

VOLUME 10

THE BIBLE SERIES

A METAPHYSICAL
AND SYMBOLICAL
INTERPRETATION OF

The Bible

by

Mildred Mann

Seven Steps in Demonstration

Desire: Get a strong enthusiasm for that which you want in your life, a real longing for something which is not there now.

Decision: Know definitely what it is that you want, what it is that you want to do, or have, and be willing to pay in spiritual values.

Ask: [When sure and enthusiastic] ask for it in simple, concise language...

Believe: in the accomplishment with strong faith, consciously and subconsciously].

Work at it ... a few minutes daily in seeing yourself in the finished picture. Never outline details, but rather see yourself enjoying the particular thing ...

Feel gratitude. Always remember to say, "Thank you God," and begin to feel the gratitude in your heart. The most powerful prayer we can ever make are those three words, provided we really feel it.

Feel expectancy. Train yourself to live in a state of happy expectancy ... Act it until it becomes part of you, as it must and will.

These are the seven steps. Follow them and they will bring you whatever it is that you need.

*FORMULA FOR DEMONSTRATION

(A demonstration is answered prayer..
the manifestation of the Presence,
Power and Love of God.)

" **A**sk And Ye Shall Receive,

Seek And Ye Shall Find,

Knock And It Shall Be

Opened unto you"

- *JESUS*

(*The formula is ASK Mildred Mann)

NOTES

NOTES

Thank you, and God
bless you.

Mildred Mann

AUTHOR OF

HOW TO FIND YOUR REAL SELF (textbook)

THIS I BELIEVE

LEARN TO LIVE

THE FAMILY OF ADAM AND EVE

THE BIBLE - The Seven Days of Creation.

BECOME WHAT YOU BELIEVE

WHAT IS PRAGMATIC MYSTICISM?

Published by

THE SOCIETY OF PRAGMATIC MYSTICISM

101 West 57th Street

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"Straight is the gate, and narrow the way,
which leadeth unto life, and few there
be that find it". - Matt. 7:14.

This section shows us as clearly as
we will ever see, what Jesus meant
by this text. We are unwilling to -

- 1- Put God first - in all things.
- 2- Discriminate between the st-
irring psychic phenomena
and the still waters.
- 3- Realize that God is a normal,
not a super-normal or abnormal
experience.

Samuel, to a great degree expresses the
normalcy of contact with God in his life.
He was not perfect, but fairly near it,
in spite of the fact that the times in which
he lived were as troublesome for him
as our times are for us.

M. M.

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psychic influences, susceptible from within and without. Saul was such a person.

People often say: "Why do we have to go through such a stage?" I might ask you why do you have to go through adolescence? Most people look back on their adolescence and find that it was not a happy period. We usually suffered from pimples or moods. It was very unpleasant and seems extremely unnecessary, yet we all had to go through it. Now the same thing is true of the soul. Psychism is a period of growth in the soul and there is no way of eliminating it. But there is one thing we can do about it and this rests with the individual; we can go through it quickly. If the adolescent has any sense, he tries to mature as quickly as possible. He may get his feelings a little bit hurt; he may even develop a few phobias during this period of growth; but if he has a fairly balanced ego he comes through it quickly and safely. This is also true of the soul when it reaches the adolescent stage of psychic growth.

Saul did not go through this stage easily and quickly. He was the type of person who never outgrows this stage (at least not in this incarnation). People such as he make no attempt to control their psychic life and they suddenly become affected or afflicted (take your choice) with visions; sometimes they even have contact with discarnate entities. If they join a seance group they may be told by a medium who has enough perception to know that they are psychically open: "You would make a wonderful medium."

This stage has a great deal of fascination for such people and if they are not too well balanced, they go into that field. We have many "psychics" with us today, also. I say "not too well balanced" because remaining at the stage of being psychically open is contrary to normal spiritual development. Usually people who become immersed in it sooner or later end up in a sad way. When a person allows this to happen he incarnates the next time at the same point of development and goes through the same experience all over again. Furthermore, if he doesn't work it out in that lifetime, he again incarnates at the same point; and this goes on "an infinitum" until he decides he has had enough and does something about getting off the psychic wheel. Then through his own efforts — though often he gets help from the outside — he comes through it. This is what Saul didn't do.

JUDGES, CHAPTERS 12-21

It is very interesting that in the periods when there were men strong enough to rule and guide them, the Israelites worshipped Yahweh; but when there was no one to guide them, they became idol worshippers. They mingled with the neighboring pagan tribes and worshipped Baal and Ashtaroth. The Israelites began to be assimilated in the life of Canaan instead of the Canaanites being assimilated into the life of Israel. It was the Israelites who began to forsake their culture and their religion and through intermarriage and change of worship became the Canaanite type. Each time this happened, the Israelites got into difficulty but fortunately a deliverer always was found to get them out of it.

From a philosophical point of view, this strange quality of assimilation that the Israelite has is unique. Down through the centuries in practically every nation where he has settled, the Jew has assimilated the culture and customs of that country — be it Germany, France, Spain, England, America, etc. Yet at the same time he has to some degree preserved his religion. However, this assimilation is one of the things that the Jews were warned against. The greatest thing that Israel ever did was to worship the one God and found a nation on this principle. This is the gift that the Jew contributed to every nation to which he migrated. The pure concept of the one God, whether it is worshipped in the Jewish tradition or the Christian tradition, has taken root wherever the Jew has gone. This basic concept of the religion of Israel has acted like a spiritual leaven wherever the Jewish race has travelled. It is not a question of following its mode of worship, but the concept of the one God has become part of the thinking — both religious and political — of every civilization in which it has lived.

Christianity is only the outgrowth of Judaism. The New Testament is proof of the truth of the Old Testament.

The seed of the purity of the concept of the one God in which Israel believed was often betrayed by them; but they returned to their belief and carried it throughout the world until Christianity finally personified Jesus, making him God. Neither concept realized that God is neither an archangel in the form of a Messiah, nor a human being. As we know, the Presence is within each and every one of us.

It is amazing to watch this swing of the pendulum – away from the one God, back to the one God – and it will become more and more apparent as we study the other books of the Bible. There is always a pattern; but no matter how far the Jews strayed, they never actually lost sight of the concept of the one God. This is the Israelites' great gift to the world and the day will come when this concept will be worshipped throughout the world – although not necessarily through any specific formal religion.

We in the metaphysical movement believe that there is only one God; we believe in no form of ritual; we believe in eradicating the false gods of fear, doubt, selfishness and stupidity. We do not believe that fasting or lighting a candle is going to relieve us of any wrongdoing we may commit. We do not believe in sin but we believe in stupidity and the misuse of intelligence.

Our whole concept is built on the Judaic idea of the one God and He is everywhere – Infinite, Omnipotent, Omnipresent and Omniscient. We believe that God not only exists in the people we like but also in the people we don't like. This is one of the most difficult things to learn; but any other God would be a false god, and we believe in no false gods. If we believe in the false gods of power, materialism, color supremacy and what have you, are we any different from the Canaanites or the Amorites? I don't think so. It is up to all of us to worship only the one God; this is the only way we will eventually have One World.

It does not matter how you worship Him, or how your neighbor worships Him. It is only important to believe in Him and only Him as the source of all good and all supply. And never forget, this idea started thousands of years before Jesus; and it was started by a little band of wandering men who believed in the concept of the one God. No matter how often they strayed from the path (and the book of Judges is historical proof of how often they did stray) they always

and David, if I may be facetious, the "glamour boy" of the Old Testament. David's story is really the original Horatio Alger story. He was a little red-headed shepherd boy who grew up to be the king of Israel. He was an amazing person, and so were the adventures of his life.

Probably the most interesting figure we meet in the present chapters is Saul. He was a pathetic person and so characteristic of his time (and ours) that our hearts ache for him. Saul was the unfortunate man elevated to a position for which he was not prepared. It inevitably happens that when an insecure person is thrust into a position of responsibility, either he becomes tremendously egotistical or he disintegrates mentally. Unfortunately, both of these things happened to Saul.

Also, as we read this book and discover what happened and why, we get a fascinating insight into the character of Samuel. There was no doubt that Samuel was a brilliant and highly developed man. He had very little formal education but he had the wisdom that comes only from God. Samuel, we learned previously, was raised with the idea that he was to serve God; remember, he was a Nazarite. He was also a human being – very much of one – and his human quality is very strongly shown to us in his relationship with Saul. We might say, in one sense, that he makes and breaks Saul, but he blamed it all on the Lord.

Never forget as you study the story of Saul, any confidence he had in himself came from Samuel; it never came from himself. He was in fact emotional enough to be – what we call today – "psychically open." From time to time we have mentioned this but now we are beginning to study a section of the Bible that deals with it. Later, when we study the book of Ezekiel, we will find that Ezekiel was one of the greatest psychics who ever lived. (A psychic is not a mystic; there is a great difference.) Ezekiel constantly says: "When I was in the spirit." But Samuel never said that, nor did Moses or Jesus. They said "I know" or "and the Lord said." It is such phrases that tell us the spiritual development of the person we are studying. Whenever we see the phrase: "When I was in the spirit," it is indicative of trance. We are so created that there comes a period in the evolution of our soul – in some life or other – when we are psychically open. At that time we are susceptible to

time the nation of Israel is split. It is no longer a nation dedicated to God alone; it is now a political state as well. Many people have always felt, and I do too, that the great destiny of the people of Israel is not to be a political state, but to be the people of the one God. Here in Samuel you find the beginning of this split in the nation of Israel. From now on Israel begins to assume a political importance rather than a spiritual importance. And like all political states sometimes she is on top and sometimes she is on the bottom.

