

Eliezer Schlossberg

A BOOKLET ON THE NAMES OF THE LORD AND HIS ATTRIBUTES
ATTRIBUTED TO RAV SHMUEL BEN HOFNI GAON

Ninety years ago Goldziher published a short booklet written in Judaeo-Arabic dealing with The Names of the Lord and His Attributes. The main purpose of the booklet was to determine which names and attributes of the Lord may be attributed also to human beings.

Goldziher attributed the booklet to Rav Hai Gaon (d. 1048), but only twenty five years ago it was agreed upon that the author was Rav Shmuel Ben Hofni Gaon (d. 1013).

In this article the original Arabic version of the booklet is published, translated into Hebrew and annotated.

Raphael Shuchat

THE IMAGE OF THE VILNA GAON ACCORDING TO R. HAYYIM
VOLOZHIN — REALITY OR POLEMIC

The Vilna Gaon became an icon of Lithuanian Jewry representing the ideal of Torah scholarship and piety. However, the Gaon was a man who kept out of the public eye, withdrawn behind the shutters of his home in the four cubits of Torah. Few could claim to have come close to him and fewer could claim to be one of his disciples. Even though the Gaon died in 1797, the first full biography, *'Aliyot Eliyahu*, was published only in 1856. Even *Ma'aseh Rav*, the book that

records his personal customs, wasn't published until 1832. The short biographical sketches of the Gaon, published by his closest disciples as introductions to his works, demonstrate the delicate way in which his disciples attempted to represent their teacher. The discrepancies between the various biographical pieces present to us different approaches as to how the disciples presented the image of the Gaon. There were attempts to censor or at least leave out certain biographical elements so as not to add fuel to the already existing struggle between the *Mithnagdim* and the Hasidim as well as to keep the image of the Gaon as far as possible from the *Maskilim*. The main positions seem to be that of R. Hayyim Volozhin on the one hand and that of R. Menahem Mendel of Shklov on the other.

In this article I will demonstrate how R. Hayyim consistently left out all biographical elements of the Gaon's life relating to his knowledge of secular studies in order to keep the Gaon's image out of the reach of the *Maskilim*, and in his early sketches, he preferred to limit the mystical side of the Gaon in order not to describe him in a way too close to that of the Hasidic Rebbes. In this latter issue, R. Hayyim had a change of heart and his last biography, his introduction to the Gaon's commentary to *Sifra Dizni'uta*, he does a 180 degree turn and describes the Gaon as the mystic par excellence.

Shelly Goldberg

UNDERSTANDING THE *HILLULA* OF R. YOSEF Y. SCHNEERSON
THROUGH THE *HITBATLUT* OF R. MENAHEM MENDEL

This article has two major goals: a) to show that the main theme in Rabbi Menahem-Mendel Schneerson's (RMM) teaching is his total humbleness (*Hitbatlut*) in front of his father-in-law, Rabbi Yosef-Yitzhak (RYY); b) to explore the ontological uniqueness of the RYY's *Hillula* in RMM's view. The terms *Hillula* and *Hitbatlut* will be examined both according to Hasidic sources and research literature.

This study makes use of several approaches, including the mystical approach, in which a mystical meaning is given to the term *Histalkut* (elevation); the metaphysical approach, which deals with the eternity of the soul in this world after its *Histalkut* from the human body; the psychological approach, which deals both with *Hitbatlut* in front of the Holy One as well as with the complex relationship between the body (the carnal element) and the soul (the spiritual one); and the historiosophic approach, which deals with the place of the generation and its function in the

process of redemption.

The intensity of RMM's emotional tie with RYY is the cornerstone of the establishment of RYY's *Hillula*, which, in RMM's view, as reflected in his writings, is considered the most important *Hillula*. RMM considers RYY as a universal soul, the president of the last generation in exile and the first for redemption, like Moses.

RMM explains the sublime ontological root of RYY's soul in the upper worlds and its role in the placement of the *Shekhina* in the lower worlds. It is possible to say that RMM's versatile teaching of his father-in-law stems from his pragmatic-messianic perception of the world — the status of the Tzadik's soul after its *Histalkut* as the soul of the messiah.

In my opinion, the main importance and relevance of the above themes lies in the fact that Habad's Hasidim who see RMM as a king, view him in the same manner he himself viewed RYY.

Avraham Munitz

GOD'S FACE-HIDING IN ROSENZWEIG'S THOUGHT

Rosenzweig frequently uses the concept *Face-hiding*. In his system this concept is the opposite of Revelation. In this paper I try to present the philosophical significance of this concept, as it appears in the context of other concepts in his religious and philosophical thought. One of the goals of his *Star of Redemption* is to correlate between philosophy and theology. Face-saving as the opposite of revelation, illustrates the correlation between these two fields.

