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“Putting on the Names”: A Jewish-Christian Legacy

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Aristotle observed that “nothing is by nature a name or a noun.” That is, words or word-names have no inherent or necessary meaning. Instead they are arbitrarily assigned to objects or persons. For different reasons, it is a standard view today that names, as well as concrete or abstract terms, are no more than a *flatus vocis*, a mere sound.

This tendency to reduce language to whimsical convention without concern for more profound origins may be symptomatic of the secularization of men and even the trivialization of life itself. At any rate, it reflects a diminishing of the religious consciousness that some names were thought anciently to be of divine origin.

In antiquity, several ideas about names recur, among which are the following:

1. In names, especially divine names, is concentrated divine power.
2. Through ritual processes one may gain access to these names and take them upon oneself.¹
3. These ritual processes are often explicitly temple-related.

The tradition that certain temple-centered names have a divine status is present in the inscriptions of Tel Mardikh, which reach back into the third millennium B.C. There are place names in the tablets of Ebla (Upper Syria), which translate “Temple of the Word.” These Canaanites appar-

ently divinized the word *ni'm* (Heb. *ne'um*) meaning oracle. And they ascribed a divine status to the voice, the name, the oracle, and *the word* of their god or gods associated with the temple.²

The proscription against pronouncing the personal name of deity is also ancient.³ It relates to the third commandment, "Ye shall not swear falsely by the name of Yahweh or God" (Exodus 20:7 and Deuteronomy 5:11). This seems to suggest that one use of God's name is in making a covenant. Related is the idea that one may make a serious and solemn vow by using, taking upon oneself, or acting in the name of God. The proper use of the name YHWH constitutes a covenant between Israel and her God.⁴

In Egyptian initiation rites one puts off his former nature by discarding his name, after which he receives a new name. Prior to coronation, the candidate is presented to the gods without his own personal name. In order to pass the obstacles, he recites the name of his god and thus is allowed to pass. If the candidate cannot produce the name, the gatekeepers are aggressive and unyielding.⁵

In the temple ritual setting, names are not seen as mere labels. They mark degrees or attributes or roles in one's transformation process. They are symbolic of new births or beginnings. Thus, an individual, while retaining his identity, may take on several names as he moves through stages toward the divine. "To possess knowledge of another's name is to hold some power over him, even if it be the high god himself."⁶ The Egyptians went further: "the name is a person's essence." If his name perishes, he himself does not exist.⁷ The person was told "Thy name lives on earth. . . . Thou dost not perish, thou art not destroyed forever and ever!"⁸ Hence, it was important that one's name live in memory because if the "name lives on earth" the person could "live hereafter."⁹ The name enabled his body to survive.¹⁰

The Hebrew Word for "Name"

The Hebrew word for "name" is *shem*. *Ha-Shem* is still used sometimes as a "meta-word,"¹¹ part of a prayer pattern, used to avoid saying the most sacred name. In Judaism the "sh" (which in English looks like a "W") has often had ritual importance because it pictures a position of prayer—arms raised above the head.¹² Thus one symbolizes the name in prayer whether or not he uses it.

Speculation continues on the derivation of the name of the oldest son of Noah, Shem, from whose name the designation of "Semite" for the peoples of the Near East has been derived.¹³ ("Sh" and "s," depending upon the "pointing" of the letter,¹⁴ are different sounds but reflect both the Hebrew and the Arabic values). Abraham and his descendants are, in turn, descendants of Shem. It is at least possible that some scriptural references to the person Shem and the word "name" reflect the idea that whoever bears that name is like the angel of the Lord's presence. Abraham received, glorified, and sanctified this name. He is a blessing, and his seed bless themselves, precisely because the imprint of that name is upon all of them.

It is hard to exaggerate the richness of a single order of consonants in Hebrew and how many meanings may derive from a given root. By examining variations of vowel "pointing" on divine names, analysis of the ancient sources continues to this day. Among the Jews, other techniques expand it even more: Gematria assigns numbers to consonants and then draws conclusions about matching sets.¹⁵ By acronyms words are derived from first letters. In *notarikon* letters of words are interpreted as abbreviations of whole sentences, and letters are varied or interchanged according to certain systematic rules.¹⁶

The twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet were early assigned masculine and feminine values. And much is made of the contrast between such couplets as dark and

light, right and left, male and female.¹⁷ Today there is renewed discussion of ways in which words not only name, but also function, as in the performative roles they play in ritual expression. Such “linguistic acts,” for example, “I baptize you,” especially in ceremonial form, undergird and override very important life changes.¹⁸

Names as Titles

In the Psalms, eleven of which were sung on festive days in honor of royalty, there are many composite names—sentence names or titles—such as the “God of Gods,” “the Most High God,” “Yahweh the Exalted,” and “the Most High Yahweh.” Some Psalms are “a litany of sacred names”¹⁹ as is Psalm 145, which introduces new titles in verses 1, 3, 5, 6, and 7. Praise here becomes synonymous with prayer and vice versa. In the Psalms, the most frequent order of praising is first of Yahweh, then of his works, and finally his name. Frank Cross, Jr., sees Psalm 132 as a “royal hymn” with connections to the tabernacle and Psalm 89 as “from an early temple liturgy.”²⁰

In the context there is a close association between the name and the glory of God (cf. Psalm 26:8 and 79:7). “The dwelling place of God” means the place where his glory—his name—dwells.

