CHAPTER 1

The Immanent Frame and the Need for Jewish Metaphysics

The Why, What, and Wherefore of Jewish Theology

As a book of Jewish theology, this is a book about God, a book written in Jewish God-language. This language includes a lot of texts: the Bible, Talmud, Midrash, and medieval and contemporary philosophy. But it also includes the sciences and mathematics, the language of the natural world. Jewish theology is concerned to articulate the beliefs of Judaism in the terms of the best philosophy, science, and art of the day. As a synthesis of Judaism and philosophy, its goal is to explain Judaism to Jews and non-Jews and serve to elevate their lives intellectually, morally, and spiritually. Jewish theology, in its most developed form, intends to bring Jews up to the high ideals of justice, humanism, and peace represented by prophetic messianism. Jewish theology, in the apt words of one of the greatest to engage in it, Hermann Cohen, uses the "sources of Judaism" in Torah together with philosophy, science, and art, to craft a higher Judaism. In this task, Jewish theology is an exercise in interpretation and reform. Reviving this task for the twenty-first century is the objective of this book.

However, given its rather grand scope and objectives, Jewish theology is not an easy thing to practice. Especially if one wants to engage Jewish sources, as vast as they are, with the insights of the sciences, philosophy, and the arts, there is a lot to attend to. Added to this, the Jewish theologian must always be aware that his or her work is done with the awareness of the presence of God. God makes things infinitely harder precisely because the God of Israel is a rather unique and difficult figure to pin down. In short, God does not reveal Godself clearly. And Jewish theologians must know from the outset that if they think they have gained real clarity on God they are mistaken. So Jewish theology, which is intrinsically a grand and even hubristic enterprise done often by rather brazen individuals of high

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ambition, must be done with real humility and patience. And since the requisite sounding board and tool of theology is philosophy, the philosophically oriented Jewish theologian will have to know that the most basic rule of all philosophy, the law of non-contradiction, will be consistently challenged and even broken.

Allow me a few examples from the Torah, which is, after all the Jewish theologian's primary source. Here, Moses is told "you cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live" (Ex. 33:20). But then Torah also says. "The Lord spoke to [Moses] face to face" (Dt. 5:4). And in the concluding words of Deuteronomy, we hear: "There has not arisen a prophet in Israel like Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (34:10). And when Moses asks God to tell him His name. God gives him a name, Y-H-V-H, that cannot be said directly and whose meaning is utterly obscure. So Jewish theology enters the philosopher who is trained to abhor contradictions into a series of contradictions. Now many philosophers, when confronted with the contradictions in Jewish theology, simply throw up their hands and say, "contradictory statements about God are non-sensical." Therefore, theology is not something philosophers should bother with. But others cannot look away; they are transfixed like Moses was when he saw the burning bush that was not consumed and said: "I must turn aside toward this marvelous sight" (Ex. 3). And this turning toward God requires patience, contemplation, and study. So, Jewish theology, even more than knowledge of Torah, philosophy, science, and art, requires a certain mental attitude, a form of processual, reflective, and dialogic thinking that requires time and diligence.

Added to all these challenges to Jewish theology, it must be said that theology is not the favorite religious language of Judaism. Jews would rather focus on law and on ethics, on humans and the world. Judaism is more about the world than God and perhaps God wants it that way, given how reticent He is to reveal Himself. At the same time, there is no Jewish people or law, text or philosophy, ethics or nation, without God. God, as Maimonides reminds us, is the "foundation of foundations," the beginning and the end, and all of Jewish law is ultimately about spreading the glory, justice, and life-giving power of God.

Furthermore, thought about God is a natural activity of humans. For the rabbis, it goes back to Abraham, the first monotheist, who the Midrash tells us looked at the world and the religions of his day and thought "these statues of wood and clay cannot be the power behind all that is" (Midrash Genesis Rabbah 38:13). Aristotle is probably correct when he says that all humans wonder about ultimate beginnings and ends. So, that metaphysical

