

SUBSTITUTES FOR THE TETRAGRAMMATON

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The practice of avoiding the pronouncing, as well as the writing out in full, of the four-lettered Holy Name of God has been followed by the Jews throughout the ages, and is still observed by the great majority of them. Except in the books of the Holy Scriptures the Tetragrammaton is never written out in full. And when the Scriptures are read aloud, even as part of the Synagogue service, it is never pronounced as written.

The Talmud¹ tells us definitely about the ancient restrictions upon the pronunciation of the Holy Name. It also gives us some information about the substitutes² used for this ineffable Name when it was forbidden or improper to utter it. But the Talmud never says expressly that there were restrictions upon writing it

¹ See saying of Abba Saul (M. Sanhedrin X, 1). Outside of the Temple even the priests when reciting their blessings used a substitute (כינוי) for the Tetragrammaton (M. Sotah VII, 6; Sotah 38a; cf. also Philo, "Leben Moses" in *Die Werke Philo von Alexandria*, ed. L. Cohn, I [Breslau, 1909], p. 323 and note 2). In the Temple, especially on the Day of Atonement, the Name was pronounced by the High Priest (M. Yoma VII, 2; Menahot 109b; Yoma 39b and Tosefta Sotah XIII, 8; cf. also Graetz in *Monatsschrift* [1857], p. 55ff.; Kohler in *Jewish Encyclopedia* I, p. 202-203, s. v. "Adonai"; Bacher, *ibid.* XI, s. v. "Shem ha-Meforash," p. 263; and L. Blau, *ibid.*, XII, p. 119-120, s. v. "Tetragrammaton"; also A. Marmorstein, *The Old Rabbinic Doctrine of God* [London, 1927], p. 17ff.). Also at the final stage of a court trial for blasphemy the witnesses were allowed to pronounce the Name used by the blasphemer (M. Sanhedrin VI, 5).

² The usual substitute was *Adonai* (cf. Pesahim 50a and Rashi to Sotah 38a, s. v. ובכינוי. Sometimes the word, השם, "The Name," was used (M. Yoma l. c.). There must, however, have been many other substitutes used for the Tetragrammaton. On the substitute יוסי in M. Sanhedrin VII, 5, see commentaries and cf. Jacob Lewy in Kobak's *Jeschurun* IV (1864) Hebrew part, pp. 4-6; and against him Hirschfeld, *ibid.*, pp. 181-183. The latter suggests that it is the Greek word *ὄνομα* corresponding to the Hebrew הויה which was properly used as a substitute for the Tetragrammaton. Cf. also Oppenheim in Koback's *Jeschurun*, *ibid.*, German part, pp. 90-98, and L. Blau, *Das Altjüdische Zauberwesen* (Berlin, 1914), pp. 130-131.

out in full. Yet, there can be no doubt that just as the ancient Jews refrained from uttering this holy Name they also were reluctant to put it down in writing.³ They surely attached as much importance to the written as to the spoken word, and the same motives that restrained them from uttering the Name would serve to restrain them from writing it down.⁴

Of course, in the books of the Holy Scriptures, especially in those copies prepared for use in the religious service of the Synagogue, the Tetragrammaton was unhesitatingly written out in full. But in other writings and documents, and probably even in copies of Biblical books or parts of Biblical books intended for study and instruction,⁵ not for religious use, scrupulous care was taken to avoid writing the ineffable Name in full.

³ The Samaritans also hesitated to pronounce the Name, though occasionally, or in an oath, they may have pronounced it, as may be concluded from Yer. Sanhedrin X (28b). But ordinarily they refrained from pronouncing it and used the substitute שם which is like the substitute השם used in the Mishnah (see W. Bacher, *Shem ha-Meforash*, op. cit.). They also hesitated to write it out in full. They changed the last *He* into a *Daleth*, as was done later by the printers of the Brescia Bible (1494), and wrote it thus, יהוד (cf. A. Epstein, סקדטוניות היהודים [Vienna, 1887], pp. 116–117). A similar method of avoiding the writing out in full of the four letters of the Tetragrammaton was followed by the Hellenistic Jews, except that instead of changing the last *He* into a *Daleth* they changed the *Vav* into a *Yod*, writing it thus יהיה. In the older manuscripts of the Septuagint the Tetragrammaton was retained in Hebrew letters. In Greek circles these Hebrew letters, *Yod He Yod He*, were not recognized as such, but read as the Greek letters, $\pi\iota\pi\iota$ (cf. F. Field, *Origenis Hexaplorum* II [Oxford, 1875], p. 431, note to Isaiah I, 2; also R. Kittel in *Realencyklopädie für protestantische Theologie u. Kirche* VIII [Leipzig, 1900] p. 530). Dr. Max L. Margolis calls my attention to the Cairo Fragment of Aquila's Version of the Psalms (see *Cairo Genizah Palimpsests*, by Ch. Taylor [Cambridge, 1900] p. 54ff.) in which the Tetragrammaton is written in ancient Hebrew characters, but with a *Yod* instead of the *Vav*, thus ידדד (cf. also Ludwig Traube, *Nomina Sacra* [Munich, 1907], pp. 27–29, 40–41).

⁴ For the reason why they hesitated to write out the Name, see L. Blau in *J. E. XII*, s. v. "Tetragrammaton," pp. 118–119, where the literature on the subject is cited. The passage in the Talmud, R. H. 18b, suggests that it was reverence for the holy Name that kept them from writing it out anywhere except in the Biblical books.

⁵ This would explain the traces of such abbreviations for the Tetragrammaton, found in the Masoretic text or reflected in the renderings of the Septuagint. All such traces go back to copies originally prepared for use in study, not for reading in the Synagogue.

Now, if the holy Name could not be written out in full, it had to be indicated in writing by a sign or by an abbreviation consisting of part of its letters. The latter method of substitution was the prevalent one in early talmudic times, and perhaps even earlier. At that time, the most common way of abbreviating a word was to represent it by its initial letter. Instances of such abbreviations are cited in the Mishnah. Thus the letter ת stood for תרומה and the letter ק for קרבן.⁶ On Maccabean coins the letter ש is used for the word שנה and the letter י for יהודים and for ישראל.⁷ In like manner, the letter *Yod* was used to indicate the Tetragrammaton. Instances of the use of the letter *Yod* as an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton can be cited from very early times. This usage is reflected in many of the renderings of the Septuagint. Traces of it can be found, though ordinarily not recognized as such, in the Masoretic text of the Bible.⁸

Another method of abbreviating a word in talmudic times was to represent it by its last letter or one of its middle letters. Accordingly, the letter *He* was used as an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton. This use of the letter *He* is also reflected in many renderings of the Septuagint.⁹ A late cabbalistic Midrash expressly states that the letter *He* represents the ineffable Name, אין הי אלה שם, המפורש; and that the ineffable Name is indicated in writing merely by the letter *He*, שכל שמות המפורשות אינם נכתבין אלא בהי. (*Midrash Otiath de Rabbi Akiba*, ed. S. A. Wertheimer [Jerusalem, 1914], pp. 21-2).¹⁰

⁶ See M. Maaser Sheni IV, 2 and cf. L. Löw, *Graphische Requisiten und Erzeugnisse bei den Juden* II (Leipzig, 1871), p. 44ff; also M. Steinschneider, "Gab es eine hebräische Kurzschrift?" in *Archiv für Stenographie* (1887), Nos. 466 and 467; also F. Perles, *Analekten zur Textkritik des Alten Testaments* (Munich, 1895), p. 4ff.

⁷ M. A. Levy, *Geschichte der Jüdischen Münzen* (Leipzig, 1862) p. 55; S. Raffaeli, *Coins of the Jews* (Jerusalem, 1913), p. 70.

⁸ See F. Perles, op. cit., pp. 12-16 and *Analekten*, etc., *Neue Folge* (Leipzig, 1922), pp. 1-2; cf. also Ch. D. Ginsburg, *Introduction to the Massoretico-Critical Edition of the Hebrew Bible* (London, 1897), p. 167ff.

⁹ Perles, op. cit., pp. 16-18 and *Neue Folge*, pp. 2-3. According to S. Klein, *Jüdisch-Palästinisches Corpus Inscriptionum* (Vienna-Berlin, 1920), p. 70, note 1, *He* as an abbreviation for the Name of God is also found in an old Synagogue inscription.

