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THE GREAT NAME OF GOD

Leo Schaya

Leo Schaya *was born and raised within the Jewish tradition. He was particularly known for his writings on Jewish esoterism, with his book* The Universal Meaning of the Kabbalah *being one of the best known and often-quoted works in that field; however, he was also at home in the area of Sufi metaphysical interpretation. He lived most of his adult life in Nancy, France, where he shared his time between the elaboration of his metaphysical output and his interactions with spiritual seekers from various religious horizons. The following chapter concludes his aforementioned masterpiece on the Kabbalah.*

The Judaic confession of divine unity, the scriptural formula of which—the *Shema*—combines several names of God, represents for the Jew one of the most important "means of union"; another central or direct means of attaining union with God lies in the invocation of a single one of his names.

The tetragrammaton YHVH—the "lost word"—was above all others the "saving" name in the tradition of Israel; it is known as *shem hameforash*, the "explicit name," the one, that is, of which every consonant reveals and symbolizes one of the four aspects or fundamental degrees of divine all-reality. It is also called the "complete name" and the "synthesis of syntheses," because it includes all the other divine names, each of which, by itself, expresses only one or another particular aspect of the universal principle; it is also called the "unique name" because it is for the "unique people," and more especially because of its incomparable spiritual efficacy, in that it gives the possibility of direct actualization of the divine presence (*shekhinah*). It was exactly on account of the direct outpouring of divine grace brought about by the invocation of the name YHVH that the traditional authority in Israel found it necessary, even before the destruction of the second Temple, to forbid the spiritually fallen people to invoke, or even merely to pronounce the tetragrammaton. In his "Guide of the Perplexed," Maimonides says on this subject: "A priestly blessing has been prescribed for us, in which the name of the Eternal (YHVH) is pronounced as it is written (and not in the form of a substituted name) and that name is the 'explicit name.' It was not generally known how the name had to be pronounced, nor how it was proper to vocalize the separate letters, nor whether any of the letters which could be doubled should in fact be doubled. Men who had received special instruction

transmitted this one to another (that is, the manner of pronouncing this name) and taught it to none but their chosen disciples, once a week. . . . There was also a name composed of twelve letters, which was holy to a lesser degree than the name of four letters; in my opinion it is most probable that this was not a single name but one composed of two or three names which, joined together, had twelve letters (representing their synthesis).[1] This was the name which was substituted for the name of four letters wherever the latter occurred in the reading (of the Torah), just as today we use the name beginning with the consonants *Alef*, *Daleth* (*ADoNaY*, 'My Lord'). Doubtless this twelve-letter name had originally a more special meaning than that conveyed by the name *Adonai*; it was not at all forbidden to teach it and no mystery was made of it in the case of any well-instructed person; on the contrary, it was taught to anyone who wished to learn it. This was not so in respect to the tetragrammaton; for those who knew it taught it only to their sons and disciples, once a week. However, as soon as undisciplined men, having learnt the twelve-letter name, began thereafter to profess erroneous beliefs—as always happens when an imperfect man is confronted by a thing which differs from his preconceived notion of it—they began to hide this name also and no longer taught it except to the most devout men of the priestly caste, for use when blessing the people in the sanctuary; it was indeed on account of the corruption of men that the pronunciation of the *shem hameforash* had already been abandoned, even in the sanctuary: 'After the death of Simeon the Just,' so say the Doctors, 'his brother priests ceased to bless by the name (YHVH) but blessed by the name of twelve letters.' They also say: 'At first it was transmitted to every man (in Israel), but after heedless men increased in number, it was no longer transmitted save to men of the priestly caste and the latter allowed (the sound) of it to be absorbed (during the priestly blessing) by the (liturgical) melodies intoned by their fellow-priests.'"

Even after the destruction of the second Temple, however, invocation of the "explicit name" appears to have continued as the sacred prerogative of a few initiates who were unknown to the outside world and who served as the spiritual poles of the esoteric "chain of tradition" (*shalsheleth hakabbalah*). The function of this chain is the initiatic transmission—uninterrupted through the ages—of the "mysteries of the Torah," which include, among others, the mystery of the invocation of the holy names; except for the extremely restricted "elect" who retain the high function of guarding and secretly invoking the

[1] Like the eight-letter name: YAHDVNHY, which is the synthesis of the two names YHVH and ADoNaY (My Lord).

