

FREUD'S MEETING WITH RABBI ALEXANDRE SAFRAN

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Introduction

The literature is replete with authors attempting to prove and/or disprove Freud's knowledge of the Hebrew language and Jewish primary sources: Talmudic, Midrashic and Jewish mystical literature.¹ There is new evidence which indicates that Freud had a considerable interest in and knowledge of Jewish religious texts. This is demonstrated in an exchange of letters that has recently come to light between the Los Angeles psychoanalyst, Dr Samuel Eisenstein, and the prominent Kabbalist and Chief Rabbi of Geneva, Rabbi Dr Alexandre Safran. Their correspondence mentions a meeting that took place at Freud's request at his home in Vienna in 1934 to discuss 'the relation between psychoanalysis and Judaism'. The authors have included the letters exchanged between Eisenstein and Safran in Appendices A and B.

Alexandre Safran

Alexandre Safran was born in Bacău, Romania, in 1910, and died in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2006. He had studied philosophy at Vienna University, in the years 1930–1933, receiving his doctorate in 1933. In 1940,

1. Talmud = a corpus of teachings comprising civil, religious, sociological and philosophical discussions. The writing and final redaction are between the third and sixth centuries C.E. Midrash = Jewish commentaries on the Hebrew Scriptures, compiled between 400–1300 C.E., and are based on exegesis, metaphors and legends. Jewish mysticism = the 'inner' or 'higher' reality, beyond 'external' reality, that mystics attempt to 'experience' and 'know'. This inner reality is associated with the Divine and, therefore, the Godhead is the source of everything.

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he became the Chief Rabbi of Romania, the youngest Chief Rabbi in the world. During the Nazi era, he became very active with the Romanian Orthodox Church and several ambassadors, as well as the papal nuncio, in convincing the Romanian authorities to resist German demands for deportation of the Jews. Safran was instrumental in saving 57% of the pre-war Jewish population of over 800,000. Refusing to cooperate with the Communist leadership after the war, he was forced into exile to Geneva, Switzerland. In 1948 he became Chief Rabbi of Geneva, where he remained until his death at age 95. He wrote several books including major philosophical works on the Kabbalah, the Jewish mystical tradition (Safran, 1977, 1987, 1991).

The Eisenstein–Safran Exchange of Letters

In 1934, Samuel Eisenstein attended a lecture in Bacău given by Safran after returning from Vienna after completing his doctoral studies. Years afterwards, on 25 June 1956, Eisenstein wrote to Safran about this lecture. He recalled that Safran had talked about an encounter he had with Freud while he was a student in Vienna. Eisenstein writes (see Appendix A):

I remember you saying that you remarked to Prof. Freud that you felt there was some relation between Freud's Jewish background and his discovery of Psychoanalysis. I also vaguely remember you saying that he nodded or gave some sign of being receptive to your suggestion.

Eisenstein was also born in Bacău, Romania, and emigrated to the United States after finishing his medical studies in Italy. Eisenstein was a Training Analyst and Past President and Dean of the Southern California Psychoanalytic Institute. In addition, he was an Associate Clinical Professor at the University of Southern California.² Eisenstein wanted Safran to write up his meeting(s)³ with Freud for a paper to be published for the celebration of the 100th anniversary of Freud's birth.

On 11 July 1956, Safran responded, in French, to Eisenstein's letter, in English, and wrote that he was unable to write the article that Eisenstein requested because of work and time constraints (see Appendix B). Safran recalled that the conversation with Freud centred around the verse in Genesis 4: 7: 'If you do good, will there not be special privilege? And if you do not do good, sin is crouching at the door. It lusts after you,

2. Eisenstein edited a classic book, together with Franz Alexander and Martin Grotjahn, entitled *Psychoanalytic Pioneers* (Alexander, Eisenstein & Grotjahn, 1966). He died in 1996.

