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# SUICIDE AND THE WORLD-TO-COME

by

MARC B. SHAPIRO

In 1880 the Jewish community of Iraq was forced to confront a sharp increase in antisemitic persecution. Not all of the country's Jews were prepared for this new phenomenon and the result was a number of suicides. The Iraqi rabbinate, both shocked and determined to put an end to the needless taking of life, declared from all the synagogue pulpits that those who commit suicide have no share in the world-to-come.<sup>1</sup> This idea was certainly not unknown to either the masses or the rabbis, who probably believed it to be found somewhere in talmudic literature.<sup>2</sup> However, although it does not appear there, the rabbinic maxim *הבא לעולם הבא אין לו חלק לעולם הזה* is very well known. Since this notion has played a central role in many rabbinic discussions about the status of suicides, it is worthwhile to trace its origin.<sup>3</sup>

The idea is strange for a few reasons. To begin with, there are very few sins regarding which there is general acceptance that the perpetrator loses his portion in Paradise. There appears to be no reason why suicide should be included in this list, especially as there is no explicit biblical verse forbidding the practice.<sup>4</sup> Second, an examination of the Bible, Talmud, and Midrash shows that suicide is not always viewed as such a heinous sin. Third, and

1. Avraham ben Ya'akov, *Yehudei Bavel mi-Sof Tequfat ha-Ge'onim 'ad Yameinu* (Jerusalem, 1965), p. 143.

2. It should be noted, however, that the famed R. Joseph Hayyim of Baghdad, *Rav Pe'alim* (Jerusalem, 1905), vol. 3, *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 30, was aware that the idea had no source.

3. It is surprising that Sidney Goldstein, in his recent book *Suicide in Rabbinic Literature* (Hoboken, 1989), makes no mention of this notion.

4. See also *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, chap. 36, which discusses those who lose their portion in the world-to-come. There is no mention here of suicide.

perhaps most important, there are a few rabbinic texts which teach that those who commit suicide *do* have a portion in the world-to-come. To give perhaps the most explicit example, the Talmud in *Ketubot* 103b states:

On the day that Rabbi died a heavenly voice went forth and announced, "Whosoever was present at the death of Rabbi is destined to enjoy the life of the world-to-come." A certain launderer who used to come to him every day had failed to call on that day; as soon as he heard this he went on a roof, fell to the ground, and died. A heavenly voice came forth and announced: "That launderer also is destined to enjoy the life of the world-to-come."

As is obvious from this passage, one who commits suicide, even for no purpose whatsoever, does not necessarily lose his portion in the world-to-come.<sup>5</sup>

Another example, this time from the Midrash, concerns the torture that Zedekiah was put through (2 Kings 25:7). The Midrash asks: "Was it possible that Zedekiah should see others piercing his eyes without having the sense to dash his head against the wall until he expired?"<sup>6</sup> Reflecting the popular belief, Rabbi Wolf Einhorn writes: "It is amazing that the rabbis would permit someone to commit suicide in order to avoid pain . . . for one who commits suicide has no share in the world-to-come."<sup>7</sup>

Another proof against the notion that one who commits suicide has no share in the world-to-come is pointed out by Rabbi Eleazar Landau.<sup>8</sup> *Sanhedrin* 10:2 reads: "Three kings and four commoners have no portion in the world-to-come. . . . The four commoners are Balaam, Doeg, Ahithophel, and Gehazi." The Talmud explains why the other three lost their heavenly portions, but does not do so for Ahithophel. If it is true that a suicide has no portion in the world-to-come, asks Landau, why did the Talmud not give this as the reason why he was excluded, for as is well known, he committed suicide (2 Sam. 17:23)? It is also important to note that the Talmud records another opinion according to which Ahithophel does have a share in the

5. See R. Jacob Emden's glosses on this text. Emden accepts the idea that suicides have no portion in the world-to-come and therefore struggles, unsuccessfully in his own opinion, to explain this passage. See also R. Ezekiel Sirkin, *Binyan Yehezqel* (Warsaw, 1861), ad loc.

6. *Eikhah Rabbah* 1:51.

7. Commentary, ad loc. (found in the Vilna edition of *Midrash Rabbah*).

8. *Yad ha-Melekh* (Lemberg, 1826), last page of appendix. With this comment Landau was correcting the contrary view expressed in his note to *Hilkhot Avel* 1:11.

world-to-come.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, there appear to be no *rishonim* who claim that Ahithophel lost his heavenly portion because of his suicide.

That one who commits suicide is to be punished in Hell is a given in rabbinic sources and is also mentioned by Josephus. However, this does not make suicide different from any other sin. All sins are punished by a period of suffering in Hell, but it is understood that when this atonement is completed the sinner may enter Heaven. Even a statement in the twelfth-century *Midrash Sekhel Tov* that suicides are doomed to Hell does not mean that they are destined to remain there for eternity.<sup>10</sup>

The earliest explicit reference in Jewish sources to the notion that suicides have no heavenly portion appears to be the fourteenth-century Yemenite Rabbi Netanel ben Isaiah, who mentions this in his Bible commentary.<sup>11</sup> He does not attribute this view to the rabbis but states it as a well-known fact. It is possible that he saw this statement in some midrash which no longer survives or that it was an oral tradition. Still, it cannot be ruled out that the idea, which appeared authentically Jewish to Netanel, actually had its origin in Islam. This is not a far-fetched assumption when one considers all the influence Islam had on Judaism during this period.<sup>12</sup> In addition, Netanel's Bible commentary appears to show some Islamic influence<sup>13</sup> and also has a number of anti-Islamic passages, thus showing that Islamic ideas were well known to him.

Although there is some dispute regarding whether Muhammad ever refers to the prohibition of suicide, there is a good deal of discussion of it in the later *hadith* literature. A well-known ninth-century *hadith* reads:

9. See *Sanhedrin* 104b–105a.

10. S. Buber, ed., *Midrash Sekhel Tov* (Tel Aviv, n.d.), vol. 1, p. 283.

11. R. Joseph Kafah, ed., *Ma'or ha-Afelah* (Jerusalem, 1957), p. 68. See also R. Joel's twelfth-century Hebrew translation of *Kalila wa Dimna*, ed. Joseph Derenbourg (Paris, 1881), pp. 12 and 176, where the idea also appears. Since this is merely a translation, it obviously does not reflect Jewish teaching. However, it does show that even at this early date Jews were aware of the notion we are considering. (Incidentally, as far back as R. Hai Gaon Jews were acquainted with *Kalila wa Dimna*; see A. Harkavy, ed., *Teshuvot ha-Geonim* [Berlin, 1887], no. 362, and Harkavy's note on p. 371.)

