

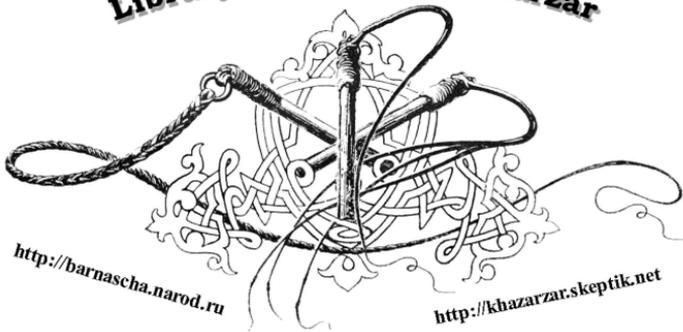
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and the
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PHILO AND THE NAMES OF GOD

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IN A recent work on the allegorical exegesis of Philo of Alexandria¹ Philo's views and teachings as to the Hebrew names of God are once more discussed and analyzed. The author repeats and shares the old opinion, elaborated and propagated by Zacharias Frankel and others that Philo was more or less ignorant of the Hebrew tongue. Philo's treatment of the divine names is put in the first line of witnesses to corroborate this literary verdict. This question touches wider and more important problems than the narrow question whether Philo knew Hebrew, or not,² and if the former is the case how far his knowledge, and if the latter is true how far his ignorance went. For the theologians generally some important historical and theological problems, for Jewish theology especially, besides these, literary and religious questions as to the date and origin of religious conceptions, and the antiquity and value of our sources are involved.

Philo is criticized for having no idea² of the equivalent names used by the LXX for the Tetragrammaton and Elohim respectively. The former is translated *κύριος*, the latter *θεός*. This omission is the more serious since the distinction between these two names is one of Philo's chief doctrines. We are referred to a remark made by Z. Frankel about

¹ Edmund Stein, *Die allegorische Exegese des Philo aus Alexandria*; Giessen, 1929. (Beihefte Zur ZAW. No. 51.)

² *Ibid.*, p. 20, for earlier observations see G. Dalman, *Adonaj*, 59.1, Daehne, *Geschichtliche Darstellung*, I 231, II 51; Freudenthal, *Alexander Polyhistor*, p. 74; M. Joel, *Blicke*, I 115, whose views require now some modification.

eighty years ago.³ However that may be, there is another most puzzling discrepancy between Philo and Haggadah, which did not escape Frankel's notice and circumspection.⁴ Philo teaches us the following equation:

(1) Tetragrammaton = $\kappa\rho\upsilon\sigma$ = אֲדוֹנִי = power of justice.

(2) God = $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$ = אֱלֹהִים = power of goodness or mercy.

If we turn to the Haggadah, we learn just the opposite:

(1) Tetragrammaton = אֲדוֹנִי = מַדַּת הַרְחָמִים.

(2) God = אֱלֹהִים = מַדַּת הַדִּין.⁵

How is this contradiction between Hellenistic and Hebraic thought, Philonic and Rabbinic theology, Alexandrian and Palestinian Haggadah to be explained? Is it really ignorance of Hebrew, which caused this misunderstanding? or is there a deeper reason for this difference of interpretation? Let us endeavor first of all to see clearly, on whose part the greater misunderstanding,—if there is such a thing,—is. Is it on Philo's side, or on the side of the Haggadah? Is the Philonic view, which sees in the name $\kappa\rho\upsilon\sigma$, the Lord, the power of chastisement, the מַדַּת הַדִּין, and in $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, Elohim, the power of mercy, מַדַּת הַרְחָמִים, more reasonable and logical than that represented by the Haggadah? One expects justice, judgment from a $\kappa\rho\upsilon\sigma$, a Lord, an Adon, and love or mercy from God, $\theta\epsilon\omicron\varsigma$, or Elohim. Owing to this fact I suggested⁶ that the old Haggadah fully agreed with Philo. Philo himself refers to older authorities. The present equation in the Haggadah is much younger than Philo, and owes its origin and change to religious movements, which necessitated such a discarding of an older teaching. Dr. C. G. Montefiore, a most impartial critic, finds my theory a "most

³ *Über den Einfluss der palästinensischen Exegese auf die alexandrinische Hermeneutik*, Leipzig, 1851, 26 ff.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 27 ff.

⁵ Stein, l. c. 52.

