THE SEFER YETZIRAH AND THE
ORIGINAL TETRAGRAMMATON

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The Sefer Yetzirah [1], whose author is unknown, is reputed
to be the oldest and most respected book of Jewish mysti-
cism; [2] apart from the Bible and the Talmud, it is probably
the most frequently commented upon work of the Jewish
national literature. In the opinion prevalent among scholars [3],
it originated between the 3rd and 5th century of our era though,
some modern scholars consider it to be considerably older.
Thus Lazarus Goldschmidt assigns its origin to the second
century B.C.E., [4] while Albert von Thimus—in a highly
interesting argument—, advocates the view [5] that its compo-
sition dates from the period shortly before the end of the
Babylonian exile. In any case, it is a fact that the *SY* is
already mentioned in the Jerusalem Talmud [6] and must,
therefore, have been known at the time of its composition.
Franz Delitzsch has already recognized the importance of the
SY for Hebrew philology. He calls it [7] the oldest Hebrew
grammar because in it is found for the first time the division
of Hebrew consonants into guttural, palatal, lingual, dental
or hissing sounds, and labials.

[1] Subsequently abbreviated as *SY*.
[2] Cf. the article *"Jezirah"* by G. Scholem in the *Encyclopuɪdia
Judaica* (Berlin, 1932), vol. 9. col. 104 ff.
[3] See note 2.
[4] Lazarus Goldschmidt: *Sefer Jezirah — Das Buch der Schöpfung*
(Frankfurt am Main, 1894), p. 12.
[5] *Die harmonikale Symbolik des Altertums* (Cologne, 1868), pp. 370-
395.
[6] Cf. L. Goldschmidt, *loc cit.*, p. 5.
[7] *Physiologie und Musik in ihrer Bedeutung für die Grammatik,
insbesondere die hebräische* (Leipzig, 1868).

In 1914, Phineas Mordell renewed the attempt to interpret the *SY* as a Hebrew grammar in the *Jewish Quarterly Review*.[8] At the same time, he wanted to demonstrate that the author of the *SY* was well acquainted with the Hebrew vowels, and that he mysteriously incorporated them into the alphabet by means of the tetragrammaton.[9]

These attempts of Mordell demonstrate his remarkable insight into the nature of the *SY* and of the Hebrew language. They also show his great moral courage, since by advocating these views he put himself in sharp opposition to the opinions of the greatest Jewish commentators. Merely by bringing the problem to light, he served Hebrew philology well. We can also gratefully acknowledge the fact that he refers the reader of his article to Rashi's commentary on Job 28. 27 [10], where Rashi considers as the "mothers" of the *SY* the letters אמת and not אמש, as is usually done. I will return to this question later on.

These attempts of Mordell, however, were a complete failure. Scholem [11] rightly refers to them as "arbitrary interpretations." [12] We have already alluded to the main reason for the failure of Mordell's undertaking: he simply did not follow the text. The outstanding example of his error quoted below also gives us an interesting insight into the methods and work of the author of the *SY*; we will use the knowledge thus gained later on.[12]

The *SY* divides the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet into three categories [11]. The first, called "mothers" (*immot*) comprises the letters אמש; the second is formed by the letters

[8] Phineas Mordell. Later published under the title: *The Origin of Letters and Numerals According to the Sefer Yetzirah*, (Philadelphia, 1914) p. 6.

[9] Mordell, *op. cit.*, pp. 15 ff.

[10] Mordell, *op. cit.*, p. 17.

[11] Scholem, *op. cit.*, vol. 9, col. 105.

[12] The subsequent quotations are from the Goldschmidt edition of the *SY* since this is most readily available at the present.

[13] *SY*, section II, paragraph 1.

בגדכפר״ת, which have a double pronunciation [14]. These are followed by the third group of "simple" letters ק״צ עצ׳ילנם. From these 22 letters G-d formed words of two consonants [15] by combining the *Aleph* with all other, subsequent letters of the alphabet, thus the *Aleph* with the *Bet*, then the *Aleph* with the *Gimmel* etc., and finally the *Aleph* with the *Tav*. Thereafter He combined the *Bet* with all the following letters, thus the *Bet* with the *Gimmel*, the *Dalet* etc., and finally the *Bet* with the *Tav*. In this manner there were formed, in alphabetical order, 231 words of two consonants each [16]; an inversion of these words resulted in 213 additional words. The *SY* calls the former "gates," the later "inversions."

