

*Daphna V. Arbel,  
Andrei A. Orlov (Eds.)*

# WITH LETTERS OF LIGHT

STUDIES IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS,  
EARLY JEWISH APOCALYPTICISM,  
MAGIC, AND MYSTICISM

IN HONOR OF RACHEL ELIOR

EKSTASIS

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With Letters of Light

באותיות של אור

Ekstasis

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Religious Experience  
from Antiquity to the Middle Ages

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Volume 2

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With Letters of Light

באותיות של אור

Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish  
Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism

in Honor of Rachel Elijor

רחל אליאור

Edited by

Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov

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## Rachel Elior – An Appreciation from her Colleagues and Students

DAPHNA ARBEL AND ANDREI ORLOV

In one of her recent books, *The Three Temples*, Professor Rachel Elior quotes the words of Thomas Mann at the beginning of his novel *Joseph and his Brothers*:

Very deep is the well of the past. Should we not call it bottomless? Bottomless indeed if – and perhaps only if – the past we mean is the past merely of the life of mankind, that riddling essence of which our own normally unsatisfied and quite abnormally wretched existences form a part; whose mystery, of course, includes our own and is the alpha and the omega of all our questions.

Without a doubt, the work of Professor Rachel Elior reclaims surviving works from the well of the past to explore the history of Jewish Mysticism, from its earliest manifestations up to the modern period. She constantly considers textual evidence, paying close attention to changing cultural contexts, attending to multiple voices and raising challenging questions related to the foundation and crystallization of Jewish mystical thought. This volume reflects the deep respect, gratitude, and appreciation of colleagues and students who share some of her wide ranging scholarly interests and areas of research related to the Dead Sea Scrolls, apocalypticism, magic, and mysticism.

Rachel Elior is the John and Golda Cohen Professor of Jewish Philosophy and Jewish Mystical Thought at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. She was born and raised in Jerusalem, and earned her Ph. D. *summa cum laude* in 1976 from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, where she has taught from 1978 until today. She has also served as a visiting professor and research scholar at many universities and institutions in the United States and Europe, including Princeton University, Tokyo University, Yeshiva University, Case Western University, Shalom Institute in the University of New South Wales in Sydney, the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, Oberlin College, and University College London. She has also been a research fellow at the Oxford Center for Jewish Studies in Oxford University.

For nearly thirty-five years Elijior's teaching and scholarship have inspired colleagues and students. She has investigated a wide range of texts, personalities, and periods, and has published numerous articles, edited books, and monographs which all investigate, sharply, insightfully, and in depth, critical questions related to both mystical phenomena and mystical traditions in diverse historical realities. It is difficult to capture in several sentences the breath, depth, and significance of Elijior's work. What is characteristic of her studies is her extensive knowledge of literature from antiquity to the modern period, her detailed textual investigation, her innovative perspectives, and her ability to shed new light on complex historical, conceptual, and textual issues, extending our vision to see, both in and through the texts, what might otherwise remain obscured.

Demonstrating erudition and versatility, Rachel Elijior's work has contributed to the exploration of several areas of scholarship. One of them is the crystallization of early Jewish mysticism. In 1982 Elijior published a critical edition of the *Hekhalot Zutarti* ("The Lesser Palaces") – one of the crucial textual evidences pertaining to the Hekhalot tradition. She has further probed the Hekhalot and Merkavah literature in relation to the Dead Sea Scrolls and other sources, opened up these texts to fresh insights, and considered new possibilities related to both the origin and the nature of early Jewish mysticism. In particular, Elijior has investigated traditions related to the Temple, priests, and priestly worship that were transformed from historical realities to heavenly visionary ideals. She has examined the textual evidence of these traditions in apocalyptic and early mystical literature, including the book of Ezekiel, the books of Enoch, Jubilees, and the Dead Sea Scrolls, and has explored the historical context and social circumstances that may have contributed to their survival.

In her recent studies, Elijior has challenged and reassessed the predominant opinion of scholars that the Essenes wrote the Dead Sea scrolls in Qumran. She has investigated the scrolls with a new set of questions, asserting instead that they demonstrate profound priestly interest and distinct priestly language, and were probably written "in clear Hebrew" by ousted Zadokite Temple priests in Jerusalem. The fruits of her investigation of the crystallization and nature of early Jewish mysticism have been published in important articles in Hebrew and English, as well as in several major books including *Temple and Chariots, Priests and Angels, Sanctum and Shrines in Early Jewish Mysticism* (2002, Hebrew), translated into English as *The Three Temples, On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (2004); *Hekhalot Litera-*

*ture and the Merkavah Tradition: The Theory of Early Mysticism and its Origins* (2004, Hebrew); as well as *Memory and Oblivion, The Secret of the Judaean Desert Scrolls* (2009, Hebrew). Rachel Elior's historical, contextualized analysis, and the discerning insights she has promoted, not only paved challenging paths and grappled anew with uncertainties related to the formation of early Jewish mysticism, but also raised stimulating questions that have since established the basis for an ongoing active and rich, burgeoning scholarly dialogue that has flourished in recent years.

Professor Rachel Elior has also devoted important studies to the exploration of some of the most complex and sophisticated variants of kabbalistic traditions that developed in the context of the Jewish Expulsion from Spain and later in Safed, in the writing of Joseph Karo (1488-1575) and Isaac Luria (1534-1572). In addition, Elior has investigated the presence and impact of kabbalistic traditions in the Sabbatean and Frankist movements between 1492 and 1800, exploring diverse literary genres and paying attention to changing historical circumstances. These investigations have been presented in several significant publications, including a critical edition of *Galia Raza* (1981), as well as in several edited volumes: *Lurianic Kabbalah* (edited with Yehuda Liebes, 1992, Hebrew); *The Dream and its Interpretation: The Sabbatean Movement and Its Aftermath: Messianism, Sabbatianism, and Frankism* (2001, Hebrew & English); and an edition of the Krakow manuscript, *Jacob Frank: The Sayings of the Lord* (1997, Hebrew).

The Hasidic phenomenon as expressed in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup>, and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, as well as its relationship to the Jewish mystical tradition, is another focus of Professor Elior's scholarship. She has made crucial contributions to issues related to the theology, mystical ideology, and social-historical contexts of the Hasidic movement in several generations, considering debated questions of primary importance, for example, the origin of the movement, the later development of Hasidism after its formative period, its spiritual and social contexts, its vitality and persistence through the centuries, and the place of Hasidism in the Jewish world. Her first study, *The Theory of Divinity of Hasidut Habad – Second Generation* (1982, Hebrew), made a vital contribution to the understanding of the later development of Hasidism after its formative period. Subsequent studies further developed comprehensive and detailed inquiries into Hasidism throughout its history. These were published in her *Unity of Opposites, The Mystical Theosophy of Habad* (1992, Hebrew), translated to English as *The Paradoxical Ascent to God: The Kabbalistic Theosophy of Habad Hasidism* (1993); *Freedom on the Tablets, The Mystical Origins and Kabbalistic Foun-*

*dations of Hasidic Thought* (2000, Hebrew); and *The Mystical Origins of Hasidism* (2006). With Israel Bartal and Chone Shmeruk, Elior also edited a volume devoted to *Studies in Polish Hasidism* (1996, Hebrew).

Combining literary sensitivity and phenomenological insights, Rachel Elior has drawn on her vast knowledge of Jewish mystical thought from antiquity to the twentieth century to develop an innovative study related to the existential meaning of the mystical phenomenon. In her *Jewish Mysticism: The Infinite Expression of Freedom* (2007), which appeared in Hebrew, English, and Spanish, Elior has illuminated central features related to the phenomena of mysticism, including both mystical experiences and traditions. She has promoted innovative and bold observations about the relation between mysticism and freedom, considering the phenomenon of mysticism as a liberating, mind-expanding force that has enabled individuals to transcend limiting social and historical boundaries in the context of various stages in Jewish history.

Rachel Elior has also explored how religious traditions have shaped the lives of women in Jewish communities throughout the ages. She has focused on critical religio-cultural issues related to the absence of women's voices in the Jewish written tradition, women in Jewish law and literature, and the repression of Jewish women in patriarchal societies past and present. In her thoughtful essay "'Present but Absent,' 'Still Life,' and 'A Pretty Maiden who has No Eyes': On the presence and absence of women in the Hebrew Language, in Jewish Culture and in Israeli life" (2001), she has investigated the heritage of past Jewish traditions, confronted present attitudes to women in Jewish societies, and suggested alternative outlooks for the future. In *Dybbuks and Jewish Women in Social History, Mysticism, and Folklore*, (2008), she has examined the phenomenon of the *Dybbuk* (the possession of a living body by the soul of a deceased person) in the context of the history of women's oppression in patriarchal systems, both within the Jewish tradition and throughout other cultures. Her edited volume *Men and Women: Gender, Judaism and Democracy* (2004) includes various discussions of gender that are particularly significant in the socio-legal and religious status of women in Israel.

For her outstanding and prolific contributions to the study of Judaism and Jewish mysticism, Professor Elior has been awarded a number of prestigious prizes, among them the Friedenberg Award of Excellence of the Israel National Academy of Sciences and Humanities, the Beracha-Yigal Alon Prize for Academic Excellence, the AVI Fellowship – Geneva, the Warburg Prize, Federman Foundation, State University of New York Research Foundation, The Littauer

Fund, Oxford Jerusalem Trust Visiting Fellowship, Wolfson Foundation, and Memorial Foundation for Jewish Studies Fellowship. In 2006, the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities awarded her the esteemed Gershom Scholem Prize for research in Kabbalah.

The contributions of Rachel Elior have extended beyond the academic world, creating a link between Jewish history and Israel's cultural life. Aiming to share her research with a larger group of interested and informed audiences, Professor Elior has published several studies in the framework of the "Broadcast University," as well as in a series of articles in the multidisciplinary Hebrew cultural-literary journal *Alpayim*. In her capacity as a senior fellow of the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, the leading intellectual center for interdisciplinary study in Israel, Elior is playing a central role towards the goal of enhancing and deepening Israeli democracy and gender equality. She is also an advisor to the president of the Hebrew University on the status of women, promoting the gender equality of its academic faculty and staff.

With generosity and thoughtfulness, Rachel Elior has constantly inspired and assisted colleagues, peers, and juniors; she encourages all, always ready to help regardless of rank or status. She never tires of sharing insights or discussing ideas and new perspectives, encouraging an ongoing conversation not only with the past but also with present scholars. The essays in this volume stand as a testimony. They are written by colleagues and students from universities around the world, and treat topics related to fields that Rachel Elior has contributed to in one way or another.

In a recent communication, Rachel Elior reflected upon the passing time and wrote: "I raised three children, read many books, wrote and edited many books and articles, as well as guided and guiding a nice number of doctoral dissertations. So I am pleased. The only thing I want is more of the same – happy family life, creative intellectual life, and more time to read." The contributors of this volume express their esteem and affection, and enthusiastically join these wishes.

# The Consideration of Religious Experience in the Work of Rachel Elijor

FRANCES FLANNERY

In recent decades two main approaches to the scholarly study of Jewish mysticism have prevailed. One approach limits discussion to what is available in the text, because – as the maxim goes – “all we have is the text.” This approach maintains that it is impossible to know whether texts with ascents to the *Hekhalot*, apocalyptic dreams, or angelic adjurations are simply literary fictions, or whether mystical practices lie behind them. The presupposition is that the subjective experiences of the author (or of anyone else for that matter) are always unknowable, and therefore the safest route is to “stick to the text.” Curiously, scholars who have advocated this approach often use literary-critical methods along with historical criticism (although history is constructed through subjectively selected memory)<sup>1</sup> or social criticism (which depends on discerning the self-identity of members of a culture). The other scholarly approach understands the mystical text as an expression – in symbolic, enigmatic, and culturally conditioned forms – of the mystic’s original experiences. Academics on this path not only probe the mystical language and worldview articulated in texts, they go beyond texts to ask questions about the mystics who produce them.<sup>2</sup> Rachel Elijor has consistently exemplified this latter understanding of the study of Jewish mysticism, and thus is it fitting that her Festschrift appear here in the *Ekstasis* series dedicated to the study of religious experience. With genuine sensitivity to biography and also to the real people who produce texts, Elijor’s widely ranging works have attended to the nuances of religious experience in multiple ways.

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<sup>1</sup> See Halbwachs 1950 [1980]; Halbwachs 1992; Assmann 1992; Kirk – Thatcher 2005.

<sup>2</sup> This has increasingly been the approach of scholars in the Early Jewish and Early Christian Mysticism Group of the Society of Biblical Literature, see DeConick 2006a; and the Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Early Christianity Section of the SBL, see Flannery – Shantz – Werline 2008. For a brief account of the rise of the study of religious experience in biblical studies see Flannery, “Introduction: Religious Experience, Past and Present,” in Flannery – Shantz – Werline 2008: 1-10.

First, Elijor grasps that in order to really understand what the texts are saying we readers must attune ourselves to an entirely different experience of the world. That is, scholars might be able to reframe what the authors are stating, but can we really hear them? To do so, we must go beyond the recognition that an historical and cultural gulf lies between the mystical authors and the scholars who analyze them. Instead, we must take an imaginative leap into the mystical mindset and accept that reality is relative. Elijor has pointed the way in which we can do so, insofar as it is possible, and she does this perhaps most of all in her work *Jewish Mysticism: The Infinite Expression of Freedom*:

*Mystical experience* is the seedbed of the recognition of many voices in the human spirit, the discovery of opposites, multiplicities, and different identities within one psyche at one and the same time. It also underlies the awareness of the capability of consciousness and creative imagination to break through the boundaries of conventional limitations of time and space. *Mystical experience*, which involves inspiration of idiosyncratic observation and imaginative interpretation, is the origin of the recognition of the profound linkage between the human psyche and the secrets of the divine being and of the complex relations between the inner dimensions of man and outer reality. The awareness of the relativity of concepts to place and time, the changing conceptions of God and man, the place of dreams and thoughts in an associative sequence, the freedom to create, and the absence of an unequivocal authority can also be traced to *mystical experience*. (Italics added, Elijor 2007: 102)

This excerpt speaks volumes about her work. While she of course is adept at explaining the history of the emergence of Jewish mysticism (*The Three Temples*), and the logic behind mystical systems such as the *sefirot*, the tradition of ineffable names, and “magical language” or the deconstruction of language (unification, *yichud*), Elijor stands out amongst many of her contemporaries in her ability to probe *mystical experience*. Somehow, she seems to be able to speak from the inside of it, understanding it as the “seedbed,” that which “underlies” other awareness, the “origin,” that is, the starting point from which the mystic constructs the rest of his / her reality. Consider, even in the short excerpt above, her capacity to articulate the mystic’s experience in the connections she makes between the experiential phenomena and: theological plurality, shifting self-identities, the relativity of reality, mystical creativity, atemporality and aspatiality, imagination, dreams, associative thought, irrational speech, antinomianism, anti-authoritarianism, micro- and macro-cosmic perceptions of reality, anthropomorphized reality, and mystical expansiveness! Each of



these subjects could be, and have been, analyzed in a strictly cognitive fashion; yet if the crucial wellspring of religious experience is missed, then the linkages between these subjects become invisible.

Second, Elijah is able in part to speak out of this mystical viewpoint so well by carefully attending to any and all articulations of the mystical experiences imbedded in the texts. Along with outlining the content of their mystical revelations, mystics also often describe their bodily, spiritual, mental, and emotional transformations. Like Ezra in *4 Ezra*, they do not find theology compelling because of rational and measured argumentation, but rather because of pivotal and transformative experiences (such as Ezra's visionary tour of the heavenly *hekhal*) that present a new theology as completely undeniable and persuasive. She has often examined the mystics' experience (e. g. see "Rabi yosef karo verabi yisra'el ba'al shem tov: metamorfozah mistit, hashra'ah kabalit vehafnamah ruchanit"). Beyond interpretation, Elijah also lets the mystics speak for themselves, and she will often quote autobiographical passages at length, such as the Besht's words in a private letter, about which she states: "These words explain the essence of the self-observation of the mystic who ascends through his spirit from the earthly to the heavenly..." (Elijah 2007: 69). The point is, she is *interested* and attentive to listening to the mystics' self-description of religious experience, and not all scholars are.

The third way in which Elijah's work addresses religious experience is that she consistently asks *why* mystics experience reality in the way that they do. In getting at the formative influences on mystical experience, she adeptly moves along multiple sites for the analysis of religious experience: social, spiritual, symbolic, gendered, and interpersonal. For instance, she investigates the religious experience of possession by a dybbuk on many of these levels (Elijah 2008). She first explains that the doctrine of transmigration itself gained impetus from the profound social experience occasioned by exile and dislocation after the expulsion from Spain (Elijah 2008: 95-97). She also describes the mystical experience of dybbuk possession in its spiritual terms, as a linkage to unseen worlds and therefore an experiential binding of the world of the dead and earth, the divine realm and the material realm of the husks (Elijah 2008: 97). On yet another level of analysis, Elijah explores the symbolic level of the dybbuk as a "model of identity" expressing the religious, culturally constructed experience of impurity associated "the other Side" and with women, who are the dybbuk's typical victims (Elijah 2008: 98).

Elijah also completely grasps the fact that the preponderance of women as the hosts of the dybbuks is a deep expression of female

powerlessness in Judaism and Jewish society: the dybbuk is itself a woman's sphere of the individualized experience of collective oppression. She is able to speak from this gendered-based level of the analysis of religious experience, which mostly references a silent record, with extraordinary sensitivity to the interpersonal and personal realms (Elijor 2008: 9-10):

The victim's implicit story pertains to anxiety over undesired matches, compelled marriages, rape, incest, or bodily or psychological compulsion of the weak by the strong. Such instances of compulsion, tied to multi-layered physical and symbolic feelings of powerlessness, speechlessness and the associated anxiety, generate reactions that are expressed through a loss of control over body and soul, bound up in a dramatic alteration of consciousness termed a "dybbuk." (Elijor 2008: 65)

In her wide-ranging analysis, Elijor is able to listen to the silenced female voice by recognizing that language itself is the inculturation of gendered societal norms. For example, she notices that in the narrative traditions of the act of the dybbuk's adherence to a person, usually female, the dybbuk penetrates through the genitalia in a manner analogous to rape (Elijor 2008: 66). She relates the personal and social pain associated with this invasion by noting that the dybbuk is described in terms of "impregnation," *ibbur*.<sup>3</sup> In other words, her scholarship begins to unveil the social, personal, spiritual, emotional, and interpersonal experiences of real people, realizing that it is these conditions that prepare them for the mystical experiences that subsequently give rise to the texts we study. Such scholarship simply cannot be accomplished without empathy for the humanity that underpins the mystical phenomena and production of mystical texts.

There is a fourth manner I can discern in which Elijor's works attend to religious experience, namely, that she also pays attention to the subsequent *impact* that mystical experiences make in the personal and social lives of the mystics. Mystical experience and its ensuing theology are watershed events that reshape self and social identity, as she often notes, bringing the mystic absolute freedom from convention, tradition, past theology, and known reality (e. g. Elijor 2007:100-101). However, these paradigm shifts in the construction of society and reality also occasion severe responses from others

<sup>3</sup> I should note that Elijor is also aware of the male experience of women as much as she is of women's experience, as in her example of the rabbinic use of *kever* to mean "grave" or "womb" (Elijor 2008: 69), relating the ambiguous hesitancy with which the rabbis regarded women's power to produce new life.

who fear change, and thus Elijor also describes the accusations of lunacy, imprisonments, marginalization, persecutions, and murders of so many mystics (Elijor 2007: 93-97). Again, their real sufferings are of interest to her.

Finally, the chronological range of religious experience that Elijor addresses is also worthy of note. Like Scholem before her, Elijor does not restrict her analyses to the traditional corpus of Jewish mystical texts, but easily ranges between the Hebrew Bible, the Dead Sea Scrolls, apocrypha, Pseudepigrapha, and *Hekhalot* corpus (*Three Temples, Jewish Mysticism*), and medieval and early modern mystics (e. g. *Jewish Mysticism*, "Reality in the Test of Fiction," "The Struggle for the Status of Kabbalah in the sixteenth Century," "R. Nathan Adler and the Frankfurter Pietists"). She also adds folkloric material transmitted through a modern play by S. Ansky, "Between Two Worlds (The Dybbuk)" in *Dybbuks* (111-125). Not only is this breadth remarkable in terms of Elijor's facility of scholarship, but in terms of the analysis of religious experience it is a groundbreaking recovery of silent voices over millennia of Jewish experience.

Elijor's repeated emphasis on religious and mystical experience is a grounding center from which her work emanates. As her work progresses, it seems that this emphasis is more and more clear: her 2007 work on *Jewish Mysticism* uses the words "experience" or "experiential" in mystical, spiritual, personal or social contexts nearly fifty times in the opening chapter alone! The contents of this birthday celebration Festschrift are by some of those whose perceptions have been enriched by Rachel Elijor's bravery and strength. I choose these words because it takes bravery to dive into the enigmatic, poetic, associative, subjective world of liminality and mystical experience, and serious strength to surface again with detailed scholarship explaining the matter with clarity, as she has done.

## I. EXEGESIS



# Peter and the Patriarch: A Confluence of Traditions?

KELLEY COBLENTZ BAUTCH

It is my great pleasure to celebrate Prof. Elior and her work. Prof. Elior has inspired many of us through her scholarship and mentoring to delve deep into sources and ask fresh questions of texts and traditions. In light of Prof. Elior's research that seeks to recover aspects of ancient texts and traditions forgotten or obscured with the passage of time, I investigate in this essay the commonalities to be observed in Enochic and Petrine literature, and what such shared features might suggest about the origins of the latter.

## 1. Enoch and Peter: a Connection?

The so-called Jesus movement and early Christianity are examined rightly now within the context of Second Temple Judaism; concomitantly New Testament students are well acquainted with Ernst Käsemann's famous dictum that "apocalyptic was the mother of all Christian theology."<sup>1</sup> It should not be a surprise, therefore, to scholars that Christian literature would evidence familiarity with Jewish apocalyptic literature. While apocalyptic literature flourished from the second century B. C. E. to first century C. E., its origins precede this period. Whether we approach apocalyptic literature as indebted to wisdom literature,<sup>2</sup> prophetic circles,<sup>3</sup> influences outside of Israel,<sup>4</sup> or some combination of these, its roots are best sought and observed in works like the *Book of the Watchers* (1 En. 1-36). The *Book of the Watchers* is one of many texts attributed to Enoch, a patriarch familiar from Genesis 5. Manifesting generic traits and classical aspects of apocalyptic literature such as dualism and a focus on the end of one age and beginning of the new brought about by the intervention of the divine, the *Book of the Watchers* seems to have influenced texts accorded canonical status such as Daniel.

<sup>1</sup> Käsemann 1969: 102.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, von Rad 1972:263-283 and von Rad 1962, 1965, 2:301-315.

<sup>3</sup> Thus Hanson 1975.

<sup>4</sup> E. g. Müller 1972: 268-293 or Kvanvig 1988.

While apocalyptic texts attributed to Enoch and traditions associated with him did not flourish in emerging rabbinic circles outside of *merkabah* and *hekhlot* literature, early Christians seem to have cherished and preserved traditions related to the patriarch for some time.<sup>5</sup> Surveys of early Christian literature make obvious the popularity of Enoch.<sup>6</sup> Though not univocal in their response to these traditions – Augustine, for instance, rejects the notion of angels mating with women in the Enochic parallel to Gen 6:1-4 and considers much of the literature to be fable – many Christians in the first four centuries of the Common Era regarded early Enochic literature as authoritative. Moreover, from Justin Martyr to Clement of Alexandria, Christians recalled the story of the angels' descent and mating of women and understood Enoch as an important witness to the end of the age and the Parousia. The evidence suggests that Christian employment of the fallen angel myth, so prominent in Enochic traditions, was attested throughout the Roman world and in all leading centers of the church.<sup>7</sup>

At the same time, a more particular point of contact has been suggested. While scholars of Jude and 2 Peter often note that these show familiarity with early Enochic traditions, George Nickelsburg calls attention to other texts associated with Peter that seem to invoke motifs particular to Enochic literature.<sup>8</sup> Nickelsburg first observed correspondences in scenes of commissioning and in the common geographical setting, the upper Galilee, favored by these “call narratives” involving Enoch, Levi and Peter. The *Book of the Watchers* (1 En. 12-16), the *Testament of Levi* (2-7), and the Gospel of Matthew (16:13-19) present the patriarchs and apostle in the environs of Mount Hermon and Caesarea Philippi (Bania) where they all are in some sense commissioned to serve a community.<sup>9</sup> The commissioning is related to revelatory experiences and the works feature concomitant critiques of the Jerusalem priesthood even while seeming to promote their protagonists as “priestly” in some manner.<sup>10</sup>

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Rachel Elijor who extensively treats rabbinic rejection of Enochic traditions (Elijor 2004b: 201-231). Elijor understands Enochic traditions to emerge from Zadokite priests and argues that these have a theological perspective ultimately at odds with that of sages, forerunners of rabbinic Judaism.

<sup>6</sup> See Lawlor 1897: 164-225 and VanderKam – Adler 1996: 33-101.

<sup>7</sup> VanderKam – Adler 1996: 87.

<sup>8</sup> Nickelsburg 1981: 575-600 and Nickelsburg 2001: 86, 103-104.

<sup>9</sup> Nickelsburg 1981: 582-599.

<sup>10</sup> Nickelsburg 1981: 586-587, 595.

Other instances of Enochic and Petrine traditions intersecting also emerge. The imprisoned spirits of 1 Peter 3:19-20 were most probably understood as the disobedient angels with whom Enoch communicates, though the Petrine text replaces the patriarch with Jesus.<sup>11</sup> Second Peter 2:4-5 also refers to the punishment of the rebel angels.<sup>12</sup> Later apocryphal texts, the *Gospel of Peter* and the *Apocalypse of Peter*, were found in an Akhmîm manuscript along with 1 Enoch 1-32; the apocalypse in particular shared with the *Book of the Watchers* descriptions of visits to places of punishment.<sup>13</sup>

Revisiting the topic of commonalities in his commentary on 1 Enoch, Nickelsburg suggested that Peter's vision in Acts 10 was comparable to that of Enoch in the *Book of Dreams* (1 En. 85-90; also known as the *Animal Apocalypse*). Just as Enoch's vision recounts history zoomorphically, Peter's concerns clean and unclean animals symbolizing people.<sup>14</sup> Similarly, 1 Pet 5:2-4's imagery of the shepherd and the sheep, which occurs likewise in Jesus' conversation with Peter in John 21:15-19, are reminiscent of the Enochic *Animal Apocalypse* in which sheep symbolize the people of Israel and shepherds represent their leaders (see, for example, 1 En. 85:13 and 89:59-64). Not unlike the *Book of the Watchers*, which has the deluge purifying the earth from its uncleanness, 1 Peter calls attention to the flood which prefigures baptism (1 En. 10:21 and 1 Pet 3:21). Moreover, 1 Pet 3:3 seems to condemn beauty practices associated with women and adornment, a stance that may lie behind 1 En. 8:1.<sup>15</sup>

Thus, Nickelsburg concludes, "The cumulative evidence, unless coincidental, indicates that Enochic traditions were known in Petrine circles."<sup>16</sup> Moreover, he presents this challenge to scholars: "It remains at present a mystery just how the various Petrine traditions relate to the Enochic texts and how both of these groups of texts relate to other Jewish and early Christian texts... The puzzle calls for closer study."<sup>17</sup> Do Petrine texts indeed suggest a special familiarity with Enochic lore? If so, we would know more about the transmission and preservation of Enochic literature among early Christians as well as more about a distinctive community which was bound in some manner to one of Jesus' most prominent

<sup>11</sup> Nickelsburg 1981: 599.

<sup>12</sup> Nickelsburg 1981: 600.

<sup>13</sup> Nickelsburg 1981: 600.

<sup>14</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 103.

<sup>15</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 86.

<sup>16</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 104.

<sup>17</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 560.



apostles. The notion is particularly interesting because, given the diverse forms of Judaism in the Second Temple period, an intersection of Enochic and Petrine traditions could provide insight into the background of some in the early Jesus movement. In light of these potential gains and the impressive list assembled by Nickelsburg of shared interests in Enochic and Petrine traditions, the thesis merits further examination.

## 2. Clarifying Enochic and Petrine traditions

Engaging the thesis requires some refinement of terms, however. Before speculating about a possible relationship or point of connection between Enochic and Petrine traditions, one must define what one means by these respective traditions. Unhappily, it is not possible to demonstrate the existence of *an* Enochic or Petrine corpus, *an* Enochic or Petrine tradition, or *an* Enochic or Petrine school. We begin by examining the literature associated with Enoch, which resists ultimately being situated within a single tradition, and then turn to a similarly inchoate picture of the Petrine literature.

First, and most notably, the texts affiliated with Enoch span hundreds of years; these have been preserved in a variety of languages and by diverse communities and bear out the very different contexts and concerns of their authors and redactors. This is easily observed in the distinctive collections, *1, 2, and 3 Enoch*. *1 Enoch*, for example, is also known as the *Ethiopic Book of Enoch* because this anthology has been preserved in Ge'ez among Ethiopian Christians. As Nickelsburg observes, "a thousand years separates the fourth- to sixth-century translation of *1 Enoch* from our earliest extant MSS of the translation."<sup>18</sup> This corpus, portions of which are extant in both Aramaic, the likely language of composition, and Greek, upon which the Ge'ez was based, consists of distinct booklets that range in date of composition from the third (or fourth) century B. C. E. to the first century B. C. E. or C. E. The booklets demonstrate not only that there were multiple authors behind Enochic literature but also that these often had distinctive theological positions or views that sought to rehabilitate earlier traditions.<sup>19</sup>

The absence of the *Book of Parables* (= *1 Enoch* 37-71) at Qumran has encouraged also more cautious speculation about the possibility

<sup>18</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 16.

<sup>19</sup> Nickelsburg, 2007: 262-265.

and/or shape of an early Enochic corpus.<sup>20</sup> The complex nature and history of *1 Enoch* militates against claims of a singular Enochic tradition, let alone an Enochic corpus. While some early Enochic texts may have circulated together, one cannot speak with confidence of a single ancient corpus or of the shape of a hypothesized corpus.<sup>21</sup> *Second Enoch*, preserved in Slavonic with portions extant in Coptic as well, and *3 Enoch*, preserved in Hebrew, speak also to the distinctive trajectories of Enochic traditions. To further complicate matters there are a number of texts, both Jewish and Christian, outside of these pseudepigraphal collections, that employ Enochic traditions. From the *Book of the Giants* and *Genesis Apocryphon* to the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies*, Enoch and themes seemingly rooted in early Enoch literature are prevalent in very different contexts and further challenge the view of a single community or school.

The diversity and number of texts and traditions associated with Enoch are comparable to those associated with Peter. While Peter and the first apostles in general seem to have had historical ties with certain communities and to have generated rich legacies among these, it is difficult to extrapolate from the variety of texts associated with the apostle a Petrine tradition or circle.<sup>22</sup> The texts associated with Peter that provide interesting parallels with Enochic literature include 1 Peter, 2 Peter, the *Gospel of Peter*, the *Apocalypse of Peter*, and the *Pseudo-Clementine Homilies* and *Recognitions*; these works cannot easily be associated with one particular provenance, and there is as yet no substantial evidence that the texts circulated as part of a Petrine collection.<sup>23</sup> Furthermore, as scholars such as PHEME PERKINS or Terence Smith have demonstrated, the figure of Peter was employed by a variety of Christian communities in order to lend authority to or

<sup>20</sup> The scholarly consensus does not favor J. T. Milik's hypothesized Enochic Pentateuch (see with the collaboration of M. Black in: Milik 1976: 58) in which the *Book of the Giants* stood in place of the *Book of the Parables*. See, for example, Greenfield – Stone 1977: 51-65 and Nickelsburg 1978: 411-419.

<sup>21</sup> See, for example, Chesnutt n. d.

<sup>22</sup> On early Christian communities, such as in Antioch or Rome, recalling an association with Peter, see, for example, Brown 1984 and Brown – Meier 1983: 68-70, 85, 132.

<sup>23</sup> See Smith 1985: 61-64 and Perkins 2000: 126. On Petrine traditions, Smith 1985: 64 concludes: "The lack of sufficient evidence concerning the existence of a second century Petrine school or group of followers intent on preserving Petrine traditions means that we are unable to answer some of the fascinating questions which we would like to put with regard to such a group. Did there ever exist a corpus of Petrine writings similar to the Pauline or Johannine corpuses? ...What historical relationship existed between the historical Peter and the Petrine school?"

bolster a particular theology.<sup>24</sup> Thus, as in the case of Enochic traditions, one might not speak of a single trajectory associated with the apostle Peter, but instead recognize that this hero of the faith was claimed in different circles to different ends.<sup>25</sup>

Lacking distinctive corpora, static traditions, or single communities that coalesce around these figures, on what basis, then, could one conduct such an investigation? Despite the fact that Enochic texts are products of varying provenances and multiple authors, shared features led some ancient audiences to associate discrete texts with one another (thus, the anthology, *1 Enoch*). In addition to the pseudepigraphical attribution to the seventh patriarch, Enoch is consistently presented in a number of texts as a seer or visionary, as a spokesperson of God and as a scribe of righteousness who, following the intimations of Gen 5:24, walks with or is in the presences of the angels. Common to early Enochic works as well are apocalyptic themes typically keyed to the end of the current age and judgment. Enochic texts also take up journeys to various places in the cosmos; not only does Enoch visit the ends of the earth and ascend into the heavens, he also takes tours of places associated with the realm of the dead, with paradise and with places of punishment. Some scholars do maintain the existence of a particular Enochic school of thought or delineate the group(s) which produced and promoted this literature; however, as the literature spans centuries and religious perspectives change or are nuanced, they allow for theological development of the community/tradition.<sup>26</sup>

With regard to Petrine material, at the most basic level one could speak of the traditions that esteem Peter, through attribution of authorship or by featuring him as an important protagonist in the work. Peter's central role in writings described as "Petrine" may have been due to the perception of the apostle as the recipient of revelations

<sup>24</sup> "Apostolic figures were often appealed to as part of intra-Christian apologetic and polemic"; Smith 1985: 9. See also Perkins 2000: 13-14.

<sup>25</sup> A plurality of images tied to Peter emerges from the New Testament writings alone. These images include "missionary fisherman, pastoral shepherd, martyr, recipient of special revelation, confessor of the true faith, magisterial protector, and repentant sinner." See Brown – Donfried – Reumann 1973: 166.

<sup>26</sup> See, for example, Boccaccini 1998: 53-162. The community that Boccaccini articulates, one emerging from a priestly context, is not static, but develops and even splinters into new groups. Thus, Boccaccini is able to explain the diverse perspectives represented in Enochic literature spanning several generations. Nickelsburg 2001: 52-53 notes that early Enochic texts refer to the "chosen" and "righteous" and favor election and wisdom proffered by Enoch over other constitutive categories such as Torah. See also Nickelsburg 1998: 128-129.

from Jesus, based on his presence at the transfiguration (Mark 9:2-8) and vision of the post-Easter Jesus (1 Cor 15:5; Luke 23:34). In spite of these generalizations, the traditions associated with both Enoch and Peter are diverse, originating in different contexts and preserved by various communities. Essentially Enochic and Petrine traditions are moving targets that vary according to provenance and communities.

### 3. Commonalities That Are Too Common?

There is another caveat to keep in mind as one considers parallels that is important to mention. An initial encounter with the hypothesis, in which Nickelsburg calls attention to commonalities, might lead one to conclude falsely that the instances of overlap are unique to the Enochic and Petrine texts. Moreover, given instances where motifs are widespread, one cannot be certain as to how these were mediated to Petrine authors. Toward demonstrating these points, we recall some of the parallels. Enoch and Peter received a special commissioning in the area of the Galilee. First Peter 3:19-20 seems aware of a tradition concerning disobedient angels. Second Peter 2:4-5 also would appear to refer to their punishment. The *Apocalypse of Peter* especially features visits to places of punishment. First Peter uses the expressions "sheep" and "shepherd," which also appear in the *Animal Apocalypse*; Jesus' conversation with Peter in John 21:15-19 also invokes these motifs.

Many of these similarities are shared, in fact, with other Second Temple and Late Antique texts. Nickelsburg himself calls attention to the fact that the commissioning scene of the *Testament of Levi* (2-7) resembles those of the *Book of the Watchers* (1 Enoch 12-16) and the Gospel of Matthew (16:13-19). First Peter and Second Peter's familiarity with traditions related to the fallen angels and their punishment is not surprising given that a number of Second Temple period works also make mention of the motif. From the *Damascus Document* (CD 2.16-20) in the Second Temple period to Comedian in the third century, the watchers tradition was wide-spread and could have been mediated by a number of sources not explicitly associated with Enochic traditions.