¹⁰ The practice of indicating the Tetragrammaton by merely one of its letters is also presupposed in the translation of Pseudo-Jonathan (ed. M. Ginsburger [Berlin,

Still another method of abbreviation was to use the first two letters of a word for the whole word. Such abbreviations are found on ancient Hebrew coins, where **ח** stand for **חרות** and **י** for **ישראל**.¹¹ The Mishnah (Sabbath XII, 12) also presupposes the practice of using such abbreviations especially in writing proper names, such as **ש** for **שמעון** or **שמואל** and **ג** for **גדיאל**.¹² According to this method, then, the Tetragrammaton would be represented by its first two letters **יה**. Some scholars¹³ are of the opinion that even in the Masoretic text of the Bible the word **יה** which so frequently occurs as a designation for God is not in itself a name of God but merely an abbreviated form of the Tetragrammaton. R. Eleazar's statement in the Midrash to Psalms (Ps. 113, ed. Buber, p. 470), that **יה** is merely half of the Name, **שם** **חציו של** supports this theory.¹⁴ But whether or not in the Masoretic text of the Bible **יה** is an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton rather than a name complete in itself, there is no doubt that in writings other than the biblical books the two letters **יה** were used in talmudic times as an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton.¹⁵ There are many unmistakable indications of this practice in talmudic literature.

1903], p. 9) to Gen. IV, 15 which reads: **וירשם ה' על אפידקין אחא מן שמה רבא ויקרא** cf. also Rashi to this passage in Genesis and the comment in **מדרש אונדא** (ed. Buber, Vienna, 1884), p. 12: **ויש אומרים אות אחת משמו של הקב"ה חקק לו במצחו**.

¹¹ Levy, op. cit., pp. 94, 96.

¹² Cf. also discussion of the Gemara, Sabbath 103b.

¹³ L. Blau, "Tetragrammaton," in *J. E.* XII, p. 120; Steinschneider, op. cit., p. 3; and R. Kittel, l. c., p. 531; cf. also Ed. Meyer, *Der Papyrusfund von Elephantine* (Leipzig, 1912), p. 35, and W. F. Albright, "Further Observations on the Name Jahwe and its modifications in proper names," in *Journal of Biblical Literature* (1925), p. 159. The theory that **יה** is the original Name of which the Tetragrammaton is merely a longer form (cf. Ree, "Forschungen über die Überschriften der Psalmen," in *Literaturblatt des Orients* [1846], p. 24ff. and J. H. Levy in *Jewish Quarterly Review* XV [1903], p. 99) is rightly rejected by Kittel, *ibid.*, p. 538.

¹⁴ Cf. also Tanhuma **חצא** **כי**, 11, and Rashi to Exod. XVII, 16; also *Tosefot Yomtov* to Sukkah IV, 5.

¹⁵ There probably was another abbreviation used in talmudic times to indicate the Tetragrammaton. It consisted of the two middle letters **הו**. This is used in M. Sukkah IV, 5 in the expression **אני הו** (cf. L. Blau, *Das Altjüdische Zauberwesen* [Berlin, 1914], p. 134, note 2, and L. Ginzberg, *Eine Unbekannte Jüdische Sekte* [New York, 1922], p. 57). And the statement, **הו זה שמו של הקב"ה** (Sabbath 104a) no doubt means that the two letters **הו** represent the Name of God (cf. also *Or Zarua*

The frequency with which the Tetragrammaton is referred to in tannaitic literature by merely naming its first two letters יה¹⁶ shows clearly that יה was at that time an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton. For, if the name had been referred to thus only to avoid pronouncing it, it might very well have been designated by the phrases, שם המיוחד or שם המפורש, which are also found in tannaitic literature. And if the Tannaim did not wish to refer to it by a description of its character, as מיוחד or מפורש, but preferred to indicate it by the letters in which it was written, they could have used the epithet שם בן ארבע אותיות,¹⁷ the "four-lettered Name." They could even have used all the four letters; in the passages where they say יה יה they could just as well have said יה ואו יה, and still not have been considered guilty of pronouncing the Name.¹⁸ Accordingly, יה was undoubtedly an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton in tannaitic times.

There is even clearer evidence of this in a Baraitha (Shebuoth 35b) which discusses the prohibition of erasing the Divine Names once they have been written. This Baraitha reads as follows:¹⁹ כתב אד מאדני אל מאלהים יה מיהוה אין נמחקין שד משרי צב מצבאות נמחקין. If, intending to write the name *Adonai*, one writes only the first

I, p. 8, *Alpha Betha* No. 28). What he mentions as being מפורש בספר יצירה is not found in our *Sefer Yezirah*. He probably refers to another later *Sefer Yezirah*; cf. A. Epstein, לקורות הקבלה האשכנזית, II (Vienna, 1894), p. 1ff.

¹⁶ Cf. also L. Blau, op. cit., p. 121. The saying, נכתב אני ביה יה ונקרא אני באלף, (Pesahim 50a) would suggest that they also hesitated to write and pronounce יה in full and wrote and pronounced it merely *Ad* or *Aleph Daleth*. This hesitancy still prevails. Except in religious services, the pronunciation of the word *Adonai* is avoided. It is read *Adoshem* which is a combination of the shortened form אד with the substitute השם (cf. Tosafot to Ab. Zarah 18a, s. v. הוה השם).

¹⁷ This description of the Tetragrammaton is used by R. Johanan (Kiddushin 71a) but no doubt it is of tannaitic origin.

¹⁸ Mentioning by name the letters of the Name is not regarded as uttering the Name (see Tosafot to Sukkah 5a, s. v. מלמעלה יה), and הוה means "pronouncing" or "uttering," not "spelling out", as suggested by G. F. Moore in his *Judaism III* (Cambridge, 1930), p. 129, note 154.

¹⁹ This is the correct reading of the Baraitha, as given by R. Hananel in his commentary and as found in the Munich ms. The reading in the printed editions is due to misunderstanding of the reason for the differences between the two groups. With Rashi it was understood that the reason for distinguishing the first group from the second was because the two letters אל as well as יה in the first group in themselves constitute a שם לעצמו, a complete Divine Name. And since the abbrevia-

two letters, *Aleph Daleth*; or, intending to write the name *Elohim*, one writes only the letters, *Aleph Lamed*; or, intending to write the Tetragrammaton, one writes only the first two letters, *Yod He*; then, in each case, the two letters are not to be erased. However, if one, intending to write the Divine Name שדי or צבאות, has written only the first two letters of either of these two words, the two letters שד and צב, respectively, may be erased. The reason for this difference is not, as Rashi ad loc. assumes, that the first two letters of each of the names in the first group constitute in themselves a Divine Name, a שם לעצמו. For even though the letters, *Aleph Lamed* or *Yod He*, constitute Names in themselves, the letters, *Aleph Daleth*, surely do not. The real reason for distinguishing between these two groups of Divine Names is clearly stated in the Palestinian Talmud (Megillah I, 11, 71d). Here we read: כללו של דבר שכיצא בו שם מתקיים במקום אחר אינו נמחק. The principle is this: if the two letters are such as elsewhere are retained or allowed to stand permanently for the Divine Name, they may not be erased. In other words, if the two letters are generally used as an abbreviation for the Name, they may not be erased because, being generally used as an abbreviation for the holy Name, they have the character of the holy Name—even though, in this particular case, the writer intended not to use an abbreviation but to write out the Name in full. We are virtually told here that the first two letters of each of the three Divine Names in the first group—not only יה and אל but also אד—were used as abbreviations for those Names. But out of reverence for the Divine Name the first two letters of שדי were never used as an abbreviation, for these two letters spell שד, a “demon.” Nor were the first two letters of the Name, צבאות, used as an abbreviation, since these two letters spell צב, an unclean animal, the “great lizard” (Leviticus XI, 29). Hence, if, intending to write the name

tion אד could not be regarded as such a Divine Name, it was put in the second group together with שד and צב (see Tosafot there s. v. בפר"ח נרס). The difficulty of Tosafot, however, is removed by our correct interpretation, based upon the statement in the Yerushalmi, that the reason why the abbreviations אל and יה are not to be erased is not because these words constitute complete Divine Names but because they were commonly used abbreviations for a Divine Name, and the abbreviation אד was also so used and, therefore, belongs in the same class.

שדי or צבאות, one puts down only the first two letters of either, these first two letters can in no way be construed as indicating the holy Name and may, accordingly, be erased.

We have thus found that the Jews in talmudic times, and perhaps even earlier, hesitated to write out the Tetragrammaton and abbreviated it, according to the methods then prevalent, by using either its initial letter, *Yod*, its middle or last letter, *He*, or its first two letters, *Yod He*.