"complete name,"[2] no one may know its exact pronunciation. Although today Hebrew scholars render the name YHVH by "Jehovah" on the strength of the Masoretic vocalization given in the Bibles and prayerbooks, or by "Yahveh," in an attempt to imagine some way to pronounce it, these introductions of vowels into the tetragrammaton certainly do not correspond to the authentic pronunciation, and that is why it is written here only in the form of the four consonants which are its known basis.

The prevailing ignorance as regards the pronunciation of the "explicit name" is certainly not the result of mere "forgetfulness" nor of a purely human decision arrived more than two thousand years ago. The suppression of the teaching and pronunciation of this name—by decree of the traditional authority—is so categorical and so radical in its consequences that it can be affirmed that God himself has withdrawn this name from the mass of the people of Israel. However, such intervention "from above" expresses not only the rigor, but also the mercy of God, who foresaw that the human recipients of "the last days," no longer possessing the requisite theomorphism, would be shattered by the weight of his lightning descent.

The "complete name," therefore, cannot be the medium for deifying invocation in our age, which in the prophecies is called the "end of time"; this being so, we must consider its fragmentary substitutes without particular reference to the "twelve-letter name," the ritual use of which lasted only a short time. As we have seen, it had to be replaced by the name *Adonai*, which has been pronounced, ever since the destruction of the Temple, every time the tetragrammaton occurs in the reading of the Torah and the daily prayers. It should be noted that the substitution of the name *Adonai* was decreed only in respect to the exoteric ritual, whether performed in the synagogue or in private, the aim of which is the salvation of the soul in a restricted sense, that is, within the confines of the ego; it does not have in view the invocation which is intended to raise man's being to the highest "place" (*hamakom*) which embraces all that is. The restriction does not apply to the "two-letter name," YH (יה) which is pronounced *Yah* and is nothing other than the first half of the "name of four letters," YHVH (יהוה); from the very fact that it is directly substituted for the *shem hameforash*, this name must have the same esoteric potentialities as the latter, without, however, involving the danger of

[2] According to the word of God addressed to Moses: "Thou shalt say unto the children of Israel: 'YHVH, the God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob hath sent me to you. This is my name for ever, and this is my memorial (*zikhri*, the invocation of God) unto all generations'" (Exodus 3:15).

a too sudden actualization of the divine.[3] This even appears obvious, firstly because the "name of two letters" has the same transcendent significance as the tetragrammaton, which includes it and further, in a more general way, because every divine name not referring to a particular quality to the exclusion of other qualities, refers to the being or essence of God.

* * *

Since the "complete name" was withdrawn from the Jewish people, they have used above all the following three names, which together replace the unity of the "four letters"; firstly the name *YaH* which integrates the two first letters—the "transcendental half"—of YHVH; secondly the name *Elohenu*, "Our God," which includes the six active causes of cosmic construction and represents divine immanence as first revealed in the subtle, celestial, and psychic world, symbolized by the *vav*; thirdly the name *Adonai*—an exoteric replacement for the name YHVH—designates *malkhuth*, the final *he*, representing divine immanence as manifested particularly in the corporeal world.

But the name which concerns us here is *Yah*, the transcendental nature of which leads, in principle, to the state of *Yobel* (Jubilee), final "deliverance" (in the same sense as the Hindus understand the word *moksha*). This name seems to represent not only the "means of grace" *par excellence* of the final cycle of Jewish history, but also that of its beginning. In fact, it can be deduced from Scripture that *Yah* was the divine name used particularly by Jacob and his people, whereas YHVH was the "name of Israel" so long as Israel represented the "portion of YHVH." In the Psalms (135:3-4) it is said: "Praise *Yah*, for he is good! YHVH, sing praises to his name, for it is pleasant! For *Yah* has chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his costly possession," the possession, that is, of YHVH, according to Deuteronomy (32:9): "For the portion of YHVH is his people." And Isaiah (44:5) explicitly distinguishes between the "name of Jacob" and the "name of Israel": "One shall call himself by the name of Jacob (*Yah*) and another shall subscribe with his hand, unto YHVH and surname himself by the name of Israel." This distinction can be explained in