The consensus view that 2 Pet 2:4-5 depends upon Jude also undercuts the theory that an Enochic tradition (better: traditions) bore a unique relationship with a Petrine tradition.<sup>27</sup> Visionary journeys to

<sup>27</sup> The scholarly consensus suggests that 2 Peter is dependent upon Jude. See, for example, Neyrey 1993: 30, 120-22 and Bauckham 1983: 141-43. For further discus-

places of punishment, like ascents, were prevalent in Second Temple and Late Antique literature. Patriarchs and prophets – consider, for example, Moses in Pseudo-Philo’s *Liber antiquitatum biblicarum* (19:10) or Elijah in the eponymous *Hebrew Apocalypse* – are credited with having journeyed to otherworldly sites. Use of the language of sheep and shepherd could easily derive from Pss 74:1-2, 79:13, 95:7, Isa 53:6, Jer 50:6, Ezek 34, Zech 11:4-17 and 13:7, which Nickelsburg cites in his study of the *Animal Apocalypse*.<sup>28</sup> Since there are parallels to the aforementioned parallels outside of the Enoch-Peter matrix, the need for more definitive evidence remains.

#### 4. Strengthening the Case for Confluence: 1 Peter and the *Apocalypse of Peter*

The hypothesis that there is some sort of concrete relationship between Enochic and Petrine traditions seems firmer, though not decisive, when we can isolate verbal parallels in texts. Let us examine the case for confluence by examining two potential intersections. First, we consider the instance of 1 Peter, which according to Nickelsburg not only shares numerous themes with Enochic literature, but also close verbal parallels with *1 Enoch* 108. Second, we return to the case of the *Apocalypse of Peter*, an important text for this study because of its preservation alongside of an Enochic work and because of a close verbal parallel it shares with *1 Enoch* 106-107.

There are many reasons for suspecting that 1 Peter is familiar with Enochic traditions.<sup>29</sup> As Nickelsburg has suggested, 1 Peter shares with Enochic traditions an apocalyptic outlook and the expectation of imminent final judgment (1 Pet 1:3-12): “the end of all things is at hand,” according to 1 Pet 4:7.<sup>30</sup> Also of interest is the reference in 1 Peter to Christ making a proclamation to spirits in prison (πνεύμασιν ἐν φυλακῇ; 1 Pet 3:18-20). Many understand the imprisoned spirits to be the angels who are familiar from the *Book of the Watchers*;<sup>31</sup> these mated with mortals, shared forbidden knowledge (*1 Enoch* 6-8), and

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sion on 2 Peter’s inclusion of the watchers tradition and the possibility as well that 2 Peter may have also had independent knowledge of the lore, see Mason n. d.

<sup>28</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 377; 391.

<sup>29</sup> 1 Peter tends to be regarded as a pseudonymous letter and is dated typically to the last decades of the first century. For a helpful survey on the dating and authorship of the letter, see Mason n. d.

<sup>30</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 86.

<sup>31</sup> Dalton 1965: 163-176.

were imprisoned in an abyss or pit prior to the final conflagration (*1 Enoch* 9-18; 21). Comparable to the setting in the Enochic narrative in the *Book of the Watchers* (see *1 En.* 10:1-3), the Petrine author links the captive spirits to the time of the flood (*1 Pet* 3:20). Jesus' encounter with the imprisoned beings in *1 Peter* 3:19-20 is likened to Enoch's viewing of places of punishment and intercession for the rebellious watchers.<sup>32</sup>

Nickelsburg extends the inventory of comparisons by identifying close verbal parallels that suggest to him that *1 Enoch* 108 was known to a Petrine author. Let us take up briefly the points he makes.<sup>33</sup> *1 Enoch* 108 and *1 Peter* encourage faithfulness in the midst of suffering with the promise of eventual compensation, and both employ similar expressions to communicate about these themes; we should note that *1 Enoch* 108 is extant only in Ge'ez which Nickelsburg typically paraphrases for the sake of the list.<sup>34</sup> References to "seed" (or "offspring") "that will perish forever" (*1 En.* 108:3) and "perishable seed" (*1 Pet* 1:23; σποράς φθαρτῆς), to spirits slaughtered and kept in a desolate, burning place (*1 En.* 108:3-6) and "imprisoned spirits" (*1 Pet* 3:19-20; πνεύμασιν ἐν φυλακῇ), and to being summoned from darkness to light (*1 En.* 108:11 and *1 Pet* 2:9; ἐκ σκότους...εἰς τὸ...φῶς) might suggest, some sort of relationship between *1 Enoch* 108 and *1 Peter*. Overall Nickelsburg assembles sixteen "parallel ideas and terminology" that, in addition to addressing a similar situation, utilized a common vocabulary;<sup>35</sup> this leads him to conclude that *1 Enoch* 108 belonged to "'Peter's' theological repertoire."<sup>36</sup> The numerous points of overlap assist in making the case for the intersection of Enochic works, at least the *Book of the Watchers* and *1 Enoch* 108, with a Petrine text.

<sup>32</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 86; consider, though, *1 En.* 19:1 where the spirits of the angels are permitted to roam and mislead humans further. See also Dalton 1965: 176.

<sup>33</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 552-553. Toward understanding this selection, we should note that Chapter 108 is understood to be a later addition to *1 Enoch*, one familiar with other Enochic writings in the collection; moreover, the persecution presupposed by the text and its response to this suffering call to mind the context described in *2 Maccabees* and the *Parables*. With the exception of conjectures about context, the possibility that the author was familiar with other Enochic works like the *Book of the Watchers*, the *Epistle of Enoch*, and the *Book of the Parables*, and the work being known, in turn, by the author of *1 Peter*, the chapter is otherwise difficult to date. Sadly *1 Enoch* 108 is not extant in the Aramaic or Greek. On the dating of the chapter, see Nickelsburg 2001: 554.

<sup>34</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 560.

<sup>35</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 560.

<sup>36</sup> Nickelsburg 2001: 86, 560.

Another case can be made for a close verbal parallel involving an Enochic work and a Petrine apocalypse. *First Enoch* 106-107, a distinctive selection within the *Epistle of Enoch*, and the *Apocalypse of Peter* speak of heroes of the faith – in the Enochic selection, Noah, and in the apocalypse, Moses and Elijah – in angelomorphic terms, utilizing similar language.

Though extant in both Greek and Ethiopic, our attention is to the Greek text discovered at Akhmîm.<sup>37</sup> Strengthening the case for a relationship between Enochic and Petrine traditions, or at least witnessing how they could be perceived as compatible by a community, is the fact that the *Apocalypse of Peter*, along with the *Gospel of Peter*, circulated with the *Book of the Watchers* (here only *1 En.* 1:1-32:6) as is evidenced by the Akhmîm codex.<sup>38</sup> The two Petrine works and one Enochic text were bound together and placed in a grave that is dated by means of paleography to the late sixth century.<sup>39</sup> Scholars have speculated as to why these texts in particular were joined and placed in a grave, and a much repeated observation is that they all concern the fate of the dead.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Müller 1991, 2: 623 and Smith 1985: 44. There are some significant differences between the two versions; although the Ethiopic version is thought to be closest to the original, the text is not error free (Bauckham 1998: 163-164). While Egypt is sometimes suggested as the work's provenance, the *Apocalypse of Peter* also enjoyed popularity among Christians in the East and West prior to being suppressed. See Müller 1991, 2: 622. Müller observes that apocalyptic traditions were well represented in Egypt, and that Petrine traditions also enjoyed prestige there due to the apostle's association with Mark, who is venerated in Egypt (Müller 1991, 2:625). As Lawlor and VanderKam demonstrate, many of the Christians who knew and used Enochic traditions come out of Egypt – Athenagoras, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, and Julius Africanus, for example – especially in the second and third centuries. As the *Apocalypse of Peter* was known to Clement and seems to draw upon *4 Ezra* and *2 Peter*, we can date the work to the first half of the second century. See Müller 1991, 2:622; cf. also Eusebius *Hist. eccl.* VI 14.1. Bauckham 1998:160 argues that the *Apocalypse* was produced by a Palestinian Jewish Christian during the Bar-Kokhba rebellion.

<sup>38</sup> The *Gospel of Peter*, thought to have been composed in the second century perhaps in Syria, does not offer the same striking parallels or allusions to Enochic traditions. See Mirecki 1992, 5:279. Most likely drawing on *1 Peter*, the *Gospel of Peter*, a text with docetic leanings, refers to Christ preaching to the dead after his crucifixion. It misreads *1 Peter* 3:19-22, as it shows no awareness of imprisoned spirits or of the fallen angels tradition.

<sup>39</sup> van Minnen 2003: 16-17.

<sup>40</sup> The texts are in Greek and interestingly, were all found incomplete. Nickelsburg 2001: 12 wonders if the three, which were found in a grave and concern journeys to the realm of the dead, served a function like the Egyptian custom of burying a copy of the Book of the Dead with the deceased.

Brief allusion is made to Jesus' preaching to the dead in the *Gospel of Peter* (39-42), but visits to the realm of the dead, a paradise, and places of post-mortem punishment are arguably the focus of the *Apocalypse of Peter*. There Peter has visions of various types of hell where he sees individuals undergoing punishments that relate to their respective sins.<sup>41</sup> At one point, Peter is also able to visit a paradise. Similarly many of the early Enochic texts, especially chapters 17-36 of the *Book of the Watchers*, concern the patriarch's visit to the realm of the dead and places associated with post-mortem punishment or eschatological blessing. From the Enochic text we learn about places of detention, where disobedient celestial beings (see *1 Enoch* 18-19, 21) and the human dead (*1 Enoch* 22) are held until the Day of Judgment.<sup>42</sup> The celestial beings – rebellious angels and disobedient stars – as well as humans are separated into distinct holding cells until the day of judgment, just as various kinds of sinners are grouped together in the *Apocalypse of Peter*. Enoch also has access to places of eschatological blessing which are quite similar to those described in the *Apocalypse of Peter* (chapter 16). In the apocalypse, the apostle visits a paradise for the righteous which is comparable to the description of paradise-like places in the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 24-25, 28-32); both texts present their paradises as places full of fragrant trees, spices, and fruits.<sup>43</sup>

Recalling the apocalyptic tone of the *Book of the Watchers* and Enoch's role as a prophet and intercessor of the rebellious angels, the Petrine work presents Enoch and Elijah warning people of the great deceiver (chapter 2), a motif comparable to the two witnesses in Revelation 11. In this Petrine work, the patriarch assumes responsibilities that are comparable to the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1; 13). There are other commonalities, but suggesting that these examples suffice to establish similar themes and aspects within the traditions, we turn our attention now to the verbal expression shared by *1 Enoch* 106-107 and the Petrine apocalypse, though the respective narrative settings are rather different.

<sup>41</sup> See Himmelfarb 1983: 8-11; 97-100; 127-136; 140-147.

<sup>42</sup> On the Enochic tours to places of punishment and promptuaria for the dead, see Coblenz Baultch 2003: 36-156 and Wacker 1982.

<sup>43</sup> Smith suggests there to be a strong relationship between the *Apocalypse of Peter* and 2 Peter, especially with regard to their interest in the eschaton and Parousia and the language they use to speak of the end times. He thinks that perhaps both were dependent upon a "(lost) common source, perhaps a Jewish apocalyptic writing." Smith 1985: 53.



The Enochic text, *1 Enoch* 106-107, is extant fully in Greek and Ge'ez, and partially in Aramaic and Latin; it is thought to derive from a hypothesized "Book of Noah."<sup>44</sup> In this selection, the appearance of the baby Noah so startles father Lamech and grandfather Methuselah that the latter decides to consult with Enoch in order to see whether Noah is the offspring of an angel. The baby Noah is twice described as having a body that is whiter than snow, redder than rose, with hair that is all white, wool-like, and curly (*1 En.* 108:2, 10). With face glorious and eyes that shine like the sun, the *Wunderkind* is able to stand and praise God at birth (*1 En.* 108:2-3, 5, 10-11).

The subject of this brief selection, Noah's paternity, recurs in the *Genesis Apocryphon* (20 II; V), an Aramaic text, and may have also been addressed in a similar Hebrew composition from Qumran, 1QNoah (1Q19).<sup>45</sup> The description of Noah, a lengthy selection within *1 Enoch* 106, recalls Daniel's theophany where the Ancient of Days appears, with clothing white as snow and hair like wool (Dan 7:9), and the angel of Dan 10:6 with eyes like torches. Unable to detect readily a trigger in Genesis for such a description of Noah, VanderKam concludes that the text's presentation of the patriarch evidently derives from "traditional language...used of the deity or other extraordinary individuals."<sup>46</sup>

The Greek *Apocalypse of Peter* takes up the matter of the otherworldly bodies or angelic forms assumed by saints and the pious at death. First, Jesus reveals that at the Parousia, he will come in glory shining seven times brighter than the sun (*Apoc. Pet.* 1). Radiance beyond that of the sun is also ascribed to Moses and Elias, who appear in a modified account of the Transfiguration (*Apoc. Pet.* 15:6-7). Moreover, the Greek *Apocalypse of Peter* presents the two as having bodies whiter than any snow and redder than any rose with hair curled and charmingly coiffed.<sup>47</sup> We recall that an almost exact description is given to Noah, whose unusual appearance arouses among the patriarch suspicions of angelic paternity (*1 En.* 106:12, for example). In *1 En.* 106:5, the infant's countenance is brighter than the

<sup>44</sup> See Nickelsburg 2001: 542. 4QEn<sup>f</sup> make clear that this text concerning Noah followed *1 Enoch* 105 by the final part of the first century B. C. E. and was probably composed at an earlier time; cf. VanderKam 2002: 398.

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, Milik 1976: 55.

<sup>46</sup> VanderKam 2002: 406.

<sup>47</sup> The Ethiopic presents Jesus in such a manner, shining more than hail or crystal with a body the color of roses. The Ethiopic *Apocalypse* shows signs of textual corruption as it switches adjectives from third singular to third plural in the description of Jesus; cf. Dan 7:9. Note that Matthew's transfiguration adds Jesus shining like the sun and with garments becoming white as light; cf. Matt 17:3.

sun, his body whiter than snow, and redder than a rose; his hair is thick and like wool (*1 Enoch* 106:2-3; 10). Here we compare the Greek of the texts, with verbal parallels italicized:

<i>1 En.</i> 106 <sup>48</sup>	<i>Apoc. Pet.</i> 15 <sup>49</sup>
(2) καὶ ὅτε ἐγεννήθη τὸ παδίον ἦν τὸ σῶμα λευκότερον χιόνος καὶ πυρρότερον ῥόδου, τὸ τρίχωμα πᾶν λευκὸν καὶ ὡς ἔρια λευκὰ καὶ οὐλον καὶ ἔνδοξον. καὶ ὅτε ἀνέωξεν τοὺς ὀφθαλμούς, ἔλαμψεν ἡ οἰκία ὡσεὶ ἥλιος.	(7) ἐξήρχετο γὰρ ἀπὸ τῆς [ὄ]ψεως αὐτῶ(ν) ἀκτῖν ὡς ἥλιος καὶ φωτεινὸν ἦν αὐ[τῶν] τὸ ἔνδυμα, ὁποῖον οὐδέποτε ὀφθαλμὸς ἀν[(θρῶπ)ου] ἴσται δύναται ἐξηγήσασθαι ἢ καρ[δί]α ἢ τῆν δόξαν ἦν ἐν ἐδέδυντο καὶ τὸ κάλω[ ὄ]ψεως αὐτῶν
(4) καὶ ἐφοβήθη Λάμεχ ἀπ' αὐτοῦ καὶ ἐφυγεν καὶ ἦλθεν πρὸς Μαθου[σ]άλεκ τὸν πατέρα αὐτοῦ	(8) οὓς ἰδόντες ἐθαμβώθημεν τὰ μὲν γὰρ σῶματα αὐτῶν ἦν λευκότερα πάσης χιόνος καὶ ἐρυθρότερα παντὸς ῥόδου,
(5) καὶ εἶπεν αὐτ[ῶ], τέκνον ἐγεννήθη μου ἄλλοῖον, οὐχ ὅμοιον τοῖς ἀνθρώποις ἀλλὰ τοῖς τέκνοις τῶν ἀγγέλων τοῦ οὐρανοῦ, καὶ ὁ τύπος ἄλλο[ῖ]οτερος, οὐχ ὅμοιος ἡμῖν τὰ ὄμματα [τά ἐστιν] ὡς ἀκτῖνες τοῦ ἡλίου, καὶ ἔνδοξ[ον] τὸ πρό[σ]ωπον	(9) συνεκέκρατο δὲ τὸ ἐρυθρὸν αὐτῶν τῶν λευκῶν, καὶ ἀπλῶς οὐ δύναμαι ἐξηγήσασθαι τὸ κάλλος αὐτῶν
(10) καὶ νῦν ἐγεννήθη τέκνον Λάμεχ τῷ υἱῷ μου, καὶ ὁ τύπος αὐτοῦ καὶ ἡ εἰκὼν αὐτοῦ (οὐχ ὅμοιος ἀνθρώποις καὶ τὸ χρῶμα αὐτοῦ) λευκότερον χιόνος καὶ πυρρότερον ῥόδου, καὶ τὸ τρίχωμα τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ λευκότερον ἐρίων λευκῶν, καὶ τὰ ὄμματα αὐτοῦ ἀφόμοια ταῖς τοῦ ἡλίου ἀκτῖσιν	(10) ἢ τε γὰρ κόμη αὐτῶν οὐλη ἦν καὶ ἀνθηρὰ καὶ ἐπιπρέπουσα αὐτῶν τῶ(ι) τε προσώπω(ι) καὶ τοῖς ὤμοις ὡσπερὶ στέφανος ἐκ νάρδου στάχυος πεπλεγμένους καὶ ποικίλων ἀνθῶν ἢ ὡσπερ ἴρις ἐν ἀέρι τοιαύτη{ν} ἦν αὐτῶν ἢ εὐπρέπεια.

<sup>48</sup> For the Greek text, see Campbell Bonner – Youtie 1937: 77-81 and Black 1970: 43-44. For the fragmentary Aramaic of 4QEn<sup>c</sup>, see Milik 1976: 207-209; of the description of baby Noah, only the word 'red' (רָגַל) from *1 En.* 106:2 survives.

<sup>49</sup> For the Greek text of Akhmîm's *Apocalypse of Peter*, see Kraus – Nicklas 2004: 106-108.

Though the narrative contexts differ, the description of the heroes assuming features of angelic and divine beings is striking and deserves further examination. Richard Bauckham suggests that the descriptions of Moses and Elijah in “their glorious heavenly forms” “are composed of features traditional in the descriptions of the appearance of heavenly beings.” His examples of parallels, however, pertain to shining countenances or white garments primarily;<sup>50</sup> Bauckham does not mention any other Second Temple or Late Antique tradition where the hero’s complexion is both white and red (and to be more specific, invoking the language of “whiter than the snow and redder than a rose”).<sup>51</sup> At this time, we have yet to discern what is meant by the unusual description of complexions that are white and red.

The *Animal Apocalypse* may shed some light on the enigma. In its symbolic universe in which moral standing and election are communicated through colors, white animals (bulls and sheep) depict saintly (“pure”) and elect individuals such as Noah (e. g. *1 En.* 89:9). Black animals are used for the presentation of characters who are in some way problematic, such as Cain (*1 En.* 85:3) or the Cainite line, and red is used for Abel (*1 En.* 85:3), who is presented rather neutrally but who might also serve as a prototype of a martyr. Taken together, the red and white coloring of these figures may communicate both the human dimension (that the individual is truly flesh and blood; cf. also *1 En.* 89:9, where the bull associated with Noah’s son Ham is red like blood, the reader is told) and the quasi-divine (or angelic) status of an individual.<sup>52</sup>

The example of a verbal parallel which may indeed derive from traditional language the number of commonalities, and the fact that the *Apocalypse of Peter* and the *Gospel of Peter* were bound together with the *Book of the Watchers* assist us in making the case for an intersection or confluence of traditions.<sup>53</sup> From the codicological evidence, we know the texts circulated together, if only in one context. Eschatological concerns and shared perspectives about the realm of the dead and places of punishment are in both earlier Enochic writings and the *Apocalypse*

<sup>50</sup> White, reflecting perhaps purity, appears in some descriptions of the divine (see, for example, Dan 7:9 where the clothing of the Ancient of Days is described as ‘white as snow’ [לבושה כתלג חורר]).

<sup>51</sup> Bauckham 1998: 240 calls attention to *1 En.* 14:20; 71:10; *2 En.* 1:5; 19:1; *4 Ezra* 7:97; *Ap. Ab.* 11:2-3; *Ap. Zeph.* 6:11; Tab A7:3; Rev 1:14-16; 10:1).

<sup>52</sup> One recalls, for example, the use of white and red in depictions of Jesus and the martyrs in Revelation, which assist in juxtaposing their purity and sacrifice. See, for example, Rev 1:14; 6:10-11; 19:11-14; perhaps also suggested by the image of the Lamb that had been slain, Rev 5:6.

<sup>53</sup> Nickelsburg (2001: 87) also thinks the *Apocalypse* paraphrases selections from the Similitudes (cf. *Apoc. Pet.* 4 and *1 En.* 61:5; also *Apoc. Pet.* 13 and *1 En.* 62:15-16; 63:1, 7-9).

of *Peter*. Finally we have a verbal parallel, although the referents and the context for the description shared are so very different. Nickelsburg makes a compelling case for the coming together of the *Book of the Watchers*, 1 *Enoch* 108, and 1 *Peter*; it seems likely that the author of 1 *Peter* was familiar with these Enochic writings. Similarly the *Apocalypse of Peter* was preserved by a community that knew and cherished early Enochic traditions like the *Book of the Watchers*. 1 *Enoch* 106-107 ("the Birth of Noah") also becomes a prime candidate. It would require more work than what can be accomplished here to establish ties beyond these.

## 5. Conclusion

The study concludes by acknowledging gratitude to Nickelsburg for juxtaposing two fascinating traditions, those associated with Enoch and those with Peter. Nickelsburg's original point of entry to this topic, the commissioning scenes and ascents associated with the Galilee, continues to intrigue, and his ground-breaking and very thorough research on the sanctity of the space associated with the area near Hermon should be revisited by scholars eager to know more about diverse communities in Second Temple Judaism and early Christianity.<sup>54</sup> As for the possibility of confluence between Enochic and Petrine traditions, we have observed that a broadly construed examination, such that the complex legacies of the patriarch and apostle would be simplified into two distinct traditions, corpora, or schools, would not accurately reflect the texts and their backgrounds. Similarly, we have noted that one must be cautious in crafting an argument for confluence using motifs shared widely in Second Temple and Late Antique works. The most prudent course would be to look for signs of intersection or engagement in a few texts and to limit our observations to the communities (or perhaps better, authors) associated with those texts. In the final analysis, these examples remind us how indebted *some* early Christian communities were to Jewish apocalyptic literature and traditions. Following the example of Prof. Eilior whose scholarship challenges us to examine texts and communities from new perspectives, we might pursue this line of inquiry further and ask what this familiarity suggests about early Christian communities vis-à-vis the spectrum of traditions in the Second Temple period and the groups which preserved certain Enochic texts.

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<sup>54</sup> In addition to his article referenced earlier, see the excursus "Sacred Geography in 1 *Enoch* 6-16" in Nickelsburg 2001: 238-247 and subsequently, Suter 2003: 167-212.

# In Heaven or on Earth: A Misplaced Temple Question about Ezekiel's Visions

SILVIU N. BUNTA

In 2007, as I was preparing the first draft of this paper for a conference,<sup>1</sup> I was re-reading a refreshing study by Rachel Elijor, *The Three Temples*.<sup>2</sup> Needless to say, I learned a lot from that study, as I did from all of Elijor's scholarship. It is only fitting that in this more expanded form the paper is dedicated to her.

The primary methodology of this paper is a historical investigation of Ezekiel's imagery of the temple in the context of ancient Near Eastern ideologies about the divine world and its location. Within the scholarship of the last few decades it has become a common endeavor to search for heavenly temples as opposed to earthly temples, and for accounts of ascent to liturgical locations that seem to be completely other-worldly.<sup>3</sup> At least since the seminal work of Gershom Scholem, the visions of Ezekiel (particularly Ezekiel 1) have been identified as a primary literary source for many of the accounts of heavenly visions and ascents from late antiquity. The most general glance into late-antique visions of the heavenly temple will show this point to be undoubtedly true; Ezekiel 1 is by far the most important literary source for this type of speculations in late ancient Judaism. However, in contrast to this literary connection, current scholarship

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<sup>1</sup> A first version of this paper has been presented at the 2007 annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, within the Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism group. First, I wish to thank the conveners of the group at the time, Kevin Sullivan and April DeConick, for having me, and for their suggestions. Second, I would like to express my gratitude to Paul Joyce, who most kindly sent me a copy of his article that was still to appear at that time (Joyce 2007: 17-41).

<sup>2</sup> Elijor 2004b.

<sup>3</sup> The literature on the heavenly temple is vast. To mention just a few titles: Elijor 1997: 217-267; Segal 1980: 1333-94; Morray-Jones 1998: 400-431; Morray-Jones 1992: 1-31; Collins 1995: 43-57; Himmelfarb 1995: 123-137; Himmelfarb 1993; Himmelfarb 1986: 145-165; Himmelfarb 1987: 210-217; Barker 1991; Koester 1989; Halperin 1988; Halperin 1987: 218-231; Nickelsburg 1991: 51-64; McNicol 1987: 66-94; Levenson 1988: 32-59; Levenson 1984: 275-298; Rowland 1982; Rowland 1979: 137-154; Gruenwald 1980; Hamerton-Kelly 1970: 1-15; Patai 1967.

consistently assumes that Ezekiel 1 is not a vision of a heavenly reality, much less of a heavenly temple, since the throne-*kabod* structure is not identified in the text as a temple. Much of this attitude may also be traced back to Scholem, who, in his attempt to trace the roots of the later Merkabah mysticism back into the Second Temple period, stopped short of the Book of Ezekiel itself and instead pointed to *1 Enoch* 14 as the earliest reference to the heavenly temple.<sup>4</sup> Indebted to Scholem, the common wisdom of current scholarship on the topic assumes, as Paul Joyce summarizes perceptively, that “not until *1 Enoch* 14 (commonly dated to the third century B. C. E.) do we encounter the first account of a visionary ascent to the heavenly Temple.”<sup>5</sup> Contrary to this common wisdom (and to Scholem), Elijor has placed Ezekiel 1 on the map of Jewish heavenly temple speculations as the first stage of this type of mysticism,<sup>6</sup> and has asserted repeatedly that Ezekiel’s vision “could not be subsumed under any category clearly distinguishable as either earthly or heavenly.”<sup>7</sup> In a seminal article, Joyce makes the intriguing argument that Ezekiel 40-42 is a heavenly ascent narrative, and that the temple described in these chapters is the heavenly temple,<sup>8</sup> although he stops short of making a similar argument about Ezekiel 1 (or Ezekiel 8-11).

This article criticizes the common trend of current scholarship on a more fundamental basis. The first contention of this paper is that the entire dialectic of heavenly versus earthly is misplaced when it comes to the Book of Ezekiel, simply because this distinction seems to be unknown to the author(s) of this biblical text. Several concepts from Ezekiel 1 in particular, and from the whole book in general, suggest that the writing adheres to a certain ancient Near Eastern understanding of the divine world that does not differentiate between the divine presence in heaven and the divine presence on earth. Moreover, several elements in Ezekiel 1 suggest that the opening chapter of the book describes the divine presence itself as heaven. Common elements in the depictions of heaven and temples in ancient Near Eastern sources are incorporated in Ezekiel 1 into the portrait of the divine chariot. It appears that for Ezekiel the earthly temple *is* the heavenly temple; it is not merely a *juxtaposition* of heaven and earth, or a place where heaven and earth meet. Rather the temple *is* heaven.

<sup>4</sup> E. g., Scholem 1995: 43-46.

<sup>5</sup> Joyce, “Ezekiel 40-42,” 17. See such remarks in Himmelfarb 1988: 130; Himmelfarb 1986: 150; Himmelfarb 1993.

<sup>6</sup> Elijor 2004b: 31.

<sup>7</sup> Elijor 2004b: 34. See also her comments in Elijor 2004b: 15, 31.

<sup>8</sup> Joyce 2007.

The second argument of this article is that a complex parallelism between, on the one hand, the vision in chapters 1-3 and, on the other hand, the visions of chapters 8-11 and chapters 40-48 redefines the temple and focuses it into the divine *kabod*. Moreover, Ezekiel 1:13 defines the ritual of the Jerusalem temple as an integral part of the throne-*kabod* structure. Therefore, the ritual leaves the physical temple with the divine presence within it. As part of his intention to safeguard the divine presence in front of the destruction of the Jerusalem temple, Ezekiel makes the divine presence a temple, or rather *the* temple. The Jerusalem temple (both the lost and the renewed) simply embodies the heavenly temple in the fragile realm of human history.<sup>9</sup> The physical temple in Jerusalem only encompasses the real temple, the divine presence.

To adhere (in part) to Joyce's line of criticism, no attempt, to the best of my knowledge, has been made to identify Ezekiel 1 itself as a vision of heaven and an ascent to heaven, beyond Elior's reintegration of Ezekiel 1 into the world of Merkabah-type speculations. Admittedly, the location of the vision cannot be more mundane: it takes place by the Chebar canal. Yet, as I would argue here, in Ezekiel's terms this is as much a heavenly experience as the direct vision of the divine presence in the Jerusalem temple. No relocation to celestial realms is necessary for such a heavenly encounter to occur; the Chebar canal is as good a place as any. Moreover, the vision of Ezekiel 1 has not been commonly understood as a temple experience. I will argue here that for Ezekiel the divine presence contains the essence and ritual of the temple. Therefore, it would appear that Ezekiel 1 lies at the source of heavenly temple speculations in more ways than one. Ezekiel 1 does not only provide the imagery for subsequent depictions of the heavenly sanctuary. The assumed ideological disconnection between Ezekiel 1 and its subsequent uses may be grossly overplayed; most probably, ancient readers sensed perceptively that the prophetic vision is a temple vision and an ascent to heaven.

It is necessary to offer here several cautionary remarks. First, I do not wish to suggest in this paper that the ancient Near East shared one common homogenous culture and knew of one model of heaven. Second, I do not wish to suggest that Ezekiel 1 shows a direct literal dependence on the Near Eastern sources mentioned here, or to imply that the author of Ezekiel 1 knew these varied conceptual worlds directly, outside of their incorporation into the larger Juda-

<sup>9</sup> I deliberately use the word "embodies" because I wish to make the point that the temple is heaven.

hite culture. Third, I will not, for two reasons, address the issue of the authenticity of the Ezekielian passages that I discuss. On the one hand, the authenticity of most passages analyzed in this paper has not been disputed (in general).<sup>10</sup> On the other hand, it is not essential to my argument that the prophet himself stands behind these passages. I am rather interested in the book as a whole, as it was received and used by later mystics. Fourth, I do not wish to overlook the gap between Ezekiel 1 and late ancient Jewish mysticism. As will be evident in this paper, I do not assume that Ezekiel shares the same, identical type of mysticism with later readings of the book, at Qumran, in apocalyptic literature, and in Hekhalot sources. Indeed, the differences between these various texts, the origins of which spread out over more than a millennium, caution against their placement in one category. Rather, my argument is that later uses of Ezekiel may have sensed the text's transcendence of any sharp distinctions between heaven and earth, and that it is this ideology that made the text readily available for full-scale heavenly temple speculations at a time when such sharp distinctions were quite often in place.

## Heaven on Earth in the Ancient Near East

In the Mesopotamian and Syro-Palestinian world, the preponderant view is that the celestial locales in which the gods live are not completely removed from earth, but simply located at the top of the human realm. In other words, the world of the gods is the world of the humans and not an entirely different world; the gods are just positioned more prominently and enjoy a more commanding view of the world. With many variations, of course, the celestial world is either connected with the human realm by pillars or is simply situated at the top of a mountain.<sup>11</sup> Fundamentally, sky and earth share the same structure or essence. In literary terms, both Egyptian and Mesopotamian sources depict the sky and the earth as being made out of the same original matter or being originally united.<sup>12</sup> Of course, the ancients would find this perspective fundamentally

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<sup>10</sup> For issues concerning the unity and coherence of the book and of the passages discussed here, see especially Zimmerli 1965: 515-527; Greenberg 1986: 123-135; Greenberg 1983, 1997; Block 1997, 1998, 1: 17-23; Kutsko 2000: 5-9.

<sup>11</sup> For Mesopotamian sources, see Wright 2000: 27. For Egyptian sources on this idea, see Wright 2000: 13-16; Keel 1985: 27.

<sup>12</sup> Thus, in the *Enuma Elish* Marduk makes sky and earth out of the body of the goddess Tiamat (Dalley 2000: 254-257). In *Gilgamesh*, the cosmos is one mountain,



faulty and would reverse it to convey the idea that it is the heaven that ultimately supports or extends to the earth, and not the other way around.<sup>13</sup> Heaven and earth are realms of the same world, and there is nothing to separate them in a geographical way. It is only the nature or the quality of life of those who inhabit the two realms that differentiates between heaven and earth. Not only are heaven and earth parts of the same space, but they are never beyond reach to each other. Gods and other heavenly creatures dwell on earth or visit it regularly, while humans get glimpses into heaven or simply visit it (legitimately or illegitimately/intrusively).<sup>14</sup>

Most of the cosmology discernible in the Hebrew Bible moves in the same conceptual world. It is telling that according to Gen 1:6-8 heaven and earth are separated out of the same original matter. Isaiah 14 is particularly significant because it employs several major concepts related to the divine realm. When one “who rules over nations” (חולש על גוים) boasts that he will achieve divine status in a divine location, ascend to heaven (שממים) upon cloudy heights (על במתי עב), sit enthroned on high, in the divine council, above the stars of El, and become like Elyon, he envisions this extraordinary destination to be on Mount Zaphon.<sup>15</sup>

The same conception of the (very mundane) divine world seems to survive in two of the earliest “heavenly” ascents, namely, *1 Enoch* 14 and the Aramaic *Testament of Levi* from Qumran.<sup>16</sup> Considering that Mount Hermon is the place on which the Watchers descend in *1 Enoch* 6:6; that Enoch begins his journey to heaven at the foot of Hermon (13:7); and that the throne of God is depicted in 18:8 as reaching up to heaven like a mountain; it is probable that the intriguing temple and heaven of *1 Enoch* 14 are located at the top of Mount Hermon, or at least at the top of a mountain reminiscent of Zaphon.<sup>17</sup>

The Aramaic *Testament of Levi* from Qumran has also been traditionally presented as one of the earliest accounts of heavenly ascent.<sup>18</sup>

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made “of heaven and earth,” which are two united siblings, the sky-god An and the earth-goddess Ki.

<sup>13</sup> See Egyptian sources to this end in Wright 2000: 15.

<sup>14</sup> Ascents of humans to the celestial locations of the gods are mentioned already in the earliest Egyptian texts, such as the *Pyramid Texts* of the Old Kingdom (see Wright 2000: 5).

<sup>15</sup> See also the similar meaning of Jacob’s ladder in Wright 2000: 62 and Clifford 1972: 103-107.

<sup>16</sup> See Himmelfarb, “The Practice of Ascent,” 130.

<sup>17</sup> For Hermon as the cosmic mountain in *1 Enoch*, see Clifford 1972: 187-188; Coblenz Bautch 2003: 59-66.

<sup>18</sup> Collins, “A Throne in the Heavens,” 46: “Apart from Enoch, the only account of an ascent in a Semitic language is that of Levi in the Aramaic Levi apocryphon from

However, the text seems to describe a heavenly experience on top of a high mountain:

I lay down and settled up[on...] ... Then I saw visions [...] in the appearance of this vision, I saw [the] heav[en opened ...] underneath me, high, reaching up to heaven [...] to me the gates of heaven... (4Q213a 1.II.14-18)<sup>19</sup>

The heaven that Levi enters is most probably situated on the top of a mountain. According to the Greek *Testament of Levi*, the mountain is Sirion, a probable designation for Hermon. Even in these two earliest occurrences of the heavenly temple and an ascent to heaven, *1 Enoch* 14 and the Aramaic *Testament of Levi* from Qumran, heaven may not be other-worldly, but it may rather be located on top of a mountain.

The intriguing possibility that the temple of *1 Enoch* 14 is located on top of a mountain points us in another direction: no distinction is commonly made in the ancient Near East between the heavenly dwellings of the gods and earthly sanctuaries. The presence of the gods in heaven and their presence in their earthly temples are not two distinct yet related or mutually mirrored presences, but one and the same reality. When one enters a temple on earth, one reaches the top of the sacred mountain and is described as "entering heaven."