While the *SY* does not combine the letters of the alphabet with themselves — not the *Aleph* with the *Aleph*, nor the *Bet* with the *Bet* etc., Mordell does form such combinations. He thus obtains 22 additional words of two, identical consonants each. Mordell also committed another error, which we find as well in the work of the majority of modern scholars: he overlooked the importance of the *gematria* for the understanding of ancient and medieval Jewish works.

Nowadays we rightly reject the method of the gematria as unscientific. This does not, however, alter the fact that the ancient Jewish authors frequently used this method in order to conceal the true meaning of their texts and the great significance of their propositions from the masses. If we are to understand the ancient Jewish authors correctly, we must examine their works carefully to see whether they contain a *gematria*. G. R. Driver has recently shown in his article concerning the interpretation of the Book of Daniel, in the *Festschrift* in honor of Professor S. H. Hooke ("Sacred Numbers and Round Figures"), what positive results we can attain if we examine the ancient texts carefully to see whether they

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[14] Originally, the *Resh* was pronounced in two different ways: as a lingual R, and as a uvular R.

[15] *SY*, section II, paragraph 5.

[16] *SY*, section II, paragraph 4.

contain a *gematria*. In pursuing this method, we see that the full significance of important parts of the *SY* cannot be fully understood without due consideration of the *gematria* found in them.

The *gematria* uses different methods. The one begins with the normal numerical value of the letters and will in future be referred to as the "great" value. The other operates with the so-called "lesser" numerical value of the letters. Here only the cross sum (*Quersumme*) of the numbers corresponding to the letters is considered; the tens, hundreds and thousands are counted as one. [17] Accordingly, the words קונה and תורה could be considered equivalent, since in each case the "lesser" value amounts to 17 ($1 + 6 + 5 + 5 = 4 + 6 + 2 + 5 = 17$) It is also possible to combine both methods of the *gematria*, as we will show later on.

The author of the *SY* considers the fact that from the 22 letters of the alphabet there could be formed 231 words consisting of two consonants each in alphabetical order, and that through inversion of these 231 more words result, as so significant and important for the grammatical understanding of the Hebrew language that he incorporates the numbers 22, 231 and its permutation 123 into the text as *gematria*. But he goes even further. In this *gematria* he warns us explicitly not to undertake the theoretically possible formation of 22 words of identical consonants [18]. Let us consider the following sentence of the *SY* [19]: אין בטובה למעלה מעכג ואין ברעה למעלה מגגע Translated: "there is nothing in good above delight (עכג) and there is nothing in evil above plague (גגע)" [20]. A closer examination of the Hebrew text reveals the following: The word *tovah* has the numerical value of 22 ($Tet = 9 + Vav = $

$6 + Bet = 2 + Hay = 5$). 22, however, is: (1) The number of letters of the Hebrew alphabet and thus also (2) The number of potential words consisting of two identical consonants.

Ra'ah has the numerical value of 275 ($Resh = 200 + Ayin = 70 + Hay = 5$). If we subtract from the numerical value of the word *ra'ah* = 275 the double amount of *tovah*, i.e., $2 \times 22 = 44$, we obtain the number 231, i.e., the number of gates of the *SY*. By subtracting $2 \times 22 = 44$, the author of the *SY* obviously wanted to caution against two errors. He wanted to say, do NOT include:

(1)The 22 consonants *per se*. We might have wanted to do so since the majority of the letters bear the names of visible objects.

(2) The 22 words consisting of two identical consonants that might theoretically be formed.

The author of the *SY* thus repeats in the form of *gematria* everything that he had already said for the careful reader. Here he has used the method of the *simple gematria*, i.e. the ordinary numerical value of the letters.

