The Mystery of God

Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament

Christopher Rowland and Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones
The Mystery of God
Compendia Rerum Iudaicarum ad Novum Testamentum

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The Mystery of God

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By
Christopher Rowland and Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones

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Pieter Willem van der Horst and Peter J. Tomson

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2009
To Catherine and Ellen

With profound gratitude
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by Christopher Rowland

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EDITORS’ PREFACE

Every book has its history, the poet said, and this also concerns its pre-history, certainly in the present case. The book was conceived more than a decade ago in conversation with the first undersigned, and along many ways—sometimes mysterious, true to the theme—it has grown and matured into the present publication. It is an occasion worth celebrating.

The importance of mysticism not only in early Judaism but also in nascent Christianity is still to gain the recognition it deserves in scholarship. Fierce debate is going on about the relevance of the sources, in particular the rabbinic ones, and the present volume takes position in this dispute. It is here concluded that Jewish mystical traditions played a crucial role in the life and thought of the protagonists of the New Testament, as also in the rise and development of the central ideology of Christianity, Christology. If correct, the consequences of this insight are manifold for theological and historical scholarship, as well as for Christian-Jewish relations. The present volume, which of course cannot pretend to be more than a contribution to the discussion, is an important step forward, and its authors are to be warmly congratulated.

Not only methodological barriers were to be overcome in preparing this volume, but also innumerable editorial and typographical problems. Many have made their contribution in resolving these difficulties, and insofar as they are not mentioned elsewhere in the book, we wish to express here our sincere gratitude to them.

The book also marks an editorial milestone in the history of our series. It is both the last volume to appear in the present editorial set-up, and the first one to be published at Brill Publishers. In due time, further publications are to unfold the positive implications of these developments, and we wish to thank both the CRINT Foundation and the Brill staff for their efforts to carry our project further under these fortunate new conditions.

Pieter van der Horst
Peter Tomson
During the past hundred years, attempts to explore the Jewish background of New Testament theology in the light of ancient Jewish sources have tended to concentrate on the legal and ethical sections of rabbinic literature. At the same time, the importance of Jewish apocalyptic literature has increasingly been recognised, though this recognition has largely been confined to the eschatological dimension of that literature. Moreover, it has generally been assumed that these two different streams of Jewish tradition were either unrelated or opposed.

The modern study of Jewish mysticism has been dominated by the work of Gershom G. Scholem, who proposed that a continuous tradition of mystical teaching and practice extended from the period of the Second Temple to that of the medieval kabbalah. That view has been subjected to severe scrutiny. The authors of the present work are persuaded that in general outline Scholem is still to be believed though they have attempted to take full account of the perspective of those who have argued an alternative, non-mystical interpretation of some of the texts which we consider important.

The ancient apocalypses seek to reveal hidden truths about God, heaven and the created world. In these attempts they come close to one understanding of the nature of mysticism: the perception of truths beyond the range of ordinary human knowledge in a direct experience of divine revelation. The Jewish mystical traditions encountered in the rabbinic and Hekhalot ('heavenly palaces') literature have many affinities with the revelations vouchsafed to the apocalyptic seers. The origins of the Jewish mystical tradition remain tantalisingly obscure, but it seems to have emerged during the early Second Temple period, if not the Exile. One of its principal concerns is meditation on Ezekiel's visions of God's manifest glory, seated on the heavenly merkava or chariot-throne, upheld by cherubim. That these visions were a continuing source of wonder and fascination is evident in the apocalyptic writings, in related texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls, in rabbinic sources, and in the Hekhalot writings which have been made accessible to us by Scholem and his successors.

Underlying this study is the conviction on the part of both authors that the Jewish mystical writings have much to offer the interpretation
of the New Testament. As will be apparent in the pages that follow, the perspective of the authors on the material is different, though, we hope, complementary, and that has contributed to the approach taken in the book. One has more of an interest in New Testament theology and the relationship with apocalypses concerned with the revelation of divine mysteries which were written round about the beginning of the Common Era. The other has worked extensively on the later collection known as the Hekhalot literature which in its written form is much later than the New Testament. One of the tasks of this study is to indicate that traditions within these texts are as ancient as the earliest Christian writings and so might be expected to contribute to the understanding of the New Testament.

Throughout the book there is a basic assumption that mysticism and apocalypticism are ways of speaking about phenomena which are closely related. The esoteric character of the apocalyptic texts of Second Temple Judaism is now widely recognised, whatever weight may be given to their eschatological content. Mysticism is one of those words which is difficult to define, but, if we may follow the Oxford English Dictionary, the concern with ‘the hidden or inexplicable’ or ‘a religious truth directly revealed’ has obvious connections with apocalypticism. As this description implies, such texts have to do with that which is hidden and has now been unveiled or revealed. In the first part of the book it is the apocalypses which form the major point of comparison with the New Testament. The approach taken here is intended to offer a general overview of the earliest Christian texts viewed from the perspective of the apocalypses and their concerns. Major New Testament texts are considered, and ‘mystery’ and revelation are suggested as ways of illuminating some of the major themes of the New Testament.

In the last twenty years there has been a growing recognition that the form and contents of the book of Revelation offer more to the exegesis of the New Testament than has usually been thought. Of course, apocalypticism has for a century and a half or so featured in discussion of the New Testament. It has been considered an essential ingredient in any explanation of the origins of Christianity, but it has been understood almost exclusively as heralding the end of the world. Early Christianity has thus been characterised as a movement eagerly awaiting the Parousia and the winding up of history. More recently there has been a long overdue questioning of this consensus which has so pervaded the interpretation of the New Testament, and serious doubts have been raised about the understanding of apocalypticism
which undergirds it. Ancient apocalypses (of which Revelation is the prime example) can no longer be seen simply as collections of predictions about the end of the world. First and foremost, apocalypses unveil heavenly secrets, some of which relate to the future. They are not, therefore, solely concerned with the end of the world. Their chief task is to reveal truths about God and the universe, and in these attempts they come close to one understanding of mysticism: the perception of truths which exceed the capacity of human reason and are mediated by means of divine revelation. It is that kind of religious outlook we find in an apocalypse.

In an apocalypse what happens in heaven corresponds to what happens, or will happen, on earth. The alternative perspective may in some cases offer a literal representation of reality, past, present or future, but in other cases (and the Book of Revelation is a good example) the understanding of reality is offered in imagery which is less literal prediction and more evocative portrayal in highly symbolic language. So, apocalypticism is neither solely about the end of the world, nor is it mere prediction. Of course, it includes the secrets about future, but it is a future—as well as a present—viewed in the light of the God who now reigns and will be seen to reign on earth. John on Patmos is commissioned to write ‘what is now, and what is to take place hereafter’ (Rev 1:19). Apocalyptic dualism encourages a split level perspective in which the ‘higher’ level is offered as the starting place for interpretation of what takes place on the ‘lower’, earthly, level. Thereby, that which takes place in heaven, or is reported as having its origin in heaven, offers an insight into the perplexing story of the world. By this means an understanding of the mystery of existence is given a new dimension. Events on the earthly stage are enigmatic. One who looks at them from the ‘lower’ level can nevertheless be offered another perspective on reality through the eye of vision, albeit requiring insight into the import of the mysteries for earthly events (as the visions of the second half of the Book of Daniel indicate). This is the heart of apocalypticism. It is not that the ‘higher’ level determines the way in which events below work out. Human beings are not puppets at the end of the divine strings. They can be confronted with the reality of God and the coming kingdom, with inexorable truths which demand understanding and action, but they possess freewill and can make choices about the way they will respond. The vision of the apocalyptic writers enables the reader with eyes to see and ears to hear to make sense of events and interactions which without that added perspective would seem utterly
enigmatic. It is such a perspective which can transform understanding so that what appears to be confusion and folly may be apprehended as the wisdom of God.

This applies also to the Jewish mystical tradition with which the revelations vouchsafed to apocalyptic seers have several affinities. The practice which lies behind the Jewish mystical texts is obscure, but it is generally thought to have had its origins early in the Second Temple period and to have owed much to the exile. One of its principal subjects is the meditation on the chariot, the merkava, of Ezekiel. The vision of the glorious God enthroned on the cherubim-chariot was a source of wonder and fascination, as is evident from the early rabbinic literature which much scholarly work in recent years has made available to us together with the discovery of related texts among the Dead Sea Scrolls. In the mystical account the vision of the divine throne-chariot in heaven was the goal of a heavenly ascent.

Eschatology is firmly established as a key factor in the understanding of Christian origins, and indeed of the development of Christian theology throughout history. The mode in which the eschatological convictions originated and were endorsed came through vision or audition, through revelation. This is the thesis of this book. It does not pretend to offer a complete explanation of the origins of Christian theology and the dynamics of what distinguished Christianity as a religion, but without it any account would be incomplete. The claim to definitive revelation from God is endemic to religion and the peculiarity of that understanding of revelation is an important ingredient of Christian theology.

There has been a greater appreciation of the rich potential offered New Testament theology by the apocalyptic and mystical texts of Judaism when these have been viewed not merely as a means of elucidating eschatological themes but also of shedding light on a range of texts less obviously related to such themes, including the transformation of the believer into the divine image, christology and cosmology. Thus, the occasional hint in Paul’s letters about a transformation of the believer in the midst of the present life, anticipating the eschatological change at the Parousia, may well be the background to the references to bodily transformation of the apocalyptic seer to passages like 2 Cor 3. Concerning the development of Christology, the existence of exalted mediatorial figures in the heavenly world has been the subject of fierce debate: was early Christianity merely taking over a theology in which the existence of divine beings wielding divine authority was part of the fabric of Jewish
belief? Or were early Christians responsible for a significant mutation of the beliefs of Second Temple Judaism about angels in which their convictions concerning Jesus as Messiah acted as a catalyst?

In the past, the exploration of the relationship of the New Testament to the world of Jewish mysticism has concentrated on theological themes in the more obviously theological writings of the New Testament. On the whole the narrative texts have not seemed so susceptible to this kind of treatment. But examination of the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and the apocalyptic and mystical tradition suggests that the narrative texts of the New Testament may also repay careful study in the light of this material.

A typical feature of apocalypses is the way they divide heaven into various levels, the highest being occupied by God and the most exalted angels, and the lowest by lesser angelic powers and demons. The ascent of Christ into the heavens, his conquest of the powers, and the relationship of all these to his death ‘outside the gate’ in a text like Hebrews, have all been illuminated by the thought world of the apocalypses of the Second Temple period, or just after, and emerging Jewish mysticism.

The approach to this subject in the present book naturally starts with the context in the parent religion, Judaism, and the importance of visions and revelations within it. The key revelatory text among the early Christian documents, the Book of Revelation, is the gateway to the consideration of apocalyptic and mystical themes in the rest of the New Testament. The approach taken in Part I is to examine the claims to visionary experience and their role in the various New Testament books, while complementing discussion of the examples of revelatory moments with exploration of apocalyptic themes, some often neglected. What underlies all this is the basic thesis that claims to the access of divine mysteries are a motor for the development of distinctive early Christian theologoumena and are the foundation of the eschatological convictions of early Christianity. The shape that these beliefs took is determined by context, but the basis of their importance lies in an understanding of the divine which does not rely primarily on the rational reflection on received wisdom but on the intuitive apprehension which is typical of the dream, vision, and audition.

There is a deliberate contrast between the various parts of the book; nor could some overlaps be eliminated. Part I is largely a descriptive survey of the scope of the project, setting the context in Jewish apocalypticism and surveying apocalyptic elements in the New Testament. The task is here less minute textual examination of all the passages
and more to stake out the terrain and to accumulate the evidence for apocalyptic motifs and themes in the New Testament.

Furthermore, the approach taken in the first part of the book mixes the descriptive and the analytical. This is in keeping with the aim of the series, which is to offer a varied survey of the ways in which the New Testament may be illuminated by Jewish material. In certain instances the nature of the material requires more detailed examination of the sources in order to make sense of brief, and allusive, passages (as is the case with the discussion of the Enoch material). No attempt is made to offer an exhaustive exploration of all aspects of Christian origins, nor to a comprehensive survey of research. The survey is intended to indicate that, without attention to the mystical element in Jewish religion, emerging Christianity cannot be adequately explained. In addition, by surveying this New Testament material it is hoped that a contribution might be made to the elucidation of the setting and significance of apocalypticism at the end of the Second Temple period and indicate why there may also be a mutually illuminating interpretative process, whereby the New Testament might be a means of understanding better the varied character of the Judaism from which it arose. The process involved in this series, therefore, might be truly dialectical.¹

¹ A point rightly stressed also in Segal, Paul the Convert.

In Parts II and III of this book the starting point is the Hekhalot literature rather than the apocalypses. Detailed examination of this unfamiliar literature leads us into themes which are more familiar to New Testament interpreters. The method here is different: less survey, more in depth analysis. The reason for this is that it is an attempt to demonstrate the antiquity of the traditions and the relevance of this material for New Testament study. The days of citing parallels to the New Testament from a later age and hoping that this will itself be sufficient to illuminate the relevant New Testament passage have long passed. When the purpose of exploring the mystical texts is to illustrate earliest Christian texts, attention to the propriety of using this material as illustration requires a method which justifies their use.
This is a contested area. On the one hand, Scholem and those who have followed him (which includes both authors of this book) have argued that the Hekhalot writings preserve ideas of the Tannaim and are rooted in Second Temple apocalypticism. Others, including E. Urbach, P. Schäfer, and D. Halperin, have argued that mystical elements are a development within, or a departure from, mainstream rabbinic Judaism, and therefore date from post-New Testament times. So, if merkava mysticism is part of the story of the development of rabbinic Judaism rather than a significant part of its antecedents, its relevance for the study of the New Testament is at best marginal. In this situation mere citation of parallels from Jewish sources which are manifestly much later than the New Testament itself is inadequate. The consequence of this, however, is that the attempt to demonstrate the relevance of the material and the explanation of why it should be included in a series entitled *Compendia Rerum Judaicarum ad Novum Testamentum* requires detailed traditio-historical study which characterises the second part of this book.

Parts II and III of the volume take further the method adopted by C. Morray-Jones in *A Transparent Illusion*. Those unfamiliar with the Hekhalot literature have the opportunity of reading it for themselves in the translation of Hekhalot Zutarti in Chapter Eleven of this book. The major case studies focus on the Pauline corpus and the task of bridging the gap between the Second Temple Dead Sea Scrolls texts and the liturgical and cultic elements of the later Hekhalot sources.

The present book complements that edited by J.C. VanderKam and J. Adler in this series. The consideration of Enochic motifs in the earlier book overlaps in part with material in Chapter Three below. David Frankfurter’s discussion of Christian apocalypticism is concerned with the pervasiveness of what might be called a non-eschatological apocalypticism in early Christianity. The major aim in the earlier volume was to trace apocalyptic traditions in early Christianity, whereas the concern in this volume is more thematic and theological, as well as methodological, in that it offers an attempt to justify the propriety of the use of later material and seeks to demonstrate the relevance for New Testament theological themes.

The project has taken seventeen years to complete. The various factors which have prevented a more speedy completion need not concern our readers, but the consequences for both our editors and our helpers have been immense. The lapse of time has only underlined the
importance of the thesis of this book, whatever the shortcomings of
the execution of our demonstration of it. Study of the reception history
of the Apocalypse has indicated that the mystical and the visionary are
key to the history of Christian theology. The reasons for this lie in the
foundation texts of Christianity, and the exploration of why these texts
have had that ongoing effect will be, we hope, one of the contributions
of this study.

We have been helped in the production of this book by several people.
Pieter van der Horst and Peter Tomson have shown us such gracious-
ness and patience over the years, as we have struggled to complete
this project. Theirs has been a magnanimity and critical support which
has been a model of the life of scholarship. We cannot express our
thanks adequately. We are also grateful to the editors of the Harvard
Theological Review for permission to reproduce the material on the
background of Paul’s apostolate which appears in Part II. This chapter
has been considerably revised, augmented, and updated. A version of
the chapter on ‘The Temple Within’ has already appeared in Paradise
Now, a collection of essays edited by April DeConick arising from the
work of the SBL Early Christian and Jewish Mysticism group. The
editors of CRINT are warmly thanked for permissions to anticipate
publication of that essay.

The Faculty of Theology in the University of Oxford kindly made
available funds for editorial work on the book over the years. Roger
Ruston helped with the formatting of the first part of the book several
years ago. The person who has most assisted us in enabling a complex
typescript to reach publication is Sally Norris, a doctoral student at the
University of Oxford. Not only did she devote hours trying to adapt
a typescript from one word processing system to another but had to
deal with a myriad of technical problems on the way, which she did
with great patience and fortitude. It is fair to say that without her
help we could not be completing this project. We want to register our
profound gratitude.

Christopher Rowland
Christopher Morray-Jones
ON TRANSLITERATIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Transliteration of Hebrew Names

Except for biblical names and modern personal names where accepted usage is adopted, the transliteration of Hebrew names follows a simple anglo-based system tuned to produce modern Israeli pronunciation. The scholar will know to distinguish.

Transliterated Hebrew words are italicised only as long as they remain rare in the given context.

Needless to say, these rules and the ones following are not imposed on quotations from other modern works.

Abbreviation of Source Names

Names of biblical books, Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha, and Graeco-Jewish literature are abbreviated following SBL usage, except for italics and full stops. For Qumran texts the accepted conventions are followed. Names of rabbinic and related documents are abbreviated according to the style developed in the CRINT series; see the list in II/3b, The Literature of the Sages, Part Two (2006).

Some of the more unusual abbreviations are:

AggShS Aggadat Shir ha-Shirim
HekhR Hekhalot Rabbati
HekhZ Hekhalot Zutarti
MerkR Merkava Rabba
MMerk Maase Merkava
PrJos Prayer of Joseph
SidRBer Siddur Rabba di-Bereshit
SKoma Sefer ha-Koma
SRaziel Sefer Raziel
SShiur Sefer ha-Shiur

As a rule, modern editions are referred to following the source indication, using the editors’ names and page numbers or paragraphs in brackets.
ON TRANSLITERATIONS AND ABBREVIATIONS

Other Abbreviations

AGJU Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AJS Review Review of the Association for Jewish Studies
AnBib Analecta Biblica
ANF The Ante-Nicene Fathers (Washington DC)
ANRW Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt (W. Haase and H. Temporini, eds)
AOS American Oriental Society
ArBib The Aramaic Bible
ARW Archiv für Religionswissenschaft
ASNU Acta Seminarii Neotestamentici Upsaliensis
BDB F. Brown—S.R. Driver—C.A. Briggs, Hebrew and English Lexicon
BETL Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovanensis
BHTh Beiträge zur Historischen Theologie
BJS Brown Judaic Studies
BJS UCSD Biblical and Judaic Studies from the University of California, San Diego
BM Wertheimer, Batei Midrashot
BSJS Brill’s Series in Jewish Studies
BZNW Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche
CBAA Catholic Biblical Association of America
CBQ(MS) Catholic Biblical Quarterly (Monograph Series)
CGL The Coptic Gnostic Library
CGTC Cambridge Greek Testament Commentary
CJT Canadian Journal of Theology
CNT Commentaire du Nouveau Testament
ConBNT Coniectanea neotestamentica or Coniectanea biblica: New Testament Series
CSR Contributions to the Study of Religion
CurTM Currents in Theology and Mission
EBib Etudes bibliques
ErJb Eranos-Jahrbuch
EJ Encyclopaedia Judaica, Jerusalem 1972
EncJud Encyclopaedia Judaica, Berlin 1928–34
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<td>Evangelische Theologie</td>
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<tr>
<td>ExpT</td>
<td>Expository Times</td>
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<tr>
<td>FJB</td>
<td>Frankfurter judaistische Beiträge</td>
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<td>FRLANT</td>
<td>Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments</td>
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<tr>
<td>HTKNT</td>
<td>Herders theologischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>HNT</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>History of Religions</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICC</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDB(Sup)</td>
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<td>Int</td>
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<td>IOS</td>
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<td>JAOS</td>
<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
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<tr>
<td>JBL</td>
<td>Journal of Biblical Literature</td>
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<td>JJS</td>
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<tr>
<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near-Eastern Studies</td>
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<td>JPS</td>
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<td>JTSA</td>
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<td>KEK NT</td>
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<td>MGWJ</td>
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<td>PAAJR</td>
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<td>PTMS</td>
<td>Pittsburgh Theological Monograph Series</td>
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<td>PTS</td>
<td>Patristische Texte und Studien</td>
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<td>PUF</td>
<td>Presses Universitaires de France</td>
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<td>PVTG</td>
<td>Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece</td>
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<td>PW</td>
<td>Pauly-Wissowa</td>
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<td>ScrHier</td>
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<tr>
<td>SJLA</td>
<td>Studies in Judaism in Late Antiquity</td>
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<td>Studia Judaica</td>
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<td>SNTSMS</td>
<td>Society for New Testament Study, Monograph Series</td>
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<td>SPB</td>
<td>Studia Post-Biblica</td>
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<td>SRT</td>
<td>Studien aus Religionswissenschaft und Theologie</td>
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<tr>
<td>STAC</td>
<td>Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum</td>
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<td>STDJ</td>
<td>Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah</td>
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<td>SUNT</td>
<td>Studien zur Umwelt des Neuen Testaments</td>
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<td>Studia in Veteris Testamenti pseudepigraphica</td>
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<td>The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</td>
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<td>Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament</td>
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<td>Theologische Zeitschrift</td>
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<td>TSAJ</td>
<td>Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum</td>
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<td>TU</td>
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<td>University</td>
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<td>UUA</td>
<td>Uppsala Universitets Årsbok</td>
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<td>VC</td>
<td>Vigiliae Christianae</td>
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<td>V&amp;R</td>
<td>Vandenhoeck &amp; Ruprecht</td>
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<td>Word Biblical Commentary</td>
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<td>ZNW</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft</td>
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<tr>
<td>ZRGG</td>
<td>Zeitschrift für Religions- und Geistesgeschichte</td>
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PART I

THINGS INTO WHICH ANGELS LONG TO LOOK: APPROACHING MYSTICISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE JEWISH APOCALYPTES

by

Christopher Rowland
CHAPTER ONE

Mysticism and New Testament

Mysticism is one of those concepts that defies exact definition and historically has caused suspicion in religion because the appeal to privileged access to the divine perspective has seemed to encourage the unpredictable and subversive. There is an amusing quip which goes the round in Anglican circles concerning mysticism: it begins with ‘mist’, goes via ‘I’ and ends up in ‘schism’. A cutting remark, it is true, no doubt coined by those who were suspicious of claims to religious experience as a basis of faith. But the saying epitomizes the difficulty attaching to mysticism in religion. Mysticism and schism are closely linked in the history of Judaism and Christianity. For example, the mystical communion with the divine led to antinomianism in both Sabbatianism and the radical religion of English Protestantism at roughly the same time in the seventeenth century, though, of course, mysticism and conventional religion could be found together. Its relationship with matters apocalyptic and eschatological is not always noted, however, and it is often treated separately as a discrete religious phenomenon. One function of this work is to seek to consider together that which scholarship has often kept apart. The vague, often random, use of the word has meant that defining mysticism has always turned out to be rather difficult, encapsulating as it does a variety of different religious currents. The suspicion lurks that the lack of conceptual clarity may mask a fundamental inability to characterize it with any precision. After all, New Testament writers did not describe themselves as mystics (though Paul comes close to so doing in 1 Cor 4:1), and in 2 Cor 12:2–4 Paul speaks either of himself or another, directly or indirectly, as in the case of the pseudonymous authors of the Jewish pseudepigrapha, as being a recipient of divine knowledge.

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1 For a survey of mysticism in early Christianity see McGinn, Foundations, who also offers a survey of the study of the phenomenon in the modern period; Stroumsa, Hidden Wisdom and Idel, Messianic Mystics. There is an excellent discussion related to the theme of this book in DeConick, Paradise Now.

2 E.g. Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi, and Hill, World Turned Upside Down.

3 E.g. Werblowsky, Joseph Karo.
It is appropriate to approach New Testament theology using mysticism as a heuristic device because the word forms part of the title of one of the most important (and influential) interpretations of the emergence of New Testament theology in the twentieth century. In it Albert Schweitzer suggested that Paul’s Jewish eschatological inheritance was transmuted into a communion of the believer with the risen Christ, thereby enabling the unfulfilled hopes of millennial bliss to be appreciated in the present exquisite union with the crucified Messiah. Schweitzer points to a central emphasis of New Testament theology which is widely accepted, namely, the way in which writers speak of the identification between believers and the divine in this age, whether it be with the person of the heavenly Christ, the indwelling spirit sent from God, or ultimately that time when ‘God will be all in all’. It is a theme which is prominent in John 14–16, where mutual indwelling of the divine and the human is evident. The focus will be determined by the links with the mystical inheritance derived from the apocalypses and continued in the esoteric tradition of rabbinic Judaism, which forms so little part in Schweitzer’s eschatological concerns. This reflected a widespread view that early rabbinic Judaism was unaffected by apocalyptic and mystical ideas, a view, which, since the work of Gershom Scholem, can no longer be sustained.

Mysticism may seem to be a surprising word to use in connection with any form of Judaism, which gives the impression of being concerned more with mundane, practical issues, rather than reliance on experience of the otherworldly. Nevertheless it is not as surprising as may appear at first sight. Indeed, ‘normal mysticism’ is said to characterize the everyday sense of God. But there has always been another, ‘prophetic’, dimension to Jewish experience of the divine. In rabbinic Judaism the first chapter of Ezekiel is the foundation text of the extraordinary speculative interest in the divinity. Even if in its present form Ezek 1 is the result of later reflection and redaction, it is an extraordinary description of religious experience whose nearest parallel in the Bible is the bewildered and disorientated outburst of Isa 21 or the

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4 Schweitzer, *Mysticism of Paul*.  
5 E.g. E.P. Sanders speaks of Paul’s ‘participationist eschatology’ in Sanders, *Paul*.  
6 On ideas of divine immanence see Goldberg, *Untersuchungen*.  
8 See Zimmerli, *Ezekiel*.  

call-vision of the same prophet and the agonized cries from the heart of Jeremiah. We have in Ezek 1 a description of the way in which the prophet attempts to express in words his belief that he has seen the glory of God. In it, and in parallel passages in the later apocalypses, we have evidence of a prophet’s conviction about the apprehension of truths beyond the normal human understanding. The knowledge of God and the divine call are said to come through an experience which is out of the ordinary in the magnitude of its impact. Perception comes, therefore, by means other than those normally sanctioned by convention or human wisdom for determining the divine will. Superficially it contrasts with exegetical conventions and long-established behaviour transmitted from generation to generation by trusted interpreters which had come to guarantee some predictability in ascertaining appropriate religious conduct. There were well-worn patterns of interpretative practice in the quest of knowledge of the divine enabling stability and minimizing uncertainty. This contrasts with the claim to truth about God and the divine purposes which, at least initially, bypasses human reason, rational explanation and the conventions of normal discourse and relies instead on the intuitive and ‘givenness’ of dream or vision.

Visions are sometimes self-authenticating, and self-explanatory. However, they often require the jagged edge of metaphor and the qualifications of analogy in communication of their content, or they demand the wisdom of an angelic interpreter to make sense of their enigmatic opacity.

The apprehension of divine wisdom by means of vision or revelation which is beyond normal human perception well describes the religion of the apocalypses of Judaism and Christianity. These offer access to hidden mysteries through revelation, to hidden or inexplicable truths which can explain the mystery of God and the world. Foremost among these is the truth about the future of the world and the reasons for rebellion against God and the means whereby that wrong will be righted, particularly when social and political circumstances made this a pressing issue.

Communion with the divine, familiar to us from the accounts of the mystical quest in later Christian mysticism, is not without its parallels.

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9 See the discussion in Lindblom, Prophecy.
10 See Flannery-Dailey, Dreamers for the importance of dreams and visions in antiquity.
in the pages of the New Testament, even if mystical union is not usually seen as the way the New Testament authors speak of that experience. Nevertheless the language they use is about identification with, infusion with, or being clothed with, the divine Christ. It is a divine enfolding or indwelling, in which human and divine worlds meet, and is mystical in its intensity and conviction. Otherwise matter-of-fact epistles like 1 Corinthians, dealing with the practicalities of everyday life, and the human stories of the Gospels and Acts, hint at communion with a more mysterious world of angels and demons, of heavenly secrets and dramatic epiphanies.

Christianity had its origins in a messianic movement in Galilee and Jerusalem and consisted of a pattern of religion which expected the restoration of Israel’s fortunes, thus paralleling, at least in general terms, several short-lived popular movements described by Josephus (e.g. Ant. 20:167f.). The main difference is that Christianity was a messianic movement which survived and fragmentary information is extant about what motivated its founding figures. We have an example of a self-consciously messianic group which after the traumatic death of its leader became well-established within the last decades of Second Temple Judaism, continuing to proclaim an eschatological message focused on the resurrection of its leader from the dead. There is little in the extant literature of other movements which resembles this peculiar character of Christianity. It led the Christians to deal with a range of issues which would hardly have affected Jews who did not share their convictions: the character of life in the messianic age, the order of the fulfilment of eschatological events and the timetable for the consummation of all things.

Accompanying such eschatological convictions and the related practices which are worked out in conjunction with these beliefs, and in certain key ways supportive of them in many strands of the New Testament, reference is made to the importance of visions and revelations. While in the Jewish apocalyptic literature these visions are pseudonymously attributed to a biblical figure from the distant past of the golden age of Jewish history, in the New Testament these are linked directly with the founding figures of the Christian movement (though there can be

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11 Sanders, Jesus.
12 See Gray, Prophetic Figures; and on prophecy in early Christianity, e.g., Aune, Prophecy.
13 Survey in Rowland, Open Heaven, 358ff. and Lane Fox, Pagans, 358ff.
no denying the affinities which exist between the form and content of
the visionary reports in the New Testament and those found in the
apocalypses). Take the accounts of Jesus’ baptism and the conversion
of Paul, for example. In the former we have, particularly in its Marcan
form (Mark 1:10), the personal vision reminiscent of the apocalypses
and the call-visions of the prophets, and, in the reference to the open
heaven, a typical feature of visionary accounts (cf. Acts 7:56; 10:11;
2 Bar 22:1). Whatever our views may be about the authenticity of this
account, it stands at the beginning of Mark’s Gospel as the decisive
moment when Jesus of Nazareth was called by God and commissioned
as the divine Son by the Spirit to preach the good news of the Kingdom
of God. Similarly, at the start of Paul’s ministry as an apostle of Jesus
Christ there stands the Damascus experience. Whether in the versions
of the call vision in Acts (9, 22, and 26), with their similarity with
angelomorphic traditions of Hellenistic Judaism, or in Gal 1:12 and
16, where Paul felt impelled to describe his call in language derived
from the prophetic commissions of Jer 1:5 and Isa 49:1, the centrality
of the mystical is evident.14

The early Christian texts relate such visionary experiences in a matter-
of-fact way, with a minimum of detail or fuss. It is now impossible to
be certain whether they record the visionary experiences of these key
figures of early Christian life. Nevertheless, given the widespread exis-
tence of the visionary and mystical in the Christian material of the first
century or so, not to mention its profound importance for the growth of
the movement, it would be an excessively suspicious person who would
deny that some authentic visions lie behind some or all of these brief
literary records. When John the visionary on Patmos speaks of ‘being in
the spirit on the Lord’s day’, he beckons interpreters to consider what
is written in a way different from the work of the ordinary collector
of traditional material or visionary scribe.15 A ‘principle of credulity’
rather than of scepticism infuses the following pages, therefore, accept-
ing the possibility that visions have prompted the words we now read
rather than literary artifice alone, unless there are strong reasons for
supposing the contrary.

It is specifically the narrative in Luke-Acts of the origins of the church
which has most of the accounts of visions in the New Testament. Even

14 Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge* and Bowker, ‘Merkabah Visions’.
15 See Rowland, *Revelation*.  

allowing for the author’s special interest in the divine guidance of the church and its mission, the vision of the tongues of fire at Pentecost, the martyr Stephen’s vision of the heavenly Son of Man, the decisive vision of the sheet descending from heaven which preceded Peter’s preaching to Cornelius, and the thrice-told account of Paul’s conversion, all indicate to us the importance which the author attached to visions and revelations in the life of the early church. Related to them is the belief, which abounds in the New Testament, that with the return of the prophetic spirit, God was communicating to his people through his prophets, inspiring them with the tongues of angels and revealing mysteries through the Spirit which had long been hidden. Here we have a pattern of beliefs which has clear affinities with that quest for higher wisdom through revelation which was characteristic of apocalypticism.16

The story of the extent of such influence does not end with the New Testament, however.17

Visions themselves remain unproblematic, unless they result in a radical departure from conventional belief and practice. The problem is set out in Deuteronomy 13 which speaks of ‘following other gods’ (Deut 13:2), with the attendant departure from established custom and obligation. In the early Christian story, at decisive moments, issues are ‘clarified’, and new departures initiated, by visionary insight (Mark 1:10; Acts 10–11). In the case of Peter in Acts 10 the vision is used, in part at least, as the basis of the new turn in Christian outlook and practice: the admission of the Gentiles into the people of God. Such a significant shift in behaviour was the subject of intense wrangling and discussion, as we see from Galatians 2, but when it was supported by supernatural validation, the quest for consensus and the appeal to tradition is short-circuited. Such an appeal to visions might not matter if the subject matter was itself uncontroversial. When it becomes the basis for a significant new departure then it inevitably becomes problematic.

The contemporary Jewish apocalypses, however, rarely use the concept of revelation to offer a definitive and innovative solution to existing problems. There are exceptions. So, for example, in a work like Jubilees

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16 Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism 1: 210 and Dodds, Pagan and Christian.
17 In Jewish Christianity, figures like Elchesai (Hippolytus, Refutatio 9.13.3), Cerinthus (Irenaeus, Haer. 1.26; Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 2.28.1) and the Shepherd of Hermas as well as the Montanist movement all included a significant visionary component with importance attached to the authority conveyed as the result of being in receipt of such heavenly manifestations. See Daniélou, Jewish Christianity and Lüdemann, Heretics.
which purports to be an angelic revelation to Moses on Sinai we find a telling of biblical history which conforms largely with what is found in Scripture. At many points, however, there are divergences especially when halakhic questions emerge, such as the calendar and sabbath observance. Here revelation (which is itself the overall context of both the patriarchal story as well as the Sinaitic revelation in the book) is used to exclude and castigate opponents and their way of behaviour. Such a use of apocalyptic themes, which in effect denies the fallibility of the recipient, also removes any possibility of discussion of the subject. Something of the same can happen when final, authoritative interpretations of Scripture are offered by means of revelation, such as we find, for example, in Dan 9:23 and in the biblical interpretation at Qumran (see 1QpHab 7).\textsuperscript{18} In a similar way the Temple Scroll offers what appears to be a revelation by God to Moses and in fact consists of additional, peculiar, halakhot, as well as including material in line with that found in Scripture.\textsuperscript{19}

As we have seen, the problem of true and false prophecy is endemic to religion and has a long history in Judaism (Deut 13 and 18 and Jer 23:16ff.). The central role that prophecy played within early Christianity is evident from virtually every document in the New Testament. Problems were posed by such claims to divine inspiration. All this could have been lived with if there had not been a substantial difference of opinion over conduct, just as later the Jewish mystics could be accommodated provided that they did not infringe conventional theological and ethical wisdom. When they did, the excesses of mystical religion needed to be hedged around even more with restrictions. This, as we shall see, is what happens with regard to mystical matters in mHag 2.1.

Religious authority claimed as a result of visions has a long history within early Christianity. The Nag Hammadi texts indicate the extent of the influence of apocalypticism at the level of ideas. Threats from individuals or groups who claimed divine support by means of visions and revelations seem to have been quite a pressing problem. The problem of wandering prophets is alluded to in Did 11:3ff. and 16:3, and there is a repudiation of false spirits in 1 Tim 4:1 (cf. Jude 4ff.). If Paul and John of Patmos could claim authority on the basis of a vision, what was

\textsuperscript{18} Cf. the way in which apocalyptic revelation cuts short haggadic debate, Urbach, Sages, 669–671 but note bMen 23b.

\textsuperscript{19} Maier, Temple Scroll.
to distinguish them from a Cerinthus or an Elchesai, whose esoteric teaching is communicated in the garb of divine authority?

Paul’s letters testify to the conviction that the Scriptures, the fountainhead and embodiment of tradition and the basis for a community’s identity, are now read in the light of the new experience, that of the Spirit (Gal 3:2–4). Something very different is at work which relativises the past. Christians in Corinth are told: ‘Now these things happened to them as a warning, but they were written down for our instruction, upon whom the end of the ages has come’ (1 Cor 10:11). The point is made most clearly in 1 Pet 1:11f. by stressing the privileged position of the readers/hearers of the letters in understanding mysteries which the angels themselves had long desired to look upon (cf. Luke 10:24). The present has become the moment to which all the Scriptures have been pointing. Their meaning can only be fully understood with that Spirit-inspired intuition which is a consequence of the advent of the Messiah. Apocalyptic insight, on the basis of one’s own experience, or the testimony of others who have been privileged to have it, will enable the new way to be discerned or the enlightened reader to pierce beyond the letter of the text to get at its inner meaning. Just as the Teacher of Righteousness opened up the enigmatic prophetic oracles with his mystical insight: ‘to whom God made known all the mysteries of his servants the prophets’ (1QpHab 7:1), so now not only is the true meaning of the ancestral texts being offered but also new knowledge is on offer (cf. John 16:13). Those who accept the Messiah can understand the true meaning of the Scriptures and taste the goodness of God and the powers of the age to come. It is not that the Scriptures are redundant but that they have ceased to be the primary source of guidance. They are a witness to, and the vehicle whereby, the promptings of the indwelling Spirit of God take place. A mystery of ultimate importance had been revealed in Christ, and it is subsequently amplified by other divine mysteries. In short, the spirit of mystery and revelation is a recurring theme of New Testament theology.20

In what follows we shall allude to many of the main strands of the New Testament. The discussion will not be solely with the perception of the divine through vision or revelation. Other themes will be considered. The privilege of access to the environs of God and the divine secrets brought the mystic into contact with a world populated by angels.

20 Bockmuehl, Revelation and Mystery, and Brown, Semitic Background.
There is evidence enough that from the earliest period angelomorphic categories were used by orthodox and heterodox alike to explore the mystery of Christ’s relationship with God. The spatial, dualistic, language which is such a striking feature of the apocalyptic ascents to heaven also served Christian writers’ theological purposes as they sought to expound Christ’s exaltation. Even within the narrative books the intersection of the human and divine worlds in the stories of Jesus deserves more recognition. Christ is either the one who is in receipt of divine revelation which is then revealed to the least expected members of the human race (Matt 11:25ff.) or is himself the embodiment of the divine mystery. The communion of human and divine worlds marks the eschatological climax of the Apocalypse when heaven comes down to earth. Nevertheless, as we shall see, that distant hope is already enjoyed as a present fact of life in individual and corporate experience as the struggle with the fragmentation of individual and society goes on.

It is our contention that a proper understanding of New Testament theology and Christian origins is incomplete unless mystical and apocalyptic material is taken seriously. Early Christianity was born as an apocalyptic movement in Judaism. Its messianic convictions were rooted in its revelatory claims and its innovations with regard to convention and established institutions were buttressed by a mystical outlook. To this extent Schweitzer was right to ground his understanding of Christian origins in apocalypticism. But his exclusively eschatological interest ignores other, and more important, elements of the apocalyptic and mystical tradition which deserve our attention. Mysticism might be difficult to define but it was a thorn in the flesh of the wielders of power in the first century and in centuries which followed, not least because it was such a central component of earliest Christian experience and self-definition from the very start of the Christian church.21

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21 McGinn, *Foundations*, surveys the material.
CHAPTER TWO

APOCALYPTICISM:
THE DISCLOSURE OF HEAVENLY KNOWLEDGE

Apocalypticism and Eschatology

There are a range of Jewish works from the Second Temple period which offer revelations of divine secrets and are similar in form and content to the New Testament apocalypse, from which they derive their generic description ‘apocalypse’ (Rev 1:1). The use of ἀποκάλυψις/ἀποκαλύπτω to describe revelation of God or divine secrets is relatively rare in Jewish literature written round about the time of Revelation. They include a work probably interpolated by a Christian editor, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs.

By contrast, the words are common in the New Testament. In the Gospels ἀποκάλυψις is found at Luke 2:32 in a context where already the revelation of a mystery, which angels desire to look upon, had been celebrated as part of the immediately preceding context (2:13; cf. 1 Pet 1:11f.). ἀποκαλύπτω appears in contexts dealing with the eschatological revelation of human secrets (Matt 10:26 and Luke 12:2; Luke 2:35), and divine secrets (Matt 11:25 and Luke 10:21; Matt 16:17; the quotation of Isa 53:1 in John 12:38). In Matthew’s Gospel Jesus is presented as one who came to utter revelation (13:35). The way of God comes through dreams (1:20; 2:13; 2:19; 27:19). The disciples are among those to whom divine insight has been given (16:17). Children understand and respond to Christ (11:25f.). They, along with the lame and blind, recognise Jesus in the Temple (21:16). The angels of ‘the little ones’ are those closest to God and vouchsafed the supreme privilege of a vision of God (18:10). Apocalyptic terminology is central to Paul’s self-understanding (Gal 1:12). ‘Apocalypse’ is something past for him but a future hope also (1 Cor 1:7 cf. 2 Thess 1:7; 1 Pet 1:7 cf. 1:13 and 4:13). The gospel has been made manifest, the mystery of hidden things made manifest (Rom 3:21; Col 1:26; Rom 16:25). The opening chapters of

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1 The evidence is set out in Smith, ‘History of ἀποκαλύπτω/ἀποκάλυψις’ and Bockmuehl, Revelation and Mystery.
1 Corinthians speak of a divine wisdom which is not attainable merely by the exercise of human wisdom. The gospel is a mystery hidden from the rulers of the present age (1 Cor 2:6f.). The divine wisdom to which the true apostle has access, and of which he is a steward (1 Cor 4:1), is a mystery taught by the Spirit. It can only be understood by others who themselves have the Spirit (1 Cor 2:10). This divine wisdom manifests itself in surprising turns in salvation history (Rom 11:25, 33) but pre-eminently in the mystery revealed in Christ (Col 1:26; 2:3). The Fourth Gospel uses φανερόω in 1:31; 2:11; 7:4; 9:3; 17:6; 21:1. Although the Gospel of John elsewhere does not use the language of the apocalyptic tradition, it has recently been described as ‘an apocalypse in reverse’. It is a work which is thoroughly imbued with an apocalyptic ethos even if apocalyptic terminology and events are comparatively rare.

The word ‘apocalypse’ is used to refer to literary texts which offer revelation and the content of divine revelation. In the modern period the noun ‘apocalyptic’ (from the German ‘Apokalyptik’) has been widely used as a heuristic device which serves as a generic label for a collection of revelatory, symbolic and eschatological ideas. Interest in apocalypticism and its place in Jewish and Christian theology has been widespread over the last one and hundred and fifty years or so as New Testament commentators have been wrestling with the implications of the work of Weiss and Schweitzer (and before them Hilgenfeld), who made apocalypticism central to their discussion of Christian origins. Much of this discussion has oscillated between using the words ‘apocalyptic’ and ‘eschatological’ to describe Jesus’ message. Consequently, treatment of apocalypticism has ended up as a discussion of eschatology, with well-defined characteristics: the imminent end of this world; a deterministic view of history; a message couched in extravagant symbolism; and the introduction from above, amidst cataclysmic disorders, or a transcendent realm.

The hope for a glorious new age in which sorrow and sighing would flee away has a significant part to play, either explicitly or implicitly, in the presentation of the early Christian message. It is questionable, however, to use the word ‘apocalyptic’ to describe the beliefs concerning the arrival of a new age, and to see ‘apocalyptic’ merely as a form

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2 Ashton, Understanding, 405; Studying John; Bühner, Der Gesandte.
3 Schmidt, Die jüdische Apokalyptik and criticism by J.J. Collins, Apocalypse.
4 See e.g. the discussion of apocalyptic in NTA 2: 569–602.
of eschatology featuring a contrast between the present age and a new age which is imminent and which breaks in from beyond through divine intervention and without human activity. Evidence from the apocalypses themselves indicates that, apart from a handful of passages, their doctrine of the future hope seems to be pretty much the same as that found in other Jewish sources. It is striking that most definitions of ‘apocalyptic’ work with a view of the phenomenon which is only loosely related to the apocalypses. Thus, only a few texts are made to bear the brunt of supporting the existence of what is supposed to be a distinct religious phenomenon, pieced together as it is from a wide variety of works of different background and dates and of differing literary types. As the investigation of the Jewish and Christian apocalypses has intensified, however, it has become less credible that there was a separate ‘apocalyptic movement’, with a set of religious beliefs, which was held by a distinct group in Second Temple Judaism.

This dominant eschatological orientation of the understanding of apocalypticism is understandable, given that it was coined to indicate similarity with the material in the Revelation of John, much of which is eschatological in character. A concern throughout Revelation is with a future hope for a better world, expressed in imagery similar to that found in other apocalypses (e.g. Dan 2:31ff., 7:1ff., 8:3ff. and 1 En 85ff.) and with a belief in the irruption of God’s way into the historical process (Rev 6:1ff., 19:11ff., 22:20). The use of the word ‘apocalyptic’ to describe this cluster of ideas is widespread, therefore. A distinction is often made between the literary genre, the apocalypse, and apocalyptic eschatology—and apocalypticism, ‘which refers to the symbolic universe in which an apocalyptic movement codifies its identity and interpretation of reality’.5 It can be said that the contrast in the contemporary debate is between those who define what is ‘apocalyptic’ according to the criterion of whether it corresponds to the content of the Book of Revelation (i.e., the cataclysmic, eschatological material of the visions), and those who define it according to its form (i.e., its claim to offer revelation of that which is hidden).

The ‘eschatological approach’ in understanding apocalypticism6 colours the way in which its origins are outlined. Since the heart of apocalypticism is thought to be its distinctive eschatology, there is a

5 Hanson, ‘Apocalypticism’, 28–34.
6 Well exemplified by Collins, Encyclopedia.
search for eschatological passages in the Hebrew Bible (e.g. Isa 24–27, Joel, Trito-Isaiah and Zechariah), which are then made to provide its antecedents. The preoccupation with certain Hebrew Bible passages which evince an eschatology of a particular type, in which the beyond breaks into this world, as in Rev 6 and 19:11, and Mark 13:26, reflects the extent to which investigation has been dominated by the supposed eschatological orientation of apocalypticism. This widely accepted understanding of apocalypticism, which stresses its eschatological characteristics at the expense of other elements, does not do justice to the apocalypses.

The discovery of the Enoch fragments in Cave 4 at Qumran has pushed back the origin of what we know as 1 Enoch well into the third century BCE. The question arises, therefore, of the relationship between the later biblical material and the earliest parts of 1 Enoch. The two important areas for understanding the origin of apocalypticism—prophecy and wisdom—both have considerable affinities with the oldest parts of this early apocalypse. It is not just the eschatological teaching of the prophetic literature which is important, therefore, but the conviction, inherent in Ezek 1 and elsewhere, that God is revealed to certain chosen agents. The mode of revelation found in the prophetic literature was one which according to later rabbinic tradition passed into oblivion with the last of the prophets (tSota 13:2). But with Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, did prophecy finish or did it carry on in one form or another? Hints like Zech 13:2ff. suggest that it did. The visionary character of Zech 1–8 points in the direction of the type of literature we find in the later apocalypses. Thus that quest for higher knowledge so characteristic of apocalypticism can be grounded in the claims of the biblical prophets to direct visionary experience and to knowledge of the debates in the heavenly court.

So, when we attempt to ascertain the religious outlook of the apocalypses, one should question whether we should place such great weight on eschatology as the key to our interpretation of these texts. An interest in the future is found in most apocalypses, but the character of this interest and its relationship to other features demands careful consideration.

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8 Newsom, *Songs*.
9 See further Jeremias, *Die Nachtgesichte*.
10 See further Rowland, *Open Heaven*. 
When one investigates the eschatology of the apocalypses, what are often regarded as typical features of apocalypticism (imminent expectation of the end of the world, symbolism, historical determinism and a transcendent hope) are on inspection by no means common. What is more, actual teaching about the content of the future hope, e.g. the character of the new age, the origin and activity of the Messiah, the organization of the messianic community, etc., are frequently passed over with hardly a mention. While the apocalypses may devote much attention to the progress of history leading up to the new age, there is an evident reluctance to speculate about its character. The conviction about a glorious future for the people of God is there, but it remains something hardly ever elaborated in detail—a strange phenomenon for works whose primary interest is supposed to be in the future.

So, apocalypses are not always the best witnesses to the religious outlook which is often designated ‘apocalyptic’, when that outlook is deemed to be primarily eschatological in orientation. The distinction between the apocalypse as a literary genre and apocalypticism as a type of eschatological thought has, to put it mildly, led to considerable confusion. When we find that the religious beliefs of the apocalypses do not conform to the ideal, apocalyptic, type as usually defined and the eschatology of the apocalypses only occasionally evinces the characteristic features of what is called ‘apocalyptic eschatology’, our understanding of the pattern of ideas usually identified as ‘apocalyptic’ may need to be revised and may be better categorised by some other term, say, transcendent eschatology, thus reserving ‘apocalyptic’ to describe the distinctive religious outlook of the apocalypses themselves, with their distinctive ‘mystical’ concern to offer the apprehension of divine mysteries by means of revelation, whether through dream, vision, audition or inspired utterance.

**Apocalyptic Topics**

A survey of the contents of the apocalypses reveals a wide range of topics. Important in many apocalypses is an interest in details of the

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heavenly world, astronomy, the course of Jewish history, and human destiny. All these issues correspond roughly with the ‘lists of revealed things’ which M. Stone has argued constitute the heart of apocalyptic. Interest in history, eschatology, astronomy and cosmology is by no means confined to the apocalypses only. What is distinctive about the use of this material in the apocalypses is that it is offered to the apocalyptic seer as a revelation direct from God through vision or through divine emissary. It is not the product of human observation, therefore, or of the application of the exegetical techniques of the scribal tradition to Scripture such as we find in Sir 39 (at least in the form that it is presented). The divine truth is apprehended by the seer and by all those to whom the seer chooses to make known this knowledge as the result of angelic pronouncement or the mysteries opened up as the result of the heavenly ascent.

The lack of detail about the hope for the future, a keen interest in other subjects and an emphasis on the revelation of divine mysteries suggest that apocalypticism cannot be regarded as merely a ‘science of the End’, in which heavenly journeys and other revelations serve only as a convenient back-drop for eschatological information. The emphasis throughout them on the revelation of God and the divine purpose for the cosmos as a whole may have been an attempt to answer the crisis facing the Judaism at the time of the apocalyptists, though one must be careful not to overplay the assumption that the apocalypses are crisis literature. While it would also be wrong to play down the speculative interest in the descriptions of the heavenly world, the revelation of God enthroned in glory and the divine purposes may be seen as an appropriate way of reassuring those whose historical circumstances might indicate that the God of the Jewish tradition no longer cared for God’s people. The detailed demonstration of divine foreknowledge of human plight and of the divine plan for human history could enable a beleaguered religious group to have confidence in its traditional affirmations and hopes. The reader thereby sees the totality of human history from the divine perspective, so ensuring that the inevitable preoccupation

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12 Dan 7:9; 1 En 14:8ff., 71; Apc. Abr. 18ff.; T. Levi 2ff.; 3 (Greek) Baruch; Rev 4; Asc. Isa. 6ff.
13 1 En 72ff.; 2 En 23.
with the present plight does not detract from belief in God’s saving purposes, which according to some apocalypses were on the point of being realised (Dan 12:6, 4 Ezra 14:10, 2 Bar 85:10). Apocalypticism thus would provide an authoritative context for belief which, while rooted in Scripture, avoided the shortcomings of conventional exegesis by recourse to the direct disclosure of heavenly knowledge.

Apocalypticism was arguably religious current in Second Temple Judaism (and for that matter in the Hellenistic world generally) which spans a long period of time, far longer than that considered in this book. Dreams and visions in antiquity are the context for understanding apocalypticism, as scholars like Frances Dailey have pointed out, the dream and visionary literature of Second Temple Judaism.17 Even if we date the earliest parts of 1 Enoch to the third century BCE18 (and they are probably much older) and the latest apocalypses at the end of the first century CE, we are speaking of a period of three hundred years or more. It is unlikely that the interests over this period remained the same and that circumstances did not affect the choice of material for inclusion in the apocalypses. For example, it is in the three apocalypses written in the aftermath of the First Revolt (4 Ezra, 2 Baruch and Apoc. Abraham), that we find a particular concern for the destiny of Israel together with impassioned pleas for an explanation of the suffering and eclipse of the people of God.19 Concern with astronomical data is manifested in the Enochic literature (e.g. 1 En 72ff.), though there is occasional evidence that other apocalyptists may also have been interested in this subject (2 Bar 48:1ff.). Likewise the dominant concern with eschatology in parts of Daniel and Revelation is not typical of other apocalypses. The origin of Daniel in its present form during the religious crisis provoked by the action of Antiochus Epiphanes probably explains the single-minded preoccupation with suffering, martyrdom and eschatological vindication.20 Similarly, Revelation may have been prompted by the political crisis either at the end of Nero’s life (more likely in the light of Rev 17:9) or, as Christian tradition would have it, in the time of Domitian.

19 On 4 Ezra see Stone, *Fourth Ezra*.
20 On this theme see Nickelsburg, *Resurrection*. 
Apart from the circumstances affecting the interests of the apocalypticists we may also see change and development in the form in which revelation is delivered.21 Not all apocalypses describe heavenly ascents and visions of the heavenly world; some, like 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch, prefer the revelatory angel or the divine voice as the means of communicating the divine mysteries. One common feature is the fact that all the Jewish apocalypses are pseudonymous (that is except that of John of Patmos). Pseudepigraphy was a very common literary convention,22 and may have served as a means of enhancing the authority of the revelations committed to writing. It is an open question whether the apocalypses are merely literary creations following a conventional pattern or may include the relics of actual experiences by unknown visionaries.23 There was a growing concern with the mystical and magical in late antiquity, and apocalypticism may be seen as a Jewish form of what Hengel has described as the quest for higher wisdom through revelation.24 Pseudepigraphy is not peculiar to the apocalypses. The practice probably had a long history in the prophetic tradition. It is difficult to believe that the authors were chosen at random; the enigmatic reference to Enoch in Gen 5:24, for example, and the high opinion of him in some strands of Jewish tradition (e.g. Jub 4:17ff.) made him a prime candidate as a recipient of divine knowledge.25 Whereas Enoch and Abraham, Levi and Isaiah are allowed to ascend to heaven during their lives and return to tell of their experiences, the same cannot to said of Ezra and Baruch in 4 Ezra and 2 Baruch respectively, though Greek Baruch does speak of Baruch’s heavenly ascent and the disclosures which result from it (1:8).26 The choice of Baruch and Ezra as recipients of divine revelation is entirely appropriate as they had either lived through the catastrophe of the destruction of the First Temple or participated in the rebuilding afterwards and so could speak for those going through similar experiences after 70 CE. The reluctance in both works to speak of heavenly

21 J.J. Collins, Apocalypse; idem, Apocalyptic Imagination; Collins and Charlesworth, Mysteries; and Aune, Prophecy.
22 On pseudepigraphy in the Old Testament and Judaism see the papers by Hengel and Smith in von Fritz, Pseudepigrapha, 231–308, Meade, Pseudonymity, and the comprehensive discussion in Duff, Reconsideration.
24 See Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism 1: 210–218; Dodds, Irrational; Segal, ‘Heavenly Ascent’.
26 Stone, ‘Paradise’.
ascents during the life-time of the seer contrasts with the extensive account of a heavenly journey in the contemporary Apocalypse of Abraham (15ff.).

Apocalypticism and Wisdom

To do justice to apocalyptic texts, however, we cannot ignore that quest for knowledge of things earthly and heavenly which in part at least is characteristic also of the wisdom tradition.²⁷ The links are particularly close in parts of 1 En 2–5, which evince a definite interest in the created order. The information in 1 En 72:2, however, comes through revelation rather than human observation. No doubt there are significant differences between the apocalypses and the wisdom literature. Nevertheless there is an affinity of certain parts of the apocalypses, particularly Daniel, not with the wisdom of the book of Proverbs, but with mantic wisdom which was concerned with the mysteries of the stars, the interpretation of dreams and divination.²⁸ Even within the biblical tradition, however, there is a closer link with the wisdom tradition than is often allowed. As has already been pointed out, one group of apocalypses includes an intense questioning of the human predicament, particularly as it affects the righteous Jews. Parts of 4 Ezra have close affinities with the book of Job; indeed, this book is shot through with apocalyptic themes from its heavenly setting in ch. 1–2, via the hints of visions in 4:13; 7:14; and 33:15 to the final climactic vision in ch. 38–41, as William Blake indicates in his engravings.²⁹

The contrast between human and divine wisdom in the dialogue between Ezra and the angelic intermediary is stark. Even those who are the most righteous of humanity are unable to comprehend the ways of an inescrutable divinity. Ezra’s words express the common-sense position with regard to the lot of humanity, the injustices of the world, and perplexity at the fate of the Jews in the wake of the destruction of the Second Temple. The message is that the righteous need to view all things in the light of the eschatological resolution when the Messiah comes. Attempting to understand the apparent injustices of the present

²⁸ See Müller, ‘Mantische Weisheit’.
²⁹ See Gruenwald, Apocalyptic, 4f. and Stone, 4 Ezra, 421.
(4 Ezra 7:16) is futile, because, despite the innate ability to understand, humanity’s sin makes it difficult to do so, and so it awaits eternal torment (4 Ezra 7:72). What is required is not knowledge of the why’s and wherefore’s of human history, but obedience to Tora. The mystery of the reign of God is that the one who endures to the end will be saved. Like Ezra in this apocalypse Job is offered an answer through divine revelation (38–41). So, the questioning spirit of the biblical wisdom tradition and the interpretation of dreams and visions are antecedents which should not be ignored in our attempt to elucidate apocalyptic origins.

Apocalypticism has its origin neither in prophecy nor in wisdom. Both have contributed much to apocalyptic. Rather it is a case of elements of prophecy and wisdom contributing to an outlook which set great store by the need to understand the ways of God. The apocalyptic visionary approaches Scripture with the conviction that the God who is revealed in the pages of the sacred writings may be known too by vision and revelation. The interpretation of Scripture offered the opportunity to plumb the depths of some of the most profound divine mysteries, often only hinted at darkly in the sacred text. The apocalyptists were not content with answers to mundane questions and pressed on in search of divine knowledge. Indeed, they were probably the ones castigated by the sage in Sir 3:21ff. (a passage quoted in part in yHag 2, 77c lines 18ff. and bHag 13a):

Do not pry into things too hard for you or examine what is beyond your reach. Meditate upon the commandments you have been given; what the Lord keeps secret is no concern of yours. Do not busy yourself with matters that are beyond you; even what has been shown you is above human grasp. Many have been led astray by their speculations, and false conjectures have impaired their judgement (cf. 34:1ff., trans. NEB).30

In contrast with the material in the apocalyptic literature the warning in Sirach sets a limit on the extent to which the religious traditions offer opportunities both to seek for and to find an answer to the most pressing problems of human existence as well as on human curiosity about God and the divine purposes.

30 Compare the Hebrew and cf. ySot 7,22a and GenR 8,2.
Apocalypticism and Tora

To state the importance of the visionary element in ancient religion\(^{31}\) is not to assert that apocalyptic religion was antithetical to Tora study. The choice of Enoch rather than Moses as the apocalyptic seer need not be taken as a rejection of the Tora and the tradition of its interpretation. There is much in the apocalypses to suggest that there is no fundamental opposition to the Tora. Indeed, in a work like 4 Ezra obedience to the Law is a constant preoccupation of the writer (e.g. 3:19, 7:17ff. and 9:31ff.) and similar interest in the Law is found in other apocalypses.\(^{32}\) Apocalyptic is a basic component of engagement with the Scriptures.\(^{33}\) It took its start from precisely those passages which deal with hidden mysteries of heaven and earth rather than the application of biblical principles to everyday concerns as set out in the Tora (cf. Luke 11:52).\(^{34}\) The discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls has proved once and for all that apocalyptic and legal materials were held closely together, as they were also in emerging rabbinic Judaism.

Because of the esoteric character of the apocalypses it is tempting to suppose that apocalypticism is the product of a movement or groups removed from the mainstream of Jewish interpretation of Scripture.\(^{35}\) From time to time it has been asserted that there was a polarization in Judaism between apocalypticism and Pharisaism.\(^{36}\) But there is evidence to suggest that apocalypticism may well have been the esoteric tradition of the scribes and nascent rabbinic Judaism.\(^{37}\) That such interests did in fact form part of later rabbinic tradition is widely accepted. From the Mishna itself we can see that speculative interests, perhaps of an esoteric character, already existed in the Tannaitic period, as is evident from the following mishna:

The forbidden degrees [concerning permitted sexual relations] may not be expounded before three persons, nor the Story of Creation before two, nor [the chapter of] the Chariot (merkava) before one alone, unless he is a Sage that understands of his own knowledge. Whosoever gives his mind to four things it were better for him if he had not come into the

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31 Lane Fox, *Pagans*.
32 E.g. 1 En 93:6; 99:14; 2 Bar 38:2; 59:2; Jub 23:26ff.
33 See Rowland, ‘Apocalyptic Literature’.
34 See Halperin, *Faces*.
35 P.R. Davies, ‘Social world’.
world—what is above? what is beneath? what was beforetime? and what will be hereafter? And whosoever takes no thought for the honour of his Maker, it were better for him if he had not come into the world (mHag 2:1, trans. Danby). 38

In the second part of this mishna we find a dire warning against those who would occupy themselves in subjects that are difficult for humans to comprehend. The four prohibited topics represent the major concerns of the Jewish apocalypses: speculation about heaven, hell and human destiny, as well as the mysterious workings of human history as it moves toward the New Age. The final threat in the mishna is a thinly veiled warning to those whose theological interests led them to speculate in such a way that they would dishonour God, probably in the speculation on the form of God (shiu r koma). 39

Of particular interest, however, are the restrictions placed on scriptural exposition. Elsewhere in the Mishna, in mMeg 4:10, a ban is placed by some sages on the public reading of the first chapter of Ezekiel (merkava). mHag 2:1 extends the restriction to the exposition of the chapter in the academy. In the case of Ezek 1 this is a complete prohibition, except when an individual has shown himself to be mature enough to embark on such study (cf. tMeg 4:34). In yHag 2, 77a (lines 45ff.; cf. 77c lines 67f.) cautionary stories may be found which are intended to deter the amateur and uninitiated from such a dangerous exercise. 40

Two of the restrictions mentioned in the Mishna concern Gen 1 and Ezek 1. Here are two passages from Scripture which might open the door to speculation about the creation of the world and the God who created it. They are passages which pointed him not so much to obligations and how they could be fulfilled as to the nature of God and God’s creation. In the light of the sophistication of the exegetical methods applied to the Scriptures to enable the will of God in specific situations to be discerned we can imagine that the hints found in passages like Gen 1 and Ezek 1 might lead the expositor to untold excess and indeed an unbalanced perspective as he sought to understand the process of creation and the immediate environs of the Creator. These

38 On the origins of Jewish mysticism see Gruenwald, Merkava Mysticism; Scholem, Major Trends; Halperin, Faces, Urbach, 'Tradition'; Mach, 'Apocalypticism'; and on the links between messianism and mysticism, see Idel, Messianic Mystics.
39 See Gruenwald, Merkava Mysticism, 213, and Cohen, Shi’ur Qomah. See also part III of this volume.
40 Origen in his commentary on the Song of Songs, e.g. Comm in Cant 1.2 confirms the rabbinic restrictions, see Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism.
passages (to which we might add others like Isa 6:1ff.) offered the exegete a glimpse into another world, a disclosure of the way things were before the universe existed and the nature of God who sat enthroned in glory on the cherubim-chariot above the firmament. The restrictions concerning the study and public reading of Ezek 1 go back at least as far as the early first century and may well be much older. Morray-Jones\footnote{Murray-Jones, Merkabah Mysticism.} has argued that the merkava-restriction originally meant that only a ‘mantic’ wise man who was able to understand the text on the basis of his esoteric knowledge was permitted to ‘expound’ (in the sense of giving teaching about) Ezek 1. Thus the background and context are an esoteric tradition concerned with divine secrets.

Jewish mysticism in all its various manifestations has had a long history from the very earliest times after the return from exile in Babylon by way of the mystics among the Tannaim and Amoraim through the kabbala down to the hasidic movements nearer our own day. The explanation of this remarkable religious phenomenon owes an overwhelming debt to the researches of G. Scholem.\footnote{Scholem, Major Trends; also Gruenwald, Merkava Mysticism; idem, Apocalyptic to Gnosticism; Halperin, Merkabah; idem, Faces; Rowland, Open Heaven; Hellholm, Mediterranean World; Collins and Charlesworth, Mysteries; Schäfer, Hidden and Manifest God; Collins, ‘Throne’; Wewers, Geheimnis; Morray-Jones, Merkabah Mysticism; idem, ‘Transformational Mysticism’; Schäfer, ‘Hekhalot Literature’; Alexander, ‘Sixtieth Part’.} Of the long period of Jewish mystical ideas our concern is with the very earliest period among the Tannaitic rabbis (i.e. up to about 200 CE) and the pre-history of their interest in Ezek 1, knowledge of which is derived in the main from apocalyptic writings which in part antedate the Christian era.

As we have seen, according to mHag 2:1 Jewish mysticism is divided into two main branches, that concerned with cosmogony and cosmology based on Genesis 1 (maase bereshit) and that based on Ezekiel 1 and the throne-chariot of God (maase merkava). The latter is much more theologically orientated insofar as it deals specifically with the nature of God and God’s immediate environment in heaven. Jewish mysticism is much more a case of knowledge or enlightenment about things which remained hidden in heaven, whether cosmological, astronomical, eschatological or theological. According to the ‘hekhalot’ literature of the early centuries of the Christian era, which is a repository of ideas emanating from mystical circles, one of the means whereby this knowledge was gained was through the ecstatic ascent to heaven to
look upon the merkava and to learn its secrets. Usually these journeys are attributed to a famous Tannaitic rabbi like Akiva or Yishmael, just as the apocalyptic literature had spoken of the ascents made to heaven not in terms of some contemporary person but of a figure of the far distant past like Enoch or Abraham. What we have here is not explicitly a mystical communion of the saint with God as in the mediaeval Christian mystics, but the participation in and knowledge of events which are unseen to the human eye, though the transformation of the mystic into angelic existence may parallel the intermingling of human and divine in later Christian mysticism.

It seems probable that esoteric traditions associated with Ezek 1 and similar passages were inherited by some of the early Tannaim from this apocalyptic milieu. The earliest rabbinic traditions had both an exegetical and a ‘practical’ (i.e. visionary-mystical) aspect.\(^{43}\) A feature of the later rabbinic development of these traditions was their association with and subordination to the Sinai revelation.\(^{44}\) In the earliest strata of tradition, as in the apocalyptic texts, this connection is not always evident, and it seems likely that this association was developed in order both to legitimise and control the development within a rabbinic context, a process which probably began during the first century.

The reconstruction of the content of merkava tradition in the late first century is not easy. The earliest strata of the talmudic tradition do not refer to a heavenly ascent, however, but simply to supernatural phenomena (pre-eminently fire) which accompanied merkava exposition. Only later in connection with Akiva do we find suggestions of heavenly ascents being practised, especially in versions of the story of the four who entered parda\(\acute{\text{s}}\).\(^{45}\) What was later to become the hekhalot visionary tradition was a synthesis of a number of different traditions which employed a variety of texts, pre-eminently Ezek 1, Isa 6 and the Song of Songs (the latter being particularly important for the shiur koma), as their basis. At an early stage it may well have been the case that the content of the merkava tradition was primarily (though not exclusively) exegetical. The focus of the tradition was the throne-chariot

\(^{43}\) Or as Halperin, *Faces*, 71, has put it: ‘When the apocalyptic visionary “sees” something that looks like Ezekiel’s *merkabah*, we may assume that he is seeing the *merkabah* vision as he has persuaded himself it really was, as Ezekiel would have seen it had he been inspired wholly and not in part.’ Cf. Lieb, *Visionary Mode*.

\(^{44}\) Halperin, *Faces*.

\(^{45}\) tHag 2:3f.; bHag 14b; yHag 2, 77b; CantR 1,4. See ch. 13 and 14 in this volume.
of God and the glorious figure enthroned upon it. The only question is: to what extent were such practices current and respectable in mainstream academies? Meditation on passages like Ezek 1, set as it is in Exile and in the aftermath of a previous destruction of the Temple, would have been particularly apposite as the rabbis sought to come to terms with the devastation of 70 CE. Of course, if the practical methods were among the most closely guarded secrets of the tradition, and if some influential rabbis were hostile to them, we should expect the sources to be very reticent about them, especially when the practice was liable to cause theological and halakhic deviance.

By the early second century the esoteric tradition was known to and practised by leading rabbis such as Akiva. Some controversy concerning the status and dissemination of the tradition is likely to have occurred during the first century, probably because of the way in which such traditions were developed in extra-rabbinic circles, not least Christianity. We know Paul was influenced by apocalyptic ascent ideas (2 Cor 12:2ff.). He emphasises the importance of this visionary element as the basis of his practice (Gal 1:12 and 1:16; cf. Acts 22:17). His apocalyptic outlook enabled him to act on his eschatological convictions, so that his apocalypse of Jesus Christ became the basis for his practice of admitting Gentiles to the messianic age without the practice of the Law of Moses. The threat posed by apocalypticism may be discerned elsewhere, for example, in the visionary context for the discussion of (a dangerously) dualistic theology. Problems with apocalypticism were a common feature of emerging Christianity and Judaism. In this there was common ground even if there was not much evidence in their literature of either tolerance on the part of Christians or interest on the part of the Jews.

We know from later Jewish texts that cosmogony and theosophy played a part in rabbinic theology. A glance at bHag 12a ff. indicates that the mystical lore based on Gen 1 and Ezek 1 was fairly extensive, ultimately involving the mystic’s ascent through the heavenly palaces to the divine kavod itself. While the literary remains are extensive

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46 See Dean-Otting, Heavenly Journeys and Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven.
47 See Segal, Two Powers; Fossum, Name of God; idem, ‘Jewish Christian Christology’; Rowland, Open Heaven, especially 94ff.; idem, ‘Vision of the Risen Christ’; Ashton, Studying John; Fossum, Image; Hurtado, One God Hurtado Lord Jesus Christ; Mach, Die Entstehung; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration.
48 On the heavenly ascent material see Dean-Otting, Heavenly Journeys and Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven.
enough to establish the contours of this speculative interest in the Amoraic period, the precise character of the mystical lore in the age of the Tannaim is unclear. Names of prominent Tannaim like R. Yohanan b. Zakkai (bHag 14b) and R. Akiva (e.g. bHag 14b–15b) are linked with it, which suggests, at the very least, that later interpreters considered that the mystical tradition should be associated with the heart of early rabbinic Judaism rather than be regarded as the interest of a peripheral group. It is possible that this interest did form a significant part of the religious beliefs of important teachers in the Tannaitic period, a fact which seems to be presupposed by the necessity for the regulation in the Mishna. But even if this be the case, the paucity of information, because it was esoteric material, about the mystical involvement of R. Yohanan b. Zakkai and his pupils R. Elazar b. Arakh, R. Yoshua and of R. Akiva, and his contemporaries Simeon b. Azzai. Simeon b. Zoma and Elisha b. Avuya, does not allow us to reconstruct with any degree of certainty the character of this mystical interest. There are hints that visions of Ezekiel’s chariot may have been involved (tMeg 4:28; bMeg 24b).

*Mystical Antecedents in the Pseudepigrapha*

In several places in apocalyptic literature there is evidence that the apocalyptists were also interested in the first chapter of Ezekiel and the first chapter of Genesis. Consideration of the use made of Ezek 1 in the apocalypses leads to the suggestion that these passages, one of which (1 En 14:8ff.) may go back to the beginning of the second century BCE, already evince an extensive speculative interest in Ezek 1. Here is evidence that apocalyptists were not merely interested in eschatology, nor did they regard the throne-vision merely as a convenient backdrop for eschatological teaching. Rather, the interest in God’s throne is already a matter for study in its own right. In these cases the basis of the apocalyptic vision is Scripture itself. The vision takes its origin from the insight already communicated in the biblical passage, however

49 This matter is explored further in Rowland, *Open Heaven* and Wolfson, *Speculum.*
51 LAB 28; 4 Ezra 6:38ff.; Jub 2:2ff.; and 2 En 25f.
further it may take it. Other examples of Scripture being the basis for apocalyptic visions and pronouncements can be found elsewhere.52

There are fragments throughout the pseudepigrapha which enable us to glimpse something of the antecedents of the theosophic and cosmological speculation which were to form the cornerstone of later Jewish belief. Thus, in the early Jewish drama Ezekiel the Tragedian (lines 68–82), we have an extraordinary account of the coronation of Moses in heaven. In the retelling of the early sagas of Israel in Biblical Antiquities 28, the story of Cenez includes a remarkable cosmogony with few parallels in Jewish literature. The Life of Adam and Eve 25 is full of features typical of the mystical ascent and the Testament of Job 46–51 betray hints of the heavenly liturgy (as well as other mystical matters). These hymns are sung in angelic language reminiscent of the merkava hymns of the hekhalot literature and the hymnic passages in the book of Revelation (e.g. 4:8 and 11 and 5:9–10) and the Apoc. Abr. 17, not to mention the glossolalia which was a feature of the earliest Christian experience. The Egyptian Jewish romance Joseph and Aseneth 14 has a remarkable angelology and hints of a heavenly banquet, and the Prayer of Joseph, fragments of which have been preserved in Origen’s commentary on the Fourth Gospel, points us to a doctrine of pre-existence and angelic/human relations which has wide ramifications for early Christology. Throughout Philo’s writings (and to a lesser extent those of Josephus) the midrashic invention betrays acquaintance with theological speculation which has several points of contact with the apocalyptic and mystical tradition. Philo’s reference to the Therapeutae in Vita Cont. 28ff. is a tantalizing glimpse of what might have been involved in ecstasy in the Second Temple period. From works like these students of Judaism have over the years built up a picture, albeit fragmentary, of an extensive mystical tradition, which is the antecedent of the more developed tradition of the Tannaitic period.

The publication of the material from Caves 4 and 11 known as the ‘Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice’ has given considerable support to the view that the origin of the idea of the heavenly Temple, its liturgy and the existence of a complex angelology linked with speculation

52 E.g. Dan 7 in 1 En 46; 4 Ezra 12 and 13; Rev 13 (cf. Jer 23 in Dan 9 and Gen 6 in 1 En 6:1ff. Other passages are investigated by Hartmann, Prophecy.
about God’s dwelling lies early in the Second Temple period. These fragmentary texts offer us a speculation in which we find angelic beings described as ‘gods’ having a priestly function in a heavenly liturgy within the innermost sanctum of heaven, suggesting that the kind of description contained in the Greek Testament of Levi 2 may well be authentically Jewish. There is reference to the heavenly sacrifice, but whether these are the spiritual sacrifices of T. Levi is unclear. These divine beings have intimate knowledge of the divine secrets engraved in secret in the heavens (e.g. 4Q402 4) which is obviously shared with the readers of these texts. The repetitive style is typical not only of the later hekhalot material but also of the plerophoric style of a New Testament text like the letter to the Ephesians. The frequent mention of the different heavenly languages suggests a peculiar set of languages for different parts of heaven and may be akin to the glossolalia mentioned in the New Testament and alluded to in works like the Testament of Job 46ff. The various parts of the structure of the heavenly Temple are the object of praise. There are numerous divine merkavot whose parts themselves have become angelic beings. The angelic host is divided into different groups each with their own leader so reminiscent of the complex angelology of a later text like the much later Sefer Enoch. The carefully defined order of the liturgy and the deferential nature of the worship of the different grades of angels to the group of higher status may illuminate the enigmatic reference to the ‘humility and worship of angels’ (Col 2:18). In heaven there are a variety of entrances (similar to the earthly Temple), in and out of which run the angelic host destined for the divine service. In addition to the Qumran merkava fragment in which the movement of the divine throne-chariot is described, another text speaks of the glorious chariots. All are a remarkable testimony to an extensive interest in the complexities of the heavenly world which

53 See Newsom, Songs, and on the expositions of the chapter in the apocalyptic tradition Rowland ‘Visions of God’; Chernus, ‘Visions of God’; Newsom, ‘Merkabah Exegesis’; and further Fletcher-Louis, All the Glory of Adam; Elior, Three Temples.

54 E.g. 4Q405 94 and 11QShir Shabb 8–7; cf. bHag 12b.

55 4Q403 i 1 i 1–29.

56 4Q403 i 1. 4Q403 i 1 ii cf. 11Q Shir Shabb f-c-k where a number of thrones are mentioned.

57 E.g. 4Q403 1 ii.

58 See 4Q403 1 ii and below 158ff.

59 4Q405 14–150; 4Q405 23 i.

60 See 4Q405 20 ii–20–22.
far exceeds the detail of all the extant apocalyptic texts and in many respects has its closest counterparts in the extensive heavenly accounts of the hekhalot tractates. The fragments represent an insight into the existence of an extravagant, heavenly-orientated, mind-set of at least some groups of the Second Temple period which gives the lie to the notion that such speculation and interest is merely the creation of a post-Christian era.

In the apocalyptic tradition, visions and myths serve to disrupt readers'/hearers’ expectations of what is normal rather than offering the definitive pronouncements about what is demanded. They are tantalised and perplexed into thinking and above all behaving differently. The texts carry them to the brink of something other than the norm without actually informing them in any prescriptive way about the new that is offered. The book of Jubilees (as we have seen) is rather different. The angelic revelation to Moses on Sinai is used to vindicate one side in what were contentious matters in Second Temple Judaism. In such a use of apocalypticism there is no sense of human fallibility. Wisdom is offered and received which in effect removes any possibility of discussion of the subject. The text’s meaning is transparent and is the final, authoritative pronouncement.

So while the apocalypses offer revelation, much of which confirms what was traditionally believed already, this does not always offer an unambiguous answer to existential questions. Indeed, there is frequently need for angelic interpretation of enigmatic dreams and visions. It proved necessary for revelations coined in one era to be the basis of ‘updating’ and application in the different political circumstances of another. Thus the symbolism of the fourth beast in Dan 7 is given a new lease of interpretative life in the Roman period by being made to refer to Rome. Despite its authoritative claim in 22:18, Revelation does not offer unambiguous and exclusive answers either. Its apocalyptic symbols can produce as much mystification as enlightenment. In the apocalypses there is a plethora of imagery or enigmatic pronouncement which leaves the reader either without the possibility of ever knowing the mind of God or with tantalizing glimpses in the enigmatic symbols of dreams and visions. Those who had resort to the apocalyptic tradition were not content with the world as they appear to ‘normal’ perception. ‘The door open in heaven’ challenges the works and wisdom of the age, where, to quote Paul’s words, humans only ‘know in part’ and ‘see in a glass darkly’ (1 Cor 13:9, 12).
CHAPTER THREE

ENOC IN JEWISH AND EARLY CHRISTIAN TRADITION

The enigmatic reference to Enoch in Gen 5:24 produced a welter of speculation about his person and a range of literature attributed to him. The reference in Genesis already suggests that at the time of the redaction of this chapter during the Exilic period speculation about Enoch was well established. The allusion to the 365 days of the year in the number of years of his life hints at calendrical wisdom, which was to be such an important component of Enoch’s character in later Jewish tradition, as is evident in a late summary such as Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer (9a). The discovery of the Enoch fragments from Qumran have improved our insight in the wide range of speculation about the figure of Enoch in ancient Judaism.

The literature attributed to Enoch is found in a variety of forms. Our knowledge of its early appearance has been transformed by the discovery of the fragments from Cave 4 at Qumran, many of which correspond to what we now know as 1 Enoch. The apocalypse—or better apocalypses, as there is a collection of different material from different dates—is extant in its complete version in Ethiopic. The chapters 37–71 which speak of the Son of man and Enoch’s identification with this heavenly figure appear not to have been known at Qumran, while another Enochic work, the Book of the Giants, has been found among the manuscripts.

The legend about Enoch’s righteousness, wisdom, and enigmatic end, are all used as convenient biblical pegs on which to hang a vast array of apocalyptic information about astronomy, eschatology and paraenesis. The Enochic apocalypse differs from many others in the


2 Cf. Boccaccini, Origins.

3 See Stuckenbruck, Book of Giants.
extent of the speculative material which is related to the Enoch legend: astronomical, calendrical and heavenly matters. The material contained in 4 Ezra makes an interesting comparison as speculative interest is minimal with more questions raised about the human condition than answers given, even allowing for the eschatological visions in the later chapters. Of the other texts attributed to Enoch, the Slavonic Apocalypse (2 Enoch) consists of a heavenly ascent followed by a last testament from Enoch after his brief return to earth. In the much later (sixth century?) Hebrew Apocalypse of Enoch also called ‘Sefer Hekhalot’ (3 Enoch), the ascent to heaven and the transformation of Enoch into an exalted angel is followed by a plethora of complex angelological descriptions capped by various brief eschatological predictions. Much of the Enochic material has been preserved by Christian scribes—the Ethiopic Apocalypse forms part of the biblical canon of the Ethiopian Church—and reflects an ongoing interest in apocalyptic thought and literature in Christianity.

*The Greek and Aramaic Interpretations of Genesis 5:24*

What follows traces the contours of these traditions. The clear bifurcation of the speculative interest will be outlined, using the targumic traditions as a guide to the contrasting opinions that emerged in Jewish traditions. We start with a comparison of the Hebrew and Greek versions of Gen 5:24:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MT</th>
<th>LXX</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>יהוחנן נתן</td>
<td>קא ותמרסשתננא ענוκ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ת şi התאים</td>
<td>תוע θεω</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ואין</td>
<td>קא 오ות ηφρύσκετο</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>כי לוח אם אלהים</td>
<td>οτί μετέθηκεν αὐτῶν ὁ θεός</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A comparison between the Hebrew and Greek of Gen 5:24 already suggests a modicum of interpretation.⁴ Enoch’s walking with God has become pleasing in God’s sight and the enigmatic ואין has been expanded to indicate his ‘translation’. The author of Hebrews clearly

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⁴ Cf. 2 Kgs 2:11; Wis 4:10; Heb 11:4–6.
understands it as ‘not seeing death’ (Heb 11:5–6; cf. Mark 9:1). Traits of
the Greek rendering also appear in the references to Enoch in Sirach:

Enoch pleased the Lord and was translated (μετέτέθη, ונדחק), an example
of repentance for future generations (Sir 44:16).

No one to equal Enoch has been created on earth, for from the earth
he was taken up (ἀνελήμφθη, ונלקח; Sir 49:14).

Enoch like Noah was pleasing to God (Gen 6:11). Εὐάρεστος is a word
used in the New Testament in Rom 12:1 and Phil 4:18 of offerings
acceptable to God. This might connect with that long tradition of Enoch
being a priest which stretches back at least to Jub 4:20ff.

In the targumic tradition this is manifested in the use of פלח (‘served’)
to translate יתהלך (‘walked’). As with many other parts of the Targumim,
an examination of the various versions of Gen 5:24 gives us a glimpse
of a wide range of Jewish traditions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Neofiti</th>
<th>PS. Yonatan</th>
<th>Fragment</th>
<th>Onkelos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And Enoch served before the Lord in uprightness. And it was not known where he was, for he was withdrawn by the word from before the Lord</td>
<td>And Enoch served before the Lord in uprightness, and behold he was not with the dwellers on earth, for he was withdrawn and went up to the firmament by the word from before the Lord, and his name was called Metatron the great scribe.</td>
<td>And Enoch served before the Lord in uprightness, and behold he was not, and we do not know what he was in his end because he was taken away from before the Lord</td>
<td>And he was not because the Lord caused him to die</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Neofiti At end of v23 M adds ונדחק גואמן ואתכונש למ נא עלמה Vaticanus אמטית יד Onkelos יי line 9 add במענה
A glance at these versions reveals significant variations between the different versions, as well as compared with the Masoretic Text. All Targumim show an unwillingness to translate the last part of Gen 5:24 as it stands and offer a variety of interpretations ranging from the paraphrase ‘God caused him to die’ to the identification of Enoch with Metatron the great scribe. In the first part of the verse both Onkelos and Pseudo-Yonatan render the Hebrew literally (line 3), whereas Neofiti\(^5\) and Fragmentary Targum\(^6\) render the Hebrew by a statement indicating their ignorance about Enoch’s end. With regard to the second part of the verse, we find that Onkelos emphatically states that Enoch’s disappearance was the result of God’s intervention when he caused Enoch to die. Nevertheless, a closer approximation to other Jewish traditions about Enoch is brought about in some other versions of Onkelos by the addition of a negative, thereby indicating that Enoch was privileged to avoid death.

Pseudo-Yonatan is much more explicit about Enoch’s destiny. We are told that Enoch was no longer with the inhabitants of the earth, phraseology which is reminiscent of 1 En 87:3, ‘They took me up away from the inhabitants of the earth.’ Only Pseudo-Yonatan tells us explicitly that Enoch went up to heaven, in language not unlike that used of Elijah’s ascent in Tg. 2 Kgs 2:11 (וָלָם אֶלֶּה בְּשָׁם אָלִי מְנוּ). After his ascent to heaven Enoch is called ‘Metatron the great scribe’, an appellation which, as we shall see, is well attested in the traditions concerning Enoch.

Both Pseudo-Yonatan and Neofiti use the word אַתנַגֵּד (‘withdrawn’) of Enoch’s departure, though Neofiti has nothing explicit to say about an ascent to heaven, only indicating that Enoch’s removal was by means of God’s ‘word’ (memra), a frequent circumlocution in the Targumim.\(^7\) An examination of some of the uses of אַתנַגֵּד elsewhere in these Targumim would seem to indicate that Pseudo-Yonatan too may have wanted to indicate that Enoch died before he was finally taken up to heaven.\(^8\) In several places in both Onkelos and Pseudo-Yonatan אַתנַגֵּד (‘withdraw’) is the word used to translate the Hebrew הָלָם. For example, in Gen 25:8; 25:17; 35:29; 49:33 we find that consistently Pseudo-Yonatan and

\(^5\) Diez Macho, Neophyti 1 Genesis.
\(^6\) Ginsburger, Fragmentthargum and Klein, Fragment-Targums.
\(^7\) See Chester, Divine Revelation.
\(^8\) On the terminology used in the Book of the Watchers for Enoch’s ‘ascent’ see L. Stuckenbruck, ‘Review’. 
Onkelos render the Hebrew ינתננירחא, וימת (cf. bSan 39a) whereas Neofiti equally consistently does not use ינתננירחא but prefers סאף ('ceased to exist') for ינתננירחא (though the marginal readings in Neofiti do want to replace ינתננירחא at 25:8; 25:17; 35:29).

This usage may indicate that this word in the Targumim on Gen 5:24, far from denoting the fact that Enoch was removed from earth to heaven without seeing death, may presuppose that Enoch died like the other patriarchs, but that, unlike those who remained dead, he was taken up to heaven after his death. This interpretation might be confirmed by the use of two verbs to describe Enoch's end, a feature which is peculiar to Ps-Yonatan. סליק seems to be redundant if ינתננירחא already implied removal to heaven. Its presence becomes essential, however, if ינתננירחא only refers to Enoch's death, and the Targum also wanted to reflect the view that Enoch was ultimately taken up to heaven.

What is also interesting is the fact that Neofiti does not use ינתננירחא in the passages just mentioned where Onkelos and Pseudo-Yonatan use it when describing a person's death, but Neofiti does retain it at Gen 5:24. This distinctive usage may give some credence to the supposition that ינתננירא is here being used not of withdrawal through death, as seems to be the case in Pseudo-Yonatan, but of withdrawal direct to God without death. Hence, there would be no need to use the extra verb as in Pseudo-Yonatan. Also we should note that consistently throughout Neofiti's version of Gen 5 we find the phrase ינתננירחא מ נא עלמא in place of the simple ינתננירחא of the Massoretic Text and the similar מ ינתננירחא of Onkelos and Pseudo-Yonatan. This phrase is omitted in the case of Enoch, a deficiency remedied by the marginal reading. So this singular use of ינתננירחא in Neofiti probably designates something rather more significant as compared with its use in Pseudo-Yonatan. Relevant to this is S. Lieberman's suggestion of a link between Ps-Yon Gen 5:24 and a story in bPes 50a concerning R. Yoshua ben Levi, who 'falls sick and is translated' (ואתננירחא חלש). Lieberman considers that the word ינתננירחא, here which occurs also in TgNeof Gen 5:24 should be understood as a technical term referring to a heavenly ascent.9

In the Fragment Targum of Gen 5:24 we find that the verb ינתננירחא has been avoided and is replaced by אידבר. In view of the fact that this word is used by Elijah in his own description of his ascent in the targum on

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9 See Liebermann, *Hellenism*, 13–15 and Segal, 'Paul', 120.
2 Kgs 2:9–10, the change may seem to be of little significance. Some care is needed, however, before we assume that the change is of little or no importance, not least because Fragment Targum as it stands seems to paint a rather different picture of Enoch’s end as compared with Pseudo-Yonatan and Neofiti. There are other changes in Fragment Targum, however, and we are left with the impression that Enoch, far from being taken up to heaven, was removed from God’s presence completely. Such a removal from before God in all likelihood was through death. So even if we do find a parallel usage in the Tg. 2 Kgs 2:9–10 we can find the verb used elsewhere to indicate removal by death rather than removal to heaven. Indeed, the context of the verb דבר in Fragment Targum on Gen 5:24 makes it difficult to argue that this targum intends to state that Enoch was taken up to heaven, and hints at a less than glorious end for Enoch.

Thus, possibly three of the Targumim indicate that Enoch died, even if Pseudo-Yonatan recognizes that ultimately he was given a position of some importance in heaven. The targumic interpretations of this verse are indicative of the range of views about Enoch within Jewish literature. It is to these that we now turn.

For the sake of convenience these are divided into two groups. The first group deals with material which, like Onkelos, is prepared to include reference to the less admirable side of Enoch’s character. The second group includes those passages, which, like Pseudo-Yonatan, regard Enoch in a much more exalted light and concentrate on his heavenly role, whether during or after his earthly life. This second group is further subdivided into sections as Enoch’s ascent to heaven, his activity as a scribe and a visionary, his role as an intercessor and priest and finally his transformation into an angelic being.

In any assessment of the targumic versions we cannot assume that the length and explicitness of Pseudo-Yonatan necessarily point to the fact that as a whole it must be later than the rest merely because of the exalted position it gives to Enoch. As for the rest we have indications that, while Onkelos is on the whole in line with the Massoretic Text, it too knows of one branch of the Enoch-tradition which rejected Enoch’s

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10 Codex Vaticanus 440 does contain דְּנָהָא, however, and includes אוֹרַה, see Ginsburger, *Fragmentthargum*, 74.
12 Tg Prov 24:11 and Tg Ezek 33:6.
removal as being a by-pass of death. There is also great reluctance in Neofiti and Fragment Targum to offer much explicit information on Enoch’s end. Indeed, Fragment Targum actually indicates that Enoch’s seizure was nothing more than a removal from God’s presence, thus bringing it more into line with the negative statements about Enoch which, as we shall see, we find in GenR 25. Neofiti, on the other hand, in its use of the verb אתנגיד and its reluctance to use it in other contexts where both Onkelos and Pseudo-Yonatan use it, shows that it knows of the removal of Enoch to heaven, even if there is an unwillingness to spell out this ascent in as much detail as Pseudo-Yonatan. If this is the case, we would then be faced with two possible sides of a development: first of a growing reluctance to encourage speculation about Enoch in continuity with prevailing rabbinic opinion in the extended form we have it in Pseudo-Yonatan, by maintaining an apparent agnosticism on the subject (Neofiti) or a complete refusal to accept that Gen 5:24 says anything at all about Enoch’s heavenly destiny (Onkelos and Fragment Targum); or secondly, what is more likely, as time went on, there was a greater emphasis on other aspects of the traditions about Enoch, all of which had a lengthy history, which stressed the fact of his death at the expense of the more extravagant estimates of him, in order to discourage too much interest in this more exotic side of Enoch’s character.

*Traditions Which Take a More Sober View of Enoch*

The starting part for this section is a passage which takes the most negative view of Enoch. It is the collection of interpretations of Gen 5:24 which are to be found in GenR 25. The text reads as follows:

And Enoch walked with God: R. Hama the son of R. Hoshaya said: His name was not written in the roll of the righteous but in the role of the wicked. R. Aibu said, Enoch was a hypocrite (חנף). At times he was righteous and at times wicked. The Holy One blessed be He said, While he is righteous I will remove him (סלק). R. Aibu said, God judged him at Rosh ha-Shana at the time when he judges the whole world.

The minim asked R. Abbahu and said to him, We do not find death mentioned in Enoch’s case? He said to them, Why is that? They said to him, It speaks here of ‘taking’ as it does also of Elijah. He said to them, If you are expounding the word ‘taking’, it speaks of ‘taking’ here and it also says in Ezekiel, I am taking away the desire of your eyes (Ezek 24:16). R. Tanhumah said: He answered them well.
A woman asked R. Yose: We do not find death mentioned in Enoch’s case. He said to her, If it said ‘and Enoch walked with God’ and no more than that, I would agree. Since it goes on to say, ‘And he was not, because God took him’, Enoch was no more in the world for God took him away (sc. through death).\(^\text{13}\)

In the first statement we find R. Hama denying Enoch’s place among the righteous completely, a point of view which, we have suggested, is hinted at in the Fragment Targum. R. Aibu on the other hand is not willing to go as far as this and asserts that Enoch’s removal was an act of mercy on God’s part, since he chose a time when Enoch was acting righteously, so that he would not die in wickedness.\(^\text{14}\) The last part, involving R. Abbahu and the *minim*, centres round the use of ‘take’ (ַּלַּחַךְ) of both Enoch and Elijah in both Gen 5:24 and 2 Kgs 2:9–10. R. Abbahu asserts that nothing positive can be proved about Enoch’s end on account of the use of the sentence ‘for God took him’ because the same verb is used in another context of removal by death (Ezek 24:16) rather than ascent to heaven. The final passage deals with the lack of any explicit reference to Enoch’s death in Scripture. Here too the suggestion that Enoch did not die is refuted by the sage, this time because he considers that ‘taking away’ in fact indicates that Enoch died.

The passage offers a negative picture of Enoch, and this has led to the assumption that the views expressed here are merely a reaction to extravagant views of Enoch in heterodox Jewish, Gnostic or Christian circles, a view which is given some credence because of the presence of the rabbi’s heretical interlocutors (*minim*), even if we cannot be certain of their identity, though we will recall that the Book of Enoch is cited as prophecy in Jude 14.\(^\text{15}\) Enoch does feature in the writings of the early Christian fathers, but it would be wrong to assume that there is widespread evidence of this biblical figure being used in polemical contexts. It is true that certain second-century Christian writers use Enoch as a

\(^{13}\) Note Rashi’s comment: ‘He was just but his understanding inclined to turn and be evil.’

\(^{14}\) In the light of the fact that סלק can be used of the removal of a man by death, e.g. GenR 62 ‘the Holy One knows when the time of the righteous has come and removes them’ (מסלקן), cf. ExodR 52 and tHag 2:5 of Shimon ben Zoma’s death. The removal here is to be understood as removal from the world by death.

type of a man who could be regarded righteous without circumcision.\footnote{16} Nevertheless there are many more references which indicate a certain suspicion towards Enoch and the literature written in his name.\footnote{17} Not least of the problems facing early Christian commentators was the fact that both Enoch and Elijah had ascended to heaven long before the ascension of Jesus.\footnote{18} Enoch’s eschatological role is stressed because of the identification of him with one of the two witnesses in Rev 11.\footnote{19} As a result there is frequent reference to the fact that Enoch will in fact die (though eschatologically), e.g. Acts of Pilate 25. It is worth noting also that Enoch is not by any means prominent in Gnostic literature and is hardly mentioned in the Nag Hammadi codices. Seth is much more important, though Enoch does have a part to play in the much later Pistis Sophia 227b.\footnote{20}

While one obviously does not want to exclude the possibility that the one-sided view expressed may have been a response to a polemical usage of Enoch, that does not mean that the view was specifically formulated to meet that polemic. Indeed, there seems to be every indication that the views recorded in GenR 25 may well reflect much older material, which reckoned not only with the possibility of his death but also of him as a repentant sinner. The similarities are especially evident in certain texts from earlier Jewish texts in Greek.

In Ben Sira we have two references to Enoch in 44:16 and 49:14.\footnote{21} The former is indicative of a strain in the traditions about Enoch with some connection with the interpretation of R. Aibu recorded in GenR. In the Greek Sirach 44:16 Enoch is said to be ὑπόδειγμα μετανοίας τοῖς γενεαῖς (cf. Hebrew דﬠת אות).\footnote{22} The precise significance of this remark is not immediately apparent as an exposition of the text of Gen 5:24. We do have a clue, however, when we consider Gen 5:22. The text implies that begetting children marked a turning point in Enoch’s life (cf. 2 En 1:1) The point is made explicitly by Philo in his QG 1.82:

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{16} E.g. Justin, Dial. 19 and Eusebius, Demonstr. 1.2.3; Eusebius Fragm. in Lucam MPG 24:540f.
\footnote{17} E.g. Tertullian, De cultu feminarum 1.3.
\footnote{18} E.g. Cyril of Jerusalem, Cat. Lecture 14.25.
\footnote{19} Bousset, Antichrist.
\footnote{20} See also the fragmentary Manichean text concerning Enoch: Henning, ‘Ein manichäisches Henochbuch’.
\footnote{21} See R. Argall, \textit{1Enoch and Sirach}.
\end{footnotes}
On becoming a man and a father, in his very procreation, he made a beginning of probity, being said to have been pleasing to God for although he did not remain in piety...not very long after the forgiving of Cain it introduces the fact that Enoch repented, informing us that forgiveness is wont to produce repentance.

Similarly also in his work On Abraham, 17ff., Philo points to Enoch as an example of one who changed from a worse life to a better one, but in this passage grounds his opinion on the LXX, ὅτι μετέθηκεν αὐτόν ὁ θεός. The reference here is to change by God of Enoch's moral life rather than his status (similarly On Rewards and Punishments 15–21). It is probably this sort of understanding which lies behind the terse remark in the Greek of Sir 44:16. While the reason for the translation of Enoch is not obviously a direct result of his repentance, the end of Enoch may be an example to humankind of the benefits of repentance. The Hebrew is less obviously linked with this tradition and more probably reflects the tradition of Enoch as an apocalyptic seer who was a witness to divine knowledge.

Philo's treatment of the figure of Enoch and the first reference to him in Ben Sira show that one important tradition of interpretation was the change from an evil to a good life. In another document from Greek-speaking Judaism we find a parallel to the view in GenR by R. Aibu and R. Yose. In Wisdom of Solomon 4 the writer discusses the apparent humiliation of the righteous. As an example of a righteous man whose life is like so many other righteous men, the writer alludes to the example of Enoch even though he does not mention his name.

Honourable age is not length of life, nor is it measured by the number of years...A man was pleasing to God and was loved by him and even while he lived among sinners was translated (μετετέθη). He was snatched away (ἡρπάγη), lest evil should change his understanding or guile deceive his soul.23

There are several allusions to the LXX account of Gen 5:24, but this is here amplified by ἡρπάγη, a verb which in later Christian literature could be used of removal by God to heaven,24 though it is not so clear in Wisdom that removal to heaven without death is implied. Enoch is cited here as an example of a righteous man who lived a short life on earth—365 years is the shortest life-span among the first genera-

23 Cf. Rashi's comment: 'God took him before his time.'
24 2 Cor 12:4; 1 Thess 4:17; Acts 8:39; Rev 12:5.
tions in Gen 5. Yet the shortness of his life bears no indication of his character, for he became perfect in a short time (v13). The context of the reference to Enoch suggests that the writer of Wisdom did in fact believe that Enoch died. The evidence for this is more clearly seen in the conclusion to the section in which the example of Enoch is cited, for the writer concludes, ‘So the righteous man who is dead will condemn the impious who remain alive’. Not only does this reference to Enoch point to his death, but it also indicates that his removal from earth was the result of God’s mercy, as God did not want to see a righteous man corrupted by the sin around him.

So, while it is true that the predominant emphasis in GenR 25 is on the less exalted aspects of Enoch’s life and character as they are reflected in the traditions about him, it would not be correct to say that they are merely a reaction against more exalted views of Enoch in other Jewish or Christian circles. It is an attitude which has its antecedents in the writings of earlier Jewish texts in Greek, and indeed may be reflected in Jub 7:39, which speaks quite clearly of Enoch’s death. The attempt to relate the interpretations in Bereshith Rabba to such earlier aspects of the Enoch-tradition makes better sense.

Traditions Which View Enoch in a More Exalted Light

Mention of the name Metatron in Pseudo-Yonatan, together with a link with Enoch, inevitably leads to a consideration of the description of the ascent of Enoch and his transformation into the angel Metatron in the Sefer Hekhalot or 3 Enoch. This work tells of the ascent of R. Yishmael to heaven to look upon the secrets of the merkava and of his introduction to the angel Metatron, the ‘youth’ (נ�이ים). We learn that the reason for this description of him is that Metatron is none other than Enoch who was removed from earth in the sinful generation of the flood to be a witness of God’s mercy and a reproach to the rest of

25 The link between the rabbinic interpretations and certain of the writings of Hellenistic Judaism was a point made in the middle of the last century by Frankel, Über den Einfluss, 44, who argued that the writers of Hellenistic Judaism interpreted Enoch’s change of heart in a positive sense, while the rabbis understood it in a negative sense.

26 Jellinek, Beth ha-Midrasch, 170; Odeberg, 3 Enoch, and especially Schäfer, Synopse.
Enoch is lifted on high in a fiery chariot (cf. 2 Kgs 2:11 and 1 En 70) and his removal coincides with the removal of the shekina from earth (cf. Ezek 10:4). He is taken on high, where he is shown all the secrets of heaven (3 En 8 and 11, Schäfer, *Synopse* § 892, 895), transformed into a glorious angelic being (chs. 9 and 15, Schäfer, *Synopse* § 856) and given a throne of glory and a name like that of God. He is placed at the door of the seventh hall of heaven (where God himself dwells) and is made God’s intermediary and vice-regent. Before him all the angels in heaven are compelled to prostrate themselves. This is the most exalted of all the traditions about Enoch.

The identification of Enoch with Metatron in both Pseudo-Yonatan and 3 Enoch tends to blur the differences which do exist between these two works. The most notable feature is that 3 Enoch nowhere describes Enoch/Metatron as the heavenly scribe. Indeed, this function is fulfilled by others (18:23–25; 26:1; 27:2; 33:2, Schäfer, *Synopse* § 859–65, 908, 909, 916). If we compare the picture of Metatron in the story of his confrontation with Elisha b. Avuya in 3 En 16 (Schäfer, *Synopse* § 856) with the related passage in the Babylonian Talmud (bHag 15a), we find that in the former Metatron is a judge in the heavenly court, whereas in the latter Metatron merely appears as a scribe who has been permitted to write down the merits of Israel (similar to Abel’s role in Recension A of the Testament of Abraham). So in fact the description of Metatron as the great scribe in Pseudo-Yonatan stands much closer to the view in b.Hag, where Metatron is not given anything like the power that he receives in 3 Enoch.

As we have seen, Enoch’s heavenly ascent is probably already hinted at in the Hebrew of Gen 5:24 where נקח is used. It is the word used by Elijah of his removal from earth in 2 Kgs 2:9 (cf. Ps 73:24). It is likely that the transference of Enoch from one place to another is to be understood as a transference from earth to heaven, though ἀναλαμβάνω and not μετατίθημι is used consistently of Elijah’s removal in 2 Kgs 2:9–11. By the time we get to the Greek of Ben Sira (c. 130 BCE) we find that the verb used in the LXX of Elijah’s translation is used also of Enoch’s in 49:14 (Hebrew has ‘he was taken to the presence’ הם לפני נלקח also suggesting translation to heaven). ἀναλαμβάνω is the verb used in the Testament of Abraham 15 by Sarah of Abraham’s final removal to

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27 Cf. NumR 5,3: ‘Enoch and the righteous were saved in the generation of the flood.’
heaven. Also, in the Greek of 1 En 12 we find the verb ἐλήμφθη used of Enoch’s activity with the angels, whereas the Ethiopic text states that Enoch was hidden (cf. John 12:36). It is not easy to determine whether this verb in the Greek version of 1 En 12 indicates that Enoch had been taken to heaven before his role as intermediary on behalf of the watchers, for his activity with the angels, as we know from Jub 4:21, is not in itself evidence of translation to heaven.28 Much more explicit in its emphasis on Enoch’s translation to heaven, however, is Josephus’ view of Enoch, found in Ant. 1.83. He says that Enoch lived for 365 years and ‘returned to the divinity’ (ἀνεχώρησε πρὸς τὸ θεῖον). Similar terminology is used by Josephus of Moses in Ant. 4.326: Moses only wrote that he died in order that no one should suggest that he went back to God without tasting death (cf. Ant. 3.96; cf. Philo, QG 1.86).

Alongside this view, and despite the otherwise exalted position given to Enoch, Jub 4 does not indicate Enoch’s final removal to heaven, even though during his life he is given visions (4:19) and has dealings with angels (4:21). Rather we find that Enoch is taken into the Garden of Eden in majesty and honour (4:23) which is located on earth, as 4:26 makes plain ‘the Lord has four places on earth, the Garden of Eden, etc’. An earthly setting for the Garden of Righteousness is evident in 1 En 32:3.29 A view similar to these is to be found in 1 En 106, where Methuselah journeys to the ends of the earth to inquire about the nature of the son born to Lamech (106:8–9). Whilst Enoch is said to dwell among the angels, he is still to be sought out on the earth rather than in heaven.30 In the fragments of the so-called Genesis Apocryphon from Cave 1 at Qumran, col. 2 Enoch is said to know the truth about all things and to dwell in Parwain, a place on earth to which Methuselah can journey. It also appears that Enoch was with the angels (col. 2, line 20), though the text at this point is by no means certain, but there is little doubt about his privileged position as the description of him as a ‘favourite and one desired’ makes plain.31 This is not dissimilar

28 Cf. Enoch’s ambiguous location in 4Q530 col iii, Genesis Apocryphon and 1 Enoch 106:7.
29 Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism.
30 Cf. Derekh Erets Zuta, ch. 1 end, ‘Nine entered the Garden of Eden alive including Enoch, Messiah and Elijah’, etc. Also known to Early Christian commentators, see Levine, Early Syrian Fathers, 174.
31 Fitzmyer’s translation of ורעי הרוחי in idem, Genesis Apocryphon.
to the reference to Enoch in the Wisdom of Solomon 4 as the one who was loved by God (ἠγαπήθη, cf. LXX Gen 22:2).  

Jub 4 provides us with a pattern for Enoch’s life as it is reflected in the later collections of material on Enoch and is even just discernible in a diffuse work like 1 Enoch. In Jubilees we find that Enoch’s final exaltation in glory, whether to heaven or a position of honour on earth, is preceded by earlier contacts with the heavenly world. We see this in 1 En 12 and 14, where Enoch’s intercession on behalf of the Watchers involves him in an ascent to heaven (ch. 14) as well as a subsequent revelation of the secrets of heaven and earth (1 En 17–36). Before his final departure, however, he returns to his children and gives them advice (1 En 81:6): ‘One year we will leave thee with thy son, so thou mayest teach thy children; in the second year they shall take thee from their midst’.  

This kind of form for the description of Enoch’s life corresponds with the form of the testament document, like the Testament of Abraham, where the patriarch is taken up to heaven, shown the glory of God and the heavenly assize before he returns to earth to make final preparations before his death (ch. 15). Precisely this pattern is found in 2 Enoch, where, after Enoch’s extensive visions of heaven, he returns to earth to inform his sons and advise them before he is finally taken up to heaven (2 En 36:1): ‘Now Enoch I give thee the term of 30 days to spend in thy house and tell thy sons…and after 30 days I shall send my angel for thee and he will take thee from earth.’  

In Jubilees also we find that Enoch’s role as a scribe is well established. The traditions vary as to whether his activity is on earth, as the man who introduced the art of writing to humanity (Jub 4:17; 1 En 83), or in heaven as the heavenly scribe whose task it was to advise the judge on the fate of a particular soul, as in the shorter recension of the

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32 On Gen 22 see Vermes, Scripture and Tradition.
33 It will be noted that the Similitudes, 1 En 37–71, must be excluded in order for the work to fit into this kind of pattern.
34 This kind of understanding of Enoch’s life reaches its most developed form in the late Life of Enoch printed in Jellinek, BHM 4: 129ff. Here we find Enoch responding to the call of an angel to leave his seclusion from humanity in order to teach humankind to walk in God’s ways. Many flock to him, including many kings. But Enoch is summoned to go up to heaven to rule in the heavenly world and he is taken up to heaven on a fiery chariot (Ginzberg, Legends 1:128).
35 In 4Q203 Enoch is described as מפעם המتدخل, cf. 4Q203 fragment 8 and 4Q530 ii lines 13–14 and 21–23.
36 On Enoch as the revealer of true wisdom as compared to the wisdom of the pagans revealed by angels, see Clement of Alexandria Strom. 5.1.10.1–2.
Greek of the Testament of Abraham (ch. 10–11), Enoch is described as the ‘scribe of righteousness and the teacher of heaven and earth’. He was also given knowledge of astronomical secrets (Jub 4:17 and 1 En 72ff.) as well as the nature of the heaven and the earth (1 En 17ff.; 59 and 2 En 23). Even in Jubilees, after he has been conducted into the Garden of Eden, he is said to write down the condemnation and the judgement of the world (v23). In the Slavonic Enoch he is commanded to write down all that he has seen in heaven (22 end; 33 and 40:2), though the role of heavenly scribe in this document is given to the angel Vretil (2 En 22:11).

Among the many things which Enoch views in heaven are, perhaps inevitably, the secrets of the future age (1 En 90; 2 En 33; 3 En 48; Schäfer, Synopse § 934–6; Jub 4:18 and 1 En 46:2), but most important of all Enoch is permitted to gaze upon the glory of God himself. While the complex angelology of the later Hekhalot literature is absent from the vision in 1 En 14, this passage marks the first step in the process which culminated in the elaborate descriptions of the mysteries of God’s throne and court in later literature. So we find that Enoch, like Abraham, (but unlike Ezra or Baruch), becomes a recipient of the vision of God’s throne, which involves Enoch in a heavenly ascent to gaze upon it. At a later stage of the Enoch tradition in 1 En 71, we see that the different parts of the chariot which are hardly mentioned in 1 En 14 have been given angelic status. So, for example, in 71:7 the ofanim are ranked alongside the seraphim and cherubim as angelic beings, a process which is perhaps already hinted at in the Hebrew of Ben Sira 49:8.

A fairly prominent feature of Enoch’s activity which has a very long history is his role as intercessor. In the early chapters of 1 Enoch we find him acting as the mediator between God and the fallen angels of Gen 6:1. The dramatic opening of 1 Enoch is followed by a more reflective section, typical of some strands of the earlier Wisdom tradition of the Bible. The reader is asked to contemplate the universe, to ‘understand how the eternal God made all these things; and how all God’s works are created for the divine service without any expectation of change’. What is necessary is continued pursuit of that which is laid down in God’s decrees (1 En 5:2). The contemplation of the universe and the

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37 Enoch was also the first to write down the calendar (Jub 4:18 and PRE 9a), where Adam handed on the principle of intercalation to Enoch.

38 Just as in 3 En 27, Schäfer, Synopse § 909 Radweriel as opposed to Enoch has this task.
human place in it turns, somewhat abruptly, to condemnation. Humans have not observed the law of the Lord, and have spoken proud words with unclean lips against the divine majesty (5:4f.). Such hubris earns a terrible curse for those who fail to recognize that the world is suffused with divine wisdom. For those who do, there is a promise of light, joy and peace, and wisdom. What characterizes those who possess wisdom is that they will be humble (5:9).

The general condemnation at the opening of the book is given a more specific content in 1 En 6ff., with the myth of the fallen angels, the sons of heaven, which is an extended version of the allusive reference in Gen 6:4. They choose for themselves wives. Two hundred angels come down to the summit of Mount Hermon. As well as having sexual intercourse, ‘they teach [humans] charms and spells and showed to them the cutting of roots and trees’. The angel Azazel also teaches them to make ‘swords and daggers and shields and breastplates, and the art of making them…bracelets, and ornaments, and the art of making up the eyes and of beautifying the eyelids, and their most precious and choice stones’. The women become pregnant and give birth to large giants who become a drain on human resources. Eventually, the giants turn against humanity and the created universe. In the face of the destruction humans cry out and their voices reaches heaven. Michael and Gabriel look down from heaven and see the blood that was being shed on the earth and bring the plight of humankind before the Most High (6:1–9:5). God’s response is to warn that the whole earth will be destroyed by a deluge, before the restoration of the earth which the Watchers have ruined (10:7).

Enoch then appears on the boundary between angels and humans, with access to divine secrets which enable him to have an authentic perspective on the world and God’s purposes for it (12:1). Like God he discloses both ‘past and future and lays bare the traces of secret things’

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40 The reference to the cutting of roots may be illuminated by the enigmatic story in bHag 15a (see below ch. 13 and 14). Four rabbis entered paradise, presumably by means of a heavenly ascent. Only one ascended and descended in safety, Akiva; catastrophe struck the other three, and of one, Elisha ben Avuyah, it is said that he ‘cut the plants’.

41 According to Clement of Alexandria (Strom. 5.1.10) the false wisdom of the Greeks is traced back to the illicit revelation of heavenly secrets by the fallen angels.

42 Cf. Josephus, Ant. 1.60, and Augustine, City of God 15.5, where Cain’s violence against Abel had become the cause of social disintegration.
(Sir 42:19). He is the scribe of righteousness and mediates between God and the Watchers, who seek Enoch’s assistance in seeking God’s forgiveness. He speaks the divine secrets because he has the breath given by the great One, and understands the word of knowledge (14:2f.). After an ascent to heaven to intercede with God and to receive the divine message of condemnation Enoch travels through the universe, observing those secret places removed from normal experience. When Enoch eventually reaches Paradise he sees there ‘the tree of wisdom’ (32:3). When Adam and Eve ate from it, they ‘learned wisdom; and their eyes were opened, and they knew that they were naked, and they were driven from the garden’. At the beginning of the next section of the book, the so-called Parables or Similitudes of Enoch, probably much later than the opening chapters, there is a repeated emphasis on the fact that Enoch speaks words of wisdom.

What the opening of 1 Enoch suggests is that there is a true and a false wisdom. The false wisdom is characterized by the fornication and sorcery, a link found also in the book of Revelation, where murder (21:8; 22:15, the ‘original sin’ of Cain in Gen 4), sorcery (18:23; 21:8; 22:15), fornication (2:21; 14:8; 17:2; 18:3; 19:2) and theft are the marks of those who consort with Babylon and emulate its ways. This echoes themes in later chapters of 1 Enoch where apocalyptic wisdom is the basis of a fierce denunciation of the oppressive behaviour of the rich and mighty (1 En 94ff.). In 1 Enoch there is a stress on misappropriated wisdom and the cosmic as well as the individual effects of it.43 The text of 1 Enoch comments ominously: ‘and the world was changed. And there was great impiety and much fornication and they went astray and all their ways became corrupt’. It is Enoch, a figure on the margins of culture, who has wisdom and can intercede with God and reflect the message of divine judgement on a fallen world.

Similar themes are found also in 2 En 7:4 where Enoch, on his way through the heavens, finds the rebellious angels hanging in the darkness in the second heaven. He is asked to intercede on their behalf, but his intervention is unsuccessful (cf. 1 En 14:4), and he has to act as the emissary of God’s judgement (1 En 16:4, cf. 65:10). In this we already have the beginnings of the process whereby Enoch becomes the representative of God in judgement which culminated in the identification of Enoch with the eschatological Son of Man who would judge

43 See Murray, Cosmic Covenant.
humanity (e.g. 1 En 71:14, cf. 3 En 16, Schäfer, Synopse § 856) and his position as the pledge of future glory of the righteous (1 En 71:15–17). Such an act of intercession of a righteous man on behalf of the impious is attested elsewhere in the Testament of Abraham 14, where we find Enoch interceding on behalf of a soul whose fate is in the balance and that soul being saved on account of Abraham’s intercession. Alongside this intercessionary role must be mentioned Enoch’s priestly office. This is already evident in Jub 4:25, where Enoch is said to burn the incense of the sanctuary (cf. Exod 30:7 cf. Jub 21:10 regulations for sacrifice found in words of Enoch) in the Garden of Eden, which is one of the four places on earth, including Mount Zion, where God’s presence is to be found. This is a feature which is taken up in later documents, like the Cave of Treasures,44 and in the fourth-century Christian Apostolic Constitutions, 8.5.45 In the Book of the Rolls Enoch (like Melchizedek) serves before God in holiness, and in Apost. Const. Enoch along with Seth and Abel is included in the prayer for the consecration of bishops as an example of the holder of a priestly office.

When we look at the end of the Similitudes, two points are immediately striking. First of all, there seem to be no less than three accounts of Enoch being raised aloft to heaven. The first, in ch. 70, speaks of Enoch being raised aloft on the chariots of the spirit (cf. 2 Kgs 2:11). In the second we find Enoch being shown the angels in God’s presence as well as all the secrets of heaven (71:1–4). But it is the third account (71:5–end), another parallel account of Enoch’s ascent (cf. 1 En 14:8ff.), which offers the most significant point of contrast. Here we find Enoch being brought before God and being addressed as the ‘Son of Man who was born for righteousness’ (71:14). The figure of the Son of Man is one who has been described in the earlier chapters of the Similitudes as a glorious, heavenly, and pre-existent, figure who sits on God’s throne and exercises judgement. In the context of the Similitudes as a whole this address to Enoch suggests that Enoch is identified with the heavenly Son of Man. Just as in 3 Enoch, so here too Enoch is transformed into a heavenly figure. In 1 En 71:11 the same Ethiopic word is used of Enoch’s experience before God as is used to describe the transfiguration of Jesus in the Ethiopic New Testament of Matt 17.46

44 Budge, Cave of Treasures, 95.
45 Fabricius, Codex, 220.
46 Dillmann, Lexicon Aethiopica, 890. The word is also used in Asc. Isa. 7:25 of Isaiah’s transformation as he ascended to the highest heaven.
Enoch’s exaltation and transformation are also evident in the Slavonic Enoch. After his journey through the heavens, Enoch finally arrives in God’s presence. After his vision of the divine glory God commands Michael to strip him of his earthly garments and to put on him garments of glory (2 En 22:9), which, according to Enoch, made him look like one of the glorious ones (22:10). Enoch is then shown all the secrets of heaven and earth, secrets which not even angels have heard (24:3) and is permitted to sit on God’s left hand with Gabriel (24:1). Indeed, we find that when Enoch is about to return to earth for a short time, he has his face frozen because no man could look upon him (2 En 35–37).

The glory of Enoch which we find in 1 and 2 Enoch seems to be an anticipation of the extravagance of 3 Enoch (Schäfer, Synopse § 856) with its parallel in bHag 15a; see the table on the next page. This kind of material is of considerable importance for any discussion of the development of Christology.

Perhaps the most complex of all the questions concerning Enoch is the age of the traditions concerning his exaltation and transformation into a heavenly being. His removal from earth, his ascent into heaven, his office as the heavenly scribe can all be found in passages which can be dated with some probability just before, or at the beginning of, the Christian era. But what are we to make of the ascent of Enoch as it is described in 3 Enoch, with his transformation into the angel and his position as God’s vicegerent? Is this a relatively late phenomenon in the development of the ideas concerning Enoch, or can we trace it back to a period before or at the beginning of the Christian era? Long ago H. Graetz argued that the identification of Enoch, as well as the exalted position given to him throughout the Enochic literature, was a very late development and owes much to Christian and Islamic estimates of Enoch. We have no indisputably early evidence that Enoch was identified with the angel, though the passage dealing with Metatron in bHag seems to have close contacts with other Enoch-traditions, his scribal activity such as we find it in Jub 4 and the early

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47 On the transformation of Enoch see Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven, and Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism’.
48 Discussed in Rowland, Open Heaven, 336ff.; Hurtado, One God, 51ff.; Odeberg, 3 Enoch; Lieberman’s essay in Gruenwald, Merkavah Mysticism, and Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 69ff.
49 See the survey in Hurtado, One God, and Fossum, Name of God.
50 Graetz, ‘Die mystische Literatur’.
R. Yishmael said, Metatron the angel the prince of the presence, the glory of the whole heaven said to me: At the beginning I was sitting on a great throne at the door of the seventh hall and I was judging the sons of heaven, the heavenly household, by the authority of the Holy One blessed be He. I allotted greatness, dominion, dignity rule, honour, praise, a diadem and a crown of glory to all the princes of the kingdoms, when I was sitting in the heavenly court with the princes of the kingdoms sitting before me on my right hand and on my left by the authority of the Holy One blessed be He. When Aher came to gaze upon the vision of the merkava, he looked at me and he was afraid and trembled before me. His soul was agitated even to leaving him because of fear, horror and dread when he saw me sitting on a throne like a king and ministering angels sitting before me like servants and all the princes of the kingdoms around me adorned with crowns. At that moment Aher opened his mouth and said: It is true; there are two powers in heaven. Immediately a bat kol came forth from heaven from the shekina saying Return, backsliding children (Jer 3:22)—apart from Aher. At that time Aniyel the honoured, glorified beloved, wonderful revered and fearful prince with a commission from the Holy One, blessed be He, came and smote me with sixty lashes of fire and made me stand on my feet…

Aher cut the plants, concerning him it is written, Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin etc. (Eccl 5:6). What does this refer to? He saw, to whom was given permission to write down the merits of Israel. Tradition teaches that in heaven there is no sitting, no rivalry, no division and no weariness. Perhaps (God forbid) there are two powers? Behold they led forth Metatron and they smote him with sixty lashes of fire. They said to him, When you saw him why did you not rise before him? Power was given to him to strike out the merits of Aher. A bat kol came forth and said, Return backsliding children apart from Aher…
chapters of 1 Enoch. Much of the interest, as far as the early dating of these concepts is concerned, is going to centre on the final chapter of the Similitudes of Enoch (1 En 71), and the account of Enoch’s ascent in 2 Enoch.\textsuperscript{51} Doubt has been cast upon the early dating of the Similitudes (ch. 37–71), not least because of the absence of fragments of this part of the Ethiopic version from the Aramaic fragments of 1 Enoch from Qumran. There are three pieces of evidence which demand our consideration and which suggest that this kind of development may have had a much longer history within Judaism than many have supposed:

1. The first is a work which shows the exalted position which could be given to an angelic figure quite apart from any connection with the Enoch-traditions.\textsuperscript{52} The Apocalypse of Abraham, a little known but extremely important apocalypse preserved in Slavonic and Romanian versions, has an angelology which is remarkably similar to 3 Enoch’s view of Metatron. It speaks of the angel Yaoel who appears to Abraham and takes him to heaven, an angel who has God’s name dwelling in him:

   I am called Yaoel by him who moveth that which existeth with me on the seventh expanse of the firmament, a power in virtue of the ineffable name dwelling in me (cf. bSan 38b of Metatron) … and I (Abraham) arose and the appearance of his body was like the sapphire and the look of his countenance like chrysolite and the hair of his head like snow and the turban upon his head like the appearance of a rainbow and the clothing of his garments like purple and a golden sceptre was in his right hand. (Trans. G.H. Box, \textit{The Apocalypse of Abraham} 10–11)

There is little evidence of Christian influence in this work (apart from ch. 29), and the original of the document has been dated within the first century CE and, it is suggested, goes back to a Semitic language original. So in a document whose angelology is independent of the Enoch-Metatron ideas we find that the sort of extravagant language could be used of a heavenly figure with little or no trace of any anti-Christian polemic. Indeed Scholem has suggested that the description of Yaoel in this work is essentially the basis of the talmudic passages concerning Metatron which he says have no link at all to the Enoch traditions.\textsuperscript{53}

\textsuperscript{51} See the important discussion in Orlov, \textit{Enoch-Metatron}.
\textsuperscript{52} Discussed below pp. 81–3.
\textsuperscript{53} Discussed by Scholem in \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}, 51.
2. The second is a text which offers us a parallel to the link between an ordinary mortal and a heavenly position of pre-eminence. In the fragmentary work from Cave 11 at Qumran we have a text which mentions the figure of Melchizedek. In 11Q Melchizedek one stands opposite other, and Ps 82:1 is quoted explicitly and linked with Melchizedek. In this quotation the first indicates one person (is singular) and the second a group (is plural). The heavenly one seems to be Melchizedek and the others are (condemned) angels'. So once again, as in 1 En 71 and 3 Enoch, we have a human figure exalted to a position of glory in heaven and exercising the divine office of judgement.

3. A similar situation confronts us in the longer Greek version of the Testament of Abraham. This is probably to be dated at the latest early in the Christian era, for there are no signs of Christian influence whatsoever. In it we find that Abraham, who has been taken up to heaven on a cherubim chariot just before his death, is shown the judgement scene in heaven. In the first part of this process the patriarch watches those who are obviously righteous and those who are impious wending their respective paths either to glory or to perdition, with Adam looking on miserably at their fates. When, however, there is a doubt about a particular soul this is referred to another tribunal which consists of Abel who sits on a throne resembling that of God himself. This part of the text reads as follows:

We followed the angels and came within the gates and in the middle of the two gates there stood a terrible-looking throne like the appearance of crystal flashing like fire. And on it there sat a wonderful looking man who looked like the sun and who was like a son of God. Before him stood a table of crystal... and on the table a book was placed. (Greek Rec. A ch. 12)

The Greek of this description, ἑτόνος φοβερὸς ἐν εἴδει κρυστάλλου, resembles the Greek used in the description of God’s throne in the Greek of 1 En 14:18, εἶδον θρόνον ὑψηλόν, καὶ τὸ εἴδος αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ κρυστάλλινον. What is more, there is no mention of God’s part in this ongoing process of judgement, and it would seem that Abel has not only taken over this particular task of God but also, like the Son

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54 Van der Woude and de Jonge, ‘Melchizedek’, 303.
55 Cf. the discussion of this passage in Kobelski, Melchizedek.
56 Munoa, Four Powers.
of Man in the Similitudes and Enoch/Metatron in 3 Enoch sits on a throne like that of God.

These three passages should make us pause before we write off the description of Enoch’s transformation into a heavenly being merely as the extravagance of a later period. There seems to be sufficient evidence in the earlier traditions about Enoch as well as indications both from the angelology of Jewish apocalyptic, and from parallel developments concerning figures like Abel and Melchizedek, to suggest that the granting of divine glory as well as the function of judgement to certain prominent humans from the past is not without parallel.

**Early Christian Appropriation of the Enoch Tradition**

*The Epistle of Jude*

In the Christian tradition there is occasional interest in Enoch.\(^{57}\) The Enochic literature is quoted and treated as prophecy in Jude 14.\(^{58}\) The Letter of Jude is the only New Testament text which explicitly quotes the book of Enoch where the antediluvian hero is hailed as one who ‘prophesied’ (Jude 14), and whose words to the fallen angels apply directly to those who the writer thinks have gone off the rails in his own day.\(^{59}\) The prophecy relates to the coming of the Lord (here identified with Christ),\(^{60}\) but there is also an allusion to the condemnation of the fallen angels in Jude 6. In 1 En 10 the Watchers were consigned to judgement beneath the earth, despite the intercession of Enoch on their behalf (1 En 12–15). There are several verbal allusions to the Enoch myth in these verses: wandering stars (1 En 18:13ff.; 86:1ff.); angels as shepherds (1 En 89:59ff., cf. Ezek 34). Vocabulary with affinities to the Greek of 1 Enoch may be found in Jude 2 cf 1 En 12:5f and 16:4; Jude 6 cf 1 En 16:1 ; 15:3, Jude 7 cf. 1 En 17:2; Jude 8 cf. 1 En 5:4; cf. 1 En 15:11; Jude 18 cf. 1 En 15:4; and Jude 25 cf. 1 En 14:20; 12:3.\(^{61}\) The allusions to the Enoch corpus are woven into a remarkable tapestry.

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\(^{58}\) The authority of Enochic literature is supported in various pre-Nicene sources, e.g. Barn 4:16; Tertullian, De cultu fem. 1.3; Apost. Const. 6.16.

\(^{59}\) See Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter; Heiligenthal, Henoch und Paulus*.


\(^{61}\) See Bauckham *Jude, 2 Peter*. 
of typological use of Scripture in which the present circumstances are viewed and understood through the lens of these scriptural types (cf. 1 Cor 10:6ff; Rev 2:14, etc.).

Those referred to in the letter so disparagingly appear to have been visionaries (v8), like the charismatics of the new age referred to in Acts 2:17 (quoting Joel 2:28), the dreamer of dreams of Deut 13:1ff. who leads Israel astray and the Colossian visionaries (2:18). Unlike the last mentioned these are guilty of corrupting the community (cf. the prophet or dreamer of dreams warned of in Deut 13) and are ‘grumblers’ (cf. 1 Cor 10:10). Their ‘blasphemy’ of ‘lordship’ and ‘glories’ reminds us of the profanity in the legend concerning Elisha ben Avuya that there were two powers in heaven, the ‘blasphemy’ alleged against Jesus after he asserts a second power (the Son of Man) sits in heaven and is comparable with bHag 15a.

The final doxology of Jude pictures the hope of the author that the readers will stand in the presence of the divine glory ‘blameless’. This resembles the multitude who have come out of the great tribulation in Rev 7:14 or the 144,000 who possess its name and the name of the father of the Lamb on their foreheads and who stand before the Lamb in Rev 14:1ff. No lie was found in their mouth and they are blameless (cf. Isa 53:9; 1 Pet 2:22), as in Jude 24. Jude fears that his readers might despoil their robes (v23). In Rev 3:4 there is a warning of the risk of defiling one’s robes, though walking with the Lamb can ensure the continued whiteness of the robes. Virginity and non-defilement are linked, suggesting abstinence from sexual activity (a particular problem caused by the angels according to 1 En 7:1ff.). Being without blame characterizes those who are found worthy to come close to the throne of glory (Eph 1:4; Col 1:22). As in Col 1:12 there is a close link between angels and humans. In Jude 3 the ‘saints’ are humans, whereas in Jude 14 angels. In the final prayer it is the preservation of the readers’ status in the divine presence (unlike the opponents who are criticized in the letter by following the path of the angels of Gen 6:1ff./1 En 6–11 in

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62 See below pp. 156ff.
63 Discussed in Segal, *Two Powers*.
forsaking the holy community of which they had been a part), that the Epistle of Jude seeks to achieve. 66

Elsewhere in the NT

Enoch is cited as an example of faith manifest in the fact that he was pleasing to God (Heb 11:5ff.). There has been debate over the extent of the indebtedness to the figure of Enoch elsewhere in the New Testament. 67 It is likely that the Last Judgement scene in Matt 25:31ff. is indebted to the son of man figure (subsequently identified with Enoch in 1 En 71), especially 1 En 69:27, as also is John 5:27 (though the link between the Christ and judgement such as we find also in 2 Cor 5:10 could have been influenced by the kind of christological reading of 1 En 1:9 we find in Jude 14). John 3:13 has been taken as an indication of polemic against the contemporary claims made on behalf of figures like Enoch and Moses to have ascended into heaven by asserting the superiority of Jesus as a result of the Son of Man’s ascent and descent. 68

The links between the Enoch corpus and the New Testament are perhaps most apparent in the accounts of Jesus’ ascension in Luke-Acts. 69 While the terminology in Acts 1:11 is more closely linked with 2 Kgs 2:11 rather than Gen 5:24, we have seen that in Sir 44:16 the verb ἀναλαμβάνω (also found in Acts 1:11) is used of Enoch too. There is a general similarity of outline with the developing Enoch tradition which is absent from the Elijah saga. Thus Enoch is described as a figure who had access to divine secrets, either by communion with angels or heavenly ascent (as in 2 Enoch) and then communicated this information to his children before his final removal. That pattern is exactly the one found in Luke-Acts. Jesus spends time teaching his disciples the mysteries of salvation in the days after the resurrection (Luke 24:32 & 44ff.). His death and resurrection marked the moment of his ‘translation’ (ἀναλήμψις) which had to take place in Jerusalem (Luke 9:51). Another striking parallel between traditions about Jesus and Enoch is

66 Heiligenthal, Henoch und Paulus, 74ff.
68 Discussed in Ashton, Understanding the Fourth Gospel, 350ff. and cf. the similar contrasts in Cyril of Jerusalem’s Catechetical Lectures 14.25 and Ambrose, De fide 4.1.
69 See Lohfink, Himmelfahrt Jesu, and Zwiep, Ascension.
the way in which textual traditions about Enoch’s end in the Targumim parallel the text of Luke 24:51 and Acts 1:11. Both reflect uncertainty about the end of their subjects (though the reasons for the similarities are in all likelihood very different). The Enoch material reflects uncertainty in interpreting Gen 5:24. The Lucan portrayal material reflects a parallel unease, with regard to a growing sensitivity about a crude literalism in describing Jesus’ resurrection, inherent in the Lucan texts. Such material was already being interpreted by means of the notion of ascent, for example in the link between exaltation/ascension and the cross in the Fourth Gospel. As we have noted, the various Targumim differ over what happened to Enoch, as also do some manuscripts of Luke and Acts. At the end of the Gospel Luke has Jesus merely being distanced from his disciples. In Sinaiticus and Codex Bezae no reference is made to his being taken up to heaven: the risen Jesus’ precise whereabouts and destiny remain a mystery, therefore. Similarly in Acts 1:11 a group of mss. omit the phrase εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν in the angelic reference to Jesus’ departure.

1 Peter

Another text where we suddenly stumble on an outcrop of material related to the Enochic tradition is 1 Peter. In 3:16ff. Christ’s proclamation to the spirits in prison seems to reflect Enoch’s proclamation of judgement to the Watchers who had been imprisoned and sought Enoch’s intercession (1 En 12–16 cf. Hippolytus, Antichrist, 45).70 Enoch acts as a scribe and as such is located in a position (1 En 12) which enables access to God, so he can intercede with God on behalf of the Watchers, the fallen angels who had transgressed by revealing secrets to women:

[A]nd Azazel taught men to make swords and daggers and shields and breastplates. And he showed them the things after these, and the art of making them: bracelets and ornaments and the art of making up the eyes and of beautifying the eyelids, and the most precious and choice stones, and all kinds of coloured dyes. And the world was changed. And there was great impiety and much fornication, and they went astray and all their ways became corrupt. Amezarak taught all those who cast spells and cut roots,71 Armaros the release of spells and Barqiel astrologers and

70 See Reicke, Disobedient Spirits, and Dalton, Christ’s Proclamation.
71 See above, p. 45 n. 30.
Kokabel portents and Tamiel taught astrology, and Asradel taught the path of the moon… (1 En 8).

Enoch ascends through the palaces of heaven to receive a message of judgement from God on the Watchers (1 En 14) and intercedes, but to no avail. In 1 Pet 3 Christ proclaims to the spirits in prison, not as far as one can ascertain during an interlude in his earthly life but ‘in the spirit’ (cf. Rev 1:10; 4:2). He ‘preached’ hinting at the possibility of salvation (so 4:6), in contrast with the negative message of Enoch. Κηρύσσω is used elsewhere in the New Testament of the proclamation of the gospel, e.g. Matt 4:23; Luke 8:1; 1 Cor 1:23; Gal 2:2; 1 Thess 2:9 (εὐαγγελίζω is used at 3:6). In addition to these links, we should note that the instructions to women in 1 Pet 3:1ff. may be constructed in the light of the behaviour of ‘the daughters of men’ in 1 Enoch who were taught by the angels the making of ‘bracelets and ornaments and the making up of eyes and of beautifying the eyelids’ (1 En 8:2).

Like Enoch, Christ passes through the heavens and attains a position of eminence in the process (3:22). The passage through the heavens and angelic transformation reflect the soteriology of the Ascension of Isaiah,72 where the transformation into different forms of angelic existence enables the hidden Messiah to escape notice of the heavenly powers at the descent to earth resulting in their consequent discomfiture at the ascent back to the seventh heaven. Traditions of exaltation and heavenly session are as much indebted to Elijah traditions and to Ps 110:1 (e.g. Acts 1:11, cf. 1 Tim 3:16 and 2:34f.). Briefly, in Luke Jesus, like Enoch, reveals to the disciples that their names are written in the heavenly books (Luke 10:20, cf. 1 En 103:1f. and 81:1ff.).

Revelation of John

We have already noted that John of Patmos is an apocalyptic seer the authority of whose writing puts him on a par with the prophets of old (22:18f.). He, like Enoch, is appointed as scribe and writes letters to the angels of the churches (e.g. Rev 2:1). In 1 En 12, Enoch is portrayed acting as a scribe located in a privileged position with access to God to intercede with God on behalf of the Watchers. In the book of Revelation John of Patmos is appointed as a scribe to write to the angels of

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72 Survey in Knight, *Ascension of Isaiah*, and idem, *Disciples. Asc. Isa.* is also discussed below, 189ff.
the seven churches in Asia, emulating the role of Enoch. A human is given the privileged role of acting as a scribe who warns the angels of the churches, and encourages them, outlining for them ways in which they can ‘conquer’.\(^{73}\)

John’s role as scribe to the angels of the churches parallels Paul’s career as a writer of epistles. Our view of Paul as a correspondent should not be entirely governed by his disclaimers (e.g. 1 Cor 7:25), or the matter-of-fact way he deals with such diverse issues as glossolalia and the collection for the poor, that we miss the peculiar sense of vocation which sets this activity apart from that of most letter writers. In 1 Cor 7:10 (cf. 7:12; 17; 25) we find Paul’s own authority contrasted with that of ‘the Lord’, and, likewise, Gal 2: 1 (cf. 1:17) attributes a degree of authority to the Jerusalem church. Nevertheless, as an apostle of Jesus Christ he functions as a mediator, a steward of the divine mysteries (1 Cor 4:1), whose role it is to convey in word, written and spoken, but above all in his own person, the divine power. Like Enoch’s, his message is one of ultimate authority which may bring blessing (Rom 15:29) or judgement (1 Cor 4:21). Paul’s commission comes from one who, like Enoch in some of the ancient sources, is seated at God’s right hand (Rom 8:34). Like Enoch, who acted in this way on behalf of the Watchers and was a pledge in heaven on behalf of the elect, Paul regards Christ too as an intercessor (Rom 8:34; cf. Heb 7:25).

2 Corinthians

Finally, we may note connections between Enochic themes with 2 Corinthians. It has often been noted that there are affinities of the Enochic material with 2 Cor 12:2f., both because of its theme of a rapture to heaven and also the use of παράδεισος. Enoch is linked with the garden of Eden in Jub 4:20f. and also 1 En 32:9 where the phrase פַּרְדֵּס becomes used and ύπότοξος (cf. Wis 4:10). But there may be links with 2 Cor 5 also. The dialectic ‘in the body/out of the body’ in 2 Cor 12 parallels ‘at home in the body/away from the Lord’.

Another possible link with the Enoch tradition is the use of the words εὑρίσκω and εὐάρεστος in 5:3 and 9. Tentatively, one wonders whether Paul might have had the Enoch legend in mind as he wrestled with post-mortem existence and the need to come to terms with a, less than

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73 Orton, Understanding Scribe.
glorious, future existence, at least for a time? This would be especially pertinent in the light of what we have seen in the Targumic tradition, where it is not clear whether or not Enoch was taken up to heaven without tasting death (which Paul would prefer) or had to endure the risk of death and the nakedness which that might bring (cf. Rev 6:9). Also, the faith/sight vocabulary at the end of ch. 4 resonates with sentiments from Heb 11, where Enoch is hailed as one who did not see death, and who is an example of that faith which enables the one who would draw close to God to do deeds pleasing to God.

In 2 Cor 5:10 the theme of recompense for each as they appear before the judgement seat of Christ parallels the emphasis on God as one who rewards those who seek him (Heb 11:6). So, the tangled traditions about Enoch’s destiny might have provided the means whereby Paul can explore the uncertainties of the post-mortem existence. Did Enoch enter heaven without death, as the writer of Hebrews asserts? Or was it the case that he had to die before being taken to a position of pre-eminence in the heavenly world as the scribe of righteousness? In which case was it true that when one had to divest oneself of the mortal body one would indeed be found naked? Paul’s longing to be like Enoch and be immediately ‘present with the Lord’ is countermanded by the vocation to be an ambassador of Christ, an intermediary, like Enoch, seeking the reconciliation between the Corinthians and God (5:20; cf. 1 En 15).

In such ways Enochic ideas were incorporated, in one way or another, within the emerging Christian theology but subordinate to another figure who ascended to heaven but who now sits in pre-eminence at the right hand of God (Acts 2:33, cf. Mark 14:62). The ideas connected with Enoch seem to form part of the structure of early Christian theological reflection, and not so much motivated by polemic to counteract Enochic speculation. The hints of connection with the Enochic legends suggest a much more subtle relationship, with various features of that tradition playing their part in the emerging formation of Christian identity as its soteriology emerged. Whatever role Enoch had as a mediator for communities which cherished books written in his name, and in which he functioned as a mediator of the things of God, the Christians gave that role exclusively to the exalted Christ and that rich tradition of apotheosis in ancient Judaism was focused on him.74

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CHAPTER FOUR

REVELATION AND THE APOCALYPTIC VISIONS OF GOD

The Revelation of John¹ in itself was the catalyst in succeeding centuries for a variety of eschatologically inclined movements and readings of history.² It is representative of that spirit of early Christianity which allied expectation of historical change with a visionary intuition endowing its message with authenticity. If our view of mysticism is formed by assumptions about communion with the divine culled from the pages of the later medieval mystics, Revelation’s preoccupation with the paraphernalia of heaven, the visionary context and the hope for heaven on earth may seem far removed from the sublime piety of, say, a John of the Cross. Yet the differences are more superficial than real. Thus, Revelation is concerned with the ultimate identification of believers with the divine. That is the moment when they will see God’s face and have the divine name impressed upon them (Rev 22:4). In the language of ancient apocalyptic this marks the moment of identification with the divine and is every bit as intimate as the mystical union, albeit less explicitly expressed. Indeed, for all its fantastic imagery and historical perspective the book of Revelation is truly a mystical work. It offers its readers the perception of things which are beyond human understanding as an indispensable guide to their eternal destiny as they struggle to live under the shadow of empire. It is a glimpse of divine things whose visionary form and content is shaped by the religious culture and the linguistic patterns which formed part of the tradition learned by the mystic.³

Although the secrets which are revealed in Revelation are primarily concerned with the future hope, the visions inform readers of contemporary realities and their destiny, particularly the dangers of their relationship with the imperial authorities and their demonic counterparts. Its angelology, heavenly voices, and preoccupation with the hidden are precisely what we find in the Jewish mystical literature. Revelation is not concerned with the minute detail of the heavenly ascent, nor does

¹ There is a comprehensive survey of secondary literature relating to Revelation and the Jewish mystical tradition in Aune, Revelation, vol. 1.
² E.g. Emmerson and McGinn, Apocalypse; Kovacs and Rowland, Revelation.
³ Katz, Religious Traditions, and idem, Language.
it offer details of what is required of the mystic to make a successful entry into the heavenly palaces. Nevertheless, the lack of this information should not lead us to suppose that there is a difference between mysticism and apocalyptic as if the latter is based on a spontaneous confrontation with the holy without the elaborate preparation of the former. We cannot know precisely what led to John’s cataclysmic vision of the heavenly son of man on the isle of Patmos, even if conjectures may be made about the significance of the time (the Lord’s Day) and the place (possibly, though not certainly, in exile as was the prophet Ezekiel). To describe the contents of Revelation as mystical is a necessary reminder to any interpreter about attaching significant weight to all the nuances of its symbolism.

A peculiar book requires a hermeneutic peculiar to itself. If, as is assumed in this study, John’s apocalypse is largely the report of a visionary experience, we need to take care not to approach its interpretation as if what confronts us represents in its minute details the intention of the seer, therefore. A vision, like a dream, is something which is given not created, a product of psychological and spiritual forces which often defy analysis of the ingenuity of their recipient. It is true that the visionary’s intention is to communicate what appears to John to be of enormous import, because of its authoritative content and its impact on him, particularly because of the sense of bewilderment and humility in the face of this awesome demonstration of the divine purpose. For the seer apocalypse is not an intellectual project in any conventional sense, therefore, nor can one approach it as if one is interpreting an epistle or even a narrative text, in which authors are seeking to present traditions or communicate their points of view. Intertextual connections one can find in a text like Revelation are less deliberate allusions than the manifestation of a visionary culture, in which key scriptural texts, like Ezekiel and Daniel, provide the necessary components for the apprehension and comprehension of divine truth. Analogies in interpretation of apocalyptic texts are more the mystical literature of both Judaism and Christianity than reflective or systematic theology—Teresa of Avila or William Blake rather than Augustine or John Calvin, therefore.

We have noted in the introductory chapter the importance of the recourse to the visionary and mystical in earliest Christian writings. It is

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5 Fully explored in Beale, *Revelation*.
in Revelation that apocalyptic symbolism and the visionary imagination receive their most complete expression in the New Testament. Elsewhere in the New Testament we are treated only to hints and allusions. Mysteries are mentioned, revelations and visions are reported, and the future can at times be predicted in the darkest of hues. But in Revelation the whole panoply of apocalypticism is set before us. The panorama of divine wrath and restoration vividly portrayed in the visionary imagination seem to belong to a different world as compared with much of the rest of the New Testament. Even in the passionate outbursts of 2 Corinthians and the diatribes of the Gospels there is a familiar ‘this worldly’ ring to the discourse, which is absent in Revelation.

Revelation is part of a visionary tradition. Ezekiel and Daniel have influenced its form and content. From the christophany at its opening via the visions of heaven, the dirge over Babylon, the war against Gog and Magog, and, finally, the vision of the New Jerusalem, all bear the marks of influence of the written forms of ancient prophecies on the more recent prophetic imagination of John of Patmos. Daniel’s beasts from the sea (Dan 7), for example, become in John’s vision a terrible epitome of all that is most oppressive and eerily akin to the way of perfection symbolized by the Lamb that was slain. This unique example in the early Christian literature of the apocalyptic genre is profoundly indebted to Jewish apocalyptic and mystical ideas. In Revelation the first chapter of Ezekiel, the merkava chapter, has contributed to the visionary vocabulary of John in two crucial parts of his vision (namely 1:13ff. and 4:1ff.) and in the references to the throne, divine and demonic, which run throughout the book. While the apocalyptic resources which John could call on to express the divine glory that confronted him were probably limited (at least as far as the scriptural exemplars were concerned), the pervasiveness of the indebtedness to Ezekiel points in the direction of more than a chance reference. When taken alongside those other descriptions of the divinity which are now extant from the Second Temple period, what we have in Revelation is a glimpse of a distinctive use of the prophecy parallel to other apocalyptic texts, but in significant respects also independent from these.

The Vision of the Risen Christ (Rev 1)

The opening chapter of the book offers a christophany with few parallels in the New Testament, the Transfiguration being a notable exception. There are some similarities with various christophanies and
angelophanies from both Jewish and Christian texts. The elements of this chapter are inspired by several biblical passages, one of which is the first chapter of Ezekiel, particularly at the climax of his call vision where the prophet catches a glimpse of the form of God on the throne of glory in the dazzling gleam of bronze. In Ezekiel 1 the prophet sees the divinity in human form above the throne-chariot. In addition to the glimpse of the divine glory in exile in Babylon, Ezekiel describes two other visions. First of all, he sees this glory departing from the Temple in Jerusalem leaving it a shell, paving the way for the destruction of a building now shorn of its protective sanctity. In addition, that strange figure of fire and light appears to the prophet without any reference to the throne and acts as the agent of the prophet’s visionary removal to Jerusalem (Ezek 8:2). The figure described here is the same as the one that had confronted the prophet by the river Chebar in ch. 1. Both in Dan 10 and in Ezek 1 and 8 we have a glorious fiery human figure who appears to a prophet. This strange divine being turns up a little later in the prophecy of Ezekiel where it seems to function as the means whereby the prophet is translated in a trance from Babylon to view the iniquities which are taking place in Jerusalem.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ezek 1:26f.</th>
<th>Ezek 8:2</th>
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<tr>
<td>...and seated above the likeness of a throne was a likeness as it were of a human form. And upward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were gleaming bronze, like the appearance of fire round about; and downward from what had the appearance of his loins I saw as it were the appearance of fire, and there was brightness round about him</td>
<td>Then I beheld, and, lo, a form that had the appearance of a man, below what appeared to be his loins it was fire, and above his loins it was like the appearance of brightness, like gleaming bronze</td>
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</table>

The appearance of this divine figure shows how the divine kavod could appear independently of the merkava much as the Human Figure does in Rev 1:13ff.

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8 Discussed in Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, and further Gundry, ‘Angelomorphic Christology’.
The few relevant literary remains extant of visionary material inspired by Ezekiel 1 in ancient Judaism indicate that the climax of Ezekiel’s vision when the prophet sees God enthroned above the crystal vault was a potent stimulant to mystical speculation. ‘God in human form’ is in these verses explicitly hinted at, with whatever qualifications, thereby opening up the possibility that the visionary might dare to imagine the mysteries of the divine form. It was an opportunity which was not lost by later mystics and kabbalists, and, as has already been noted (above p. 24), it is possible that the Mishna itself knew of contemporaries who dared to speculate on the divine kavod. The restrained description of the human figure seated above the cherubim-chariot is the basis for subsequent speculation about the body of God. The evidence would seem to suggest a fairly early date for this speculation in rabbinic mysticism. In later texts the speculation takes the form of a rather pedantic repetition of measurements of the different limbs of God.

The vision of God is the climax of the heavenly ascent. Despite the warning in Exod 33:20 that humans cannot see God’s face and live, there is a restrained readiness in the apocalypses to refer to, if not to describe at length, the divine glory seated on the throne. In the earliest extra-biblical apocalyptic theophany in 1 En 14:20 the visionary speaks of ‘the Great Glory’ whose ‘raiment shone more brightly than the sun and was whiter than any snow’. Among the Jewish apocalyptic theophanies nothing can compare with the extravagant description of the form of God in 2 En 39:

But, you my children, see my face, a human being created just like yourselves; but I am one has even seen the face of the LORD, like iron made burning hot by fire, and it is brought out and emits sparks and it is incandescent. But you gaze into my eyes, a human being in equal significance to yourselves; but I have gazed into the eyes of the LORD, shining like the rays of the sun and terrifying the eyes of a human being. But you my children, see the right hand of one who helps you, a human being created identical to yourselves; but I have seen the right hand of the LORD, helping me and filling heaven. But you see the scope of my activity (alternative translation ‘you have seen the extent of my body’), the same as your own; but I have seen the scope (or extent) of the LORD, without limit (or measure) and without analogy, and to which there is no end. (trans. OTP)

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9 See Cohen, Shi’ur Qomah; Baumgarten, ‘Book of Elchesai’.
The repeated comparison between human and divine form, all so reminiscent of the language of Gen 1:26, indicates that the image of God could in certain circumstances be conceived in explicitly anthropomorphic terms (Exod 24:10 is also of relevance here).10 Such descriptions of God are not typical of all the apocalypses, and there is some evidence that there was a growing reluctance to speak of God’s form. Even in the Apocalypse of Abraham, an apocalypse with heavenly ascent and throne-theophany, nothing explicit is said about the one seated on the throne, and this may indicate a reluctance to describe God in anthropomorphic terms.11 Whereas 1 En 14 and Dan 7 speak in varying degrees about God, John of Patmos merely refers to the one seated on the throne (4:2). The merkava passage from Qumran Cave 4, like the Apocalypse of Abraham, is restrained about speaking of the form of God: ‘The cherubim bless the image of the throne chariot above the firmament, and they praise the majesty of the fiery firmament beneath the seat of his glory’ (4Q405 frag 20–21–22, lines 8–9).

The vision of the risen Christ in Rev 1 echoes the book of Daniel, especially chapter 10, where the seer describes the appearance of an exalted heavenly being with the contours of a human figure as he sat in prayer and fasting waiting for divine illumination. This description is, in part, indebted to Ezekiel’s great vision of God enthroned on the cherubim-chariot which marked the start of the prophet’s activity as well as passages like Ezek 9:2. Dan 10:5f. is itself broadly-based on Ezekiel, and especially on the first chapter. Later tradition is divided over the identity of the angelic figure in Dan 10. The glorious being in Dan 10:5f. is anonymous. The Syriac tradition denied any bodily form to the angel, and one manuscript makes an explicit link with the vision of Ezekiel.12 The figure described in Rev 1:13ff. is no ordinary angel, but appears with the attributes of God. The exalted Christ is described not only as the son of man but also as the Ancient of Days (though we should take care not to attach too much weight to this as a deliberate theologoumenon in the context of an account of a visionary experience).13

That is not only peculiar to the Christian text, for in an angelophany from a text which in its earliest form must be roughly contemporary with the book of Revelation—the Apocalypse of Abraham—an angel

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10 See Fossum, Image; idem, Name of God; idem, ‘Jewish Christian Christology’.
11 So Hurtado, One God, 88f.; idem, Lord Jesus Christ.
12 Rowland, Open Heaven, 100.
13 See further Aune, Revelation 1: 91.
Yaoel is described in terms remarkably similar to Christ in Rev 1:13ff. The divine status of that angel is indicated this time by the fact that it embodies the divine name.

This is evident when we compare Revelation with the contemporary Apocalypse of Abraham and the angelophany in the Hellenistic Jewish work, Joseph and Aseneth, in both of which there is a remarkably similar vision.14

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revelation</th>
<th>Joseph and Aseneth</th>
<th>Apocalypse Abraham</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>...and in the midst of the lampstands one like a son of man, clothed with a long robe and with a golden girdle round his breast; his head and his hair were white as wool, white as snow; his eyes were like a flame of fire, his feet were like burnished bronze, refined as in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of many waters; in his right hand he held seven stars, from his mouth issued a sharp two-edged sword, and his face was like the sun shining in full strength...</td>
<td>And there came a man from heaven and stood at Aseneth’s head... and the man said, I am the commander of the Lord’s house and chief captain of the Most High: stand up and I will speak to you. And she looked up and saw a man like Joseph in every respect, with a robe and a crown and a royal staff. But his face was like lightning, and his eyes were like the light of the sun, and the hairs of his head like flames of fire, and his hands and his feet like iron from the fire. And Aseneth looked at him, and she fell on her face at his feet in great fear and trembling. And the man said to her, Take heart Aseneth, and do not be afraid; but stand up, and I will speak to you...</td>
<td>...and I rose and saw him who had grasped me by my right hand and set me up upon my feet; and the appearance of his body was like sapphire, and the look of his countenance like chrysolite, and the hair of his head like snow, and the turban upon his head like the appearance of a rainbow [cf. Rev 4:3] and the clothing of his garments like purple, and a golden sceptre was in his right hand...</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14 A detailed comparison is offered in Rowland, ‘A Man Clothed’. It has been suggested that the angel Yaoel is conceived as the figure on the throne who moves from...
What we find in the visions in the Apocalypse of Abraham and Joseph and Aseneth are examples of exalted heavenly beings described, as is the parallel passage in Rev 1, with the appurtenances of divinity. What is distinctive about the vision in Joseph and Aseneth, so similar to Rev 1 and Apoc. Abr. 10, is the close link that exists between this chief angel and the patriarch Joseph. This in turn is reminiscent of the fragmentary Prayer of Joseph, where Jacob is said to be an incarnation of an archangel.15

There is another group of texts from the Second Temple, however, in which the throne of glory is occupied by a figure other than God. In Ezekiel the Tragedian God places Moses on a throne with a crown on his head and a sceptre in his hand.16 In the Similitudes of Enoch the Son of Man or Elect One sits on the throne of glory (e.g. 1 En 69:29). Elsewhere in the text the throne is occupied by God. The Son of Man exercises judgement just as the royal Son of Man does in the final judgement in Matt 25:31ff. In addition, the Similitudes of Enoch offer evidence of the transference of divine attributes to another heavenly figure but also identify that figure with the translated Enoch. Similarly 11Q Melch has Melchizedek exercising judgement and being called God:

For this is the moment of the year of grace for Melchizedek. And he will by his strength, judge the holy ones of God, executing judgement, as it is written concerning him in the songs of David, who said, ELOHIM has taken his place in the divine council…17

The Hellenistic-Jewish Testament of Abraham has a judgement scene in which Abel sits on a throne resembling the throne of God: ‘…in between the two gates stood a throne, dread in appearance, of dread crystal, flashing like fire and upon it sat a wondrous man, shining as

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15 Quoted below p. 114.
16 Jacobson, *Exagoge*, and Van der Horst, ‘Throne Vision’, though we should note that this enthronement takes place in a dream which is then interpreted.
the sun, like unto the son of God’ (Rec. A, ch. 11f.). Divine judgement is carried out by a man whose righteousness has brought about his apotheosis. He then acts as vicegerent or even judge.

Much of the discussion of the emergence of a Jewish intermediary theology has been intertwined with the christological interests of expositors of the New Testament who have sought to explain the remarkably rapid doctrinal developments in earliest Christianity. Consequently, there has been a circumspect attitude with regard to the significance of these figures, epitomized by George Foot Moore, who cautioned Christian commentators not to presume that they could find in Judaism the antecedents of trinitarian theology. Caution is appropriate in the face of a paucity of evidence, much of which is fragmentary, and is of uncertain date and provenance and often difficult to evaluate. Nevertheless passages like Philo’s Confus. 146 and the Prayer of Joseph suggest that angel and Wisdom traditions could occasionally come together to produce the notion of a heavenly being with divine characteristics. Also, one must question to what extent the assumptions made in modern scholarship about the nature of Jewish monotheism do justice to the evidence. Judaism was not a monotheistic faith in any straightforward sense. Nor should we ignore the possibility that, whatever the intentions of the visionaries or other writers, the effect of the visions on later interpreters left open the possibility that extravagant language might be used by later Christian interpreters as they developed their trinitarian theology.

