

Bible reading

explanations and details of some details

Genesis

My view is probably biased, but I can't tell you what I don't believe or what in my view can't be true. So if you have a different view of all this, then try to create your own picture. Maybe it will turn out better, but so far this is what I've got.

It may be of interest to people who are unfamiliar with the Bible but who don't mind getting to know it a little, also to those who are too lazy to read such serious things as the Bible. Although its presentation is not the easiest reading either, because of the possible abundance of detail, to many who feel unsophisticated in the intricacies of religions, this presentation of biblical facts will help to enter this vast world and get to know the perception of someone who knows the Bible well, see what those who live by it see in it, get up to speed a little. It is not intended as a substitute for reading the Bible itself, nor does it purport to be a comprehensive survey, and is intended only to give some idea of the subject, though it seeks to be comprehensive.

How deeply do I want to delve into the biblical narrative and in what way do I even approach reading the Bible?
- This Bible narrative will be the impressions of an ordinary person who is more or less advanced in this area. You will be the judge of the result. What is not going to be here is a mystical approach that looks for information not in what is said directly, but in the numerical meanings of words or in some order of letters in lines or ciphers. The author operates only with what is said directly or what can be deduced by ordinary reflection, armed with a knowledge of history and science that a layman can reach. All in all, a rather moderate approach, typical of Christians in many churches who focus on what they call "salvation of the soul. This means that everything described in the Bible will be perceived and presented as real, whether it be miracles or the presence of God among men, without any attempt to interpret it allegorically. This, however, is quite enough...

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Genesis

In the beginning, God created the universe, which is spoken of as creating "heaven and earth. That is, among the created star systems was our planet within his solar system. He unfolded matter out of nothing, which today is considered quite "scientific" and very reminiscent of the "big bang" theory.¹". It was a long story as the stars went through their cycles of formation and life, building up the heavy elements for the next forms of being. Of course He could have created at once a ready world with all its details, and He did so in some cases, but as an Inventor, Engineer and Scientist He was pleased to see processes unfolding and following the paths calculated by Him, to see how His designs worked, how they were put into practice from His visions and calculations. In any case, the events of the creation of the Universe and the arrangement of the planet Earth for life on it are significantly separated in time.²First there was the entire universe, then, an unknown amount of time later, the creation of life on Earth. Also, the description of the seven days of the Creation of the Earth clearly states that on the first day light was created, illuminating the *already existing planet*, not a planet at all, much less the universe, as many think of the biblical story of the emergence of the Earth and the universe. Such a reading is only possible when one reads mechanically, without analyzing and understanding what one has read. There is simply no place for the creation of our planet in the seven days of Creation, that is, "heaven and earth" were created outside of these seven days.

If we think that He had to create everything at once, that is, that He didn't want to see His design come to fruition, then we have little understanding of His creative pleasure, how He was interested in bringing everything to fruition step by step. Often impatient people jump straight from the task to the answer at the end of a textbook, not wanting to deal with anything between the idea and its finished embodiment. But God is more understandable to those who love not only the result, but also the work of accomplishing it. In this, God bears little resemblance to the magician, though he possesses powers and abilities far greater.

After the individual parts of the universe were ready for the next steps, when the star systems had accumulated enough different elements³ for planets and life on them, God began to create habitable worlds. Some were created earlier, others later. Our Earth was one of the last, if not the very last⁴.

And so God and many onlookers came to the planet, curious to see how God worked, that it might help them understand how they themselves were once created. Here were both the Father and the Son, because the plural when it says "we" is plural, and in Solomon's Proverbs the Son is placed alongside the Father in the creation. He created directly.

1 Although, after Volosatov's rather interesting views on the aether theory, the "big bang" does not seem to be needed.

2 Job 38:7 describes the creation of the earth, that there were witnesses - inhabitants of other worlds, that is, the universe was already there when the seven days of the Creation of the earth took place. And the planet was already there before that, only lifeless.

3 Actually, there is also the idea in cosmology that different substances could have been formed otherwise, immediately after the so-called Big Bang. That is, they were not produced by stars. Then even less time could have passed.

4 It is difficult to unequivocally understand Christ's words, "My Father is still creating, and I am creating. If it is about the creation of new inhabited planets, then Earth is not the last in the series, but if it is about whole worlds and universes, then God gives no information about it at all, but rather it is about something else, because at the time when life was created on Earth, a little earlier, somewhere in the Universe, and it seems that where the control of the worlds or the central world of God is located, a conflict between God and the devil arose and flared up when evil appeared in the world, expressed in the nagging of the authority and powers of the Son of God by one of the strongest angels, Lucifer.

The Son, because the Bible tells us unequivocally that the Son of God was the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, not only in our solar system, but everywhere in the universe, since it also came into being in His hands.⁵and not only in our solar system, but everywhere in the universe, since the universe itself also came out of His hands. The Father, as the one in charge, watched with pleasure as the Son carried out what they had planned, their original plans, precisely and perfectly placing detail by detail, step by step, creating on the planet, in the language of science fiction, the terraforming, preparing the conditions for life. It was a paradise once the process was finished.

Have you ever installed an operating system on a disk that had nothing on it yet, only the ability to format the surface by creating a file system on it? Although this would seem to be a dry, purely technical routine, in my first years of interaction with computers it had a touch of communication, and installing the system, formatting it, preparing it for work was something akin to the emergence of a new creature. Maybe I could even get bogged down in installing the system, losing the sense of what to do with it, as it happened to some novices, but I also had some ideas about what to do with the installed system, so that the installation and the subsequent configuration and work in it were in harmony with each other. But the solemnity of the beginning is still mesmerizing to this day. And just on our planet something similar was happening - the formatting of the planet for future life for protein beings, carried out by the Specialist for the arrangement of life. By the way, the human mind, the brain - the apparatus that has its own operating system that allows you to think, to enjoy, to feel and feel, to make decisions and to act - all this was also once developed in the human project, and is now being prepared for launch on our planet.

Usually one installation is planned and further work should proceed without interruption or failure. In our world it is difficult to achieve such a thing, but God, with His possibilities of thought, has no errors. Yes, at the level of use His products can be spoiled, directed to the wrong place, it all reflects just the richness of possibilities, almost inexhaustible; yes, there are weaknesses in living systems or some mechanisms of even non-living systems of the planet have a fragile design, but this shows rather the impossibility to do otherwise, than the shortcomings of the Creator. And one more point - the fragility of living things shows that the universe was not designed to act in the evil mode... On the one hand we are unlucky to be the arena of the struggle between good and evil before the whole universe (there was no need to surrender the planet to Lucifer, giving in to his tricks, I mean Adam and Eve, after them nothing can change in the living conditions, except waiting for the recovery time), but on the other hand we will be able to see a real reformation of the planet and its biosphere, such as that described by Moses in the beginning of the Bible. Revelation speaks of a "new heaven" and a "new earth," after the planet, desecrated by evil, will be destroyed in the final punishments against evil and its supporters and restored again. And people, not those who have survived the cataclysms of the Apocalypse, but those who have entered life, seem to be able to see this with their own eyes.

"Let there be light" - day one

"Light!"⁶ - commanded the Son, and there was light, the planet was illuminated.⁷ Whether it was an illuminating device or whether space itself began to glow, it is hard to say. But the planet was illuminated on one side, on the other side was shadow, i.e. night, since it is specifically mentioned that "it was evening and it was morning". The rotation of the planet created the change of day and night, the boundaries of night and day were constantly moving, and morning and evening were always present. From the outside, that is, to the observer from outer space, the contrast is striking, while for those on the planet, day and night, lasting their due time, are more relevant than their relatively short change.

It is probably more reasonable to assume that the⁸ Sun, this is the most natural variant. It is also worth remembering that the planet was in a different state than it is today, as it is said, "sightless and empty" - the chaotic state of the surface and the dusty atmosphere did not allow light to reach the surface, so the sun, although it could shine from its place, was not visible from the planet. On the fourth day the transparency of the atmosphere was established, and then the sun and the stars "appeared", became visible from the surface, while before the fourth day the light could not reach it.

However, even without the inclusion of our star called the Sun, God had enough possibilities to illuminate the planet on this first day of Creation. Artificial illumination from some devices to radiance from Himself...

On this first day, nothing was created except day and night, and their alternating mornings and evenings at the borders. This light must have reached the surface, though the dusty atmosphere muffled it. But to those who saw our planet from the outside, it was interesting. God noted to himself that the illuminated planet, though indistinguishable to the plain eye and the dust in the atmosphere, looked beautiful nonetheless. The light was good. And also, at first everything was illuminated, but then "God separated light from darkness," that is, he illuminated the planet on one side, leaving a shadow. The night is also beautiful and good in itself.

Atmosphere - Day 2

On the second day, the work of setting up the Earth seemed to take place as if it had been done leisurely. The command "let there be an atmosphere⁹ in the midst of the waters." But this airy, soft and intangible atmosphere seems to protect the planet and all of us from sometimes flying in space bodies and radiation from outer space. It may not be absolute protection, but it works.

6 Literally it sounds in the original as "ehi aur" - "there is light. If it is similar to European languages, like English "there is (be) light," then "is" serves an auxiliary role.

7 I can imagine how limited my knowledge is. One could (and should), of course, undertake studies and become a Ph.D. in many disciplines before undertaking all this, but the range of knowledge required to evaluate the issues raised would take many years to do so. Even if I were able to do this (and a number of circumstances have prevented and still do not succeed in doing so), I would hardly be interesting to read then... So I have also ventured to take on the assessment of the days of Creation, although this is more difficult than the rest of the Bible, where such extensive natural science knowledge is not required. Something pushes me to take the risk and even dare to believe, that I am not so wrong, at least from a creationist perspective.

8 Or translated into a more appropriate range of radiation. However, we can still think that on the fourth day the planet could have been added to the solar system, prior to that being somewhere else, where it was illuminated artificially. But this is somehow too much...

9 In many translations it looks like a "firmament," though it is also a "vault. From afar, the atmosphere of the planet really looks like a curved shell around a ball.

But what waters does it share? The bottom at that moment does not yet show land, water seems to prevail, and one can conclude that the planet is still quite flat. All in all, a shallow ocean with islands of isolated uplands, just as science tells us about the days of the origin of life, attributing them, however, to much more distant times. But above the atmosphere there are waters of some kind - what are they? I think the Bible describes the waters that poured out in the flood, and now those waters no longer exist around the Earth. Could there be a Saturn-like ring around the planet? One person on the net was very critical of me for such a view, saying that he was a scientist and that he knew for a fact that such a thing could not be, as it would radically change the equation of motion of the Earth and was generally impossible due to physical limitations. And if I knew physics, I would never say such a thing. Alas, I am not a physicist and not a scientist, and my school (or even college) course gives absolutely no grounds for such conclusions. He, though he called himself a scientist, did not call himself a physicist. From what I know about this subject, I do not even guess at any fundamental limitations for the Earth to have such an additional shell. Even if there were very considerable masses of water there (the total mass did not change, after all), it is still as if it is not "forbidden" by science in any way, as the rings of Jupiter and Saturn or the Moon of our planet are not "forbidden". I asked him very much to enlighten me, at least to tell me in which section of physics it is described, to look there what he was talking about, but he did not condescend. A troll obfuscator, I guess. In the end, without giving me any information or even a hint, he only reinforced my assumption, especially since I am not the author of this notion of "waters above Earth."

Thus, the second day passed in the ordering of the original chaos¹⁰ in which the surface of the planet was.

Land and Sea - Day Three. And plants

On this day the command to separate the waters from the land was sounded. The period of shallow expansive surface ended, the continents rose a little higher and the waters gathered in lower places. It is possible that the oceans were not large, as a huge portion of the waters were hidden underground and perhaps above, if I am not mistaken with the assumption of a water ring in the cosmos. This was done by lowering the oceanic crust or raising the continental crust. Of course it could also have been done by horizontally moving land masses, but that would have involved moving mountains around the planet, for such a scenario involves moving crustal plates, which would cause many cataclysms when they collide. This is a problem, especially on the eve of the emergence of life. Extreme conditions of settlement, collisions, fractures, surface magma, earthquakes, and volcanoes with other strong effects are not conducive to life, though after the Flood this was true.¹¹ and probably during the Flood as well. Smoothing the mountains that rose from the collision of migrating plates took a long time, and doing so on the eve of life is not a good idea. In addition, the tectonic plates were formed a long time ago, so moving them now would have been a problem. These processes were completed much earlier.

In general, the geological state of the planet's surface has changed in the past times clearly more than once, and at this moment the final chord in this area has occurred. It is true that the human factor subsequently made great adjustments to this, so that during the Flood¹² the sinking and the rising again, as well as the traveling of the continents with their splitting. And this process continues-

10 Or rather, it is a realignment from the order of things that existed before creation to the mode needed for evolved life forms.

11 It says of Falek that "in his days the earth was divided," which is about 100 years after the Flood.

12 I am not referring here to the time of the Flood alone, but to what happened about a century later.

The world is still in its present state, although not as catastrophic as it is today. However, unpleasant surprises continue to smolder and may yet reveal themselves at the end of the world.

Before that moment, there was nothing alive on Earth, not counting, however, the "invisible" life - the microorganisms that recycled "rough" inorganic materials into more complex forms that could nourish plants with the right substances. Sedimentary rocks, bound calcium, released oxygen and red rocks with iron oxides are all the result of an invisible army of small living beings who acted as robotic servants and accomplished gigantic work on a planetary scale. Their work began long before the days of creation, and the words "The Spirit of God hovered (or "vibrated", which is similar to "radiated") over the water" speak of their creation and management by God, which means that the work of preparation was going on actively, and God was already making the necessary impacts on certain processes, including the creation of some living or pre-animate forms for the processing of inorganic matter. And yet, the living microcosm still plays a direct part in the regulation of life on the planet and the cycle of substances, only this microcosm is not the same as it was before the seven days of creation, because then there was the addition of many more complex life forms in the microbiota.

And on the same day that dry land appeared, God starts the plant world project. All the ideas have been designed and calculated, and now all that is said is "let the earth grow green" - grasses, trees, and all other forms of plants. From this word came the germs of different plants. I do not know whether these were single germs for large areas or whether the whole soil was sown with them in abundance - it is not said. However, as stated in chapter 2, all of these did not grow yet, that is, they began to grow naturally, gradually, and only in one area, called Eden, or according to the synodal translation Eden, known as Paradise, were all these plants grown there very quickly, perhaps even instantly - "God planted a garden in Eden in the east." By the time man arrived there, the trees were already quite mature, bearing fruit for the nourishment of man and the other inhabitants.

Day four - luminaries

Here it is worth citing a statement that I have read now where I can't remember¹³ But it is important: "surprisingly, the maximum transparency of our atmosphere is in the visible spectrum" - but "surprisingly" is if one looks at it through the evolution of chance from modern science. To look through the biblical information about the origin of the world, it's just natural, for "that's how it was meant to be." But in general this is said very much in favor of God, because if the transparency of the atmosphere had been maximal in the radio range or X-ray, infrared, ultraviolet, and the illumination of the planet would have been completely different, and let the light reach us anyway, but the plants would not have had enough energy for synthesis of substances, and life on it would have been under great question. Even this "little thing" hides a dependence, so fragile and delicate, on all sorts of the most unexpected conditions affecting our being. That is, the air and atmosphere, even free of dust and suspended matter, do not yet guarantee enough light... But we have what we need, for which we can and should be grateful to the one called the Source of everything, who calculated and embodied all these small and large details.

So, on the fourth day for the observer from the surface of the Earth appeared the luminaries - the Moon and the Sun, the stars and the planets. Versions: the first is that they were just created in addition to the Earth (the most illogical, since this denies the existence of life in the Universe before the Earth, along with the Universe itself, if there was nothing before the Earth, behind the Universe also disappear angels, which is just

¹³ Most likely it's "Knowledge is Power" from the seventies.

now observing, according to Job, the creation of life and the arrangement of the planet...). The other is that the Earth was created in one place in the cosmos, and is now "inserted" or built into the solar system (as if more logical, not too difficult a task for God's technology, it seems). The third - were in their places, and now only "appeared" in the sky, when God arranged the atmosphere, removing dust and clouds of moisture after the actions of the second day, or removing some factor that closes the outer view from the planet, the same factor of transparency. There is not a little speculation about the moon being artificially added at some point in time, but it is more likely to have been with the Earth from the beginning.

Besides being a beautiful and fascinating sight in itself-the night sky and sunsets and sunrises-they serve, as God says, to measure time from days to years, and beyond-that much longer stretches of time can be measured by the position of the planets in the star configurations. But there is an interesting point in God's words, as if hinting also at what lies at the heart of astrology today, where these stars, planets and the Sun and Moon can be Signs, landmarks and signs of destiny or better, signs of trends. The planets and stars as reflections of the characters, the moods, the tendencies of men, related to what we ourselves are as embodiments of the elements or the designs-formulas of God? Or are they merely reflections of forces affecting man? Is it possible? - Who knows? These are words that I myself have tried to translate from the original and to understand: "May they be for signs and for times and for days and years. And the "signs" come first... Yes, God laughs at the stargazers in the Bible, but the problem is that pagan consciousness worshipped the signs as deities, which was a violation of God's law, his second commandment. The signs cannot be asked to change; they show their figure and position unambiguously; they cannot be influenced. So when Babylon was threatened by a disaster brought on by the Almighty, God mockingly says to the king of Babylon: "Assemble the stars (along with other occult figures) - maybe they will help you¹⁴..." Star-dochets are not magicians; they cannot persuade the stars and planets to change their place or position in order to change the sign of trouble into something favorable. It is meaningless to worship, beg, and plead with them, as well as to command them.

What approach should we take when interpreting the Bible and the words of God and the prophets? The first step is to analyze the words in their most immediate, familiar and ordinary sense. If the meaning or message cannot be read in this layer of meaning, then we must go to the next level of awareness - look for the figurative, non-biblical meaning, usually closely related to the functionality of the word. For example, Christ tells the disciples of Lazarus that he "fell asleep. The disciples took this in its simplest sense, but were mistaken. They might have wondered, though, why would the Master, far from Lazarus, speak of his sleep. Yes, they knew he could know it, being a prophet, but somehow, in this situation, to speak of a dream "ordinary" is a little bit wrong. They had only recently learned that Lazarus was sick, and the Master had been slow to help him. Suddenly he says he must go, because he has "fallen asleep". If, as they thought, he had simply fallen asleep after the crisis, that would mean that he had already begun to heal, and then why go, since there was no need to help anymore? So the disciples had a clue to correctly understand their Master's words, but they did not use it, although sages of all times are always eager to speak out of turn and confuse the simple-minded and too direct simpletons. To paraphrase a Hobbit proverb from Tolkien, "don't ask the wise man and the wind for an answer, they both say yes and no. But they don't do it out of spite, it's their job to bring others up to their level, to pull them out of the swamp of simplistic existence.

In principle, the second level of analysis is sufficient to understand most places in the Bible; we will talk about the rest when we encounter such cases. In this place with "signs" the first approach seems to be enough, because the word "sign" already means that there is a transition to indirect meanings of things. If the planets and stars are symbols, they must represent something, show the connection of what we see with something else, with a similar character. It seems that there is something behind these signs, but is it the sign we know astrology or is the real science of signs something else that we are not yet familiar with? Somehow it seems to me that the second one is that astrology has gone somewhere in the wrong direction, which is why ancient astrology was forbidden by God.

Fish, Aquatic Animals and Birds - Day Five

"Let the waters swarm with swarming waters, living life," God said. You could also translate it as "let the waters swarm, teeming with life," or as in the Synodal translation, "let the water produce reptiles, a living soul. This has produced in the water a multitude of small creatures that precisely fill the volumes of the ocean. We ordinarily regard as normal, observable to the eye, and observable only that which is nearest to us, animals large and intelligent enough, the form and structure close enough to ourselves, and aloof to all others, unlike us. However, the Creator of life has some ideas of His own about how to arrange the living world, and perhaps we just don't know how to cooperate with species that are distant from us in appearance and design. It is unlikely that we can cooperate with them, but they are involved in a very large-scale regulation of substances, and the existence of all others depends on them as well.

In addition to the small creatures of the seas, God created fish and birds and, as in the original reference, large animals, giants of the waters. It is not clear that this day speaks of God's work as if only with the waters, then the birds came out of the water? It is possible, although subconsciously we tend to see them as connected to the earth, they are perceived closer to the animals that emerged from the earth the next day.

Mammals and Man - Day Six.

"Let the living come out of the earth - the animals, the reptiles and the beasts. In the section designated as reptiles were included insects, and all other crawling things, having bones or other coverings, in general all others who are not mammals, who are nearest to man and occupy a position close to him, being able to take part in his affairs, having sufficient intelligence to learn.

However, we must point out that this miracle of life began only in one place on the planet, called paradise; the rest of the surface was gradually filled with life-plants and animals-as plants grew and animals spread to these places. This detail is introduced in Genesis 2, when it says that "nothing had yet grown on the earth," only "paradise was planted in Eden in the east. However, this has nothing to do with evolution, since everything was already set, programmed and carried out, and all that was left was for the plants and animals to spread from the preserve of Eden.

After the animals, it was the turn of the final project, the human being. The dispenser and custodian of created wealth, with the task of developing and evolving, to worthily adorn what the Creator has created, being himself an instrument of the Creator, created in His own likeness with far-reaching plans, as indeed is the case with everything that comes out of His hands.

Adam gave names to the animals that God brought to him, wondering what he would name them. The first people had not only good senses, but also unimpaired perception and a clearly working mind. Also, it did not hurt that the language spoken and thought by Adam, as well as all other creatures in the universe, was a single language not torn apart by human emotions and passions. It is thought that the foremost language of mankind was pictorial and figurative, the symbols readable in the details of the world around it were linked in a single connection with the sensations and meanings reflected in the mind. Graphics, sounds and feelings worked together, or better said, a letter or symbol had reflections or likenesses in sound, colors, shapes and lines, feelings. To a certain extent, even in today's languages, there are still some links between the sound and the sense of the symbol, but the languages, which were once very close, have gone too far apart, and too many words have changed, taking layers of meaning with them, while many come back again in new words, formed from the remains of previous ones, losing contact with their original sense.

As the Bible describes it, there were no suitable helpers for Adam among the animals, although it is more accurate to say that we are not talking there about helpers, but about those who are suitable, who can stand beside him, be in the same line, be a match for him. They could not have been among the animals for their limited abilities but in this way God was demonstrating it to him. But all animals were in pairs, and Adam was alone, so although Adam could not have been bored in this short first day of his life and God was there, he could sense from the situation itself some question as to why he was alone.¹⁵... God was looking ahead, knowing that one day man would surely sense incompleteness or emptiness around him. And so, after this demonstration of auxiliaries for the man, which were suitable only for a limited range of possibilities, God puts Adam to sleep and takes his rib... When Adam wakes up, perhaps feeling a change in himself, though it can hardly be painful, this time God gives him a true "helper", or rather a helper that suits him in every way, not as animals do. That is, not only a human being with the same parameters and constitution, but in the narrowest sense a human being who is suitable or appropriate to him, so that even their wishes and the features of their expression are similar and mutually complementary. So he immediately recognized his own and accepted it. The name he gave the woman meant "life." It is in every sense, both the mother of all living and the light of his soul personally, for whose sake he risked going even against God. But more about that later.

God then blessed the couple, commanding them to inhabit and govern the earth well, seeking the happiness and good of all, just as He Himself has arranged the earth for their happy existence.

Day Seven

For Adam and Eve it was the second day of life, but they did not count the days from Friday, their personal first day of life, the sixth day of creation, but from the first, entering into the count of the days of the Creator as He launched them for the planet. They "entered into His rest" with Him. If it had been in their place, they would have easily counted the days from the origin of man, they would have put their own week, which would have been a symbol of independence from God and the self worth of man. Nothing was created on this day, nothing was forgotten, nothing was left behind, there was nothing to correct, nothing that had been done wrong. For a time, and probably for this whole day and night, God has been with men, and it has been that way from that time until now, and it will always be that way - men "enter into His rest," this day, every seventh day of the week, since

15 There is a story that fits this situation: a three- or four-year-old with his mother somewhere among other people, and he notices a mother with twins in her arms; he looks at them with amazement, then turns to his mother and asks, "Where is mine like that?"

This completeness, the peace and tranquility of God. It is said of each of His operations that He was pleased with the parts, but that the whole was for this reason even more grandiose. When the parts were completed into a whole it was all perfect. It is a joyful thing to see what is accomplished and what has come to pass out of the pre-arranged plans. Such things advance Man to a new level, they have a healing power, even the humps are straightened out and all ground for depression disappears at the sight of the solvency and success of the hands. God is like that, His approach to so many things connects us to Him, so that we can understand Him at least on a perceptual level, if we lack some knowledge.

Man also came into possession, embracing with his mind and senses the grandeur of their new world, which was not yet furnished everywhere, though their home, the Garden of Eden, was in full bloom. God was bringing them up to speed, explaining or simply showing them their possessions.

The seventh day of the week has been charged with this charge ever since. Every seventh day brings an aura of perfection or, rather, completeness, closeness to God, His joy and pleasure, peace and tranquility. It is not suitable for business; it is suitable for rest, renewal of strength, recuperation, and fellowship. Even the pagan tradition, when we refer to the seventh day as Saturn's day, emphasizes this importance, because the sign of Saturn, the embodiment of wisdom and intelligence, is unfavorable for work and action. God has blessed and sanctified this day, that is, made it sacred. It has remained so ever since, and it is forever, bringing to those who rest in it those powers and benefits laid down from the beginning. Thus he also entered into the law of God, declared at Sinai, his fourth commandment¹⁶.

So the arrangement of our planet was completed in these seven days, which are called the days of Creation. From this time the time of life on Earth is counted, and it is clear that these six thousand years (approximately, you can count them later) are not the age of the planet itself, it counts only from the time of the appearance of highly organized life on it.

Rivers of Eden

It is written that a river flowed out of the garden, which was divided into four rivers. Revelation, the last book of the Bible, also describes a stream flowing out of the Tree of Life. After the Flood and the catastrophic division of the continents that followed 100 years after it, the situation of the rivers may have changed greatly. Although the Tigris (very similar to the Hiddekel "flowing before Assyria" mentioned in Genesis) and the Euphrates seem to remain in their places, only their sources now begin in the mountains rising in the Caucasus region (there were none before, the Caucasus mountains are geologically new, arising after the division of the continents) and flow into the old channels. But the other two rivers are harder to find. Especially the Fison, which flowed around the land of gold. However, the other one, the Gihon, has recently been discovered. It is the Amazon...

Although it is probably hard to believe this, there are some very interesting facts. It is known that Africa and South America were once one continent, as was Europe and North America. The Mediterranean Sea probably didn't exist at the time or was smaller in size. It was the supercontinent we call Pangaea today. In South America, the Amazons today flow from west to east, from the mountains of the west coast. These mountains rose during the tumultuous westward advance after the breakup with Africa. Recently, however, researchers have found that the Amazon once flowed in the opposite direction, from east to west, along the same channel, there is an article about this¹⁷. When the mountains rose in the west, the Amazon stopped. Rather it dried up first, though, because from the east side the water flowed into the ocean, into the gap between the African and South American plates, having lost its recharge from the African side.

¹⁶ Exodus 20:8-11

¹⁷ Article with links to names of scientists and studies: polit.ru/news/2006/10/30/amazonka/

But later it flowed back when the mountains, precipitation and jungle gave it water. The important thing is that on the African continent, too, a channel was left that corresponded exactly to the position of the continents at one time. From east to west of the single African-South American continent then flowed a river, through what is now the Sahara Desert, and the source of this vast river can be seen in the side of the former Eden.

It turns out that there were rivers coming out of Eden on all four sides of the world. It is true that the former Eden does not exist on Earth now. It was either destroyed by a flood, which is the easiest to assume, or, more likely, taken from the planet somewhere for a time, after which it will return here again, as Revelation actually describes when it talks about the New Jerusalem descending to Earth from heaven at the end of a thousand years after the Second Coming. What will happen then, after a thousand years of neglect on earth, can be called the Third Coming, although that time already has another name: the Last Judgment. After the Last Judgment, the City, the soil and the land, all of its territory, will return to the place from which it was taken before the Deluge. And the Tree of Life will stand again, and the River of Life will flow from under its roots as it once did, giving rise again to those rivers. We can probably think of new positions for rivers and continents and mountains, but for now I am inclined to think that God will restore "as it was," at least the Garden of Eden will remain the same as it was, except now there will be a city in it.

Life. Arrangement and Configuration

Chapter 2 describes some of the instructions God gave Adam and Eve when He placed the created economy of the planet in their hands.

Household

They were commissioned to cultivate and beautify the garden that would become their home. This shows that although the Creator's creation was perfect at the time of creation, it may not be so with the passage of time. To maintain order or to give direction, to give direction is an important work, without which perfection or at least a given order cannot be maintained. And it is not that human beings only had to maintain order, because human beings are capable of more. Rather God created the initial conditions for our world and it was up to human beings to further demonstrate the possibilities inherent in their nature.

Marriage

The union that ensures the happiness and wholeness of human existence was established there in Eden, when evil and problems did not yet exist. When troubles came, marriage was subjected to the ravages of evil, yet it had great potential from the beginning, which many people don't think to unlock. The pursuit of pleasure is usually, and almost always, damaging to happiness; but it is also damaging to pleasure itself, because the pleasure center tires out and adapts to an increased workload. And old pleasures cease to be, which leads many to the temptation of perversion. But pleasure is an indispensable part of life, you just have to observe the safety precautions that are present even in this subject matter. Our lives are very sophisticated, so every element of being has rules for its safe use.

Nutrition

The diet or ecological niche of man in the natural world of the earth has been established. Nuts and fruits, fruits of trees, also berries and grains, seeds of herbs and other plants belonged to them. These are all things that sustain life and health, the proper condition of the internal environment of the body, best suited to the design of man himself and his digestive system. Those who today try to live by this system, eating it all unprocessed or minimally processed, always speak of amazing gains for health, although the current state of man and the biosphere, due to the departure from the original path, has created problems to return to the original basics of diet and lifestyle - the digestive system, accustomed in childhood to excessively mixed and heat-processed foods, may have problems with such a healthy (by itself) diet. But if one moves in this direction without fanaticism, a lot of people could be a lot healthier, and happier as well, since the brain and psyche are very much influenced by both food and gut microflora.

Now some health advocates have advanced theories that cereals are not a species-specific human food, simply on the grounds that they are inconvenient to pick and process. However, their idea of "inconvenience" is very speculative; according to their calculations, man evidently collects one grain at a time and in no other way, and when he gets tired of it, gives it up... They somehow did not consider technology to be a species attribute of man, placing man in the same line with animals and birds which are not capable of technological development or have only the rudiments of it, using stones or crevices to hold onto an object. They say that it is long and inconvenient to pick up crops with one's hands, and that the mind could not or should not have been used by humans. This is an echo of the theory of evolution, according to which humans once did not have a mind. However, this very construction shows the discrepancy between the theory of evolution and reality, revealing the unscientific nature or weakness of these scientific ideas. Humans appeared at once in an intelligent and skillful state, so the use of grains was no problem for them either in harvesting or in processing. Technology was man's native element, even though his initial conditions did not contain any tools for making things or taking care of themselves. But all the knowledge of the Universe was at their service, until the retreat from the Way severed the ties with the Big World.

Prohibition and Trial

They were told about their diet, which included nuts, fruit, and grains. They were also told what not to eat. It would seem that much was excluded by saying what was meant for them, so the rest was not for them, but for the rest of the living creatures. But here God explicitly forbade one tree, called the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is somewhere near the Tree of Life, as both are indicated as being in the "middle" of the garden. When you eat from it, He said, "you will die by death. This was the test. The world was designed so that there was no reason or reason for evil, everything was arranged as safely as possible, but man himself was capable of breaking the rules. I like one expression I read in books that speaks of "hidden evil. The world is a very complex place, but God's safety techniques were worked out very well and there was no suffering or grief. However, through possible irrationality, resulting in unbalanced forces, or carelessness, all of this could come into being and come to pass, out of possibility into reality.

We should not think that naming the tree the Tree of Knowledge means that God has assumed that people are ignorant. Knowledge is needed in a circle, without knowledge, without

The Bible and all that God has said do not support this view. The Bible and all that God has said do not support this view in any way. When Solomon asked for knowledge and wisdom, it received the highest approval from God, it was pleasing to Him, as is evident from His words and from the tone of His voice, apart from the remark of the prophet, the author of that record, that Solomon pleased God greatly with this request. And among other things, the tree was not called the tree of knowledge, but the knowledge of good and evil; it is just that many people think the short version, which leads to a distortion of the essence. Good was not forbidden, was it? It would never even occur to anybody, so why would knowledge be forbidden? Only the tree was forbidden, not knowledge. Evil is forbidden, of course, but this is irrelevant to the tree. The symbolism of the tree is that keeping the prohibition is good, and breaking it is evil. And the very observance or non-observance is a test where the spiritual state of the subjects is revealed, hence the "knowledge" that is gained by experience, by practice, by behavior.

So the notion of a God who created blissful idiots who escaped the darkness of ignorance only at the cost of breaking the prohibition and losing Paradise is groundless. Except for some inattentiveness in reading or mere dithering.

Also, besides the fact that there was no reason for discontent in the world, there is also such a factor as the will and choice of living sentient beings who can deliberately remove the system of life from equilibrium. Lucifer's example shows that these fears are not in vain. Lucifer, having himself gone beyond the limits of sound principles, has, through his influence and activities, led quite a number of other beings out of harmony with the Creator. But even beyond the dangers of the seducer, the test was necessary in this world, where evil was concealed by many covers, so that it was not real, but only possible. A man had to know himself, to know and understand his inclinations, what motivated him, to have an object that revealed to him what might have remained untouched for a lifetime in a well-to-do world. Only the one who understands his structure, who sees his weaknesses, who feels he can do something beyond order, and who stays on the road, can be regarded as reliable. And that stumbling block was the Tree of Knowledge. It is unlikely that it carried any special substances that changed the human condition or was evil itself, it is just that the test and prohibition tree created a moment of temptation in man himself, and by his choice he discovered and confirmed his state of faithfulness or unfaithfulness.

Do we hear claims that "forbidden fruit is sweet," that prohibition necessarily leads to transgression? That is not true, it is simply a lie, unsupported by anything other than the limited experience of individuals who are spoiled or capricious. The prohibition is attractive only when one is already in a lost condition. For people before evil came into the world, such an ordeal was not a fiery excitement that attracted curiosity like a magnet. Even in our world, prohibition is far from always producing such effects, especially in those to whom disobeying the Creator's will was unthinkable. For Eve to partake of the fruit of this tree required a most subtle gesture on the part of the tempter, without his special efforts the tree of trial would have had to wait very long, endlessly long, for anyone to approach it... Even with all the efforts of the tempter, success was not at all guaranteed.

And they were both naked

Such was the nature of the world they (and we with them) had lost, that people didn't wear clothes, and that was perfectly normal. But don't put modern people in the picture of that time and that world, our nudity doesn't show what it was then. Can we say that they were as naked as people are today when they remain unclothed? The Bible paints a somewhat different picture of people in a naked state. And it is not at all a picture of blissful idiots, as some critics have tried to portray a time when people "knew neither good nor evil. Let us look at this idea as it is presented by the detractors of religion. They knew good because they lived in it, they simply had nothing to compare it to, and was it even worth comparing? But does someone say that without evil no one would understand or appreciate the good? That may be true for some in this world, but is the idea belittling too much? When there was no evil, when the unity with the divine was not broken by retreat, man had a heightened sensitivity and acuteness of mind, which is a little blunted nowadays, by education and by way of life. Also, some are so immersed in crime that they don't see any other way of life as possible, just that they don't understand the good. In general, I totally disagree with the idea that man had to face adversity in order to appreciate well-being, although this is unfortunately true for generations of people born after the fall. Again, this is only true for us who are born after the fall of man, and even then some people only need a little suffering to appreciate the good, others have little help from the harshest of punishments.

Moses, when he was on Horeb with God for a long time, after two terms of forty days, one of which he also did not eat anything (if I am not mistaken, the second time too), began to glow. This glow was clearly visible even during the day, so he had to cover his face, so as not to embarrass ordinary people (for some reason they could not bear it). This fact well shows the natural state of man when he is close to God, when the harmony of interaction with Him is not disturbed in any way. From this it is clear that before the arrival of the Evil One people were luminous, and this light created a different picture of the human body, a different emphasis, a different vision and perception, so that the openness of the body was not seen or experienced as we do it today. Who knows, perhaps this light could even hide certain details, like a fog, but even without that people looked at each other differently.

Falling - advice from an outsider

When Lucifer first began his path of deviation from the truth, he attracted his companions by personal contacts, by conversations with those who were friends and close to him, and as such were inclined to believe him, or rather it was difficult for them to doubt his intentions, for before that lie did not exist in the world - it was simply inconceivable that anyone could say an untruth. He acted openly as he convinced others of the superiority of his revolutionary way, of his rightness in the dispute with God. But he was not known personally on earth, nor had he any access to people, being persona non grata. The people were still very young and inexperienced. To meet them directly to deceive them he could physically do so, but it was a sure loser, for they knew the Creator directly and many of the angels who had visited them. He had already been cast out of heaven by then, and everyone knew him as a rebel and deceiver who had rebelled against the Creator. It is doubtful if they had not been warned, or perhaps they had not yet been informed of the full extent of the events. The test of them was yet only the tree of knowledge.

In these circumstances Lucifer could not act directly, because he would probably not be believed or accepted, nor would he be allowed to approach people for propaganda purposes, and he had only to act in the current context of circumstances, that is, if he wanted to divide and divorce people from God, then by merely leading people to break the test ban he would achieve all his goals at once without having to tell them what he had enticed others with. He could only act within their temptation, that is, where this Tree of Knowledge was. Later, when they would have completed their training, he could have had the same access to them as he had to everyone else, but he was not satisfied with the timing; by then they would have been other, much more knowledgeable and mature individuals.

Almost everyone knows the story of Eve with the serpent and the apple, though usually in a distorted and limited view. So let's take a closer look at what's going on.

Eve somehow ended up near this tree, all by herself. Having been warned of the maximum responsibility for breaking the rule about the Tree of Knowledge - death for eating its fruit - they would have to avoid it to avoid temptation. It was also best not to go into the dangerous place alone - simple safety measures of which they should also have been warned by their teachers and mentors. The people were not left to themselves after the days of Creation. God spent the seventh day with them, which was the first full day of their lives, giving them explanations and instructions about their tasks and activities. Children had much to teach and could not be left to themselves, so they were visited by the inhabitants of heaven assigned to them and engaged with them. The civilization of the universe included our earth, and there is no way to think that people were left to their own devices without the slightest instruction and lessons. The more advanced the society, the more knowledge must be learned, that is simply the rule. So they were well taught everything, including the rules of safety. However, Eve still found herself alone and in close proximity to the tree of temptation.

Many works describing these events point out that Eve was under the influence, that something was influencing her to come here. I also understand that Lucifer turned on all his powers of influence that day to suppress Eve's will, as she was more inclined to lead, because she was the second, led by the leader, Adam, and this is a quality Lucifer placed a special emphasis on. But to draw her to the tree of knowledge was not enough; it was necessary to achieve success, which was not guaranteed at all.

Lucifer did not act directly, but used the serpent-dragon as an intermediary, taking control of it. This animal is described as the most skilful in the Garden of Eden, that is, it had considerable intellectual capabilities. There are a number of animals that are the closest to man and can understand him at least in part. The bait was that the serpent, after allegedly eating the fruit of this tree, was intellectually equal to man, and more capable of speech than what animals were naturally capable of. The other bait was the trick of his question to Eve, which was basically, "Listen, I heard that you are forbidden to eat all the fruit from all the trees in this garden-what is that, how do you eat then?"

Do you know the origin of the expression "pretend to be a hose"? It seems to be inspired by the German Bible. In German the serpent is der Schlange, and there Eve is seduced by a "hose" which the devil "disguised" as a disguise, or took control of - the difference in the end does not matter how he did it. The main thing is that the trap worked perfectly. Eva, clearly a little stupefied by Lucifer's overwhelming influence, did not see the catch. What was the point here? Psychologists noted in their studies that people with injuries of different hemispheres of the brain perceive the tasks given to them differently. They were asked a simple

Syllogism - "It is cold in northern countries. Argentina is a northern country. Is it cold in Argentina or not?" People with right hemisphere damage, that is, with impaired figurative thinking, on logic alone, answered as asked, and concluded that "Argentina is not cold," since it lies in the north. The people were not inclined to check the background data, only to act within the limits they were given. But people with an injury of the left hemisphere responsible for logic, but with a working intuition, did not make mistakes, they easily discovered the catch - "but Argentina is not in the North!" - although the problem itself would have been difficult for them to solve. The subterfuge freed them from the problem itself. For Eva, too, there was a similar intuitive constraint¹⁸, she fell for the question, resented such rumors, as if she wondered who could have distorted things so wrongly - the restriction on one tree to extend to all others, and she entered into the conversation without thinking that such a lie or such a mistake should not, could not have arisen in their world at all. And if someone brought an impossible distortion of things, there was something lurking here that had to do with the Creator's warning about the presence of evil and the Deceiver. Behind this distortion of things was death, crime, deception. And the Deceiver...

But for some reason she did not think of that. Probably, when she saw who was addressing her with a question, she noted for herself the unusual speech of this flying snake, which could not speak like humans, although there is some similarity of words in the animal world, and humans can, using the tone of voice and imitating the sounds of animals, inform them something within their understanding, just as they can inform humans of their condition and desires. And suddenly the speech was on a human level! However, she was caught up in the question and resented the distortion of facts, pushing aside the strangeness of the situation. A little later the perplexity of the speech of a wordless earthworm was compounded by the thought that perhaps this Tree of Knowledge had endowed the serpent with a new level of intelligence. And that for humans it would be a step up to an even higher level of intelligence. Even without words, Lucifer had skillfully set up circumstances leading to unmistakable hints that God had hidden from men some supreme possibility, the key to which was found in this Tree, and that mastery of this key would give man something. Everything here, however, was a deception, both the words and the hints.

Here, however, she was not yet defeated, though she was being led around. She made no choice that would put her on the side of the enemy. For now she began to explain to this flying serpent, who could not speak before (or since), that he was wrong, that they had the right to eat from any tree, and that there was only one tree they could not eat from. Just the one that this dragon sits on, and which she would not have gone near, since she was not going to take anything there.

And the enemy made his next move. When Eve said that they were forbidden to touch this fruit, Lucifer pretended to be the good uncle, the benefactor of the human race - "no-o-o-o, you guys are not going to die, that's not true at all... God knows that when you taste this, you will be equal to them, to the Father and the Son, you will know good and evil. So he said of the Creator and their Father. Lucifer was taking a risk because he didn't know for sure if people would die immediately from the fruit of the tree or if there would be some time lag. But he did have strong thoughts on the matter, based on his own experience of rule-breaking. Personally, he was still alive after all the outrages he had committed in the inhabited universe, and that was the basis of his "revelation" that Eve would not die the same day she broke the rules. And his calculation turned out to be correct, though not entirely as he thought it would. But it was a victory for him, too.

How does he know what God thinks? Why does he present Him as a secretive and not-all-positive father who hides good from his children? So this dragon is already familiar with God?

18 When a person is confused, when he is being led around, the right hemisphere is somehow blocked. I have experienced this kind of thing personally.

is a man, if he knows such a thing? And the sign is clearly not a good one - then is it not the one who is stirring up the whole universe against the Son of God? And did God really hide anything from His children? Is it only good and evil that distinguishes God from created beings? Could there be more differences and more serious ones? Why doesn't he say you will become all-powerful, strong like God? Why not all-knowing, all-creating, all-pervading visionaries? But Lucifer cites only the smallest of God's attributes, which is again a fraud, and of all the abilities of the Godhead he singled out only the knowledge of good and evil. It is as if a product was sold to you under the guise of a well-known, high-quality brand, and the only signs of this brand were a box or a label. But here it is more like a crudely painted semblance of a brand name. But for some reason Eva did not pay attention to all the snake's words. She just didn't have time. She could have if she'd stopped and thought about it. But Lucifer was not going to give her that advantage, he needed success, so the experienced cheat continued to press on, not allowing time for reflection. And that was the easy and win-win part of his plan, the hardest part was starting to grab her attention and get her talking, but he succeeded.

So far he had succeeded in everything, but at this point things might have stalled. Eva tried to weigh the pros and cons, though she could not weigh everything in such a short time, especially when her attempts to understand were cut short by an alien influence. It was urgent to get out of here, but she stood there indecisively, her intuition very much drowned out by the hostile influence, reasoning - "it looks like a tree could do some good," which she valued highly. What is strange is that sinless Eve fell for the lure of a higher development, but people in their fallen state are far from being able to appreciate these higher possibilities, they are too indifferent, they are much closer to pleasures, I mean simple, primitive pleasures of the body, than to higher possibilities. What has happened is sin - it devalues man and deprives him of the possibilities that awaited Adam and Eve in the future, when the time comes and they are developed to the right levels, and deprives even the thirst for the higher. Not all of them, fortunately, but too many. Already from this we can see that Lucifer cheated even in this, rather than advanced man.

But Eve was still in no hurry to take these fruits, which the serpent tried to encourage her to do. Seeing that she herself, the more time goes by, the more likely she would refuse or follow Adam to work out together with him the tempting offer, the serpent put in her hands one of the fruits. But he chose the right moment - while Eve was looking at the fruit of the tree, its beauty enchanted her and attracted her, and Lucifer's influence was not absent here. And when one of the fruits suddenly touched her hand, held out by the dragon's paw, she did not pull away... It is written that she did not pluck it from the tree, but "took it," that is, it was held out to her. Before doing so, she answered the serpent's provocative question that they were not allowed to eat from this tree alone, while adding that they were not allowed to touch them either, lest they die. It was just the perfect moment for the serpent, and he held out the fruit he had torn into her hands at just the right moment. It was as if Lucifer was saying - you see, nothing has happened to you, and you were afraid! You are not dead, are you? But if she had died, he would not have cared about her; he was worried only about his own plans. But it turned out just as he had intended, that Eve should not die the moment she touched or consumed the fruit from the Tree, or else Adam would have remained inaccessible to his machinations because of his worries about his dead wife. Lucifer understood that he had lost a great deal by abandoning his former position as Supreme Archangel, having violated many things during his rebellion and subversion, but although there was a reckoning for all this in some future time, he was still alive and well. And he had yet to live to see the final reckoning, and he believed he had a definite chance of winning. Or rather, to win - as long as anyone believed him, or at least doubted God, God could not take him out without harming those who lived. In his plans and actions one can find deep calculations and knowledge.

God's character. Probably he knew that against His power he has no chance, but it is possible to act without power, using his own power against the enemy, bringing the Creator into conflict with the creation - to destroy trust, to destroy the connection with the created beings, deceiving them and keeping them in distrust of God as long as possible, to destroy the heart of God, His love and harmony in the creation... And then for the Creator to be disappointed in the creation, which can not be in harmony with Him all the time (if all the time to spoil and destroy something, set up, lie, there will always be someone to believe it ...). Somewhere in all of this there was quite a bit of insanity. But he saw his supposed chances clearly, and he wasn't going to pass them up. And if he did lose, it would be with great scandal, so that even after his death, the seeds of his cause would destroy God's designs. He understood quite a bit about God, but still not everything, because he began to judge Him by himself...

When Eve did not die by taking the fruit of the forbidden Tree in her hands, she felt herself already over the edge, that she had already broken the prohibition, and so she thought it was all the same, and now she could taste it... If she did not die by touching it, nothing should happen if she ate it either. So she tasted what she was given.

Many people today believe that the words about not touching the Tree of Knowledge and its fruit were self-inflicted. In fact, it is as if God did not say so, He only said not to eat them. However, such a viewpoint leads to the fact that Eve's sin began long before that day... If they twisted God's words, then that is already evil, but such a viewpoint is too hasty and wrong. The people spoke correctly and the logic is very simple - if this fruit is forbidden then we must not touch it. It is a basic safety technique - if something constitutes a temptation, we must stay away from it. He who approaches and plays with seductive things, is himself led into temptation, so it is not safe for a former alcoholic to approach the alcoholic rows. So for both Adam and Eve themselves, these words are completely true and true. They are details to the brief instruction that the Creator gave them, explanations of it, which the angels or God himself taught them in detail later. But this instruction is only true as far as their own behavior is concerned. If someone else puts the forbidden fruit in their hands, since it is not their play, they are innocent, a provocation by the enemy, as it happened, but as long as they did not eat it they remained innocent. Eve at this point did not deal with this twist of temptation, found herself unprepared.

Many at this point would still show principle, refraining from the next steps of violation, understanding at least that the main rule "not to eat" has not been broken, but the usual tactics of the devil are aimed at "now you don't care anymore," go for it. Force a person to touch the forbidden by a method where not the person himself touches, but another brings him into contact with the forbidden, and convince him that you have already violated. Although, until she ate from it, she had a chance to get out of the problem, because what had happened before was violence and fraud. But she was convinced that she had already crossed the line, and with that she was de-moralized. "And she ate..."

Lucifer knew that it was too early to celebrate his victory. His plan was not just to harm the Master, to show the validity of his idea that laws are unnecessary, that rules, restrictions, and prohibitions are artificial, that the will of a reasonable being is the only law. These are the voices of his servants today, and they are nothing new. But, as it seems to many, it was also because he and his supporters had no normal base in the universe. They all, as the Bible says, "left their places" when they rose up to protest and probably seize power - a kind of revolt or rebellion - and were all cast out of the inhabited worlds together after that. By design, many of them, being angels by nature, could probably even live on lifeless planets or outer space (or they were all deported to somewhere un-

(I am not sure about all this, there is no direct data, but if they were given hospitality on some planet and the whole planet, without abstentions and those "against", accepted them, then they would have the right to be there and build their own world. On Earth, they would have had the opportunity, if Adam and Eve had accepted them, to become masters of the situation. If people on Earth had had time to multiply, the chances of the rebel angels taking over the territory would have been markedly reduced, because even if a small percentage were "against" they would not have been allowed to be there, so they needed to act urgently while people were inexperienced and there were only two of them to ensure unanimity. At this point, half the job was done, one vote out of two was received, but Adam remained. Had he remained faithful to God, Eve would have perished, and Lucifer's task would have been as far from a solution as it was before the attack on Eve. While this would not have left him undermining the inhabited worlds, it would have made his task much more difficult. On Earth, he could carry out the building of a society according to his own principles, plans and designs, and he hoped to entice all others in the universe who had not yet believed or doubted him, if he could come up with something viable and at least in some way appealing. He still seemed to believe it then, that life could be built on other foundations. Though as a deceiver he now simply declares to those who would lay claim to him for a world filled with evil and misery that either you want freedom or you want prosperity, it is impossible to have both at the same time .¹⁹. Yet why is it possible for God to have both? Or is the alternative path, necessarily not the same as God's, an end in itself for him?

Eve made her way toward Adam. She was filled with new, previously unprecedented sensations, which confirmed the serpent's words that they would be like the gods. It was not difficult for Lucifer to arrange these sensations for her, for his knowledge of nature was great and he himself was still one of the first beings in the universe in power and intelligence. And alas, she did not go on her own, now she served as the instrument of the Deceiver, was the conduit of his power, the serpent was no longer needed, he was let go. She brought Adam the fruit from the forbidden Tree and told him all that the serpent had said and what she herself experienced after eating them. She had shown considerable persistence and conviction, and she herself glowed with excitement, presenting Adam with an attractive lure. She now wanted to raise him to the height of being that she, or rather that she felt she had reached.

It was not that Eve gave the fruit to Adam without informing him where the fruit came from. If there had been, Adam would have spoken very differently, and he would have had serious complaints against Eve. He would have told God that he did not know that he was violating His prohibition, and, indeed, would that have been a violation? In all fairness, such a thing should be considered an additional crime for Eve and Adam would be the victim here, not the criminal. No, what is clear here is that she was agitating him to join her and the serpent in violating the prohibition on the tree of knowledge.

The Bible does not say that Adam believed her. There is no word that he began to doubt, to question anything, as she did in her conversation with the serpent. No, it was clear to him that what had happened was what the angels and God had warned them about (the fact that God had visited them often, the Bible itself says literally in the following verses, and it is clear that visits from outside the planet were a constant, regular occurrence), that a Deceiver had appeared in their comfortable world and that he had just succeeded and destroyed their lives. The only question for him was what to do now that Eve was doomed to die. She was very dear to him, and that was what Lucifer was now gambling on. And he had won. In a way, Adam had accomplished the feat of deciding to die with Eve, to share her fate. Noble? I don't know. Because his choice was driven not so much by helping her as by the idea that he could not live without her, although compassion for her also played a role. But, on the other hand, this

¹⁹ Of course, I have not spoken to him personally, but I have heard a lot of this and that from his supporters, and we can speak confidently about his ideas of the world order. They are voiced by those who oppose God.

he was betraying God, Who had created him and Eve (and could, and would inevitably in time give him another wife), to Whom he owed his life, his being, and all his feelings and sensations, and Eve herself, too, for that matter. Betraying the Father for his wife? Not a good decision. And it's not a way out at all, it's suicide. In a way, this is inspired by the same rebellious, suicidal spirit of Lucifer himself (from the time he set his followers on rebellion, he took the risk, knowing that, but was ready to do a lot for "to see what happens", to test both himself and God), because he was not standing aside at that moment, but actively tried to influence the emotions of Adam.

However, Adam could also think that maybe God would not kill them both at once, i.e. he would not kill them at all, because if he destroyed them both, the Creator's plan for the Earth would be destroyed, and it is unlikely that God would agree to that. Lucifer also counted on just that, that people would stay alive, and then the whole planet together with them would pass into his hands. If Adam, the ruler of planet Earth, submits to him, Lucifer, the prince of heaven in exile, then this subjection of the prince of Earth puts his domain in his hands as well. So Adam thought that one Eve would surely die, and if he risked it, he would either die with her, and the thought of being separated from her made him despair, or God would spare them somehow, because He had not fiddled with the planet for nothing, and He needed them for something. This was actually blackmailing God (not to the eye, but still, what if the owner is so kind...), although it was a big risk, too. And it turned out that Adam's risk and Lucifer's calculation paid off. Not completely, and not in the way they wanted, but in terms of the continuation of life they succeeded. But it didn't work with the Lucifer-run Earth advertising project. Nor did it succeed with the cosmic appeal of his lifestyle.

And so Adam deliberately takes the fruit from Eve's hands and eats it. It's like he's telling her, "I'm with you. You, though now so enthusiastic and energetic, you are almost gone, yet I don't want to live without you, and I want to die with you. True, she didn't understand it at the time; it was a different, messianic mood that possessed her. And then there was no time to evaluate, other thoughts came... Maybe much later, when everything had calmed down and the shock of all the changes had passed, when a different, not glorious life had settled down. If the Creator had been around at that time (and people were related to Him closely enough and were delighted with Him, understanding the greatness, power, His kindness and sensitivity to what He had created), Adam would have been very uncomfortable. He would have felt more clearly that he would not want to live without God either (we are such heroes today, but if we were acquainted with Him more closely...). That God is dear and desirable in his own way, and in general is the source even of the very feelings of man, and of the very love that Adam felt for Eve, and Eve herself as well. However, he also sensed a bifurcation-no matter to whom he turned his allegiance, in both cases it was a pity to leave someone behind. He could have stayed by the side of the Creator, but it seemed to him that by doing so he was betraying Eve; God was stronger and would survive somehow... Later, when he became a father of many people, when he saw the amount of suffering on the planet, not only among people but also in the rest of the living world, he realized a thousand times that he was wrong in choosing Eve and underestimating at first the experience of the Father and the way he framed Him by leaving Him alone before Lucifer and his followers. This could not help, however, except to add patience to the long journey to the lost home.

After Adam ate what his wife had brought him, during which he hardly experienced the slightest pleasure, except from the taste of the fruit. And even then, when one does the wrong thing, seldom is the soul capable of enjoying anything. He had the distinct feeling that he was doing something unnecessary and in vain, that what he was doing was not help. But once he had begun, would he give it up? - Is there any point...? This is where it is really too late to jump back, the violation has already happened. In many other cases, for example, as in the proverb "the war will stop halfway, and that is good" - to stop in the way of the violation makes sense. Where the amount of evil is concerned, it always has

meaning, but where there is only black and white, either-or is not. I've seen jokes somewhere about "British scientists' discoveries" - something like "quickly lifted does not count as fallen," or "inserted and quickly pulled out does not count as inserted," but these are just jokes, and there is little that is good for describing real things. We can try to "not count" ourselves for something done wrong, but how will the audience in front of whom all this tragedy takes place count? Neither they nor God can be deceived, even with our own conscience it is hard to do.

Eve, too, did not enjoy the unusual rush of energy and heightened sensations for long. After Adam chewed the fruit or nut she had brought, she began to recoil, born out of Adam's lack of the effect she had experienced. Either she was angry that Adam wasn't thrilled about breaking the commandment, or Lucifer had abandoned them, since he had nothing else to do now due to the complete success and fueling of the emotions from the extraneous fire of the except. Feeling her downfall, she suspected she had been cruelly deceived. Angry, frightened, fleeing? And that glow of light that radiated from their skin vanished. Their bodies appeared to them in the light as we see them today in us, the overbred human race - we are not to blame for what our forebears did, but there are consequences all the same, we are all born in what they had. Not so bad in some situations for our way of looking at things, but for them it turned out to be unaccustomed. Along with a wounded conscience it was very unpleasant. It was a clear sign of their guilt and the loss of something very important. So they began to look for something to cover themselves with in order to feel a little more normal, not so openly naked. They were far from degraded, their ingenuity and mental agility was firmly inbuilt in their being, and they quickly found a way to combine the leaves into a sort of cloak. I wonder why they chose fig leaves, for they are very much like sandpaper, if you touch them with your bare hand when you pick a fig, it does not bleed, but where the skin is not as rough as on the palms, it peels and burns. It was clearly a manifestation of remorse and self-punishment. A normal reaction, as it were, a normal human reaction. But what will God say now about all this, will their self-punishment count for payback?

Punishment

It is not known how often visitors came to them from beyond the Earth, but the new world was not left to itself, to the long agonizing search for ways in error and loss, for the evolution of consciousness, science, culture and other ideas of our time about the beginning of humanity. God's visit to the Garden of Eden does not seem unexpected or rare, but rather a routine visit with regular lessons. They were introduced to the civilization of the universe, taught everything they should know in all worlds, taught all knowledge. Although it seems that this process did not go very far - we do not know how long Adam and Eve lived before their fall. On the one hand, we can assume that they had time to learn a lot, as many people seem to cite evidence about the ancients as having very advanced knowledge and technology, that is, at least several years had passed from Creation, on the other hand, if this time was significant enough, they would have had time to finish their education and they would have begun to have children. All in all, they did not have fifty years or even twenty. Their flight was obviously interrupted early on. Or should I say, they were shot down on takeoff, never allowed to take off.

God came to them during the "cool of day," the original reference to the time when the wind is blowing. At any rate, it is not morning; the events that took place around the Tree of Knowledge took part of the day, and even if they began in the morning, their subsequent reflection and realization of what had happened took many hours. Most likely, as usual, when the sun is at its zenith, the wind is less likely, but the approach of evening with its proximity of darkness and light, of cool and warm-

of that zone, causes the wind. And it is unlikely that even the pre-Potterian climate was any different in this respect. That is, they had plenty of time to experience and comprehend.

Unlikely people had played hide-and-seek with God before, their absence did not seem normal, so God called out to them-"Adam, where are you?" Adam was not far away and responded at once. Shame and an unaccustomed sense of guilt kept him from quietly approaching his creator as if nothing had happened.

We should note something about the Person of God who came to earth here and later. Although everybody talks about the monotheistic religion of the Jews, this monotheism is only as compared to paganism. In fact, the situation is a little bit more complicated. Everyone has heard of the Trinity, where the Godhead appears as composed of three figures, the Father, the Son and the Spirit (or two visible and manifest Persons and an invisible, all-pervading Spirit, who is also quite personal). In the Bible the Father and the Son are visible and palpable and while there are still many who can argue about the personhood of the Spirit of God, there is less debate about the Son, and if there is any debate, it is only about His beginning and when He became God. To me He is the original God. And this Son acts not only as Jesus Christ of New Testament times, but in Old Testament times most of the Bible's references to God are to Him, the Son. It is said of the Father that "no one has ever seen God; the only-begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He is revealed. In fact, by all indications and signs, it is He who represents the Father, serving as a kind of mediator between Creation and the Most High. Although the Son is the Creator and Maker Himself, He almost always acts "on behalf of" Himself, and even the name "Essent" or Jehovah (Jahveh, Yahweh) is one in common with the Father. Details on this will be in the article²⁰ about this.

Adam called back from somewhere in the bushes - "I was afraid of your voice because I am naked. Perhaps the translation is not quite accurate; he was rather ashamed because he is talking about nakedness. But on the other hand he must really be afraid, because he knows what must follow eating the forbidden fruit. He has clearly experienced both. Rather the phrase might have been, "Your voice makes me afraid, and I am also naked," but he must have been bragging, not explicitly speaking of fear. The cloaks of leaves did not help them in any way to get rid of the feeling of nakedness ... This confession is the absolute truth - many people try to justify their guilt by various considerations, but they work only before people, they are not effective before themselves, a considerable residue remains. However, if one feels the presence of God, or who brings His influence with him, or whatever, like Adam at this visit, then those leaves of self-justification disappear, are not felt, as if they did not exist. In general, if only guilt and fear for his life, he could still go out and look God in the eye, but this unaccustomed nakedness and shame did not allow him to straighten up...

God doesn't scold, doesn't blame at this point. He finds out what happened by pulling them, most likely, out of the bushes. This is important for them now, so they can understand themselves, why they ended up where they did. God wonders - "who told you you were naked? Maybe you ate from the tree from which I forbade you to eat?" How else could they have ended up naked? Adam confirms it. Only for some reason, not directly that "yes, I ate," but by shifting the focus to his wife - "she whom you gave me, she gave me...and I ate." It kind of sounds like, "and I did what?" Does he realize now that he was only recently going to die with her? And perhaps he thought that such a death would be something glorious (at least some gentlemen are sure of that)... Only now his accusation of Eve does not look glorious at all. Maybe the fact that God spoke to them and didn't become either

²⁰ Not ready yet, but it will be called "About the Father and the Son" or something about their relationship. In the same section of the website as books about the Bible.

scolding, nor blaming, has awakened some hope in him? What if he was not too guilty and he or they would be forgiven? Or maybe the loss of the shining light was the punishment they had been warned against, a symbolic death? Is real death no longer a threat? In this relaxation, it's as if he doesn't see the need to be a hero.

But it's worth pointing out that before his fall, he could think of heroism or heroic deeds, but sin changed him, he became another being who is not what he thought he was, who is different, who displays unexpected qualities, and not the best, not the noblest. He sets Eve up, even if not for death, as he suddenly hopes he will, he tries to justify himself by putting the blame on her. He says that if he is to blame, she is more to blame. And if, as a result (hypothetically), he had been left to live and she, with her greater guilt, had not, what would he have done?

Perhaps there is another side to Adam's words that neither blames Eve nor excuses himself. His words are ambivalent. On the other hand, he is merely stating a fact, the purest fact. If he had taken all the blame, that too would have been a lie that would not have been difficult to uncover, and people have not yet had the experience of lying. Some are even still not very good at it, to a person's credit, because in order to lie, the body activates some mechanisms in the person that are not activated when the truth is told. It is just like an insincere smile differs from a real smile in that there are other muscle groups at work and everyone subconsciously if not consciously sees that very well (although it may not come to consciousness). But back to Adam and Eve - Eve did bring him fruit, and he, in short, Western Action style, gives no motives, no thoughts, no feelings, just a dry account of actions - "they brought it to me, I ate it". But even if he states the facts as they are, his words still say more by themselves than he would like to say. The facts do point to Eve, and hint that he is less to blame, or maybe even not to blame at all... The situation... Though there is indeed a case of self-justification, look - he doesn't just say "the wife brought it", but he includes God himself - "the wife you gave me"... Now this is something devious and devious, which could not have happened if he had not let sin into his life. The normal phrase would have been, if he had said, "my wife brought it to me, and I ate it. But he brings God into it. Or is this a reference to the fact that God's gift is so precious to him, that this value is the reason he pro-wanted to share her fate? It may be so. But now, because of the crime that has entered his world, the bio- and noosphere at his behest (Eve, if she had violated alone, would not have affected the world, but only herself, but when both of them, at that moment constituting all humanity, crossed the line, they framed the whole world, everything they owned or were endowed with), his words sound so clear that he himself no longer knows whether they are pure or deceitful. And it overwhelms him. How Eve felt is hard to express. She felt not only guilty, but deceived, wrapped around her finger. And naked again. And she took the hints from her husband, whom she had seduced with her own hands, as she deserved.

It is interesting how the Son of God, who led this conversation-investigation, behaved. Adam declared to Him that he was, as it were, the injured party, though he did not deny guilt. All right, says God, let's ask Eve then. And asks a difficult question - "What did you do that for? How is it possible? Why? Do you understand what you ended up doing and how you ended up doing the work of destruction? Did you realize you were doing evil, or did you think it was something right?" A simple question would be if one were asking "why," or "what did you do?" But here is "what did you do," or "what is it that you did," "what was your idea of what you did?" Eve answered that when she did what she did, bringing the fruit to Adam and agitating him to eat it, she thought she was really doing something important or necessary. Her answer - "the serpent of ob - flattered me, and I ate." In other words, "I acted in seduction," that is, I believed the deception,

now seeing that it was a deception. Lucifer, in fact, presented the case so attractively that she believed him, so much so that she ate it herself, and thought that Adam should obligingly try it and join the dragon's plan. "I was seduced" and acted in that state...

God does not yet draw conclusions, and having one more link in the chain of guilt, must also ask the serpent. However, the serpent is no longer the bearer of another's mind or its mouthpiece. Lucifer, convinced of the success of his case, did not wait for the denouement. He simply left Eve with her disillusionment and went away. He had no intention of staying with those who had entrusted themselves to him. So the serpent could not answer. Lucifer had not inherited the gift of speech. In fact, if the serpent could speak, the most he could say was, "Something came over me that made me do things I never thought I would do in my life. Eva also saw the snake in its present form, which could no longer speak and would no longer behave so mysteriously and seductively, becoming simply the flying kite that it had been before. And what did she think of herself afterwards, who had allowed herself to be so deceived... and also of the one who had deceived her. I can imagine what modern people say about themselves and those who deceived them in such cases.

Since there was no one to ask, the serpent remained only a serpent, albeit a flying one, which in the following times was called a dragon, God pronounced in his face the curses which the Deceiver deserved, but which also affected the serpent. Lucifer, listening from afar to the words addressed to him personally, though spoken as if to the poor serpent, felt a little shudder. He felt that he had done something worse than anything he had done so far. Before, he had deceived the likes of him, already mature and independent beings, and here he had touched children who had barely begun their journey - how much of an honor is that?

The serpent himself did not suffer much, though he was not personally guilty of anything. He was deprived of the ability to walk and fly; he was told that he would "walk on his stomach," that is, to crawl, to creep, not to fly, and to eat earth, or rather ashes. Snakes, crawling ever since, hardly feel deprived of anything, hardly remember the other abilities their bodies once had, but Lucifer heard in this rather unpleasant promises to himself. He was deprived of the capacity for good, for something higher. He had not been able to create living things like God before, and, in fact, that was one of his goals - to get as close to God as possible in ability. But now he is being told that from now on he will be unable to do anything good or long. For him, a supremely advanced and gifted being, this was very distressing to hear. All he had been allowed to excel at was evil and destruction. That was hardly what he was aiming for, he wanted precisely his kingdom of success and prosperity, which would be an advertisement for his principles, to show how it was possible to live outside God's rule with alternative laws or no laws at all, in complete freedom, and of course "reasonable" at that. But different. In his struggle for the place of the Son of God he invented this ruse--freedom and other laws. He could hardly see any other way to live besides prosperity for all, he hardly wanted death or ruin and desolation to rule his kingdom, so he hoped to come up with something. However, when two people argue, they are bound to drift in different directions, there is a repulsion that is dictated by the role they have taken on in the conflict (or so the conflict itself dictates), and even if they thought the same way before the conflict started, their opposition can cause them to first speak and then think differently. The distortion usually begins with the initiator of the confrontation and the guilty party, who is pushed into untruths. This is how many heresies and dissensions have come about - not from the head, but from the heart, from behavior, from emotion. Every mind can at times vacillate between two ways of understanding, but it is very difficult for the minds that are in conflict to remain united. It is only a question of time. So Lucifer, opposing the Son of God, claiming His place, unwillingly spoke of

its laws and orders differently than God's ways and laws had suggested. It was also attractive because it looked new and unusual. In order to draw the inhabitants of the worlds after him, he simply had to invent new things to distinguish himself from Christ. So he became a bearer of lies, death, deceit, and there was no other way for him, because the "Way, the Truth and the Life" could not be separated from God, or God was not going to change Himself, and it is impossible for a righteous person to refuse the truth. Choosing the alternative path, he had to break with these life-forming things as well. For God, this step by Lucifer and the punishment that followed was the visible consequence of his path, but for Lucifer it was a bit of a surprise prediction. But he felt that God was right, and that the "reward" he received was right. He could no longer be good and pleasant, nor could he build something good and eternal. Having evolved in deception, he has now also become a murderer; death has appeared in this world because of his deception. A little delayed, but it has already come. He had been promised that Earth would never become a showcase for his lifestyle in the sense he wanted, but it would become his anti-advertisement, an indication of his real way and lifestyle-just the thing that would forever alienate from him all those who had not followed him, but in whose minds he had once had doubts, who might not fully understand the rightness of God. For himself and for all who chose him as their leader, it will be a matter of disappointment and self-judgment.

There is a famous phrase in Faust, where the spirit of evil advertises itself as eternally striving for evil, but somehow good comes out of it. It's as if unwittingly he's contributing to something like this, progress and development. But it is his usual distortion, a wishful thinking, but not a real one. With these words he argues with the verdict that was spoken to him as a serpent. In fact, he was precisely seeking to do some alternative good (as he presented his way to his supporters), but now it turns out that he is always doing evil. And even the good he does, if it seems that way to anyone, always ends badly and tragically. Money from casinos does not bring good; bought love does not bring not only happiness, but even as a pleasure does not always satisfy a person. And what curses are attached to what is for sale... So, in all honesty, a demon should have characterized itself the other way round - wishing good, but always doing evil. But the deceiver has no right to do it... And since then, a lot of water has flowed, and he has long been interested in doing exactly evil, causing suffering, in order to take as much as possible with him to the grave.

And, God added, "I will establish enmity between you and the woman and between your offspring and hers. It will sting you in the head, and you will sting him in the heel. This was the prediction of Lucifer's concept. The heel is quite a painful place on the body, if anyone has encountered it, and the devil inflicts very substantial blows and defeats on the generation of the righteous, just as he was able to inflict the cruelest suffering on Christ, but this Messiah who came forth from among men will inflict more severe blows, up to and including the destruction and destruction of Lucifer. The offspring of the woman he deceived, the One born of her, will smash the dragon's head. Avenging the deceit and the suffering it brought, and the women and men who had to live in the world he had shattered, the world of unbalanced ways, of deceit and violence. This was a prophecy of a Messiah also, who would be born of a woman, but who would at the same time be a Person of a different origin, who could stand as an equal against the devil. This is beyond the capacity of men on the scale of personality. If there were not a cloak from above over the earth for all men, whether they were righteous or sinful, they would be easily enslaved to the dark forces, but with this gracious cloak everyone retains the freedom of choice and of will. Unless one personally opens up to the enemy for domination and the capture of the soul, but even this does not happen immediately.

Some people believe that there is some kind of pact of balance between darkness and light. It is some vague notion that it is supposedly impossible, or even impossible, or so do-

They said, in general, that there cannot be only one good, just as there cannot be only one evil. That the preponderance of one over the other would disturb something in the world... - but what else could disturb a world that is already disturbed? That's basically the wrong approach. It's like saying that we can't all be healthy so that some kind of germs don't disappear.²¹... It is unlikely that they can justify their assumptions, since the sacred books do not seem to give any reason to think so, especially the Bible. However, some "rule of the game" does exist. This is hardly a treaty; it is more of a "notion" and boils down to the fact that people should have freedom of choice. This means that no one should be forced - either from the divine side or from the dark side, meaning the non-human superpowers of angels. And this "equilibrium" was not established by a treaty between the parties, but by an act of God unilaterally, since He owns everything by right that created everything, including Lucifer. God has limited Himself as far as men are concerned, He cannot force them to be righteous or to save them by force, that would be contrary to the principle of freedom with which men are created.

But this is about the interaction between higher powers and humans. For people themselves, because they are equals, there is no such rule of equilibrium or nonviolence; they can usually take care of themselves. In this they are the rules and in our horizons, not only can higher powers not intervene, but something special is needed, for believers it is through prayer, a request for protection or a contract like the one God had with Abraham. And the results may not always be obvious.

There is no other limitation, everything comes from this condition of freedom of choice. It is not born of a contract, it is a natural limitation of common sense - Lucifer himself recruited supporters purely by persuasion and deception, and if he had used the slightest force on anyone, especially on people who were not equal in ability to the angels, no one would have understood him and God would have had the right to intervene. That is why the devil did not push Christ out of the temple when he tempted Him, because that would not have been His choice and He or the Father would have the right to use force in case of violence. The whole basic game is about capturing a man's attention and interest, for his choice of whose side or whose principles he will choose. There are cases, of course, when dark forces firmly hold some person, but there is always some reason why he gets into such dependence, and these issues are solvable, if only the desire of the person himself, although it must be commensurate with the size of the problem, and if the desire to free himself is small, then the problem will remain. Actually the representatives of God have to be on top of it too, but nominal Christianity (which is really just a shadow of what is right) is powerless here. Sometimes there is no one to help, not many people who are near enough to God and have achieved something in spirit and strength, but maybe more people will come, if only because of these lines.

Now, after finding and dealing with the cause of the problem, God returns to the manic transgressors. Eve hears his sentence, which for some reason does not speak of death, but of life, though not the same life as before. If the devil really did lead them into some higher realm of life, it might make sense to look at the execution of the guilty in terms of competition between the gods, but can anyone say (even the most advanced proponents of the theory that Lucifer was the benefactor of humanity) that they were actually beneficent and not deceived? What did they receive from the Tree of Knowledge? Intelligence? - They had it before, it wasn't added to it at all. Knowledge? - Knowledge of what? They did not advance in any of the sciences. Rather, they lost access to the learning they had had before, and only much later did they begin to catch up, having thoroughly lost almost everything they had before. In general, people

²¹ They will not disappear, they will just take their real niche and perform the role they were originally programmed to perform, leading a "herbivorous" life.

were victims of a major sabotage, and in addition to some punishment they were assisted as victims of circumstances whose lives and livelihoods were destroyed.

So Eve had her rights diminished, which in our twisted world has degenerated in some communities into even greater disenfranchisement, to the point of denying women the right to knowledge, to voice, to many opportunities, you can go on with the list. God had said that her husband would dominate her. She also received an increased psychological dependence on her husband, which seems to be at the heart of his domination. Not that this dependence creates his domination, but it helps her to accept or not feel humiliated - "your attraction to your husband, and he will dominate you". Today this dependence, in our rather inverted world, makes many women resent the very fact of its existence and is resulting in a feminist revolt, leading them to totally deny and destroy such a mechanism. The reaction, of course... It doesn't look like this rebellion is healing society or women themselves, only breeding new problems and tensions, new points of division within man and society, destroying man himself. But what was God to do? Reward Eve with more rights? If Adam had obeyed her, should he have continued to obey her? When men surrender to women, something like this comes out, but is it good for the women themselves? There is no peace and good in that, only conflict. So it is better to obey the supreme decree.

Another punishment Eve and all women received from her was painful childbirth. I have read that non-Christian and non-Judaic peoples have not and do not have a problem with painful childbirth, and that only Jews and Christians, "who have listened to their preachers, ha-ha," have this problem. Such, they say, is the power of suggestion and self-influence. If we were to throw off these shackles, we would instantly forget the problem of childbirth and liberate women. But this would be like the way in which medieval scholars, following Aristotle, claimed that the spider, like the insects, has six legs.²² Spiders have eight legs, anyone could count them, but for some reason they repeated this statement in their scientific papers, contrary to the obviousness of life. So here too, following the old atheist fiction about the relativity of religious taboos, they repeat that only in Semitic religions do women have a problem with pain in childbirth, but none of them wants to ask midwives. Or the pagans themselves, Buddhists and others. They all have pains, even those who have never heard of women being punished by the biblical Yahweh, it is not at all from self-inflicted pain, but at a much deeper level. Although physiologically it seems as if there is no special reason for pain, there is. And no alternative beliefs or disbeliefs help. The only thing is that the size of these pains can be stronger or weaker, depending on the health and energy of the body, and on the state of mind and emotions. It is possible to do something with self-talk and self-control, which are significant factors. Knowing how to relieve or block pain can help to some extent, but only to some extent. If you read on the forums of women dealing with the subject, trying to learn how to control themselves in such a way that the birth is painless, it is clear whether we are dealing with suggestion, with self-mastery or with something else beyond the capacity of the human being. The pain did not come from suggestion, and suggestion is not able to take away even half of the pain. When God spoke of pain in childbirth He was not suggesting, He was just changing something in human nature, or rather in the settings of the system, which is a factor that man can hardly remove. And when one tries to use strong painkillers, the birth itself is often stopped...

Now the focus was on Adam as well. His guilt was in its own way greater than Eve's. She fell victim to quite harsh influences (though she could have easily avoided all of this, simply

²² I have not verified the truth of this statement, nor have I reviewed the writings of all medieval scholars, or even, I repent, any of them, but I still trust those who have mentioned it, and this is not one case. At the very least, some of them did trust the authorities too much.

removed from there as soon as possible), but he was not particularly deceived, but inclined directly to unfaithfulness to God. In a sense he could not escape temptation, it was more difficult for him - Eve could leave the tree and the serpent, and Eve herself came to him. It was blackmail, it was the abuse of his co-suffering and sympathy. He must have noticed by now that sin and guilt had changed him more than he had noticed at first with the loss of the natural glow²³ skin. He had freely set Eve at risk, even though he had been ready to die with her before. But there is no way he could have gotten out of the state he was in, even if he could have suppressed all the aberrations in his impulses and desires that had arisen after he crossed the line. He wished he could return to innocence, a quality all too precious now, but there was no door leading back. He saw, however, that God was reaching out, at least in the fact that Eve had not been punished with death. What was handed out as punishment was more of a remedy, though painful. The same was prescribed for him. He was appointed to work, to toil "in the sweat of his brow. In overcoming the difficulties that God had now "provided" for man (although the real difficulties did not begin until after the Flood, and it is unlikely that God had changed nature and conditions on Earth; it seems that it was the changed nature of man, which now had an inner discord in it), there was a way out of the problem of sin, to develop the qualities needed to get back into harmony with God and the cosmos. It was, it seems, labor therapy. Although it was man's share, his part to regain what was lost, this does not mean that gaining righteousness or holiness depends solely on man. It cannot happen without labor, without man's participation, but labor and effort alone do not create any righteousness. It comes down on man from above, and man must participate in it, in accepting and assimilating it, but he is not the source. To accept it and get used to it, to get used to it and assimilate it, is perhaps the truest description of the divine purpose of man's salvation. Everyday affairs, survival, provision, are the means of man's restoration, of his sanctification. Those who declare that not working for man is the supreme good available to the elect, rebel against God's help to men, against His work in men, become opponents of God and helpers of the devil. Those who despise work and those who work with their hands, who regard idleness as the highest privilege, open their souls to the worst powers.

All this was appointed to him, as God emphasized, "because you obeyed the voice of your wife. Between the voice of Eve and the voice of God he chose the voice of his equal, but in so doing he rejected and humiliated the superior. This was offensive on Adam's part and his responsibility was greatly increased by it.

Of course, as with everything, labor is not so simple. Just as it can heal and uplift when it is conscious and productive, it can also destroy if it does not reveal a person's potential and capabilities, but is meaningless and futile. It just goes to show that you have to put a lot of thought into it (perhaps the most important part of occupational therapy) to make it constructive rather than destructive. When work is used to subdue and suppress the will, it is in most cases criminal, unless it is used to subdue the especially violent. But for the violent and unconscious it is better to use the other branch, the deprivation of bread which work creates, the principle of "if you don't work, don't eat". Hunger would be the best means of enlightening all criminals and unscrupulous people, however perverse and corrupt they may be. The punishment of labor is better than that. It is suitable for those who wish to change, and must fit their abilities. Although a little schooling in labor that is not suited to one's abilities is helpful to all, in order to acquaint them with their limitations as well as to develop them. However, the work of the

²³ In humans there is a residual effect of this until now, scientists say at least one quantum of light per second from a square centimeter of skin, but usually from 6 to 60. At death, this glow disappears.

The field which suits man's character and nature is much easier and healthier and more productive in ennobling man, than a field where man's abilities do not coincide with the circumstances and peculiarities of the work. The highest uplifting means is to work according to one's abilities, where man is most effective. This is the involuntary communication, the dependence of the individual on the other, and this socialization of the individual in parallel with his/her development. The use of man according to his abilities - his strengths rather than his weaknesses - enriches society considerably, while forcing a person to work against his abilities would destroy and impoverish both society and man, so that the fanatics in power who love to put down a man in a foreign cause or in a meaningless job are the enemies of society, and should not be allowed near them in government. In the Soviet Union, the middle management was dominated by an attitude of "wherever we tell you, that's where you will go to work," i.e. it was as if society was given over to destructive tendencies. "It seems that people at the top did not understand this either, judging by what is written and said today about governing the country at that time, although some forces in the scientific sphere talked about it, but the gap between theory and practice, thinkers and managers is an eternal problem.

"thorns and thistles shall it bring forth unto thee"- Adam's curse included not just labor or drudgery, but a changed nature, not as benevolent and kind as it was originally created. It is difficult, if not impossible, to fully appreciate the magnitude of the change. It is unlikely that these changes took place immediately, that is, not all of them were instantaneous, but they were gradual. For example, the appearance of needles and thorns on many plants. We learned at school or from scientific literature that the thorns are reduced leaves or branches - so what was a normal part of the plant became thorns, like preserved, curled up. This requires a change in genetics, and the Author of Nature, the Programmer of all life, made these changes.²⁴ in the programs of living organisms. Or, could it be that gene manifestations and activity may have been tied to man? And his problems were reflected in nature? The thorns are only a small part of the changes that took place after the fall of man. So all of nature was affected by man's unfaithfulness, which is why Paul later wrote that "the creation submitted to vanity not voluntarily," that is, nature got into trouble because of man, and "the whole creation groans and agonizes together until now," "waiting for the adoption, for the manifestation of the sons of God. The appearance of saved men will also restore nature to its original harmonious state.

From there, from fallen man, come changes in food chains, ecological niches, the appearance of predators, and other changes. In nature, man received a clear illustration of the state that had come to reign in his soul, the inner world of man and the outer world of the planet were brought into alignment... The knowledge of sin did something to the psychic nature of man, the experience of violation was extremely critical for the entire human world, for the noosphere. What did this violation do? - Man fell out of the unity of the world and God. The experience of violation was followed by man's separation from God, from his Source. Here lies the essence of what is called in Christianity the "sinful nature of man. The seemingly smallest (a small prohibition on one tree among many in the garden was a powerful indicator...) disobedience triggered other mechanisms of feeling and perception, separation or detachment from God creates an ungovernability of inner expectations, impulses and reactions, a disordering and governing within man. I believe that as a result of the separation-

24 Everything was already calculated long ago before the Creation, only the scenarios of genes' inclusion have changed - this is most likely the case. There are a lot of reserves and reserve possibilities in the genetics of living things, while the genetics of different species should not overlap, i.e. dogs cannot change into cats.

