

The Name of God, A Study in Rabbinic Theology*

I

Divine names embody the conceptions of God of a particular religion. Coming down from a distant past their meanings often are obscure. The personal name of a deity thus represents an epithet the meaning of which has been forgotten.¹ The epithet generally derived from some function, characteristic or relation of the deity to the tribe, its members or surroundings. Acquiring the distinction of a personal name, it is identified with the deity and invested with *mana*, i.e. with power and mystery. Being sacred, it is guarded by tabus against profane use and is reserved for magic rites and tribal mysteries by medicine men or priests. For ordinary relations new epithets are created denoting the relation of the deity to the life and destiny of the people and to nature. These newer appellations, expressed in more transparent language, in turn become the titles by which the deity is invoked, sometimes independently and often in combination with the original personal name. The formation and use of new epithets for the deity constitute milestones in the progress of religion.

The use which the Rabbis made of the divine name and its related expressions reveals the intensity of their effort to reach out after a fuller and firmer comprehension of the divine. In their quest after God they walked humbly with Him. Though certain of His reality and ever conscious of His presence,

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¹ J. A. MacCulloch, art. "Nameless Gods." *Hastings, Encycl. Rel. and Ethics*, IX, 179.

they spoke reservedly of His nature. They often resorted to the words of Isaiah 45.15: "Verily Thou art a God that hidest Thyself, O God of Israel, the Savior."² They were aware of the challenging words addressed to Job:

"Canst thou find out the deep things of God?
Canst thou attain unto the purpose of the Almighty?
It is high as heaven; what canst thou do?
Deeper than the nether-world; what canst thou know?"³

Being unlike anything in existence, mysterious and transcendent, He is beyond human grasp. The Rabbi interpret Ex. 33.20, "Man shall not see Me and live" (האדם וחי), to mean: "Man shall not see Me nor angel." In evident opposition to the Gnostics, who claimed direct knowledge of God, R. Akiba, who was versed in their doctrines, adds that not even the angels that bear God's throne can behold Him. R. Simeon b. Azzai supplements Akiba's statement: "Not even the ministering angels who live eternally see God."⁴ When Moses prayed: "Show me Thy Glory,"⁵ he meant: "Show me the attribute wherewith Thou guidest the world."⁶ Even that was ruled out as impossible. "It is God's glory to conceal" His nature.⁷ In the words of Solomon's prayer: "The Lord said that He would dwell in thick darkness."⁸ "He dwells in the highest secrecy, seeing all things and is Himself unseen."⁹

Though God is shrouded in mystery, the questing spirit strives to draw

² Cant. R. 4; Mid. Psalms 94.1.

³ Job 11.7-8. Jer. Ber. 9.1; Tanhuma, Kedoshim 15; Mid. Ps. 106.2; 139.1; Yalkut Job 906.

⁴ Num. R. 14.22. The Marcosian Gnostics took Ex. 33.20 to refer to the ignorance of the highest divinity, whereas the Demiurge, whom they identified with Yahveh, was seen by the prophets. Some Gnostics claimed that by virtue of their spiritual natures they were acquainted with the spiritual Pleroma. Iranaeus, *Against Heresies* I.19, 1-2; II.19, 2. Cf. Matthew 11.27; John 5.20; 10.15.

⁵ Ex. 33.18.

⁶ Mid. Ps. 25.6.

⁷ Prov. 25.2.

⁸ I Kings 8.12.

⁹ Mid. Ps. 91.1; Num. R. 12.3.

near to Him, to behold His graciousness and to perceive something of His relation to man and to the world. The whole endeavor of religion may be said to consist in bridging gap between the finite and the infinite and thus to endow human life with sanctity and spiritual purpose.

In view of this polarity of the religious experience, the development of the Jewish idea of God exhibits a twofold trend. On the one hand, Judaism strove to discover the essential being and nature of God, which, in the idiom of the ancients, meant to find His true name. Accordingly it persisted in ascertaining the significance of the divine names in general and of the Tetragrammaton in particular. On the other hand, in its steady spiritual advance it sought to divest itself of the thought that the Divine may be named as men or objects are named. Popular piety clung to the first. Advanced theological thought tended toward the other position.

While this problem is present in all religions, it assumed a somewhat different form in Judaism. The pantheons of the polytheistic religions employ names of deities to differentiate them from one another. Monotheism, with its emphasis on the uniqueness of the Holy One, requires no names wherewith to distinguish Him from others. According to R. Levi, when Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh and asked him in the name of "the God of the Hebrews" to send forth Israel to serve Him, the monarch consulted his directory of deities. Reading off the names of the gods of Edom, Moab, Sidon, etc., he said: "I do not find here the name of your God." To which Moses and Aaron replied: "You will not find Him among these, for they are dead, but 'the Lord God is the true God, He is the living God, and the everlasting King.'"¹⁰ This comment may be related to Philo's interpretation of God's answer to Moses' request for His name: "First tell them that I am He who is, that they may learn the difference between what is and what is not, and also the further lesson that no name at all can properly be used of Me, to whom all existence belongs."¹¹ In another connection, he adds: "God indeed needs no name; yet,

