

# Mysticism, Magic, and Angelology

## The Perception of Angels in Hekhalot Literature

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For man stands upon the earth, and his head reaches  
unto the heavens, and the angels of the Lord ascend  
and descend within him.

Jacob Joseph of Polonnoye, Ben-Porat Yosef, fol. 42a.

An examination of the synoptic edition of the Hekhalot<sup>1</sup> Literature and the various texts which relate to the Merkabah<sup>2</sup> tradition<sup>3</sup> reveals an abundance of different components, comprising the interwoven fabric of the early trends of Jewish mysticism, and it clearly shows the varieties of styles and themes within that tradition.<sup>4</sup>

A comparative analysis of the various sources will demonstrate that this is not a well formulated corpus of literature produced within a

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<sup>1</sup> Hekhalot, heavenly palaces, or celestial temples.

<sup>2</sup> The Merkabah is the Divine Chariot, referring to the vision described at the beginning of the book of Ezekiel, which at an early date came to be designated as the vision of the Merkabah.

<sup>3</sup> See: P. Schäfer, in collaboration with M. Schlüter and H. G. von Mutius, *Synopse zur Hekhalot Literatur, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 2*, (Tübingen 1981) (henceforth: "Synopsis"); P. Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot Literatur, Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum 6*, (Tübingen 1984) (henceforth: "Geniza Fragments"); M. Margalit, *Sefer ha-Razim*, "Yediat Ahronot" edition (Tel Aviv and Jerusalem 1966) (henceforth: "S. ha-Razim"); M. S. Cohen, *The Shiur Qomah, Texts and Recensions* (Tübingen 1985) (henceforth: "Shi'ur Qomah"); R. Elior, *Hekhalot Zutarti*, scholarly edition, *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, Appendix A (Jerusalem 1982) (henceforth: "Hekhalot Zutarti"); P. S. Alexander, "Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch," in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. 1 (New York 1983), pp. 223-315 (henceforth: "Alexander, Enoch").

<sup>4</sup> G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York 1941) (henceforth: "Scholem, Trends"), pp. 67, 70; M. Smith, "Observations on Hekhalot Rabati," in A. Altmann (ed.), *Biblical and Other Studies* (Cambridge 1963) (henceforth: "Smith, Hekhalot"), p. 149; J. Dan, "Anafiel, Metatron, and the Maker of Creation" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 52 (1983), pp. 447-450; idem, "The Seventy Names of Metatron, *Proceedings of the Eighth World Congress of Jewish Studies*, vol. III, (Jerusalem 1982), pp. 19-23.

distinct circle, for various segments of the Hekhalot tradition are differentiated from one another by their literary style, by the quality of their editing and transmission, by the names of the authorities cited, and by their content, structure, and linguistic patterns. Almost certainly they are also to be distinguished by the date of the composition of the various parts, and by the places where they were composed.<sup>5</sup>

Some of these traditions possess a decidedly mystical and numinous character,<sup>6</sup> others bear a characteristic magical and theurgic stamp;<sup>7</sup> some have a pronounced cosmological bent, while others are marked by their angelological character.<sup>8</sup> However, despite all the differences in content and style, in genre and in interrelationship, it is possible to identify a fundamental underlying common denominator, which deter-

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<sup>5</sup> Scholars do not agree regarding the extent of the corpus which is included in Hekhalot and Merkabah literature. Various systems of classification relating to various works and manuscript traditions have been proposed by G. Scholem, J. Dan, and P. Schäfer. See: G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York 1965<sup>2</sup>) (henceforth: "Scholem, Gnosticism"), pp. 5-7; P. Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature," *Journal of the Study of Judaism (JSJ)*, vol. XIV, no. 2 (1983), pp. 172-181; J. Dan, "Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism," Seventh Annual Rabbi Louis Feinberg Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies, University of Cincinnati, April 26, 1984 (henceforth: "Dan, Three"). For a description of the various works, see: I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden/Cologne 1980) (henceforth: "Gruenwald, Apocalyptic"), pp. 127-234.

<sup>6</sup> The works which are known as Hekhalot Rabati, Hekhalot Zutarti, Ma'aseh Merkabah, Shi'ur Qomah, and Sefer Hekhalot-Third Enoch include traditions of decidedly mystical character. For the numbering of their passages in the synoptic edition and for an indication of earlier editions, see Schäfer, *Synopsis*, pp. x-xvii. For editions published after the publication of the synoptic edition or close to the time of its publication, and which were not included in the indications of printings, see note 3 above. Highly interesting mystical traditions which were first published in the synoptic edition are found in paragraphs 384-488 and 947-963 of the synoptic edition and in the Geniza fragments, paragraphs 8, 11, 22. Cf. I. Gruenwald, "New Fragments" (Hebrew), *Tarbiz* 38 (1968-69), pp. 368-372. See now concerning these treatises and the concept of angels in them: P. Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God: Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism*, Albany, NY: SUNY Press, 1992.

<sup>7</sup> Consult S. ha-Razim, Introduction, p. 41; Harba de Moshe, *Synopsis*, pars. 360-367, 489-495, 623-639, 598-622; and compare Geniza fragments, pars. 13-21. For theurgical use, see *Synopsis*, pars. 563-569, 572, 204-205. Magic spells, incantations, praxes, and seals, lists of names and charms are found throughout Hekhalot literature.

<sup>8</sup> Dealted cosmological traditions are found in the Book of Enoch, in Masekhet Hekhalot, and in many paragraphs of the *Synopsis*. See, for example, paragraphs 51-55, 346-356, 367-374, 518-525, 546, 554-555, 558-559, 743-777, 778-798. Angelological traditions comprise the major part of the Hekhalot literature and they are presented in hundreds of paragraphs in the *Synopsis*; so many that it would be impossible to list them in detail. In Geniza fragments interesting angelological traditions are also presented, see fragments no. 8, 19, 21, 22.

mines the character of Hekhalot literature, and to note the combination of three of its most pronounced traits, which creates its uniqueness.

Hekhalot traditions represent a "different reality," one which is not anchored within earthly existence, nor in the historical dimension, nor yet in the traditional textual context. They do not express a conception of a common historical past, a defined present, or a yearning for a future, nor do they openly draw upon a distinct social milieu, a conventional exegetical framework, or a structure of beliefs and opinions which reflect directly a particular reality.<sup>9</sup> The Hekhalot tradition contains pseudepigraphy and an alternative chronology, which both relate to the world of the Tannaim, who lived after the destruction of the Temple, along with an imaginative grasp of reality, which relates to the period when the Temple stood. These tendencies express a distinct alienation from tangible reality and a different view of historical perception.<sup>10</sup>

The Hekhalot literature focuses on a cosmic realm which draws upon a mystical vision, upon mythical elements, and upon a ritual tradition, all of which are included within the concept "Merkabah" (divine chariot). This "other reality" is a celestial reality, transcending time and place, with a visionary and numinous character, revealed in its splendid beauty to those who "descend to the Merkabah" in order to ascend heavenwards.<sup>11</sup> In various ways the Hekhalot traditions express the transcendental exaltedness of this celestial reality, describing in poetic fashion the various dimensions of visionary reality and discussing in detail the components of the divine world:

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<sup>9</sup> For various views of the historical and social background of the authors of the Hekhalot traditions, cf. Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 40–43; E. E. Urbach, "ha-Mesorot 'al Torat ha-Sod be-Tekufat ha-Tanaim," in *Mehkarim be-Kabbalah u-ve-Toldot ha-Datot Mugashim le-G. Scholem* (Jerusalem 1965), pp. 1–28; D. J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot* (Tübingen 1988) (henceforth: "Halperin, Chariot"), pp. 359–446; R. Elior, "Merkabah Mysticism, a Critical Review," *Numen* (1990), vol. XXXVII, fasc. 2, pp. 233–249; I. Chernus, "Individual and Community in the Reduction of the Hekhalot Literature, HUCA LII (1981), pp. 253–274.

<sup>10</sup> See Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 72–73 and cf. J. Dan, "Tefisat ha-Historia be-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot ve-ha-Merkabah," *Be-Orah Mad'a, Mehkarim be-Tarbut Israel Mugashim le-A. Mirski, Makhon Haberman* (Lod 1986), pp. 117–129. It seems that there is reason to reexamine the connection between the alienation from historical reality which is reflected in Hekhalot Rabati and the response to a situation which was too difficult to bear after the destruction of the Temple, and so created an alternative, visionary reality.

<sup>11</sup> For the concept of "the other reality," see R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (Oxford 1973), p. 72. See also: V. Turner, *The Ritual Process, Structure and Anti-Structure* (Ithaca, New York 1977), pp. vii, 15. Consult the Synopsis, pars.: 180–188, 198, 214–219, 236, 247, 276, 337–356, 468–478, 554–556, 559, 586–596.

R. Nehunya ben Hakkanah ... revealed the secret of the world as it appears to one who is worthy to gaze upon the King and His Throne in His majesty and His beauty; [upon] the Hayot of holiness, the Cherubim of might, and the Wheels of the Shekhina, upon the frightful lightning and the awesome electrum; upon the fiery river which surrounds the Throne upon the bridges and upon the flares which strengthen and rise between the bridges. (Synopsis, § 198)

The complex of cosmological assumptions found underlying this visionary reality is explained extensively in the various parts of Hekhalot literature. The descriptive point of departure draws upon the vision of Ezekiel and combines ideas and concepts close in spirit and language to the apocalyptic literature and to the pseudepigraphia, to the Hellenistic world, and to the Qumran literature.<sup>12</sup> However, the descriptive structure of the celestial world which takes shape in mystical experience, and the worldview which arises therefrom, depart significantly from earlier traditions in extent, in detail, in complexity, and in content. This transformation derives to a large degree from the new combination of diverse spiritual and cultural elements, which constitute a new religious consciousness. These elements are interwoven in changing forms within the diverse traditions of Hekhalot literature.

The three primary characteristics, which together create the uniqueness of the Hekhalot tradition, are *mysticism*, *angelology*, and *magic*. These three perceptions suggest: (a) a novel grasp of the concept of divinity and a new perception of man's ascent to higher realms, a grasp which is inspired by Ezekiel's chariot, and is affiliated with both "kenisah la-pardes" [the mystical entry into the heavenly grove] and Shi'ur Qomah [the description of the names and dimensions of God's limbs]; (b) a detailed description of the higher powers which comprise the divine unity of the world of the Merkabah, as related to the contemporary conception of the "pleroma" and to the mythical thought of the age; (c) the reciprocal relationship between human deeds and knowledge and man's influence on the various dimensions of the heavenly world, a relationship connected to a ritual and a theurgic perception which pertains to worship in the celestial Temple and to ritual traditions which were affiliated with the terrestrial Temple.

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<sup>12</sup> Regarding the connection between the Hekhalot literature and apocalyptic literature, see Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 43-46, Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, pp. 29-72. Cf. Halperin, *Chariot*, pp. 63-113. For a primary hypothesis concerning the connection between the Hekhalot literature and that of Qumran, see Scholem, *Gnosticism*, pp. 29, 128, and see below, n. 42, 99. Regarding the connection with the magical literature which was prevalent in the Hellenistic world, see below, n. 44.

(1) *The Mystical Element* finds expression in a new conception of the figure of the divinity, which emerges from the Hekhalot traditions.<sup>13</sup> It is also expressed in the image of those who descend to the Merkabah, that is, those who assumed the possibility of establishing a connection, made by human initiative, between nether and higher realms. The description of the ascension of those who mount the Chariot, the testimony concerning their celestial vision, along with descriptions of the Throne of Glory, the heavenly shrines, the Hekhalot, the firmaments, and the heavenly beings, create a complex view of the upper realms which is portrayed in the mystical vision. The description of numinous reality, which emerges from the heavenly hymns and angelic extollments, has a distinct mystical character. Likewise, the testimonies of those who descend to the Merkabah concerning the meaning of the spiritual conversion which they have undergone all bear an unmistakable mystical quality.<sup>14</sup>

Testimony concerning the upper worlds, the result of visions and mystical exaltation, whether presented as the unmediated experience of the visionary or expressed in patterns of a liturgical tradition pertaining to worship in the higher realms,<sup>15</sup> is the essential foundation which

<sup>13</sup> Examples of the new mystical conception of the deity, which is concerned with the measurement of the divine body and its perception, can be found in descriptions such as the following: "As it were, He is like us, and He is larger than all, and this is His glory, which is hidden from us" (Synopsis, § 352). "Rabbi Ishmael said, I will tell you how much is the measure of the body of the Blessed One, which is hidden from all people" (Synopsis § 948). "R. Akiba said, Metatron, the beloved servant, great prince of testimony, said to me, 'I make this testimony about YHWH the God of Israel ... that the height of His Body when He sits on the Throne of Glory is ... parasangs'" (Synopsis § 376). "The appearance of the face is like the appearance of the jaws, and the appearance of the jaws and the sight of the face is like the image of the spirit and the form of the soul: no creature can know it. His body is like *Tarshish*: his splendor shines awesomely from the midst of the darkness, cloud and fog surround him, all the princes of the countenance and the Seraphim are poured out before him ... thus we have no measure except the names revealed to us: (Synopsis, § 949, 481). See Hekhalot-Zutarti (ed. Elijor), pp. 25–26, 64–67.

<sup>14</sup> See Scholem, Trends, pp. 40–79; Scholem, Gnosticism, pp. 14–30, 36–42; Scholem, "Shi'ur Qomah ha-Demut ha-Mistit shel ha-Elohut," *Pirkei Yesod be-Havanat ha-Kabbalah u-Semaleiha* (Jerusalem 1976), pp. 259–274; R. Elijor, "Yihuda shel ha-Tofa'ah ha-Datit be-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot: Demut ha-El ve-Harhavat Gevulot ha-Hasaga," in "Mysticism and Early Judaism," *Mehkarei Yerushalayim be-Mahshevet Yisrael* VI, A-B (1987), pp. 13–64 (henceforth: "Elijor, Demut ha-El"); I. Chernus, "Visions of God in Merkabah Mysticism," *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. XIII (1982), pp. 123–146.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. the remarks of Y. Baer, *Yisrael ba-Amim* (Jerusalem 1969), p. 112. For examples of explicit language of visual testimony, see Synopsis, pars. 216, 337, 348, 405, 545, and see nn. 20, 31 below. Examples of the tradition of the heavenly liturgy which relates to prayer on high, see for example Synopsis, pars. 178–190, 156–167.

nurtures the spiritual world of the Hekhalot authors. This testimony about the ecstatic experience and the mystical conversion which derived from the mystical ascent traces the horizons of the Merkabah tradition, and its spirit inspires the descriptions of celestial reality. This testimony also represents an innovative dimension in religious thought which does not draw directly upon earlier sources, but rather it creates a new conceptual perception.<sup>16</sup>

(II) *Angelology* is concerned with the detailed description of the awesome world of the angels and with celestial ritual, along with the creation of a cosmological foundation for the perception of those who descend to the Merkabah. The cosmological foundation is a structure of concepts which enumerates and categorizes the phenomena comprising the celestial world as a hierarchical whole, while describing its reality with exact visual detail. The principal cosmological concepts become both focal points of sanctity as well as the dominant elements of the world of those who descend to the Merkabah.<sup>17</sup> Against this cosmological background the angels and the diverse celestial beings are described. The angels reflect the exalted beauty of celestial reality and its enigmatic splendor. By their very existence, angels express the mysterious, exaltedness, the numinous realm, the secrets of the knowledge hidden on high, and the other image through which reality may be reflected.<sup>18</sup>

R. Ishmael said: the angel Metatron, prince of the divine presence, the glory of highest heaven, said to me: when the Holy One, blessed be He, took me to serve the Throne of Glory and the wheels of the chariot ... at once my flesh turned to flame, my sinews to blazing fire, my bones to juniper coals ... all my limbs to rings of burning fire and the substance of my body to blazing fire ... The Holy One, blessed be He, revealed to me from that time onward all the mysteries of wisdom ... all the mysteries of the world and all the orders of nature stand revealed before me as they stand revealed before the Creator. (Synopsis, §19, 14)

The world of the angels is the frame of reference for those who descend to the Merkabah, for the angels set the paradigm for divine

<sup>16</sup> For an example of the new conception of God from the mystical standpoint see Synopsis, pars. 352–356, 367, 376, 468, 480–484, 695–704. For examples of mystical conversion, see Synopsis, pars. 580–581, 420, 309, 544–554, 656, 678, 680.

