



INTERIORIZATION IN SCRIPTURAL READING: AN EXPLORATION IN BIBLICAL SPIRITUAL HERMENEUTICS¹

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The paper explores interiorization as a method in Scriptural reading. The reader looks into the movement in the scriptural text as one pays attention to the interiorization of God's reality in the human person. However, it is not an unidirectional inward movement but a receptivity that leads to responsiveness and responsibility. The movements, moments, and layers of interiorization unfold through the examination of Hebrew terms – Shema, Hesed, Hakkadosh, Hineni, Emunah, Teshuvah, Yirah, and Tamim.

The paper provides the visual representation and translates the dynamics of interiorization in the reciprocal spiritual relation into Scriptural Reading through frames of questions. Through the phenomenological method and dialogic reading, the paper intends to broaden the understanding of interiorization and its application within the framework of Biblical Spiritual Hermeneutics.

Keywords: *Interiorization, Scriptural Reading, Hermeneutics, and Biblical Spirituality*

Dates:

Received: July 17, 2023

Accepted: August 15, 2023

Published(Online): Sept 30, 2023

How to cite this article:

Tabile, S. (2023). Interiorization in Scriptural Reading: An Exploration in Biblical Spiritual Hermeneutics. *Scientia* Vol 12 no. 2., 51–71. <https://doi.org/10.57106/scientia.v12i2.165>

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INTRODUCTION

Interiorization is a movement in the human person within the reciprocal relation with God that is essentially transformative. It is phenomenologically described as a mystical dialogue² and reciprocal union.³ The previous investigation primarily considers the reciprocity between God and the human person as the key to Spiritual Reading.⁴ It is oriented to the dynamic of relation that takes place together with the unfolding movements, moments, and layers. To read spiritually is to discern God's donation of Himself and the human person's response to Him.

The interiorization in the human person in the reciprocal relation comes in layers: receptivity, responsiveness, and responsibility. Receptivity is receiving what God intends to give the human person, which leads to responsiveness. Then, the inworking of God that overflows from the person to others is a responsibility, the action of God in and through the mission allowing him to participate in the mission of God.

This study investigates in a detailed manner the movements as well as the moments and layers in the realities that are involved in Spirituality, Divine, and human. However, the investigation specifically investigates the interiorization in the human person through the spiritual reading of the Scriptures. This does not only expand the phenomenological understanding of

interiorization but, in turn, hopefully develops Biblical Spiritual Hermeneutics.

HERMENEUTICS OF SCRIPTURES IN THE CATHOLIC TRADITION

Hermeneutics is the theory and methodology of interpretation, especially of scriptural texts, and is a branch of theology. It deals with the principles underlying biblical exegesis, that is, careful investigation of the original meaning of texts in their historical and literary contexts. In the decree *Dei Verbum* pronounced by Vatican II, Catholic biblical scholars were encouraged to use more modern methods of interpreting the Scriptures under the guidance of the Pontifical Biblical Commission of the Vatican. These were outlined in detail in *The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church* by the Pontifical Biblical Commission in 1993. The document presented the pros and cons of the various methods: historical-critical (Composition History,⁵ Traditional Literary Criticism,⁶ Comparison of Translations,⁷ Textual Criticism,⁸ Source Criticism,⁹ Form Criticism,¹⁰ and Redaction

¹ This paper is once again written in honor of + Fr. Kees Waaijman, O. Carm., a scholar, teacher, and guide par excellence in Spirituality.

² Tabile, S. (2021). A Phenomenological Investigation of Interiorization in the Spiritual Life. *Scientia - The International Journal on the Liberal Arts*, 10(2), 39–53. <https://doi.org/10.57106/scientia.v10i2.138>. See also, Tabile, S. (2022). Reciprocal Union in St. Thérèse of Lisieux Story of a Soul - Sheldon R. Tabile, O.Carm. *Scientia - The International Journal on the Liberal Arts*, 11(1), 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.57106/scientia.v11i1.9>.

³ Tabile, S. (2022). Reciprocal Union in St. Thérèse of Lisieux Story of a Soul - Sheldon R. Tabile, O.Carm. *Scientia - The International Journal on the Liberal Arts*, 11(1), 28–39. <https://doi.org/10.57106/scientia.v11i1.9>

⁴ Tabile, S. (2023). Phenomenological and Dialogic Thinking in Spiritual Reading: Spiritual Paradigms of Selected Biblical Figures. *Scientia - The International Journal on the Liberal Arts*, 12(1), 70–84. <https://doi.org/10.57106/scientia.v12i1.147>

⁵ The investigation encompasses not only the author and the events surrounding the text, but also delves into the author's goal by examining the historical and cultural context in which the piece was produced. Upon engaging with the material, one immerses oneself in the author's worldview or *weltanschauung*.

⁶ This analysis explores the various interpretations and connotations associated with the word, as well as the significance attributed to the visual representations and symbolic elements employed. Additionally, this study examines the development of the Biblical Figures within the narrative.

⁷ The present analysis is a comparison of translations from ancient and modern periods. This paper examines the examination of philosophies and languages, specifically Hebrew and Greek.

⁸ Scholars engage in the examination of variant readings found within ancient manuscripts, focusing on those variants that are either inconsequential or have had an impact on the interpretation of the text. Moreover, this study investigates the different variations that might be elucidated through the lens of literary or historical context, categorizing them as either deliberate alterations or inadvertent ones.

⁹ Source criticism is an academic discipline that examines both the text itself and the sources from which the text originated. This study focuses on the precise interpretation of the version in its original context, as well as its utilization through direct quotation, paraphrasing, and adaptation in subsequent texts.

¹⁰ The identification of the literary form or genre of the entire work and/or the specific text is undertaken. Subsequently, the anticipated outcomes and objectives pertaining to the utilization of the genre, in conjunction with its corresponding social milieu, ensue.





Criticism¹¹); Rhetorical,¹² Narrative,¹³ Semiotic Analysis,¹⁴ Canonical,¹⁵ Jewish Interpretative Traditions,¹⁶ and Interpretative Tradition of the Church Fathers.¹⁷ Other methods related to social sciences were mentioned: Sociological,¹⁸ Cultural Anthropology,¹⁹ Psychological/Psychoanalytical,²⁰ and Liberationist²¹ and Feminist²² approaches.²³

In the fourth section, the document discusses biblical interpretation in the church, emphasizing actualization and inculturation. Actualization involves rereading early texts and considering contemporary situations to apply them to the people of God. Actualization recognizes the numerous links between the Old and New Testaments. This is because the New Testament fulfills the Old Testament from the perspective of Catholic interpretation. The dynamic unity guides actualization.²⁴

¹¹ In the context of the final composition, the process of redaction involves analyzing the manner in which the author incorporated the source material(s) to shape the text. This study focuses on the examination of similar texts, theological aspects, and real-life circumstances that contribute to its formation.

¹² This analysis examines the author's intended message, their endeavor to educate, motivate, justify, or convince the reader, as well as the rhetorical strategies employed to accomplish these objectives.

¹³ This analysis focuses on the examination of the narrative, namely how the story effectively portrays the faith experience through the testimonies of the biblical figures.

¹⁴ Semiotic analysis deals with the patterns of meaning conveyed by the words and symbols.

¹⁵ The Canonical approach locates the text in the literary context of the entire Bible. Further, the connections of the text with preceding and succeeding texts are analyzed. The location of the text in the Canon shapes the meaning of the text.

¹⁶ The Jewish methods of interpretation written in the Talmud and Midrash are considered both in the literal and spiritual (allegorical/typological, moral, and anagogic) sense of the text.

¹⁷ The Church Fathers emerged as the initial exegetes of the Scriptures within the nascent Christian communities. The interpretation of the apostles, as served by certain Church Fathers, varies significantly.

¹⁸ Patterns of human social behavior are evident in the text and are examined through sociology.

¹⁹ Cultural presuppositions and patterns within the field of Cultural Anthropology influence the text.

²⁰ Texts are analyzed through the application of several psychological theories, serving as a valuable tool in enhancing our comprehension of human awareness.

²¹ Liberation analysis looks into the use of power in the text as it dominates and oppresses people. Has this text been used for the domination of oppressed people? Can this text be used for the liberation of the poor/disadvantaged? How? Can other texts counteract the detrimental effects of oppressive texts?

²² Feminist analysis seeks to identify and examine instances of gender bias within the text. Does the text provide proof of gender bias? What impact does a feminist perspective have on the interpretation of the text? What alternative sources can be retrieved and employed to counterbalance texts that exhibit bias?

²³ Pontifical Biblical Commission. "The Interpretation of the Bible in the Church" Origins, January 6, 1994. Accessed September 5, 2023. https://catholic-resources.org/ChurchDocs/PBC_Interp-FullText.htm

²⁴ Ibid.