In the talmudic-midrashic literature, as far as I know, no theory is ever advanced or even suggested to explain the use of these abbreviations or to attach a special significance to any of them. Indeed, no explanation was thought necessary. The use of abbreviations for the Tetragrammaton was altogether in accord with the common practice of abbreviating words whenever, for one reason or another, it was considered advisable or necessary not to write them out in full. Certainly, no apology was needed when this expedient was employed to avoid writing out the holy Name.

Of the three abbreviations for the Tetragrammaton, employed in talmudic times, the one consisting of the letter *He* remained in use, to a certain extent, throughout the Middle Ages and up to modern times,²⁰ the one consisting of the initial letter, *Yod*, was

²⁰ This *He* is not an abbreviation of the word הַשֵּׁם, as assumed by S. D. Luzzatto (*Grammatica della Lingua Ebraica*, 6). For there could have been no reason to avoid writing the word הַשֵּׁם in full (cf. Franz Delitsch in his edition of Aaron ben Elijah's עץ חיים [Leipzig, 1841], p. LXXVI, and Perles, *Analekten*, pp. 16-17). Besides we have the express statement in the *Otiot de Rabbi Akiba* (l. c.) that the *He* represents the Tetragrammaton and not the word הַשֵּׁם. Likewise in the *Sefer Hasidim* 735 (ed. Wistinetzki-Freimann [1924], p. 188) we read, אַם אִדָּם כּוֹחַב בְּכַחֲבִי, 'ה' להיחור מן דְּרַקְבִּיהָ, which shows that the ה was used as an abbreviation for the Name. In passing, I should like to remark that the word להיחור is not corrupted from להיות רמו, as suggested by the editor in his note (א), but is a euphemistic expression for לקצור. H. J. Bornstein (in his תאריכי ישראל *Ha-Tekufah IX* [1920], p. 253) assumes that the custom of writing 'ה' for the Tetragrammaton did not come into use before the fifteenth century. This is entirely wrong. I have not been able to ascertain when the 'ד' came into use as a substitute for the Tetragrammaton. It may be an abbreviation of אֲדָרִי which, as we have seen above (note 16), some hesitated to write out in full. It seems more likely, however, that it is merely a modification of the abbreviation 'ה'. We have seen that *He* as one of the letters in the Tetragrammaton, was changed by some people into a *Daleth* (see above note 3 and cf. below note 37). In like manner *He*, when used as an abbreviation for the whole Tetragrammaton, was changed into a *Daleth*.

less frequently used in post-talmudic times.²¹ But the third abbreviation, the one consisting of the first two letters, *Yod He*, was apparently altogether discarded.

In early post-talmudic times, apparently new substitutes for the Tetragrammaton came into general use. Unlike the simple talmudic abbreviations, these consist of groups of letters—either two or three *Yods*, variously arranged, or one or two *Yods* and a *Vav*—with or without an additional little sign. Various theories have been advanced both by medieval rabbinic authorities and by modern scholars, to explain why some of these new signs were appropriate substitutes for the most holy Name.²² All these theories assume that the new substitutes for the Tetragrammaton were introduced for the purpose of suggesting or hinting at some mystical, theological, or philosophical ideas about God. Hence, the theories attempt to explain just what ideas about God are suggested by these signs. All the theories, however, ignore the following question: what objections, if any, could there have been

²¹ It is found written with a little stroke on the left, marking it as an abbreviation (see Merx, *Chrestomathia Targumica*, p. 104, also *Das Targum zu Kohelet nach Südarabischen Handschriften*, by Alfred Levy [Breslau, 1905]), or with a little circlet or ring on the left side, thus  (P. Kahle, *Die Masoreten des Westens* II [1930], pp. 23, 24, 25) and also with two signs of abbreviation, a dot above and a circlet at the left, thus:  (ibid., pp. 31–32). The use of the letter *Yod* as an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton is also presupposed in the saying found in מדרש חסר ויתר (in Wertheimer's ספר מדרשים כהני יד [Jerusalem, 1923], p. 19), that Esau's name עשו, is written without a *Yod* after the *Ayin* because the wicked Esau was not worthy of having the Name of God, represented by the *Yod*, associated with his name: עשו למח הוא חסר אמר הקב"ה אין הרשע הזה כראי שיתערב בשמו אות אחת משמי (cf. Wertheimer's note, ad loc.). The real reason, however, why no compunction was felt in writing the name of Esau with a *Vav* at the end, though *Vav* likewise is one of the letters of the Tetragrammaton, was because, unlike *Yod*, the *Vav* was never used as an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton and hence could not be considered to represent the Name.

²² For the speculations of Christian theologians about the three *Yods* as indicating the trinity, see Steinschneider in *Monatsschrift* (1895), p. 130ff. Steinschneider also refers to other theories about the three *Yods*. Cf. also A. Berliner, *Ueber den Einfluss des ersten hebräischen Buchdrucks* (Berlin, 1895), p. 47–48. Max Grünbaum, *Gesammelte Aufsätze zur Sprach- und Sagenkunde* (Berlin, 1901), p. 361, assumes that the three *Yods* were meant to represent past, present and future, and thus to refer to the eternity of God, who was, is and shall ever be יהיה הוא ויהיה. Other theories about the significance of some of the substitutes will be referred to below.

to the talmudic method of simply using abbreviations for the Tetragrammaton; why should later authorities have been prompted to abandon this older method and introduce new substitutes for the Tetragrammaton? This question, to my knowledge, has not been raised, much less answered, by any of the scholars who attempt to explain the various substitutes. And yet this is a very important question, the answer to which is bound to affect the validity of any theory about the substitutes. For, if no valid objection to the talmudic practice can be found, the basis of all these theories, i. e. the assumption that post-talmudic authorities consciously introduced the use of new substitutes, becomes very doubtful. Unless they had some fault to find with the older practice, the post-talmudic authorities would have been unjustified, to say the least, in abandoning it and selecting new symbols for the Tetragrammaton—symbols consisting of combinations of certain letters, which, according to the interpretation arbitrarily put upon them, could become appropriate substitutes for the most holy Name. It would certainly have been very unusual for rabbinic authorities to disregard talmudic precedent and take undue liberties with the writing of the most holy Name. This consideration alone is sufficient to make one suspicious of any theory which presupposes that the post-talmudic substitutes for the Tetragrammaton were intentionally invented. In addition to this, the theories so far advanced do not cover all the cases; they explain only three or four of the many substitutes. A satisfactory theory should account for the origin of all the post-talmudic substitutes for the Tetragrammaton.

Before attempting to propose such a theory, I shall list the various forms of substitutes for the Tetragrammaton, and briefly sketch the theories that have been advanced to explain the origin and significance of some of them.

There are about eighty-three²³ of these apparently new substitutes for the Tetragrammaton; or, to be more correct, the substitutes for the Tetragrammaton, as used in post-talmudic times,

²³ In counting these varieties, I have considered the slightest change in form, as e. g., when the dot is on the second *Yod* instead of on the first. For all these details and minor differences support the theory that the differences between the forms were the result of graphic developments and due in part to the peculiarities of

assumed about eighty-three different forms. These eighty-three forms are found, for the most part, only in manuscripts, but quite a number of them were also used in early printed books. In my list of these forms, I refer only to one or two of the sources where each is found, and do not attempt to list all instances of their occurrence. I refer to such sources as were accessible to me. I did not have access to all the manuscripts, but consulted facsimilies or photostatic reproductions when they were available. In most cases, however, I refer to recent editions of these manuscript texts, assuming, as I believe one has a right to do, that these modern editions accurately reproduce the text of the manuscripts and, therefore, give the peculiar manner in which the Tetragrammaton is written in each manuscript.

The order in which the forms are listed has no chronological significance. I do not mean to suggest that those mentioned first were earlier, or that those listed later developed out of the preceding ones. For, although this may be the case in some instances, it would be very difficult to prove that it was so throughout, and to trace the development of each of the forms from the one preceding it on the list. In most cases, it is hard to decide which forms came into use earlier and which later. Quite a number of them, as it seems, were used simultaneously even by the same author or scribe. In many manuscripts more than one form is used, sometimes even on the same page or in the same fragment. This would justify the assumption that some of these apparently different forms are merely varieties of one form introduced or developed at one and the same time, and hence used indiscriminately by the same authors or scribes. No doubt, some of the forms have claims to priority, while others were developed from them. But since this process cannot be consistently traced throughout the entire list, it has not been made the basis of the order

writers or copyists. I am not considering here the differences between forms as regards the vocalization given to the letters. It is evident that the vocalization was not original with the form. In order to indicate that the letters of the form constituted an abbreviation of the Tetragrammaton, scribes sometimes supplied the letters with the vowels of the Tetragrammaton, thus writing יְיָ instead of merely יי. Cf. also G. Polak, הליכות קדם (Amsterdam, 1846), p. 55, and בן גרני (Amsterdam, 1851), p. 61.

adopted. The forms have been arranged not according to date but according to size and simplicity of form. The shorter and simpler forms precede the more complex, longer ones. They are numbered consecutively merely for the purpose of facilitating reference to them in the discussion that follows. Here is the list:

(1) " Two *Yods* without any additional sign. See Paul Kahle, *Die Masoreten des Westens*, I (Stuttgart, 1927): *Alte hebräische Bibelhandschriften aus der öffentlichen Bibliothek zu Leningrad*, p. 76; II (Stuttgart, 1930), p. 11.²⁴

(2) " Two *Yods* with a little ring or circlet on the left side. See P. Kahle, *ibid.*, II, p. 23.