<sup>17</sup> See M. Stone's instructive comment: "The lists of revealed things in the Apocalyptic Literature are similar to lists of cosmological secrets in the Hekhalot texts." M. Stone, "Lists of Revealed Things in Apocalyptic Literature, in *Magnalia Dei: The Mighty Acts of God*, F. M. Cross (ed.), (New York 1976), pp. 414–452. Regarding the connection between the cosmological classification and the mystical structure of concepts, cf. Hekhalot Zutarti, pp. 22–25.

<sup>18</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 21–44, 581–582: 52–60, 546–559, 413–418.

worship, and they serve as interlocutors for those who ascend to the heavens. It is the angels who possess the esoteric knowledge of higher worlds and of the image of the deity, and they are the source of knowledge as to the names, the secrets, and the seals which those who descend to the Merkabah seek to acquire. Moreover, they constitute an object of imitation for the authors of the Hekhalot literature: the worship of the angels in the celestial shrines is a liturgical model which is imitated by those who descend to the Merkabah: the ceremony which the angels celebrate before the Throne of Glory, which includes immersion, the recitation of praises, the singing of hymns, the recital of prayers, the attachment of crowns, and the uttering of the Name, is taken as a basic ritual pattern which those who descend to the Merkabah seek to learn and imitate.<sup>19</sup> The angels possess the "keys" for ascent to the firmaments and for contemplating the Merkabah – the hymns, the names, the seals, and the secrets; hence the revelation of their secrets and knowledge of their mysteries condition descent to the Merkabah. Generally the traditions of the names which are presented in the Hekhalot literature are of an angelic origin. And this is also the source of the songs and hymns, the prayers, the praises, and the descriptions of the Shi'ur Qomah. For, as noted, the angels are the source of celestial knowledge, and they are an object of imitation.<sup>20</sup>

Both the focus upon the figure of the angels and the deep concern with the details of the celestial ritual derive from the fact that the world of the angels is conceived as a source of authority for religious innovation, and its ceremonies serve as a paradigm determined at the time of ascent to heaven, as a cosmological framework and also as a background for the mystic and ritual conception of the worship of those who descend to the Merkabah.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> See Elior, *Demut ha-El*, pp. 23, 49, see below near n. 112.

<sup>20</sup> See for example: "Rabbi Yishmael said, all of those *songs* Rabbi Akiba heard them when he descended to the Merkabah and he grasped and learned them from before His Throne of Glory, the ones which *His servants* sang before Him" (Synopsis, § 106); "Rabbi Yishmael said, my friend *Sorta* the Prince of the Countenance spoke to me of the *praise* of the King and His throne" (*ibid.*, 152); "This is the name revealed to Rabbi Akiba, when he gazed upon the sight of the Merkabah" (*ibid.*, 337); "Rabbi Akiba said, *Metatron*, the beloved servant and great prince of testimony said to me: I swear to this testimony about YHWH, the God of Israel ... that the height of His stature when He sits on the Throne of Glory is 118,000,000 parasangs" (*ibid.*, 376 NYMS 8128); "While you pray, repeat three *names* that are recalled by the *angels of honor* ... and in the end repeat three *letters* that are recalled by the holy *hayyot* while they gaze and see" (*ibid.*, 564).

<sup>21</sup> To demonstrate this argument, see Hekhalot Zutarti (ed. Elior), 11. 349–389 (Synopsis, para. 413–417), and see below, the discussion of the angelic worship as a background for the worship of the Hekhalot mystics, near note 112.

(III) *The Magical-Theurgical Area*<sup>22</sup> deals with the various connections between terrestrial and celestial existence and with the ritual links connecting knowledge of celestial secrets and influence upon higher powers. Magic is concerned with clarifying the connection between man's actions and his knowledge and the imposition of his will upon the creatures of the celestial world, both in the upper world and in this one. The magical tradition establishes a ritual path and cultic framework for attaining the spiritual goal of acquiring knowledge of the upper worlds.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, the purpose of magical praxis is to help ascend to the Merkabah, and to bring down the upper powers. Its objective is to define patterns of influence and effective ways of addressing celestial powers, thereby helping the adepts to erect a bridge between earthly reality and celestial being. The magic instructions, which are based on the assumption of a hidden link and a continuum of reciprocal relations between manifest reality and hidden worlds, discuss the secret formula, the proper time, the holy ritual, and the magic spell which assist an initiate to affect and influence the upper powers and to guide their actions according to his wishes.

In many chapters of Hekhalot literature the principal discussion revolves around the magical means which serve mystical elevation. That is, they treat the complex of mantic means and ritual elements which influence the ways to ascend to the Merkabah or to draw the celestial forces down to the earth.<sup>24</sup> In other sections the magic relates to corporeal needs and mundane concerns,<sup>25</sup> though in both cases the struc-

<sup>22</sup> See the definition of theurgy in relation to magic by E. R. Dodds: "[Theurgy is] magic applied to a religious purpose and resting on a supposed revelation of a religious character," E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (Berkeley 1951), p. 291. See also the appendix on theurgy, pp. 283-299.

<sup>23</sup> For a definition of ritual see M. Douglas: "ritual ... refer[s] to symbolic action concerning the sacred," M. Douglas, *Purity and Danger* (London 1985), p. 65; see further, *ibid.*, pp. 64-69, 94. Cf. also V. Turner, *The Ritual Process* (above, n. 11), pp. 6, 15. Regarding the connection between magic and ritual, see the following instructive studies: S. Tambiah, "Form and Meaning of Magical Acts," in *Modes of Thought*, R. Horton, R. Finnigann (eds.), (London 1973) pp. 199-229; and idem, "A Performative Approach to Ritual," *Proceedings of the British Academy*, 1979, pp. 69-113.

<sup>24</sup> See, for example, Hekhalot Zutarti, p. 22, 11. 9-36, and cf. Synopsis pars. 360-365; Hekhalot Zutarti, pp. 32-34, 11. 349-389, 416-429. See also Ma'aseh Merkabah, Synopsis pars. 560, 566-656. On the relation between magic and mysticism in the Hekhalot, see Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 50-51; M. Smith, *Hekhalot*, pp. 149-160; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, pp. 102-111.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. Sefer ha-Razim, pp. 65-106; Synopsis, pars. 598-622, and compare Geniza fragments, sections 13-21. See the recent work of P. Schäfer, "Jewish Magic Literature in Late Antiquity and the Early Middle Ages," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 41 (1990), pp. 75-91.



ture of reference includes an angelological matrix and a ritual foundation, the adjuration of angels, secret incantations, knowledge of the names, and the use of magic spells within a specific ritual framework.

The essence of the magical-theurgic tradition in the Hekhalot literature is found within inexplicable holy names, and with meaningless permutations of letters and words. These names and permutations are not based on literal comprehension or on explicit meaning but rather on a predetermined formula and on sacred ritual patterns, all of which are assumed to have the power to influence the upper worlds. Considerable attention is given to these holy names, their classification, their enumeration, their characterization, their proper pronunciation and utilization by means of constant reiteration. This literature perceives the divine creative force as being embodied within the Hebrew letters. Thus reality is no more than the extension and manifestation of the divine word. The divine language by which the world was created becomes *names* possessing creative power and letters which bind heaven and earth. The name embodies the divine essence which is susceptible of being attained, the secret creative powers hidden in the letters, and the enigmatic element which links between the world of man and the celestial world.<sup>26</sup> The essence of God is identical to His name, and therefore knowledge of the names and the manner of articulating them is tantamount to a certain comprehension of the divine essence.<sup>27</sup> The name is considered as the embodiment of the creative power and as a means of creation, as a mystical-magical means of ascent and as the secret essence of the celestial world. Therefore knowledge of the divine names which are found throughout all the realm of the celestial Merkabah and the denizens of

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<sup>26</sup> See Scholem, *Gnosticism*, pp. 65–77, E. Urbach, *Hazal, Emunot ve-De'ot* (Jerusalem 1976) (henceforth: "Urbach, Hazal"), "Koah ha-Shem," pp. 103–114; Elior, *Demut ha-El*, pp. 20–24; K. E. Grozinger, "The Names of God and the Celestial Powers: Their Function and Meaning in the Hekhalot Literature," in "Early Jewish Mysticism," *Mehkarei Yerushalayim be-Mahshevet Yisrael* VI (1987), pp. 53–70. Interestingly, anthropological research on meaningless names in spells and on their source speaks of them as "the language of demons." See Tambiah (above, n. 23). It seems that the use of meaningless names and words without significance to create a connection with some supernatural power is based on the assumption that language containing meaningless sounds and letters expresses a deep, primordial consciousness, man's primary language, prior to the linguistic structures which subordinate sound to sense, to a conventional tradition, or to common logic.

<sup>27</sup> See the principal definition of the name as an expression of God's power: "He is His name, and His name is He, He is in Him, and His name is in His name" (Synopsis, §588), and cf. "For His name is in His might, and His might is in His Name, it is His power, and His power is His name" (*ibid.*, §557). Cf. Scholem, *Gnosticism*, p. 114, par. 28, and see also pars. 31–33.

the upper worlds is pronounced as the core of the yearnings of those who descend to the Merkabah. The name contains the mystery, sanctity, power and symbol, and it includes the secrets and arcana, the signals and signs, the letters and seals in which the foundations of heaven and earth are laid.<sup>28</sup> The name possesses terrestrial dimensions and can be pronounced, written, "observed," "used," "sealed," and adjured. These qualities are characterized both from the angelic point of view and also from the human point of view. The exalted ritual of reciting the tetragrammaton and the pronunciation of divine names by the angels is paramount in the cult of the celestial Hekhalot, and, conversely, knowledge of the explicit Name of God, the theurgic use of heavenly names, observing and mentioning them, are found at the heart of the worship of those who descend to the Merkabah.<sup>29</sup>

The use of meaningless names to create a link with a supernatural force is a mainstay of magical thought, of mystical elevation, and of ritual worship. Consequently, knowledge of the names of the various powers which comprise the Merkabah or their pronunciation and repetition according to a specific order is considered an essential foundation of the religious obligation to acquire knowledge of the upper realms. Therefore, we find that the various sections of the Hekhalot literature contain enigmatic traditions regarding the names of God, of angels, of parts of the Merkabah, and of the entire structure of celestial existences. The names are imparted as part of the visionary revelation, as part of the descriptions of the ascent to the Merkabah, and as arcane knowledge learned from the angels. They also appear as seals, secrets, talismans, crowns, incantations, spells, "shimushim," amulets, charms, and magic formulae, and they are mentioned within a ritual context which relates both directly and indirectly to the angelic rite of the celestial Temple. The knowledge of these names is an essential part of mystical experience, and their application upon heavenly powers is the principal concern of magical wisdom and the theurgic praxis that is bound up with it.

Mysticism, magic, and angelology are founded upon a shared cosmological view which assumes continuity between the upper realms and the terrestrial world, allowing a reciprocal relationship between them.

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<sup>28</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 389, 396, 629, 630-633.

<sup>29</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 515-516, 556, 588, 591-594, 676, 735, 972. Regarding various traditions relating to praise of the Name of God, to the coronation of the Name, and to its Glorification, see below, nn.91, 104. For the ritual tradition regarding the pronunciation of the Explicit Name by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement, see BT Yoma, ch. 6, p. 65b, and see also below, near n. 105.

That is to say, corresponding to the conceptual structure which details and categorizes the various components of the upper world and constitutes celestial existence – “Shi’ur Qomah,” “Merkabah,” the “Throne of Glory,” the firmaments, the heavenly shrines, the celestial beings, holy creatures, wheels, angels, names, and the like – a parallel structure is proposed, consisting of mystical concepts allowing man to forge reciprocal relations with the upper world by means of “knowledge of the secret” of “Shi’ur Qomah,” “gazing upon the Merkabah,” “use of the Throne of Honor,” “ascent to the firmaments,” “beholding the Hekhalot,” singing adorations, “riding the wheels,” “use” of the names, “invoking the angels,” and the like.<sup>30</sup> In the Hekhalot literature, religious consciousness is founded upon the capability bestowed upon man of passing between different levels of existence and of deciphering the secrets of the celestial world through mystical elevation, magical-theurgical use of the names, and the recitation of angelic tradition, which includes esoteric knowledge and celestial ritual. This conception regards man as capable of ascent to celestial experiences, of being affected by them, and of influencing them, by means of the three aforementioned areas. Mysticism, magic, and angelology are anchored in the upper world both as a focus of mystical yearnings and also as a realm of celestial vision, both as a source of magical knowledge and also as an area in which it can be applied. Further, it is the exalted angelic domain and the realm of celestial worship, angelic rites, and mysteries. In the Hekhalot traditions these three areas are acquired by means of mystical experience – their origin is in celestial revelation or in ascent on high, in descent to the Merkabah, in “Entering the Grove,” or in ecstatic mystical conversion. The secrets of the Merkabah, the angelic hymns, and the descriptions of the Shi’ur Qomah are all known through visionary revelation, they are heard in a celestial “divine voice,” or from the angels’ mouths. The collocation of magical means – the names, the seals, the invocations – are also known by visionary revelation, they are imparted through the testimony of those who descend to the Merkabah and return to relate the details of their celestial vision to their listeners, including those components which can be described, for ritual reiteration, for study, and for use.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>30</sup> See Hekhalot Zutarti, pp. 22–25 for a demonstration of this connection.

<sup>31</sup> See n. 20 above, and see also the traditions regarding testimony from the upper worlds: “A decree of heaven is upon you, O Descenders to the Merkabah, if you do not speak and say what you have heard, and if you do not testify about what you have seen (Synopsis, § 169).” “Rabbi Akiba said, When I went and asked this question before the Throne of Glory, ... and when I parted from the Throne of Glory to descend with

The three elements are combined with each other within the conceptual world of the circles among whom the Hekhalot literature was created, for they are the different ways of establishing a substantial continuum between celestial, numinous reality, with its multiplicity of components, and the world of those who descend to the Merkabah. These ways deviate from the traditional religious conviction, which is based on a historical revelation as consolidated in the Torah and the commandments, and which is primarily related to man's earthly experience, to his historical consciousness, and to his existence in this world. The three areas under discussion here are based on a structure of cosmological and theological assumptions which is focused on realms hidden from man's normal apprehension and which mainly relates to celestial reality and to man's mystical and magical connection with it.

These new dimensions are founded upon the assumption that the revelation of God and His angels is a phenomenon which did not cease after the final recension of the Scriptures, but that it is a continually recurring phenomenon. That is to say, mysticism, angelology, and magic in the Hekhalot literature depend upon renewed revelation, which is esoteric in character, made known to those who descend to the Merkabah as they ascend upward, and for them it is a source of inspiration and authority. All three factors are based on a worldview for which celestial existence is central and which lays bare unknown dimensions within it. Religious obligation concentrates upon study of the secrets of divine reality, on beholding the Merkabah, on knowledge of the names, and on ascent to the world of the angels. The spiritual desideratum is defined as "seeing the King in His splendor," and as knowledge of "the secrets of the world", and as knowledge of the names of the celestial creatures and the dimensions of Shi'ur Qomah. It is bound up with imitation of the worship of the angels in the celestial Hekhalot and in the mystical re-creation of its foundations.

The three areas establish celestial reality and organize it into liturgical and ritual patterns, of mystical, magical, and angelological character. These new patterns represent a significant turning point in religious consciousness, a turning point which reflects distance from tangible reality, alienation from earthly experience, alongside a withdrawal into a mythical world and concentration on celestial reality, on mystical life, on the world of the angels, and on magical practice.

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the children of man, He said to me, Akiba, go down and testify as to the heavenly dimensions to the people," Synopsis, §686, and cf. Synopsis, pars. 712, 348, 405, 423. On the celestial sources of the names, see Synopsis, pars. 629-636.

Whether the Hekhalot traditions are based on authentic mystical experience, bound up with the revelation of the secrets of a celestial vision at the time of the descent to the Merkabah, or on an direct numinous-ecstatic experience, or whether they are a product of religious imagination, a literary and poetical fiction, or merely a mystical association,<sup>32</sup> in the consciousness of their authors, as reflected in many of the Hekhalot traditions, it is evident that they regard these matters as bearing the authority of divine revelation, and they acquire the force of a profound spiritual experience. All knowledge in these areas depends upon the authority of vision or of angelic revelation and rests upon the holy celestial source.