The identification of the earthly sanctuary with heaven is attested in Iron Age II Egypt and Mesopotamia, and in the Late Bronze religion of Ugarit.<sup>20</sup> Othmar Keel provides several expressions of this common ideology. Thus, in Ugaritic literature a temple is commonly called "high heaven."<sup>21</sup> In Egypt a formula uttered regularly at the opening of the gates to the inner chamber of the temple is: "The gates of heaven are opened."<sup>22</sup> The priest then proclaims: "I enter into heaven to behold (the name of the god)."<sup>23</sup> Regarding the Mesopotamian world, J. Edward Wright notes that a scene on a ninth-century tablet from the temple of the sun god Shamash depicts Shamash sitting in heaven on a throne, supported by two zoomorphic creatures, and being worshipped by king Nabuapaliddina, a goddess, and a priest. Thus Wright concludes that

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Qumran, of which a later form is found in the Greek Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs."

<sup>19</sup> Translation from García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1997-1998: 451.

<sup>20</sup> Mettinger 1982: 29-30, n. 40 and 41; Keel 1985: 172-173.

<sup>21</sup> Keel 1985: 172.

<sup>22</sup> Keel 1985: 172.

<sup>23</sup> Keel 1985: 172.

...this scene depicts the notion that when a human stands before the god's altar, symbol, or image on earth, that person is simultaneously appearing before the god in heaven itself. King Nabuapaliddina did not ascend to heaven, but while worshipping Shamash in his earthly temple, the king, or any worshipper for that matter, mythically appears before the god in heaven.<sup>24</sup>

I would further suggest that there is no distinction in this scene between the heavenly and earthly realms. They are rather one and the same. Tzvi Abusch notes that in the Babylonian magical series *Maqlû* there is no clear distinction between the terrestrial city of Zabban, in which the visionary seeks an encounter with the gods of both heaven and the underworld, and the heavenly place in which he expects this meeting to take place.<sup>25</sup> In Abusch's words, "while the speaker is on earth, he is also in the heavens."<sup>26</sup> I would nuance this remark and propose that the speaker is in heaven by being in a certain location on earth. This location on earth *is* heaven.

Similarly, in Iron Age II Judah, God's throne and abode – that is, "heaven" – are located in the temple. As Herbert Niehr points out,

...from the times of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah (ca. 950-586 B. C. E.) onward, there are no traces of the idea of YHWH living in heaven [as distinct from the earthly temple – my clarification]. What we do have from the 8<sup>th</sup> century B. C. E. onwards, however, are traces of YHWH's solarization, his conjunction with a host of heaven, his commanding of meteorological phenomena and his riding in heaven. Not once, however, is heaven presented as YHWH's habitat. Heaven becomes YHWH's dwelling place only after the exile. This seems to be both a reaction against the destruction of YHWH's earthly abode, viz. the Temple of Jerusalem, in 586 B. C. E., and a logical continuation of YHWH's cosmic powers, a concept which developed from the 8<sup>th</sup> century onwards.<sup>27</sup>

The Iron Age II location of God in the temple is evident even in texts revised or authored in the exilic and postexilic period. God is described as king in Zion, enthroned upon the enormous cherubim throne in the temple (1 Sam 4:4; 2 Sam 6:2; Ps 80:2; 2 Kgs 19:15), or dwelling in the temple (1 Kgs 8:12-13; Exod 15:17; 2 Sam 7:1-6). The psalms dedicated to Zion and the temple, the so-called "songs of Zion," which are most likely rooted in ideologies of the monarchic period, emphasize the same idea: the temple (Zion or Jerusalem) is

<sup>24</sup> Wright 2000: 37.

<sup>25</sup> Abusch 1995: 20-21.

<sup>26</sup> Abusch 1995: 21.

<sup>27</sup> Niehr 1997: 75.

literally the house of God (Pss 43:3; 46:5; 48:9; 50:2; 76:3; 132:13-14). The parallelism of Psalm 11:4 (יהוה בהיכל קדשו יהוה בשמים) suggests that the heaven is not simply a place correlative to the temple, but identical to it. The fact that the temple is God's abode is also apparent in Isaiah 6.<sup>28</sup> Keel astutely notes that, if one is to work with 1 Kgs 22:19b-22 within pre-exilic parameters, "it is out of place to inquire whether the scene is set in the temple or in heaven. The temple is on earth, but because Yahweh dwells in it, it is one and the same with heaven."<sup>29</sup> In pre-exilic times, inasmuch as they can be reconstructed from extant sources, the temple is heaven on earth.<sup>30</sup> The relation heaven – Temple is not simply a union, but rather an identity. With God dwelling literally *in* the temple, the temple constitutes heaven on earth (cf. Pss 14:2, 7; 20:3, 7; 76:3, 9).

An ideology that places God's abode in a heaven increasingly secluded from earth emerges with the end of the monarchic period.<sup>31</sup> The belief according to which the temple serves as a union between earth and heaven – as composed of both realms, which are ultimately distinct from each other – seems to be at the earliest postexilic. It is in postexilic times that, as Martha Himmelfarb has emphasized, the temple is often portrayed as a sacred meeting place between heaven and earth, as distinct from each other.<sup>32</sup>

### The *Kabod* as Heaven in Ezekiel's Visions

The Book of Ezekiel seems to represent a common ancient Near Eastern ideology. Ezekiel 28:1-19 is a perfect example of the identification of heaven as an earthly location. The text (as well as the other oracles

<sup>28</sup> The divine council mentioned in the text (see also v. 8) takes place in the liturgical setting of the temple: God is surrounded by both members of the council and worshipping attendants. God is seated in the temple on a "high and lofty" (רם ונשא) throne, which is arguably the ten cubit high cherubim throne in the holy of holies (1 Kgs 6:23-28; 8:6-7; 2 Chr 3:10-13). The anthropomorphic God literally dwells and is enthroned in the temple (see also Isa 8:18; 31:9). The enormity of the throne entails that the god (most probably present in a cultic statue) is of gigantic proportions; the hem of the robe of the enormous god suffices to fill the temple.

<sup>29</sup> Keel 1985: 174.

<sup>30</sup> See also the remarks in Mettinger 1999: 920-924, esp. 923; Mettinger 1982: 29-32; Metzger 1970: 139-158; Keel 1977: 51-53; Keel 1985: 172-173; Maier 1964: 101-105.

<sup>31</sup> For the separation of heaven from the temple and the subsequent seclusion of heaven from regular human access, see Hurowitz 1992: 313-321; and also Niehr 1999a: 370-372; Niehr 1999b: 428-430.

<sup>32</sup> E. g. Himmelfarb 1986: 150-151.

of 28:20-32:32) addresses a humanity that claims divinity,<sup>33</sup> according to a dominant monarchical ideology in the ancient Near East.<sup>34</sup> The king of Tyre purports that he is a “god,” אל אלהים/θεός (vv. 2, 9). The swift divine correction reminds the king that he is a human being, אדם/ἄνθρωπος (vv. 2, 9). Scholars have previously noted that “the holy mountain of God” (בהר קדש אלהים) and the site of “Eden, the garden of God” (Ezek 28:13-14), the primordial location of this king, parallels Isa 14:13.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, scholars have repeatedly pointed out that this heavenly location reflects the sanctuary of Jerusalem.<sup>36</sup> On several occasions Himmelfarb has also noted that the reconstructed temple of Ezek 40-48, which she labels as “eschatological,” carries features of the Garden of Eden.<sup>37</sup> Both Himmelfarb and Joyce seem to be right; the temple of Ezek 40-48 is both eschatological and heavenly. Moreover, I would add, the temple of Ezek 40-48 is also the earthly temple of Jerusalem, simply because no such temporal or spatial distinctions seem to exist in Ezekiel.

Several elements in the depiction of the divine presence in Ezekiel 1 recall features of heaven in the common ancient Near Eastern cosmology that identifies heaven as an earthly location. First, several features of the היות recall ancient Near Eastern depictions of the supports of heaven. The main function of the היות in Ezek 1 is to bear the divine presence (cf. vv. 22-23). The היות support the firmament on which the divine throne is placed:

Above the heads of the creatures was a form: an expanse (רקיע), with an awe-inspiring gleam as of crystal (קרח), was spread out above their heads. Under the expanse (רקיע) each had one pair of wings extended toward those of the others; and each had another pair covering its body.

<sup>33</sup> It is possible that Ezek 28:1-19 contains two units originally distinct and conjoined editorially, namely 1-10 and 11-19. It has been contended that form and topic differentiate the two units (see discussion in Wilson 1987: 211-212). Nevertheless in their final form the two units coalesce in a unitary composition. The whole of vv. 1-19 has the same addressee (the king of Tyre), general theme, and vocabulary.

<sup>34</sup> Most likely the direct reference of Ezekiel’s oracles is the Egyptian monarchical ideology (cf. Launderville 2004: 170). Ezekiel 28 has received extensive attention from modern scholarship. To cite only a few studies: Bunta 2007: 212-232; Launderville 2004: 165-183; Miller 1994: 497-501; Wilson 1987: 211-218; Habel 1967: 516-524; Yaron 1964: 28-57; May 1962: 166-176; Williams 1976: 49-61; Jeppesen 1991: 83-94; Loretz 1976: 455-458; Barr 1992: 213-223. For the coherence of chapter 28, see especially Block 1998: 87-90; Greenberg 1983: 577, 589, 593; Wilson 1987: 217-218.

<sup>35</sup> Block 1998: 114.

<sup>36</sup> Callender 2000: 41; Yaron 1964: 40-41; Launderville 2004: 175; Wilson 1987: 215; Bunta 2007: 225-229.

<sup>37</sup> Himmelfarb 1991: 63-78; Himmelfarb 1993: 73-74.

The image of creatures supporting a platform has antecedents in Mesopotamian iconography.<sup>38</sup> However, רָקִיעַ is not a mere platform; it is always used in the Hebrew Bible in reference to the floor of heaven.<sup>39</sup> There is no reason to believe that in this Ezekielian passage רָקִיעַ is used with another meaning. The Septuagint translates רָקִיעַ in this passage with the word it uses for all other occurrences of the Hebrew concept, namely στερέωμα. Nevertheless, the use of רָקִיעַ in Ezek 1 has puzzled the scholarship. Some scholars have argued that רָקִיעַ should be read here, quite exceptionally, as a mere platform; while others, such as Walther Zimmerli, have noted the obvious reference to heaven, but have not attempted to explain it.<sup>40</sup> After all, how can creatures carry the firmament? I would say that this is exactly the point in Ezek 1:22-23: the four creatures bear the heavens; they act quite like the four pillars of heaven. If this reading is correct, heaven is simply the divine presence. From this perspective, the phrase "the heavens opened" (נפתחו השמים) in Ezek 1:1 may refer not to a phenomenon that leads to or makes possible the vision of the *kabod*, but to the actual vision of the divine *kabod*. This reading of Ezek 1 is further supported by the use of קָרָה, which refers to a meteorological, celestial phenomenon. It is used in the same way in *1 Enoch* 14, a vision that is clearly indebted to the prophetic text. In *1 Enoch* 14:10 the floor of the temple is made out of ice (χιών), which is what קָרָה should be taken to mean in Job 6:16 and 37:10. Furthermore, the very throne of God is crystal-like in *1 Enoch* 14:18 (κρυστάλλινον), the way קָרָה is commonly translated in the Septuagint.

The identification of the חַיִּוֹת with the pillars or supports of heaven is further supported by their portrayal. Scholars have previously identified their main features in Mesopotamian and Syro-Palestinian iconography.<sup>41</sup> Creatures of composite character, human and animal, are common occurrences in ancient Near Eastern iconography. Particularly prominent are features of bulls and lions, although eagles appear, too. However, the pillars, columns, or mountains supporting heaven are also depicted with mixed zoomorphic and anthropomorphic characteristics in Israelite and non-Israelite sources. The nature of the support of the firmament varies considerably in Judahite sources of the Persian and Hellenistic period, from pillars (Job 26:11), to mountains, to winds (*1 Enoch* 18:2-3). These supports are often depicted in zoomorphic or even anthropomorphic terms. Thus in

<sup>38</sup> Keel 1977: fig. 115, 118, 130.

<sup>39</sup> Already noted in Zimmerli 1979: 122.

<sup>40</sup> See discussion in Block 1997: 101, n. 79; Greenberg 1983: 48.

<sup>41</sup> See particularly Keel 1977: 125-273; Greenberg 1983: 54-56.

Egypt the sky rests not only on pillars, mountain, or winds, but also on lions (maybe sphinxes?)<sup>42</sup> and even on people holding staves.<sup>43</sup> In Syro-Palestine, several cylinder seals represent the pillars of heaven (or the cosmic mountains) as animals.<sup>44</sup> At Ugarit the sacred mountains are often animate and are even portrayed as divine beings (a concept also attested among the Hittites).<sup>45</sup> The imagery seems to closely parallel the frequent depictions of west Semitic gods standing or riding on the same elements, pillars, mountains, winds (cf. Pss 18:11; 104:3), or animals (e. g., bulls).<sup>46</sup> In the ninth-century Mesopotamian tablet from the temple of Shamash mentioned above, the throne of the sun god seems to stand on zoomorphic creatures. In both Judahite and non-Judahite traditions, the supports of heaven are commonly four in number, presumably one for each cardinal direction.<sup>47</sup> Wright astutely notes that although the supports of heaven “appear typically in pairs in Egyptian iconography, the pair in fact represents four supports, thus the ‘four corners of the earth.’”<sup>48</sup> A similar interchangeable use of two and four may surface in Ezekiel’s depiction of the *היות*. According to Ezek 1:5, there are four composite zoomorphic/anthropomorphic creatures supporting the throne of the divine presence.<sup>49</sup> Yet, the four *היות* are associated in Ezek 10 with the temple cherubim, which were two in number. The two cherubim constituted the seat of the divine throne in the Jerusalem Temple (1 Kgs 6:23-28; 8:6-7; 2 Chr 3:10-13).<sup>50</sup>

<sup>42</sup> Wright 2000: 15. Wright’s figure 1.12 (on page 17) depicts the sky resting on mountains, but the standing animals (monkeys?) represented at the top of the mountains with their upper limbs stretched toward the sky seem to provide additional support of the vaulted firmament. If this is so, the image represents an interesting combination of two different paradigms. Similar animals appear in figure 1.13. Their function, however, is less clear, since the limbs are stretched not toward the sky, but toward the god Horus, in an apparent act of worship.

<sup>43</sup> Wright 2000: 13-15. This recalls the Greek myth of Atlas supporting the heavens (Hesiod, *Theog.* 713-748).

<sup>44</sup> Clifford 1972: 94-95.

<sup>45</sup> Clifford 1972: 61-64.

<sup>46</sup> For reviews and discussions of texts, see Maier 1964: 114-118; Clements 1965: 28-39; Keel 1977: 152-158.

<sup>47</sup> For Egyptian sources, see Wright 2000: 13-15.

<sup>48</sup> Wright 2000: 15.

<sup>49</sup> The number of the creatures has been previously related to the four winds or directions of the compass. Thus, see Block 1997: 97; Block 1988: 32-33; Keel 1977: 241-243; Zimmerli 1979: 120; Greenberg 1983: 57-58.

<sup>50</sup> See also Mettinger 1982a: 19-37, esp. 20; Mettinger 1982b: 109-138. It is significant to note that in the Masoretic text Ezek 10:2 and 4, as well as 9:3, refer (maybe collectively?) to a single cherub upon whom the *kabod* is enthroned. However, in all

Second, the depiction of the throne in Ezek 1:26 further supports the probability that Ezekiel understands the divine presence itself as heaven, and any vision of the presence as an ascent to heaven: "Above the expanse (רְקִיעַ) over their heads [that is, of the הַיּוֹת] was the semblance of a throne in appearance like lapis-lazuli stone (MT סַפִּיר; LXX λίθος σάπφειρος)." The lapis-lazuli stone in the form of the throne is the seat of the divine *kabod*.<sup>51</sup> Lapis-lazuli is identified as the stone of the firmament in several ancient Near Eastern sources. In ancient Mesopotamian texts, the floors of heavens are commonly made of stone, generally clear or transparent.<sup>52</sup> At Ugarit, Baal's heavenly dwelling on mount Zaphon is made of lapis-lazuli (CTA 4.5.80-81). Another glimpse of the lapis-lazuli heaven emerges in Exod 24:9-10, which describes "the God of Israel" on Sinai who has, under his feet, a work resembling a lapis-lazuli brick as clear as the sky.

The evidence presented so far leads to the tentative conclusion that Ezek 1 describes the divine presence in itself (in and outside of the temple) as heaven. In this understanding, any vision of God is a vision of heaven and an ascent to heaven. This conclusion is also supported by reading Ezek 1 in conjunction with the two other visions of Ezek 8-11 and 40-48. Scholars have previously noted that within the structure of the book there is a subtle unity and parallelism between Ezek 1 and the prophet's two other visions. First, three key formulae appear together only in these three visions. All three sections of the book are introduced as "visions of God" (מראות אלהים), an expression that occurs in no other places in the book; all mention the hand of God as being upon the prophet; and all contain specific date references (1:1-3; 8:1-3; 40:1-2).<sup>53</sup> Moreover, all the visions refer to a spirit lifting up the prophet (3:12, 14; 8:3; 11:1, 24; 43:5).<sup>54</sup> Furthermore, all three passages are bound together by the cross-reference formulae of 10:15, 20, 22 ("These were the living creatures that I saw by the river Chebar") and 43:3 ("The vision 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 Chebar").<sup>55</sup>

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three passages the LXX is consistently attuned to the temple narratives and uses the plural.

<sup>51</sup> This stone is not the modern sapphire, since this stone was not known in ancient times (Quiring 1954: 200-202; Block 1997: 102, n. 89).

<sup>52</sup> Wright 2000: 34-36.

<sup>53</sup> Tuell 1996: 649-664; Joyce 2007: 25-26.

<sup>54</sup> van Dyke Parunak 1980: 61-74.

<sup>55</sup> Tuell 1996: 649-664; Joyce 2007: 25.



The place of the opening vision in this complex parallelism is not immediately evident. I would suggest that Ezekiel constructs the three visions in a certain progression, building each on the previous one. The editorial hand that produced the cross-references of 10:15, 20, 22 and 43:3 seems to have perceived this progression, since it has introduced each vision as an expansion of the previous narrative. The logic of this complex construction suggests that the essential vision – on the basis of which the other two exist, or on which the subsequent visions develop – is the opening vision of Ezek 1-3. Indeed, the temples of Ezek 8-11 and 40-48 contain the *kabod* of Ezek 1 (the second temple to a better outcome than the first). By this logic, the *kabod* of Ezek 1 is the essential core of the temples.

This correlation between the three visions seems imbalanced by an expression that only introduces the vision in Ezek 1-3, namely, “the heavens opened” (נפתחו השמים). Zimmerli notes that the expression does not occur in any other subsequent visions in Ezekiel, or for that matter anywhere else in the Bible.<sup>56</sup> Zimmerli contrasts this introduction to the first vision with the emphasis in the other visions that God dwells in Jerusalem:

Ezekiel 1:1 is the only text in the book of Ezekiel which presupposes so clearly the heavenly dwelling place of Yahweh. Far more frequently, on the other hand, we find references in Ezekiel to Yahweh’s dwelling at the holy place, in Jerusalem (cf. 8:1ff.; 43:1ff.; 48:35).<sup>57</sup>

Contrary to Zimmerli, I would argue that, given the complex correlation between the three visions, this unique introduction of the first vision, as the opening of the heavens, corresponds exactly with the subsequent emphasis that God dwells in the temple; and that this correspondence between heaven and temple collapses any possible distinction between an earthly and a heavenly presence of God. This initial opening of the heavens constitutes the theophanic substance of all subsequent visions.

Another dissimilarity between the three visions is also probably meant to be interpreted in the same manner. The visions of Ezek 8-11 and 40-48 are visions of the earthly temple (within mirrored processes of destruction and reconstruction), while there does not seem to be any focus on the temple in Ezek 1-3. However, a close reading of Ezek 11:16 and 1:13 suggests that the first vision of the book already redefines the *kabod* as a temple.

<sup>56</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 116.

<sup>57</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 116.

## The *Kabod* as Temple in Ezekiel

Ezekiel 11:16 seems to take Ezekiel's understanding of the divine presence one step further: "I have been a sanctuary (מקדש) to them [Israelites] for a little while [or, in small measure: מעט] in the countries where they have gone."<sup>58</sup> The term מעט has puzzled modern scholars and ancient interpreters alike. It has been read adverbially, in reference to either time ("a sanctuary for a while," RSV, NRSV, REB, NASB, NIV)<sup>59</sup> or measure ("a sanctuary in small measure," AV),<sup>60</sup> or even adjectivally ("a little sanctuary," KJV).<sup>61</sup> Joyce has made a compelling argument that, given its context, the phrase מקדש מעט should not be taken in reference to time, but rather as a statement of degree.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, I would argue that מעט does not qualify only מקדש, but the entire idea that God is a sanctuary to the people (ואהיה להם למקדש). In other words, the phrase does not imply that God is a מקדש in a limited, imperfect degree, but that God offers himself (as מקדש) in a limited measure.

While the passage has been taken as a mere historical allusion to the divine presence within the tabernacle, מקדש is always (21 times) used in reference to the temple in Ezekiel.<sup>63</sup> Ezekiel 11:16 suggests that the divine presence in itself is the ultimate temple. Human-built temples only house this sanctuary. The temple as a material building only encompasses the real temple, the divine presence, and it does so imperfectly. This use of temple language in reference to the divine presence itself should undoubtedly be seen as integral part of Ezekiel's overarching theology about God's freedom of movement and ultimate independence from the physical temple.<sup>64</sup> It occurs in the context of Ezekiel's insistence that the divine presence is self-sufficient and complete in itself (a point that Ezekiel makes at length in 36:22-32).

Samson H. Levey suggests, in his introduction to the *Targum of Ezekiel*, that in the moving divine throne Ezekiel presents a mecha-

<sup>58</sup> For the probability that this is an original Ezekielian composition, see Kutsko 2000: 98 n. 63. For the unity of the verse, see Joyce 1996: 45-58.

<sup>59</sup> See Brownlee 1986: 155, 164, and comments in Blenkinsopp 1990: 63-64.

<sup>60</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 230, 262; Joyce 1996: 45-58.

<sup>61</sup> Thus Greenberg 1983: 186, 190.

<sup>62</sup> Joyce 1996: 55-56.

<sup>63</sup> Thus Ezek 5:11; 8:6; 9:6; 23:38; 24:21; 25:3; 37:26, 28; 43:21; 44:1,5,9,15,16; 45:3,4,18; 47:12; 48:8,10,21.

<sup>64</sup> For a recent thorough analysis of Ezekiel's focus on the divine presence, see Kutsko 2000. For the physicality and mobility of the *kabod*, see especially Kutsko 2000: 79-93; Weinfeld 1972: 200-206; Weinfeld 1974, 7: 22-38.

nism for God to leave the Jerusalem temple and survive its destruction.<sup>65</sup> However, Ezekiel seems to state more. For Ezekiel, the divine presence is not simply a part of the temple (albeit the central part) that is salvaged from destruction; the divine presence *is* the temple. The entire holiness of the temple and the entire heaven is concentrated in the divine presence. In rescuing the divine *kabod* from destruction, Ezekiel rescues all of the divine presence and the entire temple. In this sense, for Ezekiel a presence-less or *kabod*-less temple is not a temple at all; it no longer carries any holiness; while a temple-less *kabod* is as perfect or sufficient as the *kabod* within the Jerusalem temple. The divine presence is a complete temple in itself. It is from this perspective that Ezekiel can conceive of the heavens as supported on the back of four moving creatures.

It has been stated before that Ezekiel's use of מקדש in Ezek 11:16 is without equivalent in the Hebrew Bible.<sup>66</sup> However, Isa 8:14, a particularly difficult text, describes God in both MT and LXX versions as a מקדש.<sup>67</sup> Moreover, Ezekiel's reinterpretation of the divine presence as a temple in itself is not unparalleled. At least one other passage in the Hebrew Bible, namely Exod 24:9-11, suggests that some ancient Judahites thought of the divine presence as a temple, with or without physical walls to surround it:

Then Moses and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel went up, and they saw the God of Israel (וַיִּרְאוּ אֶת אֱלֹהֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל / και εἶδον τὸν τόπον οὗ εἰστήκει ἐκεῖ ὁ θεὸς τοῦ ἰσραηλ). Under his feet there was something like a pavement of sapphire stone, like the very heaven for clearness (וַתַּחַת רַגְלָיו כְּמַעֲשֵׂה לַבַּיִת הַסַּפִּיר וּכְמַעֲשֵׂה הַשָּׁמַיִם לְטָהָר / και τὰ ὑπὸ τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ ὡσεὶ ἔργον πλίνθου σαπφείρου και ὡσπερ εἶδος στερεώματος τοῦ οὐρανοῦ τῆ καθαριότητι). God did not lay his hand on the chief men of the people of Israel; also they beheld God, and they ate and drank.

The similarities between this text and the vision of the divine *kabod* in Ezek 1 are evident, and they have been noted in previous scholarship.<sup>68</sup> Among these are the focus on the surroundings of the divine presence, the repetitive use of כ, the mention of the vision of God and of heaven, and the reference to the lapis-lazuli stone (MT ספיר; LXX σάπφειρος). In addition, the LXX version of the Exodus passage uses two concepts that appear in Ezekiel's first vision: τόπος/οὐρος, which

<sup>65</sup> Levey 1987: 3.

<sup>66</sup> Thus Zimmerli 1979: 262, and Block 1997: 97.

<sup>67</sup> This parallel to Ezek 11:16 is noted in Joyce 1996: 54.

<sup>68</sup> Greenberg 1983: 50; Childs 1976: 506-507.

was a specific title for the Temple already in the seventh century,<sup>69</sup> and which Ezek 3:12 uses in reference to the *kabod*, thus redirecting a title of the Jerusalem Temple toward the divine presence; and στερέωμα/עֲרֵכָה, which occurs several times in Ezek 1. Scholars have noted before that the setting of the divine presence in Exodus 24, and the actions of Moses and the elders, have liturgical overtones.<sup>70</sup> First, God and the leaders of the people share in a sacrificial meal. Second, although the scene takes place on a mountain, מעשה לבנת and ἔργον πλίντου suggest that this sacrificial meal takes place in a construction of some sort. It appears then that Exod 24:9-11 conceives the divine presence to be in itself a temple, just like Ezekiel.

To take the parallelism between Exod 24:9-11 and Ezek 1 further, Ezek 1:13 mentions a liturgical inner-working of the divine presence:

In the middle of the living creatures there was something that looked<sup>71</sup> like burning coals of fire, like torches moving to and fro among the living creatures; the fire was bright, and lightning issued from the fire.

Zimmerli notes perceptively that the image of the burning coals "cannot be separated from 10:2 where there is a reference to the scattering of the burning coals which were between the cherubim."<sup>72</sup> The scattering of the coals in 10:2 occurs in between the cherubim of the temple of Jerusalem. The parallelism between 10:2 and 1:13 suggests that Ezekiel conceives the temple ritual as continuing uninterrupted in between the creatures that carry the divine presence. Ezekiel integrates fully the ritual of the Jerusalem temple into the throne-*kabod* structure. Therefore, the ritual leaves the physical temple with the divine presence within it.

## Conclusion

The above observations lead to several tentative conclusions. First, the Book of Ezekiel seems to adhere to a certain ancient Near Eastern understanding of the divine world that does not differentiate between the divine presence in heaven and the divine presence on

<sup>69</sup> See especially Murray 1990: 298-320; Levinson 1997: 23-52, 98-143; Leuchter 2005: 93-109.

<sup>70</sup> E. g., Clifford 1972: 111-112.

<sup>71</sup> Thus in LXX (ἐν μέσῳ τῶν ζῶων ὄρασις). MT reads ודמות הזיות מראהים. However, most scholars follow the LXX at this point (e. g., BHS; Brownlee 1986: 8; Zimmerli 1979: 84; Greenberg 1983: 46).

<sup>72</sup> Zimmerli 1979: 122.

earth. Therefore, the entire dialectic of heavenly versus earthly is misplaced when it comes to the Book of Ezekiel, simply because this distinction seems to be unknown to the author of this biblical text. Second, several elements in Ezek 1 suggest that the opening chapter of the book describes the divine presence itself as heaven. Third, a complex parallelism between the opening vision in Ezekiel and the visions in chapters 8-11 and 40-48, and a close analysis of Ezek 11:16, imply that the Book of Ezekiel as a whole redefines the earthly-heavenly temple and focuses the theophanic nature of the temple into the divine *kabod*. For Ezekiel the divine presence *is* the temple. The entire holiness of the temple and the entire heaven is concentrated in the divine presence. Within this parallelism the Jerusalem Temple (both the lost and the renewed) simply embodies the divine presence in the fragile plan of human history. Thus for Ezekiel the visionary's glance at the *kabod* is an ascent to heaven and a vision of the heavenly temple. In the terms of the ancient Near Eastern texts introduced above, the visionary, by simply being in front of the divine presence, is in heaven and in the temple.

# Scriptural Exegesis in the *Treatise of the Vessels*, A Legendary Account of the Hiding of the Temple Treasures\*

JAMES R. DAVILA

## Introduction

The *Treatise of the Vessels* is a remarkable Hebrew pseudepigraphic text that purports to reckon up the treasures of Solomon's Temple and to give an account of how and where they were hidden at the time of the Temple's destruction by Nebuchadnezzar and the Chaldeans. A longer version was published by Adolf Jellinek in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, taken from a Hebrew book published in 1802. (I have also found a printing of this recension of the *Treatise of the Vessels* published by R. Naftali Hertz Bachrach in *Emek Halachah* [Amsterdam, 1648], pp. 14a-14b). A shorter version inscribed on marble plaques in Lebanon was copied in part by Jean Starcky in the mid-twentieth century and published by J. T. Milik in 1959.<sup>1</sup> I have not succeeded in locating these marble plaques or any additional independent manuscripts of the work. Based on the available resources, I am publishing the first English translation of the work for the More Old Testament Pseudepigrapha Project of the University of St. Andrews. The work may have been written any time between late antiquity and the middle of the seventeenth century, and the surviving manuscript evidence preserves two recensions whose text is close where they overlap, but each of which contains a good deal of material not found in the other.<sup>2</sup> I work from the eclectic text of Milik.

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\* It is a great pleasure to dedicate this article to Rachel Elijor, whose important work on Jewish apocalypticism and mysticism has been a major contribution to the field.

<sup>1</sup> Jellinek 1876 [1967], 2: xxvi-xxvii, 88-91; Milik 1959: 567-75.

<sup>2</sup> Jellinek's text ("J") consistently has the longer reading where the two texts overlap, but given that the Beirut plaques ("B") were inscribed in stone, their text may have been abbreviated for convenience. B begins with a prologue not found in J and I cite it as 0B. The prologue of J, which appears in both texts, is cited as 0J. Otherwise, I cite the text according to the chapters I-XII given in Jellinek's text, adding the line numbers of B where these are available. All translations of primary texts are my own.

The purpose of this paper is to explore how the exegesis of scripture contributed to the storyline of the *Treatise of the Vessels*. This work appears to have been intended simply as an entertaining piece of midrashic fiction, so the author or authors worked with relatively few constraints on their imagination. Nevertheless, the target audience was clearly both highly scripturally literate and well informed about Jewish exegetical methods and the long tradition of Jewish aggadic readings of scripture. The author(s) thus implicitly agreed to follow these methods of scriptural exegesis and to interact with previous aggadic and midrashic retellings of scripture. Because the authors worked within this framework, it is possible to “reverse-engineer”<sup>3</sup> many of the thought processes that went into the creation of the traditions found in the *Treatise of the Vessels*. It will become clear that sophisticated scriptural exegesis played quite a central role in the composition of this work. Since it is probably a collection of traditions from more than one author, perhaps written over a long period of time, I will refer in what follows to “the exegete,” by which I mean the person who worked out the exegetical strategy being discussed. The various traditions may have been composed by numerous exegetes and some of the individual traditions likely arose over a process of time as they were refined by a succession of exegetes. There is no way to know at present how much original exegesis was contributed by the final editors of the two recensions. Although exegesis of scripture played a central role in the composition of this work, what follows is not in any way meant to negate the contribution of other factors, including exegesis of rabbinic traditions (some of which are discussed below), mobilization of otherwise lost oral traditions, and simple imagination. I divide the analysis of the use of scriptural exegesis in the work into three categories: *the dramatis personae* of the story; *the hiding places* of the treasures; and some limited observations on *the Temple treasures* themselves as presented in the work.

## 1. The Dramatis Personae

The central actors of the *Treatise of the Vessels* are the “five great righteous men” who “wrote these recited traditions” (§ 0J 5-6). The list appears twice (the second time in § II 11-12) and begins both times with Shimmur the Levite. In II, Shimmur and his companions

<sup>3</sup> I borrow the phrase from Kugel 1990: 251-53. Chapter nine of this book is an important methodological guide to the analysis of ancient Jewish exegesis of scripture.

inscribe an account of the vessels on a bronze tablet (J) or tablets of an unspecified material (B); in § IV 14 (J only), he and his companions, including one hundred Levites, hide many myriads of gold and silver vessels and furniture; and in XII he is mentioned twice alongside his son Heleq. Heleq hides the twelve precious stones of the high priestly ephod and he, his father, and the Levites deliver the rest of the treasures to the angels Shamshiel, Michael, Gabriel, and perhaps (accepting a plausible emendation) Sariel. The word *Shimmur* does not appear as a proper name in the Bible nor, as far as I can ascertain, in the classical rabbinic literature. Heleq appears as the name of a clan leader of the Gileadites of the tribe of Joseph (Num 26:30; Josh 17:2). I can find no scriptural rationale for assigning these names to key characters in the narrative.<sup>4</sup>

That said, there is a rabbinic tradition that seems to explain the prominence of the Levites in the story.

When the Ark was hidden, hidden with it was the jar of manna, the container of oil of anointing, and the staff of Aaron and its almonds and its buds, and the box that the Philistines sent as a gift to the God of Israel, as it is said, "And the vessels of gold that you return to Him as a guilt offering you shall put in a box to its side and you shall send it and it shall go" (1 Sam 6:8). And who hid it? Josiah hid it. What did he see so that he hid it? He saw that it was written, "The Lord will make you go and your king whom you put over you [to a nation that you and your fathers do not know, and there you shall serve other gods of wood and stone]" (Deut 28:36). He got up and hid it, as it is said, "And he said to the Levites who gave understanding to all Israel, who were holy to the Lord, 'Put the holy Ark in the House that Solomon son of David, king of Israel, built. You no longer have a burden on the shoulder now. Serve the Lord your God and His people Israel'" (2 Chr 35:3). And R. Eleazar said "It follows from 'to there' – 'to there,' and 'gifts' – 'gifts,' and "to be kept" – "to be kept.'" (*b. Yoma* 52b)<sup>5</sup>

The argument is that Josiah hid the Ark of the Covenant because he understood the scriptural warning of exile in the newly discovered Book of the Law (cf. 2 Kgs 22:14-20) to apply to him and his generation. He then ordered the Levites to "put," that is conceal the Ark inside the Temple, presumably by burying it (cf. *m. Sheqal.* 6.1-2) and

<sup>4</sup> The Hebrew word *shimmur* (שמור) appears in the Bible only in Exod 12:42, where it appears to mean "watching" or "vigil," an appropriate enough name for the leader of those who saved the Temple treasures for posterity. The name Heleq (חלק) means "portion," "share," "territory" in the Bible, from a verbal root meaning "to divide, assign, apportion." Perhaps Heleq was seen as apportioning the Temple treasures to safe hiding places, unlike King Ahaz, who apportioned them to the plunder of the king of Assyria (2 Chr 28:21).

<sup>5</sup> Cf. *t. Sotah* 13.1; *b. Hor.* 12a; *b. Ker.* 5b.



therefore dispensing with responsibility for it. It was deduced by R. Eleazar that three other precious objects were hidden with the Ark, arguing on the basis of analogy (*gezerah shavah*) and catchwords: the biblical verse that mentions the jar of manna (Exod 16:33) and the passage that mandates the construction of the Ark (Exod 30:6) both use the Hebrew word translated "to there"; the same verse on the jar of manna and the passage pertaining to the oil of anointing (Exod 30:31) both use the word "generations"; and the verse on the jar of manna and the passage about Aaron's staff (Num 17:25 [Evv 17:10]) both use the word "to be kept."

It seems likely that this midrash is the ultimate source of the prominence of the Levites in the *Treatise of the Vessels*. Whether or not our exegete knew it in the form we have it here (which is not improbable) or knew oral or written traditions derived from its exegesis, the midrash provides the basic framework that certain Temple treasures were hidden away by the Levites in response to the Babylonian invasion. Our exegete uses this framework, making the Levites central players and dispensing altogether with Josiah, and including the Ark, the jar of manna, the staff of Aaron (or Moses?), and golden vessels in general among the hidden objects, but leaving out the oil of anointing and the gifts of the Philistines.