Moreover, the author considered the fact that through inversion of the 231 "gates," 231 additional words could be formed as of such significance that he used the permutation of the number 231 and its "lesser" value, i.e., the cross sum, to express this.

The words עג and גע consist of the same consonants; they only differ in, that in one case the *Ayin* stands at the beginning of the word and in the other it stands at the end. The numerical value of each word is 123, namely $Ayin = 70 + Nun = 50 + Gimmel = 3 = 123$. The ' lesser" value of each word is thus $7 + 5 + 3 = 15 = 6$. The values 15, respectively 6, are identical with the corresponding values of 231. Thus we have here a further hint for the number 231 in the form of *gematria*. This however is by no means the only hint. 123 is only a permutation of 231: in one case the number *one* is at the beginning of the number, in the other it stands at the end. Therefore, we have here an exact parallel to the words עג and גע, where

the *Ayin* stands in one case at the beginning of the word, and in the other case at the end—a clear indication that an additional 231 words are to be formed by inversion of the "gates". [21]

We see therefore that Mordell clearly contravened the instructions of the *SY*—given in the form of *gematria*—by including the 22 words consisting of two identical consonants in the total number of combinations.

Furthermore, Mordell attempted to show that the Hebrew vowels, in the form of the consonants *Yod*, *Ayin*, *Vav* and *Aleph*, are hidden in the tetragrammaton. Because of his arbitrary interpretation, he errs here too. However, in this connection [22] he refers to the following important sentence of the *SY* [23]: שלש אמות סוד גדול מופלא ומכוסה וחתום בשש טבעות ··· Translation: "Three mothers—a great, wonderful and hidden secret, engraved in six seals" [24]. Better still, he notes 10, as mentioned earlier, that Rashi, the great Jewish scholar and commentator (1040-1105), in his commentary to Job 28.27, in contrast to the existant texts designates as "mothers" of the *SY* not the letters אמש, but the letters אמית. We read in that passage of Rashi: ספר אותיותיה כפולות ופשוטות ראשונה ואמצעיית ואחדונזת הוא אמת חותמו של הקב״ה וכן בשאר סדרים ברא כל דבר ודבר באיתיות הללו והכל מפורש בסוד ספר יצירה·

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[21] This would indicate that the knowledge of the so-called Arabic numerals is much older than hithei to assumed.

[22] Mordell, *op. cit.*, p. 17.   [23] *SY*, section III, par. 2.

[24] Goldschmidt translates here: ". . . sealed with six signet-rings."

While this translation is grammatically also tenable, it does not correspond to the true meaning of the *SY*.

According to Goldschmidt, the secret of אמש would be sealed with six signet-rings. According to the *SY* however, the universe has six extremities, namely north, south, east, west, the above and the below. They are sealed by G-d with His Holy Name, contained in אמש (cf. *SY*, section I, par. 13). Thus אמש *is engraved* in six seals.

This assumption of mine is now confirmed by Rashi's commentary of Job, 28.27. Rashi rightly replaces the *Shin* in אמש by the *Tav*, so that the three letters that contain the "great, wonderful, hidden secret," read אמת. Rashi says that these letters represent "the seal of the Holy One, Blessed be He."

Translation: "He counted her letters, the double and the simple ones, (the) first (*letter*), middle and last (*letters*), *Aleph Mem Tav*, this is the seal of the Holy One Blessed be He, and in the same manner with the rest of the orders he created everything with these letters; and everything is explained in the secret of the *SY*" [25].

For this statement of Rashi there are only two possible explanations: either Rashi did have a different text—or *he revealed the secret that the* Shin *stands as a code for the* Tav, *while fully realizing that in spite of this revelation the above mentioned secret was so completely hidden behind the letters* אמת *that it could be discovered by only very few people.* Personally, I incline to the second interpretation, and to the theory that *The letters* אמת *of the SY conceal in an eightfold code the original tetragrammaton Vav Aleph Yod Hay,* and with it the four Semitic vowels U (O) A I E in order which already encounter witdh the Babylonians.*