The Name and Solomon’s Temple

After the construction of the First Temple of Jerusalem, Solomon either stood or knelt down²¹ upon a platform in the sight of the whole congregation, spread out his hands toward the heavens, and offered a dedicatory prayer. Repeatedly, Solomon called the Temple “the house I have built for your name”²² (cf. 2 Chronicles 6:34, 38). Even the foreigner who implored Yahweh was to know “as your people Israel do” that this house “bears your name.” The exact Hebrew reads “that your name has been *called over*”²³ (2 Chronicles 6:33). The temple is “the place where you

promised to put your name, so that you may hear [KJV reads "hearken unto"] the prayer your servant offers toward this place" (2 Chronicles 6:20; 1 Kings 8:29).

From then on, prayers were directed to the temple in the belief that God's presence was there as it was in heaven. Covenanters spoke of "seeing God" as an extension of worshipping in the temple (Isaiah 6:1; Psalm 24:3-6; Matthew 5:8).

The Jews, during the period of the Second Temple, faced the dilemma of avoiding the pagan idolatrous practices of "placing" statues or idols in their sacred structures. For the Jews, the belief that a temple was dedicated to Yahweh, and that his presence was somehow localized therein, confronted the commandment to avoid images or statues. In Deuteronomy, and especially Jeremiah, the name became a substitute, a legitimate replacement for forbidden images or replications of the deity. Somehow, it was believed, the name brought the presence of the *kavod* or glory – a tangible and visible presence – within the most sacred place. A cluster of interrelated expectations revolved around this presence: the priestly literature speaks of the light, the aura, the perpetual flame of tabernacle and temple. Thus, the use of the name of deity in the temple setting helped to reconcile the ideas of divine transcendence and immanence in the setting of the temple, for the name could be present within the temple while the power of God extended everywhere.

Names and Sacrifice

For Israelites, the highest moment of feast or sacrifice in the sanctuary was to behold the presence of Yahweh, that is, to be presented at the sanctuary (Exodus 34:23; cf. Deuteronomy 31:11 and Isaiah 1:12).²⁴ When an altar was built to Yahweh and sacrifice and invocation of his name were appropriately made, it was believed he would come and bless the worshipper. As Kaufmann puts it, "the effect

of the offering on the divine realm is depicted not in terms of union, but in terms of God's pleasure at man's submission and obedience." An offering is "a token of honor and reverence. . . . The sacrifice is 'acceptable,' 'delightful,' and 'pleasant' to God."²⁵ This is the substratum assumption behind most temple laws and narratives. Kaufmann concludes, "the custom of calling altars and sanctuaries by theophoric names is attested to in early times."²⁶

In the temple setting it is clear that by proper use of the name or names, one does not speak *of* or *about* God. He speaks *to* or *for* or *with* God.²⁷ Divine names are uniquely hallowed because they are more than descriptions, however lofty. They are invocations. The question is not "What do you call this 'object'?" but "How may I summon or commune with the Divine?"

The Name *Yahweh*

The supreme or transcendent name of God is in the four Hebrew letters *YHWH*, later known as the tetragrammaton. The letters have obscure origins, pronunciations, and meanings that continue to confound scholars.²⁸ But they are usually thought to express the eternity of God—that he was, he is, he shall be, or that his presence shall never depart from Israel. Whatever its meanings, this sacred name, both in early and late Jewish thought, was surrounded with safeguards: It could be spoken only on one day a year—Yom Kippur—and in the most sacred place—the Holy of Holies. The High Priest spoke it in behalf of the people-community of all Israel. It was in the performance of his most sacred function, the cleansing of the sanctuary. This meant purifying Israel of her sins.

When the *Kohen Gadol* (High Priest) went into the temple on the Day of Atonement, he had already undergone elaborate preparations for purification. The experience was considered awesome, even perilous. Imminent

danger as well as redemption was at stake. The pronunciation of the name was thought to bring him into direct contact with the Divine. Through the power of the name, he was able to experience God as "a consuming fire."²⁹ If spoken in unpreparedness or without concentration, the name could bring dire, even disastrous, results.³⁰

One of the oldest passages of the Mishnah says that the high priest at the appointed place and time on the Day of Atonement offered thrice a certain formula containing the name. The congregation answered after him: "Blessed be the name of the glory of his kingdom for ever and ever."³¹ Thus the name of the King of Righteousness became, symbolically, the name of His Righteous Kingdom and of its members. After the third recitation, "the priests and the people who stood in the Court at the time when they heard the Name, coming forth from the mouth of the High Priest, bent the knee, prostrated themselves and fell on their faces and said: 'Blessed be the Name of His Glorious Kingdom forever and ever.' "³² "The climax of the ceremony was the mighty official proclamation of the sacred cultic name of Yahweh."³³

