

source together with Abulafia's *Sefer ha-Ot*, under the title "Apokalypse des Pseudo-Propheten und Pseudo-Messias Abraham Abulafia," in *Graetz-Jubelschrift* (1887), 65-88. The second passage is from Abulafia's *Sefer Hayyei ha-Olam ha-Ba*, and was translated by G. Scholem from manuscript and included in his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (1955³), 136-37. The lengthy third selection by a disciple of Abraham Abulafia is from a book written in 1295 called *Sha'arei Zedek*. The translation, also by G. Scholem, appears in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 147-55.

Text

I. ON PROPHECY

Prophecy is a mode of the Intellect (*inyan silkhli*).¹ It is the expression of the love of the Lord our God, the Lord is One. It is well known that those who love prophecy love God and they are beloved of God. Undoubtedly these are called sages and prophets. Observe and realize that the numerical value of the word "lovers" (*ohavim*) is the same as that of the word "prophecy" (*nevu'ah*) and by "lovers" I mean "beloved prophets." This stage of prophecy is itself the worship of God in love. Appreciate that whoever knows the name of God has the spirit of God, the holy spirit, within him. That holy influence, descending by virtue of divine grace, will bestir, move and incline a man to strive to attain the knowledge of God so as to sanctify Him and declare His name to all the earth. Know and realize that those who prophesy by virtue of their knowledge of God are beloved of God. Now, my son, you may have misgivings, saying to yourself: When will I ever reach this lofty stage since there are so many hindrances, as I am only too well aware, caused

by my weak constitution, for instance, and there seems to be no way of changing it so as to be able to reach this stage? There is also the hindrance caused by poverty, which demands the pursuit of food, clothing and economic satisfaction, essential if man is to remain in a state of stability. There is also the hindrance caused by exile in which a man is like a slave sold to those who force him to toil in order to make bricks and mortar. And there are many similar hindrances. But, my son, I swear to you that all these are excuses made by that harsh evil inclination which engages in battle in order to seduce you to die without wisdom, understanding and the knowledge of God, soiling you with bricks and mortar so that no portion in the World to Come can be given you.

If, however, God is with you, it is right for you to consider that wisdom is the food of the soul, so that if wisdom, I mean the true wisdom, is lacking, the soul will expire through death by torture; that soul shall be utterly cut off with its sin upon it. But if you do not lack the true wisdom then you will live, for of it Scripture says: "For it is your life and the length of your days." Reflect upon this: Just as the body dies without food so the soul needs this science. Appreciate how improper it is for the hungry man to say that he refuses to eat all but the most delicious food. Rather he should be happy, for the time being, to eat whatever food comes his way to satisfy his hunger, otherwise he will die, and when he is able to eat better food he can then eat as much as he requires. So must you do, my son, with regard to the true science. If you hunger and thirst for it, it is only right for you to satisfy your hunger and slake your thirst from whatever is to hand in order to save your soul from the pit. For it matters not whether one achieves much or little provided the intention is for the sake of heaven. But this applies only to one who strives unceasingly to allow his heart to reach out to acquire wisdom. Then will he be able

to comprehend, by studying daily and to the best of his ability, at the feet of sages and by reading the holy books. But let him not say: "My heart is directed towards heaven and all my deeds are for the sake of heaven" if he has little interest in the deeds that can bring him the wisdom God loves and if he is unaware that while study inevitably leads to practice it does not follow that practice inevitably leads to study. He should be aware that practice is easy even for youths, to say nothing of intellectuals, whereas study, which is the science of God, is hard even for the venerable, to say nothing of those afflicted by vain delusions, imagining that deeds are acceptable merely because there has been an utterance of the mouth or because a deluded impression has been made on the heart. For no deed is good at all unless it be based on the practice of this science. Then, and not as commands learned by rote, is it acceptable to God.

Hul. 13b Observe and appreciate how our Sages of blessed memory hinted at this when they said that the Gentiles are not idolators and yet we see that all their efforts and all their deeds are based on idolatry. But the meaning is that since there is no understanding of the basic idea, it is as if it has no significance. So, you see, an act without knowledge is nothing at all. Observe that the Sages continue: "For they [the Gentiles] simply follow the habits of their ancestors," namely, as commands learned by rote.²

Know, my son, that whoever fails to strive to acquire this science, to know the deeds required by God and carry them out adequately, if not in totality at least partially, the reason for it is because of the evil inclinations which kills the living, and God will judge such a one for failing to choose life. If you will reflect on this no hindrance whatsoever will prevent you from seeking wisdom. For you will know that if these hindrances sought to prevent you from eating the food your body requires, you would not stand for it but would cry out to God and to His creatures to sustain you

and you would be prepared to run from city to city. You would even fly in the air, were you able to do it, all for the sake of obtaining the sustenance you need in any way possible. And all this is for keeping the body, drawn to the evil inclination, alive. If God will help you keep this picture in your mind, to have confidence in it and to follow it with all the strength you can muster, know that no hindrance—whether it be of poverty or exile or even of imprisonment—will prevent you from seeking wisdom, understanding and knowledge, ruler in all of the six directions. Who is so stupid, coarse and insensitive not to flee from death when he knows what death is, a descent into the abyss? And yet the majority of men cannot distinguish between life and death but in their ignorance try to turn life itself into death, fleeing from eternal life in order to prefer temporal existence. They engage in much activity and kill themselves before their time in their efforts to leave their wealth to others, it may be their enemies or their sons, in order that these, too, might enjoy that inferior order of life over which time has dominion and they fail to realize that they and all that is theirs are His. And know, my son, that as a result of this they forget eternal life completely until they return to the darkness they have preferred. It is in this connection that the prophet cries out: "Woe unto them who declare evil good and good evil, who turn darkness into light and light into darkness, who make the bitter sweet and the sweet bitter."