In various chapters of the Hekhalot literature we find, juxtaposed with each other, strata in which these three areas are bound up with each other and directly connected to the mystical source of knowledge, and, correspondingly, the strata in which each of these areas is distinctly autonomous. That is to say, in the Hekhalot traditions we find, side by side, compositions which concern only the use of adjurations and magic spells,<sup>33</sup> works which mainly contain angelic hymns and exalted cosmological descriptions, and chapters of the Hekhalot which concentrate on expressing the mystical experience of those who descend to the Merkabah and on descriptions of impressions of the celestial vision which they witnessed.<sup>34</sup> Alongside these distinct sections, in other parts of the literature, we also find these areas combined in a unified structure.

The three areas are discussed in this literature in different stylistic patterns and in various manners of transmission, but one must distinguish between the outer division, which is reflected in the stylistic and generic variety of the various traditions, and the shared inner affiliation to mysticism, magic, and angelology. One must avoid arbitrarily separating the areas and classifying them simplistically. The mystical ascent or descent to the Merkabah is the source for the authority of the religious creativity as expressed in all forms of the Hekhalot literature, and it is direct testimony to the new celestial reality which is laid out

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<sup>32</sup> On the connection between authentic religious experience and literary creation, cf. J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination* (New York 1987), p. 31. Halperin, Chariot, p. 7., criticizes Scholem's attitude towards mystical experience as reflected in Hekhalot literature. See also Elior, Merkabah (n.9 above).

<sup>33</sup> See nn. 7, 25 above.

<sup>34</sup> See Hekhalot Rabati and Ma'aseh Merkabah for the angelic hymns and Sefer Hekhalot for cosmological descriptions, and see nn. 6 and 8 above. See also Alexander, Enoch, Introduction, p. 239.

in this creation.<sup>35</sup> Angelology is the conceptual matrix which produces the numinous experience that characterizes Merkabah literature. It is also the basic cosmological and ritual pattern that establishes the celestial reality to which those who descend to the Merkabah refer, and a model for imitation from which they draw inspiration for their worship. Moreover, angelology nourishes the ritual configuration, the magical praxis, and mystical elevation. Magic, or the system of bonds and relationships between the revealed and concealed worlds, which makes use of the names which comprise celestial reality and which influence it, is also the transmissible manifestation of the tradition of the names and of the orders of the upper worlds which are learned from the angels when descending to the Merkabah. Magic is also the key to repeated mystical elevation, to "practical use," to spells and adjurations, to theurgical influence on celestial forces and on change in the orders of nature by means of controlling the higher forces. The three aforementioned subjects have been discussed to a varying degree in research into Hekhalot literature. The mystical element has received extensive illumination and comprehensive scholarly discussion with respect to its phenomenological and historical aspects.<sup>36</sup> The magical-theurgic element has been mentioned in comparison to the place of magic in the syncretistic culture that was contemporary to it,<sup>37</sup> and the tradition of the names and its connection with mysticism and magic has also been investigated to some degree.<sup>38</sup> In contrast, the angelological element as a

<sup>35</sup> P. Schäfer has recently argued unequivocally against placing the mystical element in the center of the Hekhalot traditions and in favor of viewing that literature as a magic corpus, saying, "Anyone who reads the texts edited in the *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* in an unbiased way, and without having the history of research inaugurated by Scholem in mind, will hardly conclude that it is precisely the ascent to the Merkavah which forms the center of interest of the authors of this literature. It seems to me that an entirely different impression will force itself upon the reader. That is, we are concerned here with eminently magical texts which deal with forceful adjurations." See P. Schäfer, "Gershom Scholem Reconsidered: the Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism," the Twelfth Sacks Lecture (Oxford 1986), p. 6. See the recently published book, P. Schäfer, *Hekhalot Studien* (Tübingen 1988), ch. 13, pp. 288ff. and cf. idem, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, (New York 1992). See also Gruenwald's criticism of Schäfer's position: I. Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism* (Frankfurt 1988), ch. 6, pp. 175-190.

<sup>36</sup> See n. 14, above. See also Gruenwald, *Apocalypse*, pp. 98-126, Dan, Three (n. 5 above)

<sup>37</sup> See Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 50-51; Scholem, *Gnosticism*, pp. 75-77; Margaliot, *Sefer ha-Razim*, pp. 1-16. Smith, *Hekhalot* (n. 4 above), pp. 149-160, and esp. pp. 154-156. In Schäfer's article, referred to in n. 25 above, the history of research in this field is reviewed, including the important developments that have taken place in it recently with the publication of Jewish magical texts from the Geniza.

<sup>38</sup> See n. 26 above.

general phenomenon has been discussed very little, and the following discussion will be devoted to a clarification of its uniqueness in the Hekhalot literature and to illuminating its mystical, mythical, and ritual dimensions.

The present discussion will concentrate upon the characteristics of the conception of the angels in Merkabah literature, on its relation to the conception of the pleroma and to the mythic tradition, and on the significance of the prototypical position of the angels and their worship in the celestial Temple, in the ritual of those who descend to the Merkabah.

The conception of the angels in the Hekhalot literature was inspired by developments affecting the importance of angels in post-Biblical Judaism. The angelological concepts in the apocalyptic literature and in the writings of the Judean Desert sect reflect a new phase in the development and diffusion of the belief in angels.<sup>39</sup> This juncture has generally been understood as a result of the rise of the transcendental conception of God, which distanced God from the world and necessitated the inclusion of intermediary essences, though occasionally this development has been attributed to a foreign influence, especially Persian and Babylonian, upon Israelite faith. The angels fill the space of the celestial world and glorify the greatness of the Creator by serving as an exalted retinue in many of the apocryphal works. They may also descend to the mundane world and carry out missions in the name of God, holding converse with prophets and mystical visionaries.

The angels play a variety of roles in the upper realm. They are associated with the celestial Temple and are involved with ritual ceremonies and heavenly prayer before the Throne of Glory.<sup>40</sup> Along with their celestial tasks, which are described in relation to the priesthood and the Temple, the description of the retinue of angels is influenced by the sight of the royal courts and regal and military retinues of the late

<sup>39</sup> See W. O. Osterley, *Introduction To The Books of the Apocrypha*, 1935, pp. 106–110. J. Licht, "Malakhim," *Enziklopedia Mikrait*, IV, 1970<sup>2</sup>, cols. 975–990. P. Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen: Untersuchungen zur rabbinischen Engelvorstellung*. W. de Gruyter, Berlin und New York 1975. M. Mach, *Mehkarim be-Torat ha-Malakhim ha-Yehudit ba-Tekufah ha-Helenistit-Romit*, Dissertation (Tel Aviv 1986) henceforth: "Mach, Mehkarim". See the detailed bibliographical appendix there on angels in the literature of the Apocrypha.

<sup>40</sup> See A. Aptovizer, "Beit ha-Mikdash shel Ma'alah 'al pi ha-Aggadah," *Tarbiz* 2 (1931), pp. 137–153, 257–287. E. E. Urbach, "Yerushalayim shel Ma'alah ve-Yerushalayim shel Matah," in *Yerushalayim le-Doroteha*, Twenty-fifth Convention of Land of Israel Studies, 1969, pp. 156–171, and cf. H. Bietenhard, *Die Himmlische Welt im Urchristentum und Spaetjudentum* (Tübingen 1951), pp. 192ff.

Persian period. Aside from their heavenly service, the angels also take part in the management of Creation, and they are appointed by the divinity over various dimensions of the universe and of the fulfillment of its historical vocation. They are classified into various orders and ranks in a detailed hierarchical division, and, in some sources, they are described figuratively and given a decided personal character. The details of their existence – their number, their characteristics, their ranks, and their roles, vary from work to work within the apocryphal literature. Nonetheless, the emphasis on their centrality is reflected prominently in this literature.<sup>41</sup>

Many of the characteristics mentioned above are also found in the conception of the angels in the Hekhalot literature. However, these concepts are not simply quoted or borrowed, but rather they are presented through a new prism: that of mysticism, as narrated from the standpoint of the one descending to the Merkabah, who ascends to the heavens upon his own initiative and encounters angels. Alternatively, they are also viewed through the prism of magic, that is, from the perspective of one involved in the invocation of angels and the use of names. Furthermore, while in the apocryphal literature the angels generally appear in an apocalyptic framework and are connected to eschatological exegesis, here in the Hekhalot literature they are not generally associated with a particular objective beyond mystical contemplation or a magical relationship. That is to say, the angels in the apocryphal literature are not affected by the visionaries or invoked by them, but they are bound up with a predetermined divine mission. While in the Hekhalot they fulfill an active role in the mystical experience and express the exalted reality of the celestial Temple which is imparted to the descenders of the chariot.

These views regarding the angels in post-Biblical literature did not crystalize around a single conceptual system, but it is quite evident that

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<sup>41</sup> For detailed references to angels in this literature see J. H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (New York 1982), vol. 2, pp. 925–927; M. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (Philadelphia 1984), p. 678. Index, article, "Angels." Several works within this literature refer to themselves as compositions dictated by angels, and some contain dialogues with them. Many of the apocalyptic visions refer to the figure of an angel who speaks and guides the seer in his heavenly ascent, explains the meaning of the vision that is revealed to his eyes, and explicates its cosmological or eschatological meaning. See, for example, *The Ethiopian Enoch*, *The Testament of Levi*, the *Vision of Yohanan*, and *Book of Jubilees*. Josephus Flavius mentions secret traditions of the names of angels which were preserved by the Essenes, and in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the angel Yehoel is described, within whom is the name of God, as the one who teaches the celestial hymns. See Scholem, *Gnosticism*, pp. 23–24. Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, pp. 681–700.



the significance of the angels in religious thought is enhanced during the Second Temple period. Further, it is manifest that the development of the conception of the angels and the various teachings about angels were composed in those circles in which the apocryphal literature and the Judean Desert Scrolls were composed. A special place is set aside for the angels known as "Kohanei Korev," "Nesiei Rosh," "priests of the Exalted Heights," and the Sons of Light in the Qumran literature. Here the world of the angels becomes tangible and real, joins with the earthly and celestial cult of the companions of the Yahad, and shares their strict laws of ritual purity. Here the celestial Temple and its priests, the angels, correspond to the world of the priesthood of the members of the Yahad. The angels participate in the plans for the wars of the End of Days between the celestial and earthly Sons of Light and the Sons of darkness, and in determining the fate of the sect in the end of days.<sup>42</sup> The various celestial powers, called "princes" or "archons," have a central position in the gnostic literature of the first centuries, in which they are linked to traditions of the creation of the world, with mythical views connected with the pleroma, with the sin of the fallen angels, and with various dualistic views.<sup>43</sup> The angels also occupy an important place in the syncretistic magical literature which blossomed throughout the Hellenistic world at the close of antiquity. In works of magic the angels are the object of incantations and represent the mysterious forces active upon man and activated by him.<sup>44</sup>

The transformation in the importance of the angels in religious consciousness and the alteration in the meaning of their role in celestial

<sup>42</sup> On the doctrine of angels in Qumran see Y. Yadin, *Milhemet Bnei Or bi-Bnei Hoshekh* (Jerusalem 1955), pp. 209-221; J. Strugnell, *The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran - 4 Q Serek Shirot Olat Hašabbāt*, suppl. to VT 7 (1960), pp. 318-345. C. Newsom, *4 Q Serek Shirot Olat Hašabbāt (The Qumran Angelic Liturgy)* Diss. Harvard (Cambridge, Mass 1982); idem, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: a Critical Edition* (Atlanta 1985), pp. 23-59, 77-80.

<sup>43</sup> See H. Jonas, *The Gnostic Religion* (Boston 1963), pp. 42-44, 130-143. K. Rudolph, *Gnosis, the Nature and History of Gnosticism* (San Francisco 1987), pp. 53-87. G. Stroumsa, *Another Seed* (Leiden 1984). Regarding the connection between the gnostic views of the archons and the guardians of the gates and the conception of the angels in Hekhalot literature, see Scholem, *Trends*, p. 49, and cf. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic* (n. 5 above), pp. 110-120. See also P. Alexander, "Comparing Merkabah Mysticism and Gnosticism: an Essay in Method," *JJS* 35(1) (1984), pp. 1-18.

<sup>44</sup> See *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation*, H. D. Betz (ed.), (Chicago 1986), pp. xli-lit; E. R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational*, pp. 283-211; J. M. Hull, *Hellenistic Magic and the Synoptic Tradition* (London 1974). For a partial comparison of magical literature and Hekhalot literature see Smith, *Hekhalot* (above, n. 4), pp. 149-160; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic* (above, n. 5), pp. 104-110; M. Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the Hekhalot Literature," *HUCA* vol. LIX (1988), pp. 82-86.

reality derives from the turning point which took place in understanding of the concept of God and in the meaning of the divine revelation in post-Biblical literature, as well as from the cessation of prophecy and the loss of prophetic authority during the Second Temple period. In contrast to the Biblical view which reflects the awareness that the divinity is close to man, and which views divine revelation as transpiring in the earthly realm, which is conditional upon the initiative of the deity, and upon His desire to reveal Himself in this world, within historical reality,<sup>45</sup> post-Biblical literature reflects a different attitude. Here the exaltation of God is intensified, and His eminence, His glorification, and His immense remoteness from earthly reality are emphasized. In the wake of the transcendental view, which develops a conception of a divinity exalted in His distance and in His wondrous ways which are concealed from human understanding, a view emerges which sees the rule of the universe as given over to a structure of celestial forces.

Gradually a view developed regarding the existence of intricate celestial structures which separate man from God – firmaments, Hekhalot, and Merkabot, and, alongside them, a complex array of celestial beings which bear the sovereignty of God and rule the world in His name. A multitude of angels, princes, and a variety of heavenly creatures was created, between man and God. Correspondingly, as this immeasurable distance opens and as more angelic barriers are erected, one sees an intense desire to penetrate the hidden worlds in the celestial firmaments, to contemplate their beauty, to lay bare their secrets, and to testify as to what takes place on High.<sup>46</sup>

An additional change, derived from the transcendental view, occurred with respect to the place of divine revelation. In post-Biblical literature the divinity is no longer revealed on earth, but, rather, God is revealed only to visionaries who ascend to heaven. All the descriptions of divine revelation relate to the manifestation of God in the upper worlds, and they are transmitted in the name of those who ascended on High and viewed the celestial vision. Revelation is separated from earthly reality, from the realm of the prophets, and from the public domain, and now it is bound up with the ascent on High of a chosen individual, with the revelation of a celestial vision, and with converse with the angels, who guide the ascender and interpret the vision to him.

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<sup>45</sup> See J. Guttman, *ha-Philosophia shel ha-Yahadut* (Jerusalem 1963), pp. 13–14.

<sup>46</sup> See I. Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism* (Berlin and New York 1982), p. 31.

The emphasis on the exaltation of God and on His remoteness from any contact with the earthly present, along with the displacement of the area of revelation from earth to heaven, was bound up with a change in the position of the angels and with a re-mythologization of the celestial world. The angels become the divine entities which form the barrier between earthly and celestial reality, on the one hand, and, they also become the entities which mediate between divine being and earthly reality, on the other hand. In this literature they are depicted as commanding a wealth of secrets and as possessing foreknowledge of the future, as expounding the celestial vision and as interpreting the mysteries of the mundane world, and also as effecting the celestial ritual, adoring, extolling, and praying on High.

The new tendencies in apocryphal literature and in the writings of the Judean Desert Sect regarding the status of the angels and their place in religious perception, were developed and augmented in the Hekhalot literature. The angelological elements mentioned in the apocrypha and in the scrolls were revised in the Hekhalot traditions and combined with mystical and magical elements and incorporated within mythical and liturgical structures. Three distinct elements are notable in the doctrine of angels of Hekhalot literature:

1. The mystical element embodied in the affiliation with "another reality," which is derived from the mystical vision of Ezekiel's Chariot, from the body of rabbinic mystical lore known as "Entry into the Grove" (*Hagigah* 15) and from the conception of Shi'ur Qomah. Some of its components are influenced indirectly by post-Biblical apocryphal writing.

2. The mythical element, which relates to the profusion of divine forces in the world of the Merkabah and to the creation of new divine figures. This is influenced conditionally by the surrounding culture, though it also expresses an extremely powerful, original numinous religious experience.

