

SCHÄFER'S *GENIZA-FRAGMENTE ZUR HEKHALOT-LITERATUR**

Modern research of the hekhalot literature has tended to focus upon the hekhalot traditions which were preserved in medieval manuscripts, especially those copied and edited in twelfth- and thirteenth-century Germany, within the circles of Ḥaside Ashkenaz.¹ These manuscripts comprise the major hekhalot and merkavah traditions as based upon the principal textual rendition available in twelfth-century Europe. This rendition, which reflects the nondefinitive and flexible form of the hekhalot tradition, was transcribed, with slight variations and small changes in order, through the course of the centuries.²

The textual tradition of the medieval manuscripts was the foundation for most of the later publications of the different parts of the hekhalot literature, even until modern times.³ While the medieval manuscripts include the essential hekhalot traditions, it has been argued that they do not comprise all the once extant merkavah texts. The existence of different compositions and other traditions is suggested in two groups of sources which retain fragments of this anonymous literature: 1) bits and fragments scattered in the extensive tenth-century gaonic responsa, in the Karaite polemic literature of the same period, in the later compilations of twelfth-century Ḥaside Ashkenaz, and in specific insinuations in the Kabbalistic literature; and 2) the Cairo genizah fragments, some dated as early as the ninth century, although most are from the eleventh.

* Peter Schäfer. *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1984. Pp. 191.

¹ For hekhalot literature, merkavah mysticism, and information on the pertinent manuscripts see G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York, 1954), pp. 40-79, 355-369; idem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York, 1965); I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden and Köln, 1980), pp. 98-234; P. Schäfer, "Handschriften zur Hekhalot Literatur," *Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge* 11 (1983): 113-193.

² On the problem of the redaction of hekhalot tradition see P. Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 14 (1983): 172-181.

³ *Hekhalot rabbati*, edited by A. Jellinek, was based upon a fourteenth-century German manuscript, Oxford 1531 (cf. Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash* [Wien, 1855], 3:83-108). Scholem's "Ma'aseh Merkavah" (appendix to *Jewish Gnosticism* [note 1 above]) pp. 101-117) is based upon mss Oxford 1531 and JTS (New York) 828. Both manuscripts came from the circles of Ḥaside Ashkenaz. R. Elior, *Hekhalot zuḡarti* (Jerusalem, 1982 [Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought, Supplement 1]) is based upon MS JTS 8128.

While the major hekhalot manuscripts are known and have been studied, the other two sources have not yet been subjected to systematic scholarly investigation. The bits and fragments within the more extensive writings are not easily accessible, since they are concealed within many manuscripts and books integrating various traditions from several periods. This material still awaits methodological scrutiny and investigation. The merkavah traditions found in the genizah had to be gathered out of thousands of fragments now located in the several genizah collections in Cambridge, Oxford, and Leningrad.

Peter Schäfer's book presents 23 texts from these collections, the great majority of them published here for the first time.⁴ These texts are accurately reproduced in photographs and are faced by a full transcription, enabling the reader to compare both the original text and its transcription. The separate verses are compared for similarities and repetitions within the larger hekhalot manuscripts as found in Schäfer's previous volume, *Synopsis zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen, 1981).

In his previous book Schäfer had assembled a synoptic edition of the seven major hekhalot manuscripts, presented concurrently in their entirety, while disregarding earlier textual divisions and nomenclature.⁵ The transcribed manuscript texts were divided into 985 numbered units. The present genizah fragments are compared with the relevant numbered sections in the synoptic edition.⁶

The texts offered are introduced with detailed information about the place and origin of the particular fragment, its material, and the paleographic background, including suggestions of the dates as offered by M. Beit-Arieh. The reader is provided with a short description of the fragments and their relation to other known and relevant hekhalot texts. An annotated bibliography is offered for texts previously published. One third of the texts are supplied with a commentary by the author, since they have not been published before and some of them have no known parallels in the other hekhalot traditions. This suggests that not all once extant merkavah texts have been preserved, and that some have been lost and remain only in fragments.

Geniza-Fragmente amplifies and corroborates the textual evidence previously available and discussed in the modern research of hekhalot literature. The fragments offer previously known traditions in slightly different versions as well as new narratives and accounts reflecting traditions as yet undiscovered.

⁴ Fragments number 8 and 22 were published by I. Gruenwald, "New Fragments from Hekhalot Literature," *Tarbiz* 38 (1968/69): 354-372; some parts of *Shi'ur qomah* have been published by M. S. Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah, Texts and Recensions* (Tübingen, 1985); M. Margoliot, *Sefer ha-razim* (Tel Aviv, 1966), includes important hekhalot material from the genizah.

⁵ See my review of Schäfer's *Synopsis zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, *JQR* 77 (1986/87): 213-217.

⁶ Two comparable recensions, MS Florence 44/13 and MS Leiden 4730, appearing in the present volume, were added to the seven published in Schäfer's *Synopsis*.