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thinking is part of being human. And Abraham Joshua Heschel points to the wonders of nature in sunsets and storms, rainbows and flowering trees, as one of the leading paths to the contemplation of God. So, in short, not only is there no Judaism without God, there is also no being human that does not, at some point, think about God. Therefore, Jews do speak of God and Jews do have theology. And this is a book of Jewish theology that aims to revive a theological tradition that, for a variety of factors, has run aground and languished in the recent period. In what follows, we will review these factors, beginning with the secular frame in which theology must operate and moving to discuss postmodernism and the celebration of difference in the humanities followed by a review of radical negative theologies as the emergent form of theology for Judaism in the university. Our overall argument is that the immanent frame must be countered and supplemented by another frame, what I call the frame of "a soft Jewish metaphysics." This alternative framework is not meant to totally replace the immanent frame of secularism but, rather, to buttress the moral aspects of it. This frame supplies at once a moral and a sacred foundation to revive and rebuild Jewish theology as a positive and not a negative theology capable of supporting Jewish religious life, liturgy, and ethical action in the world.

The Challenge of Secular as the "Immanent Frame"

We must first reiterate that the form of theology we are concerned to revive in this book comes out of a "high" tradition, a form of Jewish thinking that was formerly a central preoccupation of some of the greatest minds that Judaism produced. We are not therefore concerned with the forms of Judaism that are attracting the most passionate of followers today – ultra-orthodox, "Haredi," and nationalist forms. We are talking of the Jewish theological tradition of Maimonides and of the modern ethical monotheists from Moses Mendelssohn to Martin Buber. And we want to explain why this form is in decline.

Here, Judaism is not unique, as the high traditions of Christianity and Islam are also in decline. And here, the major issue is the rule of the secular order. Charles Taylor calls this "the immanent frame"[1] The notion of the immanent frame is helpful since it goes beyond previous descriptions of secularization as the separation of Church and State, the "privatization" of

[1] Charles Taylor, A *Secular Age* (Harvard University Press, 2007), ch. 15.

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religion in noninstitutional personal forms, and the idea that religious belief is in decline because its ideas are irrational and filled with illusions. The idea of a "frame" for life is a way to refer to the established boundaries and the accepted ways of understanding what is real and false, known and unknown, doable and achievable in modern life ruled by secular institutions.

The sociologist Peter Berger speaks of something similar to what Taylor means by "frame" with his notion of a social or "life world" that is built on structures of "legitimations" – cognitive ideologies – and "plausibility structures" – the accepted behaviors and social rituals of human institutions in societies.[2] Other ways to think about this are to say that the notions of a frame refers to the "metanarratives" that we tell ourselves about how modernity began, what its values are, and what its promises for the future are. We could also refer to the Wittgensteinian notion of a "language game" as a system of discourse with corresponding grammar and semantic units through which a corresponding "way of life" is developed. And finally, we will also use the word "metaphysics" to describe this.

What the "immanent frame" and parallel terms suggest is the peculiarly scientific, rationalist, capitalistic, and individualistic nature of our modern societies. The immanent frame is a decidedly naturalist frame within which religious notions of "transcendence," "spirit," "soul," "holy," to say nothing of "God," make little sense. In the language game of secularism, claims to religious truth are easily dismissed since they cannot be proved by the empirical tools – the primary legitimation sources – of modern science.

In relation to religion, Taylor does not say that the immanent frame rules it out altogether. For even though the frame of our current society is largely secular and materialist, it is porous and pluralistic enough to allow certain forms and elements of religion, what Taylor calls "transcendence," to enter. Yet the interesting thing for religion here is, first, that religion is thoroughly a matter of choice of the individual and not an accepted or given set of social knowledge claims and, second, and more importantly, it is constrained by the overarching materialist presuppositions of the immanent frame. What this means is that only those forms of religion that conform to or can work within the materialist assumptions of the immanent frame are legitimated. This means that those forms of religion that are accepted are largely those that fulfill concrete social and personal needs.

[2] Peter Berger, *The Sacred Canopy* (Anchor, 1969).

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This can be made more clear by a number of examples of the increasingly popular forms of religion in our culture. Here we see (1) religious forms like meditation, yoga, and diets and exercise regimes that provide individual health; (2) religious life-cycle rituals for birth, marriage, and death that give meaning to important personal events; (3) forms of religious charisma, mystical practice, speaking in tongues, and trance states that foster experiences of ecstasy and pleasure, like a drug; and (4) the ways in which religion is used to support political ideologies and social movements on the left and the right.

