

The theory of *shifters* ([Jespersen](#), [Jacobson](#), [Krauss](#) & [Robinson](#)) asks what it is that *orients* us when semantic meanings are articulated? What is it that orients us socially, spatially, psychologically and physically as we receive *meanings*? And how do we then *receive* them? What prompts the semantic meanings to dis/orient us in certain ways? This is the problem of *deixis*. We can start with *confusion* as a category of orientation, continue with *perception* and round up with *public matter* where the orientation of meanings is divided and shared, at least up to a point.

Then to the proof of the pudding: how can a Jew understand Jesus? Asking from the house of study, *not* from the house of worship and the house of assembly (since *both* of these are presently *at cause*). That is, moving from confusion via perception to public matter—which is already a step past the current state of affairs: both in terms of relations between people/s, and relations between States. The point of departure here will be Baruch Spinoza’s distinction between *thought* and *extension*. Which is where shifters (*deixis*) presumably can be seen to operate “semiotically”.

Hence the *semiosis* of shifters—the process—is what should concern us here (rather than starting by considering *shifters* as quasi-objects; small unstable object like entities): instead, the generative process of formation based on steps. *Semiosis*. However, moving from things to steps, we have to keep in mind that steps involve things. Thinking things. The alphabet, for instance. Or, presently, the Hebrew alphabet. They meet at the point *between* thought *and* extension: because they *speak* (thoughts) but are also *acts* in formation (extensions). If not already *shifters*, they are at least already seeds for *sprouting* shifters.



ועשית פרֹכֶת... והבאת שמה מבית לפרֹכֶת את אֲרוֹן העֲדוּת והבדִּילָהּ הפְּרֹכֶת לְכֶם בֵּין הַקֹּדֶשׁ וּבֵין קֹדֶשׁ הַקֹּדֶשִׁים

You shall make a parochet partition... and you shall bring there, inside the Parochet, the Ark of the Testimony, and the Parochet shall separate for you between the Holy and the Holy of Holies. (Exod. 26: 31-33).

In sum, every sequence of letters in a written *word*, are also a con/sequence of *steps*. They are moving *from* the general *to* the specific. The *Torah* is also organised in this way: from small steps to the big strides—first from creation, then across the desert, and to the Holy Land. And the *5 books* of the Pentateuch: they are also *strides*. Then come the *meandering paths* of the prophets in the Holy Land. They are building up to something. Always *already*, but still *not*: there is an ethos of anticipation and postponement throughout. As this week’s Torah portion: *lech lecha*—go for yourself/within yourself. Abram starts out a general human, and becomes a specific Abraham.

Names of people, names of places, the Torah as G-d’s name writ large. Big time! Names are everywhere. According to [Saul Kripke](#) (1980) names are rigid

designators. Perhaps we can add the precision that names are rigid designators in public matters—*res publica*—yet, at the other end of the spectrum, we find *floating signifiers*. The name of Jesus is a case in point: struggling and often violent parties have fought to have the name of Jesus on their side. With the effect of emptying the name from content. But there are more kinds of empty. Shifters are also “empty”. An emptiness ranging from nothing to *almost* something.

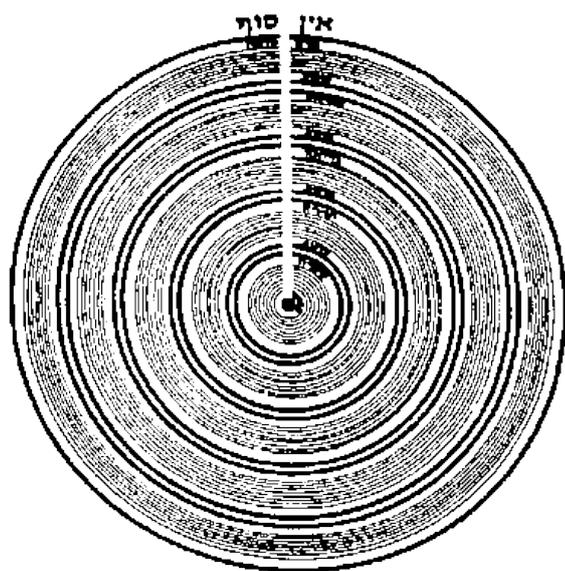
From the gospels we know that Jesus placed a great emphasis on his *name*. But what was his name? There seems to be a consensus about the name Jesus in Aramaic (which Jesus spoke, and was the vernacular of his time): it is *Yeshua*/ישוע in modern Hebrew script. In late Hebrew script in Jesus’ time in the top/frontispiece [*recto*]. That is, *Yud* (י), *Shin* (ש), *Vav* (ו) and *Ayin* (א). In Jewish lore *Yud* (linked to *Yad*) is the hand/arm but the smallest letter of the alphabet with which every other letter begins and ends. That is, in *thought*. While *Vav* (ו) means hook: *extension*.

