

# UC Davis

## UC Davis Previously Published Works

**Title**

Re-creating Genesis: the metapragmatics of divine speech

**Permalink**

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/8dt7k7kw>

**ISBN**

0521351642

**Author**

Janowitz, Naomi

**Publication Date**

1993-01-01

Peer reviewed

## Re-creating Genesis: the metapragmatics of divine speech

NAOMI JANOWITZ

Rabbinic Judaism and early Christianity are both exegetical religions, founded on intricate systems of Scriptural interpretation. Scholars trying to write histories of Christian and Jewish exegesis tend to enter into the process instead of trying to explain its underlying motivations and dynamics.<sup>1</sup> Part of the problem is that the process of interpretation is itself complex; it is a process of using language to understand, define, and make explicit the language of the text. Textual interpretations, as the exegetes themselves are aware, can range from defining obscure words to reading an entire text as allegory. Interpretation, therefore, is "metalinguistic." Metalinguistic usages, simply put, are uses of words to talk about, explain, define, etc. other words.<sup>2</sup> Such metalinguistic activities depend crucially on the interpreter's ideology of language. Therefore, this investigation into Jewish and Christian exegetical systems begins with the linguistic ideologies of the exegetes, that is, with the ideas the exegetes have about language and the manner in which words function.

To further complicate matters, sacred texts are used as well as read. They are ritual objects, powerful in a manner which must in turn be related to the manner in which they are interpreted. The ritual functions of these texts demand further refinement of our investigation of linguistic ideologies. The ritual role of a text (e.g., carrying it around, touching/not touching it, standing in its presence) may influence interpretation and vice versa. Therefore, instead of entering into the exegetical debate, or trying to guess the psychological stance of the exegetes, we will examine several exegetical excerpts where the pragmatic question is explicitly highlighted.

The pragmatic dimensions of holy texts, the connections between exegesis which tells us how to read a text and exegesis which tells us how to use a text or what a text is, are particularly clearly articulated in the exegesis of the creation story in Genesis. This story presents the power of the deity's words when he creates the world through speech. The manner in which the deity's speaking is an effective and ordering force in the universe is perceived by exegetes to be a central message of the text. The interpretations we will discuss include excerpts from an Aramaic translation of Exodus, a late antique mystical text, the Gospel of John, and Augustine's autobiography. In the process of discussing the creation story, the exegetes try to

capture the literal creativity of the deity's words, and employ these pragmatics for their own literary, ritual, or, as they are often called, "magical" ends.

## Naming the speaker: characterizing divine language

Moses said to the Lord,

"Behold I am going to the Children of Israel and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they will say, 'What is his name?' Who should I say sent me?"

And the Lord said to Moses,

"I am who I am." *And he said, "And this you will say to the children of Israel, "I am" sent me."* (Exodus 3: 14–15 [Hebrew], emphasis added)

And Moses said to the Lord,

"Behold I am going to the Children of Israel and say unto them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me unto you' and they will say 'What is his name?' What will I say to them?"

And the Lord said to Moses,

"I am who I am." *And he said, "And thus you will say to the children of Israel, 'The one who spoke and the world was there at the beginning, and who is to speak to it "exist" and it will exist sent me.'*" (Targum Neofiti Exodus 3: 14–15<sup>3</sup> [Aramaic], emphasis added)

The implicit claim of this translation of God's revelation of his name in Exodus is that the new Aramaic version has the same meaning as the original Hebrew text. In the translation, however, the deity has a new name. If we compare the Hebrew original with the Aramaic translation we find that the Aramaic has expanded the deity's name from the simple "I am," to the more complex "The one who spoke..." The deity's revelation of his name to Moses is a choice opportunity for interpretation. Names present ready-made, hidden texts for the exegetes in that the semantic content of names can often be explained in a variety of ways. Proper names logically need have no obvious semantic content, that is, no meanings that emerge systematically from linguistic structure. Meanings can however be supplied by the exegete.<sup>4</sup> Every name is waiting to be explained and few exegetes can refrain from discussing names.

As scholars have noted, the text in Exodus seems already to contain a short meditation on the meaning of God's name, playing with the connection between the name Yahweh (*yhw*) and the root "to be" (*hwh*).<sup>5</sup> The interpretation is then extended in the Aramaic translation. God not only exists himself, he is also the source of all existence as the creator of the world. Thus, in order to refer to him and to explain who he is, the simplest way is to describe him in his unique role as the speaker who creates. The deity's creative act of speaking has become his proper name.