In all these examples, religion functions as a vehicle or accessory to the project of fulfilling material personal, political, and social needs. In all these examples, religion fulfills a secondary function that serves ideologies and needs that are established by the immanent, largely secular, frame. In Marxist terms, the secular frame provides the "superstructure" and religion the "substructure." In all these examples, it is the human being and her needs that are at the center and not God and God's wisdom, God's will, commands, ethics and laws, that is at the center. In short, the theocentric universe of premodern societies has been overthrown and Nietzsche's "transvaluation" of the old values and hierarchies has been accomplished.

Now, I am certainly not calling for a return to the premodern religious order. There are, indeed, many reasons to support our immanent frame and secular order including the advances for humans that we owe to modern science, democratic political institutions, modern medicine and agriculture, and an international economic order with the rule of law at its center. And no educated rational religious person would want to overthrow this order.

However, saying this, it is also obvious that our secular order is not serving the mass of humanity as it should. The immanent frame ruled by utilitarian and materialistic values that fuel the drive for wealth and success and the narcissistic desire of the individual for power and pleasure has brought us to a series of crises in natural resources, politics, and society that require a rethinking of the bases and assumptions of our present regime of social order.

Therefore, this book is dedicated to the idea that a space must be made in our world for the sacred, for the holy, and for God as a guarantor of what is good and loving and moral in the world in which we live. Here I take the view that although theology and religion has been used by humans as a weapon of violence and oppression, it has within it deep resources of prophetic critique of injustices as well as visions of hope, goodness, love,

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and peace. Here I seek to lift up and follow a long tradition in religion and theology that is often overlooked, distorted, or ignored in the confines of the secular frame that simply cannot see religion's inner light nor can it comprehend its discourses of goodness and hope. Here I will insist that despite its history of patriarchy and authoritarianism along with its fear and demonization of the "other" there is a remainder, a surplus, and "essence" to Judaism most clearly seen in its notion of God that transcends Judaism's historical abuses and errors. Finally, I will say that I have made something of a wager on God and Judaism that is a consequence of both reason and experience. And I cannot blame or judge others who, after careful consideration, have made a different decision on these matters. In this book, however, I will attempt to argue that choosing God and Judaism can be a rational choice and not, as secularists often claim, irrational, overly emotional, or the result of bowing to overbearing religious authority.

But a return to theology for Jews as a rational endeavor will have to be, as the Buddhists like to say, particularly "skillful" in its means of expression and teaching if it is to get a hearing in the secular order. And the reader will find in this book one skillful means for Jewish theology to be the construction of an alternative frame to the immanent frame of secularism, which we will call the frame of a "soft metaphysics."

Jewish theology, we will argue, needs metaphysics as a transcendent frame to serve as a counterweight to the given immanent frame that rules the secular world. This metaphysical frame begins with God as guarantor of human value and Torah as God's instrument of guidance. And we will argue that God and Torah provide a metaphysical frame for the nonmaterial moral values of Jewish theology. Without it, transcendent theological claims will constantly succumb to the more powerful material values of the immanent frame. Without this frame, it is nearly impossible to make the moral claims and ethical demands required to address pressing issues like the demise of democracy and the impending climate catastrophe.

We call our frame a "soft" and not a "hard" metaphysics since we are neither arguing that this frame must replace the immanent frame of the secular order nor are we arguing that this frame has universal claims to truth for all humans. Since Jewish metaphysics is open to philosophy, to science, and to other religions, it is porous enough to find points of overlap with other parallel systems even as differences will exist. As a rational system, Jewish metaphysics can recognize the power and value of science as a rational system as well as other religious metaphysical systems. So, dialogue with others is part of Jewish soft metaphysics. However, our soft Jewish metaphysics forms, for the Jewish community, its anchor and

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ground. It also forms the underlying assumptions and structures upon which Jewish theological arguments for the priority of nonmaterial moral values are made. The reader will find our most extended discussion of a Jewish soft metaphysics in Part II of this book.

Postmodernism and Its Discontents

In addition to the immanent frame of secularism, there have been developments in philosophy in the humanities of the university that have been particularly pernicious for Jewish theology. Here we are speaking of postmodern philosophy and a variety of post-Marxist forms of cultural theory that have become popular in the humanities as well as the social sciences. These theoretical perspectives have made not only theology an unwelcome conversation partner but also have thwarted age-old attempts to speak of a common humanity and a common good. What we are seeing is a glorification of differences and particularism and a radical suspicion of any discussion of human unity and metaphysical universalism that theology champions. We are also seeing radical challenges to the roots and major themes of the liberal arts tradition in the university that has eroded support for the study of "Western Civilization" going back to the Greeks and the Bible, which are precisely the sources of the Jewish theology we are seeking to revive.