This is why human nature functions in emergency mode, as a fallback in a hostile environment, and why it interprets many signals as hostile, even though it often creates this hostility itself. Whatever the case may be, we have an internal influence that is *not in tune* with what is normal. Strangely enough, it is our own ego; this is why Christianity speaks out for self-denial, even though it does not need to be repressed, we just have to put it back, under the influence of a higher being, coming from God, as it were from the beginning. Without it, the ego is prone to transgression, and depending on the particular nature and condition of the individual, these temptations vary from person to person. In yielding to these temptations, man is corrupted, that is to say, he develops in the violation of norms. In the firmness of restraint, man is sanctified (not by acting sanctified, but in these actions, because he responds to the call from above to act good, the will of God flows through him, and this current is what makes us sanctified - we *act* under His *influence*), developing the skill of self-control. God works to restore connection, and this work of His in us, which calls us to goodness and gives our actions a healthy influence, is called grace. Without grace it would be useless, indeed impossible, but in conjunction with the work of God in men it is possible to improve until harmony is restored in man, even in this life.

Introduction of the Atonement

They were given grace, which is what the Father and Son call a plan of action, in case someone needs to be restored from a fallen state. This can be characterized in many ways, from many angles, but here for now it is to say that it is a temporary suspension of the sentence, giving opportunity and time for correction. Lucifer and his followers were not subject to what was given to men, and obviously they were in very different circumstances.

Adam and Eve should have wondered why they were alive. Although they were glad they were, why do God's words seem so far at variance with His actions? Didn't He say, "You will die," but they were alive? And to this question God had an answer ready for them. He summons one of the animals from the pasture nearby, and as it approached, trustingly expecting affection and a kind word, God suddenly smites it with the sword. The sight of the blood and torment of an animal that had not expected it was terrifying to the people. And if they were not pierced by the picture of the other's death, who knows if they should not then be next... At their sentencing their punishment was not yet over, as if they were whole, and though they had suffered some loss, yet they were alive, and though outside Eden, they could live and do all their business and studies as before. And now they saw what really awaited them, what would happen to them, what God had spoken of when He warned them not to touch the tree of knowledge. They could have asked, and maybe they did - "Why? Why an innocent animal?" What happened is what the words of Revelation say - "A lamb slain from the creation of the world," that is, the Sacrifice that took the place of men, at the expense of which men were enabled to return to sinlessness and life. How God responded, I don't know, but the meaning was, "If I punished you, you couldn't understand it all and make it right anymore." They saw the value of their lives, their forgiveness. Without that Sacrifice there could be no reconciliation with God, and He still had to explain to the rest of us why people could be forgiven. And not only forgiven, but restored to their former state. And why it is impossible for Lucifer to have it. And how pardon can be combined with justice.

Why couldn't God just forgive? Why was Sacrifice necessary? There are many weaknesses here. The main thing is that although God is Lord and Master, He is not a tyrant. What is thought of Him, what will be thought of Him, what can be thought, means much to Him who created the world, who endowed it with reason and consciousness. Since He Himself has entrusted such a great instrument to

If the world does not understand God sufficiently, it will be a problem. If the world does not understand God sufficiently, that will be a problem. But if the world does not understand, it will distrust God and be afraid of Him, misinterpreting His actions - that would be an even greater threat. He, who loves the living, would like His world to be dominated by goodness, love, and harmony, in the happiness of all, apart from science and the arts, progress and success. Anything else, the opposite of good, would destroy and afflict both the world and Him, who would have to see those He created suffer and suffer, how they die, how the talents and jewels of the spirit are destroyed. That is why, in order to permanently and completely solve the problem of evil, which is the question of whether evil is something better than His plans for the world, whether a "shortcut" is better than a "longcut," but safe, He allowed evil to exist and reveal itself perfectly, so He gave Lucifer the freedom and ability to do as He said, which enticed His supporters. Had He been different, He would have eliminated Lucifer long before the first lying words came out of his mouth. But how would He explain Lucifer's disappearance to the rest of us? For a tyrant, it might be acceptable, but the disappearance of one would create doubt in many. And how many would He then have to eliminate until everyone turned away from Him with curses and He would have to create a new world by destroying the old one? And if the new world would be on the same principles, then in time everything would go again according to the same scenario... He who sees the end from the beginning, who invests in living things the finest abilities, cannot be a tyrant. Only love for all living things can solve all the knots that may arise in the fabric of life. Evil is often a shortcut to some intermediate goal, but this is achieved at the cost of destroying whatever is on the trajectory of this cutting. A master will consider it an honor to find any long path to a goal that leads to it without loss, but a path where something is destroyed would be a shame for him because he could not find a conflict-free solution. Evil, by resolving one knot radically, creates many problems in the long run (and in the short run no less), and on the contrary, good, by going the long way, solves the problem radically and without destructive consequences (we are not talking about each individual case of good and evil, but about God's strategy regarding Lucifer and the evil he raised).

The first circumstance of Sacrifice's need is the very difficult experience of breaking the rules. Those who have once allowed themselves to cross the line have an experience that will linger in their memory, and sooner or later the expectation of a shortcut and an easy solution will seduce them again, and even the mapped track of the habit started will arouse the desire to repeat what has been tried. In time, what was once frightening may seem attractive. The experience of life wraps itself around one's sensations, motivations, thoughts, and the tangle becomes more and more twisted, soaked in the substance of what one has done. You can swear to yourself that you will never do it again, but people often know themselves very badly and from the depths of the psyche the experience will present another seductive option, and thoughts of payback or wrong-doing may not come to mind, or may come separately, at another time, not everyone sees the connection of things, especially when living by emotions and sensations, when the *raison d'etre* does not connect the sense of feeling, emotion and thought, word and deed. And that can be anything. Look at the experience of maniacs and see if you yourself have not had the chance to go down this road ... You have rejected temptation and someone else not so much ... It was not enough to forgive legally which is also difficult.

hundred, we must somehow still free him from this experience of violation, no matter how big or small.

This freedom from the power of temptation is gained by denying ourselves, or rather our false interests, sometimes a very difficult choice when a part of us desires otherwise. God does a great deal on His part to ensure that man has this ability to overcome himself. But until man discovers that many of his interests are not real, until he understands that his nature is sometimes capricious, until he understands himself, a considerable time passes in which he has to limit himself, sometimes even in normal things. The Son of God became incarnate in man, changed the nature of his body, and became related to mankind. He showed that for those who would follow in His footsteps, it would be just as He was, that no temptation could be too strong for man not to be able to overcome it. His thirty years of life in the midst of the common man shows that sinlessness is quite possible for any man. He too, in the midst of the same temptations we all encounter, had to deny himself certain pleasures if they went beyond the law or the good. In imitating Him, in relationship with Him, man receives the same opportunities that He received from the Father. Without Him, without His special help, man will find it impossible to keep the rules completely, why He called Himself "I am the Way. Man himself cannot control more than two or three parameters in himself at the same time, and this is quite insufficient for being righteous, while grace carries out a complete adjustment of our whole being according to all the required parameters in all the right places. In order to make all that He has done in our body available to all, to replace the experience of our sinful life with His experience of living in perfect harmony with heaven, with the Father, with all the rules, it was necessary to pass through death, which is inseparable from the fate of man. He said, "When I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all unto Myself;" that is, after His death on the cross, He will become the center of mankind.

Another reason for the necessity of the Sacrifice is the problem of the conflict of justice and the desire to help, because in justice the guilty must be punished and to save him from punishment (which is total destruction) without questions from the inhabitants of the universe, it must not only be explained to them, but the conflict of law and grace must be really solved. And the Sacrifice is the ideal solution, or near-ideal if one wants to find faults in it, but sufficient. The Bible often uses the word "ransom" in reference to the saved and this leads many, some mockingly, others even seriously, to ask who is paying this ransom to whom? The question is a legitimate one, for this ransom relationship comes from a situation where an impoverished man is put into service, sometimes not far from slavery, by a richer man, but his relative must help him and pay a ransom for him so that he can be free again. But God does not pay the devil; there is nothing like that in biblical symbolism, much less reality. For the devil, the redemption of man is a threat, not a payment, and no privileges or opportunities are given to him, except those he has long since seized from the beginning. Also Lucifer is hardly a real proprietor of men, because God declares the earth his property with all its contents, the devil can only dispose of it among those who choose him as their god. Of course, few choose him consciously, it's just that many live by his rules and principles of selfishness, serving themselves first and foremost, and through this they fall under his rule. All men and fallen angels will one day give an account to the Master, so God does not need to

to pay the rebellious prince of heaven any retribution-Lucifer did not fight a battle when he was cast out of the civilization of the universe, and he only managed by deception to take the formal place of prince of Earth, taking the title from Adam, who chose him instead of God. But where the conflict is real is between the desire for mercy and justice, which demands nothing less than the humiliation of the transgressor, as it is written, "the wages of sin is death. The transgression must not exist and if there is, there must not be a transgressor, lest the transgression should continue... The judgment may be set aside, but its decision is unequivocally predetermined by law - its "NOT" overriding the transgression together with the transgressor. And God takes measures to satisfy justice beforehand, by offering this combination, whereby the place of the man is taken by the Other, so that the demand of the law may be satisfied, but the man lives. This Other must also become guilty, become the transgressor - but isn't He who created man responsible for him? I think He has the right to vouch for him and be responsible for his vouching - this is what happened on Calvary. This is the essence of the idea of redemption. The Surety, when a situation arises in which His ward has violated something, is guilty along with him and is equally responsible with him. In general, if it is necessary for someone to pay for a person, it is Justice who accepts payment from Love.

If we look at the Atonement apart from the understanding of vouchsafety, as if God had put Christ in our place under the law for nothing, then to some it seems unfair that the innocent bear the penalty for the guilty, as if justice itself were being violated here. However, the human situation is also far from standard. What about when a person has been "helped" to become a perpetrator, especially with the effect on the mind, manipulating and deceiving without giving time for reflection? Lucifer is a master at confusing situations and creating traps. So his answer is just as unconventional. We can look at the details that make up this case.

First, God has become human, that is, capable and entitled both to be responsible for the human race and to influence it by pulling it out of trouble. Although He could have influenced from afar, this difference is still significant for humans, for us His closeness is now more tangible and weighty. Christ's humanity made it possible for Him as Man to face the judgment of vengeance and as Guarantor to take the wrath of the broken law upon Himself for all who would in turn agree to join His nature as He did with mankind. He makes it possible; we need only allow ourselves to do so, to accept His divine gifts.

The second is that when Adam broke the law, he brought all of his descendants into a state of condemnation to a life of temptation and separation from God. It is really not fair: you were born, you have not broken anything, but somewhere in your genes you already have an urge to go to the left. To balance this unfair state of affairs with something neutralizing is quite fair and even Lucifer does not seem to object, he only chuckles aside saying that not everyone will want such protection from evil. In sum, through the dehumanization of his Son, God has given to men an influence, a sort of veil over the world, restoring man's unity with God, with original harmony, the possibility of "entering into his rest". In this way, as the Apostle Paul wrote.²⁵ Thus, the Apostle Paul writes - "if by one man's crime many were put to death" - there is no problem that life also came to the world through one Man.

Third, I don't know about you, but I had to feel guilty where the guilt attributed to me was not and could not even be. It was either hypnosis or a huge belief on the part of the accuser that he was right, that the accused really meant what he was accused of, but it worked, and what my relatives accused me of made me feel as if I could actually do that - could think, do, plan and carry out, and even as if I had already... Crazy, but I actually felt that way. And I realized that when God "made sin"²⁶ And I realized that when God "made sin" his Son, the latter actually felt himself to be the transgressor, guilty of all the sins that were ever committed on earth. And in all this weight-the consciousness of all the guilt of all men-He had to die. Throughout life every human being unconsciously benefits from this Sacrifice - it makes us carefree and joyful in childhood, enjoying being in all aspects of our lives, if the conditions allow it. The shadow of this perfect Sacrifice illuminated the planet from the beginning, but it is not meant to automatically redeem all people, it is only to delay the penalty, to give them the opportunity to accept the redemption offered and to take the path. Only by the choice of the person who chooses to walk this Way, who deliberately fights against evil, is it given the fullness of the gift. They are the only ones who "have life to spare. All are granted a reprieve from judgment, but not all take full advantage of it.

Most importantly, rightly or wrongly, it works for those who accept this means of restoration devised by God. Those who accept the gift of life give their guilt to the Son of God, receiving in return life and justification, along with other gifts - righteousness, sanctification, longing for light and goodness, regeneration of soul and body. The substitution of the guilty by Him who could take the guilt of anyone who wants to live is the means of salvation that Christianity talks about. To a higher degree this is indeed true. Many of us resent the fact that we had to be born into this imperfect world, unable to choose, so the Son of God, who created everything with His own hands, really feels responsible for this state of affairs, and so He Himself chose to get under our skin and moreover, to close the chain of all human guilt upon Himself. We cannot say now, that He from heaven looks on our sufferings, and feels nothing but sympathy from afar. This could be said of the Father, but not of the Son. However, by the connection between the two, the Father suffered no less, agreeing to this sacrifice of the Son in the beginning, and then feeling with Him both the shame of guilt and the suffering of body and soul in that darkness when the Son was hanging on the cross, but also having to pour out on the Son all the anger meant for evil and sin...

When the means of reconciliation became apparent to Adam and Eve, God made clothes for them out of the skins of those animals. Later, they, too, had to offer sacrifices each for themselves, and shuddered to see an innocent animal die by their hand, for their guilt. The animal that substituted for their death and punishment became also their covering, they were now clothed in it... It was innocent, and now they bore the marks of the Innocent, as if it had passed on its innocence to them, having perished with their guilt. Illustration... These garments, taken from the hand of God, covered their nakedness. Only now did they feel normal and uninhibited. The subconscious, which had suffered from the nakedness that had suddenly descended upon them, was now at peace. The fig leaves did not give them this peace and security, or they would not have been hiding from God, for they had made their clothes before God came to them. The picture of the death of the animals was for

²⁶ Many translations translate the expression as "made a sacrifice for sin," but the original says exactly that: "made sin," that is, the center of all evil, the bearer of sin.

The day was a shock to them, but at the end of it, they saw themselves and their situation as not unreliable. This complacency was no longer the arrogance that was initially present in their minds.

And the last thing they had to endure that day was to leave the Garden of Eden. It must have been a shame for them to leave this place, but someone had to repopulate the rest of the land, only it was a shame they had to leave early. Normally it would have been their children leaving, on their way to repopulate the planet, but not them. All the edges of the planet were habitable by this time, though many trees might not yet be at full strength, but that was not a problem. The rest of the land was hardly inferior to Eden in any way, it was only at the beginning of the days that they were empty, but after a few years they became quite suitable for providing animals and humans with everything they needed.

In the conversation between the Father and the Son the words were spoken: "Behold, Adam has become like one of us, knowing good and evil. Now he can take from the fruit of the Tree of Life and eat, and he will live forever. Do you think that knowing good and evil, doing both together, makes God a god? I don't think anyone can seriously think that. The father of evil himself did not achieve this, but tried to, that was his goal and he is still pursuing it. This "knowledge of evil" is only one of the traits peculiar to God, but he penetrated the essence of the different ways as the Sage and Creator of the universe, not as the bearer of evil along with the good. The experience of breaking the law certainly gave men the knowledge of evil, but in this there was only a likeness to the gods, a very distant likeness, not equality. Yes, they did not become fully evil; but they were not fully righteous and could not have been by any power except that grace that came to their aid. The resemblance is too small, this property of God is not in the realm of power or creativity, but in the realm of knowledge, philosophy. The problem of knowing evil, not in theory but in practice, for creation is that knowing evil through action and experience spoils something in the soul, dirtying one's hands and conscience, destroying life both for oneself and one's surroundings. Eternal life alone does not yet make one a god; all of God's creation can live forever as long as it lives in harmony with Him. The problem with eternity was that those who chose to become wicked, if they ate from the tree of life, would also be immortal, and eternally could then be perfected in wickedness. It is hard to imagine what could have come out of this if geniuses dedicated to evil had lived on the planet, what kind of organization with what purposes they could have created and how many things they could have done. But God promised the transgressor a limited life span, so there was no immortality for humans in their present fallen state.

God knows the essence of everything through His mind, through understanding things, through penetrating the essence of everything. Others too can penetrate all these mysteries of possibilities and ways of doing and organizing life, through understanding, eventually gaining insight into all that lies in the possibilities of evil, but some try to *do* evil literally and immediately, jumping over steps, cutting corners, cutting knots, and spoiling themselves, their lives and then others. In time, men would have understood evil and the difference between it and good, by gaining wisdom, by reaching higher levels of intelligence, for they were still children at the beginning of their journey, but Lucifer had plunged them into evil by *participating* in it. Evil is the way of destruction. God, knowing the meanings of both good and evil, bypassed these traps in His designs and their realization, and those who were involved in "cutting corners," which is, in general, the way of evil at first, in shortening and simplifying the path, they become entangled in them. Men, trapped by the devil's deception, had come into contact with an alternative path, and their moral nature was no longer secure. The contact with crime, the experience of violation, remains in the memory, and over time the experience takes effect. Habits arise from repeated experience. Why do living beings repeat their experiences? - There is a mechanism *of learning*, it triggers the spooling of experience onto the fabric of life.

This is how all things in us evolve. Whatever the experience, the mechanism of analysis of our brain makes it repeat itself, at least in thought, in order to know more, and if a disturbance has crept into the experience of a highly developed being, it will tend to repeat itself. Therein lies somewhere the mechanism of sinfulness, of which Christianity speaks, which is inescapable by human powers, for the former cannot be made non-existent. And there was a danger of making these learned men eternal. If they were given access to the tree of life once after the crime, then they would claim it permanently, which would make men immortal, and perpetuate the sinner. The limitation to the tree of life actually fulfilled God's promise of "you shall die by death," only in a delayed form. That is why there are no immortal sinners on the planet. It says that God placed an angel with a flaming sword at the entrance to the Garden - suit yourself, but it reminds me a lot of the idea of a self-guided laser... The further technology develops, even in science fiction, the more interesting it is to read the Bible...

There is hardly any substance of evil, so one can understand some who say that good and evil do not exist. I would agree that there is no substance or substance of either, but as a way of doing things, as a way or as a direction of action, there is. Human behavior contains good or evil, and these are more than tangible to any of us. For those who do not feel the pain of others or the interests of others, evil may not be noticed, but it is perfectly visible, unmistakably discernible in actions toward them personally. There are, of course, those who like to obfuscate, advocates of evil, but I have not yet encountered a flawless argument, there is always a preconfigured platform with already confused circumstances.

It should also be stated that evil and sin are not always synonymous. Sin is a violation of the law, or more simply, a violation of justice, of law, of righteousness. Sin is always evil, that is, pain and destruction or defilement, if not for the transgressor, then necessarily for someone else. Also, we are now speaking only of the Ten Commandments, which may be called the constitution of rightness for man. The rest of the laws, especially the laws of states, can in some cases even be in violation of divine laws, carrying with them the intention of keeping people under the hood or creating more culpability just in case. But not every evil is sin, as in the case of the punishment for sin. In this sense God also has to do evil by punishing transgressors, but He or the instrument of punishment is not to blame. Those who have earned the punishment cannot blame the punishers, except for exceeding the measure of the punishment. Of course, in the real world evil-doers and wicked men are far advanced in shifting the blame to others, in evading punishment, in delaying it as long as possible, multiplying the suffering of others, but all this too, with its accumulated interest, will be brought to judgment. Many think that if the punishment for sins does not happen immediately, it is ineffective or wrong, but when that time comes, no one will get hurt, and to punish evil instantly does not fit the paradigm of salvation, then no one would survive at all. Besides, man always lives in the "now" and not in "yesterday" or "tomorrow", as much as some of us would like it to be, and when the time of reckoning comes, it will not be late, it will be on time - the culprit will feel all that is due and will not enjoy all the previous delay, because it will remain in yesterday. So the justice of the Court and the Judge should not be doubted. But whoever would have the transgressors sooner come to their senses, they should become influential and strong in righteousness, that they may be better able to convince the wicked. No, not to destroy them personally, by any means, but just to be more

We are not only convinced by our words, by our influence and example, but if we can also do it, then that is good. Many are bent on evil by the influence and example of others, not realizing what they are doing, and others only because someone has taught them that righteousness is weakness and an ungodly thing to do. No, that is not true at all, it is someone who has portrayed this kind of religion to the world and someone has believed this picture, but it is not true. There are many possibilities to reduce evil in the world, almost magical (I'm not talking about magic, that's just a comparison), the human being has to reach higher levels of development of his being. There are religions that make and portray man as small, but there are also religions where man has to conform to higher expectations, as a son or daughter of God, has to develop and reach all possible heights.

The Tree of Life was one of the trees of the garden, they all belonged to them, and Lucifer may have thought that humans would retain access to everything, including the Tree of Life. Humans may have thought the same, but God had this gift in mind when He warned them of destruction for breaking the test. The guards at the tree made it impossible to restore life and health to those who fell under the curse of death.

The high resilience and vitality of early humans ensured the health of many generations to come. Before the Flood, even though human beings had gone to all lengths and abused both food and all kinds of pleasure, there are no descriptions of disease and degeneracy. But after the Flood, as mankind wallowed in pleasure, evil, and vice, and as the weak were deprived of the necessary resources in a world made scarce by the Flood, the degeneration of the generations grew. But when somewhere, somewhere, people took up their wits and restricted the harmful practices of at least eating and drinking, there was a revival of general health, though it was a long way from the previous pre-Flood level. Of course, no amount of good health in itself can undo what God told Adam and all his descendants, "Out of dust you were taken, to dust you shall return.

After Eden

For a long time after being moved outside the garden, life went on as it could in the best of scenarios - nothing bad happened, children were born, grew and developed. Was there any sign of sin in those early days? Only a little, but for a sensitive person who tends to reflect, to follow the paths that thoughts and desires follow in him. Evil, visible, like violence, murder, outright debauchery, and the like, did not and could not exist at that time. If there was wrong, it did not come out. Rather, the sacrifices that were offered on different occasions served as reminders of sin. Since the first sacrifice was offered as a sign that man was on the verge of death and another creature had died in his place, it became a necessity and an obligation, as a sign of following the way of salvation and also as a sign of followers of God. There was only one path that could deliver each person and all of humanity from the problem of death. This was the path indicated to them from the beginning.

Perhaps this Way of substitutionary sacrifice will seem wrong to some, not- It is not fair or meaningless at all. If only because the perpetrator remains alive and can continue to sin as he pleases, and once again take the victim and again get away with it. However, I hasten to reassure you in this regard - for such people, who have no respect for the Sacrifice, no remorse and abuse pardon, there is no Way for them (they go some other way).

(cf. Gen. 3:1), it is said of them that "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.²⁷". That is, if someone decides to go the way of "sin and repent" (that is, knowingly doing sin, allowing themselves to sin, counting on the subsequent pardon), then they are not people of the Way of God, but at best this is foolishness from ignorance of Scripture, at worst such people were called "Nicolaitans" in Revelation, those who combined sin and righteousness together. As for the justice of the substitutionary system itself, if it were not for this system, when the Son of God took the punishment of men upon Himself, and the animals were only a reflection of His intention, they would be doomed, there would not be the slightest hope and would either soon be extinct themselves or God himself would have destroyed them the same day, as in fact should have happened, if not for the pardon. God did not mean to destroy them so easily-not only were they dear to Him as His children, but they were also very sneakily "helped" to fall, and it would have been unfair to punish them for someone else's tripping. So God also had the right to help them, looking "unfair" as well, to help them get up just as they had been helped to fall.

When Cain was born, Eve said, "I acquired man from the Being," and this word "acquired" became his name. The first human being born on earth was realized by his mother as the ob - retention of a new, something created, probably unique. A new being, not being her, but coming through her... The word "kanakh" means both acquisition and creation, so the first blacksmith or metalworker is called Tuval-Kain. He, Cain, is the first-born, and in his line of descendants are amazing masters of their craft. However, he proved somewhat unworthy of his first-born. He was so demanding of his brother that he killed him when his brother turned out to be better at something than he was, even in following the Way.

Not much is said about Cain's lineage, but some conclusions can be drawn from Tuval-Cain's profession. Man is created with higher abilities than animals. He has at least one more dimension than they do. His hands are capable of making things. This is a great and very important fact. There are other abilities that set him apart as the highest being on the planet, but man's labor and ability to create things reveals an important detail of man's nature. Also, man needs TOOLS to create. When man creates things, whether material or immaterial, he also creates a technology, a recipe for production. These things are not necessary for survival, at least they were not necessary at first, as long as the environment was favorable, but they reveal the abilities of man, and so I conclude that tools and technology are part of our nature. Without them the human being is not fulfilled, his potential remains unrealized. And what does the need for tools, implements and technology say about the very God who created Man?

Instruments are not always like human hands, they are usually completely unlike anything in man, and yet they are all extensions of man. But tools don't grow on trees. You need materials that are available in the Earth's body to create them. All these metals and elements have been designed and placed by the Creator, and have a variety of properties which allow us to offer a great variety of possibilities. The human mind is capable of knowing how to develop the right tools, the right procedures and the right processes to create technology, all of the knowledge and effort is sacred, in the way that the Creator understands it.

27 Hebrews 10:26 - For if we, having received the knowledge of the truth, sin arbitrarily, there remains no more sacrifice for sins

because all of this is part of the "human" project from the beginning. Religion that wishes to conform to God's plan would have to take this into account.

Everyone knows that Abel's sacrifice was accepted, but Cain's was not. It is hard to say in what way it was accepted. It could have been the descent of fire upon the sacrifice, it could have been the smoke of the sacrifice rising directly to heaven or wafting over the earth. It doesn't matter what the acceptance was, they themselves knew very well what happened. What matters is what caused it to happen and how Cain behaved. Clearly, it was the sacrifice itself, the way it was offered by each of them. The sacrifice of the animal was an acknowledgement on the part of the offerer that he was someone who needed help from God. The fruit sacrifice that Cain made meant gratitude for the gifts, but it had no redemptive meaning, it did not contain the need for deliverance from sin and death because of it, it did not express that the one who made it needed help to be delivered from destruction. He clearly wants to show that he is good enough on his own and does not need redemption or salvation. It is as if he is already fit for heaven or for restoration in the Garden of Eden. He has not eaten of the tree of knowledge, he has not broken any of God's orders and laws. However, there is something not so sublime behind this. Yes, at that time man was not yet corrupt and debauched, nor had he developed a weakness against all temptation. Therefore, it was possible for a long time to not notice in himself any inclination to sin, which in our time would seem absolute perfection and holiness. But he was not, after all, a saint, judging by the storm that broke out in him when his natural "goodness" was not accepted by God. Christ made it clear to His disciples that "if your righteousness does not surpass the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees (when people seem to be quite good in themselves, doing nothing wrong, on the contrary, doing good, especially in the eyes of people who cannot see their inner state), you will not enter the kingdom of heaven. Not just "goodness" is needed, there has to be a heavenly component to that goodness, and without it the person sooner or later reveals himself as a transgressor. For God, it is evident that man lives "on his own yeast," without the heavenly component, and without truly righteous qualities. Evil has just not yet manifested or unfolded in him, but that is only a matter of time.

If Cain did not consider animal sacrifice a necessity, it shows a disagreement with the Creator who set this order of things. He may have been resentful of his father and mother because they had so wronged the world, including him, by succumbing to temptation. Had it not been for their sin, he, Cain, would not have been born in this lost world, but in the unlost Eden. By his refusal to offer the due sacrifice he rebelled against God and His way. And the fact that he dared to openly disobey, to declare some alternative way, speaks volumes about what is going on in his soul. If he were simply in doubt, he would talk about it, and then parents or visitors from heaven or even God Himself could help him with them, but he does not.

Perhaps one thinks that Abel had sheep and was greedy to give his brother one. There were plenty of animals suitable for sacrifice, and if he had been willing, even if his brother had refused to trade with him or just give him what he needed, he would have had no great difficulty finding the right one. And Abel was only a shepherd of the sheep, not their owner.

The occupation they chose for themselves hardly has any influence on their mutual relations. In those paradisiacal conditions (and the pre-Potterian Earth was all close to paradisiacal conditions) doing something was not a condition of survival or success. These occupations were more a school for the development of abilities than a business or a livelihood. If Cain's enmity had any other roots, such as the idea that the sheep trampled the field where Cain was growing his plants, it would at least be reflected in the Bible. However, there is none of that, the whole conflict is precisely in their beliefs. It was Cain's idea of the self-sufficiency of himself or man in general that led him to make the sacrifice of gratitude for the already

from him, denying the need for anything he lacked, and as a result of this very thing his sacrifice was not accepted.

Further developments turned him from a rebel to a murderer. He could not forgive his brother for his success in being more righteous and successful than he was. If Abel had been older, the problem might not have arisen, but he, Cain, was older. In many communities, a couple of years' difference is enough for the elders to view the younger ones as servants, whether in the family or in groups united by kinship. I am not ready to consider whether it is good or bad, I myself grew up in a society where you had to have a superiority of five years in order to have leadership or headship. Also, the elders in our society usually had to take care of the younger ones like the parents, and in doing so there was a more friendly relationship that excluded enslavement and excessive cruelty. Normally, of course - when one says "people are good", one is not referring to everyone in the crowd who is addressed as such ... And that was good and right. It's hard to imagine what the norms are where the younger ones must serve their elders unquestioningly. This may be a legacy of one particular influence, and one who has mastered and reproduced this treatment over generations, but in most cultures a slight age difference between peers usually does not lead to superiority status. Groups with greater age differences, on the other hand, usually have their own social circles, which interact little, and do not lead to large-scale problems. Cain appears here to have tyrannical tendencies. The younger one was ahead of him, and this is extremely, totally unacceptable to him. In one translation it looks like Cain said to Abel, "Let's go out into the field. And there in the field he killed him.

It seems to me that he didn't have the original intention of killing his brother, but he first tried to influence him to go his own way, demanding support for his ideas, that people should not be dependent on the Messiah for their salvation, that all normal people should be allowed into life without additional obligations or conditions. He convinced Abel that he, as the older brother, was entitled to some authority and command over the younger one. He spoke to him, but Abel does not appear to have agreed and yielded, for he was right in fulfilling the statute of sacrifice given by God, God approved of his sacrifice, in which he expressed his dependence on God for righteousness. And he found himself killed, but died unbroken and even undaunted. If only Eve or Adam had shown such steadfastness in their day! Now Cain continued the work of the seducer, and failed. It is true that because the former tempted ones were unfaithful, the pressure on the first betrayer was stronger than usual, incompatible with life... Sin began to gain strength... Cain began to exert its power when words failed, and could not stand the pressure, maddened by his refusal to obey. This is the way bullies think - how dare he oppose, he must, he must be afraid, he cannot disobey, just a little more pressure! He only woke up when Abel stopped answering. And after that he does not look remorseful even for a moment. Maybe he is still arguing with his living brother, he is not dead to him, he is still standing his ground. Cain was in no hurry to realize what he had done, although it was clear from some of his words that he was aware of what he had brought about, though in the faintest corner of his mind, but at the same time it was as if he could not imagine how it was possible otherwise, how he could have put up with the rebellion of the younger, how dared he do so! Although he himself is much younger before his parents or God, he does not owe anything to anyone, but Abel owed him personally - why should he? Parents and God are matters distant and high, and there was a peer in front of him, from the same group, to whom he owed a special debt, which, however, no one owed to him himself. The toughest he should not have been. I don't know if later in his life Cain realized what he had done to his brother, the wrongness of his claim, or if he kept chasing it away until the end. The return to God was not closed to him, only he closed it from himself.

God tried to stop him while Abel was still alive. When Cain was walking in his disappointment in God and life in general because of the non-acceptance of his sacrifice, God came to him (by the way, how great His involvement, His condescension and interest in man's life is) and spoke to him: "Why are you grieved, and why have you lowered your face?" - He begins with him, like a skillful psychologist. He is not speaking to Abel, who seemed better suited to Him, being more faithful than Cain. But He tries "not to reject even the rejected," as it is written of Him. God gives Cain a good chance to stay on the good path, trying to reason with him. Cain, however, does not respond in any way to these attempts to appeal to his reason, apparently remaining deaf. Notice that God did not accept Cain's sacrifice, but He does speak to Cain himself and wants to bring him back to his senses. Not hearing an answer, God continues, "When you do good things, you raise your face, don't you?" leading him to think that he is in sorrow because of a wrong idea in conflict with reality. Cain again answers nothing, though God's negative gaze shows him that he is seen right through. Of course, these words were spoken at the right time, and Cain was somewhere aware of his wrongdoing. But perhaps he was too much absorbed in himself, in the feeling of himself, of his total perfection, and thought that everything connected with the Path to the divine original lost harmony was near at hand, just by reaching out. And he did not see how human nature itself was powerless to rid itself of the power of division and decay that had infiltrated humanity, which very soon came out in gruesome and unconventional scenes of violence against the one who was more righteous. And had it not been for the grace of God shown to his parents and all their children, they would have been long gone. Sin, penetrated through one act of human nature, was not a simple matter, though it seemed very simple to Cain-because man is capable of controlling himself, and how is it that there is no shortcut to the back?

Yes, man was capable back then, and still is capable in principle, but too many were losing the capacity for complete self-control, losing with it their humanity in varying degrees of degradation. But self-control does not create sainthood or perfection, even if perfect. This control can only control deeds, but is this enough?

I've seen it in a movie, but it's a real-life scene - in an art college, students were divided into pairs and given the exercise of saying "I'll love you" to each other. You should have seen their faces when, unable to avoid it, they were forced to speak into the eyes of the person standing in front of them. But try it, and afterwards the task of clapping one's hands will no longer seem difficult ... The impossibility here lies in the fact that one cannot begin to love consciously (I am talking about erotic love, the other loves are not subject to natural limitations) - if they are not compatible in their nature, then love between a man and a woman is not possible. One can be infatuated, but only for a while; one can live one's whole life, but without personal happiness. And those who assured the teacher opposite that they would (that is, that they did not love him or her now, but would in the near future) love him or her, understood the absurdity of the situation, that they were saying something very foolish or untrue. The more they repeated it, the more doubts about their words appeared on their faces, and the more they tried to convince themselves and their partner of what they were saying. But the task of the teacher (a film from an old time and of an even older time) was to make them feel the limitations of reality and try to break through it, to compose an image that would make the spectator, and maybe the artist himself, believe in it. Well, self-control is not an issue here - you can take care of a person without loving him, you can be philanthropic even if you hate him, you can make the life of another devoid of problems and easy, but to create a favor for himself

It's impossible to have a heart for someone who doesn't suit you completely (again, this is only about erotic feelings). Although you can try to fool yourself, but if you ever get smart, you'll realize that you've been doing the wrong thing and your pretending to yourself won't make you or the other happy. No, we should try to make everyone around us happy, but within the limits of what is possible. If personal happiness is impossible because of choosing the wrong couple, we should still make the most of what is possible. The real meaning of that phrase would not be "I will love you," but "I will do all I can for your happiness"... That would be a realistic way of putting it. But not everyone wants the truth of life, so the teacher knew what he was doing.

It is not enough to do a good deed, it is not enough to restrain oneself from temptations-who can make sure that there are no temptations at all? I mean not the circumstances of the temptation, but the inner attraction to certain things that are destructive? Usually a person is able to control two or three parameters of his state, but in order to control his state completely, it is necessary to hold in your hands an order of magnitude more. That is the problem - it is beyond man's ability to have righteousness, but not to create it. This is why God offered His help to humanity, grace, without which the mastery of self does not have any final meaning, does not bring the problem to a solution. This is the essence of grace, God's help, which consists, among other things, in controlling the other parameters of the soul and the spirit, which are beyond our power. It is an extrinsic influence and action, not ours; it is the power that guides and holds us on the path of goodness, of righteousness, of all that is just, pure and faithful. The righteous man is righteous, not because he controls his actions and governs himself completely, but because he is under the influence of God, under His cover, which guides everything else in man (in fact everything). And it's his part to make sure that he doesn't get out of that heavenly influence, and if he does, to get back in before it's too late. Cain was very much mistaken in all this, rejecting the gift of God.

And Cain also heard a warning and advice from God, just in time: "If you do not do good, sin lies at the door. He draws you to himself, but you dominate him. Don't let it take hold of you. In the position of choosing between the bad and good paths, a man does not stay long, it cannot last too long. Cain did not do good, and as for Abel, he already had a plan to speak to him firmly, anger had already blinded him. He was ready to stumble on the obstacle under the door.²⁸God sees it and asks him not to do what his anger tells him to do but to take control. How he responded to His warning is known.

Once again Cain is not left alone, God comes to him again, no longer with advice, but with a question. Perhaps at this time Adam and Eve had not yet found Abel's body, or maybe they did not know that he was gone. God asked Cain-"where is Abel, your brother?" He portrays the matter as if He was looking for Abel and couldn't find him, or just came looking for him, and asked the first person He met where to look for him. Cain must have understood that God knew everything. Maybe he didn't, because at that time angels and God were often in the midst of people and were seen as being on a par with themselves. It is now for us that God appears in the light of all that is known about Him, all-knowing and all-powerful. It is true, of course, but the way God presented Himself to the first people might have led them to think that He might not know something, if He were asking... "Adam, where art thou?" He might ask them, as if guessing from some mark, "If thou hast eaten of the forbidden tree;" or now "where is thy brother? Cain evidently does not

28 An interesting image is that as long as a person is in himself, as if he were "at home" in this comparison, in familiar surroundings, he does not stumble on the problem. As long as the circumstances are favorable and habitual, the person may well look prosperous, but he sometimes needs to "get out of the house," that is, when he is out of favorable "tame" circumstances, a weak spot is ready to spring under his feet, his problem will be waiting for him...

The feeling of dying, of weakness, of being defeated - it's very hard to tell from the outside, when you yourself are full of strength and energy, especially anger. That's why he doesn't feel the significance and meaning of what he's done at all. He had not yet seen how his parents would react to Abel's death. He had seen the deaths of the sacrificial animals, and he understood theoretically that something was happening to them when the power went out of them, saw their fear and pain, but instead of understanding that it was his pain and fear and death they were taking over, experiencing it all instead of him, he wanted to undo their suffering. He wanted them not to die - kind of a great, wonderful wish, only then what would save people? To be themselves worthy, sinless, so that others wouldn't have to die for their sins, so there would be no need to save them? It's a little late, actually. I mean, it is necessary to live such a life, but not to get rid of sinfulness. But in wanting to save both the animals and the future Messiah from destruction, he himself had become a murderer, and now he tried to escape the realization of this, to keep this thought from his mind.

This is why God comes to him, not trying to find out where Abel is, but to help Cain understand the meaning of what he has done. How condescending and caring God is, even to a murderer. Don't think that He doesn't care about Abel's death, but Abel cannot be brought back now, while Cain can still be tried to get back on track. But Cain is stubborn and insolent because of this stubbornness, insolent as if he had learned it long and successfully, though not long ago he thought that he would never allow any evil to come into the world through himself, so as not to make it difficult for the Messiah, so that no bloody sacrifices would have to be made for his, Cain's, sins. But the Sacrifice was necessary not only because of the sins committed, but because of the very fact that the world was in rupture with God and people needed to be rescued from that situation.

He mockingly replies, "I don't know. He says "am I my brother's keeper?" So it's like, "Is my brother somewhere, and I'm supposed to know all this? Cain showed the worst traits of Lucifer, although perhaps even Lucifer would have disowned it, accusing his followers of profanation of his ideas, but in this, God's will was already fulfilled, that nothing good would come of Lucifer's taking over the Earth, and only evil would come from him and his followers, no matter how hard they tried to do something good. Only evil will be good, but good will be bad... And this is not God's will, not that He would curse Lucifer's deeds in this way on a whim, but only a revelation of the nature of what life without Source is, an inevitable consequence. He designed life, and it was impossible for Him to invent a reality in which evil was good and vice versa. Lucifer and his followers had to be convinced of this by experience. They all felt intuitively that they were going into bad, wrong, bad and evil, also they had been warned about it from a side faithful to God, but they brushed it off. Some may not have understood, but Lucifer understood that God was right, but for a number of reasons beyond reason, beyond reason, he willed to pursue his way. But that is a separate topic.

Seeing that hints do not lead Cain to effective contact, as he avoids thinking in the right way, God tries to reason with him directly - "What have you done? Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground.²⁹". Could it be that a direct "what have you done?" with all the emotion of the question would make Cain feel that he has done a terrible and horrible thing? In a way it helped, Cain had not yet had time to become completely entrenched in an alternative way, in selfhood, and his resistance was based more on an unwillingness to recognize what he had done than on an assurance that he was doing the right thing by defying God. But having begun to speak directly, God was no longer asking, and even if Cain had found something to say, it was no longer necessary, he had not seized the moment and lost some opportunity. Now God determines the punishment. However, this punishment is astonishing-

29 For proponents of the belief in the natural immortality of the soul and the otherworldly life here, it is a mystery why only the blood cries out and not Abel himself, who after death could directly and personally say all this to God himself.

It's not harsh, he's not being asked to be a murderer. There is something subtle here, not the gross deprivation of liberty or of life, but the message that by his action he has found himself in a kind of "offside" position. The earth, he is told, will not give him its power in her works - and this to him, the farmer! Such a harsh punishment is determined because he did not seek murder as a means to get his way and did it in the heat, not calculating the consequences, confronted for the first time with such depths of his ego, which gave rise to unforeseen scenarios of behavior. In later life Cain shows no trait of murderer or rapist, he simply continued on his path of independence from God's recipe for salvation from the power of sin, believing the human being could do it. He may have later found the right path to follow in order to kill his brother, but he clearly missed out on his children. Not only did they neglect the offered opportunity to return to righteousness, they didn't even follow their father who tried to lead a righteous life on his own terms, without atonement, without grace. Of course, I think of Cain here perhaps too well, suggesting that he was consistent in his ideas, but if he did lead a worse life of open disobedience, that would be a consequence of his self-made way, refusing to follow God in everything, but only in part, and that hardly changes anything in his fate and in our attitude toward him.

His life was also spared because Cain had to see where his theory of the self-sufficiency of men, of the "sufficient goodness" of man, was leading. It is very similar to the way God dealt with Lucifer, who brought evil into the world in the form of the pursuit of power and falsehood, who was also allowed to unfold all his proposals, with which he lured and deceived his supporters, so that everyone could see their fragility.

Cain stopped being rude and persistent in deaf denial; now, without disputing the fact of the crime and the justice of the punishment in general, he only complained that it was too heavy, it was "impossible to bear. And this after his precious life had been spared! He suddenly had a fear that anyone he met would now kill him. There was a backlash of excitement and rage, and now he was no longer sure of himself. Until now he seemed to himself unconvinced in every movement and action, he smiled at everything on earth, living and inanimate. It seemed to him that paradisiacal life had hardly disappeared, and the Garden of Eden was not far away and they could peer into its sacred territory. But after God had said that the earth had now cursed him for his brother's blood, that it would no longer give him strength, something in him trembled, he realized and felt that all his beauty and strength in him did not come from himself, it was all the powers of the earth and environment in him assembled so that he lived and enjoyed, but his being was very much dependent on the world around him and these bonds were not so difficult to break, and now his stability was faltering. His common sense finally came to him and death, the harm done to the other, was suddenly in his face. He remembered that there was justice, and that it had to be redeemed. God did not punish him with death, but he thought that others might not forgive him. And when he was weakened without strength from food, everyone would be glad to do to him what he had done. Again sin was showing its flip side, destructive to the mind and soul - to lead the fearless fool into the swamp and already there to open another door of consciousness through which terror and doubt burst in...

What does God do and say about this? Although Cain is a murderer, yet, in judging him, people do not look into the circumstances of the case, judging only by the one parameter of the situation, that he "killed," and even his brother. This is certainly true, even if it takes some time for him to realize it himself, but it is worth thinking about all the elements of the case. This is what you should do in any case where you want to get to the bottom of it, especially when it comes to the trial and the verdict. Even good people are sometimes guilty of being completely unreasonable in this matter. Am I now acting as Cain's lawyer? Absolutely not, it's a very good advice to anyone who in religion or in life is trying to judge right and wrong. With little effort.

or even without effort few people can get by, and when it comes to achieving something, it's generally impossible to achieve anything, and if you want to be right, you have to move your brain. To say that someone is guilty without going into the matter - how would you call a judge who judges people in his charge with this approach? But whether you condemn Cain or Judas, you have to understand the case fully, otherwise your judgment cannot be sound and true. Some are afraid of the justification of men already condemned by the Bible, thinking that if Cain is not as guilty as they thought he was, it is as if he is beginning to be whitewashed... Fear is unfounded - both Cain and Judah are guilty, even if not as guilty as they were ascribed, but living with a false, knowingly incomplete judgment that has not lifted a finger to sort it out, is not the case.

I think in reading this narrative about Cain, you didn't find him whitewashed, he just happened to be the wrong man who had calculated murder beforehand, but does that excuse him? - It doesn't. But we can see how he came to it with his seemingly good idea going against the established order of things. It's not the good way or the innocent way. How often do you yourself, with a seemingly beautiful idea, do unwitting harm without noticing it? And his teachings and his example for his descendants proved to be destructive, leading to a Flood, a global cleansing, an extremely ugly one, but think of the size of the problems that caused it!

So God comforts and reassures him, oddly enough. If Cain had been a deliberate murderer, the conversation would have been different. But a premeditated murderer does not instantly become a premeditated humanist (and that Cain professed exactly humanism, that man can manage salvation without God, without grace, without redemption, that "everything is in man"). - very similarly, if what I have described about his ideas is true), events between Abel and Cain developed quickly, except that for a while Cain "harbored" a grudge. God tells him not to worry about his life, even makes him some kind of sign guarding him from imaginary encroachments, just as a manicured doctor may give him some objects that will "protect" him, and that he will be perfectly safe under those guards. Cain fears that someone will take revenge on him, but it will not be long before there are those among the living who are capable of killing for nothing, although later on someone might appear among his children who are sufficient for even the slightest reason to pick on him... Even in this fear of Cain's subsequent births lies self-judgment - if he killed his brother for no good reason, there are bound to be those who will want to do the same because of sufficient reason. Is he so wrong? In reassuring him, God says that if anyone wants to kill Cain, he will be avenged more severely than for mere murder. Although does that reassure him, maybe in his mind he sees someone who wants revenge for Abel, who even an all times greater punishment won't stop him? Since Cain himself did not pay with his life for it, then his, Cain's murderer would not be punished with death either? Weak consolation, very weak... And that was Cain's lot in this life, unless he was willing to find rest in a God who seeks to restore man from every point of fall. Did he find that peace, or did he eventually settle down without it? Has he become accustomed to living with guilt, invented "how to live a thousand years without peace of mind" or "live life in harmony outside of divine harmony"?

In these places where his parents lived, Cain could not live, probably not so much because his fate was a nomadic life (because the land was losing its power where he worked it?), but because of his inability to face his parents. He took one of his sisters with him, who sympathized with him and did not abandon him (life went on), and went somewhere to the east. This place is called the land of Nod, i.e. "land of wandering", but it is unlikely to be found today. The land as it was before the flood has changed greatly since that time. Especially after the rift and the great shift of the continental plates, which lifted the Caucasus and the Himalayas and many other mountains, greatly crumpling and distorting the appearance of the planet. However, the place of its

It was not too far from the parents, because in time the two **s e p a r a t e d** tribes began to communicate and later united again.

Lamech

For a long time nothing much happened, children were born, grew up, became parents in turn. But then a personality came into the family of Cain that drew the attention of the chronicler. Lamech took two wives. In those days, not all men were determined to be faithful to God in all matters; but on the other hand, when they were intelligent and perceptive enough, they were not so quick to abandon the way of God, seeing the negative consequences, and not so lost as to destroy lives for themselves and others; especially since the pleasure of the forbidden was not much better than the good (perversion began later; Lamech also contributed to this mental rut). Love and harmony of life were of great value to all who yet lived. And so this Lamech takes two wives at once. In people's eyes this is a clear violation of the good way, the statutes of life, on which so much depends. These are not empty rules invented by man, which people later learned to make up and abolish, but the real rules of real life safety. However, Lamech clearly has some justification for doing this, and somehow convinced these women to share his fate as well. It is very likely that he thought a lot about Abel's death and the violation of the balance, since one of the women was always doomed to be alone. It is possible that in this way he wanted to restore the balance of men and women, taking upon himself the curse of the broken harmony, so that the succeeding generations would be free from the consequences of murder and all women would have their man. The name of the second wife, Cilla, means "dark" or "twilight", as if to indicate her unenviable fate among men. The first wife's name is Ada, "or-nament," or "pattern. It is as if Lamech wants to use the pattern of the one to decorate the life of the other, balancing the injustice done once by his forefather Cain.

However, for all the plausibility of the purpose, the act itself can in no way be normal; he himself feels this, speaking out in his speech called "the song of Lamech. He explains to his wives that although he is committing a crime, no one should punish him for it. In the ordinary translations, it sounds as if he had confessed murder without being noticed, but if we think about it in a different way, it sounds very different: "Did I kill a man in my wound, a young man in my ulcer? It's like he's saying that if Cain killed, and for his murder the punishment would be sevenfold, then for him, who only took two women for himself, that is, who committed quite a small offense, incomparable to murder, the punishment should be seventy times as much. That is, it makes no sense to punish him with death for an offense that is not significant compared to murder. Especially since he is trying to live for Abel, for two, "for himself and for that guy. And it is interesting that his firstborn son, Javal, becomes a professional shepherd, continuing the work of his murdered relative. Probably many have fiddled with animals, but the children of Lamech, all three mentioned in the chronicle, become masters of their craft, they far surpass the others, setting the standard of excellence for centuries.

The Flood

Suddenly in the Bible there are "sons of God" who mingle in marriages with "daughters of men. For many who see the Bible as a collection of myths and fairy tales, the first thing to do is to see this as contact between gods and mankind, but the picture is different when we see it not as fairy tales or as fantasies of a mythic mind. We have just said that Cain went to live elsewhere, far away from possible avengers for the blood of Abel, so it was not a close proximity of these two tribes of mankind. Between

There was a significant difference in their upbringing. Cain transmitted many things to his children, but not the way of God, at least a limited version of it. This led to the fact that their character differed significantly at first. Seth's children were trained to be God's people, and if one wanted to make a distinction between them, it was self evident - some followed the Way of God, others their own, not bothering especially with any rules. Hence the "sons of God" - it is not difficult to see them as the young men of the tribe of Seth, who in time, losing their spirit, noticed some difference in the appearance of the women of the tribe of Cain, when their boundaries were eventually drawn together. Although called "sons of God," the Sethites were in practice little better or more spiritual than the Cainites after some time. The common legacy of problems of sinfulness or of the experience of evil of something very important and subtle in man led to the same problems. In the "sons of God" there was resistance to this sinfulness, but the original sinfulness accumulated and manifested itself there.

It is possible that human society would have developed normally without such a destructive outburst of willfulness, which turned into debauchery, but marriages between different families who had lived apart for some time led to a surge of vitality and strength in the mixed offspring. When the isolation caused by territorial remoteness and different upbringing ended, the union of "pure lines" produced a marked increase in vitality, which was reflected in the birth of giants, taller and stronger than their parents. At that time, when humans were much healthier and stronger than all subsequent generations, degeneration was not strong, it is unlikely that the fifth or sixth generation from Adam was much weaker than Adam and Eve, but the connection of different lines, kept in isolation for some time, had a surprising effect. And these giants felt like gods, and others looked up to them in a similar way. It is hard to say whether it began with power and impunity, or with being spoiled by admiration for their abilities, but they were brought up by mothers who were not very faithful and obedient to the rules of life (it is said that it was the descendants of Seth who took the women of Cain's clan, not vice versa) and they went much further in satisfying their desires and passions. Looking up to them, the rest of us strove not to yield to them. And, as it is written, the earth became corrupt, "every flesh perverted its way..."

How much time elapsed before this explosion of moral decay is unknown. It is possible to estimate from the very time of the Flood, because if the breakdown of morals had occurred earlier, the Flood would have occurred earlier. We can estimate that from about seven hundred to the first thousand years the people lived quietly, almost righteous, compared to the time that followed. But if that righteousness had been so, there could not have been a decline in manners. But the lack of spirituality, the lack of development in anything but paths, could not have prevented the world from spiritual degradation. People influence one another, imitation and copying is built into us, and is the greatest influence mechanism. It is powerful for righteousness and for unrighteousness. It's about the number of imitators the majority will follow and the number that will set the tone. But it is also a matter of the character of those who set the tone of society. If there are many who think they are good, but are not strong and upright in spirit they will be reluctant to be imitated, and not many will follow. And they are bound to be weak, if they regard those who live for themselves and pleasure as happier. If they envy pleasure-lovers, the decline of morals is assured.

Something happened to the children of Seth, called "sons of God," something like this happened to young people in the Soviet Union when they thought they were happier "over there" simply because more pleasures were available. Who could have shown people then that happiness did not depend on the number of kinds of sausage... But even those who understood something, decided that pleasure could at least somewhat

to be happy. Even the propagandists could not be convinced, apparently thinking like everyone else. At one time Yaroslavsky-Gubelman convinced Stalin that religion must necessarily be shortened, that it could not be compatible with Soviet ideas, although it was a diversion that destroyed the future of the USSR. But you can't entirely blame him, because a weak religion couldn't keep the morals of the Soviet Union up to par, and there would probably have been another decline of Christianity, as happened in the West, another version of Babylon³⁰ so God allowed religion to be underground in the Soviet Union, where it was preserved from distortion more securely.

In that world, in the midst of great moral decay, there was one man who became a definite iconic figure with his impeccable life - Enoch. He is said to have "walked before God. Usually this is said to imply total purity, impeccability, referring to Adam's experience of hiding from God when he fell. Probably during his time there was a severe moral decline, the beginning of mass degradation. When his son was born, he was able to learn important lessons. The child taught him of God's character and revealed to him the great reliability of the Creator and His concern for man and mankind. This made him an order of magnitude stronger and more spiritual, and it got to the point where God took him to Himself. Moses writes about his "migration," and it is not about his changing his residence within the earth, because if he had lived on earth, the Bible would have continued to count his years, but he stopped at 365. So this fact makes it clear that Enoch is in a place where the count of years has no meaning as it does here... Many speak of the impossibility of reaching holiness or of living in harmony with God's commandments and rules amongst sinful or ungodly people. This seems like an insurmountable influence to many, but it is not true. Difficulties may be with survival, but not with moral perfection, not with holiness and spirituality. I am even inclined, with my experience, to say that the more sin in the circle, the clearer and more obvious its unkind consequences, agitating louder than any sermon for the superiority of God's way. It is true that while people are young, it is not so obvious, but if one observes and draws conclusions, much will be clear to them immediately, not twenty or forty years or more later.

When Noah was born, which was six hundred years before the Flood, the decline was already severe, as can be seen by the fact that he had a family when he was five hundred years old, whereas even his most moderate ancestors married no later than a hundred years old. True, his father and grandfather had also been looking for wives for almost two hundred years. This suggests that it was very difficult for him to find a woman suitable, not only in character or appearance, but also in spirit, so that she would be close to the ideas of following the Way of God.

If there were no problem of compatibility, that is, if one could take any woman and be happy with her (and this is a prerequisite for marriage), it would be much easier for them to start a family, but such a long search says that the scope of the search was narrowed not only by the need to find the right person, but also the right one, which narrows the choice by an order of magnitude.

30 Babylon is a separate topic, but we can make it short for now. Revelation calls this system a harlot, or rather a prostitute, trading with the authorities and the powers that be the souls of the people, their obedience and loyalty for their personal position in society and the system of power. That is, they tell the authorities - we will provide you with obedience of the masses in anything, and you provide us with benefits and some powers... For the sake of this manipulation they went to change the principles of the Way expressed in the Bible. The religion of the Bible itself does not harm society and the state by working with human nature. A true Church would guide the minds of society and the rulers whenever possible, but in reality many spiritual leaders adjust to those who rule, to their interests. Church groups are born, most of which are indifferent to higher subjects but can be sensitive to any other, and at the head of these groups are the worst descendants of religion who have found a trough in it. This is Babylon, the system of unfaithfulness to God in the church that has taken a leadership position in this world.

It is also quite interesting that if we compare the length of life of a pre-top man with the time of the birth of his first child, we can see an almost unambiguous relationship between these values. That is, the time of the beginning of family life was directly reflected in the age of the first people - the later they created a family, the longer they lived. I don't think this correlation has disappeared in modern times. It may not be noticeable because people today are unequally healthy, while in the early centuries of mankind the problem of disease did not exist, so it was the only obvious factor influencing life expectancy. If a similar study were done today, all other things being equal, this factor would probably be found again.

The Bible says that before the Flood "all flesh perverted its ways", so it seems that not only humans, but also the animal world was greatly changed by them, and the changes were in the quality of their lives and behavior. I am inclined to think that the food pyramid may have taken its present form at this time, although many changes may well have started immediately after the people left Eden, when many animal families started to eat not only plant food, but animal food as well. And the tone for all these tremendous changes in the order and customs of life seems to have been set by people whose morals were increasingly degraded. The potential for sinfulness, acquired (or created?) by Adam and Eve in their singular departure from God, was too fully and lavishly realized...

The very sinfulness and even perversity of fallen humanity is no reason to destroy it, especially since there were righteous people in the midst of the general moral decline. But this perversity had gone so far that God could see no other way, and there were scarcely any righteous people left. Of God's condition Moses was given the words, "God repented of having made man," that is, we can say with certainty that He was in a very, very bad way. It's hard to describe God's patience and how far it went, but it was really bad. People had to learn a lesson about the limits of His patience. A hundred and twenty years before the Flood, God had decided to destroy people who had strayed too far from the Way. Noah was the seventh from Adam, worthy of the best of his ancestors, the firstborn of a line of firstborns, the first not only in birthright but also in many other qualities. From him could begin anew the generations of mankind and a new civilization, one that would be more temperate in its passions and desires. In a way, it has succeeded, especially since humanity, after the excesses of Babel and the tower, was no longer united, and the evil was dispersed, losing its chance to develop in a single flux. In contrast, the division of languages and the alienation that resulted, the groups that were in control limited one another, even preventing one another in the development of the evil. If one ventured too far into wrongdoing, the anger of the others would stop their wickedness. By dividing up, people lost the chance to act as one, and although this had its negative side, it slowed down evil from developing too much.

Many critics of religion get hooked on words about God's repentance for creating man and wonder if God did not foresee this turn of events. But foreseeing doesn't mean it was inevitable, things could have developed differently, and that is the reason God is in a bad mood. So the teachers failed in their task of educating the new generations, failed to instill resistance to temptation to all sorts of pleasures. They could have, but they failed their test. Failed to recognize the dangers? Or did they get carried away? Did the broad way seem more attractive than the narrow one, even to them? All this is quite possible, and unlikely to have happened otherwise. Against the strongest of the is-

We can't manage with weak efforts or weak guidance and weak

example. The lesson was, if you want to live, learn to restrain yourself. Just because God gave life to a sinner doesn't mean you can do the worst or whatever you want without limits, otherwise the purpose for which God gave life to sinners becomes meaningless. A weak church destroys the whole world by its weakness, it must give a sufficient example, otherwise it is worthless ("salt that has lost its strength" in the example of Christ) and will suffer with all.

It is true that today's world has again been able to unite in many ways, but we are already living near the end, of which it is said that "the present earth is being saved for fire," no longer for a flood of water. No group of people and no nation has the right to unite the world. Which is what Russia and China are doing today, helped by God, who is restricting Anglophone globalization through them. Many say that the perversity of our world today has reached the level of the antebellum - it could well be.

Preparing for the Flood

So, relying on Noah, God made the decision to stop evil on the planet, or rather to limit it, since human nature could not be improved or changed by this means. True, to restrict it was very radical, but it clearly deserved it. Most importantly, it was not sudden, without warning. On the contrary, for one hundred and twenty years people had time to come to their senses. They were warned for a very long time. And at that time, although people did what they wanted, no one thought to deny the existence of God, atheism simply could not exist, too obvious were the experiences and accounts of eyewitnesses and direct witnesses, beginning with Adam. But all this knowledge about God could do nothing to help the falling morality, everything can be used to, including religion and miracles, why any sins can hide in the most fanatical religious environment. Righteousness comes from a willful decision to follow the Way, not directly from professed ideas, not from emotions associated with religion or God-no matter how zealous one is of religiosity, without a conscious decision to do what your faith pushes you to do, your deeds will not coincide with your faith. Wrong are those who think that it is in vain that God has withdrawn so far from men, not showing himself to them or giving them miracles or signs of any kind, that his distance from the world allows evil to flourish. Knowledge has little influence on a person's choice. That is, for some, the knowledge that there really is a God could play a role, but only until one gets used to this reality in which God is now included. Once one gets used to it, this knowledge often ceases to be decisive in matters of morality. Just as it was before the Flood, and just as it was with Lucifer and his followers. People who have been in church or religion for many years have their temptations, sometimes stronger than those of newcomers who have only just learned the fear of God, because for the newcomer there is only a difference between pleasure and fear of punishment, But for the long-time believer the fear may linger, or the definition of sin may be blurred, so that he is tempted to think that many sins, which he has always regarded as such, are as though they were not sins at all (or not even sins at all, unless he tells others so). And he now perceives his former fear of sins as fanaticism, as youthful over-exposure. Especially after being exposed to liberal theories that blur the concepts of right and wrong.

By saying "let their days be one hundred and twenty years", God marked the date of the catastrophe (although some people think that this was a deadline for human life, but it can not be true, because people still lived long and five hundred and four hundred and two hundred years, the life span decreased gradually, as they lost vitality), which will sweep from the planet all the uncleanness that has accumulated on it. From this time, Noah was given the task of warning-

The flood is the first time that he, his family, and those of the land biosphere must survive the Flood.

Noah received detailed instructions as to the size of the ark and the materials of which it should be built. On such occasions God usually shows how things should look, something like "handing over documentation in blueprints," so Moses and David were shown all the details of the temple that they were each to build in their own time. And Noah began construction, moving leisurely. It probably could have been much faster to build the ark, but here it was necessary to demonstrate the ship being built on land to let the multitude know what it meant. Noah accompanied his work with explanations as well, so that through rumors and news the people heard what they needed to hear - prophecies of the impending doom of civilization.

Catastrophe and Survival

Construction of the ark took a hundred years (so it began twenty years after the Flood, which took time to prepare the materials and the preparations) and finally it was ready. Many words were said about its purpose, that those who wished could live in it if they wished. It was not said whether anyone could enter it unconditionally, or whether it was required that all the evil customs of that world, which had caused it to be destroyed, should be left beyond its threshold. But if God had wished to destroy the wicked, the building of the ark could have been done much more quickly and without any preaching. So from the long construction time we can conclude that God wanted to give the people a chance and time to think. Also about the denial of the customs of that time we can safely think that simply wishing to preserve life without returning to the Way would not have counted on receiving into the ark - the wrath of God comes upon the earth precisely because of their sins, also Noah and his family enter into the ark because they are a family of the righteous. Without this quality, or at least the desire for it, a place on the ark could not, of course, be granted. But the chance was available to anyone who wished, simply and reliably.

In the modernist view of the gospel, "having a relationship with God" is enough, and that's it. Changing your life to conform to God's will seems to be completely unnecessary, unless you want it for some reason. God is very appreciative of your precious, unique and unique personality. And your deeds - maybe He does not like something, but He still cares more about you, so He will tolerate and wait for your correction, which will take place some time (in a distant future, most likely in a very distant future when you suddenly get tired of doing evil), and then the kingdom of love and good will come. Occasionally, some in the Orthodox world present these views as Protestant, although this is not true - there are not only modernist liberal churches and movements in Protestantism, but also fundamentalist ones. Sometimes liberalism and fundamentalism divide a church, tearing it apart or causing many problems, but it is not fair to attribute liberal judgments to Protestantism as a whole. Everywhere liberalism and fundamental, old gospel voices are struggling, even if these waves do not always reach outside observers. Churches with a strong tradition are less prone to the changes brought on by the liberal approach to the Bible and salvation, but liberalism has been around for a long time and is well established everywhere, so that an Orthodox priest or theologian can give out personal views that are at odds with the official position of the church. In the eighties of the last century, the vast majority (and I have not heard the opposite approach at all) of Orthodox priests began to

The Orthodox have rejected the idea of creation in seven literal days, promoting the idea of evolution-this is exactly what liberal teaching is all about, so Orthodoxy has something to contend with in and of itself.

The tale of the abnormal ship was probably known to the world, but hardly anyone took Noah's words seriously. Perhaps it was the Titanic in reverse... They were built according to the best designs, although in one case it was built by professionals and in the other by an amateur, as some have noted, but their fate was different. There is also a direct parallel with the Tower of Babel, which the builders intended to be a guarantee of salvation for at least some, safety without God. But in this case God Himself personally guaranteed the success of this project, and launched it. The Titanic was only the intention and attempt of the people to create a safe haven, but they did not and probably could not take EVERYTHING into account. And even if they had, how could they do it? God is one of the key conditions of safety; it is unreasonable to ignore Him. All other options can not be considered worked out and calculated to the end. Man due to his limitedness (he is sort of unlimited but this is in the long run; in reality he develops step-by-step and is limited at any given moment, sometimes just terribly limited) cannot consider everything, but if God is on his side He takes upon Himself the things that cannot be considered by man at his stage of development. Of course being on His side, it is axiomatic that we have to count and reckon as much as possible. God places knowledge very highly, education is a basic factor in His system of life. We will see this more than once as we read the Bible.

And so the ark is built. The next part of the instruction is to fill the pantries with the products needed to feed humans and animals. Hardly any special foods were prepared, for most species universal foods suitable for almost everyone were sufficient, in the crisis conditions of the voyage, in the unusual and abnormal conditions of life, hardly anyone could not live without pickles. Animals could be fed not at all the way they were fed in normal conditions, but much less frequently, especially since the stressful conditions of sailing on rather rough waters were most likely not conducive to appetite. Also, even if there were carnivores in those days, and this has most likely been the case for a long time, they were also quite able to eat plant food under critical conditions, so that perishable meat was not necessary for them. There are some felines that are excellent omnivores, and God Himself selected animals for the ark that were calmer and more intelligent, as well as tough, and worth selecting for breeding.

After that, all we had to do was wait for the signal to enter this ship. There was plenty of space on this ship, and not all species had to be taken on board for the preservation of the biosphere, only the key species needed to fill the eco-niche and create sufficient communities for the normal development of the living world. That is, it was enough to take only one breed of dog, the same thing was with any other species. Variability³¹ planned by the Creator for the adaptation of animals and humans to their environment, elaborated with great reserve, will assure later, as ranges spread, new breeds and varieties up to the separation of species. At 150 by 25 meters, with a floor space of three stories, we can estimate the size of the ark to be about 10,000 square meters. If we roughly estimate the space for big animals and people as 20-25 meters each², then there are three hundred separate cabins for the passengers (minus one quarter to one third of the space for the storerooms), where a conditional family could fit in. But such large animals were not many, and the dinosaur giants were not taken (why they did not survive the Flood), and about the fish and animals living in the water, there was no question, they did not need to escape, being in their element. In addition, a year's journey was not a lifetime.

31 Variability itself in no way proves anything against religion or the Bible.

The health of the ark's inhabitants would be affected by cramped conditions to such an extent. Therefore, 300-500 rooms could house 300-500 major species (and perhaps more, many birds and small animals could be placed together), sufficient for an equilibrium recovery of the biosphere after the catastrophe.

It is not written that Noah predicted the exact day of the catastrophe or even knew it. The year was known, but the construction itself, its completion, was as if it were a definite signal of readiness. And so, after filling the storerooms with food and tools, Noah is ordered to receive guests and themselves to take up residence on the ship as well. From the forests and fields the animals and birds began to come in, led by teams of angels who gathered those who were destined to survive. Alas, it was impossible to save everyone. The animal world is subservient to man and dependent on his condition, so Paul wrote of the suffering of the living, waiting for the generation of special people in whom the glory of God is revealed - "the revelations of the sons of God. Even they understand something about it... The hope of the living world for the appearance of "sons of God" is actually characteristic of humanity too - how many times have I caught an involuntary impulse from them, containing something like: "so will we see something real or will it be an excuse for human weakness again? But until now the tendency has been to follow the majority, so that the world has lived as it has lived, and the animals can choose no other fate - the tone is set by men, they are the gods of this planet... The punishment for their demise falls upon those who have brought evil into the world by their actions, their choices, their behavior and their example, and the final punishment of the Last Judgement will also contain a share for the fate of the animal world. Yes, for them too there will be a reckoning, indeed there will be a reckoning even for ecology.³² Freedom of choice means responsibility for your choices, and the treatment of animals is not a matter of doing what you please and being outside the law; there are places in the Bible where it says that "the righteous man watches over the lives of his animals, but the heart of the wicked is cruel.³³

When wild animals run together without distinguishing between predators and herbivores, people know without a doubt that trouble is nearby. When those living near the ark site saw birds and animals flying in from different directions, they were alarmed. Most likely few of them believed Noah, not because they thought he was lying, but because they were so careless and unwilling to change their lives. Atheism was not yet formed in those days, too close to living history and witnesses. His message of impending disaster may have been taken seriously by many, but the terms of salvation from the impending end were entirely unacceptable to them. So none of them thought of giving up their habitual willfulness in pleasures, formed in an extremely friendly and comfortable environment of almost paradisiacal (still) abundance with complete provision without much, if any, effort on their part. So none of them could enter and would go into the rescue ship. But at this time, when the animals went into the ark, many wanted to do so too, because what was happening to the animals was not the normal course of things. "This is the end that this Noah has been talking about for so long," they couldn't help but think. But to be eligible to go in, one had to have a different way of thinking and intentions. And that is too difficult to do in a short time, and almost impossible if one procrastinates until the last to change and become aware of one's way. Real change could not happen without a serious awareness of the unrighteousness of one's deeds. But when the habit of self-righteousness is only strengthened day by day, and all calls for change are neglected and even ridiculed, then it turns out that in one moment repentance and change are impossible, simply impossible. God, on the other hand, did not hasten to bring His purposes to fulfillment.

32 Revelation 11:18 "It is time to judge the dead ... and to destroy *those who destroy the earth.*"

33 Proverbs 12:10

After everyone who was to enter the ark had entered, and God had personally closed the door so that it was impossible to open it from inside and outside, nothing happened for a week. It is written that it didn't start raining until seven days later, but before that, Noah could hear the voices of those who had had time during those days to get over the initial doubts that came from seeing the animals coming to the ark. I think he might have heard derisive comments about his current situation, about what all the normal people thought of his venture. And really, no one heard what God had said to Noah alone, everyone knew of the threat to the world only from his words...

Noah hardly had any doubts, but his family - his sons and their wives - might still glance at their father and ask him if we really did this right. How long are we going to sit here? And listen to those derisive comments about our "sitting on the ark"? But their ordeal in this period of great change and crisis can hardly be compared to the problems of similar change in future times. They say the challenges of the last crisis, which is bigger than the Flood, will be much greater, though it is possible that many will be protected by something similar to the ark. This moment for now was the calm before the storm, a solemn silence before the face of the world was to be very much irrevocably changed. God was saying goodbye, paying tribute to this world with its complete well-being, before destroying something of this beautiful home because of the utterly maddening inmates. Noah and his family would never see the old world as it was, but they could hardly understand now what they were missing and what the next world would be like. That would come later.

And so on the seventeenth day of the second month in the six hundredth year of³⁴ Noah began to rain. It rained for forty days. And most likely it came not only from the clouds, but also from that atmospheric or atmospheric shell that I mentioned in my description of the second day of creation. But the water was not only coming down from above, it was also coming up from underneath, and many parts of the earth were cut off. The rain after forty days wore off, but the water level continued to rise with the influx of water from the underground springs. By the end of that time, the highest mountains were covered by seven to eight meters of water. It should be mentioned that at that blessed time, before the Flood, there were no high mountains on Earth which are geologically new mountains. All of the mountains before the Flood were old mountains which had long ago, before the Creation, been flattened and leveled out by weathering processes, temperature variations, and other geological factors. They were all similar to the mountains of the Urals and other old mountains on the planet. The Caucasus, the Pamirs, the Andes, the Sierra Nevada, and other high mountains were raised after the Flood, about a hundred years later, when the earth was "divided" in the time of Falech Peleg. Some people see this as a division of territory between nations, but the nations had not yet been formed, as the Bible says, a division of continents. At the time of the Flood there were some strong processes too, but these were more vertical shifts due to the water leaving the surface to the outside, not horizontal like afterwards. The Bible tells us one remarkable thing that "in the beginning ... the earth (and the atmosphere) was made up of water and water".³⁵ why the Flood became possible, but now the same amount of water is in the oceans, not distributed in underground reservoirs.

Some time after the rain began, the ark was swept up by the waters and began its voyage. It was hardly a calm voyage, there must have been wind and waves, especially in places where there were sinkholes where the underground waters came out. Some say the cacalism was such that even Lucifer feared for his life. At that time vast areas with forests were swept away and buried under sediment, from which deposits of coal were formed, excavated which had not existed before - the previous rocks were formed in the absence of higher forms of life.

34 1656 from the Creation

35 2 Peter 3.5

For five months the water was coming in, and after that time it started going out. Where? I think into the oceans, the bottoms of which had lowered or continental plates had floated up. In my geology class, I had an interesting insight that continents float (not in water, of course) and the equilibrium of this floating depends on the water level. Those who prophesize flooding of territories from melting polar ice do not take into account that rising ocean levels will cause continental plates to float up. It may not be as massive, but the continents will not stay at the same level as the ocean rises. So there can only be real flooding when a particular section of land sinks. And the entire landmass is unlikely to be threatened. True, there may be other surprises, such as the rapid movement of the continents due to detachment from the upper layer of the mantle (more precisely, the decrease in pressure during ascent makes the semi-liquid layer more liquid).

The ark, as its massive stone anchors³⁶ the rocks of the Ararat Mountains, where it was sailing at the time, stopped and soon found itself on solid ground. This happened on the seventeenth day of the seventh month, exactly five months after the beginning of the Flood. After another two and a half months, the tops of the surrounding mountains appeared. At that time there was no time to think of leaving the shelter; the situation was not favorable. Forty days later, in the eleventh month, which is about January or the turn of December-January, Noah opened a window and let out a raven to explore. It flew back more than once, and it was clear that there was nothing of interest around. After one day the crow did not come Noah released the pigeon, a more demanding bird, and it returned, making it clear that the ground had not yet dried out sufficiently. But the next time, a week later, the pigeon returned with an olive leaf in its beak. And somehow it guessed that it had to do this to bring a signal to people that the time of great trouble was over, that the planet was ready to bloom and bear fruit again. One can say that it was the angel who told him to do it, but he sensed it anyway, that the people would welcome the message, that it was important, that it was necessary to share the joy of life and the hope of a new life. For which he was honoured to become a symbol of peace, a messenger of a dove. Another week later, the pigeon was released again and never returned to them. Those remaining in the coven felt that life was getting better.

The Beginning of a New Civilization

On the first day of the first month (generally speaking, many people used to celebrate the new year in the fall, but since the time when Jews left Egypt, they were told to start the months in the spring; the new year was still in the seventh month) Noah opened the roof and went upstairs to have a look around. He had not yet received any command to go out and he had not tried to do that. But he wanted to explore his surroundings and he had wanted to see more space. And as soon as it began to warm in these parts, and it was about March, there was nothing to keep them from it. There was no water around, except maybe lakes, but they were not boundless waters. There was green all around, not the gray and brown or black surface when the water had just begun to release the surface. It was grass beginning to grow, new plant life beginning again after a year's hiatus. From most of the land the water had gone into the oceans, remaining only in low-lying places in the form of marshes and lakes. But it was not until another two months, it was written, that the land dried up, that is, returned to its normal state, when it was possible to walk on it, to till it and sow on it. It was only then, a year and ten days from the beginning of the Flood, or a year and seventeen days from entering the floating refuge, that God spoke to Noah and gave the command to go out.

36 On the anchors and other circumstances of the ark, Ronald Eldon Wyatt, who surveyed the find in the mountains of northern Turkey where the Armenians used to live; after the events of 1915 these places were abandoned by them and the new inhabitants of those places speak of some legends lost because of this. You can find quite a bit about him and his findings on the Internet.

I would like to note Noah's exploratory spirit - he could have sat in the ark and done nothing, but he measured and investigated what was going on around him to the best of his ability. Nowhere does it say that God gave him the command to measure with a raven and a dove the environment around him, this is purely his initiative. And this is a lesson in what the way of life of the righteous should be... Also, much later, the Apostle Paul noticed a peculiarity of the prophets who were investigating questions about the timing of the coming of the Messiah. Rather than simply asking the One who was sending them information for answers, which they also did, they researched the issue by comparing the information they already had from various sources, including those that had been revealed to them from above. Paul, too, had the same spirit, and so he enriched the theory of Christianity, not only by what was revealed to him from above in response to his inquiries, but also by what was found as a result of the reflection of what had been received.

Generally speaking, a "lack of guidance," knowledge, and a certain lack of initiative constitute the problem of those who call themselves followers of God, as noted by God Himself-"who is so blind as My chosen one?" But these are properties of the mass, not of those who are the core and the core. The latter are distinguished precisely by search and initiative. Thoughtlessness, on the other hand, has rather been planted by a hostile force, leading to the degeneration of Christianity. In the Old Testament period, however, indifference and a certain "swamping" of the soul stem from the fact that the initiative and search of the majority was directed toward evil, not toward good.

It is not written that God opened the door for them, but it was said that He closed it behind them when they went in. Most likely it was He who opened a door that they probably could not open by themselves and called them out of the entrance. Had it been otherwise, they would have gone out themselves much earlier. It was said to let the animals out, and it was to be done judiciously, avoiding conflict between them, species by species, isolating the carnivores from the herbivores. "Let them disperse on the earth and multiply," was the admonition and blessing for them all. It was a feast for all, and for the animals too, from dark and cramped quarters to fresh air and grassy expanse. It would not have been wise to let them out earlier and go out on their own, there was not yet enough grass, and the soil might have been sticky in many places.

First things first: thank you

Noah took one of each of the clean animals and birds and arranged the sacrifice. In those days, before the Messiah came into the world and accomplished what the sacrifices symbolized, so much was done through sacrifices. Without them there was simply nowhere - what people can now simply express in words to God, in those days in addition to words there had to be certain ritual actions that expressed what they believed in, and those sacrifices expressed their faith and their circumstances, all connected with saving them both from guilt and from other problems. Just as in New Testament times it became necessary to give thanks and ask for everything in the name of Christ and through Christ, so in earlier times this was done visibly in the name of sacrifice, through sacrifice. Yes, the lives of animals were taken for this purpose, but they are still taken today for food, and then people could see in this the essence of the problem of sin, and the price of liberation from it, and that there was no other way. So Noah, wishing to express gratitude for deliverance from the Flood and for the new possibility of life, for nature continuing to blossom, expresses gratitude from what he has. The pure animals are those that could be sacrificed, they are herbivores, the birds do not seem to have a system for this. Animals were not yet allowed to be eaten, but the distinction between clean and unclean has long been known, from the beginning of time. When it was forbidden to eat meat (this is from this very day) it was of course only for those animals that were to be sacrificed. We need only compare the two instructions, not only that "all that move" can be eaten, but also that in the midst of this movement.

of what is clean and unclean. This is not a Mosaic law, and although there is a section in the Mosaic law about this, the concept of clean and unclean has been known since the beginning of time. I don't think it would have occurred to the people of that time to eat unclean; it was ruled out by the order of things. It was later when some tribes allowed themselves to forget many customs and regulations that people tried other kinds of meat. Many tribes went through some feralization (some, apparently outcasts, were really losing their bearings), for the same reason of forgetting routines and knowledge, rebelling against the old rules, and started to eat "anything that moves" indiscriminately.

So Noah set up an altar and offered a sacrifice of dedication and thanksgiving on it. In the next time, when meat could be eaten, thanksgiving was expressed by so-called peace offerings, the meat of which was used for a sacred feast by him or those who offered the sacrifice. Those sacrifices that were burned altogether in later times expressed only devotion, but it seems that at this point the new dietary regulations had not yet been pronounced, and meat was still forbidden. God pronounced His blessings and exhortations, including a new order of diet, after the sacrifice. So at this point there were only two kinds of sacrifices - the sin offering and the burnt offering. The only difference between them was the intention of the offerer; outwardly they were the same, both burnt the whole sacrifice. Later the ordinance of sacrifices became more complex, peace offerings appeared, and the sin offerings also became quite different from the burnt offerings. The permission to eat meat changed some things in the order of the sacrifices.

The following is a rather unusual narrative. First it talks about God "smelling the fragrance of the sacrifice," and then the Bible voices the thoughts of God, what He says to Himself, talking to Himself, not even a conversation between the Father and the Son, which would seem normal, but the thoughts of God in Himself. It is quite rare in the Bible for man, in this case Moses, to get into the thoughts of God. Yet it has been done-God has revealed this to man as well. And this is what He thinks - "man was dissolved because of the novelty of experience, of inexperience, of youth. After this lesson, no such upheaval will be necessary, and it will be possible "not to curse the earth for man anymore.

In principle, man himself did not become better or more reliable after the punishment, but in the post-flood world order people quickly divided into nations, and in this divided humanity people themselves began to limit each other, the evil of some limiting the evil of others. This is a last resort, a last resort, and of course it would be better if there were sufficiently powerful forces of good on Earth, but to limit evil in many cases this simplest limiter that works unconsciously, "automatically", when "evil destroys evil" is sufficient. Moreover, the forces of good can also be subject to distortions, up to and including the transition to the dark side, because they are always people, not mechanisms. Therefore, we can say that God foresees that He will not have to resort to radical measures anymore, also because humanity will no longer be so childishly enthusiastic in experiments with evil, will always learn and remember the experience of the Flood, even if they forget... The memory of the past will appear and the voice that limits evil will sound from where it is not expected.

Then it says that "sowing and reaping, cold and heat, summer and winter, day and night" will no longer cease on earth. This is a new reality, never before has there been any mention of heat and cold or the changing of the seasons. There is much speculation that before the Flood, the planet's axis of rotation coincided with its orbit, thus avoiding temperature and climate variations and winters, and that the entire planet had an even climate. Indeed, the history of fossils confirms this; everywhere one finds ancient plants, they are tropical plants. It was during the Flood that the inclination of the planet's orbit changed, creating additional problems to those already present. Whether this was accomplished by the directional impact of the Arizona (or other)

meteorite or something else, it is difficult to judge. But the post-Flood reality is quite different from the pre-Flood reality. And at the same time, not so much that it significantly affected the ecology of the environment, the survival of humans and animals, although many had to change. A lot of things changed following environmental conditions, but we cannot say that the post-Flood human lifespan decreased because of this. It did not decrease immediately, Noah lived the usual years for pre-flood humans, his nearest descendants lived not much less, and only from the fifth generation onward did life expectancy begin to shorten dramatically. If it were only a matter of living conditions, this would have been noticeable immediately, in the first post-Flood generation, but it was not. But it could also have had an influence, but it was not the first influencing factor. It was much more influenced by nutrition, which we will talk about shortly.

Instructions to the new ancestors of mankind

The better part of Genesis chapter 9 is God's speech to men who are destined to become the rulers of the new humanity--tribes and nations. It is a solemn moment, rare and few in number. This meeting took place at the sacrifice that Noah arranged, God appeared before the people, and it was an important conversation, an important encounter. The future depends on the quality of the fathers and mothers. God does not require them to be righteous and responsible--they themselves are well aware of the difference between an orderly life and licentiousness. They themselves have witnessed evil, perversion, and sin before the time of the world, and how it ended. In addition, they come from a lineage of the righteous, where upbringing was traditionally high, so they know perfectly well all the requirements of God, repeated from their forefathers. God is more of a comforter here, and does his best to reassure, to remove any possibility of even post-stress consequences, when he says that such punishments will no longer apply to the inhabitants of the earth, that they can safely breed and multiply, and even have to do so without fear of the elements anymore. When it rains, there will be a rainbow, and that rainbow will remind them and Himself at least that it must stop raining. On this everyday level He binds people and Himself together with such meaningful symbolism of peace, comfort, stability, signifying His favor with those who live. This is important for people to understand God not as a critic and a stern judge, but as a loving Father. Yes, He can be awful, but His extraordinary patience shows how much work it takes to bring Him to that state. But many, both good and bad, see His justice apart from Him, in an exaggerated way, or as the only attribute of His character. That is, they don't see the rest, the whole picture, and in their eyes God looks like a punishing, punishing destroyer of sinners, in their eyes the figure of Judge is, as it were, much more important and powerful than that of Friend and Father. Many direct all their claims to Him for every evil they have suffered in life, perhaps really believing that He could protect them all from their own works and all the consequences of those works... But if He gave men freedom of choice, it would be wrong to take it away.