[3] In his commentary on the *Sefer Yetsirah* written in 931, Gaon Saadya de Fayyum says: "When it is said: 'YaH has two letters, YHVH has four letters,' what is meant is that YaH is one half of the name YHVH. Now, the half was said everywhere and at all times, but the whole was only said in the Sanctuary in a particular period and at the moment of the blessing of Israel." And the Talmud (*Erubin* 18b) states: "Since the destruction of the Sanctuary, the world need only use two letters (as a means of invocation, that is, the two first letters of YHVH, forming the name YaH)."

relation to the history of Israel, all the phases of which are contained in three fundamental cycles: the first, or "patriarchal" cycle, from Shem to Jacob's victorious struggle at Peniel with the divine manifestation; the second, or "Israelite," cycle, from Peniel, where Jacob and his people received the name of Israel, to the destruction of the second Temple; and the third, or "final," cycle, from the collapse of the priestly service and theocracy to the advent of the Messiah. Now Shem was the "seed" of the Jewish race; Abraham was the "father of many peoples" and Isaac the "sacrifice of oneself to God," while Jacob gave birth to the twelve tribes and the "mystical body" of Israel; so the latter is considered above all others as the patriarch of Israel and the people of God are called "Jacob" until the struggle at Peniel.

"Jacob was chosen to belong to *Yah*," that is, to be raised up in spirit to divine transcendence. But at Peniel there was a fundamental change in the mystical destiny of Jacob and his people, for it was said to him (Genesis 32:28): "Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel (he who struggles with God), for thou hast striven with God and with men and hast prevailed." In the language of the Kabbalah this means that after having "wrestled with God until victory"—absorption in the transcendence of *Yah*—Jacob prevailed also at Peniel over the divine manifestation called "man," that is, over the "descent" of God into humanity. This revelatory and redemptive "descent" is symbolized, in sacred ideography, by the *vav* (ו). According to the *Zohar* (*Terumah* 127a): "When the *vav* emerges mysteriously self-contained from the *yod-he* (*YaH*), then Israel attains to his costly possession," its *corpus mysticum*, which is identical with the *Sefirah malkhuth*, represented by the last *he* of the tetragrammaton. Thus, thanks to the sacred struggle of its patriarch, the people entered into possession of the reality hidden in the last two letters of the *shem hameforash*—the spiritual (V) and substantial (H) fullness of the divine immanence—and itself became, in its mystical body, the "final *He*," the "portion of YHVH."

It appears, therefore, that during the "Jacobite" phase the people were not yet the "possession of YHVH," just as YHVH—the "complete name" or actualized unity of divine transcendence (YH) and divine immanence (VH)—was not yet the "possession of Israel." The people of "Jacob" was centered on the transcendent aspect of God: *Yah*. In that cyclical moment and in that environment, spiritual realization must not necessarily have required initiation into the sacred sciences (symbolized by the *vav*), any more than it needed the priestly service in the sanctuary (represented by the last *he* of the tetragrammaton). It was only when YHVH established the roots

of the earthly center of his presence in the midst of Jacob's family—which thereby became "Israel," or the Chosen People—that the *vav* or "mysteries of the faith" had to be communicated to it through the intermediary of its patriarch. These mysteries, transmitted from generation to generation to the "children of Israel," were lost at the time of their servitude in Egypt, but were reborn and permanently crystallized in the revelation on Sinai; and the "final *he*" of YHVH, the pure and imperceptible substance of the *shekhinah*, called the "Community of Israel," entered into the Holy Land and took up its abode in the Temple of Jerusalem, where the High Priest blessed all the people by the *shem hameforash*.

