

Freud's B'nai B'rith dream: Having lost his way,
his "brethren ... were unkind and scornful ..."

Robert L. Lippman

Son who is dear to me, Shelomoh. In the seventh in the days of the years of your life the Spirit of the Lord began to move you and spoke within: Go, read in my Book that I have written and there will burst open for you wellsprings of understanding, knowledge and wisdom. Behold it is the Book of Books, from which sages have excavated and lawmakers learned knowledge and judgment. A vision of the Almighty did you see; you heard and strove to do, and you soared on the wings of the Spirit. Since then the book has been stored like the fragments of the tablets in an ark with me. For the day on which your years were filled to five and thirty I have put upon it a cover of new skin and have called it: "Spring up, O well, sing ye unto it." And I have presented it to you as a memorial and as a reminder of love from your father, who loves you with everlasting love.

Jakob Son of R. Shelomah Freid [sic]

In the capital city of Vienna 29 Nissan [5]651 6 May [1]891

--Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi's "deliberately literal" translation of Jakob Freud's Hebrew inscription on the rebound Philippon Bible volume he presented Freud on the occasion of his thirty-fifth birthday. (Yerushalmi, 1991, 71)

On Tuesday, April 25, 1900, four days after Passover, Freud gave a

talk on Emile Zola's novel *Fecondite* (1899) at his B'nai B'rith lodge. The next day he penned his best friend and confidant Wilhelm Fliess the following:

Yesterday I gave a lecture on Zola's *Fecondite* before my Society. I am always ill prepared; actually I start only an hour before. . . . During the night from Monday to Tuesday, I dreamed inordinately of this lecture. I explained that I had to go home to fetch the book, did not find the way and got lost, the weather was miserable The brethren, moreover, were unkind and scornful of me--conduct that is apt, quite surely to reduce my interest in the success of my lecture (Freud, 1985, 410).

“the weather was miserable”

In "*J'accuse*" (January 13, 1898), his Open Letter accusing specific members of French General Staff of railroading Captain Dreyfus then languishing on the penal colony of Devil's Island off the coast of French Guinea, Zola, three months shy of 58, denounced "that *miserable* anti-Semitism." On February 9th, the second day of Zola's seventeen-day libel trial, Freud wrote Fliess,

Zola keeps us breathless. He is a fine fellow, a man with whom one can get on (Freud, 1954, 245).

In *The Jewish State*, Theodor Herzl (1896) referred to anti-Semitism as *Judennot*, "the *misery* of the Jews." [On Sunday, September 28, 1902, four days before Rosh Hashanah, Freud will mail the Zionist leader a copy of *The Interpretation of Dreams*, ostensibly for him to review. The accompanying letter ends: "But in any event I ask you to keep the book as a token of the

high esteem in which – I like so many others-- have held since many years the poet and the fighter for the human rights of our people.” (Falk, 1977, 5)] Clearly, anti-Semitism is implicated in the dream. And, as I intend to show, so is Freud’s intention to deliver his besieged nation from that perpetual scourge.

Whereas Herzl's envisioned Promised Land is a sovereign Jewish State, Freud’s, on the other hand, is an enlightened secular world grounded in reason. But unlike Herzl, Freud does not broadcast his messianic ambition. Secrecy is essential. His creation, psychoanalysis, must not, like Herzl’s Zionist movement, be seen as a Jewish national affair.

“I gave a lecture on Zola's *Fecondite* before my Society”

Because it mirrors his passionately longed-for boundless, harmonious Promised Land--Freud could easily have penned the “divine dream” envisioned in *Fecondite*. (Zola had written this utopian novel while in self-exile in England, having fled there rather than serve his one-year prison sentence.)

And the divine dream, the generous utopian thought soars into the heavens; families blended into nations, nations blended into mankind, one sole brotherly people making of the world one sole city of peace and truth and justice! Ah! may eternal fruitfulness ever expand, may the seed of humanity be carried over the frontiers . . .
(Zola, 1899 [1925], 41)

**“The brethren, moreover, were unkind and
scornful of me--conduct that is apt”**

In order to eradicate anti-Semitism, Freud secretly intends to do ill or evil (cf. "I am ... ill prepared") that is to say, destroy the Torah: no Law, no Judaism, no Christianity, no miserable anti-Semitism. Accordingly, it is "apt" or fitting that his brethren, fellow Sons of the Covenant, are "unkind and scornful of" Freud, who would destroy their Tree of Life. To brave the enmity and contempt of his people would require the moral courage of a Zola. Does he then really wish to proceed with his vast impious ambition? (cf. "conduct that is apt, quite surely to reduce my interest in ... success").

**"I had to go home to fetch the book,
did not find the way and got lost."**

Perhaps this wicked son who has "lost [his] way" should leave the "miserable anti-Semitism" to Herzl and his band of Zionists, and just "go home," return to that wellspring of "understanding, knowledge, and wisdom," the Book of Books, so dear to his grey-haired papa, Jakob, of blessed memory who loved him "with everlasting love."

In the dream his brethren's contempt signifies that Freud is making his move; that is to say, having prevailed over his reluctance (cf. "reduce my interest in ... success"), Freud, at long last, is showing his hand, his impious hand.

Before setting others free from their religious chains and turning his "divine dream" into a reality, it is essential, Freud understands, that he first free himself from the yoke of the Law. But how?

Now, at the time, Freud holds to the cathartic treatment method for neuroses:

. . . [we] lead the patient's attention back from his symptom to the scene in which and through which that symptom arose; and having thus located the scene, we remove the symptom by bringing about, during the reproduction of the traumatic scene, a subsequent correction of the psychological course of events which took place at the time (Freud, 1896, 193). (Note: later in the letter, Freud mentions another physician's related article, "A Case of Hysteria, Presented According to the Cathartic Method of Breuer and Freud.")

