

# Notes on the Study of *Merkabah* Mysticism and *Hekhalot* Literature in English

*with an appendix on Jewish Magic*

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[The original version of this article appeared as an appendix to the fourth edition of *A Guide to Kabbalistic Books in English: 1977-1979*, by Don Karr (Ithaca: 1982), pp. 37-40; it was reprinted in slightly expanded form in *Collected Articles on the Kabbalah*, volume 1, by D. Karr (Ithaca: KoM #5, 1985), pp. 17-20, which is reprinted below as Appendix 2.]

MERKABAH (= CHARIOT) MYSTICISM developed out of speculation on and expansion of the visions of Ezekiel (chapters 1, 8, and 10) and, to a lesser extent, Isaiah (chapter 6) and Daniel (chapter 2). This strain of mysticism meanders through the intertestamental pseudepigrapha\* and even touches corners of gnostic and Qumran texts.\*\*

*Merkabah* material and references can be found in shreds, often more provocative than telling, in the Talmud and other rabbinic writings.† However, the major concentrated expression of *merkabah* mysticism is that cluster of writings which has come to be called the *hekhalot* (= HEAVENLY HALLS) literature, which is the focus of this paper.

\* 1 Enoch 14; The Life of Adam and Eve (including The Apocalypse of Moses); The Apocalypse of Abraham. For translations of these, see James H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Volume 1 (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1983). 1 Enoch 14 is particularly important; Gruenwald (in AMM, p. 36) says, "...it is the oldest Merkavah vision we know of from outside the canonical Scriptures. ... Indeed, one can consider this particular vision a model-vision of Merkavah m Mysticism." (On AMM, see below, p. 3.)

\*\* On *merkabah* in gnostic works: (texts) "The Hypostasis of the Archons" and "On the Origin of the World," in James M. Robinson (ed), *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (Leiden – San Francisco: E. J. Brill / Harper and Row, 1977; revised edition, Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996); Ithamar Gruenwald's article, "Jewish Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism," in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism*, edited by J. Dan and F. Talmage (Cambridge: Association for Jewish Studies, 1982).

On *merkabah* in Qumran works (= Dead Sea Scrolls): David Halperin, *FACES* (= *The Faces of the Chariot*, see below, p. 5); Geza Vermes, *The Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (London: Penguin Books, 1987): § 12; Florentino Garcia Martinez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1994): pp. 419-431; M. Wise, M. Abegg, and E. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996): 365-377 (includes the "Masada Fragment"). Refer also to the list on page 13 below.

† Mishnah: *Megillah* 4:10, *Hagigah* 2:7, *Tosefta Hagigah* 2:1-7, Palestinian Talmud 77 a-d; Babylonian Talmud 11b-16a. See the books listed below by Halperin and Chernus, both on page 5.

Arguments over the dating of this body of literature continue, but there is general agreement to a range of 200-800 C.E. The bounds and structure of these writings are also matters of dispute, for the notions of titles and fixed contents of a specific canon of *hekhhalot* books appear to be more academic conveniences than reflections of the true nature or state of the literature.

Since the 'seventies, scholarly work on the *hekhhalot* texts has increased dramatically, as the publication dates on a clear majority of the books and articles discussed below attest. Before this spate of academic activity, there were in English little more than Gershom Scholem's works\* and Hugo Odeberg's attempt at a critical edition of one of the *hekhhalot* texts\*\* to shed light on this oblique collection of writings. Even as this lament is being recalled, no time should be lost in acknowledging Scholem's inescapable influence on this and all other aspects of the study of Jewish mysticism. Some of Scholem's conclusions regarding the *hekhhalot* have been challenged, and some of his observations on and characterizations of the *hekhhalot* texts have come to seem convenient, imposing order on that which is, in fact, near chaos. Yet, Scholem's writings on this subject remain some of the clearest and best supported. They are also among the most accessible, not only in their style but in their actual availability. As for Odeberg, his lone work is more problematic. As significant as it *was*, Odeberg's treatment of *Sefer ha-Hekhalot* (BOOK OF THE HEKHALOT, dubbed by Odeberg "3 Enoch") is now considered unreliable and misleading on many points. But, as contemporary scholar David Halperin has pointed out<sup>†</sup>, Odeberg's work has "proved easier to criticize than to emulate," for critical editions of *hekhhalot* texts—with English translations or not—are few indeed.

Today, however, we are in pretty fair shape to study *merkabah* mysticism and *hekhhalot* texts, though some of the leading scholars in this field publish in German<sup>‡</sup> and, of course, Hebrew. Nevertheless, from the texts and studies now available in English, the persistent reader can certainly gain firm impressions of (i) the contents of the *hekhhalot* texts, (ii) the issues captivating contemporary scholarship regarding the *hekhhalot* texts, and (iii) the place of the *hekhhalot* texts in the history and development of Judaism, early Christianity, and their mysticism.<sup>‡</sup>

In the following pages, books, sections of books, and articles on *merkabah* mysticism and *hekhhalot* literature—including translations—are described. I also discuss the various texts attached, however loosely, with the *hekhhalot* corpus, with indications of sources for translations and studies of them.

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\* A list of Scholem's works is given below, page 3.

Morton Smith's "Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati," in *Biblical and Other Studies*, edited by Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) was another early notice. In the 'forties, Smith translated *Hekhalot Rabbati* into English; this translation circulated among scholars in the field but was never published. The typescript was corrected by Scholem, whose notes appear in the margins. Scholem mentions Smith's translation in *Jewish Gnosticism...*, page 11, note 4. A transcription is now online: <http://www.digital-brilliance.com/kab/karr/HekRab/index.htm>

\*\* *3 Enoch or The Hebrew Book of Enoch* (1928, Cambridge University Press; rpt New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1973; with a prolegomenon by Jonas C. Greenfield).

† *FACES*, p. 364. (See below, page 4-5: Halperin).

‡ In German there is Peter Schäfer and his team. Certainly, the most significant work which Schäfer has overseen is *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1981), which presents in the original Hebrew and Aramaic an array of manuscript readings side by side. *Synopse* was followed by *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur* by the same team (1984, same publisher). Soon after, German translations of *Synopse* appeared (1987 onward, same publisher). Schäfer has also published a collection of his articles—ten in German, three in English—as *Hekhalot-Studien* (1988, same publisher).

‡ Refer to Ra'anan S. Boustán's article, "The Study of Heikhalot Literature: Between Mystical Experience and Textual Artifact," in *Currents in Biblical Research*, Vol. 6, No. 1 (London: Sheffield Academic Press, 2007).

## Studies

### LISTED CHRONOLOGICALLY

1965

- Scholem, Gershom. *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*. New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1960; 2<sup>nd</sup> improved edition, 1965.

The studies of Gershom Scholem form the basis of contemporary scholarship on Jewish mysticism, and, hence, provide the foundation of subsequent work on *merkavah* mysticism and *bekhalot* texts. Other works by Scholem which address this subject at length are the following:

- *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*. Jerusalem: Schocken Publishing House, 1941; London: Thames and Hudson, 1955; reprinted frequently New York: Schocken Books.  
Lecture 2: “Merkabah Mysticism and Jewish Gnosticism”
- *Kabbalah* [articles collected from *ENCYCLOPEDIA JUDAICA*]. Jerusalem and New York: Keter Publishing House and Times Books, 1974; rpt. New York, Meridian, 1978; rpt. New York, Dorset Press, 1987.  
pages 8-21; pages 373-6: § MERKABAH MYSTICISM; pages 377-81: § METATRON
- *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah*. New York: Schocken Books, 1991. The original version of this work was published in German, 1962, and subsequently in a revised and emended Hebrew version, 1976.  
Chapter 1. “*Sh’ur Komah*: The Mystical Shape of the Godhead”

These works (*Major Trends...*, *Jewish Gnosticism...*, *Kabbalah*, and *Mystical Shape...*) are cited not only to establish the starting point for “modern” scholarship on *bekhalot-merkavah* mysticism but also to demonstrate Scholem’s own development in appraising the subject.

1980

- Gruenwald, Ithamar. *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* [ARBEITEN ZUR GESCHICHTE DES ANTIKEN JUDENTUMS UND DES URCHRISTENTUMS, Band XIV]. Leiden – Köln: E. J. Brill, 1980. ([hereafter](#) AMM)

The first half of AMM analyzes the major features of the *merkavah* tradition, beginning in Jewish apocalyptic, then developing onto “the literature that first gives a full-scale presentation of Merkavah mysticism” *i.e.*, the *bekhalot* literature, “composed in Eretz-Yisrael (circa 200-700),” thus ending “as a creative literary stream ... some time in the Ge’onic period.”

The second half of AMM describes the *bekhalot* texts one by one, including *Re’uyot Yehezkel* and *Sefer ha-Razim*.

Two appendices by Saul Lieberman follow: (1) “Metatron, the Meaning of His Name and His Functions,” and (2) “The Knowledge of *Halakha* by the Author (or Authors) of the *Heikhaloth*.”

- Halperin, David J. *The Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature* [AMERICAN ORIENTAL SERIES, #62]. New Haven: American Oriental Society, 1980.

Halperin’s study investigates the references to the *merkavah* tradition in Mishnah Hagigah 2:1, Tosefta Hagigah 2:1-7, Palestinian Talmud Hagigah 77a-d, and Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 11b-16a.

“...I believe that I have shown that Scholem’s position is not securely supported by the rabbinic sources on the *merkavah*, which, taken by themselves, provide little reason to believe in the existence of the ‘*merkavah* mysticism’ envisioned by Scholem.” – page 184

1982

- Chernus, Ira. *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism: Studies in the History of Midrash* [STUDIA JUDAICA, Band XI]. Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1982.