By the grace of the "complete name," the Chosen People long ago actualized the "kingdom of God" in the Holy Land, but on account of their sins the first Temple was destroyed and Israel had to suffer exile in Babylon: ". . . during the whole seventy years of exile," says the *Zohar* (*Shemoth* 9b), "Israel had no divine light to guide her and, truly, that was the essence of the exile. When, however, Babylon's power was taken away from her and Israel returned to the Holy Land, a light did shine for her, but it was not as bright as before (when Israel received the emanation of the 'complete name,' which was broken up by the sins which also caused the destruction of the first Temple), being only the emanation of the 'lower *he*' (the *shekhinah*, or 'mystical body' of Israel, identical with that of the second Temple), since the whole of Israel did not return to purity to be a 'peculiar people' as before. Therefore, the emanation of the supernal *yod* did not descend to illumine in the same measure as before, but only a little. Hence Israel was involved in many wars until 'the darkness covered the earth' and the 'lower *he*' was darkened and fell to the ground (so that Israel was forbidden to invoke the 'complete name') and the upper source was removed as before (as at the time of the destruction of the first Temple), and the second Temple was destroyed and all its twelve tribes went into exile in the kingdom of Edom.[4] The *he* also went into exile

[4] The name of the biblical kingdom of Edom (situated between the Dead Sea and the Gulf of Elath) is here used as a symbolic term of the whole Roman Empire. According to the Kabbalah, Edom symbolizes sometimes the imperfect or unbalanced state of creation preceding its present state—the latter being an ordered manifestation of the *Fiat Lux*—and sometimes the idolatrous world of antiquity and, by extension, every materialistic, profane, or atheistic civilization, such as our own. The Bible (Genesis 36) identifies Edom with Esau, who sold his birthright—implying the right of the first-born, the major patriarchal blessing—for "a mess of pottage." Therefore, in the Jewish tradition, Esau or Edom is opposed to Jacob or Israel, as the animal and materialistic tendency of man is opposed to his spiritual and theomorphic tendency.

there. . . ." the *shekhinah* was "decentralized," dispersed with Israel all over the world. It continued to radiate only through weak "reflections" wherever there was a community of orthodox Jews; nevertheless, its sacred "embers" have continued to flare up with an increased light and, sporadically, its true "grandeur" has been recaptured amidst the elect; these are the *Mekubbalim*, or initiated Kabbalists, who—with certain exceptions, such as the "false Messiahs"—formed the "pillars" of the exiled people; but they appear to have become a negligible minority in the era of the triumph of "Edomite" civilization, this modern world of ours which has even been transplanted to the Holy Land itself.

According to the *Zohar*, David, through the holy spirit, foresaw the end of the last exile of Israel—identifying it with the very "end of days" in accordance with the prophecies—and revealed it in Psalm 102:19:[5] "This shall be written for the future (or the last) generation and a people which shall be created (in the time of the 'end') shall praise *Yah*!" The same prophecy is hidden in the verse from Malachi (3:23): "Behold, I will send you Elijah (my God is *Yah*) the prophet (whose very name reveals which divine name was to be invoked during his pre-Messianic ministry and who represents, not only the type of the eternal master of masters, but also the type of all prophetic activity preceding and directly preparing the universal redemptive act of God's anointed), before the coming of the great and terrible day of YHVH." Finally, the *Zohar* shows the exact reason why the name *Yah*—as in the time of Jacob—represents the means above all others of salvation in the period from the destruction of the Temple to the advent of the Messiah; and this reason becomes fully apparent in our day, when even the believing Jews can no longer live in freedom from the materialistic and profane organization of the modern world and so are unable any longer perfectly to carry out the Mosaic law, which presupposes as its "sphere of activity" either a theocracy or a closed traditional world.[6] Now, the *Zohar* (*Terumah* 165b) says, referring to

[5] This Psalm is called the "prayer of the unhappy man" whose "days vanish into smoke" and "are like a shadow at its decline." These phrases refer to the end of time.