The implication for our attempt to develop a Jewish metaphysics as a counterweight to the immanent frame of secularism is obvious here. For postmodernism in its very inception opposes any and all metaphysics and rational systems of order. And as we have said, its particular target is classical and theological systems of metaphysics that are fundamental to all Western religious theologies. So, this book will devote significant time to an analysis of postmodern philosophy, to its assumptions and origins, and the consequences of postmodernism for theology.

World War II and the Shoah

One way of describing the origins of postmodernism is to look to its roots in the aftermath of the World War II and the Shoah. At this point, many intellectuals and theologians became convinced that the central problem that required response was the rational "bureaucratic mentality" that led to the development of a totalistic anti-Semitic ideology in which the Jew was the enemy and eradication of the Jew through the industrial killing machine of concentration camps was the goal. The argument of some

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was that the drive for totalistic explanation and solutions was an outcome of Western totalistic philosophies. This led to an attack on all rational systems of truth, all metaphysics and idealism, all "meta-narratives," and, in the words of Emmanuel Levinas, all "Totalities." Levinas describes Western philosophy as the "rule of the same" where everything that is different is dissolved into the same rational brew. This yields the philosopher's sense of certainty that he or she has the truth. Levinas's solution to this problem is the appreciation of "Infinity," that which exceeds all boundaries, all limits, and any totality.[3] In his book *Le Differend*, the French philosopher Francois Lyotard called for the celebration of the "fragmentary."[4] The search for the "differend" values incompleteness over wholeness and completeness. Jacques Derrida, the true father of postmodernism, made deconstruction of narrative thematics and meaning into a way of doing philosophy. In his *Of Grammatology*, Derrida criticizes the use of reason in philosophy as a pernicious "logocentrism."[5] Derrida, himself, was aware that his thought was meant to institute a radical change, a virtual revolution in philosophy. Thus, he called his philosophy "a catastrophic consciousness." And he also tells us that he desires the "end of philosophy."[6]

Other important representatives of French postmodernism include the literary critic Roland Barthes who used literary theory to argue that it is literature, its genres, tropes, and mechanisms, more than the author that determines the shape of literature. So that he declared "the death of the author" and the "end of the subject."[7] And then there is Michel Foucault who reduced all of philosophy and all "regimes of truth" to the dynamics of power.

The American philosopher Richard Rorty sums up the result of the series of critiques of metaphysics and rationalism in postmodernism as follows: "Philosophy must be therapeutic rather than constructive, edifying rather than systematic, designed to make the reader question his own motives for philosophizing rather than to supply him with a new philosophical

[3] Levinas, Emmanuel, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority* (Duquesne University Press, 1969).

[4] Francois Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (University of Minnesota Press, 1984); and *The Differend: Phrases in Dispute* (University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

[5] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. G. C. Spivak (Johns Hopkins Press, 1974), 13.

[6] Jacques Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. A. Bass (University of Chicago Press, 1978), 3.

[7] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *Image, Music, Text*, trans. S. Heath (Hill and Wang, 1973), 167.

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program."[8] After the initial break with the aims and goals of philosophy from Plato to Kant, postmodernism has given rise to a series of cultural critiques and new charges against philosophy such that it supports the rule of elites, colonialism, misogyny, homophobia, racism, capitalism, and virtually all the ills of modernity. These attacks have obscured the liberatory element of philosophy as a critique of illusion and superstition. It also leaves behind the philosophical distinction between mere opinion and truth as the new philosophy celebrates subjectivity and each person's right to their own truth and ever-changing identity. Furthermore, the priority given to difference over sameness destroys the humanistic quest for that which unites us as human beings. The series of attacks on the universal and the rational has remade the university, especially in the US, into a battle-ground of identities and grievances and a source of discord and even hatred and violence. No one wants to ignore or paper over discrimination and disrespect for those who are different. As "the other" in Western societies for centuries, Jews know well the experience of being a pariah in a majority culture. Jewish theology then gives special attention to the stranger and her needs. At the same time, rational Jewish theology insists that all humans have a single source in Adam and Eve and that themes of human unity, peace, and love must be continually emphasized in the face of difference. This is the ultimate promise of theology, that human beings can overcome their differences and build a better world together.