But you, my son, if you are wise and love God with all your heart, reflect on the root from which you were hewn. Know that you have been taken from the Throne of Glory and have been endowed with the light of reason and have been created in God's image and have been brought into existence by the grace of His Being and your coming here has not been purposeless. Return therefore, for the Holy One of Israel has redeemed you and His holy name is your

glory. Harken, therefore, my son to these words of mine. Bind them upon your neck, write them upon the tablets of your heart. They will be a diadem of grace upon your head and a necklace around your throat. Trust in God, not in man, for cursed is he who trusts in man.

Strive day and night to meditate on the Torah of the Lord, the Torah of Moses the man of God, the divine wisdom. Read the prophetic books with understanding. Sing the words of the Hagiographa. Study the sayings of the Sages of blessed memory with a clear and alert mind. Gaze with divine intelligence into the works of the kabbalists. Here you will discover that which you seek and you will see that they all cry out in protest against the absence of wisdom, against unworthy deeds, and against limited understanding. For not a single word contains neither wisdom nor understanding nor knowledge nor word nor deeds, in the Torah, the Prophets, the Hagiographa and all the words of the Rabbis.

After you have done this set your heart to know the glorious and tremendous name of God, blessed be He. Engrave it upon your heart never to be erased. For in this connection the Rabbis say that the sacred names are not to be erased. Since they point to a picture of God, how then can that which depicts be erased since He who is depicted can never be erased? Never utter the names without concentration but sanctify them, know them, and reflect that they are the angels of all being and the angels of God sent to you in order to raise you higher and higher and elevate you over all the nations upon earth. All the people on earth will see that the name of the Lord is called upon you and they will fear you.

Here is the strong foundation which I deliver to you that you should know it and engrave it upon your heart: The Holy Name. The whole of the Torah, the sacred Scriptures and all the prophetic books, are all full of divine names and

tremendous things. Join one to the other. Depict them to yourself. Test them, try them, combine them. Consider that they are the writings of the King who has sent them to you that it may be well with you and that you may live long. Occupy yourself with them, with a refined, pure and clear activity, and keep yourself far from all sin and transgression and clean from all guilt, iniquity and wickedness.

Now the time has come to elevate you in the stages of love so that you become beloved on high and delightful here on earth. First, begin by combining the letters of the name YHWH. Gaze at all its combinations. Elevate it. Turn it over like a wheel which goes round and round, backwards and forward like a scroll. Do not leave it aside except when you observe that it is becoming too much for you because of the confused movements in your imagination. Leave it for a while and you will be able to return to it later. You can then make your request of it and when you attain to wisdom do not forsake it. For the initial letters and the final letters, the numerical values, the *notarikons*, the combination of letters and their permutations, their accents and the forms they assume, the knowledge of their names and the grasping of their ideas, the changing of many words into one and one into many, all these belong to the authentic tradition of the prophets. By means of these God will answer when you call upon Him, for you belong to His family. And now, my son, the secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him and to them will He make His covenant known. He will make known His covenant to the man who fears Heaven and whose covenant is perfect. Otherwise, He will hide it, for honor is not fitting for the fool.

We know by a prophetic divine tradition of the Torah that when the sage who is an adept combines (the letters of the divine name) one with the other, the holy spirit flows into him. This is the sign. When you look at these holy letters in truth and reliance and when you combine them—

placing that which is at the beginning at the end and that which is at the end at the beginning, that which is the middle at the beginning and that which is at the beginning in the middle, that which is at the end in the middle and that which is in the middle at the end and so forth in like manner—these letters will all roll backwards and forward with many melodies. Let him begin gently and then make haste. Let him train himself to be thoroughly familiar with the changes as they are combined and it is essential, too, for him to be thoroughly familiar with the secrets of the Torah and the wisdom thereof in order to know that which he brings about through these combinations. Let him awaken his heart to reflect on the spiritual, divine, prophetic picture. At first, when he engages in the task of combination in solitude, a feeling of terror and trembling will result so that his hair will stand on end and his limbs will tremble. Afterwards, if he is worthy, the spirit of the living God will pass over him and the spirit of the Lord will rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the Lord. It will seem to him then as if his body had been anointed, from head to foot, with anointing oil. He will become the anointed of the Lord and His agent. He will be called an angel of God and his name will be that of his Master, *Shaddai*, as Metatron, the Prince of the Presence, is called. The numerical value of Metatron and *Shaddai* is the same.³