A character named Hezekiah appears twice in the narrative. In § 0J 6 he is listed as the second of the "five great righteous men" and in § II 11 we are told that Shimmur the Levite and his companions inscribed a list of the Temple treasures on a tablet of bronze (J) or unspecified tablets (B). The text adds that "in the place of Shimmur there were with him Hezekiah" and the three other righteous men in the same list of five. There are three men mentioned in the Bible who bear the name Hezekiah. The first is King Hezekiah of Judah, who reigned from the late eighth to the early seventh century B. C. E. The second is the great-grandfather of the prophet Zephaniah (Zeph 1:1) who would have been roughly a contemporary of King Hezekiah and could possibly even be identified with him. The third, who also bore the name Ater, returned to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile, evidently with Nehemiah (Ezra 2:16//Neh 7:21; Neh 10:16 [Evv 10:17]; cf. Ezra 2:1-2//Neh 7:6-7). The text is less than fully coherent and it is not entirely certain that the Hezekiah of the *Treatise of the Vessels* is intended to be one of these, but this seems a reasonable working hypothesis. There are two possibilities. On the one hand, it may be intended that the Hezekiah in question was the contemporary of Nehemiah who was also known as Ater. As we shall see below, the rabbinic chronology of the Exile and Restoration is very flexible, and

it regarded Haggai, Zechariah, and Ezra (and so by implication also Nehemiah) as contemporary with Zephaniah and Baruch.

On the other hand, it may be that the Hezekiah in question is the king. The rabbinic chronology cannot be stretched to the point of making him contemporary with the others, but it is perhaps just possible to understand the text to mean that Hezekiah made his list of treasures before the others. Two hints in scripture may have led to him being chosen as someone concerned with the fate of the Temple treasures. First, we are told that after his near fatal illness, King Hezekiah received envoys from the King of Babylon, "and he showed them his whole treasure house: the silver and the gold and the spices and the fine oil and his house of vessels and everything that was found in his treasuries; there was nothing that Hezekiah did not show them in his house and in his whole realm" (2 Kgs 20:13//Isa 39:2). The prophet Isaiah then came to him and pointedly inquired about the visitors and their business. When Hezekiah had told him that they had come from Babylon and he confirmed that he had shown them everything he possessed, Isaiah replied with an oracle warning that "days are coming when everything that is in your house and which your fathers have stored up until this day shall be taken to Babylon: nothing shall remain" (2 Kgs 20:17//Isa 39:6). It may be that our exegete seized on this episode as an indication of Hezekiah's interest in the Temple treasures and a motivation for him to look to their future preservation. The second passage, Prov 25:1, says that the men of Hezekiah made a written compilation of proverbs for him, thus confirming literary activity in Hezekiah's court and perhaps giving the exegete the idea that Hezekiah may also have written an account of the Temple treasures in his own time.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, even if Hezekiah-Ater is intended as the second of the five righteous men, his name may have been chosen because of these associations with the king who bore the same name, regardless of the fact that he was a different person.

The third in the list of righteous men is Zedekiah. Like Hezekiah, he is given no title and he is mentioned again in § II 12 as one "in the place" of Shimmur the Levite. Zedekiah, presumably the same person, is also mentioned in the place name "the Spring of Zedekiah" in § IX, and it is reported in the same chapter that he and Baruch hid the vast hoard of the Temple's musical instruments in advance

<sup>6</sup> In rabbinic tradition King Hezekiah is also reported to have hidden away a book of healings (*b. Ber.* 10b; *b. Pesah.* 56a), which perhaps could have contributed to our exegete thinking of him as someone involved with the hiding of treasure.

of the Chaldean invasion, and in § X that the two hid many additional gold, silver, bronze, and iron implements. In § XI we read of “the treasuries of gold and silver from the days of David and until Zedekiah and until when Israel was exiled to Babylon,” a passage that seems to identify Zedekiah with the last king of Judah at the time of the exile. King Zedekiah is portrayed as a weak ruler who was sympathetic to the prophet Jeremiah (Jer 37:1-10, 16-21; 38:14-28) and even saved his life (Jer 38:1-13), but who in the end did not have the courage to follow the prophet’s counsel (2 Chr 36:12). When the city fell, Zedekiah attempted to escape, but he was captured by King Nebuchadnezzar, forced to watch the execution of his sons, and then blinded and deported to Babylon where he remained imprisoned for the rest of his life (2 Kgs 25:1-7).

Although he lived at the right time, he does not seem a natural candidate for membership in the cabal that preserved the Temple treasures. Nevertheless, I believe that the exegetical process that put him in this place in legend can be reconstructed. The key is found in *b. Erub* 61b, which refers to a vast “cave of Zedekiah” (eighteen miles long according to *Num. Rab.* 2.9) through which, evidently, the king tried unsuccessfully to escape from the Babylonians. The origins of this cave seem to be Ezekiel’s cryptic account of the attempted escape of the king in Ezek 12:1-13, in which the prophet Ezekiel acts out the part of the king. He is instructed by God to dig through the city wall (vv. 5, 7) and to cover his face so that he does not see the land (v. 5) as a sign that “the prince who is in their midst” (Zedekiah) will dig through the wall and cover his face so that he does not see the land with his own eyes (v. 12). This oracle actually refers to Zedekiah’s attempted escape and his blinding by the Babylonians (cf. v. 14, which says he shall not see the land of Chaldea), but it was evidently given a midrashic reinterpretation to the effect that he dug into a huge cave wherein he was unable to see the land. This midrash seems to be the inspiration for including Zedekiah among those who preserved the Temple treasures, presumably because of his discovery of an enormous cave which could be used to conceal them.

The fourth righteous man is “Haggai the prophet,” who appears in both lists. In the Bible he appears with this title in Ezra 5:1; 6:14 and Hag 1:1, 3, 12; 2:1, 10. A passage in his book may have served as the inspiration for including him in this group. The oracle in Hag 2:6-9 contains the key themes of the gold, silver, and desirable things of the Temple treasure, as well as the glory of the Temple itself, and enigmatically predicts that the future glory of the Temple will be greater than its past glory. It would not be difficult for our exegete

to map the passage onto the narrative of the hiding of the Temple treasures of gold, silver, and other delights and the promise of their glorious return at the end of time. Haggai the prophet would then be included in these events by association because of this oracle in his book.

Zechariah the prophet is the last person in the list, appearing first as “Zechariah the son of Iddo the prophet” (cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14) and then as “Zechariah the son of Berechiah the prophet” (cf. Zech 1:1). I can find no specific rationale for including Zechariah in the list apart from his association with Haggai in the verses in Ezra.<sup>7</sup>

Baruch, the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah, appears twice in the *Treatise of the Vessels*, both times (§§ IX and X) hiding treasures along with Zedekiah, as noted above. Baruch is treated very positively in the Bible (cf. Jer. 45:1-5) and he lived broadly in the relevant time frame. There is one reference to him that may have inspired our exegete to think of him as a suitable concealer of the Temple treasures. In Jeremiah 32 the prophet is instructed by God to buy a piece of property from his cousin. Having signed the contract before witnesses and paid for the property, Jeremiah reports (vv. 11-14) that he gave the signed copies of the deed of sale to Baruch to be stored in a clay vessel. This passage portrays Baruch with a divine mission to preserve and presumably conceal a valuable document for a future period of prosperity for the Jewish community. Our exegete does the biblical text one better and makes him a preserver and concealer of the precious Temple treasures until the messianic age arrives.

Ezra also figures briefly in the *Treatise of the Vessels*, which states in § III 14 that “these (five righteous men) and the rest of the prophets who were with them and Ezra the priest-scribe (cf. Ezra 7:11) wrote these recited traditions in Babylon.” The story thus includes Ezra not as one of the concealers of the treasures, but only as one of those who wrote down an account of the treasures and perhaps also of their hiding. Ezra’s high standing in the biblical and Jewish tradition, his presence in Babylon and Judea, and his status as a scribe suffice to explain his involvement. That said, it is worth noting that rabbinic tradition associates Haggai, Zechariah, Baruch, and Ezra with one another and treats them as contemporaries, despite the serious chronological difficulties involved. Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are taken to be the unnamed men who were with Daniel when he

<sup>7</sup> Tenuous connections between Zechariah and the Temple treasures are found in his oracle involving a crown of silver and gold which was deposited in the Temple (Zech 6:9-14) and in the mention of the thirty shekels of silver to be cast into the Temple treasure (11:13).

saw a vision of an angel (Dan 10:7; *b. Meg.* 3a; *b. Sanh.* 93b). It also states that Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi, Baruch and others all prophesied in the second year of Darius (*b. Meg.* 15a; cf. Hag. 1:1; Zech 1:1). Moreover, Malachi is taken to be the same person as Ezra (*b. Meg.* 15a) on the ground that Malachi objected to Jews marrying foreign women (Mal 2:11) and Ezra was the one who saw to it that these foreign women were divorced (Ezra 10:2). And there is a tradition that Ezra delayed his return to the Land of Israel to continue his study of Torah with Baruch until the death of the latter at a very advanced age (*Cant. Rab.* 5.5.1; *b. Meg.* 16b). Thus from within the thought-world of rabbinic Judaism, the treatment of Haggai, Zechariah, Baruch, and Ezra (along with Zephaniah) as contemporaries is not incoherent.

There is one mention of "Hilkiah the scribe" (§ VII) to whom were revealed various gems and hoards of gold and silver which he passed on to Shamshiel the angel to keep until the coming of the Messiah. No Hilkiah in the Bible is identified as a scribe, although in the period between the Exile and Ezra a number of men bear this name. Hilkiah the high priest discovered the copy of the Book of the Law in the Temple (2 Kgs 22-23, esp. 22:8-10); the name of the father of the prophet Jeremiah was Hilkiah (Jer 1:1); Hilkiah was the father of the priest Azariah who returned to Judea from the Babylonian exile (1 Chr 9:11); the grandfather of Ezra was named Hilkiah (Ezra 7:1; cf. Neh 11:11), although another passage seems to place this same person several generations before the Exile (1 Chr 6:13); a Hilkiah stood on the pulpit with Ezra at the reading of the Law (Neh 8:4); and a Hilkiah came to Judea with Zerubbabel (Neh 12:7). Hilkiah the scribe, if he is to be identified with a biblical figure, could be any of these. I can find no scriptural hint that favors one above the others, apart perhaps from the evocative fact that Hilkiah the high priest found hidden treasure in the Temple in the form of the Law Book.

The other scriptural figures mentioned in the *Treatise of the Vessels* have less complex roles in the story. Paragraph I 9-10 mentions "the holy vessels that Moses made on Mount Sinai by the holy commandments," referring to the account of the building of the Tabernacle in Exodus 24:15-40:38. We are told in § V 23 that King David established a cubit measure; this tradition is not mentioned in the Bible, but it may be hinted at in *m. Kelim* 17:9. Paragraph V 23 also asserts that the gold, silver, and stone used to build the Temple were prepared for Solomon by David. More treasures set aside for the Temple by David are listed in § VII. These passages develop and exaggerate the traditions in 1 Chr 29:1-5. David is also credited with making the myriads of high priestly, priestly, and Levitical vestments listed in § VIII and thou-

sands of musical instruments in § IX. There is no explicit mention of his production of vestments in the Bible, although David's close relationship with the priests and Levites is emphasized in 1 Chr 6:16-33 [Evv 6:31-48]. Likewise, there is no specific mention of his producing musical instruments, but he is credited with organizing the guilds of Levitical musicians in 1 Chr 15:16-24 and 25:1-31. King Solomon is credited with making the vessels of the most holy sanctuary in § II 11 (cf. 1 Kings 6-7; 2 Chronicles 3-4) and with voluntarily contributing silver and gold in VII (cf. 2 Chr 4:19-22). In § IX there is mention of certain ostentatiously ornamented lyres "which the soothsayers, the satyr-demons, and the spirits who were subjects to Solomon used to bring." The tradition that Solomon subjected the demons to himself to build the Temple and for other purposes is well established in ancient Judaism and early Christianity (e. g., Wis 7:17, 20; *Testament of Solomon*; *b. Git.* 68a-68b).<sup>8</sup> It may go back to traditions of Solomon's mantic wisdom preserved independently of the biblical canon, but it seems also to find its inspiration in part in 1 Kgs 5:18 [Evv 5:4] in which he says, "And now the Lord my God has given me rest all around: there is no adversary (אֹיֵב) and no evil stroke (פִּגְעָה רָעָה)." The words translated "adversary" and "stroke" later take on demonic connotations, leading later exegetes to infer or confirm Solomon's power over the demons from this verse. Although satyr-demons (Lev 17:7; Isa 13:21; 34:14; 2 Chr 11:15), soothsayers (e. g., Isa 2:6; Jer 27:9) and evil spirits (e. g., 1 Sam 16:15) appear in the Bible, I know of no biblical or later tradition that has them provide Solomon with musical instruments. Paragraph VI 2 mentions briefly that "the worthy who were in Israel concealed" some of the building materials of the Temple from before Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 2 Kgs 24:1-25:12). The biblical angels Michael (Dan 10:13, 21; 12:1) and Gabriel (Dan 8:16; 9:21) appear in § XII in connection with the concealing of the treasures.

## 2. The Hiding Places

Hints in scripture seem also to have inspired the assignment of most of the locations where the treasures are reported to have been hidden. In 0B 2-3 we read "He [God] commanded the children of Israel when they went to my sanctuary and they hid them [the treasures] on Mount Carmel." A little later they are located specifically at a place called Ein Kohel at the top of a very high mountain. The

<sup>8</sup> For details see Davies-Browne 2003.

inspiration for this location seems to be Amos 9:3a: "And if they are hidden at the top of Carmel, from there I will seek them out and take them." The exegete mobilized three aspects of this passage: the key word "hidden," the location the "top of Carmel," and the assertion by God that he will recover what is hidden there. Although the original intent of the passage is the threat that no one can hide from God, the exegete chose to read it as a promise rather than a threat. God promises that if they (the Temple treasures) are hidden at the top of Carmel, God will see to it that they are recovered at the right time. Suitable details about the basic location were then produced to fill out the (perhaps from local tradition) and the first hiding place was created. The theme that God will reveal the location of the treasures in the messianic era also became an oft-repeated theme of the work (§§ OJ 7, VII, VIII, IX, XII).

The second hiding place is alluded to briefly, with no specific location given: "These are the implements the earth took" (§ III 12). The inspiration here seems to be a midrash found in *Num. Rab.* 15.13 and *b. Sotah* 9a, which reports that although the vessels of the sanctuary were taken into exile (Dan 1:2), "the gates of the Temple were hidden away in the place where they had stood." Lamentations 2:9 is quoted as the proof-text: "Her gates have sunk into the earth." The midrashist seized on the odd expression "have sunk" (טבעו) to undermine the original sense in context that the gates of Jerusalem were lying in ruin on the ground. Instead the midrashist deduces from this expression that in fact the Temple gates miraculously retracted themselves into the ground and thus were preserved. The exegete of the *Treatise of the Vessels* typically does the midrash one better and asserts that the vessels/implements were indeed taken by the earth as well. But this one-upmanship has very ancient roots, as is demonstrated by the fact that in the *Paraleipomena of Jeremiah* (4 *Baruch*) 3:7-8, 14, Jeremiah and Baruch delivered the Temple vessels to the earth, which swallowed them up.

The third hiding place has an obvious inspiration. Paragraph IV reports that Shimmur the Levite and his companions hid myriads of silver and gold platters and libation-jars, and specifies that "all these things they concealed and hid in a tower in the land of Babylon in a city and its name is Bagdat" (IV 16).<sup>9</sup> The text does not assert explicitly that the hiding place is the ruin of the Tower of Babel, but it is hard to imagine that the reader was not expected to hear the echo of Gen 11:4-5. In *b. Sanh.* 109a we read that a third of the Tower of

<sup>9</sup> The phrase "and its name is Bagdat" is missing in J.

Babel had been burned and a third had sunk into the ground, but a third was still standing, and that its atmosphere induced forgetfulness. Thus rabbinic tradition allows for the possibility that the Tower could have served as difficult-to-detect hiding place.

The origin of the fourth hiding place is much less clear, but a few scriptural passages may have contributed to its creation. Paragraph V describes seventy-seven tables of gold whose gold was from the Garden of Eden, along with all the gold overlaid on the surface of the Temple and seven thousand additional talents of gold, and then reports that “all these they concealed and hid in the treasure of the cistern” (§ V 21). The phrase “treasure of the cistern” is geographically uninformative, but both Hebrew words have potentially relevant connections in scripture. The word “treasure” (לגז) is a variant of the Hebrew word that is used for King David’s own treasure of silver and gold that he gave to Solomon for the building of the Temple (סגל; 1 Chr 29:3). The same word is used in Qoh 2:8 of the “treasure of kings and provinces” gathered by Solomon along with silver, gold and concubines. Otherwise the word is used only of the people of Israel as God’s own special treasure (Exod 19:5; Deut 7:6; 14:2; 26:18; Mal 3:17; Ps 135:4). Cisterns appear frequently in the Bible, but one passage in particular is of interest here. In 1 Sam 13:6 we are told that under the oppression of the Philistines “the people (of Israel) hid themselves” in various places, including “cisterns.” Our exegete may have seized on two catchwords in this passage. One is the word “hid themselves,” the same verbal root used in Amos 9:3 and frequently in the *Treatise of the Vessels*. The other is the word “people,” which is also used in several of the passages noted above, in which Israel is described as God’s “treasure.” On the basis of these catchwords, the author could have reasoned by analogy (*gezerah shavah*) that not only people, but also the treasures of David and Solomon used for the Temple, were hidden from foreign oppressors in a cistern, the name of which our exegete then supplied.<sup>10</sup>

The sixth hiding place is found in § IX, which describes the fabulous musical instruments made by David, Moses, and Solomon for use in the Temple and reports that “everything was treasured up and hidden at the Spring of Zedekiah.” No such location is men-

<sup>10</sup> I can find no scriptural rationale for the fifth named hiding place, Borsif (Borsippa) in § VII. However, the Babylonian Talmud identified Borsif with Babylon (*b. Sukkah* 34a) and in the Talmudic passage about the Tower of Babel noted above (*b. Sanh.* 109a) Borsif is assigned the folk etymology of “empty cistern.” It seems possible therefore that the two immediately preceding hiding places brought Borsif to the mind of our exegete.



tioned in the Bible, but it may have been generated by the same web of scriptural exegesis that led in the first place to Zedekiah's inclusion in the *Treatise of the Vessels* as one of those who hid the treasures. Two key passages in the story of Zedekiah are the account of his attempted escape and his capture by the Babylonians in 2 Kgs 25:1-7 and Ezekiel's cryptic oracle describing the same event in Ezek 12:1-13. Both passages culminate in the blinding of Zedekiah's, explicitly in 1 Kgs 25:7 and implicitly in Ezek 12:13, and the word eye (עַיִן) is important in both passages, especially the second. Zedekiah's sons are put to death "before his eyes" and then his own eyes are blinded (1 Kgs 25:7). Ezekiel's compatriots "have eyes to see" but do not (Ezek 12:2). Ezekiel must mime going into exile "in their eyes" (v. 3, 4, 5, 6). The escaping prince will not see the land "with his eye" (v. 12). I propose that the place name "Spring of Zedekiah" is a midrashic pun on these passages. The word "eye" also means "spring," and so our exegete created the location the Spring of Zedekiah as a commemoration of Zedekiah's lost eyes.<sup>11</sup>

Chapter XI places the last two hiding places in Babylon. Myriads of gold and silver shields, along with a huge hoard of pearls and precious stones, were "treasured up and hidden in the wall of Babylon and at Tel Baruq underneath the great willow that is in Babylon on whose (branches) they used to hang their lyres." The wall of Babylon was famous in Classical tradition (cf., e. g., Herodotus, *Hist.* 1.178-81). But perhaps a more immediate inspiration for this hiding place is the mention of the wall(s) of Babylon in the oracle against Babylon in Jeremiah 51. In v. 12 there is a call to "raise a standard against the walls<sup>12</sup> of Babylon"; in v. 44 we read that God will bring a divine visitation against Bel in Babylon and that "also the wall of Babylon has fallen"; and in v. 58 a divine pronouncement declares "the wide wall<sup>13</sup> of Babylon shall be utterly dismantled and her lofty gates shall burn with fire." These verses give us a picture of the wall of Babylon reduced to a ruin, a suitable site for the hiding of treasure. The last hiding place is clearly inspired by Ps 137:1-2, in which the exiles "by the rivers of Babylon" lament their fate and "on the willows in its

<sup>11</sup> The seventh hiding place, Ein Kotel ("Spring of the Wall") in § X does not have an obvious origin in itself, but it may be a corrupt reading of Ein Kohel ("Blue Spring?"), the place name associated with Mount Carmel in 0B 3.

<sup>12</sup> The MT vocalizes as plural, but the consonantal text could also be read as the singular "wall."

<sup>13</sup> Vocalizing as the singular with the LXX, the Latin Vulgate, and many manuscripts of the MT. Other manuscripts of the MT vocalize as the plural, "walls," but the adjective "wide" remains singular.

midst, we hung our lyres." This very general geographical reference is concretized to a specific willow in a specific place, Tel Baruq (reference to which I have not found elsewhere).

### 3. The Temple Treasures

The detailed lists of Temple treasures in the *Treatise of the Vessels* are based primarily on the account of the building of the Tabernacle by Moses and Bezazel (Exod 25-40) and the building of the Temple by Solomon (1 Kgs 6-7; 2 Chr 3-4) with the support of David (2 Chr 28-29). A detailed discussion of the use of these passages is beyond the scope of this article, but it is worth noting that our exegete does frequently apply the principle of one-upmanship to the passages, greatly exaggerating the quantity and quality of the treasures described in the biblical text.<sup>14</sup>

But two of the treasures merit more attention. In VII we are told of "the trees of the gold of Parvaim which used to produce fruit of six hundred and sixty-six myriad talents of fine gold that was underneath the Tree of Life in the Holy Garden." This passage is illuminated by a rabbinic midrash concerning the gold in Solomon's Temple. Two texts give the central elements of the midrash between them. The first discusses the question of why one of the names for the Temple was the Forest of Lebanon.

R. Isaac b. Tablai said, "Why is its name called Lebanon? Because it whitens the iniquities of Israel." Rab Zutra b. Tobiah said, "Why is its name called Forest, as it is written, 'The House of the Forest of Lebanon' (1 Kgs 7:2; 10:17, 21//2 Chr 9:16, 20)? To say to you that just as the forest blooms, so the sanctuary blooms." Rab Hoshea said, "In the hour that Solomon built the sanctuary, he planted in it all kinds of delicacies of gold and they would produce fruit in their times. And as soon as the wind would blow on them their fruit would drop off, as it says, 'May its fruit shake like Lebanon' (Ps 72:16), and from them came support for the priesthood.

<sup>14</sup> For example, the two silver trumpets (Num 10:1-10) become forty-six golden trumpets (§ IV 16); the golden lampstand (Exod 37:17-24) becomes ten myriad bejeweled lampstands of fine gold (§ IV 17); the ten golden tables in Solomon's Temple (2 Chr 4:8; cf. Exod 37:10-16, which mentions only one table) become "seventy-seven tables of gold from the walls of the Garden of Eden" (§ V 18) and "seventy tables of fine gold and their gold was from beneath the Tree of Life that stands in the Garden of Holiness, upon which was the bread of the Presence" (§ X); and Solomon's annual intake of six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold (1 Kgs 10:14) become six hundred and sixty-six myriad talents of fine gold produced by the trees of the gold of Parvaim" (§ VII), on which more below.

But as soon as the star-worshippers entered the Temple they dried up, as it says, 'And the flower of Lebanon droops' (Nah 1:4). But in the future the Holy One, Blessed be He, will return it to us, as it says, 'It shall flower fully and rejoice, even (with) joy and chanting, the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it' (Isa 35:2)." (*b. Yoma* 39b)

The second covers some of the same ground as part of a discussion of the seventh of seven types of gold found in scripture.

"Gold of Parvaim" (2 Chr 3:6) – R. Shimeon b. Laqish said, "It was red and it resembles the blood of a cow." But there are those who say that it produces fruit. [R. Aha said, "in the hour that Solomon built the sanctuary he formed all kinds of trees in it and they would produce fruit. And in the hour that the wind blew, they knocked their fruit to the ground. And they would gather and apply them to the repair of the House."]<sup>15</sup> R. Hanina b. Isaac said, "On the day that Manasseh made an idol enter the Temple, all these fruit dried up. This is that which is written, 'The flower of Lebanon droops' (Nah 1:4). But in the coming future everything shall return, as it is written, 'It shall flower fully ... the glory of Lebanon shall be given to it' (Isa 35:2)." (*Num. Rab.* 12.4)<sup>16</sup>

The midrash deploys a number of scriptural passages to demonstrate that an Aladdin-like orchard of gold-bearing trees grew in Solomon's Temple. The key phrase is the name "Forest of Lebanon," which is applied (or understood by the rabbis to be applied) to the Temple. The place-name Lebanon (לְבָנוֹן) is explained with puns using words that sound similar in Hebrew ("whiten" [מַלְבִּיין] and "bloom" [מַלְבֵּב]). The term "forest" and the pun regarding the Temple "blooming" leads the exegete to search for more information on just what forest was blooming in the Temple. The answer is found in the phrase "gold of Parvaim," which we are told in scripture is the type of gold Solomon used in the Temple. The word "Parvaim," whose actual meaning is unknown, sounds like the word for "cow" (פָּר), evoking the blood of the sacrificial cow, and like the word for "fruit" (פֵּרִי). The deduction is therefore that the forest in the Temple blooms and produced golden fruit. The catchword "Lebanon" is then used to fill out the picture: other verses that contain this word are mobilized to show that the fruit stopped being produced when idolaters or idolatry were introduced into the Temple, but it shall be brought back in the eschatological future.

<sup>15</sup> The bracketed passage may be a secondary addition.

<sup>16</sup> Other versions of or allusions to this midrash on the gold of Parvaim are found in *Exod. Rab.* 35.1; *Num. Rab.* 11.3; 13.18; *Cant. Rab.* 3.3; and *y. Yoma* 41d, 19-27.

This midrash is assumed and developed in the passage quoted from the *Treatise of the Vessels*. The existence of the trees of the gold of Parvaim is assumed and they are introduced without discussion.<sup>17</sup> The amount they produced is derived from 1 Kgs 10:14 with the principle of one-upmanship applied, as already noted. But their gold is connected in some not entirely clear way to a place beneath the Tree of Life in the Garden of Eden, a motif not associated with the trees of the gold of Parvaim elsewhere as far as I have been able to ascertain. Nevertheless, the rationale is not hard to follow. Very ancient Jewish tradition associates the Temple with the Garden of Eden, which in turn is associated with Parvaim.<sup>18</sup> And in the Bible, one of the four rivers that flow out of Eden is associated with a land of fine gold (Gen 2:11). Moreover, the description of Eden in Ezek 28 describes it as full of precious stones and gold (Ezek 28:13), and this may have clinched the identification of Solomon's magical trees with the Garden of Eden.

The second treasure of special interest involves the ornamentation of David's musical instruments:

A thousand lyres that David made and seven thousand lutes for Israel's benefit; cymbals for song and for praise songs and for thanksgivings and for psalmody to the God of Israel which were given to Moses from Sinai. And inscribed upon them from beneath the feet of the throne of glory is a sapphire stone (in the) likeness of a throne. And the lyres were of almu-wood overlaid with fine gold; and five stones were upon every single lyre which the soothsayers, the satyr-demons, and the spirits who were subjects to Solomon used to bring. And on every single lyre was a bell of burnished bronze from before the throne of glory and one fine stone, precious and outstanding, which Moses hewed out at Mount Sinai from beneath the throne of glory that was on the sapphire stone. (§ IX)

The points of interest here are the cymbals that were given to Moses on Sinai and the lyres brought to Solomon by his supernatural assistants. Both types of musical instruments are adorned with a sapphire gem whose origin is beneath the throne of glory, that is, the throne of God. The ones on the cymbals bear the engraving of a throne, presumably to commemorate their origin. It is said explicitly that the ones on the lyres were excavated by Moses on Mount

<sup>17</sup> In § XI the House of the Forest of Lebanon is mentioned as a source of a vast amount of gold that was hidden, but it is not explicitly employed for this midrash.

<sup>18</sup> For the identification of the Garden of Eden with the macrocosmic Temple in Qumran literature and Jewish Merkavah mysticism see Davila 1996:457-78. For Parvaim as the celestial Paradise, see Grelot 1961: 30-38 (the reference in the *Treatise of the Vessels* is discussed on pp. 37-38).

Sinai “from beneath the throne of glory that was on the sapphire stone” and presumably we are to assume the same for the ones on the cymbals. This passage is a midrash on several scriptural verses that are held together with the catchword “sapphire.” The tradition of the sapphire pavement beneath the throne of God is found first in Exod 24:10, in which Moses and his companions on the first ascent to Sinai “saw the God of Israel, and under his feet something like brickwork of sapphire and it was like the essence of the heavens for clarity.” Much the same scene appears in Ezekiel’s vision of the divine throne, with reference to the firmament that was above the heads of the four living creatures: “And above the firmament that was over their heads was something like the appearance of a sapphire stone in the likeness of a throne, and on the likeness of the throne was a likeness like the appearance of a man, over it from above” (Ezek 1:26; cf. 10:1). Our exegete evidently wishes us to understand that Moses excavated bricks from this sapphire pavement, and that some of them were then engraved with a likeness of the sapphire throne of God that sat on the pavement.

The catchword also gave our exegete grounds for placing these sapphires among the Temple treasures. First, a passage in Isaiah can be read as promising that sapphires will adorn the Temple. Addressing Jerusalem, the prophet says, “<sup>11</sup>O poor, storm-tossed one, uncomforted, behold I lay your stones with antimony and your foundations with sapphires. <sup>12</sup>And I set your battlements in agate and your gates as carbuncle stones and your whole border in delightful stones” (Isa 54:11-12). These verses were probably in the exegete’s mind in general as a basis for decorating much of the Temple treasure with precious stones.<sup>19</sup> Likewise Ezek 28:13, already noted above, listed sapphires among the precious stones found in the Garden of Eden, the source of some of Solomon’s treasures. And a description of the beloved in the Song of Songs offers further support for sapphires in the Temple: “<sup>14</sup>His hands are cylinders of gold, set in Tarshish(-gems); his abdomen is a panel of ivory, encrusted with sapphires; <sup>15</sup>his legs are pillars of alabaster, founded on golden bases. His appearance is like Lebanon, choice as the cedars” (Cant 5:14-15). These verses describe the beloved in terms of materials used in the Temple (gold, ivory, cedar) and tie him to the key catchword “Lebanon,” which we have already seen is a midrashic code word for the Temple. The sapphires

<sup>19</sup> Midrashim inspired by Isa 54:11-12 on the precious stones to be found in the Temple and on the borders of the Land of Israel in the end times are found in *Pesiq. Rab. Kah.* 18.4-6 and *Midr. Psalms* 87:2-3.

then can be taken as included among the Temple decorations and our exegete imaginatively tied them to David's musical instruments. Although this midrash does not survive explicitly in any rabbinic text, its implicit understanding by the exegete behind the *Treatise of the Vessels* is clear.

## Conclusions

The basis of many of the traditions recorded in the *Treatise of the Vessels* consists of complex webs of sophisticated exegesis of scripture using methods well known from Jewish literature in the rabbinic and even earlier periods. Sometimes the exegete draws on midrashic traditions known to us and sometimes on traditions that are otherwise unknown. In some cases the exegetical strategies are simple and obvious (e. g., the treasures involving the Tower of Babel and the willow in Babylon). Other times they are more complex (e. g., the sapphires on David's musical instruments). Some of these traditions are well homogenized, having clearly been passed on for a long time until they had taken on a life of their own in Jewish legend (e. g., Solomon's trees of gold) or even left lurking in the background without explicit mention (e. g., Zedekiah's cave). And consistently throughout, the exegete behind the *Treatise of the Vessels* relies on the principle of one-upmanship to create the narrative: biblical and other traditions are exaggerated, often wildly so, to make the story more remarkable.

# Cultivating Visions through Exegetical Meditations

DAN MERKUR

Ancient Jewish and Christian apocalypses narrate pseudepigraphic visions. Niditch (1980) showed that the apocalypses contain accurate references to techniques of ecstasy and visionary experience that are known anthropologically. Gruenwald (1980) demonstrated that the apocalypses closely resemble the *hekhhalot* literature of the talmudic era and urged that apocalypticism be treated as an early chapter in the history of Jewish mysticism. Writing from a psychoanalytic perspective, I discussed the techniques that Jewish apocalypses variously portrayed, mentioned, and implied, by which it would be possible to induce the visions reported. I also demonstrated the evidence in the texts of unconscious dynamics that no one can have known to counterfeit prior to Freud's introduction of psychoanalysis (Merkur 1989). Yet with rare but notable exceptions (Stone 1974, 1990, 2003b; Rowland 1979, 1982), most specialists in apocalyptic literature reject both the claims to pseudepigraphic authorship and the debt of the vision narratives to actual visionary experiences. Himmelfarb (1993) shaped the current consensus that the visions are intertextual constructions that present exegeses of earlier literary texts. She insisted that "the apocalypses are literary documents in which the depiction of the hero's experience needs to be understood as an act of imagination, with its specifics determined by the author's manipulation of conventions, rather than as a literary representation of the author's own experiences" (p. 98).

A similar difference of opinions surrounds the second chapter of the talmudic tractate Hagigah. Scholem (1965) discussed the legends about sightings of the *merkabah* by R. Yochanan ben Zakkai and his students in terms of visionary experiences that were consistent with both the apocalyptic and the *hekhhalot* literatures. However, Urbach (1967) objected to the association of the rabbinic narratives with the *hekhhalot* literature, on the grounds that the rabbinical legends pertain to the exegesis of passages of Ezekiel, while the *hekhhalot* texts portray groups of practicing mystics. Halperin (1980) carried the day with a

careful textual analysis of the many variants of the “mystical collection” of talmudic narratives. Working from the unearned assumption that the tales were not learned compositions but instead reflected “popular enthusiasm,” Halperin treated the legendary sightings of the *merkabah* as naive folkloristic fantasies about miracles (pp. 179-80). “The accounts of the *merkabah* expositions of R. Johanan b. Zakkai’s disciples derive from a cycle of miracle stories which recounted the wondrous supernatural responses to the saints’ expositions of Ezekiel’s vision” (p. 179). Halperin did not consider the possibility that the tales are parabolic discussions of visionary experiences that conformed to halakhic restrictions on public discussions of the *merkabah*.

Although the Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism group of the Society of Biblical Literature has since created an academic forum that is hospitable rather than antagonistic to the discussion of ancient literatures in terms of visionary experiences (Morrison-Jones 1993a, 1993b; DeConick 2006a), the positions within the scholarly debate remain much where they were two decades ago. In this article, I would like to present my current thinking about visions in Jewish apocalypses, Revelation, and rabbinic aggadah.

Let me preface by remarking that the idea, prevalent in apocalyptic and midrashic studies, that a vision cannot be genuine if it is exegetical, rests on an incorrect assumption about what is and is not possible psychologically. Halperin (1987) expressed the alternatives as follows:

Only one criterion seems to me to have the slightest validity in distinguishing consciously created fantasy from unconsciously created hallucination. It is this: Do the images used by the writer have symbolic meanings which, when deciphered, yield a more or less coherent and convincing interpretation, but which the writer gives no indication he is consciously aware of? To the degree to which the symbols of the vision are outside the writer’s conscious control, we may assume that the vision itself is outside his conscious control. (Halperin 1987: 226)

Halperin’s criterion of a vision’s relation to consciousness advanced the debate when he offered it two decades ago, but it has not aged well. It secularized and psychologized the Christian theological claim that visions are passively received gifts of grace, but it had no basis in either experimental or clinical psychology. It has since become clear that the criterion of unconscious spontaneity versus conscious control cannot usefully be applied to visions because neither consciousness nor unconsciousness occurs in isolation. The psyche always functions as an integrated whole. Visions routinely blend conscious and unconscious components – in Freud’s (1900)



terms, the day residue and the dreamwork – in varying admixtures. If dreams represent the end of the spectrum that is characterized by minimal conscious input, creative inspirations (Kris 1950) represent the opposite end, where conscious contribution is maximal. A variety of further psychological phenomena occupy middle positions along the spectrum.

(i) Like the dreams of sleep, *the hallucinations of the psychoses* (schizophrenia, mania, and so forth) tend to be unconscious productions that manifest spontaneously; but psychotic hallucinations, like dreams, are invariably triggered by sense perceptions of recent events that serve as day residues around which the hallucinations develop. Because psychotics are socially dysfunctional, psychotic hallucinations have had comparatively little impact on the historical record of religious visions (Kroeber 1940).