The Qumran community, a century and a half before the birth of Jesus, considered themselves a righteous remnant plucked from the midst of a corrupt temple culture. They, too, celebrated the Name.³⁴ Regarding the Second Temple as defiled and looking forward to a future messianic temple, they performed an annual ritual for renewing their covenant with Yahweh. The process involved ritual ablutions, purifying baths, clothing themselves in white, and praising Yahweh.³⁵

Bearing the Name

During the First and Second Temple periods, receiving the name was a privilege of obedience. It was to be inscribed on and in the person—in the hands (Isaiah 56), and on the "inward parts" (Jeremiah 31:31-34). It was to

permeate the new heart and new spirit of those who had heretofore profaned the name (Ezekiel 36:21-28). It was also associated with priestly robes. The headdress both of the ordinary priest and of the high priest³⁶ (cf. Exodus 28:6) was a cap "made in the same fashion as that of all the priests." Over this was stitched blue or violet embroidery extending from the nape of the neck to the two temples. The forehead had a plate of gold in which was graven in sacred characters the name of God.³⁷ The name was expected to be inscribed and present in the new temple (Ezekiel 43:7) and the new city (Ezekiel 48:35) where it would signify "The Lord is there." In deed and in prayer it was to be retained and honored just as the ark contained the covenant and as the temple contained the ark. Ultimately, it was to be as everlasting as the covenants accompanying it. Finally, desecration of names brought the penalty of death (Leviticus 24:16; 1 Kings 21:10). To sanctify the name, one must be willing to submit to martyrdom.

In Jewish practice to this day, a person who recovers from a severe illness is given a new name which, in effect, celebrates his return from near death. Such new names assigned in prayer are chosen from worthy patriarchs (e.g., Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) and from worthy matriarchs (e.g., Sarah, Rachel, and Leah). The names are new to the person because it is assumed the person is himself new, having overcome or been healed from death. Sometimes the names are compounds of the names of God (cf. Revelation 2:17).

Names and Creation

The notion that divine names have creative power and that the world itself was made by the use of the holy language is present in a Talmudic statement: "Bezalel knew how to combine the letters [of Hebrew] by which the heavens and earth were created" (cf. Exodus 31:3; 35:31). It is said that this man was filled with the Spirit of God in

wisdom, and understanding, and in knowledge. It goes on to say that by knowledge "the depths were broken up," by wisdom the earth was founded, and by understanding the heavens were established.³⁸

In fact, Jewish tradition has sometimes elevated the words of the Torah into divine entities. The words of the Pentateuch were first seen as a total tapestry and unity, not one syllable of which was dispensable. Later the words or names were thought to be organic, in some sense vitalized, so that the names were understood as living supermundane beings. [The Zohar says "Scripture is like a man and has flesh, soul, and spirit."] The next step was not only to regard the Torah as a composite of the names of God but, as a whole, the one great Name of God.³⁹

By the speaking of words (names), God himself acted in creation. His *saying* made light, or the heavens, or the world. The Talmud says all creation was completed by ten utterances.⁴⁰ Thus, in Jewish tradition, as one praises the name of God, he reaches the very ultimate nature of God. As he verbalizes the name, he is calling upon that nature "at which moment all the creation is at our feet, prepared to do our bidding, because all of creation emanates from that nature."

A prescribed order was required in the use of the names. Rabbi Eleazar said in a well-known midrash on Job 28, "The various sections of the Torah were not given in their correct order. For if they had been given in their correct order, anyone who read them would be able to wake the dead and perform miracles."⁴¹ Exodus 34:5 says "The Lord came down in a cloud and placed himself beside him [Moses] and proclaimed the name of the Lord." One legend says Moses used that name as his instrument in dividing the Red Sea. Traditions dealing with the creation of the world are matched by traditions concerning the re-creation of man.

There is evidence that the Qumran community and

other groups, as well as John the Baptist, set great store upon initiation hymns leading to rebirth or the gift of life. They saw this process as the restoration of God's image. To take the name upon oneself was to take the image of God. Later, the *Odes of Solomon*, a Gnostic group of hymns that date to the first or second century, describe baptism as a sign and as a seal of names.⁴² It may be that Paul had this in mind in Ephesians 1:13.

The Name of Jesus

In nothing is Jesus more Jewish than in his use and reverence of the "name of the Father." Jesus says, "I am come in my Father's name" (John 10:25). He speaks of "the works that I do in my Father's name" (John 5:43). He prays, "Father glorify thy name" (John 12:28). He instructs that prayer addressed to the Father begin "hallowed be thy name" (Luke 11:2). His high priestly prayer asks, "keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me" (John 17:11), and "I have declared unto them thy name" (John 17:26). And John 20:31 promises "life through his name." But what of Jesus' own name?⁴³

At one point Jesus tells his disciples: "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name" (John 16:24). Later he says that some will claim in vain to prophesy in his name and thus to cast out devils and in his name to do many wonderful works (Matthew 6:9; 7:22). He asks his disciples to gather "in my name" (Matthew 18:20). Luke describes the disciples' return, saying that even the demons are "subject unto us through thy name" (Luke 10:17). John speaks of those who "believe on his name" (John 1:12; cf. John 2:23). All this bespeaks a kinship of Messiah and Father in the tradition of the sacral name and name-entitlement.

