Notes on the Hebrew Names of the Planets,
as Transmitted by Epiphanius of Salamis

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1 Introduction

Forty-three years ago Robert Stieglitz wrote a short article on the
Hebrew names of the seven planets, as transmitted by Epiphanius of
Salamis (Cyprus), in his most famous work, *Panarion*, 16.2.2–3.¹ Both
Stieglitz and earlier scholars were stumped by several of the forms
recorded by Epiphanius. Four decades later Stieglitz revisited the issue,
with a short essay devoted to the two names of Venus presented by
Epiphanius.² In the intervening years, Judith Lieu, Reimund Leicht and

¹ Stieglitz, “Hebrew Names.” For a more recent treatment of the names
recorded by Epiphanius, see Leicht, “Planets in Ancient Jewish Literature,” 28–31. Recent scholarship on Epiphanius includes Kim, *Epiphanius of Cyprus*; and Jacobs, *Epiphanius of Cyprus*. Neither of these monographs, however, discusses
Epiphanius’s treatment of the planets.

² Stieglitz, “Planet Venus.”
Frank Williams also contributed to our subject (the latter in his standard translation of the *Panarion*).³

The present article revisits these names of the planets, with an attempt to provide solutions to several of the obscure forms, still not properly elucidated by scholars.⁴

2 Epiphanius, *Panarion*, 16.2.2–3

First, though, the text of *Pan*. 16.2.2–3 (within Epiphanius’s discussion of the Pharisees):⁵


⁴ For sake of reading, typically I include the later Masoretic vowel points for the Hebrew and Aramaic words discussed herein, even though our discussion focuses on a period antedating their development by about a half-millennium (see also n. 63).

αὐτίκα γοῦν τὰ Ἑλληνικὰ ὅνόματα τὰ ἐκ τῆς τῶν πεπλανημένων ἀστρονομίας κατὰ τὴν Ἑβραϊκὴν διάλεκτον έτέροις ὅνόμασι παρ’ αὐτοῖς μετωνόμασται· οἶν Ὁλίος ἥμα καὶ σέμες, Σελήνη ἱέρεε καὶ ἀλβανά, ὅθεν καὶ μήνη καλεῖται (ἱέρεε γὰρ ὁ μήν λέγεται, μήνη δὲ ἡ σελήνη, καὶ ὡς παρ’ Ἑλληνικὸ διὰ τὸν μήνα), Ἄρης χωχὲβ ὑβόλ, Ἐρμῆς χωχὲβ ὅχομόδ, Ζεὺς χωχὲβ βάαλ, Ἀφροδίτη ζερούα ἦτοι λουήθ, Κρόνος χωχὲβ σαβήθ (λέγεται δὲ παρ’ αὐτοῖς καὶ ἄλλοις ὅνόμασιν, οὐκ ἢδυνήθην δὲ ἀκριβῶς τὴν τούτων ἐπωνυμίαν ἐκθεῖναι).

Here follows the translation of the passage by Frank Williams:6

6 Williams, Panarion of Epiphanius, 2nd ed., 43. The translation offered in Williams, Panarion of Epiphanius, 1st ed., 39, is slightly different, though the presentation/transliteration of the month names is the same in both editions. The 1st ed. also includes the following comment (not present in the 2nd ed.): “The list which follows gives the Hebrew names for the planets, but uses Epiphanius’ transliteration only where the underlying Hebrew is not clear” (39, n. 6). As we shall see below, I do not accept two of Williams’s identifications (Lilith and Chochmah), which in any case he does not elucidate. For another translation, see Brown, The Lebanon and Phoenicia, 12; for an adaptation of Williams’s translation, see Leicht, “Planets in Ancient Jewish Literature,” 29.
To begin with, they have other names in Hebrew for the Greek names that are taken from the astrology of the misguided. For example, Helius is Chammah and Shemesh. Selene is Jareach, or Ha-l’banah, and hence is also called Mene – the “month” is called “the mene” and the moon is called “mene,” as it also is in Greek because of the month.

Ares is Kokhabh Okbol; Hermes is Kokhabh Chochmah; Zeus, Kokhabh Ba’al; Aphrodite, Zerva or Lilith; Cronus is Kokhabh Shabb’tai. (They have other terms for him too, but I cannot give the names of these things exactly.)

### 2.1 The Names of the Planets

The data are extracted and are presented in Table 1, with the seven items presented in the order of the related days of the week, per the listing by Epiphanius. The Hebrew forms in the third column of the chart appear in a variety of ancient sources, including: Baraita de-Mele’khet ha-Mishkan, ch. 14 (at least according to JTS ENA 2940.2);\(^7\)

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\(^7\) See Kirschner, *Baraita de-Melekhet ha-Mishkan*, 101–2 (for discussion), 266 (for transcription of JTS ENA 2940.2).
b. Shabb. 156a; Sefer Yeṣira, §§ 43, 44, 62; Pesiq. Rab. 20:7; and the πιγγυτ by Yannai, and the הנעימים בְּבֵכְרֵים (see images of the manuscripts in the Appendix).⁸

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Planet</th>
<th>Hebrew name</th>
<th>Panarion Hebrew</th>
<th>Panarion Greek</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Sun</td>
<td>שֶׁשֶׁמֶשׁ/תְּפֹה</td>
<td>ἡμὰ / σέμες</td>
<td>ῬΗλιος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Moon</td>
<td>יָרֹחֵן/לבנה</td>
<td>ἰέρεε / ἀλβανά</td>
<td>Σελήνη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Mars</td>
<td>מַאָדֶם</td>
<td>χωκέβ ὀξβόλ</td>
<td>Ἀρης</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Mercury</td>
<td>כוכב</td>
<td>χωκέβ όχομόδ</td>
<td>Ἑρμῆς</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Jupiter</td>
<td>צֶבֶד</td>
<td>χωκέβ βααλ</td>
<td>Ζεὺς</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Venus</td>
<td>נוֹגַה/כּוֹכֶבֶת⁹</td>
<td>ζεροῦα / λουηθ</td>
<td>Ἀφροδίτη</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Saturn</td>
<td>שֶׁבֶת</td>
<td>χωκέβ сαβήθ</td>
<td>Κρόνος</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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⁸ The texts have been identified via a search at Ma’agarim.

