

'NEW OLD THINGS'
MYTHS, MYSTICISM AND CONTROVERSIES, PHILOSOPHY AND HALACHA,
FAITH AND RITUAL IN JEWISH THOUGHT THROUGH THE AGES
VOLUME I
JERUSALEM STUDIES IN JEWISH THOUGHT
VOLUME XXII

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Myths, Mysticism and Controversies, Philosophy and Halacha,
Faith and Ritual in Jewish Thought through the Ages

Volume I

Editor

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ENGLISH ABSTRACTS

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT: PURITY AND IMPURITY, MEMORY AND OBLIVION

Rachel Elior

This article deals with three ancient traditions concerning *Yom ha-Kippurim*, the Day of Atonement. The Dead Sea Scrolls have revealed three forgotten traditions that shed new light on the ancient associations of this holiday. The article suggests that these traditions formed part of a sacred drama that was enacted as part of the ceremony performed in priestly circles on the Day of Atonement.

The first tradition connected the ‘sin of the watchers’ (Gen 6:2–4; *1 Enoch*, chapters 1–36) to the Day of Atonement, since both are associated with the enigmatic concept of Azazel. The First Book of Enoch was found among the writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls and has come down to us in translation as part of the Pseudepigrapha. The Book of Enoch presents a comprehensive tradition based on this biblical narrative which illuminates the hidden significance of Azazel (Lev 16:10). Azazel is not the geographical name of a specific place in the desert as is commonly thought, but is the name of the leader of the rebellious angels in the ‘sins of the watchers’ narrative. Azazel is the sinful angel who is bound in the desert as an eternal punishment for the sin of the sons of God according to the short description in Gen 6:2–4 and as elaborated in detail in *1 Enoch*, chapters 1–36.

The second tradition, which appears and is elaborated in *Jubilees*, concerns the date when Joseph’s brothers committed the sin of selling him into slavery (Gen 38). According to *Jubilees* 34:10–19, this event occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month according to the biblical reckoning: i.e. the date of the Day of Atonement.

The third tradition concerns the angelic High Priest Melkizedek who appears in the *Melkizedek Scroll* (11QMelchizedek) which was also found at Qumran. Melkizedek is represented as the head of the Sons of Light, who is associated with the time of redemption – the Day of Atonement in the Great Jubilee and the place of redemption on the biblical Mount Zion, where the Jerusalem Temple was built in the days of David and Solomon.

The various angelic-priestly traditions suggest that *Yom ha-Kippurim* was perceived in certain ancient traditions as the anniversary of the climax of the struggle between the mythical cosmic representations of life and death, purity and impurity, justice and injustice, good and evil, law and lawlessness, punishment

and crime, atonement and sin. The first act of this sacred drama enacted the priestly ritual of the entrance of the High Priest to the Holy of Holies (representing Paradise and the eternal source of life) and the parallel ritual of the ‘temporal man’ (*ish ‘iti*) (Lev 16:21–22; 26–29) going off into the desert, to the place of Azazel (representing hell and the realm of death). The two movements were set in the context of a sacred drama embodying a dualistic world view that recalled the sins of the mythical past, the iniquity that engendered impurity and lawlessness: the sin of the watchers (Gen 6:1–4; *1 Enoch*, chapters 1–36) associated with the Day of Atonement. In the second act of the sacred drama, the enormous sin committed in the time of the Patriarchs – the selling of Joseph (Gen 37:18–33) ‘in the tenth of the Seventh month’ (*Jubilees* 34:12) – explained the need for the public atonement represented by the annual fast. The Children of Israel, the descendants of the sinners, who had *not* been punished according to the biblical law relating to those who steal and sell human beings (Exod 21:16), are atoning for the cardinal sin of their unpunished forefathers. The sacred drama concluded with the story of Melkizedek, the angelic priest who will fight the powers of Darkness at a future date and who will win a final victory on the Day of Atonement. This glorious victory will occur on the date of the Great Jubilee which takes place after seven *shemitot* (fallow years). The drama concluded with the Priestly Blessing on the ‘Sons of Light’, ‘The Keepers of the Covenant’ whose destiny lies with Melkizedek, with the priestly blessing for those who observe the solar calendar, and an anathema on the accursed ‘Sons of Darkness’, those who ‘break the covenant’, whose destiny lies with Belial (*Community Rule*), those who follow the ways of Azazel, Mastema and Melkiresha, and those who observe the lunar calendar. These blessings and admonitions were proclaimed in a dramatic public ceremony on the Day of Atonement in accordance with the Zadokite priestly tradition as recorded in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