I hope no one associates the idea of freedom with impunity or lack of responsibility? Because there is a text with these words that was thought to be funny to the person who launched it: "...God gives people free will and then kills them with a flood for not behaving the way he wants them to behave. The claim here is that God gave such freedom that there is no responsibility for it, as if no evil could be done, and then punishes them for something by breaking the agreement. But alas, this maxim is empty, it makes no sense, though many apparently rely on it when they say they don't want to deal with such an inconsistent God and His religion because of it.

Freedom to do what one wants to do, but if those desires and actions have proven destructive, there will be consequences. Some people just want there to be not only freedom, but also no responsibility. But it's a very bad game.

Just Life

For some reason, when a person pays attention to the way he lives, something is often disturbed in his life, at least in his perception of it. So a person who has begun to take care of his health, if he has begun to do so not because of illness, but because he is fascinated by someone else's example, begins to be ill - not always, but indeed there are examples. There are testimonies of some who, when they began to make sense of life, lost their sense of life and its joy. This is reflected in proverbs and sayings such as "shoemaker without shoes," or the saying mentioned by Christ, "Physician, heal thyself. This is because the process of cognition is analytical by nature, that is, it divides the whole into parts; it cannot be otherwise, it is just the way things are. But what to do - to remain ignorant, so as not to lose the childish, integral sense of life? And to remain an infant in the body of an adult is not too much of a price to pay for pleasure? This is an unavoidable stage of human life, it is necessary for the formation of man. As the body grows, so must the mind. Solomon said that knowledge multiplies sorrow, and the main cause of this sorrow is precisely this consequence or by-product of the process of learning - the withdrawal from simple pleasures.

But knowledge itself is a highly valued object, and in the process of acquiring it, wisdom emerges, which is even more valuable than the knowledge itself. And then the lost wholeness of life and feeling returns, and on the new level one looks and feels much stronger and happier. We grow from simple pleasures to more complex ones...

Many criticize the image of the kingdom of God because of the immature conceptions of many of its interpreters, who say that there will be eternal rest, eternal joy. That would be true, but how different the ideas of peace or joy can be ... Many people don't like the primitive pictures of the primitive mind, and others who like it, expect it to be about work which will never be there, are rather anti-advertising to the kingdom. But it will be something that is inherent to man, this search for himself and to push himself to the limit. And there are many activities where this growth can take place. And these problems of seeking and losing oneself in getting to the present (from the glory to the glory) will accompany man, as it would be on the Earth if there were no problem of the Evil One. However, one should not call this development and change of sense of self a problem or a pain, it is just a tribute to the notion of it. I would not even use such words, "search" or "overcoming the level" are enough, they contain a certain amount of what one could hardly call "torment" - they will suffice there, and that is enough of suffering in the Kingdom of God, in a life that does not end, in which these searches and discoveries create a sufficient interest in life and knowledge for all eternity. And this interest in life is what makes it appealing and guaranteed, isn't it? Not just life itself, but the guarantee that it will never get boring. And yes, health, of course. And health is not ensured by medicines, but by a taste for the sensible things which do not damage the liver and kidneys, do not clog up the blood vessels.

But evil, or rather the fall of man, has done something to man so that he follows his feelings spontaneously, without controlling this side of his nature. And fell under the power of pleasures, and the more tangible they are, the stronger the attachment. Even a person with a poor taste often becomes fixated on taste, on simple pleasures, avoiding the more simple ones... Growing the fruits of the earth and eating them is more important than the pleasure of solving mathematical problems.

tasks for some reason. And it's even easier just to savor, and instead of cultivating, to have fun. Of course, there are people to whom simple pleasures are closer than simple ones, but they are so few. But these stimuli are supposed to be equal, distributed more evenly.

But with the individual, his personal choice, not always a conscious one, is fine, but a system of influences has emerged from the relations between people, their preferences, their speeches and gestures, which inclines everyone in society toward simple preferences. A system of the polluting of life, little noticed at first, but over time gaining strength and inertia, where through the genetics of behavior and speech the attitudes of "staying away from the rest", "not dreaming too much", "living for your own pleasure", "do you want more than anyone else?" and other such things are transmitted from generation to generation. All schools, all education, should counterbalance this demeaning attitude, should teach to overcome oneself, to refuse to primitivize life. In general, there is such a counterbalance, but not everyone goes to those schools, or not for very long... Many understand the value of discipline, but it is so unromantic, but to break something, somewhere is something worthy that generates this: "*and everyone knew that it was time to take a seat, but in the code of honor it was considered essential - not to come to class*".³⁷... Not everyone has time to get into it, and teachers are sometimes just people, too, teaching to a lowered standard. It's hard to fight back. It may seem to many that I am not talking about the kingdom of God or about the most important work of God, the salvation of souls, but it is a key topic, even if it is hidden from the eyes of many.

This relaxation is probably a characteristic of all people, except for those in "responsible positions", many of whom feel the pressure of a "position of responsibility" in one way or another, but they are no exception. Not in all ways, but not in all, it is enough that this "it's all right" in general is present in life. It was the cause, or better, the way, by which temptations and deviations from the highest standards of being were brought into society, especially into the society of the elect for the proclamation of the Way. This begs the grave question - can this be inescapable, inherent in human nature? Can a man be worthy of his title at all in everything rather than in his individual achievements? The answer is yes, except that will everyone like the details? The first thing to remember is that man was not created that way. But he was not originally disconnected from the one who created him, and now he is exactly in that state. Because of this there has been a change in him, the familiarity of the broken rules has broken a certain wholeness and coherence of the nature of things in man, a connection with Source, which is why there is a contradiction when certain traits of man come into conflict with other traits of him. It may sound too grandiose, but the point is simple - in contact with the source of one's nature, the means to find its lost wholeness or sinlessness or non-vulnerability is found. There is a selection of those who will succeed in renouncing their own limitations and separateness from the whole, from the separation in themselves. It is difficult because the state of simplicity has become too familiar, but only in the unity we regain with heaven do we find all that is real. There is a self with its own self, there is peace and harmony. There is of course the opposite in man - the engine of interest, of desire - but it is not always where it is needed, it turns on spontaneously and also off so that the solution lies outside us.

From Shem, Ham and Japheth the earth was inhabited, and from them came all the tribes of the new history of mankind. Though it is hard to say that it was so very different, except that the natural conditions were distinctly different, and the people lived simpler and poorer. Those who survived the Flood remembered perfectly the structure of the old civilization, and being human beings themselves sufficiently educated even then, they could reproduce very much, tools, houses and decorations. Yet the earliest generations certainly did not have a taste for luxury, mindful of its corrupting influence.

37 Grebenshchikov, "The Sky's Getting Closer.

to render. And those who followed were no longer in a hurry to learn all the wisdom of the ancestors and did not seek the advances in knowledge as the original people did.

The Case of Noah

So, people continued to farm, grow the plants they needed, deal with animals, obtain the materials they needed for all kinds of needs and products, and build homes, villages and entire cities. Nature was no longer as generous to them as before, and they depended much more on the results of their work. However, if one does not strive for extravagance or rush to become stronger than others, one can live quite peacefully. In the beginning, they were a united group, without divisions or disputes, all intent on following the way of the righteous, mindful of the cataclysm they had just experienced. The seeds of evil did not go anywhere from human nature, but as long as people remembered the extent of the Flood and passed it on to their children, evil sat quietly and did not remind them of itself, so there was no rush or competition.

Noah grew a crop of grapes and drank the juice, which, after spending some time in the vessel, fermented. That he became very intoxicated to the point of losing control suggests that it was a surprise to him. Simply because if he had known the properties of what he was drinking, he would have at least done so under comfortable conditions and taken care not to slur his face. If drunkenness had been familiar to them, Noah would not have been the only one tempted to do it... However, the intoxication was unexpected, since he could not take care of himself. From this fact arises many conjectures about the difference in the physical conditions on the planet before and after the Flood, some say a difference in the activity of bacteria, others about a change in pressure. The pressure is the easiest version - I have read about valley dwellers getting drunk at high altitude unexpectedly hard, because the lower pressure makes the body more vulnerable to alcohol, and the intoxication is stronger than one expects. Even if Noah made wine as before, by storing fermented sap, as he did before the flood, its effects were stronger than people had experienced before.

The sons' characters showed up differently in this case. We all seem to be good in a typical non-extreme environment, but our tendencies may show vulnerabilities in new circumstances, so that our neighbors see a not so pleasant image. Or vice versa. So Ham displayed not his best traits at all. When he saw his father fall asleep from the unanticipated effects of wine, he laughed at him. Whether it was satire or mockery, whether he expressed his indignation at his nakedness, despising such an oversight, or whether he was humorous about the situation, it is not very clear what was funny to him, but he went and told his brothers what he had seen. Yet somehow they did not share his emotion, whether it was mockery, contempt, or amusement. He could have gone to them expecting them to share his feelings, but they did not. In the same way he himself would have had to do, so that what he saw would only stay with him, and not go any further. But Japheth and Shem took care of his father so that he would not suffer the damage of the surprise that had befallen him, and preserved his authority as a father. They rectified the situation as best they could by covering him with their clothes, trying not even to look at his nakedness, for which they went their backs forward into his tent, only groping for his location with the edge of their eyes.

When Noah came to his senses, he found out what had happened and how his youngest son³⁸ son. And by inspiration from above, he cursed Ham, whose name has become a nickname, though it seems to be only in Russian. The word "Ham" itself means "hot" in Hebrew, i.e., fast-paced, emotional. Since names were given, and in some places still are given, reflecting the essence of a person's character, which can be seen from birth, it is clear that Ham acts

38 Shem was a hundred years old two years after the Flood - Gen. 11:10, so he is the second, since Noah had his first son a hundred years before the Flood. Ham the younger is 9:24, thus Japheth the elder.

was really like that, more emotional than the other brothers. This in itself is not better or worse than other characters, just that every character has its weaknesses and strengths. Here it was not so much his nature as his ethical disposition, his choice to be good or evil. He was well aware of respect for his elders; he grew up in a sound environment, but he was infected with pre-Flood permissiveness, the seeds of which the Flood would not have destroyed but man himself would not have done so. Maybe later he understood how he should have behaved and what to do, but at that time he did what he did. And in doing so, he inflicted consequences on his offspring. It seems strange that Noah's words are not directed to Ham himself, but to his son Canaan, who probably did not even exist at that time. Maybe this was a version of the name "Ham", just as for "Alexei" there is a version of "Lyosha", for "Alexander" there is "Sasha" and "Shura", but rather Noah sees ahead that not the best traits of Ham will be reinforced or concentrated in his grandson, who will be named by this name.

Did Noah bring some kind of doom upon his grandson? What portion did he prepare for him, who seemed to have no part in his father's affairs? Perhaps he did not, but his character was not that of his grandfathers or other relatives, judging by his descendants. Despite the curse, the Canaanites received one of the finest lands on earth, which God calls holy Canaan.³⁹ which He later gave to the Jews, who were to be a holy nation. So God entrusted the Canaanites with His holy land, but they didn't fulfill His expectations, they showed the same disposition that Noah warned them about, and in consequence, they lost their right to live in this special land. Nor did the Jews fail, nor did they try hard enough.

"Slaves of slaves" - Many attribute slavery to God and the Bible, even though He invented it? He uses that image, but does He justify slavery? - Absolutely not. The position that man finds himself in as a result of evil and violation of the laws of life, as a result of yielding to the prince of lies-is it sublime? When the destroyer of foundations took the place of God, and by deceit took that which was given to man, instead of sonship to God, men became servants, some slaves (it is all slavery) of the prince of darkness, who was not at all a benefactor of the human race. The original relationship of God and man is not one of lord and slaves, but of Father with sons and daughters. This order of things will return again when the domination of evil in our world ends. As long as man seeks to use his neighbor in one way or another to his advantage, slavery of one kind or another will arise again and again, regardless of any progress in society. As long as this world exists, well, Paul writes that "while the son is in his childhood, he is no different than a servant, though he is lord of all things," but that is until he grows up, because his caretakers must bring him to the point where he can accept his rights and responsibilities.

And, then, slavery, for all the bad meaning of the word and the phenomenon behind it, cannot be called homogeneous. The Hebrew word for slavery also means the position of a servant. Those who hate slavery and all that goes with it give the word an extreme, worse meaning that comes from being a captive of the enemy, where they can humiliate the captive in every way. But how do you call the relationship between peasants, some of whom have fallen into poverty because of certain circumstances, and are forced to ask the more fortunate for help? It does not smell of slavery, of great dependence, but of servitude, of hired labour, of working for pay, even if it is not money. But both are denoted in Hebrew by one word, "abed," which in the Russian Synodal translation is rendered "slave," and

39 He's Palestine

Western translations use "servant" (is it not because of this trifle of translation that respect for persons in the West is in a better position than it is in Russia?) In those days, people were no less scrupulous about matters of honor than they are today, but a great many people used the expression "your servant" to themselves as a gesture of politeness (when there is not the slightest need for it), emphasizing the superiority of the other side, sometimes quite insignificant. Were they wrong? Maybe they were. Perhaps there was no propaganda then, which had set many to the point of rejecting any mention of slavery. One can understand them, centuries of oppression have produced a certain attitude toward the worst features of humanity, but still, one should not mix things up by attributing modern meanings to ancient times. The English-speaking biblical scholars have done well by removing the word "slave" from almost all English translations, using "servant" instead, which is quite correct according to the meaning of the Hebrew original. But the Russian Synodal translation is on the other side, using "slave" almost everywhere, even when the meaning does not require it. But this is fixable, at least I hope that such a version of the Russian translation will appear.

By the way, about "servant" and "slave" in Biblical translations and the use of the word in popular expressions - "your humble servant" was said to each other by perfectly respectable people. Do you smell the humiliation of one to another or one to another? Not noticeable? But now imagine their speech being translated into another language where there is only one word for both, and then it would sound like "your humble servant"...

The subject of human dependence is too vast, so that if one wished to speculate on it, one would always find an excuse and an opportunity to play on emotions. Many people portray even the slightest dependence on one another as slavery. For example, some compare the dependence of wage earners today to slavery, where "the slave is even happy and thinks he is free", but this is an unconscionable manipulation, a means to set one group of people against another, a destructive work. And those who fall for it will always be cannon fodder for the manipulators. Even with the best of human beings, and smooth relationships between them, it is possible to make one or more of them dominant over the others, and even among equals, there will always be some permanent or temporary inequality of standing, and the enemy of the human race will try to exploit it. In a divine realm, where everyone cares for everyone else, no one will be harmed by unequal positions. But even there, Lucifer has succeeded in indoctrinating individual individuals with a picture of the damage to their freedom. What to say about life on earth, where not everyone living is virtuous. But even here one should not see everything as an attack on one's freedom and independence. Human beings are condemned to cooperate on everything, whether for the survival or for the advancement of their group or of humanity, we depend on one another and in cooperation have to give up some of our rights to someone else. There are always coordinating figures with some level of power, and this is a necessity that must be recognized and supported, because a person alone cannot and is not able to give out the potential that is inherent in him/her. What one really has to take care of is that one's freedom should not be diminished below a certain level, not that it should not be restricted at all.

It is not that Noah's curse condemns certain nations to slavery, but it shows the inescapable consequences of the character that Ham exhibited if any of his descendants are

to manifest the same character. Wherever there is disrespect, wherever honor, defilement, right and wrong are rendered meaningless, there is the need or doom to become humiliated, to lose freedom as due retaliation for the loss of meanings. Did the descendants of Canaan manifest this? - So they will get it. Those who are boorish deserve this fate. Although one cannot conclude from biblical history that every Canaanite had such a fate, by no means. God seldom applies a punishment that He warns of in advance, there is always a "time of grace" when one can escape punishment by reforming oneself. This was more of a threat than a real destiny for the Canaanite peoples because very little of this threat came true. They were free to live as they pleased, until the time came for them to leave the land they had originally been given, when God's patience came to an end, when God gave their land to another people. Many left Palestine, it was the easy way out. Those who didn't want to go were uniquely humiliated by the wars and some were left to live, indeed for a time in a dependent position, as servants and slaves, upon whom this prophecy was fulfilled. But when the Jews were punished by God, the Canaanites were masters of the situation for a while. So their real fate was no better or worse than many other nations, and blaming Noah or God for this curse makes no sense, it is the same as blaming the punishment that follows the crime, making the punisher the extreme. It is also known, and we can see it in later biblical history, that God rarely brings His curses and punishments to an end, being very reluctant to carry them out in most cases. The other children of Ham were free from the consequences of his act; that is, the rest of the nations of the earth are not under Noah's curse. In Israel today, if there are any who are descended from the Canaanite peoples, they have in fact long since been considered Jews and have Israeli citizenship. Many who were disobeyed by Israel in Biblical times still live north of Israel, in Lebanon, from that very same period of time.

Population of the Earth - Peoples and Individuals

The Bible tells of the sons of Noah and what the original groups were from them, from which the various nations later emerged. Judging from some of the expressions in the⁴⁰ The Bible tells us that God had something to do with which territory was given to which of them. Whether it was a prescription as to where to go or whether He assigned to each one the lands they liked is not known, personally I think it was the latter. You could say that this was a process that continued as new tribes came into existence, it was not a one-time thing. But He did keep track of the peoples' rights and it was considered a crime to take land where another people lived, even if they forgot the One, went into paganism or were guilty before Him of something else.

Therefore, it is not a sin before God to defend one's land and those who live in it from any claimant to it, but a responsibility and duty. The Jews did it just like any other people. Tolstoy's teaching on non-resistance to evil by violence, while not bad in idea, is not a balanced and well-understood principle; it is not meant to take away the protection of nations and peoples, and even Tolstoy himself hardly understood his idea that way. But no small number of non-Orthodox believers took the idea to heart, laying it on top of Christ's words "turn the cheek of the evil one," from which Tolstoy himself took it. However, a personal relationship with someone who treats you badly should not lead to giving in to a foreign army coming to your land. This matter requires more discussion, but for now I will only

40 One of these is that when the Jews went to Palestine, they had to pass through the land of the Edomites. God ordered them to ask permission to pass without using military force, forbidding it by saying that "this land I gave" to the descendants of Esau - Numbers 20. Later in the book of Judges, Jephthah refers to the same time that Israel bypassed the land of the Moabites without entering it, for the same reason.

I will say that all such questions must be dealt with more carefully so that one truth does not displace another from its place. A people's right to their land has existed since ancient times and has not been abrogated by Christ, neither then nor now.

There is a very interesting work by Bill Cooper, "After the Flood," he worked very hard to establish the truth of the genealogical lists from Genesis chapters ten and eleven. A comparison to Schliemann's discovery of Troy begs to be made. He examined the European nations (Angles, Saxons, Irish, and others) keeping their chronicles to see if they matched the biblical data. And he found an almost 99% match! The interesting thing is that these chronicles go back to pagan times, excluding the "pious" forgery of the Christian monks. I think it would be useful to give some excerpts from it, let the author of this book tell a little about his work himself.

"In other words, we have been solemnly assured in the spotlight of modern science that, from a historical perspective, the book of Genesis is simply not even worth the paper on which it was written.

... I am confused. On the one hand, the Bible, which calls itself the Word of God Himself; on the other, the many commentaries that assure me with one voice that the Bible is nothing more than a "vinaigrette" of Middle Eastern myths and legends... and that it has no relevance whatsoever to modern science.

Clearly, of these two approaches to the Bible, only one can be true. And I felt it was my duty to ... find out which one. That's when I decided to pick out a few passages from Genesis and put them to the test, whereas with any other historical document such a test would have seemed *unduly harsh*. ...

When an error or even a number of errors are found in a historical document, this does not mean that the text cannot be regarded as historical evidence and used in scholarship. However, the Bible is no ordinary chronicle. No other historical text claims to be infallible. If it tried to do so, scholars would leave no stone unturned! But if the Book of Genesis is indeed what it claims to be, then no amount of scrutiny will vitiate its claims, only confirm them. ...

But then I had no idea that this work would consume my attention and energy for more than a quarter of a century! Furthermore, I had no idea with what astonishing accuracy the truthfulness of the book of Genesis, especially its tenth and eleventh chapters, would be confirmed. Researchers ... usually call these chapters the Table of Nations. The abundance and depth of the historical evidence stunned me! As I began this work, I could not have imagined such a thing!

... If the names of people, families, nations and tribes ... are not invented ... then the same names must also be found in the annals of other peoples ... I have supposed that a good deal of these names are found nowhere else, because those annals which contained them disappeared long ago, or these names themselves were changed beyond recognition by linguistic and dialectal variation. ...It would be sheer madness to expect that all the names found in Genesis would be found in ancient ... annals, which, moreover, have been preserved to this day! If even 40% of the names could be confirmed, it would already be excellent, especially considering the age of the table of nations and the paucity of extra-biblical sources that match it in antiquity.

But when, in the course of my twenty-five years of research, 40% of the evidence grew to 50% and then to 60% or more, it became clear that the "wisdom of this age" was far from the truth. ...I can say today that I have found proof of the authenticity of up to 99% of the names in the Table of Nations. ...

This was not the end of my research. ... I wanted to find out if the names of the same patriarchs as in Genesis were found in the earliest genealogies and chronicles of European peoples. Also, I decided to find out to what extent the European peoples were familiar with the events described in this book. Very importantly, I was only allowed to use documents and chronicles from before the Christian conversion of the people concerned. ... This second part of the test was decisive, and it gave as extensive and convincing evidence for the validity of the tenth and eleventh chapters of Genesis as the first part. ...

Babylonian Confusion and the Emergence of Nations

Many consider kinship and the purity of the original family lines to be important in the origin of peoples, but in addition to the family, one necessarily has friends and other contacts outside the family, which are sometimes stronger than kinship. The same thing happens, albeit on a smaller scale, when families become large tribes, tribes become nations, and nations mate with territory, becoming countries. This was also the case before the separation of languages, when everyone felt they were one big family. For the first hundred years, it was as if they lived in the same place, where they came out of the ark. This may not be true, but in some studies⁴¹ The people who left the ark have lived there for a long time, leaving behind names of places and settlements. Unfortunately the inhabitants of those places are not indigenous; the Armenians who had lived there before had left during the events of 1915, taking with them many legends and stories about many things in the area which the new inhabitants of those places have noted and which tell only vague shreds of lost information and that those who lived before them could tell much more.

When the emergence of languages occurred, it is likely that the boundaries of languages did not pass through the families of closely related groups and tribes, but captured those who by activity or occupation happened to be related to this or that tribe. That is, the languages might well have divided the relatives, the people with the common features of appearance, into incomprehensible groups. But first it is worth looking at the conditions under which different languages arose.

The division in Noah's original family came when the second generation of those born after the Flood grew up. Noah's sons are best thought of as generation zero, since their roots lay in the former, pre-Flood life. Ham had his firstborn son Hush, whose sons also most likely included one of his last children, Nimrod.⁴²Nimrod. While Nimrod grew up and discovered the bright qualities of a leader, accompanied most likely by a theory of government which he especially knew and developed, it was between seventy and a hundred years after the Flood. At that time the population of this family reached (in the second generation) about 110 (together with the female half) just the mentioned descendants, with the unmentioned it would have been between 200 and 250 (they didn't have any daughters).

41 In this case, it was Ron Wayett who studied the area and lore, along with his study of the hill beneath the ark. Turkey has recognized his findings, referring to it as Noah's Ark Site in official documents. It is among the tourist attractions of Turkey.

42 Verse 8 of Genesis chapter 10 sets him apart from the rest of the sons. As if he were the last, the youngest, who often gets the most attention.

read). Nimrod himself and his ideas probably did not immediately attract followers, so by the time his supporters left with him to build a new life, the settlement might have been up to 300-600-1000 or more people (depending on the rate of growth, but there must have been enough enthusiasm). What was Nimrod's idea, what did he want from life and from people? The Bible says very simply and not very definitively that he was "strong," which can be understood as both a "hero" and a "leader. He was an excellent hunter, yet in his later life we see him as a king. He seems to have offered his supporters a kind of division of occupations, which gave a marked increase in productivity in the production of anything. He proposed cooperation, where according to aptitude and ability, one did one thing and the other another, all with a common goal. Mankind had no enemies then, thanks to a good religious and moral upbringing (Noah and his sons most likely had a firm grip on the matter) people did not think of enmity or any claims against each other.

Nimrod, knowing the nature of man and his propensity for evil, and noticing little sprouts of it here and there, had the good sense to assume that it would sprout one way or another. And decided in advance to take measures to contain it. And he saw these measures, among others, in the cooperation of people. In principle, this is very modern thinking, seeing in the unification of people and their cooperation, the concentration of efforts, the means to protect society from the negative aspects of human nature. What he saw was the setting up of a system, a system of regulation of society, of what we call power. I don't think he wanted to suppress other people, it wasn't about power, although it could easily have been used in that direction. As a man he might have been fascinated by being at the top of society, but there can be no king without an entourage, meaning the people who followed him were not coerced into it, otherwise he would hardly have succeeded. On the contrary, they saw in the cooperation of men an enormous opportunity to achieve great success for themselves and their descendants, so they took part in his plans. But there was a conspicuous absence of God in all his designs, and in general his ideas of governance were based only on human power and ability. There was a weakness in this that made Noah and many other more spiritual people unable to accept and agree with his science.

Because Nimrod's ideas were not accepted by Noah and his sons, and he did not want to leave them behind, especially since they were sensible enough in some respects, he had to go down to the plains of the Interregional, where he established his civilization. Nimrod's ideas were good for large-scale affairs, for building anything, for organizing science and production, but they could not fix human nature, and that was not even his intention. Nimrod must have seen this limitation, but they saw the future success of the organization of life. On the other hand, it is possible that Noah himself suggested leaving a certain nucleus of the population as the reserve of mankind, and to carry out experiments or individual ideas about life with eager and enthusiastic people. That way there would be more success and, in case something goes wrong, there would be a reserve unaffected by the fashion and winds of fickle "modernity" where the fundamental human values and God-knowledge would be kept intact. Although this seems to be my personal assumption, Nimrod was not alone in seeing the challenges ahead for population multiplication, and Noah and his sons' refusal to associate themselves with any social projects seems like a wise decision. And the fact that Nimrod led the volunteer Passionists, who were passionate about his ideas, is very clear from the scant lines of the biblical record. And there were many young people who were influenced by Nimrod, a successful and wise man. Another aspect of this is that Nimrod was laying the foundations of the modern world order, the civilization of cities, the division of labor, the creation of a power structure for maintaining order and order in society, basically everything that needs people who compose a modern society.

that are some kind of mechanism. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but it is a world order that brings limitations to human existence. Those who remained in the mountains, led by Noah and the patriarchs, maintained the highest values and spirituality, free from the constraints of the civilization that Nimrod had begun to build. Where people keep and follow the highest standards of morality, there is no great need for restraining structures, for guards, at the same time everyone can rise to take part in the battle in a moment of danger, and people can be free for higher tasks. A sort of reserve of humanity just in case. This can even be correlated with Shambhala to some extent, although these things are hardly side by side; I am only starting from the idea that Shambhala is ascribed to by prejudiced minds.

Big things usually require people, as many people as possible. So Nimrod encouraged early marriage and large numbers of children. This, on the other hand, put a strain on supply, a dependence on food production. And it also led to the grinding of mankind. It was there, in the center of his civilization, that people began to eat mostly cereals, and at the same time become very small due to a combination of factors, not only nutrition. Life expectancy declined, the ability to learn also declined because of the "unnecessarity" of education for the lower levels of production. "The magnetization of man, his spirituality, was in decline, and there were people (a couple of centuries later) who were not respected due to their undeveloped higher qualities. To what abuses and what evils in general this led, it is difficult to list. Including slavery and wars, and the loss of humanity. People of succeeding generations, already from birth in the disadvantageous position of a "cog" in a soulless machine, seduced the more successful ones by the possibility of domination and enrichment at their expense. Many evils were born out of this state of affairs and people created many weak people, except that God did not create them weak and Colonel Colt should have rested, his invention would not have been in demand... For this too, quite a few will have to answer. And the movement for human rights, for opportunities for the poor and weak to be educated and for some superior opportunities should be understood as a work to restore the image of God in man and a work pleasing to Him both in principle and in many particulars.

Those who left for the interfluves built several cities, in which Nimrod established a certain way of life and order, in which he "tested" the ideas of the future order of mankind. It is true that after his departure many things fell into decay, and excavations of those places often show primitive farming, although people made many improvements to the area itself, which was not so friendly to people. Nimrod's success can be seen in the cuneiform writing, which was so developed that it survived even when the languages were divided. It has served the Acadians and the Sumerians equally well, helping them understand each other. Whether the people were well off under Nimrod's rule and laws is hard to say. However, people began to appear disenfranchised or with reduced rights as the number of people increased, feuds and wars appeared when captives were used for hard labor. There were debtors whose rights were also not complete. We must also take into account that in Nimrod's lifetime there was a catastrophe.⁴³ Nimrod had a catastrophe, mentioned in the Phalek record (Peleg in the original), during whose time the continents divided and the climate of the earth changed greatly. When they arrived in the plains of Sumer the weather was milder, but after the catastrophe

43 Nimrod is Noah's great-grandson, and Falek is his great-great-grandson. The timing of this catastrophic division and drift of the continents can be assumed fairly confidently that it happened, if not at his birth, then in his early childhood, because the name is still given in the very early days of life, and his name means "earthquake". Thus the divergence of the continents, which gave their present position and configuration, probably happened in the 102nd year after the Flood. Following the records in Genesis chapter eleven about the age of the genealogy of Shem, it is easy to establish this year of the birth of Falek. See the table in the box "On the Causes of Degeneration.

The climate became drier and hotter, so that only a narrow strip along the Tigris and Euphrates where irrigation canals could reach was suitable for farming.

It was enough for them to organize some production to ensure not only survival, but also convenience. Decadence and feralization, together with slavery and slavery, came later, when man began to degenerate because of nutrition, which had changed in many ways in the new generations. It's hard to say if these things evolved independently or if they were intertwined and which problems came first, and which later. It could have been different; new problems were woven in with the old ones... A man of that time, sufficiently developed in all respects, could have made the full technological breakthrough, but it never happened, at least not on a visible and traceable scale. Perhaps limited by the perception that high technology could and would be used for evil in further decline, and that it itself could become an object of envy, people were allowed to develop technology only on the smallest possible scale. In addition, it seems that there was soon a time when there were few people willing to develop anything. Without Nimrod, cooperation and division into groups degenerated into inequality... This is why technology was developed only when it was needed, for the sake of competition between the tribes, for protection against those who wanted to settle down at the expense of others, to start a life of looting. The Assyrians were particularly good at this.

Although I should be a pacifist, and to a certain extent I am, I can't understand those who shout "if nobody picks up a gun, wars will stop". Alas, wars did not start because everybody defended himself, but because somebody attacked in order to solve his problems at the expense of somebody else, or more often just for profit. And some started to live almost exclusively at the expense of others, through robbery and looting. The psychology of piracy didn't disappear from this world, and even though in the western world too many average citizens might have forgotten about it, because of their long prosperity, if the West became any weaker it would be pinched by those who live according to other principles. And is the West so pure? Life has shown that many problems have been smoothed out by civilization, but underneath there is much that smolders... Alas, weapons are still needed, and not only for the police. It cannot be used by the church, which has a fundamentally different mission and tasks, but the state is not guilty of using arms, because it must and is obliged to, this is its task and service. It is therefore a mistake to accuse the authorities of maintaining an army. This world has not yet been able (and, in principle, is unlikely to be able) to reach a time when guns are no longer needed. It is not a sin for Christians to pay taxes to a government that maintains an army with those taxes. A "weapon is criminal" in the hands of a criminal, but a weapon for the State cannot be seen as an instrument of murder because, as the Apostle Paul writes⁴⁴It is a "sword for your own protection," for the repression of evil.

If pacifists are to succeed, their efforts must be directed not toward governments, but toward the masses. They will have to develop such an influence on the minds, to reach such an influence on the masses, that individuals and criminal communities of violence will be neutralized throughout the world, precisely in all countries and corners of the world. If they can convince aggressors to live together peacefully so that bullies don't reproduce, if they can assure a non-conflicted development of children then they will have a more or less non-threatening world where the state can safely disarm itself to a minimum level. Must

44 Rom.13:4 - The governor is "God's servant to you for good," "...He does not carry the sword in vain - he is God's servant, an avenger for the punishment of him who does evil.

There should be an educational work aimed at improving the psyche and perception at the level of "grass and roots", the ordinary population - skilful, talented work of conflict resolution already in childhood, to eradicate aggression, the tendency to offend anyone, because children are still savages, even in the most civilized countries - only this way you can achieve something. Not everyone leaves childhood without loss, without hurt feelings or a damaged attitude toward people and the world. Only in the way war came about - out of human nature - can it be eliminated. Only after this kind of work can the state be disarmed and we can talk about the immorality of weapons. Only it seems to me that "not in this life. They will have to work with the same things that the Church works with. And the problems will be the same. But at least the Church works with those who are willing (today even Catholics and Orthodox have to agree to freedom of conscience and religion, although it is alien to them...), while those will have to work with those who disagree...

Nimrod was followed by representatives of all the tribes, all the sons of Noah; they were then still one big family, speaking the same language. However, after the division of languages, people began to divide into nations, and it is written that from this area, where Nimrod ruled, Assur later "came forth," who built his cities and established his reign north of the Sumerian state. Clearly, the Assyrians may have had strained relations and wars with the former kingdom, which yielded prisoners for hard labor. But this was when the people began to multiply, and from about the fifth generation onward, they were weaker in body and spirit than their ancestors. Also, it should be noted that the data in the Bible on life expectancy and health are given for the patriarchs, but after all the rest, which are always much more numerous, can easily allow themselves a somewhat more free and relaxed life, allowing themselves to obey the patriarchs only partially. So the degeneration for the rest could have begun earlier and on a much larger scale.

On the causes of degeneration

The role of nutrition in the degeneration of man is worthy of special mention. The original pre-Flood conditions were optimal for human life, providing excellent health, so humans were giants compared to later times. True, even after the Flood there were giants-Anaks on Earth, but most humans after the Flood were degenerated, with diminished vitality and other qualities, down to intelligence and height, and the appearance of disease. What happened that caused such a significant change? - You can see this in the change of diet. There were two crucial changes in the diet of mankind after the Flood, the first one being that God gave people permission to eat meat, which was not the case in the pre-Flood period. Either the earth, through the plants, provided everything necessary for mankind then and ceased to do so after, or something else important changed in nature, but meat was allowed. The second change was made by humans themselves.

For the unspoiled healthy person, almost everything that plants provide is tasty and magnificent. But meat, especially when prepared skillfully, has a stronger effect on the sense of taste. But God has set a trap in this permission for meat that abstemious people might not even notice or fall into, but self-loving people could hardly avoid it. This could be regarded as a kind of test, a selection for pleasure, for temperance, in which the weak in spirit and capricious are degenerated, and the superfluous are degenerated.

The weak strengthened and dominated. To some extent this worked at first, but too many proved weak on the appetite...

However, meat was not the only contributor to the creation of the modern sick pleasure-lover. There was another problem: the prehistoric food was raw (according to some reports, grains still need to be heated if we are talking about bread products). That raw food was not only extremely palatable, it was also extremely healthy because the enzymes, vitamins and other complexes of life were not destroyed by heat. In the post-Flood period, meat was introduced into the human diet, and sacred meals were held at sacrificial altars. These sacrificial feasts were also accompanied by cereal dishes, which, like the sacrifice, were cooked over a fire. This could be bread, unleavened or leavened, the likeness of pancakes or fritters, and other kinds of baked goods. Ordinary food should have stayed the same, predominantly raw, but what happened was that the festive cuisine made its way into the everyday kitchen, too many people liked the taste of heat-processed fruits and vegetables. There is a difference between raw food and fried food - heat-processed food, since many of the long moles are already split, hits the palate harder, because this splitting of the moles makes the food contain more flavor substances. And those who loved pleasure on its own, in isolation, without considering the effects on health and morals, on body and spirit, who impatiently demanded pleasure now and immediately, demanded new standards of nutrition for themselves. The consequences of this were not noticeable and glaring, for the human body has filter systems, and as long as these are strong, no health problems appear or are noticed. Likewise, the human legacy was still solid - the health and vitality of the human body was strong at first, not much inferior to that of the pre-Potopian generations. But look at the longevity and generation number. Here is the story of the family of Shem, which itself was born before the Flood:

Sim - lived 600 years

Arfaxad - 438

Sala - 433

Ever - 464

Falek - 239

Raghav - 239

Seruh - 230

Nahor - 148

Farrah - 205

Abraham - 175

The first three post-Flood generations lived much longer than all subsequent generations, and there is a boundary here where human viability declined sharply. Not the change of climate or other conditions on Earth because of the Flood, because in that case life expectancy would immediately decrease, so the main factor is still nutrition, which the new generations have differently than the previous ones, who still stuck to the old rules and regulations. For the later generations, their taste determined everything, they didn't want to eat what seemed to them now as bland or less vivid. It was.

The first of these was a deviation (a violation not of the law, but of the original order, the "rest" or the statutes), but it is unlikely that God blamed them for this change in diet; the subsequent deviations were much more "tangible" and weighty.

For clarity, here is a table with the years of life and dates of birth and death. You can see that when Abraham was born, even Sim was alive, as were Arphaxad and Salah and Eber. Also, the "younger" Ragab and Serug still lived, but there was no Nahor and Falech. Even when Abraham died of old age, Eber was still alive!

The years are counted from the creation of the world. The column "Firstborn" means the age of birth of the first son, the next "Age" is the time of life. Except that Abraham was not born in 1948 (1878 + 70), as the table would suggest, but he was not the firstborn, his brother Aran was born in that year, and Abraham himself was born when his father was 130 years old.

Patriarchs	Year of birth	Firstborn	Age	Year of death
Sim	1558	100	600	2158
Arfaxad	1658	35	438	2096
Sala	1693	30	433	2126
Ever	1723	34	464	2187
Falek	1757	30	239	1996
Ragav	1787	32	239	2026
Seruch	1819	30	230	2049
Nahor	1849	29	148	1997
Farrah	1878	70	205	2083
Avram	2008	100	175	2183

When did the division of languages take place? It is not stated explicitly, but we can assume that the destruction of the tower, which the exiles in the Mesopotamia began to build, was caused by the division of the continents. The shock which damaged the tower⁴⁵ may have been the trigger that set in motion the drifting of the continental plates. However, even if these are two different events, the division of tongues and the division of plates, these events are still not far from each other. The catastrophe with the continents happened at the birth of Falek, who was born a century after the Flood. By the time Nimrod left the Araratian lands (if the survivors of the Flood did not move to some more convenient place), as already calculated above, the population was between 300 and 600 people. Most likely most of the people left with him, we can count between 200 and 400 people.

So when the people who came to the Mesopotamia looked around, they saw that there was plenty of clay and asphalt tar, though there were no stones to build. But they were not embarrassed; they knew how to get out of it. It is clear from their words that they were going to inhabit the Earth.

⁴⁵ The Bible itself says nothing about the destruction of the tower. But it is as if the excavations confirm the legends that the tower was exposed to the elements.

The tower was supposed to be a monument to them, the pioneers of a new civilization. They envisioned the tower as a monument to them, the founders of a new civilization. Was it a bad idea to make a name for oneself? To the modern man it seems not, but for the survivors of this catastrophe, not because of their own merits, but because of the will of the Supreme, not a good idea. It would have been more logical to dedicate the tower to the One who preserved their parents, but somehow such an idea did not occur to them. And even before dedicating it to God, they should have asked Him if He would approve of the idea. - It is an unattractive and unnecessary thing to spend huge resources on vanity. Perhaps they wanted to get even with the idea of the Flood - if it happens again, they will have an opportunity to go without God, to save themselves without His help⁴⁶without obligation and debt to Him, even though God had promised that there would be no more floods. It's as if they have a strong will to sin and in their subconscious there's a feeling that it will go far again and God will again, necessarily punish mankind again and this time they will have a chance to survive against His will... One of the reasons why God couldn't like the idea of this building.

Certainly there would have been people left to live in Babylon, who presented themselves to them as inhabitants of the capital of the world, as the chief ones exercising control from here over all the inhabited parts of the world. And it might well have gone that way, even if Nimrod himself had not planned to set up the capital of the world here, the temptation to go that way would have arisen in those that followed. There was another language on earth at that time that didn't even have dialects, as specifically pointed out by Moses. God appreciated this plan of theirs, coming personally to see their scheme, and concluded for Himself-"They will not stop doing what they are up to," too much enthusiasm. But to have a one-stop-shop in a sinful humanity, in a state which does not pursue righteousness and fidelity to the principles of life - that could take very unpleasant forms in the future, and even if the corruption of individuals would not reach the pre-potop level, being controlled by the authorities, it would be difficult to avoid organized crime implanted in the state government... - God did not want to destroy the Earth once more before time, it might not survive. So He took measures that broke the unity of the people.

It is likely that almost everyone capable of work was working on its construction. And you can imagine how people began to have different perceptions of the same words, which suddenly had different meanings and meanings to them. Or who knows, maybe even new words appeared which had not existed before? Or maybe there were different pronunciations of the same words, or different word organization, where the cases in the endings were replaced by prepositions, or vice versa? Or all at once? I am personally inclined to think that there were only two languages, which today are called Sumerian and Akkadian (and which of them was closer to the original, it is difficult to judge). They had completely different vocabularies; the same objects were called differently, and quite differently, without the slightest resemblance. True, the writing developed by Nimrod (or someone else) before that time worked fine in both languages because it was not based on sound transmission, as it is in most cases today, but on signs, helping one understand each other somehow, but it was not the same unity.

We usually perceive language sensually, not with the mind alone. Therefore, the sensations of words and sounds, as well as writing, also have the opposite effect, that is, a group of people with a common emotional disposition will tend to choose a common pronunciation, sound and

46 At the time of the Flood the highest mountains were covered by 7-8 meters, at that time the Ararat Mountains were the highest. The builders were guided by them, and probably this height was not too high and the goal seemed attainable to them. Soon, however, when the continents split up and traveled, new, higher mountains appeared on Earth. And the Caucasus probably rose additionally as a result of these changes, too.

ways of expression, which at the slightest change in social psychology will incline the language to change over time. Today linguists say that every century the vocabulary of a language changes by 19% and that this is a constant. And that is what drives people in every generation to change pronunciation and words slightly, to invent something different, to stop using "funny-sounding" words that sound perfectly normal to earlier generations. That is, the same power that was at work in building the Tower of Babel is still at work in the mass of humanity. But then the change was violent, like a hurricane's blow, whereas today it is a gentle breeze, though moving layers of words and meanings one grain of sand at a time, looking back a couple of centuries. In this state of affairs, the vocabulary of any language changes by 95%, almost completely, in five hundred years. From these two original languages (or rather from one, Shumran seems to have gradually disappeared) all the other languages seem to have evolved through constant mutation, because linguists see all the languages in existence as related and all of them boil down to one original language.

The differences that emerged divided people into groups with the same language. It seems to me that these groups are not always related, some members of one family may be of the same dialect with another family, which has led to unions of different families, where groups with a common language are made up of people of different blood. For many, this could prove quite tragic. This unwelcome miracle has caused many to ponder. The cause by which they were united came to a standstill, because cooperation among them in this senseless construction became very difficult. Construction stopped, and they began to do what was expected of them in the current moment in history—they began to disperse to inhabit the planet. The concentration in one place, Babylon, was not part of God's plan. Their stopping place, where Nimrod stayed, became a joke. The original meaning of the word "Babylon" means "the gate of God" or "the gods. Although it is unlikely that people had any gods other than the present, paganism did not yet exist at that time, the events of His intervention and manifestation were too close. The "gate of God" in that language was "Bab El". After the division of the languages, people twisted it to "balal" - "babble"... The same word now used as the root in "blah-blah" and similar. So some say that the word "Babylon" means "mingling," even though "mingling" is "ba-lal" and "Babylon" is still "God's Gate." But in the end they are right - Babylon is more "ba - lal" than "Bab El." Babylon did not become a city where God comes to the people, that remained a good intention, but in fact it turned out to be a place where people walked away from God... However, walking away from God was not so direct - people wanted to impose their plans on God, and that is not a union with Him. And there are too many such cases in human history.

Those who stayed in the mountains with Noah also gave groups that dispersed over the earth. It is not known whether their languages divided, but it is certain that their language also began to change over time. There is no language on Earth that is not subject to change, as far as I know.

It is very likely that people had time to disperse before the continents divided. Then they would not have needed to cross the oceans to settle the Americas and Australia. Yet the catastrophe which soon followed would have sealed this division. True, only a very small group reached these margins, for there is less diversity in appearance and phenotype among them than among those who remained on the "Great Land" - the Eurasian continent and in Africa. Subsequently, North America was inhabited by another group (if, of course, there was someone before them), which came there through the Bering Strait, as the researchers claim.

The split of the continents

Geology claims that there were times when the Earth was fairly flat, that is, there were no deep depressions and too high mountains. True, they consider this time convenient for the birth of life according to evolutionary theory, but the same position is also convenient for understanding how water could have covered the entire planet, so that even the mountains were covered by seven meters (according to the Bible). Where did that water, that gigantic volume, go? The answer seems simple - after the Flood the terrain of the planet has changed, and the volume of water on the planet now is the same as at the time of the Flood, but it has gone in the oceans which bottoms have considerably fallen though one can say also that it is "surfaced" continents. The surface was not completely flat before, but the difference in height and depths has become more significant. However, because of this, the balance of the Earth's crust has changed, and stresses have arisen that lead to earthquakes, the crust of the planet crackling and rearranging itself.

From geology, I learned a very curious point about how continents, which are part of the lithosphere, happen to be floating in the asthenosphere, a semi-liquid rock. And the presence of a lot of water probably caused the continental plates to float up a bit, which lowered the pressure at the boundary between the lithosphere and the asthenosphere. Because of the lower pressure in the upper layers of the asthenosphere (the deeper, the higher the pressure), its material is in a viscous or even liquid state. In fact, there is nothing that holds the continental plates together, except for the unity of the lithosphere itself, the oceanic and continental crusts... If they seem to be firmly in place, it is due to the integrity of the crust, but if their integrity is somehow broken, the picture of fast-moving continents can be repeated.

Before the Flood and for some time afterwards, the continents were like a huge island, a supermatter, but under the changed conditions the equilibrium was lost and few things held this supermatter together. Probably, the mass of water disrupted the equilibrium a lot, and the rising mantle currents melted the plates from the inside, as today the northeastern corner of Africa is trying to separate from the big plate; and the tensions and distortions of the oceanic crust, dipping in many places, coincided with this.⁴⁷ In general, the supercontinent began to crack. The North American plate was one with the European plate and broke away from it, and the South American plate broke away from the African plate. Science says that these events took place a long time ago, but the biblical record says it was about 1757 from the creation of the world, or the modern chronology says it was 2246 B.C. plus or minus a year or two, about 4300 years ago. At one point the Psalms say, "Let us not be afraid, even though the mountains move into the heart of the seas. That is, someone seems to have seen how it was and conveyed his impressions about it to his descendants. The continents were moving apart rather fast and only slowed down when the borders of other plates started to slow them down, or when they went beyond the limits of the mantle currents that engulfed them. At the fracture boundaries, deep layers opened up, molten rock, lava, and ocean water rushed in. Clearly the sensation, if anyone had seen it, was intense, although to see anything you had to see it from a distance, up close it was just hell. The oceanic crust in the Atlantic Ocean today is the thinnest, from 4 kilometers, indicating it is young, while the old crust of the other oceans is usually much thicker. In the middle of the Atlantic there is a ridge that pushes the Americas away from Europe and Africa, this pusher is still working, though not as fast as it was in the beginning.

On the other side of the African plate, the Indian plate broke off, as if it looked twice or a half as big as it does now, and it pushed into the body of Asia with great force. If you look at the images from space, you can see how much it crumpled on its way, how much

⁴⁷ When the lithosphere is unified, its pressure keeps the asthenosphere in a more "thick" consistency, but if the lithosphere is cracked, the pressure drops and the viscosity decreases and probably quite significantly. So we get a "liquid grease" under the continents...

It has pushed into the Asian continent and disturbed its harmony. It raised the mountains of Tibet, the Pamirs, and the Himalayas, and its influence extended as far as Lake Baikal. The climate of Central Asia, Mongolia, and many plains were raised to a height of four or five kilometers because of the ascent of the mountains. The air became dry, the rains decreased, and those who lived in the territories of today's Uzbekistan and neighboring regions went far to the west, losing hope to wait for the restoration of favorable conditions. Some stayed, and others came when a new climate with a new equilibrium was established. Then the first great migration happened, but these were not nations yet, only tribes.

I can't get away from the impression, although it may not have been, that when the South American plate broke away from the African plate, it pushed Africa upwards, from where it bounced back. Both because the Indian plate broke off with Madagascar and because it was just sitting there too firmly in its place. But those shocks back and forth did something to where the Mediterranean Sea and the Arabian Peninsula are now. The Google Earth view shows a very sharply shaped bottom in some areas of the Mediterranean Sea, very strong folds that were formed by the collision of Africa with Europe and Arabia and back again. There may not have been a sea there at the beginning, but that area dropped after the tremors, went under the African plate, and the water came later when it broke through the Gibraltar Pillars... It was not a sight for the faint-hearted. But in all the places where there was a division, and on the other side of the collision, the views were stunning to the imagination. Because of those interactions between the European plate and the African plate, new mountains rose in the Caucasus, the Pyrenees, the Alps, and many others in the region.

Atlantis

The problem with identifying this land stems from the fact that its history actually goes back to the time of a single primordial, which today we call Pangaea or Gondwana, while looking for it on a modern map. Ancient historians wrote about it as a historically close event, but in the modern scientific picture of the world, all the changes in geography happen at a very distant time, and since this picture of the world has a very strong influence on the mind, no one thinks that continental transitions can take place within human existence, and it is not even tens of thousands of years, but only thousands. Thanks to these views, we cannot even think of looking for Atlantis other than the Atlantic. People think too logically - to walk across Europe to the far west, and look to the west in the ocean island. However, one must first (mentally) join the North American continent to Europe, and pass it also as far west as the west coast, and already from there look into the ocean. On the maps describing the times of Gondwana, west of the supercontinent we see several islands, one of which could be the sought-after Atlantis. Where are those islands now? - I guess logic tells you the same thing as it does to me. The North American plate in its westward movement either took these islands to itself, or sunk them, sinking them beneath itself, at the same time braking about them in any case. That is, they are most likely now the western tip of North America. Indeed, a physical map shows that between the Sierra Nevada, the powerful new mountains that are folds from collisions with the oceanic crust and these islands as they move westward, and the coast with not so high mountains, arising for the same reason, from resistance of the oceanic crust to westward movement, lies a plate that is an essential part of the state of California. Oregon looks similar, only the island is different, not so flat. The island plate sagged downward in the collision, while the mountains around it. Geologically, California and the lands to the east are different, different rocks, different plants. The boundary between the true North American plate and the island plate lies in the foothills of the Sierra Nevada. For example, in the mountains to the east, you can find plants characteristic of

for Europe and even Russia, such as St. John's wort, but there is none in the California valley. Over time, of course, many European plants entered here, but still the difference remains. It is not known only which of those islands that fit into North America is that Atlantis, whether it is in California, Oregon, or Washington state, but that island is somewhere here on the Pacific coast.

If there was anyone living on these islands at the time, they could hardly have survived incorporation into the Big Land, because a wave of water and mud swept over the low islands and didn't go away right away, a lot of rock from that wave⁴⁸ remained in the depressed part of Central California, hiding the original surface from our view. And no one has excavated the plains, no one has thought to look for anything of Atlantis here, just because they believe that this annexation didn't happen forty-three centuries ago, but hundreds of millions of years ago, when there were no humans...

I must add that this is my way of understanding the question, but I also came across another interesting version, according to which this island was closer and so I cannot assert anything confidently. Everything requires much more thorough verification. There were such islands, but they may have nothing to do with Atlantis.

Summarizing the post-Flood division of the world, we can say that most or even the vast majority of the people left the mountains and settled in the interfluves, and if not for the intervention of God, might have stayed there for a long time. But the division of languages confused their plans, and they scattered over the lands, inhabiting them. The division of the continents cemented the picture of the world as we have it today. The time period in question stretches from about 1656, the year of the Flood, to about 1800 from Creation, or 24 to 23 B.C.

Patriarchs

To keep knowledge of true things and principles on Earth, you need people who appreciate and love them, who understand them, who can act as their custodians and disseminators (the need was very urgent). For a long time, the patriarchs fulfilled this task. The first sons of the fathers, who were themselves first-born, became patriarchs. But even though Cain was the first-born of the earth, he lost this title because of his crime and the way of life that followed. The rest of the generations of the family were headed by the firstborn, and this continued after the Flood. It was their duty as priests of the family and clan when the previous patriarch passed away. Noah was the last common patriarch of mankind, and after his departure his sons became the patriarchs of their families, with their tribes and clans divided not only by descent but also by language. As long as Japheth, Shem, and Ham, the living witnesses of divine wrath and disposition, who saw God personally, were alive, no paganism could arise. But no matter how long the patriarchs lived, their turn also came, and the new generations were no longer covered by the restraining influence—either the scale of personality weakened, or the new generations learned to resist the spiritual authority of the patriarchs, or simply there were more people and it was harder to work in this mass. On the one hand, they were worshipped as gods; on the other, no one cared about their example and teaching, and people slowly drifted away from the ancient ways, allowing themselves to forget common sense. It fell to these leaders to lead their tribes and their extended families. The growing humanity was more and more divided into peoples more and more distant from one another, forgetting their kinship, and, if they did remember, sometimes because of this, being even harsher on any distinction. Leaders, princes and princes themselves were not all-

48 Which indicates some velocity sufficient to create a wave. If the velocity were very low, there would be no wave.

hen they turn out to be the best people, pursuing goals that lead not to the common good but only to certain groups or individuals in general, this is a very important indicator of the degradation not only of morality but also of the power of thinking. It is always difficult to determine the consequences of a particular choice, and without the aid of an all-knowing mind, mistakes are always made sooner or later. Sometimes leading to the death of the clan or tribe entrusted to you. It began to happen more and more often as the population grew and health and vitality were lost due to dietary cravings for not the healthiest of things. The loss of health and total body energy is inextricably linked to the loss of mind power.

Paganism

Over time, people began to forget about God and drift away from the rules and canons of sound living. Knowledge about God also became perverted. The wise philosophers, in their analyses, dissected God into parts, and His individual parts began to look like individual persons to many - thus paganism came into being. So images of the attributes of God appeared, and thus the One was divided into Power, Knowledge, Love, Wisdom, Kindness and other attributes. Anger and Militancy were not forgotten either, of course. The key step after that was the personification of these qualities, the idea of them as separate personalities. It was a process of mythologizing, where unscrupulous teachers began to give people not a real picture of the world, but a symbolically meaningful one, and they perceived it as real. When the common people (and a lot of people didn't want to grow and learn, so they created a "swamp", the most numerous and passive layer, prone to many vulnerabilities) were seduced and began to choose who they worshipped. Especially since the set of laws and rules also happened to be divided among the characters resulting from the splitting of the One. According to this twisted logic, the Warrior had different rules than the Scientist, not to mention Love. Some rules were stricter than God's original laws; others, on the contrary, allowed much more (not always, but only occasionally, but even this enticed heightened pleasures) than the sensible restrictions arising from human nature itself. God's commands were protective of human life, but contrary to selfish pursuits of pleasure, so when people weakened, they readily allowed destructive relaxations of custom. The old, as always, grumbled about the youth not keeping the law; the young answered that they were out of step with life; then they fixed new, relaxed rules which the next generation loosened. Then the older youth rebuked the new one for the same thing, receiving in return their own old words. And so it is still this game between sensible and artificial rules, with a revolt against both.

To the philosophical prism that split the One into its component parts, the cult of the ancestors came in time; it began just as Noah's sons left, especially Japheth-Japet-Jupiter, who as the elder was endowed in the imagination of the descendants with divine qualities. The worship of the ancestors (as gods) could only arise under the degradation of the new generations, when the descendants began to differ markedly from the ancestors not for the better.

Also, where people were drastically degraded, and there were some, cults of worshipping local spirits easily arose. This is what some call "lunar" paganism. It is also close to what atheists say about the origin of religion - the "primitive man's fear of the elements" and the deification of the elements - yes, that too has happened. In reality, though, all these tendencies tended to overlap, so the rational religion of the Greeks contains prophetess-pythians, more in line with the paganism of the stones, trees and places. Oracles, too, cannot arise from a purely speculative philosophy about the facets of the One, but must go beyond speculative rationalism.

The ancestors of the ancestors, the ancestors of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants of the descendants. It is not without reason that later generations began to deify the ancestors, precisely because they were closer to the gods than to weakened men, having an insight approaching prophecy, combining the knowledge of the early pre-Flood times with the wisdom that sprang from their nearness to God. Their descendants cared little for such wholeness, such righteousness, such perfection, and so they lost and degraded, neglecting the heritage of their fathers, paying them a perverse homage that their forefathers had not and could not teach them.

The calling and task of Abraham

Under the circumstances, God saw fit to create a special group, a nation of keepers of the Law and Covenant. The patriarchal way was even more miserable; human frailties would have overpowered the patriarchs as surely as they had overpowered Israel, but in Israel there was at least a generic obligation, making it much more reliable to pass on and reproduce to new generations all that God wanted to give to the people. There were many requirements and clarifications in the books to help maintain some level of God-knowledge even in the most adverse circumstances. Instead of one patriarch for all mankind (or one for the people), a large group of people with similar tasks was erected, which increased the reliability of the system, since at least some members of this group succeeded in the tasks assigned to them. If all of them were like that, at least a little more of them...

For this purpose, from among the firstborn patriarchs, in the tenth generation from the Flood, God singled out Abram, who was not firstborn⁴⁹ but was very distinctive in his spiritual qualities. Among them they already had idols, or rather talismans, or figurines of theraphim, which we find in the story of Jacob when his wife took them from her father's house. Abram on the whole revived the spirit of the old patriarchs, guardians-priests of the family, guiding their people to true God and true service. In fact, the service itself was very simple, free of elaborate rituals; all "truth" consisted in not inventing or complicating what God had established, and not in redefining what He had ordained. They taught that at sacrifice one must be reconciled to the one against whom one had sinned, if it was a penitential sacrifice, that one must keep the commandments of the Law and other subsidiary laws and statutes, and generally any ordinance of God. The principles and rules were simple, but the main thing was that the patriarch himself should be a star with spiritual power, an interesting, energizing person, drawing people to the Way, otherwise his ministry would lose drastically in effectiveness.

But the destiny of Abram, now Abraham, was not to pass on the patriarchy to his son, but to give his children such direction that an entire patriarchal people, guardians of the Truth, like him, Abraham, would emerge. When his grandson Jacob found a large family, all his children and their children's children were obligated to be keepers, there was no longer a division in this between the firstborn and the rest. Although the primogeniture of the firstborn remained in part, they were princes, chief among the clan and tribe, but they no longer acted as priests; the patriarchal system was abolished, until the new heavenly, divine Patriarch and Priest abolished the Levitical priesthood. The new system, however, did not take its final form until some time later. Only after leaving Egypt and building

⁴⁹ Farrah's firstborn son was born when he was 70 years old, but Abram was born when Farrah was 130 years old. This can be seen by comparing Genesis 11:32 and 12:4 - that is, when the father died at 205, Abram was 75 at the time.

The family of Aaron, Moses' brother, was assigned the role of priests, and the rest of the Levi family became their helpers.

It is not very clear to me where Abram's family lived before they moved to Harran. Ur of the Chaldees clearly belongs to the lower reaches of the Tigris and Euphrates. If this is the place from which they left for Harran, then this Ur was a well-appointed city, as we have read in the archaeological excavations, with plumbing and a sewage system. We know from history that about ten years after they left, the city was destroyed by the Kochevniks, so either they foresaw something and took security measures, or God sent them news of their change of location in time. But there are other considerations about their original location. From Ron Wyeth's excavations in the same area where he found the ark, he describes an area with settlement names that hold the names of the same patriarchs. Ur is also found there, and the Chaldeans are also present, who are more likely just here in the north than in the south of the Mesopotamia. This, if it is true, suggests that these people remained living in the mountains, not leaving with Nimrod to participate in his project, not uniting with him in his plans for civilization, but keeping a full set of information about God and his statutes for humanity. If Ur was in the south, however, it is not quite clear why the patriarchs went not just with Nimrod to Babylon, but even further south and then north again to Harran. It seems more logical to think that they stayed where they left the ark, and only then did one of the families go from there south to Harran.

I am also curious about another question that probably has no answer - why did they have to go to Haran at all, since only one Abram received the call? Was it just one call, or were there several instructions from above for the others as well? After all, they went there by the decision of Farrah, the father of the family - we read in Genesis 11:31 *"And Farrah took Abram ... and Lot son of Aran ... and Sarai ... Abram's wife ... and went out with them from Ur of the Chaldees to go into the land of Canaan; but when they came to Haran, they stopped there."* If they were coming from Ur in the north, they didn't go far; if they were coming from Ur in the south, they could have been in Canaan, although it looks like the road to Canaan was more convenient along the Euphrates (but twice or three times as long). It seems as if, after Abram received an invitation to become the ancestor of a special nation of truth keepers and to wander in the land that this nation would one day inherit, his father and immediate family wanted to have some part of it as well. At least to be near, though it was not as if God had called them, yet there was no prohibition, and their desire is commendable. On the other hand, it is possible that their desire to go to Canaan was not due to a message to Abram (if he did not receive the order to go until after his father's death in Genesis 12:1), but to some other consideration. In any case, they made a base to help Abram in case he needed anything, and it paid off - when he was looking for a wife for his son, he sent a servant there for her, just as his grandson went there for the same thing.

When his father died, it was only then that Abraham received a specific order to go his way, and it was still as if he did not know where to go. That the family wanted to go that way was not yet a directive from God? However, the direction was still to the southwest, and he could have guessed the destination God was directing him to on the way, or he could have been fully informed already at a particular place. The places that in the future would belong to his descendants were not a single country at the moment, they were different peoples, although most of them closely related, but independent of each other tribes and settlements.

Wanderings in the Promised Land

Abram walked this land from end to end, stopping for a while in different places, but he did not choose a permanent home, because he was told to wander through it. He had to go around it, the places where his descendants will live. They would live permanently, in their places, but he, the progenitor, had to go around them all. And in many -

In all the places where he walked, where he stopped to live for a while, he placed altars to God. By this he reminded the inhabitants of this land of the ancient customs, giving them the opportunity to join in the worship of a real and living God, not abstractions of the Deity or de-monetary spirits of moon cults, and not dead ancestors (who themselves were not worshipping any ancestors!). At that time there was still a possibility to return these people to a real real God and real laws of life, because paganism was not very developed and people still knew about the idea of the One Source of life and power. However, reversing the trend of society was difficult, and it didn't happen. But Abraham's personality still attracted the attention of those of old, and he was held in high esteem by those of old. But the younger ones were also able to appreciate him and his way of life.

Problems in Egypt with Sarah. Real and far-fetched

The truth is, as has been and will be the case many times, some advantages can be a disadvantage in other settings. Something in his life has proven to be quite unsightly in the eyes of many people, especially those of today's generation. This is Abram's strange weakness in the story of his wife.

There was a famine in Palestine because of a drought, so Abram went to Egypt to wait out the bad time. One would think that it was God's plan to introduce Himself through Abram to places other than Palestine, only because of Abram's fear of people things did not work out in the best way. Going there, he was in fear for his life. Judging from this moment and others, he was the sprightly type of person who are called intellectuals today (in the best sense of the word, but it has its side effects). The meaning of the word varies greatly among the Russians, but there is one thing this characteristic has in common - it is usually not a fighter, and it is difficult for him to stand up for himself. Although Avram did do this, at a later time he defended his nephew by attacking a superior enemy force, and quite successfully. So he was not a coward, but still had a heightened sensitivity of character which can be traced in his every move. Actually, this is a great advantage - sensitivity, the tendency to understand and feel a lot and notice a lot, but sometimes the imagination fails and can draw different fears to a much greater extent than they deserve. Maybe nothing will happen yet, but the imagination, having raged, pushes a person on a completely unnecessary road.

He had not been to Egypt before, but he had heard something that made him think there was no law there - although there was not; Egypt was a civilized nation, and far ahead of many other nations in the polity (for better or for worse - I cannot say). However, even if there was a law, there might have been another problem - a lot of self-perpetuating rulers who could do arbitrary things in their own domains. This is a more realistic concern and may have been the case. Wasn't that when the Hyksos took over Egypt? If so, it was a time of a new relationship of conquerors with the conquered and a time of great change, so his fears may have been justified. However, he did have protection - his God, who might well have protected him. And so it was that He protected him even in a situation that Abram found himself in because of his cowardice, although He would have been more than happy to protect him had Abram not been afraid and endured real hardship, that is, someone would have actually attempted to take his wife and try to take her by force. And the story would have been a different, more palatable one, but that's the way it turned out.

Many people are confused by Sarah's age, because when Abram was about eighty years old at the time, Sarah was about seventy. But we should not judge by our usual notions that beauty is forgotten at seventy. Just today, this story is quite possible and

believe it, at least look at the Internet about women who have kept their beauty and appearance at that age. Also in the nineties I happened to see a film that was not worth much attention at all, except for an episode in which there was a woman who was very old, at least eighty years old, but who retained the kind of beauty in which even the wrinkles did not spoil anything and had a freshness that many young people would envy. This struck me, and considering that Pharaoh was not a young man either, it is rather natural that Sarah was noticed and her fame reached the royal palace. It should be taken into consideration that in that antiquity those who did not succumb to excessive appetites and passions were quite healthy and fresher at any age and even at the end of their lives than those who allowed themselves excesses. That is to say, Sarah at her seventies might well rival today's thirties if she were among us today, as, in fact, is the case with some people even today. For many, modern, quality cosmetics also make them look much better than others of the same age.

There is another thing that stands out in this story. Neither Abraham, nor the Canaanites, nor any other place in Egypt has a burqa or a covering of the woman's face. If Sarah had one, then no one would speak of her beauty, and this story could not have happened. Although the burqa itself is known, the Pharaoh later gave it to Sarah, yet its use was not quite the same as today where it is worn; women could walk around with their faces open in various cultures in ancient times, and it didn't seem to be a problem.

So Abram encouraged his wife to refer to him as her brother and not her husband (which was not a lie, because in those days, when human health was still higher and genetic problems-we had not yet manifested or accumulated, marriage between relatives was not forbidden), thus creating a problem for himself and others. Had he shown courage, his marriage would not have been threatened. Maybe his fears were really real, but what happened to them there came from a completely different side - no one took his wife away from him by force and the problems came just because of his precautions - they came to him and very politely asked him to give his "sister" to Pharaoh... By doing so, he probably lost some respect in the heart of his wife, that he was ready to give her up without a fight, giving up beforehand. Or was it that kind of rationalism, when not-who senses in advance the futility of fighting and defeat, and surrenders at once? But it was not only his wife or his own conscience that judged him, but also God, who in this all too rational calculation, but made with such clear unbelief, was if not offended by it, then disgraced. Abram had put Him out of the bracket altogether in his equation of circumstances, not factoring Him into his calculations. That might have been normal for an atheist (not even for a few), or for a man who saw himself as a mere mortal, a speck of sand or a cog in the machine, but not for the One whom future generations will look up to. And he was not weak, the war for Lot had proved it, but here and now he was thinking too down-to-earth. How much he had lost in the eyes of modern people by his action is perhaps beyond description. God interceded for him at this point, but his act was a problem in his spiritual development, in becoming the right character for heaven, so it had to be somehow neutralized, or, if you will, redeemed, corrected, if he was to remain an example to believers. This predetermined his further problems, that is, if he had not had this decline in Egypt, God would not have tested him later in a harsher way. There is a lesson and a pattern here - a failed test weighs down the process of correction and improvement that heaven produces over those who claim to be holy. Heaven has to guide us through tougher problems, not only to get us results, but also to neutralize the negative effect of previous defeat. Going straight to winning trials and training makes it easier for both God and ourselves. I have noticed since gym class at school, and many have confirmed this, that it is much easier to run right away in the front rows than to fall behind and then catch up after running away.

who are ahead of the curve. Even the weak one who keeps the front row has a better chance of winning than the stronger one who allowed himself to slack off and fall behind. Of course, those who win may also have their own problems such as pride of success, but these are problems of a different order, and they too will be solved in time, but the general principle is this.

When Sarah was promised to Pharaoh, which Pharaoh was quite happy about, Abram was rewarded for this valuable "sister" with many gifts and kalam. But he was probably already saying goodbye to his wife inwardly. How did he feel then? Counting on rude and fearful lawless people, he found himself in a somewhat different situation, where he was spoken to politely, as a relative of a pharaoh... Here, indeed - "a man believes". And there was no way to turn back; then the calculations of rude treatment could be realized right away... And only God did not let him down; He took immediate action. In the refined Egyptian society it was not customary to jump on the beauty of women at once; there were probably no such savages in those days, unless somewhere in the backyards away from populated areas some feral outcasts could organize themselves into a tribe devoid of any (or other) rules. Although Sara was taken into the Pharaoh's house, she had time to get used to her new surroundings while her courtiers prepared for the wedding ceremonies.

But God did not fail the distraught Abram, who must also have remembered his Guardian and finally told Him of his problems and disappointment with his own plans. The Pharaoh's house quickly noticed some health problems. It is not clear from the text, but it was very quick to guess what or who they were for. There are many people who are sensitive to the causality of events and feel the reality of higher forces, and there were such people near Pharaoh - Egypt is known for the considerable wisdom of its priests. It quickly became clear who Sarah was to Abram, and Pharaoh summoned him to him and reprimanded him, not very strictly - although for other people such set-ups could have been costly. But Abram, because of his respect for the scale of the forces that stood in his defense, did not even take back the gifts he had been given for Sarah... He even got some profit instead of trouble, though he could hardly be proud of it. He was, it was written, "escorted" out of the country, and that was the only punishment for his ob- man.

Because there was a famine in Canaan, and he had not been in Egypt long, he did not hurry back to Canaan because of the famine, but went to the south, and apparently then he came to Gerar in Philistine, where again the exact same thing happened with Sarah, where he said again that she was his sister. Whether the Philistines were rougher than the Egyptians is unknown, but there is a reek of nobility in many of the personalities and situations in this story. True, many people are noble only among themselves and not always among strangers, so Abram, fearing the same trouble with his wife, is soft in character, expecting the same trouble from her beauty. God's intervention seems to have given him a sense of some invulnerability, but in doing so he acted in a habitual way. Habit is the problem. Someone described habit as "shackles put on voluntarily," although this definition is not true, because what should be called shackles are destructive habits that arise unconsciously, and where one consciously instills in oneself something, develops character, it is voluntary, but it is not a shackle in any way. Only in the opinion of those who go with the stream, not caring about the consequences of their deeds, thinking that they live free and carefree. Many people in crisis situations do not act in a rational way in order to solve the problem most effectively, but do what they can do best. So long after Egypt, when Avram did not have time to draw any conclusions, he just reacted as if he had inertia. And so it is the same, the people are angry at this set up, but they see him as a respected and deserving man from other sides so they don't wait too long to condemn and reject him. "What have you done to us? What have I sinned against you?" says Abimelech,

or in other words, "What have I done to you that you have set me up so badly? Abram had indeed cast a shadow over Abimelech with his fears and suspicions. Avram, in his explanations with him, revealed to him that he had this very long-standing plan for his wife, a pact with her that if they were ever in danger because of her beauty, that she would always speak of him as a brother. In fact, he was willing to part with her to keep himself alive. Such is that unconquerable weakness. God had to put up with it all, but perfect people are hard to find, so truly even He has to work with what He has. But He worked at it, bringing Abram into new and new circumstances that demanded more and more steadfastness and determination from him. He either had to reform or fall out of the ranks, and God would have to look for another candidate.

Since these stories of the failures in Egypt and in Gerar are separated by several chapters, it is possible that they are also distant in time, not immediately following each other, but even in this case Sarah did not lose her form even after ninety years, since she gave birth to a son at that age, so in her case years did not mean loss of beauty. Only a couple of generations separated them from their ancestors who lived much longer than they did, and the fact that Sara stayed in good shape was to be credited to her fathers and grandfathers. Other tribes and peoples lived somewhat differently, living by agriculture, which ensured survival and abundance under favorable weather conditions, but the diet of poor people may have been deficient in nutrients, which impaired the quality of health, followed by lower energy, caused loss of beauty at an earlier age, and a quicker old age, laden with senility and later disease. But I am inclined to think that Abram went to Gerar immediately after Egypt, since he had to leave there much earlier than the famine ended, prematurely. Also, the narrative in the Bible does not always follow a chronological sequence, as many other books do. A chronological narrative is far from the best way for authors to convey a message; it only appears to be the easiest.

Parting with Lot

In those days the economy was simple, and in many cases it could have been overlooked, if by economy we mean production for exchange, because many were able to produce most of the necessities of the household within their families, settlements or clans. The financial system was still in its infancy, banks were still a long way off, wealth was measured in material objects. In those days, the richest were those who cultivated or produced more, who applied themselves more skillfully. This seems to still be the case today, but when everything is measured in terms of money, then it happens that people have a lot of material possessions, but their financial situation is not the most successful. If they can't buy what they need, they don't feel rich when they already have it. And sometimes people who have an abundance of money can suffer for lack of something vital.

But Abram and Lot were rich by the standards of the day. Their wealth - sheep and other livestock - did not have enough room for grazing, and this led to conflicts between their shepherds and servants. Little by little these conflicts could and legitimately would lead to personal clashes as well. Although people sometimes confuse conflicts of interest with character and think that if there is a conflict, then the person is unequivocally bad, and may consider them enemies, wisdom says that conflicts of interest must be considered long before they begin; they are easy to calculate, and then it is easy to avoid the conflict and resolve the problem. It is the conflict of interest that reveals who is truly human and who has a tainted core. Because of conflicts of interest even the best people have to explain themselves and look bad in front of their neighbors, but one should not confuse bad character with bad ob-

circumstances. In theory, sensible and good people can resolve conflicts of interest with minimal harm to themselves and the other person, and I personally also think that conflicts of interest hold the potential for development, when a problem turns into greater benefits and opportunities, although this requires a considerable change of perspective. The trouble is that people try to deal with such things too flat and down-to-earth, without considering perspectives, with a broader view of possibilities. However, conflating bad character with a problematic situation usually means war or having to do something to defend oneself. When David heard that his son Absalom was "enthroned," he instantly decided to leave Jerusalem because he knew the customs of the people and that his son did not possess the nobility that he himself had once displayed toward Saul, his God-denied predecessor. Saul had been anointed, but already rejected and condemned, and David had been appointed to take his place; but he dared not lay his hand upon Saul to overthrow him, as any one else would have done, but waited for the natural course of events, not hastening them in any way from himself. If God had given the command to remove Saul, as He did to remove Ahab's house to Jiuy, David would not have resisted, but there was none, and he waited, seeing no other way.

In this situation Abram behaves without conflict, avoiding even the shadow of discontent, even though as the eldest of the family he had some advantages. Although Lot is also reluctant to speak out, there is a problem and it must be solved before it leads to more problems. Lot joined Abram, wanting to be with this outstanding man, but success and great business began to distract him from his spiritual mission ... Abram was close to God and being close to Abram meant having spiritual advantages, opportunities for development, knowledge and just about everything unusual, but a personal successful business sometimes seems very big business, although its benefits are limited to a much narrower set of possibilities. Abram saw that Lot was greatly bound up in his household and that his interest was no longer the same when he shared his way with him. There came a point when his nephew's weak spirituality, which prevented Abram (such things always get in the way if they are not willing to reform) from representing God to the people of this world, brought Lot to the brink of choosing whether to continue his former life of service to spiritual objects or to focus on whatever caught his attention more. It was not difficult to divide the flocks, scattering them in different places, or simply sell off some of them, while Lot himself remained with Abram, but Abram does not even discuss such a thing, but simply suggests the easiest thing to do: to separate. And Lot accepts this without much difficulty, and this speaks volumes about his character. He evidently thought he had gone after some wealth with his uncle, and by separating from him he was getting his share of the inheritance. As far as wealth was concerned, he got his share of the land and did not count on much more. But Abram got rid of an inert companion who did not become a helper and support in his work. Abram's work was probably not difficult or dangerous in spreading the knowledge of the true and living God, but good companions and co-workers mean a lot - they either help fuel the fire of life and service and keep it alive, or they put out the fire with their lack of initiative and passivity, if not with nagging and complaining. It is unclear from this story how Abram himself felt all this, but it looks as if God breathed freely when Lot left for the valley of Sodom. As soon as Lot left, God says to Abram, "Look north and south, east and west - everything you see, I will give to you and your offspring forever." So Lot, it seems, was a kind of barrier to God, and He could not give much to Abram while Lot was around him. In fact, if Lot had been like Abram, his presence would not have hindered God. He is called righteous in the Bible and it is true, the men of Abram's lineage were heirs to faithful and good traditions, but as I noted earlier, that heritage began to be lost and Lot was just the kind of man who was losing rather than restoring a legacy of truth. Righteous, but in a somewhat limited way - within himself, for himself, but his influence on the outside world was no longer enough, as his example shows, and he was completely

of the unholy family. It may be enough to save oneself, but that is not the way one should live, not like that...

Abram, not abusing his right to be God's chosen one and the eldest in the family, in fact the patriarch, delicately offered Lot a choice of territory, saying "if you go right, I will go left, and if you go left, I will go right. In this way he somewhat risked his legacy, because God had called him and promised him the land, but he agreed to part with a relative, not considering it an infringement of his rights. Of course he was not the master here at the time, he knew himself to be an alien and a wanderer, but anyone in his place would have seen the prospects for his descendants and few would have given up for nothing. But he did not lose, though Lot chose the best of the land at the time, the valley where Sodom was. Paradisiacal living conditions in terms of climate and fertility provided many conveniences, and the presence of cities looked like a considerable advantage compared to the sparsely populated Canaan of the time. It is true that the valley's inhabitants had some oddities, but Lot had no problem with this for a long time, except for the moral discomfort of seeing and hearing things that were considered evil in his former surroundings. Besides the distorted sexuality of many of the inhabitants of those cities, ancient historians say they had some rules that it was either wrong or indecent to help the poor. Their idleness, surfeit and pride resulted in rules "the other way around," that is, what was "bad" for all normal people was considered "good" there. Even small deviations from what derives from human nature and needs lead to very bad consequences, if not for ourselves and not immediately, then certainly for others, and then for ourselves as well. God often allows too many things to mature, to manifest, so that those who want to understand can see that His sentences and judgments are more than just. Just because in the course of this life it is not always easy to understand His full righteousness does not mean a failure of His policy in this regard, because there will be a final summation and "rewards" and that is where everything will be given for all. There every little detail and every "why" God has allowed something to be will become clear to all. Though it is not closed to man now, it takes a certain contact with Him and a mind of unordered⁵⁰ mind to see beyond the surface of events and things.

Avram and the War

Wars can be traced back to early post-Flood history. As soon as languages were divided and peoples emerged, enmity with "them," who were "different from us," began. Already the Sumerians and Akkadians, the first nations in the history of the earth, have records of clashes and attacks against each other for the purpose of capturing labor, although they were one people only a short time ago. Their projects were resource-hungry, post-Flood life was labor-intensive, and humans were already seen as machines rather than individuals. Barely more people, the planet had not yet been populated, the labor force was still lacking, and the population was already thinning out. By the time of Abram and Lot, too many nations and tribes had acquired a taste for plunder; power had become too important, far more so than knowledge and skill (though war has its knowledge and skill, too). An account of all the deeds and thoughts of men is kept for judgment, and those who have started wars and murders without cause or sufficient reason will be among those over whom "death has a second power".⁵¹ But those who defend and protect others are not to be blamed, no matter how many attackers they destroy. The guilt of murder lies only with those who started it first-it is written, "He who sheds

50 Many people's minds are ordinary? - Maybe, but the potential of all healthy people, and even of many unhealthy ones, is enormous, and all could make great progress if they wanted to, which is precisely one of God's original goals for human beings, . "He who seeks shall find," emphasizes the Son of God, with every seeker, anyone and everyone.

51 Rev. 20:6.

the blood of man, that blood shall be shed by the hand of man".⁵²This is what God said as an admonition to mankind afterwards. Even if the assailant has not yet had time to kill anyone and is killed himself, it is the assailant's fault, he provoked it by the very threat of force. The defender and the defender of others cannot and must not in any way be blamed, otherwise the judgment will be ungodly and unjust. The concept of "exceeding the limits of defense" is not quite right, it is only valid when there was a verbal abuse or a small conflict not based on self-interest over resources, but if even minor injuries are threatened that is enough reason to neutralize the attacker, up to and including death. Later on many things became more complicated in the use of force, but in Old Testament times it was very simple. But even today the principle of defense has not been abolished, and those who defend are doing a righteous thing, for which not only they are not to blame, but they have the blessing, at least from those who are saved by their actions - mi. Defenders tend to have far fewer cases of post-traumatic syndrome, because a clear conscience protects against all such problems. The assailant can't blame them, doesn't have the right to. Although he tries to confuse them with false accusations and embarrass them, that's the tactic of bad people - to try to make their victim look guilty. If there is an unlawful law or a conflict of laws, when according to one or the other law someone is guilty, it is always the trace of bad people who abuse civil lawfulness. War is not only fought by force, but also by perversion of justice.

It so happened that the Sumerian (Sumer was still Sumer at that time) king Amraphel gathered with Kedorlaomer and his other allies and marched against the kings of the Sittim valley. They had the Sittim valley enslaved, but then they refused to pay tribute to Kedorlaomer and so they came for their money. Amraphel and Kedorlaomer were quite successful because their campaign was not only against the Sittim valley, but other places in Canaan and among them even the giants, the Rephaim, the Emim, the Zuzim, and the Chorreï. Their march covered considerable territory, and they also fought with the Amalekites and the Amorites.⁵³ and the Amorites. The Bible says nothing about the size of the invaders or the defenders, and it is unlikely they were tens of thousands of troops. The cities were not large yet, the population of the world was in the millions, not billions at this time. About five hundred years after the Flood, the total population may have been about twenty-five million⁵⁴ under the right circumstances. Even so, it is difficult to know how many people there were in these particular countries, Canaan, Egypt and the intermediate areas, because the distribution of people in these areas is not known. But if we assume that not many people have settled on the outskirts, and the rest were concentrated in warm and comfortable or at least familiar places, we can estimate the average population of 15-25 million people per 3 million square kilometers of the world (a very rough rectangle from Turkey to Egypt from north to south and slightly beyond Mesopotamia to the east), the average population density is 6-8 people per square kilometer. By the end of Abraham's life there would be three times that number, but for now there was plenty of free land and pasture.

The army of the valley of Sittim was again defeated; they were not able to escape enslavement from their enemies. But what happened was that Lot also suffered, whom, along with the rest of the inhabitants of

52 Genesis 9:6

53 This place looks like a mistake, there were no Amalekites yet, we are clearly talking about the area where the Amalekites would later live. This was written by Moses four or five centuries after these events.

54 Very estimated and rough estimates by hand, assuming a slightly longer childbearing period for women up to 60 years for the first five hundred years and the number of children from 4 to 10 during that time, when there are no particularly long crop failures and wars. I tried to calculate through cycles what the increase might have been in one generation, which for that time I took at forty years, although for the first couple hundred years it could have been more, but then it dropped steadily to the current twenty (if I'm not mistaken). Believed that women after forty years of childbearing age passed into the category of the old population, not participating in the growth.