Jesus, in the book of John, as well as in the epistles of John, bears God's name to the point that he can say "the Father and I are one" (John 10:30). Does this mean their names are one? The specific divine name which is assumed

in these passages is a matter of controversy. Perhaps it is the divine name in Exodus 3:14: "I am." But the Masoretic text can be read to mean "I will become what I will become."⁴⁴ This is compatible with the view that Yahweh became the messianic figure of the New Testament. But it is incompatible with the philosophical thesis that God is exclusively "being" without the dimension of becoming.

In the New Testament, the tradition is carried forward that one can be named by God, or be named after God, or "called" by a name which gives a person a specific mission or commission. Associated with the latter idea is the conviction that by wearing or bearing the name, one is placed under God's special protection, as also his judgment. (Adam named animals and by so doing attained dominion over them;⁴⁵ cf. Genesis 2:19; Psalm 1:26; 8:6.) It would appear that to take or to give a name without divine authority is, in effect, to illegitimately assume or presume a divine honor.

Baptism into the Name

Albright observes: "There are two kinds of formal statements about baptismal status in the New Testament." One mentions "baptism 'in the name of' and the other 'into the name of' the Messiah. . . . The first formula ('in the name of') may include both faith in Jesus as Messiah, and also the ceremonial action which accepted this profession of faith—i.e., the baptismal rite. 'Into the name of' . . . calls attention to the results" of baptism. "The neophyte baptized *into the name of* the Messiah thus not only pledges allegiance to Jesus as Messiah," but is also established or born "into fellowship with him"⁴⁶ and with the Father in whose name he acts.

Writing one's own name on a temple wall was thought, in Second Temple times, to unite one with the temple deity. "To bear the name" was a sign of citizenship in the sacred city. Revelation 3:12 makes the new name of Jesus as Lord

the insignia of victory. For by bearing the name, one shares in the name and character of Jesus (cf. Philippians 2:9-10). This is comparable to the promise of being "registered" in the Book of Life (Revelation 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; cf. Luke 10:20; Hebrews 12:23).

Baptism, as described in Acts 2:38, 8:16, and 1 Corinthians 1:13, 15, requires one to acknowledge (1) knowing the name, (2) accepting the name, and (3) testifying of the name. This is a blessing, a burden, a commission. The name may have been "Messiah" or the title "Son of Man" or both.

The Disciples' Transmittal of the Name

Peter heals in the name of Jesus Christ and explains that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we can be saved (Acts 4:12; cf. 2 Nephi 31:21). It is also clear that forgiveness of God comes in the name of Christ, which is also somehow the name of God. (Compare the "forgiveness" of God described in Ezekiel 20:8-9.) To refuse to punish would bring contempt from the gentiles for the name of God and his power.

By the end of the first century, the *Psalms of Solomon*, a pseudepigraphal work, says "While your name dwells in our midst, we shall find mercy." This is often interpreted as both a lament and a consolation for the destroyed temple.⁴⁷ Thereafter, divine names were associated, among the Jews, with the Ark of the Covenant in the synagogue and among Christians with emerging sacraments and preachments. The Didache at about A.D. 100 has this sentence: "We thank you, Father most holy, for the sake of your holy name which you made to dwell in our hearts."⁴⁸

The close connection between desecrating the name and desecrating the temple is reflected in the Jewish tradition that the correct pronunciation of the name of God was lost as the Temple was demolished by the Romans in A.D. 70. Concern for the recovery of this knowledge,

viewed as crucial, is reflected in the mystical tradition that it was rediscovered about A.D. 300.⁴⁹ Then the Kabbalists gave the name the title "tetragrammaton," "the word of four letters," or the square name, or more simply, the square.⁵⁰ The tradition was carried on that the name must remain ineffable, that is unspeakable, except in ritual contexts. A Gnostic echo of this with allusions to the temple is in the second- or third-century *Gospel of Philip*.

One single name they do not utter in the world, the name which the Father gave to the Son, which is above all things, which is the name of the Father. For the Son would not become Father except he clothe himself with the name of the Father. This name those who have it know indeed, but they do not speak of it. But those who have it not do not know it.⁵¹

This passage is close to another in the *Gospel of Philip* which says Christ did all things in a mystery or sacrament. It names five of these. One involved the receiving of a new name with an anointing that rendered the person Christ-like.⁵²

The *Gospel of Bartholomew*, also from the third century, embodies a Jewish legend that "Adam and Eve had characters and signs written on their brows, and the names of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost were written" in certain parts of their bodies.⁵³ In Egypt as well, similar holy insignia were placed on or in ritual garments.⁵⁴