⁹ The standard form is נוֹגַה, but the form כּוֹכֶבֶת also occurs, specifically in Pesiq. Rab. 31.4 (see Ulmer, Pesiqta Rabbati, vol. 2, 230–31), presumably influenced by the Aramaic form מַכּוֹכֶבֶת, used by Tg. Neb. to render מלְטָה, ‘Queen of Heaven’ in Jer 7:18, 44:18–19. For additional occurrences in Western Aramaic, see Gen. Rab. 527:2; y. Ber. 2c (35) // y. Yoma 40b (35), per Sokoloff, DJPA, 270–71. For Eastern Aramaic sources, see Sokoloff, DJBA, 514; and Sokoloff, Syriac Lexicon, 606.
Table 1: The names of the planets, both from traditional Jewish sources and from Panarion, 16.2.2–3.

The forms transmitted by Epiphanius for Sun, Moon, Jupiter, and Saturn are self-evident, equivalent to: שֶׁשֶּם, לְבָנָה, שֶׁמֶשׁ, חַמָּה — see Stieglitz for comments.¹⁰ The same holds for the word χωχὲβ = כוכב obviously, while μηʆ νη ‘moon’ is clearly derived from Greek μηʆν ‘month’.¹¹

But the forms for Venus, Mercury and Mars have remained unexplained, and thus it is these terms to which we turn our attention.¹²

¹⁰ Even as ἡμὰ (one of the words for ‘sun’) aligns more closely with חֵמָה ‘heat, anger, wrath’ than it does with חַמָּה ‘sun’.

¹¹ Stieglitz, “Hebrew Names,” 135, n. 3. This is the only form mentioned by Epiphanius – presumably מנָה (or perhaps מנֶה) – not attested, to the best of my knowledge, within the extensive corpora of late antique Hebrew (and Aramaic) literature. Though from the wording of the passage, it is unclear if Epiphanius considers μηʆ νη to be a Hebrew word.

¹² True, Leicht, Stieglitz, and Williams have offered suggestions (the former two for Venus, the first and third for Mercury), but as we shall see in the relevant sub-sections below, these proposals suffer from phonological difficulties.
2.2. **Hebrew vs. Aramaic**

Before proceeding, though, I wish to emphasize that we truly are in a Hebrew mode here, as opposed to an Aramaic one. First, Epiphanius uses the word Εβραϊκὴν, and while scholars have observed that “Hebrew” can at times refer to Aramaic,\(^\text{13}\) such is clearly not the case in the present instance. For secondly, the recognizable terms appear in their Hebrew guise: σέμες, χωχὲβ, etc.\(^\text{14}\) In fact, even in a text such as b. Shabb. 156a, where the discussion is in Aramaic, the names of the planets are in Hebrew. And while it may surprise to have a 4th-century Eretz-Israel author providing the names in Hebrew (again, as opposed to Aramaic), one must reckon with the possibility that

\(^{13}\) The standard study is Beattie and Davies, “What Does Hebrew Mean?” See also the references in Fassberg, “Which Semitic Language Did Jesus Speak?” 265, n. 4.

\(^{14}\) The same holds true for the twelve names of the zodiac in the following section (*Panarion* 16.2.4–5); see the following paragraph.
Hebrew still was spoken in various pockets in the land, even unto Epiphanius’s day.\textsuperscript{15}

In addition, when considering the Hebrew words presented by Epiphanius, one must contend with the enduring question: to what extent did this 4th-century scholar know Hebrew? To be sure, Jerome hailed him as \textit{πεντάγλωσσος}, with Hebrew listed among the five,\textsuperscript{16} high praise from the celebrated \textit{vir trilinguis}.\textsuperscript{17} Moreover, a review of the Hebrew words used by Epiphanius (always in Greek transcription, of course) reveals that in fact his knowledge of the language is excellent. One need only look at the following paragraph in \textit{Pan}. 16.2.4–5, where all twelve names of the zodiac accord perfectly with the known Hebrew terms.\textsuperscript{18}

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{16} Jerome, \textit{Ruf.}, 2.22, 3.6.
\textsuperscript{17} Jerome, \textit{Ruf.}, 3.6.
\textsuperscript{18} For further discussion, though with some skepticism, see Dummer, “Die Sprachkenntnisse des Epiphanius.” Regardless, one will agree with Jacobs, \textit{Epiphanius of Cyprus}, 147, n. 65, who in response to Dummer wrote: “Our modern critical evaluation does not detract from the obvious \textit{display} of linguistic
3 Venus

We begin our treatment of the unexplained terms with Venus/Aphrodite, for which Epiphanius provides two words, ζερούα (Zeroua) and Louēth (λουήθ).19

3.1 The First of the Venus Terms

The former term I equate with Hebrew וּרְזוּעַ ‘sown, spread’, with attention to the well-known passage לַצַּדִּיק זָרֵעַ אֵוָר ‘light is sown for the prowess that Epiphanius achieves in his writings.” Indeed, there are some remarkably accurate transcriptions of Hebrew words and phrases scattered throughout Epiphanius’s writing, beyond the names of the planets and the zodiac signs. See, for example, ἐλθωθάρ for (later) Masoretic צְבָאוֹת יְהוָה (Gen 49:4), ἀδωναὶ σαβαὼֹת for (later) Masoretic דַּעַתָּהּ (passim), etc., even as Epiphanius could have obtained these data from Origen (see Dummer, “Die Sprachkenntnisse des Epiphanius,” 400–1, for details).