(ii) A large and perhaps majority portion of the visions in religious literature are waking dreams that occur during *dissociative states*. Dissociative states can be cultivated through self- and hetero-hypnosis; they also occur spontaneously as symptoms of hysteria, post-traumatic stress syndrome, and other psychopathologies that are markedly less severe than psychosis. Because dissociative states prevent conscious and preconscious access to the data base that is ordinarily employed in reality testing (Shor 1959), they prevent falsification of the hallucinations that comprise waking dreams, both during and after their occurrence. Reality-testing may proceed, but only with a limited, dissociated data base. As a result, dissociated visions readily generate or validate beliefs in mythical realms. At the same time, because dissociated visions are *waking* dream states, they accommodate considerable interaction between conscious auto-suggestions and the unconscious transformation of auto-suggestions into imagery (Arbman, 1963-68-70). The Call of Isaiah (Isa 6) and the *merkabah* vision of Ezekiel (Ezek 1) are biblical examples of dissociative dream states, the one hypnotic and the other hysterical (Merkur 1988; Halperin 1993); both conformed to cultural expectations regarding visions of the enthronement of God.

(iii) A third broad category of visions is less exotic. The *hypnagogic state* in between waking and sleeping (Mavromatis 1987) may spontaneously produce pseudo-hallucinations, which is to say, hallucinations that are known to be such, that tend to develop into hallucinations that are not known to be such, as the person falls to sleep. In other cases, hypnagogic states can be maintained at intermediate levels, where they are considerably responsive to conscious control. Jung's practice of active imagination (Hannah 1981) and many further

guided imagery therapies (Watkins 1976) employ hypnagogic states. Self- and/or hetero-suggestions select the images whose unconscious reworking generates hypnagogic imagery whose interpretation can be turned to therapeutic effect. In *Gnosis* (Merkur 1993), I suggested that the visionary experiences indicated in both the Nag Hammadi and *hekhalot* literatures had their basis in hypnagogic states that were akin to active imagination.

Not only is the mutual exclusion of unconscious spontaneity and conscious control a psychological impossibility, but we possess conclusive historical evidence that links textual exegesis to visionary experiences. Michael E. Stone (personal communication, 2006) drew my attention to the *Hymns on Paradise* that St. Ephrem the Syrian wrote in the fourth century. Ephrem began his series of fifteen hymns with explicit references to Moses' book and its account of paradise. Ephrem asserted that he approached the text in two ways:

I revered what lay hidden  
and meditated on what was revealed. (Brock 1990: 78)

With these words, Ephrem described his progress from what, in a later era, would be called the *pshat* to the *sod*. He provided more details about his procedure in the third and fourth stanzas of the same hymn.

3. Joyfully did I embark  
on the tale of Paradise –  
a tale that is short to read  
but rich to explore.  
My tongue read the story's  
outward narrative,  
while my intellect took wing  
and soared upward in awe  
as it perceived the splendor of Paradise –  
not indeed as it really is,  
but insofar as humanity  
is granted to comprehend it.

4. With the eyes of my mind  
I gazed upon Paradise. (Brock 1990: 78)

Here we have Ephrem's explicit testimony that his own meditations on the text of Genesis 2-3 led to visions of Paradise on which, in turn, he based his hymns.

Equally conclusive, I suggest, is the gemara of *Hagigah*. The tractate begins with the discussion of a mishnah that concerns the obligation to perform the biblical commandment of *re'iyah*, "being seen,"

in the Temple courtyard on Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. The gemara includes a discussion of the exemption of a person who is blind in one eye.

Yochanan ben Dahavai says in the name of R. Yehudah, "A person who is blind in one eye is exempt from appearing, for it is stated, "shall see" [but it is read aloud] "shall be seen." In the manner that He comes, so does he come to be seen. Just as He [comes] to see with His two eyes, so too must He be seen with two eyes. (*b. Hagigah* 2a; compare 4b)

By noting that the biblical text is written "shall see" but is customarily read aloud in synagogue as "shall be seen," the gemara makes the animal sacrifices at the Temple auxiliary to visions that pilgrims experienced during the festivals. One came textually to see God, and orally to be seen by God, in a mutual encounter, a reciprocal meeting of eyes.

The concern of *Hagigah* with visions continues at intervals throughout its first chapter. Discussing the exemption of deranged individuals from the law, the gemara required three criteria to be met simultaneously.

The Rabbis taught: Who is a deranged person? One who goes out alone at night, and one who lodges in a cemetery, and one who rends his garment [for no apparent reason]. It was stated: Rav Huna said: until all are at one time....[Regarding] one who lodges in a cemetery, one could say it is so that an impure spirit would rest upon him that he did [so]. And one who goes out alone at night, one could say lycanthropy seized him. And one who rends his garment, one could say he is a meditative individual. (*b. Hagigah* 3b)

We are apparently to understand that because the third kind of apparent madness is a religious experience and does not disqualify a person from having a vision of God, neither do the first two. Slightly later in *Hagigah*, we are given narratives that provide details of the Sages' meditative practices. The first begins: "Whenever Rav Huna came to this verse 'he shall see' [which is read] 'he shall be seen,' he wept" (*Hagigah*, 4b). Further narratives discuss other verses and occasions when rabbis wept (*Hagigah*, 4b-5a). References to weeping as preludes to visionary experiences had a long history. A Canaanite legend that dates to the fourteenth century B. C. E. relates that King Keret mourned prior to a night dream or vision in which the god El appeared and spoke to him (Pritchard 1969:143). In Josh 7, Joshua and the elders mourned at night in front of the Ark, before Joshua received a revelation from Yahweh. In late antiquity, mourning was performed prior to the onset of visions in a variety of apocalypses

and other texts: the *Book of the Watchers*, *2 Baruch*, *3 Baruch*, *4 Ezra*, *Joseph and Aseneth*, *Pseudo-Philo*, *Testament of Levi*, *Shepherd of Hermas* (Merkur 1989). Jews continued to weep as an adjunct to meditation in the later history of the kabbalah (Idel 1988). The discussions of weeping in *Hagigah* 4b-5a were implicitly part of the concern of the first chapter of *Hagigah* with visionary experiences. The themes of divine judgment, encounters with the angel of death, and God's withholding of his face (*Hagigah*, 5a-5b) further expand the implicit discussion of visions, by referring to their contents.

Given that the first chapter of *Hagigah*, which deals with persons exempt from animal sacrifices on the three pilgrimage holidays, referred explicitly and repeatedly both to seeing visions and the induction technique of weeping, we are obliged to recognize that the Sages regarded the mystical collection that comprises *Hagigah's* second chapter as an expansion on the first chapter's discussion of the law requiring visions on the pilgrimage holidays. The Sages maintained that pilgrimage holidays had been occasions of seeing and being seen by God while the Temple stood, and they amplified their exegesis of scripture by discussing how they themselves practiced visions in their own time. We may endorse Halperin's emphasis that the tales in *Hagigah* portray exegetical efforts that culminated in sightings of the *merkabah* without embracing the unearned assumption that genuine visions cannot have been meant.

The *Babylonian Talmud* addressed the topic directly in a discussion of Isa 30:19-20 in tractate *Sotah*.

R. Judah the son of R. Khiya said: Every *talmid hakham* who engages in the Torah in adversity, his prayer is heard. As it is said, "Yea, O people in Zion who dwell at Jerusalem; you shall weep no more. He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when he hears it, he will answer you" [Isa 30:19]. And it is written afterward, "And though the Lord give you the bread of affliction and the water of affliction" [Isa 30:20a]. R. Abahu says: He shall be satiated with the splendor of the Shekhinah, as it is said, "and your eyes shall behold your Teacher" (Isa 30:2c). R. Akha bar Haninah said: Even the veil is not locked before him, as it is said, "and your Teacher will not hide himself any more" (Isa 30:2b). (*b. Sotah*, 49a)

The culmination of Torah study in visionary experiences, which is explicit in these interpretations of Isa 30:19-20, should also be read into a more enigmatic – because esoteric – narrative that is positioned several sentences earlier in the same gemara.

R. Ilia bar Yevarechyah said: If two students of the Sages travel on the way, and there is no talk of Torah between them, they deserve to burn in fire, as it is said, "And as they still went on and talked, behold, a chariot of

fire, etc." [II Kings 2:11]. The reason was that there was speech. Had there been no speech, they would have deserved to burn. (*b. Sotah*, 49a)

The last sentences involved double-entendre. "The reason" that there was a vision of the divine chariot "was that there was speech." Had they not been performing exegetical meditations while they spoke, they would have been studying incorrectly and "they would have deserved to burn."

Exegetical activities and visionary experiences were as closely associated in the Sages' minds as they were for St. Ephrem.

## Medieval Christian Monastic Meditation on Scripture

If we allow, as I suggest we must, that ancient exegetes knew how to induce visions through acts of exegesis, the question before us is a practical one: how did they do it?

Collins (1979: 22-23) divided Jewish apocalypses into two basic genres: (i) "historical" apocalypses with no otherworldly journey; and (ii) apocalypses with an otherworldly journey. He subdivided the second category according to additional concerns: (iia) apocalypses with an otherworldly journey and a review of history; (iib) otherworldly journeys with cosmic and/or political eschatology; and (iic) otherworldly journeys with only personal eschatology. Because I found the same techniques of vision induction and management in both genres of apocalypse (Merkur 1989), I infer that the two genres reflect differences, among other matters, in the theoretic understanding of visions. This circumstance is analogous to the differences between Jungian and Freudian dream interpretations. Although Jungian patients tend to dream about Jungian topics, and Freudian patients about Freudian topics, the phenomenology of dream experience is shared in common. Emphatic differences are introduced, however, in the theory and practice of dream interpretation. Jung (1938) maintained: "The dream is a natural event and there is no reason under the sun why we should assume that it is a crafty device to lead us astray" (p. 31). Freud (1900 1916-17), by contrast, maintained that dream images are cryptic symbols that conceal unconscious materials.

In late antiquity, the two genres of Jewish apocalypses attest, I suggest, to ancient forerunners of the same two basic points of view: that visions, like dreams, are to be taken at face value; and that visions, like dreams, are to be interpreted in an allegorizing manner. Ancient Jewish accounts of otherworldly journeys and places portray visual

images as real perceptions of ordinarily invisible beings and sceneries of heaven, paradise, hell, and distant locations on earth. In these apocalypses, seeing was believing. Their seers assumed that what they saw in their visions existed objectively in a spiritual manner. Because these otherworldly apocalypses' conceptions of the cosmos included mythic places and beings, I shall refer to them as mythological apocalypses.

The genre of "historical" apocalypses similarly took for granted a theoretic understanding of visions, but it was a fundamentally different one. The authors of "historical" apocalypses regarded visual images as symbols, metaphors, or allegories whose manifest contents differed from their meanings. In keeping with this theory of visual images, accounts of visions were often followed by allegorizing interpretations (Daniel; 4 Ezra; 2 Bar. 36-76; *Lad. Jac.*). In other examples of the genre, accounts of visions were left uninterpreted, but their thinly disguised references to historical events were intended to be transparent to ancient readers (1 En. 85-90; *T. Naph.* 5-6, *T. Jos.* 19). As a rule, the subtexts of allegorical apocalypses concerned the past and future courses of earthly history and the human soul.

Having appreciated that the two genres of Jewish apocalypses reflect two schools of thought regarding visionary imagery, mythological and allegorizing, I attempted, on an experimental basis, to work with my own hypnagogic hallucinations in an allegorizing manner. What I found was that the prolonged visionary experiences that Jungians are able to produce through "active imagination" (see Merkur 1993) are contingent on a suspension of disbelief in the imagery for the duration of the experience. Any effort that I made to interpret a vision during its progress brought the imagery to an immediate halt. My finding was consistent with Silberer's (1909, 1912) discussions of "autosymbolic" phenomenon during hypnagogic states. Consciousness must be relaxed and the hypnagogic state must verge on a dream of sleep before prolonged and elaborate imagery will manifest. Increasing the amount of conscious input, that is, increasing one's wakefulness, abbreviates the imagery. These observations simultaneously dovetail with Freud's (1900) claim that "free association" consists of (i) the cultivation of a hypnagogic state and (ii) the verbal reportage of its visual imagery. With practice, Freud remarked, patients cease to experience the imagery consciously and only the verbal descriptions emerge into consciousness. Freud assumed that images continued to be produced unconsciously but were automatically translated into words on their way to consciousness, while they were still preconscious. In the present con-

text, we may conceptualize hypnagogic phenomena on a spectrum that ranges from very near to waking to very near to sleeping. Verbal inspirations are the most wakeful; brief imagery admixed with verbal inspirations are less alert; and extended imagery without attendant verbal ideation are nearest sleep.

These conclusions persuaded me that my interpretation of ancient vision literatures in terms of hypnagogic phenomena (Merkur 1989, 1993), as produced through Jung's active imagination and analogous mental imagery therapies, might remain appropriate for Nag Hammadi and *hekhalot* texts. They offer no more than a partial account, however, of the Jewish allegorical apocalypses and their successors, the allegorical trajectory within the Talmud and midrash, and the New Testament practice, most prominent in the Gospels and Revelation, of allegorizing the motifs of heavenly ascension.

Precisely how ancient exegetes cultivated visions remained opaque to me until I read Mary Carruthers' *The Craft of Thought* (1998), which discusses the practice of meditation in medieval Christian monasticism. My encounter with Carruthers' text radically and permanently altered my way of thinking about medieval meditation on the passion of Jesus (Merkur 2007). In the present article, I am arguing that Carruthers' findings have comparable importance for the Jewish-Christian nexus of the apocalypses, New Testament, and rabbinic aggadah. These three bodies of late antique literature shared an approach to visions that, I suggest, Carruthers was the first to recognize, but only as it persisted in Christian monastic practice from the fourth century onward. Carruthers expressed her fundamental argument as follows:

The monastic practice of meditation notably involved making mental images or cognitive "pictures" for thinking and composing....The emphasis upon the need for human beings to "see" their thoughts in their minds as organized schemata of images, or "pictures," and then to use these for further thinking, is a striking and continuous feature of medieval monastic rhetoric. (Carruthers 1998: 3)

In keeping with the Aristotelian paradigm of late antique psychology, monastic authors understood imagination as a recombination of memories of sense perceptions. They consequently discussed meditation as a kind of remembering or recollection. One "recollected" events from one's own life when one constructed mental images that were imagined to portray ancient events that were read in scripture (Carruthers 1998: 3). Interestingly, the psychological understanding of mental imagery that was expressed by the terms "memory" and

“recollection” was not restricted to Christianity. It was a general legacy of the psychological theories of ancient Hellenism. The Arabic term *dhikr*, which became the technical term for meditation in Muslim Sufism (Hodgson 1974: 211-13), literally means “to remember”; and rabbinic references to “remembering the Name [of God]” likely pertained to a practice of meditation among Jews (Elliot R. Wolfson, 1999, personal communication).

As an example of medieval Christian meditation, let us examine several passages that William of St. Thierry, a Cistercian monk and abbot, composed in the twelfth century. The passages commonly pertain to a single trope, the hidden manna of Rev 2:17. In the eucharistic theology of the cathedral school of Laon (Macy 1984: 74-76), the hidden manna was the presence of Christ that could be encountered in a mystical experience. The hidden manna was not to be confused with the sacramental manna that is the eucharist wafer. In *Meditations*, William discussed the hidden manna as follows:

O Lord, this height, this depth, this wisdom and this might, are these the heaven of which you are the door? It is so, truly; that is why the ark of the covenant was seen in heaven when the door was opened, as the same John says. For what does the ark of the covenant that was seen in heaven mean, if not “the dispensation of the mystery, which from the beginning been hidden in God, Who created all things”? You are yourself that ark. In you from all eternity was hidden, and in you in these latter days has been fulfilled, all that from the beginning of the world has been revealed to all the saints and prophets by the Law and by the prophecies, by wonders and by signs. You are that ark in which every part is covered with pure gold; for the fullness of God’s Wisdom rested on you and invested you completely with its glory. In you is the vessel of gold that contains the manna, the holy and spotless soul in which the fullness of the Godhead dwelt corporeally. In you is Aaron’s rod that budded, the dignity of the eternal priesthood. In you are the tables of the covenant, by which the world is made heir of your grace, and the nations are made coinheritors and fellow-heirs and sharers of your promise. Above all these things are the bright cherubim, the plenitude of knowledge; but they are not above them because of their own excellence and worth, but rather as needing to be carried and upheld by them; their overshadowing of the mercy-seat testifies to the incomprehensibility of the mysteries of your atoning grace.

These blessings, that were hidden in your secret heaven through the ages, you at the ages’ end unveiled to the world’s longing eyes, when you opened in heaven the door that is yourself. (*Meditations* 6:10-11; in William 1970: 130)

The sequence of images in this passage conformed to the convention of medieval monastic meditation. The better to facilitate think-



ing deeply on a topic, meditators both pondered ideas as abstract verbal concepts and entertained mental images that expressed the same ideas pictorially. The images that monks selected were often chosen because they were striking, memorable, and emotionally evocative. A master stylist such as William might use “a number of distinct symbols, each expressing a different facet of meaning but each blending into the others and supporting the others” (Cousins 1978: 78-79). For the purposes of meditation, the mental images did not have to bear a logical relationship to each other. They had instead to be memorable and individually informative.

William began this passage by mentioning a door in heaven. By equating not only the door but also the ark with Jesus, William provided a conceptual link from the motif of the door to the motif of the ark. The motif of the ark was presumably suggested by the biblical reference in Rev 2:17 to the hidden manna. Because manna had been kept in an urn in the Ark of the Covenant in the tabernacle in Moses’ time (Exod 16:33-34), it was reasonable for William to image the hidden manna within an ark in heaven. Revelation 11:19 mentions the ark in the heavenly temple, but William added the images of the urn on his own. By equating the heavenly ark with Jesus, William made Jesus, in his capacity as a door, open onto the hidden manna. Manna, in its turn, was “the holy and spotless soul in which the fullness of the Godhead dwelt corporeally.”

Whose was “the holy and spotless soul”? William’s intention cannot be determined from this passage in *Meditations*, but his meaning is unequivocal in a corresponding passage in his treatise *On Contemplating God*. William there wrote:

But when in my eagerness I would approach him...I want to see and touch the whole of him and – what is more – to approach the most holy wound in his side, the portal of the ark that is there made, and that not only to put my finger or my whole hand into it, but wholly enter into Jesus’ very heart, into the holy of holies, the ark of the covenant, the golden urn, the soul of our humanity that holds within itself the manna of the Godhead. (William 1970: 38-39).

In this passage, William again listed the door, the ark, and the golden urn. The soul that holds the Godhead explicitly belongs to “our humanity.” Accordingly, it was the human experience of mystical union, and not the unique event of the God-man’s hypostatic union, that William associated with the hidden manna.

William developed these ideas further in a third passage that again drew on the image of the hidden manna.

Lord, whither do you draw those whom you thus embrace and enfold, save to your heart? The manna of your Godhead, which you, O Jesus, keep within the golden vessel of your all-wise human soul, is your sweet heart! Blessed are they whom your embrace draws close to it. Blessed the souls whom you have hidden in your heart, that inmost hiding-place, so that your arms overshadow them from the disquieting of men and they only hope in your covering and fostering wings. (*Meditations* 8:4 in William 1970: 141).

In this passage, William combined several of the same images and ideas in different ways, as though he had been mulling them over in a further meditation to see how they might be recombined yet again. By the divine “embrace” that draws souls close to Jesus’ heart, hiding them in “that inmost hiding-place,” William referred to contemplative experiences of mystical union, when all souls experience union with God. However, in a reversal of the previous associations, here it was the urn that was divine and the manna that was human. The urn was Jesus’ human soul, the soul that underwent hypostatic union; and the manna, which was Jesus’ heart, was the hiding-place of human souls, implicitly in mystical union with it.

From these passages, we may infer that in meditating on the topic of mystical experience, William was guided by the eucharistic theology of Laon to the text of Rev 2:17, with its reference to the hidden manna. This literary trope, which was understood as a symbol of the divine presence in mystical experience, was imaged and associated with a variety of further images that were drawn from scripture: the ark, the urn, and so forth. Meditation was then performed simultaneously on the theological concept, its scriptural trope, and the group of mental images. The outcome of the meditations, the images or ideas at which the meditations eventually arrived, showed individual variation from one occasion to the next. In at least some cases, the meditative process spontaneously altered the significance and sequence of the images, in a fashion that a meditator might attribute to cooperative grace.

Medieval monastic life provided a great many opportunities for meditations. The Bible was read aloud during meals; and a meditative practice, termed *lectio divina*, “divine reading,” attended the public readings (Guigo 1978). There were also set times each day for private meditation. In the present context, it is additionally significant that the nineteenth chapter of the Rule of St. Benedict requires monks to conduct themselves during the divine office in a manner appropriate to “the presence of God and his angels.”

We believe that the divine presence is everywhere and *that in every place the eyes of the Lord are watching the good and the wicked* (Prov 15:3). But

beyond the least doubt we should believe this to be especially true when we celebrate the divine office.

We must always remember, therefore, what the Prophet says: *Serve the Lord with fear* (Ps 2:11), and again, *Sing praise wisely* (Ps 46[47]:8); and, *In the presence of the angels I will sing to you* (Ps 137[138]:1). Let us consider, then, how we ought to behave in the presence of God and his angels, and let us stand to sing the psalms in such a way that our minds are in harmony with our voices. (Benedict 1982: 47)

Benedict's approach to the mass, which conceptualized the participants in the presence of God and his angels in the heavenly temple, had an approximate parallel in the Syriac Christian *Book of the Holy Hierotheos* (Marsh 1927), which dates, like Benedict's rule, to the sixth century. The book discusses a secret practice of the eucharist, attended exclusively by priests, which was imagined or described symbolically as a mass officiated by Christ in heaven, in whose course the recipient of the mass experienced mystical union with Christ. These Christian practices of imagining oneself in the heavenly temple of God had historical forerunners, I need scarcely remark, in the Priestly rites of the Jerusalem temple (Haran 1978), the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* at Qumran (Newsom 1985, 1990; Elior 2004b; Alexander 2006), the *Testament of Levi* (Alexander 2006: 83-84), and many of the ascensions to heaven in Jewish apocalyptic literature (Himmelfarb 1993).

In Benedict's ritual practice, the obligation to imagine the presence of God was not characterized as a mystical technique. Because Christian theology prohibits the belief that voluntary efforts can attain visionary states, Christianity acknowledges no mystical techniques beyond prayer. At the same time and from a secular perspective, we may recognize that because people differ in their abilities to achieve visions, the achievement cannot reasonably be required of participants at rituals. It can be made an obligatory goal for people who self-select to become meditators, but it cannot successfully be required of the larger part of the population that participates in rituals. Its occasional occurrence during ritual performances was nevertheless expected and welcomed. In the twentieth chapter of his Rule, Benedict stated that "prayer should ... be short and pure, unless perhaps it is prolonged under the inspiration of divine grace" (Benedict 1982: 48).

The evangelization of the Gentiles was responsible for the inclusion within Christianity of non-Jewish approaches to spirituality, beginning no later than Paul's difficulties with the Corinthians, and extending through many of the early Christian apocalypses. At the

same time, we may appreciate that the Jewish school of allegorical visionary praxis that descended from the Jewish apocalypses into the Gospels, Revelation, and rabbinic aggadah, also reached Christian monasticism, whose institutional structure was able to preserve it for centuries as a coherent praxis.

## Letters and Seals

The monastic practice of converting concepts into images as a prelude to meditation is demonstrable, centuries prior to the rise of the monastic movement, in the New Testament book of Revelation. Whether the text is, as Marshall (2001) plausibly argues, Jewish and not Christian, it dates to the late first century, the precise period of Yochanan ben Zakkai and his students, whose legends are narrated in the second chapter of *Hagigah*.

Revelation asserts the allegorical character of many of the images in its visions. The first vision, which accomplishes John's commission as a prophet, concludes with the statement: "As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in my right hand, and the seven golden lampstands, the seven stars are the angels of the seven churches and the seven lampstands are the seven churches" (Rev 1:20). In this manner, Revelation, like Daniel 7, appropriated the mythological tropes of the ascension apocalypses and invested them with allegorical meanings. Among the topics that John allegorized, I suggest, was the praxis of exegetical meditation. Let us attend closely to the motifs of seven letters and seven seals.

John is told to compose seven letters that are to be addressed to the angels of seven churches. Each letter is different, and there are no manifest connections among them. They are presented simply as a collection of unrelated letters that an angel happened to reveal to John (Rev 2:1-3:21). Next comes a vision of a throne in heaven, with one seated on the throne, surrounded by twenty-four elders and four living creatures (4:1-11). The enthroned being holds a scroll that is sealed with seven seals (5:1). John then mourns.

And I saw a strong angel proclaiming with a loud voice, "Who is worthy to open the scroll and break its seals?" And no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth was able to open the scroll or to look into it, and I wept much that no one was found worthy to open the scroll or look into it. Then one of the elders said to me, "Weep not; lo, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has conquered, so that he can open the scroll and its seven seals." (Rev 5:2-5)

These verses express the interplay between meditative technique and its revelatory response. John cannot open the scroll, because he cannot produce revelations. Only a heavenly being can open the scroll. Like mental imaging, however, weeping was a means by which seers might pray or prepare for revelation. The mixing of metaphors, by which the Lion of Judah (Rev 5:5) is a Lamb (5:6, 8) who opens the seals (6:1), emphasized the psychological nature of the vision. Like Pharaoh's dreams of seven cattle and seven sheaves of grain (Gen 41:1-7), the Lion and the Lamb were mental images that were equivalent or interchangeable for John's purposes. John constructed the mental image of the Lamb in the hope that it would function as a vehicle of revelation within a vision. He could as easily have meditated on another image such as a Lion.

Following these prefatory indications about mental imagery in general, John proceeded to the details of each of the seven seals. Scholars have not previously noticed that some of the verbal contents of the seven letters correspond to some of the images on the respective seven seals.

1. The letter to Ephesus, the first church, states "To him who conquers, I will give permission to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God" (Rev 2:7b). The image of the first seal was a rider on a white horse, who had a bow and a crown. The text states that "he went conquering and to conquer" (6:2). In this way, the image on the first seal allegorized the ideas in the first letter, transforming a topic of abstract verbal conceptualization – "conquest" – into a mental image that could be used in meditation in order to cultivate a vision.
2. The second letter, addressed to Smyrna, includes the statements: "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and for ten days you will have tribulation. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev 2:10-11). The second seal portrays a rider on a red horse, who is given a great sword, and removes peace from the earth, so that people kill one another (6:4). Once again, the image allegorizes ideas in the corresponding letter. The concepts of the devil and tribulation were expressed as the mental image of a sword-bearing rider who kills people.
3. The third letter and seal introduce a new detail regarding the selection of imagery for meditation. Instead of having the motifs of the seal *repeat* the motifs on the letter, the second sets of motifs *contrast with* the first. The third letter refers to church members at Pergamum "who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak

to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, that they might eat food sacrificed to idols and practice immorality" (Rev 2:14). The third seal (6:5-6) similarly addresses the topic of food; but it does so differently, by portraying famine. Within the third seal, the visual image of scales to weigh food is inconsistent with the auditory reference to the cost of grain by *volume* (Aune 1998: 396). Discrepant doctrinal ideas are similarly juxtaposed. In 1 Cor 8, Paul permitted eating food sacrificed to idols, on the grounds that idols have no real existence; although he allowed that some individuals might be led into sin through the practice. In 1 Cor 10:23-11:1, Paul again permitted eating food sacrificed to idols; he acknowledged, however, that on-lookers might thereby be led into sin. John's criticism of Balaam and Balak may have been addressed to followers of Peter and Paul (Himmelfarb 1997: 90). Certainly the phrase "stumbling block" alluded to Paul's teaching that Mosaic law is a stumbling block for Jews (Rom 9:32-33). Through its image of famine as a rider on a black horse who holds a pair of scales (6:5), the third seal alludes to a different criticism of rabbinic teaching. Scores of rabbinical sayings discussed good and bad deeds as earning merits and demerits that were recorded in a heavenly Book of Life. By the first century B. C. E., *imitatio dei* had translated this trope about divine retribution into a practice of judgmentalism within the Jewish community. The mishnaic teaching, "Judge all men on a scale of merit" (Abot 1:6) was explicitly rejected by Jesus' saying, "Judge not, that you be not judged" (Matt 7:1; compare Luke 6:37).

4. The fourth letter, addressed to Thyatira, includes a discussion of the process of divine retribution: "those who commit adultery... I will throw into great tribulation, unless they repent... I am he who searches mind and heart, and I will give to each of you as your works deserve" (Rev 2:22-23). The letter's description of "this teaching" as "what some call the deep things of Satan" (2:24) referred, I suggest, to God's purpose in creating Satan. In Job and rabbinic teaching, Satan furthers God's purposes by exacting retribution on God's behalf. The fourth seal allegorizes these ideas of divine retribution in its image of a rider on a pale horse. His "name was Death, and Hades followed him; they were given authority" (6:8). As an abstract concept, retribution could not be converted directly into a mental image; the somewhat far-fetched reference to "the deep things of Satan" provided the opportunity, however, to portray Satan as the rider named Death. The identification was rabbinic: "Rabbi Simon ben Laqish said: Satan, the evil

inclination, and the angel of death are one and the same" (*b. Baba Batra*, 16a).

5. The fifth letter, addressed to Sardis, advocates the perfection of works. The letter ends with the promise that those who "are worthy" will "walk with me in white" garments (Rev 3:4). This image recurs on the fifth seal. On the seal, "the souls of those who had been slaughtered for the word of God" (6:9) are given white robes (6:11).
6. The sixth letter, to Philadelphia, promises deliverance in the end-times. "I will keep you from the hour of trial which is coming on the whole world, to try those who dwell upon the earth" (Rev 3:10). The abstract concept of a trial could not be expressed as a mental image that was suitable for use in meditation. Because individual trials could be pictured in their concreteness, the sixth seal conveyed the general idea of trial by portraying disaster on a cosmic scale: "there was a great earthquake; and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale; the sky vanished like a scroll that is rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place (6:12-14). The motif of trial occurred within the mental image as direct speech. Men call "to the mountains and rocks...the great day of...wrath has come, and who can stand before it?" (6:17).
7. The seventh letter, addressed to the church in Laodicea, demands repentance. "I know your works....For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing; not knowing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked....Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; so be zealous and repent" (Rev 3:15, 17, 19). As an abstract concept, repentance was unsuitable for representation by a mental image that could be used in meditation. The seventh seal instead portrayed the worship of God. "When the Lamb opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour" (8:1). The motif alluded both to the revelation of the "still small voice" to Elijah on Mount Horeb in 1 Kgs 18:11-12, and also to Ps 65:2, "to You silence is praise," which the Qumran *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice* interpreted as the worship distinctive of the highest angels in heaven (Alexander 2006: 22, 38, 41, 98 n. 3).

The correspondence of the seven letters and the seven seals is tidy. The seals expressed concepts in pictorial imagery that the letters had formulated verbally. Because the letters to the seven churches alluded, among other texts, to the letters of Paul (Charles 1920: 94-95;

Fiorenza 1985: 151), the seven seals provided object lessons in the procedure of exegetical meditation on the letters of Paul, as well as on the seven letters of Rev 2-3. Revelation indicated how to prepare scripturally based, abstract ideas in forms that could be visualized as mental images for the purpose of cultivating visions. The first two seals presented simple examples of the procedure that depended on literal correspondences between texts and images. More sophisticated procedures were illustrated in the further examples. The third letter borrowed a phrase from Paul, but the third seal devised an image that alluded to a contrary teaching by Jesus. The fourth letter, on divine retribution, briefly mentions the concept of "the deep things of Satan"; the fourth seal was wholly devoted to exploring this doctrinal curiosity. The fifth, sixth, and seventh letters each mentioned abstract concepts whose pictorial representation by the corresponding seals required still greater ingenuity. By these examples, the seven letters and seals together comprise an introduction to the practice of exegetical meditation.

The procedures of exegetical meditation that were outlined in Revelation can also be discerned in midrashic descriptions of visions. In *Mechilta d'Rabbi Ishmael*, Rabbi Akiba resolved the apparent paradox in Exod 20:18, "And all the people were seeing the sounds," by explaining: "Seeing and hearing that which is given to sight; they saw a word (Hebrew *Diber*) of fire coming out of the mouth of the *Gevurah* (= *dynamis*) and being hewed on the Tables" (as cited in Gruenwald 1980: 73, n. 1). According to this midrash, the Israelites at Sinai heard the ten commandments and mentally imaged an archangel whose mouth spewed fire that carved the two tablets of stone. The Sinai revelation was not an instance of synesthesia, when sensory channels are confused. The Israelites saw a coherent symbolic vision that portrayed the miraculous carving of the words in stone, precisely as though they had been performing exegetical meditations.

## The Construction of Complex Image Sequences

Farrer (1949: 47) suggested that when John did "not mark the introduction of a fresh vision by the numbering of its angel or seal," he made "use of the rubric 'And I saw.'" This literary convention in Revelation, which announced the commencement of a vision with phrases such as "And I saw" or an equivalent, may be traced as early as the biblical book of Zechariah. Although Zechariah's night



visions have traditionally been counted as seven, the tell-tale literary signals are twelve: "I saw this night, and behold!" (Zech 1:8); "And I lifted my eyes and saw. Behold!" (2:1); "And Yahweh showed me" (2:3); "And I lifted my eyes and saw. Behold!" (2:5); "And behold!" (2:7); "And he showed me" (3:1); "And the angel that talked with me returned...And he said to me" (4:1-2); "And I returned, and I lifted my eyes and saw. Behold!" (5:1); "And the angel who spoke with me went out and said to me" (5:5); "And behold!" (5:7); "And I lifted my eyes and saw. Behold!" (5:9); and "I returned, and I lifted my eyes and saw. Behold!" (6:1). The religious significance of the number twelve makes it improbable that the number of Zechariah's formulas was accidental. Active phrasings, such as "And I looked," "And I saw," "and I lifted my eyes," and so forth, referred to the meditative act of constructing a mental image. Both the term "Behold!" and passive constructions such as "And he showed me" or "said to me" signified the onset of a spontaneously or autonomously unfolding vision, subsequent to an effort of meditation.

When notice is taken of these literary markers, major visions in several of the apocalypses appear to have been literary constructions that were built out of a great many smaller visions. Consider, for example, the so-called sixth vision of *4 Ezra*, a further text that dates to the end of the first century. Stone (1990: 82) used the markers to divide the text into four literary episodes, each containing subdivisions. The better to disclose the psychological features that underlie the literary presentation, I have instead divided the sixth vision into eight paragraphs that all begin with a formula that signals the beginning of what I regard as having been a discrete exegetical meditation and its corresponding vision:

<sup>132</sup>And behold, a great wind arose from the sea, so that it stirred up all its waves.

<sup>3</sup>And I looked, and behold, this wind made something like the figure of a man come up out of the heart of the sea.

And I looked, and behold, that man flew with the clouds of heaven; and wherever he turned his face to look, everything under his gaze trembled, <sup>4</sup>and wherever the voice of his mouth issued forth, all who heard the voice melted as wax melts when it feels the fire.

<sup>5</sup>After this I looked, and behold, an innumerable multitude of men were gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came up out of the sea.

<sup>6</sup>And I looked, and behold, he carved out for himself a great mountain, and flew upon it.

<sup>7</sup>And I tried to see the region or place from which the mountain was carved, but I could not.

<sup>8</sup>After this I looked, and behold, all who had gathered together against him, to wage war with him, were much afraid, yet dared to fight. <sup>9</sup>And when he saw the onrush of the approaching multitude, he neither lifted his hand nor held a sword or any weapon of war; <sup>10</sup>but I saw only how he sent forth from his mouth as it were a stream of fire, and from his lips a flaming breath, and from his tongue he shot forth a storm of fiery coals. <sup>11</sup>All these were mingled together, the stream of fire and the flaming breath and the great storm, and fell on the onrushing multitude which was prepared to fight, and burned them all up, so that suddenly nothing was seen of the innumerable multitude but only the dust of ashes and the smell of smoke. When I saw it, I was amazed.

<sup>12</sup>After this I saw the same man come down from the mountain and call to him another multitude which was peaceable. Then the forms of many people came to him, some of whom were joyful and some sorrowful; some of them were bound, and some were bringing others as offerings. (*4 Ezra* 13:2-13; translated in Stone 1990:381-82)

This vision in *4 Ezra* was exegetical. Its major concern is with a redeemer figure, in the tradition of *Dan* 7, *1 Enoch* 37-71, and the New Testament (Stone 1990:382). It calls him a man and not "son of man" and emphasizes his function as a warrior (p. 211). The visions of *Dan* 7 and *4 Ezra* 13 both commenced with winds stirring the sea (*Dan* 7:2; *4 Ezra* 13:2). The Ezra-seer, a term that I shall use for the pseudonymous seer whose visions were narrated as those of Ezra, presumably began this vision complex by meditation on the text of *Dan* 7:2.

