in London. Some of the older ones can perhaps even mimic my impersonation of her rather unusual accent when speaking English. I have elicited countless laughs with my exaggerated version of how she rolled her *r*'s [IMPERSONATE FOR HUMOROUS EFFECT]. The way she spoke used to amuse me so much as a child. The truth is that I have (for many years now) gathered you together to reminisce with you and to amuse you with a very modest purpose in mind. I have wanted simply for my memories of this remarkable woman to live on in yours.

But this year, I confess, my purpose is a bit more ambitious. In honor of the sixtieth year, I decided to invite all of you [LOOK UP AND AROUND] to come along to this private affair. Here we are a large crowd, and I thank you all so very much for coming. There are friends here and family but also students and colleagues. All of you have been very kind in coming along to join me and my family here, and I am very moved to see you. I have invited you on this occasion to talk about an aspect of Salome's life that I believe is of more general interest than my childhood memories alone. I would like for the first time to talk less

about the sweet, playful, mischievous, bohemian, mysterious, and extraordinary woman who turned up in my home unannounced one day in the summer of 1940 . . . and more about Salome Leon, the unread and unspoken Zionist philosopher.

When Salome was killed here in Jerusalem, I was still a child in London. Sadly, I did not hear of her death for many years. I was already a young man when my beloved father, of living memory, shared with me the little that he knew of how she had tragically met her end here in what was then Palestine. On that same occasion, my father presented me with two notebooks that Salome had left in his care for me to read when I grew up. [HOLD UP NOTEBOOKS.]

I am sorry to admit that for many years I did not really examine them. It was only recently, when I resolved to study them more carefully, that I began to appreciate their significance. For all these years, it never really occurred to me that these notebooks might contain anything of importance. In the last few months, I have taken time to work on these manuscripts and prepare them for publication. Doing so has been a labor of love but also of great purpose—not only for me but even, perhaps, for the Jewish people as a whole.

Preparing Salome's notebooks for publication involved a great deal of editing, translating, and organizing the materials that I inherited. While one notebook was written clearly in one language, the second was full of what appeared at first to be wholly unorganized scribbles in French, English, and Hebrew. After several careful readings, I was able to discover the order that Salome had intended and even to uncover a system of numbering that she used to put her thoughts into a coherent sequence. Despite the erratic style of the unedited original, my edition of the text presents a consistent, evolving argument that—I believe—faithfully reproduces Salome's intentions. After organizing all of this material, I translated it into English and produced, I hope, a satisfactorily readable final text.

It is hard to know whether these oddly reticent writings would have appealed to anyone at the time when they were put on paper. Salome herself believed that they would have annoyed many. Perhaps things have changed now. The world is a different place. The Jewish people and the State of Israel have been evolving vigorously while these notebooks have sat silently in my desk drawer, waiting for their day. I hope that now I might have the privilege of affording Salome Leon the posthumous opportunity of being truly heard.

[PAUSE AND BREATHE.]

Salome Leon was a French-Alsatian Jewess who, under the tutelage of her father, acquired a very solid grounding in the classics of the Jewish tradition. I remember clearly the facility that she had with talmudic and biblical texts. She was an avid reader and a scholar who quoted verbatim from a vast variety of Jewish sources. But, in addition to her Jewish learning, Salome was influenced by the bustling intellectual climate that she encountered during the formative years that she spent in Paris. She said very little to me about her past, and her writings

contain very few autobiographical clues. But it is clear to me now, after studying her work, that both her Orthodox Jewish home and the ideas she encountered as a young woman in the Left Bank milieu were profound influences on the formulation of her radical yet traditionalist Zionist thought.

Salome was most certainly a Zionist, though, at least in her own mind, she was a different kind from those she knew. She was wary of the thinking that dominated the Zionist discourse of her time. As a woman and a refugee, some of it must have caused her a good deal of frustration and pain. I cannot help but think that—had she lived longer and become a citizen of Israel—Salome might well have discovered more like-minded Zionist thinkers than she seems to have known in Europe. For example, she makes no explicit mention of people like Martin Buber, Rav Kook, or Judah Leon Magnes, with each of whom, I imagine, she would have identified, at least in part. Despite similarities between her ideas and those of others whom I shall return to later, Salome had her own special point of view. It is this singularity that I want to begin with as I speak about her notebooks today.

Like many (if not most) of the Zionist thinkers in her generation, Salome was motivated by a strong messianic impulse. She believed in the redemptive power of the Zionist idea. She believed as well, however, that it was not so much the Jewish people who stood to gain from the establishment of a Jewish state as it was the rest of the world. The Zionist idea was not meant to solve the “Jewish Problem.” Zionism was meant to tackle a deep human problem. In this sense, the Jewish state was destined to fulfill the messianic purpose of the Jewish people in the world and for the world. The services that a Jewish state might provide to the Jewish people were of secondary importance to her. Jewish self-interest and the survival agenda that dominated the Zionist reaction to both World War II and the “Arab Problem” were distractions from a higher purpose. In her view, Zionism was a chance for the Jewish people to fulfill its historic destiny, even if doing so promised little to the Jews in return.

Salome’s thoughts on the purpose of Zionism begin with a rather surprising analysis of the behavioral relationships within families. She writes attentively about sibling rivalry but especially about tensions between infants and their parents. Though she had no children of her own, Salome played with children very naturally and easily, and I absolutely loved it when she played with me. As I think on it now, it strikes me as odd that I enjoyed her company so much. She was an unusually demanding playmate. She had this uncanny way of challenging me as we played and of forcing me to think and even work as I learned and grew. But the thing that was so captivating about her was the depth and the precision of her attentiveness. When she came to play with me, I immediately felt that she understood me better than anyone else. While she played with me, I felt as if I was her whole world.

Her choice to begin her first notebook with observations about children is typical of her. But it is also a self-consciously unconventional and surprising way to begin an essay on Zionism. I imagine that any reader will feel the moment he or she moves from the title of the first notebook to its opening sentence. Whatever expectations are conjured up by a title like “Shlomzion—Thoughts on the Purpose of Zionism” are immediately shifted by an opening sentence that says: “Anyone who has watched children at play knows that war is inevitably a part of the human condition.” Clearly, Salome hoped to elicit surprise by locating the significance of the Zionist idea in its response to human conflict rather than its plan for Jewish survival.

As you read on, it emerges that the scope of Salome’s Zionist humanism is nothing short of startling. She states early in the essay that her hopes for Zionism include the possibility of its being redemptive even for Nazism. She initiates this theme in a sequence of seemingly inoffensive musings about overlaps that no doubt exist between the nursery-room cultures of German and English (or perhaps it is French) mothers. Despite the monstrosity of Nazi Germany, children everywhere in the world are brought up in accordance with the same platitudes about good behavior. By prompting us to think of these overlaps, she means to suggest that the threat of destructive conflict is everywhere. It is neither better nor worse when one observes it among the children of liberal democracies than among the children of fascist countries. She seems fascinated by the thought that Nazi mothers who love their children teach them the same nursery-room truisms as everyone else does. But her point is not to comment on the universality of maternal affection. Her point is that the liberal West is implicated, along with Nazi Germany, in a long history of appalling aggression and is therefore equally in need of the redemption that only Zionism can bring. I would rather return to this climactic point a bit later. For now, all I am trying to say—by way of introduction alone—is that Salome’s brand of Zionism strikes me as unique because of the limitlessness of its hopes for humanity. She is determined to include the widest imaginable range of human evils in the pot of political problems that Zionism is destined to address and ultimately solve.