Intermediary theology has roots deep within the biblical tradition, particularly in the ancient testimony of the Pentateuch to the activities of the Angel of the Lord in passages like Gen 16:7ff., Gen 21:17 and 22:11, and Judg 13:3ff. This cannot easily be reduced to a debate about God’s transcendence and immanence in the Hellenistic period, which only later took on a more overtly dualistic theological tinge. Our sources prevent us from certainty in this area, but the fact that Christians at an early stage in their theological development espoused sophisticated beliefs about Christ’s relationship to God might give us

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18 Moore, ‘Christian Writers’; idem, ‘Intermediaries’.
19 Discussion in Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, especially 15ff. and on definitions of monotheism see Hayman, ‘Monotheism’, and Hurtado, ‘Monotheism’; idem, Lord Jesus Christ.
20 See Daniélou, Jewish Christianity.
21 See Ashton, Interpreting John; Barker, Great Angel; Johnson, One and the Many.
pause for thought before we prefer Christian theological creativity to
the complex inheritance of Second Temple Judaism as the matrix for
such theology.22

Evidence from the Letter to the Hebrews23 indicates that within cer-
tain circles influenced by Judaism, angelomorphic categories were used
which presented problems for Christians as they sought to establish
the distinctiveness of the heavenly Christ. The developments which
have been briefly catalogued already indicate why it was difficult for
eyear Christians to differentiate between Christ and other members of
the heavenly hierarchy (e.g. Rev 19:10).24 Some of the figures from the
Jewish pseudepigraphical texts are not described as angels. Indeed, if
there is anything in the theory that some of these ideas derived not
from traditions about angelic mediators but from developments in the
understanding of God centred on the throne-theophany of Ezekiel or
the angel of the Lord traditions,25 it would be quite understandable
why these traditions could provide early Christian writers with a way
to communicate their convictions about Christ rooted in the language
about God.26 It is clear, however, that there is no suggestion that this
material is a threat to the unique authority of God in the universe. For
all these writers there is only one locus of divine power.27

The Vision of the Merkava in Revelation 4

The vision of Christ marks the very start of John’s revelation. After the
instruction to write the letters to the seven churches—a scribal role
which, as we have seen, resembles that of Enoch in 1 En 12–14—John
is called ‘in the spirit’ to heaven (Rev 4) and is granted a vision of the
divine throne with one seated upon it. There is at the start of this new
dimension of John’s vision a sight of the throne which owes some of its

22 Balz, Methodische Probleme; Hengel, Son of God, 89; Hurtado, Lord Jesus Christ.
23 See Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 119ff.
24 E.g. Barbel, Christos Angelos and Horbury, Jewish Messianism, 78–108.
25 See Hannah, Michael.
26 Though note the reservations expressed by Hurtado, One God; Casey, Jewish Prophet.
27 See Segal, Two Powers, Fossum, Name of God; idem, ‘Jewish Christian Christology’;
Rowland, Open Heaven, especially 94ff.; idem, ‘Vision of the Risen Christ’; Ashton,
Studying John; Fossum, Image; Hurtado, One God; Chester, Messianic Expectations’;
Mach, Entstehung; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration; O’Neill, Who did Jesus, 94–110;
Munoa, Four Powers; Hannah, Michael.
details to Ezek 1 and to the related passage in Isa 6. The seer is offered a glimpse of a reality which is cut off from normal human gaze and opened up only to the privileged seer. There is no mention of a heavenly journey in this text preceding the vision of God. Indeed, Revelation is singularly lacking in the complex uranology which is typical of later Jewish apocalyptic texts and is sparse in the details communicated about the heavenly world.

Rev 4 is the most extensive example in the New Testament of a vision of God and the heavenly court and shows little evidence whatsoever of explicit influence from distinctive elements of the Christian kerygma. Treated in isolation, it seems to be Jewish in its inspiration.28 There is a contrast between the description of the divine court in Rev 4 and the transformation which takes place as the result of the exaltation of the slaughtered lamb. This creature is then permitted to open the heavenly scroll, an act which ushers in the eschaton.

As with Enoch, John of Patmos finds himself taken up to heaven,29 and the first thing he notices is a throne, with little attempt to describe it further.30 There is no explicit description of the figure on the throne, but the one seated upon it is said to resemble ‘jasper and carnelian’, words which occur in successive lines in Ezek 28:13. The fact that this last verse seems to have influenced the imprecise description of the one sitting on the throne suggest that the lack of anthropomorphic terminology is only superficial, and the use of these two words betrays the anthropomorphism of Ezek 1:26f., even though it is subtly disguised by the imagery borrowed from Ezek 28:13.

In the vision of God and the divine throne in Rev 4 there are obvious omissions as compared with Ezek 1—for example no mention is made of the wheels of the chariot. Other links with that chapter are evident, however, for example the description of the living creatures. There are some differences in the depiction of the creatures in Revelation. Thus each living creature has been identified with one of the four faces of the creatures of Ezek (4:7). The description, therefore, is considerably less complicated in Revelation. There are four different creatures each with one face, as compared with Ezek, where there are four creatures each

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29 Cf. the fragment of the Apoc. of Zephaniah preserved in Clement of Alexandria, Strom. 5.21 (Denis, Fragments, 129). On the door in heaven, note T. Levi 5:1.
30 This is typical of most of the early texts, e.g. Apoc. Abr. 18: ‘over the wheels was a throne… this was covered with fire’. The only possible exception is 1 En 14.
having four different faces. Also, in Ezek 1:18 the rims of the wheels of the chariot are full of eyes, but this particular feature is now transferred to the creatures themselves. Then, the order in which the creatures are mentioned in Revelation differs from Ezek 1, (Revelation—lion, ox, man and eagle; Ezekiel—man, lion, ox and eagle). The rainbow (4:3) recalls Ezek 1:28, though its resemblance to an emerald may indicate the influence of Ezek 28:13. In God’s immediate presence there are other thrones (4:4 cf. Asc. Isa. 9:9). The surrounding of God with the heavenly retinue is a familiar one from the Bible, e.g. Job 1–2 and Ps 82:1. From God’s throne proceed lightnings, voices and thunders, but there is no mention of the stream of fire which is a distinctive feature of Dan 7 and 1 En 14. Nevertheless this particular feature of the tradition is echoed in Rev 22:1, where ‘a river of living water as clear as crystal’ comes out of God’s throne. Despite the pastoral setting in Paradise in Rev 22, and whatever the influence from Ezek 47:1 and Zech 14:8, the river contrasts with the fiery stream because of the very close links with the throne of God.

The seven lamps (4:5) go back to Ezek 1:13 (cf. Exod 26:35) where the burning fires in the middle of the living creatures are compared to torches (cf. 2 Chr 4:7), though influence from Zech 4:2 is likely also, not least because the interpretation of the seven lamps as the seven spirits of God resembles the pattern of Zech 4:2 and 10, where the seven lamps too are interpreted in this case as being symbolic of the seven eyes of the Lord.

The most distinctive feature about the vision of God in Rev 4 is the reference to the sea of glass (4:6). Unlike the Greek T. Levi 2:7 (‘And I entered from the first heaven and saw a huge sea hanging there’), 2 En 3:3 (‘They placed me on the first heaven and showed me a very great sea, greater than the earthly sea’) and T. Abr. Rec. B 8 (‘And Michael went out and took Abraham in the body on a cloud and lifted him up to the river Ocean’), in all of which water is said to be in heaven, in Revelation we read that in the immediate vicinity of God’s presence there was something which appeared to resemble a sea. The influence of cultic ideas is not to be ruled out, for we know that in Solomon’s temple a molten sea was to be found (1 Kgs 7:23 cf. Josephus, Ant. 8.79). In Ezek 1:22 the firmament which separates the creatures from God is likened to crystal, as is the sea in Rev 4:6, and Gen 1:7 speaks of the upper and lower waters in heaven which are separated by a firmament. Indeed, the link between the water and the firmament here could explain the resemblance of the sea in Rev 4 to crystal, for the
juxtaposition of water and the firmament in Gen could easily have led to the comparison of the firmament to crystal found in Ezek 1:22.\textsuperscript{31}

Gen 1:7 (‘and God separated the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament’) played its part in the early rabbinic meditation on creation (\textit{maase bereshit}) as is evident in the story of Shimon ben Zoma gazing upon the space between the upper and lower waters (tHag 2:5 and parallels in bHag 15a; yHag 2, 77b; and GenR 2,4).\textsuperscript{32} The reference to something which appeared to be a sea of glass also appears again in Rev 15:2. This time it is said to be mingled with fire, however, and from the context it is apparent that it is compared to the Red Sea over which Israel crossed in triumph and was delivered from the hand of Pharaoh. Its fiery appearance presents a threatening aspect to the enemies of God, and indeed those who would draw close to the divine presence, who would wish to cross over it. Those who have remained faithful to God, however, are permitted to cross over the sea and gain access to God’s presence. After crossing they sing a song of deliverance just as Israel of old had done (Rev 15:3; cf. Exod 15:1).

In a famous passage which occurs in later rabbinic mystical texts problems confront the mystic in his ascent to heaven when he may be confronted with something which may appear to be water in heaven but is in fact something quite different. In the longest version of the story of the four who entered \textit{pardes}, in bHag 14b, Akiva warns his companions about a particular hazard when they come to the place of the pure marble plates, at which point they may be tempted to cry, ‘Water, water’. He tells them not to be deceived by such an experience, because such a case of mistaken identity will not be tolerated in heaven.\textsuperscript{33} The inclusion of the sea of glass with its threatening aspect in Rev 15 may well be a parallel recollection of a danger facing visionaries as they seek to identify the different contents of the heavenly world (something we shall meet again when we consider Paul’s account of his heavenly ascent in 2 Cor 12). The threat in this case does not manifest itself against

\textsuperscript{31} On this see further Morray-Jones, \textit{Transparent Illusion}.

\textsuperscript{32} Cf. 1 Kgs 7:26; bHag 15a; LAB 28 (ed. Kisch 149).

\textsuperscript{33} See further below pp. 276–277 and Morray-Jones, \textit{Transparent Illusion}. Shorter versions of this story without any reference to this particular incident are to be found tHag 2:3; yHag 2, 77b; CantR 1,4. See further Schloem, \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}, 14ff.; Maier, ‘\textit{Gefährdungsmotiv}’, and Strack-Billerbeck, \textit{Kommentar}, vol. iii, 798f. Morray-Jones, \textit{Transparent Illusion}. 
those who have a mistaken view of heaven so much as mistake what constitutes divine obedience in times of persecution (Rev 15:2).

In Rev 4, Isa 6 has a prominent role to play and is freely combined with Ezek 1. What we have in this use of Isaiah in Revelation is evidence of expansions of Ezek 1, in which various elements are either changed or ignored, and where the very variety of usage indicates the versatility of the interpretative process even if the ultimate inspiration of the texts is not in doubt. In Revelation as in the other apocalyptic texts the vision of the merkava is preceded by an ascent to heaven. This is a notable development as compared with the biblical exemplars. Although Isaiah believes that he can be part of the heavenly court during the course of his call-vision in the Temple (Isa 6; cf. 1 Kgs 22:19), there is no suggestion that Ezekiel’s or Isaiah’s vision involves an ascent to the heavenly world (though the visions of the new Jerusalem in the final chapters of Ezek come close to this). The situation is different in 1 En 14.34 Rev 4 is to be set alongside the descriptions of the divine throne in the Jewish apocalypses which owe their inspiration principally to the first chapter of Ezekiel, though, as has been suggested, it is apparent that Isaiah 6 has also been incorporated (e.g. 1 En 14; Dan 7:9; Apoc. Abr. 17; T. Abr. 11; 4Q 405 frg. 20; 2 Enoch 22).

A most remarkable passage which offers early testimony of interest in the divine merkava is 1 En 14:8ff.35 It is found in the context of Enoch’s intercession for the doomed Watchers and is in some ways an extraordinarily long digression from the main point of the saga. Enoch is commissioned to announce judgement on the watchers and Azazel (13:1) and is requested by them to intercede with God on their behalf (13:4ff.). The watchers’ petition is rejected (14:1ff.) and Enoch recounts his experience in 14:2ff. which leads to the heavenly ascent and another report of the divine rejection of the petition. Here we have an account of a mortal taken into the divine presence (parallel to other early Enoch traditions such as Jub 4:20ff. which itself may be dependent on 1 En 14).36

(14:8) And there was shown to me in my vision as follows: Behold, in my visions clouds were summoning me,37 and mists were calling me,
and the courses of the stars and lightnings were hurrying me along and were bewildering me. The winds in my vision carried me away, lifted me up and brought me to heaven. (9) I entered until I drew near to a wall built of hailstones, with tongues of fire around them, and they began to make me afraid. (10) I entered into the tongues of fire, and I drew near to a great house built from hailstones. The walls of the house were like flat stones. All were made of snow, and the foundations too were of snow. (11) Its roofs were like the courses of the stars and like flashes of lightning, and between them were fiery cherubim, and their heaven was as water. (12) A burning fire was around the walls, and the doors were burning with fire. (13) I entered the house, which was as hot as fire and as cold as snow, and there were no means of nourishing life there. Fear covered me and trembling overtook me. (14) I was shaking and fearful and fell down. (15) I continued to see in my vision, and behold, another door was opened before me. There was another house greater than the first, and the whole of it consisted of tongues of fire. (16) All of it excelled in its glory, splendour and majesty, so that I am not able to tell you of its glory and majesty. (17) Its foundation was of fire. The upper part of its roof was of fiery flame. (18) I looked and saw a lofty throne, and its appearance was of crystal and its wheel as the shining sun. There was also a vision of cherubim. From underneath the throne there came forth rivers of flaming fire, and I was not able to look

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38 Exod 24:10; Ezek 1:22; Ezek 38.22.
39 Ezek 1; Acts 2:3; Dan 7:9; Tg. Job col. 36 line 5.
41 Exod 19:16; Ezek 1:13; Ps 18:14.
42 Ezek 1:22; Gen 1:7; 1 Kgs 7:23ff.; 2 Chr 4:2ff.; Rev 4:6; T. Levi 2:7; bHag 15a ('When you come to the place of the marble plates, do not cry “Water, water”). See further Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion.
43 Ezek 1:4; Dan 7:9.
44 Ezek 1:22; Teresa of Avila, Life 20 ('In these raptures the soul no longer seems to animate the body; its natural heat, therefore, is felt to diminish and it gradually gets cold, though with a feeling of great joy and sweetness').
45 Ezek 2:1; Dan 8:17; 10:15; Matt 17:7.
47 For these recurring phrases in vv8, 14, 18; cf. Dan 7:6, 7, 9, 11, 13.
48 Gen 28:17; Greek Baruch 2:2; 3:3; 3 Macc 6:18; Mithras Liturgy (Dieterich, Mithrasliturgie, PGM IV and further Betz, Mithras Liturgy', especially 54, lines 625–30) cf. Exod 26:33; PRE 4 (Friedländer 23); Josephus, War 5.216ff.
49 Exod 24:10; Ezek 1:13; 1 Kgs 6:13ff.; Josephus, Ant. 8.80ff.
50 Isa 6:1; Ezek 1:26; Dan 7:9; Rev 4:2; 2 En 22:2; T. Abr. 12; Life of Adam and Eve 25; PRE 4 (Friedländer 23); text quoted in Goodenough, Symbols 2: 181.
51 1 Kgs 7:30; 2 Kgs 2:11; Ezek 1:16; Ezek 10:2; Dan 7:9; 4QShirot; 1 En 71.7; Apoc. Abr. 18.
52 1 Kgs 7:29; Ezek 1:10; 10:1.
53 Dan 7:10; 4QShirot; 1 En 71:2; Rev 4:5; 22:1; Exod 19:16; Ezek 1:13; 47:1; Zech 14:8; Ps 50:2; 3 En 19:4; 33:ff.; Schäfer § 866, 916.
at them. (20) The Great Glory sat on a lofty throne. His robe was as the appearance of the sun, brighter and whiter than any snow. (21) No angel could enter the house and see his face because of his magnificence and glory. No human being could look at his flaming fire which was around. (22) A great fire stood by him and no one was near him. Ten thousand times ten thousand stood around him and before him, and his word has power. (23) The holy angels who are near him do not depart by night nor do they leave him. (24) Until this time I had been prostrate on my face trembling. (1 En 14:8–24)

Most commentators are agreed that this vision comes from the earliest phase of the apocalyptic tradition. In 14:10 and 15 there are two parts to heaven, a ‘great house’ and a ‘second house greater than the former’, probably reflecting the different parts of the Holy Place (1 Kgs 6:14ff.). Unlike the Testament of Levi, 1 Enoch makes no mention of a heavenly cultic activity, though Enoch elsewhere is seen as a priestly figure e.g. Jub 4:21ff. This remarkable passage is obviously indebted, at least in general terms, to Ezekiel and offers us the earliest evidence of the expansion of Ezek 1. A comparison with its biblical antecedents suggests that we have come a long way from the typical prophetic commission. While the connection with Ezek 1 is obvious, this passage differs from other throne-theophany passages in the extent of that indebtedness.

The reference to the wheel (14:18) is perhaps the clearest evidence of the influence of Ezekiel, whereas the reference to the throne is almost identical to Isa 6:1 LXX. In the description of God there is a continuation of the suggestive, if veiled, anthropomorphism of Ezek 1:27 (14:20 cf. 14:24), and the reference to God’s garment is probably derived from Isa 6:1. Yet despite the links with these biblical passages clear differences emerge. Unlike Ezek 1 there is no mention whatsoever of the living creatures which play such a prominent part in that chapter, (though cherubim are referred to briefly in vv11 and 18 and are probably...
derived from 1 Kgs 6), and the concern of Ezek 1 with the movement of the chariot has vanished completely. Much attention is now devoted to the heavenly abode which Enoch enters, its walls, its roof as well as its inhabitants. It is a place which is divided into two parts (vv10 and 15), a division which has suggested a strong priestly influence on this particular vision, because of the division of the main part of the Temple into two sections.\textsuperscript{61} A brief description is given of the way in which the heavenly world affected Enoch.\textsuperscript{62} In v13 he speaks of entering that house which was as ‘hot as fire and as cold as snow’. A similar comment relating to the experience of the visionary as he enters heaven appears in Apoc. Abr. 17, where the patriarch describes his loss of balance as he approached God. The second point to note is the contrast between the description of God himself (the Great Glory) in 14:20 with the more restrained description of the figure on the throne in Ezek 1:27. In 1 En 14:21 it is clearly indicated that God resembled human form. In the later 2 Enoch the description of God is much more explicit than 1 En 14:20, and we see a movement here towards the extravagance of the later shiur koma speculations.\textsuperscript{63} A development as compared with Ezek 1, which becomes a distinctive feature of several of the apocalyptic visions of God, is the inclusion of the rivers of fire (14:19) which flow under God’s throne.\textsuperscript{64} The background of this imagery is by no means clear, but probably passages like Ezek 1:13, Ezek 47:1, Exod 19:16 and Zech 14:8 have contributed to the origin of this particular element, which is to be found also in the theophany in Dan 7:10 (‘The throne was fiery flames, its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and came forth from before him.’)
The development of a heavenly Temple (or in 1 En 14, a description of the heavenly world which owed something to the layout of the cult) is not easily explained. Once again we may resort to the theory that the heavenly Temple offered a radical alternative to the inadequacies of its earthly counterpart, though we should note that in biblical texts like Exod 25:40. and 1 Chr 28:18 heaven offered a blueprint for that which was to be found on earth (cf. Heb 8:5). There was developing in ancient Judaism a more sophisticated cosmology in which God was believed to be enthroned in glory far above the heavens. Well before the beginning of the common era, if 1 En 14 is anything to go by, some Jews had taken the step of establishing the merkava of Ezekiel in a heavenly palace which only the privileged seer could view. Such a cosmological development may hint at something also of their theology. God was transcendent in heaven; signs of the divine presence were indirect and not immediate, though such a lack of immediacy should not lead us to deny the importance attached to divine immanence at particular moments in history and ritual devotion. Care should be taken not to overplay such dualistic contrast, therefore, as it is clear from the apocalypses that the whole of human history is not a random series of events but follows the plan laid down in heaven. There is some evidence of suspicion of the Second Temple in passages like 1 En 89:73 and 2 Bar 68:6.

Another text which is indisputably older than Rev 4 is a brief and fragmentary description of the divine throne-chariot (4Q405 20 ii 21–22) and its angelic attendants, dated probably in the first half of the first century BC and among the texts discovered in Cave 4 at Qumran:

...the cherubim prostrate themselves before him and bless. As they rise, a whispered divine voice [is heard], and there is a roar of praise. When they drop their wings, there is a [whispered] divine voice. The cherubim bless the image of the throne-chariot above the firmament, [and] they praise [the majesty] of the luminous firmament beneath his seat of glory. When the wheels advance, angels of holiness come and go. From between his glorious wheels there is as it were a fiery vision of most holy spirits. About them, the appearance of rivulets of fire in the likeness of gleaming brass, and a work of... radiance in many-coloured glory of marvellous pigments, clearly mingled. The spirits of the living gods move perpetually...
with the glory of the marvellous chariots. The whispered voice of blessing accompanies the roar of their advance, and they praise the Holy One on their way of return. When they ascend, they ascend marvellously, and when they settle, they stand still. The sound of joyful praise is silenced and there is a whispered blessing of the gods in all the camps of God. And the sound of praise ... from among all their divisions ... and all their numbered ones praise, each in his turn. (4Q405 20 ii 21–22, trans. Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls, 328)

Here there is even clearer evidence than there was in 1 En 14 of the influence of Ezek 1. The reference to the chariot, its wheels, the firmament, the comparison of the rivers of fire to brass and the use of the noun מראית all indicate indebtedness to Ezek 1. Indeed, some of the dominant interests of that chapter reappear, one example being the movement of the chariot and its wheels (cf. Ezek 1:17). The cultic influence which made only a superficial impression on 1 En 14 is much more prominent in this brief passage. The cherubim feature more prominently and are in close proximity to God’s throne (cf. 1 Kgs 6:24), unlike Ezek 1:22 and 10:1, where the firmament is above their heads. The reference to the throne-chariot itself in line 2 is probably influenced by the description of the cherubim-chariot in the Temple mentioned in 1 Chr 28:18 (cf. the Qumran text which has כסא תבנית מרחבת מראית). Of the two occurrences of the word מרחבת one of these is to be found in a plural form. The multiplicity of divine throne-chariots is a theme which is dwelt upon in later texts like 3 En 24 (Schäfer § 903–4) and the Visions of Ezekiel. The rivers of fire feature in the theophany, their brazen appearance suggested either by Ezek 1:27, or by Ezek 1:4. What is most noticeable about this fragmentary work is the even stricter avoidance of anthropomorphism as compared with the veiled anthropomorphism of Ezek 1 and 1 En 14, and possibly even Rev 4:2.

Less easy to date and now only extant in a much later translation is the Apocalypse of Abraham. It is a work which probably comes from the end of the first century CE. In chs. 17–19 we find another vision of the divine glory. After preparing his sacrifice Abraham is taken up to
the seventh heaven by means of the birds which are part of his offering and beholds the divine merkava:

And while I was still singing my song, the tongues of fire on the expanse rose higher. And I heard a voice, like the roaring of the sea; and it was not affected by the strength of the fire. And as the fire rose up, soaring into the height, I saw beneath the fire a throne of fire, and round about it a throng of many-eyed ones singing the song, and beneath the throne, four living creatures of fire singing. And they looked the same: each one had four faces. One face was like a lion’s, another like a man’s, another like an ox’s, and another like an eagle’s—each one had four heads. And each one had three pairs of wings, one pair at their shoulders, and another at their sides, and another at their loins. And with the wings at their shoulders they covered their faces, and with the wings at their loins they covered their feet, and the middle wings they stretched out and flew forward with them. And when they had finished singing, they looked at one another in a threatening manner. And when the angel who was with me saw them threatening one another, he left me, and hurried towards them, and turned each face of each living creature from the face opposite it, so that they could not see each other’s threatening faces. And he taught them the song of peace which has its origin in the Eternal One. And while I was standing alone and looking I saw behind the living creatures a chariot with wheels of fire, each wheel full of eyes all around. And over the wheels was the throne that I saw; and it was covered with fire, and fire encircled it all around; and an ineffable light of a fiery host surrounded it. And I heard their holy voices like the voice of one man. (Apoc. Abr. 17–19, trans. Sparks, 381)

The description of God’s throne stands even closer to Ezek 1 than the three passages considered so far, with several parallels, e.g. the sound of many waters (17:1; cf. Ezek 1:24), the living creatures (18:3) and the chariot and its wheels (18:11). As in Ezek 1 each of the four creatures is said to have four heads (faces in Ezek), and the wheels are said to be full of eyes (18:11 cf. Ezek 1:18), a detail which is often omitted from descriptions of the throne-chariot, or, as in Rev 4, transferred to the living creatures. The influence of Isaiah is clearly discernible in 18:6 where Isa 6 is once again combined with Ezek 1 in the description of the wings of the creatures. The passage is not without its distinctive features, one of the most unusual of these being the way in which the creatures threaten each other and the necessity for the angel who accompanies Abraham to go and prevent an attack of the creatures on each other (18:8f., cf. 3 En 1; Schäfer § 883). Unlike Ezek 1, no mention is made whatsoever of any human form sitting on the throne of
All that the patriarch speaks of above the throne is ‘the power of invisible glory’ (19:5). Abraham stresses that he saw no other being there apart from the angels. God’s presence is located within the most holy part of heaven above the throne-chariot itself, but there is little sign of any anthropomorphism except for the divine voice.

After his ascent to heaven Abraham is taught to sing the celestial hymn of praise to God in which he is joined by Yaoel (17:7ff.):

Eternal One, Mighty One, Holy One, El, God, Monarch, Self-Begotten, incorruptible, unsullied, unborn, immaculate, immortal, self-perfect, self-illumined. Without mother, without father, without birth, the High One, the Fiery One. Lover of man, generous, beautiful, my defender, long-suffering, most merciful. Eli (that is my God), eternal, mighty, holy, Sabaoth, most glorious, El, El, El, El, Yaoel. Thou art he whom my soul hath loved, preserver, Eternal One, fire, Shining One, whose voice is like thunder, whose aspect is lightning, many-eyed, who receivest the prayers of those who honour thee. Thou, the Light, shinest before the light of morning on thy creation; and in the heavenly dwelling places sufficient is the other light from the inexpressible dawn of the light of thy face. Receive my prayer, and also the sacrifice which thou hast made for thyself through me who sought thee. Receive me favourably, and show me, and teach me, and tell thy servant what thou hast promised me.’ (trans. Sparks, 381ff.)

Hymns like this one played an important part in the preparation of the mystic to behold the glories of the merkava as well as being part of the songs which were sung in honour of God by the heavenly host. Like the short hymnic passages which occur throughout the book of Revelation (e.g. 4:8 and 11), the hymn in the Apocalypse of Abraham includes an extensive recital of the attributes of God. Although in the Apocalypse of Abraham the recital of the hymn does not seem to be a necessary prelude to acceptance into the divine presence, it may be no coincidence that we are told that Abraham learnt to recite it before he came into the presence of God (cf. Asc. Isa. 9:27ff.). So, after his arrival

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70 One wonders if the stress on the emptiness of heaven is polemic against those whose view of God was too anthropomorphic, cf. Marmorstein, *Old Rabbinic Doctrine*, vol. 2, 48ff. The invisibility of God is stressed in passages like Exod 33:20; John 1:18 and Col 1:15, cf. the Apocalypse of Zephaniah and see below p. 73 n. 29.

71 Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 23. There seem to be indications that Job’s daughters may have been uttering such heavenly hymns at the departure of their father according to T. Job 48.
in heaven Abraham sings the celestial song and is shown the throne of God and its environs and is given a glimpse into the future. In the hymn quoted in this work there are similarities with the hymns sung by the angelic host in the Hekhalot texts.\textsuperscript{72}

The mystical hymn is also hinted at in the conclusion of the Testament of Job. Here, interestingly, Job’s daughters (cf. Job 42:15) are said to inherit cords of many colours which enabled the daughters ‘no longer to mind earthly things’ and to take up the ‘speech of the heavenly powers’ (T. Job 48–49), a reference to glossolalia (cf. 1 Cor 13:1):

Accordingly, the one (daughter of Job) called Hemera got up and wound her rope about her, just as her father had said. And she assumed another heart, no longer minding earthly things. And she gave utterance in the speech of angels, sending up a hymn to God after the pattern of the angels’ hymnody; and the Spirit let the hymns she uttered be recorded on her robe. And then Cassia girded herself, and she too experienced a change of heart, so that she no longer gave thought to worldly things. And her mouth took up the speech of the heavenly powers, and she lauded the worship of the heavenly sanctuary. So that if any one wants to know about the worship that goes on in heaven, he can find it in the hymns of Cassia. And the remaining one, of Amaltheia-Keras put on her girdle; and she likewise gave utterance with her mouth in the speech of those on high. Her heart was changed and withdrawn from worldly things; and she spoke in the language of the cherubim, extolling the Lord of Virtues, and proclaiming their glory. Any one who would pursue the Father’s glory any further will find it set out in the prayers of Amaltheia-Keras. (T. Job 48–49, trans. Sparks)

We can note verbal parallels and possible allusions to other texts, but that does not answer the question how the particular conjunctions of images and words came about.

There has been much debate about the extent to which the apocalyptic texts from Jewish and Christian antiquity include the record of actual visions. On the one hand there are those who consider that the evidence indicates that the study of Ezekiel involved a seeing again of Ezekiel’s vision by the apocalyptists and their rabbinic counterparts.\textsuperscript{73} On the other hand there are those who argue that the material (particularly the rabbinic sources) will not bear the weight of such an interpretation and prefer to see the references as indicating a deliberate midrashic activity connected with these chapters which did not differ substantially in

\textsuperscript{72} On this material see Scholem, \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}; Grözinger, \textit{Musik und Gesang}.

\textsuperscript{73} E.g. Scholem, \textit{Major Trends}, and \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}; Rowland, ‘Visions of God’.
the earliest period from the kind of method applied to other parts of Scripture. What we have in these uses of Ezek 1 is evidence of variant expansions of the chapter, in which various elements are either expanded or ignored, and where the very variety of usage indicates the versatility of the interpretative process even if the ultimate sources for this process are not in doubt. We probably have no way of knowing whether the descriptions of God’s throne in the apocalypses with their amalgam of various biblical passages are the product of conventional exegetical activity, carried on according to normal patterns of interpretation. But the possibility should not be ignored that in the study of Scripture creative imagination could have been a potent means of encouraging the belief that the biblical passages were not merely written records of past events but vehicles which enable latter-day visionaries to enjoy contemporary manifestations of the divine.

That, of course, is precisely what the writer of the New Testament Apocalypse wants readers to believe in speaking about being ‘in the spirit’ (4:2 cf. 1:9). Such indications, when taken together with the obvious absence of the kind of systematic, ordered, exegetical activity which we find in contemporary biblical commentaries should make us wary of ruling out the possibility of particular biblical texts becoming in the imaginations of the apocalyptic visionaries a handle opening up a door of perception whereby textual details, along with other passages from Scripture, coalesced to form the distinctive visions of heaven now found in some of the apocalypses.

The bulk of Revelation is presented as a vision which John received. In an apostolic epistle or a Gospel an author could be expected consciously to have worked with traditions received and to have intended the various statements in them to express his own intentions. Thus, Paul sought to respond to situations and problems and exercised a conscious effort to mould tradition, thought and technique to meet an immediate need. The Apocalypse is an altogether different work, however. It is possible that there are contacts with contemporary Jewish tradition or the hymns of praise of church or synagogue. Nevertheless,

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76 Prigent, *Apocalypse*. 
if we examine its relationship with the Hebrew Bible,\textsuperscript{77} there is hardly a verse in which there is not some kind of contact with the language and imagery of the Bible. If we take seriously John’s claim to report a vision, then we would be wrong to consider the writing as a conscious deliberate recall of tradition. This is not to deny that some editing might have gone on (John is obviously capable of drawing his readers’ attention to particular items of his vision, e.g. the lamps in 4:5, though this secondary reflection could have been part of the vision). If we respect his visionary claim, particular circumstances which affected the deepest levels of his consciousness, as well as the language of the Bible, serve the visionary imagination and Daniel’s and Ezekiel’s prophecies become the means whereby visions are expressed and perhaps even engendered. There are signs in the book of that dream-like quality in which the visionary not only sees but is involved (e.g. Rev 1:12; 1:17; 5:4; 7:13; 11:1; 17:3 cf. 1:10 and 21:10). There is a semblance of order, but the ordering in Revelation need not exclude the possibility that it contains the visions which John saw, either on one single occasion or over a period of time. As we know from our own experience of dreams, their order and sophistication in no way demands that we suppose the conscious rational activity of the seer in order to explain that sophistication and complexity. Though analysis of dreams and visions reveals the presence of the bizarre, the enigmatic and the unexpected juxtaposition of persons and events, and the dreamlike are not necessarily chaotic, however surprising its contents may be as compared with what passes for ‘reality’. Dreams and visions do evince a sophistication of structure and sequence which can defy the ingenuity of even the most sophisticated constructor of allegories. So sequences of sevens or the presence of significant numbers need not by themselves prove that the writer is engaged in a conscious attempt to construct an arcane set of symbolism to tax the apocalyptic analyst!

In the apocalyptic merkava visions Ezekiel’s vision provides the building blocks for the visionary expression of later seers. In this, visionary experience and scriptural interpretation merge and are not to be regarded as antithetical approaches. This is given some support by later rabbinic tradition, where, as Elliot Wolfson has observed, visionary

experience was supported by exegesis of the Bible. A key part of the merkava tradition focuses on the meaning of the word *hashmal* which occurs twice in Ezek 1 in vv7 and 27 as well as in Ezek 8:2. In 1:27 it occurs in a description of the human figure who sits on the throne, who appears again to the prophet, this time without a throne to take the prophet from Babylon to Jerusalem in a visionary trance in 8:2. There are two matters of importance about *hashmal*. First of all, it only occurs in the prophecy of Ezekiel and secondly from the context it in all likelihood refers to a colour (though the first occurrence is much less clear than the fiery context in 1:26–7). So, one familiar way in which the meaning of a word is discerned, namely, via analogy (how is a word used in another passage) cannot work so easily. How then do we explain the meaning of *hashmal*? One way in which students of the text sought an answer was by experience. Such checking out of the meaning of *hashmal* experientially is precisely what is hinted at in the discussions of this passage in the Babylonian Talmud:

Thus far you have permission to speak, thenceforward you do not have permission to speak, for so it is written in the Book of Ben Sira: Seek not things that are too hard for thee. The things that have been permitted thee, think thereupon; thou hast no business with the things that are secret. . . . But may one expound [the mysteries of] *hashmal*? For behold there was once a child who expounded [דרש] [the mysteries] of *hashmal*, and a fire went forth and consumed him. The case of the child is different for he had not reached the fitting age . . . The rabbis taught: There was once a child who was reading at his teacher’s house the Book of Ezekiel and he apprehended what *hashmal* was (בchem behashmol), whereupon a fire went forth from *hashmal* and consumed him. So they sought to suppress the Book of Ezekiel, but Hanania said: If he was a sage, all are sages. What does the word *hashmal* mean Rav Yuda said: Living creatures speaking fire. In a baraita it is taught: *hashmal* means, at times they are silent; at times they speak. When the utterance goes forth from the mouth of the holy one Blessed be he, they are silent and when the utterance goes not forth from the mouth of the Holy One, they speak. (bHag 13a–b).

The opening of the eternal through the experience of the ordinary is found in the symbolism attached to the thread of blue (Num 15:37–39). In this latter case, it is not a text but part of the habits of piety which provide the catalyst for visionary perception. The ‘thread of blue’, which formed part of the prayer shawl, had significance as a gateway to discernment of the divine (bMen 43b; SifNum 115). In these passages, the experience of reading the biblical text was both an effective and a threatening affair by which one could become damaged as a result.
of a naive and unprepared engagement with the biblical text. Also, in looking on an item of clothing there could be opened up for the reader an experience in which the eye of vision for oneself could enable the explanation of the mysteries of the text. These legends suggest an experiential dimension of preoccupation with Ezekiel.

Elliot Wolfson has rightly pointed out that the dichotomy, which is often posed, between exegesis and experience, between expounding the merkava and seeing the merkava, misses the point, as there is a close connection between engagement with texts and visionary experiences. Indeed, the ongoing merkava vision is itself the product of engagement with traditions of interpretation and the study of the biblical text. He too points out the potential danger from the exegesis of Ezekiel’s vision.

We may be helped to understand something of what happened in John’s visionary experience from later Christian sources. The kaleidoscopic way in which passages and underlying themes from the Bible come together and merge in different ways in John’s vision is reminiscent of what Mary Carruthers has called ‘the craft of memory’ in medieval monasticism. She has shown how, in the process of memorization and the recall of memory, there is a creative process of interaction of images. The monastic practice of meditation notably involved making mental images or cognitive ‘pictures’. There was, therefore, a process of ‘visualisation’. So, scriptural meditation opened up the gateway to meaning as a network of allusions together with personal context led to a new interpretation of the Bible. Thus, Hugh of St Victor writes: ‘Meditation is a regular period of deliberate thought. [It] takes its start from reading but is not at all bound by rules or precepts of lecture (lectio), for it delights to run freely through open space... touching on these, now those connections among subjects... Whence it is that in meditation is to be found the greatest pleasure and amusement’ (Didascalion 3.10).

This kind of practice may help us glimpse how the prophetic imagination worked, in the case of John of Patmos. John’s apocalyptic vision is the best example we have of what David Halperin has called ‘seeing the merkava vision as he [the apocalyptic seer] has persuaded himself

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79 Wolfson, Speculum, 121–4.
80 Carruthers, Craft of Thought; idem, Book of Memory.
81 Carruthers, Craft of Thought, 304.
it really was, as Ezekiel would have seen it, had he been inspired wholly and not in part." While the adequacy of the evidence prevents us from being completely sure how visions took place among ancient Jews and Christians during the Second Temple period, an imaginative process of interconnecting scriptural images from related texts, similar to what was practised in the medieval monastic art of memorisation and meditation, might offer an important way of understanding it. Visionary experience, therefore, was supported by their reading and exegesis of their scriptures.

Thus, in some forms of the interpretation of Ezekiel 1, the meaning of the text might have come about as the result of ‘seeing again’ what Ezekiel saw. For John the visionary on Patmos, rather than by an explanation of the details of what Ezekiel saw, the visionary’s own experience of what had appeared to Ezekiel becomes itself context for the interpretation of the text, which prompted its own creative interpretation (such as the Lamb sharing the throne), which are absent from the original. In this visionary exegesis the letter of the text points to another level of reality and as a result other dimensions of meaning may be opened up, and the very allusiveness of the text becomes a gateway to greater perception through the merging with related biblical texts and more existential situations and convictions.

Michael Lieb, in a fascinating study, draws on the work done on the origins of Jewish mysticism and its relationship with the apocalyptic tradition of Second Temple Judaism and its appropriation by early Christians to suggest that the ongoing practice of visionary merkava exposition is not something confined to Judaism. By reference to some little known early Christian material, he extends the study from the origins of the early Christian mystical tradition and the interpretation of the Song, Ezekiel and Revelation down to Dante. He draws attention to the catalytic and creative potential of Ezekiel and its ability to prompt new formulations of what is already a suggestive and multi-faceted text. At the very core of the merkava tradition is its propensity to assume new forms. In Lieb’s view the merkava generates new meaning, new modes of perception, that are forever multiplying, of hermeneutics of transformation and visionary re-enactment. It is a dynamic repository

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82 Halperin, *Faces*, 71, and further on visionary experience in the apocalypses, Stone, ‘Reconsideration’; MacDermot, *Cult of the Seer*.
83 Lieb, *Visionary Mode*. 
of ever-changing meanings that are inscribed and reinscribed, that circle of reciprocity that occurs between hermeneut and text. He also draws attention to another feature of the tradition and its appropriation: the way in which the reader becomes the object of attention and is himself interpreted and converted. What begins as the prophet beholding the vision ends with an awareness that it is not the prophet who beholds so much as the vision that beholds him. There is an ongoing preoccupation with the book of Ezekiel, a ‘seeing the merkava vision’ as the apocalyptic seer ‘has persuaded himself it really was’.

Mystical Insight Concerning the Lamb and the Beast

So much then for the contemporary parallel accounts of the merkava vision and their significance. We may note enough similarities to see that they offer evidence of what might have been a lively tradition of interpretation and reflection. Nevertheless the differences between Revelation and the other texts are just as important. What is most striking about Rev 4 is the vision which immediately follows it. This subtly subverts and reorientates the Ezekelian vision in the direction of a vision of heaven on earth without any temple. The scene in heaven is transformed in chapter 5. John sees God with a scroll with seven seals, which contains the divine will for the inauguration of the eschatological process. The means of the initiation of that process turns out to be the coming of the Messiah, the Lion of Judah, a paradox that the messianic Lion is a Lamb with the marks of death. The Lamb’s marks of slaughter qualified it to have this supreme eschatological role and to share the divine throne (7:17). At first the Lamb stands as one of the heavenly throng, but it ‘wins’ the right to superiority and the privilege of divine power, as the result of the ‘conquest’ wrought through death. Superficially, the scene is similar to that described in Dan 7:9, where there is also a heavenly court. Whereas in Daniel a human figure comes to take divine authority, here it is an animal. Animals, of course, feature in the first part of the vision in Dan 7 as heavenly, demonic, representations of the kings of the earth but here it is the agent of liberation which is depicted in this vision.

84 Halperin, Faces, 71.
There is in the imagery of this chapter an unusual element as compared with most apocalyptic genres from the Second Temple Era. We are familiar with animals in dream visions from 1 En 89ff. (the so-called Animal Apocalypse where animals represent men and men angels). Rev 5 offers a peculiar, perhaps unique, juxtaposition of the throne theophany vision with the dream vision. We might have expected the angelic figure of chapter 1 to have been the major actor before the divine throne. Instead, there is resort to the animal symbolism of the dream vision in which the Christ is represented by a Lamb. And it is the Lamb who appears throughout the apocalypse. The use of that animal symbolism, when viewed in the light of the Enochic material, suggests a determined attempt to stress the humanity of the messianic agent. Humans are invariably animals and only become angelic prophetically in the case of Noah in 1 En 89:1.

If we examine the Jewish apocalypses, it is apparent that there are several types of vision. There is the report by the seer of what he has seen in heaven, usually after a mystical ascent. Then there is the communication to the seer of divine secrets by an angel in which visions play no part. Finally, there is the dream vision in which the seer sees in a dream various objects (often animals) which afterwards are explained by means of an angelic interpretation. These have no independent existence, except as part of the dream-vision and are merely signifiers of persons or events which take place on earth. There is usually a fairly clear distinction in the apocalypses between visions of this type and visions of the third type. In the first type we have attempts to describe the environs of God using the terminology of Ezekiel and Isaiah. These are no symbols but a report of what is actually believed to be the case in the world above. The dream vision with its extravagant symbols and interpretation are not usually mingled with report of what is seen in heaven in the Jewish apocalypses. They are in Rev 4–5, however. The vision in Rev 4 is a good example of the first type of vision. John glimpses activities in heaven normally hidden from human perception. If John had followed the conventions of apocalyptic set out in ch. 4 he might have been expected to have described the heavenly Christ in language similar to that in 1:13ff. Instead we have the introduction of

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85 On this section of 1 Enoch see Tiller, Animal Apocalypse.
86 See Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, 267ff.
87 See the survey in Collins, Apocalypse.
the language of the symbolic vision—ἁρνίον ἑστηκός ως ἐσφαγμένον (5:6). The awkwardness of the juxtaposition reflected also in the oxymoron in 5:4–5, ἰδοὺ ἐνίκησεν ὁ λέων ὁ ἐκ τῆς φυλῆς Ἰούδα, ἡ ῥίζα Δαυίδ, ἑστηκός ως ἐσφαγμένον, might be deemed to reflect the jarring nature of the eschatological reality to which John seeks to bear witness. It is as if the dream-vision, with its symbolic or allegorical quality, inserts itself into the heavenly-world type of vision, disturbing the neat separation of otherworldly and dream vision evident in the extant literature. We may speak of a mixing of genres here, therefore, all the more apposite when the message which the text seeks to convey is of the cosmos-shattering effects of the triumph of Christ. The Lamb had affected the normal apocalyptic conventions. Hitherto accepted patterns of discourse are shattered as well as the understanding and course of history.

While some of the elements of the divine merkava are absent from Revelation, the throne of God runs like a thread through the different visions of the Apocalypse and has become a key element in what is a highly charged political vision. It is the ultimate focus of the destiny of the elect in the new creation (3:21; 7:9; 14:3) and a signal of true authority in the universe (7:10), contrasting with that other locus of power in the cosmos which deludes the world’s inhabitants (2:13; 13:2). Worship of the one who sits on the throne (19:4) marks recognition of true sovereignty and is the basis of true service. In Rev 21:3 the tabernacling of God with humankind is fulfilled in the new creation. The crisis facing humanity awaiting this critical moment is evident in the stark dualistic contrast between this age and the age to come, between the vision of the new Jerusalem in ch. 21 and the initial vision of the heavenly court in ch. 4. In the latter the seer is granted a glimpse into the environs of God in a world beyond this present one, to which access is given through the door open into heaven. The need for this disappears in the new creation where the tabernacle of God is with humanity. God’s dwelling is not to be found above the cherubim in heaven. God’s throne is set in the midst of the New Jerusalem, where the living waters stream from the throne of God (22:1), whose servants are marked with the divine name seeing God face to face. As has been noted, the stream of fire which was such a feature of the merkava tradition of Judaism (see Dan 7:9 and 1 En 14:21) makes no appearance in the throne-theophany in ch. 4, though the fiery and threatening character of heaven is evident throughout the apocalypse, particularly in ch. 15. But in the description
of the heart of the New Jerusalem the streams which proceed from the
throne of God have ceased to be fiery and threatening and are made up
of the waters of life. It is only in the New Jerusalem that there will be
the conditions for God and humanity to dwell in that harmony. God
is no longer transcendent but immediately present to those privileged
to inhabit the new Jerusalem. Indeed, they will be identified with the
character of God and enjoy the divine presence unmediated, without
the need of heavenly ascent or vision. Here Revelation comes as near
as anywhere to speaking of the transformation into the divine. So the
book’s climax speaks of the goal of the mystical ascent to heaven and
the unmediated presence of God. What is needful meanwhile is not
the ritual preparations of fasting and prayer for heavenly ascent, but
lives lived in conformity with the divine holiness and faithfulness to the
lamb, a life of testimony risking the opprobrium of this world’s political
power, thereby keeping sufficient distance from the contamination of
the Beast whose allure can prevent access to the vision of God.

In Revelation there is no Temple in John’s vision of the New Jeru-
salem. We do not have a great amount of material on which to base
judgements about the attitudes to the Temple in the apocalyptic tra-
dition, but the absence of much detailed discussion of the Temple is
striking. This could be because this institution is taken for granted as
an essential component of both this age and the age to come. In the
material dating from the years immediately after the destruction of
the Second Temple the relative paucity of references is noteworthy. It
might have been expected that the end of the Temple would have at
least led to nostalgic hopes, though a hope for its restoration is included
in the rabbinic daily prayer, Shemone Esre. That there was a significant
increase in eschatological urgency is indicated by several passages (e.g.
Syr. Baruch 85:10; 4 Ezra 5:50ff.; 14:10 and 16). It is remarkable that
the detailed prescriptions such as are found in the Temple Scroll are
completely absent in the extant apocalypses. But we need to remember
that fantasizing about the details of the new age in a utopian fashion is
hardly typical of the apocalypses. They show an interest in history as
a whole in which detailed concern with the Temple would have been
out of place. The explicit concern with the heavenly Zion which we find
in apocalypses from the second half of the first century CE may well
derive in part at least from the catastrophe of 70 (though several clearly
pre-70 passages like Gal 4:24–25 and 4Q174 also need to be borne in
mind here). Explicit doubts about the Second Temple are occasionally
expressed, for example, in 1 En 89:73 and Syr. Baruch 68:6. In the light of
the protests raised in some of the Qumran texts about the Temple
it is reasonable to suppose that some of the dissatisfaction expressed
itself in the visions for the future by a concentration on Zion rather
than the Temple. Still, there is nothing to compare with the hint in
Stephen’s speech that the whole cultic enterprise based on the Temple
was flawed from the very start as a consequence of the massive rebel-
lion at the Golden Calf (Acts 7:40). 88

That ambivalence about the Temple also attaches to heaven. While
a superficial reading of the visions of Revelation suggests a dualistic
contrast between heaven as the repository of all that is good and perfect
and earth as a place of rebellion, there are indications that, as in other
apocalyptic and mystical texts, the heavenly powers themselves are in
need of redemption. This is seen most clearly in the war in heaven
which precedes the fall of Satan (Rev 12:7) and the removal of the
threat to the witnesses to Jesus, but is also evident in the threat posed
by the sea of glass (Rev 15), ultimately removed in the new creation.
In the Apocalypse, heaven is not the goal of the divine purposes, so
much as a necessary alternative presence for God pending that moment
when God will tabernacle with humanity. Unlike the emerging mystical
tradition in Judaism, therefore, ascent to heaven is a means to an end:
the receipt of a saving gnosis which will enable angels and humans to
pursue God’s commands and faithfulness to Jesus. It offers no escape
from the call to martyrdom and resistance to the Beast but is instead
a means of ensuring that resistance to Babylon and the Beast, and
prophetic witness take place.

In the book of Revelation the medium is the message. There are
aspects to its genre which differentiate it from the apocalyptic and
mystical tradition with which in other respects it is closely related.
Despite the opening words in 1:1, Revelation is a work of prophecy. 89
In addition, the letters in chs. 2–3 give to the text an ambiguous qual-
ity as they frame the panoramic view of the working out of God’s
purposes for creation with warnings against false teaching, suspicion
of false prophecy, loss of an initial religious enthusiasm. Yet John is
an apocalyptic seer the authority of whose writing puts him on a par

88 See Halperin, Faces, 103ff.
89 See Mazaferri, Genre.
with the prophets of old (22:18f.). John is appointed as scribe who has to write letters to the angels.

As we have seen, 1 Enoch portrays Enoch acting as a scribe located in a privileged position (1 En 12). That privileged access to God enabled him to intercede with God on behalf of the Watchers, the fallen angels who had transgressed in the time of Noah. To do this Enoch ascends to heaven in a description reminiscent of the visions of Ezekiel and Isaiah and a prototype of later visions of God in apocalyptic literature and in the Jewish mystical (Hekhalot) tradition. In the book of Revelation John of Patmos is appointed as a scribe to write to the angels of the seven churches in Asia, emulating the role of Enoch. A human is given the privileged role of acting as a scribe who warns the angels and encourages them, outlining for them ways in which they can ‘conquer’. This language is reminiscent of the Hekhalot tracts in which adepts are given advice which will enable them to pass the celestial gatekeepers and attain to the environs of the merkava. In Revelation such an attainment is not via a mystical ascent but through the ability to ‘conquer’ the obstacles which prevent humans gaining the glory of the New Jerusalem by a moral life of resistance to the power of empire.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter we have explored connections between Revelation and contemporary apocalypses, in particular the mystical ideas which are extant in them. That hardly does justice to the complex character of Revelation, which perhaps more than most biblical texts has suffered from being subject to explanation as if its message, told in such distinctive imagery, can be adequately offered in another form of discourse. In a sense, of course, that approach is quite understandable. Apocalypses themselves frequently include explanations of their imagery by means of an authoritative angelic interpreter. The book of Daniel functions in this way as also do parts of 4 Ezra 11–13. Revelation by contrast differs from these in not having such a pattern of symbolic vision followed by prose interpretation. It matters that God signified in a particular way ‘what must be’ (Rev 1:1). It is not an angelic monologue but a thoroughly symbolic vision (or series of visions) whose meaning is to be found in the impact of the words and symbols themselves rather than in any accompanying authoritative, angelic, exposition of their true meaning. The revealed mystery comes through something which
in fact is ambiguous and opaque, therefore. Just as in 4 Ezra, where the apocalyptic seer has revealed to him that he cannot understand the divine inscrutability, in Revelation the means of knowing is couched consistently in language and discourse whose syntax and vocabulary taxes the conventions of normality. John writes as an outsider, an insignificant person in the face of the might of Rome. Yet he is the one who glimpses the revelation of the mystery of God’s purposes. Human wisdom, to paraphrase Paul, is stretched to its limit as ‘normal’ language seeks to bear witness to the mystery of God.90

Revelation stands near the start of a long tradition of interpretation of Daniel 7 in which both the apocalyptic Beasts and the Human Figure are taken up in an emerging political apocalypticism.91 In the appropriation of Dan 7 in Rev 13 there is a concentration on the beasts from the sea with the Human Figure separate, appearing either in John’s call vision in 1:13ff., or in the judgement scene in 19:11ff. That separation is already evident in the synoptic tradition where the use of Dan 7:13 is detached from the wider context of the sequence of beasts in Dan 7. While the passage picks up on the tradition of representing nations by beasts found in Dan 7, only one beast is described incorporating characteristics of the other beasts. As in Dan 7 the beast arises from the sea. Two creatures are described (13:1 and 11), one reflecting the representative of Rome and the other the local, indigenous promoter of the imperial cult. The Beast is the incarnation of the powers of the Devil (13:2) and attracts universal admiration for acts (13:3). The plausibility of the Beast and the reason for its worship is that it is like the Lamb. Imperial power is rooted in its military might (13:4). The Beast is given some of the characteristics of the Lamb (13:3 and 14). In addition to Dan 7 the political vision is informed by the oracles against Tyre and Babylon in Ezek 27 and Jer 51.

There are several parallels also with 4 Ezra, particularly 4 Ezra 11 which like Rev 13 focuses on one Beast only from Daniel, which is an epitome of the awfulness and oppression of tyranny. Revelation and 4 Ezra manifest concerns which are typical of the apocalyptic tradition as it is found at the end of the first century. In both there is necessity for a single-minded devotion to God’s will in order to attain the

90 There are some cautionary comments on the dangers of overinterpreting visionary material in Lieb, Visionary Mode, 326.
91 E.g. Casey, Son of Man, based on the important extensive survey of the early history of interpretation in his doctoral dissertation.
eschatological bliss. That emphasis on ethical rectitude at the expense of satisfying eschatological and theosophic curiosity is echoed in several works of the period. At a time when the upheaval caused by the decimation of Jewish institutions had thrown the whole tradition into the melting-pot there is a remarkable convergence of opinion in Jewish and Christian apocalyptic and mystical sources on the primacy of ethical rectitude as the key to salvation. The book of Revelation sets the apocalyptic revelation about the age to come in the context of letters to the seven churches. The present is marked by costly struggle, not leisurely dreams of the future. The latter’s purpose is to reinforce the demand for righteousness and to assure those who are seeking to enter by the narrow gate that there is hope of vindication and fulfilment. Apocalypticism becomes a necessity in the context of one’s eternal survival; it is not a luxury which can be divorced from the pressing demands for practical righteousness. It serves to enhance the power of the demand by rooting it in the direct voice of God. Any other pursuit of the divine mysteries appears indulgent and a distraction from the real task in hand.

The book of Revelation brings us fully into the world of apocalyptic mystery. Despite attempts over the years to play down the importance of this book the indications suggest that its thought-forms and outlook was rather typical of early Christianity. Beneath the surface we have here convictions about God, Christ and the world which are not far removed from the so-called ‘mainstream’ Christianity of the rest of the New Testament. The synoptic eschatological discourses are an obvious example of a similar outlook but they are by no means alone. Revelation with its indebtedness to the embryonic mysticism of the Second Temple period prompts us to look closer at the other New Testament texts to see whether they too exhibit some of the tell-tale marks of mysticism which may enable us to pursue the mystical evidence further in less overtly apocalyptic texts.
CHAPTER FIVE

THE MYSTICAL ELEMENT IN THE GOSPELS AND ACTS

The Book of Revelation is prime testimony to the existence of a lively visionary, experiential engagement with Scripture in the first century CE. It evinces a mystical dimension which is not unique in the New Testament. It is the more overtly theological works of the New Testament (the Pauline corpus, the letter to the Hebrews, and the Fourth Gospel) which have been the starting place for discussions of the relationship between Jewish mysticism and the New Testament. But the Synoptic Gospels contain several passages where this kind of background illustrates important aspects of the text. While there is little in the Gospels which suggests preoccupation with heaven and the disclosure of its mystery, there are hints that important dimensions of their messages are thoroughly imbued with an apocalyptic outlook which deserves the epithet ‘mystical’. As we know from the Book of Revelation, where what is hidden and revealed to the seer will ultimately be revealed when the New Jerusalem comes down to earth, the mystical and the eschatological overlap. Luke 12:2, ‘Nothing is covered up that will not be uncovered, and nothing secret that will not become known,’ well summarises the relationship between the two.

This chapter surveys mainly passages from the Synoptic Gospels and Acts in which heaven impinges on earth, whether through angelic appearances, visions, or the identification between inhabitants of heaven and the actors in salvation history. The Gospel of Matthew in particular, it will be suggested, contains an apocalyptic motif which is an important part of its narrative. The chapter concludes with a summary of the critical place apocalyptic themes have in the theological substructure of the Gospel of John.

Angels and Shepherds: The Lucan Infancy Narratives

The famous passage in Luke 2:9ff. which speaks of the extraordinary manifestation of the angelic world at the time of the birth of Jesus
anaesthetizes our reading by its very familiarity.\(^1\) Yet it is a remarkable outcrop within the Synoptic tradition. The appearance of angels is by no means frequent in the Gospels. One thinks of passages in John, for example, where there is the promise of an angelophany in 1:51, a promise of an apocalyptic demonstration which is otherwise singularly lacking in the Gospel, the mistaken identification of an angelic audition in John 12:29, or the (possible) addition to the Gethsemane narrative in Luke 22:43. The situation is little different in the other Gospels. Even Luke-Acts, which has more angelic appearances,\(^2\) has little to compare with the concentration of angelophanies in the first two chapters of the Gospel of Luke. As in Matthew the peculiar circumstances of Jesus’ birth are explained by apocalyptic revelation (Luke 1:26; cf. Matt 1:20). Such insight into the birth of the Messiah together with the spontaneous ejaculation of praise of God in Luke 1:46ff. and 68ff. place these stories within the general ambiance of the world of apocalypticism. Nevertheless, what is described is not the result of the door opened in heaven with access to another world. It involves the attendance of the heavenly host in the mundane circumstances of human birth. The closest parallels to the appearance of the angelic host to the shepherds in 2:9 may be found in the account of the call-vision of Isaiah ( Isa 6), where the prophet is brought into the glory of heavenly court with the seraphim lauding the enthroned God in the Temple. Parallel to this, as we have seen, is the vision of John of Patmos in Rev 4 in which the seer witnesses the worship in heaven and the adoration offered to the one seated upon the throne of glory. In comparison with both of these passages, however, the Lucan text portrays the angelic host singing the praises of God neither in Temple nor in heaven (2:13) but with a group of herdsmen at night (2:8) on a Judean hillside, just as Ezekiel had glimpsed the fiery manifestation of the divine glory by a river in Babylon rather than in the Jerusalem Temple. While it may be possible to see some link with the night-time as the time of revelation and apocalyptic insight (see Dan 7), the mundane circumstances of the demonstration of apocalyptic glory is here reminiscent of a theme evident in the Gospel of Matthew: the divine is located in unexpected places, among the lowly and pre-eminently in the humiliated Son of God.

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\(^1\) For a contribution to the reception history see Olsson, ‘Canticle of the Heavenly Host’.

There are parallels from the early rabbinic tradition which should be considered. In the early mystical tradition as found in the rabbinic texts there is a story of the exposition of the merkava by Elazar ben Arakh before his teacher Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai. In it we find a similar assembly of the angels to witness the revelation of the divine glory. This story is well attested in the rabbinic sources and is to be found in the Tosefta and the Mekhilta of R. Shimon ben Yohai as well as in both Talmuds. The longest version of the story is that which is contained in the Babylonian Talmud:3

Our rabbis said: A story of R. Yohanan ben Zakkai who was riding upon an ass and was going along a road. And R. Elazar b. Arakh who was driving the ass behind him said to him, Rabbi teach me one section of the story of the chariot. Yohanan said to him, Have I not taught you, Not the chariot with one person unless he is a sage able to understand of his own knowledge. He said to him, Rabbi, give me permission to speak something before you which you have taught me. He said to him, Speak on. Immediately R. Yohanan b. Zakkai got down from his ass and wrapped himself and sat upon a stone under an olive-tree. Elazar said to him, Rabbi, why did you get down from the ass? Yohanan answered, Is it right that you expound the story of the chariot with the Shekhina with us and the ministering angels accompanying us and me riding upon an ass? Immediately R. Elazar b. Arak began the story of the chariot and he expounded it. Fire came down from heaven and encompassed all the trees which were in the field. All of them began to sing the song. What was the song they sang? ‘Praise the Lord from the earth, dragons and deeps, fruitful trees and all cedars, praise the Lord’ (Ps 148:7,9,14). An angel answered from the fire, This is indeed the story of the chariot. R. Yohanan b. Zakkai stood up and kissed him on the head and said, Blessed is the Lord God of Israel who has given a son to Abraham our father who knows how to understand and to investigate and to expound the story of the chariot. Some expound well and do not perform well, perform well and do not expound well. Elazar b. Arakh expounds well and performs well. Blessed are you Abraham our father that Elazar b. Arakh has come forth from your loins.

While there are significant variations among the versions in the exposition of the merkava (e.g. whether there was an angelic attendance or fire at the exposition of the merkava), the angels, according to the version in the Babylonian Talmud, attend to the accurate exposition of the meaning of the chapter. In the Gospel of Luke their presence

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3 tHag 2:1; yHag 77a; bHag 14b; MekSbY mishpatim 58:1 (Epstein-Melamed 158f.), and see further below p. 425.
is testimony to the presence of the Messiah in humility in Bethlehem. Just as the divine Shekhina is with the rabbis as they glimpse the divine mysteries, so that is true of the shepherds who go to view that which angels had longed to look upon (Luke 10:23 cf. 1 Pet 1:12). There is some similarity with another theme elsewhere in the midrash. Angels are summoned to gaze upon righteous individuals. In Jacob’s case this is because he is in some sense an embodiment of the divine glory. This is stated most explicitly in the Targumim on Gen 28:12: ‘Come see Jacob the pious whose features (איקונין, a loan word derived from the Greek εἰκών) are fixed on the throne of glory which you desire to look on. So the rest of the holy angels of the LORD descended to look on him.’

In Luke 2:14 the heavenly host ascribes glory to God just as the inhabitants of heaven in Rev 4:11 and 5:13 join in the hymns of praise. The proclamation of divine glory in the heavenly world (δόξα ἐν ὑψίστοις θεῷ) is here paralleled by the declaration of divine shalom among humans. In this the angelic hymn reflects the structure of Revelation as a whole which is a movement towards the moment when the assertion of divine glory in heaven—which in the early part of the vision contrasts with the scenes of death, destruction and disobedience on earth—is ultimately manifested in a world where the Shekhina dwells with humanity (Rev 21:3). Luke 2:14 still maintains a division between heaven and earth (much as in 1QM 17:5ff.), looking forward to that moment when as in Rev 21 the division between the two is transcended.

There is implied in these words a wish for peace as an eschatological possibility now declared as a fact through the angelic pronouncement. As in Revelation the angels proclaim a peace which is at present absent from the cosmos. The attendance of the heavenly host is testimony to the extraordinary situation of that night when the Messiah was born. There is, at least temporarily, heaven on earth anticipating that era without Satan in the ministry of Jesus (Luke 4:13), a view also reflected in the unique visionary report in Luke 10:18. As in the unusual circumstances of the recitation of the mysteries of the merkava, when the Shekhina is to be found with the two rabbis, and the fire of heaven testifies to the communion between heaven and earth which takes place during the recitation of the divine merkava, so here too an insignificant moment is suffused with profound theological significance.

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4 The passage is discussed in connection with John 1:51 below, 126–128.
These chapters of Luke are replete with the hope for deliverance, and the eschatological salvation has perhaps distracted attention from the significance of this, what the writer of Ephesians calls ‘the mystery hidden from eternity’ (Eph 3:9). The ‘vision’ of the babe in the manger, which humble shepherds are privileged to see, is paralleled in the event in the Temple when the two ancient saints hail the arrival of Jesus. Simeon speaks of ‘my eyes have seen your salvation’ (repeating the importance of catching sight of the infant, cf. Luke 2:26), explicitly foreshadowing the blessedness of the disciples for witnessing the eschatological mysteries fulfilled (10:23). Likewise Anna, fasting like those who would prepare for a moment of divine disclosure (2:37). What Simeon sees is nothing other than φῶς εἰς ἀποκάλυψιν ἐθνῶν. It is the apocalyptic mystery ‘prepared’ by God (cf. 2 Cor 4:4–6) and ‘for glory’ (כבוד), an important term in mystical lore. Simeon’s song describes a public manifestation rather than an esoteric event, much as the Gospel is described in Col 1:16ff. and Eph 3:9 (cf. Rev 14:6f.; Rom 16:25f.; 1 Cor 2:7). The sight of Jesus is a moment of liberation for Simeon (νῦν ἡμᾶς ὁ θεός τον δοῦλον σου). It is as if he has been in bondage and is now ‘redeemed’ by God through the touch and sight of the infant Messiah (cf. 1 John 1:1). It is a proleptic moment of liberation which still awaits its consummation (Luke 21:28). This at one and the same time parallels, and contrasts with, both the angelophany to the shepherds and the Pentecost experience. In the latter the apparition of tongues of fire, reminiscent of the merkava, appear as a sign of the divine presence. The insight of Simeon is reflected in his ability to discern apocalypse without any further proof of the divine than could be seen in the ordinary appearance of this child and his poor parents.

In Luke angels have a slightly higher profile, particularly if disputed passages like Luke 22:43 are taken into account. What is particularly striking is the way in which key figures are compared to angels. As he stands before the Sanhedrin Stephen is described in Acts 6:15. While there is no suggestion that Stephen is an angel, his persona resembles that of an angel (though the strength of the link is brought out by Codex Bezae’s addition of the words ἐστώτως εἰς μέσον αὐτῶν). Yet the paradox is that the one who is like an angel is guilty of blasphemous offences (Acts 6:14). The commendation of Stephen (Acts 6:8) is reminiscent of the way in which Paul talks of his apostolic office in 2 Cor 12:12

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5 Rowland, Open Heaven, 368.
Despite the signs and wonders and the resemblance to an angel there is no suggestion that Stephen is an angel any more than are the wonder-working Paul and Barnabas according to Acts 14:11. The point is that Stephen’s significance vis à vis the celestial hierarchy is stressed without him becoming an angel. As a human he has a position superior to them (cf. Heb 2:7ff.). Likewise in Acts 12:15, Peter, who has escaped from captivity, is at first thought to be an angel (cf. Matt 18:10). Here the assumption is that what had appeared was merely his angel. Instead it was something better, a flesh and blood person, just like the Lord who had appeared to the disciples in Luke 24:39. There the disciples thought that they had seen πνεῦμα (Marcion and D: φάντασμα). But the risen Christ stresses that what they handle (cf. 1 John 1:1) has flesh and bones: even the risen Christ does not possess an angelic body but a body of flesh. Whereas John the Baptist might have resembled an angel in that he came neither eating or drinking, the Son of Man was very much a man of flesh and blood, not like the angels, who was thought by his opponents to resemble the rebellious son of Deut 21:20).

**Baptism and Transfiguration**

As with the stories of Jesus’ birth the accounts of his baptism include apocalyptic terminology to underline the divine authorization of Jesus. Apart from the allusion to Ezek 1:1 in the reference to the open heaven, in all three Synoptic Gospels, the presence of fire or light is to be found in some versions of the baptism of Jesus in the Western tradition. For example, in the Old Latin version of Matt 3:15 we read: *Et cum baptizaretur lumen ingens circumfulsit de aqua ita ut timerent omnes qui advenerant*. The descent of fire at the baptism is known also to Justin in the middle of the second century (Dial. 88:3) and parallels with the fiery character of the divine throne vision in Ezek 1.10 But the

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7 Schäfer, *Rivalität*.
8 Goodman, ‘Do Angels Eat?’
10 In Revelation fire and water contrast with one another, the former threatening in ch. 15 the latter linked with the grace of life in the New Jerusalem in ch. 21, see above 94.
connections with the apocalyptic and mystical tradition in the baptism are evident elsewhere in this story. The heavens are opened just as they were to the prophet Ezekiel by the river Chebar (καὶ ἠνοίχθησαν οἱ οὐρανοί, καὶ εἶδον ὀράσεις θεοῦ), thus fulfilling that prophetic longing that God would rend the heavens and fulfil the divine purposes (cf. Isa 64:1). The descent of the spirit on Jesus is compared with that of a dove. We have a version of a story in which the early second-century teacher Shimon ben Zoma meditated upon the first chapter of Genesis and in particular the words in Gen 1:6.\footnote{bHag 15a; cf. tHag 2:6; yHag 2, 77a–b; GenR 2,4.}

Our rabbis taught… A story concerning R. Joshua b. Hananya who was sitting on top of the Temple mount and Ben Zoma saw him but did not stand up before him. Joshua said to him, Whence and whither, Ben Zoma? Ben Zoma said to him, I was looking at the space between the upper and lower waters and there is only three fingers breadth between them as it is said, The spirit of God was hovering on the face of the waters like a dove which hovers over its young without any touching [only mentioned in the version in the Babylonian Talmud]. R. Joshua said to his disciples, Ben Zoma is still outside.

In this meditation Ben Zoma saw the gap which separated the upper and lower celestial waters, which he linked with the reference in Gen 1:2, to the spirit of God hovering on the face of the waters. He compared the gap to the one which exists when a bird hovers over its nest. In the Babylonian Talmud version the hovering of the spirit of God over the celestial waters is compared to the way in which a dove hovered over its young, like the divine Spirit’s brooding over the Son of God—in Gen 1:2, via the use of the verb רוח in Deut 32:11 (cf. רוח in 4Q521 frg 2 II:6).\footnote{Abrahams, 'Dove', and Marcus, 'Baptismal Vision'.} In the story of Ben Zoma the meditation is a detached piece of cosmological speculation, however, whereas in the story in the Synoptic Gospels the creative spirit hovers over the head of the Son of God, and Jesus is depicted not as a detached observer of matters of mystical interest, like Ben Zoma, who penetrated the secrets of a particular part of the cosmos by his interest in maase bereshit. Rather, Jesus is represented as seeing the Spirit coming towards him with the commission of himself as the anointed agent of God (cf. Luke 4:18 and Acts 2:17).
The Transfiguration also has some similarities with theophany scenes. In particular it most closely resembles the vision of Dan 10 and the christophany of Rev 1:13ff., where the risen Christ appears to the exiled seer on Patmos. There, as we have seen, the links with the throne-theophany of Ezekiel and related angelic appearances are widely acknowledged. Here alone of all the Synoptic texts—and, surprisingly so, given the eschatological nature of the post-resurrection appearances and the emerging beliefs about the glorious body of the risen Christ, as is evident from Phil 3:21—we come closest to the glorious heavenly appearance of the angelic figure.

If we examine one of the oldest of the throne theophany scenes we find some similarities. Thus in 1 En 14:20f. the clothing and the face of the divinity which are mentioned there are also mentioned in Matt 17:2 and Luke 9:29. No less than four words are found in common in the Greek of the different Synoptic narratives and 1 En 14:20f.: sun, face, snow (a variant reading in Matt 17:2 and in Luke 9:29) and clothing. The word ἐξαστράπτων in Luke 9:29 is reminiscent of 1 En 14:11 and 17 and also Ezek 1. Also the disciples fall on their faces (Matt 17:6), a typical reaction to a theophany (cf. Ezek 1:28 and Dan 10:9). The visionary character of the experience is brought out in Matthew where the event is described as ὦραμα, cf. Acts 7:31 and 9:10. In Test. Abr. Rec. A 12, the appearance of the one on the throne, who exercises judgement and is identified with Abel, has several resemblances of wording with the transfiguration stories.

Differences exist among the accounts. Mark’s account, for example, is arguably less ‘theophanic’ than that in Matthew, possibly in line with Mark’s theologia crucis and the consequent need to maximize the centrality of the way of the cross as the way to glory and strengthen the humanity of Jesus by not overstressing the divine. Nevertheless, this extraordinary demonstration of Jesus’ divine glory is included, as also the superiority of Jesus to those figures of Israel’s past, who were at present sharing the glory of the heavenly world but had now become

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13 On the wider philosophical and theological implications, see Wiebe, Visions, 111–149.
14 See Rowland, ‘Risen Christ’; Sabbe, ‘Rédaction’.
16 Davies—Allison fail to recognize the point of the similarities with Daniel and 1 Enoch in concluding ‘that parallels are not always what they seem to be’ (Matthew 2: 689).
participants in this dramatic transformation into heavenly glory in the midst of human flesh and blood.\footnote{Josephus links the fate of Moses and Elijah in Antiquities, and see further on Enoch 45.} An inner circle of disciples is privileged to witness this unique moment (reminiscent of the privileges granted to selected disciples to know about and expound the mysteries of the merkava). It is as though the veil which had hidden the true identity of Jesus is removed, and he is beheld in communion with those who were his ‘natural’ companions—the exalted Elijah and Moses—a mystery which has hitherto only been recognized by the demons.

The experience on the mount of Transfiguration provokes a reaction from Peter about the significance of what he has seen. According to Mark 9:6 Peter did not know what to say because of his terror (cf. Mark 16:8), a theme retained in Luke 9:33f. That indication of ignorance and bewilderment is absent in Matt, however, where the request to build the three σκηναί is rather an indication of the perceptiveness of Peter. Perhaps Peter’s only error is to attribute to Moses and Elijah an equivalent glory to that of Jesus. Unlike Mark’s more enigmatic presentation of the discussion which took place on the descent from the mount of Transfiguration, Matthew’s version continues the theme of insight in the ensuing recognition of the disciples about the identity of Elijah. Here the dominant ideology is outlined which Jesus challenges (Matt 17:10ff.). In Matthew’s version Jesus’ enigmatic reply is immediately understood by the disciples, however, as a reference to John the Baptist (v13). Jesus has already asserted to those willing to accept it that John is Elijah who is about to come (Matt 11:14). And come he does, sharing the divine glory on the mount of Transfiguration, and, also incognito, in the eccentric prophet of judgement by the river Jordan. By the time of Elijah’s appearing at the Transfiguration, according to Matthew’s chronology, however, John has been executed (14:11f.). After death he is thought by some to have reappeared in the person of Jesus (Matt 16:14), but the disciples understand (perhaps as a result of supernatural insight) that John is in fact the heavenly Elijah who is to come and whom they have just seen at the transfiguration.

Matthew’s Gospel stresses the unique insight granted to, among others, the disciples. As the result of their heavenly vision the disciples seem to be able to understand more of the nature of salvation history. Such insight into the nature of the divine purposes is hinted at elsewhere in
the Gospel (e.g. 13:51 and 16:12 and 17). In all these cases it has followed fairly explicit explanatory teaching by Jesus. In ch. 13 Jesus asks the disciples whether they understand, thereby distinguishing themselves from those who see but do not perceive and hear without understanding (13:13, 14, 15 and 19). They unequivocally identify themselves with the seed sown in the good soil (13:23). In 16:12, after the discussion in the boat about the significance of the loaves, the disciples accept that Jesus was talking about the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees when he spoke of their ‘leaven’, hardly a matter of considerable insight when Jesus had made the matter abundantly plain in vv6 and 11. The interpretative wisdom is, however, more marked in 16:17 and 17:13. In the former it is not flesh and blood which has been the source of the revelation which enables Peter’s insight about the true identity of Jesus. Likewise it is a matter of great moment to attach the mystery of the return of Elijah to John the Baptist, a flash of insight whose place immediately after the vision on the mount may be worthy of note.

Wisdom and insight about the nature of things, particularly concerning the mysteries of the future, are typical of the apocalyptic and mystical tradition. In apocalypses, after the throne-theophany, for example, the mystic is granted wisdom and insight. In the Apocalypse of Abraham, for example, the patriarch is shown the meaning of the story of humanity from creation to eschaton. In 3 Enoch the ascent to heaven includes angelological mysteries as well as the secret of God’s inactivity on behalf of the Jews. That kind of insight about a problem is paralleled in the enigmatic passages which follow the account of the ascent of the Four to the heavenly Paradise in its version in the Babylonian Talmud (bHag 14b). In that version in particular there is little doubt that what is described is a heavenly journey with all its perils and privileges. At its conclusion Ben Azzai (one of the four along with ben Zoma, Elisha ben Avuya—alias Aher—and Akiva) is asked halakhic questions which he proceeds to answer with fluency, presumably as the result of his heightened awareness and insight. It is a feature of the later mystical tradition that such insight about the mysteries of Tora interpretation is vouchsafed to the mystical adept who safely makes the heavenly journey.

The baptism and transfiguration of Jesus have a central place in the Synoptic version of the narrative of the life of Jesus of Nazareth, and yet they often pay a curiously small part in accounts of Christian origins. They are like the testimonies to the mystical practice of ancient Judaism divulging little about the precise content of the experience,
whether in the life of Jesus or the communities which preserved and revered such stories and the religion they embodied. We would like to know more, and the temptation to press beyond the fragmentary testimony to a strange and awesome world of mystical transformation and apocalyptic insight is tempting for the historian or theologian. It is not just Christian reverence which prevents the attempt to pierce the veil of mystery which surrounds these strange, but tantalizing, accounts however.  

**The Son of Man**

The Gospels present us with a picture of Jesus speaking somewhat enigmatically, apparently about himself, as ‘Son of Man’. The meaning of this phrase on the lips of Jesus has been a matter of considerable debate, and there has of late been much less willingness on the part of commentators to contemplate the possibility that Jesus of Nazareth may have identified himself, either in the present or in the future, with the heavenly being of Dan 7:13. In several passages in the Synoptic Gospels (e.g. Mark 8:38; Luke 12:8) the Son of Man appears as the leader of the heavenly host or heavenly advocate, like Michael or Yaoel in the Apocalypse of Abraham. Elsewhere, particularly in Matt 25:31–45 the Son of Man has an altogether more glorious role and sits on the throne of glory, like the similar figure in, for example, 1 En 69:29, exercising divine judgement. The relationship between the human Jesus and the heavenly Son of Man is never explained, and manifests the same kind of ambiguity as we find in the stark contrast between the dazzling figure on the mount of Transfiguration and the ‘one who came eating and drinking’, apparently no different from the rest of those ‘born of flesh’.

One final passage deserves our attention. A striking feature of the Sanhedrin trial in both Mark, and the version in Mathew which is likely to be dependent upon it, is the dramatic reaction of the High priest to Jesus’ blasphemy: ‘I tell you this, from now on you will see the Son

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19 See e.g. Jeremias, *NT Theology*, 257; Collins, *Cosmology*, 139–158; and Casey, *Son of Man*.
of Man seated at the right hand of the Almighty and coming with the clouds of heaven’ (Matt 26:64).

The problem of heavenly session is at the heart of the well-known legend about Elisha ben Avuya (Aher) recorded in the Babylonian Talmud. In the account of the heresy of Elisha ben Avuya in bHag 15a (parallel in 3 En 16; Schäfer § 856) Elisha’s offence was to have mistaken/supposed that the exalted angel Metatron was a second divine power when he saw him seated in the heavenly world. In the story of the Four who entered Pardes the application of Eccl 5:6 to Elisha by way of explicating his offence of ‘cutting the shoots’ (‘Do not let your mouth bring your flesh into sin, and do not say before the angel that it was a mistake; why should God be angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands’) suggests that Elisha’s offence was seen to be a mistake about an angel. The version in 3 En 16 is much more elaborate, however. Metatron is depicted as sitting on a throne like the throne of God and is surrounded by attendants very much like those of God. Metatron is a judge in the heavenly court whereas in bHagiga he is merely a heavenly scribe (like Enoch in 1 En 12; Jub 4:23; Test. Abr. Rec. B 11; PsYon Gen 5:24) who records the merits of Israel. As we have noted, there is other early evidence of an angel who shared the attributes of God e.g. Apoc. Abr. 10 and 17f. Here the angel Yaoel has God’s name in him as does Metatron in bSan 38b and 3 En 12, Schäfer § 896. There are hints that such beliefs were no isolated phenomenon as is illustrated by a debate between Akiva and Yose about the significance of the plural ‘thrones’ in Dan 7:9:

One passage says: His throne was fiery flames and another, Till thrones were placed and the Ancient of Days sat. There is no contradiction, one throne for God and one for David. This is the view of R. Akiva. R. Yose the Galilean said to him, Akiva, how long will you go on profaning the Shekhina? Rather it is one for God’s justice and one for mercy. (bHag 14a)

In the light of this dialogue it is a least comprehensible why, in the Sanhedrin trial according to Matthew and Mark, Jesus might have been thought of speaking in a blasphemous way (though there is nothing in the Gospels which might suggest a literal infringement of the law concerning blasphemy in Lev 24:16). The words of Jesus as reported in the Gospels may have been construed as asserting that there was another divine figure with equal power to the one God, evident in the fact that he was sitting alongside God rather than standing as a suppli-
the Lamb *stands* in the midst of the heavenly court, or a servant (cf. Acts 7:56f. and 1 En 49:2).

Another approach taken to the Matthaean versions of Jesus’ statement before the High Priest (which also applies to the Marcan), is that the sitting and coming may be best understood in the light of the merkava tradition and that the order in which we have these verbs is significant.\(^{21}\) This is a matter which has taxed commentators in the past: we would have expected that a description of a process of exaltation or apotheosis would have the Son of Man coming and then sitting. How then are we to explain the unusual order? If we suppose that the Son of Man is closely linked with the one seated on the throne of glory, as a companion on the divine throne chariot, then we might understand the *parousia* of the Son of Man as that of the one who rides in the chariot. He sits alongside, or even in the place of, God on the divine throne-chariot and comes in glory like the God who rides on the clouds in Ps 68:4 (cf. Eph 4:8). Such an interpretation is compatible with the unease about second figures sitting in glory in heaven and may indeed be reflected in the position given to the Lamb of sharing the divine throne in Rev 7:17 and 22:3.

In several passages there emerges a hint that Jesus possessed a sense of apocalyptic destiny in the way in which he spoke of the necessity of the suffering of the Son of Man—the emphatic δεῖ (e.g. Mark 8:31; 9:31 and 10:33f.). The similarity with Rev 1:1 and 4:1 suggests a possible link with the apocalyptic mysteries of Dan 2:29 and 45 (Theodotion) rather than those already contained in the pages of Scriptures as is often suggested.\(^{22}\) According to the Synoptic Gospels the sense of destiny concerning the predetermined lot of the Son of Man follows in the wake of the transfiguration, itself an apocalyptic moment, which, according to Luke at least (9:31), was a time when the transfigured Jesus talked about his ‘departure’ (τὴν ἔξοδον αὐτοῦ ἣν ἠμέλλειν πληροῦν ἐν Ἰερουσαλήμ). The ἀνάληψις in Jerusalem (Luke 9:51), as in the Gospel of John, turns out to be an experience of worldly ignominy and humiliation. The path to glory proves to be one which is significantly at odds with what might be expected in the merkava tradition, where ascent to glory, and, possibly, transformation into a body of glory, is hardly through death and annihilation (even if this remains an ever

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\(^{22}\) E.g. Davies—Allison, *Matthew 2*: 636. These themes have been explored by Theissen, *A Theory*, 61–118.
The apocalyptic dimension becomes particularly clear after the Transfiguration in Luke’s Gospel. Luke 10 is replete with terminology concerning the revelation of apocalyptic mysteries. First, Jesus hints at a decisive heavenly vision (10:18, cf. Rev 12:9). Second, the disciples are told that their names are engraved in the heavens, which parallels the way in which Enoch is offered information engraved in the heavenly tablets according to 1 En 81:1; 93:2; 103:2; 106:19. Third, Jesus rejoices in the spirit, a moment of inspired utterance, asserting the insight of the νηπίοι and the inability of the wise to perceive the things of God. Finally, the privilege of the disciples is stressed. They are recipients of apocalyptic mysteries which kings and prophets longed to see, recipients of a privilege, and now with a peculiar vocation to be the angels who go before the face of the Lord (Luke 9:52) and to sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel, inheritors in their turn of that which had been passed on from God (22:28–30, cf. 10:22). That sense of privilege, in the context of the divine economy, what Karl Mannheim has aptly termed ‘the chiliastic mentality’, is a theme echoed throughout the New Testament (1 Cor 10:11; 1 Pet 1:11–13), and marks out the peculiar kairos of revelation. It is paralleled by the peculiar sense of divine fulfillment in the depiction of the Pentecost experience, fulfilling the eschatological prophecy of the book of Joel and underlined by Luke’s explanatory addition of the phrase ‘in the last days’ in Acts 2:17. Just as in the Gospel of Matthew the ‘little ones’ can understand, and the disciples after the ‘vision’ at the transfiguration have an understanding of the identity and significance of the heavenly visitants not previously comprehended, here in Luke the aftermath of the transfiguration yields a variety of hints of the divine significance of the persons and purposes which have been unfolding.

Agnosticism with regard to the precise historical detail of Jesus’ apocalyptic consciousness cannot mask the importance of recognizing such apocalyptic moments as a decisive part of the Christian memory of Jesus and the unveiling of his identity which is indelibly linked with such moments of revelation in the Gospel tradition. New Testament

theology has had to confront the problem posed by apocalypticism in Christian origins. Hitherto the challenge has focused on the eschatological content of the proclamation. The indications are, however, that, in addition, the mystical and experiential, rooted in the esoteric tradition of Second Temple Judaism, is equally, if not more, important. In this respect that rich tradition of messianism in Judaism suggests that future students of the character and development of early Christian messianism may need to give greater attention to the study of comparative messianism, with a range of similarities to early Christian theology too often neglected.25

'I Send My Angel Before My Face'

If visionary insight enables understanding of the unique moment, the various actors in the eschatological drama themselves at least enact, and perhaps even embody, the expected eschatological agents. Nowhere is this seen better than in early Christian testimony to John the Baptist. All the Synoptic Gospels link John the Baptist with the messenger who is to precede the great and terrible day of the Lord according to Mal 3:1. In addition to the fact that the word used for that messenger is (ἄγγελος, מלאך) there is in this verse an allusion to Exod 23:20:

Exod: καὶ ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου
Mal: ἰδοὺ ἐγὼ ἐξαποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου, καὶ ἐπιβλέψεται ὁδὸν πρὸ προσώπου μου

Exodus 23:20 is important within Jewish mystical literature for it is the verse which supports the belief in the exalted angel Metatron whose greatness derived from his possession of the divine name (see bSan 38b).26 The identification of John the Baptist with an angel is already known to Origen. In his commentary on the Gospel of John (2.25 on 1:6) he interprets ‘there was a man sent from God’ with a quotation of the important Jewish pseudepigraphon The Prayer of Joseph.27 There is a lengthy digression in his commentary; Origen intends to make credible

25 See Idel, Messianic Mystics, especially 58–100 on Abraham Abulafia; Scholem, Sabbatai Sevi.
26 See Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, 43, and Lieberman in Gruenwald, Merkavah Mysticism, 235.
27 The authenticity and theological provenance is discussed by Smith, ‘Prayer of Joseph’. See also Böhlig, ‘Jakob als Engel’; Horbury, Jewish Messianism, 89, 125.
the belief concerning John the Baptist that he was an angel and took human form in order to bear witness to the light:

I Jacob who am speaking to you am also Israel, an angel of God, and a ruling spirit. Abraham and Isaac were created before any work. But I Jacob whom men call Jacob but whose name is Israel am he whom God called Israel, which means a man seeing God,28 because I am the firstborn of every living thing to whom God gives life.

And when I was coming up from Syrian Mesopotamia, Uriel, the angel of God, came forth and said that I (Jacob-Israel) had descended to earth and I had tabernacled among men and that I had been called by the name of Jacob. He envied me and fought with me and wrestled with me saying that his name and the name that is before every angel was to be above mine. I told him his name and what rank he held among the sons of God. Are you not Uriel, the eighth after me, and I Israel the archangel of the power of the Lord and the chief captain among the sons of God? Am I not Israel the first minister before the face of God? And I called upon my God by the inextinguishable name. (trans. J.Z. Smith, in Charlesworth, OTP 2, 713 adapted)

The importance of this Jewish work, which is quoted only partially by Origen, is that we learn that the patriarch Jacob is the incarnation of the exalted angel Israel. The terminology used here is reminiscent of that used of the incarnation of the Logos in John 1:14 and is testimony to the possibility of a Jewish writing contemplating a human being as the incarnation of a heavenly being (a concept with which Origen seems to have no problem).29 It is possible that the Synoptic Gospels reflect a parallel kind of identification of John with an angel. John could be either an angelic being (Elijah who has returned from heaven) or himself an incarnation of an angel, just as Jacob/Israel in the Prayer of Joseph. All this may suggest explicitly that John is no ordinary human being (ἀμὴν λέγω ὑμῖν· οὐκ ἐγήγερται ἐν γεννητοῖς γυναικῶν μείζων Ἰωάννου τοῦ βαπτιστοῦ, Matt 11:11). This is usually taken to indicate John’s unique status, in language reminiscent of Sir 49:14 (‘No one to equal Enoch has been created on earth’). The description of John the Baptist as one born of women is also reminiscent of the derogatory comments of angels who would prevent Enoch ascending through the heavens to the merkava in 3 En 1–2 (Schäfer § 883–4).30 Thus the verse stresses John’s humanity: he is the greatest among those born of women and

28 This interpretation is found in Philo, Conf. 146.
29 Discussed in Hengel, Son of God, 89.
30 Schäfer, Rivalatät.
is not of heavenly origin (unlike the Son of Man). Alternatively, the
sentence could mean that there is none greater among those born of
women precisely because he is also an exalted angel, and not one born
of women. Indeed, he is none other than the one sent before the people
(Exod 23:20). John is, as we have seen, explicitly identified with Elijah
in two places (Matt 11:14 and 17:13). In the first of these passages it
is a moment of significance as is indicated by the use of the words ὁ
ἐχών οὖς ἀκουέτω, and in the second it is the result of the insight of
the disciples when their awareness has been heightened as the result of
the vision on the mountain. At this point they differ from the authori-
ties who lack understanding, that ability to recognize (ἐπιγινώσκω) as
the result of revelatory insight (cf. Matt 16:17) granted by the Son who
holds the key to apocalypse (11:27). Such an insight is typical of the
heightened intellectual powers given to the Messiah and those infused
with the messianic spirit.31

Despite John’s greatness, however, the least in the Kingdom is greater
than he. ‘The least’ could refer to Jesus, though equally to anyone who
identifies with Jesus.32 If John is the incarnation of an angel, in what
sense is ‘the least’ superior? In the context of Matthew (and Luke and
the Q tradition) the superior status of the ‘the least’ is held by the angelic
Son of Man (Matt 10:32 cf. Luke 12:8).33 John may be God’s angel but
his position is inferior to that of Jesus, the heavenly advocate (cf. Matt
10:32f.) who, when on earth, has nowhere to lay his head (Matt 8:20)
and those who follow him. At the time of Jesus’ words about John in
Matthew 11 John is Elijah who is to come. He has not been perceived
as such by the disciples, whose eyes have not been opened to his real
identity. By the time of the transfiguration, however, John, who has by
now been beheaded, is seen by a privileged group of disciples, who had
been given eyes to discern the true meaning of persons and events, as
the glorious Elijah who had appeared with Moses and the glorified Jesus
on the mount of Transfiguration. To the rest, however, John’s identity as
the angel who went before the face of the Lord is hidden. He is merely
‘one born of woman’ (cf. Gal 4:4), and, as such, he resembles the Son

31 See Idel, Messianic Mystics, especially 58–100.
32 Cf. Davies—Alison, Matthew 2:251, who reject the christological interpretation,
despite its long pedigree, because ‘Matthew is not likely to have thought of Jesus as
the lesser or the least’.
33 On the background see Horbury, Jewish Messianism, especially 78–108. Μικροί
is used in Matt. of those who follow Jesus or are in some way linked with him (10:42;
of Man who appeared in humble guise and whose fate will resemble that of John (Matt 17:12). Elsewhere, the link between John and an angelic being in Matthew’s Gospel seems to be explicitly denied in the Gospel of John (John explicitly rejects an identification with Elijah who is to come in 1:21) and perhaps in the Gospel of Luke also, where the birth of the Baptist is described even if his conception took place in extraordinary circumstances (Luke 1:57).

A feature of Matt 11:7–19, and its parallel in Luke 7:24ff., is the complex interrelations between persons. Jesus and John are linked, despite the differences in their behaviour, John the ascetic and Jesus the rebellious son (cf. Deut 21:20), with wisdom (as her children in Luke 7:35). It is the possibility of an ‘incarnation’ of a figure from the past that helps onlookers explain who Jesus is (Matt 16:14, cf. Mark 6:14f.) as he too might overlap with the identity of another, albeit contemporary, figure. The identity of an individual here becomes ‘porous’, and, given the evidence of the Gospels, open to other powers, whether demonic or divine. All the Gospels affirm that the Spirit descended upon Jesus, and so he is either inspired by, or an embodiment of the divine, rather than the demonic. Onlookers could detect that both John and Jesus were not ordinary humans, though the assertion ‘he has a demon’ (Matt 11:18; 12:24; 9:34; Mark 3:22; John 7:20; 8:48; 10:20), according to the Gospels, misinterprets the character of that identity.34 Indeed, Elijah was a figure who not only continued in his successor but was himself seen as a continuation of an earlier figure, Phineas.35 Whether he was an angel or the incarnation of an angel in a human, the traditions about John reflect a desire to reject the notion that John was the returned Elijah who had been taken up to heaven even if he may have been a being sent from the divine world, as Origen believed.36

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34 On this issue of identity see below p. 54 and the fascinating oscillation in William Blake’s poem Milton between the poet and Milton (especially Milton, plate 23 where the Elijah/John typology is appropriated to signify the eschatological significance of the Milton/Blake ‘syzygy’). See the suggestive comments in Idel, Messianic Mystics, 78.


36 On the different ‘messianic personas’ which could infuse an individual see the remarkable passage discussed in Idel, Messianic Mystics, 78.
Mystical insight is the property not only of people like the disciples, who have the benefit of the quasi-theophanic appearance of Jesus on the sea which leads to that kind of insight (Matt 14:33), but also other humble and insignificant people who recognize him. The dramatic assertion that the νήπιοι are given divine knowledge is immediately followed by a passage (Matt 12:1–8) in which those privileged engage in activity which is controversial in the eyes of the religious authorities.

The juxtaposition of the revelatory thanksgiving in Matt 11:25f. and the actions of the disciples on the sabbath in 12:1ff. (closely linked by the repeated phrase ἐν ἐκείνῳ τῷ καιρῷ) suggests that action is linked with insight as the disciples demonstrate their ability to engage in activity which appears to be contrary to the divine law but in fact is true to the new revelation that mercy is superior to sacrifice. After the outburst of thanksgiving by Jesus to God for having vouchsafed the revelation to the ‘babes’, the disciples are found challenging the wisdom of the teachers in 12:1ff. compared with Jesus’ opponents, who misunderstand the nature of Jesus (9:34; 12:24). They pluck grain on the sabbath, apparently as those who have been given insight from God about Jesus which empowers them to engage in controversial practice as disciples. As we have seen, the disciples have understanding particularly after the vision of Jesus in glory in Matt 17, but also with the benefit of the revelation of their privilege stated by Jesus in 11:25ff. As insiders, they have the kind of understanding which is lacking in outsiders (cf. 13:11ff.). Indeed, they have seen and heard what prophets longed to see (cf. 1 Pet 1:10f.). In this they resemble the student equipped for independent research into the mysteries of the merkava from his own understanding (mHag 2:1). Like the rabbinic material, which is full of warnings to those who think they have sufficient understanding to embark on the exploration of divine mysteries and who need to be reminded of the threat of disaster (three great teachers fell victim as the famous story of the Four who entered pards indicates), Matthew’s Gospel leaves no room for complacency on the part of an élite. The understanding vouchsafed to them offers no immunity from error or guarantee of status, as Peter’s descent from privilege to ‘Satan’ in 16:17–23 indicates.

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37 See below 341ff.
The disciples are not the only ones to have such insight, however. When Jesus enters the Temple he is greeted by children who acclaim him as the Messiah (Matt 21:15f.). These are the νηπιοι spoken of by the Psalmist: ‘Out of the mouths of νηπιοι you have rebuked the mighty’ (Ps 8 NEB). They are the ones who manifest faith and insight and who demonstrate it in the Temple. Indeed, children are offered as the models of true discipleship to those who believe that they particularly have the status to be called disciples (Matt 18:2f.). Children are offered to the disciples as a pattern, all the more necessary when it is remembered how those adult disciples can so easily end up on the side of Satan (Matt 16:22f.) and indeed find themselves betraying the Son of Man (Matt 26:14ff.). Children have a special position. Once again echoing the language of the throne-theophany tradition, the angels of these ‘little ones’ (children are identified with ‘the little ones’ in Matt 18:5–6) are allowed to behold God’s face. That was something denied to ordinary mortals and to angels (1 En 14:21: ‘and no angel could enter and at the appearance of the face of the one who is honoured and praised no creature of flesh could look’). The angels of the little ones are the ones who are linked with those who in worldly terms are insignificant but by virtue of the proximity of their angels to the divine throne have particular privileges to see God (Matt 18:10 cf. 17:2ff.).

The theme of revelatory insight of the ‘little ones’ may be only a subtext of Matthew’s narrative but represents an important theme. The children, the little ones, like their angels, who are in close proximity to the divine glory, are peculiarly able to have that revelatory insight. This insight is not the product of learning or sophistication, nor is it without problems. To be a child is to be at the mercy of the powerful (as is evidenced by Herod’s action) and to be despised by the sophisticated. This may be seen in the attempts by the ruling élite to keep the children quiet in Temple (Matt 21:15). Yet it is a child which poses a threat to the king in Jerusalem (Matt 2:3). It is children, along with the blind and the lame, who greet the meek and lowly king as he enters Jerusalem. In contrast the hierarchy seek to persuade the humble king

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38 A similar connection between proximity to the merkava and certain humans is found in the Jewish haggada where the ancestors are regarded as the embodiment of the mysteries of God’s throne and person. So one source says: ‘The patriarchs are the merkava, the throne-chariot’ (e.g. GenR 47,6 and 69,3). In TgNeof Gen 22 angels compete with one another to catch a glimpse of Abraham and Isaac.
to rebuke the children. For Jesus to place a child in the midst is to challenge the assumption that the child has nothing of worth and only can be heeded when it receives the wisdom from another’s experience. There is another perspective (so typical of the genre of apocalypse) which challenges the traditions of generations.

A concern with the difference of perspective characterizes life in the Kingdom of God. Revelation is a key factor, and Jesus is presented as one who came to utter revelation (Matt 13:35). In the opening chapters the way of God comes through dreams (1:20; 2:13; 2:19). The Magi manifest a different kind of wisdom (like the ‘babes’ in 11:25f.) and prominence is given to the extraordinary phenomenon of the star (2:2) rather than the more conventional wisdom of the scribes. The disciples as the ones to whom divine insight has been given practise their wisdom, and they manifest this by placing human need before institutions and traditions (12:6). As a result they are rebuked by the supposedly wise (cf. 12:24). Children understand and respond to Christ (11:25f.; 21:15f.). At the end of Matthew Pilate is given an opportunity to avoid executing Jesus by the intervention of his wife and her dream (27:19).

Other passages in Matthew suggest that there may be a debt to the merkava tradition. First of all, at the beginning of the Sermon on the Mount Jesus declares that the pure in heart will see God. Once again we have terminology familiar from the throne-theophany tradition in which the mystic is vouchsafed a glimpse of the divine kabod after the heavenly ascent. In Jewish mystical traditions engagement with esoteric matters can only come after the thorough grounding in Mishna, Talmud and Midrash.\textsuperscript{39} An ethical dimension is stressed in Matthew too. It is evident from 5:28 and other passages (9:4; 15:18f.) that the human heart is a site of struggle and the source of perverse and misguided attitudes (9:4; 12:34; 13:15; 15:8) as well as that which motivates true devotion (22:37). The corrupt heart evident in the attitudes of Jesus’ opponents (15:8 cf. 23:25f.) leads to various forms of evil practice which defile a person (15:19). As 6:21 indicates, the repudiation of Mammon and the storing of treasure in heaven demands a disposition of heart which contrasts with the prevailing values (6:25ff.). Jesus is the paradigm of one who is ‘lowly in heart’ (11:29), the meek and lowly king, the child of God (12:18 cf. 11:11). So it is not surprising that it is to ‘the little ones’ that true understanding, culminating in the vision of God, is given.

\textsuperscript{39} Scholem, \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}, 19ff.
At the conclusion of the eschatological discourse in Matt 25:31–45 we find a judgement scene without any parallels in the other Synoptics. Here the heavenly Son of Man sits on the throne of glory. This passage offers the closest parallel to the Similitudes of Enoch where the heavenly Son of Man sits on God’s throne of glory, thus exercising judgement and vindication on behalf of the elect (e.g. 1 En 69:29). But this eschatological appearance of the glorious heavenly Son of Man in the midst of the divine glory is not just some remote expectation. Not only does the Gospel of Matthew conclude with the disciples being confronted with Jesus to whom is given this divine sovereignty (28:18), but in 25:31ff. we find the interpretation of the glorious theophany in the more mundane circumstances of human need. Thus, surprising as it may seem to them, the righteous learn that they have in fact already met the glorious eschatological Son of Man who occupies the throne of glory in the persons of the naked, the poor, the hungry and the imprisoned. Not only is the moment of judgement brought into the present, and its outcome determined by patterns of reaction to those who appear to be nonentities, but also, and more significantly, in them they meet the presence of the Son of Man who is to appear in eschatological glory. They are depicted as agents of the heavenly glorious figure, so that in reacting to them they are reacting to him (cf. 10:40ff.).

The Gospel of Mark: ‘Nothing Hidden Except to Be Revealed’

Mark’s story starts on the margins of Israel’s life with the force of apocalypse, demonstrated by the allusions in Mark 1:10 to Ezek 1:1 as well as Isa 64. Commentators on John’s Gospel have written of a ‘two-level drama’ in the biblical text, and Ched Myers, writing particularly of the Gospel of Mark, of ‘a war of myths’. By this he means not only a conflict between different ways of viewing the world but also a narrative in which understanding of the earthly is only truly possible if another, heavenly or mythical dimension is included. So, for example,

40 See the discussion in Theisohn, Richter.
41 Rowland, ‘Poor’. On the links between the ‘sending’ formula and traditions of mystical ascent see Bühner, Der Gesandte.
42 Ashton, Understanding, 381ff.
43 Myers, Binding, 16 and passim.
the conflict between Jesus and his opponents is a continuation of the struggle with Satan at the Temptation.

Whatever the origin of the phrase, ‘Son of Man’, in Mark’s Gospel there are clear allusions to Daniel (Mark 13:26, cf. 14:62; 2:10). The mysterious heavenly figure who is given divine authority appears in Mark’s Gospel as one exercising that divine authority on earth and yet doomed to suffer and be vindicated. He is also the one who will be seen by his tormentors as the heavenly judge (14:62, cf. Rev 1:7). He appears as an ordinary human (Mark 6:3), yet manifesting a very different kind of power (1:22). To those who are vouchsafed the moment of vision, however, he appears as the glorious Son of Man with his heavenly companions (Mark 9:2ff.). The Son of Man, therefore, bridges the divide between heaven and earth. Just as in Daniel 7, where the heavenly vision represents persons and events on earth, so the Marcan Gospel narrates a merging of the heavenly and the earthy in the acts and struggles of the heavenly Son of Man who exercises authority on earth. The two levels are merged. In this age the meaning and significance of the hidden divine presence escapes the notice of almost all, even eluding, at the last, those most intimate companions of the Son of Man. There are echoes here of the themes of 1 Cor 2:6–9 (and Asc. Isa. 7–10). What ultimately is the case, however, is the demonstration of that which had been secret. After all, ‘nothing is hidden except to be disclosed’ (Mark 4:22).

Mark 13–14 are the chapters in which the allusions to Daniel are most obvious. Jesus leaves the precincts of the Temple and predicts its destruction (cf. 14:58) while the disciples still cling to the glory of the buildings. Mark’s Jesus abandons Jerusalem. In the midst of the cataclysm that surrounds the ‘abomination’ all the disciples have to look forward to is costly martyrdom (13:9) and vindication by the Son of Man. This term, clearly derived from Dan 7 in 13:26 and 14:62, has a political as well as eschatological significance. There is evidence for the use of this passage in Jewish and Christian political theology. The triumph of the Son of Man and the destruction of the beasts which represent the empires of the world is a defiant assertion of the ultimate triumph of God’s representative. Its meaning in the context of the Synoptic narrative is a statement of victory over the political forces ranged

44 Hooker, *Son of Man*.
45 Hartmann, *Prophecy*. 
against Jesus, whether hierarchy or Roman governor. Yet in 15:39 the reign of a king who is not like the rulers of the world (Mark 10:42–45) is acknowledged as God’s son by the representative of Rome, the dominant economic and political power of the day (cf. Phil 2:10–11).

The apocalyptic theme which pervades the Gospel is particularly evident in the account of Jesus’ death which comes at the end of a narrative in which, from ch. 11 onwards, a dominant theme has been the Temple. Jesus is portrayed as a prophet of doom teaching in the centre of the Jewish empire and attracting a mixed response. The climax of Mark’s story comes when the apparent defeat of Jesus turns out to be the moment of his triumph, marked by the destruction of the focus of the symbolic old order, ‘the end of the world’ indeed. The rending of the veil of the Temple relates closely to the complex narrative tapestry of the Gospel.46 At the baptism a heavenly voice proclaims Jesus as God’s son—a theme taken up at 9:2ff. and 15:39. Most commentators note the link between the divine voice proclaiming Jesus as son of God and the centurion’s confession but fewer juxtapose the rending of heaven in 1:10 and rending of veil in 15:39. While heaven and earth are linked in 1:10 as the result of the rending, the significance of the tearing of the veil suggests something more destructive in 15:38. It is probably symbolic of the end of the Temple, just as the torn robe symbolized the end of Saul’s reign in 1 Sam 15:27. The veil established the mystique of the Temple by creating that mystery of exclusion and uniqueness hinting at the peculiar presence of God in that place. The destruction means the disruption of that mystique and the ‘end of the world’ where its writ dominated life. According to Mark’s Gospel there is no longer reason to see the place as deserving of attention—in similar manner the departure of the divine glory from the Temple was seen by Ezekiel in his vision as a sign of imminent destruction (cf. Josephus, War 6.288ff.). The stark juxtaposition of death and rending at the climax of Mark’s story may be read, therefore, as a radical rejection of religio-political status quo, the moment of defeat of a critic is the dynamic which impels the motor leading to the institution’s collapse. We have ‘portents’ of something significant at the death (cf. Isa 13:10; Amos 8:9 and Jer 15:9) which, in the spirit of the apocalypse, those with eyes to see can see is a matter of ultimate importance, just as the writer of the Wisdom of

46 Hooker, Mark, 266.
Solomon in chs. 1–4 wanted his readers to make proper judgements on true human worth by demanding that the life of virtue should be judged from the divine perspective.

*The Gospel of John: ‘An Apocalypse in Reverse’*

While the apocalyptic credentials of the book of Revelation require little support, it may come as more of a surprise to find that the Fourth Gospel as well should be classed with the apocalyptic and mystical writings of the period. Without necessarily supposing common authorship there seem to be good reasons for supposing that we should class the Fourth Gospel within a broadly similar tradition.47

We may see why this avenue is of such importance if we recall that the goal of the apocalyptic seer and the visionary is the glimpse of God enthroned in glory (1 En 14), and the manifestation of God’s secret purposes (Apoc. Abr. 20ff.). Of course, apart from the unique reference at the end of chapter 1 (1:51), where the characteristics of the apocalyptic tradition are manifested in the references to an open heaven, angelic mediators and a heavenly Son of Man, there is little in the Fourth Gospel which might superficially suggest that this text is at all interested in apocalypticism. But if we accept that apocalypticism is constituted by ‘higher wisdom through revelation’48 rather than eschatology then the Fourth Gospel can be seen as part of this world of discourse. That is not to say that the concern with the minutiae of hidden mysteries is a preoccupation of the evangelist. Quite the reverse in fact. Rather, the stress is on the vision of God as found in Jesus, the one, to borrow from the letter to the Colossians, ‘in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ (Col 2:3). In the Gospel of John, Jesus is represented as the supreme revelation of God and God’s character, the goal of the angels’ search for the divine mysteries (1:51; cf. 1 Pet 1:12).

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Such a view of the importance of the apocalyptic and mystical has had its supporters in the past. Hugo Odeberg’s incomplete commentary\(^{49}\) on the Gospel from the perspective of the Jewish mystical traditions, as well as the Mandaean texts, is a pioneering study in this field. But, until recently, the voices raised in support of a connection between the Gospel and the mystical and apocalyptic tradition of Judaism have been few and far between. The Gospel of John has frequently been regarded as an example of a type of Christianity which firmly rejected apocalyptic.\(^{50}\) What is meant by that is that there is no imminent expectation of the end. Few would want to deny that the Fourth Gospel has a distinctive approach to eschatology (gone almost completely is the cosmic eschatology of Mark 13, for example). When viewed from the perspective of the quest for higher wisdom through revelation, the main thrust of its message appears to have a remarkable affinity with apocalyptic, even if we have to admit that the mode of revelation stressed in the Gospel differs radically from that outlined in the apocalypses. Bultmann noted that the Gospel of John is permeated with the major theme of the apocalypses—revelation.\(^{51}\) In the Gospel we have a christological exposition of great sophistication. The Gospel opens with a description of the work of the divine Logos from the creation to the incarnation.\(^{52}\) The reader is left in no doubt that Jesus of Nazareth is the only one who reveals the character of God. Nothing is allowed to detract from this theme throughout the Gospel.

The Gospel does not offer visions and revelations, by means of an ascent to heaven or communion with the world above (1:51 and 12:28 are solitary exceptions). Much of what the Fourth Gospel says, however, relates to the theme of the attainment of knowledge of the divine mysteries, and in particular the mysteries of God. Jesus proclaims himself as the revelation of the hidden God. He tells Philip, ‘He who has seen me has seen the Father’ (14:9) and at the conclusion of the Prologue, the evangelist speaks of the Son in the following way: ‘No one has ever seen God; the only Son, (\textit{v.l.} God) who is in the bosom of the Father, he has made him known’ (1:19). The vision of God, the heart of the call-experiences of Isaiah and Ezekiel and the goal of the heavenly ascents of the apocalyptic seers and rabbinic mystics, is in the Fourth Gospel

\(^{49}\) Odeberg, \textit{Fourth Gospel} and see above on the relationship between apocalyptic and eschatology, 13–17.
\(^{50}\) Cf. Barrett, \textit{John and Judaism}.
\(^{51}\) Ashton, \textit{Understanding}, especially 381ff.
\(^{52}\) Mystical links in the Prologue are explored by Fossum, \textit{Image}. 
related to the revelation of God in Jesus. All claims to have seen God in the past are repudiated; the Jews have ‘neither heard God’s voice nor seen his form’ (5:37): even when, as in Isaiah’s case, Scripture teaches that a prophet glimpsed God enthroned in glory, this vision has to be interpreted in the Gospel as a vision of the pre-existent Christ (12:41). No one has seen God except the one who is from God; he has seen the Father (6:46). The highest wisdom of all, the knowledge of God, comes not through the information disclosed in visions and revelations but through the Word become flesh, Jesus of Nazareth, whose authority relies on the communication he has received from his Father, and, in turn, the activity of the Spirit/Paraclete is ultimately dependent on the authority of the Son. Thus while the Fourth Evangelist sets himself resolutely against any claim to revelation except through Christ, the basic framework of apocalyptic is used to affirm the uniqueness of the disclosure in Christ and the inferiority of all earlier claims to divine knowledge.

When we compare the Gospel of John and Revelation we find that for John of Patmos it is the coming of the new Jerusalem from heaven which heralds an era when the dwelling of God is with humanity (Rev 21:3). The verb (σκηνόω) is that used in John 1:14 of the dwelling of the divine Logos among humankind. The major difference between these two verses is that Revelation still thinks of that presence of God as part of a future eschatological bliss, whereas the author of the Fourth Gospel considers that this is an event which has already taken place at the incarnation. The life of Jesus of Nazareth is already, in some sense at least, an anticipation of that eschatological glory which is to be revealed at the end of the age. The Gospel itself famously oscillates between passages which affirm the realization of eschatological bliss and others which still look forward, albeit to a much attenuated eschatology (John 5:25ff. is a good example). Whatever hope there may be for the future in the Fourth Gospel, the focus is on the first coming as the decisive eschatological moment to which the witness of the community and the Spirit-Paraclete both look back (cf. 1 John 1:1). The presence of the eschatological glory among the disciples stresses the ‘vertical’ dimension of salvation.53 The disciples now look forward to a time when they will be with Jesus to behold his glory (John 17:24).

53 See Aune, Cultic Setting, where important texts from Qumran and the Odes of Solomon are discussed.
The climax of the Revelation, on the other hand, is the description of the new Jerusalem where the throne of God is set and the elect are granted the privilege of seeing God face to face (Rev 22:4). In Revelation and the rest of the apocalypses the vision of God is a proleptic glimpse of the divine glory which is hidden in heaven. The Fourth Evangelist agrees in insisting that God cannot be glimpsed through a door open into the heavenly court (tantalizingly suggested in 1:51). Rather, God has been revealed in a human person, Jesus, who is repeatedly described as the unique agent of the Father. No one else can see the things of God. The statement of Exod 33:20 ‘no one can see me and live’ is hinted at in 1:18 and is used as the basis of the new possibility which is offered in Christ alone to see definitively what Jews had claimed to see in an unmediated way in the past (5:37). The unveiling of the things of God comes authoritatively only through the one who has seen God. Christ is the revealer who embodies the content of the revelation: he makes known the divine will (7:16f.) and is the embodiment of God (14:9). Jesus is not only the truth but speaks the truth. He is both the intermediary who acts as go-between (hence the central importance of the agency motif in the Gospel) and the intermediary who embodies the divine glory. The Fourth Gospel is at one with a trend in some apocalypses where there is a denial of heavenly ascent to view the divine glory (4 Ezra 8:21). There is no vision of God unless it be a vision of Christ, whether in his pre-existent or incarnate state (so 12:41).

One of the most unusual verses in the Gospel is 1:51, not least because here we have one of the two clear indications of use of the conventional language of the apocalypse. It comes at the climax of the first chapter, dominated as it is by christological themes (e.g. 1:1–18; 1:29; 1:36; 1:41; 1:45; and 1:49). It recalls other New Testament passages like Acts 7:56 and 10:11. The order of ascent followed by descent (similar to 3:13) suggests a link with Gen 28:12. Whether the Son of Man is the means of the angels’ ascent and descent or the goal of that action is debated. Most commentators favour the former, seeing the Son of Man as the intermediary between heaven and earth. The precise significance of the link with Gen 28:12 has been variously explained, but possible

54 Borgen, ‘God’s Agent’, and Bühner, Der Gesandte.
links with the mystical tradition have often been noted particularly in the light of the ongoing tradition of interpretation.

The midrash on Gen 28:12 in GenR 68,12 has often been suggested as a background for this passage. Here Jacob becomes the ladder who links heaven and earth and provides the means of mediation between the two:

R. Hiyya the Elder and R. Yannai disagreed. One maintained: they were ascending and descending the ladder; while the other said; *they were ascending and descending on Jacob*...Thus it says, Israel in whom I will be glorified; it is thou whose features are engraved on high; they ascended on high and saw his features and they descended below and found him sleeping.

What is particularly interesting about this passage is that, although much later than the Fourth Gospel, there is an earthly and heavenly dimension of Jacob’s *persona*. What is important about the patriarch is that his features are those which are part of the divine merkava and as such looking at Jacob would enable any one who was aware of this to know something of the secret of the merkava. This is made more evident in the Targumim on Gen 28:12 where it is stated explicitly that Jacob’s features are those which are engraved on the throne of glory. There are four versions of this legend, three of which (Pseudo-Yonathan, the Fragmentary Targum and Neofiti) are substantially the same. The version in Ps.-Yonathan is reproduced here:

And he dreamed and behold a ladder was fixed on earth and its top stretched to the height of heaven. And behold angels who went to Sodom and who had been banished from them because they revealed the secrets of the lord of the world. And they went until the time that Jacob left the house of his father. And they escorted him in kindness to Bethel. And on that day they went up to the high heavens, spoke and said, Come see Jacob the pious whose features (*איקונין* cf. Greek *εἴκών*) are fixed on the throne of glory which you desire to look on. So the rest of the holy angels of the LORD descended to look on him.

The significance of this passage is that it reflects the belief that the secret things of God hidden even from the angels (1 En 14:21 cf. 1 Pet 1:12) were now public in the features of the patriarch. Consequently, the angels who wished to avail themselves of the opportunity to gaze upon the divine secrets could do so by looking at the features of the

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56 Explored in Fossum, ‘Alter Ego’.
sleeping patriarch.\textsuperscript{57} It is a view we meet elsewhere in the rabbinic tradition where all the patriarchs are identified with the chariot (merkava).\textsuperscript{58} In the targumic passage either Jacob was identified with the face of the man on the chariot or possibly with the human form of God seated upon it. However we interpret that, what we find in the targumim on Gen 28:12 is a development of the original verse where Jacob is merely a passive recipient of a vision of angels. In addition, in the Prayer of Joseph Jacob and other patriarchs are said to be incarnations of exalted angels.\textsuperscript{59} Thus the patriarch becomes an important figure in the story, the object of intense interest on the part of the angels. Similarly, Christ is the embodiment of the secrets of God, so that looking upon him can be like looking upon the Father (cf. 14:9).

Another passage which has been linked with the Jewish mystical ascent tradition is 3:13. Because of Nicodemus’ incomprehension Jesus says that there is little likelihood of him understanding the things of heaven. In order to understand, Nicodemus needs a changed epistemological perspective; he needs to be ‘born again’. Without this he continues in a mode of discourse which will not lead to enlightenment but to further obscurity. He is offered little except the knowledge of the fact that in Jesus he has come to the right person (3:12).

There are several puzzling features about 3:13 in the context of the narrative as we now have it. Firstly, the perfect \textit{ἀναβέβηκεν} suggests that the ascent of the Son of Man has already taken place. What distinguishes the Son of Man is his ascent \textit{and} descent, though that could also be said of Enoch in 2 Enoch and others whose ascent was followed by a descent to report on what they had seen and heard. 3:14 acts as a commentary on the verse, however, and now relates the previous, enigmatic, verse to the cross. ‘Ascent’ means, therefore, being lifted up on a cross as 12:33 makes clear. Whatever the meaning of 3:13 before it was glossed by 3:14 and the rest of the Gospel, ascent to heaven cannot be contemplated without the cross. The juxtaposition of ascent and humiliation is a feature of several passages in the New Testament, including Phil 2:5–11 and Col 2:18. This has more than a passing resemblance

\textsuperscript{57} See further Jervell, \textit{Imago Dei}.

\textsuperscript{58} See GenR 47,6; 69,3; also bHul 91b. The significance of the form of the ancestors for understanding the likeness of God is stressed also in bBB 58a: ‘R. Baana used to mark out caves… When he came to the cave of Adam, a voice came from heaven saying, ‘Thou hast seen the likeness of my likeness (i.e. Abraham), my likeness itself (i.e. Adam) thou shalt not behold.’ See further, Bunta, ‘Likeness of the Image’.

\textsuperscript{59} See Smith, ‘Prayer of Joseph’.
to Isa 14:13–18 and Ezek 28:1–10, where the claim to divine status is part of a protest against human hubris.60

Nicodemus is unable to comprehend the metaphorical discourse of the one who confronts him. This requires a complete transformation in understanding and allegiance for the member of the ruling élite. The teacher misses the metaphor and perversely persists in taking things literally. As a result of his dwelling on earthly things (3:12) he proves to be incapable of understanding the mysteries of God. The true perspective (a typical feature of the apocalyptic mentality) is not that of Nicodemus or his colleagues in the political leadership, or even their Roman allies, but the minority group who followed the Stranger from heaven.61 While Nicodemus remains part of the hierarchy, however hard he tries to distance himself from it, he is looking at the world from a purely human point of view. That is the perspective of the flesh rather than the spirit. Just as the Synoptic Jesus had talked of solidarity with the child as the necessary condition for understanding the Kingdom and being truly great, so Nicodemus has to see that however old one may be it is necessary to go through that process of gestation and growth which will enable a new perception. Despite being a teacher of Israel Nicodemus cannot understand. Like many others he thinks he hears and understands the voice of God but the claim is spurious (cf. 5:37). The things of earth dominate Nicodemus’ outlook. The Johannine Jesus probes the way in which the lack of an appropriate epistemology means a lack of faith. The ‘epistemological break’ can only come about through baptism which is itself an event which is dangerous politically and socially.

The Gospel of John is permeated with that apocalyptic dualism which is an important component of its epistemology.62 It is an essential ingredient of its attempt to offer that alternative perspective on reality by positing another, divine, dimension to human existence and thereby indicating that the form of the present order is only temporary.

The Fourth Gospel, unlike its companions in the New Testament, presents a picture of a figure who is at one and the same time an enigma and an ambassador of another realm. The very enigmatic character of saying and story is a barrier and a challenge. Nicodemus meets nothing

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61 See Rensberger, *Overcoming the World*.
but τὰ ἐπίγεια when he would like to hear of, or behold, τὰ ἐπουράνια. What is referred to as ‘the spiritual Gospel’ is only tantalizing in the mysteries it unfolds. It offers few secrets, other than an exposition of the offer of the one who has descended from heaven. The signs are all ambiguous, not least the ultimate sign of cross and empty tomb. Jesus is in a sense a mystagogue summoning those like Nicodemus from their life of security into a more dangerous existence ‘put out of the synagogue’ (ἀποσυνάγωγος). The Gospel itself is a form of mystagogy, beckoning and leading its readers on so that they can learn from the Spirit Paraclete greater truth than any contained in this directory of spiritual adventure. Not even those disciples who are privileged to share the upper room with the one who has seen the Father and makes the Father known are given any greater truths (at least not in this public narrative). They too wait for that moment when Jesus will not speak in figures but will tell them plainly of the Father (John 16:25). The collection of metaphors, signs, and narratives function as an induction into a different pattern of life and as a result a different epistemology.

The point was well made by Wayne Meeks in a seminal article on the Gospel:

The reader cannot understand any part of the Fourth Gospel until he understands the whole. Thus the reader has an experience like that of the dialogue partners of Jesus: either he will find the whole business so convoluted, obscure, and maddeningly arrogant that he will reject it in anger or he will find is so fascinating that he will stick with it until the progressive reiteration of themes brings, on some level of consciousness at least, a degree of clarity…The book functions for its readers in precisely the same way that the epiphany of its hero functions within its narratives and dialogues.63

John 1:14 speaks of the tabernacling of the Divine Word in history not as an event in the future but as an event in the past, in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. The ‘tabernacling’ takes place in an environment where the ‘world knew him not’ (John 1:10). Whatever hope there may be for the future, the focus is on the first coming as the ultimate moment to which the witness of the community and the Spirit-Paraclete both point. Those who love Jesus and keep his commandments are those to whom the incarnate Son of God comes and with whom the Father and the Son make their abode (John 14:20 and 23). However we interpret

63 Meeks, ‘Man from Heaven’; Griffith-Jones, Four Witnesses.
the enigmatic reference to the Son of Man and Jacob’s ladder in Gen 28:12 there is the idea of communion between heaven and earth in the past revelation of glory in Jesus (cf. 1 John 1:1–3). The presence of the eschatological glory among the disciples who love him has about it a vertical dimension in which the coming son of man is not primarily a figure who appears as a reproach to the nations. The disciple now looks forward to a time when s/he will be with Jesus to behold his glory (17:24). It is now not a question of public vindication (cf. Rev. 1:7) for ‘the world will see me no more but you will see me’ (John 14:19).

This contrasts with the central theological theme of the Book of Revelation as the overcoming of opposition between God and earth. In this respect the contrast between the vision of the New Jerusalem in ch. 21 with the initial vision of the heavenly court in ch. 4 also should be noted. In Rev 4 the seer is granted a glimpse into the environs of God. Here God the Creator and Liberator is acknowledged, and, as we notice from the following chapter, it is from the God of the universe that the historical process begins which leads to the establishment of a new aeon after the manifestation of divine judgement. The contrast between heaven and earth disappears in the new creation. Now the tabernacling of God is with humanity, and they shall be God’s people. It is only in the New Age that there will be the conditions for God and humanity to dwell in that harmony which was impossible while there was rejection of the divine righteousness in human affairs.

So, the Fourth Gospel locates revelation in the person of Jesus and denies heavenly ascents as the means of revelation except the ascent and descent of the Son of Man (3:13). The goal of the apocalyptic seer and the visionary is the glimpse of God enthroned in glory (1 En 14) is to be found in Jesus (1:18; 6:46; 12:41; 14:9) and, to borrow from the letter to the Colossians, he it is ‘in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge’ (Col 2:3). The Son of Man is the goal of the angels’ search for the divine mysteries (1:51; cf. 1 Pet 1:11–12). However restrained the vision of the enthroned God might be in Rev. 4.2 in comparison with Ezek. 1:26 John of Patmos very differently claims to have a vision of God in heaven. Such was the experience of Isaiah (John 12:41). Heavenly visions of God are not what is on offer in the Fourth Gospel, for claims to see God must be regarded as claims to see Jesus. The Gospel of John is indeed ‘an apocalypse in reverse’.64

64 Ashton, Understanding, especially 381ff.
Visions play their part in the account of Christian origins in the Acts of the Apostles. In Acts, as in the opening chapters of Matthew’s Gospel, the author uses visions to enable the narrative of the church’s growth to be moved on, e.g. in the way in which Paul’s experience on the Damascus road changes the focus of the story. This is repeated three times as if to emphasize the strange hand of providence at work that led one who had ‘fought with God’ to become an agent of the gospel’s movement to the ends of the earth. Peter’s journey to Cornelius, which is a key moment in the inevitable progress of the Gospel, is dependent on the vision of the descending sail and the instruction to sacrifice and eat animals without regard for their ritual cleanness (Acts 10:11). Thereby a major barrier to a common table and fellowship with pagans is removed and a possibility is opened up of extending to a wider group that fellowship between the risen Jesus and his disciples (Acts 10:41; cf. Luke 24:30 and Gal 2:1–14).

The conjunction of the angelic appearance to Cornelius (10:3) and the vision granted to Peter are crucial in broadening horizons for the reader of Acts. The interesting thing about Luke’s account of the vision in its present form, at least, is that, unlike other apocalyptic visions (say the visions in the second half of the book of Daniel), there is no angelic interpretation of the meaning of the vision. Peter may initially be left at a loss as he is confronted with the need to make sense of what has appeared to him (v19). That is precisely what has happened by the time we get to v28, for a link has been made by him between clean and unclean food and clean and unclean persons. Peter has drawn the conclusion that if he is told that he should not regard as profane what God has deemed to be clean (10:15), he might thus be under an obligation to regard all human persons in the same way in the manner of the God who shows no favours (v34). The implication is that the conjunction of the perplexity at the vision and the appearance of the Gentile have together led to a moment of insight so that on reflection (and with the exercise of rational reflection?) the meaning of the vision for that particular set of circumstances has become clear. A suggestion that Luke might have wanted to ‘explain’ how it was that Peter’s vision came about is found in 10:10, where the circumstances

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65 On the importance of reason see Epiphanius, Panarion 48.7.3.
in which Peter received the vision are set out. Peter was praying and was hungry, thus in a particularly favourable disposition for the receipt of visions (cf. Dan 10:3; 4 Ezra 10:4). ‘Discrimination’ is evidently an issue, however, in the way in which this incident is reported. The critical attitude taken by the Jerusalem presbyterate in 11:2f. contravenes the instruction of the Spirit to Peter in Acts 10:20 not to question but to act on the implications of what has been revealed. Nevertheless the similarity of the supernatural experience enjoyed by Cornelius with that of the apostles on the day of Pentecost persuades the elders of the divine sanction offered to Peter’s action (11:18).

The role of visions in these chapters contrasts with the deliberations described in Acts 15 where the issue of the conditions upon which Gentiles are admitted into the community are discussed. Although it is clear that the debate is under the guidance of the Spirit (15:28), the authoritative pronouncement is that of James, whose word seems to be decisive (15:19) and whose speech deserves the attention expected of the prophet like Moses (15:13 cf. Luke 9:35; Deut 18:15, 19). The possibility cannot be excluded that this prominence is because of James’ blood relationship to Jesus: the institutional and the charismatic thus come face to face in this chapter. In James’ speech the justification is rooted in proof from Scripture. In this respect it differs from the visionary, supernatural, proof which runs through Acts 10–11 and the appeal to experience which is repeated in Peter’s speech in Acts 15:7.

A peculiarity of the proclamation of the gospel to Cornelius and his household is the way in which the manifestation of the Spirit’s presence precedes the confession of faith required in v43 and is used as a clinching evidence of the hand of God by Peter in v47. Here for the third time in the narrative, the ‘supernatural’ is the basis of validation. Luke’s language in v44 suggests the occasional and fleeting manifestation of the Spirit rather than the indwelling action of God’s grace, which pervades and converts, so familiar to us from the Pauline letters. This is ‘a sign for unbelievers’ (to quote Paul’s words about glossolalia in 1 Cor 14:22) indicating that the Gentile God-fearer is not barred from sharing the same new life vouchsafed to the apostles (v47) and an indication that they too had received the word of God (11:1).

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66 On this see Johnson, Decision Making; and Bauckham, Acts.
67 See Johnson, Decision Making and Bauckham, Acts. See Bauckham, Jude and the Relatives.
Acts, like the writings of Josephus, is permeated with the conviction that what takes place does so in fulfilment of the divine will, something which cannot be resisted (Acts 2:23; 4:28; 5:39, cf. Luke 7:30; 22:22). Josephus in Ant. 1.14 seeks to persuade his readers that those who conform to the will of God prosper, unlike those who depart from the laws of God. Luke’s narrative, told with hindsight, is one that is imbued with a sense of inevitability and conformity with the manifest purposes of God. Just as Josephus had introduced his description of the climax of the Jewish War (War 6.288) in 70 CE, when Titus’s legionaries raised their standards in the Temple, by reporting the plain warnings of God in the form of prodigies and prophecies, so Luke’s narrative is peppered with visions and angelic appearances which pointed in the direction of the veracity of the Christian claims for those with eyes to see them. Gamaliel perhaps voices the author’s desire to persuade his readers that opposing the divine purposes will be futile (5:39 cf. 11:17f. and 21:14). Just as Josephus used the divine oracles of old to validate Roman imperial claims, the frequent insertion into the narrative of the visionary and angelic pronouncement serve to remind the reader that this is no ordinary story, however insignificant and unremarkable the participants.

In the account of Acts the visions are an otherworldly testimony to the fact that the divine spirit is that which is the dynamic within the Christian movement. The threefold telling of Paul’s conversion reiterates the ability of the omnipotent God to control the destinies of individuals and nations. The visions vouchsafed to Stephen at his death and Paul on the threshold of Europe validate the stand of the former and open up the perspective of the latter. The visions parallel the function of Scripture whose fulfilment (Lk 3:4; 4:1ff.; 4:18f.; 7:27; 19:46; 20:17; 20:42f.; 22:37; 24:27) points to the divine being acted out in the events that surround the origins of Christianity (22:31 is an obvious example). It is the same in the Gospel of Luke where there is apocalyptic/supernatural verification (1:11; 1:26; 2:13; 3:21; ‘signs’; 23:44). So, the visions are the occasional confirmation that what is done is not human in origin (cf. Acts 5:38).

In the discussion of the Gospels we noted the way in which the destiny of Jesus and in particular the journey and ‘departure’ in Jerusalem were closely linked with the transfiguration. In Luke 9:51 that is given a particular slant in the way in which Jesus is portrayed as being determined to fulfill that which was his destiny at the appropriate time, a theme which emerges even more strongly in the Gospel of John (e.g.
the mystical element in the gospels and acts 

John 2:4; 7:6, 30). In the account of Paul’s life in Acts there is a parallel theme. Here the last chapters are dominated also by a journey to Jerusalem. The reason for this is never fully set out, though one cannot dispute the dominance that the journey to Jerusalem and the collection for the saints had in Paul’s plans, e.g. Rom 15:25 and 2 Cor 8–9. The way in which this journey is referred to in Acts suggests that, as was the case with Jesus, this journey was deeply rooted in that sense of vocation and knowledge of the divine plan which brooked no contradiction. Such rootedness of the human agents of the divine purpose in the divine plan is evident in Luke 10:20, which parallels the way in which Enoch, rapt to heaven, is apprised of the information engraved in the heavenly tablets (1 En 81:1; 93:2; 103:2; 106:19). Paul had been described to Ananias at the time of the call as a ‘chosen vessel’ (Acts 9:15 cf. 22:14; 26:17) echoing the language of Jer 50:25 and Gal 1:16, and in 21:7–13 he seeks to persuade companions not to be discouraged by the prophecy of suffering which came from Agabus (21:11). The visionary perception is shown to be crucial in determining not only Paul’s conversion but the character of what was to come. Nevertheless the contrary evidence offered by Paul’s ‘inner conviction’ and the prophecy of Agabus allows Luke to bring to the surface the tension which exists between rival claims to divine wisdom. The problematic character of resort to visions and dreams, so important in Deut 13; 18:20, is explored in a famous story in bBM 59b.68

Conclusion

This survey reveals both important visionary elements and an apocalyptic sub-text of the narrative parts of the New Testament. It may not be extensive, but in terms of the theological structure of these texts its importance cannot be underestimated. The narrative is happening on two ‘levels’.69 There is another story, a divine dimension, and it is impossible to understand the vagaries of human existence or even the true identity of individuals unless one is also aware of that other story. The foundational narrative texts confirm what we find in the Book of

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68 See Rowland, Christian Origins, 208 and 267; Rowland, Open Heaven, 307; Alexander, ‘Sixtieth Part’.
69 This is particularly well worked out for the Gospel of Mark in Myers, Binding and see also Ashton, Understanding, 381ff.
Revelation: apocalypticism is endemic to the emerging religion. It is not an addition, which might easily be subtracted from the narrative and exist without it. The visionary is central to the character of the story told, and the movement to which it bears witness, is incomprehensible without it.
CHAPTER SIX

PAUL AND THE APOCALYPSE OF JESUS CHRIST

In recent scholarship on Paul there has been a move away from the debates initiated by the Reformation on justification by faith and the question of the validity of the Mosaic law. Schweitzer’s mystical focus\(^1\) has gained a new lease of life as scholars like Ed Sanders have argued that the heart of Pauline religion is ‘participationist eschatology’. The shift has opened up the possibility for a new appreciation of the centrality of apocalypticism in the Pauline corpus. This pervades all strata of the evidence and indicates that Paul the visionary and charismatic was thoroughly saturated in apocalypticism. The present chapter uses neglected features of Paul’s apocalyptic claims as heuristic devices to explore the extent of that legacy in the Pauline corpus.

*Only the Third Heaven: 2 Corinthians 12:2–4*

The mystical component in Paul’s life is fundamental for his whole career, and yet it can seem curiously marginal in modern interpretations of Pauline theology and religion.\(^2\) Paul as a Pharisee may have been introduced to apocalyptic mysteries, but we are no longer in a position to know exactly what that body of knowledge may have contained, or to what extent his apocalyptic beliefs were influenced by emerging Christian groups with which he came into contact after his ‘conversion’.\(^3\) The so-called ‘conversion’ (so called because as many have pointed out this was not the change from one religion to another but from one sect within Judaism to another—from the Pharisees to People of the Way) is shrouded behind the brief accounts of the Acts of Apostles\(^4\) and the allusive glimpses offered in Galatians. Yet for all

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\(^1\) Schweitzer, *Mysticism*.

\(^2\) On all this material see the surveys in Bockmuehl, *Revelation and Mystery*; Segal, ‘Beginnings’ and *Paul the Convert*.

\(^3\) A suggestion concerning Paul’s conversion and *merkava* mysticism is offered by Bowker, ‘Visions’.

\(^4\) See Burchard, *Der dreizehnte Zeuge*; Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 3ff.
that, it is the language of revelation with which Paul chose to explain
that shattering moment in his life, and which best helps us to elucidate
the Acts accounts and their significance.\(^5\) According to Acts 26:19,
Paul describes what he has seen as an ὀπτασία, a term which is used
in Dan 10:16 (Theod.) of Daniel’s vision of the exalted heavenly being
which appears to the prophet (cf. Luke 1:22 and 24:23).\(^6\) In Galatians,
the moment of disclosure is an ἀποκάλυψις (Gal 1:12), and in 1:15f.
he writes of ‘God being pleased to reveal his son to me’. This informa-
tion is given as all part of his attempt to affirm his independence as
an apostle. Paul states that he did not receive his commission by any
human agency but δι’ ἀποκαλύψεως Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.\(^7\) So his gospel
is just as much the result of a direct meeting with the hitherto veiled
Jesus Christ as any that had been received by the ‘pillar’ apostles. It
was none other than Jesus of Nazareth, temporarily seated at the right
hand of God and to be manifest in glory at the close of the age (1 Cor
1:7) who had, proleptically (cf. 1 Cor 15:8), revealed himself to Saul the
Pharisee. In line with apocalyptic hermeneutics Paul thinks of another
dimension to human existence normally hidden from sight but revealed
to the favoured few.

Apart from Gal 1:12–16 the most obvious link with the Jewish mysti-
cal tradition is the experience recorded in 2 Cor 12:2ff.:\(^8\)

v2: I know a man in Christ fourteen years ago
Whether in the body or out of the body
I do not know, God knows
Who was snatched up to the third heaven.

v3: I know such a man
Whether in the body or out of the body
I do not know, God knows
That he was snatched up to Paradise.
He heard unspeakable words which is not possible for humans to utter.

The dispute with the Corinthians has elicited this confession from
Paul. He writes in an oblique fashion about an experience fourteen
years before when ‘a man in Christ’ was snatched up into Paradise or
the third heaven. Although it is not impossible that Paul chooses to

\(^5\) See further Kim, Origin.
\(^6\) On Acts 26:19 see Betz, ‘Die Vision des Paulus’.
\(^7\) See Fredriksen, ‘Judaism’.
\(^8\) See the discussion in Tabor, Things Unutterable; Segal, Paul the Convert, 35ff.;
Schäfer, ‘Hekhalot Literature’; and the extended discussion of the passage in Windisch,
Der zweite Korintherbrief.
boast about a third person here,\textsuperscript{9} the reference to the abundance of revelations in 12:7 suggests that Paul has himself in mind, or perhaps even his ‘apocalyptic persona’, or heavenly alter ego, who experiences such awesome things. While Paul speaks of the ineffable words he heard on that occasion, the experience appears to differ from the Damascus Road experience in not having that peculiar life-changing quality about it, or if it did Paul has chosen not to divulge it. If Acts is to be believed, it was not the only such experience which Paul had (22:17 and 27:23). The nature of the experience in 2 Corinthians has been much discussed.\textsuperscript{10} It is obviously a highly stylized, fragmentary, account. Several explanations of it are possible. Paul may describe in two different ways the same experience, or two different events, or two stages of the same experience, or even two attempts to reach heaven with differing results on the same occasion.\textsuperscript{11} One interpretation which should be considered is that the experience which is wrung out of him here has a particular relevance to the catalogue of his weakness, a theme running throughout the immediate context in 2 Corinthians. It could be the report of a ‘failed’, or incomplete, ascent in which Paul did not achieve the ultimate goal of the divine presence and vision of God but had to be content with ascent to a lower (the third, as opposed to, say, the seventh) heaven. Even so, he was able to hear unutterable words and words from the Lord which affirmed the importance of weakness. Such a failure to achieve the climax of the mystical ascent would indeed have been an admission of weakness and would have few parallels in the extant texts.\textsuperscript{12} Normally, the climactic moment of the vision is reached when the seer beholds the glory of God in the highest heaven.

\textsuperscript{9} The consensus is that Paul is here referring to himself despite the reserved style, though note Goulder, ‘Visionaries’.
\textsuperscript{10} Tabor, \textit{Things Unutterable}.
\textsuperscript{11} This is not as far fetched as may appear at first sight. In the first part of the report Paul writes of only reaching \textit{ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ} without necessarily entering, whereas in the second he manages to get inside Paradise (\textit{εἰς τὸν παράδεισον}). See also below ch. 13.
\textsuperscript{12} The interruption of the Great Seance in HekhR 18 may offer a limited parallel to Paul’s experience, see Scholem, \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}, 19ff. 3 Bar 11ff. offers a version of an heavenly ascent without a description of God, and see Bockmuehl, \textit{Revelation}, 176 n. 97, and Rowland, \textit{Open Heaven}, 380ff. Gooder, \textit{Third Heaven}, has explored the possibility that 2 Cor 12:2ff. is an account of an abortive heavenly ascent which chimes in with Paul’s rhetoric concerning weakness. The interpretation offered here is much indebted to it.
Such an incomplete ascent, inadequate in terms of what an apocalyptic seer, bent on the highest mysteries may have hoped for, was something that Paul could now speak openly of, precisely because it included within it signs of failure rather than of sublime vision. The character of the experience prevented Paul from ‘being too elated’ (12:7, RSV). Υπεραιρόμενος is the word used of the man of lawlessness in 2 Thess 2:4. Like the prince of Tyre who boasts of his status (Ezek 28:2) and enjoys the glory of Paradise (28:13) but is cast down from the mountain of God, Paul’s rapture results not in sublime visionary authority or an ineffable divine vision, but a thorn in the flesh. The words Paul can hear (which he may have heard as part of the same ecstatic experience) and chooses to report are unlike the ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι. The Lord speaks of grace being sufficient and of power being perfected in weakness (12:9). It is at that moment that the power of Christ, like the divine Shekhina, tabernacles with him (John 1:14 cf. Luke 1:35). Paul enjoys, in weakness, that eschatological divine shelter in the middle of the present age rather than in the age to come (cf. Rev 7:15; 21:3). What counts for him now is not superfluity of revelations but the marks of weakness embodied in his own person and words, ‘always carrying in the body the death of Jesus’ (2 Cor 4:10). In a passage laced with heavy sarcasm the syntactically puzzling καὶ τῇ υπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων (12:7) looks like an aside, in which the overwhelming revelations turn out to be not a mark of success but of failure and the cause of his torment. The reason for this is not difficult to seek in the light of the Jewish mystical sources: the threat of danger is an ever present reality for all those who ascend to heaven. Paul finds himself buffeted by a thorn in the flesh from the angel of Satan. This may be illuminated by later Jewish mystical traditions which speak of being ‘clobbered’ by iron bars. So, this ecstatic experience is not something totally unrelated to the themes of other parts of 2 Corinthians which is shot through with an emphasis on humility as a means of demonstrating the divine glory (cf. 4:7ff.).

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13 We may note that σκόλοψ appears also in LXX Ezek 28:24, though in a rather different context from the judgement on the prince of Tyre.

14 See Morray-Jones, ‘Paradise Revisited’, and Price, ‘Punished in Paradise’. On the torment of the mystic see the threat to Rabbi Akiva in Hekhalot Zutarti (see Halperin, Faces, 199–210) and the threat confronting Ishmael in 3 En and the words, ‘If one was unworthy to go down to the merkabah, when they said to him, Do not enter, and he entered, then they would throw iron weapons at him’ (Wertheimer, Batei Midrashot 1:107f.). On this theme see Maier, ‘Das Gefährdungsmotiv’ and below p. 404.
That Paul is using the traditional language and style of Jewish apocalyptic is apparent from the cosmological language and rapture. His use of the Greek ἁρπάζω is particularly pertinent. It is a word used elsewhere in the New Testament to speak of the mysterious rapture of individuals whether to heaven (1 Thess 4:17; Rev 12:5), or as the result of divine intervention (Acts 8:39). The word is used of Enoch’s translation in Wis 4:11 (cf. LXX Gen 5:24 and Sir 44:16 where μετέτεθη is used). The ἁρπαγμός/ἁρπάζω may be of the signs of an apostle (cf. 2 Cor 12:12) but, like that experienced by the Messiah himself according to Phil 2:6f., its meaning is the opposite of what might have been expected. To be rapt to heaven is what one might expect of an apostle, just as Enoch or Elijah had been. But the meaning of ἁρπαγμός, Paul learns from experience, is not ecstasy but failure and is interpreted by the cross. The one who is the image of God did not reckon ‘rapture’ the key to divine status. In 2 Cor 12 Paul had reluctantly felt himself compelled to speak of rapture(s). In both 2 Cor 12 and Phil 2, however, the snatching is replaced by humiliation (cf. 1 Thess 4:17 and Rev 12:5). Such an experience prevents Paul from emulating the arrogance of the Antichrist, the King of Babylon, and the king of Tyre, in thinking too highly of themselves (cf. 2 Thess 2:4; Isa 14:14; Ezek 28:2), despite the fact that the divine Christ dwelt in him. There is a repudiation of grandiose pretensions to exaltation and an acceptance of human degradation as the way to exaltation. In 2 Cor 12, the mystical raptures are not the qualifications which the apostle grounds his boast on. Instead, it is the suffering and humiliation which is the lot of most mortals and in which his Lord shared to the full. It is this to which Paul in particular appeals. It is Paul’s identification with the humiliation of one who now shares the divine presence which qualifies him (Paul) as spokesman and an envoy whose words should be heeded in preference to any angelic communication (Gal 1:8 and 2 Thess 2:2).

15 There are other echoes of the Enochic tradition in this verse: Philipp disappears and reappears (πνεῦμα κυρίου ἠρπαγμένον τὸν Φίλιππον καὶ οὐκ εἶδεν αὐτὸν ὑπέκειτι ὁ εὐνοῦχος), just as there is mystery about the disappearance of Enoch in the targum-mim; cf. Fragment Targum 791b: τὸν δὲ Φίλιππον ἐφαυλίσθη εἰς ᾿Αζωτον, cf. LXX καὶ οὐχ ἠὑρίσκετο ὅτι μετέτεθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός, above 34–38).

16 Hammerich, ‘Phil 2.6’, suggests that equality with God did not come by rapture but was the pre-existent Christ’s by right. See also D.W.B. Robinson ‘Ἀρπαγμός’. This interpretation is discussed in Wright, Climax, 77. It is not incompatible with the idiomatic usage identified by Hoover which Wright prefers.
Elsewhere in the Pauline corpus Paul alludes to the theme of the divine mystery. Paul seems to have believed that he had access to divine secrets which were of fundamental importance for his theology, and occasionally he is prepared to make such mysteries public. In 1 Cor 15:51, for example, he explains in climactic style the problem of the resurrection by resort to the revelation of a mystery about eschatological transformation. Even more importantly he lets his Roman readers into the eschatological mystery of Israel’s strange destiny in Rom 11:25. There seems to be no reason why Paul the apostle, steward of the divine mysteries, should not have had access to the wealth of divine mysteries and a passage like Rom 11:25 is to be seen, therefore, as the revelation of one of these mysteries and not the summation of rational reflection on a knotty doctrinal issue. Paul sees himself, and his intimate companions, to be mystagogues who are like stewards in the divine palace with the privilege of administering and mediating the divine secrets (1 Cor 4:1). Access to divine secrets is typical of the apocalypses and forms a central feature of the authority granted to the Teacher of Righteousness at Qumran (cf. 1 QpHab 7). Such mysteries related to the details of eschatological salvation and the reordering of conventional wisdom about its fulfilment in the light of the gospel.

This is most apparent in 1 Cor 2:6–8, where Paul talks of the content of the gospel as a mystery hidden from the rulers of the present age. The gospel is the essence of divine wisdom which is hidden and perceived as foolishness by those who cannot understand the secret of the divine purpose in it. Paul contrasts the divine with the human wisdom and suggests that the clue to salvation is based upon the inability of those dominated by the epistemology of the present age to see the significance of what they were doing in crucifying the Lord of glory (1 Cor 2:9). This is reminiscent of the opening chapters of the Wisdom of Solomon. The cross turned out to be the very heart of the divine mystery for the salvation of the world. So the Christ event itself is an apocalyptic mystery hidden before all ages only revealed in the last days but which in its paradoxical character still remains mysterious.

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17 Survey in Bockmuehl, Revelation, 170.
18 Cf. ibid. 170f.
19 There is a an extended version of the soteriology underlying these verses in the Ascension of Isaiah, see below 189–191.
and indeed an offence, to those who are unable to pierce the veil and discern its true meaning (cf. 1 Pet 1:11f.; Luke 10:23f.).

Mystery terminology is taken up in the deutero-Pauline epistles of Colossians and Ephesians. In Col 1:26 (cf. Rom 16:25 and Eph 3:3), for example, God’s plan for the salvation of the Gentiles is portrayed as an apocalyptic mystery which Paul has been privileged to receive and which forms the basis for the apostolic ministry in which he is engaged. The apostolic task is no hole-and-corner affair, therefore, for the apostles themselves are engaged in an enterprise on a truly cosmic scale (1 Cor 4:9, cf. Rev 14:6) as God’s fellow workers (1 Cor 3:9). Indeed, Paul sees himself as an architect working according to a divine master-plan, parallel to Moses himself (Exod 25:9 and 40 cf. 2 Cor 3; 1 Chr 28:19).

That to which the apostles are bearing witness is itself the apocalyptic event. In Rom 1:17f. Paul can speak of the gospel and its content as that which is revealed from heaven, and, using slightly different terminology in Rom 3:21, he summarizes the saving event of Christ as something which was heralded by the law and the prophets but is essentially a fresh and definitive revelation from God. The revelation of that divine wisdom to which the true apostle has access is a mystery taught by the Spirit, and can only be understood by others who themselves have the Spirit (1 Cor 2:10ff.). Those who understand and are indwelt by the Spirit can themselves be interpreters of the most profound divine mysteries. Those who regard themselves as wise according to the wisdom of the present age and are unaware of the content of the divine mystery turn out to be babes. Those who are truly mature are the ones who according to the criteria of the age which is passing away seem to be fools (3:18f.). The divine mysteries, knowledge of which is the goal of the mystical ascent, are available now through the Spirit and in the proclamation of the cross.

What is perceived as folly escapes the attention of those who think merely according to this age’s categories. It is that divine wisdom which Paul speaks ἐν μυστηρίῳ (1 Cor 2:7). It has to be spoken in this way because the fact that it is wisdom remains a mystery, hidden before all ages with God and remaining unrecognized among those who are perishing (1 Cor 1:18; 2:6). It is, however, a very accessible secret.

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20 For discussions relating to this question see Martyn, ‘Epistemology’; Via, Self-deception.
because it concerns an event in history rather than something hidden in heaven still waiting to be revealed (like the παρουσία in 1 Cor 1:7) but like any uninterpreted apocalyptic symbol, it remains opaque for those who lack the spiritual discernment. Similarly, the Wisdom of Solomon offers readers examples of lives which seem futile, whose significance is missed by the majority. In contrast with the exclusive character of the heavenly ascent texts, Paul offers a mystery which is open and accessible to all even if it is still hidden in its significance from many because of their darkened minds, until the revelation of all things in the future (1 Cor 2:6; 1:18).

Possible cultic background for the accounts of mystical ascent (most evident in 1 En 14) reminds us that access to holy places was limited to men. As the ‘Great Seance’ in Hekhalot Rabbati 18 indicates, menstrual blood disqualifies Nehuniah ben Hakanah from the divine presence. It is no surprise, therefore, that the access to the divine mysteries is confined to men. Indeed, the child who dares to probe the mysteries of hashmal, is, according to the legend of bHag 13a, devoured by fire. In 1 Cor 1–3, however, access to the supreme divine mystery does not depend on that level of holiness or knowledge. All the community are addressed in 1 Cor 1:2. As we presume that Paul’s communities consisted of women as well as men, in the light of the occasional reference to women such as Chloe in 1 Cor 1:11 and the significant role given to Phoebe in Rom 16:1f., the transfer of cultic imagery to a community which was inclusive is a reminder that ritual impurity does not seem to have been a disqualification from access to the nascent Pauline Christian communities and their communion with the heavenly world (though later we know that menstruation could be a bar on women being baptized). There is no sense of disqualification here, therefore (something which seems also to be repudiated in Col 2:18). This may also explain the enigmatic reference to the angels in 1 Cor 11:10. There are several passages from apocalyptic texts where humans are refused admission into the presence of God by the angels. According to Paul, all those sanctified (1 Cor 6:11), women (and children?) as well as men,

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21 See Himmelfarb, Ascent, and on the social background of apocalyptic Davies, ‘Social World’ and the final chapters of Esler, First Christians.

22 See the work attributed to Hippolytus, Apost. Trad. 20.6 (Dix, Apostolic Tradition, 32).

23 E.g. HekhZ; R. Akiva speaks: ‘When I arrived at the celestial veil (pargod), angels of destruction came out to destroy me’; Schäfer § 338f., 344–346 and 671–673.
can expect to understand the mystery through the indwelling Spirit which enables the believer to probe the profound things of God (1 Cor 2:10). This meant becoming part of the temple of God (3:16; 6:19). In such circumstances, women who might find themselves otherwise disqualified needed some kind of ἐξουσία to indicate their right to be in the divine presence (1 Cor 11:10), much as those who accompanied the Lamb had the name of God on their foreheads (Rev 14:1). Such ἐξουσία equipped women to be part of the assembly which, like the Qumran community, shared the lot of the angels in light (Col 1:12f., cf. 1QH 11:20f.; 1QS 19:6ff.).

Language of Transformation and Apocalyptic Hermeneutics

While Paul presumes that all those who put on Christ share the divine Spirit in the present age, he in particular is both a recipient and embodiment of ἀποκάλυψις Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ. However we interpret the enigmatic ἐν ἐμοί in Gal 1:16, there is other evidence in Paul’s letters of an intimate link between the human medium (the apostle) and the message about, and even the person of, Christ. By virtue of his own knowledge and practice the gospel can be observed in his own person and conduct: Paul has the mind of Christ himself (1 Cor 2:16) and speaks words which are not taught by humans but by God (2:13, cf. Gal 1:1). Access to the divine mystery is subtly bound up with the reception of and perception about Paul’s person. The believer like the apostle can expect to be transformed into the likeness of Christ. Christ’s reflection, indeed embodiment (Gal 2:20), the apostle in particular is called to be. In several key passages in the Pauline epistles the apostle speaks of the transformation of the believer, mainly at the eschaton. Several of these have been the subject of discussion because they appear to indicate that Paul’s outlook on eschatological transformation underwent a profound change. In the earliest phase represented by 1 Thess 4 Paul merely seems to look forward to a meeting with the Lord when believers would be united with him in the air. Later in 1 Cor 15, however, probably following a dispute about the nature of the resurrection body, the emphasis is on the need for transformation: ‘flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God’ (15:50). That transformation is still future when ‘we

24 On gender and mysticism see Jantzen, Power.
25 See Harris, Raised Immortal, and Hill, Regnum Coelorum.
shall not sleep but we shall be changed’. The imagery which Paul uses here is of the immortal being put on over that which is mortal so that the corruptible will be swallowed up by the incorruptible. As in Asc. Isa. 11:35 the human body is seen as ‘garments of flesh’ which can be taken off and new, celestial, garments put on.

In accounts of heavenly ascent the metaphor of vesting and divesting can be used to describe the transformation of the seer as he passes from one heaven to another. In 2 Cor 5 Paul alters this vesting imagery significantly. Divesting has to occur before vesting; death will not be immediately swallowed up in victory, therefore. The possibility of nakedness has to be undergone before the glory of the heavenly ‘house’ can be enjoyed. Nakedness is a state to be abhorred and it betokens a degree of utter vulnerability which the divine judgement initiates (cf. Rev 3:17; 16:15), as well as the risk that, like Babylon in Rev 17:16, one might appear to be among the damned rather than the elect. Like the martyrs under the throne in Rev 6:9, who query the delay in the manifestation of the divine righteousness, and who until their anguished cry seemed to be bereft of the white robes which are given as a compensation, Paul in 2 Cor 5 accepts that the hope of glory must come via a path of nakedness and waiting. There is a ‘tabernacle’ which is eternal in the heavens, but the path to it is not via glory. This seems to be dependent on the belief such as we have in Ascension of Isaiah:

And I saw there Enoch and all who were with him stripped of the garments of flesh; and I saw them in their garments of the world above, and they were like angels, standing there in great glory. But they were not seated on thrones, and their crowns of glory were not upon them. And I asked the angel who was with me, Why have they received the garments, but not the thrones and crowns? And he said to me, They will not receive either their crowns or their thrones of glory (although they see and know now which of them will have the thrones and the crowns) until the Beloved descends… (Asc. Isa. 9:9ff.)

And I saw there many garments stored up, and many thrones and many crowns. And I said to the angel, Whose are these garments, and thrones and crowns? And he said to me, These are the garments which many from the world will receive who believe in the words of the One who is to be named. (Asc. Isa. 9:24ff.) 26

Paul’s hope is that the ‘the earthly tent we live in’ (2 Cor 5:1), like the form of Jerusalem coming down from heaven in Rev 21, would so

26 For the background to these ideas see Fletcher-Louis, All the Glory.
swamp the lives of the elect that they forget the impoverishment of the present and move from death to life with ease.27

The future orientation of this profound passage, however, should not lead us to forget other features of the context which do emphasize present transformation. The transformation of the apocalyptic seer is occasionally found in some of the extant Jewish apocalypses (e.g. 1 En 71; 2 En 22; Asc. Isa. 9:30, cf. 11:35), and it was to become an important component in the mystical texts of a later period.28 In the well-known Enoch-Metatron piece, 3 Enoch 4, for example, Enoch is transformed into an exalted angel. That appears to be a very necessary event given that the opposition there is from the angels in heaven to the intrusion of flesh and blood into the holy heavens. In the much earlier 1 En 14, Enoch’s entrance into heaven is described without mentioning transformation (though Enoch’s fear is alluded to), whereas in 1 En 71 (a text which is of notoriously uncertain date) his whole being is said to undergo a profound metamorphosis in the course of which he becomes the eschatological Son of Man. It is perhaps somewhat surprising that Revelation appears to know nothing of the transformation of the apocalyptic seer. While Christ can appear as an exalted heavenly being in 1:13ff., John’s entrance into heaven is not marked by any allusion to transformation (unless the ἐν πνεύματι in 1:10 includes this). Indeed, it seems that it is precisely John’s humanity which equips him, like Enoch before him, to be the heavenly messenger of the Apocalypse of Jesus Christ. John is commanded not to worship angels (19:10; 22:8ff.). In this he may be like Christ before him. His heavenly status is based not on being an angel but on his humanity.

While in most Pauline texts transformation is still to come, there are examples which suggest that eschatological transformation is a process already in operation. The notion of ‘realized eschatology’ is one that is now entirely comprehensible in the light of some of the angelological and communitarian beliefs found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.29 The sharing of the lot of the angels is something which is particularly characteristic of the life of the holy community.30 Transformation is manifested in lives of purity enabling the extension of the sanctity of heaven to the

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27 Wis 9:15 is a passage often quoted to illustrate these verses, suggesting they could refer to the individual resurrection body which is stored up in heaven.
28 Himmelfarb, Ascent.
29 Kuhn, Enderwartung. On transformation Fletcher-Louis, All the Glory.
30 Material collected in Lane Fox, Pagans, 336ff.
chapter six

enclave of the secluded group. Thus, the Corinthians are told that they are a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19).