THE SIGHTS REVEALED TO EVE

Daphna Arbel

Of the numerous apocryphal works that were written about Adam and Eve in the ancient world, the apocryphal work known as the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (GLAE), written somewhere in the period 100–300 CE, includes a unique depiction of the archetypal Eve. This depiction is articulated most clearly in a short scene found in GLAE 33–34, which abandons the stereotypical image of Eve as the supreme transgressor of God’s commandments, and presents her instead as one who sees awe-inspiring visions of God and His chariot, angelic rituals and divine mysteries.

In this paper I examine this exceptional portrayal and put forward the following suggestions. Firstly, I suggest that the three visions with which Eve is associated, namely God’s chariot, angelic rituals, and divine mysteries, are not

unique to the GLAE. Rather, they correspond to formulaic themes and tropes normally associated with certain typically male 'ideal figures' found in a variety of Qumranic, pseudepigraphic, and Merkavah traditions, and which usually emphasize the worthiness, authoritative status, and high position of these figures.

Secondly, I suggest that by utilizing these stock themes and tropes, the GLAE 33–34 implicitly casts Eve as one of these ideal figures and associates her with their virtues. In so doing, it deviates from typical portrayals of Eve as a sinful transgressor and recreates her as a figure of superior status, visionary abilities, and spiritual standing. Finally, I consider the depiction of Eve's visions in GLAE 33–34 in the context of both the complete account in the GLAE and its broader cultural setting. I further suggest that this depiction of Eve may have been associated with cultural attempts to assert an ideological position concerning the elevated status of Eve, and thus ultimately resist prevalent Jewish and Christian traditions of the fallen standing of Eve.

BRIEF COMMENTS ON THE SYRIAN CONTEXT OF *SEFER YETSIRAH*

Tzahi Weiss

The Book of Creation is considered an enigmatic treatise owing to its equivocal manner of expression and the obscurity surrounding the question of the cultural and historical context in which it was written or edited. An important issue that can shed some light on those problems, but has been discussed by scholars in the field of Jewish studies to only a minimal extent, is the relation between *The Book of Creation* and discussions on letters in non-Jewish sources: Christian, Gnostic, Pagan, neo-Platonic and Samaritan works dating from the second- to the seventh centuries A.D.

Among the non-Jewish sources dealing with letters, it would seem that the one bearing the strongest resemblance to *The Book of Creation* is a Christian treatise entitled *The Mysteries of the Greek Letters* which was composed around the sixth century A.D. This treatise, which is devoted to an explanation of the meaning of the Greek letters, argues that there are twenty-two of them (i.e. – the same number as in the Syrian and Hebrew alphabets), and that the world was formed according to the shapes of these letters, and according to the number of them: twenty-two.

Unlike *The Book of Creation*, *The Mysteries of the Greek Letters* openly reveals the identity of its sources; it states repeatedly that the original, most holy script, is the Syrian one and refers to a number of myths illustrating the importance and sanctity of the Syrian language. Here two facts should be taken into account: firstly, *The Mysteries of the Greek Letters* derives its data from known Semitic sources and does not create them independently; secondly, in some of the writings of the Syrian Church fathers one finds statements similar to those in *The Mysteries of the Greek Letters* concerning the holiness of the Syrian language.

The study shows that together with arguments from previous studies about

the possible Christian-Syrian origins of some of the major ideas in *The Book of Creation*, this evidence reinforces the possibility of non-Jewish origins to this work.