12. This influence was not merely in the realm of ideas; see Naphtali Wieder, *Hashpa'ot Is-lamyot 'al ha-Pulhan ha-Yehudi* (Oxford, 1947); Boaz Cohen, *Quntres ha-Teshuvot* (Budapest, 1930), p. 15, n. 1.

13. See M. Havatzelet in *Sinai* 108 (1991): 189, n. 10, who points to Arabic-Islamic mythology. Cf. also *Ma'or ha-Afelah*, p. 91, n. 2.

Narrated Thabit bin Ad-Dahhak: The Prophet said, “. . . Whoever commits suicide with [a] piece of iron will be punished with the same piece of iron in the Hell Fire.” Narrated Jundab: The Prophet said, “A man was afflicted with wounds and he committed suicide, and so Allah said: ‘My slave has caused death on himself hurriedly, so I forbid Paradise for him.’” Narrated Abu Huraira: The Prophet said, “He who commits suicide by throttling shall keep on throttling himself in the Hell Fire [forever], and he who commits suicide by stabbing himself shall keep on stabbing himself in the Hell Fire.”<sup>14</sup>

In another ninth-century *hadith* it is stated that suicide is the “gravest sin” and that one who commits it is doomed to remain in Hell forever.<sup>15</sup> This *hadith* also condemns to Hell one who is severely injured and commits suicide, even if he had displayed great valor in fighting for Islam.<sup>16</sup> There are many more sayings in the *hadith* literature to the effect that one who commits suicide loses Paradise, and a number of *hadiths* also record that Muhammad refused to say prayers over the body of a suicide.<sup>17</sup> Whether Netanel derived the idea from these sources one can only speculate; however, it is fairly clear that his view did not have any influence on subsequent Jewish teaching.

Two centuries later, in what appears to be the next written occurrence of the idea we are looking at, R. Shneur b. Judah Falkon asserted that according to the talmudic sages a suicide has no portion in Heaven.<sup>18</sup> He does not quote a talmudic statement in this regard but reasons that since the sages say that one must not treat suicides the same as other dead persons, it must mean that they viewed suicides as having no heavenly portion. This latter point will be seen to be of great importance. Also important is the fact that Falkon contrasts the “talmudic” attitude to that of the Zohar, which, according to him, does not accept this view.

The idea we are discussing next appears in *Midrash Talpiyyot*, authored

14. Muhammad Muhsin Khan, *The Translation of the Meanings of Sahih Al-Bukhari* (Ankara, 1981), pp. 251–252.

15. Muslim ibn al Hajjaj al-Qushayri, *aṣ-Ṣaḥiḥ* (Bulaq, 1873), *Kitab al-Iman*, no. 199.

16. *Ibid.*, no. 206.

17. See the sources listed in A. J. Wensinck, *A Handbook of Early Muhammadan Tradition* (Leiden, 1971), p. 222. See also Franz Rosenthal, “On Suicide in Islam,” *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 65 (1945): 239–259. Rosenthal points out that certain orthodox Muslims, who denied the possibility of eternal punishment, regarded such utterances in the *hadith* literature as Mutazilite falsifications.

18. *Pesah le-Hashem* (Constantinople, 1560), introduction. Regarding this book see Abraham Yaari in *Qiryat Sefer* 9 (1932): 388–393, where the introduction is reprinted.

by R. Elijah ben Solomon Abraham ha-Kohen (ca. 1650–1729), where it is attributed to the talmudic sages.<sup>19</sup> However, in this work it is also stated that a suicide loses his own individual portion in Paradise but is still granted some share of the world-to-come which he shares with other sinners who have also lost their heavenly portions.<sup>20</sup> Contemporary with R. Elijah, R. Jacob Culi (1689–1732), in his *Me'am Lo'ez* to Genesis 9:5, also records that a suicide loses his heavenly portion, but this time the statement is unequivocal; a suicide has absolutely no portion in the world-to-come. Soon afterward, when this notion next appears, this time in Rabbi Jacob Joshua Falk's Talmud commentary, Culi's view is reaffirmed.<sup>21</sup>

Falk makes his comment upon the following talmudic passage: "Better had a man throw himself into a fiery furnace than publicly put his neighbor to shame" (*Bava Metzi'a* 59a). Since those who commit suicide have no portion in the world-to-come, and the restriction against suicide is suspended to avoid shaming someone, it must follow that the latter offense is even more severe than committing suicide. This in turn proves that one who publicly shames his neighbor also loses his portion in the world-to-come.<sup>22</sup>

The notion we are examining was likewise known in the Sephardic world, as is apparent from the strong attempts by the Salonikan sage Rabbi Raphael Jacob Manasseh (1762–1832) to deny its validity.<sup>23</sup> Indeed, it appears that by

19. (Izmir, 1736), s.v. *heleq le-'olam ha-ba*. See also his *Shevet Mussar* (Jerusalem, 1989), p. 295, where this idea also appears and is attributed to the *Azharot ha-Qodesh* (which I have not been able to track down). Both R. Samuel Jaffe Ashkenazi (16th cent.), *Yefe To'ar* (Venice, 1597), to *Bereshit Rabbah* 65:22, and R. Jacob Reischer (ca. 1670–1733), *Shevut Ya'akov* (Lemberg, 1861), vol. 2, no. 111, could be read as implying that a suicide has no heavenly portion, but this is not altogether certain.

20. This view, which in fact denies eternal punishment for *any* sinners, including those described in the Mishnah as having lost their portion in the world-to-come, is based on kabbalistic sources. See the discussion in Alexander Altmann, "Eternality of Punishment: A Theological Controversy within the Amsterdam Rabbinate in the Thirties of the Seventeenth Century," *Proceedings of the American Academy for Jewish Research* 40 (1972): 1–88. (Incidentally, Altmann was unaware that some of the texts he published had earlier appeared in *Ha-Ma'or* [Tishrei–Kislev 5696]: 9–18.)

21. *Penei Yehoshu'a* (Jerusalem, 1970), to *Bava Metzi'a* 59a.

22. See also R. Solomon Kluger, *Ha-'Elef Lekha Shlomo* (Bilgoray, 1931), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 321.

23. *Be'er ha-Mayim* (Salonika, 1836), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 54, p. 33a: "And that which they said, that we do not perform any funeral rites or mourn for him, this is not because he has removed himself from the Jewish people, and not because he has no share in the world-to-come, etc., God forbid to say this, for he is part of the Jewish people, as the Mishnah explicitly teaches,

the end of the eighteenth century the maxim “one who commits suicide has no portion in the world-to-come” had become widespread. There are numerous responsa from before this time which discuss the status of suicides, and as far as I can tell, none of them mentions the notion that suicides have no portion in the world-to-come. Indeed, in these responsa it is often assumed, and even stated explicitly, that suicides may receive a portion in the next world. Still, although references to this notion in pre-eighteenth-century literature are not widespread, it is obvious that it was far from unknown. This is the only way to explain how such learned figures as Falk and Emden could unquestioningly accept its validity.