(3) " Two *Yods* with a dot on top of the second *Yod*. Kahle, *ibid.*, p. 13; Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 94.

(4) " Two *Yods* with a dot on top of the second *Yod* and a circlet on the left side. Kahle, *ibid.*, p. 35.

(5) " Two *Yods* with a dot on top of the first *Yod*. Kahle, *op. cit.*, I, p. 61; II, p. 13.

(6) " Two *Yods* with a dot above the space between them. Kahle, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 67, 74; II, pp. 8-9.

(7) " Two *Yods* with a vertical stroke above the space between them. Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 20.

(8) " Two *Yods* with two vertical strokes above the space between them. *Ibid.*, p. 55.

(9) " Two *Yods* with a vertical stroke to the left of the second *Yod*. *Ibid.*, p. 20.²⁵

(10) " Two *Yods* with two vertical strokes to the left of the second *Yod*. I. Davidson, *Saadia's Polemic Against Hivvi Al-Balkhi* (New York, 1915), p. 97. Also found in a Genizah fragment published in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, n. s., V, p. 554; cf. however Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 21.

²⁴ Perles *Analekten* (1895), p. 16, considers this form a development from the abbreviation "י. The little stroke serving as an abbreviation sign was, he assumes, mistaken for another *Yod*. G. Polak, in *הליכות קדם*, p. 55, cites an opinion according to which the two *Yods* represent the initial letter of the Tetragrammaton and the final letter of *Adonai*.

²⁵ See also Isserlein in *חרוטת הדשן* II, No. 171 (Warsaw, 1882), p. 36.

(11) ם Two *Yods* with a horizontal line above them. Schechter "Genizah Specimens," in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, XIII (1900–1901), p. 365, line 4.

(12) ן Two *Yods* with a horizontal line beneath them. Found in inscriptions on Synagogue walls.

(13) ן Two *Yods* with a horizontal line beneath them and a short vertical stroke to the left of the second *Yod*. J. Mann, *The Jews in Egypt*, etc., II (Oxford University Press, 1922), p. 282.

(14) ן Two *Yods* with a sort of *Vav*, horizontal or slightly slanting, drawn from the left of the two *Yods* and extending over them. Kahle, *Masoreten des Ostens* (Leipzig, 1913), facsimile, Tafel 7, bottom line; *Thesaurus Typographiae Hebraicae Saeculi XV*, ed. Dr. A. Freimann (Marx & Co., Berlin, 1924), A68,2.²⁶

(15) ן Two *Yods* with a sort of inverted *Vav* drawn from above the second *Yod* and slanting towards the left. Facsimile volume of A. Neubauer's *Catalogue of the . . . Bodleian Library* (Oxford, 1886), Plate XI.

(16) ן Two *Yods* with a slanting, inverted *Nun* at their left. Kahle, op. cit., line 2; *Thesaurus*, A37,4.


(17) ן Two *Yods* with a vertical curved line at their left. Found in the manuscript of the Babylonian Talmud, Munich, Cod. Hebr. 95; also in editio princeps of the Mekilta.


(18) ן Two *Yods* with a vertical, inverted *Nun* at their left. Carlo Bernheimer, *Paleographia Ebraica* (Florence, 1927), facsimile, Tav. n. 23; also *Thesaurus*, A3,2. Cf. also Alexander Marx, "Eine unbekannte Spanische Inkunabel," in *Soncino-Blätter*, III (Juli, 1930), p. 175.


(19) ן Two *Yods* with an inverted *Beth*. Mentioned by the author of *Sechel Tob*. See below.


(20) ן Two *Yods* with the sign of the Arabic *medda* on top. See Franz Delitzsch in his edition of Ahron ben Elia's ןן ןן ןן (Leipzig, 1841), p. LXXVI.


²⁶ See Isserlein, l. c., who sees the significance of this form in the numerical value of the letters which total 26, equal to the numerical value of the letters of the Tetragrammaton. It is also suggested there that the *Vav* is written horizontally (שׁוּבוּרָה) for a definite purpose. Cf. also L. Grünhut in the Introduction to his edition of the *Midrash Shir Ha-Shirim* (Jerusalem, 1897), p. 7, note 4.


(21)  Two *Yods* with the sign of the Arabic *medda* drawn vertically at their left. *Thesaurus*, A95,2.


(22)  Two *Yods* with the sign of the *medda* written rather squarely at their left. See Henry Barnstein, *The Targum of Onkelos to Genesis* (Leipzig, 1896), pp. 4, 78.


(23)  Two *Yods* with the sign of the *medda*, written as in the preceding number, put vertically between them. See Barnstein, op. cit. l. c.²⁷

(24)  Two *Yods* and on top of them a figure representing an inverted *medda* in a vertical position, somewhat resembling the Hebrew letter *Ṣade*. De Rossi, *Annales Sae.* XV, p. 3.


(25)  Two *Yods* with a sort of *Ṣade* in rabbinic characters at their left. See A. Marx, op. cit., p. 175.²⁸

(26)  Two *Yods* with a sort of *medda* similar to the one in number 24, in a vertical position to the left of the two *Yods*. *Proverbs* (Lisbon, 1492); also Rashi in *Pentateuch with Onkelos*, etc. (Lisbon, 1491).

(27)  Two *Yods* in a row with an inverted *medda* above them and beneath a sort of inverted and upside down *Daleth*. This form is used in a little book, תפלת יום כפור קטן, found in the Hebrew Union College Library, to which Mr. Moses Marx called my attention. The title page of the book is missing. But Mr. Marx thinks that it is an eighteenth century print.

(28)  Two *Yods* in a row with an inverted *medda* above them and an inverted *Daleth* beneath, as in the preceding number. But the two signs, the *medda* and the *Daleth*, are joined together. This form is found in the מחרוזת מנהג אשכנז. (Wilhermsdorf, 1673), to which Mr. Marx also called my attention.

²⁷ There is no doubt that the sign put between the two *Yods* is the *medda* written squarely, though it was understood by some as a development of the third *Yod*. Cf. Zunz, quoted by A. Berliner, op. cit., p. 47. It may be that some copyists mistook the third *Yod* for an abbreviation sign and substituted for it another abbreviation sign, the *medda*.

²⁸ The same figure is also found in *Thesaurus* B31,3. The sign after the two *Yods* is not actually a *Ṣade*. It probably is the sign of the *medda* joined to another abbreviation sign, the short stroke, and put after the two *Yods*. It really was written thus . It is also possible that the whole figure is a modification of No. 55.

(29) 𐤓𐤓 Two *Yods* with a vertical stroke above the space between them and a sort of *medda* at their left. Facsimile volume of Neubauer's *Catalog*, Plate XXI.

(30) 𐤓𐤓 Two *Yods* in a row with a thick vertical stroke under the second *Yod* and a sign above it, a slanting line with a circle at the end. *Thesaurus* A13,2 and A13,4.²⁹

(31) 𐤓𐤓 Three *Yods* in a row on a horizontal line. Kahle, *Die Hebräischen Bibelhandschriften aus Babylon* (1928), facsimile Ea. 4 and Ea. 7.³⁰

(32) 𐤓𐤓 Three *Yods* in a row with a dot above the middle one. Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 145.

(33) 𐤓𐤓 Three *Yods* in a row with a dot on top of the first *Yod*. See I. Elbogen, שמונה עשרה בדרך הימנון in *Ha-Goren*, X (1928), p. 88.

(34) 𐤓𐤓 Three *Yods* with a dot on top of the third. Elbogen, *op. cit.*, l. c.

(35) 𐤓𐤓 Three *Yods* in a row with a dot on each *Yod*. Kahle,

²⁹ This form may be regarded as a development of No. 13. It is further varied in the form consisting of two *Yods* with a short half circular line written under the second *Yod* and joined to it, and a sort of short *Vav* above it, like this 𐤓𐤓. Cf. Zunz as quoted by Berliner, l. c.