Name and Destiny

The Hebrew *Apocalypse of Enoch* (fifth century A.D.) became a basic document in Jewish Merkabah throne mysticism, which depends heavily on passages in Ezekiel. There are three main notions of names: (1) that sacred names are engraved "with a pen of flame on the throne of glory," (2) that sacred names "fly off (from the throne of glory) like eagles,"⁵⁵ and (3) that there is a heavenly

curtain "on which are printed all the generations of the world and all their deeds, whether done or to be done, till the last generation."⁵⁶ The curtain was seen as a heavenly counterpart of the temple veil, which in the earthly tabernacle and temple divided the holy place from the Holy of Holies. It was a veil that somehow contained "in blueprint" the whole course of human history.⁵⁷ In Jewish thinking, this was a condensation of names, a forecast of destiny which is neither a violation of freedom nor a compromise of individual prophecy.⁵⁸ Rabbi Akiba epitomized the prevailing view: "All (is) foreseen (and) choice (is) granted."⁵⁹ A corresponding notion is that heavenly records are kept and guarded by a heavenly scribe. (The idea that names of the faithful may be written in the Book of Life appears at least as early as in Daniel 12:1-4.)⁶⁰

Name Transmission

Medieval Jewish mysticism continued and embellished – in the absence of the temple – ritual processes for receiving and giving divine names.⁶¹ Thus Eleazar of Worms (about A.D. 1200) describes an initiation which Scholem concludes is "very old," for the transmitting of the name of God from master to pupil.

The name is transmitted only to the reserved – this word can also be translated as "the initiate" – who are not prone to anger, who are humble and God-fearing, and carry out the commandments of their Creator. And it is transmitted only over water. Before the master teaches it to his pupil, they must both immerse themselves and bathe in forty measures of flowing water, then put on white garments and fast on the day of instruction. Then both must stand up to their ankles in the water, and the master must say a prayer ending with the words: "The voice of God is over the waters! Praised be Thou, O Lord, who revealest Thy secret to those who fear Thee, He who knoweth the mysteries." Then both

must turn their eyes toward the water and recite verses from the Psalms, praising God over the waters.⁶²

There may be a link between such patterns and Jewish ritual baths practiced in the time of Jesus. These ceremonies required sizable cisterns or pools and abundant water reserves. Remnants of many such cisterns have been uncovered in and near Jerusalem. Numerous baths have been found in the southeast corner of the Old City dating back to the Second Temple period.⁶³ Such ritual baths were preparatory to entry into the Temple Mount. One precept of ritual purity required a "bath . . . [with] no less than forty 'seahs' [about 750 liters] of spring water or rainwater."⁶⁴ The insistence not only on water but on running water reflects an earlier Qumran preoccupation. It was also embraced by the Hassidic movement for whom, as Buber writes, "Immersion in a river or a stream is higher in value than the ordinary ritual bath."⁶⁵ In this context it should be recalled that the Jerusalem Temple was built over flowing water. "A river rises from below the temple," writes Richard Clifford, "and flows out to make the earth fertile."⁶⁶ Ezekiel prophesies that out from under the future Messianic Temple water will flow (cf. Ezekiel 47:1-12; Genesis 2:10-14).

Another Jewish name-ritual in medieval times was titled "Putting On and Fashioning the Mantle of Righteousness." "A piece of pure deerskin parchment" was cut into a sleeveless garment similar to the high priest's ephod. It covered shoulders, chest, and navel, and included a "hat connected with the garment." On this garment the names of God were inscribed. After a period of fasting and ritual purification, and at the end of seven days, one went to the water. On receiving certain signs which confirmed his inward purity, he was considered fit to put on the venerable name. He proceeded into the water and emerged from it with the name which it was believed assured him

“irresistible strength” and authorized him to invoke angels associated with the name thus acquired.⁶⁷

A thoroughgoing attempt to ascribe a number or a name to every human muscle or nerve, as if the name “governs” the organism, permeates many Jewish movements as, for example, the writings of Isaac of Luria (sixteenth century). Similar ritual procedures are thought, under certain combinations, to bring the Holy Spirit. Breathing or blowing the utterance with the face in the proper position is thought to bring about “communion with His great Name.”⁶⁸

Names and Magic

In warning and protest against abuses and magical expectations arising from the use of names,⁶⁹ Maimonides (1135-1204) and other influential Jewish interpreters tried to draw the line between authentic and spurious practices. Nevertheless, Jewish and Christian lore contains many references to occult incantations, to amulets, charms, spells, exorcisms, all related to speculative angelologies and demonologies.⁷⁰ Maimonides tended to interpret passages, both biblical and talmudic, in a figurative way and thus denied the existence of either demons or of angels. But wonder-working aspirations continued (and continue) to flourish. Martin Buber’s *For the Sake of Heaven* is a striking and lamentable account of the efforts of nineteenth-century Jews to effect and even reverse the outcomes of Napoleonic Wars with occult incantations.⁷¹ In contrast to the magician, the sorcerer, and the conjurer, Jewish rabbis sought to understand name rituals for altruistic and not for manipulative purposes. Merely knowing and repeating the names were not sufficient.

The observant Jew, as the dedicated Christian, claimed to employ these names and invoke these powers either in his quest for divine aid or in his attempt to establish a meaningful relationship between “the above and the be-

low," or in his striving to organize and vitalize his own life.

Physical Correlates

In religious as well as in legal practice, most contemporary cultures have abandoned severe punishments of mutilation for blasphemy of sacred names. Anciently, it was not so. Among Israelites, blasphemy could bring death by stoning.⁷² In other cultures, for abuse of the sacred name one could lose his eyes, his nose, his ears, or his tongue. More radical still were those punishments which left a man a eunuch, impotent, and left a woman barren and hardly recognizable as a woman.

