

## CHAPTER FIVE

### *The Name of God*

#### *The Golem Legend and the Demiurgic Rôle of the Alphabet*

Since Samaritanism must be viewed within the wider phenomenon of the Jewish religion, it will be pertinent to present material from Judaism proper which is corroborative to the thesis of the present work. In this Chapter, the idea about the agency of the Name of God in the creation process will be expounded; then, in the next Chapter, the various traditions about the Angel of the Lord which are relevant to this topic will be set forth.

An apt introduction to the Jewish teaching about the Divine Name as the instrument of the creation is the so-called *golem* legend. It is not too well known that the greatest feat to which the Jewish magician aspired actually was that of duplicating God's making of man, the crown of the creation. In the Middle Ages, Jewish esotericism developed a great cycle of *golem* legends, according to which the able magician was believed to be successful in creating a גולם (גורלם)<sup>1</sup>. But the word as well as the concept is far older. Rabbinic sources call Adam a *golem* before he is given the soul:

In the first hour [of the sixth day], his dust was gathered; in the second, it was kneaded into a *golem*; in the third, his limbs were shaped; in the fourth, a soul was infused into him; in the fifth, he arose and stood on his feet [...].

(*Sanh.* 38b)

In 1615, Zalman Ševi of Aufenhausen published his reply (*Jüdischer Theriak*) to the animadversions of the apostate Samuel Friedrich Brenz (in his book *Schlangenbalg*) against the Jews. In his response, Zalman Ševi wrote *inter alia*:

The renegade said that there are those among the Jews who take a lump of clay, fashion it into the figure of a man, and whisper incantations and spells, whereupon the figure lives and moves. [...] he writes that we call such an image *homer golem*.

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1 On the golem, see B. Rosenfeld, *Die Golemsage*, Breslau, 1934; G. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. by R. Manheim, New York, 1965, Schocken paperback edition, New York, 1969 and reprints, pp. 158 ff. (chapter based on "Die Vorstellung vom Golem in ihren tellurgischen und magischen Beziehungen", *E-J*, XXII (1953), 1954, pp. 235 ff.).

*i.e.*, an unshaped mass of material [...]. I myself have never seen such a performance, but some of the Talmudic sages possessed the power to do this, by means of the Book of Creation [...]. We German Jews have lost this mystical tradition; but in Palestine, there are still to be found some men who can perform great miracles through the Kabbalah.<sup>2</sup>

The response by Zalman Şevi no doubt expresses the general attitude of the Jewish folk religion on the subject of the *golem*: the creation of a man-like being is quite possible for the sage who utilizes the correct means, namely, the *Book of Creation*, that is, *Sefer Yeşira*.

But the notion of the creation of a *golem* by means of the *Book of Creation* is not confined to a late stage in the history of Judaism. In fact, the legend about the *golem* is rooted firmly in the Talmud:

Raba said: "If the righteous desired it, they could be creators; for it is written: "But your iniquities have distinguished between you and your God" (*Is. lix.2*)."<sup>3</sup> Raba created a man and sent him to R. Zera. The latter spoke to him but received no answer. Thereupon he said to him: "You are a creation by the magicians – return to your dust!"

R. Ḥanina and R. Hoshayah spent every Sabbath eve studying *Sefer Yeşira*, by means of which they created a three year old calf, which they ate.<sup>4</sup>

(*Sanh.* 65b)

Raba (R. Abba ben Joseph ben Ḥama) was a leading Babylonian amora who died in the middle of the 4th century, while the associates R. Ḥanina (Hananiah) and R. Hoshayah were Palestinian amoraim of the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 4th century. As shall be seen forthwith, however, the mystical doctrine of creation as found in the *Book of Creation* is of an even older date than the generation of R. Ḥanina and R. Hoshayah.

But, first of all, let us note that the magician was not able to endow his *homunculus* with speech, for the faculty of speech is a token of the soul or spirit of man. *Targum Onkelos* on *Gen. ii.7*, "... and man became a living spirit," reads: "... and man became a speaking spirit." God's infusion of his spirit into man was at the same time an endowment of the faculty of speech. It will be immediately clear that the Jewish magician creating a *golem* bears likeness to the Gnostic demiurge: he is able to create a corporeal man, but he cannot give his creation spiritual life<sup>5</sup>. The Jewish *golem* legend presents us

2 Quoted by M. Grünbaum, ed., *Jüdischdeutsche Chrestomatie*, Leipzig, 1882, p. 566.

3 Raba apparently insists on the freedom from sin as a prerequisite for the work of creation.

4 According to a variant reading, the means utilized for the magical act of creation is called *Hilkoth Yeşira*, and this is also the name of the work in question in old mss. However, there is the possibility that the reference in the Talmud is to an early version of the book or to some prototypal traditions; see Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, p. 167; *Kabbalah* (LJK), Jerusalem, 1974, p. 26.

5 Compare that the Gnostics taught that Adam, when he received the spirit from God,

with the same dichotomic anthropogony as does Gnosticism: the body is made by an inferior being, whereas the soul or spirit can only be supplied by God. G. Scholem accurately states: "... a man who creates a golem is in some sense competing with God's creation of Adam; in such an act the creative power of man enters into a relationship, whether of emulation or antagonism, with the creative power of God."<sup>6</sup> This description fits the Gnostic demiurge just as well as it fits the Jewish magician.

