

Martin Buber - God in the Everyday  
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**I. A Life of Dialogue**

The Word “You”

The world is twofold for man in accordance with his twofold attitude.

The attitude of man is twofold in accordance with the two basic words he can speak.

The basic words are not single words but word pairs.

One basic word is the word pair I-You.

The other basic word is the word pair I-It; but this basic word is not changed when He or She takes the place of It. (*I and Thou*, 53)

When I confront a human being as my You and speak the basic word I-You to him, then he is no thing among things nor does he consist of things...Neighborless and seamless, he is You and fills the firmament. Not as if there were nothing but he; but everything else lives in *his* light. (59)

The basic word I-You can be spoken only with one's whole being. The concentration and fusion into a whole being can never be accomplished by me, can never be accomplished without me. I require a you to become; becoming I, I say You.

All actual life is encounter. (*I and Thou*, 62)

How Rabbi Sasov Learned to Love Man

“How to Love men is something I learned from a peasant. He was sitting in an inn along with other peasants, drinking. For a long time he was as silent as all the rest, but when he was moved by the wine, he asked one of the men seated beside him: ‘Tell me, do you love me or don't you love me?’ The other replied: ‘I love you very much.’ But the first peasant replied, ‘You say that you love me, but you do not know what I need. If you really loved me, you would know.’ The other had not a word to say to this, and the peasant who had put the question fell silent again.

“But I understood. **To know the need of men and to bear the burden of their sorrow – that is the true love of men.**” (*Tales*, Vol. II p. 86)

## II. The Life of Community

### Community of Relation

True community does not come into being because people have feelings for each other (though that is required, too), but rather on two accounts: all of them have to stand in a living, reciprocal relationship to a single center, and they have to stand in a living reciprocal relationship to one another...A community is built upon a living, reciprocal relationship, but the builder is the living active center. (*I and Thou*, 94)

### In the Image

Rabbi Rafael asked his teacher: “Why is no face like any other?” Rabbi Pinchas replied: “Because Man is created in the image of God. Every human being sucks the living strength of God from one another place, and all together they make up Man. That is why their faces all differ from one another.” – *Tales of the Hasidim*, Vol. I, pp. 126-7.

Rabbi Pinchas said: “When a man is singing and cannot lift his voice, and another comes and sings with him, another who can lift his voice, then the first will be able to lift his voice too.”

– *Tales of the Hasidim*, Vol. I, p. 125

### Peace

Concerning the words of the prayer: “He who maketh peace in his high places, may he make peace for us...” (*Oseh shalom bimromav*) Rabbi Pinchas said: “We all know that heaven (*shamayim*) came into being when God made peace between fire (*esh*) and water (*mayim*). And he (meaning God) who could make peace between the utmost extremes, will surely be able to make peace between us.”

### Love of Neighbor

A merchant once came to Rabbi Meir Shalom...and complained of another merchant who had opened his shop right next door to him. “You seem to think,” said the zaddik, “that it is your shop that supports you, and are setting your heart upon it instead of on God who is your support. But perhaps you do not know where God lives? It is written: ‘Love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord.’ This means: ‘You shall want for your neighbor what he needs, just as you do for yourself – and therein you will find the Lord.’” – *Tales of the Hasidim*, Vol. II, p. 235

### III. Relating to God

#### God: the Eternal You

Extended, the lines of relationship intersect in the eternal You.

Every single You is a glimpse of that. Through every single You the basic word addresses the eternal You. (*I and Thou*, 123)

Man can do justice to the relation to God that has been given to him only by actualizing God in the world in accordance with his ability and measure of each day. (*I and Thou*, 163)

#### God’s Dwelling

“Where is the Dwelling of God?”

This was the question with which the Rabbi of Kotsk surprised a number of learned men who happened to be visiting.

They laughed at him: “What a thing to ask! Is not the whole world full of his glory!”

Then he answered his own question: “God dwells wherever man lets him in.”

(*Tales*, Vol. II, 277)

#### The Counterruse

Several mitnagdim (adversaries) of Sanok came to the Rabbi of Rizhyn when he was passing through their city and complained to him: “In our congregation we pray at dawn, and after that we sit wrapped in our prayer shawls, with phylacteries on head and arm, and learn a chapter of the Mishnah. Not so the Hasidim! They pray after the hour set for prayer has passed, and when they have finished praying they sit down together and drink schnapps. And yet they are called ‘devout’ (*Hasidim*) and we are called ‘adversaries’ (*mitnagdim*)...”

The rabbi said, "...The truth of the matter is this: You know that ever since the day our Temple was destroyed, we pray instead of making sacrifice. And just as the sacrifice was disqualified if the thought was impure, so it is with prayer. That is why the Evil Urge devises ruse upon ruse to confuse (one) who prays with thoughts alien to prayer. Now for this, the Hasidim have invented a counterruse. After praying they sit down together and drink to one another, 'To life!' Each tells what is burdening (their) heart and then they say to one another: 'May God grant your desire!' And since – so our sages say – prayers can be said in any language whatsoever, **this speaking and answering of theirs while drinking is also regarded as prayer.** But all the Evil Urge sees is that they are eating and drinking and using everyday speech, and so he stops bothering his head about them. (*Tales*, Vol. II, pp. 55-6)

### The Table

On the day of the New Moon (*Rosh Chodesh*) in the month he was to die, the rabbi of Apt discussed at this table the death of the righteous man. When he had said grace he rose and began to walk back and forth in the room. His face glowed. Then he stopped by the table and said: "Table, pure table, you will testify on my behalf that I have properly eaten and properly taught at your board."

Later he bade that his coffin be made out of the table. (*Tales*, Vol. II, p. 120)

### The Two Strangers

In the 119<sup>th</sup> Psalm, the psalmist says to God: "I am a sojourner (or: stranger) on the earth, hide not thy commandments from me."

Concerning this verse Rabbi Barukh said: He whom Life drives into exile and who comes to a land alien to him, has nothing in common with the people there, and not a soul he can talk to. But if a second stranger appears, even though he may come from quite a different place, the two can confide in each other, and live together henceforth, and cherish each other. And had they not both been strangers, they would never have known such close companionship. That is what the psalmist means: 'You, even as I, are a sojourner on earth and have no abiding place for your glory. So do not withdraw from me, but reveal your commandments, that I may become your friend.'" (*Tales*, Vol. I, p. 89)