Sodom was taken captive. The news of his defeat in that war reached Abram and he rallied to help his nephew. He had friends and allies who would not let him down and rallied with him without thinking of the consequences. It is unlikely that they had more men than Sittima, still more likely that they were far less than the invading army. It is interesting to note that usually in all accounts of Abram there is only family and rarely two or three servants, but here there were 318 servants (only those who went to war, and there must have been some who stayed to work, all of whom could not go out of business). This is not surprising, because the number of herds required a sufficient number of workers, it's just that without this military march situation, we wouldn't have had the opportunity to imagine the real situation of Abram's business. Even in David's time, about a thousand years later, there were wars with less than a hundred thousand troops; a hundred years later they were up to a million troops, but these were sporadic, excessive and perhaps inefficient in an underdeveloped economy. So Avram went out against maybe five or ten thousand. There may well have been a thousand or two men on his side with his allies, although we do not know the status of Eshkol and Aner, they probably had about as many men as Abram had.

The campaign was quite successful; God helped Abram and his allies. When they attacked the enemy camp at night, they defeated them utterly and recovered much of what they had captured (rather more, since the Sumerians had robbed many, not just Sodom). Lot and his family were unharmed. On their way back south, they passed by Salem, which was also Jebus and Jerusalem. Melchizedek, the king of that city and priest, came out to meet them with blessings. The silence about his figure is symbolic; the apostle Paul later wrote that it is the lack of information about him that allows us to compare him to the Son of God, who has no beginning, having no parents and no lineage. Melchizedek blessed Abram, and Abram set apart a tenth of the spoils of war. The conquered had much of the spoils of their campaign against Canaan and the cities of the valley of Sittim, so that both Abram and his allies were well enriched. From his share he gave Melchizedek a tithe which supported the clergy. Melchizedek in turn blessed Abram.

To a greater or lesser extent, there has always been a division of labor, which is rooted in human nature because different people are gifted in different ways, and it is always more advantageous to have each task done by the one who can do it better than the others. Exceptions are made only to train young people so that they can experience the widest range of activities and in special need cases where the whole society or most of it is mobilized to perform extreme tasks, but such situations are temporary and if there is always a rush, then one would assume bad management, most likely the result of a lack of intelligence in the management or enemy influence to undermine the efficiency of the society.

This is necessary because the spiritual and mental domain of man is the key as well, both for the individual in the achievement of his efficacy as well as for society. This includes educators, coaches, teachers, and priests, all of whose skillful work benefits society - morally, creatively, scientifically, and in other similar respects. The strength or weakness of the individuals who make up society, their moral qualities - it depends on them how society will be, how much power can be mobilized for higher tasks or how much power and resources of society will be devoted to imposing order, neutralizing crime, and curing disease. It is therefore difficult to overemphasize the role of teachers who

The rightly directed society can retain a charge of morality for a long time, even if their teachers do not. A properly directed society can keep a moral charge for a long time, even if their teachers are taken away from them. Civilization will stand firm only when there is a strong core of culture, not just the section of culture that is about music and dance, but more that is about behavior, understanding the principles of what builds and strengthens, teaching to distinguish the creative from the destructive.

Morality can be transcended by religion because it is sufficiently self-sufficient and closely related to human nature that even the staunchest atheists can be moral people. Anyone who is not egoistic is already on the right path, but egoism is also destructive to the most faithful (whatever that may be for someone) religion, contradicting it in its very essence. At a time when God was far away from people, atheists did not exist, so priest-teachers of the people occupied an important place in society. True, not every priest was a good teacher; some later religions had a limited version of morality, but the figures of priests-priests of a "limited version" are present in every religion. They see their vocation only in performing rituals and nothing else, supposedly enough to keep people in some framework because of the magical or other nature of the rituals. At best they are music, harmonizing and soothing, or expressing through their symbolism the essence of certain things; at worst they are a cover for evil deeds, helping to "cleanse the conscience" and make it possible to continue sinning with peace of mind. The Buddha at one time spoke sharply of such "ministers"-

"Overgrown like a black yak,
Wrapped in a beast's skin A
brahman walks, but he is a fool,
Not a holy and wise guru.
Look into his eyes.
There's a jungle hidden inside...⁵⁵"

But even the ritualists were among those who were relieved of any other work for the sake of this work. Society paid for their labor, understanding its importance. Here the principle "ten feed one" was used. The people separated a tenth from their profits to support both superiors and clergy and those who were doing something separate for the good of the community, a kind of exchange of services. The tithe is a tax in this sense, and when Samuel imposed royal government on the people, he warned of this, that in addition to the three tithes of the people there would be a royal tithe, which was already a regular tax. The Levitical system, which has survived in much detail (the tithe in other societies and times may have differed in detail), suggests that the tithe was a tenth of the harvest of grain, fruit and olive oil, and of the herd of flocks. It dates from a period when the economy was subsistence, i.e. the financial system was not yet in existence or just beginning to emerge, so it was not based on money. Money was around for a while, but it was not a full-fledged equivalent, much less a substitute for things as it is today. This system was obviously simpler in Abram's time than it was in Israel's time, for Abram gave his tithe from the spoils of war, which included things and valuables and money.

55 "The Dhammapada, translated by E. Parnow.

It must be said that Abram himself was a patriarch with an important mission, all the more so from a lineage of patriarchs, and he himself was entitled to tithes and was not obligated to give them, but here was Melchizedek, whom Paul wrote of as far superior to Abram in rank. It is not difficult to suppose that it could have been a patriarch of his own lineage - Eber, Arphaxad, or even Shem himself, who were all alive at the time. And for Abram then it would have been a great-great-grandfather, if not higher. But the Bible does not reveal Melchizedek's origins, so I am not going to do that either.

This was also the site of the meeting, not only with Melchizedek, but also with the kings of the cities of the valley of Sit-Tim, who had survived the defeat of the invaders and were now gathered to welcome Abram and his friends, who had brought deliverance, vengeance and other good news. The king of Sodom offered to let Abram keep their liberated possessions for himself in gratitude for his help and rescue, but Abram behaved as any self-respecting, noble man would. He replied, with a clear indication of the scandalous reputation of the inhabitants of these towns, that he would not take even a single thread of clothing from all the possessions of these perverts, so that no one could say that they had enriched him. He did, however, leave it to his allies to take a share of the property of Sodom and the rest of the valley cities. For them it was not a matter of principle whether or not to have relations with these people, but Abram had a calling as a representative of God (but not as a vicar) and the demands on him were somewhat higher.

At last all these meetings and marches were over, Abram was alone, the excitement had subsided, and then a belated fear came over him. The fight they had inflicted on his enemies had aroused in him the fear that they might come again to deal with him personally, to avenge their defeat. In principle, this was not unreasonable. But this was also due to Abram's intellectual character, his penchant for nonviolence, for silence, and for a very different way of life from that of the military. For him, war was not typical, so his emotions were a reaction to an unconventional cause. War is not easy for someone who does not have some of the necessary qualities for it, so death, even of enemies, was something he experienced keenly, knowing that enemies are enemies, but that they are human beings after all. A very important quality for the founder of a sacred people, a representative of God on earth, but, as a rule, every quality that wins in some situations can be a loss in others. But to his rescue came God, who appeared to him and said, "Fear not, I am your shield." If his enemies were offended and wanted revenge, they would not succeed... Either the diseases would attack, like the Egyptians and the inhabitants of Gerard, or everyone around would stand up for Abram, not counting his friends and allies in the campaign, or they themselves would simply give up such an unwise venture... This proved to be a balm for Abram, exhausted by his post-stress reaction, and peace reigned over his soul. When someone big and strong tells you about your fears, that you shouldn't be afraid, it's always very meaningful.

The Heir

Abram calmed down his anxiety about his enemies, but he took the opportunity to ask God a question that had been troubling him for some time. If he is the founder of a great and glorious nation, where is that nation, where is its beginning, where are its heirs? Ten years had passed in this land, perhaps more, but there was no sign of his race multiplying. He was already about eighty-five, soon to become incapable of procreation, as many from the fifth generation after the Flood began to live three times less than their glorious ancestors, who were still living, while their fathers and grandfathers were already dying. Sarah was about seventy-five, too, and for all her longevity compared to us, that was the end of her fertility. Thoughts of an unfortunate delay on God's part appeared, doubts and questions grew. Abram began to think that his paternity might be understood symbolically, and his heirs

The best and most loyal men in his entourage, who served him, would become his successors. He named one of them, Eliezer of Damascus, thinking that this man would inherit all of Abram's possessions and responsibilities after he was gone. Obviously this was a worthy man, but God responded to these doubts by saying that the nation would literally descend from him, that he would have his own son. This was to reflect a likeness to God, who also has a Son, a kindred, of the same nature as Him, not created like the rest of His creation.

There is a notion among some Bible followers that the Son of God was created by the Father, only before all others, who afterwards was also endowed with godly attributes, and as such stood alongside the Father, while the rest of creation was already created by the Son. So this is a theory of the adoption of someone of a different nature than God Himself, but on Abram God reveals that just as Isaac descended from Abraham, so His Son is related to Him, They are of the same nature, and that this is quite important.

The conversation took place in the tent, and God told him to go outside and look up. "Count the stars, if you can... So many descendants you will have. Abram believed it. That is, he accepted it as a fact that would be inevitable, that could be relied upon, that took its place in his picture of the world. It was a faith that was needed for cooperation with God and salvation. He knew God, he knew He could be believed. He believed always, if he had any doubts, it was because he didn't have a clear enough picture of the circumstances. He had not been told about a personal offspring before, so the idea of a non-biblical paternity came into his mind, but after the answer his doubts dissipated. Not everything had been explained to him, but he was confident enough in the Promised One, and that was the main thing. Then again there was difficulty in understanding the promises of the Almighty, and again Abram made a mistake. He could have believed better and more, but we had better not judge him harshly, but use his experience to avoid making the same mistakes. Isn't that why all this is written down, with all his and others' mistakes, so that they may be eradicated by succeeding generations? If someone thinks that the mistakes of biblical characters "allow" them to sin as well, they are making a much bigger mistake than they are. Abram paid a very heavy price for his mistakes and it is better to learn from the mistakes of others than to repeat them and get into more trouble for not learning from the information provided... What does it say about those who do not learn from the mistakes of others?

"Abram believed God, and He imputed it to him as righteousness. Here is one of the key passages revealing how God acts in regard to imparting righteousness to people. The phrase sounds as if it is weak - God merely "credited" Abram as righteous. "Imputed" in most cases means "counted," "counted as" righteous. As if one would think that a person doesn't really change in any way, he is merely called righteous, and that's it, there is nothing further, and he himself remains the same as he was. That's not true. But before we talk further about the meaning of the word "count" or "impute," it is worth looking at what happened to Abram himself when he did this.

Could he have been skeptical of God's words? Could he continue to think in the same direction as he did before receiving the answer? Many would; people often choose to be skeptical, which prevents them from perceiving the truth or understanding the other person. Skepticism is good in a limited way, in a scientific way, when we interpret the facts as received by others or by ourselves, but in relation to people or even to the facts themselves⁵⁶ But regarding people or even facts themselves it is worth including trust more often - the impossibility of repeating or re-enacting

56 Science has excluded some facts from its sphere. Voluntarily. It is understandable - if there is no possibility something reproducible for measurement and study, then it is simply impossible to study it. But then we should not say that these weakly repeatable or unreproducible facts themselves do not exist, or that they are anti-science...

to produce something doesn't mean that it didn't happen or that it is impossible. Without trust, it is simply impossible to perceive any aspect of reality. Yes, doubt helps us avoid (not guarantees, but helps us avoid) lies and delusions, but we limit ourselves greatly if skepticism alone works in us. In fact, skepticism should lead to fact-checking, not indiscriminate denial. If it becomes the only rule of thought, it guarantees a limited view...

So Abram accepted as fact what God had said about his son. He made a choice in that moment, opening his soul to God, leaving no loophole for doubt. At all such moments, when one chooses for or against God, His influence is either anchored in his soul or rejected, and they are also turning points in human relationships. We are always in the field of the influence of the Spirit of God and at these moments of choice, we are either fixed or weakened. We are either drawn nearer to Him or we are drawn farther away. This drawing near, at this moment of particular significance, for God was at hand, literally, on the special theme of having children in old age, left a mark in Abram, making him stronger in righteousness than he had been before. He went one step higher in spiritual development. "Imputation" in this case also refers to the fact of doing the right thing, which served as a trigger, a trigger that changed the situation. The "imputation" this time was not symbolic, when the fact and the record of it diverge, but what was "imputed" corresponded to reality. That is, that imputation had permeated Abram, had taken root in him. "Imputed" means it was filled with new content, a divine influence penetrated through the door Abram opened...

In ordinary life, mistakes alternate with right actions, so people develop and change slowly, with age and experience committing fewer mistakes and bad deeds, approaching God very gradually. Not much of that, of course, but that is how it is so far. Others, on the other hand, going downhill, develop bad traits in themselves and develop into non-bromance, but this is known to everyone as it is. But if one were at least a little more directed toward the better, maintaining not a horizontal line and especially not a descending one, but an ascending one, how much it could change the lives of many and many people, families, society as a whole...

Predicting Egyptian Slavery

The conversation moved on. It was not, as I understand it, a direct face-to-face conversation between seeing partners, but it was a kind of vision (audio contact) in which God spoke to him and Abram could answer and ask questions. Vision does not always allow for conversation, but two-way communication is not uncommon either. But this time, Abram seems even a little impatient, interrupting God's speech with his questions every time his consciousness gets caught up in a word, the way a child sometimes asks questions that lead away for the sake of an unfamiliar word or association evoked by something in the adult's speech, instead of listening to a story. Thus, after the assurance of a large number of offspring, God turns to describing something important in a solemn way: "I am He who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldees, to give you possession of this land...". Abram interrupts with a new question, clearly inspired by the fact that he has lived here for many years, but is so far an alien who has become his own, but no more. And he asks: "By what sign or sign do I know that I will own this land?" - because he sees no sign of it yet. God agrees to the question, most likely he has not disturbed the general plan of his conversation, and responds with a description of the sacrifice to be made this time. The three-year-old heifer, goat, and ram, along with the dove and turtle dove, must be cut in half and the pieces spread out at some distance. This kind of sacrifice is very rare and was considered

Although this maxim is not about science, but about some people speaking on its behalf.

a significant event of great responsibility, according to the second case of such a sacrifice in the Bible.⁵⁷ In this action we see a "total immersion" in the situation, a kind of special rapprochement with what sacrifice can bring to people. Abram did this and stayed near the animals, guarding them from the birds of prey until nightfall. As the sun was setting, a sound sleep came over Abram, and he may have been dreaming further, or awakened at some point. He felt a kind of intense terror and darkness around him. Many of Abraham's descendants today are too proud of their descent from him; just as many think of the Jews, as if they were given or so they think they have the right to control the destiny of the world because of their origins. If the Jews thought so, that would be a mistake; God did not create them to rule the world, or even to rule it, but as guardians of truth and knowledge of God, that is, as models and examples of heavenly standards, leadership is possible, but of the second or third order. But even without aspirations to rule the world, this nation is somewhere truly proud of being descended from Abraham. Except that what Abram felt here and now was something else entirely. He understood that his people would not be as he was, that because of them or because of them the world would be in darkness for a long time; and that the horror he was experiencing now would be visited upon many, many people because of the unfaithfulness of his descendants. People must have a landmark, there must be those who set this landmark, and woe to those who do not fulfill this mission, the most important one on earth. Without a point of reference, people go astray. Many will go astray and be guided, but the responsibility for that is theirs; but those who will not go astray could be many more, and the degree of going astray would be many times less. But the lack of direction in righteousness and justice has caused terrible deviations among the inhabitants of the earth, and it is not in vain that "the blood ... of all the slain on the earth was found in him. These words are spoken of Babylon, and Babylon was exalted precisely because the Holy City did not fulfill its mission as a whole, but only partially, and not always, leaving the earth at times completely without example and without the influence of doctrine and truth. It is also said of Babylon "the mother of harlots and abominations of the earth" - again, this is the same dream-vision of Abram of the future of his offspring, who will turn out to be, in character, not all his offspring, not like him. You say, "the dream of the mind produces monsters"? - Do you see what the absence of a moral compass produces? The sleep of the mind is but a consequence of this; it is to avoid it that Abraham himself and the people who descended from Abraham were put in charge.

The darkness and terror experienced by Abram, however, also meant the slavery of his descendants in Egypt, which, however, happened again because they had strayed from the path that was meant for them. God allotted four hundred years for these events, which would take place before the arising people were brought back to Canaan. Four hundred and thirty years had actually elapsed before they came out of Egypt, and for another forty years they must walk in the wilderness because of their unbelief and disobedience, or rather their scandalous and nagging character, which continually gave Moses, and through him also God, problems.

Abram awoke from these sensations of darkness and terror, and God continued to speak to him, foretelling the four centuries after which his people would return and take full possession of Canaan, answering many of his questions. A thick smoke and fire passed between the dissected animals, showing the acceptance of the sacrifice and the faithfulness of what Abram had said, though the presence of such thickened smoke and soot indicated the same problems. For all the weaknesses of the chosen people, however, the plan of salvation offered to man was nevertheless destined to succeed, otherwise if everything depended only on the people, it would have made no sense at all. But from this nation was to come the Messiah-the Man who brought deliverance-God who became man, Abraham's blessing to all nations. It was He who was the guarantor of success. And His rare helpers, who understood the essence

of their calling in this life, provided the minimum that was necessary for His coming. But if there were more of them, how different the picture might have been, without the horrors that come from the weakness and poor quality of human material.

Their conversation ended with the establishment of a covenant, that is, a treaty and a promise that the land in which Abram had already traversed a great deal would belong to his descendants. God emphasized that it was too early to give the land to Abram because, as He said, "the measure of the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet been filled. God made a covenant with Abram now that the whole land would belong to his descendants, something He had told him twice before - when he first came to Canaan and later when he and Lot were separated. But now, ten years later, this promise has taken the form of a contract, a more tangible commitment on the part of God. Abram, it is implied, was to provide for his descendants the necessary qualities, to take care of their proper upbringing.

Heir and the problems around offspring

Ishmael

I think that this covenant event with the parted sacrifice occurred when Abram was eighty-five years old, ten years after he came to Canaan. Also in chapter 16 verse 3 it talks about ten years in Canaan, as does the birth of Ishmael when Abram was 86 years old. There is a clear connection between these events and this encounter with God. When Sarah heard the news of the future Abram had revealed to him, she was thrilled, and clearly she could not wait to see at least some of the beginnings of such grand plans. She was so enthusiastic about the idea of a people descended from them, that she couldn't stop herself from having no children, a barrier that she couldn't get past. She also felt that she was past childbearing age and thought that this was the end of her personal hopes. She wondered how she could get around the problem... A child born to another woman in her lap could be considered her son. She might have thought that the other woman would agree with the great idea and give Sara the right to appropriate her son. To this end, she informed Abram of her plan and made an offer. The Bible does not tell us how Abram looked at this. He did not have a point of reference at the right time, God had not told him about it, and for some reason he had not thought to go to Him and ask Him. Or maybe the women didn't give him much time to think. He should have at least paused to weigh such a twist, but this time his faith did not move him to do so. Though there was one point of reference, the original one-man-one-woman marriage charter, only he himself lacked the firmness and determination to lean on higher standards. Polygamy had long been practiced and was so widespread that the patriarchs had lost the clarity of their vision. So the blurring of concepts at a critical moment served to ensure that Abram saw no particular problem in having a woman other than his lawful wife by his side. Through this, his family will come under attack in the coming months and even weeks, and in the future it will cause terrible inter-ethnic and international problems. By the way, this has already begun to fulfill the prophetic feelings of "darkness, gloom and terror" that he experienced when he made his covenant with God a short time ago. He had "fallen asleep," not really grasping the situation as it might threaten him and his cause, and had allowed things to lead to this "darkness and terror. It all began soon enough.

Hagar, seeing that she was pregnant, began to treat Sarah as number two, feeling important in a family where she was now in a position of advantage. At first she might have accepted Sarah's offer as it were - to become the mother of a son who would belong to Sarah and not to her - but soon enough she discovered that another way could be taken, for

her, as if it were far more advantageous and prestigious. She had an idea of the importance of an heir to Abram, and since Sarah could not give him, but she could, in her shallow mind this immediately led to unnecessary and superfluous conclusions, she decided to replay everything in her own way... One can lament the human imperfection that showed up here too, but it is too simple and will not be productive. In terms of justice, Sarah was the real mistress and wife, because without her Hagar could not have entered the family and become the mother of Abram's son. This unwise and hasty plan of Sarah's created problems for everyone, including herself. Hagar, on the other hand, thought that if she gave Abram an heir, she was now the chief wife of the house... And she began to show Sara that she could no longer consider her a servant or subordinate, that she now had a very different status. And it is as if Sarah is no longer in charge of the house, for the master loves her no less, and even if it is under question - a catfish, she has the main argument in her belly - an heir. In short, problems began to arise between Sarah and Hagar. Avram, by his inherent dislike of violence and scandal, most likely tried to stay out of the way. However, he did not succeed. Sarah said to him, "You are to blame for my offense.

At first glance she seems to be at fault, especially in the eyes of the men, for she has given herself this headache, with her own hands, but here and now she is talking about something else. The maid goes out of her way to insult the mistress of the house, the master of the house, as it were, and Sara's rights are violated. Sara's authority is not enough to set things right, because her authority is also questioned. It takes the word of the master, which Hagar also recognizes, and the master is silent, thus recognizing their equality, arming Hagar with this. So she is right, and Abram admits it, though he is bitter about it all. True, he himself still avoids interfering, so it looks like he gives Sarah all the rights to act as she sees fit, and he probably never said anything to Hagar. It's too hard for him, too, to say bitter things to this woman who has grown attached to him. Although it is a simple solution - "Hagar, you are not in charge of the house..." However, this would not avoid the question of whether she was still a servant or had been promoted. She is clearly no longer a maid, but... Anyway, there's plenty to quarrel with, and arguments can be endless, so he puts everything in Sara's hands. In vain, though he is uncomfortable, his intervention and exhortations to Hagar would have led to a better solution to the problem. And so Sarah decided in her own, competitive, masterful way. The harassment led to Hagar running away, it was all about pride, a claim that the rest of the party did not accept - neither Sarah nor Abram. The latter was a blow to Hagar; she was counting on him very much...

Hagar and the Angel

So Hagar ran away, not necessarily because she was in danger, but because things were not according to her plans and her pride was hurt. Sarah's "harassment" of her was not a threat to her life, but a belittling of her precisely where her pride and her plans were wounded. She could not reconcile herself to this state of affairs, and in addition, her master did not support her in what she hoped would be the head of the house. She had not thought of God, of the Covenant, of the purposes for which everything was taking place in this house. Although she was not completely ignorant of religion, there were those in Abram's house who shared his ideals and accepted the rules by which they lived. At least everyone was educated about it. But knowledge of the rules alone does not guarantee that they were imbued with the rules and their spirit. Hagar had more down-to-earth interests, so she could not be a member of the covenant, in the sense of a key figure, though she could be one of the people of the covenant. She was a participant to some degree, but in a more modest role. If she had been much more interested in the living God, His kingdom, His principles of life, eternity-who knows how things would have turned out. Her son Ishmael had already become something of a partaker of the glory of the covenant people, though not fully, but

If she had been a spiritual person, and had agreed to Sarah's terms and raised Ishmael as a spiritual person as well, with the result that Ishmael would not have mocked the true heir and ended up banished from home, they might have had a much closer involvement in the destiny of the chosen people. True, Sarah's plan was not a sound one to begin with, but if those involved had shown more integrity and less pride, the history of these nations would have been radically different.

Hagar was on her way southwest, having left Abram's house, fleeing from Sarah's oppression. There was pressure to subdue her claim to supremacy, and her pride was too wounded to tolerate it, so she decided to leave her place of service. The important thing to point out, for the lovers of politics and social justice, is that this was not a conflict between slaves and slave masters, between maid and mistress, but a conflict for supremacy, where the former maid laid claim to being the boss of the house, and this is a different matter, a personal conflict, not a class conflict. There was no room for this kind of conflict here and now - when Hagar was a maid, she had no friction with her mistress.

She would go to Egypt, where relatives and parents could stay. Or she would simply go to her people if there were no relatives left and nowhere to go, but in those days of the natural economy it was not difficult to get by if her hands were in place. Surely she had her savings with her, which she had managed to earn in Abram's house and his gifts. Yet she had touched God's chosen one and carried his son in her, and God could not just leave her fate up to her own discretion. As the servants in Abram's house were all more or less enlightened about Abram's dealings with the Almighty, so Hagar knew quite a bit about Him, and she knew who was speaking to her when someone came up to her in the desert at the well and spoke.

He called her "Sarah's maid," thus showing her that her claim to primacy in the female part of the house was wrong. He told her to submit to Sarah, that is, to take the place she had been assigned when she was hired into the family, not low and not last in itself, but it was pride that pushed her to take the opportunity to claim a more important position and that must be corrected. "Go back to your mistress and submit to her," there is no danger of that, your position was not bad before and it is no worse now. There was a condemnation of her pride in these words, and she seemed to understand everything, the fallacy of her claim to Abram, to the primacy of the house, came to her. When such things are said by men, many may be tempted to object, to argue, but now God was speaking, and Hagar was listening. Impressed by the encounter with a personality of great power, she said, looking at the retreating figure - "I looked after the one who saw me..."

Had it not been for Sara's offer to become a surrogate mother for the family, she probably never would have made trouble for anyone, going her own way toward the light and purpose she knew. The responsibility for tempting Hagar lies more with Sarah; she set the stage for it by her meddling in someone else's fate, not understanding the importance of each person, not considering her own responsibility. But Sara quickly realizes her mistakes, when she faces the unintended consequences of her excessive enthusiasm. One might say that Sarah could not have foreseen the consequences, a man of her years, one would think. But it's all about enthusiasm, enthusiasm not supported by calculation or good thinking. How easily a person can fail to see that what he does is not in accord with reason, if he is passionate and controlled by the flow of desire. What let her down was her haste, her desire to see her dreams come true sooner. It seemed to her that since this was God's work, in everything she would do for Him, God would help and protect her from problems and surprises-so often it seems, after all, we are trying for Him! However, in His work, regardless of whether or not we have enough knowledge, we must move in harmony with His commands, methods, and will. It is better for everyone to remember this,

Even to the wisest of people, as the wise proverb says, a man can make a fortune... So Hagar returned, and the Bible does not mention any more complaints or conflicts in Abram's house for quite a long time.

In due course, when Abram was 86 years old, a son was born to Hagar, whom at first Sarah hoped would be hers, her and Abram's son, who would begin their line. But by the time he was born, Sarah had no more claim on Ishmael, and he was all Hagar. Abram, like Sarah, understood everything from God's words to Hagar, which she did not hide from them. There was a blessing for Ishmael, and it was not like the blessing God gave to Abram and his offspring, the offspring that would make up the people of truth. The future of Ishmael's lineage is described as being in conflict with all-"his hands upon all and the hands of all upon him. From this it was clear that this child was not the son of the divine promise. They had to wait for a son from Sarah, waiting after their natural powers and ability to procreate had been extinguished (they didn't know it at the time), so that God could exercise His ability on them. If you are on the side of the Almighty and want to walk with Him everywhere, be prepared for surprises and for the fact that He may want to demonstrate His supernatural abilities on you so that people can see the benefits of His way and way of life. If he holds out on a promise, it means there is something behind it, so don't be too quick to be disappointed and think he's forgotten.

Isaac

The time has come.

Abram was 99 years old and Sarah was 89 when God saw fit to give them an heir. He came to Abram and a meaningful conversation took place between them that day. "Walk⁵⁸ before Me and be blameless." This is the main condition for Him to continue, that He "multiply him very much." At these words Abram fell face down before God. For him this was the answer he had waited so long for, when human hopes had already ceased, and he later voiced it in the words, "Will there be a son by a centenarian, and Sarah at ninety years of age give birth?" These words should be understood as a revival of the miracle, not a doubt of its fulfillment, although there is such a thing, he speaks of a son already existing, that "at least Ishmael might be alive". He did not express everything out loud then, but his thoughts have reached us, he did not hide them from his descendants, teaching them to trust God with the example of his life, more than our knowledge allows us. Now he hears God's clear intention to finally fulfill his promises, and he has trouble understanding how God will come out of the situation when even his childbearing activity has waned, much less Sarah's.

I would like to point out that Abram here is content with little, his maximum seems to be just to have an heir to his riches, whereas God has brought him more. Going forward, we note that here Abram is willing to be satisfied with Ishmael, forgetting about Sarah and her desire for a son, and Abram expressed to God that little-hearted expectation. But humanly speaking, this is normal and understandable, but Abram could have exhibited higher traits... His potential was greater and maybe by focusing too much of his feelings on his heir he closed the door to greater and better achievements - I don't mean to say that Abraham shouldn't have dreamed of having a son,

58 The expression means faith when the simplest actions, including walking, are done with the presence of God in mind, as if He were near. Usually when people do not see or feel someone near them, their actions are somewhat different than when someone is present, as people (and not only) influence one another. Such "walking" before God requires remembering Him, considering Him in every action one takes. This implies that man in the presence of such a Person behaves more circumspectly, if not more differently, than when he feels alone. Many people who allow themselves to be superfluous when, in their mind, no one sees them, could be much better off if they remembered that they are well seen and understood. The remedy is not absolute, but it would help many who want to be better. To live in the presence of God...

but that a dream of such power need not be the only one. Sometimes it seems that Abram failed to transmit his best traits or did not transmit them to the greatest extent, which is why there was a certain spiritual decline in his descendants later on.

Where God begins about the covenant, there are some strange words. Maybe I'm getting it wrong, but look at this phrase: "I am my covenant with you. It goes on to say, "You will be the father of many nations.⁵⁹". According to ordinary logic, this is the covenant, in fatherhood to many nations, but it is the initial "I"... That he is a great father to the nations - is it not possible that the great "I Am" accepted him into a covenant with Himself? It is also worth considering the logic of the ancients, when language was more voluminous than the overly logical language of our times, which is losing voluminosity. What stands between the different phrases in this play on words can (and I am sure of it) refer to both, both the one before and the one after the central covenant phrase. It turns out the following meaning-"My covenant with you is Myself"-is the first half of the phrase. The second half is the familiar sense that the covenant is "you will be the father of many nations. It really comes across that God will be the God of both Abram and his descendants. He is the Source of all things, of every good and of the covenant itself as well, so to see God as the covenant itself seems right. This is also where the Law begins, the first commandment, "I am your God"... The rest is a detail of this covenant, the plurality of nations, circumcision as a sign of the covenant, commandments, statutes and laws, and other details. Many believe that when there are two meanings in a phrase (which is play on words) only one is true and the other is just a disguise. This may be true among people who practice deception, but there is also a good chance that both meanings are true, unless they are mutually exclusive.

Here Abram was also given a new name, or rather, it was modified, from simply "father" or "noble father," he became "father of many," from Abram Abraham to Abraham. It was also said - "Your descendants shall receive the land on which you walk. But you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you." In doing so, God also gives the outward symbol of the covenant, circumcision. Sarah's name was also changed. In the Russian Synodal translation it sounds like Sarah, but the "r" was not doubled, the last letter was changed, this is the difficulty of translation. What her name means, just think of the Russian "tsar." It's actually a very ancient word, and all its meanings are just around this royal dignity, so that the name Sarah, when it was still in Hebrew Sari (our letters), meant "my princess", and became "Princess", Sarahh, if you try to transfer the transcription of her aspiration. But more likely it was already "Tsarina", very close in root and even in sound...

Abraham, listening to everything God was saying, absorbing this startling, long-awaited news, had a slightly different take on what was being said to him - again he lowered his head and laughed, implicitly, hiding his face. Whether it was a joyful laugh or a dash of either disbelief or unnecessary humor, there was little reverence in him at that moment⁶⁰. And he says things that show he has little faith in God. He says, if you twist his words a little, "Come on with Sarah, she's 90 and I'm almost 100, there's already Ishmael - let him have everything, what more do I want?"

But God patiently responds to this heresy by saying, "It is Sarah, *your* wife, who will bear you a son, whom you will name Isaac, and with him will be my covenant and his descendants. In this it is easy to see the rebuke to that decision to "help" God with the fulfillment of His promise, Sarin's

59 It would seem that Abraham is the father of only two nations, the Arabs and the Jews, but if we consider the spiritual influence, then all who have embraced Christianity are his children as well.

60 Reverence, as well as worship, is necessary in solemn moments, in worship, for example, but not always even in the presence of God it should occupy all 100% of the feelings, otherwise it could hinder communication - reverence is transformed into respect for the interlocutor, as it reduces the share from 100% in silence to (say) 50% or 40% when communicating. Respect should not disappear from communication.

He was the one who had to stop the plan, which Abram supported, though he should have stopped it. About Ishmael, however, he comforted Abraham that he would be fine and his people would also be great, but that he would achieve his spiritual goals (of which Abraham had somewhat forgotten) through a people descended from Isaac. If Abraham didn't care through which of his sons God's plan would be carried out, God cared... Isaac, God said, would be born in a year when Abraham would be just one hundred years old. God can be seen on several occasions to have a commitment to round numbers, so the birth of Christ was in the year 4000 from the creation of the world. But this is not always true, rather He shows some preferences of His, of which few are yet aware.

Although I didn't want to talk about circumcision, it's worth mentioning something. Man was made perfect by God in the beginning, and he was created uncircumcised. With all righteousness and perfection, before the fall, man was not circumcised, it is his natural state. But now Abraham receives the sign of circumcision as belonging to the covenant with God, as the Apostle Paul later wrote - the sign of righteousness. Has something changed in the nature of man? Hardly, except that he has developed a tendency to continually deviate from the right course. But to put man's nature back on the right track, man's nature must be corrected. Probably not much at all, but it is painful for our nature. And circumcision symbolizes this correction, a little artificial intervention, a little more naked sensitivity, openness to the outside world. Could it be that because of sin the man has withdrawn into himself, not trusting those around him, losing contact with them because of this distrust? Or could it be seen as affecting one of the central nodes of pleasure? Yes, sin has indeed made people unreliable for each other. But man can find no support or perfection in himself, no matter how perfect the Creator has placed it in him, which means that even for himself man can be unreliable and even be an enemy to himself, to say nothing of others. We need to pick up signals from the outside, we need to become more sensitive. And also to remove something that helps us to reach this goal. One can see a certain symbolism in this. Perhaps there are other meanings.

At this point God stopped speaking to Abraham (no longer Abraham) and went into heaven, or, in the old way, ascended. Abraham was left to comprehend what had happened and what he had learned. Although he probably did not have time to do this until nightfall, because in his haste to fulfill instructions from on high, that day he gathered all the men of his house and circumcised them all, including Ishmael.

Another encounter with God, the fate of Sodom and the loss of Lot

About two or three months later, or a little more, God visits Abraham again. Before that, He came to prepare Abraham and his whole house for the birth of Isaac, and He said that Isaac would be born "at the same time in the next year. When He visits Abraham this time, the child is still not there, he is spoken of again in the future tense.

It was a hot summer day, Abraham was sitting at the entrance to the tent in the shade, and looking once again before him, Abraham saw three people. Neither God nor angels he recognized in their appearance; they had the most ordinary appearance. This is also evident from the fact that he addressed them as ordinary people. When Abraham had first encountered God there seems to have been differences from which he could immediately recognize who had come to him, but not this time. They looked like wayfarers on their way to their destination, but decided to take a break in a comfortable place. Hospitality is a holy thing at all times, and Abraham, seeing travelers pensively contemplating and discussing the surroundings of his place, could not pass up an opportunity to give rest to his guests, nor to learn some news or simply to meet new people who might need to

They were not familiar with the customs or other things of importance to Canaan. Maybe it was their first time in these parts and they didn't know the customs or other things important to Canaan because they didn't seem familiar. I think in those days, when there weren't many people yet, most people knew who lived where in the area for tens or even hundreds of miles, who did what, their families and many circumstances. It is possible that not-so-many people may have known practically everyone in their neighborhoods. The fact that they were strangers meant that they were from far away and that their impressions of the land and the people there might be good or bad for the future of those who lived there.

Abraham offered the usual set of amenities for guests - a table, a rest in the shade, and a foot wash. For a long-distance walker, that's pretty valuable. They agreed - "do as you say. Abraham told Sarah to knead flour for unleavened flatbread, ran to the herd and chose a good calf and instructed the servant to prepare it. It took, I believe, at least two hours. Then he approached the guests with the ready meal and offered them refreshment. He himself did not participate in their meal, standing nearby like a servant, waiting to see what he could do for them.

His behavior here suggests that he sensed something in his guests that made him treat them as royalty, so he didn't sit down with them himself. The more time passed, the more he felt that he was once again visited by guests from a heaven that was of a higher origin than any human being. His feelings were soon confirmed when one of those seated asked Sarah where she was now. Abraham answered, "here in the tent," which was located under the same tree, next to the guests. The older of the guests said - "I will be at your place again at the same time, and Sarah, your wife, will have a son." Abraham's feelings were confirmed about Who had visited him.

In a previous encounter, when God had told Abraham the same thing, he had laughed with joy and surprise with a touch of disbelief. Sarah already knew this and could have been more ready for God's words about a son, but she showed by her reaction that she was looking at it somewhat aloof, not excited to touch the new and unknown possibilities that God was willing to reveal in His special people. She looked too down-to-earth and actually denied that the miracle of regaining the ability to bear children could happen to her personally. She did not seem happy about the promise, she was like some people who, after a long wait, lose all willpower and when the expected comes, they are already negative, even scandalous to the one on whom the delay of the promise depended. God saw no problem in Abraham's laughter, but there was disapproval for Sarah.

She, standing in the tent, heard all the talk, especially the last words, and began to laugh at God's words, expressing skepticism, with the sense that "can it be, should I have a child in my old age, when I have already lost the ability to procreate?" This sounded in her soul like a denial of the message, a manifestation of disbelief in what the Guest had said. It was as if instead of comfort and joy they were grieving her, as if they were saying, "Leave me alone, I have already lost all hope. God's people should have kept the dream alive, not lost it, but God works with us as we are, everyone has one problem or another. He doesn't punish us for every wrong thing we do, but He nurtures us to grow the right thing in the human soul. For Sarah, though, there still came a moment of fear here. God says to Abraham, as if to rebuke him, not addressing her - "Why did Sarah laugh? - as if asking, "didn't you tell her anything of what you were told, didn't you explain it?"

- Is there any difficulty for the Hereafter? At the appointed time I will be with you again, and Sarah will have son.

Sarah was frightened, because her laughter was internal, unexpressed. Although God's question was directed to Abraham, Sarah hastened to justify herself by lying, "No, I was not laughing. Technically it was as if she were true, for no one had heard it - well, who could have heard her thoughts...? But to Him who created man, it is as easy to read thoughts as it is to see and hear open manifestations. To Him laughter was clearly audible. And He declared His knowledge to her in response, "No, you laughed." Sarah no longer dared to argue with the heartbreaker, for it was fraught with danger. It's great when people are reasonable enough, but it's better to be reasonable right away and not later.

Lunch and rest were over. The guests got up and went their way, and Abraham went with them to see them off. The masks were already off, the identities known. The dear God spoke, and said a rather surprising thing - "Shall I hide from Abraham what I want to do?"... The amazing thing lies in the very frankness of God. How do people normally think of God? - That He is inscrutable and His works are too complicated for us. Especially among those who believe in him, a lot of people are rather pessimistic in this regard. Yes, there are some things that God will probably never reveal to humans. There are also many things which we must grow up to understand and if we do it is unlikely to be of benefit to the world. And there are many things which are within our grasp if someone were to bring them to light. God basically wants to see man as knowledgeable, evolved, almost everyone in His plans⁶¹ is a highly learned master in the sciences, crafts, art, wisdom, self-control, expression. God also wants to reveal the future to people, maybe not everything, but there is a phrase in the prophet Amos - "He does nothing without first revealing (the secrets) to his servant-prophets. Prophets have the task not of keeping what is entrusted to them, but of communicating it to at least one person, but very often they are set out to inform large groups of people, if not all of humanity, of God's plans.

Some in the church preach the idea that men are not equal, that some are given power and knowledge and the duty of others to obey that power thoughtlessly and senselessly, there is no such idea in the Bible. Under such an idea, it is even a sin for those who are created to obey to rise above their (someone else's) destined level. But there is no such sin in the Bible! There is, of course, the idea of not making revolutions to free the slaves, for example, because the time is not ripe for it, because according to Marxist ideas, revolutions can only succeed when society is ripe for them, especially economically... So the Marxists condemned all previous generations to hopeless vegetation, without hope or perspective for the slave masses. I remember in history class at school being unpleasantly struck by the hopelessness of such a prospect for the oppressed part of humanity. But then don't blame God or religion for limiting revolutions--they limited them by the same factors that Marxists did. Even the slave in the Bible is not absolved of the duty to develop, train, and other duties of man, to the best of his ability.

There is also the idea in the Bible of subjugating people to one another, and that is not abnormal, an army would lose a lot without that subjugation. But to limit the development of men for the sake of subjection is a criminal idea. No matter how subaltern people are, every last cog must carry and implement the image of God with dignity, develop himself to understand what is in him, and fulfill his vocation. It cannot be that some may be developed to high

61 Colossians 1:28 - "making every man to understand and teaching all wisdom, so that every man may be perfect in Christ.

God created men equal, as the founding fathers of the United States rightly pointed out. Those who preached that it was the business of some to command and others to obey, and that for the sake of the prestige of the higher ones not to develop, thus diminishing the image of God who created men each with his own abilities, are criminals and will answer to God when the time of reckoning comes. Over the course of time, classes of people have developed that have been deprived of the right to develop and learn. This has brought many problems to mankind, where large numbers of people have been condemned to nothingness and a lowered dignity. Man's dignity is not merely the respect accorded to him; it is that he "unfolds" his personality according to the measure of his abilities, knowledge and skills; if he is not developed to the utmost, his worth is diminished, and his Creator is deprived of his service.

"From Abraham will indeed come forth a great and strong nation, which will bring good to all the nations of the earth," God said to Abraham. Of course, this can only be fulfilled if this nation possesses the desired moral qualities; without them, it will prove to be just the *nao-borot*, the curse of the world. God does not create this people for superiority in talents or sciences, though they have that too, much less for political domination and the suppression of others, but solely as a model of righteousness, goodness, and other attributes of God. To keep the world from being corrupted by sin, there must be those who set an example of faithfulness, purity and righteousness. Without this example, the world will be doomed. Either God will have to replace him with someone else. "That is why I chose you, that you might teach your sons to walk in the same way that you did, doing righteousness and faithful judgment," God continued. A task of great importance, was Abraham able to do it? In what follows, it will be seen that in succeeding generations of this chosen generation there has been a decline in the spirituality that was in Abraham, giving rise only to a few individuals. It may be because Abraham himself was not spiritual enough; it may be because the children do not always follow their fathers' steps or because they do not want to accomplish more and are satisfied with very little.

God then told Abraham of plans to destroy Sodom, because the development of the community of people living there was not going well, and had finally gotten to the point where the observers who served the Sittim valley area were simply fed up. God said something that many people, even believers, are not comfortable with - "I will go and see if the news that comes to Me is true. Everyone knows about God as being all-knowing and even omnipresent, and it would seem that He could see everything without having to personally come somewhere. That is absolutely true, and maybe He does. What I see here, however, is that God is indeed close to man, and it is true that we are made in His image-this very case shows that for Him too, despite all His superpowers, being on the spot means more than knowing even ALL, but from a distance. Let us not forget that God, who appears here, is not the Father, but the Son, who is the same as the Father in all His qualities, but embodied in such a way that creation can bear Him and not perish from the transcendent energies of His presence.

It is interesting that the destruction of Sodom and its surroundings was overdue just in time for Isaac's birth. It seems that this breeding ground of perversion should not have been near a growing heir to righteousness, who would have liked to be less confronted by the brazen libertines of the valley of Sittim. Living in almost paradisiacal conditions, fully supplied with all kinds of food, with no hard worries about survival, they had corrupted themselves to the point of, in the Russian proverb, "going crazy with fat. Located below sea level, the valley had many springs of water and did not suffer from drought, so that farming there was easier than anywhere else on earth. To separate Isaac altogether from sinful men

God's plans were by no means in place, they were all around him, but from some particularly "advanced" ungodly people⁶² It is nevertheless worthwhile for any good person to keep his distance. The consequences of close association with especially perverse people can be seen in the problems of Noah's family, some of whom perished with Sodom, while others carried its customs into the wider world.

Because of our knowledge of Abram's age at that time (99 years old), we can know the exact date of the destruction of Sodom and the cities - 2107 from the beginning of the world or about 1897 B.C.

Bargaining for Sodom

The angels who accompanied the Son of God went to Sodom, with the purpose of bringing the family of Lot out of there before the punishment of this wicked place was inflicted. Christ remained speaking to Abraham, who did not fail to ask some theoretical questions. It is interesting, though, how different types of people can be recognized by the questions they raise in the same situation. Abraham, as a true humanitarian and intellectual, could not have failed to clarify for himself the relationship between God's mercy and goodness and His justice and retribution. Isn't this the best characteristic for the ancestor of the Messianic people? He was making this clear in the current context of the impending destruction of Sodom (knowing their temperament and knowing that God, coming to see for himself what was going on there, would find nothing to appease them and that the city was doomed). He was not going into abstract matters, though he had been much enlightened by his fathers and relatives, who had ancient knowledge of what was real. Still, it is a rare privilege to have the questions and doubts resolved by the Judge of the Universe.

What did he want to make clear to himself? All the same things that people today still think of His judgments on those who have managed to call them on themselves. There are children dying and not all people are equally guilty-why doesn't God do these things exactly right, why do the less guilty or the innocent fall along with the guilty? Abraham is not so subtle about this; atheists today ask this of believers; his questions are more specific, they are about the righteous, so let me answer this as I see it today.

When a society comes to the brink of death, as a rule, the situation matures to the point that there are no "normal" people left there; most of them either leave it because they cannot live further among the high level of evil, or are driven out by the majority, or are already dead... Those who remain among the "normal", not contaminated themselves outwardly, understand the fate of the doomed society, but make their personal choice due to certain circumstances and attachments. And it is not just coexistence next to the highly developed evil, but also almost inevitable complicity, complicity in everything that is happening there. So in bringing down the blows on those who incur the wrath of God, it is not God's fault that those who remain with them die among the clearly guilty. As a rule, society is always warned of the consequences of their choices and deeds, that God's patience is running out. They are not necessarily prophets like Moses or Elijah, but they are always messengers who may not be heard by many, but they are heard by all, they reach all. This is the time everyone hears, some seriously, some jokingly - "it's time to go" in one variation or another. Sodom was also warned, although the Bible does not tell us about it, but it is undoubtedly - the history of mankind contains many similar examples, and the presence of Lot there, who did not accept the customs of Sodom, confirms it. There remain children who are far from always guilty of the sins of their parents, but is it not the fault of the parents that they, in choosing distinctly hy-

62 The difference between the "sinner" and the "wicked" is that any normal person has a conscience and if he does something that violates the law, his conscience torments him, while the "wicked" has somehow managed to adjust. In the Bible there is an even worse category of the wicked who have a "burned conscience," for those there is no longer any possibility of salvation, while the "wicked" have not yet crossed the line where conscience disappears. Their conscience sometimes awakens and they have hope.

Do they not think about their children? People walk away from the place where trouble is expected, sometimes without any prophet, they sense the impending storm themselves. By warning a generation that has reached the threshold of disintegration and destruction, God is trying to save just those innocents. But to deliver them "by hand" when society itself has no intention of doing so, to interfere in people's choices is not His principle, it would be a violation of the principle of free will. Standing over everyone and protecting them and their loved ones from the results of their choices is not what God signed up for, except in rare special cases. But even so, there is no guarantee of deliverance from the consequences of every mistake...

Besides those judgments when God punishes groups of people, cities, nations, there are also calamities caused by the Prince of this world, not God. He has some limited power over people who are not in league with God, who have not committed themselves to His way, especially those who willfully reject God and His laws, and he likes to deceive those who trust him, often thinking that "they have a pact with hell and the abyss. But Lucifer does not always protect those who have chosen him as their leader, and knowing that the fate of people is not always in his full power, he, seeing the impending troubles, hurries at times to draw a line for many who thought they were the spoils of fortune and good fortune. To complaints (if anyone has time to ask a question) he replies simply: "What makes you think I keep my promises? You knew I was a Deceiver. That's what you liked - complete freedom. Do I owe you anything?" Or maybe he simply says that he doesn't like losers... He possesses great knowledge and many skills, for he is a being of supreme intelligence and power, but his chief mission today is to destroy the lives of those to whom God has offered the opportunity to return, something he and his angels were not given the opportunity to do. Although he doesn't do this often, he still needs the living for his work, not the dead, so he restrains his inclinations. Bullies and sadists are closer than any Satanists to understanding the devil's emotions, his essence. Satanists may sincerely despise them, thinking they are high in spirit like Lucifer, but they imitate other sides of Lucifer, while his true essence is still closer to those who are addicted to killing and keeping others in fear. And isn't that what Satanists themselves are all about? They don't run their own movement. In "Faust" he lies when he speaks of himself as a force eternally striving to do evil and doing good instead (the part where he speaks of striving to do evil is all true...). This comes from the fact that God can turn his evil into good and does so to give choice to those who live, so it is not the merit of the Prince of this world at all, but only a byproduct of the work of grace in this world. It is the result of the confrontation of destructive and creative forces, not of evil itself.

So Abraham asks, "Will You destroy the righteous along with the wicked?" In principle, he himself is well aware that this can happen, and he cannot condemn God for it. This is evident from the fact that he tries to find a boundary beyond which it becomes permissible, in the sense of "permissible loss," for which there is no condemnation. He is only trying to understand God and the principles of justice, to reconcile his understanding of things with the way God looks at it. This is evident from his question as he step by step lowered the bar of the ratio of the righteous to the wicked to ten men for the whole of Sodom. He himself felt he could not go on; he even asked the first question as if it were a matter of strength, a sense of inappropriateness, apologizing for his impudence. He asked the question six times, bringing the number of righteous from fifty to ten, but all he found out was that there was a boundary beyond which the courts of society could seize those who were not worthy of punishment. Although in this particular case none of the righteous suffered at all, Lot and his family were led out of Sodom. From the practice of life, Abraham could

I can understand just as much from the answers I get from God personally. Although having such opportunities-to ask God personally-seems to me to be very meaningful, a kind of supreme privilege. And it still seems that Abraham could have spent time on some better topics, that the end of the seder was a bit abrupt, that God had expected a better approach. Who knows, though, we shouldn't judge harshly. It is just as important for God to have a direct, personal relationship with man as it is for us, and the possibilities are not over and far from exhausted. And our questions, if they are deep and strong, not only lift us up to Him, but He also "draws" us to Him - He is no less interested in answering our questions, lighting a light of understanding and admiration in our eyes than He is in getting an answer.

When Abraham could not ask any more questions-though it was logical to expect a question about the five righteous, which would have been right next to the actual number of those brought out of Sodom-he could no longer overpower himself, feeling that he was already abusing the moment, then God went His way and Abraham returned home. This was the end of this year's meetings, but there was one more meeting scheduled after Isaac was born. Abraham and Sarah knew they had to bring a miracle to life, and this anticipation brightened their lives. It must have been within a week of this meeting that Sarah realized she was pregnant... Isaac was to be born within a year, as God had promised He would come to visit him after his birth.

When the same thing happened to John the Baptist's mother, who was also in her teens, she kept from people by not telling anyone about her pregnancy, saying to herself that people would laugh. Sarah was not secretive, but she, too, expected people to laugh. True, people might have laughed and joked, but hardly maliciously or jealously; usually such things make all good people happy. She just wanted to make the time of their jokes shorter, sometimes even unkind jokes are not taken well with a certain mood or temperament. Being a very beautiful woman, especially in those old days, when there were still alive, if not giants, then long-lived first post-flood people who looked like gods in the eyes of ordinary people, she, being a direct heir of one of those clans, could not be shy.

The Destruction of Sodom and the Fate of Lot

Meanwhile, the angels who had gone to Sodom were doing their work. They were to bring out a relative of Abraham who had been involved in his mission for some time. He had not lost sight of God for himself personally, but he could not communicate this to anyone around him. His wife was from Sodom, and that city ruined her. How to blame the city, though, if she herself found herself bound not only to the good things that were in it, but also to the bad things that were in it.

Lot was sitting at the gate of the city, as the elderly and not only people have been sitting and are sitting in all centuries, it is a ubiquitous custom, in many places people are sitting at the borders of their villages, if there are such, or just at their gate or neighbors, if they want to be in company. In today's big cities this seems unfamiliar, perhaps to new generations, but even the sight of grandmothers at the porch will help one understand and feel the human nature that compels one to gather for a get-together. No amount of civilization, in America or Europe, can eradicate those traits.

Lot, sitting in the evening at the gate of the city, saw two travelers. They looked like strangers, which meant they might not know the customs of this dangerous city, where good was called evil and vice versa, and where helping a man could be considered a disturbance. He immediately suggested they go to his home where they would be safe. I wonder, when he himself first came to this city, was he in any danger? Hardly, because he was rich and had servants, which was a virtue in the eyes of the sodomites. But these two wayfarers, though not you-

The people were poor, had no visible protection, and could have been attacked by the mob, which happened a little later. As is quite often the case, bad morals develop quickly, a fall into one depravity or another takes over others and the circles of bad influence widen. Sometimes this can happen slowly, sometimes quickly. Here in Sodom it was going too fast. When Lot came here twenty years ago, it was still pretty safe, but on this night even he, who seemed to have become a local (though not his own), was in great danger.

Lot began to persuade the aliens to visit him, but they refused, saying that the streets and squares of the city were comfortable enough to rest and sleep in. The climate of the place was indeed very human-friendly, except that its inhabitants took it for granted and felt no gratitude to the Author of Nature. According to their ideology, as some traditions of old say, it was wrong to help anyone. Their perversity was not only in the realm of sexuality, but in notions of good and evil as well. I think this perversity of theirs was not great in the beginning, but it blossomed over a period of a dozen years and burst out in the end to the point where it forced God to take action to curb the hotbed of moral decay. I tend to think that the scale of God's "response" to human evil is usually adequate to the degree of decay (a purely human trait, but where does that come from?), and then the fact that this heavenly blooming land with the best fruits has been reduced to a barren desert with barely any life left means that they have gone too far. And there was someone who set the tone, or a few people, followed by the rest. Although the whole population could also be quite unanimous, so the seducers didn't need to talk or try to influence them, their influence was grasped on the fly. But then it gets even worse...

Lot persuaded them at last. The Bible notes that he pleaded with them very hard, indicating that he understood that the situation in the city was already very bad. And that Lot couldn't leave the people in danger either, whereas another could have walked away, as if to say, "I did my duty, I begged them, but if they don't want it, that's their choice..." But Lot, seeing that these people were fearless only because they didn't know what was going on in the city (they portrayed the simpletons very well, while the level of violence in Sodom is shown even in the words of God "I will go down and see if the cry of complaint against them is as accurate as it comes to Me", that is, the victims were many and it was known to the whole neighborhood), did not give up and still he persuaded them to go to him.

The sun went down. The master and his guests had had time for supper, but things were moving quickly. They had not yet gone to bed when a crowd of excited locals gathered at the house and were told of Lot's visit by two strangers. Lot's insistence and the behavior of the strangers attracted the eyes of some, not unnoticed... All of them were in anticipation of meeting new people intimately, you can imagine how... Their blood was boiling with sexual hormones, so free they were, unbound from the original norms of being. One can develop even to places where one shouldn't, and can even take pride in this unusualness, where it is as if one gets something that people who follow the laws can't get. If one doesn't worry about consequences and results it might even be interesting, and by "not caring about consequences" I'm not talking about the punishment God has in store for apostates, but where the development of unhealthy principles will go, where it will lead man himself and society. Disturbing the ecology of relationships inside and outside the individual is always dangerous. He Who calculated man's being, Who designed it, calculated the optimum and these limitations, the safety techniques, are articulated in laws, rules, regulations and orders. To go beyond them means to lose the power, the health, the happiness, the meaning of life, which will turn into existence. Lucifer at the beginning of his journey did not calculate the results of his plans and intentions, but later, when he began to reflect on what had been done and what had been accomplished, he was already on his way to destruction. Subconsciously he was already striving for destruction,

only wanted to take more people with him. And while many of his plans seem not so impossible (though is it life?) - a little more, and would have succeeded. Except that he and his activities were also calculated before his creation...

Why was evil even allowed to exist? What is the usual thinking of all critics of God? - If He is so all-knowing and foresaw that He created the devil, or rather Lucifer, who then became the devil, from a sane being who made himself the medium of evil, then why did He create him? He could have easily avoided all the problems if he had created someone else in his place... But this is a primitive idea. Perhaps you and I would have created someone else, but if we were so omniscient we could see that the problem of choosing right or wrong is universal... That is, it affects everyone, not only Lucifer. And it is not only Lucifer who can fall for temptations. He only did it first. So could anyone else. Lucifer was successful mainly because he was the chief or one of the chief, a very influential being at the origin of governing the universe, as God describes him in Isaiah's prophecy - "from the vastness of your trade your inwardness is filled with unrighteousness".⁶³ That is, he had a lot of contacts, a lot of connections, he handled a lot of resources. If he had been a less powerful being, the scale of the evil would have been much smaller. But, in principle, position and amount of influence does not solve the problem of evil. A weaker being could still seduce many. Even a creature of little influence could gain popularity and influence at the expense of the very idea, as is often the case. Not only was the emergence of the initiators of evil unavoidable, but one thing was very important: Lucifer might not have fallen! He had a choice, but he was not programmed to fall! He could have avoided the temptations, or he could have stepped on his slippery slope and returned to the good path, he could have. And they say he was really on the verge of it, but that is beyond our consideration. Evil is not necessary for the harmony of all, it is much better without it.

Another question is, couldn't the one who took the crooked path have been destroyed? But his disappearance, if eliminated in secret, or his destruction in public, would raise questions and doubts about the goodness or righteousness of God. God is omnipotent, of course, but not in the realm of mind control. No, He can, of course, but why then create sentient beings? And if you create sentient beings, you have to deal with them in a way that they understand. It is only possible for God to know everything beforehand, while the others learn gradually and need time to comprehend. It is in this gap of reasoning that Lucifer played, as anyone else would have done. Not allowing time for his followers to comprehend the situation, constantly planting doubts about God - how long can you manipulate them like that? The story goes back about six thousand years. True, for the great majority of people it has been solved long ago; in many respects it has been solved for all but human beings, but there will be ample opportunity for them to sort it out. But the last doubts must be removed, already concerning men themselves - can those who have known evil, moreover those who were born in a corrupted world, be trustworthy in righteousness? Will they not become new hosts of evil, carrying the seeds of evil and decay into the worlds of peace? How enduring is the salvation that God accomplished through Christ? How enduring is the salvation that God accomplished through Christ?

63 Isaiah 28:16 is a prophecy about the king of Tyre and at the same time about the devil, because of the commonality of characters and many traits.

perceived him? Because the devil has succeeded with religion as well, creating many variations of distortion.

So the answer seems to be clear: one could not destroy the host of evil without first defeating evil morally and ideologically. Another solution would inevitably lead to doubts in God and would lead to new kinds of evil and retreat, the world would turn into hell - the fantasists did a very good job here, portraying many variants of ruling society, and in the pictures they described almost everywhere everything is unreliable and welfare is short-lived, if evil has not won at all, in their versions of the world order only variants of evil incarnation, not victory over it, are distinguished. Almost no one has found or indicated a way out.

The answer is that the fall of Lucifer was an experience of maturation for the created beings. This experience could have been gained and understood in the limited versions of the retreat, it was enough to make good sense of the findings, but in practice the retreat took on too much force. When Lucifer succeeded in bringing the Earth also under his control, things went on (for humans) in a catastrophic scenario. That was not in the plans of God, the events were and are going according to their own laws, everybody is free to choose except if we limit ourselves (in that sense Lucifer is rather limited by the capabilities of his helpers, especially if some divine capabilities are lacking), He doesn't have and never had any divine possibilities, it's a subject of his dreams, for which he probably started everything, and those miracles that are available to him are also available to others, including us by the very nature of things, unless he has a little more power and thinking power), but that's life and the rules of the game. If God planned something, it was without taking away our freedom of choice. All we can say here is that He knew how things would go, but He didn't plan them, just foresaw them. He put Himself voluntarily, for the sake of being understood, on the same level with creation (not giving up His divinity, hardly possible, but not manifesting it and not using it) and opened Himself to the judgment of all, expecting that the plans of the Deceiver would reveal themselves and His character as a thief and murderer would become clear to all. To remove Lucifer prematurely was to harm Himself and all the living - without understanding what he is, it is useless and unhealthy. This is the essence of why things are the way they are up to now. There is, however, an opportunity for anyone who wishes to secure his or her future - to stand not just on the side of God, but on the side of righteousness and other things derived from this path of common and personal good and harmony. The gain here is not instantaneous, although it is guaranteed by the powers of God - it takes time, winning now, many lose the future, but those who win the future do not necessarily lose in everything now... In this life both sides play on equal terms, without advantages, so crooked paths seem more advantageous to those who do not look far ahead. This equality of conditions is necessary to put people to the test of profit - too many could suffer for the sake of the future, it is the most self-serving who try to enter into life, but the conditions of this life and the length of this reality severely reveals the real motivations of the candidates...

These measures bore fruit for all who remained faithful to God and for many who were in some way carried away by Lucifer's sophistry, but were not in a hurry to join him in his rebellion - they, seeing by the example of the Earth what his rule carried and what his methods were, understood everything. When they saw what he had done to the Son of God, whom everyone loved, how he had treated him while he was on earth, the devil's sympathizers were nowhere to be found

in the universe are no longer left. We, the inhabitants of the earth, are the only ones left. We have many different points of view, much confusion due to a lack of understanding of the Bible and God as well as life itself, even knowledge of ourselves is lacking for too many. Because of many and many subversions from the evil one in the information sphere, because of apostate religious systems called in the Bible Babylon, people walk in darkness, but sooner or later enlightenment will play its role, and each of the living can make a conscious choice about the side, worthy to be supported by him. Then the end will come, not only of government, but of the existence of evil and its prince....

Lot, seeing the horny crowd eager to get to know the newcomers who had inadvertently wandered into Sodom, decided to make a personal appeal to them. He counted on his authority as a man of God to reassure them. He may not have hoped for total success but he could not help but try to stem the tide of the mob, and it might work. And the moment was such that he had to act somehow. He had probably done it before, when his words of reason had cooled passions and his pictures of consequences had helped someone to stop the wrong actions. And now he went out to the crowd and begged them to leave untouched the guests, who in perhaps all cultures are sacred, who should be untouched by hostile acts, at least to the master of the house. He even suggested that they take their virgin daughters out to them in lieu of guests. This suggestion, it should be noted, is not at all as simple as it seems to many. Not everyone has the experience that when there is an attack, the victim suddenly seems to confront the aggressor and the aggressor stops and stops his hostile actions. This is when the aggressor is ahead of his time, when he is not yet ready to take drastic action, and the victim wins by "setting himself up" before the aggressor has reached his boiling point... Often the aggressor is ready to hit, but not ready or absolutely unwilling to kill, or, say, cut off a part of his body. When the Russian at the beginning of a fight or at a certain point of a quarrel rips his shirt and opens his chest, shouting "come on, beat it!", "opens up" to his opponent, this is just that - he psychologically disarms him, unready for even more powerful moves. The situation develops gradually, as a rule. Where there is no such gradualism, one speaks of lawlessness, because the culture of conflict is violated, the aggressor acts dishonestly. This is why Lot does not set his daughters up at all at this point. And if he didn't do it now, anyway, later the crowd, if they hadn't stopped before the fence of the private property and stormed into Lot's house when he wouldn't give up his guests, would have done this and many other things, and neither the defenselessness of the women, nor their screams or their submission would have stopped anyone.

Some will say, "What would Lot have done if the crowd had fallen for Lot's offer, to replace the guests with his daughters?" Would he have had to honor his offer then? Do you think the situation would have stayed the same, that is, his daughters would have been abused? Is it common to hit someone who shouts, "hit, hit," by opening up? After all, they were in the mood to "communicate" with men, not women... Even a change of mood would have meant a kind of thought activity, a pause or pause in the action program, which was necessary at this acute moment; besides, the pre-emptive "rubakhi break" factor should also have worked, we must not forget. If they had understood that it was the guest of a man from their own country and of respect, they would have cooled down and his daughters could not be touched, an insult to the honor of their town and their own city. They would not have been forgiven by others, not just Lot. At least this was a serious calculation on Lot's part. Yes, it may have been that his calculation might not have been justified, but it is unlikely. Yes, there was another case in which a similar calculation could not have been made, but the retaliation was terrible, really terrible. But of that in due course. But here the move of Lot was not effective - no, they did not want their daughters. The crowd was on edge, the development of wickedness in the city had reached a certain point when their fate was decided, coming to them in the form of these two guests of Lot. The Situation in Sodom

override, people have crossed the line in their moral "development. Lot's suggestion, capable of stopping a merely angry or resentful or capricious person, proved to be unhelpful here. However, it was heard and appreciated, though not at all in the way Lot thought it would be.

The crowd reacted - "this alien wants to teach us here? Is he going to tell us what's right and wrong? Manipulate us? - they noticed everything... "Then you and I are about to do *even worse than* we wanted to do to them..." If they were eager to get their guests in the back door, then Lot was really in danger of doing even worse. The Bible goes on to say that they began to "come down hard" on Lot. That is, they began to attack him, trying to take him in their grasp, to bend him over, but Lot resisted it and it did not work right away. The matter was complicated by the fact that Lot took too big a risk when he went out to them, he locked the door behind him. Returning to the house was now very difficult, he would not be allowed to do so. He literally sacrificed himself, giving the rest of the house a chance that the attackers would stop on him if they dared to attack. Though things could have gone his way with what he said about his daughters, and then he could have safely returned to the house after the attackers were ashamed of his exhortations, but it didn't work. Lot was being attacked, not heavily yet, with only a couple of people attacking, the others only watching, but soon they could all get involved. At this time, the door behind Lot opened, and the angels pulled him back into the house. He found himself in safety. However, leaving the attackers just like that meant that the crowd could begin to destroy Lot's house out of sheer emotion, and the angels did not have the strongest effect by "closing their eyes" or "taking their eyes away" from the crowd, as it is written "struck with blindness". They searched so long that they exhausted themselves, and they scattered around in this search, trying other houses, and their fate is unknown. This blindness was limited, not a total loss of sight. Not seeing or, rather, not discerning the right door, they tried in fury for a long time to find it.

Lot was allowed to catch his breath, but not for long. They all didn't have much time before morning, at sunrise the Sittima valley would cease to exist as the valley of the gardens of paradise, the sources of fire, lava and other things that would destroy this beautiful but corrupt and evil place had already been prepared. The people had to be out of the valley by this time, and the angels had to activate the elements at dawn. The guests had now made themselves known, not by what they had said about themselves, but by the fact that they had shown their power and were no longer playing the role of inexperienced aliens. They took charge and now asked Lot if there was anyone else in this city who was related to him, relatives or anyone who was dear and close to him. It was no longer a question of the righteous, but only of family members who might have been saved because they had something to do with Lot, and thus fell into the circle of his sanctifying, thought-provoking influence. There were two young men who had wooed his daughters, and the angels sent Lot to them to suggest that they leave the city right away. But how do people who are used to their city, to an environment where there are no worries and no reason for them to be in nature, take such news, and in the middle of the night? It is hard to believe in such a thing, unless full of like-minded people would understand and believe it, but not ordinary people living in the present day. Anyway, it seemed to these fellows that Lot was joking, and so unfortunate as to get them up in the middle of the night for some reason, to drop everything and go off in the middle of nowhere. Without any preparations in advance, without any arrangements in the new place, without the slightest reconnaissance of the new place... Well, respectable people do not do such things... In general, only Lot's wife and daughters, the closest circle had the first prospect for life of all the inhabitants of this bad place. When it became clear that no one else was going, and we had to leave, Lot was still slow, hanging in a kind of passivity and indecision. As time passed in these preparations and gatherings, the angels, seeing that their words were not working, simply took them by the hand and led them out of the house. Lot was slow to act, not because he felt sorry for the city, but because he was in shock over what had happened, and he was simply lost in the tumult of the unexpected happenings. In such cases, without any reproach, one must make allowance for the state of

which was done by the angels. They explained to Lot that they had to make it to the edge of the valley at the very least, or better yet, beyond, but Lot, like Abraham, began to bargain for terms, sensing some possibility in God's favor for him.

He asked to be left in a small town on the edge of the valley, either because he had to live somewhere, or because he thought he would not be able to leave the valley in the time allotted, although he was not infirm at all, so his persistence is incomprehensible. Apparently, Sodom had loosened his spirituality considerably. One of the angels said that for his sake he would make this exception, and spare Zoar, of whom Lot had spoken. By the way, Siger could do little for him; he would not live there long, he left, for reasons unknown. Most likely the inhabitants of that place were of the same character as the Sodomites, which is not surprising. When Lot persuaded the angels not to touch this town, he somehow thought that since it was small, the wickedness of its inhabitants would not be as widespread. This is evident in the words he used to justify his request. It was accepted, though it did no good to anyone, nor did it benefit the city, which was later also unified. But Lot was told - "Hurry and flee there, for I can do no work until you get there. It is interesting that if Lot is to be waited until he has gone to a safe place, it would seem that they could wait as long as they wanted, yet he is very persuasively asked to go quickly, hurriedly and quickly to leave, practically on the run. For some reason, the time of dawn, when the retribution was committed, was important; later times were unacceptable.

"The sun rose over the earth, and Lot came to Zoar. The moment he was already in the vicinity of that place began in Sodom. They were all given clear orders not to turn around or stop in their journey until they arrived at their intended location. They could not see, therefore, what had happened in the first moments of the catastrophe, but they could hear the sounds of the raging elements. When they were already in Sigora, they had the right to turn around and look back, and in doing so, they saw smoke and fire falling on the valley. There must have been some clouds or clouds or something else where fire and brimstone were falling from as well. A meteor shower or it could have come from the ground itself, from somewhere it had been ejected by the explosion and was falling on the valley. From the vantage point of Abraham, who went out early in the morning to look in that direction, it looked like smoke from a furnace rising from the ground. But only three of them, Lot and his daughters, made it as far as Sihor. The wife, probably hearing the sounds of what was going on, broke her orders not to turn around. There must have been a very targeted retaliation going on, which worked against her breaking the order as well. By her disobedience at the critical moment, under the hot hand, she as if drew a charge of anger to herself. It was not for nothing that they warned her. It is reminiscent of military instructions on how to behave in a high-risk area if one is unlucky enough to be there. Many in the religious world today make fun of those who care about following every order of God as it is given, saying it is fanaticism and that the main thing is to love and obey in such detail and detail is not necessary⁶⁴. At the same time, Lot's wife herself serves here as a tacit hint at the non-accidental nature of every command from on high, and Christ also puts her case⁶⁵ to the disciples. Yes, of course, both here and here, where Christ speaks, these are times of "visitation" that are critical to the smallest infidelity. In normal times there is usually no such retaliation, but although in "quiet" times there may be no direct blow, everything is written in books (or on video recorders?) and will be brought to trial in time, with just as much, if not more, effect.

It is said about her that she became a pillar of salt, that is, almost instantly she either became a crust of salt, or all of her tissues became salt. I don't find it unbelievable and the second

64 In so doing, there is a substitution of terms. They would be right if they were only talking about the moment of obtaining salvation-justification, forgiveness of former sins. But when it comes to survival or health or many other things, every word and even letter becomes important and even critical, obedience cannot be abolished because it does not create merit for "salvation.

65 Luke 17:32

In geology, it is a common phenomenon when in petrified wood all molecules with carbon participation disappear, and salts take their place with the preservation of the wood structure. The only difference is the time; on a geological scale, it is enough time for one molecule to be replaced by another, whereas here it is too fast. But if miracles happen, if there are forces that can control all the elements and elements, what stops this from happening?

After he had been in Zigorah for a while, Lot could not live there. It does not say why, but it does say that he was afraid to live there. We can assume that the people of that town knew him as a resident of Sodom. Why did he escape when everyone else was dead? How did he know of the valley's destruction, and only one escaped? Suspicious, however... Explaining that he tried to call the others with him hardly helped, only increased the suspicion that he knew exactly what trouble was coming - they still thought and said their own things, since the character of the inhabitants of this valley was not the best of them all. Had it not been for Lot's pleas for their city, they would also be gone by now. Probably Lot regretted his weakness when he left this place... It may be that, in the custom of Sodom, no one helped him when he found himself without possessions or wealth. So he had no place there from the beginning, but the dangers of those who would make profit at their expense began to appear, so that he had to flee from it again, and not less quickly than he had fled from Sodom. He left there and took up residence in a cave.

It was hardly a life of poverty and misery, but Lot no longer wanted to build houses, at least at that time, after all those upheavals. They were still strong and skillful people with the right hands, despite these or other character flaws. It wasn't hard to live in those places if you could sow and plow or take care of the animals. He did, but there were other daughters who were going to marry back in Sodom, and now found themselves sort of separated from all the other people - it seems that everyone avoided them and perhaps feared them. And since Lot was afraid to live in Zigorah as well, that means they were also hated and treated badly. So it seemed to them that no one would marry them anymore, and that life was passing them by in its course. And they seemed to have come to terms with everything, except one thing: they wanted offspring. And to some extent, both in their maternal instincts (or is it more appropriate to speak of passions here?) were very successful; they became the foremothers of two outwardly successful nations. And they had no more children, except one son each, and they had no private life, they did not marry. An almost heroic detachment from the world and from themselves, were it not for one serious departure from common sense.

Sodom had damaged their thinking and their ideas of right and wrong too much. They chose their own father as a father to their children... Knowing he would not even talk about it, they played a bad joke on him. And they knew, assumed that it would not last, that they would be alone, while they could have looked for husbands through Abraham, the relative would not have refused to help, the father would have helped too, but for some reason they did not try this option. They made wine, perhaps mixed some to make it safe, gave it to the father, and while he was under the influence they were able to use it in a known way. I have heard stories, and they are not tales, that a woman can take advantage of a man who is sober and asleep, without him waking up and being aware of the contact. She may remember an erotic dream and be surprised that there is no trace which must be present in such cases, maybe just a little. That's if he wakes up immediately afterwards, otherwise there won't be any trace at all. Lot realized all this later, when he learned of his daughters' pregnancy, though he might not have investigated the matter so as not to curse them for breaking the rules and laws, carrying his shame within himself. He had to endure much while living in Sodom, of which the apostle later wrote that Lot "suffered daily in his righteous soul, seeing and hearing the wicked deeds. With the destruction of Sodom this torment unfortunately did not end, Sodom continued to have its

He had the chance, though to a lesser extent, to correct evil. On the other hand, he had been involved, albeit involuntarily, in the customs of the home, being a father to his grandchildren... It remained for him to correct evil wherever he could, which he did, trying to bring up his grandchildren as sensible people as possible. They were not to blame for their origins. If there is anything good about the Ammonites and Moabites, it is Lot's efforts, although it cannot be entirely attributed to him alone. Neither do the faults come only from Sodom or Lot's daughters, but Lot had something to do with them. If he did not wish his descendants the fate that resulted, the only right thing to do was to stay away from Sodom altogether.

When parents have a sexual interest in their children or vice versa (as well as same-sex friends), it is a perversion roughly in the same category as a gastronomic interest in them (also happens, but fortunately, less often). People who are called normal are almost incapable of such a thing, no matter what their other faults are. The human sexual sphere is surrounded by many regulators and programs of the unconscious, and is supposed to be activated only within certain circumstances. But since a lot of it has to do with pleasure, people who live for pleasure can easily programmatically malfunction, because human regulation is very delicate in most processes, we make associations and connections between things with our habits, and in principle these associations are restricted to morality but not to the hardware-body level, i.e. we can construct almost anything except divinity, limited by power and ability. There are programmed blockages of sound instincts, but with persistent effort they can be bypassed or rewritten altogether, so that one becomes what one makes of oneself (usually unconsciously). And since few know what goes where and how it will respond, and few are interested, it makes people a problem for society, carrying unhealthy and dangerous tendencies.

Birth of Isaac

At the promised, due time Isaac was born. Abraham was a hundred years old at this time and Sarah de - vyanosta. She remembered laughing again, no longer her own, she said of others that people would laugh, speaking of her case. She did not look unhappy however, having overcome her weaknesses, but rather proud to have a son at an age when no ordinary person would have had the opportunity, knowing that this was a good advertisement for God and His followers. She may see different categories of people laughing - some will do it out of joy for her, and some will just chuckle dismissively because of her age - "what can't happen in this world. But here she is rather transferring her emotions to other people, attributing her experience to them; she is afraid to laugh, as she used to laugh at God's words. When she laughed a year ago, it was doubt or disrespect for what God wanted to give her. Now there was nothing to doubt, what had been said had come true, and it was no use laughing-doubting, but something still sat in her soul, a kind of pain, and if not herself, at least let others laugh... But others need not laugh, they were not Sarah, they would be glad for her, and that was all. It was she, Sarah, who had had the pain of childlessness for years; and when she had lost hope, suddenly God had touched a sore spot with promises, and then, when she had received the unexpected good, something in her soul had rebelled and wrestled with such small laughter, attributed to others...

It's important to clarify what we're talking about here. Often people do not know themselves, much less others, and seeing the manifestations of man in a particular action, judge by the nearest analogy, by the familiar and understandable, not knowing the real engines and levers that make man bend the wrong way. God sees what is real and wanted

I would like people to understand much more than they do, to, as Solomon said, "scoop out" the depths of the soul, the subconscious and the unconscious.

What was it about Sarah that made her laugh and attribute her laughter to others? The longing for motherhood, unquenched in youth and maturity, turned into a kind of despair-pain, they did not disturb her mental health and thinking, did not lead to embitterment against life, against God or people, did not lead to depression. This is good and right, a model for all others. It is her share of suffering for Christ, for His cause, a part that has fallen to her - in this delay with her son the power and glory of God was displayed, and her patience enabled God to manifest His supremacy over every circumstance. If she had gone the way of discontent and scandal, it might have completely ruined what God had in mind for them and God would have had to find other people who were more patient and wiser. And yet the fact that she had to put up with it created a bit of pain that would show up on occasion. This knot of emotions is objective, but how it will manifest itself, what emotions it will evoke, what actions it will prompt and what it will whisper in your ear - is it possible to predict? It sits in the subconscious, and how it will make itself known when life touches it - who knows? Although the character usually predetermines the reaction, but this influence is not the only one, a person can act atypically for himself, the influence of the moment remains, and the mind corrects a person...

It can be controlled even when something unexpected and unthinkable comes out of the inside, when our insides start to move us instead of rational calculation, when we don't understand or recognize ourselves (and others too). The consciousness works sequentially and cannot comprehend everything at once; but it has time to guess and calculate from outward signs and tangible feelings and emotions what is going on under the surface of the consciousness... And having learned and understood the real structure of ourselves we have the most powerful levers of control for ourselves and others.

Why did Sarah have such a painful reaction when the subject of children was touched? The answer seems to be quite simple - it was not so much due to the years of waiting, but to that grave blunder with Hagar and Ishmael. Subsequently, seeing her feverishness, haste, and belligerent insistence, which no one could resist, as she imposed her version of the appearance of the family heir on Abraham, and seeing the disastrous results of this, she might have felt ashamed that she had set it up with her own hands. So afterwards, when things went right, I mean, when God Himself declared His intention to fulfill what He had promised, these things in her mind came in contact with what she was doing, and it was painful for her. It is usually on such occasions that one, in an effort to avoid these feelings (how blessed are those who know how to acknowledge their failures), begins to twist and behave in an inadequate manner. The painful spots or clumps of feelings in the memory, when the current of attention induced by the circumstances runs through them, make us cringe. But we have to face it with dignity and honesty, to admit the mistakes, but not everyone faces up to it. That is why Sarah laughed when she heard God's words about the son she would have in a year's time, and why she attributes to others the laughter that she could not have after Isaac was born. Even if someone laughed, she might not have cared what others thought of her and her son, when she herself had great joy and triumph over the seemingly inexorable laws of existence.

It was time to wean his son, and Abraham threw a big party for the occasion. Everything was perfect, but there were moments that marred the celebration. The previous heir, Ishmael, who had come into being through Sarah's own fault, was hardly himself hostile to

to someone who had taken away most of what he could have counted on, if only because he was young, not yet burdened by greed and excessive pragmatism. But his mother could whisper this to him, and he was imbued with this spirit. After all, he was the first and so he was expected to have a special share of the inheritance, and with Isaac's arrival he was losing primacy and with it a huge fortune, which for the vast majority of ordinary people is a very powerful factor. So he had a definite dislike for Isaac, which translated into some taunts. Sarah saw and heard this. If Ishmael had been a friendly, unselfish, normal person at the time, the situation would probably have developed peacefully, but Sarah did not want the child of a divine promise and heir not only to the family's material wealth but also to great spiritual knowledge, to grow up in an atmosphere of hostility. Courtesy, politeness and friendliness, yes, not only make life easier, like grease, reduces friction, but also has a direct bearing on security. Hagar, at first admonished by God and impressed by this, gradually returned to remembering the lost opportunities that seemed to have been taken from her and her son. Although she "submitted" to Sarah, she did not destroy the envy within her completely, and passed it on to her son. This was wrong of them, and by placing themselves on the brink of alienation from the family, even if not directly, but still a meaningful threat to the peace of the home, and potentially a danger to the heir, they had put themselves on the brink of alienation.

Sarah was belligerent; she demanded the expulsion of Ishmael and Hagar, which was extremely distasteful to Abraham. He looked everywhere for peace and harmony, and was willing to make many sacrifices for prosperity, but would that prosperity be possible now for everyone? But this time, God saw that Sarah's position was truer than his, which He told Abraham, assuring him that He Himself would take care of Ishmael - both his life and his glory - so that Abraham would not be ashamed of him. Here, too, is another lesson for Abraham - God told him *to listen to Sarah's voices*. Seventeen years ago Abraham also listened to her voice, when it was not necessary to do so, when he thought her offer was flattering, but when he had to weigh the decision more than once. And now, precisely because he had listened to her when it seemed appealing to him, he had to listen to her one more time when it was unpleasant for him.

Ishmael, too, needed a lesson that Abraham was hardly capable of giving, which God arranged for him by holding him for a time in weakness on the brink of death. Looking at Ishmael's later successful life, we can see that they were not poor with Hagar, they had the wealth that Abraham had provided for them in their divorce, but on their journey in the wilderness, no amount of wealth could provide them with water. They lost their way in the wilderness, and when they ran out of water, Ishmael was very weak and could not walk. Hagar, in despair, went away, not wanting to see her son die of thirst, not being able to help. She clearly still had strength herself, but she could not share it with the teenager. Sitting in the distance, yet seeing what was happening, she began to cry and scream to the sky. Once on a similar journey she had not called on God, but He had appeared to her personally because she needed help with something, now she had called, and He had answered her, spoken to her again. The remarkable detail, however, is that God tells her that He did not answer her cry, but that He "heard Ishmael's voice. If Ishmael had not prayed, rethought his actions, and repented of his behavior that led him into these problems, God might not have answered him or his mother.

After talking with God, her "eyes were opened," as it is written, and she saw a nearby church near where she and her son had been wandering. All their problems were instantly solved and their life was not sad, although it could have been better.

It says that God was with Ishmael. This is a great work, not often mentioned in the Bible, and it is always related to the way of life and the morals of man, that is, the experience and the experience was enough for Ishmael to last a lifetime, he did follow the way his father did, though not always, not constantly. This was passed on to his descendants.

Reinforcing Abraham

In the course of his life and wanderings in the Palestinian land, Abraham gradually became noticed. All the events connected with him contributed to this, and surprisingly, not only the right and the upright, but even his blunders did not too much diminish his credibility. The God of Abraham was visible to all who dealt with him as well as those who heard of him. The way he defended his vassal, even when he was not entirely right, made people think about life and served as a certain advertisement for God himself, even if not always sound. Many would not have minded having the strength that accompanied Abraham among their pillars as well, and that was in line with the task God wanted to accomplish. Even if the people didn't know this God very well, even if Abraham didn't have everything right in his example, but that could be corrected in time, and for now things were going well.