Although some sources actually represent God as a great magician who creates the universe by means of *Sefer Yesira*<sup>7</sup>, the teaching of the book itself is that God made the world "through the thirty-two secret paths of Wisdom", that is, the ten *Sefiroth*, i.e., the four elements of the cosmos (the Spirit of God, ether, water, and fire) and the six dimensions (*keṣaboth*, literally, "extremities") of space, added to the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. In ch.i, it is described that the first four *Sefiroth* emanate from each other; and, while nothing specific is said about the manner of creation of the last six *Sefiroth*, it is stated that God created the twenty-two letters from the ether, the chaos from the water, and the Throne of Glory and the host of the angels from the primal fire<sup>8</sup>. The remaining five chapters of the book, however, have nothing whatsoever to say about the *Sefiroth* and deal exclusively with the mystical part played by the letters in the creation of the universe. The whole work of creation was enacted through the combinations of the Hebrew consonants. The existence of every single thing in the universe depends upon the exact combination of letters that lies hidden in it:

By means of the twenty-two letters, by giving them a form and a shape, by mixing them in different ways, God made the soul of all that which has been made and of all that which will be.

(ii.2)

That *Sefer Yesira* is not meant to be solely a theoretical discourse on cosmogony but also has a practical design, as indeed is implied in the narratives about its use for magical creation acts, is confirmed by the fact that the earliest mss. are accompanied by introductory chapters emphasizing magical practices which are to be performed on the completion of the study of the book<sup>9</sup>. A further proof of the practical-magical aim of the *Book of Creation* is found at the very end of the book itself, where its contents are ascribed to a revelation to Abraham. Here, it is stated:

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immediately began to speak and praise God (see Iren., I.xxx.6, on the Ophites; *Right Ginza* 104.4 ff.).

6 *On the Kabbalah*, p. 159.

7 See, e.g., *Pesikta Hadatha*, in *BH*, VI, p. 36.

8 The nature of this second act of creation is obscure, since the verbs used, *קקק* and *כצק*, do not mean "create", but "engrave" and "hew out" respectively.

9 See Scholem, *Kabbalah*, loc. cit.; cp. *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 169 ff.

When our father Abraham came, he contemplated, meditated, and saw; he searched, understood, outlined, and dug; and he *combined* and *created* – and he was successful!

Abraham is here more than a sage possessing divine wisdom; he is a great magician knowing how to make the combinations of the letters constituting the creative power.

That Abraham could perform magical acts of creation is a tradition to be supplied from various sources. The German Kabbalists held that *Gen. xii.5*, which says that Abram and Sarah “acquired” (עשר) people (הנפש) in Haran, indicated a magical act of creation performed by Abraham. They took the verb עשה in the sense “make”, “fabricate”, which is also one of its meanings. As G. Scholem has observed, this mystical exegesis may be quite ancient, for it seems to be under attack in an aggada dating from the 2nd century C.E.: “R. Eleazar observed in the name of R. Jose ben Zimra: “Are we to believe that Abraham could make נפש? If all the nations assembled in order to make one insect, they could not endow it with life; and yet you say: “and the נפש that they had made”! It refers to [nothing else than] the proselytes [that they had acquired]. So let it be read: “that they had converted”” (*Gen. R. xxxix.14*). A couple of texts to be furnished below support the theory that Abraham already in the 2nd century C.E. was regarded as the prototype of the magician who fashions a *golem* through word and letter magic.

The teaching about the *Sefiroth*, a novel term coined by the author to signify “numbers”, probably derives from Neopythagorean sources, while the part dealing with the letters is to be explained against the background of Jewish mystical doctrines. The Babylonian amora Rab (Abba ben Aibu), who is said to have come to Palestine in the beginning of the 3rd century, declared that Bešalel, the chief architect of the tabernacle, knew “how to combine the letters by which the heavens and the earth were created” (*Ber. 55a*). The explanation of this statement is found in the more or less universal idea about the sanctuary being a microcosmic representation of the universe. In *Midrash Rabba*, there is to be found an anonymous exposition of the import of the tabernacle which brings God’s various works on the successive days of the creation into close parallelism to the description of the construction of the tabernacle (see *Num. R. xii.13*)<sup>10</sup>. It is stated plainly in *Midrash Tadshe*: “The Tabernacle was constructed corresponding to the creation” (ch. 2).

Thus, just like Abraham, Bešalel was believed to have possessed the faculty of making the combinations of letters that constitute the creative power. Since the conveyor of this tradition is said to be Rab, the mystical doctrine

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10 J.B. Schaller, *Gen. 1.2 im antiken Judentum*, Diss., Göttingen, 1961, pp. 121 ff. with notes on pp. 224 ff., has mustered evidence concerning the collation of the sequence of the creation to the construction of the tabernacle.

of the creation through the letters of the alphabet presents itself as a good deal older than the composition of *Sefer Yesira*, which is dated to the time between the 3rd and the 6th century C.E. by G. Scholem<sup>11</sup>.

The idea that the letters of the alphabet are the basis of the work of creation recurs throughout later Jewish mystical literature<sup>12</sup>. I confine myself to quote a passage from *III Enoch* (also known as the *Hebrew Book of Enoch* or the *Book of the Hekaloth*), a Merkaba writing probably belonging to the 5th or 6th century C.E. but containing much material from a far older age. This book purports to be revelations given to R. Ishmael by the patriarch Enoch, who was taken up to heaven and translated into the figure of Metatron, the prince of the angels. R. Ishmael relates that Enoch-Metatron announced to him that he was in possession of a crown upon which God had inscribed the letters by which the whole universe was created:

R. Ishmael said: "Metatron, the Angel, the Prince of the Presence, the Glory of all Heavens, said to me:

"Because of the great love and mercy with which the Holy One, blessed be He, loved and cherished me more than all the children of heaven, He wrote with His finger with a flaming style upon the crown on my head the letters by which were created heaven and earth, the seas and rivers, the mountains and hills, the planets and constellations, the lightnings, winds, earthquakes and voices [*i.e.*, thunders], the snow and hail, the storm-wind and the tempest – the letters by which were created all the needs of the world and all the orders of Creation." <sup>13</sup>

(xiii.1)

Summing up the discussion of the present Chapter so far, we see that there was a Jewish teaching to the effect that the world was created by means of the letters of the alphabet or rather by certain combinations of them, and that it was rumored that gifted persons could learn the creative manipulation of the letters and thus emulate the divine act of creation. By the end of the 3rd century C.E., outstanding rabbis exercised this magical faculty according to the tradition. Their prototype was Abraham, the belief in whose creative powers has been traced back into the 2nd century C.E.