19 Stieglitz, “Hebrew Names,” 136, suggested that two names are provided “apparently [to] designate Venus in its twin aspects as Morning and Evening Star, a familiar tradition in the ancient Near East.” See further at Stieglitz, “Planet Venus.”
righteous’ (Ps 97:11).\textsuperscript{20} Given the brightness of Venus in the morning and evening sky, it is easy to imagine the Hebrew word \textit{זָרַע} as an epithet for the planet,\textsuperscript{21} or perhaps more likely in the feminine passive participle form \textit{זָרָה}, as the two Hebrew forms would look essentially the same in Greek transcription, that is, \textit{ζερούα}.

\subsection*{3.1.1. Alternative Proposals}

In theory, one also may wish to consider the passive participle of the root \textit{זֵרַה} ‘shine’, that is \textit{זָרַע} / \textit{זָרָה}, as the underlying form, especially since this form also would appear in Greek letters as \textit{ζερούα} – and in fact

\footnote{For the semantics of this expression, see Morag, “\textit{ʾor zarua}.” As to the phonology, note that \textit{ζερούα} reflects the furtive \textit{patah}, which appears as early as the Septuagint and then later in Jerome and other transcriptions. See Yuditsky, “Transcription into Greek and Latin Script,” 808, and in greater detail, Steiner, “A-coloring Consonants and Furtive \textit{patah},” \textit{*149}–50.}

\footnote{The rabbis attached the expression to the moon in Exod. Rab. 15:27, but the comparison there is homiletical, not purely astronomical.}

\footnote{Quite remarkably, such was proposed more than four hundred years ago by Nicolaus Serarius (1555–1609) in his \textit{Trihaeresium}, 49 (§2.2), with the term \textit{זרוע}, glossed as \textit{seminans}.}
such was proposed by Lieu.\textsuperscript{23} Note, however, that the Hebrew root ח-ר-ז is typically associated with the sun, and not one of the planets, both in the Bible and in post-biblical literature.\textsuperscript{24}

When considering the concept of brightness in the Semitic tradition, naturally the root ז-ה-ר comes to mind (see most importantly az-Zuhara as the Arabic name for Venus),\textsuperscript{25} and in fact both Leicht

\begin{itemize}
  \item Lieu, “Epiphanius on the Scribes and Pharisees,” 521.
  \item In the Bible, see Gen 32:32, Exod 22:2, Judg 9:33, 2 Sam 23:4, 2 Kgs 3:22, Jon 4:8, Nah 3:17, Mal 3:20, Ps 104:22, Qoh 1:5 (all with שֶׁמֶשׁ,), and Job 9:7 (with חֶרֶס), in addition to the numerous instances of מִזְרַח הַשֶּׁמֶשׁ ‘east, sunrise’. See also Ben Sira 42:16 (per MS B XIIr, line 8) (Masada, col. 5, line 3, reads שמש זורחת). For post-biblical literature, see in the following \textit{piyyuṭim}: Yannai, א栎 באתא, his \textit{geduṣṭa} for Shabbat Bereshit; and Yehuda, ים בהחתות עד פנות ים, within the \textit{geduṣa} for the Ne‘ila service on Yom Kippur (these references were identified via a search at \textit{Ma’agarim}).
  \item The form is attested once in Syriac as well, though in a late source (see Sokoloff, \textit{Syriac Lexicon}, 371), where Arabic influence most likely is at work. Note also the Mandaean genius Zahari‘il, at times associated with Venus, for which see Drower, \textit{Mandaeans}, 46–47.
\end{itemize}
and Stieglitz have attempted to interpret Zeroua in said fashion. But both the order of the consonants and the vowel pattern of Zeroua is much closer to, if not a perfect match for, זָרוּעַ / רָוַע.  

### 3.2 The Second of the Venus Terms

For the second term, Louēth, we must cast our net slightly wider, with a look to Mesopotamia: starting with Akkadian Delebat, which, through reanalysis of the first syllable de- as the relative pronoun,

26 Leicht, “Planets in Ancient Hebrew Literature,” 30; Stieglitz, “Planet Venus.”

27 If we assume that ζεροῦα = the masculine form זָרוּעַ, with slightly different vowels in the first syllable, then see below for Jerome’s oft-cited statement in *Epistula ad Evangelum Presbyterum de Melchisedech* (*Epist.* 73.8). Though if we assume that ζεροῦα = the feminine form זְרוּעָה, then the match is perfect.

28 Holl, *Epiphanius (Ancoratus und Panarion)*, vol. 1, 211, lists variant forms λουηθ, with one letter obliterated, and λουηδό, with the voicing of the theta (whether it be a dental or an interdental at this stage) to delta, but neither of these alternatives affects the matter at hand. See further at §3.2.1.

29 See, e.g., Rochberg, *Babylonian Horoscopes*, 28. The etymology of the term remains elusive, though a Sumerian origin is assumed.
emerges in Mandaic as Libat. This approach requires the shift of the middle consonant /b/ to /w/, a shift well attested in Mandaic, including, in fact, in the selfsame word. Thus, for example, E. S. Drower used Libat and Liwet interchangeably in her classic work on the Mandaeans. Moreover, the same phonological shift is attested in Hebrew, so that a connection between Louēth as reported by Epiphanius and Liwet/Libat of the Mandaic tradition (with both terms ultimately deriving from Akkadian Delebat) is most probable.