This series of essays shows the relationship between *merkabab* mysticism and rabbinic *midrashim* following, generally, two motifs: the revelation on Mount Sinai and the eschatological rewards of the world to come.

Refer also to Chernus' articles:

- “Individual and Community in the Redaction of the Hekhalot Literature,” in *Hebrew Union College Annual* 52 (1981)
- “The Pilgrimage to the Merkavah: An Interpretation of Early Jewish Mysticism,” in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, edited by Joseph Dan (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1987)
- “Visions of God in Merkavah Mysticism,” in *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 13, nos. 1-2 (1982)

1983

- Cohen, Martin Samuel. *The Shi'ur Qomah. Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1983.

1985

- Cohen, Martin Samuel. *The Shi'ur Qomah. Texts and Recensions* [TEXTE UND STUDIEN ZUM ANTIKEN JUDENTUM, Volume 9]. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, (Paul Siebeck), 1985

The 1983 and 1985 works from Cohen comprise an edited version of his PhD dissertation, *THE ŠI'UR QOMAH: A CRITICAL EDITION OF THE TEXT WITH INTRODUCTION, Translation and Commentary* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1982). See below, Translations and References,” § F.

1988

- Gruenwald, Ithamar. *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism. Studies in Apocalypticism, Merkavah Mysticism, and Gnosticism* [BEITRÄGE ZUR ERFORSCHUNG DES ALTEN TESTAMENTS UND DES ANTIKEN JUDENTUMS, Band 14]. Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1988.

*From Apocalypticism...* is a collection of twelve articles (plus an introductory essay), most previously published. Four of the articles are new, and one appears in English for the first time.

“The traditions and writings which are discussed in this collection of studies crystallized among people whose intellectual horizons were not as clearly and sharply outlined as those of the modern mind. For those people, the demarcation lines between dreams and dream-like situations, on the one hand, and rational wakefulness, on the other, were rather flexible and likely to be altogether ignored.” (PREFACE, page i)

Refer to Gruenwald's article

- “Reflections on the Nature and Origins of Jewish Mysticism,” in *Gershom Scholem's MAJOR TRENDS IN JEWISH MYSTICISM 50 Years After*, edited by Joseph Dan and Peter Schäfer (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1993)
- Halperin, David J. *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Responses to Ezekiel's Vision*. [TEXTE UND STUDIEN ZUM ANTIKEN JUDENTUM, Volume 16]. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1988. ([hereafter](#) FACES)

FACES is a thorough study which challenges many conclusions and assumptions of previous scholars, tracing *merkabab* material from the Bible, through the apocalypses and rabbinic literature, concluding with the *hekhlot* texts. Translations of the text *Re'iyot Yezeqiel* (VISIONS OF EZEKIEL) and other important segments of *hekhlot* material are included.

FACES is valuable in a way that few books of this ilk are in that Halperin invites the reader to engage in his entire scholarly process, which he lays out in great detail in his 450-page text, two-tiered notes (footnotes *and* endnotes), seven informative appendices (Appendix I: “Orientation to Rabbinic Sources” is especially helpful), and full reference list (which is divided into sixteen sections according to topic).

Refer to Halperin’s articles

- “Heavenly Ascension in Ancient Judaism: The Nature of the Experience,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1987 Seminar Papers*, no. 26, edited by Harold Kent (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987)
- “A Sexual Image in Hekhalot Rabbati and Its Implications,” in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, edited by Joseph Dan (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1987).
- “Ascension or Invasion: Implications of the Heavenly Journey in Ancient Judaism,” in *Religion*, vol. 18 (1988).

1989

- Janowitz, Naomi. *The Poetics of Ascent. Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text* [SUNY SERIES IN JUDAICA: HERMENEUTICS, MYSTICISM, AND CULTURE]. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989.

*Poetics* offers a translation of *Ma’aseh Merkabah* with a speculative analysis regarding the functions of this text’s “ritual language.”

Further, see Janowitz’ article

- Janowitz, Naomi. “God’s Body: Theological and Ritual Roles of *Shi’ur Komah*,” in *People of the Body: Jews and Judaism from an Embodied Perspective*, edited by Howard Eilberg-Schwartz [SUNY SERIES: THE BODY IN CULTURE, HISTORY AND RELIGION]. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992.

1991

- Swartz, Michael D. *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism. An Analysis of MA’ASEH MERKABAH* [TEXTE UND STUDIEN ZUM ANTIKEN JUDENTUM, Volume 28]. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1991.

*Mystical Prayer*...gives a full treatment and translation of *Ma’aseh Merkabah* (WORK OF THE CHARIOT).

*Mystical Prayer* is a revised and expanded version of Swartz’ PhD dissertation, LITURGICAL ELEMENTS IN EARLY JEWISH MYSTICISM: A Literary Analysis of “Ma’aseh Merkavah” (New York: New York University, 1986).

1992

- Schäfer, Peter. *The Hidden and Manifest God. Some Major Themes in Early Jewish Mysticism* [SUNY SERIES IN JUDAICA: HERMENEUTICS, MYSTICISM, AND RELIGIONS]. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992. ([hereafter](#) HMG)

HMG is a detailed look at a selection of *hekhalot* texts. Instead of summarizing each text in turn, Schäfer organizes his analysis thematically, considering each text’s notion of God, angels, and man. He clarifies the roles of two distinct motifs: (i) ascent through the *hekhalot* to the throne of glory, and (ii) the adjuration—either to God or to one of his angels.

Refer to Schäfer’s articles

- “Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature,” in *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 14, no. 2 (1983) ; also in Schäfer’s *Hekhalot-Studien* (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1988)
- “New Testament and Hekhalot Literature: The Journey into Heaven in Paul and in Merkavah Mysticism,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 35, no. 1 (The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, Spring 1984); also in Schäfer’s *Hekhalot-Studien*
- “Research on Hekhalot Literature: Where Do We Stand Now?” in *Rashi 1040—1990: Congrès européen des Études juives* [HOMMAGE A EPHRAIM E. URBACH], edited by Gabrielle Sed-Rajna (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1993)

1993

- Dan, Joseph. *Ancient Jewish Mysticism*. Tel Aviv: MOD [= Ministry of Defense] Books, 1993.

Dan reviews all of the major topics, issues, and texts in a manner which does not exclude the non-specialist. *Ancient Jewish Mysticism* expands Dan's earlier chap book, *Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism* (University of Cincinnati, 1984), which discusses (a) ascent to the divine world, (b) the mysticism of Hebrew letters, and (c) *Sar Torah* (Prince of the Torah) revelations.

Further elaborating on the topics covered in *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism* is the collection of articles which comprises Dan's *Jewish Mysticism*, Volume One: LATE ANTIQUITY (Northvale – Jerusalem: Jason Aronson Inc., 1998; [hereafter](#) JM1), in which Dan's articles listed below have been reprinted.

Refer also to the following articles by Joseph Dan:

- “The Concept of History in Hekhalot and Merkabah Literature,” in *Binah: Studies in Jewish History, Thought, and Culture*, vol. 1: STUDIES IN JEWISH HISTORY, edited by Joseph Dan (New York – Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1989) = JM1: Chapter 7.
- “The Concept of Knowledge in the Shi'ur Qomah,” in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History* [PRESENTED TO ALEXANDER ALTMANN ON THE OCCASION OF HIS SEVENTIETH BIRTHDAY], edited by Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe (University of Alabama Press/Institute of Jewish Studies: 1979); also, JM1: Chapter 8.
- “Rashi and the Merkabah,” in *Rashi 1040—1990: Congrès européen des Études juives* [HOMMAGE A EPHRAIM E. URBACH], edited by Gabrielle Sed-Rajna (Paris: Les éditions du Cerf, 1993) = JM1: Chapter 11.
- *The Revelation of the Secret World: The Beginning of Jewish Mysticism*. Providence: Brown University Press, 1992; = JM1: Chapter 3.
- *Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism* = JM1: Chapter 2.

1994

- Wolfson, Elliot R. *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) ([hereafter](#) SPECULUM)

“This book ... is an attempt to treat in a comprehensive manner the problem of visionary experience in some of the main texts of the classical period of medieval Jewish mysticism. I have isolated the problem of vision and visualization since this constitutes one of the essential phenomenological concerns in the various mystical corpora produced by Jewish authors throughout history. I make no claim that mysticism is identical to or collapsible into the phenomenon of vision. I do, however, maintain that the examination of this issue provides an excellent speculum through which to view the religious experience of different Jewish mystics.

While the major focus of this book, from a chronological perspective, is the High Middle Ages... (chapters 5 to 7), in chapter 3 I discuss the nature of the vision of the glory in the ancient Jewish mystical corpus known as the Hekhalot or Merkabah literature. The justification for including this chapter is both historical-textual and phenomenological.” (—page 9; my ellipses--DK)

After providing a summary of scholarship on *hekhalot* literature, CHAPTER 3, “Visionary Ascent and Enthronement in the Hekhalot Literature,” discusses the vision of God as presented therein, citing *Hekhalot Rabbati* most often. Wolfson explores problematic aspects—“The Paradox of Seeing the Hidden God,” eroticism, anthropomorphism—which bear upon the import of the texts: Did actual experiences determine the texts, or did the texts determine the experiences? Are the experiences themselves “real” or “imagined”? Does the *hekhalot* literature represent experience or exegesis? Are such distinctions useful in understanding the intent of the *hekhalot* authors? Through the chapter, Wolfson remains in dialogue with other scholars who have treated the *hekhalot* material—Scholem, Schäfer, and Halperin in particular.