### *The "Sealing" of the Creation with the Divine Name*

But what kind of combinations of letters effected the creative acts? The 10th century exegete Solomon ben Isaac Rashi of Troyes gives the following comment upon the Talmudic story about R. Hanina and R. Hoshayah creating a calf through the agency of *Sefer Yesira*:

11 He inclines toward the earlier dating; see *On the Kabbalah*, p. 167, n. 3.

12 For references to texts, see L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*. V (Notes to Volumes I and II), Philadelphia, 1925 and reprints, p. 5, n. 10.

13 There is a parallel passage in ch. xli, where the letters are said to be engraved upon the throne of glory.

They used to combine the letters of the Name, by which the universe was created. This is not to be considered forbidden magic, for the works of God were brought into being through His holy Name.<sup>14</sup>

In *Sanh.* 67b, the tradition about the two amoraim creating a calf by means of *Sefer Yeşira* is related as an example of what kind of magic is permitted, and Rashi upholds this by explaining that the rabbis were penetrating into the mysteries of the Name of God and the practical consequences. The magical acts said to be performed by means of this esoteric book ultimately turned upon the Divine Name. The Talmudic sages thus effected their creations through combinations and permutations of the letters of the Name. Raba, who was said to have created a golem, had clear affinities with an esotericism concerning the Name of God: on one occasion, he even wished to discourse in the *beth midrash* upon the mystery of the Tetragrammaton, but was stopped by a certain old man, probably representing the *sensus communis* of the rabbis (see *Pes.* 50a).

Similarly, the "Great" *Yalqut Reubeni*, one of the two published parts of the anthology of Kabbalistic lore compiled by Reuben Hoeshke ben Hoeshke Katz of Prague in the 17th century, interprets the combination of the creative letters known to Beşalel as the name אהיה or a construction of twelve letters derived from it. It is said that "Beşalel, by the name of אהיה, constructed twelve letters by which the heaven and earth were created," and that "Beşalel, by the name of אהיה, constructed the tabernacle."<sup>15</sup>

Since *Sefer Yeşira* imparts that Abraham actually succeeded in his efforts to create by manipulating the letters of the alphabet, this would imply that the patriarch possessed the power of the Divine Name, which was the real means by which everything came into being. A couple of details to the effect that Abraham possessed the creative Name of God can in fact be obtained. In *Midrash Rabba*, we read:

"And I [– it is God who is speaking to Abram –] will make your name great" (*Gen.* xii.2). This means: "I will add the letter *He* to your name." R. Abbahu commented on this: "It is not written: "Look now אהיה," but: "Look now אהיה" (*Gen.* xv.5). [God said:] "With this *He*, I made the world. And – behold! – I will add it to your name, and then you will be fruitful and multiply." "

(*Gen. R.* xxxix.11)

R. Abbahu, a Palestinian amora who flourished about 300 C.E., gives a very peculiar interpretation (quite casually bringing in *Gen.* xv.5) of God's changing of the name Abram to Abraham: the letter ה that was added to the old name was the letter with which God made the world. The letter *He*, however,

14 *Talmud Babli. Tractate Sanhedrin with Rashi, Tosafot ... according to the Venice Text*, Jerusalem, no date, *ad loc.*

15 See Ch. Kaplan, "The Hidden Name", *JSOR*, 13, 1929, p. 182.

was regarded as an equivalent or abbreviation of the proper Name of God, the real creative instrument. Thus, when Abram receives the letter *He*, with which God created the universe, this implies that he actually gets the Divine Name conjoined to his own. Abraham's name became "great", that is, he was fruitful and multiplied, because he possessed the Great Name, the means of the creation.

Another passage runs thus:

"And he [*viz.*, Melchizedek] blessed him [*viz.*, Abram] and said: "Blessed be Abram by God the Most High, Creator of heaven and earth (קנה שמים וארץ)" (*Gen.* xiv.19). From whom did he acquire them? R. Abba said: "As one says: so-and-so has beautiful eyes and hair." R. Isaac said: "Abraham used to entertain wayfarers; and, after they had eaten, he would say to them: "Say a blessing!" They would ask: "What shall we say?" He replied: "[Say:] Blessed be the God of the universe of whose bounty we have eaten!" Then, the Holy One, blessed be He, said to him: "My Name was not known among My creatures, and you have made it known among them. I will regard you as though you were associated with Me in the creation of the world." Hence it is written: "And he blessed him and said: "Blessed be Abram by God the Most High, who has created heaven and earth!" " " "

(*Ibid.* xliii.7)

In the Biblical text, קנה שמים וארץ obviously refers to God, but R. Isaac takes it as referring to Abraham (Abram). קנה can mean to "acquire" and also to "possess", and R. Abba takes the verb in an attributive sense, apparently indicating God's possessing of the universe. R. Isaac, however, obviously chooses another meaning of the verb, namely, to "create", and maintains that the words about the creating of heaven and earth in *Gen.* xiv.19 refer to Abraham. R. Isaac, a tanna of the mid-2nd century known to have engaged in mystical studies (see *Hag.* 13a), evidently reckons that it was because Abraham knew the Name that God elevated him to the position of being regarded as an associate in the process of the creation. The explanation of this apparently is that the Name of God is the instrument by which the creation was effected: since Abraham knew the creative medium, God raised him to the position of being regarded as a partner in the creation of heaven and earth. The two last-quoted texts allow us to conclude that, in the 2nd century C.E., there were circles that associated Abraham with creative activity by virtue of his possessing the proper Name of God.

