

## The Turning

*Martin Buber (1878–1965), author of I and Thou, among other books, is one of the most significant Jewish theologians and philosophers of the twentieth century. Born in Vienna, he taught for many years at the University of Frankfurt before fleeing Germany in 1938 and taking up a professorship at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Buber's philosophy was influenced by his study of Hasidism, a mystically tinged Jewish movement emerging in the eighteenth century. Here I focus on the Jewish notion of the "turning" to explore the prisoners' experiences of self-transformation.*

### Where Art Thou?

"How are we to understand that God, the all-knowing, said to Adam: 'Where art thou?' . . . Adam hides himself to avoid rendering accounts, to escape responsibility for his way of living. Every man hides for this purpose, for every man is Adam and finds himself in Adam's situation. To escape responsibility for his life, he turns existence into a system of hideouts. And in thus hiding again and again "from the face of God," he enmeshes himself more and more deeply in perversity. . . . This question ["Where art thou?"] is designed to awaken man and destroy his system of hideouts; it is to show man to what pass he has come and to awake in him the great will to get out of it. (Martin Buber, *The Way of Man According to the Teaching of Hasidism*, 9–12)

**Charles:** I think it's two moments in my life I can say that I have really asked myself where I'm at. The first time was in '79. I went into the city jail for assault. I had a lot of friends that was in there and I couldn't understand why the dudes was so *content* in jail. I thought, "Man, I don't want none of this shit. I want to go home, live my life."

When I got out I just wanted to get away from the hustling world because I'd actually seen what prison was like. I had a few dollars put away, and I started working in my uncle's shoe repair shop. But we got in an argument and I broke off. By a year and a half later, I found myself in a lot of illegal drug activities.

