

**בראשית ב' א** ואלקים את השמים ואת הארץ והארץ היתה תהו  
ובهو וחושך על פני תהום ורוח אלקים מרחפת על פני המים ואמר  
אלקים יהי אוֹר והי אור וירא אלקים את האור כי טוב ויבדל  
אלקים בין היום לבין החושך ויקרא יום אחד ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום אחד  
המים ויהי אוֹר ליום מים למים ועשה אלקים את המים אשר נתות לרקיע ובין המים אשר נתינת למים ויקרא  
אלקים לרקיע שמים ויהי ערב ויהי בקר יום שני ואמר אלקים יקוו  
המים מתחת ולמעים אל מקום אחד ותראה היבשה ויהי כן ויקרא  
אלקים ליבשה ארץ ולמקוה המים קרא ימים וירא אלקים כי טוב

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### About the cover

The cover artwork was designed to express the approach of this series of essays which interprets popular media, primarily film and music, through the looking glass of Jewish philosophy. The intent of the essays is not to explain a particular pop-media piece *per se*, but rather to utilize its power to explain Jewish Philosophy. In this sense the media serves as an *articulation* of Jewish Philosophy whereby recondite ideas are brought to life in the “language” of modern man. Jewish philosophy seeks to understand man’s world within the context of the Creator; as such the cover art rests on a backdrop of deep sky blue, *tekhelet*, the color of God’s throne, upon which the entire creation rests. The blue is rendered chaotic through graphic noise, thus giving expression to the unfinished and imperfect nature of creation. Upon this amorphous substrate is the text of the creation narrative, written in the typeface of a traditional Torah scroll, indicating that it is with reference to the ancient lore that we seek to derive meaning. Scattered around the page are ten circles modifying the base color, representing the ten *sefirot*. The *sefirot* are mystical lenses through which divine emanations reach the world and through which man perceives divinity. There is another circle in a very light *tekhelet*, around the word “*bereishit*” (beginning), symbolizing the *sefirah* of “*keter*” – God’s crown itself. Overlaying these religious symbols are the more familiar symbols of film and music: the director’s clapperboard, treble and bass symbols, and a guitar. The guitar is replicated three times; three representing permanence in Jewish thought. The guitar is no ordinary guitar but the 1950’s Fender Telecaster used to record Led Zeppelin’s Stairway to Heaven, a permanent classic in the music world and the subject of one of the essays in this series.

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## Bungle In The Jungle – A Song On Life\*

In an interview some 35 years after the song's release, Ian Anderson explains that the composition of his Jethro Tull hit single, "Bungle in the Jungle," was a study of the human condition. He states, "... I was writing an album that was exploring people, the human condition, through analogies with the animal kingdom. And that particular song was perhaps the more obvious and the more catchy of the tunes."<sup>1</sup> Indeed, a close analysis of the lyrics reveals deep existential and eschatological motifs.<sup>2</sup> Let us delve into the song's words, phrases and concepts to learn of man, his world and his destiny.

*Walking through forests of palm tree apartments ---*

This verse sets up the analogy of animal kingdom to human world that will be used throughout the song. Man's jutting apartments make for a cityscape akin to a forest of palm trees – a jungle – through which one makes his way with great effort and difficulty.<sup>3</sup> By starting with the verb "walking", we are informed from the outset that we are not here to sit in passive observation but rather to actively embark on an adventure. Indeed, we are going on the excursion of our very lives.

*Scoff at the monkeys who live in their dark tents*

Monkeys represent people who take everything as a joke, oblivious to the serious nature of reality. Darkness is a metaphor for ignorance, so living in "dark tents" emphasizes the uneducated nature of these people. Darkness is also a metaphor for evil, so living in "dark tents" further implies an ignorance that begets immorality.<sup>4</sup> Witnessing such base living evokes a contempt that is given expression as "scoffing".

*Down by the waterhole --- drunk every Friday ---*

A "waterhole" is a well-worn euphemism for a bar or pub; and so it is that these "monkeys" – these people who choose to mock reality – do so by inebriating themselves. This occurs particularly at the weekend when, being of the working class, they are finally left to themselves.

*Eating their nuts --- saving their raisins for Sunday.*

The workday week is lived humbly off of staple foods and staple thoughts, while the consumption of sweets that tantalize the senses is reserved for the "Sabbath" day.<sup>5</sup> Though this alludes to a religious ethic of celebrating the "Sabbath day as holy",<sup>6</sup> it is here mentioned disparagingly as an addendum to the drunken Friday.

\* I would like to acknowledge my brother, Dr. Joseph Navon, for bringing this song to my attention.