Here is the place to return to the teaching of *Sefer Yesira* that the letters of the alphabet were the means of the creation. Actually, the author of the book knows that the creative letters are based upon the Name of God:

How did he [*i.e.*, God] combine, weigh, and exchange them [*i.e.*, the letters]? *Aleph* with all, and all with *Aleph*; *Beth* with all, and all with *Beth*; *Gimel* with all, and all with *Gimel*; and all of them return circlewise back to the starting-point through 231 gates, the number of the pairs that can be formed from the twenty-two [letters]; and that is why *everything which is created and everything which is spoken proceed from one Name.*

(ii.5)

Everything in the universe depends upon fixed interconnections of the letters of the alphabet according to certain gematrical permutations. At every "gate" in the circle formed by the letters of the alphabet, there is a combination of two letters through which the creative powers enter into the universe. What is of importance in this connection, however, is to note that the author obviously holds the opinion that the whole alphabet is based upon a mystical name. The idea that the alphabet is founded upon a secret name can be corroborated by Greek and Latin sources<sup>16</sup>. That the author of *Sefer Yesira* has in mind the proper Name of God, the most efficacious of all names, appears certain. The author undoubtedly regards God's Name as the foundation of the whole creation, for, in another passage, he states that the six extremities of the world are "sealed", that is, kept together, by the six different permutations of "the Great Name יהוה" (i.3).

That the stability of the world is dependent upon God's "sealing" the creation with his own Name is a teaching which occurs in several writings dealing with mystical lore. In *Hekaloth Rabbati*, a Merkaba writing probably edited in the 6th century but containing considerably older strata, we read about "the sealing of the order of the creation" by the Divine Name (ch.23). In *Yalqut Reubeni*, there are several passages saying that אהיה or some name derived from it is the "seal" of heaven and earth<sup>17</sup>.

The passages from *Sefer Yesira* and *Hekaloth Rabbati* are among those texts repeatedly cited by G. Quispel as evidence for the view of the Jewish origin of the Gnostics' reflections upon the Name of God and of their concept of the demiurge. Admittedly, these two esoteric books are younger than the Gnostic sources, but we shall see that the notion of the Name of God as the *agens* of the creation has very deep roots. As a matter of fact, the sealing of the six extremities of the world with the name *Yaho* seems to be a ramification of the same basic idea as that adapted in ch. 136 of *Pistis Sophia*, where Jesus turns towards the four corners of the world and cries out:  $\dot{\iota}\alpha\omega$ ,  $\dot{\iota}\alpha\omega$ ,  $\dot{\iota}\alpha\omega$ . The crying out of "Iao" in all the four directions of the world apparently signifies that this word is the name of the lord who is over the whole cosmos. Since *Pistis Sophia* probably stems from the 3rd or 4th century, we can conclude that the notion of the sealing of the extremes of the universe with the name *Yaho* in *Sefer Yesira* is at least as old as the *terminus post quem* of the Gnostic book.

That this cosmological notion of the name *Yaho* (Iao), a variation of the Tetragrammaton, is of Jewish origin appears to be certain. We discern the Jewish origin of the cosmological function of the name *lao* in a magical

16 See F. Dornseiff, *Das Alphabet in Mystik und Magie*, 2nd ed., Leipzig, 1925, pp. 69 ff.; cited by G. Scholem, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbalah* (SJ, III), Berlin, 1962, p. 25, n. 44.

17 See Kaplan. pp. 181 f.

papyrus where it is related that the dragon of chaos moved and rocked the creation, whereupon God brought it to rest and made the world stable again by exclaiming: "Iαω!"<sup>18</sup> This is a turn of the ancient myth of God's conquering the dragon of chaos and creating the world; in the Old Testament, we find several reminiscences of a cosmogonic myth telling that God has conquered the Deep (Tehom) or the Sea (Yam), often described as a great aquatic monster (and called by the name of Leviathan, Rahab, or simply Tannin, the "Dragon"), thereby making the creation of the world possible<sup>19</sup>. In *Psalm* civ, God combats the Waters by his powerful Word: "At Your rebuke, they fled; at the sound of Your thunder, they took to flight" (v. 7). The account of the creation in *Psalm* civ stands in a halfway position between the mythological-dramatical versions and the sober priestly creation narrative of *Genesis* ch. i, where God solemnly creates and orders the universe by his Word of Command (cp. *Ps.* xxxiii.6, 9). The magical papyrus obviously interprets God's Word as the Name of God. In this respect, the papyrus can be likened to the eulogy of the Creator in the opening stanzas of the Jewish apocryphon known as the *Prayer of Manasseh*:

Lord, Sovereign of all! You, God of our fathers, of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and of their righteous seed. You who have made the heaven and the earth with all their beauty; You who have prisoned the Sea by Your Word of Command, who have closed the Abyss and sealed it by Your terrible and glorious Name [...].