“From a phenomenological perspective as well, it is obvious that the Hekhalot corpus is an intrinsic part of such a study [*i.e.*, of visionary experience in medieval Jewish mysticism], insofar as the vision of glory and the chariot served as a paradigm for visionary experience in later Jewish mysticism, influenced in particular...by the philosophical reinterpretations

of this religious experience, as will be discussed in chapter 4 [“Theories of Glory and Visionary Experience in Pre-Kabbalistic Sources”]. To be sure, in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the various ‘trends’ of Jewish mysticism took shape in such a way that the chariot vision is hermeneutically transformed. It is nevertheless the case that the major mystical ideologies of the period to be discussed in this monograph, the German Pietists [CHAPTER 5: “Haside Ashkenaz: Verdical and Docetic (≈ “real” or “imagined”) Interpretations of the Chariot Vision”] and the Provençal-Spanish kabbalists of the theosophic trend [CHAPTERS 6 and 7, “Visionary Gnosis and the Role of the Imagination in Theosophic Kabbalah” and “The Hermeneutics of Visionary Experience: Revelation and Interpretation in the Zohar”] orient themselves in terms of the chariot. In that sense we can speak of these schools as hermeneutical transformations of the Hekhalot mysticism.” (—pages 9-10; my brackets, parentheses, and ellipses--DK).

Further, refer to Wolfson’s articles

- “The Image of Jacob Engraved upon the Throne: Further Reflection on the Esoteric Doctrine of the German Pietists” = CHAPTER 1 of *Along the Path: Studies in Kabbalistic Myth, Symbolism, and Hermeneutics*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995
- “Jewish Mysticism: A Philosophical Overview,” § MERKAVAH MYSTICISM, in *History of Jewish Philosophy* [ROUTLEDGE HISTORY OF WORLD PHILOSOPHIES – volume 2], edited by Daniel H. Frank and Oliver Leaman (London – New York: Routledge, 1997)
- “Metatron and Shi’ur Qomah in the Writings of the Haside Ashkenaz,” in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism: International Symposium held in Frankfurt a. M. 1991*, edited by Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan [STUDIA JUDAICA: Band XIII]. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995.
- “Yeridah la-Merkabah: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism,” in *Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies*, edited by R. A. Herrera (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc., 1993).

1995

- Deutsch, Nathaniel. *The Gnostic Imagination. Gnosticism, Mandaeism, and Merkabah Mysticism* [BRILL’S SERIES ON JEWISH STUDIES, 13]. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995.

Deutsch gives an account of the relationship between Gnosticism and *merkabah* mysticism using Scholem’s written statements on these as a starting point. He surveys a range of scholarly opinion on issues surrounding these topics, drawing on many of the writers mentioned in this bibliography. Deutsch summarizes his view of Scholem on page 36: “Even though his [Scholem’s] comparative analysis of Gnosticism and Merkabah mysticism is problematic from a number of methodological perspectives, its role as an intellectual catalyst cannot be overstated.”

- Fossum, Jarl E. *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on Early Christology* [NOVUM TESTAMENTUM ET ORBIS ANTIQUUS 30] Freiburg, Schweiz: Universitätsverlag / Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1995.

“Many statements about Jesus in the Gospel according to John can be paralleled by what is said about Metatron in 3 *Enoch* and the Son in Valentinian Gnosticism. Perhaps the most striking similarity is that they all are represented as the possessor of the Name of God, the concept of which plays an enormous role in Judaism. As the figure of Metatron appears to be some sort of systemization of and elaboration upon everything that was said about the principal angel in older sources, works outdating even John, it would seem that both Johannine and Gnostic Christology owe to mystical Judaism.” (INTRODUCTION, pages 3-4)

- Kuyt, Annalies. *The ‘Descent’ to the Chariot. Towards a Description of the Terminology, Place, Function and Nature of the YERIDAH in Hekhalot Literature* [TEXTE UND STUDIEN ZUM ANTIKEN JUDENTUM, Volume 45]. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1995. ([hereafter](#) DESCENT)

DESCENT offers a discussion of the heavenly journey, *yeridah*, literally “descent,” to the *merkabah* in various passages of the *hehkalot* literature. Kuyt outlines the contents of *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Hekhalot*

*Zutreti, Ma'aseh Merkabab, Merkabab Rabbab*, 3 Enoch, and one of the Genizah fragments. Translated excerpts from all these are included.

1996

- DeConick, April D. *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* [Supplement to VIGILÆ CHRISTIANÆ, 33], Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996.

“This monograph represents a critical juncture in Thomas studies since it dispels the belief that the Gospel of Thomas originates from gnostic traditions. Rather, Jewish mystical and Hermetic origins are proposed and examined.” (—ENDFLAP)

- Swartz, Michael D. *Scholastic Magic. Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

*Scholastic Magic* analyzes and translates the *Sar Torah* (PRINCE OF THE TORAH) texts with an eye toward the cultural environment which produced them.

1997

- Green, Arthur. *Keter: The Crown of God in Early Jewish Mysticism*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997.

In chapters 4 through 7, passages from *Shi'ur Qomah*, 3 Enoch, *Razo shel Sandalphon* (SECRET OF SANDALPHON, a *bekhalot*-related text), and *Hekhalot Rabbati* are translated and analyzed.

1998

- Kanagaraj, Jey J. *Mysticism in the Gospel of John: An Inquiry into Its Background* [JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, Sup. 158]. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998.

The first half of the book (Parts 1 and 2) provides an excellent survey of *merkabab* material and the literature (apocalyptic, non-apocalyptic—including Qumran material—and Christian) clustered around it from Hellenistic times through the first century. Part 2 examines *merkabab* mysticism in some detail to set up an analysis of its connections with Johannine mysticism.

- Lesses, Rebecca Macy. *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism* [HARVARD THEOLOGICAL STUDIES 44]. Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 1998. ([hereafter](#) POWER)

Lesses concentrates on the adjuration sections of the *bekhalot* material. Along with an analysis of these “ritual performances,” Lesses presents a survey of current scholarship (covering many of the authors mentioned in the present paper). Further, she attempts to set the adjurations of the *bekhalot* into the milieu of the Greco-Egyptian ritual literature of late antiquity.

Refer to Lesses’ articles

- Lesses, Rebecca. “The Adjunction of the Prince of the Presence: Performative Utterance in a Jewish Ritual,” in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, edited by Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki [RELIGIONS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD, 129]. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995.
- See below, page 12-13: *Paradise Now*.

1999

- Deutsch, Nathaniel. *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* [BRILL’S SERIES IN JEWISH STUDIES, 22]. Leiden: Brill, 1999.

“Within Merkabah mysticism, God is frequently depicted as an exalted and highly remote figure. Thus, Scholem was partly right when he described the gulf between humans and the God in Merkabah mysticism. Yet, Scholem erred when he emphasized the impossibility of closing this gulf—that is, when he defined the God of Merkabah mysticism as absolutely inaccessible or transcendent. How was the distance between human beings and God breached in Merkabah mysticism? The answer to this question requires an appreciation of the paradoxical nature of the

angelic vice regent” (*Guardians*, p. 9). Deutsch discusses Metatron in this role, with comments on Akatriel; he then examines similar figures in Gnosticism (Sabaoth) and Mandaeism (Abathur).

Further, refer to Deutsch’s article

- “Dangerous Ascents: Rabbi Akiba’s Water Warning and Late Antique Cosmological Traditions,” in *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, vol. 8 (Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1998)

2000

- Kanarfogel, Ephraim. *“Peering through the Lattices”: Mystical, Magical, and Pietistic Dimensions in the Tosafist Period*. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2000.

Kanarfogel tracks the influence and use of *hekhhalot* and other mystical and magical material to 12<sup>th</sup>- and 13<sup>th</sup>-century Germany and France. His argument is that esoteric teachings and practices spread beyond the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* to the *tosafists*, rabbinic descendants of Rashi, conventionally considered to have been inclined exclusively toward study of the Talmud.

2001

- Davila, James R. *Descenders to the Chariot: The People behind the Hekhalot Literature* [SUPPLEMENT TO THE JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF JUDAISM, Volume 70]. Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2001.

In the first chapter, Davila provides an excellent summary of the issues and debates in *hekhhalot* scholarship. He then makes his case for understanding the *hekhhalot* texts not as being mere literary constructs but as describing the experiences of real practitioners, whom Davila likens to shamans, *i.e.*, “religious functionaries,” “intermediaries” seeking “to gain power over the spiritual world.”

Further, see Davila’s article

- Davila, James R. “Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the Hekhalot Rabbati,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 45, no. 2 (The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. 1994).
- See below, page 13: *Paradise Now*.

- Eskola, Timo. *Messiah and the Throne: Jewish Merkabah Mysticism and Early Christian Exaltation Discourse* [WISSENSCHAFTLICHE UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT 2. Reihe 142]. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2001.

Eskola says in the introduction (page 17), “...it will be the main purpose of this work to investigate the relationship between Jewish merkabah mysticism and New Testament exaltation Christology by focusing on the central metaphor of the throne. In this study our interest lies in the occupants of the throne, in enthronements, and in the function of the throne in different contexts.”

2002

- Janowitz, Naomi. *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity* [MAGIC IN HISTORY]. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002.