3. Eisenstein mentions: 'your encounter', implying one meeting. In Safran's obituary in *Le Monde*, 31.7.06, by Prof. Carol Iancu (2006) of Paul Valéry University in Montpellier, France, he writes: 'numerous encounters'. In several phone calls the authors made to Rabbi Dr Safran during the period 2004–5, he referred to his 'meetings' with Freud.

but you can dominate it.’⁴ Safran adds in his own handwriting: ‘and its [the verse’s] commentary in the Talmud [Tractate] Kiddouchin 30b’. The Talmudic discussion deals with the concept of the instincts: the evil desire creeping up on man and how one may be able to overcome the evil desire. Safran adds that: ‘the meeting took place at the home of Prof. Freud, at his invitation, after he attended a conference that I gave on Jewish thought’.

Textual Analysis

The context of the Biblical verse that Safran taught Freud is after the expulsion of Adam and Eve from the Garden of Eden and the birth of their sons Cain and Abel. Cain brings an offering to God consisting of fruits of the ground. Abel offers up to God choice animals. ‘God paid heed to Abel and his offering, but to Cain and his offering. He paid no heed. Cain became very furious and depressed. God said to Cain: “Why are you so furious. Why are you depressed?”’ (Genesis 4: 6).

Then we have our verse, Genesis 4: 7, that consists of three parts:

1. ‘If you do good, will there not be special privilege?’
2. ‘And if you do not do good, sin is crouching at the door.’
3. ‘It lusts after you, but you can dominate it.’

In order to analyse the verse and extrapolate what Safran was trying to teach Freud, we need to look at two philosophical concepts of Jacques Derrida which he popularized in the 1960s: deconstruction and binary opposites (Powell, 1997). Deconstruction allows us to examine a text and ‘decentre’. This means that, while a text may seem to be unified, clear and logical, a closer reading may show us that there are contradictory meanings. Binary opposites enable us to see a dialectic formulation of opposite terms or meanings, and this, in turn, will clarify for us the accentuation of one or another. We can see examples of both of these terms in Søren Kierkegaard’s work on Abraham’s near-sacrifice of his son Isaac. Kierkegaard terms this seemingly contradictory act: ‘a teleological suspension of the ethical. He [Abraham] has, as the single individual, become higher than the universal. This is the paradox which cannot be mediated’ (1843/1985, p. 95).

The three parts to the verse all deal with ‘action’. Either one can do ‘good’ or one can do ‘not good’. And man has the power to dominate the ‘not good’ which can lead to sin if not controlled. By decentring, we can concentrate on a central theme – the underlying instinct which can lead to ‘good’ or to ‘not good’. ‘Good’ and ‘not good’ are binary opposites. By focusing on what one can do, the power to change lies in the hands of man. Both instincts – the ‘good’ and the ‘not good’ – are, in reality, one: ‘good’. Either it remains ‘good’ or it can be turned into ‘not good’.

4. The translation is from Aryeh Kaplan (1981).

Interestingly, in the Aramaic translation of the Bible,⁵ we find that both instincts – the ‘good’ and the ‘not good’ – are in reality one: ‘not good’. The translation states: ‘If you do good actions, it [the “not good”] will leave you. If you don’t do good actions, on the Day of Judgement, your bad actions will extract a penalty if you do not return. If you return [to good], it [your bad actions] will leave you.’ The translator felt that the lust to receive punishment will always be there, and man needs to overcome this underlying evil tendency.

We consider that Safran and Freud were exploring the binary instincts, the ‘good’ and the ‘not good’. The above analysis relates to the biblical verse from a basic textual analysis. The Talmudic discussion on this verse, noted in Safran’s handwriting, is from Tractate Kiddushin 30b. The Talmud states the following:

So did the Holy One, blessed be He, speak unto Israel: ‘My children! I created the Evil Desire but I also created the Torah, as its antidote. If you occupy yourselves with the Torah, you shall not be delivered into his hand, for it is said: “If you do good, will there not be special privilege?” But if you do not occupy yourselves with the Torah, you shall be delivered into his hand, as it is written: “Sin is crouching at the door.” Moreover, he is altogether preoccupied with you [to make you sin], as it is said: “It lusts after you.” Yet, if you will, you can rule over him, as it is said: “But you can dominate it.”’