(1-3)

The prisoning of the Sea through the Word of God is here brought into close parallelism to the closing and sealing of the Abyss with God's Name. "Sea" (θάλασσα) and "Abyss" (ἄβυσσος) are obviously regarded as identical, since ἄβυσσος is the LXX rendering of *Tehom*, the meaning of which oscillates between that of a surging flood and a subterranean locality. The Word of God, the means wherewith the cosmos was established, is here interpreted as the Name of God: through God's Word, the Sea was prisoned; through God's Name, the Abyss was closed and sealed.

The *Prayer of Manasseh* is also related to the passages from the mystical texts discussed above in that it knows the idea of the "sealing" with the Di-

18 *PGM*, XIII.539. Scholem, *Ursprung*, p. 27, also compares this text to the Valentinian idea that "lao" was the name by which Horos, literally, the "Limit", turned back Sophia-Achamoth from entering Pleroma again (see Iren., I.iv.1; cp. Epiph., *Pan.* XXXI.xxxv.4). Scholem poses the question whether the notion of the "sealing" of the extremes of the universe with the name Yaho is a monotheistic and anti-dualistic polemic against the Gnostic myth. However that may be, the "sealing" of the foundations of the cosmos with the Name of God is much older than the Valentinian myth.

19 For a more recent discussion of the myth, see O. Kaiser, *Die mythische Bedeutung des Meeres* (BZAW, 78), wnd ed., Berlin, 1962.

vine Name in a cosmogonic context. The apocryphon, however, does not tell about the sealing of the universe, but states that the primeval sea was sealed by the Name. In this respect, we can compare it to a passage from the *Pseudo-Jonathan Targum* where it is said:

The Name is distinctly engraved upon the Shetiya Stone, with which God sealed up the mouth of the Tehom.<sup>20</sup>

(Ex. xxviii.30)

The Shetiya Stone (אבן השתיה, אבן שתיה), whose surface was breaking through in the temple on Sion, was the centre of a great cycle of myths<sup>21</sup>; in this connection, it suffices to note that it carried the inscription of the Name of God (see also, e.g., Targ. *Eccl.* iii.11), and that it was the first part of the earth to have been raised above the primeval waters and therefore the place from where the creation began (see *Midrash Tanh.* B *Eccl.* ii.5). When David was digging the pits (שיתין) of the temple, he was breaking open the Tehom – for the temple stood over the Tehom (see *Par.* iii.3) – and a potshard upon which the Divine Name was engraved was cast into the pits in order to suppress the uprushing Sea (see *Succa* 53b; *Makk.* 11a). This aggada in the Babylonian Talmud obviously presupposes the cosmogonic myth about the *Eben ha-Shetiya*; David is in a way copying the first cosmogonic act, the suppressing of chaos<sup>22</sup>.

- 20 That the mouth of the Deep had been sealed by God obviously was an old Near Eastern *mythologoumenon*; an Ugaritic text seems to read that El has “sealed the mouth of the Tehom (את גיף התהום)” (H.L. Ginzberg, ed., *כתבי אורגריט*, Jerusalem, 1963, p. 80).
- 21 See D. Feuchtwang, “Das Wasseropfer und die damit verbundenen Zeremonien”, *MGWJ*, 54, 1910, pp. 546 f., 720 ff.; 55, 1911, pp. 43 ff.; J. Jeremias, *Golgotha* (“Αγγελος, Beiheft I), Leipzig, 1926; cp. Ginzberg, *Legends*, V, p. 15, n. 39. For the wider cosmological pattern, see E. Burrows, “Some Cosmological Patterns in Babylonian Religion”, in S.H. Hooke, ed., *The Labyrinth*, London, 1935, pp. 45 ff.
- 22 The Scriptural support for writing the Name upon a shard and casting it into the Deep was found in *Num.* v.23, “The priest shall write these curses [*viz.*, those cited in *vv.* 21 f.] on a scroll and cast them into water.” Since the curse in question contains the name of YHWH, the erasing of which was forbidden (see *Deut.* xii.3 f.; *Sheb.* 35a-b), the aggada finds the exceptional enjoinder of God to blot out his Name at this place: “[...] the Torah said: “Let My Name which was solemnly inscribed be blotted out by water” [...] .” “The Torah is here identified with the Lord, whose words it reveals” (M.E. Lazarus, trans., “Makkoth”, in Epstein, *Talmud*, Seder Neziqin VIII, 1935, p. 74, n. 5). We know that there was a tradition according to which the Torah was regarded as a mystical composition of God’s names, as can be seen from *Shimmush Torah* and *Shimmush Tehillim*, which date from Geonic times, and from the later *Sefer Gematriaoth*; see J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition* (JPSA), New York, 1939, Atheneum paperback edition (TB, 15), New York, 1970, pp. 108 ff.; Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 37 f. Perhaps, as Scholem perceives, this tradition is premised already in the comment by R. Eleazer in *Midrash Tehillim ad Ps.* iii, ch. 2, *ad v.1*, “Man does not know its [*i.e.*, Wisdom’s] order,”

The Palestinian Talmud, however, records a version according to which David did not cast the shard into the pits, but unexpectedly came upon it when he was digging the foundations (תִּמְלִירוֹסִים : θεμελίωσης) of the temple. The shard told him that it had been placed there at the time when God revealed himself on Mt. Sinai: "Then, the earth shuddered and began to subside, and I am placed here in order to suppress the Tehom" (*Sanh.* 29a).