The fundamental delusion that Salome wants Zionism to dispel is the belief that human conflict is unavoidable. Although her portrayal of sibling rivalry (and of the resentments that inevitably ensue between parents and children) might invite a psychological analysis of human conflict as inherently animal in nature, she is adamantly opposed to that kind of thinking. She insists that she is not a psychologist and rejects the notion that the problem of conflict should be dealt with in psychological terms. If the problem were psychological, it might be too ingrained in human nature ever to solve. But conflict is, for her, a philosophical problem, since conflict seems to her a human construction. The problem remains intractable because of a paradox she identifies in the relationship between what

she calls “unity” and what she calls “individuation.” This paradox *seems* to extend all the way from the most formative personal experiences of childhood to the most sophisticated macropolitical constructs. But this seeming extension, she claims, is an illusion. The problem is not human nature but, much more specifically, the nation-state, which is a cultural and intellectual development that does not exist everywhere and always. Wars inevitably ensue from the nature of states and the alliances formed between them. Every treaty signed is only ever a prelude to a war that two or more partners will now fight together against someone else. This idea is familiar to us from Hegel’s critique of Kant. Hegel pointed out that any state, once it is formed, becomes a new individual and, as such, is invariably implicated in the negation of other individual states. By way of extension, an alliance that involves a number of states joining together must likewise generate an individuality of its own. Thus, the alliance now generates opposition and creates an enemy. The larger alliances get, the more devastatingly destructive the wars that invariably follow will become.

Hegel famously accepted this state of world affairs, but Salome did not. She knew its ironies too intimately, as one of its victims. After the Holocaust, many Jews became Zionists in the hope that Zionism would put an end to the victimization of powerless Jews. It was for this purpose that *Jews* needed a state. Salome hoped that Zionism—as an expression of Jewish messianism—would have the capacity to redeem humanity from the endless cycle of alliance and conflict of which Jews had been perennial victims. And for *this* purpose, the *world* needed a *Jewish* state.

Salome does imagine, in her first notebook, how sibling rivalry could escalate as far as world war. But she does so with an ironic twist that calls into question whether there is actually any such connection. Though her writing is a bit ambivalent on this point, it seems to me that her way of thinking does not over all implicate the animal nature of humanity in the etiology of war. Infant violence is inarticulate, unarticulated; like the aggression of other carnivorous predators, it defies our comprehension and moral judgment. On the other hand, civilization is articulate, cognizant, and self-conscious. Salome faults civilization for feeling inappropriately threatened by infant violence and consequently overreacting to it. In other words, the problem she describes in her opening sentence (“Anyone who has watched children at play knows that war is inevitably a part of the human condition”) is with the people who watch children at play and not with the children themselves. The result of this misunderstanding of children is tragically ironic: the attempt at “civilizing” children is responsible for the metamorphosis of harmless infant behavior into a macropolitical monster. War is actually perpetuated by the social mechanisms that seek to control and prevent it.

In Salome’s portrayal of human conflict, ethical distinctions seem to fade away. Good and evil are much of a muchness when both are involved in perpetu-

ating the enmity that rages between them. The normally crucial distinctions between them seem trivial in the context of societies destroying each other in wars. Consider the daring of this argument. How is it possible that the distinction between the kind of good and evil that Salome observed during World War II was a matter of such indifference to her? How could she have been so accepting of the world the way it is? For a Jew living in Europe during the darkest days of their history, how was this plausible? It strikes me that Salome's acceptance is, perhaps, only a stand-in or a marker for her radical rejection of "civilization." After losing her childhood home, she could not come to terms with a substitute. Paris and London both failed to engage her emotionally. She came to experience Western civilization as an implicit rejection of God. In her messianic effort to look at the world from God's point of view, pithy distinctions between good and evil faded against the backdrop of a greater drama, in which everyone involved is implicated in acts of mass destruction. It seemed clear to her that valor and madness, self-sacrifice and self-aggrandizement, compassion and cruelty could be found on each side of any war. Her view was that, in combat, opposed sides are ultimately complicit partners.

What I am suggesting is that Salome's Zionism was rooted in her profoundest sense of herself—as a refugee. In her notebooks, she understands the refugee as both an exile and a pilgrim. The refugee is thrown back on nature and so, like a child, is in contact with some part of God's raw design for creation. The refugee is in quest of a new home and feels incapable of being other than a stranger. As a refugee, exile, and pilgrim, Salome in her notebooks searches for a home fundamentally different from the home that cast her out. This same search was the tragic fate of many Jews of her generation, but Salome conceptualizes it as the collective spiritual experience of the whole Jewish people across history. The Jews were refugees from their homeland but also from God. They were outcasts from the politics of civilization—any civilization—and as such lived a unique sort of existence. They could not be implicated in the crimes of any civilization by anything other than their own victimhood. According to Salome, it was this element of the Jewish experience that Hitler found insufferable. Persecuting them was his best strategy for dragging them, against their will, into the violent politics of civilization.

Salome wanted out of that civilization altogether. Yet her Zionism was unusually uninterested in negating the conditions of exile. In her view, Zionism needed to institutionalize the conditions of exile and pilgrimage in its political culture. It is the experience of the exile, the refugee, and the pilgrim that Salome imagines could enable the Jews to establish a state with redemptive powers. The Jewish state was to be a corrective to the flaws of Western civilization, as well as an escape from them.

When considering Zionism in this context, it becomes clear why, in the first six sections of her first notebook, Salome offers a portrayal of the most fundamental conditions of a child's initiation into civilization. She discusses three central themes: birth, feeding, and language acquisition. After feeding and language have been improperly taught to the young children of a society, no effort to avoid the violence that civilization breeds will succeed; such efforts are not only hopeless but perilous as well. Salome's emphasis on early childhood experiences may seem at first like that of Freudian analysts. But, bearing in mind her remonstration "I am not a psychologist," I think that her own analysis is something quite different. I am wary of any stereotype when talking about Salome, but her description of early childhood and motherhood strikes me as foundational for a distinctly feminist or at least feminine political theory. Salome's portrayal of early childhood is not designed in any way to found a collective developmental psychology. She writes about infancy in order to criticize the way that the process of becoming civilized politicizes even the most private and intimate moments of life. Again, Salome's perspective here is that of a refugee. In this case, she is a refugee from motherhood. Having no children of her own, motherhood is something she looks at from the outside. She is a refugee not only from politics in the usual sense but also from the politics of family. It is her status as an outsider that gives her a unique perspective on both and an ability to connect them.

Salome's discussion of birth is essentially a feminist political critique of "civilized" early childhood. She maintains, somewhat surprisingly, that the experience of birth entails inevitable acts of political violence. As mother and infant engage in an act of separation, they implicate each other in one another's struggles for individuation. The mother bequeaths a historical identity to a child that he or she cannot choose or reject, since it defies the actual boundaries of his or her experience in the world. Similarly, the mother bequeaths to the child the curse—the realization of any child's greatest fear—of one day being orphaned. Since no mother wishes to die before her child, every mother ultimately wishes on her child the crisis of parental abandonment. The child cannot but emerge from the mother; the mother cannot but eject the child. They cannot resolve the desire to be separate with the desire to be together, and so they are complicit partners in a politically violent relationship.

After this political portrayal of birth, Salome moves on to find the same dynamic in infant feeding. While nothing is more intuitive and instinctive than breast-feeding, Salome's representation of it is full of impasses and negotiations. In her depiction, the mother and child are embroiled in an impossibly paradoxical process, in which neither one can resolve the questions of identity that arise. Each must hurt and drain the resources of the other if the process is to successfully ensure their shared survival. Again, this delicate situation (as perhaps mothers

today dare to confess) is politically violent. The effect of this analysis is striking precisely because Salome avoids politicizing the act of suckling purely in terms of shared resources and their correct distribution. Her political concern is with the impossibility of the alliances that must be formed for the mother and the child to accept their respective roles in an intimate political nexus.