As we shall see later, this order is based on a very definite

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[25] Here one notes that in regard to the letters אמת, Rashi rightly denotes the *Aleph* as th? first *letter* (ראשונה), thus using the singular, whereas further on he speaks of the "middle" and "last" letters (אמצעית and אחרונות), thus using the plural. Since, according to the *SY*, the *Tav* belongs to the double letters, the use of the plural here is justitied. Regarding the *Mem*, however two objections could be raised: (1) The *Mem* does not belong to the letters possessing two pronunciations; the use of the plural is thus not easily understood. (2) Neither does it occupy the middle place in the alphabet. In an alphabet of 22 letters, it occupies the 14th place. Were one to count the seven double letters twice, one would obtain an alphabet of 29 letters, in which the *Mᴵm* would occupy the 17th place, thus again not being in the middle.

Both of these difficulties disappear only if we assume that Rashi visualized an alphabet of 33 letters and therefore added to the 29 letters the following 4 as double letters: the שׁ, as an expression of either *Shin* or *Sin*; and the first three letters of the five מנצפ"ך letters that can be written in two different ways, i.e., the first three מנצ, since they are not contained in the letters *Begadkefarat* already counted doubly. In this case the alphabet would contain the *Mem* twice—Rashi could therefore refer to it in the plural—and the *Mem* would occupy the 17th place, and the Final *Mem* the 18th, thus be inexactly in the middle of the alphabet.

system. We have found that the author of the *SY* makes extensive use of the *gematria*. If we are to understand the "great, wonderful and hidden secret" mentioned in section III, paragraph 2, we will have to follow the example of the *SY* and apply the method of the *gematria* to the word אמת or, more correctly, to the word אמש substituted by Rashi in its place.

We must consider the fact that our author substituted the *Shin* in lieu of the *Tav* in the three "mothers" as the first code of the great secret. He rightly assumed that his readers, at least the educated ones among them for whom the work was destined and who alone could decipher his secret, had a mastery of the Aramaic language. And in Aramaic we frequently find a *Shin* in lieu of the *Tav* in the corresponding Hebrew word. Let us now attempt to understand and to read the word אמש and its components as numbers of the *gematria*. We begin with the method of the "lesser" values and undertake the following operations:

(1) Interpretation of the *three* letters: The "mothers" אמת have the numerical values $Aleph = 1 + Mem = 40 + Tav = 400$. Thus we obtain here the "lesser" values $4 + 4 + 1 = 9$.

(2) Interpretation of the *first* letter alone: If we subtract from the cross sum 9 the "lesser" values of *Mem* and *Tav*, equalling $4 + 4 = 8$, the letter *Aleph* with the numerical value of 1 remains.

(3) Interpretation of the *last* letter: If we read the last letter alone, thus subtracting from the cross sum 9 the *Aleph* and *Mem* with the "lesser" values of $4 + 1 = 5$, the letter *Tav* alone, with the numerical value of 4, remains.

(4) Interpretation of the *two last* letters: Finally, if we read only the last two letters *Mem* and *Tav*, thus subtracting right away the first letter $Aleph = 1$ from 9, we obtains for the *Mem* and *Tav* the lesser value of $4 + 4 = 8$.

By reading the letters as "lesser" values, we have broken the *second* code.

The *third* code of the secret consists of transferring the

(newly) discovered "lesser" values to the alphabet of the *SY*. Here the numbers are to be interpreted as the positional values of the alphabet in question and are to be read as the corresponding letters of that alphabet. We said "alphabet of the *SY*." This does not comprise 22 sounds and a corresponding number of symbols, but, since the letters *Begadke-farat* (בגדכפר״ת) are counted double in the *SY*, comprises 29 sounds and thus 29 symbols. To facilitate the reading, the positional values of the individual letters are recorded directly above them:

15	14	13	12	11	10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
כ	ס	י	ט	ח	ז	ו	ה	ד	ד	ג	ג	ב	ב	א

29	28	27	26	25	24	23	22	21	20	19	18	17	16
ת	ת	ש	ר	ר	ק	צ	פ	פ	ע	ס	נ	מ	ל

Thus we see at once: the *Vav* has the positional value of 9, *Aleph* corresponds to the positional value of 1, *Hay* corresponds to that of 8. What, however, does the number 4 signify? Here is hidden the *fourth* code of the secret.

