

The great themes of Yom Kippur, selichah and teshuvah, forgiveness and repentance, imply a philosophy of man.

Man, Judaism postulates, possesses a dual character. The two poles of his nature are referred to as  $\gamma\gamma\gamma \gamma\beta$  and  $\gamma\gamma\gamma \gamma\beta$ , the evil inclination and the good inclination.

This means that man is capable of the greatest extremes of conduct -- of angelic altruism and beastly malice. Thus it is that he stands in need of forgiveness and repentance, because he often, even usually, falters as his yetzer hara misleads him. At the same time, his innate yetzer tov, his inherent capacity for goodness, makes him capable of rehabilitation (teshuvah) and worthy of pardon.

The Kabbalists taught that ever since Adam and Eve ate of the "Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil," man has combined both qualities, good and evil, in his daily life. He is normally shot through with contradictions. His good deeds are tinged with selfishness and they serve his ego. And his transgressions are not devoid of redeeming kindness and pity. He is characterized, therefore, by the ambivalence of love and hatred, right and wrong, the good and the bad, the noble and the ignoble, the beautiful and the ugly.

Most modern philosophers and psychologists have tended to emphasize man's evil rather than his good. They have expounded on his yetzer hara and ignored his yetzer tov, seeing him as a

grasping, aggressive, hostile, self-serving biped. They followed King David not when he saw man as "but little lower than the angels," but when, in his haste, he called all men liars.

Freud bequeathed to contemporary men their fundamental vision of the human personality. He is, according to this view, acquisitive, sex-starved, and incestuous. Adler added that he is power-hungry and ruthless. Mark Twain, that loveable old cynic, said, "all I care to know is that man is a human being; that is enough for me -- he can't be any worse." Professor Whitehead calls us "the incommensurable idiots of the universe." Contemporary literature is most unflattering to man; authors compete with each other in describing our condition in ever-more obscene terms, and critics consider that the blacker the picture, the more objective and true is it.

Of course, it is hard to dispute this vision of man as an intelligent, and sometimes quite unintelligent, beast. We pollute the environment, plunder nature, kill ourselves off, and all the while compliment ourselves on the sophistication of our technology. As Jews, especially, we know all too well the diabolical character of humankind. After World War II, after such experiences as Auschwitz and Buchenwald and Bergen-Belsen, after witnessing this week the cynicism of all nations, large and small, towards the State of Israel -- massing against it because of an act of arson committed by a Christian Australian against a Moslem mosque guarded by

Moslems -- who can blame Isaac Bashevis Singer for starting one of his short stories, "The Last Demon," with the demon speaking:

I, a demon, bear witness that there are no more demons left. Why demons, when man himself is a demon? Why persuade to evil someone who is already convinced?

The yetzer hara is in the ascendancy, and it is futile to deny it. And many of us, looking over this past year, can personally testify to instances of man's inhumanity to his fellow men.

Nevertheless, on Yom Kippur we affirm that that is not the whole story. We proclaim that no matter how strong man's yetzer hara, he also possesses the yetzer tov -- or at least the potentiality for it. Call this belief naive, ingenuous, child-like, simplistic -- that may all be true; but it is a belief upon which we stake our existence as Jews. That is why we say some ten times in the confession of Yom Kippur: 'וְאַתָּה יְיָ יָדָה וְאַתָּה יָדָה... "You, O God, know the secrets of the universe and the mysteries locked up in every living thing; You search out the secrets hidden within the conscience and the heart and the soul of every human being -- |אָדָּה|, therefore, O Lord, forgive us for our sins." If man were all evil, all yetzer hara, it would be ridiculous and irrelevant to say: God, look inside us and |אָדָּה|, "therefore" forgive us. On the contrary, if we were evil and corrupt inside, then God's glance into our inner life would be damning and condemning in the extreme. But we know that we do have the potentiality for good-

ness, that we are good in some measure, that there is something worth redeeming and saving and even loving -- אכן , "therefore," for the sake of this yetzer tov, forgive us, O God.

That is too, why we began this Kol Nidrei service with the recitation of גוֹשִׁיבָה עַל גַּעֲזָהּ וּבִשְׁלֵבָהּ שֶׁל מִטָּה . Three of us at the pulpit formed a Beth Din or court, and we proclaimed, אָנוּ מְתוּרִים לְהַתְּחַלֵּץ עִם חַטָּאֵי הָעוֹלָם , "we grant permission to pray together with the sinners." And who here is not a sinner? Yet, we are חַטָּאֵי עוֹלָם who desire לְהַתְּחַלֵּץ -- sinners who want to pray! Surely, there must be some yetzer tov in all this evil, within such "sinners!"

In Genesis we learn that God created the world, and after each stage the Bible proclaims וַיַּרְא אֱלֹהִים כִּי טוֹב הָיָה which we usually translate: "and God saw that it was good." But according to one incisive commentator (Rabbi Yaakov Zvi Meklenburg), the meaning should be: "and God made visible (i.e., brought into being) the world in its various stages, because He is good." The world is testament to God's goodness. כִּי טוֹב הָיָה -- The world was created by chesed, loving-kindness. טוֹב הָיָה לְכָל וְרַחֲמָיו שָׁמַיְם וָאָרֶץ , "The Lord is good to all, and his compassion extends over all His deeds."