The outward-reaching spiral that begins with birth and feeding moves on, next, to the acquisition of language. This centrifugal movement outward—away from the birth of the individual, through language acquisition, to the mechanisms of social life and of the state—appears to Salome to be a flawed attempt to escape the dangers of [MAKE AIR QUOTES] the “individuation/unity paradox.” This movement or diffusion is cynically designed to create distance between struggling parties and thus defer outbreaks of violence. But the ploy of sublimation is impotent. The core of civilization’s most formative experiences is rotten; hence, the effort to avoid it is hopeless. In her view, humans misconstrue even the most basic and intimate mechanisms of survival—and this failure, in her words, “is enough to make God weep.”

In this cynical portrayal of early childhood, Salome shows how deeply the mechanisms of civilization have poisoned our hopes for a natural human life. By portraying suckling in terms of the “individuation/unity paradox,” she exposes the roots of a political crisis in which life itself—the reproduction of offspring—poses a fundamental threat to civilization. In order to delay its face-to-face encounter with its own self-destructiveness, civilization seeks to generate ever-expanding concentric social circles that sublimate violence and disperse it in ever more diffuse political constructs. One might account in this way for the emergence of the family, the tribe, the nation, and the empire. But Salome focuses her analysis on things belonging to the intimate, feminine range of experience. She seems to do so in order to blame mothers for not breaking free of the yoke imposed upon them by male constructs that conceal from them what motherhood really is. It is the complicit acquiescence of mothers in these constructs that perpetuates civilization’s grip on such intimate matters as childbearing, lactation, and the acquisition of language. Short of divine intervention, nothing can be salvaged once maternal acquiescence is secured. It is here too that Salome locates the cause of Jerusalem’s destruction and the dispersal of the Jewish people. The Temple stood on the shaky surface of a male civilization rotten to the core. Exile and eternal pilgrimage have been the conditions of Jewish life because of this mistake—and the lesson that we draw from this history is now the key to our national redemption.

Before I get too far ahead of myself in unfolding her arguments, it is important at this point to say something about how Salome deals with language. She dedicates sections 5 and 6 of her first notebook to this topic, and her discussion

of it takes her straight up and into her discussion of World War II. She begins section 5 with the statement that “we seek escape from our violence into our words. *Compassion, civility, brotherhood, compromise*. Yet never is a word uttered that does not violate a silence kept in peace.” As she does with tribes, families, cities, religions, states, alliances, and the other structures of civilized society that she examines, Salome represents language as a flawed mechanism for avoiding violence. This is a motif that is easily understood. The ludicrous idea that “sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me” is impressed upon all of us from an early age. We are trained to believe that the civilized way to resolve a dispute is to talk it through. But then again, we all remember the playground insult that stings for much longer than injuries inflicted by any stick or stone. Alas, words too are saturated with violence.

In her discussion of language, Salome expresses ideas that today are quite familiar. The points that she makes about the violent structures inherent in language were after her time in Paris much in vogue with poststructuralists, whose political anarchism rested on a rigorous exposé of concealed linguistic aggression. Language was said to obscure and manipulate more than it reveals about the world [MAKE AIR QUOTES] “out there.” However, unlike most of the poststructuralists (and of the postcolonialists who succeeded them), Salome had in mind a constructive alternative to anarchism. Her alternative, in the notebooks, is a form of Jewish mysticism. The political manipulation of language seems to her an affront to God—to a purposely obscured God yearning to be known, spoken of, and spoken to. She arrives at religion as if freshly fallen off the edge of a radically secular philosophy of language. Where she lands is in a soft bed of quietist theism, far from any sort of political commitment.

On the other hand, as I have indicated, Salome’s analysis of language acquisition begins with her politicizing the intimate relations between parents and children. The acquisition of language is both a power struggle and a battle for survival. I can say as a parent and grandparent that it is true, as Salome writes, that we tend to delight in the little mistakes our children make when they learn to speak. [LOOK AROUND AT THE CHILDREN AND GRANDCHILDREN.] Doing so ultimately protects them from us as we begin to interact with them, from a social distance, as “others.” The struggle for individuality is yet again ironized here, and the irony is compounded by the inevitability of belonging. The hope that one might *peak* one’s own individuality is undercut by desire for the recognition and comprehension of others. For a language to function as an effective means of communication, it must be recognizable to others and is therefore always recycled. This analysis, which reminds me of Wittgenstein’s famous argument against private language, is again connected by Salome to the inevitability of violence and conflict in all and any organized, civilized human

interaction. It is no surprise, when one reaches this stage of her argument, to find her claiming that language is a concealed weapon and that all hope of social interaction protecting us from violence is therefore naive or deluded.

But Salome's most significant critique of the use that civilization makes of language is found in her treatment of philosophy. The philosopher's project is, in her view, "embarrassing." Philosophers use language as if it enables them to address posterity and transcend the society of their place and time. This shameless gambit conceals the philosopher's true desire, which is to win the esteem of his or her contemporaries. By denying the ways in which language inevitably functions as a means of communication with coevals, the philosopher denies its (and his or her own) violence. The philosopher, in her depiction, is a haughty adolescent and may stand here for a whole society that believes it has developed, evolved, and matured. But a society in denial of its aggression is more dangerous than any of its tribal predecessors, just as adolescents are more dangerous than young children. A destructive power never dreamed of in the past is now wielded by an older but still immature subject whose capabilities have far outgrown its capacity for responsible behavior.

This portrait of the philosopher reminds me of a point that A. J. Heschel makes in the opening lines of his book on the prophets. He mocks the sublime grandeur of the philosophical perspective and its supposedly levelheaded approach to moral judgment. In contrasting the philosopher and the prophet, Heschel characterizes the former as one who seeks arrogantly and absurdly to be God and to exit the everyday world, while the latter with humility brings to the world the knowledge that God is listening and watching. The prophet, whose loyalty is above all to God, is outraged by a civilized world that leaves orphans and widows to fend for themselves. But Heschel's prophet is moreover appalled by a system of justice prepared to demand that individuals pay intolerably high prices for the common good. Such a system, as Heschel's prophet sees it, is indifferent to God. Belief in God from within such a system has no true religious meaning, since the system itself obscures the divine perspective, which is never limited by the practicalities of politics and the economics of resources.

Salome writes that we must look outside the confines of our delusional horizons to find maturity and peace. Once again, I am reminded of Heschel and his wonderful idea that the prophet speaks an "octave too high" for society to hear. It is from outside the megastructures of civilization that religion offers solutions to political problems and to the problem of politics. Make no mistake—religion too can be implicated in conflict and war when it too is a mere trapping of civilized human life. A religious identity is often a partisan identity, which as such participates in the paradox of individuation and unity that brings so much meaningless enmity in its wake. But breaking out requires no less than a politics based on empathy with God, whose place in the world has been demolished and

whose spirit has been sent into exile. It takes a refugee who has lost everything to conceive the hope of a prophetic politics.

Salome herself turns to prophetic language when, in a midrash on the battle of Gog and Magog, she introduces a startling image of how the world looks from a prophetic refugee's perspective. Here she expresses her deepest fear for Zionism: that the entry of the Jewish people into the politics of conventional civilization will ultimately give Hitler a "posthumous victory." I am making ironic use here of Fackenheim's 614th commandment ("Thou shalt not give Hitler a posthumous victory") because Salome, unlike Emil Fackenheim, is not thinking about the survival of the Jewish people. Hitler's posthumous victory has, for her, nothing to do with the threat of either assimilation or anti-Semitism. On the contrary, she wants desperately to prevent the rhetoric of survival from taking over the discussion. She presents Zionists with an ethical imperative of her own making: "Thou shalt not build a war-making state in the Holy Land." It is the Jews founding a state of such a kind that would give Hitler his victory. She insists that the Jewish people never join in the perverted carnival of destruction that Hitler both parodied and intensified.