In translating this verse, the translator has used one part of the text (Genesis) in order to interpret and expand another part (Exodus). This type of intertextual reference is one reason why studying exegesis can be so complex. An interpretation extracted from Genesis (God spoke and the world existed) becomes part of the text

itself (Exodus) in the translation.<sup>6</sup> The translator is assuming that the reader has read Genesis prior to Exodus and uses the expanded name to reinforce the connection between the two sections.

This point is worth further consideration because of the sleight-of-hand of translation which claims that the language has changed but denies the altered stance of the new version.<sup>7</sup> The new name extracts the implicit idea of God's creative speech from the narrative flow. It is no longer simply a point in the narrative (God said "X" and there was X), but is now something to be talked about. A future-time framework (God will speak and it will exist) has been substituted for the original creative speaking in Genesis. A narrative has been reworked to present a theoretical point about divine language. The reader should not be mistaken in thinking that God's creative speech was a one-shot occurrence; he would have missed the point of divine utterances if he did.

The translation also reflects the status of the text as an object of inquiry. (What was God's speaking of creation like? What does it have to do with his modes of revelation?) As Jakobson has pointed out,<sup>8</sup> in translation a text itself becomes reported speech, and as reported speech is itself the focus of attention. The translation implicitly asks what is this text – a series of words? And most importantly it asks and, as we shall see, answers the question, how are we to read the text?

What is the purpose and intent of the new name? What "folk" notions about naming does it reveal? The new name refers to the deity, that is, it points him out as the speaker, and also predicates something about him as a speaker – that he can speak in this extraordinary manner. The name is thus a short meditation on the notion of divine language, language with a special status because it was spoken by the deity. Humans can say what they want, they only speak words. Yahweh speaks and the world exists.

God's revelation of his Name in the Targumic version is a semantic speech act; "my name is X" is a definitional form.<sup>9</sup> In this case, the process is also pragmatic, for the deity's name is context-related speech, that is, his name is not only defined but its connection to the speaking situation is also articulated. Divine utterances are context-related in the most extreme sense imaginable, much more so than our standard examples of effective speech. The act of speaking created the world, and thereby the very possibility of speaking to the world.<sup>10</sup> The "creativity" of all other words and usages pales by comparison. All other creative speech is reflected performativity dependent on the primal creative speech. The translation emphasizes that the creative words used by the deity are contained in the text, literally. This in turn highlights the latent power of the text. The words by which the world was created are found in the document, along with many other examples of divine speech. Each "thus says the Lord" is an utterance of divine speech and the text is a collection of these utterances.

The name of the deity is presented as reported speech, or, more correctly, as a report of a report of reported speech. God tells Moses that when he goes to the Israelites he should repeat something that God himself had previously said. In the Targumic version, the Name is inseparable from its spoken aspect; the "content" of the Name is itself a speech act (i.e., X spoke and the world was there). The fact that the Name includes reported speech is no accident. The Scriptural text consists largely of the

deity's words reported by Moses. As the translator/exegete was aware, the Torah is a collection of examples, or tokens, of divine speech. Moses does not pass on the words divorced from their implications, or simply repeat them. He passes them on exactly as God spoke them, with the numerous "Thus said the lord's" functioning as signals of divine status of the words which follow.

The naming in the Exodus translation is an exegetical key; it tells the reader how to interpret all of the divine reported speech. It states that all of God's words function differently from human words. Whatever subjects the text may talk about, the exegetical key from the Targum highlights that God is manifest on earth, among other ways, in divine speech. The subjects God talks about are secondary to the fact that the Torah exists as the divine presence made "flesh." Again, by its articulation in a translation, the implicit claim is that this is what the text actually says and not an interpretation.

This linguistic ideology of the Name is evident throughout the Targumic translation. The Aramaic word for "word" (*memra*) is often added in the translation, as for example, "I will be there, my Memra, with you" (Targum Neofiti Exodus 3: 12).<sup>11</sup> The introduction of this word is the repeated articulation of an exegetical principle extracted from the very structure of the text. As the Targumic ideology highlights for us, with its emphasis on the divine word, the text physically embodies these divine words. Divine speech, in the objectified state of THE TEXT ITSELF, embodies the deity on earth. The translation, each time it focuses on God's word on earth, tries to incorporate back into the text the implicit claim of the text, that God's words work (create) on earth. Because the deity's words are present in the Torah, the words of the text are not just any collection of words, but are the WORD operative in the midst of the community. The word as divine presence physically sits in front of them in the scrolls, scrolls which contain actual tokens (examples) of divine speech.<sup>12</sup>