The identification of the believers with Christ in baptism, and the transfer from one set of values to another, is matched by a metaphysical transformation which transcends the notions of mere change of status. Even if the ‘in Christ’ formula cannot bear all the weight of mystical identification of the believers with Christ, there is more in the Pauline letters to suggest that communion with Christ involved more than a favourable outcome in the ultimate celestial reckoning. For the most part, however, the reality of the present glory is relativized by the emphasis on suffering, partly to counteract the effects of realized eschatology. Indeed, 1 Corinthians has often been cited as evidence of Paul reacting to a realized eschatology which manifested itself in extreme (and unrealistic) ascetic practices and the conviction that the resurrection from the dead had already taken place. It has been suggested that Paul is seeking to correct the effect of this realized eschatology, perhaps originally encouraged by the enthusiasm of his initial preaching. In its place there is a more pragmatic attitude to the world and the believers’ place in it matched by an emphasis on future eschatology to counteract the preoccupation with the present as the time of fulfilment.

The most explicit testimony to transformation is found in 2 Cor 3. In the course of the meditation on the nature of apostolic ministry Paul contrasts it with the ministrations of Moses. The extent of the claims are at once apparent. Here is Paul, not only placing his activity on a superior plane to that of Moses, but also subordinating the latter’s pivotal role in the divine economy to himself. That is proved by the fading nature of the glory which attended Moses’ transformation. The veiling of Moses’ face, which according to Scripture hid the extent of the divine glory for fear of damaging those who looked upon it, is regarded as something masking its transitory character. When compared with the transparency and permanence of the glory which attends the apostolic ministry it is seen to be impoverished and obsolescent—hence the need for Moses to mask the reality of the inferior character of the glory he was given.

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31 Schweitzer, mysticism, 1f.
32 See Thielston, ‘Realised Eschatology’ and idem, 1 Corinthians.
33 See Hurd, Origin.
What we find here is not the repudiation of Moses as a witness. Moses after all is the one who ascended the mountain (and so gained access to heaven according to Jewish tradition) of whom God said: ‘When there are prophets among you, I the Lord make myself known to them in visions; I speak to them in dreams. Not so with my servant Moses; he is entrusted with all my house. With him I speak face to face—clearly, not in riddles; and he beholds the form of the Lord’ (Num 12:6ff.). In the critique of the constellation of ideas and practices which constituted the Judaism of which he was formerly a part, Paul harked back to other features of the Moses tradition which presented him as the mystagogue par excellence. Moses had witnessed the glory of the Lord on Sinai, but that was a prelude to a covenant which had been superseded by the supreme revelation of God in Christ (Rom 3:21ff.; Gal 4:24). In Paul’s case the apocalyptic vision had devastating effects on his conventional assumptions and practice, which led him to advocate a new covenant, not merely a reaffirmation of what had gone before. As the one who outshone Moses in his diakonia, Paul had access to greater mysteries than were received by Moses but which rendered those obsolescent (hence the repeated καταργομένον) even if they were seen to be a herald of that greater glory.

The words of Scripture may function as a veil which prevents understanding. In 2 Cor 3 Paul exhibits his conviction about the indispensability of allegorical exegesis. That should not surprise us given the explicit description of his method in Gal 4:24 where the literal sense of Genesis yields a ‘deeper’, ‘transcendent’ meaning in the contrast between two cities and two covenants. Allegorical exegesis presupposes that the letter of the text points to another level of reality whereby one may have opened other dimensions of meaning. Other levels of hermeneutical reality are available because of the allusiveness of the text and its terminological imprecision. Understanding demands a

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34 LXX Num 12:8 translates תְמוֹנָה by δόξα, cf. John 12:41 where this word is used to describe the form of God on the divine throne.
35 Meeks ‘Moses as God and King’.
36 Louth, Discerning.
37 On Paul’s allegorical exegesis see Boyarin, Radical Jew.
38 Cf. William Blake: ‘You say that I want somebody to elucidate my ideas. But you ought to know that what is grand is necessarily obscure to weak men. That which can be made explicit to the idiot is not worth my care. The wisest of the ancients consider’d what is not too explicit as the fittest for instruction, because it rouzes the faculties to act…’ (Complete Writings, 793).
perception which pierces beyond the letter. In this comes the moment of ‘apocalypse’ when the veil is removed and repentance and epistemological renewal coincide. According to Paul, the potent polyvalency of Scripture, which is the very basis of ancient interpretation, has its particular focus in Christ. For the ancient readers of Ezekiel the prophet’s visionary report offered a gateway for visionary perception. For Paul the words of Scripture offered a gateway to Christ, a possible, though not inevitable, means of discerning the divine mystery, which was, in the last resort, ‘apart from the Law’.

Paul, therefore, was an exponent of a kind of allegorical hermeneutics in the apocalyptic/mystical tradition, with its contrasts between above and below, appearance and reality. His dualism of flesh and spirit explains the basis of his departure from the hegemonic hermeneutics of his previous life as a Pharisee by stressing the contrast between present and future and the tension within the person on the way to eschatological redemption. Paul inherited from the Hebrew Bible the belief in revelation, but in his case it was used to subvert dominant ways of reading via a conviction that the spirit enabled a deeper (christological) understanding of Scripture to come to the fore. The apocalypses were indirectly promoting the kind of hermeneutical dualism which necessitated, and indeed promoted, the quest for a deeper meaning, exactly what allegory seeks to promote. Imagination and allegory are a gateway, a hermeneutical device which opens up a way to eternal verities hidden with God in the heavens. So, according to 2 Cor 3, those who read the letter of Scripture only are not able to understand its true meaning. There remains a veil which conceals the diminishing glory, so that the truth is only revealed when the veil is lifted in Christ (3:14). What is needed is not a preoccupation with the letter which kills (3:6) but the Spirit who offers freedom (3:17) and life to all who turn to the Lord (3:16).

What starts off in 2 Cor 3 as a contrast between Moses and Paul ends up as an assertion about the present transformative glory which belongs to those who are ministers of the new covenant. These ministers do not need their faces veiled, for they have nothing to hide, as the apostolic ministers reflect the divine glory. There is uncertainty about the precise meaning of κατοπτριζόμενοι in 3:18. Its middle form suggests the translation ‘reflect’, but there could be ideas here of those reflecting the divine glory doing so as a result of beholding it. Such reflection of divine glory is apparent in 2 En 22ff. where the seer beholds the glory of God, and this results in his reflecting the glory which he had
been privileged to see. The consequence of reflecting the glory of the Lord is transformation, therefore. In 2 Cor 3 it is not merely a future phenomenon but something which begins in the present age. Paul is both a steward of the divine mysteries (1 Cor 4:1) and the one who bears the glory of crucified Jesus. As such he is both a beholder, and a reflector, of the divine glory. Transformation is not inevitable, however. In contrast with Paul, some ‘masquerade’ (μετασχηματιζόμενοι) as apostles of Christ—a perverse form of the transformation at the parousia (Phil 3:21), resembling the transformation of Satan into an angel of light (2 Cor 11:13f.). While the transformation of the body of flesh into the glorious body resembling that of the resurrected Christ must await some future consummation, those who have embarked on the path already are indwelt with the divine Spirit (Rom 8:9ff.). They are robed with Christ (Rom 13:14) and thus are already part of Christ’s body, the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19).

The pattern of the transformation of which Paul speaks in 2 Cor 3:18 is the divine image, and the means by which it takes place is the Lord who is the Spirit. Εἰκών is here introduced without warning. Elsewhere, it is used of Christ as God’s image, e.g. 2 Cor 4:4; 1 Cor 15:45ff.; cf. Phil 2:6 and Col 1:15. It is that image which believers share. The phrase ‘from glory to glory’ suggests a progressive transformation. It is the kind of pattern of development described in the Ascension of Isaiah, for example, where there are different levels of glory in the different heavens. Isaiah’s ascent to the heavenly world brings about a transformation of his own body as he approaches the seventh heaven.

In 2 Cor 4:1ff. Paul indicates that there is a present possession of heavenly glory in the ordinary ministrations of the apostle whose source is the effulgence of the gospel. The knowledge of God’s glory, the highest privilege granted to the apocalyptic visionary, but now located in the face of Jesus Christ is what Paul mediates. Paul returns to the present character of the transformation in 4:16. Here he picks up the contrast touched on earlier in the chapter. He has compared the treasure with the earthen vessels which contain it in 4:7. Outwardly, the apostles are afflicted and suffering, but that is the means whereby the glorious life of God may be manifested (4:10). Briefly Paul lapses

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40 On these verses see Segal, Paul the Convert and ‘Beginnings’.
41 See below pp. 189ff.
into his conventional eschatology in speaking of sharing in the future resurrection of Jesus (4:14).

The burden of suffering and afflicted leads to an eternal weight of glory. It is the unseen things, the very heart of apocalypticism, which are the focus of attention in these verses, not the ephemeral things of the visible world. The former have become available in the midst of the rigours of life thanks to the Spirit. That glory which is the property of the elect in heaven with God and those risen with Christ at the eschaton is already at work in humans of flesh and blood (3:18; 4:16). The Paul of the canonical letters cannot rest content with an eschatology which is entirely realized. After asserting the present dimension of glorification he moves in 5:1 to stress the, still awaited, consummation of that process. It is apparent from this passage that ‘presence with the Lord’ is something for which he longs (cf. Phil 1:23) and which is still to come on the other side of the painful moment of putting off the flesh.

Christology is the heart of Paul’s doctrine of transformation.42 We cannot know whether Paul knew of the tradition of Jesus’ transfiguration (there are the occasional verbal echoes in 2 Cor 3, with its reference to Moses and the language of glory). But transformation of Christ is a cornerstone of emerging Christology. In other (earlier?) traditions this takes the form of a transformation of status e.g. Acts 2:36; Rom 1:3. In Phil 2 this is linked with the possession of divine character: ‘the name which is above every other name’. In apocalyptic and mystical texts God’s form and nature are sometimes linked. The reference to the transformation of the followers of the one who possessed the name which is above every name into the nature of the divinity places ideas in the letter to the Philippians in the context of a wider Jewish and mystical tradition.43 There is implicit within Paul’s Christology a belief in a kind of transformation. In the present age transformation is connected almost exclusively with Christ alone in heaven but in the age to come it would be something to be shared with the elect. There is the promise to Christians that they would in due course share the heavenly being of Jesus in contrast to the earthly body which was theirs in the present age (Phil 3:21).44 In these verses in 2 Cor 3–4 Paul gives us a glimpse of beliefs about the present transformation which takes place

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43 Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God’; and Stroumsa, ‘Form(s) of God’.
not through heavenly ascent but through identification with the pattern of Christ whose path to glory involved affliction and death.

Paul’s extant writings include no apocalypse. The apocalyptic form of Revelation form no part of the language used to communicate with the churches, though there is implicit in Gal 1 an apocalyptic claim to authority. Instead there is an ethical pragmatism and a rhetoric of persuasion. As we have seen, apocalyptic themes are at the heart of Paul’s writing and help to explain his theology. The mystery, however, is one that is public rather than esoteric, in principle, available to all even if it remains hidden from those on the way to perdition (2 Cor 2:15f.). For all that Paul seems to deny a central place to the mystical ascent and apocalyptic discourse in favour of the word of the cross, he has replaced the plethora of apocalyptic imagery with one sign. As he puts it in 1 Corinthians, that sign signifies life to those who perceive the divine wisdom. But, as with every sign, what is signified is ambiguous. To some it remains foolishness (1 Cor 1:18). Like the Lamb which forms the centre piece of the Apocalypse so the cross stands at the fulcrum of history and as the determinant of true understanding of reality. Paul cannot in the end avoid the language of mystery and apocalypse even if his communication through epistles seems to breathe the air of the ‘down to earth’ and the straightforward. What he offers is the apocalyptic image of Christ crucified, and himself as its mediator. Like the Teacher of Righteousness who could make sense of the enigmas of the prophetic word, Paul is the steward of the divine mystery and is himself as the true interpreter, but one whose life and person becomes the message as well as its medium.

In speaking of life within the messianic community Paul uses language which indicates that those in that fellowship are not merely believers in the Messiah but are in some sense clothed with the Messiah’s person: they put on Christ like a garment (Gal 3:27 and Rom 13:14). They have the Spirit of the Messiah dwelling in them (Rom 8:9). Paul himself when speaking of his own ministry speaks of the Messiah dwelling in him (Gal 2:20). There is thus identification between the apostle and those who respond to his message and the Messiah himself, so that the divine is incarnated in the lives of his followers. The relation between the individual and the collective becomes blurred: ‘you have all put on Christ as a garment…you are all one person

45 Cf. Baumgarten, Paulus und die Apokalyptik.
in Christ Jesus’ (Gal 3:27f.). Even if Paul’s reference to ‘the man in Christ’ in 2 Cor 12:2 is little more than a rhetorical ploy in order to distance himself from boasting based on a heavenly ascent,\textsuperscript{46} it echoes that sense of fragmentation of parts of his identity in different guises which is evident elsewhere in his writings. Who is Paul? Has he ceased to exist as an individual in any meaningful sense? Or as an apostle of Jesus Christ has he become someone else as the result of the indwelling Spirit? What is more, his identity is not found solely in his corporeal presence for, as 1 Cor 5:3f. indicates, Paul is able ‘in spirit’ to be with a community assembled ‘in the name of the Lord Jesus’. This is not simply the dualism of flesh and spirit, though this is part of the same phenomenon. Indeed, the attempt to rescue Paul from the dualism of flesh and spirit, of Law and Gospel, of this age and the age to come, which has been such a feature of modern scholarship, does not do justice to the tensions which are exhibited in his epistles. In addition, there is also in Paul’s writing a questioning of human identity and the complex interrelationships between humanity and the divine such as is also explored by the visionary poet William Blake, whose ‘critique of selfhood goes to the heart of Western metaphysics, the cogito of Descartes…that posits a unitary self as the basis of existence’.\textsuperscript{47}

There is obviously a subtle relationship between Paul’s person and work and the eschatological and apocalyptic beliefs that formed him as a Jew, as Albert Schweitzer recognized. That eschatological sense pervades Paul’s outlook. Even at moments when he seems to be far removed from

\textsuperscript{46} Cf. Betz, \textit{Sokratische Tradition}, 89f., and see the discussion in Gooder, \textit{Third Heaven}.

\textsuperscript{47} On Blake see Blake, \textit{Milton}, 12: ‘It is an existence Blake wished to overcome and replace with a more fluid and open concept of being where the gulf between self and other is bridged—indeed, annihilated.’ Blake’s \textit{Milton} with its idea of a living poet (Blake) taking up and reformulating the work of a predecessor is a phenomenon which is akin to the process of identity which is suggested in the apocalypses of ancient Judaism and early Christianity. Conventional temporality is abolished as the departed reappear and are expounded or rewritten in the present. Blake sees Milton’s spirit enter into his left foot (\textit{Milton} 14, 49f.) so that (to quote the words of Halperin in connection with the appropriation of the book of Ezekiel in \textit{Faces}, 71): ‘When the apocalyptic visionary “sees” something…we may assume that he is seeing the…vision as he has persuaded himself it really was, as (the prophet) would have seen it, had he been inspired wholly and not in part.’ Cf. Lieb, \textit{Visionary Mode}, who traces the appropriation of Ezekiel’s merkava vision down to Dante. Blake continues that tradition as his illustrations of Ezekiel’s vision and John’s vision of the Twenty Four Elders indicates. We have in all these authors the blurring of identity and time as the eternal and the temporal merge, and the experience of the past is taken up, repeated and transcended.
such matters, his terminology, such as we have in the opening verses of 2 Corinthians (1:4) where Paul writes of the ‘tribulation’ he endures, hints at the more than ordinary in the trials he undergoes. By the time he came to write his extant letters, more pragmatic concerns dominated his horizon. In one sense there is a domestication and individualizing of the apocalyptic and eschatological, but there is reflected in the Pauline corpus a feature which runs parallel with the rabbinic treatment of the mystical: it is not allowed so to dominate that it unhinges either the individual or the community from their proper service under God. We are only offered glimpses of the ecstatic and mysterious, not to mention the context in which Paul may have experienced such heights of bliss. The veil hides the precise moments of mystical ascent or visionary insight from us. What Paul chooses to reveal in his written words, however is, directed to the maintenance of community and the common life, albeit under the direction of the apostle of Jesus Christ rather than the chain of tradition which went back to the Fathers (mAvot 1:1). In this respect Paul maintains the pattern of religion which is evident in the Tannaitic sources when it comes to the mystical: present revelation is subordinated to the ultimate revelation on Sinai, thereby ensuring that the demand for the stable conformity to traditional patterns and habits of life are maintained. Similarly, however wonderful the insights and the glory which both apostle and his churches may appreciate, all this is set in the context of that definitive revelation which comes in Jesus Christ. The ‘routinization’ is nowhere better exemplified than in 1 Cor 14, where the ecstatic words of the spirit are subordinated to the rational communication of the comprehensible words of prophecy, or interpreted glossolalia, which have the effect of building up the community. Paul nowhere denies the force of that religious power which had turned his world upside down but, at least in the Corinthian correspondence, we find repeated attempts to prevent the repetition of the kind of disturbance in a church’s common life which had previously caused the personal upheaval in his life. Tradition handed down and appealed to, obedience to the apostolic behest and, above all else, mutual charity, are urged as values which take precedence over the individual moments of ecstasy or other exercises of spiritual power.

The visionary perspective of messianism and apocalyptic, prompting as it does the freedom of the Spirit and embryonic antinomian themes in both Galatians and in Romans, sits uneasily with a different ethic evident in the Pauline corpus. But even there, the challenge to conventional religion, supported by an appeal to mysticism, sets
these texts apart from the merely predictable and conformist and may explain something of their innovativeness and continuing effects. It is no coincidence that the author of Romans and Galatians should have been deemed an antinomian by his opponents (a fact that he is compelled to deny in Rom 3:8 and 6:1 cf. Acts 21:17–26). The heart of his religion has ceased to be the Tora, and its place has been taken by ‘the revelation of Jesus Christ’, with all that came to mean for belief about God and halakha, (though the Tora is not abandoned so much as seen in a new, perhaps one should say, mystical, light). That point is affirmed in the climax of his argument in the opening chapters of Romans, where he contends that ‘without the Law God’s righteousness has been revealed’. Apocalypticism explains Paul’s new reading of inherited traditions. Of course, visions and revelations may only have confirmed accepted patterns of belief and practice and need have offered no threat to conventional wisdom about the character of the covenant. The subversive element in early Christianity owes much to that apocalyptic inheritance, however.

The Letter to the Colossians: Christ the Bodily Form of God

In what has been written so far about Paul and apocalypticism the theme of the public ‘apocalypse’ of the crucified Messiah has emerged as a significant way in which Paul articulates his beliefs about the definitive new revelation. The ultimate divine mystery, therefore, is not to be obtained by heavenly ascents, even if access to divine mysteries remains an important component for elucidating the economy of the divine salvation. A similar perspective is to be found in the most overtly christological text in the Pauline corpus, the letter to the Colossians. In it Paul (and we shall assume Pauline authorship, though much of the argument in this section is little affected by the issue) stresses that the fullness of divinity dwells in Christ in bodily form (1:15; 2:9). He writes to readers tempted to indulge in esoteric and ascetic practices, which might have been a prelude to mystical insight into ‘the treasures of wisdom’ (2:3). Paul seeks to demonstrate the supremacy of Christ over the angelic powers, and he argues that it is through identification with the transformed and glorified Christ that there is release from subservience to angelic powers and the rituals they control (Col 2:14–15).

Those who have studied the opposition or ‘false teaching’ reflected in Colossians have often pointed to a significant Jewish, apocalyptic,
component.\textsuperscript{48} The presence of words like ‘new moon’ and ‘sabbath’ in 2:16 suggest that, and other indications, like circumcision (2:11) and beliefs concerning angels (2:18) support this view. Asia Minor was a center of apocalypticism. According to Eusebius (Eccl. hist. 3.28), the heretic Cerinthus, who was based at Ephesus (cf. Irenaeus, Haer. 3.3.4), had revelations mediated by angels and was thought to have been the author of John’s apocalypse. Phrygia was the birthplace of the Montanist movement in the mid-second century CE in which ethical rigour and eschatological enthusiasm were linked with the revival of prophecy and visions. There are also points of contact between the letter to Laodicea in Rev 3 and Colossians. According to Rev 3:21 hope is held out to those who conquer that they will share the throne of Christ. It is a promise, not as in Matt 19:28 and 1 Cor 6:2 to sit alongside Christ on other thrones, but to share the throne of Christ himself. In Col 1:16 the ‘thrones’ probably reflect the kind of cosmology we have in the Ascension of Isaiah, where five of the seven heavens have a throne placed in them. Also Col 3:1 directs the readers heavenwards to the session of Christ, just as in Rev 3:14 Christ is described as ‘the beginning of God’s creation’, a description without parallel in Revelation and the only place where the language of pre-existence makes its appearance. The similarity to Col 1:15 is remarkable, and the phrase ‘first-born from the dead’ occurs only at Col 1:18 and Rev 1:5. It is possible that John, who seems to have intimate knowledge of the churches, may have been influenced by ideas familiar to the communities of the Lycus valley. Whether these ideas reflect an indigenous Judaism,\textsuperscript{49} or are an imported form of Jewish Christianity is uncertain. The link of Cerinthus with Ephesus and with his particular form of Jewish Christianity may be an argument for supposing that what we have in Colossae is further evidence for the influence of a form of the Jewish Christianity which had its origins in Palestine.\textsuperscript{50}

When we turn to Colossians itself a key passage linking the epistle to apocalyptic elements is to be found in 2:16ff. In 2:16 we can discern the ethical rigour of the teaching Paul combats, with its emphasis on dietary

\textsuperscript{48} See the collection in Francis and Meeks, Conflict; Rowland, ‘Apocalyptic Visions’; Fossum, ‘Colossians 1.15–18a’; Sappington, Revelation and Redemption; Goulder, ‘Visionaries’ and ‘Visions and Knowledge’; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration, but cf. Arnold, Colossian Syncretism; DeMaris, Colossian Controversy.

\textsuperscript{49} On evidence of Judaism in Asia Minor see Kraabel, Judaism in Asia Minor; Trebilco, Jewish Communities; Lieu, Image and Reality.

\textsuperscript{50} Lüdemann, Heretics.
restrictions and the observance of certain festivals. The same concern appears also in 2:21, where Paul seems to be quoting the instructions of the opponents when he refers to commands not to touch, taste or handle. Such restrictions fit well into a situation where visionary experience was important. We know from the apocalypses and later Jewish mystical material that strict preparation was a necessary prerequisite for the receipt of visions.

The crucial verse is 2:18. It is a verse which has caused commentators much difficulty and has led to various suggestions for emendation because of the awkwardness of the Greek. Taking the text as it is, rather than emending it, I would suggest the following translation: ‘Let no one disqualify you taking delight in the humility and worship of angels which things he saw on entering [heaven], puffed up without reason by his carnal mind.’

Paul warns the Colossians about those who would attempt to distinguish among believers, accepting some and disqualifying others, therefore. The basis for the disqualification is their delight in ‘humility and worship of angels’ (2:18). Most attention has focused on these words, translated by the RSV ‘[insisting] on self-abasement and worship of angels, taking his stand on visions’. ‘Humility’ is often translated ‘fasting’ in line with Hermas, Vis. 3.10.6 and Sim. 5.3.7. So, the issues of food and drink mentioned in v16 and the regulations spelt out in v21f. are the fasting which is part of the ascetic practice of the mystic. There are problems with this interpretation, however. First of all, the preposition ἐν is not repeated before the noun θρησκεία. This might suggest that the phrase τῶν ἄγγελων stands in the same relationship to ταπεινοφροσύνη as it does to θρησκεία. Most commentators opt to take the phrase only with θρησκεία and maintain that it is an objective rather than a subjective genitive, i.e. it is a matter of humans worshipping angels rather than the angels doing the worshipping. But there are reasons for supposing that the phrase τῶν ἄγγέλων should be taken with both the preceding nouns, thus making the phrase concern the activities of the angels, their humility and their worship, possibly

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51 For this translation see Francis and Meeks, Conflict, 110; Lohse, Colossians p. 117.
52 On worship of angels see Williams, ‘Cult of Angels’. The prohibition of the address to angels in the Talmud and the command not to worship them in Rev 19:10, 22:8f. and Asc. Isa. 7:21 suggest that it may have been more widespread. See e.g. Lueken, Michael, 4ff. and Schäfer, Rivalität, 67ff. and Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration.
as part of a heavenly liturgy. So the description of the ‘false teaching’ would be not so much a reference to ascetic practices preceding devotion to the angels as a preoccupation with the activities of the angels in heaven, a typical feature of the mystical literature and evident also in the earlier apocalypses.53

In the Jewish literature there is interest in such activities of the angelic powers. In earlier material the obsequious devotions of the heavenly attendants in God’s court are evident in passages like Rev 4:9f., and according to Avot de R. Natan 23a, the highest angels practised humility one towards another:

Even the Holy One, blessed be He, made peace on high… Whence do we know that the angels reverence one another…. and are more humble than human beings? When they are about to open their mouths to sing hymns, one says to another: You begin for you are greater than I; and the other replies, No, you begin, for you are greater than I.54

If we take the phrase τῶν ἀγγέλων as a subjective genitive it is easier to make sense of the following clause ἃ ἑόρακεν ἐμβατεύων as a description of what the visionary saw on his heavenly journey. The verb ἐμβατεύω is normally intransitive, and it is difficult to see how the relative clause could be dependent on it as we would have expected a preposition before the relative. If we retain the intransitive sense we commit ourselves to treating the verb as one whose antecedent must be ἐν ταπεινοφροσύνῃ καὶ θρησκείᾳ τῶν ἀγγέλων. The plural relative refers to the humility and worship, therefore. The neuter plural here is not an insuperable difficulty, despite the fact that the antecedents are both feminine nouns. The neuter plural following feminine nouns is to be found also in the previous verse. Other passages where this happens are Col 3:6 and Eph 5:4.55

Parallels have been offered of the verb ἐμβατεύω in connection with entry into a shrine after initiation into the mystery rites.56 The use of such a technical term might have been deemed appropriate to refer to

53 See Francis’ important essay in Francis and Meeks, Conflict, 163ff.
54 Quoted in Strack-Billerbeck 3: 629. The translation is from the Soncino ed., Minor Tractates, 75. There are similar ideas in 3 En 18; 35 and 39 (Schäfer § 859–65, 919, 923). There are several examples of humble devotion to God e.g. Apoc. Abr. 17 and in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. Perhaps Jude 9 may offer evidence of a similar attitude to ARN 23a.
55 See Moule, Idiom Book, 130.
56 See Dibelius, ‘Isis Inititiation’.
the entry of the mystic into the world above to see visions. There are no precise parallels in the Hellenistic Jewish texts of usage in a mystical context, though there are occasional references in the apocalypses of the seer describing the ascent to heaven as an ‘entry’, e.g. 1 En 14:9 and in the famous story of the Four who entered *pardes*.\(^57\)

The problem with this particular solution lies in v23, where we find the phrase ‘self-imposed piety, humility’ (ἐν ἐθελοθρησκείᾳ καὶ ταπεινοφροσύνῃ) used of the practices of humans and not of angels. Is it possible to suppose that in v18 there could be a reference to the activity of angels in heaven while five verses later the same words could be used of human behaviour? We can explain this by a reference to the imitation of the behaviour of the angels whom they had seen in their visions. Evidence from the Dead Sea Scrolls indicates that there was a close link between the community and heaven. Just as the angels in heaven have their allotted place in the heavenly liturgy (4Q405 23 i, cf. 2 En 20:3f.), so also the earthly community is given a position corresponding to God’s everlasting purpose (1QS 2:22f.; 5:23f.; 6:8ff.). The practices of members of the Qumran community gained for them an intimate relationship with the angels.\(^58\) Likewise, it may be suggested, the Colossians thought that their imitation of the angelic behaviour was entirely appropriate given their communion with them in their visions. One other possibility deserves to be mentioned, i.e. that ‘worship of angels’ refers to the obeisance done by the angels in the presence of the privileged mystic. This is reflected in some of the later Jewish sources, where the human who has pierced to the innermost sanctum of heaven, is deemed to be worthy of angelic honour.\(^59\) Although humans who ascend into heaven are greeted with a threatening hostility from angels, who resent the human presence in the holy heavens, we know that angels could worship the mystics. Small wonder therefore that those who had such visions in Colossae might be puffed up and would disqualify others who had not received such honour (2:18!)

Thus the Colossian ‘false teaching’ would have two components: the minute preparations and the visions themselves, which offered the participants the opportunity to participate in patterns of behaviour

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57 See pp. 341ff.
58 Participation by humans in the angelic liturgy may be found in 3 En 1:12 (Schäfer § 883ff.); Test. Job 48ff.; Apoc. Abr. 17; Asc. Isa. 7:37; 9:31ff.; 1QH 11.20f.; 19.10f.; 1QSb 4.25 and 1 Cor 11:10.
59 See 3 En 10–16 (Schäfer § 894–99, 856).
which should be imitated in everyday life. What the adepts saw in their visions focused on the behaviour of the angels. It is this aspect of the problem which Paul finds so unhealthy. He is not himself opposed to visions. What worries him, however, is the consequence of the visions. There was an unhealthy concentration on other, lesser, heavenly beings rather than Christ. For this reason Paul confronts the assumption that behaviour patterned on that of the angels is of more importance than that of attention to the example of the image of the invisible God, who is creator of the angels, for he is the one in whom are to be found all the mysteries (2:3), and from whom also comes the understanding of true humility (3:12). In the concentration on the angelic liturgy believers are losing sight of Christ as the centre of their faith.

Two other elements of Colossians lend weight to a mystical interpretation of the epistle. Apart from the christological hymn, which has been the subject of much detailed discussion, the importance of Christ as the locus of divine revelation is stressed in 2:9. Here Paul talks of Christ as the one in whom the whole fullness of divinity dwells bodily. Commentators regard the reference to ‘bodily’ as one to the incarnation or the reality of the divine indwelling. The use of the word σωματικῶς elsewhere in the New Testament stresses the literal, corporeal aspect (cf. Luke 3:22 and 1 Tim 4:8), and we should not exclude this possibility here also. Thus, the writer speaks of the present bodily dwelling of the divine glory in Christ. The main objection to taking this as a reference to the incarnation is the present tense of the verb (cf. 1:19). But if we have a reference to the indwelling in bodily form in the heavenly Christ there would be no problem, and, what is more, there would be a link with other passages in the Pauline corpus relating to apocalyptic ideas.60

Col 2:10–15 would seem to imply that the stripping of the body of flesh at Jesus’ death marked the moment when the Christ inherited a glorious heavenly body. That put him beyond the clutches of the angelic powers, a paradigmatic event whose benefits may be shared by Christians. In 2:11 Christian initiation is contrasted with circumcision as a rite which is not made with hands and involves the putting off of the body of flesh (note the language of transformation implied in the metaphor of divesting). Paul can use this language for Christian baptism because the believer is identified with one who at his death has laid aside the body of flesh and passed into another realm of existence. Thus,

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60 On the parallel with Phil 2:6f. see Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God’.
just as Christ was buried and rose again to new existence in heaven, so also believers can be raised with him to share that glory in the present (2:12, cf. 3:1). The death of Jesus marked the moment when the time in the body of flesh came to its end (cf. 1:22). Henceforth, he is the one who exists as the locus of divine glory in bodily form in heaven: he is, therefore, the image of the invisible God. He has put aside the body of flesh and put on a body of glory which will be the ultimate destiny for all believers (cf. Phil 3:21). Divine power is not shared among a number of exalted heavenly beings but found in Christ alone in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom.

The divesting of the body of flesh in 2:11ff. is related to the triumph of Christ over the powers. ἀπεκδύομαι and its cognate noun ἀπέκδυσις (2:15; 3:9, cf. 2:11) are to be found only in Colossians. There is also a moral dimension to the use of the metaphor, which concerns the laying aside of that area of life no longer appropriate to the demands which the new life in Christ makes: in 2:11 it is the putting off of the body of flesh; in 2:15 the putting off of the principalities of powers; and in 3:9 the putting off of the activities of the old nature. Paul opposes return to elementary teaching (2:8) and rejects preoccupation with human tradition rather than the divine fullness revealed in Christ (2:8f.). The close link between circumcision and the flesh gives the writer a starting-place for his dismissal of the ordinance laid upon the believer by the opponents and their interest in angels. In 2:11 the ‘true circumcision’ is a sign of a relationship with God rooted in the risen life of Christ (2:12). It involves ‘removal of the flesh’, in the sense of an end to the subservience to the values and practices of the old aeon, by identification with the death of Christ. This is the moment when he passed out of a sphere of existence which was subject to rites which could be manipulated by the powers. So, just as Christ left behind the sphere of flesh at his death, so also the believer at baptism passes from the influence of the angels and is committed to a new pattern of existence (3:1, cf. 3:10). Christ on the cross has blotted out subscription to the old ordinances. But what is in fact nailed to the cross is nothing other

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61 For a similar approach to these verses see Robinson, Body, 43 and Moule, Colossians and Philemon, 94f.

62 There is a parallel to this belief that the glorified Christ embodies the divine glory in John 12:41 and Justin’s Dial. 114, and links with the kind of angelomorphic tradition known to us from Rev 1:13ff. cannot be excluded, particularly if this kind of Jewish Christianity was imported and widespread in Asia minor.
than the body of Jesus (Mark 15:24; John 20:27, cf. 1 Pet 2:24). It is the body of flesh which is the sphere of influence of the angelic powers, and the place where the Law makes its demands. When Christ died, he triumphed over the powers (2:14f. cf. 1 Pet 3:22) and put off the medium through which the angelic powers exercised such dominion over humankind.\(^63\) The dying Christ divests himself of that flesh, the medium of the power whereby the angelic powers tyrannize humanity. The conquest of the angelic powers takes place at the moment of the divesting of the flesh, with which believers identify in baptism. Baptism/death, therefore, marks a moment of transition from the terrestrial to the celestial, and it is this which the ‘earthly saints’ can enjoy in the midst of this age.\(^64\) New life in Christ qualifies the believer to share in the new life of heaven. The point is made in Col 1:12: the church is privileged ‘to share in the inheritance of the saints in light’. The saints in this context are not only the believers but the angels who are often described in this way (e.g. 1QS 19:7f.). As in Ephesians, where the writer stresses the communion of the church with those in heaven in its evangelical task, the believers as a group now enjoy the inheritance of the angels. According to Col 3:1, the aim of the believer is said to be the place where Christ is seated. That is the direct consequence of baptism when the flesh is laid aside. That is where the believer’s hope is stored (cf. Eph 1:5), so there is no need to resort to any practice of the world below.

As Col 3:9 indicates, transformation is not only, or even primarily, about mystical transformation of the adept, but the change in moral outlook and practice which is the distinguishing mark of the true seeker after a place near the throne of glory. These sentiments are paralleled in the ethical orientation evident in the apocalypticism of another text from first-century Christian Asia Minor, i.e. the Revelation of John (e.g. Rev 3:15–21).\(^65\)

The promise of present participation in resurrection life in Col 3:1 is a clear advance on Rom 6:4ff. The community is offered an opportunity to gain access to the privileges of the world above not through ascetic practices but through focus on Christ. Apocalyptic revelations cannot

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\(^{63}\) This presupposes a change of subject from 2:13 to 14b.

\(^{64}\) Note the parallels to this theme in the *Odes of Solomon* 21, 24, 36, 38 with their baptismal imagery linked to transfer to the angelic life. See further Lane Fox, *Pagans*, 336–74 and Fletcher-Louis, *Luke-Acts*, 72–106.

\(^{65}\) See further Lieu, *Image and Reality*. 
be a necessary condition of faith, therefore. When they are, inevitably a division emerges within the community between those who by their elaborate preparations assert that they are qualified to know the heavenly mysteries, and the rest.

In the light of this we should consider the background of the 'hymnic' passage in Col 1:15. While evidence for the possible background has been thoroughly explored, passages like Justin, Dial. 114, where Christ is identified with the divine *kabod* on the throne of glory, the one who is the form of the invisible God, suggest that Christ as the image of the invisible God is the concrete expression of God and (to borrow words from the Gospel of John) makes the invisible Father known. Christ is the concrete manifestation of the divine *kabod*, the one 'like a man', who appears as the image of the invisible God.

Εἰκών is used as a loan word in the targumim in the context of traditions about humans embodying the secrets of the *merkava*. רוחם is the loan word in Hebrew and Aramaic. In the first form it occurs in the targum tradition at Gen 28:12 where it refers to the form or features of Jacob engraved on the throne of glory. There are several later traditions where the closeness of Adam’s form to that of God is treated. Some connection with a first-century interpretation of Gen 1:26f. and with an angelomorphic tradition is suggested by the catena of ideas in the much discussed passage in Philo’s Conf. 146 where the Logos is described as an angel in human form and linked with the patriarch Jacob (cf. Conf. 62f.). As we have seen, in several apocalyptic texts we find a divine figure either bearing the divine glory, or sitting

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66 Various passages have been suggested from Philo and the Jewish wisdom tradition as the background for this passage: the notion of the part of an intermediary in creation (Prov 3:19; Wis 7:22 and 27, 8:4–6; 2 En 30:8; Philo, Spec. leg. 1.81; De fug. 94ff.; Leg. alleg. 1.43; 3.96; Sacrif. 8; Quod Deus 57; Conf. 61f.; Cher. 127; Opif. 20f.; Somn. 1.241); on pre-existence (Prov 8:22ff.—note that the translation of LXX Prov 8:27 suggests that wisdom was present when God’s throne was created, thereby giving divine wisdom precedence over the throne of God; bPes 54a); on ideas of the divine image (Philo, Conf. 146; Spec. leg. 1.81; Fug. 100f.; Leg. all. 1.43; Pr. Jos.; Wis 7:26).

67 See further Bunta, 'Likeness of the Image'.

68 There is evidence of the use of רוחם in Ps.-Yon. Genesis in a way which suggests that it signifies the form of God in whose form humanity is created. It translates ד 쉽 at Gen 1:26, ד 쉽 at 1:27, ד teaspoon at 5:1, and ד teaspoon at 9.6. The parallel targum traditions in Neofiti and Onkelos do not have these words.

69 E.g. bBB58a, bMK 15b, bHul 91b. On this material see Jervell, *Imago Dei*, and Fossum, 'Colossians 1.15–18'; Bunta, 'The Likeness of the Image'.


71 Apoc. Abr.; Joseph and Aseneth; Rev 1.
upon the throne of glory. Like this figure, Christ gives form to and embodies the image of the invisible God. He is the locus of revelation and the one who manifests the features or God. He is the physical embodiment of divinity, the divine kabod of God which could be seen (cf. 2 Cor 4:6; 1 Cor 15:49), the very manifestation of God in bodily form (Col 2:9). The ascription to this heavenly figure of a creative function is unique in the intensity of its language in New Testament christological passages, however. The letter to the Philippians offers an indication that Paul considered that the exalted Christ had put on a heavenly, glorious body (Phil 3:21). The one who is now in heavenly form is the same as the one who took the form of a slave. It is this heavenly form which will be shared by those who have put on Christ in baptism in the age to come. Paul writes of the majesty of the divine glory manifested in Christ, transferring the rudimentary speculation about the divine form which may have been part of the apocalyptic/mystical lore of certain Pharisees.

Thus there seems to be evidence that the false teaching which Paul sets out to contradict in Colossians had its origin in beliefs and practices which were typical of the apocalyptic and mystical tradition. Paul does not assert that interest in the mysteries of God is to be rejected, but such interests must not displace Christ. Baptism qualifies the believer in Christ to enjoy the privileges of the treasures of divine wisdom and a ‘transformed’ life.

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72 Test. Abraham; Sim. Enoch; 11QMelch.
73 These issues are explored by Fossum, ‘Colossians 1.15–18’ and Rowland, Influence.
74 Scholem, Mystische Gestalt, 276, n. 19; Stroumsa, ‘Forms of God’.
75 Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God’; Kim, Origin.
In the previous chapter we explored the ways in which brief references in the Pauline corpus suggested a mystical substratum. The visionary, the angelic and themes of the transfiguration represent a network of concepts which connect closely with major themes in Paul’s theology. In this chapter we shall focus on apocalyptic cosmology, in order to show the way in which other New Testament texts, and notably the Epistles to the Hebrews and to the Ephesians, are indebted to apocalypticism. The ways in which compensation for eschatological disappointment is sought by means of apocalyptic terminology will be explored. Finally, the issue of angel Christology will be raised, not by reference to the opening chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews, but the christological polemic of 1 John.

In stressing the indebtedness of the New Testament to ancient Jewish mystical and apocalyptic traditions we must recognize the importance of the imagery in which those theological expositions are expressed. They cannot be treated as incidental ephemera to be discarded when the essential religious meaning is extracted. They are integral to the theological message which they communicate. This is particularly the case with the passages in which soteriology and cosmology are yoked together into a theological partnership of sophistication and great importance.

Hebrews

The argument about Christ’s superiority over the sacrificial system of the old covenant involves an exploration of the relationship between heaven and earth in which the heavenly character of Christ’s sacrifice, and the more exalted altar at which he offers himself, are stressed. The apocalyptic cosmology presupposed by the soteriology enables us to see
how the concerns of Hebrews can find a common background in the Jewish apocalyptic tradition.\(^1\)

The author starts his work by arguing that Scripture demonstrates the superiority of ‘the Son’ over the angels. This pressing concern is entirely understandable in the light of the sophisticated angelology of the Jewish apocalyptic and mystical tradition. The existence of angelic beings sharing divine power and characteristics made a precise delineation of the exalted quasi-angelic Christ over against the most exalted angelic beings very difficult. One way in which that could be done is by invoking passages which speak of God and linking them with the Son. But even that is a strategy which offers no unequivocal demonstration of the superiority of the Son, when in Jewish sources angelic beings like Metatron and Jaoel can be given the attributes of God, and even called God. The argument of the Epistle to the Hebrews, stressing soteriology, and the specific character of the life lived and died, offers perhaps the only convincing way of distinguishing Christ from the angels. What sets Christ apart is the offering of a better sacrifice, which effects the linking of heaven and earth. In this the shedding of blood is crucial; a bloodless sacrifice would not enable the access to the inner shrine of heaven (9:25). A veil of flesh is pierced, and a new and living way is opened up (10:20), which requires a body of flesh and blood. A glorious angelic being is inadequate for this office. The contrasts in Hebrews, between the sacrifice of Christ and the sacrifices of the levitical system, and between the heavenly perfection and the earthly shadow, have been taken as indications of Platonic influence.\(^2\) But the likelihood is that any influence from this quarter already had infiltrated the emerging apocalyptic tradition with its contrasts between the heavenly world and the world below where God’s purposes might be fulfilled.\(^3\)

Christ in Hebrews is the one who has passed through the heavens (Heb 4:14, cf. 6:19; 9:24; 10:19f.; 12:2) and is now seated at the right hand of the majesty on high (1:3). His exaltation is closely linked with his inheritance of ‘a more excellent name’ (1:4). Mere possession of the divine name is no guarantee of superiority, however, for the angel Jaoel in the Apocalypse of Abraham shared the divine name, as also

\(^{1}\) This was recognized in a significant article by Barrett, ‘Eschatology’, 62ff.; Chester, ‘Hebrews’. See further Hurst, Hebrews, 24; Hofius, Vorhang; Attridge, Hebrews.

\(^{2}\) See Williamson, Philo and Hebrews.

\(^{3}\) This is thoroughly explored in Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism 1: 214ff.
did Metatron. Nevertheless, in the second half of the book, by use of the belief that Jesus has passed through the heavenly world, the writer focuses on the uniqueness of Christ’s heavenly offering. The cosmology reflects the cosmology of the apocalypses. Within this framework the author seeks to understand the work of Christ as the important moment in the piercing of that barrier between heaven and earth. The ascent of Christ into heaven is not the glorious progress of the Son to the Father, as the whole of the understanding of the letter is linked with the cross as the decisive event which made the ascent/entry possible.

From 7:1 onwards the writer sets out to justify and to explain the significance of the references to the high priesthood of Jesus, already hinted at in 4:14 and 6:20. Jesus was not a high priest of the line of Aaron and was therefore not permitted to officiate in the earthly cult (7:1ff.). His high priesthood was according to the order of Melchizedek. This figure, mentioned so briefly in Gen 14:18ff., was the basis of a variety of speculations in Judaism and Christianity in some respects parallel to the Enochic legends reviewed earlier, though it has to be admitted that there seem to be few hints of the more extravagant examples of speculation about Melchizedek in Hebrews. Rather, his importance for our writer is the fact that he received tithes from Abraham, the ancestor of Levi, and thus showed himself to be superior to Abraham and the priestly family which was descended from him (7:7ff.). He is without genealogy and parentage, thus ideally suited to be a type of the son of God who breaks with the traditions which base themselves on priestly pedigree. Jesus, from the tribe of Judah, is a member of that superior priesthood (7:15ff.), therefore. His superior office is linked with the superior offering made only once (7:27; 9:25; 10:11f.), unlike the offerings made by the levitical priesthood, which could not bring into a right relationship with God (9:9). Perfection was not to be found in them, for they were merely a shadow of reality (10:1ff.).

Hebrews 8–10 presupposes a division between earthly and heavenly. According to Heb 8:5 the earthly shrine was an exact copy of the heavenly. The earthly priests serve merely a copy of the heavenly sanctuary (8:5), whereas Christ has entered heaven itself, not the sanctuary which has been made with hands (9:24). It is the perfection of the heavenly cult which is the setting for Christ’s offering (cf. 8:5f.), not the earthly

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4 Note the similarities with the merkava hymn in the Apocalypse of Abraham quoted above 82.
copy. In the earthly shrine there are two compartments, the inner one being shut off by a veil (9:3). Before entering the inner compartment of the shrine, the Holy of Holies, on the Day of Atonement, the High Priest must kill a bull as a sin offering for himself (Lev 16:11). Then he sprinkles the mercy-seat with the blood of the bull (v14) and kills a goat as a sin-offering for the people, after which he sprinkles its blood on the mercy-seat (v15). Scripture prescribes that the High Priest makes atonement for the shrine and then at last enters into the Holy of Holies. In Hebrews Jesus, by virtue of the sacrifice of himself, was able to enter, not the earthly, but the heavenly sanctuary (9:23f., cf. 9:13f.). Just as a rite of purification was necessary for the earthly shrine, so it was with the heavenly. Just as in the earthly shrine the veil shut off the Holy of Holies and the presence of God above the ark, except for the one occasion in the year when the High Priest was allowed access (Lev 16:2ff.), so also in heaven God was cut off from other parts of the heavenly world by a veil. Christ by virtue of his sacrifice is permitted to go behind the veil, however, into the inner sanctum of heaven (cf. 9:3) and sit at the right hand of God (4:16; 8:1; 12:2). He thus becomes the guarantee of the salvation for those who would follow him (6:19f.). His sacrifice enabled him to enter not the holy place of the earthly cult but the very heart of the heavenly world where God sat enthroned in glory. In other words, Christ’s death enabled him to ‘ascend’ to the divine presence, the climax, in other words, of the ascent of the apocalyptic seer.

The background to this soteriology seems to be is that of the Jewish apocalyptic and mystical tradition.5 Jewish writings offer evidence that the heavenly cult was something which reflected the activities on earth, even to the extent of having a heavenly high priest offering sacrifice. For example, in bHag 12b Michael acts as the heavenly priest in Zebul. Such ideas are familiar also from Revelation (e.g. 6:9; 11:19). There is reference to sacrifices made by angels in heaven in T. Levi 3:5, and a celestial veil is mentioned in 3 En 45 (Schäfer § 930), T. Isaac 8:4 and Tg. Job 26:8.6 In T. Levi 3:4f. we find reference to the patriarch’s ascent to heaven. God is enthroned in the highest heaven. Before God are the angels ‘who minister and make propitiation to the Lord for all the sins of ignorance of the righteous’ (3:5). There is close proximity of

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5 See further Hofius, Katapausis, and idem, Vorhang.
6 Two references which may be earlier than the aforementioned are bHag 15a (Elisha ben Avuyah’s audition of a bat kol from behind the celestial veil excluding him from the people of God) and PsYon Gen 37:17.
the altar in heaven with the throne of God. For the author of Hebrews the heavenly sanctuary is the eschatological sanctuary, built (8:2) along with the city, by God at the end of the age—one that has now arrived according to Heb 12:22. It is inaugurated (9:23f.) by the offering of Jesus. So, the climax of history has now occurred in Jesus, and he is the first to enter the heavenly sanctuary which is at the same time the sign of the new age.7

There is in Hebrews that oscillation between the ‘vertical’ and the ‘horizontal’. What is above, in heaven, is also what is to come, which will be revealed in the end time. Nevertheless, the end of the age has now been reached, and the good things to come are now revealed (9:26). Even if Hebrews concentrates on the ‘vertical’ rather than the ‘horizontal’, the ‘realized’ rather than the future, the spatial dualism of the apocalyptic and mystical texts facilitates a dialectic which enables the writer to communicate both the transcendence of present realities and the immediacy of that transcendent crisis in the world of flesh and blood.

So, Hebrews presupposes the pre-existence of a heavenly shrine as the pattern of the earthly tabernacle (8:4f.; 9:8; 9:11; 9:24 and 10:20).8 There is a sanctuary in heaven into which Jesus enters at death and as the result of his sacrifice he purifies the heavenly shrine. The sacrifice of Christ was once for all and need never be repeated (7:27; 9:12; 10:10). It was this that enabled the son of God to enter the holiest place of heaven and thus to sanctify the heavenly shrine to be a place where all those who have faith can enter in.

The incarnation, culminating in the self-offering, is seen in Hebrews as the way in which Jesus opened up a way through the veil. The cosmological framework of a heavenly cult from Jewish apocalypticism enables the writer to show that the way to God is direct (10:19), as Jesus is the pioneer who has gone into the innermost part of heaven and has sat down with God now behind the celestial veil. Calvary thus becomes the moment when the definitive access to God becomes a possibility. Paradoxically, the death outside the camp (13:12) becomes the place where heaven and earth coincide, in that the sacrifice of Jesus opens up the way into the heavenly shrine.9 Access to the heart of heaven

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7 Hurst, Hebrews, 38–85.
8 See the survey of the background and meaning in Attridge, Hebrews, 222.
9 On this see the discussion by Isaacs, Sacred Space.
has been achieved by those who follow this heavenly high priest (4:16). The cross has become a meeting-point between heaven and earth. To paraphrase the language of Hebrews 9:26, συντέλεια τῶν αἰώνων, the coming together of this age and the age to come (cf. 1 Cor 10:11), has come at a point when Christ offered sacrifice of himself outside the camp. The place of reproach and rejection turns out to be the very gate of heaven. The moment of the offering of the sacrifice is historical, 'sub Pontio Pilato'. Entrance into heaven takes place at the moment of a cruel death. Just as in the Fourth Gospel the exaltation and glorification of the Son of Man is at the moment of suffering and death, so in Hebrews the path to the innermost sanctum comes via crucifixion.

Dualistic contrasts are exploited to illuminate the decisive moment of salvation. The law remains only a shadow (10:1), and the earthly tabernacle is one made with hands and inferior to that in the heavens (9:24). The contrasting parts of the tabernacle are linked with the different parts of reality in contemporary Jewish sources (Philo, QE 1.91, 94; Josephus, Ant. 3.122ff.). This dualistic perspective facilitates the critique of the world 'below' and the assertion of eschatological crisis which has arrived in the death of Christ. As in John's Gospel the theological narrative is one that is happening at two levels.10 There is another aspect, a divine dimension which is opened up through the apocalyptic perspective. Thus it is impossible to understand the vagaries of human existence, or even the true identity of individuals, unless one is also aware of that other perspective. In an apocalypse what happens in heaven corresponds to what happens on earth. It is a kind of overview from another perspective. It is like a drama happening on two levels in which the 'higher level' 'pre'-figures (not in a temporal so much as an interpretative sense) what takes place on the 'lower' level. That which takes place in heaven, or is reported as having its origin in heaven, offers an insight into a perplexing story of the world. Understanding the mystery of existence is given a new dimension. Events on the earthly stage remain enigmatic. One who sees only at the 'lower' level can be offered another perspective on reality by means of the eye of vision. The vision enables the reader to make sense of events and interactions which without that added perspective would seem utterly enigmatic. It is that which can transform understanding, so that what appears to be confusion and folly may be apprehended as the wisdom of God. This is offered in the letter to the Hebrews. In expounding the

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10 See Ashton, Understanding, 404, drawing on Martyn, History and Theology.
significance of the death of Christ the writer opens up the heavenly world to his readers to enable them to see the true meaning of the death which took place at Golgotha. The heavenly Temple is opened up by this death as an alternative horizon to existence ‘beyond’ and ‘contrary’ to the institutions of the old covenant. Workers are thereby shown a picture of a heavenly pioneer who opens up access to this other dimension and enters and transcends the limits of ‘the veil of the flesh’ to create the possibility of an alternative space for those who go ‘outside the camp’.

_Ephesians_

The letter to the Ephesians is often treated as an example of second generation Christianity when the eschatological fervour had diminished and the preoccupation with the role of the church gradually assumed centre stage. Its apocalyptic credentials are seldom recognized. At any rate, what is evident in Ephesians is that the dualistic contrast between two ages is replaced by a cosmological dualism of heaven and earth, above and below. Futurist eschatology is present in Eph 1:14; 2:7; 4:10; 5:5; 5:27; 6:8 and 13), yet it has to be admitted that there is alongside it a greater emphasis on the present possession which the _ecclesia_ enjoys in Christ.

Ephesians has six occurrences of the key term ‘mystery’. Elsewhere in the Pauline corpus, in 1 Corinthians, Paul had described himself as a steward of the divine mysteries (4:1), in particular, the divine wisdom found in the cross of Christ (2:1, 7; cf. Rom 16:25). In addition, there are other mysteries, particularly of an eschatological kind (1 Cor 15:51, cf. 13:2; 14:2; Rom 11:25; 2 Thess 2:7, cf. Rev 17:5, 7). The Pauline usage continues that found in the Gospels where Jesus is presented as offering the mystery of the Kingdom of God (Matt 13:11; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). The soteriological content of the mystery is to the fore in Ephesians, Colossians and 1 Tim 3:16. In the last mentioned, it refers to the whole of the Christian _Heilsgeschichte_. The mystery which is hidden is referred to in Col 2:2 and 4:3f. and explained in 1:26f. as ‘Christ in you, the hope of glory’ (1:27). In Ephesians the mystery of Christ (3:4, cf. Col 4:3) is the divine economy (1:10, cf. Rom 8:29) and

11 So Attridge, _Hebrews_, 262: ‘language of cosmic transcendence is ultimately a way of speaking about human interiority.’

12 Lincoln, _Paradise_; Odeberg, _View of the Universe_.

the summation of all in Christ. This is hidden from previous genera-
tions (3:5, cf. Rom 16:25) but is now revealed to the holy apostles and
prophets ἐν πνεύματι. The content of this mystery is that the nations
are fellow heirs of the promise in Christ. This mystery is none other
than the gospel in which is now revealed the righteousness of God

Alongside this emphasis on ‘mystery’ Ephesians, like Hebrews, makes
great play of apocalyptic, spatial, dualism. In the opening chapter of
Ephesians the triumph of Christ is stressed through the exaltation (Eph
1:21). In describing this the writer uses the phrase ‘in the heavenlies’ (ἐν
tοῖς ἐπουρανίοις) which occurs several times in the epistle to speak of
the place where Christ is seated in glory (1:3; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12). The key
to the understanding of the phrase is 1:20 where its spatial dimension
is not in doubt: the readers’ attention is directed to the place where
Christ is enthroned in divine majesty. With the exception of this verse
all the others are to be found in contexts dealing with the role of the
church. The nearest in content to 1:20 is 2:6, which speaks of believers
having been raised with Christ and seated with him in the heavenly
places. This suggests that in the life of the Christian community the
writer believes that those who have passed into the realm of light
already enjoy the glory surrounding God’s throne. Similarly in 1:3 the
blessing which God has bestowed on believers in the heavenly places
is in Christ and qualifies them to participate in the glory which now
belongs to the risen Christ in heaven. They can now enjoy that which
was only to be manifest on earth at the fulfilment of God’s purposes
on earth (cf. Col 1:12).

The other two references to ‘in the heavenlies’ deal with a different
issue: the relationship of the church to the powers, earthly and heavenly.
In Eph 3:10 the author talks of the wisdom of God made known to the
powers by means of the church. It now becomes the agent of Christ’s
saving work. In Col 1:25f. ‘Paul’ had spoken of the gospel as a message
which had been hidden by God but only recently made known to his
saints. In 1 Pet 1:12 the gospel is spoken of as events which angels had
longed to look upon. The generation of the believers was peculiarly hon-
oured. While many sages and mystics had longed to see the day of the
Messiah and probe the mysteries of the messianic era, the generation of
believers addressed in texts like 1 Cor 10:11, 1 Peter and Ephesians are
told that they are privileged to know the heavenly mysteries. Accord-
ing to Ephes 3:10, this mystery of the gospel is proclaimed through the
agency of the church. Its link with the exalted Christ has qualified it
to proclaim the divine mystery of salvation. The church is engaged in no ordinary struggle. In Eph 6:12 the writer talks of the life and death struggle with the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places. Divine protection is needed for this extraordinary body of people. All this is reminiscent of passages from the apocalyptic and mystical texts. The frightening appearance of angels who would keep the mystic from the higher reaches of heaven is stressed (3 En 1:7, Schäfer § 883; HekhR 15). In Asc. Isa. 10:20ff. the descending Christ needs to escape the gaze of those angelic powers which now threaten the church. The heavenly warfare in which Michael and his angels have been engaged according to Rev 12:7 becomes part of the life of the community. In contrast to the War Scroll from Qumran (1QM), this is a battle which is not fought with weapons of war but the divine equipment outlined in Eph 6:11ff. It is tempting to see in the letter to the Ephesians a spirituality akin to that found in some of the Dead Sea Scrolls. Indeed, as Geza Vermes has pointed out, the Dead Sea Community thought of itself as a group with access to the heavenly world:

The aim of the holy life within the Covenant was to penetrate the secrets of heaven in this world and to stand before God for ever in the next. Like Isaiah who beheld the Seraphim proclaiming 'Holy, holy, holy', and, like Ezekiel, who in a trance watched the winged Cherubim drawing the divine throne-chariot, and like the ancient Jewish mystics who consecrated themselves, despite official disapproval by the rabbis, to the contemplation of the same Throne-Chariot and the heavenly Palaces, the Essenes too, strove for a similar mystical knowledge... The earthly liturgy was intended to be a replica of that sung by the choirs of angels in the heavenly temple.

The spatial language is found elsewhere of the moral life of Christians and the order of the church. Vocabulary of size is employed to describe the quality of existence in Christ. In Eph 4:13 the phrase εἰς μέτρον ἡλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ to some extent prefigures the language of the shiur koma speculation where the dimensions of the body of God are set out. Here, however, any speculative interest is

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13 See Bauckham, Climax, ch. 8.
14 See Mussner, 'Contributions'.
15 So Vermes, Dead Sea Scrolls, 174f.
16 See below 539ff. and Cohen, Shi’ur Qomah. There is evidence that on the fringes of early Christianity the antecedents of this kind of speculation existed as the brief references to the vision of Elchesai indicate, see Hippolytus, Ref. 9.8.3f. and further Baumgarten 'Book of Elchesai'.
subordinated to the use of the language of size as a way of stressing the norm and environment of the life of the members of the new community of faith. The same is true of Eph 3:18, where the indwelling Christ enables a comprehension surpassing all knowledge, cosmic in its scope, ‘the breadth, length, height and depth’. In Eph 4:8ff., Ps 68, with its language of heavenly ascent, provides a framework within which the theological significance of earthly ministry within the ecclesia can be affirmed. Here the speculation about the nature of ascent has become part of an ethical discourse on the apocalyptic and cosmic character of life in Christ. The ordinary and the extraordinary are brought together in the common life and moral action open to all the saints (3:18).

Ephesians represents a shift in the eschatological concerns. Instead of apocalypticism being a means whereby the seer could ascertain the secrets of the future, Ephesians represents those writings where the apocalypses’ emphasis on the present glory of heaven is used. Apocalyptic ideas cease to be about the proleptic glimpse of that which is to come and rather become the whole-hearted participation in it in the present and the understanding of a mystery now revealed. Similar things recur in a text which has been described as the earliest Christian hymn book: the Odes of Solomon.17 In the Odes worship is seen as a participation in the life of the end-time. In Odes 11:16f. (cf. 20:7) the writer talks about being taken to Paradise. Elsewhere the writer appears to use the language of the heavenly ascent. For example, in 36:1f. we read: ‘I rested on the spirit of the Lord, and she lifted me up to heaven and caused me to stand on my feet in the Lord’s high place before his perfection and glory… the spirit brought me forth before the Lord’s face.’ Here the language used points to the writer seeing participation in the worship of the community involving not only a foretaste of the heavenly Paradise but also an actual ascent to heaven to stand in the presence of God. The writer appears to have borrowed language more usually linked with the heavenly journey to express the profound conviction of the intimate relationship between the saved community and the presence of God. It parallels themes from the Qumran Hodayoth. In 1QH 11:20f. the writer speaks of being raised up to ‘everlasting height’.

Apocalyptic categories are taken up and utilized in the expression of convictions about Christ’s exaltation and its consequences. The cosmol-

17 For discussion of the background of related themes and the cultic significance of realized eschatology see Aune, Cultic Setting.
ology of apocalyptic was a convenient starting-place for reflection on the understanding of revelation which Christian writers believed had been inaugurated by the exaltation of Christ. The glory of the world above which was to be manifested in the future had now become a present possession for those who acknowledged that the Messiah had come and had already made available the heavenly gifts of the messianic age.

Christ Present and Absent, Hidden and Revealed

One of the most distinctive doctrines of the New Testament, evident in most strata of the material, is the conviction that sooner or later Christ would return. The eschatological horizon of early Christianity is dominated by this expectation whose relevance for our theme is not difficult to discern. The ‘this worldly’ expectation receded in the subsequent centuries but the apocalyptic outlook, as we have defined it, did not. The Christ hidden by the vault of heaven would in due course be revealed, and, as a result, there would be a physical communion between those who had been faithful to the one hidden from human sight and the lord of the universe. The communion between elect and Messiah, such a feature of the convictions of various strands of New Testament Christianity, would be demonstrated as the reality which the faithful always trusted it was. Apocalypticism’s concerns with what is beyond normal human comprehension, and communion with the divine, are both featured in this important, though neglected, doctrine. Much of the explicit enunciation of it in the New Testament entails the appearance of a remote figure into a situation of greater proximity with the created world with severe repercussions for those opposed to the divine will and bliss for those who welcome him. For those who put their faith in Christ there is the promise that they will share in his glory and even ‘be like him’ (1 John 3:2). Christ would be revealed from behind the vault of heaven which shrouded him from human gaze to be seen by all flesh. That moment of ‘apocalypse’ (1 Cor 1:7 and 1 Peter 1:7) is a final demonstration of the unseen communion between ecclesia and heavenly Lord which was at the heart of so much early Christian theology.

There was probably no coherent parousia doctrine in Second Temple Judaism, though the material in the Similitudes of Enoch, with the belief in the coming judgement of the Son of man/Elect One, comes very close to it. This material represents an interpretation of Dan 7 in a direction
parallel to what we find in the future Son of Man sayings. With the exception of Matt 25:31 (and possibly John 5:27, where judgement is linked with the Son of Man) there is not much evidence to suggest that the New Testament was dependent on the Similitudes (or vice versa for that matter). Material concerning the return of Christ and his presence in the world is evident in most parts of the New Testament (possibly even in the letter of James, e.g. 5:7–8).

In the eschatological discourses in the Gospels nothing is said about the effects of the coming of the Son of Man on the forces of evil. Indeed, the description of the coming of the Son of Man in all three Synoptic Gospels is linked explicitly with the vindication of the elect and communion with the Son of Man, though that moment of vindication suggests only a meeting and a gathering rather than a moment of transformation into another realm of existence.

The element of communion, and identification with the heavenly Son of Man who will come at the parousia, is evident elsewhere from the Synoptic discourses, however, as the climax of the Matthean version is the account of the final assize with the Son of Man sitting on God’s throne separating the sheep from the goats (Matt 25:31ff.). Here the focus of attention is on the present response of the elect. It is those who recognise of the heavenly Son of Man in the brethren who are hungry, thirsty, strangers, naked, weak and imprisoned in the present age who will inherit the kingdom prepared by God from the foundation of the world. There is some kind of identification between the heavenly Son of Man and those he chooses to call his brethren which has the effect of making vividly present the heavenly judge and his demands.

Paul is concerned to maintain the importance of the presence of Christ here and now, while another feature of his extant writings is the stress on future fulfilment. The sense of mystical communion has rightly been seen as ‘the prime enigma of Pauline teaching’ which ‘once grasped…gives the clue to the whole’. In one of the earliest eschatological accounts in the New Testament in 1 Thess 4:15–16, written for a situation where there is despair about the fate of the righteous dead—clearly a difficulty for those who shared the doctrine of the resurrection found in most Second Temple texts—Paul quotes tradition and asserts the fellowship of alive and dead at the coming of

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18 Schweitzer, Mysticism.
the Lord. In 1 Cor 15 we have the most extensive example of Paul’s *parousia* hope. In a discussion which focuses on the belief in the resurrection and the character of the resurrection body, Paul alludes to the future consummation. It is in two stages. In the first stage, set out in 1 Cor 15:22–23, he outlines the order in which the resurrection from the dead will take place: Christ, as the first fruits, is first, then those who belong to Christ at his coming (cf. 1 Thess 4:15). In vv24–28 comes the second stage: the ‘end’ when Christ hands over the kingship to God with every rule, principality and power destroyed. It is only when all things are subjected to the Messiah that the son will himself be subject to the father, and God will be all in all (v28).

In 2 Thess 2 we have an eschatological fragment in a context dealing with a particular pastoral problem. As such, like 1 Cor 15, it offers only a fragment of the eschatological drama, sufficient to deal with the particular issue confronting the writer: the threat of disturbance to the community because of an outburst of eschatological enthusiasm prompted by the belief that the day of the Lord has already arrived (2 Thess 2:2). The mystery of lawlessness is *already* at work. In other words, the present is in some sense a time of eschatological fulfilment but not a time when the righteous yet enjoy the delights of resurrection life. In this sense it is similar to Revelation where the exaltation of the Lamb provokes the initiation of the whole eschatological drama, in which the seer and other prophetic voices have their part to play.20

Passages like these contrast with Rom 8, which offers a possibly solitary example of evolutionary eschatology, rather than the disjunction with which we are more familiar in uses of the imagery of gestation and birth. What is also lacking in Rom 8 is any reference to the *parousia* of Christ, which is replaced by the ‘revelation of the sons of God’, a sign of the liberation of creation. Just as the followers of the Messiah could find a new creature emerging in themselves in tension with the old, with all the anguish that involved, so the creation was in travail awaiting that moment when God’s children would come to birth. In the present there could be no escape from the pain of the world for those who belonged to Christ. Elsewhere, the tribulations that accompany the renewal of all things may be felt by the apostolic minister (Col 1:24).

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19 On the significance of this eschatological material see Jewett, *Correspondence*.

The eschatological presence of Christ in the future is already anticipated in the community, but particularly in the life of the apostle. He is no ordinary mortal sent by the God of Israel but one in whom the presence of the Messiah dwelt, as bearer of the marks of his death (Gal 6:17; 2 Cor 4:10; 2 Cor 10:10; Phil 3:10). Paul thought of himself as one whose presence was that of the bearer of charismatic, even, eschatological power, so in addition to the parousia of Christ in the future there was an anticipation of that eschatological meeting in the apostolic parousia.21 Thus Paul in Christ Jesus, who has become father of the Corinthians through the gospel (1 Cor 4:15), and is to be imitated (4:16), is the embodiment of Christ (11:1).

In the Fourth Gospel the disciples are those to whom Jesus comes soon after his departure. Jesus will manifest himself to that disciple who loves him and keeps his commandments (14:21); indeed, to that disciple will both the Father and the Son come and make their home (14:23). The dwellings which Jesus goes to prepare for the disciples with the Father can be enjoyed by one who loves Jesus and is devoted to his words (14:2, cf. 14:23). Likewise, the manifestation of the divine glory is reserved not for the world but for the disciple (14:19). Whereas in Revelation all flesh will see the salvation of our God (cf. Isa 52:10), and those who pierced the victorious Son of Man will look upon him in glory (Rev 1:9, cf. Mark 14:62), the world cannot see the returning Jesus who remains hidden from it. There is here little of the cataclysmic denouement of the Apocalypse even if the language of future eschatology continues to make its appearance (e.g. John 5:28). The goal of the new age in Revelation, where those who bear the name of God on their foreheads (Rev 22:3f.) will see God face to face, is part of the heavenly bliss reserved for the disciples whose destiny is to be in heaven with him and to see his glory (John 17:24). The Paraclete comes to the disciples; the world cannot receive him; and it is the Paraclete who enables the disciples to maintain their connection with the basic revelation of God, the Logos who makes the Father known (14:17ff.; 15:26). Possibly these Johannine passages represent an attempt to come to terms with disappointed parousia hopes. But if the Johannine writings are in fact products of an alienated group, what we have is a lack of concern for the future of the world, not because they are disappointed because of the non-fulfilment of the Promise but because of the concentration

21 See Funk ‘Apostolic Parousia’.
on those who are of the light rather than those on the way to pedition outside the elect group.

In Revelation, present communion with Christ is at a minimum except in those for whom he stands in the midst of the community in judgement (1:20). That dramatic coming is primarily, in Rev 19:11. in the future. There is clear evidence here of the influence of the Jesus story: the Rider on the White Horse already bears the marks of his death (v13). In addition, there are explicit links with the vision of the Son of Man in 1:14. His appearance leads to a holy war. Like the descendant of David described in Isa 11, it is with the sword proceeding from his mouth that he will rule the nations. He comes as king of kings and lord of lords (19:16). In the struggle which is to take place, therefore, his victory is already assured. For the readers meanwhile, eschatological bliss is some way off. Just as in Rev 2–3, where the promise of Paradise is offered to those who hear what the Spirit says to the churches, the apocalyptic vision serves not to comfort by its content those who hear or read it but to demonstrate the enormity of the task awaiting those who would reach the New Jerusalem.

An example of the problem posed by eschatology is the non-fulfilment of eschatological hopes, the delay of the parousia. This is widely considered to be a way of explaining the mutation of eschatological beliefs and practice in primitive Christianity and the evolution of a very different religious system. It was this acute problem which was used to explain the emergence of mystical identification of the believer with Christ. Thus, Paul’s conventional eschatological timetables inherited from Judaism had to be modified by the non-appearance of the eschatological kingdom (e.g. Rom 11:25). Its particular importance for the theme of this book is that it concerns the mutation into an immanent union between the heavenly Christ and his followers while stressing the need for endurance and finding other ways of expounding Christ’s presence with his own. In the New Testament writings the early church seems already to have begun to find a way to domesticate eschatological enthusiasm. The process of routinization left a credible doctrinal edifice which is built on less shifting sands than messianic enthusiasm.

The apocalypses offer important evidence of a resource for dealing with the non-fulfilment of God’s reign on earth. The apocalypses are as interested in the world above, where God’s reign is acknowledged

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by the heavenly host and where the apocalyptic seer can have access to the repository of those purposes of God for the future world. Thus the apocalyptic seer can glimpse the future, either in the heavenly books about the divine mysteries, or by being offered a preview of what will happen in human history in the future. In most apocalypses the experience of a disclosure of the heavenly mysteries is reserved for the apocalyptic seer, but this might be extended to a wider group. It is that which we find in different forms in the Hodayoth (1QH) and the Odes of Solomon, and especially the letter to the Ephesians and the Fourth Gospel, which offer the elect group a present participation in the lot of heaven and a foretaste of the glory which is to come. The identification of the ecclesia of the elect with Christ in the heavenly places is stressed in the letter to the Ephesians (1:21, cf. 3:5ff.), so that the present life of the church becomes a glimpse, a foretaste of the kingdom of God, just as the Spirit enables the believers to regard the present as a participation ‘in the powers of the age to come’ as the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews puts it (Heb 6:5).

1 John: Christ Angel or Messiah?

At the beginning of this century Alois Wurm in an important monograph argued that the position of the opponents of the author of 1 John was best understood as a form of Judaism, which denied the messiahship of Jesus. Because this seemed to be incompatible with the suggestion that the heretics were themselves once part of the Christian community, the valuable points in this theory have been neglected, and the origin of the heresy has been found in the emerging Gnostic religion. While care must always be taken not to ‘read off’ too easily the situation and doctrines lying behind a text, what is known as ‘mirror reading’, the content of 1 John suggests an approach to its Christology which has been neglected in recent study.

The writer speaks of Jesus as the one who came by water and blood (1 John 5:6). The fact that he goes on to stress that both water and blood were involved in Jesus’ coming has led to the view that there is a deliberate rejection here of a belief which asserted that Jesus came by water only. It is tempting to suppose that the reference to water in this

23 Wurm, Irrlehrer.
passage is a reference to Jesus’ baptism and the blood to his death on the cross. In that case, it would appear that we have a repudiation of a Christology which asserted that only the baptism, and not the suffering on the cross, was part of the coming of Christ. Put like this, the similarities with the Gnostic Cerinthus’ teaching seem very marked indeed (see Irenaeus, Haer. 1.26). After all, according to Irenaeus, Cerinthus believed that Christ descended in the form of a dove, but departed from him, so that only the human Jesus suffered and rose again, while the divine Christ remained impassable. 1 John 5:6 would seem to indicate that the false teachers accepted the presence of the heavenly Christ at baptism but not at the crucifixion.

Two points should, however, be made about this theory. First of all, it is by no means obvious that the coming of Christ spoken of in 1 John refers to the events which characterized his life as a whole but speak rather of the mode of his coming (i.e. his incarnation, the reality of his humanity). This seems to be the case in 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7, where the coming on both occasions is linked explicitly with the humanity of Jesus. A more natural explanation of 5:6, therefore, is to suppose that the water and the blood refer to the nature of the incarnate Christ rather than events in his life. This is a view which would seem to be confirmed by the passage in John 19:34, which seems to parallel 1 John 5:6.24 Secondly, the other passage dealing with the false teaching in 4:2 is not so easy to interpret in the light of the teaching of Cerinthus as many have supposed. The issue here, and for that matter also in 2 John 7, is not the extent of the presence of the heavenly Christ throughout the life of Jesus of Nazareth, but the reality of the humanity of Jesus Christ. There seems to be no question here of the problem of a separation between the divine Christ and the human Jesus. Rather, the author of 1 John repudiates the views of those who reject the reality of the incarnation. This was not, as far as one can ascertain, part of Cerinthus’s Christology. Thus, if we start with 4:2 as a summary of the Christology of the false teachers, we are driven to conclude that the issue was the reality of the humanity of Jesus Christ.

How then are we to understand 5:6 in this light? Is this a separate christological deviation, or can it be related to the other aspects of the

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24 John 19:34 is regarded as a sign of Jesus’ humanity in Irenaeus, Haer. 3.22.2 and 4.33.2, though a close link between the baptism and the death of Christ is noted by Tertullian in Bapt. 16.
false teachings? The reference in 1 John 5:6 is not to events in Jesus’ life but an affirmation of the reality of the incarnation by pointing out the character of Jesus’ nature, in much the same way as the parallel passage in John 19:34.25 This view has the advantage of being consistent with 1 John 4:2 and 2 John 7.

There are two further factors to be borne in mind when interpreting the passage in the latter way, either the reference to water and blood could reflect ancient beliefs about human beings, or the water and the blood could represent the two aspects of Jesus’ nature, the water the divine, the blood the human. The second alternative fits better with the fact that the writer wants to deny a view that Jesus Christ came by water only, an idea which is not completely comprehensible if this passage is merely about the make-up of humans. Emphasis on blood as a sign of the reality of the incarnation is to be found also in Ignatius, Smyrn. 6, and such an emphasis contrasts with those who deny the reality of his humanity by suggesting that the body of Jesus was made up of some other substance.26 Wengst rightly points out the difficulty of finding examples of Gnostic teachers who considered that Jesus was made up of a watery substance, without any human blood.27 There is some evidence, however, to suggest that some later Gnostics did think of Christ as consisting of an ethereal substance (Tertullian, De carne Christi 6 and Adv. Marc. 3.11). Indeed, in a passage which explicitly quotes John 19:34, Origen himself seems to make a similar point against Celsus in Contra Celsum 2.36. In this passage Origen sees the water which flowed from the side of the crucified Jesus as a miraculous indication of his divinity.

Finally, it should be noted that the notion of the water being a celestial substance which was part of Jesus’ make-up is not as far-fetched as may appear at first sight. After all, it is apparent from certain Jewish cosmogonies that water is one of the pre-existent substances which is used to make the world (e.g. yHag 77a; 2 En 25ff.). It is not inconceivable, therefore, that the author of 1 John wants to make the point that, as well as a celestial substance, there was human blood in Jesus’ veins.

Alongside this, we may note an earlier reference to the Christology of the false teachers in 2:22f. (cf. 5:10). The ‘heretics’ apparently denied

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25 See Richter, ‘Blut und Wasser’.
26 Act. Thom. 165 (see Klijn, Acts of Thomas, 302); Gos. Phil. logion 100.
27 Wengst, Häresie und Orthodoxie, 19f.
that Jesus was the Messiah, and, secondly, thought that it was possible to have a relationship with God without any intermediary activity of Jesus. In the light of the stress on the relationship with God alone and denial of the messiahship of Jesus, it seems natural to suppose that the setting for such beliefs was a form of Judaism, which rejected the messiahship of Jesus and consequently the central role of Jesus the Messiah in the new relationship between humanity and God now possible.

From all these verses it may be suggested that recent developments in the community have challenged the faith which the group has held from the beginning (1 John 2:24). As a result of inspiration, supposedly from God (2:20 and 4:2), members of the community have abandoned their original faith by denying that Jesus was the Messiah and they have felt compelled to leave the community. So, the writer has to warn his readers not to follow after them. It is not without significance that the issue of Jesus’ messiahship is, in part at least, behind the writing of the Fourth Gospel (John 20:31 cf. 9:22), when Jewish-Christians may have had to decide whether to remain with the ‘non-believing’ Jewish synagogue or form their own community based on doctrines which would be acceptable to both Jews and Christians alike. But how could such a compromise be achieved between the Christian position and that of the Jews?

There does appear to have been one option open to these Jewish-Christians which enabled them to allow a place for Jesus in God’s revelation of his will without asserting the messiahship of Jesus. A form of angel-Christology can explain the way in which such a group could square their beliefs in Jesus with Jewish insistence that Jesus was not the Messiah. Developments in Jewish angelology would have enabled them to see Jesus as an angelic mediator in the form of man but who was not the final, eschatological agent of salvation. It is clear from other biblical passages, however, that angels can be said to have the appearance of men (e.g. Dan 8:15f.) without any suggestion that they shared in human nature. Indeed, as we shall see, in the early Jewish-Christian apocalypse, the Ascension of Isaiah, human form is merely a cloak for

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28 There is some evidence to suggest that Jewish-Christian thought did make use of angelomorphic categories in its Christology; see e.g. the quotation from the Gospel of the Hebrews in Hennecke, *New Testament Apocrypha*, 163, and further Daniélou, *Jewish Christianity*, and especially the vision of Elchesai in Hippolytus, Ref. 9.8.1–3.

his celestial nature, so that evil powers should not perceive his true nature (Asc. Isa. 11:17) and foil the divine plan of redemption.

That angel-Christology played a larger part in early Christian doctrinal discussions than is usually supposed is now being recognized, but it would be of special significance for those schooled in the Johannine traditions. For them Jesus was the one sent by God from heaven to speak God’s will and do the will of the God above (John 7:16). He was the one, like the angel of God in the Old Testament, whose task it was to be the emissary of God and who was ‘no longer distinguishable from his master but in his appearing and speaking clothes himself with Yahweh’s own appearance and speech’.

To say that Jesus was the one who makes God’s person and will known is at the heart of the Johannine Christology (John 1:18 and 14:6f.). Nevertheless this is not enough for the author of the Fourth Gospel, who asserts that the collection and redaction of the Johannine traditions is intended to enable his readers to accept Jesus as Messiah, and as such, also a man and not merely a celestial envoy. In other words, it is necessary for the disciple of Jesus to accept the unique role of Jesus as the eschatological agent of God’s saving purposes. He cannot be placed alongside other heavenly messengers (as the author of Hebrews also stresses), for he is the person who must be accepted as the Messiah of the Jewish nation. For a Jew who wished to maintain his connections with a Jewish synagogue antagonistic to Christian claims, it may have been necessary to deny the unique role to Jesus which the messianic confession implied, but this need not exclude the possibility that Jesus was an important, though not unique, angelic emissary, who came from God, a view in line with one main theme of the Johannine traditions. Such a position would have enabled the Jewish-Christian to remain faithful to the Christian emphasis on Christ as a divine envoy, while being at one with the synagogue in denying that Jesus was the Messiah. To regard Jesus as an angelic envoy rather than the Messiah of Jewish expectation, however, might mean denying his humanity. Thus it would appear that a case can be made for the understanding of the christological position of the opponents in 1 John being best explained by a form of angel-Christology, a belief which absolved

30 See the discussion in Hannah, Michael.
31 Bühner, Gesandte.
32 Johnson, One and the Many.
Jewish-Christians from giving a unique role to Jesus. The lack of emphasis in 1 John on Jesus as the emissary from above as compared with the Fourth Gospel, in favour of a stress on his messiahship and humanity, not to mention the unique significance of the saving death of Jesus (1 John 2:1f.), emphasizes that belief in Jesus could not involve any kind of compromise with a position which did not allow a central place for the messiahship of Jesus and his agency in the process of salvation. The line between orthodoxy and heresy does not lie merely in acceptance or rejection of Jesus as being sent by God, so much as the significance given to him as the fulfilment of Jewish eschatological hopes. What has been challenged by the heretics is the uniqueness of Jesus’ role as a human, epitomized by his messiahship, the eschatological scope of his saving work (2:2) and the reality of his humanity. In the view of the writer, in this area no compromise is possible. Either the believer accepts the unique role of Jesus or he forfeits his relationship with God (2:23 and 5:12). To deny his messiahship and his humanity, with the assertion that he is one of a number of angelic emissaries, undermines the messianic thrust of the early Christian message.
In the previous chapters we have seen that apocalypticism played an
important part in the genesis of earliest Christian theology. Exploring
this further, this chapter seeks to point forward to some of the
issues which arise in the developing apocalyptic tradition by outlin-
ing apocalyptic trends in emerging Christian theology. We will discuss
the Ascension of Isaiah as a possible background to 1 Peter and the fluid
transition to Gnosticism.

*The Ascension of Isaiah and 1 Peter*

The Ascension of Isaiah is an important testimony to early Christian
apocalypticism\(^1\) with several distinctive features.\(^2\) Like many other
apocalyptic pseudepigrapha it is extant only in translation (the com-
plete version in Ethiopic, with parts extant in Greek, Slavonic and
Coptic), and it owes its survival to the interests of Christian scribes.
It is extant in various translations and may have existed as a Jewish
pseudepigraphon before it was transformed into the Christian text it
now so obviously is. Its cosmology, dualism and redeemer myth make
it a theologically fascinating testimony to a variety of religious currents
at what might have been a particularly critical junction in emerging
Christianity. While its cosmology is distinctive, it reflects one of the
most widespread soteriological themes of Christianity, the Christus
Victor, classically expounded by Gustav Aulen.\(^3\) This is a soteriology
which has gained popularity in recent years as an approach to the death
of Christ which transcends the individual to incorporate the social

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1 Recognised in Daniélou, *Jewish Christianity*.
2 See Knight, *Ascension of Isaiah*; idem, *Disciples*; Pesce, *Isaia*, and Bauckham,
‘Ascension of Isaiah’.
3 Aulen, *Christus Victor*. 
and the cosmic. The contours of the myth as we find it in Ascension of Isaiah harks back to New Testament passages like 1 Cor 2:9–10, 1 Tim 3:16, 1 Pet 3:22. As such, whatever its date, it presents with a way of elucidating the brief and allusive New Testament references. Also, of importance, is its connection with the dualist theology of what we have come to call Gnostic texts.

In the later chapters of the Ascension of Isaiah, Isaiah ascends through the heavens, is himself transformed and sees the Beloved (a saviour figure) descending through the seven heavens to appear as a man. The seer tells of the way in which he was transformed during the descent into the form of the angels in the five lowest heavens and then the angels of the firmament which separate earth and heaven (ch. 10). It is only after his appearance on earth that the Beloved returns again to the highest heaven, but this time without being transformed (10:14 and 11:23ff.). The consequence of this descent and ascent again is that the angelic powers who deny the existence of God in the seventh heaven (10:13) worship the Beloved (10:15 and 11:25ff.). There is great sorrow among these lower heavenly powers that they had not recognized the Beloved as he descended and this revelation of the hidden descent leads to the conquest of the lower powers. According to 10:12 this descent and ascent is the means whereby the dominion of the ‘gods of this world’ is shattered. The point is that the moment of victory comes on the way back to heaven again when the powers are forced to admit that they have been deceived and so worship the Beloved. This theme is one which may have influenced other passages such as 1 Tim 3:16 (where the chiastic structure suggests that ἐδικαιώθη ἐν πνεύματι, ὄφθη ἠγγέλοις refers to events in heaven), Phil 2:10ff., and in other forms is found also in Eph 1:21, Col 2:15 as well as 1 Cor 2:9.

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4 See Stringfellow, *Conscience and Obedience*, who was responsible for anticipating more recent study, e.g. Wink’s trilogy on the principalities and powers: *Unmasking, Naming, Engaging*.
5 In this apocalypse we have one of the earliest and clearest examples of a doctrine of seven heavens. See Bietenhard, *Himmilische Welt*, and Collins, ‘Seven Heavens’.
6 The link between Phil 2:7 and Asc. Isa via the use of cognate in Phil 3:21 deserves to be considered. Phil 2 like Asc. Isa. depends for its soteriology on the humility of the Beloved as a prelude to his exaltation. In both works there is a hint of transformation: ‘being found in human likeness’ is the result of the descent of the divine being who was in the likeness of God.
7 Other possible links between the Pastorals and the mystical tradition are discussed by Goulder, ‘Pastor’s Wolves’, and see also Gunther, *St. Paul’s Opponents*. Both the Mishna and the Pastorals seek to discourage speculation, however, whether about
The transformation of the righteous on ascent into heaven is found in the Enoch tradition:

> And the Lord said to Michael, Take Enoch and take off his earthly garments, and anoint him with good oil and clothe him in glorious garments. And Michael took off from me my garments and anointed me with good oil. And the appearance of the oil was more resplendent than a great light, and its richness like sweet dew, and its fragrance like myrrh, shining like a ray of the sun. And I looked at myself, and I was like one of the glorious ones, and there was no apparent difference. (2 En 9:17ff., trans. Sparks).8

The Ascension of Isaiah oscillates between outlining Isaiah’s ascent and transformation (9:30) and the Beloved’s descent and transformation. In Asc. Isa. the defeat of the powers comes through the transformation of the Beloved as he ascends having first descended incognito through the heavens taking on the distinctive character of each heaven as he passes through it. He is seen in all his glory as he ascends back to the Father, thereby catching the lower heavenly powers off their guard. He does this by giving appropriate passwords to the angelic doorkeepers9 leading to their worshipping the Beloved (Asc. Isa. 11:25ff.).

There is some evidence that the soteriology of the Ascension of Isaiah may lie behind 1 Pet 3:22. Here the author links the resurrection of Jesus with the triumph over the heavenly powers. It is not the fact that Christ is now seated at the right hand of God which is the reason for his dominion over the powers, for the entry into heaven itself seems to have led to this subjection. The genitive absolute ‘with angels subject to him’ is best understood as an adverbial clause speaking of the moment when the angelic powers became subject to Christ. Thus it was during the journey to heaven when the angelic powers became subject to him and not the receipt of a privileged position which has enabled Christ to be lord over the powers. As we have seen, this is the emphasis which we find in the Ascension of Isaiah. That there may be some contact between the two works is suggested by the order of the angelic powers, which corresponds with Asc. Isa. 1:3.10

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9 See the similar theme in the hekhalot literature, Schäfer § 204–51, 413–16.
10 There is also some evidence of links between Asc. Isa. and the hymnic fragment in 1 Tim 3:16 particularly the words ὤφθη ἄγγελοις, cf. Phil 2:6ff. above, note 3.
From the very start of 1 Peter it is evident that the spatial dualism of Jewish apocalypticism contributes to its theology. Salvation is an entity reserved in heaven (1:4, cf. Matt 6:19) but, like the raw veiled Christ (1 Pet 1:7), to be revealed on the last day. The significance of that salvation is stressed in 1:10–11. It is something that the prophets of old searched after (cf. John 12:41). Already in ancient times the spirit of Christ was revealing the sufferings of the Messiah and the salvation which was to come, the third time that ἀποκαλύπτω/ἀποκάλυψις are used in 1 Pet 1. The message glimpsed beforehand by the prophets and now announced to the readers through the Holy Spirit sent from heaven is so significant that even angels desire to ‘have a peep’ at its secrets.\(^\text{11}\) Those who do the preaching are engaging in a cosmic activity (cf. Rev 14:6; Eph 3:9) and handle mysteries only dimly understood in the past. In this they share the privilege of Christ who preached to the ‘spirits in prison’ (1 Pet 3:19, 4:6). It is the privilege of having access to divine secrets that is the basis for rejoicing (1 Pet 1:8).

**Apocalypticism and Gnosis**

Concentration on the eschatological characteristics of apocalypticism has not prevented commentators from noting the similarities which exist between the apocalyptic literature and Gnostic texts.\(^\text{12}\) The relationship between apocalypticism and Gnosticism is a very complex one. That some links exist cannot be doubted, particularly since the discovery of the Nag Hammadi texts. It is by no means clear whether apocalyptic ideas are the motor of Gnostic spirituality or have merely provided certain components to certain texts.

In the light of what has already been said it will be apparent that the interest in what may be called the heavenly dimension in apocalyptic

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\(^{11}\) Cf. Ignatius, Trallians 5 where the bishop points to his knowledge of τὰ ἐπουράνια. There is a resemblance to the story in the targumim on Gen 28:12 (above 126–128 on the Fourth Gospel) where the sight of the sleeping Jacob is viewed as a significant insight into the mystery of the throne of glory and to the legends concerning the recitation of the merkava chapter by Elazar ben Arakh in the presence of Yohanan ben Zakkai, where angels gather round to hear the mysteries which are being expounded (above 101).

literature is an important link with Gnosticism. Nevertheless the pre-occupation with human history and eschatology in the apocalypses, a historical/horizontal, rather than the heavenly/vertical, dimension, has persuaded most that a significant shift has taken place from the former to the latter in the Gnostic texts. The fact is that the Nag Hammadi texts include several apocalypses, as well as many other points of contact with the apocalyptic tradition, which suggests that the relationship needs to be kept under review.

It is unlikely that Judaism by itself formed the dominant religious tradition for the Gnostic systems. Any glance at the Gnostic texts now available to us reveals a wide spread of sources of the ideas used by the writers. Nevertheless the Nag Hammadi discoveries have confirmed that the debt owed to some strands of Judaism is considerable. One example of this is the way in which the divine-throne chariot features in some of the Gnostic cosmologies. The kind of developments which we find in these Gnostic texts point to connections with Jewish circles developing the understanding of Ezek 1 rather than the use by the Gnostics of the original scriptural passages. The Ascension of Isaiah may suggest that certain forms of Judaism contained within them the seeds of later Gnosticism. Nevertheless Jewish apocalypticism does not promise salvation based on knowledge, even if knowledge of hidden mysteries is a signpost to the understanding of the divine will. So, for example, in Rev 2–3 the revelation of the contents of the heavenly letters is a means of enabling the community to see the true way to salvation. The complacency at Laodicea would have remained unrecognized without the knowledge of the divine assessment. Here knowledge of God’s perspective is the essential prerequisite to the understanding of what is required for salvation.

In one respect apocalypticism allows no concession to Gnostic theology. In Apocalyptic texts there is a very firm grasp on divine control. Nowhere do we find any suggestion that there is no providential control of the course of this world. Nevertheless, there are elements in apocalypticism which parallel a Gnostic form of dualism. Firstly, the way in which God delegates his authority to other angelic beings, however temporary that devolution of power might have been, has the seeds within it of a far-reaching dualism, though it has to be stressed that

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13 For the Excerpta see Casey, Excerpta ex Theodoto, and for comment Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, 34f. and Hofius, Der Vorhang.
this dualism is never found in the apocalypses. Indeed, in the Tripartite Tractate, there were Jews who espoused a form of dualistic theology which ascribed the creation of the universe to angelic beings (112:35; 113:1). Secondly, the hope for the future in the apocalypses necessarily has an implied contrast between the glory of the future age and the inadequate circumstances of the present. Although there is no reason to suppose that the apocalyptists thought of matter as inherently evil, in certain circumstances it is conceivable that Jews could be so disillusioned with any hope for the present that they could retreat, via their mystical experiences, to the world of light, which was unsullied by the vicissitudes of the present creation (at times the pessimistic attitude in 4 Ezra towards human nature comes close to despair).

Apocalypticism and Gnosticism are both concerned to make sense of existence by reference to the world beyond. So, while it may be true to speak of Gnosticism as essentially non-historical and non-eschatological it is not correct to put Gnosticism at the other end of the religious spectrum from apocalyptic. It is tempting to accept generalizations which affirm that ‘the dualism of apocalyptic literature was eschatologically conditioned, whereas the dualism of the Gnostics was cosmologically conditioned. Whereas the Gnostic wanted to flee from the world, the apocalyptist hoped for a new world.’ No doubt the apocalyptic literature does demonstrate a keen interest in history as the arena of divine activity. Nevertheless, the evidence suggests that part of the reason for this interest resembles the concern of the Gnostics to know whence one has come and whither one is going. The total view of human history found in the apocalypses functions as a means of explaining the human situation, in a perplexing world. The ultimate solution may differ from the Gnostic, but the quest of the apocalyptist and the reliance on divine revelation as the basis for his answer is akin to Gnostic spirituality. What is more, as we have seen apocalypticism is not directed solely towards the future, for there is an important ‘vertical’ dimension to apocalyptic thought. The knowledge of what already exists in heaven, whether it be the secrets of the future or of God, is a way of giving significance to life in the world below. The differences should not lead us to deny a

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16 Cf. mAvot 3:1, on which see Davies, ‘Reflections’, and Wewers, *Geheimnis*, 114f.
17 So also Barrett, ‘NT Eschatology’, 138f.
similarity of outlook, which suggests related religious streams. Where there is common ground is in their hermeneutical perspectives. Both traditions offer information, the reading or hearing of which offers a different perspective on existence. Gnostic cosmogony is, it is true, in many ways more complete and more coherent than that found in either the apocalypses or the Bible. It is offered as a means of understanding, though whether that involved those who were persuaded by it in adopting different patterns of life as opposed to thought is not clear.

We have already had reason to mention on several occasions the Ascension of Isaiah\(^\text{19}\) and noted its importance for the reconstruction of an apocalyptic cosmology in early Christianity. While the first part of this work is believed to have been an independent Jewish pseudepigraphon, emended by Jewish Christians, we have in the later chapters of this work the ingredients of apocalypticism: the revelation of the world above, the heavenly ascent and an elaborate cosmology. What is remarkable is that in the description of the seer’s ascent to heaven in the second half of the book there is a complete dearth of eschatological material, though futurist eschatology is found in the earlier chapters, e.g. 4:14ff. Like the Gospel of John a marginalized visionary group seems to be the origin of the book. It has separated itself from society at large and joined with the prophet in the desert: ‘And many... who believed in the ascension to heaven withdrew and settled on the mountain. And they all put on sackcloth and they all were prophets; they had nothing with them, but were naked and bitterly lamented the apostasy of Israel’ (Asc. Isa. 2:9f.).

The concern of the apocalyptist is, first and foremost, with the world above and the descent of the Beloved, and there is little concern for the future of the world below. The obvious separation between the high God in the seventh heaven and the hostile powers which populate the lower heavens has many of the ingredients of the radical metaphysical dualism so typical of fully-fledged Gnostic religion. The Gnostic tendencies of the work are especially marked in the later, apocalyptic, chapters\(^\text{20}\). First of all, the successful descent of the Beloved depends on his escaping the notice of the lower heavenly powers. Although it is not immediately apparent that the lower heavenly potentates are

\(^{19}\) An introduction to this important book can be found in Knight, Ascension of Isaiah and idem, Disciples. See also Hall, ‘Ascension of Isaiah’ and ‘Isaiah’s Ascent’.

\(^{20}\) See Helmbold, ‘Gnostic Elements’.
hostile when Isaiah first ascends to the seventh heaven, there can be little doubt as the narrative proceeds that they are hostile to the Beloved (10:18ff.). Indeed, the Beloved is forced to give the appropriate password to the celestial doorkeepers of each of the lower heavens before he is allowed through. This is a well-known feature of the Hekhalot material and suggests a degree of alienation between the highest heaven and the earth and the heavenly world most adjacent to it.21 A dualistic outlook becomes most explicit in 10:13 where the lower powers in heaven utter the cry so typical of the Demiurge in any Gnostic texts: ‘we alone are and there is none beside us’ (e.g. Hypostasis of the Archons 141:22ff.; Apoc. John 59:20, cf. Isa 45:22). The lower powers thus set themselves up as the rulers of the universe, unaware of the fact that there is a higher divine power in the seventh heaven. Here within the framework of an apocalypse we have every indication of the rudiments of that dualistic theology which was to become so characteristic of the fully-fledged Gnostic systems of the second and third centuries.

It could, of course, be argued that the Gnostic tendencies which we find here are the result of the infiltration of Gnostic ideas into apocalyptic thought. There are, however, good reasons for rejecting such an assumption and instead preferring an explanation which sees the development by reference to the trends within the Jewish apocalyptic and mystical tradition itself, and in particular the hints to which we have referred of a growing reluctance to speak of God enthroned in glory.22 No mention is made of the throne of God in this apocalypse, though it may be implied in 11:32. Isaiah does not disguise the fact that he is unable to look upon the glory of God. Nothing whatever is said about the throne of God in the highest heaven, however. The situation is very different when Isaiah describes what he sees in the five lowest heavens. In each of these there is a figure seated upon a throne surrounded by angels:

And after this he brought me to the firmament, which is the first heaven. And there I saw a throne in the midst, and on the right hand and on the left of it were angels. But the angels on the left were not like those on the right, for those on the right possessed a greater glory, and they all praised with one voice; and there was a throne in the midst... (Asc. Isa. 7:13ff.)

22 See above p. 198.
We are not given a detailed description of the thrones in the lower heavens, but such information as we do possess would suggest some connection with the apocalyptic throne-theophanies in Dan 7:9 and 1 En 14:20f. It seems plausible to suggest that the angels mentioned were singing the praises of the one in the highest heaven. The lower heavens, however, do not accept the existence of any power higher than themselves. We must assume, therefore, that the praises of the angels in each of the lower heavens are directed to the figures on the thrones which they surround. Indeed, according to 8:19f. there is a difference in the praise of the sixth and seventh heavens as compared with the fifth heaven. In the highest heavens the praise is directed to the primal Father and his Beloved. So it would appear that the traditional Jewish theophany has here been taken and linked with lower divine beings rather than with God in the highest heaven just as we find in Gnostic works (Apocryphon of John 58:15, the Hypostasis of the Archons 143:20 and On the Origin of the World 105).

Isaiah is told not to worship these divine figures in the lower heavens even though he feels compelled to do so (7:21). The seer appears to consider that these figures have sufficient marks of divinity to warrant worship. Such a compulsion would be understandable if Isaiah connects the sight of these lower powers with the vision of God of Isa 6:1ff. There are signs that such a connection was made in the text itself, for in 7:2 we read: ‘I saw a sublime angel, and he was not like the glory of the angels which I was accustomed already to see.’ There is implied in this verse a contrast between the glorious angel who appears to him at the opening of the ascent to the highest heaven and the less glorious heavenly beings which he had seen previously. But when had Isaiah seen these angels? The most obvious answer to this is to take it as a deliberate contrast with the call-vision of Isaiah 6, where God had appeared to the prophet surrounded by the seraphim. So, according to Asc. Isa., the call-vision would be of less importance than what the prophet was to see in this new vision and was more akin to the vision of the enthroned figures in the five lower heavens. The call-vision recorded in Scripture involved a glorious heavenly apparition, but nothing to compare with the reality of glory found in the seventh heaven. The God who dwells there is a mysterious, invisible figure (11:32) who is described by one of the angels as ‘the unnamed one’ (8:7). God’s nature and form are thus beyond human comprehension, contrasting with the enthroned divine figures in the five lowest heavens, all of whom are described in language more appropriate to the throne-theophany visions.
The separation between the throne of glory and the invisible God is already hinted at in some apocalypses. Two trends may be noted in apocalyptic theology. On the one hand, there is a tendency to link the throne of glory with some other figure. Thus in the Similitudes of Enoch and the Testament of Abraham Enoch and Abel respectively occupy a throne like the throne of glory. On the other hand, there is a growing reluctance to speak of the figure on the throne. In the Qumran merkava fragment, Rev 4 and in Apoc. Abraham, for example, there is either only a brief reference to a figure on the throne or a complete absence of any figure on the throne. Along with the empty throne Apoc. Abraham includes references to a divine being, Jaoel bearing many of the attributes of divinity associated with the theophany tradition. In these trends we find a tendency which Scholem noted in the Jewish mystical tradition which makes ‘a fundamental distinction between the appearance of God the creator and his indefinable essence’. In the Jewish apocalypses this is not yet the radical dualism we find in fully-developed Gnostic systems, but there are elements here which might lead to a complete separation between the demiurge and the invisible, transcendent God.

Although the writer of the Ascension of Isaiah knows parts of the gospel tradition, and perhaps even the canonical Gospels, his Christology differs from theirs and shows signs of docetism. Despite the fact that the birth of Jesus from Mary is reported, there is every indication that this event is interpreted in a docetic manner. In 9:13 the angel who had been accompanying Isaiah speaks thus of the descent of the Beloved: ‘Nevertheless, they see the thrones and know to whom they belong and to whom the crowns shall belong after he had descended and become like you in appearance, and they will think that he is flesh and a man.’ This seems to be docetic, which is evident also in the description of the birth of the Beloved. This takes place in unusual circumstances. Mary was pregnant for only two months before the birth takes place (11:7). There are no labour pains (11:14) and without Mary knowing anything about what happens (11:8). This could mean that she was not in fact pregnant, and that the coming of the Beloved to earth was attended with all the usual marks of a human birth but was not, in fact, one.

24 On the merkava elements in the Nag Hammadi material see Fallon, Enthronement; Gruenwald, Apocalyptic to Gnosticism; Deutsch, Gnostic Imagination.
Thus he sucked the breast merely so that ‘he would not be recognized’ (11:17). The hint that the Beloved did not really need human food is reminiscent of those Jewish traditions which deny that angels eat or drink. By disguising himself as a human being the Beloved thereby escaped the attention of the heavenly powers (11:16, cf. 1 Cor 2:9).

Elsewhere, there are links with Jewish ideas. In para. 37f. of the Excerpta ex Theodoto, for example, there is a description of the throne of Topos which is clearly indebted to the merkava:

A stream of fire issues from under the throne of Topos and flows out into the void of what is created, which is hell, and is not filled from the creation of the fire that flows. Topos is itself fiery. Therefore, he says, it has a curtain in order that the spirits may not be devoured by the sight of it. Only the archangel goes into it, according to the likeness of whom the high priest enters once a year into the Holy of Holies.

The language here has been extensively influenced by Gnostic ideas but the Jewish elements are everywhere apparent. The naming of the demiurge has its origin in a well-known circumlocution for the divine name (Hebrew \textit{makom}). The reference to the stream of fire which comes from the throne of Topos is a reflection of apocalyptic ideas (cf. Dan 7:10 LXX; 1 En 14:19). The closeness of the description to 1 En 14 makes textual dependence on that particular text possible. The fiery nature of Topos is typical of the merkava passages in the apocalypses (e.g. Dan 7:9–11). We note the important part the veil before the throne has to play. Its function is to prevent the destruction of the spirits. The notion that the angels could not see God is known from 1 En 14:21 (cf. Exod 33:20). Just as in T. Levi 3:5 where the angels are said to minister before the abode of God, so the description of the abode of Topos is based on the notion of the heavenly cult. The divinity is hidden behind a veil (cf. Heb 6:19f.).

Other references to the throne theophany tradition may be found in the Apocryphon of John 58:15ff. and the Gospel of the Egyptians, but the best examples are to be found in the Hypostasis of the Archons 143:20ff. and the Untitled Work from Nag Hammadi Codex III (also known by the title On the Origin of the World). In both the lower divinity Sabaoth is installed over the seventh heaven beneath the curtain.

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25 See Goodman, ‘Do Angels Eat?’
27 Marmorstein, \textit{Old Rabbinic Doctrine}.
In Hypostasis of the Archons there is indebtedness to both Sir 49:8 and 1 Chr 28:18, though it may also be indebted to developments of the merkava tradition. The cosmology of the Origin of the World is similar to that of the Ascension of Isaiah. There are seven heavens, in the first five of which there are thrones and angelic powers. Also, in certain later Jewish mystical texts mention is made of a plurality of throne chariots belonging to God also evident in the plural מרכבות in the Qumran merkava fragment and the seven levels of heaven in which the angels minister before God in heaven in 4Q403. In the Origin, Sabaoth is said to have created a throne in front of his dwelling. This is similar to 3 En 10 (Schäfer § 894), where God made for Metatron a throne similar to the throne of glory and placed it at the door of the seventh hall. The throne-chariot is undoubtedly the Jewish merkava. It is a chariot with four faces. The description of the cherubim in this work is without exact parallel in Jewish literature. Like Ezek 1 mention is made of the four 'forms', but instead of each corner of the chariot and its creature having four faces, the cherub had eight forms. The throne appears to be in the shape of a cube with eight corners. These descriptions of the throne of a lower heavenly being seem to have been have derived from the developing merkava tradition rather than directly from the biblical exemplars.

In one respect apocalyptic and mystical writings make no concession to Gnostic theology. They usually keep a firm grasp on the idea of divine sovereignty. This is even true of the Ascension of Isaiah where the soteriology functions on the basis of the ultimate recognition by the lower powers of the sovereignty of the Beloved. Nevertheless God delegates authority to other heavenly beings. Such a devolution of power could in certain circumstances lead to the radical theological dualism of Gnosticism (though this is a development we never find in the apocalypses). We have noted that in the Tripartite Tractate from Nag Hammadi, there were Jews who did ascribe the creation of the universe to an angelic being (112:35f.—it was by the angels that God created), something which is confirmed by the testimony of al-Qirqisani.

28 Hebrew has ‘the plan for the chariot, that is the cherubim’. לְבַדָּנִי הַמרְכָּבָה הַכֶּרְבִּים.
29 On the Visions of Ezekiel see Wertheimer, Batei Midrashot 2: 136.
30 Cf. Macrae, Elements, 104ff., who thinks that dualistic myths of this kind may have influenced Elisha ben Avuyah. Gnostic influence on Jewish mystics was argued by Graetz, Gnostizismus.
31 See Böhlig and Labib, Koptische-gnostische Schrift, for an explanation of the arrangement.
to the beliefs of the Magharians, a Jewish sect whose antecedents might go back to the beginning of the Christian era who believed that the world was created by an angel.\textsuperscript{32}

In both apocalypticism and Gnosticism we find writers seeking to make sense of existence by reference to the world beyond and by means of an all-embracing explanatory revelation. This is done more comprehensively in the Gnostic texts, for in several of the apocalypses there are many loose ends left untied. Also the eschatological strands in the apocalypses prevent a thoroughgoing escapist and an otherworldly solution to the problems of history. But for all that there is evidence to suggest that mystics and apocalyptists shared the Gnostic concern to know whence one had come and whither one was going. The total view of history serves to explain the situation of humanity in a perplexing world. The ultimate solution may differ from the Gnostic but is akin to their outlook. The knowledge of what already exists in heaven is a way of giving significance to life in the world below. The way of salvation in apocalypticism is different from Gnosticism, but these differences should not blind us to a similarity of outlook which makes it difficult to see them as anything other than related religious streams.

We have in the Ascension of Isaiah an apocalypse which raises in the acutest possible form the question of the relationship between apocalypticism and Gnosticism. The guardians of the lower heavens, described as they are in terminology derived from the Jewish theophany tradition, echo the cry of the Gnostic demiurge that there is no other divinity apart from them (10:13). Like the debt of the Hypostasis of the Archons and the Untitled Work from Nag Hammadi to the merkava tradition, so here too we find in them a question raised about the extent to which apocalypticism contributed to the development of certain forms of Gnostic religion. Apocalypticism could lend itself to a radical form of otherworldliness in which the light of the heavenly throne-room of God offered a stark contrast to a benighted creation. In a political situation in which hope was at a minimum apocalypticism may have offered a significant catalyst to the development of that distinctive and systematic denigration of this world which is at the heart of fully-fledged Gnosticism. Any account of the parting of the ways between Judaism and Christianity has to take account of this trend.\textsuperscript{33}

\textsuperscript{32} See the recent discussion by Ashton, \textit{Studying John}, 71ff. and below 593.

\textsuperscript{33} On the connection between apocalypticism and Gnosticism see the comments of Grant, \textit{Gnosticism}, and idem, \textit{'Early Christians'}.
Apocalyptic has performed a variety of different functions within religion. Its interest in visions of a world beyond with its myriad of angels and preoccupation with the means of achieving communion with that world make it seem a classic example of an opiate for those who wish to escape from a heartless world (to paraphrase Karl Marx). Nevertheless, it has also often been a spur for those engaged in movements of political change, where visions of hope have fuelled powerful social forces demanding change in the existing order. It is a matter of dispute whether apocalyptic functioned in this way in our period or at the time of the First Revolt, though in later Christian apocalyptic movements it did perform exactly that function. The elect were offered conviction of their identity and certainty to engage in that struggle to actualize their visions of the eschatological reign of God. In the apocalyptic material that we have been examining there is little sign that it was in fact the motor of violent change.

Its role in the extant late first-century CE apocalypses is to encourage obedience by stimulating the reader to recognize the temporary nature of present realities and the urgent need to persevere in order to receive what has been promised. One might say that in some of these works, both Jewish and Christian, there is an approach to religion which mixes the promise of eschatological bliss and the dire consequences of failing to respond to the divine call. There is probably a secondary theme running through them: the need to maintain an identity as a religious community in circumstances of difficulty. The apocalypse offers a demonstration of the divine undergirding of the religious community, its practices and beliefs in a situation where that identity might have been under threat because of the extreme disjunction between tradition and reality. So apocalyptic functions not so much as vehicle for change at this stage as a means of reaffirming what has been received and an incisive encouragement to endure (to borrow a favourite word from Revelation) and to build up the ancient ruins.
In the Jewish material it should not surprise us that a central focus is the Law. Syr. Baruch articulates the position most clearly in asserting that there is nothing left except obedience to it. The conclusion of 4 Ezra likewise makes a clear link between Ezra’s visions and the Law of Sinai as being part of one continuing revelation from God. With those markers of Judaism such as the Temple and the whole apparatus of the sacrificial system based on the centrality of Jerusalem suddenly gone, what was left became all the more important to anchor the religious communities and prevent them being moved too far from their moorings. Apocalyptic in this situation was an essential way of increasing certainty in the validity of what was left. Likewise in the Christian texts the emerging emphasis on the centrality of Christ, particularly in the Fourth Gospel, guaranteed by the assertion of the ultimacy of the revelation in and through him, was the sole foundation for a Jewish-Christian group seeking to maintain its messianic convictions and their link with the biblical tradition. The indications are that there was little opportunity for diversity when the pressure was there to hang on to what was left, whether it be particular interpretations of the Law or the assertion that the same Law found its fulfilment in the life of the Messiah. Apocalypticism is not here offered as a means of satisfying curiosity. In most cases it is subordinated entirely to the demand for obedience and ethical rigour on the part of the reader.

Apocalyptic literature by its very nature encourages a feeling of certainty in the reader by appearing to offer the authentic word of God on a variety of matters. There is something of this kind of tone in Revelation where the concluding verses seem to give the book an authoritative air quite without parallel in the rest of the New Testament (Rev 22:18f.). Yet apocalyptic symbolism made such certainty in the process of deriving meaning much more speculative and open to constant questioning. In this sense most apocalypses flatter to deceive. They appear to offer final answers by their revelatory form and yet frequently prove to be opaque in their interpretation. It is rather different in the Fourth Gospel. Here the emergence of an exclusive Christology serves to demand an unequivocal response concerning the centre of divine revelation. So, despite the revelation from God about what is to come, the apocalyptic genre in the Book of Revelation allows for a considerable degree of ambiguity about the precise meaning of its imagery and the demands it makes upon the reader both doctrinally and ethically. It is true that the text offers a resolution of the contradictions of the world in its vision of the future but alongside this it demands participation
in present struggle. That is the immediate reality confronting the readers in their everyday life. The Paradise of God is still future, and the precise way there is hardly clear. What is apparent is that there can be no compromise with the old order and every expectation that a price will have to be paid for the patient endurance of the saints. Similarly in 4 Ezra apocalyptic offers no clear answers to the heartfelt questions of the seer. By the end of the book we are left with a clear message of hope but little real insight about why it is that the glory which is to come is so exclusive in its scope. In the apocalypses the readers are asked to stay with the confusions and contradictions of the world as it is. Apocalypse is not a means of offering easy answers and certain remedies which will ensure participation in the Paradise of God. The apocalyptic genre demands of the people of God, whether Judaism or Christianity, a response in action which will ensure the continuation of the divine righteousness not through fantastic speculation but through patient endurance (Rev 14:12).

Fascination with the mysteries of Scripture, particularly the secrets of the apocalyptic texts, has exercised the greatest minds, from Augustine to Isaac Newton. Interest in the mystical is not of itself subversive. Yet part of the story which has been told in this part of the book has been about the way in which mysticism has provided not only a 'background' but also a dynamic which has helped propel ideas and form new social movements. Apocalyptic imagery provides a framework for theology and the foundation for the central features of the Christian theological system. In the case of the Pauline letters it is the basis for that alternative understanding of the divine purposes.

Different uses of the mystical is typical of both Judaism and Christianity. As is well known, maase merkava attracted considerable suspicion from the very start of the rabbinic corpus. Despite the way in which halakha and the mystical were held together, for example in the life of Joseph Karo, the Sabbatian movement is a reminder of the potential for rapid and, from the point of view of the conventional, destructive change. We see that in other eras too. The specific messianic and eschatological beliefs in the New Testament may not have been particularly unusual (a point famously made by Paul in Acts 23:6). Nevertheless the corollary of the acceptance of the fulfilment of these beliefs is that the movement itself may well have (and in the case of certain parts of early Christianity, almost certainly did) come to different conclusions about the meaning of the tradition as compared with others of their contemporaries. The kind of movement we believe early Christianity
to have been must have made it prone not only to fissiparousness but also to idiosyncratic interpretations of the Bible. It is in this area in particular that the investigation of similar millennial movements is so important. W.D. Davies recognized this in his fascinating study of the seventeenth-century Jewish mystical messiah, Shabbetai Tsevi.\(^1\) It is a pity that study of millenarian movements among those scholars who have wanted to take on board the insights of social anthropology have not concentrated on movements whose ideological pedigree is much closer to ‘home’ than the cargo cults of the Pacific islanders.\(^2\) The sixteenth- and seventeenth-century radicals in Judaism and Christianity with their messianism, mysticism and antinomianism provide fertile soil for a comparative study. The millennial tradition has a long history within the church and it is often linked with an apocalyptic outlook.\(^3\) The development of, and the problems initiated, by such groups, not only within their own organization and practice, but also in relation to the parent body, presents many typological similarities to early Christian messianism.

A study of mysticism in the New Testament involves not just the demonstration of this or that parallel with the apocalyptic tradition of Judaism but involves the identity of Christianity itself. It could be argued that however pervasive the elements we have isolated in this book, they need only show what every one realizes in any case, namely, that Christianity was indebted to the language and traditions of Second Temple Judaism for its own distinctive theological language, and, indeed, rapidly left behind the distinctive traits of apocalypticism as it constructed its own theology. There is some truth in this, and yet it represents only part of the story. Even if the book of Revelation is a unique genre in the New Testament, its underlying theological terms pervaded emerging Christian discourse and identity.

Nowhere is this better seen than in 1 Corinthians. This document, most of which contains the emerging community organisation constructed by Paul, includes an enunciation of some of the classic themes of apocalypticism, including the contrast between God and the world and the privileged epistemology which comes only by means of revelation which is the work of the divine Spirit. There is a fault line which

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\(^1\) See Davies, 'Schweitzer to Scholem'.

\(^2\) See the summary discussion in Gager, *Kingdom and Community*; Esler, *First Christians*.

\(^3\) See Cohn, *Pursuit*. 
runs right down this text, the identification of which goes to the heart of the explanation of Christian identity. It is the coexistence of the mystical and experiential on the one hand—the immediate experience of, and indwelling of the divine—and, on the other, the externally organized, communally responsible, in which authorities legislate for and direct the life of a group, ensuring its coherence and continuity. For the former there is no need for external monitoring. After all, when the Law is written on the heart, there is no need for any one to be taught the ways of the Lord, for these are known about instinctively (Jer 31:34). The very existence of 1 Corinthians is itself testimony to a very different pattern of religion in which advice, admonition, correction and inter-group norms are enunciated and negotiated. Paul the Apostle emerges in the pages of the New Testament as a broker between two different religious impulses, the autonomous, spiritual and personal, and the heteronomous, legal and communal for the latter of which something more than the ability of a collection of enlightened individuals to determine their path to perfection was needed. Paul emerges clearly from 1 Corinthians as a sympathizer with the charismatics. He himself was one, and, doubtless, he communicated that kind of religion to his first converts. This was part of the problem. It was one thing to know the Lord instinctively. What happened when those who were perfect could not agree among themselves? This is the situation Paul contends with in 1 Corinthians. He does so by continuing the language of revelation, insight and autonomy but, subtly, inserts within it a claim to distinctive, apostolic insight as the test for real perfection. This would be taken further in 2 Corinthians as the norm of revelation is exemplified by the disclosure which emerges through a weak and suffering person, the apostle of Jesus Christ, who bears Jesus’ death in his own body and thereby is a living example of that continuity with the definitive revelation of the past.

Paul’s role in bridging two different types of religious terrain prefigures what happened in other periods. Something similar emerges in the early period of Anabaptism, for example. The initial stage of that movement was characterized by an emphasis on immediacy which took the realization of the prophecy of Jeremiah 31:34 seriously. That led to the debacle at Münster, when enthusiasm for messianic fulfilment and a millennial theocracy attracted Anabaptists in the Netherlands and North Germany, culminating in an orgy of antinomianism and destruction. In the aftermath of that the spirit of Anabaptism continued through the ministry of those like Menno Simons and others, altogether more low key and more insistent on the basic rules and external controls which
led to continuity, conformity, and, most important of all, survival, in
the face of persecution from a threatened and threatening state. Menno
did not invent a different kind of religion, any more than Paul did, but
what was reduced were those unpredictable elements which threatened
the wisdom and insight of the initial impetus that marked Anabaptism
off from contemporary Reformation religion.

In the New Testament the Paul of Galatians is replete with emphasis
on personal testimony of the fundamental character of revelatory expe-
rience for himself (1:12, 16) and his converts (3:4) leading to a radical
rejection of the binding force of Law and the consequent rejection
of those who adhere to it. Elsewhere the Paul of the Pastoral Epistles
breathes conformity and the ensuring of survival by attention to the
tradition and the advice of authoritative leaders. These two dimensions
are brought together in the Corinthian correspondence in which the role
of the apostolic person becomes the decisive mediator of the revelatory
experience and the arbitrator of its trustworthiness.

In this uneasy relationship is set forth the dialectic between contrary
apprehensions of and responses to the divine which characterizes the
Christian story subsequently. On the one hand there is the mystical,
personal quest for perfection in this world; on the other, the realistic,
social and controlling elements which only a pattern of life based on the
imposition of external norms can fully articulate. Throughout its his-
tory different traditions have viewed these two dimensions as plaguing
its life. On the one hand there is charismatic, apocalyptic ‘enthusiasm’,
unpredictable, destabilizing, and always potentially destructive. On the
other hand there is the dead hand of conformity, a tradition which
concentrates more on the letter than the spirit, uniformity, and the
elimination of difference. The problem is that both sides can appeal
to the founding texts of Christianity to authenticate their message.
The anathematizing of the other only means that there ceases to be
a recognition of the complicated juxtaposition of these two elements
in the foundation texts of Christianity, which in turn bear witness to
the, often uneasy, conjunction of these two hardly compatible religious
currents.

There are many reports of visions in the New Testament, but only in
the case of two actual persons do we have first-hand accounts of such
visions: John of Patmos and Paul. Such visionary encounters, it has been
suggested, play an important part in the development of Christianity.
What is not clear, however, is the context and origin of such visions. The
peculiar way in which Paul describes the heavenly ascent in 2 Cor 12,
highly stylized and in the language familiar from other accounts of heavenly ascents, only further tantalizes the interpreter who would like to have some inkling of the circumstances in which the mystical ascent occurred. It is not too speculative to suppose that, given the prevalence of an emerging mystical lore based on the first chapter of Ezekiel, the maase merkava, in late Second Temple Judaism, Saul the Pharisee might have been expected to have shared some of that mystical tradition which could have been the context for the cataclysmic vision which changed the course of his life. Nevertheless what confronts us in the New Testament texts is the reserve towards the detail and the circumstances of the visions. Not even the book of Revelation pretends to offer the kind of mystical handbook which is so characteristic of the later Hekhalot material. The situation is rather different, however, in the book of Revelation. There we have a clear testimony from the visionary about his own visions, at least the basic outline of the circumstances in which the visions took place, and incontrovertible evidence that the major chapter which inspired the early Jewish mystics, Ezekiel 1, was fundamental both for the call-vision and vision of God. We have only John’s word that ‘he was in the spirit’, in all likelihood a reference to some form of ecstatic experience, though we need to set against this testimony the widespread view among modern commentators that John’s visions were a literary, reflective creation rather than the spontaneous description of a mystical experience. How scriptural images formed and coalesced in the mind of the visionary must remain a matter for speculation, even if comparison with the accounts produced by later visionaries (Hildegard of Bingen, Teresa of Avila, and William Blake, for example) might enable us to discern how the visionary state facilitated the connection between Scriptures and the peculiar experience of the visionaries themselves in the construction of the vision. The nearest we can get to it is the form of dreams, that tantalizing and inventive part of the human intellect, so often despised or ignored, more frequently reduced to a rational explanation offered by some psychological theory. Yet here we glimpse a parallel to the way in which the conscious experience merges in the unconscious in forms which are unpredictable and often highly charged. Some apocalyptic seers (like Daniel) admit to the

4 See further the introductory study in Bradstock—Rowland, Radical Christian Writings; for a consideration of the influence of the Apocalypse, Kovacs—Rowland, Revelation.
dreamlike context for their visions. Others (like Hildegard) avowedly reject it. Nevertheless that borderland played its role in the formation of early Christian experience, which forms such a crucial dimension of Christian identity.

The poetry and illuminations of William Blake (1757–1827), with their idiosyncratic mythopoiesis, demonstrate the way in which mysticism rooted in apocalypse (and knowledge of the kabbalistic tradition) continued to pervade radical Christianity. Life is imbued with communion with the divine. Blake, for example, looked for the signs of Jerusalem not in some distant future but in the houses of his own locale and day. What is immediately apparent in Blake’s work is the intimate link which exists between antinomianism and apocalypticism, a feature also of the Sabbatian tradition in seventeenth-century Judaism. Blake’s work, like Paul’s epistles, is shot through with the contradiction between, on the one hand, a suspicion of a religion of law and the book and an appeal to an immediacy of apprehension of the divine and, on the other, a commitment to writing and books as the medium whereby human incomprehension can be challenged, and insight into the divine offered.

Blake’s work also offers an example of the continuation of the appropriation of that foundational mystical text, Ezekiel’s merkava, a ‘visionary mode’ which Michael Lieb has traced from the Bible down to Dante, in which ‘an act of transumption rearticulates what [is] a fundamental characteristic of Ezekiel’s own visio Dei as a phenomenon constantly undergoing metamorphosis both in the very act of its own articulation and in the hands of those later visionaries and exegetes who rearticulate it in their own terms’. But Blake’s appropriation of the merkava was highly ambivalent. His challenge to the belief in a transcendent divinity (clearly evident in his ‘Job’ sequence) led him to a subversion of the notion of divine monarchy implicit in the merkava tradition, reflecting the subversion of the merkava tradition which is already imbedded in John’s vision in Rev 5.

Blake stands in a long line of those who have taken up and used the words of Scriptures as if they were the ones ‘on whom the ends

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5 Lieb, Visionary Mode.
6 See the survey in Raine’s essay ‘Suffering according to Blake’s Illustrations of Job’ in idem, Golgonooza, 21–43.
7 Cf. the subversion of the tradition of the hayyot brought out in Halperin’s treatment in Faces.
of the ages of have come’ (1 Cor 10:11). Prophecy is not about past or future but about the present, itself a moment of ultimate destiny in which the contemporary visionary is given a voice to speak. It is an example of what Karl Mannheim terms ‘the chiliastic mentality’, the way in which the present moment becomes the kairos, the moment to take decisive action. At this critical time, the utopian then takes it upon himself to...

...enable the absolute to interfere with the world and condition actual events...the present becomes the breach through which what was previously inward bursts out suddenly, takes hold of the outer world and transforms it...the chiliast is always on his toes awaiting the propitious moment...he is not actually concerned with the millennium to come; what is important for him is that it has happened here and now...the chiliastic mentality has no sense for the process of becoming; it was sensitive only to the abrupt moment, the present pregnant with meaning.

It is in the light of such an understanding that we should view also Paul’s theology. The mission to the Gentiles and probably also the collection for the saints in Jerusalem were probably linked with the framework of an eschatological drama in which Paul is a crucial actor. That sense of destiny which undergirded Paul’s self-understanding and activity also gave coherence to his thinking about himself as an agent of the dawn of the new age, the means by which the Gentiles became fellow heirs of the commonwealth of Israel. That is most clearly expressed in Ephesians where not only the Apostle’s but also the church’s role as the bearers of the divine mysteries is stressed (3:5ff.).

All this contrasts with the perspective of much of mainstream Christian tradition which has been indebted to Augustine. For him the city of God is quite clearly a transcendent, heavenly reality, despite its hidden presence in the midst of the earthly city. Its coming in all its fullness is not on the plane of history. It is at present hidden but nowhere can the city of God become a reality in the midst of this world because the values of the earthly city are so utterly opposed to those of the city of God. What is set forth by Augustine in the City of God is a radical questioning of simplistic attempts to read off from the complexities of history the evidence of the hand of God in human affairs. He does this by espousing a sharp division between the earthly city and the city of

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8 Mannheim, Ideology and Utopia, 193.
10 See further Markus, Saeculum.
God. The former is always characterized by corruption and violence and can never be identified in entirety with the city of God. All that can be hoped for is a modicum of peace and justice to ensure stability.

The legacy of Augustine’s *City of God* has been pervasive in Christian doctrine. Yet it has not everywhere held sway. A major exception has been the result of the influence of the medieval interpreter of the Apocalypse, Joachim of Fiore. Joachim’s interpretation of Revelation and his historicism, in which world history is divided into three ages corresponding to the persons of the Trinity, provoked a very different attitude to eschatology. In it, eschatological events ceased to be merely mysterious transcendent entities and became ciphers of imminent historical possibilities. In the hands of Joachim’s followers contemporary history became the arena for the fulfilment of the eschatological promises. So, contemporary events became the markers of eschatological fulfillment, and the apocalyptic symbols received their meaning in the contemporary persons and events. Mysticism and revolution flowed together to offer a catalyst for social protest. The Book of Revelation became a text not just about the past, or the far distant future, or even about ecclesiastical hierarchy, but a mystical portrait of human history in which contemporary commentators believed themselves to be actors. Peter Olivi, but also Bonaventure, who himself forms part of the ongoing tradition of the appropriation of Ezekiel’s vision, believed the rise of Francis was prophesied in the opening of the sixth seal of Rev 6:12ff. Thus, the present was infused with eschatological urgency. Joachim’s insight into the meaning of the Apocalypse, like Paul’s conversion, had come as the result of mystical insight. Like the Spiritual Franciscans, who believed that Antichrist walked in their midst, the early Christians went beyond general expressions of fear that this may be so (e.g. 1 Tim 4:1, etc.) and in certain instances believed eschatological forces to be incarnate in the ethical and doctrinal deviants around them (1 John 2:18). When the writer of Mark 13:14 included the cryptic ‘let the reader understand’ in the middle of the final discourse of Jesus, the mystery of history was

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11 An introduction to Joachim’s thought may be found in Reeves, *Joachim*.
12 See Emmerson and McGinn, *Apocalypse*.
14 Lieb, *Visionary Mode*, 296–305.
being revealed to a community which thought itself to be privileged to share such divine secrets.

Early Christian writing evinces an outlook in which its adherents steadfastly affirmed a historical resolution of their hope. There are significant strands in the New Testament which exhibit an outlook which invests present persons and events with a decisive role in the fulfilment of the Last Things. There are signs that the present becomes a moment of opportunity for transforming the imperfect into the perfect; history and eschatology become inextricably intertwined, and the elect stand on the brink of the millennium itself (not a term, it should be noted, used by New Testament writers, like the author of the Book of Revelation). It was a conviction often buttressed by intuition or mystical knowledge. It has been wrongly assumed that the early Christians’ eschatological expectation was for an act of God without any human agency. Humankind, according to this view, being merely passive spectators of a vast divine drama with the cosmos as its stage. The foundation documents of Christianity suggest a different story. For many of their writers history is illumined by apocalypse; vision opens ultimate possibilities and responsibilities. Thereby they are equipped with insight concealed from humanity at large, and privileged to enjoy a role in history denied even to the greatest figures of the past. Thus 1 Pet 1:12 speaks for the outlook of many other New Testament documents in its emphasis on the privilege of the writer’s time: ‘It was revealed to the prophets that they were serving you in the things that have been announced to you… things which angels long to look on.’ But privilege is matched by the need for action.

Early Christianity emerged in a world where contact with the divine by dreams, visions, divination and other related forms of extraordinary insight was common. The emphasis laid on access to the divine power which it was believed would be typical of the Last Days was an important element. Paul, for example, in several of his letters made much of the dramatic, charismatic and experiential. The conviction about the access to privileged knowledge of the divine purposes was linked to action for change. So Saul of Tarsus took upon himself the role of divine agent to bring about the inclusion of the nations in the people of God in the

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16 See Daley, *Hope of the Early Church*, for the pervasiveness of this-worldly expectation.
17 Cf. Ratzinger ‘Eschatology and Utopia’.
18 Dodds, *Age of Anxiety*, and Lane Fox, *Pagans*. 
Paul's sense of destiny is evident above all in his vocation as apostle to the Gentiles. In describing that vocation he speaks of it in terms derived from the divine vocations of the prophets of old (Gal 1:15 alluding to Jer 1:5 and Isa 49:1). The mission to the Gentiles was intimately linked with the framework of an eschatological history in which he believed himself to be a crucial actor. All of this came about as far as he was concerned through an apocalypse of Christ (Gal 1:12). Arguably, something similar is true of the project which occupied the last years of his life: a collection of money for the relief of poverty in Jerusalem to be delivered there by him. It is a plausible hypothesis that this may have been understood as the fulfilment of the prophetic predictions about the pagans bringing their gifts to Zion in the Last Days. In the organization and execution of this unusual enterprise, Paul played a crucial role.

The present has become the moment to which all the Scriptures have been pointing, though their meaning can only be fully understood with that divinely inspired intuition which flows from acceptance of the Messiah. New rules applied which would not have been appropriate for the old aeon. In speaking of life within the messianic community, Paul used language which indicates that those in that fellowship are not merely believers in the Messiah but are in some sense clothed with the Messiah's person (Gal 3:27): they put on Christ like a garment. Indeed, Paul himself when speaking of his own ministry speaks of the Messiah dwelling in him. There is thus a form of mystical solidarity between the apostle and those who respond to his message and the Messiah himself, so that the divine is incarnated in the lives of his followers. Such ideas have become so much part of Christian doctrine that their startling quality can easily be missed. It would be no surprise if some of Paul's converts thought that they were already living in the glory of the messianic age, uncluttered by the shackles of human misery and thoroughly overwhelmed with the divine nature. Part of Paul's task in the first letter to the Corinthians may have been to disabuse them of such fantasies. So, the divine presence of the eschaton is vividly present in the lives of the Christian communities.

Visions of hope have had an important role in movements for change in Christian history. Christian theology has been in part an attempt to

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19 On the eschatological significance of Paul's vocation see Munck, *Paul*, and the discussion of the Collection in Georgi, *Remembering the Poor*. 
articulate that basic datum in theological intricacy and practical exemplification. It has asserted the fact and the hope of heaven on earth and yet had to deal with the problem of (as Scholem puts it) the verification of its messianic claim.\textsuperscript{20} To assert that there is a fundamental ambiguity at the heart of Christianity is to pinpoint the problem which arises from Christianity’s indebtedness to apocalyptic. In the New Testament we have documents which are saturated with hope, and the conviction that an insight of ultimate significance has been given, which relativizes all other claims. Yet life on the brink of the \textit{Telos} anticipating the millennium is psychologically and politically impossible to sustain. The New Testament, rooted as it is in apocalypse and eschatology, also breathes the spirit of accommodation, domestication and stability. The fiery enthusiasm of Paul sits uneasily with the staid and sober ethic which is so evident in his epistles. Herein lies one of the continuing enigmas and challenges which has continued to characterize the phenomenon of Christianity down the centuries.

\textsuperscript{20} Scholem, \textit{Messianic Idea}. 
PART II

DIVINE NAMES, CELESTIAL SANCTUARIES, AND VISIONARY ASCENTS: APPROACHING THE NEW TESTAMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MERKAVA TRADITIONS

by

Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones
CHAPTER TEN

MERKAVA MYSTICISM IN RABBINIC AND HEKHALOT LITERATURE

The first part of this study of mysticism in the New Testament has emphasized the mystical dimensions of the apocalyptic writings and traditions of Jews and Christians in the late Second Temple period. The New Testament writings have been shown to be saturated with apocalyptic imagery and ideas, and, indeed, to be premised on a fundamentally apocalyptic vision of the world. In so far as they express uncompromising confidence in the revelation of God’s hidden mysteries—the keys that unlock the secret truths of scripture and grant access to the knowledge and fulfillment of his saving purpose—these writings are themselves ‘apocalyptic’. Conversely, in so far as this supernatural revelation is an immediate experiential reality which gives present access to the celestial and divine realms, thereby producing a spiritual transformation of the mundane self and its relationship to the world, it is also ‘mystical’. These characteristics do not, in themselves, constitute a radical departure from the Jewish apocalyptic tradition, which Schweitzer and others have wrongly understood to be oriented exclusively towards ‘future-eschatological’ concerns. On the contrary, the ‘realized-and-future eschatology’ of the Christian sources is deeply rooted in the fertile soil of Jewish apocalyptic mysticism, as evidenced in several Pseudepigrapha, the Qumran scrolls, and elsewhere.

Parts II and III of this study will approach the question of mysticism in the New Testament from a different direction. In these chapters, we are primarily concerned with the mystical and esoteric traditions of early rabbinic Judaism, especially those associated with the vision of the celestial ‘merkava’ (chariot, i.e., Ezekiel’s wheeled throne). The evidence for these traditions is preserved in various talmudic and midrashic sources and, above all, in the literature of the heavenly ‘hekhalot’ (palaces or temples). At the present stage of scholarship, the interpretation of these materials remains somewhat controversial, as also, in many cases, are their dates and provenances. The lack of an agreed tradition-historical framework, together with the fact that source-, form-, and redaction-criticism of rabbinic and early Jewish
literature are much less advanced than in New Testament scholarship,\(^1\) make it difficult for the New Testament specialist, bereft of the critical tools and scholarly apparatus on which he or she habitually relies, to make intelligent use of this material. For these reasons, before we can move to a consideration of ‘merkava mysticism’ in the New Testament, an overview and evaluation of the evidence is required.

**The ‘Mainstream’ Rabbinic Sources**

Rabbinic traditions about *maase merkava* (‘the story of the Chariot’) are preserved in both midrashic and talmudic literature. In the midrashim, they are very frequently associated with the Sinai theophany and, hence, with the revelation of the Tora. By the third century CE at the latest, Ezekiel 1 was established as the standard prophetic reading (*haftara*) in the synagogues at the festival of Shavuot or Pentecost, which commemorates the revelation of the Law, and a complex exegetical web linking Ezekiel 1 to the Sinai revelation was already developing well before this time. As we shall see, the association of Ezekiel 1 with Shavuot was a central feature of the cultic liturgy of the Qumran sect.\(^2\) In the rabbinic midrashim, this provided the context for a cycle of stories about Moses’ ascent into heaven to receive the Tora, often in the face of fierce angelic opposition.\(^3\) Another biblical text that came to be closely associated with the Sinai theophany, and hence with Ezekiel’s merkava vision, was the Song of Songs. The beautiful male figure described in the Song was identified by at least some rabbinic exegetes with the humanoid appearance of the divine Glory (כבוד, *kavod*) on the celestial throne.\(^4\)

In the talmudic literature, the expression *ha-merkava* can be used either to refer to the heavenly throne-chariot described in the first chapter of Ezekiel or as a shorthand term standing for the biblical chapter itself. The expression *maase merkava* is most commonly used to refer to exegetical activity concerning that chapter, perhaps in association with

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\(^1\) On this issue, see especially: Goodblatt, *Rabbinic Instruction*, 44–59; Neusner, ‘History of Earlier Rabbinic Judaism’; and Saldarini, ‘Form Criticism’.

\(^2\) See pp. 307–328 below.


mystical practices and/or visionary experiences. The talmudic sources contain two types of material. On the one hand, there is a genre of ‘horror-stories’, which are clearly intended to warn the unwary against involvement in maase merkava. Here, we are told about the dire consequences incurred by ill-advised individuals who took it upon themselves to dabble in this subject. Those consequences include sudden death, leprosy, madness, and exclusion from the world to come. On the other hand, we find stories of great rabbis who successfully ‘expounded the merkava’ and produced supernatural phenomena by so doing. Thus, the talmudic sources display an ambivalent attitude towards maase merkava, and the overall impression is of something mysterious and wonderful, but terrifyingly dangerous and forbidden.

The talmudic maase merkava materials are mostly found in a compilation that David Halperin has designated the ‘Mystical Collection’, three recensions of which are preserved in the Tosefta, the Yerushalmi, and the Bavli. In all three sources, these materials are appended to the lemma mHag 2:1, which reads as follows:

A It is not permitted to expound [variant: ]
A1 the forbidden sexual relationships
A2 nor the story of Creation
A3a nor the merkava with an individual

— See the discussion on pp. 256–259 below.
— The talmudic sources are presented and analyzed in detail by Halperin, Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature; but, for an alternative analysis, see Morray-Jones, Merkabah Mysticism.
— tHag 2:1–7; yHag 2:1, 77a–c; bHag 11b–16a; see Halperin, Merkabah, 13–18 and 65–105. The Tosefta’s version appears in full and is discussed in detail on pp. 424–438 below.
— Compare the following discussion with that in Morray-Jones, ‘Paradise Revisited’, 185–190.
— All texts of mHag 2:1 read , but is found in ms. Vienna of tHag 2:1, which cires the ‘merkava-restriction’ independently of its mishnaic context (parallels in Yerushalmi ans Bavli read simply: , etc.). Ms. Vienna of Tosefta may well preserve the pre-mishnaic form of the ‘merkava-restriction’. See further Halperin, Merkabah, 30–32.
unless he were a sage and understands [var.: understood] from his own knowledge.

Whoever meditates upon (lit., ‘gazes at’) four things,
it were fitting [var.: a mercy] for him if he had not come into the world:
what is above,
what is below,
what is/was before,
and what is behind [or: and what will be hereafter].

And whoever is not careful about the Glory of his Creator,
it were a mercy [var.: fitting] for him that he had not come into the world.

In its present form, the mishna states that the forbidden relations (A1) may be taught to a maximum of two (not three) students at one time, the story of Creation (A2) only to one (not two), and ha-merkava (i.e. Ezek 1) (A3a–b) not even to a single student unless he meets the required condition. However, the ‘merkava-restriction’ (A3a–b) can be

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10 Thus mss. Parma and Kaufmann.
11 The reading רתוי, here and at C2 below, is supported by several mss. and editions of Mishna, Tosefta, Yerushalmi and Bavli, but ראוי (thus the printed Mishna edition) is equally well attested. See Halperin, Merkabah, 12 n. 7. Both readings appear to be early, and it is impossible to tell which is original. Both were probably current in the oral tradition. It may well be the case that B2 and C2 were originally different and have been harmonised by the redactors: ms. Göttingen 3 of the Bavli reads ראוי at B2, but רתוי at C2. Moreover, the syntax is slightly different in each unit. Thus, following ms. Göttingen 3, and as given above, we read in B2: ראוי ולא בא לעולם, but in C2: רתוי ולא בא לעולם. These considerations suggest rather strongly that the two units were originally independent of each other and were combined by the redactors of this mishna.
12 See the previous note.
13 The mishna is thus explained in tHag 2:1 and bHag 11b.
shown to have circulated as an independent unit, and so the mishna as we have it is a redactional construct: the 3–2–1 numerical sequence has almost certainly been developed on the basis of the merkava-restriction’s בהיד. Halperin has pointed out that the preposition ב would more naturally be translated ‘by’ which, though it makes no sense in the present context, may be a clue to the original meaning of the merkavarestriction. This, he suggests, was that only an accredited scholar (חכם) who could be trusted not to fall into erroneous exegesis was allowed to study (דרש/שנה) Ezek 1 in private (i.e. on his own: בהיד). 14

This reconstruction does, admittedly, allow us to understand the preposition in its most obvious sense (‘ha-merkava may not be expounded by an individual on his own…’). It is undermined, however, by the observation that that neither דרש nor the variant שנה normally mean ‘to study’ in this sense. Both verbs usually refer to public teaching or exposition in the presence of others. Moreover, Halperin’s theory implies that דעת (‘knowledge’) here means ‘scholarship’ which would be (so far as I am aware) unique. In rabbinic literature, the word can mean either ‘mind’ or (personal and non-authoritative) ‘opinion’, but neither of these meanings seems appropriate in this case. In pre-rabbinic apocalyptic and mantic Wisdom literature, the term generally refers to revealed, esoteric knowledge, as do its Aramaic and Greek equivalents, מנדאה and γνῶσις. 15 In this literature, the verbal roots חכם and דעת (whence דעת) are very frequently juxtaposed, as in Dan 2:21:

וְיִנָּהֶב בִּינָה לְיָדְﬠֵי וּמַנְדְﬠָא לְחַכִּים חָכְמָא

He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who know understanding.

At Qumran, דעת refers to the heavenly, esoteric knowledge that has been revealed to the sect. 16 1QS 4:22 is of especial interest:

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14 Halperin, Merkabah, 19–63. His hypothesis is that the regulation was formulated in an attempt to control the wilder forms of exegesis associated with the reading of Ezek 1 in the synagogues at Shavuot.


The knowledge and wisdom to which this passage refers are of divine origin and associated with the angels. Moreover, למפי here means to instruct, rather than to study.

On these grounds, I have argued that the merkava-restriction is an ancient unit of tradition that was inherited by the rabbis of the first century from the apocalyptic tradition. In this context, the term hakham does not denote a rabbinic scholar, but a mantic sage, such as Daniel, who possesses esoteric knowledge and is skilled in visionary-mystical technique. The term יַהֲדִי (יֵדִי) which clearly does not carry the numerical significance that it acquires in the context of the mishna, may simply mean ‘an individual’. However, the term probably carries a more specific and deeper meaning. According to mTaan 1:4,

If the seventeenth of Heshwan had come, and no rain had fallen, single individuals (יֶהְדִידִים) began to fast [and observed] three days of fasting. They were permitted to eat and drink after nightfall, and they were permitted to work, to wash themselves, to anoint themselves, to put on sandals, and to have marital intercourse…

Here, the term יַהֲדִי evidently indicates an ascetic practitioner of some kind who intercedes before God on behalf of the community. The question of who, exactly, these ‘single individuals’ were is briefly addressed in the tTaan 1:7:

Who is a יַהֲדִי?
R. Shimon b. Elazar says: Not every one who wishes to make himself a יַהֲדִי or a תלמיד-חָכָם may do so and receive a blessing. Where it is a matter of gain, not everyone who wishes to make himself a יַהֲדִי or a תלמיד-חָכָם is permitted to do so, unless a בית דין has appointed him over the community.

The Bavli discusses the identity of the יֶהְדִידִים in greater detail: 17

Who are the יֶהְדִידִים?
R. Huna said: The rabbis.

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17 bTaan 10a–b.
R. Huna further said: The yehidim fast three fasts, on Monday, Thursday and Monday . . . [further details are given].

The rabbis have taught: Let not a man say, 'I am only a disciple (talmid) and I am therefore not worthy to consider myself a yahid,' since all disciples of the sages (talmidei-hakhamim) are considered to be yehidim.

Who is a yahid? And who is a disciple?

A yahid is one who is worthy to be appointed Community Leader; a disciple is one who is asked any question of halakha connected with his studies and can answer it, even if it is on a subject covered by the tractate Kalla.

Our rabbis have taught: Not everyone who wants to consider himself a yahid may do so, but a disciple may do so. This is the opinion of R. Meir [according to a different source: of R. Shimon ben R. Elazar].

But R. Yose says: Anyone may do so, and may he be remembered for good, because it is not a matter of gain but a hardship for him.

R. Shimon b. Gamliel says: The prohibition only applies where it is a matter of gain. Where it is a hardship, any one may do so, and may he be remembered for good, because it is not a matter of gain, but a hardship for him.

According to these texts, the yehidim are individuals who, in terms of drought, undertake ascetic and penitential performances as a means of intercession before God on behalf of the community, in order to obtain rain. André Neher identifies these ascetic ‘individuals’ with the hasidim ha-rishonim or “pious men of former times” (mBer 5:1, etc.), and it is certainly true that some individuals counted among the hasidim ha-rishonim, such as Honi the ‘circle-drawer’ (mTaan 3:8, etc.), do seem to have performed this social function. Neher also associates these individuals with the Qumran yahad (community) and argues that they were avowed celibates, even though the mishna states explicitly that they were not. We may note in passing that the cognate term Ihidaya occupies an important role in Syriac Christian ‘protomonasticism’, where it refers to a celibate ascetic ‘solitary’ whose heart and mind are ‘single’ for Christ. It is noteworthy that, just as in mHag 2:1 (A3a–b), the rabbinic authorities were evidently concerned to restrict this activity to a limited group of permitted individuals. According to the opinion

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18 Neher, ‘Échos de la secte de Qumran’.
19 The term is sometimes translated by the Greek μονάχος, but in the early Syriac sources does not yet carry the full sense of ‘monk’. See: Klijn, ‘Single One’; Quispel, ‘L’évangile selon ‘Thomas’; Morard, ‘Monachos, moine’; and Brock, Luminous Eye, 136–139.
of R. Huna, the duties of a *yahid* may only be undertaken by the rabbis themselves, but the consensus is that an officially recognized *talmid hakham* may also do so. A person who is not a *talmid* is forbidden to serve as a *yahid*, although some authorities hold that the prohibition only applies if the *yahid* is acting in a professional capacity. The title *talmid-hakham* indicates a status of considerable distinction, but which falls below the rank of a fully-fledged *hakham* or rabbi. The discussion probably reflects a situation in which the function of *yahid* was being performed by charismatic ascetics and wonder-workers, such as Honi, whose popularity and social influence was perceived by the rabbinic leaders as a challenge to their authority. It is not at all unlikely that visionary-mystical traditions were current in such charismatic circles.

If we read mHag 2:1 (A3a–b) in the light of this material, the meaning is that *maase merkava* may not be taught even by a *yahid*, if his status is merely that of a *talmid hakham*. For this activity, the status of a full *hakham*, or rabbi, is required.

It thus seems probable that the meaning of the unit of tradition preserved in mHag 2:1 (A3a–b) evolved over time. Originally, it meant that no ‘individual’ or ‘ascetic practitioner’ was competent to expound (i.e., teach or express an opinion about) Ezekiel’s vision unless he were a mantic Sage who could do so on the basis of his own visionary-mystical experience and esoteric knowledge. In other words, it may originally have been a statement about competence, which only acquired generalised halakhic significance in the context of rabbinism, where the original meaning was changed in several ways. Most importantly, the term *hakham* was understood in its rabbinic sense, and so the unit was taken to mean that only an ordained rabbi (i.e., a talmudic Sage) was permitted to teach *maase merkava*. The status of *yahid* was not considered sufficient to confer the authority to teach this theologically difficult and dangerous subject, since the minimum qualification for that status was the lower rank of *talmid*. Later still, the combination of this unit with the others on the list obscured the original meaning of the traditional unit still further, by causing it to be understood as a restriction concerning (a) the number of students that could be instructed at one time (‘not even a single individual’) and (b) the personal qualities required of a student before instruction could be given.

Units B and C of mHag 2:1 are formally connected. Unit C is clearly a warning against heretical speculations and/or visionary-mystical practices associated with the *kavod*, which were held to compromise
the unity of God. The meaning of B is somewhat less certain as it is not clear whether ‘before’ (*le-fanim*) and ‘behind/after’ (*le-ahor*) should be understood in spatial or temporal terms. Gerd A. Wewers adopts the latter interpretation, taking B and C to be comments on A2 (*maase bereshit*) and A3 (*ha-merkava*) respectively.\(^{20}\) Although this view finds some support in later rabbinic sources,\(^{21}\) it is unlikely to be correct since B2d must, if temporal, refer to the future. Alon Goshen-Gottstein has suggested that the whole of B–C originally applied to the vision of the merkava, and that B referred to the dimensions of the body of God (i.e. the Glory) with its surrounding brightness as described at Ezek 1:27–8.\(^{22}\) In support of this reading, there is evidence that both ‘spatial’ and ‘temporal’ interpretations were current in the early period.\(^{23}\) However, a more straightforward interpretation, proposed by Christopher Rowland, is that B’s fourfold formula refers to the subjects of apocalyptic revelation: the mysteries of the celestial and infernal worlds, the beginning of Creation and its eschatological fulfillment.\(^{24}\) Rowland’s reading appears to be confirmed by the earliest known citation of the formula, which occurs, in the context of Moses’ vision of God’s appearance on the merkava, in the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian (second century BCE).\(^{25}\) Whatever the unit’s original meaning, B–C evidently refers to matters that were regarded as forbidden, and the *mishna* as a whole thus represents the strand of rabbinic opinion that was more restrictive towards the esoteric and mystical tradition, especially as it was developed in circles outside of rabbinic control.


\(^{21}\) See: tHag 2:7; yHag 77c; bHag 11b, 16a; SifNum 103; and Tg. Ezek 2:10.

\(^{22}\) Goshen-Gottstein, ‘Ma le-maala’. See further ch. 17, pp. 587–590 below.

\(^{23}\) In tHag 2:7, yHag 77c and bHag 11b, the formula is applied to Deut 4:32: ‘Ask now concerning the former days…ask from one end of the heavens to the other….’ combining both the spatial and the temporal interpretations. Rashi (commentary to bHag 12a) understands 2a–c to be spatial dimensions and suggests that what is forbidden is inquiry into the pre-existent formless space (*tohu wabohu*) beyond the boundaries of the world, which is conceived of as a box or cube. This is highly reminiscent of the teaching found in the (third century or later) esoteric ‘Book of Creation’ (Sefer Yetsira): see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 75–78 and ‘Jezira’, for introductory discussion and bibliography and, further, Hayman, ‘Temple at the Centre’ and ‘Was God a Magician?’

\(^{24}\) Rowland, *Open Heaven*, especially 75–189.

The Hekhalot Writings

Compared with most other categories of ancient Jewish literature, these strange writings are still relatively little-known and, as yet, imperfectly understood. The texts are most extensively preserved in a number of late medieval European manuscripts, seven of which were selected by Peter Schäfer for publication, in parallel columns and divided into numbered short sections, in his monumental *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur.* In addition to these manuscripts, which appear to represent a ‘western’ or Ashkenazi recension of the hekhalot traditions, Schäfer has also published several fragments from the Cairo geniza, some probably as old as the ninth century, which provide tantalizing evidence of a somewhat different and probably older ‘oriental’ recension. Unfortunately, this important evidence is so fragmentary that with regard to most of the contents of the hekhalot corpus and, especially, its larger literary components, we are forced to rely mainly on the manuscripts of the ‘western’ tradition.

The literary organization of these strange, rambling collections is extremely fluid, varying greatly between the manuscripts, and what is true of rabbinic literature in general is much more so of these documents: the text, such as it is, represents a relatively late stage in the development of the tradition and developed over a considerable period of time. Although some textual units have been subjected to a degree of redactional organization, the corpus consists, for the most part, of rather amorphous compilations of quite diverse materials, rather than fully edited literary works. Units and longer sequences of textual tradition quite commonly ‘migrate’ between these compilations and, in some instances, are considerably altered in the process. For these reasons,

26 Schäfer, *Synopse*. This work, together with its accompanying volumes, *Konkordanz* and *Übersetzung* is the primary tool of serious scholarship in this field. In quotations from the hekhalot literature below, Schäfer’s section numbers are generally adopted, with my own alphabetical subdivision in many instances. See also the following note.


28 An obvious example is the story of the four who entered *pardes*, which is found in both HekhZ (Schäfer § 338–339 and 344–346) and MerkR (§ 671–673). See Chapter 13 below. Many other examples could be cited.

29 Compare, for example, the two versions of the sequence attached to Ezek 1:27 (the ‘Enter!’ incident and the water vision episode) in HekhR (Schäfer § 258–259) and HekhZ (§ 407–408), both translated in Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 55–57.
Schäfer believes that the quest for an Urtext of the hekhalot ‘books’ is, in most cases, futile and misguided.\(^{30}\) In his opinion,\(^{31}\)

\[\ldots\text{we are dealing with an extremely fluctuating literature that has been crystallized in various macroforms,}\] 32 which are nonetheless interwoven with one another on many different levels. As has been illustrated by the Genizah fragments in particular, the redactional arrangement of the microforms into clearly defined ‘works’ is to be placed rather at the end of the process than at the beginning (although the individual texts must be judged differently and opposite tendencies will likely also appear). Even more differentiated and complicated is the picture when one compares individual sets of traditions and smaller literary units on the level of ‘microforms’ with one another, which can appear in various relationships within the various macroforms.

Although Schäfer’s radically ‘deconstructive’ analysis of the hekhalot literary tradition has been widely accepted, a few scholars are not entirely persuaded. Joseph Dan, for example, evidently regards Schäfer’s ‘macroforms’ as more or less discrete literary entities and continues to refer to them, without apology, as ‘books’ and ‘treatises’.\(^{33}\) This difference is, in a sense, largely semantic. Like Schäfer, Dan fully appreciates the textual and redactional complexity of these composite, multi-layered compilations.\(^{34}\)

It is clear \ldots that those who compiled these treatises had before them various traditions from different sources and possibly even from different eras, which they combined together in an artificial form, and these sources cannot offer us a full picture. Beyond this, it appears that there was a


\(^{31}\) Schäfer, Hidden and Manifest, 6.

\(^{32}\) Schäfer (ibid. n. 14) explains this term as follows: ‘I employ the term macroform for a superimposed literary unit, instead of the term writing or work, to accommodate the fluctuating character of the texts of the Hekhalot literature. The term macroform concretely denotes both the fictional or imaginary single text, which we initially and by way of delimitation always refer to in scholarly literature (e.g., Hekhalot Rabbati in contrast to Maase Merkavah, etc.), as well as the often different manifestations of these texts in the different manuscripts. The border between micro- and macroforms is thereby fluent (sic): certain definable textual units can be both part of a superimposed entirety (and thus a ‘microform’) as well as an independently transmitted redactional unit (thus a ‘macroform’).’

\(^{33}\) See Dan, The Ancient, 16–24, and elsewhere.