[6] That the "name of two letters" applies to the present time is made clear not only in the saying from the Talmud (*Erubin* 18b) which we have quoted, but also in the following formulation, amongst others, which was used in the school founded by the great master Isaac Luria (1534-72) and which shows that a spiritual method was based upon it as modern times approached: "For the sake of union of the Holy One, be he blessed, with his *shekhinah*, in fear and in love, that the name *YaH*, be blessed, may be unified in complete unification." It should be remembered that the phrase "to unify the name" has the meaning, from the point of view of method: to invoke the divine name.

the name *Yah*: "All is included in this name: those that are above (epitomized in the *yod*, the ideogram of pure transcendence, *kether-hokhmah*) and those that are below (hidden, in its principal and undifferentiated state, in the 'upper *he*,' *binah*, the archetype of immanence). In it the six hundred and thirteen commandments of the Torah, which are the essence of the supernal and terrestrial mysteries, are included." When this name is invoked sincerely, then it is as though one were carrying out all the commandments of the Jewish religion. This name compassionately forgives and compensates for the inadequacy of man in relation to the divine will; that is why the psalmist and "prophet of *Yah*" cried out: "In my anguish I called upon *Yah*; *Yah* heard my prayer and set me in a large place" (Psalm 118:5). "I shall not die, I shall live and declare the works of *Yah*. *Yah* has chastened me sorely, but he has not given me over to death. Open the gates of righteousness before me; I will enter into them, praising *Yah*!" (Psalms 118:17-19). God can and will save Zion, not by his rigor, but by his compassion, when "time shall have come to its end": "Thou wilt arise and have compassion upon Zion; for it is time to be gracious unto her, for the appointed time is come!" (Psalms 102:13).[7]

The name *Yah* does not have the "descending" efficacy of the *shem hameforash*; it lacks the direct influx of the *vav* or "living God," the spiritual brilliance of which cannot be borne without the presence of the "final *he*," represented at the same time by the Temple and its priestly service, the transmission and practice of the sacred sciences, the functioning of theocratic institutions, and the conformity of an entire people to the divine will. Yet the reasons for the substitution of the name *Yah* for that of YHVH are not only restrictive, for, since they are connected, from the cyclical point of view, with the "end of time," this end ceases also to be of a purely negative character; on the contrary, according to the prophets, it precedes a positive renewal, namely, the creation of "a new Heaven and a new earth"—more perfect than

[7] "For He hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did YHVH behold the earth to hear the groaning of the prisoner (of the civilization of 'Edom') and to loose those that are appointed to death (represented by the anti-spiritual life of the modem world)" (Psalms 102:19-20). "YHVH is full of compassion and gracious, slow to anger and plenteous in mercy. He will not always contend, neither will he keep his anger forever. He hath not dealt with us after our sins, nor requited us according to our iniquities, for as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his goodness towards them that hear him. As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed us from our transgressions. Like a father hath compassion upon his children (and *Yah* is precisely the name of the divine 'father,' *hokhmah*) so hath YHVH compassion upon them that fear him. For he knoweth our frame; He remembereth that we are dust (and can in no way change the cyclical conditions in which we are born and have to live)" (Psalms 103:8-14).

those now existing—as well as the creation of a new Jerusalem, whose "places shall be sacred to YHVH and will never be laid waste nor destroyed." By the very fact that it is the name to be invoked by the "last generation," *Yah* is also the name for the return to the "beginning," to the perfect original of all things. It is different from the tetragrammaton, the efficacity of which is above all "descending," revelatory, and existential, for the name *Yah* is in fact the name of "ascent" and of redemption; it is exactly the name of the "beginning" and of the "end" of every ontological emanation and cosmic manifestation of God, while the name YHVH is the whole emanation, and the whole manifestation.