It has only been in our day that we have seen the Israelites re-established in Palestine. What will happen from now on none of us know. We only know that the Israelite today shows the same kind of courage that he showed under Saul and under Joshua; unquestionably what they have done in Israel is fantastic. But the real purpose of the chosen people — not the people chosen by God but the people who chose God — was not to become a civil state. The real purpose of Israel was to be the high priest of God and to show others the way to achieve the same goal. By becoming a political state they forfeited this ability. Samuel saw this; he saw what would happen to a nation that became involved in the political arena of the world. This is why he objected to — although he gave in reluctantly — the secularization of Israel.

The book of Samuel becomes much more interesting when we realize that it is written on two levels. On one level we see the individual characteristics and development of the human beings we encounter in its pages; on the other level we see the action of God as it works through and guides these people. We discussed this point in some of the books we have already studied, such as Exodus and Deuteronomy. But in this book — you might say that we are now in the biographical section of the Bible — this is more apparent.

Do you realize that until we reached I Samuel, there were only six great figures with whom we dealt — Moses, Joshua, Abraham, Isaac, Joseph and Jacob; and do you realize we have covered approximately a thousand years of Jewish history? Do you realize that the Old Testament is concerned primarily with just these six men?

In I Samuel we meet several important figures: Samuel, a tremendously interesting personality; Saul, a pathetic character, whom we touched upon in the previous section;

came back to their basic concept of "thou shalt have no other gods before me."

Samson and Delilah

One of the most fascinating episodes in the Old Testament is the love story of Samson and Delilah. As you read it, however, you begin to realize that writers have distorted and romanticized this tale. As it is related in the Bible, it is not a great love story, in spite of the way later writers have rewritten this episode.

Let me briefly recapitulate. Samson was a tower of physical strength. He was pledged to God at birth by his parents. He was a Nazarite and a child of promise but he did not live up to expectation. (When we interpret the tale on an esoteric level you will understand why.) Being a very wilful and spoiled person, he always managed to get his own way.

It is extremely interesting to note that here for the first time the concept of marriage, as it was set forth in the Old Testament, changed. The parents, usually the father, always selected the bride for the son, but Samson is the first person mentioned in the Old Testament who selected his own wife. It was he who decided on the girl of his choice. She was a Philistine and not a woman of his own faith. His parents were greatly disturbed but they realized they were unable to control their son. Also it was the custom for the parents of the groom to provide for the wedding ceremony and feasts, but Samson's parents refused to have any part in the marriage. So wilful Samson went to the house of his bride-to-be and told them the story. The Philistines agreed to provide him with thirty companions for his best man and ushers.

Samson was an egotist, very proud of his great strength, and on the way to his bride's house he met a lion and tore it to bits. At the wedding feast he proposed a riddle to the guests and offered thirty linen garments and thirty festal garments for its solution, but no one could solve it. The guests warned Samson's wife that unless she obtained the answer to the riddle, they would kill her and destroy her father's house. She wept for the seven days of the feast but Samson would not reveal the solution to the riddle. On the seventh day Samson, moved by her tears, told her the answer and she revealed it to the guests.

We learn from this incident that while Samson was very vain and spoiled and fantastically strong physically, he had, like the majority of men, no defense against a woman's tears. But when he realized what had happened, he became furious. Now, it was the custom at that time for the marriage to be consummated at the end of the seven-day feast, but Samson was so indignant that he refused to do so and left her. The bride's father, rightly insulted, gave his daughter to the best man; otherwise disgrace would have been brought upon her.

Some months later, at the time of harvest, Samson had a desire to see his bride and he returned to her. When he discovered that she was married to someone else, he sought revenge by sending 300 foxes with firebrands attached to their tails into the cornfields of the Philistines. The Philistines retaliated by burning Samson's wife and her father. Samson avenged their murder by slaughtering a great number of the Philistines. His enemies tried to arrest him, but his strength was so extraordinary that they could not hold him. After this episode Samson visited a harlot in Gaza. The Gazites set a trap for him but Samson outwitted them and carried away the gates of the city and brought them to a hilltop.

After this incident Samson met Delilah and fell passionately in love with her. (As you can realize, women were this man's weakness.) She was very much a woman of the world and had few moral scruples. The Philistines, having good reason to seek vengeance on Samson, asked Delilah to deliver him into their hands. They must, however, first know the secret of his tremendous strength. Delilah used all of her feminine wiles on him to discover his secret. He teased her at first by telling her that if he were bound with seven fresh bowstrings his strength would be evaporated.

Three times she begged him to tell her the secret of his strength and three times he withstood her wily attempts. But finally he became annoyed with her constant nagging, and in a moment of sheer desperation said: 'I am a Nazarite. If I should cut my hair, then my strength would leave me, and I would become as weak as other men.' While he slept the Philistines cut his hair and took him captive; they bound him and put out his eyes. Then they fettered him in bronze

ing is the symbol that the power of God is resident in his ambassador on earth. And you know in Bible terminology the king represents the mentality. So we find that it is the mentality that leads the way to the kingdom, and no matter how much we wish it were otherwise, it is the only way we can develop — through our mentality; that is through our own consciousness.

In Chapter 11 we find the town of Jabesh-gilead, which is on the outskirts of Israel, suddenly visited by the Ammonites. The Israelites have always been afraid of them, and want to make a truce with the Ammonites. The Ammonites seemed to have had a peculiar ability to be insulting, and said they would make a truce, provided the Israelites would agree to having their right eyes put out. This would bring disgrace upon Israel. The elders asked for a respite of seven days to send messengers throughout Israel in an attempt to get help.

It was not because the Ammonites were fiendishly cruel that they wanted to do this to the Israelites. Don't forget these were primitive people and they had a long memory of wars in which the Israelites had been extremely successful under the leadership of men by the names of Moses and Joshua (as well as others). But by the time of the book of Judges the Jews had reached a period of decadence, and the Israelites were no longer considered to be great fighters. (Is this story so much different from what has happened during our own century?) Israel was no longer a threat and therefore the Ammonites could be a little bit patronizing.

So they allowed the Israelites seven days to think things over; they knew that under ordinary circumstances if Israel had retained her old glory there would have been an army in the field. But the Ammonites were perfectly sure there would be no army in the field. They thought Israel was through; apparently they had not heard of the new king of the Israelites. At that time Saul was not called a king; he was called a captain. Anyway, the news came to Saul and he called the Israelites together, about three hundred thousand men. They fought the Ammonites and beat them. And this was the beginning of the Jewish empire.

In Chapter 12 we have a great deal of the recapitulation that we had in Deuteronomy; we are told by Samuel what had happened to Israel from the time of Moses. But by this

Saul. In fact it is important to study this meaning closely, for it is the only time that an experience like this is recorded and it is important that you realize how Samuel's spiritual experience is different from Saul's. Saul was not capable of great development because he was too immature, too involved in the physical side of his nature, too much a prey to the instability of his emotions. But Samuel was different, and Samuel should be the man on whom we should pattern our own spiritual growth.

Samuel was a very practical man, who lived with his head in the clouds, and his feet on the ground. He lived very closely with his God and this showed in his being so well balanced. He lived a completely normal physical life; he was acclaimed by his people as a wonderful judge and was never unfair in any decision; he was noted for his intellectual brilliance as well as his tremendous spiritual power. But above all, he had something that no one but Moses ever had – the power of the Word, the power of prayer. People believed that when Samuel prayed, God would do all the things that he asked.

And, most important, he never used psychic power, nor did he ever go into trance. We have several instances where the Israelites asked Samuel to pray and his prayer was always immediately answered; he could indeed speak the Word. He had the power and he was not only revered and adored, but a man of great mystery because this was something they had never seen, a man doing such things in such a normal way. Even today most people would find it difficult to believe that such things could ever come to pass. Yet that is exactly the goal of our metaphysical lives. We too should be able to have the power to speak the Word and have it manifest instantaneously – and have it manifest without any occult hocus-pocus, as an ordinary event in our everyday living.

In Chapter 10 Saul was anointed king. Now the idea of anointing is quite fascinating. The anointing of kings with oil originated in Egypt during the time of Thutmose III, about 1900 B.C. This religious ritual meant that the gods were propitiated, and it was believed that the anointing invoked the god's power. The ritual has come down through the ages. (Not too long ago Queen Elizabeth was anointed in Westminster Abbey by the Archbishop of Canterbury.) Anoint-

chains and carried him to Gaza and gave him the hard task of grinding with a handmill.

But the Philistines did not realize that Samson's hair would grow back. They were celebrating at Gaza and offering thanks to their god Dagon for delivering their enemy into their hands. During this revel the people asked to see Samson. So he was brought into the temple by his helper, for he was totally blind. Samson asked to rest against the pillars of the temple because he felt weak and they allowed him to do so. Strangely enough, no one noticed that the hair had grown back. With a great surge of strength he dislodged the pillars and brought destruction upon the Philistines and himself. Although he brought on his own death, more people were slain by this act than any other display of strength he had ever shown before. And thus ends the story of Samson.

Now this story is extremely interesting from an esoteric point of view. The name Samson means "consecrated." In Chapter 13 the circumstances surrounding the birth of Samson are described, and in Verse 3 an Angel of the Lord appeared to Manoah's wife and said she would conceive and bear a son. This is really the first annunciation. Samson's parents had been married for many years but had no children. In their great joy at the knowledge that God would enable them to have a child, they pledged the child to the service of God and he was to be a Nazarite.