Interestingly, a number of rabbis mistakenly claim to have seen the maxim in earlier sources. Emden quotes the saying and says it appears in tractate *Semaḥot*, yet this is incorrect.<sup>24</sup> Rabbi Joseph Saul Nathanson cites our maxim as appearing in the *Shitah Mekubetzet* of Rabbi Bezalel Ashkenazi (1520–ca. 1591),<sup>25</sup> yet this too is incorrect. Rabbi Eleazar Landau.<sup>26</sup> Rabbi Israel Lifschitz,<sup>27</sup> and Rabbi Abraham Rosen<sup>28</sup> claim to have seen the maxim in the commentary of Rabbi Joseph Trani (1568–1639) to *Ketubot* 103b. However, unless they had a different version of his commentary they are all in error, as Trani says nothing of the kind in the passage they refer to.<sup>29</sup>

‘All Israel have a share in the world-to-come.’” Regarding Manasseh, an outstanding rabbinic figure whose life and work remain virtually unknown, see Solomon Rosanes, *Qorot Ha-Yehudim be-Turqiyah u-ve-Artzot ha-Qedem* (Jerusalem, 1945), pp. 87–91. See also R. Israel Moses Hazzan, *Kerakh shel Romi* (Livorno, 1876), no. 14, who presents a very liberal view of suicide and its halakhic consequences. His responsum is actually the most comprehensive treatment of the subject in the entire responsa literature, but is not mentioned in Goldstein’s book.

24. *Lehem Shamayim* (n.p., n.d.), vol. 2, p. 38a. Perhaps one cannot totally dismiss the possibility that Emden saw a manuscript of *Semaḥot* with this passage; I say this because it is known that our text of *Semaḥot* is very different, and probably even smaller, than the text which was known to medieval authorities. See, e.g., *Hiddushei Hagahot* in the standard editions of the *Tur*, *Yoreh De’ah* 335, n. 2, who points out that many of the passages from *Semaḥot* cited in references by early authorities do not appear in our texts. Still, since no one else mentions having seen our saying in *Semaḥot*, it seems extremely doubtful that such a version ever existed.

25. *Divrei Sha’ul: Hiddushei Aggadot* (Lemberg, 1877), to *Ketubot* 103b.

26. *Yad ha-Melekh, Hilkhot Avel* 1:11.

27. *Tiferet Yisra’el to Sanhedrin* 10:2.

28. *’Etan Aryeh* (Jerusalem, 1976), no. 20.

29. There is no printing of Trani’s novellae that contains the passage in question.

Finally, R. Simha Bunim of Przysucha<sup>30</sup> mistakenly quotes the saying as appearing in *Tanna de-Vei 'Eliyah*.<sup>31</sup>

Since the end of the eighteenth century the rabbinic maxim that “a suicide has no portion in the world-to-come” has come to be known to all rabbinic decisors. Most of them recognize that it has no rabbinic source, and three approaches have developed: (1) some totally reject its validity; (2) some feel it is implicit in certain rabbinic passages; (3) some believe that even though it is not found in rabbinic literature, simple logic dictates that a suicide has no portion in the world-to-come.<sup>32</sup> No patterns can be detected in the various rabbinic views, and because the discussions are virtually all of a theoretical nature, it is impossible to explain through any sort of historical contextualization why one approach is adopted over another. Still, it appears clear that the decisors in the latter two categories have as a leading motivation the desire to show that what has become a well-accepted belief is, in actuality, based on sound Jewish teaching. Without adopting this view they would be forced to a most unpleasant conclusion, namely, that numerous learned rabbis were flatly mistaken in their conception of the fate of suicides.

Rabbi Eliezer Fleckeles, although recognizing that our quotation has no explicit source, believes it to be apparent from a passage in *Gittin* 57b:

On one occasion four hundred boys and girls were carried off for immoral purposes. They divined what they were wanted for and asked themselves. “If we drown in the sea, shall we attain the life of the future world?” The eldest among them expounded the verse “The Lord said, I will bring again from Bashan, I will bring again from the depths of the sea” (Ps. 68:23). “I will bring again from Bashan”—from between the lion’s teeth. “I will bring again from the depths of the sea”—those who drown in the sea. When the girls heard this, they all leaped into the sea. The boys then drew the moral for themselves,

30. See *Ramatayim Tzofim to Tanna de-Vei 'Eliyah* (Warsaw, 1881), pp. 163–164. The title page says that this book was written by R. Samuel of Sieniawa. However, in *Ha-Peles* 3 (1903): 47, R. Joseph Levenstein admits that he wrote the book but due to a “hidden reason” did not publicize his authorship. I thank R. Shmuel Ashkenazi for calling this to my attention.

31. R. Simha Bunim’s “passage” is based on *Tanna de-Vei 'Eliyah*, chap. 14, which reads: “Whoever spurns the good life in the world, it is a bad omen for him.”

32. It should also be noted that some rabbis who do not quote the maxim have clearly been influenced by the idea it expresses. An example is R. Judah Mecklenburg, who writes that one who commits suicide suffers a punishment worse than *karet* in that his soul is completely destroyed for eternity; see his *Ha-Qetav ve-ha-Qabbalah* (Jerusalem, 1969), to Genesis 9:5. Needless to say, there is no support for this view in classical rabbinic sources.



saying, "If these for whom this is natural act so, shall not we, for whom it is unnatural?" They also leaped into the sea. Of them the text says, "Yea, for thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter" (Ps. 44:23).<sup>33</sup>

According to Fleckeles, the fact that the children were concerned about whether they would go to Heaven shows that normally those who commit suicide do lose their heavenly portion. Although, as we have noted, Fleckeles does not believe this to be an explicit source for our quotation,<sup>34</sup> other rabbis were not so hesitant and pointed to the story in *Gittin* as clearly establishing that suicides have no share in the world-to-come.<sup>35</sup>

Fleckeles goes on to state that even if there is truly no rabbinic source for the maxim, it still is sound Jewish teaching. This is so because a man is able to repent before death for any sin he has committed, except, obviously, in the case of suicide.<sup>36</sup> Still, with this answer Fleckeles is only begging the question, namely, how does one know that if a suicide dies without repenting he loses his heavenly portion? This is surely not the case with regard to other sins. Also, Fleckeles' point about a suicide not being able to repent assumes immediate death. There are, however, a number of discussions in the responsa literature about people who committed suicide but managed to repent before actually dying.<sup>37</sup>

33. *Teshuvah me-'Ahavah* (Prague, 1820), vol. 3, no. 409. See also *Yad ha-Melekh, Hilkhot 'Avel* 1:11, which also sees this passage as a "hint" that one who commits suicide loses his share in the world-to-come.