How the Mandaic term Liwet/Libat reached Hebrew is a question not easily answered, but in light of the recent study by Charles Häberl,

30 For Libat, see, for example, Ginza Rabba Yamina 27, accessible at Lidzbarski, Ginzā, 28, §192. For other attestations, see Drower and Macuch, Mandaic Dictionary, 234–35. In general, see Bhayro, “Cosmology in Mandaean Texts.”

31 Nöldeke, Mandäische Grammatik, 49; and Macuch, Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic, 58–59.

32 Drower, The Mandaeans, 75–76, et passim.

33 See Segal, Grammar of Mishnaic Hebrew, 35, §58; and Bar-Asher, Studies in Classical Hebrew, 409–11, with an in-depth study of one such instance.
“Hebraisms in Mandaic,” the interaction between Jews and Mandaean is now clearer than ever, regardless of how, when, and where we situate the cross-cultural encounters. To be sure, one can imagine the Jewish borrowing of the planet name Liwet/Libat, especially given the international character of astrology and astronomy, not to mention the amply documented Mandaean engagement with astrology for all aspects of life.

3.2.1 A Further Step

Williams took an additional step, for while he mentioned “Libath, Dlibath” in a footnote, in his translation he rendered Louēth as Lilith

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34 Häberl, “Hebraisms in Mandaic” (see especially the conclusion on 48–49).

35 Drower, The Mandaens, 73–99, et passim. Note that Sefar Malwasha, the major astrological treatise, is accounted as one of their sacred books (Drower, The Mandaens, 25).

36 Williams, Panarion of Epiphanius, 1st ed., 39, n. 8 (said information is not conveyed in the 2nd ed.).
(see above),\textsuperscript{37} though there is little support for this association. First, none of the attested forms (see n. 28) – all of which lack a second lambda – provides for an underlying Hebrew לילית ‘Lilith’. Secondly, I am not aware of any connection between Lilith and Venus/Aphrodite in Jewish sources.\textsuperscript{38}

3.2.2. An Alternative Proposal

Both Lieu and Stieglitz posited Hebrew לילה ‘glistening’ (see Ps 104:4) as the underlying form of Louēth.\textsuperscript{39} On the surface, this would appear to be a promising lead, but it suffers from a crucial phonological issue. In Greek transcriptions of Hebrew names and words, the letter ṯet is always


\textsuperscript{38} For a possible Mandaean association between the two, see Häberl and McGrath, \textit{Mandaean Book of John}, 341, though even with this possible connection, the two forms Louēth and Lilith remain too distinct to posit the former as a reflection of the latter.

\textsuperscript{39} And long before them also Nicolaus Serarius, \textit{Trihaeresium}, 49 (§2.2), with the glosses incendens vel fulgens.
represented by $\textit{tau}$, never by $\textit{theta}$, whereas conversely the letter $\textit{taw}$ is 
\textit{always} represented by $\textit{theta}$, never $\textit{tau}$.\(^{41}\) Thus, the underlying Hebrew 
form of Greek $\lambda\nu\eta\theta$ perforce must end with $\textit{taw}$, not $\textit{tet}$.

4 Mars

\footnotesize

41 There is only one exception, to wit, Epiphanius’s use of $\chi\varepsilon\sigma\varepsilon\tau\tau$ to render 
Hebrew $\pi\nu\psi$ ‘bow’ for $\ Tau\zeta\nu\tau\tau\varsigma$ (Sagittarius) in the next section of the \textit{Panarion}, 16.2.5, in the discussion of the signs of the zodiac. Naturally, the use of $\textit{tau}$ here to render $\textit{taw}$ suggests the possibility of the parallel use of $\textit{theta}$ to render $\textit{tet}$, per the 
proposal that Louèth derives from $\nu\eta\hbar$, though I for one must assume a simple blip 
here. For in general Epiphanius followed the standard practice with such forms as 
$\sigma\alpha\beta\hbar\theta$ (see Table 1), $\beta\theta\upsilon\lambda\lambda$ to render $\Pi\alpha\rho\theta\varepsilon\nu\nu$ (Virgo) (again, in the next section 
regarding the zodiac signs), and the words presented in n. 18 – all with $\textit{theta}$ 
rendering $\textit{taw}$.
Next we turn to ὀκβόλ (Okbol) as the term for Ares/Mars: here I would look to the BH hapax legomenon קָבוֹל (the most likely absolute form)42 ‘weapon, battle’, for which see Ezek 26:9 קָֽבָלּוּוֹ and מְחִי ‘and the smash of his weapon/battle he shall give against your city-walls’ (translating somewhat hyperliterally).43 Moreover, the patterns of the two forms cohere nicely, with an /o/-vowel as the main theme vowel in both קָבוֹל and ὀκβόλ (on the initial omicron, see below).

The connection is an obvious one, in light of the main manifestation of Ares/Mars as the god of war. The Hebrew term

42 Note that Hebrew qof is regularly transcribed by kappa in Greek transcriptions: see Yuditsky, “Transcription into Greek and Latin Script,” 805; and Kantor, “The Second Column (Secunda) of Origen’s Hexapla,” 206–07.

43 The reference may be specifically to the battering-ram, mastered first by the Assyrians, then adopted by the Babylonians. See, e.g., Block, Ezekiel: Chapters 25–48, 37 (with n. 56) and 41. The usage is especially apt since the subject of the verb יִתֵּן ‘he will give’ is Nebuchadnezzar, as the prophet Ezekiel imagines the Babylonian assault on Tyre.
appears only here, without cognates in Northwest Semitic,\textsuperscript{44} but it finds
a congener in the common Akkadian word qablu ‘battle, warfare’.\textsuperscript{45} In
fact, the name Ares may derive from a noun related to ‘war, battle’\textsuperscript{46}
(even as such etymology is not certain), so that the Greek and Hebrew
forms Ares and Okbol would have semantic equivalence.