The fragments include six texts from *Greater Hekhalot* (frag. 1–6); five from *Shi'ur qomah* (frag. 4, 8–11); two from *Lesser Hekhalot* (frag. 7, 18); two concerning Metatron (frag. 9, 19); one from the *Book of Hekhalot* (3 *Enoch*) (frag. 12); seven are magical adjurations and incantations (frag. 13–17, 20, 21); one refers to the *Ascension of Moses* (frag. 21), and another to *Pereq shirah* (frag. 23); and two include unique merkavah texts (frag. 8, 22), probably the most important texts offered in this collection.

Parallels with the synoptic manuscripts can be found in fragments 1–7, part of 8–10, 12, 18. Fragments 11, 13–17, 19–23 and the remainder of 8 have no parallels.

A perusal of the texts which have parallels will reveal interesting changes in the hitherto accepted structure and order of their composition. These differences between similar hekhalot manuscripts and genizah fragments suggest that this literature was not assembled in one consecutive order or in an accepted codex, and never had one definitive literary form or permanent redaction. Rather, the hekhalot tradition was largely an unredacted assemblage of fragmented pieces, collected into a random order.

The medieval manuscripts have indicated a relatively structured and consistent basic order for the separate verses, while freely intermixing the order of chapters and units. However, the genizah fragments present an alternative perception, in which verses seem to have been less structured; indeed their order may even have been quite incidental. In a number of instances the traditional hekhalot narratives have been integrated with incantations and adjurations in the genizah fragments.

Another point deserving attention is that the genizah recension often retains a more intriguing version than the one in the medieval texts. Medieval redactors seem to have modified the more sensitive or controversial expressions concerning the mystical ascent, theurgy, and angelology. Examples of this, involving descriptions of the heavenly chariot, may be found in the following verses:

Syn. 213—ועומדים כל הגיבורים, while we find in gnz. f.6–2a/6 מלאכים ועומדים גיבורים.

An obvious difference in version may be found in this change of verbs:

Syn. 337—זה השם שנגלה לר' עקיבא שהיה מסתכל במעשה מרכבה, while gnz. f.7–2a/3 has בשעה שנישתמש במעשה המרכבה; Syn. 344—ואני נכנסתי לשלום ויצאתי, while gnz. f.7–2a/9 has אני עליתי בשלום וירדתי בשלום.

A different change may be seen in the shift from first person to third:

Syn. 348—בשעה שעליתי למרכבה יצתה בת קול מתחת כסא הכבוד, gnz. f.7–2a 15/16 has בשעה שעליתי למרום שמעת בת קול שיצתה מתחת כסא הכבוד.

Another type of modification concerns a description of the mystical ascent: Syn. 673—וכשהגעתי לפרגוד, gnz. f.7–2a/13 has וכשהגעתי לאחורי הפרגוד.

A more detailed account has been modified: Syn. 673—יצאו מלאכי חבלה לחבלני, gnz. 7–2a/13 באו מלאכי חבלה וביקשו עלי לדוחפני.

A remarkable part of the new material is directly concerned with angels: genizah fragment 8 has preserved an angelic revelation concerning the mystical *yeridah la-merkavah* that has no similar account in other hekhalot texts. Genizah fragment 12 presents a slightly altered version from the *Book of Hekhalot* (3 Enoch) and offers a different account of the angelic revelation: Syn. 62—ותפשני בידו והראני—gnz. f.12-2b/11-12, ותפשני בידו והעליני בכנפיו. Genizah fragments 8, 9, 11, and 19 are concerned with the angel Metatron, some in an unprecedented manner; fragment 22 offers a detailed angelology.

Schäfer's reading of the genizah fragments is generally accurate, although a few mistakes have occurred and some alternative readings can be suggested. One obvious misreading occurs in fragment 7, line 8 (p. 89): the manuscript clearly reads ובגפיהן, while Schäfer's transcription has ובקפיהן. In fragment 19 (p. 166) the manuscript reads אין אמרין אתו אלא מעומד, while the transcription has אין אמרין אתו אלא משמר. In fragment 8 (p. 101), line 14/15 the manuscript reads לי אמר לו מטטרון, while the transcription has מטטרון הפח ותן אחת בפוך. In fragment 20 (p. 170), line 12, the manuscript reads חק שתי חיטים מן הפח ותן אחת בפוך, while Schäfer's transcription has חק שתי חיטים מן הפח ותן אחת בפוך. In Fragment 20, line 14 the manuscript reads clearly קח זנב של שרף, while the transcription has קח זנב של שרף. These are minor errors considering the number of lines transcribed and the condition of the texts.

The present edition is arranged in an exemplary manner, offering the texts in their original form, without imposing a final or binding recension, while supplying the relevant context and comparable material presently available. The reader is provided with a new textual perspective by which he can place, study, and compare the hekhalot corpus in a richer context. The convergence of the genizah material with the wider merkavah traditions make this volume a valuable contribution to the study of hekhalot literature and to the better understanding of the early stages of Jewish mysticism.