Chapter 5, “Using Names, Letters, and Praise: The Language of Ascent,” focuses on *Hekhalot Rabbati*; Chapter 6, “Combining Words and Deeds: Angelic Imprecations in *The Book of Secrets*,” discusses *Sefer ha-Razim*. The *hekhhalot* practitioners are considered within the broader setting of the prevailing assumptions—Jewish, Christian, and pagan—of the culture in Late Antiquity concerning religion and ritual.

- Morray-Jones, C. R. A. *A Transparent Illusion. The Dangerous Vision of Water in Hekhalot Mysticism: A Source-Critical and Tradition-Historical Inquiry* [Supplements to the JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF JUDAISM, volume 59]. Leiden – Boston – Köln: Brill, 2002.

In the first section of *A Transparent Illusion*, Morray-Jones builds upon (and occasionally corrects) comments regarding the “water test” passages in his own earlier two-part article, “Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1-12): The Jewish Mystical background of Paul’s Apostolate, Part 1: The Jewish Sources” and “Part 2: Paul’s Heavenly Ascent and Its Significance (both in *Harvard Theological Review* 86, Cambridge: 1993). Thereafter, Morray-Jones offers an in-depth analysis of the “water vision

episode” within the context of the *hekhalot* literature: *Hekhalot Rabbati* and, especially, *Hekhalot Zutarti*. An extensive appendix discusses “Solomon and the Queen of Sheba,” a story which “appears to derive from the same traditional background and to be related in some manner to the water vision episode itself” (—page 230).

Refer to Morray-Jones’ articles

- “Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition: Alexander’s Three Test Cases,” in *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 22, no.1 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1991)
- “Transformational Mysticism in the Apocalyptic-Merkabah Tradition,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 43, no. 1 (The Oxford Centre for the Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 1992)
- See below, page 13: *Paradise Now*.

2003

- Arbel, Vita Daphna. *Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003.

Arbel’s summary of *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature and scholarly approaches to it is not as engaging or detailed as, for instance, the introduction in Davila’s *Descenders to the Chariot* (see above). However, Arbel nicely treats the question, “What is MYSTICAL about *hekhalot-merkavah* mysticism?” *i.e.*, what are its “mystical” characteristics and intentions?

FROM THE SUNY PRESS CATALOGUE (Spring 2003): “While previous scholarship has demonstrated the connection between Hekhalot and Merkavah mysticism and parallel traditions in Rabbinical writings, the Dead Sea Scrolls, apocalyptic, early Christian, and Gnostic sources, this work points out additional mythological traditions that resonate in this literature. Arbel suggests that mythological patterns of expression, as well as themes and models rooted in Near Eastern mythological traditions are employed, in spiritualized fashion, to communicate mystical content.”

See also Arbel’s article

- “‘Understanding of the Heart.’ Spiritual Transformation and Divine Revelations in the Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature,” in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, Volume 6, No. 4 (1999). Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.
- “Pure Marble Stones or Water? On Ecstatic Perception, Group Identity, and Authority in Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature,” in *Studies in Spirituality*, Volume 16 (2006). Kampen [Netherlands]: Kok Pharos.
- See below, page 13: *Paradise Now*.

2004

- Elior, Rachel. *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism*, translated by David Louvish [= MIKDASH U-MERKAVAH, KOHANIM U-MAL’AKHIM, HEKHAL BAMBISTIKAH HA YEHDIT HA-KEDUMAH, 2002]. Oxford – Portland: The Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004.

Elior details the traditions and literature leading up to the *hekhalot* texts. She writes, “Heikhalot literature preserves the living continuation of the sacred service by recovering it from the realm of space and time: the Temple/*beikhal* is lifted up to the heavens, and the priests serving therein become the ministering angels in the supernal Temples; the sacred service in these heavenly sanctuaries is described explicitly in terms of the rituals of the earthly Temple. This metamorphosis is implemented through the terminology of Merkavah mysticism, combining the hallowed memory of ritual with creative imagination and visionary inspiration, creating a bridge between the ‘revealed’ and the ‘hidden’” (INTRODUCTION, pages 14-15).

Refer, however, to the critical comments made about Elior’s *Three Temples* by presenters Nehemia Polen, Alan F. Segal, Jonah Steinberg, and Lawrence H. Schiffman at the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the Association for Jewish Studies (Chicago: December 19-21, 2004), § 4.5, HEAVENLY SECRETS AND HUMAN AUTHORITY IN THE THOUGHT OF SECTARIANS, SAGES, AND EARLY JEWISH MYSTICS, Chair: Rebecca Lesses (CDs and tapes available from Content Management Corporation, 3043 Foothill Blvd., Suite #2, La Crescenta, CA 91214: 818-857-0874).

Also, see Elijior's articles

- "The Concept of God in Merkabah Mysticism," in *Binah: Studies in Jewish History, Thought, and Culture*, vol. 2: STUDIES IN JEWISH THOUGHT, edited by Joseph Dan (New York – Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1989) (= a translation from the Hebrew of Elijior's article in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, edited by Joseph Dan (Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1987).
- "Mysticism, Magic, and Angelology—The Perception of Angels in Hekhalot Literature," in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 1, no. 1 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck] 1993).
- "From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines: Prayer and Sacred Song in the Hekhalot Literature and Its Relation to Tradition," in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 4, no. 3 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1997).
- "The *Merkavah* Tradition and the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism: From Temple to *Merkavah*, from *Hekhal* to *Hekhalot*, from Priestly Opposition to Gazing upon the *Merkavah*," in *Sino-Judaica, Jews and Chinese in Historical Dialogue*, edited by A. Oppenheimer (Tel Aviv: Tel Aviv University Press 1999).
- "The Priestly Nature of the Mystical Heritage in *Heykalot Literature*," in *Experience et Écriture Mystiques dans les Religions du Livre*, edited by Paul Fenton and Roland Goetschel [ETUDES SUR LE JUDAÏSME MÉDIEVAL, TOME XXII] Leiden: Brill, 2000.
- See below, page 13: *Paradise Now*.

2005

- Boustán, Ra'anan. *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkabah Mysticism*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005. (= Abusch, Ra'anan S. FROM MARTYR TO MYSTIC: THE STORY OF THE TEN MARTYRS, HEKHALOT RABBATI, AND THE MAKING OF "MERKAVAH MYSTICISM." Ph.D. dissertation, Princeton: Princeton University, 2004)

"My emphasis on the situated nature of "Merkavah mysticism" [as opposed to a "radical alternative or esoteric counterpart of 'normative' rabbinic Judaism"] represents, at least in part, a reaction to the scholarly literature that stems from this homogenizing tendency [which is to "routinely conflate later applications or elaborations on Heikhalot texts with the Jewish 'mystical' or 'magical' literatures of Late Antiquity"]. To this end, this study aims to illuminate the particular historical circumstances and ideological motivations that led the creators of *Hekhalot Rabbati* to formulate their novel conception of heavenly ascent as an esoteric ritual discipline. I thereby pointedly emphasize the role of Heikhalot literature in the transformation of Jewish religious thought from its largely decentralized roots in Late Antiquity to its gradual drive towards systematization in the High Middle Ages." – PREFACE, pages viii-ix.

- Orlov, Andrei A. *The Enoch Metatron Tradition* [TEXTS AND STUDIES IN ANCIENT JUDAISM 107]. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.  
PART ONE, "Evolution of the Roles and Titles of the Seventh Antediluvian Hero in Mesopotamian, Enochic, and Merkabah Tradition" [Chapter Three deals primarily with *Sefer Hekhalot* (3 ENOCH)]  
PART TWO, "Polemical (Adamic, Mosaic, and Noachic) Developments and Their Role in the Evolution of Enoch's Roles and Titles in the Slavonic Apocalypse (= 2 ENOCH)"

Orlov fills a gap in scholarship by reintroducing the Slavonic pseudepigrapha (THE APOCALYPSE OF ABRAHAM, THE LADDER OF JACOB, and, particularly, 2 ENOCH) into the progression from Second Temple apocalypticism to *heikhalot* literature (which progression, borrowing from Hugo Odeberg's analysis, can be epitomized as 1 ENOCH → 2 ENOCH → 3 ENOCH). Orlov refers to 2 ENOCH as "proto-*heikhalot*," which indicates, in Orlov's assessment, the degree to which rabbinic mystical and *heikhalot* literature relied upon it.

2006

- Alexander, Philip. *The Mystical Texts: Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and Related Manuscripts* [COMPANION TO THE QUMRAN SCROLLS, 7 / LIBRARY OF SECOND TEMPLE STUDIES, 61]. London – New York: T&T Clark International, 2006.