Post Modernism, Negative Theology, and Apophatic Jewish Theologies

While the postmodern philosophers were mainly focused on a critique of Western philosophy, they also addressed issues of theology. And following the work of the French postmoderns, a group of theologians sought to make a virtue of principles of difference, deconstruction, and the fragmentary for theology. Here we see radical versions of what is called "negative theology," which technically are called "apophatic theologies" or "denial of speaking" theologies. Here one refers to God by a series of negation strategies that deny God's existence, declare God dead, or speak of God in terms like "the abyss," the "absent one," or the "nothing." The important thing to say about this form of Jewish theology is that the negation of God and the negative itself becomes revelatory not only of reality but also of God.

[8] Richard Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature* (Blackwell, 1980), 6.

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Negative Theology has its origins, on the one hand, in Jewish medieval philosophy, where Maimonides seeks to establish God's transcendence from the world and humans and, one the other hand, in mysticism, where the mystic stresses God's unknowability and ultimate mysteriousness. We ourselves referred to a tenet of negative theology in the beginning of the book when we asked for humility and patience in knowing that clear knowledge of God is impossible to gain. However, contemporary negative theologies in Judaism go well beyond the needed patience and humility of the traditional Jewish theologian. For traditional theologians never doubted the existence and goodness of God. They doubted, rather, their own ability to know clearly and express in language the nature and depths of God's existence and goodness. So, the negation there is really a negation directed at human abilities rather than a negation in God.

Some point to Nietzsche, who declared God dead,[9] as an early source of modern negative theologies. But for Jews, radical negative or apophatic theology finds its roots in the work of post-Holocaust or post-Shoah theologians. These theologians were so distraught by the destruction of the Jewish communities of Europe that they placed all assertions of God's presence, power, and providential concern for the Jewish people under suspicion. Here we see a number of Jewish theologians speaking about God as in hiding, in eclipse, or absent and unavailable to Jews. And although we can also see how it is that the continued existence of genocidal movements and massive human suffering and injustice in the world may lead postmodern theologians to continue to push the theologies of the Shoah to the most radically negative formulations, one does not have to be a theologian or a rabbi to recognize that no religion, and certainly no theology, can persist in the mode of negation alone. Indeed, no person can subsist on negation. It is a simple truism of all life that without hope, without positive goals, without affirmation of life, we die. And furthermore, one could also argue that the essence of Judaism and indeed, all religion, is precisely the bestowal of hope in a time of despair.

Thus, one could simply say that this is a book about hope. It is a book about God as the guarantor of hope for the present and for the future. It is a book about positive and not negative theology in which the reality and existence of God is affirmed, along with the value of God's creation of earth.

[9] Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Gay Science* [1882], trans. Walter Kaufmann (Random, 1974), Book 111: 125.

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This book is traditional in that it affirms not only God's existence but the centrality of Torah and mitzvot (commandments) in Judaism. It is philosophical in that it affirms the importance of reason, of rational argument and propositions, and the need for ideas and concepts and ideals, as guides to thought and behavior. It is modern and liberal in that it holds to the truth that humans are equal and the same in nature and capacities and all deserve equal treatment and justice under the law. It is also modern in looking to the sciences for knowledge of the world and technology for the sustenance of life. It follows Kant and the ethical monotheists in insisting that a primary task of religion is ethics and the pursuit of justice. This means that religion not only upholds the moral ideal but inculcates it in moral training, which for Judaism is a central task of Jewish law. But it seeks to go beyond Kant and ethics. It does this in its deep appreciation for particularities of the language of the texts of Torah, then for the tradition of Jewish interpretation of hermeneutics, and finally for the role of Jewish liturgy in inculcating the transcendent experience of the sacred what Judaism calls *kedushah*, or holiness.

Chapter Summaries

We begin in Chapters 2 and 3 with a discussion of the intellectual academic scene, both in Jewish Studies and in the humanities in American universities, which has created a largely hostile environment for the form of philosophical Jewish theology we are advocating. In Chapter 2, we review post-Holocaust or post-Shoah theology, which is a kind of anti-theology in which the powers of God are denied. Here we focus on the work of Richard Rubenstein, Emil Fackenheim, and Hans Jonas. In their work, traditional Jewish theodicy is radically challenged and the negative experience of the Shoah is presented as revelatory of God and fundamental reality.