¹⁰ Jer. 10.10. Tanhuma, Vaera, 5; ed. Buber, 2. Cf. Philo., *Life of Moses*, I, xv, 8 (Loeb ed., p. 320).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 1.75. Cf. Josephus, *Against Apion*, II, 167, 190-191. Justin Martyr states in this spirit that "to the Father of all, who is unbegotten, there is no name given. For by whatever name He be called, He has as His elder the person who gives Him the name. But these words, Father, and God, and Creator, and Lord, and Master are not names, but appellation derived

though He needed it not, He nevertheless vouchsafed to give to humankind a name of Himself suited to them, that man might be able to take refuge in prayers and supplications and not be deprived of comforting hopes."¹² God is essentially nameless, transcending any designation that man can apply to Him. Within this limitation, however, names of God are spiritual necessities. They stem from human habits of thought and of speech. An emotion, experience or idea is incommunicable unless it is verbalized. Only when expressed in a fitting word or name does it acquire power. Names of God have retained their place in advanced Jewish monotheism not merely as survivals of earlier and less developed religious views but also as indispensable designations of the personality of the Divine and as compact attributes of His nature.¹³ Instead of being proper names of God, in the customary sense of the word, they simply point to His reality and to His effects.¹⁴ They awaken the devout and searching mind to the awesome mystery and meaningfulness which environ the soul.

1. *The Tetragrammaton.*

The recognition that God transcends all names is paradoxically coupled in Jewish thought with the persistence to invoke Him by the right name. This is the case in both Hellenistic and Rabbinic Judaism. According to Josephus, Moses besought God not to deny him the knowledge of His name that he might know how to invoke Him to be present at the sacred rites. "Then God

from His good deeds and functions. . . Also the appellation 'God' is not a name, but an opinion implanted in the nature of man of a thing that can hardly be explained." (*The Second Apology*, 6).

¹² *On Abraham*, 51. Clement of Alexandria, sharing the doctrine of the Alexandrine schools of the namelessness of God observes that high names like "Father," "God," etc. are employed "because of our incapacity to find a true name, so that the mind may have something to rest on and steady it. None of these names taken separately expresses God." (*Stromata* V, 81 ff., cited by J. A. MacCulloch, *op. cit.*, 179). The *Martyrdom of Isaiah* 1.7 declares that God's name "has not been sent into the world."

¹³ Lekah Tob Ex. 3.13 וַאֲמַרְוּ לֵי מַה שְׁמוֹ כְּלִמְרַ עוֹצֵם גְּבוּרָתוֹ. While personality is conceivable in nameless beings, it is greatly crystalized by a name.

¹⁴ Philo, *On Abraham* 24.121.

revealed to him His name, which ere then had not come to men's ears, and of which I am forbidden to speak."¹⁵ We have here the same reserve to utter the Ineffable Name, YHVH (=Yahveh), which forms a characteristic feature of Rabbinic theology. By a play on the word לעלם in Ex. 3.15 — written defectively — the rabbis teach that the divine name must be kept secret.¹⁶ It must not be pronounced in the way in which it is written, but by a substitute word. Jewish piety, from post-Exilic times on, withdrew the four lettered name YHVH (=Yahveh), the specific designation of the God of Israel, from ordinary usage and invested it with awe and mystery. The third commandment and the related prohibitions of using the divine name in vain rendered it sacrosanct.¹⁷

The avoidance of the use of the Tetragrammaton — שם בן ד' אוחיות, which figured as a proper name — in some of the later books of the Bible, is due to the growing sense of God's transcendence, a tendency which shows itself in the older books as well. The editorial revisions of the second and third books of the Psalter employ *Elohim* as the general appellation for Deity — in place of Yahveh.¹⁸ Job avoids the Tetragrammaton in favor of other names and particularly of the archaic *Shaddai* (31 times). Ecclesiastes makes exclusive use of *Elohim*. The same is true of Daniel, with the exception of the interpolated prayer in Ch. 9. The total avoidance of all mention of divine names in Esther may stem from the same motive rather than from the supposedly secular nature of the book.

The substitution of other names for the Tetragrammaton continued in both Hellenistic and Rabbinic literature. The LXX invariably renders it with ὁ ἄριστος = Adonai.¹⁹ The same idea underlies the Masoretic pointing of the

¹⁵ *Antiq.* II, 275-6.

¹⁶ Pes. 50a לעלם כתיב ר. Rashi comments לשון העלמה. Ex. R. 3.7. Cf. Eccl. 3.11; Kid. 71a.

¹⁷ Ex. 20.7; Deut. 5.11; Lev. 18.21; 19.12; 20.3; 21.6; 22.2, 32; 24.16; Ezek. 20.39; 36.20.