It might be said that this line gives expression to Marx's criticism: "religion is the opiate of the masses." For while religion can inspire thought, reflection and ultimately perfection of the self and the world, it can only serve as an "opiate" if one just goes through the motions of religiosity as part of the rote of life. In the case of the "monkeys", their sanctification of the Sabbath day does not spark thoughts and yearnings for higher consciousness, but merely serves as part of the work week structure that maintains them in their oblivion.

*Lions and tigers who wait in the shadows ---*

There are other people – predators – who take advantage of the oblivious masses. These people are dishonest, seeking to take unfair advantage, as is denoted by their waiting in the shadows.

*They're fast but they're lazy, and sleep in green meadows.*

These "lions and tigers" are not greater than the "monkeys" in any spiritual sense; they are merely endowed with the asset of physical prowess. "Fast but lazy" implies that they have an advantage but do not employ it to make use of their true potential.

"Green meadows" are symbolic of wealth which often gives rise to "sleep" – a rejection of one's higher calling through oblivion.<sup>7</sup> The Bible expresses the phenomenon as, "Jeshurun waxed fat and kicked ... and he forsook God who made him, and contemned the Rock of his salvation" (Deut. 32:15).<sup>8</sup>

*Let's bungle in the jungle --- well, that's all right by me.*

The world is a jungle, a lush paradise, but at the same time a place fraught with potential danger – indeed a fitting metaphor for a world created with the possibility of both great good as well as frightening evil. The world being what it is, we are called upon to "bungle", to "struggle", to rise above the monkeys, lions and tigers. Indeed this is the very task of life.<sup>9</sup>

*I'm a tiger when I want love, but I'm a snake if we disagree.*

These are personal reflections of an individual struggling to "bungle" in the "jungle" just depicted. This line, together with those that immediately follow, describes an attempt to cope in a world of destructive competition. The individual is aggressively passionate about his selfish – "I want" – desires;<sup>10</sup> he is conniving and dangerous when opposed.<sup>11</sup> These traits are less than ideal and are, we realize by the end of the song when tigers and snakes are no more, to be shunned.

*Just say a word and the boys will be right there:  
 with claws at your back to send a chill through the night air.  
 Is it so frightening to have me at your shoulder?  
 Thunder and lightning couldn't be bolder.  
 I'll write on your tombstone, "I thank you for dinner."  
 This game that we animals play is a winner.*

Here we have a description of a competitive life made of politics and deal-making – a merciless “game” in which one may be taken advantage of without remorse. This is strikingly conveyed in the burying of one’s dinner guest: opportunism at its worst, man as animal. His “divine image” lost, he honors no code of morality, but only the code of the jungle.<sup>12</sup>

*The rivers are full of crocodile nasties*

The world is a place where things are not what they appear to be on the surface. The nature of the world is such that good and evil are often intermingled – rivers, which supply essential water, are nevertheless also inhabited by life-threatening dangers. It is incumbent upon man to distinguish between the two in his struggle to perfect the world. Man must realize the world’s potential for good, while being ever cautious of its latent potential for evil.<sup>13</sup>

*And He who made kittens put snakes in the grass.*

Indeed, God by design created the good, the sweet, the innocent, and the vulnerable, along with the evil, the malevolent, the crafty, and the predatory – as the Bible states, “I form the light and create darkness, I make peace and create evil; I, the Lord, do all these things” (Isaiah 45:7).

While the kitten is the picture of sweet innocence, the snake is the ultimate icon of evil. Placed in the grass, the snake denotes an evil which is not readily discernable. Indeed, evil is difficult to overcome precisely because it often “sneaks” up on man, taking advantage of his vulnerabilities. As such, the Bible describes the snake, who plotted the first sin of man, as “crafty” (Gen. 3:1) and “deceiving” (Gen. 3:13).

*He's a lover of life but a player of pawns ---*

Here is a reference to the existential dialectic of fate and free will. On the one hand, God loves life. Indeed, He created man to live through the exercise of his free will, for without it one has not “life”.<sup>14</sup> On the other hand, God plays people like pieces on a chessboard. Worse yet, He plays them like “pawns” which are expendable for some greater good.

Expressed in this verse then is the notion that there is indeed free will, yet there is also a guiding hand that moves history in the direction "He" deems fit.<sup>15</sup> Man has free exercise of his will, yet he cannot alter God's destiny for His creation. This truth is confirmed emphatically in the following line which starts with the word "yes".