The second paragraph of the vision took a novel course that partly resembled but otherwise departed from *Dan* 7. Where *Dan* 7:3 has four beasts emerge from the sea, *4 Ezra* 13:3a has "the figure of a man" emerge from the sea. Because *Dan* 7:17 interprets the sea as the earth, we may interpret the man as terrestrial. The symbolism controverted an interpretation (see Black 1976) that was current in the author's day. It revised the traditions about the son of man by conceptualizing not a heavenly and cosmic redeemer but a mortal human hero (Stone 1968: 302, 305-10). The motif of the sea has also a further significance. The beasts that emerge from the sea in *Dan* 7 are villainous; they are defeated when the son of man triumphs. In *4 Ezra* 13, it is the man who emerges from the sea. This shift from villains to hero implies a change in the symbolic use of the motif of the sea (Stone 1990: 383). In both cases, the motif of the sea is a negative symbol whose meaning derives ultimately from the evil, villainous character of the god Yamm in Canaanite mythology. Where, however, the beasts in Daniel are evil creatures that issue from the evil realm of the sea, the man in *4 Ezra* instead resembles the biblical prophet Jonah, who emerged unscathed from the depths of the sea

(compare Stone 1990: 384). It is implicit, I suggest, that like the prophet Jonah, the man in *4 Ezra*, when first we meet him, has already undergone a transformative experience of the death-and-revival type that the Ezra-seer himself underwent in the fourth vision of *4 Ezra* (Stone 2003b: 173).

Unlike the first two paragraphs, each of which narrates a single image, the third paragraph involves either a series of three images, or a single complex image that had to be divided into three in order to be narrated. In either event, the emergent materials proceeded as though the seer had selected the man of the second paragraph as the topic for his next meditations. Agreeing with Dan 7:13, Mark 13:26, and Matt 24:30, the Ezra-seer allowed that the man rides the clouds of heaven (*4 Ezra* 13:3b); but his ascension to heaven followed his mortal origin in 13:3a. The man's gaze was fearsome (13:3c-4), a motif that characterized God in Ps 104:32 and both God and angels in several apocalypses (Merkur 1989). The man's voice caused enemies to melt, an effect that the Hebrew Bible attributed to God (Ps 97:5; Mic 1:4; Stone 1990: 383). When the motifs of ascension, angelic fearfulness, and power to cause melting are taken together, they suggest that the man's ascension to the clouds accomplished his apotheosis or transfiguration into an angel. The motif of transfiguration was a frequent one in ascension apocalypses (Murray-Jones 1992; Himmel-farb 1993: 47-71). Philo allegorized the motif, explaining the transference of Enoch into a heavenly immortal as his repentance: "Transference implies turning and changing, and the change is to the better because it is brought about by the forethought of God.... And the expression used of the transferred person, that he was not found, is well said, either because the old reprehensible life is blotted out and disappears and is no more found, as though it had never been at all, or because he who is thus transferred and takes his place in the better class is naturally hard to find" (*On Abraham*, 18-19; Philo 1935: 13).

The fourth paragraph of *4 Ezra* 13 begins as though the seer next meditated on the topic of those who melted at the sound of the man's voice. These men were seen to be gathered by the four winds, a motif that alluded to the text of Dan 7:2-3, where the four winds were associated with four beasts. Although the manifest content of the two visions differed, their meanings were equivalent. The four beasts of Dan 7 signified the nations, who were directly portrayed as men in *4 Ezra* 13:5. The phrasing, "gathered together from the four winds of heaven to make war against the man who came up out of the sea," has multiple meanings. The four winds of heaven was a figurative expression with much the same meaning as the four points of the

compass and the four corners of the earth (Stone 1990: 385). At the same time, the phrasing alluded to the distinction between the man's emergence from the sea and his ascension to heaven. His enemies objected to his death-and-revival, not to his repentance.

In the fifth paragraph, the topic of meditation was implicitly the man, who carves a mountain and flies onto it. The motif was presumably influenced by the stone cut out of a mountain without hands in Dan 2:34, 45 (Oesterley 1933: 155). Here, as previously in *4 Ezra* 13, the Danielic symbol was revised in a fashion that emphasized the terrestrial, mortal nature of the hero.

The sixth paragraph, "And I tried to see the region or place from which the mountain was carved, but I could not" (13:7) asserted that the seer's next effort at meditation did not succeed in cultivating a vision. The seer had hoped that imaging the mountain would lead to a revelation concerning its geographical location, but his effort was unsuccessful.

The eschatological war of Dan 7:21-22 furnished the exegetical background of the seventh paragraph (13:8), whose initial topic is the men who opposed the man. Once again, the eschatological scenario in Daniel was modified to reflect the earthly origin and mortal nature of the man. Rather than Dan 7's war against God, God's victory, and God's peacetime installation of the Son of Man in a kingdom, *4 Ezra* 13 has the eschatological war proceed directly against the man. God's miraculous involvement in the war was indicated, however, by the image in the eighth paragraph of the man using neither his hand, nor a spear, nor any weapon of war (13:9), a motif that also occurs in *Psalms of Solomon* 17:33-34 (Stone 1990: 386). The seer had evidently hoped for a coherent explanation of the man's manner of combat. He expressed disappointment in his phrasing: "but I saw only how he sent forth from his mouth as it were a stream of fire..." (13:10). At this juncture, there was a considerable autonomous development of the visionary state, with image upon image compounding into the lengthiest unit of vision in *4 Ezra* 13. The remark at the end of the eighth paragraph, "When I saw it, I was amazed" (*4 Ezra* 13:11), referred not only to the content of the particular unit of vision, but also to its unprecedented length and complexity. The allegorical significance of the imagery is transparent. Fire is typical of biblical theophanies and is a major weapon of God. In Ps 18:9, fire issues specifically from God's mouth (Stone 1990: 212, 387). The application of the motif to the man in *4 Ezra* both alludes to God's power and humanizes its deployment. Stone (1990: 386) noted that the image is consistent with Isaiah's prophecy regarding the "stump of Jesse":

“and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked” (Isa 11:4). It similarly agrees with the text of Jeremiah’s commission: “Behold, I have put my words in your mouth. See, I have set you this day over nations and over kingdoms, to pluck up and to break down, to destroy and to overthrow” (Jer 1:9b-10c). The man whom the seer envisioned was not to be a warrior using military weapons, but a prophet speaking the word of God.

The final visual image (3:12-13a) in the eighth paragraph echoed Dan 7:14, 27, which pertain to the establishment of the Son of Man’s kingdom among the righteous. At the same time, the Ezra-seer envisioned a community not only of the righteous, but also of the sorrowful and punished.

In all, the literary markers divide Ezra’s sixth vision into eight units that correspond to eight efforts to meditate. Seven of the efforts successfully resulted in original visions. Not only may we distinguish conscious meditative efforts at mental imaging from unconsciously emergent images, but at least much of the unconsciously emergent materials may have been auto-suggested. We may suspect, for example, that the Ezra-seer intended from the start to replace Dan 7’s heavenly Son of Man with an earthly, mortal man. If so, the manifestation of the doctrinal change in the second paragraph in form of a vision would have been autosymbolic (Silberer 1909, 1912), an unconscious transformation of consciously held ideas into images that were symbolic of those ideas. The image in the eighth paragraph that surprised the Ezra-seer was presumably a novelty, an unanticipated creative inspiration that emerged spontaneously from his unconscious. Three distinctions may then be made among the contents of Ezra’s sixth “vision”: (i) conscious mental imaging, as preparatory acts of meditation; (ii) passive experiencing of autonomously manifesting images, understood by the seers as visions; and (iii) a differential analysis of the autonomously manifesting images, according to whether they were autosymbolic or inspired. The process was exegetical from beginning to end. The initial topic of meditation was the biblical text of Dan 7; but the interpolation of a doctrinal difference – the mortal nature of the man – led the Ezra-seer partly to depart from and partly to conform to the text of Dan 7, culminating, much to his surprise, in expecting not a warrior on the Maccabean precedent intended by the book of Daniel, but a prophet of the classical biblical type.

On alerting from his dream, Ezra prayed to be taught its interpretation (13:13b-20); but the verbal revelations that he received

did not stop at explicating the meanings of the images. The verbal revelations frequently re-interpreted the images, adding meanings beyond those implicit in the imagery. Stone (1990:211, 402) noted, for example, that the dream consistently portrayed a man, but the verbal interpretations identify him as a "servant" (13:32, 37, 52) "through whom he [God] will deliver his creation" (13:26). Again, the final dream image of the gathering of a mixed multitude is expanded into a lengthy account of the ingathering of the lost tribes of Israel. Some of the ideas in the interpretations refer not to Ezra's sixth vision, but to passages earlier in *4 Ezra* (Stone 1990: 397). The inconsistencies have often led textual scholars to divide sources on the assumption that the author of the dream differed from the author of the interpretations (Stone 1990: 398-99); but this procedure is unnecessary.

Before taking recourse to source criticism, it is always appropriate to question whether manifest inconsistencies are better explained psychologically. In psychoanalysis, it is well known that narrating and interpreting a dream continue the dream process of making the unconscious conscious; and the interpretations of Ezra's sixth vision may be read in parallel, as having continued the Ezra-seer's meditative process. The interpretations treat the prior vision not as a text to be expounded systematically, but as points of departure for further inspirations. Some interpretations completely ignore some of the dream images. Some expand extensively beyond the content of other dream images; and some directly contradict the contents of still others. These peculiarities of the interpretations may be explained psychologically as products of resistance. Had the interpretations been resisted less, they would have corresponded better to the dream images, been organized better as narratives, and so forth. Images can undergo whatever symbolic displacement is necessary in order to accommodate resistance, but verbal interpretations of the images can undergo displacement only at the expense of manifest incoherence.

In 13:25-26, God stated that the man who emerged from the sea in 13:3a was being kept until the end-times. We may assume that the seer was curious as to when the man would emerge, and that his creative unconscious announced its ignorance by saying what the seer already knew, to wit, that the man would come at the end-times. In 13:27, where we should expect an interpretation of the man's terrible gaze and frightening voice in 13:3b-4, we instead find God explaining the wind, fire, and storm that emerged from the man's mouth in 13:9-10. The oral phenomena were interpreted as words that had the power to unite the nations in waging war against the man (13:28-34).

In this way, the prophetic character of the man, which was expressed allegorically in the images of the seventh paragraph, became increasingly explicit verbally.

Next, the mountain of 13:6, whose geographical location the Ezra-seer had not been able to envision in 13:7, was summarily identified as Zion in 13:35. In psychoanalysis, the illogical interpretation of a puzzling image that makes it conform to prior expectations is a common result of resistance to the unconscious meaning of a dream; and the motif in *4 Ezra* may be understood in parallel. As Stone remarked, "The manifestation of Zion at the end of days is a common idea in the book and in general in Jewish and Christian literature of this age" (1990: 403). That the Ezra-seer's visionary state was still in progress is disclosed by the interpretations' reactions to the imposition of common ideas about Zion. The Ezra-seer had seen the man carve a mountain in a place that he was unable to see (13:7), but the interpretation maintained to the contrary that the mountain had been carved without hands (13:36). The interpretation was presumably influenced by the stone cut out of a mountain without hands in Dan 2:34, 45; but the text of Daniel apparently served the Ezra-seer as a day residue that alluded to a further biblical image: the two tablets of the Mosaic Decalogue, whose masonry and engraving were done by God (Exod 32:16). The implicit allusion to the Pentateuchal narrative became transparent in *4 Ezra* 13:37-38, where the power of the man's words was explained as the rebuke that he would make of sinners, effortlessly but inexplicably destroying them "by the law (which was symbolized by the fire)." This surfacing of the idea of Mosaic law would suggest that unconsciously the mountain had always signified Sinai and not Zion. A complex sequence of associations that incrementally wear down the resistance to an unconscious message is frequently encountered in the clinical interpretation of dreams. It is equally expectable of visionary experiences. The Ezra-seer was consciously imposing an interpretation regarding Zion that his creative unconscious rejected by insisting on the law of Moses. And unlike the fabulous eschatological scenario at which he aimed consciously, his unconscious theology was realistic. The battleground where good combats evil is anywhere that the law is contested.

The final interpretation in *4 Ezra* 13 was more pedestrian. The interpretation in 13:39-50 considerably expanded on part of the final images of 13:12-13, treating the man's summons of his people as the ingathering of the twelve tribes of Israel.

As I trust will be obvious from my analysis of *4 Ezra* 13, concern with the visionary experiences that underlie texts about visions is

not a secondary issue that literary scholars may safely treat as an afterthought, if at all. Understanding how exegetical meditations work and how they were reported in ancient literature affects both the literary and source criticisms of these texts.

## Psychoanalytic Remarks on Visionary Experiences

The term “vision” belongs to religion, rather than psychology, and provides an all-inclusive umbrella term that confabulates a variety of different psychological phenomena. For many years, historians of religion assumed that visions, like mystical experiences, occur exclusively in states of dissociation or trance (for example, Arbman 1963, 1968, 1970; Lindblom 1962). The awareness that some religious ecstasies do not involve dissociation (Merkur 1992, 1993) is implicit in the traditional Buddhist distinction between concentrative meditation and mindfulness or insight meditation (Goleman 1977). Concentrative techniques are self-hypnotic and induce dissociation. Mindfulness techniques differ. The Neoplatonic tradition of late antiquity provided a phenomenological parallel to the Buddhist categories in its distinction between union with the One and union with the *nous*, or Active “Intellect” (Merlan 1963). Intellectualist mysticism – union with the *nous* – traces to the theory of contemplation by which Aristotle accounted for his experiences of creative inspirations (Leshner 1973); and Aristotle’s approach was perpetuated not only by Neoplatonists, but also by medieval Aristotelians in both Islam and Judaism (Fakhry 1971; Blumenthal 2006; Bakan – Merkur – Weiss 2009). To designate these nondissociative Buddhist and Western philosophical alternate states, I employ the term “reverie” (Bachelard 1987). Reveries are wholesome states that are universally experienced in play, daydreaming, and aesthetic experiences. Used with greater deliberation and purpose, reverie states are also routine components of the creative process for many poets, writers, painters, musicians, inventors, mathematicians, scientists, and so forth. Many psychoanalysts seek reveries (Bion 1962) while they listen to patients with what Freud (1912: 112) called “evenly suspended attention.” A hallmark of reverie states, by which they differ from dissociative states, is the subject’s psychological mindedness. Reveries are known to be reveries both during their occurrence and afterwards.

The visions discussed in the present article, which were induced through meditations on scriptural texts, were known to be visions both during and after their occurrence. Their onset was induced, but



they were prized for their spontaneous departures from the self-suggestions with which they began. They typically remained coherent and did not lapse into dreamlike riots of incomprehensible imagery. They also tended to be comparatively brief. Where Carruthers (1998) treated exegetical meditation as an application of the mnemonic practice called *ars memoris*, "art of memory," to the text of scripture, it may be more useful historically to think in terms of an appropriation of *ars memoris* for intellectualist meditations on scripture.

Exegetical meditations may simultaneously be understood with reference to the psychology of creative inspirations. Rephrasing Wallas' (1926) classic account, we may distinguish four phases within the creative process: preparation, incubation, inspiration, and application. In exegetical meditations, preparation consisted of the selection of the text for exegesis and the conversion of its verbal formulation into mental images, that is, the replacement of discursive thinking with nondiscursive thinking (Langer 1957). When the meditative effort was successful, unconscious incubation would be followed by the conscious manifestation of a solution to the problem, in the form of an image or images during an "aha" experience of understanding, inspiration, intuition, or insight. The new images, or the new arrangement of previously selected images, would convey the creative innovations. Scholars who know the creative process in the context of their own literary productivity will appreciate, however, the variations to which the creative process is subject. Some preparatory efforts fail, others trigger inspirations that are limited and brief, and others again lead to an outpouring that may continue for hours (or in rare cases, days or weeks). The ancient and medieval practices of exegetical meditations depended on much the same creative process, deployed to the task of scriptural exegesis, and may be expected to have varied from frequently brief moments of inspiration to occasionally more prolonged and intense periods of illumination.

Intriguingly, exegetical meditators' preference for mental images, rather than for the verbal contents of scriptural texts, is consistent with the findings by historians of science that moments of scientific creativity tend to take form as metaphors or analogies (Hesse 1970; Barbour 1974; Leatherdale 1974; MacCormac 1976). The mind's best innovative thinking is done unconsciously in nondiscursive imagery even when the topic of the thinking involves abstract conceptions. Verbal or mathematical unpacking ordinarily follows only after the inspiration of imagery. This sequence, of visual imagery manifesting prior to explanatory verbal inspirations, occurs, as we have seen, in 4 *Ezra* 13 (see also Merkur 1989).

Because apocalypses present what, from a modern perspective, must be recognized as literary fictions, it may be useful to compare apocalyptic visions with a rare form of creative imagination that Dickens, Pirandello, and other modern novelists and dramatists have occasionally reported, when the characters of their fictions came alive, “speaking for themselves,” dictating what they would and would not do in different scenes, and so determining the outcomes of the narratives (Wallas 1926: 107, 209; Harding 1948: 46-7; Assagioli 1991: 58-59). Consider, for example, the following remarks by the British children’s story author, Enid Blyton:

When I begin a new book with new characters, I have no idea at all what the characters will be, where the story will happen, or what adventures or events will occur...

I shut my eyes for a few minutes, with my portable typewriter on my knee – I make my mind blank and wait – and then, as clear as I would see real children, my characters stand before me in my mind’s eye. I see them in detail – hair, eyes, feet, clothes, expression – and I always know their Christian names but never their surname...More than that, I know their characters – good, bad, mean, generous, brave, loyal, instinctive as sizing up a person in real life, at which I am quite good. As I look at them, the characters take on movement and life – they talk and laugh (I heard them) and perhaps I see that one of them has a dog, or a parrot, and I think – ‘Ah – that’s good. That will liven up the story.’ Then behind the character appears the setting, in colour, of course, of an old house – a ruined castle – an island – a row of houses.

That’s enough for me. My hands go down on my typewriter keys and I begin...

The story is enacted in my mind’s eye almost as if I had a private cinema screen there. The characters come on and off, talk, laugh, sing – have their adventures – quarrel – and so on. I watch and hear everything, writing it down with my typewriter – reporting the dialogue (which is always completely natural) the expressions on the faces, the feelings of delight, fear and so on. I don’t know what anyone is going to say or do. I don’t know what is going to happen. I am in the happy position of being able to write a story and read it for the first time, at one and the same moment. The odd thing is that if a character comes in singing a song or reciting a poem, I hear it and take it down immediately, rhyme and all – though if I were actually writing a poem about something myself, I would, like most poets, have to think hard about metre and correct rhyming. But this imaginative creative work is something quite different from *thinking* work. (Stoney 1974: 206)

Sustained creative inspiration such as Blyton reported has been very little discussed in psychological literature. Psychoanalysts refer to the vividly imagined, seemingly autonomous, and some-

times interactive characters as “psychic presences” (Schafer 1968, 1972). Most psychoanalytic discussions pertain to psychic presences of close family relations that occurred when memories were relived, rather than merely remembered (Weiss 1932, 1939; Rapoport 1944; Pious 1949; Modell 1958; Castelnuovo-Tedesco 1978; Meissner 1981). Further examples of psychic presences include religious experiences of the sense of God’s presence (James 1902; Merkur 1999). The only psychoanalyst to devote a book to the topic of psychic presences, Grotstein (2000: 171) suggested in passing that presences are integral to visionary experiences. Citing secondary sources on Avicenna and Sufism, Grotstein remarked that the “internal objects” that populate unconscious phantasies and their conscious manifestations are consistent with the Islamic concepts of *malakut*, the angelic realm, and *‘alam al-mithal*, the “world of imagination” (Corbin 1954, 1972; Rahman 1964). Where medieval Muslims contemplated an imaginal world that mystics accessed, so they believed, through the union of God’s imagination with their own, Grotstein (2000) wrote metaphorically of an “inner space” within the psyche whose population is not limited to close family members, but also includes “chimerical (hybrid) conglomerations” (p. xxi). Both remembered and imaginative internal objects may manifest as psychic presences or “preternatural presences within the psyche” (p. xxiii) that “present as images or phantoms and which we, in turn, reify as real” (p. xix). Presences are portions of the self that have been split-off and endowed with apparent objectivity. Presences seem subjectively to be autonomous entities in dreams, religious experiences, and so forth (pp. xxi-xxiii, 159-60).

For seers who engaged in exegetical meditations and knew while they were having visions that they were having visions, the validity and authenticity of a vision depended on its spontaneous or autonomous development beyond the mental imagery that the seers had constructed as topics for meditation. Possessing a theory of the unconscious psyche, we today evaluate the spontaneity of visions less naively. The difference between divine inspiration, understood theologically, and literary inspiration, understood secularly, is nevertheless doctrinal, not experiential. Theologians can be hack-writers and poets divinely inspired. We are not dealing with differences in the psychology of two types of inspiration but with the question whether, from a theological perspective, any particular inspiration is exclusively a natural product of the psyche or, in addition, has been facilitated and shaped, as Maimonides and Aquinas phrased it, through prophecy or cooperative grace.

Situating exegetical meditations in the context of hypnagogic reveries, autosymbolism, and the creative process provides a novel context for thinking about ancient visionary practices. Exegetical meditations were no less rational, and no more phantasmagorical, than creative achievements in any other sphere of the humanities and sciences. They were nevertheless genuinely visions, genuinely exegetical, and genuinely regarded as inspired by God and his angels.

# “SERPENTINE” EVE IN SYRIAC CHRISTIAN LITERATURE OF LATE ANTIQUITY\*

SERGEY MINOV

“That woman is a worm, we find  
E'er since our grandame's evil;  
She first conversed with her own kind,  
That ancient worm, the devil.”

ALEXANDER POPE, *To Mr John Moore,*  
*author of the celebrated worm-powder*

As a starting point for this excursus, I would like to quote a passage from the *Cave of Treasures*, a Syriac composition ascribed falsely to Ephrem that belongs to the loosely defined category of “rewritten Bible” and is dated to the sixth century.<sup>1</sup> The fragment that has drawn my attention is *Cav. Tr.* 4.12,<sup>2</sup> which at first glance seemed to be nothing but a quite literal rendering of Gen 3:1-5 according to the Peshitta version of the Old Testament:

ܘܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ  
ܘܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ  
ܘܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ  
ܘܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ  
ܘܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ  
ܘܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܪܘܢܐ

However, there is one remarkable trait in this passage, namely, that the author of the *Cave*, while rewriting the Peshitta text of Gen 3:1-5 – the text he reproduces almost verbatim – three times introduces the same change into the biblical text. In the three cases, underlined in this passage, where the Peshitta text has “the woman” (ܥܘܪܘܢܐ) as

\* I would like to offer this paper as a small token of gratitude to Prof. Rachel Elijor, for it was participation in the seminar on the Garden of Eden, organized by her and her colleagues at the Scholion Center for Jewish Studies in the years 2005-2006, that made me give deeper thought to the subject. I am also indebted to Dr. Maren Niehoff, Dr. Sergio La Porta, Prof. Guy Stroumsa and Prof. Michael Stone, who read an early version of this paper and offered valuable suggestions.

<sup>1</sup> On the work's dating, see the thorough discussion in Leonhard 2001.

<sup>2</sup> Ed. Ri 1987: 33. This passage exists only in the Western recension of the *Cave*.

the serpent's interlocutor, he consistently emends it to "Eve" (ܐܘܘܐ).<sup>3</sup> On the one side, this phenomenon could be explained as an expression of the general tendency on the side of the *Cave's* author to refer to the first woman by her personal name in order to avoid the generalizing "woman." Nevertheless, holding this possibility in mind, I am inclined to think that both the graphic – viz., one letter, the Yodh, distinguishing between the two words – and the phonetic – viz., similar sounding Syriac words for "Eve" (ܐܘܘܐ / *hawā*) and "serpent" (ܚܘܘܐ / *ḥewyā*) – effects of this editorial intervention betray the author's conscious decision to introduce a paronomastic word-play upon these two words into his version of the biblical narrative.

In Syriac literature from Late Antiquity, this passage is not the only instance of the world-play that involves the names of Eve and the serpent. Many additional examples of this sort are scattered throughout the works of authors writing in Syriac. At first sight this paronomasia explains itself. It is based on the closeness in orthography and sound between "Eve" and "serpent," and its appearance testifies only to the high level of philological sensitivity on the side of the authors that resort to it.<sup>4</sup> Yet, as I intend to show further, there is something more to say about this particular literary technique if we consider it in the broader perspective of late antique Syriac culture. My primary goal in what follows is to analyze the cluster of exegetical and rhetorical motifs containing "serpentine" imagery of Eve that appear in the works of Syriac authors. While speaking about "serpentine" traditions of Eve, I will focus my attention mainly on these two topics: explicit or implicit etymological connections between her name and the Aramaic word for "serpent" (*ḥiwya*), and traditions about Eve falling in love or having sexual intercourse with the serpent. First, I shall provide a review of the "serpentine" Eve material in ancient Jewish and non-Syriac Christian sources. Then I will deal in detail with the question of "serpentine" Eve in the Syriac Christian tradition.

<sup>3</sup> The text of the Peshitta referred here is that of Jansma and Koester 1977.

<sup>4</sup> That, by the way, disproves G.R. Driver's claim that such a phenomenon as word-play "is apparently unknown in early or indeed in any Aramaic literature" (Driver 1967: 121). For various examples of use of this literary technique by Syriac authors, see Charlesworth 1970; Falla 1977; Rodrigues Pereira 2000.

*“Serpentine” Eve in ancient Judaism*

It is virtually agreed upon by all biblical scholars that in distinction from “Adam,” which seems to be a real personal name,<sup>5</sup> his wife’s name *ḥawwāh*<sup>h</sup> is an artificial construct invented by the author or redactor of Genesis to convey a certain symbolic meaning.<sup>6</sup> Although several scholars have argued in favor of the direct etymological connection between Eve and the serpent in Gen 3:20a,<sup>7</sup> some of them by taking the Mother Goddess traditions from the Ancient Near East as the foundation, their arguments don’t appear persuasive.<sup>8</sup> Recently, Scott C. Layton has argued strongly against any etymological link between the Masoretic *חַוָּה* and Old Aramaic \**ḥiwwā* (“serpent”).<sup>9</sup> He considers this name to be derived from the Canaanite root \**ḥwy* (“to make alive”), which is consistent with the Biblical explanation of the name in Gen 3:20b.<sup>10</sup>

However, in post-biblical Jewish tradition the exegetical potential hidden in the similarity between Eve’s name and the Aramaic word for “serpent” was unleashed. In a most pronounced form, the motif of the “serpentine” Eve appears in the corpus of rabbinic writings. Generally speaking, the rabbis were not particularly fond of Eve, preferring to blame her rather than Adam for the fall.<sup>11</sup> There are several cases where this negative attitude finds its expression in the connection established between Adam’s wife and the serpent.

One of the most prominent examples of this approach appears in the following comment on Gen 3:20 in *Genesis Rabbah*, a Palestinian

<sup>5</sup> See Layton, S. C. 1997: 22.

<sup>6</sup> The artificiality or, at least, strangeness of this name for potential readers could be deduced from the fact that in the view of Genesis’ redactor(s) it was in need of a separate explanation, namely Gen 3:20b; see on this Layton, S.C. 1997: 23.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Cassuto 1961: 170-171. Kimelman 1996: 33-34, basing himself on the fact of the artificial nature of Eve’s name, argues for the bilingual Hebrew-Aramaic pun in Gen 3:20a. It is noteworthy that in an Old Aramaic inscription from Sefire (I.A.31), “serpent” is spelled as *חַוָּה*, although as the inscription’s editor notes it should be vocalized as *ḥiwwāh*; see Fitzmyer 1967: 14, 48.

<sup>8</sup> See Emerton 1997 for a general discussion on the difficulties entailed in application of the data from comparative Semitic philology. Concerning Eve, see Williams, A.J. 1977: 363-367. Still, there are reasons to suggest that these traditions influenced later perception of Eve in at least some of the Near Eastern cultures that came in contact with Jewish traditions.

<sup>9</sup> See Layton, S. C. 1997: 29-30.

<sup>10</sup> *Idem.*: 31.

<sup>11</sup> On the generally negative depiction of Eve in Rabbinic literature, see Bronner 1994; Lachs 1974.

midrashic collection dated usually to the fourth century, where Eve is explicitly likened to the serpent:

*And the man called his wife's name Eve. She was given to him for an adviser, but she played the eavesdropper like the serpent. [...]. R. Aha interpreted it: The serpent was your (Eve's) serpent (הווייה הוויך), and you are Adam's serpent (ואת חויה דאדם) (20:11).<sup>12</sup>*

In addition, one finds in rabbinic writings a number of exegetical traditions evolving around the serpent's passion for Adam's wife. In general, these traditions can be divided into the two main groups: those where the serpent's plot in Gen 3 is directed against Adam in order to get his wife,<sup>13</sup> and those where he (or Satan) actually has sexual intercourse with Eve.<sup>14</sup>

Although all these traditions are attested in the late Amoraic sources, both Palestinian and Babylonian, there is a high probability that the basic motif of Eve having intercourse with the serpent goes back well into the Second Temple period. For example, in 4 Maccabees, a pseudepigraphic work dated to the first century CE, the mother of the seven sons brings forth the following argument in her speech:

I was a chaste maiden, and did not depart from my father's house; but I kept guard over the rib fashioned into woman's body. No seducer of the desert or spoiler in the field corrupted me; nor did the seducing and deceitful serpent defile the sanctity of my chastity (οὐδὲ ἐλυμήνατό μου τὰ ἀγνὰ τῆς παρθενίας λυμεῶν ἀπάτης ὄφιδος). All the period of my maturity I abode with my husband. (18:7-9)<sup>15</sup>

One can see clearly from the phraseology used here that while defending her integrity the woman speaks about her sexual purity and not about some kind of abstract moral defilement. In so doing, she explicitly positions herself against Eve.<sup>16</sup>

Some scholars, such as Bernard Prusak, also understood the scene of Eve's seduction in the Greek *Life of Adam and Eve* (§ 19) to imply that “Satan sexually seduced Eve,” basing themselves upon the identification of the serpent's venom in this passage as “lust”

<sup>12</sup> Theodor-Albeck 1996, 1: 195. The same saying of R. Aha is found in Gen. Rab. 22:2. Cf. also a marginal gloss to Gen 3:20 in the *Targum Neophyti*, where Adam calls his wife אִשָּׁה, “serpent” (Díez Macho 1968: 19), not to speak about such later midrashic collections as *Bereshit Rabbati* 17 or *Yalkut Shimoni* on Gen 3:20.

<sup>13</sup> Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 18:6; 20:5; 85:2; *b. Sotah* 9b; *Avoth de Rabbi Nathan* (A) 1.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *b. Shabbat* 145b-146a; *b. Yebamoth* 103b; *b. Abodah Zarah* 22b; *Targum Ps-Jonathan* on Gen 4:1; *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 21.

<sup>15</sup> Hadas 1953: 239-241.

<sup>16</sup> As it was noted by Norris 1999: 109.



(ἐπιθυμία).<sup>17</sup> However, Johannes Tromp, in his recent critical edition of this text, holds this line to be a later gloss, which increases the likelihood that this tradition is a Christian addition to the original text of the *Life*.<sup>18</sup>

Although it is not an appropriate place here to discuss in detail the origins and development of this exegetical motif, several important points germane to our investigation should be made. First of all, one might point at a set of purely exegetical reasons behind these traditions. Most likely, they were triggered by the wording of Gen 3:13. Thus, as I have mentioned above, it is likely that the sexual connotations of Eve's complaint that the serpent "deceived" her (MT הִשָּׁתָּהוּ עִוְבָה) were brought to the fore already in Second Temple Jewish exegesis. It also should be kept in mind that, notwithstanding the gross imagery and misogyny of this tradition, it had a genuine exegetical rationale at its core. For its ultimate goal is to resolve a wide range of Scriptural problems, such as the strange description of Cain's birth in Gen 4:1 and his unexpectedly vicious behavior afterwards, or Seth's birth, which is described as in Adam's "likeness and image" (Gen 5:3).<sup>20</sup> An additional scriptural "hook" for this motif is provided by Gen 3:15, where God puts enmity between Eve and the serpent, from which one might infer that before this they were friends.<sup>21</sup>

There is another important factor that might contribute to the development of this exegetical motif. It belongs to the milieu of folk beliefs, namely, the widespread superstition about a "killer wife," that is, a woman who, although unwillingly, brings death to her husband. In Jewish culture this belief lurks already behind the story of Tamar and Judah in Gen 38, and is firmly attested in the Second Temple period – in the book of Tobit, for example, not to speak about the later period, when it was definitely known and shared by many Rabbis.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Prusak 1974: 94.

<sup>18</sup> See Tromp 2005: 109. On the possible Christian origins of the whole work, see de Jonge 2000a.

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that both in ancient and later literature and folklore the act of "tricking" a female protagonist by a male one does often imply a sexual dimension; for various examples of this deception-seduction cluster, see Thompson 1975, vol. 4: 381-395.

<sup>20</sup> While enjoying a quite wide circulation in rabbinic literature, this exegetical somersault gains especial popularity among the Gnostics; see on this Stroumsa 1984: 38-49.

<sup>21</sup> Among others, Origen makes use of this possibility in *Homilies on Jeremiah* 20.7.4.

<sup>22</sup> See Friedman 1990. The story of Tobit is particularly interesting because of the demon Asmodeus, who kills the husbands of a woman that he loves (Tobit 3:7-9,

An additional possibility of influence upon the development of Eve’s “serpentine” image in Jewish tradition comes from Hellenistic Egypt, where the goddess Isis was associated with another female deity, Thermouthis, and assumed the latter’s serpentine features.<sup>23</sup> It should be noted that there is archaeological evidence of the Isis-cult in Syria-Palestine,<sup>24</sup> and Isis herself is occasionally identified with Eve in Rabbinic literature.<sup>25</sup>

Last but not least: since in all late Aramaic dialects we find the same word for “serpent,”<sup>26</sup> it seems only logical to suggest that in any scripturally oriented Aramaic culture, Gen 3:20 would sooner or later unleash its ironic potential. There is no wonder that, in a male-centered exegetical perspective of reading Genesis, Eve easily becomes the serpent’s willing or unwilling collaborator against the first man, Adam, instead of being the latter’s co-victim.<sup>27</sup>

### *“Serpentine” Eve in Early Christianity and Gnosticism*

The association of Eve with the serpent that originated in Jewish circles was readily adopted and further developed by various Christian groups in accordance with their own exegetical needs and theological outlooks.

Thus the Aramaic-based word-play connecting Eve’s name with the serpent occurs sporadically throughout Christian writings from

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6:15); see also Friedman 1990: 33-35. This story, coming from the repertoire of popular beliefs, stands very close to various later traditions about the serpent being in love with Eve.

<sup>23</sup> For references see van den Broek 1973: 37-39. It is remarkable that during the Roman period the couple of Isis and Serapis were often depicted in the form of two upright snakes; see Belayche 2001: 158. That the figure of Thermouthis gained some popularity in Jewish circles during the Second Temple period attests the fact that her name was assigned to pharaoh’s daughter, who saved Moses from the waters of Nile; cf. *Jubilees* 47.5; Josephus, *Ant.* 2.224.

<sup>24</sup> See Witt 1971: 130-140; Belayche 2001: 158, 185, 212, 224; Magness 2001.

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *b. Abodah Zarah* 43a, where Eve is identified with the “female nursing image” (דמיות מניקון) mentioned in *t. Abodah Zarah* 5:1, and usually understood by scholars to refer to Isis (see Lieberman 1962b: 136-139). Recently an attempt has been made to change this identification in favor of that with the goddess Nysa nursing the infant Dionysus; see Friedheim 2003.

<sup>26</sup> Thus, besides Syriac ܫܘܪܡܘܬܐ and Jewish Palestinian Aramaic ܫܘܪܡܘܬܐ, there are Christian Palestinian Aramaic ܫܘܪܡܘܬܐ, Samaritan Aramaic ܫܘܪܡܘܬܐ, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic ܫܘܪܡܘܬܐ and Mandaic *hiuia*.

<sup>27</sup> For an example of how women were construed in one of these cultures, the Rabbinic, see Baskin 1999.

Late Antiquity. The first Christian author to employ “serpentine” etymology is Clement of Alexandria (II-III cE). While describing the Dionysiac orgies in his *Protrepticus*, Clement brings forth the following scene, where Eve’s name is likened to the Bacchic cry Εὐάν and the Aramaic word for “serpent”:

Wreathed with snakes, they perform the distribution of portions of their victims, shouting the name of Eva, that Eva through whom error entered into the world; and a consecrated snake is the emblem of the Bacchic orgies. At any rate, according to the correct Hebrew speech, the word “hevia” with an aspirate means the female snake (2.11-12).<sup>28</sup>

It is not my task here to discuss the probable source of Clement’s knowledge, but the possibility of direct Jewish influence upon him in this particular case seems very likely.<sup>29</sup> The connection between Eve’s name and the Bacchic cry seems to be employed also in the second century by Theophilus of Antioch.<sup>30</sup> Later on, we find a similar explanation of Eve’s name in the context of the Dionysiac cult in Epiphanius of Salamis’ *De Fide* (10.7). Most likely, Epiphanius has borrowed this story directly from Clement, as he was well acquainted with the latter’s writings.