⁶ See *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, I, London, 1927, pp. 45 ff.

interesting hypothesis."⁷ Another critic, Dr. L. Finkelstein, remarks⁸ "his colleagues will hardly be willing to accept on the basis of an *isolated* (my italics), doubtful passage, a theory which runs counter to a dozen well-authenticated rabbinic sources." I fully recognize the justice of Dr. Finkelstein's objection, and crave hospitality for a few remarks on this subject. I essay to establish the date of the haggadic rule that the Tetragrammaton indicates מדת הרחמים, and Elohim מדת הדין. Who are the first teachers who avail themselves of these terms? Who is the oldest haggadist who did formulate that rule? Is there only an *isolated* instance for the exception to this rule, or are there more of them? How is it to be explained that the Targum called after Onkelos, or that after Jonathan ben Uzziel, i. e. the Palestinian Targum, does not pay even the slightest attention to this by no means unimportant rule? Enough of these questions! We turn to our material.

The older Haggadah, as represented by the Midrash of the Tannaim, shows that the terms מדת הרחמים and מדת הדין were almost unknown to their terminology. Wherever they occur, they might be later alterations and changes. The terms used in reliable and genuine texts are: מדת הטובה on one side, and מדת פורענות on the other side.^{8a} I am not able to offer

⁷ Jewish Guardian, 3. Feb., 1928, p. 9.

⁸ *JQR.*, N. S., XX, 1930, 363.

^{8a} Paul in Romans 5, 15 avails himself of this haggadic formula: 'Αλλ' οὐχ ὡς τὸ παράπτωμα (פורעות), οὕτω καὶ τὸ χάρισμα (טובה). εἰ γὰρ τῷ τοῦ ἐνὸς παραπτώματι οὐ πολλοὶ ἀπέθανον, πολλῶν μᾶλλον ἢ χάρις τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ ἡ δωρεὰ ἐν χάριτι τῇ τοῦ ἐνὸς ἀνθρώπου 'Ιησοῦ Χριστοῦ εἰς τοὺς πολλοὺς ἐπερίσδενσεν. The nearest parallel, in contents and in form, to this saying is a sentence of R. Yose b. Halaftha in Sifra, Lev. 5.17. ר' יוסי אומר אם נפשך לירע מן שכרם של צדיקים לעתיד צא ולמד מאדם הקדמוני שלא נצטווה אלא על מצוה אחת בלא תעשה ועבר עליה ראה כמה אותות נקנסו לו ולדורותיו ולדורות דורותיו עד סוף דורותיו, וכי איזה מדה מרובה? מרובה מדת הטובה או מדת פורעניות? הוי אומר מדת הטובה, אם מדת פורעניות מועטת הרי כמה מיתות נקנסו לו ולדורותיו ולדורות דורותיו עד סוף כל הדורות השב מן הפגול ומן הנוטר והמתענה ביום הכפורים על אחת כמה וכמה שמוכה לו ולדורותיו ולדורות דורותיו עד סוף כל

denu, the compiler of which might have used an old tannaitic source to which he was indebted in quoting the controversy between R. Ishmael and R. Akiba, R. Levi,¹³ a famous haggadist in Tiberias, of the circle of R. Johanan b. Nappaha, could not have known this rule in teaching, with reference to Ruth 1.13, כל מקום שנאמר בו יד ה' מכת דבר הוא, ובנין אב שבכולם הנה יד ה' הויה Ex. 9. 3. R. Levi's proclivities towards Philonic ideas and teachings can be detected from other sayings and homilies.¹⁴ It is, therefore, not surprising to meet here again with a new parallel between Philo and R. Levi. But, granted that no link between the latter could be established, and all traces between Alexandrian and Galilean theology have been obliterated, if they ever existed, the composition of the phrase 'יד ה' speaks eloquently against the rule as established and taught by the later rabbis. Other contemporary preachers noticed the same difficulty. The Tetragrammaton and Elohim are used promiscuously. Where the Tetragrammaton is used Elohim is expected, and *vice-versa*, according to this rule. The contradiction is smoothed over by the theory that on the one hand the wicked change God's love into justice, and on the other hand the righteous effect a change from strict justice to mercy.¹⁵ Homiletically such a theory sounds very well indeed; logically it is weak and unacceptable. As far as one

¹³ Ruth Rabba 2.20.

¹⁴ See my *Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*, I, p. 19.