¹⁸ The third book of Ps. (73-89) uses אלהים צבאות in place of the usual צבאות יהוה. Ps. 80.5,20 combines the two; cf. vss. 8 and 15. See Wellhausen, *Book of Psalms*, p. 82.

¹⁹ See Wolf Wilhelm Graf Baudissin, *Kyrios als Gottesname im Judentum u. seine Stellung in der Religionsgeschichte*, p. 9 ff. *Elohim* is translated Θεός. The distinction is carried out most consistently in the Psalms and fairly so in the Pentateuch. Kyrios is used also for El, Adon, and Adonai. Aquilla, in his literalism, rejected the LXX usage as being inexact and intro-

Tetragrammaton with the vowels of *Adonai* and with those of *Elohim* when the word *Adonai* itself precedes it. Onkelos, by identifying *Elohim* with Yahveh, removes all possible misunderstanding.²⁰

The motive of reverence combined with the dread of breaking the third commandment underlies the use of "the Name" for Yahveh and subsequently even for its substitute *Adonai*.²¹ This usage derived from the general tendency to identify the name with the person of its bearer.²² As in magic so in ancient religion, knowledge of the name of a spirit or deity was believed to give one power over him and the means of securing his help.²³ However, improper mention of the name might spell disaster. Hence caution was required in its employment. Persons and objects belonging to God were designated as "called by His name."²⁴ Owned by Him, they were entitled to His protection. Deutero-Isaiah expressed the thought of Israel's consecration to God by the words: "Every one that is called by My name, whom I have created and formed and made for My glory."²⁵ Jeremiah spoke of himself as having "the name of the God of Hosts called upon" him, and referred to Jerusalem and the Temple, even as Shiloh was aforesaid, as a place over-

duced the word bodily into his translation, "writing it IIIII, a form which is found in the Hexaplar manuscripts of the Septuagint and is the representation in the Greek alphabet of the letters of יהוה read from left to right." W. Bacher, *J. E.* XI, 263, referring to Swete, *Introduction to the O.T.* in Greek, p. 30; Nestle, in *Z.D.M.G.*, XXXII, 468, 500, 506.

²⁰ Onkelos leaves *Elohim* only where it accompanies the Tetragrammaton. Where the word is used for foreign gods Onkelos translates דהלתא (Gen. 31.32) and אלהים מעות עומיא (Deut. 7.4; cf. 4.28). In Ex. 30.3 he uses אילה אחרן. See Luzzatto, *Oheb Ger*, p. 2. Sheftel, *Biure Onkelos*, Gen. 1.1.

²¹ Ex. 20.24 שמי אשר אוכיר את שמי. Ex. 23.20-23 speaks of an angel in place of Yahveh moving before the people, and demands reverence for him on the ground that Yahveh's name is within him בקרבו כ.י שמי. For this tendency in the Apocrypha, see W. Bousset, *Religion d. Judentums*, p. 302, n. 1.

²² E.g. Isa. 30.27; 42.8; 56.6; 59.19; Ps. 102.16; I Kings 3.2; 5.17,19; 8.17,20. Like "the Name" so "the glory" and "the face" appear in place of Yahveh. Ex. 33.14, 15, 18, 20, 23; Ps. 34.17; cf. Ex. 23.21; 32,34 and Isa. 63.9, where מלאך is associated with "the face of Yahveh."

²³ Cf. Judg. 13.17-18; Gen. 32.30; Ex. 33.12. See G. Foucart, "Names, Egyptian," *Hastings, Encyc. Rel. and Ethics*, IX, 151; A. H. Gardiner, "Magic, Egyptian," *Ibid.*, VIII, 265b.

²⁴ Am. 9.12; II Sam. 6.2; cf. I K. 16.24.

²⁵ Isa. 43.7.

which Yahveh's name was called, or where He caused His name to dwell.²⁶ Deut. 28.10 assures the people of Israel that when the other nations "will see that Yahveh's name is over you, they shall be afraid of you."²⁷ His power is communicated to the possessors of His name.

At the same time care was exercised not to limit Yahveh or His name to any locality. While popular usage persisted in referring to Him as "He that dwells at Zion"²⁸ — a belief that gave the people ground for confidence in times of stress²⁹ — advancing Jewish thought made it clear that He was confined to no earthly habitation. 2 Sam. 7.11 rejects His need of a dwelling that human beings might erect for Him. Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the Temple — in line with Prophetic teaching³⁰ — repudiates the popular notion that the sanctuary is the seat of the Deity. He is the God of the universe. "The heaven is My throne and the earth My footstool. Where then is the house that ye may build unto Me, and where is the place that may be My rest."³¹ High and exalted, inhabiting eternity, He yet dwells with those of a contrite and humble spirit. His transcendence combined with His nearness forms the favorite theme of numerous psalms.³²

Similarly Yahveh's early identification as the God of Israel was modified by the Prophetic doctrine that He is the universal God of humanity. The Creator of the world is also the father of all men. He is the King of the nations who rules them by His unfailing justice and mercy.³³ Accordingly, Rabbinic usage requires that His kingship over the universe be combined with the acknowledgment of Him as personal God in the standard form of benediction.³⁴ Monotheism spells universality.