The Nazarites were an ancient sect whose origins are shrouded in antiquity. (It is not known where or when they came into existence.) This sect was dedicated to the service of God; they practiced many rituals and believed in many odd laws and customs. One of the laws that was strictly enforced was that a person's hair was never to be cut. Hair is the symbol of the vital essence of the body, the seed; it is strength and power. Hair grows continually, just as the seed is always in the process of growing.

The Nazarites also did not believe in sexual relationships; they literally believed in keeping their seed within themselves. This probably stems from an early Egyptian teaching (certain members of the Egyptian priesthood practiced celibacy). It could also have come from the Hindus who believed too that celibacy was necessary to the spiritual life. The Nazarites were forbidden to drink wine or to eat

anything unclean. Also, they were not allowed to come in contact with a dead body, for they were trained to be the pure vessels of the Lord. Do you remember that in Numbers we were given a vivid description of this kind of thing, and that we were told in that book that the rules of the Nazarites applied to a small sect that was part of the tribe of Levi?

Samson, the consecrated Nazarite, was reared in this tradition. Esoterically, he symbolizes the man who has a realization of the God within him, but who has not yet learned to conquer his lower nature. His own whims, desires and ideas are the only things that are important to Samson; he rides roughshod over everyone. Yet, he is occasionally motivated by a feeling of kindness. The Bible tells us that he was a judge over Israel for twenty years, but we have no record of any of the cases that he judged. Actually, from the description we are given of him, he was a libertine, a fighter and a braggart, but that is all we know. Has it occurred to you that it might be a little bit strange to have a figure like Samson, at least as he is described in the Bible, as a symbol of man's spiritual development? Even though he was a judge he doesn't seem to be much above the run-of-the-mill Israelite, does he? Then what does he represent?

Actually he represents the kind of person who in one sense tries to overreach himself. He represents power misused. Samson symbolizes the man who has an intellectual concept of God without a spiritual realization of God. It is possible for us to understand what we are doing and where we are going without having had the experience of a spiritual realization. In other words, we (like Samson) can have a sterile concept of God. This can lead to a complete misuse of our spiritual power, if we make no attempt to control our emotions, and it then turns against us. That is what happened to Samson. He was a man pledged to God but he had no scruples about killing people; he murdered a great number and, in the end, he had to pay for it.

Eyes symbolize spiritual understanding and that is what is meant when we are told that his eyes were put out — he had lost his spiritual understanding. He also lost his vital essence when his hair was cut off. In 16:13 we are told that Samson had seven curls on his head. Cabalistically, 7 is the number of intuition and mysticism. Samson lost those faculties too. He had to pay, and horribly, for the misuse of

Joshua. But while they had the first spiritual initiation, Saul was nowhere near it. He was only at the end of the minor initiations. He was not yet ready for the First Major Initiation. This is symbolized by the fact that he was unable to receive all the spiritual knowledge that Jacob and Joshua were given. The three men symbolize the emotional nature, the physical body and the mentality. But Saul was incapable of reaching anything higher although he fervently loved God. In spite of a depth of understanding that could so completely change him that he could become an initiate, he does not fulfill his promise — even though as the Bible says "God gave him another heart."

When we discussed the major initiations, we mentioned the Transformed Heart. This is among the last of the minor initiations, and the gland that functions in this experience is the thymus. This is the experience that Saul underwent, so we realize that he is not a Jacob or a Moses or a Samuel. He is someone who is nearing that point of development, provided he keeps on the spiritual path. The very fact that he is not given all the gifts of the three men whom he meets indicates that he is not yet ready for the major initiations. Then why was Saul chosen? The unvarnished truth is that Samuel was an old man and Saul, in spite of his spiritual immaturity, was probably the best man available in Israel at that time. So he was chosen.

Still another proof of Saul's spiritual greenness is that although Samuel tells Saul all this is going to happen to him, it is not until the next day when he meets the three men and has made contact with them that he is stimulated enough to decide to take action. He then joined the band of wandering ecstasies, and became completely touched by them and began to prophesy. People who knew him said: "Is Saul also among the prophets?" (10:11). Saul was the son of a farmer and people were surprised and annoyed that he could prophesy. You will notice that this experience of Saul and Samuel is very important, for as we progress in our study of the Bible, we will find that the experiences of the people in it are all various phases of spiritual development. In fact the Bible is a book of spiritual experiences as well as a book of spiritual values.

We must also realize that the meaning of the story of Samuel is quite different from the meaning of the story of

him." This is an interesting remark. Did Saul think or know from previous consultations that all seers charged a fee? Or did he find out that Samuel charged a consultation fee? (We do not know whether Samuel did or not; we only know that there is no record that he lived as did the Levites, from the tithes of the people.) Probably the custom of paying a seer for his services was so ordinary that Saul and his servant took it for granted. Anyway, they had a small coin with them and they consulted Samuel.

The voice of the Lord had spoken to Samuel the day before; he was told that a young man would come to see him and that this young man would become the king of Israel. When Saul and his servant appeared, Samuel recognized them. He spoke with them, gave them food, and asked Saul to come with him to the top of a hill. There he told Saul about his destiny as a king of Israel. We are not told what Saul's reaction was, but Samuel very carefully described what would take place and how it would all come to pass; he told Saul to return home and that on his way there he would meet two men who would tell him that the asses had been found. Later on he would meet three men and then a band of prophets. He should go with the prophets and he would be able to prophesy with them. Then he was to wait for Samuel at Gilgal.

In the description we are given of the three men he met, one of the men had three kids, one had three loaves of bread, and the third a bottle of wine. And Saul is given only two loaves of bread. Why do the writers of the Bible make a point of that? Because the number 2 represents Emotion. We know from the New Testament what the bread and the wine symbolize. Bread (the body) is the Soul and wine (the blood) is the Spirit. Actually we are being told that Saul is too emotional, that he is not quite ready to carry through his spiritual development. As we get to know the story of Saul in full detail, we will find that he cannot carry things through to a conclusion, he is not big enough to do so. He has not had the great spiritual experience. We see here the difference between Saul's particular experience and the experience of Joshua when he met the stranger or the experience of Jacob when he wrestled with the angel.

Now in 10:9 we read that "God gave him (Saul) another heart." We were never told this about Jacob and

his powers. It ended in his being blinded and finally losing his life.

It is important to remember that this man was not dedicated to God of his own free will; his parents dedicated him to God. Translate this to our own day and age. We are all acquainted with people who have insisted upon their child (or children) following a certain career, regardless of whether or not the child was interested in such a career. Now the choice of the individual to do what he really wants is a most important thing. Perhaps if Samson had not been pledged by his parents to be a Nazarite, he might have become a great figure in his own right; he would certainly have been much happier, and most likely he would never have ended up as he did.

We have two lessons to learn from his story: first, that the man who has only an intellectual concept of God can misuse his spiritual knowledge; and secondly, that parents cannot force a person into a life they want for him that he is neither prepared for nor interested in. Seen in this light, Samson is really a tragic figure. (Do you see now why I said this story is not a great love story?) It does not mean that Samson will not reincarnate with a highly evolved understanding and knowledge of God. Not at all, but at this stage that we are reading about in Judges he certainly was not ready for it; he was forced into it by his family, with greatly tragic results.

No doubt his physical strength came from the fact that he was an abnormally big man. He was about six feet six and powerfully built. Did you notice we are never told that Samson prayed to God; in fact, he does not mention God at all. Samson was concerned only about himself and he believed very much in his own ability and physical prowess. He paid for his transgressions because he abused every law of his own nature — he was a murderer, a terrific egotist, promiscuous, etc.

Nor must we forget that his story is told to us in the form of folklore. I do not believe people are visited by angels who tell them they are going to become parents. I think the Presence of God within Manoah and his wife told them what was going to happen. (Do you remember in our study of Genesis that an angel appeared to Lot and told him to leave Sodom?) In their delight in knowing that they

were going to have a child, Samson's parents had a desire to reciprocate for their gratitude; and they pledged this child to God. I believe this incident shows very clearly that every person is an individualization of God, and no one – not even a parent – has the right to force a person to be something he does not really want to be.

But do not doubt that these people really lived, Samson and Delilah were actual historical figures. At the time of Samson's birth the Philistines were in control of the land and they lived fairly harmoniously with the Israelites. There was an interchange of commerce between the two races, and to a great extent they got on quite amicably – that is, until Samson became obstreperous. Then the trouble started.

Delilah was actually a very worldly Philistine woman. In this story she symbolizes sensuality and Samson certainly came to his downfall through her. Samson symbolizes the man who knows the truth intellectually but who has not experienced it emotionally or spiritually. His emotions, therefore, are not activated by the guiding principle, the Presence of God; they completely run riot. He is only motivated by his will and this gets him into tremendous difficulty – especially his sensual nature, which is controlled by Delilah, who represents the sensuality of the subconscious.

There are only five more chapters of the book of Judges after the story of Samson, and they are rather strange. Not so many years before, the Israelites had Moses and Joshua to guide them. Do you remember in Exodus, Numbers and Deuteronomy the purity and magnificent concepts which Moses had instilled in them? Now only a few hundred years later these people have reverted to the life they led before Moses appeared in their midst. These last five chapters of this book (17-21) show the complete degeneration of a people.