¹⁵ R. Judah ben Ilai, Ex. r. 6.3 is, as far as I am aware, the first who speaks of such a change in his Haggadah: כן אמר משה בשעה שאמרה לי שעה, לכה ואשלחך אל פרעה במדת הרחמים אמרה לי שאתה עתיד לנואלך שמה עד שבאתי יוצא ממדה למדה ממדת הדין למדת רחמים על ישראל. See Ex. 6.2. Further R. Meir's exposition of Is. 26.21 can be instanced here: יוצא ממדה למדה ממדת הדין למדת רחמים על ישראל. See Eccl. r. 8.1. Tanh. IV. 113. Pes. R. K. 162a, 164a. Pal. Taanit 65b. See *Ginse Schechter*, I, 413, Tos. Ber, 7.6.6 Ber. 48b. cf. also Gen. r. ch. 26. R. Meir and R. Jose ha-Gelili, ed. Theodor, p. 252. The theory cited in the text is formulated by R. Samuel b. Nahmani Gen. r. ch. 33.4, 73.2. See ed. Theodor, pp. 308, 333; Midr. Psalms 274, Num. r. 9,16, *ibid*, 10,17.

can ascertain, this theory, which really amounts to a modification of the new rule, was propagated by R. Samuel b. Nahmani, a teacher like R. Levi, who, even if not imbued with Hellenistic lore, yet shows signs of acquaintance with it. A second objection to the new rule must have been pointed out in the very fact that Genesis begins with Elohim which means, and would be a support of Marcionite teachings, that the world was created with מַדָּת הַרִּין, which sounded rather harsh. To overcome this controversial point the view was advanced that God combined both measures and created world and man.¹⁶ Finally, there are certain passages in Scriptures with 'ה' referring to punishments and chastisements contradicting the rule. How do they agree with the conception of the Tetragrammaton marking the measure of love? Another teacher of the third century, R. Eleazar ben Pedath, essayed to solve this difficulty by introducing an old conception in a new shape.¹⁷ He taught that יי' means God and His Court.¹⁸ These explanations show clearly that there is something in favor of the older view, if we are going to give preference to one or the other theory, and assume that there is some foundation for either of them in the Bible. Even teachers of the Middle Ages, who generally accepted rulings of the Haggadah, could not acquiesce in this theory of the divine names. A whole list could be

¹⁶ Gen. r. 8.4a, M. B. ed. Buber 23 (R. Berachiah), v. also Gen. r. ch. 21, ed. Theodor 202 (R. Joshua ben Levi), see however Mek. 97a, where we read, in spite of Elohim being מַדָּת הַרִּין, the words אֲנִי שְׂבַרְחָמִים בְּרֵאשִׁי עוֹלָמִי.

¹⁷ See Marmorstein, "Anges et hommes dans l' Agada" in *REJ.*, 84. 1927, 37 ff., and "Notes complémentaires à Anges et hommes," *ibid.*, 138 ff. I hope to deal with this subject in another place.

¹⁸ Gen. r. 51.3 (R. Eleazar b. Pedath) Lev. r. 1.3, Tanh B. I 96 (R. Berachiah) I Berakot 9.5, Ex. r. 12.6, Num. r. 3.3.1, Horayot, III 1. (R. Simon ben Lakish), v. further, Marmorstein. "Greek and Rabbinic Ideas of God" in the *Jewish Chronicle Supplement*, January 29, 1926, p. V ff. [and, now also Marmorstein, *Zur Erforschung des Jalamdenu-Problems*, MGWJ. 74 (1930). 266-284, esp. p. 276].

made up. It will suffice to mention here Baḥya ben Ascher ibn Halawa¹⁹ and Meyuḥas.²⁰ Finally the fact cannot be overlooked that the teachers after the Bar Kokba war were the first to use the new terms מרת הדין and מרת הרחמים, instead of the older ones, e. g. מרת הטוב and מרת פורענות. The change must have taken place about this period, and not earlier.

I am perfectly aware of the fact that owing to the deplorable condition of our texts it may happen that the new term crept into an older saying or that amoraic teachings contain the old forms. In such cases, one has to examine, whether the later text does not preserve a fragment of the older Haggadah, which was adopted, or adapted by the editor of the compilation, or if the earlier text was not changed by editors or copyists. I will prove this by adducing one or more examples. For this purpose one of our youngest compilations, Exodus Rabba, might be especially instructive. We find the older terms in Exodus r. 3, 18, and 45, 6. In the latter Ex. 33.19 is explained with the help of these two measures.²¹ Preceding one reads a passage ascribed to R. Jose ben Halaftha; is it too daring to conjecture that the continuation is also his? The former states anonymously the idea: מכאן שמרת הפורענות שוהה על הצדיקים לבוא מרת הטוב לבוא ממרת לבוא.²² In the Babylonian Talmud²³ the teaching is quoted in the name of the Babylonian Amora, Rabba, who flourished in the fourth century. The tradition was not firmly established, for some read: R. Jose bar Hanina, a Palestinian scholar of the third century. Now, there are cases for the interchange of the two names ר' יוסי בר חלפתא and ר' יוסי בר חנינא. Such mistaken readings are not rare in

¹⁹ See Kirchheim, Geiger's *Zeitschrift*, IX, 143.

