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SECTARIAN POLEMICS AS REFLECTED IN MIDRASHIC EXEGESIS

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BASED UPON GENESIS AND EXODUS RABBAH, TANCHUMA TO
GENESIS AND EXODUS, AND THE YALKUT SHIMONI TO GENESIS
AND EXODUS

SUBMITTED FOR THE RABBINICAL DEGREE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

- A. THE HISTORICAL BACKGROUND
- B. CONTROVERSIES WITH SECTARIAN GROUPS
 - I. The Minim
 - II. The Samaritans
- C. CONTROVERSIES WITH INDIVIDUALS
 - III. The Matrona
 - IV. The Philosophers
 - V. Roman-Rabbinic Controversies
 - VI. Jacob of Chephar Neburaia
 - VII. The Gentiles
- D. Conclusion
- E. Appendix. The Midrashic Sources
- F. Bibliography

PREFACE

In defining the scope of this thesis, it must be made clear from the outset that I will deal with those controversies between the Rabbis and their various opponents which deal primarily with the interpretation of various Biblical texts and religious and doctrinal arguments. The Midrashic passages which will be examined are those which contain the direct controversy, i.e. where the sectarian and the Rabbi actually engage in discussion. The Midrashic books are full of allusions to various sectarian teachings but these I have not included in this study. In presenting the Midrashic passages I have gathered those which seem to me to present some definite polemical argument. The classification of the material has not been made according to the ideas or texts discussed but according to the various sectarians mentioned. In this manner I hope to present a fuller understanding of the sectarians with whom the Rabbis debated. To whatever extent possible, I have endeavored to identify the various sectarians.

To do full justice to this subject it is necessary to study all of the polemical arguments dealing with the sectarians. The particular material examined for this thesis is but a small portion of the polemical literature, therefore allowances must be made for what might be an inadequate presentation of this subject. This study is but a personal introduction into a field which is as interesting as it is

vast.

I have no particular thesis to present. I have combined in this study the twofold problems of attempting to identify the sectarians and to study as comprehensively as possible the answers of the Rabbis. To attempt any identification of the sectarians can be only made upon the basis of an analysis of the Midrash itself and I have followed this plan throughout this study.

The material has been classified into two parts. In the first division I have included those controversies which represent polemics with members of some definite sectarian group. In the second division I have gathered the material under the general heading of Controversies with Individuals. The individuals may belong to any of the sectarian groups which will be discussed in the first portion of this study, but because they are referred to as individual polemicists whose sectarian identity cannot be always definitely determined, I will consider them separately. This division of the material is of course arbitrary but I have found it advantageous to present the material in this manner.

Of the source material itself, I have used the Theodor edition of Genesis Rabbah and the Warsaw edition 1867, to Genesis and Exodus Rabbah. The Buber edition of the Tanchuma, 1885, and the Tanchuma 'Hanidpos,' Warsaw edition, have been also employed. Lastly I have made use of the Vilna edition, 1909, of the Yalkut Shimoni. I have also been fortunate to have been able to employ the recent Soncino translation to the

Midrash Rabbah which has aided me considerably in paraphrasing the Midrashim. The masterly and scholarly books by W. Bacher on the Tannaim and Palestinian Amoraim have also been of great help to me and throughout this study I will refer to them by the initials of the titles of his works.

INTRODUCTION

The Historical Background

LIST OF ABBREVIATED WORKS

J.E.

Jewish Encyclopedia

A.d.T.

Agada der Tannaiten

A.d.P.A.

Agada der Palestinen-
sichen Amoraim

R.E.J.

Revue Etude des Juif

INTRODUCTION

The Historical Background

This study is based primarily on the controversies between the Rabbis and sectarians as reported in some of the Midrashic books to Genesis and Exodus. Naturally, with this limitation in dealing with restricted source material it is difficult to present a comprehensive view nor any definite conclusions of the nature of Jewish and Non-Jewish polemics. The word 'sectarian' is used advisedly. One of the perplexing problems of the Talmudic and Midrashic period, in the first five centuries of the Common Era, is to identify those whom the Rabbis referred to as Heretics. Therefore, it is best to speak of the antagonists of Judaism in general terms before any definite identifications can be made.

Probably the first outstanding polemicist in Judaism was the Jewish-Hellenist philosopher ^hPilo. With the challenge of Hellenism, Judaism was compelled to meet the Greek-Oriental philosophies which attacked Judaism upon a philosophical-theological plane. Philo combined Greek thought ^{with} to his philosophy of Judaism and in that period wrote, particularly against the attacks of Apion, ^{what} may be called the first philosophical polemic for Judaism.

The Jewry of Palestine, however, was not overly pre-occupied with the question of polemics. The Jews in the Diaspora, constituting a minority, were more on the defensive in meeting the wave of Hellenism which spread over the Near

East. In Palestine, during the time of the second Temple, the leaders of Judaism, the scribes and teachers of the Synagogue, these who became known as the Pharisees, were forced to meet the rise of a sect within their own group, namely the Sadducees. The struggle between the two groups continued in the main up to the time of the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D. Other sects were known to have been in existence but primarily the struggle was carried on between those who represented the Synagogue and those who formed the bulwark of the Temple.

With the turn of the first century (of the common era) a new and even greater force than ever met by Judaism before began to take shape. Insignificantly did the movement of Christianity appear upon the world scene. Preoccupied with their own internal difficulties and with the rising animosities toward the eagle of Rome, the ^{Elders} Rabbis were at first disinclined to negate the importance of Jesus and his small band of disciples. The attitude of the Jews in the early stages of the rise of this new religion may be summed up in the judgement of Gamliel who thought it best to wait and see what would become of this new sect, that if it were of God it would endure, if not it would pass away.¹ But as the differences

1. Acts 4. 38-39

became accentuated, as Christianity became a proselytising religion under the missionary activities of Paul (c.49-60), as the new converts to this 'upstart' religion overthrew the Law, the polemics between the Rabbis and the followers of the Church began to flourish. In general as Parkes says, "we can see that it is probable that the Jewish attack on Christianity would be less violent than that of the Christians on Judaism."¹ Judaism adopted a negative view toward Christianity and though they disputed the Messianic claims for Jesus, His birth and Resurrection "there is not much evidence in these first centuries that their attack went further."² Christianity, as revealed in the writings of the Church Fathers was by far much more denunciatory of Judaism.³

The early Rabbinic polemics were not primarily directed against the Gentile Christians but rather against those who formed the Jewish-Christian groups. Among these were those who upheld the Law but accepted Jesus as the Messiah. The opinion of many scholars is that the famous 'Birkat HaMinim' composed by Samuel Hakotan at the request of Rabban Gamleil was directed particularly at this group.⁴ Jewish hostility toward this group, who are sometimes known as the Nazarenes, grew sharper when after the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus

1. Parkes, the Conflict of Church and Synagogue, p.114.

2. Ibid. p.115.

3. cf. Ibid. p.95ff.

4. Bacher, A.d.T. Heb. ed. Vol. I,1 p.63ff; Parkes, op. cit. p.77; Moore, Judaism, Vol. I, p.91; Graetz, Vol. II, History, p.379ff.

in 70, the Jewish-Christians saw in the downfall of the city a sign for the final "departure of the sceptre from Israel."¹ "Had the Judeo-Christians been the only members of the new faith, the breach between them and the Jews might have been healed, for they also desired to observe the Law. But the Rabbis at Jabne were not unaware of their contact with Gentile Christians who did not observe the Law at all. They knew the teaching of Paul and condemned it entirely. It was only a step from this condemnation to the refusal to accept as orthodox the conformity of the Judeo-Christians."² It was then, before the end of the first century that the Birkath Ha-Minim was included into the synagogue service.

Little in reality is known about the Jewish-Christian group. Among them there were various groups differing in their attitudes toward the Law and Jesus, as the Nazarenes and Ebionites who in the ~~main~~ upheld the Law and regarded Jesus as a human Messiah. The Jewish-Christians, for example, who followed in the pattern of Paul and some of the apostles broke entirely with the Law. With the growth of the Gentile Christian Church the line of separation between the Judeo-Christians and the Jews are more firmly drawn. Moreover, the Judeo-Christians gradually were absorbed by the Gentile Christians group and decreased in importance by the middle of the second century. But Judeo-Christian groups,

1. Parkes, op. cit., p.77.

2. Ibid., p.77.

however, still continued to exist and drew the censure of the Church. Their position, as Parkes has written, was a tragic one. "Rejected, first by the Church, in spite of their genuine belief in Jesus as the Messiah, and then by the Jews in spite of their loyalty to the Law, they ceased to be a factor of any importance in the development of either Christianity of Judaism."¹

The whole period of the first five centuries of the growth of the Talmud and the Church witnessed the rise of many sects. The recent and excellent historian of the conflict of the Church and the Synagogue, Dr. James Parkes, has well summarized this period that "the interesting fact about this period is that from the two poles of Catholic and Rabbinic orthodoxy stretch an unbroken stream of intermediate sects. For there were some groups which had both Christian and Jewish representatives such as the Gnostics and the Ebionites, and among the Jewish believers in Christ there appear to have been a number of different groups varying in their conception of the amount of Law which should still be obeyed."²

Along with the rise of the religious movement of Christianity there grew up the philosophical mystical movement of Gnoticism, which in time was likewise absorbed into the Church. The antecedents of this philosophy are many and

1. Parkes, op. cit. p.92.

2. Ibid. p.94.

varied. "It was a confusion of the most opposite modes of thought and teachings, Jewish and heathen, old and new, true and false, the lofty and the low, all in close fusion and juxtaposition."¹ This group likewise broke up into many sects ranging from the early group of the Ophites to Marcion and Valentinus.² Both the Church and the **Synagogue** contended against the followers of this Greek-Oriental syncretism of thought. The Church Father, Irenaeus in his writings of the Heresies is particularly hostile to the sect of the Gnostics.³ The Rabbinic stories of Elisha b. Abuya and Ben Dama testify to the influence of Gnosticism on Jews.⁴ But whether the Rabbinic statements applied to the Minim refer to the Gnostics as well as to the Jewish Christians is yet a debatable question.⁵ There is to my knowledge no particular term used by the Rabbis to specify the Gnostics and it must be concluded that references to them may have been included in the general names for heretics.

In brief the theory of the Gnostics is based on a Dualism of a Supreme God and the God of Creation, the Demiurge, who was subordinate to the former. Through knowledge (γνῶσις) God was known. The Supreme God, they held, had no relation-

1. Graetz, History, II, p.373.

2. For an excellent survey of Gnosticism see Mansel, the Gnostic Heresies.

3. Ibid. and Jackson, The Fathers of the Third Century, p.29ff.

4. Graetz, Gnosticismus und Judenthum, p. 62 ff. and p. 77 ff.

5. cf. Herford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash p.370. also A. Büchler Über die Minim von Sepphoris und Tiberias, Festschrift zu Hermann Cohen. He identifies the Minim with the Gnostics and Gentile Christians but not with the Judeo-Christians, whom he claims were for the most part not antinomistic.

ship to the world. It was the Demiurge who directed the world and had given the Law to Israel. From the Supreme God "issued emanations which revealed a portion of his essence; these emanations were called aeons (worlds)."¹ With the aid of Wisdom (Achamoth) the Demiurge created the world out the Eterbal Primeval matter. Thus they taught a form of trinitarianism of three original beings, God, The Demiurge, and Primeval Matter. Christ, they differentiated from Jesus, the son of man "upon whom the Christ descended temporarily." Christ was the Saviour and was begotten through Intelligence and the Father.²

The purpose of Gnosticism was to bring salvation to man from the earth-bound and evil matter. It was particularly a religion of redemption. "Only the initiated could attain the revealed knowledge, the gnosis. Through this divine enlightenment the soul now attains liberation at the same time learning the secret of a successful journey to the abode of the blest after death. This abode is in the highest heavens whither the soul journeys equipped with all necessary armor, both offensive and defensive, for triumphing over its foes. This victory is made possible in the first instance through the work of a savior who, instead of being a concrete historical or mythical individual is now an abstraction in the form of 'light,' 'wisdom,' 'truth,' 'primal man,' and the like. The whole scheme of the universe becomes a mighty drama of

1. Graetz, History, II, p.376.

2. Irenaus, Jackson, op. cit., p.31.

the redemption. This in general was the character of Gnosticism before it was fused in the second and third centuries A.D."¹

The many Gnostic sects that flourished throughout the Near East were invariably hostile to Judaism. The Jewish and Christian elements in these groups were strongly antinomistic. The Gnostics, it can be said, represented the distinctly anti-Jewish tendency in Christianity. The God of the Old Testament, or the God of the Jews, they relegated to the highest of the seven world creating spirits, being inferior to the Supreme God. The Gnostic, Marcion, displayed an attitude of hate for the God of Judaism and considered Him as an evil God, differing from the good God of Christianity.

These in the main, along with the Hellenistic transplantation of the Greek mythology and philosophy, were the forces which Judaism met in the early centuries of the formation of the Talmud and Midrash. Other religions and philosophies were also known in Palestine, for in this country the fusion of many Oriental and Occidental philosophies took place. The Rabbis also fought against the influences of idolatry and some of these polemics will be noted later.

1. Case, The Evolution of Early Christianity, p.327-328.

CONTROVERSIES WITH SECTARIAN GROUPS

CHAPTER I

THE MINIM

I turn now to the polemics of the Rabbis against those who were called Minim, as based upon the sources of Genesis Rabbah, the Tanchuma to Genesis and Exodus, and the Yalkut Shimoni to these books. If the handling of this problem of the Minim may seem inadequate here, appropriate apology must be made, for in order to completely understand the problem all the Rabbinic sources must be studied. A complete and acceptable account has been given by R. Travers Herford in his excellent study, Christianity in the Talmud and Midrash. Professor H. Strack has also a collection of many of the statements pertaining to the Minim in his book, Jesus, Die Häretiker und Die Christen.

The difficulty in dealing with the problem of the Minim is that the Rabbinic sources give us little, if any, specific evidence of these sectarians. The terms 'min' or 'Minuth' refer generally to heretics and heresy. Bergmann in his study of Jewish polemics, Judische Apologetik, writes, "Minim bedeutet im allgemeinen Häretiker im besondern die Anhänger aller Häresien: die freidenkenden, griechisch gebildeten Juden, die Christen und die Gnostiker."¹ Thus the terms of the Rabbis, 'minim' and 'epikursim' (free-thinkers) refer in general to those who deviated from the norm of Judaism. Other terms used by the Rabbis which have some sectarian im-

1. Bergmann, Judische Apologetik, p.7.

plications are: 'betrayers' (אֲבֵרֵי); and 'apostates' (אֲפֹסְטָטִים). "Epiqurosin (plur. of Epiquros) is plainly borrowed from the personal name Epicurus; but it contains also a play on the word 'paqar' (פָּקַד), which means 'to be free from restraint.' The name denotes, in general terms, a free-thinker, one who disregards the restraints of traditional authority. An Epiquros was not necessarily a Jew, he might be a Gentile.....The term does not, so far as I know, imply the holding or rejecting of any specific doctrines, but merely the assertion of liberty of thought upon all subjects, and consequent disregard of external authority. A gentile Epiquros would be one who, in controversy did not from the first admit the authority of Jewish tradition as upheld by the rabbis, a Jewish Epiquros would be one who, having formerly acknowledged the Rabbinical authority, afterwards rejected it. But a man is only an Epiquros, if I rightly understand the term when he is considered as having relation with the Jewish religion. A Greek philosopher, teaching in Rome or Athens, would not, merely as such, be an Epiquros; but if he had a controversy with a Jew upon some question affecting Judaism, he would be a Gentile Epiquros. A Jew became an Epiquros as soon as he showed a disposition to despise the Rabbinical authority and go his own way..... The difference between Min and Epiquros is much the same as the difference between 'heretic' and 'free-thinker'. The heretic usually is a free-thinker; but not every free-thinker

is a heretic."¹

The greater number of the polemics to be examined deal with the Minim. Some of the sources also refer to the 'Epikursim' as interchanged with the Minim in the Midrash. In general the terms, as shown above, refer to some kind of heresy but what that heresy was is a difficulty which cannot be easily solved. To what ever extent that can be found will be developed in the course of this study. It is, I believe, only upon an analysis of the sources in relation to the time and background that some idea of the Minim can be formed.

In pursuing this study of the Minim I follow no particular thesis to prove whether they were Gnostics or Jewish Christians as have been the efforts of M. Friedlander² and Herford.³ Their particular approaches will be included in this study but it can be said of both studies that their conclusions are not decisive. The subject of the Minim and other heretics cannot be fully known as the source material does not throw enough light upon the problem. I am more particularly interested in the answer of the Rabbis to their antagonists; to relate their answers wherever possible to the theory and doctrine of Judaism.

Of an explanation of the word 'min' (מין) various theories have been propounded. The word is generally related to 'species,' 'kind' as explained in Gen.1.2. According to

1. Herford, Christianity in Talmud and Midrash, p.119ff.
2. Friedlander, Der Vorchristliche Jüdische Gnosticismus.
3. Herford, Christianity in the Talmud and Midrash.

Bacher the word is translated into the Greek as γένος (genus). The word, he finds, is also related to αἵρεσις (heresy) as the Pharisees were wont to speak of the Sadducees as $\text{ק'ר'י'ט'ן} \quad \text{י'ד}$ as Josephus in the Antiquities XII, 10.6 refers to the Sadducees as τὸ Ἰαδουχαίων γένος (the Sadducean sect) with the sense of Ἰαδουχαίων αἵρεσις (Sadducean heresy) implied. In time the word 'Min' came to refer to sects in general but originally referred to the sect of the Sadducees. However, the sense of the word as sect was changed and the word 'min' was applied to the sectarian, the miscreant or the heretic, and sometimes those Jews who separated themselves from the religious community and followed false doctrines. It seems, continues Bacher, that when Christianity gained more and more adherents the word 'min' was applied to them, but nevertheless it was also applied to other heretics. From the word Min is formed the abstract 'minuth' which in a very particular sense designates Christianity.¹

Herford has an interesting theory of the word ^{min} which seems plausible but must be recognized as a theory. There is another word found in the Old Testament which also has the meaning of 'kind' 'species,' namely zan (זן). The word is found in Ps. 144.13 and in II Chron. 16.14. Interestingly he has found that it is the same as the Aramaic word זן which

1. Bacher, Le Mot "Minim" Dans Le Talmud, Revue Etude des Juif, 1899 Vol. 38, p.38ff.

ing of מין in the same direction and that whereas פלג in the Talmud usually denotes literal unfaithfulness, מין, referred almost exclusively to figurative unfaithfulness, i.e. some form of apostasy from the national religion. That is unquestionably the connotation of whatever the denotation may be. The theory worked out here is based on the suggestion of Friedmann in his note to Pesikta 101a...If it is correct then, it explains why in several of the passages which have been examined in the earlier part of the book, there is secondary reference to fornication in the mention of Minim and minuth... None but a Jew could be guilty of unfaithfulness towards the covenant-relation between God and Israel. Hence, if the above etymology be correct, a min must be an unfaithful Jew; and in examining the various instances where the term is used, we have found that in almost every case the Jewish origin of the Minim is either implied or not contradicted. In a few instances the term appears to be applied to Gentiles, in the sense of enemies of Judaism."¹

Herford's theory seems highly acceptable and supplies the missing link in the explanation given above by Bacher. Bacher says that in time the sense of the word as sect became lost and was applied to sectarians in general. What accounted for this psychological transference in the meaning of the word? The answer, I believe, has been well given by Herford that the idea of unfaithfulness crept into the meaning of this term."²

1. Herford, op. cit. p.362ff.

2. The Rabbinical statement in San. 38b that Adam was a Min can be understood to mean that Adam had been unfaithful, had disobeyed a Divine Command.

where is page 15?

