

Auf Max Müllers Brief vom 28 Juni 1876, als  
 in ihm wegen des Zünigungsopferes Juden.

I need not say that I shall be proud to accept the dedication of your translation of Dr Goldziher's work. I read it very cursorily, cursorily, but with great interest. It certainly goes far beyond what I thought possible, and I am quite prepared to see some of his positions fiercely attacked by Semitic scholars, to say nothing of theologians. But in the main his theory seems to me right. We have no right to expect history where history was simply impossible; and any attempt at explaining the natural growth of prehistoric history seems to me admissible, and far more scientific than that common torpid agnosticism which either does not see that there is anything which requires explanation, or denies that we possess any means of explaining it.

Max Müllers Brief vom 1 März 1877.

Accept my best thanks for the copy of your translation of Goldziher's Mythology among the Hebrews. It reads extremely well, in fact one does not perceive that it is a translation. I read it through once more, and I can only repeat, I am glad that the book is translated. We shall now hear all that can be said against it. I formerly doubted the existence of Hebrew mythology, and I

tried to account for its absence by the nature of the Hebrew language, which retains a consciousness of the radical and predicative meaning of words far more than any of the Aryan languages, not excepting Sanskrit. A few myths had always been admitted in Hebrew, particularly the story of Janson, and portions of Genesis, which by their very nature must be mythical. But still this seemed to constitute a very small question, not larger than the few Celtic words in English.

Even after reading Goldschier I think we may say that in no one sense the Hebrews had no mythology. What gives its peculiar character to Greek mythology is the impossible nature of what is told of Gods and Heroes. On reading them one feels at once that the Greek myths must signify something different from what they seem to signify. There must be a *mythos* in them. We have not yet so far as to know that Greek mythology, instead of being inconceivable, is inevitable - but without the inconceivabilities of Greek mythology we should probably never have moved at all. Now here is a great difference between Greek & Hebrew mythology. The latter is so very matter-of-fact, prosaic, almost credible. It does not provoke wonder and inquiry. In that sense, therefore, I still hold that, in our ordinary acceptation of the word, there is little mythology among the Hebrews - one has to look for it, and test every apparently historical fact to see whether it will give a mythological ring (*Klang*). In that process it seems to me that Goldschier has been successful. It is now for others to show how what he has dissolved into mythology,

is, can be, must be historical. I wish Goldschier had said more particularly on the second point, why what he takes as mythological, cannot be historical. Nor has he sufficiently distinguished between different kinds of myth, such as, 1) decayed thought, 2) decayed facts, 3) decayed thoughts gathering round real facts, 4) decayed language etc.

If Schliemann produces the skeleton of Agamemnon, will he also produce the skeleton of the swan, his father-in-law? In the same manner, I still feel, till I am better informed, that there may have been a real Abraham, though much that is told of him is of a mythical nature. Here we must wait for criticism, which is sure to come; possibly contemporary history may help to establish an historical kernel behind the legendary shell. The red-haired David and the red-haired Frederick were flesh and bone after all.

Acht Dank, lieber Herr Professor, für Ihre Bemerkungen, "Notes and Queries"  
Mar. 3.

Mr Martineau is one of those accomplished translators who leave no trace in their work of its being a translation. This gentleman, moreover, can convey his own meaning in few but intelligible terms, and in such terms he describes what this book is and what it is not. - How nice our *Lehrbuch* in your hands.