Chapter 3 concerns the postmodern thought of Jacques Derrida and Daniel Boyarin and then turns to Jean-Luc Marion and Elliot Wolfson to view the development of the most radical forms of apophatic theologies. In some ways, these thinkers pick up where the post-Shoah theologians left off. However, their work represents a thoroughgoing challenge to the very basis of the humanities as a meaning-giving enterprise built on the power of language and reason and aimed at the elevation of Western civilization as a fundamentally moral venture.

The next parts of the book, Parts II–IV, focus on ways to revive Jewish theology as a positive theology. We begin again at the beginning with

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medieval metaphysics. We call our revised metaphysics a "soft" and "practical metaphysics" that is concerned less with establishing universal truths about the nature of reality and more about probabilistic truths and a basic framework for Jewish theology aimed at serving the pragmatics of a good and just and hopeful Jewish existence.

This framework, we argue, requires two principles: God and Torah as revealed by God. These are fundamental assumptions of Jewish theology that must be accepted for Judaism as a system of thought and action to work. Furthermore, Tanak has its principles too, and these are given in the doctrines of "creation," "revelation," and "redemption" along with the notion of Israel as people, land, and nation chosen for God's special mission in the world. This mission is to redeem the world in a just peace. The most significant contribution of the Bible to a Jewish soft metaphysics is that God, the eternal Being at the origin of the universe, enters into time to reveal His will and attend to the affairs of human beings. So, the Bible itself has its own version of a soft metaphysics and we will use the work of Martin Buber and Franz Rosenzweig to explicate it in the second section of Chapter 4.

In Chapter 5, we engage in a methodological discussion. The issue of method involves the "how to" of Jewish theology. How is Jewish theology to be carried out as an intellectual and religious program? Here we turn to the work of some of the most creative and constructive Jewish and non-Jewish theologians of our day. For it is not the case that all work in Jewish theology is negative and apophatic. Indeed, much work is being done under the rubrics of "constructive Jewish theology" and "theological realism." These terms suggest that there are existing resources in philosophy today to construct a theology out of the religious traditions that support the good life. The term "theological realism" means that there are also resources to support a notion of God's existence as real, independent of human thought about God and also independent of the world God created.

For our discussion of analytic Jewish theology, we will explore the recent work of three Jewish thinkers – Cass Fisher, Sam Fleischacker, and Yehudah Jerome Gellman. In the work of these figures, we see a series of creative and constructive attempts to show how it is that a rational individual would come to understand the theological claims of Judaism as warranted by philosophical tools.

The second method that we discuss in Chapter 5 is hermeneutics. We turn to hermeneutics or the science of interpretation because Judaism is more than a philosophy; it is a series of texts. Here we aim to take advantage of the considerable work in linguistics in theory of sign,

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symbol, and narrative, and in the interpretation of text that emerges from the phenomenological tradition inaugurated by Edmund Husserl and Martin Heidegger. Where analytic philosophy focuses on common language use, hermeneutics focuses more on poetic language, law, and religious literature. Here the figures of Hans-Georg Gadamer and especially Paul Ricoeur have been central. These figures have developed hermeneutical strategies that preserve the meaning-giving role of texts in human culture. The crucial addition to theology that hermeneutical tradition makes is the insistence that religious texts contain transhistorical truths that cannot be reduced to historical and cultural forces. Hermeneutics sees the process of interpretation as an application of the truths (or word) of an ancient text to the contemporary moment. And hermeneutics has a practical dimension since it aims to end in ethical action in the world. For Judaism, hermeneutics culminates first in halakhah but then also in prophetic ethics.

In Part III of the book, we display some of the features of our own positive Jewish theology in three chapters. Here a central theme of the book, the tension between the transcendent God of Being and the personal God, is directly engaged. We use the methods of analytic philosophy and hermeneutics to both describe and negotiate this tension in the identity of the God through looking at a natural theology (Chapter 6), the ways God is manifested in the Bible (Chapter 7), and the way God is presented in daily synagogue liturgy (Chapter 8).