The ongoing tradition stimulates actualization. Tradition has two purposes in relation to actualization. First, it prevents erroneous interpretations. Second, it helps preserve and transmit faith. Actualization does not include text manipulation. Hence, instead of imposing new ideas or ideologies on biblical texts, the goal is to truly examine and find their intended message in the current setting. The Scriptures' influence over the Christian church is constant. Despite decades of use, the Scriptures remain a trusted guide. According to Dei Verbum no. 10, the church magisterium is not above God's word. Instead, it serves divinely mandated teachings. The church reveres the text and interprets it accurately with the Holy Spirit.²⁵

Actualization requires a precise exegesis of the text, including its literal meaning. Interpretation involves three steps and several cycles of hermeneutics. 1. The method entails applying the Scriptures to one's situation. 2. It involves identifying the biblical text-emphasized or challenged components of the current situation. 3. It entails identifying aspects from the biblical text that can advance the current situation in a way that is constructive and consistent with God's salvific and redemptive goal in Jesus Christ.²⁶

The Scriptures illuminate many modern issues through actualization. These include exploring various kinds of ministry, the church as a community, prioritizing the vulnerable and disadvantaged, liberation theology, and women's status. Actualization might include ideals increasingly recognized in modern society, such as individual rights, human life, the environment, and global harmony.²⁷

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.





BIBLICAL SPIRITUALITY

The dynamics of actualization consider what takes place within the scriptures and outside it. Huub Welzen articulates this as the process in the text and text in the process.²⁸ According to him, there exists a distinction between the research objects of spirituality and biblical exegesis. While there may be areas of agreement for potential discussion, these encounters are often hindered by many challenges. The exegesis focuses on the canonical source texts of the Jewish-Christian tradition. The focus of academic inquiry in the field of spirituality studies pertains to the complex dynamics of the interaction between the Divine and the human person. The foundational texts serve as the ground for exegesis,²⁹ and the diverse interpretations surrounding the concept of God in spirituality.³⁰ These are the focal points of problems. There is a different materiality for the two different objects. These produce the moments of the process in the text and the text

in the process. The inclusion of spirituality in the field of exegesis leads to an investigation of how the biblical texts address the relationship between the divine and human beings, specifically focusing on the textual process. It is important to note that spirituality questions are not consistently acknowledged within the field of exegesis, which can possibly open areas for research inquiries.³¹

Welzen believes that Spirituality must include the consideration of scriptural text. Scholars must study how the Scriptures initiate the divine-human relationship and assume accurate descriptions of spiritual praxis within the Scriptures and related literature. The Scriptures' function in articulating divine-human interactions is an interesting area for investigation. How does the Scriptures describe human relation with God that is essentially transformative? Do the Scriptures or individual scriptural texts mystagogically transform the

²⁸ Huub Welzen, *Biblical Spirituality: Contours of a Discipline* Volume 30 of *Studies in Spirituality: Supplement*, Titus Brandsma Instituut, Peeters, 2017.

²⁹ *Ibid.* 68-69. "With regard to the Bible: in fact, there is no basic Bible text. Not only do the different churches have a different canon, but the actual Greek and Hebrew texts that are used as starting points are not the basic texts. The text-critical editions of the Greek New Testament are reconstructions of biblical scholars who, based on the manuscripts passed down and on text interpretation, have made reconstructions of what the basic text might have been. The most commonly used text editions of the New Testament are those of Nestle-Aland and those of United Bible Societies. The last edition has notes in which the degree of probability of the chosen text variant is indicated. A separate commentary gives the considerations which led to the choice of the printed variant. For the Old Testament, the text is based on the most used text edition, not on a reconstruction of the basic text, but on one manuscript, the codex Leningrad B 19A, which dates from 1009. This is a diplomatic edition, i.e. the text edition is based on one manuscript. The Hebrew University Bible Project publication is also a diplomatic edition. This edition is based on the so-called Aleppo codex (around 930), whose Pentateuch has unfortunately been lost. Both manuscripts are the result of the work of Jewish scholars who, between around 500 and 1000, were devoted to recording the Hebrew text and the pronunciation as well as possible. In Qumran and Masada, manuscripts were found which provide evidence of much older text forms. The so-called Samaritan Pentateuch also provides evidence of an older text form than those of modern critical editions. The old translations, such as the Septuaginta (the most important Greek translation), the Peshitta (the Syrian translation), the Targumim (the Aramaic translation), and the Vulgate (the Latin translation by Hieronymus), also represent older text forms which we no longer know as such.

³⁰ *Ibid.* 69. The object of spirituality scholarship is not without problems either. This object is the divine-human relationship. The description of spirituality as a divine-human relationship has four moments. These are extensively discussed in Kees Waaijman's book. He also discusses the difficulties associated with this description, including the use of the word "God" in the description.

³¹ Huub gives specific examples, 69- 70 "For some time, I have noticed that there is a similar pattern in each of the synoptic gospels with respect to the divine-human relationship. At the start of each synoptic is the story of Jesus' baptism. In each of the three stories, Jesus is addressed by the voice from heaven as 'my Son'. Correspondingly, in the synoptic gospels, Jesus addresses God as 'Father' at the start of the Passion story. Jesus' prayer on that occasion is characterized by the submission to the will of the Father: 'Not my will, but your will.' In terms of spirituality, it would be very interesting to describe the process that takes place between the statement 'my Son' and the statement 'Father' and also to consider whether this process is the same in each of the three synoptic gospels. It might also be an idea to study whether this process is similar to what happens in the story of the annunciation to Mary (Luke 1:26-38) between Gabriel using the word 'favored' and Mary's answer: 'May your word to me be fulfilled.'

Another example is the renewed attention to mysticism in Paul. In connection with this renewed attention, I consider it a challenge to describe the life and works of Paul as a further unfolding of the experience in Damascus. The life and works of Paul are then described as the unfolding of a mystical path, resulting from his most fundamental mystical experience.

But the study of the biblical texts can also be introduced in the spirituality question: the text in the process. In that case, it is about the function of the Bible in the divine-human relationship. One can study the biblical influences in the expression of spiritual processes. The study of intertextual connections offers good opportunities here. However, other research questions must also be addressed. The question of how the Bible functions when setting the divine-human relationship in motion assumes good descriptions of spiritual practices, which are based on the Bible and biblical texts. The question must also be asked how the Bible helps in the expression of the processes in the divine-human relationship. How does the Bible give language to human experiences with a transcendent reality, particularly if these experiences have also been transformation moments in their lives? Have the Bible or concrete biblical texts had a mystagogic function in the transformation processes in the divine-human relationship? A wide area of research lies open here."





divine-human relationship³² Welzen proceeds his investigation with consideration of the models of Kees Waaijman, Sandra Schneiders, and Manfred Oemig leading into the Spirituality in the Biblical Texts, specifically the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John; Letter to the Hebrews, and Letter to James.

Considering Welzen's points, the study takes the direction of describing the movements together with the moments and layers that take place in realities, specifically the human person involved in the relation, with a specific emphasis on mystagogy and transformation. This is done by noting the fundamental dynamics of both the Divine and human reality, as articulated in the Scriptures. As the study notes the action of God in the relationship, it pays attention to how the human person moves toward God, which unfolds in moments and layers. Noting these movements not only develops the understanding of reciprocity in spirituality and interiorization in the human person but, at the same time, frames a method of reading the Scriptures, a biblical spiritual hermeneutic.

INTERIORIZATION IN RECIPROCITY

Scriptures have specific words that are regularly used to capture the dynamics of Divine and human relations. The research investigates the Hebrew terms *Shema*, *Hesed*, *Hakkadosh*, *Hineni*, *Emunah*, *Teshuvah*, *Yirah*, and *Tamim*³³ As we pay attention to dynamics in these terms, the movements and layers in the reciprocal relation unfold, specifically the mystagogy and transformation in the interiorization in the

human reality. These movements, moments, and layers give shape to biblical spiritual hermeneutics.

SHEMA עִמָּשׁ

"*Shema Yisrael*" serves as a fundamental declaration and prayer that expresses a profound faith in the one and incomparable God. Shema calls for a profound and unwavering devotion to God. God's invitation is characterized by an unconditional and all-encompassing love that transcends the limitations of time, location, or situation. This love is all-encompassing, leaving no aspect or circumstance exempt from its demands. For the human person, it is essential to direct one's thoughts, articulate one's words, and act by doing God's commands. The Shema instructs the Israelites to demonstrate wholehearted devotion to God. In this sense, Shema is hearing, heeding, obeying, and doing.