Why such extreme, even fatal, consequences? This brief outline points the way to one answer: Both in Jewish and Christian parlance, divine names were and are a matter of life and death—in every physical and spiritual sense. Life is violated in taking or speaking names "in vain." One who thus profanes is acting in self-destruction, striking at the fountain of his own soul, his nature, the vital places of selfhood. In Hebrew lore, the loci of these soul powers were the *neshamah* (breath), *ruach* (also breath or vital spirit), and *nefesh* (soul).⁷³

Such abuse of the divine instrument, which is the self, is all the more serious because the *selem* and the *demut* (the image and the likeness)⁷⁴ of God reside in every human self—"Be ye holy for I am holy" (*qadosh*; Leviticus 11:44-45). Once one has partaken of the name, he wears it, he manifests it. An identification tag is attached, as it were, to every element of his being (those who truly know him know him by name). The highest spiritual aspiration is that there will one day be full harmony of nature in the One who names, the name, and the named. This is the vision of the Temple in Isaiah 56:

For thus says the Lord:
As for the eunuchs who keep my Sabbaths

and choose to do what I will—
 holding fast to my covenant—
 to them I will give a handclasp and a name
 within the walls of my house
 that is better than sons and daughters;
 I will endow them with an everlasting name
 that shall not be cut off.
 And the foreigners who adhere to the Lord
 to serve him,
 who love the name of the Lord,
 that they may be his servants—
 all who keep the Sabbath without profaning it,
 holding fast to my covenant—
 these I will bring to my holy mountain
 and gladden in my house of prayer.
 Their offerings and sacrifices
 shall be accepted on my altar,
 for my house shall be known
 as a house of prayer for all nations.
 Thus says my Lord the Lord,
 who gathers up the outcasts of Israel:
 I will gather others to those already gathered.⁷⁵

Notes

1. Cf. Dallin Oaks, "Taking upon Us the Name," *Ensign* 15 (May 1985): 80-83; Numbers 6:27, and Mosiah 5:6-12.
2. Mitchell Dahood, "The Temple and Other Sacred Places in the Ebla Tablets," in Truman G. Madsen, ed., *The Temple in Antiquity* (Salt Lake City: Bookcraft, 1984), 86.
3. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 16.
4. Yehezkel Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, tr. Moshe Greenberg (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1960), 298.
5. Hugh Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1975), 219.
6. *Ibid.*, 140.
7. *Ibid.*, 139.
8. *Ibid.*, 139-40.
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*, 140.

11. F. Brown, S. R. Driver, and C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1974), 1028.

12. The prayer posture symbolized by the Hebrew letter for "sh," "shin," may be traced to an Old Testament verse; Abraham replies to the king of Sodom, "I have lift[ed] up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high" (Genesis 14:22). In Hebrew it means literally, "I raised up my hand." It is an oath formula, cf. Speiser, *Genesis*, 104-5, n. 22.

13. Samuel N. Kramer, *The Sumerians: Their History, Culture and Character* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1963), 298-99, an expert on Sumerian, believes that the word *shem* derives from the name Sumer.

14. In Hebrew, vowels are designated by dots or points below the consonants, hence the term "pointing." The arrangement and number of dots determine the vowel sound.

15. Gershom Scholem, "Gematria," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 16 vols. (Jerusalem: Macmillan/Keter, 1971-72), 7:370-74.

16. Cf. "Notarikon," in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, 12:1231; Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken Books, 1946), 99.

17. Cf. Charles Poncé, *Kabbalah* (London: Quest Books, 1973), 249.

18. Cf. John L. Austin's account of "performative utterance"; e.g., "I christen you," "I pronounce you man and wife," "I baptize you." In each case saying is a form of doing. *Philosophical Papers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), ch. 10.

19. Cf. Mitchell Dahood, *Psalms*, Anchor Bible, 3 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1970), 3:xxxviii; cf. 259 and 336.

20. Cf. Frank M. Cross, Jr., "The Priestly Tabernacle in the Light of Recent Research," in Madsen, *The Temple in Antiquity*, 98-99. Cf. Psalm 132:12-13.

21. Both standing and kneeling are represented on ancient monuments. See Jacob Myers, *II Chronicles*, Anchor Bible, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1965, 1974), 2:36.

22. On building a house to the name of the Lord, see 2 Samuel 7:13; 1 Kings 3:2; 5:3, 5; 6:1-38; 7:13-51; 8:16-18, 20, 29, 43-44; 9:3, 7; 18:32 ("an altar in the name of the Lord"); 2 Kings 21:4; 1 Chronicles 22:7-8, 10, 19; 28:3; 29:16; 2 Chronicles 2:1, 4; 6:5, 7-10, 20, 33-34, 38; 7:16; 20:8-9; Ezra 6:12; Nehemiah 1:9. The people of Israel and the Holy City itself also bear the name.

23. See Jacob Myers, *II Chronicles*, 2:35, n. 33.

24. Richard D. Barnett, "Bringing the God into the Temple," in

Avraham Biran, ed., *Temples and High Places in Biblical Times* (Jerusalem: Hebrew Union College, 1981), 10-20.