3. The ritual-magic element, which is found in the relation to the ritual of the heavenly Temple, and which is influenced both by syncretistic tendencies and also by the Qumran literature.

Alongside these elements are found additional dimensions of the conception of the angels, such as their significance in prayer, their ambivalent attitude towards those who descend to the Merkabah and ascend to heaven, "the bringing down of the Prince of Torah," "Angels of Destruction," and the struggle with hostile angels. These topics will not be discussed here, both because they have already been widely examined in recent research and also because they deviate from the

shared elements which shape the doctrine of angels in Hekhalot literature.<sup>47</sup> The following remarks will be devoted to clarifying the three elements just mentioned, which delineate the conception of angels in the Merkabah tradition.

### *The Other Reality*

I. The Hekhalot literature is concentrated on the world of the Merkabah and on the celestial Hekhalot, and it transfers the essence of religious worship to the heavens, to the realm of angelic beings and various celestial powers. This literature reflects the assumption that no true reality exists on the mundane level, and consequently the center of religious life is deflected from corporeal reality to visionary reality, to the mythic reality of the world of the angels, and to the figure of Shi'ur Qomah. All concern is focused on this "other reality," which differs in its mysterious essence from all familiar reality. In this literature a configuration of mystical relations is established, within which man does not act according to the written religious tradition. Nor is this setting essentially defined by man's affinity to his fellow man or by the experience of mundane reality, but rather according to his bond to the renewed revelation of the world of the Merkabah and to the revealed celestial beings and mythological creatures.<sup>48</sup>

The celestial reality related to by the descender to the Merkabah includes a detailed cosmological description of the firmaments and a precise record of the details of the mythical reality of the world of the angels. The masters of the Hekhalot list many *groups* of angels which are given collective names, including "Princes of the Merkabah,"

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<sup>47</sup> See P. Schäfer, "Engel und Menschen in der Hekhalot Literatur," *Kairos* 22 (1980), and also idem, *Hekhalot Studien* (Tübingen 1988), pp. 250–276. See also the discussion by Halperin, Chariot (n. 9 above), in "Sar Torah," pp. 427–438. Regarding the angels and prayer in Hekhalot literature, see I. Gruenwald, "Shirat ha-Malakhim, ha-Kedushah, u-Ba'ayat Hibura shel Sifrut ha-Hekhalot," in *Perakim be-Toldot Yerushalayim bi-Yemei Bait Sheni* (Jerusalem 1981), pp. 459–481. M. D. Swartz, "Patterns of Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism: Progression of Themes in Maaseh Merkabah," *New Perspectives on Ancient Judaism*, vol. V, P. Flesher (ed.) (New York 1990), pp. 173–186. M. Bar-Ilan, *Sitrei Tefilah ve-Hekhalot* (Ramat-Gan 1987). Regarding angels of destruction see J. Dan, "Petah Hekhal ha-Shishi," *Mehkarei Yerushalayim be-Mahshevet Yisrael* (n. 14 above), pp. 197–220.

<sup>48</sup> On the world of the angels as "another reality" see n. 11 above, and see Synopsis, pars. 152–174 for one example among many of that view in Hekhalot literature.

"Heavenly Wheels," "Cherubim," "Ofannim," "Princes of the Faces of the Holy Hayyot," "Ofannim of Light," "Cherubim of Majesty," "Hayyot," "Hashmal," "Holy Hayyot," "Seraphim of Flame," "Ranks of the Hosts," "Soldiers of Aravot," "Great Princes called YHWH in the Name of their King," "Sons of on High," "Seven Heads of the Servants of the Heroes of Power," "Hosts," "Seraphim," "Arelim," "Servants," "Twelve Ministers," "Heroic Kings," "High Holies," "Seven Princes Guarding the Seven Gates of the Hekhalot," "A Thousand Camps of Multitudes of Hosts," "The Host of the Divine Presence," "Holy Angels," and the like. These names reflect various angelological traditions from the Hekhalot literature, and their source is found in part in an indirect verbal affinity with the Biblical tradition in general, especially the Vision of Ezekiel. Many unique amalgamations are the creation of the authors of the Hekhalot, who convert these dormant visionary concepts into anthropomorphic celestial beings who sing praise and exaltation of the Lord.

A significant number of these names are composed of concepts and combinations derived from the vision of Ezekiel (chapters 1 and 10). However, their reappearance in the Hekhalot literature is neither a direct quotation nor a chance combination, but rather a decipherment of the vision of the Merkabah and a threestage re-creation including the ritual source of the vision in the earthly Temple; transfer of the ritual objects of the Temple worship to the visionary level in Ezekiel's Merkabah; and their reintegration into the celestial rite, personified as priests and Levites serving in the celestial worship.

This reading is founded upon the assumption that a considerable portion of the concepts mentioned in the vision of the consecration of Ezekiel are little more than visionary abstractions of concepts taken originally from the ritual objects of the Temple of Solomon, which are described in detail in 1 Kings 7:23-37, 8:6-9 and in 2 Chronicles 3:7-14, 4:3-5, 14-15. The lions, the cattle, the cherubim, the spokes of the wheel, the wheels, and the structure of the chariot, which were all connected on the ritual level as part of the objects of the Temple service, underwent a visionary metamorphosis in the figure of the Holy Hayyot with the faces of lions, oxen, and Cherubim standing on the wheels in Ezekiel's vision of the Merkabah.

The *bronze* "molten sea" that stood on *four* triads of oxen, which faced in the *four* directions "three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east," and the *bronze* stands with four *bronze wheels* with spokes, axles, and hubs," on the frames of which stood "*lions, oxen, and Cherubim*" ... "and palm trees in the proportion

of each"<sup>49</sup> and the Cherubim which were plated with gold and spread their wings "touching each other wingtip to wingtip"<sup>50</sup> were all transformed in the vision of the exiled priest Ezekiel into the image of a great glowing cloud with brightness round about it and fire flashing forth, within which was seen "the likeness of the *four hayyot* (living creatures)" with their wings, sparkling "like burnished bronze," facing the four cardinal directions, "and their faces were in the figure of the face of a *man* and the face of a *lion* ... and the face of an *ox* ... and in the face of an *eagle* to all four of them:" and their wings touched one another.<sup>51</sup> The four wheels (ofannim) of the stands in the Temple, which are described in concrete detail: "and *the four wheels* beneath the frames ... and *the making of the wheels* was like the making of the wheels of a chariot, their axletrees and their backs and their rims and their spokes everything was molten,"<sup>52</sup> becomes in the vision of Ezekiel four celestial wheels: "And as I beheld the Hayyot, behold one wheel upon the earth by the Hayyot, with his *four faces*; the *appearance of the wheels and their making* was like unto the color of a beryl; and they four had one likeness; and their appearance and their making was as it were *a wheel in the middle of a wheel* ... and when the Hayyot went, the wheels went by them: ... for the spirit of the Hayyah was in the wheels."<sup>53</sup> The winged Cherubim from the Temple also became, in the second version of the vision, winged Cherubim with four faces standing on the four wheels, which are identified with the Holy Hayyot and linked to the Temple that appeared to the prophet in the "vision of the Lord."<sup>54</sup>

*The ritual objects and the dormant bronze utensils* from Solomon's Temple, which were most likely influenced originally by patterns of mythical thought, evolved into the "figure of the four Hayyot" with wings that gleam "like burnished bronze," and which, as they move, emit the great roar of the vision of the chariot. In the visionary dimension, movement, sound, and fire were added to the quadruple cultic structure which appeared as a combination of the figures of the Hayyot and the wheels of the chariot, a structure which was also retained in the visionary image of the heavenly Merkabah. However, the essential dimension added to the chariot vision is mythical and mystical, thus eternalizing in heaven the glory and the beauty of the

<sup>49</sup> 1 Kings 7: 23-37.

<sup>50</sup> 1 Kings 6: 23-28.

<sup>51</sup> Ezekiel 1: 4-11.

<sup>52</sup> 1 Kings 7: 32-33.

<sup>53</sup> Ezekiel 1: 15-21.

<sup>54</sup> Ezekiel ch. 10, and see 8: 3.

earthly temple, which has been destroyed. Ezekiel, the *priest*, was exiled in the exile of Jehoiachin in 597 BCE, when Nebuchadnezzar plundered "all of the treasures in the House of the Lord and all of the treasures in the House of the King and cut in pieces all of the golden utensils which Solomon, king of Israel, had made in the Temple of the Lord,"<sup>55</sup> saw "the visions of God" in "the fifth year of the exile of Jehoiachin,"<sup>56</sup> when the shattered utensils of the Temple and the plundered ritual objects became visionary objects in the celestial Temple.<sup>57</sup>

It seems that the visionary metamorphosis of objects of the earthly Temple ritual indeed was intended to preserve the lost service within poetic memory, and to maintain an echo of the historical memory within a textual reality. For the authors of the Hekhalot, who contemplated the Merkabah of Ezekiel after the destruction of the Second Temple, transformed the visionary beings which were originally associated with the earthly Temple ritual, into bearers of the ritual of the celestial Temple, while describing the elements of the Merkabah in the guise of personified celestial beings who take part in the heavenly ritual in the pattern of the Temple service.

The Hayyot, the Cherubim, and the Ofannim – which are described in the vision of Ezekiel as moving in many directions, as forming an awesome and splendid vision, as though the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, the storm wind, burning fire and the glow of torches – are envisioned in the Hekhalot tradition in the figure of heavenly priests and Levites who play, chant, intone, and sing before the Throne of Glory: "From the sound of the playing of lutes of His Hayyot from the sound of the intoning of the drums of His Ofannim and from the sound of the chants of the cymbals of His Cherubim ..." "For with six voices singing before Him the bearers of His glorious Throne, the *Cherubim* and the *Ofannim* and the Holy Hayyot."<sup>58</sup>

In many parts of the Merkabah a multi-voiced personification takes place, for all of its figures become singers, musicians, and players on the

<sup>55</sup> 2 Kings 24: 13.

<sup>56</sup> Ezekiel 1: 1–2.

<sup>57</sup> See the survey of scholarship in reference to Ezekiel's vision: M. Greenberg, *Ezekiel 1–20: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*. Doubleday, 1983. The Anchor Bible vol. 22, pp. 39–59. See also pp. 51–59 for a discussion of the accepted views of the structure of the Merkabah and the character of the vision in comparison with the culture of that period. On the vessels of the First Temple which were taken as booty to Babylonia, see 2 Kings 24: 3, 2 Kings 25: 13–17; Jeremiah 52: 17–27; 2 Chr. 36: 7, 18; and cf. the traditions connected with the vision of Ezekiel and the Temple vessels in "Re'uyot Yehezkel," I. Gruenwald (ed.), *Temirin I*, 1972, p. 110, 11. 31–32.

<sup>58</sup> Synopsis, pars. 103, 161.

instruments of the priests of the Temple. The numinous celestial ceremony is described by means of the combinations of the visionary beings of Ezekiel's chariot, which are indirectly affiliated with the ritual of the Temple, with descriptions of the service of the priests and Levites, which are directly connected to the ritual of the First and Second Temples:<sup>59</sup>

Also the Holy Hayyot devote themselves and sanctify themselves and purify themselves ... and they don garments of fire ... and all of them stand in purity and sanctity and intone songs and melodies and praises and exultation and adoration in a single voice and in a single word and with a single mind and with a single melody.<sup>60</sup>

The earthly Temple which had been destroyed was perpetuated in a visionary image; likewise the earthly Temple service was eternalized by means of the celestial ceremony as repeatedly echoed in the vision of the descenders to the Merkabah. In the Hekhalot literature the celestial worship which combines the vision of the Merkabah and the Temple service is linked with earthly prayer, for all of the creatures of the Merkabah are envisioned as a mighty heavenly chorus which sings, plays, praises, extols, and prays in correspondence with the earthly worshipers who exclaim: "Holy, Holy, Holy." Thus the transition from the ritual of the earthly Temple to the prophetic vision of the Merkabah is completed: the beauty of the Temple is maintained in the celestial vision, a beauty which is revealed anew in the mystical exaltation of the authors of the Hekhalot, who depict the worship of the Hayyot of the Merkabah using patterns of the service of the priests and Levites, combining the celestial liturgy with earthly prayers: "From the chant of the lutes of His Hayyot, from the song of the drums of His Ofannim and from the sound of the melodies of the cymbals of His Cherubim the sound grows strong and rises up with a great noise in sanctity while Israel says before Him H[oly] H[oly] H[oly]."<sup>61</sup>

According to various traditions, the angels who take part in this celestial ceremony are described as "serving the Throne of Glory," and as bearing upon themselves "generative letters," and as "embellished with the inscription of the Ineffable Name." They are described as members of the heavenly retinue, and defined as guardians of the gates

<sup>59</sup> Cf. 2 Chr. 5: 12-14, 7: 6; 1 Kings 10: 12, and n. 107 below. On the Priests and Levites singing in the Temple, cf. Nehemiah 7, 12: 27, 46 and further discussion below.

<sup>60</sup> Synopsis, pars. 184-185, and cf. § 590.

<sup>61</sup> See Synopsis, § 161, and cf. the various traditions there regarding the prayer of the higher and lower beings, pars. 162-165, 178-190, and see *The Vision of Yohanan*, IV, 8, and also see below, near n. 111.



of the Hekhalot and as possessors of the seals. That is to say, they are depicted with the inspiration of the earthly concepts of the Temple ritual, which include a retinue of servants and helpers whose status is fixed in a hierarchical order. This retinue is decorated with emblems of honor and with the indisputable signs of rank and degree which embody the hierarchical gradation and reflect expressions of authority and defined tasks. In the description of the celestial Temple service it is said that they "pass crowns," "pronounce names," "expound holiness," bless and pray, extol, recite poetry, "give praise and adoration and celebration," "prepare a seat for the One who sits upon the Cherubim," "attach crowns," sing hymns, "murmur in song," play music, "recall and pronounce the memory of His name," "devote and sanctify themselves," immerse and "purify themselves in rivers of fire." That is, they embody the celestial hypostasis of the earthly Temple ceremony and the rituals which it included, and, in parallel, they reflect the service of the priests and Levites as we shall see below. Along with their position in the celestial world they also represent God and promise His closeness to human beings and the action of His power by means of them. In several traditions they are depicted as being responsible for the order of nature and for the leadership of the world. In the Hekhalot tradition the angels hold conversation with those who descend to the Merkabah, respond to their adjurations, reveal enigma and arcana to them, decipher the secrets of celestial reality, teaching them the mysteries of the Shi'ur Qomah, and raise them up to the Throne of Glory. That is to say, the angels become figures who provide the link between the mysteries of heaven and the apprehension of one who descends to the Merkabah. The angels become heavenly creatures who are visible and audible to human beings. They are perceived as the denizens of the upper worlds with whom one can converse, or as an accessible dimension of the divine world which is perceived by man in his mind's eye after the earthly Temple had been destroyed, prophecy had ceased, and God had removed Himself from apprehension.<sup>62</sup>

## *II. The Merkabah – Multiplicity of Divine Powers*

The Hekhalot traditions reflect a transition from a religious conception focused on God to a worldview centered on the Merkabah. That is, alongside relation to a God exalted within the mysteries of the

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<sup>62</sup> See Synopsis, §123 for a despondent description of the destruction of the Temple, which is attributed to a celestial voice.

Hekhalot, paramount importance is attributed to the celestial powers found beside Him, those which are revealed to the adepts. Along with the impersonal angelic categories, described in connection with the vision of Ezekiel and in the descriptive language of the Bible, which constitute the celestial realm of being and create the Merkabah, *individual* celestial powers also appear, with names whose sources are unknown, such as Metatron, 'Anafiel, Zaharariel, Tetrosia, Suria, Sassangiel, Cherubiel, Yofiel, Maghasha, Shakhahuzay, Adiriron, Ozzahaya, and many others. These figures, the meaning of whose names is not clear, and whose historical development is unknown to us, have a decidedly mythological character. Their most prominent characteristic is their exalted divine eminence, within the heights of the Merkabah, which is portrayed with mythical traits. They have simultaneously sustained a complex association with the deity and fulfill the role as the celestial powers with whom the adept holds conversation during the various stages of his ascent. Central to this visionary reality are the angels, the Princes, the guardians of the Hekhalot, the Holy Hayyot, the Cherubim, and the celestial beings who administer the rite of the earthly Temple, which has been destroyed, in its visionary likeness in a celestial ceremony, while they also weave a new exalted mythical reality, gleaming with splendor. All of these are described from the viewpoint of the descenders to the Merkabah, who ascend to the celestial Hekhalot and converse with their denizens.