*Yes, the King on His sunset lies waiting for dawn*

The King, God, waits expectantly for history to reach its destiny. He gives man his "day"<sup>16</sup> to perfect himself through the use of free will, but just as the day ends, so too does man's opportunity.<sup>17</sup> Here "sunset", which denotes the day's end, is a metaphor for the end of days, the eschatological destiny of mankind.<sup>18</sup>

The prophecies of the end of days indicate that there will be a great war known as Armageddon (i.e., Gog U'Magog) during which God does not actively participate but "lies waiting".<sup>19</sup> However, there will then come a day, the "day of the Lord", at which point "the Lord shall go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fighteth in the day of battle. ..." (Zechariah 14:3).

Following this "day of the Lord" there will "dawn" a new day, a new era: the messianic era<sup>20</sup> – when the light of peace and truth shines forth, as reflected in the next line.

*To light up His Jungle*

Light, as the ultimate metaphor for knowledge and truth, was sorely lacking prior to the "dawn" of redemption. In contradistinction, the messianic era will be a time when the knowledge of God will pervade the earth and, as a result, peace and harmony will extend throughout all of nature, indeed, lighting up "His Jungle":

There shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Ishai [i.e., the Messiah] ... And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. And the cow and the bear shall feed; their young ones shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. And the sucking child shall play on the hole of the asp snake, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder snake's den. They shall not hurt nor destroy in all My holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

(Isaiah 11:1-9)



*As play is resumed.*

The new world order will “resume” activity in a world that had stopped “playing”. That is, amid the apocalyptic visions of the end of days, between the “sunset” of man’s struggles and the “dawn” of his redemption, there is a “day of the Lord” when God judges mankind, bringing all life to a standstill. The prophet Zechariah (14:1-6) describes it as follows:

Behold, a day of the Lord cometh ... Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fighteth in the day of battle. ... And it shall come to pass in that day, that there shall not be light ....

R. S. R. Hirsh explains, “Light is the fundamental condition for the development of all organic existence. If we imagine all light being removed there would be an end to all further development.”<sup>21</sup> That is, without light, “play” ceases. But immediately thereafter, continues the prophet, there is light once again:

And there shall be one day which shall be known as the Lord’s, not day, and not night; but it shall come to pass, that at evening time there shall be light. ... And the Lord shall be King over all the earth; in that day shall the Lord be One, and His name one.

“Play is resumed” in a new light. Mankind then lives in the knowledge of the “King”, when His creations are at one with His will.<sup>22</sup>

*The monkeys seem willing to strike up the tune.*

And then even the “monkeys”, the masses who were oblivious to the truth but went through the motions of religiosity, will now sing the songs of God’s praise with sincerity. By the sheer nature of the new world they belatedly recognize the truth and thus “seem willing” to adapt their ways to the new reality.

Note that the *metaphoric* “lions, tigers and snakes” are not part of the messianic era. Ironically, the prophet Isaiah talks of *real* lions, snakes and other animals as being part of the messianic era; they are now, however, of a completely different nature. The *people*, on the other hand, who acted throughout history as lions, snakes, etc., will not take part in this era. This era is a time for reward, such that those who worked against the harmonious perfection of the world, or continue to deny God, will not take part in its happy conclusion. The prophet Zechariah (14:12-21) goes on to proclaim that they will either perish in the final plague that God brings at the end of days or, if they continue to deny God, they will perish in subsequent divine plagues.

On the other hand, those who do make it to this new redemptive era will both literally and figuratively “strike up the tune.” Isaiah declares that upon redemption,<sup>23</sup> the people will “Sing unto the Lord a new song, and His praise from the end of the earth” (42:10). But more importantly, the people will “strike up the tune” of performing God’s will in peace and harmony:

And it shall come to pass in the end of days, that the mountain of the Lord’s house shall be established as the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it. And many peoples shall go and say: ‘Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths.’ For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. And He shall judge between the nations, and shall decide for many peoples; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks; nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.

(Isaiah 2:2-5)