The story of Micah is a strange story. Micah stole money from his mother; she had been saving it to make "a graven image and a molten image" (17:3). We are told that at this time there was no king in Israel and as a result every man lived according to his own desires. After Micah stole the money he repented. A certain portion of it was used to make idols – Micah made an ephod and a teraphim which were placed in a room set apart as a temple. Then a young man from Bethlehem, a Levite, came to Mount Ephraim to

lineated the marriage laws, the moral laws and especially the laws that applied to women, he was big enough to say: "This is what I think myself; I am not sure that God is in accord with it." And in Samuel we find that although he was quite vehement about not wanting a king and rebuked the Jews very strongly for their wish to have one, he did not refuse to appoint a king when the Lord commanded him to do so. We see in this great man a very human quality that is quite evident, as it is in all of us. And we will continue having this quality, even though we know God is Love, until we reach the stature of Jesus.

In Chapter 7 it is again emphasized that this man who was highly developed, this man who was really and truly a great man, a man who was a wonderful judge over his people, was still human enough to feel that not enough honor was given him. He wanted to have all the glory due him as their leader. Therefore he decided, after Saul was appointed king, that he would resign. So he retired and became a circuit judge. That is, he travelled from town to town judging cases and expounding the law. (This was the dual function of the high priest at that time.)

Before this he had tried very hard to keep the reins of government in his own hands, but finally, when he saw that apparently no sign was given to him from the God within, he gave in. Then in Chapter 9, which is one of the most interesting in the entire book, Saul appears for the first time. Now the name Saul means "asked for, desired," and Saul was actually made king through the decision of Samuel. If it had not been for Samuel, Saul would never have been given the position. Again this parallels Paul. Paul's name before his conversion was Saul. He "asked for, desired" and became Paul of his own free will.

Saul, we are told, was the son of a wealthy Benjaminite; he was a very powerfully built man, a man in his prime. And quite apparently Saul was one of the few Israelites who had never heard of Samuel. Saul's story begins with the loss of some of his father's asses. He and a servant are sent to look for them; two or three days pass and they still have not found them. Finally Saul decides to return home, but the servant says: "In the town that we are coming to, there is a great seer named Samuel. Let us ask his advice." Saul says: "But we have nothing left to give

questions. He was able to contact his God whenever he wanted to. (And that, of course, is exactly what we are striving to do, isn't it?) For that reason, Samuel was a most unusual person, and for the first time since Moses there was a prophet in Israel who was a "normal" man.

Another interesting point is that Samuel fulfilled the prophecy that Moses made in Deuteronomy 18. You will remember that Moses commanded the people of Israel to give up all kinds of false worship. Verses 10-12 read: "There shall not be found among you anyone that useth divination, or an observer of times, or an enchanter, or a witch, or a charmer, or a consulter with familiar spirits, or a wizard, or a necromancer. For all these things are an abomination unto the Lord."

Then in Verse 15 Moses tells them that: "The Lord will raise up unto thee a prophet from the midst of thee, thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken." He gives them the signs by which they will know he is a true prophet; and he gives a description that fits Samuel perfectly. The Jews are told that if the prophecies that the prophet makes come to pass, he is a man of God; but if the prophecies do not come to pass, then they will know that the prophet is a charlatan. Samuel fulfilled this prophecy; everything he predicted came to pass. And, most important, Samuel's prophecies were made in complete consciousness, and related in simple direct language, without any "ifs, ands or buts."

In 8:1-22 the Israelites demand that a king be appointed over Israel. Samuel's anger at this idea was very strange, for the Scriptures had said long before this incident and many times after it that out of the kings of Israel shall come the Messiah. Samuel knew this, yet he recoiled at the idea. But the reason for his attitude lies in the fact that he wanted no king over Israel during his time. He was an honest human being who knew his own worth and felt that he was able to judge Israel. Furthermore, he was worried that the Israelites would give to a king the worship that was due Yahweh. However, Samuel prayed to the Lord and the Lord said: "Hearken unto their voice and make them a King" (Vs. 22). I am sure that Samuel would never have appointed a king otherwise.

Samuel reminds me somewhat of Paul. When Paul de-

make his home there. He arrived at the house of Micah where he was treated as a son and installed as high priest. The Levite conducted all the services and used all his powers to intercede with God. Life continued peacefully.

Chapters 19 and 20 contain another amazing story. A Levite had a concubine who left him for another man; when she returned, he sent her back to her father's house. Then the Levite relented and went to bring her back home. His father-in-law was overjoyed that the Levite had come for his daughter and persuaded him to stay with him for awhile. But after a number of days had passed the Levite decided to return. So he and his concubine, accompanied by a servant and a pair of donkeys, started on the trip home. The servant wanted to stop at a particular town but the Levite refused, for that place was not a town of Israel; the Levite wanted to continue until they came to the town that belonged to the tribe of Benjamin. When they arrived no one made them welcome; this was unusual, for the Israelites were extremely hospitable to strangers.

The Levite met an Ephraimite on his way to the temple; and the Ephraimite welcomed him. When he heard that the Levite had nowhere to stay, he offered him lodgings in his house. One of the early Judaic rules, long before the twelve tribes of Israel existed, was that whenever a traveler was your guest, everything possible should be done for his comfort and protection, even if this meant the sacrifice of yourself or your family. That evening, a group of the townsmen besieged the house and demanded that the Levite be given to them. The Ephraimite pleaded with them but to no avail. Finally, in desperation, the Ephraimite gave them his virgin daughter and the concubine of the Levite to do with as they pleased. All night the men abused the women and caused the death of the concubine. This strange story parallels the story of Lot; you remember what happened in Sodom. Did it really happen? Yes, for the Ephraimite was following the laws of hospitality that Moses had given. If you desire to befriend a person, it includes giving everything in your possession necessary to this. One really never knows, the ancient Hebrews believed, when your guest might turn out to be an angel of the Lord!

So once again, 1200 years later, the decadent atmosphere and culture of Sodom is repeated in the tribe of Ben-

jamin, one of the twelve tribes of Israel. The men of this tribe were sexual perverts and had certainly deteriorated from the purity of the time of Moses; for them the morality of the Ten Commandments was non-existent.

The next morning the Levite left and took the body of his concubine with him. When he arrived home he did a very odd thing: he divided her body into twelve parts and sent one part to each of the twelve tribes. All the people of Israel, horrified at this act, congregated and asked the Levite how he could have done such a thing. And in 20:6 the Levite explained that the Israelites had completely fallen away from their God and that his act was a symbol to remind them that they had lost their spiritual life:

This assembly took place at Bethel (which means the house of God) where the temple and the Ark of the Covenant were located. The people prayed for guidance and were told that they must march against the tribe of Benjamin. They did so; but on the first day they were defeated. They again asked God's advice and were told: "Go forth tomorrow"; but the next day they were beaten again. Quite disillusioned, they again sought the Lord and were told: "Go forth tomorrow, I will deliver the enemy into your hands." By means of a ruse they defeated the Benjaminites (only six hundred men escaped) and razed the town.

Then a great problem arose: There had to be twelve tribes of Israel. What should be done about Benjamin? All the other tribes had taken an oath never to defile themselves by allowing their women to marry men from the tribe of Benjamin, for this tribe was a pariah. But the fact had to be faced that Benjamin was one of the original tribes and they knew it could not be excommunicated forever. So, in the wonderful way that men always find for solving their religious problems, they worked out a scheme. The remaining six hundred men, unless they married, would certainly be the last of the tribe of Benjamin. So the Israelites attacked and killed all but the virgins of the land of Jabesh-gilead. The virgins were given to the men of Benjamin, but there were not enough to supply the needs of the tribe. Then the Israelites hit upon a second idea to make up the deficit. A spring festival was being held in Shiloh and the Benjaminites were commanded to lie in wait in the vineyards and "catch every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh and go to the

to worship Yahweh as a pagan god, too. Samuel told them that they must put away these gods and goddesses and return to the worship of the one God if they wished to prosper and be delivered from the Philistines. They finally did as Samuel commanded.

Samuel also had the strange quality of being a prophet. The Jews always had a strong feeling for prophecy and were dependent upon people who could foretell events. Moses to some degree encouraged it. As you remember in Leviticus and Deuteronomy, the ephod, the urim, the thummin and other means of oracular prophecy were used in the temple. This custom to some extent had come from Egypt where it was much practiced; but for the most part it came from the Ammonites, the Babylonians and the Canaanites who were the neighbors of the Israelites.

Also the Israelites were very accustomed to wandering bands of seers that travelled from town to town. These seers, who were called ecstatic visionaries, would dance and sing psalms, thereby working themselves into a trance. While in trance they would then make predictions. It is strange to realize that this went on for several hundred years and that the Jews who believed so strongly in the concept of the one God could deviate so far from this belief – and in spite of what they had experienced under their great leaders, men like Moses and Joshua, etc. – that they could accept and worship these seers as "holy" men.

The idea of working yourself into an ecstatic trance through exercise is not unusual. Some modern and very dangerous occult schools teach this today. The body rhythm is increased to such an extent that the individual is thrown into a trance or hypnotic state and in that condition can perform abnormal things. Do not in any way open yourselves to such dangerous practices.

But in the days of Samuel such things were not considered abnormal; the Jews thought the people who practiced such things were touched by the spirit of God. But Samuel was quite different. He was not a seer in the above sense; he belonged to none of the prophetic guilds. To understand God he did not have to work himself into a trance by dancing or singing. He maintained his contact with God through meditation, and learning to wait for the answers to all his

I SAMUEL, CHAPTERS 7-14

The book of Samuel is not only the story of an individual named Samuel, it is the story of the founding of the first monarchy; and, although the book bears his name, Samuel himself plays only a small part in it – at least as far as his actual presence is concerned. In the first six chapters, three pertain to Samuel and three do not. We can assume, although there is no record of it, that this was the period of Samuel's childhood and naturally at that time he had no voice in Israel. In fact, it was not until he was in his thirties, apparently, that he came forth as a judge of Israel.