³⁰ The significance of this form has been thought to lie in the numerical value of the three *Yods*, which is 30. The number of the letters of the Tetragrammaton, 4, plus their numerical value, which is 26, also totals 30. See Solomon Norzi in his מנחת שי to Deut. XXXIII, 12; R. David ibn Zimra in his Responsa שו"ת הרדב"ז I, No. 206 (Warsaw, 1882), p. 33, and cf. also S. A. Wertheimer in the Introduction to his ספר מדרשים כתבי יד (Jerusalem, 1923), p. 16. Another suggestion is that the significance of the three *Yods* is derived from the fact that the letters of the Tetragrammaton, if spelled out like this: יוד הי וואו הי, contain three *Yods* (cf. Zohar, רעיא מהימנא, פנחס to [Lublin, 1872], p. 492). To the various theories about the significance of the three *Yods* may be added the suggestion of Zunz (quoted by Berliner, l. c.) that the writing of the Tetragrammaton by three *Yods* may have been, in part at least, meant to be a reminiscence of the threefold קדוש of the Kedushah.

Dr. Israel Davidov first called my attention to the following statement about the three *Yods* found in the מסכת פורים (Pesaro, 1513), p. 5: אמר רבי בון דבר זה מסורה: אבותינו בידינו איש שומע מפי איש שומע עד כרמי כל ה' הכתוב בספר הזה חול ולחכי נהוג עלמא למכתבינהו בתלתא יודין וכן הלכתא. This statement is also found in a preface to the *Toledoth Jeshu*, published by Wagenseil in his *Tela ignea Satanae* (Altdorf, 1681). See M. Gudemann, *Geschichte des Erziehungswesen*, etc. II (Vienna, 1884), p. 335. Cf. also Luzzatto in פניני שריל (Przemysl, 1888), p. 63.

op. cit., facsimile Eb. 16; *Masoreten des Ostens*, pp. 32, 39; I. Elbogen, op. cit., p. 89.³¹

(36) ם Three *Yods* with a short vertical stroke above the middle *Yod*. Kahle, *ibid.*, facsimile Ea. 2.

(37) ם Three *Yods* in a row with a short vertical stroke after each of them. Ginzberg, *Yerushalmi Fragments* (New York, 1909), p. 29.

(38) ם Three *Yods* in a row with one short vertical stroke to the left of the third *Yod*. Ginzberg, *Genizah Studies*, גוי שׂכטער, I (New York, 1928), p. 169.

(39) ם Three *Yods* in a row with a short vertical stroke between the second and third *Yod*. Ginzberg, op. cit., pp. 283, 285; Elbogen, op. cit., p. 91–92.

(40) ם Three *Yods* in a row with two short vertical strokes above the third *Yod*. *Thesaurus*, B31,5.

(41) ם Three *Yods* in a row with two short vertical strokes between the second and the third *Yod*. I. Davidson, "Poetic Fragments from the Genizah," *J. Q. R.*, n. s., VIII, p. 446–7; S. Assaf, "Letters of R. Samuel b. Eli," in *Tarbiz* I, 3 (Jerusalem, 1930), p. 49.

(42) ם Three *Yods* in a row with two vertical strokes above the middle *Yod*. Found in a cabbalistic work (Mai, Uffenbach Catalog, p. 315) with the explanation יחיד ירוד יחיד, "One is the Lord, only One." The *Daleths* in ירוד are substitutes for the *Hes* of the Tetragrammaton.

(43) ם Three *Yods* in a row with two short vertical strokes between the first and second *Yod*. I. Davidson, op. cit., l. c., p. 437.


(44) ם Three *Yods* in a row with a cluster of three dots like an inverted *Segol* above the middle one. Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 51–2; Assaf, op. cit., p. 65.


(45) ם Three *Yods* in a row with an inverted *medda* written vertically above the middle one. Schechter, *ibid.*, p. 9.


(46) ם Three *Yods* in a row with a horizontal curved line above them. Found in an amulet from the Genizah; see Gaster,


³¹ Perhaps Rabiah (see below) in referring to the three *Yods* as ירודין שׂהן נקודים also refers to three dotted *Yods*.


Rimon (1923) No. 3, p. 27; Assaf, op. cit., *Tarbiz* I, 2, pp. 73, 78.³²


(47)  Three *Yods* in a row with a horizontal line beneath them. See Jacob Saphir in his *אבן ספיר*, II (Mayence, 1874), p. 216, note. Cf. also I. N. Epstein *ליקוטים מספר המפתח לרב נסים* in *Tarbiz* II, 1 (Jerusalem, 1930), pp. 5-6.


(48)  Three *Yods* in a row with a fourth *Yod* above the space between the first and second *Yod*. J. Mann, op. cit., pp. 59-60.


(49)  Three *Yods* in a row with a fourth *Yod* beneath the middle one. See Franz Praetorius, *Das Targum zu Josua in Jemenischer Überlieferung* (Berlin, 1899), and *Das Targum zum Buch der Richter* (Berlin, 1900).


(50)  Three *Yods* in a row with a short vertical stroke between the second and third, and a fourth *Yod* right under the third, almost joined to it. *Thesaurus*, B32.

(51)  Three *Yods* in a row half surrounded by what looks like an inverted *Beth*. See below discussion of the description given by Rabiah and *Sechel Tob*.


(52)  Three *Yods* in a row with an inverted *Nun* at their left. See A. Marx, in *Zeitschrift für hebräische Bibliographie*, XII (1908), p. 16.

(53)  Three *Yods* in a row with a sort of crown, designated as the letter *Beth*, above them. Described by R. Eleazar of Worms; see discussion below.

(54)  Three *Yods* with an *Aleph* above them. Discussed in the introduction to the Pseudo-Saadya Commentary on the *ספר יצירה* (Ms. Munich), quoted by Steinschneider in *Monatsschrift* (1896), p. 130.

(55)  Three *Yods* with the *medda* written vertically and rather squarely between the second and third. *Thesaurus*, B1, 3.³³

³² The curved line above, as well as the curved line on the side (No. 17), are but the sign of the *medda* written incompletely.

³³ Another variety consisting of three *Yods*, two in a row and the third on top of the second, with a vertical stroke at their left, like this , is found in an early print, a reproduction of which was shown to me by Mr. Moses Marx.

(56) יי Three *Yods* in a cluster like an inverted *Segol*. Kahle, *Masoreten des Westens* II, p. 18–19; Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 71.³⁴

(57) יי Three *Yods* in a cluster, as in the preceding number, with a vertical stroke beneath the second *Yod* in the row, making it look almost like a *He*. See Bernheimer, op. cit., facsimile (Tav. n. 23).

(58) יי Three *Yods* in a cluster, as in the preceding number, with a long vertical stroke at their left. See *The Mishnah*, etc., ed. W. H. Lowe (Cambridge, 1883); Facsimiles volume of Neubauer's *Catalogue*, Plate IX.

(59) יי Three *Yods* in a cluster, as in the preceding number, with the sign of the *medda*. See below, description given by Rabiah.³⁵

(60) יי Three *Yods* in a cluster, as in the preceding number, with an inverted *medda* written vertically at their left. See Butin, "An Egyptian Jewish Ritual," *J. Q. R.*, n. s., IX (1918), p. 264, note, pp. 267, 287; also *Thesaurus*, B20,3.

(61) יי Three *Yods* in a cluster, as in the preceding number, with a sort of *Vav*, like the one in number 14, drawn from the left side of the second *Yod* in the row and extending slantingly over its top. *Thesaurus*, B11.

(62) יי Four *Yods*. Three in a cluster, as in the preceding number, and the fourth beneath the second, slightly to its left. *Thesaurus*, B25,1.

(63) יי Four *Yods*. Three in a cluster, as in the preceding number, and the fourth above the second, slightly to its left. See Steinschneider in *Monatschrift*, l. c., p. 130, note 1, quoting Wolf.

³⁴ This form is supposed to have a special mystic significance. See Samuel ibn Seneh in his commentary *Mekor Hayyim* מרגליות טובה (Amsterdam, 1722), 114a, and cf. Senior Sachs in Kobak's *Jeschurun* I (Lemberg, 1857), pp. 96–97. G. Polak, op. cit. l. c., would assume that the third *Yod* in this form developed out of the abbreviation sign which had been put on top of the two *Yods*. As a matter of fact, the reverse was the case. Some copyists mistook the third *Yod* for an abbreviation sign which they felt free to omit, thus leaving only two *Yods*.