The verse, Listen, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is One, *שְׁמָעָה יִשְׂרָאֵל יְהוָה יְהוָה אֶחָד* emphasizes the need of actively and attentively listening to God's communication and to discern His presence. The act of attentive listening can cultivate faithfulness and enhance the depth of one's spiritual relationship with God. Within this understanding, the act of listening can be regarded as a form of conviction, establishing a connection between one's hearing and spiritual life. Engaging in active listening facilitates a deep encounter: the human person who attentively listens, engages, and bears witness to God's presence. Cultivating undivided listening and genuine faith allows for the exploration of mystical truth. The audience perceives the divine being.

The term Shema encapsulates a significant understanding that hearing God's voice entails

³² Huub, 70.

³³ The collation of these key Hebrew terms was accomplished together with the seminarians of Immaculate Concepcion Major Seminary, Configuration Stage I: Lenard Agustin, Jonatan Caritan, Joshua Cueva, John Wayne Garcia, AJ Christian Guadalupe, Reynante Labao Jr., Jose Romualdo Lunod, Sherman Madlangakay, Jose Mari Navarro, Kenneth David Ricalde, John Matthew Noel Reyes, Jhun Mar Tripoli, and Hahns Valderama.





obeying and following His guidance. Hence, genuine obedience necessitates the complete reception and acceptance of God's revelation. The underlying assumption is that genuine understanding is mystical and extends beyond cognitive processes to embody and enact God's will.

The Shema prayer serves as a transformative and redemptive prayer, facilitating an individual's spiritual development and fostering intimacy with God. A covenantal or dialogical prayer is characterized by the active participation of both God and the human person, where God reveals Himself, and the human person attentively listens. Persons who engage in active listening create an environment in which they are receptive to God, facilitating a process of restoration and transformation within themselves.

The Shema, as stated in Deuteronomy 6:4, places particular emphasis on its initial six words. The verse "Shema Yisrael, Adonai eloheinu, Adonai echad, and barukh shem kevod malkhuto le'olam va'ed" וְיִהְיֶה לַאֲדֹנָי, לֵאמֹר שְׁמַע עִמָּךְ, דְּהָא יִאֲדֹנָא, דְּעוּ מְלוּעַל וְתוּכְלֵם דּוּבְכֵּם מִשׁ דְּוִרְבוּ, is a significant declaration of the Jewish faith. It is recited as part of the Shema, a central prayer in Judaism. This declaration affirms the belief in the oneness of God and acknowledges the eternal and everlasting nature of His kingdom. The *Ve'ahavta*, which serves as a reminder to love the Lord wholeheartedly, with utmost devotion and dedication, is presented thereafter. The passage of *Vehaya* (Deut. 11:13-21) emphasizes the correlation between obedience and the receipt of blessings following one's adherence to God's commands. In the biblical passage of Numbers 15:37-41, it is said that the Jewish community adhered to the practice of wearing a *tallit*, a rectangular prayer shawl adorned with four fringes known as *tzitzit*. This ritual serves as a constant reminder for individuals to

remain steadfast in their commitment to follow the teachings and commandments of God. These three facets encompass adhering to God's commands to hear His voice. The acquisition of blessings is contingent upon one's obedience to God. The individuals are reminded of the Divine protection in their prayers.

The Enlarged Letters, specifically *Ayin* and *Dalet*, combine to create the word 'ed', which conveys the concept of God's omnipotence. The act of reciting the Shema prayer serves as an acknowledgment of the supreme authority of God. The concept of unity in God encompasses the interconnectedness of all beings. This perspective aligns with the concept of unity between man and woman, as portrayed in the book of Genesis. The preservation of identity is facilitated by maintaining the person's identity in the context of the relation with God. As one engages in Shema, a heightened sense of intimacy with God is experienced.

The Shema Prayer emphasizes the one nature of God as the ultimate origin of compassion and mercy, responsible for the creation and harmonious order of all things. God says His innermost Self with truthfulness. This statement underscores the significance of the unity between God and humanity. Moreover, God's word necessitates corresponding behavior. This response fosters a sense of faith and adherence to God's instruction. As individuals actively listen to God, their proximity to the divine presence is enhanced.

In the Hebrew language, the term '*Shema*' is the sole designation for the act of perceiving and adhering to God's commandments. This prayer serves as an exhortation for individuals to relate with God, resulting in a sense of fulfillment and steadfastness in their faithfulness. As the human person prays the Shema, God's *Hesed* and *Hakkadosh* are made known to him.





HESED חֶסֶד

Hesed refers to an unwavering and compassionate love exhibited by God, characterized by acts of loving-kindness and constant devotion. It is not solely an emotional state but God's very life. It is not characterized by a sentimental or infatuation-driven form of affection but rather by a steadfast and dependable form of love. Hesed refers to the enduring and unwavering love that God possesses towards the human person. God's Hesed initiates the relationship with the human person, allowing the latter to receive God's Self-revelation and donation. In the order of intention, God's Hesed comes first; however, in the order of execution, the human person understands God's Hesed in the reciprocity in Shema.

Hesed is a Hebrew word commonly used in the Hebrew Scriptures, which continues in the Christian Scriptures. Hesed is the covenantal bond established by God with a human person from the beginning of creation. The cessation of exile in the Scriptures is attributed to the covenant, which abounds with God's Hesed. Hesed manifests within a relational dynamic wherein God, in His power and authority, reveals an outpouring of compassion and mercy toward those lesser than Him, His creatures. God is steadfast to the covenant He previously made with Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David, expressing His determination to uphold and actualize them.³⁴ There is no moment in history that God is not Hesed, for it would be contrary to His nature. At every moment, from the beginning, God's Hesed is revealed to His creatures.

Due to the inherent essence of God as Hesed, with encompassing attributes such as mercy,

compassion, and kindness, it is not surprising that God's relentless pursuit of restoring Israel from its state of captivity will persist until they are fully restored in Him. Engaging in alternative actions implies a deficiency in the attribute of Hesed or a complete contradiction to the inherent essence of the subject in question.³⁵

In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses conveys to the Israelites that God, known as *Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh*, יהוה רשע היא, YHWH, will faithfully maintain the covenant established with them on the condition that they demonstrate their

³⁵ Lamentations 2:32, "He will one day act on these old promises and bring His people out of captivity since He is "mighty in Hesed." Ezekiel 16:59-60. "Yes, thus says the Lord God: I will deal with you as you have done, you who have despised the oath, breaking the covenant; yet I will remember my covenant with you in the days of your youth, and I will establish with you an everlasting covenant." The fulfillment of God's promises in the covenant relationship is realized through Jesus in the New Testament. Jesus serves as the embodiment of God's love, specifically characterized by the Hebrew concept of Hesed. Through the advent of Jesus, God successfully fulfills His covenant with our ancestral forebears.

The canticles of Zechariah and Mary convey God's expressed purpose to fulfill His promise of rescuing Israel from exile, which is attributed to His gentle compassion, mercy, and Hesed. Both canticles are recited on a daily basis. It is important for individuals to consistently recall the divine commitment made by God in the covenant, which was ultimately realized in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This serves as an invitation to maintain unwavering faithfulness in our connection with God.

Mercy plays a significant role in the formative stage of Christianity, as evidenced by various teachings found in the biblical text. For instance, the concept of righteousness is emphasized, with the expectation that one's righteousness should surpass that of the religious authorities (Matthew 5:20). Additionally, acts of charity are encouraged, with the notion that one's benevolent actions should be discreet and not boastful (Matthew 5:3; 6:3-4). The teaching of non-resistance towards wrongdoers is also emphasized, suggesting that individuals should refrain from retaliating when faced with injustice (Matthew 5:39). Furthermore, the principle of going beyond what is required is advocated, as exemplified by the instruction to willingly go the extra mile when compelled to travel a single mile (Matthew 5:41). The command to love one's enemies is another prominent teaching, highlighting the importance of extending compassion even to those who may be considered adversaries (Matthew 5:44). Lastly, the prohibition against judgment is emphasized, urging individuals to refrain from passing moral evaluations on others (Matthew 7:1-5). The concept of having a merciful disposition is concisely conveyed in the Beatitudes, as stated in Matthew 5:7: "Blessed are those who exhibit mercy, as they shall be recipients of mercy."

The concept of mercy in Christianity is deeply connected to the benevolence of God, as exemplified by the provision of rain for both the righteous and the unrighteous (Matthew 5:45). This divine benevolence is further demonstrated via the adornment of field crops and the sustenance of avian creatures (Matthew 6:26-29). The presence of a comparable visual representation can be observed in the Gospel of Luke, namely within the parables featuring a sympathetic father who, upon seeing his lost son, is described as being "filled with compassion" (Luke 15:20), and a benevolent Samaritan who, upon encountering a severely injured traveler, is said to have been "moved with compassion" (Luke 10:33). The statement "Be merciful as Abba is merciful" (Luke 6:36) holds a significant position within Luke's sermon on the plain.