Other derivations have been advanced, for example, deriving the term from the word י'דן (believer in Jesus as Messiah)¹ and from the word י'ס (refuse, applied to those who refuse to uphold the Oral Law and the unity of God)² The latter word has some etymological soundness and may be advanced as a possible explanation. There is no definite conclusion to be made upon the derivation of the word, although it is my opinion that Herford has made an exceptionally strong case in his etymological explanation of the word.

The difficulty in attempting to identify the various sectarians with whom the Rabbis engaged in polemics has not as yet been fully resolved. With the exception of the Samaritans, the identity of the other heretics or sectarians must be based, to a large extent, upon theory and conjecture. Similar ideas as expressed by various philosophical and Church writers of the early centuries C.E. are not in themselves definite proof that the sectarians were members of the groups whom the writers describe or represent.

The two main theories advanced about the Minim are those by M. Friedlander and R. Travers Herford. Friedlander, in his *Der Vorchristliche Jüdische Gnosticismus*, has advanced the thesis that the Minim were mainly members of the Ophite sect of the Gnostic theory. The Ophites (Οφίς) or Naasenes (נחש, serpent) regarded the serpent in Paradise as the origin of evil and

1. Joel, M.: *Blicke in Die Religionsgeschichte zu Anfang des zweiten Christlichen Jahrhunderts*, p.90, part II. Joel's explanation seems rather untenable. His theory is based on the fact that the early Christians called themselves 'believers' (πιστοί), which he translates as י'ב'ל' (י'ב'ל' is a transliteration of the Greek word). Yet he does not advance any Rabbinic proofs for this assertion, nor does he explain why the Jews regarded the word י'ב'ל' as an opprobrious term for י'ב'ל' (י'ב'ל' is a transliteration of the Greek word).
 2. Cited by Herford, op. cit., p.365.

honored highly this animal for having led Adam and Eve into disobedience against God "and thus to the recognition of good and evil and of consciousness in general." In the main the Ophites followed the outlines of Gnosticism as described above. In relation to Judaism they were antinomistic. Friedlander also claims that they were the earliest Jewish sect in the Diaspora.¹

Herford, in his Christianity in the Talmud and Midrash, admits that the Minim may have been Gnostics but in particular, he claims, the Minim in the Rabbinic literature are mainly Judeo-Christians. The latter he believes were Judeo-Christians characterized by the Epistle to the Hebrews.² Herford has collected most of the passages relating to the Minim and in my opinion has produced a strong and tenable thesis.

Most of the material used by Friedlander lies outside of the scope of this study and therefore, it is difficult to evaluate his thesis. If, however, the criticisms of Herford,³ I. Levi,⁴ and Bacher⁵ of Friedlander's thesis can be accepted as authentic and scholarly it would seem that Friedlander's thesis has little support. No doubt Friedlander has stretched his theory too far and has committed errors in trying to fit all the material he finds into his theory.

The main difficulty in dealing with this whole problem, it seems to me, revolves about the anti-nomistic attitudes

1. Friedlander, op. cit. p.68.

2. Herford, op. cit., p.266.

3. Ibid, p.368ff.

4. I. Levi, R.E.J. 1899 p.204ff 'Le Mot Minim.

5. Bacher, R.E.J. 1899 p.38ff.

of the sectarians. Those who hold that the Minim are Gnostics because of their antinomistic attitude do so on the assumption that the Judeo-Christians were not antinomistic. This conclusion may not be tenable. Little is known about the Judeo-Christians and their attitude toward the Law, although we know of some groups among them ^{who} observed the Law. But whether all Judeo-Christians were observing Jews is a problem for which little has been said or dealt with. Probably the one single authentic argument that the Judeo-Christians are the minim is the statement made by Jerome in his letter to Augustin where he states that the Minim are Nazarenes (נזרונים) who profess to be both Jews and Christians but are neither.¹ Jerome, Herford claims, is an unimpeachable witness who can speak out of his own knowledge.²

To gain any further understanding of this problem it would be best to turn to those Midrashic passages where the Minim and the Rabbis are engaged in polemical discussion. In presenting the polemics I have grouped them according to the ideas discussed, which should throw some light upon the identity of these sectarians.

One of the foremost problems discussed between the Rabbis and the Minim is the problem of a plurality of Gods or the doctrine of Two Powers in Heaven (שתי כחות). The Minim asked R. Simlai, (Gen.R.8) 'How many Gods created the world?' He said, 'Let us inquire of the first days, it is

1. Herford, op. cit. p.378. Jerome says: In quem et nos credimus, sed dum volunt et Judaei-esse et Christiani, nec Judaei sunt nec Christiani

2. Ibid. p.378.

written, Ask now of the former days which were before thee,
since God created man upon the earth. (Deut. 4.32) It is not
 written here they created (|כר) but he created (|כר).
 The Minim asked him again of the statement in Genesis 1.1.
 'God created' (¹ |כר |כר). R. Simlai answered, 'Gods
 created (pl. |כר) is not written here but God created
 (sing. |כר). R. Simlai created the dictum that wherever
 in the Scriptures the Minim could find some pretext for attack-
 ing Judaism, the proof against them could be found in a
 following passage.

An example of his hermeneutics is also given in the follow-
 ing polemic. The Minim asked him of the meanign of the verse
Let us make man in our image after our likeness (Gen. 1.26).
 Said R. Simlai, 'Read what follows, it is not written, *And
 they (Gods) created man in their image but And God created man
in his own image (Gen. 1.27). The disciples of R. Simlai were
 not, however, fully satisfied with his answer and said to him,
 'Rabbi these you have thrust away by a reed (a simple answer)
 what will you answer us?' Answered R. Simlai, 'At first man
 was created out of the dust and Eve was created out of man.
 From then on it is said, in our image after our likeness (Gen.
 1.26). It is impossible for man to live without woman and it
 is impossible for woman to exist without man, and it is im-
 possible for both to exist without the Shechinah.'

Once again the Minim queried R. Simlai, 'What is the

1. They argue the plurality of the term 'Elohim' which they
 translate as 'Gods.'

meaning of the verse, God, the Lord, God, (God the Lord knoweth) (Josh. 22, 22). He answered, 'It is not written they know (פ'ל ידעו) but He knoweth.' Again his students asked for a better answer and he said, "The three names are the names of God, just as a man addresses a king, Basileus, Ceasar, Augustus Ceasar."

Again the Minim asked, 'what is the meaning of the verse, For He is a Holy God (Josh. 24.19). Said He: 'They (ה'הם) are holy is not written but He is holy.

The passages before us clearly deal with the problem of Two Powers in Heaven. The Minim strive to prove by arguing the plurality of God's name that more than One God is taught in the Bible. R. Simlai counter⁵reposes their attacks by citing Scriptural verses which teach the soleness and unity of God.

The dates of R. Simlai are not definitely known. This discussion can be dated about the middle of the third century C.E.¹ This famous Haggadist originally hailed from Babylonia and settled in the northern part of Palestine in Lydda and in the Galilee and was associated with R. Jannai.

Who the Minim mentioned here were is problematic. The doctrine of a duality of Powers in Heaven has been known in the Zorastrian theology and as we have seen above the Gnostics also taught a plurality of Gods. However, the theory of a quality or plurality of Gods may also belong to the Christian Church. According to Graetz, in the middle of the third century the Church had already conquered the primitive Christ-

1. cf. Herford, op. cit. p. 258ff. and Graetz, History, II, p. 498ff. and Bacher, A.d.T. Vol. II.-2, p. 318ff.

main sects and the Gnostic heresies. "New dogmas had made their appearance which the authorities sought to establish and secure. The rigid doctrine of the Unity of God derived by Christianity from the parent religion, had in course of time, and in proportion as the new Church glorified the Messiahship of Jesus given rise to a doctrine of duality: Father and Son, or the Creator of the World, and the **Logos**."¹ Later the Church added a third, the Holy Ghost. "...Whenever the Scriptures contained several denominations of God, they professed to see an indication of the Trinity in the letter of the text itself. Even the simple opening words of the Pentateuch, 'In the beginning God created heaven and earth' were interpreted by this Christology in proof of Christ's cooperation in the creation of the world; for 'the beginning' was interpreted to mean 'wisdom' or the 'word' (Logos), being synonymous with Christ, and this sentence was thus found to contain the profound secret that 'God created the world in Christ.'²

Herford points out that while the Gnostics held a duality of Gods it was the Demiurge alone who was associated with Creation. "The Gnostics certainly did not teach that creation was the work of the supreme God; but equally they did not teach that it was the work of two deities acting together. Hence it would seem that the Doctrine of the Two Powers in Heaven is not a Gnostic doctrine."³ Herford proceeds to derive this

1. Graetz, History, II, p.500.

2. Ibid. p.501.

3. Herford, op. cit. p.263.

doctrine as taught to the Jewish Christians in the Epistle to the Hebrew I.1., where Christ is closely identified with God in the creation of the world. But it may be concluded with Bergmann who writes, "aus der Bibel versuchten christliche und gnostische Schriftsteller eine Mehrheit in Gott zu beweisen, und aus der Bibel wurden sie von den Lehrern des Judenthums widerlegt."¹ Bergmann brings proof to his statement from the writings of various Church Fathers that a duality or trinity of heavenly powers was taught by both groups.²

That the Christians sought to find in the Bible proof for two or more powers in Heaven can be seen from the interpretation given by Justin Martyr to the above verse, 'Let us make man' etc. In the Dialogue with Trypho he says, "But that you may not pervert the meaning of these words, by urging what your teachers tell you, that God either said, Let Us make, to Himself, as we often do when on the point of setting about something, or to the elements, that is, the earth, and those other substances of which we think that man is composed; I will recount the words of Moses Himself, from which we may be assured indisputably, that He spoke to One different in number from Himself, and who was possessed of reason: they are as follows: And God said, Behold Adam is become as one of Us, to know good and evil; but the words, one of Us, show a number of Persons to be mutually present, that is two at least; for I cannot think that to be true which is taught by

1. Bergmann, op. cit., p.89.

2. cf. Williams, Adversus Judaeos, Origen, p.85ff. and Bergmann op. cit., p.89.

what is considered by yourselves to be a heresy, or that its propagators are able to prove that He spoke to angels, and that the human body is the work of angels; but this offspring (Word or Son) which truly was put forth from the Father, was with the Father before all the Creation, and to Him the Father speaks.".....¹

Thus the idea of a duality of powers was taught by various Christian groups. But who the Minim here were may be concluded to refer to the Catholic Christian group. R. Simlai lived in the northern part of Palestine and here were also the centers of Christian learning. Graetz also suggests that R. Simlai was acquainted with the Church Father Origen.²

R. Simlai's answers to the Minim are clear enough and has well proven his case by the authority of the Scriptures. However, his answers to his disciples are not always sound. No doubt, his students agreed to his polemical refutation of the Minim but wanted his particular 'haggadic' interpretations. The Matnot Kehuna explains that their first question was inspired by the fact 'that under any condition the plural should not have been used but rather the singular, in my image and after my likeness.' Rabbi Simlai's answer that the verse in question is applicable only after the creation of man and woman must be recognized as forced. To solve the apparent contradiction between Gen. 1 V.26, where the plural form "Let us" is used, and V.27 where the singular form "And God created" is employed, R. Simlai explains that the latter

1. Works of St. Justin Martyr, Oxford, Rivington, 1861, p.150.

2. Graetz, op. cit., p.501.

text, 'it is written speaking (דבור -sing.) and not speak (דבר -plur.). Again his disciples ask for an explanation since it should have been written the voice of God (el-sing.). But the answer is not given by R. Simlai but by R. Levi who interjects another verse, The voice of the Lord is in Power (Ps. 29.4)' Had it said the voice of the Lord is in his power, the world could not stand before him mightiness, but the voice of the Lord is in Power means according to the power of his listeners, the power of the young and old. Therefore, the word Elohim is used, not because it teaches a plurality of Gods but rather as His voice corresponded to the various powers of the people. In other passages it is found that the Haggadic answer is not always given by R. Simlai but by some other Rabbi, who may have been one of his pupils, or a contemporary teacher.¹

The perplexity which the disciples of R. Simlai show in regard to the matter of pluralistic implications in the Bible is similar to the strange and interesting Midrash in Gen.R.8, where R. Samuel b. Nachman relates in the name of R. Jonathan that Moses when writing the account of the Creation stopped in amazement when he came to the passage let us make man etc. and said, 'Master of the world why do you give a pretext to the Minim (to misinterpret)? Said God, 'Write, and let him who errs, errs.' R. Samuel b. Nachman was a contemporary of R. Simlai and no doubt this statement was directed against the Christian groups.

1. Bacher, A.d.P.A., Heb. ed. II, 2, p.321-322, n.1. Of this particular Midrash Bacher writes:
 קוּמָה שֶׁל מֹשֶׁה בְּזֵאת מִטְּבַח אֵי הַבְּנֵי
 דְּשִׁילָה א"ר הַנְּתַלֵּם בְּבִינֵי דְּרַבִּי אֱלִיָּהּ וְהַשֵּׁלֶכֶת מִלִּפְנֵי
 Bacher has a complete account of the controversies between

Of this whole problem of Two Powers in Heaven we can conclude with this statement by Moore: "The difficulty of reconciling the evils in the world with the goodness of God was so strongly felt in the early centuries of our era in the East and West, and a dualistic solution of one kind or another was so widely accepted in Philosophy and religion, that it is idle to attempt to identify the Jewish circles which adopted this solution. It must suffice us to know that there were such circles; that they tried to fortify their position with texts of Scripture; and that the rabbis refuted them with their own weapons. It is certain also that, whatever leanings there may have been in this direction, Judaism, with its inveterate monotheism, was not rent by dualistic heresies as Christianity was for centuries."¹

Another polemic which deals with the matter of two powers in heaven has been found in the Yalkut Shimoni to Ex. Mishpatim 23, וַיֹּאמֶר . This report is based on B. Sanh. 38b. The discussion is between R. Idi (fourth century Amora of Palestine) and a Min.² The Min basing his question on Ex.24.17, And he said unto Moses, Come up unto the Lord, says, 'It should have been written 'Come up unto me.' Said R. Idi, 'This (the one who spoke to Moses) is Metatron, whose name is as his master's. As it is written (Ex. 23.21) For my name is in him.' 'If so,' said the Min, 'worship him.' Said R. Idi,

1. Moore, Judaism, Vo.I, p.366-367.

2. The Yalkut reading is 'Epikuros;' Bacher, A.D.P.A. III, P.407 gives the reading of Min and I have followed his version. This is also the reading of Herford, op. cit., p.286.

'It is written do not exchange (Me) for him'¹ (Ibid). The Min asked again, 'If so (why does the text continue to say) he will not pardon thy transgressions?' 'Answered R. Idi, 'Be assured, not even as a guide do we accept him, for it is written (Ex. 33.15) And he (Moses) said unto Him, If Thy presence go not with us, carry us not up hence.'

The angel Metatron assumes his place in Jewish angelogy as God's lieutenant. According to the Rabbis his name was numerically equivalent to one of God's names, Shaddai,² therefore the Biblical passage, 'My name is in him' is applied to him.

The essential point of the argument is whether there were two powers in Heaven. The Min by pointing to the fact that when Moses is commanded to come up unto God, God is spoken of in the third person. Therefore, he assumes that another power spoke to Moses. R. Idi admits that another personage spoke to Moses and in the rest of the Midrash answers his charge that Metatron was deserving of worship, since he was, he infers, another power in the heaven. R. Idi, however, even refuses to admit the intercessory powers of the angel, he was a guide and no more.³ And in this case, R. Idi does not admit Metatron as being the guide of the people in the desert "for it appears from Ex.33.12-17 that Moses prayed that God himself would lead his people, and that his

1. The verse in Hebrew is לֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה לְאִישׁ אֶלֶל אֱלֹהֶיךָ R. Idi does not give the literal meaning of the verse. He understands לֹא תִשְׁתַּחֲוֶה as 'exchange' from the root שׁוּב. לְאִישׁ אֶלֶל is literally translated as 'be not rebellious against him.'
2. Abelson, Jewish Mysticism, p.67-68.
3. Rashi interprets Ex.23.21 to mean that the angel could only be a guide and no more. R. Idi seems to have given the same interpretation.

prayer was granted."¹

The Metatron was heretically identified with God is hinted at in Chagigah 15a. It is related that when Elisha b. Abuya (Acher) visited Paradise "He saw Metatron to whom permission was given to remain seated while he recorded the merits of Israel. Acher said, 'It has been taught that in heaven there is no sitting, contention, back, or weariness. Are there ten two powers?'"²

The name Metatron may have been borrowed from the Latin word, Metator which means a 'precursor.'³ There has been some disagreement among various scholars as to the identity of Metatron in Jewish tradition. Friedlander identifies him with the Gnostic 'Horos' "the frontier guardian."⁴ Bergmann also finds in the figure of Metatron some definite Gnostic influence.⁵ Friedlander, however, is completely in error when he places this discussion in the first century, C.E. and therefore, he identifies Metatron with the Ophite Horos.⁶ Herford, on the other hand, is rightly of the opinion that Metatron cannot be identified with the Horos of Gnosticism nor with the Logos of the Jewish Alexandrian system as is the opinion of Friedlander. Metatron,ⁱⁿ Rabbinic tradition is the chief scribe of God but is not a second God.⁷

1. Herford, op. cit., p.289.

2. Quoted from Cohen, Everyman's Talmud, p.56.

3. J.E. Art. Metatron, Vol. 8, p.519. L. Blau.

4. Friedlander, op. cit., p.104.

5. Bergmann, op. cit., p.39.

6. Friedlander, op. cit., p.103.

7. Herford, op. cit., p.287 cf. also J.E. Art. Metatron, op. cit., where according to Blau, L. Cohn, Philonic Scholar, contradicts this view of Friedlander and others.

Metatron may reveal some similar features to the Logos of the Jewish Alexandrianian system, or to the Horos of Gnosticism, or even to the Mithra of Zoroastor. But the Rabbis certainly did not hold any such opinion of Metatron or any other angel as a divine intermediary or sharing in his work of creation.

Who the Min was cannot be definitely determined. Friedlander in following his thesis seeks to make him out an Ophite Gnostic. Yet even the Christians taught some idea of a Logos, or divine intermediary. But it must be pointed out that it is not the Min who mentions Metatron but rather R. Idi. Therefore, even a Catholic Christian could have asked of the two or more powers in heaven. And since this Midrash is given in the name of R. Idi who was an Amora of the fourth century it is doubtful whether the Min was an Ophite Gnostic. The Ophites may have continued to exist even into the fourth century but by the middle of the third "they had ceased to constitute a danger to the Church, and it had become difficult to discover their precise beliefs."¹ But as said above it is the Jew who raises the issue of Metatron and not the Min, and therefore, the identification of Metatron with Horos is irrelevant to this Midrash.