25. Kaufmann, *The Religion of Israel*, 112.

26. *Ibid.*, 138, n. 3.

27. Louis Jacobs, explaining Buber, in *A Jewish Theology* (New York: Behrman House, 1973), 54. See also his "Excursus: The Names of God," ch. 10.

28. A Palestinian targum identifies the divine name YHWH as expressing God's eternal presence with Israel. Robert Hayward, *Divine Name and Presence* (Totowa, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun, 1981), 17-20, 82, has written that this name is at the core of covenant terminology of covenant oaths and was associated with the Jerusalem temple.

29. See 3 *Enoch* 42 in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2 vols. (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 1:293.

30. Talmudic traditions say that the unpronounceable or secretly pronounced tetragrammaton was trusted only to priests who were pious, chaste, and discreet. When singing from the Torah, the rabbi would "gulp the pronunciation amid the singing of his brethren." Rabbis continue to do so today in "a chant reminiscent of the singing of the Temple priests." See C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *A Rabbinic Anthology* (New York: Schocken Books, 1965), 14.

31. M *Yoma* 3:8; 6:2, citing Leviticus 16:30 in Herbert Danby, tr. and ed., *The Mishnah* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1933), 165, 169; cf. Hayyim Schauss, *The Jewish Festivals* (New York: Schocken, 1962), 136-38, who gives greater emphasis to the name with his translation. "Blessed be the Name, the glory of His kingdom forever and ever."

32. I. Abrahams, *Studies in Pharisaism and the Gospels*, 2 series in 1 vol. (New York: KTAV, 1967), 2:25.

33. Hans Joachim-Kraus, *Worship in Israel*, tr. Geoffrey Buswell (Richmond, VA: John Knox, 1966), 213.

34. Yigael Yadin, ed., *The Temple Scroll*, 3 vols. plus supplement (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1977-83), 1:279, "The city which I will hallow by settling my name and [my] temp[le within it] shall be holy and clean." In many Qumran texts the name of God is written in a distinctive script to remind the reader that it is too holy to pronounce. In the Temple Scroll, however, the author, who perhaps thought of his writing as the very law of God, wrote the letters for YHWH in the exact style of the rest of the text; see *ibid.*, 3:36 (plate 36) for two examples of YHWH in the standard script of the text.

35. J. Massyngberde Ford, *Revelation*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 123.

36. Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* III, 157-58.

37. Josephus, *The Jewish War* V, 235-36. A "crown [with] sacred letters . . . in four vowels," i.e., YHWH. The golden diadem (Exodus 28:36 and 39:70) contained "seal engravings." Hebrew sources claim that the diadem had in it the words "Holiness to Yahweh." The exact rabbinical phrase is *kodesh le-Yahweh*. Cf. TB *Shabbat* 63b. Other sources, including Philo, *De Vita Mosis* II, 114, 132, claim it was simply the tetragrammaton. Gregory of Nyssa, II, 201, describes the gold letters as "ineffable," in Gregory of Nyssa, *The Life of Moses*, tr. Abraham J. Malherbe and Everett Ferguson (New York: Paulist Press, 1978), 106. See Menahem Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 169. The Holy Name may have been abbreviated (*ibid.*, 34, n. 38) on the headplate (TB *Shabbat* 63b).

38. TB *Berakhot* 55a.

39. Abraham J. Heschel, "The Mystical Element in Judaism," in Louis Finkelstein, ed., *The Jews, Their History, Culture, and Religion*, 3rd ed., 2 vols. (New York: Harper, 1960), 2:943, writes of this approach to the Torah: "The Torah is the 'Holy of Holies'; it consists entirely of the name of the Holy One, blessed be He. Every letter in it is bound up with that Name."

40. Cf. TB *Abot* 5:1.

41. Gershom Scholem, *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism* (New York: Schocken, 1946), 37.

42. See discussions on baptism in the *Odes of Solomon* in Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 2:728 and n. 31, and 732: cf. J. H. Bernard, *The Odes of Solomon*, in *Texts and Studies*, 10 vols. (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1912), 8(3):42.

43. A Jewish midrash claims that the name of the Messiah "existed . . . in an incomplete form" before the creation. See Samuel Rapaport, *Genesis Rabba I*, in *A Treasury of the Midrash* (New York: KTAV, 1968), 42.

44. W. F. Albright, "Further Observations on the Name Yahweh and Its Modifications," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 44 (1925): 158-62.

45. Markus Barth, *Ephesians 1-3*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1974), 383.

46. William F. Albright and C. S. Mann, *Matthew*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1971), 362.

47. Not only destruction but desecration and defilement of the temple led to a loss of names. Ezekiel 8 describes how the temple was entered by idolaters. Images were engraved all around the walls, and the seventy men of the elders of the house of Israel were stand-

ing before them. In the inner court of the temple between the porch and the altar, twenty-five men were prostrating themselves eastward toward the sun. This was, in Greenberg's phrase, the "climactic abomination" – turning one's back to the sanctuary and bowing toward the sun; cf. Moshe Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1983), 171; cf. 164-74.