Instincts and Drives: The Evil Impulse and the Good Impulse

When Freud met with Safran, in the early 1930s, the theories of instincts and drives⁶ were well documented and elicited many elaborations. The encounter between Freud and Safran, as documented in Safran’s letter to Eisenstein, reviewed the classic Jewish sources (biblical and Talmudic) for the *yetzer ha-tov* [the good inclination/drive] and the *yetzer ha-ra* [the evil inclination/drive]. The Hebrew term for drive is *yetzer*. It can be loosely translated as: impulse or inclination; an emotional impetus which excites the heart to have desires.⁷

5. The Aramaic translation of the Bible was made by Onkelos, or Aquilas, a convert to Judaism (35–120 C.E.). His translation is the accepted rendition of how to understand the text. Many later Jewish Bible commentators built their understanding of the text upon the translation of Onkelos.

6. Laplanche and Pontalis (1980) note that Freud was quite clear in his usage of the two German terms: *Instinkt* and *Trieb*. The former deals more with behaviour akin to animal behaviour. The latter, from the German *Trieben*, to push, relates to pressure that is felt and causes a resultant feeling or action (pp. 214–7).

7. This is the understanding of Rabbi David Kimchi (1847), known by the acronym, RaDaK (1160–1235), a biblical commentator and grammarian from Narbonne, Provence.

In order for Safran to continue with his discussion of these two inclinations/drives, he would have had to learn with Freud a more in-depth understanding which would have had to include mystical and philosophical conceptualizations.

The major Jewish mystical text, the *Zohar* [Book of Radiance/Splendour],⁸ states that:

The moment a human being comes into the world, the evil impulse appears along with him, inciting him constantly, as it is said: ‘At the opening sin crouches’⁹ (Genesis 4: 7) – evil impulse . . . This never leaves a person from the day he is born, forever, whereas the good impulse accompanies a person from the day he begins to purify himself. When is that? When he becomes thirteen years old. (Matt, 2006, p. 1)¹⁰

And a second comment in the *Zohar*:

Come and see how intensely a person is attacked, from the day that the Blessed Holy One endows him with a soul to exist in this world! For as soon as a human being emerges into the atmosphere, the evil impulse lies ready to conspire with him . . . because the evil impulse dwells within him, instantly luring him into evil ways. (Matt, 2006, p. 85)¹¹

One can easily see how Freud and Klein disagreed regarding the origin of the superego. As Hinshelwood writes:

Although Klein accepted Freud’s description of the superego, she did not agree with its origin as late as the fourth or fifth year; her clear evidence of the early feelings of guilt showed the origins of the superego to be in the second year of life at the latest. (1991, p. 98)

Regarding the ‘birth’ of the good inclination/driver, the *Zohar* clearly sets the age at 13 years – the age of majority. Yet, Maimonides remarks that: ‘the good inclination/driver is found only after the child’s intellect develops.’¹²

8. One of the most important books of the Kabbalah, the *Zohar* [Book of Radiance/Splendour], emerged in Castile, Spain, at the end of the 13th century. Jewish tradition ascribes authorship to Rabbi Shimon bar Yochai, a second century C.E. Palestinian rabbi.

9. Normally our translation of Biblical verses follows Kaplan (1981), who would translate this verse as: ‘sin crouches at the door’. The translation we have quoted is part of Matt’s (2006) translation of the *Zohar*. The implication is that sin emerges at the opening or door, i.e. the womb, from birth.