The assumption of Enoch was another source for polemics between the Rabbis and the Minim. In Gen.^R/25.1 the Minim asked R. Abbahu, 'We do not find death mentioned of Enoch?' The

1. Ophitism, Art. Ency. of Religion and Ethics, E.F. Scott, Vol. 9, p.501.

proof, they claim, lies in the word 'taking' (קִיָּב). The passage in Genesis 5.24 reads: And Enoch walked with God, and he was not for God took him. The word 'taking' they claim is also used in connection with Elijah (II K. 2.5). Said R. Abbahu, 'If you stress the word 'taking', 'taking' is mentioned here and also in Ezekiel, 'Behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes (Ez. 24.16). Said R. Tanhuma, 'He answered them well.'

The idea underlying this polemic is the doctrine of Assumption. Jewish tradition admits the assumption of the prophet Elijah but denied the claim for ^{the} assumption of Enoch. R. Abbahu by citing an analogy of the word 'taking' in Ezekiel strives to prove that the word refers to death and not to assumption. To counteract the idea of the ascension of Enoch, there is a Rabbinic tradition that he died by a plague,¹ which is the import of R. Abbahu's reference to the death of the wife of Ezekiel.

R. Abbahu lived in Caesarea which was an important Christian center and no doubt the Minim here were Christians. The Christians, it seems, held to the theory of the Assumption of Enoch for in the Epistle to the Hebrews, 9.5 it is written, 'by faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death and was not found because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.' Whether the purpose of the Minim was to raise Enoch to some

¹ L. Matnot Kehuna and J.E. Art. Enoch, Vol. 5, p.178.

type of Divinity is not clearly known.¹ It is probable, as Herford suggests, "that in the dialogue before us there is no reference to Jesus (Herford also suggests that the Minim wished to show that Enoch was a type of Jesus, as regards his ascension into heaven) but merely a defence of a Christian text against a Hebrew one."²

Friedlander identifies the Minim with Christians, who by reference to Enoch, attempted to verify the Christian claim that Jesus was taken into the Heavens by God.³ In support of his identification that R. Abbahu entered into controversy with Christians, Friedlander quotes from the writings of Cyrill (De. Catech. 14): "Wir bekennen und glauben, dass Christus nach seiner Auferstehung wieder zurück in den Himmel gegangen ist. Dabei mögen wir uns erinnern an das, was öfter in den Psalmen zu lesen ist: ~~Er~~ ist in die Höhe gefahren und hat das Gefängniss gefangen (68,19). Man mache keine Schwierigkeiten, ob dies auch möglich sei? Konnte der Engel den Habakuk soweit fortbringen, warum sollte sich der Herr der Engel nicht auch auf der Wolke zum Himmel erheben können? Oder man denke an die Beispiele von Enoch und Eliah."⁴

Bergman is also of the opinion that the Christians sought to prove the ascension of Jesus by a parallelism to Enoch. "Die Christen, die den Heiden gegenüber die Himmelfahrt Christi

1. This is the contention of Kasher, Torah Shelamah, Vol. II p. 710, n. 0.
2. Herford, op. cit. p. 272.
3. Friedlander, Patristische und Talmudische Studien p. 99ff.
4. Ibid. p. 101 n. 49.

mit dem Hinweis auf die Erzählungen von Herakles, Dionysius u.a. begründeten, zitierten den Juden als Beweis für die Himmelfahrt Christi die Erzählungen von dem Entrücktwerden Henochs."¹

Two Midrashim dealing with the Doctrine of Resurrection will now be discussed. In Gen. R. 14 a discussion between R. Jose B. Halfta and an Min is reported. The son of a man living in Sepphoris had died and R. Jose went up to visit him. The account is not quite clear whether the father of the deceased boy was a Min or whether a Min was living in his home.² R. Jose expresses the opinion that he is not saddened by the death of the boy because he is sure that in the future world he will be seen. The Min, denying the resurrection of the dead, retorts, 'Can broken potsherds be joined together,' For is it not written, Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel (Ps.2.9) (Thus, he infers, the flesh of the body cannot be restored after it had turned into dust).. R. Jose explains, 'an earthen vessel which is made from water and finished by heat when broken cannot be restored (since the process of making differs from the process of finishing) but a glass vessel which is originally made by fire and finished by fire ~~that~~ can be restored. (He compares man to a glass vessel.) 'But,' said the Min, 'a glass vessel can be restored because it is made by blowing.' 'Let your ears hear what your mouth has spoken,' says R. Jose. 'For just as a glass vessel

1. Bergmann, op. cit., p.50, n.2/

2. The text reads: מרבה אהבה מנחם. זיבאוי למה גני, איך באחרי מיני
 כזה ואיך באה מיני כזה יתכן איה

can be made by the blowing of a mere mortal all the more so can man be restored by God who created him by breathing his spirit into him.' To this Midrash is added a statement by R. Isaac, 'It is not written, thou shalt break them in pieces like earthen vessels, but Like a potter's vessels, which means, those which have not yet been baked, so that they can be restored when broken. (R. Isaac reads the Hebrew 'כלי' 'vessel' as 'כלי', meaning, his materials, which he interprets to mean that the vessels are not as yet fully formed and therefore, can be restored.) His interpretation is brought in order to confirm the use of the verse in Ps. 2.9 as an argument for resurrection.

R. Jose, a Tanna of the fourth generation (c.140-175) was one of the outstanding teachers in Sepphoris. We shall discuss his various conversations with the Matrona later. Who the Min here was is uncertain. A Christian certainly would not have denied the resurrection of the dead. The Gnostics denied the resurrection of the body and it might be argued here that the Min was a member of this group, since he denies in effect the resurrection of the body.¹ Whether the Min denied the resurrection of the spirit cannot be determined on the basis of this Midrash alone. Rashi quite interestingly says that this Min was not a Samaritan, (The Samaritans denied the resurrection of the dead). The only reason that Rashi might have for this statement is, it seems to me, that the Min quotes a verse from the Hagiographia which the Samari-

1. Bergmann identifies this Min as an Ungläubiger. Bergmann, op. cit., p.128.

tans did not accept. It might be also argued that the Min was a heathen, for the heathens in general denied the theory of resurrection.

The Yalkut 37, App to Genesis, Vayeshev, a Min asked R. Judah Hanasi, 'Is it possible that the dead live? Your fathers do not admit this and you^r (Rabbis) do, for it is written concerning Jacob, And he refused to be comforted (Gen.37.35), if he knew that the dead continue to exist would he refuse to be comforted?' He said to him, 'Fool, because he knew by the Holy Spirit that he was alive he refused to accept condolence, for comforting is not received for those who are alive.'

This Midrash is similar to one which we shall examine below in the case of R. Jose b. Halfta and the Matrona. The answer of R. Judah is based on a reinterpretation given to the text; because Jacob knew that his son was alive, therefore, he refused to accept the comforting of his children. From the Jewish point of view the reference to the Holy Spirit was acceptable.

In essence the Min denies that Resurrection can be taught from the Bible. He implies by his question that Resurrection is a Rabbinic thought alone and that the Rabbis cannot find confirmation of their doctrines of Resurrection from Scriptures. Whether the Min accepted the answer of R. Judah is not known. It is questionable, however, whether it can be concluded that the Min denies the theory of Resurrection on the basis of this

Midrash. His denial that Scriptures does not teach this doctrine does not necessarily imply his disbelief in Resurrection.

It is quite probable that the Min was a Christian, for as Herford writes "the Christian position was that the resurrection of the dead was consequent on the resurrection of Christ. And that position would be weakened if a valid proof of the doctrine could be produced from the O.T.; because in that case the resurrection of Christ would be shown to be unnecessary at all events as an argument for the resurrection of men in general."¹ Yet, according to Bergmann who deals with the polemics on Resurrection in his *Jüdische Apologetik*, it seems that many of the Church Fathers in their writings based themselves on the Scriptures to prove to their heathen adversaries the resurrection of the dead.² Therefore, it seems, that Herford's conclusion is unwarranted. The Min may have been a Jewish sectarian, whose attitude is akin to the Sadducees and the Samaritans, who denied that the doctrine of Resurrection is taught in the Bible.³

Between the Jews and the Christians the meaning and observance of the Sabbath was one of the most important subjects discussed. With the rise of Antinomism, Christianity swept

1. Herford, op. cit., p.232-233.

2. Bergmann, op. cit., p.124. He cites Tertullian and the Homilies of Aphraates.

3. In the Dialogue with Trypho, Justin is critical of those Christians who deny the resurrection of the dead: "do not imagine them to be Christians; as no one who thinks rightly would consider the Sadducees, or the kindred heresies of the Genistae, and Meristae, and the Galileans, and the Hellenians, and the Baptist Pharisees, to be Jews..." (Works of St. Justin, Oxford, Rivington, 1861). Thus the Min might have been a member of either the Jewish or Christian sects who denied the resurrection of the dead.

away the legal prohibitions observed by the Jews on the Sabbath. In time the Sabbath for the Christians was changed to the first day of the week and associated with the day of Christ.

In Ex. R.30.9 a discussion is given between four Rabbis and a Min on the observance of the Sabbath. The four Rabbis mentioned are Rabban Gamliel II, R. Joshua b. Hanniah, R. Eliezer b. Azariah and R. Akiba. This discussion is mentioned in connection with their visit to Rome in 95 C.E. The Midrash does not tell us which one of the Rabbis carried on the polemic with the Min, and apparently we may conclude that all four carried on the polemic with their interrogator.

When the Rabbis were in Rome they preached on the following: The ways of God are not as the ways of man. A man will make decrees and tell others to observe them while he will not. But God is not so. A Min was there and challenged them, 'Your words are false. Did you not say, God saith and doeth? Then why does He not observe the Sabbath?(His point is that the forces of nature do not cease to move even on the Sabbath and therefore, God does not rest on the Sabbath). The Rabbis answered, that just as a man is allowed to move about on the sabbath in his own courtyard so does God move about in His courtyard which is the Universe, Proof is cited from the Scriptural passage, 'The whole earth is full of His glory (Is. 4.3). To clinch their argument they also show that inasmuch as a man who sins ~~he~~ is allowed to move about in his

courtyard to the extent of his stature even^{the} more so can God,
Do I not fill heaven and earth saith the Lord. (Jer. 23.24)

The answer of the Rabbis is not based on any philosophical theory but rather on the Jewish Law itself concerning the laws of the 'erub', the making of the courtyard, wherein one can move about on the Sabbath. The Min reveals that he is acquainted with the Laws and from the account given in the Midrash seems to agree with the legal conclusions of the Rabbis that God can move about on the Sabbath but this does not signify labor.

The fact that the Min asks this question makes it rather improbable that he was a member of the Law-observing sect of the Judeo-Christians. He seems to have been a Jew, at least his knowledge of the Scriptural passages and legal prohibitions would indicate his Jewish training. He may have been among those Jews who agreed with the antinomism of Paul. Justin in his Dialogue with Trypho advances the same line of argument as does the Min here "Nature does not idle nor keep Sabbath."¹ We may conclude that the Min here was a Jew who became converted to Christianity and adopted the antinomistic influence inherent in some branches of the movement.

1. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, p.36 n.5. In the Dialogue with Trypho Justin says: "Do you not see that the elements stay not working, nor do they keep any Sabbaths. Remain as you were born; for if before Abraham circumcision was not needful, nor, Sabbaths, feasts, and sacrifices, before Moses, neither are they so now..." (The works of Saint Justin the Martyr, Oxford, Rivington, 1861, p.98) "Be not angry then, nor reproach us for our fleshly uncircumcision which God Himself made, nor account it a grave crime that we use hot drink on the Sabbaths, for God Himself continues the same administration of the world on that as on all other days..." (Ibid)p. 105.)

Not all of the discussion between the Rabbis and the Min were upon points of doctrine and religion. Some were based on solving difficulties in Scriptural texts, and explaining contradictions seen in Biblical passages. However, some sectarian argument can be found even in these passages which seem to be merely exegetical.

In Gen.R.82 a discussion is given concerning the Tomb of Rachel. According to Gen. 35.19 when Rachel died she was buried on the way to Ephrath (the same is Bethlehem). A Min approached R. Jannai and R. Jonathan and asked them of the passage in I Sam. 10.2: 'When thou departest from me this day thou shalt find two men by Rachel's tomb in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah.' Is not, he asks, Zelzah in the border of Benjamin and the tomb of Rachel in the border of Judah? (for in Gen. 35.19 the statement is that Rachel was buried in Ephrath) and moreover he finds in Micah 5.2 the words Bethlehem Ephrath. Thus, he claims, the Bible has erred in determining the site of Rachel's tomb. R. Jannai admits that he cannot answer him, saying to R. Jonathan, 'Take away my reproach.' R. Jonathan then interprets the text of I Sam. 10.2 to mean 'When thou departest from me this day by Rachel's tomb thou shalt find two men in the border of Benjamin at Zelzah.' Another version of the answer is given as 'When thou departest from me this day in the border of Benjamin in Zelzah thou shalt find two men at the tomb of Rachel.' And this the Midrash says is the correct answer.

From the point of view of Rabbinic exegesis the Rabbis well answered the Min, but it must be recognized that they forced the meaning out of the text in order to solve the apparent contradiction. To whom the second answer is accredited is not clearly known, it might be one or the others of the Rabbis mentioned.

Herford is of the opinion that this polemic is based upon the question of the birthplace of the Messiah. The Targum to Micah 5.1, translates the verse, But thou, Bethlehem Ephrathah...out of thee shall one come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel to mean 'from out of thee before Me will come forth the Messiah(מִן־בֵּית־לֶחֶם עֲפְרַתָּה יֵצֵא לִי מֶלֶךְ) Thus Herford writes, "The importance of these texts was the same both for Jews and for Jewish Christians, since upon them depended the question of the birthplace of the Messiah."¹ In Mark 2. 4-6 the text in Micah is used to designate Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah.

Although the conclusion of Herford seems to be rather sound, it seems to me, that there is room for question. As far as I have been able to find out, Jewish tradition does not consider Bethlehem as the birthplace of the Messiah. There is, I have found, one exception to this in a statement by R. Aibo, an Amora of the fourth century, that on the night when Jerusalem was destroyed the Comforter (Messiah) was then born and carried off by a storm wind.² Although R. Jonathan

1. Herford, op. cit., p.255.

2. Cited by Moore, Judaism, II, p.348 n.5 R. Aibo makes this statement in Lam. R. 1.16 and Jer. Berakot 5a.

and R. Jannai were Amoraim of the third century it may be possible that they were aware of such a tradition of the birthplace of the Messiah. Yet, it seems to me, the Rabbis were not concerned with the problem of the Messiah but rather in solving the apparent Biblical contradiction of the text itself. Surely were the problem of the Messiah involved the argument might have been much more explicit.

As Herford also points out this Midrash shows that the relationships between the Minim and the Jews were not always hostile. For the Min came to consult the Rabbis upon a question of interpretation of Scriptures.¹

Another Midrash dealing with exegesis is given in the Yalkut Shimoni to Genesis 4.39. The passage here is based on b. Sanh. 38b. This Midrash could be placed with those dealing with the polemics on the doctrine of Two Powers in Heaven but because of its exegetical approach I have placed it here.

A Min asked R. Ishamael b. R. Jose (b. Halfta), 'It is written, Then the Lord caused to rain upon Sodom and Gomorrah brimstone and fire from the Lord (Gen. 19.24) it should have been written From Him?' A certain fuller² said, Let me answer him. It is written, And Lamech said to his wives, Ada and Zillah, hear my voice, ye wives of Lamech (Gen. 4.23), he (Lamech) should have said, my wives.' But this is the Scriptural idiom, so here too (in Gen. 19.24) it is the Scriptural

1. Herford, op. cit., p.255.

2. Who this fuller was is not known. The editors of the Sonc. Tran. to 38b Sanh. write "A figure frequently mentioned in the Talmud as of a specific type. In the Roman literature he is an object of ridicule; in Rabbinic lore he plays a more dignified role."

idiom.' R. Ishamel asked him, 'Whence did you learn this?' The fuller answered, 'From the teachings of R. Meir.'

As has been pointed out the essential argument here involves the theory of Two Powers in Heaven. Because of the statement made by the fuller that it is the Scriptural idiom to repeat the name of God or an individual without imputing any other being I have placed this Midrash following the above where exegesis is discussed. R. Ishmael, lived around the end of the second century and at the beginning of the third and may have, as his father, lived in Sepphoris. No doubt as Bacher claims the Min here was a Christian.¹ We have discussed the Christian interest in the doctrine of Two Powers in the preceding.

The concluding Midrashic portion of this chapter on the Minim deals with a polemic in pantomime. The Midrash deals with R. Joshua b. Hanniah, Hadrian, and a Min. Of R. Joshua and the emperor Hadrian we shall deal with in the chapter on Roman-Rabbinic controversies. The polemic here is given in the Yalkut Shimoni to Genesis, Vayishlach, 37, and is based on Hagigah 5b. The argument essentially deal with God's casting off of Israel. No verses are cited by R. Joshua and the Min but merely signs are performed by both before Hadrian. The Min showed by signs that God had turned his face away from Israel. R. Joshua showed by signs that God's hand was yet stretched out over Israel. Hadrian asked R. Joshua,

1. Bacher, A.d.T. Vol. III, p.409. The fuller is also mentioned with R. Ishmael in Ned.23a.

'What did he show thee?' He answered, 'A people whose God had turned away His face.' The Min confirms the answer of R. Joshua that he understood his sign. But the Min cannot understand the sign that R. Joshua has made and is sentenced to death since he had not understood that the Jews were protected by God it should be made clear to him by royal decree. (This last part of the Midrash is no doubt fictitious as it represents the Jewish bias.)

When after the Temple was destroyed it was commonly thought among Romans and Christians that God had forsaken Israel.¹ It is quite improbable that the Min was a Judeo-Christian of the type who remained close to the Law, for he would not have taunted the Jews with the great disaster which had befallen them.² It is probable that the Min was acquainted with Scriptures for the signs which both he and R. Joshua made are from Biblical texts. (Deut. 31.18)³ and Is. 51.16)⁴ thus it may be concluded that the Min was a Christian.

Herford is of the opinion that this encounter took place in Alexandria where it is known that R. Joshua went to visit Hadrian.⁵ However, according to Graetz this story took place in Judea⁶ and Bacher does not include this Midrash among the polemics that R. Joshua had in Alexandria.⁷ According to Bacher

1. cf. Bergmann, *Judische Apologetik*, chapter VI.

2. Herford, *op. cit.*, p.224.

3. The text dramatized is: And I will hide my face in that day.

4. In the shadow of my hand have I covered thee.

5. Herford, *op. cit.*, p.224.

6. Graetz, *History*, II, p.406.

7. cf. Bacher, *A.d.T.* Vol. I, p.134ff.

this was the only encounter reported between R. Joshua and a Min.¹

R. Joshua, as will be seen below, was very friendly with Hadrian and no doubt this Midrash as all others related of these two figures took place before the Hadrianic revolt in 132 C.E.