5 Mercury

Finally, we turn to δχομόδ (Ochomod) for Hermes/Mercury, the most
difficult of the terms transmitted by Epiphanius, though at least one
suitable Hebrew term comes to mind. I refer to the common root ח-מ-ד

\textsuperscript{44} The phrase קבלו מחי קבל was revived by Yannai in several piyyuṭim (6th century)
and by Saʿadya in several of his compositions (10th century) (information per the
search results at Maʾagarim).

\textsuperscript{45} CAD 13 [Q] (1982), 12–16. Though one must admit that the Akkadian
word is never used in connection with Mars. To continue the point observed in n.
43: in light of the presence of Nebuchadnezzar as the main player in Ezek 26:9, one
may sense a modicum of addressee-switching here: the prophet addresses Tyre, but
he invokes an Akkadian word in the process. On this literary technique, see
Rendsburg, “Addressee-Switching”; and Rendsburg, “Style-Switching.”

\textsuperscript{46} See Burkert, Greek Religion, 169, along with the references at 415, n. 1.
‘desire’, the phonological issues notwithstanding. Normally, Greek χ is used to represent Hebrew kaf (and occasionally qof), but not het.47 But since the roots כ-מ-ד and ק-מ-ד are not attested in Hebrew, nor in Jewish Aramaic dialects,48 to my mind we should focus on the root ד-מ-ח ‘desire’.49

The meaning certainly fits for Hermes, especially in light of the episode narrated in Iliad, book 16, lines 181–186, as follows: “With her [sc. Polymele] the strong Argeîphontes [i.e. Hermes] became enamored when his eyes had seen her among the singing maidens in the dancing

47 Yuditsky, “Transcription into Greek and Latin Script,” 804–05; and Kantor, “The Second Column (Secunda) of Origen’s Hexapla,” 195–99. In fact, this standard usage may be seen in our own text, per Epiphanius’s use of χωχέβ to render כּוֹכָב. Note further: since the time of Epiphanius is centuries after the Septuagint, the LXX use of χ to render Semitic /ḥ/ is not relevant to our discussion, and in any case, the root of ח-מ-ד is ḥ-m-d (and not ḫ-m-d).

48 The former appears in Syriac with the meaning ‘weak, languid’, though even there the root is not well attested (see Sokoloff, Syriac Lexicon, 629).

49 Holl, Epiphanius (Ancoratus und Panarion), vol. 1, 211, lists two variants, ḥχµόδ, with the second omicron replaced by alpha, and ḥχµόδ, with the second omicron dropped altogether, but neither of these alternatives affects the matter at hand.
floor of Artemis, huntress of the golden arrows and the echoing chase. Immediately then Hermes the helper went up into her chamber and lay with her secretly, and she gave him a glorious son, Eudorus, preeminent in speed of foot and as a warrior.”

Note further that Hermes was worshipped as a phallus at Kyllene in Elis, and that he often was imagined “as developing his sexual prowess among the nymphs on the wooded mountains.” Of course, normally one associates the gods Eros and Himeros with sexual desire (not to mention Zeus’s own sexual prowess), but as indicated, Hermes too is portrayed in such fashion.

The association of Hermes/Mercury with sexual desire is also reflected in Egyptian mythology and astronomy, with Seth, whose erotic tendencies are well attested in the texts, identified with the planet Mercury.54

50 Translation of Murray, Homer, The Iliad, vol. 2, 177.
51 Burkert, Greek Religion, 156–59, with references at 410, nn. 23–24.
52 For a detailed study, see Farrell, “Hermes in Love.”
I am inclined, accordingly, to see the root ח-מ-ד ‘desire’ underlying the form Ochomod transmitted by Epiphanius.\textsuperscript{55} As to the specific form of ὤχομόδ, I would posit the Hebrew passive participle חָmodoֹ� ‘desirous one’ (as in Isa 44:9, Ps 39:12, Job 20:20, Ben Sira 14:14, 11QT 57:21) (see further below).\textsuperscript{56} Not that the form needs to bear passive meaning, as in ‘the one who is desired by others’, for the qatɨl form (and the related qatɨl form) may at times express the active voice, especially in Mishnaic Hebrew.\textsuperscript{57} Hence, the form Ochomod would mean ‘the one who desires’, hence, my gloss ‘desirous one’, as befitting of Hermes within Greek mythological tradition.

\textsuperscript{55} Once again, Nicolaus Serarius was on the right track, as he included "חמוד id est desiderii" (\textit{Trihaeresium}, 2.2 [49]) as one of his proposed interpretations for the word. Though see also below, n. 65.

\textsuperscript{56} Obviously, the Ben Sira and Temple Scroll occurrences are not written with niqqud, but rather simply as חmodoֹ.

5.1 *The Use of χ to render ḥet*

As to the use of χ to render ḥet in this instance, one may point to occasional analogues.58 Note, for example, Origen, *Secunda*, Ps 49:15 οὐκ ἵπποδος, which must equal יתרדּו (MT reads יירדו).59 Similarly, see Eusebius, *Onom.*, 965/174:14, Χαλαᵭ to render אחלב (Judg 1:31), a form which he did not inherit from the Septuagint, which reads Ααλαφ here.60

58 I exclude here the word πάσχα (Mark 14:1, Matt 26:2, Luke 2:41, etc.) to render פסח, for almost undoubtedly the New Testament (and later) writers simply used the term already ensconced in Jewish-Greek writings, based especially on the Septuagint. To my mind, the etymology of פסח remains an open question, though based on the LXX transcription, one must assume that the final consonant is /ḥ/. Of some potential is the Arabic noun fasih ‘applied to flesh-meat, parting in pieces, and easily resolvable, by reason of much cooking’, reported by Jacobus Golius, from the Proverbs of el-Meyddnee – for which see Lane, *Arabic-English Lexicon*, vol. 6, 2396 – but caution is advised, based on this single attestation in the vastness of the Arabic lexicon.