As noted, the arena of the vision passes to the upper realm, and therefore the description of the angels is not bound up with any historical event, with eschatological expectation, with textual interpretation, or with a specific prophetic vision connected with the human world. Rather the description is concerned with the angels' connection with the world of the Merkabah and the celestial ceremonies, on the one hand, and with the celestial reality encountered by the descender of the chariot, on the other. The angels create the exalted reality of the world of the Merkabah with its beauty, elevation, and arcana: they are the attendants at the celestial ceremony and of the ritual of the upper Hekhalot. They are the means by which the divine mysteries are revealed to the descenders to the Merkabah, and they establish the numinous existence against the background of which the figure of God is described.

The conception of the "other reality" is founded upon mystical illumination and a visionary view established in the connection with the Merkabah of Ezekiel and with "Entry into the Grove." However, it seems that the angelology which is expressed therein is also influenced

indirectly by the concepts of syncretistic Hellenistic culture, which was polytheistic, mythical, and close to it in spirit. Hellenistic religious thought is characterized by the consolidation of syncretistic mythologies which were based on the adaptation of existing traditions and by the creation of new divine entities. Thus it expressed interest in the mystical elevation connected with gazing upon the divine being and with contemplation of heavenly powers, and it spoke extensively of the magic means connected to these ends.<sup>63</sup> These traits are consistent with the characteristics of Hekhalot literature, which was created in the geographical area influenced by Hellenistic culture and with a close affinity to it.

The perception of angels of the Hekhalot literature, reflecting the continuation of the process of remythologization which began in post-Scriptural literature, was consolidated, as noted, in a period when polytheism, paganism, occult, and magical traditions were preeminent in the surrounding cultures.<sup>64</sup> All of these are expressed in the angelological conceptions in which the gods of Greek and Egyptian mythology, along with Biblical figures, served together to create a syncretistic mythology which acknowledges many divine entities revealed to man.<sup>65</sup>

The authors of the Hekhalot viewed the upper worlds as a complex divine unity, which contains within it, along with God, various powers and divine entities, which join together in a divine vision and in governing the worlds. This view is extremely remote from the Biblical view which absolutely denied any divine entity except for God, thought it acknowledged the existence of angels as distinct from the divinity, without attributing an explicit character or autonomy to them.<sup>66</sup> In the Hekhalot traditions the mystical attitude does not focus on a single, unique God with a retinue of angels devoid of any individual character, but rather, upon a complex of celestial beings possessing mythic charac-

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<sup>63</sup> See the sources mentioned in n. 44 above, and cf. E. R. Goodenough, *By Light, Light, the Mystic Gospel of Hellenistic Judaism* (New Haven 1935), pp. 11–47, as well as the remarks of Festugiere on the interest of Hellenistic religions in seeing God and deciphering the celestial mystery, A. J. Festugiere, *L'enfant d'Agrigente* (Paris 1950), pp. 12–52.

<sup>64</sup> See the survey by N. Spiegel, "Plotinus" (Hebrew), in *Enneades* (Jerusalem 1978), pp. 34–73.

<sup>65</sup> See *Greek Magical Papyri* (above, n. 44) and *Sefer ha-Razim*, pp. 1–28; E. R. Dodds, *Pagan and Christian in an Age of Anxiety: Some Aspects of Religious Experience from Marcus Aurelius to Constantine*, (Cambridge, 1965), p. 38.

<sup>66</sup> See A. Rofe, *ha-Emunah be-Malakhim be-Yisrael bi-Tekufat Bayit Rishon le-Or Masorot Mikrayot* (Jerusalem 1969), and cf. the summary of the various views regarding the conception of angels in the bible in M. Mach, *Mehkarim* (n. 39 above), pp. 15–51.

teristics. These celestial entities are not viewed as abstract concepts but rather as exalted *figures* who inspire awe and which can be seen and heard and can even become interlocutors. The celestial world view is depicted in images of a dreadful encounter with mysterious divine beings which are qualitatively different from any familiar reality. These beings are depicted in a changing hierarchical order, and, against the background of their numinous character, the new figure of the deity is perceived in the world of the Merkabah.<sup>67</sup>

One example among many of the mythical character of the celestial creatures and their awe-inspiring nature is found in the description of the Holy Hayyot standing at the gate of the Seventh Hekhal:

And two-hundred-and-fifty-six faces has each of the Holy Hayyot opposite the entrance of the Seventh Hekhal. Greater than all of them, are the five-hundred-and-twelve eyes of the four holy Hayyot by the entrance of the Seventh Hekhal, which have the facial forms of the sixteen faces of each of the Hayyot ... whenever one requests to descend to the Merkabah, Anafiel would open the doors of the entrance of the Seventh Hekhal for him, and that man would enter and stand upon the threshold of the entrance to the Seventh Hekhal, and the Holy Hayyot would raise to him five-hundred-and-twelve eyes and each and every eye of the eyes of the Holy Hayyot is split open like a large winnow's sifter and bolts of lightning flash from them. Beside them there are the eyes of the mighty Cherubim and the Ofannim of the Shekhinah for they are similar to torches of light whose flames are coals of juniper."<sup>68</sup>

The change in the status of the Biblical allusion, which refers to the Holy Hayyot in the vision of Ezekiel, takes place when the Hayyot are presented from the point of view of the descender to the Merkabah, gripped by awe in the presence of the closeness of the Holy. The mythical intensification takes place in response to the details of the dreadful vision which had been experienced in the mystical ascent. This ascent lays bare the awesome mythological character of the exalted angelic configurations which creates the celestial Merkabah.

<sup>67</sup> Rudolph Otto explained the essence of religious experience as an encounter with a power which is different in quality from all other reality, a force which he called the Numinous force, and the encounter with it was described as an encounter with the *mysterium tremendum*. According to his view myth expresses the feeling of a person who encounters that other force as a primary expression of the conception of the numinous power. See Otto, *The Idea of the Holy* (n. 11 above).

<sup>68</sup> Synopsis, pars. 245–247, and cf. similar traditions on the holy Hayyot in Hekhalot Zutarti, 11. 100–119, and see pp. 65–67 and the notes there. Regarding the description of the many eyes of the holy Hayyot, cf. the figure of Argus in Greek mythology. For the meaning of the images bound up with eyes, cf. D. Halperin, "A Sexual Image in Hekhalot Rabbati and its Implications," in *Mehkarei Yerushalayim be-Mahshevet Yisrael* VI (1987), pp. 117–132.

Another example of a celestial figure of great majesty that inspires dread, which draws upon the mythical tradition that interprets the upper world in anthropomorphic images, in sights connected to the vision of Ezekiel, in mystical dimensions, and in meaningless names, we find in the anonymous description of Shi'ur Qomah in Hekhalot Zutarti:

Its stature is filled with a throne of fire, the name of which is Dagavat Gav Hyvug. The ends of it are like its stature, and its name is Dabar Barad Robeg. And it has arrows named Batyan Galshrab. And its one eye sees from one end of the world to the other and its name is Atatasath. And the sparks that are emitted from it illuminate all beings with their lights and with his other eye he sees behind that which is going to be and its name is Anotosath, and its body is like a bow and his bow is like the sight of fire, and it has a house all around. His bow is named Domeh Kashtya ... his sword is named Mezamzehu Mazmiyah. The name of his Throne of Glory is Rodfim Piduta.<sup>69</sup>

Beside the divinity, who is described by the angels in connection with the tradition of Shi'ur Qomah, many divine entities are mentioned who are associated with the essence of the divinity, are derived from it and are related one to another in hierarchical order. These divine powers, who combine in their being the divine and the mythic, are, in the main, unknown to us from earlier sources or parallel traditions. The patterns of their description, which suggest a certain parallel between angels and gods in a polytheistic pantheon, deviate significantly from the angelological descriptions in the Bible and in post-Biblical literature, and their historical development is obscure.<sup>70</sup> The following description of Cherubiel which is taken from *Sefer Hekhalot*, exemplifies the literary adaption of the mythical resplendence and divine exaltation of the celestial beings and it reflects the tendency to create new celestial beings with unprecedented detail and to an unparalleled degree:

Rabbi Yishmael said: the angel Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, said to me: Above them is another Prince, noble, mighty and wondrous, brave and extolled, honored with all manner of praise; *Cherubiel YHWH is his name*. A valiant Prince full of boundless power; a majestic yin, with whom is majesty ... a holy Prince, with whom is holiness. A splendid Prince glorified by thousands of hosts, a Prince embellished by countless legions. At his wrath the earth quakes; at his fury the camps tremble; from

<sup>69</sup> See Synopsis, §367, and cf. Hekhalot Zutarti, 11. 231–239 and see notes there, p. 70.

<sup>70</sup> For an evaluation of this development in relation to the phenomenon of gnosticism, see Scholem, *Gnosticism*, pp. 1–5, 31–35, 65–75. J. Dan, *ha-Mistika ha-'Ivrit ha-Kedumah* (Tel Aviv: Broadcast University Library, 1989), pp. 97–98.

his dread the foundations shudder and at his rebuke 'Arabot quakes. His stature is full of glowing coals, the height of his stature is the height of seven firmaments, and the breadth of his stature is of seven firmaments and the thickness of his stature is of seven firmaments. The opening of his mouth blazes like a fiery torch and his tongue is a consuming fire. His eyelids are as the splendor of lightning. His eyes are like sparks of splendor and his face is like flaming fire. A crown of holiness is on his head, for the Sacred Name is engraved on it, from which lightning blazes. The bow of the Shekhinah is across his shoulders: his sword is like a lightning flash on his thigh; his arrows like lightning bolts are on his belt; a shield of devouring fire on his neck and coals of juniper encompass him. The splendor of the Shekhinah is on his face; rays of glory are on his wheels and the veil of royalty crowns his head. His whole body is full of eyes and his stature is covered with wings ... coals blaze from his body, torches shoot from him; and lightning flashes from his face.<sup>71</sup>

This description of Cherubiel, which brings to mind the pagan source of angelology, is one of many dozens of descriptions of angels and Princes who are described in the Hekhalot traditions, in descriptions that are connected to mythological figures, who create, taken together, the angelical hierarchy of the Merkabah.

Two typical groups of descriptions of angels appear in the Hekhalot traditions. One of them is related to *distinct figures* such as Metatron, Shakdehuzia, Suria, Tetrosia, Cherubiel, or Yefefiah, who are divine entities appearing individually in the framework of various traditions. They sometimes are described in the first person and sometimes in the third person, as interlocutors of those who descend to the Merkabah. The second group relates to those *exalted Princes* who create a set part of the celestial cosmology, who are defined by their function and their high status in the upper world. In the second category there is a group with high rank which is unique to a system of names, the source of the first part of which is unknown, while, in the second part, these names are, in exceptional fashion, associated with the explicit Name of God. In Hekhalot Rabbati, in the description of the guardians of the gate of the Seventh Hekhal, various forces are named, of whom it is said, "each of them is called by the name of the King of the World."<sup>72</sup> These forces are called by names with complex structures, combining an unknown name with the Explicit Name:

<sup>71</sup> Synopsis, pars. 33–34, and cf. Sh. Musayov, *Merkavah Shlema* (Jerusalem 1938), fol. 27b. See also similar descriptions of other angels, Synopsis, pars. 23–35, 38–44. There is a certain similarity with the descriptions of Helios, see Margalio, *Sefer ha-Razim*, pp. 12–14; and cf. the description in the spirit of Shi'ur Qomah, Hekhalot Zutarti, 11. 231–237.

<sup>72</sup> Synopsis, §240, and see Scholem, *Trends*, p. 356, n. 3.

Zahafnuray YHWH an honored Prince ... Avirazihi YHWH a mighty prince and desired and dreadful ... Anafiel YHWH a Prince whose name is mentioned before the Throne of His Honor three times every day ... why? Because the ring of the seal of heaven and earth is delivered to his hand.<sup>73</sup>

The group of exalted forces which is called by the name of YHWH the Lord God of Israel is also mentioned in other traditions: in Hekhalot Zutarti these celestial forces are described as "the seven Princes guardians of the Seven Gates of the Hekhalot," and they are called by names with a similar structure: Evtah YHWH Lord God of Israel, Azbugah YHWH, Lord God of Israel, Shakdehuziay, YHWH the Prince, Tetrosia YHWH the Prince, Natpadrayelu YHWH the Prince, and the like.<sup>74</sup> These Princes are also endowed with rings upon which are engraved the holy names which end in the phrase, "YHWH the God of Israel."

*Sefer Hekhalot*, which is also known as *Third Enoch*, mentions "eight great and honored, awesome Princes called YHWH in the name of their King,"<sup>75</sup> and in its various chapters detailed lists are presented specifying celestial forces to whose name is linked that of the divinity. Some of the names in these lists are mentioned in other traditions in Hekhalot literature as the names of God Himself, and sometimes they appear in the lists of the names of other holy powers such as Metatron or Ozahia, Tetrosia or Zaharariel. There is no distinction between the divine names referring to Princes, as seals, as the name of God, as names of angels, or as the name of the "Bosom" in which he who rises up to the Merkabah is seated.<sup>76</sup>

The Explicit Name and the appellation, "YHWH God of Israel our Father in Heaven," which in the Jewish tradition are reserved only for the Holy One, blessed be He, become the property of many celestial powers in the Hekhalot literature. That is to say, the unity of the divinity is appropriated in this tradition, while its unique characteristics are attributed to additional divine forces. In this literature many sublime beings are mentioned, who have been endowed with the unique characteristics of the divine exaltation: the ineffable name, the celestial

<sup>73</sup> Synopsis, § 241.

<sup>74</sup> Hekhalot Zutarti, 11. 353-388, and see notes there, p. 74.

<sup>75</sup> Synopsis, § 13.

<sup>76</sup> See for example Hekhalot Zutarti, 11. 369-370: "Shahariel YHWH the prince, showed me a ring upon which was engraved *Shatkiyer YHWH the God of Israel* whose name was called *Aha Shatkiyer YHWH the God of Israel our Father in heaven*." There is no distinction between "Shatkiyer YHWH the God of Israel," mentioned as the seal of Shahariel, the guard of the gate to the seventh palace, and "our Father in heaven Whose name is called Shatkiyer YHWH the God of Israel."

glory, the divine mystery, the celestial immanence, the creative power, and the infinite dimensions. A complex array of celestial figures is displayed before the viewer. These figures can be seen, described, and heard, and occasionally even worshiped in prayer, summoned in magical invocations, and addressed with petitions. This development, which seems to replace the monotheistic tradition with a polytheistic-visionary myth, reflects a religious transmutation in which earthly worship related to the concept of a single and unique deity is insufficient. The abundance of angels and the appropriation of the uniqueness of the name of God indicate an essential change in religious conception. The new conception reflects an expansion of the definition of the divinity from a single God to a complex of divine forces,<sup>77</sup> nullifying the uniqueness of the single divine entity, and including an essential connection with various celestial beings, gradually exchanging the monotheistic ritual surrounding the earthly Temple for a celestial ritual relating to an original version of mythical and visionary polytheism in the heavenly temples.

The celestial world revealed to one who descends to the Merkabah is a world in which the divinity is reflected in a variety of forms, illuminated in the speculum of myth and depicted in an unfamiliar language. On his way "to see the King in His splendor," the descender to the Merkabah encounters a dynamic structure of celestial powers which are designated by the Explicit Name and denoted by names which cannot be understood:

Immediately Ragazel YHWH takes his hand and throws him to Rahivron YHWH, and Rahivron YHWH to Asheryveli YHWH to Tetrosia YHWH ... and Shahril YHWH seats him in the bosom of Evtah YHWH the God of Israel, in the bosom of Azbugah YHWH the God of Israel ... Shatkiyer YHWH the God of Israel who is called by his name Shatkiyer YHWH the God of Israel our Father in Heaven."<sup>78</sup>

This description depicts unfamiliar figures who create a new conceptual reality. The powers marked with the Explicit Name, who catch, throw, and raise up the descender to the Merkabah into the bosom of Shatkiyer YHWH the God of Israel, create a divine realm which contains a systematic mythical structure embodying the heavenly Merkabah in its plurality of visages, a realm which demarcates the background of mystical experience. Ashryveli, Evtah, Azbugah, Tetrosia,

<sup>77</sup> See Elior, *Demut ha-El*, pp. 17-43.