10. This translation is from the *Zohar*, 1: 165b.

11. This translation is from the *Zohar*, 1: 179a.

12. Maimonides, *Moreh Nevuchim* 3: 22. In the edited edition by Yosef Kapach, there is a footnote that states that there is no direct biblical verse or Talmudic proof that informs us that the good inclination/driver begins when the child’s intellect develops. Rather, Kapach states: ‘It is a *svarah*’ [a logical deduction] (Maimonides, 2006, p. 324, fn. 45).

Another comment continues our line of thinking on the evil and good inclinations: ‘... the evil inclination speaks, “Since I am doomed in the world to come, I will drag the entire body with me to destruction”.’¹³ Interestingly, Freud had given a lecture to the B’nai B’rith in 1915, entitled: ‘We and Death’. In that lecture, which he had initially thought of calling, ‘We Jews and Death’, in order to show how Jews are also affected by destructive drives and fears about death, Freud addressed a Jewish audience on aggressive instincts.¹⁴ Significantly, Freud had already begun to think about death wishes in several of his earlier works.¹⁵ So the connection between aggressive instincts and drives had already been percolating.

Evidently, Freud’s understanding of aggressive drives and death changed dramatically after the First World War. As Robert Hinshelwood wrote:

He [Freud] raised aggression to the same level of importance as the sexual drives—in a strange way: by imputing to the human being an innate aggressive drive against his or her own existence, the death instinct. (1991, pp. 327–8)

Freud formally introduced the concept of the death instinct in 1920, in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (Freud, 1920). Freud now created a dialectic: ‘The libido, now including the ego-instincts (for survival and life) is opposed by a silent, hidden *death instinct* which demands dissolution and the opposite of life’ (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 266).

Discussion: Freud’s Subterfuge

Sigmund Freud spent a great deal of effort in order to disguise his interests and to disassociate his new creation, psychoanalysis, from Jewish sources so that it should not be viewed as a ‘Jewish science’ (Yerushalmi, 1991, pp. 41–3, 46–50). He even made negative statements regarding his knowledge of the Hebrew language (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 133, fn.) in his Preface to the Hebrew translation of *Totem and Taboo*, where he described himself as: ‘... an author who is ignorant of the language of holy writ ...’ (Freud, 1930, p. xv).

13. From *Aboth d’Rabbi Nathan*, an ethical treatise that is considered to be from the 2nd century C.E., and is printed as one of the 15 minor tractates of the Talmud. This quotation is from chapter 16 (15a). This may be a prelude to Freud’s dabbling in the idea of the death instinct.

14. See Dennis B. Klein (1985, p. 162). Freud’s ‘dealings’ with death may have been a reaction formation response because of his dread of death. See Ginsburg (2003, p. 269). Interestingly, Ginsburg notes: ‘... it is puzzling to learn that a small black-covered Yahrzeit booklet (i.e. containing prayers in Hebrew and German to be said on the anniversary of the death of a loved one and at memorial services), issued by a Berlin undertaker, was included among the limited artifacts which he took with him when he left Vienna’ (ibid., p. 270). See Ginsburg (1999) for Freud’s aversion to Jewish burial rituals and customs.

15. *Totem and Taboo* (Freud, 1912–13) and ‘Thoughts for the times on war and death’ (Freud, 1915).

We feel that Freud attempted to throw researchers off the track so that they should not have any thoughts regarding his understanding of the Hebrew language and, by inference, his knowledge of Jewish primary sources. In the same manner, Peter Gay takes both positions (of knowing/not knowing Hebrew) and tries to ‘cover up’ for Freud by writing: ‘Freud underscored his infidelity¹⁶ by forgetting the little Hebrew he had ever known. As a schoolboy, he had studied religion with his admired teacher... Samuel Hammerschlag’ (Gay, 1998, p. 599). And, ‘Freud’s inability to read Hebrew was a matter of some regret to him’ (1998, p. 601). And, ‘It was not that he had repressed his Hebrew, he had never really known it well’ (Gay, 1987, pp. 124–5).