Again, the version of the Palestinian Talmud is repeated in *Midrash Samuel*, a rather late Palestinian work, only with the notable exception that it is maintained that the potsherd was placed over the Tehom at the time of the creation (see ch. 26). This rendering is also to be found in the "Great" *Yalqut Reubeni*, where it is narrated that, when the Ten Commandments were given, the voice of God caused the foundations of the earth to shake, but the slate placed over the Tehom prevented the subterranean waters from engulfing the world (see 210b). It must be assumed that the slate is to be understood to have been put in its place at the time of the creation. It ought to be apparent that the agreement between *Midrash Samuel* and *Yalqut Reubeni* represents the original notion over against the conflicting opinions of the two Talmuds.

The version of the Palestinian Talmud makes no explicit mention of the Name of God being inscribed upon the sherd, but *Midrash Samuel* states that

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which this 3rd century rabbi took to mean that the real order of the Law had to be hidden from men in order that they should not utilize it in magic. The Kabbalists of the later Middle Ages speculated that the Law is not only made up of the various divine names but is as a whole based on or derived from the Tetragrammaton. Moreover, they made the outright identification of the Torah with the Name of God and thus with God himself; the whole issue is summed up in the following statement by Joseph Gikatilla in his work on the mystical foundations of the Commandments: "His Torah is in Him, and that is what the Kabbalists say, namely, that the Holy One, blessed by He, is in His Name and His Name is in Him, and that His Name is His Torah" (MS Jerusalem, 8° 597, 21b; quoted by Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, p. 44). Scholem thinks that the Spanish Kabbalists were the first who taught that the Law "is as a whole the one great Name of God" (*ibid.*, p. 39), but the aggada cited above shows that the foundation of this idea was at least as old as the 3rd century C.E., which is the age of the rabbis to which the tradition is assigned. Another instance of a non-Kabbalistic text interpreting the Name of God as the Law is found in *Deut.R.* vii.3, where "the Name" of the Lover in *Song of Songs* i.3 is interpreted as "the words of the Torah".

It is obviously because the Torah could be interpreted as the Name of God that an ancient midrash teaches that the means wherewith God sealed the primeval ocean was the Torah: "And by it [*i.e.*, the Law as identified with Wisdom] He has sealed the Great Sea, so that it might not well up and wash away the world[...]. And by it He sealed the Deep, so that it might not overcome the world" (*Midrash Tanh. Gen.* i.1). Certain linguistic and stylistic traits suggest that the midrash is dependent upon the *Prayer of Manasseh*; thus, הַתְּהוֹם [...] אֲרֻכֵּינֹס יָם can be compared to θάλασσαν [...] ἄβυσσον, and הַתְּהוֹם אֶת הַתֵּם to ὁ κλείσας τὴν ἄβυσσον καὶ φραγισάμενος. The midrash has substituted the Torah for the Name.

the slate had the "seventy-two letter Name engraved upon it." The Divine Name of seventy-two letters, mentioned in an oft-repeated passage in *Midrash Rabba* (*Gen. R.* xlv.19; *et passim*), was, of course, regarded as a derivative of the original Name of God<sup>23</sup>. *Yalqut Reubeni* also knows that the slate contains the inscription of the Name<sup>24</sup>. The potshard or slate suppressing the Deep apparently is a representation of the *Eben ha-Shetiya*, upon which God's Name was inscribed.

In the Babylonian Talmud, the tradition is cited in the name of Rab or in the name of R. Yoḥanan. Both these rabbis belong to the 3rd century, but the myth about God shutting or sealing up the Tehom with the Shetiya Stone must be earlier. The *Prayer of Manasseh* is witnessed in the *Didascalía*, a Syrian Christian work from the beginning of the 3rd century, and the Jewish apocryphon thus has a safe *terminus ante quem* in the end of the 2nd century C.E.<sup>25</sup> But we may work further back. An apocalyptic amendment of the cosmogonic myth is discernible in the last book of the New Testament: "And I saw an angel coming down from heaven, having the key of the Abyss and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the Dragon, the old Serpent, who is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for thousand years, and cast him into the Abyss and shut him up and set a seal upon him ..." (*Rev.* xx.1-3).

In the *Revelation*, which was probably written during the persecutions under Domitian (d. 96 C.E.), there is no explicit mention of the "seal" containing God's Name; but it is only a logical inference that it was understood to do so. The apocalyptic vision is related to the strange Talmudic legend that Ashmedai, the "prince of the demons", was caught and fettered by means of a chain, upon which the Divine Name was engraved, and the ring of Solomon, whose seal contained the Name of God (see *Gitt.* 68a). In the so-called *Alphabet of R. Aqiba*, we read that the heaven and the earth "are sealed with the ring [containing the Name] אהיה אשר אהיה."<sup>26</sup> It would seem evident that the *Revelation of John* as well as the aggada reflects a cosmogonic *mythologoumenon*. When it is said that God "sealed up" his work of creation or the underworld with his Name, the meaning of the phrase is that the powers of evil cannot prevail, and this notion of "sealing" obviously could be transferred to other contexts<sup>27</sup>. Since the most effective "seal" of

23 For the divine name of twelve, twenty-two, forty-two, and seventy-two letters, see Trachtenberg, pp. 90 ff. with notes on pp. 289 ff.

24 See Kaplan, p. 182.

25 Many scholars, however, even want to assign a pre-Christian date to the *Prayer of Manasseh*; see, for instance, O.F. Fritzsche, *Kurzgefasstes exegetisches Handbuch zu den Apokryphen des Alten Testaments*, I, Leipzig, 1851, p. 158; O. Zöckler, *Die Apokryphen des Alten Testaments* (KKSANT: Altes Testament, 9), Munich, 1891, p. 236; V. Ryssel, trans., "Das Gebet Manasses", in *APAT*, I, p. 167.

