

God in the Book of Canticle? אלהים בספר שיר השירים?

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Many Jewish and Christian theologians were wondering why the name of God does not appear in the Book of Canticles. Unlike the Book of Esther, this absence was not corrected by the Greek translators of the Bible.

However, we suggest that this seeming deficiency is just the result of scribal error.

In the Book of Isaiah we read:

ביום ההוא יהיו חמש ערים בארץ מצרים, מדברות שפת כנען, ונשבעות ליהוה צבאות:
“In that day there shall be five cities in the land of Egypt that speak the language of Canaan, and swear to YHWH of hosts” (Is 19:18).

In the Book of Exodus we read:

וידבר אלהים אל-משה; ויאמר אליו, אני יהוה.
וארא אל-אברהם אל-יצחק ואל-יעקב-באל שדי; ושמי יהוה לא נודעתי להם.
“And God spoke to Moses, and said to him: I am YHWH;
And I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but by My name YHWH I made Me not known to them” (Ex 6:2-3; see also: Gen 17:1; 28:3; 35:11; 43:14).

Now we read in the Book of Canticles:

השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלים, בצבאות, או באילות השדה:
“I adjure you, O daughters of Jerusalem, by the gazelles, and by the hinds of the field”
(Cant 2:7; 3:5).

The meaning of the Hebrew word **השבעתי** (*hishbaa'thi*) is “I made (you) swear” and not “I adjured” (e.g Gen 21:23; Jos 2:12; 1 Sam 24:21; 30:15; 1 Ki 2:42). Yet if the English understanding of this verse was correct, then we would have here an unusual and bizarre swearing.

The Greek translator wrote: “I have adjured you O daughters of Ierousalem by the powers and by the forces of the field.”

However, the comparison between these verses suggests that instead of:

השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלים, בצבאות, או באילות השדה we should read here:

השבעתי אתכם בנות ירושלים, ביהוה צבאות, או באל שדי “I made you swear, O daughters of Jerusalem in YHWH of hosts, and by God Almighty.”

If this understanding is correct then in the Book of Canticles the name of God is not absent. On the contrary, two of God's names are mentioned there.