34. ראו ע"פ שאין ראיה לדבר זכר לדבר. Cf. also R. Ovadia Yosef, *Yabi'a 'Omer* (Jerusalem, 1986), vol. 6, p. 261.

35. See e.g. Sirkin, loc. cit.; R. Yehiel Michal Epstein, *'Arukh ha-Shulhan* (New York, 1961), *Yoreh De'ah* 116:1 and 345:1; R. Barukh Epstein, *Tosefet Berakhah* (Pinsk, 1937) to Genesis 9:5; R. Hillel Posek, *Hillel Omer* (Tel Aviv, 1956), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 210; R. Jekuthiel Judah Greenwald, *Kol Bo 'al 'Avelut* (New York, 1956), p. 318; R. Judah Leib Graubart, *Havalim ba-Ne'imim* (Jerusalem, 1975), vol. 3, no. 108; R. Moshe Blau, *Mishnat Moshe* (Bnei Brak, 1989), p. 240; David Tamar in *Areshet* 6 (1981): 258–259. See, however, the rejection of this view by Manasseh, *Be'er ha-Mayim*, p. 33a.

36. See also *Tiferet Yisrael to Sanhedrin* 10:2.

37. See e.g. Hazzan, *Kerakh shel Romi*, pp. 52b ff.; R. Moses Klein, *Va-Yakhel Moshe* (Grosswardein, 1934), p. 32, n. 1; R. Ishmael ha-Kohen, *Zera 'Emet* (Reggio, [1815]), vol. 3, no. 157; R. Raphael Asher Covo, *Sha'ar 'Asher* (Salonika, 1877), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 16; R. Hiyya Pontremoli, *Tzapihit bi-Devash* (Salonika, 1848), no. 67; R. Hayyim Palache, *Hayyim be-Yad* (Izmir, 1873), no. 110; R. Hayyim Hezekiah Medini, *Sedei Hemed* (New York, 1962), vol. 4, *ma'arekhet 'avelut*, no. 118. (Many more sources could easily be added to this list.) As R.

When the renowned Rabbi Joseph Saul Nathanson saw the previously mentioned comments of Falk, who implied that our quotation was of talmudic origin, he responded unequivocally that this was incorrect.<sup>38</sup> Rabbi Benjamin Aryeh Weiss in turn wrote to Nathanson to uphold Falk's opinion.<sup>39</sup> Although he could not point to a talmudic source, he called attention to Maimonides' comment in *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:6, "And the following are they that have no share in the world-to-come . . . shedders of blood." Weiss asserts that Maimonides' comment is difficult to explain for there is no source which states that murderers lose their share in the world-to-come. Indeed, he calls attention to a talmudic text we have already seen which implies that murderers do have a share.

The Mishnah states: "Three kings and four commoners have no portion in the world-to-come. The three kings are Jerobam, Ahab, and Manasseh."<sup>40</sup> Commenting upon this passage the Talmud asks: "How do we know that he [Manasseh] will not enter the future world?"<sup>41</sup> The Talmud then derives this from a verse in which Manasseh is compared to Ahab, who the Talmud had already established has no heavenly portion. If murderers have no portion in the world-to-come, Weiss says, there would be no reason for the Talmud to ask how it is known that Manasseh lost his portion. The Bible is explicit that Manasseh was a murderer: "Moreover, Manasseh shed innocent blood very much, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another" (2 Kings 21:16). Obviously the Talmud did not feel that this shedding of innocent blood was enough to automatically deny him his portion in the world-to-come.

Therefore, Weiss concludes, Maimonides must be referring to suicide when he writes "shedders of blood" in this passage. Recognizing that this is extremely unlikely, Weiss suggests that there is a printer's error in our text of

Rahamim Joseph Franco points out, *Sha'arei Raḥamim* (Jerusalem, 1902), vol. 2, *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 32, one should assume that even those authorities who are strict and refuse to allow normal mourning and funeral rites in this case, nevertheless agree that as far as God is concerned the repentance is valid (this is actually stated explicitly by Pontremoli, *Tzaphit bi-Devash*, p. 167b, one of those who does rule fairly stringently). R. Moses Rivkin, *Tiferet Tziyyon* (New York, 1975), p. 262, overlooks all of this when he declares that a suicide's repentance is of no value in securing him a share in the world-to-come.

38. *Divrei Sha'ul* (Jerusalem, 1973) to *Yoreh De'ah*, p. 269.

39. *Even Ye'qarah* (Lemberg, 1894), vol. 1, *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 56. See also Posek, *Hillel Omer*, loc. cit.

40. *Sanhedrin* 10:2.

41. *Ibid.*, 102b.

the *Mishneh Torah* and “shedders of blood” (שופכי דמים) should actually be “shedders of their own blood” (שופכי דמם); in other words, “suicides.” Weiss seems to overlook the fact that in *Hilkot De’ot* 7:3, Maimonides also says that murderers have no share in the world-to-come.

Much more ingenious than Weiss is the similar explanation of Rabbi Yehiel Michl Leiter, who also calls attention to Maimonides, *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:6, in order to support his position.<sup>42</sup> As we noted, in this passage Maimonides says that murderers have no portion in the world-to-come. Leiter also points to *Hilkhot Rotzeah* 2:2, where suicide appears to be put in the same category as bloodshed,<sup>43</sup> thus establishing, to his satisfaction, that just as a murderer has no portion in the world-to-come, so too one who commits suicide.<sup>44</sup> However, Manasseh does not support this hairsplitting. According to the latter, since Maimonides does not explicitly mention suicide as one of the crimes for which one loses his heavenly portion, one must conclude that suicides do have a share in the world-to-come.<sup>45</sup>

42. *Darkei Shalom* (Vienna, 1932), vol. 1, no. 41. See also R. Moshe Yonah Zweig, *’Ohel Moshe* (Jerusalem, 1949), section *Har’ Evel*, p. 17; and R. Eliezer Waldenberg, *Tzitz Eliezer* (Jerusalem, 1985), vol. 5, section *’Even Ya’aqov*, p. 2.

43. כל אחד מאלו שופך דמים הוא ועון הריגה בידו.

44. Others simply assert, without pointing to any particular text, that suicide is the equivalent of murder. This in turn leads to extremely negative judgments. See, e.g., R. Abraham Danzig, *Hokhmat Adam* (Jerusalem, 1966), 156:1; R. Solomon Ganzfried, *Kitzur Shulḥan Arukh* (Jerusalem, 1972), 101:1; and Klein, *Va-Yakhel Moshe*, p. 32a. All these writers agree that “there is no greater sinner than one who commits suicide.” The characterization of suicide as murder is actually quite early, and is found in *Pesikta Rabbati*, ed. M. Friedman (Vienna, 1860), chap. 24, as well as Kirkisani. See Leon Nemoy, “A Tenth Century Disquisition on Suicide According to Old Testament Law,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 57 (1938): 411–420. See also Solomon ben Abraham Parhon, *Mahberet ha-Arukh* (Pressburg, 1844), s.v. *haser*; Saul Lieberman, *Hilkhot ha-Yerushalmi* (New York, 1948), p. 21, note n; R. Menahem Kasher, *Torah Shelemah* (New York, 1955), vol. 16, p. 101, n. 330.