The concept of mercy is exemplified through the implementation of "works of mercy." The early Christian communities were already familiar with various acts of charity, such as mutual forgiveness (Colossians 3:17), distribution of commodities (Acts 4:34-35), almsgiving (Acts 9:36), hospitality (1 Timothy 5:10), caring for the dead (Acts 8:2), and other similar expressions of benevolence.

³⁴ The biblical passages referenced include Genesis 22:16, Psalm 132:11, and Hebrews 6:13-18.





devotion and faithfulness. This is expressed in Deuteronomy 7:9. It is important to understand that the Lord, identified as God, is the one and supreme God. He is characterized as a faithful God, demonstrating unwavering loyalty through the concept of *Hesed*. This faithfulness is primarily expressed through the upholding of a covenant, known as *berit* תּוֹרַת, with individuals who exhibit love towards the Lord and adhere to His laws. This covenant allegiance is intended to endure for an extensive period, spanning a thousand generations.

The verse in question exhibits a hendiadys, wherein the terms *Berit* (covenant) and *Hesed* (grace, mercy, kindness) are conjoined to convey a singular understanding. The term “covenant” is commonly interpreted and translated as faithful love. YHWH pledges to uphold the *Hesed* within the covenant as a reciprocal arrangement for Israel’s love and allegiance. Psalm 89: 1-4 establishes a connection between the divine attribute of *Hesed*, which represents God’s steadfast love and kindness, and the covenantal commitments of David, namely *Berit* and *Emunah*, denoting fidelity and loyalty.³⁶

³⁶ Deuteronomy 4:31: “Because the Lord your God is a merciful God, he will neither abandon you nor destroy you; he will not forget the covenant with your ancestors that he swore to them”; Deut. 30:3: “Then the Lord your God will restore your fortunes and have compassion on you, gathering you again from all the peoples among whom the Lord your God has scattered you”; Deuteronomy 32:36: “Indeed the Lord will vindicate his people, have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, neither bond nor free remaining”; Micah 7:18–19: “Who is a God like you, pardoning iniquity and passing over the transgression of the remnant of your possession? He does not retain his anger forever, because he delights in showing clemency. He will again have compassion upon us; he will tread our iniquities underfoot. You will cast all our sins into the depths of the sea”; Isaiah 54:7–8: “For a moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment, I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love, I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer”; Isaiah 60:10: “Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you down, but in my favor I have had mercy on you”; Psalm 79:8: “Do not remember against us the iniquities of our ancestors; let your compassion come speedily to meet us, for we are brought very low”; Psalm 102:13: “You will rise and have compassion on Zion, for it is time to favor it; the appointed time has come.”

In the public ministry of Jesus, we witness many signs that He is indeed God’s *Hesed*. John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life”; Romans 5:8: “But God proves his love for us in that while we still were sinners Christ died for us”; Ephesians 2:4: “But God, who is rich in mercy, out of the great love with which he loved us.” Jesus’ merciful deeds incarnate the Father’s compassion. He is always moved with compassion and mercy (Matthew 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34; Mark 1:41; Luke 7:13).

HAKKADOSH שוֹדֵקוֹשׁ

God, as the Holy One. In the Jewish tradition, the understanding of God as *Hakkadosh* (הַקְּדוֹשׁ), or the Holy One, represents His unparalleled uniqueness, distinction, and holiness. This concept establishes God as the sole entity deserving of genuine respect and adoration, with unparalleled, incomparable, and unsurpassed qualities. The term “Holy” possesses an inherent uniqueness that cannot be replicated since it can disengage from its surroundings and maintain an unchanging and ultimate nature. In the biblical passage Exodus 3:5, the phrase “Come no closer!” is uttered. Moses was told to remove the sandals from his feet, as the ground upon which he was currently standing was considered sacred. The earth can be delineated based on its association with holiness and its demarcation from elements that lie beyond its realm.

In the biblical passage of Exodus 19:10–24, there were established boundaries that individuals must adhere to when seeking to engage with God. Israelites were prohibited from ascending or physically coming into contact with any portion of the mountain. The mountain’s sanctity was preserved by adhering to its boundaries. Those who exceeded their limits would ultimately face mortality. Nevertheless, this did not imply that God would sever His connection with the people of Israel. Despite the limitations of the method, the meeting between God and human person nevertheless occurred. The divine being conveyed His presence through the manifestation of smoke, fire, earthquake, and thunder. The regulations dictated that the Israelites must demonstrate the highest level of reverence and veneration towards the sacred mountain prior to their approach. Therefore, the resulting outcome was the importance of discerning between that





which was sacred and that which was mundane to avoid transgressing or defiling the sacred.³⁷

There was a clear depiction of the domain of the Holy and its associated elements. The cleanliness of the subject was of utmost importance, and it was imperative to provide the most optimal offering to it. The observance of the Sabbath was imperative as it was regarded as a sacred day. The individuals were to refrain from using profanity, as failure to do so may result in severe consequences such as death or social exclusion. Moreover, it was evident that the reverence for the sacred had implications for interpersonal interactions. The lack of reverence towards the Holy led to the manifestation of violence within human interactions. When the sacred was defiled, presenting the sacred offerings made by the people of Israel was likewise debased. The Israelites' offerings were subject to exploitation, theft, and embezzlement. Violence could be attributed to the act of surpassing boundaries, neglecting to approach the sacred with profound regard and veneration, and desecrating hallowed spaces.

The term "the Holy One" is referenced in twenty-five instances within the book of Prophet Isaiah. The seraphim are the celestial beings that proclaim the sanctity of God. These seraphs were present above God, each with six wings. Two wings were used to shield their faces, two to cover their feet, and the remaining two

³⁷ Leviticus 10:10: "You are to distinguish between the holy and the common, and between the unclean and the clean"; Numbers 18:32: "You shall incur no guilt by reason of it when you have offered the best of it. But you shall not profane the holy gifts of the Israelites, on pain of death"; Leviticus 22:15: "No one shall profane the sacred donations of the people of Israel, which they offer to the Lord"; Leviticus 19:8: "All who eat it shall be subject to punishment because they have profaned what is holy to the Lord; and any such person shall be cut off from the people"; Exodus 31:14: "You shall keep the Sabbath because it is holy for you; everyone who profanes it shall be put to death; whoever does any work on it shall be cut off from among the people"; Leviticus 21:12,23: "He shall not go outside the sanctuary and thus profane the sanctuary of his God; for the consecration of the anointing oil of his God is upon him: I am the Lord. But he shall not come near the curtain or approach the altar, because he has a blemish, that he may not profane my sanctuaries; for I am the Lord; I sanctify them."

were employed for flight. "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory."³⁸ As the Holy One, God is lifted and dwells on High. Thus, God is the high and lofty one who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy. "I dwell in the high and holy place, and also with those who are contrite and humble in spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite."³⁹ Further, He is the pure and incorruptible one Who purifies the Israelites in their iniquities, "but the Lord of hosts is exalted by justice, and the Holy God shows himself holy by righteousness."⁴⁰ God's holiness is incomparable with all else that exists, "O whom will you compare me, or who is my equal? says the Holy One."⁴¹ Such deserves human respect and awe, reverence, and fear.

Sanctification refers to the complete and unwavering commitment to God. During consecration, an individual assumes a dual role, exhibiting active agency by willingly surrendering oneself, and passive receptivity by being affected and devoured. In the active sense, sanctification refers to the act of consecrating individuals and objects to bring them into the realm of the sacred. This includes the priest and his garments,⁴² as well as any items associated with the altar, religious artifacts, and offerings.⁴³ Therefore, it was imperative for Moses to consecrate the people to ensure their survival at the manifestation of God on Mount Sinai.⁴⁴ The act of purification was inferred from the consecration, whereby it was said that the individuals were required to cleanse their garments. Moses was obliged to remove his sandals.⁴⁵ This assertion holds validity not only for tangible impurities but

³⁸ Isaiah 6:2-3.

³⁹ Isaiah 57:15.6.

⁴⁰ Isaiah 5:16.7.

⁴¹ Isaiah 40:25.

⁴² Exodus 29:21.

⁴³ Exodus 29:37; 30:29; Leviticus 6:11, 20.