The translation represents a major shift in thinking with regard to the Hebrew original. The Scriptural text is based on an ideology of the spokenness of divine language ("thus says the Lord"). Divine language is manifest in the examples of what God said and how his speech always turns out to be true. In the Targumic translation, an ideology of written divine language develops. This ideology articulates the power of the written form and is important for understanding both Judaism and Christianity. Now the tokens of divine speech exist not only in regard to the semantic content (the things the deity talks about, the blessings and the curses he delivers). The tokens also exist simply as tokens of powerful speech, leaving aside all questions of what the powerful tokens are "about." The meaning, broadly defined, of the tokens of divine speech has been stretched beyond their referential content. The status of the text as a collection of God's words has, through rumination about what a collection of God's words really is, endowed the text with a magical status beyond the magic contained in any particular story. The text has status as a collection of divine words, not as a collection of divine words about anything in particular.

Finally, it is worth repeating that one of the central messages of this translation is the linking of the divine name with the act of creation. Within the bounds of translation, the Genesis story cannot be rewritten so that the deity speaks his name in

creating the world, a theme we will turn to next, but the link between the name and the creation of the world, creation *par excellence*, has been forged in the translated Exodus revelation of the name. As the divine name literally contains within it the creation of the world, we are but a step away from making an explicit ideology of the divine name, as we will see in the next exegetical example.

## Naming the Name: a Rabbinic notion of the Decipherable Name

Creator of his world by his one name, fashioner of all by one word (Maaseh Merkabah, lines 1095-6)

God's name, as it appears in the Targumic translation, is so lengthy it is hard to remember the entire long name. Once this interpretation of the name has been developed, the pragmatics of the name can be carried over to other, shorter names. Or, the divine name, as a bundle of creative ability, can itself be given a name, a shorthand reference which both includes a reference to the fact that it is a name, and also refers to its complex content. The name used to create the world does in fact receive a Name in rabbinic exegetical texts, the Decipherable Name (*Shem Ha-Meforash*).<sup>13</sup>

Already in 1901, Max Gruenbaum argued that the term *Shem Ha-Meforash* meant "un-expressed name," with connotations of secrecy. He pointed to the use of the term in the Targum (Judges 8: 13), where an angel refuses to tell Jacob his name because it is *Meforash*. Most scholars have confined their efforts to trying to discern which of the many names of the deity this term was meant to refer to. However, as a Name for the divine name, the term cannot be explained by pinpointing a unique name to which it refers, or by finding the best translation. No doubt, in distinct texts, the term refers to distinct "names," and, depending on the text, a variety of arguments could be made about which name is THE NAME.

More important, as a Name for the divine name, the term crystallizes in a single unit the ideologies discussed so far. That is, the term signals that the Name itself is now an object of speculation and investigation. The name, as part of receiving a Name, can itself be talked about as a topic and not simply used. As something to be talked about, the Name can, indeed must, be interpreted in order for it to reveal its secrets.

Not only is the Name a text to be studied, but it is a particularly powerful text. The term *Shem Ha-Meforash* is a shorthand reference for the process of divine naming, both as the Name refers to the deity and as it is an instrument of creativity. Exegesis of the Name is exegesis of all of the deity's power bundled in a single word. The choice of name is obvious, again, following linguistic ideology, the name is the word which most closely "stands for" the deity.

Before we survey the Name ideology found throughout the rabbinic texts, we must note, as mentioned in our discussion of the Targum discussion, that the ideology departs substantially from biblical principles. The two rabbinic themes, prohibitions against uttering the divine name and anecdotes about its power, are interpretations of



the Hebrew Scriptures. While there are injunctions against the improper use of God's name, Scriptures contain no prohibition against merely stating it.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, while the creativity of God's word is mentioned in a few Scriptural references, nowhere does it explicitly state that the deity created the world by speaking his Name.

What then, was the source of the ideas for the *Shem Ha-Meforash*? Already in the Scriptures blessings and curses are automatic and irrevocable, reflecting some but not all of the special status that will accrue to the Name.<sup>15</sup> We have already seen the connection made in the Targum between creation and the divine name. The Book of Jubilees 36: 7<sup>16</sup> and the Prayer of Manasseh 1–3<sup>17</sup> both refer to the sealing of the abyss of creation by means of an oath which contains the divine name. The same transitional theme is found in b. Menahot 29b, which mentions the sealing of the abyss of creation by means of the divine name.<sup>18</sup>

A particularly rich anecdote revealing the new linguistic ideology states that the divine name was not supposed to be uttered even in court by a witness to blasphemy.<sup>19</sup> As to the definitional limits of the name (are all words used to refer to the deity "names"?) some would extend punishment for blasphemy even to those who substituted divine attributes for the Name, giving the attributes Name-status (b. Sanhedrin 56a).