²⁶ Jer. 15.16; 7.10, 12, 14 etc.

²⁷ Driver, *International Critical Commentary*, Deuteronomy, p. 310. See also Isa. 63.19. Amos 9.12 speaks similarly of other peoples.

²⁸ שוכן בציון ושב ציון, and as השוכן בהר ציון. Ps. 9.12; Joel 4.17, 21; Isa. 8.18.

²⁹ Cf. Ps. 46.48.

³⁰ Jer. 7.4; 26.6; I Kings 8.27; II Chr. 6.16.

³¹ Isa. 66.1; 57.15.

³² Pss. 36.6 ff.; 66.4 ff.; 68.5 ff.; 89.6 ff.; 113 etc.

³³ Jer. 10.7, 10 ff.; Pss. 65.3; 66; cf. Isa. 6.3; 2.1-4, 9; 40.28; 44.6; Ex. 34.6, etc.

³⁴ Ber. 12a; cf. Jer. Ber. 9.1, ed. Zechariah Frankel and note. Hence every benediction begins with the six words: ברוך אתה יי אלהינו מלך העולם.

2. Liturgic Uses of the Name

The chief use of "the Name" in place of Yahveh was in ritual. Ex. 20.21 states: "In every place where I cause My name to be mentioned I will come unto Thee and bless Thee." The name is linked with the altar and with the ark,³⁵ with Mt. Zion³⁶ and Jerusalem.³⁷ "The name of Yahveh" represented a most ancient formula of worship. The Yahvistic account traces it back to the days of Enosh.³⁸ Its liturgical usage is indicated in Deut. 32.3: "I invoke the name of Yahveh, ascribe ye greatness to our God."³⁹ Knowing His name, in which the essence of His being was believed to inhere, gave ground for trust, for invoking it brings help.⁴⁰ He makes His name known by responding to His people's prayers. Hence His name is a protection.⁴¹ In blessing the people, the priests placed Yahveh's name upon them.⁴² On the other hand those that do not invoke His name are His enemies who are fated for His wrath.⁴³ "The Name" served also as a formula of oath-taking. Deut. 10.20 commands: "By His name shall ye swear," i.e. in place of the names of foreign deities. Lev. 19.12 warns against swearing by His name falsely.⁴⁴ In prophecy the name of Yahveh "served as a mark of authenticity." The true prophet speaks "in the

³⁵ The patriarchs, building altars, invoke the name of Yahveh. Gen. 12.8; 13.4; 23.33; 26.25; cf. 28.18 f.; 33.20; 35.7; II Sam. 6.2. Similarly Ps. 113.1; 135.1: יהללו את שם יי 148.5, 13: יהללו את שם יי 34.4. and the call: הלליה.

³⁶ Isa. 18.7.

³⁷ Deut. 12.5, 11; I Kings, 8.16; also II Chr. 6.33.

³⁸ Gen. 4.26.

³⁹ Also Ps. 72.19; cf. 113.2; Job 1.21; Neh. 9.5. See further Ex. 33.12; 34.5; Deut. 21.5; II Sam. 6.18; I K. 18.24, 25, 32 (cf. vs. 26 בעל הבעל); II K. 5.11; Zeph. 3.9; Ps. 116.4, 13, 17; 129.8; I Chr. 16.2 etc.

⁴⁰ Zech. 13.9; Ps. 9.11; 91.15.

⁴¹ Isa. 52.6; cf. Isa. 64.1; Ps. 20.2.

⁴² Num. 6.27.

⁴³ Jer. 10.25//Ps. 76.6.

⁴⁴ Cf. Amos 8.14; Jer. 12.16. God Himself swears "by His great name" Jer. 44.26; cf. Amos 8.7.

name of Yahveh."⁴⁵ Thus Jehoshaphat orders Micaiah to speak to him the truth in the name of Yahveh only.⁴⁶ Jeremiah complains that he was not permitted to speak in the name of Yahveh.⁴⁷ The "name of Yahveh" figured also in personal greetings, as in Judges 6.12, "Yahveh be with thee" and Ruth 2.4, "Yahveh bless thee." It is paralleled by the benediction, "The Lord bless thee out of Zion,"⁴⁸ and by the interchange of greetings between the lay worshipers at the Temple and the Levites entering upon their night service.⁴⁹ The response to this greeting, as given in Ps. 129.8, is: "We bless you in the name of Yahveh." Tradition reports that after the death of Simon the Just (probably the contemporary of Ben Sira), whether out of considerations of reverence or possibly because of Hellenistic persecution, the use of the divine name was withheld from greetings. With the passing of the danger, the old usage was reinstated.⁵⁰ We are informed further that, bent on the Hellenization of the Jews, the Greek government forbade them to mention God's name (שם שמים) in documents. Following the Maccabean victory the old practice was restored. The formula ran: "In the year of Johanan the High Priest of the 'Most High God.'" This use of the divine name in secular documents displeased the sages (Pharisees), who, upon gaining the upper hand, abolished the practice on the ground that the notes, when cancelled, would be thrown away and the name would thus be defiled.⁵¹

⁴⁵ Deut. 18.22.