45. *Be’er ha-Mayim*, p. 33a. It would require another article to discuss the many ingenious answers offered in the attempt to find a source for Maimonides’ claim that murderers have no share in the world-to-come. Suffice it to say, however, that this is not a difficult problem. Although *Kesef Mishnah* to *Hilkhot Teshuvah* 3:5 states that he does not know where Maimonides derived this notion, he overlooked the fact that Maimonides himself provides the source. In his Commentary to *Avot* 1:16, Maimonides quotes the Tosefta as saying: “For three things man is punished in this world and has no share in the world-to-come.” One of the three things listed is murder. Many commentators have pointed out that there is no such Tosefta, although Tosefta *Pe’ah* 1:2 is very similar. In fact, there is no doubt that Maimonides was referring to *Pe’ah* 1:2, and his version is actually recorded in a few different medieval sources; see Saul Lieberman, *Tosefta Kifshutah* (New York, 1955), vol. 1, p. 126. Still, one must question Lieberman’s

Nevertheless, Rabbi Meir Dan Plotzki argues that Maimonides does, in fact, assert that suicides have no portion in the world-to-come. He points to the same passage as Leiter, *Hilkhot Rotzeah* 2:2, which reads as follows:

If, however, one hires an assassin to kill another, or sends his slaves to kill him, or ties another up and leaves him in front of a lion or another animal and the animal kills him, and, similarly, if one commits suicide, the rule in each of these cases is that he is a shedder of blood, has committed the crime of murder, and is liable for death at the hand of Heaven; but there is no capital punishment at the hands of the court.

Plotzki asks the obvious question, namely, how can a suicide be liable for death at the hands of Heaven? Maimonides must be referring to a spiritual death which will be suffered by the suicide. In other words, the suicide will lose his share in the world-to-come. According to Plotzki, this passage of Maimonides is the ultimate source for our maxim.<sup>46</sup>

There is another passage in *Avodah Zarah* 18a which is relevant.

Our rabbis taught: When R. Jose b. Kisma was ill, R. Hanina b. Teradion went to visit him. He said to him: "Brother Hanina, knowest thou not that it is Heaven that has ordained this [Roman] nation to reign? For though she laid waste His House, burnt His Temple, slew His pious ones, and caused His best ones to perish, still is she firmly established! Yet I have heard about thee that thou sittest and occupiest thyself with the Torah, dost publicly gather assemblies, and keepest a scroll [of the law] in thy bosom [contrary to Roman decree]!" He replied, "Heaven will show mercy." "I," he remonstrated, "am telling thee plain facts, and thou sayest, 'Heaven will show mercy!' It will surprise me if they do not burn both thee and the scroll of the law with fire." "Rabbi," said the other, "How do I stand with regard to the world-to-come?"

suggestion that these sources simply copied the Tosefta as it appeared in Maimonides without necessarily having such a reading in their own Tosefta texts. I say this since *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol*, negative commandment no. 9, quotes the variant Tosefta reading as also appearing in the Jerusalem Talmud; a point which is not noted by Maimonides. (It is worth noting that R. Jonah Gerondi, *Sha'arei Teshuvah* [Jerusalem, 1967] 3:141, is explicit that murderers do have a share in the world-to-come.)

46. *Qeli Hemdah* (Piotrkow, 1927), vol. 1, p. 8b. Maimonides' closing words present a difficulty according to this interpretation, for how could there ever be capital punishment at the hands of the court in the case of a suicide? Plotzki is cognizant of this problem and cleverly attempts to solve it.

A number of rabbis ask the purpose of R. Jose b. Kisma's question "How do I stand with regard to the world-to-come?" It must be, they answer, that he was concerned with the following: If he persisted in teaching Torah, an activity he could have refrained from, and as a result the Romans killed him, this might be considered suicide, in which case he would not have a share in the world-to-come. Among the illustrious rabbis who point to this source are Solomon Kluger<sup>47</sup> and Judah Aszod.<sup>48</sup>

Kluger also advances another source which, according to him, shows that a suicide has no portion in Paradise. The Talmud states that "whoever crosses a river behind a woman will have no portion in the world-to-come."<sup>49</sup> Kluger asks what is so terrible about this that it would cause one to lose his share in the world-to-come. Indeed, even actual intercourse with a married woman does not have this punishment. He answers as follows: One who crosses a river knows that he is putting himself in danger but trusts that, if necessary, God will perform a miracle and protect him. If, however, a man is walking after a woman and his thoughts are on sin, God will no longer perform this miracle. Therefore, if someone walks in a dangerous place and does not protect himself, it is as if he is committing suicide, and the Talmud states that a man in this situation has no portion in the world-to-come.<sup>50</sup>

That there are numerous difficulties with this view is obvious. To begin with, according to Kluger there is no element of a sexual crime in the talmudic passage. Also, according to Kluger's understanding, one who only puts himself in a dangerous situation, such as walking in a river without thinking about God, loses his share in the world-to-come even if he is never actually killed. This means that everyone who simply attempts suicide loses his portion; surely a radical presumption.

Earlier I mentioned Landau's view that the Talmud did not give a reason for Ahithophel's exclusion from Paradise because it did not accept the idea that one who commits suicide has no portion in the world-to-come. However,

47. *Avodat Avodah* (Brooklyn, 1962), p. 38a, and *Ha-'Elef Lekha Shlomo*, loc. cit.

48. *Yehudah Ya'aleh* (Lemberg, 1873), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 355. In this responsum Aszod asserts that there is no source for our maxim. However, in a note appended to the responsum, Aszod's son claims that when questioned, his father pointed to the text in *Avodah Zarah*. Cf. R. Isaac Herzog, *Pesaqim u-Khetavim* (Jerusalem, 1990), vol. 5, no. 120, who also points to *Avodah Zarah* 18a but for a different reason.

49. *Berakhot* 61a. Rashi explains that the Talmud is dealing with a married woman who will lift up her dress in order to cross the river.