The creative power of the Name was harnessed by select biblical figures, who used it for protection and even violent acts of aggression.<sup>20</sup> The divine name was also used to animate lifeless images, a variation on the creation theme.<sup>21</sup> An entire history of the Name, or rather, a series of conflicting histories, was composed by the rabbinic exegetes. The distant past and the future were both portrayed as times when people knew (or would know) how to use the Name, as the history of the Name became a metaphor for the presence of the deity on earth, and for his interaction with his people. For example, one anecdote states that the Name was once entrusted to the entire nation, given to them during their journey through the desert. It was taken away, however, when they worshipped the Golden Calf.<sup>22</sup> Perhaps the most famous "history" is that at one time the Name was widely known, but growing corruption led to increasing restrictions until the Name was not used any more.<sup>23</sup>

Even though the Name was "lost," a few stories describe its use by individual Hebrew exegetes. The most dramatic example of its use in the Talmud is the creation of a calf by means of the manipulation of the letters of the divine name (b. Sanhedrin 65a). The story was subject to extensive elaboration, refining the exact nature of the creation, and its limitations.<sup>24</sup>

The model of the name in Exodus has implications for both ritual and exegesis. An analogy has been established between Name and text; simply put, since the Name can be a text, a text can be a Name.<sup>25</sup> The named-Name is now the icon (image, pattern) by which all verbal expressions are measured and judged. The Scriptural text derives its value from the extent to which it is a copy of this pattern. Exegesis of the Torah, a collection of names, of potentially creative words, demands investigation of both semantic and non-semantic elements. Rabbinic exegetical literature will be dotted with metaphors and anecdotes which try to make this point. For example, the idea that the addition or subtraction of a single letter will destroy the world calls attention to the

power of the text and its pragmatic implications.<sup>26</sup> Other stories recount the necessity of rearranging the manifest content in order to find the other, hidden, content.<sup>27</sup> The "name-ness" of the text is not only evident in the surface structure, but exists as an exegetical possibility.

If we turn now to a Christian text, we find a similar, yet contrasting, ideology developed from verses such as "By your word, the heavens and the earth were created" (Psalm 33: 2). Just as "Name" can be exegeted as clothing a multiplicity of semantic contents, so can "Word."

## Escaping the Name through the Word

In the beginning was the word and the word was with God and the word was God. (John 1: 1)

The Prologue to the Gospel of John, a short meditation on Genesis, manages to encapsulate and articulate yet another theory of divine language. The deity's words were not "Let there be light"; instead the word in the beginning was "God." God's word is once again a reference to himself, not by means of name, but by means of the word "God." Genesis is read self-consciously as a text in which the deity is identified by his speech acts, indeed with his speech acts. Here the act of speaking does not reveal his name.<sup>28</sup> Instead the word chosen to represent the revelatory and creative aspects of the deity is "word" (*logos*). That is, following the discussion above, that word which was the Word which created the world, is the word "word." God speaks the world into existence, speaks to the world, and is manifest in the world all in "word." The word, not surprisingly, is itself defined in turn as "God." Word stands for God in the same way that Name stands for God. When word is equated with "God," God and his creative speaking powers are once again brought into linguistic analogy, and thereby identity.

Name = 'God'	Word = 'God'
<u>God</u>	'God'

The text is now an objectified presence of divinity, manifest in the letters. Similarly, God is now defined in terms of his "wordness."

Once again an exegetical principle (word = God) creates the possibility of endless interpretation. All things said about words can be said about the deity, and the analogies between divine word (God) and human word (Scriptural text) can be multiplied. A linguistic ideology, as encapsulated in the Prologue, serves as a key for reading the rest of the text and is itself part of the text as, again, an interpretive principle becomes part of the text. The subtle models of Name and Word affect the interpretation of all Scriptures but because they are both such basic linguistic images they appear simply to make explicit what they are actually redefining.