Abimelech, the ruler of the Philistines, who was well versed in the power of God, may have had some negative feelings against Abraham because of the story of Sarah, but in time he evaluated Abraham from other angles and came to the conclusion that it would be very good to have him as a friend and ally. He was aware of his war with the enslavers of Canaan when he rescued his nephew from captivity, and that was a definite plus in Abraham's characterization. Such an ally, accompanied by supernatural power, who personally knew the Source of that power, the real God, was very valuable for any future challenges to his people. And this was entirely the right calculation, but even beyond the political calculations, Abimelech felt a purely human sympathy for this remarkable man, being himself a man of similar principles. And when different interests coincide, isn't that bliss?

Coming to Abraham with his deputy for military affairs, Abimelech offered to make a pact that none of them would offend each other now or in the future, that is, a friendship pact. He seems to have understood Abraham's future, that this man is not walking around Canaan now by chance, that Abraham would be the leader of the area, and he wants to protect his descendants. So he reminds him of what he did to Abraham in the story of Sarah, which was really quite generous. Yes, he could not do Abraham any harm, because God had forbidden it, but he did not even reproach him or feel ill will toward him, sincerely giving him gifts and treating him politely, contrary to what Abraham himself expected from the inhabitants of this kingdom. It is also worth mentioning that Abimelech, having been honored with a personal conversation with God, who warned him about Abraham in a dream, appears to be quite righteous himself, if God honored him with His treatment (God did not speak to Pharaoh in Egypt in the same case). Abimelech insists on this, asks him to swear an oath, and Abraham answers that he will do so himself and pass the rule on to his seed. Nobility begets nobility, goodness begets goodness, all is right and proper.

While talking about the alliance, Abraham complained to Abimelech that his men had taken away the well he had dug, based on the fact that it had been dug close to their land. Abimelech said he had not heard of this story and acknowledged Abraham's right to it. Interestingly, Abraham made the alliance by giving animals from his flock to Abimelech in addition to a verbal oath, and the latter accepted them. This looks like a kind of purchase on Abraham's part and a concession-sale on the part of the Philistines. This territory, where he was living at the time, they began to consider his, Abraham's, land, where he had the right to farm, without losing it at the same time to themselves, it was still their, the Philistines', land. Abraham was a guest of them... This settlement he called Beersheba. Abraham lived there for a long time, even planted a grove that delighted him with its shade and beauty.

Last test

Everyone is probably familiar with the expression that catching up is harder than running ahead. And if anyone has ever had to catch up, they know that it's easier to run ahead right away. If you have the strength to stay in your head, it's better to keep up; it takes much more effort to catch up than it does to maintain what you've already achieved. It's the same mechanism in school - if you don't learn a lesson, then you have to catch up later, you have to work much harder and spend more time on both past and present assignments. Abraham showed weakness several times, and God was not presented in the right way by his actions. Although He helped Abraham get away with it by showing His strength, and in a way He made Himself and Abraham respect Himself, it was not a development for the better for Abraham himself, nor did people have every right to think of God as the protector of things that were not right. For the sake of His honor and the cause of salvation in general, He had to raise and resolve the issue of those failures one way or another - either Abraham corrects those character flaws, becomes fit for His plan, or he must be done away with. Abraham failed in Egypt, and for the second time he was given the opportunity to replay the situation with the Philistines, but he repeated the same scenario. Also with the heir he fell for Sarah's persuasion to take Hagar as a wife, which was flattering to his male ego in human terms, but for him personally as a righteous man it was not a worthy act, nor was it useful for his status as the chosen father of the holy people. In all these deeds he was noticeably "behind" in his progress along the Way, and now it was time to "tighten up" and "catch up" so as not to fall off the track, and also not to fail the One who had set his sights on him.

I had to think about the process of development, about the transition from evil to good, the attainment of the right qualities by man. If a person overcomes his negative traits, he strengthens the "new man" or the framework of the new structure in his soul and character. But if the person falls somewhere, makes mistakes, sins, evil, lives with the old habits and schemes, then there is a fall, the person is thrown back one step or down one level (I do not know the size of the steps, maybe to the bottom, where he was before the ascent). This weakens his capacity for good, and his attraction to the dark side increases accordingly, the old construction or "old person" becomes stronger, and the "new person" is almost in a coma. In order to overcome this negative effect of the falls, God has to put more strain on the next trial. This is necessary because the former measures become sensitized, habituated and ineffective - a stale soul must be "re-magnetized," for which a stronger effect must be applied. If the person falls again, it is necessary to increase it more and more. I understand that in many cases, education is done without increasing the load, but life is vast, and there are responsible areas where the result is very important, and this mechanism is at work there. So the workload increases, the tests become heavier, the conditions under which one has to be faithful are tightened up to a certain limit. After that, if the candidate is not successful, he or she is rejected from the job. I'm not sure if this is the mechanism in human salvation (it probably is to some extent, too), but when someone is called to a responsible job where man plays a key role, as was the case with Abraham, it is. Greater responsibility generates a corresponding demand.

These cases piled up on a scale invisible to man, and it was finally time to settle the question of which side Abraham was on, time to pull up "tails" or to be outnumbered. Yes, he was choosing the side of God, but was he sufficiently in character in Him and not in the rest of humanity? It was not enough that Abraham wanted something, he had to conform. And it was his accumulated experience in his path of serving the truth that was the most important of all.

not habits and traits showed who he was with and whose side he was on. If he had behaved correctly in the moment of crisis, he probably would have had to experience more fear and tension, but it would have been a victory, and he would not have had to go through the great darkness in his later years, when it seemed that everything he wanted had been achieved and he could relax. After all, a failure is not only a guilt before God or men, not only a consequence for the world, but also a pain inside, a thorn in the grip of years, preventing a normal life, poisoning many things. To accept or forget it means to lose a clear conscience and to disconnect from God, who has no access to the soul by not admitting his wrongdoing. It is of course possible to live with an admission of guilt without blocking the way of the Spirit's action, but is it not even better to overcome and live freely, without bending under the weight of a wounded conscience?⁶⁶ Abraham, on the other hand, lived with this for a long time and could begin to get used to it. When you don't know what should have been done, or rather when the right way seems wrong or impossible because of certain attitudes or complexes, then you slowly start to rebel against the other right things, you start to justify what you did because "I could not do otherwise", "I am a sinner" and things like that... But if man tends to procrastinate for a long time, risking everything, as Abraham did now, then God could not leave it unresolved, and now it's time to visit again.

God had not come to him explicitly; Abraham heard a voice, familiar from his previous interactions with Him, commanding him to go with Isaac to one of the mountains and sacrifice him there. Had it happened to anyone else today, the man would not have doubted for a moment that it was not God but His enemy dictating such a thing. And he would have been right, because what God told Abraham to do then was not what it looked like. Such a thing, a human sacrifice, could not and could not be repeated, even if only because, according to the laws and statutes of sacrifice, nothing but a special category of animals could be sacrificed. If Abraham had actually killed his son there, it would not have been a sacrifice in any way, but merely a murder; a sacrifice always has a symbolic meaning. On the altar of burnt offering there could only have been a parthuman and a ruminant, and no other animals. Other, non-kosher animals not only could not be eaten, but they could not be sacrificed either. God could not accept the sacrifice of a dog, for example, or a pig or a horse. These are good animals in themselves, but not suitable for sacrifice. The king of beasts, one of God's sympathizers, the lion, could not be a sacrifice on the altar because it did not fit into the category of "clean" animals, not having bifurcated hooves and not being a ruminant animal. Man also never appears on God's altar, simply because animal sacrifices were meant to save man (even though they did not bring real salvation, but were a sign of the real sacrifice). A man cannot die for the sins of another man, because then both die - the first in vain, the second without being forgiven. A person can die for his own sin (as will actually happen at the Last Judgment), but it will be the perpetrator's death in retribution for what he has done, not a sacrifice of atonement; after that there can be no more life. But when the Messiah, the Son of Man, came, He was not offered in the temple and on the altar, because such a literal act would have been beyond the symbolism that God Himself had defined, and would have been a desecration of both the temple and the service, and of the whole Mosaic Law. The symbols of the Mosaic law were fulfilled in their own way - on the cross. Christ's crucifixion was an execution and murder for those involved, not a literal sacrifice in the Temple⁶⁷... All in all, Abraham felt something terrible and wrong, impossible and wrong to be. It looked like a breakdown of everything, a catastrophe. It is true that he was used to trusting God, and from his past mistakes of mistrust he had already understood how things should be done, and this time he decided not to rush into anything

66 It's not about forgiveness of guilt in the salvation process, it's about the right character to represent God. Repentance for done wrong is good, but sometimes all that is needed is victory, not just good, but better.

67 Only because Christ never broke the law, both because He was able to take away the sins of those who would allow Him to do so, and because He knowingly did so, could He be the Sacrifice symbolized by the animal sacrifices.

conclusions, but to do what he was told from above. The Bible says that Abraham thought that through this God would show new wonders, that He would not leave Isaac dead, since He had promised so much about him, but would raise him up by placing new signs for the future. It was an extreme hope, and he had many other thoughts, but this idea helped him to endure and not break down.

But this was the positive side of Abraham's thinking; the other side, which had helped him to fall in earlier times, might have presented very different considerations. For example, he, Abraham, had failed too much, for after Isaac was born, God had not made contact and perhaps He was dissatisfied with him, totally disappointed, and therefore was breaking the covenant with him. And killing Isaac is exactly what it means, that God is either shutting down the sacred nation project or will look for a better candidate, and it is over with Abraham, he is unworthy, having spent too passive a life. If he had been younger he might have acted more vigorously, changed things, learned a better way, but now it's too late ... Such thoughts could not possibly have escaped him at this time. But this time he does not give in for a moment, he places his total trust in God, and this trust is vindicated in the highest degree. But not immediately, but only when Abraham has fulfilled everything.

First he had to go to an unknown place - God said that he would show him a specific place in the land of Moriah only when he got there. And he had to take his son on this unknown road, without informing him of the purpose of the journey. But this was not difficult, the young man is always easy-going and the unknown is more stimulating than alarming or disappointing. Abraham told him that they must make a sacrifice on some mountain that had yet to be found. The quest seemed intriguing. Especially since his father hadn't brought any animals with him for the sacrifice, which seemed unusual. But imagination moreover painted pictures that it would be necessary to search for a victim by themselves, as if they also went hunting. Just a whole adventure.

On the way Isaac asked his father this question - why didn't we take anything for the sacrifice, who would be our sacrifice? This question was painful for Abraham, and he could not have been happy with the joyful look of his son anticipating the adventure. "Had he known he was the one destined to be put on the altar," was roughly what Abraham thought, all the way agonizing and struggling with himself, wavering between believing and not believing that God was good, that He would not reject them from Himself. Isaac's response was to hear words that are now part of many proverbs, including the famous Russian "we'll see," that very "avos. To be more accurate, it was "on the mountain of God it will be seen," which is Hebrew for "on the spot, on the mountain Yahweh will show (his answer). For Isaac this was enough, but for Abraham it was painful, because he knew what must be there, but this expressed "maybe" was also for him a vague shadow of hope, which he understood only when he got "there" and passed his test.

On the third day, looking at the chain of mountains in front of him, Abraham saw where he had to go, he was told his destination. There were two servants with them, and Abraham told them to stay where they were and wait for them, and then they would go on alone with Isaac. The destination was apparently a day or two away, and no matter how much time dragged on, it was over. Abraham and his son came to the place where the sacrifice was to be offered. The previous promises that God had made to him about a future connected specifically to his son gave Abraham a strong assurance that no matter what, these promises would be fulfilled. And if dead Isaac could not be the progenitor of a holy nation, then Isaac would be alive. It was a faith that would not let one stray from the path, which even God kind of held within His promises. We could say that Abraham had kept God from breaking His promises by his faith, if God was inclined not to keep His words... However, here it was the opposite, it was He who strengthened Abraham to hold on to what he knew about God and not to lose, not to give up. But God was pleased to see that Abraham did not waver and held fast to Him, not doubting Him, not being disappointed, and not losing conviction. Abraham really-

he had time to understand and experience God and His character very well in his life, from his first childhood experiences to his last encounters. Not only by what God said, he judged Him, but by the imprint of His personality itself, by the influence that unfolds in every encounter between the intelligent, whether created or Creator, all are surrounded by a personal atmosphere that allows us to penetrate each other with our senses. Everything Abraham knew about the Creator said that He did not lie and could not even do it, so Abraham believed and felt his faith was not in vain. Many of us have not met God or the angels, and that is a serious loss.⁶⁸ Although no one who is alive has escaped the influence of heaven, everyone sooner or later encountered it, felt the pull of goodness, truth and truth, but not everyone was impressed or appreciated it properly. There is a minimal dose in which it comes to all, as John said, "there was a light that enlightened everyone who came into the world," and it is enough for one to choose the side of good, to become one of those "good men" on whom the world still rests. This is familiar to all, but many reject or reject this influence. However, these experiences do not happen once in a lifetime, but for some the subsequent revelations are of no benefit, while most still adjust their path in one way or another.

When they arrived at the place, Abraham had to tell Isaac about his role in what was to happen here. He could, of course, have said nothing, but that was not in his character. And to attack and overpower the young man, his father, who was already (to put it mildly) young, might not have been able to do so. Since Isaac had been brought up in the right spirit, a thinking man, Abraham counted on his conscience and cooperation. He told his son all about the role of the Sacrifice in humanity's very existence, its divine origin, that Isaac was to be the father of a great nation, and that he was to undergo, by divine appointment, this experience. They thought that this experience of dying had to be passed by him, but they may have thought so, but it was not God's plan to make man a savior. We could still atone for our personal sins with our lives, but then everyone would have to be a victim. Can you imagine the magnitude? And so about God say a lot of unnecessary things, and this way would make the salvation of man very hard, death would be on the same level of values as life, and what damage would be for the mentality and mental sphere, especially the efforts of the evil one, it is difficult to overestimate. Especially one person could not, was not even entitled to save someone else, having those or other stains from violations of the Law. Each of us is accountable only for himself, and if he is responsible for others, then only to the extent of his influence over them, but not for the decisions that they themselves make. A person makes choices only for himself and for no one else. If someone decides for others, it happens, but these others have the opportunity to disagree, or even actively oppose it.

Isaac penetrated, let himself be bound.⁶⁹ and put himself on the altar, revealing in this his own choice and faith, a great experience of knowing, of touching the experience of the Messiah. He had been in the role of a Sacrifice, in its skin, able to appreciate the feelings and sensations of all those animals who, for centuries, had ascended the altars, symbolically taking on the guilt of man. And so his father took the knife and held it over him... What would happen to him next?

But man can only barely touch the experience of Christ, and that is not for everyone; it is not in human power or ability, and it is more important for us to use the opportunity that we have to

68 It is possible not to see Him personally, but to experience Him with great tangibility and authenticity, even without seeing Him personally, which is the experience that distinguishes serious believers. And so essential is this word, to believe, to allow His words and promises to be true. It opens some doors to something greater.

69 The binding of the sacrifice is mentioned in the Bible, Psalm 117:27. Under the Levitical laws, that is, of the Israelite period, as far as I understand it, the sacrifice was placed on the altar after it had been killed, but it seems that in pre-Israelite times the sacrifice was cut up on the altar. A loose animal could be a lot of trouble, but a rope made it much easier even for an inexperienced person to handle.

He provided for us, for which He went to death. We cannot go any further without having full righteousness and a divine nature within us. So at that moment a voice rang out to Abraham, telling him to stop his hand. It is not known whether Isaac heard it, most likely not. But he saw that his father's hand, instead of making the final movement, stayed and then slowly lowered, his father answered to someone "here I am," the knife moved away from his body, and then the rope was untied.

Isaac understood that his father could very well have done what he was told to do, in fact he was willing to participate in restoring man's lost glory and God's kingdom on earth, but it proved to be only a test. But the experience was enough for both of them to make a great difference and to become an individual in the great work of human salvation. Abraham showed through his firmness and steadfastness that he was no longer the one who had treated Sarah badly for fear of men, but had changed indeed. His former conduct now looked very different to him and he saw how he ought to have behaved in those cases and what a disgrace he had brought upon God as well as upon himself. God Himself acknowledged his faithfulness and steadfastness when He said to him, stopping his hand: "Now I see that you fear God. Isaac also had his share of experiences - although he lived securely and safely, he tasted terror and fear from which no power can deliver, making him especially open to reflections on the meaning of life. Jacob, in offering his relatives a vow of peace, mentioned "the fear of Isaac," his father. This was an experience that was or should have been handed down in Israel as an introduction to an understanding of the person and service of the Messiah, what He would have to go through in order to be the Sacrifice for mankind.

There was great joy in both of them for it was not easy for Abraham to kill even an enemy, much less an innocent one, much less a son, even with the most well-intentioned of excuses. He happened to glance away and found a ram entangled in the bushes, with its horns, which had taken its place on the altar. This is the final touch to this story of Isaac's sacrifice - the man's place has been taken by another who has replaced him. We discussed the legitimacy and legality of the Substitute in the situation of the first sacrifice in Eden, so here we can only say that the plan of salvation was again vivid and significant, this time for Abraham and Isaac, patriarchs of a special people, guardians of truth.

Abraham called the place "The One who will see," or "will take care of," or "will provide," enshrining in the geographical name one of the great principles of human life - not to try to decide everything, to agree everything before taking another step, to leave things *that are beyond human power* to the Above, to Whom such seeming "unreasonableness" is acceptable, because it shows that man recognizes his dependence on higher powers and is able to *count* on them. This is wisdom indeed, though for the unwise who do not know how to weigh circumstances well, it easily degenerates into presumptuousness or negligence. The important thing here is to distinguish between what is available to man and what is not. If we do not tidy up what is within our reach, it is laziness, disorderliness, foolishness. But if God requires us to take a risk, we must understand that then the unreachable is on Him and that He takes responsibility for that part of the work. Collaborating with Him in this way teaches man something higher, and in such things we recognize God in reality, we learn to interact with the invisible, when the intangible becomes more tangible.

God reaffirmed to Abraham His previous promises of many descendants and other blessings. They sounded much more meaningful to Abraham now than the first time, now there was the son he had once despaired of expecting. He was ashamed of his earlier unbelief and levity, and was happy with his success. Now he had conquered himself. And what had prevented him from doing the same before?

After that, they returned to Bathsheba, where they lived for quite some time.

Sarah's Death

Something else must be said about Sarah, that she was not at first privy to what Abraham had done (or not done to Isaac, but thought he would). Had he told her of God's command, she would not have been able to bear it and might have said something unnecessary, without trying to delve into what was going on, would not have taken any other considerations than her son's life into account. Everyone has their own trials. It is possible that she never learned anything about Isaac being threatened at all. And apparently that is why Abraham could not have been near her, for he could not have kept quiet for long about what had happened, and if he had, it would have caused her a painful wound, and so they lived in different places until she passed away. But what had probably happened was that he had told her the story at one point and she could not be with him after that, she could hardly imagine him drawing a knife on her son... All the offenses she had suffered in Egypt and Gerard might have been stirred up in her mind as well, though they were things of different orders, but logic rarely helps here. So it was better for them to be apart, especially since their possessions were quite large and the interests of the case might require them to be in different places. Her faith should have required her to understand what Abraham had done, and most likely she did in time, but emotionally there may have been a residue. Her age could also have failed her, so she might have lost interest in life and faded away quickly. So she didn't live long after this test of their faith.

She died at 127, which means Abraham was 137 and Isaac 37 at the time. She lived these years in Kiriath⁷⁰-Arba, which also bore the name (at a later time) of Hebron, in the east of Palestine, while the Philistine regions, where Abraham founded Bathsheba, lay to the west. Abraham came from Bathsheba to mourn for her and to say goodbye. After days of mourning, he went out to the people of the city to ask them for a place to bury her. He already had one place in mind, a cave with surroundings, and he asked the owner of the place to sell it.

It is interesting to read these dialogues, and they show quite a bit of overlap in the approaches of both Abraham and the Hittite elders. He begins, "I am an alien with you," saying that he has no personal property on the land for burial, and asking to be given such a place. On the one hand, there was plenty of land, when his grandson Jacob buried Rebekah, he did not ask anyone, but it was not in a populated place. But here Abraham does not want to take her anywhere, respecting her attachment to this particular place, and wants to arrange for her final resting place here, where all the land already belongs to someone.

The elders responded to him respectfully - "you are the prince of God among us" - a very honorable title, a definite recognition of his role as emissary of the Most High. For this reason they offer him their own best seats to choose from. Abraham responds to this by standing up and bowing to them, thanking them for their honor and help. He then asks them to intercede with Ephron for his plot, which Sarah liked and perhaps he liked too, which he intends to acquire. Ephron is there and offers the field for free. Abraham bows again, thanking him for his kindness and generosity. After bowing, however, he asks to take money from him for the field, so that it is not gratuitous. He is not a poor man and to receive such an expensive gift for nothing, taking advantage of people's sympathy, would not be an honor to him. Ephron understands and agrees to accept the money, naming the price, though he says it is a small price for both of them given their wealth

⁷⁰ This is a rare case of Slavic and Hebrew roots being close to each other. The Russian "town" comes from "fence," "gorodba," "enclosure" (as well as the English guard - to fence), probably the same meaning in Hebrew.

both of them. There was some haggling in reverse, with the buyer raising the price and the seller lowering it, and they agreed on the original price... Both knew that in this situation there was no need to linger in bargaining, knowing that it was not appropriate, so they finished almost in one fell swoop - Abraham only asked the price and after Ephron answered, he gave him the right amount of silver coins. Although money in the form of coins didn't seem to exist then, in the sense that it was only in its infancy, it was the weight of silver at four hundred shekels⁷¹ in bullion or in pieces. So the bargain was sealed, and Abraham could now place his wife in a place of rest, where she was to rest until "the cry of the Archangel and the trumpet of God."⁷²

The Marriage of Isaac

In the next chapter Abraham is depicted three years after his wife's death. Isaac is now 40 years old and not yet married, avoiding dealing with the women of Canaan. But in the eyes of the world, most of whom had become short-lived and were getting married quite early because of it, and everyone was already used to it, seeing it as the norm, it was kind of wrong. By their standards, he was wasting his time. There was, however, another incentive to take up the matter now - Abraham had a suitable match for him in Harran with relatives who had stayed there decades before. If not taken now, it would simply "go away" somewhere else and finding something more suitable would be problematic. At that time, Farrah's descendants still remembered kinship and Abraham was to them a light and a hero whom they would have to help in case of need. There grew up a daughter with Bafuel, the son of his brother Nahor. Isaac had no problem with loneliness; he was a healthy man, well-mannered and self-controlled enough not to be infected by the loose morals of those around him who saw no great problem in violating the seventh⁷³ commandment. For many young people the example of their peers seems to be the law, and if it is popular among the leading personalities of society to have a couple that does not lead to marriage, so, temporary, for fun or prestige or romance, then the led begin to think that it should be so and cannot be otherwise, and if otherwise, then you are retarded, a sucker, a loser. Examples of the older generation are somehow not a model, existing independently in some other space... And not all the older generation is a model in this case, they were young too...

Abraham feels that his strength is not what it used to be, and as long as he is active enough, he must take care of the future of his son and his descendants, for they are his people. The greatness of a nation is not only determined by the number of people, and not even by military strength, but most of all by the reasonableness of its life structure, the quality of its people, its characters and skills. These are always several factors mutually influencing each other. And Abraham was not to let anything go - everything in his power he had to do to reduce the impact of evil on his descendants. There was not much he could do at the same time-he could not directly prejudge the choices of Isaac and his children-but at least he had to see to it that the circumstances for spiritual and other well-being as a father were as favorable as possible. Finding a good wife for his son was his task. Not an easy and important task; the saying "one married, the light went on, the other married, the head went off" was true. He saw what the people around him were like, what their principles and culture were, what their inhibitions and restrictions were, what they could and could not have, and he saw no possibility of a normal party for his son anywhere around him. He knew that his nephew had a son and daughter growing up in Harran and counted on that family. They were close people with understandable principles and customs, especially since they shared the legacy of

71 It has been used by many peoples since very ancient times. 400 shekels is about 4 kg of silver, which at this point in time is about \$1,500 (with the average price of silver being \$450 per 1 kg).

72 1 Thessalonians 4:16

73 Limiting and ordering the realm of love, happiness, and family, "Thou shalt not commit adultery.

faith and spirituality from the ancestors (although they too were infected with paganism, but to a lesser extent than other peoples), which was becoming increasingly rare in the world around them.

Abraham called the servant who was in charge of all his household, who was in charge of thousands of people. He gave him a rather delicate task, to match Isaac with his cousin Rebekah. Although at this point he is not talking about his relatives or Rebekah, but in general, "to my homeland. Geographically his homeland is not at all in Haran, but his inner circle lives there, who came from the Chaldean lands. There may have been many of them who came to Harran, and when the former social circle, many neighbors and relatives move together to new lands, it is also very valuable for those who have changed their place of residence. I have thought a lot about the problems of migrants, like the Molokans in the U.S. who came here from Iran, who had moved there from the Soviet Union, which had tightened the screws during collectivization. They didn't feel much of a disconnect because most of their ties had just moved with them. This solves the problem of nostalgia in no small part. When friends and brothers with fathers and children move with them, then their homelands move with them. That is why, in ancient times, moving peoples to distant places did not create much of a problem with nostalgia or a sense of foreignness. Although not a complete solution to the problem, it is still no small mitigation. And when Abraham speaks of his homeland, here it is more a former circle of loved ones than a geographical concept. From this circle a suitable bride must be found for Isaac.

In those days, intermarriage was not (and was not) considered a problem or a sin because God had not yet issued warnings against it at that time. He did not do so because human vitality and health had not yet reached a critical point where diseases had accumulated so that the hereditary relationships were "lifting" the damaged genes out of heredity. That is, those generations did not yet have damaged genes carrying disease traits, except that the facial traits became more pronounced and the diversity of the internal genus decreased. The way people ate, obsessed with the taste of food rather than the health and power of it, literally ensured the accumulation of disease. This is probably obvious to many, but it is worth describing for those who have no interest in health and don't know the problems that walk around a person and occasionally seem to come to visit him or her as if by chance. Then they wander in more and more often, until they settle in for good...

If people ate only cooked meals of cereals and meat, leaving fruits and most vegetables raw, it is likely that degeneration would be virtually non-existent. Also, if we didn't mix different foods together, which is often required by perverted tastes, it would be easier to digest without overloading the digestive system and creating too much waste. And the third rule of health is to avoid overeating, which people have also sinned quite often. This also causes digestion problems, no less than violation of the previous rules, because the stomach simply does not always have enough enzymes and digestive powers for the excess mass, the system is not designed for constant overloading.

Any of these infractions makes it difficult to assimilate what we eat, and these are the simplest rules, easily deduced from the very nature of things and our experience. They are also statutes (i.e. God's law for specifics) because He programmed and calculated our bodies and all their vital functions and if they are not obeyed He always destroys the Manufacturer's guarantee. He does not

is responsible for the illnesses that result from our unwillingness to listen and follow the operating instructions.

It's worth repeating the laws of health:

- What can be eaten raw is best eaten raw; what is worth boiling is not worth roasting, and roasting to brown crusts is not worth it at all

- Do not mix things that interfere with each other's digestion and assimilation - if proteins require an acidic environment, carbohydrates are better broken down in an alkaline environment; there are legumes that are rich in both, but therefore they take longer to digest, and not all successfully; the effects of disorders are not always obvious due to the fact that many have high vitality and adaptability of the body to successfully handle overload, but do not abuse the stock of strength, this in itself is not good business, here one takes risks

- There are things that are compatible and things that are not compatible, and probably many people know from experience which ones; it may even be that these can be different things for different people and it is important that everyone knows their limitations and not impose them on others (which means that they have not yet understood enough about health issues)

- overeating is the enemy, even healthy food in excess will more often cause more harm than combining incompatible foods in small quantities; the reason for this is the simple lack of digestive means of the body to out-volume; the reason is simple, but the consequences are not less

- Chew the food sufficiently so that there are no large (or even medium-sized) pieces, otherwise the digestive substances simply will not penetrate the lumps

Each of the disorders leads to some kind of failure in the processing of what we eat, and this in turn inevitably ensures that our intestines will produce something toxic from what we eat instead of good nutritious things. Instead of proper processing - the creation of a favorable bacterial-microbial atmosphere in the intestine (often already in the stomach), a painful one is created and formed, that is, the food mass is not properly fermented, fermented or putrefied.

The digestive system and its accompanying purification systems (liver and kidneys) are capable of neutralizing harmful substances, but they are not designed for excessive amounts of poisons. I'm not an expert, so I can't give you exact numbers, but for this conversation, the approximate numbers are sufficient. Let's say, the body can excrete up to 30 grams of waste without much tension. With exertion, twice as much. That's all. And if a person ate too much at a feast (and drank too much too) not only mixed food, difficult to digest, but also in quantities that are too much - what then? The organism is not able to eliminate these toxins and poisons from itself, and then it feels very bad. When the waste cannot be eliminated, it is deposited somewhere and becomes a solid residue, and then it is harder to get it out of the place where it is deposited, thus reducing the overall strength and energy of the body.

Yes, it often happens that our mouth (or even a large part of the body) loves something, and we are not used to listening to the body, we can not hear or feel how the stomach or liver wrinkles at the sight of the same product, they still work with it ... This is already bifurcation, lack of unity, integrity in our life on the simplest -

The same thing often happens in other spheres. And yet this is often the case in other spheres as well. Dangerous and harmful things are evaluated only in terms of entertainment, while raptures can be very, very different, that is, some satisfy their interest with things that are destructive to them, while others are happy with things that provide them with strength and health in addition to pleasure.

For a long time our body, if it originally received a good energy potential - health - from parents, holds on in such hostile food conditions at the expense of filters and a strong digestive system. As long as our liver and kidneys are intact and strong, as long as our organism is not too clogged up with toxins, our health will be good. But sooner or later (and the more often they happen, the faster), our body will accumulate wastes. If binges are rare, then in between the body will be painful or sometimes, quite possible, painless, to cleanse itself. But here too, many people give the body additional problems - people don't let the body purify itself. They start "treating" it by removing fever, inflammation and painful processes. And instead of healing the organs that are being cleansed, the blockages go deep inside. The disease takes on systemic features, when no matter which side you pull, the knot only gets tighter. Of course, even so, the body is still quite strong and can recover, but you have to give it that opportunity. If a person does not consider the pleasures in life (the worst of pleasures, of course, they are infinite and varied, but many people are tied to only the simplest of them) the main thing, then he saves himself from many problems, if he decides to have pleasures while he can, then the worst thing is that the pleasures for which he decided to ruin himself, with time stop being pleasures (without health they lose a lot of weight...). And one's last days are spent in an unpleasant, if not painful, payback for them. Often life does not end with a complete loss of health, and one still has to give them up naturally, because of the inability to enjoy the same foods or substances - and wasn't it better to do it earlier, without depriving oneself of many other pleasures? I'm somehow very sure that the main pleasure is health, the other ways of feeling pleasure from something are derivatives of it.

This is just an introduction to the subject of health, and it is not the place to cover the whole subject here, but since God and health are connected quite directly, it is necessary to talk about it.

Abraham swore⁷⁴ the servant to do exactly as he said. He forbade Isaac to take a wife from the local women. He was to go to Harran to the remaining members of his former family from whence he came, and find a suitable girl. But the matter was not secured, and the servant asks about this - what if the one suitable for Isaac did not want to go to Canaan, could Isaac then go to live in her area? Abraham forbade this because Isaac must live here without leaving his future inheritance for long. He assured the servant that it should work out for sure, but if anything went wrong with the human factor, he

⁷⁴ It means to bind oneself or another by an oath, a promise, a word. A spell can also mean adding a punishment clause to a promise or demand for breaking it, so it is almost a curse, only it differs from a curse in that the punishment only comes into effect if the promise is broken. If a person says - "I will do it," it's a promise. But if he says to that, "If I don't do it, let this or that happen to me," it's a curse. Or if the one who demands something or entrusts it adds a clause about penalties for not doing it, that's also a curse. A curse is usually pronounced for something already done, whereas a spell is stipulated beforehand.

would be free from his vow to Abraham. Then the matter would be left up to Isaac himself, and certainly to God, who was interested in providing Isaac with everything he needed for His own plans. It would not have been a disaster, there were other relatives left, and there were other tribes on the earth besides the Canaanites, Isaac would not have been alone in any way, just that the Harran option was the easiest and most reliable one for Abraham by all calculations.

Abraham provided the servant with jewels for gifts for the bride's family, but this man also had his own contribution to make; he assembled the caravan as he saw fit, who and what to take for the journey and the whole mission. In his search for a bride for his heir, this steward might have spent considerable time getting to know Abraham's community in Harran, so he prepared for the journey thoroughly. Still, Abraham's closest relatives in the house of Bethuel were the primary target, as is evident from the steward's subsequent words.

When the caravan arrived in Harran, it was evening. Abraham's servant had by this time mapped out a rather unusual plan of action for himself, based not on calculation or even luck, as one might think, but directly on God. Abraham, though he does not seem to have ever done any explicit missionary work among the Canaanites, in the sense of organizing any education or propaganda, had not only enlightened people in his house and household, but really knew God and His ways, imbued with true knowledge, preserved from the ancestors and multiplied by Abraham. His workmen were the same patterns of righteousness and life as Abraham himself, and the steward was also an outstanding man in every way. He may be the same Eliezer of Damascus whom Abraham mentioned to God the first time he spoke of an heir. He had a way of identifying the right girl for Isaac - so that God Himself would point her out. He gave himself and God a sign, the fulfillment of which was the right signal. He said to God, "May the one who gives water to me and my camels be the woman we need.

It is interesting that, willingly or unwillingly, he makes a selection on the basis of politeness and courtesy, good character. This sort of thing is attracted to this sort of thing... A key quality for a good and happy life. However, how many attempts could he have made? If all the girls of Harran were polite, there was only one he would have to deal with who would get him drunk. And that might have been a girl of a different sort than Abraham's. And if not all of them were polite, how many would he have to ask of them? Besides, how could these girls think? - They could drink water anyway (it was a spring, not a well), you could bend down and drink it, and many girls could avoid talking to strangers, others could be in a hurry for supper, so they could find many ways to refuse, not necessarily rude and harsh. They would carry jugs on their shoulders or heads and it was not very decent to ask them to make some extra movements, to make it difficult; that was another part of the matter, and also an objective factor - don't you see, dear man, we are busy with our work... And to think afterwards themselves - all kinds of people walk around, they have their servants, and in the stock they can find a pail and a jug to scoop... something suspicious. Or even to express something like that aloud. Adults are sedate and more inclined to respect and talk to their elders, and the young have their own layer of customs and habits, not yet polished and not fully ennobled. Although they may well show their best traits with a non-zero probability. And that's the probability the governor wants to discover.

He knew from Abraham on which end of the city his relatives lived, of which there may have been many families by this time, so Eliezer came to the right place, where there was a high probability that the immigrants from Ur of the Chaldees lived.

He chose the one he liked best - he had a good knowledge of people, he could feel their qualities - if you know what to look at, you can read a lot about a person from their behavior and movements. He approached the most beautiful and best of all and asked for a drink and he was pleased to see her responding as kindly as he had hoped. It was a personal result of choosing the best, and getting what he expected and wanted! After all, if you approach the prettiest girl in town with a request, you will discover she is spoiled by attention and success, and is slow to respond, especially when it comes to small things, especially since she has not yet been abitively interested in anything. But Eliezer wanted to bring his master the best and so he risked starting with the most attractive option. God did not let him down - the attempt was a one hundred percent hit. And the bride was beautiful, and, most importantly, from exactly the line and house Abraham wanted, from his relatives, though Eliezer didn't know it yet. The one he asked for a favor took a jug off his shoulder, got him drunk, and ran to water his camels. Amazing natura! But it is in the vein of hospitality, if you receive a guest well, give him shelter and food, then doing a stranger a favor is the same, after all, he is also a guest in a place he is not familiar with. She behaved correctly, imitating the best qualities of the best people in her town, doing what she had been taught since childhood. Not everyone follows advice and lives it, but here and now, hopes and dreams and reality collide.

Eliezer saw the answer to his request, in which he made a condition to God, to which He responded faster than he could say it in his head. As he was still speaking, turning inwardly to God, he saw Rebekah as she came to fetch water. He waited while she fetched water and planned to ask no one else, feeling that he must try his luck with this maiden alone. He had already realized that his question had been answered, and now only watched with some exasperation as the action unfolded. He was trying to determine if it was an accident, if it was really an answer from God, so he asked a question that might further clarify the situation-"whose daughter are you? At first he thanked her for her kindness and courtesy with a pair of gold bracelets and an earring weighing a hundred grams, probably embarrassing her and the others present with such generosity. Her answer dispelled any doubt; she was the daughter of Abraham's nephew, Bethuel, who was his grandniece and cousin to Isaac. Abraham's task, which coincided with God's will, began to succeed. Eliezer went exactly to the right place and to the right people. Coincidence makes it hard to explain, and he sensed that as soon as he saw Rebekah he knew from whom to ask for water. Once again he had seen how God guides and directs, how He shows and prompts. Although as an experienced and knowledgeable man, this was not the first time he had encountered this, he had gone through all his problems and adventures with Abraham, just to see God's hand in action once again was costly.

After the gift and inquiring about their parents, Eliezer hinted if they could stay with them, and Rebekah, though neither a man nor the eldest in the house, invited⁷⁵ them to her house, assuring them that they had not only a place to sleep, but also food for the animals. Eliezer worshipped God in sentiment with all the gratitude and delight of success and the apparent assistance of the divine hand, and Rebekah ran home to tell of the noble guests, surprises and gifts. The jug was probably left here; even the strong and nimble can't run with it, though who knows... They probably took it away a little later.

Rebekah ran home and told her mother that they were going to have visitors from a far country, from Abraham. Her brother Laban ran to meet and escort the dear guest and all his household to the house.

75 An important point for those who say that women in ancient times were as powerless as they are today in some Eastern cultures. In antiquity we see in this example the emancipation and a certain freedom of women, which was maintained for a long time. We need to go back to the beginning....

he was not to be a stranger. When he saw the expensive gifts in his sister's hands, he might have had additional respect for the person who had come. He had not shown the best traits of greed in later dealings with the sister's son, Jacob, but now he was young and had every chance to learn from this story the healthy and useful things of communicating with a significant person of God's emerging people and seeing the hand of God in what was now happening to his family. He addressed Eliezer as "blessed by the Hereafter," which shows his respect for Abraham and his people, his own definite commitment to God. He had good inclination at the time... He invited them all into the house, walked them in, and helped with the setting up of the animals.

The table was set, but Eliezer refused to eat, feeling that there were certain matters to be resolved at this moment, and he could not even eat without resolving what was troubling him. It was as if he feared that if he relaxed when God was helping him, God might leave him, and that the good fortune and device in all matters would disappear, and a streak of failure would begin... "Strike while the iron is hot" - again the Russian wisdom in this Jewish story... Although this nation did not exist then, as Eliezer himself was from Damascus. However, this is not only a Russian proverb, even a brief glance at proverbs shows that they come from deeper layers than language (or languages have a lot in common, no matter how different peoples treat each other).

He said, "I won't eat until I tell you my business. He was invited to tell them what it was that was troubling him, that he was acting so impolitely, why he was in such a hurry. He briefly explained the circumstances of Abraham, the miraculous birth of Isaac, to whom he was seeking a bride, Abraham's own instructions as to where to find her, and the other circumstances that had brought him right into this house with all the signs of God's leadership in the matter. It didn't take long, maybe ten minutes, so the people were hardly starved, rather the opposite, all engrossed and interested in the story. To the house of Bethuel it was all a meaningful reminder of the living God, whom they were in danger of forgetting and losing interest in walking in His ways. After the story, Abraham's steward asks the direct question if they intend to help him and Abraham, to help God who has arranged for them this opportunity to participate in His plans and works. Who knows, thought Eliezer, if they have some brilliant plans of their own for Rebekah's future, or if she herself has a young man in mind, so he asks, as if in a hurry to finish what had begun so well. He does not here seem like a skilled matchmaker, skillfully and unhurriedly bargaining for a bride, not using gold and jewels, as the professionals would have done in his place (perhaps there were initial gifts to Rebekah, but far from it). Bethuel and Laban, seeing such haste, did not condemn him, though they shrugged their shoulders. They responded as any faithful man would in such cases-"since it is a work of God, we cannot oppose it." They gave their consent to Rebekah's marriage to Isaac. Although the matchmaking did not take place according to all the rules, it was a minor matter for the occasion, not worth much attention. Although they may have wanted a more elaborate agreement that was not so hasty. But they did realize that such a party for their daughter and sister was very successful in every way, not only financially. And after all, Abraham's steward was right, God's hand was here, and there was no need to furnish it with any calculations, especially since the calculations also led in the same direction.

Hearing this answer, desired and as if having no other normal solution, Eliezer worshipped this family wholeheartedly. A stone of responsibility and fear that something might go wrong fell from his shoulders. Only now he opens his coffers and his boxes of money and jewels. Then, at last, he begins to feast.

But the rush that was pushing Eliezer did not end there, only made a break for it. In the morning, as soon as he got up and cleaned himself up, the steward felt the need to take his joy back to the one who had sent him. He asked that they be released today. The plans of the ro-

I was not aware that such haste was part of my parents' plan, but it did not cause any problems; there were no objections, except a simple desire to say goodbye to my daughter, who was about to leave the house. They offered to let them stay longer, ten days, because they might never see each other again; that was the point. It was not her father who asked for it, but her mother and brother, as they were more attached to her. But Eliezer made a good point, too - "He has arranged my way, so don't hold me back," that is, as long as His blessing over me and my way lasts, let me be and act in that field. The sense that procrastination could cause the blessing to diminish is evident in his words. Back then, people also had a notion of the white and black stripes of life... Was it really necessary to rush, or was this his subjective feeling? I think as an experienced man, he had seen more than once that obstacles, especially in the human element, can arise literally out of nothing, on an even keel, and his desire to keep luck, a wave of blessing from the Most High is quite justified. There are examples in the Bible of such procrastination, where for the sake of the table and being a guest, people got huge problems that did not end with them alone, but passed on to other people. So I personally side with Eliezer, trusting his feelings that he really had to hurry. If things had started and were not in the normal course of human relations, it would have been dangerous to change course, to change the protocols of procedures on the fly. Eliezer asked for guidance from on high, instead of the usual "normal" long search and selection in this city, and received an answer as to who would be a suitable bride for the heir to the greatest fortune in the history of the planet. Continuing with human custom may have introduced a human element, unreliable and unstable. People could question God's choice, pry into Eliezer's train of thought, and drag things out until the whole affair collapsed. So his desire to leave these people and this city as soon as possible was perfectly justified. Not the members of Bethuel's family themselves, but their neighbors and acquaintances, hearing the story, could twist the matter in their minds and whisper doubts to them, so that a delay here could cause a lot of trouble. So Eliezer forged the iron while it was hot.

Bethuel's family did not see anything wrong in Eliezer's desire to leave on the same day, God has kept them all for now, and they themselves had already given their blessing to Rebekah's marriage, but there was a last resort, Rebekah herself. It is not yet clear to me whether she was present when her father and brother agreed to her marriage to Abraham's son, at least her opinion was not asked at the time. She knew, couldn't help but know what had happened, her mother had at least told her about it, but she had not yet had her say, and if she had said "no," she would have. She had the right to decide and to vote, not in all cultures and not in all times were women or daughters deprived of their voice or human rights-as far back as Abraham's conversation with Eliezer this question sounds: "if a woman won't go?" So when Eliezer insists on going, Rebekah is called and asked, "Will you go with this man?" It was clear from the question that she already knew where and for what she could go, and she answered "I will." No one else argued, her will and decision helped settle all questions about parting and saying good-bye. She was escorted off with words of farewell and best wishes - "Our sister, may millions be born of you, and may your offspring own the homes of your enemies." This the brother, Laban, who obviously loved her and was attached to her by his friendly childhood, wished from the bottom of his heart. Rebekah and her maids then mounted their camels, and the kahlavan set out on his journey. At last the steward took his breath away. He bore the dangers of the journey more easily than he did the worry in the hospitable house of Bethuel that something might upset what had begun well. He understood that he was being treated as a rich and powerful man, all the more so representing an even more important man, but in such cases there are many things that can be concealed that one must stay away from. It is no coincidence that wealth, influence, and power in the card system are denoted by the spades or swords, and although this is a strong simplification, it is still something to remember in this evil world.

While Eliezer went to Haran, Abraham sent for Isaac, who was not with his father at the time. He went south to Be'er Lahai Roi, perhaps for a short time. He was to wander these parts as his father had done, who was old for the long road and lived in Bathsheba. He arrived in time for the return of the caravan sent by Abraham. With a distance of about 800 kilometers, the journey might have taken two weeks (if not the Dromedaries, they can go three to five times faster). Moses notices an important quality in Isaac, a tendency to think, when he writes that he "went out into the field to meditate. For the founder of a Messianic people a quality of the utmost importance. So is it for any representative of such a people (and indeed for any people and any person). Going out in the evening into the hilly steppe (if Abraham planted a grove there, that means the terrain there was not originally wooded), Isaac enjoyed nature; it was easier to think and feel under those beauties. Eliezer's caravan was somewhat early to expect, but it was a good place to start, and Isaac was able to cast a glimpse of the road coming towards them from the north. So he spotted the caravan from afar, and moved toward them. Rebekah also saw a wayfarer coming toward them, and she asked Eliezer who it was. When she found out it was her fiancé, she put on a cloak to hide her face. Customs, however. At home she spoke easily to strangers without a veil, but in front of the bridegroom she had to hide her face, which apparently everyone or many did, and so she did.

In the beginning, covering the face was not a religious or sacred necessity; the appearance of burqas, hairbrushes, and capes is rather of pagan origin. The Bible does not mention any commandment (only the custom already in place) to cover the face of women (and sometimes of men as well). The covering of the face has only to do with psychology, with human nature, when it is one's own feeling that it is desirable to cover the face. However, people tend to underestimate things as well as overestimate them. In antiquity we can find cases of covering the face for brides, fornicators and prostitutes, and somehow some prophets serving false gods in Israel also did this during their prophecies. It is not known whether this gave them more authority or helped them to detach themselves from certain feelings.

The Muslim world likes to cover the face of women, and that is where we see almost all instances of covering the face. However, as far as I know, the Koran itself does not declare an open face as a sin, only recommends it for some reason, which is based more on the same old customs. The custom of covering women's faces grew stronger and stronger over time, and by the beginning of the 20th century it reached its peak, when in Central Asia the burqa or something similar had to be worn by all women. In older times, even a hundred years before that, faces were covered more in the cities, while in the villages there was practically no face covering.

Rebekah covered her face according to the marriage customs of her region. By this she emphasized that Isaac was her groom. That is, she rode in the caravan with the men with her face open, and it was no problem, and only in front of the bridegroom, to emphasize her attitude toward him, did she cover her face with a cloak of hair. The features of her face might well have been discernible through such covers, but even if Isaac could not see her face and might have wondered "is my bride beautiful?" - Eliezer, if he had seen his questioning look, might have given him a thumbs-up, saying, "Don't doubt it, boy!" Abraham's clan was not yet as weakened as many others, and so the beauty of its members was guaranteed, so there was no need to doubt the bridegroom's beauty even then. Also the members of the clan had an increased similarity of many traits, were of the same type of build, which is responsible for the compatibility of men and women, so that the probability of a very good choice even "blindly" was high, even

if there was not much of a choice. And given that Rebekah was originally intended by God to be Isaac's wife (not necessarily by Abraham or Baphuel), as is evident from the direct immediate response to Eliezer's request, their compatibility was complete, guaranteeing mutual complementarity, understanding at a glance, and other pleasures and happiness in general.

Moses does not describe a wedding or any rituals. The arrangement was made by the governor at Haran, and we find no elaborate rites or customs in the marriage sphere in the description of the life of the ancient people. All that is described here, as in many other cases, is simply the beginning of life together without any elaborate formalities such as registration, paperwork, witnesses or weddings. We see only some control in the form of parental assistance in the contracting of the parties, but the union itself was accomplished by the young people themselves, without any intermediaries between them. Isaac, it is written, brought her into his mother's tent, and from that time she became his wife. Rebekah coming into his life brought him joy and helped him to expiate his longing for his mother, to whom he had been deeply attached and longing since her death three years earlier, which had not yet been forgotten. He was forty years old at the time, and Abraham was correspondingly one hundred and forty, after which Abraham lived thirty-five more years. Twenty years later, Isaac and Rebekah had twins, Esau and Jacob, who could see their grandfather Abraham until they were fifteen years old. If it had not been for Rebecca's barrenness, the children might have been born sooner, but it did not work itself out, so Isaac had to ask God for special permission, but when Isaac finally approached God with this problem, it was solved immediately. It sounds simple, but Isaac and Rebecca only had to wait five years less than Abraham and Sarah, who waited twenty-five years for their time of visitation (and this is only from entering Canaan, but if you count the time from the beginning of their marriage, it would be much longer). Although at a younger age than Abraham, Isaac waited only until he was sixty, twenty years is still a long time.

This delay is some indication of the purpose God has for his people. There are two types of cultures in terms of child-rearing and human development. Their difference can be characterized as one "quick" and the other "long". In animals we can see the difference in offspring - some require a long education and development, care and nurturing, while others are born and dry as soon as they are virtually ready for life. It is clear that the latter do not have complicated programs and are quite simple, if not primitive, for their existence it is enough to have built-in instincts, while the former are much more complex and cannot survive without training and support. But they can give out much more than the simpler ones. Humans by nature are among those who must not only grow, but also learn in order to discover their potentialities, though not all strive to do so, being satisfied with the minimum, living too simple a life. People of pleasure who live for simple pleasures have become trapped in their passions and have degraded rapidly, failing to educate new generations to their potentials, and have quickly simplified, much to the criticism and annoyance of their forefathers who saw their grandchildren and great-grandchildren degraded. This is where proverbs like this one echo: "The old ones moved mountains, but these ones will soon be climbing a mine with all hands". The established communities of lovers of simple pleasures did not bother to educate the generations, contenting themselves with a minimum, giving simplified rules, which were also poorly enforced. But not everyone followed this path, even though all human beings by nature were inclined to simplify for the sake of the same pleasures. But the example of sharply degraded communities

warned many in positions of responsibility in their tribes against

The result was that many tribes and groups merely protected themselves from degradation without reaching the possible heights. But few did what was needed, settling for a partial solution, and as a result, many tribes and groups simply prevented themselves from degenerating, not reaching the possible heights, settling for very little. Few reached the peaks, not all of them deserved, but only because they had the good fortune to have a caring leader or educator, who drove their people to the top, with a lot of effort and even violence.

The simplification and primitivization, the reduction of human potential, is no small sin and an affront to the Creator, who has given man an infinite⁷⁶ and the capacity for very great achievements. Without education and knowledge, without wisdom and full mastery of one's abilities, man is not completely human, and stays in the low stage of revelation of his nature.

Lastly, it may be mentioned that Abraham took another wife after Sarah's death and had six children by her. In addition to these six, the Bible speaks of children by concubines, although they are probably the same children of Hittite and Hagar. But all of them were later sent off with rich darlings somewhere in the east. These people, as far as I understand the case, along with the children of Ishmael and later Esau, made up the Arab tribes, keeping the differences of descent between them to this day. They could have been offended by Isaac or their father, but having been taught the knowledge of God, and enlightened in one way or another about Isaac's role in God's plans, they have maintained and continue to maintain, if not politically, then at least in the spiritual realm of religion, respect for the will of God and for the people descended from Isaac. Did Abraham violate the will of God by remarrying after Sarah? I do not judge categorically, I do not think so. It's a matter of life. Would he have been better off alone? If they hadn't made the mistake with Hagar, yes, it would have been better. But after Ishmael and the separate people from him, it was no longer critical. The rivalry between Abraham's sons was assured and Abraham's new children added little to the problem. On the other hand, Abraham had shown great strength and health, which, while not the best advertisement for the benefits of following God's will, was also present.

The issue of polygamy and concubines is on the lips of all critics of God, the Bible, and religion. Today the religion of Christianity is ascetic, but its past is still very much questioned by many, though not always deservedly, and sometimes serves as a stumbling block and a temptation to Christians themselves.

How polygamy came about is obvious. Wars took men, on the one hand they had to protect their families, tribes and cities, and on the other hand a large part of people (not only men) sought profit, which gave rise to conflicts and wars that devoured the strongest part of humanity. Women, on the other hand, were left behind, mostly to be preserved. In ancient times, when men were few and resources were scarce, there was plenty of everything, and even the territories were not overcrowded, even if occupied, it was not difficult to raise children. The surplus of women instantly created a situation where a widowed woman would go to someone who was inclined to help, to give her and her children their protection. The elders saw no problem, they needed people - the more people in the tribe, the stronger it was, the more it could afford, handle and do, and stronger in defense as well as offense. On the part of God, on whom many people were still guided, the people saw no objection either

76 Eccl.3:11 - where Solomon speaks of "peace" embedded in the heart of man, the word "olam" is used - eternity, infinity.

(direct objections), and how many really sought the will of God? Where paganism was emerging, all the more so, these considerations overshadowed everything and were themselves a justification for polygamy. But this was not a new thing; even before Popa, in earlier times taking property and women from a neighbor was a common thing; everything was decided by force or artifice. So the consideration of population growth was more than enough to justify polygamy. It seemed a perfectly natural solution to the loneliness of widows, and even the righteous teachers could not say anything against it, since the "against" reasons for polygamy were very weak in the eyes of the people. Clearly, all they could say was that the original charter of human life was "one man, one woman. But Lamech's act is also very old, and for that, the defenders of polygamy would say, he was not punished, and yet he was driven by a sense to help the "woman of Abel's murder" to have a family. It was unthinkable to leave a woman who could give many new members to society, to let such a valuable, in some circumstances even super-valuable resource stand idle.

But these are the considerations of men. How did God look at it? From Christ's words, you can half-assess it. His principled position is "it was not so in the beginning. That is, the unchanging God holds unchanging conceptions of right and wrong, of good and bad, and that only the permissibility or permissibility of certain departures from eternal principles depended on time. This is clear, and even the world of polygamy itself (though by no means all of it), in its civilizational development, gradually came to the same primordial monogamy. At the time of Christ, although the orders of antiquity were preserved and polygamy was not abolished, we no longer see it anywhere in Israel. And yet, did God consider Abraham's case with Hagar to be a sin? Or, as the caustic critics say, did He make an exception for him, like a sin for everyone else, but not for Abraham? Or something else? It was not only Abraham who had two wives, however, but Jacob and especially the kings of the Hebrew people were different in this.

Let's note at once the second option, "exceptions for the elect," is not an option for God. His justice is the same for all and His rules are the same. Rather, it is a mixture of the first and third options, where it was a sin, but it was not counted. How is that, you may ask?

It's probably understandable to anyone when an article of law for the same offense imposes different penalties. And people quite understand the necessity and reasonableness of such "staggered" laws, usually we are only indignant when someone who could be acquitted is given the maximum punishment, while someone "chosen" is given the mildest punishment, if that can be called a punishment.

We still need to understand the difference between sin and evil. Usually these things go together, but not always. Sin is a violation of the law, whereas evil is some kind of destruction, suffering or deprivation. When someone is punished for sin, the punisher, though he does wrong to the one he is punishing, he is not guilty, not before God, not before men, not even before the one he is punishing.

In the case of polygyny, evil is always present, because it violates the original charter of human nature, where two people meet and all their needs and requirements are satisfied to the maximum (ideally). The third one is superfluous here, there are not enough resources for him, the harmony possible in a couple (not all couples are harmonious, but even they do not have a "third") is inevitably destroyed. Suffering, co.

responsibly, too, are inevitable. That is, polygamy is evil, and God is only stating a fact here, not ascribing or creating guilt arbitrarily. But God did not impute it as a sin, taking it for granted that it would be too hard on people to demand a stricter adherence to the rules. People have lost sight of the meaning of His ordinances and laws and if they are also charged with breaking this statute (which is part of the seventh commandment schedule) it will make life harder and more difficult for them and His work as well. When men do not understand the meaning of sin, what is wrong with it, then if they are asked as severely for breaking this article as for breaking a clearly visible law with which they agree and the evil is obvious to them, an unpleasant situation will result, that men may begin to look at even serious laws as frivolously, or will be afraid and discouraged from not understanding what God needs from them, will be confused. We can say that He has entered into their situation and has shown understanding and humanity...

It is very difficult to resist illustrating this situation with a situation from an anecdote I heard from our deputy political officer. To make a long story short, a man from Russia came to the south, where it was possible to buy a license. He stopped at a red light, but when he saw his neighbor drive off, he followed too, thinking that it was the custom here, the other way round. Immediately he was stopped by the whistle of a policeman, who approached him and asked why he was running a red light. The man explains that his neighbor drove through a red light, so he, thinking it was the right thing to do, drove too. The policeman asks if he knows that he should not drive on red, and the guest of the republic answers that he knows, but...

- If you know, then you have violated, pay the fine.
- But what about them? - At the same time others were calmly running a red light...
- They don't know! Do you know?
- I know, of course, but...
- You know, pay!

I don't think we need to go on, the ending is irrelevant to our story, but this approach of "ignorant" and leniency to them makes more sense than it seems. Christ actually explained a similar divorce situation with this, saying in response to a question about how Moses allowed divorce, "Moses, because of your hard-heartedness, allowed you to divorce your wives.⁷⁷". When mankind evolves in any way, that greater and better understanding of an issue enables God to make rules that better suit man's true needs and nature.

So the question of polygamy has been set aside for a better time, for the greater development of Israel, of humanity, of civilization, and of other conditions. Greater severity is possible when one is willing and able to understand it. God holds to this principle in the lives of a great many people, as you can see again in the words of Christ when He clearly declares the "staggered" nature of man's punishment and responsibility - "To whom more shall be given ... more shall be exacted.⁷⁸". Therefore, we should not pick on Abraham as well as David or Solomon in the sense that God has a double standard. Solomon could indeed have been modest about the number of wives, but even if he had been more prudent in this matter he would still have had more than two and would not have pleased those who blame it on him or God.

77 Mat.19.8

78 Luke 12:47-48

There is still no double standard here-it would be a double standard if He were hard on some and lenient on others at the same time. But He has an approach by degree of development, not only of man, but also of mankind, by time and age, and these are not all different approaches for the "insiders" and the "outsiders. Although He asks more harshly of His own, He may not ask much of the strangers who do not know about His laws. The apostle Paul wrote that God will ask people as they understand His laws, saying of the Gentiles who do not know the law that "the work of the law is written"⁷⁹"In their minds, when their own thoughts "now accuse, now exculpate one another," revealing the laws of right and wrong from life itself, delving into the nature of things. As the Earth became more populated and society developed, the transient solutions were to fade into the shadows, giving way to a lighter, clearer understanding of the laws of life.

Something must be said about the phenomenon of concubines in the ancient world as well. In those days, when polygamy turned out to be an unprohibited (or unenforced) violation of the rules, this case was not a violation either, more so than the one already violated. The only difference was that the wives lived with their husbands in the same territory, while the concubines lived elsewhere. They could support themselves at the expense of the man, they could support themselves, but they were not alone, they had their own man. They had their own name, concubine, but what was her man called? Regardless of their status in the eyes of the people it was still marriage, husbands and wives... He might not be called husband, but he was their man and they belonged only to him. Only in those days it was not reprehensible enough to be considered a sin, nor could an independent living woman change her man for another without it being called and considered a violation of the law, adultery. There is one important difference between concubines and second or third wives and women of a reprehensible way of life who rent their nature - they had one man and their belonging did not change, it was permanent. This state of affairs was considered legitimate, although the status of a wife was higher than that of a concubine.

Since the original charter of human existence allowed only one relationship, it is clear that a relationship with another woman destroys the relationship with the previous one... That is, polygyny by its very nature kind of provokes divorce, since the constant change of partners within the polygamous family was, however one views it, a change permanently present in such a family, even on a microscale. It is a source of disharmony and misery, and not just for the woman. No one can be truly happy in a polygamous family. And when polygamous families appeared, so did divorce. Before that they were unlikely, because in ancient times people heard their nature more and chose not arbitrarily, but only those who suited them in real, who complemented them fully in personal sense, not only in sexual one. In general, although polygamy was not reprehensible in the eyes of men, and in many cases was also an indicator of high status, it was an evil, a tolerable evil in the eyes of God. The Messiah, expected by all, even by nature itself, was to bring a "change of customs," whether ancient or from the time of Moses, even with the permission of God himself, and no amount of tradition and sanctification over the centuries could save them. Anything that was not the original order of things had to go away sooner or later. So from the time of Christianity we can expect the original order to be restored, which is what happened with the questions of marriage, concubines and divorce. Christ demonstrated this when the Pharisees

79 Rom.2:14-15

asked him about divorces, and there he made it clear that the "permission" to give a letter of divorce was on the verge of being revoked.

James. The Beginning of the Chosen People

As already mentioned, Isaac and Rebekah had almost the same story as Abraham and Sarah, and they also had to wait a long time, almost twenty years, although it was resolved more easily and without too much friction. Apparently, the fathers' experience was good for their children. I must say that even Jacob had the same thing with Rachel, and her first child came after about six or seven years of waiting, when her rivals already had lots of children. But those wives were not the ones he was originally meant to have, so they were not subject to the same degree of God's washes - selves. In this line of God's conduct toward the chosen people we see the idea of a slow, delayed, even artificial delay for a purpose. Why does He make such a long wait?

In the animal kingdom we see differences in the length of childhood and the formative period in different animals. Those who have the simplest instincts and behavior programs are usually independent from birth, or need only minimal prompting, training and support. Those who have to learn complex behavioral programs and skills always have a long period of helplessness, when even food has to be put in their mouths. These facts suggest that the chosen people must have had a long period of formation and upbringing, they could not be precocious, unfit for masterful work. They had to learn a great deal of knowledge and skill, and be like God in skill and wisdom. Likewise the parents must have gained as much experience as possible, so that all that they had gained could be invested into the new generation without loss or distortion, in which wisdom, experience and knowledge were to be accumulated and multiplied. Only such qualities could reveal well enough to the inhabitants of the earth their God.

We should not think that God planned to give the Jews all the advantages for some bad purpose, as some believe, confusing everything in the world, the human with the divine, some people's purpose with that of God, the design with how it turned out in practice as a result of the enemy's many sabotages and subversions. He did not plan to make them masters and oppressors. What God had planned for the Jews was to be given through them to everyone else. They are but God's intermediaries, agents or contractors. If they wanted to get humanly by leaving God's plan out of it, they would be betraying their purpose and bringing very bad problems upon their heads, as they have done more than once. Their vocation was to serve mankind by example, not to be masters, or worse, oppressors. This is the unenviable lot of the Jews, and is it not because of the longing in their gaze that they cannot live as their simple human self would wish, when others suspect their secret mastery of the world, and they have not seen this in all their lives ...

So Isaac was forty years old when he found Rebekah. He was perfectly happy with her, but they had no children for a long time. But they did not murmur, having the example of their parents before them. After ten -teen years Isaac prayed about the problem, until then it was as if they just waited very patiently and didn't rush anywhere, and received an answer almost immediately, Rebekah became pregnant. It is true that as time passed, the babies in her belly began to fight with each other, and it looked quite serious, such blows from within were simply painful for the mother and, it is said, for the children themselves. They wondered what it was and if it was worth putting up with. Isn't there a sign? She turned to God with this question. At a later time, it belonged to

The stones of the high priest's robes were the urim and tumim, through which one could ask God and receive an answer. The glow of the right urim was a "yes" sign, while the misting of the tumim on the left shoulder was a "no" sign, and in this way one could ask rather difficult questions and have a dialogue with God. At the time of the patriarchs this was probably not an option, but one could either go to someone like Melchizedek, "the priest of all God", who was also a prophet, the liaison between God and men, or God could even answer her personally, if not through Isaac. However, she is said to have gone somewhere, perhaps to Abraham. Isaac appears to have had fewer encounters with God, but this is not indicative, the sheer number of such encounters says nothing about Isaac's spiritual problems or accomplishments, his journey may have been devoid of it, like so many other faithful and reliable people, because perfection and holiness do not depend on direct encounters with God. The person who lives under the influence of God is already bound to Him, even though he may not be able to hear His voice or see Him in person.

God answered her, whether in person or through someone, but she learned that these clashes in her life would continue into the future, they were a sign of the brothers' relationship. From them two nations were to come forth that would not get along with each other. Was this "programmed" by God, was it His will, was it "so necessary" out of some very important consideration? The Bible does not say anything about such a thing, so we can answer a clear "no" to such questions. In the future Paul will say words that seem to imply that God is somewhat biased, preferring Isaac and rejecting Esau long before they did anything good or bad, but he does not say that God endowed them with characters, nor does he say that he predetermined their fate. It is precisely from the characters that everything flows for them, as it does for all of us. For some, God even made the mistake of choosing the "deceitful and cunning" instead of the "upright and noble" Esau as his favorite (neither of which is true). Is Esau so noble in neglecting his birthright, his opportunity to give the world a Savior, to prepare his way? Such a trait is very substantially wrong for those who value these things. But of this there is yet to come, but for now it is worth considering what the apostle Paul is talking about. His further words show not the voluntaristic attitude of God, who arbitrarily assigns favorites, but objective knowledge, from which He knew who was who, and it was the moral character of each that provided the decision of God. Paul himself refers to the prophet Malachi, who relayed these words of God about Jacob and Esau, that he loved one and hated the other. And Paul is talking about foreknowledge, not arbitrary choice. In Romans 9 Paul says, "He says to Moses, 'Whom I will pardon, whom I will pity, whom I will pity. Everything is explained here, and in the light of these words everything begins to look different than it seems when we read that chapter. God has mercy on those who need it, not on the one who tries to *get* it, no matter how hard he wants it. Likewise, He pities those who are in trouble, who need help, not those who play on feelings and try to speculate on God's emotions, to appease Him. It is clear that those who want to play on God's feelings are in a better position than they want to portray, or they try to get something from Him on their own terms, that is, by maintaining some sin, not wanting to admit their guilt. This happens all the time; people very often want help from God, but they are not the least bit interested in His rules and laws, they don't want to hear about His conditions for help, so they disobey Him, but they want success and prosperity and His favour. That is, they are ready to use Him as a magic wand, an automaton of desires, but they do not take into account that it is the Master who has entrusted to them His resources to manage for a time. Even the life of a man is given to him from somewhere, he did not make himself, he did not create, assemble, build and run it... Even the parents are indirectly involved in this process, they are just "pressing the buttons", the Father is the one who is responsible for him.

of people, for each of us, is the One who calculated all our construction and existence, the One who launched their forebears into life.

Paul seems to be a bit of a "bummer", he does indeed for some reason present God's side harshly, but he does not put God as the one who programs who is to be saved and who is not. He takes up the grave paradox that indeed, as if there had to be "vessels of wrath," not just recipients of good. But he balances the seeming unfairness of his construction with the fact that God tolerates these ungodly people for a very long time. In the context of freedom of choice, Paul has no problem with this, especially given the large percentage of people who live casually, unconsciously, adrift. There are always many instruments of anger in their midst but if most people would consciously consider how to live their lives in the future and how to survive the final reckoning the laws of numbers would paint a very different picture of society and man, the different trends and pulls of society and man and greatly reduce the vessels of anger in the human race. What Paul writes is true, but it is a picture of the current condition of man and humanity, a snapshot of the current state of the world. He himself is quite aware of the role of human choice and that God is just and will not abandon anyone who truly seeks Him, who is aware of their situation, and will certainly give them opportunities and knowledge.

So the problems between the descendants of Esau and the Jews were not programmed from the outside; their history shows the reasons for their problems. They may not have had any of those reasons; they may have been easy to get around and solve things peacefully but unfortunately they ended up going the way they did. This is reflected in the fact that God knew about them before time began.

In the meantime, their confrontation in their mother's belly continued for some time, until it was time for them to be born. Esau was born first, with hair and red skin, so that Edom, a nickname that is similar to "Adam," meaning red, became his second name, which was also given to his descendants.

Jacob was the second to come out, and surprisingly and symbolically in their destinies, he had his hand on the heel of the older man. It was as if he were tripping him up or trying his best to hold him back. It was as if from the very beginning they sensed the characters and qualities of one another, and could not stand each other (fortunately, in fact, it was far from always this kind of relationship between them). And they reacted as best they could without reason, purely instinctively or animal-like, pushing against each other and causing their mother pain and fear. He was named Yakov, "heel grabber," a name that, to the Russian ear, has the familiar root "kov," meaning "fettters," "to fetter," and other such things. However, they grew up peacefully and without conflict, nothing about their childhood is said of their intrauterine existence. The clash predicted by their struggle in their mother's belly came to fruition much later.

In theory, both of these sons could have already been the founders of this special messianic nation-yes, although most of the blessings should have gone to the firstborn. Why was it only with Jacob's sons that God's chosen nation began, what prevented the two sons of Isaac from starting the process together, as Jacob's sons did? Was there something missing? The selection of the right traits had not yet been completed? But Jacob's sons were no gift either, for a time they were even more problematic than Esau, figuring out how to kill their own brother (although later they changed a lot), in some ways they were weaker spiritually, if only because the mothers of most of them were

Women who were not meant to be, who were taken as Jacob's wives by accident, who passed on to their children unkind character traits or at least indifference to high things.

I see only one glaring trait in Esau that prevents him from being part of that special people of God—a total preoccupation with earthly things, a lack of interest in, and even disregard for, spiritual things that God could not leave unresponsive. Had he been more interested in the prospects that were promised to Abraham, the chosen people could have already begun to be intelligent in this generation, the second from Abraham. But it was not only his disregard for the firstborn that prevented Esau from being counted among the glory of God; it was only the result of his general mood and state of mind; he also took two women as wives, both of whom were not of a character suitable for the chosen people. That they were Canaanites and Gentiles also exposed him for the worst, but they were also simply problematic family members, creating frequent troubles for Isaac and Rebekah. At the same time Isaac seems rather indifferent to Esau's spiritual condition in this regard, he did nothing to stop him from marrying, he continued to pamper him with his affection. His personal experience of participating in the sufferings of the Savior of the world has told him nothing of what is going on before him, he seems asleep and relaxed in a completely comfortable life. And the failed marriage of the beloved could have been a reminder, a wake-up call. Isaac may have thought about it, but he did not draw any conclusions or take any action. These were moments of Isaac's fall or weakness, of unworthiness compared to his father, who in his place would not have left such things without some kind of conclusion. This too was part of the prediction of that "great darkness and terror" that came upon Abraham on the day of the sacrifice of the slaughtered animals.

Selling the primogeniture

Esau became a skilled hunter. It was not a peaceful occupation, though. He could have been a shepherd if he liked animals, but he liked not to care for them, but to hunt, to chase, to catch, and to kill. However, these games are not harmless, they take the life, of the victim, or if unlucky, of the hunter. In and of itself, in the conditions of life on earth, this cannot be considered reprehensible or bad, but in the case of this particular family, making hunting a vocation is somehow not the best thing. It is as if Esau is following in the footsteps of Nimrod, who was also a successful hunter at the beginning of his journey. It is an occupation that requires focus and strength for risky moments, it requires heightened senses and error-free actions, but the mind may not develop, stopping at a sufficient level for hunting. Although it is not the only activity that develops these skills, Esau found himself absorbed in it. He is close to nature, living in the breath of the fields and forests, which is great in itself, but the purpose and calling of his ancestors, the call of God and the calling to serve mankind proved foreign to him. The skill and skill to kill proved to be not harmless to him, and removed him from the influence of the Spirit. And it seems to me that he himself chose this occupation precisely to distance himself from the calling of his kind. He once lied, and has not turned from his crooked ways, but has remained steadfast in them.

It is not surprising, therefore, that when his brother touched the subject of primogeniture, he reacted so sharply and dismissively. The birthright had two main components—the first was a material advantage in the division of the parents' inheritance, a double share, and the second was the right to be priest and elder of the family after his father's death. If he had wished to show his disinterestedness and his unwillingness to enrich himself at the expense of others, that would have been one thing; it is doubtful, because the double portion of the estate was not given for wealth and advantage, but on the contrary, to serve and support the other members of the clan, and to make sacrifices for his family, a considerable expense. That is to say, on the material side it was not

advantage, all privileges were concentrated precisely in the spiritual side of the matter.

But to be a teacher, a guardian of morality, order, spirituality, to be an educator of others - for some reason he did not want to see himself in it, moreover, he was drawn to it. So he reacted sharply to the mention of primogeniture. Did he want to show that he did not value material gain, that it was alien to him, that he was above all mercantile considerations? Or was it all this "stuff" about morals, rituals and rules that made him dislike them? The second thing is that life among nature did not instill in him any higher notions, although it seemed to raise him above the vanity of the world. He sold his right of seniority, not gave it away disinterestedly, if he really saw that he was not up to this high calling, and yet he did not resent it, as a nobleman should resent such an offer - to give up his right for a plate, however tasty, of food.

Jacob was just fine with that-he was someone who reached for the eternal questions, for whom his parents' and grandfather's stories about God and the fate of mankind were not empty words. If he saw that his older brother, the heir to such significant advantages, valued what he had inherited, he would be his helper and support in all things without any problem. There was no rivalry for rivalry's sake between them, a sign of struggle between them before they were born was more serious than that. Later Esau, in his complaint to his brother, mentioned only two points at which Jacob had done wrong to him. The first, that he had "taken the first birth," was not in any way objectionable, for he might not have sold it to him if he had thought it wrong. But when Jacob saw that Esau disliked almost everything connected with Abraham's heritage, he was very concerned. He wanted to step into this "holy place" that could not, should not, remain empty. Only he did not act in an obvious way, which got him in trouble with his brother and with the rest of the world - Jacob's mistake being used by the enemies of God and His work. In wanting to take his sacred place before God, unfortunately he did not act as a follower and worshiper of God, but as an as yet unconverted, unspiritual man. This was his problem.

Somehow, while reading Semyonova's *Wolfhound*, the theme of the divine twin brothers, one of the religions of that fantasy world, caught my eye. In the case of Jacob and Esau, it could have been a very similar story, but only if Esau was as dedicated an adept of the Being as the younger Jacob. Together they would have been able to move mountains... They would have complemented each other in their difference - Esau's vigor and strength would have been matched by Jacob's vigor of thought and search for solutions. But alas, it

The case was that Esau was on his way back from hunting, tired and hungry, and his brother already had his food ready. They were both old enough that there was no direct rivalry between them (and probably no rivalry at all, except as in most normal families), they successfully "separated" their parents - Esau was loved by his father, attracted by his older son's active character and his adventures in the fields and woods, as well as enjoying his meals from what he had done hunting. Jacob, on the other hand, was preferred by his mother, whose gentle character harmonized with her way of life, so that there was no conflict between them. Esau asked to share a meal with him, and Jacob, as if in jest (though he was very serious inside - this was the moment!), offered to sell him the birthright. And Esau said what he said - "What's in this eldership for me when I'm starving"? He is clearly weighed down by his responsibilities, of which his father and mother and grandfather had told him much. It is unlikely that the image of the skilled hunter who can kill and skin his prey is in harmony with this attitude towards the princely lot. I cannot imagine, for example, a Caucasian or an Arab who would react in this way to such an offer. It would have been an insult, and a grave one at that, with bad consequences. But Esau did not react to it as an insult then, or anytime soon thereafter. It was not until later, when Jacob

He had deceived his father, he had a reason and a great desire to kill his brother, only then does the reaction to the bargain, which until then had been a silent thorn in his side, become apparent. What would have happened if Jacob had exercised his purchased seniority in a non-fraudulent way? In time he would either have realized the offense of which he and he alone was guilty and repented of his criminal negligence for spiritual things, or he would have petty hated the one who had exposed his weakness, which might have led to the same enduring enmity between their descendants that was in the reality at hand. Esau was not bad at everything, but one of the apostles calls him "the wicked one who gave up his birthright for mere food. Sin is different from sin, the commandments differ in character, but the consequences of breaking any of them are destructive, even if the violation does not seem to involve suffering and deprivation or anything bad at all. But this destructiveness is visible to those who delve into and calculate the consequences of every deed, and in time it will become evident even to the farsighted.

The fact that Esau is displeased with his primogeniture shows that his father prepared him specifically for the role of patriarch as the favorite. He knew very well from his wife, or heard it personally, being with her when it was given, the prophecy of a younger man who would be stronger than the elder, but shows a kind of stubbornness and opposition. In this insistence on Isaac imposing on his son a role he did not like is the cause of the elder Esau's inner problems...

Jacob holds his breath - his brother agrees! And they make a deal - Jacob is now considered the eldest, and Esau gets his portion of lentils. But there may have been other ingredients and those who cooked them can tell you wonderful things about lentils and other legumes. Having eaten and refreshed and enjoyed his meal, Esau got up and went to his room and showed no sign of regret or even doubt about what he had just done. Rather, in this outburst of dissatisfaction with the role imposed upon him and the exchange of his right to food, he found some kind of satisfaction, his problem suddenly found its solution. Unfortunately, he did not pursue this line later, but began to think about the material benefits of primogeniture when he was older and began to look at life in a more down-to-earth way.

I once had to read a story by a young man of the teenage generation, which didn't seem to me at all like we were back in the day. They had there were some other outward traits in behavior that I didn't understand in general, it was as if they lived by completely different things and values (I even wondered if they had any at all?) - that's how it seemed to me then. I think you understood that I was talking about growing up in the nineties, when instead of the old communist propaganda came the propaganda of completely different things. However, that story helped me to understand that human nature remained in the same place it had always been. The external conditions had changed, but the reaction to them came from the same centers as any other generation. The gist of the story is this: In a group of teenagers, one suggested to the other that he sell his soul. Not much, not much, just like that. This was happening in an environment where the topic was not prohibited or silenced because it was a word that was rarely used, it was not their thing. The person who received the offer instinctively thought about it, because money is not usually offered for free, and it seems as if he is giving something away. But what is it? He didn't think about the soul, like the rest of them, and didn't care specifically (that doesn't mean they didn't have principles). And the "buyer" was hardly from Orthodox or any other milieu and did not do it with the far-reaching purpose of confusing the thoughtless boys, but was more educated and decided to come to his senses. Anyway, he thought about it for a while, but when he could not find a catch, he agreed to the bargain. He received a small sum of money and all he had to say in return were words confirming the sale of a "soul". The buyer said - here, I have an empty matchbook.

I'm going to put your soul here, and I'm going to keep it in this box and carry it in my pocket. And he put the box in his pocket. In spite of the seeming absence of necessary concepts in this environment, those who witnessed this action felt uncomfortable, especially the one who was selling. After a while he approached the seller and returned the money, asking for what he had sold... Although Esau was not selling a soul, it was not a significant issue between them, but nevertheless...

The reason Esau did not want to get involved with leadership in religion was not because he was alien to leadership - he had the necessary qualities in abundance, he was followed by many dashing men with whom he had great authority (when they met after Jacob's return from Laban, Esau had 400 men with weapons who went to fight with Jacob). He had everything he needed, but it was not the way of truth, the way of God, that attracted him. Somewhere within himself he wanted a little freedom, a wider freedom, not excluding some indulgence in pleasing himself - something that is so close to almost all ordinary "good" people. And this drove him away from his vocation... And the performance of rituals and spiritual teachings was really not his.

In my father's footsteps - repeating mistakes

This story happened even before the children were born⁸⁰. Isaac was searching for a better place to live because of crop failures and famine, and God came to him, as He had come to Abraham, and told him not to go to Egypt. There were other fertile places within Canaan; and one of these was familiar to him from his father's experience. That experience was not entirely successful or commendable, and Isaac might not have repeated that mistake, might have drawn conclusions, but somehow he did... They came to Gerar, and Isaac, who had gone through self-denial to death, somehow forgot his experience, forgot his fearlessness for God. It often happens that things in people's minds don't fit together much. Alas. Our mind is not shrewd and sharp in all things, it does not grasp everything on the fly, but since things have to be understood, then the connection between things has to be made manually, through deep thought, meditation. The human mind often finds food for thought, but not everyone tends to give it its due place, looking at things simplistically and too easily, trusting too much in the "don't overthink" attitude of most people. If the human mind worked as it should - keenly noticing EVERYTHING, then maybe connections between things and meanings would be established really automatically (though not without consciousness), but our mind is also distracted by emotions and not always correctly prioritized interests, depending on how we turn the vector of emotions and desires, or just give in to the waves of our emotions. Thus in an unthinking "automatic" mode things and tendencies remain untraced and instead of a coherent order of things in our minds, cluttered corners are formed, the mind suffers from indigestion and the spiritual sphere of man produces ghosts, if not monsters, instead of sensible things (the same "sleep of the mind gives birth to monsters").

In short, Isaac feared for his life and, like his father, put his wife, and himself, along with his honor, at risk, questioning and censuring his wife by calling her his sister. If Abraham was a mild-mannered man, Isaac doubly inherited this quality, and when after years of quiet life he found himself in an uncomfortable, potentially threatening environment, he took the same relaxed route - "then what happens, a dead man doesn't need his wife, they'll take his wife away, but right now I'll take my own care"... Most likely Abraham did not share with him his conclusions about such blunders of the past, or only touched them slightly, so

80 In the Bible, this chapter with the account of things earlier is not in chronological order, so I digress as well.

that he did not put in his son a safety net against the dangers of his own fear. Either in practice it was not as easy as it seemed when the warnings and lessons were sounded.

This same Abimelech, who had been deceived by Abraham, was again set up by his son (or since "Abimelech" means "father of the king," each successive king received the same name, an inherited position, it was a new Abimelech, though not unbelievable and a debt to the Philistines, especially in those early days). Isaac feared the Philistines as rude and cruel people, but the king of Gerar was also worried about his city, knowing that it was dangerous to touch Abraham or Isaac, knowing the powers behind them. Fortunately, by chance Abimelech saw that Isaac's relationship with Rebekah was not at all fraternal and immediately told Isaac that he was doing extremely wrong, that his wife, thinking she was a free woman, was being targeted by someone in his circle, and the consequences would be bad for everyone. It's a good lesson to be less afraid, after all. After all, there are powers behind you, and you don't take them into account at all, is something Isaac would think, or Abimelech, who in his long life has seen and learned a lot, would say. The Philistines may have been what Abraham and Isaac thought they were, but their king was a most worthy man.

Isaac was not expelled as Abraham had been the last time, apparently Abimelech was used to them and did not consider them strangers, especially since Abraham had been his ally in his last years and they had possessions in his territory. Isaac lived in the land and had a successful economy, but, as Genesis chapter 26 describes this period of his life, endured a great deal from the Philistines. Their character was in some ways really not exemplary; they argued with him about wells, hurting him over trifles. It got to the point that when Isaac, on account of his great success in farming (the usual occupation of this family before and after was animal husbandry, but for some reason Isaac decided to try his hand at cereals, and succeeded very well) became richer than many of them, they demanded that he leave their borders, and even Abimelech joined in these demands. Though he himself was hardly hostile to Abraham's son, the people's animosity toward Isaac made him uneasy, and to avoid more trouble he thought it best that he go himself.

Isaac lived for a time near these parts, but later went to his possessions in Beersheba (again within the kingdom of Abimelech) and lived there. Some time later the same men, Abimelech and Ahuzaf, came to him, as they had once come to Abraham, with a commander of an army to seal the same agreement as they had with Abraham. Isaac expressed some surprise at this visit, for they had recently driven him from their midst, but Abimelech tried his best to mitigate the impression, diatribing the popular indignation by adding, "with you the blessings of your God, you have lost nothing in consequence, and we wish to be friends with you nevertheless." Indeed, friendship is sometimes much easier at a distance than at close quarters, and wise people keep their distance if they do not see a close relationship of souls or minds, protecting themselves and others from the problems of misunderstanding and distortion of each other's motives, which too often happens at close quarters. This is not to say that close friendship itself is to blame for anything - if people understand each other easily, they will benefit more from close ties, but not everyone is so attuned and accustomed.

Father's Deception

After Jacob bought his seniority, nothing else happened. Perhaps Esau may have thought that what had happened between him and his brother would make no difference in his fate or his father's attitude toward him. It seems to me that he was so relieved without the responsibility that was weighing on his soul until now that he no longer cared or thought about it. But the matter was more serious than either of them expected. Jacob got what he wanted from his brother, but could he turn what he bought into real value, into seniority in the race of the righteous? Would his father know him as an elder, give him the blessing that follows from his newfound right?