Salome makes, at this juncture, a haunting suggestion: that the victor in the war with Hitler was undecided as of 1945. She regards the peace that followed the German surrender as counterfeit. Hitler duped the Allies into crediting two delusions: first, that evil can be defeated with violence, and second, that enmity directed at an evil opponent is morally sound. In Salome's midrash, Gog—who represents Nazism—appears to Magog to be lying dead and defeated. But actually Gog lies in waiting to strike back. Magog toasts his apparent triumph over Gog and then collapses in an idiotically arrogant drunken stupor. Like a gambler in a casino hugging his winnings and betting them all on the next hand, Magog has been fooled into thinking that wars can be fought to end warfare and that good people can bring peace by killing bad people. Meanwhile, by playing dead, Gog has become Magog's master. In other words, the so-called victors and survivors of the war are all Hitler's accomplices in the cynical travesty of European civilization that Nazism so consummately was. Defining their identity and their sense of purpose as the negation of Nazism, the victorious Allies and the Jewish people are no freer of Hitler than an obsessive atheist is free of God.

It is hard not to be troubled by this analysis and by the conclusion that Salome draws from it. At first glance, she seems to disallow the way in which many Jews today express their deepest sense of communal Jewish purpose. But I have to confess that I also find her midrash liberating. We are so accustomed to believing that the war had a happy ending and that the good side won that we have lost sight of deeper prices that are still being paid for victory. It hurts me to admit how many times I have criticized the survivors who chose to make their lives outside of Israel or to move away from institutionalized Jewish life. Macabre

as it may sound, we are so blinded by our self-confident triumphalism that we cannot imagine what it must feel like for those who lost everything in the war to watch us celebrate its happy outcomes. So what if Hitler was killed, Berlin leveled and divided? It all happened too late. Admittedly, we mourn the prices paid . . . but deep down we still celebrate the fact that the war was won—and, for that matter, that the State of Israel was established as a result. I am no different from anyone else, which is why reading this section of Salome’s first notebook was—I admit—such a shock for me. Can you imagine what it feels like to read a notebook composed over sixty years ago by a woman you loved and adored as a mother and to discover that what she has to say is that you have been duped? It hit me hard. I said to myself [PAUSE], *Oh my God . . . I am Magog!* [PAUSE AGAIN AND LOOK UP.] *What a fool I have been!*

Salome was a young, desolate, and homeless woman who had lost everything. She could see no comfort or consolation on the horizon. She announces in her notebook that the Allies were defeated, and all of a sudden . . . *I saw it.* I asked you here because I believe that this message is of deep importance for us today. Salome warns us how hopeless the search for triumph (in war or in any negotiation) must be. She goes so far as to suggest that we must look to the Arabs for guidance. Hers, I should say right away, was not the typical Zionist Arabism that many in her generation espoused. She believed that the Arabs, who had lived in the land for so many centuries, must have had a God-given purpose to fulfill. They were free of the ailments that haunted Europe and could perhaps see the meaning of our history better than most Jews of European provenance. The Arabs were here to punish us if we sought victory rather than peace. They were here to disrupt our peace of mind if we strayed from the path of our destiny.

Is it possible to think in such terms of Palestinian terrorism and the two intifadas? Is there something the Palestinians are telling us about ourselves that we are too arrogantly drunk to see? Are we so convinced we have been redeemed that we can no longer hear the voice of the redeemer, calling to us from outside the scenery of history? Is there perhaps something that God is telling us through the war-riddled history of the last sixty years—something that we cannot or do not wish to hear? The question brings to mind the words of the prophet, “The ox knows its master, the donkey its manager, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand!”

Salome writes that the time may soon come when Jews will call each other Nazis. She sees how the agenda dictated by Nazism and bequeathed to Zionism could consume us from within. She understands that those who struggled to defeat Nazism might one day be confused for Nazis. Indeed, anti-Semites and anti-Zionists in the Islamicized Europe of today frequently hurl exactly that accusation at Jews and the Jewish state. The internal discourse of Israeli politics is not exempt from this rhetoric either. But the irony is ours, not Salome’s, to bear.

If we think through it bravely, we might well conclude that the militant survivalist agenda that dominates the Jewish world now does give a kind of posthumous victory to Hitler. Jewish militarism as a cultural ideal in any case undermines the deepest purpose that Zionism, in Salome's understanding of it, was supposed to fulfill. In her own time, Salome might have been considered hostile to the Zionist project. Perhaps today we might hear her voice differently.

The extent of Salome's messianic universality is, as I said at the beginning of my remarks, astonishing. Her vision for a universal redemption accommodates even those unforgivable phenomena that Hannah Arendt judged to be "radically evil." Salome insists that refusing to enter into the arena of national conflict should be the Jewish answer to Hitler. But this answer presumes we have the capacity to dissolve all the conditions that occasion and sustain enmity. Salome knew it was an open question whether we had or could develop this capacity, but in her notebooks she is adamant that the soteriological success of the Jewish state depends on it. In her words, "if Magog can be saved—shocking as it is to contemplate—so can Gog. Magog, Gog, and God might all be reconciled. Indeed, that is the purpose of Zionism." By dismantling the structures of civilized militarism, Gog and Magog can be saved from each other. In the absence of those structures, evil and good are both in concert with their function in the divine creation. The purpose of Zionism is thus to necropsy the Western nation-state and develop a new messianic politics that can redeem the world entire.

Clearly, it was difficult for Salome to find words for what she had envisioned. It could not be represented in political or structural terms, because it was more a disposition than it was a position, a state of affairs more than a state. Her best attempts at describing what she saw are found in the second notebook, where she gives a feminist rendering of one of Isaiah's prophetic visions. All peoples are ingathered to Mount Moriah, where the wounds of history are maternally healed. In practical terms, Salome's Zionism demands a culture of coexistence that she understands as inherently connected to the Jewish experience of Diaspora. Her Zionism ingathers exiles and does not ask them to become something they are not. The Jewishness of the Jewish state is to be found in the great range of gentile cultures that the Jews have absorbed in exile. As a microcosm of the world, the Jewish state is to be a symbol of peace, because it is inhabited by people who have mastered the art of powerless coexistence. Anyone in the world can feel at home in Zion, and the role of those who make it their home is to provide warm hospitality for others.

Salome's prescription for Zionist politics prefigures (or, at least, reminds me of) Daniel Boyarin's description of rabbinic culture. Both reject the gender norms of those who regard the inwardness, passivity, diffidence, or quietism of Diaspora Jewish males as signs of cultural decadence. Both reject the imperialist "phallocentrism" of Western politics, in favor of a gentle, accommodating Jewish

culture of receptiveness, care, and service. Salome appears to think of Zionism in the mystical and messianic terms of “Lecha Dodi” and the Song of Songs, in which the masculinity of the divine honor reunites with the mother figure of the Shechinah. The returning exiles are likewise reunited with their homeland and, once there, stitch together in one complex fabric all the precious keepsakes they have brought home from the four corners of the world. After a Diaspora of such extent and duration, the returning Jews cannot imagine a Temple that would not be the central place of worship for all religions of all the continents on which they have dwelt. The Temple itself, in Salome’s vision, consists of Muslim and Christian shrines under a single roof with the Jewish people’s wall of weeping.

Salome passionately believed that a post-Western, nonnationalist, anti-liberal, and nonconfrontational kind of politics would be better suited both to the Jews in their globalized, postexilic diversity and to the theocratically inclined, understructured political culture of the Arab Middle East. Borders and sovereignty and imaginary constructions matter so much less here than do real people, whose variety should never be subjected to narrow categorizations of identity. The society that Salome favored would neither accumulate nor attempt to sublimate reserves of power and force that summon rigid symbolic enmities into existence. Putting distance between identity and politics could enable the close coexistence even of communities alienated from one another. Something very traditional about Judaism blends into the prevailing culture of the precolonial Middle East. In a time when sovereignty and old forms of statehood have come to seem inadequate, the world perhaps needs us Jews to ask ourselves if we have managed to build a state that has truly learned the lessons of Jewish history and faith. While the possible outcomes of such a process are not at all clear to me, the invitation that Salome’s work extends is nothing short of thrilling.