If for Hebrew exegetes human language fails to measure up to the divine language, leaving the exegete in search of the Name, Christian exegetes also feel the inadequacy of human language. At least for the Hebrew exegetes, the deity spoke Hebrew,

permitting a basic analogy between divine and human speech. For Christians this analogy was less powerful. Almost metaphorically, Jews become "literalists" no matter how they read Scriptural texts because they read Hebrew (the letter) while the Christians interpret the Greek (the spirit). This claim is strategically employed by Christian exegetes. As Jews abandon interpretive methods adopted by the Christians, even if these methods were first developed by the Jews, the charge becomes self-fulfilling. Jews will be seen increasingly as "literalists" as if assimilating themselves to the Christian claim.<sup>29</sup>

But if Christians reject the "letter" in order to find the "spirit" of a word, they must develop explicit theories of meaning that demonstrate how one moves from letter to spirit. Augustine contributes a particularly clear articulation of the relation between his theory of language and his theory of text interpretation. For Augustine, in perhaps the most gnostic theory of language possible, the very existence of human language, in its diversity, is a sign of all that is human, i.e., "fleshly." For Augustine, who defines signs as "things which are used to signify something" (*DDC* I, ii, 2), the most important signs are linguistic signs. He is concerned about the definitions of signs because he believes that the holy Scriptures are a series, or collection, of signs. How does a reader move from the signs in the text to the things they designate? Signs are good, but what is really needed, what is really of interest is the things, i.e., the truths, behind them. Books 2 and 3 of *On Christian teaching* explore this problem, which is most acute when the signs are obscure, as in both the Old and New Testaments.

In order to understand signs, one must first know the basic interpretive rule, which, according to Augustine, is the commandment of love. Then one must understand the way in which signs are produced. Basically, (1) the thing (*res*) is (2) apprehended either by sense or intellect and (3) held in the mind, giving rise to a conception (*dicibile*, an unspoken word) which then is (4) used to signify and (5) communicated to another mind, usually through the ear (Jackson 1972). Interpretation thus operates at this fifth level. The person who hears it must work the entire process in reverse. Obviously this system is fraught with problems. Why must the reader/hearer work so hard in order to comprehend meaning? Humans are caught in this web of signs for one reason according to Augustine, because of the sin of pride (*DDC* II, iv, 5). The diversity of language is a result of the sin of Babel.<sup>30</sup> Augustine pushes this theory even further when he states that the arbitrariness of the sign is a result of the fall. The fact that we have to speak using corporeal signs which only vaguely designate things is part of our having been banished into corporeal existence, into corporeal creation (Vance 1982: 23). As Eugene Vance writes, "Discursive understanding is fragmentary because of the fall" (1982: 27).

The corporeality of creation is manifested in the temporality of language. Augustine returns repeatedly to language because it is such a dramatic example of the time-boundedness of our existence. That is, we have to speak one word at a time. God, beyond time, does not speak this way. Vance continues, "If divine knowledge of temporality occurs, unlike man's, without division or difference within the knowing mind, so too, God's eternal word, unlike human speech, produces itself without any succession of syllables unfolding in time" (1982: 23). Christ, in turn, is the perfect

sign. Human language, which is imperfect signs, is at its best when it points towards eternity. Therefore Augustine likes poetry, with its timeless metrical structure, that is "beyond all temporal authority" (1982: 30).

But as with the Hebrew exegetes, Augustine remains in the world, in time, having only imperfect human language. How can a human surpass the letter of stone to get to the letter of the heart? For Augustine, education, that is, "the acquisition of signs," was the beginning of subjection to the Law. How can one reverse the process? How can humans shed their temporal body and temporal language and put on eternal language?

Augustine outlines two methods in his *Confessions* (Vance 1984). First, he turns to the *via negativa*, and in the dramatic scene with his mother in the garden, he abandons language in favor of the "silence of ineffable wisdom." Second, at the end of the *Confessions*, he appends an interpretation of Genesis. To limit his confession to his personal life would be to limit it to the "letter." He must re-speak the world, just as the Hebrew exegetes re-speak the world by speaking God's Name. He therefore concludes with "a re-wording of God's wording of the world" (Vance 1984: 622). This re-wording re-creates the world, the corporeal world, and thereby re-creates Augustine. He re-creates himself as a spiritual creation, a spiritual man, beyond words, beyond time, in the Sabbath rest when God stopped speaking.