<sup>78</sup> *Hekhalot Zutarti*, 11. 379-388, and notes, there, pp. 74-75, and cf. *Synopsis*, pars. 414-417.



and Shatkiyer are the names of God himself according to one tradition, while they are also the names of distinct celestial powers which are described as guardians of the gates of the Hekhalot, according to another tradition. Some are mentioned as names, seals, or names of parts of the Merkabah, and they appear in appellations and various combinations of other divine entities which are mentioned by the one who gazes. The great number of unknown names and of unfamiliar linguistic structures along with new forms of address to the divine entities, indicate both the transformation which took place within the world of the authors of the Hekhalot and also the consolidation of a new world of concepts, relating to heavenly existence as to a plenum or pleroma.

In the study of the religions of late antiquity, in the Hellenistic cultural realm, the concept "pleroma" has been proposed to describe the religious perception of a multitude of powers in the world of the divinity. Along with it, one may also use the term "plenum," which has recently been coined:

Pleroma – "The doctrine of God ... incorporates a 'fullness' (pleroma) of Angels and other heavenly beings."<sup>79</sup>

Plenum – "The World is expressed as plenitude of divine forces and beings."<sup>80</sup>

These definitions largely suit the view which emerges from the testimony of those who descend to the Merkabah with respect of the nature of the vision revealed to them when they ascended to the heavens, and which was interpreted by the angels.

However, the picture arising from their remarks concerning the structure of the celestial world is not only an expression of the hierarchical plurality of exalted forces but also a multi-voiced, mythical picture drawing upon the ritual and liturgical tradition which relates to the beings of the Merkabah, to the Hekhalot, and to the firmaments. It also contains a detailed description of the arrangement of celestial forces and the orders of their worship in the heavenly ceremonies. This impression, which the mystic internalizes, creates a conceptual continuum between the world of those who descend to the Merkabah and the divine forces, establishing the complex configuration which permits mystical experience, grants it validity within the boundaries of the "other reality."

In the Hekhalot tradition God and several of His powers share certain traits of divine being, but they are distinguished from one an-

<sup>79</sup> See Rudolph, *Gnosis* (n.43 above), p. 58.

<sup>80</sup> P. L. Berger, *The Other Side of God* (New York 1981), pp. 12-13.

other by the hierarchical relation. God and His Princes share the holy names, the appellation "Yotzer Bereshit" (The Creator), the Explicit Name, the ritual form of address, "Our Father in Heaven, the God of Israel," descriptions such as Shi'ur Qomah, cosmic size, creative powers, control over the universe and knowledge of the secrets of the world. They also share the celestial beauty and the "seals with which were created heaven and earth," a splendid retinue of angels and attendants, cultic images, the glory of the kingdom and other similar dimensions. However, they are distinguished by hierarchical distinction, some being superior and others subordinate. The multitude of celestial beings who are graced with divine attributes creates a picture of a world with mythical character, sharpening the distinct nature of the various celestial forces, and blurring the distinctions between God and His Princes.

Various divine forces are given the title of "Creator" in this literature, and they are further designated "YHWH the God of Israel." The description of Anafiel in Hekhalot Rabbati exemplifies this tendency to glorify the celestial Princes and liken them to their Creator:

Anafiel YHWH is an honored, favored and awesome Prince ... who was called Topriel YHWH. And why was he called Anafiel? Because of the *branch* [Heb.: 'anaf] of the wreath of crowns which was placed upon his head, which would vault and overshadow all the chambers of Hekhal 'Arabot-Rakia like the Creator. What is written of the Creator, that 'His majesty veils the heavens' [Habakuk 3:3], so too Anafiel the Prince who is called that after the name of his Master."<sup>81</sup>

In an adjacent passage God is described by means of motifs which are also associated with crowns, branches, and majesty:

King of all Kings, God of Gods and Lord of Lords,  
 He Who is exalted with *the wreaths of the crowns*,  
 Who is encompassed by *branches* of the regents of brilliance,  
 For *with the branch of His majesty* He veils the heavens,  
 His glory will appear from on high,  
 From His splendid beauty the abyss will be enflamed,  
 And from His stature the heavens will be enkindled.  
 His stature radiates magnificence,

<sup>81</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 243–244, and cf. §26, "and why is His name called Anafiel, because the branch of His majesty and glory and crown and light and splendor covers all of the chambers of the 'Aravot Rakia, the highest firmament, like the Creator of the world, as it is written about the Supreme Creator, that the covering of the heavens is His glory ... so too Anafiel YHWH the prince covers with his majesty and glory all the chambers of the chambers of upper 'Aravot." Cf. pars. 241–242, 247–248, and compare J. Dan, Anafiel (n.4 above).

And His crown blazes with power.  
His garment flows with richness,  
And all eyes will be delighted with His speech.<sup>82</sup>

In the Hekhalot tradition, particular signs of the uniqueness of God are imparted to various celestial beings, which were depicted in the visionary polytheistic myth. Indeed, this is not a simple hierarchical delegation of powers creating harmony and a close relationship among the various forces, but rather it is a development which reflects tension between monotheism, which accentuates the unique unity of God, and polytheism, which depicts various celestial beings as possessing the most typical characteristics of the deity.

The tension inherent in the semblance between "the King of all kings" and the Prince described as "Begetter of Creation" or as "a small YHWH," and the problematic nature of the great similarity between God and an angel, are clearly reflected in the various traditions regarding Metatron. This figure is described mythically, on the one hand, and with signs of identity and analogy with the divinity, on the other. At the beginning of *Sefer Hekhalot* Metatron tells Rabbi Yishmael about his ascendancy and about his intimacy with God:

I have seventy names ... and all of them are founded upon the name of the King of all kings ... The Holy One, blessed be He laid His hand upon me and blessed me with one-thousand-and-three-hundred-and-sixty-five-thousand blessings. He raised me up and magnified me to the dimension of the length and breadth of the world. He caused to issue forth from me seventy-two wings, thirty-six on one side and thirty-six on the other, and every single wing is like the entire world. He placed upon me three-hundred-and-sixty-five-thousand-eyes. And each and every eye is like the great light, and he did not leave out any kind of brilliance or splendor, brightness or beauty, in the luminaries of the world, which he did not place upon me ... all of these the Creator of the World did for me, a throne like the Throne of Glory ... He placed it at the entrance to the Seventh Palace and He set me down upon it ... and the Holy One, blessed be He, revealed to me all the mysteries of wisdom and all the secrets of the Torah ... and all of the mysteries of the world and all of the orders of Creation were revealed before me as they are revealed before the Creator ... out of the love which the Creator of the World loved me ... He made me a raiment of majesty in which the array of luminaries were set, and He garbed me and made me a cloak of honor ... and He clothed me and made a royal crown

<sup>82</sup> Synopsis, §253. Cf. §262 for a different version: "the King of kings, the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the elevated one in the crowns of monarchy and surrounded by clouds of brightness and surrounded with branches of brightness. With the wing of His splendor He covers the heaven and with his glory He appears on high. From the utterance of His mouth the abysses are enflamed and from his beauty the firmaments are illuminated." Cf. Scholem, *Gnosticism*, pp. 61-62.

for me, the brightness of which extends in the four quarters of the heaven of 'Arabot into the seven heavens and in the four quarters of the world. He set and bound it upon my head and He named me *the lesser YHWH* in the presence of His entire court on high, as it is written, "My name is in him" (Ex. 23:21).<sup>83</sup>

Against the background of this description, in which Metatron becomes a winged, mythological figure, splendid and majestic, on the one hand, and a figure with regal traits similar to God, on the other hand, the question arises as to what might be the criterion for distinguishing between God and some other divine power, which is similar to Him to such a great degree? Metatron – who sits on the throne of glory, who is provided with the names of God, endowed with enormous cosmic dimensions, with the knowledge of mysteries of creation and the wisdom of the universe, with a retinue of angels, with the garment and crown of royalty – is invested as "the lesser YHWH" in the presence of the entire retinue on high and becomes a mythical entity splendid with an exalted light.

Metatron completes the transition into an exalted celestial being when the descriptions of the figures of fire from Ezekiel's vision, which, in the original, are associated with the divine chariot, here are used to describe his blazing image:

Immediately my flesh became a flame. My sinews became burning fire. And my bones became coals of juniper. And the light of my eyelids became lightning and the wheels of my eye became a torch of fire, and the hair of my head a blaze and a flame and all of my organs wings of burning fire, and the height of my body searing fire.<sup>84</sup>

At the end of the description of Metatron's glorification and elevation to a high and mighty divine power, when his anthropomorphic form goes through a metamorphosis of light and fire, the background of Elisha ben Abuyah's words, is explained. Elisha, who is known as "Aher", almost inevitably saw this second divine power as the figure seated on the Throne of Glory at the entrance to the Seventh Hekhal:

At first I used to sit on the great Throne at the entrance to the Seventh palace, and I judged all the denizens of the heights with the authority of the Holy One, blessed be He. ... and the Princes of the kingdoms stood next

<sup>83</sup> Synopsis, pars. 4, 12–15, and also see there. Considerable literature has been written on Metatron. See Scholem, *Gnosticism*, pp. 43–55; Scholem, *Kabbalah* (Jerusalem 1974), pp. 377–381. Urbach, *Hazal*, pp. 117–120; J. Dan, *ha-Mistika ha-Ivrit ha-Kedumah*, pp. 81–92, and the articles mentioned in n. 4, above.

<sup>84</sup> Synopsis, §19. See Alexander, Enoch (n. 3 above), pp. 243–244, 265–266. On light and fire in mystical thought, cf. M. Eliade, *The Two and the One*, Chicago, 1979, pp. 19–77.

to me at my right and left ... But when "Aher" came to behold the vision of the Merkabah and cast his eyes upon me, he was frightened and trembled before me, and his soul was dismayed in anxiety to leave him, because of my fearfulness and awesomeness and dreadfulness. When he saw me, *seated upon a Throne like a King, and the ministering angels standing beside me as servants* and all of the Princes of the kingdoms adorned with crowns surrounding me, then he opened his mouth and said, "There are indeed two powers in heaven!"<sup>85</sup>

The description of Metatron raises, as noted, the question which perplexed the editors of these traditions – what truly divides and separates God from that which is called by His name, who is parallel to Him in his characteristics, and who is endowed with many of His traits? The description of the figure of Metatron is partially based upon revelation motifs which are bound up with the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, motifs which describe God as surrounded by Seraphim or seated upon the Merkabah, and also upon Biblical motifs which describe God as a king sitting on a high and elevated throne, ruling over the entire world and surrounded by a royal retinue of servants. These characteristics, which, in the tradition, are reserved for depicting God, are now applied to the figure of Metatron, who has become an elevated celestial power, depicted with regal features. This description well typifies the change in the status of the angels – from created angels, serving and adoring the Throne as part of the heavenly retinue subordinate to God, they become superior Princes in the Hekhalot traditions, magnificent mythic beings, immeasurable sovereign entities – forms of deities, who are endowed with traits peculiar to the divinity. Now these powers are called "Yotzer Bereshit," and "He who holds the seal of heaven and earth in his hand," and the title, "YHWH God of Israel" is added to their name. Moreover, various traditions also show that at times *they* too are served, adored, praised, and worshiped.

In a Hekhalot fragment from the Geniza, which relates to Metatron, who is called the "youth" or "a lad,"<sup>86</sup> the problem of the absence of a distinction between God and another celestial power similar to Him

<sup>85</sup> Synopsis, §20, and see TB Hagiga 15a. On the various interpretations of the words of Aher, see Y. Libes, *Heto shel Elisha: Arba'ah she-Nikhnesu la-Pardes ve-Tiva'ah shel ha-Mistika ha-Talmudit*, Mif'alei Mehkar shel ha-Makhon le-Mada'ai ha-Yahadut, publication series: 9, Jerusalem 1986. See Numbers 23: 20–21, and see Urbach, *Hazal*, p. 119.

<sup>86</sup> For the Hekhalot tradition regarding Metatron, who is called *na'ar*, the "youth," see Synopsis, pars. 4–5 and compare pars. 389–398. Regarding that appellation see J. Dan, *ha-Mistika ha-Ivrit ha-Kedumah*, pp. 82–86. Cf. Halperin, *Chariot*, pp. 420–427.

becomes more acute. God speaks in the first person, warning the adept who descends to the Merkabah against the error bound up in the similarity or identity between God and His angel. This angel is described by Him as an elevated mythological being arousing awe:

For I am a wise King, a pure King, an honest King, everyone who knows of himself that he is pure ... and [he who] has acquired Torah shall enter and sit before me, and thus three times every day the herald announces, look at *the youth* [na'ar] who comes forth from behind the Throne of Glory to greet you, *do not prostrate yourself before him, even though his crown is like the crown of his King* and his shoes are like the shoes of his King, and the cloak upon him is like the cloak of his King, and the cloak of splendor is bound around his hips. The sun is shining from the belt that is in front of him and the moon from the knots behind him. His eyes glow like torches and his eyeballs blaze like beacons. *His splendor is like the splendor of his King and his glory is like the glory of his creator*, Zehuvadiah is his name. He will grasp [ ] your hand and seat you in his bosom, not only have you come under his authority, but he seats others on the place which is prepared before the Throne of his Glory. This is the sign of the Seventh Palace."<sup>87</sup>

The regal and mythical description of the angel who dwells in the Seventh Palace and is compared to his King, also provides an indirect indication of the conception of the figure of the deity in these traditions. However, the main purpose of these passages is to emphasize the similarity between God and the various celestial powers, as well as the prohibition against confusing the two, despite their great similarity. The implicit argument here is that any degree of similarity to God and any amount of divine substance or divine emanation which may be attributed to a celestial power which is not God himself, are insufficient to permit worship of that force, to allow recognition of it as a separate dominion, or to cause prostration before it. These prohibitions are particularly significant where new divine entities are created in a syncretistic cultural realm and a polytheistic milieu with a mythological heritage that encouraged a variety of rituals devoted to various and sundry divine forces.<sup>88</sup>

Perhaps the prohibition against bowing down before the "youth" whose crown is like the crown of his King, which is formulated in language that recalls the verse, "provoke him not ... for my name is in

<sup>87</sup> See Genizah Fragments, frag. 8, p. 105. The letters in brackets supplied by R. E. Cf. I. Gruenwald, "Keta'im Hadashim," *Tarbiz* 38 (1969), pp. 354-362, and see Hekhalot Zutarti, 11. 322-332 with regard to sitting before the Throne of Glory and the seventh palace.

<sup>88</sup> Betz, *The Greek Magical Papyri*, pp. xli-liii.

him" (Ex. 23:21), of which one interpretation is "do not exchange Me with him,"<sup>89</sup> addressed to the descender to the Merkabah, is to be explained indirectly against the background of evidence of the worship of angels which was common among various Jewish circles during the first centuries of the era.<sup>90</sup> Testimony in the writings of the Church Fathers attributes the worship of angels to Jews, and teachings in the Tosefta are concerned with the prohibition of prayer and sacrificial offerings for the angels, "He who sacrifices in the name of Michael the great Prince ... this is the meat of offerings to the dead."<sup>91</sup> That evidence, together with the testimony of *Sefer ha-Razim*, which is close in spirit and in some of its parts to Hekhalot literature, clearly attest to the forbidden practice of angel worship. Introductory remarks in *Sefer ha-Razim* include, "and to say what are the names of all of the guardians of each and every firmament and their kingdom, and what succeeds with respect to each thing, and what are the names of their servants, and what oblations shall be made for them." It goes on to mention oblations of wine, the burning of myrrh and frankincense and the sacrifice of a white cock, which are intended for the angels and for the celestial powers.<sup>92</sup>

The similarity between the wording of the incantations in the Hekhalot literature and the practical instructions presented in *Sefer ha-Razim* regarding oblations to the angels as part of the magic spell, and the connection of these with the detailed directions given in the Greek magical papyri regarding the worship of angels, indicate the presence of angel worship among certain Jewish circles, who were influenced by Hellenistic culture in Late Antiquity.