[PAUSE; LOOK AT WATCH.] I am watching the time go by and getting a bit self-conscious about not tiring you all out. Thank you so much again for being here and for listening patiently to all I have said so far about Salome Leon. For now, I think I have spoken enough about her notebooks. I hope that what I have related has been enough to encourage you to look at the printed texts I have prepared for you to take home and read in your own time. What I still want to say [HOLD UP REMAINING PAGES] is something that connects to a perhaps personal need to think of Salome as a recognizable, not to say a “loyal,” member of the *medurat-hashevet*—the tribe sitting around the campfire. Up to this point, I have presented Salome’s position as significantly different from that of your run-of-the-mill, garden-variety Zionist thinker. And while I do believe this is so, what I want to say now is going to flow a bit in the opposite direction. Like a plane coming in to land (a metaphor meant to reassure you that I eventually will finish up [SMILE]), I want to put the engine into reverse briefly before allowing you to disembark. By pointing now to what we may find familiar in Salome’s writ-

ing, I hope I may enable you to take her ideas with the seriousness they deserve. The admissibility of her writing into the discourse of Zionism, I must assume, depends on it.

Let me, then, begin again—this time, with a few comments on Salome’s attitude toward nationalism and especially toward collective Jewish identity. It is true that her nonessentialist approach to nationalism was unusual among the Zionists of her day, but it was not entirely unique and certainly not without Jewish precedent. Indeed, it has biblical precedents, in accounts of crucial figures in Jewish history whose origins were not fully kosher, including Abraham (son of Terah the Chaldean), King Hezekiah (son of Ahaz the idolater), King Josiah (son of Amon, another idolater), Mordechai (descended from Shim’i, a traitor to King David), and David himself (descended from Ruth the Moabitess). Midrashim expound upon this theme, which is also consistent with the Jewish understanding of conversion, which allows people born outside the faith to embrace not only the religion but also the specifically national component of the Jewish collective.

Interestingly, Freud played with this theme when he suggested that Moses was actually an Egyptian. While *Moses and Monotheism* occasioned outrage among the Jews of Freud’s day, it was one of the more Jewish books in his oeuvre. Freud’s thesis has been rearticulated by an Israeli Bible scholar who argues that the origins and “genetic code” of the Jewish people are to be found in the “Jewishness” of eclecticism as a national trait. According to Israel Knohl, the practice of Judaizing the beliefs and practices of the pagan ancient Near East is more characteristically Jewish than any supposedly essentialist quality attributed in the Bible to the Jewish people. The father of the Jewish nation, Abraham, in the account of his life in Genesis, is noticeably a Judaizer of local customs and an evangelizer of local peoples. One might even say, along the lines Freud suggests, that Moses was quintessentially Jewish for absconding with Egyptian monotheism.

I think it is interesting that an Israeli scholar whose Jewish identity is nothing like Freud’s should make such an argument about the Bible, and I think that the significance of articulating such a claim at a time of national conflict with an eclectic Palestinian people struggling to determine its national identity should not be overlooked. I hope very much that I can clarify the meaning of Knohl’s gesture without in any way implying that for him ideology comes before scholarly integrity. All the same, it is significant that such a claim about the Bible is published at a time when the essentialist narrative of Zionism about Jewish national identity is so notably in decline. Non-Jewish immigrants from the post-Soviet republics and Ethiopia are filling the borders of the State of Israel under the aegis of the Law of Return, and for the first time ever the rabbinic leadership, in association with the Israeli army, is beginning to talk of encouraging conversion as a national priority. Knohl’s work, I think he might agree, aspires to establish *more* than the simple truth about the Bible. He might agree to my suggestion that his

scholarship, in addition to being rigorous, may *in addition* be helpful in challenging the kind of nationalism that questions whether Israel is Jewish enough and thereby makes the conflict with the Palestinians ever less resolvable.

My point is that Salome's nonessentialist Jewish nationalism rings true with much of the Jewish tradition, and its renaissance today is part of an important effort to resolve the rigid conflicts of values between Israel's Jewishness and its democracy. There are many people in Israel now who feel that Jewish particularism should not police any boundary between the Jewish people and the rest of the world. They perhaps echo a sentiment now taking hold in parts of Europe as Brussels Eurocrats seek to dilute national identities in an effort to strengthen the European Union. Many Israeli Jews who wish their country would emulate this brand of universalism cannot quite bring themselves to accept any rationale for the state's constitutional prescription of Jewishness. Most of these Israelis are committed to an understanding of liberal democracy that conflicts with their desire to be Jews in a Jewish state. An answer to this quandary might be found in the nonessentialist nationalism that Salome's version of Zionism offers. But this version should not be confused with liberal Zionism. Salome's is a *Jewish particularism* that emphasizes the Jewish people's universal purpose as expressed by the prophets and as embraced and developed in the rabbinic tradition.

Salome's association of Zionism with the attainment of world peace is not uniquely hers either. While the idea was never dominant in the Zionist movement, it *was there*. Among its exponents, Buber is probably the outstanding figure. In an essay on the national spirit of the Jewish people, Buber reads a famous midrash in the context of Hegelian nationalism. The midrash describes how each of the world's seventy nations is given an angel or a prince to lead it. All of these princes (and hence the nations that they lead) understand their purpose as engaging in war with the others. "Some would say," Buber observes, that the Jews too have a prince—and I think that, when he writes "some would say," the reference is not only to rabbinic interpreters of old who disagreed with the majority view, but also to Zionist leaders who in Buber's time were espousing Jewish militarism. According to Buber, who was in agreement with the prevailing opinion in the midrash, the Jews rejected the dominion of a prince and chose to answer to no one but God himself. Because God cares for the well-being of all humanity, the spirit of the Jewish nation recoils from war and pursues only peace. Thus, Buber contradicted the mainstream political narrative of his time, which placed national interests above human interests.

Of more immediate significance, Buber's view is at odds with the prevailing Zionist agenda of our day, which enshrines the preservation of Jewish national identity and security as the highest Jewish value. It is for this reason that Buber has become a hero of the Israeli radical Left, whose agenda is the promotion of human rights over Jewish particularism. It strikes me as a shame to so confuse

the issue when it is clear that Buber's particularism was firm. He simply followed the prophets in maintaining that an authentic Jewish particularism must also have its universal dimension. In the context of his time, between the world wars, Buber wanted the Jewish people to fulfill its prophetic purpose and proclaim the God of Israel as the God of the universe entire. One might also draw comparisons with Spinoza, to bring another Jew thinking along these lines into the conversation. But the principal point to make, vis-à-vis Buber, is that he should not be misunderstood as saying that peace with the Arabs was no more than a condition of moral rectitude for Jewish settlement in Palestine. In tandem with this argument, he was making the case that achieving world peace is the ultimate purpose of the Jewish people and that Zionism is the Jewish people's greatest opportunity to do so.