⁴⁶ I K. 22.16//II Chr. 18.15.

⁴⁷ Jer. 11.21; 26.9; 16.20. See further Jer. 23.25; Zech. 13.3; I Chr. 21.19; II Chr. 33.18.

⁴⁸ Ps. 128.5.

⁴⁹ Ps. 134.3; cf. I Chr. 9.33.

⁵⁰ Bertinoro comments: ולא אמרין מולול הוא בכבודו של מקום בשביל כבוד הבריות להוציא שם שמים עליו. See Geiger, *Urschrift*, p. 263. Ber. 8.5; Yoma 39b. Marmorstein's argument in *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, Ch. 1, fails to carry conviction. See Tos., ed. Zuckermann, *Sotah* 13.8, p. 319, l. 24. Ms. W: משמח שמעון הצדיק פסקו מלברך בשם. Graetz considers this injunction to use יהוה in place of אדני = ζυγτος as "a measure taken at the time of Bar Kochba to distinguish Jews from Judeo-Christians who regarded Jesus also as Lord. *Geschichte*, 2nd ed. IV, 458. The dating fits into the statement of Abba Bar Kahana (Mid. Tehil. on Ps. 36, end) that two generations used the המפורד שם, the Men of the Great Assembly and those of the period of the *Shemad* (Hadrianic persecution)." Bacher, *J.E.* XI, 263.

⁵¹ Meg. Taanit VII; R.H. 18b.

It is noteworthy that "the name of Yahveh" nowhere figures as a separate divine being, but is generally equivalent to Yahveh. Such a phrase as "Ashtor-teh, the name of Baal"⁵² has no analogue in Hebrew writings. While Isaiah 30.27 contains the startling expression "the name of Yahveh cometh," the context shows that Yahveh Himself is meant, and in the parallel passage 59.19 "the name" alternates with "the glory of Yahveh." So, too, the combination of "name" with "glory," as in "the name of His glory" or "His glorious name," refers to God.⁵³

While "the Name" is invariably combined with Yahveh or with a possessive pronoun, in three Biblical verses it appears by itself with the definite article: *Hashem*, e.g. in Lev. 24.11, 16; Deut. 28.58. The Deuteronomic passage marks the culmination of the use of "the Name" as a substitute for Yahveh. It is given as "the glorious and awful Name," thus conveying the doxological connotation associated with it in the minds of the people. "Hashem" became the standard usage among both Samaritans⁵⁴ and Jews, displacing both the Tetragrammaton and its substitute Adonai for uses other

⁵² *Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum*, Paris '81, pt. I, no. 3, 1, 18.

⁵³ Ps. 72.10; 29.2; 96.8. Cf. Ex. 33.18 f. T.K. Cheyne, *E.B.*, art. "Name," III, 3268 and כבוד in Brown, Driver and Briggs, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*, and Lewy, *Neuhebräisches und Chaldäisches Wörterbuch*; Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, p. 88. שם שמים כבוד מלכותו corresponds to שמה רבא in the Kaddish. Thus the Targum Jerushalmi to Gen. 49.2 and Deut. 6.4 states that Jacob on his death bed, hearing his sons recite the Shema and thus professing the unity of God, responded לעלמו עלמן Pes. 56a, repeating this Haggadah, reports that he said ועד לעולם ועד שם כבוד מלכותו (For variants see Kasher, *Torah Sheleimah* to Gen. 49.2). Both expressions stand for שם אדנות, the Tetragrammaton. Cf. Gen. R. 93.1 קבל מלכותו ואדנותו. Thus the Shema is referred to as מלכות שמים. (Deut. R. 2.31 איהו מלכות שמים, שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד. . . כבודי אחר ומיוחד בעולם. The recitation of the Shema is referred to as קבלת עול מלכות שמים (Ber. 13a).

⁵⁴ Kirshheim, *Karme Shomron*, pp. 17, 94, 99; Geiger, *Urschrift*, p. 262. They substituted שמה for Yahveh. Abraham Ibn Ezra's report that the Samaritans translated the first verse of Genesis with a reference to 2 Kings 17.30, is groundless. See the introduction to his commentary on Esther. The Samaritan Targum reads: בקדמתא שלמא אלהה יח ומקסם שם יהוה. It retains the word השם in Lev. 24.11. Verse 16 is rendered: למדהל מן יהוה יקידה ונוראה הדן מן יהוה. e.g. השם 28.58 is translated with the Tetragrammaton, אלהך.

teaching, the Rabbis stressed the ineffable nature of the Tetragrammaton as representing the one and only God, and withdrew it from ordinary use.