Rosenzweig tries to escape from holistic views in philosophy and from divine universal objects, such as god, gods and idols. Instead he puts the atomic individual in the center of his system. Divine objects are closed from each other. They hide their faces from each other as do men to each other.

For Rosenzweig the absence of face hiding enables the individual's genuine awareness of his being and his place. So from an ethical and social point of view, revelation and the correlative opposite of face hiding the existence of relations between God and man and between man and his fellow.

In summary, face-hiding serves Rosenzweig as a critical device against abstract theology and traditional philosophy, as a criterion for establishing the role of the individual in his pluralistic system, as an important ingredient in his epistemology and as a marker distinguishing between openness and closeness, between closeness

and distance as a transition to a system of ethical relations based on the love of man to his neighbor.

Ayalon Eidelstein

WAR, STATE & PROGRESS IN ROSENZWEIG'S STAR OF REDEMPTION

This article deals with three aspects of Rosenzweig's thought: his relationship to the First World War, to the modern nation and to the idea of historical progress. This article suggests a complex attitude to each of those aspects, and rejects the commonly held view that sees his negation of the war, the nation and progress as the constitutive foundations of Rosenzweig's philosophy. His Judeo-Christian eschatological vision functions as a perspective from which to criticize those concepts, but also ascribes them a positive role.

Uriel Barak

RABBI A. I. KOOK ON THE NATURE OF FRANZ ROSENZWEIG'S CONNECTION TO KABBALAH: ANALYSIS OF AN UNKNOWN LETTER BY R. ZVI YEHUDAH KOOK

There have been a number of studies dedicated to the analysis of the relationship of Franz Rosenzweig, the German-Jewish philosopher, to the Kabbalah. Some scholars are of the opinion that Rosenzweig's knowledge of Kabbalah was very minimal, and, therefore, played no significant part in his work. Others argued for assigning the Kabbalah a more prominent role in his thought.

This article presents for the first time a letter written by R. Zvi Yehudah Kook that deals with his father's ambivalent attitude towards Rosenzweig's relationship to Kabbalah. Essentially, my assessment of the content of this hitherto unknown letter supports those scholars who are of the opinion that the Kabbalah occupied an important place in Rosenzweig's thought. Rabbi A. I. Kook, in Zvi Yehudah's epistle, appears to vacillate between appreciation and criticism of Rosenzweig's oeuvre, and coincides interestingly with an entry from Rosenzweig's own diary.

Rosenzweig notes in a self-revelatory moment that “the true antecedents of my problem are after all in the Kabbalah”. *Inter alia*, this epistle helps to crystallize the views of Rabbi A. I. Kook regarding the special nature of Judaism in general and of the Kabbalah in particular.

To summarize, this letter is an interesting document that contributes to a primary analysis — or maybe provides us with an exclusive analysis — of Rabbi A. I. Kook’s attitude towards an understanding of the nature of Rosenzweig’s relationship to the Kabbalah. It also affords us with the opportunity to examine the response of one great Jewish thinker to the contemporary philosophical works of another.

Hanokh Ben-Pazi

LÉVINAS’S TALMUDIC READINGS:
PHILOSOPHY OR RELIGIOUS EXEGESIS?

The corpus of “Talmud Readings” created by Emmanuel Lévinas plays an important part in his discourse, which moves between Jerusalem and Athens. Lévinas tries to offer a philosophical explication of Talmudic passages, which includes ascribing philosophical meaning to the Talmudic discourse itself. At the same time, he seeks to give voice within the world of Western philosophy to Jewish wisdom and its particular ethical language.

Inquiring into that corpus can often lead one to wonder about the unique character of that project. Should one regard this as a type of Talmudic homiletics? Are we dealing with a creative personal interpretation of Talmud? Does Lévinas’ writing create a fair and appropriate understanding of the Talmudic text? Should this corpus be seen as a philosophical project?

This article takes up these questions by subjecting to a philosophical analysis the choice of the Babylonian Talmud as the basic text of “Jewish wisdom,” the text that best expresses that wisdom. That approach sets aside the biographical and practical question regarding the place of the Talmud in Lévinas’ own life and development and instead focuses attention on the philosophical significance of the project.

This study takes up three spheres of inquiry:

- (a) An examination of the literary and ideational aspects of the Talmudic genre according to Lévinas’ approach;
- (b) The ethical and philosophical meaning that Lévinas attributes to Talmudic thinking;

(c) The method offered by Lévinas for the philosophical analysis of Talmudic texts.

The study reaches this conclusion: Lévinas' project should be seen as an undertaking in the philosophy of ethics. "The ethics of *alterity*" offered by Lévinas and derived by him from "Talmudic wisdom" is also what directs the manner of his reading and exegesis of the Talmud. It appears, though, that Lévinas' exegesis can be seen nonetheless as a fair interpretation that one may consider to be within the traditional exegetical discourse surrounding the Talmud.