However, he must have been a brilliant man, and in the twelfth chapter he is giving his farewell address and emerges as a very great spiritual figure. He stands next to Moses, actually, as the greatest figure we have encountered thus far in our Bible study.

But his main interest for us, at this particular point, is his appearance as a prophet. We know from the earlier chapters that he was a prophet, but now his *people* recognize that he is one. We very often forget that during the period of several hundred years from the time of Joshua to the time of Samuel, the Jews had become extremely friendly with their neighbors who for the most part were pagans. There was much intermarriage, and the customs of the pagans were gradually absorbed by the Israelites – in fact, the Jews had fallen away from the concept of Moses.

In the beginning of Chapter 7 we are told that the Israelites had become quite pagan in their beliefs and that things have gone badly with them. The Israelites came to Canaan as a pastoral people and they had to learn the art of agriculture from the Canaanites. They also learned to worship Ashtaroth and the Baals, the gods and goddesses of fertility, which they felt was necessary for the success of their crops. As a result, it was not long before they began

land of Benjamin" (21:21). By such devious means the tribe of Benjamin was restored and gradually fully redeemed.

In this incident we have an intimation of something that happened much later. (In the Old Testament we are being told a truth through the symbology of the twelve tribes of Israel; in the New Testament we are told a similar truth through the twelve disciples.) What are we being shown? Remember the twelve tribes were suddenly in danger of being decimated; one of the tribes, Benjamin, had defected – just as in the New Testament one of the twelve disciples, Judas, turned traitor. We are going to find this similarity of events evident throughout our Bible study; incident after incident recurs on a different level. We begin to realize that the New Testament proves what the Old Testament teaches. In the Old Testament we are told of the experiences of the twelve tribes, in the New Testament the experiences of individuals. Also in the Old Testament we are dealing with the experiences of the race. With the exception of the prophets, there is as yet no individual consciousness; there is no outstanding figure – we cannot call Samson an outstanding figure, interesting though he certainly is. In fact, in these last five chapters (with the exception of Micah) no one human being is named, not even the Levite who befriended Micah. There was not even one man of sufficient stature to warrant his name being recorded.

What is important is that here we are coming into contact with Cosmic Knowledge, not a conscious knowledge, but an inner knowledge that motivates all of us, whether we live in the twentieth century or the twelfth century, B. C. Twelve is the number of cosmic consciousness, of the cosmos itself, and seven symbolizes individual perfection. The meaning of the twelve tribes, as later with the twelve disciples, is that a living example of Cosmic Perfection is about to manifest. However, at the level we have reached in Judges, the twelve tribes are not yet motivated by the idea of Cosmic Perfection, they only know that since the time of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, there were twelve tribes and that Moses had held them together and molded the nation of Israel. The twelve tribes knew they had to stay together, although they did not know why. They made every effort to do so and they succeeded.

In the New Testament, the twelve disciples found Judas no longer one of them. Their anxiety is recorded in the book of Acts. What was their reason? They thought: "Jesus selected twelve of us; therefore there must always be twelve of us." They had no reason beyond that. Each disciple had his candidate and finally a little man by the name of Matthias was selected as the twelfth disciple. This is all we ever hear of him in the New Testament. Why? Because the *real* twelfth disciple was chosen by Jesus and that man was Paul. Furthermore, the disciples were not terribly happy about having Paul join their ranks.

But in the book of Judges the Israelites were very glad to restore the tribe of Benjamin. They felt they had committed a noble act in restoring them and they felt it was imperative to do so. You will notice that in each case there was defection from the Law, and while the choice of replacement was not always the wisest, in both instances, there was a strong intuition that there had to be twelve.

The Jews had departed greatly from the teachings of Moses; they had disobeyed almost all the laws devised by him. They had intermarried and worshipped false gods; they had lost their sense of honesty and had become extremely licentious. They were invaded by many of the surrounding tribes and often assimilated by them; and the purity of Israel that Moses strove so hard to retain began to disintegrate. This disintegration reached its lowest point in the book of Judges. "There never was a man like Moses."

As we go further into the history of Israel, great men like Samuel, David, Solomon, Isaiah appear, but none of them ever reached the greatness of Moses; no man is ever again able to take the Israelites and mold them into a pure vehicle for the workings of God. (And the tragedy is that no other race or religion since then has reached that peak of purity.) Here was a people who found a great leader and they entered into a union with him. But it is always a question of whether Moses found them or whether out of desire they produced Moses. Behind it, of course, was the action of God.

The Jews were so like ourselves, for when things began to get a little better they fell away again. The story of Samson makes this clear. Actually until we individually get to the stage where our belief does hold, we are going to

"When the student is ready, the teacher appears." -
When ---?

This is an old Hindu saying, and I purposely chose it to illustrate this section. The conscious contact with God has nothing to do with race, color or creed. It deals directly with the understanding and desire of the heart.

When you and I consciously reach the desire of voluntarily putting our bodies, our emotion and thoughts on the altar of spirit, the Presence Within - I AM - comes forth.

This too is an explanation of the text -
"God is no respecter of persons" -
He only respects and responds to
what is in the heart.

M. M.

So they sent Yahweh back. We don't know exactly how but the Ark and the ten golden statues appeared suddenly at the Israelite town of Bethshemesh. But strangely enough, when the Israelites looked inside the Ark they were all killed, thousands of them, supposedly because Yahweh was punishing them, too, for looking at the sacred vessel. (Only the High Priests had the privilege of entering. But I think what probably happened was that the plague followed the Ark and the men who found the Ark probably contracted the disease. Finally the Ark was restored and the plague came to an end.

Against this rather weird background there began to emerge the figure of a little boy, a little boy who only knew what he was told, a little boy who suddenly found that he had the ability to hear God, and to speak with Him; and this boy began to change the lives of the Israelites. Probably in the beginning he was completely unaware of his power and what he was able to do with it. He merely did as he was directed — and of course you cannot find a better approach to God than: "Thy will, not my will be done." The boy Samuel never argued a point, that we are sure of; and yet in this aura of magic and sorcery the Word of God once more begins to emerge.

This can be looked at from two points of view: from the point of view of evolution, where all of a sudden the race evolves and produces such men as Samuel, Moses, Abraham and Joseph, men who stand head and shoulders above the crowd and who direct, influence and teach the people. Or you can look at it as the adventure of God, the same God whose story was told in Exodus. That story was not only the story of Moses, it was the story of Yahweh. And now He comes again and He finds that He can work with a little boy, a boy who was dedicated to Him by his mother. But this boy, unlike Samson who was also dedicated, does not resent the dedication. We can look at his story either way. In any case Samuel matured and assumed the responsibility for his beliefs and his actions. He became one of the great men of Israel and helped his race in their never-ending struggle to find God and continually live by His laws.

have our ups and downs. But at least we have one thing that the Israelites did not have, the intelligence to understand our problems. For in those days the intelligence of the race was only a growing faculty. I do not mean that we do not have to continue growing — but the early Israelites were a primitive people who could only understand things expressed in primitive terms. And gradually they slipped back to the mud from which they had come.

Look at the people of Judges and compare them with Abraham, Isaac and Joseph, men who were towers of strength. In this book the Israelites were not even capable of producing a leader who was able to hold them together. Now at least you and I have the opportunity and the privilege of choosing our path. We have the power of choice and some degree of knowledge and understanding. We know what is right from what is wrong and cannot deceive ourselves about that. How well we can adhere to our beliefs is not a question of intellect or of spirituality — it is a question of will power because we live in an age where the will has to be developed. The Israelites lived in an age where discipline had to be developed from the outside; our discipline can only come from within. We have at least progressed that far.

As we look at these people we must feel sorry for them; they were perfectly miserable. They no longer had the security of a God. They had wandered so far from the concept of God that at the end of the book they do not even cry: "Lord deliver us, we have sinned against Thee." It is not until we reach Samuel that these people begin to return to the ways of their forefathers. But not in Judges; and as this book closes we feel great compassion for a proud people who have strayed so far from the path. The last verse reads: "In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did what was right in his own eyes" (21:25). Isn't this quite a bit different from the Mosaic Code? So we come to realize that Judges is a tragic book, but from this book we can learn a great deal of what to avoid in our own lives, and we can sympathize with the Israelites, for we know that we, too, often have lost our way and had to fight our way back.

"Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, The Lord is One Lord." - Deut-6:4

This is one of the earliest prayers of Israel. In its early meaning, it told the Israelites that God alone was the Ruler and Creator of the universe, and all that dwelt therein.

This of course is completely true, and always will be. But, as usual, there is an even deeper meaning. The name Israel means "Prince with God". One is a Prince with God when there is a conscious co-ordination of mind and emotion, which brings us to a conscious contact with the Presence within.

It is then that we are really One - in body, mind and spirit. Everyone who is seeking this contact is an Israelite - in the real meaning of the word.

M. M.

istines for seven months, and I'm sure the Philistines felt mighty proud of themselves, so proud that they placed it next to Dagon, the god in whom they believed. The next morning they found "Dagon was fallen upon his face to the earth before the Ark of the Lord" (I Samuel 5:3). So they set Dagon in his place again, and the following morning they found him lying on his face again. By this time the Philistines, a very superstitious people, were becoming very uncomfortable. On the third morning, not only was he on his face, but his arms and legs had been removed, as well as his head. They now became so frightened that they decided to send the Ark to Ekron.