We also find the etymological connection between Eve’s name and the serpent in another Greek source, the so-called *Onomasticum Coislinianum*, an anonymous composition comprised of the etymologies of scriptural figures’ names.<sup>31</sup> There the author offers for the name “Eve” such an etymology as ὄφις (“serpent”),<sup>32</sup> alongside the traditional ζωή (“life”) and θήλεια (“female”).<sup>33</sup>

<sup>28</sup> ἐπολούζοντες Εὐάν, Εὐάν ἐκείνην, δι’ ἣν ἡ πλάνη παρηκολούθησεν· καὶ σημειῶν ὀργίων βακχικῶν ὄφις ἐστὶ τετελεσμένος. Αὐτίκα γοῦν κατὰ τὴν ἀκριβῆ τῶν Ἑβραίων φωνὴν ὄνομα τὸ Ἔυια δασυνόμενον ἐρμηνεύεται ὄφις ἢ θήλεια; ed. Butterworth 1960: 30-31.

<sup>29</sup> On Clement’s Jewish connections, see Stroumsa 1995: 58-59. A remarkable detail of this story is that Clement identifies *hevyah* not as an Aramaic but as a Hebrew word. In my view, that could strengthen the argument about his reliance on Jewish informants for this etymology.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. *Ad Autolyicum* 2.28; for an analysis of this tradition, see Zeegers-Vander Vorst 1981.

<sup>31</sup> First published by Hohlenberg 1836; reprinted in de Lagarde 1887: 194-202.

<sup>32</sup> Hohlenberg 1836: 32.

<sup>33</sup> This unusual explanation of Eve’s name might be understood as a corrupted form of θηρία (“beast”) and go back to the Aramaic ܦܝܬܐ, as it was suggested by Hohlenberg 1836: 32. Another possible explanation for this etymology is that it had been deduced from the biblical references to the first couple as “male and female” (ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ); cf. Gen 1:27, 5:2 (LXX); Mt 19:4, Mk 10:6. Finally, it might be a result of misunderstanding of Clement’s words quoted above, when his ὄφις ἢ

Finally, there is one more source where explicit serpentine etymology for Eve’s name appears. In an Armenian apocryphal composition entitled the *History of the Forefathers, Adam and his Sons and Grandsons*, the following explanation of the names of Adam and Eve is offered (§ 32): “Adam means ‘earth’ and Eve, ‘serpent’ (ܒܫܘܘܐ ܘܠܕ).”<sup>34</sup> As it has been noted by Michael Stone, who published this work, the real basis for this etymology should be looked for outside of the Armenian milieu, namely, in one of the Aramaic dialects.<sup>35</sup> It seems that, similarly to the meaning of Adam’s name, the etymology of Eve’s name was also adopted by the author from a non-Armenian source.

However, the motif of the “serpentine” Eve in early Christian literature is not confined to these brief etymological observations. It appears also in implicit form, embedded in the stories about the serpent (or Satan) being sexually attracted to Eve.

One of the earliest examples of this sort comes from the *Protevangelium of James*, a second-century pseudepigraphic composition. There Joseph, upon his return to home after a long period of absence, finds his wife in the sixth month of pregnancy. He starts to express his distress in a series of jeremiads, among which the following deserve our attention:

Who has deceived me? Who has done this evil in my house? Who has captured my virgin and defiled her? Has the story of Adam been repeated in me? For as Adam was (away) in the hour of his offering of praise and the serpent came and found Eve alone and deceived her and defiled her, so also it has happened to me (13:1).<sup>36</sup>

What is remarkable in this passage is that, while drawing a parallel between Mary’s unexpected conception and the fall of Eve, the author of the *Protevangelium* lays particular stress on the sexual dimension of the serpent’s attack against Adam’s wife.

The sexual element also figures prominently in the treatment of Eve’s fall found in another pseudepigraphical work, the so-called *Questions of Bartholomew* (IV.59). Here, in order to infatuate Eve, Satan

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θήλεια was the original reading in the *Onomasticon*, but in the process of incorrect transmission it was split into the two separate etymologies.

<sup>34</sup> Stone 1996b: 196.

<sup>35</sup> Stone 1996b: 196, n. 32.

<sup>36</sup> Τίς ὁ θηρεύσας με; Τίς τὸ πονηρὸν τοῦτο ἐποίησεν ἐν τῷ οἴκῳ μου; Ἐπειὶς ἡμαλώτευσε τὴν παρθένον ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ καὶ ἐμίανεν αὐτήν; Μήτις ἐν ἐμοὶ ἀνεκεφαλαιώθη ἡ ἱστορία (τοῦ Ἀδάμ); Ὡσπερ γὰρ Ἀδὰμ ἦν ἐν τῇ ὥρᾳ τῆς δοξολογίας αὐτοῦ καὶ ἤλθεν ὁ ὄφις καὶ εὗρεν τὴν Εὐάν μόνην καὶ ἐξηπάτησεν αὐτήν καὶ ἐμίανεν αὐτήν, οὕτως κάμοι συνέβη; ed. de Strycker 1961: 122-124.

resorts to a stratagem from the arsenal of love-magic. He infuses the waters of the rivers of Paradise with his sweat, so that when Eve drinks from them she gets overwhelmed with "desire" (ἐπιθυμία) and, thus, becomes vulnerable to Satan's assault.<sup>37</sup>

But perhaps the most prominent association of Eve with the serpent was achieved among those heterodox Christians usually heaped together under the umbrella-term "Gnosticism."<sup>38</sup> While the connection between Eve and the serpent was inherited by Gnostic authors from Jewish exegetical tradition, the Gnostics creatively developed it in order to fit the framework of their particular mythological schemes.

To begin with, in several Gnostic systems one finds the idea of Eve having been sexually abused by the serpent. As an example of this approach, one can mention the system of Justin the Gnostic, who says that Eve was deceived and sexually violated by Naas, an angel whose name is derived from the Heb. נָח, "serpent."<sup>39</sup> Often instead of the serpent it is Satan, the demiurge, or the archons that violate Eve.<sup>40</sup>

Another important line of development of Eve's "serpentine" image in Gnosticism is her association with the serpent in a positive context, as a transmitter of the spiritual knowledge (*gnosis*) from the highest God to Adam. For example, in the teaching of the Peratae, as it is described by Hippolytus, the ultimate salvific principle, God's Logos of John 1:1, is referred to as the "universal serpent," which is identical with "the wise discourse of Eve."<sup>41</sup>

In some developed Gnostic mythological systems these two options appear combined, through the splitting of Eve's figure into the material and spiritual halves,<sup>42</sup> as in the following account from the *Hypostasis of the Archons* from Nag Hammadi:

<sup>37</sup> See Bonwetsch 1897: 26. This tradition appears also in a Coptic love-spell (London, Hay 10376, ln. 15-19); see Meyer & Smith 1994: 165.

<sup>38</sup> On the problematic character of this term, see Williams 1996; King 2003.

<sup>39</sup> Hippolytus, *Haer.* V.26: ὁ δὲ Νάας παρανομίαν ἔσχε· προσῆλθε γὰρ τῇ Εὐᾶ ἔξαπατήσας αὐτήν καὶ ἐμοίχευσεν αὐτήν, ὅπερ ἐστὶ παράνομον; ed. Marcovich 1986: 205.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. the *Apocryphon of John* NHC II.24.8-25; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.30.7 (for the doctrine of Ophites); Epiphanius, *Panarion* 40.5.3; 40.6.9 (the doctrine of Archontics). For more examples of this sort, and thorough discussion, see Stroumsa 1984: 38-42.

<sup>41</sup> Hippolytus, *Haer.* V.16.8: ὁ (δὲ) καθολικὸς ὄφις [...] οὗ τὸς ἐστὶν ὁ σοφὸς τῆς Εὐᾶς λόγος; ed. Marcovich 1986: 183. Similarly, in another specimen of Gnostic mythology described by Irenaeus (*Haer.* 1.30.15), Sophia, projection of the heavenly Eve, is identified with the biblical serpent. Cf. also Epiphanius, *Panarion* 26.2.6 on Borborites. For more on this motif, see Sundermann 1994.

<sup>42</sup> See on this Pagels 1986: 270-271.

Then the authorities came up to their Adam. And when they saw his female counterpart speaking with him, they became agitated with great agitation; and they became enamored of her. They said to one another, “Come, let us sow our seed in her,” and they pursued her. And she laughed at them for their witlessness and their blindness; and in their clutches, she became a tree, and left before them her shadowy reflection resembling herself; and they defiled [it] foully. [...] Then the female spiritual principle came [in] the snake, the instructor; and it taught [them] [...] (89:17-32)<sup>43</sup>

There is also Irenaeus’ account of the Ophite mythological system, where a distinction is drawn between the Spiritual First Woman “whom they call *the Mother of the living*” and the carnal woman “Eve.”<sup>44</sup> The latter was originally formed by the demiurge Jaldabaoth to deprive Adam of his spiritual power and had become a sexual object for the archons, although later on she inadvertently turns into a collaborator of Sophia-Prounikos, the daughter of the First-Woman, in her struggle against the demiurge. Another mythological system where both motifs are found is that of the treatise *On the Origin of the World* from Nag Hammadi.<sup>45</sup>

One remarkable aspect of the Gnostic writings from Nag Hammadi is that in some of the texts there is a recognizable Aramaic substratum behind paronomastic word-plays involving Eve, especially those that are most likely of Egyptian origin.<sup>46</sup> It has been suggested by Birger Pearson that these traditions were borrowed by the Gnostics from Jewish sources.<sup>47</sup> His theory seems quite plausible, whether this borrowing was direct or through intermediates, since Aramaic was known and spoken throughout Hellenistic and Roman Egypt, especially in Jewish circles.<sup>48</sup> There is also evidence of direct contacts

<sup>43</sup> Tr. Layton 1989, 1: 241-243.

<sup>44</sup> See *Haer.* 1.30.1-9, 15; tr. Unger 1992: 97-98, 102.

<sup>45</sup> See esp. 112.29-120.10. Cf. also the *Apocalypse of Adam* 64:12-13 and 66:25-28.

<sup>46</sup> Cf. *On the Origin of the World* 103-104 (ed. Layton, B. 1989, vol. 2: 72-73), where Aramaic word-play on הוה (“Eve”), הייזא (“serpent”), היזא (“beast”) and הוה (“to instruct”) is at work. Cf. also *Testimony of Truth* 45.31-47.4 (Pearson 1981: 158-163) as well as the passage from *Hypostasis of the Archons* quoted above, where a similar word-play is used.

<sup>47</sup> See Pearson 1972: 461-465. For dependence of Gnostics on Jewish traditions in this particular case, see also Stroumsa 1984: 46-47. On Jewish influence upon Gnosticism in general, see Alexander 1999; Pearson 1990.

<sup>48</sup> On Jewish presence in Roman and late antique Egypt, see Tcherikover 1963; see esp. pp. 187-189 for the evidence of the popularity of Aramaic names among Egyptian Jewry. In fact, Aramaic was used by Jews as late as V C. E.; see Lieu, J. 2002 on an Aramaic *ketuba* found in Antinoopolis, Upper Egypt.



In addition to these translated compositions, the motif of the serpent falling in love with Eve is found also in such an original product of Syriac Christianity as the *Acts of Thomas*, a pseudepigraphic work written in the third century. There, in the third act of the apostle, a story appears about the snake that killed a young man because of jealousy for his beautiful girlfriend.<sup>55</sup> This episode seems to be modeled upon the tradition about the love-triangle composed of Adam, Eve, and the serpent, well attested in rabbinic sources.<sup>56</sup> As I have argued elsewhere, the appearance of this motif in the *Acts of Thomas* and rabbinic literature betrays their dependence upon an earlier Jewish source.<sup>57</sup>

While following the development of traditions about the “serpentine” Eve in Syria-Mesopotamia, it is important to take into account the fact that at least several Gnostic groups were active in this region in antiquity. The first attested Gnostic group in Syria seems to be the one founded by a certain Quq in Edessa in the middle of the second century.<sup>58</sup> In the teaching of this group one finds, although in a significantly transformed form, the motif of Eve having been seduced by the serpent. Thus, in a short review of this sect in the eleventh chapter of Theodore bar Koni’s *Book of Scholies*, we are told about the “Mother of Life” (ܡܘܬܪ ܕܗܝܘܬܐ), a mythological female figure derived from Gen 3:20b, who was sexually tricked by the enemy of the highest God, her spouse.<sup>59</sup>

A similar motif of sexual intercourse between Eve and the archons appears in the system of the Audians, another Gnostic group that was active in Edessa during the fourth century.<sup>60</sup> Theodore bar Koni in his report on the Audians quotes from several writings of the group’s founder Audi, where this theme is developed:

He says in the *Book of the Strangers*, while representing God: “God said to Eve, ‘Conceive a child with me before the creators of Adam come to you!’” And, while representing the rulers, he says in the *Book of Questions*: “Come, let us lie with Eve, so that whatever that will be born will be ours!” And he says also that “the rulers led Eve (away) and lay with her

<sup>55</sup> See Klijn 2003: 90-92.

<sup>56</sup> Cf. *Gen. Rab.* 18:6; 85:2.

<sup>57</sup> See Minov, S., “An Unnoticed Jewish Exegetical Tradition in the *Acts of Thomas*” (forthcoming).

<sup>58</sup> See Drijvers 1967.

<sup>59</sup> *Liber Scholiorum* XI.77; ed. Scher 1910-1912, 2: 334. See translation and discussion of this fragment in Drijvers 1967: 113-123.

<sup>60</sup> The Audians are mentioned by Ephrem, *Contra Haereses* 24.16. The founder of this movement could be a native of Edessa; see Stroumsa 1998: 98-42.





such a highly influential and widespread heterodox movement as Manichaeism was active.<sup>67</sup> In Manichaean mythology we also find a treatment of Eve similar to that found in other Gnostic systems. For example, there is a story about Eve having intercourse with the archons and siding with them against Adam in the Manichaean retelling of Genesis 2-4 by Ibn al-Nadim (X c. E.), who narrates how “the [male] archon reverted to his daughter, who was Eve, and because of the lust that was in him, had intercourse with her.”<sup>68</sup> The same tradition is reflected, probably, in the anti-Manichaean *Acts of Archelaus*, where we are told that the archons “made Eve too in a similar way, and gave her some of their lust in order to deceive Adam” (12.2).<sup>69</sup> Eve as the transmitter of spiritual knowledge features in the *Kephalaia* and some other Manichaean works.<sup>70</sup> And, finally, the mythological “Mother of Life” (ܡܘܬܪ ܕܗܝܘܢܐ) that was connected with Eve in some pre-Manichaean Gnostic systems played a prominent role in Manichaeism as well.<sup>71</sup>

Turning to the “orthodox” authors writing in Syriac from the fourth century on, one discovers that there is a variety of contexts and rhetorical strategies where association of Eve with the serpent can be found.

One of the most prominent contexts where such association takes place is that of ascetical exhortation. For example, Aphrahat, a fourth-century Persian Christian writing in Syriac, in one of his homilies aimed at his fellow-ascetics, urges them to beware of Satan (identical with the serpent), since he inflames those who pursue celibacy with “the lust of Eve.”<sup>72</sup> This phrase evokes the rhetoric of contempt for marriage and sexuality, typical for a radical-ascetic faction within Early Syriac Christianity known under the name of Encratism, where these aspects of human existence were considered as invented

Syria-Mesopotamia, see Gero 1986, esp. pp. 295-303. On connection between Eve and the serpent in these two systems, see the references in nn. 54-55 above.

<sup>67</sup> On Manichaean presence in Syria, see Lieu, S. 1994: 38-53.

<sup>68</sup> *Fihrist* IX.1: ثم ان الاركون عاد الى ابنته التي هي حواء فنكحها بالشبق الذي فيه 1: 331; tr. Dodge 1970, 2: 784. For more Manichaean material on Eve as Adam’s enemy, see Reeves 1999b: 432-437.

<sup>69</sup> Tr. Vermes 2001: 56.

<sup>70</sup> See van Lindt, 1992: 148, 188-189. Eve functions there as a channel of “Jesus the Splendor,” so that through her knowledge is imparted to Adam. Cf. also Augustine’s claim that for the Manichaeans the serpent is Christ; for the reference and discussion, see Pedersen 1988: 165.

<sup>71</sup> See on this van Tongerloo 1997: 361-364.

<sup>72</sup> *Dem.* 6.2: ܡܘܬܪ ܕܗܝܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܘܠܘܢ ܕܥܘܠܘܢ; ed. Parisot 1894, col. 256, ln. 22. For identification of Satan with the serpent, cf. *Dem.* 12.8; 23.49.



Furthermore, Eve is linked to the serpent in a variety of other contexts. In a most versatile way this connection is developed in the writings of Ephrem. Thus he often engages in the sort of allusive word-play that places Eve’s name side by side with the serpent, with which I began this paper.<sup>81</sup> It has been correctly underscored by Alphonso Rodrigues Pereira that the cases where Ephrem juxtaposes Eve’s name and the word “serpent” (ܣܥܘܐ) should be considered as a deliberate choice on his side, i. e., as an intended word-play meant to present Eve in a certain way. This is supported by the fact that Ephrem’s anguine vocabulary was quite developed, as one can see from the *Nisibene Hymns*, where he uses no less than four synonyms for “serpent.”<sup>82</sup>

On a number of occasions Ephrem resorts to the motif of Eve’s falling in love with the serpent. Thus in *On Virginity*, one of his ascetical works, Ephrem brings forth the image of Eve’s fatal infatuation with the serpent, enforced by an evolved paronomasia based on her name, the word “serpent” and the verb “to love, embrace” (ܩܘܘܥܘܐ):

Eve (ܣܥܘܐ) the inexperienced found the Serpent (ܣܥܘܐ), the poisonous one whose words are sweet; she cherished him with love (ܩܘܘܥܘܐ, ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ), and he smote her to destruction.<sup>83</sup>

Later in the same work Ephrem refers to Eve as “the simple dove that has uprooted her nest and gone forth in her love after the serpent.”<sup>84</sup> In one of Ephrem’s hymns this love-affair between Eve and the serpent is alluded to in terms of hospitality:

On the other hand, Eve became a cave and grave for the accused serpent, for his evil counsel entered and dwelt in her; she who became dust became bread for him.<sup>85</sup>

On another occasion, while comparing Eve to Mary, Ephrem uses explicit sexually-charged language in order to emphasize the promiscuous behavior of Eve vis-à-vis the serpent:

Eve, who was intoxicated from the advice of pride, dared to be immoderate like a whore. She did not ask him: “Are you a slave, or a freeborn?”

<sup>81</sup> For examples of such paronomasia in Ephrem’s writings, cf. *De Paradiso* 6.8; *De Ecclesia* 46.10; *De Virg.* 17.2; 37.1; *Carm. Nisib.* 57.3; *De Fide* 83.2.

<sup>82</sup> Rodrigues Pereira 2000: 258.

<sup>83</sup> *On Virginity* 30; ed. Mitchell 1921: 180, ln. 17-18 [Syr.]; lxxxv [tr.].

<sup>84</sup> *On Virginity* 43: ܣܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ. ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ; ed. Mitchell 1921: 185, ln. 9-11 [Syr.]; lxxxviii [tr.] (modified).

<sup>85</sup> *De Nativ.* 17.6: ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ. ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ ܩܘܘܥܘܐ; ed. Beck 1959: 88; tr. McVey 1989: 155.



his wife only after the fall (Gen 3:20) – Ephrem expresses the idea that there was an opportunity for Adam to pass through the temptation unharmed, if he would only have had a somewhat deeper philological insight, and recognized the Aramaic word-play at work on the name of his partner and the serpent. Homophony between the word “serpent” and Eve’s name turns the latter into an omen that Adam fails to interpret. Treatment of personal names as possible omens played an important role in Greek and Roman antiquity.<sup>91</sup> In view of that, one might consider this passage as an additional example of Ephrem’s acquaintance with Greek culture.<sup>92</sup>

Besides Ephrem, there are others examples of Syriac authors making use of the idea of intimacy between Eve and the serpent. An interesting parallel between the two figures is drawn in another passage of the already mentioned *Cave of Treasures*. In *Cav. Tr.* 4.7-14 the author applies, to the scene of Eve’s seduction by Satan, the parable of a man teaching a parrot to speak.<sup>93</sup> According to him, Satan, in order not to scare Eve by his hideous appearance, hides himself behind the serpent, who serves him as a kind of mirror and from there speaks to her. It is noteworthy that in the description of Eve’s reaction to this plot the author of the *Cave* states that “she saw in him (i. e. in the serpent) her own image” (ܫܠܝܢ ܐܘܪܚܝܢܐ ܡܢ ܫܝܘܐ),<sup>94</sup> thus putting forward the idea of visual similarity between Eve and the serpent.

The notion of natural similarity between woman and serpent also finds expression in a hagiographical topos about a serpent that penetrates a woman’s body and has to be exercised. For example, it appears in a story found in the Syriac version of *Transitus Mariae*, where Satan in the form of a serpent enters the body of a noble woman and leaves it only after she kisses the infant Jesus.<sup>95</sup>

Finally, let us turn to perhaps the most vitriolic expression of a connection between Eve and the serpent among those that are scattered through the writings of Syriac “orthodox” authors. It belongs to Narsai, the most distinguished East-Syrian poet, who was active in Edessa and Nisibis during the second half of the fifth century. In the *Memra on the Reproof of Eve’s Daughters*, an extended and extremely misogynistic *psogos*, he describes Eve’s relationships with Satan in this way:

<sup>91</sup> See Lateiner 2005.

<sup>92</sup> On this subject, see Possekel 1999.

<sup>93</sup> Most probably, this image was borrowed by the author of the *Cave* from Ephrem’s hymn *On Faith* (31.6-7), where it serves as an illustration of God’s pedagogic approach towards humanity.

<sup>94</sup> CT 4.13 (Eastern recension); ed. Ri 1987: 32.

<sup>95</sup> Ed. Budge 1899, 1: 44-45 [Syr.], v. 2: 51-52 [tr.].



to the biblical etymology of Eve’s name.<sup>100</sup> Yet there is an additional context that might shed some light on the roots of Narsai’s misogynistic rhetoric. I would like to suggest a possibility of Zoroastrian background for the negative portrait of Eve in this work of Narsai.<sup>101</sup> Certain details in the description of Eve in the *Memra* bring to mind the mythological image of Jeh, the “Demon-Whore” (Pahl. *Jēh-dēv*), the malicious female demon that caused the fall of Gayomart, the primal man of Zoroastrian mythology.<sup>102</sup> According to Narsai, “partnership with the Evil One is very dear to her (i. e. Eve’s) mind”<sup>103</sup> and, being lustful by nature, she readily embraces him. In a similar vein, in Zoroastrian sources Jeh is presented as the intimate “friend” (*dōst*) of the Evil Spirit, whose relation to her is “as a man has a woman who is a whore as his bed-fellow.”<sup>104</sup> In Narsai’s text, Eve instructs Satan how to deceive Adam, while in the Zoroastrian myth Jeh helps Ahriman to bring down Gayomart. Finally, similarly to the Zoroastrian account of Jeh, Narsai uses the language of impurity in his description of women, for whose destructive behavior Eve serves as the paradigm. Thus he states about women that “full of impure sin are the inner chambers of their thoughts,”<sup>105</sup> and that “they defile the pure.”<sup>106</sup> These parallels are suggestive enough to allow us to propose that Narsai has deliberately infused his polemical work, aimed at a female adversary, with the misogynistic imagery of the Zoroastrian mythological account of Jeh and Gayomart known to him from the dominant Persian culture. In this regard, it should be taken into account that Narsai composed this text in Nisibis, a city located in the confines of the Sasanian Empire. This suggestion is strengthened even more by the fact that the story of Jeh and Gayomart was

<sup>100</sup> Cf. IV.244 – ܟܘܢܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ; ed. Gignoux 1968: 624. Yet Narsai occasionally resorts to the kind of “soft” paronomastic word-play involving Eve’s name and the serpent that we have seen in the *Cave of Treasures* or in Ephrem; cf. IV.135 – ܟܘܢܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ (Ibid.: 618).

<sup>101</sup> Unfortunately Sunquist 1990, who on pp. 173-174, 181-182 discusses parallels between Narsai’s treatment of Adam and Eve and Zoroastrian traditions about the primeval humans, does not take our *Memra* into consideration.

<sup>102</sup> The story of Jeh and Gayomart appears in *Bundahišn* 3; *Zātspram* 34.30-32; see Widengren 1967 for an English translation of the relevant passages and discussion, as well as de Jong 1995.

<sup>103</sup> ܟܘܢܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ; ed. Mingana 1905, 2: 361, ln. 21-22; tr. Molenberg 1993: 84, ln. 157.

<sup>104</sup> Widengren 1967: 349.

<sup>105</sup> ܟܘܢܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ; ed. Mingana 1905, vol. 2: 356, ln. 21-22; tr. Molenberg 1993: 79, ln. 67.

<sup>106</sup> ܟܘܢܘܢܐ ܕܥܘܢܐ; ed. Mingana 1905, vol. 2: 357, ln. 15; tr. Molenberg 1993: 80, ln. 80.



known to Syriac-speaking Christians, as the testimony of Theodore bar Koni demonstrates.<sup>107</sup>

## Conclusion

I would like to conclude this study with some general remarks on the development of “serpentine” Eve imagery in Syriac Christian writings from Late Antiquity.

As I have tried to demonstrate, different traditions about a close connection between Eve and the serpent entered Syriac-speaking Christian culture at the earliest stage of its formation, i. e., during the second and third centuries. Imagery of this sort played a particularly prominent role in the mythological systems of such heterodox groups as Gnostics and Manicheans. Apparently, at least in some cases, these motifs were inherited by Syriac Christians from the Jewish matrix.<sup>108</sup>

Different examples of associating Eve with the serpent are found also in the writings that belong to the later “classical” period of Syriac Christianity, which started with the fourth century and was dominated by the nascent “orthodoxy.” However, in most of these cases the authors confine themselves to the relatively mild misogynistic rhetoric of the ascetically-oriented topos of woman as *instrumentum diaboli*, or to non-offensive paronomastic word-plays. Even with respect to Ephrem, in whose writings a significant number of “serpentine” Eve motifs appears, one can hardly say that this imagery figures prominently in his arsenal of rhetorical and hermeneutical tools for dealing with the biblical story of the fall. The only remarkable exception to this trend discovered so far is the case of Narsai, whose virulently misogynistic treatment of Eve as Satan’s eager partner in crime seems to be conditioned by his extraordinary personal circumstances. Generally speaking, it looks as if there was a certain reticence on the side of the Syriac “orthodox” writers to make full use of the rich exegetical and rhetorical potential buried in the anguine associations of Eve.

As a possible expression of this tendency, I would like to point to the surprising fact that not a single example of explicit serpentine etymology for Eve’s name is found in the Syriac exegetical or theo-

<sup>107</sup> Cf. *Liber Scholiorum* XI.13. For a discussion of this tradition, see Widengren 1967: 346-347.

<sup>108</sup> On the Jewish background of Syriac Christianity, see Brock 1979; Drijvers 1992.

logical works, including biblical onomastical works.<sup>109</sup> Likewise, a majority of the later Syriac interpreters of Genesis, such as Theodore bar Koni, the anonymous *Diyarbakir Commentary*, Ishodad of Merv, or Barhebraeus, ignore the similarity between the word “serpent” and Eve’s name, and offer for it only the etymology based on Gen 3:20b. This stands in a certain contrast with the fact that many of these authors made use of Aramaic etymologies for the names of various Biblical figures.

There are a number of possible explanations for this reservation. First of all, in light of the fact that various Gnostic groups, as well as Manichaeism, posed a considerable challenge to the nascent orthodoxy in Syria,<sup>110</sup> one might argue that the “orthodox” authors writing in Syriac avoided applying serpentine imagery to Eve because it was tainted by heterodox associations. This marginalization of “serpentine” Eve traditions serves as an indicator of the new discourse of orthodoxy that developed in Syria-Mesopotamia during the fourth-fifth centuries, for which polemic against Gnosticism was one of its important constitutive factors. It might be noted in this relation that in the contemporary rabbinic tradition, whose contacts with Gnosticism could be characterized as minimal,<sup>111</sup> the “serpentine” imagery of Eve enjoyed full legitimacy.

However, it is possible to explain this difference in exegetical approaches between Syriac-Christian and Rabbinic traditions on a more general basis, namely, that such an important feature of the rabbinic approach to Scripture as “mythopoesis,” in the words of Michael Fishbane,<sup>112</sup> was alien to the classical Syriac culture, which became more and more oriented on the Greek Christian patterns of thought and imagination.<sup>113</sup> The standards set by this highly developed and influential culture, including the field of scriptural exegesis, could also contribute to the process of marginalization of indigenous exegetical traditions, including those based on an association of Eve with the serpent.

An additional factor that may have hindered the development of the traditions about a love-affair between Eve and the serpent has been suggested by Phil Botha.<sup>114</sup> The particular version of angelology

<sup>109</sup> These were published by Wutz 1915, 2: 792-847.

<sup>110</sup> On “orthodox” polemic against these groups, see Griffith 2002; Harrak 2004.

<sup>111</sup> As it has been argued by Gruenwald 1981: esp. 188-189.

<sup>112</sup> For an example of this phenomenon in Rabbinic literature, see Fishbane 1991.

<sup>113</sup> There was dramatic increase in Greek influence on Syriac culture beginning with the fifth century; see on this Brock 1998: 712-717, and Brock 2000.

<sup>114</sup> Botha 1997: 488.

held by the majority of Syriac orthodox writers might be described as a “high” angelology, according to which angels as spiritual beings are not able to mix physically with humans.<sup>115</sup> This frame of reference would leave no place for any literal kind of sexual understanding of Eve’s seduction by the serpent or Satan.

Whatever might be the reason for the relative marginalization of the “serpentine” Eve imagery in the literature produced by “orthodox” Syriac Christians, it never completely disappeared from the stock of exegetical and rhetorical motifs available to Syriac writers, as the case of Narsai shows. Hence one might look at these traditions as a kind of Chekhov’s gun that, although loaded, for the most part is just hanging on the wall; yet it could be picked up at any moment in order to make a clean shot.

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<sup>115</sup> Cf. the polemic against the understanding of the “sons of God” in Gen 6:2 as angels waged by the author of the *Cave of Treasures* (15.4-8) and by Jacob of Serug in his now lost memra *On those who say that angels had intercourse with the daughters of men* (this title is known from ms. Vatican Syriac 252, fol. 52a).

# From “Pre-Emptive Exegesis” to “Pre-Emptive Speculation”? *Ma’aseh Bereshit* in Genesis Rabbah and *Pirqei deRabbi Eliezer*

ANNETTE YOSHIKO REED

Among the most intriguing aspects of *Pirqei deRabbi Eliezer* (eighth or ninth century C. E.; henceforth *PRE*) is its approach to Genesis 1. The work begins with an expansive hexaemeral retelling.<sup>1</sup> In the course of describing God’s deeds during the six days of creation, it integrates many traditions familiar from classical rabbinic literature. Conspicuously absent, however, is the reticence that characterizes rabbinic discussion of *ma’aseh bereshit*, “work of creation.” The *locus classicus* of that discussion – *Mishnah Hagigah* 2.1 – famously sets bounds upon the public exposition of the beginning of Genesis (“it is not permitted to expound [*doreshin*] ... *ma’aseh bereshit* among two”) and warns against speculation into “what is above and what is below, what is before and what is after”; such inquiries are associated with the dangers of dishonoring the Creator (Halperin 1980: 19–63 *passim*; cf. *t. Hag* 2.1–7; *y. Hag* 2.1/77a–c; *b. Hag* 11b–13a, 15a; Schäfer 2009: 180–185, 207–210, 233–234). By contrast, in *PRE*, cosmological speculation is not deemed a dangerous pursuit, nor is the exposition of creation treated as an esoteric discipline. The author of *PRE* delves without hesitation into what lies above and below the inhabited world, and into events before and after history. In addition, he goes well beyond teachings derived from Scripture, integrating astronomical, meteorological, calendrical, geographical, and even zoological materials, alongside ethical, ritual, and exegetical traditions.

At first sight, *PRE*’s hexaemeral retelling (esp. 3–11) might seem more akin to the apocalypses that prompted ben Sira’s famous warning against speculation into the unknown (Sir 3.21–22), than

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<sup>1</sup> The first five days (cf. Gen 1:1–23) are taken up in *PRE* 3–10, and the sixth day and the story of Adam and Eve (cf. Gen 1:24–31; 2:4–3:24) in 11–17. Although 18–19 focus on the first Sabbath (cf. Gen 2:1–3), these chapters include additional hexaemeral material (e. g., discussions of whether heaven or earth was created first; the list of things created at twilight before the first Sabbath). Citations here and below follow the chapter-numbering in Börner-Klein 2004.

to the works of the sages who approvingly quoted his words (*GenR* 8.2; *y. Hag* 2.1/77c; *b. Hag* 13a). After all, *PRE* exhibits concerns that are common in apocalyptic and related Second Temple texts, but downplayed or suppressed in the rabbinic literature of Late Antiquity (esp. cosmology and eschatology; Elbaum 1996; Reeves 2005: 67-75; Adelman 2009). Likewise, where the form of *PRE* departs from the characteristic literary structures of classical midrash, it recalls the parabiblical genres common in Second Temple times (e. g., so-called “rewritten Bible”; Albeck 1939: 167-169; Zunz – Albeck 1947: 136-140; cf. *Jubilees* 2.2-16; 2 *Enoch* 24-32; 4 *Ezra* 6.38-59). In this, *PRE* appears to attest a broader process whereby, as Joseph Dan notes, “[t]he vast theological and cosmological as well as narrative material included in works like the *Books of Enoch* and *Jubilees* reentered Hebrew literature” (Dan 2007: 261; also Reeves 1999a: 150-152; Reed 2005: 234-239).

The re-emergence of Second Temple traditions in medieval Judaism is an intriguing phenomenon, the precise dynamics of which remain debated (e. g., Himmelfarb 1984; 1994; Stone 1996; 2003a: 311-314; Reeves 1999a; Ta-Shma 2001a; 2001b; Reed 2001; 2005: 233-272; Elior 2004b: 210, n. 20; Adelman 2008: 216-219). Further investigation of *PRE* 3-11 may thus have the potential to shed light, not just on the work and its author,<sup>2</sup> but also on changing attitudes towards “outside books” in rabbinic culture, the medieval afterlives of Second Temple traditions, and the history of Jewish reflection on *Urzeit* and *Endzeit*. Precisely for this reason, however, some caution may be warranted. Since the first half of the twentieth century, scholars have delighted in enumerating *PRE*’s parallels with so-called “Old Testament pseudepigrapha” (esp., Friedlander 1916: xxiii-lii; Albeck 1939; Zunz – Albeck 1947: 139, 422), and the conclusions of early studies remain frequently repeated (e. g., Strack – Stemberger 1996: 329; Herr 2007). The lists of parallels in Gerald Friedlander’s 1916 translation of *PRE*, for instance, are still consulted, and his conclusions there generally accepted – so much so, in fact, that scholars of Second Temple

<sup>2</sup> I here follow the general scholarly consensus (esp. Elbaum 1992) that *PRE* 3ff has been significantly shaped by a single author/compiler of the gaonic period, the aims of whom are evident in the selection, reworking, arrangement, and structuring of earlier traditions, and in the repetition of tropes, phrases, and motifs. In referring to an “author,” however, I do not mean to draw too sharp a distinction with a “compiler,” “redactor,” etc.; for, as we shall see, the literary practices of *GenR*’s redactors stand in continuum with those of *PRE*’s author. Notably, later medieval tradents also played some role in forging *PRE*’s surviving forms, as suggested by the addition of 1-2 as preface, the variation in the extant MSS, and early quotations with no counterparts in any text as we now have it. See further Barth 1999.

Judaism and the New Testament often mine *PRE* for motifs, apart from any concern for the many centuries that separate this gaonic work from pre-70 C. E. Judaism and the Jewish "background" of early Christianity.