The Hekhalot traditions which discuss the meaning of the similarity between God and His ministers and the errors bound up with it in the implicit context of an angelic ritual as well as the prohibition against prostrating oneself before Metatron and the sin of Elisha which is likewise related to Metatron, are testimony to a polemic against circles

<sup>89</sup> See Urbach, *Hazal*, p. 160.

<sup>90</sup> See the survey by Margalit in the introduction to *Sefer ha-Razim* regarding the various testimonies about the worship to the angels, pp. 10-16, and see pp. 32-33, 65, 75. Compare the analysis by Mach, *Mehkarim* (n. 39 above), pp. 393-398, with some of whose conclusions one might disagree.

<sup>91</sup> Tosefta (ed. M. S. Zuckerman, Jerusalem 1963), Hulin 2, 18, p. 503, "in the name of Michael the prince." On alternation between Metatron and Michael see Urbach, *Hazal*, p. 120.

<sup>92</sup> *Sefer ha-Razim*, p. 65 and see also p. 68, 11. 29-33, p. 75, 11. 159-165. Cf. the explicit prohibition, "He that sacrifices to any god save to the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed" (Ex. 22: 19).

which would bow down to Metatron and worship him whether in mystical vision or in a magical ritual.<sup>93</sup>

It is not surprising that this extremely powerful angelological myth, which was conceived as living reality by the circles of the descenders to the Merkabah, was, in certain cases, accompanied by ritual trappings which gave cultic expression to the mystic experience, though the redactors of the Merkabah traditions placed matters in a complex context which glorifies the place of the angels, on the one hand, and which has reservations about worship and devotion to them, on the other hand.

Opposition to angels in rabbinic literature, the diminution of their figures, and the suppression of works dealing with them, were associated with a consciousness of the pagan origin of angelology, of its connection with polytheistic myth, and of the place which it occupied in popular circles.<sup>94</sup> However, in truth, it does not seem that the systematic struggle against angelology derived solely from the position which the angels came to occupy in popular faith, but rather that it was related to the central place which angels possessed in mystical literature. The glorification of the angels in the Hekhalot traditions, which was based on their indirect affiliation with the ritual traditions and upon their mythic quality, brought about the creation of new divine beings which deviated substantially from the confinements of Biblical tradition. This change was also bound up with the development of magical and theurgical tendencies, which recognized the worship of angels and maintained a complex liturgical relation with them.<sup>95</sup> All of these developments brought about a substantial change in the place of angels in religious thought; caused both their glorification within the esoteric

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<sup>93</sup> Later testimony to phenomena like these can be found in the words of Ibn Hazm (d. 1064), *Kitāb al-Faṣl fi al-Mīlāl wal-Ahwā' wal-Nihal* (Cairo, 1902), I, pp. 221–224: "All of the Jews, that is to say, the rabbinical among them, are of one mind as to anger against God, mockery of Him, and contempt for Him, and they say on the eve of their holiday 'al-kebor' [Yom Kippur], which is on the tenth of Tishrin ... that *al-Mittatrun* arose, and that is the meaning of this expression of theirs, '*haribon hakatan*', that God should rise up over their atonement ... and He pulls His hair and weeps a little: woe is me, that I have destroyed My house ... and you should know that they dedicate ten days on the month of October to worship a different Lord other than God, and in this they come to true sharing, and you should know that '*haribon hakatan*' to whom those aforementioned days are dedicated and they worship him during them and not God, praised be He – he is Sandalfon with them, the angel who serves the crown upon the head [of God] who is worshipped by them." – I am grateful to Professor Havah Lazarus-Yaffe for making me aware of the existence of this text and translating it for me.

<sup>94</sup> See Urbach, *Hazal*, p. 160, and cf. J. Naveh and S. Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity* (Jerusalem 1985), pp. 35–38.

<sup>95</sup> See M. Bar-Ilan, *Sitrei Teḥilah ve-Hekhalot* (see n. 47, above and n. 103 below).



mystical tradition and the intensification of their position in popular worship and magical praxis, while simultaneously deepening opposition to them.

### III. The Affiliation with Heavenly Temple Worship.

At the end of the Second Temple Period there are signs among various circles of a tendency to break out of the earthly frameworks of worship, as well as a related trend to adopt a spiritual and cosmic conception of the Temple and its cult. Various aspects of this tendency are represented in frequent reference to the celestial Temple, to Jerusalem on High, and in the transfer of the principal adoration of God to the world of angels. Specific reference to angelic priesthood, to ceremonies in the celestial Temple, and to spiritual sacrifices are found in the apocryphal literature, in rabbinic teachings, and in the writings of the Judean Desert sect.<sup>96</sup>

In the Judean Desert Scrolls this tendency was given radical expression. In some of the writings by members of the sect we find renunciation of worship in the Temple in Jerusalem, and two positions arise in response to this. The first develops the concept of the congregation as a Temple ("The Temple of Man"), and the second proposes a complex conception of a priesthood without an earthly Temple, with worship directed towards the celestial Temple and performed in cooperation with the angels who officiate in the upper Hekhalot.<sup>97</sup> The latter aspect is expressed in the "Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice," which reflects a close affinity between the earthly priesthood within the members of the sect, and the celestial priesthood, which serves in the upper Temple. Depictions of this priesthood are inspired by descriptions of

<sup>96</sup> See Aptovizer, *Beit ha-Mikdash shel Ma'alah* (n. 40 above) and cf. J. Maier, *Vom Kultus zur Gnosis*, (Salzburg 1966), pp. 95-148. Maier discusses the transition from a ritual bond to the earthly seat of God to a visionary experience that relates to the celestial throne of God, a process which is an expression of the transition from the Temple ritual to Merkabah mysticism. See I. Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*, Frankfurt 1988, ch. four; idem, "Mekoman shel Masorot Kohanot be-Yetsirata shel ha-Mistikah shel ha-Merkabah ve-shel Shi'ur Qomah," in "Early Jewish Mysticism," *Mehkarei Yerushayim* VI (1987), pp. 65-120.

<sup>97</sup> Explicit reference to the angelic priesthood and the celestial Temple ritual is also found in Book of Jubilees, in the Testament of Levi, and in the *Apocryphon of Levi*. Regarding the views of the cult, see D. Flusser, "The Cult of the Judean Desert and its Views," *Zion* 19 (1954), pp. 83-103. H. Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran* (Philadelphia 1963). Regarding the literature of the cult see D. Dimant, "Qumran Sectarian Literature," in *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, M. Stone (ed.), (n. 41 above), pp. 483-548.

the Sanctuary and the Temple, on the one hand, and by the description of Ezekiel's Merkabah, on the other. These songs provide a detailed description of the order of the celestial worship by angels called "Kohanei Korev" (priests of the inner sanctum), in parallel with the order of the duty roster of the Priests in the Temple, and the worship of the Levites and the order of sacrifices. The songs of the Sabbath sacrifice reflect the cultic cooperation of members of the "Yahad" (the name of the sect, literally "togetherness") with the angels in the ritual of the celestial Temple. They place hymns and acclamation in the center of the joint holy worship, and they describe the angelic liturgy as a substitute for the sacrificial service.<sup>98</sup>

The relocation of the Temple cult from the earth to heaven in post-Biblical literature, the placement of hymns in the center of the sacred service, and the emphasis on the worship of the angelic priesthood in Qumran literature affected the worldview of the authors of the Hekhalot.<sup>99</sup> However, although the spiritualization of the Temple in the literature of the apocrypha and Qumran took place while the Temple still existed,<sup>100</sup> reference to the celestial shrines in the Hekhalot literature took place only after its destruction. The Hekhalot literature is not content with the parallel between the worship of the priests and Levites in the earthly Temple and that of the angels in the celestial Temple, which, as noted, is inspired by Ezekiel's vision of the Merkabah and the Temple service, but it also adds an additional parallel between the worship of the angels and that of the descenders to the Merkabah. It formulates the mystical ritual of the latter, under the inspiration of the order of the service and the celestial ceremony of the former. That is to say, the Hekhalot literature proposes a three-fold relationship between

<sup>98</sup> See C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (1985, n. 42 above), pp. 1-81. On the central position of the angels as priests in the celestial Temple see p. 30 there.

<sup>99</sup> Regarding the connection between Shirot Olat ha Shabat and the hymns in Hekhalot literature, see Scholem, *Gnosticism*, p. 128; Newsom, *Shirot Olat Haššabbāt* (1982), pp. 92-97 and Strugnell, *The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran*. L. Schiffman, "Merkavah Speculation at Qumran: The 4Q Serekh Shirot Olat Hashabat," in *Mystics Philosophers, and Politicians*, essays in honor of A. Altman (J. Reinharz and others, eds.), (Duke 1982); idem, "Sifrut ha-Hekhalot ve-Kitvei Qumran," in "Early Jewish Mysticism" (n. 26 above), pp. 121-138, and see Halperin, *Chariot*, pp. 49-55. J. Baumgarten, "The Qumran Sabbath Shirot and Rabbinic Merkabah Traditions," *Revue de Qumran* 13 (1988), pp. 199-213.

<sup>100</sup> The image of heaven as the Temple and the description of the angels as Priests show not only the spiritualization of earthly worship but also the possibility that the earthly Temple and its ritual are dependent upon a celestial prototype, as was shown by M. Eliade. See M. Eliade, *The Myth of the Eternal Return* (Princeton 1974), pp. 7-9, and cf. Y. Baer, *Yisrael ba-Amim* (Jerusalem 1969), p. 84.

the ritual of the earthly Temple, that of the heavenly Temple, and the worship of those who descend to the Merkabah. It adopts the worship of the angels in the celestial Temple as the prototype of the worship of the descenders to the Merkabah, while the worship of the angels as described in the Merkabah tradition is portrayed as the prototype of the earthly Temple service or of poetical traditions concerning it.

The first parallel, between the earthly Temple service and the worship of the angels in the celestial Hekhalot, commemorating a visionary image of the service in the earthly Temple, which was destroyed, is described in several aspects. The priestly worship in the earthly Temple, the holy service, and the High Priest's entry into the Holy of Holies all correspond to the songs and adoration of the angels in the celestial sanctuary, and their ritual attendance before the Throne of Glory:

A thousand thousands stand *and serve* before the Throne of Glory and *they crown and commemorate* Your name. ... Because the Creator of the Universe took me in service *to attend* the Throne of Glory and the wheels of the Merkabah. ... *And he serves* after the Merkabah and ties *crowns* to his Creator.<sup>101</sup>

The ceremonies of raising up the crown, the coronation of God, or the tying of wreaths of crowns by the angels are described as the focus of the celestial ritual, in place of sacrifice offering as the center of worship in the earthly Temple.

When the Prince of Countenance enters to extol and to arrange the Throne of Glory and to prepare the seat of the "Knight of Jacob," he binds a thousand thousands crowns to the Ofannim of Splendor, upon each one's head. A thousand thousands times he kneels and falls down and prostrates himself before each of them. Two thousand crowns he binds to the Cherubim of glory ... Three thousand crowns he binds to the Holy Hayyot, upon each one's head, and three thousands times he kneels and falls down and prostrates himself before each of them ... "I pray you, bearers of the Throne of Glory ... be great in jubilation and joy, song and melody before the Throne of the Glory of Totrosay ... the Lord of Israel."<sup>102</sup>

<sup>101</sup> See Synopsis, §19 and cf. BT Yevamot, 15b, "and some of them are High Priests and they served on the altar." Regarding angels portrayed as Priests in the Temple in Serekh Shirot Olat Hashabat, see Newsom (1985), p. 89. The angels there are called "Kohanei Korev" (priests of the inner sanctum) and they sing songs of the sabbath sacrifice just as the Levites used to sing them during the Temple service. They are also called "inner servants in the Sanctuary of His Honor," "servants of the countenance of the King in the Holy of Holies," etc. On the worship of the Priests in relation to that of the angels, see also TJ Berakhot ch. 1, p. 4a, and Sifre, *Ba-Midbar*, p. 143 (ed. Horowitz), and *Vayikra Rabba* (ed. Margaliot), 21, 11, pl. 492 and Sifre, *Devarim*, 32, 3, p. 341 (ed. Finkelstein).

<sup>102</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 170-172, 23-28, for a description of raising up the crown.

Parallel to the tradition of the priests' recitation of the holy names and their knowledge of the secret of the Explicit Name<sup>103</sup> is the tradition of reciting the names by the angels and their knowledge of the Explicit Names, which is granted only to them:

The Ofannim and the Holy Hayyot and the Ofannim of splendor and the Seraphim of the flame and the wheels of the Merkabah with a great and huge voice and thunder recite the remembrance of the Name Totrasi, YHWH, one-hundred- and-twelve times.<sup>104</sup>

The tradition of pronouncing the Explicit Name by the High Priest when he entered the Holy of Holies is parallel to the pronunciation of the Explicit Name by Metatron, at the peak of the celestial ceremony:

And that youth whose name is Metatron brings silent fire and puts it in the ears of the Hayyot so that they shall not hear the speaking voice of the Holy One Blessed be He and the Explicit Name that the lad whose name is Metatron pronounces at that time with seven voices in the name of the Living and Pure and Venerated and Awesome.<sup>105</sup>

Corresponding to the song of the Levites, which was part of the Temple cult meant to glorify and praise the Lord, the song of the angels' hymns before the Throne of Glory is described as part of the

See § 772 on bringing sacrifice in the celestial Temple (Seder Rabba de-Bereshit, ch. 39). In Qumran the worship corresponding to bringing sacrifices in the earthly Temple was the singing of praise by the angels in the heavenly Temple. See S. Fugita, *The Temple Theology of the Qumran Sect and the Book of Ezekiel*, Dissertation, Princeton Theological Seminary 1970, p. 217. See also M. Bar-Ilan, "Ra'ayon Hakhtarat ha-Shem be-Keter ve-ha-Pulmus ha-Karai Neced ha-Tefilin shel ha-Shem," "Early Jewish Mysticism" (n. 26 above), pp. 221-233.

<sup>103</sup> See Urbach, *Hazal*, "Koah ha-Shem," p. 107, and the sources indicated there, and see also A. Bikhler, *Ha-Kohanim ve-Avodatam* (Jerusalem 1966), pp. 9-37, 69-88. I. Gruenwald, "Mekoman shel Masorot Kohanot" (above, n. 96), pp. 86, 113, nn. 54, 55, 59. And see traditions on this matter in the Synopsis, pars. 981-985.

<sup>104</sup> See Synopsis, § 590, and cf. "with one mouth we utter Your dreadful name ... there is none before and none after ..." (Synopsis, § 306). "And how much power is in you, servants of our Lord, that you recite and utter to Him the memory of His name in the height of the world, and there is no limit and no number in the voice and the power when it is said 'Holy holy holy'" (§ 168). Cf. Genizah fragments, p. 117, 11. 36-46, and Synopsis, para. 590-592, 390, 399, 961.

<sup>105</sup> At the conclusion of the bringing of sacrifices, the Priests used to pronounce the Name of God as it is written, see Mishna Tamid, 7, 2, and cf. Sotah 7, 6. See "whoever looked at the Priests while the Temple existed, as they stood on the platform and blessed Israel with the Explicit Name," BT Hagiga, 16a. See Synopsis, § 390. And compare § 399: "and the lad brings the new fire and places it in the ears of the hayyot so that they shall not hear the sound of the utterance, and he alone is present, and the lad calls Him by His pure and great and strong name, and this is how he is calling." And compare the description of the Yom Kippur service in Tractate Yoma. See Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, p. 104 and the references there.

celestial ceremony, the intent of which is to praise, glorify, and laud the deity.<sup>106</sup> Corresponding to the Levites who play various musical instruments and the priests who hold trumpets, the angels are described in the Hekhalot literature as holding horns, trumpets, shofarot, lutes, drums, and cymbals.<sup>107</sup> The rituals of purification and ritual immersion which the priests were commanded to carry out during the Temple worship service are parallel to the immersion of the angels and their purification in the river of fire before their sanctified service.<sup>108</sup> The conception of the priests as possessing a secret, mantic knowledge, and as guardians of the Torah, is parallel to the view of the angels as possessing secrets and arcana, as a source of hidden celestial knowledge and as the guardians of the Torah on high.<sup>109</sup> The holy awe and danger upon the entry into the Holy of Holies, as well as the numinous apprehension, correspond to the feeling of tremendous fear and profound dread before the mystery bound up with mystical elevation, and with both the foreseen danger associated with entry into the various Hekhalot and the severe punishments connected with them.<sup>110</sup> The prayers and ceremonies performed jointly by the priests and those who

<sup>106</sup> On the songs of the angels before the Throne of Glory, see Synopsis, pars. 106, 94, 103, 162, 185, 188, 197, 251, 260, and cf. Schäfer, *Genizah*, p. 191. See I. Gruenwald, "Shirat ha-Malakhim, ha-Kedushah, u-Be'ayat Hibura shel Sifrut ha-Hekhalot," in *Perakim be-Toldot Yerushalayim bi-Yemei Bayit Sheni* (Jerusalem 1981); idem (ed.), "Reuyot Yehezkel," *Temirin I* (Jerusalem 1972), pp. 125–127, nn. 99–103. On the song of the angels in the Apocrypha see also Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*, I, pp. 126, 130–137, 168, 248. On the song of the entire cosmos which praises and extols the Creator, cf. M. Beit-Arieh, *Perek Shirah*, dissertation, Jerusalem 1960, pp. 51–52. On the hymns intoned by the angels see pp. 66–71 there.