For both Jews and Christians, the metalinguistic practices both depend on and give rise to linguistic ideologies. In the case of the Targum, an interpretation of divine speech is placed in the text and becomes part of the text as one part of the text (Exodus) is read in light of another part of the text (Genesis). Later exegetes developed and expanded the nascent Name-ideology found in the Targum until the Name swallowed up the entire text, and all notions of the meaning of words and texts became secondary to the definition and explication of the divine name. The Name became a model both for the holy text, conceived of as a complex of names, and for all effective, i.e., "magical," speech. The divine name was conceived of not only as the "metaphysical origin of all language"<sup>31</sup> but also as the source of efficacy in ritual language, written and spoken. Creativity in the exegetical process is demonstrated by finding new ways of locating the divine name in Scriptures, and new methods for manipulating the power of the Name in ritual, activities often labeled by scholars as "mysticism" and "magic."

For the Hebrew exegetes, the perfected model of the Name ideology can be hidden in human language (in Scripture), because Hebrew is the divine language. For Christians, as they develop their own variation on the divine language theme, the manner in which Word stands for God is the issue. Without the built-in connection of Hebrew text = Hebrew divine name, the manner in which names "stand for" objects becomes a problem. In John, the word is still God, but the word comes to dwell on earth not in a scroll, but instead the word is "made flesh." For Augustine, truth is beyond Hebrew and Greek, and a general theory of signs is necessary. He needed his own "prologue," or key, for understanding the text. In the end, however, Augustine is just as "magical" as the Name-manipulators, striving to use the text to gain a new



existence. Creativity is found in the process of employing words about words, particularly words about words about creation, to redefine the world and hence its human inhabitants.

## Notes

- 1 In writing histories of exegetical traditions, present-day scholars at times adopt the attitudes expressed by one side or the other in the continuing debates between Jews and Christians. Persuaded by some of the exegetical claims, scholars develop their own hierarchies of more and less legitimate exegesis, embarrassed, for example, by allegorical interpretations which appear to them to be wildly implausible in relation to the text. The impetus for such "wild" exegesis is, they argue, the exegetes's embarrassment about outsiders' rejection or ridicule of a text as "silly stories." Psychological attitudes towards texts are elusive at best. More importantly, by relying on psychological theories, scholars overlook the rich explanations and self-understandings reflected in the interpretations.
- 2 As Jakobson stated, "An ability to speak a given language implies an ability to talk about this language. Such a 'metalinguistic' operation permits revision and redefinition of the vocabulary used" (1972: 162).
- 3 This translation is from the edition of Diez Macho, 1962. He argues elsewhere (1960) that the presence of "anti-halakhic" (legal) material, inclusion of early geographical names, New Testament use of Targumic material, and disagreement with the Masoretic text are all evidence for an early (i.e. pre-Christian) date. Vermes (1960-1) compares several Targumic versions in an attempt to find the development of exegesis and to date the texts accordingly. For example, he argues that Targum Onkelos is Palestinian (not Babylonian) and that it is a revision of an earlier targum based on a Masoretic-like consonantal text. He shows that some exegetical ideas contained in the targums are prior to 300 BC. While he rejects many of Diez Macho's arguments, he also posits a pre-Christian date. Bowker (1969) states that the present text dates from the third century AD, but offers no conclusive arguments. For additional bibliography see McNamara (1966). The Targumic ideology of the divine name is presupposed by the rabbinic exegetical texts (third century-eighth century AD) discussed below.
- 4 Some names appear to contain Hebrew roots which are obvious guides to exegetes in their search for semantic meanings in names.
- 5 This is not to imply that the root of the name was in fact "to be," but only to state that the Exodus text appears to play with this connection. See de Vaux (1972).
- 6 Written canons differ from "non-literate" (i.e., oral) ones in that when the object language and the metalanguage are the same, the gloss can become the text. There is a transparency which permits the metalanguage to melt into the text. This is not true, for example, of the dual-functionality of divination, where the metalanguage (interpretation) cannot become the text (a bear claw for example).
- 7 Jakobson (1972: 161) distinguishes between three types of translation and comments on their relationship in a manner relevant to this study. First is intralingual translation or rewording (an interpretation of verbal signs by means of other signs of the same language), second, interlingual translation (translation proper, by means of another language), and finally intersemiotic translation (i.e., from verbal to non-verbal). Of particular interest to us is his comment about the second type of translation. It "substitutes messages in one language not for separate code-units but for entire messages

in some other language...such a translation is reported speech: the translator recodes and transmits a message received from another source" (1972: 162). Thus the deity's reported speech becomes yet another level of reported speech in the Targumic translation, as the process of translation highlights the already evident reported speech of the text.