59 Sperber, “Hebrew Based upon Greek and Latin Transliterations,” 225.

60 Recall further that Eusebius (c. 260 – 369) and Epiphanius (c. 315 – 403) are near contemporaries.
From perhaps the same time period we have the attempt to render
וְחַנּוּן רַחוּם אֵל (Exod 34:6, etc.) into Greek letters, in the “Hygromanteia of
Solomon” (also known as the “Epistle to Rehoboam”), with both
instances of ħet transcribed with chi. The late manuscript witnesses
are all garbled, but the three recensions agree on the point just made:

A. ελ ραχαχου βαχανου
B. ελ αχαχαχου βαχανου
C. ελρα αγλου βαχανου

Or, to use a parallel practice from a cognate language, one may
point to the following examples from the Damascus Psalm Fragment,
with Arabic written in Greek letters (both words taken from Ps 78:23):

φατεχ ‘he opened’ [fateḥ] (= classical Arabic fataḥa)

ελσιχβ ‘the clouds’ [el-siḥeb] (= classical Arabic al-siḥāb).

61 On this text, see Carroll, “Epistle to Rehoboam”; and in much greater
detail, Torijano, Solomon the Esoteric King, 151–75, 209–24, with an English
translation at 231–53.


63 See Al-Jallad, Damascus Psalm Fragment, 9, 13, 81. The date of this
document is debated (for a thorough review, see 35–56), though a span of the 6th–
8th centuries C.E. seems reasonable.
In sum, Ochomod is to be derived from the root ḥ-ו-ד ‘desire’, which serves as a good semantic match for the traits exhibited by Hermes/Mercury.64

5.2 An Alternative Proposal

Lieu, Williams, and Leicht all looked to Hebrew חכמיה ‘wisdom’ as the underlying form for Ochomod,65 but the forms are too divergent. Naturally, one could allow for textual corruption along the way, but since so many of the Greek transcriptions by Epiphanius align with the

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64 I do not consider Epiphanius’s form ἱέρεε (Ieree) for ירח to be an impediment to my proposal, since in said instance, the het appears in final position, where it is more difficult to pronounce (as indicated eventually by the Masoretic application of the furtive pataḥ), as opposed to the het in Ochomod near the beginning of the word.

known Hebrew terms (see Table 1), or may be explained based on other Hebrew terms as proposed herein (especially for Zeroua and Okbol), scribal transmission errors in this one instance are unlikely.

The thematic connection is possible, of course, given the association of Hermes with esoteric wisdom, but the presence of the final *delta* in all the attested forms (see n. 49), to mention just the most glaring issue, remains an obstacle.

66 Once again, see the excellent correspondences between the twelve zodiacal names transmitted by Epiphanius and their Hebrew equivalents.

67 And in fact Pesiq. Rab. 20.7 makes the connection between Mercury and חכמה ‘wisdom’, at least according to one manuscript family, which reads אברם שמויהל כל העולמ כלו חכמה ‘this refers to Abraham our father, who guides the entire world with wisdom. Though note the alternative recension: אברם שמויהל כל העולמ כלו חמה ‘this refers to Abraham our father, who brightens the entire world like the sun’. See further at Ulmer, *Pesiqta Rabbati*, vol. 1, 576–77.

68 Lieu, “Epiphanius on the Scribes and Pharisees,” 520–21, attempted to overcome the difficulty, by calling attention to חכמה (Prov 9:1, etc.), though this raises yet another issue, namely, the use of *delta* to render *taw* (a problem which she recognized).
The Initial ὀ at the Onset of Okbol and Ochomod

The attentive reader will have noticed that the last two items discussed, Okbol and Ochomod, pose a special problem: the initial ὀ at the onset of both words. Here I would tentatively suggest that this prefix represents the definite article -ὁ ‘the’. Naturally, one expects an /a/ vowel (as in Masoretic Hebrew) to be represented by alpha, though once again one may point to occasional analogues. Thus, for example, in the Reḥov inscription one finds אוף ‘also, indeed’ (line 20), while in the Babylonian incantation bowls, one finds והרוחות ‘the spirits’ and ירושלים ‘Jerusalem’. In the latter two forms, note the effect of partial...

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69 The same was proposed by Lieu, “Epiphanius on the Scribes and Pharisees,” 520.

70 In fact, such may occur in the form ἀλβανά (see Table 1), if the first syllable alpha represents the definite article.

71 The following /p/ may have caused the expected /a/ vowel of ῥα to become rounded, but the /o/-quality of the vowel is present nonetheless. See Elitzur, “Epigraphic Hebrew: Roman and Byzantine Period,” 849.

72 Elitzur, “Epigraphic Hebrew: Roman and Byzantine Period,” 850. The former would appear in Masoretic Hebrew with a qames before reš (Num 16:22,
vowel harmony, as both key words have long /u:/-vowel present, /ruːh/ and /yəruːː/. In addition, one may point to Jerome’s use of lochen to transcribe יֹשְׁבֵן, in his letter to Pope Damasus I (Epist. 36.2).  