³⁵ Rabiah leaves it undecided as to where the *medda* was placed, above or to the left of the three *Yods*. For when he says, וואחז מלמעלה ומשיכה ארוכה, he may mean that the third *Yod* as well as the *medda*, i. e., the משיכה, are placed above the two *Yods*.

(64) יי A *Yod* and a *Vav* without any additional sign. Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 81.

(65) יי A *Yod* and a *Vav* with a horizontal line above them. Schechter, *ibid.*, p. 105–6.

(66) יי A *Yod* and a *Vav* with a dot above each of them and a short vertical stroke to the left of the *Vav*. J. Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 228.

(67) יי A *Yod* and a *Vav* with a short vertical stroke to the left of the *Vav*. Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 106; J. Mann, *op. cit.*, p. 233.

(68) יי A *Yod* and a *Vav* with two vertical strokes above the space between them. In a Genizah fragment published by M. Z. Weiss in *Hazofeh* V (Budapest, 1921), pp. 6–9.

(69) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them, and two short vertical strokes between the first *Yod* and the *Vav*. Gaster, *ספר המעשיה*, p. 17.

(70) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them, and two short vertical strokes between the *Vav* and the second *Yod*. Gaster, *ibid.*, p. 26; also in Genizah fragment in *Hazofeh*, l. c., p. 7.

(71) יי Two *Yods* and a *Vav* in a row one after the other without any additional sign. Found in an early Spanish print of Alfasi's *Halakoth*, two leaves of which are now in the Library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. See *Zeitschrift für hebräische Bibliographie*, XII (1908), p. 15.

(72) יי Two *Yods* and a *Vav*, as in the preceding number, with a hooklet over the space between the two *Yods* and the *Vav*. Facsimiles volume of Neubauer's *Catalogue*, Plate XV.

(73) יי Two *Yods* and a *Vav*, as in the preceding number, with a horizontal line above the letters. Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 106, line 8.

(74) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them.³⁶ Kahle, *Masoreten des Ostens*, p. 13.

³⁶ The significance of this figure is seen by some in the fact that the numerical value of the three letters is 26, and is therefore equivalent to the numerical value of the four letters of the Tetragrammaton. See Isserlein, *op. cit.*, and Zunz as quoted by Berliner, *op. cit.*, l. c. Isserlein also states there that some people use two *Vavs* with a *Yod* between them as a substitute for the Tetragrammaton. ונס יש שיעושין שני ווין כזה וי' but I have not found this variety anywhere else.

(75) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them and a dot on the second *Yod*. Schechter, *Saadyana*, p. 120.

(76) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them and a dot above the *Vav*. Gaster, op. cit., p. 13.

(77) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them, and two dots in a row above the *Vav*. S. Assaf, op. cit., p. 59.

(78) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them, and a dot above each letter. S. Assaf, *ibid.*, p. 70.

(79) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them, and a cluster of three dots in the shape of an inverted *Segol* above the *Vav*. E. Baneth, "Maimuni's Commentar zum Tractat Abot," in שי למורה, *Jubelschrift zum Siebzigsten Geburtstag des Dr. Israel Hildesheimer* (Berlin, 1890), pp. 59, 66; also S. Assaf, op. cit., in *Tarbiz* I, 2 (Jerusalem, 1930), pp. 53, 55.

(80) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them and a vertical stroke above the *Vav*. Gaster, *ibid.*, p. 55, 108.

(81) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them and a horizontal line above. Schechter, *Saadyana*, pp. 118, 121.

(82) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them and a curved horizontal line above the three letters. S. Assaf, op. cit., in *Tarbiz* I, 3, p. 32.

(83) יי Two *Yods* with a *Vav* between them and the sign of the *medda* above. Fragment of a work by Samuel ibn Ḥofni, published by Dr. B. Levin.³⁷

Closer scrutiny of these substitutes for the Tetragrammaton shows that quite a large number of them, the majority in fact, are made up of the letters *Yod* and *Vav* and some other sign. The latter may be a dot, a small vertical stroke or curved line, two vertical strokes, a horizontal straight or curved line, or a sign like the Arabic *medda*. These additional signs are found in various positions: above, beneath, between, following, or to the left of the

³⁷ I find among my notes a reference to Dr. Levin's article, but I forgot to notice where Dr. Levin published this fragment. To complete the list of substitutes for the Tetragrammaton it should be mentioned that in early printed texts the forms ידוה and ידור as well as יהור were substituted for the Tetragrammaton. The first two forms are found in the edition of the book of Proverbs (Naples, 1486), and the third in the Brescia Bible (1494); cf. above Note 3.

letters which are the chief component parts of the forms. As these signs were generally used to indicate abbreviations,³⁸ it follows that the letters to which they were added must have been abbreviations of full words. Since it could easily happen, and, indeed, frequently did happen, that authors or scribes omitted the sign of abbreviation from the letter or letters forming the abbreviation, it may further be assumed with a great deal of probability that even those forms on our list which have no such sign must have been abbreviations of full words and not signs or figures invented to serve as substitutes for the Tetragrammaton.

These substitutes can be properly divided into four groups.³⁹ The first group comprises forms consisting of three *Yods* with or without an additional abbreviation sign. The second group comprises those of two *Yods* with or without an abbreviation sign. The third group comprises those of two *Yods* and a *Vav* with or without an abbreviation sign. And the fourth group comprises those of one *Yod* and a *Vav* with or without an additional sign. To the first group may be added those varieties of the second group which consist of two *Yods* and a dot or a little vertical stroke; for both the dot on top of one or the other of the *Yods*, and the little vertical stroke at the end or between the two *Yods*, look very much like the letter *Yod* and can sometimes hardly be distinguished from it in manuscripts. The third *Yod* of the first group could easily have been mistaken by scribes for a dot or a vertical stroke serving as an abbreviation sign, and, as such, have been placed between, above or after the two *Yods*. Likewise, some of the varieties of the third group consisting of two *Yods* and a *Vav* in various arrangements may be regarded as actually belonging to the group consisting of three *Yods*, since a *Yod* and a *Vav* can easily be mistaken for one another, especially in manuscripts. Some scribe or copyist could easily have made a *Vav* out of one of the *Yods* by inadvertently lengthening the short leg or vertical stroke of the *Yod*. It is, accordingly, fair to assume

³⁸ See Rashi to Sabbath 104b, s. v. כתב אות אחת, and cf. Steinschneider, *Gab es eine hebräische Kurzschrift?* l. c.

³⁹ The one form consisting of four *Yods* would seem to be in a class by itself. But, after all, the fourth *Yod* may have developed out of a dot or a little stroke, serving as an abbreviation sign.

that the majority of the forms listed, if not all of them, are merely graphic developments of one substitute—the figure apparently consisting of three *Yods*. At any rate, this much can be stated with certainty, that, as far as we can judge from the available sources, the substitute consisting of three *Yods* is the oldest of all the forms on our list. It was in use as early as the eighth century.⁴⁰ It is found in oriental manuscripts dating from the eighth, ninth and tenth centuries. It is expressly reported and described by a non-Jewish authority at the beginning of the eleventh century. And theories about its alleged meaning and special significance are found in works by rabbinic authorities in the latter part of the eleventh and in the twelfth centuries.⁴¹

Thus Alberuni in his work on India written between 1000 and 1030 C. E. (translation by E. Sachau [London, 1910], vol. I, p. 173) refers to this substitute for the Tetragrammaton in the following words: "Similar to this is the manner in which the Jews write the name of God, viz., by three Hebrew *Yods*. In the Torah the word is written J. H. V. H. and pronounced *Adonai*. Sometimes they also say *Jah*." He does not say how the three *Yods* are arranged. We may safely assume, however, that he is referring to the form found in oriental manuscripts of the eighth and ninth centuries, that in which the three *Yods* follow each other in a horizontal line. The next authority to refer to this substitute is R. Tobiah b. Eliezer, who, in his *Midrash Lekah-Tob*, written 1097–1108 (according to S. Buber, in the *Introduction* to his edition of the *Lekah-Tob* [Wilna, 1884], p. 26), mentions the practice of representing the Name by writing three *Yods*. According to his interpretation, these three *Yods*, presumably following each other in a row, correspond to, or represent, the three initial *Yods* of the threefold priestly blessing in Numbers VI, 24–26. He

⁴⁰ As to the date of the manuscripts in which the substitute consisting of three *Yods* is found cf. P. Kahle, *Die hebräischen Bibelhandschriften aus Babylonien* (1928), pp. 9, 117ff.