Then they were struck with a form of the bubonic plague. The Bible says they were afflicted with emerods. Emerods are boils that break out under the armpits, in the groin and on the sides of the neck. Not only are they exceedingly painful, but they usually are fatal. And so, like people who believe in voodoo, the Philistines became convinced that this was an act of Yahweh. In those days everybody believed (in the beginning, even the Israelites) that Yahweh was primarily the God of the Jews. Therefore Yahweh was an Israelite. It was the Philistines' concept that now that they had captured the Ark which housed Yahweh, Yahweh would become a Philistine. But somehow or other Yahweh was not acting the way He was supposed to. So they decided they really had quite a siege of it and that they had better send Him back to the Israelites. But their wise men said they should offer a trespass offering first, because this was no god to meddle with. So they decided to make golden images of the emerods and of mice (mice were the carriers of the plague), five of each, and they worshipped them and blessed them in the name of Yahweh and they made a present of them to Him.

Next they took two milch cows and separated them from their calves, yoked them to a cart and placed the Ark upon it. It was assumed that if the cows returned to their calves, then Yahweh was not responsible for the plague; but if the cows went toward Israel, then it was assumed that Yahweh had instigated the plague. The cows went to Bethshemesh in Israel.

As far as the Philistines were concerned, they believed Yahweh was a god of vengeance. Not only was He killing them with a plague, but was hurting their god Dagon.

projection, which it is most of the time — or whether it was a genuine experience. But true visions are always understood, respected and revered by people who understand this stage of spiritual development. Very often visions are seen during an ecstatic trance. It is amazing that Samuel never went into trance; he was as normal as you and I — which is the earmark of higher development. There was no psychic haziness in his makeup. But that does not mean that there have not always been psychic schools that encourage such things. Even today there are schools that encourage the student — in fact, *train* the student — in ecstatic trance. These poor people are told that this is the way to get closer to God. I hope I don't have to tell you that nothing is further from the truth — or more dangerous!

Even in Biblical times there were a number of people who indulged in it. (As a matter of fact, Paul was not quite free of it, either.) Let me re-emphasize to those of you who have cultivated the ability to be put into trance — stay away from it. First, because it is extremely dangerous; and secondly, if you don't find God in full consciousness, you won't find him at all. Unless you are completely conscious you never have a real contact with God. Samuel proves this point. He had contact with his God and he had it as freely as you and I carry on a conversation.

We will now leave Samuel for awhile and discuss what happened to the Ark of the Covenant (Chapters 4-6). As you know, the Philistines made war on the Israelites and defeated them quite properly. The suggestion was then made that the Ark of the Covenant be brought into battle because Moses and Joshua always had the Ark with them; and every time the Ark was with them they were victorious. So the Jews brought the Ark of the Covenant into battle. The Philistines heard a tremendous outcry and could not imagine what all the noise was about in the camp of the enemy. They suddenly discovered the Israelites had the Ark of the Covenant. At first the Philistines became very frightened, for they remembered that every time the Ark of the Covenant was with the Israelites the Jews were victorious. But the Philistines were goaded on by their leaders who said: "Now look, are you men or aren't you?"

So the battle was joined and in spite of the presence of the Ark, the Israelites were beaten. What was worse, the Ark of the Covenant was captured. It was held by the Phil-

RUTH

The book of Ruth is very short but very beautiful and extremely interesting from many points of view. First of all it is a perfect short story and contains all the elements of this form of literature — characterization, structure, etc. It is told very simply; not a word can be deleted.

There has been much speculation by theologians as to why this little story of four chapters has been included in this particular section of the Old Testament. They feel the reason for its inclusion is its connection with David; for from the union of Ruth and Boaz came Obed; Obed was the father of Jesse and Jesse was the father of David. That seems valid enough; but I think the reason lies deeper than that. We will discuss that later.

The narrative concerns a young widow Ruth who is very devoted to her mother-in-law Naomi. They return to the tribe of Naomi after the death of their husbands. Now it was the custom for a widow to marry her husband's next of kin. But Ruth met and fell in love with Boaz, a distant relative of Naomi's. There is a discussion between the two prospective bridegrooms and, at the end, the hero Boaz wins her.

Every scene in this story is logical, nothing happens by chance. But this apparently simple story is one of the most esoteric in the Bible, and the name gives the clue. Although it is called the book of Ruth, it is actually the story of Naomi. It is Naomi who opens the book (1:2) and closes it (4:17). It concerns the grief of Naomi, the events that occurred in her life, the things that happen to her when she returns to her home, and like Job (there are parallels in the two stories) her life is restored when the villagers tell her that Ruth has given birth to a son. The name Naomi means the "pleasant one, joy" and is derived from the ancient Babylonian name Naamith. Naamith was a female version of Babylonian god of fertility, Kanmuth.

If you are familiar with the Tarot cards, you will realize that the story of Ruth is the story of the second card,

the High Priestess – nature, fertility. This is the subconscious part of the Mind of God from which all things are created. Ruth is the third card of the Tarot – the Empress. She is the individual subconscious mind, the individual soul that recreates; she is the daughter of these two forces. (We will interpret this story on two planes – that of the plane of esoteric symbolism [the Tarot] and the plane of the soul.) Ruth is being redeemed; she is working her way back to a consciousness with God. She has reached the point where she is to some degree conscious of the power of the universe that lives within her.

Therefore she labors in the corn field – a sign of fertility – and is capable of creating. Her child Obed represents the birth of the Christ Consciousness, and Boaz her husband is the physical manifestation. Yet there is a conflict in the story. There are two daughters-in-law, Orpah and Ruth. They represent the dual side of the subconscious mind. (We all know how often we can follow the right path or the wrong path.) There are also two men – Boaz and the kinsman who does not want the responsibility of marrying Ruth. Boaz does want to. Here we have a representation of the duality of human life.

Finally, the Law brings about the union of Boaz, the physical, and Ruth, the soul; the product is the child Obed who is brought to Naomi. Naomi is also changed by the event, for when she first returned to her village, she said: "Call me not Naomi, call me Mara: for the Almighty hath dealt bitterly with me" (1:20).

Now the word Almighty is only used a few times throughout the Bible. The Hebrew word for Almighty is El-Shaddai which indicates that this story has Cosmic Significance. It concerns the nature side of creation that is being first destructive, to be followed by a reconstruction on a higher level of life, – in other words, Nature run riot. An example of this on the physical plane is frequently seen in a land that is very fertile and which is suddenly completely ruined by dust storms, and, then, in some way, rehabilitated. This is what we are being told here. Naomi is becoming Mara – Nature gone berserk at the moment. Or we can say this in another way. The Law of Cause and Effect is directing Nature into paths of cruelty, into paths of bitterness and grief. (Do not forget this follows the book of Judges, where we saw how man had almost wrecked himself.)

sion." Yet in Verse 15 we read: "and Samuel feared to show Eli the vision." Why the confusion in the texts? Direct hearing is a very rare gift and at that time no one had any knowledge of it, except in Egypt where it was very much understood and experienced. The writers and the editors of the book were completely mystified, but they were very well acquainted with visions; in fact they were quite fond of consulting oracles, and had a great interest in necromancy and many other phases of psychism.

But the Word of God being spoken to a human being was a new occurrence for them. If you recall, even in the story of Moses, although Moses often had this experience, it was never expressed in this way. We were always being told: "And the Lord said to Moses and Moses said to the people." But here we have a twelve-year-old boy who was not educated in the mystery schools of Egypt, a boy who had very little spiritual background, and yet suddenly he had contact with his God – a contact that was so powerful that he could hear the voice of his God speak to him. This was something the Israelites could neither understand nor accept. The question of what kind of spiritual relationship people will accept has always been extremely interesting.

Down through the centuries, from the time of Samuel to the time of Jesus and right up to the present day, spiritual knowledge given by revelation has rarely been understood or believed in. This kind of knowledge has always been kept alive by a small segment of the theological world – especially shortly before and after the time of Jesus. But according to orthodox belief all revelation ceased after the writing of the book of Revelation. Since then most people think such a thing is impossible. I say "believed to have ceased" and "most people" – but some people still continue to have visions. More people than we would think. People with such gifts have always been with us and always will be with us, because the ability to see visions belongs mostly to the psychic stage. There have been hundreds of thousands of people who were psychic or who went through the phenomena of that stage – and there always will be.

In fact, a vision is not an unusual thing at all. But the difficulty lies in the analysis of such an experience. Only someone who has knowledge of it can decide whether the vision was a hallucination – that is, a subconscious

pieces; out of heaven shall he thunder upon them: the Lord shall judge the ends of the earth; and he shall give strength unto his king, and exalt the horn of his anointed" (Verse 10).

The boy Samuel served in the temple and he began to develop into an unusual personality. The episode of the "calling of Samuel," which is very unusual and very beautiful, is the beginning of his career as a great religious figure. We are told that Eli was very old and his sight was dim. One night, as Eli and Samuel were sleeping in the temple, Samuel heard his name called. He arose and went to Eli and said to him: "Did you call me?" Eli replied: "No, my son." Samuel went back to bed, and again he heard his name being called; again he went in, but Eli said he had not called him. Once more he heard his name called and went to Eli. By this time the priest, who knew the ways of the Lord, said: "Go, lie down, and it shall be if he call thee that thou should say: 'Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth' (I Samuel 3:10). I cannot refrain from mentioning here a remark made by Dr. Emmet Fox. He said that we should be more like Samuel and say: "Speak Lord, for thy servant heareth," instead of always saying: "Hear Lord, for thy servant speaketh."