Alexander treats “Heikhalot Mysticism and Qumran” in CHAPTER 5, stating,

...comparison of Qumran mysticism with Heikhalot mysticism draws Qumran into the larger discipline of the study of Jewish mysticism, and puts it in a broader intellectual context. It is probably not unfair to say that the study of the Scrolls has been somewhat marginalized within the study of Judaism, and its significance underestimated by mainline Jewish Studies scholars (see Schiffman 1994 [*Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls*—noted immediately below]). ... It is only recently that attempts have been made to integrate the Qumran evidence into the general history of Jewish mysticism (e.g., Elior 2004 [*The Three Temples*—noted above]). As we shall see, this evidence arguably challenges Scholem’s paradigm of Jewish mysticism [as in *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*—noted above], and forces a revision of it... (—pages 121-2) [my brackets—DK]

Regarding the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, see

- Abusch, Ra’anan. “Seven-fold Hymns in the *Sabbath Sacrifice* and the Hekhalot Literature: Formalism, Hierarchy, and the Limits of Human Participation,” in *The Dead Sea Scrolls as Background to Post-Biblical Judaism and Early Christianity*, edited by James R. Davila [STDJ 46] (Leiden: Brill, 2003).
  - Boustan, Ra’anan S. “Angels in the Architecture: Temple Art and the Poetics of Praise in the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*,” in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, edited by Ra’anan S. Boustan and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).
  - Davila, James R. *Liturgical Works* [EERDMAN’S COMMENTARIES ON THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS, 6]. Grand Rapids – Cambridge: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2000: § “Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q400-407, 11Q17, Mas1K)” —pages 83-167.
  - Fletcher-Lewis, Crispin H. T. “Heavenly Ascent and Incarnational Presence: A Revisionist Reading of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*,” in *Society of Biblical Literature 1998 Seminar Papers* (SBLSP 37 – Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998), and listed at the website JEWISH ROOTS OF EASTERN CHRISTIAN MYSTICISM (<http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/>)
  - Newsom, Carol A. “Merkabah Exegesis in the Qumran *Sabbath Shirot*,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38:1 (1987)
  - \_\_\_\_\_. *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* [HARVARD SEMITIC STUDIES 27]. Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985 (which is a revised version of Newsom’s Ph.D. dissertation, 4Q SEREK SĪROT ’OLAT: EDITION, TRANSLATION, AND COMMENTARY. Cambridge: Harvard University, 1982); see especially Chapter VII. “4Q Sir and the Tradition of the Hekhalot Hymns”.
  - Schiffman, Lawrence. “Merkavah Speculation at Qumran,” in *Mystics, Philosophers, and Politicians*, edited by J. Reinhartz and D. Swetschinski (Durham: Duke University Press, 1982).
  - \_\_\_\_\_. *Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Lost Library of Qumran*. Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994: Chapter 22, “Mysticism and Magic.”
- *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*, edited by April D. DeConick. Leiden – Boston: Brill / Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006. ([hereafter](#) PARADISE NOW)

These eighteen articles, gathered from symposia of the Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism unit of the Society of Biblical Literature conducted over a ten-year span commencing in 1995, are described in DeConick’s preface as “a pioneering volume, the first ever to collect international voices that are mapping this field of study” (page xx).

## CONTENTS:

Abbreviations

PREFACE

- April D. DeConick, “What Is Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism?”

## PART 1: HERMENEUTICS AND EXPERIENCE

- Alan F. Segal, “Religious Experience and the Construction of the Transcendent Self”
- Christopher Rowland, with Patricia Gibbons and Vicente Dobroruka, “Visionary Experience in Ancient Judaism and Christianity”
- Seth L. Sanders, “Performative Exegesis”

## PART 2: COMMUNAL IDENTITIES

- Rachel Elior, “The Emergence of the Mystical Traditions of the *Merkabah*”
- James R. Davila, “The Ancient Jewish Apocalypses and the *Hekhalot* Literature”
- Ra’anana S. Boustán, “Rabbi Ishmael’s Priestly Genealogy in *Hekhalot* Literature”

## PART 3: COSMOLOGY

- Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones, “The Temple Within”
- Andrei A. Orlov, “God’s Face in the Enochic Tradition”
- Cameron C. Afzal, “Wheels of Time in the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ”
- Kevin Sullivan, “Sexuality and Gender of Angels”

## PART 4: APOCALYPTICISM

- Frances Flannery-Dailey, “Lessons on Early Jewish Apocalypticism and Mysticism from Dream Literature”
- Kelley Coblenz Bautch, “Situating the Afterlife”
- Rebecca Lesses, “Eschatological Sorrow, Divine Weeping, and God’s Right Arm”

## PART 5: PRACTICES

- Celia Deutsch, “The Therapeutae, Text Work, Ritual, and Mystical Experience”
- Andrea Lieber, “Jewish and Christian Heavenly Meal Traditions”
- Charles A. Gieschen, “Baptismal Praxis and Mystical Experience in the Book of Revelation”
- Daphna Arbel, “Divine Secrets and Divination”

Bibliography

Contributors

Indices

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- Orlov, Andrei A. *From Apocalypticism to Merkabah Mysticism: Studies in Slavonic Pseudepigrapha*. [Supplements to THE JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF JUDAISM, v. 114]. Leiden – Boston: Brill 2007.

PART ONE of Orlov’s study is an exhaustive (near 100-page) “Bibliography of the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha and Related Literature”; PART TWO, “Studies in Slavonic Pseudepigrapha,” “contains several [17] essays previously published in journals inaccessible to many interested readers” (page XI).

In the introduction to the articles in PART TWO, Orlov writes, “It should be noted that *2Enoch*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, and the *Ladder of Jacob* represent a unique group of texts that share a theophanic and mediatorial language that, in my view, is as different from the mainstream of early apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic writings as it is from later Hekhalot materials. This group of materials gives evidence of the lost *practical* and *literary* development that could very well represent an important transitional stage in early Jewish mystical testimonies, serving as a bridge from the matrix of early Jewish Apocalypticism, as it was manifested in early Enochic literature, to the matrix of early Jewish mysticism as it became manifest in rabbinic Merkabah and Hekhalot materials. The articles gathered in this volume intend to illustrate this transitional character of the Slavonic pseudepigraphic evidence by exploring theophanic and angelological imagery found in *2Enoch*, the *Ladder of Jacob*, the Slavonic version of *3 Baruch* and other pseudepigraphical texts preserved in Slavonic. It appears that the theophanic and angelological developments found in these documents

occupy an intermediary stage between Second Temple Apocalypticism and Hekhalot mysticism and thus exhibit its own distinctive, one might say ‘proto-Hekhalot,’ mystical mold.” (—page 105)

- Halbertal, Moshe. *Concealment and Revelation: Esotericism in Jewish Thought and Its Philosophical Implications*, translated by Jackie Feldman. Princeton – Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2007.

CHAPTER 3 “The Ethics of Gazing: The Attitude of Early Jewish Mysticism toward Seeing the Chariot; and CHAPTER 4 “Concealment and Power: Magic and Esotericism in the Hekhalot Literature.

Toward the end of CHAPTER 4, Halbertal writes, “The fundamental unit for the transmission of esoteric oral knowledge is the family. According to the testimony of Rabbi Eleazar of Worms, the termination of his family line, as a result of the early death of his son and combined with the diminution of his students, moved him to commit the secrets of the Torah to writing. The fear of the loss of the secret as a result of the diminution of the line of transmission justified the writing down of the secret; thus, the knowledge could be passed on without relying on the continuous chain of oral tradition.” (—page 33)

2009

Schäfer, Peter. *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.

[forthcoming – due June 2009]

## Translations & References

### The Hekhalot Corpus

The number of *hekhalot* texts in translation has grown, though very slowly, over the years. Alas, here we enter directly into the question of what *is* and what *is not* a member of the *hekhalot* family; the canons offered by various scholars differ. For instance, Schäfer's *Synopse* includes some items which many commentators find dubious, namely, THE SWORD OF MOSES and *Seder Rabba di Bereshit*. One well-known text, THE VISIONS OF EZEKIEL, while almost always included on lists of *hekhalot* texts, is clearly of a character different from the so-called "core group."

Discussions regarding which texts belong to the *hekhalot* canon have progressed along several lines:

1. Texts which have long been counted among the *hekhalot* are now thought not to belong, for example, THE VISIONS OF EZEKIEL.
2. Magical works, such as THE SWORD OF MOSES and *Sefer ha-Razim*, are being drawn closer to the *hekhalot*.
3. Some works are being wholly reconsidered in that they might not be *works* at all but rather of one *genre* or another, as, for instance, the *Shi'ur Qomah* and *Sar Torah* texts.

As mentioned already, even the titles of these "books" are late inventions which have become *conventions*, used even by the scholars who refute their validity.

Using the lists of *hekhalot* given by a number of contemporary scholars, below is a reference outline of sources on various *hekhalot* titles, erring in favor of inclusion.

## The “Core Group” of *Hekhalot* Texts

### A. *Hekhalot Rabbati* [THE GREATER PALACES] (HR)

#### Translations:

1. HR chapters 1-30, translated in the early 1940s by Morton Smith from an unpublished edition prepared by G. Scholem and C. Wirszubski which was never published.
2. HR chapters 15-29, prepared by Lauren Grodner, in David R. Blumenthal's *Understanding Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1978), where it is referred to as “Pirkei Heikalot.”
3. HR chapters 1, 2, and 16-26, in Aryeh Kaplan's *Meditation and Kabbalah* (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1982).
4. HR chapters 15:1-22:2 (with omissions), in Philip S. Alexander's *Textual Sources for the Study of Judaism* (Totowa: Barnes and Noble, 1984; rpt., University of Chicago Press, 1990).
5. HR chapters 5 and 6 (up to the *First Apocalypse*), “annotated translation” = APPENDIX C of Ra'anan Abusch's dissertation, FROM MARTYR TO MYSTIC...; see immediately below under “See also.”

#### References to HR throughout the following:

- Gruenwald. AMM.
- Schäfer. HMG.
- Kuyt. DESCENT.
- Lesses. POWER.