\(^{34}\) This is especially evident in his painstaking source- and redaction-critical analysis of the traditions associated with the entrance to the sixth hekhal (‘Petah Hekhal Shishi’), partly summarized in The Ancient, 96–106.
certain lack of understanding in these works themselves about the traditions which reached them, and which the authors struggled to interpret.\textsuperscript{35}

Nonetheless, Dan appears to regard the quest for an authoritative text of the larger treatises (‘macroforms’) and their components (‘microforms’) as a valid enterprise, whereas Schäfer, on the whole, does not. In some cases, moreover, Dan is much more inclined to posit an original unitary text.\textsuperscript{36}

More recently, James Davila has argued cogently that Schäfer’s refusal to look beyond the confusing and frequently corrupt raw material of the hekhalot manuscripts can create unnecessary problems for research.\textsuperscript{37} Commenting on the macroform Hekhalot Rabbati (HekhR) and its lack of ‘final definition’, Davila observes that this characteristic also applies to many other ancient writings, and that a number of biblical texts, such as the Book of Daniel, likewise grew by accretion over time. He believes, against Schäfer, that it is both possible and useful to produce conventional eclectic critical editions of HekhR and other hekhalot macroforms. Davila concedes that such a critical edition would only represent ‘the furthest back we can reach through textual criticism alone using complete (nonfragmentary) manuscripts’,\textsuperscript{38} and freely stipulates:

\begin{quote}
It would not be the original Hekhalot Rabbati. ‘Original’ implies either a canonical form or composition by an author (or at least a heavy-handed redactor). Neither ever existed for the Hekhalot Rabbati. Since it was not scripture in any sense, it was never given an authoritative form. It seems to have built up largely by accretion throughout its history, although Arnold Goldberg has demonstrated that it also shows significant signs of redaction.\textsuperscript{39}
\end{quote}

Nonetheless, Davila believes that it will be possible to reconstruct ‘the Urtext behind all extant mss. that were disseminated from Ashkenazic and Sephardic circles’\textsuperscript{40} and that this

\textsuperscript{35} The Ancient, 94; cf. ibid. 138.
\textsuperscript{36} This is true, for example, of his discussion of the shiur koma materials (The Ancient, 63–77). See further Part III below.
\textsuperscript{37} Davila, ‘Prolegomena’.
\textsuperscript{38} Ibid. 219.
\textsuperscript{39} Ibid. The reference is to Goldberg, ‘Einige Bemerkungen’.
\textsuperscript{40} Davila, ibid.
Although Davila’s assertion may well be right, no such Urtext of any hekhalot macroform is, as yet, available. In consequence, when we attempt to make use of the hekhalot materials, complex textual, intertextual and redaction-critical problems are encountered at almost every turn. The confusion and obscurity of large portions of this literature have been graphically described by Halperin, who observes that the reader of Schäfer’s *Synopse* is confronted, not with a series of clearly defined ‘texts’, but with an inchoate mass of ‘partly coagulated globs floating in a thick and murky liquid’.42

Investigation of this chaotic and frequently obscure material can, for this reason, be a laborious and time-consuming task, requiring close attention to detail and, in many instances, to minute variations between multiple versions of the microform texts. In the following pages, I hope to convince the reader that this rather tedious endeavour can sometimes yield a more than adequate reward. In practice, it is often necessary to strike a balance between, on the one hand, Schäfer’s and Halperin’s ‘negative’ insistence on the fluidity and elusive nature of the ‘text’, and on the other, the relatively ‘positive’ approach of scholars such as Dan and Davila. Thanks in large measure to Schäfer’s work, we are able to fully appreciate the multifarious and multilayered nature of the hekhalot collections and their contents. It is, moreover, universally recognized that questions of original date and provenance must—with few, if any, exceptions—be addressed to the individual units of tradition, not to the ‘macroforms’ themselves.43 At the same time, it is both legitimate and necessary to explore the processes of accumulation and reедакtion by which the various collections were produced or, in other words, the origins and development of the literary and performative traditions that they represent.44 It is also necessary to examine their relationships with each other, and their points of connection with other types of ancient literature. Such source-critical and tradition-historical analysis is, in fact, the only way to discover the original meanings and Sitze im Leben of

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41 *Ibid.* 222.
43 In addition to the works of Schäfer cited above, compare Goldberg, ‘Einige Bemerkungen’, and Chernus, ‘Individual and Community’.
the smaller units of tradition. In other words, although we must always differentiate between the ‘macroform’ collections and their ‘microform’ contents, our knowledge of each is to a large extent contingent on our understanding of the other. Finally, it should be observed that these considerations apply in almost equal measure to the talmudic and midrashic collections of ‘mainstream’ rabbinism and their contents.\footnote{A point made by Schäfer, ‘Tradition and Redaction’, 16.}

It may be generally true that the literary organization of these works tends, on the whole, to be more coherent than that of most hekhalot compilations, but this is a difference only of degree.

The fact remains that, owing to the confused state of the manuscripts, considerable uncertainty exists regarding the definition and extent—and, hence, the exact contents—of the various hekhalot macroforms and, indeed, the corpus as a whole. The expression ‘hekhalot literature’ is ultimately derived from the well-known \textit{responsum} of Rav Hai Gaon b. Sherira (939–1038) about the story of ‘the four who entered Paradise’ in bHag 14b:

> You may be aware of the opinion that an individual with certain specifically defined attributes, who desires to behold the merkava and to gaze into the hekhalot of the angels, has ways of achieving this. He must sit fasting for a specified number of days, put his head between his knees, and whisper earthwards many prescribed songs and hymns. In this manner, he gazes into the inner rooms and chambers as if he were beholding the seven hekhalot with his own eyes and he observes as if he were going from one hekhal to the next and seeing what is in them. There are two mishnayot taught by the Tannaim on this subject; these are called Hekhalot Rabbati and Hekhalot Zutarti (i.e., the ‘Greater’ and ‘Lesser’ Hekhalot). This much is generally known.\footnote{Lewin, \textit{Otzar ha-Geonim} 4, \textit{Yom Tov}, 13–14.}

The title Hekhalot Rabbati (HekhR) is encountered in several manuscripts and applies to the largest compilation of the hekhalot corpus.\footnote{Schäfer § 81–277, excluding the \textit{Sar Tora} appendix, § 281–306, which should really be considered as an independent macroform (see further below). § 278–280 occur in two mss. only and appear to be borrowed from elsewhere. This important macroform has been extensively quoted, discussed and summarized but, to date, no published English translation of the whole text is available.} Although the manuscripts differ somewhat with regard to the organization and delimitation of this macroform, its outlines are, as observed by Davila, reasonably clear. Since the text grew by accretion over time, we should not necessarily assume that the first of the two mishnayot
cited by Rav Hai Gaon included all of the materials that are contained in the extant recensions of HekhR. However, there is no reason to doubt that it was a version of this text. The narrator of this macroform is R. Yishmael and the central characters are Yishmael himself and his teacher, R. Nehunya b. Ha-Kana. The title Hekhalot Zutarti (HekhZ) is not found in any extant manuscript, but the text to which Rav Hai refers has been identified with an untitled and loosely organized collection of rather diverse materials, written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic, which is placed after HekhR in several manuscripts and includes material quoted by Rav Hai. As in the case of HekhR, we do not know how much of the HekhZ collection in its present form was known to Rav Hai. Moreover, the precise extent of this macroform is uncertain. This issue is discussed in more detail in Chapter Eleven, which also contains an English translation of the nine core components of this important macroform, all of which are attributed to Akiva.48

If we take Rav Hai Gaon’s remarks as our starting point, the macroforms HekhZ and HekhR—or, at least, their core components—are the definitive texts of the hekhalot literary corpus. Moreover, it is in these two collections that we find the most detailed descriptions of the practice of the visionary journey through the seven hekhalot, which Gershom Scholem identified as the central and definitive theme of the corpus as a whole.49 HekhZ and HekhR are also reckoned to be the earliest of the macroforms, by which we mean that (a) they contain a substantial amount of early microform material and (b) they preserve some of the earliest ‘mesoforms’ or layers of redaction.50 Schäfer is inclined to regard HekhR as the older of the two.51 However, my research has tended strongly to confirm the previous scholarly consensus that HekhZ is, in Scholem’s words, ‘the oldest [hekhalot] text available to us’.52 It contains the earliest versions of (i) the story of ‘the four who entered Paradise (pardes) and (ii) the account of the dangerous vision of water in the sixth hekhal. It is highly probable that these two

48 For the purpose of this discussion, HekhZ is conservatively defined as Schäfer § 335–375, 407–419, and 422–424. See ch. 11, pp. 265–273 below; and further, Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 83–87, and the sources cited there.
49 See e.g., Scholem, Major Trends, 40–79; idem, Jewish Gnosticism; and idem, Kabbalah, 14–21.
50 The term ‘mesoform’ is my own. See further below.
52 Scholem, Major Trends, 45; see also ibid. 358 n. 15; and idem, Jewish Gnosticism, 75–83; cf. Gruenwald, Apocalyptic, 142–149.
originally independent microforms were first combined with each other in the context of one branch of the HekhZ literary tradition, represented by ms. New York. These pre-talmudic materials are derived from an exegetical tradition which (i) takes Ezek 1 to be an account of the prophet’s ascent into heaven, and (ii) holds out the possibility that such ascents are also possible for other exceptionally qualified human beings. This exegetical-mystical tradition can be traced back to 1 En 14 and is encountered in numerous sources of the first and second centuries CE, including the Book of Revelation. Two corrupt readings in the Hebrew text of a redactionally complex passage in HekhZ are reproduced in the Coptic version of a Gnostic treatise which was originally written in Greek during the third or, at latest, early fourth century CE. The process of compilation and redaction of the HekhZ macroform must, therefore, have begun no later than the second or third centuries CE. Several of the microforms contained within this macroform may well be even older.53

The structure of the seven hekhalot, with the merkava in the centre, is based on the Jerusalem Temple, with its concentric areas of increasing holiness. By the first century CE, the celestial temple had long been a structural motif of the heavenly ascent tradition. In several apocalyptic sources, as in the hekhalot writings, the celestial journey is imagined as a procession through the courts of a cosmic temple. As discussed below, the courts and chambers of this temple are the various heavens of the multi-layered cosmos.54 In the hekhalot corpus, the verb associated with the visionary journey is either הלא, ‘to ascend’, or, just as frequently, ירד, ‘to descend’, and the usual term for the visionary traveller is מרכבה ירד (yored merkava), ‘descender to the chariot’. This strangely counterintuitive terminology has been the subject of much discussion but has never been satisfactorily explained.55 The most complete account of the journey through the seven hekhalot to the merkava is given in HekhR, where R. Nehunya b. Ha-Kana discloses the details of the praxis to R. Yishmael, along with ‘the entire great and small Sanhedrin’, who are assembled before him in the Temple.56

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55 See Chapter 12, pp. 330–333, especially p. 331 n. 125, and the sources cited there.
begins by describing a magical and apparently auto-hypnotic method of inducing trance:

(§ 204) When a man wants to descend to the merkava, he should invoke סוריה, the prince of the countenance, and adjure him a hundred and twelve times by גוויליא, who is called טוטרוסיאי וטוטרביאל והריאל סבריאל, and טפרגיא אשוריאל בוהראל, and גבריאל, the LORD God of Israel.57

(§ 205) Let him not add to the hundred and twelve times, neither let him subtract therefrom. If he adds or subtracts, 'his blood is upon his own head' (Josh. 2:19). Rather, while his mouth is pronouncing the names, let the fingers of his hands count one hundred and twelve times. Then he will descend and master the merkava.

Following this, Nehunya travels in his trance through the seven hekhalot and, as he does so, recites by automatic speech the names of the terrifying angelic guardians of the gateways. These names are written down for posterity by Yishmael and his companions. The guardians will only allow the traveller to pass through the gateways if they are shown the correct magic seals. On each of the seals is inscribed one of the secret names of God, as listed above. Finally, the visionary is admitted to worship before the merkava in the innermost palace.

In its present form, the narrative of this ascent in HekhR is rather muddled and includes materials from a variety of sources that have been combined in a rather haphazard and disorganized manner. Nonetheless, the outline of a more ordered and coherent account can still be discerned beneath the confusion.58 This appears to have been a formulaic and repetitive description of an orderly and highly ritualized procession through the hekhalot, in which the element of danger is controlled by the ceremonial formulae of the names and seals.59 At the gate of the sixth hekhal, the yored merkava must, in addition to presenting the appropriate seals, undergo examination by the angels Katspiel (קטספיאל, ‘Wrath of God’) and Dumiel (דומיאל, either ‘Divine

57 The spelling of the names varies considerably between the manuscripts. Ms. Oxford is followed above, save that variant readings noted by the scribe are ignored.
58 The material under consideration is included in Schäfer § 219–277. See especially: Goldberg, ‘Einige Bemerkungen’; Dan, ‘Petah Hekhal Shishi’; and Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 71–73. English translations of this passage of HekhR have been offered by Grodner in Blumenthal, Understanding Jewish Mysticism, 56–89 (not very reliable); Kaplan, Meditation, 42–54 (a rather speculative paraphrase); and Alexander, Textual Sources, 120–125 (summarised, but by far the best).
Silence’ or ‘Divine Likeness’, who appear to represent the divine attributes of justice and mercy. Those who are ‘unworthy to behold the king and his throne’ are attacked by Katspiel, who wields a flaming sword that shoots out lightning bolts, but the ‘worthy’ yored merkava will, if properly prepared, be unaffected by this danger. Provided that he satisfies the criteria of ‘worthiness’, which the text defines in terms of Tora observance and talmudic learning, Dumiel conducts him into the seventh hekhal, where he is presented before the throne of glory and participates in the worship of the angels. One who is ‘worthy’, and who knows the names and seals that enable one to perform this practice, is compared to

$(§ 199)$...a man who has a ladder in his house, by which he can ascend and descend, and no created being can hinder his power.

In the text as we have it, this orderly narrative is broken in several places by interpolated materials—including, near the end, a garbled version of the water vision episode—which tend, on the whole, to emphasize the perils that may befall the yored merkava if he is judged by the angels to be ‘unworthy’. In these interpolated passages, the atmosphere of terrifying danger is greatly heightened and the sense of serene control that pervades the underlying account of the ‘ritual ascent’ is considerably diminished. Unfortunately, the redactional complexity of HekhR makes it difficult to identify and separate all the various sources and layers of literary activity that have contributed to this account of the heavenly journey. For example, the examination by Katspiel and Dumiel at the sixth gate should perhaps be included in the category of interpolated, perhaps relatively late, material.

A different set of instructions for the practice of ascent/descent through the seven hekhalot to the merkava is found at the end of HekhZ (as conservatively defined). Although the earlier parts of this macroform contain a variety of materials that relate in one way or another to the heavenly ascent, no systematic account of that practice has been given

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60 The discussion of this angel in HekhR (Schäfer § 230) incorporates both of these meanings.
63 Schäfer § 259; see Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 54–79.
64 Of course, the fact that a ‘microform’ unit has been interpolated does not necessarily mean that the unit is less ancient than its ‘mesoform’ host.
65 Schäfer § 413–419, translated in ch. 11, pp. 294–300 below. See also p. 233 n. 48, above.
up to this point. In this passage, Akiva specifies the names of the
gatekeepers and the seals that must be shown to them. Although the
basic structure of this account is similar to that of the ‘ritual ascent’
narrative in HekhR, the names and seals are different. Moreover, the
version in HekhZ is much simpler. Whereas HekhR includes a good
deal of narrative detail and gives the names of two guardians for each
gateway (on the left and right sides) with their corresponding seals,
the account in HekhZ gives only the bare instructions, with minimal
elaboration, and specifies only one name and one seal at each gateway.
Given the antiquity of HekhZ, this ‘bare bones’ account of the ascent/
descent is likely to be older than the more elaborate and redactionally
layered version in HekhR.66

It should be observed that, although the divine and angelic names
are essential elements of the instruction given in this and many other
passages of the hekhalot literature, the spellings of these names often
differ considerably between, and even within, the manuscripts.67 This
may indicate that these instructions were originally communicated—as
indicated by the account in HekhR—in an oral and performative, rather
than purely literary, context. In HekhZ (§ 413–417a), the guardians
of the gateways are called ‘princes’, a term (שר) which is frequently
applied to exalted angels in this literature. The divine name, the tetra-
grammation, is appended to each of their names. This is characteristic
of many angelic names in the hekhalot literature and is also true, for
example, of the gatekeepers’ names in HekhR. This motif, which is
clearly indicative of these angels’ special status and authority, may also
be related to a tradition that the angels bear the name of God engraved
on a seal within them.68 Here, however, the names on the seals are not
permutations of the tetragrammaton but secret names, which identify
the yored merkava to the angels as one who possesses the authority
of a power higher than themselves. This is a specific application of
a concept which is central to the ‘ritual technology’ of the hekhalot

66 For a full translation of the HekhZ ascent passage discussed below, see Chap-
ter 11, pp. 294–300 below. The section numbers are based on Schäfer, Synopse. For
analysis of this passage, see Lesses, Ritual Practices, 254–260 and 343–344, and the
sources cited there.
67 For the sake of clarity, consistent spellings, based mainly on mss. Oxford and New
York, are adopted in translations of HekhZ (see pp. 272–273 below).
68 MidrPs 17:3; PesR 21:10. In both instances, the tradition is attributed to R. Levi.
In the Odes of Solomon 4:8, we find the statement that the angels are ‘clothed with’
tradition: mastery over the celestial powers is gained by (i) the knowledge of their names and (ii) the correct naming of a superior power, requiring knowledge of the specific divine (or higher angelic) name to which a given angel answers.69 These names stand in a hierarchical relationship to each other and, in this passage, seem to signify distinct forms of divine manifestation, each of which corresponds to a particular hekhal. Rebecca Lesses, however, observes that this passage reveals in a particularly acute way the confusion between God and the highest angelic princes that one often finds in the Hekhalot texts. This text elides the differences between God and the angels, both by giving God multiple names, and by compounding the names of God and the angels with the tetragrammaton. This confusion is important to address because the rabbis condemned as heretics those who confused God and the highest angels.70

A particular problem concerns the names on the seals and their relationships to each other. Lesses suggests that these may be the names of different celestial beings, each of which has its own distinct identity, and that ‘just as there is an angelic prince of each palace, there is a God of each palace’.71 This model would, in her view, resemble that in the Ascension of Isaiah, where an enthroned angel is worshipped in each of the seven heavens, and in Visions of Ezekiel, where there is a different merkava in every heaven, each with its own name.72 Lesses considers the possibility that the seven seals in HekhZ are all names of the one God, but concludes that this ‘does not square’73 with the scenario in § 417c, where, according to her reading of the text, the yored merkava is passed from the lap (חיק) of one divine figure to the lap of the next in an ascending hierarchy. Although this is certainly one way to understand the passage, it is not certain that the yored merkava is seated on the laps of seven different celestial beings, one after the other. An alternative reading is that the yored merkava is seated on the lap of a single divine or angelic being who appears or manifests in each of the seven hekhalot and is called by a different name at each level of appearance. If

69 In this instance, the authority conferred by the seals is of a limited nature, since the yored merkava is authorized only to pass through the gateways and has not yet been granted wider power over the angels. Nonetheless, the principle that higher names confer authority over lower entities still applies to this situation. See further below.
70 Lesses, Ritual Practices, 257.
71 Ibid. 258.
72 Ibid. 258–259. On Visions of Ezekiel, see below.
73 Ibid. 259.
the ‘request’ formula in § 418–419 originally included the seven names,\textsuperscript{74} this might be held to support the latter inference, since the request is made in the second person singular.\textsuperscript{75} On the other hand, the names on the seven seals do clearly stand in a hierarchical relationship to each other and it may be that the request is addressed only to the seventh and last of these names (i.e., שַחֲטֵרִים). Thus, the precise status of these seven figures, and the degrees of identity or difference between them, are very far from clear. These observations touch on a central issue of interpretation of the hekhalot literature, which will be examined in greater depth below.\textsuperscript{76} To the best of my knowledge, the placing of the yored merkava on the lap of the figure who sits on the merkava (§ 417c) is almost, if not entirely, unique to HekhZ. The nearest parallel is found in a short apocalyptic passage, included by some manuscripts within HekhR, concerning the heavenly enthronement of David next to the throne of glory and the consequent downfall of Israel’s oppressors. The vision of these celestial and future events is revealed to Yishmael by the angel Sasangiel, prince of the countenance, who instructs him: ‘My beloved, return to my lap (חִיק) and I will show you what is going to befall Israel.’\textsuperscript{77}

In addition to instructions for the practice of the ascent, the contents of both HekhZ and HekhR are very varied. Accounts of events associated with the ascent/descent are found in both macroforms but the narrative element is much more highly developed in HekhR, which constructs an elaborate narrative context for the ascent of Nehunya and assigns redemptive significance to this event by connecting it with the rabbinic apocalyptic legend of the ten martyrs. According to some manuscripts, the HekhR collection also includes a number of other, mainly shorter, apocalyptic passages. These passages, which include the ‘David apocalypse’ discussed above, are probably taken from independent sources, in which revelations about heavenly and earthly events are communicated to Yishmael by celestial beings.\textsuperscript{78} HekhZ, in contrast,

\textsuperscript{74} See n. 87, p. 297 below.
\textsuperscript{75} ‘May it be your (s.) will, LORD God of Israel… that you (s.) give me grace, mercy, compassion and glory before your (s.) throne of glory, in the eyes of all your (s.) ministers… and bind all your (s.) ministers to me…’
\textsuperscript{76} See Part III.
\textsuperscript{77} Schäfer § 122 (mss. New York and Budapest); cf. Wetheimer, 	extit{Batei-Midrashot}, 1: 75f. (‘Pirkei Hekhalot Rabbati’, ch. 6 § 3).
contains only two short narrative episodes: the story of the four who entered paradise and the ‘ascent midrash’, which concerns the transition through the sixth and seventh gateways and includes the water vision episode.\(^{79}\) The latter, although superficially narrative in form, is really a chain of midrashic expositions of Ezek. 1:27, interpreted in the context of a visionary ascent.\(^{80}\)

Descriptions of the heavenly world, its inhabitants, and their activities are found in both macroforms but, again, these are more highly developed in HekhR. In HekhZ, these descriptive passages are basically elaborations of Ezek 1, interpreted in the light of Daniel 7 and other scriptural theophanies, with the addition of the secret names of the hayyot, other angels, and God.\(^{81}\) In HekhR, descriptive elements are sometimes included in the account of the heavenly ascent, but they are mainly found within three large blocks of hymnic material, These, taken together, make up a significant portion of this macroform, which opens with the words: ‘R. Yishmael said: What are the songs which should be uttered by one who wishes to behold the vision of the merkava, to descend in peace and to ascend in peace?’ (§ 81).\(^{82}\) Interestingly, the first sequence of hymns (§ 94–105) is attributed by Yishmael to Akiva, who otherwise plays no part in HekhR: ‘R. Akiva heard all these songs when he descended to the merkava and grasped (תפס)\(^{83}\) and learned them from before the throne of glory, where his (i.e., God’s) ministers were singing them before him’ (§ 106). This statement is appropriate to the content of the sequence, which concerns the manifestation of the kavod on the heavenly throne at the times of the celestial liturgy. All of the hymns in this section conclude with the opening words of the kedusha (trishagion). The hymns in the second collection (§ 152–177 and § 189–199\(^{84}\)) likewise tell of the celestial liturgy and, in almost all cases, include or end with the kedusha. These hymns, however, are said to have been revealed to Yishmael by Suria (سورיה), the prince of

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\(^{80}\) See Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 83–104.

\(^{81}\) See HekhZ, § 353a–356h and § 368a–375b on pp. 280–282 and 288–291 below.

\(^{82}\) Cf. HekhR, § 94, where the question is repeated.

\(^{83}\) It is worth observing that this word is used of Moses when he takes hold of the heavenly tablets (yTaan 4, 68c).

\(^{84}\) § 178–188 are included in HekhR by ms. New York only and are taken from a different macroform (Siddur Rabba di-Bereshit, on which see ch. 15, pp. 519–525 below).
the countenance, or celestial high priest. Their dominant theme is the overpowering beauty of the divine glory and the *hayyot*.\(^{85}\)

\(\S 159\) A lovely face, a glorious face, a face of beauty, a face of flame is the face of the Lord God of Israel, when he is seated on his throne of glory, and when his worship is made ready at the seat of his splendor. His beauty is more lovely than the beauty of the powers; and his splendor exceeds that of grooms and brides beneath their nuptial canopy. One who gazes upon him will at once be torn to pieces, and one who looks at his beauty will at once be poured forth like a jug. Those who serve him today will not serve him again tomorrow, and those who serve him tomorrow will not serve him again, for their strength becomes feeble and their faces are darkened, their hearts fail and their eyes are dimmed, due to the splendor of the glory of the beauty of their king, as it is written: *Holy! Holy! Holy!* (Isa 6:4)

\(\S 160\) Beloved servants! Lovely servants! Quick servants! Swift servants, who stand at the base\(^{86}\) of the throne of glory and are stationed upon the wheel of the merkava when the base of the throne of glory comes back around to them, when the wheel of the merkava catches them up! Those standing on the right go around and stand on the left; and those standing on the left go around and stand on the right; and those standing in front go around and stand at the back; and those standing at the back go around and stand in front; and he who sees this one says: ‘This one is that one,’ and he who sees that one says: ‘That one is this one,’ for the facial features of this one are like the facial features of that one; and the facial features of that one are like the facial features of this one; Happy is the king who has servants such as these! Happy are the servants that this is their king! Happy is the eye that feasts itself and gazes at this wondrous light, a strange and wondrous vision, as it is written: *Holy! Holy! Holy!*…!

\(\S 161\) Rivers of rejoicing! Rivers of exultation! Rivers of jubilation! Rivers of goodwill! Rivers of love! Rivers of friendship, pouring out and going forth from before his throne of glory, and growing mighty and flowing into the gateways of the paths of *Aravot-Rakia*! With the sound of the lyres of his living creatures

\(^{85}\) The following translation is based mainly on ms. Budapest.

\(^{86}\) Lit.: ‘stone’ ([סונ]). Some manuscripts omit this word.
with the sound of the timbrels of his wheels,  
with the sound of the clanging of the cymbals of his kherubim,  
a swelling mighty sound goes forth  
with a great quaking, with sanctification,  
at the time when Israel say before him: Holy! Holy! Holy…!

It will be observed that this hymn posits a connection between the celestial worship of the angels and the daily prayers of the earthly community of Israel. This connection is a central motif of the hekhalot tradition and of HekhR in particular. In the following passage, the throne itself participates in the liturgy and offers its own praise to the divine glory:

$(§ 162)$ Like the sound of mighty waters, like the turbulence of rivers,  
like the billows of Tarshish when the south wind stirs them up  
is the sound of the singing of the throne of glory  
when it extols and recites the praise of the wondrous king.  
There is a tumult of voices, with a great and mighty quaking,  
which accompany the voice of the throne of glory  
to support it and give it strength  
when it sings and gives praise to the mighty one of Israel,  
as it is written: Holy! Holy! Holy…!

This motif recurs in the third block of hymnic material in HekhR, which is found at the end of the macroform.\textsuperscript{87} Here, at the culmination of the heavenly ascent, the yored merkava is instructed to recite a long series of hymns which are said to be uttered by the throne of glory each day. With one exception,\textsuperscript{88} the hymns in this section do not include the kedusha. Rather, they consist mainly of lists of epithets and short phrases extolling the multitudinous characteristics of the divine king:

$(§ 254)$ A beloved, lovely, beautiful and pure king,  
who prevails over kings!  
The excellent one,  
who excels above all excellencies!  
The glorified one,  
who is raised up above the strong  
and exalted above those who are feared!  
A diadem for kings!

\textsuperscript{87} Schäfer § 251–277, excluding § 258–259, which are clearly misplaced in this context (see Goldberg, ’Einige Bemerkungen’, 28; and Morray-Jones, \textit{Transparent Illusion}, 73).

\textsuperscript{88} § 273–274. This is a description of the hayyot and their praise, and therefore resembles the content of the first two hymnic sections.
A song of praise for the pure!
A treasure for the holy!
Humility for the humble!
Pleasant in the mouths of those who call on him!
Sweet to those who hope in his name!
Righteous in all his ways!
Upright in all his works!
Lovely in his proportions!
Pure in counsel and in knowledge!
Clear in understanding and in deed!
Witness of every word!
Judge of every soul!
Adjudicator of every matter!
Strong in wisdom and in every mystery!
Majestic in holiness and in purity!89

Unlike HekhR, HekhZ (translated in Chapter 11) contains almost no hymnic material of this kind. Apart from a long hymn that has been inserted into the ascent instructions in ms. New York only,90 the collection contains only one relatively short passage (§ 412) that can clearly be identified as such. On the other hand, several passages of this macroform are written in a rhythmic, quasi-liturgical style and were clearly intended to be recited.

A major focus of interest in HekhZ is knowledge of the secret names of God and the angels, lists of which are found throughout the collection. As we have seen, this knowledge is essential to the practice of the heavenly ascent, but this is only one reason for its importance. At the very beginning of the collection, the great name of God, which was revealed in heaven to Moses and subsequently to Akiva, is introduced as the principal subject of the ‘book’. This name is made up of an apparently limitless number of lesser names, combinations of which are to be learned and recited for a variety of purposes. In the introduction to HekhZ, the first application of this knowledge to be mentioned is enhancement of the power of memory.91 Then, in the following passage, Akiva instructs his students about the name.92

It should be observed that at least two sources have been combined to produce this composition at the opening of HekhZ. Whereas § 336b–f

89 Translation based mainly on ms. Oxford.
90 § 418c–418g.
91 See § 336b–f.
92 § 337a–d.
trace the revelation of the secret divine name back to Moses at the
time of his heavenly ascent, § 337a–d attribute it to Akiva. Moreover,
the benefits associated with the name are different in both cases. It is
possible that the Moses paragraph has been added in an attempt to
establish a basis in authoritative tradition for the teachings about the
name which, in the rest of HekhZ, are associated with Akiva. In ms.
New York’s alternative introduction to this macroform, the name and
its permutations are said to have been the source of Moses’ miraculous
power to smite the Egyptians and divide the Red Sea.93

Of the eight remaining component passages of this macroform, only
two—the pardes story and the ascent midrash94—are not directly con-
cerned with the subject of the names.95 In a passage that immediately
follows the pardes story, the vision of God’s glory is closely bound up
with the knowledge of his secret names (§ 348–352).96 At the heart of
the collection is an extended passage (§ 357–367) containing instruc-
tions for the repetitive recitation of long lists of names, apparently in
connection with the theurgic or liturgical formulae which the practitioner
is already expected to know.97 It is difficult to make much sense of
most of this material, since its ‘meaning’ is evidently contingent on its
ritual context, which is largely unknown to us. The opening words of
this passage seem, however, to imply that the name is identical with
the manifest and visible divine glory: ‘Blessed be his great, terrible,
mighty, strong, majestic and powerful name, for whom our eyes yearn!’
(§ 357a). Immediately after this, we are given a name of power which
is said to be used for the purpose of adjuration (§ 357b–c), followed
by a series of shorter names, for each of which an authority is cited.
These are: Bileam, Moses, the angel of death, David, Solomon, and an
unknown figure identified only as ‘he who utters the name of the LORD
(Lev 24:16) to all who stand’ (§ 357d).

At the end of this rather puzzling unit, we are told: ‘For this is the
explicit name. They interpret it; they examine it; they pronounce it; and
its interpretation is Greek’ (§ 357e). There is no indication of what this
statement might mean but, later in this passage, we find the statement:

93 HekhZ(N), § 341a–343a.
94 § 344–346 (= 338–339) and § 407–412.
95 Admittedly, the description of the hayyot and the kavod in § 353–356 is primar-
ily descriptive, but see § 356b–e. In the parallel but more extensive ‘throne midrash’
(§ 368–375), the names are an essential element.
96 See ch. 13, pp. 404–407 below.
97 § 357–367.
‘בֵּית וֹדֶּי הָאָדָם’ (= Greek beta) is his name,’ followed by a sequence of names containing the element בֵּית, which appears to represent the same letter and/or its Hebrew equivalent, bet (362f–g). It is very probable that, in this microform, the letters bet and/or beta carry their numerical significance: ‘two’. If so, the statement that God’s name is ‘Two’, rather than ‘One’, is rather startling. The inescapable implication is that ‘the Appearance of the Glory of the Lord’ on the celestial merkava is, according to this microform, a Deuteros Theos.98

As in the instructions for the ascent, the spellings of the names vary widely between—and also sometimes, within—the manuscripts. Some names and name-sequences are biblical, and a few carry literal meanings, such as ‘Compassionate’, ‘Merciful’, and ‘Lord of Wrath’.99 A few seemingly angelic names, ending with the element: אל- are found, especially in ms. New York. In the vast majority of cases, however, these names are nomina barbara, having no known meaning. One long list of such names is followed by the instruction: ‘And let him recite (this) seventy (times), backwards and forwards, until the fast takes control of him,’ (§ 359d). Following another list of names, we find the statement:

This is the name of the power. Happy is everyone who knows and recites it in purity—his Tora will be established in his hand. His praise will last forever and for all eternity, for though he stands in the dark of night, no harm shall again befall him.100

The opening words of HekhZ appear to refer to this practice of name-recitation:

If you want to be singled out in the world so that the mysteries of the world and the secrets of wisdom may be revealed to you, repeat this mishna—and be careful about it—during the day in which set yourself apart. Do not think about what is behind you and do not investigate the sayings of your lips. Apply your understanding to what is in your heart and keep silent, so that you may be worthy of the beauties of the merkava.101

The precise meaning of ‘what is behind you’ in this context is unclear, but the instruction to refrain from investigation of the words being said presumably refers to the lists of names to be recited. If so, the

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98 See, e.g., Philo, QG 2.62; and see further, Segal, Two Powers, 163–166. The ‘Second Power’ issue is explored in Part III below.
99 See § 362g–h, for example.
100 § 365a.
101 § 335a.
meaning seems to be that the practitioner should not be distracted into speculation about their meaning. \(^\text{102}\) At the end of HekhZ, the ‘Akiva postscript’—the passage quoted by Rav Hai\(^\text{103}\)—refers back to the practice of name-recitation: ‘Whoever wishes to learn this mishna, and to express the name explicitly, should sit in fast for forty days and rest his head between his knees until the fast takes control of him’ (§ 424b). This is followed by the instruction: ‘If he tells it to his friend, he should tell him one letter from the beginning and one letter from the end, but he should not join one to the other, lest he should make a mistake and destroy the world of the holy one, blessed be he’ (§ 424c). This seems to imply that some lists of names may have been produced by a systematic method or methods of letter combination. However, owing in part to the confused spelling of the names in the manuscripts, it is difficult even to speculate what this method (or these methods) may have been. In a few places, it is possible to discern a pattern of some sort beneath the muddle,\(^\text{104}\) but in the absence of any knowledge of an underlying system, most of these lists have the appearance of gobbledygook. It is possible that some of these the names were produced by glossolalia, which would certainly be consistent with the claim, made repeatedly in HekhZ and other hekhalot writings, that they were revealed in the course of heavenly journeys and other visionary experiences.\(^\text{105}\) It would also help to explain the uncertainty of their spelling. Nonetheless, it is clear that accuracy in the recitation of these names and name-sequences was considered to be of paramount importance: ‘If he wishes to test him, he may test him once but not twice, and, when he tests him, he should examine him strictly, lest he should make a mistake and destroy the world of the holy one, blessed be he’ (§ 424e). The HekhZ ‘postscript’ ends with an instruction to repeat this practice each year for forty days ending on Yom Kippur, ‘so that Satan and the forces of evil may not afflict him all year’ (§ 424f).

In both HekhZ and HekhR, the practice of name-recitation is intimately connected with the heavenly ascent and the vision of merkava. In HekhZ, as we have seen, the subject of the names is encountered in

\(^\text{102}\) For a more detailed discussion of this passage, see pp. 259–263 below.
\(^\text{103}\) See p. 232 above and pp. 265–266 below.
\(^\text{105}\) Compare MMerk, § 579–584, discussed on pp. 249–250 below.
almost every passage of the collection. In HekhR, however, this subject is rarely encountered outside of the account of Nehunya’s heavenly ascent. In the apocalyptic passages of this collection, we occasionally encounter secret names of God (אֲדוֹנָי, הָוָה-הוֹדֵד, נָפָסָה, אֲדוֹרֶנְה, etc.) and of exalted angels (סֵרוֹא, סֵסגֶנֶי, סַרְעָית, סַרְעָך, etc.), but these occur singly, rather than in lists, and appear to be mentioned only in passing.106 Single names of God are also encountered very occasionally in the hymns. At the end of the second hymn collection (§ 195), we find a short list of names (mostly variations of טָטְרָסְסְתָה), with an instruction that they should be memorized, and the third hymn collection ends with a list of the eight names of Metatron (§ 277) but, apart from these two instances, the hymns in HekhR do not involve the recitation of names.

Thus, when we examine these two macroforms for evidence about practices associated with the heavenly ascent, we find them to be similar in some respects but different in others. Both describe the process of ascent/descent through the seven gateways and, in both, knowledge of the gatekeepers’ names and their corresponding seals is an essential element of this process. HekhZ lays great emphasis on the knowledge and recitation of secret names, and appears to allude to liturgical formulae associated with this practice, but contains hardly any hymns. HekhR includes three long collections of hymns but, except in the context of Nehunya’s heavenly journey, contains little evidence of interest in the subject of the names.

As observed above, the extent and delimitation of the hekhalot corpus is a matter of some uncertainty. This problem of definition is compounded by a lack of clear agreement about what constitutes a ‘text’, and at least four leading scholars have offered different lists of works to be included in this literary category.107 In addition to the two ‘definitive’ macroforms, HekhZ and HekhR, three more may be said, with Schäfer, to ‘indisputably belong to the Hekhalot literature’.108 These are:

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106 In the apocalyptic passages of HekhR, the names most frequently occur in the context of a formula such as: ‘N., the prince of the countenance, said to me...’ (e.g., § 117–119, 122, 130, and 139).
107 See, in order of publication: Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, 5–7; Gruenwald, Apocalyptic, 134–234 (with extensive summaries of each text); Dan, The Ancient, 16–24; and Schäfer, Hidden and Manifest, 5–8 (with detailed summaries of the five ‘core’ macroforms in ibid. 11–138).
108 Schäfer, Hidden and Manifest, 7.
‘Maase Merkava’ (MMerk); \textsuperscript{109} ‘Merkava Rabba’ (MerkR);\textsuperscript{110} and ‘Sefer Hekhalot’, better known as 3 Enoch.\textsuperscript{111} All three of these works are also included by Scholem and by Ithamar Gruenwald.\textsuperscript{112} Dan lists MMergek and 3 Enoch,\textsuperscript{113} but seems not to recognize the MerkR collection as a ‘text’ in its own right.\textsuperscript{114}

Gruenwald and Dan both list ‘Shiur Koma’ as the title of yet another hekhalot treatise.\textsuperscript{115} According to Scholem, this ‘was originally a part of Merkava Rabba but was later transmitted in the manuscripts as a separate unit’.\textsuperscript{116} However, Schäfer is right to disregard this alleged ‘text’. Allusions to the subject of shiur koma (‘the measure of the stature’), which details the enormous measurements and secret names of the limbs and other body parts of the kavod, are scattered throughout all five of the ‘core’ macroforms and there are several recensions of shiur koma materials in manuscripts other than those included in the Synopse, as well as in MerkR. Although the shiur koma is an important strand of the merkava mystical tradition and, as such, will be explored in depth in Part III below, the use of this term as the title of a distinct literary entity or hekhalot macroform is undoubtedly misleading.

Maase Merkava (MMerk) is a collection of hymnic prayers set within a mostly rather minimal narrative context. The prayers are said to have been taught to Yishmael, the narrator of the text, in some instances by Akiva and in others, by Nehunya. Unlike those in HekhR, most of the hymns in this macroform include lists of secret names. As Naomi Janowitz has demonstrated, the primary function of these hymns is to enable the performer, by the very act of recitation, to participate in the

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{109} Schäfer § 544–596; first published by Scholem, \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}, 103–117; English translations by Janowitz, \textit{Poetics of Ascent}; and Swartz, \textit{Mystical Prayer}.
  \item \textsuperscript{110} Schäfer § 655–708. So far as I am aware, this macroform has not been translated into English.
  \item \textsuperscript{111} Schäfer § 1–80, § 855–871 and § 882–938; English translations by Odeberg, \textit{3 Enoch}; and Alexander, \textit{OTP} 1: 223–315.
  \item \textsuperscript{112} Scholem, \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}, 6–7 (referring to MMergek, first published as an appendix in \textit{ibid.} 103–117, as ‘the titleless Hekhaloth’); Gruenwald, \textit{Apocalyptic}, 174–208 (with extensive summaries and discussion of each text).
  \item \textsuperscript{113} See Dan, \textit{The Ancient}, 23–24.
  \item \textsuperscript{114} Compare Gruenwald’s description of MerkR as ‘a compilation of several technical and difficult Merkavah texts’ (\textit{Apocalyptic}, 174); and see also Schäfer, ‘Prolegomena’.
  \item \textsuperscript{115} Gruenwald, \textit{Apocalyptic}, 213–217; Dan, \textit{The Ancient}, 24.
  \item \textsuperscript{116} Scholem, \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}, 7.
\end{itemize}
heavenly ascent of Yishmael and his two teachers.\textsuperscript{117} A related function, which should not be overlooked, is that they protect the mystic from the dangers associated with the ascent and, especially, with the vision of the merkava.\textsuperscript{118}

Michael Swartz, approaching the MMerk collection from a literary-historical and redaction-critical perspective, has shown that it is composed of four blocks of material. Of these, the first and last (§ 544–559 and 592–596) contain teachings given to Yishmael by Akiva. In the two intermediate sections (§ 560–570 and 579–591)\textsuperscript{119} Yishmael receives instruction from Nehunya. Swartz finds that many of the hymns and prayers in MMerk include elements derived from the synagogue liturgical tradition, but that these ‘date from a period when the liturgical literature was fluid and not codified’.\textsuperscript{120} These combine the prosodic forms of rabbinic liturgical poetry with the ‘numinous’ repetitive hymnic style characteristic of HekhR.\textsuperscript{121} He further demonstrates that, in the Akiva passages, the hymns did not originally include the names, which were later added to them.\textsuperscript{122} This is not, however true of the material in § 560–570,\textsuperscript{123} where Nehunya teaches Yishmael about the secret method of adjuring the angelic prince of the Tora. This involves ritual performances and the recitation of special prayers, of which the names are essential—ergo, original—components.\textsuperscript{124} In the second Nehunya passage (§ 579–584), Yishmael stands before his master and recites the names of (i) the gatekeepers of the seven hekhalot and (ii) the angels who worship before the merkava, the knowledge of which

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{117} See Janowitz, \textit{Poetics of Ascent}. Janowitz’s analysis of the function and operation of ritual language in this text, which draws on theories of structural linguistics, is in places very technical but offers valuable insights. See also Schäfer, \textit{Hidden and Manifest}, 86–95.
\item \textsuperscript{118} See § 585–591 (discussed below) and cf. § 547, 563, 570, and 595. Compare also the merkava hymn in Apoc. Abr. 17, which performs a similarly protective function.
\item \textsuperscript{119} § 571–578 is an Aramaic \textit{Sar Tora} text, found only in ms. New York. § 579–591 are omitted by ms. Munich 22, which, however, includes some additional material, not found in the other manuscripts. Swartz calls this the ‘short recension’ of MMerk.
\item \textsuperscript{120} Swartz, \textit{Mystical Prayer}, 218. An example is the \textit{לשבח עליךله} hymn (§ 551), a mystical first person singular adaptation of the well-known \textit{לשבח עלינו} prayer (see Swartz, \textit{ibid.} 118–125). See below pp. 513–514.
\item \textsuperscript{121} See Swartz, \textit{ibid.} 190–207.
\item \textsuperscript{122} See Swartz, \textit{ibid.} 103–133, 144–168 and 213–214. Compare Gruenwald, \textit{Apocalyptic}, 182, who inclines to the view that hymms in MMerk, including the names, ‘represent a more original phase of Hekhalot hymnology than do their counterparts in Hekhalot Rabbati’. See further below.
\item \textsuperscript{123} Swartz designates this material Section II of the collection.
\item \textsuperscript{124} See Swartz, \textit{ibid.} 134–143.
\end{itemize}
he has acquired by direct revelation. At the end of the sequence, the prince of the countenance admonishes him not to succumb to pride on account of this revelation and promises: ‘Happy are you in this world, and it will be good for you for ever and throughout eternity, and for all sons of men who possess it and recite it from one morning to the next in prayer, like you’ (§ 584). The names of the angels revealed to Yishmael are clearly the essential content of this passage. Following this, Nehunya teaches Yishmael five prayers that he should recite in order to protect himself from the dangers of the ascent (§ 585–591). These prayers bring about the following results (§ 586):

R. Yishmael said:

After R. Nehunya b. Ha-Kana, my master, had set out these prayers in order for me, I continued each day to recite each and every one of them, with their names, during the descent and the ascent, and there was protection for all my limbs.

Swartz believes that, as in the Akiva passages of MMerk, the lists of names in these five prayers have been interpolated and are not original, but, in fact, the greatness, excellence and mystery of the divine name is the central theme of these prayers. The utterance of this name is identified with the creative act by which the world was created:

(§ 587) Blessed are you—a great, mighty and strong God; a king who is exalted in splendor and magnificence! In glory (kavod) you spoke and the world came into being. By the breath (ruah) of your lips you established the firmament. And your great name is pure and exalted over all those above and all those below. ‘Virtue of Earth’ is your name; ‘Virtue of Heaven’ is your name. Angels stand in heaven; and righteous ones trust in remembrance (zekher) of you; and your name hovers over everything; and your memorial (zekher) is magnified (megudal) over all the sons of flesh. Blessed be your name for ever! Blessed be your name for ever! A burning fire; a blazing flame;

125 Here is another indication that charismatic speech may once have played a role in the merkava tradition and that it may account for the origin of some names (see p. 246 above).
126 Swartz does not consider this narrative passage in his discussion of the relationship between the prayers and the names.
127 Swartz, Mystical Prayer, 144–155.
128 See further Schäfer, Hidden and Manifest, 77–86.
In this passage, the great name, as the creative agent, is identical with the manifest divine glory (kavod) and with the divine breath (ruah elohim) of Gen 1:2. The statement that the name is the ‘virtue’ (zekhut) of heaven and earth is interpreted by Alexander Altmann to mean that heaven and earth were created, and are maintained in existence, by virtue of the recitation of the name.130 The word zekher, translated ‘remembrance’ and ‘memorial’, is, in the hekhalot literature, used very frequently in association with the name(s) and means ‘calling to mind’ by the act of recitation.131 According to this passage of MMerk, this fiery name is ‘burned’ and ‘imprinted’ (perhaps: ‘branded’) at the apex of the creation. A recurring theme of the hymns in MMerk, including these five, is the emphatic assertion of God’s uniqueness and the identity between God and his name:

($§$ 588) He is his name and his name is he:
He in himself, and his name in his name!
A song is his name, and his name is a Song!

עוסה עני ית אלפים יהטש רמי יה
רשי ברק אסנאה
וילאתא אתר אוי

Compare with this the opening words of the first prayer of the second Akiva passage ($§$ 592):

Blessed are you, the Lord, God. Great is your name in power. The Lord, One (Deut 6:4) is your name, and there is none like you.

129 Cf. the translations of Swartz (Mystical Prayer, 247) and Schäfer (Übersetzung, 3.), both of which differ in places from the above, and from each, other. The names follow ms. Oxford.


131 See, for example, HekhZ, § 336c, where the practitioner is instructed to ‘recite these names upon himself’ (הזכבי עלי אל שם). In the Sufi tradition, the closely related Arabic term zikr refers to the practice of reciting God’s names.

132 The names follow ms. Oxford.
Swartz’s finding that, in the Akiva passages, the names have been interpolated into existing prayers is undoubtedly correct, but, as we have seen, the names are the essential content of the Nehunya passages. It therefore seems likely that the five prayers in the second Nehunya passage were constructed around these names. It is, at any rate, clear that MMerk represents a synthesis of several sources and embodies numerous layers of redactional activity. Therefore, taken as a whole, this macroform represents a later stage in the development of the hekhalot literary tradition than either HekhZ or HekhR, even though it may draw, in part, from source-traditions of comparable antiquity. Swartz believes that the hymns, prior to the addition of the names, are the earliest contents of MMerk, and concludes that they were ‘probably composed in Palestine between the fourth and seventh centuries from forms and literary units of third-to-fifth century Palestinian origin’. He maintains that the narrative elements are post-talmudic and were probably composed during the sixth to seventh centuries. He suggests that the names were probably added to the hymns at about the same time, even though he recognizes that the tradition of the names, in and of itself, is much older. He assigns the Sar Tora passage in § 560–570 to late or post-talmudic Babylonia, and the final redaction of the macroform to the late Geonic or early medieval period.

Although it is possible that the two Nehunya passages, in which the names are the essential content, are rather older than Swartz thinks, his arguments concerning the Akiva passages, and his analysis of the redaction history of the collection as a whole, are persuasive. It follows that, in an exploration of the influence of merkava mysticism on the earliest Christian writers, MMerk should be used, if at all, with caution. On the other hand, we shall find that at least one passage preserved in this macroform appears to be rooted in a tradition that is at least as old as the early first century CE.

Two more major macroforms should be briefly mentioned. Merkava Rabba (MerkR) is a rather heterogenous collection of merkava materials, including a version of the story of the four who entered Paradise (based on that in HekhZ). This macroform is closely related to

133 Swartz, Mystical Prayer, 218.
134 See Swartz, ibid. 218–220.
135 See pp. 320–321 below.
136 Schäfer § 671–673.
MMerK and, in its present form, appears to be of approximately the same date. To a greater extent than the other macroforms, MerkR lays great emphasis on ascetic, purificatory practices and theurgic utterance of secret names. Whereas our discussion of HekhZ, HekhR and MMerK has focused mainly on the process of the heavenly ascent and the vision of the merkava, together with the celestial liturgy, and on the significance of the names in this context, the primary emphasis of MerkR is rather different. Here, the power of the names is applied above all to the adjuration of exalted angels, who are called upon to descend to earth in order to confer benefits on the practitioner. These angels are extremely powerful, ergo dangerous, and the purpose of the purificatory rituals described in this macroform is to provide necessary protection for the practitioner. The objects of invocation include the Prince of the Presence (Sar ha-Panim) and, above all, the Prince of the Tora (Sar Tora), who is adjured to illuminate the understanding of the practitioner, so that he is able instantly to perceive the meaning of any text of scripture, aggada or halakha, and to confer upon him a superhuman power of memory, thereby enabling him to retain all of this immeasurable learning. It is important to emphasize that, although these themes are more prominent in MerkR than in the other macroforms, they are found throughout the literature. Hence, the adjuration of angels to empower and obey the merkava practitioner cannot easily be separated from the practice of the heavenly ascent. As we have seen, in HekhZ, HekhR, and MMerK, the power conferred by knowledge of the secret names enables the yored merkava to ascend safely and to withstand the overpowering vision of the merkava. At the climax of the ascent in HekhZ, the yored merkava asks the divine Glory, in whose lap he is now sitting, to

...give me grace, mercy, compassion and glory before your throne of glory, in the eyes of all your ministers, and in the eyes of all who see (me); and bind all your ministers to me, to do thus and thus.138

Thus, mastery over the angels was one of the benefits—perhaps the principal benefit—to be obtained by the yored merkava as a consequence of his ascent to heaven. In many other passages of the literature, and

138 HekhZ, § 419c.
especially in MerkR, the power of the names is applied directly to this end.\textsuperscript{139}

Invocation of the \textit{Sar Tora}, which can be seen as a specific application of this principle, is a major concern of MerkR but, again, it is by no means unique to this macroform.\textsuperscript{140} Several macroforms include one or more short \textit{Sar Tora} texts and/or allusions to this practice.\textsuperscript{141} The most extensive treatment of this subject is found in an appendix to HekhR, where it is stated that the secret names by which the \textit{Sar Tora} is invoked were revealed to Israel by God at the time when they were occupied with the building of the Second Temple and, in consequence, were too busy to have time for the ordinary study of Tora.\textsuperscript{142} Halperin believes that this material reflects the concerns and aspirations of an ‘outsider’ group that attempted, by the use of magic, to gain access to the knowledge and status possessed by the rabbinic elite. This, he suggests, is the whole purpose of the heavenly ascent and, therefore, the real focus of the hekhalot corpus as a whole.\textsuperscript{143} Schäfer, however, rightly observes that this reversal of Scholem’s perspective is at least as unbalanced in the opposite direction, and that the invocation of the \textit{Sar Tora} and other practices of angelic invocation are best understood as complements to the tradition of the heavenly ascent. Both operate within the same framework of belief and concern for the revelation of the divine secrets contained within the names. Neither should be assumed to have either conceptual or temporal priority over the other.\textsuperscript{144}

Another matter with which MerkR is much concerned is the shiur koma or ‘measure of the stature’. The subject of the shiur koma is the cosmic body of the divine \textit{kavod} on the heavenly throne, the gigantic measurements of its various limbs and members, and the secret names of which that body is concerned. Like the \textit{Sar Tora} material, the subject of shiur koma is encountered in the other macroforms, and in other, related compilations. This material will be discussed in greater detail in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[139] On this aspect of the literature, see, e.g., Schäfer, \textit{Hidden and Manifest}, 139–166; and, above all, Lesses, \textit{Ritual Practices}.
\item[140] On this subject, see Halperin, \textit{Faces}, 376–383 and 427–439; and Swartz, \textit{Scholastic Magic}.
\item[141] E.g., the Aramaic text in ms. New York of MMerk (see n. 119 above).
\item[142] Schäfer § 281–305. This passage is translated and discussed in detail by Halperin (\textit{Faces}, 429–439).
\item[143] See Halperin, \textit{Faces}, especially 437–446.
\end{footnotes}
Part III below. It may be noted in passing, however, that the shiur koma texts are liturgical in nature and also closely bound up with the practice of the heavenly ascent. Indeed, as we have already seen, and as rightly observed by Schäfer, participation in the celestial liturgy is a—if not the—central goal of the ascent. Schäfer comments:

The merkava mystic is the chosen one of God to whom messianic qualities are ascribed... The redemption does not occur in the world to come, but here and now.\textsuperscript{145}

The potential relevance of this remark to the ‘apostolic’ community of the early church will be immediately apparent.

The last of the five major macroforms to be considered is 3 Enoch (= Sefer Hekhalot). This work, which has been available in a critical edition and in English translation for several years, is relatively well-known.\textsuperscript{146} The book, which is formally a narrative apocalypse, is atypical of the hekhalot literary corpus. Although the primary narrator is nominally R. Yishmael, his function is simply to report the words of Enoch, who, following his ascent into heaven, has been transformed into the angel Metatron, the ‘Youth’, or ‘Lesser יהוה’, and enthroned at the entrance to the seventh hekhal on a replica of the divine throne. The figure of Metatron has been the subject of exhaustive discussion,\textsuperscript{147} which does not need to be rehearsed here. There are two very different sides to his character: on the one hand, he appears in some sources as a cosmic, Logos-like figure, who assists God in the work of creation; and, on the other, he is a human being who has ascended into heaven.\textsuperscript{148} The redactor of 3 Enoch, who seems to have been concerned to include all the traditions about Metatron known to him, was nonetheless careful to eliminate the cosmic and pre-existent aspect of Metatron’s character by

\textsuperscript{145} Schäfer, ‘Aim and Purpose’, 293.

\textsuperscript{146} See Odeberg, 3 Enoch, and the more recent translation by Alexander, in OTP 1: 223–315.


reinterpreting elements derived from that side of the tradition (including the titles ‘Youth’ and ‘Lesser יהוה’) in terms of Metatron-as-Enoch, thereby emphasizing his junior and subordinate status in heaven.\(^\text{149}\) The motive behind this revisionist activity is, in all likelihood, indicated by the well-known story of how Elisha b. Avuya was misled by Metatron’s glorious appearance into supposing that there were ‘two powers in heaven’ (3 En 16:1–5; cf. bHag 15a).\(^\text{150}\)

In addition to the five ‘core’ macroforms (HekhZ, HekhR, MMerk, MerkR, and 3 Enoch), Schäfer lists two works, ‘Visions of Ezekiel’ and ‘Massekhet Hekhalot’, ‘whose affiliation is problematic’.\(^\text{151}\) ‘Visions of Ezekiel’ is essentially a midrash about Ezekiel’s vision, which may be relatively early and contains much interesting material, but it does not mention the seven hekhalot, nor is it attributed to either of the standard authorities of the hekhalot literary tradition.\(^\text{152}\) ‘Massekhet Hekhalot’ is also a midrashic compilation, organized into seven chapters, about the heavenly throne and its environs.\(^\text{153}\) The treatise is heavily dependent on other hekhalot sources, exhibits a strong tendency to systematize this source material, and is, therefore, almost certainly late. Neither of these two works includes instructions for the heavenly ascent. Neither is included in any of the manuscripts contained in the *Synopse*.

**The Relationship Between the Rabbinic and Hekhalot Sources**

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the rabbinic *maase merkava* was believed by scholars to be gnosticizing cosmological speculation.\(^\text{154}\) The first modern scholar to advance the view that this mate-

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\(^{149}\) See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 50.

\(^{150}\) On the textual relationships between these versions, see Alexander, ‘3 Enoch and the Talmud’; Morray-Jones, ‘Hekhalot Literature’, 17–36; and Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, 48–77. Whereas Alexander argues that the talmudic version of the story is earlier, Morray-Jones and Deutsch conclude that 3 Enoch has preserved the original form of the tradition.


\(^{152}\) For translations of this text, see: Jacobs, *Jewish Mystical Testimonies*, 26–34; and Halperin, *Faces*, 264–280.

\(^{153}\) See Herrmann, *Massekhet Hekhalot*.

\(^{154}\) See, e.g.: Graetz, *Gnostizismus*, 56–101; Joël, *Blicke in die Religionsgeschichte*, 1: 163–170; Bacher, *Die Agada*, 1: 333; Friedländer, *Der vorchristliche*, 57–60; Weinstein,
rrial referred to a rabbinic tradition of ecstatic mysticism was Wilhelm Bousset, although he did not believe this tradition to be represented by the hekhalot literature, which he assumed to be very much later.\textsuperscript{155} The contemporary debate was first initiated by Scholem,\textsuperscript{156} who advocated for an early date of some hekhalot compositions, especially HekhZ,\textsuperscript{157} and argued that the literature as a whole preserves mystical traditions of the early rabbinic period. Scholem’s theory has been supported and developed by several scholars. Gruenwald, in particular, has argued that Hekhalot mysticism is a direct continuation of Apocalypticism within rabbinic Judaism.\textsuperscript{158} Gruenwald rightly argues, however, that Scholem’s description of Merkabah mysticism as ‘Jewish Gnosticism’ is misleading. Rather, both Gnostic and Hekhalot literature are descended from Apocalyptic.\textsuperscript{159} Rowland, of course, adopts a similar approach.\textsuperscript{160}

The Scholem-Gruenwald theory has been challenged by scholars such as E.E. Urbach, Johann Maier, and Peter Schäfer, who argue that the rabbinic \textit{maase merkava} was a purely speculative and exegetical tradition, and that the ecstatic mysticism of the hekhalot literature developed in circles marginal to rabbinism, in late and post-talmudic times. According to this view, the hekhalot authors’ relationship to both apocalyptic and rabbinic traditions—neither of which involved ecstatic mysticism—was merely that of literary derivation.\textsuperscript{161} The most elaborate case for this position is that presented by David Halperin, who undertook a detailed analysis of the \textit{maase merkava} materials contained in the talmudic Mystical Collection.\textsuperscript{162} Halperin concluded that, during the early rabbinic period, neither esoteric doctrine nor ecstatic mysticism were associated with exegesis of Ezek 1. In his opinion, the rabbinic editors were simply concerned to guard against widespread

\textit{Zur Genesis der Agada}, 198; Neumark, \textit{Geschichte} 1: 48–95; and, more recently, Efros, \textit{Ancient Jewish Philosophy}, 56–59.
\textsuperscript{155} Bousset, ‘Himmelsreise’.
\textsuperscript{157} Idem, \textit{Major Trends}, 45 and 358 n. 15; idem, \textit{Jewish Gnosticism}, 75–83.
\textsuperscript{158} See Gruenwald, ‘Knowledge and Vision’; idem, ‘Priests, Prophets’; and idem, \textit{Apocalyptic}.
\textsuperscript{159} Gruenwald, ‘Jewish Sources’; and idem, ‘Jewish Merkavah Mysticism’.
\textsuperscript{160} See, e.g., Rowland, ‘Visions of God’; and idem, \textit{Open Heaven}.
\textsuperscript{162} Halperin, \textit{Merkabah}.
popular enthusiasm for extravagant interpretations of Ezekiel’s vision in sermons delivered in the synagogues at Shavuot. This concern is reflected in the restrictions and danger stories associated with maase merkava, while the exegetical developments and popular enthusiasm against which they were directed gave rise to the ‘wonder stories’ and the merkava midrashim. The fiction of maase merkava as an esoteric-mystical tradition is a literary construct produced by the combination of these two opposing genres in the later talmudic sources. Only in Babylonia do we find a picture of maase merkava that has been influenced by the hekhalot traditions.  

All of these challenges to Scholem’s position involve a sharp distinction between the exegetical activity described in the talmudic sources and the visionary mysticism of the hekhalot writings. Joseph Dan, for example, states:

It seems to me that we have to accept, from a historical-philological point of view, the conclusions of Urbach and Halperin, and follow a strict categorical distinction between homiletical, midrashic study of Ezekiel’s chariot, known as ma’aseh merkavah, and the appearance of groups engaged in mystical activity whose ideas are present before us in Hekhalot and Merkavah literature. While ma’aseh merkavah speculation may be an old Jewish tradition, the mystical schools of the Hekhalot are new…  

Although the point that the talmudic maase merkava was primarily concerned with exegesis of Ezek 1 has generally been conceded, some defenders of Scholem’s position have argued that this does not preclude the possibility that such exegesis may sometimes have been associated with visionary-mystical practices and/or experiences. This point is confirmed by own analysis of HekhZ, in which I demonstrate that the heavenly ascent described therein is, in fact, based on a midrashic interpretation of Ezek 1 (ha-merkava). According to this exegesis, the biblical chapter contains an account of the prophet’s own heavenly ascent to the throne above the firmament. This exegetical tradition is at least as old as 1 En 14 and is widely attested in sources of the first two centuries CE. The major components of HekhZ itself were almost certainly assembled

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165 E.g., Gruenwald, Apocalyptic, 82; Segal, Paul the Convert, 53–54; and Wolfson, Through a Speculum, 121.
in something like their present form by the end of the second century, and many of its microform contents are, in all likelihood, older still. Thus, the ascent tradition represented by HekhZ has a solid exegetical foundation, but it is by no means ‘merely’ exegetical. Ezekiel’s ascent is held up as something to be imitated by the yored merkava, provided that he is ‘worthy’ and possesses the necessary knowledge. I conclude that what the rabbinic writers called maase merkava was the tradition of ‘performative exegesis’ represented by HekhZ.

As I have shown elsewhere, HekhZ has preserved the earliest version of the story of the four who entered pardes, which was subsequently adapted by an early talmudic redactor in the light of mHag 2:1. Moreover, the editor of bHag 15a–b, who linked the pardes story to the water vision episode found in another part of HekhZ, evidently did so on the basis of HekhZ itself, rather than a common source. Further evidence that the tradition represented by HekhZ is, in fact, the source of the talmudic maase merkava can be found in the opening paragraph of HekhZ, which reads as follows:

If you want to be singled out in the world so that the mysteries of the world and the secrets of wisdom may be revealed to you, repeat this mishna and be careful about it during the day of your separation. Do not think about what is behind you and do not investigate the sayings of

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167 See pp. 233–234 above.

168 For a more detailed presentation of this case, see Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 217–225.


171 Schäfer § 335. Except where indicated to the contrary, the following text and translation are based on ms. Oxford. Minor variations of spelling, etc. are ignored. Punctuation marks, which differ widely in the manuscripts, are omitted.

172 Ms. Munich 22: ‘the secrets of the merkava’.


174 Gruenwald (*Apocalyptic*, 142) takes עד ים פטרישת to mean ‘until the day of your death’ but notes (*ibid.* n. 5) that the expression could equally well refer to the duration of a period of ascetic, mystical practice. This seems to make better sense in light of the specific instructions that follow.
your lips. Apply your understanding to what is in your heart and keep silent, so that you may be worthy of the beauties of the merkava. Be careful of the Glory of your Creator and do not go in to him; and if you have gone in to him, do not take pleasure in him; and if you have taken pleasure in him, your end is to be cast out from the world. The glory of God is to conceal a matter (Prov 25:2)—so that you may not be cast out from the world!

Gruenwald comments that the opening sentences of this passage are a ‘mystical paraphrase’ of Sir 3:19–23, the Hebrew text of which is as follows:

175 Gruenwald (Apocalyptic, 142 n. 3) suggests that this means either that the practitioner should not try to interpret his own glossolalia, or that he should not discuss esoteric teachings in public. The first of these suggestions, though perhaps possible, requires the reader to infer a good deal of information which is not explicit in the text. The second fails to explain the syntax of the sentence, which seems clearly to mean that the practitioner should not try to understand the meaning of the words that he himself is speaking. A simpler explanation emerges if this instruction is connected with the preceding words: "This is the mishna that you have overheard."

176 Ms. Munich 22: "...so that you may be worthy of the vision of the merkava"; ms. New York: "...so that you may be worthy of the utterances [?] of the merkava", a reading which perhaps deserves consideration in light of the previous instruction not to interpret 'the sayings of your lips'. But on the word ' đẹp as a characteristic expression of merkava mysticism, see Leiter, 'Worthiness, Acclamation and Appointment' (note that Leiter refers to a version of this HekhZ text published in Musajoff, Merkava Shlema, 11).

177 Gruenwald (Apocalyptic, 142) suggests that 'לא תרד may mean in this instance: 'and do not make him descend' , but there is nothing to support this in the text. The more straightforward translation: 'and do not go in to him' is surely to be preferred, especially in light of parallels in ARN(b) 33 and SER 8.

178 Ms. Dropsie and Munich 40 read: "...do not investigate [or?] take pleasure in him." The words: 'and if you have taken pleasure in him' (לא תתרזה מבך) are found in ms. New York only.

179 The words: 'and do not go in to him' (ואס תתרזה מבך) are found in ms. New York only.

180 Gruenwald, Apocalyptic, 142 n. 3 (in fact referring only to Sir 3:19–21; my reasons for including 3:22–23 will emerge below).

181 Vattioni, Ecclesiastico, 17. Note that the Hebrew text omits verse 20.
19 For great are the mercies of God and to the humble he reveals his secret. 21 Do not interpret matters too wonderful for you, or investigate that which is concealed from you. 22 Reflect upon that which is permitted to you, for you have no business with secret things. 23 And do not speak of that which is beyond your capacity, for that which has been shown you is too great for you.

Gruenwald’s expression ‘mystical paraphrase’ is, perhaps, a little too strong. Nonetheless, in addition to a general similarity of subject matter, HekhZ includes several verbal echoes of this passage:

> הוהי
> תבין
> תחקור
> השרנ
> לגלות

HekhZ corresponds to Sir 3:19, סודו יגלה; the words in HekhZ are also found in Sir 3:21; תבש, which occurs twice in HekhZ, closely resembles תבשנות in Sir 3:22; and both texts include an instruction to refrain from speaking (HekhZ: סודו, Sir 3:23: אֵל). While none of these points, considered individually, is decisive, when taken together they clearly indicate that author of the passage in HekhZ is consciously alluding to the text of Ben Sira. Linguistic parallels between HekhZ and mHag 2:1 are even more pronounced:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HekhZ</th>
<th>mHag 2:1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>אם אתה רוצה לתחייתו בעלמים</td>
<td>אל מברכת ביוםך עבדך</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>והשוב ולא המשנה את האות</td>
<td>ואיך שנין</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>המ למלעה המmasını</td>
<td>המ לפנים ומכ緩</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>המ שלארחך</td>
<td>המ למלעה המミニ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ויושב בשבלך תבש</td>
<td>ויושב בשבלך תבש</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>והרי בברך קונך</td>
<td>והרי בברך קונך</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>סופר לפני פרדס ממעולות</td>
<td>ראוי ולשא לא בולעון</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although the second and fourth of these parallels are fairly self-evident and, arguably, rather minor, the other four deserve examination. The way in which the verb חתייחד is used in HekhZ indicates clearly that being ‘singled out’ is associated with superior status and prestige. As we have seen, the term יחיד (yahid), used in mHag 2:1, carries a similar connotation in mTaan 1:4, where the יחידים are honored ascetic intercessors on behalf of the community in times of drought. According to tTaan 1:7 and bTaan 10a–b, the status of יחיד may only be assumed by a חכם or a חכם תלמיד. Since mHag 2:1 states that המרבכה may only be expounded by a יחיד who is also a חכם, it is very probable that this

182 Greek (Vattioni, 16): πολλοί εἰσιν ὑψηλοὶ ἐπίδοξοι, ἀλλὰ πρέασιν ἀπολαύτει τὰ μυστήρια αὐτοῦ. ὥτι μεγάλη ἡ δυναστεία κυρίου καὶ ὑπὸ τῶν ταπεινῶν δοξάζεται (‘Many are exalted and famous, but to the humble he reveals his mysteries [pl.]. For great is the power of the Lord, and by the lowly he is glorified.’)
was also the original meaning of the term in this context.\(^\text{183}\) In the present form of the mishnah, however, the sequence: ....obsures this meaning, so that ...個 appears to mean merely 'an individual, on his own'. The fact that the text in HekhZ has preserved the underlying and original meaning is, therefore, remarkable.

As we saw above, the precise meanings of the four forbidden objects of \(\text{מסתכל} \) in \(\text{mHag 2:1b} \) have been much discussed. The fourfold formula itself is evidently old, since the earliest surviving reference to it occurs in the \(\text{Exagoge of Ezekiel the Tragedian} \), a work written in the second or early first century BCE.\(^\text{184}\) The meaning of the expression \(\text{שלאחריך} \) in HekhZ is unclear and, if the author is alluding to \(\text{mHag 2:1b} \), it is strange that he has chosen to mention only the last item on the list. Nonetheless, in the light of the other parallels, this expression is clearly a point of connection between the two texts. The clause \(\text{הרי היר \(\text{ברכבו} \) קונפ \(\text{שלייר} \)} \) in HekhZ is very close, but not identical, to the language of \(\text{mHag 2:1b–c} \). This also applies, to a lesser extent, to the clause: \(\text{העולם \(\text{מן \(\text{ליכרת} \) איש} \)} \)\(^\text{185}\).

Now, although it has long been recognized that \(\text{mHag 2:1b–c} \) is a paraphrase of \(\text{Sir 3:19–23} \), there is no significant direct connection between the language of the two texts.\(^\text{187}\) However, the passage in HekhZ is directly connected to both \(\text{Sir 3:19–23} \) and \(\text{mHag 2:1b–c} \). If it is assumed that this text is the latest of the three, we will have to conclude that the author of the HekhZ passage, perceiving the similarity between \(\text{mHag 2:1b–c} \) and \(\text{Sir 3:19–23} \), deliberately conflated the language of these two texts within his own composition. Although this is not impossible, it is much more economical to conclude that the 'bridge' between \(\text{Sir 3:19–23} \) and \(\text{mHag 2:1} \) is none other than the text

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\(^\text{183}\) See pp. 224–226 above.

\(^\text{184}\) \(\text{Exagoge, 88–89}. \) See n. 25, p. 229 above.

\(^\text{185}\) A close parallel to this expression occurs in the following saying, attributed to R. Eliezer the Great: 'The vineyard of the Holy One, blessed be He, is the house of Israel. Do not look into it. If you have looked into it, do not enter inside it. If you have entered inside it, do not take pleasure in it. And if you have taken pleasure in it, do not eat of its fruit. If you have looked, entered, taken pleasure, and eaten of its fruit—the end of such a one is that he will be cut off from the world (ואם \(\text{שהוא} \) \(\text{ומתייו} \) \(\text{לירבד \(\text{מן \(\text{לוכס} \) אדם} \)}) \) (\(\text{SER \$ 8} \)).

\(^\text{186}\) See further: Wewers, \(\text{Geheimnis und Geheimhaltung} \), 46f.; Weiss, \(\text{Untersuchungen zur Kosmologie} \), 79–83; and Rowland, \(\text{Open Heaven} \), 75–76.

\(^\text{187}\) Admittedly, the verbs \(\text{דרש} \) and \(\text{הבין} \) in \(\text{mHag 2:1a} \) also occur in \(\text{Sir 3:21} \) and \(\text{22} \) (\(\text{התבונן} \)), but these two parallels alone are too weak to establish a direct relationship between the two texts.
preserved in HekhZ. According to this hypothesis, the text in HekhZ, which is based in part on that in Ecclesiastes, was used as a source by the compiler of the Mishna. This would explain why there are no direct linguistic connections between mHag 2:1 and Sir 3:19–23, despite their evident similarity of theme, and why clear allusions to both mHag 2:1 and Sir 3:19–23 are found in HekhZ. This hypothesis is also able to explain the fact that the verb התייחד in HekhZ preserves the original, pre-mishnaic meaning of יחיד (yahid) in the restriction concerning ha-merkava, even though this meaning was lost with the redaction of the Mishna into its present form.

Two further considerations, though less than decisive in themselves, tend to support the hypothesis that the text in HekhZ may indeed have priority over the received text of mHag 2:1. First, the clauses כון בכהonen הוי and והעולם מיכרת אתו של סוף in HekhZ are better explained as independent witnesses to the source of mHag 2:1 than as paraphrases of the Mishna, which rapidly acquired the status of an authoritative text. It seems unlikely that the editor of the text in HekhZ, if later than the Mishna, would have chosen to alter the text of that authoritative source. Second, it is more likely that the editor of mHag 2:1 interpreted the expression של אחריך מה in HekhZ, the original meaning of which is obscure, as an allusion to the established fourfold formula, ‘what is above . . .’, etc., for which we have an early independent witness in the Exagoge, than that the author of the text in HekhZ inexplicably borrowed only the final item of the list in mHag 2:1.

The conclusion that has emerged from this discussion is that the opening passage of HekhZ is an independent witness to the maase merkava tradition and that it preceded the redaction of mHag 2:1 into its present form. Although this conclusion may at first seem surprising, it is wholly consistent with a substantial body of evidence pointing to the early origin of the stream of literary activity that produced the macroform HekhZ.\textsuperscript{188}

Uncertainty about the dates of origin of the Hekhalot traditions, and the relationships of those traditions to early rabbinic orthodoxy, has hitherto been a deterrent to New Testament scholars who might otherwise have been inclined to explore the relevance of those traditions to their work. Those who have done so have on the whole been restricted to utilising the talmudic source-material as interpreted by

\textsuperscript{188} See pp. 233–234 above.
Scholem, and the criticisms of Scholem’s thesis by Schäfer, Halperin and others have, for the most part, gone unanswered. My own analysis of the rabbinic *maase merkava* traditions supports a modified version of the Scholem-Gruenwald hypothesis.¹⁸⁹ The data suggest that heavenly ascent practices associated with the vision of God’s *kavod*, as described in Ezek 1 and other biblical throne-theophanies, were inherited from apocalyptic circles and enthusiastically developed by some early rabbis but were opposed by others, partly because these traditions were also being developed by groups whom they regarded as heretical, namely, Christians and (loosely speaking) Gnostics. While it cannot be assumed that everything in the hekhalot literature goes back to the first two centuries, the writers’ claim to have inherited traditions from that time and *milieu* deserves to be taken very seriously. The following studies will examine those traditions in greater depth and explore some aspects of their relevance to the study of the New Testament and the origins of the Christian Church.

¹⁸⁹ See Morray-Jones, *Merkabah Mysticism*. 
CHAPTER ELEVEN

A VERSION OF HEKHALOT ZUTARTI

Introductory Remarks

My aim in this chapter is to offer a preliminary English translation of the macroform Hekhalot Zutarti. The translation, like the text on which it based, is by no means definitive. However, I believe that it is serviceable enough to provide the non-specialist scholar with a means of access to the important material contained within this macroform. As we saw in the previous chapter, at least some of this material is derived from the earliest strata of the Hekhalot-literary tradition. The macroform itself is the product of a stream of literary and editorial activity going back to the second or, at latest, early third century CE.¹

The title ‘Hekhalot Zutarti’ is derived from the well-known responsum on the story of the four who entered pardes by Rav Hai Gaon b. Sherira (939–1038), who refers to two allegedly Tannaitic ‘mishnayot’, called Hekhalot Rabbati and Hekhalot Zutarti (i.e., the ‘Greater’ and ‘Lesser’ Hekhalot).² In the extant manuscripts of the hekhalot writings, the title Hekhalot Rabbati (HekhR) is applied to the largest of the macroforms.³ Although the title Hekhalot Zutarti (HekhZ) is not found in any extant manuscript, it has been identified with an untitled collection of materials which is included immediately after HekhR in several manuscripts, including five of the seven published by Schäfer.⁴ The collection includes the pardes story and also the water vision episode, which, although originally an independent unit of tradition, became assimilated with that story.⁵ These materials are quoted almost verbatim by Rav Hai and his younger contemporary, Hananel b. Hushiel,

¹ See pp. 233–234 above.
³ Schäfer § 81–306 (including the Sar Tora appendix).
⁴ This identification was first made by Jellinek, BHM 6: xliv, and Zunz, Die synagogale Poesie, 1: 148. Scholem (Jewish Gnosticism, 127, addendum to 6, n. 13) reported that he saw the title Hekhalot Zutarti in an Italian manuscript which was subsequently lost during World War II.
⁵ This assimilation seems first to have occurred within the tradition represented by HekhZ, ms. New York. See Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 78–82.
although both misquote a key term of the water vision episode in HekhZ, as also does Rashi. A second reason for identifying this collection as HekhZ is Rav Hai’s description of practices associated with the visionary ascent:

You may be aware... that an individual... who desires to behold the merkava and to gaze into the hekhalot of the angels... must sit fasting for a specified number of days, put his head between his knees, and whisper earthwards many prescribed songs and hymns.

As observed by Halperin, this is based on a statement that is attributed to Akiva in HekhZ (Schäfer § 424):

Whoever wishes to learn this mishna, and to express the name explicitly, should sit in fast for forty days and rest his head between his knees until the fast takes control of him. And he should whisper (it) to the earth and not to heaven, so that the earth may hear, but not heaven.

Unfortunately, we do not know how much of HekhZ in its present form was known to Rav Hai. Like the other hekhalot macroforms, this collection appears to have grown over time by a process of accretion and amalgamation of materials from a variety of sources, which have been added to and modified by several generations of compilers and redactors. In consequence, as remarked by Scholem, “The text of the Lesser Hekhalot as it is preserved is something of a hodgepodge.” In some places, the different manuscripts appear to represent divergent streams of this developing literary tradition, which never reached a definitive conclusion or produced an ‘authoritative’ text.

For these reasons, the specific content and precise extent of this macroform are rather hard to determine. According to Schäfer, who characterizes HekhZ as ‘of all the analyzed macroforms... the least homogenous’, it basically consists of the material in Schäfer’s Synopse § 335–426, excluding 375–406 which are found only in ms. New York and contain an assortment of materials derived from other macroforms. According

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6 See Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 83 and 92f. Rav Hai Gaon (b. Sherira) and Rashi both read HekhZ: סלולות (primary meaning: 'paved') as צלולות ('transparent'). Rabbenu Hananel (b. Hushiel) misquotes this word as כלולות ('included').

7 See p. 265 n. 2 above.


9 Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 83.

10 For a more detailed discussion of this issue, see Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 83–87, and the sources cited there.

to Schäfer, this early version of the HekhZ macroform (§ 335–374 and 407–426) was subsequently expanded by a variety of copyists, in different ways, to include the materials in § 427–428 and 489–517.¹² Rachel Elior does not include this additional material in her critical edition of HekhZ,¹³ and agrees almost exactly with Schäfer in omitting § 376–406. In my opinion, she is right to include § 375, a short saying attributed to Akiva, which, although found only in ms. New York, seems to be intrinsically connected to the material that immediately precedes it.

Unlike Schäfer, Elior sets the end of the text at a point corresponding to the end of § 419 and relegates the material in § 420–426, which she views as an editorial addition, to a separate appendix. At the end of § 419, the reader is instructed to ‘repeat (or: ‘learn’)¹⁴ this mishna every day after prayer’, thereby bringing the preceding material to a close.¹⁵ Although this does not necessarily indicate the end of the ‘book’ as a whole, it does appear to refer back to an instruction to ‘repeat (or: ‘learn’) this mishna’ in the opening paragraph of the text (§ 335a). The supposition that § 420–426 were added during a subsequent stage of redactional activity is supported by the observation that they include three sayings attributed to R. Yishmael (§ 420–421, 425 and 426), who is nowhere mentioned in HekhZ as defined by Elior (§ 335–375 and 407–419). A version of the first of these three Yishmael sayings is preserved in a Geniza fragment (G8) as part of a longer text, entitled ‘The Power of Anafiel’. This text also includes material found in § 376–383, which both Elior and Schäfer regard as foreign to HekhZ.

If the three Yishmael sayings are disregarded, the central character and, where specified, narrator of HekhZ is invariably Akiva.¹⁶ This

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¹² See Schäfer, ‘Aufbau und redaktionelle Identität’, 569–582; idem, Übersetzung 3: vii–xxvii (cf. idem, Schäfer xxiv); and idem, Hidden and Manifest, 55–75. It does not necessarily follow that all of the material in § 427–428 and 489–517 is itself of late origin. § 429–488 occur in one ms. only and contain material taken from other macroforms.
¹³ Elior, Hekhalot Zutarti.
¹⁴ Heb. שב.
¹⁵ Elior includes these words at the start of her appendix (see above).
¹⁶ Yishmael is cited in a passage which is included within HekhZ in ms. New York (Schäfer § 403–404) but which, in other manuscripts, occurs elsewhere (§ 740–741). He also appears in two Geniza fragments, designated G8 and G22 by Schäfer, which have parallels in HekhZ: see Geniza-Fragmente, 101, l. 14; and ibid. 187, l. 7; but cf. Schäfer § 376 and 402, where Yishmael is not mentioned. A closer parallel to G8, which includes the citation of Yishmael, is found outside HekhZ in ms. Munich 40 at Schäfer § 939.
contrasts with HekhR, where the narrator is always Yishmael.\textsuperscript{17} It is true that, near the beginning of HekhR as it now exists, Yishmael cites Akiva as the source of several hymns which he (Akiva) learned from the angels in the course of his heavenly ascent.\textsuperscript{18} Apart from this, however, the central characters of this macroform are Yishmael himself and Nehunya b. ha-Kana, his teacher. In the light of these observations, it is interesting to observe that, near the end of the \textit{responsum} cited above, Rav Hai Gaon speaks of ‘…the account of how R. Akiva gazed into the chambers, and the account of R. Nehunya b. ha-Kana and R. Yishmael’.\textsuperscript{19} It is not unreasonable to suppose that the accounts to which he refers are, respectively, HekhZ and HekhR.\textsuperscript{20}

For these reasons, Elior is almost certainly right to regard the Yishmael sayings in § 420–421 and 425–426 as alien interpolations into HekhZ. As we have seen, however, Rav Hai’s description of the practice of fasting and whispering songs to the earth is based on Schäfer § 424, which is one of a series of three linked sayings attributed to Akiva (§ 422–424). Since these three sayings are clearly related to the HekhZ materials that precede them, it seems appropriate to treat them as components of HekhZ. It is, of course, possible that they were added during a relatively late stage of editorial activity by way of a ‘post script’, but, even if so, this must have occurred before Rav Hai’s lifetime.

The version of HekhZ that follows includes all of the material included by both Schäfer and Elior (§ 335–374 and 407–419), plus § 375 (included by Elior but not by Schäfer) and the Akiva ‘postscript’ (422–424). § 347 (ms. Munich 40 only), where a copyist has mistakenly repeated the first words of § 337, is disregarded.

Owing to the redactional complexity of the HekhZ macroform, it cannot be claimed that this version represents an ‘original’ or ‘authoritative’ text of HekhZ. Schäfer’s contention that no such text ever existed is basically correct.\textsuperscript{21} It is therefore necessary to take account of the different sources and layers of literary activity found in the manuscripts, including the distinctive literary tradition represented by some passages of ms. New York. It can, however, be said that the materials included

\textsuperscript{17} This observation applies to the main body of HekhR (§ 81–277), not to the \textit{Sar Tora} appendix (§ 281–306).
\textsuperscript{18} Schäfer § 106.
\textsuperscript{19} See p. 265 n. 2 above.
\textsuperscript{20} This supposition is supported by the observation that the term ‘chambers’ (hadasrim) echoes Cant 1:4b. This verse is applied to Akiva in the story of the four who entered \textit{pardes}, with which HekhZ begins (Schäfer § 338–339/344–346).
in this version are the basic ingredients of the early HekhZ literary tradition, that they were amalgamated with each other in something like this form during the early centuries of the common era, and that at least some of the materials preserved in this collection must be very old indeed.

When the HekhZ collection is reduced to its basic components in this way, it is found to be less incoherent and disorganized than is commonly supposed. It appears to consist of nine more or less discrete blocks of material, as follows:

1. An introduction (§ 335–337), found in all five manuscripts published by Schäfer, in which the heavenly ascent of Akiva is linked to that of Moses. The ‘great name’, which was revealed during those ascents, is introduced and its power discussed. As we saw above, the opening paragraph of this passage (§ 335a–b) may well be the source of mHag 2:1, in which case it can be dated to the second century CE or earlier.22 Ms. New York also includes an alternative introduction, which, although it uses different words, says much the same things (§ 340–343).

2. The story of the four who entered *pardes*, given in full only by mss. New York and Munich 22 (§ 344–346//338–339). The other manuscripts give only the abbreviated heading of this story. Mss. Oxford and New York also include this material within Merkava Rabba (§ 671–673), but its original home appears to be HekhZ. Originally, this story was a first-person account by Akiva of his heavenly ascent (§ 344//338 and § 346), but the surviving manuscripts include additional material derived from the ‘authoritative’ talmudic version of the story (§ 345//339). However, the talmudic version is itself an adaptation of the underlying account in HekhZ, which can therefore be no later than the mid-third century.23 Ms. New York includes additional material which links the *pardes* story to the water vision episode in HekhZ, § 408–410. The literary tradition represented by this manuscript predates the redaction of bHag 14b.24

3. A discussion of whether and how it is possible to see God, initially attributed to an Aramaic-speaking *bat kol* heard by Akiva during the

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22 See pp. 259–263 above.
24 See Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 78–82.
course of his heavenly ascent (§ 348–352). The vision is facilitated by
the knowledge of God’s secret names, which, as in the shiur koma,
are to be uttered as praise, without investigation of their meaning.
The evidence of 2 Cor 12:4 suggests that the ascent to Paradise was
already associated with the hearing of celestial speech in the first
century CE.25 This passage is found in all five manuscripts.

4. A description, also in Aramaic but attributed directly to Akiva, of
the hayyot, including the numbers of their faces and wings, and,
beyond them, the appearance of the divine glory (§ 353–356). This
passage, which occurs in all five manuscripts, is closely related to
the preceding one and also contains shiur koma elements. It appears
to be earlier than the roughly parallel but more extensive Hebrew
‘throne midrash’ in § 368–375 (see below).

5. A lengthy discussion of God’s secret names, written partly in Ara-
maic and partly in Hebrew (§ 357–367). This passage is found in all
five manuscripts, but a small amount of material occurs in ms. New
York only. The text of this obscure passage, which appears to be an
amalgam of materials from several sources, has become corrupt in
places. The content is neither narrative nor descriptive; rather, it
consists of instructions for the utterance, repetition, and manipu-
lation of the various names. Reference is made to what appear to be
liturgical formulae, with which the reader is assumed to be familiar,
and which are to be repeated with the names. I have the impression
that the reader is assumed to possess other knowledge that will enable
him to understand and make use of this strange material. The pas-
 sage includes a parallel to a saying attributed to Hillel at mAvot 1:13
(§ 360). § 361 is, apart from very minor differences, a doublet of
§ 349. All five manuscripts include this microform in both locations
and it seems equally at home in both contexts.

6. The ‘throne midrash’ (§ 368–375). A midrashic elaboration of Eze-
kiel’s merkava vision, roughly parallel to § 353–356, but much more
extensive and written in Hebrew.26 Most of this passage is unique
to ms. New York (only § 368b and § 373b–374 are found in other
manuscripts). The passage combines material from more than one
source and includes two different calculations of the numbers of the
wings and faces of the hayyot (§ 368b and § 371b). Anomalies in

26 This passage is analyzed in Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 174–191.
the Hebrew texts of both § 368b and § 371b are reproduced in the Coptic version of a Gnostic treatise which was composed in Greek during the late third or very early fourth century CE. The Hebrew ‘throne midrash’ must, therefore, have existed as a single source by the middle of the third century, at latest. Its individual components must be even older. § 368b is derivative of the Aramaic text in § 354, which is, therefore, older still.

7. The ‘ascent midrash’, found in all five manuscripts and comprising a chain of three midrashim attached to Ezek 1:27 (§ 407–412). This passage, which includes the water vision episode, is derived from an ancient exegetical tradition in which Ezekiel 1 is interpreted as an account of the prophet’s heavenly ascent. The influence of this tradition can be detected in numerous sources from the first two centuries CE, including the Book of Revelation, and its origins can be traced as far back as 1 En 14. The ‘throne midrash’ in § 368–375 is rooted in the same exegetical tradition and is basically a continuation of the ‘ascent midrash’, but in the macroform as it has come down to us, these two units are presented in reverse order. Despite their strong exegetical basis, both passages are concerned with the practice of the heavenly ascent.

8. Instructions for the ascent (§ 413–419). Attributed to Akiva, this passage gives the names of the seven angelic princes who guard the hekhalot, and the divine names on the seals that must be shown to them. After successfully performing the ascent, the yored merkava is seated on the lap of the enthroned divine glory in the seventh hekhal. There, he asks God to grant him power over the angels. Ms. New York inserts a long hymnic passage into this prayer (§ 418c–g and § 419b). The prayer is followed by the text of Cant 5:10–16 (abbreviated in the mss. other than New York). This scriptural text is linked to Isa 6:3 (the kedusha) by repetition of the name צבאות (‘Hosts’) at the end of each verse, with a series of names and the full text of Isa 6:3 at the end. The passage ends with an instruction to ‘learn this mishna every day after prayer’.

27 For detailed analysis of this passage, see Morray-Jones, ibid. 54–104.
29 Morray-Jones, ibid. 173f. and 178.
31 See pp. 236–239 above.
32 See pp. 529–531 below.
9. The Akiva post script (§ 422–424), found in all five manuscripts, except for a single saying which occurs in ms. Munich 22 only (§ 424d). A heavenly blessing is promised for Akiva and for all who undertake the practice of ascending and descending to the merkava. Further instructions regarding the practice and its transmission are then given. As observed above, this passage was known to Rav Hai Gaon.

The translation offered below is intended to facilitate access to these basic components of the HekhZ collection. The translation is eclectic. In some places, as noted in the footnotes, I have chosen to base my translation mainly on an individual manuscript or Geniza fragment but, in all cases, I have considered myself at liberty to choose what appear to be the best or most complete readings. I have not noted minor textual emendations that I consider to be uncontroversial. Small variations of spelling, punctuation, etc., have likewise been disregarded. Some more substantive variations are likewise ignored, especially in passages that I have analyzed in detail elsewhere. For all these reasons, the following version of HekhZ should not be regarded as an authoritative basis for detailed exegesis of this material. Those wishing to undertake a close reading of the text should refer to Schäfer’s *Synopse* and *Übersetzung*. My own text-critical analyses of some passages are referenced in the notes and may also be consulted.

The lists of *nomina barbara* present the translator with several problems. These divine and angelic names are essential components of the instruction that the text purports to convey. However, the spellings of these names differ considerably between—and sometimes, even within—the manuscripts. This may indicate that the instructions were originally communicated in an oral, rather than written, context. In this translation, I have ‘tidied up’ the lists and, for the sake of clarity, adopted consistent spellings. I have reconstructed the lists in a few places, as indicated in the notes, where I believe that a pattern can be discerned beneath the confusion of the manuscripts. A consequence of these decisions is that the lists of names as they appear below are, in many cases, more orderly and systematic than anything found in the manuscripts. I believe that this approach will enable the reader to better appreciate the underlying structure of the text, and that this gain

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33 See p. 268 above.
in clarity more than offsets the sacrifice of strictly accurate reproduction of the ‘unfiltered’ manuscript evidence. The reader who wishes to investigate the names in detail should consult the parallel lists in Schäfer's *Synopse* and *Übersetzung*.

**Abbreviations and Conventions**

In the notes that accompany the translation, the following abbreviations are employed:

- **N:** ms. New York 8128
- **O:** ms. Oxford 1531
- **M22:** ms. Munich 22
- **M40:** ms. Munich 40
- **D:** ms. Dropsie 436
- **G:** Geniza fragment (numbered according to Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente*).

The section divisions used in this translation are based on those in Schäfer, *Synopse*. The alphabetical subdivision of Schäfer’s sections is my own.

Material unique to ms. New York is included within braces and annotated.

Material unique to ms. Munich 22 is included within square brackets and annotated.

Where material is given in full by one manuscript and abbreviated in others, the more extensive version is usually followed. Such material is not considered to be unique to the manuscript in question.

In the lists of names, where only one manuscript is available, indecipherable characters are represented by question marks.

The symbol // placed between two section numbers, or other textual references, indicates that the two passages contain substantially parallel material.
HEKHALOT ZUTARTI

Introduction: The Ascent of Moses and the Great Name (§ 335–337)

§ 335a  If you want to be singled out in the world so that the mysteries of the world and the secrets of wisdom may be revealed to you, repeat this mishna, and be careful about it, during the day in which you set yourself apart. Do not think about what is behind you and do not investigate the sayings of your lips. Apply your understanding to what is in your heart and keep silent, so that you may be worthy of the beauties of the merkava.

§ 335b  Be careful of the glory of your creator and do not go in to him; and if you have gone in to him, do not take pleasure in him; and if you have taken pleasure in him, your end is to be cast out from the world.

§ 335c  The glory of God is to conceal a matter (Prov 25:2), so that you may not be cast out from the world!

§ 336a  {In the name of the Lord, the blessed one, wise in mysteries!}

§ 336b  In the hour when Moses ascended to God on high, the holy one, blessed be he, instructed him:

§ 336c  Let every man whose heart goes astray invoke these names:

§ 336d  In the name of אבריו סלם סמו מראות מרי אבהי בארי ואנכילון

§ 336e  that my heart may retain all that I hear and learn—scripture, mishna, talmud, halakhot and aggadot—that I may not forget, neither in this world nor in the world to come!

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1 This portion of the text is in Hebrew. It is found in all five manuscripts. The translation mainly follows O.

2 M22: 'the secrets of the merkava.'

3 Heb.: וָיֵשׁ. I take this to refer to an ascetic practice under conditions of ritual seclusion. Alternatively, it may mean: 'until the day of your death.' See Gruenwald, Apocalyptic, 142; Elior, Hekhalot Zutarti, 59 n. 3a; and Schäfer, Übersetzung 3: 1 n. 10.

4 § 336a is found in N only.

5 המير עֲלֵיה, lit.: 'recite upon himself.'
§ 336f Blessed are you, Lord. *Teach me your statutes* (Ps 119:12, 26, 68).

§ 337a This is the name that was revealed to R. Akiva while he was contemplating the account of the merkava. And R. Akiva descended and taught it to his students.

§ 337b He said to them:

§ 337c My sons, be careful of this name; it is a great name; it is a holy name; it is a pure name, and everyone who makes use of it in awe, in fear, in purity, in holiness, and in humility, will increase his posterity and prosper in all his ways, and his days will be long.

§ 337d Blessed are you, Lord, who have sanctified us with your commandments and instructed us about sanctification of the name.

_An Alternative Introduction in Ms. New York (§ 340–343)_

§ 340a {When Moses ascended to God on high, the holy one, blessed be he, instructed him concerning every man whose heart goes astray:}

§ 340b Let him invoke these names:

§ 340c יְהֹוָה יְהֹוָה בְּיָה בְּיָה יְהוָאָל יְהוָאָל.

§ 340d May you, these holy names, open my heart! All that I hear, whether words of Tora or worldly matters, let them be kept within my heart and never more be forgotten by me.

§ 341a This is a book of wisdom, and of understanding, and of knowledge, and of the investigation of that which is above and that which is below, and of the treasures of Tora, and of heaven and earth, and of mysteries, which הִי הָאָדָם, the LORD of Hosts, the God of Israel, gave from his knowledge to Moses.

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6 دمشقל בִּעֲפָיָת מַרְכָּבָה. N: دمشقל בָּמַעְשֶׁה מַרְכָּבָה (‘gazing at the vision of the merkava’).

7 This passage, unique to N, is written partly in Hebrew and partly in Aramaic.

§ 340a–d are roughly parallel to § 336b–e, save that the names differ.

8 The ms. reads שְׁבַעַל עַלְיָו תוֹךְרֶ הַשָּׁבֵעַ, the word שְׁבַעַל being added in the margin. The word שְׁבַעַל עַלְיָו after שְׁבַעַל is probably a dittographic error, reproducing the same word after השבע (cf. § 336c)

9 Reading מִדִעְתָה instead of מְדִיעָה.
ben Amram. And he revealed it to him on Mount Horeb, that the world might stand upon it. And with it, Moses made the signs and wonders that he made in Egypt; and with it, he smote the Egyptians.

§ 341b ...the fire which was in the thornbush. And Metatron, the great prince of the LORD, the prince of the host of the LORD, revealed himself to him, saying: ‘Moses, Moses!’

§ 342a R. Akiva said:

§ 342b This name, סנגסגאל סנגול תרגול, is sealed, sealed, sealed!

§ 342c This is his great name, with which Moses divided the great sea: בושור יברב סגי בדסיי בר סחיי לבלם.

§ 343a This is his great name which turned the waters into high walls: אנסיהגמן לביי סגיי מסחיי מרוב ושברים סוסיאל נעלם. מבוי נמש חיה חאל.

§ 343b Jonah prayed to the LORD his God... I called to the LORD from my distress... from the belly of Sheol I cried, and you heard my voice... I have looked into your holy sanctuary (hekhal)... you brought my life up from the pit, LORD God of Israel... I will open my thought to you; you will live in my voice:

§ 343c אשטרו ידה פסותור מליאזו are the letters of the name.

§ 343d In the name of Michael and our Creator, the LORD himself.}

The Four Who Entered Pardes ($344–346//338–339)$13

§ 344a R. Akiva said:

§ 344b We were four who went into pardes. One looked and died; one looked and was smitten; one looked and cut the shoots; and I went in in peace and came out in peace.

§ 344c Why did I go in in peace and come out in peace?$14

10 The disjointed syntax suggests that some words may be missing.

11 Part quotation, part paraphrase of Jonah 2:1–9. The most significant alteration is: ‘I have looked into your holy sanctuary’; cf. MT: [I am cast out from your presence] how shall I look again on your holy sanctuary (Jonah 2:4). See further Schäfer, Übersetzung 3: 8–9.

12 Following Schäfer’s suggested emendation (Übersetzung 3: 9 n. 14).

13 This passage is written in Hebrew, but is given in full only by M22 ($338–339, 346) and N ($344–345). O and D give the abbreviated heading: ‘R. Akiva said, We were four who went into pardes... , etc.’ ($338). N and O also include the story of the four in the later macroform Merkava Rabba ($671–673). See pp. 366–372 below; and see further Morray-Jones, A Transparent Illusion, 12–15.

14 N omits A2a.
§ 344d Not because I am greater than my fellows, but my deeds have caused me to fulfill the teaching that the sages taught in their Mishna: *Your deeds will bring you near and your deeds will keep you afar* (mEd 5:7).

§ 345a And these are they that went into *pardes*: Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma and Aher and R. Akiva.

§ 345b Ben Azzai looked into the sixth palace and saw the brilliance of the air of the marble stones with which the palace was paved, and his body could not bear it, and he opened his mouth and asked them: ‘These waters—what is the nature of them?’ and died. Of him, scripture says: *Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints* (Ps 116:15).

§ 345c Ben Zoma looked at the brilliance in the marble stones and thought that they were water, and his body could bear that he did not ask them, but his mind could not bear it and was smitten—he went out of his mind. Of him, scripture says: *Have you found honey? Eat what is enough for you . . .*, etc. (Prov 25:16).

§ 345d Elisha b. Avuya looked and cut the shoots. [In what way did he cut the shoots? They say that whenever he went into the synagogues and study-houses and saw children succeeding in Tora-study, he used to speak over them and they would be silenced, and] of him, scripture says: *Do not let your mouth lead your flesh into sin!* (Eccl 5:5).

§ 345e R. Akiva went in in peace and came out in peace. Of him, scripture says: *Draw me after you. Let us run. Let the king bring me into his chambers* (Cant 1:4).

§ 346a [R. Akiva said:]

§ 346b At that time, when I went up to the heavenly height, I made more signs in the entrances of *Rakia* than in the entrances of my house, and when I arrived at the *pargod*, angels of destruction came out to destroy me. The holy one, blessed be he, said to them: ‘Leave this elder alone, for he is worthy to behold my glory.’

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15 Material within braces, here and in the following two sections: N only.
16 N: ‘went down.’
17 N: ‘. . . went up . . . and came down . . .’
18 In HekhZ, § 346a–b is found in M22 only. N omits this section here, but both O and N include this unit in the story of the four in Merkava Rabba (§ 673) (see p. 276 n. 13 above).
The Vision of God ($348–352)\textsuperscript{19}

§ 348a R. Akiva said:
§ 348b At that time, when I ascended to the merkava, a heavenly voice went forth from beneath the throne of glory, speaking in the Aramaic tongue. In this tongue, what did it say?
§ 348c Before the LORD made heaven and earth, he established [corrupt word] in Rakia, by which to go in and come (scribal gloss: and [corrupt word] means nothing other than ‘gateway’). He established the irrefutable name, with which to design the entire universe.
§ 349\textsuperscript{20} And what man is there who is able to ascend on high, to ride the chariot-wheels, to descend below, to explore the world, to walk on the dry ground, to behold his splendour, to unbind\textsuperscript{21} his crown, to be transformed in glory,\textsuperscript{22} to utter praise, to combine letters, to utter names, to behold what is on high, and to behold what is below, to know the meaning of the living, and to see the vision of the dead, to walk in rivers of fire, and to know the lightning?
§ 350a And who is able to explain, and who is able to see?

\textsuperscript{19} See pp. 404–407 below and, for further detail, see the footnotes in Morray-Jones, ‘Paradise Revisited, Part 2’, 278–281. § 348c–352f are mostly in Aramaic, apart from the scriptural quotations. The translation of this passage is based primarily on O. Re: § 347 (omitted), see p. 268 above.
\textsuperscript{20} Cf. § 361a below.
\textsuperscript{21} The meaning of this word is uncertain; see Morray-Jones, ‘Paradise Revisited, Part 2’, 279 n. 43.
\textsuperscript{22} See Morray-Jones, ibid. n. 44.
§ 350b First of all it is written: …for no man may see me and live (Exod 33:20);
§ 350c and in the second place it is written: …for God speaks to man, and he lives (Deut 5:21//24);
§ 350d and in the third place it is written: I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne…, etc. (Isa 6:11).
§ 351a What is his name?
§ 351b he is entirely holy, whose hosts are fire!

§ 351c And Israel say before him: A glorious high throne from the beginning [is the place of our sanctuary] (Jer 17:12).
§ 352a His holy ones on high say: We see (him) like the appearance of lightning!
§ 352b His prophets say: We see (him) in a dream-vision, like a man who sees visions in the night.
§ 352c The kings who are upon the earth say: (corrupt text?)
§ 352d But our rabbis say: He is, so to speak, like us, but he is greater than everything; and this is his glory, which is hidden from us.
§ 352e Moses says to them, to these and those: Do not inquire into (the meaning of) your words, but let him be praised in his place!
§ 352f Therefore it is said: Blessed be the glory of the LORD from his place!

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23 This line appears to be corrupt (ms. readings vary).
24 N: ‘R. Akiva says…”
The Appearance of the Hayyot and the Divine Glory ($353–356$)

$353a$ R. Akiva said:

$353b$ On his left and on his right, I heard them say:

$353c$ 26{Whoever wants to learn these names, let him learn this wisdom.}

$353d$ Whoever wants to learn this secret, let him learn knowledge from the hayyot which stand before him: their motion, their appearance, their faces, and their wings.

$353d$ Their motion is like the lightning. Their appearance is like the rainbow in the cloud. Their face is like the appearance of purple-blue.27 Their wings are like beams of clouds of glory.

$354a$ *Four faces for each one*: four faces for each face; four faces for each of these faces—sixteen faces for every face; sixty-four faces for each creature; the number of the faces of the four creatures was (thus) two hundred and fifty-six faces.

$354b$ *Four wings for each one*: four wings for each wing; four wings for each of these wings—sixteen wings for every wing; sixty-four wings for each creature; the number of the wings of the four creatures was (thus) two hundred and fifty-six wings.

$355a$ When they wish to look, they look forward, toward the east; and when they wish to gaze, they gaze, but not behind them, not toward the west.28

$355b$ When they fly, they fly with their outer wings and cover their bodies with their inner wings. When they pray, they pray with their inner wings and cover their bodies with their outer wings. When they expound,29 they expound with their outer wings and cover their bodies with their inner wings. When they fall silent, they fall silent with their inner wings and cover their bodies with their outer wings.

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25 This passage, like the preceding one, is written mainly in Aramaic. See Halperin, *Faces*, 388f. The translation is eclectic.

26 § 353c occurs in N and M22 only.

27 Reading תכלא for רכלא, as suggested by Schäfer (Übersetzung 3: 26 n. 15).

28 M22 and G7 omit ‘but not’ and ‘not.’ West is, of course, the direction of the holy of holies.

§ 355c When they speak, they shake and shudder the world with their speech. And when they rise up to utter song before El Shaddai, the holy one, they raise up their mouths, their faces and their bodies.

§ 356a In front of the hooves of their feet lie hailstones.
In front of the hailstones lie glowing coals.
In front of the glowing coals lie beryl stones.
In front of the beryl stones lie clouds of consolation.
(In front of the clouds of consolation) rise up holy ramparts.
In front of the holy ramparts, spirits and liliths are assembled.
In front of the spirits and liliths are encircling streams of fire.
In front of the streams of fire, (is the place of which it is said:)

he covers the face of the throne; he spreads his cloud over it (Job 26:9).

In front of (the place of which it is said:) he covers the face of the throne; he spreads his cloud over it, there dwell a thousand thousands (who) serve him and a myriad of myriads (who) stand before him, wherefore it is said: a thousand thousands served him and a myriad of myriads stood before him (Dan 7:10).

§ 356b Above all these, (with) thunder and lightning, are established the letters of his name. Their appearance is like the appearance of the rainbow in the cloud.

§ 356c Above them is a cloaked scribe, more honored than they and exalted above them.

§ 356d He himself sees them all. His stature is equal to the world and his fullness dwells in his sanctuary (hekhal). He abides in secret.

§ 356e גבור הילוכי מסמתי סמר תדס במכני

§ 356f His feet are supported on fiery flames, on fiery flares, on clouds, on [corrupt word], on [corrupt word]s of hail, on lightning-flashes of splendour like the sceptre of עיאלא, and

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30 The translation of § 356 mainly follows G7, which is both clearer and more extensive than the other manuscripts.
31 These words are lacking in the manuscripts.
32 Reading כסה for MT: כסה.
33 G7: 'outside.'
34 Reading שלוח in place of שלוח (G7), שלוח (N), שלוח (M22), or שלוח (O, D, M40). The verb ישן (‘dwell’) is used in the following clause but seems inappropriate here.
35 Mss. other than G7: 'on fiery clouds'.
on the hooves of the feet of the *hayyot*, like the appearance of the sun, like the appearance of the moon, like the appearance of the stars, like the human face, like the eagle’s wings, like the lion’s claws, like the ox’s horns.\(^{36}\)

§ 356g And the brightness of the expression on his face is like the shape of the spirit or the form of the soul, which no creature can perceive. And his body is like *tarshish*,\(^{37}\) filling the world, for neither those near nor those afar can look at him.

§ 356h Blessed, yea, greatly blessed be his name for ever and throughout the ages!

*The Celestial Names* (§ 357–367)\(^{38}\)

§ 357a Blessed be his great, terrible, mighty, strong, majestic and powerful name, for whom our eyes yearn!

§ 357b And with this name, we adjure:\(^{39}\)

§ 357c I adjure you, שָׁמוֹאֵל פָּעָם מְסָפָר מִכְּנָסָו, by the name וּמְסָפָר מִכְּנָסָו חַיִּיתא בתֶּרֶשֶׁשׁ, is his name; שֵׁמוֹאֵל פָּעָם מְסָפָר מִכְּנָסָו is his name.

Moses said: פָּעָם מְסָפָר is his name.
The angel of death also said: פָּעָם מְסָפָר is his name.
David said: עֲנָקלוֹתֵּס תְּפִימוֹנ is his name.
Solomon said: עֲנָקלוֹתֵּס תְּפִימוֹנ is his name.

§ 357d בִילאָם מְסָפָר מִכְּנָסָו, was his name; בִילאָם מְסָפָר מִכְּנָסָו is his name.

Bileam said: פָּעָם מְסָפָר is his name.

And *he who utters the name of the Lord* (Lev 24:16) to all who stand: טָחֹון is his name.

§ 357e For this is the explicit name. They interpret it; they examine it; they pronounce it; and its interpretation is Greek.

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36 The syntax and meaning of this section are unclear, mainly because of wide variation in the manuscripts regarding the prepositions ב (‘on’) and כ (‘like’). These confused readings mean that the choice of preposition in each phrase is basically a guess’).


38 § 357–359 and 363–366 are written mainly in Hebrew; 360–361 are mainly in Aramaic; 362 and 367 are written in a combination of Hebrew and Aramaic; the names are, of course, in no known language. A parallel to § 362–365 is found in ‘Havdala de-R. Akiva’, ed. Scholem, 243–281. The translation of this passage is based mainly on O.

39 ‘We’ is found only in M22. Other mss.: ‘they’ (implied).
§ 358a  ‘And the face...’, eight times;40 ‘By the holy ones...’, eight times; and their beginnings41 are: ‘Blessed...’, eight times; and their seals are: ‘Our father, our king...’,42 eight times.

§ 358b and: ‘Holy...’, eight times; and: ‘What is his name?...’, eight times.

§ 358c (editorial comment: notarikon).45

§ 358d and their endings, eight times; and: ‘Holy...’, eight times; and: ‘What is his name?...’, eight times.

§ 358e and: ‘Holy...’, eight times; and: ‘What is his name?...’, eight times.

§ 359a Taking to be the abbreviation of ‘hadargilus digus.’

40 Reading ז׳מ׳ח׳ as an abbreviation for ח׳ (see Schäfer, Übersetzung 3: 37 n. 2). The meaning of this section is obscure. I surmise that it contains instructions for the repeated recitation of known liturgical formulae.


42 Reconstructed text: note that the second sequence of (mainly) biblical names is the same as the first, but in reverse order. Although the ms. readings vary, this symmetrical arrangement can be detected beneath the confusion. I take these names to be the divine ‘hosts’ to which the first and last pair of names (צבאים צבאות) refer.

43 Again, the manuscript readings are confused. It seems that the text originally indicated repetition of the syllables: ‘hadargilus digus.’

44 Notarikon (from Latin notarius, meaning ‘short-hand writer’) is a technique whereby each of the initial and/or final letters of a given word stands for another word, so as to form a ‘hidden’ phrase a sentence. Presumably, this technique is capable of unearthing the hidden meaning of ‘hadargilus digus’, but I am unable to speculate as to what that meaning may be.

45 Or: ‘[corrupt word] and purity.’
and

§ 359b ברכטיאל בнесенיאל תמייל

§ 359c וניאל שחכ תופסיואל סרותיאל

§ 359d And let him recite (this) seventy (times), backwards and forwards, until the fast takes control of him.47

§ 360a He used to say:

§ 360b He who extends the name will lose his name;
and he who will not learn deserves the death sentence;
and he who makes use of the crown will pass away;
and he who does not know קינטמשיא will be executed;
and he who knows קינטמשיא will be asked for in the world to come.48

§ 361a49 And what man is there who is able
to ascend on high,
to descend below,
to ride the chariot-wheels,
to explore the world,
to walk on the dry ground,
to praise his glory,
to behold his splendour,
to unbind the crown,
to be transformed in his glory
to utter his praise,
to combine letters,
to utter names,
to behold what is on high,
and to behold what is below,
to know the meaning of the living,
and to see the vision of the dead,
to ascend on wheels of iron?

47 See § 424b below.
48 Cf. mAvot 1:13 and see further Scholam, Jewish Gnosticism, 80–81.
49 Cf. § 349 above.
§ 361b (corrupt text?)

§ 362a R. Akiva said:

§ 362b By the word of your countenance on the day of your wrath, and (by) your personal name, by the fire;

§ 362c what is his first name, by which he is called at night? and what is his second name?

§ 362d and what is his third name?

§ 362e, who issues and goes forth (Dan 7:10), and takes from the seventy-two letters, from the keys:

§ 362f

§ 362g

§ 362h

§ 362i

50 Following D, M40.


52 Reading: (tentative reconstruction based on D (with the letter m inserted above the line between r and c) and M40 (with the letter n inserted above the line between c and f)). O: מכסא; N: מכסא; M22: מכסא.

53 See G18, lines 10–11.

54 = the same, or Hebrew Bet. See pp. 244–245 above.

55 §§ 362g and 363 are in N only.
is his name; אפרנם is his name; חושיאל is his name; אביריאל is his name; אוריאל (Uriel) is his name; ברקיאל is his name; חניאל is his name; משיאל is his name; איתיאל is his name;זהדריאל is his name; אהניאל is his name; ברכיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניאל is his name; אתניאל is his name; איכניאל is his name; תחתאל is his name; ברקיאל is his name; אנואל is his name; קדריאל is his name; רפיסואל is his name; מיכאל (Michael) is his name; אינכמול is his name; נתניא}
and in the name of Azboga,ֶָּשְׁבֹּגָה Holy! Holy! Holy!

§ 365a This is the name of the power. Happy is everyone who who knows and recites it in purity—he has Tora will be established in his hand. His praise will last for ever and for all eternity, for though he stands in the dark of night, no harm shall again befall him.

§ 365b David said: LORD of Hosts, happy is the man who trusts in you (Ps 84:13).

§ 365c Jeremiah (sic) said: Trust in the LORD for ever, for in Yah, the LORD is an everlasting rock (Isa 26:4).

§ 365d R. Akiva said:

§ 366a I gazed (in a vision), and I observed the whole of the inhabited world, and I beheld it just as it is. I went up in a wagon of fire and I gazed into the palaces of hail, where I found , sitting on .

§ 366b The personal name from the keys of the book is: אַדַּני קִיפָד כֵּאלֶף נֶא בַיּוֹד יָה. ‘Glowing Coal Stones’ is his name: רֶסֶקֶטֵה רֶסֶקֶטֵה, etc. ‘Fire Stones’ is his name: רֶסֶקֶטֵה רֶסֶקֶטֵה, etc. ‘Hail Stones’ is his name: רֶסֶקֶטֵה רֶסֶקֶטֵה, etc. ‘Pitch Stones’ is his name: רֶסֶקֶטֵה רֶסֶקֶטֵה, etc. ‘Torch Stones’ is his name: רֶסֶקֶטֵה רֶסֶקֶטֵה, etc.

§ 366c This is the spell and the seal by which the earth is bound and by which heaven is bound.

§ 367b 63{His body is full of fiery thrones: דְּבָתָה נֵב הָיוָה is its name.

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60 On the name Azboga (أشבגה), see Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, 66f.
61 Following N; the other mss: ‘Your praise…’
62 N: ‘waters’ (ם מ for ד). § 367b and 367d–e are found in N only. Parallel material occurs in § 953 (M40 only). Schäfer (Übersetzung 3: 61 n. 9) states that this passage, which refers to the shiur koma tradition, has been inserted here by the redactor of N. However, § 367c seems to indicate that the other manuscript traditions were, at some time, aware of the presence
The locks of his hair are like his body: דַּרְרֶשׁ is their name; and half of them have another name: נַנְלָשׁ is their name.

His one eye, which sees from end to end of the world: אֲטַטְסָא is its name, and the sparks that go forth from it shine with light for all creatures; and his other eye, with which he looks behind him and sees what will come to pass in future: אֲנָנוּטָסָא is its name.

His body is like the rainbow (Ezek 1:28), and the rainbow is like the appearance of fire surrounding it (Ezek 1:27)

§ 367c The rainbow: רַומְאָא is its name. The sword: מַצָּמָצַיָּא is its name.

§ 367d {The throne of glory: רְדֵפְסָא is its name. His dwelling place: פִּרוּוֹפָא רְפָדָא פִּרוֹפָא is its name...

§ 367e ...and so forth, the personal name.}

The Throne Midrash (§ 368–375)64

§ 368a 65{[The legs of the throne of glory: surely, these are the hayyot, standing beneath it.]

§ 368b The first leg of the throne, which is a hayya, is called בְּבֶבְלִי מַשׁ נַעֲרָא נַעֲרִי אַצָּבָיָא. The second leg of the throne, which is a hayya, is called מַשְׁמַמְי מַסְמַי מִכְּכָה כְּלִי הָעִי. The third leg, which is a hayya, is called כְּכָבָב אֵנְלָי טִיְפַלְפָּאָה. The fourth hayya, which is a living leg of the throne, is called זַרְמַמְי יָד אַצְצָי בָּטָב אָצָחָי אַצְצָי הָאָב.67

64 A midrashic elaboration of Ezekiel’s merkava vision. This passage is written in Hebrew. The translation follows N. As indicated, most of this passage is omitted by the other manuscripts. For analysis, see Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 174–191; and cf. Halperin, Faces, 390–393.

65 § 368a is found in N only.

66 The names vary in the mss.

67 Following N. The other manuscripts give a different and shorter list of the names of the four feet of the throne, followed by a separate list of the names of the four hayyot.
§ 368c 68{And the likeness of their faces is the stamp of a lion, the seal of an eagle, and the likeness of an ox, and the sealed face of a man.

§ 368d Four faces each, and four faces to each face,69 and four faces to each of these faces—sixty-four faces for each individual hayya. And four wings each, and four wings to each wing, and four wings to each of these wings—sixty-four wings for each individual hayya.

§ 369 The prince with the face of a man is called אמץ אמצב ליח הוא. The prince with the face of a lion is called מפסיה בפגמכן וההוא hod. The prince with the face of an ox is called מסביה אמץ צמאמצם אליה. The prince with the face of an eagle is called להוזיאל עפעפי להודידייאל. And when Israel sinned, the face of the ox was concealed and a keruv was put in its place. The prince with the face of a keruv is called עמנו הוא הליה עמנו פסיה נקיה הנק פצפצציה פצופ קרוביה קרוביה מביאיה.

§ 370 The hayyot, when they fly, fly with thirty-two (wings) and cover their bodies with thirty-two. And they fly on the wind, for they are entirely made of fire, and the fire is lighter than the wind, so that the wind supports the fire, as it is said: Wherever the wind would go, they went…, etc. (Ezek 1:12, 1:20). And the sound of the wings of the hayyot is the earthquake of which Elijah spoke: And behold, the Lord passed by, and a great strong wind—here we have the wind—and after the wind, an earthquake (1 Kgs 19:11). The earthquake was like the sound of mighty waters, as it is said, and I heard the sound of their wings like the sound of many waters (Ezek 1:24). And after the earthquake, fire (1 Kgs 19:12). This is the fire of which Daniel spoke: Its wheels were blazing fire… (Dan 7:9), and he says: A stream of fire issued and flowed forth from before him. A thousand thousands served him and ten thousand times ten thousand…, etc. (Dan 7:10).

68 § 368c–373a are found in N. only.

69 The text of HekhZ(N) reads: . . . four faces to each corner’, but פינה (‘corner’) is a false correction of פינה, a Hebrew rendering of the Aramaic singular form: ממ (‘face’) in § 354a. Cf. the parallel Hebrew text in Schäfer § 954 and see further Halperin, Faces, 391f; and Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 182f.
§ 371a And the throne of glory stands upon the four hayyot, and the likeness of the throne is the likeness of the firmament; and the firmament is like the waters of the sea; and the waters of the sea are like the color blue; and the color blue is sapphire (Ezek 1:26; Exod 24:10). And around the throne are pure thunder clouds, which give forth lightning flashes like jewels of tarshish. And the brilliance of the flashing of the throne, which is like sapphire with jewels of tarshish, is the brightness (Ezek 1:4 and 28). As the likeness of them both, sapphire and tarshish, thus is the likeness of the hashmal. It is like the appearance of fire (Ezek 1:27), but it is not fire. Rather, it is like fiery flames of all kinds of colors mixed together, and the eye cannot master their likenesses. And around the throne is fire flashing forth continuously (Ezek 1:4) from the radiance and the many flashes of its appearance. And from the midst of these terrors, the likenesses of the hayyot, which are the legs of the throne, appeared to Ezekiel.

§ 371b To each leg there were four faces; to each kind of face, there were four wings. Thus you will find that for the four legs there were sixteen faces and sixty-four wings.

§ 372 And upon the throne is the great fire, for from the veil (parokhet) of fire that is spread before him, no comparison may be made. And seven (chief) ministers, mighty ones of power, are before and inside the veil. And twelve are stationed outside the throne, three in each direction, and these are they: פדיאל כובכיאל מיכאל on the right; עזריאל זכריאל שמעאל on the left; מיקיאל מרפייאל א biçimל רפאיאל גבריאל רזיאל רוגיאל שמעאל הנניאל אחזיאל גבריאל רפאל רזיאל, and he is seated in the middle. His glory is like the appearance of the hashmal (Ezek 1:27). And on his brow is the crown of the explicit name, which is all made of fire, and on his head is a diadem of splendour, as it is said: from the brightness opposite him [burned coals of

70 Reading לᑖז תז הפנס ל_suffix תז הписыва ('for each pair of faces'). See Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 184f.

71 The text adds here: אどのような, which would most obviously mean: 'in each direction.' If so, a redactor has added these words in a partially successful attempt to harmonize this passage with the numbers given in § 354a–b and 368b. See Morray-Jones, ibid. 183f.

72 Most of these names are, of course, the names of well-known angels: Kokhabiel, Padiel (Pahadiel?), Michael, Azriel, Zakharieel, Shemael, Gabriel, Raphael, Ahaziel, Regael, Dananael, and Uriel.
fire] (2 Sam 22:13/Ps 18:13; cf. Ezek 1:13). On his right is life, and on his left is death, and in his hands there are sceptres of fire. On his right are two powerful mighty princes, and these are their names: מְרָאֵל and שִׁבְבָּאֵל. And on his left are two powerful mighty ones who execute the severe decrees, and these are their names: גֵּלְיוֹר and הָבֹרָא.

§ 373a And the throne of glory is the seat of his glory, and the hayyot bear the throne, and the 'ofanim are the wheels of the chariot (galgelei merkava), and they are all of them fire mixed with fire, as it is written: and their appearance was like coals of fire (Ezek 1:13).

§ 373b The place of his dwelling: רִדְפִּין סֵיפִּין is its name. And how should his name be investigated? So powerful is his personal name that even the exalted angels do not know it. נַחַל יָהּ יִהְיוּ אִדֵּנִי וְיְהוּ אֲדֹנָי is his great name. ‘He that covers the face of the throne’ is his name!

§ 374a And there are fourteen letters that stand opposite to the crown: דִּידֶנֶה וְיִהְיוּ וְיִהוּ אֲדֹנָי אֱלֹהָי וְיִהוּ וְיִהוּ אֲדֹנָי.

§ 374b Blessed be the Lord, with an abundance of thanksgiving-hymns and with performance of good works! May it be your will, O Lord my God, that I neither sin nor succumb to wrath, neither now or throughout eternity!

§ 374c The Lord is king! The Lord was king! The Lord will be king for ever and ever!

§ 375a 75{R. Akiva said:

§ 375b These are the princes of the faces of the hayyot. Surely, they say: ‘Sanctified…!’
Surely, they say: ‘Blessed…!’
As it is said: He declares his words to Jacob…, etc. (Ps 147:19).}

73 Ref. to Job 26:9, but with the misspelling: כסא for כסא.
74 On this formula and its parallel at Rev 4:8, see Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 88f., 130 and 177f.
75 § 375a–b are found in N only (see p. 267 above).
Chapter Eleven

The Ascent Midrash (§ 407–412)76

§ 407a And I saw what/one who looked like the hashmal (Ezek 1:27),77

§ 407b who is recognized, and stands up and selects from the yordei merkava, between one who is worthy to see the king in his beauty and one who is unworthy to see the king in his beauty.

§ 407c If one was worthy to see the king in his beauty, they would influence his mind. When they said to him: ‘Enter!’ he would not enter. And again they would say to him: ‘Enter!’ Then he would enter. They would praise him, saying: ‘Surely, so-and-so is worthy to see the king in his beauty!’

§ 407d But if one was unworthy to see the king in his beauty, they would influence his mind and when they said to him: ‘Enter!’ he would enter. Then they would crush him and throw him into the river Rigyon of fiery coals.

§ 408a The sixth palace looked as if a hundred thousand thousand myriads of myriads of waves of the sea were billowing in it, yet there was not a single drop of water in it but only, of brilliant air, the pure marble stones with which the palace was paved, the brilliance of the appearance of which was more terrible than water.

§ 408b And lo, the ministers stand before him, and if one should say, ‘These waters: what is the nature of them?’—then they run after him to stone him and say to him: ‘Worthless one! Do you not see with your eyes? Perhaps you are of the calf-kissers’ seed and unworthy to see the king in his beauty!’

§ 408c If so, a heavenly voice comes forth from the seventh palace, and the herald comes forth before him and trumpets and pro-

76 A chain of three midrashim on Ezek 1:27, relating to the heavenly ascent. This passage is written in Hebrew. The translation is eclectic, but based primarily on M22 in § 407a–408d, and on O in § 409a–12c. See further Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, especially 54–67, 74–78 and 87–104.

77 החשמל כעין וארא (O omits the article, in agreement with MT). In § 407b–d, the first midrash, the ‘one who looked like the hashmal’ is the angelic guardian of the sixth hekhal. In the second midrash, § 408b–410d, the ‘appearance of hashmal’ is the brilliance of the floor of the sixth hekhal, which is Ezekiel’s shining firmament, viewed from above. In the third midrash, § 411a–412c, the ‘appearance of hashmal’ is the shining countenance of Jacob in the seventh hekhal. For a more detailed analysis, see the previous note.
claims, saying to them: ‘You have spoken well! He is indeed of the calf-kissers' seed and unworthy to see the king in his beauty!’

§ 408d And he does not depart thence before they split his head with iron cleavers.

§ 409a This shall be for a sign to the generations, lest a man should err at the gate of the sixth palace and see the brilliance of the air of the stones and ask, or say that they are water, that he may not bring himself into danger,

§ 409b because even if one is unworthy to see the king in his beauty, and does not ask them about the brilliant air of the pure marble stones with which the palace is paved, they will not destroy him but judge him according to the scale of merit, saying: 'If he is unworthy to see the king in his beauty, how did he get into the (first) six hekhalot?'

§ 410a R. Akiva said:

§ 410b A certain person78 was worthy, and stood at the gate of the sixth palace, and saw the brilliance of the air of the stones, and he opened his mouth twice and said: 'Water! Water!' In the blink of an eye, they cut off his head. And eleven thousand iron cleavers shall be upon him.79

§ 410c This shall be for a sign to the generations, lest a man should err at the gate of the sixth palace.

§ 410d The LORD is king! The LORD was king! The LORD will be king for ever and ever!

§ 411a R. Akiva said:

§ 411b Thus does the face of Jacob our father shine with light in the presence of אֵדִירֵרָון, the LORD God of Israel, our Father who is in heaven, and thus shall his love be received with love in the presence of אֵדִירֵרָון, the LORD God of Israel, our Father who is in heaven, beneath the clouds and thunder-clouds that sprinkle blood.

§ 411c And in the seventh hekhal, the wheels of light sprinkle perfume and pure balsam, and a doubled wheel sounds a plain note, a tremolo, and a plain note, saying: 'Everyone who is worthy to see the king in his beauty, let him enter and let him see!'

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78 N: 'Ben Azzai.'
79 The meaning of this sentence is uncertain.
§ 411d And if he were so, the wheels of power would embrace him, and the keruvim of glory would kiss him, and the living creatures (hayyot) would raise him up, and the brightness (noga) would go leaping before him, and the hashmal would go singing before him, and a living wind of brilliance (ruah ziv hayya) would raise him up, until they had lifted him and seated him before the throne of glory.

§ 412a And he would gaze and see:
§ 412b The hidden king! The kindly king! The benign king! The perfect king! The gracious king! The righteous king! The holy king! The supreme king! The pure king! The blessed king! The beloved king! The comely king! The king who is desired! The king who is worshipped! The king who is praised! The powerful king! The mighty king! The terrible king! The innocent king! The solitary king! The distinguished king!80
§ 412c Him and all his ministers, and this is his glory!

Instructions for the Ascent (§ 413–419)81

§ 413a R. Akiva said:
§ 413b Memorize and learn by heart the names of the seven princes, the guardians of the seven palaces—the palace of exaltation, the palace of eminence, the palace of wonders, the palace of purity,82 {the palace of lordship, the palace of splendour, the palace of holiness)—and the names and how they are made into seals. When you show each one his seal, he will permit you to enter his palace.

§ 414a And these are the names of the princes, the guardians of the seven palaces:
§ 414b רגניאל, the LORD, the prince;
רנינריא, the LORD, the prince;
שנקדד, the LORD, the prince;
בנסלא, the LORD, the prince;

80 N gives a markedly different list of attributes in § 412b.
81 The following translation is based primarily on N, except that § 416–417a follow M22 (see p. 295 n. 85 below). The passage is written in Hebrew.
82 All mss. except N end the list here.
§ 415a And these are their seals:

§ 415b

§ 415c83

§ 41685

Over the first palace is set רגزال, the LORD, the prince, with smoke and winds. You show him the seal and the signet on which is engraved: אבשות, the LORD God of Israel, our Father who is in heaven.

Over the second palace is set רחיבירהון, the LORD, the prince. You show him the seal and the signet on which is engraved: אבשות, the LORD God of Israel, our Father who is in heaven.

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83 M40 and D omit this section; O abbreviates.
84 איה, possibly to be read as איה, 'I am.'
85 In § 416–417a, the translation follows M22. Mss. O, M40, D and N all abbreviate this material in different ways and seem, in places, to be confused. This passage repeats and expands the material in § 415c.
Over the third palace is set שקדוהואי, the Lord, the prince, and you show him the seal and the signet on which is engraved: התחפונריו, the Lord God of Israel, our Father who is in heaven.

Over the fourth palace is set סגןאל, the Lord, the prince, and, of the seals, you show him the seal and the signet on which is engraved: ינודיאלא, the Lord God of Israel, our Father who is in heaven.

Over the fifth palace is set אشيرיויאלי, the Lord, the prince, and, of the seals, you show him the seal and the signet on which is engraved: אברגהודיה, the Lord God of Israel, our Father who is in heaven.

Over the sixth palace is set טטרוסיאי, the Lord, the prince—an exalted prince, whom his king exalted, therefore he is set over the sixth palace—and, of the seals, you show him the seal and the signet on which is engraved: נתפדראילו, the Lord God of Israel, our Father who is in heaven.

§ 417a Over the seventh palace is set שוריאל, the Lord, the prince—an exalted prince whom the king of the world exalted like himself, therefore he is set over the gate of the seventh palace, the palace of exaltation, the palace of eminence, the palace of wonders—and, from the seals, you show him the seal and the signet on which is engraved: שתקייר, the Lord God of Israel, whose name is called שתקייר אהת, the God of Israel, our Father who is in heaven.

§ 417b At once, רגزال, the Lord, grasps his hand and delivers him to רחיבירון, the Lord; רחיבירון, the Lord, to שקדוהואי, the Lord; שקדוהואי, the Lord, to סגןאל, the Lord; סגןאל, the Lord, to אشيرיויאלי, the Lord; אشيرיויאלי, the Lord, to טטרוסיאי, the Lord; טטרוסיאי, the Lord, to שוריאל, the Lord;

§ 417c and שוריאל, the Lord, lifts you up and seats you upon the lap of אבהת, the Lord God of Israel; אבהת, the Lord God of Israel; and, the Lord God of Israel;
upon the lap of יִהְוֶה, the LORD God of Israel;
upon the lap of אֲבֹדֶאָל, the LORD God of Israel;
upon the lap of נַחֲפָדָרֲאִיל, the LORD God of Israel;
upon the lap of שֶׁשֶׁכֶּרֶי, the LORD God of Israel,
whose name is called שֶׁשֶׁכֶּרֶי, the LORD God of Israel,
our Father who is in heaven.

§ 417d The LORD is king! The LORD was king! The LORD will be king for ever and ever!

§ 418a Make your request;
§ 418b May it be your will, LORD God of Israel, our God and our fathers’ God...87

§ 418c {King, seated upon a high and exalted throne (Isa 6:1);
elevated above the summit of exaltation,89 established above the crowns of splendour;
who sees into depths; who beholds mysteries; who perceives in darkness.
In every place, you are there; in every heart you dwell;
and none can alter your will; nor revoke your word; nor delay your desire;
and there is no place in which to flee from you;
and none can hide or conceal himself from your presence;
Lord of all works; wise in all secrets; ruler of all generations;
the one God who has been for ever; the unique king who will exist for all eternity.
Sela.

§ 418d Master of the things above and the things below,
of the first things and the last things;
what god is there like you, LORD God of Israel, Lord of the powers?
Before you, LORD God of Israel,
those above and those below bow down and prostrate themselves.
Before you, LORD God of Israel, serafim give glory

87 The syntax of this sentence is picked up in § 419c. The mss. other than N abbreviate § 419a (see p. 298 n. 92 below) but otherwise omit § 418c–419b in their entirety.
88 Material within braces: N only (see the previous note).
89 On the word סֶלֶל and its association with the pavement beneath the divine throne, which is also Ezekiel’s firmament, see p. 266 n. 6 above; and see further, Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 89–100.
and bring forth songs of rejoicing.
Your throne of glory praises and accords you majesty and excellence.
Might and splendour are before you, LORD God of Israel.
Your ministers crown you with crowns and sing you a new song.
They install you as king forever and you are called ‘One’ for all eternity.
They bless you; they praise you; they glorify you; they exalt you; they give thanks to you,
for you are the God of Israel, puissant in power and mighty in action.

§ 418e

Kalsh esarekho kachmdrath
Sedmewar asemfeqret hahrirrot abirort nemtrrot
Nghel shinyom hahshophsil hahfip holli
Shothnic, the exalted LORD.90

§ 418f

Zoharariel Aserael Nourael Panael Raphael,
Seraiel Angel, the LORD, the prince;

§ 418g

Uriel, the LORD, the prince;
Gabriel, the LORD, the prince;
Nuriel, the LORD, the prince;
Panael, the LORD, the prince;
Serafiel, the LORD, the prince;
Seraphim, the LORD, the prince;
Sharaiel, the LORD, the prince.

§ 419a

Abesan, the LORD God of Israel;
Abogena, the LORD God of Israel;
Abdmepr, the LORD God of Israel;
Noiaries, the LORD God of Israel;
Sharaiel, the LORD God of Israel;
Sharaiel, the LORD God of Israel;
Shai, the LORD God of Israel.

§ 419b

Barwadrot, the LORD

90 I have arranged the names in this section according to their forms.
91 These are, of course, the names of the seven angels: Zoharariel, Uriel, Afael, Gabriel, Nuriel, Panael and Serafiel.
92 Following N. The other mss. abbreviate as follows: “בכה, the LORD God of Israel’… as far as… ‘שתקייר, the LORD God of Israel.”
93 § 419b is found in N only (see p. 294 n. 81 and p. 295 n. 85 above).
—a good splendour, a pure splendour, a brilliant splendour—

§ 419c\(^94\) ...that you give me grace, mercy, compassion and glory before your throne of glory, in the eyes of all your ministers, and in the eyes of all who see (me); and bind all your ministers to me, to do thus and thus.

§ 419d The great, mighty, fearsome, strong, firm, majestic and potent God!

§ 419e *My beloved is all radiant and ruddy, etc.—צבאוה!*

His head is fine gold, etc.—צבאוה!  
His eyes are like doves, etc.—צבאוה!  
His cheeks are like spice beds, etc.—צבאוה!  
His hands are disks of gold, etc.—צבאוה!  
His legs are columns of marble, etc.—צבאוה!  
His mouth is wholly sweet and he is altogether desirable.  
*this is my beloved and this is my friend.*\(^95\)

§ 419f \{יה ייח י
and in the name of חסדיאל, who is called to the power for six hours each day, זכריאל, the Lord, the prince,

§ 419j learn this mishna every day after prayer.

Closing Remarks by Akiva (§ 422–424) 100

§ 422a R. Akiva said:

§ 422b When I explained this practice of ascending and descending to the merkava, they appointed a blessing for me each day in the court above and the court below.

§ 423a And again, R. Akiva said:

§ 423b A heavenly voice addressed me from beneath the throne of glory and it said to me:

§ 423c For my friend, who suffers and endures the practice of ascending and descending to the merkava before me, I have appointed a blessing to be said three times each day in the court above and the court below. And I shall love and redeem the household in which they learn it.

§ 424a R. Akiva said:

§ 424b Whoever wishes to learn this mishna, and to express the name explicitly, should sit in fast for forty days and rest his head between his knees until the fast takes control of him. 101 And he should whisper (it) to the earth and not to heaven, so that the earth may hear, but not heaven. If he is an unmarried youth, he may say it as long as he has had no emission; and if he is a married man, he should be continent for three days, as it is said: Be ready by the third day; [go not near a woman] (Exod 19:15).

§ 424c If he tells it to his friend, he should tell him one letter from the beginning and one letter from the end, but he should not join one to the other, lest he should make a mistake and destroy the world of the holy one, blessed be he.

§ 424d 102 If he is chained in prison for his soul’s sake, that it may not perish, he may say it during the daytime but not at night, lest

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100 This portion of the text is written in Hebrew. The translation, while eclectic, is based mainly on O. See further Halperin, Faces, 373f.

101 Cf. § 359d above.

102 § 424d is found in M22 only.
he should make a mistake and destroy the world of the holy one, blessed be he.]

§ 424e If he wishes to test him, he may test him once but not twice, and, when he tests him, he should examine him strictly, lest he should make a mistake and destroy the world of the holy one, blessed be he.

§ 424f He should practice it regularly, month by month and year by year, for thirty days before Rosh Hashana, from the beginning of the month of Elul to Yom Kippur, so that Satan and the forces of evil may not afflict him all year.
CHAPTER TWELVE

THE TEMPLE WITHIN:
THE EMBODIED DIVINE IMAGE AND ITS WORSHIP
IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS AND OTHER EARLY JEWISH
AND CHRISTIAN SOURCES*

The celestial temple is a central motif of Jewish apocalyptic literature
and the merkava mystical traditions preserved in the hekhalot writings.¹
In these sources, as we have seen, the ascent into heaven is envisaged
as a journey through the courts of a cosmic temple to the innermost
sanctuary where God appears in the form of a vast man-like figure of
fire or light, called the ‘Power’ (δύναμις/קדש) or ‘Glory’ (δόξα/כבוד),
seated on the throne of glory or merkava. This imagery is deeply rooted
in the Hebrew biblical tradition.² The term merkava is derived from
1 Chr 28:18, where it refers to ‘the chariot of the keruvim’ that carried
the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies. In Isa 6, which became
a central text of the mystical tradition, the prophet encounters the
enthroned deity in the holy of holies of the temple. The serafim seen
by Isaiah above the throne evidently correspond to the keruvim of
1 Chr 28:18, whose wings were outstretched above the ark. God’s throne
is, therefore, already identified with the chariot by which the ark was
carried, as it is in the later esoteric sources.³

It has sometimes been stated that there is a fundamental difference
between the visions of the biblical prophets and the heavenly ascents
described by the later apocalyptic writers. The prophets, it is argued,
did not claim to have ascended to heaven but experienced their visions


² See, above all, Levenson, ‘Temple and the World’; and idem, Sinai and Zion. See also Mullen, Divine Council, 147–169; and Barker, Gate of Heaven, esp. 151–152.

³ See further Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, 20–30.
while remaining on the earth.\(^4\) It is thus assumed that the locus of Isaiah’s vision was the earthly temple and not, as in the later apocalypses, its heavenly counterpart.\(^5\) However, this distinction seems overstated. Although it is true that detailed accounts of heavenly ascents are not found in the prophetic writings, the vision of the heavenly council provides the context for the commissioning of the prophet, who therefore experiences himself as present at the scene.\(^6\) Geo Widengren has shown that the forms of these commissioning narratives originated in pre-biblical Mesopotamian enthronement ceremonies in which the king, having ritually entered the heavenly palace of the god, is awarded the status of a ‘sent one’.\(^7\) Like Enoch, Daniel, and other ascending heroes of the apocalypses, Isaiah is a participant in the action. His mouth is purified by an angel with a coal from the altar (Isa 6:6–7), after which he engages in a dialogue with God, volunteering his services and receiving his instructions (Isa 6:8–13). Not being a priest, Isaiah is not permitted to enter the sanctuary on earth. He must, therefore, have been relocated in his vision. Whether the ‘house’ into which he has been transported is the earthly temple or its celestial counterpart is nowhere specified. It is perhaps doubtful whether this distinction would have been very meaningful to the author, for whom the ritual identification of the one with the other was not merely a dramatic metaphor. As observed by Levenson, ‘Isaiah is privileged to see the difference between the earthly antitype and the heavenly archetype disappear: iconography becomes the reality it symbolizes.’\(^8\) This ritual identification of the earthly sanctuary with the heavenly throne room was a central theme of the pre-exilic cult tradition, as expressed, for example, in the poetic parallelism of Ps. 11:4:

\[
כִּסְאוֹ
יְהוָֹה
בַּשָּׁמַיִם
יְהוָֹה
קָדְשׁוֹ
בְּהֵיכַל
יְהוָֹה
Th’ ,
\]

‘The LORD (is) in the temple of his holiness; the LORD, in the heavens (is) his throne.’

Similar considerations apply to the commissioning scene in Ezekiel 1–3, which appears to take place not on earth, but above the firmament,


\(^5\) See, for example, Engell, *Call of Isaiah*, 27–28; and compare Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, 11.


\(^7\) Widengren, *Ascension of the Apostle*, 30–35.

\(^8\) Levenson, ‘Jerusalem Temple’, 54.
where the throne is located (Ezek 1:26). The prophet falls on his face (Ezek 1:28), then gets up and interacts with the figure on the throne, eating the scroll that he offers him and receiving his commission (Ezek 2:1–3:11). Following this, he is returned to earth by a wind (ruah), which appears to be generated by the wings of the hayyot (Ezek 3:12–14) and is almost certainly identical with the ruah ha-hayyot of Ezek 1:20–21 (conventionally translated ‘spirit of the living creatures’).9 Although Ezekiel is a priest, his vision occurs not in the earthly sanctuary, but in Babylonia.

Visions of the Enthroned Glory

Under the conditions of the exile, access to the divine throne via the physical temple in Jerusalem was, of course, no longer possible. Ezekiel’s visions of the enthroned kavod, drawn on awesome wheels (ofanim) by the mysterious hayyot, who are clearly identified with the temple keruvim (Ezek 10:14–15), occurred in response to this situation and provided an assurance that the heavenly reality was still accessible by other means. When the prophet is transported to and conducted around the temple of the future (Ezek 40–48), what he sees is, presumably, a celestial archetype.

Possibly the earliest occurrence of the term merkava in connection with Ezekiel’s vision is in Sir 49:8:

It was Ezekiel who saw the vision of the Glory, which was shown to him upon a chariot of keruvim (Ἰεζεκιήλ ὃς εἶδεν ὅρασιν δόξης, ἧν ὑπεδείξεν αὐτῷ ἐπὶ ἅρματος χερουβίν).

However, the earliest detailed account of an ascent into heaven occurs in 1 En 14:8–25.11 Here, Enoch’s journey to heaven leads him into a temple whose threefold structure, consisting of two concentric houses surrounded by a wall, corresponds closely to that of the earthly sanctuary

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9 For a detailed discussion of this passage and its exegesis in the apocalyptic and hekhalot traditions, see Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 96–104.
in Jerusalem. The two ‘houses’, one within the other, correspond to the sanctuary building (היכל) and the holy of holies (דביר) within. The surrounding wall of white marble (v9 according to the Ethiopic text) corresponds either to the wall surrounding the inner courts of the temple or, perhaps, to the balustrade (سورג) beyond which no gentile was allowed to pass. The wheels of God’s throne (v18) identify it as Ezekiel’s merkava, and the keruvim mentioned in the same verse are clearly identical with Ezekiel’s hayyot. The structure of this celestial temple involves a curious reversal of normality: the inner of the two ‘houses’ is larger than the outer.

The threefold structure of the temple in 1 En 14 reflects a cosmology of three heavens, which is also attested in other parts of the early Enoch literature. According to a majority of commentators, an early form of the Testament of Levi employed a similarly three-tiered cosmology, although the number of heavens was increased to seven in later versions. Here, again, the highest heaven, the dwelling place of ‘the Great

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13 mMid 2:3; bYom 16a; Josephus, War 5.193. Alternatively, Himmelfarb (Ascent to Heaven, 14) suggests that the first stage of the vision corresponds to the temple vestibule (אולם) but her statement that the Greek text of 1 En 14:9 reads ‘building’ for ‘wall’ is inaccurate and appears to be derived from Milik’s speculative reconstruction of the text (see Milik and Black, Books of Enoch, 195; refuted by Black, Book of Enoch, 146f.).

14 See Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 29–33. Himmelfarb (Ascent to Heaven, 9–28 and 31) assumes that the passage refers to a single heaven only. Gooder (Only the Third, 48, 185) maintains that it is unclear whether the structure of the celestial temple has three or two levels, suggesting that the first wall encountered by Enoch may be the exterior of the outer house, not a separate structure. This reading of the text is not at all convincing, since the narrative clearly refers to three transitions, each denoted by the statement: ‘And I went in’, followed by an approach to the threshold of the next level (1 En 14:9, 10, 13).

15 See Milik and Black, Books of Enoch, 40–41 and 231–236.

16 See, for example: Charles, APOT 2: 304; idem, Greek Versions, xxviii; Kee, OTP 1: 775–780 and 788f., nn. 2d, 3a; Rowland, Open Heaven, 81; Yarbro Collins, ‘Seven Heavens’, 62–66. Himmelfarb maintains that ‘no form of the text with three heavens ever existed’ (Ascent to Heaven, 126–127 n. 7) but this assertion appears to be based on a misunderstanding of the analysis of de Jonge (‘Notes on Testament of Levi’). De Jonge comments that the relevant fragment of the Aramaic Levi document from Qumran (4Q213, 1.i.15–18) ‘does not necessarily presuppose more than one heaven’ (ibid. 253), but this observation does not apply to the developed recensions of T. Levi. The ‘non-α’ Greek and Armenian recensions, which refer twice to an arrangement of three plus four heavens, are believed by de Jonge to have priority over the ‘α’ recensions, which have three only. Nonetheless, he states that the extra four heavens in the ‘non-α’ recensions are ‘clearly redactional’ (ibid. 259), implying that a three-heaven version of the text did, in fact, precede the seven-heaven version. Gooder (Only the
Glory’ (ἡ δόξα ἡ μεγάλη), is called ‘the holy of holies’. As observed by Himmelfarb, in the extended version of the text, the chambers of the temple are identical with the higher celestial levels.

In the later apocalypses, the three-tier cosmology is largely displaced by a more complex model of seven heavens. As Himmelfarb has shown, the idea that the universe is a temple, corresponding in structure to the temple in Jerusalem (or, at least, to the ideal form thereof), continues to pervade this literature. A similar idea is expressed by Philo:

The whole universe must be regarded as the highest and, in truth, the holy temple of God. As sanctuary it has the heaven, the most holy part of the substance of existing things; as votive offerings it has stars; as priests it has angels, ministers of His powers.

The Merkava at Qumran

The Qumran sectarians, who believed the temple in Jerusalem to have been defiled and its cult perverted by a corrupt and illegitimate priesthood, evidently attached great significance to the prophecies of Ezekiel. It is possible that the site of the community settlement was chosen on the basis of Ezek 47:1–12, which states that in the last days a river will flow eastward from beneath the Jerusalem temple and revitalise the

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Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven, 33.
Himmelfarb, Ascent to Heaven, passim.

I use the terms ‘sect’ and ‘sectarians’ to refer to the organized group represented by the Community Rule, the Damascus Document and associated texts. The sectarian or non-sectarian provenance of individual documents will be briefly discussed below. On this subject, see especially Newsom, ‘Sectually Explicit’, especially 168–171. I assume that the site at Qumran was the primary center of the sect, but not that all members resided there. See further, for example: Talmon, ‘Community of the Renewed Covenant’; VanderKam, Dead Sea Scrolls Today, 12–27 and 71–119; García Martinez and Trebolle Barrera, People of the Dead Sea Scrolls, 3–91; Collins, Scepter and the Star, 4–11.

waters of the Dead Sea. In the Damascus Document (CD 1:16), the foundation of the Sect is dated to 390 years after the exile, on the basis of Ezek 4:4–5. In the same document, the leaders of the sect are identified with the ‘Sons of Zadok’ who, according to Ezek 44:15, are to serve as priests in the restored and purified temple of the coming age:

But with the remnant which held fast to the commandments of God He made His Covenant with Israel for ever, revealing to them the hidden things in which all Israel had gone astray. He unfolded before them His holy Sabbaths and His glorious feasts… and He built them a sure house in Israel whose like has never existed from former times until now (תבר) ולא בן שם ברשע אלה אל שם מנחת תמים ותור ימצוה. Those who hold fast to it are destined to live for ever and all the glory of Adam shall be theirs (אך מייתק ולו נעש ותור ימצוה להם). As God ordained by the hand of the Prophet Ezekiel, saying, The Priests, the Levites, and the sons of Zadok who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel strayed from me, they shall offer me fat and blood (Ezek 44:15). The Priests are the converts of Israel (ישראל שבי) who departed from the land of Judah, and (the Levites are) those who joined them (והנלוים עמהם). The sons of Zadok are the elect of Israel, the men called by name (קריה יהוש) who shall stand at the end of days.

According to this text, Ezekiel’s eschatological temple already exists as a metaphysical reality. It is closely associated with the ‘glory of Adam’ and, for the community that ‘holds fast’ to it, it is the means of access to eternal life.

Aside from Sir 49:8, the earliest instances of the term merkava in connection with the vision of the heavenly throne are found in writings which were either produced by this sectarian group or, at least, held in its possession. In 1988, John Strugnell and Devorah Dimant published some fragments from Cave 4 of several copies of an extended paraphrase of Ezekiel, which they designated ‘Second Ezekiel’. In 1990, they published a further fragment of the same text (4Q385, fragment 4), which includes a summarised version of Ezek 1. The fragment consists of 15

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22 Cf. Joel 3:18; Zech 14:8; Rev 22:1–2; and see Wacholder, ‘Ezekiel and Ezekelianism’, 195. This suggestion is in no way incompatible with the widely held view that the sect’s withdrawal into the desert was partly inspired by Isa 40:3, as indicated in the Rule of the Community (1QS 8:12–16) (see, for example, VanderKam, Dead Sea Scrolls Today, 104f.; Garcia Martinez, ‘Men of the Dead Sea’, 32–35.
24 Strugnell and Dimant, ‘4Q Second Ezekiel’.
25 Dimant and Strugnell, ‘Merkabah Vision’.
lines from what seems to be the fourth column of the scroll, with the right margin more or less intact, as follows:  

1 And my people shall be […]  
2 with contented heart and with willing soul […]  
3 and conceal thyself for a little while […]  
4 and cleaving […]  
5 the vision which Ezekiel saw […]  
6 a radiance (לה) of a chariot (מרכבת) and four living creatures; a living creature […] and while walking they would not turn  
7 backwards; upon each living creature was walking, and [its] two legs […]  
8 [leg […] was spiritual and their faces were joined to the other. And the shape of the]  
9 faces, one of a lion, and one of an eagle, and one of a calf, and one of a man, and each one had a hand of […]  
10 man joined (דבקה) from the backs of the living creatures and attached to [their wings] and the wheels…  
11 wheel joined (חובר) to wheel as they went, and from the two sides of the wheels were streams of fire…  
12 and there was in the midst (בתוך) of the coals living creatures, like coals of fire, like torches in the midst of…  
13 the wheels and the living creatures and the wheels; and there was over their heads a firmament like  
14 the terrible ice. [And there was a sound [from above the firmament…]

The appearance of the merkava in line 6 is a departure from the order of the biblical chapter, where the throne appears only at the end of the vision, after the description of the hayyot and the wheels, at the point where this fragment ends. However, the word נגה (noga, radiance) does occur in Ezek 1:4. It may be that the term merkava here applies in an extended sense to the vision as a whole, as in some rabbinic sources. The rest of the fragment follows the biblical sequence with only minor variations but, although shorter than the biblical text, adds several interpretative details. In lines 6–7, Dimant and Strugnell detect the influence of Isa 6:2, concerning the wings of the serafim, ‘…two covering his face, two covering his feet, and two with which he flew’. In lines 10–12, the relationship between the terminology of the fragment and that of the biblical account becomes somewhat confusing. In line 10, the term דבקה (deveka, joining), which does not occur in the biblical text, is derived from 2 Chr 3:12, where it applies to the wings of the

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keruvim in the temple sanctuary. In Ezek 1:9, the wings of the hayyot are likewise said to be ‘joined’ to each other, but the verb used here is חָבָר. In the fragment, this verb is applied to the wheels (line 11: ‘wheel joined to wheel’). In the biblical version, we read ‘a wheel within (בְּתוֹךּ) a wheel’ (1:16). In the fragment, בתוך occurs on the next line: ‘in the midst of the coals, living creatures’, whereas Ezek 1:13 states simply that the appearance of the hayyot was ‘like’ (כ) that of coals of fire. In short, it seems that the author is using terminology derived from Ezek 1, but that the various terms have been displaced by the additional word דבקה in line 10 (corresponding to Ezek 1:9), which has been borrowed from 2 Chr 3:12:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>4Q385.4</th>
<th>Ezek 1 (MT)</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>lines 6–7</td>
<td>The hayyot have (?) 6 legs.</td>
<td>The serafim (= the keruvim of 1 Chr 28:18) have 6 wings.</td>
<td>Isa 6:2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 10</td>
<td>The hands of the hayyot are joined (דפקה).</td>
<td>The wings of the hayyot are joined (_MAXIMUM).</td>
<td>Ezek 10:14–15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 11</td>
<td>A wheel joined (והבר) to a wheel.</td>
<td>A wheel within (_MAXIMUM) a wheel.</td>
<td>2 Chr 3:12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>line 12</td>
<td>The hayyot are in the midst of (בותוך) the coals.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It thus appears that the author of the Qumran fragment is interpreting Ezekiel’s merkava vision in the light of other scriptural passages, namely, 2 Chr 3, Isa 6, and Ezek 10, all of which describe the interior
of the holy of holies and the angelic beings who draw the chariot of the ark. Dimant and Strugnell draw attention to the fact that the Qumran author does not explicitly identify the hayyot with the keruvim of Ezek 10, even though this is clearly implied by his allusion to 2 Chr 3:12. They infer from this fact that the Qumran author may have been unwilling to endorse this identification. However, this suggestion seems unlikely. Rather, the equation: hayyot = keruvim = serafim is so clearly implicit in the text that it appears to have been something that the author took for granted, and saw no need to explain. This is consistent with the evidence surveyed above, which indicates that, in the biblical literature, the three terms all refer to the heavenly guardians and bearers of the throne or ark in the heavenly sanctuary. We find a different usage in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period and later—including many pseudepigrapha, rabbinic writings, and the hekhalot texts—where the three terms represent distinct categories of angel. The author of Second Ezekiel seems to have observed the older usage encountered in scripture and not to have been influenced by the tendency towards differentiation and proliferation of angelic species, a tendency which is very characteristic of literature produced during the later Second Temple period. This may indicate that Second Ezekiel is an early and therefore ‘pre-sectarian’ composition, possibly antedating Sir 49:8. If so, this would be the earliest surviving instance of the term merkava in the context of Ezekiel’s vision.

The most significant locus of merkava material at Qumran occurs in the thirteen ‘Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice’ (שירות служба השבת), which form a liturgical cycle intended for performance on the thirteen sabbaths of the first quarter of the year according to the fixed solar calendar observed by the community. It is unknown whether or not the cycle was repeated during the second, third and fourth quarters of the year. This is certainly possible, but we shall find that its integration with the

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28 Dimant and Strugnell (ibid.) further observe that the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (see further below) ‘refer only to the Cherubim but pass in silence over the Living Creatures’.
29 As will be seen below, the role of the keruvim as the guardians of Eden (Gen 3:24) is consistent with this observation.
30 On this subject, see especially Olyan, Thousand Thousands Served Him, reviewed in detail by Morray-Jones, JSS 42 (1997) 154–159.
31 This is inferred by Elior, ‘Merkavah Tradition’, 119, who observes: ‘The months of the year are specified by numbers, not by names, so that the liturgical order of the thirteen Sabbaths may be repeated in each of the four seasons, whose dates coincide in the 364-day calendar.’ On the fourfold repeating structure of the solar year, see
first quarter of the cultic calendar was especially significant. Fragments of ten copies of the text have survived: eight from Cave 4 (4Q400–407), one from Cave 11 (11Qshirshabb), and one from the Zealot stronghold of Masada (Masada shirshabb). Carol Newsom believed the text to be a sectarian composition. She has subsequently reconsidered this opinion and concluded that it is probably of extra-sectarian, even pre-sectarian, provenance. She acknowledges, however, that the evidence is not at all conclusive.

Three points are held to weigh against the probability of sectarian authorship: the absence of explicitly sectarian polemic; the discovery of a copy at Masada; and the frequent occurrence of the word *Elohim*, deviating from the convention of avoidance of this term, which is characteristic of texts the sectarian origin of which is largely undisputed. 

Newsom rightly regards the first of these three points as indecisive, since ‘A religious sect may have other needs as a community that do not have to do explicitly with defining the boundaries between itself and the larger religious community from which it has separated.’ With regard to the second point, a variety of theories are able to account for the presence of a sectarian document at Masada. If discovery outside Qumran were held to be proof of non-sectarian authorship, the unambiguously sectarian Damascus Document would likewise be excluded. The remaining objection, deviant use of *Elohim*, carries greater weight. However, the term also occurs in the ‘Songs of the Maskil’ (4Q510–511). This text appears to be very closely related to the Sabbath Songs, but Newsom nonetheless believes it to be a sectarian composition ‘composed under the strong influence both of the Hodayot and the Sabbath Songs’. In this case, she explains the anomalous occurrence of *Elohim* on the grounds that ‘the Songs of the Maskil are conceived of as words of power. In such a context the use of a normally restricted divine name

VanderKam, *Calendars in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, especially 52–90, and the sources cited there.


is readily explicable. This point, however, applies equally to the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, which involves the summoning or adjuration of angelic companies to assist in the performance of the worship of the heavenly temple and, if the interpretation offered below is correct, in the ritual construction of that temple. The fact that the Sabbath Songs also seems to be related to the explicitly sectarian 4QBerakhot further strengthens the case for its sectarian origin, as does the formulaic use of the expression le-maskil as part of the heading of each song. Nonetheless, Newsom concludes that:

The most plausible explanation seems to be that the Sabbath Songs alone originated outside of and probably prior to the emergence of the Qumran community. Appropriated by the Qumran sect, this document became an important text in the community...At some point, probably during the first century B.C.E., the Songs of the Maskil were composed, under the strong influence of both the Hodayot and the Sabbath Songs.

The theory that the Sabbath Songs is a sectarian composition has the advantage of economy over Newsom’s rather tentative hypothesis. As she herself remarks, the text clearly implies the existence of a highly organized worshipping community. To deny its sectarian provenance thus requires us to postulate the existence of another, unknown religious group. Even if Newson is right, the sectarians clearly attributed high importance to this composition, a conclusion confirmed by the existence of multiple copies at Qumran. As she observes, even if authorship of the liturgy is ascribed to non-sectarian sources, it nonetheless ‘functioned as an adopted or naturalized text within the sectarian perspective of the Qumran community’. Therefore, regardless of its origin, the liturgy contains important evidence of the sectarians’ religious practices and core beliefs.