Chapter 6 on natural theology begins in an attempt to retrieve this form of theology, which has been cast aside by the neo-Kantian focus on ethics alone and the many developments of modern physics. Kant demolished natural theology with his series of critiques of medieval metaphysics as logically inconsistent. And modern physics and science made many of the assertions of Aristotelian physics untenable. However, if theology as an explanatory system for the mysteries of nature has been challenged, the entire enterprise of natural theology remains relevant to us even today. The first thing to be said, as many sciences have asserted, is that the advances of science should only bring us to greater and not less appreciation of the wonders of the natural world. Furthermore, the most basic question of natural theology, who established the natural laws that rule the universe, remains unanswered without God. Thus, the rational individual is faced with a choice either to accept that the order, laws, and mechanism of the natural order occurred accidentally and by chance or that some larger force, consciousness, or Being lie at its source. The theistic choice to include God in creation not only gives us an elegant and simple account

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of ultimate beginnings, it also suggests an end, meaning, and direction to the creation. Thus, with God, beginning and end is assured and as the rabbis like to say, "the rest is commentary."

An important move in modern natural theology is the change from the medieval drive for certainty to probabilistic arguments. This allows the theologians to say that it is more probable than not that God exists or that life had a divine causative force at its origins. Furthermore, as wonderful as modern science is, it can only go as far as its fundamental assumption – that all that is can be explained through material forces and mathematics. While this takes the scientists very far indeed, there are many things, especially things connected to human consciousness and human temporal experience, that science cannot fully explain. Here theology and religious texts offer a deeper understanding that transcends science. Therefore, even as our chapter on natural theology aims to disclose a theological dimension to modern science, it also addresses the ways in which science is limited and requires aspects of theology that transcend the boundaries and methods of the sciences.

In Chapter 7, we address directly the contradiction in the identity of God that we point to throughout the book. This is the contradiction between the transcendent and eternal God and the personal God of Abraham and Sarah. We address the contradictions in two ways corresponding to the two methods we outlined in Chapter 5, analytic philosophy and hermeneutics.

We begin with our analytic philosophers Sam Fleischacker and Yehudah Gellman. Fleischacker offers us a solution to the contradictory identity of God based on the notion of a paradox, which he distinguishes from a contradiction. Fleischacker analyzes the words "para" "doxa," which suggests something that requires the suspension "beyond" or "apart from" a common belief "doxa." So, God's identity is a paradox that requires us to suspend the common assumptions about contradictions and about identity.

Gellman offers us a series of solutions to the contradictory identities of God based on different "modes" and "functions" of God's manifestations. God is ultimately beyond contradiction but he manifests Himself in different modes, now as transcendent Being and now as person. God is one but he "functions," differently in the world according to the needs of the situation.

The second section of the chapter utilizes a hermeneutical method in which the language of Torah itself is analyzed for its ability to communicate two aspects of God at once. Torah uses words with a complex of meanings like *ruah* – wind or spirit of God – that communicate His

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simultaneous material and nonmaterial aspects. The word for God's face, *panim*, is given in the plural which allows for multiple "faces" or aspects of God's being. We devote a section to the Name of God, "YHVH," whose meaning is a fertile source of multiple meanings and aspects of divinity, which Judaism has used over generations. The name YHVH is then presented as a way of negotiating the simultaneous transcendence and immanence of God.

Chapter 8 involves us in an extended hermeneutics of Jewish prayer and liturgy that explicates the ways in which the rabbinic tradition has sought to present its theology. Here the *Siddur*, or prayer book, emerges as the central theological text of Judaism. In prayer, all the themes of God's absolute Being and personal capacities for compassion are displayed. Liturgy not only gives expression to God in sayings, song, and textual quotations, it also helps to negotiate the tensions that we discuss throughout the book. Liturgy, then, is a communal practice of celebrating and bringing understanding to God. It displays the whys and wherefores of God as a complex being. Liturgy then plays a pedagogic role as well as a ceremonial and celebratory one. Furthermore, liturgy provides a "living script" that brings the holiness of God into the Jewish community of prayer.

The last section of the chapter includes a discussion of proclamations about God that are made in liturgy using Austin's theory of "speech acts." It then concludes with a discussion of the role of liturgical testimonies to the saving acts of God in Jewish history. Here we will argue that even as Jewish liturgy teaches theological ideas and repeats many biblical verses, it finally points to God's creative, revelatory, and redemptive acts in history as its warrants for why Jews will want to thank and praise God in their liturgy.