#### See also

- Boustán, Ra'anan. *From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism*. Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.
- Boustán, Ra'anan S. “Rabbi Ishmael's Priestly Genealogy in *Hekhalot* Literature,” in *Paradise Now*.
- Dan, Joseph. *The Revelation of the Secret World: The Beginning of Jewish Mysticism*. Providence: Brown University Press, 1992; = JM1: Chapter 3.
- Davila, James R. “Prolegomena to a Critical Edition of the *Hekhalot Rabbati*,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 45, no. 2 (The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies. 1994).
- Halperin, David. “A Sexual Image in *Hekhalot Rabbati* and Its Implications,” in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, edited by Joseph Dan (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1987).
- Janowitz, Naomi. “Using Names, Letters, and Praise: The Language of Ascent” (= Chapter 5), in *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity* [MAGIC IN HISTORY] University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002.
- Schiffman, Lawrence. “The Recall of Rabbi Nehuniah ha-Qanah from Ecstasy in the *Hekhalot Rabbati*,” in *AJS Review*, vol. 1 (Association for Jewish Studies, 1976).

- Smith, Morton. “Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati,” in *Biblical and Other Studies*, edited by Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963).
- Wolfson. SPECULUM, chapter 3.

Often appended to HR in manuscripts is “The Book of the Great Name.” For an introduction and translation, see Michael D. Swartz, “The Book of the Great Name,” in *Judaism in Practice from the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period* [PRINCETON READINGS IN RELIGIONS], edited by Lawrence Fine (Princeton – Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001).

B. *Hekhalot Zutreti*, OR *Zutarti* [THE LESSER PALACES] (HZ)

Translations: Two editions of HZ in the original Hebrew and Aramaic have appeared (i) Schäfer’s *Synopse*, and (ii) a problematic “critical edition” by Rachel Elijor (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1982). For a review of these two editions, see David Halperin’s “A New Edition of the Hekhalot Literature,” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, vol. 104, no. 3 (1984). There is no complete version of HZ in English; many important passages are given in Halperin’s *FACES*.

References: *FACES*, AMM, HMG, DESCENT, POWER, Scholem’s *Jewish Gnosticism*, and Morray-Jones’ *Transparent Illusion*.

C. *Sefer Hekhalot* [BOOK OF PALACES] = Hebrew Book of Enoch = 3 Enoch (3E)

Translations:

1. Odeberg, Hugo. *3 Enoch or The Hebrew Book of Enoch*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1928; rpt. New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1973.
2. Alexander, P. “3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch: A New Translation and Introduction,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James Charlesworth (Garden City: Doubleday and Company, 1983).

References: AMM, HMG, POWER, and the following articles by P. S. Alexander:

- “Appendix: 3 Enoch,” in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, A New English Version, revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Goodman. Edinburgh: T&T Clark Ltd., 1986: volume 3, part 1.
- “The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 28, no. 2 (The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 1977).
- “3 Enoch and the Talmud,” in *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, vol. 17, no. 2 (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1986).

Refer also to the articles in PARADISE NOW:

- Rebecca Lesses, “Eschatological Sorrow, Divine Weeping, and God’s Right Arm.”
- Daphna Arbel, “Divine Secrets and Divination.”

D. *Merkabah Rabba* [THE GREAT CHARIOT] (MR)

There are a few paragraphs of MR translated in Appendix One of Janowitz' *Poetics of Ascent* (noted above) and Cohen's *Shi'ur Qomah* (see below: F. *Shi'ur Qomah*).

With MR, we come to the first of many texts on which there is very little in English. We must turn to Schäfer's HMG, Kuyt's outline in DESCENT, and Lesses' references in POWER. Gruenwald's chapter on MR in AMM begins with a description of material which probably does not belong to it, namely, a portion of the *Sar ha-Panim* (ShP, PRINCE OF THE PRESENCE, or COUNTENANCE). Peter Schäfer treats ShP as an independent text in "Die Beschwörung des *sar ha-panim*. Kritische Edition und Übersetzung" (THE ADJURATION OF THE PRINCE OF THE COUNTENANCE: CRITICAL EDITION AND TRANSLATION), originally in *Frankfurter Judaische Beiträge*, vol. 6 (1978); reprinted in Schäfer's *Hekhalot-Studien*. Of course, Schäfer's translation is in German, but all is not lost. The same text has been put into English twice.

- by Moses Gaster in *The Sword of Moses* (London: D. Nutt, 1896; rpt. New York: Samuel Weiser, 1970): Appendix I, § III, pp. 47-51; also in *Studies and Texts...* (see below): vol. 1, pp. 288-337; vol. 3, pp. 69-103. Schäfer does not think Gaster's rendering is terribly accurate, commenting, "The translation is overall fluid and easy to read but often rather fanciful." (*Hekhalot-Studien*, page 122: "[D]ie Übersetzung ist insgesamt flüssig und gut lesbar, doch häufig recht phantasievoll." My thanks to Sabine Baumgart for the translation.)
- by Michael Swartz in *Scholastic Magic* (described above, page 8) on pp. 136-142.

Further, Lesses discusses ShP in numerous places and outlines its contents in POWER, pp. 415-17.

E. *Ma'aseh Merkabah* [WORK OF THE CHARIOT] (MM)

Translations:

- Janowitz, Naomi. *The Poetics of Ascent*.
- Swartz, Michael. *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism*.

References: Along with the two books listed under "Translations," which both offer an analysis of the text, see AMM, HMG, POWER, and Daniel Abrams, "Ma'aseh Merkabah as a Literary Work: The Reception of the Hekhalot Traditions by German Pietist and Kabbalistic Reinterpretation," in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, Volume 5, No. 4 (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1998). Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones translates a passage from MM (Scholem's *Gnosticism...* APPENDIX C: § 6 / Schäfer's *Synopse* §§ 544-45) in his article "The Temple Within" (in PARADISE NOW, page 161).

F. *Shi'ur Qomah* [MEASURE OF THE HEIGHT {of the Divine Body}] (SQ)

David Halperin suggests (FACES, p. 364) that SQ "probably ought to be considered a generic term for materials describing God's organs rather than a single texts." Martin S. Cohen (in his book listed below) holds out for SQ's having been an independent, freestanding work, complete with a lost *urtext* looming in back of the extant versions. SQ has been included here in the "Core Group" because nearly all of the texts already discussed contain SQ material: HR, HZ, 3E, and MR.

## Translations:

- Cohen, Martin Samuel. *The Shi'ur Qomah. Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism*. Lanham: University Press of America, 1983.
- Work of the Chariot. #3 *Book of Enoch*. Los Angeles: Work of the Chariot, 1970. This work contains 1 and 2 Enoch from R. H. Charles' *Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1913), 3E from Odeberg, along with the translation of SQ. The same SQ translation appears in *The Secret Garden*, edited by David Meltzer (New York: Seabury Press, 1976: pp. 23-37).

References: Scholem's *Jewish Gnosticism and Mystical Shape of the Godhead* (New York: Schocken Books, 1991). Further, see

- Abrams, Daniel. "The Dimensions of the Creator—Contradiction or Paradox? Corruptions and Accretions of the Manuscript Witness," in *Kabbalah: Journal for the Study of Jewish Mystical Texts*, Volume 5, edited by Daniel Abrams and Avraham Elqayam (Los Angeles [Culver City]: Cherub Press, 2000).
- Dan, Joseph. "The Concept of Knowledge in the Shi'ur Qomah," in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History* [Presented to Alexander Altmann on the Occasion of His Seventieth Birthday], edited by Siegfried Stein and Raphael Loewe (University of Alabama Press/Institute of Jewish Studies: 1979); also, JM1: Chapter 8.
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- Loewe, Raphael. "The Divine Garment and Shi'ur Qomah," in *Harvard Theological Review*, volume 58 (Cambridge: Harvard College, 1965); includes translated excerpts of *Targum Song of Songs*.
- Wolfson, Elliot R. "Metatron and Shi'ur Qomah in the Writings of the Haside Ashkenaz," in *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism: International Symposium held in Frankfurt a. M. 1991*, edited by Karl Erich Grözinger and Joseph Dan [STUDIA JUDAICA: Band XIII]. Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1995.

## Texts Associated with the *Hekhalot* Corpus

The texts listed in the following set are those which are usually included in summaries and lists of *hekhalot* literature.

### G. *Re'uyot Yehezkiel* [VISIONS OF EZEKIEL] (RY)

Translations:

- Jacobs, Louis. *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*. New York: Schocken Books, 1976: Chapter 3.
- Marmorstein, A. "A Fragment of the Visions of Ezekiel," in *Jewish Quarterly Review*, New Series #8 (1917-18).
- Halperin, David. *FACES*: Chapter VIII, § A.

References: The best source for information on RY is Halperin's *FACES*.

### H. *Masekhet Hekhalot* [TREATISE OF THE PALACES] (MH)

Gruenwald's chapter (AMM) on MH begins with these encouraging words: "*Masekhet Hekhalot* is the most frequently published Hekhalot text we have." Alas, this comment reflects the state of the text in Hebrew, though there are two German translations: (i) by August Wunsche in *Aus Israelis Lehrhallen* III (1909); and (ii) by Klaus Herrmann, *Massakhet Hekhalot: Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar* [TEXTE UND STUDIEN ZUM ANTIKEN JUDENTUM, 39], Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1994. There is also a French translation by Nicolas Sed within his "Deux documents sur la kabbale: *Le Commentaire sur le Sepher Yesirah* de Moïse ben Nahman et le *Traite des Heykalot*," in *Documents oubliés sur l'alchimie, la kabbale et Guillaume Postel*, offerts, à l'occasion de son 90<sup>e</sup> anniversaire, à François Secret par ses élèves et amis, "Scientific editor": Sylvain Matton (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2001).