Each song begins with a summons to praise God, addressed to the angels, and goes on to describe the performance of the angelic liturgy. The heavenly temple is divided into seven sanctuaries (דבירים or, in two instances, מיכלים), also called paths (נתיבות), each under the

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37 Ibid. 185.
38 See further below.
39 E.g., 4Q403 1.i.30; למשכיל שיר שולחメッטיות ובשש עולות זיוון שיר. See further Newsom, Songs, 3.
40 Newsom, 'Sectually Explicit', 184.
41 Ibid. 184 n. 13.
42 Ibid. 185.
43 4Q400.1.i.13: למשכיל נבודה; 11 Qshirshabb 2–1–9.7: מיכלים ממלך.
presidency of an angelic prince (שֶׁר). The first five songs of the cycle deal with the angelic priestly councils of the lower devirim and create the framework of a ritual journey through the courts of the temple towards the sacred center. As observed by Newsom, the language of Songs 6–8, at the heart of the cycle, is characterized by a repetitious and hypnotic quality, suggestive of an increase in intensity of devotion.44 In these songs especially, the number seven occupies a major role.45 The sixth song begins as follows:

[Ps]alm of praisesong (תהלת רומיו) by the tongue of the sev[enth of the chief princes,]

a mighty praisesong to the God of holiness with [its] sev[en] wondrous [praisesongs.]

and he will sing praise to the King of holiness seven times with s[even words of] wondrous [praisesong.]

Seven psalms of His blessings; seven p[salms of the magnification of His righteousness;]

seven psalms of the exaltation of His kingdom; seven psalms of the p[raise of His glory;]

seven psalms of thanksgiving for His wonders; seven psalms of thanksgiving

for His wonders; seven psalms of rejoicing in His strength;
[sev]en psalms of praise for His holiness, the nature […]46

The sixth song marks the transition from the outer courts of the temple into the sanctuary proper. The seventh song, at the heart of the cycle, takes us into the holy of holies. Here, instead of a single call to the angels to worship God, we find a series of seven such calls. These are almost certainly addressed to the angelic councils of the seven devirim. The temple itself is portrayed as an animate structure, while its architectural features and appointments are angelic or quasi-angelic entities, who participate in the praise of God:

Sing praises to the mighty God with the choicest spiritual portion, that there may be [melody]y together with divine joy, and (let there be) a celebration with all the holy ones, that there may be wondrous songs together with e[ternal] joy.
With these let all the *foundations of the holy* of holies praise, the uplifting pillars of the supremely lofty abode, and all the corners of its structure.

Sing praise to God who is Deadful in power, [all you spirits of knowledge and light] in order to exalt together the splendidly shining firmament of [His] holy sanctuary.

[Give praise to Him, O you god[like] spirits, in order to praise for ever and ever] the firmament of the uppermost heaven, all [its beams] and its walls, [for]m, the work of [its] structure.47

It is important to observe that, according to this passage, the innermost sanctuary of the heavenly temple is identical with the highest heaven. This is indicated by the parallel expressions ‘firmament of his holy sanctuary’ and ‘firmament of the uppermost heaven’. ‘The uppermost heaven’, moreover, is said to have beams and walls. As in 1 Enoch and The Testament of Levi, the courts and chambers of the temple are, in fact, the celestial levels. The temple is not ‘in’ heaven: its seven ‘sanctuaries’ are the heavens.

At the end of the song, we encounter a plurality of merkavot. These too are angelic entities who participate in the temple’s worship:

And all the crafted furnishings of the debir hasten (to join) with wondrous psalms in the debir[...] of wonder, debir to debir with the sound of holy multitudes. And all their crafted furnishings [...] And the chariots (מרכבות) of His debir give praise together, and their cherubim and their ophanim bless wondrously [...] the chiefs of the divine structure. And they praise Him in His holy debir.48

The fact that the *keruvim* are associated with ofanim (wheels) identifies them clearly as Ezekiel’s *hayyot*.49 The plural merkavot, which are also encountered in songs 11 and 12,50 are apparently angelic entities.51 Newsom observes that the praise of these multiple merkavot may well be related to the expression ‘devir to devir with the sound of holy multitudes’, in which case the merkavot are involved in the process of ‘relaying’ the praise of God from the lower devirim to the higher ones. This might mean that there are seven merkavot, one in each sanctuary

47 4Q403.1, i.30–ii.16 (Song 7), trans. Newsom, Songs, 211–213.
49 See p. 311 n. 28 above.
50 See further below.
51 Compare, perhaps, Isa 66:15, where the merkavot accompany God in the execution of his final judgement.
or heaven. The image of a throne or merkava in each of seven heavens is found, for example in the Ascension of Isaiah, the merkava midrash Visions of Ezekiel,52 and Hekhalot Zutarti (§ 413–419). On the other hand, MT Ps. 68:18 states that ‘the chariots of God are twenty thousand and two thousand.’ According to a midrashic tradition attributed to named rabbis of the third and fourth centuries, and also to a mysterious ‘band that came up from Babylonia’, the meaning of this verse is that ‘…twenty two thousand chariots of ministering angels descended with the Holy One, blessed be he, at Sinai.’53

MT Ps 68:18 is the first of a pair of verses,54 the Hebrew syntax of which is, in places, unclear:

\[
\begin{align*}
18 & \text{The chariots of God are twenty thousand and two thousand; the Lord among them; Sinai in holiness;} \\
19 & \text{You ascended to the height; you led captives in captivity; you received gifts among mankind.}
\end{align*}
\]

Halperin has shown that this couplet performs an important function in exegetical traditions associated with the festival of Shavuot (Pentecost), commemorating the Sinai revelation.56 In some rabbinic circles, the prescribed Tora portion and prophetic reading (haftara) for this festival were, respectively, Exod 19 and Ezek 1. 57 Ps 68:18 provided a natural connection between these two passages, while the following verse contributed to the widespread tradition of Moses’ ascent from the

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53 PRK 12.22 (ed. Mandelbaum 1: 219–221); TanhB yitro 14 (38b–39a); Tanh tsaw 12 (ed. Zondel 2: 9a); TanhB tsaw 15 (10b). See further Halperin, Faces, 141–144. The puzzling attribution, ‘some (members) of a party that came up from Babylonia said . . .’ (אמרו מכת שעה ממכבים) occurs only in PRK. Suggested emendations of מכת have included מכתו (‘a text . . .’) and במסורה (‘in a tradition . . .’). See further: Lieberman, ‘Mishnat’, 122 n. 20; Braude and Kapstein, Psikta d’Rab Kahanah, 243 n. 58; Neusner, Pesiqta deRab Kahana 1.211; see also p. 319 n. 73 below.
54 MT Ps 68:18–19 = LXX Ps 67:18–19 = RSV Ps 68:17–18 (cited here and below in accordance with MT).
55 According to Albright (‘Catalogue’, 24–25), followed by Cross (Canaanite Myth, 102) and Mullen (Divine Council, 193), the hapax נאֶחֶשׁ is derived from a Ugaritic word meaning ‘warrior’ or ‘bowman’. Knowledge of this meaning seems, however, to have been lost at an early stage of the Jewish exegetical tradition, in which the word is invariably understood to carry the meaning of ‘doubling’ or ‘repetition’. See further below.
57 tMeg 3(4):5; bMeg 31a.
summit of Sinai to the heavenly throne. Further evidence of the existence of this tradition in third-century Palestine is provided by Origen, who interprets ‘the heavens were opened’ (Ezek 1:1) in the light of Eph 4:8–12, which quotes Ps 68:19. Origen also quotes Ps 68:19 in connection with the ‘opening of the heavens’ at Jesus’ baptism, and with the gift of the Spirit to the apostles at Pentecost. Halperin concludes:

... Origen knows the Jewish stories of Moses’ ascension; he knows that their germ and nucleus is Psalm 68:19, and he knows that they are connected, through this verse, to Ezekiel’s merkabah. By replacing the ascension haggadot with Ephesians 4:10–12, he lets Jesus take the place of Moses as the hero who invades heaven and brings back gifts for humanity, including the institutions of a new covenant and the help of the angels.

Halperin’s analysis is undoubtedly correct, and is an important contribution to our understanding of these traditions. However, the parallel between Christ and the ascending-descending Moses did not originate with Origen. The same parallel is already implicit in Eph 4:7–13, where the spiritual gifts given to men by the ascended Christ are the pentecostal commissioning gifts of the Holy Spirit. And, since the background of the passage in Ephesians must lie in the Shavuot stories of Moses’ heavenly ascent, the origins of those stories must be a good deal earlier than the third century CE.

Halperin detects a connection between Sinai and Ezekiel’s merkava in Apoc. Abr. 15–18. He notes that, according to a rabbinic tradition, Abraham saw Sinai in the vision described in Gen 15:17 (cf. Apoc. Abr. 15:1), while Jub 14:8–20 states that the same vision occurred at Shavuot. A further connection between Sinai and the merkava, via Ps 68:18, should be noted. The LXX version of Ezek 43:2 reads: καὶ φωνὴ τῆς παρεμβολῆς ὡς διπλασιαζόντων πολλῶν (‘the voice of the camp was like the voice of many repeaters’). Halperin points out that ‘the voice of the camp’ must be derived from Ezek 1:24 (‘...like the sound of many waters...like the sound of a camp...’). He suggests that the

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60 Halperin, Faces, 336.
61 See further pp. 603–609 below, and the sources cited there.
62 See further: Meeks, ‘Moses as God and King’, idem, Prophet-King.
63 Halperin, Faces, 105–110.
64 MT: ἔχολεν καλάλα μία βιβία ('and his voice was like the sound of great waters').
strange word διπλασιαζόντων (‘repeaters’) reflects the equally puzzling נַשַׁן of Ps 68:18.65

The translator of Ezekiel 43:2—or, more likely, the tradition that he followed—deduced from this etymology that the shin’an are the ‘repeaters’ of God’s praise, who were present with God’s chariots (rekheb) at Sinai, and who therefore were part of Ezekiel’s chariot vision. He aptly translated their title into Greek as diplasiazonton (Greek diplos, ‘double’, corresponds to Hebrew shanah).66

The presence of this ‘midrash’ in the LXX led Halperin to conclude that the origins of the merkava/Sinai exegetical complex, including the use of Ps 68:18–19 as a link between the two, goes back to a pre-Christian Alexandrian Jewish community.67 However, subsequent research has shown that these same traditions played an important role in the cultic cycle at Qumran.

Bilhah Nitzan has published a preliminary study of two fragments of a collection of ceremonial blessings and curses from Cave 4 (4QBerakhot), dating from the early first century CE.68 The text includes a reference to ‘the council of the community’ (הָאִדַּה עֹצֶת) and is therefore almost certainly a sectarian composition.69 Nitzan’s study confirms J.T. Milik’s identification of the text as part of an expanded version of the liturgy for the annual ceremony of the renewal of the Community’s covenant, which occurred on the fifteenth day of the third month, at Shavuot.70

The first fragment begins as follows:

65 See p. 316 n. 55 above.
66 Halperin, Faces, 58.
68 Nitzan, ‘4QBerakhot’; see also Davila, Liturgical Works, 41–82.
69 4Q286 10.ii.1. See Newsom, Songs, 2; and idem, ‘Sectually Explicit’, 181.
70 Milik, ‘Miî-Kêdêq’, 135–137; cf. idem, Ten Years 117–8; and see also Elior, ‘Merkavah Tradition’, 131–136. Milik arrives at the date of the ceremony by combining the evidence of ‘our oldest manuscript of the Damascus Document’, which places it in the third month, with that of Jubilees (6:17–22, 14:18–20, 22:1–7, 29:7, 44:5–8), which places the festival of Shavuot on the fifteenth of that month (Ten Years, 117). Given the covenantal significance of Shavuot in Jubilees, Milik’s argument is compelling. A simpler form of the same blessings and curses occurs in the Community Rule (1QS 2.2–17), in the context of the ceremony of admission to the sectarian covenant community. – N.B.: Milik initially identified the Qumran manuscript as ‘4Q D’ (Ten Years, 58) but subsequently corrected this to ‘4QD’ (4Q266) 3 X 16 fin-21 début, le manuscrit qui date du premier tiers du Ier siècle avant J.-C., which he published with lacunae supplied from ‘4QD’ (4Q270) 6 X, qui est tracé en alphabet héroïen classique’ (‘Milki-edeq et Milki-réša’, 135). The two fragments appear to correspond, respectively, to ‘4QDamascus Document’ (4Q267 [4QD]), Frag. 18 col. v, 17–20’, and ‘4QDamascus
The language of the text as a whole is very similar to that of the Sabbath Shirot, and the reference to a plurality of merkavot should be noted. Nitzan identifies allusions to the merkava descriptions of Dan 7:9, 1 En 14 and, indirectly, Ezek 1:26–27 and 8:2. There are detailed allusions to biblical lists of divine attributes occurring in contexts associated with renewal of the Sinai covenant (Exod 34:6–7; Deut 10:17, 21), and to descriptions of the Sinai theophany in Moses’ final blessing (Deut 33:2–5, 26–27). Allusions to Ps 68 are also evident, especially in the second fragment.

According to the solar calendar observed at Qumran, the fifteenth day of the third month fell on the day following the eleventh sabbath of the sect’s cultic year. It is, therefore, almost certainly significant that one of the two or three surviving fragments of the eleventh Sabbath Song, like 4QBerakhot, makes reference to a multitude of angelic merkavot, which are mentioned not once but several times:

1. [They do not delay when they arise... the dev]irim of all the priests of the inner sanctum [...] 

2. By [strict ordinance they] are steadfast in the ser[vice of...] a seat like His royal throne (מלכותו ככסא מושב) in [His glorious devirim. They do not sit...]

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71 4QBer 1.ii (Nitzan, ‘4QBerakhot’, 56 [text] and 57 [translation]).
72 Thus also Newsom, Songs, 2; and idem, ‘Sectually Explicit’, 180.
73 See Nitzan, ‘4QBerakhot’, 63–71. In the light of this material, I am tempted to entertain the speculation that the unique expression in PRK 12,22, ‘...a party that came up from Babylonia’ (see n. 68 above) may be a garbled reference to a long-forgotten sectarian group that preserved the traditions represented at Qumran.
74 According to the sectarian calendar as reconstructed on the basis of 1 En 72–82 and Jubilees by Milik (Ten Years, 107), the eleventh sabbath falls on the fourteenth day of the third month; and see Jaubert, Date, 26–29. Elier (‘Merkavah Tradition’, 108) observes that, according to the solar calendar, ‘the festivals fell on fixed days of the week and in fixed seasons of the year; no festival could fall on a Sabbath, and every festival stood in a seven-fold relationship to other festivals.’
3. His glorious chariot(s) (מכובות הנדוה) [...] holy keruvim, luminous ofanim in the de[vir... spirits of godlike beings... purity...]

4. of holiness, the construction of [its] cor[ners... royal [...] the glorious seats of the chariot th[rones (למרכבות מרובע עננים)... wings of knowledge... wondrous powers...]

5. truth and righteousness, eternal [...] His glorious chariots as they move (מכובות כבודו בלכתמה) [...] they do not turn to any side... they go straight...]

A passage in the later hekhalot literature tells of vast numbers of angelic merkavot who, with their accompanying 'flames' (שהלביות), relay God's praises from the lowest sanctuary to the highest: 76

In the first hekhal, the fiery merkavot say: 'Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of Hosts! The whole earth is full of his Glory!' And the fiery flames disperse, then reassemble in the second hekhal, saying: 'Holy! Holy! Holy! is the Lord of Hosts! The whole earth is full of his Glory!'

In the second hekhal, the fiery merkavot say: 'Blessed be the Glory of the Lord from his place!' And again, the fiery flames disperse, then reassemble in the third hekhal, saying: 'Blessed be the Glory of the Lord from his place!'

[The process continues through hekhalot three to six.]

In the seventh hekhal, the fiery merkavot say: 'Blessed be the King of the kings of kings, the Lord, the lord of every power! Who is like God, who lives and endures? His praise is in the highest heavens! His holy kingdom is in the most exalted and highest heavens! His Power is in the innermost chambers! Sanctification from here, and sanctification from there!' And they pour forth song unceasingly and commemorate the name of הוהי שלמה the Lord God of Israel, saying: 'Blessed be the name of his glorious kingdom for ever and ever from the house of his indwelling!'

These angelic merkavot are distinctly reminiscent of the 'repeaters' of God's praise of God, encountered in LXX Ezek 43:2 (cf. Ps 68:18–19), 77 and it may well be that the expression: 'devir to devir with the sound of holy multitudes' in the seventh song of the Qumran cycle refers to a scenario very much like that described in this hekhalot passage. The formulaic style of the hekhalot passage is quite similar to what we find in the Sabbath Songs. The image of praise being relayed and repeated by

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76 MMerk § 6 (Scholern, Jewish Gnosticism, 106–107; Schäfer, § 544–545). The numbers vary considerably between the manuscripts. Majority readings are followed where possible above.

77 See pp. 317–318 above.
the angels, which is reflected in the antiphonal structure of the Songs themselves, may also be associated with the calling of the **serafim** ‘one to another’ as they recite the **Kedusha** (Isa 6:3).\(^7\)

As observed above, the seventh song, marking the entrance to the holy of holies, brings the first half of the ritual cycle to its climax. The eighth song is only fragmentarily preserved, but appears to be closely parallel to song 6. Songs 9–11 describe in detail the vestibules, courts and furnishings of the temple. There are numerous references to celestial life-forms whose images are carved on the interior walls. These correspond to the carvings of **keruvim**, trees and flowers in both Solomon’s temple and Ezekiel’s ideal form.\(^7\)

Newsom regards the seventh song as the climax of the Sabbath Songs cycle as a whole, forming the apex of a liturgical pyramid structure.\(^8\)

I suggest that this analysis requires modification and that the seventh song is, in fact, no more than a preliminary crescendo. In my opinion, it is the twelfth song, falling on the sabbath following the covenant-renewal ceremony of 4QBerakhot, that forms the true climax of the liturgical cycle as a whole.\(^8\)

This song describes the manifestation of the Glory upon the merkava:\(^8\)

> By the Instructor. Song of the sacrifice of the twelfth [sa]bbath [on the twenty-first of the third month.]
> Praise the God of . . . wondrous . . . and exalt him, . . . the Glory in the tabernacle of the God of knowledge.
>
The **keruvim** fall before him and bless. When they rise, the sound of divine silence (יָדָם קול) [is heard], then a tumult of jubilation as their wings are raised.

- In the sound of divine silence, they bless the image of the chariot-throne (حسبת כסא תבנית) above the firmament of the **keruvim**, [and] they sing of [the splendor of the radiant firmament beneath the seat of his Glory (כבודומושב).]

- And when the wheels (אופנים) go, the holy angels return. From between the [w]heels of his Glory (粏לפי הכבוד), like the appearance of fire, go forth the holy spirits. Round about is the appearance of streams of fire.

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\(^7\) See Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer*, 276–282 and 315–316.


\(^8\) Newsom, *Songs*, 5–21.

\(^8\) Neither Newsom (*Songs*, 55–56) nor Nitzan (*Qumran Prayer*, 313–314) seem fully to appreciate the significance of this song but Davila (*Liturgical Works*, 87–90) concurs with my opinion.

Like hashmal, a radiant substance of glorious colours, wondrously hued and purely blended, are the spirits of the living Elohim that move continuously with the glory of the wondrous chariots (הכובד מרכבות פלא).

There is a sound of silent blessing in the tumult of their movement, and they praise his holiness while returning on their paths.

When they rise up, they rise marvellously, and when they settle, they stand still. The sound of joyful praise falls silent, and there is a silence of divine blessing in all the camps of the Elohim.

And the sound of their praises [...] from among all their divisions [...] and all the numbered ones praise, each in his turn.

The second half of the Sabbath Songs cycle is evidently based on the description of the ideal temple in Ezek 40–48. Newsom is clearly right to connect the passage shown above with the vision described in Ezek 43:1–5, where the Glory on the merkava returns to the holy of holies:

1Then he brought me to the gate that faces eastward, 2and behold, the Glory of the God of Israel coming from the east! His voice was like the sound of many waters, and the earth was illuminated by His Glory. 3And the vision that I saw was like the vision that I had seen when He came to destroy the city, and like the vision that I had seen by the River Khebar, and I fell upon my face. 4And the Glory of the LORD came into the House by way of the gate that faced eastward. 5Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the inner court, and the Glory of the LORD filled the House.

Newsom comments:

I would suggest that the author of the Shirot, still following the outline of Ezekiel 40–48, first described the structure of the heavenly temple and then gave an account of the entry of the divine chariot throne into the temple and the appearance of its glory there, an account modelled after Ezek 43:1–5 but enriched with details from Ezekiel 1 and 10.

Halperin suggests that the ‘sound of divine silence’ in the twelfth song is derived from the account of God’s appearance to Elijah in 1 Kgs 19:11, but, given the fact that this liturgical composition is clearly based on an idealized form of the temple-cult tradition, the reference is more likely to Hab 2:20 (‘But the LORD is in his Holy Temple; let all the earth

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83 Cf. Ezek 1:4, 1:27. See further below.
84 Newsom, Songs, 55.
85 Halperin, Faces, 51.
86 Compare Aristeas 92, 95, on which see Hayward, Jewish Temple, 32–34. See now Knohl, ‘Between Voice and Silence’. 
keep silence before him!’) and/or to Zech 2:17 (2:1) (‘Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD; for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling!’). The hekhalot texts likewise speak of a moment of awesome stillness at the climax of the heavenly liturgy, when the tumultuous sound of the angelic worship falls silent, and the divine Glory descends upon the merkava. A striking example, to be discussed more fully in Part III below, occurs in the shiur koma section of ‘Siddur Rabba di-Bereshit’, where the angelic high priest, here called ‘the Youth’ מועמר enters beneath the throne and summons the divine Glory to appear:

And the angels who are with him (the Youth) come and encircle the throne of glory. They are on one side, the hayyot are on the other side, and the Shekhina is in the center. And one hayya rises above the throne of glory and draws near to the serafim, then alights upon the tabernacle of the Youth and says in a loud voice, a voice of silence: ‘The throne alone shall I exalt above him!’ At once, the wheels are silent, the serafim are still, the troops of watchers and holy ones are thrust into the River Dinur, the hayyot turn their faces to the ground, and the Youth brings fire of deafness and puts it in their ears, so that they do not hear the voice that is spoken, and so that he alone remains. And the Youth calls him the great, mighty, awesome, majestic, strong, powerful, pure, holy, stalwart, precious, honoured, clean, guiltless, beloved, wonderful, exalted, uplifted and glorified God!87

There are several points of contact between this passage and the twelfth song from Qumran. In both, we find the same dynamic quality, and the same paradoxical combination of sound and silence. The prostration of the hayyot parallels that of the keruvim in the song. In the song, the keruvim ‘rise up’ and ‘settle’, as does ‘one hayya’ in the shiur koma piece. Both texts are describing the same climactic moment in the celestial liturgy. It should be observed that the shiur koma passage is, like the Sabbath Shirot, a liturgical text designed for recitation.

The thirteenth and final song of the Qumran cycle describes the angelic priests, their ritual vestments, and the sacrifices that they perform before the divine throne. Fletcher-Louis considers these figures to be identical with the senior priests of the community, who are held to be the embodiments of the divine Glory itself.88 He concludes, therefore, that the climax of the cycle is located in neither the seventh

88 See Fletcher-Louis, All the Glory, 356–394.
song (as advocated by Newsom) nor the twelfth (as proposed by me) but in the thirteenth:

*It is here, in the XIIIth, that the liturgy truly reaches its climax with a vision of the community’s priesthood taking the place of the occupant of the throne-chariot.*\(^8^9\)

*It is in the XIIIth Song that the human form seated on God’s throne in Ezekiel 1 first comes into view. The human high priesthood here makes manifest the anthropomorphic appearance of the Glory of the Lord.*\(^9^0\)

This conclusion follows from Fletcher-Louis’ very detailed and insightful exegesis of the cycle as a whole, in which he demonstrates that a relationship of ‘functional synchronicity’ and ‘spatial overlap’ exists between the priestly community on earth and the angelic denizens of the heavenly temple.\(^9^1\) It is undoubtedly true that the Qumran sectarians considered themselves to be in fellowship with the celestial hosts and attributed to themselves, (quasi-) angelic status.\(^9^2\) Moreover, the glory of the celestial Adam (or: Logos) was ritually embodied in the person of the High Priest, and the idea that his vestments were symbolic of that glory, is, as Fletcher-Louis shows, by no means unique to the Qumran literature.\(^9^3\) His suggestion that, at Qumran, the chief priests of the holy community were considered, in their liturgical function, to be visible manifestations of the divine *kavod*, is not merely plausible but probable almost to the point of certainty.\(^9^4\) The role of this ‘glorified’ human priesthood is to represent and mediate the divine *kavod* to the community of worshippers, which is thereby incorporated into the celestial hierarchy of glory.

However, Fletcher-Louis appears to be saying that the celestial Glory has no other mode of visible appearance than in the person(s) of the sectarian priest(s) at Qumran. If so, he seriously overstates his case. The clothing of the human priests with glory in the thirteenth song—if

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\(^{8^9}\) *Ibid.* 375.

\(^{9^0}\) *Ibid.* 386 (author’s italics).


\(^{9^2}\) On the angelic status of priests and merkava practitioners, see further Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 192–205.

\(^{9^3}\) The same motif is encountered in a variety of Jewish sources. See Fletcher-Louis, *ibid.* 56–87. See also Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 38–84, 108–118, and the sources cited there.

\(^{9^4}\) It should be noted in passing that Fletcher-Louis (*All the Glory*, 248–251) traces the origin of the term ‘Essene’ to the breastplate (נְשֵׁן) worn by the High Priest (Exod 25:7, etc.).
this is, indeed, what is happening—is an expression of their mystical communion with the divine \textit{kavod}, which, in turn, facilitates the union between the community’s worship and the liturgy of the angels. It does not mean that the cosmic function of the manifest Glory has been wholly usurped by the person(s) of the priest(s). Thus, while the glorification of the priests in the thirteenth song may legitimately be regarded as, in a sense, climactic, it flows as a consequence from the descent of the \textit{kavod} to the sanctuary, as described in song 12. This descent, following immediately from the covenant-renewal ceremony of Shavuot, seems to form a more fitting climax to the cycle as a whole. It may further be noted that, according to Michael Chyutin, the lunar date of Ezekiel’s merkava vision, ‘in the fourth month, on the fifth day of the month’ (Ezek 1:1) corresponds in the solar calendar to either the fourteenth or the fifteenth day of the third month—that is, either the eleventh sabbath or, as is perhaps more likely, the festival of Shavuot itself.\footnote{See Chyutin, \textit{Milemet luhot ha-shana}, 75; cf. Elior, ‘\textit{Merkavah Tradition}’, 134f.}

Newsom describes the purpose of the Sabbath Songs cycle as ‘something like the praxis of a communal mysticism’,\footnote{Newsom, \textit{Songs}, 19.} which aimed to produce an intense experience of being present in the heavenly temple and participating in the worship of the angels.\footnote{Wolfson (‘\textit{Mysticism and the Poetic-Liturgical Compositions}’) questions the application by Newsom and Nitzan of the adjective ‘mystical’ to this material, preferring to limit the term to the practice of the heavenly ascent. However, since religious ritual has the capacity to embody both mystical meaning and mystical experience, this arbitrary semantic restriction seems unjustified. In any case, the ritual cycle of the Sabbath Songs is, according to the above analysis, very closely related to the ascent tradition and therefore contains a ‘mystical’ dimension even if Wolfson’s narrow definition were to be accepted.\footnote{Newsom, \textit{Songs}, \textit{ibid.}} She comments:

\begin{quote}
During the course of this thirteen week cycle, the community which recites the compositions is led through a lengthy preparation. The mysteries of the angelic priesthood are recounted, a hypnotic celebration of the sabbatical number seven produces an anticipatory climax at the center of the work, and the community is then gradually led through the spiritually animate temple until the worshippers experience the holiness of the merkabah and of the Sabbath sacrifice as it is conducted by the high priests of the angels.\footnote{Newsom, \textit{Songs}, \textit{ibid.}}
\end{quote}

These songs, then, enabled the community to gain access to the heavenly temple and to join with the angelic hierarchy in its worship before the throne. By performing the liturgical cycle, the worshippers undertake a
ritual journey or ascent through the seven *devir*im (songs 1–7), followed by a detailed tour of the celestial temple, moving inwards towards the center, where the Glory manifests upon the throne. Another, perhaps better, way to understand this liturgy is to regard it as a process of ‘ritual construction’. The performance of these songs, presumably combined with intensive visualisation of the images described, will have had the effect of ‘building’ the celestial temple in the personal and collective imagination of the participants. The imperative formulae of the early hymns indicates that they are calling on the angels to participate with them in this ritual ‘temple-building’ project. The process of construction culminates in song 11, which was performed immediately before the renewal of the community’s covenant at the feast of Shavuot. On the two sabbaths following this act of rededication, in songs 12 and 13, the divine Glory is called upon to indwell the temple that has been constructed by the now reconsecrated community, to clothe its priests with glory, and to receive its offerings. As observed above, it is the descent of the Divine Glory in the holy of holies, described in song 12, that forms the true climax of the cycle. The sacred structure within which this manifestation occurs has been constructed by means of this extended ritual performance. The worship of the holy community and its celestial, angelic counterpart is, so to speak, the substance out of which the temple is composed.

The idea that this spiritual temple is ritually constructed in and through the act of worship may perhaps be inherent in the very language and terminology of this remarkable liturgy. In addition to the emphasis on song and music that pervades the text, we have observed that, especially in the latter part of the cycle, this music is produced not only by the angels and the human worshippers, but by the architectural components of the temple itself, which appears to be a living structure. The term *devir* (דביר), used of the seven courts or chambers of the temple, applies in Scripture to the holy of holies, and is probably derived from a common root with the Arabic word for ‘back’ or ‘part behind’. The King James Bible, however, renders the term by ‘oracle’, a mistranslation that goes back via the Vulgate (*oraculum*) to Aquila (χρηματιστήριον) and is based on the assumption that this word is derived from the root דבר, ‘to speak’. It seems not impos-

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99 1 Kgs 6:5–31, 7:49, 8:6–8; 2 Chr 3:16, 4:20, 8:6–8; Ps 28:2.
100 See BDB (1977) 184a–b.
sible that the author of the Sabbath Songs may have made the same verbal association and interpreted the word *devir*, in addition to its straightforward meaning, as signifying ‘speech’ or ‘utterance’. If so, the phrase: ‘*devir to devir*, with the sound of holy multitudes’ would mean that the courts or sanctuaries of the temple are actually formed by the ‘utterances’ of the angels and the worshipping community. In other words, the heavenly temple is imagined as a structure that is literally composed of living sound.101

Elsewhere in the Scrolls, as is now widely recognized, the community itself is identified with the temple:102

When these are in Israel, the Council of the Community shall be established in truth. It shall be an Everlasting Plantation, a House of Holiness for Israel, an Assembly of Supreme Holiness for Aaron...It shall be that tried wall, that *precious corner stone*, whose foundations shall neither rock nor sway in their place (Isa 26:16). It shall be a Most Holy Dwelling for Aaron, with everlasting knowledge of the Covenant of justice, and shall offer up sweet fragrance. It shall be a House of Perfection and Truth in Israel that they may establish a Covenant according to the everlasting precepts.103

The hierarchically ordered community thus embodies the living structure of the cosmic temple and its members are incorporated into that celestial reality:

He has joined their assembly to the Sons of Heaven

to be a Council of the Community,

a foundation of the Building of Holiness,

and eternal Plantation throughout all ages to come.104

The expression ‘an eternal plantation’ reflects an ancient tradition according to which the temple, and especially the interior of the sanctuary building (corresponding to the sixth and seventh *devirim* of the Qumran model) is identified with the primordial Garden of Eden, which was also the future Paradise of the righteous.105

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101 I am indebted to the late Mr. W.G. Davies for this suggestion.
102 See further Gärtner, *Temple and the Community*, 1–46.
103 1QS 8:4–9, trans. Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 72f. Compare 1QpHab 12:3–4, on which see further Vermes, 'The Religious Ideas of the Community', ibid. 50f.
into the structure of the temple confers ‘advance membership’ of the world to come and is, at the same time, a return to humanity’s original state of angelic purity. Thus, those who are admitted to this spiritual community ‘...are destined to live for ever and all the glory of Adam shall be theirs.’

### Cosmos and Temple in Later Jewish Sources

The tradition of incorporation into the celestial temple is found in a variety of rabbinic sources, where the righteous in the world to come are divided into seven hierarchical classes, and where the Garden of Eden is described as a series of seven concentric celestial chambers, built of gold, silver and precious stones. This imagery appears to be derived at least in part from the language of Ezekiel’s prophecy against the king of Tyre (Ezek 28:12–14):

You were the seal of perfect proportion, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God. Every precious stone adorned you: ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper, sapphire, turquoise and beryl. Your settings and mountings were made of gold; they were prepared on the day of your creation. You were the overshadowing outstretched keruv, for thus I appointed you. You were upon God’s holy mountain. You walked amongst fiery stones.

It has long been recognized that behind this passage there lies a version of the primordial Paradise tradition which is independent of, and possibly older than, that preserved in Genesis 2–3. The description,

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106 CD 3:20 (see p. 308 above). On the notion that the ministry of the High Priest in the temple sanctuary reflects that of Adam in Eden, and that the High Priestly vestments are symbolic of the pre-fallen Adam’s glory, see Hayward, *Jewish Temple*, 44–46 and 70ff. (on Sir 49:15–50:26). See also van Ruiten, *‘Garden of Eden’*, 315ff.

107 See, e.g: yHag 2:1 = 77a, lines 67–72; LevR 30,2; MidrTeh to Ps 11:6 (77a); cf. 4 Ezra 7:92–98.


110 Heb.: סִוכְךָבָּךְ לָמָּס הֲמוֹדָךְ. See BDB, 603b.

then, referred originally to the primordial Adam, who is the embodiment of the Divine Image or 'seal of perfect proportion', and is here identified with the golden, bejewelled keruv whose outstretched wings overshadowed the ark in the holy of holies of the temple. That the rabbis were aware of this meaning of the passage is confirmed by several sources.112

By about the first century CE, the seven-level cosmology had largely displaced the three-tier model, although Paul, in 2 Cor 12, equates Paradise (i.e., the holy of holies) with the third heaven.113 The sevenfold model is most commonly found in rabbinic sources,114 although alternative traditions enumerating two or three heavens are also sometimes mentioned.115 A correspondence between the cosmos and the structure of the temple is implied in mKel 1:6–9, which lists ten areas of increasing holiness in Jerusalem, three outside the temple and seven within. Differing opinions are expressed about the precise divisions between these areas, but all agree that there were seven levels of holiness in the temple. According to R. Yose, these levels were as follows: (1) the area within the balustrade (soreg), from which gentiles were excluded; (2) the Court of Women; (3) the Court of Israel; (4) the Court of the Priests; (5) the area between the altar and the entrance to the sanctuary; (6) the sanctuary building; and (7) the holy of holies.116

This sevenfold conceptual structure doubtless reflects the seven planetary spheres of Greek cosmology and/or the seven heavens encountered in Sumerian and Babylonian magical texts.117 Since the sacred space of the temple is conceptually arranged in concentric ‘areas of holiness’ around the ark or chariot on which God’s Glory is enthroned, it may be that the sevenfold structure also embodies ‘the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of the LORD’, as described in Ezek 1:28: ‘As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the radiance that surrounded him.’ In other words,
the seven heavens or courts of the temple may correspond to the bands of the rainbow-coloured aura that surrounds the Glory on the throne. This hypothesis perhaps helps to explain an image encountered above, in the twelfth song of the Qumran cycle: ‘Like hashmal, a radiant substance of glorious colours, wondrously hued and purely blended, are the spirits of the living Elohim that move continuously with the glory of the wondrous chariots.’\textsuperscript{118} A similar description of the hashmal is encountered in HekhZ: ‘It is \textit{like the appearance of fire} (Ezek 1:27), but it is not fire. Rather, it is like fiery flames of all kinds of colors mixed together, and the eye cannot master their likenesses.’\textsuperscript{119}

\textit{‘Descenders’ to the Merkava}

The hekhalot writings thus represent a continuation and adaptation of these traditions within, or on the fringes of, rabbinic culture. It is true that the magical technology of names and seals, to which the hekhalot writers attached great importance, is not a subject of interest at Qumran. In other respects, however, the hymns and prayers recited by the yordei merkava as they journey through the seven hekhalot, corresponding to the devirim of the Sabbath Shirot, are very similar in both content and tone to those found in the Qumran liturgy. In the central texts of the hekhalot corpus, the process of the heavenly ascent consists entirely of the journey through the seven hekhalot, which, like the devirim of the Sabbath Shirot, are identical with the celestial levels.\textsuperscript{120} For example, in HekhR’s lengthy narrative of Nehunya b. ha-Kana’s journey through the gates of the seven palaces,\textsuperscript{121} there is no mention of a prior ascent through the heavens. Nonetheless, the method is said to be ‘like having a ladder in one’s house’, which clearly indicates that the journey through the palaces and the ascent through the seven heavens are, indeed, one and the same thing.\textsuperscript{122} Similarly, in the final chapter of MMerk, Akiva speaks of gazing ‘from the palace of the first firmament to the seventh

\textsuperscript{118} 4Q405 20–21–22,ii.6, Newsom, \textit{Songs}, 303.
\textsuperscript{120} Admittedly, according to 3 En 18:3 (Schäfer § 24) and Massekhet Hekhalot § 4, all seven hekhalot are located in the highest heaven. However, as discussed on pp. 255–256 above, these texts are not typical of the corpus as a whole.
\textsuperscript{121} HekhR 17:1–25; Schäfer § 219–259.
\textsuperscript{122} HekhR 13:2 and 20.3; Schäfer § 199 and 237.
Thus, as in the apocalypses and the Sabbath Shirot, the chambers of the temple (i.e., the seven hekhalot) are identical with the celestial levels. In one important respect, however, the temple and the cosmos are structural opposites. The temple’s areas of holiness are concentric upon the holy of holies. ‘Ascent’ of the levels is therefore conceptualized as a journey ‘inwards’, to the center. The ascent into heaven, on the other hand, proceeds outwards, away from the earth, so that the sphere of greatest holiness is assigned to the periphery. This ‘dimensional shift’ may perhaps help to explain why, in 1 En 14, the ‘inner’ house is greater than the ‘outer’.

A further seeming confusion of dimensional relationships is encountered in the hekhalot literature. There, the journey through the hekhalot to the merkava is described both as an ‘ascent’ (employing the verb עלה) and, somewhat disconcertingly, as a ‘descent’ (employing the verb ירד). The two terminologies seem to be virtually interchangeable but the mystics themselves are always called ‘descenders to the chariot’ (יורד מרכבה), even in passages where the narrative verb is ‘to ascend’. Various explanations of this puzzling terminology have been offered. Of especial interest is Alan Segal’s suggestion that the language of ‘descent’ may be associated with the ‘fetal’ position described by Rav Hai Gaon, who, it will be recalled, stated that the aspiring yored merkava ‘must sit

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123 Ed. Scholem, § 33; Schäfer § 595.
125 Scholem (Jewish Gnosticism, 20 n. 1) suggests that the language of ‘descent’ may be derived from the rabbinic expression: ירד לפני אברהם, referring to the cantor in the synagogue who ‘goes down before the ark’. Dan (Three Types, 34 n. 29; and idem, The Ancient, 79–80) believes it to be derived from Cant 6:11 (‘I went down into the nursery’). Halperin (Faces, 226–227) relates it to midrashic traditions about the ‘descent’ of the Israelites to the Red Sea. Stroumsa (Hidden Wisdom, 169–183) submits that it may been borrowed from the Greek and Hellenistic tradition of descent (κατάβασις) into the underworld. Wolfson (‘Yerida la-Merkava’ and Through a Speculum, 82–85) argues that the expression ירד לפני אברהם refers primarily to the final stage of the heavenly ascent, i.e., the entrance of the mystic into the heavenly throne room, and his individual enthronement, not to the visionary journey as a whole. Kuyt, ‘Once Again’ and ‘Descent to the Chariot’, offers a very detailed analysis of all the ‘descent’ passages in the Hekhalot corpus in which she attempts, with limited success, to define the range of phenomena covered by the terms: ירד לפני אברהם, ירד, ורד, etc., but makes no attempt to explain what this strange terminology may have meant.
126 Segal, Paul, 322 n. 77.
in fast... and lay his head between his knees and whisper to the ground many hymns and songs.\textsuperscript{127}

As noted above, Rav Hai Gaon’s statement appears to be derived from HekhZ § 424.\textsuperscript{128} The posture described also corresponds to that of Elijah on Mount Carmel in 1 Kgs 18:42. Allusions to the same posture are encountered in rabbinic sources, which state that the first-century miracle worker Hanina b. Dosa ‘squeezed his head between his knees’ when praying for the life of Yohanan b. Zakkai’s son.\textsuperscript{129} Scholem found an intriguing parallel in a nineteenth-century account of a Chinese trance-somnambulist.\textsuperscript{130} If Segal is right to associate this posture with the ‘downwards’ direction of the merkava practice, this would suggest that the ‘ascent’ through the heavens could also sometimes be understood to be a ‘descent’ within the ‘temple’ of the practitioner’s own body.

The idea that the Jerusalem temple embodies or reflects the structure of the universe is widely documented in rabbinic sources\textsuperscript{131} and in Josephus.\textsuperscript{132} The foundation stone (אֲבֶן שַׁתְיָה), beneath the altar posesses the attributes of an omphalos or ‘world-navel’. Just as the holy of holies is said to be the source of the light that shone forth on the first day of creation, so the foundation stone, immediately outside the sanctuary, is identified with the primordial mound that emerged in the midst of the waters of chaos on day three.\textsuperscript{133} Josephus, moreover, tells us that the curtain at the entrance to the sanctuary represented the firmament, which was created on day two.\textsuperscript{134} Several midrashic sources add a further dimension to this model:

In the hour when the holy one, blessed be he, said to Moses: And make me a sanctuary (Exod 25:8), Moses said: How shall I know how to make it? The holy one, blessed be he, said: Do not be afraid. Just as I created the world and your body, so shall you make the tabernacle.

\textsuperscript{127} See p. 232 above.
\textsuperscript{128} See pp. 265–266 above.
\textsuperscript{129} bBer 34b; bAZ 17a.
\textsuperscript{130} Scholem, \textit{Major Trends}, 49f. Scholem gives no citation, but appears to be referring to Dennys, \textit{Folklore of China}, 60f.
\textsuperscript{131} For example: tYom 4:6; bYom 54b; GenR 1,4; Tanh kedoshim 10. See further: Ginzberg, \textit{Legends} 1: 12f.; Aptowitzter, ‘Bet ha-Mikdash’, 137–153 and 257–277; Patai, \textit{Man and Temple}, 105–139; Levenson, \textit{Sinai and Zion}, 115–125 and 142–145.
\textsuperscript{133} GenR 3,4 (ed. Theodor − Albeck 1: 20); TanhB bereshit 112; PRK 21 (ed. Buber 145b); Jellinek, \textit{BHM} 5: 63; PRE 35. See further Patai, \textit{Man and Temple}, 84f.
Whence do we know that this is so? You find in the tabernacle that the frames were fixed into the bases, and in the body the ribs are fixed into the vertebrae, and so in the world the mountains are fixed to the foundations of the earth. In the tabernacle, the frames were covered with gold, and in the body the ribs are covered with flesh, and in the world the mountains are covered and coated with earth. In the tabernacle there were bolts in the frames to keep them upright, and in the body limbs and sinews are extended to keep a man upright, and in the world trees and plants are extended in the earth. In the tabernacle there were curtains covering its top and both its sides, and in the body a man’s skin covers his limbs and his ribs on both his sides, and in the world the heavens cover the earth on both its sides. In the tabernacle there was the veil dividing the sanctuary from the holy of holies, and in the body the diaphragm divides the heart from the stomach, and in the world it is the firmament that divides the upper waters from the lower waters, as it is said: ‘...and let it divide the waters from the waters’ (Gen 1:6).  

As Raphael Patai has demonstrated, this three-way correspondence between the world, the temple, and the body of man, is well-documented in the midrashic literature. More succinctly, Midrash Tanhuma states that ‘the temple corresponds to the whole world and to the creation of man, who is a small world’ (שהוא adam וכנגד עולם כנגד השמים הקטן עולם). All this seems strongly to suggest that the yored merkava, in making the ‘ascent’ through the levels of the heavenly temple to Aravot rakia, the highest firmament, could also be conceptualized—at least, in some circles—as ‘descending’ into the temple of his own body. If this is correct, the holy of holies to which the yored merkava seeks admission is encountered at the center of his own consecrated body, where, as in the outer temple, the divine Glory is believed to dwell. Presumably, that glorious form is identical with the divine image that exists at the core of each human individual.

A primary goal of the hekhalot practitioners, as of the worshippers at Qumran, was participation in the angelic liturgy. According to Schäfer, ‘the Merkavah mystic represents in his person the participation of Israel in the heavenly liturgy and simultaneously confirms for the earthly congregation that it stands in direct contact with God in its synagogue liturgy.’ The mystical practice of ascent to the heavenly temple thus maintains the connection between God and his people.

135 Albeck, Midrash Bereshit Rabbati, 32, ll. 8–18 (and see Albeck’s notes ad loc.). See further Patai, Man and Temple, 113–117.
136 Tanh pekudei 3 (ed. Zondel 132b).
137 Schäfer, Gershom Scholem Reconsidered, 11 (= Hekhalot-Studien, 288).
that had formerly been provided by the earthly temple in Jerusalem. The *yored merkava*, when he worships before the divine throne in the innermost *hekal*, is performing the same mediatorial function as the high priest in the holy of holies.

Recent research has drawn attention to the theme of transformation in the apocalyptic and merkava traditions. There are numerous references in the apocalypses, the hekhalot writings, and the midrashic traditions of the heavenly ascent, to the metamorphosis of the mystic’s body into a purified angelic or supra-angelic form of fire or light, which embodies or reflects the image of the divine Glory and, like that Glory, expands to fill the universe. This is frequently associated with the idea that the mystic ‘assumes’ or ‘is clothed with’ the divine name. This transformation was held to be extremely dangerous, should the mystic prove unworthy, but it also seems to have been a central goal of the mystical endeavour. This motif is also found in several Gnostic sources. It seems, then, that the vision of the Glory entailed the transformation of the visionary into an angelic likeness of that divine image. It is almost certainly against this background that the language of ‘glorification’ encountered in early Christian literature, and especially Paul’s letters, should be understood.

The body of the Glory, which both fills and contains the universe, is greater than the temple in which it dwells. As stated in 2 Chr 6:18, ‘behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain you—how much less this house that I have built!’ If it is true that the ‘descent to the merkava’ was sometimes conceptualized as a journey within or into the ‘temple’ of the practitioner’s own body, then the divine image or ‘glory of Adam’ enthroned at the center of the body must likewise be much greater than the outer ‘house’. Moreover, as we have seen, the interior of the temple was identified with the heavenly Garden of Eden (i.e., Paradise). One who enters this garden recovers ‘the glory of Adam’, and is thereby transformed into conformity with the celestial divine image. According to rabbinic tradition, the unfallen Adam’s body, like the manifest Glory of Isa 6:3, was so great that it filled the

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139 See especially the account of Enoch’s transmogrification in 3 En 9–15.
141 See p. 328 n. 106 above.
the temple within. All this would explain the expansion of the visionary’s body when he enters the temple and worships before the throne.

The last three chapters of Hekhalot Rabbati, at the climax of the mystical ascent, contain a series of hymns which are said to be uttered by the throne of glory in the presence of God each day, and which the yored merkava himself is instructed to recite. This suggests that the practitioner is identifying himself with the merkava and invoking the divine Glory to assume its throne upon—or, better, within—his own person. In other words, he is offering himself as a bodily ’vehicle’ for the manifestation of the divine image.

I suggest that the ‘descent within’ and the ‘ascent without’ may best be understood as two aspects or dimensions of a single transformational process, not mutually exclusive conceptual alternatives. He who enters the holy of holies gains access to the highest heaven, since the courts of the temple are in symbolic reality the levels of the cosmos. Since this same structure obtains within the ‘temple’ of the human body, the process of the heavenly journey may be enacted both ‘within’ and ‘outside of’ the body of the practitioner, who may thus be said both to ‘descend’ and to ‘ascend’. These observations may perhaps help to explain the cryptic utterance of Paul, when he states twice that he ascended into Paradise (i.e., the heavenly holy of holies) ‘whether in the body or outside of the body, I do not know: God knows’ (2 Cor 12:2–3).

The image of the body as a temple occurs several times in the New Testament. In the Fourth Gospel, Jesus’ body is compared with the Jerusalem temple:

18The Jews then said to him, ‘What sign can you show us for doing this?’
19Jesus answered them, ‘Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.’
20The Jews then said, ‘This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it again in three days?’
21But he was speaking of the temple of his body.

In 1 Cor 6:19, Paul calls the body of the individual Christian ‘a temple (vōóć) of the Holy Spirit’. Elsewhere, he makes the same statement of the church, which is also very frequently called Christ’s body. We

142 See, for example: bSan 38b; GenR 8,1; 21,3.
143 Schäfer § 251–277.
144 See ch. 13 below.
145 John 2:18–21; see also Matt 26:61, 27:40; Mark 14:58, 15:29, where the parallel between body and temple, though not clearly stated, appears to be implied.
146 1 Cor 3:9–17; 2 Cor 6:16.
recall that at Qumran, the community regarded itself as the embodiment of the celestial temple. The same theme occurs in Eph 2:14–16:147

147 For he is our peace, who has, in his flesh, made the two one and broken down the middle wall of the partition, the hostility, having abolished the Law of the commandments (as expressed) in ordinances, that he might make the two into one new man, making peace, and that he might reconcile the two to God in one body through the cross, having slain the enmity by means of it.

Here, the Church is a both a new Creation and a resurrected body. This is also expressed in imagery of the temple (‘the middle wall of the partition’).148 Because the partition (i.e., the soreg) has been broken, the gentiles are no longer excluded from the worship of the holy community. This metaphor, which is developed in some detail in the following verses, reflects the structural imagery of the merkava tradition: ‘body’ and ‘temple’ are complementary expressions of the same paradoxical reality. The Glory of the Lord, the divine image, is enthroned at the center of the ‘temple’ of the body, but, at the same time, comprehends all things within himself (Eph 2:21–2):

21(Christ Jesus) in whom the whole structure, fitly joined together, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling-place of God in spirit.

This interweaving of body and temple imagery appears to be deeply indebted to the traditions that we have been considering. Consider also Eph 4:7–13:

7But to each one of us was given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ, wherefore it is said: Having ascended to the height, he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to men (Ps 68:19). 8Now what does ‘ascended’ mean, except that he also [first] descended into the lower [regions] of the earth (τὸ δὲ Ἀνέβη τί ἔστιν, εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ [πρῶτον] κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη] τῆς γῆς)?149 10The one who has descended is himself the one who has ascended far above the heavens, so that he might fill all things. 11And he gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be shepherds, and some to be teachers, for the equipping of the holy ones for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all arrive at the unity of

147 On the shiur koma background of Ephesians, including more detailed discussion of this and the following two passages, see Part 3, ch. 17 below.
149 The two words given in brackets are found only in some manuscripts. See further below.
the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a man of complete maturity, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.

Here, Christ is identified with the divine Glory that fills the universe (cf. Isa 6:3). The members of his Church also participate in that spiritual-bodily transformation (vss. 7 and 12). The (misquoted) citation of Ps 68:19 links this passage to the Shavuot-merkava cycle discussed above and to the traditions about Moses’ heavenly ascent. The imagery of ‘ascent’ and ‘descent’ in verses 6 and 9–10, although ambiguous and puzzling, closely resembles the characteristic language of the merkava tradition.150

For these early Christian writers, Christ, his church, and its individual members have become the body of God’s Glory. In this new and ‘glorified’ creation, the former distinction between ‘sacred’ and ‘profane’ is abrogated. The purity laws associated with the temple cult are therefore rendered meaningless (cf. Heb 10:1–13). Since the very structure of the temple, with its ascending degrees of purity and danger, is conceived as both a barrier and a means of approach between the holy and the unholy, it is rendered obsolete by the convergence of heaven and earth in one spiritually transformed ‘body’, made mystically one with the fullness of the everlasting Glory. Thus Revelation 21:

1And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. 2And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. 3And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will tabernacle with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them... 22I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God, the Almighty is both its temple and the Lamb.151 23And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the Glory of God illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb...27nothing unclean will enter it, nor any practitioner of abomination and falsehood, but only those written in the Book of Life of the Lamb.

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150 These verses are discussed in greater detail on pp. 603–608 below.
151 Greek: ...ό γὰρ κύριος ὁ θεὸς ὁ παντοκράτωρ ναὸς αὐτῆς ἐστιν καὶ τὸ ἁριόν. Most translators appear to ignore the word order and take this to mean: ‘...for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb’ (thus RSV), but the notion that the Lamb is the temple is clearly nonsense. The meaning is surely that the Lord God, the Almighty, is both the temple itself and the lamb that is offered in it. It thus appears that this author espoused a ‘high’ Christology in which Christ, the Lamb, is identical with God.
Summary of Findings

The findings of this chapter may be summarized as follows: according to the Hebrew Bible, the earthly temple is the embodiment of a celestial archetype, i.e., the heavenly palace and throne-room of the Lord. In Isaiah’s vision, the distinction between these two levels of reality seems to disappear. In the literature of the Second Temple period, this symbolic correspondence acquires cosmological significance. The cosmos itself is now conceptualized as a temple, and the earthly temple reflects this structure. Its seven (or three) courts and chambers, centered on the holy of holies, correspond to the celestial levels. In the apocalyptic-merkava tradition, the visionary ascends to heaven by entering a temple whose interior is greater than its exterior, an image which expresses the opposing dimensional structures of the temple courts and the (three or) seven heavens, which are nonetheless considered to be identical. At the climax of the ascent, the practitioner participates in the angelic worship of the ‘Great Glory’, enthroned in the central chamber, and is himself transformed into an angelic likeness of that Glory. Some later sources seem to indicate that this ‘ascent to heaven’ was also sometimes conceptualized as a ‘descent’ within the ‘temple’ of the visionary’s own body. The fourfold correspondence of temple, cosmos, community and body is represented in Figure 1 below.

Many of these ideas are encountered in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, a liturgical text the performance of which may be interpreted as the ritual construction by the worshipping community, in association with the angelic hosts, of a seven-tiered temple, which is identified with that described by Ezekiel. This temple not merely reflects but actually embodies the structure of the cosmos, for its seven sanctuaries are the seven heavens. The construction of this imaginary temple is completed on the eleventh sabbath, falling on the day before the annual ceremony of the renewal of the sect’s covenant at Shavuot, which is partially preserved in 4QBerakhot. On the sabbaths following this ceremony of re-dedication, the divine Glory descends on the merkava to indwell the temple that the worshipping community has constructed, and to receive the pure sacrifices that are offered in it (songs 12–13). If this analysis is correct, a unified liturgical framework links the Sabbath Songs to 4QBerakhot. It is perhaps legitimate to suspect that the Songs of the Maskil may also belong within this framework.

Despite repeated references to the recovery of Adam’s lost glory, the theme of correspondence between the temple and the body is not
developed in the Qumran sources. Instead, we find an emphasis on the embodiment of the temple archetype in the structure of the community as a whole. The rabbinic writings, in contrast, posit a three-way correspondence between cosmos, temple and body but make no reference to the correspondence between the temple and the community on earth. However, all of these themes are taken up and developed in combination by the Christian writers, who regarded their Saviour-Messiah as ‘a great High Priest who has gone through the heavens’ (Heb 4:14), and for whom the equation of the holy community with both body and temple became a centrally important motif in the formulation of their faith.

Figure 1. Approaches to the Glory
CHAPTER THIRTEEN

THE ASCENT INTO PARADISE:
PAUL’S APOSTOLIC CALLING AND ITS BACKGROUND*

Part 1: The Jewish Background

The ‘Mainstream’ Sources

The theory that the background of Paul’s rapture into paradise (2 Corinthians 12) is indicated by the talmudic story of four men who entered pardes (פרדס) (a garden, park, or orchard) is by no means new. First proposed by Wilhelm Bousset, the theory was developed by Hans Windisch and Hans Bietenhard, but has come to be associated with the name of Gershom Scholem.1 Although a few scholars have subsequently referred to Jewish mysticism in their interpretations of Paul,2 the subject on the whole has figured only at the periphery of the map of Pauline studies as a puzzling and little explored terra incognita of marginal or, at best, uncertain relevance to the whole. Growing recognition of the importance of apocalyptic for our understanding of Paul now makes it imperative that this unknown territory be explored. As demonstrated by Segal,3 it is clear that Jewish mystical traditions must occupy a central place in any reconstruction of the matrices of Paul’s experience and thought.

In the talmudic literature, the pardes story is included in the so-called ‘Mystical Collection’, a compilation of materials relating to

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* This chapter is based on my two-part article, ‘Paradise Revisited’. The version offered here has been edited to avoid unnecessary duplication of material covered elsewhere in this volume. Some significant material not included in that article has been added and a few scholarly responses to that article are addressed. The alternative reading of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ offered by Goshen Gottstein is discussed in Chapter 14 below.

1 Bousset, ‘Himmelsreise’, esp. 147–48; Windisch, Korintherbrief, 368–98, esp. 375–76; Bietenhard, Himmlische Welt, 91–95 and 161–68; Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, 14–19.

2 Davies, Paul and Rabbinic Judaism, 14–15, 37–38, and 196–98 refers in passing to Jewish mysticism; see also idem, ‘From Schweitzer to Scholem’. Kim, Origin, esp. 252–256 mentions Jewish mysticism several times but circumspectly. More confident in their use of the material are Smith, ‘Observations’; Bowker, ‘“Merkabah” Visions’; Rowland, ‘Influence’, esp. 239–98; and idem, Open Heaven, esp. 368–86. On the specific subject of Paul’s ascent to paradise, see Young, ‘Ascension Motif’; and especially Tabor, Things Unutterable.

3 Segal, Paul the Convert.
maase merkava, three different recensions of which are preserved in the Tosefta, the Yerushalmi, and the Bavli, where it is appended to the lemma, mHag 2:1. As we have seen, this mishna states that ha-merkava (i.e., Ezek 1) should not be ‘expounded’ by an ‘individual’ who is not a ‘wise man’ in possession of the necessary ‘knowledge’ (ביחיד במרכבה ולא מדעתו וולבין חכם היהכן אם אלא). This unit of tradition may originally have meant that even an ascetic ‘individual’ (yahid) was not considered competent to interpret Ezekiel’s vision unless he was endowed with the direct knowledge, acquired through visionary experience, of a ‘mantic’ sage. In its talmudic context, however, it came to mean that only a formally ordained rabbi (hakham)—as opposed to one who possessed only the lesser status of a ‘student of a sage’ (talmid hakham)—should presume to issue teaching on this subject.4

The following presentation of the pardaš story5 is based on the version of tHag 2:1 (according to ms. Vienna),6 which combines three units of material: the story itself (A) and two parables appended by way of commentary, one of a king’s pardaš (B) and the other of a highway passing between two roads (C).7 Unit A also occurs at yHag 77b, bHag 14b-15b, and CantR 1,288 (= 1.4.1).8 The Yerushalmi and the Bavli both incorporate additional material (indicated in square brackets) about the arch-heretic Elisha b. Avuya, otherwise known as Aher (‘the Other One’), but only a small proportion of this material is common to both sources.10 The Bavli also includes additional material about ben Zoma and Akiva. Neither the Bavli nor Canticles Rabba include units B and C, which in the Yerushalmi occur within the Mystical Collection, but in different contexts.11 C is also found, in an altogether different context, in Avot de-R. Natan, version (a), chapter 28.12

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4 See pp. 221–226 above.
5 Compare Morray-Jones, ‘Paradise Revisited’, 209–217; and idem, Transparent Illusion, 4–11. Some textual notes included in those two versions are omitted below as not germane to the following discussion.
6 See Lieberman, Tosefta, 2: 381; and Zuckerman, Tosefta, 234.
7 The strange story of Yoshua b. Hanania and Shimon b. Zoma, which occurs after C in mss. Vienna and London, but before B in MS Erfurt, and which is also found at yHag 77a, bHag 14b, and GenR 2:4, is too long and complex to be considered here.
8 In Dunsky, Midrash Rabba Shir ha-Shirim, 27.
9 In Freedman and Simon, Midrash Rabbah, 9:2, 46–47 (see Simon’s introduction to the text, vii–viii, on the confusing reference system adopted here).
10 yHag 77b–c (most of the Jerusalem Talmud’s material is also found at RuthR 6:4 and KohR 7.8.1); bHag 15a–b.
11 yHag 77c (B) and 77a (C).
12 Schechter, Aboth, 43b; Goldin, Fathers 118.
A1

A2 Four men went into pardes:
A3
A4 ben Azzai and ben Zoma
A5 Aher and R. Akiva.\textsuperscript{13}
A6 One looked and died;
A7 one looked and was smitten;
A8 one looked and cut the shoots;
A9 one went up in peace
A10 and came down in peace.\textsuperscript{14}

A11
A12
A13
A14
A15
A16
A17
A18
A19

A20 Ben Azzai\textsuperscript{15} looked and died.
A21 Of him, Scripture says:
A22 'Precious in the eyes of the Lord
A23 is the death of his saints.'\textsuperscript{16}

A24 Ben Zoma\textsuperscript{19} looked and was smitten.
A25 Of him, Scripture says:
A26 'Have you found honey?
A27 Eat what is enough for you…'\textsuperscript{18}

\textsuperscript{13} Tosefta, ms. London, omits A4–A5.
\textsuperscript{14} Tosefta, ms. Erfurt, omits A6–A10.
\textsuperscript{15} Tosefta, ms. London: 'Ben Zoma.'
\textsuperscript{16} Ps 116:15.
\textsuperscript{17} Prov 25:16.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Bavli</strong></th>
<th><strong>Canticles Rabba</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Our rabbis taught:</td>
<td>We read in a mishna:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four men went into <em>pardes</em></td>
<td>Four men went into <em>pardes</em>:</td>
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<tr>
<td>and these are they:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ben Azzai, ben Zoma,</td>
<td>ben Azzai and ben Zoma</td>
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<tr>
<td>Aher, and R. Akiva.</td>
<td>Aher, and R. Akiva.</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>R. Akiva said to them:</td>
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<td>When you approach</td>
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<td>the pure marble stones</td>
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<tr>
<td>do not say</td>
<td></td>
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<td><code>Water! Water!</code></td>
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<tr>
<td>—according to what is written:</td>
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<tr>
<td><code>The speaker of lies</code></td>
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<tr>
<td>shall not endure</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>before my sight:<code>^{18}</code></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Ben Azzai looked and died</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Of him, Scripture says:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><code>Precious in the eyes of the LORD</code> is the death of his saints:<code>^{17}</code></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Zoma:<code>^{19}</code> looked and was smitten, and of him it is said:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><code>Have you found honey?</code></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eat what is enough for you...<code>^{18}</code></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>lest you be filled with it</td>
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<tr>
<td>and vomit:</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

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`^{18}` Ps 101:7.

`^{19}` Tosefta, ms. London: ‘Ben Azzai.’
### Table (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A30 A31</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

| A32 | Elisha\textsuperscript{20} looked and cut the shoots. | Aher cut the shoots. |
| A33 | Who is Aher? |
| A34 | Elisha ben Avuya, who |
| A35 | used to kill the masters of Tora |

[Additional material about Elisha]

| A36 | Of him, Scripture says: |
| A37 | 'Do not let your mouth lead your flesh into sin…'\textsuperscript{21} |
| A38 | —that he ruined the work of his own hands.\textsuperscript{22} |

[Additional material about Elisha]

| A41 | R. Akiva went up in peace |
| A42 | and came down in peace.\textsuperscript{23} |

| A43 |
| A44 |
| A45 |
| A46 |
| A47 |
| A48 |
| A49 |

| A50 | Of him, Scripture says: |
| A51 | 'Draw me after you!' |
| A52 | Let us run…,'\textsuperscript{24} etc. |

\textsuperscript{20} Tosefta, ms. Erfurt: ‘Aher.’
\textsuperscript{21} Eccl 5:5. The verse continues: ‘…and say not before the angel (LXX: τοῦ θεοῦ) that it is an error. Why should God become angry at your voice and destroy the work of your hands?’
\textsuperscript{22} Allusion to Eccl 5:5 (see the previous note).
\textsuperscript{23} Tosefta, ms. Erfurt: ‘…went in…and came out…’
\textsuperscript{24} Cant 1:4a.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bavli</th>
<th>Canticles Rabba</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aher cut the shoots</td>
<td>A30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R. Akiva came out in peace</td>
<td>A31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Additional material about B. Zoma]

| Aher cut the shoots.                      | Elisha b. Avuya cut the shoots A32 |
|                                          | A33 |
|                                          | A34 |
|                                          | A35 |

[Additional material about Elisha]

| Of him, Scripture says:                   | And of him it is said: A36 |
| ‘Do not let your mouth lead your flesh into sin…’ | ‘Do not let your mouth lead your flesh into sin…’ A37 |
|                                          | A38 |
|                                          | A39 |
|                                          | A40 |

[Additional material about Elisha]

| R. Akiva went up in peace and came down in peace.25 | R. Akiva went in in peace and came out in peace;26 |
|                                                    | A41 |
|                                                    | A42 |
| and he said:                                        | A43 |
| Not because I am greater than my fellows           | A44 |
| but thus taught the sages in a mishna:             | A45 |
| ‘Your deeds will bring you near and your deeds will keep you far.’27 |
|                                                    | A48 |
|                                                    | A49 |
| Of him, Scripture says:                            | And of him it is said: A50 |
| ‘Draw me after you!                                | ‘The king has brought me into his chambers.’28 A51 |
| ‘Let us run!’24                                    | A52 |

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25 Bavli, ms. Göttingen: ‘…went in… and came out…’
26 Halperin (Merkabah, 78 n. 41) reports that a text of CantR cited by Martini (Pugio Fidei, 320) has: ‘…went up… and came down…’
27 mEd 5:7.
28 Cant 1:4b.
### Additional material about Elisha

**Tosefta Yerushalmi**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A53</th>
<th>A54</th>
<th>A55</th>
<th>A56</th>
<th>A57</th>
<th>A58</th>
<th>A59</th>
<th>A60</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>B1</strong></td>
<td><strong>They employed a parable:</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B2</strong></td>
<td><strong>To what may the matter be compared?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B3</strong></td>
<td><strong>To the garden (pardees) of a king</strong></td>
<td><strong>...to the garden of a king</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B4</strong></td>
<td><strong>with an upper chamber</strong></td>
<td><strong>with an upper chamber</strong></td>
<td><strong>built above it.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B5</strong></td>
<td><strong>What should a man do?</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B6</strong></td>
<td><strong>Look,</strong></td>
<td><strong>One may look,</strong></td>
<td><strong>but not</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B7</strong></td>
<td><strong>only let him not</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>B8</strong></td>
<td><strong>feast his eyes</strong></td>
<td><strong>on it.</strong></td>
<td><strong>approach.</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</table>

**C1** They employed another parable:

| **C2** | **To what may the matter be compared? This teaching is like** | | | | | | |
| **C3** | **To a highway** | **two paths,** | | | | | |
| **C4** | **which passes between** | | | | | | |
| **C5** | **two roads,** | **one of fire and one of snow.** | | | | | |
| **C6** | **He who turns aside this way** | **He who turns to this side** | **dies in the fire.** | | | | |
| **C7** | **is scorched by the fire.** | | | | | | |
| **C8** | **He who turns aside that way** | **He who turns to that side** | **dies in the snow.** | | | | |
| **C9** | **is scorched by the snow.** | | | | | | |

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29. 서아일에לחתחמש Sabbath. Parallels in HekhZ and MerkR read (‘to behold’).


Table (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bavli</th>
<th>Canticles Rabba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Even R. Akiva—</td>
<td>A53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the ministering angels</td>
<td>A54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wanted to drive him away.</td>
<td>A55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Holy One, blessed be he,</td>
<td>A56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>said to them:</td>
<td>A57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leave this elder alone,</td>
<td>A58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>for he is worthy</td>
<td>A59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to make use of my glory.29</td>
<td>A60</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Additional material about Akiva]

\[\text{ARN}(a)\]

They employed a parable: C1
To what may the matter be compared? C2
To a courtyard C3
which passes between C4
two roads, C5
one of fire and one of snow. C6
If one walks on the side of the fire, C7
lo, one is scorched by the fire; C8
but if one walks on the side of the snow, C9
lo, one is smitten by the cold. C10
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tosefta</th>
<th>Yerushalmi</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C11  What should a man do?</td>
<td>C11  What should one do?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C12  Let him walk in the middle,</td>
<td>C12  One should walk in the middle.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C13  only let him not turn aside,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C14  neither this way nor that way.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C15  C16</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C17  C17</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bavli</th>
<th>Canticles Rabba</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What should one do?</td>
<td>C11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let him walk between the two of them</td>
<td>C12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and take care of himself,</td>
<td>C13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>lest he be scorched by the fire</td>
<td>C14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or smitten by the cold.</td>
<td>C15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The geonic commentators of the tenth and eleventh centuries understood the *pardes* story against the background of the hekhalot traditions. Rashi explains that the four men ‘ascended to heaven by means of a name’, while Rav Hai Gaon offers a detailed explanation of the story in terms of the visionary practice of the heavenly descent as described in the hekhalot sources. Rav Hai’s younger contemporary Rabbenu Hananel ben Hushiel offers a similar interpretation:

*Pardes* was used as a term for the Garden of Eden, which is reserved for the righteous. Thus it is that place in *Aravot* wherein the souls of the righteous are stored. And it is explained in the hekhalot that the sages who were worthy of this matter used to pray, cleanse themselves of all defilement, fast, immerse and purify themselves. Then they would employ the names and gaze into the palaces and see how the angelic guards stand, and how one palace follows on after the one before it.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the *pardes* story was interpreted in terms of the prevailing view of *maase merkava* as gnosticizing (or merely Greek philosophical) cosmological speculation. Bousset was the first modern scholar to take the geonic interpretation seriously, even though he believed the hekhalot writings to be post-talmudic. Scholem, however, argued that the geonim were right to interpret the story in the light of the hekhalot traditions. Scholem’s hypothesis has been developed by several scholars. Of particular importance is Neher’s suggestion that *pardes* was a term for the heavenly temple. Neher argued that texts such as Ezekiel chapters 1, 10–11, 40–48 and Isaiah 6 indicate that visionary experience was associated with the sanctuary from an early

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32 Rashi on bHag 14b.
34 R. Hananel on bHag 14b–15b (like Rashi, included in the traditional printed editions of the Bavli).
36 See p. 341 n. 1 above.
37 Scholem, *Major Trends*, 52–53; and idem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 14–19. In this interpretation, Scholem was followed by Bietenhard (Himmlische Welt) who, however, developed Bousset’s theory of a connection with 2 Cor 12 before Scholem.
39 Neher, ‘Voyage mystique’. 
period, and that merkava or hekhalot mysticism was a development, and a relocation into heaven, of the temple cult tradition. He suggested that the mishnaic tractate Middot, which describes a journey into the temple, was originally a book of esoteric, visionary-mystical instruction, and that the *pardes* story is a fragment that became detached from its original context, in which the mystical experience was still deemed to occur within the context of the earthly temple.

Scholem’s theory has also had its critics. Maier agreed that the story refers to the vision of the merkava, but believed that it originally meant only that the four characters engaged in an exegesis of Ezekiel 1 employing apocalyptic imagery of the heavenly temple and its cult. In Maier’s opinion, the story was only later understood by the hekhalot writers—and, secondarily, the geonim—to be an account of an actual visionary ascent. Urbach observed that explicit references to an ascent to the heavenly temple occur only in the Babylonian version (A11–19 and A53–60) and argued that this represents a later layer of interpretation of the *pardes* story, which in the earlier version preserved in the Tosefta and the Yerushalmi was merely an allegory of contemplative exegesis of Ezekiel’s merkava vision. According to Urbach, that earlier version consists of a parable (*mashal*), immediately followed by its ‘explanation’ (*nimshal*). He juxtaposes these two supposed elements as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Part 1: <em>mashal</em></th>
<th>Part 2: <em>nimshal</em></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Four entered <em>pardes</em>:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One looked and died;</td>
<td>Ben Azzai looked and died. Of him, Scripture says:..., etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one looked and was smitten;</td>
<td>Ben Zoma looked and was smitten. Of him, Scripture says:..., etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one looked and cut the shoots;</td>
<td>Elisha looked and cut the shoots; of him, Scripture says..., etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and one ascended in peace and descended in peace.</td>
<td>R. Akiva ascended and descended in peace; of him, Scripture says..., etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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41 Urbach, ‘Mesorot.’
42 Ibid. 12–14.
43 Ibid. 12. Thus, according to Urbach’s opinion, the *mashal* corresponds to lines A2 and A6–10 of the presentation on pp. 344–351 above, while the *nimshal* corresponds to lines A20–52.
Urbach’s structural analysis has been widely influential. According to this opinion, the term *pardes*, which occurs only in the *mashal* and nowhere in the *nimshal*, must be parabolic or allegorical in meaning. However, this interpretation is fundamentally unsatisfactory, since the supposed *nimshal* nowhere explains the meaning of the term *pardes*, which is the crux of the supposed *mashal*. In fact, the supposed *nimshal* makes no attempt to explain the meaning of any element of the supposed *mashal*—it merely provides additional information. In other words, even in the Tosefta and the Yerushalmi, the second part of the story cannot rightly be characterized as a *nimshal*. It is simply a development and expansion of the narrative in the first part. Urbach’s identification of that narrative as a *mashal*, which has no basis other than its relationship to the supposed *nimshal*, is in turn vitiated by these observations.

Other scholars have argued that, if the components unique to the Bavli are disregarded, there is nothing in the story itself (apart from its context in the Mystical Collection) to suggest that it was originally concerned with *maase merkava* at all. In his earlier study, Halperin found no evidence that the story originally referred to any kind of mysticism or esotericism, and concluded that the hekhalot writers were simply attempting to explain the Babylonian version. He has subsequently modified his position to the extent of conceding that the redactor of the Bavli has borrowed from the hekhalot tradition. However, he maintains that this tells us nothing about the form of the original story, which he thinks must have been a metaphor intended to convey something (he is not sure what) about the lives and actions of the four dramatis personae. Similarly, Schäfer, who believes that the reading ‘went in . . . and came out’ is to be preferred over ‘went up . . . and came down’ (A9–10; A41–42), suggests that the story was originally an allegory of four types of rabbinic teachers who ‘entered the garden’ of Tora scholarship with differing results. Regarding Scholem’s suggestion of a connection between the *pardes* story and 2 Cor 12:1–12, Schäfer concludes that ‘what Scholem has demonstrated is nothing but a classic example of what S. Sandmel called “parallelomania”’. As we

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shall see, Scholem’s reading of the story is much more securely based than Schäfer supposes. Nonetheless, his criticism of Scholem’s method is at least partly justified and he is right to insist that

it is only possible to make a reliable assertion concerning the relationship of Hekhalot Literature and the New Testament... if the respective literatures are analysed in their own structure.49

Rowland originally adopted an intermediate position between these extremes, arguing that the story originally referred to ‘theosophical’ Tora exegesis.50

A few scholars have looked further afield for explanations. Henry A. Fischel maintained that the story is a warning about the dangers of Epicurean philosophy and that *pardes* was a term for the school of Epicurus, which originally met and lived together in a garden.51 Samson H. Levey suggested that the term should be vocalised *parados* (short for παράδοσις or ‘authoritative tradition’) and that the four undertook a study of Christian teaching about Jesus.52

Several commentators have looked for a key to the story’s meaning in the traditions found in other rabbinic sources about the four dramatis personae. This quest has usually involved identification of the three other than Akiva as representatives of different kinds of (usually Gnostic) heresy resulting from uncontrolled exegetical and/or visionary-mystical activity or, from involvement in non-Jewish speculative philosophy.53 One or other of the three has occasionally been identified as a Christian.54

The traditions concerning Akiva’s outstanding scholarship and saintliness are too well-known to require documentation here. Almost equally well-known is Elisha b. Avuya’s reputation a renegade and heretic. The traditions collated by the talmudic redactors stress the contrast between

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49 Ibid. 249
53 This approach was initiated by Graetz (Nestorius, 56–101), who identified ben Azzai as an ascetic and encratic Gnostic, ben Zoma as a speculative Gnostic, and Elisha b. Avuya as a Gnostic Gnostic.
54 Neumark (Geschichte 1: 93) and Neher (‘Voyage Mystique’, 81f.) both argue that Elisha became a Christian, while Löw (Lebensalter, 57f.) and Levey (‘Secret’) make the same suggestion of ben Zoma. The latter suggestion is based on a parallel between ben Zoma’s use of the image of the spirit hovering like a dove upon the waters of Creation (bHag 14b and parallels: see p. 342, n. 7 above) and the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ baptism, first observed by Schechter (‘Study’, 2. 102–25, esp. 112f.).
his great learning and, after his apostasy, his contempt for the law, willful immoralty, and collaboration with the Romans.\textsuperscript{55} In the Yerushalmi, at the end of a long dialogue in which Elisha has demonstrated the superiority of his learning and knowledge of halakha, R. Meir exclaims, ‘You have all this wisdom, yet you do not repent!’\textsuperscript{56} According to bHag 15b, Rabba expounded with reference to Elisha:

> What does the verse mean, ‘I went down to the garden of nuts to look at the blossoms of the valley . . . ,’ etc. (Cant 6:11)? Why are talmidei hakhamim compared to nuts? To tell you that just as this nut, though it be spoiled with mud and filth, yet what is inside it is not condemned, just so a talmid hakham, though he has sinned, yet his Tora is not condemned.

Despite Elisha’s great learning, the sources consistently characterize him as a \textit{talmid}, rather than a rabbi.\textsuperscript{57}

In contrast to Elisha, Shimon ben Azzai and Shimon ben Zoma are generally presented in a favourable light. Shimon ben Azzai is portrayed as a person of exceptional sanctity and, although his celibacy is mentioned in several sources, there is no indication that this behaviour was associated with heretical beliefs.\textsuperscript{58} The traditions concerning his death are somewhat confused. He appears in a list of martyrs at LamR 2:2,4, but this is of doubtful historical value.\textsuperscript{59} Other sources record that he recited Ps 116:15, the verse applied to him in the \textit{pardes} narrative (A22–23), with reference to the death of God’s saints.\textsuperscript{60} There is some evidence to suggest that ben Zoma was involved in esoteric matters and suspected of unorthodox beliefs about the creation,\textsuperscript{61} but on the whole, the sources speak respectfully of his wisdom.\textsuperscript{62} Like Elisha, ben Azzai and ben Zoma shared a reputation for outstanding wisdom and scholarship, but, also like Elisha, neither was ordained. In the course

\textsuperscript{55} See p. 342 n. 10 above. See Bacher, \textit{Von Hillel bis Akiba}, 430–434, and the sources cited there; and see now Goshen-Gottstein, \textit{Sinner}.

\textsuperscript{56} yHag 77b; cf KohR 7,8 §1 and RuthR 6,4.

\textsuperscript{57} See pp. 363–364 below, especially n. 85.

\textsuperscript{58} See tSot 1:2; bSot 4b; bYev 63b.

\textsuperscript{59} See Schürer, \textit{History} 1: 552.

\textsuperscript{60} GenR 62,2; ExodR 50,3; see further pp. 446 and 488–490 below.

\textsuperscript{61} The story of ben Zoma and Joshua b. Hanania (p. 342 n. 7 above) seems to make this point. Moreover, GenR 4,6 states that ben Zoma ‘shook the world’ with his exegesis of Gen 1:7. At GenR 5,4 and MidrTeh 93,3, ben Zoma (var. ben Azzai) apparently identifies the archangel Metatron, in this context a ‘demiurgic’ Logos figure, with the ‘voice of God upon the waters’ (Ps 29:3), although the reading ‘Metatron’ is uncertain (see Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism’, 30, and the references cited there).

\textsuperscript{62} See, for example, mSot 9:15; bSot 49b; mBer 1:5; bSot 49b; bHor 2b.
of a discussion of conditions that may lawfully be attached to an oath of betrothal, the precise meaning of one such condition is defined as follows:

On condition that I am a *talmid hakham*: they do not mean like Shimon ben Azzai or like Shimon ben Zoma, but only that the people in his city should honor him as such.63

Here, ben Azzai and ben Zoma are mentioned as proverbial examples of outstanding ‘students’, the point being that one may reach the status of *talmid* without acquiring the advanced level of learning to which they attained. The parallel to this passage in the Bavli also includes a discussion of the higher status of *hakham*:

On condition that I am a *talmid*: they do not mean like Shimon ben Azzai or like Shimon ben Zoma, but anyone who when asked about a single matter in any place in his learning can pronounce on it, even in tractate Kallah.

On condition that I am a *hakham*: this does not mean like the sages of Yavne, or like R. Akiva and his colleagues, but anyone who when asked about a matter of wisdom in any place, can pronounce on it.64

Here, ben Azzai and ben Zoma are excluded from the category of *hakhamim*, which is exemplified by Aqiba. Nonetheless, they are accorded a special status as exceptional *talmidim*, whose learning far exceeded the required minimum. Similarly, in another context:

A student who is qualified to render a decision—such as whom, for example? Rabba said: such as Shimon ben Azzai and Shimon ben Zoma.65

According to this passage, the scholastic attainments of ben Azzai and ben Zoma were such that, despite their formal status as mere ‘students’, they were qualified to exercise a decision-making authority that was normally reserved for the ordained *hakham*. Yet another recognition of their unusual status is found in bSan 17b (cf. yMS 2:10 = 53d, lines 3–5):

‘They that argued before the sages’66 are Shimon ben Azzai, Shimon ben Zoma, Hanan the Egyptian, and Hanania ben Hakhinai. Rav Nahman

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63 tKid 3:9.
64 bKid 49b.
65 bHor 2b. From the context, we learn that such a disciple is guilty if he follows a permissive ruling issued by a court if, on the basis of his own learning, he knows the ruling to be erroneous.
66 See mMS 2:9.
bar Yitshak taught that there were five: Shimon, Shimon, and Shimon,\(^{67}\) Hanan, and Hanania.

Here again, ben Azzai and ben Zoma appear in company with other figures, who, like themselves, are accorded an exceptional status in relation to the hakhhamim or rabbis, but were not themselves ordained.

All four *dramatis personae* of the *pardes* story occur together in a list of dream-objects, preserved in both versions of Avot de-R. Natan\(^ {68}\) and, in a longer recension, in bBer 57b. The dream-objects are divided into categories and, within each category, each object is identified as a portent of an outcome to be expected by the dreamer. The two versions of ARN each have four categories: ‘prophets’, ‘writings’ (i.e., biblical hagiographa), ‘sages’ (*hakhhamim*), and ‘students’ (*talmidim*). The longer version in the Bavli has two categories of ‘great’ and ‘small’ writings, plus an additional category of ‘kings.’ Save for three exceptions, each category consists of three dream-objects with their anticipated outcomes for the dreamer. The Bavli states that there are ‘three prophets’ and three ‘small writings’, but then lists four items in each of those two categories. ARN(a) both enumerates and lists four ‘sages.’ It seems safe to assume that these anomalies arose from a tendency on the part of copyists to include additional items and/or to harmonize conflicting versions of the lists, and that each of the categories originally consisted of three items.\(^ {69}\) Although the outcomes portended by the first and second dream-objects vary from one category to another, the portent associated with the final object is always ‘calamity’ (*פורﻉון*).\(^ {70}\)

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\(^{67}\) The third Shimon is almost certainly Shimon the Yemenite. See mTaan 3:7, mYev 4:13, and mYad 1:3.

\(^{68}\) ARN(a) 40; ARN(b) 46 (Schechter 128f.). ET: Goldin, *Fathers*, 167; Saldarini, *Fathers, Version B*, 290. On the early date of the ARN tradition, see Saldarini, *Fathers, Version B*, 12–16, and authorities cited there.

\(^{69}\) It should also be noted that in ARN(b) and Bavli, the two categories of ‘sages’ and ‘students’ are listed after the categories of biblical characters and books. However, ARN(a) places them at the head of the list, before the biblical dream-objects, and immediately following an entirely different series of fourfold typological lists, corresponding to mAvot 5:10–15 (see ch. 14, pp. 438–447 below). This juxtaposition may have caused the fourfold pattern of the preceding list to be carried over into the list of ‘sages.’ In the alternative, a concern for formal harmony may explain the editorial decision to move the expanded list of ‘sages’ to its present position in this source.

\(^{70}\) A single exception occurs in the Bavli’s category of ‘small writings’, where calamity is associated with the Book of Lamentations, which is listed third of four items. The fourth dream-object in this category is the Book of Esther, portending a miracle. Since the category is introduced by the statement, ‘There are three small writings’, this is undoubtedly an editorial addition.
The categories relevant to our present purpose are those of “sages” and “students.” In the category of “sages,” the readings found in the mss. of bBer 57b differ from those of the printed edition,\(^\text{71}\) and, as noted by A.J. Saldarini,\(^\text{72}\) this produces four different versions of the text:\(^\text{73}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ARN(a) 40</th>
<th>ARN(b) 46</th>
<th>b.Ber 57b (edition)</th>
<th>b.Ber 57b (mss)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There are four sages (חכמים).</td>
<td>There are three sages (חכמים).</td>
<td>There are three sages (חכמים).</td>
<td>There are three sages (חכמים).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One who sees Rabbi Yohanan ben Nuri in a dream should expect fear of sin (יראת ת-envelope).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria: one should expect greatness (גדולה) and wealth (עשיריה).</td>
<td>One who sees Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria in a dream should expect wisdom (חכמה).</td>
<td>One who sees Rabbi Akiva in a dream should expect saintliness (חסידות).</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbi Yishmael: one should expect wisdom (חכמה).</td>
<td>Rabbi Akiva: one should expect fear of sin (יראת ת-envelope).</td>
<td>Elazar ben Azaria: one should expect wealth (עשיריה).</td>
<td>Rabbi Elazar ben Azaria: one should expect greatness (גדולה) and wealth (עשיריה).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rabbi Akiva: one should fear calamity (פורעניות).</td>
<td>Rabbi Yishmael: one should fear calamity (פורעניות).</td>
<td>Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha: one should fear calamity (פורעניות).</td>
<td>Rabbi Yishmael ben Elisha: one should fear calamity (פורעניות).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There are three students of the sages (תلمודים חכמים).</td>
<td>There are three students (תلمודים חכמים).</td>
<td>There are three students of the sages (תلمודים חכמים).</td>
<td>There are three students of the sages (תلمודים חכמים).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One who sees ben Azzai in a dream should expect saintliness (חסידות).</td>
<td>One who sees ben Azzai in his dream should expect wisdom (חכמה).</td>
<td>One who sees ben Azzai in a dream should expect saintliness (חסידות).</td>
<td>One who sees ben Azzai in a dream should expect saintliness (חסידות).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ben Zoma: one should expect wisdom (חכמה).</td>
<td>Ben Zoma: one should expect fear of sin (יראת ת-envelope).</td>
<td>Ben Zoma: one should expect wisdom (חכמה).</td>
<td>Ben Zoma: one should expect wisdom (חכמה).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elisha ben Avuya: one should fear calamity (פורעניות).</td>
<td>Rabbi Elisha ben Avuya (sic): one should fear calamity (פורעניות).</td>
<td>Aher: one should fear calamity (פורעניות).</td>
<td>Aher: one should fear calamity (פורעניות).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{71}\) See Rabbinovicz, *Variae lectiones*, 1.319.


\(^{73}\) Ms. Epstein of ARN(a) associates wisdom with ben Azzai, and saintliness with ben Zoma.
According to Goshen Gottstein, the fact that all seven of the characters named in this list are from the early tannaitic period indicates that it was very probably composed during that time:

To dream of a total of seven rabbis *(sic)*, all of whom are of the same generation, assumes the tradition to be contemporary with the people mentioned. It may be safely assumed that the images of these rabbis are known to the dreamers, and this familiarity leads to dreaming about them. Second, the very fact that no rabbi of a later generation is mentioned is further proof of the dating of this tradition. There are many worthy examples of wisdom, fear of sin, or greatness and wealth from later generations of rabbinic, or even tannaitic times. That the list stops at a particular point indicates when it was composed.74

Taken in isolation, Goshen Gottstein’s first point is less than wholly persuasive, since dreams about historical figures, whom the dreamer is able to identify despite never having never seen them in person, are in all probability not uncommon. His second point, however, is much stronger. The fact that all seven of these figures are from the same narrowly defined period suggests strongly that the list originated during, or shortly after, that time. Further indications of an early date of composition will emerge below.

Turning first to the category of ‘sages’, it is safe to assume that the reason for the anomalous reading ‘Rabbi’ in the edition of the Bavli is that the name Akiva, which is preserved in the manuscripts, has simply been omitted. If so, the three characters: Akiva, Yishmael, and Elazar b. Azaria occur in all versions. In three of the four versions, a dream about Elazar portends ‘greatness and wealth’, but ARN(b) associates this figure with ‘wisdom.’ A reference to Elazar’s proverbial wealth occurs in mSot 9:15, which may, at first sight, appear to support the majority reading in the list of ‘sages.’ However, ARN is basically a commentary or ‘tosefta’ on Mishna Avot,75 which attributes a number of sayings to Elazar, but makes no mention of his wealth. Moreover, Elazar’s sayings in Avot are placed immediately after those attributed to Yishmael and Akiva.76 They are mainly concerned with the relationship between learning and behaviour, and include the following:

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74 Goshen Gottstein, *The Sinner and the Amnesiac*, 38. See also Finkelstein, *Introduction* 103 (cited by Goshen Gottstein, *ibid.*). Goshen Gottstein’s designation of all seven characters as “rabbis” ignores the classification of three as “students” in this text.


76 See mAvot 3:13–17.
If there is no wisdom, there is no fear [of sin]. If there is no fear [of sin], there is no wisdom.\textsuperscript{77}

The fact that the Avot tradition already associates Elazar with Akiva and Yishmael suggests that he may originally have been included with them in the list of dream-objects. It is therefore likely that the ‘interloper’ in ARN(a) 40 is Yohanan ben Nuri. However, the association of Elazar with wealth is very probably based on his reputation in sources outside of the Avot tradition. Based on the sayings attributed to him in Avot, it is much more likely that he originally portended either ‘wisdom’, as in ARN(b), or ‘fear of sin.’ If this is correct, the editor of ARN(a) 40 has altered the list, first by introducing the motif of ‘greatness and wealth’ on the basis of Elazar’s later reputation as the exemplar of those qualities, recorded in mSot 9:15, and then by introducing a fourth figure, Yohanan, to carry the displaced motif of ‘fear of sin.’ The fact that Yohanan belonged to the same generation of Tannaim as the other six ‘sages’ and ‘students’ may indicate that this alteration occurred an early stage in the editorial history of the list. The redactors of the Bavli’s two versions then reduced the ‘sages’ category to three in an effort to maintain the formal consistency of the list as a whole, but retained the association of Elazar with wealth, which was by that time so firmly established in tradition as to seem self-evident. It is therefore very likely that the closest approximation to the original list is preserved in ARN(b) 46, which is the only version that has not been contaminated by the extraneous tradition of Elazar’s wealth. Conversely, the fact that the composer of the original version was seemingly unaware of the tradition about Elazar’s wealth is another indication of the list’s early date.

If the portent of ‘greatness and wealth’ is disregarded, the two categories of ‘sages’ and ‘students’ both follow the same pattern. One character is associated with ‘wisdom’, one with ‘fear of sin’ or ‘saintliness’ (these two qualities are similar in meaning and appear to be interchangeable), and the last with ‘calamity.’ However, the versions differ as to which character is associated with each quality. As we have seen, in the category of ‘sages’, it is probable that Elazar was originally associated with either ‘wisdom’, as in ARN(b), or ‘fear of sin.’ In all

\textsuperscript{77} mA\textsuperscript{v}ot 3:18. Elazar’s sayings are repeated in ARN(a) 22 and ARN(b) 34 (Schechter 75). In ARN(b), the saying quoted above is placed at the head of the series.
likelihood, Akiva was associated with the other of these two qualities. For reasons discussed below, the association of Yishmael with ‘calamity’, found in all versions except ARN(a), is almost certainly correct. In the category of ‘students’, most sources associate ben Azzai with ‘saintliness’, and ben Zoma with ‘wisdom’, but—just as in the versions of the pardes story—the roles assigned to these two characters are reversed in ARN(b) and in one manuscript of ARN(a). Elisha’s association with ‘calamity’ is found in all sources.

As observed above, a portent of ‘calamity’ (פורענות) occurs at the end of every category in these lists. Although the term can sometimes carry overtones of moral retribution, this is by no means universally the case—it may simply refer to an ordinary misfortune. Moreover, even where moral retribution is implied, its significance in relation to the subject of the ‘calamity’ may vary. In the dream-object lists in ARN and the Bavli, the biblical objects associated with this outcome are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>ARN (both versions)</th>
<th>Bavli (edition and mss.)</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kings</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Prophets</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>(Great) Writings</td>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
<td>Jeremiah</td>
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<tr>
<td>Small Writings</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Job</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Job</td>
<td>Lamentations</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

A nuanced examination reveals that the relationship between the dream-object and the portent of ‘calamity’ is different in each case. Ahab incurred punishment for his wickedness, whereas Jeremiah was the prophetic mouthpiece of divine retribution, not its object. Job experienced misfortunes that were wholly undeserved, while the Book of Lamentations expresses the theme of ‘calamity’ without regard for these distinctions. The moral significance of this portent is therefore different in each of these four categories.

Returning to the lists of ‘sages’ and ‘students’, as observed by Saldarini, the source of Yishmael’s association with ‘calamity’ is the story

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78 See Jastrow, Dictionary, 1148a.
of his execution during the Bar Kokhba revolt. In both versions of ARN, this story is appended to the saying in mAvot 5:8,

Seven kinds of calamity (פורעניות שבעה מיני פורעניות) come into the world on account of seven basic transgressions: ... The sword comes into the world on account of the postponement of justice, on account of the perversion of justice, and on account of those who teach Tora in ways contrary to the halakha.

According to ARN, Yishmael was decapitated with a sword, but he is not said to be personally guilty of these offenses. Rather, the story explains his death in terms of divine retribution for the sins of the people as a whole. It therefore seems likely that in the list of three sages, the ‘calamity’ portended by Yishmael may likewise involve divine retribution, but no reflection on his moral character is implied.

Regarding Elisha’s association with ‘calamity’ in the list of ‘students’, the traditions about his apostasy and wickedness might well lead us to place him in the same category as Ahab and, perhaps, to infer that an implication of well-deserved punishment attaches to the dreamer. However, as observed by Goshen Gottstein, Elisha’s evil reputation is not mentioned in either version of ARN or, indeed, in Avot. On the contrary, these sources report sayings attributed to Elisha alongside those of other talmidim and sages whose status and legitimacy are unquestioned. It therefore seems to be the case that, when these sources were compiled, Elisha was still viewed as a legitimate transmitter of tradition. If so, his role as a portent of ‘calamity’ in the dream-object list is not related to his later reputation for apostasy and evil. This may also be true of the pardes story, where we should not simply assume that Elisha’s unsavory reputation provides the explanation of his role. Indeed, Goshen Gottstein proposes that it is the pardes story that is the source of Elisha’s evil reputation, not the other way around. He very plausibly suggests that the very nickname אחר (‘Other’) had its point of genesis in the orthographically very similar expression אחד (‘one’), which is applied to each character in the pardes story.

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79 See Saldarini, Fathers, 290 n. 7.
80 See ARN(a) 38 and ARN(b) 41 (Schechter 114f.).
82 mAvot 4:20; ARN(a) 24; and ARN(b) 35 (Schechter 77f.).
83 See Goshen Gottstein, Sinner, 47–61; cf. idem, ‘Four Entered’, 126–128. This theory is discussed in more detail in ch. 14, pp. 482–488 below.
Before leaving the subject of Elisha, it should be noted that his designation as ‘R. Elisha ben Avuya’ in ARN(b) 46 is undoubtedly a scribal error, since the title ‘Rabbi’ contradicts his designation as a ‘student’ in this source, in addition to being inconsistent with his reputation in the rabbinic corpus as a whole.85

It has emerged from this discussion that the four characters in the *pardes* narrative have one thing in common: their reputation as outstanding scholars. One (Elisha) developed a reputation for apostasy and wickedness, but it is by no means certain that this reputation preceded the composition of the *pardes* story, which may, indeed, have been the nucleus around which that reputation coalesced. In the dream-object list, the compiler who associated Elisha with ‘calamity’ may not have meant to imply that he personally deserved to be punished. In the cases of ben Azzai and ben Zoma, we have found no evidence to support the theory that their outcomes were the consequences of misdeeds or moral failings on their part. On the contrary, both have generally positive reputations and one, ben Azzai, is sometimes said to have possessed a saintly character. In the dream-object list, one of these two (in all probability, originally ben Azzai) was associated with either ‘saintliness’ (*hasidut*) or ‘fear of sin’, and the other with ‘wisdom.’

When we apply these findings to the talmudic versions of the *pardes* story, we are led to the conclusion that the reason why Akiva succeeded where the other three failed is unlikely to be his superior knowledge of Tora, since all four characters were considered outstanding in this respect. Nor can the crucial distinction between Akiva and the others be a matter of moral character, since a comparison based on this criterion would apply to only one of the three and, even there, its relevance is doubtful.

It has become evident that what ben Azzai, ben Zoma, and Elisha have in common against Akiva is the fact that they were never ordained as rabbis. We need look no further than this for the distinguishing criterion in the talmudic version of the *pardes* story. The point must undoubtedly be that Akiva, alone of the four, was a *hakham* in the rabbinic sense of that term as used in mHag 2:1, that is, an ordained rabbi. The others, in spite of their great learning, were merely *talmidei hakhamim* and so

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85 See Bacher, *Von Hillel bis Akiba*, 430–434. So far as I am aware, the only other instance of Elisha being accorded the title ‘Rabbi’ is a ms. variant of bMK 20a (cited in passing by Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 126 n. 130). Goshen Gottstein agrees that the title is a scribal error (*ibid.* 108).
their involvement in *maase merkava* resulted in disaster. It follows from this conclusion that an early author or redactor of the talmudic Mystical Collection either (a) composed the *pardes* story as an illustration of the lemma to which the Mystical Collection is attached, mHag 2:1, which states none but a *hakham* is permitted to expound *ha-merkava*; or (b) adapted an existing story for that purpose. In either case, within the context of the Mystical Collection, the names of the four characters embody the essential point of the story.

It should, however, be noted that the version of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ preserved in Canticles Rabba, with its citation of mEd 5:7, is at variance with this conclusion. Of the versions examined thus far, this is the only one that offers an explicit explanation of the reason why Akiva succeeded where the other three failed. Those outcomes, it is clearly implied, were the consequences of his and their ‘deeds.’ This explanation has nothing to do with the difference in their formal status. One way to explain this discrepancy would be to posit that the explanation in CantR was added by an editor who failed to perceive the significance of the four names and so missed the point of the talmudic version. On the other hand, if the explanation in CantR were found to be an original component of the story, this would call into question the meaning attached to the story by the compiler of the Mystical Collection, as embodied in the names.

Setting Canticles Rabba aside for the moment, it is clear that, in its talmudic context, the *pardes* story is intrinsically connected to mHag 2:1 and, hence, to the subject of *maase merkava*. Scholarly theories that deny this connection and attempt to explain the story without reference to *maase merkava* may therefore be discounted. However, the question whether the story refers to the performance of a heavenly ascent, or to ordinary non-mystical exegesis of Ezek 1, remains to be decided. It is clear from lines A11–19 (the water vision episode) and A53–60 (where the ministering angels oppose Akiva’s entrance) that the redactor of the Bavli did, indeed, understand the story in terms of a visionary ascent, but the other sources are arguably open to other interpretations. This question is bound up with that of the relationships between the talmudic sources and the hekhalot traditions.

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86 See above, p. 347. lines A48–49.
The Hekhalot Versions

The *pardes* story is found in two of the hekhalot macroforms: Hekhalot Zutarti (HekhZ), where it is preserved in full by mss. Munich 22 (M) and New York (N); and Merkava Rabba (MerkR), where it is found in mss. New York (N) and Oxford (O). The remaining manuscripts of HekhZ and ms. Munich 40 of MerkR include an abbreviated reference to the story: ‘Four entered *pardes* . . ., etc.’87 As observed by Schäfer, both the story and the immediately following material are ‘redactionally much more securely anchored’ in HekhZ than in MerkR, where they appear to be ‘of a secondary nature.’88 HekhZ(N) and MerkR(N) both include additional material, but the additional material is different in each source. Halperin therefore considers that there are three distinct recensions of the story,89 a conclusion which is based in part on Schäfer’s rather confusing organization of the HekhZ versions in the *Synopse*. In fact, all four sources contain the same basic text, which has been expanded in different ways by the redactors of HekhZ(N) and MerkR(N).90 The following table shows how the material appears in the *Synopse*:91

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>HekhZ</th>
<th>MerkR</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(M)</td>
<td>(N)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>§ 338</td>
<td>§ 344</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>§ 339</td>
<td>§ 345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>§ 346</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

The material in § 340–343 has nothing to do with the *pardes* story and occurs only in HekhZ(N). Therefore, § 344–345, which are assigned by Schäfer to HekhZ(N) only, are directly parallel to § 338–339. In HekhZ(M), § 346 comes immediately after § 339 and this version is therefore parallel to that in both mss. of MerkR. For the sake of

87 Schäfer § 338 (HekhZ) and § 671 (MerkR). See further below.
90 The fact that both of these expansions occur in the same manuscript is probably not significant, since this manuscript seems to be the work of more than one copyist (see Schäfer, ix) and the additional materials are evidently derived from different sources.
91 In Elior’s edition of HekhZ, based on ms. New York, this material occurs at lines 42–58. Variant readings are given in the apparatus on page 44.
clarity, the basic text of the story, found in all four sources, is shown below in ordinary print, with significant variations noted within square brackets. Material unique to MerkR(N) is shown in italics and placed within braces. Material unique to HekhZ(N) is shown in italics, within angled brackets, and underlined. The following discussion will concern the basic text only.92

A1a R. Akiva said:
A1b We were four who went into *pardes*: one looked and died; one looked and was smitten; one looked and cut the shoots; and I went in in peace and came out in peace.

A2a Why did I go in in peace and come out in peace?
[HekhZ(N) and MerkR(N) omit A2a.]
A2b Not because I am greater than my fellows, but my deeds [MerkR(N) and HekhZ(N): ‘they’] have caused me to fulfill the teaching that the sages have taught in their mishna: ‘Your deeds will bring you near and your deeds will keep you far’ (mEd 5:7).

B1a And these are the they that went into *pardes*: ben Azzai and ben Zoma and Aher and R. Akiva.
B1b {R. Akiva said to them: Beware! When you approach the pure marble stones, do not say, ‘Water! Water!’—according to what is written: ‘The speaker of lies shall not endure before my sight’ (Ps 101:7).}

B2a Ben Azzai [MerkR(O): ‘ben Zoma’] looked <into the sixth palace and saw the brilliance of the air of the marble stones with which the palace was paved, and his body could not bear it, and he opened his mouth and asked them: ‘These waters—what is the nature of them?’> and died. Of him, Scripture says: ‘Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints’ (Ps 116:15).

B2b Ben Zoma [MerkR(O): ‘ben Azzai’] looked <at the brilliance in the marble stones and thought that they were water, and his body could not bear it, but his mind could not bear it> and was smitten <—he went out of his mind>. Of him Scripture says: ‘Have you found honey? Eat what is enough for you…,’ etc. (Prov 25:16).

B2c Elisha b. Avuya looked [HekhZ(N): ‘went down’] and cut the shoots. <In what way did he cut the shoots? They say that whenever he went into the synagogues and study-houses and saw children succeeding in Torah-study, he used to speak over them and they would be silenced, and> of him, Scripture says: ‘Do not let your mouth lead your flesh into sin…!’ (Eccl 5:5)

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92 For discussion of the additional material in B1b, B2a, and B2b (referring to the water vision episode), see Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 27–29 and 78–82.
B2d {They say that when Elisha went down to the merkava he saw Metatron to whom permission had been given to sit for one hour in the day to write down the merits of Israel. He said, ‘The sages have taught: On high there is neither standing nor sitting, neither rivalry nor contention, neither division nor affliction.’ He entertained the thought that there might perhaps be two powers in heaven. At once, they led Metatron outside the curtain and punished him with sixty lashes of fire, and permission was given to Metatron to burn the merits of Aher. A heavenly voice came forth and they (sic) said: ‘Return, backsliding children’ (Jer 3:22)—except for Aher!”}


C1 R. Akiva said:

C2a At that time, when I went up to the heavenly height, I made more signs in the entrances of rakia than in the entrances of my house,

C2b and when I arrived at the curtain (pargod), angels of destruction came forth to do me violence (לאchéלני חבילה). The Holy One, blessed be he, said to them: ‘Leave this elder alone, for he is worthy to behold my Glory’ (ל心血תי ראוי שהוא לזקן הכבודי) [MerkR(N): ‘…to behold me’ (ל心血תי רבכבי)].

It will be observed that sections A and C of this passage are both written in the form of a first-person account by Akiva. Section B, like the talmudic versions, is a third-person narrative. The basic text of section B consists of the names of the four and the biblical verses associated with each one—again, in agreement with the talmudic versions. The words: ‘And these are they…’ in B1a are parallel to the Bavli, line A3. It therefore seems highly probable that (i) this version of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ was originally a first-person narrative attributed to Akiva, comprising sections A and C only; and (ii) section B (basic text) was added by a subsequent redactor, who borrowed this material from the talmudic version of the story. It is important to note that the first-person account in sections A and C mentions only Akiva, as narrator, and does not include the names of the three who failed to enter and leave pardes ‘in peace.’ In this version, the explanation of Akiva’s success, and the others’ failure, corresponds to that found in CantR 1,28.

93 Alternatively: ‘to destroy me.’ Note that the noun חבילה is derived from the same root as the verbal infinitive חבל. See Jastrow, Dictionary, 419b–420b.
Our hypothesis that the third-person material in section B has been interpolated into the first-person narrative of sections A and C is confirmed by a geniza fragment of HekhZ, where the materials in sections A and B are combined in a different order.\(^9^4\)

A/B1  R. Akiva said:
A/B2  We (sic) four were going into pardes, and these are they (sic): ben Azzai and ben Zoma, Aher and I, Akiva.
A/B3  Ben Azzai looked and died. Ben Zoma looked and was smitten. Aher looked and cut the shoots. I went up in peace and came down in peace.
A/B4  Why did I go up in peace and come down in peace?
A/B5  Not because I am greater than my fellows, but my deeds caused me to fulfill what was taught by the sages in the mishna: ‘Your deeds will bring you near and your deeds will keep you far.’

C1  R. Akiva said:
C2a  When I went up to the heavenly height, I set down a sign in the entrances of rakia, more than in the entrances of my house,
C2b  and when I arrived behind the curtain, angels of destruction came and wanted to drive me away, until the holy one, blessed be he, said to them: ‘My sons, leave this elder alone, for he is worthy to behold my Glory.’
C2c  Of him, Scripture says: ‘Draw me after you! Let us run!’ (Cant 1:4a).

The awkward transition from first to third person in A/B2 indicates that the names of the four have been added by a redactor who was familiar with the version in the Bavli, lines A3–5. Therefore A/B3 must originally have read ‘one…one…one…and I…’ as in HekhZ/MerkR, Alb. The underlying text of the fragment is thus virtually identical with the longer recension in HekhZ/MerkR, A and C, save that C2b, ‘…and wanted to drive me away’ is closer to the Bavli, line A55. The only other significant difference is that the geniza fragment includes the application of Cant 1:4a to Akiva (C2c). In the longer HekhZ/MerkR recension, this verse is found only in the interpolated section derived from the talmudic version (B2e). Since the redactor of the geniza fragment reverts to the third person in C2c, it is very probable that he too has adopted this item from the talmudic version of the story.

Subsections A2a–b of HekhZ/MerkR (= A/B4–5 of the fragment) are parallel to CantR, lines A41-49. It is noteworthy that CantR employs

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the first person only at this point, suggesting strongly that the hekhalot version has priority with regard to this item. As we have seen, this explanation of Akiva’s success is incompatible with the meaning of the talmudic versions (that he, unlike the others, was an ordained hakham). Subsection C2b corresponds to the Bavli, A53–60, although the Bavli expresses this item in the third, not first, person. It cannot be a coincidence that God’s statement that Akiva is ‘worthy to behold my glory (רמאי לַהֲשֹׁת בָּבְבוֹדָא)’ uses the language of mHag 2:1 B-C. Here, too, the hekhalot version must have priority over the Bavli, which changes לַהֲשֹׁת בָּבְבוֹדָא to לַהֲשֹׁת בָּבְבוֹדָא. 95

These observations suggest that the hekhalot writings have preserved a form of the pardes narrative which is quite different from that found in the talmudic sources, but that this version was subsequently expanded by a redactor who was familiar with the talmudic version. When the material inserted by that redactor (section B) is discounted, it can be seen that the hekhalot version was originally a statement by or attributed to Akiva (i) that he and three unnamed individuals went into pardes; (ii) that the other three met with disaster; and (iii) that he alone went in/up and came out/down safely, despite the opposition of the angels, through the merit of his deeds. Since the other three were not identified, the meaning of the story in this version cannot possibly have been that, unlike Akiva, they were not ordained hakhamim. Indeed, Akiva refers to them as haverim (A2b = A/B5; cf. CantR, lines A41–50), a term which implies equality of status (‘fellows’ or ‘colleagues’) and, possibly, co-membership of a formal (perhaps esoteric) ‘fellowship’ (havura). 96

It appears, then, that there are two basic versions of the pardes story. One, the first-person account in the hekhalot recensions, explains Akiva’s success as a consequence of his deeds and does not name the three who came to grief. In the second (talmudic) version, which is expressed in the third person, Akiva’s success is due to his being an ordained hakham and so the names of the three who were not hakhamim convey the essential point of the story, which is an illustration of the merkava

95 Scholem (Major Trends, 358 n. 17) and Maier (Kultus, 145–146) have shown that the curious expression לַהֲשֹׁת בָּבְבוֹדָא (‘to make use of my glory’) refers to theurgic pronunciation of the divine name, originally in the context of the temple cult. Nonetheless, לַהֲשֹׁת בָּבְבוֹדָא is likely to be the better reading, by reference to mHag 2:1.

96 The word is used of those present at Nehunya b. ha-Kana’s trance-ascent to the merkava in HekhR 14:3 (§ 203).
restriction in mHag. 2:1. There are two possible explanations of the historical relationship between these two versions.

First, if the talmudic version is held to have priority, the redactor of the original hekhalot version (sections A and C) must have (i) failed to see the point of the talmudic story; (ii) excerpted from it the story of Akiva; (iii) changed that narrative into the first person; (iv) dropped the other three names, the significance of which he did not understand, and which were in any case irrelevant to his main concern (Akiva’s heavenly ascent); (v) omitted the biblical verses associated with all four characters, including his hero Akiva; (vi) added the motif of angelic opposition; and (vii) provided an alternative explanation of Akiva’s success (the merit of his deeds). According to this hypothesis, the hekhalot version is derivative of the story in its original form in the Mystical Collection, but has also influenced the redactors of CantR (A43–49) and the Bavli (A53–60). A later redactor or redactors of the hekhalot version then reinserted the names of the three talmidim and the scriptural verses associated with all four characters (section B, basic text) by taking this material from the talmudic versions. However, he or they did not convert this re-adopted material from the third back to the first person.

Alternatively, if the original hekhalot version is accorded priority, a much less convoluted reconstruction is made possible. The original, first person account did not give the names of the three who came to grief and explained that Akiva succeeded, despite the opposition of the angels, through the merit of his deeds. The redactor of the Mystical Collection or his source (i) adopted the relatively simple story preserved in HekhZ/MerkR; (ii) converted it into the third person; and (iii) made it into an illustration of the merkava restriction by adding the names of the three talmidei hakhamim. For the names of three talmidim who already appeared in close association with Akiva, this redactor had to look no further than the early tradition about dreams of ‘sages’ and ‘students’, preserved in ARN(b) 46 and elsewhere. The four scriptural verses may have been included by the same redactor, or they may have been added at a later stage of the literary tradition. In either case, some or all of those verses appear to have been adapted from extraneous traditions about the four named figures. The hekhalot recension was subsequently expanded to include these details, which were taken from the third-person talmudic version, probably at a time when the talmudic sources had acquired authoritative status (HekhZ/MerkR, section B).
The second reconstruction is so much simpler and more economical than the first that the conclusion that the hekhalot version has priority seems inescapable. It follows that an early redactor of the talmudic Mystical Collection took a preexistent story about Akiva’s ascent to the merkava, in the face of angelic opposition, and made that story into an illustration of the merkava restriction in mHag 2:1 by identifying the three unnamed characters as *talmidei-hakhamim*, probably on the basis of their appearance in close proximity to Akiva in the list of dream-objects and their meanings. However, it is important to recognize that the source-version of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ preserved in the hekhalot writings uses the characteristic language of the Mishna: רואים לַחַתְוָלִים (HekhZ/MerkR and geniza fragment, section C2b). Therefore, the source-version must already have been among the traditions associated with mHag 2:1 even before it was adapted by the compiler of the Mystical Collection. According to that source version, the *pardes* is located ‘behind the *pargod*’ (section C2b), which can only mean: in the celestial holy of holies, where God resides in his *kavod*.

Thus, the source from which the talmudic versions are derived refers quite explicitly to an ascent to the heavenly temple, culminating in the vision of God’s Glory, and cannot have been understood in any other terms.

Once this is recognized, the details of the story fall into place. The variant readings: ‘went in/went up’ and ‘came out/came down’ may be less significant than Schäfer supposed, since both pairs of expressions were used in the context of the temple. The disasters that befell the three other than Akiva were evidently a consequence of their having ‘looked.’ The pretalmudic version makes it clear that the object at which Akiva, alone of the four, was worthy to look was the divine *kavod* in the celestial holy of holies (HekhZ/MerkR, section C2b). Of those who were not found worthy, that one should have died hardly requires explanation, since Scripture itself associates the vision of God with extreme danger.

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97 On the term *pargod*, which must mean here the curtain before the celestial holy of holies, corresponding to the veil (*parokhet*) of the earthly temple, see Halperin, *Merkabah*, 169 n. 99; and see further Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*, 153–172. The same usage occurs at bHag 15a in connection with Elisha b. Avuya’s account to R. Meir of his condemnation by a *bat-gol* in the heavenly temple. The parallel in yHag 2:1 (77b) places this event in the earthly temple, and does not use the term *pargod*. According to mss. Vatican 134 and Munich 95 of the Bavli (not the printed edition), the word occurs again on the same page, and with the same meaning, in the story of Elisha’s disastrous encounter with Metatron, whom he took to be a ‘second power.’ Elisha’s statement to Meir almost certainly refers to this story. See Alexander, ‘3 Enoch’; but compare Morray-Jones, ‘Hekhalot Literature’, 17–36.
and the risk of death.\textsuperscript{98} The second was evidently injured in some way, which seems natural enough, although the precise meaning is not quite clear. The geonic commentators understood that ben Zoma was afflicted with madness,\textsuperscript{99} as does HekhZ(N) (section B2b). In the pretalmudic version, it seems more reasonable to infer that the death and injury were inflicted by the ‘angels of destruction’, who only desisted from attempting to injure (or destroy) Akiva at God’s command (HekhZ/MerkR, section C2b).\textsuperscript{100} It should be noted that the expression מלאכי חבל (malakhei habbala) refers to a species of demonic angel.\textsuperscript{101} As demonstrated by Dan,\textsuperscript{102} in the early merkava literature, the gatekeepers of the hekhalot have very destructive tendencies and appear to be regarded as demonic.\textsuperscript{103} The Bavli’s reading, ‘ministering angels’ (line A54), is deliberately ‘softer’ and reflects a concern to guard against the possibility of association between the demonic principle and God—a concern that Halperin has shown to be a recurring theme in the rabbinic treatment of the merkava traditions.\textsuperscript{104} The substitution of ‘drive me away’ (Bavli, line A54; geniza fragment, subsection C2b) for ‘do me violence’ (HekhZ/MerkR, subsection C2b) is similarly explained.\textsuperscript{105} 

With regard to the fate of the third individual, the expression ‘cut the shoots’ is evidently associated in some manner with the image of a garden (pardes). Although the precise meaning is not immediately

\textsuperscript{98} Exod 33:20, etc. On the mystical tradition in midrashic literature that the Israelites’ experience at Sinai involved an ‘initiatory death’ and transformation, see Chernus, \textit{Mysticism}, 33–73; and Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism’, 23.

\textsuperscript{99} Rashi, Rav Hai Gaon, and Rabbenu Hananel (see p. 352 above) all interpret the expression in this way.


\textsuperscript{101} See, for example, bKid 72a.


\textsuperscript{103} The tradition of Solomon’s mastery over the demons, whom he compelled to assist him in the building of the temple (in T. Solomon, for example), may reflect a similar conception. The construction of the temple, which embodies the order of the cosmos (see ch. 12 above), was regarded as a means of subduing the demonic and destructive powers of the primeval chaos waters, over which God is enthroned upon his merkava. On this theme, see Neiman, ‘Supercaelian’; Day, \textit{God’s Conflict}, esp. 18–21; Halperin, \textit{Faces}, 227–49; Barker, \textit{Gate of Heaven}, 18–20, 62–67. Thus, it is not surprising that the mystic should be assaulted by demons of destruction when he attempts to enter the celestial sanctuary. See pp. 397–402 below.


\textsuperscript{105} See p. 367 n. 92 above.
apparent, it seems probable that some kind of sacrilege or desecration of the sanctuary is intended.\footnote{106}

As we saw in chapter 12, the notion of the preexistent heavenly or cosmic temple, the courts of which are identical with the heavens, occurs throughout rabbinic literature,\footnote{107} and also in Philo,\footnote{108} and is a central feature of the apocalyptic-mystical tradition.\footnote{109} Whereas the hekhalot writings, the later apocalypses, the majority of rabbinic texts, and the Sabbath Shirot from Qumran all refer to a seven-tiered cosmic temple, some important early sources, including Testament of Levi and the early strata of 1 Enoch, embody a cosmology of three heavens and corresponding temple courts. In 1 En 14, the ascending visionary passes first through a wall, corresponding to the \textit{soreg} or wall around the inner courts of the temple, before entering two ‘houses’ contained one within the other, which correspond to the sanctuary building and the holy of holies.\footnote{110} According to other early passages of 1 Enoch, the third and highest of the celestial levels contains the ‘paradise of righteousness’ (in Aramaic, \textit{pardes kushta}).\footnote{111}

This correspondence between the Garden of Eden (= the future paradise of the righteous) and the heavenly sanctuary is also found in Jub 3:9–13, 8:19, and 2 Bar 4:2–7. In Questions of Ezra 1:19–21, the throne of glory is placed ‘opposite the garden’ in the seventh heaven. As observed above, some late midrashim describe the garden of paradise as a succession of seven halls or chambers, of gold, silver, and precious

\footnote{106} According to yHag 77b–c and parallels (see p. 342 n. 10 above), this means that Elisha either killed young students of Tora or persuaded them to abandon their studies. According to CantR, he accomplished his nefarious purpose by ‘speaking a word’ over his victims, which almost certainly means that he pronounced a magic spell. Compare HekhZ(N), subsection B2c). As noted above, however, these explanations are derived from an independent body of tradition concerning Elisha and tell us nothing about the meaning of the expression ‘cut the shoots’ in the pretalmudic version of the \textit{pardes} story, in which Elisha played no role.

\footnote{107} In addition to the sources cited in ch. 12 above, see, for example, GenR 69,7; PesR 20,4; Tanh naso 19; bSan 94b; Tg. Isa 1:1–6; Tg. 1 Chr 21:15. Elsewhere, the temple is regarded as the source of the creation of the world: tYom 4:6; bYom 54b; GenR 1:4; Tanh kedoshim 10. See further, Ginzberg, \textit{Legends} 1: 12–13; Aptowitzer, ‘Bet ha-Mikdash’, 137–153 and 257–277.

\footnote{108} Philo, Spec. leg. 1.66.

\footnote{109} See pp. 303–305 above.


\footnote{111} 1 En 32:3 and 77:4. See further, Milik and Black, \textit{Books}, 40–41 and 231–236.
stones, to which the various classes of the righteous are allocated. One source has only three chambers. The division of the righteous in the world to come into seven hierarchical classes is found in several midrashic sources, in yHag 77a, and in 4 Ezra 7:92–98, where the seventh class is said to behold the vision of God. A threefold division is also recorded. In these sources, the traditions of the Garden of Eden or paradise, the celestial levels, the heavenly temple, and the hekhalot are closely intertwined. The common factor uniting these traditions is, of course, the idea of a holy place in which God’s Glory may be seen. The three-level cosmology is almost certainly older than the more elaborate seven-level version. The two models appear to correspond to the hierarchic structure of the temple as follows.

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112 See pp. 328–329 above.
113 'Maase be-Rabbi Joshua ben Levi' in Gaster, 'Sefer', 96–97. This is an extended version of the story of how Yoshua b. Levi was permitted to enter paradise during his lifetime in the company of the angel of death, also found at bKet 77b. A longer, and probably later, version of the story in Jellinek, BHM 2: 48–51 has seven houses. See further Ginzberg, Legends 5: 31f. On the importance of Yoshua b. Levi in the merkava tradition, see Chernus, Mysticism, 33–43; and Halperin, Faces, 253–257, 309–313, and 345–346.
114 See, for example, LevR 30:2; MidrPs 11:6. See further, Ginzberg, Legends 1: 11, 21; 4: 118; and 5: 30–33; Goldberg, 'Rabban Yohanans Traum', esp. 11–13.
115 ARN(b) 43. 'Seder Gan-Eden' has seven classes of the righteous but three walls around the Garden.
116 Compare the merkava vision in paradise described in Vita Adae 25–29. Another common feature linking the inner sanctuary with the Garden of Eden is that both are guarded by keruvim (see Tanh bereshit 1,25), as of course are the hekhalot.
117 The sevenfold model is most commonly found in rabbinic sources, for example, LevR 29,11; ARN(a) 37; PesR 20,4; and MidrGad Exod 7:1 (Margulies 108f.). A few sources record, in addition, alternative traditions that enumerate two or three heavens: for example, bHag 12b; MidrPs 114:2; and DeutR 2,32 (to 6:4), though the parallel text published by Lieberman, Devarim Rabbah, 65, has seven only. See further, Young, 'Ascension Motif', 89–91.
118 The following analysis of the sevenfold structure of the temple is based on mKel 1:6–9, which lists ten areas of increasing holiness in Jerusalem, the first three of which are outside the temple. In this source, differing opinions are expressed about the precise divisions among the levels, and so the following model, based on the opinion of R. Yose, is provisional only (compare Neher, 'Voyage Mystique', 73–76). The idea that there were seven levels of holiness within the temple, however, seems to have been generally recognized. The threefold model is based on 1 En 14, discussed above. On the association between the sevenfold structure of the temple, the seven days of creation, and the enthronement of the kavod, see Levenson, 'Temple', 288–293. On the sevenfold structure of the heavenly temple in the liturgical cycle at Qumran, see ch 12 above and Newsom, Songs. See also Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 29–33.
The image of the temple as a garden can be further explained by reference to the descriptions of Solomon’s temple found in Scripture, which state that the inner walls of the sanctuary were covered with carvings of gourds, flowers, and palm trees, all overlaid with gold. Rabbinic traditions about this ‘gold of parwayim’ (2 Chr 6) state that it came from the Garden of Eden, and that the trees made from this gold bore golden fruit. These traditions are also preserved in the medieval treatise Massekhet Kelim, which states that the temple contained ‘seventy-seven tables of gold, and their gold was from the walls of Eden, which had been revealed to Solomon…and trees of gold of parwayim which used to bear fruit, six hundred and sixty-six myriads of talents of pure gold which came from beneath the tree of life in the holy garden.’ Much earlier, in the Genesis Apocryphon from Qumran, parwayim is evidently a term for paradise. It appears, then, that the interior of the sanctuary was both a replica of its celestial counterpart and an image of the primordial and future paradise, with which the heavenly temple was closely associated, if not identified.

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120 bYom 45a; NumR 11,3; Tanh bereshit 4,33; Tanh nasso 9. See further Ginzberg, *Legends* 5: 29 n. 77.
121 NumR 11,3; CantR 4,17 (= 3.10.3).
123 mKel 5:7.
124 1QapGen 2:23. In their edition, Avigad and Yadin (Genesis Apocryphon, 34) indicate that the reading is uncertain, but it has been generally accepted. See Grelot, ‘Parwaim’, 30–38, esp. 37; Vermes, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 253.
125 On the correspondence between the earthly and heavenly temples see yBer 4:6 (8c) = CantR 4,11 (= 4.4.9); MidrPs 30:1; Tanh wayakhel 7. See further Aptowitzer, ‘Bet ha-Mikdash’, 145–53; Davies, *Gospel*, 131–54; and, especially, Barker, *Gate of Heaven*.
126 On the antiquity of this theme, see Levenson, ‘Temple and the World’, 297f.; Margaret Barker, *Older Testament*, 127 and 233–45; and idem, *Gate of Heaven*, 57–103. A different, but closely related image is that of the tower in the vineyard (Isa 5:1–7). Baumgarten (‘4Q500’, 1–6) has shown that this was identified with the heavenly
These observations explain the parable of the King’s garden in the Tosefta (B1–9), which refers to the structure of the Jerusalem temple itself. The ‘garden’ (פרדס) represents the sanctuary building (ההיכל), containing the holy of holies, on the ground floor, while the ‘upper chamber’ (עלייה) is the unused empty space that occupied the upper portion of the building. This reading is confirmed by tractate Middot, which refers to the empty chamber as the לעיינה הבת קדרש הקדשים.127 According to this source, whenever it became necessary to make repairs to the internal walls of the holy of holies, the workmen were let down from the empty upper chamber in closed boxes ‘lest they should feast their eyes on the holy of holies’ (shalla yot tevuot mahit kadosh kadosh).128 The Tosefta’s version of the parable employs the same formula: ‘What should a man do? Look, only let him not feast his eyes on it’ (ברלב).129 This indicates clearly that, in the pardes story, the forbidden object at which the three talmidim ‘looked’ (lines B6–9) was, indeed, the celestial holy of holies.

In the Yerushalmi, the parable of the upper chamber occurs within the Mystical Collection, but outside the immediate context of the pardes story, at yHag 77c, where it is preceded by another parable, also involving a king’s palace. The two parables are quite different in meaning and it seems that the editor of the Yerushalmi has placed them together simply because of their similarity of form. Although the parable of the upper chamber in yersuhalmi omits the Tosefta’s formula of ‘feasting one’s eyes’, it contains other language that links it directly to the pardes story. Yerushalmi’s statement: ‘One may look…’ (עלהי לוהט) (line B7) contains a clear echo of the pardes narrative, where each of the three talmidim is repeatedly said to have ‘looked’ (הציץ) (lines A6–10, etc.). The statement in the parable continues: ‘…but not approach’ (לא לגוע) (lines B8–9). This echoes Akiva’s warning in bavli and in MerkR(N): ‘When you approach (כאמס תמיעי אמט) the pure marble stones…’ (bavli, lines A11–12; MerkR[N] B1b).130

Linguistic connections with the pardes story are not found in any version of the parable of the two roads. Maier sees a parallel with 1 En...
14:13, where it is stated that the celestial temple was ‘hot like fire and cold like ice.’\textsuperscript{131} This is unlikely to be the original meaning of the parable, which appears in the Yerushalmi and ARN(a) in wholly different contexts. However, it may be that the redactor of the Tosefta’s version did make the association suggested by Maier, which would explain why he chose to include it here.

Our investigation thus far has shown that the rabbinic tradition of the four who entered \textit{pardes} was originally associated with the subject of \textit{maase merkava}, and that the earliest form of the story referred quite unambiguously to an ascent to the celestial temple. The Mystical Collection, which includes the \textit{pardes} story, is older than the earliest talmudic document, the Tosefta, and must therefore have been compiled in the third or very early fourth century, at latest.\textsuperscript{132} We have found that the hekhalot version of the \textit{pardes} story must be earlier still, and that it was associated with the mishnaic merkava restriction even before it was reworked by the redactor of the Mystical Collection. The most conservative possible estimate would therefore date the composition of the story to the early third century. Indeed, we have no reason to assume that the attribution of the original first-person version to Akiva, who lived in the late first and early second century, is inaccurate. Akiva is said to have been especially devoted to the \textit{Song of Songs}, which was associated in the mystical tradition (especially the shiur koma)\textsuperscript{133} with the vision of the body of the \textit{kavod}. This text provides ample grounds for the idea that this vision occurs in the setting of a garden. The term \textit{pardes} itself, when used to refer to the holy of holies, as in ‘Four Entered Paradise’, may contain an allusion to the ‘garden of pomegranates’ (\textit{pardes rimmonim}) mentioned in Cant 4:13. Elsewhere, Akiva is said to have associated the \textit{Song of Songs} with the sacred space at the center of the temple:

\begin{quote}
R. Akiva said: God forbid! No man in Israel ever disputed about the \textit{Song of Songs}, that it does not render the hands unclean, for all the ages are not worth the day on which the \textit{Song of Songs} was given to Israel—for all the Writings are holy, but the \textit{Song of Songs} is the holy of holies.\textsuperscript{134}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{131} Maier, ‘Gefährdungsmotiv’, 26f. For alternative interpretations, see Halperin, \textit{Merkabah}, 94–97; and Rowland, \textit{Open Heaven}, 316.
\textsuperscript{132} See Halperin, \textit{Merkabah}, 105.
\textsuperscript{133} See Part III below.
\textsuperscript{134} mYad 3:5.
The accuracy of the hekhalot writers’ attribution of the *pardes* narrative to Akiva is thus, although not proven, by no means inherently unlikely. It may even be the case that a preexistent unit of tradition, which was already associated with the merkava restriction (itself of prerabbinic origin), was either appropriated by Akiva or attributed to him in the years following his death. Whoever the original author may have been, he evidently used the term *pardes* as a technical term for the holy of holies in the highest heaven, where God appears on the merkava. He evidently expected his readers to understand this usage, which was deeply rooted in the prerabbinic and pre-Christian tradition of the visionary ascent.

Part two of this chapter will explore the relevance of this material for our understanding of Paul’s ascent into paradise in 2 Corinthians 12 and his claim to possess the authority of an apostle, which he evidently based on that event.

*Part 2: Paul’s Heavenly Ascent and its Significance*

**Text and Context of 2 Cor 12:1–12**

2 Cor 12:1–12 reads as follows:

1It is necessary for me to boast. Though it is not profitable, yet I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord (ὀπτασίας καὶ ἀποκαλύψεις κυρίου).135 2I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago—whether in the body I do not know, or out of (ἐκτός) the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up as far as the third heaven (ὑπεραγέντα... ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ). 3And I know that this man—whether in the body or outside of (χωρίς) the body I do not know, God knows—was caught up into paradise (ἡρπάγη εἰς τὸν παράδεισον) and heard unutterable words, which it is not permitted for a human being to speak (ἄρρητα ῥήματα ἃ οὐκ ἐξὸν ἀνθρώπῳ λαλῆσαι). 4On behalf of this man I will boast, but on behalf of myself I will not boast, save in my weaknesses. 5So, if I wish to boast, I will not be a fool, for I will be speaking the truth, but I refrain, lest anyone should give me credit beyond what he sees in me or hears from me, even considering the exceptional nature of the revelations (καὶ τῇ ὑπερβολῇ τῶν ἀποκαλύψεων). 7Therefore, lest I should become too exalted, a thorn in the flesh (σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί) was given to me—an angel.

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135 It seems most natural, *contra* (among others) Jörg Baumgarten (*Paulus und die Apokalyptik*, 136–146), to interpret κυρίου as an objective genitive, rather than a genitive of authorship. The following analysis will confirm this reading.
of Satan, that he might strike me (ἀγγέλος σατανᾶ ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ), lest I should become too exalted. 8Three times, I called upon the Lord about this, that he/it might leave me (ἵνα ἀποστῇ ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ), but he said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for (my) power is perfected in weakness.’ 9Rather, then, I will boast most gladly of my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell over me. 10Therefore I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and calamities on behalf of Christ, for whenever I am weak, I am powerful. 11I have become foolish—you have compelled me, for I ought to be commended by you! For I was inferior to the ‘super-apostles’ in nothing, even if I am nothing! 12Indeed, the signs of an apostle were performed among you with complete patience, and with signs and wonders and works of power (σημείοις τε τέρασιν καὶ δυνάμεσιν)!

In order to understand this passage, we must first take account of its context. 136 Paul is at this point engaged in a defense of his apostolic authority, which has been challenged by his opponents, evidently Jewish Christians of some kind, who laid claim to ‘visions and revelations’ of their own. 137 The frame within which 2 Cor 10–13 is set is thus very similar to that indicated by Gal 1–2. 138 In both cases, Paul’s defense is that his apostolic commission comes directly from God or Christ, and not through human mediation (2 Cor 10:8; 13:10; cf. Gal 1:1; 1:12; 2:7). 139 Although Paul includes a similar claim in the standardized opening

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136 It is assumed in what follows that 2 Cor 10–13 is a separate textual unit, probably part of the ‘severe letter’ referred to in 2 Cor 2:3–4, 2:9, 7:8, and 7:12. For a recent discussion of this issue, including an excellent overview of relevant scholarship, see Taylor, ‘Composition and Chronology’. See also Strecker, ‘Die Legitimität.’

137 See further Lightfoot, Galatians, 353–355; Kasemann, ‘Die Legitimität’; Schoeps, Paul, 74–87; Friedrich, ‘Die Gegner’; Barrett, ‘Paul’s Opponents’ and idem, Commentary, 302–306; Gunther, St. Paul’s Opponents, esp. 298–307; Ellis, ‘Paul and his Opponents’; Schutz, Paul and the Anatomy, 165–186; Holmberg, Paul and Power, 45–48 and 77–79; Georgi, The Opponents of Paul, esp. 32–39; Tabor, Things Unutterable, 21–45; Young and Ford, Meaning and Truth, 206–220; Martin, ‘Opponents of Paul’; Sumney, Identifying Paul’s Opponents; Newman, Glory-Christology, 229–240; Strecker, ‘Die Legitimität’, 570–573. The influential study of Betz, Der Apostel Paulus, has shown that in 2 Cor 10–13, Paul makes extensive use of Greek apologetic techniques, especially irony, when defending himself against these opponents. However, Betz’s penetrating analysis of the literary form of these chapters does not justify all of his conclusions regarding their content, and his suggestion that 2 Cor 12:1–12 is merely a parody of a heavenly ascent, not an autobiographical account, is entirely unconvincing. See further, Forbes, ‘Comparison’, 1–30.

138 See the cogent arguments of Knox, ‘Fourteen Years Later’; and see further, Lightfoot, Galatians, 183; Riddle, Man of Conflict, 18–24 and 205.

139 See, in addition to the works cited in n. 137 above, Benz, Paulus als Visionär, 77–121; Saake, ‘Paulus als Ekstatiker’; Rowland, Open Heaven, 379f.
formula of many of his letters (e.g., Rom 1:1–7), this strong emphasis on the independence of his authority from any chain of human transmission is found only in Galatians and 2 Cor 10–13.

Paul’s Unwillingness to Boast

In 2 Cor 12:11, continuing a theme begun in 2 Cor 11:16–33, Paul explains that he is driven to ‘boast’ of his visionary experience, against his own wishes and better judgement, by his need to respond to the claims of his opponents. Normally, he refrains from such boasting (2 Cor 12:6; cf. Rom 15:17–19). Paul thus makes it clear that (i) he is referring to an experience of which he would much rather not speak (or write); but (ii) he feels forced to do so by the exigencies of his situation. Even so, he refers only obliquely to the central content of the revelation (2 Cor 12:4). Elsewhere in his writings, Paul states that he received his apostolic authority not by human transmission, but ‘through a revelation (δι’ ἀποκάλυψεως) of Jesus Christ’ (Gal 1:11–12). In 1 Cor 9:1, he asks rhetorically, ‘Am I not an apostle? Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?’ These passages clearly indicate that Paul bases his claim to possess the authority of an apostle on his vision or visions of the risen Christ. It seems that the vision recorded in 2 Cor 12:1–12 is somehow crucial to that claim.

A central theme of 2 Corinthians 10–13 is Paul’s contrast between his own weakness and the power of Christ.140 This contrast represents an attempt to resolve the difficult situation in which Paul finds himself. If he does not ‘boast’ he has no answer to the claims of his opponents, but to do so is to commit the very error for which he has castigated them (2 Cor 10:12). In 2 Cor 12:8–12, he models his own position on that of Christ. Just as the power of God was made manifest by Christ’s weakness, so Paul’s weakness manifests the power of Christ. Thus, Paul’s very ‘nothingness’ is the basis of his claim to be ‘inferior in nothing’ to the so-called ‘super-apostles.’ In this way, he tells us that he is boasting of Christ’s power, and not his own attainment (compare 1 Cor 1:26–2:5).

Warnings against self-exaltation with regard to visionary experience are quite common in the hekhalot literature. Akiva’s disclaimer in the original version of the *pardes* story: ‘Not because I am greater than my fellows,’\textsuperscript{141} is, of course, a case in point. Another example is found in the macroform Maase Merkava, § 24:\textsuperscript{142}

R. Yishmael said: מַלֵאךְ הַפְּדוּת כָּל הַנֵּטְעָה to me: “Son of the noble ones, do not exalt yourself above all your companions, and do not say, ’Even I, out of them all, have been worthy!’ For this has not come about through your effort or through your power, but by the power of your Father who is in heaven.’

This warning is given to Yishmael immediately after he has experienced a charismatic revelation whereby he is empowered to pronounce the names of the angelic gatekeepers of the seven hekhalot. A little later, when Nehunya b. ha-Kana challenges his right to reveal those names, Yishmael responds: I did not do it for my own honor, but for the glory of the king of the universe.’\textsuperscript{143} Paul’s unwillingness to boast on his own account is wholly consistent with these traditions.

This reticence explains the curious formulation of 2 Cor 12:2–5. Morton Smith has interpreted these verses literally, arguing that the ‘man in Christ’ is Jesus, not Paul himself.\textsuperscript{144} However, this reading fails to account for 2 Cor 12:7, where Paul makes it clear that the ‘revelations’ are his own. Most commentators, from Irenaeus onward,\textsuperscript{145} have recognized that Paul is speaking of his own experience. This view is challenged by Michael Goulder,\textsuperscript{146} who suggests that, in Paul’s vocabulary, the terms ἀποκάλυψις and ὀπτασία carry different meanings. According to Goulder, Paul (i) was unable to compete with his opponents’ claims to have obtained angelic revelations (ὀπτασία) in the course of heavenly ascents; and (ii) was, in any case, vehemently opposed to such practices:

\textsuperscript{141} HekhZ/MerkR, section A2b; geniza fragment, section A/B5; CantR, lines A44–45 (see pp. 367–369 and p. 347 above).


\textsuperscript{144} Smith, ‘Ascent to the Heavens’.

\textsuperscript{145} Irenaeus, Adv.haer. 5.1.1

\textsuperscript{146} Goulder, ‘Visionaries’, esp. 18–20.
Where Paul can compete is in ἀποκαλύψεις, the second category of heavenly experiences, incursions of the divine on earth—in fact he has had so many such experiences that God gave him the stake in the flesh to slake his pride. But the ὀπτασίαι were a most dangerous claim. Once it is accepted that a man has been to heaven, and has been given a message by an angel, his power is virtually unlimited.147

This purely speculative exegesis is without evidentiary support and makes a nonsense of Paul’s argument. In the first place, it requires us to understand that Paul was prepared to ‘boast’ about a heavenly ascent experienced by an unknown third party (in Goulder’s view, Paul’s friend), even though he simultaneously denied the legitimacy of any such experience. Second, Goulder cites no external evidence to show that the terms ἀποκαλύψεις and ὀπτασίαι carry the meanings that he proposes.148 His argument on this point is wholly circular: the only basis for the proposed distinction is his exegesis of the passage, which, in turn, is based solely on that distinction. Although we should by no means assume that the two terms are precisely synonymous, there is no evidence that the distinction intended by Paul is between ‘heavenly’ and ‘earthly’ visions. It seems more probable that ὀπτασία (= Hebrew ראה or זיהי?) refers to the visual element of the experience, and ἀποκάλυψις (= Hebrew חווי) to its auditory, verbal content. Finally, the issue in dispute between Paul and his opponents concerns visions, not of angels, but ‘of the Lord’ (2 Cor 12:1). Earlier in the letter, Paul has characterized his opponents as ‘false apostles’ who have disguised themselves as apostles of Christ but are in reality agents of Satan, the deceiver (2 Cor 11:13–15). These opponents boast in order to be recognized as Paul’s equals (2 Cor 11:12), which must mean that they too claim to have experienced ‘visions and revelations of the Lord’, not a lesser angel. Paul clearly regards this claim as spurious, but he is forced to counter it by referring to his own genuine vision ‘of the Lord.’ Nowhere does he contest the legitimacy of such experiences as a matter of principle. Indeed, to do so would be to undermine the basis of his own claim to possess the authority of an apostle.

147 Ibid. 19.
148 Barrett (Commentary, 307) observed that Luke uses ὀπτασία of earthly visions; Goulder (‘Visionaries’, 19 n. 1) acknowledges this observation, but discounts it.
The ‘Man in Christ’ and Paul’s Earthly Personality

Although he feels forced to cite his vision in defense of his apostolic authority, Paul is unwilling to claim it as a personal attainment. As we observed above, the ‘man in Christ’ formula reflects his discomfort over the issue of ‘boasting.’ It may well be, in part, an expression of deference to the pseudepigraphic convention associated with the apocalyptic and early mystical tradition, even though Paul cannot fully observe that convention without defeating his own purpose. Paul’s choice of language may also signify a deeper and more ‘mystical’ meaning. In many apocalyptic and merkava-mystical writings, including the hekhalot texts, the process of ascent into heaven, leading to the vision of the kavod (whom Paul identifies with Christ), involves a transformation of the visionary into an angelic or supra-angelic likeness of that glorious divine image. This seems to be the background of Paul’s concept of ‘glorification’, expressed in passages such as Rom 8:29 and 2 Cor 3:18.

The ‘man in Christ’ of 2 Cor 12:2 is, therefore, Paul’s ‘heavenly self’ or ‘apostolic identity’, which is conformed to the image of the enthroned and glorified Christ, and thereby endowed with divinely conferred authority or ‘power.’ ‘This man’ is contrasted with Paul’s earthly, human self. Just as Paul’s earthly personality is conformed to that of Jesus (characterized by ‘weakness’, 2 Cor 12:9–11), so his ‘heavenly being’ is conformed to the image of Christ-as-kavod (characterized by ‘power’). The same contrast is expressed elsewhere in Paul’s writings, for example, at 2 Cor 4:11: ‘While we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh,’ and Gal 2:20: ‘It is no longer I who live, but Christ within me.’ The same theme of transformation is found in Eph 2:6, where the author states that God ‘raised us up with him and seated

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150 See Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism.’ Compare Tabor, *Things Unutterable*, 10–19, and Segal, *Paul the Convert*, 34–71. In the passages cited above, Paul extends this promise of transformation (which is apparently both a future event and an ongoing process) to all those who have become ‘participating members’ of the glorified body of Christ. It seems that the transformational aspect of the heavenly ascent was at an early period transferred to the rite of baptism. This transference is also found in Gnostic and Syriac Christian sources, and a few Jewish texts associate reception of the divine name, which is a key element of the heavenly transformation in the apocalyptic-merkava tradition, with ritual immersion. See further DeConick and Fossum, ‘Stripped Before God’.
us with him in the heavenly places’, while Eph 4:24 speaks of ‘the new self, created according to the likeness of God.’

Returning to 2 Corinthians 12, it is Paul’s identity with the celestial ‘man in Christ’, on behalf of whom he is willing to boast (2 Cor 12:5), that is the source of his power and authority, even though, paradoxically, that power is made manifest in and through his own personal ‘weakness.’ This theme of conformity with Christ is at the heart of Paul’s apostolic claim (compare, e.g., 1 Cor 11:1 and 1 Thess 1:6). As observed by James Tabor,

the apostle is the mediator of divine power in the world and the guarantor of the ‘success of the enterprise.’ He not only speaks ‘in’ or ‘for’ Christ, but in a representative sense is Christ manifest in the world.152

In 2 Cor 12:6, Paul explains that, under normal circumstances, he would not choose to boast of his mystical attainments because he wishes to be given credit only for his words and deeds. This idea is picked up in 2 Cor 12:11–12, where he states that he has been compelled to abandon his usual restraint and ‘commend’ himself because his readers have failed to ‘commend’ him in spite of the ‘signs and wonders and works of power’ that he has performed among them. Those works, which Paul feels should preclude his need to boast, are the evidence of his apostolic authority. It is also clear that they are connected in Paul’s mind with the ‘visions and revelations’ by which that authority was conferred upon him. It is noteworthy that, when alluding to his prior performance of ‘signs and wonders’, Paul uses a rather awkward third-person, passive-mood construction and—just as when speaking of his ascent into heaven—goes out of his way to avoid the first person.

The claim that Paul makes for himself in this passage is similar in substance to a series of statements at the very beginning of Hekhalot Rabbati, where the merkava adept is said to possess seven kinds of ‘greatness’ (presumably, these are related in some way to the sevenfold cosmic structure of the hekhalot):153

152 Tabor, Things Unutterable, 23.
1:1 R. Yishmael said: What are the specific songs (שיריוות) that are to be said by one who wishes to behold the vision of the merkava (马来תכל ב_WATCH_ מרהב) in order to descend in peace and ascend in peace?

1:2 Greatness beyond them all,\(^{154}\) (that he is able) to bind (the angels) to himself,\(^{155}\) (compelling them) to admit him and lead him into the chambers of the palace of Aravot Rakia and to place him on the right of the throne of glory, and (that he is able), when he stands oppositeיהוה, the God of Israel,\(^{156}\) to see all that is done before the throne of his glory and to know all that is going to happen in the world.

1:3 Greatness beyond them all, for he sees and discerns all the deeds of men, even when they are performed in secret, distinguishing between worthy and disgraceful actions. If a man steals, he knows it and recognizes him. If one commits adultery, he knows it and recognizes him. If one murders, he knows it and recognizes him [...]

1:4 Greatness beyond them all, for anyone who raises his hand against him and strikes him will be clothed with plague and covered with leprosy and crowned with boils. Greatness beyond them all, for anyone who speaks evil of him will have cast upon him plagues of ulcers, dreadful wounds and sores dripping pus.

1:5 Greatness beyond them all, for he is set apart from all the sons of men, feared in all his characteristics and honored by those above and those below [...]

1:6 Greatness beyond them all, for all creatures before him are like silver to a smith. He knows which silver is blemished and which has been purified. He examines a family (and discerns) how many bastards there are, how many sons of impure intercourse there are, how many eunuchs there are, how many men with severed members there are [...]

2:1 Greatness beyond them all, for everyone who hardens his face against him will be struck blind [...]

\(^{154}\) Heb.: ידיעת עולם ממזרח. The precise meaning of this unique expression is unclear. Schäfer (Hidden and Manifest, 41–45) offers: 'The greatest thing of all is the fact that...’ (cf. idem, Übersetzung 2: 1–10: 'Die alle übertreffende Größe besteht darin, daß...'). Compare Hewitt (‘Überlegenheit’, 5–9): ‘Eine Größe von ihnen allen ist...’; and Halperin (Faces, 440): ‘Greater than all of them...’, which conveys the probable sense of the expression but not the grammatical construction. Hewitt (‘Überlegenheit’, 9 n. 36) suggests that the expression may be based on Exod 18:11 and/or mAvot 6:5–7.

\(^{155}\) Following Hewitt (‘Überlegenheit’, 5); Schafer (Übersetzung 2: 2): ‘that they [i.e. the angels] bind themselves to him’ (‘daß sie sich ihm verbinden’).

\(^{156}\) See the following note.
2:2 Greatness beyond them all, for the heavenly bet din blows the plain note, then the tremolo, then the plain note again, and they pronounce the lesser ban, then the lesser ban again, then the greater ban, three times every day since the time when permission was given to the pure, to the humble, to the meek, to the discerning, to the pious, to the chosen, to those set apart, to the righteous and to the perfect, to descend and ascend to the merkava, to say: Let him be under a ban!' to יְהֹוָה, the God of Israel\textsuperscript{157}—to him, to his glorious throne, to the crown of his head, to the bet din on high, to the bet din below, to all the host of heaven, and to all his ministers who stand before him, attending to the merkava and serving him.

2:3 R. Yishmael said, ‘It is taught thus concerning the vision of the merkava: one who attends the merkava has permission to stand up only in these three cases: before the king, before the high priest, and before the sanhedrin when the Nasi is present. But if the Nasi is not present, he may not stand up even before the sanhedrin. And if he does stand up, his blood is upon his own head, because he lessens his days and shortens his years.’

\textsuperscript{157} According to the majority of the manuscripts: יְהֹוָה ה’ נַעֲשֵׂה לְבֶן שְׁלושֶׁתּוֹת יְהוָה אֽלָיו. Schäfer (Übersetzung 2: 9) and Wewers (‘Überlegenheit’, 8) evidently assume that נַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה is identical with God himself and take the preposition ל to mean ‘for’, implying that the adept is empowered to pronounce the ban on God’s behalf. However, the construction ל...לomer would not normally carry this meaning. Just possibly, the preposition might be interpreted as an expression of the genitive, connecting נַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה, the God of Israel, to נַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה, resulting in: ‘and to pronounce the ban of יְהוָה, the God of Israel.’ Ms. Munich 22, which reads של in place of ל, evidently understands the construction in this way. However, expression of the genitive by של, rather than ל, is rare in rabbinic Hebrew. By far the most natural interpretation of ל...לomer is ‘to say... to.’ The problem is, of course, that this would apparently mean that the adept is empowered to excommunicate God himself. Although this reading may seem unlikely, it is supported by mss. Vatican 228 and Leiden 4730, which read הנה in place of ל. This can only mean ‘to pronounce a ban against’, and is therefore lectio difficilior. The most likely explanation is that נַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה אֽלָיו יְשֵׁרָאֵל is not God himself, but the angelic head of the celestial hierarchy. Angels whose names include the tetragrammaton are frequently encountered in the hekhalot literature and in one passage of MerkR (Schäfer § 678), the formula: יְהוָה אֽלָיו יְשֵׁרָאֵל is appended to the name of Metatron, the celestial vice-regent (see Schäfer, Hidden and Manifest, 106; Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism’, 7–10). This interpretation of HekhR 2:2 is supported by the observation that earlier in the same passage (HekhR 1:2), the adept is said to stand ‘on the right of’ God’s throne but ‘opposite’ נַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה (נַעֲשֵׂה יְהוָה), who is presumably stationed on the left. If this reading is correct, the meaning is that the adept’s authority is second only to that of God himself, that it exceeds the authority of the heavenly and earthly courts, and that he is empowered to judge and excommunicate even the celestial viceregent and his retinue. Compare 1 Cor 6:3: ‘Do you not know that we are to judge angels?’
Yishmael’s opening statement that the adept who knows the ‘specific songs’ is able to ‘descend in peace and ascend in peace’ (HekhR 1:1) uses the language of the pardes story. This text that follows is more crudely melodramatic than Paul’s account in 2 Cor 12:1–12, but the claim that it makes is essentially the same. Supernatural power and authority are conferred upon one who attains to the vision of the merkava. This person functions as God’s emissary and is empowered to judge both Israel and the angels. In Schäfer’s words, ‘the Merkavah mystic is the chosen one of God to whom messianic qualities are ascribed.’

Wewers infers that this passage was composed in response to a hostile social environment, towards which the writer adopted an attitude of patient, passive suffering based on the ‘servant’ model encountered in prophecy and the Psalms. Despite his personal powerlessness, the adept is vindicated by the intervention of divine power on his behalf and possesses divinely conferred authority to pass judgment on his adversaries. Like Schäfer, Wewers observes that

the mystic aligned his self-portrayal with eschatological individuals (Elijah, the messiah) and saw himself as corresponding closely to these figures (or identified himself with them?).

The adept’s superior, revealed knowledge is opposed to that conferred by exoteric and halakhic Torah scholarship, which indicates that his opponents are members of the scholastic rabbinic establishment. Wewers infers that this passage was composed in response to a specific historical situation, but concludes that we do not have sufficient information to identify that situation with any certainty. In fact, the writer’s perspective is fairly typical of both Jewish and Christian apocalyptic authors. It is therefore legitimate to regard the passage as a product of a tradition that was adapted, over the course of several centuries, by various sectarian groups in situations of conflict with those more powerful than themselves. The situation inferred by Wewers is not at all dissimilar from that addressed by Paul, who, in his claim to have achieved conformity with Christ, likewise assumes the ‘servant’ role.

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160 Ibid. 21.
According to HekhR 2:2, the authority claimed by the merkava adept has been given ‘to the pure, to the humble, to the meek.’ This is highly reminiscent of Paul’s contrast between God’s ‘power’ and his own ‘weakness’, a theme that he continues to develop in the concluding passage of the letter (2 Cor 13:1–10). There, Paul warns his readers to reform their conduct in advance of his imminent visit, since

2b. . . if I come again, I will not be merciful (οὐ φείσομαι), 3since you look for proof that Christ is speaking in me, who is not weak towards you, but powerful in you! 4For just as he was crucified from weakness, yet lives by the power of God—just so, we are weak in him, yet we shall live with him by God’s power towards you!

...Therefore, I write these things while I am absent so that when I am present, I do not have to treat you with severity (ἀποτόμος) in accordance with the authority (κατὰ τὴν ἐξουσίαν) that the Lord gave me for building up, not tearing down (εἰς οἰκοδομὴν καὶ οὐκ εἰς καθαίρεσιν).

In these verses, Paul reminds his readers that God has conferred on him a degree of power concomitant to his apostolic status. Because that power was given to him for the purpose of ‘building up’, Paul wishes to be ‘merciful.’ Nonetheless, he warns his readers that if they do not mend their ways, he will be obliged to exercise his God-given power towards them in a way that is ‘severe’ and destructive. Although Paul does not specify what this may mean, there can be no doubt as to his threatening intent. For an indication of the nature of the threat, we should perhaps turn to the Book of Acts, which tells of disastrous outcomes befalling those who crossed God’s will, expressed through the apostles. In Acts 5, Peter is able to perceive and expose the deceit of Ananias and Sapphira (cf. HekhR 1:3), both whom fall dead at his feet. As a consequence of his opposition to the power of Christ, Paul himself is struck blind (Acts 9:8–9, etc.; cf. HekhR 2:1). Subsequently, he calls down the same affliction on Elymas bar-Jesus the magician (Acts 13:4–12). Whatever we may make of these stories in and of themselves, they doubtless reflect an understanding of ‘power’ that was no more foreign to Paul and his readers than it was to the author of Acts and, indeed, the hekhalot writers. When Paul presents himself as one endowed with authority to judge—and, if necessary, power to punish—the community, he assumes a role very similar to that of the merkava-adept in HekhR. It is also noteworthy that, although the passage in HekhR is attributed to R. Yishmael, his claims about the adept’s ‘greatness’ are expressed in the third person, rather than the first. As we observed above, the same rhetorical strategy is employed by Paul.
In or Out of the Body?

When referring to his ascent-experience, Paul states twice, in 2 Cor 12:2–3, that he does not know whether it occurred ‘in’ or ‘out’ (in verse 3, ‘outside of’) the body. God knows, but he does not. This may mean simply that Paul does not know whether or not his body left the earth and ascended into heaven, or whether the experience was a purely spiritual one. However, the evidence considered in Chapter 12 suggests that a more subtle meaning is perhaps intended. As we saw there, the outwardly directed ‘ascent’ into heaven via the courts of the cosmic temple and the inwardly directed ‘descent’ into the temple of the body represent two essentially complementary, rather than opposing, ways of conceptualizing the same process. Paul may, therefore, be saying that he does not know whether his ascent into paradise was enacted internally (‘in the body’) or externally (‘outside of the body’). If so, he appears to be saying that it really makes no difference, since the holy of holies (‘paradise’) at the center of the bodily temple is mystically identical with the celestial throne room of the Christ- kavod. The Image of God, whom Paul identifies with Christ, is encountered in both ‘places.’

The Third Heaven

The relationship between the ‘third heaven’ of 2 Cor 12:2 and the ‘paradise’ of 2 Cor 12:4 requires consideration. Are verses 2 and 3–4 to be understood sequentially or in parallel? If a seven-heaven cosmology is assumed, either interpretation is theoretically possible, but it seems most unlikely that Paul would have based his claim to apostolic authority on an ascent merely to the third of seven heavens, since this would hardly qualify as an ‘exceptional’ revelation (2 Cor 12:7a). Moreover, our analysis of the Jewish sources has shown that pardes was a term for the celestial holy of holies, which is identical with the uppermost heaven. Therefore, the seven-heaven model would imply a ‘two-stage’ ascent, first to the third heaven and subsequently to paradise in the seventh. There is no parallel for such an account in the apocalyptic and mystical literature. Normally, the ascent through all six lower levels to the seventh

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161 This interpretation was first proposed by Windisch, Zweite Korintherbrief, 374–376.
162 See ch. 12 above, especially pp. 334–335.
163 Rowland (Open Heaven, 380–382) and Tabor (Things Unutterable, 115–120) both interpret the passage in this way.
is described, albeit in some cases briefly. In a few cases (e.g., Rev 4:1–2),
the visionary proceeds directly to the highest heaven without mention of
the intervening levels. Nowhere, to my knowledge, do we encounter an
ascent that is interrupted in only one of several intermediate heavens.
Since there is clear evidence for the existence of an alternative—and
earlier—three-heaven cosmology, it seems most natural to assume that
Paul is referring to this model.164 This assumption is confirmed by the
elegant analysis of Bietenhard,165 who has demonstrated that 2 Cor 12:
1–5 are a symmetrical composition, the second half of which repeats
and expands upon the first. Verse 5 picks up the theme of ‘boasting’
introduced in verse 1 and adds the theme of ‘weakness.’ Encapsulated
between these two verses, the statement in verse 2 is repeated in verses
3–4 with an additional report of a secret, unutterable revelation. This
parallel construction must mean that ‘paradise’ in verse 4 is equivalent
to ‘the third heaven’ in verse 2. The parallel structure may be shown
schematically, as follows:166

(A) It is necessary for me to boast…
(B) I know a man…who (in or out of the body)
   was caught up to the third heaven.
(b) And I know that this man (in or out of the body)
   was caught up into paradise
(b+) and heard unutterable words…
(a) On behalf of this man I will boast,
(a+) but on behalf of myself I will not boast,
   save in my weakness.