Most of the conclusion about the Minim have been included in the analysis of the Midrashim discussed. From the chronological order the earliest mention of a Min was made in connection with the rest of God on the Sabbath. That story took place at the end of the first century. How early the term came to be used to designate Jewish-Christians and Christians and Gnostics cannot be clearly determined. But it may be assumed from the Birkath Haminim composed at Jabneh under the direction of Rabban Gamleil that the term came into vogue not long after the destruction of the Temple. (70-81 C.E.)²

Who the Minim were cannot always be definitely known, for the name was used to define heretics in general. In most cases we have seen that they were Christians. Insofar as my research has gone into the problem the work by Herford seems to be the finest and most dependable and I have based some of my conclusions on his book. Whether Herford's thesis is essentially correct cannot be judged on the basis of the source material used here. The subject is too great and varied to

1. cf. Bacher, A.d.T. Vol. I, p.126.

2. Joel claims that Jochanan b. Zakkai did not know the word Min as associated with the Christian sectarians. Joel, op. cit., p.90.

form any conclusions on the basis of this limited study alone. All that has been shown is that Judaism met many groups in polemical arguments and acquitted herself with dignity. The Rabbis did not indulge in apologetics, they were convinced of the truth which they held and met their opponents with forcible logic and ready answers.

In the time of R. Simlai, during the middle and end of the third century C.E. "Rabbinic polemics assumed a more violent character when the Church, having acquired political power, threw aside all reserve, and invective and abuse became the favorite weapons of the assailants of Judaism."¹ Both R. Simlai and R. Abbahu were foremost in their attacks upon Christianity and its Trinitarian ideas. The polemics against Christians were led by the Palestinian Rabbis, for Christianity had not invaded Babylon. In later ages, the leaders of Judaism continued to polemicize against Christianity and Mohammedanism and Karaism, with the same forcible logic and vigor which characterized the Palestinian Tannaim and Amoraim.

1. J.E. Art. Polemics, Vol. 10, p.104.

Chapter II

THE SAMARITANS

We turn now to an examination of the controversies found in our material between the Rabbis and the Samaritans. Of all sectarian groups with whom the Rabbis met in discussion, our knowledge is much more definite about the Samaritans. While Samaritanism during the Talmudic period cannot be considered as the greatest challenge to Judaism, for the Rabbis were pre-occupied with the problems of reconstruction and meeting the arising threat of Christianity, the old hostility between the Jews and the Samaritans yet continued even in this period although not quite so vociferous. Whatever rivalry existed was purely on religious grounds alone for with the loss of temporal power in Jerusalem there could be no grounds for political opposition. The Rabbis did commend the Samaritans for their strict observance of the Scriptural commandments but took issue with them in respecting the authority of the Oral Law. The whole attitude of the Rabbis is summed up in the Massechet Cuthim where the principle is laid down "they (the Samaritans) are to be trusted insofar as their own practice agrees with that of the Jews; in other respects they count as ^{non-}Jews."¹

Of direct controversies with the Samaritans our material yields but a few Midrashic passages. Two of the passages reveal the jealous zeal which the Samaritans and Rabbis maintained for the holy sites of Mt. Gerizim and Jerusalem re-

1. Jewish Ency. Art. Samaritans, Vol. X, p. 673

spectively; the third is a somewhat humorous encounter between R. Meir and a Samaritan; the fourth is about a Samaritan who casts suspicion on the character of Jacob.

In Gen. R. 32, 19 the following story is told about R. Jonathan and a Samaritan in commenting upon the verse 'And the waters prevailed...and all the high mountains were covered' (Gen. 7,19) R. Jonathan was upon his way to worship in Jerusalem. As he passed the Palatinus¹ he was seen by a Samaritan who asked him whither he was bound. Upon being told that he was on his way to Jerusalem, the Samaritan jeered, 'Would it not be better to pray at this holy mountain than at that dunghill?' 'Why is it blessed?' asked R. Jonathan. 'Because it was not covered by the Flood,' answered the other. R. Jonathan momentarily forgot the traditional teaching and instead his ass-driver answered his interrogator. 'If it is of the high mountains, then it is written, And all the High mountains were covered (ibid) while if it is of the low ones, Scripture ignored it.' Thereupon R. Jonathan seated the driver upon the ass and led him forth in praise.

The answer of the driver is a logical one, since the Samaritan by his own admission stated that Mt. Gerizim was not submerged by the flood. Yet by reference to the Scriptures, which the Samaritan himself must accept as authentic, it is proved that only the high mountains were covered by the waters. Therefore, Mt. Gerizim was among the lower mounts and hence there was no necessity for it to be included in the Scriptural verse.

1. This was one of the names which the Samaritans called Mt. Gerizim. Jastrow identifies the word with the Greek form for hill 'plantos.' (Dict. of Talmud, cf. פלנטוס) Bacher establishes the name with a holy tree. (A.P.A. Heb. ed. p. 67 vol. 1) Another name is 'Nepolin.' Nablus (Schechem)

It is of interest to point out that the Samaritan Pentateuch presents the same account of the Flood as Scriptures. Thus the argument here is not based on two different texts but rather upon a different interpretation or legend.¹ The commentary, Yefeh Toar explains that the teaching which R. Jonathan forgot was that the Rabbis themselves discussed the problem whether or not the Flood alighted upon Palestine. Basing themselves on Ez. 22, 24 and chapter 23, proof is found that the Flood came upon Jerusalem and Samaria.²

The R. Jonathan of this Midrash is according to Bacher,³ R. Jonathan b. Eleazar who lived in Sepphoris and was a member of the circle of R. Hanina Bar Hama. Known usually as R. Jonathan his name is found in frequent association with R. Jannai. He was an Amora of the first generation. Jews were admitted to pray in Jerusalem only on certain times of the year, such as Tisha B'ab and no doubt it was for one of those times that R. Jonathan was journeying there. In Deut. R. 7:14^{there is} a similar version of this encounter between R. Jonathan and a Samaritan. It is there that the text of Ez. 22.24 is used as the basis for controversy.

In another polemic on the sanctity of Mt. Gerizim, we find an account of R. Ishmael b. R. Jose who encounters the Samaritan. This story is found in Gen. R. 81.3. The Samaritan questions R. Ishmael whither he is bound and likewise upon hearing that he is going to Jerusalem he jeers at him. In anger, R. Ishmael retorts, 'I will tell you what you resemble, a dog eager for carrion. Because you know that idols are hidden beneath it,

1. Montgomery, Samaritans, p. 238

2. Yefat Toar. Warsaw Ed.

3. Bacher, A.d. P.A. Heb. ed. Vol. 1, p. 67, n.4

for it is written, And Jacob hid them' (Gen. 35.4) (He refers to the idols which Jacob gathered from his kin and hid them under an 'elah' near Schechem). The Samaritan upon hearing these words accuses R. Ishmael of wanting to steal the idols. Thereupon R. Ishmael fled.

In another tradition of this story reported in the Midrash Hagodol the statement is made that Jacob hid the idols under a terebinth on Mt. Gerezim.¹ By his reference to the idols R. Ishmael attempts to insult the sanctity of the holy site of the Samaritans. In commenting upon this passage, Montgomery writes, "To approach now the Talmudic appreciation of Samaritanism, we find that no fault was found in the earlier ages with respect to the cardinal tenets of the soleness and spirituality of the God of Israel. The one early exception for the end of the II Century, is the anecdote concerning R. Ishmael B. Jose who falling into dispute with a Samaritan at Schechem on his way toward Jerusalem, accused the Samaritans of worshipping the idols hidden under Gerizim by Jacob on his return from Haran.

But as Taglicht remarks, this was only 'eine neckische Antwort'.²

This Midrash seems largely fictional and of course the coloring given to it by the editors of the Midrash must be recognized. Else it is difficult to explain why the Samaritans, who certainly did not worship idols, would have been so intent on keeping the 'Uncleanness.' Surely this would have brought Mt. Gerizim into disrepute. Thus, I believe, this may be an editorial variation of an actual account between R. Ishmael and

1. Midrash Hagodol, ed. by Schechter, p. 531

2. Montgomery, op. cit. p. 168f.

a Samaritan. Furthermore, in this case as well, the Samaritan Pent. reads as the Jewish Scriptures. Ishmael is the son of R. Jose ben Halfta, and is a Tanna of the Fourth generation.

The following Midrash Gen. R. 94.7 tells of a discussion between R. Meir and a Samaritan. R. Meir asks the Samaritan from whence is he descended. The Samaritan traces his lineage back to Joseph. Rabbi Meir then proceeds to prove to him that his ancestors hailed from Issachar by quoting the verse, And these are the names of the children of Israel, who came unto Egypt... and the sons of Issachar Tola and Puvah and Iob, and Shimron. (Gen. 46.8-13) R. Meir imputes that from Shimron ^{hail} came the Samaritans. Thereupon the Samaritan reported this discussion to the Patriarch. The ~~more~~ keener minded Patriarch answers, "By your life, he has excluded you from Joseph and yet has not brought you into Issachar." For he understood that the mere similarity between the names of Shimron and the Shomronim (Samaritans) did not prove that the Samaritans were descendants of Issachar.

Montgomery cites this passage as an example how the 'stupid' Samaritans were not always a match for the sharp wits of their opponents.¹ Again whether this passage can be assumed to be authentic is questionable. The reason for skepticism is to be found in the fact that tradition has recorded the statement of the Patriarch. By what source did it come to the Rabbis? This is not to say that the whole passage is apocryphal but rather the last portion. This may have been no more than an attempt

1. Montgomery, op. cit. p. 194

by the Rabbis to indulge in humor at the expense of a less acute-minded opponent.

The last Midrash (Gen. R. 70.7-8) in this chapter again deals with the famous R. Meir. The tradition for this story is told in the name of R. Joshua of Siknin who related it in the name of R. Levi. The Samaritan raises the charge that Jacob was untruthful because he did not make a rightful tithe to God. '..did he (Jacob) not say that of all that thou shalt give unto me I will surely give the tenth unto thee?' (Gen. 28.22). 'Yes,' he (R. Meir) replied; and therefore he separated (to God) the tribe of Levi, which is one in ten.' 'But why did he not separate a tenth of the two remaining tribes?' Answered R. Meir, 'Were there only twelve tribes? surely there were fourteen, for it says, Ephraim and Manasseh even as Reuben and Simon shall be mine' (Gen. 48.5). 'Then the difficulty is even greater,' said the Samaritan. 'If you add water you must add flour.' 'Will you not admit that there were four matriarchs,' he (R. Meir) asked him. 'Yes.' 'Then deduct the four first-born of the four matriarch from these (the fourteen) and since the first born is considered holy, and that which is holy does not exempt what is holy.' Pleased by his answer the Samaritan says, 'Happy are the people in whose midst you dwell.'

The argument here is essentially Halachic. It is the contention of the Samaritan that Jacob did not make a rightful tithe by separating Levi for that was only a separation of one part of ten, whereas it should have been one part to twelve as there were twelve tribes. R. Meir solves this difficulty by

explaining that there were in reality fourteen tribes. A first separation was made by ~~making~~ the ~~redeeming~~ of the four first born. Then of the remaining ten tribes another 'maaser' is made by the separation of Levi. R. Meir has added the element (or Pidyon Haben) of 'Kodesh Bechorot' which apparently the Samaritan did not take into consideration. Since one ~~Maaser~~^{separation} was made another 'maaser,' that of 'kodesh maaser' ~~had~~ still to be made. This is the meaning of R. Meir's statement 'that which is holy does not exempt what is holy.'

While the Samaritan was pleased with the answer of R. Meir the commentators have detected a flaw in the reasoning of the Tanna. The ¹ points out that Manasseh was also a first-born and if he were added to the first born, then after making the 'kodesh bechorot' only nine tribes would have been left and thus the tithe of Levi could not be made. But, he answers, that if twelve tribes alone would be considered, after deducting the first four born only eight would have been left. Therefore, Jacob added Manasseh and Ephraim ^{למנין עשרה} Manasseh, is not, however, to be added among the first-born since Jacob did not recognize him as such. The ² is not quite satisfied with his own answer and states that the the problem should be studied further.²

It is interesting that R. Meir speaks here of fourteen tribes, arriving at this number by adding Manasseh and Ephraim to the twelve tribes. In the Tanchuma³ the rule is laid down that when Levi is enumerated among the tribes, Manasseh is not

1. Commentary of ^{למנין עשרה} of. also the Yefey Toar
2. ^{למנין עשרה} Buber ed. 17
3. ^{למנין עשרה}

included and vice versa.¹ No doubt troubled by the various numberings of the tribes found throughout the Bible,² they tried to devise some formula for enumerating the tribes. The number twelve may have been a conventional round number arrived at by the twelve divisions of the land by Solomon.³

The Midrash refers to the Samaritan by the term כּוּתִי (Kuthite, Cuthean). Another epithet is שׁוֹמְרֵי תּוֹרָה (observers, Samaritans). The former term seems to have been a name of opprobrium. The Rabbis used this term to identify the Samaritans "with the colony imported from Babylon."⁴ "No satisfactory explanation has been given for the choice of this special name; the Kuthites may have been the most important colony, Sanballat may have been of Kuthite origin. The Samaritan explanation of this Jewish epithet is that their ancestors, returning from exile, came into a certain valley named Kutha."⁵

From the Midrashic statements of above it can be seen that the feeling of estrangement still existed between the Rabbis and the Samaritans. At times the relationship was hostile (as in the case of R. Ishmael) and if we can accept the statement made in the above Midrash by the Samaritan to R. Meir, we find here a friendlier feeling. In the main it can be said that Samaritanism was no longer a formidable opponent of Judaism.

[illegible]

CONTROVERSIES WITH INDIVIDUALS

Two of the discussions are not found in the main text of this thesis.

CHAPTER III

Controversies With Individuals

The Matrona

Our study thus far has dealt with individuals and groups whose sectarian views have been more or less evident. We turn now to a consideration of some discussions which the Rabbis held with various individuals, either by name or reference, who reflect either the controversial issues between the Rabbis and the sectarians, or who advance arguments of their own, which do not necessarily reflect the opinions of a sectarian group. In this study we shall include the discussions which R. Jose b. Halfta held with a Matrona, discussions with outstanding Romans, with those whom tradition has called 'philosophers,' with Jacob of Chephar Neburaia, and with some others, referred to as 'Gentiles.' To what extent these fall into the wide and varied group of the Minim can only be ascertained after an analysis of each passage.

Throughout the Rabbinic literature there are sixteen discussions reported between R. Jose b. Halfta, a Tanna of the third generation (c.160) who resided in Sepphoris, in northern Palestine, and a woman, who is called by the title for distinguished Roman women, the Matrona. Most of these passages will be given in this section.¹ Whether or not she was the one and the same woman mentioned in all of these passages cannot be definitely determined. Insofar that all these passages are related by R. Jose it may be assumed that the Matrona through-

1. Some of the discussions are not found in the material studied for this thesis.

out is but one woman with whom this Rabbi seems to have been acquainted. What doctrine of thought she represented is a far more difficult problem to solve, for from the passages investigated it will be seen that she put forth questions representing a number of variant sectarian groups.

Sepphoris it will be recalled was in the time of R. Jose an outstanding Jewish community. Moreover, here as in other parts of the Galilee, was a 'hot-bed of Heresy' where the Jewish-Christians were active.¹ No doubt the Matrona was aware of the teachings of this group.

Most of her questions as a rule pertained to difficulties in Scriptural texts, others give us but a faint suggestion of her own religious leanings. From the following Midrashic portions it will be seen that she was very familiar with the Bible and her questions reflect an alert, keen mind.

In the Tanchuma (Buber ed) Genesis, 2, the Matrona engages R. Jose in a discussion about the time needed by God for the creation of the world. 'In how many days,' she asks, 'has the Holy One Blessed Be He made the world?' He said, 'From the first day.' 'From whence do you teach me this?' R. Jose asked, 'Have you ever prepared a dinner?' 'Yes.' 'And how many courses did you prepare?' She told him so and so many. 'And did you place all of them at one time before them (the dinners)?' 'No, But I prepared all of the food at one time and served it course by course.' (Said R. Jose) 'And thus it is learned (that creation took place at one time)

¹ I. Herford, *op. cit*, p. 117

from one verse, as it is written, 'For He is the former of all'
(Jer. 10.16)

The point of the discussion is, if God is the All-Powerful and the Creator of all, why would he need six days in which to create the world? R. Jose (who seems to have understood his womanly interrogator) proves to her by the analogy of preparing and serving a dinner, that God created the world at one time but the six days of creation were needed for the gradual unfoldment of the universe.

No doubt here the Matrona reflects a Pagan attitude toward the matter of the six days of creation. Yet the question can be raised whether the Matrona has asked this question in the spirit of engaging in polemics or to garner some information. Her appeal to some Scriptural proof (although R. Jose first proceeds to answer her by an analogy) may indicate the latter attitude.

In the following two Midrashim the same question is asked by the Matrona of R. Jose: In how many days did the Holy One Blessed be He, create the Universe? 'But in these passages R. Jose answers, 'In six days.' The first of these passages in Tanchuma (Buber) Ki Tissa, 5,¹ relates the well known story of the attempt of the Matrona to emulate God, who after the six days of Creation is engaged in arranging marriages, in making one poor and another rich. The Matrona endeavours to pair off her many servants but after one night when her servants return complaining and bruised she admits to R. Jose that arranging

1. cf. Gen. R. 68.4

marriages is no simple matter. 'I confess that your God is truth and that His Torah is true, for all that you told me you informed me correctly.'

Again in Tanchuma (Buber) Vayishlach, 20 the same question is repeated and the same answer is given as above. She (the Matrona) asked him, 'And from that time to the present what does He do?' He said, 'He makes ladders causing one to go up; one to go down; one to get rich and one to get poor.'

In these passages the fundamental difference in the conception of God as held by the Rabbis and 'enlightened' non-Jews (Heathens) can be discerned. For the 'Heathen' God was God of nature alone and in no way was concerned with the affairs of human beings. For the Rabbis God was also God of nature but also determined the course of human events. Of this passage Bergmann writes: "Von aufgeklärten Heiden wurde ferner die Frage aufgeworfen, was Gott seit der Weltschöpfung tue.....

In dieser Antwort^{en} (to the above in Vayishlach) der palastinensischen Lehrer kommt ein wichtiger Differenzpunkt zwischen dem jüdischen Gottesglauben und dem Gottesbegriff der aufgeklärten Heiden war etwa wie der Gott der Deisten in Seinem Tun durch die gesetzmaszige Naturordnung gebunden, während der Gott des Judenthums über die Naturordnung erhaben, 'jeden Tag in seiner Güte das Werk der Schöpfung erneuert' und fortwährend in die Geschehnisse der Menschen richtend, helfend, und bestimmend eingreift."¹

Thus the Matrona was well aware of the philosophies of her

1. J. Bergmann, *Jüdische Apologetik*, p. 76ff.

day and may be considered among these whom Bergmann calls 'aufgeklärte Heiden.' Whether in the above (Ki Tissa) her last statement 'your God is truth' can be taken as authentic or as an editorial gloss is questionable. However, it can be seen that the Matrona does display a friendly attitude toward the Scriptures.