The reader who followed our exposition carefully may have wondered why, in calculating the "lesser" value of the individual letters of the word אמת, we always started from the cross sum. This is both unusual and cumbersome, since the values themselves are known without effort. The reason for this is the following: In transcribing these values to his alphabet, the author of the *SY* does not go back to the *Aleph*, the first letter of the alphabet, but to the *Vav*! Starting with this letter he counts either backward or forward. He makes the *Vav* the basis of his method of counting, since the tetragrammaton begins with this letter. If we adds 4 to 9 we obtain number 13. The 13th letter, or the fourth letter after the *Vav*, is the *Yod*! We thus obtain the following tables:

I. Numerical values of the letters:

$Aleph + Mem + Tav$ $= 4 + 4 + 1 = 9$
$Aleph/Mem/Tav$ minus $(Mem + Tav)$ $= 9 - 4 + 4 = 1$
$Aleph/Mem/Tav$ minus $(Aleph + Mem)$ $= 9 - (4 + 1) = 4$
$Aleph/Mem/Tav$ minus $Aleph$ $= 9 - 1 = 8$

II. Positional values of the letters in the alphabet of the SY:

$$9 = Vav \quad\quad = \text{vowel U}$$
$$Vav - 8 = \quad 1 = Aleph = \text{vowel A}$$
$$Vav + 4 = 13 = Yod \quad = \text{vowel I}$$
$$Vav - 1 = \quad 8 = Hay \quad = \text{vowel E}$$

The four letters Vav, $Aleph$, Yod and Hay are the vowel-letters of the Hebrews and can be read as the vowels u - a - i - e. This is what is meant here and we have thus uncovered the *fifth* code of the secret.

The order of vowels u - a - i - e is very ancient. We find it frequently as far back as Babylonian cuneiform texts [26]. The Semitic languages, including Hebrew, have three basic vowels, namely: u - a - i. The E is a derived vowel; it originated sometimes from the A, sometimes from the I [27]. The projected series of vowels, therefore, consists of two groups: the first, formed by the three vowels u - a - i comprises the primary vowels [28], while the second group has only the secondary vowel E.

Behind the series u - a - i, however, there is an inner meaning —and this is the *sixth* code of the secret. This enumeration reproduces the vowels in descending order of their pitch, from high to low. In this connection we must note that the Semites—and with them also other civilized nations of antiquity such as the Greeks and the Chinese—considered the masculine-sonorous U and O as high-pitched, whereas they regarded the feminine-clear I as low-pitched. The A, on the

[26] Cf. G. R. Driver: *Semitic Writings*, 2nd edition (1954), p. 180.
[27] Gesenius/Kautzsch: *Hebräische Grammatik*, 28th ed. (Leipzig, 1909).
[28] In the original German: *originäre* . . .

other hand, was considered by them—as it is by us—as being of medium pitch [29]. This reading of the code therefore shows us the division of vowels into primary [28] and secondary ones, the former arranged from high to low according to the Semetic concept of vocal pitch.

The most important aspect of the "great, wonderful and hidden secret", however, has not yet been revealed! A quick glance at the following table will show us that in order to fully appreciate its significance, we must realize that the tetragrammaton YHVH has the numerical value of:

10 + 5 + 6 + 5 = 26 = 8.

LETTERS

Numerical value, respective positional value according to the usual alphabeth of 22 letters

Positional value of the alphabet of the SY, containing 29 letters

I	II			III	IV
Great Value	Lesser Value			Great Value	Lesser Value
6	6	Vav	= Vowel U	9	9
1	1 Aleph		= Vowel A	1	1
10	1	Yod	= Vowel I	13	4
5	5	Hay	= Vowel E	8	8
22	13			31	22
cross sum 4	4			4	4

column I + II = 8 = lesser value of the tetragrammaton = column III + IV

This table shows us that according to the usual alphabet, the "great" and the "lesser" value of the letters *Vav, Aleph, Yod, Hay* each show half the value of the tetragrammaton, namely four. Therefore together they constitute the "lesser" value of the tetragrammaton, i.e., eight. We have solved the *seventh* code of the secret of the "mothers".