The association of world peace with monotheism is a traditional Jewish idea that can be traced back to the prophet Isaiah. In his famous vision of the wolf lying down with the lamb in chapter 11, Isaiah insists that peaceful coexistence both comes from and deepens the human recognition of divine unity. In his explication of this prophecy, the great kabbalist Rabbi Yehuda Ashlag, who immigrated to the Land of Israel from Poland in the 1930s and is most famous as author of the "Ladder" commentary on the Zohar, sets out to demonstrate, in what he calls "rational" and "empirical" terms, that opposed forces coexist peacefully in God himself. Ashlag maintains that any rational person can and should notice the contradictions in nature, which is the creation of God, and come, through this observation, to understand the mystery of divine unity. The role of the Jewish people in the history of the world is to bring the gentile nations to this understanding. Following Isaiah, Ashlag regards knowledge of God's oneness as the precondition for peace, and peace as the prerequisite for reentry of the Jewish people into world affairs. In the climactic conclusion to his essay, Ashlag writes:

And now you will see the truth in the words of the prophet: "The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid" (Isaiah 11:6). And he reasons that "the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea" (Isaiah 11:9). Thus, we see that the prophet conditions peace in the whole world on the filling of the whole world with the knowledge of God, just as we have said that the tough, egoistic resistance between people, and the deterioration in international relationships, will not cease from the world as a result of any human counsel, under any conditions. . . . And so they [the rabbis of the Talmud] said: "God did not find a vessel to hold the blessing," meaning that thus far Israel has not had a vessel to hold the blessing of the fathers. Thus, the [divine] oath that we will inherit the land for all eternity has not yet been fulfilled, because world peace is the sole vessel that enables us to receive the blessing of the fathers, as it says in the prophecy of Isaiah.

Ashlag's final comment is reminiscent of the central theme in *Vayoel Moshe*, the well-known anti-Zionist polemic of the Satmar Rebbe Yoel Teitelbaum. He argues vehemently that the Jewish people may not reenter politics until the messianic era, since to do so would be in violation of three oaths mentioned in the Talmud in *Ketubot*. Ashlag, however, seems to be connecting both the oaths and the messianic era with the politics of world peace. His own reticent support of Zionism might thus be explained as an expression of his fear that the restoration of national life and government to the Jewish people would mean the entry of the Jews into the agonistic competition among nation-states. To do so would violate the sacred commitment of the Jewish people to predicate their national life on a vision of world peace.

This same idea, so central to Salome's albeit more enthusiastic Zionism, was expressed with quite remarkable clarity by Rabbi Aharon Samuel Tamaret, who was born near Grodno in 1869. With your permission, I would like now to read aloud almost in full a lengthy passage by Erich Fromm about Tamaret:

The writings of Rabbi Aaron Samuel Tamaret constitute an extraordinary document. They apply the principles of prophetic Judaism to the scene of contemporary politics. This is extraordinary in the literal sense of the word. Much as the Jewish religious tradition has been cultivated and carried on by pious Jews and learned rabbis in the last two thousand years, it has kept itself apart from world politics and from the application of the religious principles to the secular world. . . . There were many outstanding Jews in the last one hundred and fifty years, like Marx, Einstein and others, who believed in and expressed the ideas of humanism but outside of the flow of Jewish tradition. Eventually there are the Zionists and the leaders of Israel who certainly have turned to contemporary politics—but, in spite of quoting the prophets frequently, not in the spirit of Jewish religious tradition. When, with the beginning of their political emancipation, the path was open to the world outside the Jewish enclave, many who espoused the causes of internationalism and peace had left the religious Jewish tradition and joined the world outside the gates. . . . Rabbi Tamaret does not try to square the circle. He is a devoted religious Jew and he represents the Jewish tradition without compromises. Indeed, the prophets were not defending any establishment. In many utterances (although there are contradictions) they turn against nationalism, and toward peace and the inherent unity of the human race. Rabbi Tamaret's criticism of nationalism is written in the spirit of that tradition which has *God forbid* the angels to sing psalms of jubilation when the Egyptians were drowned—for the Egyptians were God's creatures. . . . What is remarkable about Rabbi Tamaret's writings is that he continues the prophetic tradition in which politics cannot be separated from religious values. . . . In a time when politics has become completely secularized and separated from the values which characterize Jewish religious thought, Rabbi Tamaret's writ-

ings are of great significance; they should give new strength to all who fight against idols, especially the idols of nationalism and war.

Is that not astounding? [LOOK UP.] I doubt very much that Salome and Tamaret would have seen eye to eye on everything, but on the topics of peace and Zionism they would have found a good deal in common. I confess that my emphasis, earlier, on Salome's distinction between psychological and political-philosophical approaches to the understanding of violence was heavily influenced by one of Tamaret's most remarkable sermons, delivered in 1906 and published six years later under the title "Liberty." Forgive me for reading more of Tamaret aloud to you, but this is important stuff:

Man's improper acts flow from two sources. Some come from the material aspect of man, his body, and some from that other aspect of man, his mind. . . . The violence due to the body are those natural acts of murder which are plainly performed, with no rationalizations or justifications. . . . The prototype of such murders is the episode involving natural primordial man, Cain and Abel. . . . But these acts of violence flowing from the perverted intellect do claim justification and are accompanied by excuses. . . . The plain acts of violence stemming from the body alone, without intellectual justifications, are deeply planted in the nature of man. . . . But those acts of violence abetted by the intelligence, that is, by deception and deceit, do not have their roots in the nature of man. . . . The violence wrought by the lying mind is . . . more constant, more widespread, and more destructive than that due to the natural instincts of man. . . . This fraudulent evil, this evil justified by the mind—political evil—has become the greatest destroyer on the face of the earth. It is the source of the worst catastrophes which have befallen men since the beginning of the "improvement" of the intellect. For what have we seen? A steady diminution of private, natural crimes of individual violence, but an enormous increase in fraudulent murders: for hypocrisy has united whole nations and entire societies in the pursuit of weaker ones. This is the secret of all the wars . . . and this it is which permits entire nations to band together publicly in organized assaults upon the weaker nations.

Salome Leon should have met this guy! That could have been one hell of a *shid-duch!* [PAUSE AND SMILE BEFORE CONTINUING.]

Looking at Ashlag and Tamaret, and perhaps also at the writings of Rav Kook, one is left with the sense that the Jewish idea of peace constitutes a surprisingly complete alternative to the modern political project that seeks to establish order, hierarchy, and agreement through the secularization of government and the politicization of violence. In the Jewish alternative, political, legal, and taxonomic disorder is enabled and celebrated. For in the midst of confusion, muddle, and disorientation, venomous snakes and lions may find themselves lying down

with lambs and kids. In some way, at some level, each species, once thoroughly disoriented, might come to know, as Balaam's ass apparently knew, that they are creatures of a singular personality—God—and not of natural laws that are immutable, inexorable, and impersonal.

Among the Zionists, there were some exponents of such ideas, for instance, members of the Brit Shalom circle, like Ernst (aka Akiva) Simon. Considering Buber and Simon in the context of Ashlag and Tamaret is a worthwhile exercise, inviting us to reconsider (in the light of Israeli politics) where the lines should be drawn between the Zionist movement and its critics. But, more interesting still, I think that the value of Salome's notebooks emerges against this backdrop most clearly. The notebooks stand out for their capacity to bridge the gap between an authentically Jewish brand of nonessentialist, messianic, peaceful, diasporic nationalism and a positive attitude toward Zionist state-building . . . which brings me to my next and, [MUMBLE, AS IF IMPROVISING] you will be pleased to hear, *penultimate* point. [LOOK UP, SMILE, CHECK THEY ARE STILL WITH YOU.] I want to say a few words about Salome's vision of the ingathering of exiles in the context of the mainstream Zionist insistence on undoing every effect and aspect of the Jewish Diaspora.