The "upper (or transcendent) YHVH" manifests through the "lower (or immanent)[8] YHVH"; in the same way, the "upper (or ontological) *Yah*" manifests through the "lower *Yah*" or cosmic principle, which retains its transcendent nature everywhere, even "below." Therefore, if the "lower YHVH" represents divine immanence, the "lower *Yah*" then represents "transcendent immanence." The *yod* which, in its pure transcendence "on high" is the unity of *kether* and *hokhmah*, signifies "below," in the metacosmic center of the cosmos, the unity of the *shekhinah* and its active aspect, *metatron*, the cosmic intellect, the inner regulator of creation, while the following *he* represents its passive aspect *avir*, "ether," the quintessence—the *he* having in fact the numerical value of five—of the four subtle and the four coarse elements; it is, as we have already seen, the undifferentiated principle of all subtle, celestial, or psychic substance and of all coarse or corporeal matter. If the *shekhinah*, in so far as it dwells in the prototypical and spiritual world (*olam haberiyah*), is the "transcendent immanence" of *kether*, then *metatron* is that of *hokhmah*, and *avir* that of *binah*; now just as the three highest *Sefiroth* cannot be separated one from another, since they represent the one infinite and indivisible principle, *Yah*, so also *metatron* and *avir* must not be separated from the *shekhinah*, of which they are respectively the active or regulating aspect and the receptive or generative aspect. These three immanent principles, undifferentiated, compose the "lower *Yah*," also called the "heaven of heavens," the inseparable unity of the tenth, ninth, and eighth heaven being "the one who rides in *Araboth*,[9] (the seventh heaven):

[8] These two aspects of YHVH are revealed to Moses in the Scriptures (Exodus 34:6) when God shows him His attributes (*Middoth*) beginning with the twice repeated: "YHVH, YHVH *El rahum wehanun*. . . ." (YHYH, YHVH, God merciful and compassionate. . . .)

[9] It should be remembered that the word *Araboth* for the seventh heaven, translated sometimes as "clouds," sometimes by "plains," "desert," or "heaven," is derived from the root ARB, which means something mixed. In fact, *avir*, the undifferentiated ether, that "pure and imperceptible

Yah is his name" (Psalms 68:5). The "heaven of heavens," identical with the prototypical "world of creation" (*olam haberiyah*) is the intermediary plane between the Sefirothic "meta-cosmos" and the created cosmos which begins in the seventh heaven, *Araboth*, the "surface of the lower waters." The "lower *Yah*" is therefore "transcendent immanence," the mediator between pure transcendence and immanence in that it penetrates that which is created and is called by the last two letters of the "lower YHVH."[10]

When YHVH comes down from the highest "place" to the center of this world, he brings the secrets of all the divine and cosmic degrees, the "mysteries of the Torah" with their various graces; thus his "four letters" form what is preeminently the revealing name, while *Yah* is enthroned on the "surface of the waters," where the "heavens and the earth" begin and end, that is to say the whole of the world "created in one single instant"; there it is that all creatures emerge from God and return to him, in a single "cry of joy" which is nothing other than the "primordial sound." The name *Yah* is the revealed utterance of this inarticulate and universal "cry" or "sound" which manifests and reabsorbs the entire cosmos; it is the name of creative and redemptive joy. Thus the Psalmist cries out: "Make way for him who rides in *Araboth*: *Yah* is his name. Rejoice before him!" "What the verse tells us," comments the *Zohar* (*Terumah* 165b), "is that the ancient of ancients (the supreme principle) rideth in the *Araboth* (that he is really present) in the sphere of *Yah*, which is the primordial mystery emanating from him, namely the ineffable name *Yah*, which is not identical with him (the absolute), but is a kind of veil emanating from him. This veil is his name, it is his chariot, and even that is not manifested (in the cosmos, but is enthroned on the 'surface of the waters'). It is his 'great name.' . . . For when all is well with this name, then harmony is complete, and all worlds rejoice in unison."

Yah, in its immanent aspect, is the immediate cause of the cosmos, the

air" of the eighth heaven, is manifested in *Araboth* in its first differentiation, subtle substance or "water" which reflects the uncreated light, or spiritual "fire" descending from the *shekhinah* or from its universal irradiation, *metatron*. Now the "surface of the waters" shines so brightly in the light of the divine "fire" that it seems to be utterly fused or "mixed" in it. This "mixture" or more precisely this "immanence" of the spirit in the subtle substance, which endures as long as the cosmos subsists, produces the whole of the seven "heavens," *shamaim*, this word being composed of *esh*, spiritual "fire" and of *maim*, substantial "waters."