⁴¹ Steinschneider's suggestion that, "Der Gebrauch der 3 Yod scheint europäischen Ursprungs zu sein und dürfte ins XI–XII Jahrhundert fallen" (*Monatsschrift*, l. c.), is hereby utterly refuted. The substitute for the Tetragrammaton consisting of three *Yods* is also mentioned in a question addressed to Maimonides. See Kobez, *Teshuboth ha-Rambam* (Leipzig, 1859), No. 7, p. 3.

says: וכנגד שלש יודין יברכך יאר ישא כותבין את השם בשלשה יודין (*Lekah Tob to Numbers* VI, 24–26 [Wilna, 1884], p. 185).⁴²

There are, however, three other varieties of this substitute described and discussed by authorities of the twelfth century. In the Mss. work, *Sefer Assufoth*, the following description and explanation of the custom of writing the Name by three *Yods* is quoted in the name of R. Eliezer b. Joel Halevi (Rabiah; about 1065–1135): פירש הראב"ה מה שכותבין העולם בתפלות ובכל הספרים חוץ מכת"ר ספרים השם בג' נקודים כמו ג' יודין לא על חנם נהגו אלא כך שמע מרבוחיו כך יש לכתוב ג' יודין שהן נקודים ב' מלמטה וא' מלמעלה ומשיכה ארוכה למפרע כמין ב'. ג' יודין בנימטריא ל' רהב' וזה לב' נתיבות ברא הקב"ה את עולמו ועל כן יסד הפייט נוי שלשים ושתיים נועם נתיבותיים. (Gaster, *The Sefer Assufoth*, in *Report of the Judith Montefiore College*, Ramsgate, [London, 1893], pp. 61–62). This passage describes a figure consisting of three *Yods*, written not in a row but in a cluster, like an inverted *Segol*, with an additional sign, a sort of reversed curve somewhat resembling the letter *Beth*. The significance of the whole figure, it is explained, lies in the fact that the numerical value of the three *Yods* and the letter *Beth* is thirty-two, and thus suggests the thirty-two paths of wisdom in which the Holy One blessed be He created His universe.⁴³ The *Sefer Assufoth* also quotes in the name of R. Menahem b. Salomo, author of the *Midrash Sechel Tob* (written 1139), another description and interpretation of the three *Yods* used as a substitute for the Tetragrammaton. It reads as follows: וכנגד ג' יודין יוד ד'יברך (צ"ל דיברך) יוד ד'יאמר (צ"ל דיאר)

⁴² In his comment on Exod. III, 15 (Buber p. 19), R. Tobiah gives another reason why the three *Yods* are used as a substitute for the "Great Name." He says: ולמה אנו כותבין השם הגדול בשלשה יודין י' על שם יוד של שדי ויוד של אלהים ויוד של אהיה. See also B. Lewin in the Introduction to his edition of the *Sefer Shirat Na'an* (Haifa, 1929), pp. XXXI–XXXII, for references to other theories by medieval rabbinic and karaitic authorities about the significance of the three *Yods*. Here we should also mention the reference to the three *Yods* found in *Sefer Ruziah* (Amsterdam, 1701), p. 28b, which reads as follows: וזה מעידים על ג' קדושות אשר העולם עומד בהן א' בעשר הדברים ואחד בעשר ספירות ואחד בעשר הנפלאות של מצרים והם בסוד אהיה. Also on p. 26a we read: נקודות ג' בסוד ג' מורה הנ' בסוד ג' נקודות. As to the date of this book, especially of the part called *Sefer Ruziah*, in which the passages cited above occur, see Zunz, *GV*, p. 176–177, and note b. on p. 177; also L. Blau in *J. E.* X, p. 335. See also the cabalistic work of R. Jacob b. Isaac published by G. Scholem in *Tarbiz*, II, 2 (Jerusalem, 1931), p. 194, and cf. remarks by G. Scholem, *ibid.*, p. 204, n. 8.

⁴³ See *יצירה*, beginning, and cf. L. Ginzberg in *J. E.* XII, p. 604.


י"ד ד"שא כותבין את השם חוץ למקרא בג' יודין כך י"י ומסבבין סביבותיהן ב אחת לפי שמחם יוצא שם שלשים ושתיים והוא כתוב כך הפוך י"י והכותבין בספרים כך בב' יודין י"י אינו כלום. (Buber, *Introduction* to his edition of the *Midrash Sechel Tob* [Berlin, 1900], p. xxxix). We are not interested in the new interpretation, which is merely a combination of the interpretations of R. Tobiah b. Eliezer and of Rabiah, but we are interested in the new description of the figure. While Rabiah describes the sign added to the three *Yods* as a reversed curve resembling the letter *Beth*, the author of the *Sechel Tob* simply calls it, rather peculiarly, "one *Beth*." Significantly enough, he adds that this *Beth* is inverted and written to the left of the three *Yods* which are arranged not in a cluster resembling an inverted *Segol* but in a horizontal row. The inverted *Beth* thus surrounds or half encloses the three *Yods*. Why this alleged *Beth* is inverted and written to the left rather than to the right of the three *Yods* or above them, we are not told. But we may be able to find out for ourselves.

Still another description of this substitute is found in the Mss. work סודי רזי"א of R. Eleazar b. Judah of Worms (about 1176–1238), (quoted by Steinschneider in *Monatsschrift für Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums* [1896], p. 131). It reads as follows: י"י ג' יודין וב' על גביו הכתר הרי ל"ב. Here again the significance of the figure is understood to lie in its numerical value, thirty-two. We notice, however, that R. Eleazar is not satisfied with calling the additional sign *Beth*. He qualifies this name and further designates it as "the crown."⁴⁴ This so-called *Beth*, or "the crown," is written above rather than to the left of the letters, as described in *Sechel Tob*.

Since, as we have suggested above, most, if not all, of the forms can be traced back to the figure consisting of three *Yods*, we shall now consider the origin of that form. We shall then be able to consider the origin of the other varieties and see whether and how

⁴⁴ Rokeah does not say why he designates this *Beth* as "crown" or כתר. But it seems that any abbreviation sign was called by rabbinic authorities a כתר. Thus R. David ibn Zimra in his *Responsa* (l. c.) speaks of the little stroke serving as an abbreviation sign as a כתר. He says: 'אחת וכתר למעלה כוונ' א' כתר. We may assume that Rokeah knew that this sign which looked like a ב was an abbreviation sign and hence he designated it also by the term כתר.

they are connected with the figure consisting of three *Yods*. We need not enter into a lengthy discussion of the theories advanced to explain the significance of this figure. Their inadequacy will be shown indirectly when we prove that the number thirty-two, the supposed numerical value of this figure, is altogether incorrect, since the figure actually contains no *Beth*. For what seems to resemble a *Beth* is in reality another sign. Furthermore, the people who first used this figure had no intention at all of writing three *Yods*. Hence, they could not have meant to indicate three groups of ten, or the numerical value of thirty, or a reference to the initial letters of the threefold priestly blessing. They had no other purpose than simply to represent the Tetragrammaton in writing. They did not even suspect that special meaning or significance could be attached to the figure. The various forms of the figure which they used and which seem to consist of three *Yods* are merely graphic developments of the abbreviation יי, employed in talmudic times.⁴⁵ One need only visualize the manner in which the letters, *Yod* and *He*, are written in ancient manuscripts to realize how easily forms resembling three *Yods* might have developed out of them.

The right part of the letter *He*, which in square writing resembles a right angle in the shape of a *Daleth*, was written less distinctly in cursive writing and looked like a short vertical slanting stroke, the top of which was thick and curved slightly to the left, like this . This part of the *He*, then, was not very different from a *Yod* or a *Vav*, except for the slight turn to the left on the top. The other part of the *He*, the short left leg, is certainly not very different from the letter *Yod*. The letter *He*, then, consisted of two parts, each one of which more or less resembled the letter *Yod*. Thus the two letters יי came to look like three *Yods* and scribes or copyists when about to write the abbreviation יי put down what looked like three *Yods* in a row. The right part of the *He* was

⁴⁵ Accordingly, the decision given by Isserles, *Yore Deah* 276,10, to the effect that this substitute for the Tetragrammaton may be erased: 'השם שכותבין בסדורין ב' ודין ואחת על גביהן סותר למחוקו אם הוא לצורך זה' is not valid. For these three *Yods* are identical with יי and not merely an artificial sign without any connotations of holiness, סימנא בעלמא ואין בהם קדושה, as suggested by one of the authorities quoted by R. David ibn Zimra in his responsum, l. c.

sometimes written so that it looked a little taller than the *Yod* at its right, and, of course, the left leg of the *He*, always put somewhat lower than the slanting right part, also looked a little shorter than the right part. The result was that in some writings the slanting right part of the letter *He* in the abbreviation η , though resembling a *Yod*, overtopped the two other *Yods*, the real one at its right and the short leg of the *He* at its left. Thus developed the form η (no. 56), consisting of two *Yods* in a horizontal row with a third above them.