SEED THAT COMES FROM ‘ANOTHER PLACE’: THE METAMORPHOSIS OF THE
STORY OF LOT’S DAUGHTERS

Ruth Kara-Ivanov Kaniel

Gen 19 tells the story of Lot’s daughters who seduced their father in order to beget offspring by him after the chaotic destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. The Rabbinic Midrash dealing with this story draws attention to a number of surprising details. One of the homilies shows the connection between Lot’s daughters and Ruth the Moabite, King David’s grandmother, implying that the emergence of the Messianic hero began in Sodom through a divine plan. Another Midrash explains the verse in Gen 19:32 ‘Come, let us make our father drink wine, and we will lie with him, that we may *preserve offspring through our father*’ and the statement *יְנַחֵייה מֵאַבְיֵנו זֶרַע* – [*u-nehaye me-avinu Zera*] as a ‘*Seed that comes from another place (from heaven), and this is the Messiah*’ [Genesis Raba 51:8].

The aim of this article is to examine processes of continuity and transformation that take place between the Rabbinic and the Zoharic Midrashim, focusing on the first ‘Matriarchs’ of the Davidic dynasty, the daughters of Lot. I suggest that the story of these heroines represents the foundational scene of the messianic dynasty, its chaotic, confusing, and terrifying origins. Lot’s daughters symbolize the foreign and different, and indicate the complex relations of Israel with Ammon and Moab. The two daughters represent the paradoxical ‘Other’ who defines the essence of national and messianic sovereignty, the elements of incest, carnal sin and transgressing of boundaries. I wish to show how the very same Rabbinic homilies reappear in a new and daring form in the Zoharic corpus. While justifying the daughters’ conduct, the Rabbis emphasize Lot’s sins: his decision to reside in Sodom, a place of licentiousness, and the fact that he lay with his youngest daughter although fully aware of his actions. As against this, the Zohar creates a new linguistic and hermeneutic field. The Rabbinic discourse of ethical judgment is replaced by a mystical language expressing the intense relations between the earthly and the divine. Irony takes the place of tragedy, while humor and paradox replace self-criticism and self-flagellation.

On the basis of the metamorphosis of this story, I demonstrate that the Zohar appears to be both a renaissance – as Yehuda Liebes has observed – and a revolution.

YA'QŪB AL-QIRQISĀNĪ'S CRITICAL COMMENTARY ON THE
THIRTEEN HERMENEUTICAL PRINCIPLES ENUMERATED IN THE
INTRODUCTION TO THE *SIFRA*

Aviram Ravitsky

Ya'qūb al-Qirqisānī, one of the prominent and well-known Karaite writers of the tenth century, devoted a detailed discussion to the thirteen hermeneutical principles enumerated in the introduction to the *Sifra*. Qirqisānī's discussion constitutes a portion of the fourth section of his magnum opus *Kitāb al-Anwār w al-Marāqib*, a section that deals with proper methods of interpretation and inference in matters pertaining to the Law.

In the Rabbinic-Talmudic tradition the thirteen principles were regarded as the basic rules by which the Written Law is expounded, or by which the Oral Tradition is related to the Scriptures. The fact that a Karaite sage like Qirqisānī was engaged in commenting upon a text considered fundamental in the Rabbinic tradition should not surprise us. Karaite scholars, from the end of the ninth century onwards, were well versed in the Talmudic and midrashic literature, though mainly for critical purposes. However, they were nevertheless willing to accept some of the contents of the Rabbinical texts found solid after rational criticism. Qirqisānī's commentary is a good example of the Karaite use of the Rabbinical texts.

In his commentary, Qirqisānī translates the Hebrew text of the introduction to the *Sifra* into Arabic, and he analyzes, in a rational and learned way, the hermeneutical principles and the examples provided by the Sages. At the end of his analysis Qirqisānī concludes that only six of the thirteen principles are valid and should be endorsed.

Qirqisānī's Arabic translation shows how he understood the Hebrew terms that were used in the introduction to the *Sifra*, and his criticism reveals hidden difficulties in the understanding of the principles and their use, some of which were also considered by the traditional-rabbinical interpreters of the thirteen principles.

The main section of the article is a Hebrew translation of Qirqisānī's Arabic commentary on the principles. In the introduction to the translation I discuss the historical significance of Qirqisānī's critical commentary. I also analyze the way Qirqisānī understood the principles and their related terms, as demonstrated in his Arabic terminology. In my footnotes that accompany the Hebrew translation I explain difficult passages in Qirqisānī's commentary and refer to the relevant literature.