In the Yalkut Shimoni to Genesis 2.23 and in Gen.R. 17 the Matrona asks R. Jose of the removal of Adam's rib by God to form the woman while he was asleep. 'Why in theft?' He answered, 'If a man left with you privately an ounce of silver and if you returned to him a litra of gold in public is that theft?' Said she, 'Then why did He do it secretly (while Adam slept)?' Said R. Jose 'At first when He created her, he (Adam) saw her full of mucus and blood so He took her away. Then He created her a second time.' The Matrona adds here a bit of interesting biography, 'I can add to your words, I was promised in marriage to the brother of my mother, but because I grew up in the same house with him, I became ugly in his eyes, and he married another woman and she is not as pretty as I.'

This passage is interesting for its folkloristic value of the creation of woman.¹ Since there was no lofty theological answer to her question R. Jose answers her by resort to what is, from the Jewish point of view, a logical analogy. Yet she was keen minded enough to perceive that his answer was not adequate and then does R. Jose relate this rather strange and

1. There is an interesting parallel to this story in Sanh. 39a. between R. Gamliel and an emperor(?).

truly (midrashic) story of the first creation of woman.

In Tanchuma (Buber) 8.20 the eternity of Israel is discussed. A matrona asked R. Jose, it is written: 'that your days may be multiplied and the days of your children, upon the land which the Lord swore unto your fathers to give them, as the days of the heavens upon the earth (Deut. 11.21) you (Israel) exist only as long as the heavens and the earth exist but in the future the heavens and the earth will disappear, as Isaiah said: Lift up your eyes on high and see who hath created these? He that bringeth out their host by number; that calleth them all by name; from the mighty one not one escapeth. (Is. 40;26) and it is also written: Lift up your eyes to the heavens and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment. and they that dwell therein shall die in like manner; But my salvation shall be forever, and my favour shall not be abolished (Is. 51.6). Said R. Jose, 'From the same prophet whom you quote to me, I will answer you; it is written: For as the heavens and the new earth which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain.' (Is. 66.22)

In this Midrash the Matron argues that Israel's existence is dependent upon the existence of the physical world. The argument might be taken to mean that there will be no Resurrection for Israel and that Israel cannot claim to be an eternal people. Her knowledge of Scriptures is quite evident here.

R. Jose's citation of the verse serves well to refute her arguments.

It is questionable whether in marshalling these Biblical verses the Matrona does so either for the sake of argument or whether she accepts its teachings as inviolable. Insofar that she may have accepted the verse cited by R. Jose in refutation of her own premise the latter thought may be accepted. Does this mean then that she may have been a Christian, for both Jews and Christians argued from Scriptures? Can it be assumed that her reference to the prophetic statement that 'heaven and earth will vanish' is an allusion to the forthcoming kingdom of Christ? This is merely conjectural and on the basis of this Midrash alone we cannot maintain any such conclusion. Bacher sees in this Midrash a Christological bias.¹ Bergmann, however, claims that there is no ground for this assumption.² The heathen writer Celsus, held ^{according to Bergmann} a similar opinion 'die Juden sind eine Nation, die dem Untergange geweiht ist.'³ Thus it would not be Christians alone who thought that the Jew would vanish.

In Gen. R. 4.6, The Matrona raises the question, why was ~~not~~ the phrase 'for it was good' ^{not} applied to the second day or Creation? Rabbi Jose answered that the second day was included in a following text (Gen.1.31) And God saw everything that He had made, and, behold, it was very good. Then she sought to refute his statement with a logical analogy: 'Supposing six men came to you and you gave to each but one a maneh⁴

1. Bacher, ag.D.T. II, 170, Note 2

2. Judisches Aplogetik, p. 138 Note 2

3. Ibid. p. 138 section 7

4. Maneh: (מָנֶה) a weight in gold or silver. Jastrow, Dict. of Tal. p. 797

and then you gave to all of them another maneh; would not each have a maneh and a sixth while only one would have one sixth of a maneh? Then R. Jose gave her another answer which the Midrash tells us is similar to that given by R. Samuel b.

Nachman: ^{וְיָסַד} the water was as yet not finished (therefore the phrase_א was not included). And the phrase 'for it was good' was therefore written twice in connection with the third day, once because the water was made and secondly because of the work done on that day.

The point of her analogy to the giving of the maneh is to prove that in spite of the fact that the second day is included in a subsequent text, it is still 'worse off than the others' for it did not receive its full measure of blessing. There is no sectarian argument involved here. The Matrona is interested in the Scriptural text and for a fuller explanation. The same problem was also discussed among the Rabbis themselves. In Pes. 54.R. Banach ~~son~~ of R. Ilai gives the answer that on the second day the light of Gehinnom was formed, therefore, the phrase is not said of the second day.²

The Assumption of Enoch was also a matter of discussion between the Matrona and R. Jose as we have seen above in the case of the Minim and R. Abbahu. The text here differs somewhat from that of the above. 'We do not find death mentioned in the case of Enoch,' said the Matrona. Answered R. Jose: 'If it had said, And Enoch walked with God, and no more, then I would agree with you, but since it says, And he was not, for God took

1. Kasher, Torah Shelamah, Vol. I, p. 103. of note ^{פ' ד' חצק}
where he discusses the Rabbinic concept ^{אין סתמי'ים ב'}

him (Gen.5.24), this means that he was no more in the world (for he was now dead) For God took him (Ibid).

The similarity between this passage and that of the Minim and R. Abbahu may warrant the conclusion that the Matrona was influenced by Christianity, which sought to raise Enoch to some higher level. These theories we have discussed in the above. In relationship to this passage, Frankel, writes: "Die Frau, die die gedachte Bemerkung machte, scheint entweder verschieden von der bisher Fragenden gegesen zu sein oder sie stand schwankend zwischen Heiden-Juden-und Christentum."¹ This scholar has also met the intriguing and perplexing problem of identifying this woman.² Howbeit, it can be said that this question was undoubtedly inspired by the teachings of the Christian sectarians.

In Gen.R. 63.8 the Matrona raises the question of the progenitorship of Esau. "Why did Esau issue first?" Said R. Jose: 'Because the first drop (in the womb) was Jacob's. For example, if you place two diamonds in a tube, will not the one put in first, come out last? So also was that (drop) which formed Jacob.'

In this chapter in the Gen. R. the Rabbis also attempt to prove the rightful progenitorship of Jacob. This is one of the answers propounded. For the Rabbis, it had to be proved that Jacob, Israel, was superior to Esau, the prototype of Rome.

1. Frankel, Monatschrift, 7, 1885, p.207.

2. On the basis of Frankel's article cf. Bacher, Vol. II, Heb. ed., p.116, n.20.

This attempt to prove the rightful progenitorship^{of Jacob} was also made by Barnabas, the Christian writer, who reversed the Rabbinic prototypes; Esau is the prototype of Israel and Jacob is the prototype of Christianity.¹ However, this passage does not mean that the Matrona spoke as a Christian.... 'von diesem christlichen Weissagungsbeweis ist bei der Matrone nicht die Rede; sie will nur aus der Schrift beweisen, dasz die Erstgeburt und der Vorzug vor Israel Esau (dem Heidentum) gebühren."² Buchler is also of the same opinion that this passage does not reflect any Christian leanings, "Nichts spricht dafür dasz sie eine Christin war."³ (Buchler however, errs when citing this passage states that 'Rabbi Jose antwortet ihr daher mit Bibleversen,' for in this passage no Biblical verses are given).

It seems most likely that Bergmann^{is} correct in his analysis of this passage. No doubt the Matrona revealed her own ~~Heathen partnerships~~ in seeking to ~~disprove~~ or argue the point ^{that} ~~of Esau as being~~ ^{should} regarded as the rightful first born.

Another parallel passage to one given above in which a Min and R. Judah are mentioned, is that dealing with the comforting of Jacob. A matron asked R. Jose, It is written, For Judah prevailed above his brethren, (I Chron. 5.2) and it is written, And Judah was comforted and went up unto his sheep-shearers (Gen. 38.12), while this man (Jacob) was the father of them all, and yet HE refused to be comforted. Said R. Jose: 'You can be comforted for the dead but not for the living.'

1. Bergmann, Jüdisches Apologetik, p. 137ff.

2. Ibid. p.138

3. Buchler, op. cit. p.279, note 3

Again we cannot find in this passage any particular sectarian bias. This is merely a Scriptural problem. Her reference to Judah is to point out that he, the son of Jacob, was able to overcome his grief and yet Jacob was unable to react in the same manner. R. Jose's answer (as in the above) is that one can be comforted for the deceased but not for those who are yet alive, therefore Jacob refused to accept the comforting of his children. This is the Rabbinic idea that Jacob knew that his son (Joseph) was yet alive.

A very interesting and rather quaint passage is found in Gen. R. 87. The Matrona asks R. Jose: 'Is it possible that Joseph at seventeen years of age, with the hot-blood of youth, could act so? (i.e. flee from the wife of Potiphar who sought to seduce him). R. Jose produced the Book of Genesis and read the stories of Reuben and Bilha and of Judah and Tamar. Said he, 'If Scriptures has not suppressed anything of these, who were older and lived in their father's house, how much the more in the case of Joseph, who was younger and his own master' (i.e. were he really guilty Scriptures would not have concealed the true facts.)

Little more need be said of this passage. Again this is a Midrash dealing in the explanation of a Scriptural text. It is interesting to note the Matrona's acquaintance with human nature, as she expresses her skepticism of Joseph. It cannot be maintained that she intended to defame his character by her question. From the 'human' point of view her question is open

and frank. Again she may have hinted that Scriptures has not given a full authentic account of the story. R. Jose meets her frankness by proving to her that in cases which could be considered more immoral, Scriptures did not conceal the facts, here likewise there has been no coloring. It may be conjectured that the Matrona could not accept the Scriptural account of this incident since in the Greek mythology which Rome inherited the cases of immorality are replete. As a Roman, this might seem to be a natural question to ask.

In the Tanchuma (Buber ed.) Miketz, 9, another discussion takes place about a Scriptural text with some theological implications. The matrona raises this query: 'Is this the whole glory of the Holy One Blessed be He that He gives wisdom to the wise, as it is written, He giveth wisdom to the wise (Dan. 2:21); was it not necessary for him (Daniel) to say that He giveth wisdom to the foolish? R. Jose said: 'Do you own jewelry?' 'Yes.' 'If a man should come to borrow your jewels would you lend them to him?' She said: 'If he were a wise¹ man I would lend my jewels to him.' Said He: 'You would only loan your jewels to a wise man, should the Holy One Blessed be He give His wisdom to fools? Therefore he (Daniel) said: HE giveth wisdom to the wise (Ibid.). So said Elihu, not to everyone who seeketh does He give it (wisdom) therefore, it is not the great that are wise (Job 32.9) (But it is a spirit in man and the breath of the Almighty that giveth them understanding)² (ibid. 8)

1. The word given in the text is וְיָסִיחַ which Buber translates as וְיָסִיחַ

2. Buber has added this phrase from the Rome MSS.

is my God, he immediately fled.' 'Woe unto her?' he said, 'when our God revealed himself at the Bush, there was no place for him to flee. Where could he flee? To the heavens, to the sea or to the dry land? What does it (Scriptures) say of our God? 'Do I not fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord. (Jer. 23.24) Whereas your God, the serpent, a man can escape from it by running away a few paces, therefore it says, And Moses fled from before it.

If this Midrash can be taken as authentic and if it can be assumed that it refers to the same Matron with whom R. Jose engaged in controversy, then we are confronted with a passage which is very difficult to fit into the general understanding of this individual. For from her interest in the Bible the suggestion may be made that she was among those whom the Rabbis call a 'Yirei Adonai.' Yet this Midrash would disprove such a theory. Whether the statement of the Matrona can be linked with the doctrines of the Ophite group, who regarded the serpent as the "image of creative wisdom,"¹ is conjectural. Yet there seems to be no other plausible solution for the basis of her statement that the serpent is her God than to recognize in this statement some definite Gnostic influence.²

No definite conclusions as regards this Matrona can be made. The literature is not complete nor does it give us enough details to form any definite opinions. There is no way of solving the problem whether the Matrona mentioned with R.

1. J.E. art. Ophites, Vol. IX, p. 407ff.

2. Bergmann, however, relates her statement to those Heathens who worshipped the serpent "wohl Askulap oder den Dionysos Sabazios, denen die Schlange geweiht war". Bergmann, op. cit. p. 50, n.1

Jose was one woman or many women with whom he may have come into conversation. Again, are the controversies fictitious? There is to be sure a certain artificiality in the repartee, but this ~~is~~ maybe due to the redactor, who, of course, was primarily interested in presenting the Jewish point of view.

But whether these stories are merely invention or ~~ture~~ cannot be decided to any degree of certainty. Bacher speaks of her as seemingly an important woman residing in Sepphoris.¹ More than this is difficult to say. We have noticed, to whatever extent our analysis is correct, that the Matrona reflects in her questions a good many different points of view; she represents a composite study in the religious background of her day.

1. Bacher, Heb. ed. A.d.T. II-1, p. 112

Chapter IV

THE PHILOSOPHERS

Throughout the study of Rabbinic polemic with various sectarians we find ourselves continually in the dark insofar that it is at all possible to definitely ascertain the sectarians with whom we are dealing. The Rabbinic literature employs general terms in referring to the sectarians and therefore only by an analysis of the individual passages can some possible identification be made. This rule must also be followed in regard to the study of the passages dealing with those who are called φίλοσοφοι 'philosophers.' What distinguished them as philosophers as distinct from other members of sectarian groups is also a problem which cannot be easily solved. Perhaps it is as Herford suggests that these were trained speakers.¹ Reviewing the Dialogue with Trypho (between A.D. 155 and 161) Williams writes that the Jew Trypho (R. Tarphon?) met a man "wearing a kind of cape which proclaimed him scholar and philosopher."² No doubt the Rabbinic use of the term 'philosophos' may have been used to indicate some outstanding member of a group, because of his ability as teacher and spokesman which would have entitled him to wear a certain garment designating his position. Greek philosophy continued in the Roman world and the teachers, philosophers, brought its ideas to Palestine. It can also be assumed that the term 'philosophers' referred to leading Christians as will be seen

1. Herford, *op. cit.* p.148

2. A. L. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, p.31

later. To what group in Christianity they affiliated themselves with is also an uncertain matter. Among the Gnostics, with whom no doubt the Rabbis had controversial discussions there may have been those who were recognized as 'philosophers.' "The earlier Gnostics," writes Mansel, "were for the most part philosophers who approached Christianity from the side of heathen speculation, and endeavoured by means of fusion and perverted interpretation to form an eclectic system out of these separate elements."¹ Of course no proof can be made from this statement that the Gnostic philosophers were those whom the Midrash mentions as 'philosophim.' It does indicate that there were those who thought upon a philosophical plane and may have been recognized as such by the Rabbis.

Of the various passages dealing with the philosophers, by one has come down to us which does mention the philosopher by name and of whom there is some definite knowledge. In Ex. R. 13.1, a discussion is reported between Abnimos of Gadara and the builder, Abba Joseph. Abnimos, or Nimos, as he is sometimes called, has been associated with the school of the Cynics and is taken to be the friend of R. Meir.² He is also called Oenomaus.³ According to Blau, he was a pagan philosopher who lived during the reign of the Emperor Hadrian (117-138). The writer Eusebius (Praepatoris Evangelica) mentions this philosopher for his 'having destroyed the reverence for Gods.'⁴

1. Mansel, The Gnostic Heresies, p. 204

2. J.E. art. Oenomaus of Gadara, Vol. IX p. 386. By L. Blau.

3. Ibid. cf. Graetz, History, Vol. II, p. 437

4. Ibid.

In Jewish tradition, Abnimos is regarded in a favorable light. In Gen. R. 65.20 the Statement is made by R. Abba bar Kahana that there were in the world no philosophers comparable to Balaam and Abnimos Hagardi. (Abnimos is reported to have said that no power could contend against Israel as long as her schools exist)¹ "Be not surprised to find amongst the heathens a knowledge of God, for God had inspired Balaam and Euonymus, (Abnimos) two of the greatest philosophers of heathendom, with His wisdom, so that they might teach the people."²

The passage about Abnimos with which we shall deal is found in Ex. R. 13.1. Abnimos of Gadara asked the Rabbis, 'How was the earth originally created?' They told him that no man being sufficiently acquainted with such matters he should go to Abba Joseph, the builder. (The Midrash gives us here an interesting sidelight of the attitude of the laboring man. Abba Joseph cannot come down from the scaffold since he is hired by the day, and therefore asks Abnimos to question him from below.) 'how was the earth first created?' asks Abnimos. Abba Joseph answered, 'God took dust from beneath the throne of Glory and cast it into the water, where it became earth, the little pebbles that were in the dust formed the mountains and hills.' His proof he finds in the verse 'When the dust runneth into a mass and the clods cleave together.' (Job 38.38)

The point in question is not whether the world was created ex nihilo but rather what was the mode, the manner whereby the earth was formed. Abnimos may have been interested in the

1. Gen. R. 65.20

2. Graetz, op. cit. p. 437

composition of earth, air, fire, and water, the four elements of Aristotle, to form the earth. Abba Joseph's answer is built upon his experience as a builder, the mixing of earth, stone, and water to form the clay bricks. His reference to Job 38.38 proves his contention that the earth was formed from the dust which became a mass, from which he derives its mixing with water, and the clods in the mass he compares to the mountains and hills that were later formed.

Another word might be added about the name of Abnimos Hagardi, (of Gadara). The Hebrew meaning of the word, 'gardi' is weaver but there is no proof that he was called 'Hagardi' because of his trade. Rather, it must be understood as a name of a place. Gadara was in those days a day's journey from Tiberias, and it is no doubt that his name was associated with this vicinity.¹ R. Meir, it must be remembered taught at Tiberias and there came into contact with Abnimos.

In the rest of this section on the philosophers their names are not given. What doctrine of thought they represented can only be seen on the basis of the Midrash itself. Among those who engaged in discussion with the philosophers was Rabban Gamliel II.

In Gen R. 1.9 it is reported that a philosopher came to R. Gamliel and said, 'Your God was indeed a great artist, but surely he found good materials (colors)² to help him.' 'What are they?' asked Gamliel. 'Tohu, bohu, darkness, water, wind (ruah) and the deep.' 'Woe unto that man,' said R. Gamliel,

1. cf. Moore, Judaism, Vol. I, p. 95

2. The word ^{the philosopher} R. Gamliel uses is צבע which literally translated means colors (or artist's materials). The 'color' ^{word} conveys the meaning here. (cf. Bacher, A.d.T. Heb.ed., p.60 n.1, Vol. I 11 Moore, Judaism, I, 381. also gives this translation.

'the term creation is used by Scripture in connection with all of them. Tohu and bohu: I make peace and create evil (Isa. 45.7); darkness: I form the light and create darkness (Ibid); water: Praise Him ye Heavens of heavens and ye waters that are above the heavens (Ps. 148.4). Wherefore? For He commanded and they were created (Ibid. v.5); wind: For Lo He that formeth the mountains and createth the wind (Amos 4.13); the depths: When there were no depths I was brought forth (Prov. 7.24).