Samuel listened and was told the dreadful things that were going to happen to Eli and his family. He was also told that the words he would speak would have a great influence on Israel. He lay awake all night, for he was afraid to tell Eli what he had heard. In the morning Eli questioned him. When Samuel told him, Eli said: "It was the Lord." Eli knew this was so, for Samuel had spoken with such simple authority. Eli did not bemoan his fate, but accepted it gracefully as the will of God.

What is the meaning of this calling? There comes a stage in the spiritual development of the individual when he actually hears his name uttered as clearly as if some person were speaking it. It is rather startling to hear your name called and yet find no one there who had done so. Actually this is the symbol of the awakening of inner hearing. One of the things that is interesting here is that the story begins with a description of Samuel being called and ends with a description of a vision. Also in I Samuel 3:1, the text says: "The word of the Lord was precious" (which is an interesting word), "in those days there was no open vi-

Now let us discuss the Tarot for a moment. The Tarot comes down to us from the early Egyptians, and these cards, rightly understood, symbolize the basic truths that we believe. The originators of the Tarot knew that esoteric knowledge had to be preserved for mankind. They also knew that if they gave it freely to mankind, this knowledge could be easily and dangerously misused. Their purpose was to preserve the teaching for those who would have the insight to understand it.

Being extremely clever and knowing human nature extremely well, the originators of the Tarot put this wisdom in the form of a game. They were well aware that man was most unobservant and the last thing he ever did was to look within himself. They invented a deck of cards which symbolized the wisdom they wanted to preserve, and they knew the best way to preserve it was to put a "new game" into his hands to play with – one which would be so fascinating that man would always keep it. How successful they were may be seen in the mutilated form in which they are now used – these are the cards with which we play bridge, poker, canasta, etc.

But the Tarot itself consists of 76 cards, divided into two sections. 22 of these are known as the Major Arcana, the Major Wisdom, and portray through pictures the secrets of the soul; its evolution, its experiences and its climax of development. Except for the original Tarot pack, of which only a few exist, most of this knowledge is lost. Today we have taken only one card from the Major Arcana. The 22 cards mentioned above are numbered one through 21, and they are arranged in three layers of seven each. The first seven form the level of Principles; the second seven are the level of Evolution; and the third seven are the level of Experience and Fulfillment. This is really a picture story of the inner development of MAN.

The 22nd card or the 1st, (it may be called either because its number is 0) is the Fool. He is a handsome young man who stands at the edge of a precipice. His knapsack is over his shoulder and his eyes look at the sun. He is joyous, free and eternally young. He represents the Presence of God within every human being.

The remaining cards relate the experiences of the Fool in you and in me. The first card is a very pragmatic one, the Magician, and represents the individual who has reach-

ed the stage where he has the power of the Word (his wand symbolizes the Word) and is able to transform these elements into whatever he wants.

The second card shows the first thing the Magician has to contend with. This is Naomi and in the Tarot is called the High Priestess. She is very regal and sits with a beautiful crown on her head. At her feet are the sun and the moon. She is Nature, she is that which gives Life to everything that has existence, from a blade of grass to the person of Jesus. She is the soul of the universe, completely creative; everything comes from her, she is that which God uses to create. Each and every one of us, being a spark of Divine Mind, has a bit of her in our subconscious mind. We have the same quality that she has, creativity.

The third card is her daughter, the Empress. She represents our subconscious mind. It is difficult to realize, when you look at this little Empress sitting on her throne, that this little imp is the cause of all our trouble until we bring her under control. In the story of Ruth the Empress has been controlled.

So you see, the story of Ruth concerns the partnership there must exist between our individual subconscious mind and the nature side of God. It is not until you and I voluntarily decide that we are going to seek such a partnership that we are going to find not only the Presence, but through the Presence complete contact with the nature of the universe. This is the basis of the esoteric meaning of the story.

Not only is Ruth the story of the union between the individual subconscious and the cosmic subconscious, it is also a story of fertility. When these events occurred, the Israelites were an agricultural people and farming was their major industry. Fertility played a very important role in the life of the Israelites. Now fertility, as we learned from other books in the Old Testament, did not pertain only to the field. The family also had to be fertile; the conception of children is a paramount issue in Jewish history. So we are not surprised to find this is also important to Naomi; the goddess of fertility needs children in order to fulfill her role properly. At the end of the story, Ruth has given birth to a son and Naomi can once more rejoice in the knowledge that life will continue to be and to grow.

The story itself, even from a pragmatic point of view, is most interesting and contains one of the most controver-

Peninnah knew that Hannah was his beloved and because of her jealousy constantly reminded Hannah of her inability to conceive. When Elkanah and his two wives had gone up to the temple to celebrate a family feast, Hannah went into the temple to pray. She prayed fervently to the Lord that she could have a son. As her lips moved in prayer, the high priest Eli watched her. (Incidentally the Hebrew word for this kind of silent prayer is "mutter"; mutter in Hebrew means to "meditate". In this sense meditation means "muttering to God." I find this quaint phrase charming, don't you?) Eli reproved her because he thought she was drunk. She said that she had taken no wine or strong drink and that her greatest desire was to have a child. He answered that he was sure her prayer would be heard. She then replied, just as the mother of Samson did: "He will serve before the Lord; I will never cut his hair and he shall never eat meat or drink." He, too, was to be a Nazarite.

However, Samuel was a different type from Samson; Samuel was apparently at the stage of evolution where he was ready to dedicate his life to God, whereas Samson was not. He was forced into it. In the second chapter, Hannah's prayer was answered and Samuel was born. (Samuel means "God has created.") As soon as he was old enough, he was pledged to the temple by his mother. In the meantime (2:27) a man of God came into the temple and told Eli the high priest (Eli means "God of gods, the Most High") that because of the sins of his sons, they and all of his descendants would be rejected from the priesthood. There was absolutely no way in which they could be reinstated — no sacrifice that they would make would be of any avail. This is rather a devastating thing, especially when you recall that Eli was a Levite and a descendant of Aaron. This seems an unjust pronouncement, for Eli had tried to discharge his duties faithfully as a priest, and it seems unfair for him to be held responsible for the sins of his sons and their failure to live up to their duties.

The first ten verses of Chapter 2 comprise a hymn of thanksgiving offered to God by Hannah. It is extremely beautiful and reminiscent of many of the psalms of David. It is one of the loveliest passages in the Old Testament. But what is more important is that in it we encounter for the first time the beginning of the Messianic idea, because it speaks of "The adversaries of the Lord shall be broken to

killed by an Amalekite. One of the most appealing discrepancies to me is that Absalom the son of David is unaware in II Samuel 18:18 that he has a family, but he suddenly finds he has four children in II Samuel 14:27.

Yet in spite of these discrepancies we find that a tremendous power begins to manifest; for we are seeing the beginning of the impact of theology on the people of Israel. It began as a concept in the mind of one man, Moses, who insisted that his people abide by it; but after his death the Jews only remembered the Law existed when they were in trouble. And they were in trouble often. You know all of the chapters that read: "and the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord, and the Lord gave them in the hands of —, and the Lord raised up a deliverer — and the land had rest." When the episodes in Samuel take place, there is still strife in the land and the Philistines are still their enemies. Remember that Samson was not able to free the Israelites from the Philistines, and they have continued to disobey the Laws of the one God. They are in constant trouble, as they continued to be right up to the time of Samuel.

Samuel was certainly no Moses (there was no one like Moses until Jesus), but he had many fine qualities of his own. If he had not had them, he would not have attained the influence over Israel that he had, an influence that continued long after his death. The book of I Samuel begins with the story of the parents of Samuel and the circumstances surrounding his birth. You will notice it is similar to the birth of Samson, except that Elkanah, Samuel's father (which means "God has created") is married to two women. Very often a man had two wives in order to be sure that his name would be perpetuated. Elkanah's favorite wife, Hannah, was barren. Isn't it strange that in many instances in the Bible the favorite wife was barren? Do you remember the story of Abraham and Sarah? But — in the New Testament Mary is the only wife, and has no rival; she is a young woman betrothed to an older man.

In each of these stories of the Old Testament, we have a symbol of what later was known as the Annunciation. Hannah, which means "grace, fair," is the symbol of the soul that has consciously devoted itself to seeking God. She was very bitter because she had not conceived a child. Peninnah, the second wife of Elkanah, had several children.

sial points of religious history, no matter what religion is being studied. You will remember that in Exodus, Numbers, Leviticus and Deuteronomy almost nobody, except Moses, married out of his faith. The idea of the purity of the race is so strong that it has lasted even until our time. Not only in Judaism but in every sect of Christianity almost the worst thing a human being can do is to marry out of his own "faith." The Jews were very strict about this law and, for the most part, they still are. In this story we find that one of Naomi's sons married a woman who was not an Israelite. Ruth was a Moabite, a Gentile; she was from a completely outcast religion. Yet there is no mention in the story that Naomi was displeased with this marriage.

In Biblical times, if a husband died, it was the custom for the widow to return to her family or to marry her husband's oldest brother. The firstborn son of that union was then considered the firstborn son of the deceased husband. This was called the old Levirate law. But here the problem was a little different: Ruth was not an Israelite. After the death of her sons, when Naomi decided to return to her country, she expected her daughters-in-law to go back to their families. Orpah did so but Ruth refused. We all know this very beautiful passage is even used in many marriage ceremonies today: "Entreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: Thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God" (1:16).

Interpreted esoterically, this exquisite passage refers to the subconscious mind when it decides to return home. Ruth also says: "Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: The Lord do so to me, and more also, if aught but death part thee and me" (1:17). So she went with Naomi because she wanted to take care of her mother-in-law. When they reached the village the people remembered Naomi and greeted her by name. She replied: "Do not call me Naomi, call me Mara, for the Almighty has dealt very bitterly with me" (1:20). This is the first part of the story.