[10] The *vav* of the "lower YHVH—having the numerical value of six—symbolizes the *shekhinah* which penetrates the first six of the seven heavens constituting the subtle "world of formation" (*olam hayetsirah*). The "final *he* of the lower YHVH"—having the numerical value of five—represents *avir*, the quintessence, in that it has descended into the lowest heaven, there to dwell as the ether or undifferentiated principle of the four elements constituting *olam haasiyah*, the sensory or corporeal "world of fact"; thus the "final *he*," dwelling in the lowest heaven, is the immediate and omnipresent center of our world.

cause that transcends all its effects: it remains hidden in the prototypical world, as uncreated and infinite light. But its irradiation transpierces its envelope, the ether, with a "sound" which is that of the revelatory, creative, and redemptive "word"; this is the "voice" of the Creator, the "primordial sound" which produces the two lower worlds, the world of subtle "formation" and the sensory world of "fact." It is the "inner voice" which sounds in the innermost depths of all things, so that it is said that "the heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork. Day unto day uttereth speech and night unto night revealeth knowledge. There is no speech, no language where the sound is not heard: their voice resounds through all the earth and their words go out to the end of the world. . ." (Psalms 19:2-5).

The "inner" (divine) voice is in truth the very light of God, an infinite light which, by refraction in the ether, has been transformed into revelatory, creative, and redemptive "sound." That is the universal "name" of God, inwardly his light, outwardly his voice, emitted spontaneously and in innumerable modes—articulate or inarticulate—by "everything that has a soul." This is why the psalmist calls, not only to men, but to everything he sees as animated by the universal name, to invoke that name for the glory of the "named" and the salvation of the world; he even goes so far as to exhort the "heaven of heavens" to join in the invocation, because it is from there, from *Yah* itself, that the voice in effect descends and resounds on the "surface of the waters"—where the created heavens begin—and is thence transmitted throughout the whole of existence, even to the earthly "abysses." "Praise *Yah*! Praise YHVH from the height of the heavens! Praise him in the heights! Praise ye him, all his angels! All his hosts, praise ye him! Praise ye him, sun and moon! Praise him, all ye stars of light! Praise him, ye heavens of heavens and the waters that are above the heavens! . . . Praise YHVH from below on the earth, ye sea-monsters and all ye deeps; fire and hail, snow and vapors, stormy wind fulfilling his word, mountains and all hills; fruitful trees and all cedars; beasts and all cattle; creeping things and winged fowl! Kings of the earth and all peoples, princes and all judges of the earth; both young men and maidens, old men and children; let them praise the name of YHVH! For his name alone is exalted; his glory is above the earth and heaven. . ." (Psalms 148).

For the prophet-king, the synonym of this universal praise is either the call to the "great name," *Yah*, or the call to the "complete name," YHVH;[11] this

[11] The name *Yah* is the direct and synthetic articulation of the "primordial sound," whereas the name YHVH is the indirect and "explicit" articulation of the same; every holy name moreover represents a more or less explicit utterance of the divine voice, but to a lesser degree than the name YHVH.

is why his exhortation begins with the words: "Praise *Yah*! Praise YHVH! . . ." This universal invocation is made up of the indefinite multitude of modes in which the divine voice chooses to speak through his "organs" which are his creatures; however, where all worlds, all beings, all things emerge directly from their first and divine unity, that is, from *Yah* "who rides on *Araboth*," there is only one mode of invocation, a single sound, a single cry, which expresses the joy of myriads of creatures in union with the One, the Unique. For where all beings issue from God is the place where all return to him without delay; here, on the "surface of the waters," in the seventh heaven, *Araboth*, all that becomes separated from the Lord is separated only in order to be reunited with him. In effect, his creative act and his redemptive act are experienced there as one and the same thing: thanks to separation from him, union with him takes place.