6.1 Pronunciation of Vowels

In general, regarding all these issues, this would be the appropriate place to cite Jerome’s more general statement, in Epistula ad Evangelum Presbyterum de Melchisedech (Epist. 73.8): “Nec refert, utrum Salem, an Salim nominetur, cum vocalibus in medio litteris perraro utantur Hebraei, et pro voluntate lectorum, ac varietate, regionem eadem verba diversis sonis atque accentibus proferantur.”  

English translation: “It does not matter whether it is called Salem or Salim, the Hebrews rarely use letters with vowels in the middle, and according to the will of the readers and the variety, the same words are pronounced with different sounds and accents throughout the country.”

27:16, Jer 49:36), representing /ɔ̄/, even as there is no reason to read the Masoretic system into the earlier epigraphic and documentary material.

73 Migne, Patrologia Latina, vol. 22, 453. See also Kantor, “The Second Column (Secunda) of Origen’s Hexapla,” 276.

And thus we may rely on this observation when considering, for example, why Epiphanius (from Βησανδούκη, a still unidentified location in the vicinity of Eleutheropolis [Bet Guvrin])\textsuperscript{75} might say /o/ for the definite article (the onset h- aside), whereas other tradents (eventuating in the 9th-century Masoretes from Tiberias) transmitted the sound as /a/. In addition, once again one sees the effects of vowel harmony, especially in the case of Okbol, and what I might term vowel assimilation in the case of Ochomod, as something like /hɔχɔmud/ emerged as ὀχομόδ, with three resultant /o/-vowels.\textsuperscript{76}

7 The Lack of Gemination

\textsuperscript{75} Sozomen, Historia Ecclesiastica, 6.32, per Walford, Ecclesiastical History of Sozomen, 298. The toponym occurs only here and not in the anonymous 6th-century tract Vita Epiphanii (which mentions Eleutheropolis, but not the birth city). On this important work, see especially Rapp, “The Vita of Epiphanius of Salamis” (\textit{non vide}).

\textsuperscript{76} For a similar development, especially vis-à-vis the Masoretic transmission, note Greek Οδολλαμ = Hebrew Ἁλόμ (Josh 12:15, etc.), for which see Elitzur, Ancient Place Names, 137–38.
The next problem, of course, is that one might expect consonantal gemination following the definite article, something not present in Okbol and Ochomod. And yet once again there is some minor inconsistency in the evidence, for while the Secunda consistently reflects gemination after the definite article, and while Jerome usually does, there are occasional exceptions, as in Jerome’s use of *adagim* for Masoretic Hebrew יְדָגִים ‘the fish’ (Zeph 1:10).\(^77\) In fact, note that Epiphanius also does not indicate gemination in the form σαβήθ = שַׁבְּהָ (once again, see Table 1).\(^78\)

Though the entire issue of the presence or absence of gemination may be moot, for if Ochomod is derived from the root ח-מ-ד ‘desire’, as posited above, one would not expect the gemination to occur – not because we are reading Masoretic Hebrew into the form (see n. 72), but rather because of the well-attested weakening of the gutturals attested in an array of sources. In fact, the same loss of gemination could occur

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\(^77\) Yuditsky, “Transcription into Greek and Latin Script: Pre-Masoretic Period,” 821.

\(^78\) Another instance may be as ḫμא, if such is intended to represent חַמָּה ‘sun’ (though see n. 10).
with Okbol, if derived from ב-ך-ן, with qof as weak consonant, especially when bearing a vocalic shewa, though in this case I admit to relying more on the Masoretic system.\textsuperscript{79}

To be sure, issues remain in the elucidation of the specific forms Okbol and Ochomod, but based on the context of Ares/Mars and Hermes/Mercury, respectively, I submit that the noun בֵּבָל ‘weapon, battle’ for the former (or by extension ‘the warrior’, with the definite article), and the verbal root ח-מ-ד ‘desire’ (probably as ‘the desirous one’, once again with the definite article) for the latter, remain the most likely Hebrew terms underlying the names of these two planets transmitted by Epiphanius.

8 Conclusion and Further Avenues

I conclude this philological treatment by raising the larger substantive question. While one should be cautious in reading too much into the use of different names for the planets, quite possibly the list transmitted by Epiphanius may serve to remind us of the multiple streams of Jewish life which existed during late antiquity. True, the different names may

\textsuperscript{79} Khan, \textit{Tiberian Pronunciation Tradition}, vol. 1, 568.
be due simply to regional variation, with the rabbinic terminology at home in the Galilee and with Epiphanius’s terms at home in Bet Guvrin and environs.

At the same time, though, the latter also may reflect something more substantive, to wit, a non-rabbinic stream of Judaism, which differed from the rabbinic one even in the names of the planets (even as Epiphanius included the terms in his description of the Pharisees, presumably the sect most closely identified with the rabbis, along with the scribes in the previous sections of the Panarion).80 Naturally, without further evidence, one cannot explore this line of enquiry further, but given the ever increasing attention paid to non-rabbinic Judaism in late antiquity (very broadly, bridging Qumran and the

80 A discussion of Epiphanius’s understanding of the Pharisees (and other Jewish sects/heresies) would take us too far afield and beyond the more restricted goal of this article (elucidation of the names of the planets). The best sustained treatment remains Lieu, “Epiphanius on the Scribes and Pharisees.” For a more recent and much briefer study, see Skeb, “‘Pharisees’ and Early Christian Heresiology,” 275–76 (with ever briefest mention of the “Hebrew names for astrological phenomena” (276).
Karaites), scholars may wish to incorporate into the mix the testimony provided by Epiphanius for the names of the planets.