### I. *Hekhalot* fragments, or Cairo Geniza(h) fragments (CG)

In 1968-9, Gruenwald published (in Hebrew) "New Passages from Hekhalot Literature," in *Tarbiz*, vol. 38, no. 4; these were the newly-discovered Geniza fragments. They have been published subsequently in Peter Schäfer's *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (see note 9 above, page 3). Beyond Gruenwald's remarks in AMM, see *FACES*, *DESCENT, POWER*, Swartz' *Scholastic Magic*, and Jonathan Seidel's article, "Possession and Exorcism in the Magical Texts of the Cairo Geniza," in *Spirit Possession in Judaism: Cases and Contexts from the Middle Ages to the Present*, edited by Matt Goldish (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2003).

### J. Fragments on Physiognomy, Chiromancy, and Metoposcopy

A number of these fragments have been published by Gruenwald (in *Tarbiz*, vol. 40, 1970) and Scholem (in *Sefer Assaf*, Jerusalem: 1953), in Hebrew. One fragment is discussed and translated into German by Schäfer in "Ein neues Fragment zur Metoposkopie und Chiromantik" (in *Hekhalot-Studien*). Not only is there nothing of these texts in English translation, but Gruenwald (in AMM) never really gets around to detailing their contents. See Scholem's article, "Chiromancy," in *Kabbalah*.

The list of *bekhalot* texts up to this point contains all items listed by Scholem in *Jewish Gnosticism* (pp. 5-7), plus the Genizah fragments which Gruenwald includes in his account in AMM. Gruenwald also adds

K. *Sefer ha-Razim* [BOOK OF THE MYSTERIES] (ShR)

Translation:

- Morgan, Michael. *Sefer ha-Razim. The Book of the Mysteries*. [TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS 25; PSEUDEPIGRAPHA SERIES 11]. Chico: Society of Biblical Literature/Scholars Press, 1983.

References:

- AMM
- Naomi Janowitz' *Icons of Power: Ritual Practices in Late Antiquity* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), CHAPTER 6: "Combining Words and Deeds: Angelic Imprecations in *The Book of Secrets*."
- Alexander, Philip S., "Sefer ha-Razim and the Problem of Black Magic in Early Judaism," in *Magic in the Biblical World: From the Rod of Aaron to the Ring of Solomon*, edited by Todd E. Klutz (London: T&T Clark International, 2003) which offers a full analysis and translated excerpts.
- Bohak, Gideon. *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pages 170-175.

The following items are frequently associated with the *bekhalot* cluster:

L. *Baraita de Ma'aseh Bereshit*, OR *Seder Rabbah di Bereshit* [TEACHING ON THE WORK OF CREATION, or GREAT ORDER OF CREATION] (BMB)

Translation:

- In Meltzer's *Secret Garden*, pp. 3-20. This translation appears to have been done from the French of N. Sed: "Une cosmologie juive du haut moyen age: La Bēraita di Ma'aseh Bērešit," in *Revue des Etudes juives*, vol. 124 (1965). See also Sed's *La mystique cosmologique juive* (Paris: Éditions de l'École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1981).

Reference:

- Gottstein, Alon Goshen. "Is *Ma'aseh Bereshit* Part of Ancient Jewish Mysticism?" in *The Journal of Jewish Thought and Philosophy*, volume 4 (Harwood Academic Publishers GmbH, 1995).
- Schäfer, Peter. "In Heaven as It Is in Hell: The Cosmology of *Seder Rabbah di-Bereshit*," in *Heavenly Realms and Earthly Realities in Late Antique Religions*, edited by Ra'anana S. Boustani and Annette Yoshiko Reed (Cambridge – New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

M. *Harba de Moshe* [SWORD OF MOSES] (HdM)

Translation:

- Gaster, Moses. *The Sword of Moses*. (see above: § D.)

Reference:

- Bohak, Gideon. *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pages 175-179

N. *Ottiyot* [ALPHABET] of Rabbi Akiba (ORA)

Translations (excerpts):

- Alexander, P. “3 (Hebrew Book of) Enoch” in Charlesworth, *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (see above: § C). CHAPTER 48C:1-9 contains material taken from the Akiba text.
- Bokser, Ben Zion. *The Jewish Mystical Tradition*. New York: Pilgrim Press, 1981: CHAPTER 3 contains excerpts of ORA and HR.

O. *Sar ha-Panim* [PRINCE OF THE PRESENCE, or COUNTENANCE] (ShP)

Refer to § D above (MR); further, see

- Swartz. *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 135-147.
- POWER, pp. 190-203 and numerous other references.
- Lesses, Rebecca. “The Adjuration of the Prince of the Presence: Performative Utterance in a Jewish Ritual,” in *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power*, edited by Marvin Meyer and Paul Mirecki [RELIGIONS IN THE GRECO-ROMAN WORLD, 129]. Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1995.

P. *Tosefta* to the *Targum* on Ezekiel (TE)

See Halperin’s *FACES*, pp. 278-283.

## A Selection of Articles & Books

- Abelson, J[oshua]. *Jewish Mysticism: An Introduction to the Kabbalah*. London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913; rpt. New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1969 & 1981; and Mineola: Dover Publications, Inc., 2001: Chapter II. “The Merkabah (Chariot) Mysticism”
- Abrams, Daniel. “The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion of Metatron in the Godhead,” in *Harvard Theological Review*, vol. 87, no. 3 (Cambridge: 1994)
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Ma’aseh Merkabah as a Literary Work: The Reception of the Hekhalot Traditions by the German Pietists and Kabbalistic Interpretation,” in *Jewish Studies Quarterly*, vol. 5, no. 4 (1998), Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr.
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- Alexander, P. S. “Comparing Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism: An Essay in Method,” in *Journal of Jewish Studies*, vol. 30, no. 1 (The Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies, 1984).
- Altmann, Alexander. “The Gnostic Background of the Rabbinic Adam Legends”
- VERSION 1. *Jewish Quarterly Review* 35 (Philadelphia/New York: Dropsie College and Macmillan, April 1945)
  - VERSION 2. (idem) *Essays in Jewish Intellectual History* (Hanover – London: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1981)
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Gnostic Motifs in Rabbinic Literature,” in (idem) *The Meaning of Jewish Existence: Theological Essays 1030-1939*, edited by Alfred L. Ivry (Hanover – London: Brandeis University Press/University Press of New England, 1991).
- \_\_\_\_\_. “Gnostic Themes in Rabbinic Cosmology,” in *Essays in Honor of the Very Rev. Dr. J. H. Hertz*, edited by I. Epstein, E. Levine, and C. Roth (London: Edward Goldston, 1942)
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- Baron, Salo Wittmayer. “Magic and Mysticism,” in *A Social and Religious History of the Jews: High Middle Ages (500-1200)*, Volume VIII: Philosophy and Science. 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1958.
- Bockmuehl, Markus N. A. *Revelation and Mystery in Ancient Judaism and Pauline Christianity* [WISSENSCHAFTLICHE UNTERSUCHUNGEN ZUM NEUEN TESTAMENT 2, Band 36]. Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr (Paul Siebeck), 1990.
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- Borgen, Peder. “Heavenly Ascent in Philo: An Examination of Selected Passages,” in *The Pseudepigrapha and Early Biblical Interpretation*, edited by James H. Charlesworth and Craig A. Evans (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993)
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- Dan, Joseph (ed.) *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, Volume VI, 1-2: PROCEEDINGS OF THE FIRST INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE HISTORY OF JEWISH MYSTICISM: *EARLY JEWISH MYSTICISM*. Jerusalem: The Hebrew University of Jerusalem, 1987.  
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- Chernus ("Pilgrimage...")
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- Davidson, Maxwell J. *Angels at Qumran: A Comparative Study of 1 Enoch 1-36, 72-108 and the Sectarian Writings from Qumran* [JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE PSEUDEPIGRAPHA Supplement Series 11]. Sheffield: JSOT Press (Sheffield Academic Press), 1992.
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- Ginzberg, Louis. *The Legends of the Jews* (7 volumes). Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1909-25, 1937-53; rpt. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998. For a summary of Enoch/Metatron material, see Volume 1, pp. 124-40, and, for note on this summary, see Volume 5, pp. 153-64 (notes 57-61).
- Goldberg, Arnold. "Quotations from Scripture in Hekhalot Literature," in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, vol. 6, nos. 1-2, edited by Joseph Dan (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1987).
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  - = Chapter X, (*idem*) *Hidden Wisdom: Esoteric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism* [STUDIES IN THE HISTORY OF RELIGIONS, volume 70] (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996)

## Appendix 1: Hekhalot Literature & Magic\*

With the inclusion of such items as *Sefer ha-Razim*, the SWORD OF MOSES, and *Sar ha-Panim* in clusters of texts associated with *merkabab/hekhalot* mysticism, Jewish magic takes several steps closer to the rabbinic core of these traditions. Certainly, the convenient notion of a neat separation between ascent texts and magic texts can no longer be sustained. Of late, the tendency among scholars is to dismiss such loaded terms as “magic” (a negative term—*vs* “theurgy” or “religion,” positive terms) and “mysticism” to concentrate on the methods and aims of Jewish, usually along with early Christian and pagan (Greco-Roman), rituals and how these reflect the mindset and beliefs of their era. On this trend, see, for example, Rebecca Macy Lesses’ *Ritual Practices to Gain Power* (summary statement on pages 11-13), James R. Davila’s *Descenders to the Chariot* (CHAPTER 2 discusses the difficulties of the words “mysticism,” “magic,” and “shamanism”), and Naomi Janowitz’ *Icons of Power* (INTRODUCTION).