In other words, when a patient in the relative safety of the psychoanalyst's office relives a traumatic event, there is a purging or washing away of the emotions which sustain the neurotic symptom which arose from that traumatic event; hence, the symptom dissolves. Freud's neurotic symptom is submission to the Will of the Father, be the father Jakob Freud, Moses, or Jehovah.

Freud begins the letter, "Well, do you realize now that Rome can't be rushed." This is fitting, for it is in Rome that Freud, by taking his stand before the world's greatest representation of Moses, would free himself from yoke of the Law, become his own person. (Freud, through his systematic detailed self-analysis, has been readying himself for this impending "can't be rushed" face-off.) And because the situation before Michelangelo's tablet-bearing 8-ft, 4-inch bull-horned Moses would be reminiscent of his Oedipal days when he fervently wanted to kill his father to possess his mother, Freud--secretly bent on killing Moses (by destroying the Law) in order to possess Mother Earth--understands there'd be uprushes of feelings and attitudes from his early boyhood concerning his father, Jakob. It is essential that this return of the repressed not overpower him, that he stay in control as

these feelings and attitudes break through, or surface -- especially the patricidal rage and the terror while awaiting the dreaded, anticipated paternal retribution, i. e., castration.

Because he loves his father, Freud understands that guilt or filial piety could sabotage his intention to do away with Judaism and surpass Moses, both as Lawgiver (“Know Thyself!”) and as deliverer of his besieged nation.

Moreover, not actually having surmounted his belief in what he will call “the Bible Story” (Freud, 1925, 28), Freud fears Jehovah and His terrible Justice or vengeance. He especially fears that his three boys and three girls will suffer, pay for their father's transgression. Would he risk Jehovah’s avenging Himself upon his little ones, and unto “the third and the fourth generation”? (Exodus 20:5). He believes he has already murdered one child.

After Jakob passed away at age 81 on October 23, 1896, Freud, feeling uprooted, began to study himself in depth, mainly by interpreting his dreams. The following year (1897) several months into his detailed self-analysis, he discovers to his horror that he is a Cain, a brother killer.

. . . I welcomed my one-year-younger brother (who died within a few months) with ill wishes and real infantile jealousy, and . . . his death left the germ of guilt in me. (Letter to Fliess dated October 3 1897; Freud, 1954, 219.)

As brilliant as he is, and against his better judgment, he hasn’t been able to shake his belief that with his hateful wishes he had killed 6-or 8-month-old baby Julius. Oppressed by guilt, Freud, to atone for "murdering" Julius, secretly resolved to make the world a better place for future Juliuses (and

Sarabs), an enlightened socially just world grounded in reason, one in which that perpetual scourge, anti-Semitism, is unknown.

And that same year, 1897, not only does he come up with the Oedipus complex, the young boy's fervent desire to kill his father in order to sleep with his mother. He also comes up with a dazzling derivative of the Oedipus complex: the God-idea stems from the Father complex, That is to say, God the Father is a mere projection out on to the universe of Oedipal boy's idealized perception of his own father. With this godsend—or God-send—Freud would cut the ground out from under religion, and, thereby, eradicate anti-Semitism. True, Judaism would be sacrificed, but at long last future Juliuses (and Sarabs) would be delivered from that miserable scourge.

Like Janus, the two-headed Roman guardian of the threshold, Freud, during the face-off, must be ever vigilant or he'd never resolve his father problem, never be his own person, never govern his own life, forever be bound to the Law. One momentary lapse, and he could kiss goodbye the realization of his redemptive Promised Land. With the noose tightening round his people, the need to act is ever more pressing; more so, for in seven years he'll be 51, “the limit,” he fears, “of [his] life” (Freud, 1900, 513)—and he has yet to set foot in Rome.

The following September, Freud at long last enters the city of his dreams. Three days later, Thursday, the 5th, summoning courage, he crosses the threshold of the Church of St. Peter in Chains, where he “essay[s] to support [“*standzuhalten*”] the angry scorn of the hero's glance ” (Freud, 1914b, 213 [“*Der Moses des Michelangelo*,” Freud, 1914a, 175]). Two weeks later, on the 19th, Freud writes Fliess: “Rome ... was a high point of my life.”

Turning point is more like it.

In the fall of the following year disciples gather round Freud (Gay, 1988, 136), and he is on his way to preparing the ground for his Promised Land--and this former Jew-boy from the miserable streets of Vienna is on his way to becoming FREUD.

Six years later, on April 15, 1908, fifty years to the day of Julius Freud's death, the six-year-old Psychological Wednesday Society is re-named—on Freud's carried motion—the Vienna Psycho-analytic Society (Nunberg and Federn, 1906–1908, 373); in this manner, Freud secretly dedicates to the memory of Julius the psychoanalytic movement which, if all goes according to plan, would institute his Promised land, an enlightened brotherly world in which *der Kinder*, the seed of Abraham, can thrive, can at last develop their talents and satisfy their needs.

POSTSCRIPT

Michelangelo's Moses, according to my reading (e.g., Lippman, 2009), was more than a mere prop for Freud to set himself free from the Law, from Judaism's hold. In the same way that for Roman Catholics the Host is a symbol, that magnificent statue was, for Freud, a symbol. That is to say, the imposing tablet-bearing Moses stationed in his dark Roman chamber was, for Freud, Jehovah's Lawgiver. In other words, the world's greatest representation of that great man of his people was Freud's personal totem, Moses himself or his shade.

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