Would the legacy that was due to the elder of the family give him a double share? The father did not know this because everyone was silent. It appears that Jacob did not receive anything of his father's estate afterwards, there is no such record in Genesis, though perhaps it is simply not said. But Jacob did not need anything at all, he had achieved a great deal by his own hand. Jacob does not look like someone who wants to get ahead for the sake of goods and benefits, he was looking precisely for nearness to God, for belonging to a higher calling.

Isaac, their father, felt that his time to die was approaching⁸¹. He felt weak, his eyesight was also severely impaired, and so he decided that his time was near. It is true that here he was mistaken and exaggerated something, because after that he lived about forty-five years. He asked nothing of God's will; in fact, in the situation of his strange attachment to one of his sons, he showed a certain weakening of his spirituality, a relaxation. So, naturally, he wanted to bestow a blessing on the favorite, which contained not only his will, but also the power of the Most High. And he considers only Esau alone, not taking Jacob into account, not taking him into account in any way. Rebecca, I think, has pointed out to him more than once or twice the faults and unfitness of Esau, the prophecy of Jacob and his interest in Abraham's legacy. It's not good of him to ignore the younger's yearning for spirituality, his honesty and diligence, and to overlook the older's serious shortcomings. Esau had by this time taken two wives for himself, perfect Gentiles, which would have been like the sound of a siren to Abraham, but Isaac somehow continues the line he has long intended, that Esau should be patriarch. Jacob does not play any games at this point, though, on the other hand, nor does he openly act either, going to his father with the announcement that he and not Esau is now first, even though he should have informed him of the deal and that he is now first-born by right. If he saw that Esau was not up to his calling, he should have spoken to his father about it. Had he done so, the whole story could have gone down a very different road.

It is more likely that Jacob chose to trust God, remembering Abraham's experiences and his fall, when he acted from himself, not according to the principles to which he was called. And this could have been all right - but, except for one thing - such matters as ceding one's right to another must be declared, it is a very serious matter, far from being personal. But one can understand Jacob's reasoning in keeping silent about the acquisition. The fact is that the good his father wanted to endow the favorite was not up to him alone, as Solomon notes - "the heart of kings is in the hand of the Most High." At the last moment, unexpected factors could have come into play, other thoughts could have occurred, or even that unspiritual spirit of blessing Esau could have been lost altogether, the momentum could have faded and Esau's blessing could have become a pathetic effort that would have upset both Esau and Isaac. Jacob could have simply turned to God at that time, for though informally (though he was formally entitled to it), he was already entitled to a special relationship with Him, and would not have gone unanswered. Then Isaac, sooner or later, would have thought of the other son, and the failed blessing for Esau would have turned into a powerful stream of consciousness for Jacob, which he had undeservedly neglected.

However, at this point his mother intervened in Jacob's destiny, seemingly wishing almost the same thing, but with a very different mood, with a different spirit, and spoiled everything that could be spoiled. She, knowing that God must be on the side of her youngest son, remembering the words of the angel, began to act in the heat of time in the most wrong way, sowing the seeds of great trouble not only for her son, but also for herself, not to mention destroying the destinies of whole nations. She tried to promote Jacob, not as a spiritual man with a vocation to a holy cause, but as her favorite, caring more about his material position than about the success of his vocation.

81 Roughly this happened when he was 136 years old, at which time Jacob was about 76 years old. Immediately after these events he fled to Haran to Laban, where he stayed for 20 years.

She appreciated his thoughtfulness and his attraction to higher subjects, yet the way she took to help her son was a disservice, a destructive act. Here she acted in the same style as Sarah, who offered a maid as a wife to Abraham in order to produce a son in her own way, since God was in no hurry to help them. Again it was an attack of darkness, very successful in neutralizing God's plan for a holy nation. Again the cloud of "darkness and terror" struck a note in the incipient melody of the plan of salvation. She would have simply come to the ceremony that Isaac had decided to hold in secret from her and Jacob (which in itself speaks of his awareness of his wrongdoing), to intervene and demand a trial, and there would have been no need to deceive anyone and involve her son in an unworthy cause. The patriarch's blessing is not held in secret ... But what she undertook was of no higher quality than what Isaac was doing.

How much does the unworthiness, failures, and sins of those particular people who are to bring light into the world by their example spoil the work of salvation or God's plans? Very much so. It is difficult to convey the level of hatred of some not even individuals but whole groups who have gathered and concentrated for themselves all the negative things from the Bible and the lives of those who represent or should represent God and impart knowledge of Him and the grand enterprise He has undertaken for the world.

But this is an extreme that cannot but arise in society, for people by nature realize everything possible, and even common sense and extreme costs are not always a barrier to them. And in the final judgment those who contributed to this attitude toward the Bible, toward the biblical God, toward the Jews, toward Christianity, will have to receive in full, all those who gave reason for disappointment and hatred. However haters of one thing or another act out of reason, it is too much excessive, unreasonable hatred. More sane people do not fall into this trap of irrational hatred, realizing that the problems of the Jews stem from the structure and nature of man. There have been better nations somewhere, there have been worse. God Himself resents Israel, setting up the example of the Gentiles who never changed their gods, when the Jews endeavored to imitate others, not appreciating what they had, almost ashamed of their God and their simple religion.

Rebekah demanded that Jacob dress in Esau's clothes, disguise himself as Esau, imitating his hair with animal skins, and receive his blessing instead. Jacob tried to resist, but did not do so vigorously; on the contrary, he was led astray and only weakly objected. His objections were not principled, he did not point out to her how a spiritual man should act, that what she was proposing was wrong in the first place, but merely that they might get caught and then there might be trouble. He said that the father would easily deduce deception if he touched Jacob, because they were very different to the touch of Esau. And his voice would have given him away, which almost didn't happen. But Rebekah had something to say about this and Jacob, who made a weak, unprincipled objection, could not resist her pressure any further. He was under no small amount of pressure from the darkness at this time, and did not shake himself, but swam with the current.

What was it? They were counting on not missing their father's blessing, as if that were the only significant factor. But what would happen if the deception became apparent? Wouldn't the father curse the deceiver, for he was not his favorite son, while hurting the favorite, dishonorably stealing the most precious moments of his father's heart's desire? In other families this could easily have happened. And Esau - wouldn't he take up arms? After all, that's exactly what he had promised, and it almost happened, and more than once. The first time was an urgent escape from home and, if I'm not mistaken, my mother never saw her beloved Jacob again - when he returned twenty years later,

She is no longer mentioned anywhere (although by her age she could still live a long time, so it is possible that she saw her son and grandchildren). And the second time was saved only by divine intervention, and that through a very serious struggle with God, when, like his father and grandfather, he had to go through the agony of self-denial. Anyone here will ask, Was it difficult for them to appreciate the reaction of the other side to the best of their ability? They could have, they should have, but for some reason they didn't. And this is the pattern of many people who show weakness at a crucial moment, even though they are capable of the best, and on other occasions quite show their best abilities. Man is subjective, too complex, and there are moments when everything against you, both inside and outside, is in the way, disruptive, distracting. Those who haven't had such moments could throw a stone. But it's better not to, it's better to make sure that such things don't happen to yourself. Sooner or later the alertness and alertness doesn't just happen, it's not designed to happen by itself, it just happens that people become disconnected and weakened, and their attention tends to wander off by itself ... Yes you can and should go further but you cannot expect them to never fail, never to work the same way they always do. The only real solution is to cooperate with a greater being than man, with One who exists for this very purpose, to take on things that are beyond our control. This is one aspect of God, to keep and protect us always, whether we are asleep or awake. Yes, it is clear that He delegates a lot to us, and the more developed we are, the more responsibility we get along with the possibilities, but no matter how much we reach, beside Him we remain children, whom He is ready to take care of, to keep us safe where only He can see the problem.

But in this case, Jacob himself had something that suggested that if his father gave Esau his blessing, all would supposedly be lost for him. This was not true for several reasons, but under pressure from his mother and circumstances, like Eve at the tree of knowledge of good and evil, he did not have enough time to look around, and he did not think of stepping aside to do so, nor was he allowed to. He should have resolutely rejected all attempts to involve him in these matters of the flesh at once, and if he missed one stroke, at least he could have cut short all these foolish and reckless plans of his mother before he entered his father's house. And even going in to his father, he could not have hidden himself, but could have said outright what needed to be said - about the deal between him and Esau, that Esau was no longer the firstborn by right, or at least asked for his blessing for himself as one who bought the firstborn, for the status he had gained. And there would have been no problem at all, or an order of magnitude less, and everything would have been fair.

In general, no one gave God any room at the time... However, to take the ultimate case, if even Jacob did nothing, and if Isaac with all his strength bestowed the blessing on Esau, with his honesty and thirst for spiritual riches Jacob would become a powerful support for God's work on earth. A support for his brother, with invisible power, inspiring new research and discoveries, with the support of his formal eldership, he would become an indispensable advisor in all directions. If Esau had utterly failed to live up to the expectations, God would have eliminated him, just as He eliminated the children of Judah in his day. But God would not allow spiritual benefits to be placed on an unworthy man, so he could easily interfere in the blessing procedure, and Isaac's plan would not go as he thought it would.

But Jacob did what his mother demanded, and on the verge of failing, he somehow convinced his father that he was Esau. He was very hesitant because of his voice and intonation, but still somehow gave in to Jacob's words. After enjoying his favorite meal, which Rebekah had managed to make no worse than Esau's game, and breathing in the smell of Esau's hunter's field-scented clothes worn by the poor deceiver, his father was filled with inspiration - God had allowed him to be filled with the expected nastiness and word, which to Isaac was a sign that everything was going right. And Isaac spoke all that God also wanted to give a worthy heir to the great promises of humanity's salvation. And Jacob was given a huge advance.

But the advantages he received brought with them responsibilities as well. The advantages, however, came later, but in the meantime Esau's former first-born son returned from the hunt...

He brought the game, cooked it, and brought it to his father. He went in to him, offered him something to eat and then blessed him as he had planned. Esau had an oddity too - if we think of him as a man of honour (unlike Jacob, whose name was a symbol of dishonesty, though in fact he had done very few things to be blamed - only once in his life he had done wrong! - and not on his own initiative, which is essential), he should have reported to his father that he was no longer the first-born, that he had simply sold his right. But he did not do this; he continued to pretend as if nothing had happened and he was still his father's favorite. He felt that his father would not have liked it very much and he did not consider the material advantages and the authority that were to fall to him excessive, and whether they were deserved or not he, like any other man alien to the spirit, did not worry...

Isaac, hearing once again the same offer to eat his favorite food and to bless, only this time in a real voice from Esau, who, even without groping, verified that it was he and no one else, shuddered greatly. He quickly realized what had happened. Did he realize, at least here, that Jacob's attraction to higher subjects was not accidental, since it had pushed him even to such a very risky venture? He could not help noticing that Jacob was reaching upward, while Esau was rough and down-to-earth, but the mental intimacy put him in an awkward position; he could not pay tribute to his younger son for fear of offending his favorite Esau by doing so. And now even that little weakness was costing them all. He felt his own guilt at Jacob's guilt as well, and was shaken by the consequences of seemingly perfectly harmless little breaches of justice at the expense of seeming comfort and convenience, leading to a great conflict. He sensed that the matter smelled of blood, which might well have happened in the near future, and in the time that followed had occurred more than once in the relations of these nations. Once again, the "darkness and terror" from Abraham's vision at the making of the covenant continued to gain momentum.

In a few moments Isaac drew many important conclusions, the most important of which was that Jacob should have his share, even though he had done so in violation of the rules. Esau had not sold his birthright for nothing, and his father finally understood this. He replied to his son that he could not bless him. For some reason he thought there could only be one blessing (Jacob had successfully disproved that idea on his sons). And not preparing a second blessing for the youngest, in a way that actually neglected him, resulted in his having to refuse Esau at this point. But he pleaded, for some reason now he noticed that his father's words of good wishes had weight and significance. And the birthright, which he had longed for and neglected, was also somewhere near here shining with considerable glory. He had never thought of such things in the past other than disparagingly, but now it touched him. "Don't you only have one blessing?" - he demanded of his father. The fact that his brother would be without a blessing hadn't bothered him before, but now it turned out that it would come in handy for himself. So his father, well advised, plucked up courage, and did his best to please his beloved son. But he was not very successful without inspiration from on high. It did not come through. Esau, when he heard his father say that he would be enslaved to his brother for a long time, he became even more upset and angry, promising to kill Jacob as soon as his father died. After this, until his reconciliation with Jacob, he multiplied and amassed a military force, no small troop, hoping in this way to somehow counteract the prophecy that the elder would be the weaker of the two. He did not doubt his father's prophetic abilities; he trusted completely that his people would be weaker than Jacob's tribe and would be enslaved. This had been foretold even before they were born, and Esau may have hoped that through his father's special favor he would

would succeed in changing this predestination. But even if Jacob had not listened to his mother and deceived his father, and Esau had been one-on-one with his father without interference, and his father had somehow managed to carry out his uninspired plans for Esau, he would not have gotten what he wanted in any way. He could only take his place in the sacred act as head of the family, in the divine plan of restoring man's fallen nature, but he could not avert Jacob's leadership and primacy. Even if he became head of the race, it would have been an outward position; without the right qualifications he could not have become a spiritual leader and teacher; Jacob with his "inward style" would have been the center of attraction for all who needed light, while Esau would have only performed sacrifices and rituals. This would have been more than enough for him, but his father's underestimation of Jacob and his general relaxation played their destructive role. And such a pair work could have been an excellent way of realizing divine plans through the cooperation of such different people, through their harmony and harmony. But I don't think this extreme option with Esau as the formal head would have been tolerated by God... Esau had taken himself out of the boundaries of God's work and Jacob had to work alone. And he had enough problems: he had to repay for what he had done wrong, and prepare himself for the task he had yearned for. This would take time, leaving much that could not be done. The world was not receiving the light it needed because the plans of God were delayed by the doers, by their unpreparedness.

Jacob's Escape

Rebekah, when she heard of Esau's intentions to kill his brother, her beloved son, was in a state of trepidation. She must have realized at that moment that instead of favoring and arranging her son's life, she had caused him tremendous problems with her own hands. Perhaps she regretted now that she had not listened to his objections-the father's curse was not as dangerous as Esau's threat, and she felt that as a mother she had no influence over her eldest. She had, and for a long time. But what she had done could not be undone. But she had one solution in store. Jacob was not yet married, though he was old enough to marry.⁸² As if to solve the problem, she decided to send him to her brother in Haran, even though the main thing was to save Jacob's life. Esau's words indicated that he was going to avenge Jacob when his father died. Even though his father had lived more than forty years, Esau could have been impatient (when Jacob returned, Isaac was still alive and Esau was on his way to kill his brother), so delaying Jacob's departure was dangerous. The question of Jacob's marriage was indeed resolved, but Jacob met with difficulties there, though not so serious as to be unfortunate. Rebekah scolded herself for wanting to do good to her son, but she had done him the exact opposite. But her son did not blame her; he knew that if he himself had been a little more resolute, all her tossing and turning would have done nothing for anyone. Unless, seeing Jacob's straightforwardness and steadfastness in the honest conduct of the matter, she herself would have gone to her father and talked to him, as a responsible housewife could and should have done, seeing that the head of the family had become a little slack and relaxed in his pleasures, losing sight of the aspirations that attracted the younger son and the moral decay of the elder. And it could have made a much bigger difference and been safe for all. If Esau might have been offended that his blessings were diminished a little (and in case he could have suspected anything), his mother would have been beyond reproach, her position incomparable to that of Jacob. It is also worthy of note that in choosing a favorite son to share, they have removed themselves from the life of the one left behind; Esau is left without his mother's influence as well as Jacob without his father's. This was not right. They have neglected their children, and attachment is attachment, but there is also the duty of parenthood.

82 At this point he was about seventy-seven years old. Isaac died at the age of 180, when Jacob and Esau were each 120. Isaac wished to bless Esau when he felt considerable weakness and thought death was near, he was about 136 years old at this time, but it turned out that he overestimated his problem and lived a longer life. The problem with his sons seems to have served to bring about a great change in his thinking, awakening him from his complacency and complacency, which proved to be beneficial in extending his years as well.

Isaac seemed to like Esau's powerful masculinity, as if he lacked it a little bit himself. That in itself was okay, but losing control and forgetting his responsibilities was not the way to go.

Lavan's. Settlement and multiplication

Bethel. The Stairway to Heaven Vision

Rebekah saw that Jacob was in danger of death in the near future, the only consolation was that Esau had not at least put aside outward propriety and carried out his threat at once. After talking to her husband, they decided to put a more solid face on the matter, especially since the issue of starting a family was indeed already pressing. Rebekah told Jacob of the necessity of fleeing to her brother, and though her son did not reproach her for anything, she knew that she was more to blame than anyone else. But what was she to do now, except try to get on with her life? She would have plenty of time to think and assess her affairs, but in the meantime she did what she could.

Isaac called Jacob and had already given him careful orders to travel to Laban and marry one of his daughters. He did not know that Jacob would have both... Blessing him as the chosen one, he did not blame him in the least for his deception. In doing so he admits in a sense that he was wrong in ignoring his gifts and aspirations and confirming his pre-eminence.

It is very interesting that although he sends him to start a family, it looks as if he sends him there empty-handed. Perhaps that is not entirely true; perhaps he did give him some gifts, because when they went to get his wife for him there was a wagon train full of valuables and gifts. Isaac has not become poorer since then, but he gives his son nothing of the sort. Moreover, from Jacob's words when he returned twenty years later, "I crossed the Jordan with a staff, and now I have two camps", we may surmise that he certainly did not have much valuables with him. Although this might not have played any role for the relatives in Haran, since they were well aware of Abraham's and Isaac's wealth, meaning no vouchsafes or references were needed. It would have worked that way, at first Laban was not opposed to giving of his daughters to Jacob, but as time went on Laban became much more lucid, the sight of the "poor kinsman" pushed him to take advantage of Jacob's simplicity and he was not honest with him. Jacob, of course, received a very considerable retribution for allowing circumstances to involve himself in his father's deception. Not that God caused Laban to do wrong to his nephew, but the fact that Jacob tainted himself with wrongdoing (all the more so being himself a perfectly honest man who is not inherently dishonest) created an atmosphere around him that was not conducive to righteousness... People in the Far East would say "tainted karma" about his not very gracious influence, lacking in the power of integrity. If he had been faithful in a difficult moment, this too would have been a factor in influencing the behavior of others. So our deeds and actions, even our thoughts, not that they determine someone else's behavior, but they do influence our neighbors. And sometimes it seems that even the ones around us... No, they will be held responsible for their actions, the influence we have on them will not justify them, because the choice is one's own, always one's own. And it is the duty of each one of us to do not what one is led to do by circumstances, nor by influences, however powerful they may be, but to do what is right, whether one is in opposition to or in tune with the circumstances.

There seems to be an important note to the fact that Isaac sent Jacob away empty-handed to make a life for himself. I have heard that some wealthy families have a custom of not giving their children living conditions according to their wealth right away when they start a family, but of sending them out first to live on their own for a few days.

They are the ones who have been in the business for years, earning everything with their own hands and sweat, with small children in their arms and other difficulties of the beginning, and only after they have settled their life and lived like that for a few years do they invite them in and give them all the opportunities that were available to them. That's how they train them to appreciate the means and blessings of life - I was surprised to hear

Rebekah had expected that Jacob would have to stay with Laban for quite some time, and so he did. But the hope that Esau would eventually settle down with Jacob did not work out. The "fleshly" calculation, lacking the counsel of the Most High, did not work out; in addition, the family of Ba-fuel and Laban unfortunately did not turn out to be high-spirited either. Until now it had seemed that they were fit enough to participate in God's work. Their friendship with their sister and their bond of shared childhood had been lost somewhere in the affairs of life, and Rebekah was subsequently ashamed of her son for her brother's work. In spite of the unwholesome element in the affair, the blessing of his father, and that of God, accompanied Jacob, guarding him from destructive courses of events. Jacob himself had to show in practical terms whether or not he was worthy of the title he aspired to and dreamed of.

Esau, suddenly realizing that his local Canaanite wives did not please his father and mother, decided to remedy the situation a little. He went to his uncle, Ishmael, and took one of his daughters to be his wife. It was the right thing to do, and although it took him a while to figure it out, better late than never. True, he now had three wives (and the third was also a Gentile to some extent), but this was no longer considered wrong. Perhaps his parents were pleased with this, especially if Mahalafa took charge of his house, and Esau's house was somewhat ennobled as a result. That was most likely the case.

Jacob was on his way toward the northeast. He stopped for the night in a place near the small town of Luz, which later became known as Bethel, the House of God. He was hardly very far from his father's house; it may have been only a day or two since he left there for his share. Here he went to sleep, taking a comfortably shaped stone in his headboard instead of a pillow...

I am reminded of what people said in my childhood about the pampering and spoiling of the new generations, but to this are added stories about how one father, hardening his son in winter, when he lay down for the night in the snow, did not give him even a snowball to put under his head, saying, "Don't be lazy, son... From this position Jacob looks less harsh on himself, but after all this is a stone, not a soft pillow. When you sleep on your side, there must be something under your head to keep your spine straight. The stone itself amazes me when I once rested on a lake and slept on a big flat granite boulder. The pain in my hip joint that had been bothering me for a long time has disappeared. It was very comfortable to lie down, the stone was warmed by the sun, and I hardly rested for more than an hour in the afternoon, but I could have spent there more time. I didn't think to sleep at first, but something attracted me by the possibility to lie down on it, and then the pleasant warmth of the stone made me sleepy. So, if the stone is not with sharp edges, then sometimes they can be perceived as if not very soft, but comfortable enough...

All that had happened in the last days at home could not leave Jacob indifferent, all those blunders and unfaithfulness to his own principles in pursuing sacred goals and ideals that did not allow the deception he had gone to, yielding to the pressure, robbed him of peace and quiet. He knew that he was leaving home not as dignified as he would have been if he had done the right thing. A wounded conscience did not promise a blessing from on high, and even the blessing he had received from his father did not look

he did not lose the direction he had originally taken. But he had not lost the direction he had originally followed, and he had no intention of deviating from the right path in the future. And God wanted to reassure him that he had not lost His favor, that He saw his longing for the ancestral heritage and God's work on earth.

Jacob saw in his dream a ladder extending from the earth to heaven, with angels moving in both directions, and at the top of which God Himself was standing, speaking directly to him. "I am the God of Abraham and Isaac." He promises to give this earth on which, God has emphasized, he now lies (that is, Jacob perceived the whole real picture that he now lies on the earth and sleeps, in which there were elements of an added reality not visible to the ordinary eye) to him and his children. Jacob will be numerous and in his name and the name of this nation will be a good thing for all the other peoples⁸³ Earth. It is through these descendants, whether some people want it or not, that the knowledge of God and the things necessary for the salvation, the restoration of fallen humanity, will come to earth. This does not mean that there were not lights of goodness and truth appearing in other nations, but the main light was given through the descendants of this generation. The Bible mentions other peoples as bearers of God's light, and in His plans He also gave place to other peoples as bearers of light, and from now on, all peoples will be on an equal footing with Israel, as was done in the Christian era. Both the Americans and the Russians are claiming to be God-bearing nations, and they are not the only ones. The place is open to all, as long as they truly walk in the light that comes from above.

The speech to Jacob from this ladder ended with the words that God would keep him wherever he went and bring him back to Canaan, from which he was now urgently leaving. He did not say that Jacob must not leave his future land, there was a reason for leaving and apparently more than one. He had to go through a lot of schooling, where he would learn lessons that would show him clearly how bad the way of deception is. But though he would suffer much, yet the damage would not be great; God had promised to be there for him, allowing only those lessons that flowed from his own character or actions. If one gets into the essence and causes of what is happening to him, he will sooner or later see the reasons for it, which will spur his improvement, purification, and amplification. This is how God works with us, pushing us upward. Usually those who want it, especially if they agree on it with God, but in principle no one is free from such an intervention of heaven in their life.

This is an important principle that would make a lot of sense to people. There is a word in the Bible, "It is not by the will of His heart that God punishes and afflicts the sons of men."⁸⁴ That is to say, what He allows to happen to us, in our troubles and problems, is not a desire to punish, but just an echo of our shortcomings that we do not notice or do not understand their destructiveness. He wants to expose us, to show us some of our weaknesses. If we were aware of our weaknesses, He would not have to reveal them to us in such an unpleasant way (other methods do not work, unfortunately for some reason...). Even if we were told about them directly, as long as we are not aware of them we are not inclined to notice them or to see them. If we were to examine ourselves and look into the origins of our actions and attraction to certain things, He would not need to interfere and allow for bitter lessons. Just this is what the following is written about: "If we were to judge ourselves, we would not

83 Again, this, too, shows that God did not plan to bring evil to the nations of the earth, as some conspiracy theorists accuse not only the Jews, but sometimes God Himself, of giving them the right to rule over everyone. The Bible gives no reason to think so. If even the Jews themselves thought so it would be a misunderstanding and distortion of God's purposes.

84 Pl.Jer.3:33

would be judged. But when we are judged, we are punished by God, so that we will not be condemned in peace.⁸⁵".

Many people explain what happens to them by karma, i.e. by what is earned and worked out. To some extent the Bible says the same thing in these texts, although there is no such word or concept in the sense of "future" or "past lives" (nor are there any past lives), but it is our present condition, our character and our faults that determine the nature of what happens to us. It is as if we attract them, or rather, it is the mechanism of life that similar attracts, provokes or generates similar. A person's character, formed from natural qualities, together with acquired habits, generates the same kind of deeds, and around such a person by his deeds and conduct condenses the same kind of atmosphere, in which other people get or are involved in the interaction of life, and consciously or unconsciously they react to this atmosphere accordingly... And God's purposefulness has not been abolished either - the condition of the ignorant is offensive to Him, no matter how innocent or even desirable it may seem to some.

The Creator, introducing himself to Jacob, promised not to leave him until he had fulfilled all that he had promised. Jacob, hearing this, might have thought that he had not acquired the birthright in vain, and that this riches might have gone to Esau who was not eager, but if he had for a moment allowed himself that thought, it would have been wrong. Esau would only have been revealed to what he was ready or open to, and most likely nothing of that kind would have been revealed to him. All this would have come to him who had the attraction to these high things anyway.⁸⁶even if he had been number two or a slave. That Jacob made the wrong move in pursuit of what he desired, as I have already pointed out, would come back to him many times over. In the meantime, God has revealed some of His glory to His sincere adherent, revealing the riches of a lost world.

There was a phrase in G-d's speech, which could have been interpreted in a perverse way, about "leaving" him after a certain time (until he had fulfilled all that had been promised to him), but if we look at the conditions when it came into effect, it would appear that Jacob's life would not be enough for that frontier. Numerous offspring were promised there, but Jacob only lived to be great-grandchildren, and there was still a long, long way to go before his descendants spread to all parts of the world. So Jacob was not abandoned by God during his lifetime, and in this we can see God's peculiar sense of humor. There are many kinds of humor, and I'm not sure which one this can be referred to, but it looks like a do - freely mild. And how useful that promise was to Jacob one day...

At this point Jacob awoke, it was night, everything around him was almost as it had been in his dream, except for the stairs and the people he saw on them. However, he had no doubt that God was still present. Perhaps he saw God here not because, as he thought, there was a special place, like the base of the heavenly powers on Earth, but only because he himself was here at that moment. If he had been elsewhere, farther or closer from home, God would have appeared to him there as well. But he promised that this would be a special place on this earth, a principal or one of the principal places of worship of the Creator. The name of the place was called the House of God, Beth-El or Bethel. All that was required was, like Abraham, an altar to the Most High, and Jacob seems to have done so; no more was required. It did not, in the days of Israel, become the site of Solomon's temple, nor the portable tabernacle of Moses. Only Jeroboam used the glory of this place for

85 1 Corinthians 11:31-32

86 David and Saul would later show this clearly

their semi-pagan⁸⁷ The northern kingdom of Israel only then began to use the place as a holy place, but this is exactly what Jacob would not have been happy about if he had known the future. It is evident from the story of the name of this place how people tend to emotionally exaggerate the circumstances surrounding certain important events, when instead of the main thing that happened, they attach importance to secondary details and circumstances. Normally this is not a crime or sin, but it is not good to stray too far from what God has to say. Details and peripheral things must not overshadow the main thing, much less take its place.

Jacob set that stone on which he slept apart, so that it looked like a stele or monument, watering it with oil, that is, dedicating it as a sacred object henceforth. In doing so, Jacob also made a vow, realizing that God had not rejected him and was not angry with him, at least enough to consider him unfit for His great work. Seeing that He will always be with him, in the joy of belonging, now fully, to the mission of salvation, he promises his own obedience and expresses his desire for a series of things that would testify that this Being-God will be Jacob's God. Now Jacob is not yet a fully independent subject, he is still in the role of a disciple or just preparing to come out (though he is already old by our standards). He is not yet married, only still going to arrange his fate, so his vow shows his intentions for the time when he will take the place of his father, will take up the work of his forefathers. This is the firm decision to choose to serve God, to secure with the promise all the aspirations of his childhood and youth. His speech should not be seen as a bargain with God, as it might seem when reading the Synodal translation, no, he lists his needs as one, for when one fails, the others are lost. He says (closer to the original) - "if the Hereafter would keep me, give me clothing and food and security, and I would return home in peace, and the Hereafter would be my God, and this place would be God's house and I would tithe to Him⁸⁸" (from what I had acquired by then). These are all requests and wishes, in the original there is no "if" to "then", there is no "if", no condition, after which he does something in return, he only repeats what God himself said and promised, so it is a thinking out loud, a desire to give thanks, a reflection of what has just been experienced, when the soul is overwhelmed with impressions, when it has not yet seen everything from afar and it is not yet clear in its head what is what. It is an impulse of the soul, a vow from a heart still filled with a magical picture of the presence of God, so there was and could be no bargaining.

Rachel, family and troubles

When Jacob came to the outskirts of Haran, he came to a well in a field. There were three flocks of sheep and their shepherds. Jacob asked them if they knew Laban and found out that they did and that one of his daughters was coming. He inquired why they were going to the watering place, as it was still early and the sheep might still be grazing for a couple of hours. The shepherds explained to him that there was a rather heavy stone on the well instead of a lid, and only when everyone was gathered could the well be used. Whether this was a condition for sharing water and not quarreling, or whether the stone was simply too heavy to require the efforts of all the men assembled, is not clear. It is more likely the latter, because if there had been some agreement to use the well only with everyone at the same time, Jacob would not have made

87 They themselves were pagan, but they bore the name of the real God, Yahweh.

88 This is the question of to whom Jacob could give the tithe of the property he had gained with his own hands. Melchizedek was no longer there-if you mean Eber, then Eber died four years after Abraham died when Jacob was 19. But the role of patriarch and priest then could or should have gone to the next living patriarch of the family of Shem, and that is Abraham or Isaac. Giving tithes to the father was okay. In the extreme case, if the father had died earlier, as he himself expected at first, Jacob himself would then become patriarch. In that case, the separation of a tenth of the estate meant that he could only use that portion for sacrifices or other sacred purposes, but not for himself personally.

what he soon did. Just as Jacob was being told why he was waiting at the well for all the flocks and shepherds to gather, Rachel and her flock came up.

The fact that a very young maiden grazes alone shows that in those ancient times the attitude toward women in ancient Syria, if I am not mistaken, was not rigid. She did not wear a burqa or cover her face. She was alone with the herd, her brothers or her father did not have to follow her, and no one even thought of hurting her. Perhaps because she was from a respectable family, but even this is a serious argument against those customs that consider it obligatory for women to be everywhere under the protection of a man and with their face hidden under the cover of some garment or cloak.

Further events show that Jacob instantly fell under Rachel's spell. When he sees her with the flock, he goes to the well and easily knocks away a stone that was beyond the strength of the people already at the well. If it was not the weight of the stone, but only the agreement, no one would stop him, seeing his condition that he began to woo his chosen one. Such cases are rare, and few would call it an offence to deviate for the sake of such a thing. With smiles and good-natured smirks and jokes about the young men, Jacob watered Rachel's sheep. While the sheep were drinking, they were talking at the same time. True, Jacob introduced himself first, and greeted his cousin with a hug and a kiss. It may not have been the custom, but he allowed himself to do so, impressed and amazed to meet such a beautiful girl, all the more so by right of kinship, being three or four times her age. Rachel, too, accepted his attentions and reciprocated, realizing that this was her destiny. Thereafter Jacob did not break any customs and rules, having been faithfully brought up and directed, seeking not pleasure as the main thing in life, but more than that. In the seven years that he had to wait to marry Rachel, no one reproached them for their misconduct, although he lived in their house for a time and was there often afterwards.

Rachel ran home, obviously the city was not far away. Jacob and the other shepherds looked after the sheep for the time being. Laban got some good news from his daughter, that his tribal son, the son of his sister, had come to them (although, on the other hand, through their fathers they were third cousins ⁸⁹but in such cases one usually considers the closest kinship) with whom he had the best memories. He ran out to meet him, which shows a real interest and sincerity toward his sister and her son. He gladly received him, listened to all the news from those places about events in their family, the good and the bad together. Not all the news was good, and Laban realized that Jacob needed to sit away from his family, and decided to provide him with everything he needed, protecting him from adversity. His kinship traits and appearance drew him to provide whatever assistance his nephew needed, even to the point of protecting him by force if necessary. His mood and feelings can be seen in these words - "you are my flesh and bone". For a whole month Jacob was a guest in his house, but it was worthwhile to think about further arrangements. But Jacob immediately got involved in the household and helped with everything, and was in fact already a slave in Laban's house. He had brought nothing with him, and it was only his capable hands and strength that furnished him with a little capital. Of course he had many possessions in his father's and mother's house but they could be contested by his brother or simply taken away with his life, so he had to make a profit where he was now settled. Lavan, seeing all this, was at first in the position, and seeing Jacob's efficiency, industriousness, and success, he had no doubt that the fellow would not remain a poor kinsman wherever he went. However, there was a temptation to use his circumstances and his good fortune for himself, which is what Laban did.

89 Abraham and Nahor are brothers, Isaac and Bethuel are cousins, Jacob and Laban are third cousins

How did Laban become a cheapskate and a cheat, so that even his affection left him and he became a problem not only for Jacob but also for his own daughters? Could it be that Jacob's gentleness whispered to Laban that he would never fight back and could do anything with him, he would take it all, especially since he had no protection? His simplicity and directness gave him a chance (and whispered to take advantage of the moment) to take him around in a few circles. If there is anything unsightly about the Jewish people in the realm of worldly cunning, it is from Laban, not Jacob, here we see a rather ingenuous simplicity without any creeping pursuit of self-interest. The name, or nickname, "Deceiver," he has got quite undeservedly, to judge by his everlasting character and disposition, and not by any conflict with his brother. Some, purely out of spite, speculating on his name, have unreasonably represented Jacob as some kind of "haggler," but if he had been, Laban could not have treated him as he did, Jacob would have repulsed any attempt to use him from the beginning. If Jacob had ever made his own arrangements at Laban's expense (which only his detractors could say, for in reality it was on a fair contract), it was only by a conscious, willing effort, not by a grasping reflex or an abiding cunning desire for profit at all costs, and he was protected by God, without whose help Jacob would have been left with nothing at all. Laban has no excuse for this, and this warp of his began somewhere during the first seven years, when Jacob was earning enough to pay for his bride, Rachel. When Laban offered payment to Jacob after a month in Haran, Jacob asked his youngest daughter to be his wife and offered seven years of service. This was a good offer for Laban, to which he (who was a hustler and a rascal) agreed without any haggling. Seeing Jacob's diligence, he would not lose out in any case, and Jacob brought him considerable profit with an increased herd of small cattle. The ransom or tribute was more than enough.

The purpose of the kalym is a kind of deposit, providing security, giving confidence that the suitor for a woman's hand could provide for the family. At first it was returned to the young after a period of time, but later, perhaps following the example of Laban, some began to withhold it, corrupting the custom. When Laban's daughters say that their father "ate their silver," this is exactly what we are talking about, Jacob's contribution of seven years that was not given to them when they made their family.

We can see Laban's first tendency to take crooked paths in his response to Jacob's request for Rachel's hand in marriage. He himself offered to give Jacob a fee for his work on his house, and when Jacob asked for Rachel's hand, instead of a straight and honest "yes," Laban says, "I would rather give her to you *than to anyone else*. He blackmails him by showing that he might change his mind if he saw a better offer somewhere else. It is as if he is encouraging his nephew to work harder for him so that he does not change his mind. It is not fair... It would have been one thing if he had thought it in his head, and it would not have made him look pretty and indicated his excessive prudence, but he said it out loud, which scratched the ears not only of Jacob, but of the heavenly watchers who write reports on all deeds and words as well as thoughts and wishes and choices that struggle within us... In Laban's partial defense, I can only say that he may not have noticed the meaning of his words, the hint contained in them, but later, from an unconscious movement (if it was indeed unconscious) it penetrated further and became a clear feature, which in time became impossible not to notice. Those who don't notice what is wrong with them are usually prompted by others to go the wrong way, so if one doesn't analyze their own behavior and actions, there will still be a voice, whether friendly or hostile, that lets them see what is wrong and correct it.

Laban arranged his affairs at Jacob's expense, exploiting his honesty and simplicity. He saw his flocks multiplying under his hand, as Jacob would later say, "Before me you had little, but with me you have much. How nice it would have been to have him as a servant for a while longer... In Laban's mind the idea matured of solving his personal problems at one stroke, both with his wealth by keeping Jacob on double contract and with his eldest daughter, who had some problems with her eyesight, which dramatically reduced her chances of a successful marriage. With her failing eyesight she could not equal the others in fine work, and Laban had long wondered how she could be fitted for marriage without losing out, for she had to be given a high dowry to make someone interested in her. Although nothing was said about her beauty, which meant as if she did not lose much in appearance compared to her sister, but her poor eyesight was her problem. So Laban decided to trick Jacob into giving her to him, who would not refuse Rachel either, and having received both would not mind too much. Knowing Jacob's character, he was not wrong in this calculation. Knowing that Jacob is too, utterly honest, Laban did not think that Jacob would refuse to work for him an extra seven years for Leah. Maybe it would not have worked with the locals, but Jacob was not a local and his family was far away, and not all of them would have supported Jacob. So even if Jacob had argued it would have been easy to shut him up by saying that two wives cost twice as much and his objection that he had been cheated could easily have been countered by saying that he should have been a little more careful... Arguing under such circumstances would only have resulted in more frustration, and Lavan takes advantage of the defenselessness not only of Jacob's character but also of his position as an outsider whose closest and only defender was Lavan himself.

Wedding. Deception

The seven years appointed by Lavan to pay the bride price flew by like a few days. He was healthy and strong, and always had by his side the one he loved with all the strength of his unspent soul, who reciprocated, so he was quite happy. They were a long way from old age, time did not rush them and they could do without haste. Their unspoiled morals rendered unnecessary the hasty intimacy which had become a fetish for many a long time ago, but they were spared these temptations, it was enough for them to be together from time to time for full bliss. They had more through looks and smiles at one another than many couples who are not completely compatible have through full contact. Knowing their timing, they were in no hurry to speed it up; time was already flying by. Besides, Rachel must have been very young at the time of their meeting, and during that time she was just getting to the age of starting a family.

The appointed time came, and Jacob told Laban, already his father-in-law, that it was time for him to take Rachel as his wife. Laban, as was customary, gave a feast, gathering all the people of the city and the surrounding countryside - practically a king's feast. Everything would have been fine, but what happened that night was a cruel treachery and an abuse of the right of father and employer. It wasn't Rachel who ended up in the tent, but her sister... What Jacob experienced is a separate conversation, anyone can try to imagine themselves in his shoes, but there are questions for the rest of the participants in these events. Each of them must have agreed somehow, must have been convinced to do exactly that, and there is no way that Lavan could have done it alone. Okay, Lavan - he was arranging for his eldest daughter, who had no first choice, already coming of marriage age, he could be understood, if not justified, somehow. Although not very well either - in such cases, fathers, if they care for such daughters, give a high dowry to them, and in fact rarely is anyone left completely destitute. But it is clearly seen here that Laban was sorry to spend his own personal money on his daughter when there was such a profitable suitable very convenient unrequited Jacob from all sides... Leah is also involved in this, she had to agree to deceive her unsuspecting sister's fiancé. This is not a prank where, after the confusion, everything falls back into place,

It's serious here. She knows that the man loves her sister, but agrees to deceive him. She imagines that she could become hated for life, as well as rejected and defamed at the same time, although the chances of that are not very high (Jacob is a very good man), but not at all zero. However, apparently she calculated it herself, and her father taught her that for a man to have several wives is not a problem, but only a plus, and even if they do not love you like your sister, you will still be a good man, a successful and hard worker. True, Laban also hoped that Jacob would stay with him twice as long, and that his sheep would increase accordingly over the years, but this benefit coincided with the benefit of his daughter's arrangement - a win-win for both sides, so it was very, very difficult for him to resist this marriage scam when it was all fitting together. Except, after he made this deal with his conscience, his character was no longer noble, he began to oppress Jacob and even his own daughters, and his paths with God were parted. His family no longer participated in the fortunes of Abraham's descendants. So parasitizing on someone else's good fortune did not bring happiness and good fortune to Laban, nor did Leah feel happy. She became somewhat of a problem for her sister and herself, forced to fight for happiness, but never got almost anything but children. Though it would seem to be happiness too, but would everyone agree to such happiness? And the way it ruined Rachel's life...

Judging by the way God delayed the births of Abraham and Isaac, and by how long Rachel had to wait (about seven years, a much shorter period than for Sarah and Rebekah, but in an environment where others gave birth easily and at ease, Jacob was to suffer the same fate - he and Rachel (who alone was Jacob's intended wife) had to concentrate on spiritual growth, so that the children could be given the best upbringing. But other women intervened and instead of two sons Jacob got twelve, even thirteen children along with his daughter. Quantitatively, Israel began in these seven years from the time of Jacob's wedding, but this number was very raw, substandard. In addition to Leah, the mothers of Jacob's children had become maids in a rivalry process, and the atmosphere of the family was greatly poisoned by things far removed from light and spirituality and from love and goodness - rivalry, envy and resentment. Thus they lacked the influence necessary for the formation of a Messianic people; they had to grow up in a different environment and did terrible things until they came to terms with it. Nevertheless, the influence of the father somehow put the sons back on a better path, but from then on the younger generations of this nation always grew up in a kind of rebellion against sound things, passed on as a baton from one rising generation to the next unwittingly, by mere imitation. Thus the heritage of Israel was impregnated with the darkness of Abraham's vision of the slain victim, an influence that could scarcely be remedied. That fence which God had built for Isaac, in which Jacob grew up, had been shattered, and the influence of brutal and coarse morals now constantly accompanied that nation as well. When Jacob dared to take the blessing instead of speaking to his father directly, he had scarcely imagined the darkness that would come into the midst of a holy nation; he had scarcely imagined the trouble he would start with his own hands into his own house.

If Jacob had only had Rachel, they would probably have had fewer children, but they would have been nurtured very differently. Perhaps there would have been more than two, for God had to restrain Rachel because of the atmosphere in the family, as Moses says - "God saw that Leah was not loved, so He gave her children.⁹⁰ This was also a kind of punishment for Rachel, who found herself, even though she did not want to do it, but was just as much involved in deceiving her own fiancé as anyone else, giving in to the entreaties of her father and mother, not bursting into the tent where she had gone.

⁹⁰ We should not think that if there had been peace between the sisters, God would have given Rachel and Leah children as well. On the contrary, in His characteristic scenario, both would have been barren until sometime later...

Jacob thought he was going to her, but ended up with Leah, who sometimes hated her sister for it. Jacob, too, since he allowed Leah to be in the family, had to give her enough attention and accommodate his sisters, who were fighting quite hard, if not in words, but in deeds. God subsequently gave Israel a law that considered it a grave sin to marry close relatives, sisters, or mother and daughter to the same person, with very harsh punishments. But that will come later... In the meantime, there was no such law, but the evil of this violation already existed in all its power and obviousness. Well, how no law existed - many things were obvious enough to be avoided or taught as bad things, but as people lost their shores they had to give more and more commandments, turning not all obvious things into tangible commandments and laws.

There is a question for Rachel-what made her give in to her entreaties and not oppose her father, how did she put her beloved in the hands of the deceivers? If her parents had bound her without letting her disrupt their plans, then she would not have been guilty and it would have been noted in Genesis, but there is nothing like that, not even a hint. That is, she was somehow persuaded by words alone, without physical violence or threats. Although it is not difficult to reconstruct some of this - she was clearly told to feel sorry for her sister... She was fine, but what was it like for her sister? In their area, the youngest was not supposed to marry before the eldest and she was leaving her in a kind of disgrace... Yet Jacob had not known this custom for seven years and neither Lavan nor anyone else had informed him of this pitfall. So the custom was not so important that it could have been broken painlessly (after all, it was Rachel, not Leah, who did the wedding), and Laban's reference to it is only a weak excuse for the unrequited. But the pressure of her parents' authority cannot be dismissed; in those days, and still today, it was an important and significant factor. And she submitted, she broke down. To some extent, the fact that God did not give her children was the result of her not following the path of truth and justice, but giving in to the pressure of authority that rebelled against the authority of God and His principles of justice and fairness. In other words, she chose the guidance of a man to her detriment instead of the guidance of God, who would have taken much better care of everyone, including poor Leah, if they had obeyed Him... Life sometimes turns out to be in conflict with the authority of God and the authority of parents, as well as with the government, the public, the superiors and the religious. The subordinate has to be in a certain harmony with their superiors, but they are still human beings. Because of this factor the bosses can easily find themselves in conflict with God, and then their subordinates find themselves in a fork - they have to be in conflict either with them or with God (which is very un-sighted, but the bosses seem much closer...). If you choose to resist God you have to give the choice to those under your influence too, otherwise you are wrong, making the choice yourself but not limiting it to others...

By the way, this is the principle of freedom of conscience in its purest form - we are not obligated to come into conflict with God if those higher up do so and want to obligate us to do the same. If those in authority believe that people are obligated to follow them and have the right as superiors to force them to violate something with them, then God would also be obligated or has every right to stop them and take away opportunities or power... And since many superiors cannot accept the loss of power and a return to ordinary human status, preferring death, it should not be surprising that they are given this.

Subordinates have sufficient rights to decide whom to listen to and whether or not to let a rebellious boss be the boss - no one has such a right to rule that is absolutely inalienable. If He does not take away your free will, so does everyone else's.

the rest gives the same right of choice and responsibility to Him personally, not to the rest (we are responsible to the rest, but within our connections, sometimes deep, but not at all absolute).

Rachel couldn't tell her fiancé indignantly the next day how he could have mixed her up with someone else, because she was afraid of the backlash - you knew everything and participated in it! All that was left was to avert her eyes in embarrassment and nod to her parents. But it was impossible for Jacob to be angry with her, his own problems prevented him from doing so, so the embarrassment was mutual. So forgive each other...

Laban, when the indignant Jacob asks him what he was doing, did not apologize, but tried to make Jacob feel bad that he was a stranger here and knew nothing, that he was teaching him to be wise (when he referred to custom). He even demanded that Jacob should serve another seven-year term for his second wife. If Jacob had been in Jacob's place, he would have answered that it was Rachel, not Leah, that they had agreed on, and that he could only take Leah as a burden, but that there could be no additional contracts. You yourself give me two for the price of one and that is your problem - the contract was seven years for a wife. I don't need a second one, and if you do, that's your problem and you're the beggar and I decide. And if I have to work again, it's at a completely different rate, not for a bride price, but for a real fee, so that I can fix up my house, because it's your daughters I have, by the way. And the big question is what to do about Leah-if I didn't want her, she won't live with me-if I've been cheated, I might as well divorce her, for that matter.

But all this is good for more severe people, whom Laban would probably be afraid to deceive, if Jacob were Esau, for example... The independence that Jacob lacked would be good here, it would simply tie him up in his arms and legs. Jacob also felt responsible for Leah, though he had no such feelings towards Rachel as he had towards her. Deception is deception, but life is life. Especially since the deception he had once perpetrated had also kept him silent and he could not have acted as decisively as he might have if he had been free of guilt. Jacob voices little of what someone with more impetuosity would say, even as an alien with fewer rights than the locals, but he accepts the situation as it is. Leah may be weaker than Rachel, but as has been said many times before, in the eyes of most men it is prestigious to have two. Also, Leah was not indifferent to him, and her father's con even seemed to welcome it, though she lost her sister in it, but at the time it may have seemed a sufficient substitute to her. Another reason should also be noted - well, why is he silent, feeling himself guilty, for he failed to discern in the dark that it was not Rachel before him... By the way, it speaks in favor of him and Rachel that their relationship was pure from love games, so that they were physical strangers to each other, by touch, why he did not sense the switch. But he could have just talked to the bride on her wedding night, and he might have discovered some inconsistencies at once. But no, they opened their arms and shut their mouths, and it was only the morning light that brought the cruel revelations. So he was ashamed in front of his father-in-law and the others that he had kind of screwed up big time himself, which more than anything else had kept him from fighting and complaining. He felt that if he made any complaints he would be the first to be told that he should check and see what he was taking...

So Jacob agrees to work once more for the same wife, the same term once more, seven years. He showed respect to Leah, the deceiver, by giving the first seven years' work to her, even though they were dedicated to Rachel. However, Rachel was not given to him at the end of the seven years, but almost immediately, that is, a week after Leah, probably in keeping with the same custom that Laban had said, "Finish this week," that is, Leah. And already with Rachel's wife, feeling happy again, he worked for seven more years for Laban. During that time he received only some co.

The family had nothing to lose, but he had not yet acquired any property of his own. Although as a member of the family he did not need anything, he had not yet acquired any property of his own. For fourteen years the flocks of Laban and his sons had been multiplying, but Jacob himself was still only a member of the family. And some were all too accustomed to this state of affairs, where Jacob was the generator of their wealth at their complete disposal... To be deprived of the source of their wealth is usually regarded as robbery...

His family began to multiply and children were born. The detailed account of this in Genesis is not very inspiring, because these joys were accompanied by jealousy, vain hopes, tears, arguments, strife, although the relationship itself was outwardly rather mild, but this did not change the essence of the matter. For some reason, Lia kept hoping that the number of children that came not so much by her merits as by God's desire to soften her fate at least a little bit would help her become loved. But human nature does not change, and if people are incompatible, nothing can bring them closer or make them happier together. One can only endure, which is what one has to do. People really are "our treasure," but this has done very little for Lea herself personally. No matter how many children she had, it did not make her husband live with her or love her more. He went where his heart was, and nothing could change that. Rachel was the only one who was really happy, but her happiness was diminished by her misfortune - she had nothing to boast about in front of her rivals, surrounded by her children. Are you saying it is not good to boast? - Yes, it is, but when others were boasting in front of her (making up for her lack of personal happiness), she didn't want to answer them, but just wanted to have one child beside her that was really lacking for complete happiness. She didn't want that for bragging rights but it was just human nature, and her pain was acute for all her other well-being. It is God's equation, that since they have found themselves through the machinations of the enemy in an unsightly, unsettled and unhappy condition, that their troubles may help them to realize their shortcomings and weaknesses, and to break through those thorns to the heights of the spirit. If we have made mistakes, or if the enemy has wronged us, then the problems are always a means to an end for the development of character and spirit. Thus evil destroys itself through feedback, through awareness, patience, restraint, and the desire to do what is right and just, not only for our own good. But if people become bitter under these challenges, then the direction of their development is directed more toward destruction. But this is the general point, and in life there are many variations, though the directions are the same - to destroy or to build.

The relationship between the sisters deserves special mention. They both had a lot to resent each other, but after watching their conversations and attitudes, I did not notice any open quarrels or even harsh words toward their rivals. Life itself has given them enough reason for quarrels and tears, but they always use mild, even humorous expressions to each other. Even when Leah alone - one day she did not hold back and said that Rachel had taken Jacob all to herself, that was the maximum she allowed herself. In response, Rachel sort of rented him out for one night, and Leah, picking up Jacob from work in the evening, declares to him - "I bought you for my son's mandrakes," which Reuben had picked in the field that day. In spite of the tears shed, some from loneliness, some from the slanted looks of those (maybe even seemingly) who had children, they do not allow themselves anything offensive... Perhaps these families helped each other by supplying brides and grooms for a reason. True, Laban's character put a stop to these ties. Jacob seems to have taken the last good thing from this house.

Working for Yourself - Jacob Becomes Rich

The years of working for his wives were over, and Jacob was freer to take care of his own business. Until now he had had nothing personal, and his father's property was most likely in dispute

brother and he shouldn't have counted on him. Over the years he had worked for Laban, according to Jacob's words, his father-in-law had many more sheep and goats. It seems not even to have doubled the number of sheep, but to have multiplied, if he says, "Before me you had few and now you have many". Jacob was not exaggerating, it was not in his character, especially since Laban did not even think to refute him when it was said. What caused it is hard to say. Clearly God was behind it, who gave such a blessing to the man, but it was due to his skills, increased responsibility and constant toil, as he describes his years working for Lavan-"sleep escaped my eyes". All natural losses in doing so were on him if predators did any damage. It is more likely that this "blessing" did not result in the flocks magically multiplying under his watch, but that Jacob could not overlook the slightest disturbance in his sight, and would immediately fix, arrange, equip, and so forth. This attentiveness to the sheep, as well as to the people working with him, bore such fruit that everything rose and blossomed around him. Unfortunately, not all people responded in this way to his influence.

The first child with Rachel was born after her sister had already had seven (maybe six, since they were sons, the daughter could be counted separately) children, six years before he left Laban. Altogether Jacob's life in Haran was twenty years, fourteen of which were spent working for Laban (after the first seven years he got wives), and after these "obligatory" years he worked for himself for another six years, after which he left the increasingly less hospitable and welcoming home of his father-in-law. Thus, Joseph was born to Rachel about seven years after the wedding. Not a long time, although not comparable to Rebekah and Sarah's, but in her case the wait was excruciating because of their family situation. If Jacob had not been deceived at the time (even if it was only once, even if it had not been his but his mother's initiative), he would not have been deceived either. Perhaps Laban would have tried to solve his problems at his expense, but the circumstances would have fallen into a very different frame of mind, where each of the participants would probably have behaved differently. Leah, respecting Jacob and her sister, would not have cheated, nor would Rachel have resigned herself to her father's decision, and Jacob's friends might have whispered of certain local customs, so there would have been no chance for Laban to succeed. And Jacob himself would have decided to talk to his wife about something before he came any closer... How many little things can determine the course of a particular action...

It should be noted, though, that Jacob did not immediately become rich after his years of servitude were over. After Joseph was born, just as the second seven years of wife-serving were coming to an end, Jacob wanted to return home. Laban pleaded with him to stay and said words that turned things around for Jacob's enrichment. He said something like, "How can I make you feel comfortable so that you will stay longer with me? He said honestly, "I see that because of you, because you work for me, I have been blessed by God," that is, he marks a substantial gain in the flock of sheep and goats. And he said, "Give yourself a reward from me, and I will give." Here is where he with his character should have thought hard for his own benefit - I don't mean to say that he shouldn't be generous, it would only be good for everyone and especially for his spiritual interests, but he just wasn't prepared for what happened afterwards. More importantly, his flocks were not diminished in the least, the problem was that Jacob had better cattle and more and Laban somehow continued to feel he was his own, forgetting the meaning of the agreement. His words were not entirely sincere, he was playing the part of the good man he once was. Pretending in front of his family and other witnesses to that conversation. This was the way it was done everywhere, not just in his area, letting go of an excellent worker, giving him one reward or another depending on his wealth and his merit. Lavan could have returned to the good path by simply giving some part of his flocks, but he did not take advantage of it; the desire for wealth was eating away at his soul.

He could have partially redeemed himself to Jacob, but though he did so, it was not of his own goodwill, and he himself ended up treating Jacob even worse than before.

The important thing is that it happened according to his own words - he offered a reward from himself, from his possessions. Jacob could have been modest, asked for a share and the whole story would have ended there with Laban's house, and Laban would not have suffered much even if he had had to give up a substantial part. But Jacob decided to go a different way; he used a supernatural power to help him. The essence of his recipe was to take only those lambs that were not like their parents. If the parent generation was monochromatic, he would only take those with spots or there were other variations of differences, depending on the current arrangement with Lavan. Since statistics and experience have said that lambs inherit the parental traits in most cases, Laban thought that Jacob would get quite a few atypical lambs. In reality, however, this was not the case. Laban, seeing how rapidly the new generation of sheep was passing into Jacob's hands, tried to change the distinctive traits by which the lambs were passed to Jacob, but it was not a question of spots or singleness, but of what Jacob himself wanted. The right color always went to the strongest and healthiest animals, while the colors that belonged to Laban went to the weakest. It was like magic, but there was no magic in what he did. It was a kind of silent prayer or a signal to God - "this is how we do it now" - but it worked. God's promise to keep and protect was working; He was confirming His presence in his life. And Jacob himself also learned to rely on Him and cooperate with His power. There is a very important lesson in this - the cooperation of God and man.

"For thou art my God" are the words of many prayers, it is the consciousness not only of believers in the living God, but also of many Gentiles. God may demand worship and be in charge of man and mankind (if they are not against it, of course).⁹¹ But the deity also has a very big obligation. This is usually overlooked, but because of God's power and abilities and the lack of them in man, it is as if God has to help man and cover him where human power is lacking - just like between parents and small children... The idea "why else would God be needed if not to serve his wards with his increased abilities" is basically a sound and true one. Perhaps too utilitarian and down-to-earth in its expression, but nevertheless human nature is bound and designed to function fully only in connection with a higher nature... In the case of Jacob's herd multiplication we see the very function of the deity.

Jacob took the rods, cut the bark off them so that they had a pattern of spots and stripes on them, and laid these rods at the watering place when the flocks came there to drink. When the best rams and goats covered the sheep, Jacob would throw the rods next to them and take away the weaker ones. I don't think this was some kind of magical act in his mind, he was just showing God - we need these now! - And so it was. Animals of any color gave birth to lambs of the color Jacob wanted, depending on the current arrangement with Laban. God acted, His hand was in this supernatural selection... Of course, an outside observer could easily say that

91 If it is against, then God is removed from responsibility for that person, but the trouble is that man is not freed from the power of the elements and the laws of great numbers... Much less from the power of evil and many other problems from which God could just as easily help. Man is also left with much less protection from the dark forces. By and large, God's power over man remains, because the devil is not really the supreme ruler, not having divine powers, but he does not hurry to intervene, because he is not called...

Jacob was witchcraft, but no one was charging. There were no spells, meditations, or energy management, just an arrangement with God.

When it was time to leave, Jacob told his wives about the dream in which God told him to go home. There is also the description that God personally helped Jacob with acquiring the animals by showing him the motley rams and goats covering the sheep and goats, commenting that He was doing this because He "sees all that Laban does to him. I could not understand exactly when this dream took place, whether it was just before leaving Haran or beforehand, before the agreement to reward Jacob. If in advance, then Jacob's confidence in acting with rods to select healthy cattle is understandable, but then the order to leave there must be understood to have been a separate conversation or signal.

In fact, Laban's flocks did not diminish when he began to assign a certain covenant to his son-in-law, and they multiplied quite a bit, except not as quickly as before when Jacob was working for him. But one gets too used to a good thing sometimes, and when Jacob turned his successful laboring hands to the care of his family, it seemed to Laban's sons and to himself that they were being severely deprived, their rightful property being taken away... They somehow considered the flock of lambs given under the contract as still their own; that was the whole point. If Laban had not deceived Jacob at his wedding to his daughters he would not have seen him as a possible adversary (anyone who is deceived can easily wish for some form of retribution and anyone who deceives knows that problems must arise for him) and perhaps no animosity or blame and no problems could have arisen at all. There would have been no residue left over from that incident, no coma of events on that decision... But now it was as it was, and the sprawling herds, all the more remarkable for their special health and strength, from their close relative, they considered as a personal direct insult. There was nothing they could do, everything was legal, but the relationship was no longer the same and the situation could not be rectified - "a brutalized brother is more impregnable than a fortress⁹²".

"And Jacob saw that Laban's face was not so toward him as it had been yesterday and the third day... At some point, especially when Laban's sons saw how successful Jacob had been in managing the agreement, how abundant his possessions were, and complained to their father, it became clear to Jacob that he had to end the reward and leave, or there would be trouble. As noted in "The Devil's Primer."⁹³ "success is an utterly unforgivable sin before one's fellow man." Alas, too many people live by these laws, not by divine law... As Laban's flocks began to be tended by his sons, they were large but their hands were not as skilful or as steady as those of the old workman, and the increase of the sheep was not as great as before. But Jacob went on bringing in new generations of sheep and goats, which were not his by treaty, i.e. were born uniform in color, or of the same color as their parents, but to the envious eye of his neighbor it seemed more perfect than his own. They did not get less, but the problem was that Jacob's herds were multiplying faster at the same time... One day Laban wished his sister, Jacob's mother, that her offspring would "take possession of the dwellings of their enemies." It would have been foolish to hold Jacob as an enemy after this, but he seems to have forgotten his blessing, which came as a nasty surprise to him. Even though Jacob had taken nothing illegally from him, Laban still felt robbed, but that was only his problem...

Six years had passed since the end of the work for the wives, and they had been spent with great efficiency in the arrangement of the household. All in all Jacob lived in Haran for twenty⁹⁴ years,

92 Pr 18,20

93 Ambrose Bierce, The Devil's Dictionary.

94 Genesis 31:38

He was about 96 years old (the older Reuben was about thirteen and the younger Joseph was five or six), and it was time to return to Canaan.

Return to Canaan

Escape

Jacob summoned his wives to his flocks in the fields. Here he told them of his plans to leave and why they should do so and other current circumstances. In this matter they were all in complete agreement, Leah and Rachel had seen what their father was doing to their husband, and they did not like it. Their father had become emasculated, infected by a spirit of profit, and they emphasized that "he had sold us out and even sold our silver," that "he considered us strangers." In addition to those grievances born on the night of the wedding, the sisters had accumulated many other, perhaps smaller, but significant grievances against their father and brothers, and were now ready to leave their kin to establish their own home with their husband, whom they fully valued. They did not take their personal problems about how to divide it anywhere, which was a big plus to their characteristic and a stabilizer in the structure and comfort of their home.

When they heard, among other considerations, that God had given Jacob the command to leave here, none of them doubted that their plans were sound-"so all the wealth that God has taken from our father is ours and our children's, so do whatever God has told you to do. Right from here, from the field, they set out on the road. This option does not seem to me to be the best one, although Jacob's considerations seem understandable. As if it would have been better to say goodbye first, then leave, but there were significant considerations of a different order. They all feared that his father might interfere and use force - his last meetings with him gave great reason to fear him and his brothers, who might lay hands on either the flocks or even themselves, forcing them to stay and serve as a source of profit by working for them, i.e. turning them into slaves. If there were any chance of leaving peacefully, it would have been better to say goodbye chin-chin, but they seem to have assessed such chances as negligible at this meeting. With a high probability of problems, they did the right thing, although they could not avoid a meeting with offended relatives, but this did not happen on their territory. But the resentment of the relatives was not legitimate - it was their own fault, children and siblings should not be treated that way - threatening or hostile, if you want a good relationship. Lavan's family had no reason to be displeased, except for envious eyes, but that was their own personal misfortune, nobody was to blame. They made a problem for themselves and for others - "How is it, you have such big animals, and we have such small animals and almost smaller in number than you" - a very serious problem... If they considered Jacob as one of their equals, they would look at everything very differently. The fact is that so many people consider what is given to children or siblings as remaining in the family circle - not in your hands, but not lost at all, and only what is given to an outsider feels not theirs or lost. Although there are people who are happy when they share even the last with others - and these people are happy, because they have much more reasons for happiness than egoists, who are happy only when they personally have something extra - even statistically they have more reasons for joy... So somehow Jacob was not considered to be their own, although their own sisters owned the same sheep, which they so desperately saw lost ...

Laban was shearing sheep at the time, and although they went home, they might not have said goodbye, having the excuse that no one was home. If any of the servants were there, they would not tell anyone. In doing so, Rachel secretly took home gods, pagan statuettes called teraphim, for some reason. Paganism got to this family as well, the cause of Abraham and God under the influence of their environment was forgotten and abandoned. I am, however, sure that those teraphim in those days were not yet completely pagan, rather they were personifications of the Being, the real-

The figures of the ancient God were the likenesses of later icons-images in the Christianity that began to recede, so the family of Laban did not object to the presence of these figures in the house. But this was no longer the purity of the ancient original faith of the former guardian-patriarchs; the world had gone downhill and had forgotten quite a bit about the One with whom the ugly likenesses of the Living God were made, if not entirely. Rachel, by taking the teraphim, showed by this that they were dear to her. After thirteen years of cohabitation with God's chosen one, she still had not moved away from the wrong standards, nor had she weighed the rules by which she had been raised and shaped with the light she could receive from her fiancé and husband. Jacob, aware of the presence of apostate figures in the house, did not seem to talk to anyone about them either. However, it could have been different here, even if he did talk about it, Rachel might still have thought and done things her own way. And wasn't this dependence on the pagan figurines the reason why God was slow to respond to Rachel's requests for children?

Without saying anything to anyone, Jacob's family left Haran. Three days later, however, someone came to Laban where they were shearing sheep and told him that Jacob had left with everything he had. The Bible says here that "Jacob stole Laban's heart without saying he was leaving." Laban took a blow, he did not expect such an outcome. Although he had not been friendly to Jacob of late, he was still attached to his grandchildren, and perhaps to his daughters as well (even after depriving them of what was legally due to them). This was not how he envisioned parting, though he understood that Jacob had not come to him forever. But what was Jacob to do? Laban himself did not seem to realize that he was a danger to his son-in-law. Now that he had been neglected and neglected by the children who had left without saying goodbye, he felt some resentment, but had he thought about what had happened, who his daughters and son-in-law now perceived him to be? Who had he made himself to be in front of them, treating them not as his dear ones but as enemies or slaves? Did Jacob have to act by all the rules and suffer for the crookedness of his heart to be evident to all? I don't think so. Those from whom children leave because they feel threatened, not because they are capricious, like the prodigal son in the parable, cannot complain except to themselves. It often happens that too accustomed to their position, as if in their eyes they do nothing wrong, saying unnecessary, insulting, threatening, giving no peace and creating problems, tyrannizing indiscriminately because of any little thing. It is necessary to understand that not only little children are capricious, but it happens to people of all ages, and not only subordinates rebel, but also bosses run amok. It is not always easy to put even a child in his place, but how much harder to do it with the head of the family when he is driven by the same tensions that pervert children.⁹⁵ And everyone needs to take a critical look at themselves. Adults and the old are more responsible and guilty if they are wrong in their treatment of lesser ones than are young children or inexperienced youth.

Was Jacob guilty of running away from his relatives who had become unkind? Was there any real danger from them to his home? God had told him to go, but was the way Jacob carried out the order impeccable? He inflicted some kind of trauma on Laban - was it justified? On the face of it, yes, Jacob should not be blamed. It might have been possible to devise a scheme to leave without risk to himself and at the same time not so drastic, such as leaving the children and wives somewhere secluded and coming himself with a group of reliable fellows so as not to tempt Lavan to take him as slave or prisoner and discuss the terms of parting, where to meet to say goodbye. But even if that were possible, one should not require a skilled shepherd to have skills from other realms; no one covers all perfection, nor does he know everything at once. If he didn't feel safe and couldn't invent a better plan, he was right in his terms, even if it was

95 If you have noticed how a person moves in a caprice, you probably recall from Russian folk expressions "showing off", "showing off"... It is difficult to get rid of the impression that there are currents of force moving through the body, on whose path there are obstacles and the normal course of muscle movements is disturbed, becoming distorted. The body "bends," deviating from its normal trajectories...

It was not done in the most perfect way. Moreover, Laban got his way and saw his daughters and grandchildren and said goodbye, even if not on his own terms, but it was a good thing for everyone.

Ten days later, Laban and his men caught up with the fugitives who were being held back by the herds. Jacob most likely knew that they would be caught up and not simply left behind, but he knew that God was there to protect him. He remembered the stories of his fathers, even in the worst of times, when God had helped them, even when they had been wrong. Compared to them he was almost pure and innocent before Laban, and God was more justified and glorified by this than by the situations of his forefathers. Jacob was probably not very afraid of being caught up; he too had men who could handle weapons and stand up for themselves, the main thing was that this encounter would not take place in Harran, where he would have few supporters or intercessors compared to the enemy side, and there was also protection from supernatural forces that were not slow to come into play. The day before the fugitives were overtaken, God appeared in the night to Laban and very briefly explained to him that it was not that Jacob should not do anything, but that he should not even speak unnecessary words to him. What is interesting and surprising, it was not worthwhile to say not only reproaches or threats, but nothing good either... The bad things are clear why they should not be said, and the good things are forbidden, because Laban could be insincere in this case - flattery was not necessary and this attempt would look unreliable and would strain the distressed Jacob more, and such lying could also provoke God to do something that Laban would have to regret a lot later. There is another point - the flattery may have been an attempt to lure Laban to Harran to work on supposedly better terms, but Jacob had to return to his land. He was born free and had princely status and to remain a powerless farmhand in Syrian fields was somehow unreasonable from all sides. Even if he had reached a position in Harran, still his place was not there.

It was not a good occasion for Laban to have the privilege of seeing God and hearing His words... And he was hardly happy about it, nor could he brag about it in any way. Seeing God is the dream of so many people of all times, few have achieved it, Catholics can elevate such a person to the rank of saint, and such a person is considered by many to be exceptional, but it is unlikely that Laban could boast about the encounter. Though if he took note of the lesson and drew the proper conclusions, that he had been very wrong, he could. In some ways this encounter between Laban and God was similar to Saul's encounter with Christ when he went to crush the Christians in Damascus, but that encounter changed Saul dramatically, which does not seem to be the case with Laban. He did not even deny his theraphis by demanding it from James. He did not hold back in his speeches either, he actually threatened Jacob, although here Jacob himself gave him a reason for this by getting heated and saying to his father-in-law all that he had accumulated during his life, so that he could also speak in his own defence. Therefore, God did not exact retribution from Laban for violating the prohibition against speaking ill of him; Laban responded with restraint and rather correctly, under the circumstances almost perfectly, although he did not refrain from a hint of threat. But it worked out...

Laban begins normally, "Why did you deceive me, taking my daughters away as if they were prisoners? It's hard to say that he's exaggerating about "prisoners," but he's entitled to that comparison. Still, he is sort of the injured party, this time. He goes on - "I would have let you go with music and a feast, with song and gaiety" - perhaps, but before that he and his sons would have beaten him to a pulp, so that only they (and that is why) would have had fun, but not those they would have let go... Jacob was rightly wary of the very period between the announcement of departure and the actual departure. Then Laban is very indignant about not being allowed to kiss his grandchildren, but in light of the separation procedures in his scenario, even his grandchildren could have been badly harmed, so Laban is playing the innocent victim here for nothing. But Jacob, as already noted, had expected this meeting, knowing that they were moving slowly and it was not difficult to catch up with them, so these claims of his

little touched, he could say to himself - "so there they are - say goodbye, kiss, hug, but here you no longer have the power that you have at home. And here you can only say goodbye, and there you could arrange something else.

When Laban made his accusations, after mentioning that God had spoken to him and forbidden him to say both good and bad things, he said this thing - "okay, you were so eager to see your father, but why did you take my gods?" This is where I wondered - is he now sort of agreeing that Jacob had the right to do this - to go to his father? Is that how it could have been? Lavan, in fact, does not hold a grudge for fleeing; it turns out that what matters to him is his gods, which are most important to him. That's where the biggest complaint comes in.

The accusation was very serious and Jacob was very indignant - how could he think that of him? Really, then who had stolen them? But Jacob could not allow the idea that any of his household could have done such a thing. This unexpected accusation sent him into a tailspin and he lost his temper and began to say some harsh things to his father-in-law. True, not instantly, but after giving his father-in-law the right to search his entire camp, while saying the rash words that might have caused him to lose Rachel, that whoever took his gods would be punished with death. This could have been a very hard blow for him, but God had his back here, positioning Laban not to drive Rachel away from the place where she was hiding those teraphim. And when Laban found nothing, in the meantime, Jacob got thoroughly "warmed up," boiled over, and began to speak. In the Bible there are some speeches of one sort or another that are said to be "sung," whether by Jacob or Moses or others. These are inspired words that sound like poetry, and are poetry, though not in verse. So what Jacob says here is also in the line of lofty speeches, even if it is only an argument.

And Jacob began to speak, and he said to Laban:

"What is my fault, what is my sin, that you pursue me?

You looked through all my things - what did you find of all the things in your house?

Show here before my relatives and before your relatives - let them judge between the two of us.

Here, for twenty years you had me -

I have not thrown out your sheep and your goats; I have not eaten the rams of your flock.

I did not bring the beast torn to thee; it was my loss;

You charged me, whether anything was missing by day or by night;

I languished by day with the heat, and by night with the cold, and my sleep escaped my eyes.

Such are my twenty years in your house.

I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle. But thou hast changed my reward ten times.

If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the fear of Isaac had not been with me, you would have let me go now with nothing.

God saw my distress and the work of my hands and interceded for me yesterday."

But Lavan was not in the right state or the right person to appreciate the structure of the speech and the inspiration of the interlocutor, at least not to his advantage. Too bad, something useful and sensible could have come out. But not in his position, he was not on God's side now, and though he could have had inspiration from the dark side, it would not have been a good thing, and could have ended badly for him - the devil would not have led him to good, and here and now God was in charge and it was dangerous to get into a big argument. So he replies rather calmly, which is right on his part, but he is on the edge of a foul language. His speech contains an explicit or implicit threat, it's hard for me to judge, especially since it also depends on the tone, which written language doesn't always translate. He replies that all that Jacob has is from him, Laban. Hence some inalienable rights that cannot be denied in any court of law, so that even

God considered them appropriate and did not interfere. And Jacob saw his truth and did not argue further. "The daughters (who are your wives) are my children, my daughters. Your children (therefore) are my grandchildren (who can be considered my children). Your cattle - you didn't buy them somewhere, they are all taken from my cattle... Everything you see here is mine..."

Depending on the connotation put into these last words, one could argue, for it was not the whole truth, for Laban had given it all to Jacob in an honest contract, Jacob's property was his, belonging only to him and not to Laban, if Laban wanted to say that it was really all his. But in the sense that it was taken from him, that it came from him, and at least because of this he deserves some respect, that is true. But that's all there is to it. However, Laban immediately turns the conversation from dispute to peace, proposing an alliance between them. A clever move, to threaten a little and then offer peace... After that, it's uncomfortable to continue, and whoever would try further would look scandalized and at a disadvantage. But Jacob is wise and generous, he understands that Laban needs these last words to assert himself, and even as the youngest he would have to leave the last word to his father-in-law, which is what happens.

Everyone must have breathed a collective sigh of relief at the offer of peace. Jacob suggested that a monument be erected to commemorate this peace agreement, which he did by selecting and placing a large stone. Then he suggested something bigger, and everyone gathered stones together and made a hill on which to feast. And there were no more complaints and reproaches; the feast was such as any feast should be for people who are going to say goodbye for a long time. Laban said goodbye to his children and grandchildren, while Jacob said goodbye to the unhappy part of his past life.

This place with the memorial pillar and the man-made hill were both named differently, but it became the boundary between the possessions of Abraham's family and his relatives. As if it were but a boundary between two families beyond which to make friendly visits, yet Laban was an influential man of Harran, which in turn was not the last city of what later became ancient Syria, and thus here began the boundary of future Israel, recognized by the rest of the nations. It so happens that here, where Laban had reached Jacob, was where the Canaanite territory began, Jacob was able to leave before the borders of his own land. In the end Laban's admonitions were heard - he called the Living God as a witness, saying that he himself could not care for his daughters and grandchildren, but that God would see them and in case of trouble he would ask Jacob for any injustice. "This hill is a witness between you and me." He implores Jacob to do good to his daughters and not take other wives. His concern for his children and grandchildren is quite understandable, and though it is tempting to ask him why he has not set a good example for himself in everything, in fact he suddenly thinks that if Jacob did what he did to him and his wives, his daughters... Don't his words sound like a plea - "Don't do as I do"? The next day they said goodbye and parted for good.

Meeting with Esau

In the arduous parting with Harran and its inhabitants there were dangers that were successfully avoided. The meeting with Laban took place in an environment where Laban had no prey, which was a boon even to Laban himself, less temptation for unrighteous action. Now Jacob was approaching the Jordan about midstream or in the upper third, where a tributary of Jabbok flows into it from the east. His mind was again troubled. His earlier concern to meet his Harran kinsmen had been safely resolved and he could breathe a sigh of relief, but soon enough a far greater problem lay on his mind. A relative already on his side, his twin brother was far more dangerous than Laban, and if Laban had many reasons to love and respect Jacob, which did not prevent him from disliking his too fortunate son-in-law and scheming, what about Esau, who had good reason to dislike his brother... Looking at his prospects on human grounds, Jacob had every reason to be despondent and

Others in his place would have looked for any other place on earth where Esau would not have gone after his soul. His brother's promise to kill him hung before him all the time. But there was another consideration beyond all human calculations and calculations: God's promise to care and protect. Jacob had ample evidence of the fulfillment of this, the most recent of which took place just a few days ago, when Laban himself told him of God's intervention and forbidding Jacob to say anything. So on the supernatural side he had good reason not to be discouraged and to hope for a favorable outcome to this encounter as well.

On the way he encountered a group that Moses described⁹⁶ as an encampment or army of angels, a sizeable group at that, for Jacob called the area by the plural word "camps" or "armies." Such presences of heavenly dwellers on earth are noted many times in the Bible, and this is the first time such warriors are mentioned here, sent to protect, in this case Jacob. This encounter was a great encouragement to him and he then boldly sends servants to his brother to tell him of his return. He returns rich and wealthy, with no claim to his father's possessions, a gesture that may reassure his brother at least in this way. It is also a gesture of courtesy and respect for Esau - Jacob does all he can to welcome him. However, when the messengers returned, they brought very troubling news, and Jacob became alarmed, his hope of heaven's protection somewhat diminished. It was reported to him that Esau was on his way to meet him, with a team of four hundred men, all with weapons. I don't think he was weakened by his faith in his God, but the way I understand the human construct is that every part of our being and everything we encounter has its own effect on our condition, on our perception of life. Each part has its own weight and influence. If the strengths and influences of the parts that oppose each other are at least comparable, then there is the possibility of oscillations. If the influences are equal, then the slightest whiff can cause an oscillation from one state of mind to another. Thoughts of a fierce and vengeful brother countered thoughts of protection and protection from God. While the mind was preoccupied with the thought of Esau, pictures of his vengeance and fear swirled in the mind, enough to cause the emotions that accompanied the thought to intensify and push the hope out of the mind. You don't have to lose faith completely; it is enough to concentrate on one side of the case to make the emotions swing in that direction. Often we perceive some aspect or factor as more important than others and this dictates a stronger emotion. But in these cases one has to have control of one's imagination, to keep thoughts and the inner picture on the right side, in the case of Jacob it was enough to remember to hold on to the support from above. Of course he did, but the precautions had to be thought of as well, to go specifically into that section of the mind which is responsible for that operation, so that thoughts often focused on the threat. It wasn't the only way to control emotions, and even thinking about the enemy's actions was a way to be calm, Jacob had to learn it on the fly - such dangerous encounters didn't fall to him very often, and at this level, maybe not at all. The threat was too significant because it was connected to his guilt, and this depressed him most of all - now the greatest threat and problem with all the interest accumulated in a long absence had come into his life. The first time Jacob had fled from his brother's anger, but now he had to face it, face his fear. If Esau had been hostile to him for no reason, Jacob would have borne it much easier, like the problem with Laban, but guilt made him vulnerable - he knew that God might leave him to his enemy because of it. That's why he felt insecure, not about God's ability to protect, but about whether He would do so, whether His promise applied to such cases where he himself was wrong. Yes, there were cases where God protected his fathers even when they were not blameless, but in his case the fault was much more serious - at least his fathers were in danger when they took questionable steps, did so out of fear, and he

96 Genesis 32:2

was safe at first, and with his own hands he created danger for himself. And, in fact, his fears were not in vain, for God had put him to a severe test, which not every man can face.

But that was later, for now Jacob, hearing the news from the messengers, expected the worst. But there was nowhere for him to go. In principle, he could have gone far away with his clan and multiplied there in peace, but no fear could have made him abandon the vocation his fathers had given him of being the keeper of faith, truth, and the sacred land. He was to live in Canaan and nowhere else, and in fleeing to live in another land he would betray what had been entrusted to him. Having taken up the much desired legacy he had so strived for all his life, now to give it up? No, it is not for him. If God did not protect him, he still had to remain faithful to his calling, and he could not imagine that God, having promised protection, having recognized him as a covenant keeper, would simply abandon him like that. But even if there is no protection, Jacob will not run away...

But he does take some measures. And these are not even protective measures... He divides his possessions and his family into groups, putting the children of the maids ahead of the herd, then the children of Leah, and putting Rachel and her only son last. In fact, he seems to be putting those less dear to him ahead, but it's hard to blame him, because he himself went ahead of everyone else. However, this was on the day of the meeting; at first he divides everything into two camps, crosses the river Javok by wading at night, assigns gifts from his cattle and puts them out in front, hoping to win his brother to him. He also turns to God with a prayer-conversation, where he asks for protection from his brother. He refers to the promise made to him by God Himself, he refers to His promise - "You said - I will do good to you, ... to make your offspring like the sand of the sea." That is, it has to come to pass, and God has to keep this promise now, in this danger, in order to keep it.

Wrestling with God

That night before tomorrow's meeting with his brother, after he had led everyone across the river, he was alone on the other bank, behind everyone else. He had not yet settled down to sleep, and was about to pray again, tormented by expectations and fears of the unknowns of tomorrow's meeting. He neither slept nor rested that night, for the strangest thing had happened. Someone approached him and attacked him. There was no way to think or study who it was or why it was attacking him; he had to defend himself. It was unknown how strong Jacob was in self-defense and in general in the ability to fight. Judging from the fact that shepherds like David were very good at martial arts, and Jacob was an excellent shepherd, it is to be expected that he was good at defending himself in this battle of the night. If the moon was shining, he could distinguish the figure of his attacker and was able to orient himself. The attack was carried out without weapons, only with his hands. It is also clear that this was more fighting with its techniques but not striking, at least Jacob limped after this battle but had no bruises or bruises, otherwise this would have been reflected in the biblical text (although I cannot rule it out either) as it has been described in the relevant cases. The struggle was at the limit of his strength and skill, but the adversary was not beyond Jacob's abilities. The mysterious silent opponent, trying to bring him down, the shadows of the night, the reflections of the moon on his sweat shining skin, the breath of the combatants... This went on for a long time and none of them prevailed. At last the light began to fall and in a few minutes the attacker's face was visible, and he stopped; but first he touched Jacob's hip joint to show that he had been playing with it as with a child. If Jacob had let go of his hands because of the pain, the fighter would have walked away and that would have been the end of it. But Jacob took advantage of his opponent's lunge and, despite the pain in his hip, seized him so that he could not escape. The pain in his thigh was so severe that it involuntarily brought out tears, later in the book of Hosea the pro- rock described this moment that Jacob cried, and much of this was because of the intense pain, intens-

He was already aware of some signs emanating from his opponent that this was not just because he was in the presence of a higher being. He was already aware by some signs radiating from his adversary that this was for a reason, that he was in the presence of a supreme being. He remembered his encounter with the army of angels in Mahanaim and knew that they would not let any danger or enemy pass to him and it was most likely one of them. And the fact that the assailant was hiding his face only added to the certainty of the rightness of his guess. So when the assailant asked to let him go so as not to be illuminated by the morning light, Jacob asked to be blessed. Although it was more of a demand as he held his attacker tightly. He understood that what was happening here and now was a test and responded - "I will not let you go until you bless me." He had already clearly understood that he was facing a representative of the divine powers. Clearly if his adversary had injured a joint with one finger he could have easily escaped his grasp, but here Jacob knew that this would not happen, and though his request was more of a demand, it was not presumptuous or arrogant. There was a plea from Jacob, an awareness of his need and the ability of the one who came to him to help, and he drew on past promises from God. No wonder the Angel of the Covenant could not refuse him.