- 8 See previous note.
- 9 In fact, the process is not only semantic, but metasemantic, that is, there is a discourse about the semantics of language. As Silverstein explains, "Glossing speech events take language itself, in particular the semantics of language, as the referent, or object of description" (1976: 16). This capacity for using language to talk about language is "what makes language unique among all the cultural codes for social communication...of what medium other than referential speech can we say that the behavior signs can describe the meanings of the signs themselves?" (1981: 16).
- 10 Speech about context-related speech, using the terminology developed in Silverstein (1976, 1981), is "metapragmatic."
- 11 According to Hayward (1974), the constant addition of the Aramaic word for "word" into the translation is the result of combining the root  $\text{>MR}$  ('say') with the divine name *YHWH* to "give a shorthand term for the (Memra) theology." This Memra theology reinforces for the readers the fact that the divine presence will be with the community in the future just as it had been in the past. Hayward does seem to be correct that there is an early connection between the name *YHWH* and the root "to be" as evidenced in the Targums, and perhaps in Exodus itself (de Vaux 1970). He has not, however, established his case that the word *memra* incorporates the exact ideology he enunciates. For example, he translates *YHY* "be there" instead of simply "be." This translation prepares the reader for his argument that the term includes being "there," i.e., presence with the community, making a circular argument. Also, he points out that *memra* is also used to refer to that aspect of God which punishes on earth; which either contradicts his *memra* theology or makes it simply a general presence, for both good and evil.
- 12 The standard explanation that *memra* is added in order to avoid anthropomorphism misses the point, as noted by Klein (1982).
- 13 *Meforash* is the passive participle from the root *PRS*, 'to explain, expound,' and is often translated as "explicated" or "interpreted." Classic discussions of the *Shem Ha-Meforash* include Bacher (1901), Gruenbaum (1901), Marmorstein (1927) and Cohon (1951).
- 14 Cohon (1951) argues that Exodus forbids the utterance of god's name, but it refers only to inappropriate use. The enigmatic "I am who I am" in Exodus 3: 14-15 is also cited as evidence that the deity's name was secret. However, the very same verses reveal the name Yahweh.
- 15 A complete analysis of the linguistic ideology of the Hebrew Scriptures is beyond the scope of this study. We can note that Moses repeats the deity's words as if the deity himself were saying them. God's words become deeds and the closest human equivalents (blessings and curses) may operate thus because they are perceived to stem from the deity and thus are also automatically effective. This automatic efficacy of blessings and curses continues to be discussed in rabbinic literature.
- 16 The Book of Jubilees dates from the second century BC. See Charlesworth (1983: 43-4).
- 17 The Prayer of Manasseh is found in the Apostolic Constitution and is dated ranging from the second century BC to the first century AD. Cf. Charlesworth (1985: 625-34).
- 18 In rabbinic literature, b. Berahot 55a states that Bezalel, who built the Temple, knew