50. *Ha-'Elef Lekha Shlomo*, loc. cit.

there are rabbis who take exception to Landau's reasoning. They point out that Ahithophel has no portion in the world-to-come because he rebelled against David, but had he not done so, the Talmud surely would have listed suicide as the reason for his being denied a heavenly portion.<sup>51</sup> The problem with this explanation is that the Talmud nowhere states that Ahithophel was denied a portion in the world-to-come because of his rebellion. In addition, as Rabbi Rahamim Joseph Franco points out, there is no reason to assume that Ahithophel must suffer such a harsh penalty for his rebellion, and therefore his punishment must be explained as due to his suicide, despite the fact that the Talmud does not mention this.<sup>52</sup>

Kluger also opposes Landau's reason but from another angle.<sup>53</sup> According to him, the Talmud does not explain why Ahithophel was denied a portion in the next world simply because there was no reason to state the obvious!<sup>54</sup> He also points to the harsh words of Josephus regarding suicide as proof that one

51. Kluger, *Tuv Ta'am ve-Da'at* (New York, n.d.), Third Series, vol. 2, no. 202; R. Shalom Mordekhai Schwadron, *She'elot u-Teshuvot Maharsham* (Jerusalem, 1974), vol. 6, no. 123; R. Judah Grunfeld, *Qol Yehudah* (Jerusalem, 1984), p. 36; R. Gershon Stern, *Yalkut ha-Gershuni* (Brooklyn, 1972), *Quntres Aharon*, p. 2b; and Yosef, *Yabi'a 'Omer*, p. 262. See also R. Abraham Rosen, *'Etan 'Aryeh*, no. 20, who goes so far as to deny that Ahithophel even committed suicide! Because the halakhic restrictions regarding suicide only apply to those of sound mind, R. Zvi Hirsch Chajes was able to argue that a suicide's having no share in the world-to-come only applies to one whose suicide is an act of rebellion against God. However, one who is carried away by the whim of a moment is not condemned to eternal perdition. It is this distinction which enables Chajes to explain why Ahithophel's suicide did not cause the loss of his portion in the world-to-come. See *Kol Kitvei Maharatz Chajes* (Jerusalem, 1958), vol. 2, pp. 505–506.

52. Franco, *Sha'arei Rahamim*, loc. cit. Nevertheless, at the end of his responsum Franco expresses some doubt as to whether a suicide is, in fact, eternally excluded from Heaven. Cf. also R. Abraham Meir Israel, *Yalqut ha-Me'iri* (Brooklyn, 1981), to *Sanhedrin* 90a.

53. *Tuv Ta'am ve-Da'at* (New York, n.d.), First Series, no. 282.

54. Incidentally, it is with regard to Ahithophel and his punishment that one can perhaps show that *Besamim Rosh* (Berlin, 1793), no. 345, is a late forgery. (This responsum was excised when *Besamim Rosh* was printed for the second time in Cracow in 1881. It is said that the Hasidic leader R. Ezekiel Halberstamm was responsible for this; see Z. Y. Abramowitz, "Besamim Rosh be-Aspaqlaryah Hasidit," *Tagim* 3–4 [Elul, 5732]: 58.) The authenticity of this responsum has long been regarded as questionable; however, the reason for this has to do with its radical conclusions rather than internal evidence. It is with regard to the latter that I detect the forgery, for in this responsum "R. Asher" feels constrained to stress that Ahithophel was denied Paradise, not because he committed suicide, but because he rebelled against David. Now when it is remembered that none of the *rishonim* mention anything about Ahithophel being denied his portion in the world-to-come because of his committing suicide, it is certainly possible that *Besamim Rosh* is responding to eighteenth-century conceptions of the fate of the suicide. The reason none of the *rishonim* connect Ahithophel's punishment with his suicide is simply that

who takes his own life has no share in the next world.<sup>55</sup> However, whereas Josephus does speak very negatively about suicide, he does not explicitly state that a suicide *never* receives a portion in Paradise. (Of course, even if he had said so, this need not mean that his view was based on Jewish sources.)

Rabbi Barukh Epstein was surprised that so many rabbis had to struggle to find sources for the notion we are considering. The Talmud derives the prohibition against suicide from the first part of Genesis 9:5, which reads as follows: "And surely your blood of your lives will I require." Upon this passage R. Eliezer remarks, "It means I will require your blood if shed by the hands of yourselves."<sup>56</sup> According to Epstein, it is obvious that just as one who kills is in turn killed (Gen. 9:6), so too one who commits suicide will be punished. The meaning of 9:5 ("I will require your blood") is that he will be punished in the next world through the loss of his heavenly portion.<sup>57</sup> However, Rabbi Eliezer Waldenberg rightly questions this logic, since there

they were unaware of the notion we have been considering; a notion which *Besamim Rosh* was clearly aware of.

55. *Jewish War* III:8. Even among the most traditional rabbis Josephus (or more precisely Yossipon) has often been accepted as a reliable source of Jewish history and belief when he does not contradict the Talmud; see R. David Gans, *Tzemah David* (Warsaw, 1859), p. 18a, and R. Jehiel Heilprin, *Seder ha-Dorot* (Warsaw, 1878), p. 79a. Jekuthiel Judah Greenwald, *Toledot ha-Kohanim ha-Gedolim* (New York, 1933), p. 5 (see also *Kol Bo 'al 'Avelut*, loc. cit.), has a passage which is totally inexplicable. He claims that Josephus explicitly states that suicides are denied a portion in the world-to-come. In support of this he quotes the passage in Josephus we have referred to, copying from Kalman Schulman's Hebrew translation, *Sefer Milhamot ha-Yehudim im ha-Roma'im* (Vilna, 1863), vol. 2, pp. 6–7. However, in this quotation he adds the following sentence, which appears to be his own creation: הלא חטא יחטא האיש הזה לה' היוצר רוח האדם ונותן נשמה באפו ולא יכופר לו את הרצח הזה כל ימי עולם. *Yosippon*, chap. 71, does say that a suicide has no portion in the world-to-come, but as Yitzhak Baer has already shown, Yossipon's views regarding suicide are based on non-Jewish sources, in particular Plato, Cicero, and Macrobius; see his "Sefer Yosippon ha-Ivri," in Baer et al., eds., *Sefer Dinaburg* (Jerusalem, 1949), pp. 195–197. (However, Baer was unaware of Franz Cumont's convincing proofs that Macrobius never actually saw Plato's *Phaedo*; see his "Comment Plotin détourne Porphyre du suicide," *Revue des études grecques* 32 [1919]: 113–120.)

56. *Bava Qamma* 91b.