<sup>107</sup> On the Priests and Levites who sound trumpets, see 2 Chr. 29: 25–28, and cf. Mishna Tamid 7, 3. See Hekhalot Zutarti, 1. 302, "and the herald who goes out before him and sounds and blasts and sounds." This is similar to the wording of Tosefta Sotah 7, 15: "that very day the Priests were in fences and breaches and trumpets of gold in their hands and they sound them and blast." See Bikhler (n. 103 above), pp. 13, 71; and see Hekhalot-Zutarti, 11. 323, 329, "and a double Offan sounds and trumpets and sounds ... and the amber sings before them." On the "retinue blasting and sounding the trumpet" and the sound of the playing of lyres, lutes and cymbals see Synopsis, pars. 161, 192.

<sup>108</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 54, 180–181, 196, and cf. Sefer ha-Razim, p. 108. "And they plunge into rivers of purity" and "Reuyot Yehezkel," p. 126. On the demands for purity connected with the angels in Qumran see Newsom (1982), *Shirot*, p. 117.

<sup>109</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 336–337, and compare the Midrashim about Moses' ascent to heaven in BT Shabat 88b–89a and Pesikta Rabati (Ish-Shalom, ed.), 96b–97a. On the secret knowledge of the angel Priests, cf. Newsom, *Shirot*, 1982, p. 117.

<sup>110</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 247–248, 258, 407–410, and note pars. 102–104. Cf. R. Otto, *Holiness* (n. 11 above), on the *mysterium tremendum*, pp. 12–22, and cf. *Himmelfarb* (n. 44, above), p. 85.

have come to the Temple are parallel to the liturgical union with the angels during the recitation of the "Holy, holy, holy ..." on earth.<sup>111</sup>

Generally speaking, the ritual concepts, cultic ceremonies, liturgical expressions, mantic elements, and numinous-mystical experiences which were bound up with the Temple service were transferred to the celestial Hekhalot. The angels who are described in the Hekhalot literature as performing the ritual, as reciting the prayer, and as expressing the exalted reality of the celestial Temple, are portrayed with the inspiration of the worship of the priests and Levites in the earthly Temple. Almost certainly the religious significance, the sanctity, exaltation, and glory which were attached to the earthly Temple and to its priesthood, and which were transferred to the Temple on high as early as the vision of Ezekiel and the Qumran cult, were greatly intensified after the destruction of the Second Temple which survived in the realm of celestial vision alone.

The second prototypical parallel, which attributes earthly significance to the visionary perpetuation of the ritual, is made between the *worship of the angels* in the celestial ritual and the *worship of those who descend to the Merkabah* in a mystical ritual. Those who descend to the Merkabah, who seek to ascend to celestial realms and to gaze upon the worship taking place before the Throne of Glory, imitate the worship of the angels, identify with them, and aspire to emulate them. The descenders to the Merkabah intone the angelic hymns, which they learn during their ascent to the heavens, and which they teach to the members of their circle, while emphasizing their angelic source.<sup>112</sup> All of the prayers of the authors of the Hekhalot, which are recited during mystical ecstasy, are acquired, according to their testimony, from the prayers of the angels before the Throne of Glory.<sup>113</sup>

Knowledge of the names of the components of the Merkabah and of the celestial beings, which occupies a central place in the worship of

<sup>111</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 163, 178-179, and cf. the liturgical partnership in Qumran, Megilat ha-Hodayot, ed. Y. Licht, (Jerusalem 1957), 6, 11. 22-24, p. 84. For an analysis of the unity of liturgy with Merkabah mysticism and a view of it in connection with the Temple ritual, see: M. D. Swartz, "Patterns of Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism" (n. 47, above).

<sup>112</sup> "Rabbi Yishmael said, all of those songs Rabbi Akiba heard when he descended to the Merkabah and grasped and learned them from before the Throne of His Glory, that His servants would sing before Him" (Synopsis, § 106). "Who has the merit of descending to the Merkabah, because he stands before the Throne of Glory and begins to utter the song which the Throne of Glory intones, a song for every single day" (§ 260). On the connection between the singing of the angels and that of the descenders to the Merkabah, see Himmelfarb (n. 44 above), pp. 92-94.

<sup>113</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 547-550, 587-592.

the authors of the Hekhalot, derives from an angelic source.<sup>114</sup> The ceremony of articulating the Explicit Name which takes place in heaven before the Throne of Glory and the ceremonies of reciting the names in a specific order by the angels are the model for the recitation of these names in the ceremonies of those who descend to the Merkabah during their elevation on high.<sup>115</sup> Adoration and praise form the relationship between the higher creatures and their Creator, and the oration which extols God is uttered by the angels. The recitation of praise by the angels, who emphasize the subordination of all the upper worlds to God and His coronation in song and prayer, is the central object of imitation in the worship of those who descend to the Merkabah,<sup>116</sup> and it is also the principal means of participating with the angels in their worship. Purification ceremonies and the immersion of the angels in the river of fire, prior to their service before the Throne of Glory, are parallel to the ceremonies of purification and ritual immersion of the descenders to the Merkabah before their ascension to heaven.<sup>117</sup>

The authors of the Hekhalot ascribe the entirety of the mystical experience bound up with descent to the Merkabah to an angelic source. In a Geniza fragment from the Hekhalot literature the words of an angel are quoted, who says to the descender to the Merkabah:

Now, friend, return to the study of the descent to the Merkabah which I have been instructing you, how one descends and how one ascends: the features of the first palace, and how to secure angels into one's service and how one adjures them. And I stopped you; and you wrote down the seal of the descent to the Merkabah, and you conferred it to those who live in the world and for your own benefit and for the benefit of whoever seeks to descend and to gaze at the King and His splendor. If one takes this path, one will descend and see, and no harm will come to him, for on the scroll I set it forth for you, and [you] have seen it, and afterwards you descended

<sup>114</sup> See Hekhalot Zutarti, 11. 15-18 (Synopsis §337), and cf. the Midrashim on Moses' ascent to heaven (n. 109 above). See Synopsis, pars. 628-633.

<sup>115</sup> Compare "the Ofannim and the holy Hayyot and the Ofannim of glory and the Seraphim of flame and the wheels of the Merkabah with a great voice and thunder uttering the memory of the name Totrosi YHWH one hundred and twelve times" (Synopsis §590) to "when a man sought to descend to the Merkabah, he would call to Soria the Prince of the Countenance and invoke him one hundred and twelve times by Totrosai" (Synopsis §204), and see also §300. See the references in n. 105 above, and cf. Synopsis pars. 168, 590-592.

<sup>116</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 152-155, 636, 556, 385-486, 735, 676, 937, 972, 974, 957, 745, 850 and many other places.

<sup>117</sup> See Synopsis, pars. 299, 424, 572 regarding the immersion of the descenders to the Merkabah, and see n. 108 above regarding the immersion of the angels. For the purification rituals of the descenders to the Merkabah, see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, pp. 99-102.

and saw: you attempted it and no harm came to you. The reason is that I have made for you the paths of the Merkabah as the light and the roads of heaven as the sun.<sup>118</sup>

According to the view of the masters of the Hekhalot, the knowledge which is bound up with descent to the Merkabah is of angelic origin, and this is what conditions mystical ascent, just as the worship of the angels in the celestial Temple is the matrix of their ritual worship. The authors of the Hekhalot invoke the angels in order "to reveal the secrets of on high and below,"<sup>119</sup> and they strive to discover their mysteries. They intone the angels' songs, pray their prayers, and worship as their counterparts, recite their names and impress them upon their bodies, and describe their worship in the celestial ceremony. They repeat the names of God, which the angels mention, and they sing His praises inspired by the angelic ritual. They purify themselves like the angels before they ascend to the Throne of Glory, and they learn the mysteries of Shi'ur Qomah from them. It seems that there is no aspect of the world of the Merkabah mystics which is not related to the world of the angels, and there is no change in the tradition which is not bound up with an angelic source. That is to say, the world of the angels comprises a celestial prototype for mystical worship and a primary source of authority for the spiritual transformation which is reflected in this literature. The mystical ritual of the adepts ascending to the Hekhalot is inspired by angelic rite and the worship of the descenders to the Merkabah is modeled upon the worship of the angels. As we have noted, angelic worship is found in direct relation with the Temple ritual and the worship of the Priests, although the elements which the Merkabah mystics imitate are directly related to the worship of the angels and not to the terrestrial Temple service. The masters of the Hekhalot point expressly to the worship of the angels as their source of inspiration and they emphasize the angelic origin of the mystical ritual.<sup>120</sup>

<sup>118</sup> Genizah fragments, p. 103, 11. 23-27. I consulted D. Halperin's translation, *Chariot*, p. 368. See Gruenwald, *Keta'im Hadashim*, idem, *Apocalyptic*, pp. 189-190, and cf. Synopsis 234-236 on the connection between the angels and the conditions of the descenders to the Merkabah.

<sup>119</sup> Synopsis, §623.

<sup>120</sup> A different view, which focuses the worship of the descenders to the Merkabah on a direct connection with the Temple ritual was proposed by I. Gruenwald and I. Chernus. See I. Gruenwald, *Mekomah shel Masorot Kohanot* (above, n.96); I. Chernus, "The Pilgrimage to the Merkabah: an Interpretation of Early Jewish Mysticism," "Early Jewish Mysticism," *Mehkarei Yerushalyim be-Mahshevet Yisrael*, VI, i.-ii. (1987) pp. 1-37 (English section). Gruenwald compares the mantic traditions



There can be no doubt of the affinity between the background of the Merkabah mystics and aspects bound up with the Temple ritual, although examination of the Hekhalot literature shows that this connection is not direct but rather indirect. The angels are depicted under the inspiration of the worship of the Priests and the Temple ritual, while the descenders to the Merkabah are described in relation to the angels and to the celestial cult. The masters of the Hekhalot do not place themselves in a direct relationship with worship in the earthly Temple, which remained after the destruction only within the realm of the tradition, vision, or poetical memory, but rather they position themselves solely in relation to the worship of the angels in the celestial Hekhalot. As noted, mystical elevation thus draws its inspiration from the conception of the angels and the celestial rite, though the meaning of the angels' worship derives from a complex affinity with the Temple cult and to the visionary transformation which took place within it at the end of the Second Temple period.

#### Summary

The conception of the angels in Hekhalot literature reflects a combination of mystical and numinous elements concerned with the vision of the Merkabah, with mythical and magical elements associated with the abundance of divine beings and celestial figures, and with ritual and visionary elements which were related to the transformation of the ritual traditions of the earthly Temple into angelic worship in the celestial sanctuary. All of these are reflected from the point of view of the descenders to the Merkabah, who described in direct fashion the details of the celestial vision and their association with the mystical, mythical, magic, and ritual aspects of the world of the angels.

Angelology in the Hekhalot literature, which draws upon the vision of Ezekiel's chariot and from the renewed revelation at the time of

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connected with the Priesthood in its relation to the Temple ritual and the parallel characteristics of the world of the masters of the Hekhalot, and Chernus compares pilgrimage to the Temple with the mystic's ascent to the Merkabah, and he also drew a parallel between seeing the countenance of God while going up to Jerusalem and "seeing the King in His beauty" during descent to the Merkabah. Chernus also maintains that the descenders to the Merkabah were aware of the parallel between their mystical effort and the rabbinical tradition connected with pilgrimage to the Temple.

Gruenwald concludes with the following statement: "The ritual parallels from the Temple service had an active role in creating Merkabah mysticism, or at least in certain techniques which were widespread in it" (*ibid.*, p. 87).

mystical ascent, determines the bounds of numinous being and the components of celestial reality, and it binds the ritual source of the vision of the chariot with the visionary level of the celestial ritual, which is associated with the worship in the earthly Temple. The angels are the subject of the mystical vision, the source of celestial knowledge, and the medium through which the divine mystery is revealed to the descenders to the Merkabah. The world of the angels comprises the cosmological framework and the mythological foundation of the mystical conception bound up with ascent to the Hekhalot.

Along with the numinous perspective and the celestial point of view of the world of the angels, a magical-theurgical view is also represented in Hekhalot literature. This view preconditions mystical ascent with proficiency in magic and endows man with the ability to invoke various divine forces and to subordinate them to his will by means of spells and predetermined ceremonies, which create a significant connection between heaven and earth.

Alongside the mystic and magical element the doctrine of angels also reflects a highly interesting mythological aspect. The abundance of divine powers which constitute the world of the Merkabah and the extensive creativity of new divine figures in the celestial world, who share with the deity the characteristics of the divine experience, all testify to the re-mythologizing of the conception of God. This change is reflected in the new linguistic creativity which is expressed in the Hekhalot traditions and in the wealth of concepts, the source of which is unknown, used by the masters of the Hekhalot in order to describe the celestial world. The problematic character of the theology implied by this transformation is reflected in the traditions which discuss the meaning of the similarity between God and His angels and in the prohibition against substituting one for the other, despite their close resemblance. The possibility of there being a close connection between the aforementioned re-mythologizing and testimony concerning the worship of the angels within Jewish circles at the end of the Hellenistic period has also been suggested, for indeed the very powerful angelological myth, which was grasped as living reality among the descenders to the Merkabah, could have brought about the development of a ritual framework related to worship of angels, just as it influenced the crystallization of a rich body of liturgy dispersed throughout the Hekhalot literature. The fourth aspect, which is expressed in the various angelological traditions, is the ritual aspect, which relates to the angels as practising worship in the celestial Temple. The worship of the angels in the heavenly Hekhalot is the basic ritual pattern of the descenders to

the Merkabah, and the angelic ritual before the Throne of Glory is the prototype to which they refer in their worship. Our study has shown that the celestial rite was formed with the inspiration of the Temple ritual, and the worship of the angels, which relates to the service of the Priests in the Temple, becomes the source of inspiration and the model for imitation of the worship of the descenders to the Merkabah.

The various angelological traditions which extend through Hekhalot literature reflect the yearning for a divine dimension which can be attained descriptively, which can be seen and heard, and with which conversation can be held. They also indicate longings for a ritual bond which preserves ceremonial continuity and a ritual tradition in the realm of visionary reality – in a historical reality where the earthly symbols of the connection with the divine realm were suspended and obliterated after the destruction of the Temple, and the rituals which expressed the bond between the mundane and the divine had ceased to exist. It would seem that the mythical narrative, which describes the divine realm with exalted visions and luminous beauty, with figures of awesome might, with visionary images and ritual splendor, also reflects the desire to maintain an echo of the glory and splendor which had been bound up with the rite in the earthly Temple. For the mystical vision, which takes on a mythical guise in the figure of the angels, expresses the metamorphosis of traditions regarding the splendor of the earthly Temple, in a literature which reflects alienation from tangible reality, ignoring concrete history, real experience, and expresses a definite preference for the world of vision.

The many facets of the conception of the angels in Hekhalot literature, the theological transformation which it entailed from the mystical and mythological point of view, the new linguistic creativity which accompanied it, with its poetical force, the imaginative power and conceptual strangeness, all testify to its centrality in shaping a religious transformation in the consciousness of the descenders to the Merkabah, a transformation which was part of the effort to preserve an idiosyncratic religious identity despite antagonistic historical circumstances.