To begin an approach to antique Jewish magic, refer to the following:

- Alexander, P. S. “Incantations and Books of Magic,” in Emil Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ: A New English Version*, revised and edited by G. Vermes, F. Millar, and M. Goodman (Edinburgh: T & T Clark Ltd, 1986): vol. 3, part 1.
- Bloom, Maureen. *Jewish Mysticism and Magic: An Anthropological Perspective* [ROUTLEDGE JEWISH STUDIES SERIES] (London – New York: Routledge, 2007). In the present context, see especially CHAPTER 10: “Approximating God, Appropriating Authority: *Hekhalot* and *Merkava* literature.”
- Bohak, Gideon. Bohak, Gideon. *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
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\* A bibliography of Jewish magic prepared by Alex Jassen and Scott Noegel at University of Washington, which is far more extensive than mine here (and not limited to English sources), is on-line at <http://faculty.washington.edu/snoegel/jmbtoc.htm>. Works are divided according to period and topic.

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  - VOLUME 1, pp. 338-55, “Wisdom of the Chaldeans”
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  - Lesses, Rebecca. "Jewish Magic and Multiculturalism in the Ancient World"
  - Kanarfogel, Ephraim. "Magic in the Rabbinic Culture of Medieval Ashkenaz"
- Societas Magica Newsletter*, Issue 19, Spring 2008 (—online at <http://www.societasmagica.org/>) wch contains
- Durov, Victoria. "Codicological Notes on the Text of a Hewbrew Magic Manual: A New Perspective?"
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## Appendix 2

### THE 1982 VERSION OF

#### Notes on the Study of *Merkabah* Mysticism and *Hekhalot* Literature

from *A Guide to Kabbalistic Books in English: 1977-1979*, by Don Karr (Ithaca: 1982),  
pages 37-40

Additions from the slightly expanded version in *Collected Articles on the Kabbalah*,  
VOLUME 1, by D. Karr (Ithaca: KoM #5, 1985), pages 17-20, are shown in brackets.

1. Merkabah mysticism is the name of a mystical movement within Judaism's Talmudic and Gaonic Periods (ca. 100-1000 c. e.). This school produced what is called the Hekhalot literature.
2. This mysticism, ma'aseh merkabah (work of the chariot), is mentioned in the Mishna itself (in Hagigah 2:1):
 

The work of creation (ma'aseh bereshit) may not be expounded in the presence of two or more. The description of the chariot (merkabah) may not be expounded even in the presence of one, unless he is a sage who already understands out of his own insights.

(quoted from Lipman, Eugene. THE MISHNAH, ORAL TEACHING OF JUDAISM. [New York:] Schocken, 1974, p. 150)
3. Implied in this quote is that merkabah mysticism, though guarded, was not outside of the rabbinic tradition. One gets the impression that it was even thought of as the supreme mystery.
4. Just as the work of creation comprised mystical speculation on the first part of Genesis, work of the chariot comprised mystical speculation on, and amplification of, the first chapter of Ezekiel.
5. The literature of this school describes the mystical journey through various heavens and palaces (hekhalot) leading to the ultimate vision of the throne and chariot, and, in some cases, "the figure in the form of a man" (Ezekiel 1:26).
6. It is not the purpose of this short paper to go into detail about the development of the merkabah school or the contents of the Hekhalot texts. To a greater extent than I am capable, this work has already been done. My purpose is to inform the reader of where to look for information on the various facets of study pertaining to merkabah mysticism. I have limited myself to English sources.

7. Historical and scholarly overviews: as it is with any study in the field of Jewish mysticism, the best place to start the investigation of merkabah mysticism is in the works of Gershom Scholem. Two of his works give excellent synopses of the subject:

MAJOR TRENDS IN JEWISH MYSTICISM (1941, Schocken repr.)  
Lecture 2. Merkabah Mysticism and Jewish Gnosticism.

KABBALAH (1974, Meridian repr.) pp. 8-21, and article:  
Merkabah Mysticism, pp. 373-6.

For a closer look at some of the topics and scholarly concerns in merkabah mysticism, see Scholem's

JEWISH GNOSTICISM, MERKABAH MYSTICISM, AND TALMUDIC  
TRADITION (1965, Jewish Theological Seminary).

KABBALAH (as above), articles:  
Chiromancy, pp. 317-9.  
Meditation, pp. 369-72.  
Metatron, pp. 377-81.

8. There are a few articles and one book that analyze the connections of merkabah mysticism with the rabbinic (i.e. Talmudic, etc.) tradition:

Bokser, Ben Zion. THE JEWISH MYSTICAL TRADITION 1981  
(Pilgrim Press) Chapter 2. The Talmud.  
Talmudic "work of the chariot" segments are translated and introduced.

Halperin, David J. THE MERKABAH IN RABBINIC LITERATURE.  
(1980, American Oriental Society)  
This is a close scholarly analysis of the references to merkabah mysticism in the Mishna: Hagigah 2:1, the Tosefta: Hagigah 2:1-7, the Palestinian Talmud 77 a-d, and the Babylonian Talmud 11b-16a.

Levy, Samson H. The Best Kept Secret of the Rabbinic Tradition, in JUDAISM 21 (4) 1972.  
This takes a look at the strange case of Rabbi Simeon ben Zoma, who entered into PRDS (paradise) but came out of it "stricken."

Neusner, Jacob. The Development of the Merkavah Tradition, in THE STUDY OF JUDAISM in the Persian, Hellenistic and Roman Period, vol 11 (2), 1971, Leiden.  
Four versions of the story of Yohanan ben Zakkai and the merkabah-sermon of his disciple Eleazer ben Arakh are presented and compared to demonstrate that such a story accumulates more and more detail as it passes from earlier to later versions.

9. In JEWISH GNOSTICISM... Scholem lists eight texts belonging to the Hekhalot literature. I shall list them here, adding one (Shiur Qoma), indicating research sources, if any exist:
- a) The Visions of Ezekiel, a mystical midrash on Ezekiel 1:1, see:
- Jacobs, Louis. JEWISH MYSTICAL TESTIMONIES (1977, Schocken) Chapter Three: The Riders of the Chariot and Those Who Enter the Heavenly Halls. Introduction and text of Visions...
- Marmorstein, A. A Fragment of the Visions of Ezekiel, in JEWISH QUARTERLY REVIEW, New Series #8 (1917-18). Translation and discussion.
- b) The Lesser Hekhalot, possibly the oldest. In English, there are only spot translations in Scholem's JEWISH GNOSTICISM... and MAJOR TRENDS...
- c) The Greater Hekhalot, the best covered of the texts for our purposes. Besides spot translations (see Scholem as listed in b) there are
- Blumenthal, David R. UNDERSTANDING JEWISH MYSTICISM: A Source Reader (1978, Ktav) [pp. 53-91] Blumenthal introduces and presents translations of The Greater Hekhalot, Chs. 15-29:5.
- [Kaplan, Aryeh. MEDITATION AND KABBALAH. (1982, Weiser) pp. 41-54. Kaplan introduces the Greater Hekhalot and translates Chapters 1, 2, and 16-26.]
- Schiffman, Lawrence. The Recall of Rabbi Nehuniah ha-Qanah from Ecstasy in the Hekhalot Rabbati, in AJS REVIEW vol I, 1976.  
In Hekhalot Rabbati, R. Nehuniah is pulled out of his ecstasy by his disciples by making him ever-so-slightly ritually impure. This tale is given scholarly treatment in Schiffman's article.
- Smith, Morton. Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati, in BIBLICAL AND OTHER STUDIES, ed. A. Altmann (Harvard U. Press, 1963). This [article] summarizes and analyzes the contents [of Hekhalot Rabbati], presenting a translated excerpt of The Great Magical Papyrus of Paris for the sake of comparison.  
(M. Smith has translated The Greater Hekhalot in its entirety, but it has not been published. Indeed, it exists, as far as I know, in typescript, with corrections jotted in the margins and scribbled over the text by Gershom Scholem.)
- d) Merkabah Rabbah. I know of no English sources for this.
- e) A titleless Hekhalot. Scholem gives a transcription of this text in Hebrew in an appendix to JEWISH GNOSTICISM..., but I know of no other sources for information on this.

- f) Chapter on physiognomics and chiromancy, published in Hebrew by Scholem, but no English translation. See, however, Scholem's article: Chiromancy in KABBALAH.
- g) Book of the Hekhalot, called also 3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch. One of the latest of the texts. Full scholarly treatment and translation of this appear in
- Odeberg, Hugo. 3 ENOCH or THE HEBREW BOOK OF ENOCH (1928, Ktav repr. [1973])
- h) The Treatise of the Hekhalot, the latest of the texts. Published, and translated into German, but not into English.
- i) Shiur Qoma, a strange treatise listing the dimensions and secret names of the deity's various members. See
- Meltzer, David (ed) THE SECRET GARDEN (1977, Seabury) pp. 23-37 for a translation of the text.

For scholarly studies on Shiur Qoma, see

Loewe, Raphael. The Divine Garment and Shi'ur Qomah, in HARVARD THEOLOGICAL REVIEW 58 (1965)

Scholem. JEWISH GNOSTICISM... (as above) chapter VI: The Age of Shiur Komah Speculation and a passage in Origen.

A 14th-century commentary on Shiur Qoma by Moses b. Joshua b. Mar David of Narbonne is translated in

Altmann, A. (ed) JEWISH MEDIEVAL AND RENAISSANCE STUDIES 4 (1967) pp. 225-88.

Shiur Qoma's symbolism is based on the details of "the beloved" in Song of Songs 5:11-16. The basis of the dimensions given is derived from Psalm 147:5; since the phrase in that passage adds up to 236, via gematria, this is the root of Shiur Qoma's calculations.