We shall decipher the *eighth* code by calculating the corre-

[29] Cf. my article: "Die Vokalfolge in den babylonischen Keilschrifttexten" in the *Revue d'Assyriologie* (Paris 1963), vol. 4.

sponding values in the alphabet of the *SY* which contains 29 letters. Here, too, we obtain twice half the value of the tetragrammaton, thus together again the tetragrammaton! In other words: The eightfold hidden secret of the "mothers" consists of an allusion to the tetragrammaton! Or, to put it differently: *The vowel-letters stand for the tetragrammaton!*

To appreciate the full import of this statement, we must take account of the following: In his work, *Pardess Rimmonim,* Moses Cordovero (1522-1570) repudiates the view that all those names of G-d in which a consonant occurs twice— thus the tetragrammaton and the name EHYEH—are only meant for the masses [30]. This opinion, rejected by Cordovero, is held among others by Abraham ibn Ezra and advocated by him in his *Sepher Hashem* (Book of the Name). It is based on the following concept [31]. In the customary spelling of the tetragrammaton, the second and fourth letters are identical. Each letter of the tetragrammaton has, however, a tremendous significance. It is simply inconceivable that the fourth letter merely repeats the meaning of the second. Therefore one *Hay* is to be replaced by another quiescent letter, which, doubling as a vowel, expresses the same vowel as the *Hay*. Now this is the *Aleph*. The true or real tetragrammaton, which we could designate as the *Original Tetragrammaton* (Ur-Tetragramm) thus consists of the four vowels: u - a - i - e, —though ibn Ezra does not cite them in this order—expressed by the *matres lectionis Vav, Aleph, Yod, Hay.*

The *SY* and its "mothers" confirm the view of ibn Ezra that the real tetragrammaton (Original Tetragrammaton) consists of the four vowels. The generally known form of the tetragrammaton is indeed only meant for the masses! We may conceive its origin—which goes back to ancient times—as follows. To protect the Holy Name against any profanation,

[30] Cf. the work by G. Scholem: *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (Berlin 1962), pp. 278/79 and note 215, from which the reference to Cordovero's *Pardess Rinomim* is taken.

[31] Heie I follow the lead of S. Karppe, *Etudes sur les origines et la nature du Zohar,* (Paris, 1901), pp. 193-194.

the Jewish sages of old resorted to two steps: (1) They re-
placed the *Hay* with an *Aleph*, i.e., by a quiescent letter which
can express the same vowel as the *Hay*. [32] (2) Furthermore,
they transposed the syllables of the tetragrammaton. The
correct order of letters, respectively of the vowels, is from
"high" to "low", and therefore *Vav, Aleph, Yod, Hay*.[33] In
its place the syllable *Yod Hay* was placed at the beginning of
the word for "the masses"[34]. A far-reaching protection
against the profanation of the Holy Name was thus effected.
This action of the sages derives from (1) Jewish custom; and
(2) the views of the ancients regarding the sanctity of vowels,
views which we also find among the non-Jewish nations.

Addendum. 1

In order to avoid the profanation of the Divine Name, it is
still customary among the Jews—when mentioning or writing
the Holy Name—to replace one of its letters by another letter
which does not belong to the original name at all. In this
manner, the expression *Elokim* (replacing the original *Hay* of
the word by a *Quf*) arose. The replacement of the *Aleph* of the
tetragrammaton by a *Hay* corresponds exactly to the way of
thinking described above. We see then that this particular
Jewish custom dates back to the earliest period of Judaism.
The exchanging of the two syllables of the tetragrammaton
follows this same notion.

