

TWO

THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE MOST HIGH¹

Who is the Lord, that I should hearken unto
his voice?²

The God of the Hebrew Scriptures does not reveal himself simply (Section 1). He reveals himself as of a certain character. It is a commonplace that this character is what we are accustomed to call moral. But some of the expressions of this fact and its implications are of startling freshness. I do not refer so much to the stories of, e.g., Abraham teaching the higher morality to God or God handing on the lesson to Jonah, as to such serene affirmations as those with which the present Section opens and concludes.

Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: what manner of house will ye build unto me? and what place shall be my rest?

For all these things hath mine hand made, and so all these things came to be, saith the Lord: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that trembleth at my word.³

But will God in very deed dwell on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded!⁴

For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy: I dwell in the high and

¹Num. 24: 16.

²Exod. 5: 2.

³Isa. 66: 1-2.

⁴1 Kings 8: 27.

holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.¹

Righteousness and judgement are the foundation of thy throne:
Mercy and truth go before thy face.²

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou consume the righteous with the wicked? Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou consume and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked; that be far from thee: shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sake.

And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes: peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous: wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five? And he said, I will not destroy it, if I find there forty and five.

And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for the forty's sake.

And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak: peradventure there shall thirty be found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord: peradventure there shall be

¹Isa. 57: 15.

²Psa. 89: 14.

twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the twenty's sake.

And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak yet but this once: peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for the ten's sake.¹

Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that doeth justly, that seeketh truth; and I will pardon her.²

Being full of compassion he forgiveth iniquity and destroyeth not:

Yea, many a time turneth he his anger away,
And doth not stir up all his wrath.³

I will not execute the fierceness of mine anger, I will not return to destroy Ephraim: for I am God, and not man.⁴

Full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy and truth.⁵

A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows,
Is God in his holy habitation.⁶

The Lord, the habitation of justice.⁷

In thee the fatherless findeth mercy.⁸

For the Lord your God, he is God of gods, and Lord of lords, the great God, the mighty, and the terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward. He

¹Gen. 18: 23-32.
²Jer. 5: 1.

³Ps. 78: 38 (A).
⁴Hos. 11: 9.

⁵Exod. 34: 6.
⁶Ps. 68: 5.

⁷Jer. 50: 7.
⁸Hos. 14: 4.

doth execute the judgement of the fatherless and widow,
and loveth the stranger, in giving him food and raiment.¹

Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If
thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto
me, I will surely hear their cry.²

If thou at all take thy neighbour's garment to pledge,
thou shalt restore it unto him by that the sun goeth
down: for that is his only covering, it is his garment for
his skin: wherein shall he sleep? and it shall come to
pass, when he crieth unto me, that I will hear; for I am
gracious.³

The Lord is slow to anger, and great in power, and
will by no means clear the guilty: the Lord hath his
way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds
are the dust of his feet. He rebuketh the sea, and maketh
it dry, and drieth up all the rivers: Bashan languisheth,
and Carmel, and the flower of Lebanon languisheth.
The mountains quake at him, and the hills melt; and
the earth is upheaved at his presence, yea, the world,
and all that dwell therein.

Who can stand before his indignation? and who can
abide in the fierceness of his anger? his fury is poured
out like fire, and the rocks are broken asunder by him.

The Lord is good, a strong hold in the day of trouble;
and he knoweth them that put their trust in him.⁴

The Lord is good to all;
And his tender mercies are over all his works.⁵

And the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the second
time, saying, Arise, go unto Nineveh, that great city,

¹Deut. 10: 17-18.
²Exod. 22: 22-23.

³Exod. 22: 26-27.
⁴Nahum 1: 3-7.

⁵Ps. 145: 9.

and preach unto it the preaching that I bid thee. So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the Lord. Now Nineveh was an exceeding great city, of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. And the people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them.

And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he made proclamation and published through Nineveh by the decree of the king and his nobles, saying, Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock, taste any thing: let them not feed, nor drink water: but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in their hands. Who knoweth whether God will not turn and repent, and turn away from his fierce anger, that we perish not?

And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, which he said he would do unto them; and he did it not.

But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was angry. And he prayed unto the Lord, and said, I pray thee, O Lord, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and full of compassion, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy, and repentest thee of the evil. Therefore now, O Lord, take I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live.

And the Lord said, Doest thou well to be angry?

Then Jonah went out of the city, and sat on the east side of the city, and there made him a booth, and sat under it in the shadow, till he might see what would become of the city. And the Lord God prepared a gourd, and made it to come up over Jonah, that it might be a shadow over his head, to deliver him from his evil case. So Jonah was exceeding glad because of the gourd. But God prepared a worm when the morning rose the next day, and it smote the gourd, that it withered. And it came to pass, when the sun arose, that God prepared a sultry east wind; and the sun beat upon the head of Jonah, that he fainted, and requested for himself that he might die, and said, It is better for me to die than to live.

And God said to Jonah, Doest thou well to be angry for the gourd? And he said, I do well to be angry even unto death.

And the Lord said, Thou hast had pity on the gourd, for the which thou hast not laboured, neither madest it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: and should not I have pity on Nineveh, that great city; wherein are more than sixscore thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?¹

Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the skies.
Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God;
Thy judgements are a great deep:
O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.²

The Lord upholdeth all that fall,
And raiseth up all those that be bowed down.
The eyes of all wait upon thee;
And thou givest them their meat in due season.

¹Jonah 3-4.

²Ps. 36: 5-6.

Thou openest thine hand,
And satisfiest the desire of every living thing.
The Lord is righteous in all his ways,
And gracious in all his works.
The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him,
To all that call upon him in truth.¹

Seek ye the Lord while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the Lord, and he will have mercy upon him ; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.²

He delighteth in mercy.³

Thus saith the Lord, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth, and knoweth me, that I am the Lord which exercise loving-kindness, judgement, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the Lord.⁴

For I desire mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.⁵

He judged the cause of the poor and needy; then it was well. Was not this to know me? saith the Lord.⁶

¹Ps. 145: 14-18.
²Isa. 55: 6-7.

³Mic. 7: 18.
⁴Jer. 9: 23-24.

⁵Hos. 6: 6.
⁶Jer. 22: 16.