We learn too in Genesis, that God created man "in His image." That means that man resembles God. Man too, therefore, possesses the capacity for goodness, even as his Creator does. Man was

granted an innate desire to give, to be creative and productive, to serve and help, to give charity, to give of himself to his fellow men and to the institutions of his society.

The most evident illustration of the inherent desire to do good is -- marriage. What is it, if not the need to express innate goodness, that leads men to seek marriage and thus curtail their freedom, increase their expenses, risk unhappiness, and take upon themselves worry and responsibility for other human souls, his family? It is true, many marriages fail. But that is just the point: the really successful ones are those where each partner can express to the maximum his need to give love and not only receive it, bestow kindness and not only take it, to effect goodness and not only benefit from it. 1328 P3125 H11 216 16 --

"it is not good that man should be alone." Man cannot be good if he is without another human being at his side. Marriage represents the institutionalization of the human being's maximum opportunity to do good.

Despite the rampant cynicism all about us, we find such instances prevailing in life. Parents give their children physical and spiritual gifts, expecting nothing in return. Those who cannot have children naturally, go out of their way and to all lengths to adopt a child, simply in order to have someone to whom to give goodness and love. A four-year-old seeks out a rag doll in order to begin a career of bestowing kindness. Others will shower their

love on animals or even automobiles. How typical is the story of the little orphan girl who disappeared from the orphanage a half-hour or an hour every day. One day, the director decided to follow her to learn what she was up to. He noticed that she took a pencil and paper, wrote something on it, and went out into the fields and there<sup>re</sup>placed the note in the trunk of a tree. After she left, he took the note and read: "To whoever finds this -- I love you."

This is the nature of man. Evil as he is, he has a touch of goodness. Sinner though he is, he desires to pray. As much as he is in need of forgiving, it is worth forgiving him.

Now, in speaking of goodness heretofore, I have really dealt with two themes: goodness as represented by loving, and goodness as represented by giving. Both are aspects of tov or goodness. They are obviously related. It is also obvious that loving leads to giving; if I love someone, I will give whatever I can to that person.

However, one of the greatest Jewish ethicists of our times, Rabbi Eliyahu Dessler <sup>ר"י</sup> has taught that the opposite is even more true: giving leads to loving! The more I give to a child, to a wife, to a husband, to an institution, the more is my love deepened and enhanced.

The Bible teaches the law of <sup>לִשְׂכֹּרֶת וְלִפְתָּח</sup>, loading and unloading. This means that if a man notices his neighbor struggling whilst loading his ox or unloading a burden from his ox -- and

the same would hold true for an automobile or a truck today -- he is commanded by the Bible to lend a hand so that his friend does not labor with his burden by himself. Now, the Talmud asks: What if a man sees two people, one loading and one unloading his animal; which one must he help first? The answer of the Talmud is: he must always help the one who is unloading first, for in addition to the equal commandments of loading and unloading, we must also consider the commandment to relieve the pain of a dumb animal. Hence, if he unloads first, he spares the ox the need to carry the burden that much longer. But, the Talmud adds, there is one exception to this principle that unloading comes before loading. That is, if the man whose animal is to be loaded is an enemy, and the other is a friend, then although we usually unload first, in this instance we must load first -- we must assist the enemy before the friend! Why so? Quite simply, because in helping the enemy, in offering him my assistance, in giving to him -- I will learn to love him, or at least I will learn not to hate him. By giving to the enemy, I draw the fangs of enmity, I make a friend out of a foe. He will like me more -- and how can I despise one whom I myself actually helped, physically? The Rabbis taught: *אברהם קרצח אלה פון אה*  
*אברהם קרצח אלה פון אה* "If you want to increase your love of your friend, busy yourselves in doing something for his good."

The act of giving increases not only the act of loving in a personal sense, but also the act of commitment in a more idealistic sense. When I give to a cause, much as I initially resist



or hesitate, I ultimately come to identify with it. In a small brochure (already very famous in Israel) published within a year after the Six-Day War and entitled " פּוֹרְטֵי חַיִּים " Conversations of Warriors, many soldiers, young Sabras, tell of their experiences as they entered battle. A good number of them had been Sabras with their typical disdain for all the rest of Jewish history, as if all Jewish history since the end of the Biblical period until the founding of the State of Israel was a blank. They came in, especially, with an attitude of strong ambivalence towards European Jewry that "allowed itself" to be destroyed by Hitler. Yet, in this war, when they were ready to give life and limb for the Jewish people, they re-discovered their Jewish identity, they found themselves in the closest ties with all of Jewish history, and even more so with European Jewry during the Nazi period. They were ready to give -- and so they learned to love. They were ready to sacrifice -- and so their commitment grew stronger and deeper.

"You know the mysteries of the universe and the secrets locked up in every living being, You search out the innermost chambers of the heart and the soul and the conscience; יְהוָה, therefore may it be Thy will to forgive us all our sins." Deep within, within the heart and the soul and the conscience, there is goodness. Almighty God, consider that, and forgive.

But at the same time we tell ourselves: Goodness will suffocate if it always remains buried deep within us. We must liberate



it, we must bring it out, we must express that goodness in giving,  
and so enhance it and bring it to the point of love.

| 37 | , as we give, we will love, and we will be  
worthy of God's love in return.

(here -- appeal)