Paula R. Gooder objects to Bietenhard’s analysis on grounds of minor
linguistic differences between verse 2 and verses 3–4.167 She points out
that (i) verses 3–4 contain no parallel for the words ‘in Christ’ in verse
2; (ii) the expression ‘fourteen years ago’ in verse 2 has no parallel in
verses 3–4; (iii) verse 2 repeats ‘I do not know,’ whereas verse 3 does
not; (iv) verse 2 reads: ‘out of (ἐκτός) the body,’ whereas verse 3 reads
‘outside of (χωρίς) the body’; and (v) the preposition applied to ‘the
third heaven’ in verse 2 (ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ) is different from that

164 Thus, e.g., Martin, Second Corinthians, 401–403; and Young, ‘Ascension Motif’, 90.
165 Bietenhard, Himmlische Welt, 162–168.
166 This presentation differs from that of Bietenhard (ibid. 165), who includes the
parallel statements: ‘whether in the body (I do not know) or out/outside of the body,
I do not know’ in verses 2 and 3 as separate elements of the symmetrical pattern. See
further below.
167 Gooder, Only the Third, 173f.
applied to ‘paradise’ in verse 3 (εἰς τὸν παράδεισον). She therefore rejects Bietenhard’s symmetrical structure on the grounds that he has failed to show that the language used in the corresponding verses is precisely parallel. Gooder concludes that the implied equation of ‘the third heaven’ (verse 2) with ‘paradise’ (verse 4) ‘has too much of a ring of a false syllogism to it.’ She does not consider the encapsulating parallel created by verses 1 and 5, nor does she engage with Bietenhard’s point that the second part of each parallel pair contains additional information. Moreover, her insistence upon a showing of exactly parallel language is misplaced, since the structural symmetry of the passage is a matter of its essential content, not each and every minor detail.

Concerning the difference between ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ in verse 2 and εἰς τὸν παράδεισον in verse 3, Gooder observes:

ἕως is normally used as a temporal preposition rather than a spatial one, thus its normal meaning would be ‘until’. When used in a spatial sense it generally means ‘as far as’. Thus the image is given of Paul being caught ‘as far as’ the third heaven but not into it. Only with the second preposition, εἰς, is entry mentioned; he is then caught into paradise. It is possible that that the two stages which Paul mentions are an initial ‘catching’ as far as but outside the third heaven and then a second ‘catching’ into paradise.

On these grounds, Gooder rejects the identification of ‘paradise’ with ‘the third heaven’ and considers it probable that Paul’s cosmology consisted of seven heavens, not three. However, she rightly recognizes that an account of a two-stage ascent—first to the third heaven and then to paradise in the seventh—would have no parallel in any other early Jewish or Christian text of ascent, and so rejects this option also.

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168 Ibid. Gooder’s objections are in part based on comments by Rowland and Tabor (see p. 390 n. 163 above).
169 Gooder, Only the Third, 173.
170 Gooder, Only the Third, 175.
171 In fact, Gooder (ibid. 48–54 and 184–187) goes so far as to dispute the existence of a cosmology of three heavens prior to the first century CE. Her position, which flies in the face of much painstaking scholarship, involves discounting the evidence of the early Enoch literature (including, but not limited to, 1 En 14) and T. Levi. See pp. 305–307, esp. nn. 12–16, above. The rabbinic sources that mention a three-level cosmology (see p. 329 n. 115 above) are admittedly later than Paul, but are most unlikely to have been influenced by Paul’s account. Moreover, the tradition that they record must be older than the increasingly ‘standardized’ seven-level model of the rabbinic era. Gooder’s position on this issue is therefore very hard to sustain.
172 Gooder, ibid. 174.
These considerations lead Gooder to conclude (i) that Paul’s paradise was located in (but not identical with) the third of seven heavens; and (ii) that ‘the heaven contains more than one place. The ascender could be caught up as far as the third heaven but needed to go further within that heaven to reach paradise.’

In support of this suggestion, Gooder cites as parallels 2 En 8–10 and Apoc. Mos. 35–41. In 2 En 8–9, the garden of paradise prepared for the righteous is said to be located in the third of ten (originally seven) heavens. In the following chapter, according to the long recension, Enoch is taken from paradise ‘to the northern region’ of the third heaven where the place of torment is located (2 En 10:1, recension [J]). However, the short recension [A] reads: ‘up to the northern heaven.’ The [A] reading appears to be lectio difficilior, since according to both recensions, paradise and the place of torment are both located within the third heaven. These complications are compounded by the observations that (i) according to two manuscripts of the longer [J] recension, Enoch looks ‘down’ upon paradise from the third heaven, which may therefore be located on the same level as the earth (8:1); and (ii) when the paradise of the righteous is mentioned again in 2 En 42:3–14, according to both recensions, it does indeed appear to be located on the same level as the earth, to the east. Here, the [J] recension adds that paradise ‘is open as far as the third heaven; but it is closed off from this world’ (42:3). These confused and conflicting readings justify the strong suspicion that Enoch’s journeys to the different directions of the third heaven, described in 2 En 10–13, are transposed renditions of earlier traditions concerning his travels around the extremities of the earth—including visits to variously named paradise-like gardens—as recorded in parts of 1 Enoch.

Although the date and provenance of 2 Enoch are extremely uncertain, it is widely acknowledged that that, even if the work originated in a Jewish community of some kind, the surviving Slavonic versions contain numerous layers of editorial activity, some of which are without doubt...

\[173\] Ibid. 175.
\[174\] Ibid. 175 and 185f.
\[175\] On the [A] and [J] recensions of 2 Enoch, see Anderson’s remarks in OTP 1: 92–94 and 98–99.
\[176\] See Anderson, ibid. 114–115 n. ‘b’ to 2 En 8:1.
\[177\] See idem, ibid. 168 n. ‘c’ to 42:3.
\[178\] See especially, 1 En 24–25 and 60:23.
Christian.\textsuperscript{179} It is therefore possible that the placement of paradise in the third heaven in (most manuscripts of) 2 En 8–10 is the result of such editorial activity, perhaps on the basis of 2 Cor 12:2–4.

The issues raised by the Greek Apocalypse of Moses and its Latin counterpart, Vita Adae, are likewise rather complex. In Apoc. Mos. 37:3, God commands the angels to take Adam ‘up into Paradise, to the third heaven’ to await the resurrection. Similarly, in Apoc. Mos. 40:1, God sends Michael ‘into Paradise in the third heaven’ to fetch cloths with which to wrap Adam’s body.\textsuperscript{180} Yet, only a little earlier in the same text, Eve says to Seth: ‘Look up with your eyes and see the seven heavens opened, and see how the body of your father lies on his face, and all the holy angels are with him’ (35:1). Gooder not unreasonably infers that, according to this text, paradise is located in the third of seven heavens. However, if we consider 35:1 in isolation, it appears to imply that the object of Seth’s vision, Adam, is located in the seventh heaven, not the third.\textsuperscript{181} The number of heavens is nowhere stated in the Vita Adae. It is therefore possible that in Apoc. Mos. 35:1, the reference to seven heavens is a late interpolation. Alternatively, in Apoc. Mos. 37:3 and 40:1, the words ‘to (in) the third heaven’ placed after ‘paradise’ may be Christian interpolations, based on 2 Corinthians 12. In Vit. Ad. 25:3, Adam describes the following vision:

\begin{quote}
I saw a chariot like the wind and its wheels were fiery. I was carried off into the Paradise of righteousness, and I saw the Lord sitting and his appearance was unbearable flaming fire. And many thousands of angels were at the right and at the left of the chariot.\textsuperscript{182}
\end{quote}

Although the Latin recension does not specify the number of the celestial levels, there can be no doubt that this passage describes a merkava vision set in paradise, which must therefore be located in the uppermost heaven.

\textsuperscript{179} The tentative majority opinion appears to be that the origins of 2 Enoch originated in about the first century CE, possibly in a community of the diaspora, perhaps an eclectic Judaic-gentile monotheist group. See, e.g., Andersen, \textit{OTP} 1: 94–97; Rowland, \textit{The Open Heaven}, 258f.; Gooder, \textit{Only the Third}, 69–71. Gooder’s own view (\textit{ibid.} 63 n. 4) is that ‘this text had Jewish origins at some point in its history and…its major development took place after 70 AD’ (italics original).

\textsuperscript{180} Translations follow Johnson, \textit{OTP} 1: 291.

\textsuperscript{181} This issue is further complicated by the existence in this text of parallel heavenly and earthly paradises, reflecting the duality of body and spirit, which is more highly developed in Apoc. Mos. than in Vita Adae. See Johnson’s introduction, \textit{ibid.} 253f.

\textsuperscript{182} Trans. Johnson, \textit{OTP} 1: 266–268.
The proposition that 2 En 8–10 and Apoc. Mos. 35–41 have preserved a pre-Pauline tradition that paradise was located inside the third of seven heavens now seems rather doubtful. Nonetheless, Gooder is right to insist that the difference between ἕως τρίτου οὐρανοῦ and εἰς τὸν παράδεισον in 2 Cor 12:2–3 may be significant. A simpler and more convincing explanation of this difference, to which Gooder alludes, but which she fails to develop, is that it refers to a widely documented feature of the heavenly ascent. In the hekhalot writings, and in many other ascent texts, each celestial level is entered by way of gates. These gates are a necessary feature of the journey through the successive courts and chambers of the cosmic temple. In the hekhalot literature especially, the angelic guards of the temple are stationed at the gates. Critical encounters with those guards are said to occur especially at the thresholds of the highest two levels, corresponding to the entrances to the sanctuary building and the holy of holies. This is most clearly expressed in the ‘Ascent Midrash’ in HekhZ (§ 408–412) where we are told that the guards of the gate of the sixth hekhal will destroy the yored merkava unless he refuses their first invitation to pass through and enters only at the second invitation. After passing through that gate, the yored merkava must not be misled by the appearance of waves of water produced by the floor of the sixth hekhal, which is Ezekiel’s ‘firmament of ice’ seen from above. If he does, his head will be split open by ‘the ministers’ (המשרתים), who ‘stand before him’ (§ 408). These ‘ministers’ appear to be the guards of the seventh and final gate, leading to the holy of holies, i.e., the seventh hekhal.

Throughout her extensive study of 2 Cor 12 and its background, Gooder pays scant attention to the ‘cosmic temple’ structure by which

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183 See Gooder, Only the Third, 175, who cites, in addition to the hekhalot literature, 3 Baruch and the Coptic Apocalypse of Paul. She might also have referred to 1 En 14, where the journey through the threefold structure of walls and houses clearly implies the existence of gates, and where the open door of the third house is expressly mentioned (1 En 14:15); T. Levi 5:1, ‘The angel opened for me the gates of heaven and I saw the Holy Most High sitting on the throne’; and Rev 4:1, where the seer’s ascent to the divine throne is preceded by the opening in heaven of a door. Celestial gates are also mentioned in Gnostic and Mandean sources, and in many other ancient texts of ascent.

184 See Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 54–104. Allusions to this episode have been interpolated into some versions of ‘Four Entered Paradise.’ See HekhZ(N) B2a–b, MerkR(N) B1b, and the Bavli, lines A11–19. On the relationships between these sources, see Morray-Jones, ibid. 78–82.

185 See Morray-Jones, ibid. 78.
the Jewish ascent traditions were informed. She also fails, or declines to engage with, the considerable body of previous scholarship on this subject.\textsuperscript{186} She therefore completely ignores the widely documented correspondence between pardes or paradise and the holy of holies. As a consequence of these surprising deficiencies, she rightly perceives that the differing prepositions, ἕως and εἰς, in 2 Cor 12:2–3 must be significant, but glosses over their most likely meaning.

It is by now clear that the cosmic temple is a structural and centrally significant motif of the ascent tradition. In this model, the courts and chambers of the temple correspond to, and are identical with, the celestial levels. Those levels are accessed by way of gates. Those gates are protected by angelic guards. Those guards pose a serious threat to the heavenly traveller and are prone to attack him, especially at the entrances to the higher levels or innermost chambers of the temple. In the light of this background, Paul’s meaning in 2 Cor 12:2–3 is surely that he was first caught up ‘as far as’ (ἕως) the gate or threshold of the third heaven, and then subsequently ‘into’ (εἰς) the same heaven, i.e., paradise. As we have seen, the garden of paradise is mystically identified with the holy of holies, which is the uppermost of the celestial levels. Therefore, Gooder is correct in her perception that Paul’s ascent proceeds in two movements, but wrong in her denial that ‘the third heaven’ and ‘paradise’ are the same.

The Angel of Satan

The nature of Paul’s ‘thorn (or stake) in the flesh’ (2 Cor 12:7b) has been the subject of much speculation.\textsuperscript{187} Many modern scholars, following the earliest recorded church tradition,\textsuperscript{188} and taking τῇ σαρκί literally, have concluded that the expression refers to an illness or disability, which is also mentioned at Gal 4:13–14. Various ‘diagnoses’ have been offered on the basis of these two passages.\textsuperscript{189} Some commentators, rightly perceiving that the ‘thorn’ is closely associated in Paul’s mind with his ‘exceptional’ revelations, have suggested a nervous complaint.

\textsuperscript{186} See ch. 12 above and sources cited there.
\textsuperscript{187} For a useful summary of previous scholarship on this issue, see Martin, Second Corinthians, 410–23.
\textsuperscript{188} Irenaeus, Haer. 5:3.1; Tertullian, Pud. 3:6; and Marc. 5:12.
\textsuperscript{189} See BAG s.v. σκόλοψ, 441b–42a, and κολαφίζω, 763b–64a. See further, for example, Lightfoot, Galatians, 186–191; Smith, ‘The Thorn that Stayed’; Bruce, 1 and 2 Corinthians, 248f.; Delling, σκόλοψ; Betz, Galatians, 224–226.
(for example, epilepsy, hysteria, or migraine) caused by, or associated with, his ecstatic and visionary experience. According to this view, the parallel expression ἄγγελος σατανᾶ indicates that Paul believed his illness was caused by the assaults of a demon. Others have argued in favour of an interpretation first proposed by Chrysostom, who suggested that Paul is referring to a powerful opponent at whose hands he has suffered persecution. A persuasive advocate for this position is Terence Y. Mullins, who cites similar expressions in the Greek Scriptures (e.g., LXX Num 33:55 and Ezek 28:24) and thereby shows that σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί would have been recognized by Paul’s readers as a literary idiom for an enemy. However, Robert M. Price has pointed out that the theory of a human enemy fails to account for the close connection that exists in Paul’s mind between the ‘thorn’ and the visionary experience. Price therefore suggests that the reference is to an angelic opponent similar to the gatekeepers of the hekhalot tradition, whose function is to attack and punish those deemed unworthy to ascend to the merkava. This theory is consistent with Paul’s emphasis on his ‘weakness’ and dependence on the power of Christ.

If Price’s interpretation is adopted, several noteworthy correspondences between Paul’s account and the Jewish pardes story become apparent. First, Paul’s ‘angel of Satan’ appears to be a close cousin of the demonic ‘angels of destruction’ who seek to ‘do violence’ to Akiva (HekhZ/MerkR and geniza fragment, C2b). As we have seen, the guards of the merkava realm appear in the early tradition represented by this version of the pardes story to have possessed destructive and wrathful, even demonic attributes. Indeed, Halperin has shown that in post-biblical Jewish literature, these qualities are often associated with the throne-bearing hayyot themselves, although their demonic and bestial aspect tends to be suppressed in later sources. In the Apocalypse of Abraham, the hayyot have to be subdued by an angel to prevent them from fighting with each other, a tradition that is also mentioned in

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190 Thus, for example: Windisch, zweite Korintherbrief; Schmidt, κολαφίζω.  
191 Chrysostom, Hom. 26 on 2 Corinthians.  
192 Thus, for example: Menoud, ‘L’écharde’; Barré, ‘Qumran’; McCant, ‘Paul’s Thorn’.  
193 Mullins, ‘Paul’s Thorn’.  
195 See p. 373 above.  
Midrash Tanhuma. Of especial interest to us are Halperin’s observations concerning the hitpa‘el verb form התהלך (‘to go back and forth’). This verb form is used in Ezek 1:13 to describe the flashing light of the hayyot, who themselves ‘ran and returned’ (1:14); in Zech 6:7, it applies to the horses of the four chariots, who are impatient ‘to go back and forth in the earth’ (בָּאָרֶץ לְהִתְהַלָּה לֶלֶכֶת וַיִבָּקַשׁ); and in Job 1:7 it is used of Satan:

The Lord said to Satan, ‘Whence have you come?’ Satan answered the Lord, ‘From wandering in the earth and from going back and forth in it (מַשְׂמַע לֶלֶכֶת וַיִּתְהַלֵּךְ בָּהּ וּמֵהִתְהַלֵּךְ בָּאָרֶץ מִשְׁוַט).’

By probing below the surface of several interconnected rabbinic sources, Halperin unearths a striking parallel between the hayyot and Satan, based on their manner of ‘going back and forth.’ According to GenR 65:21:

Did not R. Hanina b. Andrai say in the name of R. Shemuel b. Soter: There is no sitting in heaven. ‘Their feet were straight feet’ (Ezek 1:7)—they have no knees; ‘I drew near to one of those standing’ (Dan 7:16); ‘Above him stood the serafim’ (Isa 6:2); ‘All the host of heaven was standing to his right and to his left’ (1 Kgs 22:19).

A partial parallel to this saying is preserved in yBer 1:1 (2c), where a presumably Tannaitic statement that ‘one who stands and prays must make his feet even’ is explained as meaning that one should stand either ‘like the priests’ or ‘like the angels.’ The Gemara expands on the latter explanation, as follows:

He who says: Like the angels—‘Their feet were straight feet’ (Ezek 1:7). R. Hanina b. Andrai said in the name of R. Shmuel b. Soter: Angels have no knees. How do I know? ‘I drew near to one of those standing’ (Dan 7:16).

The Shemuel named here as the source of the teaching that the angels have no knees is an otherwise unknown figure. In a midrash preserved at yShevu 6:5 (37a) and LevR 6:3, a similar teaching is—perhaps mistakenly—attributed to the well-known third-century aggadist Shmuel b. Nahman. However, in this version, the lack of knees is attributed

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to the angels of destruction (מלאכי חבלה) and an altogether different proof text is cited:

R. Shmuel b. Nahman said: Angels of destruction (מלאכי חבלה) have no knees. How do we know?—‘From wandering in the earth and from going back and forth in it’ (Job 1:7).

When the text of Job 1:7 is considered in isolation, it contains nothing that would indicate a lack of knees on the part of Satan or any other angel. Therefore, the citation of the verse as a proof text for that idea makes no sense apart from the connection between Satan and Ezekiel’s hayyot, via the verb form התהלך.

All of this evidence suggests strongly that the hayyot could be, and sometimes were, viewed as ‘angels of destruction’, whose nature is at least in part demonic or ‘satanic’, even though their destructive function is subordinated to the ends of divine justice. Halperin finds traces of this tradition in Rev 6:1–8, where each of the living creatures summons one of the four avenging horsemen, and 15:7, where a living creature delivers ‘seven golden bowls filled with the wrath of God’ to the angels who will pour them out upon the earth. He suggests that the latter passage is based on Ezek 10:7, where a keruv presents the ‘man clothed with linen’ with coals of fire from between the wheels under the throne to be scattered on Jerusalem.\(^{202}\) This connection is confirmed by Tg. Ezek 1:8, where the hayyot take coals of fire and give them to the serafim, ‘to sprinkle on the place of the wicked, to destroy the sinners who transgress his word.’\(^{203}\) Halperin cites in addition 2 Bar 21:6, where God rules with ‘indignation’ over the fiery angels who surround his throne, and 51:11, where the living creatures and angels are restrained beneath the throne by God’s word ‘lest they show themselves.’\(^{204}\) He comments:

The living creatures, their beauty and majesty aside, give the impression of being savage dogs, subjected and kept on a leash by dint of harsh discipline, but never tamed. The Book of Revelation seems to share this picture of the living creatures and we are left to ponder what sort of beings they are.\(^{205}\)

\(^{202}\) Halperin, *ibid*. 92.
\(^{204}\) Halperin, *Faces*, 92.
\(^{205}\) *Ibid*. 93.
Although the celestial gatekeepers of the hekhalot literature are not identified with the hayyot, the character and function of these angels—especially the guards of the sixth and seventh hekhalot—are consistent with these traditions. In HekhR, the guards of the seventh gate are described as follows:206

At the gate of the seventh hekhal, there stand raging all the mighty, violent, forceful, harsh, dreadful, and terrifying ones, taller than mountains and sharper than mountain peaks. Their bows are bent before their faces. Their sharpened swords are in their hands. Lightning bolts flash and shoot forth from their eyeballs, balls of fire from their noses, and flaming torches from their mouths. With helmets and body armor they are clothed. On their arms hang javelins and lances.

Their horses are horses of darkness, horses of shadow, horses of gloom, horses of fire, horses of blood, horses of iron, horses of cloud. Such are the horses on which they ride. They stand over fiery mangers filled with coals of broom and eat coals from their mangers to the measure of a hundred sea to each mouthful. And the size of each and every horse’s mouth is thirty times greater than the size of the gate of the stables in Caesarea. And there are rivers of fire beside their mangers, and each and every one of their horses drinks a quantity that is a hundred times more than the water in the Kidron river, which brings forth and strengthens all of the rainwater in all Jerusalem.

And there is a cloud above their heads, that drips blood upon their heads and the heads of their horses. This is the sign and the measure of the guards of the gate of the seventh hekhal. And so it is at the gate of each and every hekhal.

Although their function is somewhat different, it is reasonable to suppose that these grim celestial denizens, along with their fierce and terrifying steeds, are related at no great distance to the four horsemen of Rev 6:1–8. As observed by Dan, there is evidence that in the earliest layers of tradition preserved in the hekhalot literature, the conduct of the temple guards was both ‘arbitrary’ and ‘anarchic.’208 Although their proper function is to prevent only the unworthy from entering the uppermost (or innermost) of the hekhalot, a strange tradition preserved in HekhR 17:6 states that the guards of the sixth gate used to attack and ‘destroy’ the yordei merkava who were authorized by divine permission to pass through the gate, but allowed those without such permission

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207 Uncertain text, emended to אש וcplusplus on the basis of M40: תכופת אש; cf. V228: כופת אש; D436: כופת אש; B238: דנсерת אש.
to enter. As punishment for these arbitrary actions, the unruly guards were rebuked, beaten, then finally burned and replaced by others,

...but the others who stand in their places are of the same nature. They are not afraid and it does not occur to them to ask themselves, ‘Why are we being burned? And what does it benefit us that we destroy the (true) yordei merkava but not the yordei merkava who have no permission?’ And this is still the nature of the guards of the gate of the sixth hekhal.209

Dan comments on this passage:

This is a strange description of an anarchical realm, a realm in which even God Himself, as it were, cannot control His angels..., a kind of enclave in the upper realm where other, strange forces rule, ones which do not obey the commands of God, and which bring on themselves their own destruction together with that of those who descend to the Chariot.... This appears to be a fragment of an ancient and strange myth whose context was lost. with all that remained being the description of the terrifying place at the entrance to the sixth hekhal.210

In HekhZ, the characters of the gatekeepers of the innermost hekhalot are much less developed, but consistent with these traditions. In the ‘Ascent Midrash’, the guards of the sixth gate ‘crush’ the unworthy yored merkava and ‘throw him into the river Rigyon of fiery coals’ (§ 407d); while those of the seventh gate first run after the yored merkava to stone him, and then ‘split his head with iron cleavers’ (§ 408d). In this passage, there is admittedly no indication of the guards’ demonic nature. Indeed, the guards of the seventh hekhal are referred to as ‘the ministers’ (§ 408b), almost exactly as in the Bavli’s version of the pardes story (line A54). Nonetheless, the ancient tradition of the demonic gatekeepers has survived in HekhZ’s version of the pardes story (HekhZ/MerkR and geniza fragment C2b). There, as we have seen, the pargod at the entrance to

209 HekhR 17:6 (Schäfer § 224). In the following passage (18:1–4; Schäfer § 225–228), the above text is taken to mean that the guards are destroying persons who are ‘yordei merkava, but not yordei merkava’, even though they (the guards) have no permission to harm those persons, who are identified as scribes who attend the yordei merkava and write down their words, but do not themselves take part in the ascent. This is clearly a misunderstanding of the text of 17:6 and represents a later stage of literary development. In addition to Dan (see the previous note), see further: Schiffman, ‘The Recall’; Lieberman, ‘The Knowledge’; Gruenwald, Apocalyptic, 241–244; Schäfer, ‘Engel und Menschen’, 207–208, rev. and repr. in idem, Hekhalot-Studien, 256–257; Schlüter, ‘Erzählung’; and Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 67–71.

210 Dan, The Ancient, 103.
the holy of holies, which corresponds to the seventh (or the uppermost) hekhal, is protected by the ‘angels of destruction.’

There can be little doubt that the background of Paul’s ‘angel of Satan’ is to be found in these traditions about the demonic gatekeepers of the heavenly temple, and perhaps also the untamed, destructive hayyot. It will also be recalled that, according to the pardes story, one of the four was ‘smitten’ (ונצץ). This is precisely the meaning of the verb κολαφίζω, employed by Paul in 2 Cor 12:7b. Since this correspondence can hardly be coincidental, the Pauline account and the pardes story at this point explain each other. This explanation is by no means inconsistent with the theory of a neurological disorder brought on by Paul’s ecstatic experience. In the story of the four, HekhZ(N) B2c adds the explanatory gloss: ‘Ben Zoma… was smitten—he went out of his mind,’ reflecting an interpretation that was accepted by the geonim. This understanding of the expression, which is not very far removed from that of the earliest Christian commentators on 2 Cor 12, might be said to support the theory that Paul was ‘smitten’ by an illness, which he attributed to the attacks of the ‘angel of Satan.’ Finally, Paul’s report that he besought Christ to make his tormentor ‘leave’ him corresponds closely to God’s intervention on behalf of Akiva, ‘Leave this elder alone’ (HekhZ/MerkR C2b; Geniza fragment C2b; Bavli, line A58).

This reading of the ‘thorn’ motif is adopted with enthusiasm by Gooder, who rightly points to the encapsulated parallel structure of 2 Cor 12:7b.

211 It should be noted in passing that the formalized, orderly ritual ascent described in HekhZ § 413–419, and in most HekhR 17:1–25:6 (Schäfer § 219–237), represents a different tradition in which the element of danger, while still present, is brought under control by the magical protocols of the names and seals to be presented by the yored merkava at each gateway. See especially Dan, ‘Petah Shishi’, 204–206.

212 See p. 352, nn. 33–34, above.

213 It has generally been assumed that ‘three times’ implies three separate occasions. Given the fact that visions of Christ were a regular feature of Paul’s experience (see below, p. 410 n. 231), and if the reference is to a chronic or recurring complaint, this may be so. Price, however, has pointed out (‘Punished’, 35) that the text carries no such implication and argued that Paul is describing a single event in his visionary experience (compare Mark 14:35–39). Young (‘The Ascension Motif’, 81) suggests that the ‘three times’ corresponds to Paul’s passage through the three celestial levels.

214 Gooder, Only the Third, 195–203.

215 Compare the following presentation with that of Bietenhard’s structural analysis of 2 Cor 12:2–4 on p. 391 above. Gooder’s presentation of verse 7 (Only the Third, 196) is stylistically different, but makes substantially the same point (see the following note).
(A) lest I should become too exalted, ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι,
(B) a thorn in the flesh was given to me, μοι σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί,
(b) an angel of Satan to strike me. ἀγγελὸς σατανᾶ ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ,
(a) lest I should become too exalted ἵνα μὴ ὑπεραίρωμαι.

Therefore, just as in the parallel structure of 2 Cor 12:2–3, (ἵως) τρίτου οὐρανοῦ equals (εἰς) τὸν παράδεισον; so here, σκόλοψ τῇ σαρκί equals ἀγγελὸς σατανᾶ. Gooder further suggests that the verb ὑπεραίρωμαι should be interpreted in the literal sense of raising oneself up physically. As she herself concedes, this meaning cannot possibly apply to the first occurrence of the expression (A) at the beginning of the verse, where Paul is still developing the theme of boasting from verse 6. Here, the risk of self-exaltation is clearly related to ‘the exceptional nature of the revelations’ (verse 7a). However, she suggests:

It is possible that a pun is intended here. In v. 7a Paul refers to the extraordinary quality (ὑπερβολῇ) of the revelations. He continues here, ‘Therefore lest I exalt myself, a thorn of the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan to trouble me, lest I raise myself higher (i.e. into another heaven).’ Thus the double use of ὑπεραίρωμαι could mean both exalt oneself in esteem and raise oneself physically. The inability of Paul to do the latter affected his ability to do the former.

Gooder’s theory is ingenious, but lacks evidentiary support. Granted that Paul might conceivably have intended such a double meaning, it is hard to see how he would have expected his readers to perceive it on the basis of the information given by the text. Gooder, of course, believes that Paul has ascended only to the third of seven heavens:

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216 Although Gooder is right to emphasize the parallel structure of verse 7, it is surprising that she should choose to do so after after she has objected to Bietenhard’s analysis of verses 2–4. There, the substance of her objection was that certain details found in one part of the parallel structure are in the other part either omitted or expressed in slightly different language (see pp. 391–392 above). This objection, if valid, would apply equally to the structure of verse 7, where (i) the words ἐδόθη μοι in the first part have no counterpart in the second; and (ii) there is no parallel in the first part for ἵνα με κολαφίζῃ in the second. In fact, as argued above, these differences of detail do not affect the parallel structure, which is is a matter of the essential content, both here and in vv. 2–4.

217 Gooder, ibid. 200.

218 Ibid.
The case, put forward by Morray-Jones and Price, for including the thorn in the flesh as part of the account of the ascent is strong. The ramifications of the argument, which neither scholar explores, are that it is a failed, not a successful, ascent which reached the third heaven but no further. Paul’s thorn in the flesh was that his angelic tormentor prevented his ascent to the heights of heaven. Paul’s weakness is such that the ascent to heaven, which he records here, was unsuccessful.219

The identification of the ‘angel of Satan’ as a celestial gatekeeper is thus a crucial component of Gooder’s theory that 2 Cor 12 describes a ‘failed’ ascent to the third of seven heavens only. She is undoubtedly right to observe that, since Paul, unlike Akiva, was ‘smitten’, his ascent must be accounted as a ‘failure’ in that sense. This is wholly consistent with Paul’s emphasis on his own ‘weakness’ and the power of Christ. However, the traditions about the demonic gatekeepers provide no support for Gooder’s proposal that this ‘smiting’ occurred at an intermediate level of the ascent. As we have seen, in the hekhalot literature, those ferocious beings are encountered at the gates to the sixth and seventh levels, and it is there that the heavenly traveller is attacked. Those gates represent the entrances to the two central and most holy chambers of the temple, which is where we should expect the greatest danger to occur. In the story of the four, the ‘angels of destruction’ come to meet the heavenly traveller as he approaches the pargod, which is to say, at the entrance to the celestial holy of holies, a.k.a. pardes. The untamed, destructive hayyot are likewise encountered in the most holy places, in close proximity to the throne. Given all of this evidence, there can be little doubt that Paul’s ‘smiting’ by the ‘angel of Satan’ resulted from an encounter that occurred on the threshold of the highest heaven, which was numbered seven by the authors of the hekhalot, but which Paul evidently counted as the third.

Unutterable Words

The continuation of the pardes story in Hekhalot Zutarti is worthy of attention.220 Although this passage is included in chapter 11,221 it is reproduced here for the reader’s convenience and to facilitate the following discussion:

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219 Ibid. 201.
220 HekhZ § 348–352.
221 See pp. 278–279 above. For further detail, see Morray-Jones, ‘Paradise Revisited, Part 2’, 278–281 and notes ad loc.
R. Akiva said:

At that time, when I ascended to the merkava, a heavenly voice went forth from beneath the throne of glory, speaking in the Aramaic tongue. In this tongue, what did it say?

Before the LORD made heaven and earth, he established [corrupt word] in Rakia, by which to go in and come (scribal gloss: and [corrupt word] means nothing other than ‘gateway’). He established the irrefutable name, with which to design the entire universe.

And what man is there who is able to ascend on high, to ride the chariot-wheels, to descend below, to explore the world, to walk on the dry ground, to behold his splendor, to unbind his crown, to be transformed in glory, to utter praise, to combine letters, to utter names, to behold what is on high, and to behold what is below, to know the meaning of the living, and to see the vision of the dead, to walk in rivers of fire, and to know the lightning?

First of all it is written: ‘...for no man may see me and live (Exod 33:20);

and in the second place it is written: ‘...for God speaks to man, and he lives’ (Deut 5:21//24);

and in the third place it is written: ‘I saw the LORD sitting upon a throne,’ etc. (Isa 6:11).

What is his name?

who is entirely holy, whose hosts are fire!

‘...sitting on a high and exalted throne...’

‘...Holy! Holy! Holy is the LORD of Hosts!’

‘The whole earth is full of his glory!’ (Isa 6:1–3),
Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place!’ (Ezek 3:12), אוטיס פכסקיפיו וריש אחרים קפפ שמקפ פכסק פכסק וריש אופא קפפ תמק קפפ ייאק נפש נפש קפפ והט אופאיה אט קפפ פכסק קפפ § 351c And Israel say before him: ‘A glorious high throne from the beginning [is the place of our sanctuary]’ (Jer 17:12).

§ 352a His holy ones on high say: We see (him) like the appearance of lightning!

§ 352b His prophets say: We see (him) in a dream-vision, like a man who sees visions in the night.

§ 352c The kings who are upon the earth say: לעוהמה נמא גוויה (corrupt text?)

§ 352d But our rabbis say [N: R. Akiva says]: He is, so to speak, like us, but he is greater than everything; and this is his glory, which is hidden from us.

§ 352e Moses says to them, to these and those: Do not inquire into (the meaning of) your words, but let him be praised in his place!

§ 352f Therefore it is said: ‘Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place!’

This passage is significant in several respects. In § 348a–b, we learn that Akiva, like Paul, heard words when he ascended to paradise. In § 348c, especially if the scribal gloss is correct, we find references to the heavenly temple where the ‘irrefutable name’ resides, and to the time before the creation of the universe—in other words, the forbidden mysteries of maase bereshit. § 349, which contains several echoes of mHag 2:1, is a summary of the mysteries revealed to the ascending apocalyptic hero and the attainments of the merkava adept.223 As observed by Schäfer, the juxtaposition of three apparently contradictory verses in § 350 serves, in a traditional rabbinic manner, to introduce the question ‘whether man can see God at all and, if so, then who, and what he looks like.’224 The answer to this question is that certain exceptional individuals may, like Isaiah, behold God’s name (the Lord), embodied in his glory. The following passage, of which § 351–352 are, in a sense, only the beginning, concerns (i) the vision of the kavod and (ii) the mysteries of the divine name, which the kavod embodies. In § 351a–c, the angels’ worship of the kavod in the celestial sanctuary is linked to that of Israel in the earthly temple. In § 352, we find a discussion of the manner in which the kavod is seen by various categories of being. The saying attributed to ‘our rabbis’ alludes to the esoteric doctrine of

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223 Compare Rowland, The Open Heaven, 75–189.
224 Schäfer, Der verborgene, 56 (compare idem, Übersetzung 3: 20 n. 1).
the shiur koma.\textsuperscript{225} The section culminates in a warning, attributed to Moses, that this is not a matter for rational understanding or verbal definition. We may compare the following, from an anonymous medieval Yemenite commentary on the Song of Songs:\textsuperscript{226}

> It was said in the presence of Rabban Gamaliel: Though created beings do not have permission to declare the true being of the Creator, they do have permission to declare His praise. How so? As it is written: ‘for no man shall see me and live’ (Exod 33:20). Life depends upon his praise, but his true being is concealed.

The following sections of HekhZ (§ 353–406) contain detailed descriptions of the hayyot, the merkava, and the kavod, together with shiur koma material and long strings of magical names of God. Thus, the words heard by Akiva when he ascended to the merkava in the celestial sanctuary, pardes, concerned the central mysteries of maase merkava, which is to say, the innermost mysteries of God’s being. Those mysteries cannot and may not be described in words. However, they may be partially known and expressed through participation in the worship of the celestial temple, which includes the recitation of his names. This is a remarkably close parallel to Paul’s ‘unutterable words which it is not permitted for man to speak’ (2 Cor 12:4).\textsuperscript{227}

\textit{Summary of Findings}

The cumulative weight of the evidence thus far seems overwhelming. Paul’s account of his ascent to paradise and the story of the four who entered pardes are even more closely related to each other than has previously been suggested. Both are characterized by an initially enigmatic quality, and by a reticent and elliptical manner of description. Both refer to an ascent into paradise, which we have identified as the celestial holy of holies and the highest heaven. In addition to

\textsuperscript{225} See pp. 517–518 below.

\textsuperscript{226} Published by Friedländer, ‘Tehillat peirush’, passage quoted on p. 58. On the antiquity of much of the material preserved by this source, see Marmorstein, ‘Deux renseignements’, 195–199; Lieberman, \textit{Yeminite Midrashim}, 12–19; and see further idem, ‘Mishna’, 123f. It is tempting, although perhaps unduly optimistic, to conjecture that this tradition goes back to Rabban Gamliel the Elder, who was the first of six Nesiim to bear this name and title, and who was allegedly claimed as a teacher by Paul (Acts 22:3).

\textsuperscript{227} \textit{Contra}, e.g., Käsemann, ‘Die Legitimität’, 63f., who maintains that Paul uses this expression to emphasize the private, incommunicable nature of his experience and to deny that any claim to authority can be based on such experiences.
this general similarity of content, we have discovered several striking correspondences of detail, which may be summarized as follows:

Paul’s ‘angel of Satan’ corresponds closely to Akiva’s ‘angels of destruction’;
like one of the characters in the *pardes* story, Paul was ‘smitten’ by one of those angels;
Paul’s prayer to Christ to make the angels ‘leave me’ corresponds to God’s instruction that those angels should leave Akiva alone; and
Paul’s account and the continuation of the *pardes* story in HekhR both involve the hearing of unutterable words.

Of course, Paul, who died before Aqiva’s lifetime, cannot possibly have known the *pardes* story in its present form. Since it is not possible to see Paul’s account as a source of the *pardes* story, neither unit can have directly influenced the other. In order to explain these close correspondences of detail, we are compelled to conclude that both Paul and the composer of the *pardes* story are using the language of a common tradition, which was already well-developed in the mid-first century CE.

In addition to these specific points of contact with the *pardes* story, we have found points of agreement with the merkava traditions recorded in other sources. These include the following:

Paul’s unwillingness to exalt himself by boasting is consistent with traditions recorded in the hekhalot literature, including Akiva’s statement in the *pardes* story: ‘Not because I am greater than my fellows;’
nonetheless, he claims a role similar to that of the merkava adept in HekhR 1–2 and elsewhere;
as in HekhR 1–2, he speaks of his attainment and his resulting authority in the third person; and
like the adept in HekhR 1–2, he responds to opposition and persecution by adopting the ‘servant’ role.

These findings are more than sufficient to justify the conclusion that in 2 Cor 12:1–12, Paul is referring to his ascent to the heavenly temple and his merkava vision of the enthroned and ‘glorified’ Christ. The fact that Paul was ‘smitten’ by one of the guards of the temple results in a facially unfavourable comparison between his attainment and that of Akiva—as it did, seemingly, with the attainments claimed Paul’s opponents, whence the juxtaposition of his personal weakness with Christ’s power. However, this ‘smiting’ does not in any way imply that Paul has failed to reach the highest heaven, or the innermost sanctuary. On the contrary, that is precisely where encounters with, and ‘smitings’ by, the temple guards occur.
We know from the context in which Paul's account is set that he based his claim to possess the authority of an apostle on this vision. We must therefore conclude that merkava mysticism was a central component of his personal experience and self-understanding. This being so, it seems unlikely that Paul's visions were merely spontaneous, involuntary events. It is much more probable that he employed some form of mystical technique, which may have been less elaborate than those described in some hekhalot sources, but which is unlikely to have been markedly different in its essentials.228

Paul's Apostolic Call

Finally, the question of the historical event to which Paul refers remains to be considered. The majority of scholars have denied any connection between this event and Paul's visions recorded elsewhere. This view, however, is often associated with a tendentious desire to prove that visionary experience was of no more than marginal importance to Paul.229 This is a distortion of the context in which 2 Cor 12 occurs, is contradicted by the whole record of Paul's career, and does not deserve serious consideration.230 Tabor and Segal maintain to the contrary that

228 Compare Segal, Paul the Convert, 33–39. Young ('The Ascension Motif’, 80, 84) is ambivalent on this point. On the one hand, he recognizes the background in Jewish mysticism of Paul’s vision, but, on the other, he is anxious to distinguish between Paul’s experience ('an extraordinary religious encounter’) and 'an extreme esoteric and sometimes self-induced mysticism.’ This proposed distinction is not supported by historical analysis and appears to be based on theological concerns. Tabor (Things Unutterable, 115f.) is surely right to argue that the expressions ἁρπαγέντα (2 Cor 12:2) and ἡρπάγη (12:4) do not at all imply the absence of a mystical technique, any more than the use of a mystical method would mean that Paul’s experience of ‘being caught up’ was wholly self-achieved, rather than divinely granted. On this point, compare Maase Merkava § 24 (p. 382 above).


230 See Tabor, Things Unutterable, 32–34, for a penetrating exposé of the ‘hidden agenda’ underlying this approach, the aim of which is to produce a portrait of Paul that
visionary mysticism was a central feature of Paul’s experience and that the practice of the heavenly ascent was repeated many times during his career.\textsuperscript{231} This view is very probably correct, but the inference that Paul is describing only one among several such experiences, which occurred at some indeterminate point in his career, must be rejected on two counts: in the first place, this vision is evidently the basis of Paul’s claim to apostolic authority (in defense of which he is compelled, against his will, to boast of it); and, second, he is at pains to give the event a precise historical location. A few scholars have identified the ascent to paradise with the conversion on the Damascus road,\textsuperscript{232} but this suggestion is unconvincing. In none of the accounts of this event in Acts (9:1–9; 22:6–11; 26:12–18) does it appear that a heavenly ascent was involved and the narrative model corresponds more closely to the apocalyptic trope of revelatory descent by a celestial being. Nor is there any indication that Paul saw a vision of Christ in human form upon the celestial throne on this occasion. Rather, all three versions in Acts speak of a blinding light and a voice from heaven. Paul’s own account of this event (Gal 1:15–16) does not indicate that it was a heavenly ascent or that it involved a vision of Christ upon the throne.\textsuperscript{233} In this account, Paul uses the verb ἀποκαλύπτω but not the noun ὀπτασία. Although this point is not at all decisive (\textit{pace} Goulder), it does tend to support the impression given by Acts that the content of this experience was primarily auditory, not visual. Most important of all, no account of the Damascus road experience provides a point of contact with the imagery of the temple which was, as we have seen, at the heart of the paradise tradition.

\textit{Ibid.} 21; Segal, \textit{Paul the Convert}, 34–71. Baumgarten (\textit{Paulus und die Apokalyptik}, 143) has also emphasized the frequency of Paul’s visionary experience but did not discuss the aspect of practical mysticism. nor did he think that Paul saw Christ on this occasion. See also Reitzenstein, \textit{Hellenistic Mystery}, 426–500, esp. 468–471.

\textsuperscript{232} Knox (‘Fourteen Years Later’, 346–349; idem, ‘Pauline Chronology’, 15–29) originally held this view but later retracted it (\textit{Chapters}, 1st ed. 78 n. 3; cf. 2nd, revised ed., 34 n. 1). Riddle (\textit{Man of Conflict}, 62–63, 208–11) accepted Knox’s original position, which has also been supported by Buck and Taylor (\textit{Saint Paul}, 220–26). Buck and Taylor rightly recognized the importance of the vision for Paul’s claim to apostolic authority but wrongly assumed that the basis of this claim was the Damascus road event.

\textsuperscript{233} \textit{Contra} Kim (\textit{Origin}, 223–33) whose discussion, although excellent in many respects, rests on a false assumption. See pp. 415–417 nn. 249 and 250 below.
There remains a recorded vision of Paul which has attracted little attention from recent commentators, but which seems to satisfy all the criteria demanded by the above analysis. This is the vision in the Jerusalem temple, reported in Acts 22 at the conclusion of Paul’s defense speech on the temple steps. According to Acts, this vision occurred during his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. In Galatians, Paul states that this first visit occurred three years after his conversion (Gal 1:18) and fourteen years before his second visit (Gal 2:1). The vision is described as follows:

17 After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple, I came to be in an ecstatic trance (γενέσθαι με ἐν ἐκστάσει) and to see him, saying to me: 
18a 'Hurry, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because they will not accept your testimony about me.' 
18b Then I said: 'Lord, they themselves know that in all the synagogues I used to imprison and beat those who believed in you, and while the blood of your witness Stephen was being shed I myself stood by approving and guarding the garments of those who were killing him.' 
19 Then he said to me: 'Go, for I will send you far away to the gentiles,' 
21 up to this point, they [the crowd in the temple) listened to him, but then they shouted: 'Remove this person from the earth, for it were not fitting for him to live!' (Acts 22:17–22)

If one who ascends to paradise gains entry to the holy of holies of the cosmic temple, this incident quite clearly involves an experience of exactly this type. Paul has been transported in his ecstatic trance from the earthly to the heavenly temple and thence, into the celestial Holy of Holies, where he sees Christ as the enthroned kavod. As noted by Otto Betz, the account in Acts contains numerous echoes of Isaiah 6, where the prophet receives his commission in the context of a vision of the enthroned kavod in the holy of holies. As we have seen, Isaiah 6 is a central text of the merkava tradition, second in importance only to Ezek 1. Acts 22:17 echoes Isa 6:1 (‘I saw the LORD’), while Acts 22:21 (‘I will send you far away’) must be derived from Isa 6:8 (‘Whom shall I send?’) and Isa 6:12 (‘until the LORD has sent everyone far away’). Here,

234 Giet (‘Nouvelles remarques’, 340) suggested in passing that this passage may correspond to 2 Cor 12:1–12 but, so far as I am aware, this suggestion has never been developed in detail. Jewett (Chronology, 54f.) briefly considered the possibility, but mistakenly rejected it (see pp. 412–413 below).
235 Or, the vision occurred three years after Paul’s return to Damascus, soon after his conversion.
then, is the account of Paul’s apostolic commission to the gentiles, set in the context of a merkava vision of Christ as kavod in the celestial sanctuary, to which 2 Cor 12:1–12 refers (cf. 1 Cor 9:1).

Acts 22:18b (‘they will not accept your testimony’) seems to reflect Isa 6:9–13, in which the prophet proclaims God’s condemnation of Israel and predicts the destruction of the kingdom. These same verses are fundamental to Paul’s theological theory of ‘hardhearted Israel’ (compare Acts 28:25–28). In the context of Paul’s speech in the temple, the implied reference amounts to a statement that the divine glory (Christ) has abandoned Israel in favour of the nations. Thus, whereas Isaiah was ‘sent’ to Israel, Paul is now ‘sent’ to the gentiles. This radical reinterpretation of the prophetic narrative explains the anger of his listeners (Acts 22:22), and it is intriguing to note that their rage is expressed in language very reminiscent of mHag 2:1C: ‘And whoever is not careful about the Glory of his Creator, it were fitting for him that he had not come into the world.’

Robert Jewett has objected that Paul’s public description of the vision in the temple in Acts 22 contrasts so strongly with his reticence in 2 Corinthians 12 that the two visions are unlikely to be the same.237 This objection overlooks the fact that the speech on the temple steps, which provides the context in which the public description occurs, is almost certainly a Lukan composition.238 Several commentators have believed this to be true of the vision itself and argued that it reflects Luke’s concern to legitimize gentile Christianity by emphasizing its continuity with Judaism.239 Betz regarded it as a Lukan commentary on the Damascus road event and believed it to be a literary device intended to place Paul’s authority on the same level as that of the twelve, to whom the risen Jesus had appeared in the holy city.240 On the other hand, Hans Conzelmann believes it to be an alternative version of the conversion/call story, derived by Luke from a nonhistorical

240 Betz, ‘Die Vision.’
tradition that associated the event with Jerusalem, rather than Damascus.\textsuperscript{241} Christoph Burchard rightly disputes the suggestion of a tradition that was ignorant of the Damascus road story or denied its veracity, but likewise maintains that the story of the temple vision is derived from a nonhistorical tradition, the origins of which he believes to be beyond recovery.\textsuperscript{242} However, the evidence considered above suggests strongly that the account of the vision is an authentic unit of tradition and derives ultimately from Paul himself, even though the speech itself was composed by Luke out of traditional material and may well never have occurred. If the correspondence between Acts 22:22 and mHag 2:1 is more than coincidental, then this verse must also be part of the authentic tradition derived from Paul, and not merely a literary device to conclude the speech (although Luke has used it for this purpose).\textsuperscript{243} The evidence therefore indicates that the unit may well be derived from an actual confrontation between Paul and a Jewish, probably Pharisaic, audience at some point in his career. We therefore have to distinguish three stages in the development of this tradition: (1) the vision itself, in Jerusalem, three years after the conversion; (2) Paul’s own report(s) of the experience, including the outraged response of a Jewish audience; and (3) Luke’s incorporation of such a report, at first or second hand, in the (probably fictitious) speech on the temple steps.

It is therefore very probable that the temple vision of Acts 22 is based, however indirectly, on a historical experience of Paul, and that 2 Cor 12:1–12 refers to this event. Given the manner in which our information concerning this vision is mediated within the narrative of Acts, the location of the vision within the earthly temple should perhaps be questioned. The temple setting could, like that of Nehunya’s trance ascent in HekhR,\textsuperscript{244} be symbolic rather than historical. It might also be reasonable to suppose that Paul’s vision was a purely mystical event, consisting of an imaginary ascent to the celestial temple, and that it was relocated to the earthly temple by Luke, who interpreted his source too literally. If this interpretation of the data were adopted, we could no longer assume that Paul’s vision actually occurred while

\textsuperscript{242} Burchard, \textit{Der dreizehnte}, 161–169. Interestingly enough, Burchard was prepared to speculate in a footnote (p. 165 n. 13), developing a suggestion of Menoud (‘L’écharde’, 171), that it may have arisen out of speculation about Paul’s vision in 2 Cor 12. This theory imposes an unnecessary strain upon the evidence. See further n. 245 below.
\textsuperscript{243} See Dibelius, ‘Speeches’, 160.
\textsuperscript{244} See pp. 234–236 above.
he was in Jerusalem, and Luke’s chronological location of the event would also be called into question. However, the location is confirmed as to both geography and chronology by Paul’s own testimony, since it corresponds precisely to the point at which the rapture to paradise occurs in the narrative sequence of 2 Cor 11–12, where Paul’s account of his escape from Damascus is followed immediately by his account of the ascent.245

M.J. Harris and Gooder are both unconvinced by my proposal that 2 Cor 12:1–12 refers to the temple vision in Acts 22.246 According to Gooder:

Chronologically this could be same vision, but form critically it contains no overlapping features other than the location within the Temple. Such evidence is insufficient to posit a connection between the two incidents.247

Harris and Gooder also object that there is no indication in Acts 22 that Paul heard ‘unutterable words’ during this vision and that, on the contrary, ‘the message he received is fully reportable.’248 This supposed inconsistency is more apparent than real. As we have seen, ‘unutterable words’ are a feature of many merkava visions and consist primarily of God’s secret names, recited in the act of worship. That Paul may have heard such words in the course of a vision located in the temple is far from surprising. Nor is it surprising that the account in Acts 22 does not mention this aspect of the vision. There, the purpose of Paul’s ‘speech’—which, as we have seen, is almost certainly a Lukan literary construction—is to provide a narrative account of Paul’s career. That narrative begins with Paul’s Jewish birth and education (verses 3–5), continues through the account of his conversion on the Damascus road followed by his instruction and baptism by Ananaias (verses 6–16), and reaches it climax in the temple vision in which he receives from Christ

245 2 Cor 11:32–12:1; compare Acts 9:23–26. If Luke used 2 Cor 10–13 as a source, he will almost certainly have recognized that 2 Cor 12:1–12 referred to the temple vision that he recorded at Acts 22:17–22. It is, however, inconceivable that this gentile author was so familiar with the merkava tradition that he was able to make up Acts 22:17–22, with its detailed allusions to that tradition, on the basis of the relatively veiled language in 2 Cor 12:1–12. The account of the temple vision must therefore be derived from a Jewish source. To argue that this source was not Paul himself (see p. 413 n. 242 above) is to complicate matters beyond necessity of reason.


248 Ibid.
his commission to be an apostle to the gentiles (verses 17–22). Since the writer’s interest in reporting that vision is strictly focused on its message content, his description of what might be termed the phenomenal content of the vision is extremely laconic. Although there is an implicit reference to Isaiah’s majestic vision, and the angelic worship described therein, the appearance of the Christ-kavod in the inner sanctum of the temple is reduced to the simple statement that ‘I came . . . to see him’ (verse 17). It is therefore certain that this vision involved other sights and sounds than those reported here. Moreover, the hearing of God’s ‘unutterable’ names in the celestial worship does not by any means preclude the exchange of ordinary verbal communication between the visionary and the object of his vision. Such exchanges are, of course, essential features of the prophetic commissioning accounts in Isa 6 and Ezek 1–3. It is true that in 2 Cor 12, Paul does not narrate the details of the conversation recorded in Acts 22, but the whole purpose of his ‘boasting’ is to defend the validity of his apostolic commission. It is this that provides the crucial connection between these two accounts. The whole thrust of Paul’s argument in 2 Cor 10–13 tells us—and will have told Paul’s readers—that the vision of which he boasts must have involved his apostolic commission and that it was very probably the commissioning event. This is exactly what is described in Acts 22:17–22. It is therefore very surprising that Harris and Gooder fail to perceive this connection. The chronological parallel between Acts 22 and 2 Cor 11–12 merely confirms what is already evident.

It has emerged from this investigation that Paul’s conversion on the Damascus road and his apostolic commission to the gentiles in the celestial temple (= paradise) were almost certainly two separate events, the latter occurring three years after the former in Jerusalem, and probably in the temple.249 Although this finding is contrary to the

249 Though not widely accepted, this position has been argued from the internal evidence of Acts by, for example, Liechtenhan, Urchristliche Mission, 77–80; Friedrichsen, ‘Apostle’; Benz, Paulus als Visionär, 91; Gaechter, Petrus, 408–415; Davies, ‘Apostolic Age’; Rigaux, Letters, 61f.; Blair, ‘Paul’s Call’. Kim’s attempt to refute these arguments (Origin, 58–65) is both conjectural and tendentious. His statement that the temple vision ‘does not . . . seem to have been of decisive importance for Paul, for he never mentions it in his letters’ (p. 65) is, in the light of the above analysis, completely wrong. The assumption that the conversion and the commission to the Gentiles were a single event is absolutely central to Kim’s thesis, which is vitiated by this finding (see p. 410 n. 233 above). Kim lists several passages of Paul’s writings that have often been interpreted as references to the conversion (Origin, 3–31), but many of these may in fact be references to the commission in the temple (= paradise). Newman,
prevailing assumption, it accords with what we know of Paul’s career. There is no evidence that he asserted his apostolic mission to the gentiles during the three years between these two events. It seems inherently probable that this vision, and the radical reinterpretation of Isa 6 that it entailed, were at least partly the products of his intense frustration at the extent of Jewish opposition to the Christian gospel. When we examine the various accounts of the Damascus road event, we find nothing to suggest it was the cause of this radical departure from his Jewish belief that cannot be explained as the reflection of hindsight on the divine purpose behind the initial revelation. In 1 Cor 15:5–10, Paul reports that he was the last of the apostles to see the risen Christ, presumably a reference to the Damascus road event. It is clear that, in his mind, that event and his apostolic status at the time of writing stand in a relationship of continuity with each other. However, he does not say that he received his apostolic commission, and certainly not that he became aware of his mission to the gentiles, on the occasion of his first vision. Likewise, in Gal 1:16, Paul does not state that he became aware of his apostolic commission to the gentiles at the time of his conversion. What he does say is that he now knows this to have been God’s purpose when he ‘was pleased to reveal his Son’ to him. Similarly, in Acts 9, is it nowhere stated that Paul received his commission to the gentiles at his conversion. We are told only that the knowledge of God’s future purpose for Paul was vouchsafed to Ananias (Acts 9:15). Indeed, Acts 9:16 might well be taken to imply that Ananias was forbidden to reveal this purpose to Paul, since ‘I [Christ] myself will show him’—presumably, at a later time. Acts 26:12–23 seems to be a compressed version of Acts 22:6–21, in which the contents of both the Ananias episode and the temple vision are assimilated to the Damascus road event. Since both speeches (and perhaps the Ananias episode itself) are

(From Glory-Christology, 164–247) follows Kim’s erroneous assumption. Dunn (Jesus and the Spirit, 97–114) offers a useful discussion of Paul’s claim to apostolic authority but also assumes that the conversion and commission were a single event. Dunn also overlooks a crucial difference between Paul’s vision of the risen Christ and the ‘pre-ascension’ resurrection appearances to the disciple-apostles: Paul’s visions are of the heavenly, glorified Christ-šamād. The Damascus road event implies (as argued above) a revelatory descent of the Christ-šamād or, alternatively, an ‘opening of the heavens’ (as in Ezek 1), hence the supernatural blinding light which is markedly absent in the pre-ascension appearances. On the other hand, the commission in paradise (= the temple vision) was associated with a vision of the Christ-šamād enthroned in the celestial sanctuary at the climax of a mystical ascent.
Lukan compositions, this has no bearing on the authenticity of Acts 22:17–22 as a traditional unit deriving ultimately from Paul.

Seyoon Kim finds my distinction between Paul’s call and commissioning experiences ‘unusual and unlikely in the face of Paul’s clear testimonies to the contrary in Gal 1:11–17; 1 Cor 15:5–10.’ As stated above, I find those verses much less clear than Kim supposes. Likewise, Andrew Chester maintains that

Murray-Jones diminishes too readily the significance of the Galatians 1 account; and this…is simply one prominent example among many of Paul’s allusions to his Damascus road ‘Christophany.’ It is this revelation of the divine Glory that is fundamental for Paul’s beliefs and for his apostolic calling.

In fact, I ‘diminish’ neither the importance of Galatians 1 nor the Damascus road experience itself. I simply (i) accept the text of Galatians 1 at face value, without preconceptions; and (ii) conclude that Paul’s conversion experience and his apostolic commission did not occur together in the same event. In making this distinction, I intend no assessment of the relative ‘importance’ of the two events. I accept, of course, that Paul understands both of these experiences to be revelations of the Christ-kavod, that this is indeed fundamental to his faith, and that his apostolic call presupposes his conversion. I presume that there was a high degree of continuity between those two events in Paul’s internal life, while also recognizing that his experience and self-understanding—and therefore his visions—will have developed over time.

Rom 15:15–20 confirms our reconstruction of events:

15But I have written to you in part boldly, to remind you, on account of the grace given to me by God 16to be a servant of Christ Jesus to the gentiles, administering the gospel of God as a priestly service (ἱερουργοῦντα τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦ θεοῦ), that the offering of the gentiles may be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. 17In Christ Jesus, then, I have my boast in the things pertaining to God, 18for I will not presume to speak of anything except that which Christ has accomplished through me for the obedience of the gentiles, by word and deed, 19through the power of signs and wonders, through the power of the Spirit of God, so that from Jerusalem and around to Illyricum I have fully proclaimed the gospel of Christ. 20Thus, I aspire to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named, so that I do not build on another’s foundation.

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250 Kim, Paul and the New Perspective, 186 n. 69 (and see the previous note).
251 Chester, Messiah, 84.
Here, Paul characteristically emphasizes the independence of his apostolic mission from any human authority (Rom 15:20) but places the beginning of the gentile mission not in Damascus, but in Jerusalem (Rom 15:19). Moreover, he describes his apostolic calling to the gentiles as the exercise of a priestly ministry (Rom 15:16). The references to boasting (Rom 15:17) and works of power (Rom 15:18–19) are very reminiscent of 2 Cor 12.

Our findings have potentially significant implications for the vexed question of the Pauline chronology. Broadly speaking, they tend to support a reconstruction based on the Epistles, rather than Acts, as proposed by John Knox, Donald Wayne Riddle, John Coolidge Hurd, Henry Buck and Greer Taylor, Robert Jewett, and Gerd Lüdemann, among others.252 Since Gal 2:1 specifies a fourteen-year interval between the first visit to Jerusalem (when the paradise/temple vision occurred) and the second (the ‘Jerusalem conference’), 2 Cor 10–13 must have been written at about this time. As we observed above, both letters seem to have been written in the heat of the crisis over Paul’s apostolic authority and gentile mission. Since 2 Cor 10–13 does not refer to the Jerusalem meeting, it may have been written shortly before this event, while Galatians, which does refer to that meeting, must have been written shortly after it. But it is not possible to discuss this complex

252 See Knox, ‘Fourteen Years’, esp. 341; idem, ‘Pauline Chronology’, esp. 23–26; idem, Chapters, esp. 3–52; Riddle, Man of Conflict, esp. 13–20 and 185–223; Buck and Taylor, Saint Paul, esp. 3–19; Jewett, Chronology, esp. 7–24; Hurd, ‘Chronology, Pauline’; idem, Origin, 3–42; idem, ‘Pauline Chronology’; and idem, ‘Sequence’; and Lüdemann, Paul. See now Knox, ‘Pauline Chronology’. Since these scholars have tended to discount Acts as a source of reliable data, it is perhaps hardly surprising that none of them has identified the ascent to paradise with the temple vision. However, this finding is consistent with, or requires only small adjustments to, the reconstructions they propose. The conclusion reached above allows the expression διὰ δεκατεσσαρών ἐτῶν in Gal 2:1 to be taken as consecutive with (rather than inclusive of) μετὰ ἕτη τριά in Gal 1:18, as seems most natural. Thus, Gal 1:15–17 refers to the conversion; Gal 1:18 states that Paul went up to Jerusalem three years after this event: and Gal 2:1 places the second visit to Jerusalem (the ‘Jerusalem conference’) fourteen years later. Gal 2:11–14 is probably not part of this chronological sequence, but refers to an earlier event (see Lüdemann, Paul, 20–21). We should note that Paul’s protestation in Gal 1:20 implies that a different account of these events was being promulgated by his opponents, and that account could be the basis of the muddled chronology of Acts. The reconstruction proposed by Dunn (‘Incident at Antioch’) rests on the assumption that Gal 2:11–14 continues the chronological sequence of Gal 1:13–2:10. Giet (‘Nouvelles remarques’, 335–340) argues that Gal 1:18, ἐπεὶ ταυτὰ μετὰ ἕτη τριά, means three years after Paul’s stay in Damascus, the length of which is not specified, so that more than three years elapsed between the conversion and the first visit to Jerusalem, but this reading of the text seems very strained.
issue here. It is sufficient to have shown that Paul’s ascent to paradise, his ecstatic vision in the temple, and his commission as the apostle to the gentiles were one and the same revolutionary event. It is now clear that merkava mysticism was not something of merely incidental importance in Paul’s religious life and thought. His merkava visions of the risen Christ enthroned in ‘paradise’ were at the very heart of his experience and his apostolic claim.
CHAPTER FOURTEEN

METHODS AND ASSUMPTIONS IN INTERPRETING
MYSTICAL AND RABBINIC TEXTS:
THE CASE OF THE FOUR WHO ENTERED PARDES

Statement of Purpose

Alon Goshen Gottstein has proposed an interpretation of the *pardes* story which is radically different from that set forth in the preceding chapter.¹ His theory is expressed in an article which is substantially based on his presentation to the rabbinic and Patristic Exegesis Group at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature in November, 1993, shortly before the publication of my own article, ‘Paradise Revisited’,² of which Goshen Gottstein was at that time unaware.³ His published article repeats and elaborates on the views put forward in his presentation, to which remarks in response to my work have been added, mainly, though not exclusively, in a preface and postscript to his discussion.⁴ These observations serve to explain certain errors and inconsistencies in Goshen Gottstein’s argument, which will be addressed below.⁵

Goshen Gottstein’s article requires a considered and detailed response for two reasons: first, because his findings, if unchallenged, would serve to undermine the foundations on which much of this book—and the previous chapter in particular—are based; and second, because his method of interpreting the rabbinic sources, and the assumptions embodied in that method, are invalid and misleading. Goshen Gottstein’s method involves treating the corpus of ‘mainstream’ rabbinic literature as historically—in addition to theologically—normative, so that sources outside the corpus, such as the hekhalot writings, may be

¹ Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’.
⁵ For another critical response to Goshen Gottstein’s argument, see Davila, ‘The Hodayot Hymnist’, 477–478 n. 38; and see Goshen Gottstein’s rejoinder, *The Sinner*, 304f. n. 36.
ignored or discounted as ‘marginal’ and ‘late’. Where the content of the hekhalot writings overlaps with that of the ‘mainstream’ sources, it is assumed that the hekhalot recensions are derivative of the rabbinic traditions. These kinds of assumptions about the relationships between ‘mainstream’ and ‘non-mainstream’ sources, which have long been discredited in the study of early Christian literature, are at least equally invalid when applied to Jewish texts. In addition to treating the ‘mainstream’ rabbinic literature as a ‘closed universe’, Goshen Gottsein seemingly believes that it is legitimate to regard it as an organic unity, the diverse textual units of which may be used more or less uncritically to explain and supplement each other. As a result, the exegetical approach that he espouses is essentially ‘midrashic’, involving the transposition and combination of themes and meanings found in textual units culled from diverse sources, regardless of differences of context, or of form. Nor does Goshen Gottstein subject the texts on which he bases his argument to the rigors of source- and redaction-critical analysis. Owing to its lack of discipline and objectivity, this associative method has the capacity to yield whatever results the midrashic expositor wishes to achieve. Those results may be aesthetically satisfying and/ or of speculative interest, but as a tool of historical research, Goshen Gottstein’s method is significantly flawed.

In order to challenge this approach effectively, it is necessary to examine the assumptions undergirding each of the salient points of Goshen Gottstein’s argument. This will involve a close examination of the texts cited by Goshen Gottstein, and his interpretations of those texts in themselves and in relation to each other. The reader is warned that this process will test her or his patience, and that our labour will at times become extremely tedious. But if our findings and theories are to have any claim to be scientific and evidence-based—as opposed to impressionistic and fanciful—we must find the patience and persistence to undertake this very necessary task.

_Preliminary Issues: The Pardes Story, the Hekhalot Writings, and the Evidence of Paul_

At the outset of his discussion, Goshen Gottstein misrepresents my position. He states that, in my opinion, the original first-person version of the _pardes_ story preserved in the hekhalot sources ‘…is in fact
a record of [Akiva’s] mystical experience’.6 In fact, although I argued and maintain that the attribution to Akiva may be accurate, I stated clearly that the possibility remains unproven.7 Moreover, I did not and do not suggest that the story of the four is the direct account of a specific experience by Akiva or any other individual—or, still less, that it is the record of an historical incident in which four persons were simultaneously involved.8 On the contrary, although I believe that it refers to the practice of visionary mysticism and originated in circles that engaged in such a practice, I regard the story itself as a highly constructed and wholly invented composition. As such, it serves a twofold purpose: first, it warns of the dangers associated with visionary practices by distinguishing four different types of outcome, three of which are negative; and second, it upholds Akiva as the exemplar of visionary-mystical success by claiming that he, unlike others originally unnamed, was deemed worthy to perform the dangerous practice of ascent to the heavenly temple, pardes.

Goshen Gottstein prefaces his discussion by stressing the ‘lateness’ of the hekhalot sources. On this basis, he maintains, my comparisons between Paul and the hekhalot tradition have at best phenomenological, rather than historical, validity. Therefore, he declares his intention to ‘...limit myself to an examination of the Jewish sources discussed in the first part of Morray-Jones’s presentation, without attempting to decide the relevance of these sources for Pauline studies’.9 In fact, he limits himself to the rabbinic sources exclusively and ignores the evidence not only of Paul, but of the hekhalot writings as well. This strategy enables him to disregard the numerous detailed points of contact between 2 Cor 12:1–12, the pardes story, and the wider merkava tradition that were discussed in my article, and in the previous chapter. In this way, Goshen Gottstein evades the need to engage with the evidence of Paul’s testimony, which shows that the tradition of ascent to Paradise is much older than he supposes. Goshen Gottstein likewise declines to engage with the ‘cosmic temple’ traditions—which, as we have seen, go back at least as far as the Second Temple period—and confines his inquiry

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6 Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 71 (cf. 74, 121, etc.).
8 See idem, A Transparent Illusion, 20–21.
to rabbinic sources only. With regard to the hekhalot sources, Goshen Gottstein simply ignores my arguments and those of others that many of the traditions preserved in these texts, not just the pardes story, are of early and pre-rabbinic origin. As we have seen, substantial parts of the hekhalot corpus are undoubtedly older than some of the late midrashic sources that he himself has no compunction about using.

‘Four Entered Paradise’ in the Context of tHag 2:1–7

Goshen Gottstein next explains the assumptions on which he bases his interpretation of the pardes story. He asserts that the story in its talmudic recension

...does not exist in isolation, but rather is embedded within a larger literary framework. The key to its successful interpretation may well lie in the decoding of this larger unit.10

Whereas scholars such as Halperin and myself regard the talmudic ‘mystical collection’ as a compilation of independent and, for the most part, pre-existent units of traditional material, Goshen Gottstein believes that it is a single literary creation, the original form of which is preserved in the Tosefta:

I shall attempt a reading of the pardes story based on the opposite premises, assuming instead that an understanding of the pardes story must be sought in the context of the entire ‘mystical collection’...Only in the context of the Tosefta, as it comments on the Mishnah, can we account for the creation of these traditions. The point of these various traditions becomes obvious only when they are seen as a whole...I believe that the question of origin can be established by appealing to the logic of the whole, which can only be done in the context of the Tosefta.11

In Goshen Gottstein’s opinion, this supposedly seamless whole was composed—presumably, though he does not say so explicitly, by a single author—as a commentary on mHag 2:1. He therefore believes that the meaning of each component unit of the mystical collection (which he thinks is not really a ‘collection’) must be governed by the meaning of the whole, and that the keys to this larger meaning should be sought

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10 Goshen Gottstein, 'Four Entered', 73.
11 Ibid., 74.
in the language and structure of the Mishna. The text of tHag 2:1–7 reads as follows:¹²

(A) It is not permitted to expound ( אני דרשי) the forbidden sexual relationships with three—but they may be expounded with two—nor maase bereshit with two—but it may be expounded with one—nor the merkava with an individual, unless he were a hakham and understands from his own knowledge. (mHag 2:1a)

(B) There is a story about (מאש ברה) Yohanan b. Zakkai, who was riding on an ass while Elazar b. Arakh was driving it behind him. He (Elazar) said to him: ‘Master, teach (שנה) me one section (פרק) of maase merkava.’ He said to him: ‘Have I not said thus to you from the beginning, that “it is not permitted to teach (שונין שללא שנין) the merkava with an individual, unless he were a hakham and understands from his own knowledge”.’ He said to him: ‘Hence, let me discourse (ראיאתי) before you.’ He said to him: ‘Speak!’ R. Elazar opened (פתח) and expounded (דרש) maase merkava.¹⁶ Rabban Yohanan ben Zakkai got down from the ass and wrapped himself in his tallit,¹⁷ and they both sat on a stone under an olive tree, and he discoursed (והרצה) before him. He (Yohanan) stood up and kissed him on the head, and said: ‘Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, who has given a son to Abraham our father, who knows how to explain and expound (והרצה בהבין) the glory of his father who is in heaven! There are those who expound well (והрабатыва נאה) but do not perform well (מקיים נאה),… who perform well but do not expound well—Elazar ben Arakh expounds well and performs well! Happy are you, Abraham our father, that Elazar ben Arakh has issued from your loins, who knows how to explain and expound (והрабатыва בהבין) the glory of his father who is in heaven!’


¹² Unless otherwise stated, the following translation follows ms. Vienna in ed. Lieberman. Compare Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 76f., but note that he adopts the traditional division of the passage into numbered sections (as encountered in editions of the Tosefta) whereas I have indicated each unit separately, using alphabetical notation.

¹³ Ms. Erfurt: דרש.

¹⁴ Ms. Erfurt: דרשים שללא שנין.

¹⁵ Ms. Erfurt: ואריאתי.

¹⁶ Ms. Erfurt omits this sentence.

¹⁷ Ms. Erfurt: ‘…and they wrapped themselves’.


¹⁹ As in the previous note.
Four men went into *pardes*: ben Azzai and ben Zoma, Aher and R. Akiva. One looked and died; one looked and was smitten; one looked and cut the shoots; one went up in peace and came down in peace. Ben Azzai looked and died. Of him, scripture says: ‘Precious in the eyes of the LORD is the death of His saints’ (Ps 116:15). Ben Zoma looked and was smitten. Of him, scripture says: ‘Have you found honey? Eat what is enough for you...’ (Prov 25:16). Elisha looked and cut the shoots. Of him, scripture says: ‘Do not let your mouth lead your flesh into sin...’ (Eccl 5:5). R. Akiva went up in peace and came down in peace. Of him, scripture says: ‘Draw me after you! Let us run...’ etc. (Cant 1:4a).

They employed a parable (משל): To what may the matter be compared? To the garden (*pardes*) of a king with an upper chamber built above it. What should a man do? Look (לציץ), only let him not feast his eyes on it.

They employed another parable: To what may the matter be compared? To a highway which passes between two roads, one of fire and one of snow. He who turns aside this way is scorched by the fire. He who turns aside that way is scorched by the snow. What should a man do? Let him walk in the middle, only let him not turn aside, neither this way nor that way.

There is a story about (מאсе be-). R. Yoshua, who was walking in the road and ben Zoma was coming towards him. He (ben Zoma) drew near to him but did not offer him a greeting. He (Yoshua) said to him: ‘From where to where (מאין לאין), ben Zoma?’ He said to him: ‘I have been looking into the account of creation (בראשית במעשה היתי צופה) and between the upper waters and the lower waters there is not even a handspan—as it is said: ‘And the spirit of God was hovering (מרחפת) over the surface of the waters’ (Gen 1:2); and it is also said: ‘as an eagle stirs up its nest [—over its young it hovers (יְרַחֵף)]’ (Deut 32:11). Just as this eagle flutters (טס) above its nest, touching, yet not touching—just so, between the upper waters and the lower waters there is not even a handspan.’ R. Yoshua said to his students: ‘Ben Zoma is already outside (מבחוץ).’ It was not many days before ben Zoma passed away.

‘Whoever gazes (מסתכל) at four things, it were fitting for him if he had not come into the world: what is above, what is below, what is/was before, what is behind/will be hereafter.’ (mHag 2:1b)

One might think [it was permitted to ask about the time] before *maase bereshit*—wherefore scripture says: ‘...from the day that God created man upon the earth’ (Deut 4:32). One might think [it was permitted to ask about the time] before the orders of the seasons were created—wherefore
scripture says: ‘…and from one end of the heavens to the other’ (ibid.). Why does scripture say: ‘from the day that God created man upon the earth?’ From the day that God created man upon the earth, you may expound, but you are not permitted to expound what is above, what is below, what has been, and what will be in the future (למעלה מה למטה מה להיות ומה מה היה ל前世ウォ).’ (paraphrase of mHag 2:1b)

It should be noted that in Goshen Gottstein’s presentation of tHag 2:1–7, unit A (= mHag 2:1a) is omitted.²¹ As we shall see, the effect of this omission is to seriously distort his analysis of the passage as a whole.²²

According to Goshen Gottstein, mHag 2:1 distinguishes between two types of activity, one of which is permitted within prescribed limits and one of which is forbidden absolutely. He maintains that in mHag 2:1a, the verbs דרש and שנה refer to exegesis of the three scriptural passages in question (Lev 18:2–23 and 20:10–20; Gen 1; and Ezek 1), whereas the verb הсталס in mHag 2:1b refers to

…a speculation, a type of visionary activity that is not textually or exegetically based. This mishnah, therefore, may already reveal a distinction between visionary experiences and the exegetical attention paid to certain potentially problematic passages of scripture. This distinction is fruitful to the understanding of the formation of the Tosefta that comments upon this mishnah…²³

In Goshen Gottstein’s opinion, the whole structure of tHag 2:1–7 is based on this distinction: units B and C refer to the legitimate activity of exegesis (signified by the three verbs: דרש, שנה and הרצה) when practised in accordance with the restrictions of mHag 2:1a, while D–G are concerned with the visionary practices that are absolutely prohibited in mHag 2:1b (חצץ, צפה and הсталס). Based on this analysis, he concludes that units B and C are both ‘stories of praise’, while D–G are ‘stories of blame’, in which ‘various sages, with the exception of R. Akiba, incur harm for their activities’.²⁴ In the pardes story (D) the reason for Akiva’s success is provided by unit C, in which Akiva is said to have ‘discoursed’ (הרצה) before R. Yoshua, who in turn—like

²¹ See Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 76.
²² See below, pp. 433–434.
²³ Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 76.
²⁴ Ibid., 79. It is not clear why Goshen Gottstein thinks the pardes story should be characterized exclusively by the element of blame attaching to the three who failed, rather than the praise applied to its successful hero.
Elazar b. Arakh, the hero of unit B—had discoursed before Rabban Yohanan b. Zakkai:

It seems to me that, given the structure of the Tosefta as a whole, the key to R. Akiba’s successful entry into the pardes is the very fact that in the second unit he was established as a legitimate link in a chain of tradition between teachers and students. It is this fact that ensures his safe exit from the pardes. The other three members who entered the pardes did not have the kind of protection afforded by the chain of tradition and by the presence of a teacher to control their activities.  

In unit G, a counterpart to the legitimate exegetical activity of Akiva is provided by the character of ben Zoma, who fails to subject himself to the discipline of a text or to the authority of a teacher and ‘looks’ (צתה) directly for himself, thereby incurring Yoshua’s condemnation:

If we tie the two themes that mark the organization of the ‘mystical collection’ together, we find two types of activity—one exegetical and the other visionary. The former can be controlled through the presence of a teacher who supervises the nature of the exegetical process. The latter cannot be controlled; it is negative in that it defies supervision, as the story of Ben Zoma indicates.

These considerations, according to Goshen Gottstein, explain the meaning of Cant 1:4, the scriptural verse applied to Akiva in the pardes story. He finds it significant that the Tosefta quotes only the first part of this verse: ‘Draw me after you! Let us run!’ He believes that the second part of the verse is irrelevant in the context of the Tosefta, even though, as he acknowledges, it is is clearly indicated by the word: ‘etc.’ (וגו׳).

His explanation is as follows:

Who is it that draws him? Read in context, the answer becomes obvious: it is the master, in this case R. Yehoshu’a, who by guiding and supervising the person engaging in the study of the merkabah, draws the student after him. This ‘drawing after’ may indeed describe the attainment of a mystical experience as a consequence of the study of the merkabah. The

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25 Ibid., 83.
26 Ibid., 84.
27 Goshen Gottstein concedes in a footnote (‘Four Entered’, 84 n. 38) that ‘we do find many instances in which the derashah is indeed contained in the unquoted section of the verse’, but he nonetheless maintains that ‘in this instance… there is a convincing and brilliant derashah in the earlier part of the verse, so that we need not concentrate our exegetical efforts on the latter part’. However, as we shall see in a moment, he is inconsistent about this.
essential point, however, is that this is reached not in isolation, but by following the example of the master.28

This reading of the proof text is in Goshen Gottstein’s opinion confirmed by the final word of the text cited: נָרוּצָה (‘let us run’). He believes this word to be a deliberate allusion to the term הרצה (‘discoursed’), which he thinks is used in units B and C to represent legitimate exegesis as opposed to forbidden visionary practice. Strangely enough, when developing this interpretation, Goshen Gottstein refers to the second, unquoted section of the verse (Cant 1:4b), which he has just declared to be irrelevant:

The derashah thus captures the voice of the student turning to his master and saying, ‘Draw me after you, and we shall jointly engage in that particular type of study of the merkabah through which we may come to the chambers of the king.’29

Goshen Gottstein attaches great significance to the fact that, while the three who came to grief after entering the pardes are said to have ‘looked’ (הציץ), this verb is not applied to Akiva. He understands this to mean that the three who failed were engaged in the kind of visionary practice (מסתכל) prohibited by mHag 2:1b, whereas Akiva confined his activity to scriptural exegesis (דרש) under the supervision of an authorized teacher (Yoshua), as permitted in mHag 2:1b:

The one sage who entered successfully not only had a proper relationship with his teacher; beyond that—and perhaps because of that—what he did in the pardes is of a completely different nature.30

Nonetheless, Goshen Gottstein has to concede that it is clearly stated that Akiva, like the others, ‘entered pardes’ (A2), and that he is also said to have ‘ascended and descended’ (A41–42).31 This observation forces us to consider the possibility that R. Akiba is not totally disengaged from the visionary dimension. Perhaps his successful and legitimate exegetical activity, as stated in the second unit, may be the key to certain visionary activity reported in the pardes passage.32

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28 Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 84 (see the previous note).
29 Ibid., 85. Goshen Gottstein states that this interpretation of the verse was proposed by Yonah Frankel in an unpublished lecture (ibid., n. 39).
30 Ibid., 86.
31 Goshen Gottstein (ibid., 87–88) prefers the reading ‘went up…and came down’ (mss. Vienna and London) to ‘went in…and came out’ (ms. Erfurt).
As we shall see, the development of this point is deferred by Goshen Gottstein to a later stage of his discussion. However, before following that discussion any further, we should now pause to evaluate his argument thus far.

As we have seen, Goshen Gottstein’s interpretation of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ is based heavily on his belief that the mystical collection in the Tosefta is an original, unitary composition. He states:

> In my opinion, the close relation between the various units of the Tosefta, as well as its overall thematic unity, are not just the work of a creative editor, who was able to piece together disparate material. They are signs of a literary creation that is best understood as having been created in the context of a commentary on *m.Hagiga*.33

Though possible in principle, the theory that *tHag* 2:1–7 is a single composition is extremely unconvincing. In the first place, it disregards the inherently composite nature of rabbinic literature in general. It hardly needs to be demonstrated that the talmudic and midrashic collections which make up the bulk and heart of this literature—including the Tosefta—were compiled from traditional materials, not created *de novo* by single authors. This is by no means to deny that the editors of these compilations exercised considerable creativity and ingenuity in their interpretation and adaptation of their sources, which they used, combined and modified in the service of their own redactional agendas. Nor is it to deny that these editors sometimes proposed new forms of exegesis and composed new stories (which they tended to attribute to authoritative figures of the past), thereby creating halakhic and aggadic traditions of their own. It is also undeniable that each individual unit encountered in these collections must have originated at some point in the development of the oral or literary tradition. Nonetheless, the fact that a given passage can be shown to possess redactional coherence does not amount to proof that is the original source of each of its component units. In the case of the mystical collection in the Tosefta, a degree of redactional coherence must of course be recognized. The individual units are, however, characterized by a diversity of form and content that argues powerfully against Goshen Gottstein’s contention that they were all created in this context.

In terms of literary form, two units, B and G, are admittedly very similar. Both are stories. intruduced by the standard formula: ‘There

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is a story about . . .' (maase be-). Both stories are centered on a dialogue between a junior and a senior figure. The subjects of discussion: maase merkava in B and maase bereshit in G, are parallel. Though the outcomes are different, the central issue—i.e., the master’s approval or disapproval of the student’s exegesis—is the same in both cases. However, ‘Four Entered Paradise’ (D) is a very different narrative form, structured around a typological comparison supported (in this context) by scriptural citations and containing no dialogue at all. The two parables (E and F) represent yet another literary form. Unit C is different again, being a terse statement attributed—uniquely, in this passage—to a named rabbi. Unit J is an unattributed halakhic midrash, linked to mHag 2:1, on the subject of maase bereshit. Thus—apart from the similarities between B and G, and between E and F—the materials included in this collection are from the formal point of view extremely disparate.

Despite the verbal connections emphasized by Goshen Gottstein, the vocabulary of the units of the mystical collection in the Tosefta is far from uniform. In unit B, Yohanan’s citation of the restriction concerning ha-merkava departs from the text of mHag 2:1 as quoted in unit A, reading: שוניןAREN SHUTIM, in place of: דרושיןAREN SHUTIM. The only reasonable explanation for this change is that שוניןAREN SHUTIM was already present in the source used by the redactor of this passage. Thus, although the story is associated by both content and language (ולדרושלהבין) with the mishnaic restriction concerning the merkava, it is clear that the redactor of the collection has used an independent source. In fact, as pointed out by Halperin, this source may well be derived from a stage of tradition prior to the compilation of the threefold mishnah introduced byAREN SHUTIM. The term הרצה, despite the significance that Goshen Gottstein attributes to it, has no connection with the language of mHag 2:1.

The language of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ (unit D) has no apparent connection with that of the preceding units (except, perhaps, the word נרצחה) or—in this version of the story—with that of mHag 2:1. Goshen Gottstein’s theory that the pardes story was composed in the context of the Tosefta to be an illustration of the mishnah’s ban on ‘looking’ is weakened by the observations that the verb used in the story of the

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34 Admittedly, ms. Erfurt of the Tosefta reads דروسין, but this is undoubtedly a ‘correction’ in harmony with the received text of mHag 2:1.

three who failed (ה авиа) is different from the term used in the mishna (מסתכל), which, in turn, is entirely absent from the Tosefta’s version of the pardes story.\textsuperscript{36} The story of Yoshua and ben Zoma (unit G) uses a term which is different again (מסתכל), suggesting that it too has been taken from a separate source. Ms. Erfurt, admittedly, changes \( \text{ הייתי צופה בבראשית במעשה בッドמסתכל היית מסתכל בבראשית} \), a reading which is also found at yHag 77a–b and GenR 2:4. However, it seems all but certain that this change was first introduced by a redactor or copyist who sought to harmonize his source with mHag 2:1b and that \( \text{ הייתי צופה בבראשית במעשה} \) represents the earlier text. The version preserved at bHag 15a, which is entirely devoid of linguistic connections with mHag 2:1—and which may for this and other reasons be closer to the original, unadapted source\textsuperscript{37}—supports this reading: \( \text{ הייתי צופה בבראשית ב deed המילחיים} \). In case it should be maintained, despite these considerations, that the reading: \( \text{ הייתי מסתכל בבראשית ב deed המילחיים} \) in ms. Erfurt of the Tosefta is to be preferred, it should be observed that this same manuscript places unit G before units E and F, a location which is incompatible with Goshen Gottstein’s analysis of the structure of the passage as a whole. It should further be noted that the priority of the Tosefta’s recension of unit B over other versions,\textsuperscript{38} though supported by a few scholars,\textsuperscript{39} is disputed.\textsuperscript{40} As already observed, moreover, the fact that this unit cites mHag 2:1a in a form that differs from the quotation which immediately precedes it is an indication that the redactor of the passage has obtained it from an independent source.

The observation that several characters appear in more than unit is crucial to Goshen Gottstein’s interpretation of this passage. In his view, the meaning of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ (unit D) is explained by

\textsuperscript{36} The verbמסתכל occurs only in the hekhalot recension (C1c), and secondarily in the Bavli (A59–60).
\textsuperscript{37} See further Rowland, \textit{The Open Heaven}, 329–330.
\textsuperscript{38} yHag 77a, bHag 14b, and MekRSbY 21:1 (ed. Schechter, ‘Genizah Fragments’, 443–445; ed. Epstein-Melamed 158f.). For a convenient synopsis of all four versions, see Bowker, ‘“Merkabah” Visions’, 160–164.
its intrinsic connection with the two preceding units. He believes that
the link connecting these three units is the person of Yoshua, before
whom Akiva ‘discoursed’, and who—like Elazar b. Arakh—had previ-
ously discoursed before Yohanan b. Zakkai. These connections are
self-evidently valid, but they do not indicate that the passage is a single
composition. On further reflection, it becomes apparent that, in spite of
the redactor’s efforts to impose a unifying framework on his sources, the
names of the *dramatis personae* are strong indicators of the individual
units’ independent origins. Granted that Yoshua in unit C provides a
connection between Akiva in D and ben Zakkai in B, if the passage is
an original composition as Goshen Gottstein claims, and if the author’s
intention was simply to establish a chain of legitimacy from Yohanan
via Yoshua to Akiva, we are left with two questions: (i) in unit C, why
did this same author find it necessary to mention Hanania b. Hakhinai?
And (ii) in unit B, why is it it is Elazar, and not Yoshua himself, who
discourses before Ben Zakkai?41 In other words, Goshen Gottstein fails
to account for the inclusion of Elazar and Hanania, who are entirely
redundant under his theory of the text. In much the same way, he may
well be right to regard ben Zoma’s relationship with Yoshua in unit G
as a counterpoint to Akiva’s relationship with Yoshua in unit D, but
he fails to explain why, of all the characters in the *pardes*, ben Zoma
alone is elected to perform this role. The most plausible explanation is,
of course, that these units already existed prior to their appropriation
and adaptation by the redactor of the mystical collection. In short,
while some at least of the connections made by Goshen Gottstein are
undoubtedly valid in the context of the Tosefta, it is probable to the
point of certainty that those connections should be attributed to one or
more redactors of the mystical collection, and that the units themselves
were derived from independent sources.

As we have seen, Goshen Gottstein believes that the key to the
meaning of the mystical collection in tHag 2:1–7—and to that of ‘Four

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41 Alternatively, if the whole passage were a single composition, we might reason-
ably expect the sequence of discourses in C to be: Yohanan—Elazar—Akiva. Consider
also the way in which the Bavli’s redactor attempts to explain this puzzling
unit: ‘But what of R. Elazar b. Arakh? He is not counted. One who discoursed and
[others] discoursed before him is counted; one who discoursed but none discoursed
before him is not counted. But Hanania b. Hakhinai, before whom no one discoursed,
is counted! Not at all: someone [before whom no one discoursed, and who therefore
is not counted, must have] discoursed before him!’ (bHag 14b; my translation; words
in brackets added).
Entered Paradise’, which he thinks originated in this context—is the distinction that he finds in mHag 2:1 between exegetical and visionary activity (דרש and הָתָּנִכָּל). In his opinion, units B, C and D (Akiva) all refer to the legitimate enterprise of דְּרֶשׁ, while units D (ben Azzai, ben Zoma, Aher) and G concern the forbidden activity of הָתָּנִכָּל. However, Goshen Gottstein’s analysis is contradicted by the structure of tHag 2:1–7 itself. As we have seen, the verb הָתָּנִכָּל does not occur in units B–G. This is hardly surprising when we consider that these units are appended to the first part of mHag 2:1 only (see unit A = mHag 2:1a).

As we noted above, Goshen Gottsein fails to include this unit in his presentation. The effect of this omission is extremely misleading, since it distorts the structure of the passage as a whole by concealing the facts that (i) unit A (= mHag 2:1a), the lemma on which units B–G depend, is concerned solely with the three restricted subjects of דְּרֶשׁ; whereas (ii) the second part of the mishna (2:1b), which concerns the four forbidden objects of הָתָּנִכָּל, is not introduced until unit H. In the following unit, J, it is quite clear that the redactor understood the prohibition in H to refer to the four forbidden areas of maase bereshit.

Since the purpose of the midrash in unit J is to define the four forbidden objects of הָתָּנִכָּל, it was obviously composed on the basis of mHag 2:1b. However, there is no indication that the author was concerned with the distinction between דְּרֶשׁ and הָתָּנִכָּל, since he uses the latter verb but not the former. In short, there is no evidence anywhere in the text of tHag 2:1–7 which would support Goshen Gottstein’s contention that the distinction between דְּרֶשׁ and הָתָּנִכָּל is the central point at issue. Even if we allow that the distinction may possess some significance, it can hardly be the key to units B–G in the context of the Tosefta, since those units occur before the prohibition against הָתָּנִכָּל (mHag 2:1b) has been introduced into the discussion.

Goshen Gottstein appears to be somewhat aware of these difficulties, but his efforts to resolve them are extremely convoluted and involve much special pleading. Having observed in a footnote that the redactor of the Tosefta evidently regarded mHag 2:1b as a comment on maase bereshit, not maase merkava, he further rightly remarks that the early units of tHag 2:1–7 are concerned with maase merkava, and the later units with maase bereshit, so that the division between these two sub-

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42 See p. 427 n. 21 above.
43 Ibid., 78 n. 23.
methods and assumptions

jects governs the structure of the passage as a whole. Nonetheless, he maintains that this ‘thematic’ analysis—which clearly does not support the case that he is trying to establish—is secondary to a ‘qualitative’ analysis of ‘praise’ and ‘blame’, reflecting the distinction between the two types of activity, דרש והסתכל. The plain fact is, however, that the units are quite straightforwardly organized according to subject: first, maase merkava (units A–F), then maase bereshit (units G–J), and Goshen Gottstein cannot be allowed to have things both ways.

With regard to unit J, Goshen Gottstein concedes that the verb דרש appears to contradict his theory, but rather weakly suggests that the writer intended to ‘close the circle’ by returning to the language of the first part of the mishna. His assertion that ‘the forbidden activity is indeed of a visionary nature as the opening statement in the seventh unit indicates’ cannot be allowed to pass, since by ‘the opening statement in the seventh unit’ Goshen Gottstein means the direct quotation of mHag 2:1b in unit H—this being the only occurrence of the verb התייבב in the entire passage! As we have seen, there is no indication that the redactor attached particular significance to this term, and it is quite clear that unit J refers to forbidden subjects of exegetical inquiry into maase bereshit, as is indicated by the word דרש.

Thus far, then, Goshen Gottstein’s theory that the mystical collection is a unitary composition which was created in the context of the Tosefta has been found not to be credible, while his assertion that the defining issue of the passage is the distinction between דרש והסתכל is completely unsupported by the text. Goshen Gottstein’s observation that Aqiva, alone of the four who entered פרדס, is not said to have ‘looked’ (הציץ) is obviously correct but we are not obliged to accept his inference that the story embodies an anti-visionary polemic. The motif of the seer who reverently and fearfully avoids looking at the enthroned divine kavod before being assured of his worthiness to do so is found in accounts of visions as early as 1 En 14:24–15:1 and, indeed, Ezek. 1:28–2:1 itself. If the pardes story is interpreted in the light of this tradition, we may reasonably take this to mean simply that Aqiva was appropriately reticent in the matter of ‘looking’, but that the other

44 Ibid., 79.
45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 81.
47 Ibid.
three were not. The attached parable (unit E) is quite clearly consistent with this interpretation.

Goshen Gottstein’s observation that several units are concerned with the issue of legitimate authority is evidently valid. It is also true that such authority is established or negated in the context of the relationship between master and disciple. Goshen Gottstein’s insistence that this is a central issue of the ‘mystical collection’ as a whole—and to the pardes story in this context—is consistent with my own understanding of the talmudic sources, namely, that the crucial issue is the difference between the status of a formally ordained hakham, and that of a talmid, based on the merkava restriction in mHag 2:1a.

In light of the importance attributed to the master-disciple relationship in the mystical collection, it would perhaps be unwise to dismiss Goshen Gottstein’s interpretation of Cant 1:4 in the context of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ out of hand. It has to be said, however, that this understanding of the verse is not at all typical of rabbinic exegesis of the Song of Songs. As is well known, the dialogue between the lover and his beloved is usually interpreted as an allegory of the love between God and Israel, especially in the context of the Sinai revelation.48 Nowhere else (to my knowledge) is it applied to the relationship between a teacher and his pupil. It should further be noted that the biblical word נָרוּצָה (Cant 1:4a) in unit D (= A50–52) is quite different from the rabbinic Hebrew term הרצה in units B–C, the former being the qal plural cohortative form of the verb רוץ,49 and the latter the hif‘il third person singular form of רצת/רצת.50 These considerations do not altogether rule out the possibility that an association or word-play between the two words was intended by the redactor of the mystical collection, but the connection is too tenuous and uncertain to bear the considerable weight that Goshen Gottstein places on it. Certainly, he overreaches when he states:

This contextual understanding of the proof text regarding R. Akiba makes sense only within the context of the Tosefta. It therefore seems to me conclusive support of the formation of the pardes unit within the context of the Tosefta.51

48 See pp. 527–534 and 539–542 below.
49 See BDB, 930a.
50 See Jastrow, Dictionary, 1493b.
In the first place, even if the verbal association suggested by Goshen Gottstein is accepted, it is quite possible that the term הרצה in units B and C is derivative of נרקזה in unit D, rather than the other way around. It is noteworthy that the verb הרצה is not found in any of the parallel versions of unit B, in the Yerushalmi, the Bavli, and the Mekhiltat de-R. Yishmael, all of which which use the relatively straightforward expressions: אמר, דבר, and נמר/פתח. It seems more likely that the editor of the Tosefta has adapted his source in order to create a connection with the proof text in 'Four Entered Paradise' than that the term הרצה has been replaced in all the other versions. In unit C, admittedly, the word הרצתי is found in other sources, but the original context and meaning of this terse and enigmatic unit is unknown. As observed above, it appears to have been taken over from an earlier source by a redactor who used it as a link between units B and D, and it is perhaps possible that he did so partly because the word הרצה, which he associated with נרקזה in unit D, appeared to suit his purpose. It is, however, most unlikely that the proof text in unit D was chosen simply on the basis of the verb הרצה in units B and/or C.

Even were we to waive the above objections and accept, for the sake of the argument, that the proof text applied to Akiva in the Tosefta’s version of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ may (i) contain an intentional allusion to the preceding units; and (ii) have been chosen for that purpose, this would still not justify Goshen Gottstein’s claim that the (alleged) word-play furnishes ‘conclusive support of the formation of the pardes unit within the context of the Tosefta’. The version of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ that I hold to be the earliest—i.e., that preserved in the hekhalot recension, sections A and C—does not include the four biblical proof texts, which are secondary to the names of the three talmidei hakhamim. Thus, the word נרקזה came to be applied to Akiva in this context only when, or after, the story was taken over and adapted by the redactor(s) of the mystical collection. As we have seen, the earlier version of the story did not cite Cant 1:4 but referred instead to mEd 5:7, thereby explaining that Akiva succeeded where the others failed through the merit of his deeds.

The same explanation is found in the recension preserved in CantR 1:28 (A43–49), which also includes the citation of Cant 1:4 (A50–52) and
is therefore a hybrid of the two versions. Goshen Gottstein, who wrongly believes that the explanation based on mEd 5.7 was introduced into this source only after it had been removed from the context provided by the Tosefta, makes the following rather extraordinary assertion:

It should be noted that [CantR 1:28] is the only existing version of the *pardes* story that is located outside the Tosefta and the direct commentaries upon Hagiga found in the two Talmuds... *Canticles Rabbah* is therefore the only place in which the *pardes* story is completely detached from its original context in the Tosefta.54

This self-evidently erroneous statement seems to indicate that when Goshen Gottstein first composed his argument (prior to the publication of my article), he was unaware of the existence of the hekhalot recensions of the *pardes* story. His failure—and subsequent refusal—to take account of those sources has deprived him of the crucial evidence and so caused him to base his case on several false assumptions.

'Typologies' in Rabbinic Literature

Having stated his reasons for believing that tHag 2:1–7 is the original context of the *pardes* story, Goshen Gottstein considers the question of the story's literary genre. He observes that, whereas units B and G are both introduced by the expression *maase be-* ('there is a story about'), signifying that what follows is an allegedly historical narrative concerning one or more rabbinic personalities,55 and whereas the two parables, E and F, are introduced as such by the term *mashal*, 'Four Entered Paradise' is not prefaced by any such formula. This, he maintains, indicates that the unit is neither an historical story (*contra* Scholem56 and myself, as misunderstood by Goshen Gottstein)57 nor a

54 Goshen Gottstein, 'Four Entered', 85.
55 The term *maase* is also used to refer to stories of the bible (e.g., *maase bereshit* and *maase merkava*). Stories introduced by the formula *maase be-* in rabbinic literature usually involve one or more rabbinic personalities (as opposed to the purely fictional stories introduced by the term *mashal*) and very commonly contain dialogue.
56 In fact, Scholem did not state explicitly that he believed the *pardes* story to be the account of an historical event, or a vision experienced by a specific individual. His assertion that 'the mystical experience of the dangers of the ascent is really the subject of the anecdote' (*Major Trends*, 53) is certainly open to that interpretation. However, Scholem may have meant only that the story refers to an experience of danger that was familiar to those who engaged in the practice of ascents.
57 See pp. 422–423 above.
parable (*contra* Urbach\(^{58}\) and Halperin),\(^{59}\) but ‘a kind of typology.’\(^{60}\) To support this point, Goshen Gottstein presents three somewhat similar typological comparisons found in rabbinic sources. The first passage is taken from MekRY pisha 1.\(^{61}\)

You will find yourself saying (דַּעְתִּים אומרים) that there were three prophets: one sought the honour of the father and the honour of the son; one sought the honour of the father but did not seek the honour of the son; and one sought the honour of the son but did not seek the honour of the father.

Jeremiah sought the honour of the father and the honour of the son, as it is said: ‘We have sinned and rebelled; you have not forgiven’ (Lam 3:42). Therefore his prophecy was doubled, as it is said: ‘Moreover, many similar words were added to them’ (Jer 36:32).

Elijah sought the honour of the father but did not seek the honour of the son, as it is said: ‘I have been very jealous for the Lord, the God of Hosts . . .’, etc. (1 Kgs 19:14). And what is said there? ‘And the Lord said to him, “Go back the way you have come . . .”,’ etc., ‘. . . and anoint Jehu ben Nimshi to be king over Israel, and anoint Elisha ben Shaphat of Abel-mehola to be prophet in your place’ (1 Kgs 19:15–16). ‘In your place’ can mean nothing other than: ‘I am not pleased with your prophecy.’

Jonah sought the honour of the son but did not seek the honour of the father, as it is said: ‘And Jonah arose to flee . . .’, etc. (Jonah 1:3). What is written? ‘And the word of the Lord came to Jonah a second time, saying . . .’ (Jonah 3:1)—he spoke with him a second time, but he did not speak with him a third time.

The second passage is from the same collection, MekRY pisha 18.\(^{62}\)

You will find yourself saying that there are four sons: one is wise; one is simple; one is wicked; and one does not yet know enough to ask.

What does the wise one say? ‘What are the testimonies and the statutes and the ordinances which the Lord our God has commanded you?’ (Deut 6:20). You should explain to him the laws of the Passover, and tell him that the company is not to disband, that after the paschal meal should come *epikomon*.

\(^{60}\) Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 90.
\(^{61}\) Ed. Lauterbach, 1:8–10; also found in ARN(b) 47; translation my own; cf. Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 89.
What does the simple one say? ‘What’s this?’ And you should say to him, ‘By strength of hand the Lord brought us out of Egypt, from the house of servitude.’

What does the wicked one say? ‘What do you mean by this service?’ (Exod 12:26). Because he excludes himself from the assembly, so should you exclude him from the assembly, and say to him: ‘Because of what the Lord did for me when I came forth from Egypt (Exod 13:8b)—for me, but not for you. If you had been there, you would not have been redeemed.’

As for the one who does not yet know enough to ask, you should begin to explain to him, as it is said: ‘And you shall tell your son on that day’ (Exod 13:8a).

Goshen Gottstein’s third parallel is mAvot 5:10–15:63

(10.) Four types of men: he who says, ‘Mine is mine and yours is yours’—this is the average type, and some say this is the type of Sodom; ‘Mine is yours and yours is mine’—an ignorant man; ‘Mine is yours and yours is yours’—a saintly man; ‘Mine is mine and yours is mine’—a wicked man.

(11.) Four types of disposition: easy to provoke and easy to pacify—his gain is negated by his loss; hard to provoke and hard to pacify—his loss is negated by his gain; hard to provoke and easy to pacify—a saintly man; easy to provoke and hard to pacify—a wicked man.

(12.) Four types of students: quick to understand and quick to forget—his gain is negated by his loss; slow to understand and slow to forget—his loss is negated by his gain; quick to understand and slow to forget—a wise man; slow to understand and quick to forget—this is an evil portion.

(13.) Four types of almsgivers: he who wants that he should give, but that others should not give—he begrudges that which belongs to others; that others should give but that he should not give—he begrudges that which belongs to himself; both that he should give and that others should give—a saintly man; neither that he should give nor that others should give—a wicked man.

(14.) Four types who attend the study house: he who goes but does not practice—he gets the reward for going; he who practices but does not go—he gets the reward for practicing; he who both goes and practices—a saintly man; he who neither goes nor practices—a wicked man.

(15.) Four types who sit before the sages—the sponge, the funnel, the filter, and the sieve: the sponge, who absorbs everything; the funnel, who...
takes in at one end and lets out at the other; the filter, who lets out the wine and collects the dregs; and the sieve, who lets out the coarse flour and collects the fine meal.

On examination, these three proposed parallels turn out to be neither useful nor informative. We shall find that any supposed resemblance to the pardes story is either misleading or, at most, superficial. First, in all three cases, but in marked contrast to the pardes story, the meanings of the comparisons are explicitly explained. Secondly, whereas Goshen Gottstein sees a strong parallel between the scriptural citations in MekRY pisha 1 and those in the talmudic versions of the pardes story, my analysis indicates that scriptural citations were not included in the earliest recension of the pardes story. Goshen Gottstein observes that MekRY pisha 1 begins by enumerating the three prophets according to type only, without naming them: ‘One…one…and one…’, after which their names are introduced in connection with scriptural proof texts and explanatory comments. This formal structure is, he suggests, parallel to that of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ according to the London manuscript of the Tosefta and the Yerushalmi, where the names of the four are likewise omitted from the beginning of the story—64—which version, following Urbach, he prefers.65 However, the omission of the names is more straightforwardly explained by my analysis, according to which the earliest version was a first-person statement attributed to Akiva and began simply: ‘One…one…one…and I...’ (as preserved in HekhZ/MerkR, A1b).66

It is perhaps possible that the developed form of the pardes story in the mystical collection, including the addition of the names and the scriptural verses, may owe something to the influence of passages such as MekRY pisha 1. However, the original pardes story will have been closer—at least, in this respect—to Goshen Gottstein’s second and third suggested parallels, which mention no names at all. Of these, the second, MekRY pisha 18, is formally speaking much more complex than the pardes story. On the other hand, the expression of meaning in this passage is quite straightforward. Following the enumeration of the four types of son, we are told the different questions that each one asks about the laws and customs of the Passover meal. An appropriate

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64 See lines A2–5 on p. 344 above.
65 Urbach, ‘Ha-Masorot’, 12; see Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 90 n. 53.
66 See pp. 365–372 above.
response is indicated in each case. Verses of scripture are cited in some (though not all) cases, but—unlike the verses added to the *pardes* story in the mystical collection—their relevance to the subject under discussion is self-evident, explicit, and direct.  

The fourfold typologies of mAvot 5:10–15 are much shorter and simpler than the passages from the Mekhilta, and may seem at first sight to provide a more convincing parallel to the earliest form of the *pardes* story, but here too, any resemblance is superficial. In the first place, the typological lists of mAvot 5:10–15 are all explicitly introduced as such by the formula: ‘Four types of...’ (*רמשנ מָדוֹת ב*); and secondly, they are all based on a more or less uniform pattern of logic which involves four possible combinations of two factors, one of which is considered good and the other bad (the last mishna of the sequence is slightly more picturesque than the others, but the underlying logic is the same). Thus, these mishnayot may all be expressed as variations of the algebraic formula: $xy, yx, xx, yy$, where $x$ is positive and $y$ is negative, as follows:

In 5:10, the first position in each pair signifies the subject ‘mine’ and the second position signifies the subject ‘yours’. The predicate ‘is mine’ is indicated by $x$ and the predicate ‘is yours’ by $y$. The pattern is thus: $xy, yx, yy, xx$.

In 5:11, the first position signifies ‘to provoke’ and the second, ‘to pacify’. ‘Easy’ is indicated by $x$ and ‘hard’ by $y$. Thus: $xx, yy, yx, xy$.

In 5:12, the first position signifies ‘to understand’ and the second, ‘to forget’. ‘Quick’ is indicated by $x$ and ‘slow’ by $y$. Thus: $xx, yy, xy, yx$.

In 5:13, the first position signifies ‘himself’ and the second, ‘others’. ‘Should give’ is indicated by $x$ and ‘should not give’ by $y$. Thus: $xy, yx, xx, yy$.

In 5:14, the first position signifies ‘go’, and the second ‘practise’. ‘Does’ is indicated by $x$ and ‘does not’ by $y$. Thus: $xy, yx, xx, yy$.

In 5:15, the first position signifies ‘the essence’ and the second, ‘the dross’. ‘Takes in’ is indicated by $x$ and ‘lets go’ by $y$. Thus: $xx, yy, yx, xy$.

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67 Note that in the wicked son’s citation of Exod 12:26, the emphasis is on the second person: ‘you’—hence, of course, the stress on ‘me’ and ‘I’ in Exod 13:8b, which is cited as a rejoinder.
However we may understand the fates of the four characters in the *pardes* story, it can by no stretch of the imagination be believed that they are based on a logical pattern of the type found in *mAvot 5:10–15*.

Regarding all three of the supposedly parallel typological lists, Goshen Gottstein asserts:

> It is possible... to recognize a consistent pattern throughout these lists. There is always the righteous, or pious, or wise; the evil; and two median positions which are often hard to define, ambiguous or even themselves the subject of controversy. These median positions are less essential than the clear definitions of the two extremes. This genre of typology thus seems to be based on clear-cut distinctions defining the basic poles; in between these lie less significant median positions.\(^{68}\)

Though superficially plausible, this observation is not supported by a close examination of these texts. In the case of *mAvot 5:10–15*, none of the occupants of the two 'intermediate' positions—corresponding to the first and second places in each list—are at all indefinite, ambiguous or controversial. On the contrary, their significance and value are in all cases quite clear. Nor can they be considered any 'less essential' than the occupants of the two 'extreme' positions. In fact, all four positions are essential to the inherent logic of the lists, which, as observed above, always produces one 'double-positive' position (*xx*), one 'double-negative' position (*yy*), and two complementary positive-negative combinations (*xy* and *yx*). *MekRY pisha 1* is evidently based on the same logic, save that this passage lacks the 'double-negative' position, for the obvious reason that the occupant of that position would not qualify as a prophet.\(^ {69}\) In this passage, therefore, the 'clear-cut' polarity alleged by Goshen Gottstein is, in fact, completely absent, since only one of the two 'basic poles' is even mentioned! In *MekRY pisha 18*, which is not based on a logical structure of the same type, Goshen Gottstein would presumably have us place the wise and wicked sons at the two extremes, and allocate the simple and young ones to the two intermediate positions. However, no element of ambiguity or controversy attaches to any of the four. In any case, the structure of this passage does not really correspond to Goshen Gottstein's 'bipolar' paradigm, since the opposition between the wise and wicked sons is...

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\(^{68}\) Goshen Gottstein, 'Four Entered', 92.

\(^{69}\) Here, the first position of each pair signifies 'the father' and the second, 'the son'. 'Sought the honour of' is indicated by *x* and 'did not seek the honour of' by *y*. Thus: *xx*, *xy*, *yx*. Obviously, there can be no *yy* position in this instance.
given no special emphasis. Rather, the sequence in which the four sons are presented seems to emphasize the importance of imparting wisdom to the son who does not yet know.

So far as I can tell, this unconvincing bipolar paradigm adds nothing of substance to Goshen Gottstein’s argument. His purpose in introducing the paradigm appears to be to support his assertion that ‘Four Entered Paradise’ is a product of the ‘mainstream’ rabbinic literary tradition on the grounds of its literary form. If so, owing to the weakness of the suggested parallels, the attempt fails. Moreover, even if the supposed paradigm were valid in itself, Goshen Gottstein’s attempt to apply it to the pardes story is unconvincing. In his opinion, the two ‘poles’ of good and evil are represented by Akiva and Elisha, while the two ‘intermediate’ positions are occupied by ben Azzai and ben Zoma. However, this creates a problem for his argument, since the worst of the four outcomes, death, is allotted not to Elisha, but—depending on which version is preferred—to ben Azzai or ben Zoma. Goshen Gottstein tries to resolve this problem by suggesting that the story embodies a curious twofold bipolar structure, as follows:

There seems to be gradation in the presentation of the sages (sic). Their fates are presented from the most extreme consequence—the death of Ben Azzai—through the insanity of Ben Zoma, the effects of Elisha b. Abuyah, who himself was not harmed, and concluding with the positive outcome of R. Akiba, who came out in peace and left his environment intact. From the perspective of their respective outcomes, Ben Azzai is the furthest removed from R. Akiba. From the perspective of the typological list, Elisha b. Abuyah is the contrary of R. Akiba, and the two are placed next to one another, as in other typological lists that juxtapose the wicked and the wise.70

This convoluted analysis is entirely unconvincing. In the first place, even if we were to accept that it accurately represents the literary structure of the pardes story, the effect would be to distance the story even further from the rabbinic typological lists that Goshen Gottstein has proposed as parallels, since no other example of such a complex, twofold structure has been found. Second, Goshen Gottstein fails to offer a reason why the worst outcome should be allotted to an ‘intermediate’ character, and not to the occupant of the wholly negative position, which is what his paradigm—in this instance, allied with common sense—

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70 Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 93. Note that from the perspective of my analysis, Goshen Gottstein’s designation of all four characters as ‘sages’ is an error.
would lead us to expect. Third, as we saw above, Goshen Gottstein has himself argued that Elisha’s traditional role as the embodiment of apostasy and evil is a product of the later tradition of interpretation of ‘Four Entered Paradise’, and that this role was therefore unknown to the author of the story in its original setting, which he believes to be the Tosefta. However, if this were the case, there would be no valid reason for assigning the wholly negative position to Elisha—rather than ben Azzai or ben Zoma—since the pardes story itself contains no clear indication of relative value, other than the four outcomes. As we have seen, Goshen Gottstein suggests that Elisha’s negative role in the pardes story is indicated by the placing of his name next to Akiva’s. This suggestion carries no weight, since the wise and wicked figures are separated from each other in MekRY pisha 18, which he himself has put forward as a parallel. In the typological lists of mAvo 5:10–15, the wholly positive and wholly negative positions are, admittedly, placed together, but in all cases except the last, the wholly positive position is placed before the wholly negative. Moreover, as indicated above, the internal order of these lists is produced by their underlying logic, which is not applicable to the pardes story.

Goshen Gottstein’s reason for introducing this complicated and unconvincing twofold structural analysis is the problem posed for his prior argument by the scriptural verse applied to ben Azzai (in the Tosefta, ms. London and the Yerushalmi: ben Zoma): ‘Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints’ (Ps 116:15). Because this verse attributes the status of sainthood to the character who dies, it is evidently inconsistent with Goshen Gottstein’s typological paradigm, which—since he insists that the scriptural verses are part of the original pardes story—must therefore be modified. The positive evaluation implied by this verse does not accord with the structure of the pardes story as a whole, since an unfavourable comparison is clearly intended between R. Akiva and all three of the lesser characters, of whom the one who dies may reasonably be assumed to be the extreme example. At the same time, however, there is nothing in the verse to justify or explain the attribution of ‘intermediate’ status to this character. Turning to the verses which are applied to the second and third of the four characters (Prov 25:16 and Eccl 5:5), it is clear that they do carry a negative value of some kind, but their precise meanings in the context of this story are obscure and enigmatic. They are thus quite unlike the scriptural verses in MekRY pisha 1 and 18, the meanings of which are quite open and self-evident, and which serve in a straightforward manner to convey
the overall meanings of the passages themselves. The discordant cita-
tion applied to the character who dies is, as Goshen Gottstein himself
observes,\(^71\) elsewhere attributed to ben Azzai:

Ben Azzai said: It is written, ‘Precious in the sight of the Lord is the
death of his saints’ (Ps 116:15). When does the Holy One, blessed be he,
show them their reward which is prepared for them? Close to their death.
This is what is meant by ‘the death of his saints’. Therefore, ‘she laughs
at the days to come’ (Prov 31:25).\(^72\)

Here—in stark contrast to the situation in the *pardes* story—the appli-
cation and interpretation of Ps 116:15 are entirely straightforward
and transparent. According to my analysis, the scriptural verses are
not part of the original *pardes* story as Goshen Gottstein erroneously
assumes. If my analysis is accepted, the problem of the discordant ele-
ment introduced by the application of this verse to the character who
died is relegated to the later redaction history of the story, where it is
quite easily explained. The redactor who was responsible for adding the
names that identified the three lesser characters as *talmidei-hakhamim*
(or his close successor) decided to support the innovation by the nor-
mal rabbinic literary practice of including scriptural citations. Casting
around for appropriate verses, he came across ben Azzai’s exposition
of Ps 116:15. Deciding that the association between ben Azzai and
death was so eminently suitable for his purpose as to be irresistible, he
chose to overlook the discordant note introduced by the reference to
sainthood. It is probable that the discordant element did not trouble
him very much and even possible that he regarded it as mildly advan-
tageous, since his purpose was to turn the story into an illustration of
mHag 2:1 by indicating that anyone less than a full *hakham*—no matter
how saintly—who involved himself in *maase merkava* would incur a
disastrous outcome. I submit that this resolution of the problem is so
much more economical and satisfying than Goshen Gottstein’s convo-
luted, self-contradictory exposition that it tends strongly to support my
theory of the origin and redaction history of ‘Four Entered Paradise’,
and to further discredit his view that tHag 2:1–7 is the original context
of the story.

\(^{71}\) Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 110.

\(^{72}\) GenR 62,2, ed. Theodor-Albeck, 672–673; cf. ExodR 50,3. See further pp. 488–490
below.
A characteristic of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ which sets it quite apart from all of the supposedly parallel typological passages introduced by Goshen Gottstein is its narrative form. Goshen Gottstein concedes that for this reason,

we cannot unequivocally define the pardes incident as a typological list. Unlike all the other cases we have examined, the opening statement is not an abstract typology, but a concrete narration of an event that serves such a typology. What we have before us is therefore not a pure literary type, but a composite one which has elements of the typological list and other elements as well.73

In a footnote attached to the above remark, he observes:

I know of no other such combination of genres in one rabbinic text. This combination may be an ad hoc creation of the editor in the service of the message of the collection as a whole.74

I submit that the unique combination of genres in this story is much better explained by my analysis of the relationships between the sources, according to which the pardes story in the mystical collection is, in fact, a composite creation.

Finally, none of the parallels proposed by Goshen Gottstein provides an example of a typological comparison between personalities of the rabbinic era. The only example of a comparison between named individuals is MekRY pisha 1, where three biblical figures are compared. In this respect too, the pardes story of the mystical collection appears to be unique. In short, while it is possible that these literary forms may have exerted a slight influence on the development of the pardes story in its talmudic context, they shed no light whatsoever on its origin or meaning.

Rabbinic Pardes Parables

Having acknowledged that the pardes story in the Tosefta is a ‘composite’ literary form, and that it is therefore not possible to provide an adequate account of the structure and meaning of the story solely by reference to the typological lists, Goshen Gottstein turns his attention to the rabbinic genre of parables about a king’s pardes. He suggests

74 Ibid., n. 60.
that, since the term *pardes* also occurs in the Tosefta, unit E, which is self-evidently a parable (*mashal*), `we must allow for a certain parabolic element to account for the particular formation of the passage under discussion, as Urbach has suggested’.\(^{75}\) The basis for this suggestion seems very doubtful. In the first place, whereas unit E explicitly declares itself to be a parable (משלי, unit D (the *pardes* story) makes no such statement, as Goshen Gottstein himself already as observed.\(^{76}\) Second, it is quite clear that unit E, whatever may be believed about its origin and meaning, is a parable of which unit D is the reference or application. In other words, ‘Four Entered Paradise’ (i.e., the whole of unit D) is really the nimshal to which the mashal of a king’s *pardes* (unit E) refers. The suggestion that unit D is a *mashal* would, if accepted, leave us with two parables, each of which is about the other, but with no explanation of what either one might mean.

These considerations tend to cast doubt on the relevance of the rabbinic *pardes* parables to which Goshen Gottstein now turns. They do not, however, completely invalidate his suggestion that the meaning of the symbolic expression: *pardes* may be illuminated by certain ‘thematic characteristics’, which he believes that those parables share in common.\(^{77}\) In order to evaluate this suggestion, it is necessary to look carefully at the texts on which Goshen Gottstein bases his argument, and to examine critically his thematic analysis of this material.

Goshen Gottstein concedes that the sources in which these parables occur are, for the most part, relatively late when compared with the mystical collection, which he regards as ‘a tannaitic work’.\(^{78}\) He maintains, however, that the few Tannaitic parables which survive do not differ significantly from the later amoraic forms and, moreover, that

in reading these parables, it is important to remember that they are formations of oral literature, a literature that tends to fall easily into set patterns that survive for generations.\(^{79}\)

With this point, I am in full agreement. The issue of the relative dates of the written sources, while it must always be considered, is not of crucial

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\(^{75}\) Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 93. Goshen Gottstein is here referring to Urbach’s interpretation of the *pardes* story as a *mashal* and its *nimshal*, which we examined and rejected on pp. 353–354 above.

\(^{76}\) See pp. 438–439 above.

\(^{77}\) Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 94.

\(^{78}\) Ibid.

\(^{79}\) Ibid.
importance with regard to this material. These texts are derived from a very fluid literary tradition and, for that reason, inherently composite in nature. Thus, the date of compilation of a given source, where known, provides only a *terminus ad quem* for each of its components. Likewise, attributions to named authorities may, even if accurate, indicate the channels whereby traditions were transmitted, rather than their point of origin (early attributions, on the other hand, are sometimes rather suspect). These considerations apply also to the mystical collection, which, unlike Goshen Gottstein, I believe to have been compiled during the post-Tannaitic period, but which evidently contains some very ancient material—including, not least, ‘Four Entered Paradise’ itself. As we have seen, these considerations apply in at least equal measure to the hekhalot ‘macroforms’, which contain literary units that predate the mystical collection—indeed, the vast majority of rabbinic sources—and incorporate still more ancient exegetical traditions. For these reasons, Goshen Gottstein’s refusal to take account of the hekhalot sources is unduly prejudiced, but there can be no objection—on this score, at least—to his use of the midrashic collections.

The first parable to be considered by Goshen Gottstein is evidently quite early, since versions of it occur in Tannaitic sources. Goshen Gottstein cites the recension preserved at LevR 4.5:

R. Yishmael taught a parable about a king who had an orchard (*pardes*) in which there were fine new fruit. In it, he placed two watchmen, one of whom was lame, and the other blind. He said to them: ‘Keep away from the new fruit!’ Then he went away.

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80 See pp. 423–424 above.
81 Goshen Gottstein cites MekRY shirat 2, where a partial allusion to the parable occurs. Consider also MekRSbY 15:2 (Epstein-Melamed 76f.), where it is given in full (and see the following translation).
82 Ed. Margulies 1:87–91. The following translation (mine) takes account of variant readings given in Margulies’ apparatus (some very minor variations are ignored) and also of MekRSbY 15:2 (see previous note). Goshen Gottstein (‘Four Entered’, 94–95) follows the Freedman-Simon translation of Midrash Rabba and gives only the mashal itself, not the following nimshal.
83 MekRSbY: ‘They employed a parable: What is this matter like? Like a king of flesh and blood who had a *pardes*…’
84 ביכורות נאות ‘Figs’ (thus Freedman-Simon) are not mentioned in any of the mss. or editions in Margulies’ apparatus, or in MekRSbY.
85 MekRSbY omits: ‘He said to them… he went away.’
86 The early editions and MekRSbY add: ‘in the *pardes*.’
87 MekRSbY omits this sentence.
He said to him: ‘Am I able to walk?’ The blind man said to him: ‘And am I able to see?’ What did they do? The lame man rode on the blind man’s shoulders, and so they picked the new fruit and ate it, then went back and sat down, each in his own place. After some time, the king came along. He said to them: ‘Where is the new fruit?’ The blind man said to him: ‘Am I able to see?’ The lame man said to him: ‘Am I able to walk?’ What did the king, who was a clear-sighted man, do? He made the lame man ride on the shoulders of the blind man and judged them as one. He said to them: ‘Thus have you done, and eaten the new fruit!’

Thus in the time to come, the Holy One will say to the soul: ‘Why have you sinned before me?’ She will answer him: ‘Master of the world, is it I who have sinned before you? It is the body that has sinned! Since the day that I departed from it, how can I have sinned?’ He will say to the body: ‘Why have you sinned?’ It will answer him: ‘Master of the world, it is the soul that has sinned. Since the day that it departed from me, I have been cast down before you like a potsherd on the midden heap!’ What will the Holy One, blessed be he, do? He will return the
soul to the body and judge them as one, as it is written: ‘He will call to the heavens’—to summon the soul—and to the earth—to summon the body, and then—‘to judge his people’ (Ps 50:4).

Goshen Gottstein believes that this parable revolves around a theme of ‘testing’, which, in his opinion, provides the key to its meaning:

The orchard serves as a testing ground for suitable and unsuitable behavior. The king’s appointing a lame and blind person to the unlikely posts of guards may be an indication of the king’s high degree of suspicion and his knowledge of the nature of these guards. If so, the very act of placing them as guards may constitute a type of test whereby their behavior is observed. This must be the parable’s moral. The orchard is the world, an arena where various human behaviors are tested and then judged.

Goshen Gottstein also identifies a second theme of the king’s presence and absence in the pardes:

The parable begins with the king’s presence in the orchard at the moment of appointment and warning. What follows is predicated on the king’s absence, for it is clear that only in his absence will the two watchmen attempt to eat the figs. The parable also tells us of the king’s return to the orchard, a return that insinuates that the absence was not real. The king is able to reconstruct what transpired in his absence; thus, although absent, the king was ultimately present.

It is obviously true that—as explained in the nimshal—the pardes of the parable is the world inhabited by human beings, who are composed of soul and body, and that the message of the parable concerns the post mortem judgment of the human personality for its deeds committed in this life. Beyond this, Goshen Gottstein has grossly over-interpreted the parable, which is essentially quite simple and straightforward. Even if it is true that the issue of God’s absence and presence in the world is encountered in other pardes parables, the text under consideration contains no indication of any interest in this matter. The narrative function of the king’s departure from the pardes is simply to leave the two characters (soul and body) to their own devices. The suggestion that he is not really absent introduces a layer of meaning which—

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101 MekRSbY: ‘The Holy One, Blessed be He, will bring the soul and put it in the body.’
103 Ibid.
even if it is considered theologically correct—is extraneous to the text. The fact that one watchman is lame and the other blind requires no explanation beyond their symbolic significance in the narrative, which is perfectly straightforward and explicitly explained. To enquire into the king’s reasons for appointing them in the first place is to take us beyond the parable’s literary parameters and sphere of concern. In neither the mashal nor the nimshal is this question asked or answered. Goshen Gottstein’s inference that the king has placed the watchmen in the pardes because he is a priori suspicious of is therefore entirely unnecessary and has no basis whatsoever in the text.

In short, the straightforward meaning of the parable, as explained in the nimshal, is that the two aspects of human personality, soul and body, will at the resurrection be judged as one unit for acts of disobedience committed during life in the present world, which is represented by the pardes. Its central focus is thus the doctrine of the bodily resurrection and the judgment of the dead. The motif of stealing fruit, symbolic of disobedience of a divine commandment, is a rather obvious reference to the Eden story, although Goshen Gottstein overlooks this point. As we have seen, he interprets the drama of commandment, disobedience and judgment as a deliberate ‘test’ of the two watchmen by the king, who he thinks must have placed them in the pardes for that specific purpose. Here again, he introduces a layer of interpretation which—whatever its merits on the plane of theology—is external to the text.

The relationship between the body and the soul is the subject of a somewhat similar parable, preserved in KohR 5,10:104

R. Yehuda the Prince used to tell a parable:

What is the matter like? Like a king who had a vineyard (כרם) which he handed over to a tenant. The king said to his servants: ‘Go and gather my grapes. Take my portion and leave the tenant’s portion in its place.’ At once, they went and did as the king commanded. That tenant began wailing and weeping. The king said to him: ‘Have I taken anything of yours? Have I not taken that which is my own?’ He said to him: ‘My lord the king, all the time that your portion was together with my portion, my portion was kept safe from robbery and theft, and now that you have taken your portion away—behold, my portion is thrown open to robbery and theft.’

104 In Midrash Rabba ha-mevoar 11:303–304.
Who is this king? This is the king of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he. As for the tenant: this is the father and mother of a human being. All the time that the soul (נשמה) is within a human being, he is kept safe, but when he dies—behold, he is for the maggot and the worm, as it is said: ‘How much less is man, a maggot’ (Job 25:6)—these are the vermin which are upon him during his lifetime—’and the son of man, a worm’ (ibid.)—these are the worms that swarm beneath him when he dies.

In this parable, unlike that of the two watchmen, the theme of judgment is entirely lacking. Moreover, the soul-body combination of the human personality is represented primarily by the plant that grows in the vineyard (and secondarily by the tenant).\(^{105}\) Despite these differences, it is worth observing that the vineyard of this parable, like the pardes of the previous one, represents the world. The king’s ownership of the orchard or vineyard is a centrally important element of both parables.

Goshen Gottstein next turns his attention to a parable that is preserved in several recensions, one of which occurs at GenR 9,9:\(^ {106}\)

R. Zeira says: ‘Behold, it was very good’ (Gen 1:31)—this is the Garden of Eden—’and behold, it was very good’ (ibid.)—this is Gehenna

Gehenna is very good? How strange! But it is like a king who had an orchard (pardes) in which he put workers, and at its gate, he built a treasury. He said: ‘Everyone who is zealous in the labour of the orchard may enter the treasury, but everyone who is not zealous in the labour of the orchard may not enter the treasury.’

Thus for everyone who stores up commandments and good deed—behold, the Garden of Eden! And for everyone who fails to store up commandments and good deeds—behold, Gehenna!

Once again, this parable is evidently concerned with post mortem judgment and reward. Goshen Gottstein, once again, asserts that ‘the king must be present to judge whoever shows himself worthy in his work’.\(^ {107}\) Once again, this assertion is extremely forced since there is

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105 This use of the symbol: vine to represent a human child may provide a background for stories about Elisha b. Abuya in which he is said to have murdered children, this being one explanation of his sin of cutting the shoots in ‘Four Entered Paradise’ (bHag 15a–15b; cf. yHag 77b).

106 Ed. Theodor-Albeck, 72 (translation mine). Goshen Gottstein (‘Four Entered’, 96) cites the parable only, omitting both the lemma which precedes it and the explanation which follows.

no mention of the issue of the king’s presence in, or absence from, the *pardes*. Whereas the parable of the two watchmen involves active disobedience to a specific commandment, here the judgment depends on each individual’s store of ‘commandments and good deeds’. This is expressed in terms of labour and reward, the latter being either given or withheld. The *pardes* again represents the world, while ‘the labour of the *pardes*’ is the performance of commandments. The treasure house, which the good labourers are permitted to enter, stands for the future Garden of Eden. Gehenna, according to this parable, is the state of exclusion from this reward. Goshen Gottstein apparently conflates this theme of labour and reward with a theme of ‘testing’, but these two images of judgment are by no means necessarily identical. In this case, although the labourers’ reward is certainly contingent on their labour, the ‘labour of the orchard’ (observance of commandments) appears to have its own inherent value and there is no indication that it is primarily a ‘test’. Thus, neither of the two elements which Goshen Gottstein has identified as being of central significance in the parables considered thus far—the theme of divine absence/presence; and the function of the *pardes* as a ‘testing ground’—are really present in these texts. These two elements are, in fact, imported into this setting from Goshen Gottstein’s readings of other versions of the parable of the labourers in the *pardes*, found in other contexts, and to these we now must turn.

Two recensions of a longer version of the parable of the labourers are found in TanhB shemot 10\textsuperscript{108} and ExodR 2.2.\textsuperscript{109} In order to assess the conclusions that Goshen Gottstein draws from the parable, it is necessary for us to conduct a detailed analysis of these two recensions and their contents. In both cases, Goshen Gottstein considers the text of the parable in isolation and ignores the context in which the parable is set.\textsuperscript{110} As we shall see, this causes him (i) to fail to distinguish between the contents of the parable and materials derived from the encapsulating text; and (ii) to make certain inferences that he believes are applicable to *pardes* parables in general, but which on closer examination are found to be wholly specific to this particular context.

\textsuperscript{108} TanhB 2:3a–b.
\textsuperscript{110} See Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 97.
A. ‘And Moses was shepherding...’
(Exod 3:1). This is as scripture says, ‘The Lord is in his holy sanctuary,’ etc. (Ps 11:4a). R. Shimuel bar Nahman said:
While the temple was not desolated, the Shekhina was placed in the sanctuary, as it is said: ‘The Lord is in his holy sanctuary,’ but from the desolation of the temple, ‘the Lord, in the heavens is his throne’ (Ps 11:4b)—he removed his Shekhina to heaven. R. Elazar ben Pedat said: Whether it was desolate or not desolate, the Shekhina did not move from its place, as it is said, ‘The Lord is in his holy sanctuary,’ whence it is also said, ‘My eyes and my heart will be there always’ (1 Kgs 9:3), and thus it says: ‘I cry aloud to the Lord and he answers me from his holy mountain’ (Ps 3:5)—although it is desolate, behold, it is still in a state of holiness.111
R. Elazar b. Pedat said: Consider what is written, ‘...and let him build the house of the Lord God of Israel. He is the God who is in Jerusalem’ (Ezra 1:3)—he is not absent from there! R. Aha said: The Shekhina has never moved from the western wall of the temple, as it is said, ‘Look, there he stands behind our wall!’ (Cant 2:9)—‘the Lord is in his holy sanctuary.’ in the present time R. Yannai said: Even though they have said: ‘The Lord is in his holy sanctuary; the Lord, in the heavens is his throne...’ yet ‘...his sight perceives the sons of men and his eyes examine them (Ps 11:4a–c).

111 Following ms. Rome (see Buber n. 48 ad loc.; and cf. ExodR 2:2).
B. What is this matter like (למה דומה)? Like a king who had an orchard (pardes) and put workers in it, and at the gate of the orchard there was a treasure house full of every good thing. The king said: ‘Everyone who performs his labour with all his soul (נפשו בכל, cf. Deut. 6:5) may take his wages from there, but whoever does not perform his labour with all his soul—I shall sit in my palace (פלטין) and judge him!’ Who is this king? This is the king of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he. And what is this orchard? This is the present world. The Holy One, blessed be he, has put mankind into it so that they might keep the Tora. And he has made a contract with them and said to them, ‘Everyone who keeps the Tora faithfully, lo, the Garden of Eden is ahead of him; and everyone who does not keep the Tora faithfully, lo, Gehenna is ahead of him!’

C. The Holy One, blessed be he, has said: Even though I have seemed to remove my Shekhina from the temple, yet my eyes perceive him whom the Lord examines—’[The Lord] shall examine the righteous’ (Ps 11:5).

D. And why does he not examine the wicked? R. Yannai said: This is like a flax-worker pounding flax: when he sees that the flax is fine, he pounds it mightily; but when he sees that is not fine, he stops pounding it so that it does not become stiff. Thus, ‘his sight perceives the sons of men and his eyes examine them.’

**Notes:**

112 Reading בדemosינת instead of בדemosינת (‘let him be pardoned’). See Halevi’s and Shinan’s notes ad loc., and further, Jastrow, Dictionary, 300b.
E. And as for him whom he examines, the righteous, as it is said, 'The LORD shall examine the righteous' (Ps 11:5). Another explanation of 'The LORD shall examine the righteous'—R. Yitshak said: Where does he examine the righteous? In the pasture. David was examined in the pasture, as it is said, 'From following the ewes, he brought him to be the shepherd,' etc. (Ps 78:71). Amos was examined in the pasture: 'And the LORD took me from behind the sheep' (Amos 7:15). Moses too was examined in the pasture, as it is said: 'And Moses was shepherding,' etc.

E. And who does he examine? The righteous, as it is said, '[the LORD] shall examine the righteous' (Ps 11:5). And where does he examine the righteous? In the sheep pasture. He tested David by way of sheep and found him to be a worthy shepherd, as it is said, 'And he chose David to be his servant, and took him from the sheep pens' (Ps 78:70). Why...from the sheep pens (מִמִּכְלָאֹת צֹאן)? This is like, 'and the rain was restrained' (הַגֶּשׁם וַיִּכָּלֵא, Gen 8:2). He used to restrain (הָיָה מִמְּנָה) the big ones on account of the little ones and send the little ones out to graze first so that they could graze on the tender grass; and after that he would send out the older ones so that they could graze on the medium-quality grass; and after that he would send out the young, fit ones (הָבָחוֹרִים) so that they could eat the tough grass. The Holy One, blessed be he, said, 'He who knows how to be a shepherd of the sheep, taking care of each one according to its strength—let him come to be a shepherd over my people.' This is as it is written, 'From following the ewes, he brought him to be the shepherd over Jacob, his people' (Ps 78:71). And Moses too—the Holy One, blessed be he, did not test him except by way of sheep. Our rabbis have said: When Moses was shepherding Jethro’s sheep in the wilderness, a lamb escaped from him, so he ran after it until he came to a shady place. When he reached the shady place, there waiting for him was a pool of water, at which the lamb stopped to drink. When Moses caught up to it, he said: ‘I didn’t know that you were running away because of thirst—perhaps you are weary.’ So Moses set off, carrying the lamb on his shoulder. The Holy One, blessed be he, said to him: ‘You have shown compassion when leading a flock of ordinary sheep—so, as surely as you live, shall you be a shepherd of my sheep, Israel!’ Hence, ‘And Moses was shepherding’ (Exod 3:1).
Turning first to the version in the Tanhuma, it is immediately evident that the text contains two very different types of material. Taken together, sections A and E (possibly including C and/or D) contain an elegantly constructed midrash on Exod 3:1, which is connected to Ps 11:4–5, which is in turn linked to other verses of the prophets and writings. The three parts of Ps 11:4 provide the thematic threads of the following discussion: God’s presence and absence in the temple, and his ‘examination’ or judgment of mankind. The midrash is presented as a conversation in which named rabbis cite scriptural verses in response to each other, each citation being accompanied by a short and succinct statement of the point being made. In this way, a coherent and aesthetically satisfying chain of association is constructed. The discussion develops and expands upon the themes of presence/absence and judgment before finally returning to the lemma, Exod 3:1, at the end of section E.

The same midrash (henceforth: ‘the temple midrash’) is preserved in ExodR 2,2, sections A and E. In this source, however, section E has been expanded by the addition of narrative aggadic material, which—although charming in itself—obscures the elegant associative structure of the temple midrash and belongs to a very different literary genre. This is also true of the parable of the labourers in the king’s pardes in section B of both recensions, which is clearly alien to the composition of the temple midrash and must therefore have been interpolated into it at some stage prior to the final reaction of the two recensions. This being so, the temple midrash itself must be older than either of the above two late collections in which these two recensions are found, both of which have preserved it in combination with the parable. This does not necessarily imply that the temple midrash is older than the parable, which may well have been imported from a source of equal or greater antiquity. As we have already seen, the parable occurs independently in GenR 9,9. There are therefore very good grounds for supposing that it has an independent origin and was not composed in the context of this midrash.

It is difficult to decide whether sections C and D belong to the original temple midrash or have been added to it. On the one hand, the fact

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113 Note that the additional material pertaining to Moses is in fact formally introduced as a baraita.
114 On the dates of Tanhuma and Exodus Rabba 1–14, see Halperin, *Faces*, 141–142 and 463.
that D is omitted in ExodR 2.2 may be an indication of its secondary status. Against this, however, the attribution to Yannai suggests rather strongly that this unit could well be a continuation of the discussion at the end of section A. If so, it would follow that section C is also part of the original temple midrash, linking D to A, since the question that introduces D is predicated on the quotation of Ps 11:5 in C. Alternatively, section C may be a redactional comment which serves to connect the parable in B to its setting in the temple midrash. In this case, D, which is clearly dependent on C, must also be a redactional addition. In either case it is beyond reasonable doubt that section C is not an integral component of the parable of the labourers in the king’s *pardes* (section B) and that its application to the parable via Ps 11:5 is specific to this context.

These findings contradict the analysis of this passage by Goshen Gottstein, who treats section C as if it were an integral component of the *pardes* parable.115 This erroneous assumption leads him to infer (i) that the two central themes of the temple midrash—God’s presence in or absence from the temple, and his examination of human beings—are integral elements of the parable; and (ii) that this inference may be generalized and applied to *pardes* parables in other contexts. However, our investigation has shown that these two themes do not belong to the parable itself, but to the context provided by the temple midrash, in which the parable is embedded. Therefore, these themes are not transferable to *pardes* parables preserved in other sources unless their presence is directly indicated by those texts themselves.

Goshen Gottstein observes that, whereas the versions of this parable preserved in GenR 9.9 and TanhB shemot 10 speak of a treasury at the gate of the *pardes*, ExodR 2.2 replaces this detail with a tower, which is located inside the *pardes*.116 As noted above, the treasury is the Garden of Eden in which the righteous will in future take their reward. However, the tower—in this context, at least—appears to represent the earthly temple. The palace (פלטין) in the Tanhuma’s version may likewise represent the temple and/or its heavenly counterpart. The tower motif also occurs in a slightly different version of the parable of the labourers in the king’s *pardes*, preserved in MidrProv 16:11:117

116 Ibid.
117 Ed. Visotzky, *Midrash Mishle*, 129–132; also in Buber, ed., *Midrash Mishle*, 41b–42a; my translation (minor textual variations are not noted); cf. Visotzky, trans.,
(A) ‘Scales and balances of justice belong to the Lord; all the weights in the bag are of his own making’ (Prov 16:11). ‘Scales’—this is scripture; ‘balances of righteous justice’—these are the decrees; ‘belong to the Lord’—these are the halakhot; ‘all the weights in the bag are of his own making’—this is Talmud; and those who perform them all will receive their reward in the world to come.

(B1) R. Yose the Galilean said: A parable (mashal)—what is the matter like? Like a king of flesh and blood who had a great pardes, and in it he built a high tower. And he cherished it, for he put labourers in it and commanded them to be busy at their work. The king went up to the top of the tower—he could see them but they could not see him, as it is said, ‘The Lord is in his holy sanctuary; let the whole earth be silent before him’ (Hab 2:20). At the end of the day, the king came and sat in judgment on them. He said, ‘Let the hoers come and take their wages, let the beaters come and take their wages . . .’ until only the labourers who had done no work remained. The king said, ‘These people—what have they done?’ They said to him, ‘They have been emptying full vessels into empty ones.’ ‘And what good is it to me that they have been emptying full vessels into empty ones?’ said the king, ‘Let those who have performed their work take their reward, and let those who have not performed their work be led out to execution, since they have rebelled against my command!’

(B2) Thus did the Holy One, blessed be he, create his world and put mankind into it. And he commanded mankind to be busy with the Tora, the commandments, and good deeds, and he made his Shekhina dwell in heaven—he can see them, but they cannot see him. In the time to come, the Holy One, blessed be he, will sit in judgment, saying, ‘Let everyone who has been busy come now and take his reward, as it is said, ‘Where is he who counts? Where is he who weighs? Where is he who counts the towers?’ (Isa 33:18). ‘Where is he who counts?’—Where are they who count, the teachers of small children? Let them come and take their reward! ‘Where is he who weighs?’—Where are those who weigh the light and the weighty? Let them come and take their reward! ‘Where is he who counts the towers?’—Where are those who count midrash, halakhot and aggadot? Let them come and take their reward!

(B3) R. Zeira said, And as for the wicked: what will the Holy One, blessed be he, do with them? He will say to them: ‘Wicked Ones! For nothing and in vain have you spent your strength, since you have not busied yourselves with Tora. Why have you not busied yourself with commandments and good deeds? Instead, you have been in my world like an empty vessel, which gives no pleasure to me—nor shall I give any pleasure to you!’

The Midrash on Proverbs, 81–83; Goshen Gottstein (‘Four Entered’, 98) gives the first part of B1 only.
Holy One, blessed be he, has said: ‘Can it be that they will escape and go on their way in freedom? Rather, let them first see the rejoicing of the righteous, and after that let them be condemned to Gehenna!’

(C1) Let me tell you a parable (mashal): What is the matter like? Like a king who made a feast and invited everybody, but he did not fix a time for them. Those who were conscientious about the king’s command went and bathed, and anointed themselves, and pressed their clothes, and prepared themselves for the feast. Those who were not conscientious about the king’s command went and busied themselves at their own work. When the time of the feast arrived, the king said: ‘Let everyone come at once!’ These came in their glory, and those came in their disgrace. The king said: ‘Those who have prepared themselves for a feast—let them eat at my feast! Those who have not prepared themselves for a feast—let them not eat at my feast!’ Can it be that they will escape and go on their way? Said the king: ‘Not so! Let these eat, drink and rejoice; and let those stand on their feet and watch, and let them be flogged and let them suffer!’—as it is said, ‘Thus says the Sovereign Lord: Behold, my servants shall eat, and you shall be hungry! Behold, my servants shall drink, and you shall be thirsty! Behold, my servants shall rejoice, and you shall be ashamed! Behold, my servants shall shout from the gladness of their hearts, and you shall cry out from the agony of your hearts, and from the shattering of your spirit you shall howl!’ (Isa 65:13–14).

(C2) Why did this happen to them? Because they were not conscientious about the king’s command. Solomon explained in his wisdom, saying: ‘There is a road which seems right to a man, but in the end it is a road of death’ (Prov 16:25). ‘There is a road which seems right to a man’—these are they who are conscientious about the commands of the Holy One, blessed be he; ‘but in the end it is a road of death’—these are they who are not conscientious about the commands of the Holy One, blessed be he.

Turning first to the parable of the labourers and its explanation (B1–3), we find once again that the subject is the future judgment of humanity for its deeds. Again, this is expressed in terms of labour and reward. In both the mashal (B1) and the nimshal (B3), the punishment of the unworthy labourers is expressed and discussed in more active terms than in the versions previously considered, but this makes little difference to the meaning. As in those other versions, the pardes represents the world and the labour ordered by the king is the performance of commandments. In keeping with the context established in the lemma (A), this is extended to include the various branches of Tora study and teaching (B2). Goshen Gottstein comments:

Were the attribution of this parable to the tannaitic sage, R. Yose the Galilean, reliable, this might be the earliest known rabbinic orchard
parable, and as such an invaluable source for the interpretation of the pardes episode. The similarity of this parable to the parable from Exodus Rabbah, as well as its appearance in a late midrash, however, make the attribution highly suspect. Nevertheless, the point of the parable is still relevant. It is clear that the orchard has a tower built within it, and that this tower is a dwelling place of the king. This parable is not associated with the temple; the tower is designed to convey the sense that God dwells and watches from on high. Once more, the orchard is a situation of choice and selection, where God can watch and monitor different types of human behavior.

Here, Goshen Gottstein makes three points: first, that this version of the parable is probably late, despite the early attribution; second, that the tower in the parable is not associated with the temple; and third, that the pardes is a place of testing. The last point of these points is inaccurate, since there is no indication that the work performed by the labourers in the pardes is primarily a test. On the contrary, their various tasks appear to have their own intrinsic value as acts of service, as is clearly indicated by the words with which the king condemns those who fail to perform them. Once again, the theme of ‘testing’ is found to be a chimerical projection based on Goshen Gottstein’s erroneous reading of TanhB shemot 10 and ExodR 2,2.

Goshen Gottstein’s second assertion is contradicted by the text of the parable itself (B1), where the tower is explicitly connected to the temple by the citation of Hab 2:20. Although the king’s invisible vantage point at the top of the tower seems to be the celestial sanctuary rather than its earthly counterpart, the close relationship of the latter to the former is clearly indicated by the location of the tower in the pardes. However, the central issue of the ‘temple midrash’—divine presence in, and absence from, the temple—is not prominent in this version of the parable. Here, the point is simply that the king has retired to a vantage point from which he can observe the labourers in the pardes without their knowing it. It is important to observe that the opening words of the verse cited in this version: ‘The Lord is in his holy sanctuary’ (Hab 2:20) are identical with those of Ps 11:4, which verse provides the structure of the temple midrash. These words thus establish a direct connection between the version of the parable in MidrProv 16,11 and the two recensions preserved in TanhB shemot 10 and ExodR 2,2. It should further be observed that in MidrProv 16,11, neither the biblical

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118 Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 98.
citation nor the tower itself are functionally important to the story, which would lose nothing of significance if these items were deleted. It is therefore possible (i) that they have been borrowed directly or indirectly from a version of the pardes parable in the temple midrash; and (ii) that during this process, the quotation of Ps 11:4 was wrongly identified as Hab 2:20. Alternatively, the pardes parable preserved in MidrProv 16,11 may predate the temple midrash.119 If so, it will have been imported into the temple midrash due to the close similarity of Hab 2:20 to Ps 11:4.

Whereas the marshal (B1) and the main part of the nimshal (B2) are attributed to the Tanna R. Yose the Galilean, the conclusion of the nimshal (B3) and the following parable of the king’s feast (C1–2) are attributed to the third-century Amora R. Zeira, who was born in Babylonia but spent the latter part of his life at Tiberias in Galilee.120 It is interesting to observe that in GenR 9:9 it is Zeira who introduces what may be the most primitive surviving version of the parable of the labourers in the pardes.121 An indication that the parable of the king’s feast may also be quite ancient can be found at KohR 9,8, where a slightly shorter version of the same parable is attributed to R. Yehuda the Prince.122 It may be observed in passing that we have encountered R. Yehuda in another passage of the same midrashic source (KohR 5,10), where he is cited as the source of a parable about a king’s vineyard which seems to be distantly related to the parable of the lame and blind watchmen.123

Thus, although Goshen Gottstein’s caution about accepting the attribution to Yose the Galilean in MidrProv 16,11 (B1) is certainly justified, there are indications that the origins of the material in this passage may in fact quite early. Confirmation is provided by a source which antedates the rabbinic corpus and which, interestingly enough, also has a Galilean connection (see Matt 21:33–22:14).

The next passage to be considered by Goshen Gottstein is found in another late source, Pirkei de-R. Eliezer 44:124

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119 As we shall see very shortly, there are good reasons for believing the parable in Midr. Prov 16.11—including the tower motif—to be very early.
121 See p. 453 above.
122 In Midrash Rabba ha-Mevoar, 11:480–482.
123 See pp. 452–453 above.
R. Pinhas says: Forty years later, Moses wanted to remind Israel by saying to them, 'Do you remember how in the wilderness you said, 'Is the LORD among us or not?’ (Exod 17:7)' But Moses said: 'If I say this to Israel, I shall surely expose their shame and he who exposes the shame of others has no share in the world to come. Instead, I shall tell them the story of Amalek, and they will understand what is written before that.

A parable (mashal): What is this matter like? Like a king who had a pardes, and at the gate of the orchard, the king chained a dog. And the king sat in his upper chamber (בעליתו) watching and beholding everything that happened in the orchard. The king’s friend came in to steal from the orchard, and he set the dog on him, and it tore his friend’s clothes. The king thought, 'If I say to my friend, 'Why did you come into my orchard?’—I shall surely expose his shame. Instead, I shall say to him, ‘Did you see that mad dog? It has torn your clothes. It didn’t know that you are my friend.’ And he will understand at once what he has done.’

In the same way, Moses said: 'I shall surely tell Israel the story of Amalek and they will at once know what is written before that.' Therefore Moses said: 'Remember what Amalek did to you by the wayside as you were coming out of Egypt' (Deut 25:17).

As observed by Goshen Gottstein, the dog in this parable—at least, in its present context—represents Amalek whose attack upon Israel (Exod 17:8–16) is understood to be a punishment for their ‘faultfinding’ and questioning of God (Exod 17:1–7). Thus, Moses’ exhortation of the Israelites to remember this event (Deut 25:17) is understood to have the same significance as the king’s tactful remark to his friend about the dog’s actions. Goshen Gottstein attaches great weight to the fact that according to this parable the king watches what transpires in the pardes from his ‘upper chamber’ (עליתו), and connects this with the עליתו found in the mystical collection at tHag 2:1–7 (E).125 His interpretation of this parable returns to the two central themes of his argument thus far:

The king watches precisely because the orchard is viewed as a testing ground. For this reason, too, the dog is chained at its entrance. The king personally incites the dog and is thus involved in reacting to those who enter the orchard. This test concerns the very act of entry into the orchard. The friend who transgresses the orchard grounds may not have been aware of the king watching him; had the king been located within the orchard itself, the friend might not have transgressed. Thus, the king is concurrently absent from the orchard and present to the testing situa-

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125 Goshen Gottstein, 'Four Entered', 99.
These remarks contain a high proportion of unwarranted ‘eisegesis.’ There is nothing in the text of the parable to suggest either that the pardes is a ‘testing ground’ or that the issue of the king’s absence and presence is a factor in its meaning. To ask why the friend is not allowed to enter the pardes is neither germane nor necessary, since we are told plainly that he is stealing from it. There is certainly no indication that his exclusion from the pardes is in any way a test. The crux of this basically straightforward parable is the comparison between the injunction to ‘remember Amalek’ and the king’s reminding his friend about the dog, both of which serve to remind the listener of something which is considered shameful, and which is therefore best left unmentioned. Beyond this, detailed allegorical analysis is not called for. The fact that the king is able to see what transpires in the pardes is admittedly reminiscent of MidrProv 16,11, but Goshen Gottstein’s speculations about what the friend might have done had he known the king could see him are unnecessarily complicated and wholly unjustified. Despite the significance that Goshen Gottstein attaches to the motif of the king watching from his upper chamber, this motif does not seem to perform any important function within the narrative structure of the parable, or to add anything of consequence to its meaning. This element is wholly absent from a shorter and simpler version of the parable, preserved in PesR 12, to which Goshen Gottstein refers only in passing:

Another interpretation of ‘Remember . . .’ (Deut 25:17): R. Berakia said, What is the matter like? Like a king who had a pardes, and who had a dog sitting and guarding the pardes. The son of the king’s friend came to steal from within the pardes. The dog got up and bit him. When the king wished to remind his friend’s son that he had wanted to steal from within his pardes, he would say to him, ‘Remember what that dog did to you!’ Thus did Israel sin at Rephidim, saying, ‘Is the LORD among us?’ (Exod 17:7). And at once the dog came and bit him—this is Amalek, as it is said: ‘Then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim’ (Exod 17:8). And when the Holy One, blessed be he, wanted to remind Israel of the sin that they committed at Rephidim, he would say to them, ‘Do

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126 Ibid.
128 Following ms. Parma; ed. princ. and ed. Margaliyot: ‘When the king wished not to remind his beloved son . . .’
you remember Amalek, who came against you? Remember what Amalek did to you!"129

This more economical recension, which brings the central point of the pardes parable clearly into focus, is much more satisfying than the longer version in PRE 24 and very probably represents the parable in something like its original form. Therefore, in PRE 24, the motif of the king watching from his upper chamber, which is absent from the version in Pesikta Rabbati and performs no essential function in the narrative, is almost certainly an extraneous element that has migrated to this context from another source, such as MidrProv 16,11 (B1) or, perhaps, tHag 2:1–7 (E).

Goshen Gottstein draws attention to the fact that in several rabbinic parables, the pardes contains a variety of fruit trees. On the basis of this observation, he makes the following assertion:

The king’s orchard is an expression of wealth and plenty; it is part of the display of royal plenitude, which finds expression in a luxurious orchard which contains many species... Unlike the vineyard, which contains only one species, the orchard is, by its very definition, a display of great variety and wealth. It is precisely this sense of wealth that raises the need to protect the orchard from intruders and uninvited visitors. The orchard, which contains the king’s wealth, should only be entered with the king’s permission.130

This statement may superficially appear to be plausible, but it does not withstand critical examination. It may be true that the variety and abundance of fruits in the pardes is emphasized in some cases. However, we have found that ‘orchard’ (pardes) and ‘vineyard’ (kerem) parables are closely interrelated genres, and that individual motifs, such as the tower, tend to migrate freely between the two. Indeed the terms pardes and kerem seem on occasion to be used interchangeably with each other.131 Goshen Gottstein’s attempt to create an absolute distinction between the two terms and their symbolic meanings is therefore unjustified. His assertion that the term pardes signifies luxury and wealth is, as we shall see, a central component of his thesis. However, we will once

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130 Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 100.
131 See pp. 452–453 above. For a ‘vineyard’ parable that appears to be somehow related to the pardes parable in MidrProv 16,11, consider Matt 21:33–41 (and see above, p. 463).
again find that the texts on which he bases this assertion do not justify the generalized inference that he draws from them.

The motif of a variety of fruit trees occurs in only a few *pardes* parables and does not always carry the same meaning. In some cases, the *pardes* represents the community of Israel:

‘The mandrakes give forth fragrance, and at our gates are all choice fruit…’ (Cant 7:14a). Our rabbis compare this to a king who had an orchard (*pardes*) which he handed over to a tenant. What did that tenant do? He filled baskets with the fruit of the orchard and placed them at the orchard gate. Whenever the king passed by and saw all this fine display, he said: ‘With all this fine display at the orchard gate, how much more must there be in the whole orchard!’ Just so, in former generations there were the men of the great assembly, Hillel and Shammai, and Rabban Gamliel the elder; while in later generations there were R. Yohanan ben Zakka, R. Eliezer, R. Yoshua, R. Meir, and R. Akiva—and how many more were their students!\(^\text{132}\) And of these it is said: ‘…new and old, which I have laid up for you, my beloved’ (Cant 7:14b).\(^\text{133}\)

In parables such as this, the theme of wealth and abundance is indeed prominent. However, its primary significance is not God’s inherent ‘royal plenitude’, but rather Israel’s special value in his eyes. The motif of prohibition of entry into the *pardes* does not occur in these parables and would have no meaning in this context.

In another group of parables, the *pardes* or *kerem* stands for the *Tora*, which has been entrusted by God to Israel.\(^\text{134}\) A few parables in this category include the motif of a variety of trees:

This is as it is written: ‘Lest you should weigh up (תְּפַלֵּס) the path of life,’ etc. (Prov 5:6a).\(^\text{135}\) R. Abba bar Kahana said: The Holy One, blessed be he, has said, ‘do not sit weighing (שָׁקַל) the commandments of the *Tora*, according to what is written, ‘…and weighed in scales (בַּפֶּלֶס וְשָׁקַל) the mountains’ (Isa 40:12), and do not say, ‘Since this commandment is a major one, I will perform it, for its reward is great; but since this

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\(^{132}\) Presumably, the great figures named above are compared to the excellent fruit at the orchard gate, and the more numerous disciples to the fruit inside the orchard. See Dunsky, 167 n. 13; and Freedman-Simon, 302 n. 1.