57. *Torah Temimah* (New York, 1928), to Genesis 9:5; idem, *Tosefet Berakhah* to Genesis 9:5. See also the similar explanations of R. Solomon Zvi Schick, *Torah Shelemah* (Satmar, 1909), vol. 1, pp. 144a–144b, and R. Meir Murtziano, *Beit Me'ir* (Jerusalem, 1988), pp. 65–66. Cf. A. Perls, "Der Selbstmord nach der Halacha," *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums* 55 (1911): 289.



is a great difference between saying that someone will be punished in the next world and saying that he *completely* loses his heavenly portion.<sup>58</sup>

Rabbi Eliezer Hayyim Deutsch, while not pointing to a specific source, claims that the popular view of the suicide's fate appears in a number of places, including midrashim.<sup>59</sup> He also gives what he considers to be a logical rationale for the harsh punishment suffered. The Mishnah states: "Better one hour of spiritual bliss in the world-to-come than the entire life of this world."<sup>60</sup> Therefore, it is very possible that people who are having difficulties will regard suicide as a means of leaving this world for a better one. In order to prevent such thinking, suicide is punished with an absolute denial of any share in the next world; this removes the reason for taking one's own life.<sup>61</sup>

Rabbi Hillel Posek has a similar approach. He points to a passage in Sa'adiah Gaon's *'Emunot ve-De'ot* which reads as follows:

The righteous servant of God, therefore, loves the life of this world merely because it serves as a stepladder by means of which he reaches and ascends to the next world, not for its own sake. Its love has been implanted in man solely in order that he not kill himself when trouble befalls him, as Scripture says, "And surely your blood of your lives will I require; at the hand of every beast will I require it."<sup>62</sup>

Yet Posek is not very convincing when he asserts that this passage shows that Sa'adiah believed that a suicide has no portion in the world-to-come.<sup>63</sup> In fact, the passage says nothing of the kind, Rabbi Yehiel Michal Tukatzinsky also argues from logic in favor of the maxim, which he realizes is not found in rabbinic literature. He claims that since one who commits suicide shows that he denies both God and the world-to-come, it is obvious that he has no share

58. Waldenberg, *Tzitz Eliezer*, loc. cit.

59. Lieberman, *Hilkhot ha-Yerushalmi*, p. 21 n. 23, also says that the notion we are considering is reflected in various midrashim. He does not specify which ones he has in mind, and none of the numerous rabbinic texts which discuss our problem point to a specific midrash as a source.

60. *Avot* 4:17.

61. *Duda'ei ha-Sadeh* (Seini, 1929), no. 39.

62. *The Book of Beliefs and Opinions*, translated by Samuel Rosenblatt (New Haven, 1948), p. 387. See also the passage from Bahya Ibn Paquda cited by Nathanson, *Divrei Sha'ul to Yoreh De'ah*, p. 269.

63. *Hillel Omer*, loc. cit.



in the next world.<sup>64</sup> A similar argument was actually advanced years earlier by Nathanson, who, as we have seen, was later to contradict it and express skepticism as to the authenticity of our maxim and the idea it expresses.<sup>65</sup>

Earlier I quoted the story in *Ketubot* of the man who jumped off a roof and a heavenly voice declared that he was granted a portion in the next world. I claimed that this was a talmudic text which did not recognize the notion that one who commits suicide has no portion in the world-to-come. However, this position is not unanimous, and Rabbis Zvi Hirsch Chajes<sup>66</sup> and Jekuthiel Judah Greenwald<sup>67</sup> believe that the story in *Ketubot* actually shows the opposite, namely, that suicides have no portion in the next world. According to them, the purpose of the heavenly voice which declared this man worthy of his portion in the world-to-come was precisely to show that he was different than the normal suicide.

Rabbi Reuven Margaliot calls attention to a passage in the *Zohar* which reads as follows: "It is held by some that he [Samson] will have no portion in the world-to-come, for the reason that he said: 'Let me die with the Philistines' (Judg. 16:30), and thus placed his portion among those of the Philistines."<sup>68</sup> However, this source does not state that it was his suicide per se which was responsible for his punishment but rather his aligning himself with the Philistines.<sup>69</sup> Margaliot cites another source which is also not conclusive. *Midrash Tehillim* (ed. Buber) 120:4 reads as follows:

The evil tongue is called "triple-slaying." Why? Because it slays three: the one who owns it, the one who listens to it, and the one of whom it speaks. And so

64. *Gesher ha-Hayyim* (Jerusalem, 1960), vol. 1, p. 270. See also Rosen, 'Etan 'Aryeh, no. 113.

65. *Divrei Sha'ul: Hiddushei Aggadot*, loc. cit.

66. *Kol Kitvei Maharatz Chajes*, p. 942.

67. *Kol Bo 'al 'Avelut*, loc. cit. See also *Yad ha-Melekh, Hilkhot Avel* 1:11; R. Ephraim Zalman Margulies, *Beit 'Efraim* (Warsaw, 1883), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 76; and Herzog, *Pesaqim u-Khetavim*, loc. cit.

68. *Nitzutzei Zohar* in Reuven Margaliot, ed., *Zohar* (Jerusalem, 1964), vol. 3, p. 127a, n. 9; idem, *Margaliyot ha-Yam* (Jerusalem, 1977) to *Sanhedrin* 90a, n. 21. See also R. Abraham Sperling, *Ta'amei ha-Minhagim* (Jerusalem, 1957), pp. 464–465; Epstein, *Tosefet Berakhah* to Genesis 9:5.

69. See R. Moses Cordovero's comments on this passage in his *Or Yaqar* (Jerusalem, 1985), vol. 13, p. 252. He states explicitly that Samson's punishment was not due to his committing suicide.

you find in the story of Doeg that it slew three. It slew Doeg himself, for he has no portion in the world-to-come . . .

Yet a clear reading of this text shows that it nowhere states that Doeg lost his portion in the world-to-come because he committed suicide. In fact suicide is nowhere mentioned here (admittedly the Hebrew is slightly ambiguous).<sup>70</sup> The passage simply states that because of *lashon hara* Doeg lost his portion in Paradise.<sup>71</sup>

Although most of the discussion of our maxim in the rabbinic literature is of an aggadic nature, there are certain exceptions. Thus, for example, Rabbi Israel Rappaport was asked to rule in a case where a Sabbath violator had been buried in the section of the cemetery reserved for suicides, but the family demanded that he be moved. Rappoport decided in favor of the family, basing his decision on the “fact” that suicides, having no portion in the world-to-come, are much worse off than Sabbath violators. It was therefore most improper to bury a Sabbath violator, who does have a portion in Paradise, together with suicides.<sup>72</sup>

After having seen the numerous sources that speak of suicides having no share in the world-to-come, we can now better understand two responsa of Rabbi Moses Sofer.<sup>73</sup> In these responsa Sofer records what he refers to as a common belief (which may also have been a common practice),<sup>74</sup> namely, that one does not say *Qaddish* for a suicide. He finds this belief very strange, says he knows no good reason for it, and states explicitly that there is nothing wrong with saying *Qaddish*. Indeed, Sofer points out that saying *Qaddish* for a suicide will help achieve repentance for him. This shows that Sofer believes that suicides do have a portion in the world-to-come.<sup>75</sup> He suggests that the

70. לשון הרע קורין אותו שלישי, ולמה? שהורג ג'. הורג עצמו, והמקבלו ומי שנאמר עליו, וכן אתה מוצא. בדואג שהרג [שלושה, הרג] עצמו שאין לו חלק לעולם הבא . . .