Before proceeding to analyse this passage it will be of interest to bring a statement from Moore on the question of the creation of the world. "The question whether the world the creation of which is described in Genesis was brought into existence de nihilo, or whether the cosmos was formed from a chaos of previously existing formless matter, and in the latter case, whether this matter was created or eternal, did not excite discussion in the Palestinian schools, and there are few utterances that bear on it/^{any}way."¹

To prove his contention that the 'colors' which God used to aid him in the creation of the world and that these were not in existence before, R. Gamliel marshalls a number of passages. The philosopher here does not by way of his question deny that God created the world but raises the argument that the materials which God used were^f eternal existence.² The reference to the Tohu and Bohu (Chaos) by Rabban Gamliel is somewhat problematic. His reference to God as 'making peace' (shalom) has been ex-

1. Moore, Judaism, Vol. I, p.381.

2. cf. Soncino Translation to Gen. R. Vol. I, p.8.

plained to mean that matter had form (shalom, is interpreted in the sense of whole) and create evil, (ra) is an allusion to matter without form, defective. Thus God created both.¹ Tohu refers to the 'ra' (evil) and Bohu to that which good (shalom-whole.)² Bacher suggests, however, that R. Gamliel may have taken his proof for the creation of Tohu and Bohu from Isa. 34. 12³ where the phrase לֹא יֵשֶׁתּוּ לֵב יָדָא is used. According to Bacher in Hagigah 12^a the words Tohu and Bohu of this latter text are also explained cosmologically; Bohu refers to the smooth (chaotic) stones that are sunk in the deep and from these come the water.⁴ It is probable, then, that R. Gamliel did not think of the problem of matter and form, for this is only the interpretation of the commentators and that Bacher is justified in suggesting that his proof was in another text, in Isaiah, 34. 12.

His other verses are self-explanatory and prove his contention that the materials which God used were originally created by Him. It is a little more difficult, however, to prove with any exactness the identity of the philosopher. Moore merely refers to him as a "skeptic" without advancing any arguments⁵ to prove his statement. Bacher merely lists this passage among R. Gamliel's discussion with 'nochrim' (Gentiles)

1. Soncino Translation op. cit. p.8 note 1.

2. Yefay Toar

3. In the Hebrew edition of Bacher this number is given. The J.P.S. translation has it in V.11

4. Bacher, op. cit. p. 61, n.1

5. Moore, op. cit., p. 56

but specifies no further.¹ Both Graetz and Friedlander place him in the category of the Gnostics; the latter in pursuing his thesis that the Minim were White Gnostics, relegates the philosopher to that group.

Writes Graetz, "Die Gnostiker Hielten also den zweiten Vers der Genesis: 'Die Erde war wüste und leer und Finsternisz lag auf der Fläche des abgrundes,' für eine gehäufte Schilderung des Urgustandes der Welt in ihrer Formlosigkeit, ehe der Welt-schöperische Geist sie angehaucht oder mit gnostischen Stickwörtern, ehe die Weisheit sich in die Materie versenkt und verloren hatte. Dasz hiermit der gnostische standpunkt eine Primitivität der Materie und eine Coordination derselben mit Gott annimmt, das gehört ja grade in das System des Gnostizismus."² Thus it can be argued that since the Gnostics did believe that the world was created and that there existed a primitive eternal matter, that the philosopher was a Gnostic.

Of this particular Midrash, Graetz says that this encounter took place in Rome and ^{that the philosopher} was seeking for adherents. That he was a Gnostic may be proved from the fact that no orthodox Christian would adopt such a point of view. For the Church taught the doctrine of creation ex nihilo. "Denn the orthodoxen Kirchenwater hielten eben so streng auf der biblische Dogma von der Schopfung aus nichts, als die Mischnah-Lehrer und Schwerlich wurde ein orthodoxer Kiesenlehrer einme solchen Ausspruch gethan haben."³

1. Bacher, op. cit., p. 55

2. Graetz, Judenthum und Gnoticismus, p. 32

3. Ibid. 33

For it will be recalled the Gnostics taught that an inferior God, the Demiurgus, created the world. Therefore the philosopher here may have wanted to place the Jewish God on the same level with the Demiurgus as distinct from the Supreme God. Friedländer supports his view that the Gnostic here ~~was~~ belonged to the Ophite sect on the basis of the description of this group by the Church father, Irenaeus.¹ But it is a rather inessential point to prove whether the philosopher was a member of the Ophite group or not. The question can be raised, however, if the Ophite group existed at all in Rome. From Mansel's description they seem to have grown up in Palestine.² Whether this discussion did take place in Rome at all is also a matter of question, but is not of particular importance for our study.

Thus we can conclude with some measure of certainty that the philosopher here may have been a member of the Gnostic group. In the light of the philosophical and religious background of the first century A.D. this identification of the philosopher with Gnostics seems plausible.

Graetz's statement that R. Gamliel's discussion with the philosopher of above took place in Rome seems plausible when we notice in the following discussion that the Midrash reports including R. Gamliel, R. Jehoshua, B. Hanniah, R. Elazar b, Azariah and R. Akiba, went to Rome in the year 95 A.D.

1. Friedländer, *Der Vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus*, p. 111
(Friedländer says: Nach die Ophiten besteht nämlich die unter der Lichtwelt gelagerte Materie aus den Elementen: Wasser, Finsternis, Abgrund, und Chaos (Tohu wa-Bohu) worübersie den Geist Gottes schweben lassen.)
2. Mansel, *op.cit.*, cf. chapter on Ophites

A philosopher was interested in knowing how often a serpent bears. The Midrash in Gen.R. 20.4 tells us that when he saw two serpents copulating he took them, placed them in a barrel and fed them until they bore. When the sages came to Rome he put forth the question, how long does it take for a serpent to bear? R. Gamliel could not answer him and his face turned pale with shame. 'R. Joshua meeting him saw that his face was wan, asked him, 'Why is your countenance wan?' 'I was asked a question but could not answer it.' 'What was it?' asked R. Joshua. 'After what period does a serpent bear.' 'After seven years,' R. Joshua said. 'And how do you know that?' 'Because the dog, which is a wild beast bears at fifty days, and it is written, More cursed art thou than all cattle and than all beasts of the field (Gen. 3.14) and just as the cattle are seven times more cursed than the beast so is the serpent seven times more accursed than the cattle.' Later that day R. Gamliel met the philosopher and gave him his answer. The philosopher then began to beat his head against the wall saying, 'That for which I labored seven years this man has come and given it to me on the end of a cane' (meaning with the utmost of ease).

To understand this Midrash it is necessary to make clear the interpretation which R. Joshua lends to the verse of Gen. 3.14. He interprets the text to mean that just as the unclean cattle bear at twelve months, so the serpent is seven times more accursed than they who are seven times more accursed than the dog

who bears at every fifty days.¹ (In the ancient east, it seems, dogs were considered as wild, or semi-wild).²

There is to be sure no particular polemic involved here. Yet this Midrash reflects the approach to knowledge of the Rabbis, who based themselves on Scriptures and that of the 'philosopher' who indicates by his action that he can be called a 'naturalist.' The Midrash may have related this story to prove the superiority of those who knew the Torah, for from it even the knowledge of natural phenomena can be learned, over those who had to make 'scientific' observations. But if it is this was the idea behind this Midrash it must be also pointed out that R. Joshua's reference to the dog was likewise based on observation not on Scripture.

On the basis of this Midrash no statement can be made to identify the 'philosopher.' He does not reflect by his statement any sectarian ^{argument} group but rather ^{his personal} interest. Kasher tells us that the Ramban (Nachmanides) investigated this passage (by observation) and found the statements of the Rabbis to be true.³

In the following two Midrashim the sovereignty of God and His relationship to idolatry is challenged by the 'philosophers.' In the Yalkut Shimoni to Exodus, Yithro, 20 דבד 4 the philosophers asked of the elders in Rome,⁵ 'If your God⁶

1. Matnot Kehuna

2. cf. Som. Translation, note, p.161, Gen.R. Vol. I.

3. Kasher, Torah Shelamah, Vol. III, p. 101 n. 12

4. Based on Avodah Zarah (B) 54b.

5. See above.

6. The Yalkut gives the reading of ילדיו ארבעה
However, in A.Z. Vilna ed. 1912 the reading is ילדיו ארבעה
This is in agreement with the reading of the Mikduke Soferim,
Vol. 10 p.117

has no desire for idolatry why does He not abolish it?' The Rabbis answered, 'If it was something for which the world has no need that was worshipped, He would abolish it; but since people worship the sun, moon, stars, and planets, should he destroy the Universe on account of fools?'¹ The philosophers said, 'If so let him destroy that for which the world has no need and let Him leave that for which the world has need.' 'They answered, 'If so, we strengthen the hands of the worshippers of these (for which the world has need) for they would say, Know that these too are Gods, for the others have been abolished and these have remained.'

There can be little doubt that the 'philosophers' mentioned here must have been pagan thinkers. For certainly no Christian would have challenged the sovereignty of God, or would have held a brief for idolatrous worship. The point of the Rabbis' answer is that although objects of nature are worshipped that does not warrant their being abolished because misguided people revere them. Thus God's sovereignty is not impaired by the fact that people worship idols. The Rabbis reveal a 'let alone' attitude toward the matter of idolatrous worship and from the Jewish point of view have given here a logical and penetrating answer.

Following the above selection from the Yalkut is another passage brought from B. Avodah Zarah upon the same theme of God and idolatry.² Here the discussion is between R. Gamliel and a 'philosopher.' In essence the controversy follows the

1. The text in A.Z. ends here. The following is given by the Yalkut.

2. B. Avodah Zarah 54b. Yalkut Shimoni, Yithro, 20 נדו

pattern of the above passage. The philosopher introduces his question with a quotation from Deut. 4.24; For the Lord Thy God is a devouring fire, a jealous God. 'Why,' he asks, 'is He so jealous of its worshippers rather than of the idol itself?'

R. Gamliel answers with a parable of king's son who calls his dog by his father's name. The king would surely be angry at his son than at his dog. Therefore God is jealous of those who refer to an idol as a diety. The 'philosopher' does not accept his analogy for he contends that there is some reality to an idol, for in a town where a fire broke out the conflagration burned everything but the shrine of the idol. Again R. Gamliel retorts with an analogy: that when a king wages war against a rebellious province he attacks the living not the dead, thereby comparing the idol to an inanimate object. He ends his argument with a quotation from Zephaniah 1.3 which he puts in the form of a question: Am I utterly to consume all things from off the face of the ground saith the Lord; am I to consume man and beast; am I to consume the fowls of the heaven, and the fishes of the sea even the stumbling blocks of the wicked. 'i.e. because the wicked stumble over these things is He to destroy them from the world? Do they not worship the human being; so am I to cut off man from off the face of the ground (Zeph. 1.3).¹ His last reference to the worship of human beings may be taken to refer to the Roman custom of Emperor worship. R. Gamliel's quotation may seem to be contradictory since he says that God will not consume man because he is worshipped, but no doubt he refers only to those who do

1. In presenting this text I have followed the translation of the Soncino ~~To~~ Avodah Zarah 54b ~~לפיכך~~

worship man.

Here we have the case of a 'philosopher' who is seemingly acquainted with the Scriptures. The 'philosopher' attempts to present a brief for the superiority of idolatry over that of monotheism as held by the Rabbis. He tries to make a case for the power of the idol but from the report of the Midrash it cannot be deduced that he was an idol worshipper, or held tenuously to the conception of idolatry. His attitude, it seems to me, is of one who merely wishes to engage in mere rhetoric or argument. He may have seen a Heathen but heathenism in itself cannot give us an exact identification of this 'philosopher.'

The last discussion in this section on the polemics with the 'philosophers' deals with the controversy between R. Hoshaya and a 'philosopher' on Circumcision. This discussion is reported in Gen. R. 11.6. A philosopher asked R. Hoshaya: 'If circumcision is so precious, why was it not given to Adam?' R. Hoshaya answered: 'Why do you shave the corners of your head and leave your beard?' 'Because it grew with me in my folly (i.e. while in childhood and had no sense of discretion). 'If so,' said R. Hoshaya, 'blind your eye and cut off your hands' (Since these, too, he had from birth). The philosopher dissatisfied by this remark, says, 'To such words (argument) we have come.' Then R. Hoshaya said: 'I cannot send you away empty-handed, the reason is this: everything that was created in the first six days requires further preparation (development), as the mustard need sweetening; the lupines need sweetening; the

wheat needs to be ground and man needs improvement (by circumcision).

The question why Adam himself was not circumcised was not only put to the Rabbis by sectarians such as Christians¹ but was even asked among the Rabbis themselves. One answer is that Adam was born circumcised.² Here we find a far better attempt by R. Hoshya to answer this perplexing question without resort to legend. The point of the 'philosopher's' question is that since Adam was the creation of God and beloved by Him, He would not have created him defectively. Therefore circumcision is an invention of the Rabbis.³ But R. Hoshaya proceeds to show that all things created by God (as for example, hair, which man cuts off) are not meant to be that way permanently. The point of his statement 'then blind your eye and cut off your hand' is that the 'philosopher' cannot imply that everything with which he was born, since he knew no better, must be done away with. The philosopher is right in recognizing this as sophistry. R. Hoshaya's answer then is that all of creation is in a state of constant development and needs to be further improved. This is a remarkable idea of progressive evolution. (Rashi expresses the same idea in commenting upon the phrase 'all that the Lord hath created to do;' to do means further improvement.⁴ The Matnot Kehuna also adds that Adam was not circumcised because before eight days had passed he had sinned and therefore made himself unfit.)⁵

1. Tertullian asks this question in his *Adversus Judaeos*. cf. Williams, *Adversus Judaeos*, p. 46

2. Aboth d. R. Nathan, 8, cited by Kasher, Torah Shelamoh, Vol.I, p.

א"י אברה"ר יצא אהרן שניאורסון אלהיאל קאסא

3. Matnot Kehuna

4. **Matnot Kehuna.** The phrase is:

5. Ibid.

No doubt the 'philosopher' here was a Christian, for Christianity from the time of Paul attacked the idea of circumcision, for this was one of the cardinal points of difference between Judaism and the new religion which grew from it. "The (Jewish) animosity to Paul was not alone because he maintained that Gentile believers in Christ should be admitted to the Church without circumcision, a point which concerned the Church only, but what was of vital interest to all Jews--because he was reported to foment apostasy from Moses by teaching all the Jews in the dispersion not to circumcise their children nor observe the customs of their religion (Acts 21, 21)." ¹

Scholars have suggested that the 'philosopher' here was the famous Church Father and theologian, Origen. It has been suggested that this Christian student of the Bible and the classic literature was born of a Jewish mother and that she taught him Hebrew. ² Origen relates that he had Jewish teachers and gives some of their teachings in his Contra Gnesum. That Origen came into contact with R. Joshua is no doubt true since both men lived in Caesarea. ³ Origen came to Caesarea about the year 231 A.D. and remained there for about twenty-five years. ⁴ This city was one of the chief centres of Christianity

1. Moore, Judaism, Vol. II, p.21.

2. Williams, op. cit. p.81. see especially his notes. Krauss claims the mother of Origen taught him Hebrew.

3. Ibid. This is also the opinions of Bacher, op. cit. (Heb. ed. Vol. I, p.94. Graetz is also of this opinion, cf. art. in Monatschrift, 1881, p.443

4. Moore, Judaism, I, p. 165, n. 1. Graetz, Ibid, says "232 A.D.

in Palestine and no doubt many controversies took place here.

R. Hoshaya is regarded as one of the pupils of the Patriarch Judah I and was one of the compilers of the Tosephta. At first he lived in Sepphoris but came later to Caesarea.¹ Moreover, the Midrash Rabba is attributed to this famous teacher.

With this we conclude this chapter on the controversies between the Rabbis and the 'philosophers.' From the arguments studied above it can be said that in the main those whom tradition saw fit to call 'philosophers' may have been outstanding men in their group. Certainly this can be said of Abimios and Origen. Therefore, other appellations referring to heretics and sectarians such as Minim and Epiqursim, were not applied to them. In the main the term 'philosophos' is not interchanged with any of the above terms throughout the literature which we have investigated.² Therefore, it may be reasonably safe to draw the conclusion that the word 'Philosophos' refers to some outstanding individual, although not always mentioned by name, who was recognised by the Rabbis as a representative spokesman.

1. Williams and Bacher, *Obid.*

2. One exception has been cited by Bacher, *Tannaim*, Vol. I, p. 62 (Heb. ed.) see notes

Chapter V.

The Roman-Rabbinic Controversies

Throughout our Midrashic sources, discussions are reported between the Rabbis and outstanding Roman officials. Whether these conversations are authentic or not has not been fully decided even among the scholarly investigators of these passages. At most one could say that legend and fact have been intertwined in these midrashim. Of the discussions between Rabbi (Judah Hanasi I?) and Antoninus, Ginzberg says: "The traditional religious discussions between Hadrian and Joshua B. Hanniah, between Akiba and Tineus Rufus, between Shabur I and Samuel Yarhini as well as the legendary interviews between Alexander the Great and Simon the High priest, or between Ptolemy and the priest Eleazar, may serve as parallels to the various Antonine legends. Jewish folk-lore loved to personify the relations of Judaism with heathendom in the guise of conversations between Jewish sages and high potentates."¹ Bacher, on the other hand is more inclined to ~~take~~ the view that legendary accounts between the Rabbis and these high Roman 'potentates' exist, but that discussions between them may have taken place cannot be doubted for they have left a vivid impression upon the following generations.²

But the problem of authenticity of these controversies lies outside the realm of this study. We will content our-

1. J. E. art. Antoninus in the Talmud, Vol. I., p.656f. by L. Ginzberg.

2. Bacher, A.d.T., Heb. ed. Vol.II. cf. under Rabbi Judah Hanasi.

selves to study the controversies themselves and to whatever extent possible examine the various ideas expressed.

Since no definite pattern can be worked out in the study of these controversies we will examine them in their chronological order. The sources studied have yielded but a solitary discussion between the great Tanna, R. Jochanan b. Zakkai and a Roman official whose identity is not known. In the Yalkut Shimoni to Ex. Vayakhel, ¹ a discussion is given between the Tanna and a Roman general, Contraicus.²

Contraicus accuses Moses of being a thief, or a swindler, or a bad mathematician. Without entering into the intricacies of the arithmetical problem involved here, this Roman bases his accusation of the dishonesty of Moses on Ex. 38.26 where it is told that Moses collected from the people 201 talents and eleven mineh.³ Moses had to expend half of this sum upon the sanctuary but in the following verse it is related that he disbursed but a hundred talents, not quite half of the sum total which he amassed. (Thus, according to Rashi, Moses kept for himself a half talent and five and a half mineh) But R. Jochanan basing himself upon Ex. 38.28 proves that in reality Moses had returned this money in the making of the 'Vovim' (i.e. the 1757 shekels mentioned here were equal to the half talent and five and a half mineh.) Thus Rashi concludes that the Roman officer sought to confuse R. Jochanan by not taking into consideration this verse.⁴

1. Based on B. Bechoroth 5a. The text here is slightly different from the text in the Yalkut.
2. According to the spelling of Goldschmidt, German translation of Talmud, Vo. IX, Bechoroth, 5a.
3. weight, worth about twenty five shekels.
4. Rashi to Bechoroth 5a. Rashi has an involved explanation of the mathematical problem entailed here.