Could he be offended for a sleepless night without rest? For the pain and physical damage he caused? Many fantasy writers would have put many harsh and rude words into Jacob's mouth, regardless of the identity of the God who conducted the event, which would have been similar to the behavior of Marfutka from the fairy tale "Morozko," and the case would have ended even sadder then. No, and not according to Nastenka, of course, should have been answered, but Jacob feels no enemy in his attacker and exhibits no grievance or resentment. And he gets his reward. The former adversary asks:

– What's your name?

– James

– Now you are not Jacob ("the one who tripped", "the cunning one"), but Israel ("the one who struggled with God", "God rules", "the prince of God"). You have wrestled with God, and you will wrestle with men too.

Before that night Jacob had suffered many fears, tormented by the uncertainty of how Esau would behave, painting pictures to himself that were worse and worse. The night's attack gave him real experiences instead of imagined ones (not in the sense of vain and mistaken, but just not yet realized, anticipated), in this struggle he had no concern for fear, no concern for tomorrow's problems, he had to respond to the current trouble, and he did so quite successfully. He confronted God Himself, and even though He did not surpass Jacob's abilities, it shows that Jacob was well prepared. For the most part Jacob's strength was not so much in his muscles as in his strong grip on God's promise to keep him, which is faith. God could not disappoint him, could not cross the line drawn by His own promise, because Jacob was firm in the hope of His promise. That is, the inner soft power of man's conviction held even to God, who needed just that, for men to believe not only in Him, but also in Him, His promises. Developing this entails the pursuit of knowledge and other development, the restoration of man to his former strength and beauty even under the rule of dark forces.

It is worth remembering for all those who have seemingly undeserved problems, who have long followed the Way, who firmly hold fast to the rules of the divine realm - it often happens that some of the problems come not from people or even the devil, but from Himself, because our development requires it. It is written - "not according to the will of His heart He punishes and afflicts the sons of men" (Jeremiah 3:33), that is, our own condition determines the means we have to live with in order to achieve what He and we want. If, of course, we want to reach the goal.

Jacob wanted to know more about what had happened, he knew that this was a historical moment that he would remember all his life and more, all eternity, that his children and grandchildren would be curious about, that they would tell stories instead of tales and myths, so he asked the interlocutor for a name, but he got no answer. That is, he received an answer, not an answer, but a question - "why are you asking about my name?" Instead of revealing His name, He blessed Jacob with something else, something the Genesis text is silent on. But from what was happening, Jacob could already have quite figured out for himself who it was. Some time later, as he left that clearing and limped toward the location of his family, he said to himself, "I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved. Those words became the name of the place where it happened, Peniel. Fear is not in vain, the reservation about preserving his life is by no means accidental, the mark on his thigh confirms it, and it was only when God came to earth incarnate in a human body that communion with Him became physically safe because His power was hidden. However, it is not so dangerous for people who aspire to God - His energies and powers guard and protect rather than damage, but if one has any curvatures in oneself, damage from the proximity of such energies is practically assured. Moses was twice forty days in His presence, and did not even feel the need to eat and drink, only began to glow, but for most people it is physically undesirable to get close to Him.⁹⁷ It is true that when Moses asked Him to show him more of His glory, he learned that what he had seen on the mountain was only a small part; to see Him in all His power would have meant death for Moses as well. This is one of the reasons His visits to the earth gradually diminished as human numbers increased and morals declined at the same time. So as not to harm a humanity damaged by the problem of evil. If James had been different, if there had been any crookedness or dishonesty in him by this time, this meeting might have ended very differently. It was a crisis moment, but the preparation of his whole past life was not in vain.

Meeting of brothers. The denouement

When Jacob arrived at the camp, he saw from the hill that the crowd coming with his brother was approaching. He divided his household into three groups, putting his dearest ones last, and went out ahead of them all to meet his brother and his soldiers. Until yesterday this moment had tormented him greatly; it was his eternal guilt over his brother, which he could do nothing to atone for himself, and the look on his face, and Esau's words of eternal vengeance. But now he had no doubts and no restlessness. It was not the certainty of the gifts that had been sent out to meet his brother that made him so serene. He was a different man now. The encounter of this night with her battle, with an opponent far more powerful than his brother, had given him so much that his brother, with his petty vanities and unreasonable pretensions, far from being right in his own claims, no longer troubled him. He had, so to speak, won a war with God, a very small one, of course, with a safety net from Himself, but a serious and dangerous one nonetheless, more dangerous than the encounter with his intransigent brother. After that, Esau was no longer a problem. By inertia Jacob still takes safety precautions, but on going out to meet Esau he feels and realizes that he can worry about nothing else. The blessing of the Almighty still came to mind - "you have fought with God, and you will win with men". This is all a good illustration of the religious term "faith." Jacob overcame himself yesterday and so found himself victorious in his struggle with God as well. While he did not yet have victory, he already had it. And everything went according to a peaceful scenario. Esau was also defeated, judged in the framework of his offense, but Esau didn't feel like a loser either, they both won.

It is hard to say what was happening to Esau. The Bible does not say that God came to him at night or whenever else and said anything to him like Laban had before. Laban's prohibition of God did not hold him back.

⁹⁷ This is all true of the Son of God, but it is much more pronounced with the Father, so that He has to "dwell in unapproachable light," so that heavenly men need to keep some distance as well.

from a rebuke or two, and it is unlikely that God's prohibition against harming Jacob would have produced such a result. Instead Esau was awakened to brotherly feelings, to memories of childhood, to the fact that Jacob had changed, that he had suffered for all his and not his transgressions away from home and parents. The soft "homely" Jacob endured life in foreign lands that were not always kind, the deceptions of relatives, disputes over property, and hard work. The message carried over into those days as well, though not in the same way it does today. Most of all Esau was aware of the fears his brother must have felt, knowing that he was marching toward him with an armed detachment, but not running away from the near certainty of destroying not only himself, but his family as well... And he regarded him as he should have⁹⁸ And he treated him as he should have, with those almost forgotten feelings from his former life and also with some new ones. When he saw Jacob in front of his children and wives, he himself ran towards him and embraced him, and both wept. All resentment and vindictiveness were forgotten.

Esau wanted to refuse the gifts Jacob had put in his way, but Jacob begged him to accept them because, as he said, "I have seen your face today as the face of God. Who is naturally benevolent, who gives life and all good things, just like the best of parents. It was indeed the greatest miracle to Jacob that Esau was so disposed toward him and forgave him. He couldn't have expected a greater gift; it had been his life's problem, and now it was solved, the knot of his problems, pains and fears untied, and he was truly free to breathe. He knew he was not a wicked saboteur but he knew that his weakness in front of his mother's counsel had made a very grave mistake, one that his brother was entitled to consider him a criminal for and not only that, he was ready to destroy. Now not only was his mistake forgiven and made amends, but the hardened brother became a friend who removed all claims. This also shows that Esau had in some measure recognised Jacob's calling to be the spiritual leader of the family; that his ambition was not accidental; that though he had reached his position with mistakes he had paid the price, and that his place was well deserved, with the right qualifications. Also Jacob displayed brilliant business qualities, he became quite wealthy on his own, so that he did not need his father's wealth and could leave all or a substantial part of his parental inheritance to Esau - still, material considerations played some role, not the first, but as a touch to the overall picture.

Life in Canaan

Esau invited him to visit, offering to follow him, but his men were light, and Jacob had too many delicate things - children, milking cattle. And he answered Esau that he would come to him later, for he could not move as fast as his troop, for it would be bad for the animals and the children. At this they parted, and the Bible tells us no more of their relationship with Esau, except for a meeting at his father's funeral some twenty-four years later. They came to the outskirts of Shechem, where Jacob decided to settle. He housed the sheep in a place called Sokhof.⁹⁹ He did not go where his parents lived, settling¹⁰⁰ now to the north. However, he did not live in one place all the time, fulfilling the instructions given by his fathers to go and wander about Canaan while he was young and full of strength.

Problems in Seham

Dina, Jacob's daughter, was the last one born to Leah. It turns out that she must have been born six years before she left, but it seems to me that it could have been a year later, about her birth

98 Somehow we don't even want to consider the alternative, if Esau had not mollified. In that case, as soon as he gave the order for his detachment to attack or raised his hand against his brother himself, God's protection would come into play, the angels from Machanaim who accompanied Jacob would appear, or even Jacob himself who had fought that night.

99 East of Jordan, probably not far from where I met my brother. But old maps also found Sokhof west of Jordan, much closer to Shechem. It is more accurate to pronounce it Sukkot (shalash).

100 That doesn't mean he didn't attend them.

It is said that she was born "afterwards," that Rachel had Joseph before her. But when they settled in Shechem, she was already at an age when one could speak of marriage (many tribes performed marriages at an early age), that is, they had been walking around the country for some time without long stops in any one place. She was about fifteen now. If she had been older, she might not have fallen into the trap of a more experienced, successful seducer. It so happened that she went out to see the girls of these places, to make friends if possible. She made one grave mistake - before their family knew all about the place and its inhabitants, who and what they were, she should not have gone out alone. Nor had everyone living in Shechem had time to hear the details of their tribe... At least she could have gone for a walk with someone else, but she wanted to look around on her own. Perhaps this would not have been bad in familiar surroundings as it was in Haran, but not here, and this carelessness of hers (and the carelessness of those who were elders in the house) had brought great misfortune upon her and many others. Finding herself among new people, she not only looked at them herself, but they also looked at her, and not all of them favourably. Her beauty attracted the attention of not the best people. One of the local prince's sons, Schem, had carried her away with his chatter and managed either to win her heart or to make her talk so that she did not run away when she should have been on her guard. In doing so, he used force against her, and the description is that he either brought her to his house or kept her somewhere else for some time. He hardly considered himself a robber, but he was used to acting on his own free will, he thought he could do anything he wanted as the son of the chief local person, so he raped her at first, probably counting on her later favor. However, he was so attracted to her himself that he literally lost his head and then he began to act within the culture and the best traditions - he asked both Dina's father and relatives to marry her. The story, which started out badly, started to get better, as if he was doing everything for her and wanted to be with her legally. He probably didn't expect that a little fling with a new girl would turn into such big feelings for him.

Abraham's lineage should have been known everywhere, yet somehow this city does not count with the honor of a man known in Canaan. But it was probably Shechem, the son of Hamor the Shebaite, who did not question anyone about anything, concentrating on the pleasures of the flesh, courting a simple unknown girl, whom he considered to be of the simplest origins, with whom he thought he could do as he pleased, and who should also be grateful that she had been noticed by such a brave hero. True, later, when he suddenly discovered that she had a kind and delicate soul, and just something close to his soul, with whom he felt as good as ever and with no one, he discovered that he was not dealing with a simple countrywoman. And from that moment on he was extremely polite and careful, especially having also received a sizable warning from his father, who had enlightened him on the nuances when he had come with Dina to him for advice and blessing.

When Jacob found out what had happened, he did not know what to do. It is possible that his daughter had not been away for long, but it is more likely that she did not return home from her walk until the next day, which caused much anxiety. She had already been with Shechem, asking him for his daughter's hand, but Jacob did not respond at first. There was anger and a sense of shame and apprehension for the fate of his family here, since the family's life had suddenly become entangled with people of a different culture and who did not know the living God, though these were essential limitations, but they were also not of the best quality, capable of violence and unbalanced behavior. Well, him, such relatives - the main consideration in such cases ... On the other hand, he was home alone, not counting the youngest and the women, the rest of the sons who have come of age or close to it, not bad fighters in case of need, was not at home. It was better that they weren't, though, for they might not have been able to resist retaliating against Shechem on the spot, and it could have turned out very badly (though it's hard to imagine worse than it turned out later, too). At this point in time, the sons of Jacob

The people of the Hebrews had many spiritual problems, being more of a gang than a well-bred and trustworthy youth, with little in common with the high calling of the house of Abraham and the house of Israel in which they were born. But this is a topic for a separate discussion; we will limit our discussion to current events for the time being.

When the sons returned, Jacob told them of the problem. If the daughter was about fifteen years old, the older Reuben must have been about twenty-two, and the younger ones, the mu of this fortunate company, were about seventeen. As a rule, Rachel's son Joseph did not participate in the bad deeds of his brothers, having a different attitude and purpose in life, somehow he avoided the temptations that the others did not fail to fall into. His story is special and he, like most of his brothers, is not involved in the subsequent events with the destruction of this town.

The brothers removed their father from the negotiations, seeing that he, with his peaceful and quiet nature, was incapable of them; but he himself was glad to leave the matter in the hands of his sons, believing that he would have the last word if need be. The brothers, thinking ahead, had no choice but to let him have the last word. When the Prince of this city, Immor himself, and his son came to ask for Dina's hand in marriage, the brothers laid out a dreadful revenge plan, blazing with rage and hatred for the disrespect shown to their family in the way they had treated their sister.

In the songs and poems of many poets, it is not for nothing that love and blood are close and interrelated. Is it only in Russian culture, is it only because it rhymes with our language? Much has long been distorted, both in human life and in orders (there are orders "as it should be" and orders "as is customary", and which are more popular?). Sane people do not live by such destructive laws; their love is peaceful and blood is shed only in defense of their loved ones and their country. But where pride, disregard for the rights of others, a failure to recognize one's true purpose or even one's own couple, and where competition for prestige are woven into people's passions, it is hard to do without blood. Where wealth and prestige decide about building a family, where women go where they are better off financially rather than where they are happier, where men are forced to listen to considerations of prestige and "their circle", there are inevitable losses in happiness and inevitable clashes that lead to one's death. When two are destined to take someone else or the other, those "others" also have their true pair¹⁰¹ So instead of two happy ones, at least four become unhappy. Sicheem fell deeply in love, he met the one who made him happy for life, but he got off to a very bad start. He thought he could have any woman he looked up to, that his father's position allowed him more than his other peers (even if his father had raised him differently), and seeing no sign of special origin in the new girl (medieval opulence or even the older customs of kings and princes were not yet developed, things were just beginning and inequality had not taken subtle forms) in dress, he did not ask about her family. Had he known who he was talking to, he probably would have been much more careful, but alas, his arrogance and impudence led him down a different path and prevented him from finding happiness. Dina's brothers didn't leave him a chance.

It must be said that they were proud men, too, which is why they hated Shechem so much. Their plan was audacious, but if their trick of circumcision had failed, they would have left the place, fulfilling their threat to leave Shechem alone. But then he would have had a chance to somehow place her brothers with him. If he had time, he might have hoped to see her or follow their camp and try to persuade them to peace. This encounter could have changed his life.

¹⁰¹ I find that among human beings there is not so much destiny, but rather a certain number of psychotypes of people within which people are perfectly matched. Compatibility depends on the construction of the person, not on any chance. The number of types is small (I haven't tried to count them, probably within a hundred or two hundred), so perfectly matched pairs are quite common.

very much, so that he could have even joined this family and its calling. But not fate. When the sons' plan of revenge came to fruition, Jacob cursed (much later, in his last word of blessing to his sons, not immediately after what they had done, which shows the deliberateness and principle of his assessment) those who carried it out, Simeon and Levi, because what they did was no better than what Shechem had done to Dinah. There was no need for such cruel acts, and if it were not for the pride, the carnal nature of the brothers, no one would have thought to work out such plans. What was the fault of the brothers who burned with indignation? - That they treat Shechem as if he had only raped their sister and disowned her, throwing her out of their lives. But any person, though angered by this fact, usually also considers the subsequent steps and changes in Shechem, who wished to mend, began to regret the wrong step, and was especially aware of the wrong thing he had done. Maybe this is the first time this person has learned a lesson that has reached him or her. One cannot ignore such soul movements. But they ignored, acted as if nothing else, as if nothing better had happened, as if there were no extenuating circumstances. This is the fault of those who drew their swords, forgetting that they had the blood of many innocent people on them, forgetting also that they had deceived people who had made drastic changes in their lives to be friends with them.

They instantly came up with a cunning plan to offer all the men of Shechem circumcision for the sake of merging with them. Shechem was willing to do anything for Dinah's sake, and amazingly, he somehow actually managed to persuade all the men of Shechem to do it, starting with his father. And when everyone was incapacitated by this operation, Simeon and Levi attacked the town and killed all the men. Then the rest of the company came up and they took everyone else prisoner and all their possessions. It is possible that their servants could have taken part in this action as well, but if the population of Shechem was small, up to a thousand men, they could have done it themselves.

What could they do without overstepping the bounds of justice, without bringing a curse on themselves? First of all, they would have to deal with Shechem himself, who alone was guilty before them. They could have challenged him, someone alone. Although under the laws and customs of many nations this kind of wrongdoing (not violence) led to far less severe punishments, basically the one guilty before the girl had to marry her and pay her father and family a certain amount of money or property. It was exactly the same law of divine origin in later Israel, and I am sure that their relatives and thus themselves had the same custom. But for some reason they are judging by some unimaginably high standard. It is as if they had already tried the case, found only aggravating circumstances, sentenced Shechem, son of Emmore, to death, demanded his extradition for execution, and were refused, only then would they have the right to punish Shechem for his crime, for harboring and complicity. But none of this happened, none of these procedures of justice, without which their actions look and are criminal. When the father accused them that they had done something wrong (he simply could not find the right words, and described only the immediate consequences that could happen), in justification to the father they say, "Is it possible to treat our sister as a harlot?" And these words again show their falsity - they never call him a rapist... The rapist does not care who is in front of him, fornicators are not generally raped, because fornication is voluntary. Shechem seduces her, but it is not difficult to seduce girls who are fornicators; it is the virtuous ones who are seduced. So the brothers tried to distort the matter to justify themselves, accusing the guilty man though he was guilty of something he was not really guilty of. All in all, they acted cruelly, unreasonably, unjustifiably. They were not the first to commit such exaggerated acts of revenge, filled only with criminal pride and nothing else. But because these events were recorded in sacred history, it seemed right to many uninitiated people (and uninitiated ones)... They are not paying attention; you have to add a line or two more to this story to make it sound like that.

But their father repeatedly calls their action a crime. He didn't punish them for it, either because he didn't feel he could, or because he expected them to understand. And the timing was not good - if the people around them were going to judge them, they would either have to defend themselves, and then the swords of Simeon and Levi would come in handy, or they would have to be turned over to the avengers...

However, as with other such cases (it is not just Abraham and his children, God has the same attitude toward everyone else...), God did not immediately punish or prosecute those who stumbled. Especially since Jacob was not guilty of anything here, just two of the sons. Their journey was just beginning and God did not deny them the chance of redemption. In regard to vengeance from the surrounding nations, God did not intervene forcefully this time as in Egypt or Gerar, i.e. did not inflict disease, yet those who might have tried to attack Jacob's family had considerable fear of them, so that no one would pursue them. The ferocity of the retaliation shocked those around them, but still people understood the motives... However, Jacob had to leave the area. God spoke to Jacob and told them to go to Bethel. That place had become unfriendly.

These tragic and gruesome events spurred Jacob, who had begun to relax after the problems of the previous period of his life were over. He realized that he should not doze off, that there appeared to be very undesirable processes going on in his family in the souls of his children, that in many ways he had greatly neglected his sons. He realized that similar things had happened to his fathers, but they didn't have as many children, and the more people in a group, the more attention and effort it took to maintain order. It can happen that the people in a group are highly developed and conscious, and then the order and harmony are maintained as if by themselves and their work flows easily and successfully, but how often is this the case? And if the members of this group are in their formative stages - who decides what direction and principles they will take? So it is the responsibility of those who are the leaders to manage certain things and influence in such a way as to ensure future order, harmony and non-conflict, to ensure the development and future of this group, that is, to nurture. Otherwise, chaotic and uncontrolled processes, having many choices, simply cannot randomly get to the constructive ways, but according to the laws of chance, destructive processes will always have the advantage, even if young people themselves are well-meaning. Weeds grow more easily, they do not need any care...

Bethel

They had gone thirty or forty kilometers south, to Bethel. To the very place where he had dreamed of the ladder connecting the earth to heaven. After about ten or twelve years of wandering through Canaan, God tells him to settle here and arrange the place as he had promised God, including building an altar where he and others could worship the living God and learn about His orders and rules. Jacob at this time was serious about spiritual things, after the tragedies at Shechem. Thinking about the meaning of life in general and the calling of his home to enlighten the world about God and the salvation He offered, he took a responsible approach. As he fled Haran he could not have imagined that his wife would take the pagan statuettes secretly from him, but now he was probably already aware of many things that took place in the lives of the members of his extended family. He could easily see the connection between the presence of those gods in the house and what two of the older sons, the cruel Simeon and Levi, had grown up to be. And now that they must go to the sacred place and arrange it, he felt the need to purge himself and the family of things that bore the influence not of God but of the forces of darkness and brought a curse on them. It didn't solve all the problems, but without it there could be no improvement. He told everyone even before he took them down to throw away the foreign gods, whoever had them. Whether it was only Rachel who had them or whether others had them too,

It is not known, but now everything they could find that was not theirs was collected and buried under a certain oak tree in Seachem. Along with the occult objects, the household also gave him the earrings that they used to wear in their ears. Many of these ornaments were of a decaying nature, and the sympathies of many of them were not harmless. Jacob seems to have spoken only of foreign gods, but the members of his family, who had seen in practice the consequences of the pagan influences that had led Simeon and Levi to act beyond good and right, and impressed by the consequences of all this, did more than the master of the house demanded, and were quite right. Jacob did not return the ornaments but buried them with the teraphim. It is possible that Rachel's example may have inspired other wives of Jacob to acquire similar items for themselves, so that instead of being keepers of ancient truth, their family became indistinguishable from any other. Distinguishing oneself simply for the sake of distinction is not a good idea, but if matters of honor or truth or similar items require it, one must do so. And the fear of not being like everyone else then spoils a person.

In Bethel, Jacob built a monument on the spot where he slept the night God first appeared to him in a dream. Now God came to him again, not in a dream, but in reality, and spoke to him. He blessed him, confirming all His previous words and assuring him that He would give all this land to him and his descendants.

Many who have a particularly negative view of the Jews and their God, who drove out the former inhabitants of Canaan, will read this passage and find no command to drive out the Canaanites. At that time it did not seem to be an issue - if Jacob had raised his children properly, as Abraham and his descendants were required to do, the influence of the Israelite tribe could, through moral refinement, change the moral climate of the land and it would not have been necessary to expel anyone, much less destroy them. But the sons of Jacob were infected with a certain corruption and were not fit for the task, so God had to lead them in other, harsher ways, refining and polishing them, spending much more time on them, while Canaan was left to itself, and by the time Israel was somehow (frankly, not at all) ready to re-enter Canaan, the corruption of that in those more than two hundred¹⁰² The corruption of that country over two hundred years had reached such proportions that something like the Flood or the punishment of Sodom had to be done again. That's when the order was given to expel the former inhabitants of the¹⁰³ The order to cast out the old inhabitants of the land that some blame God and Israel for today was given. But if these critics had been in the place of God, I don't think their plans would have been any more humane ... As the Supreme Ruler and Judge, God is in His right to punish and dispose of the fate of transgressors, to take their land and give it to others, which is exactly what happened. God is no more at fault here than the judge who pronounced a just verdict of execution and confiscation, and Israel is no more at fault than the enforcers of justice... Once again, what was done to the former inhabitants of Canaan was an event like the Flood or the burning of Sodom and Gomorrah, only without the disastrous consequences for nature. The Jews were no more to blame for that war than the water of the Flood or the fire and brimstone that destroyed Sodom.

102 From the time Abraham was promised this land until Israel entered it, 430 years had passed. From the time Jacob and his family left for Egypt it was 215 (or 225, depending on the point of reference) years, half of that time.

103 Of course, we can remember Genesis 15:16, where we can see a hint in God's words - "In the fourth generation they will return here, because the measure of the iniquity of the Amorites has not yet been filled," but here still contains the condition of "iniquity," which depends on human choice, and the moral climate of the Canaanites could have been changed if Israel had been saner. Although God's foresight is not wrong and the Amorites have not turned from their chosen path, there is no discussion of how the Canaanites will be dealt with at that time, leaving much to the way things will go afterwards.

After that Jacob lived in the place for some time, where his children, wives, workers and servants could take in the special atmosphere of the place, where God had spoken twice to the patriarch. This may have had a special effect on the sons, to set them on a better path, to clarify and straighten their minds and souls, not the least of which was the pagan influence, the influence of some distant maids who became wives because of sibling rivalry, and the not very good relationship between Rachel and Leah, all of which contributed negatively to their formation. It is difficult to judge whether the place and its legend, its fame, influenced them. Judging by later events, not so much. If one is not in the right frame of mind, sacred places alone can do nothing for one's righteousness.

Wandering Again

After a few years in Bethel, they took off again and went south. Rachel was preparing for childbirth at this time, and it is unclear to me what the reason for leaving was, because it would have been better for her to stay put until she gave birth. Whether it was the road or something else, Rachel died giving birth to her second son. It was a very great loss for Jacob, the only love of his life gone. What was left was her children, to whom Jacob devoted his whole self, but it turned out that in this concentration on two sons out of twelve he was once again mistaken. The other children needed his attention and counsel quite badly, having walked the wrong roads at the time, but he, deep in his grief, gave these two too much attention and singled them out excessively. While for the younger Benjamin this overprotection was appropriate because he was young and did not provoke the other sons, for Joseph it proved to be fatal. The older children were left even more out of the way because of this.

For a time they settled in a place called "the tower of the herd¹⁰⁴". If this is what is now known as a resort place with hot springs, it means that they went beyond the Jordan to the southeast of Lake Tiberias. Was it outside of Canaan? As if it were, in which case it could have been some kind of rebellion by Jacob in response to Rachel's death. But this is only a worst-case scenario conjecture, and even if it did take place, it was not long and had no continuation. Unless, again, if it really happened, there is one extremely bad incident that the Bible tells us about - "while he was in that region Reuben slept with Bilhah, his father's concubine. Reuben was already twenty-three or twenty-four years old at the time, and the general decay had affected him so much that he lost his sense of honor, getting carried away with himself and managing to entice Bella. Though it might have been the other way around, he still proved weak in the face of temptation. Nothing is said about this side of the life of the bad guys at the time, only from the description of Judah's life, as from this moment in Reuben, one would think that they could afford to break the seventh commandment as well. Seven woes, one answer? - I guess they could have thought so, though I assume the worst case scenario here, the others may have kept to a stricter path than these two. Jacob learned of this, but how he reacted and what he did we do we do not know. On the one hand it is easy to understand that he was losing heart and could not do anything about it, he was too old and too disabled to do so. If he himself (if there was such a thing) was in defiance of God at this time, having gone beyond the borders of Canaan, that is, having strayed from God's command to live and walk in that land, he may have seen in the incident with Reuben his own merit, that he had given a personal example of leaving God, however small. He then decides to return to Canaan, where he knows that God will be on his side to help him, including in the raising of his sons. If he were to remain outside his destined land, his rebellion and spiritual weakness would only further corrupt his family. He continued to hope that God would somehow bring them to reason, if only in time. It did happen, though not so quickly. For now, he seemed only to focus even more on the younger ones, who manifested

104 Gader Tower

The youngest was obedient to his father because of his age, and he tried to protect him from all the influences of his elders. The younger one listened to his father because of his age, and he tried to protect him from all the influences of his elders, not letting him go anywhere with them, but Joseph was a special case. His father's hopes may well have been focused on him as a worthy successor in the work to which he had been called.

But before we focus on Joseph, we must note an important event concerning the life of this house. At the end of Genesis chapter thirty-five it is noted that Jacob and Isaac's father Isaac died when he was one hundred and eighty years old. He outlived Abraham. At his father's funeral Jacob and Esau met again, peacefully seeing his father off to his last journey and also having a quiet time with each other. Esau had once threatened to kill his brother when his father died in a fever, and now his father was dead, but he no longer remembered his brother's former guilt. Some of Jacob's circumstances had changed and even Esau's had changed with them... Now, at their father's grave they were in their late twenties (they had been born when Isaac was sixty), and the years he had lived through had made Esau reassess many aspects of his youth. This moment in their lives is more recent than in the following chapters; ten years later Jacob will move to Egypt to join Joseph, who is now lost to him some years ago and will be found ten years later, but now he has taken stock of the years before.

So far I have not calculated the years of Jacob's life, the Bible does not seem to give direct indications of the timing of certain events, but there are plenty of pointers. The first reference to time is in the story of Esau, that he married when he was forty years old. It was not long after that that Jacob went to get his wife. Comparing Joseph's years with Jacob's arrival in Egypt, Joseph was born when Jacob was ninety years old.¹⁰⁵ (91 to be exact), at the time when the work for Rachel, the second seven-year term, had ended, and six years had come when Jacob was working for himself, taking the cattle under the agreement with Laban with the coloring of which the agreement was made. Then Jacob, who had come to Laban "for work," turns out to be seventy-six years old, leaves Haran at ninety-six, and by the time his father, Isaac, dies, wanders about twenty-five years in Canaan, trying to get his rambling sons back on track, and he succeeds with time. It all fits together pretty well, though nowadays normal people start at an earlier age, but we are dealing with heirs to a long-lived line where the customs of temperance, abstinence and other things which were part of their culture produced the unusual fruit of better health and longevity for most people. Isaac was about to die at about the age of one hundred and thirty-five, which is where many of Jacob's problems began, but he lived about forty-five years after that. One would think that if he had not been so quick to bless him because of his sense of impending doom, how much would have turned out differently. It is also worth considering that his shock at the theft of his blessing helped him to wake up and rethink a lot about his condition, which prolonged his life. He came to grips with what had happened and allowed that Jacob was supposed to be the heir, which he had missed as a spiritual leader and caused problems for both his sons and God.

After Jacob's settlement in Canaan, Esau must have still had some property in the south of Canaan, but he had previously looked out for and won Seir from the Horites.¹⁰⁶ Where he had relocated to, seeing that he and his brother had ample possessions. At a certain point he decided to move wholly to Seir, and the place where he lived was called the land of Edom after his nickname.

¹⁰⁵ Joseph is sold by his brothers at age 17, became a high level official in Egypt at age 30, after seven harvest years and two years of famine he must have been 39 or 40, at which time his father and brothers move to Egypt, and the father tells Pharaoh his age is 130. Joseph had spent 22 years in Egypt before his kinsmen came, and was sold about the time his father was 108 years old.

¹⁰⁶ The four hundred men with whom he went to meet his returning brother may have been part of the army with which he fought against the Horrians.

Subsequently, the descendants of Esau seemed to live quite peacefully with the Horrians living there, becoming practically one people.

Joseph

What ran between Joseph and the rest of the brothers is not hard to guess. But it's still surprising how much they didn't like him; it wasn't normal. He didn't seem that far removed in age from the other little ones, growing up on par with them, but somehow he turned out to be of a different sort. It was not that he did not take part, but when he shared it with his father, he absorbed from him all his advice and praise or disapproval of the fun that the merry band of youngsters led by their older brothers was capable of. He was used, as any child would be at first, to sharing with his father and mother all his experiences and discoveries, but if most people don't like the advice and disapproval (which then alienates many from their parents), then there are some, among whom was Joseph, who take the advice not as a negative, not as disapproval, but as a signal for the better, a hint of something even more interesting than what has already been done. Then there is no conflict between fathers and children, the good relations of generations are preserved and life goes on much more harmoniously. Without the rest of the company, Joseph would probably have had an easier life, but the brothers from the other mothers, who, if they were concerned about raising their sons, still, it must be said, did so with a lowered perspective-"it's no worse than people," not to the standards that should have been expected in the house of the princes of God. The dark forces did not fail to take advantage of the gaps in their spiritual defenses and the temptations of the children of Jacob were ten times greater than those that even the Gentiles around them get. They were greatly assisted in seeking and finding temptations, and Jacob alone could do little against the influence of rival wives (which was also a significant factor in the bad moral climate in the family, and the fact that the rivalry went on without outright conflict and scolding still brought trouble for the sharp-minded children), and he too often felt that he was not keeping up. The main thing was that he did not immediately discover the trouble that the children were out of control - he was inexperienced, he himself was not good at temptation, and his brother Esau was not far behind in comparison to what had befallen his sons. There would have been a knowledgeable and strong tutor for each of the boys, but it was just one father against three women, few of whom had any idea of the high rank of a husband. Perhaps only Rachel was able to fully understand and support Jacob, but for a long time she had no authority in the house because of her infertility, and the older children had already reached their teenage years before she gained any status with the other women. And a little later she was gone. The older brothers, on the other hand, had much more influence on the younger ones than all the mothers and fathers combined.

By the time Joseph was seventeen, Jacob was one hundred and eight. This just confirms the expression "son of old age" as Joseph was to his father. At that age Jacob could have already begun to think, as his father Isaac did, about the time of his departure, but Jacob did no such thing. Isaac might have been weakened by the loss of his eyesight and the resulting prolonged inactivity that led to a certain moping and depression. But Jacob was not concerned about that. The children were not yet all settled, especially in the matter of upbringing. As ordinary people they were quite prosperous, but if we consider the vocation of their home, only Joseph pleased him. All his attention was given to him and to the younger Benjamin, and in this he was careless. The carelessness of his affection he expressed in dressing for Joseph by making him something special, which aroused the dislike of his brothers. They already disliked him, especially when he reported to his father about their affairs, not all of which were commendable. It so happened that Joseph's father organized a hothouse environment in which the development of his character proved to be in earnest

danger. The anger of the brothers somehow did not hurt Joseph much; he still went to them, sought their company, sought their approval, but his impracticality and lack of understanding of the real complexities of life, along with other factors, made his presence for the brothers' company undesirable. He had a good mind, but he was not yet adapted to the complexities of life. His nation at the time was excessive.

Joseph once had a dream in which he was shown his destiny as the leader of his family. These dreams are usually unusually strong feelings, and he was too quick to share them with his brothers, and it finally alienated him from his brothers. He dreamed that they were working in a field and suddenly his sheaf straightened and the sheaves of the others began to bow to his sheaf. The destiny of being first was plainly marked to Joseph, but how much his brothers disliked it... It is written that "they hated him all the more because of it". Yes, "success before fellow men is an unforgivable sin," as it says in the Devil's Dictionary. Joseph understood that his brothers did not love him, but he was too simple-minded.

It should be noted that the brothers did not particularly doubt the meaning of his dream, which means that somewhere inside they believed in his great future, seeing his honesty, openness, and following the Way and instructions of his father, which they themselves had often neglected, although they had not completely rejected. But they had missed the point in their dislike of him that he did not create his dreams, and that they had nothing to hate him for. Even his dream aroused even more dislike in them, though he never put himself above them and did not separate himself from them. In spite of the fact that his father had singled him out, he did not despise or arrogate himself because of it, although if the same had happened to any of them, some of them might not have been able to resist the temptation to put the others on lower places immediately and would have either tried to command and rule or despise the others and assemble a team of singers for themselves.

A little time passed, probably not long enough for the first dream to be forgotten by his brothers, and Joseph had another similar dream, which he again, despite his brothers' apparent irritation and dislike, did not refrain from telling everyone, and this sealed his fate... And the brothers, hating him for these dreams, sinned against the One who gave this dream and destiny to their brother. This time he saw the sun, the moon, and the eleven stars bowing to him. This time he was no longer seeing a detached picture where he saw not himself as the actor, but only his sheaf, but now the worship was directed directly toward him. Interestingly, he told it all with a simplicity that excluded any pride or arrogance, not even trying to apply any greatness or importance to himself, not calculating why he would have such a revelation about the future. Was he preparing to be a king or a leader? Not in the slightest, and that was clear to everyone else, but it didn't help matters either. If he had really had the inclination to command and rule over all, the dislike would have been more justified. And now not only did his brothers intensify their hatred for him, though there was nothing further, but even his father could not refrain from scolding him (as if he had made up his own fate and dream), as if it were not good for parents to bow to their son... But the dream did not express that the authority of the son would become superior to that of his parents, but only the fact that even his father would be a beggar to him, as it turned out to be later. Anyway, when the time came, everything turned out exactly as predicted.

Abrupt changes

Shortly after these dreams Jacob sent Joseph to visit his brothers who were grazing their cattle in another place, in Shechem. After Shechem was destroyed by Levi and Simeon, it was re-settled some time later, as is often the case if the location is convenient. Excavations of many old cities show that people have returned to it many times after it seemed to have been destroyed by fire or war, and settled there again. A couple of years have passed since then and it is unlikely that anyone

could have avenged those killed, but Jacob wants to make sure that his sons are safe. It is interesting that Joseph has a fairly easy and unburdensome job - he is like a clerk to his father, keeping order or running things, probably not doing the usual chores, which might have additionally hardened his brothers. Although rather he was engaged in everything in the household, only less than them, he could not be entirely exempted from anything, the very life of those times demanded skill in practical matters. It is inconceivable that Joseph was allowed to be idle in the house; rather, he learned various wisdoms if his father wanted to give him a preference in inheriting his vocation. This, too, was envied.

Failing to find his brothers in the vicinity of Shechem, he traveled north to Dothan from there, at the prompting of one of the locals, and found them there. But the encounter turned out to be very bad. They may have been sitting on a hill, watching the herds from there, or his path may have been across the high ground, but they saw him from afar, and in the time it took him to reach them, a hatred kindled within them, and, inflamed especially by his recent dreams in some of them, gave them the idea of killing him. Their rebellion against God's laws was at its height at this time; they were in the prime of their powers, but not of their minds, and, as often happens, in such times the sea seems to be knee-deep in man. Yet they were curious as to how God's prophecies about Joseph would be fulfilled if Joseph were gone ... It was a challenge to God at this point, and they were well aware of it, so they agreed to make a terrible experiment of it. A normal person, on the contrary, would have listened to the signals from above and kept the chosen of heaven as their special hope.

Such a challenge to God is in the spirit of spontaneous atheism, although such atheists do not challenge God, whom they think cannot be, but those who believe in Him. But atheists are forgivable, at least it corresponds to their beliefs. But Jacob's sons were not and could not be atheists, because they had heard a lot from their father about God's personal contacts with him and his fathers, and they had also heard the same stories from Isaac. They themselves, personally, must have seen and remembered the inhuman guards at Mahanaim when they returned from Haran. But religious faith and knowledge alone do not determine a person's qualities. One must decide whether or not to follow the path God has ordained. This is the second dimension of religion, which has little or no bearing on the first (if any, because there are some who choose to go against what they know, even to their own detriment). Many even agree with God's rules and laws, that they are not bad, but are not personally ready or even willing to abide by them fully, limiting themselves to those that are more profitable or more appealing, leaving it to their discretion to adhere to these protective mechanisms of life. Most "good" people go the way of partial obedience and wonder if God can have any claim on them... Often people think that if they have done any good, heaven and God already owe them. It is as if they think that if they fulfill one of the Ten Commandments they already owe something to Him, for which there should be a reward, most likely in the form of forgiveness of violations of the others ... As if they don't have to keep safety precautions, God has to protect them in any case, and how great is their disappointment in Him when it doesn't work out that way. In principle, this approach makes some sense, but only in terms of rewards for works and merit before men. But when it comes to salvation, that is, "coming into life" or "becoming sons of God," this is not enough; it is totally inadequate. For "salvation" one has to be at least in tune with God.¹⁰⁷ to have Him at the center of government, as man was originally created, and that was lost with the fall of Adam and Eve. It is more than the doing of good and right works and much more than the not doing of sinful works--it is the state of mind from which works, deeds, and character are derived, and

¹⁰⁷ This is not a complete answer, the topic is broader, but more on that later.

This is the secret of the success of good works and their fullness, when they do not include falsehoods and distortions of human insufficiency.

Many deeds that people think are good, good, and right, even though they formally conform to God's laws, contain a message of evil inherent in our nature, and these drops (and sometimes buckets) of tar inside spoil that good, turning it into evil. Such flawed deeds of seeming good or a mixture of good and evil cannot be counted as righteous, cannot be included in the list of deeds for which there will be a reward after the story of evil is over. In life, such deeds generate much evil and trouble, many reasonable people see in them the source of problems and do not like those who by such weakly good deeds try to cover their morbid natures. No normal person, analyzing his life and what he has done, can count such good deeds as an asset, he does not like what he has done inferiorly, it is his pain and from this he tries to go to the next level, so as not to be hurt and ashamed of his sexuality and imperfection. The goodness or rightness of an action can only be judged by the full range of motives, and if the leading motives are those of profit or blackmail, of enslaving someone or other hidden evil calculations, then the seemingly good deed is not good at all, and its consequences for many will be devastating.

No, it's not all bad. Our world is not left to the will of the enemy of the human race, and the divine Spirit permeates us all, drawing us all toward the good, and many even the wicked at times follow this call, doing really good and right things from the heart, not in a false or pretentious way. But not all the time or not all... Because of this influence of the light and the fact that there are still people who let it through in their lives and in all their affairs, our world is not yet flexible. But still people have to make a conscious choice sooner or later to go one way or the other. Even if they make mistakes, there is enough time for them to be among those who entered life and will live forever. But among those who once made a choice, there are too many who then give up and don't tell anyone, not even themselves. And so, in this community that is called the Church, there have been, and for some time will be those who do not bring light, and through some of them much more evil comes into the world than through direct and open advocates of evil, so that Satanists sometimes smoke nervously in the background.

If Joseph were to suddenly appear before his brothers, no plan could be formed about him. At most some of them might have said something caustic or expressed their attitude toward him. Of course, the situation was ripe, their dislike might have been looking for some way out, and even if he had come to them suddenly, if he had stayed with them for a day, they might have had some plan. However, while they were waiting for him, a plan of action was emerging in the exchange of phrases. One said, "here comes our dreamer." To another, this word about the dreams reminded him of a question he had been harboring before - what if Joseph were to be removed, would his dreams not come true? What about the prediction and the God who gave it...? Is it possible to destroy God's plans? And someone suggested this to everyone, and there was an air of "let's kill him and see if his dreams come true"... And for some reason some people liked it, others seemed to be okay with it, and agreement was reached, but the oldest, Reuben, intervened. He sharply put a stop to this sentiment. He seemed to be the only one of them who was more or less mature. Once he gave in to the urge, he ended up in his own father's bed, and that lesson was the moment he came to his senses and reevaluated his life and everything he had done up to that point. He saw his father's reaction and his disappointment over this, he knew that in another family this could have ended very badly for him and as his father's instructions on the Way were not just empty words to him (as they were to others) there had to be a time when

time to think - am I living the right life, and with this relaxation, what will come of me? A higher purpose was revealed to him, and little by little he began to turn around from his former thoughtless life. Growing up. If Joseph was seventeen, he was twenty-four - it would have been long overdue, but apparently the preoccupation of others with mirages of amusement and the old brotherly attachments prevented him from completely leaving the established rut.

Reuben had authority, and plans for murder were abandoned, but since he dared not fully oppose the others, he offered to satisfy their thirst to show Joseph his place by leaving him in some pit, hoping to rescue him from their hands later. For some reason Reuben left the company, and when Joseph came to them, they treated him rudely, stripping him and throwing him into a rather deep pit. I am probably not alone in thinking that in the process some of the brothers may have hit him a couple of times, taking out all their emotions. I don't know how Joseph was re-agitated, I don't have the full picture yet, though I can partly tell from the later words of the brothers-"we saw the suffering of his soul as he pleaded with us¹⁰⁸". He took it like so many others who grew up in a greenhouse, without seeing the serious difficulties and troubles, it was a shock. When Joseph begged his brothers not to do this to him they laughed, as such people often do, not feeling threatened in an unequal confrontation, but his emotions got to them later, so it is not in vain that frightened people try to show their feelings and their suffering... Sometimes this works even immediately. But this did not help Joseph, and he had to taste a drastic change in his life. However behind this change was not only the brothers or the devil, who wanted to eliminate a man unruly to his will, but God, who had transformed his problems into benefits of a much higher nature.

Joseph learned betrayal, the price of resentment, the law of the accumulation of trouble, and realized that he had been too naïve and careless in his actions; he saw that his father could not protect him everywhere. He realized that the insults and threats his brothers had made to him up to that point had gone from being insignificant to extremely meaningful. In one day he had become a slave with no rights, a property for which money had been paid and which now had to serve someone else. He was naïve but not spoiled, his ideas about the world order were still quite sober, thanks to the wisdom of his ancestors, but it was one thing to know about problems, another to find himself in them. In a way it was necessary for his development, his fathers had gone through some lessons too, especially his grandfather Isaac, who found himself in the role of victim for a while and learned what she was experiencing. Some might even say bliss in this plan for Joseph, who plunged deeper into the problems coming from the darker side of life than anyone else before him. Such knowledge is usually the surest defense against evil; it reveals to the mind and heart its whole essence. However, quite a few people become bitter because of this, but it depends on subjective things - mood, perception, choice, and not on circumstances.

While Reuben was going somewhere, the others sat and ate, most likely without sharing anything with Joseph. As they were eating, the brothers saw a caravan of Ishmaelites, their relatives, passing by, and Judah thought of selling his brother to them, which seemed like a good way out of the problem with Joseph, whom their older brother had forbidden them to touch. The problem was that if Joseph was left untouched how could they explain their rough treatment of him, he would be sure to tell them everything and hide nothing... They felt that their father might reach a certain point, as they had reached their own and that what they wanted to do to his brother would bring his father to a point they might not like, especially since he was his favorite son whom they would dare touch. True, it was hardly the way they had imagined; he had given them no reason to think of himself that way; the picture they had painted was rather how they themselves would have treated their own kind... Today they had come to a line beyond which some terrible destruction had begun, and if it had not been for Ru-

In this way they would have crossed it, and in so doing they would have exposed themselves not only to their father, but also to God, who in a little later time destroyed Judah's two sons, who were too unfit for their generic vocation. This could also happen to them, and so Judas offered a compromise which seemed to them advantageous from every angle: Joseph disappearing from their lives, and them not being guilty of murder, which seemed very important to them - though they were ready to cross the line, they were relieved to have escaped. On the other hand, Joseph could not complain to his father. The plan was very good on all sides, except, of course, for Joseph. But his brothers might have thought that he should still be grateful to them for staying alive. Yes... Of course, they still did not think well of their father; they were not prepared for his reaction.

When the caravan came nearer, the brothers dragged Joseph out and hastily bargained with the Ishmaelites, who were not squeamish about human trafficking, but perhaps they were not alone. Since time immemorial, slavery, the total slavery of humanity, has been part of the custom of many tribes; it is useless to accuse them today. It had nothing to do with society, the way of things was just the opposite, it was created by traits of evil in humanity, the subjective evil that predetermined certain traits of society for many centuries. Not all men sought to be obedient to the laws and statutes of heaven, so the orders of men included everything that a consciousness that had departed from the Way could generate. To think, a fledgling tribe, called to bring people the light of life and a better order, simply takes advantage of the status quo, without even trying to justify the sale of a brother. If their orientation toward good and truth had been more serious, this nation could have been a model of successful living and management without all the negatives that the rest of the tribes and peoples of the earth have managed to master. Joseph was sold for twenty coins or standard pieces of silver. In later times the price of a slave in those parts was thirty coins, and clearly it was the same at that time, yet any buyer, especially a wholesaler or merchant, would seek to drive down the price. The Ishmaelites saw that the one being sold was very similar to those who were selling it, and after probing the situation, they realized that those selling the brother did not want anyone to know about it. So they easily knocked the price down to twenty coins, and the brothers were willing to pay less than that just to get Joseph back, so the price was settled and both parties were happy.

On this long journey, through no fault of his own, Joseph went without his outer garment. The brothers tore it and smeared it with the blood of a lamb to make it look as if Joseph had been killed by a beast of prey. They decided for themselves that they had succeeded in everything, had solved all problems with Joseph, except the question of his dreams, whether they would come true. But that took time, during which time they would lose their former interest in the matter. In fact, when that time came, twenty-two years later, not even his father reproached Joseph for exalting his parental authority. The brothers, on the other hand, were simply crushed by the weight of memories and all the foolishness that had once guided them. But that was a long way off; much more immediate problems awaited them. Having solved their brother's problem for themselves, though they anticipated their father's reaction, they were totally unprepared to see what had actually happened.

Reuben, not finding Joseph in the moat, thought at first that his brothers had disobeyed him and killed Joseph, and this saddened him greatly. He had already emerged from his fascination with this world, had had time to review his behavior and principles, and it was the last moment when he saw clearly and distinctly the end of playing with evil - sooner or later it ceases to be entertainment and leads to the death, if not his own, then someone else's. Of course, it was explained to him and he had to accept the game of the others because he still lacked the spiritual core to continue Joseph's work, to tell his father the truth. Perhaps later, seeing his father's suffering, he thought of revealing the case to him, but he never did.

When they arrived home (and it was not long before they came back from their watch), they indifferently showed their father Joseph's supposedly found outer garment, pretending that they were not sure that it was his, but that it was some random person's. The father, seeing the bloody pieces of clothing, drew the conclusion, as anyone in his position would have done, that Joseph had been mauled by some predator. When Rachel died, Jacob, left virtually alone in the midst of the other wives and servants, felt his loss all too strongly, having lost something dear and important. What remained, of course, were her two children, who had become his support in life. Joseph must have lived up to all his best hopes, showing the best traits of his family (with their flaws, such as increased naivete, but this was a temporary trait of youth). The loss of Joseph hit Jacob hard, much harder than he could express in words. And the sons, perhaps for the first time, saw their plots in a different light. They saw the light, interest in life, and liveliness of spirit go out in their father, whom they still respected and loved. He tore off his clothes, dressed in sackcloth, and for a long time refused to be comforted and was in mourning. All the children gathered together to somehow bring him out of his grief, but they failed. And if it were not for Benjamin, the last remnant of Rachel, he might indeed have faded away from sorrow in time. Subsequently, when they found themselves in a situation where they were conditioned to leave Benjamin in captivity or slavery, upon whom all their father's love was cast after the loss of Joseph, they were ready to be in slavery themselves, rather than see what would happen to their father after the loss of Benjamin as well. So they were not lost people, but there was a period when they lost the Way under the influence of the temptations of this world, its way of life. They could have stayed on a bad path, they could have gotten too carried away and not found their way back, but still their father's work on them, slow and unnoticed, and his pleas for them to the Most High were not wasted. One should not think that the craving for the pleasures of this world disappears by itself over time; that is not always the case; there was a long and painstaking work that went on for years. The example of their fathers' lives also worked to bring them back. Too strong were the examples of their lives, their faith and their teachings which they all knew. What took them down the path of permissiveness was not so thorough. There was no strong foundation underneath their retreat, only their own windfall. But as they grew up and discovered the meaning of things, they saw more and more the solidity of their fathers' teachings, and gradually the husk of their former nonsense fell away from them. Their fathers' shock at the loss of Joseph, which they had witnessed, shook them, and from that time they may be considered to have begun their return to the Way. Jacob, in his grief, may not have wondered why his sons had suddenly become quiet and abandoned their past mischief. He might have suspected that there was something wrong with them and with his son's disappearance, and then, upon careful questioning of all the circumstances, he might have discovered the real state of affairs, and his grief would have ended sooner...

Egypt

The journey to Egypt was not a comfortable one, the unfriendly eyes of others prevented the dream of escape that naturally came to mind. He was heartbroken about his father, about home, about himself, surrounded by unfriendly people who consoled him only with the consolation that he might be lucky to have masters. And thanks, too, for teaching him as much Egyptian as they could. However, during the journey, Joseph recovered a little and began to adjust to life in a new environment. He had suffered worse than his fathers, any of them; he was not in danger of death, but firmly humiliated. He would have no will of his own if he were not lucky at all. But as if that should not be an obstacle for their God, and having learned from his father that God does not forsake them, he might have thought it was his turn to experience His possibilities. He could now personally believe in Him and His possibilities. These thoughts gave him some encouragement, and he was reminded of his dreams that they were not accidental.

Finally the caravan arrived in Egypt, and Joseph was bought in the bazaar by a man from Pharaoh's security service, Potiphar, head of the bodyguards. It was not, however, for the needs of the service, but for other men, and not in the slave market. Joseph was not a man of skill, and even if he were, his training would have been of a different kind. Though if it had been Simeon or Levi, they might have had a chance of getting into the guard... But what Potiphar needed at this time was a household worker. When he saw a handsome young man with good muscles and an energetic eye, he thought that things might be more cheerful in these hands, and he was not mistaken. Joseph, though shaken by the betrayal of those he loved and respected, whose company he aspired to, did not break down. Far from those who could protect and help him, he knew that there was still the God of his fathers, of Whom he had heard much, Who had shown Himself to be the blood of their race. Joseph was well aware that all this power and wisdom was ready to come to his aid. For those who do not despair at the sight of an unhappy reality, it is clear at times like these that this is the time to turn to possibilities of another order. It is especially good if they have also turned to them in good times; then nothing holds them back from calling on them in times of need. In fact, even if something has been missed before, now is the time to call them, they are waiting for us ... Although God seems to exist in his own right, though we are his instruments to affect the world and reality, he also has a reciprocal responsibility toward us. "What else is God for but these situations?" - that's the way to think when no other options work. Although it is wrong to judge God from such a utilitarian position or to evaluate His existence in a consumerist way, the idea is basically correct. So Joseph, though he had not received a promise from God like his father (the promise to Jacob had not yet been fulfilled because it spoke of a great nation that did not yet exist, so he correctly believed that he too was entitled to the promise made to his father), relied on Him. And he felt it would work. So he looked to the future with interest, knowing that he would have protection and help for any eventuality. He had heard of the problems with Abraham and Isaac's fears in foreign places, how they feared for their lives, and now found himself in the same place as his great-grandfather, and in a much worse situation. But he was no longer afraid, and God loved it. His work of improving the character of His chosen people was finally beginning to bear fruit. Isaac was still repeating Abraham's shortcomings, but already Jacob and now Joseph were showing success in this regard. Otherwise, all these men had decent character traits, and now their serious lack of fearfulness was overcome in their descendants. Big deal.

At Potiphar's

Joseph's master was a reasonable man; at least his position obliged him, and no one would be a head of security. He was quickly convinced that his first impression of Joseph had been fully justified; everything went smoothly in the hands of his new servant. He placed him in every position and, even if he had been unfamiliar with the task, he handled it perfectly. In those days, people had not yet lost their natural instincts. It was not only Joseph who attributed his success to the hand of the Almighty. To have a man close to you, whom a higher power favours, is always of value to every small-minded master. If you put him at the maximum height that he can "pull", then you can have success and prosperity in everything that comes under his hand. Potiphar put him over his whole household and he did not lose. He was very pleased both with Joseph's honesty and with the fact that his house and farm had become successful with such a manager and had literally flourished.

This could have gone on for a long time, and Joseph could probably have even gained his freedom, and later entered a higher circle with such good acquaintance at the royal court, but it often happens that success breeds problems as well. Joseph was still very young. Potiphar was still

He did not give Joseph any wives, apparently believing that the boy deserved a higher destiny. He did not think it necessary to give him a slave girl or a servant at this time, thinking that the matter would be settled later, when he had reached greater heights. Joseph himself was not a dissolute or deluded young man, but healthy and strong, and had not the slightest "want of a woman," whether "for health" or "the harm of abstinence," like any sane man who does not fall into the net of misconceptions. The healthier one is, the easier it is to keep away from unnecessary excitement and not be enslaved by passions. A culture of constant excitement and feeding of excitement was still forming (although apart from this "culture", the love of pleasures and the enslavement of passions existed for a long time, but so far everyone was entangled in them by himself, there was little help from outside as compared to later times, and not every nation was equally formed by such customs), and if one does not fall under its influence, one usually easily controls himself and is not "bothered". But this is if one is fortunate in one's upbringing or in one's circumstances to keep away from places where this subject is already supported by the very order of things, customs, and conversations. Potiphar's wife, however, was of a different sort. As the wife of a very influential and wealthy man, she did not let the opportunity for a life of fun pass her by, no matter what area it came up in.

She had her eye on the successful worker and tried to seduce him more than once or twice, but Joseph avoided such intercourse. However, the capricious socialite was determined to get her way at any cost. If Joseph had been like the common majority in his principles of life, he would hardly have been in any danger from his master; he spent most of his time on duty, which by definition does not allow for days off, and if one were careful, it is unlikely that anyone would have known. Potiphar's wife had probably had considerable experience in hiding her secrets from her husband. At last she frankly began to demand affection and attention from Joseph, when she saw that the allusions were not working. He could not betray the Path he was on. He told her frankly and openly that this was unacceptable to him and described to her that such behavior would be a violation of honor principles. He was entrusted with a great deal of trust and simply could not betray his master. To touch his wife was unthinkable to him. For a time this honesty and simplicity cooled her impulses, but there was a moment when no one was in the house and she turned to forceful methods - she simply grabbed him by the clothes and demanded to lie down with her right here and now. It wouldn't have been right to stay, fighting her didn't mean defeating her; he might have feared he might give in after all. So he simply ran away, leaving his outer clothing in her clinging hands. Even if he hadn't left his clothes there, a shadow would have been cast over him by the mere statements of the angry hostess's refusal.

I think it would have been wiser for him to have told Potiphar about his wife's harassment long ago; at least at this moment of crisis Joseph would have had a safety net, Potiphar would have been more inclined to believe him then, and maybe even to settle the matter by giving him another line of work outside the house. But as it was, Joseph was likely to be listened to, and I think that Potiphar quite believed him, but he could not leave the matter as if nothing had happened, his reputation was at stake. The temperament of many such people is not an easy one and even the shadow of a wrongdoing can ruin the reputation of a high courtier, so Potiphar had to react to protect his name and his position. So Joseph went to prison on the accusation of a woman offended by his rejection. But not to the scaffold, which could just as easily have happened had he not been of such high character, so that Potiphar would have no reason to mistrust his wife and trust a maverick slave. However,

the prison was also the fiefdom of Potiphar.¹⁰⁹ So Joseph's boss did not change much, except that there was another immediate superior, the head of the prison.

In prison.

Probably, as always and everywhere else in such places, everyone wonders what the person got there for, whether he or she was really guilty or not. The story I heard from Joseph, the chief of the place, was probably quite amusing. Having been under Potiphar, he must have known his wife and he was quite taken in by the poor young man's story. He had been sent here in exile away from the worst problems that might ensue if he had stayed in the house as if nothing had happened. Joseph had an excellent reputation among those who knew him, and Joseph's jailer carried on the tradition of giving him all the trouble of setting up and running the prison, and, like Potiphar, did not regret it one bit. The prisoners in the prison did not suffer from hunger, or cold, or want of anything; the order was perfect, and even the atmosphere was not as despondent or dreary as it often is in such places - it was the presence of the divine influence of which this young man was the agent. The organization of the work of the prisoners was also under his charge, and this economic activity might even produce a profit, which also affected the prisoners themselves. Joseph, however, was confined to the confines of the institution, though he could, perhaps, go to the markets or workshops of the city for business purposes (this, however, depended on the conditions set by Potiphar, that he should not be seen anywhere, which is highly probable). But he was in many ways powerless, and his only home was prison, though he was not constrained to do almost anything there. Many might well have envied him, and it is unlikely that he himself hated the situation, having a lot to do, seeing his success, and the appreciation of all kinds of people. It was only the lack of freedom that sometimes vexed him, as he asked the cupbearer later, to recall him, a poor dream interpreter in prison for nothing.

One day events happened in the palace that led to the imprisonment of two of Pharaoh's servants. Whether it was the wine and pastry they had made that day, or a bad joke, or bad manners at a party, they were both guilty of the same thing (hardly the fault of Pharaoh, who nagged at him for no good reason; he was a reasonable and good man, judging by how he chose men of sense) and ended up in the same room in the guardhouse where the prison was located. A lord in prison is still a lord, and Joseph was put in charge of them. These men had not yet been condemned or sentenced and could go back to the palace again, so that the governor would not want to spoil relations with the inhabitants of the palace, so they tried to treat high ranking people better in prison than ordinary people. Joseph, with his courtesy and good fortune, was the right man for almost any occasion, so the warden had little doubt as to who to put in charge of the baker and the cupbearer.

One day Joseph came to their room and found them confused and bewildered. When he inquired what had so impressed and grieved them, he heard that they had dreamed dreams that must have meaning, not only that their dreams had been on the same night to both of them, but that they were similar in some elements, and that these dreams had left a strong impression on them, which meant they were not accidental. But they could not read what was written in the symbols of their dreams, which for people who had lost their ancient culture and knowledge was typical long ago. Joseph did not fail to volunteer to help with this matter, and who better than

¹⁰⁹ In the next chapter, where two of Pharaoh's high-ranking servants are imprisoned, they are taken to a prison run by the chief of the bodyguards again. That is, the prison was also under the supervision of the security service.

He was to be an interpreter by virtue of his very status as belonging to the very generation that should preserve much knowledge about life and the world, bringing help and light, including prophetic light, to peoples and individuals alike, which would clearly characterize God as a support and quick help for each person.

Joseph offers his help without the slightest hesitation, though he refers not to himself at all, but to God, from whom, as he tells his clients, all explanations of the incomprehensible come. Yet he has a confidence that the vast majority of those who believe in God do not have. This speaks of his experience with God, of some kind of direct relationship with Him. He had considerable experience of obtaining help from on high, and even though he had no channel of prophetic access to God, still the experience of his life in Egypt, where he entered without knowing the language (certain basics were taught him on the way there), and all the success and fortune he received, gave him enormous confidence that he would know what these people needed. Which did not fail to happen as soon as he was told the dreams. God sent answers to the questions of these courtiers, raising Joseph's credibility even higher, though for one of them the answer was not favorable.

The dream of the cupbearer, who volunteered to tell it first, was of a vine with three branches. Before his eyes they blossomed, blossomed, and produced berries that immediately ripened. Pharaoh's cup was in his hand, and he gathered up the clusters, squeezed the juice from them into the cup, and served it to Pharaoh. The baker's dream was similar to the number "three" and also contained elements of his work - on his head he saw three baskets filled with all kinds of pastry, which the birds pecked at. Although we are not prophets, we can still trace Joseph's thought process in deciphering the meaning of dreams. Or maybe he simply "read" them, as we read words made up of letters. Or, rather, as hieroglyphs are read, they are closer to dreams and prophecies because of the greater informational load.

So, these people were waiting for the judgment or decision of Pharaoh to decide their fate. The decision may have been soon, and the "three branches" on the vine and the "three baskets" on the head are easily understood as indicating three days in which Pharaoh's decision on his reprobate servants would mature. It is easiest to assume this in this situation if we consider that God wants to give an answer specifically to the current situation. If to make any abstract suppositions, of course, the field of probabilities expands and one can guess long and fruitlessly, though by virtue of the generality of many things of this world one can well fit in some other events, about which even the author of the dream meant nothing. The timing doesn't seem to be difficult. But how does Joseph read the auspicious end of the cupbearer and the sad end of the baker? Until now, I myself could not understand, but now I noticed the active position of the former in his dream and the passive position of the latter. The cupbearer not only sees the clusters of grapes, he personally picks them, presses them and serves them to Pharaoh - he does his usual work. The simplest thing that can be assumed here is that he is returned to his post and at least a good outcome. Joseph also draws the same conclusion. The baker, seeing that the brave wineskin has a good answer, also reveals his dream, which we have already seen, but its character is different - he is not the actor in the dream, but only sees what happens to him, what others do to him. He sees birds pecking at his bread, flatbread, and other products, and he cannot even drive them away. He has to serve his produce to Pharaoh, and these birds are spoiling it, but he just sees it from the sidelines with no way to intervene. The "breaking of bread" is also mentioned several times in the Bible, especially in connection with Christ's sacrifice for mankind - "eat of My body, that is broken for you"... Though these examples were still far away and the Bible had not yet been written, it was enough to note the inability of the dreamer to recognize or read the symbol, and the birds pecking at what he had made.

to read in these symbols a threat to the baker's life. After the same three days, his body was hung and the birds pecked at his flesh...

Here Joseph tried to make an attempt to break out of the prison by making a request to the cupbearer, which, though naive, indicated that Joseph was absolutely certain that his interpretation of the dream would be fulfilled in due course. "When you are well, remember me, tell Pharaoh about me..." He hoped he might be released for this favor, but were the circumstances favorable to his release? Had the task which Providence had sent him to perform been accomplished? Were his brothers ready to receive him, to surrender and repent of what they had done when he returned home? Would they not have done worse to him if he had returned to them as an ordinary man in the same environment as before, in which he had no place? But the cupbearer didn't think of him when he "got good." And to think, was the favor great? It wasn't Joseph who got him out of jail at all, he merely explained his dream. After all, even if no one had explained their dreams to them, they would still have come true and become clear later. However, a good man would not forget a smaller favor from another good man, nor would he forget the contact with something larger behind a man like Joseph. And if the cupbearer forgot the experience, it was probably not for nothing that Pharaoh was angry with him and the baker. And if we consider the will and design of Providence, we might think that the cupbearer was pardoned more so that he could remember Joseph in a couple of years, when Pharaoh himself needed advice of the same kind, than because he was not guilty of anything...

Meanwhile, in Canaan

Judah was by no means the worst of the brothers; in some ways he even approached Joseph in the eyes of his father in terms of positive qualities. But under the influence of the others he also participated in pranks and mischief, until these escalating mischiefs reached a certain point. When he offered to sell Joseph instead of killing him, he saved his brother and also saved the others from very bad things. But he did not stand up, as Reuben did, openly and honestly against the others, apparently also having something wrong with Joseph at heart. In company with them he kept silent about Joseph's fate, sparing no pity for his father, only to conceal the crime of his company, but gradually the mind accumulated signals that all their amusement was not so amusing, but could end badly enough. My father's lessons about God's will for their family and God's laws and orders were gradually coming to his mind. It is possible that he broke away from their company sooner than the others and began to live his own family, finding what he thought was a suitable mate. During Joseph's absence, which was somewhere around twenty-two years, he had had time to raise three sons, meaning he might have married sometime around the time they sold Joseph into slavery. He was three or four years older than Joseph, then at the time Joseph was sold he was about twenty-one years old, and by the time Joseph was found he was forty-three.

He was not lucky with his sons, the first two. He began building a family before he was a spiritual man; too many unhealthy beginnings were guiding his life, he had not yet acquired a higher aspiration, and the example of his father and his forefathers had not yet been appreciated. He had nothing to pass on spiritually to his children because he was starting a family to show his independence rather than to feel that his time had come and that he had found true love, and had only just begun his personal search for the Path. But without having completed the search, one should not live as an accomplished person... What I mean is that one should have a family or even a polo-wife not only when he or she is ready to be responsible for it and has reached physical and mental maturity, but when one has acquired an understanding of things, has matured spiritually as well. Disciples in some cultures were strictly forbidden to have families and were greatly dependent upon the teacher until they became mature and left his sphere of influence. Judas did not do anything of the sort.

held fast, so it is not surprising that his children took only the worst from him, so much so that his firstborn son was personally destroyed by God. This, too, was a great lesson for Judah, who saw his own influence in his death, failing to give him what he had long rebelled against himself. His wife Tamar (or could it be Tamara?) was left of his dead first-born son, and Judah, according to custom, instructed his second son, Onan, to marry her, so that the first-born Tamar could retain his father's name. Onan obeyed, but only half-heartedly. He married, but in view of his youth and the general mood of the company to which Judah belonged, to break every taboo that seemed either too strict or too artificial, and not wishing his brother to have his name preserved on earth, he did not bring matters to a normal end, but performed the famous operation of interrupted intercourse, excluding the conception of a child. Though Onan disliked his brother, what he was doing was no better than what his brother was guilty of, and in the eyes of God this son of Judah was also unworthy to be included among the people of God being created. He, too, died. Judah had another son who was still young. Since marriage, unlike Abraham's lineage, was considered normal by most to create barely out of adolescence, it was not long for Tamar to wait for Shelah, a few years.

She waited, but Judah himself, without going deeply into the fate of his dead sons, somehow thought that his daughter-in-law might be to blame for his sons' deaths. When the time came for Shelah to take Tamar, Judah put all sorts of brakes on the matter, neither summoning her to himself nor sending anyone to her with an invitation. Instead of delving into the matter, instead of simply asking God for a reason, he feared that his youngest might die too, though he was better in character than the first two. Isn't it strange that even though Judah had saved Joseph once, it was reluctant, not seeking, like Reuben, to save him, but only taking advantage of a thought that came up, while allowing his father to suffer for years the loss of his son as torn by the beast, without revealing reality, allowing his father to exist for a long time in the false reality in which his son died. Doesn't the real loss of his sons seem like a fitting retribution for what he allowed to happen to his father's imagination? He most likely understood this and did not grumble, yet in the most foolish way, instead of repenting for his deeds, he casts his suspicions on the undeserving girl... It happens not only to him but to every man, when instead of repenting what he has done and then repairing what is wrong (or even repenting but not repairing when they can do it) they procrastinate and try to keep silent to hide the unpleasant thoughts of personal guilt from themselves, and it automatically gets assigned to other people in their subconscious¹¹⁰. For if Joseph had not been found, Jacob would never have known his sons' last crime. Were they afraid he would curse them? And the longer it dragged on, the harder the confession seemed? - That was not what they should have feared, not the father's displeasure, whatever it might end up being, but the fact that their souls were burdened with the uncorrected. Their father did not curse them when he found out, but willingly forgave them, because he was not an enemy to them, he was looking to make them into better human beings (which is what scares some people, but that's another story). Not trusting him, they imagined him not to be what he was, distorting his image into something hostile and evil, although it was just them who were like that at the time.

After the death of his sons, Judah's wife also died, apparently unable to bear the loss, and the character problems of her sons weighed heavily on her. He was left alone again, and only the youngest son was left of all the family he had. She did not die of old age, even if she had been a good deal older than Judah, but at that time many people were already weak enough that such premature deaths and severe illnesses would occasionally occur.

¹¹⁰ This is very similar to what Freud called "projection" or "transference," in which one's own faults and flaws are attributed to others.

already in children as well. Weakness and sickness were accumulated by parents living on their own whims, weakening their nature. The loss of their two sons had a particularly strong effect. But it was also the fault of Judah. He had been called to a higher life in all principles of righteousness and order, but in his rebellion he chose to reject everything that displeased him, which none of his ancestors had done or even thought possible. This was the first generation to rebel against the plans of God, not openly and deliberately, but only because they had thoughtlessly adopted the confused and seemingly free morals of the peoples around them. But we should not think that God was aloof from their destinies. If the children of Jacob had completely decided to deny God, which they could not deny in any way like the atheists of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, to whom science had provided a very convenient platform for this with all kinds of justifications (scientists might have doubted atheism, whose scientific validity was weak, but to everyone else the evidence for atheism - "Science proved it!!!" - seemed downright ironclad and eternal; this evidence was well organized and supported at the system level, which provided the basis for such mass confidence in "science", or rather in atheism supported by "science"), God in this conscious departure from Him might well have left them¹¹¹. However, not all of them were complete human beings; it was a temporary unconscious rebellion without denying God and His ways. They recognized the principles of righteousness, they did not deny walking in them, they simply built their personal way on amusement and convenience for themselves. This led them to do wrong, and they nearly killed their brother. The commandment "Thou shalt not kill" does not apply to war, but it protects those who are not at fault, who did not raise a weapon against you first, so Abraham's fighting is not evil or sinful. Defending one's country is not a sin before God. The actions of Simeon and Levi in avenging the Shechemites are not in this line and are a sin, but have at least some shade of validity because of the grievous insult, even though the punishment they carried out was excessive and unjust. All in all, guys who were relatively good somewhere deep down might have been lost in the wilderness of evil, but God did not leave them behind by intervening in their lives. One example of this intervention (including because of their father's requests for them) is shown in the life and circumstances of Judah.

Finding himself alone, Judah was given a chance to build his life anew, taking into account what he had experienced and understood. He was at an age when his father had not yet thought of a family, had no concrete plans beyond the most general notions, if he thought about it at all. True, Judah, as events have shown, is still very much inert, but after the surprise from Tamarie, he had changed so much that he seems never to marry again.¹¹² though he was still young. En- enough...

When Judah, after mourning for his wife and family, was about to go out to shear his sheep, someone notified Tamar that her father-in-law would soon be passing by. She was not a connoisseur of the rules of life-neither which ones were safe and which were invented by men-and she may have acted without rules at all, though by definition this seems as if it were adequate-allowing her son to evade the law? - then, since the responsibility is still on your family, do it yourself... The logic is ironclad.

She was young, led a fairly principled life, after marrying Judah's sons did not seek men or anything else, and this is not characteristic of the inhabitants of Ha- naan, one of whose tribes was called the Amorites, known for their commitment to love.

111 Although the covenant made by their fathers, the covenant under which they were born, was binding... On the other hand, God did not prevent Esau from going his way, and neither did Ishmael, although they did not explicitly or consciously renounce the Way. So, at , the options were possible. Including the worst - what happened to Judah's sons.

112 It looks like Famar stayed with him as the mother of his children, but it is not known if he lived with her as his wife.

to the entertainment of the world. Isn't this where the "cupids" came from?¹¹³ - the winged children with bows, shooting "Cupid's arrows," with people who consider the carnal side of love, or even just the pleasures of it, to be the most important factor in life? So Tamarie's faithfulness to the family of Judah seems especially praiseworthy (although the mores of those peoples were very liberal, but in some families fidelity could be maintained for various reasons by rather harsh measures; next to liberty for men there are often prohibitions for women, although without them men would have no chance - a whole lot of contradictions and double standards). Something drew her to these people, and though Judas had deviated from the Way, he had not left it completely, and already this gave him and his environment a certain aura of increased good that should accompany any follower of the living God. Perhaps she was acquainted with Judas' father, and it is not surprising then that she became attached to these people. Realizing that Shelah would not be given to her as a husband, she decided to exact her duty, personally, from the chief transgressor.

Dressed as a woman of the trade, and covering her face with a veil, as was the custom for this kind of woman, at least during "working hours," she waited for him near the gate of a town he was to pass by. And when he passed by, she set herself to attract his attention and create desire, "turning on" a certain efficacy of her nature, something that women can sometimes influence and be difficult to resist. Abuse¹¹⁴ These, however, are regarded as abuses of magic or sorcery, and are punished accordingly, if not applied within the family circle...

Judas, walking there, saw a woman sitting there. One can hardly know what was in his heart or mind. Had he heard her call, or was he seeking a certain kind of comfort himself? Had he had this kind of experience with women before? In principle, it can hardly be ruled out that he had - when one does one bad thing, one often involves another. Folk practice has long reflected this in a simple logical chain - "if you smoke, you drink." While we cannot be entirely sure of this, it may well have been in the company of brothers that they were bold in some of their transgressions, but in no way went against the seventh commandment. And if they wanted a quick manhood, they, like Judas, simply got married. It happens, too; a man breaks many things without remorse, but suddenly stops at something that is forbidden to him, "holy. Unknown. Many feel that one must not violate everything, that it is necessary to leave a corner in the soul for the "sacred"; otherwise one will sink, lose self-respect, and degrade, slide into the abyss. In any case, Judas had already recovered from the death of his wife and sons, had started to live again and look at other women, could think of a new family-even if he were at the time and of ascetic convictions, marriage would not have been a violation of any rules. But here is the situation - he threw out of his mind the problem of Famarie, who was waiting for him to give her a younger son to marry, not caring about her, her soul, her happiness, but allowing himself illicit entertainment, all the more at a time when the children are still unsettled. What did she think of him when he approached her with the proposal... Did she forgive him in advance because she had not acted better herself? Did she know he wouldn't pass her by? She was already acquainted with him, and if he really wasn't a top-notch man, she was unlikely to seek him out in the family. Then, seeing that she wasn't given Shelah as a husband, she would just ask him straight out about his plans, and if he refused to let her marry his youngest, he should have given her complete freedom to live as she pleased and marry whoever she wanted. Rather, her reasoning was that she knew his weaknesses and was a wise woman who knew how to

113 I cannot assert that the name of the Amorites has anything to do with "amorous" matters in our time, but it is difficult to escape the impression that there is a connection. The word "amour" comes directly from the Latin *amare*, to love, according to Merriam-Webster, but in Latin it is traced to a Proto-Indo-European root. Is it possible?

114 Men have a similar art of seduction, which allows them to achieve their goals quite reliably, which is also the same kind of crime with the same payback.

influence him. The reason Judas fell in this case was primarily because he was already guilty before her of breaking his promise to marry her to his younger son, and when a man breaks something, his moral stability declines at that time, and he is weaker in other ways as well. This is important for all those who want to walk in God's ways and serve Him, but think that they can let themselves be guilty of something before Him for a time and then come back to Him, repenting, because of the well-known philosophy of "sin and repent. If anyone seriously thinks that with this approach it is possible to achieve something in spirituality, to be saved, it is a grave mistake. Salvation is possible in the end, but first we must learn the perniciousness of the way, because intentional, deliberate sin sharply weakens, if not completely breaks, the bond between God and man, and the presence of wrong intentions sharply weakens the sanctifying power of the Spirit.¹¹⁵ Without it, there can be no righteousness, and so one is much more vulnerable to temptation at such times. She was most likely aware of this and took it into account. The only thing that justified it in her own eyes was that what she was doing was a kind of compensation or penalty for his guilt towards her. She felt she was in her right, though by the present rules it was not the right thing to do; such a claim had to be settled openly or directly (openly by getting other people to influence her father-in-law, and directly by talking to him personally, with or without witnesses).

She demanded that he pay with a pledge of his valuables - his seal and his cane and bandage - so that she could prove that she was not the only one to blame. She did not take the payment - when they later tried to give her the lamb, Judah's friend could not find even a trace of her in the specified place. In other words, the time she spent waiting for Judah was so well timed that none of the people in that village had time to notice her.

Three months after this, Judas was told that his daughter-in-law was unfaithful to his family and was pregnant by an unknown man. Different tribes might have very different customs regarding the protection of the family and the honor of the home, and Judah acted according to the strictest standards in ordering her to be burned. Since it was his house, his authority, no one argued. Tamar was then living in her father's house, but her father could not intercede for her, or was unwilling... As already mentioned, even in Abraham's time his tribe was highly respected, and although Jacob's sons did not always lead a respectable life, they were strong, which is usually highly respected in this world. But here was the circumstance, planned by Famar in her own defense, for she knew how things might, or even should, turn out. As she was led to the place of execution, she ordered her to give Judas, not far away, his belongings that he thought he had lost - cane, personal seal, and ligature. All of this was happening before the eyes of the people, though the crowd may have been small. He gave his cruel order with a bitter heart, angry at Famar, feeling anger at the circumstances and everything around him - knowing that his fear for the younger man was superstitious, not real, but he could not help it - he had no intention of giving him Famar, that is, he was a violator, but breaking her allegiance was very much to his advantage. If he could seize the moment and get rid of her now, he would no longer have to worry about his son. How silly - after all the elder two had died, not because of her, but purely because of their characters and affairs, so that Shelah would not die, if you are so worried about him, bring him up better, not fence him off from Famar. But here they bring him his belongings, handed to him by someone he had braced for a cruel death, with a question in his eyes - how do you understand this... And then Judas is shaken. It shook him violently enough to cut off his liberties and his excessive severity toward others. He saw himself, not even from the side but through, naked and worthless. His whole life was worthless, all that he had ever treasured and lived for was worthless nothing. His "righteous" order to burn the throne

115 "He loves the Spirit who dwells in us to the point of jealousy" - James 4:5

was given up as an unworthy sinner, her guilt was part of his own. Or rather, he had not even lived "for" anything, but had been led by the lower interests of his nature thoughtlessly and without companionship, and now suddenly he was from a prince who ruled over the lives of those who trusted him to an empty chatterbox, guilty of the sins of others, because he had led the girl into sin, and had taken part in it himself. It is only fair that he should have been on the fire with her, if not in her place.¹¹⁶... First of all he saw the guilt he owed to Famarina, though he had shunned the idea that he could owe her anything. And all these people who had come to watch the execution were now standing there looking at him. And he's not hiding, he's confessing, saying, "She's more righteous than I am. By this he does not justify her, but he accuses himself and admits that it is he who should be burnt at the stake... He is not afraid to say before the people that his guilt is greater than hers, that he is to blame for her guilt, that he brought her to this stage, and if she is guilty of something, he is more guilty. Her sin is only a consequence of his deception, he himself is the cause. And though her sin looks shameful in the eyes of society, his sin (of deceiving the pre-believers) is from another sphere altogether, not that of intimacy and natural shame, but his this plausible deception produced this naked shame of intimacy... And yet he himself was the one who made her pregnant, the participant in her shame. This realization pierced him with all clarity, and from that moment on his soul in this confession and self-denial gained real values. God had finally gotten his way.

Moses wrote of him that he was no longer with Tamar. But she was there, for she was raising his sons, twins born six months later. He cared for her, but he never touched her or any other woman, and he had no other children. This may seem unbelievable to some, but the upheavals and discoveries he made in his sad experiences made him a different man. The example of his ancestors, whom God had chosen to carry out a high and noble task, stood before him as a challenge and a calling, and he "got up and walked out the door."¹¹⁷ He could have married, no one forbade him and there were no such laws, but he focused on it, understanding the value of family, the importance of raising children healthy and wholesome individuals, and especially obedient to the Way. He saw the emptiness and evil of the way of life their company had led in his childhood and youth, and in analyzing the reasons why it had happened, he tried to keep his children from doing so. Jacob had always liked Judah; he had the best of his kind, just as Joseph had, and he was happy to have his son beside him on the Way. In his blessing of the children on the threshold of death, in the song of Jacob, he singles out Judah, endowing him with the qualities of a lion, as was his name. "The young lion Judah, with the prey, my son, rises" - only the prey was his victory over himself, over his lowly part, placed under the control of the higher forces of soul and mind, the meaning of life gained...

Joseph is exalted.

Two more years passed after the cupbearer was released from prison, and it happened that Pharaoh had dreams at night and was greatly disturbed by them. There was a great significance in them, and since Pharaoh had seen them, it might have concerned the whole of Egypt. He looked for someone to consult who could explain to him the meaning of the dreams, but those who were professionally engaged in matters of the spirit and were the guardians of Egypt's considerable wisdom somehow found themselves confused by the details and they could not give out anything definite. It is very likely that the outlines of considerable change were guessed at by many, but the priests could contradict each other, so that the matter was only more

¹¹⁶ In ancient times, and indeed in some societies today, the court was very simple - only one person was right. And if one side is proven right, the other side is necessarily guilty. If the defendant proved to be right, then the accuser is guilty...

¹¹⁷ Sergei Orlov, "The Second

was confused. Pharaoh had two dreams, one about cows and one about ears. There were two groups of each, two groups of cows, one very good and healthy, the other very thin and sickly. It was the same with the ears. Then the second group would eat or devour the first group. Usually in such cases, when God sends such revelations about the future and the threat to their well-being that can be averted, even to people who have absolutely no faith in Him, these warnings are usually clear and require no special interpretation or interpreters. But when His representatives are around, He grants them this honor, and complicates the message being sent, so that few can read it except these individuals. Thus, while the dreams themselves seem after interpretation to be simple, they are before that time a hard nut to crack for anyone who tries them. Joseph was in Egypt, and could only help Pharaoh and Egypt.

In the events looming over Egypt we can see the plan of the Supernatural to advance His designs for His representative people. It was evident that this people, at the start of becoming a small tribe, had stumbled and was not headed in the best of ways. Though the children of Jacob had matured to a great extent, not all had matured to the extent needed, like Judah. Also, the younger generation passed on a great deal of disobedience and unfaithfulness to the boys and girls who followed. So if Jacob's tribe had become a nation in Palestine, they would have been guaranteed a way that God could not protect and help them against their enemies. But they would have made enemies easily, so God could not have helped them as He helped Abraham and Isaac; they were too different people, not having the same aspirations as their fathers. So God decided to take them to a different place to grow, just as he had told Abraham "in the fourth generation they will come back here," the fourth since they left Canaan. In Egypt, they had to learn lessons of humility, dependence upon God and the quality of their work, and to see how God's favor was directly dependent upon their obedience. To do such an education in Canaan was too costly - if the Canaanites had seen God punish the Jews, they would have betrayed them, and although it was not so bad for education, it was not good for God Himself, His image as the God of this people would have suffered. That is why He created the famine and the unusual harvest before it, and sent a warning for Egypt, and to all this He also sent Joseph to govern it all ... Had Jacob's sons accepted Joseph's primacy without enmity, obeying the voice and warning of God, his influence would have smoothed many problems and they would have been different people and a very different story with no need to make such movements. But their hostility toward their brother made it necessary for God to lead them in another way, less pleasant but adequate to their condition.