3. *Theurgic Uses of the Names.*

Hillel's saying חלף דישחמש בתגא חלף points to the theurgic use of the Name.⁶⁴ More definitely Abba Saul denies future bliss to anyone who pronounces the Tetragrammaton with its actual consonants. The context of the Mishnah relates this statement to the prohibition of plying the magic art for purposes of healing.⁶⁵ We seem to be confronted with Gnostic practice in which sacred names and formulas were employed. The knowledge of the names of the demons or gods was essential to the Gnostic scheme of salvation. Bousset writes: "We constantly meet with the idea that the soul, on leaving the body, finds its path to the highest heaven opposed by the deities and demons of the lower realms of heaven, and only when it is in possession of the names of these demons, and can repeat the proper holy formula, or is prepared with the holy oil, finds its way unhindered to the heavenly home." Accordingly Gnostic books (like the II Coptic Jiu) are filled with such names and symbols. "This system again was simplified, and as the supreme secret was taught in a simple name or a single formula, by means of which the happy possessor was able to penetrate through all the space of heaven.⁶⁶ It was taught that even the redeemer-god, when he once descended on to this earth, to rise from it again, availed himself of these names and formulas on his descent and ascent through the world of demons." In such ideas Anz finds the central doctrine of Gnosticism.⁶⁷

⁶⁴ Abot 1.13; Ab. R.N., I, ed. Schechter, p. 56.

⁶⁵ Sanh. 10.1. According to Ab. Zarah 17b Hanina b. Teradion met with a martyr's death as a punishment for teaching the pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton to his disciples. From the Samaritans Theodoret learned that it was pronounced 'Iao. See Levy, *Wörterbuch*, under אנה, I, 17; Hastings, *Encycl. Rel. and Ethics*, art. "Charms and Amulets," III, 424-5.

⁶⁶ Cf. the use of "Caulacau" among the Basilidians, Iranaeus, *op. cit.*, I, 24, 5.

⁶⁷ Art. "Gnosticism," *Encycl. Brit.*, 11th ed., XII, 155. For Jewish parallels see Hekalot Rabbati, 22, in Jellinek's *Bet Ham.*, III, 90 ff.; Gershom G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 48 ff., 358, no. 50, et al.

The use of the Tetragrammaton and other divine appellations for magic purposes by Gnostics led to the *halachah* that the writings of the Minim must not be saved from conflagration despite the *azkarot*, the divine names, occurring in them.⁶⁸ R. Jose taught that on week days one may read the divine names in them and store away or burn the rest. R. Tarfon, indignantly, avowed that should the books of the Minim fall into his hands he would burn them together with the divine names, because "they would inject enmity, jealousy and envy between Israel and the Heavenly Father."⁶⁹ They offended monotheistic belief.

The Rabbinic opposition to the theurgic uses of the name notwithstanding, the practice spread among the Jewish people. The belief in the almighty potency of the name, which may go back to Egyptian magic,⁷⁰ gained strong hold on the Jewish mind both as a subject of mystic speculation and of practice. The Hasidim, Essenes, and Pharisees were attracted to it. Enoch 69.13-25 speaks of the "hidden name" as having been guarded by Michael and employed in the oath wherewith God created the whole universe.⁷¹ The Jewish variety of Gnosticism as preserved in the mystic Haggadah utilized it. The four sages who entered the *Pardes*, i.e., Gnostic speculation, resorted to the *Shem Hameforash* to gaze into the divine mysteries.⁷² The mystic *Pirke de*

⁶⁸ For the use of אכרה and הזכרה (Aramaic אדכרתא) in place of שם in Rabbinic literature see Bacher, *op. cit.*, 187. The usage goes back to the Bible, where זכר appears several times in place of שם (Ps. 30.5; 97.12; 102.13; Hos. 12.6) or as a synonym of שם (Ex. 3.15; Isa. 26.8; Ps. 135. 13; cf. Job 18.17).

⁶⁹ Tos. Sab. 13.5; 116a. Cf. Ber. 8a; Gen. R. 20.6; Tanh. B, I, 71b. See Anz, *Zur Frage nach dem Ursprung des Gnosticismus*, p. 6 ff. et passim. 'Iao Σαδωθ and 'Αλειν figure in Greek magical papyri. In Egyptian magical papyri, too, Jewish and heathen names appear in juxtaposition or combination. Sanh. 60a, Yoma 3.7 and Eccl. R. 3.11 refers to the use of the Name by gentiles as a magic formula. See Marmorsteing, *Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, pp. 18,30. Scholem calls attention to the predilection on the part of Jewish mystics to use Greek formulas, *op. cit.*, pp. 358-9, notes 50, 57, 58. For example see Hekalot R., 12.

⁷⁰ The Egyptian origin of Jewish magic is attested by the books of Hermes and by the Greek and Coptic magic papyri. See L. Blau, art. "Magic," *J.E.*, VIII, 255 f. M. Gaster, art. "Magic, Jewish," Hastings, *Encycl. Rel. and Ethics*, VIII, 303.