The Brit Shalom circle was a group that, because it did not press for immediate dismantling of the Diaspora, has usually been associated with the spirit of Ahad Ha'am. It seems to me that this association is imprecise. Ahad Ha'am did not think that it was prudent to condition the success of Zionism—a project intended to alleviate the suffering and reverse the cultural depletion of the Jewish people—on so ambitious an aim as the total resettlement of the world's Jews in the land of Israel. He thereby positioned himself as a more realistic alternative to Theodore Herzl. Among intellectuals associated with Brit Shalom, however, the attitude to the Diaspora was philosophically different. Especially in some early essays that Gershom Scholem wrote in defense of Brit Shalom's support for a binational state, we again hear a voice that, although never dominant in the Zionist discourse, may remind us of something of importance in Salome's notebooks. She argues that the Zionists were misguided when they so vigorously rejected the forms of Jewish life that they associated with the Diaspora. Indeed, Zionists were often harsh to Holocaust survivors who arrived in the *yishuv* after the war, asking them, essentially, "Why didn't you fight back?" David Ben Gurion was famous for demanding that new immigrants shed the trappings of Diaspora on arrival. *Ivri, daber Ivrit* ("Hebrew, speak Hebrew"), he would say as he had the curls of their *pe'ot* snipped off and handed to them. The point so graphically made was that they could be Jewish in the Jewish state without any outward distinguishing marks. The Zionist movement cultivated a "new Jew" to replace the embarrassing Diaspora archetype. The new Jew was ideally a warrior-farmer, martially trained and rooted in the land, attached by fluency in Hebrew to its ancient culture,

physically strong, politically active, determined to grab hold of Jewish destiny and overcome every obstacle along the path to self-redemption.

Criticism of this agenda is common and widespread today. Attitudes among Zionists to religion, to the continuing Jewish Diaspora, and to survivors of the Holocaust have all changed very significantly. Only recently, A. B. Yeshoshua aroused much acrimony by proclaiming that only Israel—and not the Jewish religion—can ensure the survival of the Jewish people. The sensational reaction to an idea that is everywhere to be found in the foundational rhetoric of the Zionist movement is, in my view, a clear indication that the time has come for a fresh discussion of what Zionism is, what it stands for today, and what it promises the Jewish future. Here again, Salome's point of view is refreshing but not without precedent. She thought that the Jewish state needed to be a political scaffolding that allowed the people within to be seen. Their conflicts with outsiders conceal the Jews' internal variety. Exposure of their clear unity amid their deep cultural and historical differences would conduce to outsiders' wonderment, then perhaps esteem, and ultimately, even emulation in pursuit of a world at peace. The Jewish state, Salome argues, must therefore ingather the exiles without asking them to be anyone but who they are (and have long been, under foreign rule). She regarded the Jewish people as a microcosm of the entire world, by virtue of its global experience in the Diaspora. Each wave of immigration to the Jewish state would bring with it another piece of the world that needed uniting, though never blending, with the rest. She had no interest in the homogenization of Diaspora Jews, in all their colorful variety, into Israelis conforming to Zionist norms and contributing to a new state in competition with other states.

These ideas of Salome's share something with Rav Kook's notion that the gathering and reconciliation of the world's Jews in the Holy Land is the key to the reconciliation of all peoples throughout the world. This formulation, furthermore, shares something with Scholem's understanding of binationalism. I do not myself favor establishment of a binational state (to be honest, I neither reject nor support it, in the current political climate); nor do I mean to associate the idea with Rav Kook or with Salome Leon, whose political thinking is never formulaic or practical. But Scholem did defend the idea, based on his conviction that the Arab population in Palestine would protect Zionism from yielding to the temptations of enthusiastic messianism connected historically with the Sabbatian movement. Scholem's concept of redemption, in any case, involved the reconciliation or coexistence of opposites. Hence, on Scholem's model—as one of my friends has suggested [SMILE AT AMNON, IF HE SHOWS UP]—redemption can be complete only if it is incomplete, and can be Jewish only if it involves the participation of non-Jews. Scholem's model of redemption, I would say, is comparable to Salome's vision of all the peoples of the world coming together in Jerusalem to heal and be healed by the wounded mother, Shlomzion. Without

the participation of them all, and lacking any of the conflicts and partialities that each nation must experience in the process, no redemption for Shlomzion herself can be imagined.

Scholem also believed, as Salome did (and as Ahad Ha'am did as well, though in a manner perhaps less sublime and mystical) that Zionism should seek to preserve, rather than negate, the exilic consciousness and concrete forms of Diaspora Jewish life extant both inside the Jewish state and among the Jewish communities that remained outside it. Scholem's notion of redemption in exile and through exile establishes a dialectic between the Jews inside and outside of Israel like that between the Jewish state's Jewish and non-Jewish inhabitants. He actually went so far as to suggest that the true effects of Zionism are felt only in the Diaspora. Under these conditions, he argued, the Zionist movement must choose between the ambitious and often grandiose forms of politics found in the West and the more modest, fragmented structures of subimperial politics that typify the Middle East. Perhaps the choice he meant was that between statehood and the distinctively flavored political life of the *yishuv*. Scholem warned that making the wrong choice would implicate the Zionist movement in the sins of imperialism. When the voice of the oppressed is finally raised, he wrote, it would be directed against the very people who, through their long history of exile, were above all accustomed to think of themselves as perennial victims. The irony would be intolerable for them to bear and would lead them to make violent mistakes. Hence the alternative that he prescribed—for the State of Israel to think of its Jewishness in exilic terms and to ingather Diaspora Jews without negating their past. Or, in Salome's formulation: what makes Jews Jews is their knowledge of what it is to be scattered among the nations of the world. The point of Zionism, for her, was to bring together people who have had that unique experience, and who bear the consciousness and sensibilities that it has occasioned, into the one place on earth that, historically and in daily prayer, they have in common.

The choice between Western and Levantine politics that Scholem insists we must face brings me to my final point, which concerns the cultural identity of the Jewish state. The choice between West and East is not only a political one; it is cultural and has geographical implications as well. Few countries today face such a choice between continents. Are we European or Asian? Does our participation in the Eurovision Song Contest define us, or do we belong to the culture of those other countries on the globe that share our desert climate? Despite the international implications, the most dramatic outcome of the choice we face will be internal.

I find deeply disturbing the extent to which Israel's non-Ashkenazic Jews have suffered from the Western cultural orientation of the state. The racism inside the Jewish community of Israel—not to mention the attitudes of the Jews here toward Israel's non-Jewish populations—came to me as a shock when I first

encountered it. The problem is not about narghile, on the one hand, and gefilte fish, on the other. These attitudes penetrate to the deepest psychological levels at which a society formulates its notions of entitlement. Sephardic Jews are at last finding a language in which to bring the intolerable ironies home to Ashkenazim. Spokespersons for the Sephardic community have begun to compare the Zionist movement's negation of the Diaspora with its rejection of the Arab world. While most of the political leaders in Israel today who talk about making peace with the Palestinians tend to think of peace as a form of separation from the Arab cultural context, some Sephardic Jews are asking why separation is at all necessary. Their answer focuses on the incapacity of Jews from Western liberal countries to fully engage the hybridity of Israeli national identity.

As we stand here on the Mount of Olives, a security wall is going up, only a few miles away, that will further divide "us" from "them." The wall, when finished, will bear two metaphorical signs. On one side, it will say, "Terrorists stay out!"—and I believe there is a consensus in Israel today about that message. However, on the side of the wall, facing inward, the sign will read, "The West starts here!" Many people in Israel who would never dream of opposing the construction of a security fence feel alienated, quite rightly, by the message of this second sign. The people I am thinking of are advocates of a position once voiced by Kedem Mizracha—Brit Shalom's Sephardic partner. They have pointed out how the definition of peace as separation reflects distaste for the Levant more than it does any hope for coexistence in it. The desire to isolate the Jewish state from the nondemocratic . . . perhaps barbaric . . . culture of the Arab world is a negation both of the geocultural context in which the state must function and of the history of a large proportion of the Jews who live in it. Many Sephardic Jews, in the past, took up the stance of radical opposition to the Arab world, lest their Ashkenazic fellow-citizens associate them too closely with it. More recently, however, the heritage of Israel's Arab Jews has surfaced in political lobbies, halachic discourse, popular music, literature, theater, and films, all of which convey this message: Israel has a Middle Eastern legacy that is no less Jewish than its Western inheritance. Jews who have generations of experience with Jewish-Muslim coexistence—a coexistence that differed significantly from Western modes of toleration and democratic pluralism—are right to present their historical experience as an asset for all Israeli Jews who wish the Jewish state to fit in with neighboring Arab countries.