Between thought and extension, comes *Shin* (ש): which means *Tooth* but also indicates *Shaddai*. The protecting Almighty: *Shin* (ש) is marked on doorposts in Jewish homes. So, from *Yud* (thought) to *Vav* (extension), upon entry: *Shin* (ש). The threshold: of words (tooth) and steps (extension). Then *Ayin* (א) means *eyes*. And connotes *emptiness*. Knowing this, we are left to ponder what *Yeshua* indicated when he asked his followers *not only* to do what he told them to, but to do it *in his name*. Seen from this vantage point a Jewish mystery cult started with him.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the 8th beatitude is “blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see G-d” (my *ital.*). Jewishly speaking, this is radical: seeing G-d without an image, is something that we even cannot *conceive* without seeing an image. But since G-d is without image this is at cause here. Moses heard G-d speaking from behind a curtain (the *Parochet*), but only saw G-d’s glory from behind. Moses is the ultimate human—in Jewish understanding—so what *Yeshua* says here, goes beyond human being as we know it. It is a new human being sprouting from the soul’s seed.

Yet, it is exactly what is claimed. From a Jewish vantage point, it is the tearing of the Temple *Curtain*—dividing the Holy and the Holy of Holies—is the core symbol of the Passion (rather than the crucifix, which was a Roman torture/execution instrument): that is, the *Parochet* (the curtain) that is described in Exod. 26: 31-33 (lower left [*recto*]), through which Moses speaks directly with G-d (whose voice emerges from between the two Cherubs on the Arch Lid) in the Tabernacle/the *Mishkan*. In Exod. 33:18-20 it is written that G-d says “No one can see my face and live.”

Now, we know—in spatial terms—that the Passion is located outside of the gates, while the Temple is at the heart of Jerusalem. The gates were the location indicated by *Yeshua* as the place of *tax-collectors* and *sinners*. While the Temple was a gated community *apart*. The entire drama of *deixis*, or the whole range of shifters, was at game: from ultimate *clarity* to ultimate *obscurity*.



Which is why the City of G-d is a doctrine of being-in-the-world, where *theology* has been neighbouring *philosophy* ever since. A critique the gated community.

The emphasis on *Yeshua*’s (ישוע) name is a candidate explanation for why the New Testament is comparatively weak when compared to the Torah. Since in Matthew 5:17-18 it is written that “Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to *fulfil* them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.” The chances is that his is *Yud* (י).

Meaning *the world and everything that is in it*—indicated by *Alef-Tav* (את) which is strewn all over the Torah without lexical meaning (beyond being the first and last letter of the alphabet)—is *included*. It is not gated. That *peace* (*Shalom*) is achieved on the condition that the Torah is *complete* (*Shalem*). And praying alone follows when the assembly is the entire earth.

Matthew 27: 50-51 “50 And *Yeshua* cried out again with a loud voice and yielded up his spirit. 51 And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And the earth shook, and the rocks were split.” Alongside: steps—a) if *Yud* is the *same* [identified thought]; b) and *Shin* is *similar* [entry]; c) and *Vav* is *difference* [connected extension], then d) *Ayin* is the *other* [seeing is changing].