\(^{133}\) CantR 7,18 (= 7:14 § 1), ed. Dunsky, 167. For further examples of the same paradigm, see CantR 6,6 (= 6:2 § 3) and 7,5 (= 7:2 § 3); and ExodR 20,2. Parables in which a *pardes* or a *kerem* stands for Israel, but in which there is no mention of a variety of trees, include GenR 38,9 and 42,3; ExodR 22,1; 30,17 (= RuthR, Proem, 7), and 43,9; NumR 15,25, 16:4 (= KohR 6,9), and 20,20.

\(^{134}\) See for example: bYev 21a; ExodR 30,9; DeutR 4,4 (= TanhB kedoshim 6), 6,2 and 7,4; and KohR 5,11 § 5.

\(^{135}\) Following MT.
commandment is a minor one, I will not perform it.’ What did the Holy One, blessed be he, do? He concealed from his creatures the reward for each commandment so that they would perform all the commandments for their own sake. Whence do we know this? As it is said, ‘...her ways wander; you do not know them’ (Prov 5:6b).

To what can this be compared? To a king who hired himself some workers and sent them into his orchard (pardes). He kept the wages in the orchard secret and did not disclose them to them, so that they would not forsake the work for which the wages were small and do only the work for which the wages were great. In the evening, he called them one by one. He said to the first, ‘Beneath which tree have you worked?’ The man replied, ‘Beneath this one’, so he said, ‘This is a pepper tree. The pay is one gold piece.’ He called another and said to him: ‘Beneath which tree have you worked?’ He replied: ‘Beneath this one.’ He said to him: ‘The pay is half a gold piece. This is a white-blossom tree.’ He called another and said to him: ‘Beneath which tree have you worked?’ He replied: ‘Beneath this one.’ He said to him: ‘This is an olive tree. The pay is two hundred pieces.’ They said to him, ‘Were you not under an obligation to let us know which tree would incur the greatest pay, so that we could work beneath it?’ The king said to them, ‘If I had let you know, how would the whole orchard have been cultivated?’

Here, the great wealth of the king who, as the owner of the pardes, rewards the workers is undoubtedly assumed. However, the function of the motif of arboreal variety is not to signify luxury, or even to express the king’s wealth. Rather, the variety of the trees—and hence, of the workers’ tasks and rewards—is symbolic of the multiplicity of commandments in the Tora. Once again, the motif of prohibition of entry to the pardes has no relevance to the meaning of the parable and is therefore absent.

In parables where the pardes represents the world, the ‘arboreal variety’ motif is only rarely found. In a few instances, trees which bear fruit or give life are contrasted with those which are barren or confer death. These parables concern the duality of good and evil in the world, and have nothing at all to do with the supposed theme of wealth or ‘royal plenitude’. An explicit reference to a wider variety of trees in the pardes occurs in a parable preserved at CantR 2,6 and LevR 23,3:138

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136 DeutR 6,2 (ed. Lieberman, Midrash Debarim Rabbah, 103); cf. ExodR 30,9.
137 See GenR 61,6; ExodR 7,4, and NumR 11,2. Compare ExodR 15,19.
138 CantR 2,6 (= 2:2, § 3), ed. Dunsky, 54 (= p. 14a, col. 1 of the Vilna edition of Midrash Rabba); LevR. 23,3, ed. Margulies, 3:529. During the preceding discussion in LevR 23,3, Lev. 18:4, ‘You shall not behave as they do in Egypt’ (introducing the list
R. Azaria reported in the name of R. Yehuda that R. Shimon said:139 [This verse applies to Israel before Mount Sinai: ‘Like a lily among brambles’ (Cant 2:2).] This is like (mashal le) a king who had an orchard (pardes) in which he planted a row of figs, a row of grapevines, a row of pomegranates, and a row of apples. Then he let it to a tenant and went away.140 After some time, the king came to look at his orchard and see how it was doing.141 He found it full of briars and thistles, so he summoned woodcutters to cut it down.142 Then he found in it a single red rose. When he picked it and smelled it, his composure was restored. The king said: ‘For the sake of this rose, the whole orchard shall be spared, [all for the sake of its merit!]’143

Just so so, the world would not have been created but for the sake of Tora.144 After twenty-six generations, the Holy one, blessed be he, looked at his world to see how it was doing and found it to be water in water (במים:145 the generation of Enosh was exterminated by water; the generation of the flood was exterminated by water; and the generation of Babel was exterminated by water.146

of incestuous relations, referred to as arayot in mHag 2:1) has been linked to Cant 2:2 (‘Like a lily among brambles’) which is the subject of CantR 2,6. The following presentation is based on ed. Dunsky of CantR 2,6, which does not differ from the Vilna edition except where stated. Words within square brackets are lacking in CantR 2,6 and have been taken from LevR 23,3, which is based on ms. London 340. The two early printed editions of LevR 23,3 (editio princeps and Venice) tend strongly to agree with CantR 2,6, as to a somewhat lesser extent do mss. Oxford 147, Oxford 2335 and Jerusalem 245 of LevR 23,3. Several minor variations have not been noted.

139 The presentation of these names varies considerably in the manuscripts and editions of LevR 23,3 (ed. Margulies: ‘R. Yehuda b. R. Shimon in the name of R. Azaria’).
140 This sentence is found in CantR 2,6 and in the early editions, but not the manuscripts, of LevR 23,3.
144 CantR 2,6 reads: ‘. . . but for the sake of Israel’. Dunsky (n. 6 ad loc.) emends this text to agree with LevR. 23,3 (all mss. and editions), as above.
145 LevR 23,3, ed. Margulies and all mss.: ‘. . . full of briars and thistles’. The early editions of LevR 23,3 agree with CantR 2,6 (above).
146 Following CantR. The early editions of LevR 23,3 read: ‘The generation of Enosh was water in water; the generation of the flood was water in water; the generation of Babel were water in water.’ Ed. Margulies and the mss. of LevR 23,3 read simply: ‘. . . for example, the generation of Enosh, the generation of the flood, and the Sodomites’.
‘He brought woodcutters to cut it down.147—as it is said, ‘the LORD sat enthroned above the flood’ (Ps 29:10). ‘And he found in it a single red rose’—this is Israel. ‘When he picked it and smelled it’—at the time when Israel recited the ten commandments—‘his composure was restored’—at the time when Israel say: ‘All that the LORD has said, we shall do and we shall obey!’ (Exod 24:7).148 The Holy One, blessed be he, has said: ‘For the sake of this rose, the orchard will be spared.’149 For the sake of the Tora and the study thereof, the world will be spared,150 [all of it, by virtue of our merit!]151

This parable, like most others in which the pardes represents the world, concerns the familiar theme of judgment. As in the previous case, the motif of arboreal variety is present, but its purpose is not to express wealth or ‘royal plenitude.’ Here, the variety of the trees is symbolic of the variety of the nations of the world, who are contrasted with Israel, represented by the solitary rose. Once again, there is no mention of a prohibition against entry to the pardes, which would obviously make no sense in this setting.

Moving outside the genre of parables about a king’s pardes, Goshen Gottstein also refers to texts such as MekRSbY to Exod 3:2–4, in which ‘trees, gardens, orchards and parks’ (אללות נגים ופרדסים וקריתות) are included in lists of a king’s possessions.152 A similar use of ‘gardens and orchards’ to express the accumulated ‘wealth’ of a wise man is found in MidrProv 12,9:

147 CantR 2,6 and early editions of LevR 23,3: LevR 23,3, ed. Margulies and all mss.: נקום חוה והחור (‘and he wanted to condemn it and lay it waste’).
148 Following CantR 2,6 according to the Vilna edition. Ed. Dunskey omits the words: ‘at the time when Israel recited the ten commandments—“his composure was restored.”’ LevR 23,3, ed. Margulies and all mss.: “When he picked it and smelled it”—this is Israel, who would in the future stand before Mount Sinai and say before the Holy One, blessed be he: “All that the LORD has said, we shall do and we shall obey!” The early editions of LevR 23,3 are very close to the Vilna edition of CantR 2,6, but not identical: “When he took it and smelled it”—at the time when he gave them the ten commandments—“his composure was restored”—when they said: ‘We shall do and obey!’
149 The words of the parable are quoted here only in CantR 2,6 and the early editions of LevR 23,3.
150 CantR 2,6; ובושאר וחזורו ולאזרו מצהל העולם; LevR 23,3, ed. Margulies, supported with minor variations by the mss.: ישראל זה יהודי שitoredו העולם (‘Israel is worthy that the whole world should be spared’); early editions of LevR 23,3: בושאר וחזורו וישראל מצהל העולם (‘by the merit of Tora and Israel shall the world be spared’).
151 As p. 469 n. 143 above.
152 MekRSbY to Exod 3:2–4 (ed. Epstein-Melamed 2); compare SER 25 and 26 (ed. Friedmann 1:136 and 1:40–141); and see Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 100.
'If you are wise, you are wise for yourself; if you are a scoffer, you alone will bear it' (Prov 9:12). Let me tell a parable: what is this like? Like a poor man and a rich man. And every day the rich man would say to the poor man: 'How much wealth do you possess? How many gardens and orchards (גָּן וּפֶרַדְסֵי) do you own?' And the poor man would answer him: 'Although you have all this wealth, I get no benefit from it. All that you have acquired you have acquired for yourself.'

Goshen Gottstein finds a further indication that the term pardes is indicative of wealth and plenitude in the following passage, which is not a parable but concerns the exegesis of an uncertain word of Scripture:

‘And he planted a (?) tamarisk tree (אֵשֶׁל), etc. (Gen 21:33). R. Yehuda said, אֵשֶׁל means an orchard (pardes): ask for whatever you wish to ask (ואהלו את הנוח), figs, grapes or pomegranites. R. Nehemia said, אֵשֶׁל means an inn (פונדוק): ask for whatever you wish to ask, meat, wine or eggs; R. Azaria said in the name of R. Yehuda, אֵשֶׁל means a court (סנהדרין), just as Scripture says, ‘... and Saul was sitting at Gibea beneath the tamarisk tree in the high place (1) (בָּרָמָה התַּחַת אֵשֶׁל, Sam 22:6). It is true that according to these sources, ownership of a pardes— amongst other things—is indicative of the wealth of the king. However, this observation does not by any stretch of the imagination justify the conclusion that, wherever we encounter the word pardes, it must always signify ‘wealth’. By this logic, we should have to infer that the same is true of ‘garden’ (גָּן) ‘tree’ (אִילוֹן), ‘park’ (קרפיף), and even ‘inn’ (פונדוק), which would be patently absurd. In the vast majority of pardes parables, the king’s wealth, while it may be naturally assumed, is not the point at issue and, as we have seen, the pardes itself may carry a variety of meanings.

Summing up this section, we have seen that Goshen Gottstein identifies four primary themes as characteristic of rabbinic parables about a king’s pardes: the pardes as a ‘testing ground’; the king’s absence and presence; the king’s wealth or ‘royal plenitude’; and the prohibition against entering the pardes. The first of these themes has been found to be illusory. It is true that the motif of judgment for deeds performed in the pardes occupies a central position in many of these parables, but this is usually expressed in terms of reward or penalty for the performance

153 Ed. Visotzky, 72–73.
154 GenR 54.6 (ed. Theodor-Albeck 583–584); cf. bSot 10a. Goshen Gottstein (‘Four Entered’, 100) quotes this passage in part only.
or non-performance of required labour. This labour, which is Tora, has its own intrinsic value and is therefore not primarily a test. The theme of the king’s absence from and presence in the *pardes* is much less widespread than Goshen Gottstein supposes. In the one case where this theme is of central significance (TanHb shemot 10 = ExodR 2,2), it is drawn from the context of the temple midrash in which the *pardes* parable is embedded. The only other clear instance of this theme is a passing reference in the parable preserved in MidrProv 16,11. The motif of the king watching from on high without being seen is also picked up in the longer version of the guard dog parable (PRE 44), but this seems to be a secondary, derivative accretion. In most cases, Goshen Gottstein has simply projected the theme of presence and absence into texts which are not at all concerned with this issue. Although his recognition of this theme may be valid in certain cases, it is by no means a universal or definitive ingredient of the genre ‘*pardes* parable’. Moreover, this theme can only be meaningful in contexts where the *pardes* represents the world. Likewise, the king’s wealth, although perhaps generally assumed, is not a centrally important theme in all—or even most—of these parables. The fact that ‘orchards’ (*pardesim*) are sometimes included in lists of a king’s or rich man’s possessions does not justify the inference that the term *pardes* is always symbolic of wealth in other, unrelated contexts. The motif of arboreal variety does not normally signify wealth and is nowhere mentioned in combination with the theme of prohibition of entry to the *pardes*. Such a prohibition is mentioned or implied only in a very few of those parables, usually in connection with stealing fruit. In most contexts, this theme would have no meaning.

Thus, close examination of the texts on which Goshen Gottstein bases his argument shows his method to be deeply flawed. By extracting and combining symbolic motifs from a variety of sources without regard for context, he constructs patterns of meaning (‘themes’) which he then reads back into sources where those motifs either are not found or carry altogether different meanings.

In the final analysis, therefore, this unavoidably lengthy discussion has produced only negative conclusions. Despite the undoubted antiquity of some at least of these parables, they appear to throw little light on the story of ‘Four Entered Paradise’, even in its secondary setting in the mystical collection. Rabbinic *pardes* parables are used to convey a variety of messages. As we have seen, the symbol: *pardes* may, according to context, represent the world, the community of Israel, or the Tora.
In a few instances, such as the guard dog parable, the precise meaning of the *pardes* is incidental to the point being made and is therefore left unexplained. ‘Four Entered Paradise’ conforms to none of these models. In the first place, it is not a parable about a king’s *pardes*. Secondly, the *pardes* in question clearly stands for something of central importance to the story, but it is neither the world, nor Israel, nor Tora.

As we saw in the previous chapter, that something is the celestial temple. The background of this image is located in the ancient and widely documented traditions in which the temple is symbolically associated with *gan-eden*. The parable (*mashal*) of the king’s *pardes* in tHag 2:1–7 (unit E) is to be understood, not in relation to *pardes* parables found in other contexts and with other applications, but in relation to its own *nimshal*, which is ‘Four Entered Paradise’ itself. In the light of this parable, rightly understood, the meaning of the scriptural verse applied to Akiva in the secondary version of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ is clearly that Akiva, unlike the others, was invited to enter the chambers of the king, i.e., the inner chambers of the celestial sanctuary. This is true to the meaning of the earlier hekhalot recension, as demonstrated by God’s response to the behaviour of the angels (C1c). It seems, then, that the only significant point of contact between ‘Four Entered Paradise’ and the genre of rabbinic parables about a king’s *pardes* is the association—discounted by Goshen Gottstein—that is found in some contexts between the *pardes* (or: the tower in the *pardes*) and the temple.

**Goshen Gottstein’s ‘Parabolic Dimension’**

Following his discussion of rabbinic *pardes* parables, Goshen Gottstein offers an exposition of what he calls the ‘parabolic dimension’ of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ in the Tosefta. The basis of this exposition is his assertion that the *pardes* story marks a ‘turning point’ in the argument of tHag 2:1–7. In his opinion, the sequence: three lectures (unit C), followed by ‘four entered…’ (unit D) is a deliberate allusion to the

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155 Compare GenR 44,4; and DeutR 5,7.
158 See pp. 376–377 above.
159 Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 100.
transition from three restricted subjects of דרש (mHag 2:1a) to four forbidden objects of הֵסַּתְר (mHag 2:1b):

The move from three to four may be intended to convey to the audience the move from the realm of legitimate activity to that of illegitimate...

...The first part of the Tosefta described activities that were strictly related to the study of the Tora...The second part of the collection, by contrast, does not refer to the study of the Tora, but to something that may be perceived as its opposite.160

The primary objection to this analysis of tHag 2:1–7 has already been discussed:161 the whole of tHag 2:1–7, B–G is in fact appended to mHag 2:1a (= unit A) only, while the four objects of הֵסַּתְר are only introduced into the discussion with the citation of mHag 2:1b in unit H. 'Four Entered Paradise' (unit D) occurs well before this transition. A further objection is that unit C of the Tosefta lays no particular emphasis on the number three. Although it does, admittedly, describe a sequence of three lectures, the word 'lecture' does not occur in noun form (הרצאה) and the unit might just as reasonably be described as a list of four persons: Yohanan b. Zakkai, Yoshua, Akiva and Hanania b. Hakhinai.162 A third obstacle is that the activity of one of the four who entered pardes, Akiva, is not illegitimate but, quite clearly, the reverse. Goshen Gottstein attempts to evade this difficulty by suggesting that Akiva’s activity in the pardes was different from that of the others. In developing this suggestion, he places great weight on the fact that in mss. Vienna and London of the Tosefta, Akiva is said to have ‘ascended and descended’ to and from the pardes, which reading he prefers over that of ms. Erfurt, where language of ‘going in’ and ‘coming out’ continues to be used.163 On this basis, Goshen Gottstein proposes:

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160 Ibid., 101.

161 See pp. 433–435 above.

162 This difficulty is implicitly recognized by Goshen Gottstein ('Four Entered', 101), who appeals to parallels in the Bavl and the Yerushalmi, where the number three is stressed. This emphasis probably does reflect a 1–2–3–4 sequence in those sources (see further: Goldberg, 'Rabban Yohanan’s Traum', 7; and Morray-Jones, Merkabah Mysticism, 272), but this has nothing to do with the lists of subjects in the Mishna. In any case, Goshen Gottstein insists on the priority and originality of the Tosefta. If this premise is granted, the derivative status of the Bavl and the Yerushalmi means that these sources can provide no support for his interpretation of the Tosefta.

163 Goshen Gottstein, 'Four Entered', 102; see also ibid., 87–88 (contra Schäfer, 'New Testament and Hekhalot Literature', 25–26). As noted above (p. 372), both pairs of expressions could be used of a journey into the temple sanctuary.
Not only does R. Akiba not ‘look’, but he may not even have entered the orchard. Rather, he engages in a different kind of activity, which is expressed in language of ascent and descent.\footnote{Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 102.}

However, even if the reading, ‘R. Akiva went up . . . and came down’ is preferred, the suggestion that Akiva did not enter the pardes must be rejected, since it is contradicted by the opening statement of the narrative: ‘Four men went into pardes.’ This statement quite clearly includes Akiva, as Goshen Gottstein himself has earlier observed.\footnote{See Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 86; cf. p. 429 above.}

Goshen Gottstein’s theory of the difference between Akiva and the other three characters of the story is bound up with his understanding of the nature of the pardes and its relationship to the ‘king’, who is mentioned both in the unquoted portion of the verse applied to Akiva (Cant 1:4b) and in the following parable (unit E). The crux of his interpretation is the proposition that ‘the entry into a garden may be viewed as a form of leisure and pleasure seeking that is not compatible with the study of Tora, which is much to be preferred.’\footnote{Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 101.}

In support of this proposition, Goshen Gottstein refers to mAootnote{See ibid.} 3:7, where it is stated that a person who allows himself to be distracted from the study of Tora study by the beauty of a ploughed field and a tree—in other words, the natural beauty of his environment—is said to commit a sin.\footnote{Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 101.} This source does not so much as mention the term pardes, but Goshen Gottstein evidently feels that the word ‘tree’ is sufficient to establish a connection. Nonetheless, the relevance of this passage to the story of the four is, to say the least, unproven and, at best, extremely tenuous. Goshen Gottstein then cites the following:

R. Hanina of Caesarea said: Just as water is drawn for gardens and orchards and for privies and bath houses ( водитель воды для садов и садов для огородов и для присы и для водитель воды для ванных помещений), may one say that it is thus with words of Tora? Scripture says, ‘For the words of the Lord are righteous (and the righteous shall walk by them, but the wicked shall stumble on them)’ (Hos 14:10).\footnote{CantR 1,19 (= 1:2 § 3), ed. Dunsky 20. Goshen Gottstein (‘Four Entered’, 101) quotes Simon’s translation (Soncino, 9.2.35), which adds the words: ‘not so’, before the citation of Hos 14:10, an interpolation which appears to me to be misleading. Compare Neusner, trans., Song of Songs Rabbah, 1:72, subsections P and Q, and see further below.}
According to Goshen Gottstein,

This statement, which is part of a wider exploration of the symbolic significance of water and its association with Tora, makes a qualitative distinction between the Tora and gardens and orchards: the Tora and orchards represent different things. The third unit of the ‘mystical collection’, therefore, in opening with a statement describing four who entered an orchard, expresses its disapproval of certain kinds of activity that are viewed as qualitatively antithetical to the study of the Tora.¹⁶⁹

Goshen Gottstein, perhaps misled by Simon’s mistranslation,¹⁷⁰ has quite certainly misunderstood the meaning of the passage. As is clearly indicated by the Hebrew syntax, ‘gardens and orchards’ stand in opposition not to water, but to ‘privies and bath houses’, the point being that water may be used for both ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’ purposes. The scriptural citation (including the unquoted section) then explains that words of Tora may similarly be used for good or evil by the righteous and the wicked. Therefore, ‘gardens and orchards’ must correspond to the clean and the righteous, while ‘privies and bath houses’ signify the wicked and unclean. Therefore, Goshen Gottstein’s assertion that the term pardes stands in symbolic opposition to Tora is completely wrong. On the contrary, in this passage, the term pardes (together with gan, garden’) is representative of the proper and morally positive application of Tora.

Even if Goshen Gottstein’s interpretation of Canticles Rabba were correct, which it undoubtedly is not, this would remain his only example of the use of the term pardes to represent something that is considered antithetical to Tora. As we have seen, examples in which the image of a pardes is symbolic of—or very closely associated with—Tora are much more numerous. Therefore, Goshen Gottstein’s generalized inference that ‘the Tora and orchards represent different things’ is (a) completely unjustified and (b) contradicted by the overwhelming weight of the available evidence. Hence, there is absolutely no basis for his assumption that this explains the meaning of the term pardes in the story of the four.

According to Goshen Gottstein, the moral of the pardes story concerns the distinction between exegetical study of Ezekiel’s description of the merkava, on the one hand, and visionary practices, on the

¹⁷⁰ See p. 475 n. 168 above.
other. Subject to the limitations prescribed in mHag 2:1a, the former is regarded as a legitimate activity, while the latter are discouraged. Goshen Gottstein maintains that this meaning is expressed in the contrast between the three, who incurred disaster by looking, and Akiva, who did not look:

The merkabah... should be examined exegetically. Any attempt to engage in direct visual experience is regarded as negative, as a form of pleasure seeking, rather than a form of religious activity. Direct visual experience receives the same negative attribution as the leisure and pleasure associated with entry into an orchard. The negative quality associated with direct visionary experience is indicated through the typological list, which in likening it to entry into an orchard, shows both the low esteem given to this kind of activity and the potential harm involved in it.¹⁷¹

In Goshen Gottstein’s opinion, the three who ‘looked’ represent the folly and danger of attempting to gain direct access to the merkava through visionary practices, whereas Akiva represents the approved method of approaching the merkava through exegesis of the biblical text. As we have seen, Goshen Gottstein believes that the citation of Cant 1:4a refers to the requirement that such exegesis must be conducted under the supervision of a teacher, a requirement that Akiva, in unit C, is said to have fulfilled.¹⁷² Although he has previously denied the relevance of the unquoted continuation of the verse: ‘...the king has brought me into his chambers’ (Cant 1:4b), Goshen Gottstein now incorporates these words into his exposition. Whereas he interprets the words of the quoted section (Cant 1:4a) in light of the previous unit (C), so that Akiva is 'drawn' by Yoshua, his teacher, Goshen Gottstein relates the continuation (Cant 1:4b) to the following parable (unit E). In his opinion, the ‘upper chamber’ of the parable is the chamber of the king. This in turn is related to the upper chamber encountered in several rabbinic pardes parables. In accordance with his reading of those parables, Goshen Gottstein believes this chamber to signify that the king is not present in the pardes, which is ‘merely a display of his wealth’.¹⁷³ Thus, whereas the three who engaged in visionary practices were beguiled by the pleasures of the king’s orchard, Akiva did not allow himself to be seduced into abandoning the more restrained and legitimate path of sober exegesis. In consequence, he was rewarded by

¹⁷² See pp. 428–429 above.
the king, who drew him upwards above the *pardes* and admitted him to his ‘upper chamber’. In other words, God conferred upon Akiva an unsought—*ergo*, legitimate and superior—mystical experience:

Those who gaze at the orchard show their lack of interest in the king himself. They are interested in his riches and wealth; they are allured by his orchard, but they do not approach the king himself. Only he who limits his gazing at the orchard, showing his lack of interest in it as well as his own self-control, is worthy of the king himself. If he is not drawn to the orchard, it is because he desires to reach the king himself. The king invites such a person to join him. Thus, R. Akiba is not said to have looked at all, but rather to have ascended. R. Akiba ascended to the king himself, rather than losing himself in the delights of the garden.\(^{174}\)

This understanding of the story, Goshen Gottstein suggests, explains the distinction between ‘looking’ and ‘feasting one’s eyes’ in the Tosefta, unit E:

Attempting to see the *merkabah* is an expression of spiritual gluttony, such as the three sages exhibit; exegetical activity is a limited form of looking which precludes gluttony. This constrained activity, moreover, holds the promise of receiving a direct vision of the king, or a direct invitation by him. This is not human effort; a person enters without permission and takes of the fruit of the divine orchard. Rather, it is a gift given at God’s initiative. It is the gift of God’s presence, granted to the one who follows the path of moderation, which is mediated by the protecting tradition.\(^{175}\)

In connection with the alleged theme of ‘spiritual gluttony’, Goshen Gottstein later states that ‘the proof texts regarding both ben Zoma and Elisha b. Avuya refer to eating or at least tasting’.\(^{176}\) This is, admittedly, true of the text applied to ben Zoma (in ms. London, ben Azzai). However, the text applied to Elisha: ‘Do not let your mouth lead your flesh into sin…’ (Eccl 5:5a) can only be understood in this way if we choose to ignore the scriptural context of the verse, which concerns not eating, but speech and, specifically, the utterance of vows. This is clearly indicated by the second half of the verse: ‘…and do not say before the angel that it was a mistake’ (Eccl 5:5b). A decision to take this proof text out of context might perhaps be justified if it could be demonstrated on other grounds that ‘spiritual gluttony’ is the defining theme of the *pardes* story. However, the only basis for such an understanding of the

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\(^{175}\) *Ibid.*, 105.

\(^{176}\) *Ibid.*, 113.
story is Goshen Gottstein’s assertion that the term *pardes* is symbolic of ‘pleasure seeking’ in opposition to the study of Tora. We have found that there is no convincing textual support for this assertion, and that it ignores an abundance of evidence to the contrary.

Goshen Gottstein’s closely interconnected interpretation of Tosefta units C, D, and E derives its supposed legitimacy from two premises: first, that *tHag* 2:1–7 is a unified literary composition; and second, that a distinction between exegetical and visionary activity (דרש and הרשת בל) is the central issue of this passage. We have found that neither premise can be sustained. Deprived of these foundations, Goshen Gottstein’s theory of the text’s meaning is supported only by supposed parallels in sources the relevance of which has been found to be, at best, extremely dubious. It may perhaps be possible to maintain the validity of some of the verbal and thematic connections proposed by Goshen Gottstein if we attribute them to the redactional activity of the compiler of this text. The possibility that *נָרוּצָה* (Cant 1:4a) in unit D may be related in this way to הרשת in unit C has been considered. However, it is very doubtful that the singular term *עלות* (‘upper chamber’) in E alludes to Cant 1:4b, since the scriptural term for the king’s chambers (**חֲדָרָיו**) is (i) different and (ii) plural. Having previously pointed to the genre of *pardes* parables as supplying the probable background of the ‘upper chamber’ in E, Goshen Gottstein fails to establish a connection between the * עולה* in those parables and the **חֲדָרָיו** of Cant 1:4b. Moreover, a precise parallel to the language of the Tosefta, unit E is encountered in *mMid* 4:5, which supports an altogether different understanding of the parable and its meaning. Finally, Goshen Gottstein’s assertion that the *pardes* is symbolic of ‘pleasure seeking’ and ‘spiritual gluttony’ is central to his ‘parabolic’ interpretation of the passage, but this assertion is not supported by any real evidence, either internal or external to the text.

‘*Four Entered Paradise’ as a Polemical Composition:*

*The Three Minor Dramatis Personae and Their Significance*

Goshen Gottstein emphasizes that, according to his reading of ‘*Four Entered Paradise’ in the context of the Tosefta, it ‘expresses not only

177 See pp. 428–429 and 436–437 above.

178 See p. 377 above.
warning but also apology, polemic and appropriation’. In his view, the composer of the passage both knew and disapproved of traditions that cast Akiva in the role of a visionary mystic, such as are found in the hekhalot literature:

The statement made by this passage can be construed as a response to other presentations of R. Akiba which cast him in a more actively visionary role. This document is thus a polemic focusing on the figure of R. Akiba, and it constitutes an important witness to the perception of R. Akiba as a mystical hero. This perception occurs in the hekhalot literature; the Tosefta presents an early expression of the same perception, viewed from a polemical perspective. The polemic finds expression in its adaptation of the terms 'ascended' and 'descended', which are charged with meaning from other contexts. The Fifth Unit [= Unit E] then casts these terms in a new context, one that neutralizes the original usage and appropriates the figure of R. Akiba for another understanding. R. Akiba did attain great mystical heights and ascension. He did not, however, follow the questionable path of self-initiated visionary activities; rather, he followed the exegetical path, and God, when God saw fit, granted him that which God chose to grant. Read in this light, this passage testifies to the recognition of R. Akiba as a mystical hero and to a discussion of the nature of this hero. This polemical document does not teach about R. Akiba in a historical fashion; rather it shows us how certain circles may have described this hero and how other circles attempted to counter this description. It is thus an important historical document not as biography, but as testimony to conflicting ideological tendencies of competing religious groups.

According to Goshen Gottstein, the pardes story was then subsequently reappropriated by the visionary tradition against which it was originally directed:

The polemical nature of this passage allows it to be interpreted as a mystical document. Since it is cast in language that shares points of contact with hekhalot literature, and since it attempts to touch upon a subject matter that crosses the lines of different groups and literary corpora, the history of the interpretation of this document is one of appropriation. Those against whom the passage speaks can find in this document an expression of their own voice, as one sees from the Babylonian Talmud’s appropriation of this story, which sees it as the record of an actual heavenly journey. This is not testimony to the original meaning of our text, but indirect testimony to its polemical message, which can be misunderstood easily.

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180 Ibid.
181 Ibid., 106.
Goshen Gottstein’s theory that the term *pardes* is symbolic of visionary practice (*הסתר* as opposed to scriptural exegesis (*דרש*)) has been found to have no basis, either within mHag 2:1–7 or outside it. However, his position that the history of the *pardes* story involved a process of polemic and appropriation is in accordance with my own. As we saw in chapter 13, the editor of the mystical collection took a story derived from the visionary-mystical tradition and adapted it to his own polemical purpose by adding the names of the three *talmidei hakhamim*, thereby making it into an illustration of the merkava restriction in mHag 2:1a.

Despite Goshen Gottstein’s emphasis on the supposed lateness of the hekhalot sources, his reading of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ in the Tosefta is clearly predicated on the assumption that a visionary tradition of the kind preserved in those sources was already in existence at the time when this version was composed. He himself argues that the Tosefta appropriates the language of the visionary tradition in order to polemicize against it. In short, his insistence that the *pardes* story was appropriated by the writers of the visionary-mystical tradition from its context in the Tosefta, rather than the other way around, is uneconomical and unfounded.

Gosshen Gottstein’s analysis of traditions in other sources concerning the three minor *dramatis personae* is an important component of his interpretation of the *pardes* story. He begins by considering the dream-object lists in ARN(a) 40, ARN(b) 46, and bBer 57b. He observes that these lists contain the names of early Tannaitic figures only, and that these traditions appear to have priority over the *pardes* story in the Tosefta:

> The likelihood that this text created—and therefore does not know of—the *pardes* episode is... strengthened when we note the different lists. R. Akiba is not listed along with the other three disciples. If the *pardes* passage were the source of this information, it would be unreasonable to locate R. Akiba in a different list than his three comrades. It seems very likely, then, that the editor of the ‘mystical collection’ took members of two existing lists and combined them into one story.

There is further evidence that this tradition is not cognizant of the *pardes* incident. To assume that this tradition is dependent on the *pardes* incident would be difficult, since the characterization of the various sages

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182 See Ch 13, pp. 358–364 above.
in no way emerges from the *pardes* passage. Neither wisdom nor fear of sin find expression in the behavior of ben Azzai and ben Zoma.183

Here, Goshen Gottstein fails to distinguish between the categories ‘sage’ (*hakham*) and ‘disciple’ (*talmid*). As we have seen, that distinction is the key to the meaning of the adapted *pardes* story of the mystical collection. Goshen Gottstein disputes this finding:

If Morray-Jones is right that they are not sages, then none of the three disciples should evoke the attribute of wisdom. After all, their problem is that they are not sages (*hakhamim*). Why associate wisdom (*hokmah*) with any one of them?184

This objection is evidently based on a confusion between the sources. The status of *talmid* only acquires the significance of a ‘problem’ in the context of the talmudic version of ‘Four Entered Paradise’, due to its juxtaposition with mHag 2:1. This source does not associate ben Zoma or ben Azzai and wisdom. That association occurs only in the dream-object list, where the status of *talmid* does not carry the significance of a ‘problem’. Moreover, the dream-object list, which is the only source to associate one of the *talmidim* with wisdom, does nonetheless explicitly distinguish the status of *talmid* from the status of *hakham*.

Although Goshen Gottstein’s conclusion that the dream-object lists have priority over the talmudic version of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ is certainly correct, he has failed to understand the way in which these sources are related. It is true that in the *pardes* story, nothing is said about ben Azzai or ben Zoma that would explain their associations in the dream-object lists. However, this is a point which cuts in two directions, since the dream-object lists provide no explanation of their behaviour or their fates in the *pardes* story unless we acknowledge the significance of their status as *talmidei hakhamim*.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Goshen Gottstein rightly observes that Elisha’s evil character is not mentioned in Avot de-R. Natan or Avot, both of which record his sayings together with those of other disciples and sages of unblemished reputation.185 Goshen Gottstein infers that when these sources were compiled, Elisha was still regarded as a legitimate transmitter of tradition, and that his evil reputation arose only in later, post-Tannaitic times. In his opinion, the primary responsibility

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185 See p. 363 above.
for Elisha’s evil reputation in the later tradition should be ascribed to the composer of the *pardes* story in the Tosefta, who has taken the teachings of this hitherto perfectly respectable figure and ‘subverted’ their meaning in the service of his own literary purpose.186

Goshen Gottstein finds a close parallel to the expression ‘cut the shoots’ (קנעיין אפרט והניעות) in a *pardes* parable preserved in DeutR 7,4:

_To keep and do all his commandments_ (Deut 28:1). R. Shimon b. Halafta said: Everyone who learns words of Tora and does not perform them will suffer a more severe punishment than one who did not learn at all. What is this like? Like a king who had a *pardes* in which he put two tenants. One kept planting trees and cutting them down (אילונות נוטע והיה ומקציץ), while the other would neither plant trees nor cut them down. With which one would the king be angry? Wouldn’t it be with the one who kept planting and then cutting down? In the same way, one who learns words of Tora but does not perform them will suffer a more severe punishment than one who has never learnt at all.187

Here, the *pardes* obviously represents the Tora, while the cutting down of newly planted trees is a metaphor for failing to fulfil the commandments one has learnt. This corresponds closely to what is said of Elisha b. Avuya in the Bavli, the Yerushalmi and elsewhere.188 However, Goshen Gottstein denies that this explains the original meaning of the expression ‘cut the shoots’ in the ‘original’ *pardes* story in the Tosefta, where he thinks it alludes to a teaching that is attributed to Elisha in ARN(a) 24:

He [Elisha] used to say: A man can learn Tora for ten years and forget it in two years. How so? Because if a man sits for six months and does not review, he will find himself declaring the unclean to be clean and the clean to be unclean. If he goes twelve months without reviewing, he will find himself confusing the sages with one another. If he goes eighteen months without reviewing, he will find himself forgetting the section headings. And as a result of declaring the unclean to be clean and the clean to be unclean, and confusing the sages with one another, and forgetting the section headings and the titles of the treatises, in the end, he sits in silence. And of him Solomon said, ‘I passed by the field of the slothful man, by the vineyard (כרם) of the

man void of understanding; and behold, it was all overgrown with thorns; its ground was covered with nettles; and its stone wall (אֲבָנָויוּן) was broken down’ (Prov 24:30–31)—for when the wall of the vineyard (นะคะל) has fallen, the whole vineyard is utterly destroyed. 189

According to Goshen Gottstein, the author of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ in the Tosefta has connected this saying of Elisha with the following unattributed teaching, found in ARN(b) 1:190

‘And make a fence (סייג) around the Tora’ (mAvot 1:1). A vineyard (כרם) that is surrounded by a wall (גדר) is not like a vineyard which is not surrounded by a wall. A man should not make a wall in excess of the root (העיקר), lest the wall fall and cut the shoots (את ווקציץ). For thus we find that the first man made a wall in excess of the root, and the wall fell and cut the shoots.

Goshen Gottstein makes a number of inaccurate and misleading comments on these texts. He comments that in ARN(a) 24, Elisha speaks of ‘moving away from the Tora’,191 whereas in fact he speaks only of forgetting the Tora he has learned, which is not at all the same thing. He further states that the proof text in the same passage (Prov 24:30–31) ‘speaks of a stone wall falling on the vineyard’, as found in ARN(b) 1.192 However, there is no indication of this either in the verse itself or in Elisha’s saying. In both cases, the falling of the ‘wall’—symbolic of abandoning the discipline of regular review—leaves the ‘vineyard’ unprotected, thereby assuring its eventual destruction. There is no suggestion that the wall has fallen on top of the vineyard—an idea which, in the context of Elisha’s metaphor, would make no sense at all. With regard to the motif of ‘cutting shoots’ in ARN(b) 1, Goshen Gottstein comments:

The combination of the vineyard and the falling fence leads naturally to a description of the kind of calamity that could befall the vineyard—cutting the plants. Here, this concept concerns only the physical vineyard and is devoid of symbolic or mystical associations.193

This is quite wrong. Further on in the same chapter, we read:

189 Ed. Schechter, 78. This saying is not found in ARN(b) 35.
190 Ed. Schechter, 3; not found in ARN(a); see further below.
192 Ibid., 117.
193 Ibid.
And whence do we learn that the first man made a ‘fence’ (סייג) for God’s words? As the Holy One, blessed be he, said to him, ‘From every tree in the garden you may freely eat, but from the tree of knowledge . . . you may not eat’ (Gen 2:16–17). Now, from the words of Eve, we learn that the first man imposed a ‘fence’ on her. The serpent was arguing with himself, saying, ‘If I approach the man and speak to him, I know that he will not listen to me. Instead, I shall approach Eve, since I know that women will listen to anyone.’ He went and said to her, ‘Did God say: “You shall not eat of any tree in the garden?”’ (Gen 3:1). She said to him: ‘Behold, of the fruit of the trees in the garden we may eat, but of the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God said: “You shall neither eat of it nor touch it, lest you die,”’ etc. (Gen 3:2–3). When the serpent heard Eve’s words, he found an opening by which to enter.\(^{194}\)

The point here is that, whereas God forbade Adam—only to eat of the tree of knowledge (Gen 2:17), Eve’s statement to the serpent states an additional prohibition against touching it (Gen 3:3). The midrash attributes this additional prohibition to Adam and interprets it as an example—in fact, the very first example—of a ‘fence around the Tora’. This additional prohibition or ‘fence’ was intended to create a ‘safety zone’ around the original divine commandment, but unfortunately, it was susceptible of exploitation by the serpent. The catastrophic consequence is explained more clearly in ARN(a) 1, where the serpent says to Eve, ‘Look! I am touching it, and I do not die. You too, if you touch it, will not die.’\(^{195}\) This version, however, omits the earlier saying about the vineyard and the wall and so does not include the expression ‘cut the shoots’ (הנטיעות את קצץ).

Goshen Gottstein’s attempt to connect Elisha’s citation of Prov 24:30–31 in ARN(a) 4 with the expression ‘cut the shoots’ in the unattributed saying in ARN(b) 1 is thus extremely forced. In ARN(b) 1, the expression refers to breach of the commandments. This meaning is also carried by the very similar language of DeutR 7,4. In the absence of evidence to the contrary, it seems reasonable to conclude that this was also the meaning of ‘cut the shoots’ in the the pardes story, even before the expression came to be associated with Elisha. The fact that the expression is associated with the Garden of Eden is supportive of this conclusion. This understanding of ‘cut the shoots’ in turn supports the traditional—and most straightforward—explanation of the motif of danger at the story’s core. The reader is warned that attempts to enter

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194 ARN(b) 1 (ed. Schechter, 4–5); also in ARN(a) 1 (ed. Schechter, 4).
195 Ed. Schechter, 4.
the *pardes* by persons of lesser caliber than Akiva—or, in the adapted version, by persons other than a formally accredited *hakham*—are liable to result in death, injury, and/or breach of the commandments.

Goshen Gottstein finds significance in another of Elisha’s sayings in ARN(a) 24:196

He used to say: If one learns Tora during one’s childhood, the words of Tora are absorbed into one’s blood and issue from one’s mouth distinctly; but if one learns Tora during one’s old age, the words of Tora are not absorbed into one’s blood and do not issue from one’s mouth distinctly. And thus the poet says: ‘If in your youth you did not desire them (なぜ
（ではありません）, how will you obtain them in your old age?197

Goshen Gottstein juxtaposes this passage with Eccl 5:5a, the proof text applied to Elisha in the *pardes* story. He understands this text to mean that

Elisha is drawn by his gluttony to eat the fruit of the orchard. His mouth leads him to sin through the act of eating in the wrong fashion and in the wrong context.198

On Elisha’s saying in ARN(a) 24, he comments:

Here again the theme of acquiring or not acquiring the Tora (*sic*). Elisha b. Abuyah expresses this in terms of blood and mouth; the ideal process is the absorption of the words of the Tora by the blood, leading to their finding expression in the mouth. Desire leads to a reversal of this relationship: in desire, the mouth causes the flesh to sin. Desire, in reversing the order of events that should be typical of ideal Tora study, is therefore once more portrayed as its opposite.199

As we have already observed, Goshen Gottstein’s explanation of the proof text, Eccl 5:5, is extremely doubtful.200 Moreover, his attempt to explain the proof text by connecting it to the motif of ‘desire’ in Elisha’s saying in ARN(a) 24 is quite clearly misguided. In the first place, the saying in ARN(a) 24 makes no reference to eating. Secondly, in ARN(a) 24, the object of the verb חפץ (to ‘desire’ or ‘delight in’)

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197 Schechter (78 n. 12) records the ms. variation: ‘…5as it is said, ‘From your youth, you have not cut (ㄴㅈ
( VOID)); how will you acquire them in your old age?’ The fact that this variant uses the verb 짤
should be noted, but the meaning in this context is obscure. I have been unable to discover the source of either version of the saying.
199 Ibid., 117–118.
200 See pp. 478–479 above.
is the words of Tora and it is precisely the failure to desire them in one’s youth that is condemned. In other words, the value attached to the verb in this context is morally positive, and not morally negative, which is what Goshen Gottstein’s exposition would require. Thus, his conclusion that, in the pardes story, the proper relationship between Elisha’s ‘mouth’ and his ‘flesh’ (or ‘blood’) is ‘reversed’ by his ‘desire’ has no basis in either text.

However, these considerations do not invalidate Goshen Gottstein’s observation that Elisha’s evil reputation does not seem to have been known to the editors of Avot or Avot de-R. Natan. It may therefore be the case that the earliest source to associate Elisha with breach of the commandments (‘cut the shoots’) is ‘Four Entered Paradise’ in the mystical collection. Goshen Gottstein’s suggestion that the origin of Elisha’s evil reputation can be traced to this source therefore deserves consideration. In his opinion, the various accounts of Elisha’s wickedness and apostasy arose out of attempts to explain his role in the pardes story, the manner in which he ‘cut the shoots’, and the meaning of the proof text, Eccl 5:5, in this context. He further points out that in the Tosefta’s recension of ‘Four Entered Paradise’, the nickname הָרֵד (‘the other one’), which is generally associated with Elisha’s evil status, is in ms. Vienna found only in the opening sentence, where ms. London omits the four names altogether. This, Goshen Gottstein rightly observes, ‘is clearly a sign of a later addition’. In the main body of this version of the story, the nickname is used only by ms. Erfurt, while mss. Vienna and London both refer to Elisha by his proper name. It is therefore possible that the original editor of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ in the mystical collection was unaware of the nickname הָרֵד. Goshen Gottstein suggests that this nickname may actually have arisen in this context by orthographic alteration of the word אחד (‘one’)—a suggestion which, though far from certain, is by no means incredible. While it

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201 In both biblical and rabbinic literature, the verb is morally neutral and acquires positive or negative value only as determined by its object. See BDB 342b–343a and Jastrow, Dictionary, 492b, and the sources cited there.

202 See Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 126–128; and for for further detail, see idem, The Sinner, 21–229.

203 See p. 344 n. 13 above.


205 See p. 346 n. 20 above.

206 For a very different interpretation of the nickname הָרֵד, see Stroumsa, ‘Aher: A Gnostic’.
is not necessary to decide this question here, it is worth observing that Goshen Gottstein’s theory about Elisha is consistent with my analysis of the sources, according to which Elisha’s role is explained by his status as a talmid, so that the prior existence of his evil reputation does not need to be assumed. Unfortunately, Goshen Gottstein fails to provide a satisfactory explanation for this radical alteration of Elisha’s status, since his attempts to interpret what is said of Elisha in the pardes story as a subversion of his teachings in Avot de-R. Natan are, as we have seen, unconvincing. He also fails to explain what might have motivated the editor of the pardes story to impugn the reputation of a previously respected figure in this way.207 This problem is resolved if it is recognized that the names of the three talmidei hakhamim have been interpolated into a pre-existent story on the basis of mHag 2:1. That theory of the story’s origins is further supported by Goshen Gottstein’s recognition that the four names in the opening sentence of the Tosefta’s recension have been interpolated, since the names are not included in the opening sentence of the hekhalot recension (A1b) but only in the interpolated section (B1a–e), which has been taken from a talmudic source by a later generation of hekhalot redactors. Thus, according to Goshen Gottstein’s own theory, the original text is at this point preserved in the hekhalot recension.208

Goshen Gottstein’s theory that the author of tHag 2:1–7 deliberately subverted Elisha’s teachings applies also to ben Azzai and ben Zoma. In the case of ben Azzai, Goshen Gottstein refers to GenR 62:2, where ben Azzai cites Ps 116:15 with reference to the death of God’s saints.209 In his opinion, the author of the pardes story has subverted the intention behind this saying in order to make the point that

rather than wait to see the recompense upon death, ben Azzai’s impatient desire led him to his own premature death, as he attempted to look upon

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207 In The Sinner, 226, Goshen Gottstein concludes that the author of the pardes story ‘did not intend to implicate Elisha ben Abuya in any specific way and...was not concerned with providing historical information about him’. See further, ibid., 37–61 (mainly reprising his argument in ‘Four Entered’).

208 This point alone does not, of course, prove the absolute priority of the hekhalot recension, since the names are also omitted in the opening sentence by the Tosefta, ms. London and the Yerushalmi. It does, however, locate the hekhalot recension at an early stage of the textual tradition, prior to ms. Vienna and Erfurt of the Tosefta. Moreover, the interpolation of the names at this point is best explained by the prior existence of HekhZ/MerkR, A and C, which mentions no names other than Akiva.

209 See p. 446 above.
something he was unable or unworthy to look upon. Ben Azzai’s teaching that one can only see God upon death thus would be subverted by his attempt to see God in this life in order to indicate the harmful effects of unguided gazing.\textsuperscript{210}

Goshen Gottstein also refers to a saying attributed to ben Azzai in Sifra on Leviticus:\textsuperscript{211}

R. Dosa says: Behold, it says, ‘For a man may not see me and live’ (Exod 33:20). While they are living, they do not see, but in the hour of their death,\textsuperscript{212} they do see. Thus it says, ‘Before him, all those who go down to dust shall bow; and he who could not keep his soul alive’ (Ps 22:30). R. Akiva says: ‘For a man may not see me and live’—even the hayyot\textsuperscript{213} that carry the throne\textsuperscript{213} cannot see the Glory! Shimon b. Azzai\textsuperscript{214} said: I do not mean to repudiate my master’s words, but to add to his words: ‘for a man may not see me and live’—even the ministering angels,\textsuperscript{215} whose life is the life of eternity, do not see the Glory!

According to Goshen Gottstein,

Ben Azzai says here that man simply cannot see God. Why then, asks the editor, was he unable to control his gluttony, and why did he attempt to have a vision of God which could only lead to his death? . . . Ben Azzai, it seems, should have known better.\textsuperscript{216}

Goshen Gottstein’s interpretation of ben Azzai’s saying is quite obviously wrong. Ben Azzai’s point is that since death is a necessary pre-condition for the vision of the Glory, that vision can be experienced only by human beings, who are capable of death, and that the angels are excluded from the vision because they do not die. While it is certainly interesting that a saying attributed to ben Azzai associates death with the vision of the Glory, it is not at all clear that his role in the pardes story constitutes a ‘subversion’ of this teaching. Moreover,

\textsuperscript{210} Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 110.
\textsuperscript{211} Sifra 2 (= dibbura denedava 2). The following translation is based on ed. Friedmann, \textit{Sifra de-vei Rav}, 37; and ed. Weiss, ed. \textit{Hu Sefer Torat ha-Kohanim}, 4a. I was not able to consult the edition of Finkelstein, \textit{Sifra on Leviticus}, vol. 2, \textit{Text}, but see n. 214 below.
\textsuperscript{212} Following ed. Friedmann; ed. Weiss omits ‘the hour of’.
\textsuperscript{213} Ed. Friedmann omits ‘the throne’.
\textsuperscript{215} Ed. Weiss omits ‘ministering’.
\textsuperscript{216} Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered Paradise’, 111.
as Goshen Gottstein himself admits, this saying is also found in other sources, where it is not attributed to ben Azzai. 217 The attribution may therefore be a consequence of his role in the pardes story, rather than vice versa. Alternatively, if the attribution to ben Azzai is assumed to be authentic, the saying may well have been available to the editor of the mystical collection, who can hardly fail to have noticed the similarity of its theme with that of GenR 62.2. Even so, Goshen Gottstein’s convoluted theory of the relationship between these texts is not at all convincing. A simpler and more straightforward explanation of the indebtedness of the editor of the talmudic pardes story to GenR 62.2 has been proposed above, 218 and this explanation applies equally to his use of the saying in Sifra if the attribution to ben Azzai is accepted. So far as I can tell, there is nothing in these texts that would support Goshen Gottstein’s theory that ben Azzai’s death in the pardes story is a consequence of his ‘spiritual gluttony’.

In connection with the story of Yoshua’s meeting with ben Zoma (tHag 2:1–7, unit G), Goshen Gottstein comments:

We know that ben Zoma may have engaged in the study of ma’aseh bereshit, since Genesis Rabbah has preserved some of his teachings on the story of creation. 219

Although Goshen Gottstein recognizes that this story, which evidently attributes ben Zoma’s early death to his erroneous speculations about maase bereshit, contradicts ‘Four Entered Paradise’, where the context is maase merkava, he resists the obvious inference that the editor of tHag 2:1–7 has combined two independent sources, and insists that both stories are ‘local inventions’. 220 Since he is unable to resolve the contradiction between the two stories, he suggests that unit G

…plays out the alternative to R. Akiba’s relations with R. Yehoshu’a and thus figures in the structure of the ‘mystical collection’ as a whole. If relations between teacher and disciple are the text’s main concern, questions of ma’aseh bereshit and ma’aseh merkabah become merely instances for illustrating another set of concerns. Seen in this light, the ben Zoma traditions, particularly to the extent to which they repeat and

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217 Ibid., n. 96. See the sources cited by Finkelstein (above p. 489 n. 214).
218 See pp. 488–489 above.
220 Ibid.
even contradict each other, should be understood as further examples of the creative power of the editor.221

This is, without question, special pleading. To accept the inconsistencies and contradictions in a text of this nature as evidence, not of multiple sources, but of the ‘creative power’ of the composer is to abandon the historical-critical method of enquiry. From a source- and redaction-critical perspective, it is not reasonable to conclude that the story of ben Zoma and Yoshua, which is also found outside the mystical collection in GenR 2,6, originated in the same context as the *pardes* story. At least one—in my view, both—of these units must have originated outside the mystical collection.

Goshen Gottstein’s consideration of other traditions concerning ben Zoma starts with a passage in ARN(b) 33,222 which begins with a direct quotation from mAvot 4:1:

Ben Zoma says: Who is wise? He who learns from all men, as it is said, ‘From all my teachers, I have gained understanding’ (Ps 119:19).223 Who is honoured? He who honours humankind, as it is said, ‘For I shall honour those who honour me, and those who despise me shall be lightly esteemed’ (1 Sam 2:30).224 Who is mighty? He who subdues his (evil) inclination, as it is said, ‘He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty’ (Prov 16:32). Who is rich? He who is happy with his lot, as it is said, ‘You will be happy and it will be well with you’ (Ps 128:2)—‘you will be happy’ in this world and ‘it will be well with you’ in the world to come.

In ARN(a) 33, these sayings are followed by another, the Hebrew text of which reads as follows:225

Goshen Gottstein, basing his translation on that of Saldarini, renders this as follows:

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222 Ed. Schechter, 72.
223 Heb.: *מכל מלומד, ומקלך*. in context: ‘I have more understanding than all my teachers.’
224 In the biblical context, the speaker is God.
225 Ed. Schechter, *ibid*.
226 Ed. Schechter reads: אָבִי יְדֵי, but see his Appendix 3 (*ibid.*, 172), where this reading is corrected.
He used to say: Do not look into a man’s vineyard. And if you have looked, do not go down into it. If you have gone in, do not stare. If you stared, do not touch. If you touched, do not eat. If a man eats, he removes his soul from the life of this world and the life of the world to come.227

Goshen Gottstein understands this saying to be a continuation of the preceding extended quotation from mAvot 4:1:

The warning follows a series of statements of Ben Zoma describing who is a wise, mighty, and rich man; such a person would clearly not go into another’s vineyard. Thus, the vineyard passage may well be a moral admonition that combines reference to the various virtues upon which Ben Zoma expounded previously. In the hands of the editor of the ‘mystical collection’ this passage served as the basis for the formation of the pardes story. The editor used this statement in an attempt to depict Ben Zoma as acting in contradiction of his own teaching.228

In Goshen Gottstein’s opinion, ben Zoma’s saying is especially significant, since it establishes a connection between looking (הציץ) and eating, since uncontrolled ‘looking’ leads one to enter the vineyard and so, eventually, to ‘eat’ its fruit. He suggests that the author of the pardes story in the Tosefta has used the verb הציץ as a shorthand term for the whole of this process, intending his readers to understand that looking leads, via unlawful entry, to eating stolen fruit—in other words, to the sin of ‘spiritual gluttony’. The same author, he maintains, has subverted ben Zoma’s teachings, like those of Elisha and ben Azzai, in the service of his anti-visionary polemical intention:

In the hands of the editor, physical gluttony has been transformed into the three sages’ spiritual gluttony; they could not control their passion—made manifest in the act of forbidden looking—and they entered the orchard to their detriment. Thus Ben Zoma is portrayed as one who is neither mighty, nor wise, nor rich: his desire leads him to transgress against his own admonitions.229

Goshen Gottstein’s suggestion that the motif of not entering another person’s vineyard is intended as an illustration of the three qualities:  

227 Goshen Gottstein, ‘Four Entered’, 112; cf. Saldarini, The Fathers, 195. Saldarini reads ‘orchard’ in place of ‘vineyard’ (and see ibid., n. 10) but in private correspondence has kindly confirmed that הכרם, not פרדס, is found in all manuscripts of this text. Goshen Gottstein follows Saldarini verbatim, except for the seemingly correct, albeit silent, emendation: ‘vineyard’.
229 Ibid., 113.
wise, mighty and rich is altogether unconvincing. There are, after all, many things that a person with these three qualities would not do, and in the absence of any explanation of the specific relevance of this particular motif, the supposed illustration is absurdly arbitrary. Goshen Gottstein’s explanation of the relationship of this saying to the preceding quotation from mAvot 4:1 is, therefore, very weak. Whereas the sayings taken from mAvot 4:1 consist of questions, answers and supporting proof texts, the vineyard saying includes none of these elements. It is thus very different, in terms of both form and content, from the sayings in mAvot 4:1 and is most unlikely to have originated in the same context. A further difficulty is that the radical consequences of eating the fruit of the vineyard make it very clear that no ordinary vineyard is intended.230 A slightly different version of the same saying, attributed to Eliezer b. Hyrkanos, occurs in SER 8:231

(A) It is said about that time (i.e., the time of the captivity in Egypt), ‘Catch us the foxes’ (Cant 2:15)—these are the wicked Egyptians—‘the little foxes (that spoil the vineyards)’ (ibid.)—these are the sons of the Egyptians—‘for our vineyards are in blossom’ (ibid.)—these are the house of Israel, who are likened to a vineyard (אלל בית ישראל שוה מבשלין), as it is said, ‘For the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel’ (Isa 5:7).

(B) R. Eliezer the Great said: The vineyard of the Holy One, blessed be he, is the house of Israel. Do not look into it. If you have looked into it, do not enter inside it. If you have entered inside it, do not take pleasure in it. And if you have taken pleasure in it, do not eat of its fruit. If you have looked, entered, taken pleasure, and eaten of its fruit—the end of such a one is that he will be cut off from the world.

In this context, the significance of the vineyard is clearly symbolic, not literal. In section A, the symbolism is quite clear and straightforward: the vineyard stands for the house (i.e., family) of Israel. Eliezer’s saying (B) appears initially to carry the same meaning but, on closer examination, the prohibited actions of looking at the vineyard, going into

230 This is conceded by Goshen Gottstein (ibid., 113 n. 103) who, however, fails to consider the full implications of this observation.
231 Ed. Friedmann, 1:43.
it, taking pleasure in it and eating its fruit make no sense at all if this meaning is assumed. Moreover, this reading requires us to assume that Eliezer is addressing persons outside the community of Israel, which is inconsistent with the literary context and would be very unusual in a saying of this form. It is, therefore, safe to conclude that Eliezer’s saying (B) did not originate in this context and that the editor has connected it to the preceding discussion (A) by using the word קְרֵמָ ('vineyard’) as a ‘hook’.

I submit that, if Eliezer’s saying is considered independently of this context, it is most reasonably explained as an allusion to the celestial temple of the visionary tradition, this being the ‘house’ which is symbolized by the vineyard. Since that temple was considered to be identical with gan eden or pardes, the prohibitions against looking, entering, taking pleasure and eating all make perfect sense—as, of course, does the radical consequence of failing to observe them. If this explanation is accepted, it must also be the original meaning of the version in ARN(a) 33, confirming Joseph M. Baumgarten’s suggestion that Ben Zoma’s words in ARN(a) 33, אל תציץ לכרמ של עד, should be translated: ‘do not glance into the vineyard of Adam’ and interpreted as a reference to the celestial temple-paradise. The fact that ben Zoma and Eliezer are both associated with the visionary-mystical merkava tradition is another indication that the saying may well have originated in this context. This suspicion is confirmed by a comparison between these two sayings and the opening passage of HekhZ ($ 335b):

Be careful of the Glory of your Creator and do not go in to him; and if you have gone in to him, do not take pleasure in him; and if you have taken pleasure in him, your end is to be cast out from the world!

As we saw in Chapter 10, this passage antedates mHag 2:1 and is therefore extremely ancient.

Curiously enough, Goshen Gottstein argues that the author of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ has adapted ben Zoma’s vineyard saying to his own purpose by changing the term kerem to pardes, which, he concedes, is

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233 The association of Ben Zoma with maase merkava occurs primarily in the context of ‘Four Entered Paradise’. For his association with maase bereshit, see tHag. 2:1–7, section G and parallels. Eliezer is mentioned several times in the hekhalot literature, often as the mystical teacher of Akiva (see Schäfer, Konkordanz 1:52c, and the sources cited there).
234 See pp. 259–263 above.
often ‘a technical term for the heavenly paradise’. However, he maintains that the author has appropriated the term from the mystical tradition and made it the instrument of his own anti-mystical polemic:

Rather than serve as a mystical record, this language is transformed to convey the lessons that orchard parables commonly convey… The shift from vineyard to orchard allowed the editor not only to express lessons typical of rabbinic parables, but to allow these lessons to operate within a polemical context.

This argument is exceedingly tortuous, and the weakness of its underlying premise—that generalized inferences may legitimately be drawn about the ‘lessons’ characteristic of all parables, irrespective of their individual contexts—has already been exposed. A more reasonable and economical explanation of the data presented by Goshen Gottstein is provided by the hypothesis that ‘Four Entered Paradise’ and the vineyard saying are both derived from the same visionary tradition. In fact, in the light of HekhZ § 335b, Eliezer’s vineyard saying may be a reference to the original pardes story, prior to the addition of the three talmidim.

According to Goshen Gottstein,

the editor of the ‘mystical collection’ has taken various statements made by all three sages, and transformed the statements in order to indicate that the spiritual gluttony, expressed in the act of looking into the orchard, is contrary both to the sages’ teachings of the Tora and ultimately to the Tora itself.

This theory has been shown to be completely unfounded. In the first place, there is no real basis for the association of the pardes with ‘spiritual gluttony’. Secondly, the theory that the author of ‘Four Entered Paradise’ took sayings attributed in other texts to the three minor characters, deliberately subverted their meaning, and then used them as the basis of his own composition is extremely convoluted. As we have seen, this theory does not offer the most economical explanation of the relationships between these sources, and the author’s motive for undermining the reputations of these hitherto respected characters is not adequately explained.

236 Ibid.
237 Ibid., 118.
Summary of Findings

This chapter will have severely tried the patience of the reader. It was necessary to include it because Goshen Gottstein’s superficially plausible reading of the *pardes* story would, if left unchallenged, undermine the major premise of this book. As we have seen, Goshen Gottstein’s theory is grounded in a set of assumptions about the relationships between the ‘mainstream’ rabbinic and mystical traditions that, if accepted, would place an insuperable roadblock in the path of scholarly exploration of potential connections between merkava mysticism and the books of the New Testament. Unfortunately, that theory is asserted on the basis of very dubious readings of inadequately examined texts. It has therefore been necessary to examine a large number of those texts in sufficient detail to expose the weakness of the edifice that has been built upon them. This process has at times been very tedious.

Goshen Gottstein’s thesis is the outcome of an invalid method proceeding from false assumptions. He appears to regard the rabbinic literature as a more or less homogenous body of material, rather than a collection of disparate redactions of highly variegated source traditions. This misperception causes him to adopt an exegetical approach to his sources which may fairly be characterized as ‘midrashic’. Texts are combined and interpreted in the light of ‘themes’ discovered in other sources, without regard for their specific contexts, or for the necessary disciplines of source- and redaction-critical analysis. Dubious meanings extracted from one text are uncritically imported into others. This is a method that is capable of yielding any result that may be wished for. Like midrash, it is imaginatively creative, with an astonishing capacity for intricate reasoning and complex speculation. Also like midrash, it may at times amaze and delight the reader. But it is not a legitimate tool of historical research.

In the final analysis, Goshen Gottstein’s assertion that the term *pardes* stands for something that stands in opposition to Tora rests on two sources only. The first of those two texts, mAvot 3:7, does not mention the term *pardes*. The second text, CantR 1,19, is completely misinterpreted by Goshen Gottstein.238 His theory that the term *pardes* stands in opposition to Tora is unsupported by either of these texts and ignores

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238 See pp. 475–476 above.
an abundance of evidence to the contrary, including a large number of parables in which a pardes is actually symbolic of Tora.

Goshen Gottstein’s theory that the pardes is associated with ‘spiritual gluttony’, and that this is the key to the meaning of the story of the four, has been shown to be similarly unfounded. His assertion that the story is a parable about the distinction between exegetical and visionary activity (דרש and הסתכל) is likewise without evidentiary foundation. His theory that tHag 2:1–7 is a single composition, and the original setting of the pardes story, is unable to withstand form-, source-, and redaction-critical analysis. There is no evidence that the distinction between הדשת and דרשה was of interest to the redactor of this text, in which the only instance of the latter term is a direct quotation of the mishna-lemma to which it is appended. Goshen Gottstein’s examination of the traditions about the three minor dramatis personae is unduly speculative, unnecessarily complicated, and ignores the well-attested, crucial distinction between the terms hakham and talmid.

A further flaw in Goshen Gottstein’s method is his assumption that the contents of the hekhalot compilations are ‘late’ and must therefore be derivative of the better known rabbinic sources. Hence, although he argues that the composer of the mystical collection in the Tosefta intended to oppose and polemicize against the practice of the heavenly ascent, he assumes that the sources which describe and give expression to that practice are both secondary to, and derivative of, the talmudic composition.

This assumption embodies a view of the hekhalot traditions as deviant offshoots from a previously established and normative ‘mainstream’, which is represented by the talmudic sources and the ‘classical’ midrashim. The thrust of this inquiry has been to show that such a view is unfounded. The compilers and redactors of the ‘mainstream’ sources had their own agendas, which they sought to impose on the materials that they inherited from a wide variety of source traditions. Some of those traditions have survived in the hekhalot writings, whose redactors, of course, had agendas of their own, and are known to have interacted with the rabbinic sources. Nonetheless, source-critical analysis shows that in several places, the hekhalot compilers and redactors have preserved those traditions in their earlier and more authentic forms. This is certainly true of ‘Four Entered Paradise’, which embodied a claim made by or on behalf of Akiva that he, like the prophet Ezekiel, had made the visionary ascent to the heavenly temple in the years following the destruction of its earthly counterpart. By identifying the three
who failed in this attempt as *talmidei hakhamim*, and thereby changing the story into an illustration of mHag 2:1, the redactor of the talmudic ‘mystical collection’ appropriated that claim and subordinated to the authoritative community of the Sages (*hakhamim*). However, the tradition out of which that claim emerged was older than the emerging orthodoxy and had other offspring, including the messianic community of the mystic and apostle Paul.
PART III

THE BODY OF THE GLORY: APPROACHING THE NEW TESTAMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SHIUR KOMA TRADITIONS

by

Christopher R.A. Morray-Jones
CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE SHIUR KOMA AND THE ANGELIC ‘YOUTH’

*Mediators of Glory in Merkava Mysticism*

As we have seen in previous chapters, the appearance of God on the celestial throne is referred to in apocalyptic literature and in the later merkava tradition as the Glory (דָּוָּסֶא/כְּבוֹד) or the Power (דָּעָנָע/נְבוֹר/כְּבוֹר) or the Power-Glory, these being technical terms of the visionary-mystical tradition. The Power-Glory is, according to numerous early sources, the embodiment of God’s creative Word (λόγος/מימרא/דבר) or Name (ὄνομα/שם/שֵׁם). Closely bound up with these traditions were those concerning a supreme archangelic intermediary or heavenly primordial man, who was held to embody the divine Name and Image, and to act as God’s agent in Creation and Revelation. In the hekhalot literature, this angel is known by many names, but the best known example is Metatron, the Name-bearing angel, also called ‘the Lesser Lord’ (יהוה הקטון), and celestial vice regent. A well-known story tells that he used to sit upon a replica of the Throne of Glory, wearing a glorious robe and crown, but was dethroned as a result of the heresy of Elisha b. Avuya, who mistook him for a ‘second Power’. A similar intermediary function is ascribed, in a variety of sources, to exalted and enthroned patriarchal figures. Metatron, whose composite character embodies a cluster of originally distinct traditions, was identified with the exalted and transfigured Enoch.

The extent to which these traditions are evidence of ‘dualistic’ or ‘binitarian’ beliefs and practices within pre-Christian Judaism has been disputed. On the one hand, several scholars have demonstrated that speculations concerning a bifurcation of divine functions between God and his manifest kavod, and/or belief in a hypostatic and demiurgic

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1 See also Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism,’ 2–6, and the sources cited there.

2 3 En 12:5 (Schäfer § 15).

‘principal angel’ or ‘heavenly man’, were extremely widespread in the later Second Temple period. Others, however, insist that those texts which appear to personify divine attributes, or to accord divine or semi-divine status to angelic or human intermediaries, are not to be taken literally, and that such traditions therefore did not compromise the essential ‘monotheism’ of Second Temple Judaism. A weakness of the latter approach is that it applies a post-rabbinic conception of what constitutes ‘monotheism’ to pre-rabbinic sources. In point of fact, the rabbinic ‘mono-theology’ was formulated at least partly in response to the ways in which earlier ‘divine agency’ traditions were developed by Christians and other ‘heretical’ groups. Those Jews of the Second Temple period who espoused and developed such traditions evidently did not consider them to be incompatible with belief in, and faithfulness to, the One God of Israel. Generalized assumptions about the parameters of Jewish monotheism therefore do not help us to interpret this material. It is necessary to distinguish between different types of celestial mediator (pre-existent angel, heavenly Wisdom, exalted patriarch, divine Word etc.) and to examine the different ways in which the typical features of these various traditions are developed and combined in the individual sources that make up the markedly heterogenous body of literature at our disposal. Only then is it possible to ask whether, in what sense, and to what extent a specific conceptual product (mediator

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5 See further Hayman, ‘Monotheism’, which objects that the application of such terminology to pre-Christian Judaism is anachronistic and confusing, since it assumes the metaphysical categories of a later era.

6 See esp. Segal, Two Powers, and, further, below.

7 Of the scholars cited in n. 4 above, only Barker has suggested that such Jews were not ‘monotheists’ according to their own self-understanding. She believes that the divine agency traditions of Second Temple Judaism preserved elements of the pre-exilic royal cult, in which the king was mystically identified with יהוה, the God of Israel and firstborn son of the High God עליון אל, and which the deuteronomic reformers, who considered יהוה to be identical with עליון אל, attempted to suppress.
x, as described in source y) was accorded the status of, and worshipped or venerated as, an ‘associate divinity’. 9

Israel’s Worship and the Celestial Liturgy

A central theme of the merkava tradition is the transformation of the visionary who beholds God’s Glory into an angelic or supra-angelic likeness of that divine Image. This transformation is typically described in terms of robing, crowning, anointing, enthronement and/or reception of (or clothing with) the divine Name. It often involves the transformation of the visionary’s body into fire or light and its expansion to cosmic proportions. Paul’s concept of ‘glorification’ (cf. 2 Cor 3) must be—in part, at least—derived from these widely documented traditions. The sources associate this transformation with participation in the celestial liturgy, through the medium of ecstatic praise. 10

As we have seen, the hekhalot writings include elaborate descriptions of the celestial liturgy, together with grandiloquent, image-laden hymns and prayers to be recited by the practitioner. 11 A passage of HekhR stresses the connection between the earthly liturgy of Israel and its heavenly counterpart: 12

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9 See Hurtado, ‘What do we mean?’. Hurtado concedes that speculative ‘divine agency’ traditions had developed within pre-Christian Judaism but distinguishes very sharply between speculation and cultic practice, and maintains that there was no precedent for the worship of Christ as a divine being alongside God, which ‘...apparently represents an extraordinary adaptation of Jewish monotheist tradition’ (ibid., 367, restating the position defended in One God). A similar position is expressed by Eskola, Messiah and Throne, esp. 137–157 and 375–390. Against these, see the detailed and more carefully nuanced discussions of this issue by Chester, ‘Jewish Messianic Expectations’, esp. 60–65; Abrams, ‘Boundaries’; Stuckenbruck, Angel Veneration 5–21, 47–204, and 269–273; and Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology.

10 See further Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism’ and the sources cited there.


12 Hekhalot macroforms included in Schäfer, Synopse are cited according to Schäfer’s paragraph numbers, with additional alphabetical subdivision where appropriate, save that merkava passages of MerkR are cited in accordance with Cohen’s line numbers (see n. 31 below). On the passage here quoted, see further: Goldberg, ‘Einige Bemerkungen’,
(§ 163a) You are blessed by me, you heavens, you earth, and you who descend unto the merkava, if you tell and declare unto my sons what I do at the time of morning prayer, and at afternoon and evening prayer, each and every day, each and every time that Israel say before me: ‘Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord of Hosts!’ (Isa 6:3)

(§ 163b) Teach them, and say to them: Raise your eyes towards Rakia, which faces your house of prayer, when you recite before me: ‘Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord of Hosts!’ For I have no joy in all my worlds that I have created, save at that time, when your eyes are raised towards my eyes, and my eyes are raised towards your eyes, at the time when you recite before me: ‘Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord of Hosts!’ For at that time the breath issues from your mouths, swirling and ascending before me like a sweet sacrificial aroma.

(§ 164) And bear witness to them of what you see of me: what I do to the countenance of Jacob, your father, which is engraved by me on the throne of my Glory. For at the time when you recite before me: ‘Holy! Holy! Holy...’ I bend down towards him and caress him, embrace him and kiss him, with my hands upon his arms, three times, corresponding to the three times at which you recite the kedusha before me, as it is written: ‘Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord of Hosts!’

This passage refers to the descent of the divine kavod to the merkava in response to Israel’s worship. The motif of a ‘graven image’ of Jacob’s face on the divine throne is also found in several rabbinic sources, which will be discussed below. It should be noted that this motif is a direct—and rather shocking—contravention of the second commandment (Exod 14–16; Halperin, *Faces*, 286–287; and Schäfer, *Hidden and Manifest*, 45–46. Compare Seder Rav Amram Gaon 4a, cited by Bloch, ‘Yordei-Merkabah,’ 19.


14 ‘Save’ occurs only in mss. New York and Munich 22.

16 ‘Sound’ occurs only in mss. New York and Munich 22.

17 The Hebrew syntax is somewhat obscure at this point, although the meaning seems reasonably clear. The mss. vary slightly.


19 Following ms. Vatican and Munich 22. All other mss. ‘...upon my arms’. For an interpretation based on the majority reading, see Halperin, *Faces*, 287, footnote 39.

20 ‘Corresponding to the three times’ occurs only in mss. Budapest and Vatican. See pp. 543–547 below.
20:4, etc.). Although it is possible to interpret God’s behaviour towards this image as simply that of a loving Father towards his favourite son, it is very hard to avoid the impression that this intimate exchange is essentially erotic in nature. At first sight, this element of (almost) explicit homoeroticism is at least as surprising as is the ‘graven image’ motif. On the other hand, it is clear that Jacob’s image functions as the heavenly representative of the community of Israel, which is frequently portrayed in biblical tradition as God’s beloved bride. This is a theme which continues to be developed in rabbinc literature, above all, in the context of midrashic exegesis of the Song of Songs. In this passage, then, the community-as-bride is figuratively identified with the celestial throne on which God appears in his visible Glory. Moreover, the liturgical action that brings about this visible enthronement—recitation of the *kedusha*—is presented as an intimate and tender act of ‘marital’ union. In this loving interchange, Jacob’s image, being the personification of the ‘bride’, necessarily occupies the ‘feminine’ role.²²

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²² On the sexual significance of enthronement in this and other hekhalot passages, see. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum*, 98–105. The suggestion that the vision-fantasies of the hekhalot mystics were strongly conditioned by their repressed sexual motivations has been strongly promoted by Halperin, ‘Sexual Image’; and idem, *Faces*, esp. 439–446. Consider also the erudite and witty, if slightly facile, cross-cultural and gender-political study by Moore (‘Gigantic God’), who relates biblical and merkava imagery to the contemporary cult of bodybuilding and thereby constructs ‘a critical midrash on the hypermasculinity of the biblical Yahweh’ (ibid., 115). In my opinion, an undue emphasis on this issue is likely to result in glib, reductionist interpretations and may easily distract us from making any real effort to address the material on its own terms (however, Wolfson and Halperin must both be exempted from this charge). Having said that, however, it is hardly reasonable to suppose that the visionary experiences and imaginings of these early Jewish mystics, who were subjected to numerous regulations and prohibitions in the sphere of sexual activity, were wholly insulated from their erotic desires and unfulfilled wishes. Moreover, given the tension between Jewish attitudes towards homosexuality and permissive tendencies in the surrounding culture, it is highly improbable that no hekhalot mystic was ever motivated by (acknowledged or unconscious) homoerotic longing. A tendency to regard female sexuality as inherently repulsive and unclean was undoubtedly characteristic of some streams of early merkava tradition and, indeed, the Book of Ezekiel itself (see Morray-Jones, *Transparent Illusion*; and Halperin, *Seeking Ezekiel*; Morray-Jones, review of Halperin, ibid.). For these reasons, although Freudian analysis should undoubtedly be resisted as a global explanation of merkava—or any other form of—mystical experience, the presence of sexual and homoerotic themes in texts like the one considered above must be acknowledged. Other passages of the hekhalot literature, though less unambiguous, are susceptible of such interpretation. Consider in this light, for example, HekhZ § 335b: ‘Be careful of the Glory of your Creator and do not go in to him; and if you have gone in to him, do not take pleasure in him; and if you have taken pleasure in him, your end is to be cast out from the world.’
Shiur koma (‘the measure of the stature’) mysticism is concerned with the central mystery of the merkava tradition: the body of the Glory on the throne. In his major study of this material, Martin Cohen identifies five main recensions, which he has subsequently edited and translated. Two of these recensions, ‘Sefer ha-Koma’ (SKoma) and ‘Sefer ha-Shiur’ (SShiur), are independent works, but the other three occur within longer collections of merkava material: ‘Merkava Rabba’ (MerkR), ‘Siddur Rabba di-Bereshit’ (SidRBer) and ‘Sefer Raziel’ (SRaziel). There are also numerous manuscripts and fragments which cannot be classified according to these five recensions and, in addition, allusions to shiur koma traditions are scattered throughout the hekhalot writings, including the earliest of the macroforms, Hekhalot Zutarti. In his earlier study, Cohen assumed that a single Urtext underlies these various recensions, but subsequent scholarship has shown this
to be very doubtful. Thus, although Cohen argues persuasively that the source(s) of the extant recensions were composed in early geonic Babylonia, this provides only a *terminus ad quem* for the origins of the shiur koma tradition.

Without Cohen’s scholarly editions of the material, the research of which this article is the outcome would have been impossible. Cohen, however, regards the material as a product of late rabbinic or early geonic Judaism and does not subject it to redaction-critical analysis. In accordance with the historical model proposed above, I maintain that these texts are the outcome of a long and controversial process of development, in the course of which traditions derived from Second Temple apocalyptic and sectarian Judaism were subjected to considerable alteration by redactors who have tried to impose on them a theological structure which conformed to the tenets of rabbinic orthodoxy, as this was formulated during the first few centuries CE.

What follows is an investigation of the redactional processes by which the shiur koma recensions were produced, an exploration of the controversies by which those redactional processes were driven, and a reconstruction of the earlier stages of the traditions preserved in these texts.

*Jewish Anthropomorphism and Gnostic Dualism*

As was indicated earlier, the shiur koma texts describe the huge measurements of the limbs and members of the *kavod*. These measurements, which are given in *parasangs* or Persian miles, differ considerably, and by orders of magnitude, from text to text. Several texts state that these are divine *parasangs*, each one being thousands of times the length of the universe. The majority attribute secret names, as well as measurements, to the various body parts:

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29 See further: Herrmann, ‘Text und Fiction’; and Schäfer, ‘Shi’ur Qomah’. In what follows, the term ‘text’ refers to any unit of textual tradition, not necessarily to an edited recension or compilation.
31 *Shiur* 6–7 and parallels.
R. Yishmael said:

I saw the king of kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he, who was sitting upon a high and exalted throne, and his troops were standing before him on his left and on his right.

The angel, the Prince of the Countenance, whose name is מטטרו״ן ונט״ף ונט״ט מיטו״ן מיטו״ן סיגרו״ן היגרו״ן איטמו״ן פיסקוני״ת רו״ח, said to me: . . .

R. Yishmael says:

How great is the measure of the body of the Holy One, blessed be he, who lives and endures for ever, throughout all eternity, may his name be blessed and his memorial be exalted?

The soles of his feet fill the whole universe in its entirety, as it is said, ‘Heaven is my throne, and the earth my footstool’ (Isa 66:1). The height of his soles is three thousand myriad parasangs. The name of his right sole is והרי״ס and the name of the left is והרי״ס.

From the soles of his feet to his ankles is one thousand myriad and five hundred parasangs: the name of his right ankle is והרי״ס, and the name of the left is והרי״ס.

From his ankles to his knees is nineteen thousand myriad parasangs: the name of his right calf is והרי״ס and the name of the left is והרי״ס.

From his knees to his thighs is twelve thousand myriad parasangs: the name of his right knee is והרי״ס, and the name of the left is והרי״ס; the name of the right thigh is והרי״ס and the name of the left is והרי״ס.

From his thighs to his neck is twenty-four thousand myriad parasangs: אססניגיה״ו, and upon his heart are

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32 The mss. vary with regard to the spelling of the names. Save where stated to the contrary, I follow the main text in Cohen, Texts and Recensions (including gershayim, where shown).

33 The text does not indicate what Metatron said. It is probable that this and the following paragraph are alternative introductions to the teaching that follows. On the secret names of Metaron, see Cohen, Liturgy and Theurgy, 129–133; and see further, below.

34 Memorial (זרך) frequently occurs in parallel with ‘Name’ and is another term for ‘praise’. See further below.

35 I take this to refer to the arches of the feet, which rest upon the lowest firmament, so that the earthly world is the space beneath them. Since this would correspond to the ‘sublunary’ world of hellenistic cosmology, there may be a distant connection with Revelation’s ‘woman clothed with the sun, with the moon at her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head’ (12:1). On giant heavenly female figures, see further below.

36 Since these texts are intended to be recited (see below), it seems preferable to give the measurements in words (thus most mss.) rather than numerals.


38 Cohen’s text adds here: ‘קננג״י’ is its (sic) name,’ but this is missing in several mss. and seems to be a duplication of the name of the right calf, which follows.
engraved seventy names... [these and further measurements of limbs and members follow].

As has been observed, the Glory on the throne is the embodied form of God’s Name. The lesser secret names, which occupy a prominent role in the hekhalot literature, are particular aspects or potencies of this Great Name, and are sometimes regarded as autonomous angelic entities. In the shiur koma, the body of the Glory is composed of these lesser names. Scholem comments that

...the Deity has a mystical form that manifests itself in two different aspects: to the visionary, it manifests itself in the tangible shape of a human being seated on the throne of glory, constituting the supreme primal image in which man was created; aurally, at least in principle, it is manifested as God’s name, broken into its component elements. According to this doctrine, God’s shape is conceived of, not as a concept or idea, but as names.

A number of Egyptian Gnostic or magical engraved gems portray a human figure whose limbs are inscribed with secret names, one of which is also found in a shiur koma text.

Gedaliahu Stroumsa observes that the writings of the Church Fathers contain numerous polemical references to Jewish anthropomorphism, which ‘seems to have been notorious in the first few centuries CE.’ Of the sources cited by Stroumsa, Irenaeus and Origen are of particular importance to the following discussion. In the course of a lengthy defense of the doctrine of God’s incorporeality, incomprehensibility and perfection, Irenaeus attacks those who claim to have measured or comprehended him, as follows:

To these persons one may with justice say, as Scripture itself suggests: To what distance above God do you lift up your imaginations, O you rashly elated men? You have heard that the heavens are measured in the palm of

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41 Scholem, Mystical Shape, 28.
42 See further Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, 130–131 (addendum to p. 41).
43 Stroumsa, ‘Form(s) of God’ (quotation, 271). On anthropomorphic imagery and language in rabbinic literature, see further Goshen Gottstein, ‘Body as Image of God’; and Aaron, ‘Shedding Light’.
44 Stroumsa also cites Justin Martyr, Dial. 114; Basil of Caesarea, Hom. de hominis struc. 1.5; and Arnobius of Sicca, Adv. nationes 3.12.
his] hand (allusion to Isa 40:12). Tell me the measure, and recount the endless multitude of cubits, explain to me the fullness, the breadth, the length, the height, the beginning and end of the measurement (allusion to Eph 3:18–19)—things which the heart of man understands not, neither does it comprehend them. For the heavenly treasuries are great indeed: God cannot be measured in the heart, and in the mind he is incomprehensible, Who holds the earth in the hollow of his hand. Who can perceive the measurement of his right hand? Who knows his finger? Or who understands his hand—that hand which measures immensity; that hand which, by its own measure, spreads out the measure of the heavens and which comprises in its hollow the earth with the abysses; which contains in itself the breadth, and the length, and the deep below, and the height above of the whole creation, that which is seen, heard and understood, and that which is invisible? And for this reason God is ‘above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named’ (Eph 1:21), of all things which have been created and established.45

Although the targets of this attack are speculative Gnostics, the language employed by Irenaeus is highly reminiscent of the Jewish shiur koma. Also significant is his citation of the Epistle to the Ephesians, a text which, as we shall see, was profoundly influenced by the shiur koma.46 A little further on, Irenaeus states: ‘As regards his greatness…it is not possible to know God, for it is impossible that the Father can be measured.’47

Like Irenaeus, Origen vehemently opposes the belief that God has a man-like body, which he attributes to ‘the Jews and even some of our own people’.48 In his discussion of Gen 1:27, where he insists that the expression ‘Image of God’ is not to be interpreted thus literally,49 Origen nonetheless cites Isa 66:1, which is a central text of the shiur koma tradition, together with Eph 2:6.50

There are, then, strong grounds for the supposition that these and other early Christian writers were aware of the Jewish shiur koma tradition. Since their theology was shaped by the Platonic doctrine of an incorporeal Deity,51 the anthropomorphic imagery of the shiur koma could only arouse their revulsion and contempt. It is hardly surprising

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45 Irenaeus, Haer. 4.19.2, 618–621; my translation mainly follows ANF 1:487.
46 See ch. 17 below. On the verses cited by Irenaeus, see pp. 587–590 and 592.
47 Irenaeus, Haer. 4.20.1 (Rousseau 624f.); compare 4.20.4–5.
49 Origen, ibid., 3:1, 114–115.
50 On this verse, see p. 603 below.
51 See further: Prestige, God in Patristic Thought; Attridge, ‘Philosophical Critique,’ 45–78; and Stroumsa, ‘Incorporeality of God’. 
that many Jewish scholars and philosophers of later generations have likewise regarded the shiur koma, with its apparently crude anthropomorphism, its grotesquely inflated measurements and its gobbledygook magic names, as obscenely blasphemous or, at best, absurd. However, it is clear that the redactors of the shiur koma texts regarded their subject-matter with the utmost reverence. If the material were to be taken at face value, we should have to conclude that they were, to say the least, extraordinarily naive. In fact, they seem to have been literate and well-educated, with an extensive knowledge of biblical and exegetical traditions, and to have considered themselves an élite group within the rabbinic community. What, then, can this apparently ridiculous material have meant to them?

Scholem believed that shiur koma mysticism was closely related to Gnosticism but his understanding of the nature of this relationship changed considerably during the course of his career. This change of perspective entailed a profound alteration of his views about the origins of the shiur koma. In 1941, he wrote:

The fact probably is that this form of speculation originated amongst heretical mystics who had all but broken with rabbinical Judaism. At some date this school or group must have blended with the 'rabbinical' Gnosticism developed by the Merkabah visionaries, i.e. that form of Jewish Gnosticism which tried to remain true to the Halakhic tradition.

At this early stage of his research, Scholem was inclined to believe that the object of the shiur koma was an adapted version of the Gnostic demiurge. However, twenty years later, he stated:

We are not dealing here with the ideas of 'heretical' groups on the periphery of rabbinic Judaism. On the contrary: The close link between these ideas and Merkavah mysticism can leave no doubt that that the bearers of these speculations were at the very centre of rabbinic Judaism in tannaitic

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53 On these grounds, Bloch (*Geschichte der Entwicklung*, 17) suggested that the merkava was originally a book for children.
54 See Cohen, *Liturgy and Theurgy*, 110–123. On the hekhalot authors in general, see, for example: Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 9–13; Lieberman, 'Knowledge of the Halakha'; Schäfer, 'Gershom Scholem Reconsidered', and *Hidden and Manifest*, 146–153. Halperin’s suggestion that they were uneducated and unsophisticated *ame ha-aretz* (*Faces*, 437–446) is contradicted by the evidence of the texts themselves. See now Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*.
56 Ibid., 61f.
and talmudic times... The gnosis we are dealing with here is a strictly orthodox Jewish one. The subject of these speculations and visions—Yotser Bereshith, the God of Creation—is not some lowly figure such as those found in the heretical sects, similar to the Demiurge of many Gnostic doctrines, which drew a contrast between the true God and the God of Creation. In the view of the Shi‘ur Komah, the Creator God is identical with the authentic God of monotheism, in his mystical form; there is no possibility of dualism. Given the antiquity of these ideas, which we have tentatively traced back to the first century, we may ask whether this orthodox Shi‘ur Komah gnosis did not precede the dualistic conception of later Gnosticism, which emerged during the early second century.57

Summarizing a position very close to Scholem’s, Altmann comments: ‘The Shi‘ur Komā is a blend of the Logos doctrine with Adam Kadmon [Primordial Adam] mysticism.’58

Stroumsa agrees with Scholem about the early date of the shiur koma tradition and argues for its priority over the Gnostic systems, but retains Scholem’s earlier opinion that the subject of the shiur koma (i.e., the appearance on the throne) was originally an archangelic, demiurgic hypostasis:

It was Jewish speculations about the cosmic size of the demiurgic angel, the hypostatic form of God, that both Christians and Gnostics adopted and transformed, each in their own way... The deep ambiguity of the Shi‘ur Qonah fragments about the identity of the divine figure whose dimensions are given might well stem from this absorption of the Jewish doctrines on the forms of God by both Christians and Gnostics.59

A similar position is adopted by Dan, who interprets the shiur koma in terms of salvational knowledge,60 basing his explanation on passages such as the following:

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57 Scholem, Mystical Shape, 34. See also idem, Origins, 20–24. Altmann summarises a position with is close to Scholem (Altmann, ‘Saadya’s Theory’).
58 Altmann ibid., 158.
59 Stroumsa, ‘Form(s) of God,’ 287f. Note that Stroumsa fails to take account of the development in Scholem’s thought and attributes to him the position expressed in Major Trends (although the German edition of Mystical Shape is cited). Thus, he ‘agrees’ with Scholem that the subject of the merkava was the demiurgic angel, whereas Scholem in fact repudiated this opinion. On the other hand, he ‘disagrees’ with Scholem’s early hypothesis of Gnostic influence on the merkava and argues that the influence was in the other direction—as Scholem himself suggested in his later work.
60 Dan, ‘Concept of Knowledge’; cf. idem, ‘Religious Experience,’ 295; and idem, Ancient Jewish Mysticism, 48–58.
R. Yishmael said: When I uttered this formula before R. Akiva, he said to me: Everyone who knows this measure (_measure|שנה,|) of his Maker (Maker|יוצר,|), and the praise (praise|שבח,) of the Holy One, blessed be he, is made secure in this world and in the world to come, lives long in this world and in the world to come, and fares well in this world and in the world to come.

R. Yishmael said in the presence of his students: R. Akiva and I guarantee this matter, that one will have a good life in this world, and a good name in the world to come, but only if he recites it as a mishnah each and every day.61

Dan rightly observes that, according to this passage, these texts were intended to be recited.62 Developing the earlier position of Scholem, he draws attention to the parallelism between ‘measure of his Maker’ and ‘praise of the Holy One’, and suggests that the term יוצר refers to the demiurge, who is the subject of the measurements, as opposed to the High God, of whom all that can be said is that he should be praised. This interpretation is not, however, supported by the text as it stands. ‘Measure’ and ‘praise’ are clearly related terms, and it is true that God’s incomprehensibility is emphasized in the hymnic passages of the shiur koma collections, but it is not clear that in this text, ‘Maker’ stands in opposition to ‘Holy One’, nor is there any indication that the figure on the throne is different from God. We have yet to determine whether such a dualism was characteristic of the pre-rabbinic shiur koma tradition, as maintained by Stroumsa, but at the redactional level of the ‘rabbinized’ recensions it has, if it ever existed, been expunged.

Almost exactly the same formula occurs in the opening words of the Aleinu prayer, which is at least as old as the third century CE and is believed by several authorities to pre-date the destruction of the Temple.63 A first-person singular version of this prayer is preserved in Maase Merkava.64 The opening words of this prayer are: כל/נה לשבח העלוי (‘It is incumbent on me/us to praise the Lord
of all, to ascribe greatness to the Maker of Creation.’) Here, there can be no doubt that the two parallel expressions refer to God himself. In fact, the Aleinu prayer explicitly rejects the dualistic distinction between God and the Creator, and declares that Israel’s worship is addressed solely to ‘the king of the kings of kings, the Holy One, blessed be he’, unlike that of the idolatrous nations, who pray to ‘a god who cannot save’ (a statement that some medieval Christians found offensive).

Dan maintains that the shiur koma was a pre-philosophical attempt to realise an abstract, non-anthropomorphic conception of the Creator-deity. In his opinion, the seemingly bizarre lists of measurements and names were intended to lead the mind beyond its own power of concrete conceptualisation to an intuition of the intangible ‘form’ of the Yotser bereshit:

There is a certain irony of history here, for this work, which was regarded as the most extreme anthropomorphic one of all, one that had to be combatted in the name of rationalist Judaism, is but an ancient anti-anthropomorphic work meant to reject more simplistic and extreme views. It is certainly true that measurements of the order of magnitude found in these texts cannot be intended to be literal descriptions of a visible object and must therefore be, in some sense, symbolic. However, it seems most unlikely that any literate Jew of late Antiquity would have lacked the conceptual equipment to imagine an invisible God, or an abstract ‘Word’. The merkava mystics did, in fact, conceive of a transcendent, formless deity ‘above’ and ‘beyond’ the throne, the manifestation of whose ‘Name’ was ‘imaged’ or ‘embodied’ in the glorious form of a

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65 Dan, Ancient Jewish Mysticism, 75. Essentially the same suggestion was made by Jellinek (BHM 6: xxxxiif.); Schäfer (Hidden and Manifest, 149f.) adopts a somewhat similar position.

66 As observed by Fossum (Name, 332), ‘...reflections upon the philosophical heritage left behind by Plato were obligatory for all intellectual people in the Hellenistic world.’ Stroumsa, ‘Form(s) of God,’ 270 states that ‘the encounter between Jewish thought and Platonic philosophy...was severed soon after Philo, and Jewish exegesis was left to struggle with biblical anthropomorphisms without the help of the most effective of tools: the Platonic conception of a purely immaterial being.’ but this surely underestimates the sophistication of rabbinic conceptual thought. The interaction of rabbinic with Hellenistic thought has been exhaustively documented by, for example: Daube, ‘Rabbinic Methods’; idem, ‘Alexandrian Methods’; M. Smith, ‘Palestinian Judaism’; Lieberman, Hellenism in Jewish Palestine, esp. 47–82 and 100–114; idem, ‘How Much Greek?’; idem, Greek in Jewish Palestine; Fischel, ‘Story and History’; Shimoff, ‘Hellenization’; Hengel, The ‘Hellenization’, 19–29 and 51–52.
‘man’ Who was the prototype and Creator of all men.67 These are not unsophisticated concepts. However, the idea that this ‘symbolic’ Image participates in and mediates the Divine Being was fundamental to their mystical theosophy. Dan’s ‘proto-rationalist’ interpretation therefore implies that the writers of these texts—and/or the audience to whom they were directed—were more simple-minded than can reasonably be believed. Nonetheless, Dan has made several important observations: (i) the texts claim to transmit saving knowledge; (ii) they are to be recited; and (iii) the term ‘measure’ is related to ‘praise’; but (iv) the object of praise is said to be beyond human comprehension.

Shiur Koma as Esoteric Worship

As Cohen has amply demonstrated, the shiur koma texts are, in fact, theurgic liturgies.68 Cohen’s use of the term ‘theurgy’ corresponds to the definition proposed by E.R. Dodds: ‘magic applied to a religious purpose and resting on a supposed revelation of a religious character’.69 A similar definition is adopted by Swartz.70 Moshe Idel sharply distinguishes ‘theurgy’ from ‘magic’ and applies the former term to ‘operations intended to influence the Divinity, mostly in its own inner state or dynamics, but sometimes also in its relationship to man’.71 Thus defined, Jewish theurgy is deeply rooted in the talmudic-midrashic tradition, which ‘is primarily interested in a dynamic concept that stresses the changes occurring in the divine Dynamis’ and ‘assumes a direct dependence of the power of the divine Dynamis upon human activity’.72 From this perspective, even ordinary acts of religious observance (specifically, the performance of commandments) are invested with ‘theurgic’ significance. On the other hand, the shiur koma tradition, which

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67 Consider, for example, CantR 1,48 (Dunsky 117): ‘A man of flesh and blood rides out of necessity, because he has substance, but the Holy One, blessed be he, is not like this. He needs his chariot to ride in because he has no substance.’ Compare the translation by Simon, who misses the point entirely, in Freedman and Simon, Soncino Midrash, 9:2.70. See further Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism,’ 2–6 and 15–17, and the sources cited there. Consider also MMerk § 595 (Scholem § 33), on which see Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 171f.

68 See Cohen, Liturgy and Theurgy, esp. 68–71 and 167–185; see further: Janowitz, ‘God’s Body’.

69 Dodds, Greeks and the Irrational, 291.

70 Swartz, Mystical Prayer, 18f. n. 57.

71 Idel, Kabbalah, 157.

72 Ibid., 158.
‘envisions an enormous, static Divinity, the knowledge and repetition of whose precise dimensions constitute a salvific gnosis’, is, according to Idel, not ‘theurgic’. Idel’s concern to distance ‘theurgy’ from ‘magic’ has problematic consequences, since a definition of ‘theurgy’ that includes ordinary religious practices but excludes those described in the hekhalot and shiur koma literature is both too broad and too narrow to be useful. Nonetheless, his discussion contains some illuminating observations concerning the conceptual background of early Jewish theurgy, several of which apply—despite his statement to the contrary—to the shiur koma and hekhalot traditions. Schäfer offers a more balanced account of the range of meaning covered by the term theurgy, as follows:

\[ \text{theourgia: im weitesten Sinne ‘göttliche Handlung’, die sowohl von Gott als auch vom Menschen ausgeht, bis hin zum ‘Götterzwang’, also der gezielten Einwirkung des Menschen auf Gott mit einer stark magischen Komponente.} \]

Janowitz offers a concise but sophisticated discussion of the term and its application to the shiur koma, concluding that the idea implied by ‘theurgy’ is the revelation of divine power on earth…People who were able to coordinate this process seem to become ‘magicians’ because they become indistinguishable from the revelation of divine power they unleash. \[ \text{Shi’ur Komah results in a man with cosmic power, a holy man.} \]

Subject to the reservations expressed above with regard to Idel, the term ‘theurgy’ as used below combines the meanings proposed by all these scholars.

Throughout the shiur koma literature, the lists of measurements and names are interwoven with hymnic passages or, in the hekhalot compilations, are embedded in liturgical material. The lists and the hymns are thus complementary aspects (‘measure’ and ‘praise’) of a single

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73 Ibid.
74 See further p. 518 n. 82 below.
75 Schäfer, \[ \text{Der verborgene, 4 (the English translation of these remarks in idem, Hidden and Manifest, 4, is quite misleading). See also Schäfer’s remarks in idem, ‘Gershom Scholem Reconsidered,’ 11; and idem, Hidden and Manifest, 165f.} \]
76 Janowitz, ‘God’s Body,’ 193f.
77 In fact, Cohen’s finding applies to a large proportion of the hekhalot literature, not just the \[ \text{shiur koma (see pp. 503–505 above). See further Alexander, ‘Prayer,’ esp., 44–48.} \]
theurgic-liturgical genre, whose central theme is the הגדולה or ‘greatness’ of God. By mystical word-play, this term comes to mean simultaneously: (a) giant size, (b) majesty or power, equivalent to δύναμις/גבורה and (c) praise or ‘magnification’. Moreover, in the shiur koma and hekhalot literature the term שבח (‘praise’) is often synonymous with כבוד (‘Glory’). Thus, God’s ‘body’ and his ‘praise’ are one and the same thing. The shiur koma liturgies are, therefore, grounded on the fundamental belief that the activity of worship makes God visible.

This ‘mystery’ is discussed in HekhZ § 350–352, a passage that we examined in some detail in Chapter 13.³⁸ As we saw there, in § 350, in the contradiction between Isa 6:11 (‘I saw the LORD’) and Exod 33:20 (‘no man may see me and live’) is resolved by reference to Deut 5:21/24:

Behold, the LORD our God has shown us his Glory and his Greatness (וְאֶת־גָּדְלוֹ אֶת־כְּבֹדוֹ) and we have heard his voice out of the midst of the fire, and we have seen today that God speaks to man, and he lives.

In other words, Isaiah was able to see God’s Word or Name (יהוה) embodied in his kavod or ‘Greatness’. In § 351, the revelation of the Name-Glory is associated with the celestial and earthly liturgies. In § 352, which discusses the manner in which the kavod may be seen, we find a shiur koma saying saying attributed to ‘our rabbis’ or, according to one manuscript, Akiva: ‘He is, so to speak, like us, but he is greater than everything; and this is his Glory, which is hidden from us’ (§ 352d). The discussion concludes with a warning, attributed to Moses, that this self-revelation of the Godhead is not susceptible of rational inquiry, and cannot be expressed in ordinary, discursive language: God may only be known, as manifest in his Glory, through the medium of praise (§ 352e–f). We also considered the following saying, which is found in an anonymous medieval Yemenite commentary on the Song of Songs that contains several allusions to both maase merkava and shiur koma.⁸¹

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³⁸ Idel (New Perspectives, 158) and Jackson (‘Origins and Development’, esp. 378–381) both emphasize the meanings: ‘bigness’ and ‘power,’ but neither recognizes the critical importance of ‘praise’. See further below.
³⁹ See Cohen, Liturgy and Theurgy, 177.
⁸⁰ See pp. 404–407 above (our analysis there also included § 348–349).
⁸¹ Published by Friedländer, ‘Teillat peirush’ (quotation, 58). On the antiquity of much of the material preserved bu this source, see Marmorstein, ‘Deux renseignements
It was said in the presence of Rabban Gamaliel: Though created beings do not have permission to declare the True Being of the Creator, they do have permission to declare his praise (שבח). How so? As it is written: for no man shall see me and live (Exod 33:20). Life depends upon his praise, but his True Being is concealed.

The shiur koma practitioner ‘knows’ both ‘the measure of the Creator’ and ‘the praise of the Holy One’, which are the same thing, considered in two aspects. God’s Great Name, the Creative Agent, is embodied in his Glory. His ‘praise’ is the expression of that Name. We have seen that the Glory appears on the Throne at the times of Israel’s worship, and that the earthly liturgy is closely connected to its celestial counterpart. By reciting the measurements of the body of the Glory, together with the names of which that body is composed, the shiur koma practitioner participates in this hierarchy of worship at the highest level and so helps to ‘construct’ the visible Image of the formless God. Since that Image is the Maker and Sustainer of Creation, this is a theurgic action of considerable significance: ‘Life depends upon his praise.’ Israel’s worship, of which the shiur koma is the most profound esoteric expression, participates in the divine activity of Creation, and manifests the body of the Glory in the world.82

The Angelic Youth

The majority of the shiur koma texts attribute both measurements and names to the parts of the divine body, but a few texts give measurements only and may, therefore, be derived from circles which did not use, or know, the names. On the other hand, one widely attested text seems to deny the validity of the measurements:83

The appearance of his face and the appearance of the cheeks are as the measure of the spirit and as the form of the soul, which no man can
perceive, as it is said: ‘His body is like tarshish’ (Dan 10:6). And his face and the brilliance thereof shine forth and give light from the midst of the darkness, cloud and mist that surround him. Yet although these surround him, all the princes of the Countenance are poured forth before him like jugs of water, because of the form of his beauty and splendor. And we possess no measure, but the names have been revealed to us.

Another interesting feature of this text is the citation of Dan 10:6, which describes not God himself, but the ‘man clothed in linen’, who appears in apocalyptic literature as a principal angel, and is identified in Rev 1:13–18 with Christ. In rabbinic sources, Dan 10:6 is applied to the bodies of the angels who ascended and descended on Jacob’s ladder, and the term tarshish is—for reasons not explained—associated with their giant size. The term also occurs in Cant 5:14, where it applies to the male Beloved.

Metatron occupies a central role in the shiur koma, as the one who reveals the secret measurements and names to Yishmael or Akiva. He is said to possess secret names and is given numerous titles: Prince of the Countenance, Great Prince, Great Prince of Testimony, etc. These traditions are known from other sources. However, the shiur koma literature contains no trace of Metatron’s identity as Enoch. Most of the detailed information about him occurs in a single text, found in Siddur Rabba di-Bereshit, Sefer Raziel and Sefer Koma, which describes the priestly role of an angel called ‘the Youth’ or ‘the (cultic) Servant’ (הנער). SKoma’s version is virtually identical with that of SRaziel, which

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84 Cohen glosses this as follows: ‘...all the princes of the presence (supplicate) before him as (obediently as water flows when it is poured from) a water-pitcher.’ The meaning, however, is that the angels are unable to endure the splendor of the divine countenance, despite its protective covering of darkness. Compare HekhR § 103–104, where anyone who hears the fifth of six terrible voices with which the angels praise God, ‘...is immediately poured forth like a jug and completely dissolves into blood.’

85 SShiur changes ‘measure’ (מדח) to ‘teacher’ (מורה), but this is unlikely to be the original reading.

86 See further Rowland, ‘Man Clothed in Linen’.

87 GenR 68,12; bHul 91b; see further pp. 546–547 below.

88 See Cohen, Liturgy and Theurgy, 124–137. The attribution of traditions to Yishmael and/or Aliva is a definitive characteristic of the hekhalot genre. Yishmael is cited more frequently in the merkava, and one text (cited below, p. 533) is attributed to his disciple Nathan.

89 SidRBer 7–47 (translated below); SRaziel 231–292. The short version of SKoma (150–168) gives only the second part of this text, but the long version includes the whole (trans. Cohen, Jx). Approximately parallel material occurs in Schäfer § 384–386, § 396–400, and parallels, on which see further Halperin, Faces, 491–494; and Rohrbacher-Sticker, ‘Die Namen Gottes,’ 147–155.
introduces the text as a quotation from ‘Seder Maase Bereshit’. We can therefore be reasonably certain that the text in SidRBer is the source of the other two versions. Both SRaziel and SKoma include parenthetical comments that identify the Youth as Metatron. ‘Youth’ is a widely attested title of Metatron, and there can be no doubt that this figure is the angel who is called Metatron elsewhere in the shiur koma recensions. However, the name Metatron does not occur in the SidRBer text. It is, therefore, very probable that this version has preserved an early stage of the shiur koma tradition, before the Youth had acquired that name. The text, which is quoted here extensively as it is not easily available in other sources, reads as follows:

(A) He [God] spoke, and the world came into being, and his Name shall endure forever and throughout eternity. His Glory fills the earth. Troops of wrath are to right and left of him, and before him are bolts of splendor, darkness, cloud, mist and the primeval clay, and before him is a field in which stars are sown. And between one star and the next is a place set aside for the lightning-bolts, and each single lightning-bolt is a gate of hashmal. And above them are winds for these lightning-bolts, and thunderclaps, clouds, and the arches of the rainbow. And above him are Grace, Mercy, Glory, Splendor, Majesty, Beauty and Excellence, and the signet of a lion, the seal of an eagle, the stamp of an ox, and the sealed face of a man.

(B) And his hand rests upon this mighty, powerful, holy and blessed Youth. And they come and stand before the Youth, and the Youth comes and prostrates before . . .

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90 Of the fifteen ‘Metatron traditions’ listed by Cohen (Liturgy and Theurgy, 125–126), all but four occur within this text.
91 Compare the remarks of Halperin (Faces, 403) re: Synopse § 384 and parallels (see p. 519 n. 89 above).
92 These seven qualities are almost certainly divine ‘names’ manifesting as divine-angelic hypostatic attributes. See further pp. 548–549 below.
93 SRaziel 240–241 and most mss. of the long recension of SKoma (see Cohen, Texts and Recensions, 155–160): ‘And the hand of the Holy One, blessed be he, rests upon the head of the Youth, whose name is Metatron.’ This must surely be the sense of the SidRBer text, even though the word ‘head’ is missing.
94 Following JNUL ms. 381; Cohen’s main text (JTS ms. 1746): הַיָּדוֹ.
enters beneath the Throne, faceless ones support him.\textsuperscript{95} And the ministering angels and the Youth come and bless and praise his Great, Mighty and Awesome Name. And each and every day, the Youth worships, three times each day. And he gives of his splendor and his beauty to the angels of the nations of the world.

(C) And this Youth is the prince whose (name) is written with seven sounds, with seven letters, with seventy, with six upon six, and placed within the most hidden secrets, within the innermost chambers, and within the most wonderful of all wonders, and who ministers before the consuming fire. And the Holy One, blessed be he, gave permission to make use of it neither to Adam, nor to Shem, nor to Abraham, nor to Isaac, nor to Jacob, but to Moses alone. And Moses said before the Lord of all the World: ‘If your Presence does not go with us, do not make us depart from here!’ (Exod. 33:15). And the Holy One, blessed be he, warned Moses: ‘Beware of him... for my Name is in him!’ (Exod. 23:21). This is the Name of my Glory!

(D) He is the Prince, the Prince of the Presence, before whom stand all the ministering angels. This is the Great Prince, the Prince over all the princes, the Prince over the myriads and thousands of angels, who stands before him Who is exalted above all. His stature (קומת״ו) is three thousand myriad parasangs,\textsuperscript{96} and he is called ‘Youth’. The crown which is upon his head is five hundred thousand parasangs by five hundred thousand parasangs: ‘Israel’ is its name. The precious stone which is between its horns is three hundred thousand parasangs by three hundred thousand parasangs: ‘My People is Mine’ is its name (שמ״ה נ״י ע״מ [sic]). His body is like a rainbow, and that rainbow looks as if it were surrounded on all sides by fire (cf. Ezek 1:27–28).

(E) And the angels who are with him come and encircle the Throne of Glory. They are on one side, and the hayyot are on the other side, and the Shekhina is in the centre. And a single hayya rises above the Throne of Glory and draws near to the serafim, then alights upon the tabernacle of the Youth and says in a loud voice, a voice of silence: \textsuperscript{97} ‘The Throne alone do I exalt above him!’ \textsuperscript{98} At once, the Wheels are silent, the serafim

\textsuperscript{95} The fact that these angelic beings have no faces—presumably, so that they do not see the unbearable vision of the divine Glory—distinguishes them sharply from the four-faced hayyot.

\textsuperscript{96} In SRaziel and SKoma, the קומת of Metatron is said to fill the universe.

\textsuperscript{97} This paradoxical expression seems to suggest a ‘stage whisper’ (or bat kol) of such power and volume that it silences the tumultuous worship that surrounds the throne. As we have seen, a very similar juxtaposition of sound and silence, also in the context of the descent of the divine Glory to the merkava at the climax of the celestial liturgy, is found in the twelfth of the thirteen ‘Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice’. See ch. 12, pp. 321–323 above.

\textsuperscript{98} SidRBer: ממנו אגדל ההכובד רק. Parallels in Schäfer § 390 and § 961 read: ‘מידכ:error אנדול ממנון (‘Guiltless is the Throne of Glory!’); but in Schäfer § 399 and parallels, mss.
are still, the troops of Watchers and Holy Ones are thrust into the River Dinur, the hayyot turn their faces to the ground, and the Youth brings fire of deafness and places it in their ears, so that they do not hear the voice that is spoken, and so that he alone remains. And the Youth calls him the Great, Mighty, Awesome, Majestic, Strong, Powerful, Pure, Holy, Stalwart, Precious, Honoured, Clean, Guiltless, Beloved, Wonderful, Exalted, Uplifted and Glorified God! Thus does he call him: יהוה אדני—and so on, as far as the end of all the holy names, as you will find them in full in Pirkei Hekhalot.99

In this passage, the Youth is the celestial High Priest and the head of the angelic hierarchy. He is a figure of great power and majesty, and in some sense an embodiment of the Divine Glory. He is, however, separate from and subordinate to the enthroned kavod of the Holy One. His body, being like a fire-filled rainbow (א), resembles the כְּבוֹד־יְהוָֹה of Ezek 1:26–28 and is an object of shiur koma teaching in its own right (ד), but it seems to be smaller in stature than God’s own kavod, the hand of which rests upon his head.100 The Youth’s crown indicates that he is the heavenly representative of Israel and we are told that he mediates the divine Glory to the angels of the nations, among whom he is pre-eminent (ב).

Section C is right at the heart of the Youth-Metatron tradition. The Youth possesses a secret name, which is the greatest of the celestial mysteries and imbued with great theurgic power. This name is evidently related to the name of God,101 and to the lists of secret names found elsewhere in the shiur koma recensions.102 The parallel texts in SRaziel and SKoma state that this name ‘is written with one letter,


99 The final rubric is not found in any parallel version of this text. As noted by Cohen (Texts and Recensions, 42), ‘it is unclear precisely to which text of merkavah mysticism the scribe is referring.’

100 See p. 520 n. 93 above.


102 SRaziel (262–263) and the long version of SKoma (Jx) state that the Youth’s name ‘is written with six letters and with seven letters…’ etc. Cohen (Liturgy and Theurgy, 234ff.) rightly observes that this must refer to the two spellings of the name Metatron: מֶטֶטרון and מְטָטֶרְון (see further Scholem, Kabbalah, 380). However, this does not apply to the earlier SidRBar version, where ‘six upon six’ (also in the two later versions) presumably refers to a 36-letter ‘seal’ or ‘magic square’ (possibly an acrostic of some kind). There is no reason to assume that this was based on the name Metatron which, as observed above, is absent in this version.
whereby heaven and earth were created, and sealed with the signet: אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה אֶהְיֶה.  

This is consistent with the statement in SidRBer (C) that the Youth’s name was revealed only to Moses, since it was this name, אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה אֶהְיֶה (‘I AM THAT I AM’), that was revealed to Moses at the burning bush (Exod 3:14). A passage found in ms. New York at the beginning of HekhZ states that it was Metatron who appeared to Moses in the bush. It follows that the name of the Youth is somehow closely connected with this name. A short text found in two manuscripts of SRaziel and four manuscripts of SKoma reads as follows:

And when the Holy One, blessed be he, calls the Youth, he calls him thus: [...names follow...]. This is the name of the Youth. He who does not learn it incurs death, but he who makes use of the Crown does so likewise. From the appearance of his loins and down (cf. Ezek 1:27), each is like the other, but from the appearance of his loins and up, each is not like the other. The name of the Youth is like the name of his Master, as it is written: ‘for my Name is in him’ (Exod 23:21).

The implication of these texts, taken together, is that the name אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (the ‘Crown’) refers to the Youth and his Master, whose names are the same. The first אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה (“I AM”) is the Holy One, and the second is the Youth. The Youth therefore manifests and mediates the Glory of the Holy One, with Whom he is partly similar, yet partly dissimilar, since the ‘I AM THAT I AM’ relationship between the two is expressive of both identity and difference.

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104 SRaziel 261–262; SKoma, Jx, 17 (minus gershayim in most mss.: Cohen, Texts and Recensions, 157–160); also at Synopse § 396 and parallels (minus gershayim).
105 HekhZ § 341. Compare Acts 7:30; and see also Philo, Mos 1.66, discussed in Bockmuehl, ‘Form of God’, 15.
106 This material occurs near the end of the longer versions of both recensions. In SKoma, it corresponds to Cohen’s section Ns, ll. 78–82. See further p. 524 n. 111 below.
107 Ms. Oxford 2257 of SKoma adds here: ‘...whose name is Metatron, and one who does not learn it incurs death, but he who makes use of the Crown does so likewise,’ and omits: ‘This is the name of the Youth...does so likewise,’ at the point where these words occur in the other mss.
108 Cohen takes this to mean the two sides of the Youth’s body, but this is surely mistaken: the comparison is between the Youth and the divine kavod. Compare the remarks of Halperin, Faces, 405–407.
109 It is very interesting to observe that Hoter ben Shlomo, a fifteenth-century Yemenite commentator on Maimonides, attributes to ‘the Sages’ the statement that ‘אהיה is maase merkava’ (Thirteen Principles, quoted by Blumenthal, ‘Philosophical-Mystical Interpretation’).
The names by which God calls the Youth in the SRaziel/SKoma text, though badly scrambled in the extant manuscripts, are worthy of attention. The six manuscripts published by Cohen read as follows:

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This list of names appears once to have been a coherent text or, at least, to have been composed of recognizable word-elements. Beginning with the fourth word, this is almost certainly 'וכנויו': 'and his nickname (is)', introducing the names that follow. Word 5 is the divine name: אוֹדָא, 'I AM.' Word 6 is presumably רְיָא, 'my friend'. Word 7 appears to be a first person singular imperfect form (qal, piel or nihpah) of the verb חָדְרֶה, thus either: 'I will honour', or: 'I will be honoured.' Words 8 and 9 are so confused as to be indecipherable. Words 10 and 11 are clearly אַשָּׁמְלָת אָשְׁמַי, 'glowing fire', with the divine name: יה added. According to ms. A, word 12 is רֶבֶר, the name of the highest heaven. Words 13–15 are confused, but ms. A suggests a magical name derived from the Greek

110 I am grateful to Rabbi Asher Finkel of the Institute of Judaeo-Christian Studies, Seton Hall University, for alerting me to the potential significance of these textual variations.


112 Thus also Cohen, *Liturgy and Theurgy*, 259.
the shiur koma and the angelic ‘youth’,

ἀνδρεῖος (‘strong’ or ‘manly’), and might speculatively be rendered: Andreiruriya. In themselves, these details are not especially illuminating, but it is clear that the names were originally meaningful.

The opening words of the list are much more significant. The first name according to manuscript A (1a–b) quite clearly means: ‘This is the son of God.’ B1 and C1 appear to support this reading, although the final letter ל has been omitted. Alternatively, B/C1 might perhaps be vocalized: בריה, ‘This is the Creator.’ However, this is unlikely to be the original reading, since it is hard to imagine that a post-Christian Jewish editor would have changed ‘the Creator’ to ‘the son of God’. C2–3 appear to repeat: ‘This is the son’, while B2 offers: ‘who is the son.’ D1–3 and E1–3 could conceivably mean: ‘This is the בד (of God).’ The term בד has various meanings, including: (a) single or separate, (b) stalk or shoot, (c) member, limb or part, and, coincidentally, (d) white linen (cf. Dan 10:5). Elsewhere, the name זהובדיה is encountered in a list of the names of Metatron and in a geniza fragment, where it is applied to the God-like Youth who, according to this fragment, receives the yored merkava in the seventh hekhal. In the shiur koma text under consideration, however, this relatively ‘safe’ reading of the name is unlikely to have been altered—at least, deliberately—so as to produce the potentially heretical variants found in manuscripts A–C.

Thus, while it is perhaps possible that the reading: זהובריאל (A1a–b) is a wholly accidental product of the vagaries of textual transmission, there are good grounds for believing it to be genuine. We therefore have to reckon with the possibility that, at some stage during the development of the shiur koma tradition, when this text was produced, the Youth was sometimes called ‘the son of God’. Whatever this title may have meant in this context, it can hardly be post-Christian.

113 See: LSJ, 128a–b; and BAG, 63b.
114 See further p. 597, n. 87 below.
115 Admittedly, this reading involves a mixture of Aramaic with Hebrew, but this is entirely understandable if, as is more than probable, the Youth was identified with the occupant of Daniel’s second throne, the celestial נשא בר (Dan 7:9–14). See further pp. 527, 536–537, and 541–542 below.
116 See BDB, 94a–b, and Jastrow, Targumim, 13b.
117 Schäfer § 682.
119 Note that both SRaziel and SKoma are represented by these mss. (see p. 524, n. 111 above).
At the end of SidR Ber, C, two verses of Exodus are juxtaposed with each other. The same two verses are included in a more elaborate discussion of the relationship between Metatron and the divine Presence in bSan 38b:

Once a heretic said to R. Idit, 'It is written, “And unto Moses he said, Come up to יהוה” (Exod 24:1). Surely it should have said: Come up to me!’

‘This was Metatron’, he replied, ‘whose name is like that of his Master, for it is written, “For my Name is in him” (Exod 23:21c).’

‘But, if so, we should worship him!’

R. Idit replied, “The same verse, however, says, “Do not rebel against him” (Exod 23:21a). (This means) “Do not exchange him for me” [reading אַל־תֵּמִיר (do not exchange) for אַל־תַּמֵּר (do not rebel)].’

‘But, if so, why is it stated, ‘He will not pardon your transgressions’ (Exod 23:21b)?’

He answered, ‘Indeed, we would not accept him even as a messenger, for it is written: “If Thy Presence go not with us . . .,” etc. (Exod 23:15).’

The point here is to refute a heretic who regards the principal angel as a second deity and wants to worship him. Cohen translates the Youth text in SidR Ber so as to give the same meaning, by placing ‘he is the Prince, the Prince of the Presence’ (D) in opposition to ‘this is the name of my Glory’ (C, end). This is, admittedly, possible. However, there seems to be no reason to include such a warning at this point in the text, which, far from refusing to accept the Youth, holds him in the highest possible regard. Moreover, the words of Exod 23:21a, which provide the crux of Idit’s argument in bSan 38b, do not appear in SidR Ber. Therefore, if the SidR Ber text is taken on its own terms (as in the translation offered above), it appears to state that God warned Moses that the name of his Glory is fully manifest in the Prince of the Presence, before whom all the angels stand, just as he (the Prince) stands before the Holy One. This is exactly contrary to Idit’s meaning. If this interpretation of the text is correct, it implies that Idit (or a redactor of the Bavli) has adopted a text like that found in SidR Ber, but re-arranged and re-interpreted it in an attempt to counteract its ‘heretical’ implications.

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120 The Hebrew text reads: יהוה משר שם פנים / הוא יש בכרדים (the oblique line represents the division between C and D in my translation). Cohen (Texts and Recensions, 40) treats this as a single sentence and translates: ‘...this being the name of my glory and he being the Prince of the Presence’.
The recitation of God’s names at the climax of the liturgy (E) is the high priestly prerogative of the Youth alone. The angels may not even hear these names. However, the rubric indicates that they are also to be recited by the shiur koma practitioner, who thereby assumes an analogous priestly role.

The Youth and the Holy One: Shiur Koma and the Song of Songs

Segal has drawn attention to a complex of midrashic traditions, apparently originating in the late first and second centuries CE, concerning two appearances of God, as (a) an old man and (b) a handsome youth. The sources state that the former appeared at Sinai and represents the divine attribute of mercy, while the second appeared at the Red Sea and represents the attribute of justice. The youthful figure is sometimes identified with the occupant of the second throne in Daniel 7 (the Son of Man), although this exegesis is regarded with suspicion and the notion that the youthful ‘appearance’ is a second God or ‘Power’ is emphatically denied. This may well be an attempt to suppress or control the tradition of the archangelic Youth. The majority of the sources resist the heretical potential of the tradition by insisting that the Youth and the Ancient of Days are both modes of appearance of the Holy One, but there is also evidence of an alternative defensive strategy which demoted the Youth to ordinary angelic status. In this sense, the story of Metatron’s dethronement may have an historical basis.

Saul Lieberman has documented a tannaitic dispute as to whether the Song of Songs was revealed to Israel at the Red Sea or at Sinai, the latter tradition being strongly associated with Akiva. In both traditions, God’s theophanic appearance is identified with the male Beloved. Other tannaitic texts point to an association between the Song of Songs and maase merkava, which, in turn, is linked to the Red Sea and Sinai theophanies. This implies an identification of the Beloved with the occupant of the merkava. These findings support the hypothesis, first proposed by Adolf Jellinek and developed by Scholem, that the shiur

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121 Segal, Two Powers, 33–59.
122 See pp. 536–537 and 541–542 below.
123 Lieberman, ‘Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim’ (see n. 86 above).
koma was based on esoteric exegesis of the Song of Songs. Lieberman concludes: ‘The midrash on the Song of Songs equals maase merkava equals shiur koma.’ Scholem supports this theory by reference to Origen’s statement, in the prologue to his commentary on the Song of Songs, that the book was classified by Jews, along with Genesis 1 and parts of Ezekiel, as a restricted text. Although no such tradition is found in indisputably rabbinic sources, a few midrashim cited by the Yemenite commentator associate the Song of Songs with maase merkava and place it in the same restricted category as Ezekiel 1. The restriction is explained by a parable concerning a slave-girl (the Christian Church) who murders the king’s true bride (Israel), steals her jewellery and attempts to usurp her place. This must, of course, refer to Christian interpretation of the Song of Songs as an allegory of the love between the Church and Christ. Scholem, however, argues that the parable does not explain Origen’s statement, since that interpretation only gained acceptance in Christian circles as a result of Origen’s own commentary. He concludes that the Song of Songs must already, in Origen’s day, have been associated with the shiur koma. Although there is much evidence to suggest that Origen was in contact with the Jewish merkava tradition, his allusions to the shiur koma are, as we have seen, extremely disparaging. His interpretation of the Song of Songs seems to be more closely related to that of the targum and the midrashim, which treat the text as an allegory of the love between God and Israel. On the other hand, however, Lieberman has shown that

125 See: Jellinek, BHM 6: xxxxii–xxxxiii; Scholem, Major Trends, 63–67; idem, Jewish Gnosticism, 36–42; and idem, Mystical Shape, 15–37.
128 Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, 36–40.
130 In fact, Hippolytus of Rome had previously interpreted the Song along similar lines (see MPG 10:627–630; and Ohly, Hohelied-Studien, 13–16). Scholem (Jewish Gnosticism, 39 n. 11) maintains that Hippolytus was less influential than Origen, which may be true, but the question of where he obtained these traditions remains unanswered. Kimmelman (‘Rabbi Yohanan,’ 570) suggests that Hippolytus may have been Origen’s source but, given Origen’s extensive direct contacts with Jewish tradition, this is unlikely to be the whole truth.
131 See further Halperin, Faces, 322–358.
132 See p. 510 above.
133 Polemical and ‘counter-exegetical’ passages occur both in Origen’s treatment of the Song of Songs and in midrashim attributed to his contemporaries among the
these allegorical traditions were sometimes linked, via the Red Sea and Sinai theophanies, to the vision of the merkava.\textsuperscript{134} We have also seen that the merkava liturgy itself could be described in similarly erotic terms.\textsuperscript{135} Moreover, and most importantly, the idea that the Song of Songs is an exalted and intimate expression of Israel’s praise of God occurs repeatedly in both the targum and the midrashim.\textsuperscript{136}

The same idea is implied by a prayer that, according to HekhZ, is to be uttered by the successful yored merkava at the climax of his heavenly ascent. Having passed through the seven hekhalot, the yored merkava is now seated on the lap of the enthroned divine Glory, whom he addresses by seven names. These names are also the seven ‘seals’ that, when shown to the angelic guardians, previously gained him access to the seven hekhalot. Excluding material found only in ms. New York, which appears to have been added during a relatively late stage of redactional activity, the prayer reads as follows:\textsuperscript{137}

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsection 418b May it be your will, \textit{Lord} God of Israel, our God and our fathers’ God…\textsuperscript{138}
  \item \textsection 419a אבטח, the \textit{Lord} God of Israel; אנה, the \textit{Lord} God of Israel; הפילניש, the \textit{Lord} God of Israel; יבריאל, the \textit{Lord} God of Israel; ינפרדיאל, the \textit{Lord} God of Israel; נתפדריאל, the \textit{Lord} God of Israel; אט סוספיה, the \textit{Lord} God of Israel.\textsuperscript{139}
\end{itemize}

Palestinian Amoraim. This suggests that a Jewish-Christian dispute about the Song may have occurred in third-century Caesarea. See further: Baer, ‘Israel’; Urbach, ‘Homiletical Interpretations’; Kimmelman, ‘Rabbi Yohanan’; Blowers, ‘Origen, the Rabbis’. On the wider picture, see De Lange, \textit{Origen and the Jews}.

\textsuperscript{134} See further Loewe, ‘Divine Garment’, who argues that the author of the targum to the Song of Songs was engaged in a ‘Zweifrontskrieg’ against, on the one hand, Christian adaptation of the allegorical midrashic tradition, and, on the other, the merkava.

\textsuperscript{135} See pp. 503–505 above.

\textsuperscript{136} For example: Tg. Cant 1:1, 2:3, 5:10, 5:16 (Sperber 4:127, 130 and 136); CantR 1,11 and 1,66 (Dunsky 11 and 59–50; = Soncino Midrash 9.2:19 and 88); AggShS 1,1 (ed. Schechter 672–697, and \textit{ibid.}, 145–163).

\textsuperscript{137} HekhZ § 418b–419j, omitting § 418c–g and 419b,f,h, which are found in ms. New York only.

\textsuperscript{138} Ms. New York interpolates here a long hymn (§ 418c–418g and 419b), which includes divine and angelic names and repeats the names of the angelic guardians of the seven hekhalot.

\textsuperscript{139} Only ms. New York gives § 419a in full, but this material is not unique to the tradition represented by that manuscript. The other mss. all abbreviate as follows: אבטח, the \textit{Lord} God of Israel’…as far as…”שנקפי, the \textit{Lord} God of Israel.’
§ 419c ... that you give me grace, mercy, compassion and glory before the throne of your Glory, in the eyes of all your ministers, and in the eyes of all who see (me); and that you bind all your ministers to me, to do thus and thus.

§ 419d The Great, Mighty, Fearsome, Strong, Firm, Majestic and Potent God!

§ 419e 'My beloved is all radiant and ruddy, etc.—צְבוּאָת
'His head is fine gold...,' etc.—צְבוּאָת
'His eyes are like doves...,' etc.—צְבוּאָת
'His cheeks are like spice beds...,' etc.—צְבוּאָת
'His hands are disks of gold...,' etc.—צְבוּאָת
'His legs are columns of marble...,' etc.—צְבוּאָת
'His mouth is wholly sweet and he is altogether desirable.
This is my beloved and this is my friend'—

§ 419g Good! Pure!140
'יה חָסְן יְהוָה, 'Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord!'141

§ 419j Learn this mishna every day, after prayer.142

Here, the addition of the name צְבוּאָת at the end of each of the seven verses, Cant 5:10–16, seems to imply that each of these verses is the equivalent of 'Holy! Holy! Holy is the Lord' (Isa 6:3), which is cited in full at the end of the final verse. In other words, the description of the Beloved contained in these verses becomes, in effect, an expansion of the kedusha, which is the innermost heart of the celestial and the earthly liturgies. Dan, moreover, argues that the addition of צְבוּאָת means that these verses from the Song of Songs are considered to be, in and of themselves, extended names of God.143 The fact that these seven verses are evidently juxtaposed with the preceding seven names of the 'Lord God of Israel' would appear to support this point. Thus, once again, God’s ‘praise’ is the expression of his Name. The number seven doubtless reflects the sevenfold structure of the cosmic temple,

140 Following N, M22, and D (other mss: ‘Goodness! Purity!’).
141 The translation of § 419e,g is based on ms. Oxford which, however, gives צְבָאוּת for צְבוּאָת in two cases. Dan ('Hadrei-Merkabah,' 53) argues that this may be the original reading. If so, it perhaps indicates that the name is to be pronounced with equal stress on all three syllables. Ms. New York gives the verses in full, but omits צְבוּאָת. Here, the letter ש (presumably standing for שֵׁם, 'name') has been inserted at intervals above the line.
142 It is not clear whether this rubric applies only to the above prayer, or to a larger block of text. Elior (Hekhalot Zuarti, 36) treats it as the first line of an appendix.
143 Dan, 'Hadrei-Merkabah,' 52f.
whose courts are the hekhalot. Dan believes that Akiva was the first to interpret the description of the Beloved as a divine self-portrait, and that it was the combination of Akiva’s mystical exegesis of the Song with traditional exegesis of Ezekiel’s description of the enthroned deity that produced both hekhalot mysticism and the shiur koma.144

However, Cohen disputes the theory that the shiur koma evolved out of exegesis of the Song of Songs,145 pointing out that the description of the Beloved bears only a superficial resemblance to the figure on the Throne. Whereas the Beloved is described from the head down (Cant 5:10–16), the shiur koma generally proceeds from the feet up.146 Moreover, quotations from the Song of Songs occur only in a few shiur koma texts, whereas scriptural verses which emphasize God’s greatness (Deut 10:17; Pss 24:1, 29:1, 93:1–5; Isa 40:12 and, especially, Isa 66:1) are much more prominent in the literature as a whole. Cohen therefore argues that the origins of the shiur koma were in the ‘throne-theophany’ (in other words, the merkava) tradition, and that the association with the Beloved was a secondary development.

Within the shiur koma recensions, there are, in fact, only three texts that cite the Song of Songs.147 The first is an extended passage of SidRBer (72–115), where lists of names and measurements, with a few commentarial remarks, are inserted between the verses of Cant 5:10–16.148 This text therefore follows the same descending order as its scriptural source. It also includes the ‘names-only’ text, where the enthroned figure is apparently identified with the angel whose body is like tarshish.149 This extended passage begins with the words: ‘This is the stature (קומה) of ידידיי״ה’, and concludes: ‘Metatron, the Prince of the Presence, said: Thus far have I seen the height (רום) of ידידי״ה.’ The

144 Dan, ‘Hadre-Merkava’; idem, Three Types, 9f.; idem, Ancient Jewish Mysticism, 67–70 and 76f. Note that Dan regards this development as entirely separate from the allegorical-exegetical tradition.
146 According to CantR 6,4 (Dunsky 140; Soncino Midrash 9.2:255f.), Israel extols the Holy One from the Head down, while God extols Israel from the feet up. This saying must be somehow related to the merkava but, as we shall see, it reverses the original tradition.
147 I discount an isolated quotation of Cant 10:13 at SKoma 96 (see the following note).
148 Much of the material in this passage has parallels in the other recensions, where, however, it is not connected with the Song of Songs. SKoma 96 (see the previous note) occurs in the midst of such material.
149 See pp. 518–519 above.
name ידידיה (‘Beloved of Yah’) is derived from 2 Sam 12:25, where it is a cognomen of Solomon.\textsuperscript{150} Here, it evidently signifies that the figure described is identical with the male Beloved (דוד) of the Song of Songs, and there can be no doubt that the redactor(s) of this recension identified this figure with the Glory of the Holy One. However, the form of the name seems inappropriate if applied to God, since the ‘Beloved of Yah’ must, by implication, be distinct from Yah himself. This name also occurs in the second shiur koma text to cite the Song of Songs, which is found in MerkR (171–175) and a few mss. of HekhR.\textsuperscript{151} HekhR § 167 reads as follows:

\begin{quote}
Metatron said: Thus far have I seen the height of ידידיה, who is the Master of the universe. Peace! ‘How is your Beloved more beautiful than any other beloved, O fairest among women?… My beloved is radiant and ruddy… His legs are pillars of marble… His mouth is wholly sweet, and he is altogether lovely’ (Cant 5:9–16).
\end{quote}

This is basically the same text as SidRBer, minus the shiur koma material inserted between the verses. The opening words in the MerkR mss. are confused. Instead of ‘Metatron said’, we read either: ‘R. (Yishmael?) said: Blessed be Metatron (א״ר ברוך מטטרון),’\textsuperscript{152} or: ‘Blessed be I AM (?), Metatron (ברוך א׳ מטטרון),’\textsuperscript{153} or: ‘Blessed be I AM (?), blessed be Metatron (ברוך א׳ ברוך מטטרון).’\textsuperscript{154} Although the textual confusion makes it impossible to be sure, the parallel construction of these readings seems to imply that ידידיה is identical with Metatron. There are therefore grounds for suspecting that these texts originally described a second, subordinate, figure, who resembled the divine Glory and was also a shiur koma object in his own right. If so, the obvious candidate is the Youth, with whom Metatron is very commonly identified, and who not only meets these criteria but also qualifies as God’s beloved.\textsuperscript{155}

\textsuperscript{150} Compare PsYon ad loc. (Sperber 2:179): ‘And Nathan the prophet stretched forth his hand and called him ידידיה for the sake of the Lord.’ See also CantR 1,10 (Dunsky 10; Soncino Midrash 9.2:16).
\textsuperscript{151} See Schäfer § 167, mss. Budapest, Dropsie, Munich 22 (following on from a merkava passage).
\textsuperscript{152} JTS ms. 8128 (= Cohen’s main text).
\textsuperscript{153} Oxford ms. 1531 (reading ‘א׳ as an abbreviated form of the name איה).
\textsuperscript{154} Munich ms. 40 (and see the previous note).
As we have seen, the ‘Youth text’ in SidRBer is the source of the other versions. This recension may, therefore, be closer to the primitive shiur koma tradition than the others. It consists of five blocks of text, as follows:

(A) an introductory formula, followed by the ‘Youth text’ given on pp. 520–522 above (lines 1–47);

(B) a text in which Yishmael gives the names and measures of the body of ‘the Lord God of Israel, the King of the Universe’, from the feet up, citing various throne-theophany passages (lines 48–72a);

(C) the ידידיה passage, based on Cant 5:10–16 and proceeding from the head down (lines 72b–115a);

(D) formulae for converting the earthly measurements into divine ones (lines 115b–125);

(E) liturgical instructions, assurances and warnings (lines 126–145).

B and C appear at first sight to be two distinct blocks of traditional material. As we have seen, however, A introduces two distinct characters: the Holy One and the Youth. It may, therefore, be the case that B and C were, originally and respectively, descriptions of these two figures. The third text occurs in SKoma and SRaziel:156

R. Natan, the student of R. Yishmael says:

Even of the nose, he gave me a measure, and so, too, of the lips and of the cheeks, and, though he gave me the measure of the brow, he also gave me the measure of the male member.157 The width of the brow is equal to the height of the neck, and, likewise, the lip is as long as the

It seems all but certain that the Aramaic term שמשיא is equivalent to the Hebrew שמשה. Compare SidRBer 1: אבא רמא שמשה ‘(the Great Servant’); and see further, Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 50f. It is very tempting to accept Halperin’s emended reading (Faces, 403) of Schäfer § 385, according to which, when the Youth enters beneath the Throne, God ‘embraces him with a shining face’ (פנים באור מחבקו). However, although באור is supported by one manuscript, מחבקו is not attested. The other manuscripts read: ‘strengthens him with a (?) great face’ (מזרק ברוב מחיקו).

156 SKoma 108–119; SRaziel 176–192 (translated); also in several ms. fragments.

157 Cohen’s text reads: המאת יל מדרシェ שמא. The word המאת generally means ‘a cubit’ but can also be a term for the phallus. ‘The measurement of a cubit’ makes no sense in the present context. Since Nathan is claiming that Yishmael has transmitted to him even the most secret measurements of the divine body, the second alternative seems much more likely. This is confirmed by ms. British Museum Or. 6577, which reads: המאת יל מדרש בא ממד (‘the measurement of the phallus of the genitalia’). The meaning is probably that the measurement of the phallus was disguised as the measurement of the brow.
nose, which is as long as the little finger, and the height of the cheeks is half the circumference of the head. 158

Thus, the measure of the lips is seventy-seven myriad parasangs. The name of the upper lip is גברתיהא, and the name of the lower is בשרגיהא. His mouth is consuming fire.

The crown upon his head measures five hundred parasangs by five hundred: ‘Israel’ is its name. And the precious stone which is between its horns has engraved upon it: ‘Israel, my people, is mine! Israel, my people, is mine!’

‘My Beloved is radiant and ruddy...his head is purest gold...his eyes are like doves...his cheeks are like beds of spice...’ (Cant 5:10–13): two thousand myriad parasangs. And whoever does not conclude with this passage transgresses: ‘His cheeks are like beds of spice...’ etc., ‘...His hands are disks of gold...His legs are columns of marble...His mouth is wholly sweet, and he is altogether lovely’ (Cant 5:13–16).

This text may not be a single unit. MerkR (130–136) includes the beginning of the text (down to ‘consuming fire’), but not the description of the crown or the citation of Cant 5:10–16. The last two elements, however, clearly belong together. The crown is identical with that of the Youth. The same crown appears immediately before the first occurrence of the name ידידיה in SidRBer (70–71), and in a rather garbled version of the first part of the same passage in MerkR (89–101). MerkR does not cite the Song of Songs directly but alludes to an exegesis of Cant 5:11 which is found in the SidRBer version, and which also includes the name ידידיה. 159 It therefore seems that this crown was traditionally associated with ידידיה, the Beloved, and that the Beloved was originally the Youth.

The Angelic-Priestly Messiah and the Hierarchy of Worship

As we have seen, the evidence suggests that the shiur koma tradition was originally concerned with two separate figures: the kavod of God himself, to whom the scriptural throne-theophany verses were applied, and the Youth, who was identified as the Beloved of the Song of Songs.

158 The point here, surely, is that the measurements of these features are determined by measurements of other body parts which have been given elsewhere.
159 Admittedly, the crown occurs in SidRBer at the end of the ‘King of the Universe’ passage (B), not within the ידידיה passage (C), but it is not hard to explain how it may have been displaced: B ends with the head, which is where C begins. MerkR clearly associates the crown with the head of the Beloved, and places it after the introduction of the name.
For reasons which are not yet clear, the latter identification was unacceptable to the rabbinic redactors of the tradition, who preserved the character of the Youth but transferred the description of the Beloved to the kavod. It is probable that the Youth, like Metatron, once occupied a throne but has been demoted. MerkR 20–21 seems to preserve a trace-memory of the fact that there were originally two objects of shiur koma:

I saw the Lord God of Israel, the King of the universe, sitting on a lofty Throne, and, to his left, the Prince of the Presence... [there follows a list of names which are elsewhere attributed to Metatron].

Who is, or was, this mysterious Youth? He is evidently the High Priest who conducts the heavenly liturgy, and the head of the angelic hierarchy. His crown shows him to be the heavenly representative of Israel: hence, God’s Beloved. However, his identification with the Beloved of the Song of Songs is problematic, since, according to the allegorical midrashim, this figure, the Beloved of the bride Israel, is the kavod of God himself. The Youth in the shiur koma participates in and mediates the Glory of the Holy One, but he is distinct from and subordinate to God. Nonetheless, the fact that his body is a shiur koma object places him in a special category and, since the essence of the shiur koma is worship (‘measure’ = ‘praise’), he is clearly an object of veneration. This special status is bound up with the idea that his Name is the second ‘I AM’ of the Name revealed to Moses. Since ‘life depends upon his praise’, the Youth, as the principal worshipper, must be reckoned to assist in the Creative process, and this function is confirmed by the statement that his name is written with the letter (hand) with which the universe was created.\textsuperscript{160}

This observation prompts a reconsideration of the possibility that the object of the shiur koma was originally the demiurge, as argued by Dan and Stroumsa.\textsuperscript{161} However, this interpretation implies that the crucial distinction is between the רשי on the throne and the transcendent, invisible Deity. Though he may once have had a separate throne, the Youth is not the figure on the merkava, nor is he the visible Image of an invisible God. He does not occupy the role of the kavod of the Holy One, but appears alongside him as his servant. It is, of course, possible

\textsuperscript{160} See pp. 522–523 above.

\textsuperscript{161} See pp. 511–514 above.
that the demiurgic function is another aspect of the Youth's character that has been suppressed. A few Gnostic and Mandaean texts attribute the title ‘Youth’ to the demiurge,162 and this may well be derived from the pre-rabbinic merkava tradition. However, it appears that the priestly Servant-Youth of the shiur koma tradition was originally a rather different figure than the demiurgic Logos-Angel, who does not appear in the shiur koma texts, although the two figures were undoubtedly conflated by some later sectarian groups.163

The evidence of the shiur koma texts suggests that the Youth, who possesses attributes which are often associated with Michael, was originally the Prince of Israel or, in other words, the heavenly Messiah.164 As such, he was almost certainly identified with the occupant of the second throne in Dan 7:9–14, i.e., the relatively youthful ‘Son of Man’ who appears before the ‘One Aged in Days’.165 This supposition is

162 See further Fossum, The Name, 307–313.
163 See further pp. 576–579 below.
164 On the convergence, in some Second Temple sectarian circles, of messianic expectation with the exalted angel traditions, see esp.: Nickelsburg, ‘Salvation without and with a Messiah’; Collins, ‘Messianism’; Charlesworth, ‘Jewish Messianology’; Collins, Scepter and the Star, 136–194; and esp. the source-rich discussion by Horbury, Jewish Messiahism, 83–108.
165 It is not necessary, for the purpose of this study, to decide whether ‘Son of Man’ was an established messianic title in pre-Christian Judaism, see Horbury, Jewish Messiahism. Note, however, that Hengel (Son of God, 46) has suggested that the term נער may have been substituted for בר־אנש in response to Christianity’s appropriation of the latter. See also the useful discussion of the exegesis of Daniel 7 in early Jewish and Christian sources by Munoa, Four Powers in Heaven, 43–81, who shows, amongst other things, that in the—admittedly, rather late—merkava midrash ‘Gedullat Moshe’, the Son of Man is identified with Metatron (ibid., 68f.).

Of the voluminous literature in favour of the view that the Aramaic expression ‘son of man’ was transformed into a messianic title by either Jesus or the early Church but that it carried no such meaning in pre-Christian Judaism, see, for example: Vermes, ‘Use of שָׁבַע וַתֶּבֶן בר; idem, Jesus the Jew, esp. 160–191; idem, ‘Son of Man’; Leivestad, ‘Exit the Apocalyptic’; Casey, Son of Man, esp. 99–141; Lindars, Jesus Son of Man, 1–16; Hare, Son of Man Tradition, esp. 231–256; and Burkett, Son of Man Debate.

Against this point of view, we have found that a tradition in which the Youth was portrayed as a second enthroned figure has been suppressed, and evidence to be considered below indicates strongly that this tradition was pre-rabbinic. This tends to confirm the view that the Son of Man was already regarded in some circles of pre-Christian Judaism as a heavenly angelic-messianic figure, as argued, in very different ways, by, for example: S. Mowinckel, He That Cometh, 346–450; Colpe, ‘ἵον τοῦ ἄνθρωπου’, 423–427; Borsch, Son of Man in Myth, 132–173; idem, ‘Further Reflections’; Kim, Son of Man, 15–37; Horbury, ‘Messianic Associations’; Caragounis, Son of Man; and Collins, ‘Son of Man in First-Century’.

With regard to Daniel 7 itself, it has been argued that the Son of Man is not a heavenly being as such but a narrative symbol standing for the community of Israel. Advocates of this position include: Moule, ‘From Defendant to Judge’; Hooker, Son of Man in
supported by a short text included in a few manuscripts of HekhR, in which King David occupies a liturgical role parallel to that of the Youth in the shiur koma.166 His appearance, like that of the Youth, is said to be magnificent, and the brilliance of his crown irradiates the universe. Most significantly, this messianic representative of Israel has a fiery throne, ‘forty parasangs high’, placed before the throne of God.

The angelic-messianic Youth is, then, the leader of the celestial liturgy who summons the kavod to visible appearance on the Throne. Since the shiur koma, over which he also presides, is the ultimate expression of that ‘praise’, his function is to make God’s Glory visible. He is the ‘embodiment’ of Israel’s worship,167 which expresses the totality of God’s Name. As such, he ministers before the kavod, but he is also an image or reflection of that visible Glory. Just as the kavod mediates between the invisible Godhead and his Creation, so the Youth is the highest link in a chain of mediation which extends from the throne of glory to the bottom-most level of that Creation.168 We have seen that the celestial and earthly liturgies are two ends, so to speak, of a single process. The ‘praise of the Holy One’ is the complete expression of his

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166 Schäfer § 122–126, mss. Budapest 238 and New York 8128; Jellinek, BHM 5:167–169 (§ 4–5); Wertheimer, BM 1:75–78. This text also occurs as part of MerkR in Musajoff, Merkava Shlema, 3a–4a.
167 Halperin (Faces, 402–405), approaching the issue from an altogether different direction, comes to a similar conclusion.
168 Compare HekhR § 201, where the secrets of the merkava are called: ‘…the wonders of the weaving of the web on which depends the perfection of the glory of the world, the axle of heaven and earth to which the extremities of the earth and the world, and the extremities of the heavens above are bound, sown and joined, on which they hang and depend, the wonders of the path of the celestial ladder, one end of which rests on earth and the other by the right foot of the Throne of Glory.’
Great Name and, hence, the very ‘substance’ of the body of his Glory. Moreover, the visionary in the presence of the kavod is, like the Youth-Metatron, transformed through participation in the celestial worship into the likeness of that Image.

Thus, in M梅尔克, Akiva introduces the לשבח prayer by stating that, when he stood before the throne, ‘I gave praise upon all my limbs’ (תקוה שבח על כל אבריו).\(^{169}\) Here, the first word of the prayer, על, is taken literally. The praise of God (= the totality of his secret names and measurements) is located ‘upon’ the limbs of the practitioner.\(^{170}\) The merkava adept or shiur koma practitioner aspires, then, to become a lesser analogue of the Beloved Youth, who embodies the Name of the Holy One and participates in his Glory. As Schäfer has observed: ‘The Merkavah mystic is the chosen one of God to whom messianic qualities are ascribed.’\(^{171}\)

The ‘glorification’ to which the adept aspires is, however, no merely personal salvation and has no meaning apart from the ‘chain of mediation’ as a whole. Since this chain extends from the top to the bottom of Creation, so the earthly community of Israel participates by and through its acts of worship in the transformational and redemptive process.\(^{172}\) The worshipper, at whatever level, is a ‘participant member’ of the body of the Glory. The shiur koma is a mystical theology of ‘corporate’ transformation.

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\(^{169}\) Schäfer § 550 (= ed. Scholem § 5); see p. 514 above. Janowitz (Poetics of Ascent, 36) renders על כל אבריו by ‘in all my limbs.’ Swartz offers: ‘I gave praise for all my limbs’ (Mystical Prayer, 229, emphasis added), but this misses the essential point. See the following note.

\(^{170}\) Compare 2 Bar 54:8, ‘For if my members should be mouths and the hairs of my head voices, even so I should not be able to utter your glory or express the excellence of your beauty’ (trans. Klijn, OTP 1:640); Odes of Solomon 26:4: ‘I will call unto him with all my heart, I will praise and exalt him with all my members’ (Charlesworth, OTP 2:758).

\(^{171}\) Schäfer, Gershom Scholem Reconsidered, 16 (= Hekhalot-Studien, 293).

\(^{172}\) Compare Schäfer, ‘Gershom Scholem Reconsidered,’ 11f. (= Hekhalot-Studien, 287f.); and idem, Hidden and Manifest God, 164f.
A problem left outstanding at the end of the previous chapter concerns the identification of the Youth with the male Beloved of the Song of Songs. According to the targum and the allegorical midrashim, the Beloved is in almost all cases a manifestation of God Himself, not the Messiah. In the shiur koma, we have found that the earliest tradition identified the Youth with the Beloved but that this identification was, for reasons associated with the ‘Two Powers’ controversy, thoroughly suppressed. The Youth was dethroned and the description of the Beloved was transferred to the Holy One himself.

Tannaitic discussions about the Song of Songs may well reflect this process. The book’s canonicity was disputed but reportedly defended by Akiva, who is associated with the view that it was given to Israel at Sinai. However, in the sources dealing with the ‘two Powers’ heresy, the Youth is associated with the Red Sea and the Ancient One with Sinai. The appearance of the Youth at the Sea is attached to the textual ‘peg’ of Exod 15:3, ‘יְהוָֹהיְהוָֹה is a man of war; יְהוָֹהיְהוָֹה is his Name’, the repeated divine name being understood to refer to the ‘old’ and ‘young’ appearances. Granted this premise, it is reasonable to identify the ‘warrior’ of the Red Sea theophany with the youthful divine manifestation—but only if the ‘old’ and ‘young’ aspects are themselves prior data. The association of the youthful manifestation with the Red Sea theophany is found in all these sources and must, therefore, be ancient. However, it seems to be inconsistent with Akiva’s position that the Song of Songs was delivered on Mount Sinai, where God is said to have appeared as the Ancient One, not in the youthful form of the Beloved.

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1 mYad 3:5; also at CantR 1,11 (Dunsky 11; Soncino Midrash 9.2: 18).
2 Note in passing that the identification of the Youth in these sources as the second יהוה tends to confirm his identity as the second אָדָם.
According to these sources, the rabbinic opponents of the ‘Two Powers’ heresy attempted to counter the heresy by emphasizing the point that the Ancient One and the Youth are two direct manifestations of a single Deity. Akiva’s Sinai-theory looks rather like an alternative defensive strategy, which aimed to sever the connection between the Beloved of the Song of Songs and the angelic Youth. As we have seen, the shiur koma redactors seem also to have adopted this strategy. This reconstruction, if accurate, implies that the tradition of allegorical interpretation of the Song of Songs may have undergone a similar transformation. If so, Origen has preserved the tradition in something like its pre-rabbinic form, according to which the Beloved was—not God Himself but—the Messiah. Elsewhere, he interprets the Red Sea theophany as an image of Christ’s victory over the powers of evil in the sacrament of baptism. This exegesis, which betrays the influence of Philo, also has definite points of contact with the Warrior-Youth tradition.5

The Messiah is a central figure in the targum to the Song of Songs. This text is not merely a translation, but also a midrashic exposition of the biblical book, which is interpreted as an allegorical account of God’s dealings with Israel from the Exodus until the final days.6 Urbach locates this exegetical development in the period between the destruction of the Temple and the Bar-Kokhba revolt.7 A consequence of this interpretation is that the Messiah is firmly located in the eschatological future, while the figure of the Beloved is identified with God. An exception to this rule is, however, found in in Tg. Cant 7:14–8:4, where the Beloved is quite clearly the Messiah.8 Other passages contain indications that this identification may have been deliberately altered. In Tg. Cant 5:14 (‘His hands are disks of gold, set with tarshish’), the

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4 Philo, Ebr. 79 and 111–115, Som. 2.269, Leg. all. 3.94 and 172. See further Goodenough, By Light, 221f.; Introduction, 200; Jewish Symbols 10: 125–139.
5 Act. Thom. 27 (Klijn 77), and see Klijn’s comments on this verse (ibid. 217); Act. Pet. 2.5 (NTA 1: 285).
6 See Tg. Cant 1,8 and 1,17 (Sperber, 4: 128 and 129) and, further, Levey, Messiah, 125–132.
7 Urbach, ‘Homiletical Interpretations’, 249. This need not, of course, imply that the targum as we have it is this old. See further: Mcnamara, Targum and Testament, 210; and Bowker, Targums and Rabbinic Literature, 14–16.
8 See Sperber 4: 139–140.
Beloved is described as wearing the robes of the High Priest, a depiction which is much more easily applicable to the Servant-Youth than to the Holy One himself. In the following verse, we find the doctrine that God appears as an old man in His compassionate aspect, but as a youth in his warlike aspect. The introduction of these two figures cannot easily be explained in relation to the text of Song of Songs itself and the youthful figure—who is described as a young and mighty warrior battling against Israel’s enemies—has decidedly Messianic overtones. If Urbach’s dating of this interpretative tradition is correct, the elimination of the Beloved Youth must almost certainly have been, at least in part, a response to the catastrophic consequences of imminent Messianic expectation. This reconstruction is supported by Tg. Cant 8:4, where the Messiah-Beloved instructs Israel not to resort to force against the enemies of Jerusalem but to wait patiently for divine intervention. It is also doubtless significant that the Messiah’s coming is said to be conditional upon the constancy of ‘the sages of the generations’ and their devotion to the study of Tora (7:14). The Hebrew midrashim on the Song of Songs adopt a similar attitude with regard to the Messiah, who is identified with the Beloved in several passages of Aggadat Shir Ha-Shirim. One such passage also alludes to the dual manifestations of God as Youth and Ancient One.

This reconstruction of the tradition of the enthroned Youth-Messiah is supported by a passage preserved within an extended collection of merkava material in bHag 14a:

(A) One verse says: ‘His throne was fiery flames’ (Dan 7:9b); but another says: ‘Until thrones were placed, and One that was Ancient of Days did sit’ (Dan 7:9a).

(B) There is no inconsistency: one for Him, and one for David—such was the opinion of R. Akiva.

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9 Tg. Cant 5,15 (Sperber 4: 136) and compare 1,9 (ibid. 128), where the same scriptural verse is applied to the Red Sea crossing. Consider again the suggestion of Loewe (p. 529 n. 134 above).

10 Compare Levey, ‘Introduction’ to idem, Targum of Ezekiel, 4–5. See also Neusner, ‘Mishnah and Messiah’.

11 In both the targum and the midrashim, Tora performs effectively the same function as does ‘praise’ in the shiur koma. Indeed, the rabbinic shiur koma redactors undoubtedly regarded Tora-study and observance as an essential component of Israel’s worship.

12 AggShS 4,11; 6,10; 7,12 (Schechter, ll. 1055–1059, 1209–1214 and 1291–1294).

13 AggShS 2,8–10 (Schechter, ll. 859–881). Compare CantR 2,19 (Dunsky 66; Soncino Midrash 9.2: 117), which, so far as I am aware, is the only instance of an explicit identification of the Messiah with the Beloved in this midrash.
R. Yose the Galilean said to him: Akiva! For how long will you continue to profane the Shekhina? Rather, one for Justice and one for Mercy.

Did he accept this from him, or did he not accept it? Come and hear: One for Justice and one for Mercy—such was the opinion of R. Akiva.

R. Elazar b. Azaria said to him: Akiva, what business have you with the aggada? Cease your talk and attend to (the halakha concerning) the marks of leprosy and tent-covering! Rather: one for a throne and one for a stool, the throne to sit on and the stool for a footstool, as it is said: ‘Heaven is My Throne, and Earth my footstool!’ (Isa 66:1).

In this passage, it is possible to trace the development of the traditions considered above through successive stages, and it is interesting to observe that Akiva is again associated with the issue. His first opinion resolves the problem of the two thrones by identifying the Son of Man as David—in other words, the Messiah—in accordance with what we have found to be the earliest tradition. However, Yose considers the tradition of the enthroned Youth-Messiah to be blasphemous. His interpretation is a summarised version of the standard defense that both are manifestations of a single deity, the Ancient of Days representing Mercy and the Youth, Justice. Akiva at first accepts this view. The reason for Elazar’s objection is not stated, but it may reasonably be inferred that the ‘two aspects’ defence was felt by some to compromise God’s unity. Elazar’s position corresponds exactly to that of the shiur koma redactors. The Youth is dethroned, and only the single figure of the Holy One remains. The verse cited by Elazar is a central throne-theophany text of the shiur koma tradition.