9 Coda: Nicolaus Serarius

As a coda to this article, I would like to pay homage to Nicolaus Serarius (1555–1609), whose remarkable ability in the Hebrew language is self-evident from Trihaeresium, 2.2 (1604). As we have seen in several notes above, Serarius’s attempts to elucidate the underlying forms of the Hebrew names of the planets as transmitted

81 See the classic study by Wieder, Judean Scrolls and Karaism, and more recent studies by Erder, Karaite Mourners of Zion and the Qumran Scrolls, and Erder, “Karaites and Second Temple Sects.” These sources posit a direct link between the two groups (and I tend to agree with this position), though even those who reject a direct link nonetheless understand that various non-rabbinic beliefs and practices presumably existed during the period under consideration. For a succinct statement, see Lasker, Karaism, 24.

82 Serarius’s treatment of the planets came to my attention via Lieu, “Epiphanius on the Scribes and Pharisees.” On Serarius’s interest in the ancient Jewish sects, see Akhiezer, Historical Consciousness, Haskalah, and Nationalism, 108–09.
by Epiphanius in Greek letters have been confirmed by my own analyses. I refer especially to his suggestions that ζερούα for Venus represents זרוע, glossed as seminans (see n. 22), and that ὀχομῶδ for Mercury represents “id est desiderii” (the first proposal that he put forward) (see n. 55). And while I disagree with the notions that λουήθ represents ‛לחש ‘glistening’ and that ὀχομῶδ represents חכמָה ‘wisdom’ (his alternative proposal), it is remarkable that Serarius anticipated the same suggestions made by modern scholars such as Lieu and Stieglitz for the former (see n. 39) and Lieu, Williams, and Leicht for the latter (see n. 65).

May this additional section here at article’s end remind us of our indebtedness to the Renaissance luminaries who laid the foundations for our own research today.

Acknowledgements

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Appendix: The Manuscripts

Because we live in a world with ever-increasing access to Hebrew manuscripts, via the ongoing concerted effort to compile a complete (or nearly complete) digital record, I for one believe that, to the extent possible, scholars should advocate for the inclusion of relevant, helpful images in their publications. These manuscript images truly bring the texts to life, reminding the reader that the ancient compositions are not simply words on the printed page (or transcriptions thereof at
sefaria.org and similar websites). To that end, I append here the images of the relevant classical Jewish texts (cited above in §2.1), which include the list of the seven planets.

![Figure 1: Baraita de-Meleʾkhet ha-Mishkan, ch. 14 (very end), as presented in JTS ENA 2940.2.](image)

The second line in this image reads:

ואלו והם הלכנו וסבכי וננה ושבתי וודק ומאמרים.

[Courtesy of The Jewish Theological Seminary of America]

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83 See further at Rendsburg, “Scroll Down.”

84 See Kirschner, Baraita de-Melekhet ha-Mishkan, 101–2 (for discussion), 266 (for transcription of JTS ENA 2940.2).
Figure 2: B. Shabbat 156a, as presented in Bodleian Ms. Heb. d. 21/5 verso.

Starting in the second line of this image, one finds the planets in the following order, with descriptions of their influences:

מאדים, צדק, שבתיי, לבנה, שבתיר, צדק, מאדים

[used with kind permission of the Bodleian Libraries, Oxford]

Figure 3: Sefer Yeşira §43, as presented in Vat. ebr. 299, fol. 68v (lines 14–15).

The second and third lines of this image read as follows, with dots before each of the planetary names:

חמה, נוגה, חמה כוכב, לבנה, שברת, צדק, מאדים

[used with kind permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana]

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85 See Hayman, Sefer Yeşira, 140.
Figure 4: Sefer Yeṣira §44, as presented in Vat. ebr. 299, fol. 68v (very bottom), with reference to the creation of the individual planets, starting with שבת and צדק here (see continuation in next image).  
[used with kind permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana]

Figure 5: Sefer Yeṣira §44, as presented in Vat. ebr. 299, fol. 69r (top of page), with reference to the creation of the individual planets (as continuation of the above), here as follows:  
[used with kind permission of the Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana]

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86 See Hayman, *Sefer Yeṣira*, 141–42.

87 See Hayman, *Sefer Yeṣira*, 141–42.
Figure 6: Sefer Yeșira §62, as presented in Vat. ebr. 299, fol. 71r (lines 8–11), with the planets in the following order, seen here starting with the second line of this image, with short phrases intervening: 88

שבת, צדק, מאדים, חמה, נוגה, כוכב חמה, לבנה

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Figure 7: Pesiqta Rabbati 20.7, as presented in MS Parma 3122 (= de Rossi 1240), fol. 170v.

Starting in the second line of this image (line 7 of the folio), one sees the planetary names with various comments, in the following order: 89

חמה, כוכב חמה, כוכב חמה, נוגה, כוכב חמה, צדק, מאדים

(N.B. שבת is not included in this version, though it appears in other manuscripts between לבנה and כוכב חמה).

[Su concessione del Ministero della cultura, Complesso monumentale della Pilotta, Biblioteca Palatina, Parma]


Figure 8: Start of Yannai, (with the title in the second and third lines of this image) as presented in C.U.L. T-S NS 289.171, fol. 1v (lines 15–18, at bottom)\textsuperscript{90} [used with kind permission granted by the Syndics of the Cambridge University Library]

\textsuperscript{90} The shelfmarks are slightly incorrect, as 1v really should be 1r, and 1r really should be 1v.
Figure 9: Relevant lines in Yannai, as presented in C.U.L. T-S NS 289.171, fol. 1r (lines 13–19, at bottom), as follows:

חמה׃המזהיר חמה כוכב המבהיק הנגה׃
הנגה׃כוכב המגיה ליבנההמהדר כוכב:
המגיה צוהר צדיק׃hammer צוהר ש啡יר שכתבך: רת?מאדים אור מאדים:

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https://maagarim.hebrew-academy.org.il/.


