

THE FIRST SENTENCE OF PSALM CIV.

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IN dealing with the first sentence of Psalm civ., too much may be read into it and because of the Kabbalistic treatment I may be accused of giving flight to my imagination. Notwithstanding the approach, the treatment is rather conservative. The paper is not intended to be exhaustive. The esoterism of *The Sepher Yezirah* is inexhaustible as is that of the Bible and many of the post-Biblical writings.

The author of the Psalm begins with a sentence of thirty-six letters, the subject of this paper. The sentence is divided into three equal parts, with a slight exception, three clauses, respectively containing, twelve, thirteen and eleven letters. The latter arrangement may have been an arbitrary one by later arrangers, but all three are three distinct ideas, clauses, and are admissible as entities. The sentence begins with *Beth* and ends with *Tau*, the beginning and the end. The *Aleph*, (A) is expected as it is in the Book of Genesis, Genesis beginning with (B) Braishes. The *Aleph* is included in the *Mem*, (M) *Shin*, (SH) *Aleph*, (A) arrangement below.

We have the thirty-six letters divided, practically into three equal parts of twelve each. For the theory of the formation or cosmogony in *The Sepher Yezirah* let us multiply the twelve departments of the Solar Zodiac by the three governing elements as understood by the ancient Hebrews, *Mem*, *Shin*, *Aleph*, resulting in the thirty-six.

We know that the Pythagorean tetractys, one to four, included a fourth element and resulted in the arithmetical basis of decimal: one plus two plus three plus four equals ten.¹ The *Yezirah's* three

¹ Not wishing to make this paper prolix, the reader may read in *The Sepher Yezirah* of the completion of all things in ten spheres which corresponds to the arithmetical system in Nature, of Pythagoras.

resulted in six: one plus two plus three equals six by which holy three letters the great fundamentals were represented. It strikes me that the *six* may have represented the six days in which *all* was completed, which is again in line with the Biblical doctrine of creation. The author of the Psalm either follows the theory of *Yezirah* or the traditional Kabbala, part of which went to form *Yezirah*. It is immaterial, here, which of the two came first.

Now, aside from the Solar Zodiac and *Yezirah's* formation of it through the Hebrew language and numbers, which are interchangeable, the three elements referred to above, are, Water (*Mem*), Fire (*Shin*), and Air (*Aleph*).

The first sentence of the Psalm contains *Mem* (once), *Shin* (twice), *Aleph* (thrice). One clause contains, one of the six letters,—another, two, and the third, three, corresponding to the six rings which seal the three mystic mothers, *Aleph*, *Mem*, *Shin*, found in *Yezirah*. Kabbalistically, the three letters have to me an androgynous value, from which all things came. This bisexuality, a requisite for formation from one source, is exemplified, perhaps, by a curious elimination from the entire Psalm, a long one, of the word *Elohim*² with its male pluralization. Instead, *Yahveh*, a more or less feminine and male combination³ is used, and always with, *Yod-Yod*. *Yahveh*, with *Yod-He-Vau-He* is never used, retaining not alone the injunction never to use the ineffable sacred term but also refraining from spelling it. Whether the Psalmist was an Elohist or a Yahvist is aside from the point. Here we find an adherence as stated above to certain defined doctrines in *The Sepher Yezirah*. It is worth while pointing out that while Genesis uses *Elohim* first and then *Yahveh*, the *Yezirah* reverses this order.

The first sentence in the Psalm is followed by: "He covereth himself with light as with a garment; he stretcheth out the heavens like a curtain." This again is probably an indication of the author's wish to keep veiled the esoteric thought of the first sentence, by covering with *garment*, and *curtain*. After the first sentence we find

² While *Elohim* is a male pluralization, it has androgynous value. This item is referred to merely because of the point made in the last two sentences of the paragraph in which this note occurs.

³ Kabbalistically, *Yod*,(I) is male. *He*,(E) is feminine. *Vau*, (F or V) is I, E, combined, neuter, or androgynous. *He* is feminine. A picture of *He*, *Vau*, *He*,= Haveh, — E, V, E,= Eve, becomes interesting.

in the several lines: *Waters, Wings of the Wind, Flaming Fire, Mem, Aleph, Shin*, respectively.

From the Sabbath after "the Rejoicing of the Law" until the Sabbath before Passover, this Psalm is the first one to be read, between the afternoon and the evening services in the Synagogue. One would think, while reading the Psalm that it is Moses singing. And, perhaps, the author dedicates the Psalm to Moses. The following note may indicate that it was not by a mere coincidence that the arrangers of the prayer book place this Psalm here.

Moses, in Hebrew, being *Mem, -Shin, -He, (Mshc)* we find here a curious analogy to the *Mem, Shin, Aleph*, of *The Sepher Yezirah*. While the study of language would indicate that interchanges for letters are not always conducive to best results nor for the discovery of correct root values, we find interchanges as this one, *He* for *Aleph* a correct one, from the viewpoint of philology, grammar, and esoteric doctrine; particularly the latter. At any rate, the Hebrew grammar would not sanction Moses being spelled, *Mem-Shin-Aleph*. The man Moses, drawn from the Water, (*Mem*)—the burning bush and the Fire on Sinai, (*Shin*)—and the Spirit of Moses the Prophet, endowed with representation of the Divine, (*He* or *Aleph*).

The following bibliography may be of interest and use to the reader who wishes to find the sources of information for the material applied in expounding my theory of the probable methods employed by the author of Psalm civ.,—and for the manner in which I connect the name Moses with the paper.

Bibliography:

The Old Testament. The Sepher Yezirah with English translation and notes—Kalisch. Anacalypsis—Higgins. Ancient Faiths—Inman. Rivers of Life—Forlong. Tarot—Papus. The Standard Prayer Book, (in English and Hebrew)—Singer.