Whoever this Roman may have been, his question, if at all authentic, reveals a knowledge of the Bible. However, it must be remembered that his knowledge of Scriptures cannot be assumed on the basis of this Midrash alone. Bacher has a fuller account of the discussions between R. Jochanan and a Roman, who can be assumed to be the one mentioned here.¹ In these discussions he does reveal a knowledge of the Scriptures.

Of the identity of this Roman officer no definite facts can be found. Some scholars have various opinions as to his identity but there is no general agreement among them on this problem. His name is also given as אֶלְדִּיִּן, אֶלְדִּיִּן, אֶלְדִּיִּן. But whether these refer to Contraious is not quite clear. However, it may be assumed that the name given in this Midrash is a variation of אֶלְדִּיִּן for in Num. R. 4 the same discussion is reported in the name of אֶלְדִּיִּן.² Bacher also lists the various opinions among the scholars who have sought to solve this man's identity: Graetz claims that he was Atticus; Jastrow and Krauss are of the opinion that he was Quietus.³ However, we can conclude in the words of Graetz that R. Jochanan did have discussions with Pagans "who had knowledge of the Jewish law, either from the Greek translation or from their intercourse with the Jews, refuting their objections which they raised, and dispelling or making clear by suitable comparisons the peculiarities which occur in the Holy Writings."⁴ In this case we have a statement by a Roman, based

1. Bacher, A.d.T. Heb, ed. Vol. I, 1, p. 27f.

2. Ibid. p. 28 n. 2.

3. Ibid. p. 27-28 n. 4.

4. Graetz, History, Vol. II, p. 329-330.

on a knowledge of the Bible, who attempted to disparage the honesty of Moses.

Our sources also yield a single discussion between Rabban Gamliel and a Roman. In the Yalkut Shimoni to Jethro, 20

וְגַמְלִיֵּל¹ R. Gamliel engages in discussion with a Roman general whom the Talmud calls Agrippas. The general asked R. Gamliel, 'It is written in your Torah, For the Lord Thy God is a devouring fire (Deut. 4:24) Would a wise man be jealous of anyone else but a wise man, or a warrior of any but a warrior, a rich man of any but a rich man?' Said R. Gamliel: 'I will give you an example, to what is this comparable? To a man who marries a second wife. If she (the second wife) is superior to the first, the latter will not be jealous of her; but if she is her inferior, the first wife will be jealous of her.' (Since her husband has taken an inferior woman to displace her in his affections; so God considers it an insult when inferior Gods (idols) are worshiped).

Who this Agrippas was is not clearly known. Bacher suggests that instead of reading וְגַמְלִיֵּל it might be וְגִימְלִי², the same general who held discussions with R. Jochanan b. Zakkai, as we have seen above. The suggestion is made in the Dikduke Sopherim that the reading should be וְגִימְלִי רַב־לְבָבִי³, that the Roman was a general of King Agrippa.

Little need be commented upon the Midrash. It is clearly a statement made by some heathen, who in this case is identified as a general.

1. Based on Avodah Zarah (B) 17a.

2. Bacher, A.d.T. Hebrew ed. Vol. I, p. 57

3. Dikduke Sopherim, Vol. 11, p. 118a

In the following discussions we are on somewhat safer ground in identifying the Romans with whom the Rabbis discussed. In examining these Midrashim, we must remember that it cannot be wholly assumed that these discussions are authentic. Among the first of these discussions are those dealing with R. Akiba and the Roman general Tineus Rufus. In the Tanchuma, Ki Tissa, 33, and in Gen. R. 11.5 a discussion is reported between these two on the Sabbath. (In the main there is slight difference between the two texts).

Tineus Rufus asks R. Akiba, 'Why does the Sabbath¹ differ from the other days of the week?' R. Akiba answers that just as Tineus Rufus differs from other men so the Sabbath differs from the other days of the week. But Tineus presses him further and in the Tanchuma version R. Akiba's answer is similar to the one given to the Min who sought proof that God does not labor on the Sabbath. R. Akiba bases himself on the Halachah to prove that just as a man has a right to walk about his own courtyard on the Sabbath so God moves about in the world, which is His courtyard and therefore the forces of nature do not cease to move on the Sabbath. In the Gen. R. version, R. Akiba alludes to the mystical river Sambatyon which ceases to flow on the Sabbath as proof that God does not labor on the Sabbath. Tineus by aid of a necromancer calls up the spirit of his father who tells him that the spirits of the dead do not rise up on the Sabbath.

1. Bacher suggest that this discussion took place on the Sabbath. According to the Mss Munich the reading of the phrase it should be פ'י ה' נא (cf. Rashi) A.d.T. Heb. ed. Vol.1¹, p. 110 n.42

There can be little question here that the reference to the calling up of the spirits of the dead is a legendary addition to this discussion. The question regarding the labor of God on the Sabbath is a legitimate one and may no doubt have some basis for the historicity of this Midrash. The question of Tineus may have been inspired by the attitude of the Stoics to the Sabbath, who claimed that idleness on the Sabbath was contrary to the laws of nature. "Die Stoiker zahlten die Arbeit zu den naturgemassen Dingen; die Untatigkeit aber ist nicht naturgemass, denn die Natur kennt keine Ruhe, und die Elemente feiern nicht. Das war in der Tat der von den philosophisch gebildeten Heiden gegen den Sabbat erhobene Einwand, den später auch die philosophisch gebildeten Christen wiederholten."¹ The Rabbis it is true did not deal with this question upon a philosophical plane but rather upon a Halachic basis. The contention of R. Akiba is that in spite of the fact that the elements yet move and change on the Sabbath that does not constitute labor. Seemingly, Judaism did not answer this question upon a philosophical basis but contented itself with an Halachic explanation which in itself reveals a kernel of their philosophical thought.

The Tanchuma to Terumah has another discussion between these two which seems very artificial and no doubt legendary. Tineus asks R. Akiba 'why does God despise Esau (Rome)? as it is written, And Esau do I hate (Malachi, 1.3) R. Akiba promises to answer him on the following day. On the next day Tineus

¹ I. Bergmann, Judisches Apologetik, p.101.

a sks Akiba 'what did you dream last night?' Akiba answers that he dreamt of two dogs, one called after Tineus and the other his wife, Rufina. Enraged by this answer, Rufus tells Akiba that he is liable to capital punishment for this insult. Akiba then explains that just as dogs eat and drink, reproduce, and die, so Rufus (Rome) acts as a human being in a similar manner. And furthermore, instead of worshipping Him"who spread out the heavens and established the earth, who causes to live and to die," Rufus raises a piece of wood and calls it God, therefore God despises Esau (Rome).

The reason for questioning the authenticity of this Midrash is that it seems that the Midrash has played upon its imagination in reporting the conversation between these two. Certainly, Akiba would not; it seems to me, or no Jew would be so bold as to compare Tineus to a dog. The Midrash only reveals its hatred for Rome through the medium of this discussion.

Bacher, however, says that there is no reason to believe that the discussions between R. Akiba and Tineus are figments of the mind.¹ He states furthermore that Rufus seems to have been acquainted with the Scriptures and with the Laws of Israel, which this Midrash confirms. Akiba tells Rufus that he is one who is familiar with the Jewish law.²

(וְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֹהִים)

וְיִשְׂרָאֵל אֵלֶיךָ אֵלֹהִים

1. Bacher, A.d.T. Heb. ed. Vol. 12, p.110f. He writes :
 הָיָה פְּנִימָנִי נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה
 גַּם כִּי הָיָה נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה
 גַּם כִּי הָיָה נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה וְעַתָּה נֶגֶד אֱלֹהִים הַזֶּה

2. Tanchuma, (Hanidpos) כ' ג' ט"ז

The recent historian of Akiba, Dr. L. Finkelstein seems to be of the opinion that these discussion are historical: "It was perhaps in later years, when the government undertook to suppress Jewish ceremonial, that the debates concerning the Sabbath and Circumsicion occurred between the two men."¹ Finkelstein also presents the above Midrash which may be understood to mean that he takes it to be authentic. This, however, is a matter of conjecture upon which scholars are not agreed.

During the period, preceding the Hadrianic persecutions (135 A.D.) a contemporary of R. Akiba, R. Joshua b. Hanniah is linked in controversies with the Emperor Hadrian. Where these discussions took place is also a matter of opinion. Some may have taken place in Rome, Alexandria, or in Palestine. The Midrashic sources are not quite clear in clarifying this problem.

Of these discussions between Hadrian and R. Joshua, Bacher writes, "These discussions.....have one thing in common that R. Joshua always bases his answers on concrete experiences and intellectual devices in order to make the matter clear for the Emperor. In an investigation of these conversations the elements of exaggeration and modification must be taken into consideration. Some must be taken as completely legendary. From a general study of these discussions it is possible to obtain a picture of the conversations between the Tanna and the inquisitive reason loving Emperor whom Tertullian calls a Curiositam Omnium explorator."²

1. Finkelstein, Akiba, p.245

2. Bacher, A.d.T. Vol. I. p.126ff. (Heb. ed.)

Throughout the Midrashic passages the editors have included after the name of Hadrian a phrase of defamation *יְהִי עוֹצֵל בְּעוֹצְלוֹ* 'may his bones rot.' This was due to his persecutions which instilled in the people a deep hatred for him.

In Gen. R. 10.3 Hadrian poses the question, how was the world created? R. Joshua answered him according to the statement of R. Huma, who said, God took six balls, four for the four corners of the world and one for above and one for below.¹ 'Is that possible?' (asked Hadrian. Thereupon R. Joshua took him into a small room and asked him to stretch out his hands. 'Thus was the work of Creation before God' (Just as Hadrian was easily able to touch the walls by stretching out his hands so God was able to encompass all the world)..

The 'balls' of which he speaks are to be understood as 'coils'² with mingled elements which God unravelled to create the world. Bacher³ is of the opinion that the 'balls' refer to the elements (*אֵשׁ מַיִם אֶרֶץ אוויר*) which the Rabbis may have learned from the Greek philosophy (earth, air, fire, water).

Whether or not Bacher is right in assuming these 'balls' to represent the elements is questionable. The idea here is a rather quaint one insofar that the Rabbis conceive of the world being formed from balls or coils, ~~after~~ which were unravelled after they came into being. It is not clear if elements alone were meant what were the other two that R. Huma added to the four main elements. No doubt the meaning here is

1. Gen. r. 10.3. His statement is : *שֵׁשׁ כוּכָדִים לָקַח אֱלֹהִים וְעָשָׂה אֶת הָעוֹלָם*
2. Jastrow, Dict. of Tal. cf. *כוּכָד*
3. Bacher, op. cit. p.127, n.2

that 'balls' containing various elements¹ were extended to the four corners, from the heavens and to the earth.

In Gen. R. 28.3 another curious notion about the resurrection of the dead is given to Hadrian by R. Joshua. Hadrian asks, 'From what will God make man to blossom again in the future?' R. Joshua contends from the 'nut of the spinal column.' To prove his statement he has a 'nut' brought to him which he tries to grind, burn, and dissolve in water but the 'nut' remains intact. Thus R. Joshua endeavours to prove to Hadrian that resurrection implies corporeality. "Die Gegner des Auferstehungsglaubens wie der Heide im Dialog des Minucius Fleix und der Kaiser Hadrian in der Agada hielten den Lehren des Christentums und des Judentums die tagliche Erfahrung entgegen dass der Korper nach dem Tode zu Staub wird, aus dem Staube aber kein Korper wiedererstehen kann."² Both Judaism and Christianity, says Bergmann, held that since man was created from dust, it was in the power of God to form him from dust again.³

Moore⁴ relates this 'nut' of the spinal column to the tip of coccyx, which is similar to the almond in shape.⁵ According to medical opinion the coccyx is flexible and can be easily

1. The two main elements are snow and fire. This is the statement made by R. Jochanan. Gen. 10.3. According to the all the other elements came from these. |"5550

2. Bergmann, op. cit. p.127

3. Ibid p.127ff.

4. Judaism, Vol II, p.385.

5. The word is Luz, which Jastrow also translates as 'almond.' (ל"ז)

broken.¹ Therefore it seems that this particular story may have been legendarized somewhat although it can be understood that the question of Hadrian was asked and that R. Joshua made some answer to prove corporeal resurrection. The reference to the 'luz' is no doubt based on Koh. 12.5 where it is written 'the almond (shaked, synonym for luz) will blossom.'²

Another curious episode between R. Joshua and Hadrian is given in Gen. R. 13.9. Here, however, Hadrian is not involved in a polemical discourse with R. Joshua. The Midrash has brought this story in commenting upon the verse in Koh. 1.7, All the waters flow into the sea. The story is told that R. Joshua and R. Eliezer were travelling on the Mediterranean when their ship came to a 'a non-flowing stretch of water.' Both men assumed that Providence had brought them here to test the water if this corroborate the Scriptural assertion: All the waters flow into the sea, yet the sea is not full (koh. 1.7).³ They filled a bucket full of this water and when they came to Rome they were asked by Hadrian 'what is the nature of this water?' They replied that it is water which absorbs water, therefore, it is never full. To prove it to him they poured ordinary water into the bucket and it was immediately absorbed. There follows then the interpretation of the two Rabbis upon the verse, which we need not consider here.⁴

1. This fact I gathered from Dr. H. Helfman, M.D. Middletown, Ohio.

2. Moore, op. cit, p.385 n.2.

3. Soncino Tran. Vol. I, p.104 n.3.

4. cf. the Son. Tran. Vol. I, p. 104 especially note 4.

We have brought this Midrash here because it relates that R. Joshua and Hadrian met in Rome. According to Bacher, however, those Midrashim which relate of their meeting in Rome are legendary. Due to the influence of the school of R. Joshua and to his friends in Rome these stories arose in the minds of the people.¹ Bacher contends that the discussions between these two men took place in Palestine and in Alexandria.²

Angelology is the subject of discussion in Gen. R. 78.1. Hadrian questions the Rabbinic thought that the celestial company of angels are created anew everyday. He prods his inquiry further and asks: 'Whither do they go?' R. Joshua answers from the source whence they came which is *Nehar Dinur*. This river, he elaborates, is similar to the river Jordan which flows continually. The source of this mythical river is the perspiration of the 'Hayyath' caused by their bearing the Throne of God. The advisor of Hadrian interjects with the remark that the Jordan flows by day and not by night. R. Joshua answers that he watched the river from the city Beth Peor and saw that it flowed day and night.

Essentially the idea of this rather 'mystical' Midrash is based on Daniel 7.10, where the notion of a 'fire river' (*Nehar Dinur*) is expressed: 'A fiery stream issued and came forth before Him; thousands thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him.' The

1. A.d.T, Heb. ed. Vol. I, p.134.

2. Ibid. p.138

thought that the celestial host is constantly changed to Lam. 3.23 'they are new every morning.'¹ Thus from the feiry stream issue forth everyday multitudes of angels who sing their praises before God. The 'Hayyoth' are the animals portrayed by Ezekiel in the first chapter.

In the Midrash preceding, R. Helbo remarks that it is only ~~the~~ celestial host and not the celestial princes, e.g. Michael and Gabriel, that are exchanged everyday. This idea has been included in the mystical writings of the Maase Merkabah.²

With this we conclude this section dealing with R. Joshua and the Emperor Hadrian. The relationships between these two men seems to have been on a very friendly basis. This is but a portion of the many Midrashim and Talmudic passages dealing with these two figures. The rest of the material lies outside of the sources we are investigating.³ Dealing with but a segment of the material it is difficult to make any definite conclusions. Hadrian does not reflect in his questions any hostility toward Judasim nor to the venerable sage. He is, as Bacher has said, inquisitive and seeking for information. It may be concluded that these discussions may have taken place before the Hadrianic persecutions. The Midrashim we have investigated were rather quaint ones and do not afford us a more complete understanding Hadrian's approach to Judaism.

1. Bacher, A.d.T. (Heb. ed.) Vol. I, p.127

2. Abelson, Jewish Mysticism, pl.46

3. Bacher, op. cit. has a full abount of these passages.

The last of the Roman-Rabbinic discussions deals with some conversations between R. Judah and Antoninus. Scholars have given varied opinions on the exact identity of each. Antoninus seems to have been a well known character in Rabbinic Judaism and was spoken of as a Ger Zedek, a righteous proselyte.¹ Of him Ginzberg writes: "He is called the son of Severus by the Babylonian Talmud, but which Roman emperor is meant by this name can hardly be determined. He has in turn been identified with Marcus Aurelius (Rapport and Bodek); Septimius Severus (Graetz, who identifies Rabbi with Judah Hanasi II); Caracalla (Jost and N. Krochman); Elagabalus (Cassel); and Lucius Verus (Frankel). The account in the Talmud is legendary, not historical and no heed is given to details, or difficulties of a chronological and historical nature."²

Although Bacher does not identify this Roman parsonage he is inclined to take the view that there was some historical basis for these discussions. He identifies Rabbi with R. Judah Hanasi, the compiler of the Mishnah. He does recognize that these stories have been fictionized somewhat and clothed in unhistorical garb. Comparing Antoninus to Hadrian, he says, "Antoninus is much more sympathetic (to Judaism) and displays an attitude of great reverence toward Rabbi."³

In two quasi-polemical Midrashim which we have collected Rabbi accepts the teachings of Antoninus. The Yalkut Shimon⁴

1. J.E. art. Antoninus, Vol. I, p.656f.

2. Ibid.

3. Bacher, A.d.T. II, (Heb. ed.) p.130.

4. Gen. r. 34.10. Slight variation in text.

to Gen. 3.38 brings a discussion on the question of the time of the endowment in man of the 'yetzer hara' (evil impulse) R. Judah^{states} that it is lodged in man while he is in the embryonic stage of formation. Antoninus, however, challenges his statement with the remark: 'If so, he (the infant) kicks while in the womb and goes out:' Therefore, the evil impulse must be lodged in the infant when he emerges from the womb. Rabbi accepts this teaching and says: 'This taught me Antoninus and there is Scriptural support for his contention: Sin croucheth at the door (Gen. 4.7) (i.e. when the infant emerges from the womb).