In Chapter 2 Ruth asked Naomi's permission to go into the field to glean ears of corn. In the field she met Boaz who immediately became interested in her. He was a distant kinsman of Naomi and knew that Ruth was her daughter-in-law. Boaz told his workers to allow Ruth to pick up any corn she wanted and that none of them were to molest her.

This shows us how foreigners were treated. Foreigners, particularly of another religion, then were very much in danger of being abused. But Boaz protected Ruth and when she returned and told Naomi, her mother-in-law was pleased to find out that the man concerned was Boaz.

Then comes the scene at the threshing floor. Naomi sent Ruth back to Boaz in the middle of the night and she told Ruth not to let him see her "until he shall have done eating and drinking." Ruth did as she was told and uncovered his feet and lay down. He did not take advantage of her; but was certainly taken by her, for he wanted to marry her. The next day Boaz met the first kinsman who had the right to marry Ruth if he so chose. Boaz asked him what to do, for it seemed that Naomi owned the land that belonged to Elimelech, her husband. This is a bit strange and has never been adequately explained, for in Deuteronomy and Leviticus the Lord states very definitely that the widows had no holdings. So where Naomi got the land from is not clear.

Of course, esoterically Naomi, who symbolizes fertility produces the land. But at any rate, the kinsman and twelve elders discussed the situation: the kinsman at first offered to buy the land. But when Boaz told him he must also marry Ruth, the kinsman, because it might hurt his own inheritance for his children, changed his mind. He said to Boaz: "Buy it for thee" (4:8). Then the kinsman drew off his shoe and gave it to Boaz. This is an odd gesture, isn't it?

Now some religions, for instance the Moslems, will not enter their place of worship with their shoes on. The Lord told Moses and Joshua: "Take off your shoes, for the place where you stand is holy ground." When you take off your shoes in the presence of the Holy One, it symbolizes giving up your free will. When the kinsman gave his shoe to Boaz it symbolized that he freely gave Ruth to him. Down through the ages, this particular gesture has always been considered one of the holiest gestures anybody could make in the presence of God. Removing a shoe is also an insulting gesture: when a man rejected a woman he took off her shoe and in return she spat in his face.

But the real meaning of the removal of the shoe is that it symbolizes the fact that of your own free will you are giving up something. It is a gesture of voluntary renunciation.

Boaz and Ruth married and they had a son, Obed. Af-

I SAMUEL, CHAPTERS 1-6

It is interesting to note that I Samuel, II Samuel, I Kings and II Kings are actually one book; but for the sake of convenience it has been divided into four volumes. Although Samuel dies in the middle of I Samuel, two books bear his name. They do so for a very good reason; for he was, after Moses, the first of the great prophets; and was called the great of the former prophets.

Of all the books in the Bible, this was one of the most difficult to translate. Many passages of the original Hebrew are unintelligible and consequently there are parts of it that are extremely hard to read. On the other hand, other parts of it are really magnificent poems. The book as we have it today has been compiled from more than one source, and is probably the work of at least three authors. It is believed that much of I Samuel was written by the writer who was responsible for the books of Deuteronomy and Judges.

Then there are a number of dialectic stories (as *The Interpreter's Bible* calls them) which were extremely difficult to translate because the grammar was so confused, and many colloquialisms were used which are impossible to trace. Also there are several versions of many of the incidents in the book. This no doubt occurred because several editors tried to weave the various strands into a single account. For that reason, Eli is told twice about the rejection of his family from the priesthood. We are told that Samuel was a great prophet known throughout Israel and yet Saul apparently never heard of him.

There are any number of such discrepancies and duplications throughout this fascinating book. In 16:14-23 David becomes Saul's chief armor-bearer and court musician and yet in 17:55 Saul has never heard of him. Both David and Elhanan (I Samuel 17:51, II Samuel 21:19) are supposed to have killed Goliath. Saul committed suicide in I Samuel 31:4 but later on in II Samuel 1:10 we read that he was

"Our Father" — This really could be the subtitle of the Book of Ruth.

The Book of Ruth — a seemingly simple tale, carries many lessons. "Those that have ears to hear, let them hear," and Jesus, centuries later.

Beyond all the symbolism, there is the basic idea that God is not confined to those who are "born in high places, born in special races or creeds — but is only to be found actively in those, whose love is so great, they seek to serve.

Ruth — a stranger — an alien — had this, above all things.

Mr. M.

ter Obed was born, the women of the village came to Naomi and told her that all that she had lost had been restored to her. She now had a son and in that son she would be honored and justified. Obed means "servant, worshipper" and when Obed grew up he had a son named Jesse, "God is He." Jesse is the root of Yahweh, and it is Jesse who was the father of David, "Love." So we have a rather fascinating genealogy.

Ruth, of course, is a beautiful love story, but it is really an esoteric drama, a drama that goes on in all of us, whether or not we are aware of it, until we make the conscious effort to do so. Boaz represents the mentality and means "quick thought" and the "power of thought." One of the two pillars in the temple of Solomon was named Boaz.

Ruth is really a drama of the soul concerning the minor initiations, when the union with Good begins to be apparent, and we have the child which is the result of that union, the power of thought. Ruth, "joy," is symbolically "a foreigner, — a stranger — who embodies a new characteristic of the subconscious mind. She is the child of Naomi, with whom she is linked; and this is a voluntary link because Naomi wanted Ruth to leave her, but Ruth refused to go. The other sister-in-law, Orpah, who did, means "stiff-necked" and she expressed this quality when she turned the back of her neck to her mother-in-law.

I have always been fascinated by the purity of the concept which is expressed here. It was the Israelites who first brought forth the concept of the one God and adhered to it, but we all fail to realize that a concept cannot help but be influenced by the surrounding conditions of the people who gave it to us. We find that the Greeks had a tremendous influence on the New Testament, and in the Old Testament the imprint of the Babylonians, the Egyptians, the Assyrians, the Moabites and the Philistines have all colored the concepts of the Jewish people. Sometimes the influence has been so great, as we saw in the book of Judges, that the people lost sight of the one God.

This story also expresses another idea which was quite revolutionary for that period of history, and that is that God is no respecter of persons. The Presence of God is not limited to a special cult or a single creed; it was just as powerful in Ruth, the Gentile, as it was in any of the

Israelites; in fact, it was she who symbolized most strongly the idea of the Presence of God. This idea of the universality of the Presence is very gently and subtly implanted in this story. In the New Testament it was Peter who found that concept hardest to accept. He was furious when Paul, the most rabid Jew of them all, preached that there was neither Jew nor Greek, there is only the Presence of God. This little story says the same thing. It was not the Israelites who were the chosen people of God; it was Ruth, a non-Jew, who so strongly believed in the idea of the one God; and she expressed her belief by showing a kindness to her mother-in-law that no one had ever manifested before in that particular relationship.

The meanings of the names in this book are quite interesting. Naomi, "joy, the pleasant one," was married to Elimelech, "God is king." Now we can understand what she meant in 1:20 when she said: "The Almighty hath dealt very bitterly with me." Her husband is gone and her first-born son, Mahlon, which means "weakening, to blot out"; and Chilion, her second son, which means "pining, to perish."

Another interesting thing in this story is the use of the term Ephrathite, instead of Ephraimite. Ephrathite was the Babylonian word for Ephraimite, which points to the fact that this story originated in Babylonia and, for reasons which I think we now understand, was adapted by the Hebrews. Orpah, the other daughter-in-law, means "stiff-necked," and Ruth actually means "love of the soul in its natural state; the desire to love." That, of course, is the real quality of the subconscious mind, strange as it may seem to us in our present state of development.

Boaz represents the power of thought, the power to bring together, and it is through his thinking, through his mental activity (there is no such activity on Ruth's part) after he realizes the situation, that a solution is found for him to marry Ruth. Nor is there any activity by Naomi, other than to send Ruth to Boaz. It is only the conscious mind that works things out. For that reason Boaz at first rejects Ruth (the threshing floor); then he thinks about things and finally makes their marriage possible, and from their union a child is born. This is true on every plane. This is probably one of the clearest examples in the entire Bible, with the exception of the life of Jesus, where the

three planes of being are so clearly and completely delineated. And isn't it a relief to find that there are no sacrifices and no murders in this story? Death only results from natural causes, which is most unusual in these first books of the Bible.

We realize now that this story has its roots in the Tarot, as well as in other old religions, once we understand the esoteric side of it. We forget that esotericism was once a fundamental part of Judaism. I have always felt that it has been a great tragedy that the esoteric side of Judaism has disappeared. In fact, even Christianity has deleted it from its teachings. It was once a great factor in Judaism, and it is quite interesting to see its rebirth in Hasidism, which originated a few hundred years ago in Poland. But the real esotericism of Judaism has disappeared. And so this little book, like the book of Job or the Song of Solomon, which are among the most esoteric literature the world has ever known, is read and studied on a purely exoteric level. Most people think the Song of Solomon is a love song; it is — but it is the love song of the union of the soul with the Christ within.

Not many people understand this, anymore than they really understand the story of Ruth. This charming idyll is a story of love and friendship, true, but the love embodied in it is the love we must all learn to manifest — the love of the Presence within, and we must express this love as did Ruth, in our relationships with other human beings. Like all great works of art, Ruth can be read and appreciated on many levels. But we as metaphysical students should learn to read this book on its deepest level — for it is a story of the evolution of the human soul.