⁴⁴ Exodus 19:10-15

⁴⁵ Exodus 3:5.





also as to moral defilement.⁴⁶ The act of ritual purification necessitates bodily manifestation, thereby symbolizing the purity of the individual. Individuals undergoing the process of sanctification are transitioning from a state of non-holiness to one characterized by holiness. This phenomenon takes place within the context of everyday existence. Human persons who dedicate themselves to a particular cause strive to align their actions and beliefs with the divine being to the greatest extent possible. This commitment is exemplified by the scriptural verse, “You shall be holy, for I am holy.”⁴⁷ Human persons become consecrated as they engage in the act of consecrating themselves. The passive aspect of sanctification is being touched and consumed by the Holy One. God possesses the exclusive ability to bestow sanctification, “I am the God who sanctifies you.”⁴⁸

An individual who has transitioned from a state of non-holiness to holiness is said to be holy. This metamorphosis eliminates the saint from the domain of the profane. The process of sanctification involves the transformation of the saint via one’s devotion to God. The Israelites perceived the radiant countenance of Moses. Likewise, it was imperative for Israel to be regarded as sacred.⁴⁹ The sanctity of the individual deemed holy is assimilated into the sanctity of the God referred to as the Holy One. The individual unknowingly emanates divine sanctity, akin to the luminosity exhibited by a sacrificial offering.

הִינֵנִי דַע יְיָ

Biblical figures, Abraham,⁵⁰ Jacob,⁵¹ Moses,⁵² Samuel,⁵³ Isaiah,⁵⁴ and Ananias,⁵⁵ responded with the word “Hineni”⁵⁶ to answer a direct call

⁵⁰ God told Abraham to offer Isaac as a sacrifice in Genesis 22:11-12. Abraham was subjected to a divine test by God, who addressed Abraham by saying, “Abraham!” Subsequently, Abraham responded, “Here I am.” “And it came to pass after these things, that G-d did test Avraham, and said unto him, Avraham: and he said, Hineni (Behold, here I am).” (Bereshis 22:1 Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB))

During the moment when Isaac was positioned on the altar, the angel conveyed to Abraham the imperative need to terminate the sacrificial act. The angel of the Lord communicated with him, addressing him by his name, “Abraham, Abraham!” Consequently, he expressed, “Here I am.” “And the Malach Hashem called unto him out of Shomayim, and said, Avraham, Avraham: and he said, Hineni.” (Bereshis 22:11 Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB))

⁵¹ Upon observing Laban’s actions towards Jacob, God manifested Himself to Jacob through a dream in Genesis 31:11-12. Within a dream sequence, an Angel of God called the name “Jacob” to which he replied, “Here I am.”

“And the Malach HaElohim spoke unto me in a chalom, saying, Ya’akov: And I said, Hineni.” (Bereshis 31:11-12 Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB)) In Genesis 46:1-2, Jacob embarked on a journey to the land of Egypt to reunite with his son, Joseph, and remained in a state of vitality and good health.

⁵² And Elohim spoke unto Yisroel in the marot halailah, and said, Ya’akov, Ya’akov. And he said, Hineni.” (Bereshis 46:1-2 Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB))

⁵³ In Exodus 3:4, amidst the desert, Moses encountered God in the burning bush.

Upon observing Hashem’s deviation to observe, Elohim vociferously called out to him from inside the shrubbery, uttering the name “Moshe, Moshe.” And he said the Hebrew word “Hineni,” which translates to “Here I am.” (Shemot 3:4 Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB))

⁵⁴ In 1 Samuel 3:10, Samuel was summoned by God on three separate occasions.

“And Hashem came, and stood, and called as at other times, Shmuel, Shmuel. Then Shmuel answered, Speak; for Thy eved shomei’a.” (Shmuel Alef 3:10 Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB))

⁵⁵ In Isaiah 6:8, in the prophetic vision of Isaiah, his lips underwent a purification process, enabling him to respond affirmatively to God’s summons.

“I heard the voice of Adonoi, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us? Then said I, Hineni; send me.” (Yeshayah 6:8 Orthodox Jewish Bible)

⁵⁶ In the entirety of the New Testament, Acts 9:10 was the only time when a person responded to God with the words “Here I am.” Ananias was the conduit through which God conveyed information to Paul regarding Jesus. At the time he was saved, Paul had been persecuting Jews because of their trust in Jesus, and this continued until the moment of his salvation. Ananias needed a lot of bravery to bring himself to present himself to Saul and lay hands on him so that Saul could become a member of the body of Christ.

⁵⁷ The Hineni prayer, a meditation commonly recited by the cantor before the Musaf service on Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur in the Jewish liturgy, distinguishes itself from the numerous pages of praise and supplication recited during the High Holidays due to its utilization of the first person singular form. Interestingly, the members of the congregation appear to be mere observers during this particular time of the liturgical ceremony. The cantor partakes in a personal discourse with the divine, beseeching for the favorable reception of their petitions, notwithstanding any individual deficiencies.

The cantor vocalizes the phrase “Hineni he’ani mima’as.” This is translated as, “In the present circumstance, I find myself lacking in both tangible accomplishments and commendable qualities. However, I have presented myself before the divine being, God, in order to intercede for the nation of Israel.”

According to the teachings of Judaism, every individual bears the responsibility for one’s personal prayer. In contrast to other cultural practices, our tradition does not acknowledge the presence of an intermediary. The cantor engages in prayer alongside the congregation, rather than solely praying on behalf of the congregation. The choreography and arrangement of the service substantiate this claim. In

⁴⁶ Isaiah 6:5-7.

⁴⁷ Leviticus 9:2.

⁴⁸ Leviticus 22:32.

⁴⁹ Exodus 19:6, Deuteronomy 7:6, and Deuteronomy 26:19.





from God. Hineni is a Hebrew biblical term that means “here I am.” It is used in the Old Testament to respond to a divine call that involves complete surrender, a complete determination to do what is asked. It implies a desire to devote yourself entirely.

Hineni not only emphasizes the individual’s physical location but also conveys one’s entire presence. “Here I stand unmovable,” which indicates giving full attention to hear what God is saying and being eager to carry out the required activity. This reaction marks a turning point in the lives of those who have responded to God with this word.

Hineh is often translated as “behold.” The statement alerts people to an impending revelation. The Hebrew word “ani” expresses a person’s willingness to serve the Lord. It is total readiness to give oneself – an offer of total availability. However, this announcement is not one-sided, for in one’s total devotion and surrender, God reveals His innermost self and donates Himself to the human person.

In Genesis 3:8-10, following the consumption of the prohibited fruit, Adam and Eve hastily departed from the presence of God. “Ayyekkah?,

a conventional place of worship, the chazzan and the congregation are oriented towards a shared direction. Every individual engaged in the act of worship bears the responsibility of uttering each and every syllable included within the scripture.

Hence, it is paradoxical that on the High Holidays, the cantor assumes the role of representing the Jewish community. Additionally, there is concern regarding the potential bad judgment that the congregation may face from God as a result of the offenses committed by the cantor. Within certain synagogues, it is customary for the cantor to vocalize the prayer known as Hineni while traversing the assembly. This practice serves as a symbolic representation of the congregation’s act of delegating the chazzan with the responsibility of leading the prayers on their behalf. However, it should be noted that the Hineni prayer is essentially an elaborate and theatrical rendition of a prayer commonly found in the Siddur, which is recited on a daily basis. One frequently disregarded example manifests itself prior to each occurrence of the Amidah.

In the Hebrew tradition, it is customary to begin prayers with the phrase “Adonai, s’fatai tiftach, ufi yagid tehilatecha,” which translates to “Lord, open my lips, and my mouth will declare your praise.” May the divine presence grant me the ability to articulate expressions of adoration towards you.

לַעֲתָשָׁה?, Where are you?” God called out to Adam and Eve. Instead of providing a direct response, Adam articulated a complaint as a justification for his act of concealment. Adam disobeyed God’s directive and thereafter attributed his transgression to his spouse. Instead of coming to God, they hid from God. God initially had a close relationship with Adam and Eve. But now, Adam and Eve immediately hid in the garden foliage when they heard the Lord God walking. God addressed them, but they were no longer addressable. God was waiting for them to respond with “Hineni” so they would desire to return to Him. Adam said to God, “Your presence in the garden frightened me since I was naked. In hiding, I sought refuge.”

Hineni also denotes the response of a father who directs his complete attention toward his child when being called. During Isaac’s journey to Mount Moriah, he assumed the responsibility of bringing the wood required for the sacrificial offering. However, he noticed the absence of the sacrificial lamb and consequently sought clarification from his father to which Abraham responded, “Hineni.” When a human person has established intimacy with God and earnestly invokes His presence, God reciprocates with equal fervor.⁵⁷ To the human who cries to God, “Where are you?” God reciprocates with the response, “Hineni, I am here.”⁵⁸

The phrase “Here I am” possesses a significant and intricate connotation. To complete it, “Hineni” assumes a position. The person announces that he is standing on his ground. “This is where I put my lot. I am aware of the most likely outcomes

⁵⁷ Genesis 22:7. “And Yitzchak spoke unto Avraham his father, and said, Avi (My father): and he said, Hineni, beni (Here am I, my son). And he said, Hinei, the eish (fire) and the wood: but where is the seh (lamb) for a burnt offering.” Bereshis 22:7 Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB)

⁵⁸ Isaiah 58:6-9. 8 Then shall thy light break forth like the shachar (dawn), and thine healing titzmach (shall spring forth; Tzemach) speedily; and thy tzedek shall go before thee; the kavod Hashem shall be thy rearguard. 9 Then shalt thou call, and Hashem shall answer; thou shalt cry for help, and He shall say, Hineni! (Yeshayah 58:8-9 Orthodox Jewish Bible (OJB))





(both positive and negative), and they do not affect my decision because I will not be moving. This is the ground where I intend to take a stance.” This is *Hineni*.