26 *BH*, III, p. 25.

27 Cp. above, pp. 98 ff., for the seal of the Name set upon the believer.

all is that of the Name of God, it cannot be doubted that *Rev.* xx.1 ff., reflecting a cosmogonic myth, suggests the seal of the Divine Name.

### The Creation through the Name

As we have seen already, the Name of God was not only regarded as the "seal" of the creation; it was even understood as the instrument through which the world came into being. It is possible that this notion was assumed already by R. Isaac; about 300 C.E., R. Abbahu certainly professes it when stating that the *He* added to the name of Abram was the creative instrument of God. Other rabbis found abbreviations of the Tetragrammaton and thus the creative instrument in other words of the Old Testament. Thus, in a discussion in *Midrash Rabba*, the word בַּהֲבֵרָאם, "When they [*viz.*, "the generations of the heavens and the earth"] were created" (*Gen.* ii.4), is read as בַּהֲ בֵרָאם, "By *He* He created them," "He created them with *He*." The first passage to be examined reads:

בַּהֲבֵרָאם: R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Judah bar R. Simeon: "Not with labour or wearying toil did the Holy One, blessed be He, create the world, but: "By the Word of the Lord, and the heavens were already made" (*Ps.* xxxiii.6). בַּהֲבֵרָאם: By means of *He*, He created them."

(*Gen.R.* xii.10)

R. Berekiah was a 4th century Palestinian amora, and R. Judah bar Simeon was a late 3rd and early 4th century aggadist. What does the latter mean by the statement that God created without exertion? In the same paragraph of *Midrash Rabba*, we read:

R. Abbahu said in R. Yoḥanan's name: "He created them [*viz.*, the heavens and the earth] with the letter *He*. All letters take a hold on the tongue, but the *He* demands no effort. Similarly, not with labour or wearying toil did the Holy One, blessed be He, create His world, but: "By the Word of the Lord, and the heavens were already made" (*Ps.* xxxiii.4)."

(*Ibid.*)

R. Abbahu, as we already know, was a Palestinian amora who flourished about 300 C.E.; he was the disciple of R. Yoḥanan ben Nappāḥa, who used to call him "Abbahu, my son". R. Yoḥanan was a Palestinian amora who died at an old age in 279 C.E. Instead of reading בַּהֲבֵרָאם, both R. Yoḥanan and R. Abbahu read בַּהֲ בֵרָאם, "He created them with *He*," splitting the word in two. The letter *He*, ה, occurring twice in the Tetragrammaton, is here obviously representing the full Name of God. The letter *He*, being an aspirate, requires no effort to be pronounced; and this is the explanation of the phrase that God created the universe without any exertion. The Word of God, which is the instrument of the creation according to such Biblical texts as *Genesis* ch. i and *Psalms* xxxiii, is really nothing else than the letter *He*, a representative of the original Name of God.

In the self-same paragraph of *Midrash Rabba* from which the two last pas-

sages are culled, the following exposition of *Is. xxvi.4* is being made during a discussion between R. Judah II and R. Samuel ben Naḥman:

The verse "Trust in YHWH forever, for *be-Yah* YHWH is an everlasting rock" (*Is. xxvi.4*) means: By these two letters, the Lord created His worlds. Now, we do not know whether this world was created with a *He* or the next with a *Yod*; but, from what R. Abbahu said in R. Yoḥanan's name, namely, "בַּה בְּרֵאֵם" means: By *He*, He created them," it follows that this world was created by means of *He*.

(*Ibid.*)

R. Abbahu refers to a saying in the name of R. Yoḥanan which is recorded in the Palestinian Talmud (*Ḥag. ch. 2, 77c*). Here, it is said: "The two worlds are created by two letters, this world and the future world, one by ה, the other by י." As proof, *Is. xxvi.4* is adduced. The saying כִּי בִיה יְהוָה צוֹר עוֹלָמִים is interpreted as meaning: "For with *Yod-He* the Lord created the worlds." In the Biblical text, יְהוָה is probably apposite to יָה, which is also a form of the Divine Name<sup>28</sup>, while the *Beth* is ב *essentiae*<sup>29</sup>. In the rabbinic exposition, however, the letter *Beth* is taken as ב *instrumentalis*, and the verse expounded as meaning that it is through the agency of *Yod* and *He* that God is the "rock", that is, the creator and sustainer, of both this world and the future world. Besides constituting the Divine Name יָה, these two letters occur in both יְהוָה and אֱהִיָּה, the two great names of God. R. Abbahu says that he is not certain which letter was responsible for which world, but, on account of the reading בַּה בְּרֵאֵם in *Gen. ii.4*, he guesses that this world was created with the *He* and the future world with the *Yod*<sup>30</sup>.

In the Babylonian Talmud (*Men. 29b*), these interpretations are reported by R. Ammi in the name of Judah bar Ilai, a tanna of the mid-2nd century C.E. When having the choice between two authors of a rabbinic tradition, we should perhaps incline towards the youngest authority, but there can be no doubt that the sophisticated rabbinic discussions about which letter representing the Tetragrammaton that was responsible for the creation of the two worlds must have been preceded by the simpler notion that the full Name of God was the creative instrument.

Up to now, the Name has been found to be an instrument used by God when he was engaged in the creation of the world. But there were also traditions according to which it was a hypostasis. In the *Book of Jubilees*, a

28 Cp. *Ps. lxxviii.5*: בִּיָּה שְׁמִי, "His Name is [none other than] *Yah!*"

29 There are other ways of explaining the phrase in *Is. xxvi.4* (and the one in *Ps. lxxviii.5*), but the different explanations do not affect the interpretation of the rabbinic understanding of the Biblical passage.