José Brunner (1991) in a paper fraught with several inaccuracies made the point that Freud adamantly denied knowing Hebrew (p. 663) and, therefore, could not know the language. On the other hand, Mikael Enckell (1988) remarked about Freud that:

As a child, he had read the Holy Script, but even if at home his parents respected the major Jewish holidays, the rules for the celebration of the Sabbath no longer prevailed and Freud firmly nourished this development towards a secularisation, as he was faithful to the liberal and atheist ideology of enlightenment which he had adopted. (p. 146)

How can we understand these clearly opposing points of view? We may take into account what Ernest Jones (1961) had written: ‘Freud took elaborate measures to secure his privacy...’ (p. 26). In a letter to his betrothed, Martha, Freud writes:

I have destroyed all my diaries of the past fourteen years, with letters, scientific notes and the manuscripts of my publications... Let the biographers chafe; we won’t make it too easy for them... even now I enjoy the thought of how they will all go astray. (Jones, 1961, pp. 26–7)

If we follow this line in Freud’s thinking – it was in his interest to maintain unclarity and cloudiness regarding his knowledge of the Hebrew language and, thereby, avoid having to deal with his knowledge of Jewish primary sources.¹⁷

16. ‘Infidelity’ is Gay’s pun on Freud’s comment: ‘... God had not done so much for me. He had never allowed me to hear an inner voice; and if, in view of my age, he did not make haste, it would not be my fault if I remained to the end of my life what I now was – “an infidel Jew”’ (Freud, 1928, p. 170).

17. Ana-María Rizzuto (1998) meticulously detailed Freud’s rejection of God. In her book, much material is collected regarding Freud’s ‘knowledge’ of Hebrew, in general, and the Philippon Bible, in particular. Compare this with Gallo’s recent (2009) analysis of Freud’s knowledge of Spanish: ‘Freud never lost a language’ (p. 35). In Berke and Schneider (2008), several examples are given that show Freud’s knowledge of Jewish primary sources. Two interesting examples are the metaphor of moving from larger to smaller rooms with censor mechanisms, such as movement from the unconscious to the

Since David Bakan's book, attempting (albeit, weakly) to show Freud's knowledge of Kabbalah (Jewish mysticism), there have been several more serious works that do succeed in showing that Freud had schooling in the Hebrew language (Rizzuto, 1998; Yerushalmi, 1991), knowledge of Kabbalah and other Jewish primary sources, and that this understanding helped Freud to formulate and refine his ideas and thoughts in the development of psychoanalysis (Aron, 2007; Berke & Schneider, 2008; Salberg, 2007; Schneider & Berke, 2008; Starr, 2008).

Joseph Berke and Stanley Schneider (2008) have written: 'The parallels to psychoanalysis and to understanding the deepest levels of the personality that we find in Kabbalah are striking' (p. 6). And, as Schneider and Berke (2008) have noted: '... Kabbalistic theosophy and philosophy had an influence on Freud's professional attitude' (p. 139). Compared to this very strong statement that Freud was influenced by Kabbalah and Jewish primary sources, Karen Starr (2008) attempts to cover both sides of the issue:

... regarding the possibility of Freud's familiarity with Kabbalah leads one to conclude that it is unlikely that Freud consciously incorporated Jewish mystical ideas into his theories. However, it is almost certain that he was exposed to these ideas and influenced by them... (p. 18)

Jill Salberg (2007) and Lewis Aron (2007) both look at Freud's Jewishness with differing approaches. Salberg remarked that aspects of Freud's Jewish background helped him to shape the development of psychoanalysis. Aron, in his reply to Salberg, noted that the emergence and continuation of psychoanalysis can be traced to Jewish influence which was kept under wraps early on in the history of psychoanalysis, in order to be politically correct. Too much emphasis on Jewish influence might have been to the detriment of psychoanalysis as a science.