EMUNAH הַנּוּמָא

Emunah can be understood as a belief that fosters both faith and faithfulness, hence emphasizing the importance of taking action.⁵⁹ The experience of faith extends beyond cognitive processes and encompasses the entirety of one’s physical being. The Scriptures portray faith in the form of a stairway. It is possible that one is not aware of the fact that the stairs provide access to the subsequent level. Nevertheless, the subsequent level may only be accessed while ascending the ladder. Emunah encompasses more than a mere belief system since it entails the integration of faith with concrete actions. The biblical interpretation of faith suggests that one’s actions hold greater significance than knowledge.

The figures of Noah, Abraham, Sarah, and Moses, among others, are examples of unwavering faith, Emunah.⁶⁰ Although their narratives and situations varied, all individuals possessed a profound sense of conviction within their innermost being. These biblical figures resided with the anticipation that God would honor each of His promises.

Faith, then, is the state of being confident in the existence or realization of anticipated outcomes, as well as the firm belief in the existence of God that is not perceptible by the senses. The strength of Emunah is attributed to its reflection of the divine attribute of Hesed in God. The human

person is capable of embarking upon uncharted territory due to his reliance on and faith in God’s Hesed.

However, this stability is not the result of effectively managing one’s personal possessions. The human person stabilizes himself by firmly gripping or relying on the steadfastness and trustworthiness of God.

The desire for resilience in times of vulnerability, tranquility amid discord, and elation during sorrow is deeply ingrained in the human person. There are several compelling justifications for the necessity of faith among individuals who identify as followers of God since it enables them to endure and persevere in the face of adversity within a complex and demanding societal context. Emunah can also be seen as a concept denoting the qualities of *endurance or steadfastness*. The development of endurance generally occurs through periods of adversity. The strength of one’s faith increases.⁶¹ The understanding of Emunah, denoting the quality of being faithful in upholding commitments, finds application in both human and divine contexts.⁶²

TESHUVAH תְּשׁוּבָה

The Hebrew term “teshuvah” in the Hebrew Scriptures reaches its height with God’s action of restoring the human person to Himself. It pertains to the process of repentance, wherein a human person expresses remorse or experiences

⁵⁹ It is worth noting that the word “Amen” shares its etymological origin with “*eman*,” a term that signifies the act of confirming. The term “*haemeen*” refers to believing or placing faith in something.

⁶⁰ Hebrews 11.

⁶¹ The account in Exodus 17 describes the action of Moses continuously elevating his hands for the duration of a day, resulting in the attainment of victory by the Israelites in a pivotal conflict. Based on the provided descriptions, it is evident that the individual’s hands exhibited a state of immobility, referred to as Emunah, until the conclusion of daylight hours. The term Emunah conveys a sense of steadfastness within the given environment.

⁶² Psalm 37:3 and Habakkuk 2:4, highlight the significance of Emunah in relation to human conduct. Similarly, Deuteronomy 32:4 and Psalm 36:6 underscore the attribute of Emunah ascribed to God.





feelings of guilt regarding his sins. The inclination towards guilt within the notion can be ascribed to the influence of the Greek term *metanoia*, *μετανοια*.

Teshuvah, commonly called repentance, necessitates the human person's voluntary engagement in introspection and reestablishing one's spiritual bond with God. The given statement signifies a determination or choice either to opt to alter one's trajectory or reestablish a spiritual bond with God. Repentance is contingent upon the existence of a chosen goal towards which one seeks to return.

Teshuvah commences with the exemplification of God's *Hesed*. Expressing God's benevolence and limitless clemency establishes the fundamental basis for all subsequent events and situations. Within the framework of understanding, an examination emerges regarding the locus of the human person's genuine inclination regarding reparation. When contemplating reestablishing a connection with God, it is crucial to recognize that the impetus for this action does not stem from the human person but rather from God, who has facilitated the course of one's restoration. To commence the reconciliation process with God, it is crucial to maintain an unwavering faith in God's purpose for our restoration to His presence.

In this context, three distinct turning movements are noted: the turning point, turning away, and turning back. The lack of these three turnings prevents the possible restoration with God. Human persons frequently experience significant instances of self-discovery and introspection, resulting in a critical turning point in their personal journeys. Following this, a significant change or transition occurs when it becomes unsustainable to persist at this pivotal point. In due course, it becomes a moment to shift toward something or someone, such as God.

Within the biblical framework, repentance holds a deeper importance that extends beyond a mere verbal declaration of regret. The process involves thoroughly reconfiguring a human person's cognitive processes, emotional disposition, and total being to relinquish thoughts and actions that hinder one's return to God. The suggested course of action is a return to God's original plan, where individuals would exist in harmony with Him, engage in eternal communication with Him, cultivate a sense of communal belonging with Him, and faithfully follow His guidance.

YIRAH יִרָא

Biblical literature depicts the fear of God as great veneration, awe, and respect for God. It begins a spiritual journey with the startling realization that God is an incomprehensible mystery, an eternal truth beyond human knowledge. Holy Fear manifests through reverence and peaks through unflinching commitment.

God's holiness⁶³ and greatness⁶⁴ inspire worship. Moses hid his face when God appeared because he feared seeing him.⁶⁵ After being stricken speechless by the divine decree, Elijah covered his face with his mantle.⁶⁶ Seeing God and his role in creation and history inspires awe and adoration. This includes his ability to create,⁶⁷ liberate the Israelites from Egypt,⁶⁸ and exercise judicial authority.⁶⁹

Humans experience fear and curiosity, horror and awe, panic and trust, and a great yearning for God's presence. Contrasting connections demonstrate this structure's paradoxical nature.

⁶³ Psalms 99:3 and 111:9.

⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 7:11, 9:4, Psalms 47:2, and 96:4.

⁶⁵ Exodus 3:6.

⁶⁶ 1 Kings 19:12-13.

⁶⁷ Psalm 33:8, 9.

⁶⁸ Exodus 14:31.

⁶⁹ Psalm 76.





Fear is associated with physical sensations such as shivering, trembling, dreading, and rattling. But fear is also linked to affection, loyalty, obedience, and faithfulness.

Those who fear God are virtuous.⁷⁰ These people desire peace and avoid wrongdoing.⁷¹ They avoid sorcery, adultery, false oaths, wage withholding, widow and orphan persecution, and stranger expulsion.⁷² Fearing God means acting properly.⁷³ Such behavior shows tremendous regard for God. Interpreting all the commandments in the context of this is essential to understanding them: Since it is God who speaks, calling the human person to Himself, the Scriptures warn against deceit and stress the significance of reverence.

Fear and love of God are intertwined. Fearing God can lead to a deep love for Him. The more one recognizes the need to revere God, the more God gives grace to build affection for Him. Completely loving people will eventually exhibit revering love, not out of fear of punishment or hope of benefits, but because of their love. When we meditate and revere God, our hearts burn with love, and God's joy comforts us. Many facets of human life revolve around love and awe. We must always contemplate the love of God that scrutinizes our innermost thoughts and aspirations. We should always venerate God and follow His precepts in the holy fear of God.

TAMIM בימת

The notion of perfection encompasses the intricate understanding of the fear of God at its height or as its goal.⁷⁴ There is a connection

⁷⁰ Job 1:1 and Exodus 18:21.

⁷¹ Psalm 34:15.

⁷² Malachi 3:5.

⁷³ Psalm 34:15, Job 1:1, 8, 3:7, 8:13, 16:6, and 28:28.

⁷⁴ Isaiah 18:5, Proverbs 20:7, and Psalm 18:26.

between perfection and our inherent moral character. Integrity serves as the fundamental basis for the transformation and purification of human persons, encompassing the notion of unconditional surrender.

In Deuteronomy 18:13, Moses instructed individuals to exhibit the quality of Tamim, which can be understood as being finished, complete, or perfect in the presence of God. It is important to acknowledge that the Hebrew term in question does not primarily denote an abstract concept of moral perfection but emphasizes the state of being meticulously crafted or successfully accomplished. Tamim within the biblical texts is utilized to denote the completion of years,⁷⁵ presentation of healthy animal offerings,⁷⁶ vitality of vines,⁷⁷ and to signify the authenticity of speech,⁷⁸ successful culmination of building projects,⁷⁹ and to signify the ultimate destruction of a people.⁸⁰ The concept of Tamim in one's relationship with God pertains to the state of wholehearted dedication in walking beside Him within the confines of one's existence in this world.