Beings emerge like so many "sparks" from the irradiation of the *shekhinah*, that is to say of *metatron*, the divine "sun" which contains them all in so far as they are immanent and unseparated archetypes. On leaving this luminous world, where all is one with God, the sparks become enveloped in the differentiated manifestation of *avir*, that is, in the subtle "waters" of the seventh heaven, over the surface of which the "wind of *Elohim*" breathes and produces innumerable "waves." This wind is the cosmic spirit, *metatron*, which sets *avir*, the universal substance, in motion in order for it to produce subtle "waves," that is, souls each one of which is animated, illuminated, and inhabited by a spiritual "spark," a "living being." Each "wave" appearing on the "surface of the waters," whether issuing from God or returning from the depths of the cosmic "ocean," bursts into a single cry of joy and expands over the whole extent of the existential sea, the whole of *Araboth*. Over this hovers the eighth heaven, *avir*, the undifferentiated and translucid ether, which is wholly penetrated by the spiritual sun, *metatron*, so that the whole firmament itself appears like a sun, illuminating the "surface of the waters" from one end to the other. As we have said, each "wave" produced on this surface instantly expands in the supreme invocation and becomes the whole of the indefinite expanse, the immense "mirror," which is so filled with divine light that it mingles—in essential "fusion" and not in qualitative "confusion"—with the "radiant face" of *Yah* inclined towards it. Thus each being is simultaneously united with the whole of existence and with the infinite source of existence.

But if it is said that this integral union takes place at the very instant when the created being issues from uncreated being, one may wonder how the being then descends to the lower heavens and down to this earth in the form of a separate individual or separate "world." This descent takes place

as follows: The "fine upper point" of the created being, which is its spiritual or divine "spark," remains in the seventh heaven in constant fusion with the infinite light of God, whilst its extension downwards—inwardly a spiritual vibration, outwardly a subtle "wave"—begins to expand on the "surface of the waters" and descend into the midst of the cosmic "ocean," there to follow its predestined path. The created being is similar in this way to a letter of the Hebrew alphabet, which, starting from its upper point, opens out first in the form of a horizontal stroke and is prolonged in one fashion or another in the direction of its lower limit. Just as letters, when pronounced, return to their origin—the silent world of the uncreated and creative Word—so do animate beings or subtle "waves," having issued with the "primordial sound" from the divine silence and having vibrated through the heavens as far as here below, then return from their terrestrial end-point towards their celestial point of departure, from which they have never been separated and which is itself in permanent union with God.

We have seen that all created beings without exception issue through the same invocation—the "primordial sound"—from their divine origin and return to it through this same "cry for joy." This simultaneously creative and redemptive sound is heard when the vibration of the divine light falls on the first subtle and cosmic expanse of the ether, on the "surface of the waters." Each of the waves formed therein truly "bursts" with joy and is nothing but an exclamation of gladness which expands over the whole of *Araboth*; each being there is just a "voice" vibrating with bliss, joined with all the other "cries" in the one "voice of YHVH" which "resounds over the waters" (Psalms 29:3). This "voice," this first and universal sound, expressed simultaneously by the Creator and by all his creatures, is symbolized in sacred ideophony by the vowel *a*; this issues from the *y* (*yod*)—from the unity of *shekhinah-metatron*—and spreads out indefinitely to the confines of the existential "ocean," through the *h* (*he*) or *avir*, that "very pure and imperceptible air" coming from the mouth of God. Such is the genesis of the divine great name, *Yah*, of which it is said (Psalms 150:6): "Let everything that hath breath praise *Yah*! *Halaluyah*! (praised be *Yah*)."[12]

[12] In the Apocalypse (19:6-7) there is also an allusion to the invocation of *Yah* by the "waters" of the cosmic ocean; St. John speaks of their "voice" which says *Hallelujah*! and of the redemptive joy which goes with the invocation: "And I heard as it were the voice of a great multitude and as the voice of many waters, and as the voice of mighty thunderings, saying: Hallelujah: for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth!"

Let us remember that "Hallelujah" represents not only a form of invocation of *Yah* in Judaism, but also became, by way of the Psalms, a praise of God in the Christian tradition.

God, by invoking his creative and redemptive name, causes everything that exists to issue from him and to return into him; by invoking his name with him, every being is born from him, lives by him, and is united with him

The Great Name of God by Leo Schaya

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