A similar discussion is that concerning the endowment of the soul in man. (Yalkut Shimoni, Gen. 4.38).¹ Is the soul placed in man when it is decreed (what the sperm shall be, male or female) or when the embryo is actually formed? Rabbi answers from the time of formation. Antoninus again refutes his statement saying: "Can a piece of meat remain unsalted for three days without becoming putrid?" (i.e. "if the sperm cell is not immediately endowed with a soul it would likewise become putrid and then could not fertilize the ovum"²) Surely, he continues, it must be from the moment when God decrees its destiny. Said Rabbi: 'Antoninus taught me this

1. Based San. 91b.

2. Sonc. Tran. to San. 91b, cf. note

3. The word 'putrid' is derived from the root word 'to rot', and is used in the Talmudic sense.

and there is a Scriptural text to support him. Thou hast granted me life and favour and Thy providence¹ hath preserved my spirit (Job 10.12)²

Both ideas are simply expressed here and no further comment need be made. Other passages relating to Antoninus and Rabbi are found throughout the Midrashic literature and in the special sources we are investigating. These, however, are not necessarily polemical. (In Gen.R. 84 Rabbi explains a verse in Job to Antoninus; in Gen. R. 11 Rabbi explains that the 'condiment' of the Sabbath adds flavor to the Sabbath meal; and in Gen. R. 75 a letter is written to Antoninus by Rabbi.)³

The third and last of the discussions between Rabbi and Antoninus, insofar that they are included in the particular sources studied, is found in the Tanchuma (Buber) to Miketz II. The essential point in question is whether prayer can be said all day long or whether it should be restricted to certain times during the day. This has been a matter of controversy among the Rabbis themselves⁴ but as Moore says, "What-

1. Decree and Providence are taken from the same root word נָּסַח . Therefore, Rabbi cites this verse.
2. Bergmann writes that the Church Father Tertullian discussed the question of the origin of the soul in man with his Stoic antagonists. His answer to the Stoics is similar to the contention of Antoninus and also employs the verse which Rabbi cites. "Der Kirchenvater ist demnach derselben Meinung wie Antoninus in der Agada und gründet diese Meinung wie Antoninus auf eine Wahrnehmung aus dem Leben und wie Rabbi auf Schriftverse." (Jüdische Apologetik, p.7)
3. Other discussions are cited by Bacher, op. cit. p.131 n.22.
4. In the preceding statements to this Midrash various points of view about the time of prayer are given.

ever temporary controversial point such utterances may have had, the outcome was that the Jewish common prayer is a noteworthy endeavor to achieve order without sacrificing freedom."¹

Antoninus raises the question to Rabbi: 'What about prayer at every hour?' 'Forbidden' answers Rabbi. 'Why?' 'Lest one becomes thoughtless in calling upon God' (repetitious prayer, Rabbi fears, may tend to become mere formalism and mockery). Antoninus, however, was dissatisfied with this answer and did not comprehend its full import until Rabbi, upon the following morning, presented himself before him once an hour and greeted him with "nonchalant familiarity."

Hail my Lord; O Emperor; Peace be unto you, O king. Antoninus became indignant and said, 'Why do you treat royalty with such disrespect?' Said, Rabbi, 'if you, a mere mortal king, resent being saluted thus every hour, how much more the sovereign King of Kings.'² Thus Rabbi held that prayer should be said at fixed times.

Again no definite assertions can be made on the basis of this material as to who Antoninus was or what his attitude toward Judaism may have been. We do find in him an interested seeker and One who seems to have been close to the Jewish point of view. The Midrash, as based upon the sources presented, reveals the friendly relationship between Rabbi and this man whose identity is unknown to the students of Jewish history.

1. Moore, Judaism, II, p.221.

2. I have followed in the main the excellent paraphrasing by Moore (Ibid.) of this Midrash.

On the basis of the above Midrashim, the Roman-Rabbinic controversies were not particularly concerned with an exegesis of Scriptural texts (although such is the case in the first two Midrashim discussed) but rather in challenging or seeking further explanation of the ideas and doctrines of Judaism. Since Rome did not have a quarrel with the Jewish religion, as did Christianity, it can be understood that the interest of the Romans in Judaism would not necessarily be in the interpretation of Scriptural texts but rather in the teachings expounded by the Rabbis. They had no sectarian doctrines to uphold and therefore it seems that their arguments were not based on the Bible. That they were men of philosophical bent cannot be proved although their interests in ideas can be seen from their discussions.

3

Chapter VI

Jacob of Chephar Neburaia

The Midrash has also left us some accounts dealing with a former Jew who seems to have turned convert to Christianity. The reasons for his conversion are unknown. At one time he was recognized as an Haggadist and even after leaving the Jewish fold his opinions were sought.¹ Tradition remembers him only as Jacob of Chephar Neburaia, who is said to have been a Jewish-Christian of the fourth century.² His name, Neburaia, is identified with the locality of Nabratin, which is situated north of Safed.³

In Gen.R. 7:2 it is related that while in Tyre he gave the ruling that fish must be ritually slaughtered. R. Haggai, one of the important pupils of Zeira and who seems to have established his own school in Tyre, opposed Jacob on this point. 'Come and be flagellated,' he said. 'What,' said Jacob, 'when a man gives a Scriptural ruling he is to be flagellated?' 'How do you know that this is Scriptural?' 'Because it is written, Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures and let fowl fly etc. (Gen. 1.20). Just as a bird must be ritually killed, so must fish be ritually killed.' Said R. Haggai, 'You have not ruled well.' 'And

1. J.E. art. Jacob of Kefar Neburaya, Vol 7, p. 35. Also from the above passage it can be seen that his opinion must have been asked otherwise he would not have made this ruling.
2. Ibid.
3. Ibid. Jastrow, Dict. of Tal., however, says Neburaya refers to Nimrin near Tiberias. cf. under word נִמְרִין. The Soncino Translation gives the same as Jastrow. (Gen.R. Vol. I, p.50)

whence can you prove this to me?' asked Jacob. 'Lie down (to be flagellated) and I will prove it to you. It is written, If flocks and birds be slain for them, will they suffice them; or if all the fish of the sea be gathered together for them, will they suffice them? (Num. 11.22) Shall be 'slain' is not written here (referring to the fish) but 'be gathered together.' 'Lay on me,' said Jacob, 'for your explanation is good.'

It can be seen that the argument here is based on an interpretation of various texts. Jacob by referring to Gen. 1.20 where birds and fishes are mentioned in the same passage, tries to derive support from it for his contention that fishes are also to be ritually slaughtered. R. Haggai refutes his statement by quoting from Num. 11.22 which offers a better argument, from the aspect of hermeneutics, that fishes cannot be slain for of them the word 'slain' is not used. It may be deduced from this passage that the custom of 'Shehitah' among the Jews was still in a state of flux, for otherwise there would be no need to argue the point of ritual slaughter for fishes.

Levi is of the opinion that from this passage it can be seen that Jacob is a Min, for no true Jew would take his point of view.¹ No doubt Levi is right, for this is an effort on the part of Jacob to dispute the authority of the Rabbis in regard to the subject discussed.

I. Levi, I. Hamaggid, Vol. XIV, p. 245. He writes:

כפר לבריאן הורה בצור פנים שחילה, מאת י' חקן רחל ליה
גא אקו והאיק ידלה על פנת מ' אשר אבא אחינה גארתני זהבית כפאת
מא יבאוי שיער פה מין היה

(Gen. R. 1)

In another polemic, with R. Haggai, Jacob argues that it is permissible to circumcise on the Sabbath a son born of a Gentile mother and Jewish father. Again, R. Haggai remonstrates with him and demands that he be lashed for having given a wrong Halachic interpretation. Jacob advances his argument on the basis of the verse 'And they declared their pedigrees after their families by their fathers' houses (Num. 1.18) (which he takes to mean that a child is reckoned after his father and like every Jewish child can be circumcised on the Sabbath, if it falls on the eighth day.) R. Haggai refutes this argument by citing the verse: Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them (Ezra 10.3). (His point is that from this verse which alludes to mixed marriages the child follows the mother and therefore Jacob is in error in his interpretation.) But Jacob protests that his statement cannot be accepted as authoritative since it is 'on the strength of tradition,' meaning it is taken from a source outside of the Pentateuch. But R. Haggai again refers to the verse he employed where it says, And let it be done according to the Torah (Ibid). Jacob accepts this interpretation and admits his error.

The underlying argument here need not be further elaborated upon. What is of interest is that Jacob does not disagree with the fundamental institution which is involved in his polemics. Rather does he attempt to interpret them, or add new elements to them, in disagreement with the tradition of the Rabbis. However, in both cases he accepts the teach-

ing of R. Haggai. If he really were a Min it can be seen that he does not stand too far outside the fringe of Judaism. He shows no hostility to the Rabbinic teachings as he was willing (at least so the Midrash tells us) to accept his punishment for an erroneous interpretation of Scriptures.

Levi calls Jacob a Min but does not specify to what group he belongs. His use of the word Min must be understood in the general meaning of the word to denote faithlessness to Judaism. The J.E.¹ refers to him as a Judaeo-Christian but is this to mean that he was member of the Jewish-Christian sect or merely a Jew who turned Christian? It is questionable if the Jewish-Christian sect existed at all by this time. As for being a Christian his attitude as expressed in the Midrash would not support that theory, since he abided by the interpretation of R. Haggai and Christianity did not practice either shehitah or circumcision. It seems likely that Jacob was no more than a free-thinker who cut off his bonds from Judaism. In this sense he can be called. a Min.

Of Jacob, Harford writes: "It is nowhere said that Jacob was excommunicated, but it seems reasonable to infer that in some way he was excluded from the community of Israel and regarded as an heretic...it is noteworthy of note that his apostasy does not appear to have been known outside of his own country. He is mentioned in the Bab. Gemara, Ket. 65a and an opinion given by him is debated without any reference to his being a Min. Further, if I am

1. See above.

right in supposing that the passage of Shab. 17b refers to a time after he had become a Min, then it would seem that he might be a Jewish Christian but scarcely a Gnostic. There is, however, nothing to show what was the change which turned him from a Jew into a Min. He remains a shadowy figure, tantalising by its vagueness, the ghost of an ancient heretic... that he did become a Min is shown not merely by the passage in Kol.R., but also by that in J. Shabb 17b where R. Haggai speaks of himself and Jacob as not entering the same door."¹

Thus in regard to Jacob we are left in the dark as to identify him any further. It is interesting to note that Kasher in his Torah Shlamah does not mention the **heresy** of Jacob but speaks of him as R. Jacob.² Jacob must remain a 'shadowy figure.'

1. Herford. op. cit. p.335. Bacher does not identify Jacob with any group but merely speaks of his Ketzerthum (Adm.P.A.111,p. R. Haggai by his statement means that Jacob no longer walked in the path of Judaism.

2. Kasher, Torah Shelamah Vol. I, p.143 n. p v

CHAPTER VII

THE GENTILES

In the last chapter of this study, some passages culled from the material examined will deal with the polemics between the Rabbis and those whom the Midrash refers to as Gentiles (גוים). The term גוי (Gentile) is usually understood to apply to those who were racially ^{and religiously} different from the Jews. The word does not necessarily convey any sectarian bias. It is a general name for those who were non-Jews. It includes all the various peoples Christian and heathen. The Rabbis use the term indiscriminately.

In the Yalkut Shimoni 6.47 to Genesis, a controversy is related between R. Abbahu and some Gentiles. They asked him, 'It is written in the Torah, And the Lord God commanded the man (Gen. 2.16) Man was commanded not to sin but the woman was not commanded (to eat of the forbidden fruit)? Said R. Abbahu, 'What does the text say concerning man? And the Lord God commanded the man saying. To what does the word saying (וַיֹּאמֶר) refer? It means to the part of his body and Eve was created from one of his ribs.' (Therefore, he proves, Eve was included in the prohibition against eating the fruit of the tree of knowledge.)

The question of the Gentiles is inspired by the fact that when God placed man in the Garden of Eden and commanded him not to eat of the fruit, the woman, according to the account in Gen. 2.1-18 was as yet not created. Therefore,

they try to prove that the woman was not included in the prohibition. R. Abbahu's answer is based on the fact that the verse (Gen. 2.16) employs the words 'commanded' and 'saying'. This, he assumes, is a purposeful redundancy and in order to explain the use of the word 'saying' he applies it to include the woman. R. Abbahu in presenting this bit of exegesis follows the hermeneutical rules of R. Akiba,¹ who sought to find a meaning for every word in Scriptures.

There is no particular point of doctrine involved here, rather the interpretation of the Scriptural text. The account in Gen. 2 and 3 does not explicitly state that the woman was included in the prohibition of eating of the fruit of the tree of knowledge. Therefore, the Gentiles propound this query to R. Abbahu.

Bacher identifies these Gentiles as Christians.² He does not, however, advance his reasons for this identification. On the basis that the Gentiles are acquainted with the Bible it may be assumed that they were Christians. R. Abbahu, as has been said above, lived in Ceaserea, which was an important Christian center, and, therefore, it may be assumed that the Gentiles were Christians.

Both Christianity and Judaism taught that Adam and Eve were punished for their disobedience and, therefore, it does not seem that the Gentiles here are interested in exonerating the woman. Their purpose may have been to either taunt the Rabbi or to understand the text as explained by the Rabbis.

1. Bacher, A.d.P.A., Heb. ed., Vol. II, 1. p.109 n.3.

2. Bacher, op. cit., p.109.

There could be no exoneration of the woman for in Gen. 3,2 she is aware of the prohibition against eating the fruit. Therefore, it may be that the Gentiles were interested in rhetorical argument alone.

Of the preceding Midrash it has been assumed that the word Gentile has been associated with Christians. In the following two Midrashim the term is supposedly applied to Heathens. Thus it may be argued the word Gentile as used in these sources does not imply any sectarian bias.

In Gen. R. 27 a Gentile asked R. Joshua b. Korha, 'If you (Jews) say that God knows the course of future events, why does it say (in connection with the flood) And it grieved him at His heart (Gen. 6.6). (His point is, why then was God pleased at first with His Creation, if He knew that someday He would destroy the world). R. Joshua said, 'Has a male son been born to you?' 'Yes,' replied the other. 'And what did you do?' Said the Gentile, 'I rejoiced and caused others to rejoice.' Asked R. Joshua, 'And did you not know that he would die at the end of his days?' Replied the Gentile, 'At a time of merriment, merriment, at a time of mourning, mourning.' Said R. Joshua 'Similarly was the creation of the world (God rejoiced when the world was first created, as a man rejoices over his new born son); then seven days did God mourn over His world before He brought the Flood, as it is said, And it grieved Him and further it is written, 'And the king grieveth for his son (II Sam. 19.7). (In both verses the root word אבב grieving-mourning is used. R. Joshua

tries to show that God was aware of the future because he first mourned over the world which he created before destroying it. The act of mourning implies a knowledge of the future, as one knows that he must mourn over the death of a near relation.)

Upon analysis of this Midrash it is difficult to place this Gentile in the category of a Christian. There is no especial Christological bias reflected in his controversy. A Christian would not question the foreknowledge of God, for that would deny in effect the validity of the prophesy of the coming of Christ. Bacher is of the opinion that the Gentile was a Heathen for R. Joshua b. Korha was known to have had many controversies with Heathens.¹ Bacher writes, "Joshua b. Karcha stand auch zu Heiden im Beziehungen und vertheidigte das Judenthum in polemischen Gespräche."²

It is worthy of note how R. Joshua has humanized God in order to drive home his point. Of this approach to explain the Bible, Bergmann, who also identifies this Gentile as a Heathen writes, "Die philosophisch gebildeten Bibelleser fanden es mit ihrem gelauteuten Gottesbegriff unvereinbar, Gott Leidenschaften wie Reue oder Zorn zuzuschreiben. Celsus und Julian tadelten die sinnlichen Aussagen und die materiellen Vorstellungen der Schrift von Gott, die griechische Bibelübersetzung milderte sie durch eine geistige Übertragung, und Philo und Origenes deuteten sie allegorisch. Die palastinensischen Lehrer waren dagegen der Meinung dass die Bibel, für

1. Bacher, A.d.P.A., Vol, II, p.308.

2. Bacher, op. cit., p.109.

Menschen geschrieben, Gott menschlich darstellen müsse, damit ihn die Menschen begreifen können."¹

An exegetical discussion is reported in Gen. R. 70 between R. Meir and a Gentile. The latter asked R. Meir, 'How is the first born of an ass redeemed?' R. Meir said, 'By a lamb (\aleph). For it is written And the firstling of an ass thou shalt redeem with a lamb. (Ex. 34.20). 'But', asked the Gentile, 'what if one has no lamb?' 'Then with a goat,' answered R. Meir. 'How do you know this?' 'From the text (your lamb shall be without blemish) Ye shall take it from the sheep or from the goats (Ex. 12.5). The gentile objected, 'But that (reference to the latter verse) refers to the Paschal lamb' (he infers that, R. Meir cannot find proof from this verse that ^agoat can be substituted for a lamb). Said R. Meir, 'A goat, too, is also called a lamb (\aleph). 'How do you know it?' 'Because it is written, 'These are the beasts which ye may eat: the ox, the seh (\aleph) of sheep and the seh (\aleph) of goats.' (Deut. 14.4). Thereupon the Gentile arose and kissed his hand.

The argument here is Halachic. No sectarian polemic is involved. The answer of R. Meir is based on a gezerah shavah (an analogous rendering of the same word in different texts) and thus is able to prove his point that the firstling of an ass is redeemed by a lamb or a goat. The ass is considered an unclean animal and therefore, an animal suitable for use by the priest must be given instead. Thus the Biblical injunction of redeeming this animal by a lamb, to which R.

1. Bergmann, op. cit., p.78.

Meir also adds the goat.

The Midrash uses a peculiar word in reference to this Gentile, Aman (אִמָּן). Theodor links this obscure word with אִמָּן (אִמָּן - gentile). He says it is found in Lamentations Rabbah where it is coupled with a camel-driver who is called an אִמָּן; or אִמָּן אֶלֶף הוּא הוּא ¹. The word then is a synonym for the usual term referring to Gentile (גוּי).

Bacher² suggests that the Gentile of this Midrash may have been Oenamoas (Abnimos), the pagan philosopher, since both R. Meir and this philosopher were known to have been friendly with one another, perhaps proven by the gesture at the end of the Midrash. The Gentile it is seen was very well acquainted with the Bible and with the laws. The commentators of the Etz Joseph and the Matnot Kehuna make this very interesting **observation**: "this interrogator was of the sect who do not believe in the Oral Law but in the Written Law alone. And for that reason he came to question the tradition of the Rabbis who say that the redemption of an ass can be even made by a kid."³ What tradition these commentators have for this assertion I do not know. Perhaps these commentators are correct in their assumption. Beyond the various theories concerning the Gentile mentioned here nothing more can be said.

In concluding this chapter, it has been seen that the Gentiles may have been either Christians or Heathens. The Hebrew appellation 'Goy,' 'goyim' does not imply any sectarian heresy. The word is used, it seems, to identify those who are

1. Theodor and Albeck, Bereschit Rabba, II p.803 also Jastrow
Dict. of Talmud. **ADJ** p.1089.

2. Bacher. A. d. T. II, p. 34 (Ger. ed.)

3. Etz Joseph and Matnas Kehuna, Warsaw ed. of Gen. R. 1867: יב בשותף
היה מכת שנים מאותנים התורה שמיים אלא התורה שכתבה אלה ואלה באו אפסן א
דמלת בפסחים הלאחרים שפיון שטכ סמוך הלא אף גלה

racially different from the Jews. The Gentiles, in the Midrashim discussed, reveal a knowledge of the Bible and it can be concluded that both Heathens and Christians entered into polemical discussions with the Rabbis on the basis of the Scriptural texts. Whether, the identification of the Gentiles as either Heathens or Christians in these Midrashim is correct, is a matter of theory and conjecture. In none of the Midrashim has a definite sectarian bias been found in the statements of the Gentiles. Therefore, it might even be argued that the Gentiles mentioned with R. Abbahu may have been Heathens and that the Gentile mentioned with R. Joshua b. Korcha may have been a Christian, although it has been supposed otherwise. The point is that in none of the Midrashim in this chapter can a strong case be made for the sectarian groupings of the Gentiles. To fully identify the Gentiles a complete study of passages referring to them must be made. That, however, lies outside of the scope of this study.