While this tendency often comes with a postcolonial critique of Zionism and is sometimes voiced even by Palestinian intellectuals, Salome's articulation of it invites us to think of it in distinctly Jewish messianic terms. "The only satisfactory answer to the Arab Question," she writes, "is an Arab Answer of 'yes' to our presence." In her special way of putting it, "No precedent learned from Europe or America will ever help us to meet the challenge of formulating the national

politics of a monotheist and humanist kingdom of priests. We must win first the confidence of those whom we will serve.”

Salome was, as I have indicated, a feminist as well as a Zionist. Following on a precedent set by the feminist movement in the last century, the Zionist movement should move on now from its first stage—a struggle, in the Western liberal-democratic mode, for independence and equality—to a second stage, in which it needs to dissociate itself from the West. Put back into Salome’s allegorical or midrashic terms, Zionism needs to separate its future from that of Magog and must cease to mimic his deficiencies and failures. What name should we give this latter stage of Zionism, as it turns away from Magog? I am pleased to suggest “Shlomzionism.” I like calling Ms. Leon, of blessed memory, by Shlomzion, her Hebrew name. Doing so allows me to draw attention away from her French name and its more disturbing connotations.

[LOOK UP AND SMILE AT THE GRAVE.]

Zionism as we know it is a flawed version of what it is supposed to be. The Arab-Israel conflict has, among other things, served as a means of focusing attention on the flaws and stimulating us to fix them. We need to go to the sources of Zionist aspiration to find how the process should have unfolded. There are signs pointing in every direction. We need to follow the ones that lead toward peace, since they will be the ones that allow Zionism to fulfill its true purpose. Instead of following those signs, the Zionist leadership chose to establish the Jewish state in any way possible. And thus they embarked upon a great conflict that has yet to be resolved.

Within twenty years of the First Zionist Congress, World War I demonstrated the destructive potential of the national idea. Having resolved next to nothing, the first war was followed by a second of even more unimaginable savagery. Finding a way beyond nationalism was the clear task of a movement aiming to save the Jewish people from catastrophe. Instead, the Zionist movement chose to build a modern, Western-style nation-state and reproduce all of its flaws. The result is that, uninterruptedly since 1948, the State of Israel has been the hinge of world conflict. But, by the same token, Israel has become a global center point and fulcrum. Tending toward either side of the central point could bring destruction to the world. The center must be held. On either side of it are opposites, opposed forces, that must be kept in balance and also in direct relation. From this place, which medieval European maps identify as the exact center of the earth, peace may go forward if the balance can be maintained.

What, precisely, needs to be kept in balance? Salome believed that she lived in a time in which the Jewish people could finally reveal the secret that Peace is among the names of its God, the one God. Like all names, Shalom is a covering, though reality is revealed only in the coverings that we see and in the names

that we hear. The ark of God contained nothing but stone, or words cut in stone. But God said that it was in “the cloud upon the ark-cover,” the *kaporet*, that he would “appear.” What is the difference, then, between the reality and the name that covers it, between truth and representation? What is the difference between God himself and the many names by which those who live at the hinge of world conflict know him? At the hinge, all these must be kept in balance while also in direct, intense, and honest relation.

If Shalom were proclaimed as a name of God from the rooftops, would peace indeed follow? If we lived with his presence *as* peace in the Holy Land, would there *be* peace? Even if it were so, how would the suggestion be received by political strategists in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Washington, Turtle Bay, and Brussels? Nothing could seem less sane and practical as a solution to the Arab-Israel conflict. Salome Leon’s proposal was that we should begin building our very own Jewish state by rebuilding the Temple on Mount Moriah. Is there not in Salome’s vision an idea that we might make practical use of today? I read Salome’s notebooks and can almost hear her saying that we are wrong, in our strategy for negotiations, to leave the disposition of Temple Mount until last—that we are wrong to assume that it is the most intractable problem of our conflict and that we dare not approach it until all other matters have been resolved. Salome offers us a political philosophy and even an architectural blueprint for a unique form of sovereignty and coexistence that could obtain on Temple Mount. Technological developments since her time have rendered easy to realize an idea that she must have thought of as a fantasy:

Can a temple be a tent of glass? She glows and glistens, blowing cool wind and warmth through her lungs, breathing a song that no one hears. The sun glints on her walls, as words of Isaiah engraved in the thick glass sparkle. They can be read from any distance as they circle the glass walls of the glorious pyramid, changing from language to language at a wink of the eye.

Without so much as touching any of the Muslim structures on Mount Moriah, a climate-controlled glass pyramid, with a huge digital sign bearing words of peace from Isaiah (in multiple languages), could be lowered over the hilltop, the Western Wall plaza directly below it, and the nearby Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The conditions for constructing the pyramid could be negotiated between Jews, Muslims, and Christians. If successful, the Temple as a simple, see-through covering for three of the most cherished sites on earth, which together represent the hinge of world conflict today, could come instead to be the place where the last war in and over the Holy Land was at last resolved.

All along, Zionism has offered the greatest opportunity in Jewish history to bring the divine name of Shalom to light. But Zionism in the form that it has taken so far is incapable of doing so. Zion needs to unite with Shalom to yield Shlomzion. In kabbalistic terms, this marriage would mean *Kavod* united with *Malchut* and *Shechinah* on the day that will be an eternal Shabbat. Is this not our meaning when wishing each other “Shabbat shalom”?

[PAUSE AND TURN TO ADDRESS THE GRAVE.]

Salome. I think that you would have been dismayed at the way in which many things in Israel have turned out. You would have cried at our story of war after war and been miserable about our martial values. You would not have been comfortable with our tendency to elect army and air force generals as political leaders. You would have fretted over our attitude toward immigrants, been appalled by our attempts to distance ourselves from the Arab world, and been uneasy about our zealous efforts to mimic Europe and America. Still, I believe that you would also have been very proud of, happy and grateful for, the remarkable versatility and hybridity of our lively society. You would have celebrated the renaissance of Torah study, the development of secular interest in classical Jewish texts, and the rising interest in kabbalistic mysticism. But you would have celebrated, too, Israeli literature and music, our intensely lived intellectual life, and our healthy supply of “new age” bohemians. You would have embraced the soldiers who cry at funerals. You would have applauded the artisans and performers who are reviving, in our popular culture, all of the different flavors to be found in the vast variety of our world-embracing heritage. Above all, I believe, you would have been hopeful. Had you been able to live in today’s Israel, you would have adored the questing independence of mind with which so many of our young people struggle to express themselves as Jews of widely varying origins and beliefs and who—as they do so—unsettle the hierarchies and banalities set in place by the founders of the state. I doubt that you would have opposed the settlers as much as you would have opposed the successive Israeli governments that have manipulated them, and I am sure that you would have felt real sympathy for the ultra-Orthodox, who still feel like refugees in their own land.

Salome, I think about you every day and try to remember the energetic, enthusiastic young radical who went in fear of nation-states and was so unhappy with the given nostrums of her time. You would have loved the cynicism of Israelis today about their political establishment. We tend to divide up among us feelings like worry and delight, hope and despondency, but I think you would have felt them all at once.

How would you have grown old in this place? Would you ever have been understood? Would you have ever been heard above the noise, aggression, and certitude of the adolescent Jews of the 1940s who sought vindication and revenge through the opportunity that Zionism offered them to seize power? I have to tell

you that I doubt it. I hope that I have done the right thing in trying to help you be heard now. I pray that my words have reflected accurately your intentions and that the notebooks, which I am now going to publish, will reach an attentive, reflective, and open-minded audience. Let us hope, as you did, that your future readers will play a role in bringing peace.

Yehi zichrech baruch — may your memory be blessed.

[RECITE KADDISH.]