ASHKENAZIC MOTIFS IN THE HALACHAH OF THE *BAHIR*

Alon Dahan

It is generally accepted that the book *Bahir* represents an oriental tradition that originated in the east and appeared in Provence in approximately the twelfth century. In the following article, I wish to examine this assumption through a new method of interpretation of the symbols of the *Bahir*. Until now, the *Bahir* has been regarded as the first Book of the Kabbalah, chiefly because of the structure of the ten 'Sefirot' organized in a hierarchic mode. In my opinion, this interpretation is incorrect. The *Bahir* used these symbols, but in a horizontal mode, as synonyms and not as entities organized in a hierarchic structure. In this study I will use this new method of interpretation to examine the 'Halachic' concept in the *Bahir*. I will show that all the 'Halachot' in the *Bahir* are simply various aspects of the 'Shechina' expressed by its different parallel symbols. I will also try to prove the validity of the new interpretation and the 'Ashkenazic' tradition of the 'Psika' in the *Bahir*.

‘I, THE LORD, MAKE MYSELF KNOWN TO HIM IN A VISION;
I SPEAK TO HIM IN A DREAM. NOT SO WITH MY SERVANT MOSES...’?
ON MOSES’ PROPHECY IN MAIMONIDES’ WRITINGS

Alexander Even-Chen

The purpose of this paper is to show that there is no essential difference between Moses' prophecy and that of other prophets. The imagination is present in Moses' prophecy as in other prophets; the different degrees of prophecy, which Maimonides regards as characterizing other prophets, are also the degrees of Moses' prophecy at different stages of his life. It was specifically the 'second degree' of prophecy that, according to Maimonides, made Moses' prophecy unique. Moses 'learned in every possible way how God rules all things', and using his practical sense was able to guide his people.

R. MOSES BEN JUDAH ON THE ELEMENTS AND THE
QUESTION OF THEIR PLACE IN COMPOUNDS

Esti Eisenmann

The article deals with R. Moses ben Judah's opinion on an important but complicated and problematic matter in Aristotle's physics, a matter that preoccupied Christian scholars more than Jewish philosophers: namely, the quality of the elements in compounds and the way in which compounds are formed from the elements.

R. Moses ben Judah's view of the matter was unique, and deviated from the strict Aristotelian tradition. He maintained that though, as Averroes held, the four qualities – hot, cold, dry and moist – are the substantial forms of the elements, they abide only in the deeper parts of each element. The compound therefore comes into being in the external parts of the elements where the qualities are only accidental. The elements abide in the compound only in potentiality, which means that the qualities in the compound are accidental and, like the qualities of the external parts of the elements, are created through an increase or reduction in the degree of the qualities of the elements.

R. Moses ben Judah claimed that the qualities of the elements, which are their forms, may increase or decrease in degree, though they belong to the category of substance which in Aristotelian logic cannot change in degree. Consequently, the quality, which was a substantial form in the element, becomes only a quality in the compound, and the elements are therefore in the compound only in potentiality.

Thus, R. Moses ben Judah had a relativistic approach to logic which differed from the realistic logic of Aristotle. In his approach, the categories are mental distinctions only and therefore more flexible, so that an attribute may belong to the substantial category in one case, and to an accidental category in another.

THE DEFINITION OF PLACE IN THE PHILOSOPHY OF
ABNER OF BURGOS AND RABBI HASDAI CRESCAS

Shalom Sadik

Rabbi Hasdai Crescas (d. 1411), the leader of the Spanish Jews at the end of the fourteenth- and the beginning of the fifteenth century, was the major Jewish critic of Aristotle. The aim of this article is to prove that *The New Philosophy*, a lost book of the apostate Abner of Burgos (d. 1347), was one of the major sources of Crescas's criticism on the questions of place and movement.

The definitions of place and movement are two of the main features of all scientific theories. Aristotle defines place as the 'boundary of the containing body where it is in contact with the contained body'. This means that place cannot exist without a body, because it has to be the boundary of *something*. Moreover, the Aristotelian system does not tolerate a vacuum and the desire of a thing to return to its natural place is one of the major explanations of natural motion.

In Abner's and Crescas's new theory, place is an abstraction, detached from any physical object and existing without a body in an infinite void. Place does not have any influence on the movement of an object; rather, movement is the consequence of the intersection between the property of the different body themselves.