²⁰ Ed. Greenup to Ex. 8.18.

²¹ See also Tanh. ad. loc., ed. Buber, Ex. p. 116.

²² See also ed. Buber.

²³ 97a.

our texts. It is most likely that the same interchange of names took place here. Assuming that the copyists of the texts used the abbreviated form, like רִיבָה, nothing is more plausible than a mistaken solution, namely R. Jose ben Halafta, instead of R. Jose bar Hanina, and *vice versa*. Similarly it may be suggested that the anonymous saying which uses the terms, 'וכן אחת מוצא בעכן הלא עכן בן זרח מעל וכו' ומדת פורענות מועטת והדר נחפש מדה טובה מרובה עאכו"כ²⁴ expressing the idea of mankind's solidarity, is of tannaitic origin. This logical conclusion is well established in tannaitic sources, just as the teaching of universal solidarity is a remarkable pronouncement of pre-amoraic Haggadah. A number of well-dated sayings can be listed here showing that the terms מדת הטוב and מדת פורענות and מדת הרחמים and מדת הדין. F. i. Mekilta 7b, 8a, 14a, 19b, 26a b, etc.; Sifre Numbers §§ 8, 15, 18, 156 and 220; Sifre Deut. § 286 a. o. Midr. Psalms, ed. Buber, pp. 119, 234, 239; Bab. Yoma, 76a (R. Eleazar of Modiim; cf. Pal. Soṭah 1.7, Bab. Sanh. 92b), Aboth of R. Nathan ch. 30, ed. Schechter 89 (R. Meir); Num. r. 9.45 (R. Jose ha-Gelili), Midrash Hashkem, ed. Grünhut, 4a. Yet, there is no trace of an application of the divine names with one or the other of these attributes of the earlier terms. It may not be out of place to investigate the meaning of these two attributes of God, goodness and justice, in the light of rabbinic theology in order to understand better the change attached to the divine names.

II.

God's goodness and grace was most impressively and eloquently taught, most intensively felt and cherished by Jewish religious thinkers in all ages. It found its expression

²⁴ Tanh. Deut. ed. Buber 49; v. Marmorstein, *The Doctrine of Merits*, London 1920, esp. p. 187 f.

in the alphabetic Psalm 145.9: The Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works. This is not the only passage in the Book of Psalms teaching God's goodness. There are others, like 73.1, where, however, God's goodness is not so universal, as in Ps. 145.9. Truly God is good to Israel. Among Israelites there is also a distinction between those that are of a clean heart, and others, cf. Ps. 125.4 (God is expected to do good, to those that are good, and upright in their hearts (Israelites)), further Nahum 1.6, Lam. 3.25. In spite of the particularistic trend of the latter passages, there are sayings which extend God's goodness and providence even to the animal world (Ps. 147.8). Yet, another alphabetic Psalm (25.8) extends God's goodness, by teaching: God is good and upright, therefore he teaches sinners in the way. These utterances convey to us, if we can see behind the scenes, that people craved for God's love and mercy. Whilst students of the history of comparative religion are able to point at some more or less convincing older or contemporary parallels and resemblances to Jewish teachings of God's omniscience and omnipresence, there are not even faint expressions which would come near to the Jewish teaching of God's goodness. Gunkel²⁵ quotes as a parallel to Ps. 147.9 a few lines of the hymn of Amon.²⁶ The Psalmist says: He giveth to the heart its food, and to the young ravens which cry. The Hymn has: who creates herbs for the cattle and the fruit tree for men." The parallel is so natural, that no borrowing need be assumed. However, the emphasis laid on this doctrine must have met some popular feeling and demand already in those days of old.

At this point I may be permitted to refer again to Dr. Montefiore. He was kind enough to consider in his new book on *Rabbinic literature and Gospel teachings*²⁷ my work.

²⁵ Gunkel, *Die Psalmen*, p. 616.

²⁶ Erman, *Literatur der Aegypter*, p. 355. ²⁷ London, 1930, p. 208-209.