48. Raymond Brown, *The Epistles of John*, Anchor Bible (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1982), 711.

49. David Noel Freedman concludes that the pronunciation was lost "some time during the Middle Ages" and efforts were made "in the modern period . . . to recover the pronunciation." See *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, 5:500.

50. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, 174-75.

51. The *Gospel of Philip* 102:5-13, section 12. The translation and numbering system are in R. M. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip* (New York: Harper & Row, 1962), 30; cf. *The Nag Hammadi Library*, tr. James M. Robinson (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1977), 133, *Gospel of Philip* 54:5-13, with a translation by Wesley W. Isenberg and an alternate numbering system.

52. *Gospel of Philip* 115:27-30, cited as section 68 in Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip*, 43; cited as 67.27-30 in Robinson, *The Nag Hammadi Library*, 140.

53. Nibley, *The Message of the Joseph Smith Papyri*, 190.

54. *Ibid.*

55. *3 Enoch* 39:1, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:290-91, cf. 246, 249-52.

56. *3 Enoch* 45:1, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:296.

57. *3 Enoch* 45:1-2, Exodus 26:31, and 2 Chronicles 3:14.

58. The length of the "garment" in later Kabbalah included two hundred and thirty-one "gates" which were, in fact, "possible combinations of the 22 letters of the Hebrew alphabet." Its width was a numerical "elaboration of the Tetragrammaton"; see Gershom Scholem, "Kabbalah, in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 10:591.

59. Louis Finkelstein, *Akiba: Scholar, Saint and Martyr* (New York: Covici Friede, 1936), 204.

60. *3 Enoch* 44, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:295-96, note 44t. Apocryphal literature, especially Enoch material, eventually links Enoch and Metatron, both of whom write and record the merits or demerits of Israel. In *3 Enoch*, Enoch, now called Metatron, is even called "the lesser Yahweh," *Yahweh ha-Qatan*, thus *3 Enoch* 12:5: "And he called me 'the lesser Yahweh' in the presence

of all his heavenly household; as it is written *For my name is in him* (Exodus 23:21)." Cf. John Bowker, *The Targums and Rabbinic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1969), 150 and note a; cf. 144-49.

61. Scholem describes the notion of a "cosmic veil or curtain before the throne which conceals the glory of God from the host of angels." Allowing that the idea is very old, at least as old as the Aggadah of the second century and citing *Pistis Sophia* of the Gnostics, he says, describing a passage in the book of *Enoch*, it "contains the images of all things which since the day of creation have their pre-existing reality, as it were, in the heavenly sphere. All generations and all their lives and actions are woven into this curtain; he who sees it penetrates at the same time into the secret of Messianic redemption, for like the course of history, the final struggle and the deeds of the Messiah are already pre-existent real and visible." This summarizes his account of Merkabah mysticism. Cf. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 72; source for the *Pistis Sophia* is from Karl Schmidt's German translation of 1925, 35; the reference for the book of *Enoch* is 3 *Enoch* 45, in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 1:296-99. In Scholem's discussion of the theory of magic, n. 130 refers to *Midrash Tehillim*, edited by Buber.

Letters and combinations have cosmic power. Scholem says that one of the "related processes to ascending to the throne is 'the putting on, or clothing, of the name', a highly ceremonious rite in which the magician impregnates himself, as it were, with the great name of God." The Hebrew phrase is *lavosh et-hashem*. There is a Syriac phrase in the *Odes of Solomon* 39:7. He also compares it to Paul's statement in Romans 13:14 about "put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ." Cf. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 136, and n. 3. The magician "performs a symbolic act by clothing himself in a garment into whose texture the name has been woven." He claims the rite is described in a manuscript in the British Museum. Cf. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, n. 132; also n. 112 to lecture IV, p. 77.

62. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 136.

63. Nahman Avigad, *Discovering Jerusalem* (Jerusalem: Shikmona, 1980), 139-43.

64. *Ibid.*, 139.

65. Martin Buber, *Tales of the Hasidim, Early Masters* (New York: Schocken, 1947), J328.

66. Richard Clifford, "The Temple and the Holy Mountain," in Madsen, *The Temple in Antiquity*, 122.

67. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 136-37.

68. *Ibid.*, 188.

69. Louis I. Rabinowitz et al., "Maimonides," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 11:754-81.

70. An introduction to the subject of demons both in the Bible and in extracanonical literature is in T. H. Gaster, "Demon, Demonology," in *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, 4 vols. (New York: Abingdon, 1962), 1:817-24.

71. Martin Buber, *For the Sake of Heaven*, tr. Ludwig Lewisohn (New York: Harper, 1953).

72. Leviticus 24:11-16; cf. "Blasphemy," in *Encyclopaedia Judaica* 4:1073-74.

73. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 675, 924-26, 659-61, respectively; cf. Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, 195-96.

74. Brown, Driver, and Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 853-54, 198, respectively.

75. Avraham Gileadi, tr., *The Apocalyptic Book of Isaiah* (Provo, UT: Hebraeus Press, 1982), 142. Compare King James Version. Cf. also Avraham Gileadi, *The Book of Isaiah: A New Translation with Interpretive Keys from the Book of Mormon* (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1988), 206.