30 In "Great" *Yalqut Reubeni* I.8b, the other alternative seems to be preferred. See also *Alphabet of R. Aqiba*, in *BH*, III, pp. 23, 24, 53, 55, 66; *Yalqut Reubeni* I.4a; *Masseketh Hekaloth* ch. 7.

midrashic work on the period from the creation to the giving of the Law, we find the following passage in which Isaac admonishes his sons to swear an oath with the Divine Name:

And now I shall make you swear a great oath – no oath being greater than it by the Name, glorious and honoured, and great and splendid, and wonderful and mighty, that created the heavens and the earth, and all things together – that you will fear and worship him [...].

(xxxvi.7)

This highly eulogized Name, which is the creative potency, obviously is the Tetragrammaton. It is significant to note that *Jubilees* continues the ideology of the concept of the Divine Name as found in *Deuteronomy* and the historical books inspired by it. In the so-called Deuteronomistic history-work, we are told that, while God himself remains in heaven, the Name of God dwells in the temple<sup>31</sup>. Similarly, in *Jubilees*, the temple is the abode of God's Name (see xxxii.10; xlix.20 f.). As was pointed out in Chapter III, the Deuteronomic concept of the Divine Name comes very close to the idea of the hypostasis of the Name, and the Name in *Jub.* xxxvi.7 is "the power which creates and sustains the cosmos, a hypostasis."<sup>32</sup> Here, then, the crea-

31 See above, pp. 86 f.

32 H. Bietenhard, Art. ὄνομα κτλ., in *TDNT*, V, 1967 and reprints, p. 267. It is interesting to note that the Logos in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel is also ascribed with cosmogonic function and residency on earth. J. Jeremias argues that the concept of the Logos had a pre-history before it was used in the prologue, and he cites *Wisd.* xviii.15 f. in substantiation of the thesis that the Logos originally was a "designation of the returning Lord" ("Zum Logosproblem", *ZNW*, 59, 1968, p. 85). In *Is.* xxx.27, however, the Name is described in the same manner as the Logos in *Wisd.* xviii.15 f.; see above, p. 85. In the *Revelation*, it is said that the returning lord has "a Name inscribed which no one knows but himself ... and the name by which he is called is the Word of God" (xix.12 f.). Thus, we would perhaps be right to seek the Divine Name behind the "Word". M. McNamara, *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (AB, 27), Rome, 1966, pp. 97 ff., points out the probability that the author of the *Revelation* drew upon Targumic interpretations of the Name in *Ex.* iii.14 for his version of the Name of Jesus as related in i.8, "I am the Beginning and the End," says the lord, "who is, and who was, and who is to come." Cp. above, pp. 79 f.

C.T.R. Hayward, "The Holy Name of the God of Moses and the Prologue of St. John's Gospel", *NTS*, 25, 1978, pp. 16 ff., argues that Memra in the Targums is an exegetical term standing for the Divine Name revealed to Moses in the Bush, and that this Targumic concept may have been influential in the formation of the figure of the Logos in the prologue to the Fourth Gospel. In *John*, however, the Word is a hypostasis; but it would not seem impossible that the teaching about the Logos in the prologue is based upon a Jewish Christian Christology of the Name: "In the begin-

tive Name is not merely an instrument used by God but a hypostasized power. In the *Book of Jubilees*, we have a pre-Christian testimony to the idea of the cosmogonic Name as an individual agent.

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ning was the Name, and the Name was with God, and the Name was God. It was in the beginning with God. Everything has been made by it ... . The Name became flesh and tabernacled among us ... ." *Pirke de R. Eliezer* says: "Before the world, God and His Name were alone" (ch. 3). Ps.-Philo (*Bibl. Ant.* lx.2) says that the Name was created right after the light had come into being. It truly can be said of the Name that it is God, for the Name is an expression of God's being. Already Zickendraht, p. 167, cited the idea of the creative potency of the Name with reference to the Logos concept in the prologue to *John*. The Name was present in the Angel of the Lord, the human appearance of God. Moreover, the "tabernacled", *σκηνοῦν*, of the Name on earth is the teaching of the Deuteronomistic history-work, using the root *יָכַשׁ* to express this dwelling of the Name and localizing it in the temple (see *Deut.* xii.5, 11). The LXX, however, does not have the verb *σκηνώω* in these places, though the word *σκηνή* in the LXX translates *יָכַשׁ*, the "tabernacle", the forerunner of the temple. But *κατασκηνώω*, a compound of *σκηνώω*, is used causatively in some important places. God according to *Jer.* vii.12 says: "Go to My place which is in Silo, where I caused My Name to tabernacle (*κατεσκήνωσα τὸ ὄνομά μου*) before ... ." *Ex.* xliii.7 contains the following oracle by God: "... My Name shall tabernacle (*κατασκηνώσει τὸ ὄνομά μου*) in the midst of the house [*i.e.*, the temple] of Israel for ever ... ." *Neh.* i.9 has also a word by God containing the promise of gathering the people and bringing them "into the place which I have chosen to cause My Name to tabernacle there (*κατασκηνώσαι τὸ ὄνομά μου ἐκεῖ*)." Cp. *Ps. Sol.* vii.6: "When Your Name tabernacles (*κατασκηνοῦν τὸ ὄνομά*) in our midst, we shall find mercy." Cp. further *Did.* x.2; see above, p. 103, n. 81. See also above, p. 178, n. 310.