These facts, together with the eight-fold coding of the

[32] Thus at least *one* assumption of Mordell is confirmed.
[33] It is noteworthy that the three primary (cf. note 28, above)
vowels are arranged in a descending order of their pitch, from high
to low. Is it perhaps possible to establish a connection with the opinion
of the ancients that the three uppermost of the ten spheres are of
special significance? Perhaps the three vowels correspond to these
three spheres.
[34] To quote the Original Tetragrammaton in alphabetical order—
Aleph, Hay, Vav, Yod is just as wrong as to quote the five letters that
can be written in two ways as כמנפ"ץ instead of the correct מנצפ"ך.
Cf. the introduction of my study: "Altastronomische Vorstellungen in
der hebräischen Buchstabenmystik," partly printed in *Sefarad*, XX
(1960), pp. 352-362.

Original Tetragrammaton, prove that the vowels which form the tetragrammaton were also considered sacrosanct by the Jews.

Addendum 2

The other nations of antiquity, too, were convinced of the sanctity of the vowels; though their views inclined to a pagan, or at least an astral, posture. In his book: *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie,* [35] Franz Dornseiff gives us some interesting examples:

(a) The ancient Pythagoreans considered the seven Ionian vowels as one of the oldest and most important manifestations of the holy number seven (*heilige Siebenzahl*). [36]

(b) In Egypt, the priests praised the gods by intoning the seven vowels. [37]

(c) In imperial Rome, too, the vowels were reputed to be holy. A youth who intoned the seven vowels in bath in order to perform a cure was tortured by the court and then executed by the sword.[38]

(d) In the Byzantian era the aid of the archangels was invoked by quoting the seven vowels. [39]

(e) In the doctrine of the orphic-gnostic sect of the Perates, a doctrine of theology strongly influenced by Babylonian teachings, the names of the planets are based on the vowels. [40] All of these examples derive from a relatively late period. Based on our examination of the tetragrammaton, however, we must assume that these views are considerably older than might be inferred from the examples cited by Dornseiff.

The question that now brings itself to our attention is: "Why did the Jews, who after all are monotheists, consider the vowels holy?" We can only conjecture an answer to this question.

[35] 2nd edition (1925, Teubner Verlag).
[36] Dornseiff, *op. cit.,* p. 33.
[37] *Ibid.,* p. 52.
[38] *Ibid.,* p. 50.
[39] *Ibid.,* p. 41.
[40] *Ibid.,* p. 53.

The ancient world was dominated by the principle—and in this respect the Jews were no exception—that everything which is found in the heavens above has its counterpart on earth below. Thus the Jerusalem on earth corresponds to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Heavenly Court of Justice is the counterpart of the court of Justice on earth, human writing is the reproduction of celestial writing, which can be recognized in the course of the planets [41], etc. Since men make music and talk, the divine hosts must do so likewise. Human speech is therefore an immitation of that of heavenly beings. As Abraham ibn Ezra once expressed it, the vowels are conceived of as the soul of human speech and the consonants as its body, which is dead without the vowels. Considered in this context, the vowels easily turn into a manifestation of the Supreme Being, Whose breath supports everything and Who with His Name seals the six ends of the universe [42] and thereby prevents the world from relapsing into chaos.

In the light of these concepts, we can easily understand that the High Priest was permitted to utter the Original Tetragrammaton—namely the vowels— only once a year when he blessed the people on the Day of Atonement [43].

Summary

(1) Behind the "mothers" of the SY is hidden the "great, wonderful secret" of the Original Tetragrammaton.
This consists of the four original vowels u - a - i, - e.

(2) The SY thus confirms the statement of ibn Ezra that the tetragrammaton contains an *Aleph* in the guise of a *Hay*.

(3) The view concerning the existence of an Original Tetragrammaton is thus much older than was hitherto assumed.

(4) The Jews of antiquity considered the vowels u - a - i - e as sacrosanct.

[41] Cf. my article: "Die babylonische Keilschrift und die numidischen Grabinschriften im Lichte der Mieses'schen Theorie über die religiös-astronomische Bedingtheit der Schriftrichtung bei den alten Kulturvölkern" in the *Revue d'Assyriologie* (Paris, 1962), pp. 133-146.

[42] SY, section I, par. 13.   [43] Mishna, Yoma, VI, 2.