While we cannot be sure of the exact interchange between Safran and Freud, we are quite confident that Safran covered all the aspects of the evil and good inclinations/drives. It is likely that their discussion included many of the Jewish primary sources that we have cited. Freud's interest in meeting a rabbi and Kabbalist indicates that Freud wanted to learn more about how Safran saw the relationship between psychoanalysis and Freud's Jewish roots. These included Freud's paternal great-grandfather, Rabbi Ephraim Freud, his paternal grandfather, Rabbi Shlomo Freud (after whom he was

conscious (p. 116) and the developmental stages of man (p. 136). Rice (1990) writes that Freud acquired 'a complete set of the Talmud, in both the original language [i.e. Aramaic] and translation, in the last decade of his life...' (p. 24) (cf. Rice, 1994, p. 246). Bakan (1969) noted that in Freud's library there 'were a number of books on Kabbalah in German, and, most importantly, a copy of the French translation of the *Zohar*' (p. xviii). Trosman and Simmons (1973) list the books that Freud brought with him to London. The German translation of the Talmud, in 12 volumes, is listed (p. 660, no. 149). See also Davies and Fichtner (2006), for a recently released catalogue of Freud's library.

named), and his father, Jacob Freud.¹⁸ All lived and learned in the Hasidic strongholds of Tysmienica and Buzhocz in Galicia, Western Ukraine. All were learned in Hasidic thinking and Jewish practices (Krüll, 1986).

As Ostow, in his article on Jacob Freud's birthday inscription to his son Sigmund (Shlomo) has noted:

Did Jakob expect Sigmund to be able to read and to understand this inscription? – And the quotations and allusions from which it was derived? Sigmund Freud maintained all along that he didn't understand Hebrew and couldn't read it. I have given some reasons to question the veracity of that statement, or at least to suggest that it may be an exaggeration. (1989, p. 488)

We believe that this exchange of letters shows Freud's involvement in learning Jewish primary sources. It is our feeling that Freud's protestations over the years claiming ignorance of Hebrew and of Jewish religious texts was a well thought-out and constructed sham in order to protect psychoanalysis from being seen as a 'Jewish national affair' (Yerushalmi, 1991, p. 16).

Acknowledgements

We are indebted to Rabbi Dr Nathan Lopes Cardozo, Dean of the David Cardozo Academy for Jewish Studies in Jerusalem, for bringing these letters to our attention and for providing us with copies of them. Rabbi Dr Cardozo received copies of these letters from Dr Eisenstein, during a lecture tour in the United States in the early 1960s.

18. The family names were entered by Jacob Freud in the family's Philippon Bible on the Gedenkblatt [Memorial Page]. See A.-M. Rizzuto, 1998, p. 29.

APPENDIX A

Letter from Dr Samuel Eisenstein to Rabbi Dr Alexandre Safran (25 June 1956) (With permission from Rabbi Dr Nathan Cardozo, Jerusalem)

June 25, 1956

Dr. Alexander Safran
11, Rue Marignac
Geneve, Switzerland

Dear Dr. Safran:

It must be at least twenty years since we talked or wrote to each other. I had your address from your brother, Josef, in Israel and this is the reason for my letter:

Many years ago (it must have been in the early thirties) on your return from Vienna you gave a lecture in Scau which I attended. Among other things, you talked about your encounter with Freud while you were a student in Vienna. I remember you saying that you remarked to Prof. Freud that you felt there was some relation between Freud's Jewish background and his discovery of Psychoanalysis. I also vaguely remember you saying that he nodded or gave some sign of being receptive to your suggestion.