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> <http://www.songfacts.com/int/2009/09/ian-anderson-jethro-tull.html>
- <sup>2</sup> It is not my contention that the philosophy articulated herein was specifically what composer Ian Anderson had in mind. Rather, as all pieces of art are open to interpretation, it is my intention to interpret the piece according to biblical-based philosophy.
- <sup>3</sup> R. M. H. Luzzato, *The Way of God*, 1:3:1-4.
- <sup>4</sup> These tents of immorality stand in contradistinction to the modest tents of the children of Israel described in the Bible, "How goodly are your tents, O Jacob, your dwelling places, O Israel" (Num. 24:5); see also Rashi (on Num. 24:5).
- <sup>5</sup> Judaism marks the Sabbath as the seventh day of creation when God rested. Christianity, for various reasons, marks the first day of the week.
- <sup>6</sup> Ex. 20:7-9.
- <sup>7</sup> Sleep in Jewish thought is used to imply oblivion to reality (see Maimonides, Laws of Repentance 3:4).
- <sup>8</sup> The Talmud (San. 108a) explains that it was wealth that brought the downfall of the generation of the flood: "'They spend their days in prosperity, and their years in pleasure' ... it is this which caused them to say to God, 'Depart from us; for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the Almighty that we should serve him? And what profit should we have if we pray unto Him?'" Similarly the Talmud (San. 109a) explains the downfall of the city of Sodom.
- <sup>9</sup> See R. M. H. Luzzato, *The Way of God*, 1:2.
- <sup>10</sup> While passion is not a negative trait per se, it is negative here in the form of the tiger seeking to fulfill his selfish desires.
- <sup>11</sup> The character of the snake is made clear at the outset of the Bible (Gen. 3:1).
- <sup>12</sup> See R. Kedar (Torat Ohel, Vol. 1, pp. 51-61) who describes Cain's fear of being killed by the animals as due to his killing of Abel which precipitated the loss of his "divine image", thus lowering his status to that of animal.
- <sup>13</sup> A telling biblical example is the story of the Tower of Babel (Gen. 11:1-9) which describes the positive endeavor of applying technology – bricks and mortar – to build a city and a tower, yet man turned the endeavor into a tool to reject his Creator (see Talmud, San. 109a).
- <sup>14</sup> See Maimonides, Laws of Repentance, Ch. 5.
- <sup>15</sup> See Zohar (Vayera 109a-110a), R. M. H. Luzzato (*The Way of God*, 1:5:4), R. S. R. Hirsch (Gen. 21:33).
- <sup>16</sup> More precisely, man is given his "week", see fn. 17.
- <sup>17</sup> There is a broadly accepted doctrine that creation is limited to 7000 years, paralleling the 7 days of creation. As such, 6000 years are for man's toil, the seventh thousand years being akin to the Sabbath. See my article "One Thousand Years of Shabbat": [http://www.divreinavon.com/pdf/one\\_thousand\\_years\\_of\\_shabbat.pdf](http://www.divreinavon.com/pdf/one_thousand_years_of_shabbat.pdf).
- <sup>18</sup> For "end of days" prophecies see for example: Isaiah (2:1-5); Ezekiel (38); Joel (4), Micah (4:1-5); Zechariah (14:1-16).
- <sup>19</sup> While God is said to "gather" the nations, he does not act until the end - see Ezekiel (38-39), Joel (4), Zechariah (14).
- <sup>20</sup> See R. S. R. Hirsch (*Haftarot*, p. 676). On the analogy of dawn to redemption see Jerusalem Talmud (Berachot 1:1) and Babylonian Talmud (San. 98b).
- <sup>21</sup> *Haftarot*, p.676.
- <sup>22</sup> See R. S. R. Hirsch (*Haftarot*, p. 677).
- <sup>23</sup> See Radak (ad. loc.).

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“Bungle In The Jungle” is Jethro Tull's enduring hit single. Indeed, though released back in 1974, it continues to be a popular radio mainstay to this day. Composer Ian Anderson explains that the song seeks to explore the human condition via analogy to the animal kingdom. In consonance with this perspective, this essay explains the lyrics to sing of man's existential struggle - his “bungle” - through the “jungle” of this world. Furthermore, with hints to biblical eschatology, the song is shown to be informed with the notion of purposive history.

*“Thanks for the marvelous essays -- such a depth of vision, a wide range of sources, inspiring Torah. You have much to teach!”*

Vera Schwarcz  
Freeman Professor, East Asian Studies, Wesleyan University

### About the author

Mois Navon has successfully bridged the secular and the religious, the modern and the traditional, into a cohesive and complementary whole. Growing up on the beaches of California as an avid surfer, it wasn't until his years studying for a degree in Computer Engineering at UCLA that he honed his logical reasoning and analytical thinking. During this time he was also introduced to the Arts which inspired a personal journey to spirituality. While obtaining a minor in Art History, he learned that man speaks profoundly in the language of symbol. Raised in a traditional home, it didn't take long before he began to find philosophical depth in the symbols of the Torah and build them into logical constructs in essay form. From that time on he dedicated himself to delving into Jewish Thought, writing prolifically and teaching passionately on the subject. His journey brought him to Israel where he obtained rabbinic ordination, and where he continues to write and teach – all while maintaining a notable career as a Computer Engineer.