⁷¹ See also *Prayer of Manasseh*; K. Kohler, *Origin of Synagogue and Church*, I, ch. 1.

⁷² For a discussion of the entire theme see Scholem, *op. cit.*, pp. 39-78. Hag. 12a and commentaries of Rashi and R. Hananeel (Hag. 14b).

men of faith to their disciples (אנשי אמונה לבעלי אמונות) to guard it and, with it, to cure all sicknesses.⁸¹

Rationalists looked with disfavor upon the extravagant speculations regarding the Name. Maimonides considers the twelve lettered name inferior in sanctity to the Tetragrammaton. In his opinion it was "not a simple noun, but consisted of two or three words, the sum of their letters being twelve." These words were employed as a substitute for the Tetragrammaton in the manner of the substitute Adonai, but of more distinctive character. Similarly the forty-two lettered name, he maintains, could not possibly constitute one word but rather "a combination of words of metaphysical character conveying a correct notion of the essence of God." "*Shem hameforash* applied neither to the Name of forty-two letters nor to that of twelve but only to the Tetragrammaton." Whereas all other names for God are homonyms, the Tetragrammaton is the distinct name of God, denoting something peculiar to Him which is shared by no one else.⁸²

Maimonides warns against the theurgic uses of the Divine names. "You must beware of sharing the error of those who write amulets (*kameot*). Whatever you hear from them, or read in their works, especially in reference to the names which they form by combination, is utterly senseless; they call these combinations *shemot* and believe that their pronunciation demands sanctification and purification, and that by using them they are enabled to work miracles. Rational persons ought not to listen to such men, nor in any way believe their assertions."⁸³

Kabbalists, on the other hand, found a fertile field for their activities in the occult manipulations of the letters of the divine names. Through such combination they believed themselves able to work miracles. Various uses of this type are enumerated in the question concerning the Name addressed to Rab Hai Gaon. Excepting the Talmudic reports of the miraculous uses of the

⁸¹ *Sefer Hanok, Bet Ham., II, 117.*

⁸² *Guide I, 62; Biur Shemot Kodesh Vehol*, ed. Gaster, *Debir I*, 194 f.: זהו שאומר עצמו שמו; וזהו שאומר עצמו שמו cf. *Kuzari IV, 3.*

⁸³ *Guide I, 61, tr. Friedlander, p. 90 f.*

Name, he categorically rejected all subsequent claims as based on mere hearsay and credulity and denounced them as sheer nonsense.⁸⁴

4. God's Attributes

While the Tetragrammaton was revealed by God to Moses,⁸⁵ it was also believed to have been discovered by the unaided reason of man. Human intelligence expressing itself in naming objects, found also the name God. R. Aha says that when the Holy One was about to create man, the angels dissuaded Him. "What is man that Thou rememberest him?"⁸⁶ "His wisdom will exceed yours," God replied. While the angels proved unable to find the names of animals, beasts and birds, "the man gave names to all cattle and the fowl of the air, and to every beast of the field."⁸⁷ Himself he called Adam because of his origin out of the earth (*Adamah*). "And what is My name?" The Holy One asked him. "It is fitting to call Thee Yahveh (= Adonai), for Thou art the Lord of all Thy creatures," Adam replied. R. Aha adds: "The Holy One said, 'I am Yahveh; that is My name;⁸⁸ that is the name which Adam gave Me; that is the name which I specified for Myself; that is the name which I agreed upon with the ministering angels.'⁸⁹

To reconcile this belief with the statement of Gen. 4.26 that in the days of Enosh men began to call upon the name of Yahveh, the Rabbis interpret the

⁸⁴ *Ozar Hageonim*, Hag. pp. 16-17: וכל אלה דברי רוח . . . אלו וכיוצא בהם דברים במלים. Albo, *Ikkarim II*, 28, ed. Husik, Vol. 2, pp. 285-6. Cf. *Sefer Razi'el Hamalak*, Amsterdam, 1701, p. 2b. The term *Baal Shem* came to figure prominently as a theurgist and folk healer, particularly after the spread of Lurianic Kabbalah. See Abraham Kahana, *Sefer Hahasidut*, pp. 20 ff. Reference is made to שם בעלי שם in מלחמות ה' ס', Mahzor Vitri, p. 738.

⁸⁵ Ex. 6.2-3.

⁸⁶ Ps. 8.5.

⁸⁷ Gen. 2.20.

⁸⁸ Isa. 42.8.

⁸⁹ *Pesikta R.* 14, pp. 59b-60a, on I K. 5.11. Gen. R. 17.4 cites the additional saying of R. Aha in the name of R. Hiyya.