There are, then, good reasons for believing that the shiur koma recensions, although heavily censored by their redactors, preserve very ancient traditions indeed. If the arguments offered above are accepted, the suppressed tradition of the enthroned Youth-Messiah must be at least as old as the Tannaitic period. All the evidence points to the late first or early second century as the period when the process of suppression was initiated. The tradition itself must, therefore, be pre-rabbinic.

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The Celestial Image of Jacob-Israel

In the shiur koma tradition, as reconstructed above, the Youth is both the beloved of Israel and the beloved of the Holy One, these being two aspects of his mediatory role. As the messianic Prince who mediates the divine Glory to Israel, he is the masculine Beloved but, as the representative of the Community and the embodiment of its worship, he more naturally occupies a passive or ‘feminine’ role like that of the image of Jacob in HekhR § 163–164. At all events, the love between the Holy One and His Youth is expressed and reflected in the love between the Youth-Messiah and Israel, and it may be that the Song of Songs was interpreted as an allegory of both.

The statement that the image of Jacob’s face is engraved upon the merkava (HekhR § 164) is also found in midrashic discussions of Jacob’s dream at Bethel (Gen 28:11–19). In GenR 68,12 the angels ascending and descending the ladder say to him:

‘You are the one whose image is engraved on high (חקוקה שלך שאריקון למעלה)’. They ascended on high and saw his image; they descended and saw him sleeping. It is like a king who was sitting and judging in open court: they ascend to the basilica and find him sleeping; they descend to the court and find him sitting and judging.

Passing references to the graven image of Jacob on the throne occur in GenR 82,2 and in LamR 2,2 where God says to Israel:

15 A trace of this dual role may perhaps be preserved in AggShS 1 (Schechter, ll. 83–125), where seventy ‘names’ (in fact, ordinary words) are attributed to Israel. Some ‘names’ are singular and some are plural; some are masculine and some are feminine. The masculine include: נער (Youth), ילד (Boy), הבן (Firstborn),עבד (Servant), אהוב (Beloved), and דמות (Beloved Ones). The feminine include: כלת (Bride), אשת (Woman), בת (Daughter), יונה (Dove), אילה (Doe), עגלה (Heifer), and פרה (Cow).

16 See p. 504 above.

17 In Tg. Cant 4,5 and 7,4 (Sperber 4: 134 and 138), the breasts of the Bride are identified as the two Messiahs of the Community (Bar-David and Bar-Ephraim). In CantR 1,11 and 3,18–19 (Dunsky 12 and 95–96; Soncino Midrash 9.2: 20 and 170f.), we find that, according to one opinion, Solomon in the Song of Songs represents the Holy One (‘the King to Whom peace belongs’), but, according to an alternative opinion, he represents the community of Israel. This seems to preserve a memory of the mediatorial role of the Youth-Messiah. The latter passage is full of merkava imagery.

18 GenR 68,12 (Theodor-Albeck 788).

19 GenR 82,2 (Theodor-Albeck 978; Soncino Midrash, 2: 752), 'Jacob, whose image is engraved on My throne.'
'Would you annoy me thus were it not for the image of Jacob which is engraved on my throne (יאקונא שלי ענכי ושלום): Here you are, it is thrown in your face!' This is the meaning of: 'He has cast down from heaven to earth the beauty of Israel' (Lam 2:1).20

This text clearly presupposes a scenario like that described in HekhR § 164, in which the performance of Israel's daily liturgy causes God to embrace and kiss the image of Jacob on the throne. Here, the words of the biblical lament for the destruction of the temple are taken to mean that Israel's acts of worship are no longer effective, since this loving union has been disrupted by the people's sin.

In NumR 4,1 the tradition which located Jacob's image on the heavenly throne is expressed in slightly different language:

The Holy One, blessed be he, said to Jacob, 'Jacob, you are extremely precious in my sight, for I have fixed your image on my throne (אֵל מֵעָנָי אִיכָּו בְּכֶסֶף חַגַּק וּבְשָׁם יָדֶךָ), and in your name, the angels praise me (שמך ד'ָּל וּבְשָׁם יָדֶךָ), saying, 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, from everlasting unto everlasting!' (Ps 41:14).21

Here, Jacob occupies a heavenly liturgical role like that of the Youth in the shiur koma. The use of the verb קבּע ('fix' or 'set') in place of חקּק ' (engrave') is also found in the targums to Gen 28:12, where the angels say to one another: 'Come and see Jacob the pious, whose image is fixed on the throne of glory (אַהֲרֹן חַסְדוֹא דְּלָי בַּבּוֹרֵס קְדִימָא)'.22 One manuscript of the Fragment Targum, however omits the word altogether: 'Come and see Jacob, the pious man, whose image is on the Throne of His Glory' (כְּסָדָא דָּי יָדֶךָ לְבַבּוֹרֵס קְדִימָא).23 The omission may, of course, be no more than a scribal error, but it is possible that this text reflects an earlier tradition in which the heavenly image of Jacob either was identified with the enthroned Glory or occupied a second throne. If so, the other sources considered above have attempted to modify this tradition by adding either חקּק (‘engraved’) or, alternatively, a form of the verb קבּע (‘to fix’ or ‘put’).

20 LamR 2,2 (Buber 96; Soncino Midrash 7.2: 151).
22 PsYon Gen 28:12 (Clarke 53). Targum Neofiti and the Fragment Targum, mss. Paris, Nuremberg and Leipzig both give the same text with only minor variations, save that the word בַּבּוֹרֵס is substituted for עָנָי (thus: 'Come and see the pious man,' etc.). See Diez Macho, Neophyti I, 1: 179; and Klein, Fragment-Targums I: 57 (Aramaic) and 2: 12 (English).
23 FrgTg Gen 28:12 ms. Vatican (Klein 1: 144 and 2:107).
This possibility is supported by a consideration of Tg. Ezek 1:26b. The early printed versions read as follows: ‘And above/upon the likeness of the throne, an image like the appearance of a man, above/upon it from on high’ (מלעילא עלוהי אנשה כמראה דמות כהויה כשאמה עליה מטילא). However, all the early manuscripts read דמות אנשה in place of כמראה דמות כהויה כשאמה עליה מטילא. The fact that the original Hebrew is left untranslated almost certainly indicates that the expression was viewed with misgivings by the early targumists, who may well have regarded ‘Adam’, in this context, as a proper name. One manuscript, however, records an even more interesting variant: ‘Another version: ‘the form of Jacob our father, upon it from on high (מילעיל עלוהי אבונא יעקב צורה נ”א).’ It appears, then, that the early targumists knew of a tradition, which they attempted to suppress, that the figure seen by Ezekiel on the merkava was either Adam or, alternatively, Jacob. Pirkei de-R. Eliezer, compiled in the eighth or ninth century CE, preserves yet another trace of this tradition:

‘And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven’ (Gen 28:12). And the ministering angels were ascending and descending thereon, and they beheld the face of Jacob, and they said: This face is the face of the hayya which is on the throne of glory (הכבוד שבכסא החיה הפנים הזה). The meaning of this passage appears to be that Jacob’s face is said by the angels to resemble the human faces of the hayytot described by Ezekiel, rather than being directly associated with the figure on the throne. If so, this ‘demotion’ may be an alternative means of suppressing the original tradition, parallel to the addition of the words ‘engraved’ and ‘fixed’ in the other midrashic and targumic renderings of this story. However, we will shortly see that the depiction of Jacob-Israel as an enthroned

24 Tg. Ezek 1:26, according to First Rabbinic Bible; Second Rabbinic (= The First Masoretic) Bible; and Antwerp Polyglot Bible (1569–73). See Sperber, Bible in Aramaic, 3.267; and Levey, Targum of Ezekiel, 22.
25 See Sperber, ibid.; and Levey, ibid.
27 See Levey, Targum of Ezekiel, 6–9.
28 Tg. Ezek 1:26, scribal addition to ms. Montefiore (Jews’ College, London) 116, (Sperber, ibid.). See further Halperin, Faces, 121.
30 PRE 35 end (Broda 45b); cf. trans. Friedlander 265: ‘This is the face like the face of the Chayyah (for it was) like the face of the Chayyah, which is on the Throne of Glory.’ Presumably, this is due to an accidental repetition of כפני in his source manuscript, which is different from that used by Broda.
hayya may also have another, older meaning. An Aramaic hymn for the festival of Shavuot (Pentecost), published by Joseph Heinemann, preserves a striking remnant of the tradition that located Jacob's image on the Throne of Glory:

The angels trembled and the ofanim quaked, that saw Moses ascending upon the cloud. The hairs of his body stood up with one accord, for the image of Jacob was arising before him! ‘Come near and approach, O shepherd of My sons,’ called, from his throne, the Living King. ‘Carve for yourself tablets of sapphire stone, from the throne of the Exalted King.’ Glad was the heart of Moses, and he rejoiced that the merciful God Apologos was his friend.

Here again, the image of Jacob appears to be identified or closely associated with the divine throne. The fact that this tradition occurs in a variety of sources, which adopt different methods of suppressing or disguising it, suggests that it was extremely widespread during the early rabbinic period. The deliberate ‘demotion’ of Jacob (or his image), to which all these sources attest, and which may reasonably be said to parallel Metatron’s dethronement, must almost certainly have been a response to the appropriation of such traditions by Christians and perhaps other non-rabbinic sectarian groups. A baraita about Jacob’s dream, preserved in bHul 91b, contains allusions to the tradition of Jacob’s heavenly image and also to the shiur koma:

‘And he dreamed, and behold, a ladder set up on the earth’ (Gen 28:12a).

A Tanna taught: What is the width of the ladder? Eight thousand parasangs, for it is written, ‘And behold, the angels of God ascending

31 See pp. 567–568 below.
33 Aramaic: לקיבליה והיוה דיעקב דאיקונין.
34 Aramaic: אפולוגוס and the Latin apologus normally mean either a narrative tale or an explanatory account. See: LSJ, 208a; Sophocles, Greek Lexicon 1. 224b; and Glare, Oxford Latin Dictionary. Here, however, the term must surely mean ‘advocate’ or ‘intercessor’. It may, therefore, be an alternative to פרקליט (= παράκλητος).
35 See further: Jervell, Imago Dei, 114–119; Rowland, ‘John 1.51’; and Fossum, ‘Son of Man’s.’
and descending on it’ (Gen 28:12b). At least two were ascending and two descending, and when they met each other there were four. And of an angel it is written, ‘His body was like the tarshish’ (Dan 10:6), and we have a tradition that the tarshish is two thousand parasangs long.

A Tanna taught: They ascended to look at his image above, and descended to look at his image below. They wanted to afflict him when ‘behold, the LORD stood above him’ (Gen 28:13).37

R. Shimon Lakish said: Were it not explicitly stated in Scripture, it would not be possible to say this—like a man fanning (the air) above his son.38

A version of the tradition that associated the term tarshish with the angels’ giant size is found in GenR 68,12 which cites Dan 10:6 to ‘prove’ that each of the angels on Jacob’s ladder was a third of the world in height. Although the basis of this ‘proof’ is unexplained, the source of the tradition is, almost certainly, the shiur koma.39 The midrash goes on to record the following discussion of the meaning of the expression בּוֹ in Gen 28:12:40


Yannai’s opinion that the angels were ascending and descending ‘on Jacob’ is subsequently explained as meaning that some angels were exalting the patriarch while others were putting him down,41 but this is clearly an attempted rationalization of the problematic saying, which, when taken on its own terms, implies that Jacob’s body was itself the heavenly ladder and that its cosmic dimensions were therefore greater even than those of the angels.

36 Cashdan (in Epstein, Babylonian Talmud n. a7 ad loc.) relates this to Ezek 1:10 and comments that ‘according to Rabbinic tradition the likeness of man was the image of Jacob’.

37 In its scriptural context, עלי clearly means ‘above it (i.e. the ladder);’ but Simeon’s exegesis takes it to mean ‘above him (i.e. Jacob).’ See the following note.

38 Cashdan (n. b2 ad loc.; see n. 36 above) explains that God is compared to a man protecting his son from the sun’s heat, just as God protects Jacob from the angels. It seems more likely, however, that the angels who seek to bite Jacob and ‘afflict him’ are compared to a swarm of bothersome insects, who are ‘whisked away’ by God. Note the preposition על, reflecting the scriptural עלי (see the previous note).

39 See pp. 518–519 above.

40 GenR 68,12 (Theodor-Albeck 787; Soncino Midrash 2: 626).

41 Ibid.
Michael Fishbane, in a short but highly important article,\textsuperscript{42} has found clear evidence of shiur koma themes and ideas in Tannaitic midrash. Among the texts examined by Fishbane is ARN(a) 37:8: \textsuperscript{43}

There are seven qualities (מדות) that serve before the throne of the Glory. These are they: Wisdom; Righteousness and Justice; Mercy and Compassion; Truth and Peace—as it is said, ‘And I will betroth you to me for ever; and I will betroth you to me with righteousness and with justice, and with mercy and with compassion; and I will betroth you to me with truth; and you will know the Lord’ (Hos 2:21–22).

R. Meir says: What can the text: ‘and you will know the Lord’ mean, except to teach that every man who has all these qualities within himself (הללו מדות כל בו יש) knows the knowledge of the Omnipresent One (יודע злоו של דעתו).

As observed by Fishbane, citing Scholem, the fact that these seven ‘measures’ are said to ‘serve’ (משמשות) before the throne of the kavod is a clear indication that they are the hypostatic or angelic forms of divine attributes.\textsuperscript{44} Citing Pss 85:11–14 and 89:15, and with the support of Ugaritic and Phoenician sources, Fishbane argues that ‘traditions about these angelic beings are part of very ancient biblical throne theosophy.’\textsuperscript{45} His comments on Meir’s exegesis of Hos 2:21–22 are worth repeating in full:

[Rabbi Meir] begins with the all-important verb ve-yadaʿat (‘and you shall know’) and asks just why scripture should specify knowledge of God as a consequence of this espousal. His answer refers to the qualities (middot) of which the hypostases are composed, and in this way reveals his theosophical reading of Hos 2:21–22. More specifically, Rabbi Meir interprets the biblical passage as a divine directive to incorporate the various attributes mentioned in order to ‘know the Knowledge of God.’ And since these moral middot are associated with the hypostatic middot in heaven, he makes the point that whoever is able to assimilate or interiorize (‘who has in him [bo]’) the essence of these divine realities will have gnosis of God. Rabbi Meir thus presupposes a profound correlation between the heavenly middot which surround the Throne of God’s Glory and their earthly actualization. Some praxis of Jewish gnosis involving the transfor-

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\textsuperscript{42} Fishbane, ‘Measures.’
\textsuperscript{43} Schechter 55b; cf. Fishbane, ‘Measures’, 67.
\textsuperscript{44} See Fishbane \textit{ibid.}; Scholem, \textit{Origins}, 82. Compare the seven attributes listed in the SidRBeer Youth text, section A, on p. 520 above.
\textsuperscript{45} Fishbane, \textit{ibid.}
mation of an adept through the interiorization of spiritual *middot* is thus indirectly revealed. The result would be a spiritual betrothal or unification with God. The Hosean prooftext (‘I shall betroth you to Me’) may thus indicate not only the programmatic of the praxis, but also something of the erotic dimension of this intellectual perfection as well.46

Shortly after the ARN(a) passage quoted above, we find the following statement:47

> Because of his sin, it is not given to man48 to know what is the Likeness on high (למעלה דמות ברעם). Otherwise, he would be granted keys to know that by which heaven and earth were created (מעריצים דמות ברעם). The enthroned Glory is the Agent of Creation.49 The statement thus alludes to the saving knowledge at the heart of shiur koma mysticism, while at the same time denying that such knowledge is possible for human beings in a state of sin. Meir’s statement that knowledge of God is conferred by the seven *middot* of moral perfection (ARN(a) 37:8) should certainly be read in the light of this teaching.50

These two texts shed light on a longer passage of the Tannaitic collection *Sifre Deuteronomy*,51 which is the primary focus of Fishbane’s inquiry, and which he rightly recognizes as an esoteric midrash containing teachings derived from the merkava and shiur koma traditions. Although Fishbane’s analysis has uncovered some of the hidden layers of meaning of this midrash, we shall find it to be even more complex and secretive in structure than he realized. This extraordinary text is, in fact, constructed like a set of Chinese boxes, with multiple layers of

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47 ARN(a) 39.1 (Schechter 58b); cf. Fishbane, ‘Measures’, 69.
48 Or: ‘it was not granted to Adam...’
49 See further Lieberman, ‘How Much Greek?’ 141. Note that this passage is an indication of the close interrelationship between *maase merkava* and *maase bereshit*.
50 Compare the remarks of Fishbane, ‘Measures’, 69; and see also Goldin, *Fathers*, 216 n. 6.
51 *SifDeut* 355 (Horovitz-Finkelstein 422f.). The text of *Sifre* is quoted almost verbatim in the late medieval collection *Yalkut Shimoni* (ed. Hyman, Lehrer and Shiloni); and a slightly different version is preserved in the medieval Yemenite compilation *Midrash ha-Gadol* (ed. Fisch, 775f.). Its late date notwithstanding, this is, in many instances, an independent witness to originally Tannaitic traditions (Fisch, *Midrash Haggadol: Deuteronomy*, 10–14; and idem, *Midrash ha-Gadol*.)
significance, each of which contains and conceals a still deeper meaning. The keys that will unlock these arcane meanings within meanings are the esoteric teachings of the shiur koma. The text reads as follows: 52

(A1a) ‘There is none like God, Yeshurun’ (Deut 33:26a):

(A1b) Israel says, ‘There is none like God[, Yeshurun]!’; and the Holy Spirit says, ‘[There is none like] the god, Yeshurun!’53

(A2a) Israel says, ‘Who is like You (מרימכּה) among the gods, O Lord?’ (Exod 15:11); and the Holy Spirit says, ‘Happy are you (אשרד), Israel— who is like you ( теперьך)?’ (Deut 33:29).

(A2b) Israel says, ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One!’ (Deut 6:4); and the Holy Spirit says, ‘Who is like Your people Israel [a unique nation (אֶחָד הָגוֹי) in the earth]?’ (1 Chr 17:21).

(A2c) [Israel says, ‘My Beloved is all radiant and ruddy!’ (Cant 5:10); and the Holy Spirit replies to them and says, ‘How beautiful are your feet in sandals, noble daughter!’ (Cant 7:2).54]

(A2d) Israel says, ‘Like an apple tree amidst the trees of the wood, [so is my Beloved]!’ (Cant 2:3); and the Holy Spirit says, ‘Like a lily amidst thorns, [so is My love]!’ (Cant 2:2).

(A2e) Israel says, ‘This is my God and I will praise Him!’ (Exod 15:2); and the Holy Spirit says, ‘I have formed this people for Myself [that they may recount my praise]!’ (Isa 43:21).

(A2f) Israel says, ‘For [you] are the glory (תראפת) of their strength!’ (Ps 89:18); and the Holy Spirit says, ‘You, Israel, in whom I will be glorified (אֲשֶׁר בְּךָ)’ (Isa 49:3).

(Ba) ‘Who rides the heavens to your assistance . . . ’ (Deut 33:26b):

52 Except where stated otherwise, the following translation is based on ed. Horovitz-Finkelstein. In addition to Finkelstein’s apparatus, I have consulted Midrash ha-Gadol, Yalkut Shimoni (see the previous note) and the Wilna edition of Sifre (editio princeps), reproduced in Judaic Classics. Only significant variants are noted. Compare Fishbane, ‘Measures’, 55.

53 All mss. and editio princeps of Sifre (following MT): אֲלֵי עָשְׂרִין, but Fishbane adopts the reading of MidrGad: אֲלֵי יְשׁוּרִין (‘except Yeshurun!’). YalShim reads simply: יְשׁוּרִין. See further below.

54 A2c is found in MidrGad only. The form: ‘. . . replies to them and says . . . ’ occurs throughout this version.
(Bb) When Israel is upright (ишר) and does the will of the Omnipresent One, he rides the heavens with your assistance; but when they do not do his will, if one may say so: ‘... and, in his Majesty, the skies (טּוֹבָאֲוָתוֹ)’ (Deut 33:26c).

(C1a) ‘And, in his Majesty, the skies:’

(C1b) ‘And the whole people gathered around Moses and said to him, ‘Moses, our master, tell us what is the measure of the Glory of the Uppermost (מהת בכור של מעלה)?’

(C1c) He said to them, ‘From the lower heavens, you may know what is the measure of the Glory of the Uppermost.’

(C2a) A parable:

(C2b) This is like a person who said, ‘I want to see the king’s face.’ They said to him, ‘Go into the capital city and you will see him.’ He went into the capital city and he saw a veil (וילון) stretched across the gate of the capital city, with precious stones and jewels set into it, and he was unable to feast his eyes on it (ممינו עיניו לזון), so that he fell to the ground. They said to him, ‘Just as you are unable to feast your eyes on the veil stretched across the city gate, and on the precious stones and jewels

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55 Re: possible midrashic readings of בניו, see below.
56 YalShim: (יחד בורו של מעלה: מטרה על norsk מועלה. (but in C1c: מעה מעל מועלה.)
57 The version in MidrGad is more elaborate: ‘He said to them: There is none like God, Yeshurun! Just as a man is unable to gaze (להסתכל) at the lower heavens, how much the more so at the measure of his Glory! You do not need to ask about the Great Power Who is above (הוח דORIZED על מעלה)’
58 YalShim: ‘the glory (בורו) of the king.’
59 Most mss. of Sifre and MidrGad read here: במדינה אולם, but ms. London and editio princeps of Sifre and YalShim all read: במדינה אבל. The verb נכנס is, of course, also used of entry to the two innermost hekalot in HekhZ and HekhR (Schäfer §258–259 and § 407–412; see Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 54–59), in the story of the four who entered pardes, and elsewhere. See the following note.
60 Here, all sources read: במדינה נכנס (some mss. omit במדינה, but ms. London and editio princeps: בה ayr_pause נכנס), except that MidrGad reads: במדינה פרדס (see Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 21–23).
61 Horovitz-Finkelstein gives: ‘all עיני, ‘to remove his eyes,’ but Fishbane (Measures, 61) is certainly right to prefer the variant עיני, found in several mss. and editio princeps of Sifre and in YalShim (MidrGad omits). The same expression is found in a parable attached to the story of the four who entered pardes in tHag 2:5, where the manuscripts read: עין (or עין), but editio princeps: עין (see Morray-Jones, ‘Paradise Revisited’, 216 n. aa, and the sources cited there). As observed by Fishbane (ibid.) the expression ‘feast the eyes’ refers to the vision of the divine Presence, by which the angels are ‘nourished’ (נזונים). In mMid 4:5, the expression refers to gazing at the Holy of Holies and, in tHag 2:5, to its counterpart, the celestial pardes (see Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 21–23).
62 Horovitz-Finkelstein gives: עין, ‘to withstand’ (see the previous note).
there, without falling down—if you were to enter the capital city itself\(^{63}\) and see the king's face, how much the more so!'

(C2c) This is why it is said: 'And, in his Majesty, the skies.'

As observed by Fishbane, the initial exegesis of Deut 33:26a (A1a–b) reverses the plain meaning of the verse, which is broken into two parts and construed as a dialogue in which Israel's theologically ‘orthodox’ affirmation of God's uniqueness is contradicted by the Holy Spirit. Yeshurun, the ancestral name of one of the twelve tribes, is here understood to be a name of Israel as a whole. In Midrash ha-Gadol, the Holy Spirit's response is rendered: אֲלֵּה יְשֻׁרְעָן ('except Yeshurun').\(^{64}\) Fishbane, who adopts this reading in his initial translation of the Sifre passage, rightly points out that it is an al tikre exegesis of the biblical word אֵל.\(^{65}\) The text in Sifre, however, simply reproduces the biblical text, but omits the preposition ('like'), thus: אָלָה יְשֻׁרְעָן. This is clearly presupposed by the al tikre 'correction' in MidGad and must surely, therefore, be the original reading. Fishbane takes Sifre's reading to mean 'Israel is (like) God;'\(^{66}\) but also notes in passing that 'this formulation even hints at the relative divinization of Israel-Yeshurun.'\(^{67}\) In my opinion, this must undoubtedly be the intended meaning of the midrash. Had the author wished the Holy Spirit to say that Yeshurun is merely 'like' God, he could simply have reproduced the words of Scripture: יְשֻׁרוּן כָּאֵל. This being so, his decision to omit the preposition can hardly be without significance.

In the following section of the text, this dialogue is extended by five (in MidGad, six) pairs of juxtaposed verses, in which statements about God are linked to parallel statements about Israel. In A2a, the composer of the midrash picks up the previously omitted preposition בּ and shows that the formula: 'Who is like you...?' is used in Scripture of both God and Israel. It is important to notice that, by the juxtaposition of these two verses, it is established that Israel is like God among the heavenly beings (בָּאֵלִים), which confirms the celestial status of Yeshurun-Israel in A1b.

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\(^{63}\) Sifre: גְּשִׁיתָא לְמָרְדֵּנָה (הָעֹמֵדִי); MidrGad: מִדְרַשׁ גָּדוֹל, מִדְרַשׁ גָּדוֹל (some sources omit העמדה; YalShim agrees with Sifre (see p. 551, nn. 59–60 above).

\(^{64}\) See p. 550, n. 53 above.

\(^{65}\) Fishbane, 'Measures', 55 n. 8.

\(^{66}\) Ibid. 56.

\(^{67}\) Ibid. n. 13. Fishbane links this observation to the rabbinic traditions that associate Jacob with the heavenly throne (see pp. 542–547 above) and with the (almost certainly) pre-rabbinic Prayer of Joseph, which is discussed on pp. 560–562 below.
It is probable, though perhaps not certain, that the word אשךיך (‘happy are you’) is intentionally punned with the word אֲשֶׁר in Exod 4:14. If so, the structural parallel between God and Israel (יִתְנָה כְּבָר אֲשֶׁר) reflects of the form of the divine Name: אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה.

The following pair of verses includes the Shema itself, juxtaposed with a verse in which the word ‘one’ is applied to Israel (A2b). This constitutes an undeniably mystical claim that Israel is (not merely ‘like’ but) one with God and, in the person of her celestial representative, partakes in his very Unity. The basis of this mystical union is the erotically charged ‘spousal’ relationship between God and Israel (A2c–d) and the medium of intercourse between the two is Israel’s acts of worship (A2e). Finally, we are told that God’s glory (תפארת) is made manifest in or through Israel (A2f). On one level, this statement includes within its scope the community on earth but it is clear that ‘the glory of their strength’ is, specifically, the angelic prince of Israel who embodies the image and likeness of the divine kavod. Once again, the structural elements of the parallel: ואתפראת אֲשֶׁר בך אשךיך...תפארת may well be a reflection of the divine Name: אֶהְיֶה אֲשֶׁר אֶהְיֶה.

The message conveyed by Sifre’s treatment of Deut 33:26a is, then, that Israel—by which is meant both the holy community and, specifically, her angelic-messianic representative—reflects or embodies the likeness of the Holy One. Since the materials in Sifre Deuteronomy are of Tannaitic origin, the highly developed shiur koma teachings embedded in this esoteric midrash can be no later than the second century CE and are likely to be even earlier. Regarding the subversion of the evident meaning of Deut 33:26a in A1b, Fishbane comments: ‘One may assume this innovation long preceded its midrashic justification, since no straightforward reading of Scripture would have led to such a conclusion.’ In point of fact, clear evidence of the antiquity of this exegetical tradition is supplied by the LXX version of the verse in question, where οὐκ ἐστὶν ὡσπέρ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ ἡγαπημένου (‘there is none like the God of the Beloved’). Moreover, while the ‘Beloved’ of this version is evidently Israel, the masculine gender of τοῦ ἡγαπημένου

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68 Note that in A2c (admittedly, unique to MidrGad) the verses describing the male lover in detail (Cant 5:10–16) are juxtaposed with a correspondingly detailed and erotic description of the female beloved (7:2–9).

69 Compare the Akiva fragment (Schäfer $296) discussed on pp. 566–568 below.

70 On the antiquity of Sifre and its sources, see Halperin, Faces, 460.

71 Fishbane, ibid.
implies that the name Yeshurun is, here too, understood to be not simply that of the community in general but, specifically, that of Israel's angelic-messianic representative, as encountered in Sifre Deuteronomy and in the shiur koma.

The bold assertion of Israel's 'likeness of unity' with God in Sifre A1–2 is, however, qualified by the way in which the continuation of the verse is treated. In Ba–b, the name Yeshurun is, reasonably enough, taken to be a form of the verb ישר 'be upright', while the Hebrew particle אֵין is, less obviously, understood to be the Aramaic preposition אִין 'if'.

According to this reading, בָּאָלָה יְשֻׁרוּן רֹכֵב שָׁמַיִם (Deut 33:26a–b) means: 'If you (Israel), like God, are upright, he will ride the heavens to your assistance . . . ', while the phrase בְּﬠֶזְרֶ שָׁמַיִם אֵין (Deut 33:26c) is understood to be the negative corollary of this statement: ' . . . but (if not), in his Majesty, (he will ride) the skies.' In order to understand this exegesis, we must recognize that it assumes a distinction between שמים, the visible heavens, and שחקים, which, in rabbinic lists of the seven heavens, is usually the third. The fact that such a list is attributed to R. Meir in ARN(a) 37:9, immediately following his statement about the seven 'measures', confirms Fishbane's belief that such texts from this work are closely related to the midrash in Sifre. With regard to the qualification raised in Sifre, Ba–b, Fishbane comments:

The utterly transcendent God of the lemma, who graciously descends to save His people, is now midrashically presented as conditioned by Israel's covenantal praxis. The result is a nomicization of the conditions of divine salvation and the concomitant empowerment of Israelite praxis . . . God descends to those who do His will, but withdraws to hidden heights on account of human sin.

Up to this point, we have followed Fishbane's demonstration that the claim made in Sifre, section A is qualified by section B, which states that Israel is only 'like' God to the extent that she remains 'upright'. If so, God will ride 'to her assistance' through the visible heavens but, if

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72 See Fishbane, ibid. 57, who also suggests an alternative, but less satisfying, pun with the Hebrew ען, which is sometimes equivalent to אינ, 'if' (ibid. n. 14).
73 Fishbane (see p. 550, n. 52 above) translates שחקים: 'high vaults.' The basic meaning of שחק seems to be 'fine dust' or 'cloud' (see BDB, 1007a) but the singular form שחק in the Hebrew Bible is often translated: 'firmament.' In point of fact, LXX renders שחקים here by ὁ μεγαλοπρεπὴς τοῦ στερεώματος ('the Majestic One of the firmament'), clearly an allusion to Exod 24:10, Ezek 1:22–26, etc.
74 See pp. 548–549 above.
75 Fishbane, ibid. 57–58.
not, He will withdraw above the higher firmament, beyond the range of human knowledge. We will find, however, that still deeper levels of meaning are concealed within the secretive, multilayered structure of this esoteric midrash. The key to the next layer of significance may be found in the word בְּﬠֶזְרֶ (‘to your help’). In the first place, the preposition בּ, which in the context of Deut 33:26b must mean ‘to’, may in the midrash be accorded its more common grammatical meaning: ‘with’. If so, the words רֹכֵב שָׁמַיִם בְּﬠֶזְרֶ are interpreted not according to their plain meaning—that God rides through the heavens to help Israel—but as a disguised statement of the opposite: that God is enthroned on the merkava (רֹכֵב) in the visible heavens with Israel’s assistance. This reversal of the surface meaning of the text parallels the treatment of כָּאֶל אֵין يְשֻׁרוּן in A1a–b and is a statement of ‘the concomitant empowerment’ of Israel’s covenantal praxis: the ‘righteousness’ of the holy community facilitates the celestial enthronement of the Glory. A second possibility is that the biblical word עֵזֶר, ‘help’ (also found in the feminine form: עֶזְרָה), in the midrash, punned with עֲזָרָה, which, in both biblical and rabbinic sources, is a term for the outer temple court (i.e., the enclosure around the sanctuary, excluding the court of the gentiles).76 If this meaning were to be adopted, the resulting midrash of Deut 33:26b–26a would be as follows: ‘If you (Israel), like God, are upright, the Heavenly Charioteer (will be present) in your temple court.’ It is unlikely that either of these exegetical possibilities in the word בְּﬠֶזְרֶ was overlooked by the composer of this esoteric text. Given that it parallels the reversal of meaning in A1b, it seems virtually certain that ‘with your assistance,’ is an intentional element of the midrash. The second exegetical possibility: ‘in your court’, may, at first sight, seem to be more speculative but, as we shall see, is strongly supported by the following section of the text. It is not necessary for us to choose between these exegeses, which, taken together, constitute an expression of the central mystery of the shiur koma tradition. To the extent that Israel remains true to her ‘bridal’ calling, thereby maintaining her ‘likeness’ to God’s Image, the divine Glory is empowered to become manifest in and through her acts of worship, which, for this reason, perform a theurgic function of cosmic ‘service’. On the macrocosmic scale, the effect of Israel’s worship, led by her angelic priestly representative, is that God’s Glory is

76 See BDB 741b, Jastrow, Dictionary, 1062b, and the sources cited there. Note especially mMid 1:4: ‘There were seven gates in the עֵזָרָה.’
enthroned in heaven. On the microcosmic scale, the ‘temple enclosure’ within which the Divine Image and its middot are enshrined is the community as a whole and, especially, the purified body of the shiur koma ‘priestly’ practitioner himself.77

There are, however, layers or levels of glory, and the indwelling Presence on earth is, therefore, veiled. In C1b–c, we learn that the ‘Glory of the Uppermost’ (cf. Ezek 1:22–26) may only be seen by exceptionally holy persons, such as Moses, and that the esoteric knowledge of the ‘measure’ of that Glory is not to be revealed to ordinary human beings. The expression כבוד מדת connects this midrash to the passages of ARN(a) considered above and, of course, to the shiur koma. Although the basic meaning of the parable in C2a–b is clear enough,78 several details deserve our attention. As observed above, the verbs הגיע and הביא, together with the expression: עיניך לצלון, are clear indications of a connection between this passage and the merkava tradition.79 The noun מדינה which usually means a province or district but, occasionally, a city or a seat of government,80 here represents the hekhalot of the seven heavens, which is to say, the cosmic temple. The word אילו (‘veil’) is also the name of the first and lowest of the seven heavens. The veil of the parable is, therefore, placed at the entrance to this heaven, corresponding to the gate of the outer court of the temple.81 The מדינה of the parable thus corresponds to the ‘outer court’ in section B (כָּבָּד), as proposed above. The manifestation of glory in this outermost court is, like that of the visible heavens, overpoweringly beautiful, but it is only an attenuated and diminished form of the ‘Glory of the Uppermost’, to which, in this midrash, the biblical phrase: שְׁחָקִים וּבְגַאֲוָתוֹ (Deut 33:26c) is understood to refer. The word גאוה, in addition to its ordinary meaning of ‘majesty’ or ‘pride’, has connotations of height or tallness.82

77 See pp. 537–538 above. See further ch. 12 above.

78 Somewhat similar imagery is encountered in bHag 13b: ‘All that Ezekiel saw Isaiah saw. What is Ezekiel like? A villager (כפר נמר) who saw the king. And what is Isaiah like? A city-dweller (כרך נמר) who saw the king.’ According to the Tosafot and Rashi, the point here is that Ezekiel, like a naive rustic seeing the king for the first time, felt compelled to describe his vision in graphic detail, whereas the more urbane and sophisticated Isaiah was content to say merely: ‘I saw the Lord.’


80 See Jastrow, Dictionary, 734a.

81 See further Morray-Jones, Transparent Illusion, 153–172, especially 163f., and the sources cited there.

82 See BDB 144a–b; and consider also the LXX rendition: ὁ μεγαλοπρέπης (see p. 554 n. 73 above).
These considerations unequivocally confirm Fishbane’s conclusion that the expression: כבוד מדת is an allusion to the esoteric doctrine of the shiur koma. As we have seen, the Tannaitic midrash in SifDeut 355 is, even more than Fishbane realized, a complex, multilayered and highly secretive repository of shiur koma teachings about the mystical relationships of embodied ‘likeness’ and ‘unity’ between (a) God’s manifest Glory, (b) the heavenly Prince of Israel who reflects and participates in that Glory, and (c) the community whom that figure represents. Fishbane rightly emphasizes the redactors’ extreme concern to conceal these ‘dangerous’ esoteric ideas from popular understanding. This concern is most strongly evident in C1–2, which Fishbane believes was added for precisely this purpose. He observes that the material in this section reflexively suggests yet another reading of the opening lemma, in which יְשֻׁרוּן is taken to be a form of the verb שׁוּר (‘to look at’):

The central purpose of the final section of Pisqa 355 is . . . to prevent popular knowledge of God’s supernal ‘likeness’, and it is just this which allows us to comprehend the exegesis of Deut. 33:26 that is presupposed. For the sages of our midrashic pericope, then, the lemma ‘ein ka’el Yeshurun (‘There is none like God, O Yeshurun!’) was further understood to mean: ‘One (viz., the people) may not (‘in) see (yeshurun) the likeness of God (ka’el).’ That is to say, He who rides the heavens to rescue His people may not be seen because His Majesty is in the supernal heights (ga’avato shehaqim) . . . Thus, as against the intimate correspondence between God and Israel found in the opening section, the final portion of Pisqa 355 provides a dogmatic assertion of divine transcendence. At the same time, the negative withdrawal of God to the shehaqim in the second part is revised. God’s exalted place is in the heavenly heights, and nothing of the ‘likes of’ Him may be perceived by the earthly eye. In this way, the sages of our midrash make a strong cultural point. While the exoteric domain of the commandments is open to all, and righteous obedience to these precepts brings the transcendent God nigh, the esoteric world of the high heavens is not for the lay public. God’s supernal splendor may only be inferred from the lower spheres. Besides that, the people must rest content with the heavenly gift brought to them from on high by Moses.83

Although Fishbane clearly recognized the shiur koma background of the midrash in SifDeut 355, he was largely unaware of the role played by Israel’s heavenly representative, the Name-bearing angelic-messianic priest, who, according to the above analysis, is the subject of the innermost and most secret layers of the midrash. This exegesis of Deut

83 Fishbane, ‘Measures’, 69f.
33:26 must undoubtedly be related to the midrashim about the Red Sea theophany, in which the heavenly warrior who rides through the heavens to assist Israel is the divine/angelic Youth. As we have seen, the suppression or concealment of the traditions about this figure appears to have been initiated in the late first or early second century. This process of elaborate concealment is reflected in the composition of the complex and secretive Tannaitic text in SifDeut 355. It is, perhaps, legitimate to observe that the successive layers of meaning embedded in this esoteric midrash are themselves like ‘veils’, which—like those used in a traditional erotic dance—conceal the central mystery of the knowledge of the ‘measure of the Glory’.

Before concluding our consideration of Fishbane’s analysis of SifDeut 355, we should note that he briefly explores some of the ways in which the motifs of ‘measure’, ‘glory’ and ‘form’ (מִוְרָח/צורה) are developed in later rabbinic and early kabbalistic texts, and in a few Christian and Gnostic sources.84 Especially noteworthy is a piyyut composed by Elazar Kallir,85 probably during the fifth or sixth century CE, in which the expression: מלך בת מ况且 (‘the measure of the king’s daughter’) is applied to Wisdom, here identified with the celestial Torah.86 Fishbane comments:

Quite certainly, Kallir has boldly combined old speculations on the cosmic extension of the supernal Anthropos (the Shi’ur Qomah) with ancient midrashic traditions concerning the anthropomorphic form of the heavenly Torah. The use of the term middah to describe both realities gives us only a hint of the theosophies of Torah that circulated in late antique Judaism.87

We shall find, however, that shiur koma traditions about female heavenly figures are undoubtedly more ancient than Kallir’s poem.

Gigantic Heavenly Figures in Other Ancient Sources

Further evidence of the early origins of shiur koma mysticism is encountered in a variety of non-rabbinic sources. We have already seen that shiur koma traditions were well-known to several Christian writers of

84 Ibid. 63–66. Among the extra-Judaic sources cited by Fishbane is Orig. World § 33, on which see pp. 565–566 below.
85 In Baer, Seder, 653–656.
87 Fishbane, ibid. 64.
the second and third centuries CE. Howard M. Jackson finds further parallels in much earlier Egyptian visionary texts of the thirteenth to fourth centuries BCE and in even more ancient Mesopotamian sources of the third millenium BCE. It may reasonably be observed that the lacunae in this body of evidence are comparable in scale to the shiur koma itself. Nonetheless, the materials cited by Jackson are apposite enough to suggest that shiur koma mysticism was to some extent derivative—if only in a rather distant and very general sense—of much earlier and evidently widespread visionary and speculative traditions.

More importantly, Jackson cites Iamblichus, Lucian and other pagan authors of the late Hellenistic period to show that claims of visions of gigantic divine bodies, including detailed measurements, were current in this period and milieu. Jackson suggests that these traditions may be derived from the same or similar roots in ancient Middle Eastern culture as the Jewish shiur koma. At all events, this evidence is sufficient to establish the possibility, at least, that there is an historical basis for the attribution of shiur koma teachings to circles of Tannaitic authorities, such as Akiva and Yishmael, or their contemporaries. Jackson further proposes that the shiur koma, like the Qumran Temple Scroll, was based on ancient biblical traditions about the precise measurements of the tabernacle and the earthly/celestial temple:

With the destruction of the Temple this tradition of precise measurement in its regard was shifted to the man-like form of God enthroned on the visionary merkabah, to the throne, and to the creatures that support it.

It should be noted that Jackson’s discussion is wholly focused on the elements of gigantism and detailed measurement as the definitive features of shiur koma mysticism. He does not address the issue of the names.

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89 Jackson goes further than this, finding detailed parallels between the ancient sources and the shiur koma literature, and hypothesizing that their historical contexts were similarly parallel. In the course of this discussion, he makes several interesting and suggestive observations but he seems to me to place more weight on the supposed parallels than the evidence will bear.
91 Ibid. 388.
92 Ibid. 389–391 and 396.
93 Ibid. 403.
94 Omission of the names is a conscious decision on Jackson’s part, since he believes that consideration of this issue is not relevant to his objective of elucidating the ancient
The extra-Judaic evidence assembled by Jackson is of value in that it indicates the probable age and more ancient origins of shiur koma mysticism or, at least, one aspect thereof. Without wishing to minimize the importance of this contribution to our knowledge, the following discussion will be confined to non-rabbinic sources which (i) have a demonstrable connection to Judaic tradition; and (ii) appear to be indebted or directly related in some way to Jewish shiur koma mysticism or an early form thereof.

**The Angel Israel**

In a wide variety of ancient sources, the figure of Jacob-Israel is identified with the principal angel or celestial vice-regent. These sources include the works of Philo, who refers to the Logos as:

> His Firstborn Word, the eldest of angels, the Supreme Archangel, as it were, possessing many names, for he is called: Beginning; and Name of God; and Word; and Man in the Image; and He Who Sees, or Israel.95

An important early witness to traditions about the angel Israel is a text cited by Origen and called by him the Prayer of Joseph (PrJos).96 According to the two quoted fragments of this otherwise lost text, the patriarch Jacob was the earthly incarnation of a heavenly being called Israel. In the longer of these fragments, Jacob-Israel speaks as follows:97

> Thus Jacob says: I, who am speaking to you, am Jacob and Israel. I am an Angel of God and a Principal Spirit (πνεῦμα ἀρχικόν). Both Abraham and Isaac were created before any work but I, Jacob, who am called Jacob by men, my name is Israel. I am he who was called by God: Israel—'Man who sees God'—because I am the Firstborn of every living being enlivened by God (πρωτόγονος πάντος ζωοῦ ζωουμένου ὑπὸ θεοῦ).

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96 Origen's writings include two fragments of the text, in Comm. in Io. 2.188–190 (given in part below); Philoc. 23.15. A paraphrase of the former is also found in Philoc., 23.19. See Smith, 'The Prayer', and 'Prayer of Joseph'.

97 Origen, Comm. Io 2.18–19 (Blanc 334–337, translation mine). Compare Smith (see the previous note) and Heine, *Origen*, 145f.
And he adds: While I was coming up from Syrian Mesopotamia, Uriel, the angel of God, came forth and said that I had come down to earth and tabernacled among men, and that I was called by the name Jacob. He was envious of me and challenged me. And he wrestled with me, saying that his name, being that of the pre-eminent angel, was superior to mine.

And I told him his name and his rank among the sons of God: 'Are you not Uriel, the eighth after me; and I Israel, the Archangel of the Power of the Lord (ἀρχάγγελος δυνάμεως κυρίου), and the Chief Captain (ἀρχιχιλιάρχος) among the Sons of God? Am I not Israel, the First Minister before the Face of God? And I called on my God by the Indestructible Name.

Some commentators have argued for a Jewish-Christian or proto-Gnostic origin of PrJos, while others have seen it as a Jewish anti-Christian text. Jonathan Z. Smith, however, observes that most of the titles and descriptive phrases applied to Jacob-Israel in this text are also applied by Philo to the Logos and concludes: 'They all may be placed within a Jewish context...no title requires that an extra-Jewish influence be postulated.'

The title ‘firstborn’ (πρωτόγονος) is based on Exod 4:22: Israel is My firstborn son, a verse which, in several rabbinic midrashim, is understood
to imply the pre-existence of the patriarch. As several commentators have observed, this title is also highly reminiscent of Col 1:15–17. The titles ‘Archangel’ and ‘Chief Captain’ have obvious parallels in Jewish traditions about Michael, Metatron and other principal angel figures, while ‘First Minister before the Face of God (ὁ ἐν πρωτόγονος πρώτος’) is, as observed by Smith, an almost exact translation of ישן ראש פנים applied quite consistently to these figures in Jewish mystical literature. It is noteworthy that, in order to defeat his angelic rival, Jacob-Israel must (a) name him and (b) demonstrate his own superior status by exercising his High Priestly prerogative of invoking God by His ‘Indestructible Name’ (ἐν ὀνόµατι ἀσβεστῳ).

Jacob’s victory over the angel is similarly associated with performance of the celestial liturgy in rabbinic midrashim, which explain that the angel begged Jacob to release him so that he could return to heaven in time to lead the morning worship. Recognizing the importance of PrJos as an early witness to a central theme of the merkava mystical tradition, Smith remarks: ‘In the PJ [PrJos] we are given a precious fragment of a mythology concerning the Mystery of Israel, a mythology which continues in the later Merkavah and Metatron speculation and which is presented in a “de-mythologized” form in the writings of Philo.’ It goes without saying that, if the Jewish provenance of PrJos is accepted, its explicit statement that the human patriarch Jacob was the earthly embodiment of the First Angel has important implications with regard to the possible origin and Jewish background of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation. In the shiur koma tradition, as we have seen, it is the holy community of Israel, represented in heaven by the angelic-

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104 ExodR 19,7; Tanh naso 19; MidrPs 93,3. See further, Smith, ‘The Prayer’, 268f. n. 4 and ‘Prayer of Joseph’, 703f and sources cited there.
105 Windisch, ‘Göttliche Weisheit’, 225 n. 1; Moule, Epistles, 63–65 (note, however, that Moule denies that πρωτότοκος in Col 1:15–18 implies ‘created’ status and, on this basis, makes a dubious theological distinction between this word and πρωτόγονος in PrJos); Smith, ‘The Prayer’, 268 and ‘Prayer of Joseph’, 703; Fossum, Name, 314–318; idem, Colossians 1.15–18a, 190f.; and idem, Image, 24–28.
106 See: Smith, ‘The Prayer’, 269 and ‘Prayer of Joseph’, 704; Fossum, Name, 188–189; and the sources cited there.
108 GenR 78,1–2 (Theodor-Albeck 915–920; Soncino Midrash 2: 714–716); bHul 91b; and CantR 3,6 (Dunsky 86; Soncino Midrash, 9.2: 153 [3,9]). See further Smith, ‘The Prayer’, 271, 280, and the sources cited there.
priestly Youth, that, in and through its acts of worship, embodies the divine Glory in the world.

The figure of the Angel Israel is also encountered in the writings of Justin Martyr, who regards Israel as a name of Christ, also known as the Logos, and very frequently identifies this figure with the angel who appeared to Jacob.\textsuperscript{110} Justin states:

Israel was his name from the beginning, who surnamed the blessed Jacob, blessing him with his own name and proclaiming thereby that all who take refuge in the Father through him are themselves Israel, the blessed (ὁ δὲ Ἰσραήλ ἦν ὄνομα αὐτῷ ἄνωθεν, ὁ ἐπωνόμασε τὸν μακάριον Ἰακώβ εὐλογῶν τῷ ἐαυτῷ ὄνόματι, κηρύσσον καὶ διὰ τούτου ὅτι πάντες οί δι᾿ αὐτοῦ τῷ πατρὶ προσφεύγοντες εὐλογημένος Ἰσραήλ ἐστιν).\textsuperscript{111}

In Hellenistic magical sources, the name Ἰάκωβος is frequently combined or associated with the name ΙΑΩ (= יוהו).\textsuperscript{112} Among these sources is an amulet published by Herbert C. Youtie, who tentatively dated it to the third century CE.\textsuperscript{113} The amulet is inscribed with a text of four words, written one above the other in Greek letters:

\begin{verbatim}
ΙΑΚΩΒ
ΑΚΟΥΒΤΑ
ΙΑΩ
ΒΕΡΩ
\end{verbatim}

The first and third words of this text are obviously the names Jacob and Iao (i.e., יוהו). Youtie suggests that the fourth word represents the Aramaic רָב (‘son’) combined with the Hebrew third person singular masculine possessive suffix: ‘his’. Given that the Greek script already indicates a degree of ‘linguistic syncretism’, this suggestion is by no means implausible. The portrayal of Jacob-Israel as God’s (firstborn) son is, as we have seen, widely distributed. Moreover, it is possible that, according to some shiur koma sources, the Youth had a name which

\textsuperscript{110} See, for example, Dial. 75.2–4, 114.2, 125.3–5, 130.3 and 134.6–135.6 (Archambault 2: 4–7, 184–187, 242–245, 264–265 and 284–289).
\textsuperscript{112} See further Ganschinietz, ‘Iakobos’, § 4. Especially worthy of note is ‘Sword of Dardanos’ (\textit{PGM} 4: 1736f. and 1803f., 1: 126 and 128). This text has been compared with \textit{PrJos} by Smith, ‘Account of Simon Magus’, 748f.
\textsuperscript{113} Youtie, ‘Gnostic Amulet’.
included the Aramaic word-element: בר. Alternatively, this word might be derived in some manner from the (Hebrew or Aramaic) verb אב (‘create’).

The second word of the text on the amulet is clearly Aramaic in form and Youtie must certainly be right to render it in Hebrew letters thus: עקובתא. It will at once be obvious that this word is based on the name יعقوב, plus the Aramaic feminine ending with demonstrative suffix: תא-, but minus the initial consonant: י, which is taken to represent the tetragrammaton and has been transposed to the following line. Thus, the name Jacob is taken to mean: ‘the one of Yahweh’. Youtie understands the word עקובתא to mean ‘likeness’ and concludes: ‘The name Jacob is compounded, according to the ingenious author of this etymology, of two elements, the one meaning likeness, the other being the name of God’. However, this undeniably attractive interpretation is unfortunately based on an erroneous conjecture by Jacob Levy, who lists the word עקובתא as meaning ‘Aehnlichkeit’. The word is found only in manuscript readings of bSan 96a, where it is stated of the Babylonian king Merodach-Baladan ben Baladan (Isa 39:1): אשה אמה עקובה دولבא (‘and his face was changed to be like the Image of a dog’). Levy’s understanding of the uncertain word is derived from the Wilna edition, despite the fact that this source omits it altogether and reads simply: دولבא כי היה אפה ואשתנו דכלבא (‘his face was changed so that it became like that of a dog’). In fact, consideration of the root עקב and its derivatives indicates clearly that, in the context of bSan 96a, the meaning of עקובתא (עקובא) is ‘hind part’ or ‘rear end’. Youtie’s interpretation of the word on the amulet is thus unjustified and its meaning in this setting remains unknown. It is, however, clear that, according to this text, the name Jacob—like the name Metatron—contains the Explicit Name.

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114 See pp. 523–525 above.
117 Var.: עקובא دولבא
118 Thus also YalShim, Kings, 244.
119 Jastrow, Dictionary, 1105a, likewise citing bSan 68a, gives the meaning as ‘haunch’ or ‘posteriors’.
120 Bizarre though it may seem, we should perhaps consider the possibility that the word carries the same meaning here as it does in bSan 96a. While an identification of Jacob with the divine posterior may seem, at first sight, to be rather scandalous, it is arguably consistent with the traditional location of Jacob’s image on God’s heavenly seat. Moreover, Fossum has found evidence of an early Christian tradition linking Exod 33:18–23, where Moses is permitted to see God only from behind, with the New Testament accounts of Jesus’ transfiguration. Here, the disciples see only the ‘hinder parts’ of
References to Jacob-Israel as an angel are also encountered in widely distributed Gnostic and Manichaean sources. In many instances, the role and attributes of this angel closely resemble those of the Messianic Warrior-Youth in his appearance at the Red Sea. In one Middle Persian prayer, for example, Jacob is called: ‘The Powerful God, the One praised with the voice, the Commander in Chief of the heroes, the Battle-Seeking One, the Valiant’. In a Manichean fragment from Turfan, in western China, the angel Jacob is worshipped as the enthroned kavod:

We worship the Lord Jacob, the Angel
with the principalities, powers, the good spirits,
that they may themselves protect us with strong power,
themselves lead us in and out.

We bow in joy before the Strong Power,
Jacob the Angel, the Leader of the angels.
Do Thou receive from the whole Holy Church
ever new blessing and praise, thou Strong One.

This text has obvious affinities with the hekhalot-mystical practice of going in and coming out to worship with the heavenly hosts before the merkava. The second stanza, with its emphasis on the role of the worshipping community, is distinctly reminiscent of the shiur koma.

The best known reference in Gnostic literature to Israel as a heavenly being occurs near the end of the Sabaoth enthronement scene in the treatise ‘On the Origin of the World’, the earliest version of which was probably composed in Egypt during the third century CE. This passage is, as has been widely recognized, a Gnostic adaptation of Jewish merkava traditions, and I have shown elsewhere that it is in

Jesus’ glorified—and greatly enlarged—naked body (see Fossum, ‘Partes Posterores Dei’ and the sources cited there). It is conceivable, therefore, that this amulet is evidence of a similar identification between Jacob, as the visible Glory, and God’s ‘backside’. If so, the text may legitimately be interpreted as an expression of the homoerotic potential of the merkava tradition and, especially; the shiur koma (see p. 505 n. 22 above).

See further: Schneider, ‘Der Engel’ (p. 561 n. 100 above); Böhlig, ‘Jacob’ and the sources cited there.

Quotation taken from Böhlig, ‘Jacob’, 129, who states that this text was published by Müller, Handschriftenreste, 78f. (non vidi).


See Bethge, ‘Introduction’.

part textually dependent on a Hebrew passage preserved in ms. New
York of HekhZ. After Sabaoth has built his palace and established
his throne, we read:

Thereafter he created a congregation (ἐκκλησία) of angels, thousands and
myriads, numberless, which resembled the congregation in the eighth
heaven; and a firstborn called Israel— which is, ‘the man who sees God’;
and another being, called Jesus Christ, who resembles the saviour above
in the eighth heaven and who sits at his right upon a revered throne.
And at his left there sits the virgin of the holy spirit, upon a throne and
glorifying him.

The text of this passage is problematic and has clearly been subjected
to editorial alteration. According to the text as it stands, the role of
Israel appears to have been usurped by ‘Jesus Christ’, who is seated on
one side of Sabaoth, while ‘the Virgin of the Holy Spirit’ is seated on
the other. It is, therefore, probable that ‘Jesus Christ’ was added by a
Christian editor and that the text originally mentioned only Israel by
name. While the ‘Virgin of the Holy Spirit’ may likewise be a Chris-
tian interpolation, it is probable that a female counterpart to the figure
of Israel was present in the original text, since male-female syzygies of
this nature are encountered throughout the treatise. If this is the case,
the two figures enthroned on either side of Sabaoth may originally have
been Israel’s male and female representatives, i.e., the angelic-messianic
High Priest and the Shekhina (corresponding to the holy community)
or, in other words, the Beloved and his Bride.

Coptica Hierosolymitana, 2.45. This translation is also found in NHL, 176 but differs
markedly from an earlier version by Bethge and Wintermute, 166, where ‘Jesus Christ’ is
understood to be an alternative name of ‘Israel’. The later translation should be accepted
as correct, but see further below. Cf. Painchaud, L’écrit sans titre, 165.
129 I am grateful to Professor Birger Pearson for helping me to disentangle the
complexities of this text, to which I have access only in translation. Any errors are
my own.
130 Painchaud (L’écrit sans titre, 106–116) argues that a primitive version of Orig.
World has been subjected to two consecutive revisions but, unfortunately, he does not
distinguish different levels in this passage.
131 For example, in § 30, where Pistis Sophia gives her daughter Zoe to Sabaoth as his
consort. On Christ and the Church as a pre-existent syzygy in Gnosticism, Valentianism,
Jewish Christianity, and the Epistle to the Ephesians, see Daniélou, Theology, 301–311.
In many of the sources cited by Daniélou, the Church is very closely associated with
the Holy Spirit. Daniélou attempts to trace the origin of this motif to Jewish traditions
about Adam and Eve as pre-existent celestial beings but inexplicably neglects to consider
the ancient biblical and midrashic image of Israel as bride.
A scenario very much like this is encountered in a hekhalot fragment attributed to Akiva, which describes the recitation of the Shema with the Amida benedictions during the heavenly liturgy, as follows:  

(A) Each and every day, at the time of morning prayer, a single angel (מלאך) stands up in the middle of rakia and begins by saying: ‘The LORD is King!’ (Exod 15:18) and all the hosts on high respond after him until he comes to: ‘Bless ye...’

(B) And when he comes to ‘Bless ye...’, a single hayya (חיה) stands up in the middle of the firmament, and her name is Israel, and engraved on her brow is ‘Israel’. And she says: ‘Bless ye the LORD, Who is to be greatly blessed!’ And all the princes on high respond after her, saying: ‘Bless ye the LORD, Who is to be greatly blessed for ever and ever!’

(C) While this utterance is not yet finished, the ofanim trembling and quake, causing the whole world to quake, and they say: ‘Blessed be the Glory of the LORD from His place!’ (Ezek 3:12).

(D) And that hayya goes on standing in the middle of the firmament until all the princes on high, the serafim, the keruvim, and the angelic regiments and battalions are all trembling. And each and every one, in his station, says to the hayya whose name is Israel, 133 ‘Hear, O Israel, the LORD our God, the LORD is One!’ (Deut 6:4).

This text describes a liturgical dialogue between a (masculine) angel and a (feminine) hayya. I submit that this gender distinction is not merely a matter of Hebrew grammar. Rather, the two gender-specific terms מלאך and חיה, together with their accompanying verbs, are deliberately employed to construct a scene in which the heavenly counterpart of Israel’s daily worship is portrayed as a dialogue between two partners, one male and one female, who lead the the celestial hosts in praise of God. An implicit parallel must surely be intended with the Song of Songs,

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132 This unit is placed near the beginning of the Sar Tora appendix to HekhR in ms. Budapest 238 (Schäfer § 296) and in Wertheimer, BM 1: 116f. It is also found in ms. New York 8128 at the conclusion of a miscellany of materials which, in this manuscript only, have been inserted in the middle of HekhZ (§ 406). In all of these sources, the unit is paired with a short account of the exaltation of Metatron-Enoch (Schäfer § 295 = § 405), which is likewise attributed to Akiva. In ms. Budapest, the pair of units is designated a tosefet. However, the two units do not seem to be intrinsically connected. The Metatron-Enoch saying is somewhat parallel to a passage in some versions of 3 Enoch and the Alphabet of R. Akiva (see Odeberg, 3 Enoch, 66f.; and P.S. Alexander, in OTP 1: 311f.). A parallel to Synopse § 296 (= § 406) is also found in Midrash Konen (Jellinek, BHM 2: 39), where it is not associated with the Metatron-Enoch unit. Save where indicated to the contrary, the following translation is based on ms. Budapest.

133 The words: ‘whose name is Israel’ are found only in ms. New York.

134 Gender distinctions are scrupulously observed throughout the passage.
which, as we have seen, is widely interpreted as an intimate expression of Israel's worship. The repeated iteration of the verb עמד reflects the context of the Amida recitation. It is also significant in that it seems to imply that, prior to 'standing up', the angel and the hayya were seated, presumably on thrones, like the two figures on either side of Sabaoth in Orig. World 33. It should further be noted that the epithet 'one' (אח/אח) is applied both to the angel and to the hayya. This is an allusion to the Shema recitation and, as in SifDeut 355 (A2b), carries mystical significance. Here, the meaning is that the liturgical intercourse between the male principal angel and the female hayya, representing Israel the bride, is directly expressive of the unity of God.

In that the name Israel is given here to the female figure rather than the male, the parallel with Orig. World. § 33 is, admittedly, not exact. It is, however, very close indeed. Since we know that the author of Orig. World 33—in its primitive form—obtained his material from Jewish mystical sources, it is reasonable to conclude that this hekhalot fragment represents a tradition which is earlier than the composition of the Gnostic text. This means that it is almost certainly at least as old as the second century CE. Still earlier evidence of the identification of Jacob-Israel as a hayya may, I suggest, be found in PrJos, where Jacob-Israel is called 'the Firstborn of every living being enlivened by God'.

We may also recall the role played by the 'single hayya (אח/אח), who, in the SidRBar 'Youth text' (E), rises above the throne and summons the angelic Youth to lead the celestial worship. The masculine 'single angel' of the Akiva fragment is thus at least functionally identical with the Youth of the shiur koma. Finally, the role of the 'single hayya' in this fragment sheds further light on the 'feminine' role assumed by the image of Jacob in HekhR § 164.

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135 See pp. 553-554 above.
136 See p. 561 above. As we have seen, Jacob is also called a hayya in the relatively late source PRE 35 (see pp. 545-388 above). See further Halperin, 'Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer'.
137 See pp. 521-522 above.
A Shiur Koma Reference in 2 Enoch

From approximately the same period as the Tannaitic sources, 2 En 39:3–5 appears to allude, albeit briefly, to something very like the shiur koma:

You, my children, you see my face, a human being created just like yourselves; I, I am one who has seen the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot like fire, emitting sparks. For you gaze into my eyes, a human being created just like yourselves; I have gazed into the eyes of the Lord, like the rays of the shining sun and terrifying the eyes of a human being. You, my children, you see my right hand beckoning you, a human being created identical to yourselves; but I, I have seen the right hand of the Lord, beckoning me, who fills heaven. You, you see the extent of my body, the same as your own; but I, I have seen the extent of the Lord, without measure and without analogy, who has no end.¹³⁸

Despite an evident similarity of expression with the shiur koma, this passing allusion may seem at first glance to provide little or no new information.¹³⁹ It is, however, noteworthy that the words ‘without measure’ (v6) are susceptible of being interpreted as a repudiation of the shiur koma mystics’ claim to possess such knowledge. It is also possible that the expression ‘without analogy’ (ibid.) is a veiled rejection of the angelic prince whose name was said to be the second I AM.

Markos Gnostikos and the ‘Body of Truth’

The cosmogonic system of the Valentinian Gnostic Markos, which strongly resembles that found in Sefer Yetzira and later Kabbalistic writings, provides conclusive evidence that a developed shiur koma tradition already existed in the second century CE.¹⁴⁰ According to Irenaeus:

He declares that the infinitely exalted Tetrad descended upon him from the invisible and indescribable places in the form of a woman (for the

¹³⁸ 2 En (short recension) 39:3–5 (trans. Andersen in OTP 1: 163). On the problems of dating the materials in 2 Enoch, see ibid. 94–95.
¹³⁹ See further: Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, 130 (addendum to 41); Rowland, Open Heaven, 85. Cohen, Liturgy and Theurgy, 79–80, disputes the association of this passage with the shiur koma but fails to account for the similarity of expression.
world could not have endured its coming in male form), and expounded to him alone its true nature, and the origin of all things, which it had never before revealed to anyone, whether of the gods or of men. This was done in the following terms:

When, in the beginning, the unoriginated, inconceivable Father, who is without substance and neither male nor female, willed to bring forth that which is ineffable in himself and to give form to his Invisible Being, he opened his mouth and sent forth the Word, who was like himself and who, standing near to him, showed Him what He Himself was, since he became manifest in the form of the Invisible One (ὑποδείξεν αὐτῷ ὃ ἦν αὐτός, τοῦ ἀοράτου μορφὴ φάνεις).¹⁴¹

In this passage, the roles of the Youth and the Logos-Angel are combined. The Word resembles the Youth in being ‘like’ the First Father and in ‘standing near to Him’. However, since the Father is considered to be formless and invisible, the Word also assumes the role of the manifest kavod and becomes the world-Creator. Thus, the relationship between the first ‘I AM’ (here, invisible) and the second (visible) has undergone a significant transformation. ‘The infinitely exalted Tetrad’ who reveals these teachings performs a function of Metatron in the shiur koma. Irenaeus goes on to describe how, according to the system, the Word was pronounced in the form of a Great Name of thirty letters in four utterances (4+4+10+12). These letters become the Aeons, each of which believes itself to be the whole Name and so fails to perceive the whole of which it is a part:¹⁴²

¹⁴¹ Irenaeus, Haer. 1.14.1 (see the previous note).
¹⁴² It is not clear whether the exalted Tetrad is to be identified with the first utterance of four letters, or with the four utterances taken as a whole, though the latter is perhaps more likely. Stroumsa sees a direct parallel between Haer. 1.15.1, according to which Markos attributed to Christ an ‘utterable’ name of six letters (‘Ἰησοῦς’) together with an ‘unutterable’ name of twenty-four letters, and ‘the longest preserved passage of the Shiur Koma’ (‘Form[s] of God’, 281). The passage in question is a version of the SRaziel Youth text in Musajoff, Merkava shlema, 39b, according to which the name of the Youth (in this source, Metatron) is written with ‘the one letter with which heaven and earth were created, and sealed with the signet ἀπελευθέρωσεν, and written with six letters and with seven letters and with twenty-four letters and with seventy names.’ However, neither Cohen’s text (Texts and Recensions, 105, ll. 260–264) nor any of the variants listed by him include the number 24 (one ms. has 27; one has 22; the others omit this number altogether). Thus, although Markos’ doctrine of divine/angelic names undoubtedly reflects the shiur koma background of his system, the basis of the supposed parallel is very flimsy. It is more reasonable to suppose that the twenty-four letter name of Christ is the Greek alphabet (symbolic of the entirety of language; compare the ‘Body of Truth’, below). The six- and seven-letter names of the Youth in SRaziel are, of course, the alternative spellings: מטרון and מתטרון. Had Markos been aware of this tradition, he could hardly have failed to observe that the names ‘Ἰησοῦς and
This teacher declares that the restitution of all things will take place when all these, combining into a single letter, shall utter one and the same sound. He imagines that the emblem of this utterance is found in Ἄμήν, which we pronounce in concert. The various sounds are those which give form to the Aeon who is without material form and unbegotten and, at the same time, they are the forms which the Lord has called angels, who continuously behold the face of the Father… He asserts that each of these, and all that is peculiar to every one of them, is to be understood as contained within the word: Ἑκκλησία.¹⁴³

Each letter is a word in its own right (for example Δ = ΔΕΛΤΑ), and emanates further words from its component letters (thus, ΔΕΛΤΑ emanates δέλτα, ἐψιλόν, λάμβδα, ταῦ, and ἀλφα), and so ad infinitum:

and if even one letter be thus infinite, just consider the immensity of the letters in the entire Name, out of which the Σιγή (Silence) of Markos has taught us the Pro-Pater is composed!¹⁴⁴

The fundamental concept behind this teaching, that the vast form in which the invisible Godhead manifests is composed of secret names, which are all derivative of his Great Name, is extremely similar to what we find in the shiur koma. Markos’ system also has a corresponding female figure:

Moreover, the Tetrad explained all this more completely to him, and said:

I wish to show you Truth (᾽Αλήθεια) herself, for I have caused her to descend from the supernal dwellings, so that you may see her without a veil, and comprehend her beauty, and so that you may hear her speak, and revere her wisdom.

Behold, then:
her head, on high: Ἄλφα and Ὄμέγα;
her neck: Βῆτα and Ψεῖ;
her shoulders, with her hands: Γάμμα and Χεῖ;
her breast: Δέλτα and Φεῖ;
her midriff: Ἐψιλόν and Ὀψιλόν;
her back: Ζῆτα and Ταῦ;
her belly: Ἡτα and Σίγμα;
her thighs: Ὄητα and Ῥῶ;

Χριστός have six and seven letters respectively. Note, however, that SidRBer (above, p. 521, section C), which pre-dates the name Metatron, does not mention a six-letter name (see p. 522, n. 102 above).

¹⁴³ Irenaeus, Haer., ibid.
¹⁴⁴ Ibid. 1.14.2.
her knees: ἵωτα and πεῖ;  
her calves: Κόππα and ὡμικρόν;  
her ankles: Λάμβδα and Χεῖ;  
her feet: Μῦ and Νῦ.

Such is the body of Truth, according to this magician, such the figure of the element, such the character of the letter. And he calls this element Ἀνθρώπος and says that it is the fount of all speech and the beginning of all sound, and the expression of that which is unutterable, and the mouth of the silent Σιγή.145

Scholem comments:

The Greek form in which these speculations are transmitted is merely Marcus’s adaptation of Semitic speculations . . . The native soil of his gnosis was not Egypt but Palestine or Syria, where he must have become acquainted with the oldest forms of Shi’ur Komah imagery.146

Cohen disputes this on the grounds that (1) ‘Αλήθεια is neither the Godhead nor the demiurge but a Valentinian Aeon, (2) the description of her body ‘shows no aspect of gigantism’ and (3) the letters which make up her limbs are not, properly speaking, names.147 These objections, however, fail. It is clear that the letters are ultimately derived from the primordial Word/Name, and that ‘Αλήθεια reflects or embodies the totality and perfection of that Word. The idea of vastness is implicit in the infinitely extended Name. Surprisingly, Cohen does not object to Scholem’s theory on the grounds that ‘Αλήθεια is feminine, despite the fact that there is no explicit mention of such a figure in the rabbinic shiur koma. Scholem regards the expression ‘Body of Truth’ as equivalent to the Hebrew נגח השכינה (‘body of the Shekhina’),148 and ‘Αλήθεια does, undoubtedly, correspond quite closely to later Kabbalistic teachings about the Shekhina as the ‘Bride’ of God. It is also possible to discern the figure of Wisdom in the background. Most importantly, however, the internal evidence of Markos’ system indicates that ‘Αλήθεια is identical with Ἐκκλησία, both being said to embody the totality of the Creative Word. This figure, ‘Αλήθεια—Ἐκκλησία, is clearly related to the hayya called Israel in the Akiva fragment considered above.149

145 Ibid. 1.14.3.  
146 Scholem, Mystical Shape, 25.  
147 Cohen, Liturgy and Theurgy, 23–25.  
148 Scholem, Mystical Shape, 27.  
149 See pp. 567–568 above.
Elsewhere, we find strong hints that Markos is drawing on the allegorical tradition of exegesis of the Song of Songs. Irenaeus reports that he addressed his female devotees as follows:

Adorn yourself as a bride who is expecting her bridegroom, so that you may become what I am, and I what you are (ἵνα ἐσῇ ὁ ἐγώ, καὶ ἐγὼ ὃ σύ). Establish the germ of light in your bridal chamber. Receive from me a husband, and be receptive of him, as you are received by him. 150

In this ritual, Markos assumes the role of the masculine Word, while his female disciple represents Ἐκκλησία. Thus, the Word corresponds to the masculine Beloved, and Ἀλήθεια—Ἐκκλησία to the Bride. It seems that Markos conceived of her both as a spiritual Aeon (the Angel of the Church, or the Holy Spirit/Shekhina) and as identical with the perfected Community. The ‘New Jerusalem’ of Rev 21:9–22:5 may be a not far-distant cousin. In Markos’ marriage ritual, the mystery of the name: ‘I AM THAT I AM’ is extended to the relationship of mystical identification between the Logos and his Church.

Other ritual practices of Markos and his disciples involved much use of nomina barbara. Irenaeus reports that some Markosians repudiated these outward rituals, on the grounds that: ‘knowledge of the unspeakable Greatness (τὴν ἐπίγνωσιν τοῦ ἀρρήτου µέγήθους) is itself perfect redemption.’ 151 The language of this soteric gnosis is precisely that of the Jewish shiur koma. Moreover, the function of the letters of the Name (who are also the angels) is to praise the Pro-Pater, and thereby to create the world:

Being all simultaneously clasped in each other’s embrace, they sound forth the glory of Him by whom they were produced, and the glory of that sound is transmitted upwards to the Pro-Pater... The sound of this uttering of praise, having been wafted to the earth, has become the Maker and Parent of everything on earth. 152

This is a remarkably exact statement of the conceptual basis of the shiur koma tradition (‘life depends upon His praise’). There can, then, be little doubt that Markos was drawing on Jewish esoteric sources in

150 Irenaeus, Haer. 1.13.3.
151 Ibid. 1.21.4. Compare 1.13.6, which states that the Markosians claim ‘... that they alone have imbibed the greatness of the knowledge of that Power which which is unspeakable (τὸ µέγεθος τῆς γνώσεως τοῦ ἀρρήτου δυνάµεως).’
152 Ibid. 1.14.7.
153 See pp. 515–518 above.
which the shiur koma was associated with allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs.

The Gospel of Philip

The mystery of the Bridal Chamber, to which Markos’ ritual alludes, and which is clearly an adaptation of the allegorical tradition associated with the Song of Songs, is a central theme of The Gospel of Philip, a late third-century anthology of Valentinian teachings.¹⁵⁴ This text applies to Christ a statement which is highly reminiscent of the Youth/Mearon tradition: ‘One single name is not uttered in the world, the name which the Father gave to the Son, the name above all things: the name of the Father. For the Son would not become Father unless he wears the name of the Father.’¹⁵⁵ Another highly significant passage confirms with certainty that this conception of Christ is derived from the shiur koma:

‘The apostles who were before us had these names for him: “Jesus, the Nazorean, the Christ.” … “Messiah” has two meanings, both “the Christ” and “the measured.” … “Christ” has been measured. “The Nazarene” and “Jesus” are they who have been measured.’¹⁵⁶

The basis of this exegetical etymology is the existence, in both Hebrew and Aramaic, of two different but formally identical verbal roots: משח, meaning ‘to anoint’ and ‘to measure’ respectively.¹⁵⁷ Stroumsa suggests that this word-play originated with Jewish-Christians, who ‘seem to have applied to Christ conceptions previously applied to Yahoel…without changing the structure of the relation between God and his hypostasis.’¹⁵⁸ This suggestion reflects Stroumsa’s reconstruction, according to which the early Jewish shiur koma concerned the ‘Logos-Angel’ only, and implies that this figure was first identified by Christians with the Messiah. There can, of course, be no doubt that the two concepts, ‘Messiah’

¹⁵⁶ NHC ii,3.62:7–17 (Isenberg in NHL, 137).
¹⁵⁷ See Leipoldt and Schenke, Koptisch-gnostische Schriften, 46 n. 2; and van Unnik, ‘Three Notes’, 466.
and ‘Logos’, were combined in early Christian circles. However, according to the analysis offered above, Stroumsa’s reconstruction is on this point incorrect. The earliest form of the shiur koma was concerned with two separate heavenly figures: the manifest Glory of the Creator and His messianic Servant, the celestial High Priest. The ‘Logos-Angel’ either represents a subsequent development of this model in which the two figures became fused together or, alternatively, has been imported into the system from elsewhere. This strongly suggests that the association of ‘Messiah’ with ‘measurement’ is ultimately derived from the suppressed pre-rabbinic and pre-Christian shiur koma tradition.159

**The Book of Elchasai**

Returning to the early second century, somewhat before the teaching of Markos, the Jewish-Christian sectarian Elchasai, writing somewhere in Mesopotamia, claimed that his teachings had been revealed to him by

...an angel whose height was twenty-four σχοινίοι,160 which make ninety-six miles, and whose breadth is four σχοινίοι, from shoulder to shoulder six σχοινίοι, and the tracks of whose feet extend to a length of three and a half σχοινίοι—that is, fourteen miles—while the breadth is one σχοινίον and a half, and the height half a σχοινίον.161

This angel, who performs the revelatory role of Metatron, is identified with the Son of God and has a female consort, the Holy Spirit. Jackson, attributing this to the influence of Elchasai’s environment, interprets it as ‘a tacit acknowledgement that Mesopotamian divinities come in syzygies’.162 In the light of the evidence considered above, this explanation is unnecessary, since the similarity with Markos’ system clearly indicates a common Jewish background, in which an early form of the shiur

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159 Irenaeus (Haer. 4.4.2, Rousseau 420f.) cites with approval the statement of an anonymous source that ‘the Son is the measure of the Father’. Here, of course, the Son is the manifest Logos of the invisible Deity. See further: van Unnik, ‘Three notes’, 466; Stroumsa, ‘Form(s) of God’, 285f.

160 Jackson (‘Origins and Development’, 414–416) suggests that this unit of measurement is equivalent to the Hebrew סְכִיּוֹנָה (‘cord’).


koma was associated with allegorical exegesis of the Song of Songs.\textsuperscript{163} However, while Markos adapts the tradition of the names, but not the measurements, Elchasai gives measurements but no names.\textsuperscript{164}

\textit{The Angelic Kavod of the Magharians}

Moving still further back in time, the influence of the shiur koma can be detected in traditions about a pre-rabbinic and pre-Christian Jewish sect known as the Magharians (‘cave people’), preserved in Muslim and Qaraite sources.\textsuperscript{165} A. Harkavy identifies these sectarians as ‘the Essenes, especially their Egyptian branch, who were known as the Therapeutae.’\textsuperscript{166} R. De Vaux considers it possible that they were the Qumran covenanters but most commentators rightly consider this to be unlikely.\textsuperscript{167} Ernst Bammel argues that the Magharians themselves were medieval sectarians who found the writings of a pre-Christian Jewish sect hidden in a cave.\textsuperscript{168} Norman Golb describes them as ‘Jewish gnostics of an ascetic character who flourished in Egypt during the first few centuries of the present era, and who had access to Philonic writings or ideas.’\textsuperscript{169} According to H.A. Wolfson, the sect ‘started as a Judaized pagan syncretism and ended up as a certain form of [Christian] Gnosticism.’\textsuperscript{170} Jarl E. Fossum observes that the cultic calendars of the Qumran sect and the Magharians were the same, and argues persuasively that this and other similarities indicate that the two groups were somehow related or, at least, derived from a similar \textit{milieu}.\textsuperscript{171} However, since the angelic

\textsuperscript{163} Thus, Elchasai’s teaching provides yet another indication of the early origin of the motif encountered in Orig. World § 33 and in the Akiva hekhalot fragment discussed on pp. 567–568 above.
\textsuperscript{164} Van der Horst, ‘Measurement of the Body’, objects that Elchasai’s measurements are much smaller than those found in the shiur koma. However, the measurements given in the shiur koma texts themselves are very varied, and there may well have been a tendency for the order of magnitude to increase with time (thus also Jackson, ‘Origins and Development’, 402–403).
\textsuperscript{165} Fossum (‘Magharians’) gives all the extant sources in translation (and see idem, \textit{Name}, 329–332).
\textsuperscript{166} Harkavy, ‘Abū Yūsuf’, 59.
\textsuperscript{167} De Vaux, ‘A propos des manuscrits’.
\textsuperscript{168} Bammel, ‘Höhlenmenschen’.
\textsuperscript{169} Golb, ‘Who were?’ 359.
\textsuperscript{170} Wolfson, ‘Pre-existent Angel’, 99.
\textsuperscript{171} See Fossum, ‘Magharians’, 317f.
Creator of Magharian belief is not attested at Qumran, the two sects are unlikely to have been identical.

The twelfth-century historian Shahrastānī writes:

One sect of the Maqāriba\textsuperscript{172} thought that God spoke to the prophets—may peace be upon them—through an angel whom He had elected and set over all creatures and made [His] viceroy over them. They say: ‘Every description of God which occurs in the Torah and the other books [of the Bible] refers to this angel, for otherwise it would not be possible that the highest God could be described.’ They allege: ‘The one who spoke with Moses was this angel, and the tree mentioned in the Torah is also this angel, because God is too exalted to speak to humans.’ They refer everything which occurs in the Torah about the wish to see God to this angel, and further phrases such as … ‘He sits staunchly on His throne; ‘He has the appearance of Adam; ‘[He has] curly hair and black hair on His head’ … They say: ‘It is quite natural [for God] to send a messenger from His attendance and give him His Name and say: ‘This is My messenger, and his position among you is My position, and his word and command among you My word and command, and his appearance to you My appearance.’ And so it was with this angel. It is said that Arius, who asserted of the Messiah that he was God and the most perfect in the creation, took his opinion from these people, who lived four hundred years before Arius and were men of asceticism and mortification.\textsuperscript{173}

This angel closely resembles the Youth-Metatron. As in the hekhalot sources, he is identified with the appearance to Moses in the burning

\textsuperscript{172} Jellinek suggests that this word is a distorted reflection of the Hebrew מַרְכָּבָה (see idem, ‘Jüdische mystische Sekten’, 410f.). Bloch, who refers in passing to ‘diese Metatron-Mystiker’ (‘Yordei-Merkabah’, 72), appears to follow this suggestion. Harkavy (‘Qirqisānī’, 58 and 78), De Vaux (‘A propos des manuscrits’, 423), Bammel (‘Höhlenmenschen’, 79f.), Wolfson (‘Pre-Existent Angel’, 91) and Fossum (‘Magharians’, 312) all believe the word to be a corruption of Mağāriya, requiring only a slight alteration in Arabic script. However, Mağāriya itself occurs only in the Qaraite sources: Qirqisānī (all mss.), and Hadassi (Heb. מַעֲרֶה מַעֲרֶה מַעֲרֶה, מַעֲרֶה מַעֲרֶה מַעֲרֶה; see Bammel, ‘Höhlenmenschen’, 82f.), Qirqisānī (Book of Lights, Part 1, ch. 2; trans. Fossum, ‘Magharians’, 305) explains: ‘They were so called because their books were found in a cave (mağār).’ On the Muslim side, Biruṇī gives the name of the sect as Mağariba, with the variants (one ms. each) al-Gariya and Mağariba, while Shahrastānī (above) offers Mağariba or (one ms.) Mağariya (see: Golb, ‘Who were the Mağariya?’, 347 n. 2; Fossum, ‘Magharians’, n. 16). Golb’s observation (‘Who were the Mağariya?’, 350) that ‘the name Mağariya may in itself be erroneous’, and that Qirqisānī’s explanation may merely be a rationalisation of the misreading, is therefore worthy of consideration. It is thus possible that the original word was, in fact, Mağariba (= מַרְכָּבָה). This, of course, would undermine the case for a connection with Qumran. It is, at all events, virtually certain that all these authors are referring to the same sect.

\textsuperscript{173} Abu‘l Fath Muhammad ben ‘Abd al-Karīm ash-Shahrastānī, Kitāb al-Milal wa’l Nihal (1127), quoted in Fossum, ‘Magharians’, 308.
bush.\textsuperscript{174} and, near the end of the passage, with the Name-bearing angel of Exod 23:20–21.\textsuperscript{175} Moreover, the Magharians’ interpretation of these verses corresponds exactly to that of the ‘Youth text’ in SidRBer (C) and confirms the conclusion reached above that bSan 38b is a counter-exegesis directed against the shiur koma tradition.\textsuperscript{176} The curly black hair of this angel indicates his identity with the male Beloved of Cant 5:10–16. If the tradition reported in the final sentence is to be believed, he was also the heavenly Messiah.\textsuperscript{177} Despite these striking parallels, however, the Magharians’ angel differs from the Youth in the primitive shiur koma tradition, as reconstructed above, in that he is identified with the figure of the \textit{kavod} on the merkava,\textsuperscript{178} rather than being enthroned alongside the Holy One. Like Markos’ Logos, he is the visible image of a formless deity. According to other sources, the Magharians regarded him as the world-creator.\textsuperscript{179}

\textbf{The Youth and the Divine Kavod: Two Models of Their Relationship}

The evidence considered above suggests that at least two different models of the relationship between the Holy One and His principal angel were already current in the pre-rabbinic period.\textsuperscript{180} One, which seems to be the background of the Youth-tradition in the shiur koma, posited two enthroned figures: the \textit{kavod} (= Word/Name) of the Creator and His Servant, the heavenly messianic High Priest and archangelic representative of Israel. In the other, which is highly developed in the Gnostic sources but seems already to have been current amongst the Magharian sectarians, a schism has occurred between the formless, transcendent

\textsuperscript{174} As observed by Fossum (‘Magharians’, 328) this must be the meaning of Shahrastānī’s ‘tree’. Compare HekhZ (ms. New York), § 341 (see p. 523 above).

\textsuperscript{175} See Fossum, \textit{ibid.}

\textsuperscript{176} See p. 526 above.

\textsuperscript{177} The question whether or not Arius was actually influenced by Magharian teachings, though interesting in itself, is not the important issue here. Even if entirely speculative, the tradition must have been based on a perceived similarity and may, therefore, preserve reliable information concerning the Magharians themselves. See further Fossum, ‘Magharians’, 330–333.

\textsuperscript{178} Fossum (‘Magharians’, 335) observes that ‘He has the appearance of Adam’ must refer to Ezek 1:26.

\textsuperscript{179} Qirqisānī, \textit{Kitāb al-Anwār}, 1.7, and Hadassi, ‘Eškol ha-Kofer, fol. 42, § 98 (Fossum, ‘Magharians’, 305ff. and 310ff.).

\textsuperscript{180} See further Fauth’s discussion of the various elements of Metatron’s identity in idem, ‘Tatrosjah-Totrosjah’, 79–87.
Deity and the *kavod* on the merkava. Here, the subordinate figure (the ‘Logos-Angel’) has assumed the role of the *kavod*, together with that of the Creator or Creative Agent.°181° Both models are found in the New Testament writings: On the one hand, Christ is said to be enthroned at the right hand of ‘the Power’, ‘the Majesty’ or God,°182° but, on the other, some passages imply, more or less clearly, that he is identical with the Creative Agent or *kavod*.°183° The evidence concerning the Magharians suggests that these two traditions were already beginning to coalesce in the first century BCE. Both models contrast with the rabbinic paradigm upheld by the redactors of the hekhalot and shiur koma recensions, according to whom the visible Glory on the merkava is a direct manifestation of the Holy One Himself.°184° This theophanic appearance of the transcendent God is attended by subordinate hierarchies of angelic beings who transmit and mediate His glory to the lower orders of creation but, at the level of His appearance on the celestial merkava, where He is worshipped, He has neither a companion nor a representative.°185°

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°181° Gnostic teachings which place the *kavod*/Creator in moral and spiritual opposition to the transcendent Godhead can be seen to represent a further development of this trend.

°182° Matt 26:24; Mark 14:62; Lk 22:69; Acts 7:55; Heb 1:2–4; Col 3:1.


°184° For a fuller discussion of this subject in relation to the structure of the seven hekhalot of the cosmic temple, see ch. 12 above.

°185° Later, Saadya Gaon’s doctrine of the ‘Created Glory’ re-introduces the ‘Logos-Angel’ model, but with one important difference. Here, the visible Glory is the agent of revelation but the function of Creator is reserved to the transcendent, formless Deity. See further Altmann, ‘Saadya’s Theory.’ On the development of Saadya’s doctrine by the Hasidei Ashkenaz, and by some kabbalists and philosophers of medieval times, see Scholem, *Major Trends*, 111–116, and Altmann, ‘Moses Narboni’s “Epistle on Shiur Qoma”’. 
CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

Preliminary Remarks

The Epistle to the Ephesians is among the most enigmatic and controversial documents of the New Testament corpus. Written in an ornate, poetic style, with long sentences constructed from extended chains of descriptive phrases and relative clauses, with much use of repetition and parallel expression,¹ this letter emphasizes the unfathomable mysteries of God, which, though unsearchable by merely human thought and comprehension, are now being made known to those who are called to participation in the new Creation that, according to the writer, has been initiated by (or ‘in’) Christ.² Widely quoted by the Church Fathers, Ephesians has exerted a deep and far-reaching influence on the development of subsequent Christian theology. According to St. John Chrysostom:

Paul would needs take great pains and trouble in writing to these Ephesians. He is said indeed to have entrusted them, as being persons already well-instructed, with his profoundest conceptions; and the Epistle itself is full of sublime thoughts and doctrines...It abounds with sentiments of overwhelming loftiness and grandeur. Thoughts which he scarcely so much as utters anywhere else, he here plainly declares.³

In more recent times, Samuel Taylor Coleridge is reported to have described the letter as ‘the divinest composition of man’.⁴

Although complete unanimity on the question of authorship has not yet been achieved, the increasingly dominant scholarly consensus is that the letter was written after Paul’s death by a follower who was deeply familiar with Paul and/or his teaching, and who believed that this familiarity entitled him to assume the apostle’s mantle by writing

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¹ See, for example, Lincoln, Ephesians, xliv–xlvii, and the sources cited there.
² See, esp., Caragounis, Ephesian Mysterion. Regarding the use of ἐν and other prepositions in Ephesians, see below.
³ St. John Chrysostom, ‘Preamble’ to Hom. in Eph. 49 (MPG 62: 9); also quoted in part by Moule, Ephesian Studies, vi.
⁴ Coleridge, Specimens 6.321 (also cited by Moule, Ephesian Studies, 15).
in his name. It is evident that Ephesians is very closely related, in both language and content, to Colossians but it is not certain whether a single author was responsible for both letters, or whether the author of one has been influenced by the other. A few commentators have maintained that Colossians is dependent on Ephesians, or tried to explain the relationship between the two letters in terms of common source traditions, but the majority opinion that Colossians has priority over Ephesians is well-founded and will, in the following discussion, be assumed to be correct. As several commentators have observed, the priority of Colossians, which is itself of doubtful authenticity, undermines the minority case for Pauline authorship of Ephesians.

The letter’s original destination is even more uncertain since, according to several early manuscripts and citations, the words ἐν Ἐφέσῳ do not occur in Eph 1:1, and a copy addressed to ‘the Laodiceans’ (cf. Col 4:13, 16) appears to be attested by Marcion, by way of Tertullian. It has, therefore, been widely speculated that this was a ‘circular’ letter

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5 The most detailed presentation of the case for this position is that by Mitton, Epistle to the Ephesians, esp. 7–24, 111–158; cf. idem, ‘Authorship’ and Ephesians, 2–11; and see also, for example: Knox, ‘Ephesian Continuator’; Dahl, ‘Ephesians’ (in IDB SupVol, reversing his earlier position in idem, ‘Adresse und Pröomium’); Käsemann, ‘Epheserbrief’; idem, ‘Das Interpretationsproblem’; Dibelius, An die Kolosser, 83–85; Masson, L’Epître de Saint Paul, esp. 226–228; Nineham, ‘Case Against’; Kümmel, Introduction, 364–366; Lincoln, ‘Use of the OT’, esp. 44–50; and idem, ‘Ephesians 2:8–10?’ (reversing his earlier position: ‘Re-Examination’ and Paradise Now, 8, 135–139 [but see 197 n. 29]). The minority case for Pauline authorship has been defended by, amongst others: Percy, Die Probleme, esp. 328–353; idem, ‘Zu den Problemen’; Sanders, ‘Case for the Pauline Authorship’; and van Roon, Authenticity, who suggests that the letter was written jointly by Paul and a member of his circle. For recent summary discussion of scholarship on this issue, see: Kitchen, Ephesians, 4–7; Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 24–29; and Lincoln, Ephesians, lix–lxxiii.

6 Coutts, ‘Relationship’.


8 See, for example: Percy, Die Probleme, 360–413; Mitton, The Epistle, 55–97, 280–321; Hurd, ‘Sequence’; Buck and Taylor, Saint Paul, 124–137; Knox, ‘Pauline Chronology’, 264f.; Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 30–33; and Lincoln, Ephesians, xlvi–lxiii. A modified version of this position is maintained by Gnilka (Der Epheserbrief, 7–13), who recognizes that the author of Ephesians knew and used Colossians, but also finds evidence of the independent development of shared traditions, and arrives at the highly plausible conclusion that the two writers were members of the same Pauline school.

9 See, for example: Mitton, The Epistle, 75–81; Gnilka, Der Epheserbrief, 14; Lincoln, Ephesians, lxvi–lxviii; Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 33–37; and the sources cited there.

10 See, e.g.: Dibelius, An die Kolosser, 56–57; Lincoln, Ephesians, 2–4; and the sources cited there.

11 Tertullian, Marc. 5.11, 17 (Evans 584–585, 612–615).
which was copied and sent to a number of affiliated churches, probably somewhere in western Asia Minor. Several commentators believe it to have been written in response to a crisis arising out of tensions between Jewish Christians and an increasingly dominant Gentile majority, and it has been suggested that the writer’s purpose was to combat a widespread tendency of the Gentile congregations to succumb to syncretism and, especially, magic. However, both of these proposals are rather speculative and the letter’s setting in life remains unknown. Owing to its presentation of Christ as a cosmic figure who defeats the demonic powers and initiates a ‘new creation’, freed from their dominion, the letter became a focus of intense interest among Gnostics and several modern commentators believe that the writer either was influenced by, or was interacting with, Gnostic teachings. The best of recent research has, however, located the background of this author’s thought within the wider matrix of Jewish exegetical, apocalyptic and Wisdom traditions represented by such diverse sources as the pseudepigrapha, the Qumran Scrolls, and the writings of Philo. The origins of many Gnostic ideas and images can be traced to this same matrix of tradition.

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12 For discussion of this issue, see, e.g., Gnilka, Der Epheserbrief, 1–7; Lincoln, Ephesians, lxixi–lxiii and 4–5; and Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 28–29. This view of the letter’s purpose was shared by Coleridge, who referred to ‘the catholic circular charge called the Epistle to the Ephesians’ (Coleridge, ‘Table Talk’, ed. Shedd, 6: 458).

13 See, for example: Chadwick, ‘Die Absicht’; Käsemann, Epheserbrief and ‘Ephesians and Acts’; idem, ‘Das Interpretationsproblem’; Fischer, Tendenz und Absicht, 79–94; and Smith, ‘Ephesian Heresy’, 78–103, who boldly hypothesizes that the author’s opponents were former pagans who, prior to their conversion to Christianity, had adopted a form of ‘unorthodox’ speculative Judaism which emphasized the heavenly ascent of Moses and the value of spiritual (not bodily) circumcision. According to Smith, these persons were contemptuous of ‘natural’ Jewish converts to Christianity.

14 See further: Dupont, Gnosis, esp. 419–528; Pokorny, Σωμα Χριστου, Epheserbrief; and Der Epheserbrief; Grant, Gnosticism, 160ff.; Käsemann, Epheserbrief, 518 and ‘Interpretationsproblem’; Schlier, Der Brief, esp. 18–22; Weiss, ‘Gnostische Motive’; Lindemann, ‘Bemerkungen’; and Koester, Introduction, 271–275. Schnackenburg (Ephesians, 36 n. 49) cautiously remarks ‘I should not like entirely to exclude a certain knowledge of Gnostic motifs.’

15 For an overview of these issues, see esp. Martin, Epistle in Search, which suggests that Ephesians may have been written by the author of Luke-Acts.

16 See further: Pagels, Gnostic Paul, 115–129.

17 See, for example: Bultmann, Theologie 2: 175–183; Colpe, ‘Zur Leib-Christi-Vorstellung’; Dupont, Gnosis, esp. 419–528; Pokorny, Σωμα Χριστου, Epheserbrief; and Der Epheserbrief; Grant, Gnosticism, 160ff.; Käsemann, Epheserbrief, 518 and ‘Interpretationsproblem’; Schlier, Der Brief, esp. 18–22; Weiss, ‘Gnostische Motive’; Lindemann, ‘Bemerkungen’; and Koester, Introduction, 271–275. Schnackenburg (Ephesians, 36 n. 49) cautiously remarks ‘I should not like entirely to exclude a certain knowledge of Gnostic motifs.’

18 See, for example: Gnilka, Der Epheserbrief, 33–45; Dahl, ‘Ephesians and Qumran’; and, above all, Caragounis, The Ephesian Mysterion.
in which the mysticism of the merkava and the body of the Glory occupied a central role.

The close relationship between Ephesians and Colossians has led some commentators to suppose that both letters were written in opposition to the same ‘heretical’ opponents, who have sometimes been identified as ‘Jewish Gnostics’ \(^{19}\) or, occasionally, as merkava mystics. \(^{20}\) Following this line of interpretation, Goulder has detected the influence of shiur koma mysticism on the language of Ephesians. \(^{21}\) He argues that the author, whom he believes to be Paul, is trying to counter the extravagant claims of Jewish-Christian visionaries, who have been attempting to subvert his congregation. According to Goulder, Paul adopts the mystical terminology of his opponents but ‘glosses’ it in accordance with his own Christocentric gospel. A weakness of this interpretation is its heavy reliance on Pauline and deuto-Pauline sources other than Ephesians, especially Colossians and, in Goulder’s case, the Corinthian correspondence. It is, of course, beyond question that these writings exerted a profound literary and theological influence on the author of Ephesians, but this does not justify the assumption that his historical situation was the same as that of his predecessors, or that he shared their immediate polemical concerns. In fact, the internal evidence of Ephesians contains no indication that the letter was written in response to a situation of conflict or controversy within the Church. \(^{22}\) Goulder justifies his assertion that the letter was directed against Jewish-Christian opponents by reference to Eph 2:11–3:8, where the author assures his Gentile readers that they are full members of the holy community. In this passage, however, the inclusive nature of the Christian community is simply contrasted with the exclusivity of ‘former covenant’

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\(^{20}\) This suggestion, which is largely based on Scholem’s characterization of merkabah mysticism as ‘Jewish Gnosticism,’ was made by Bruce, *Epistles to the Colossians*, 21–26; and cf. Smith, ‘Observations,’ 156f.


\(^{22}\) See the remarks of Lincoln, ‘Theology of Ephesians,’ 78f.; and cf. idem, *Paradise Now*, 137f.; and idem, *Ephesians*, lxxiv. See also Nineham, ‘Case,’ 33. Insofar as the letter reflects a setting of conflict, it is between the community of the ‘holy ones’ and the demonic rulers of the present world (see further below).
Judaism. There is nothing to indicate the existence of a Jewish-Christian opposition and, moreover, the fully-admitted status of Gentile Christians is treated as an established fact, not as a matter in dispute. We will find that, if Goulder’s assumption of adversarial intent is disregarded and the letter is read on its own terms, a very different picture emerges of the author’s attitude towards the shiur koma.

A definitive characteristic of the language of Ephesians is its strongly liturgical flavour. The first part of the main body of the letter opens with a form of blessing or berakha (Eph 1:3a) and proceeds in the manner of a combined prayer-sermon to and on behalf of the readers. Here, the author interweaves exposition of the ‘mystery’ of salvation by incorporation ‘in Christ’ (Eph 1:3b-14; 2:1–3:12) with prayers of thanksgiving (Eph 1:15–16) and intercession (Eph 1:17–23; 3:13–19), followed by a concluding doxology and the word ‘Amen’ (Eph 3:20–21). The second part of the letter (Eph 4:1–6:20) contains moral exhortation and advice (paraenesis) and, in that it deals with the implications and consequences of the Christian ‘mystery’ as expressed in the lives of the believers or ‘holy ones,’ follows naturally from the first. According to several commentators, this distinctive combination of liturgical, catechetical and paraenetic elements indicates strongly that this ‘letter of reminder and of congratulation’ was somehow associated with the ritual of baptism. Others have disputed or downplayed this association, arguing that, since the letter contains only one explicit reference to baptism (Eph 4:5), the theory that it was originally a baptismal homily goes beyond the evidence. Against this objection, however, a more

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23 See pp. 601–603 below.

24 The importance of shiur koma mysticism in Ephesians has also been recognized by Gieschen, Angelomorphic Christology, 340–343, who cites an early, unpublished version of the following discussion.

25 For more detailed structural analysis of the letter’s content, see Lincoln, Ephesians, xxxv–xlvi, and the sources cited there. Lincoln (ibid. lxxiv–lxxvi; cf. idem, ‘The Theology,’ 82) and others have inferred that the author of the letter believed his addressees to be somehow deficient in the qualities covered by the paraenesis. This questionable inference is akin to supposing, on the basis of a commanding officer’s inspirational address to a graduating class of West Point cadets, that the listeners are deficient in the military virtues of loyalty, discipline and courage recommended by the speaker.


28 See, e.g., Barth, Ephesians 1: 135–143; Arnold, Ephesians, Power and Magic, 135f.; Caragounis, The Ephesian Mysterion, 46 n. 83; and Lincoln, Ephesians, lxxix.
or less unambiguous allusion to baptism is encountered in Eph 5:26, 29 and several passages are best explained, either in whole or in part, by reference to this theme. 30 The hypothesis that the letter originated in a baptismal or 'post-baptismal' liturgical setting is thus, while not proven, entirely plausible. Of especial importance for the following discussion is the work of John C. Kirby, who shows that the language and imagery of Ephesians has been deeply influenced by Jewish liturgical traditions associated with the festival of Shavuot, which are preserved in the Synagogue liturgy and also in the Dead Sea Scrolls. 31 Kirby's suggestion that the letter was intended to be read at a Christian ceremony of renewal of baptismal vows at Pentecost, 32 similar to the Shavuot ceremony of covenant renewal ceremony at Qumran, 33 may perhaps be unduly speculative. 34 This does not, however, detract from his more general conclusion that the language and imagery employed by this author has been drawn in large measure from the Christian baptismal tradition and from Jewish liturgical traditions associated with the covenant-festival of Shavuot. This finding is of the utmost importance for our inquiry. Ezekiel 1 was, from an early period, the haftara or prophetic reading for the feast of Shavuot and, in both rabbinic literature and the writings from Qumran, this festival is a—perhaps the—major focus of midrashic and liturgical merkava traditions. 35 It may, therefore, be legitimate to regard the letter to the Ephesians as a Christian parallel to the Shavuot sermons about the ascent of Moses from Sinai to the heavenly throne, which, according to Halperin, were delivered in the Jewish synagogues. 36 At all events, the discovery of merkava and/or shiur koma imagery and themes in this letter will come as no surprise.

29 Admittedly, the image of purification by washing in water must undoubtedly allude in this context to the Jewish bridal custom of prenuptial immersion, but this is itself a metaphor of baptism, which is interpreted as a rite of marriage between Christ and (each member of) his Church. See further: Gnlinka, Der Epheserbrief, 280–282; Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 249–251; Lincoln, Ephesians, 375f.; and the sources cited there. See also pp. 598–599 below.

30 See, above all, Kirby, Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost, 150–161, and the sources cited there.

31 See Kirby, ibid. 83–149.

32 Ibid. 148, 170.

33 See Ch. 12, pp. 316–325 above, and sources cited there.

34 Thus Lincoln, Ephesians, lxxix.

35 See Ch. 12 above; and see also the following note.

The Fullness (Plērōma)

Goshen Gottstein finds a reference to the dimensions of the body of the Glory in Eph 3:18–19:37

(I pray)…that you may be so exceedingly strong as to comprehend, together with all the holy ones, what is the breadth, and length and height and depth (καταλαβέσθαι…τί τὸ πλάτος καὶ μῆκος καὶ ὕψος καὶ βάθος) and to know the love of Christ, which surpasses knowledge (γνωσθῇ τῷ ὑπερβαλλόντος τῆς γνώσεως ἀγάπην τοῦ Χριστοῦ), that you may be filled up to (εἰς) the whole fullness of God.

This rather puzzling passage has been interpreted in a variety of ways.38 The terms: ‘breadth, length, height and depth’ are often understood to be the dimensions of the cosmos, which, according some commentators, are to be filled by Christ, who embodies the ‘knowledge,’ i.e., Wisdom, of God.39 Others have linked these cosmic dimensions to practices of invocation described in the magical papyri.40 It has also been suggested that they are the dimensions of the cubical form of the heavenly Jerusalem, encountered in Rev 21:16 (cf. Ezek 48:16) and in other Jewish and early Christian sources.41 According to an alternative reading of the Greek syntax, the dimensions are metaphorical attributes of ‘the love of Christ,’ the scope of which is universal.42 A symbolic association with the arms of the cross is encountered in the early exegetical tradition,43 and still has a few supporters,44 but is surely anachronistic.45 The motif of cosmic ‘fullness’ (πλήρωμα), which recurs throughout the letter, has

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37 Goshen-Gottstein, 'Ma le-maala.'
38 For an overview of the literature on this passage, see Lincoln, Ephesians, 208–210.
41 See Schlier, Der Brief, 174, and the sources cited there.
42 See, e.g.: Mitton, Epistle, 134; Houlden, Paul's Letters, 304–305; van Roon, Authenticity, 262–266; Caird, Paul's Letters, 70; and Caragounis, Ephesian Mysterion, 74–76. Lincoln (Ephesians, 213) comments: 'One is hard-pressed to choose between Wisdom and the love of Christ as the reference of the dimensions.'
43 E.g., Irenaeus, Haer. 5.17.14 (Rousseau 234f.).
44 Modern commentators who incorporate this tradition into their reading of these verses include: Houlden, Paul's Letters, 304–305; Schlier, Der Brief, 99, 174; and Gnilka, Der Epheserbrief, 185–191. Schlier and Gnilka both maintain that the cosmic space to be filled by Christ’s love is identical with the Church.
45 Lincoln (Ephesians, 208) rightly comments: 'It is unlikely such highly developed symbolism would have attached itself to the cross by this stage and been readily understood by means of this cryptic allusion.'
been variously explained in relation to Jewish Wisdom traditions, Stoic pantheism, and/or Gnostic speculation about the cosmic Anthropos.\(^{46}\)

Despite the fact that this ‘fullness’ is equated or very closely associated with the body (σῶμα) of Christ,\(^{47}\) most modern commentators believe the motif in Ephesians to be metaphorical, rather than physical, in meaning.\(^{48}\) Goshen-Gottstein however, understands it in the light of the fourfold restriction in mHag 2:1b:

> Whoever gazes at four things, it were fitting for him if he had not come into the world: what is above; what is below; what is/was before, and what is behind/will be hereafter (מה לאشراء מה לאחר מה להבמה מה עתיד מה עתיד).

Whereas most commentators take ‘before’ (לפני) and ‘behind/after’ (לאחר) to be temporal expressions, in accordance with the Tosefta paraphrase: המ Trước מה עתיד מה לפני,\(^{49}\) Goshen-Gottstein argues that the whole formula applies to Ezekiel’s merkava vision and should therefore be understood in spatial terms. We have found that this is unlikely to be the original meaning, since Ezekiel the Tragedian, who provides the earliest known citation of the formula, clearly understands it to be temporal.\(^{50}\) It is noteworthy that this early citation occurs in connection with a merkava vision, which is already placed in the context of the Sinai revelation. This may be another indication that origin of the Shavuot-merkava connection is indeed quite early. Nonetheless, Goshen-Gottstein’s suggestion may be partially valid, since there is evidence that both spatial and temporal interpretations were current in the early rabbinic period.\(^{51}\) He proposes two possible interpretations

\(^{46}\) For a very history of interpretation of this motif, see, above all, Ernst, *Pleroma und Pleroma Christi*, esp. 105–172. The main positions are summarized by Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 80–84; and Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 72–78.

\(^{47}\) See Eph 1:23 and 4:13, in passages discussed on pp. 522–596 and 603–609 below; and see further: Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 80–84; Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 66–78; and the sources cited there.

\(^{48}\) This understanding of the term πλήρωμα, here and throughout Ephesians, is emphasized by Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 77; and cf. Schnackenburg, *Ephesians*, 150–153. See further pp. 595–596 below.

\(^{49}\) tHag 2:7.

\(^{50}\) Ezekiel the Tragedian, *Exagōgē*, ll. 83–9 (OTP 2: 812).

\(^{51}\) In tHag 2:7, yHag 2 (77c), and bHag 11b, the formula is applied to Deut 4:32, ‘Ask now concerning the former days… ask from one end of the heavens to the other…’; combining both spatial and temporal interpretations. Later, Rashi (commentary to bHag 12a) understands it to mean the dimensions of the pre-existent formless space (Gen 1:2, וה fotoğraf וה(Member) beyond the boundaries of the created world. According to these sources, then, the formula refers to the temporal-spatial dimensions of the created universe, not those of God or His Glory, but see p. 589 n. 53 below.
of the formula, both based on Ezekiel 1: either that it refers to the throne and firmament 'above' (vv22, 25, 26), to the *hayyot* and *ofanim* 'below' (v23), and to their movement 'straight forwards' (v9) and, by implication, backwards (v14);52 and/or that the four directions apply to the dimensions of the body of the *kavod* itself (vv27–28). The latter suggestion is much the more convincing and a few midrashic sources, which cite the formula in connection with Moses’ visions of God, do, indeed, interpret it in this way.53 Very similar formulae are applied to parts of the body in some Christian, Gnostic and magical sources.54 On the basis of this material, Goshen-Gottstein suggests that ‘the breadth, and length and height and depth’ (Eph 3:18) are the dimensions of the cosmic body of Christ, who is considered to be identical with the enthroned divine *kavod*.

This suggestion may well have merit. If accepted, it allows us to interpret the term ‘fullness’ (πλήρωμα), not as a mere metaphor, but as an explicit reference to the enthroned Glory, which, according to biblical texts such as Isa 6:3, ‘fills’ the world and/or the temple.55 This exegetical possibility, which has not received the attention it deserves, would

52 The dimensions of space are clearly central to the imagery of Ezek 1, but here Goshen-Gottstein’s case is weakened by the absence of a clear reference to ‘behind’. He refers to Ezek 2:10, *the scroll was written before and behind* (טְקֵין אַחֲוֹר פַּנִּים) but it is hard to see how this helps. In Tg. Ezek 2:10 (Sperber 3: 269) the expression is interpreted temporally, thus: הָיוּ חֳכָמָא מָאָסֵףָךְ וּמָאָסֵףָךְ מַגְּרוֹאֵתָךְ וּמַגְּרוֹאֵתָךְ מַגְּרוֹאֵתָךְ מַגְּרוֹאֵתָךְ מַגְּרוֹאֵתָךְ מַגְּרוֹאֵתָךְ מַגְּרוֹאֵתָךְ. See the following note.

53 ExodR 45,5 (1.2: 75a; Soncino Midrash 3:522–523) states that, had Moses not veiled his face at the burning bush, God would have revealed to him the four subjects listed in mHag 2:1 which, in the extant text, is cited according to *tosefta*’s temporal paraphrase. The passage goes on to state that God subsequently responded to Moses’ request to ‘show me Your Glory’ (Exod 33:18) by saying: ‘When I wanted it, you did not; now that you want it, I do not.’ Hence, Moses only got to see God’s back (Exod 33:19–23). Goshen-Gottstein argues persuasively that, in order to make sense of this, we have to assume that the text originally cited the mishna proper and referred to the dimensions of the body of the Glory. Perhaps the extant text has been ‘corrected’ in the light of SifNum 103 (Horovitz 102), where Ezek 2:10 as interpreted by the targum (see the previous note) is applied to Exod 33:18–23, apparently in order to deny the literal meaning of the text (i.e., that a bodily vision is intended). YalShim Num 12:7 (Hyman, Lehrer and Shiloni 4: 226, ll. 49–50) combines the Mishna’s reading with the Tosefta’s paraphrase to make a six-fold formula: God shows Moses מה תַּלְמוּדָה מַה לְּמוּדָה מַה לְּמוּדָה מַה לְּמוּדָה מַה לְּמוּדָה מַה לְּמוּדָה מַה לְּמוּדָה. Mention should also be made of Tg. Cant 2:6 (Sperber 4: 130) which states that Israel was surrounded in the wilderness by four clouds of glory: above, below, before and behind.


55 See also Jer 23:23–24; Ezek 44:4; mHag 2:7. On the temple as microcosm and as body, see ch. 12 above.
help to explain the equation (or association) of the divine ‘fullness’ with Christ’s ‘body’\(^\text{56}\). If this is correct, the clause: ‘that you may be filled...’ (Eph 3:19) must refer to the present-and-future glorification of the ‘holy ones,’ when they behold the vision of the Christ-*kavod*.\(^\text{57}\) This reading of Eph 3:18–19 may also help us to account for other details of the passage. The idea that exceptional strength is required to withstand the vision of the *kavod* is found in both apocalyptic and hekhalot sources.\(^\text{58}\) The paradoxical desire to obtain saving knowledge of that which is said to be incomprehensible is likewise characteristic of those sources and, especially, of the shiur koma.\(^\text{59}\)

A significant ambiguity in the syntax of this passage must, however, be noted.\(^\text{60}\) It may be that the verbs ‘comprehend’ and ‘know’ have different objects, i.e., the dimensions of the enthroned *kavod* (‘breadth... length... height... depth,’ all governed by ‘comprehend’) and the love of Christ (governed by ‘know’), respectively. In this case, ‘of Christ’ qualifies the expression ‘love surpassing knowledge’ only, not the four dimensions, and a distinction between Christ and the *kavod* is evidently intended by the author. Alternatively, the two verbs may share a group of objects: ‘the breadth...length...height...depth...and love surpassing knowledge,’ all qualified by ‘of Christ,’ in which case Christ is considered to be identical with the divine Glory.

In Eph 1:3–6, the author develops his opening *berakha* into an explanation of the relationship between Christ and his Church,\(^\text{61}\) as follows:

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in (ἐν) Christ, in the heavenly

\(^{56}\) Arnold (*Ephesians: Power and Magic*, 83–84), who relates the term πλήρωµα in Ephesians to the Jewish concept of the *shekhina* and interprets it as a circumlocution for the Holy Spirit. Arnold recognizes the relevance of the verses cited in the previous note but fails to appreciate that the equation: πλήρωµα = σῶµα is best explained by the biblical and Jewish notion of the enthroned *kavod*.

\(^{57}\) See further pp. 607–609 below.

\(^{58}\) In several sources, the visionary is granted supernatural strength to enable him to withstand the overwhelming vision of the Glory. This is often associated with the revelation of prayers which provide theurgic protection so that he is transformed, rather than annihilated. See, for example: 2 En 21:2–22:10; Asc. Isa. 9:37–42; Apoc. Abr. 16–18; HekhR § 162; MMerk § 557–58, § 570 and § 591 (Scholem, § 8–9, 17 and 31).

\(^{59}\) See again, in the light of the above discussion, Irenaeus’ allusions to these verses in Haer. 4.19.2 (pp. 509–510 above).

\(^{60}\) For further discussion, see Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 212, and the sources cited there.

\(^{61}\) On the form of the blessing, see Lincoln, *Ephesians*, 10–19, and the sources cited there.
He predestined us to sonship through (διὰ) Jesus Christ according to the good pleasure of His will, to the praise of the Glory of His grace (εἰς ἐπαινὸν δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ) with which He favoured us in the Beloved (ἐν τῷ ἡγαπημένῳ).

A potential point of contact with the shiur koma in this passage is the title 'Beloved'. Admittedly, in LXX Cant 5:9–16, etc., the word for ‘beloved’ is ἀδελφίδος, rather than ἡγαπημένος. As we have seen, however, ἡγαπημένος is used in Deut 33:26 and, in any case, ὀγαπάω and its derivatives are established usage in early Christian literature, including, of course, the Pauline correspondence (1 Cor 13:1–13, etc.). In Ephesians, the Beloved is the heavenly representative of the holy community, whose members are ‘incorporated’ ‘in’ him, so that the blessing received from the Father is mediated to them ‘through’ him. His role is thus precisely that of the Beloved Youth in the shiur koma. The Community, which participates in the Sonship of the Beloved, exists for 'the praise of the Glory'. This expression, which in the Hebrew Bible is applied to Israel, occurs again in Eph 1:12: 'so that we may be for the praise of His Glory (εἰς τὸ εἶναι ἡμᾶς εἰς ἐπαινὸν δόξης αὐτοῦ), who have put our hope in Christ,' and is repeated in Eph 1:14: 'this one (the Holy Spirit) is an earnest of our inheritance, until the redemption of the possession (i.e. God's people), to the praise of His Glory (εἰς ἐπαινὸν δόξης τῆς χάριτος αὐτοῦ).' It thus appears that ‘praise’ is the medium whereby the Community is incorporated or ‘gathered up’ into the Beloved (Eph 1:10), and so brought into communion with God. The Holy Spirit, which inspires that praise, is an earnest of its future inheritance. This is strongly reminiscent of the targum to the first verse of the Song of Songs, where it is claimed that the Song consists of the praises uttered by Solomon before God on behalf of Israel by

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63 See p. 553 above.
64 See, esp., Armitage Robinson, St. Paul's Epistle, 229–233; and see further, e.g., Schlier, Der Brief, 56f.57; Barth, Ephesians 1: 82f.; Caragounis, Ephesian Mysterion, 90; and Lincoln, Ephesians, 26f.
65 On the prepositions, see pp. 597–598 below.
67 Consider, in the light of our understanding of the shiur koma, Lincoln's observation (Ephesians, 36) that 'in the final analysis, God's working out of his purpose serves his own glorification and the believing community exists to further that end. The praise of God's glory is the goal of its whole existence.'
the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. 68 The theme of praise inspired by the Spirit reappears in Eph 5:18–20:

18 Do not get drunk with wine, which is dissipation, but be filled by the Spirit, uttering psalms and hymns and spiritual songs amongst yourselves, 19 singing and making melody to the Lord in your hearts, 20 always giving thanks for all things to God, even the Father, in the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

This emphatic contrast—and implicit comparison—between drunkenness and Spirit-filled praise indicates clearly that the activity of worship to which the author refers is, at least potentially, ecstatic and transformational. 69 As has often been observed, this passage is highly reminiscent of the Pentecost narrative in Acts 2:13–15. 70

The author’s conception of the Glorified Christ as the Agent of redemption is set forth in Eph 1:17–23: 71

17…that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ (ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου ἡµῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ), the Father of the Glory (ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης), may give you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in fuller knowledge of Him, 18 so that, the eyes of your heart having been enlightened, you may know what is the hope to which He has called you, what is the wealth of His glorious inheritance among the holy ones, 19 and what is the immeasurable greatness of His Power (τὸ ὑπερβάλλον µέγεθος τῆς δυνάµεως τοῦ) unto us who believe, according to the working of His mighty strength, 20 which He worked in (ἐν) Christ when He raised him from the dead and seated him at His right hand in the heavenly heights, 21 far above all rule and authority and power and lordship and every name that is named, not only in this world but also in the world to come. 22 And He placed all things under his feet and appointed him the head over all things for the Church, 23 which is his body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

Eph 1:21 suggests that Christ, like Metatron, has received the Inexpressible Name (compare Heb 1:4). Fossum makes the important suggestion that

68 Tg. Cant 1:1 (Sperber 4:127).
69 Compare Philo, Leg. all. 82–84; and see further Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism,’ 25–27.
70 See, e.g., Kirby, Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost, 139f.; Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 236–238; and Lincoln, Ephesians, 343–347.
71 The exact referents of the pronouns in this and other passages of Ephesians are, in many instances, uncertain. In the following translations, I have, for the sake of clarity, capitalized pronouns which, according to my understanding, refer to God (‘He,’ ‘Him,’ ‘His,’ ‘Himself’). I do not capitalize pronouns which, in my judgment, refer to Christ. See further below.
the expression ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης (Eph 1:17), apparently standing in parallel to ὁ θεὸς τοῦ κυρίου, implies that Christ, the Son, is identical with the kavod. This would mean that the author conceived of Christ as the Image of the invisible God, according to the 'Logos-Angel' model encountered elsewhere in the Pauline and deuto-Pauline literature, in the Magharian teaching and, later, in Markos' system. In Eph 1:20, on the other hand, Christ is enthroned alongside the Father, like the messianic Youth in the early shiur koma and in accordance with the 'two thrones' model of Daniel 7. If this verse is taken at face value, and if it is assumed that the text is entirely consistent at this point, ὁ πατὴρ τῆς δόξης cannot carry the significance attached to it by Fossum. On the other hand, the fact that the author has employed a standard expression derived from the 'two thrones' tradition need not exclude the possibility that his own conception of Christ was closer to—or was moving in the direction of—the 'Logos-Angel' model. The agency role attributed to Christ perhaps tends to support this view. This passage therefore sheds light on, but does not decisively resolve, the ambiguity encountered in Eph 3:18–19. It may well be the case that the two traditions of the Creative Logos and the enthroned Servant-Messiah, which were originally distinct, are in process of becoming fused with each other in this text. This would explain why the text contains elements derived from both traditions but fails to completely reconcile them with each other.

The expression 'the immeasurable greatness of His Power' in Eph 1:19 is, almost certainly, an echo of the shiur koma tradition. Eph 1:23 equates the divine 'fullness' with Christ's 'body'. This, as we have seen, recalls Isa 6:3, which is a central text, not only of the Jewish and Christian liturgies, but also of the merkava tradition. Eph 1:22 alludes...
to Ps 8:4–6, which may well, in this context, have been interpreted as a reference to the Youth:

What is man that You are mindful of him,
Or the Son of Man that You care for him?
Yet You have made him little less than God
and You crown him with honor and glory.
You have given him dominion over the works of Your hands;
You have put all things under his feet.

Eph 1:22 also seems to contain echoes of Ps 110:1, ‘The LORD says to my Lord: Sit at My right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool,’ and Isa 66:1, which is a key text in the shiur koma tradition: ‘Thus says the LORD: Heaven is My throne, and the earth My footstool!’ Certainly, these three texts, when taken together and considered against the background of the shiur koma, throw an interesting light on the author’s conception of the victorious and exalted Christ.78

The expression: ‘the eyes of your heart having been enlightened’ (Eph 1:18) is also worthy of comment. A few commentators have interpreted this, in the light of passages such as Col 1:9–13, as an allusion to baptism, which effects the believer’s transition from darkness into light.79 Others, citing references to enlightenment of either the eyes or the heart (but never ‘the eyes of the heart’) in the Hebrew Bible, the Pseudepigrapha, and the Qumran Scrolls, understand the expression in Eph 1:18 to be an allusion to the illuminative experience of conversion by the power of the Spirit, rather than being limited specifically to the ritual of baptism.80 This understanding is supported by an even closer parallel to the language of this verse, which is found in a short text about Moses’ heavenly ascent from Sinai, published by Jellinek under the title ‘Haggadat Shema Yisrael.’ In this text, which includes much merkava material

78 On the association of Ps 8:4–6 with Ps 110:1, which occurs throughout the New Testament literature, see Dunn, ’Was Christianity?’ 327; and idem, Christology, 108–10. On Psalm 110, see also Hay, Glory at the Right Hand. On The Hebrew biblical background of Eph 1:20–21, see also Lincoln, ’Use of the OT,’ 40–42 (cf. idem, Ephesians, 61f.) and the sources cited there.

79 See, esp., Schlier, Der Brief, 79–81; and cf. Houlden, Paul’s Letters, 275.

80 See, e.g., Gnilka, Der Epheserbrief, 90–92; Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 74–79; Lincoln, Ephesians, 58–59; and the sources cited there. Note that, although the phrase: ‘the eyes of the heart’ occurs occasionally in the Hermetic Corpus and a few Christian writings of later date than Ephesians, it has not been found in any pre-Christian biblical or Jewish source.
and may originally have been a synagogue sermon for the festival of Shavuot, the readers or listeners are addressed as follows:

You too saw, with the understanding of your heart and your mind and your soul, how He revealed Himself at the Sea, how He bent the upper heavens and descended upon Mount Sinai in His Glory.

Unless this parallel is merely coincidental, it provides another indication of the connection between Ephesians and the merkava traditions associated with the feast of Pentecost (= Shavuot).

*The Church as the Body*

Eph 1:22b-23 introduces the central theme of the whole Epistle: the Church as the ‘body’ of Christ. Here, once again, the ‘body’ motif occurs in close connection with the term: ‘fullness’. The syntax of the verse requires our attention and reads as follows:

τῇ ἐκκλησίᾳ, ἥτις ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα αὐτοῦ, τὸ πλήρωμα τοῦ τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν πληρουμένου (‘to the Church, which is the body of him, the fullness of him who fills all in all’).

Whereas some commentators believe ‘fullness’ to be a ‘passive’ attribute of the Church, which is ‘filled’ by Christ, others understand it to be an ‘active’ attribute of Christ, who ‘fills’ both the Church and the cosmos. In this verse, we may may choose to read ‘the fullness of him…’ in parallel with ‘the body of him’. This would yield the meaning that Christ, whose body = fullness is the Church, also fills all things—an ‘active’ reading which is supported by the expression: ‘fullness of Christ’ in Eph 4:13. A ‘passive’ parallel reading—that the Church, as Christ’s body, is ‘filled’ by him—would not significantly alter the meaning of the first part of the verse but would run into difficulty in the second, which quite clearly refers to an active ‘filler’ of all things. However, it is also possible to read the two parts of the verse sequentially, so that
the phrase: ‘the fullness of Him who fills’ qualifies only the possessor of ‘the body of him,’ which would mean that Christ, whose body is the Church, is himself the ‘fullness’ of (i.e., the one filled by) Him Who fills all things (i.e., the divine kavod). This reading gains support from Eph 3:19, where ‘fullness’ is, in the first instance, an attribute of God Himself, although it is also said that the members of the Church are themselves to be filled ‘up to’ (εἰς) that fullness.

I submit that these difficulties are most satisfactorily resolved if we recognize that ‘fullness’ and its homonym ‘glory’ both refer to a mediated quality which originates in God, ‘the Father of (the) Glory,’ and is made ‘fully’ manifest in the glorious body of the enthroned kavod. Christ, as the heavenly messiah, either is identified with the divine kavod, in accordance with the ‘Logos-Angel’ model, or is enthroned alongside Him, like the ‘unreconstructed’ angelic Youth and his prototype, the Danielic Son of Man. In either case, Christ embodies and is ‘filled’ by the quality of divine Glory, with which he, in turn, ‘fills’ the Church. The Church, as his ‘body,’ is therefore ‘filled’ by that same quality of Glory, which is none other than the Spirit of God. Thus, when the term πλήρωμα is applied to the Church, it represents the indwelling divine Presence or Shekhina-Glory, by whom or which she has been filled. When applied to Christ, it indicates: first, his status as the one who, being enthroned in heaven—either alongside, or in the place of, the kavod—is filled with that divine Glory; and, second, his role as the source of the glorifying Spirit, which has filled—or, is in the process of filling—the Church and the individual members thereof. In this way, the Church becomes, by virtue of her ‘membership’ of Christ, the body of the Glory. Thus also Eph 4:4–6: ‘There is one body and one Spirit...one Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6one God and Father of all, Who is above (ἐπί) all and through (διά) all and in (ἐν) all. ’ Compare Eph 4:15–16:

But holding to truth in love, let us in every way grow up into him who is the head, Christ, from whom the whole body, being fitly joined together and united through every joint with which it is supplied, according to the working in measure (ἐν μέτρῳ) of each single part, promotes the body’s building up of itself in love.

86 Cf. the following remarks of Schnackenburg (Ephesians, 82): ‘God’s fullness has established itself in Christ in all its density and power, and through our connection with Christ we are drawn into this fullness so that we, too, are “filled” with God’s fullness and taken up into it.’
It seems not at all improbable that it was from this passage that Markos derived his notion of Ἐκκλησία as ‘the Body of Truth’.

The expression ‘in measure’ (Eph 4:16) is almost certainly an allusion to the esoteric doctrine of shiur koma.87 Another such allusion, emphasizing the inclusion of the Gentiles within this mystical ‘body,’ may perhaps be found in Eph 3:14–15: ‘I bend my knees to the Father, from Whom every ancestral race (πατρία) in the heavens and on earth is named.’ This language must surely contain an allusion to the Jewish concept of the ‘angels of the nations’88 We will recall that, in the shiur koma tradition, the Beloved Youth is said to give ‘of his splendor and his beauty’ to these same angels (SidRBer 24).89 This seems to imply that they, in turn, mediate these same qualities to their human charges, albeit in a lesser measure than that conferred upon Israel by the Youth. This notion is very comparable to the doctrine of mediated ‘filling’ by the divinely originated quality of Glory, as encountered in Ephesians.90

In Eph 2:10, the author speaks of the members of the Community as: ‘His masterpiece, created in Christ (ἐν Χριστῷ) for good works.’ The preposition ἐν reflects the Hebrew ב (‘in’, ‘by’ or ‘through’) and suggests that Christ is here identified, as in Col 1:15–20, with the רֵאשִׁית (‘beginning’ or ‘firstborn one’) who functioned as God’s agent in the creation of the world (Gen 1:1).91 Another—by no means incompatible—perspective on the preposition is offered by Chrys C. Caragounis, who believes that it expresses a central ‘mystery’ of the letter as a whole, namely, the

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87 Stroumsa (‘Form[s] of God,’ 287) argues that the Greek word μετὰ πον is the basis of the much-debated name Metatron, an etymology first suggested by Jellinek (‘Jüdische mystische,’ 410 n. 2 [Odeberg, 3 Enoch, 134 gives an incorrect reference]). In private correspondence, Michael Goulder pointed out to me that a common feature of divine/angelic names in the hekhalot literature is reduplication of one consonant of the noun-element (e.g., אדירה־אדיר, זוהר־ריאל, etc.; also perhaps אנדר־יריא, see p. 525, n. 114 above), and suggested that מיטטרון may be an example of the same formation, from מיתרון. Compare Rohrbacher-Sticker, ‘Die Namen Gottes,’ 121f. n. 119.

88 This rather obvious connection appears to have been ignored by most commentators (see, e.g., Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 146–148; Lincoln, Ephesians, 202–204; and the sources cited there).

89 See p. 521 above (section B, end).

90 Note, however, that Kirby (Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost, 133) finds a contrasting parallel in the Aleinu prayer: ‘He has not made us like other nations; He has not placed us like the families of the earth.’ Also found in the Aleinu are the words: ‘We bow our knees and offer worship and thanks before the King of Kings’ (see also p. 603 n. 112 below).

91 See further Burney, ‘Christ as the ’APXH’; Grant, Early Christian Doctrine, 51–53; and Fossum, Name, 315–318. Hurtado, One God, fails to appreciate the significance of the prepositions in 1 Cor 8:5–6.
participation of the Church and her members, through Christ, in the ‘atemporal’ sphere of God’s intentions and plans, which are now being realized ‘in Christ’ and, through him, in the life of the Church in the world.\textsuperscript{92} Caragounis comments:

The ἐν Χριστῷ concept… constitutes both the end and the means of God’s praise. Hence, Christ and His event are the concretization of God’s attributes (cf. Heb 1:3), i.e. of that which God wants to exalt and glorify, and at the same time, the means for that exaltation as well as the sphere in which the exaltation is effected.\textsuperscript{93}

The status of the Church and its members as a new Creation is also encountered in Eph 3:9–12:

9…the stewardship of the mystery that has been hidden from the ages in (ἐν) God, Who has created all things, \textsuperscript{99} so that, through (διὰ) the Church, the many-faceted Wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places, \textsuperscript{11} according to the eternal plan which He made in (ἐν) Christ Jesus our Lord, \textsuperscript{12} in (ἐν) whom we have access (to God) in boldness and confidence through (διὰ) his faith.

In this passage, Creation, Revelation and Redemption are treated as a single process, whose author is God Himself. In Eph 3:10, the Church occupies the role of agent (in this case, of revelation), which is an extension of the role of Christ (Eph 3:11), in and through whom the Community has access to God. Except for Eph 3:9, the prepositions signify both instrumentality and mediation.

In Eph 5:21–33, the author combines shiur koma teaching with imagery which reflects the central theme of the allegorical tradition associated with the Song of Songs.\textsuperscript{94} It should be noted that this exegetical tradition was in turn closely associated with the festival of Shavuot, which is described in rabbinic sources as the celebration of Israel’s wedding day.\textsuperscript{95} As we have seen, moreover, the Song of Songs itself was held by Akiva and others to have been uttered for the first time at Sinai.\textsuperscript{96} The author of Ephesians writes:

\textsuperscript{92} See Caragounis, Ephesian Mysterion, 136–139 and 152–157.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid. 139.
\textsuperscript{94} Compare Goulder, ‘Visionaries,’ 34–37.
\textsuperscript{95} See Kirby, Ephesians: Baptism and Pentecost, 99f., and the sources cited there.
\textsuperscript{96} See pp. 527 and 539–540 above. These Jewish traditions are much more likely to be the background to this passage than are the mystery religions or the Gnostic Sophia myth, as suggested by, e.g., Schlier, Der Brief, 264–276; and Fischer, Tendenz und Absicht, 181–200.
21...being submissive to one another in the fear of Christ, 22the wives to their own husbands as to the Lord, 23because a husband is head of the wife, just as Christ is head of the Church, the body of which he is the Savior...28so ought the husbands to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself, 29for no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as does Christ the Church, 30because we are members of his body. 31Because of this, a man will leave his father and mother and will be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh (Gen 2:24). 32This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the Church. 33Nonetheless, thus should you each as an individual love his wife as himself, and the wife should revere her husband.

Here the idea of the Church as ‘body’ is interwoven with that of the Community as ‘bride’. The passage also describes a ‘chain of mediation’ very like that which we have encountered in the shiur koma. The love between Christ and his Church is reflected—indeed, embodied—in that between the individual members of his holy Community. Again, we are reminded of Markos. Moreover, the relationship between the husband and the wife (whether on the larger or the smaller scale) is, like that between the self and the body, one of virtual identity. This is said to be ‘a great mystery’. This recalls the great mystery of the Name of the Youth, and its application by Markos in this context. The author of Ephesians may likewise be interpreting Gen 2:24 in terms of the first and the second ‘I AM’.

That the author of Ephesians—like Markos after him—has applied the mystery of this divine Name to the relationship between Christ and his Church was, in fact, recognized by no less an authority than Origen. As we have seen, Origen was familiar with Jewish exegesis of the Song of Songs and with the shiur koma, although he seems to have disapproved of the latter, at least, when understood in literal terms. Commenting on the opening words of the Epistle (Eph 1:1) according to a version which did not include the words ἐν Ἤφεσῳ, Origen explains that the expression: τοῖς ἁγίοις τοῖς οὖσιν (‘to the holy ones who are’) signifies that the πιστοῖς ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ (‘the believers in Jesus Christ’) have been intimately united with the divine ‘I AM,’ as follows:

Only in Ephesians do we find the phrase: “...to the holy ones who are.” We must ask what the phrase: “who are”—if it is not merely a redundant
addition to “the holy ones”—may mean. Consider, therefore, whether—just as, in Exodus, the One Who says to Moses the words: 'He Who Is' (Exod 3:14) is uttering His own Name—so those who participate in ‘the One Who Is’ become 'those who are,' being called, as it were, from ‘unbeing’ into 'being.’ ὁ ὁμοιόμενος ὅντας γίνονται ὄντες, καλοῦμενοι οἰνωνεὶ ἐκ τοῦ μη εἶναι εἰς τὸ εἶναι).\(^{100}\)

**Transformation**

The theme of spiritual transformation appears in Eph 4:23–24, where the writer instructs his readers: 'to be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and to put on the new man, created in conformity with (κατά) God in righteousness and sanctity of the truth.' The imagery of 'clothing' is also found in Eph 6:10–17, where the readers are enjoined to:

\(^{10}\) . . . be strong in the Lord, and in the strength of his power. \(^{11}\) Put on the whole armor of God, so that you may be able to withstand the schemes of the devil. . . . \(^{14}\) Stand, therefore, having girded your waist with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, \(^{15}\) and having shod your feet with the firm footing of the gospel of peace, \(^{16}\) with all these, having taken up the shield of faith, with which you will be able to quench all the flaming darts of the evil one. \(^{17}\) And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the spirit, which is the word of God.

It is widely recognized that this exhortation, the martial imagery of which has both biblical and post-biblical Jewish antecedents, may have originated in the baptismal-catechetical tradition.\(^{101}\) Martin Kitchen, in a penetrating analysis of this passage,\(^{102}\) has shown that it reflects the liturgical setting of the letter as a whole and that the warrior figure here described is, primarily, a 'corporate' image of the Church: ‘The man seen here in armour is the community of Christians at worship, where, in the sight of God, battle is waged with the forces of evil.’\(^{103}\) The image of the heavenly warrior may also be associated with the shiur koma tradition. The passage includes an allusion to Isa 59:17, which verse is cited by the

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\(^{100}\) Origen, Comm. in Eph. 1:1b, according to the fragmentary text preserved in a Paris manuscript, published by Gregg, 'Commentary of Origen,' 235; cf. Heine, *Commentaries of Origen*, 80.


\(^{103}\) *Ibid.* 126.
midrashim on the Song of Songs in the course of a detailed description of the armor worn by God when He appeared at the Red Sea to do battle with Pharaoh's army. As we have seen, this warrior figure was identified with the 'youthful' divine Hypostasis or, in some sources, the angelic Youth. According to an ancient Jewish exegetical tradition, the battle at the Sea—in which God appears on His merkava—is a cosmic image of divine victory over the forces of evil. Origen, in fact, cites Eph 6:16 in precisely this connection. The author of Ephesians clearly has the same scenario in mind when he says:

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmocrates of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places (Eph 6:12).

Although detailed discussion of the identities of the evil forces to which this passage refers would take us too far from the principal subject of this inquiry, it may be observed that their origins and background are almost certainly to be found in the apocalyptic-merkava traditions of 'Middle Judaism' rather than in Gnosticism or in hellenistic magic.

As we have seen, there is a good deal of evidence which suggests that the writer of this letter may have been deeply immersed in traditions related to the Jewish shiur koma. According to his teaching, however, the Gentiles are now incorporated into the messianic community. They have become 'fellow-heirs, members of the same body' (Eph 3:6). Thus also Eph 2:14–16:

14For he is our peace, who has, in (ἐν) his flesh, made the two one and broken down the middle wall of the partition, the hostility, 15having abolished the Law of the commandments (as expressed) in ordinances (τὸν νόμον τῶν ἐντολῶν ἐν δόγμασιν), that he might make (κτίσῃ, properly:

104 CantR 1,48 (Dunsky 39–40; Soncino Midrash 9.2: 68–70); AggShS 2,14 (Schechter, ll. 892–900).
105 See pp. 527 and 539–540 above and, further, Halperin Faces, 194–249. Consider also the baptismal hymn in Gospel of the Egyptians, NHC iv,2.78:10–80:13 = iii, 2.66:8–67:26 (Layton, Gnostic Scriptures, 118f.; partly quoted in Morray-Jones, 'Transformational Mysticism,' 28f.), where the initiate declares: ‘…I have girded myself and come to dwell in an armor of loveliness and light' (iii, 2.67:2; lacuna in iv). This hymn, like Ephesians, contains echoes of the shi'ur qomah: ‘…what being can comprehend you by speech or praise…I shall truly declare your praise, for I have comprehended you' (iii, 2.67:26 and 68:12–13).
106 Origen, Hom. in Exod, 5.5 (Borret 168f.).
107 See, esp., Caragounis, Ephesian Mysterion, 157–161. For a range of views on this issue, see the authorities cited in nn. 368, 371, 372, and 458 above; and see further Wink, Naming the Powers, esp. 82–96.
create) the two into one new man, making peace, \( \text{and that he might reconcile the two to God in (\( \varepsilon \varepsilon \nu \)) one body through (\( \delta \iota \alpha \)) the cross, having slain the enmity by means of (\( \varepsilon \varepsilon \nu \)) it.}

Here again, the prepositions \( \varepsilon \nu \) and \( \delta \iota \alpha \), reflecting the \( \beta \) of Gen. 1:1, are significant in that they indicate the creative-redemptive mediatorial agency of Christ. The Church is a both a new Creation and a resurrected body. As implied by the prepositions, Christ is the Beginning (\( \text{ ראש } \)) of that Creation, just as he is the Head (\( \text{ הראשית } \)) of that body.\(^{108}\) He has abolished 'the Law (= \( \text{ תורה } \)) of the commandments (= \( \text{ מצוות } \)) in ordinances (= \( \text{ גזרות } \)) which formerly divided one section of the body of humanity from the rest. This is also expressed by an allusion to the soreg, which in the Jerusalem temple, separated Jews from Gentiles ('the middle wall of the partition').\(^{109}\) Thus, the Gentiles are no longer excluded from the holy Community and its worship. This metaphor, which is developed in detail in the following verses, reflects the structural imagery of the merkava tradition, in which the motifs: body, temple, cosmos, and holy community are all complementary expressions of the same paradoxical and mystical reality.\(^{110}\) Thus, the Glory of the LORD, the Divine Image, is enthroned at the innermost centre, in the Holy of Holies of the body/temple/universe, but at the same time comprehends all things within Himself (Eph 2:21–22): '(Christ Jesus) in (\( \varepsilon \varepsilon \nu \)) whom the whole structure, fitly joined together, grows into a holy sanctuary in (\( \varepsilon \varepsilon \nu \)) the Lord, in (\( \varepsilon \varepsilon \nu \)) whom you also are being built together into a dwelling-place of God in (\( \varepsilon \varepsilon \nu \)) spirit.' The statement that 'the two' are made 'one' (Eph 2:14–16) applies the theme of 'messianic marriage' to the relationship 'in Christ' between Israel and the Gentiles.\(^{111}\)

\(^{108}\) Cf. Col 1:15–20 (see p. 597 n. 91 above).

\(^{109}\) See Goulder, 'Visionaries', 29–31. Some authorities (e.g., Lincoln, Ephesians, 141) deny this allusion and argue that the author is referring to the Pharisaic-rabbinic concept of the purity rules and other halakhic regulations as 'a fence around the Torah' (mAvot 1:1, etc.). This, however, is to miss the point that the author of Ephesians is using to the image of the soreg precisely as a symbol of those (as he sees them) exclusionary rules and practices; and, conversely, that the halakhic 'fence' of the rabbis is itself a symbolic extension of the temple soreg.

\(^{110}\) See ch. 12 above.

\(^{111}\) As observed by Rudolph (Gnosis, 245), the Gospel of Philip combines the image of the splitting of the veil of the Temple with the theme of marriage-union in a way which is very reminiscent of Ephesians (NHC ii, 3.69:14–70:22). In this source, the Holy of Holies is considered to be identical with 'the Bridal Chamber'. See pp. 574–575 above.
The ‘I AM THAT I AM’ relationship (the ‘mystery’) has thus been extended to the Gentiles.

The resurrection body of Christ is thus a new, transformed Creation. The worshipping Community, through ‘membership’ of that body, shares in that transformation and participates in his heavenly exaltation and enthronement: ‘(God) raised (us to be) with (Him) and seated (us) with (Him) in the heavenly places in (ἐν) Christ Jesus’ (Eph. 2:6). From this perspective, the redemptive transformation is an accomplished act: the lost ‘Glory of Adam’ has been restored. From the temporal perspective, however, this transformational process is described in terms of a gradual growth whose goal is final ‘glorification’ or, in other words, perfect conformity to the Image of God, as embodied in the heavenly Messiah (Eph 4:7–13):

7But to each one of us was given grace according to the measure (κατὰ τὸ μέτρον) of the gift of Christ, 8wherefore it is said: ‘Having ascended to the height, he led captivity captive; he gave gifts to men’ (Ps 68:19). Now what does ‘ascended’ mean, except that he also descended into the lower regions of the earth (τὸ δὲ ἀνέβη τί ἐστιν εἰ μὴ ὅτι καὶ [πρῶτον] κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη]? 10The one who has descended is himself the one who has ascended far above the heavens, so that he might fill all things. 11And he gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be shepherds, and some to be teachers, 12for the equipping of the holy ones for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, 13until we all arrive at the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God, at a man of complete maturity, at the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (εἰς μέτρον ήλικίας τοῦ πληρώματος τοῦ Χριστοῦ).

At the heart of this passage is an enigma that has long been the subject of intensive discussion by exegetes and scholars. What, exactly does the author of the letter mean when he speaks of Christ as ‘ascending’ and ‘descending,’ and how is this related to the biblical verse that he

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112 On the theme of sitting in Ephesians, and its mystical background, see Goulder, ‘Visionaries,’ 24–25. Kirby (Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost) observes a parallel to this verse in the Aleinu prayer: ‘The seat of His Glory is in the heavens above, and the dwelling of His Power in the uppermost height’ (cf. p. 597, n. 90 above).


114 MT Ps 68:19 = LXX Ps 67:19 = RSV Ps 68:18 (cited here and below in accordance with MT). See further below.

115 The two words given in square brackets are found only in some manuscripts. See further below.

116 See Lincoln, Ephesians, 242–248; and, above all, Harris, Descent of Christ, 1–63.
(mis-) quotes? Whereas the direction of ‘ascend’ is clearly heavenward, the destination implied by ‘descend’ is much less certain. According some commentators, this verb refers to Christ’s descent, at his death, into the underworld\textsuperscript{117} or, more simply, into the grave.\textsuperscript{118} Another, more widely held opinion is that it applies to Christ’s descent from heaven to earth at his incarnation.\textsuperscript{119} These interpretations all have one factor in common, namely, that they all understand the ‘descent’ to have taken place prior to Christ’s ‘ascent’ into heaven. This understanding of the matter is supported by those manuscripts which include the word πρῶτον before κατέβη,\textsuperscript{119} but this reading is itself an interpretative gloss.\textsuperscript{120} The additional word μέρη is better attested,\textsuperscript{121} but it does not decisively affect the outcome of this issue. Whether the word is omitted or included, τὰ κατώτερα [μέρη] τῆς γῆς may be read as a qualifying genitive: ‘the lower [regions] of—i.e. beneath—the earth,’ and this reading makes excellent sense if we understand that the reference is either to the underworld or to the grave. Those who believe that the passage refers to the incarnation, however, prefer to read τῆς γῆς as a genitive of apposition, meaning that ‘the lower [regions]’ are those below ‘the height,’ i.e., the earth itself.

It should be noted that these two theories are by no means necessarily incompatible with each other, since it is entirely possible that the author of this passage was thinking of Christ’s death as the consequence and culmination of his descent into human form. Such an understanding of the passage is supported by LXX Ps 138:7–15 (= MT Ps 139:7–15), the language of which is quite closely parallel to that of Eph 4:9–10 (compare Rom 10:5–8):\textsuperscript{123}

7 Where shall I depart from Your Spirit?
And where shall I flee from Your face?
8 If I ascend (ἀναβῶ) to heaven, You are there;
if I descend (κατάβω) to Hades,\textsuperscript{124} You are present….

\textsuperscript{117} E.g., Robinson, St. Paul’s Epistle, 180; Dunn, Christology in the Making, 186f.; and Tyrell Hanson, New Testament Interpretation, 135–150.
\textsuperscript{118} Büchsel, ‘κατώτερος’.
\textsuperscript{119} Thus, e.g., Percy, Die Probleme, 273f. n. 26; Schlier, Der Brief, 192f.; Barth, Ephesians 2: 432–434; Gnilka, Der Epheserbrief, 209; and Schnackenburg, Ephesians, 176–180.
\textsuperscript{120} See p. 603, n. 115 above.
\textsuperscript{121} For detailed discussion of this issue, see Harris, Descent, 32–40.
\textsuperscript{122} See Harris, ibid. 40–45.
\textsuperscript{123} To the best of my knowledge, the implications of this passage for our understanding of Eph 4:9–10 have been largely overlooked.
\textsuperscript{124} MT: שְׁאוֹל וְאַצִּיﬠָה ('if I make my bed in Sheol').
14 For You possessed my inward parts, O Lord;  
You assisted me in my mother’s womb….  
15 My frame was not hidden from You while I was being formed in secret;  
and my substance, in the innermost parts of the earth.  
(καὶ ἡ ὑπόστασις μου ἐν τοῖς κατωτάτοις τῆς γῆς)

It seems not improbable that that the author of Ephesians has identified Christ with the speaker of this passage, in which the expression: ‘the innermost parts of the earth’ is clearly a reference to the womb. The theme of divine Omnipresence in the Psalm closely resembles the motif of cosmic ‘filling’ in Ephesians. The Psalmist’s emphasis on God’s foreknowledge and protection of the speaker, from before his birth, is highly reminiscent of the teaching about predestination in Eph 1:4–5. Moreover, the final passage of the Psalm, which consists of a prayer for the defeat of ‘the wicked… the men of blood’ (Ps 138/9:19) calls to mind the recurring theme in Ephesians of cosmic war against the powers of evil. Thus, if we interpret Eph 4:9–10 against the background of this Psalm, the expression: κατέβη εἰς τὰ κατώτατα τῆς γῆς must refer, in the first instance, to Christ’s ‘descent’ into human form at his birth. Nonetheless, the passage also speaks of a descent into the underworld and of an ascent into heaven. It would seem that, according to the author of Ephesians, the speaker in the Psalm is none other than Christ who, having descended and ascended, is united with the One whose Presence fills all things.

Satisfying as this interpretation may be, however, a different dimension of meaning is suggested by the quotation of Ps 68:19. This verse, when paired with the one immediately before it (The chariots of God are twenty thousand and two thousand), is an important focus of exegetical traditions associated with Shavuot, in which Ezekiel’s merkava vision is linked to the Sinai theophany and Moses’ heavenly ascent. According to targumic and midrashic tradition, the subject of Ps 68:19 is, in fact, none other than Moses. These traditions, which are encountered in numerous rabbinic sources, also informed the LXX translation of these two verses and played an important role in the cultic cycle of the Qumran community.125 When Eph 4:7–13 is interpreted against

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125 See further Halperin, Merkabah, 132–133; idem, ‘Merkabah Midrash’; idem, ‘Origen’; idem, Faces, 57–58, 141–149, 316–317 and 331–345; Nitzan, ‘4QBerakhhot’; and see pp. 316–321 above. Specifically in connection with this passage of Ephesians, see Fishbane, ‘Measures’, 70f. See also the very detailed treatment of these traditions by
this background, it becomes evident that the role of Moses has been transferred to Christ, who, since he comes to ‘fill all things,’ is also in some sense united with the manifest Glory. This is consistent with the tradition of Moses’ heavenly enthronement, which the rabbinic writers were at pains to suppress, but which is preserved in the Exagoge of Ezekiel the Tragedian, where Moses is installed upon ‘a throne so great in size it touched the clouds of heaven,’126 in the works of Philo, and also in the Samaritan literature.127

In quoting Ps 68:19, the author of Ephesians has changed the verbs from the second to the third person and, more importantly, has changed ‘You received gifts from mankind’ (MT: בהמה מனתת וַיְנַקְּחָה; LXX: ἔλαβες δόµατα ἐν ἀνθρώπῳ) to ‘he gave gifts to men’ (ἔδωκεν δόµατα τοῖς ἀνθρώποις). A similar change is found in the targum to this verse, which reads in full:128

לָפֶלֶקֶת הָלָךְ עַמִּי וַיִּתְחַלֶּל לָהֶם אֲנָשָׁה פֵּטֵגְמִי אֶלְפַּתָּה שֵׂבֵי תָּא נְבֵי מֶשָּה לְרוֹקִיע סִלֵּיקָה נָשַׁא לְבַנֵי נְבֵי

You ascended to the firmament, O Moses the prophet; you led captivity captive; you learned the words of the Torah; you gave them as gifts to the sons of men.

It is probable almost to the point of certainty that the Targum has preserved a tradition which was also known to the author of Ephesians, and which he adapted by substituting Christ for the person of Moses, and by interpreting the ‘gifts given to men’ as, not the words of Torah, but the charismatic gifts of the Spirit to the members of his church (Eph 4:11–12).129 Thus, when the passage is interpreted in the light of the traditions about the ascent of Moses, there can be no doubt that this author had in mind Christ’s triumphant ascent to heaven, following

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126 Ezekiel the Tragedian, Exagogē, 68–69 (Robertson, OTP 2: 811).
128 Tg. Ps 68:19 (de Lagarde, Hagiographa Chaldaice, 38). For detailed analysis of all these versions, see Harris, Descent, 96–104.
129 See, e.g., Harris, ibid. 104.
his death and resurrection, and the subsequent descent of the Spirit to his Church at Pentecost.\footnote{Thus, for example: Caird, ‘Descent of Christ’; Kirby, Ephesians, Baptism and Pentecost, 145f.; Lincoln, Paradise Now, 155–163; idem, ‘Use of the OT’ (but see the following note); and Harris, Descent, 143–197.}

Our examination of this passage has shown that there are good grounds for interpreting it, in the light of Ps 138:7–15, as a reference to Christ’s ‘descent’ into incarnation and death, followed by his subsequent ascension. At the same time, however, we have found that motifs derived from the Jewish Shavuot-merkava tradition are here applied to Christ’s post-resurrection ascent and the subsequent descent of the gift-giving Pentecostal Spirit. Although these choices have usually been presented as mutually exclusive alternatives,\footnote{See, e.g., Lincoln, Ephesians, 247, who observes that the choice is a ‘difficult’ one.} we have already seen that the author of this passage may have more than one scenario in mind. If we interpret the passage against the background of the shiur koma, by placing Christ in a role analogous to that of the Beloved Youth, who presents the prayers of the people in heaven and mediates the divine Glory to them, then the Pentecostal model (ascent followed by descent) would appear to make more sense. On the other hand, however, we have found evidence in PrJos of a pre-Christian Jewish tradition according to which a Youth-like angelic representative of Israel had ‘come down to earth and tabernacled among men,’ and then, having overcome the opposition of a rival power, reascended to assume his rightful position of preeminence in heaven.\footnote{See pp. 560–563 above.} From the perspective of the author of Ephesians, moreover, the descent of the Spirit to the Church is the consequence of the whole process of Christ’s prior descent, unto death, from heaven, and his reascension thereto. A ‘three stage’ understanding of this passage—a descent, followed by an ascent, followed by a subsequent descent—is, therefore, by no means unreasonable.

Nonetheless, if we are forced to choose, the Pentecostal reading of this passage must, in the light of the evidence of the Epistle as a whole, be awarded primacy. The descent of the Spirit equips with gifts the Church and all the individual members thereof, who are to be built up as one body until they reach their common goal of ‘the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God’ (Eph 4:13). This knowledge has as its object ‘a man of complete maturity’ and ‘the measure of the stature
of the fullness of Christ’ (ibid.). The meaning of this expression appears to be unambiguous: the object of the ‘knowledge’ to which the Christian initiate aspires is, or includes, the shiur koma of Christ’s ‘fullness’. It also appears that the knower, both as individual and as community, is expected to attain an equivalent stature for himself. This is wholly consistent with the transformational mysticism of the merkava tradition and with the rabbinic tradition that the righteous will, in the world to come, recover not only Adam’s glory, but also his cosmic stature, both of which were drastically diminished by his sin.\(^\text{133}\)

The Jewish esoteric basis of the homily in Eph 4:7–13 has been recognized by Fishbane,\(^\text{134}\) who links ‘the measure of the stature’ (Eph 4:13) with the expression \textit{middat kavod} in SifDeut 355 and therefore interprets the homily against the background of the shiur koma.\(^\text{135}\)

\begin{quote}
The attainment of ‘the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ’ is thus a profound mystical achievement. Given this, along with the fact that this ‘stature’ is related to the spiritual body of Christ, I would interpret ‘the \textit{metron} of the stature of Christ’ as the teacher’s theological and terminological equivalent for the measure (or extent) of the divine Anthropos in Jewish sources—the \textit{middat kabod} in \textit{Sifre Deuteronomy} 355. On this view, Eph 4:7–16 presents Christ as the supernal Anthropos in the image of the invisible God, so that perfected faith in and knowledge of this heavenly figure lead to some sort of mystical relationship to the divine figure on high.
\end{quote}

\begin{quote}
The portrayal of the mystical body of Christ in Ephesians 4 thus provides more than a technical parallel with our midrash text [i.e., SifDeut 355]. It even suggests that the antiquity of ancient Jewish speculations on the divine Glory in heaven (and its anthropomorphic extensions, the \textit{Shi’ur Qomah} theosophy) antecedened the teacher’s theological transformation in the early church.\(^\text{136}\)
\end{quote}

Fishbane’s cautiously expressed conclusion is strongly confirmed by the analysis of Ephesians that has been presented in these pages. It is clear that the author of this letter espoused a mystical theology of redemption which, although unequivocally realised ‘in Christ,’ was deeply rooted in the transformational mysticism of the Jewish shiur koma. Indeed,

\begin{footnotes}
\item[133] See Morray-Jones, ‘Transformational Mysticism,’ 17.
\item[134] Fishbane, ‘Measures,’ 70–71.
\item[135] See pp. 548–558 above.
\item[136] Fishbane, ‘Measures,’ 71.
\end{footnotes}
the letter is so thoroughly saturated with shiur koma themes and ideas that to speak merely of ‘influence’ would be wholly inadequate. Rather, the above analysis has shown that the letter is an extended meditation on the doctrine of the Beloved Youth-messiah whose ‘ascended’ and ‘glorified’ Body is the New Creation. The ‘members’ of that body, the Community of the ‘holy ones,’ are participants in the ‘praise of the Glory,’ into Whom they are incorporated, and into the likeness of Whom they are mystically transformed.

**Summary of Conclusions**

In Chapter 15, we found that the central idea of shiur koma mysticism is the teaching that Israel’s worship manifests the Body of the Glory. The shiur koma tradition is pre-rabbinic in origin but has been extensively revised, in accordance with rabbinic theology, by the redactors of the texts and recensions that have come down to us. In the following chapter, we saw that the pre-rabbinic form of the tradition is the source of teachings encountered in Gnostic and Jewish sectarian sources going back to the first century BCE. The early tradition described two enthroned figures: the kavod or manifest appearance of the Holy One, and his Servant, the Youth-Messiah, who shared his Glory and his holy name, ‘I AM.’ The Youth, who was the leader of the celestial liturgy and the ‘embodiment’ of Israel’s praise, was identified with the male Beloved of the Song of Songs, whose ‘Bride’ was the Community of Israel. In rabbinic exegesis of the Song of Songs, the intermediary Youth-Messiah has been eliminated, but the earlier tradition has survived in Christian sources. Finally, the Christology and soteriology of Ephesians have been found to be deeply rooted in the ‘unreconstructed’ pre-rabbinic shiur koma. According to this text, the ‘body of Christ’ is the new Creation or messianic community, into which the Gentiles are admitted as full members.

We saw that in Markos’ system, the Servant-Messiah has assumed the role of the kavod, as the Word or manifest Image and Creative Agent of the formless Deity. This modification of the tradition can be traced back to the pre-Christian Magharians and is encountered in several early Christian sources, but it is not clear whether or to what extent it has influenced the author of Ephesians. It is probable that the two originally distinct traditions of the Logos-Angel and the Servant-Youth-
Messiah are in process of fusion in this and other early Christian texts. The rabbinic reformulation of the shiur koma was initiated during the late first or early second century CE, probably in response to the catastrophic consequences of imminent Messianism, and as a defensive reaction to these ‘heretical’ developments.
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Section II
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in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud


Section III
Jewish Traditions in Early Christian Literature


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