

A P A S S A G E

and Edmond Jabes, who wrote, "Mark the first page of a book with a red ribbon, for the wound is inscribed at its beginning."

A friend from Hebrew School days visited my studio. He'd heard that I'd become an artist and was curious about what kind of work I made. I pulled out some drawings from the shelf beneath my work table. Sam found them admirable but confessed to ignorance of the ideas that had given them form. We talked for awhile about the possibility of a grammar of images, about the relationship between graphic gestures and letterforms and how looking at an artwork was the means of converting its material agglomeration into a narrative of recognitions.

I opened the doors of a storage cabinet to show him the altered books I kept there. When he saw the wedge shapes of the books, pages torn out in a sequence of lessening increments to make a cross section of each text, he reminded me of a story the Rabbi had told us twenty five years before; of a scholar so erudite that, if you pointed to a single letter in any word on any line of any page in any of the books of the Talmud, he could tell you what letter occupied that site on every following page. "I'm no scholar, then," I replied. "These books only show what I've forgotten."