- d) eternity: ראשון, אחרון, עתיק יומין, שוכן עד (ש' עדי עד), קדמונו של עולם, עתיקו של עולם.
- e) sublimity: נשגב, נשא, רם, עליון, בחור, דגול מרבבה.
- f) beauty: צה ואדום, הדר, חור.
- g) wisdom: חכם, מבין, בעל מחשבות, ידע מחשבות, חוקר לבבות, בוחן לבבות, בוחן כליות.
- h) moral excellence: תמים, צדיק, חסיד, טוב, ישר, הטוב וממטיב, הרחמן, רחמנא, חנון ורחום, ארך אפים, ורב חסד, נוקם ונוטר, נאמן, הימנותא. בעל הנחמות, ב' הפקדון, ב' הרחמים, ב' השבועה, ב' המשפט, מי שענה.
- i) might: אביר, אדיר, גבור, הגבורה, עוז, צבאות, שדי, אל, אלהים, גאון, חזק, מגדל [הצור], עוז, [הצור].
- j) nature symbols: אש, אריה, נשר, צבי, צוד, עופר האילים.
- k) relations to
- (1) space: שכינה, מקום, שמים, גבוה, גבהות העולם, רומו של עולם [רם ונשא, מעלה].
 - (2) world: בורא, יוצר, פועל, קונה, ורגע, בעל הבית, בעל הכירה, בעל מלאכה, צור עולמים, רבון העולם (ר' העולמים), רבש"ע, יישרו של עולם, צדיקו של עולם, גדול העולמים, אלופו של עולם, מי שאמר והיה העולם, כבשונו של עולם, כבודו של עולם, יחודו של עולם, מזנא דעלמא. מרותיה של עולם, עשירו של עולם, שלום העולמים, הי העולמים, מרן די בשמיא.
 - (3) Israel: אלהי ישראל, שומר ישראל, צור ישראל, לבו (לבן) של ישראל, אביר יעקב, (א' ישראל), חוקפיהון של ישראל.
 - (4) Man: אב, אח, דוד, ידיד, גואל, שומר, רועה, עד, דיין, שופט, מרי (מרן), אדון, מלך ממ"ה, קורא הדורות, אב לכל באי עולם.

These and the numerous other designations of God clearly convey the meaning of God in the life and thought of the Jewish people. The freedom with which they are used indicates that the Jewish religious consciousness was clear regarding their symbolical significance and was not troubled by fear of their being possibly misunderstood. To the Jewish mind they conveyed provisional and figurative but nonetheless real presentations of the deepest truths of religion, of God's being, His transcendence and His nearness, His baffling mysteriousness and His clear light and accessibility. The conviction was firm

— though not philosophically demonstrated — that while God is one and unique, nameless and inscrutable, He acts outward upon the universe, revealing attitudes and ways to which names may be given. But these are human creations and consequently apply to God only provisionally. Hence great caution must be exercised in their use. We are told that a certain man invoked God in these terms: "The great God, the mighty, the awe-inspiring, the strong, the powerful, the feared, the omnipotent, the forceful, the true and the revered." When he finished praying, R. Haninah rebuked him: "Have you exhausted the praises of your Master? Why all these attributes? Even the first three, had they not been spoken by Moses in the Torah¹⁰² and fixed by the Men of the Great Synagogue in the *Tefillah*, we would hesitate to speak them. And you heap up all these! It is like a person who owned myriads of golden dinars and was praised for possessing some silver coins. Is not such praise an offense to Him?"¹⁰³ "Who can express the mighty acts of the Lord? Who can proclaim all His praise?"¹⁰⁴ Rabba bar Bar Hana said in the name of R. Johanan: 'He who details the praises of the Holy One more than is proper will be extirpated from the world.' . . .¹⁰⁵ R. Judah of Kefar Giburiyah (or of Gibbor Hayyil) interprets the words of Ps. 65.2 תהלה לך (literally: "praise befitteeth Thee") as "for Thee silence is praise."¹⁰⁶ Since God's praises cannot be expressed adequately, it is most becoming for man to remain silent before Him.

Despite these exhortations, the praises of God in Jewish worship reached the extravagant. Both the formal liturgy and the *piyyutim* abound in them. In many instances they assume the form of wearisome enumerations of divine

¹⁰² Deut. 10.17.

¹⁰³ Ber. 33b. The parallel account in Jeru. Ber. 9.1 reports this incident as having occurred to R. Johanan and R. Jonathan. In Ket. 8b Judah bar Nahmani approvingly praised God as "the great in the abundance of His greatness, mighty and strong in the abundance of His fear, reviving the dead by His word, doing great things beyond searching out and wondrous things without end."

¹⁰⁴ Ps. 106.2.

¹⁰⁵ Referring to Job 37.20.

¹⁰⁶ Meg. 18a; Jeru. Ber. 9.1; Midr. Ps. 19.2. For the use of these passages in support of the doctrine of negative attributes see Maimonides, *Guide I*, 59.

honorifics, strung together alphabetically. However, at times — as in portions of the Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur services — they rise to ecstatic heights, producing an overpowering sense of mystery and awe before the supreme majesty and glory of the Holy One.