The pure heart demonstrates unwavering commitment to God's faithfulness and love. Despite temporal trials and challenges, the human person persists in unwavering dedication, and spiritual discernment is expressed in faith. The outcome of many circumstances is contingent upon a human person's conviction to trust God.⁸¹

⁷⁵ Genesis 47:18.

⁷⁶ Leviticus 22:21-22.

⁷⁷ Ezekiel 15:5.

⁷⁸ Amos 5:10.

⁷⁹ 1 Kings 6:22.

⁸⁰ Numbers 14:33.

⁸¹ The biblical passages of Exodus 12:5, 29:1, and Leviticus 1:3 stipulate that animals designated for temple sacrifices must possess the characteristic of being unblemished, specifically requiring a year-old male from the flock. Christians establish a symbolic connection between Christ and themselves by associating them with the archetypal sacrificial animal. Paul expresses his admiration for God and recognizes the concept of God's predestined choice of mankind in Christ, which was established before the creation of the universe. The purpose of this predestination is to attain holiness and moral purity in the presence of God, as mentioned





Perfection encompasses the state of being fully mature.⁸² The transition process is likened to a state of milk dependency in childhood contrasted with the ability to consume solid food as an adult. Perfection is dynamic and yet elusive. Throughout the course of spiritual history, a multitude of visual representations, such as ladders, streams, highways, travels, and life paths, have been employed as means to comprehend the concept of perfection. Various classifications, such as phases, stages, and degrees of growth, have been devised to facilitate the examination of individual transformation that leads to total surrender, wherein one relinquishes personal volition, aspirations, or authority to God.

Perfection can be understood as the act of fully surrendering oneself without seeking personal recognition or reclamation.⁸³ Genuine acts of giving are characterized by the absence of awareness or recognition by both the right and left hands.⁸⁴ The concealed nature of altruism assimilates the act of giving. God sends rain impartially to both human persons who are morally upright and those who are morally compromised, exemplifying the perfection of God's love. The Sermon on the Mount⁸⁵ exhorts individuals to strive for a level of perfection akin to that of God. The concept of perfection is exemplified by an unrestricted display of love, which is illustrated by the freedom of birds to soar over the skies and the blossoming of flowers.⁸⁶

in Ephesians 1:4 and 5:27 and based on the scriptural reference found in Colossians 1:22, among other relevant sources. The inherent perfection of humans can be attributed to their creation in the divine image of God. Baptism, within the context of Christianity, serves to reinstate individuals to their initial state through their connection with Christ. The concept was further developed by Gnosticism. In contrast to the Gnostics, the Fathers held the belief that the state of perfection resides as an inherent capability within all individuals, with a constant pursuit of growth and advancement. This concept draws a parallel between the human race and an infant, intricately fashioned by a divine being from pristine soil and imbued with vitality through celestial respiration. He has received an invitation to enhance his abilities by attaining the boundless power of the uncreated entity.

⁸² Exemplars of maturity: Noah in Genesis 6:9; Abraham in Genesis 17:1, and David in 2 Samuel 22-24. The gospels assert that Jesus personified the wishes and intentions of God.

⁸³ Proverbs 10:9, 19:1, and 28:6; Isaiah 47:9.

⁸⁴ Matthew 5:20.

⁸⁵ Matthew 5:48.

⁸⁶ Matthew 6:25-34.

In 1 John 4:18, genuine love is characterized by the capacity to relinquish personal insecurities and triumph over self-doubt.

The concept of making the ultimate sacrifice in the context of love establishes a connection between the pursuit of excellence and the notion of martyrdom. The term perfection is attributed to martyrdom, not because of the termination of the human person's life, but rather due to its exemplification of perfect love. The deaths of martyrs are significant because they result in the complete cessation of their lives, but perfection encompasses both martyrdom and love. This is because these concepts epitomize complete surrender and abandonment. There is a prevailing call for individuals to collaborate rather than engage in self-righteous seclusion. The objective is to cultivate our spiritual essence and strive towards becoming a perfect sanctuary for God. The concept of perfection entails the altruistic manifestation of love to the extent of sacrificing one's own life.⁸⁷

GOD'S REVELATION AND SELF-DONATION IN THE RECIPROCAL SPIRITUAL RELATION

The reciprocal spiritual relation begins as God reveals Himself to the human person, initiating the relation as discerned in Shema. It is fundamentally God's invitation for the human to enter into a relationship with Him. Shema, in the reality of the human person, is receptivity that leads to responsibility that unfolds in listening, heeding, obeying, and doing. In God's self-revelation and donation, God makes His Holiness (Hakkadosh) and faithful love (Hesed) known to human persons.

⁸⁷ According to Teresa of Avila, the pursuit of perfection does not revolve around indulging in internal joys, experiencing great ecstasies, visions, or engaging in prophecy. Conversely, the objective is to synchronize our volition with that of a higher power, namely God, such that we genuinely aspire for all that we acknowledge to be in accordance with His sacred intentions. See *The Way of Perfection* and *Interior Castle* by St. Teresa of Avila.





In the Hebrew Scriptures, God's *Hesed* and *Hakkadosh* were witnessed by the Israelites. During the time of the forefathers of the Israelite nation, they were still semi-nomadic families, but as soon as they arrived at new pastureland and were able to pitch their tents, they built an altar and prayed to God, saying, "Be present here. Keep us secure. Please attend to us!" *Yahweh* is primarily a prayer, an invocation for God to be present, that literally translates as "May he be there!" The holy name of God that is experienced as a protective Presence, initially encompasses all aspects of life: birth, sickness, injustice, and death. God's protective Presence, compassionately involved in human beings' ways, is present with them on their journey through life. This fundamental religious feeling of God's Presence is not a cold and impersonal experience. For, while ancient Israel did not confine God to the clearly defined figure of a person, his Presence was inextricably linked with the genesis of personhood. As the force of life, God is inextricably linked with birth; God is an eternal companion present in every person's life journey, and He does not abandon His creature in the end. When the Israelites realized this, they shivered in awe that they were fully in God's hands and that God made and sustained their entire life.⁸⁸

During the time of the oppression of the Hebrew people in Egypt, God's name became a force of liberation. With Moses leading the oppressed Hebrew people, they invoked God's name, "Be present in our struggle against Egypt, the house of bondage. Please come and set us free. Build us a house for us and our children." These people dedicated their lives to the pursuit of liberation, and, in their participation, they gained strength because God was with them.⁸⁹

88 Kees Waaijman, *Spirituality. Forms, Foundations, Methods*. Peeters: Leuven, 2002, 431-432.

89 *Ibid.*, 432-433.

Two hundred years after Egypt was liberated by the inspiring force of God, Israel was established under the kingship of David. From this point onward, God resided in the temple in Jerusalem. God anointed the king, who represented Him among the people.⁹⁰ The temple became God's dwelling among the people, who made Him present in their festivals.⁹¹ However, despite Israel's stability, there was always the possibility of idolatry. Since the beginning, God had no image. Only His Presence was evoked in many god concepts, including King, Supreme God, Lord, Merciful, and Righteous. As a result of Israel's proneness to idolatry, God raised prophets to oppose all forms of idolatry and to remind Israel that He is the *Adonai Hu Ha'Elohim*, יהוה יאנודה םיהלאה.⁹²

During Israel's exile, Israel was forced to return to the desert. The destruction of the sacred city and temple, the end of kingship, and the expulsion of large population sectors all signified their alienation from God. Many people's existential experience was that God had died. At the same time, some saw the exile as the beginning of a spiritual process that would penetrate the exilic experience to its core: "He is there—though we do not know how." As every form of mediation had vanished, God, whose *Hesed* is above all categories, awaited His creation from the end of time. This new creation, on the other hand, was carried out by God Himself as the Israelites re-established their relationship with God. In the destruction in exile, the Israelites began their return to God as a new institution was created: the house of learning, *bet ha-midrash*, שרדמב רמיה. These houses became the dwelling places of God's Presence, *shekinah*, הניכש. Here, their whole being was centered on the study of

90 Psalm. 2:72

91 Psalms 48, 150. One of the great proclamations made after Yom Kippur prayers are the words, "HaShem Hu Ha'Elohim" (HaShem, He is G-d).

92 Waaijman, 433-434.





the Torah as they discerned the will of God for them. Those who followed the Torah represented God's will.⁹³

INTERIORIZATION IN THE HUMAN PERSON IN THE SPIRITUAL RECIPROCAL RELATION

God's Hakkadosh and Hesed purify and sanctify the human person and stir holy fear (Yirah) and perfection (Tamim) in God. The receptivity of the human person allows him to be totally available and surrender himself to God (Hineni), which grows in an atmosphere of faith and trust in God (Emunah). This reciprocal spiritual relation leads the human person back to God (Teshuvah), the path towards union with Him.