The reason why I place so much importance to your encounter with Freud I am sure is familiar to you. This year the world celebrated the hundredth anniversary of his birth, and celebrations have been taking place here in America and in Europe. Hundreds of articles by people who knew him have been and still are being published. Few though, have discussed with Freud his Jewish background and its possible influences on his work on Psychoanalysis. You were in a unique position as a Rabbi to discuss this with him. It would be of great interest if you would put down on paper the circumstances of your visit to him and what was discussed during that interview. Also how the visit was arranged and what were your impressions about it. I am sure thousands of people here and in Europe would be interested to read it. If you feel that you want to do it, you could put it down in the form of an article and I am sure I could have one of the Psychoanalytical Journals publish it. Something like "A Rabbi's Visit to Freud" or any other title of your choosing. If you feel though that

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your visit was too brief to warrant a longer description, please write to me in a letter what was discussed during that visit and I shall try to find the best way to have it published or placed in the Freud Archives in New York. I am practicing Psychoanalysis in Los Angeles and I am sure I will have no difficulty to arrange this.

My parents always remember you and your family with great affection and your great Father is remembered by all of us with much warmth and admiration. I have been told that you recently lost your beloved mother. I remember her as a very saintly woman. I am sure you and your family must have felt keenly her loss.

My wife and I are planning a trip to Europe and Israel in the summer of 1957. Switzerland is not in our program but I certainly look forward to meeting your brother Joseph in Israel. I have heard of the great and courageous work you have done for the Jewish Community in Rumania during the last war when you were Chief Rabbi of Bucharest.

I eagerly look forward to a reply from you. Please give my best regards to your family. My parents ask me to give you their warm regards also.

Sincerely yours,

Samuel Eisenstein, M.D.

SE:JL

APPENDIX B

Response from Rabbi Dr Alexandre Safran to Dr Samuel Eisenstein (11 July 1956) (With permission from Rabbi Dr Nathan Cardozo, Jerusalem)

D^r ALEXANDRE SAFRAN
GRAND RABBIN DE GENÈVE

אליכסנדר סאפרן
רבני זשאנבה

Genève, le 11 Juillet 1956.

Monsieur Samuel EISENSTEIN M.D.
6135 Wilshire Boulevard
LOS ANGELES 48, California

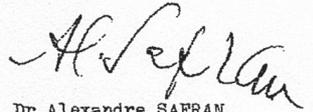
Cher Docteur Eisenstein,

J'accuse réception de votre lettre du 25 Juin, dont je vous remercie cordialement. Vos nouvelles m'ont fait grand plaisir ainsi que celles de votre famille et de vos chers parents.

Mes engagements antérieurs pour des travaux ne me laissent pas le temps de rédiger l'article que vous me demandez. Cependant, je peux vous indiquer que ma conversation avec Freud s'est déroulée surtout autour du verset 7 du chapitre 4 du livre de la Genèse, ^(et de son commentaire dans le Talmud: Kidouchin 302) que j'ai indiqué au début de mon long entretien avec lui sur les rapports entre la psychanalyse et le judaïsme, et auquel il a pris un très grand intérêt.

Cet entretien a eu lieu chez le Professeur Freud, sur son invitation, après avoir assisté à une conférence que j'ai faite sur la pensée juive.

Veillez croire, Cher Docteur, vous et votre distinguée famille ainsi que vos chers parents, à l'assurance de mes sentiments dévoués.



Dr Alexandre SAFRAN
Grand Rabbî de Genève

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ABSTRACT

Sigmund Freud went to considerable effort to disguise his knowledge of the Hebrew language and Jewish primary sources. In this way he tried to prevent his new creation, psychoanalysis, from being seen as a 'Jewish science'. The authors present new evidence that Freud had a considerable interest in, and knowledge of, Jewish religious texts. This is shown in an exchange of letters which have recently come to light, between the Los Angeles psychoanalyst, Dr Samuel Eisenstein, and the prominent Kabbalist and Chief Rabbi of Geneva, Rabbi Dr Alexandre Safran, which discuss a meeting that took place at Freud's request at his home in Vienna in 1934.

Key words: Freud, Samuel Eisenstein, Alexandre Safran, Jewish primary sources, Hebrew language, kabbalah, instincts, Jewish mysticism