The final part of this book, Part IV, is about ethics and justice. Here we turn to the great Israelite prophets. In these figures, modern Jewish philosophers and the modern Jewish movements of Judaism from Reform to Orthodoxy found resources to set Jews on paths into the world beyond the narrow ghettoes and shtetls of premodern Europe. In the prophetic figures, Jews find resources to articulate their presence in the modern world, in politics, and culture. Modern prophetic Judaism presents biblical visions of justice and peace that could be realized in history and not in "the world to come." Chapter 9 begins with a review of the work of the neo-Kantian philosopher Hermann Cohen. We endeavor to show how Cohen tried to draw from "sources of Judaism" – the Pentateuch and the Prophets and the Writings, together with the rabbis, to argue that Judaism could be a "religion of reason" suited to play a role in building a just world. In this chapter, we again engage our dichotomy of the God of Being and the

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personal God. This time we use Cohen to represent the former and we turn to Heschel's *The Prophets* to speak of the latter. Again, our task is to outline how both these dimensions of theology are necessary for a fulsome and effective theology. The prophet calls out from the depths of the God of all humanity with the universal rule of justice that is married to a divine compassionate concern for every person who suffers.

In Chapter 10, the final chapter, we aim to address an issue that all people of God need to attend to and that is the peril that humans are afflicting upon God's beautiful green earth. Here we show in a direct way why it is that Jewish theology must engage the sciences. After presenting the problem of climate change through a review of the sciences, we turn to Judaism and its resources to combat the problem. We argue that Judaism has uniquely important resources to be placed at the heart of discussions of the natural environment. Here we mention not only the doctrine of creation and the holiday of Shabbat, a celebration of the earth, but also central themes of harvest in the pilgrimage festivals, Pesach, Shavuot, and Sukkot.

The destruction of the earth is a destruction of Judaism's messianic promise for all of creation. At the end of the chapter, we reengage with the prophets through the work of Martin Buber. Buber gives us an analysis of human failing based on the human tendency to avoid responsibility for moral issues both in themselves and the world. Buber calls the path of responsible action the way of the prophets. He juxtaposes this with what he calls "apocalyticism" in which humans who are faced with catastrophic scenerios passively await nonhumans actors, "gods," to save them.

However, one may ask, if all depends on us humans, who are weak and prone to irresponsibility, where is the redeeming God of Israel. Here, Buber offers the answer of the Jewish notion of *teshuvah* or redemption. In the teshuvah model, God has already given us the gift of Torah and its guidance. In a philosophical version of this model, God has already given us reason and ethics as the core of many Jewish laws and God has also given us the ethical will to fulfill these laws. We are, as Jews, already and from our beginning bound to God in a covenantal relationship of mutual responsibilities and obligations. In the modern version of this, modernity means that humans have taken fundamental responsibility for themselves, their communities, their politics, and God's justice, so that God now waits upon us to act before stepping in. And the contemporary meaning of teshuvah is then that when we act, when we take responsibility for the world and for the earth, for environmental justice and for saving the hundreds of thousands of living species that are endangered, then God

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will act to multiply our actions, to unify our efforts, to draw from God's own infinite resources of healing and goodness, to move us toward the ultimate teshuvah, the ultimate end of a world redeemed in justice and peace.[10]

[10] Those of you who have read my other books up to this point might be surprised that I turn now in this work to metaphysics and to Maimonides. Afterall, most of my work has been dedicated to the application first of hermeneutic theory of Hans Georg Gadamer and Paul Ricoeur, to the exegetical work of Buber and Rosenzweig, then to the relation of postmodernism to Jewish thought, and finally to the Wittgensteinian approach to religion championed by George Lindbeck, sometimes referred to as "cultural-linguistic" or "post-liberal." The reader will find that I still am a devotee of Ricoeur and Buber's hermeneutics and I, indeed, include a section of this book on expansion of my views on Jewish hermeneutical theology. The reader will also find a section in this book that expands my notions of "liturgical reasoning" to a "liturgical theology." However, there is an exclusivist and even narrow understanding in purely hermeneutical and Wittgensteinian notions of religion and Judaism that I am opposing in this book. This narrowness can be seen in the way in which some hermeneuts, postmoderns, and postliberals adopt Heidegger's critique of classical metaphysics and traditional theism as "onto-theologies." This book argues that we need metaphysics of the "soft" type that I develop here.

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