When the letters η were used as an abbreviation for the Tetragrammaton, another sign was usually added to mark them as an abbreviation. This abbreviation sign continued to be added to the two letters η even after they came to look like three *Yods*. Thus originated the forms consisting of three *Yods* with the additional sign marking them as abbreviation. There were many abbreviation signs in use among Jewish scribes. There was, in the first place, the dot put on top of the letter or letters forming the abbreviation. There was the sign consisting of one or two short vertical strokes put at the end of or between the letters forming the abbreviation. There was also the horizontal, straight or slightly curved line written above the letters. Then there was the figure like the Arabic *medda*, two forms of which were used by Jewish scribes. There was the *medda* written upside down like this \sim , and there was the normal form of the *medda* like this \sim . The latter, however, being drawn in the opposite direction than the former, could well have been regarded and designated by the Jews as drawn backwards, למפרע. It is this sign which Rabiah adequately describes as a reverse curve, or a curve drawn in the reverse direction, somewhat resembling the letter *Beth*, משיכה ארוכה, למפרע כמין ב. For indeed the *medda* sign, \sim , does resemble the letter *Beth*, \beth , in the rabbinic or cursive writing (see *Jewish Encyclopedia* I, p. 453; and Carlo Bernheimer, *Paleographia Ebraica* [Florence, 1924], p. 40).

That this sign was not actually the Hebrew letter *Beth* is also evident from the description of it by R. Eleazar of Worms. For though he refers to it as a *Beth*, he adds that he merely means by this the sign or, as he calls it, "the crown," put on top of the letters. However, there were people who objected to the writing

of any sign above what represented the Name of God.⁴⁶ Some scribes, therefore, either entirely omitted the dot serving as an abbreviation or put it above the space between the letters rather than above any one of the letters. Some removed the horizontal straight line from its position above the letters and put it underneath them. They moved the horizontal curved line similarly, except that they sometimes put it to the left of the letters, instead of beneath them. Likewise, scrupulous scribes sometimes put the sign of the *medda* beside rather than above the letters. It is this *medda* written vertically after the letters that the author of *Sechel Tob* describes as an inverted or reversed *Beth*, enclosing the three *Yods*. For in a vertical position like this ζ the *medda* does resemble an inverted cursive *Beth*. We cannot maintain with certainty that, ignoring the little turn to the left on top, he actually mistook the part of the sign half surrounding the three *Yods* for a *Beth*. We may assume, however, that he knew it was part of a sign and merely resembled the letter *Beth*. His very words, *ואחת סביבותיהן ב אחת* "and they surround them with one *Beth*," support such an assumption. For the full sign of the *medda* in a vertical position like this, \mathcal{Z} , actually resembles two *Beths*, an upright and an inverted one joined to each other. Since our author was interested in describing only the lower part of the sign which resembles a *Beth* and which encloses the three *Yods*, and not the upper part which likewise resembles a *Beth* but is turned away from the *Yods*, he advisedly says that the *Yods* are surrounded by "one *Beth*," that is, one part of the sign resembling two *Beths*. All the varieties consisting merely of three *Yods* are, then, to be regarded as graphic developments of the one abbreviation, יה . The varieties consisting of three *Yods* and an abbreviation sign are to be regarded as developments of the old abbreviation יה to which an abbreviation sign has been added. Accordingly, the origin of all the varieties of the first group on our list is satisfactorily accounted for by the theory of graphic development.

The old abbreviation יה , however, took another course of

⁴⁶ Cf. Rashi on Sabbath 63b, s. v. *יוד הא מלמעלה קדש למד למטה*, who expressly says that this arrangement of the words was made in order not to have anything written before or on top of the letters constituting the Holy Name: *שלא להקדים שאר אותיות למעלה מן השם מאחר ששני שיטין היו*.

development besides the one which gradually turned it into three *Yods*. By a slight lengthening of the right leg, of the *He* that part came to look like a *Vav* instead of like a *Yod*. Occasionally, the left leg of the *He* which reaches a little lower was similarly lengthened and began to resemble a *Vav* more than a *Yod*. Thus, from the two letters ה״ of the old abbreviation three letters developed, two *Yods* and one *Vav*, the latter either standing between the two *Yods* like this ם״, or at the end like this ם״״. And where an abbreviation sign had been added to the ה״ originally, it was retained in the new forms consisting of two *Yods* and a *Vav*. We have thus satisfactorily accounted for the origin of all the forms in the third group on our list, both those which consist simply of two *Yods* and a *Vav*, and those to which an abbreviation sign has been added. Any calculations about the number twenty-six, the numerical value of these three letters, as equal to the numerical value of the four letters of the Tetragrammaton, were as far from the minds of those who first came to use the varieties of this group as the speculations about the thirty or thirty-two were removed from the minds of those who used any of the varieties consisting of three *Yods*.

We have seen above that there were many varieties of these new combinations consisting of either three *Yods* or of two *Yods* and one *Vav*, which had no abbreviation sign. For abbreviation signs were not infrequently omitted. However, some copyists, finding these varieties without any abbreviation sign, mistook the last or middle *Yod* in both combinations for a dot or short vertical stroke, serving as an abbreviation sign.⁴⁷ They then proceeded to omit this supposed abbreviation sign. Hence, we find forms consisting of two *Yods* ם״ and of *Yod Vav* ם״״ without any abbreviation sign. Others made the same mistake and considered one of the *Yods* in the varieties consisting of three *Yods* or of two *Yods* and a *Vav*, a mere abbreviation sign. But instead of omitting this supposed abbreviation sign they wished to retain it and make it

⁴⁷ This was actually assumed by G. Polak in his הליכות קדם; cf. above, note 34. Cf. against him N. N. Coronel in Polak's בן גרני, p. 63-64, who correctly states that the older practice was to write three *Yods* but that later on, through a misunderstanding, only two *Yods* were written without any good reason for doing so: שזה היה: שנה קודם לכתוב ג' יודין ואחרונים שלא ידעו הטעם שינו הדבר בלי טעם וכחבו רק ב' יודין.

very clear that it was an abbreviation sign and not a *Yod*.⁴⁸ The fact that so many sorts of abbreviation signs have been preserved in manuscripts and that these abbreviation signs are put in various positions in various manuscripts proves beyond a shadow of a doubt that copyists and scribes had their preferences both as to the sign with which to indicate an abbreviation, and as to the position in which to put it. Even copyists would not hesitate to substitute one abbreviation sign for another or to change its position in the abbreviation. Certainly scribes could not have always agreed with their predecessors' and colleagues' choice and disposition of abbreviation signs. Hence, in the case of some of the varieties of the first group and the third group where one *Yod* was mistaken for an abbreviation sign, some scribes or copyists would not have hesitated to substitute for the supposed abbreviation sign, so closely resembling the letter *Yod*, another abbreviation sign that could not be taken for anything but an abbreviation sign. And they would put this abbreviation sign in whatever position they thought proper. Instead of the little stroke resembling the letter *Yod*, they would either put a dot on top of one of the *Yods* or on top of the *Vav*; or they would put a line above or beneath the two *Yods* or *Yod Vav*; or they would put the sign of the *medda* above or beside the two letters.⁴⁹

We can thus account for all the varieties of the second and fourth group, consisting of two *Yods* or of *Yod Vav* with some abbreviation sign.

Our theory, then, is that by a process of graphic development the old abbreviation \aleph , used in talmudic times, gradually came to assume the various forms used in post-talmudic times. This theory accounts for the origin of all the varieties and explains how they came into use. It does not ascribe any special meaning or significance to any of the forms, since none of them have been intentionally invented as substitutes for the Tetragrammaton,

⁴⁸ Sometimes they would merely add another unmistakable abbreviation sign; hence we have many varieties with more than one abbreviation sign.

⁴⁹ It can easily be shown, then, that all the varieties are satisfactorily explained as graphic developments, especially if it is kept in mind that scribes would sometimes use more than one abbreviation sign and copyists would not hesitate to change the abbreviation signs, substituting one for the other.

but merely resulted from the natural variations in practice of different scribes in different ages. This theory, furthermore, does not presuppose a disregard of talmudic precedent on the part of those who gradually came to use these apparently new substitutes for the Tetragrammaton. On the contrary, it assumes that all those who first used these substitutes were following the old established talmudic practice, for it shows that all these apparently new substitutes were merely developments and modifications of the old abbreviation used in talmudic times.