In the Scriptures, the human person is seen as: 1. Vulnerable (space):⁹⁴ When the human person is threatened from the outside, it manifests itself visibly. Images like cords, chains, and shackles depict how the interior space is confined and how it is injured. Evil can enter this interior place when there is no protection. The worst thing that can happen to the person is for the barriers surrounding him to crumble. With this, the abode of the human person is then taken away; 2. Needy:⁹⁵ The needy person is like a hungry person who dreams of food. When he wakes up, his soul is empty, or he is like a thirsty person who dreams of drinking. When he awakens, he discovers that his soul remains weak. Hence, the movement is from needy (mouths wide open) to receptive (unfolded hand); 3. Sensitive:⁹⁶ This involves the physical body, with its feelings of love and excitement, dread and horror, and the birth of tenderness; and the womb, where new life is conceived. In witnessing a child or another struggling person, one experiences a sensitive

emotion in one's heart. Tenderness is identified with the "womb" of the human person, which is capable of tremendous emotions, the heart, and the interior core (all of which are invisible to the naked eye but are present in everything). Since it seeks something (someone) to satisfy one's neediness, it stirs the sensitivities of the human person.⁹⁷

The human person is capable of the 4 Rs: Receptivity, Reciprocity, Responsiveness, and Responsibility. The person welcomes God and enters into a reciprocal relationship with Him. In Reciprocity, the human person is fundamentally open, leading to Responsiveness to God, which overflows into Responsibility for others. 1. The human person can rest in the other:⁹⁸ The soul can leave itself and be with someone else; 2. A person can be with another:⁹⁹ being with the other person is called being in touch. Being in touch involves personal contact, communion, and closeness. Being in touch is not just a sign of closeness between a husband and wife but of all family ties. To love someone with this kind of love means to let the other person into one's life so deeply that he becomes a part of who he is and, on the other hand, to know oneself well enough to be at home with the other person no matter what. This soul-attachment happens in the relationship with God. Resting in another person is to be with the other person so one can rest in him. God's Hesed shows itself in kindness for the sake of the other. God's Hesed and protection are felt when two people love each other; and 3. A person can give one's life to others:¹⁰⁰ people can lose their souls by giving them away. How should we envision this happening? This is not about finding a sneaky way to harm oneself. The core of laying down one's life is love. Giving one's very soul is giving

93 Ibid., 434-435.

94 Ibid., 438-439.

95 Ibid.

96 Ibid.

97 Ibid.,

98 Ibid., 443.

99 Ibid., 444-445.

100 Ibid., 445-446.





one's entire being. When one attempts to live the other person's life, a certain amount of self-loss occurs. Putting one's soul in the place of another implies offering or sacrificing one's life. For the soul, this means not only losing its haven, ceasing to be needy, and devoting oneself totally to the other, but also ceasing to be [complete] by itself. Becoming the answer-for-the-other (accepting responsibility) implies the disappearance of The I and my Soul. Giving oneself up for the sake of another results in death by sacrifice or being consumed by the other. The human person trapped in his soul, soul's wants, soul's core, or being-by-himself is trapped in himself. To live, the soul must surrender to the movement that transports it to the other and transforms it into the other's substitute. Nobody can take it away, but one can give it up alone. One can put it down and pick it up again. When the human person gives up life as a sacrifice, one returns to God's love, which sees and accepts Him in His irreplaceable role.

The human person's movement is due to one's neediness to fill the empty space that stirs one's sensitives (fear, anger, sadness, joy, and hope, among others). Humans are vulnerable, marked by impulsiveness, hastiness, bareness, exhaustion, and boredom. However, when the neediness of the human person becomes a moment of receptivity for God's revelation and Self-donation, the heart of the human person is softened, "O that today you would listen to his voice!"¹⁰¹ The softening of the heart takes place in its purification and sanctification as it perseveringly receives God. It grows in total surrender and dependence on God in the atmosphere of Hineni and Emunah, enjoying total freedom in its undividedness for God that leads one back to God, Teshuvah, in union with Him.

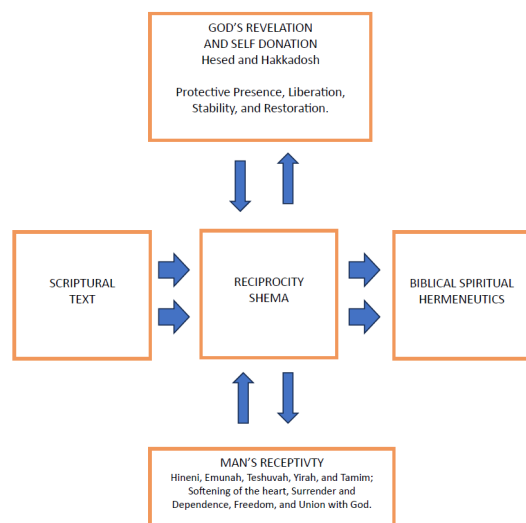
101 Psalm 95: 7-8.

Interiorization takes place in the reality of the human person; however, nothing is received if God does not reveal and give Himself. God's revelation and self-donation are intrinsically part of interiorization. What is essentially interiorized is God Himself. Here, we are brought back to Genesis 1: 26-27, 26: "Then God said, 'Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness...' So, God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." In the reception of God, the human person becomes God's image and likeness, *tselem*, תצלם. The human person is God's image in one's receptivity to God. Though the human person fell from God's presence because of sin, God initiated a covenant relationship so that the person may return to Him. Such reception of God to return to Him is the fundamental dynamic of Interiorization. Interiorization is the receptivity of the human person to God's Revelation and Self-Donation, as one does the Shema, responds with Hineni, grows in Emunah, and finds completion as one returns to God, Teshuvah. The whole movement discerned in the reciprocity with God and the human person is Interiorization.

Below is the visual representation of the reciprocal relation, specifically interiorization in the human person in the direction of Scriptural reading:¹⁰²

102 The visual representation is a collaboration with IFC Seminarians of Immaculate Conception Major Seminary, Diocese of Malolos: Jamin Marfred SJ. Agustin, Jeremy Vhier R. Figueroa, John Aelred DR. Francisco, Danne Steven Q. Galve, Yves A. Gutierrez, Nhel Anthony L. Lutero, Carl Joshua DC. Miguel, John A. Policarpio, Jose Reynaldo S. Salaria.





The dynamics of interiorization in the reciprocal spiritual relation may be unified with Scriptural Reading by considering the following questions:

MOVEMENT IN THE BIBLICAL TEXT

God's Revelation and Self-Donation

1. Reading the text, what does God reveal about Himself? What does God communicate about His inner life? How does God give Himself? (Hesed and Hakkadosh)
2. How does the text articulate the Presence of God? (Protective Presence, Liberation, Stability, Restoration, among others)
3. How does the text articulate the manifestation of God's Presence? How is it made known? How is God's Presence expressed in the human ways of experiencing? (Fear of the Lord and Perfection)

Interiorization in the human person:

1. Reading the text, how does the key biblical figure, together with other figures in the narrative, demonstrate Receptivity to God (or lack thereof)?

2. How does the receptivity of the key biblical figure lead to Responsiveness, that is, making oneself available to God and, in turn, giving oneself to God (or lack thereof)?
3. What movements in the human person are articulated in the text? (Reception of God, softening of the heart, decentering of the self, growing in undivided desire, dependence, surrender, and union with God)
4. How does the text show the 'return' of the biblical figure to God?
5. In the reception of God, how does the biblical figure bear the blossoming of a thousand virtues in one's life and grow in zeal to serve the Church and God's people?

BIBLICAL TEXT IN THE MOVEMENT

God's Revelation and Self-Donation

1. Reading the text, what does God reveal to me about Himself? What does God communicate to me about His inner life? How does God give Himself to me? (Hesed and Hakkadosh)
2. How is the articulated Presence of God in the text actualized in my experience? (Protective Presence, Liberation, Stability, and Restoration, among others)
3. How is the articulated Presence of God manifesting in my life? How is it made known to me? How is God's Presence expressed in my experiences? (Fear of the Lord and Perfection)

Interiorization in the human person:

1. Reading the text, how do I demonstrate Receptivity to God (or lack thereof)?
2. How do I grow in Receptivity that leads me to Responsiveness, which makes me available to God and, in turn, give myself to God (or lack thereof)?





3. What movements in the human person articulated in the text are taking place in my life? (Reception of God, softening of the heart, decentering of the self, growing in undivided desire, dependence, surrender, and union with God)
4. In reading the text, how am I moved to make a 'return' to God?
5. In the reception of God, how do I bear the blossoming of thousand virtues in my life and grow in the zeal to serve the Church and God's people?

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