He says: "And Dr. Marmorstein gives the references to all these, and many more passages of a similar kind. But he says nothing about the *mass of passages*²⁸ which breathe a very different spirit and tell a very different story. Yet this second class of passages is even more numerous than the first class, and is quite as characteristic. Both, as I have said, would have to be taken account of in forming the complete picture." It is a great pity that Dr. Montefiore did not give us the "mass of passages," and "numerous instances" he has in mind. I myself could not go into these passages in the part of my work published, since I left this point for the chapter of God's relation to man, especially for the subdivision dealing particularly with the wicked in Israel and the Gentiles generally. I maintain that these passages do not come under the attribute of goodness, spoken of in my studies.²⁹ There are many passages extending God's goodness even to the nations of the world. God judges the Gentiles in the night time when they are free from sins.³⁰ There are Gentiles who do good and praiseworthy deeds for which they receive their reward in the world to come.³¹ R. Jose the Galilean praises the nations because they adhere to the religion of their fathers, whilst Jews are much more inclined to drift away to idolatry.³² A haggadist makes God say to Israel: The nations of the world honor me, and you, who experienced so many miracles, aggravate me³³! R. Abbahu credits the nations of the world with the belief in God as Creator of the World and the doctrine of resurrection.³⁴ In another address of God to Israel³⁵ we hear the

²⁸ The italics are by the present writer.

²⁹ P. 196-208.

³⁰ See Pal. R. H. I. 1, Gen. r. 50.3. Midrash ha-Gadol. 287. Yalkut Machiri Ps. 9, Book of the Pious, § 1385.

³¹ See my *Doctrine of Merits*, p. 40 and passim.

³² Sifre Deut. § 87 and parallels.

³³ Tanhuma, Buber 80.

³⁴ M. Psalms 19.1. ³⁵ Tanhuma, ed. Frankfurt a, O. 257b (Ekeb).

following words in praise of the Gentiles: Neither because you are more than the other nations, nor because you are more eager to do my commandments! No, they do more than you, they do the *Miṣwah* in spite of the fact that they are not commanded to do it, moreover they magnify my name more than you do! R. Abbahu makes God say: Let all the nations acknowledge me, and I will accept them³⁶ The nations are longing to come under the wings of the Shekinah.³⁷ All the nations magnify God's praise.³⁸ One could go on enumerating scores of passages in a similar way. The result would be the same. Individual teachers saw not only bad (about them more presently), but also good points. They are in some respects better than Jews. In order to illustrate the fifth commandment of the Decalogue they recite the story of a pagan in Askalon.³⁹

What about the other side? God hates the Gentiles. They are considered as nothing before him. They are the sons of Gehinom. God's Shekinah does not dwell among them. They are hopeless. One Israelite is worth more before God than all the nations. Gentiles are punished not for their own sins alone, but also for those of their ancestors, etc. God must not hear their cry and prayers to him. They are strangers to God. Do not show them favor, exclaims R. Isaac. Here again a considerable list, which would fill a whole volume, could be gleaned from the pages of our literature,⁴⁰ yet they prove nothing for the narrow-mindedness and inferiority of Jewish doctors. Have the followers of the Gospels, the teachers of the Sermon of the Mount, the heralds of the Beatitudes, not provoked the Jews who were

³⁶ M. Psalms 424; Pes. rabbati 159a.

³⁷ Aggadat Bereshit ch. 15.

³⁸ Mek. 36b.

³⁹ Pal. Peah, 15c, 18.

⁴⁰ All the references will be found in the second volume of my *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God*.

engaged in a struggle for life, and surrounded by the most cruel persecutions, by telling them: God hates you, Jews. God has forsaken you, Jews. You are destined for Hell. You are the lowest and the most contemptible of mankind. For the sake of us, Christians, was the world created, and we are the true Israel. You Jews are the idolaters, the murderers, and the immoral people, against whom prophets and psalmists raised the cry of perdition and damnation! It is no wonder that some of the haggadists retorted to their persecutors in kind. With the Holy Bible in their hand they refuted and defended, they built and destroyed, they averted and fought the destroyer, who endangered their very existence. To me it is a wonder of wonders that viewing the Haggadah from its historical background, most of the Rabbis could remain calm and show tolerance in a measure which calls for admiration rather than severe criticism. Those men must have had more love of God and fellow-men in their hearts than their adversaries, who carried love in their mouth. If we add, now, to all this the attacks of the Gnostics against the Jewish doctrine of love, we can find a plausible reason for the change of older conceptions. The peculiar Jewish name for God, the Tetragrammaton, means love, the general old Semitic name Elohim represents justice. Love is the most characteristic feature of Israel's God.