71. See *Arakhin* 15b, *Yerushalmi Pe'ah* 1:1, and *Tosefta Pe'ah* 1:2, where *lashon hara* is regarded as the equivalent of idolatry, murder, and adultery.

72. *She'elot u-Teshuvot Mahari ha-Cohen* (Lemberg, 1875), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 47. This view is rejected by R. Jeremiah Menahem Cohen, *Ve-Herim ha-Kohen* (Jerusalem, 1981), no. 63, who argues that a brazen Sabbath violator is, in fact, worse than a suicide. For other halakhic decisions which use our maxim, see R. Eliezer Deutsch, *Peri ha-Sadeh* (Paks, 1913), vol. 3, no. 52, and R. Aaron Lewin, *Avnei Hefetz* (Munich, 1948), no. 38.

73. *Hatam Sofer* (Jerusalem, 1970), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 326; *'Even ha-'Ezer*, vol. 1, no. 69.

74. See R. Aaron Azriel, *Kapei 'Aharon* (Jerusalem, 1886), vol. 2, *Hilkhot 'Avelut*, no. 16, who defends the practice of not saying *Qaddish* for a suicide.

75. Interestingly, Sofer regards suicide as being the equivalent of murder, thus showing that

notion that *Qaddish* is not recited for suicides is probably based on the fact that those saying *Qaddish* for someone who had died a natural death would object to giving up their *Qaddish* in favor of those mourning for someone who died before his proper time. (He is referring to the practice whereby only one mourner says *Qaddish* at a time.)<sup>76</sup>

However, there is a much more logical explanation for the widespread idea that one does not say *Qaddish* for a suicide; one that is based upon the belief that a suicide has no portion in the world-to-come. The mourner's *Qaddish* was popularly understood as being a means of bringing repentance to a dead man's soul.<sup>77</sup> If the belief that a suicide has no portion in the world-to-come is accepted, it is quite obvious that there is no longer any reason to say *Qaddish* for him.<sup>78</sup>

As to the source for the notion that "one who commits suicide has no share in the world-to-come," we have not been able to find an explicit talmudic teaching to this effect. Indeed, it is not even possible to pinpoint when this

he does not accept Maimonides' judgment about the fate of the murderer. In fact he is explicit that a murderer achieves repentance through his death. However, as he points out, suicide is somewhat different, for it is the crime itself which brings death. See also his comments in *Torat Moshe* (Brooklyn, 1958), vol. 1, pp. 19b–20a, and the responsum of his grandson, R. Simhah Bunim Sofer, *Shevet Sofer* (Jerusalem, 1974), *Yoreh De'ah*, no. 105.

76. Sofer appears to be the first to refer to the notion of not saying *Qaddish* for a suicide. The assertion of Azriel, *Kapei 'Aharon*, vol. 2, p. 66a, and Hazzan, *Kerakh shel Romi*, p. 52b, that this practice is already attested to by R. Jacob Castro (1528–1610), *Erekh Lehem* (Constantinople, 1718), *Yoreh De'ah* 345, is mistaken, as Castro is only referring to the *Qaddish* which is said after the burial. Regarding this latter point see Covo, *Sha'ar Asher*, loc. cit. (at the end of the responsum).

77. See Zvi Karl, *Ha-Qaddish* (Lvov, 1935), pp. 80 ff.; David de Sola Pool, *The Kaddish* (New York, 1964), pp. 101–106; Solomon B. Freehof, "Ceremonial Creativity Among the Ashkenazim," in Joseph Gutmann, ed., *Beauty in Holiness* (New York, 1970), p. 489. Joseph Gutmann claims that this notion has a Christian origin. As he puts it, the mourner's *Qaddish* "has its roots in the Requiem Mass or Mass for the dead celebrated in the Church so that through prayer and sacrifice the living can aid the souls in purgatory and help them attain eternal glory." See his "Christian Influences on Jewish Customs," in Leon Klenicki and Gabe Huck, eds., *Spirituality and Prayer: Jewish and Christian Understandings* (New York, 1983), p. 134. I quote this only for its interesting theory. In truth, however, Gutmann's view is completely unfounded.

78. Azriel, loc. cit., explains the matter simply: since we do not mourn for a suicide, *Qaddish*, which is part of the mourning process, is omitted. This reason is also very logical and may have played a part in the popularization of the notion that one does not say *Qaddish* for a suicide.

view became a part of the Jewish tradition, and it does not appear to be a medieval notion. While Netanel ben Isaiah is an exception, his view may be derived from Islamic sources and, as indicated, it had no effect on subsequent Jewish teaching.

Some might venture the suggestion that the idea we have been considering is actually the result of Christian influence, for as is well known, according to orthodox Christian teaching suicide is a mortal sin. However, there seems to be no evidence pointing in this direction, and it would appear to this writer that our quotation actually arose out of an interpretation of the various halakhot connected with suicide. According to the law as formulated in *Semaḥot* 2:1, no mourning rites are to be followed after a suicide; that is, there is no *shiv'ah*, *qeri'ah*, or eulogy. These restrictions are recorded by the standard codes, such as Maimonides<sup>79</sup> and the *Shulḥan Arukh*.<sup>80</sup> It is not difficult to see how the masses, upon seeing these restrictions both in print and in practice, could have come to the conclusion that suicides have no portion in the world-to-come. Indeed, not merely the masses, for R. Shneur Falkon was able to write: "According to the sages of the Talmud, a suicide loses two worlds [i.e., this world and the next], as is *explicit* from their saying that we do not have any funeral rites for one who commits suicide" (emphasis added).<sup>81</sup> Although the explicitness of this teaching is obviously debatable, Falkon's point is well taken and indicates the profound influence of the punitive laws directed against the suicide. Perhaps this influence is even profound enough to be at the root of our famous maxim.

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79. *Hilkhot 'Avel* 1:11.

80. *Yoreh De'ah* 345:1.

81. See also R. Abraham Zvi Klein, *Be'erot 'Avraham* (Tyrnau, 1928), no. 42: "And I said that it is permissible to bury him in the cemetery and give him full funeral rites, for he is not considered a suicide, *since the laws which appear in the Shulḥan Arukh were only said with regard to one who died immediately, in which case he has no share in the world-to-come because he died with his sin upon him and did not repent*" (emphasis added). There is a slight difference in emphasis between Falkon and Klein. According to Falkon, the laws directed against the suicide are the proof that the rabbis regarded him as losing his share in Paradise. According to Klein, the fact that a suicide has no portion in the world-to-come is actually what caused the rabbis to legislate punitive measures against those who killed themselves.