The pattern of God's work with those whom He will save is as follows - their troubles and the troubles of life and all the other things they call trials are caused by their character flaws. I'm 99% sure of that. You could say there is a direct link between the two, and that problems act as a corrective feedback loop to correct a person's deficiencies. Problems that arise in people serve precisely as a means of bringing their shortcomings to light, helping them to notice and recognize their personal imperfections. The nature of the mental defect determines what problems and temptations will befall the bearer of the defect. I have noticed more than once that there is a correspondence between a person's character and his or her circumstances. But just look at these Bible writings and compare them - "It is not of His own will that He ... afflict the sons of men."¹¹⁸ "When God is pleased with a man's ways, He reconciles even his enemies to him"; "To those who love God ... all things work together for good. In the first case it is said that God does not send people problems because He wants Him to, it is not

¹¹⁸ Lamentation Jer.3:33; Proverbs 16:7; Rom.8:28

His desire. But if it is He who sends them, as He says explicitly and explicitly, then the only reason He does it is because it is necessary, and it is determined by circumstances outside of God, in man himself.

Although this cannot be said of all men with certainty, for in the life of the vast majority of men the elements rule, that is, God has no direct right to rule there because of the lack of agreement between such a person and God, for they did not set out to serve good and truth, to return to God and to be saved. Since they have not entered into His covenant agreement, He has no direct right to interfere in their lives (I note that for the purpose of salvation, but otherwise no one is guaranteed against the intervention of the Master of all), nor does He allow the dark forces to interfere as well. God tries by default to direct all men toward these goals, so you can see this component in everyone, but to a lesser degree. But those who will be "saved," they will go through whatever it is that is bad and wrong in them that they carry within them. Any slightest defect unacceptable to God, He will have to, must, must, remove from those who are going to live forever, and if man does not allow God to cleanse himself for any reason, then salvation is out of the question. There can be no "favourites" in this plan, there is no one whose sins God would look on indulgently and allow them to have any lasting effect, all must be cleansed from the slightest falsity and evil, even its germs. To allow for someone the leaven of evil to exist in His realm is to allow, with His own hands, the seeds of some more rebellion or disorder, means the danger of new turmoil. He did not allow Lucifer and all his supporters to reveal themselves in action, nor did He allow evil to oppress everyone and everything on our planet, to allow any rot to begin again. He had a situation - to destroy evil with its bearers without explanation and have the eternal problem of misunderstanding and grumbling, or to allow it to reveal itself to the end, but to solve the problem completely. In the second case, evil had to remain quite unchecked, one had to give it every chance, leaving everyone affected by it at risk of suffering and deprivation. But no one following the Path was left without hope, all those affected are subsequently compensated, so that in this world of evil even the worst situations are not hopeless, in light of the subsequent compensation.

If anyone thinks that God allowed Abraham and other special people to have any sins, they get that impression only because God was not slow to react ("judgment is not soon made upon wicked deeds"), and they don't notice the consequent reckoning because of a very selective reading of their stories.¹¹⁹⁾, and they do not notice the consequent reckoning because of a very selective reading of their stories. But that's why I describe everything, to show the close connection between the deeds and their consequences in the lives of all those "favorites" of God. In fact, they were asked even more than the average person.

So Pharaoh, having a dream with cows, woke up, then fell asleep again and got a continuation of the dream with the story of the ears. When he woke up in the morning he realized that it was a dream. One dream, though it was as if there had been two. And then his mood suddenly deteriorated, these dreams embarrassed and alarmed him. He saw that the dreams were not accidental, that there was something important hidden there, so he called together all who were concerned with things invisible and spiritual - the priests, priests and scientists, although it would be better to call them sages because of the different focus of thought and because modern science was not yet up to date at the time. As already noted,

no one could penetrate the meaning of the dream. And anyone undertaking to interpret today could have had trouble looking at the plot where the ears stood side by side and as if the weak ears were absorbing the strong ears. All seven pairs interacted as if at the same time, which thwarted the impending interpretation of the sequence in time. This search for an answer to the riddles of the dream lasted a long time, and then the cupbearer came on the scene, in whose hands was now the key to answering almost all the questions of not only Pharaoh and the priests and sages, but also of Joseph, and with them of all Egypt and many people in it and around it. Let us not forget also the brothers of Joseph, to whose upbringing and their posterity all this calamity in Egypt was devoted. If Egypt had been governed and ruled then by the same people, as today in the West, Egypt would have started a court against Yahweh for "interference in the internal affairs" of Egypt, and moreover for the benefit of unfriendly persons. In doing so, His representatives, the heirs of Abraham, the family of Jacob, and Joseph, would be the defendants instead of God because it was impossible to bring Him to justice. Sanctions, deportations, and contributions would be a plot for a stand-alone farce comedy... Yet God could very well have appeared in such a trial, which would have added a non-comedic note to the proceedings. A couple of hundred years later, this was exactly what happened when Egypt tried to deny God and clamp down on His people, but was confronted by their Advocate, who also had the power to bring order. It must be said that at the end of time such a thing will happen again, and God will appear again in that judgment-it is about Armageddon and the end of the world. In the Revelation, in the message of the last Church, there are the words of Christ "Behold I stand at the door and knock" - of course this is addressed to Christians, but one can also read these words as applied to the rest of the world, and the stress of the coronavirus is the "first call" from the Son of God about to visit our world with the last judgments.

But it was still a long way off, and now the cupbearer intervened in the course of the learned assembly. The confused and bewildered assembly looked in astonishment at the king's timid appearance, in whom everyone recognized the cupbearer. What does he want to say? Does he want to offer refreshment, to make them think more clearly? Go ahead and pour... However, he replied that he was not in his specialty at the moment and apologized for interfering, but that he had some thoughts that might help. So he told Pharaoh and the assembly of the spiritual rulers of Egypt of his old transgression, his punishment, and his encounter with the man who had readily foretold him his fate as shown in his dream. And not only to him, but also to the sap-baker. He said that everything had happened exactly as the young descendant of Eber had said¹²⁰ - "as he interpreted it to us, it came true." In the circumstances, in which the servant's story was delivered, and in which he had intruded into a conversation in which he ought not, if not by rank, by specialty, to be involved, no one had any doubt that this fellow should be called to this council at once, to at least assess the extent of his capabilities. In the conditions of an imminent threat to the country, there was no need for ranks and titles, and it was very interesting to hear from a witness that there are still people who are close to God (or gods, as the pagans thought). So the participants in Pharaoh's brainstorming session, listening to the cupbearer's utter frustration, jumped at the chance to finally get some kind of answer.

Pharaoh immediately sent for Joseph. He, knowing where he was called, made careful preparations, but these were welcomed by those sent for him and he was not rushed. It did not take long, however, to get his hair cut and change into better clothes. Here he was in the court of Pharaoh and a meeting of the most important clergymen in the land. It must be said that this Pharaoh, from the biblical texts, does not appear to be an authoritarian man at all; on the contrary he is friendly and open, and most likely wise. He speaks freely to Joseph - "I was dreaming a dream and no one is there to interpret it. And I have heard of you that you know how to interpret dreams." Joseph answers in the same vein, withdrawing unnecessary credit - "It is not mine, the answer is for the good of Pharaoh.

¹²⁰ It could also have sounded "Hebrew," "Eber," "Ewer," and could have been a fictitious word and a name from the name of a well-known ancestor of the Semitic peoples.

God will give." It is interesting that the servant of the living God says confidently and unequivocally in advance, before he hears the story, that there will be an answer and that it will all be for Pharaoh's good. Even if the dream was threatening and negative, the mere fact that God sent knowledge of the future to those who did not know Him meant that God was in favor. From this information we will know how to avoid future problems or at least minimize their consequences - even a little help can save a country and a lot of people.

Afterwards, Pharaoh recounted his dream. He emotionally emphasizes that he had never seen such bad cows and ears anywhere. Joseph, listening to the narrative, without any apparent pause for thought, answers him almost immediately - "seven cows and seven ears are seven years, a single dream," about the same event. Seven years of unprecedented abundance and then another seven years of unprecedented crop failure and famine. Josephus specifically notes that this dream shows that the former years of abundance will be forgotten, so severe will the famine be. "And the fact that the dream was repeated twice means that it is not accidental, but really happens from above and will surely be fulfilled. He then proceeds directly to advise some measures to be taken. He suggests that a tax should be collected on that harvest, that the office of keeper of abundance should be established to collect a portion of the excess harvest to compensate for shortages in years of famine. It is as if the peasants of Egypt were not enslaved and may not have been in the mood to give their grain to the state, but I think there was a campaign to inform the population so they understood what was being done and why, so there was no outcry. It was not for nothing that Joseph suggested that it was a wise man who would act without arousing the resentment of the people.

All of this, both the interpretation of the dream and the suggestion for a way out, though simple, appealed to everyone present at the council. Everyone was impressed and unanimously supported the proposal. Pharaoh instantly realized that he could not find a better candidate than the prisoner who had just spoken to them, and he suggested that Joseph himself should take charge of the matter. It is quite possible that his courtiers who were already in different positions were either unqualified or in an important position... Not only that, but he gave Joseph not only ministerial powers but put him in charge of his own house and farm. Pharaoh is wise - he sees that Joseph is great, and great not just by himself, but by the fact that God stands behind him. And not only does He stand behind Joseph, but He reveals Himself in Joseph himself - "since He has revealed all this to you, there is no other man like you, only you are wise and intelligent enough to do all the right things" - that is Pharaoh's thought. The man to whom so many powers and faculties have been entrusted is the man who should be trusted to manage all the circumstances that arise, unless there be a directive from on high, for sometimes it may be that a talent for vision is given to one, and another to manage it; and in large and important organisations the latter is more likely to happen. Pharaoh, seeing all this, put him second after himself, and said, "Without thee no man shall move an arm or a leg in all Egypt. He himself says to him - "only by the throne will I be greater than thou," thus placing him above all others. On that day Joseph ascended (today we would say "ascended") to a great height in a country that was, if not the first in that world, then one of the strongest and most developed countries.

Neither Pharaoh nor anyone at that meeting was embarrassed by the fact that he came to them straight from prison - Joseph's qualities and his subsequent activities erased any possibility of suspicion or underestimation. I think that a little later (or perhaps even before his appointment) Pharaoh couldn't help but wonder how and why Joseph got there, and I wonder what conclusions he drew about Potiphar and his wife. It is unlikely that Potiphar suffered as a result, but one can speculate about the fate of the capricious beauty that she suffered worse.

Pharaoh tried to find Joseph and wife from the best beauties of Egypt, not forgetting nobility, it was the daughter of the priest of the city He¹²¹. Two sons were born to him before the years of famine. The years of plenty had come and Egypt was preparing for it - under Joseph's leadership, massive granaries of grain were being built. I have seen photographs somewhere of what are still impressive buildings with no cracks in the walls because mice and other pests could easily attack so much grain over the long period of storage. But thanks to elaborate and careful technology, these storehouses were reliable, so that they have survived to this day¹²². They were in some cases cellars, in others above-ground structures close to the size of an eight- to ten-story single-floor house, which housed quite a lot of grain. In years of plenty he took a twenty percent tax from the peasants, and that was enough to eventually make the bread loaded for storage stop counting. Mathematics might have made it possible to keep count, but there might not have been enough people educated enough to do it, so the storing was done without counting.

Meeting and Reunion

The seven years of plenty have passed and the days and years have come when people, judging by some of the details¹²³The Bible doesn't tell us the reasons for the crop failures. The Bible doesn't tell us what caused the crop failures, nor does it tell us what the natural conditions were, from which we can deduce the cause of these problems. But there is evidence from more recent archeological discoveries¹²⁴that the Nile was not overflowing these seven years. Vagaries of the great River had happened before and later, but for seven years in a row, this is no longer known. At first many people still had their own supplies, made after the example of the authorities of the country, but soon most ran out of any supplies and people went to Pharaoh, knowing that the state had collected much.

Pharaoh sent a delegation to Joseph, who was to distribute the supplies. He opened the doors of the storehouses and began to sell bread to the people. He was selling the grain to the people, not giving it away, because it was not considered the property of the people, but of the state or of Pharaoh. It was surrendered as a tax to which the people were accustomed, so they no longer regarded what was surrendered to the sovereign people as their own. Maybe there was some injustice in what happened afterwards (because of lack of money people began to sell themselves into slavery), but although Joseph was influential enough, not everyone has the power to change the customs and orders of society. Besides, the idea of such social justice can only occur to people in countries with experience of socialism; in many other places, especially in ancient times, such an idea could hardly arise. For the first time in history, large masses of people had such large strategic food reserves (only Nimrod could have attempted or planned such a thing, but there was not enough population in his time); before, because of small populations and undeveloped states, people survived natural disasters mostly alone or in relatively small groups. Now, thanks to God's intervention, there was a chance for a large and well-organized country to survive a severe famine with minimal losses. Without God, this famine would have led to the possible disappearance of Egypt - its people would have either died out or moved far away from the crop failure zone. And the extent of the famine was not insignificant, neighboring Canaan was in the same problem, and people there did not go north or east to get grain or other food, but only to Egypt. Clearly, everyone within a radius of up to a thousand kilometers, if not more, had the same problem. So Joseph could not give out

121 In the Synodal translation for some reason it is called Iliopolis, apparently by a later name.

122 One example of those structures is bible-facts.ru/1381-zernohranilische-iosifa-grandioznyy-kompleks-v-egipte.html

123 Joseph tells his brothers, "There are five more years of famine ahead, when they will neither plow nor reap.

124 bible-facts.ru/1874-semiletnyy-golod-deystvitelno-byl-v-egipte.html

The ruling class in Egypt had not grown old enough to see the citizens as a single community in which all were protected and all were worried about everyone. The Egyptian ruling class had not grown to see its citizens as a single community, where everyone was protected and everyone cared about everyone, so they got the most protection possible for their time, and not without help. Even today, if you look at the world community as a whole, the world has not come to this point, only in some parts of the modern world do such ideas come true. So he sold to everyone who came in, and no one complained about the price. At some point Joseph agreed to exchange his grain for livestock. This was enough to live on for a while, but then the people had nothing left but the fields. They themselves came to Pharaoh with an offer to buy it or else they would all perish. This was a kind of turning point in the history of the country after which the people were owned by Pharaoh as well as the land. It must be said that it is as if the people were not oppressed and after a while the population seems to be free again. But at that point, the population's belonging to the state or to Pharaoh's house forced Pharaoh to feed his newfound slaves, so that people had a lot of worry about finding food - the state serfdom took care of that. Subsequently they were able to buy their way out of debt during the famine, and so they seem to have gone free. The Jews are slaves a hundred years later, but the Egyptians seem to be free people, so that this condition, born of hunger, is not set in stone forever (Joseph seems to have had the wisdom to do this too, just as the pharaoh was not a bad guy.) The threat of starvation and the outbreak of the elements seems to have alarmed the powers that be and tempered the appetite of those who might not mind (and can it be that such thinking was not yet a general trend among the powers that be?) warming their hands on the people's distress, and again, decent people were in charge, so that evil did not pass this time...

In Canaan they soon realized that a famine was coming, as soon as the weather showed that there would be no harvest. For the cattlemen the failure of grain crops does not seem to be a problem, but the bad weather may have led to a lack of grass for the animals as well. But it is not known what kind of weather conditions or what caused the crop failure - whether it was the cold from a volcanic eruption that changed the climate for a while, the heat and drought or some other factor. We know, however, that even cattlemen are not averse to the widespread use of the products of agriculture. So Jacob, when he heard the news that Egypt was not in distress, sent his sons to buy grain. They all went together, except the youngest, Benjamin, whom his father would not let go, for he treasured him as his last hope. All ten of them went, for more people could bring more goods, and a small group could tempt the robbers with the hope of a successful raid. A large family, if it is friendly, is always a winner.

And so they came to Egypt, where Joseph himself was in charge of the trade and was himself present from time to time. He might not have dealt with such matters personally, but it seems to me that he was expecting his brothers; they could not help but come... He knew that his dreams were prophetic and he waited quietly for this meeting. His appearance had changed from that of a naïve home boy to that of a man of reputation, a successful official of high rank. It was hard to recognize him now, and so it was. When he came out to the crowd, among whom were his brothers, they bowed to him to the ground, as did the others in the crowd. He recognized them easily. He had once longed for their companionship, valued them highly, and was not offended by their dislike and repulsion and mockery - he really loved them with all his pure heart. Now, however, having gained a lot of experience - and experience is usually gained much faster in problems - he is not in a hurry to open up to them, on the contrary, he wants to know what they are like today. Have they learned and changed? If he had remained the same naïve young man and opened up to them from the moment he met them, and if they had remained

the same unkind people that were in his youth, they might try to bring him under, and see his high position in Egypt as a convenient occasion to enrich him, or even to manipulate him under a high roof, might threaten him or exploit his softness by roping him in. So he prudently puts them to the test first. Besides, he had serious doubts about them - they didn't have Benjamin with them - had they done something like that to him, too? So he even had to examine their circumstances and their present condition. Was he out of line in his tests? - I don't think so. They had learned their lessons and could not have been offended, knowing such things behind them for which even greater retaliation would not have been considered excessive by many.

Although the question of the right to test the other is quite relevant. Sometimes there are people who respond to an accusation of some mischief by saying, "I tested you. And it's easy to understand that the right of such test takers is very questionable. They usually have no idea how wrong they are doing and take a big risk, only increasing their problems by making such a statement. Others may realize that they are walking on the edge, but expect to slip up on the foolishness of another to swallow it out of sheer simplicity. However, the question of reliability, why one has to check people out, is also far-fetched. But I think it's easy to see the difference between checking on someone who has done nothing wrong, and checking on someone who has already done something wrong. Or when there is no need at all for a "test", which is just a way of covering up one's own character problems, one's own malice. And then the problems with the rights of the checked out is compensated by his bad reputation or his concrete guilt, when it is clear to everyone that it is not for him to be outraged in this situation, whose cow would be mooing... This is between people, a personal matter.

But if it's not an interpersonal interaction, but, for example, in government or high-tech production, where reliability requirements are high, there's no point in objecting to inspections, because the nature of things dictates it.

Joseph spoke sternly to them. He decided to pretend that he was an autocratic, short-tempered, overbearing man. He asked them first where they were from. Then he unceremoniously accused them of being spies - "Heili Likli" wasn't invented yesterday, however - and forced them to justify themselves. They, stunned by the pressure, began to tell details of their lives and circumstances, something that could verify and confirm their authenticity, because spies are usually given a cover and a legend, passing them off as someone else (how long ago it all began). If they had been at home in Canaan, anyone would have easily confirmed their identities, but here they were not at home. In principle, Egypt, with its enormous strategic advantage during the famine, might indeed have feared attacks under the envious eyes of its neighbors, and Joseph could have played that card in front of everyone with good reason. After hearing the brothers' account of their family, he is even more hostile toward them, claiming that their excuses and the family's plausible history only strengthen his suspicions about them. And it is true that if it seems to the chief that someone is wrong, the very attempt at justification increases his anger and suspicion, unless the chief is a good man, of course, but that is the role Joseph has taken on... If he "wants" these people to be spies, then they better become them than prove that they are not at fault. The fact that his father was alive gave hope that Benjamin was also alive, but how well they were doing was not clear from the available information.

Finally, having reached the pinnacle of his "suspicions", he pardons them, as it were, and gives them a chance to prove their case by having their younger brother come here, if there is such a thing. He arrests all of them, leaving only one to go after Benjamin.

I was in the middle of the night. However, when he said that he was letting one go, he still arrested all of them for some reason, keeping them under lock and key for three whole days so that they would get into their heads. One can imagine the despair of Jacob's sons when they tried to imagine this picture-one of them coming to his father, explaining that they had all been arrested on suspicion of espionage, and that in order to get out of there, he had to bring Benjamin to that evil Egyptian who suspected everyone. Even if their father is not upset about them and the hunger of their families, he will not let Benjamin go, so the prospects before them were very unpleasant. If that Egyptian was so suspicious, in his paranoia he might also write Benjamin up as a spy, and thus their family would end at once. Or from starvation a little later.

On the third day Joseph summoned them all to him, feigning a softening of his anger and suspicion-"All right, I fear God, in case you are innocent after all... Go home all of you, your families are waiting for bread after all. But let one of you stay here and wait until your younger brother arrives, the one you spoke of. And without the younger one, don't even try to come here again.

After these trials and tribulations they could not help but remember the guilt that had hitherto lain heavy on their souls, that had kept their father in ignorance and great sorrow, and for which they had now put Benjamin and his father in harm's way. It is interesting that they do not say a single word against "this Egyptian," but in all the troubles that have befallen them they see only their own fault with Joseph. They said to one another, "Surely we are being punished for the sin we committed against our brother... we saw his misery, he begged us, and we had no mercy on him; so now we reap it all. They saw the justice in what had happened to them here, though to them there was no connection! They would have been embittered, but they found that their old follies were over, that their father's lessons and efforts had not been in vain, that their consciences had not been stifled or extinguished.

They spoke to each other in their own language, thinking that those Egyptians around them did not understand them, but Joseph listened to it as the best music for his soul, seeing that his brothers had since changed for the better. But his plan for them had only just begun, and it was too early to reveal himself. Also a sign of a complete turning from evil ways would be to reveal the whole affair to their father, but it was evident from their account of the family that they were sticking to the false story of one of the brothers being missing, as they said, "one is gone." But his heart boiled over and he had to step back to quiet his tears. When he calmed down, he returned and took Simeon into custody, whom he ordered to be tied up right there in front of everyone. It was probably Simeon (second in seniority after Reuben) who, when they plotted against him, was the most wicked of the company, having caused Joseph much pain and offense. Even now he may not have seemed so contrite as to have caused more trouble than the others - the chief's eyes fixed on him, the padre pointed at him and the soldiers came and bound and led him away, causing sadness to the rest. He would be imprisoned for a year (or the next time they were to return to Egypt) in a foreign land where he would probably not speak the language. What if his father would not agree to release Benjamin? - If not, he would be imprisoned for good. Joseph could not provide him with special conditions compared to the others, maintaining the image, but Simeon was quite capable of standing up for himself in case of need.

While all this was going on, in the distance, Joseph's house manager was surreptitiously putting the money they had paid for the grain into Joseph's sacks of grain. Joseph, pretending to be a bad man, at the same time wanted to reassure his brothers and found no better way to surprise them, which was impossible for ordinary people to solve - in their world it was unlikely that anyone would return money for what they sold, especially when relations were unkind, and in Egypt they were treated badly, all the witnesses

He finally let them go and they went home. Finally he let them go and they went home. On the way, at a resting place, someone opened one of the sacks to feed the animals and found their silver right among the grain. This puzzled them enormously, and in light of all the circumstances that had happened to them in recent days, they could not be happy about the money. The others might have been a little positively happy, that we might have been treated so badly, but at least they did not get the money... But they did not seem to be so happy, they were very embarrassed. When they arrived home the same story happened to all of them - all the money paid for the grain was in their sacks. Again, their thoughts turned to questions to God - "what is He doing to them?" - So they said among themselves. This was a very good sign of their condition, saying that they were paying much more attention to God, associating Him with every event in their lives, than before. He may not always do this or that for which we then ask Him, but that way we have a better chance of receiving an answer and of attaining a higher position in our understanding of life and the universe.

Perhaps if there had been among the brothers someone with a keen mind and keen observation, he could have matched the unnaturalness and contrived behavior of the official, this returned money, and estimated that Joseph's trail in Egypt would not have been completely lost... But there were none at the time. It is possible that Joseph was giving the brothers a chance to discover him this way, through highly effective thinking, this too was acceptable to him, would have been a good characteristic for the brothers, but it is unlikely that he played so subtly, it does not look like a purposeful action.

Jacob, having seen with his own eyes the evidence that something strange was indeed happening to his sons in Egypt, saw it as a threat as well. He was told everything, how "the governor of that land spoke harshly to them," how Simeon stayed there, and it upset him - "you have robbed me of my children - Joseph gone, Simeon gone, and Benjamin you want to take, all this on me. This was his response to his request to let Benjamin go with them to Egypt next time, to show him to that ruler to let Simeon go. They thought of turning around, but his father forbade him to even think about it. So Simeon had to wait longer in jail until they ran out of the grain they had brought. Reuben tried to convince his father to let Benjamin go with him on his own recognizance, but he did not choose the best way to guarantee his safety. He offered his two sons as a pledge, but such an offer might have gone to someone else, but not to Jacob, the quiet reflectionist and lover of peace, though he had been through fire and water. To pay with the deaths of his children and his own grandchildren! - This was rather an insult to Jacob, but he did not reprimand Reuben. He must have realized later that he had been in a hurry and come at it from the wrong place. So Jacob replied, "Benjamin will not go with you, he is the only one left after his brother... If misfortune befalls him, you will bring my sister to her grave with grief. Again the father set the rest of his children on some lower bar than the children from Rachel, but now they were no longer jealous, and they themselves understood something from their experiences of family building. They had indeed changed for the better. The bread they had brought was probably enough for a year or so. The next time the brothers meet Joseph, he says that only two years of famine have passed...

As time passed, the bread they had brought had run out. Jacob was about to send his sons to Egypt again, but it was not an easy task. His sons reminded him that they could not go there without his younger brother, who had suddenly become a key figure. And Jacob had to face another difficult task. He had learned many lessons before, where he had learned to trust God and to rely on His help. And now, in his old age, when he was 130 years old, he was again put into a situation where relying on human or earthly powers alone might have been wrong, and even criminal for him who had experience in this. He could, ope-

I was a man of his age and respectable position, to demand the impossible, to show that he has lost his mind in his old age, to be capricious about it, demanding from people and God - "how many more of these trials!" or "leave me alone at last, let me go in peace". But trusting God in these circumstances, realizing that humans cannot control everything in the world, he thought, very rightly, that God, who had guarded him everywhere before, would not leave him now. True, his faith might have been undermined by the disappearance and apparent death of Joseph, but he had just managed to overcome that doubt. He took a risk, he let go of what he was inclined to grasp judiciously and trusted once more in his heavenly Friend (and if he did not, it would have been unfriendly to Him, distrustful at the very least). Jacob had already had a moment of hard, even ultimate trial in the night's struggle with God, and in his old age he reinforced his former spiritual achievements in an equally hard situation where he was able to re-present his problems to others by becoming the head of a strong clan. This too was faith, a move that, although not described by Paul in Hebrews 11 along with other such instances, was a step of faith.¹²⁵.

It also helped that this time Judas, the most authoritative of the sons around him, was speaking to the father. Judas spoke with confidence, the Spirit's influence shining through Jacob's fears for Benjamin, dispelling his faint-hearted expectations. Somehow Judas could see in his gaze that the task before them was not difficult and his intuition told him that their perplexities and problems would soon be dissipated, that the situation in Egypt with the high officer was somehow unnatural and would have to be resolved. He did not swear to success, nor did he offer to pledge his children as Reuben did, but in the simplest words he dispelled his father's fears-"Let him go with me, and we will rise and go, and not die, but live... I am responsible for him, from my hands you will claim him"... And Joseph believed, Judas he could believe. He painted a picture of confidence and success that his father was able to trust. It is wonderful when children strengthen their fathers, when they can live up to their highest hopes.... Judas even added a rebuke, not harsh but more sobering-"If we had not delayed, we would have gone twice," which took the old father's mind off his fears and sobered him up a little more. After all, they were in danger of starvation all together, and in case of failure only he and Benjamin were at risk, and his father should not lose sight of this consideration-two against about seventy men (that was the sons' families already). This was the final touch of his recovery, of overcoming his despondency and depression by simple faith, by trusting in Providence to go against all circumstances and attitudes.

Sometimes there are discussions about "the role of personality in history," but getting the right person to do many things is indeed often the key to success. Here and now only Judah could reach his father's mind and heart; all else would have failed and only made things worse. Often morals are important, how Joseph of all the family was qualified for the work he did in Egypt, and how often are needed a special quality or a combination of qualities, without which many necessary things may remain undone, when the time is right and the situation demanded. The Bible repeatedly points out that God was only willing to work through chosen individuals or groups in crises. Why? I think it's obvious that at any given time not everyone is truly equipped to meet the challenges people face, only a few have the full range of abilities to provide the fine-tuned procedures or influences in the environment, they are like catalysts to solve all the problems of the moment. The rest will almost certainly fail or make-

¹²⁵ But one can easily imagine the phrase, somewhere after the examples about Abraham's faith - "by faith Jacob let Benjamin go to Egypt"...

They do it in such a way that it's better not to have started. Personnel departments, or whoever is doing it now, are not always correct in their assessment of the set of factors that create success at any given time. When men who were faithful to God ruled, they "asked God" before battles began who should start them. But of the times when men who were not disposed to keep the rules and serve God ruled, He says, "They set up kings without Me, and princes without My knowledge."¹²⁶...So quite often for individuals as well as for society there is a serious question for God - "who should occupy the office?" and "who should do the work?" and "who should lead the research?" to achieve success and maximum effectiveness. Regardless of religion or atheistic views of society, by choosing unsuccessful candidates who seem excellent in education or even experience, they will lose out to those who are seriously looking for those with real abilities and real power for the time being. In another moment, in another job, in another challenge, someone else will have to be found, because the person you have chosen before will only be good for the job they were assigned to. It is true that "the personnel decides everything".

There was a special tool for asking God in Israel's day: there were two stones on the high priest's robe, the Urim and the Thummim, which gave the answer-either the Urim on the right glowed, indicating "yes," or the Thummim on the left dimmed, indicating "no." The questioner had to construct the questions sequentially, breaking them up into logical segments if the question was difficult, and this made it possible to ascertain much by getting the answer almost directly from God. This, importantly, did not require a prophet, the very design of this appurtenance of the high priest's garments was prophetic. Though it was much easier and more convenient through the prophet. In patriarchal times these prophetic possibilities were far more present than they are today, though I must say people didn't abuse it at all (I mean they could have used it more), whereas He would have liked to communicate with us more. Although when people leave Him far away, He too can cut off communication and stop responding through the prophets and even the Urim and Thummim. It seems to me that personally I would use this connection too much, maybe that is why it is not given... Many would really abuse it instead of working their heads off, something that people too often lack. We can't burden or "overburden" God with too frequent and prolonged connections, but many would get on his good side with unhealthy attitudes. However, it is unlikely that God intentionally limited people in prophetic abilities; it is people who limit themselves, and it is their passions that are to blame for their higher abilities being unclaimed and therefore undeveloped. However, those who have deprived themselves of these abilities, in turn, out of malice, are already clipping the wings of the next generation, forcibly "closing" their natural abilities...

Completely reorganized in a matter of minutes, casting aside despondency, Jacob now decides how best to pack for the journey, what gifts of Canaanite value to bring to the manager of Egypt's strategic reserves - to take honey, balms and incense, nuts, and also to return the money they had in the sacks. And he sees his sons off with the words, "If I am destined to be childless," in case Benjamin is unlucky too, "I will be childless. The fact that he resigned himself to circumstances beyond his control is good, but pessimism does not suit him here; it is worth remembering previous "living helps," how many times God helped him and for-

But still, his attitude is more positive, sounding like "we'll endure whatever happens" rather than "something bad will happen."

The sons were on their way again, and here they were again meeting with the official who had caused them so much trouble. Joseph, noticing from afar that Benjamin was with them, told his steward to escort them to his house for dinner. When they were brought into the wealthy house of this fateful Egyptian nobleman, the brothers were frightened. They seemed to have done everything right, but who knows this powerful man who is suspicious of everyone? They hastened to confess to the master of the house that they had found money in the sacks, fearing they might be arrested and enslaved if they did not pay. But he assured them that their money had been long received, and that the money they had in the sacks was a gift from their God... This comforted them somewhat, they understood that they would not be accused of anything now, and a little later Simeon was brought in, and this finally calmed them down, and the stress that had kept them here since they first came, vanished.

At noon Joseph arrived. The brothers greeted him with gifts prepared for his arrival, and again they worshipped him to the ground. Joseph did not care for this worship, he was not the kind of man who needed to see the submission of others, but now he saw the hand of God, as what had been foretold to him long ago in his dreams was fulfilled. His brothers worshipped him as a ruler, placing him far above themselves in that bow. They themselves belonged to a house that could claim considerable respect and nobility, and the greater was the weight of their bow. Answering the question concerning their father, they put him, too, below Joseph, and called him their servant. So also the father and their mothers were put below Joseph, as if to bow down to him. And how angry everyone was when they heard that dream about the sun, the moon, and the twelve stars...

Joseph was not playing the bad boss - they had fulfilled his condition and now he was simply questioning them about their father. When they answered his question, they bowed to him again, again confirming the power of Providence. Joseph then allowed himself to look with both eyes at his younger brother, whom he had not seen for so many years and to whom he was especially attached. Until then, in order not to betray himself, he had avoided looking at him-"is this your little brother you were talking about?" He wished him the blessings of God and felt himself leave his equilibrium and his face unresolved. So he left the room abruptly and burst into tears. The others noticed, but they could not make sense of what was going on, because it was only possible to understand if they knew their brother was in front of them. But he had changed in more than twenty years, and he was not dressed as he should have been, and he did not speak their language; there was an interpreter between them. Even if they could see familiar features, the brothers could only think that it was a coincidence, the same type of appearance, too improbable for such an assumption to have made its way into their minds.

Then dinner began, food was served, and there were three companies of people in the room. Each was seated separately from the others, the different cultures and all that went with them. The Egyptians, newly liberated from the nomadic Hyksos, apparently could not tolerate any herdsmen, and Joseph, who came from a similar tribe, had to sit apart, though this was more due to his high position than to his origins. Jacob's sons, too, who were not invited to join Joseph's table, were seated apart. But there was no animosity between the native Egyptians and the herdsmen; they regarded it as a custom, and looked at each other's different order, wondering that Jacob's sons were seated in order of precedence, not by chance. But it was as if the aliens were observing the Egyptians as well, wondering at the looser order, and perhaps at the unfamiliar forms of certain things on the tables. The dishes of food were served to the brothers from Joseph's table also

according to their seniority. In doing so, the Bible notes that Benjamin was overlaid five times more than any of the brothers. It might have been surprising how much the younger one was liked by this Egyptian ruler. By this, Joseph was also testing the brothers' reaction to a preference that was not his, to see if the old envy of an undeserved favorite of fortune would show itself. However, he noticed nothing of the sort; the brothers had indeed changed - neither look, nor gesture, nor tone of voice showed any dislike for Benjamin, as they had once done for him.

As if Joseph had checked everything and more, he could have moved on and told his brothers, but he decided not to rush. Whether it had been planned beforehand or whether it had only now occurred to him, we do not know. But Joseph had one more test in store. Whether the brothers had given him something else to suspect, I don't know; I can't think of anything else they could have done. Or did the timing just not seem right? Most likely there was a reason why he put the brothers to another test. In some ways this was God's will; this last one, Joseph's plan, was a test, like the ultimate test of faith for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. The brothers had done many bad things in their lives, and it took a serious enough test to make them right. Ordinarily people would not knowingly do such a thing to one another, and when they do it is unapologetic before their neighbors and a sin before God. Only He Himself can authorize such a thing, or some special account between individuals. The brothers never breathed a word of complaint afterwards against Joseph for this last trick, which could have damaged the minds of those with less strong nerves. But it was this inexplicability of the situation, this undeservedness, their lack of a single thought of what was attributed to them and what they were accused of, that was their last test. In the future, they were going to have a fairly successful, prosperous, even comfortable and cozy life, and it was wrong for them to enter such a life with the untied knots of their past wrongs. So God was really behind this, influencing their minds and conscience during their final trial. Though they were not guilty of anything ascribed to them, yet for their past deeds they did not incur serious penalties, for what they had done to Joseph and to their father, of which their father, who had suffered misfortune, was still unaware, which they still carried within themselves and could not repent fully, because to repent meant also confessing to their father what they had done. It was clear from their own accounts that they were still acting out scenes of innocence before their father about Joseph's fate, though every time they saw their father they saw his undying sadness. So Joseph had certainly read everything and, by inspiration from on high, had found an adequate means of influencing his brothers, who had lingered on the threshold of salvation.

After parting with them after dinner, he gave orders to the servant about the brothers. There was both good and not so good. They were loaded with as much bread as they had the ability to carry, and a day's worth of gi was put back into their sacks. But besides this, Joseph instructed him to put his favorite silver bowl in Benjamin's sack... Then he sent a chase after his brothers and accused them of impudently and lowly stealing a thing of great value. The steward of Joseph's house told him that the stolen cup was very precious to his lord, that he used it for divination and was very attached to it. They were wondering at the thought of it, and told him that he who would have dared to do such a thing was worthy of death, and that the rest, if the cup were found, would be slaves. But Joseph's servant was lenient, saying that he would only take into slavery whoever had the master's cup, and the rest would be free. And it is clear who had it... They were all just killed, crushed, and smashed. They could not prove anything, everything was against them, the whole world was mocking them. Their family was doomed, by the spell they had cast upon themselves; their children were fatherless, their wives were separated from their husbands, their father, the keeper of truth and righteousness on earth, was doomed to sink into great sadness, to have no consolation in life. Such was their vision in their wo-

the image. They couldn't understand or explain anything-how could all this have happened? They should have checked their bags, only they were not allowed to go far, and could they have guessed another surprise? Had Benjamin really turned out to be so different from what they all knew him to be and stooped to stealing? No, it's not like that; something's not right.

They returned to Joseph's house in tattered clothes and feelings, but what could they say? As they said, "God has discovered our unrighteousness..." Joseph, coming out to them, again "turned on" the autocrat, pleased with himself and his power over them - "How dare you? Didn't you think that a man like me would surely figure it out?" Their strongest argument, that they had brought money that somehow didn't turn out to have been paid for the first purchase, proved useless and their honesty played no part. He was trolling them black and blue, but he was waiting for the right signal to end this tragicomedy and finally to calm himself down and bring them all back to peace and happiness. And the brothers show that all of life's lessons were not in vain. From what had happened, they could have been about to guess that the cup had been set up and who had set it up. Though at the moment from grief and frustration their minds had not yet figured it out, understanding might soon glimmer in their confused souls. But Joseph set them on a slightly different path, not letting them guess about the setup with the cup, not letting them realize that he was their brother who knew all about them, all this could be comprehended later, but he needed to reveal their dedication and humility, their confession of the wrong they had been guilty of before. And they say it when they said this-"God has found the unrighteousness of your servants." They are saying that there is a higher justice in what has happened to them, that this is retribution for something for which they have not yet received retribution and for which they have not yet confessed to anyone.

After this Joseph lets them go home, but says he will keep Benjamin for himself, which was totally unacceptable, and then Judah, who had vouched for his younger brother to his father, began to speak. His speech, full of the Spirit's influence, struck Joseph's heart; though he believed his brothers were better, he himself had not expected such power, such revelation and openness of soul. Some time before Judah had been able to convince his father to let the younger man go with them; the unthinkable had happened - his father had softened and put aside his fears. Now Judah had spoken with more despair, not believing, perhaps, that this cruel man would have mercy, but he could not but speak, and spoke with all his heart his concern and pain for his father, not feeling the force of his words, not believing that they would reach this pompous, conceited nobleman, but each of them shook Joseph... Now he could compare, and his brothers, if not now, later on, could see the resemblance of situations where Joseph had not once begged their indulgence, but they had not taken pity on him and were ready to kill him at that moment, and now they were in the same situation, where they might not be listened to and all their suffering might be assessed as nothing, and they themselves might be abandoned to the elements with disdain.

Judah told Joseph in detail all the problems of their family and their father, his affection for Benjamin, his father's own words about his beloved wife's children, his fears - all this was news to Joseph of the events at home after his disappearance. Once again Judah, in his narrative, sticks to the version of the loss of one of the brothers without mentioning their role in the affair, relaying everything in his father's words as he saw it (and the father in turn said what he had heard from his sons). Judah, of course, could have done even better, confessing that they were to blame for his father's trouble and his brother's disappearance, but in this situation it might have been unnecessary, for everything was determined by the experiences of the father, living the picture his sons gave him. But Joseph could no longer expect more from them; he was experiencing them beyond his limits, and he himself could not hold back any longer. When Judah said he could not see the trouble that would happen to their father unless Benjamin returned, and wished to take Benjamin's place himself, to go into slavery in his place, so that his father might be well, what could not touch the Egyptian official broke Joseph's heart. He cried out for all outsiders to

He left the room and revealed himself to his brothers. At first he simply wept and his tears prevented him from speaking, but as soon as he could catch his breath he said to his brothers in his own language, "I am Joseph, is my father still alive?"

The brothers, embarrassed by all their recent experiences and problems, were at this point confused. From the way things had gone so far, it was logical for them to expect a scornful - "I don't care about your father, if he wants to see his son, let him come here himself" or something like that. And while that would have been very bad, it would have been in line with the flow of events, understandable and logical. But now they were confused and simply dumbfounded. They had once sold their brother, wondering inwardly how God's plans for Joseph's supremacy would be fulfilled if he were not there, if he were sold into slavery, and now they suddenly saw that the one they had so much hated, despised and hated had indeed become the second man of a powerful country... And they bow to him, call their father his slave, depend on his moods. Joseph, seeing that they were stiffly inhibited, began to stir them up, bringing them out of their shock-"come here, to me." And as they slowly approached Joseph and Judas standing beside him, he repeated to them again, uttering every word -

"I am Joseph, your brother, whom you sold into Egypt."

As he watched them return to reality, he began to comfort them, because for them, dating someone they had once mistreated was probably hardly a holiday. Wouldn't he continue to punish them in the same way? And he tells them the unprecedented, unlikely thing, that by doing him wrong they have in some way done a good deed, for which he is not angry or even offended with them. It was God, he says, who sent him here to preserve their lives. That if they had not sold his brother into slavery, there would have been no reason for the famine, as well as for their removal to Egypt, Joseph did not say, and perhaps he did not think so himself. But he wanted to reassure them, so that they would not see him as an enemy or a vindictive and dangerous man. He wanted his brothers' hearts and he is doing all he can for them. He does not want to tell them that it is not their fault, that there is no need to repent, especially since they have been through all this for a long time, the mere sight of their father suffering up to now was enough for them. He says, "Don't be sad and don't regret it," but he doesn't say, "No need to repent. He presents it to them as a case where out of evil (or rather, because of evil, as a result of problem solving) some good comes afterwards (but it does not justify evil in any way).

Religion is sometimes mocked because of such instances, when something useful or good can be learned from evil by teaching lessons. There are proverbs like "there was no fortune but unhappiness helped," and "two wrongs for a broken man" and the like. There are actual biblical examples such as the one just described or David's words "Before I suffered I was mistaken, but now I keep Your revelations. There are many more like this, but for someone who thinks too formally, it can seriously confuse - "can there really be no good without evil"? The apostle Paul summed up this mockery of religion in his critique of certain mockers who said, "Do we not do evil in order that good may come out? But for this to be true, for evil to actually produce good, there would need to be another God, another Creation, and another reality altogether. By the way, the devil is no match for this role - he is not a god at all, that is, he can't and can't create, he's just dissatisfied with the existing order and wants to remake it. And if something better comes out of his evil and his machinations, it is through the power of goodness or grace working in our world against evil, because someone is restoring what was destroyed. In this world, in this life, good does not grow directly out of evil, but by lessons and reflection.

The fact that people who have been taught to avoid evil and that the forces of restoration and healing are at work does not confirm this state of affairs. Somehow, such a state of affairs does not confirm the goodness of evil.

The important thing is that people's minds are capable of understanding and appreciating the good and the good without having to face trouble and evil. To some extent this did become a problem after the fall, when sin entered the world and blinded and dumbed people down, but before that, people's minds worked better and more fully. Even today people don't all need a problem to appreciate the good. Sin was not needed to appreciate the need to evade it. This may still seem unsubstantiated, but the thesis of the necessity of evil is no better justified.

He says, "Two years of famine have passed, and now there are five more years of famine to come," in which this state of affairs will continue. In everything that has happened to me and to you, you can see the hand of God, "Who sent me before you to keep you alive. In short, "you didn't send me here, but God did. Now I am "a father to Pharaoh"; he put me in charge of Egypt. So he encouraged his brothers, so that they at last believe in the reality of the situation. He asks them to tell their father so that he may come with them all to his house as soon as possible. Then he hugged Benjamin and cried, having at last had the chance to do so. There were many hugs and conversations where all their past disagreements were resolved and peace came. Not a shadow of the past remained, not only in their relationship but also within each of them; their madneses of the past were over.

Word of Joseph's unusual experiences with some aliens spread quickly, and Pharaoh, who admired Joseph and was happy that his country had such a man, was glad that he had found his kin. It is great to be well, but if what is good for you is good for someone else, you have good friends, and that is even better. It is a pity if something happens to disturb the harmony of relations and if there are not enough good people. How to increase their number?

From this time on, Pharaoh himself took part in the gathering; he ordered that everyone be supplied not only with supplies, but also with transportation for relocation. He promised them the best of his country and even added that they should not be sorry to throw away any things that were difficult to take with them, promising to supply them from himself. He literally began to regard Joseph's relatives as his kinsmen. Joseph might have been a little wary of these sentiments, for he knew that not all of the brothers were really sensible people, lest Pharaoh should be disappointed afterwards with too high expectations, for he did not seem to be aware of the history of Joseph's arrival in Egypt. So after the brothers arrived, when Pharaoh gave them a reception at his palace, he instructed them on what and how to tell Pharaoh about themselves and their profession, so as to be both in business and at the same time not too close to the court...

Joseph, by Pharaoh's order, gave them supplies and transportation, adding much more of himself, so that they carried much more back to Canaan than they were going to bring. Finally they reached their father, and from the doorway they gave him the good news - "Joseph is alive and ruling over all Egypt! But at first Jacob, used to his grief, had a hard time accepting the news, so they had to tell him a lot about the whole story, including an old lie about Joseph's disappearance and what had really happened. But after the storm of Joseph's shenanigans had shaken them, they were no longer afraid to confess to their father, especially when everything had been resolved so favorably all of a sudden. In principle, what Joseph had done to them was very logical, in order to help them evaluate things more sensibly with this kind of shock therapy (but I would not advise anyone to do this to his neighbor without any special rights).

and authority), to help them get rid of the fear of man in order to give place to the real fear that is only worth having-the fear of God.

The fear of God. Some are confused, some are outraged by this expression, but usually in vain. Because it does not mean exactly what they perceive it to mean, missing its real meaning. The point is that these words do not mean what many perceive them to mean, focusing on only one summand. There are hardly any languages that have a separate word for every phenomenon, and Russian is no exception. So a lot of things are expressed in a complex way, not by one word, but by two, if not more (and so many of today's words are made up of two or more words from the old language, at least this very "today"). Other things have to be stated in whole sentences to make the other person understand what they are talking about. And usually in such word combinations, each individual word can change its basic meaning under the influence of another, which modifies it. For example, on wind instruments, if you close one hole, you sound one pitch, and if you close another hole, you sound a different note. But if you close both holes at the same time, you will often produce a third note that cannot be heard on either of the two holes separately. So what is left of the concept of "fear" in this expression is not fear itself, not of God, not of His power, not of destruction for sin, but something else-the rejection of things that do not please God. Also the fear of things that may separate us from God, just as a child does not want his mother to turn away from him because of what she dislikes about his behavior, lest she be disappointed, angry, rejected. If it is unpleasant to him, alien to him, it is unpleasant and alien to you as well. Are you avoiding contamination or defilement? - This could be called the "fear of filth," and it would be a close analogy to the "fear of God." Is the fear of uncleanness a fear for us? I don't think so, although there are so-called psychologists who declare it to be the same fear that one fears death or threats of physical violence. Yes, an ordinary fear that is for one's life, in relation to God may well be, but it is simply a fear, even if it is of God. But it is not the fear of God, it is an ordinary fear.

There is another good analogy that describes the other side of this fear of God. I think many people have stood next to a rushing train. What does it feel like? For me it's the thrill of power multiplied by speed. For most people, it's an uncommon sensation. Yes, there is some fear in it, too, when the mind pictures what that power could do to someone who gets in its way. However, there is no usual fear in this case, unless one has very weak nerves, in which case one can be really afraid, but that is another case. This is also a very close analogy to the fear of God. So when you read the phrase in the Bible about the righteous fearing God, try to imagine their feelings in the light of the above, rather than trembling for their lives...

Jacob was a righteous man, but not at all of the kind where a "righteous man" shoves rules and regulations in everyone's face for any reason, demanding compliance with everything, expressing constant displeasure over any violation, and anticipating the things not yet done. This is absolutely not the religion God wanted to have on earth. Such a "religion" creates rules out of His rules, but puts them on completely foreign ground to Him - in this "religion" man can only rejoice when he has observed everything, not before. Or, even worse, when he has caught everyone in violation. Since people are imperfect, there will always be a reason for discontent on the part of the "elder ones" and a reason to criticize the "younger ones" will never end. And the "younger" ones will take out their emotions on others like them, who are caught or who have failed. But the path of endless demands

The way of doing things is a false way of doing things. Instead, man should be encouraged (not by gifts and favors, of course, but simply by kindness or praise and joy) so that he does not lose the incentive and interest to live and improve. It is possible to demand and at times very necessary, but nagging has been introduced into religion by the evil one. It is a more difficult way, nagging is easier, but there is no other way. Pickiness is born out of scarcity of soul, mind, spirituality...

All in all, Jacob may have wondered at the story and appreciated all that was going on between and within the children, but he was glad that they had finally opened up. He had long seen a change for the better, and now he saw more proof of it. He had not cursed or blamed anyone, especially as he had not caught them in the act, but they had admitted it themselves. True, they had confessed at a time when it was no longer possible to hide, but that would have been bad if they had not themselves grown up by then. He understood them, though he was not so guilty himself, but at least he understood how difficult it was for them to confess when he himself appeared to them inconsolable for the loss of Joseph, showing in part that he did not appreciate them. So in encouraging them he cheered up and cried, "That's enough! (I think the implication here is "no more sorrow.") Joseph is still alive! I'm going to go and see him before he dies!" I know from my childhood experience how joyful it is for children, how powerful a feeling it is to see their parents rise from illness or discouragement. My mother had poor health due to a series of injuries, we got used to it and it was as if everything was normal, but once she went to the south to visit her brother and after a month she returned a completely different person - the Sochi fruits did wonders for her, though not for long. We looked at her with admiration and felt that she had become what we had dreamed of her. The children of Jacob were very happy to see their father straightened up and as upright as they had been long ago, when he had been a hero and an example to them. For parents, children are said to be young forever (true in some ways), but it is also a dream for children that their parents are always as healthy and full of energy as they were in their childhood. Over the years it becomes less and less accessible to the eye but if we knew how to stay healthy which is not that difficult - the rules are simple but for some reason not well known - then strength and beauty would not be gone from the elderly for good or far away...

Relocation to Egypt

They assembled, put their belongings in the chariots sent for them by Pharaoh and Joseph, arranged for the children or those who were weaker, and set out, but not yet for their new place of residence. First they came to Beersheba, where there had been one of the altars of worship to the Lord since the time of Abraham. There Jacob offered sacrifices along with a request for help and guidance. Maybe not everyone thought about it, but at least Jacob thought about how long they were going there. He sensed that he didn't have much time left; he wasn't as strong as his fathers. But if the famine lasted another five years, after that it was as if he could go back to Canaan, because that was the land where they were to live, as God had willed it. And it may well be five years, but for some reason God no longer requires them to be in this land of wandering all the time. On the contrary, God appeared to Jacob in a dream and told him not to be afraid to go to another country, thus testifying that his family had to stay there. In principle he knew from Abraham the timetable, that his descendants would be "strangers in a strange land," and that there was a clearly marked period of four hundred years before the promised land would be found by his people, and it was time to go to that "strange land. God promises him that He will bring him back by Himself, but in so doing He tells him that he will die in Egypt, and that his beloved son will shut him out. So "I will bring you out" means "I will bring your descendants out," who will carry his body with them.

More than once or twice people have wondered how to distinguish between direct and figurative expressions of the Bible, when something is meant literally and when it is meant figuratively or indirectly and symbolically. This is not an easy task, and I am not sure I know the whole question myself. But something tells me that the matter is not at all complicated. The Bible contains, first of all, the history of the lives of individuals and peoples. Therein lies the central meaning of everything, accompanied by the commentary of the prophets or of God. It's all there on the surface, you just have to read carefully. Where there are second layers of meaning, we can see from further explanations, where appropriate explanations are given that this also applies to the Messiah. There are prophecies, some in simple words, others in symbols, which are not easy to understand. But the symbols are not alien to us; they are essentially simple as well, we are just not used to working with them.

First of all, one thing about language and speech itself as a means of communication and information transfer is that words use a code that does not designate a single object, but links (or can link) together the different layers of meanings that have the attribute denoted by the word. If only because Adam named the animals, he named them after some characteristic characteristic of them (God had put some plan-formula-matrix into their character and nature when He created them). The name of the animal reflected that characteristic, which was already embodied in something that already existed... That is, the names of animals were secondary, following some patterns that already existed in other spheres. This is the simplest example of why it is difficult to separate the simple and plain things of the world from the images that also have to be manipulated. Many of us have problems with non-quantitative meanings, because as a rule, quite often, human development was not encouraged, but on the contrary, suppressed, and even when forced to develop, we were cut off from volumetric things, allowed to expand limitedly, in the flat, figuratively speaking. Christ, while on earth, very often used non-bulletical expressions, confusing the disciples and the good people, but it was not for the sake of confusion, but for the development of man. Though he drew near to people and spoke seemingly simple words, at the same time he also drew people up to his level. The riddles of the wise men, the "dark speeches" and the ambiguous ways of expressing thought are meant to develop man, to bring him up to heaven, not the other way around, so that heaven adapts itself to our wicked faculties. Solomon writes that wise men are characterized by riddles-otherwise they would become weak. Instead of being three-dimensional there will be flatness, instead of comprehension there will be repetition of someone else's. Reading meanings is no more difficult than reading words, you just have to widen the field where you have to read the signs of meanings. As this high-level literacy is mastered, reading symbols becomes almost as easy as reading alphabetic text. One can see from Joseph's example how he interprets dreams twice as easily and unmistakably.

But not only are dreams filled with symbolism with some meaning, so are the prophecies. They use the same alphabet, the symbolism of things in our world. Not everyone is gifted to be a prophet, to see in symbols or directly the destinies of individuals and whole countries, but everyone else could be a part of them, understanding them or trying to understand the meaning of what is revealed. It is difficult, but it is the vocation of man. "Oh, if all in the people of the Hereafter were prophets!" exclaimed Moses, when his po

The prophet wanted to forbid the prophecy of the two men who had not joined the other seventy¹²⁷The prophets wanted to forbid the prophesying of the two men who had not

As they approached Egypt, Jacob sent Judah ahead to bring Joseph to meet them, and with him they proceeded to their place of residence. However, the meeting had already taken place in Goshen, the region where they were going, and they had been given chaperones, and now Joseph had arrived himself. Father and son met, the dreams of two men, bound to each other by friendship, kinship and the memory of other loved ones, compatible in a special way, more than other relatives, met. Jacob said- "Now it is possible to die, when I see that you are still alive." The text literally says it a little differently, but that's how it sounds to me for some reason. But he was in no hurry to die, he lived seventeen more years, happy and forgetting all his previous fears, worries about his children and suffering because of Joseph.

Israel in Egypt

Living a life of favoritism

When Joseph met his relatives and gave them their place of residence, he prepared to go to Pharaoh. He knew that court life had its subtleties, and it would be a good idea to introduce some of his brothers to Pharaoh so that they could be attached to the cause. It wasn't just the benefits of being close to power that mattered, but how his tribe could benefit this country that he served. Interesting are the instructions he gives as an experienced courtier to the brothers who have just arrived in a country where social life was at least an order of magnitude more complicated than life in Canaan. He tells them to present themselves as pastoralists, which they were, though they had a good background in agriculture as well. But farming in Egypt had its own peculiarities, and Egyptian cattle farming also had its own problems. After the invasion of the Hyksos (sometimes it seems that this was his time; Egypt was ruled by a cattle-raising people alien to the Egyptians) a certain complex of problems developed - for the Egyptians still every sheep herder and cattleman was, as the Bible notes, "an abomination." Most of the people had animals and needed someone to take care of them; there seems to have been few people who would have volunteered to be shepherds, not wanting to become shepherds. And the country's livestock industry was clearly in trouble because of this prejudiced attitude of society, and there was nothing anyone could do about it. Joseph contemplated taking these positions, which might unclog the current problems of cattle care and, on the other hand, put capable men in places where they could benefit more than themselves. As a privileged official with almost unlimited power, he could have placed the brothers in any place possible, even created from scratch some bread-and-butter positions, but he does not do this, does not even think of making rich idlers of them, living off others, does not push anyone away from the feeding trough for the sake of his relatives. He only puts them in business, not in money and power.

Also, this business to which he is attaching them coincides with the fact that the pasture lands and cattle are precisely concentrated where they came - the land of Goshen, the Nile delta. Pharaoh called it "the best land of Egypt," he lives somewhere nearby, too, and here they would live and work without going far from home. There is plenty of grass here, which is convenient for cattle raising. In the events that follow, we can see that when Moses went to Pharaoh to negotiate about his people, these movements to and from him did not take long. Joseph is going to talk to Pharaoh about their fate, and wants his words to coincide later with what the brothers themselves will say. Pharaoh may perceive them as Joseph himself, as very good and trustworthy men, but

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Joseph does not want Pharaoh to be disappointed by this later, it would cause unnecessary problems. It is important that the brothers declare that they have come to live, that is, only temporarily in these parts, which would leave them free to leave Egypt when they see fit to do so. The fact that they would be cattle ranchers, which would make them a nuisance to the Egyptians, should protect them from unnecessary contact with paganism.

Then Joseph came to Pharaoh, bringing five of his brothers with him, and introduced them to him. Everything went as Joseph had intended and for which he had prepared his brothers, lest something unnecessary interfere with their arrangement here. Pharaoh really wanted to have the best care of the flocks, and these newcomers of Joseph's kinsmen were the best suited for this purpose. After his brothers, Joseph also brought his father to Pharaoh who impressed Pharaoh greatly. He asked Jacob about his age and he spoke of his one hundred and thirty years as being far removed from his ancestors' experience - "My days are short and miserable. Jacob really felt he didn't have long to live, not like Isaac, who began to prepare for death many years before his actual term. Jacob had only seventeen years to live, the effect of the sorrow and grief he had felt because his sons had concealed from him the real fate of his beloved son. Could he not be so deeply grieved? - Perhaps he could have, and perhaps even should have, but this does not lessen the guilt of his sons. Besides the trouble with Joseph he had been subjected to years of ill-treatment from his father-in-law, he had seen problems between his wives that were not pleasing either. And almost all of this was a consequence of the wrong he had done when he deceived his father. It was all the more bad for him that he himself was not inclined to deceive, the greater his responsibility. Had he really been a deceiver (his patriarchy would have been out of the question then) by nature, by character, his wages would have been more direct and open, probably not as long, but "to whom more is given, more is asked" - since he claimed to be the patriarch of righteousness and servant of God, he should have matched. He did not find himself in sin as its author; he did not conceive of the way of deception, but was an accomplice. He was dragged in as Eve and Adam were dragged in, but his responsibility was only made heavier by it.

The children's character problems were not punishment for weakness; they were a consequence in the chain of consequences of his crime and payback. Clearly it was probably impossible for him to avoid his father-in-law's trap of marrying both of his sisters, but why take more servant wives? It was hard not to give in to Rachel, who had to "open the account" and practically forced him to marry her maid, but when Leah, who already had four children at the time, did the same, he should have stopped and said "No". The question "Why do you need so many?" was one that Jacob did not ask, but simply waved his hand. Common sense should have made him tell Leah that her wish made no sense whatsoever, that Rachel had done it out of desperation precisely because her sister already had four and she had none, and that following Rachel's example was simply a pest (for all the delicacy of their relationship...). Afterwards, of course, he digested and realized all this, but now he had to bear all the consequences in the characters of the children on whom all these things were reflected. One good thing is that at least a lot of it was later realized and outlived. But God had to spend time and energy on things that could have been spared and much more important things to do. The development of God's work on Earth was slowed down by the need to work internally, to eliminate the defects and distortions within, instead of expanding the work outward.

After communicating with Pharaoh, Jacob blessed him, the king of a great country. Whether this was a mere wish for favors or whether it left a mark on Pharaoh's fate and life together with his country, I cannot judge. But it made no complaint to Pharaoh, who, like many kings of all time, could be sensitive to breaches of his honour, perceived or real.

But usually people feel each other's strength. But usually people sense each other as to who is greater or stronger, whether in physical strength, mental strength or spiritual strength. It was not for nothing that the Apostle Paul observed a thousand and a half years later that "the lesser is blessed by the greater, without any objection. Pharaoh felt honored to see an heir to a line of great men of the past, whose number of generations in the same historical time is far less than that of the great majority of men of his time, precisely because of their greater longevity. Before him was a "dinosaur", to use modern slang, a man of legendary times, an heir to those who in their time had already been deified precisely because of their greater physical and spiritual strength, skills and perfection. And this descendant of giants complains to him that he, too, is getting shallower...

The Last Days of Jacob

For seventeen more years Jacob lived in Egypt, surrounded by peace and prosperity. Feeling that he had not long to live, he called Joseph for an important conversation, for which he gathered his strength and sat down to talk about what was important to him in an appropriate position. He asked Joseph to put his hand on his leg as he sat, on top of his thigh, just as Abraham had once invoked the servant in the same way, and asked, with the proviso "if thou wilt please me," not to leave him in Egypt, not to bury him here when he was dead. He had not lived long in Egypt, but Canaan was his place of birth, and he wished to go there. He had indicated a place to be buried where he wished to be buried, though to many people today such a desire would not seem understandable. But people had the knowledge from the beginning that the dead would come back to life in time for judgment, for retribution or reward, so the place where they would wait for that had some kind of emotional content. The desecration of graves was a very bad thing, and it was not a prejudice, but it goes back to the original times. Clearly, it is not difficult for God to gather the right molecules from anywhere to restore from his preserved registers the parameters of any person who has been eaten, burned, blown up, or whose graves have been vandalized, but there is a romance to the resting place for the departed. Even though the dead, as Solomon says, "know nothing" and "feel nothing" and "have no part in anything that is done under the sun," while they are alive they have their sense of it, and as they slowly pass away in death they especially feel it, until the last impulse in the nervous system goes out, and with this sense they will rise when the time comes.... The prophet Balaam once said this - "May my soul die the death of a righteous man" - and these are not just words. They go into a peace comparable to what one thinks of as nirvana. This peace is present in the lives of those who have a direct relationship with God, and even in their death.

Joseph promised to do according to his father's word. Jacob asked and swore, and Joseph confirmed the promise with an oath. Having received the assurance, though he did not doubt his son's faithfulness, Jacob leaned back comfortably on his bed. He knew that sooner or later the Jews would leave Egypt, but he did not want to linger here for hundreds of years, but to be carried home at once, and to have his beloved son do it personally, without delay.

This expression, "bowed down on the pillow," on top of the bed, has an interesting distortion in the Synodal Russian translation, which sometimes confuses some attentive people. But, apart from the error, there is nothing special about it. The translators have translated "bowed down" as "bowed down on top of the bed", which bewilders - why, what was there? The imagination paints some pagan symbols, which the patriarch bowed, and yet here we can see the simple movement of moving from sitting to lying down, after an effort not easy for an old man. But the story of the "bow" is not over; in Hebrews this place turns into a "bow" altogether.

with the rod at the top of his rod. But Jacob was not actually "worshipping," not by any

In the second, other translations (the Synodal should have added "*leaning* on the top of his rod" in italics) indicate a bow to God, leaning on his rod, on the top of the rod, of course, since rods are usually held by the top when they are leaning on them. It is true that in Genesis itself, in the description of the blessing of Joseph's sons or all his sons in the next chapter, nothing is said about the staff; in both cases Jacob "leans" on the bed, returning to a lying position, but the staff (and bow) may have come from Jewish oral tradition or again a mistake.

"Appropriation" of Ephraim and Manasseh

Jacob was nearing his end, and Joseph, hearing that his father was weaker than before, decided not to put off one thing - he wanted his father to bless his sons. So he came to him and took his sons with him. Someone was constantly caring for the patriarch of the family, and Jacob was told that Joseph had come to him. He gathered his strength and sat up on his bed. He already had something to say to his son, and when Joseph and his sons came to him, he told him of the good news from the Almighty, who had promised him many offspring. And immediately he proceeded to his idea of raising Joseph's sons to the status of his own, from grandsons to sons. By their mothers they belonged to the higher priestly class, and Jacob felt that they might be tempted to choose their fate in Egypt, having the prospect of being at the very top. He told him that "these children of yours will be mine," like the other twelve, and that the new ones Joseph would have after them would be considered his. Such an elevation was probably never practiced anywhere else, but now Jacob felt it was important and necessary. Ephraim and Manasseh were becoming brothers to the other family heads, princes among the princes of Israel. Joseph, who wanted a blessing for his sons, received no small surprise. Symbolically, as the father and tutor of Manasseh and Ephraim, it is as if with them he also acquired a higher status as the eldest among the other sons, similar to that of Jacob himself. To some extent, of course, but for those who like to measure status, this would have been an extremely valuable gift, allowing them to consider the others as inferior to themselves. Jacob added that Rachel had left him too soon, and that he wanted to make up for her loss with this acquisition.

Then Jacob looked more closely and noticed that Joseph was not alone, but because he could no longer see well, he asked who it was with him. When he heard that they were Joseph's children, he said, "Bring them to me and I will do good to catch them. Then he hugged his grandchildren, now sons, and said to Joseph, "I had not hoped to see you at least once more, but now I see your children, too"... Happy.

Then Joseph took them away from their father and put them in order of precedence, Manasseh to his father's right hand and Ephraim to his left. He brought them close again, but their father did not behave as he had planned. He crossed his arms, placing his right hand on Ephraim's head and his left hand on Manasseh's. In this he showed sensitivity to the voice of God, not like his father, who had once relaxed and thus encouraged his wife to act hastily, who in turn involved Jacob in an unhealthy enterprise. Isaac was also shortsighted when he thought there could only be one blessing and that Jacob was now finding one for each. True, of Isaac's sons only one son was worthy of the blessing, but Isaac's attitude toward a single blessing was an unnecessary cause for conflict with Esau. If he had only blessed Esau, Jacob would have gotten nothing at all and his requests would have gone unanswered - but that is all on human consideration, if things had gone on without God's plans and will; God's intervention could have changed both Esau and Jacob's situation, reducing Isaac's inspiration for Esau and filling him with unexpected inspiration for the younger. Jacob had drawn the necessary conclusions from his father's weaknesses and now knew from revelations from above that the destiny

Ephraim takes him ahead of his older brother and, unconstrained by custom, blesses the younger as the older, setting an example in hindsight of how his father should have acted as well. To Joseph this action of his father seemed utterly wrong, and he even tried to move his father's hands "properly," but the latter stopped Joseph's efforts - "I know, my son, I know" what I am doing, and told him that the younger would overtake the older. Joseph must have understood this; he himself became the chief, being second in seniority from the end, without deceiving anyone or making the slightest effort to do so...

Jacob then added something to the gifts he had already given, saying that he would give Joseph the land he said he had seized in Canaan by force of arms. This story was unclear to me; there is no description of Jacob's warfare in the Genesis story, except in the case of Shechem. However, the city of Sychar, mentioned by John in his Gospel as the site of the very plot given by Jacob to Joseph, is precisely where the old Shechem was, which Jacob by the rules of old times should have considered his own after the destruction of the city by Simeon and Levi for his sister. Abraham and his descendants were for the time being commanded to wander about Canaan, not putting down roots in one place, but this did not prevent them from owning their own property - this was the case with Bathsheba, near Gerar; the burial ground near Hebron, purchased again by Abraham; and Joseph inherited a plot of land from his father.

The Song of Jacob

How much time elapsed after the conversation with Joseph and the blessing of him and his sons is unknown, most likely not long at all. Jacob summoned all his sons to tell them all that was in his heart, to summarize his life and his personal successes and failures in building up his home, in raising his sons, in bringing them to God. It was also his advice to his children, and a hint as to who needed to work on what in order to perfect what he was doing or to correct what was wrong. He had many things on his mind that needed to be expressed in an inspired speech. Most importantly, all this was backed up by revelations from God who had not really left him until now, though it was as if He had not intervened in the routine of life, but had given him intelligence and insight into what was going on. In this respect Jacob is a father-hero who, from the pile of children he inherited from four very diverse, to put it mildly, women, managed to forge, though not immediately and for a long time, something worthwhile. Natural inclinations and not the best upbringing from spiritually undeveloped maids, who were not the best influence on both their own and others' children, did much to confuse the company of teenagers, who sometimes walked dangerous paths. But his efforts bore fruit over time, and his sons almost all (though it is difficult to say for sure about all of them) changed completely or very much.

All this, revealed to him by God, overwhelmed Jacob, and he called them to express to them all that stirred him, to share the revelation both with those to whom it was intended and with all to whom the record of God's work is available. Probably anyone can notice that such places, where one is under such influence, are always expressed in some sublime syllable, which retains its special resonance in all translations. This is why many call such inspired speeches in the Bible songs - the song of¹²⁸ The song of Jacob, the song of Moses and the Lamb, and other such cases.

Gather yourselves together, and I will tell you what will happen to you in the days to come.

128 Is it okay that I use old expressions sometimes? For some reason I am no longer ashamed of old words; even if they are "outdated," they are not "backward. And if I try to read the synodal translation of the Bible in a more modern language, it is only because there are more appropriate words today and also not everyone is inclined to hear the meaning of what is said in yesterday's language.

*Come together and listen, ye sons of Jacob
Listen to Israel your father*

Then he speaks to each of them individually, giving their characteristics, briefly, but only describing their achievements or weaknesses. To the firstborn Reuben he says that he will no longer be first among the brothers, because of the moment in his life when he allowed his passions to lead him astray by desecrating his own father's bed. All sins are forgivable if men are willing to be cleansed of them, but the consequences are not always removable in this life; there are things that leave indelible marks and scars. He especially expressed his indignation at Simeon and Levi, whose cruelty apparently has not been vanquished even at this time; or rather they have not fully grasped the depth of their error, and still need more knowledge of themselves, and of the divine attributes. Cruelty and hard-heartedness as character traits are not proper qualities for followers of God, even though it seems to many that it is possible or even necessary to be cruel to certain categories of people, just for the sake of God, but this is a big mistake. Being cruel in a situation and being cruel as a character trait are very different things. Self-indulgence in these things is unacceptable. God created this people to spread the knowledge of Himself and His anger at the excessive violence of those who claim to be His followers already says their character must be different. Yes, God has at times commanded war on one occasion or another, but even David, seemingly the closest and most beloved man to Himself, was limited in his glory so that the temple that David wanted to build would not be connected with his name precisely because of David's military successes.¹²⁹ God had special hopes for Solomon, who built the temple, and He specifically says that Solomon would be a man of peace, even whose very name means "peace.

*Simeon and Levi the brothers are the instruments of their cruel swords.
Let not my soul enter into their counsel
And let not my glory join the assembly of them...
Cursed be their wrath, for it is cruel
And their fury, because fierce*

He promises to disperse them in the future, and when the Jews settled in Canaan, Simeon's tribe was inside Judah's domain, with no separate possession, and the Levites also were not given possessions for their tribe, instead they were given cities with small tracts of fields throughout Israel, so that they had no land of their own to farm like all the other tribes.

But as soon as he turns his gaze to his next son, his words begin to pour out, not bitterness and censure, but happiness, contentment and praise, pride in a son who has reached the heights.

*Judah - you will be praised by your brothers...
The young lion Judah with the spoils, my son rises...
The scepter shall not depart from Judah, ... until the Reconciler comes.*

Here Jacob's prophetic gaze marks the presence of the Messiah who will come precisely through the descendants of Judah. No clear sign of the Savior of the world had been given to anyone before this, only a promise, and this is the first announcement of Him, the first indication of through whom He will come into the world, at the dawn of the nation that God planned precisely to ensure His appearance in our world, providing for the Messiah some environment in which He could live and act, unfolding His work of providing Salvation for mankind.

¹²⁹ 1 Chronicles 22:8 - "You have shed much blood and waged great wars - you shall not build houses in my name.

Jacob touches each of the sons, and the others, except Dan, are shown to be fairly well-intentioned and blessed, at least successful. Dan, however, raises his father's concern that his name, meaning "judgment" or "judge," is too strong in his son. The judgment itself should not be a problem, because if the judgment is sound and correct, then no one can be harmed by it; such a judgment is a good thing for all. But the "judge" may be seized by the function and, carried away with it, begins to do just that, becoming not a peer but an overseer seized by a passion to find fault and nag at him. Jacob asks God's protection from this prospect, because it can destroy so much that is good in any society. "Judge not and you shall not be judged" or "lest you be judged yourselves" - if social interaction fails to help each other (or else cooperation among reasoners would be meaningless) by seeking out faults, real or imaginary, then there can be no unity, and society cannot carry out its mission by losing unity. Of course you have to fight against shortcomings if they are present, that's the other side of the coin, but to be picky and to seek out shortcomings intentionally is a distortion which will not help against shortcomings, on the contrary, it will only make the problems of society worse and generate more shortcomings.

Finally Jacob reaches Joseph and, as with Judas, cannot do without brief words. He describes his life and the trials he has endured with honour - the brothers' bitterness against him, the misfortune of life, the loss of his gains in Potiphar's house and yet "his bow was steady and his arm strong". Few can withstand such pressure from their environment, but with such an example, many in similar distress might hold fast and not allow themselves to grieve Providence by dropping their arms. The first is always the hardest, others see the example, have the path paved or at least identified, and know what is at the end. James points out the reason and source of this strength of his beloved son - the connection with the Strong, with his God. If one is determined to hold fast to what he is already holding fast to, who can break it off? This, in fact, is faith-a state of mind and soul directed toward a particular course of action or holding on to a desired picture-a choice that we make, from which one's actions then flow. Those blessings that Jacob calls on Joseph's head belong to any such person who wins first of all within himself, and after that he becomes a victor in the outside world as well.

The youngest, Benjamin, was a dual-purpose word, which can be both positive and not so positive - "predatory wolf," not without its prey. In the not-too-distant future, this tribe almost disappeared precisely because of its predatory nature, and had the leadership of Israil been more principled, it would have disappeared altogether. However, from him also came the fiery Paul, who never tired of looking for "prey," a powerful missionary who had done probably more than all the other apostles put together, not only founding many churches in the Greek-speaking world, but also advancing Christianity's theoretical points a great deal.

The Death and Burial of Jacob

Having finished blessing his sons, Jacob continued on a less lofty subject, yet one that was urgent to him. The rise of his spirit and the outburst of his last creativity before his family, whom for so many years he had mosaicked and nurtured every good sprout, had cost him dearly. He was in failing health, his energy reserves were far below what they had been in years, and so this burst of energy exhausted his reserves. As his speech drew to a close, he felt his strength failing him and that these were his last moments. He quietly bequeathed to his children to be buried with his fathers in their tomb in the cave Abraham had purchased for Sarah, where Abraham himself, Isaac and Rebecca and Leah now lie. And having said his last wish, he lay down on his bed, about to rest from his accumulated

the fatigue of the last few minutes, relaxed quietly, sighed, and the life left him. No anguish, no agony, no pain - the energy drained from his whole body at once, evenly. Their bodies did not accumulate diseases, thanks to moderation and strong heredity. But even the physically weak could have a similar care if they had peace and tranquility of mind, creating equilibrium also on the physical level, confident that God was favorable to them, that they had a future and nothing that hung over their souls unrepentant and unconfessed before God. Such people not only have security and peace, but they are also accompanied by the presence of God. Almost the same way my father, though sick for many years and debilitated by illness, left. He was thrilled to be loved by God, to be going home, and there was nothing to mar his peace of mind. His last easy exhalation stunned the doctors and nurses, because no one else in that hospital had died like that - lung patients die hard in their own way. That peace, which is inherent in anyone close to God, is able to neutralize the gravest illnesses and make the passing of life easy.

In theory, any healthy person should die healthy, no matter how strange it may sound. Everyone is probably familiar with the derisive phrase "he who does not smoke or drink will die healthy", but would those who repeat it know the difference in death between a sick person and a healthy person, especially in spirit. When a person is sick, the organ or organs which die first cause the rest of the body to suffer a lot, from external cramps or agony, to a sensation of dissipation, or impending emptiness and cold.¹³⁰ A "healthy" death has no anguish or other negative feelings, so this alone should make people realize that the health of body and soul are of the highest value and the primary goal for any reasonable person. Many people value immortality and believe it can somehow be attained by some means and I quite agree with them and appreciate it, however, the sentence of God "out of dust you were taken, and will return to dust" can hardly be outsmarted or circumvented without His help... The easiest way to become immortal is to live until the Second Coming, and of course, be on the side that meets the Son of God as a friend. In principle, most of those now living have a pretty good chance of doing so... Are you saying that many have already set a time for the end? That's right, but we're not calculating any dates, it's just that the end will become quite obvious in due time. When we consider the books of Daniel and Revelation, much will become clearer.

And a little more about the pleasures of our age - those pleasures which cause problems for the body (and there are some, and there are many, which do not cause disease or destruction), sooner or later will create conditions in which the body will no longer be able to enjoy them. Alcohol will be needed not for pleasure but in order to feel normal, and this is no longer a pleasure but a suffering. It's the same with smoking and heavier substances - all such pleasures lose their power over time, robbing you of your health and ability to enjoy. It was kind of a revelation for me that the greatest pleasure is health. Many people can remember from their childhood, that being alive was a great pleasure... If it had not been for excessive sweets or something worse, we could have still enjoyed life without any extra stimulants.

Joseph, when he saw that his father was dead, could not hold back his tears; great was their affection, also they shared the same feeling, the conviction and knowledge that God's way is super-valuable. They were bound together by

¹³⁰ Such feelings happen in healthy people as well and are not related to dying per se.

general principles and concepts, it was more than a bond between children and parents. After saying goodbye to his father, he subjected his body to embalming procedures in which the Egyptians were experts. After the long embalming procedures, which took forty days, all of Egypt mourned for seventy more days for this remarkable person whom the country was privileged to host. This was the decision of Pharaoh, who was impressed by his encounter with Jacob, and in doing so he paid tribute to the representative of ancient families and one of the founders of a sacred nation. From Joseph he could learn much about their family's purpose and vocation, as well as their religion and faith. The years of famine were long past, but the country had survived and escaped many calamities, and it seems that even among the common people there were virtually no casualties. Moreover, among the surrounding nations many survived because of the supplies in Egypt. Such services to the country are usually rewarded by the highest standards.

After the mourning, Joseph requests an audience with Pharaoh, appealing to certain court intermediaries, which could mean that from some time on he might have been demoted and no longer have the fullness of power as before. Indeed, difficult times came to an end and life took its course, presenting new demands and new leaders and favorites, which is natural. Joseph is not forgotten, and though he may not be the country's second ruler now, he still had considerable influence. It is likely that by asking some nobles to pass on his request to the Pharaoh, he is paying respect to these new (or old) faces at court, who may have risen with his participation. Or maybe he is just busy grieving for his father and this prevents him from doing business for a while. He asks Pharaoh to convey his and his father's request that Jacob be buried in Canaan. He receives his full cooperation and sympathy. Pharaoh, as before, assists him in every matter. Not only that, but almost all the high officials of the land go with Joseph to Canaan for Jacob's funeral, paying great tribute to the departed patriarch and, indeed, to Joseph himself. All of Jacob's descendants made the journey, leaving only the children and flocks in Goshen.

A little way from the field Abraham had bought for Sarah, the caravan stopped and there they mourned for Jacob. The sight was memorable and impressive, so that the inhabitants of Canaan called it the "Meadow of the Egyptians" or the "cry of the Egyptians" - Abel Mitzrayim (the Egyptians outnumber the Jews in this caravan, as the Canaanite observers remarked), though it had had another name before. I have read many times in old books that the Egyptians were a wise people, at least the upper classes. The Bible itself notes this when it speaks of the "wisdom of Egypt. And the Egyptians confirmed their status by seeing off to their last journey a representative of the line of the patriarchs, after whom very few came close in strength and character to their indicators. Only Moses is like him and to a lesser extent Joshua four or five generations later.

Joseph after Jacob

After the funeral, when everyone returned to their places, Jacob's sons became restless, thinking that the evil they had once done was so great that perhaps Joseph would still want to settle accounts with them, despite all the previous assurances of peace and forgiveness. They could understand them in a way, they could have no doubt about God, but Joseph was human after all. What if his character changed in his old age? Even if a little, but in his most important moments? So they sent one of them to him as a negotiator to persuade him to make peace, to preempt him if he had any plans for revenge, and to negotiate a future if possible. They took up their father's request, he had asked him at one time not to resent his brothers and not to take revenge on them. However, they still did not know their brother well and thought the worst of him. When they tried to tell him all this, he cried, then began to assure them that they were worrying in vain. By this point, after the way they thought he was

The Israelites spoke to Joseph, they went in to him all together and worshiped him (for the umpteenth time...), and declared that they were his servants. However, Joseph speaks words that are typical of this kind of people, righteous and honest - "Fear not, I am under God." That is, "I am under His direction, He is my chief or commander," meaning, "I will not do anything that He would not like or forbid." The Synodal translation says "I fear God," which correctly captures the meaning of his figure of speech.

Again he does not approach the evil done by his brothers in the way most people usually do, looking not at the crime itself but at what it led to, just like the proverb, "there was no blessing in store for the unfortunate. This phrase, that God had sent him to Egypt by their hands, he had already said to them when he revealed himself to them at the beginning, and he repeats it again, and it is perhaps the best assurance of his disposition towards them and of his assurance that there will not and cannot be any vengeance.

Of course, the fact that he considers the result of what they did is not yet an excuse for the evil done to him. He is not saying that it was not sin or evil, that God's wrath was not on it. But Joseph is not the judge here and now. He was entrusted with their lives and the destinies of the tribe, and he must keep them. It was a time to save, not destroy, to gather, not to scatter. In such a time, to engage in revenge or even just punishment for past crimes and mistakes would also be a crime before God and men.

After this account, Moses concludes his first book by reporting the end of Joseph's life at one hundred and ten years old. His years are significantly shorter than those of his father, whose years are also significantly shorter than those of Abraham and Isaac. Jacob had many stresses, and his years are shortened by his children, who concealed Joseph's fate, thus condemning him to a long period of depression. The reasons for Joseph's shortened years are different. He was not depressed for long, he did not give up when he got into difficulties; he did not even seem to give way to despondency. The greatest factor in the shortening of his life can only be seen in the diet of civilized Egypt; the abundance of meat and fish, which were so praiseworthy to those who after came out of Egypt. The diet of an official of high rank, rich in riches compared to that of his father, failed him, and could not fail. The royal food, even of those times, is dangerous precisely because of its excess and delicacy, its mixture of poorly compatible foods, and this superior food has migrated to the tables of the inhabitants of almost all so-called civilized countries today, making almost everyone who eats it just as weakened and short-lived.

When Joseph dies, he does not ask to be buried immediately after his death in Canaan, although he could have done the same thing his father did. Instead, he asks his children and grandchildren to carry his bones with them as they leave for their designated land. As a dignitary of Egypt, he is an asset of this country, and as one who pays his debt without depriving his subjects of his presence, it is as if he were staying with his people who have remained in these places for a long time. He has no doubt that the time of the exodus will come, he knows the timing - from the time God marked four hundred years for Abraham to gain Canaan (it was in Abraham's 85th year), only 275 years have passed, and at least 125 years remain before he leaves Egypt (in reality, 155 years have passed). Joseph's death took place somewhere around 2368 B.C. or 1636¹³¹ B.C. He was embalmed according to the customs and rules of the country, but it looks like this,

131 My calculations, in which our era begins after 4004 (this date is also verified by many other researchers) years from the creation of the world.

that he had already been put beforehand in something that could be transferred, in an "ark" or a lightweight sarcophagus, not in a stationary place of eternal rest. He was not going to stay here forever.