- how to combine the letters by which the world was created. The letters were understood by the rabbinic commentators to be the letters of the divine name. See also, b. Succah 53b, b. Makkot 11a, Genesis Rabba 12: 10 and Hekhalot Rabbati 23. Fossum (1985) states that the theme of creation by means of the name was developed by the second century AD. He bases his conclusion in part on the names of the rabbis to whom the idea is attributed. While the historicity of specific attributions is likely to be challenged, the other citations (Jubilees, Targums, etc.) make his second-century claim supportable.
- 19 Sanhedrin 7: 5 and b. Sanhedrin 91a. Compare b. Sanhedrin 55a.
  - 20 Solomon uses a ring with the Name on it to subdue a demon (b. Gittin 68b). Moses kills an Egyptian with the Name (Exodus Rabba 2: 14).
  - 21 Cf. Note 22.
  - 22 Song of Songs Rabba 7: 9 (on Exodus 33: 6) recounts two theories about the divine Name, one that the Name erased itself and the other that an angel descended and erased it. In b. Sota 47a, Gechazi makes a copy of Jeroboam's calf with the name of God in its mouth, over which he says the first words of the Decalogue.
  - 23 B. Yoma 39b, jYoma 40d, iii, 7. In the present world, prayers are not heard because they do not include the Name (Midrash on Psalms 91).
  - 24 For elaborations of the creation and subsequent consumption of the calf, which leads to the forgetting of the name, see Scholem (1965: 165ff).
  - 25 For the image of the Torah as a collection of divine names, see Idel (1981). In the eleventh century Nachmanides stated, "We possess an authentic tradition showing that the entire Torah consists of the names of God and that the words we read can be divided in a very different way, so as to form names (Commentary on Bereshit 1: 1)." He cites the image of black fire on white fire as proof that the Torah can be read either in the traditional manner or as a series of names. The black fire on white fire image is found in Midrash Konen, Jellenik, *Bet Ha-Midrash II* 23-4.
  - 26 Attributed to Rabbi Ishmael in b. Erubin 13a. See Scholem 1965: 39.
  - 27 If the correct order had been given, anyone could use it to wake the dead or perform miracles (Midrash on Psalms 3: 2).
  - 28 The idea of Jesus as the Name of God does appear, as, for example, Christ as the Name of the Father (John 17: 6). See also Jesus as the Name in "The Gospel of Truth," Quispel (1955: 68-78).
  - 29 This does not mean that the Jews do in fact abandon all allegorical interpretation, only that their interpretations are perceived as being closer (more literal) readings of the Old Testament than the Christian readings.
  - 30 See the discussion in Vance (1982: 42).
  - 31 Scholem (1979: 63).
- References**
- Bacher, W. 1901. Shem Ha-Meforash. *Jewish Encyclopedia* 11: 262-4.
- Bowker, J. 1969. *The Targums and rabbinic literature*. London: Cambridge University Press.
- Charlesworth, J. 1983-5. *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha I and II*. New York: Doubleday.
- Cohon, S. 1951. The Name of God: a study in rabbinic theology. *Hebrew Union College Annual* 26: 579-604.
- de Vaux, R. 1970. The revelation of the Divine Name YHWH. In *Proclamation and presence: Old Testament essays in honor of G. H. Davies, J. I. Durham and J. R. Porter* (eds.), pp. 40-75. Richmond, VA: Knox.
- Diez Macho, A. 1960. The recently discovered Palestinian Targum. *Vetus Testamentum Supplement* 7: 222-45.
- 1968-79 *Neophyti I. Targum Palestinense ms de la Biblioteca Vaticana*. Edicion principe.
- Fossum, J. 1985. *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*. Tübingen: Mohr.
- Gruenbaum, M. 1901. *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sprach- und Sagenkunde*. Berlin: Calvary.
- Hayward, R. 1974. The Memra of YHWH and the development of its use in Targum Neofiti I. *Journal of Jewish Studies* 25: 412-18.
1981. *Divine Name and Presence: the Memra*. Totowa, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun.
- Idel, M. 1981. The concept of the Torah in Hekhalot literature and its metamorphoses in Kabbalah. *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* I: 23-84 (in Hebrew).
- Jackson, B. D. 1972. The theory of signs in St. Augustine's *De Doctrina Christiana*. In *Augustine: a collection of critical essays*, R. Marcus (ed.), pp. 92-147. Garden City, NY: Doubleday.
- Jakobson, R. 1972. On linguistic aspects of translation. In *Selected writings, Volume 5*, pp. 155-75. Gravenhage: Mouton.
- Jellinek, A. 1937. *Bet ha-Midrash* (6 vols.). Jerusalem: Bamberger & Wahrmann.
- Klein, M. 1982. *Anthropomorphism and anthropopathisms in the Targumim of the Pentateuch* (in Hebrew, English summary). Jerusalem: Makor.
- Marmorstein, A. 1927. The old Rabbinic doctrine of God. *Jews' College Publication* 10. London: Oxford University Press.
- McNamara, M. 1966. *The New Testament and the Palestinian Targumim of the Pentateuch*. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute.
- Quispel, G. 1955. The Gospel of truth. In *Jung Codex*, H. C. Puech, G. Quispel, W. C. van Unik (eds.), pp. 68-78. London: Mowbray; New York: Morehouse-Gorham Co.
- Scholem, G. 1965. *On the Kabbalah and its symbolism*. New York: Schocken.
1972. The Name of God and the linguistic theory of the Kabbalah. *Diogenes* 79: 59-80; 80: 164-94.
- Silverstein, M. 1976. Shifters, linguistic categories, and cultural descriptions. In *Meaning in anthropology*, K. Basso and H. Selby (eds.), pp. 11-55. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico.
1981. Metaforces of power in traditional oratory. Unpublished lecture.
- Vance, E. 1982. Saint Augustine: language as temporality. In *Mimesis: from mirror to method*, J. D. Lyons and S. G. Nichols Jr. (eds.), pp. 20-35. Hanover, NH: University Press of New England.
1984. The functions and limits of autobiography in Augustine's *Confessions*. *Poetics Today* 5 (2): 399-409.
- Vermes, G. 1960-1. The Targumic versions of Genesis 4: 3-16. *Annual of the Leeds Oriental Society* 3: 81-114.