Anna Urowitz-Freudenstein (1994) has pointed to the problems of parallelomania, noting that Friedlander – as well as Chanokh Albeck and others – often drew connections between *PRE* and the "pseudepigrapha" on the basis of phrases, motifs, etc., examined in isolation. Whether or not her critique suffices to dismiss their findings (see further Sacks 2006: 15-34), she highlights the need to explore *PRE*'s rich relationships with rabbinic and other sources prior to drawing any firm conclusions about the author's access to older traditions seemingly lost or suppressed by sages in Late Antiquity; for, indeed, some of what might appear, at first sight, to be the result of direct filiation or "influence" may have been shaped by more complex, diffuse, or indirect connections.<sup>3</sup>

To re-assess *PRE*'s apparent affinities with so-called "pseudepigrapha" requires fresh efforts at contextualization, in relation both to the work itself and to connections with materials closer to its own time. Fortunately, both types of contextualization have been facilitated by the many advances in scholarship since the age of Friedlander. In the wake of seminal studies on midrash and narrative in the 1970s and 1980s (esp. Heinemann 1974; Dan 1974; Elbaum 1986a; 1986b), for instance, the rhetoric, aims, and structure of *PRE* have been richly illuminated, together with its gaonic cultural context and its relationships with earlier rabbinic traditions (e. g., Elbaum 1992; Rubenstein 1996: 146-158; Barth 1997; Stein 2004; Sacks 2006; Adelman 2009). These same decades saw the publication of a number of materials relevant for the study of "pseudepigrapha" and *PRE* alike, as well as a renewed concern for bringing extra- and para-rabbinic materials to bear on the study of pre-modern Judaism.<sup>4</sup> Among the results has been fresh attention, not just to *ma'aseh merkavah* and "mysticism,"

<sup>3</sup> *PRE*'s formal affinities with "biblical retellings," for instance, recall Second Temple texts (Albeck 1939: 167-169; Zunz—Albeck 1947: 136-140), but they can also be explained with reference to Islamic cultural context of *PRE*'s author (Heinemann 1974: 181-199), thereby frustrating any simple assignment of "influence."

<sup>4</sup> Of course, *PRE*'s connections to targumim (esp. *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*) have been discussed for some time. For references and discussion concerning its connections to Hekhalot literature, Jewish "magic," and Hebrew "scientific" materials, see Halperin 1988: 511-512; Stein 2004; Harari 2005a; Sacks 2006: 112-125; Reed forthcoming. On *piyyutim* – including the possibility that they may have served as one channel for transmitting traditions found in so-called "pseudepigrapha" – see Yahalom 1996, esp. 46-54.

but also to *ma'aseh bereshit* and cosmology (e. g., Séd 1981; Goshen-Gottstein 1995; Schäfer 2004; 2005; Reed 2007).

That much has changed since Friedlander's time is clear from the spate of recent synthetic studies that seek to re-map the trajectories of continuity and change in Second Temple, rabbinic, and medieval Judaism in light of what we now know from the Dead Sea Scrolls, Hekhalot literature, *piyyutim*, and Jewish "magical" materials (e. g., Elior 2004b; Alexander 2006; Schäfer 2009). Accordingly, it may be an apt time to revisit the place of *PRE* in the history of Jewish reflection on creation. Towards this broader aim, the present essay draws on the insights of a recent series of articles on *ma'aseh bereshit* and Jewish cosmology by Peter Schäfer (2004; 2005; 2008; cf. 1971; 1978), asking whether and how *PRE* might fit with the trajectories that he and others have sketched with respect to rabbinic and Hekhalot traditions. In the process, I look more closely at the possibility that *PRE* may reflect some hint of an enduring concern for the dangers of investigating *ma'aseh bereshit* and/or for the tension between "scientific-cosmological" epistemologies and the rabbinic elevation of the Torah.

To do so, I compare *PRE*'s approach to Genesis 1 with that in *Genesis Rabbah* (compiled ca. fifth century C.E.; henceforth *GenR*). For our understanding of *PRE*, the comparison proves useful: not only did the author of *PRE* probably draw upon some form of *GenR*, but *GenR*'s Palestinian provenance opens the possibility of some cultural continuity with *PRE*, which may have arisen in the same area – or, at the very least, exhibits an interest in implying such a provenance (Zunz – Albeck 1947: 135, 420; Perez Fernández 1984: 20-21; Barth 1997: 626). Significantly, for our purposes, *GenR* offers evidence for the midrashic discourse upon which *PRE* so exuberantly innovates. Its careful engagement with the strictures on *ma'aseh bereshit* provides an apt foil for the seemingly cavalier approach in *PRE*. At the same time, attention to *GenR*'s polemical, rhetorical, and redactional strategies points us to the possibility that *PRE*'s treatment of Genesis 1 may have been similarly shaped in conversation with competing cosmologies. This possibility – as we shall see – proves particularly intriguing in light of *PRE*'s points of contact and contrast with post-talmudic, para-rabbinic works like *Seder Rabbah di-Bereshit*, which depart even more dramatically from the treatment of the cosmos and creation in classical rabbinic literature.

## 1. *Ma'aseh Bereshit* and Rabbinic Exegesis

As is well known, *GenR* engages the mishnaic strictures on *ma'aseh bereshit*, not through silence about pre-creation and creation, but rather through carefully circumvented exegetical speech. Peppered through its initial chapters are discussions that address the concerns in *m. Hag 2.1*, including materials paralleled in the commentary to this mishnah in the Talmud Yerushalmi (*y. Hag 2.1/77a-c*; see further Becker 1999: 16-60). With respect to the precise limits of inquiry into *ma'aseh bereshit*, *GenR* preserves multiple opinions – including the views that one should not investigate pre-creation (1.10), that one should not inquire before the creation of humankind (8.2), and that one should not expound Genesis 1 at all (9.1). Yet another opinion is embodied by *GenR* itself: not only do its redactors overstep the bounds of all of the positions cited, but they start with the topics deemed most dangerous in the discourse surrounding *m. Hag 2.1* (i. e., pre-existent matter and pre-creation).

At first sight, the redactors of *GenR* might seem to acknowledge the strictures on *ma'aseh bereshit* only to contravene them. Closer analysis, however, suggests that they may address the same issues raised by *m. Hag 2.1*, *y. Hag 2.1/77a-c*, etc., albeit with a different strategy. Philip S. Alexander (1992: 236) has characterized the strategy as one of "pre-emptive exegesis":

...the redactor of Genesis Rabba shrewdly recognizes that in order to exclude such unacceptable readings of *Ma'aseh Bere'shit* it is not sufficient simply to enunciate a general prohibition in the manner of Mishnah *Hagigah 2:1*. Midrash abhors a vacuum, so it is necessary to occupy the exegetical space of the biblical text with an acceptable reading, in order to more effectively exclude the unacceptable. This is achieved by the traditions assembled in Genesis Rabba 1:1-8:1.

Recently, Schäfer (2008) has further shown how *GenR*'s redactors counter competing approaches to *ma'aseh bereshit* through the selection and arrangement of traditions in the opening *parashah*.

This dynamic is perhaps most evident in what seems to be the earliest microform of *GenR*, which begins with six *petiḥot*: 1.1 + 1.5-7 + 1.2-3 (Theodor – Albeck 1965; Schäfer 2008: 268-278). Most relevant, for our present purposes, are the first three (i. e., 1.1, 1.5, 1.6); taken together, these *petiḥot* serve to set the stage for the subsequent midrashim on Genesis by outlining what is here promoted as the proper method for gaining knowledge about creation – namely, the interpretation of Scripture from Scripture. The first (1.1) posits the



Torah as God's blueprint for creation, as well as introducing the theme of its hiddenness. The second (1.5) addresses the danger of dishonoring God by publicly discussing the preexistent matter from which He created the cosmos. The themes of the latter pointedly recall the warning in *m. Hag* 2.1 against "anyone who has no concern for the honor of his Creator":

R. Huna commenced in the name of Bar Kappara: "*Let the lying lips be dumb* (Ps 31:19) ... *which speak arrogantly against the righteous* (Ps 31:18), meaning: against the Righteous One, who is the life of all worlds, about things that He has withheld from His creatures. *With pride* (Ps 31:18b): in order to boast and say: 'I expound *ma'aseh bereshit!*' And *contempt* (Ps 31:18b): to think that he condemns My glory!" For R. Jose b. R. Hanina said: "Whoever elevates himself at the cost of his fellow man's degradation has no share in the world to come. How much the more then the glory of God!" ... Rav said: "Let him have nothing of Your abundant goodness. In human practice, when an earthly monarch builds a palace on a site of sewers, dunghills, and garbage, if one says 'This palace is built on a site of sewers, dunghills, and garbage', does he not discredit it? Thus, whoever comes to say that this world was created out of *tohu* and *bohu* and darkness, does he not indeed impair (God's glory)?" (*GenR* 1.5)

In the parallel material in the Yerushalmi, a similar interpretation of Ps 31:19 is attributed to Rav; there, the problem of human pride and divine dishonor is explored with appeal to Prov 25:2, Job 20:4, and Deut 4:32, leading to the conclusion that one should only expound God's deeds after "humankind was created upon the earth" (*y. Hag* 2.1/77c; see further Becker 1999: 22-27, 37-39). In *GenR* 1.5, however, the problem that R. Huna poses with Ps 31:19 is resolved by the same sage with appeal to Gen 1:1-2: "If the matter were not written (in Scripture), it would be impossible to say it: *In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth from them, from And the earth was tohu*, etc." Consistent with the depiction of the Torah as blueprint for creation in *GenR* 1.1, it is here asserted to be the source, guide, and measure for information about creation – including otherwise scandalous topics like pre-existent matter (cf. 1.9; Niehoff 2005: 45-55; Kister 2007: 247-256).

As Schäfer (2008: 269-272) has shown, *GenR* 1.5 thus serves as a key building-block in the redactors' argument for the epistemological monopoly of the Torah. This argument is advanced with *GenR* 1.6. Here, the *petiḥah*-verse Dan 2:22 (*And He reveals deep and hidden things*) occasions discussions of hiddenness (cf. *GenR* 1.1) – first with reference to Eden, Gehenna, the wicked, the righteous, and the messiah, and finally with reference to the Torah. Eden and Gehenna are identified by R. Judah bar Simon with "hidden" and "deep" things

respectively, with the implication that God "reveals" them. Left unexplained, however, are when or how; indeed, given the subsequent integration of discussions (associated with other sages) about the deeds of the wicked, righteous, and the messiah, the implication may be that revelation of knowledge about such matters of *Urzeit* and *Endzeit* awaits the age of eschatological judgment.

In any case, the contrast remains striking with the treatment of the information about creation hidden in the Torah. This discussion is similarly attributed to R. Judah bar Simon. He quotes a series of statements from Gen 1:1-3, each followed by the same refrain: "But the matter was not spelled out. Where was it spelled out? Elsewhere!" The refrain occasions his introduction of verses from elsewhere in Scripture (e. g., Isa 40:22; Job 37:6; Ps 104:2) to clarify or expand. Lest an exegete imagine that one must avoid engaging topics about which Genesis remains terse, it is thus demonstrated that what seems like occlusion is actually an invitation to interpretation: whereas Eden and Gehenna are hidden from present human view, true and certain knowledge about creation is asserted to be accessible, here and now, through rabbinic reading-practices.

In essence, then, *GenR* 1.6 both models and explicates the interpretation of Scripture from Scripture. Furthermore, when it is read alongside 1.1 and 1.5, the cumulative effect is the subordination of the cosmos to Scripture. Just as the Torah is said to be God's blueprint, counsel, and co-worker in creation in 1.1, so cosmological knowledge is redefined in 1.5-6 to be coterminous with exegetical expertise. Tacit is the displacement of any "scientific" cosmogonies and cosmologies, as well as the countering of any claims to know the secrets of the cosmos based on philosophical contemplation or visionary experience: those who truly possess these hidden truths are those with knowledge of Torah.

## 2. Creation and the Limits of Exegesis

Attention to the meanings made by the selection, reworking, and arrangement of traditions at the beginning of *GenR* reveals the care with which its late antique redactors mapped out the aims and parameters of their subsequent treatment of the Torah's own cosmogony. Might we see something similar in *PRE*? Is its apparent transgression of *m. Hag* 2.1, etc., paired with any subtle signaling of the dangers of cosmology?

As noted above, *PRE*'s hexaemeral retelling includes detailed descriptions of pre-creation, the structure of the cosmos, classes of angels, astronomy, mythic geography, and the time-tables of history and its end – all pursued apart from any explicit comments about the proper scope, sources, or method of inquiry into *ma'aseh bereshit*. At times, the author of *PRE* goes so far as to shift esoteric discourse into exoteric context, exclaiming what the redactors of *GenR* dared only whisper (e. g., *GenR* 3.4 vs. *PRE* 3). And, perhaps most surprisingly, *PRE* even departs from *GenR*'s privileging of Scripture. Even when its author includes earlier midrashic traditions, he often transforms their meanings by displacing them from their original exegetical settings and interweaving them into narratives.<sup>5</sup> To a far greater degree than *GenR*, *PRE* also integrates extra-scriptural evidence about the cosmos (cf. *GenR* 4.4; 6.8; Alexander 1992: 233; 2002: 229-230), pursuing the topic of creation in concert with cosmological concerns. In *PRE* 3-17, in fact, Genesis 1 seems to function, less as a *lemma* for interpretation *per se*, than as literary scaffolding for the integration of an eclectic array of received traditions – including information connected to the observation of the natural world as well as speculations concerning the contents, events, and inhabitants of what lies beyond.<sup>6</sup>

Nevertheless, as in the case of *GenR*, closer analysis might reveal motives more complex than cosmological curiosity. Here too, analysis of the beginning of the work may shed light on the stance towards Scripture and Nature alike. The first midrash in *PRE* 3 reads as follows:

R. Eliezer ben Hyrcanos commenced: *Who recounts the mighty acts of the Lord [and who] makes heard all His praise?* (Ps 106:2). Is there a person [in the world] who is able to recount the mighty acts of the Holy One, blessed be He, or to make heard all His praise? Even the ministering angels are not able [to tell] but a little of His mighty acts. [It belongs to us] to expound (*lidrosh*) concerning what He has done and concerning what He will do in the future, so that the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, shall be exalted among His creatures whom He has created, from one end of the world to the other, as it is said: *Generation to generation will laud Your deeds* (Ps 145:4).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>5</sup> With respect to this pattern in the hexaemeral chapters, see Rubenstein 1999: 146-158 on *PRE* 5, as well as below on *PRE* 3.

<sup>6</sup> The treatment of pre-creation and the first five days (*PRE* 3-10), for instance, includes discussions of astronomy, angelology, calendrical intercalation, etc., as well as the story of Jonah.

<sup>7</sup> I here translate the text in Constantinople 1514 and place common variants in brackets. Note that *PRE* is extant in a large number of MSS, some of which display significant differences; see further Haag 1978: 9-35; Barth 1999: 43-62. There is no

As we have seen, much of the discussion of the danger of inquiry into *ma'aseh bereshit* in the Mishnah, *GenR*, etc., revolves around the possibility that someone could inquire so far into creation and the cosmos, so as to risk dishonoring the Creator. At the very outset,<sup>8</sup> the author of *PRE* defuses precisely this danger: he sets the stage for his subsequent treatment of cosmogony with a midrash that emphasizes the paucity of creaturely knowledge about divine deeds.

The problem here posed, with Ps 106:2, is not how one should recount divine deeds, but rather whether it is possible. The answer, outlined with reference to Ps 145:4, is that the Torah itself permits – and, in fact, enjoins – the human exposition of God's past and future deeds, even despite the great gap between their grandeur and the creaturely capacity to know. Whereas the first three *petiḥot* of *GenR* promote the Torah as the proper source for knowledge about creation and rabbinic exegesis as the proper method for gaining this knowledge (1.1, 1.5-6), *PRE* 3 sets up its expansive retelling of Genesis 1 with an appeal to intent. The ideal exegete here evoked is one who acknowledges God's deeds as indescribable in their grandeur but who expounds them, nevertheless, for the sake of exalting His name in praise throughout the earth (see further Reed forthcoming). If there is any sense of a need to justify the transgression of the bounds of *m. Hag* 2.1 in *PRE* 3 and/or the inclusion of eclectic, esoteric, and extra-scriptural materials in the hexaemeral chapters that follow, it is answered through an emphasis on creaturely finitude and humility in the face of divine power.

### 3. Before and Beyond the Cosmos

To understand how the author of *PRE* introduces its hexaemeral retelling, it may also prove helpful to consider a partial parallel with *GenR*. Both *GenR* 1.4 and *PRE* 3 include lists of the "things created before the world was created" – a tradition also attested in *b. Ned* 39b and *b.*

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critical edition, and the only published editions are preliminary and/or partial; these include Higger 1944; 1945-1946; 1948 (from three MSS in the Casanatensa collection); Horowitz 1972 (see esp. notes); Adelman 2008 (see appendices for diplomatic versions of *PRE* 1-2, 10, 13, 20, 22, 29-30, 35, 47). Friedlander's 1916 English translation is based on a MS that is now lost, while Fernández's 1984 Spanish translation is based on David Luria's 1852 edition, together with Higger 1944; 1945-1946; 1948; Horowitz 1972. Börner-Klein 2004 reproduces the text of the Venice 1544 edition, with minor emendations, alongside her German translation.

<sup>8</sup> Note that *PRE* 1-2 are commonly considered to be a later addition to the midrash proper.

*Pes* 54a. In the versions in the Bavli, seven things are listed: the Torah, repentance, Garden of Eden, Gehenna, Throne of Glory, Temple, and the name of the messiah. Scriptural proof-texts are provided to establish the pre-created status of each. The list in *PRE* 3, as we shall see, corresponds closely to these versions. By contrast, *GenR*'s version of the list includes only six things and notes that "among them are those that were created and those whose creation was contemplated." In *GenR* 1.4, the Torah and throne are posited as pre-created, while the patriarchs, Israel, Temple, and name of the messiah are listed as merely contemplated by God prior to His creation of the cosmos; Eden and Gehenna are entirely absent, and repentance is appended after the list proper by means of a saying attributed to R. Ahaba.

Inasmuch as the compilation of *GenR* predates the compilation of the Bavli, one might be tempted to see *GenR* 1.4 as reflecting an earlier form of the tradition than *b. Ned* 39b. Yet, as Arnold Goldberg (1997: 151-154) observes, internal criteria suggest otherwise. It seems unlikely that rabbinic tradents would omit the patriarchs and Israel from any received list, and more probable that Gehenna and Eden are original elements, later deemed controversial. Similarly, the specification that some of the items were merely "contemplated" seems to reflect the reticence of a later stage of discussion.

Significantly, for our purposes, the distinctive form and concerns of this version of the list also resonate with the redactional principles and epistemological concerns of the first *parashah* of *GenR*. Schäfer (2008: 279) shows how *GenR* 1.4 can be read as contributing to a "strong emphasis on history, more precisely salvation-history though fulfillment of the Torah, as opposed to cosmology." Together with the omission of Eden and Gehenna, for instance, the distinction between "created" and "contemplated" in *GenR* 1.4 underlines the primacy of the Torah (i. e., as in 1.1), while extricating the investigation of creation from the contemplation of the mythic geography of *Urzeit* and *Endzeit* (i. e., as in 1.6). Inasmuch as the Temple and the name of the messiah are deemed merely "contemplated," they are placed on the same level as the patriarchs and Israel, and their significance is firmly located on the temporal plane, as pre-ordained developments within salvation-history (patriarchs → Israel → Temple → messiah).<sup>9</sup> When set in the context of the first *parashah* of *GenR*,

<sup>9</sup> I. e., instead of locating them on the spatial plane with Eden and Gehenna. It is perhaps not coincidental that this choice serves to downplay the possibility of a pre-created Temple in heaven as well as to displace traditions about the Temple's status as primordial *axis mundi* (cf. *GenR* 3.4); for discussion of such traditions and the rabbinic reticence towards them, see further Elior 2004b.

the list also helps to re-orient the discussion of pre-creation, away from philosophical and “scientific” concerns with problems like pre-existent matter, and towards a focus on Scripture (compare 1.5 and 1.9).

Furthermore, consistent with *GenR*’s engagement with *m. Hag* 2.1, etc., the statements in *GenR* 1.4 are couched in expressions of uncertainty – particularly after the items are listed, when the question of the chronology of pre-creation is raised and debated. The redactors may perhaps anticipate that the reader/hearer senses the boundary of acceptable inquiry being lightly overstepped. If so, it appears that such transgressions are deemed justified for the sake of elevating and celebrating the Torah – here lauded as one of only two things that God actually created before creating the world (i. e., together with His throne), and the only one accessible on earth.

As noted above, the list of pre-created things in *PRE* 3 largely parallels the version in *b. Ned* 39b.<sup>10</sup> The list in *PRE* 3 includes the same seven elements, albeit in different order(s).<sup>11</sup> The items, moreover, are all depicted as quite literally created by God prior to the creation of the world. If *b. Ned* 39b does, in fact, approximate the earliest form of the list (Goldberg 1997), we thus find ourselves faced with an interesting case in which *PRE* is technically more “traditional” than *GenR*.

Such a case proves important, for our purposes, inasmuch as it draws our attention to *PRE*’s poignant combination of innovation and traditionalism vis-à-vis the classical rabbinic literature. On the one hand, the basic form and content of the received list is here faithfully retained. Yet, on the other hand, its meaning has been radically

<sup>10</sup> Largely comparable, e. g., are the versions of the list found in the Casanatensa MSS in Higger 1944: 86-88, HUC MS 2043 (fol. 1b), the 1514 Constantinople edition (fol. 2a), and the Venice 1544 edition (Horowitz 1972: 23-24). The discussion of Gehenna, however, is missing from the MS used by Friedlander; both Friedlander (1916: 11) and Horowitz (1972: 23-24) conclude that this element is a later addition to *PRE*’s version of the list. As noted below, Friedlander’s MS similarly varies in the order of elements in the list. So too HUC MS 75, which contains a number of other minor additions and omissions.

<sup>11</sup> In the Casanatensa MSS, HUC MS 2043, the 1514 Constantinople edition, and the Venice 1544 edition, e. g., the order is as follows: Torah, Gehenna, Eden, throne, Temple, repentance, and name of the messiah (so too the text as reconstructed by Horowitz 1972: 23-24, omitting Gehenna). A slightly different order is found in the MS used by Friedlander 1916 – namely, Torah, Eden, throne, repentance, Temple, and name of the messiah (i. e., with no mention of Gehenna). The order of elements in HUC MS 75 (fol. 3a, lines 2-12) is even more divergent: the first element is not extant (but presumably the Torah, inasmuch as all versions of the list seem to begin with the Torah and end with the name of the messiah), and the rest are as follows: repentance, throne, Eden, Gehenna, Temple, and name of the messiah.

re-shaped through its integration into a story – consistent with *PRE*'s broader tendency to narrativize and “mythicize” earlier midrashic traditions (Elbaum 1992; Rubenstein 1996: 146-158).

In *PRE* 3, the traditional list of pre-created things has been embedded between two accounts of God's activities prior to the creation of our cosmos. The first account comes directly after the opening midrash discussed above, and it describes how God was alone when that He made His first cosmogonic attempt – and failed. After a *meshal* about a king building a palace, the reason for the failure is revealed: the world cannot stand without repentance. Following this assertion is the list of the “things created before the world was created,” wherein is included repentance.

By virtue of its inclusion of the Torah, the list serves as a transition to the second account of God's pre-creation activities in *PRE* 3. This account picks up where the first left off, and it describes the divine decision to make a second attempt at world-creation. For this, God is said to have consulted with the Torah (compare *GenR* 1.1). It was she, accordingly to *PRE* 3, who convinced Him to create our world. Interestingly, she is said to have done so by citing the example of a human king to extol the need for grandeur to be praised (“If there is no host and if there is no camp for the king, over what does he rule? If there are no people to praise the king, where is the honor of the king?”). Just as the opening midrash of *PRE* 3 set the stage for its treatment of creation with appeal to the injunction to praise divine deeds, so it is here revealed that such praise is part of the reason that God created the world as know it.

The comparison with *GenR* is again illuminative. In *GenR* 1.4, the list of pre-created things is presented as an anonymous tradition that prompts discussion by a series of sages, who go on to debate the chronological priority of the Torah and the throne of God, and to consider how the pre-created status of the Torah relates to Israel. What is there evoked is a rabbinic conversation, featuring the citation of verses from outside of Genesis and their interpretation in terms of creation. By virtue of the inquiry into pre-creation, *GenR* 1.4 technically transgresses *m. Hag* 2.1; it does so, however, according to the method defended at the outset (esp. 1.6) as consistent with rabbinic epistemology – namely, by interpreting Scripture from Scripture.

In *PRE* 3, by contrast, the list of pre-created things is the pivot of a two-part narrative about the divine drama that took place prior to creation. Not only is the drama described in a tone of surprising certainty, but it is presented without any exegetical “hook.” Inasmuch as *PRE* 3 posits God's initial cosmogonical failure, it might seem like

an especially egregious example of how inquiry into pre-creation can risk dishonoring the Creator (cf. *m. Hag* 2.1; *GenR* 1.5). It is perhaps telling, then, that the author of *PRE* appears willing to take the risk in order to make an ethical point about repentance (see also 43).

Consequently, the treatment of pre-creation in *PRE* 3 also draws our attention to the recurrent concern for ethics in the chapters that follow. Throughout *PRE*'s hexaemeral retelling, in fact, we find expressions of the idea that the very existence of the cosmos is predicated on elements central to human piety and practice. For instance, *PRE* 16 lists the Torah, divine worship, and service of loving-kindness as the three things upon which the world rests (cf. *m. Avot* 1.2), defining divine worship particularly in terms of the praise of God by the righteous; this list is one of a number of cases in *PRE* where maxims and other ethical traditions from *Pirqe Avot* guide the author's treatment of Genesis (e. g., 12, 13, 19; Stein 2004, esp. 68-69, 111-114; Sacks 2006: 226-232).<sup>12</sup> The correlation of ethical and cosmological concerns is similarly evident in *PRE* 16-17, where reflection on the cosmogonic week occasions homilies on the seven days of feasting and seven days of mourning observed after marriages and deaths. Likewise, in *PRE* 18, discussions of the seven firmaments, seven lands, seven deserts, seven mountains, seven seas, and seven ages serve as a means to promote Sabbath-observance. Each set is said to be an example of seven things from which God chose one (i. e., Arabot, Israel, Mt. Sinai, desert of Sinai or Kadesh, Lake Kinneret, the seventh and final age [*olam*]). Not only is creation thus used to promote the practice of Sabbath-observance as embedded in the very structure of the cosmos,<sup>13</sup> but the discussion concludes with the assertion of the penitential power of Sabbath-observance (18), such that the reader is again reminded of the inextricable connection between creation and repentance. Furthermore, inasmuch as the story of Adam and Eve is here harmonized with the hexaemeron (12-14), *PRE*'s description of the sixth day culminates with a discussion of the two ways before each person and the four doors to the way of wickedness, guarded by seven angels (15), and the retelling

<sup>12</sup> On the multiple references in *PRE* to that on which the world rests and/or without which it cannot stand, see Sacks 2006: 233-236. Significantly, for our purposes, these references combine the cosmological with the ethical, and include repentance (3), the hail from the rays of the sun that quenches its fire (6), the new moon and human genealogy (7), righteous Israelites (9), and acts of human loving-kindness (12), as well as divine love and compassion (19).

<sup>13</sup> I. e., extending the point already made in *Gen* 1:1-2:3.



of Genesis 1 simultaneously serves as preface to the account of the repentance of the first man from the first sin (20).

In both *PRE* 3 and the hexaemeral chapters that follow, the cycles and principles of Jewish piety are depicted as part of the divine order that permeates, enlivens, and supports the entire created world – from the seven days of the week, to the seven-fold cycles of the sun and moon in relation to the seven planets and twelve constellations, and from the four quarters of the earth, to the four *tequfot*, to the four classes of ministering angels who surround God’s throne in heaven. The patterns of salvation-history are similarly described, through numbered lists (e. g., ten kings in *PRE* 11; ten divine descents in 14; seven ages in 18), as no less natural or orderly than the cycles of the cosmos. In *PRE*’s hexaemeral retelling, Jewish ethics and salvation-history are naturalized with appeal to the cosmos, and cosmological inquiry is defended as a practice that – far from fostering false pride or dishonoring the divine – can complement the pursuit of Jewish piety.

#### 4. Cosmology and Contestation

As noted above, Alexander (1992: 236) has characterized *GenR*’s approach to *ma’aseh bereshit* as one of “pre-emptive exegesis.” In his view, its treatment of Genesis 1 is “fundamentally polemical in character.” He suggests that the redactors answer those engaged in angel veneration (1.3), dualistic speculation (1.7), and philosophical inquiries into pre-creation and the cosmos (1.9), not by ceding cosmology to “heretics” or non-Jews, but rather by constructing a rabbinized counter-cosmology, grounded in Scripture and oriented towards Israel and its history. Schäfer (2008: 287-288) similarly posits that the selection and arrangement of the units in its first *parashah* is meant to develop a contrast between two competing perspectives, countering a view that is “scientific-cosmological” and “dominated by speculations about nature,” by outlining and promoting a view “guided by the rabbinic Torah” (cf. Elior 2004b: 201-222). He proposes, moreover, that *GenR*’s emphasis on exegesis is “characteristic of the rabbinic approach to the ‘Work of Creation’” more broadly: “rabbinic inquiry into ‘what is above, and what is below, what is before, and what is after’ is primarily an activity of biblical exegesis” (Schäfer 2004: 237).

If so, how best can we understand the hexaemeral retelling in *PRE*? Above we noted its apparent affinities with apocalyptic and

other Second Temple traditions – some of which, notably, may reflect the types of the positions that inspired the mishnaic strictures on *ma’aseh bereshit* in the first place.<sup>14</sup> Perhaps more illuminative, for our present aims, are the resonances with Hekhalot and related writings. Not only did these works take their current literary forms after the redaction of *GenR* and closer in time to *PRE*, but they depart from the treatment of creation in *GenR* in some of the same ways as *PRE*, exhibiting renewed interest in angelology, ouranology, and cosmology alongside new patterns of pseudonymous rabbinic attribution (Elior 1993-1994; Boustan 2007).

Elsewhere, I have examined the first midrash in *PRE* 3, quoted above, in relation to the *Chapter of R. Nehunyah ben ha-Qana* (*Synopse* §§ 307-314; Swartz 1996: 62-74), exploring the possibility that the author of *PRE* might counter certain traditions about angels, adjuration, and authority common in Hekhalot literature. In light of our above analysis, we might similarly point to parallels with *Seder Rabbah di-Bereshit* (*Synopse* §§ 429-462, §§ 743-784, §§ 518-524, §§ 832-854; Séd 1981: 79-106; Schäfer 2004: 237-252; henceforth *SRdB*) – a post-talmudic cosmological work that claims to reveal the secrets of *ma’aseh bereshit* in much the same manner as other Hekhalot texts discuss *ma’aseh merkavah*. Like *GenR*, the work begins with midrashim on the term *bereshit* (Gen 1:1), and like *PRE*, it includes an hexaemeral retelling (§§ 429-436, §§ 832-854). With *PRE*, moreover, it shares an interest in ouranology, angelology, and cosmology, as expressed through the creative redeployment of the hexaemeral form and numbered lists: *SRdB* appeals to the Torah’s revelation concerning God’s act of creation to justify its subsequent speculations about the seven earths, the seven heavens, classes of angels, and divine Throne. As in *PRE*, moreover, elements from earlier rabbinic traditions are integrated into new forms and settings (esp. *b. Hag* 12b-13a; Schäfer 2004: 263-266).

In neither of these sources is Genesis 1 treated as a subject for exegesis *per se* – or, at least not in the same sense as in *GenR*. Yet the differences between them may be significant. In *SRdB*, Genesis 1 serves as preface and pretext for cosmological inquiry. By contrast, as we have seen, the author of *PRE* introduces his hexaemeral retelling with a proclamation of how very little humankind can even know; he thus presents proper inquiry into the cosmos and its creation as an activity of praise, rather than a display of expertise. In *PRE*, more-

<sup>14</sup> See further Reed 2005: 136-147. It is also possible that such materials preserve something of the roots of some of the types of perspectives later countered by *GenR*’s redactors and other rabbinic tradents. For different perspectives on this possibility, see Schäfer 2004: 271-274; 2008: 51-56; Alexander 2006; Elior 2004b.

over, the exploration of cosmic realities remains inseparable from the act of engagement with the Torah. Whereas the author(s)/redactor(s) of *SRdB* seem to subordinate the former to the latter, the author of *PRE* integrates cosmological insights into a literary structure defined by the Torah's own account of creation; the choice of form, in effect, functions to affirm the centrality of the seven days of creation for the structure of the cosmos itself. Likewise, the integration of other numbered sets and lists here serves to convey the divine order that permeates salvation-history and pious practice no less than the divinely-created cosmos. But, much as *GenR* subordinates the cosmos to the Torah, so *PRE* subordinates cosmology to ethics.

The contrast with *SRdB* thus raises the possibility that *PRE*'s ethicizing approach to creation may be no less polemically motivated than *GenR*'s privileging of the Torah. Although it would be premature to draw any firm conclusions, we might posit possible continuities in the polemical strategies of *GenR* and *PRE*. Just as the redactors of *GenR* seem to answer competing epistemologies and cosmologies through their collection of midrashim on Genesis 1, so it is possible that the author of *PRE* adopted the form of the hexaemeral retelling precisely in order to answer other approaches to the cosmos in the Judaism of his time. Just as the late antique redactors of *GenR* engage in "pre-emptive exegesis," the early medieval author of *PRE* may engage in "pre-emptive speculation."

It is intriguing, for instance, that *PRE* departs from a dominant concern in late antique Jewish cosmology – namely, the seven heavens and their contents. This concern is widely attested in rabbinic and para-rabbinic sources alike, appearing in works ranging from the Talmud Bavli, *Avot de-Rabbi Nathan*, *Leviticus Rabbah*, *Deuteronomy Rabbah*, and *Pesikta de Rav Kahana* to *SRdB*, *Re'uyyot Yehezqel*, *3 Enoch/Sefer Hekhalot*, *Midrash Kohen*, and *Sefer Ha-Razim* (see further Schäfer 2004: 241-250, 261-266). By contrast, the author of *PRE* chooses to retain the older image of a single heaven (3; cf. 18). His hexaemeral retelling appeals to the seven-day week and other numbered sets to evoke the order and symmetry of the divinely-created cosmos (cf. Elijor 2004b: 223-225); it does so, however, in a manner that stays closer to Genesis itself.

Furthermore, even as the author of *PRE* thus departs from the Bavli in imagining the cosmos, he may extend its approach to *ma'aseh bereshit*. Schäfer (2005) has suggested that the compendium of cosmological traditions in *b. Hag* 12b-13a was shaped by polemical aims, countering and subverting ouranological traditions akin to those found in *Hekhalot* and related writings. In his view, this

sugya "adopts some major components of this literature but neutralizes and marginalizes them" so as to communicate a "message about *ma'ase bereshit*" – namely, that "cosmology is a most dangerous science" and that "the 'science of the cosmos' that is preserved and propagated in certain circles... does not matter; what is important is God's perpetual love for Israel, and for Israel alone, and Israel's proper response" (2005: 56-58). Accordingly, he suggests that its redactors "made every effort to put cosmology into the theological context of the relationship between God in heaven and his people of Israel on earth, in other words, to defuse and to domesticate it and by this means to appropriate it" (2005: 58).

Much the same can be said – as we have seen – for the early medieval author of *PRE*: if he does engage the types of traditions found in *SRdB* and other Hekhalot writings, he does so by "domesticating" cosmology for the sake of the promotion of Jewish piety. Seen from this perspective, then, *PRE* fits quite well with the trajectory of the rabbinic discourse about *ma'aseh bereshit*; its hexaemeral retelling might technically transgress *m. Hag* 2.1, but it displaces competing speculative traditions in much the same way that *GenR* displaces competing exegetical traditions, and it extends specific concerns from *b. Hag* 12b-13a, perhaps with similar polemical targets (i. e., Hekhalot and aligned traditions at a later stage of their development). Those responsible for *SRdB* clearly situate their work in relation to the rabbinic discourse about *ma'aseh bereshit*, claiming to reveal the secrets to which *m. Hag* 2.1, etc., alludes and drawing upon *b. Hag* 12b-13a. The author of *PRE* is more subtle in his engagement with such issues, but perhaps also more in line with the governing concerns of the engagement with Genesis 1 and *m. Hag* 2.1 in *GenR* and the Bavli.

If so, *PRE*'s approach to creation may be shaped by factors more complex than merely a resurgence of the types of speculative, apocalyptic, or "mythic" interests common in Second Temple texts but seemingly suppressed in the rabbinic literature of Late Antiquity. Rather, its hexaemeral retelling may form part of a broader story about the contestation over creation in Jewish thought, as shaped by the generative tension between [1] the curiosity sparked by the identification of Israel's God as the world's Creator and [2] the concern that undue interest in the structures of the seen and unseen world might distract from Israel's covenantal obligations, foster worship of celestial phenomena, or encroach upon the domain of the divine.

Already within the Jewish scribal cultures of Second Temple times, different attitudes towards cosmological inquiry marked competing pedagogies and emblemized competing models of sapiential and

apocalyptic authority (see, e. g., *1 Enoch* 8, 14, 17-36; Sir 3.21-22; Reed 2004; 2005: 58-83; cf. Prov 8; Job 38; Alexander 2002). And – whatever the precise targets of the tannaitic traditions behind *m. Hag* 2.1 and their connections with the apocalyptic cosmologies and epistemologies of certain so-called “pseudepigrapha” – it is clear that there was much still at stake in controlling the exposition of Genesis 1 (cf. Niehoff 2005; Kister 2007). Likewise, the discussions in *t. Hag* 2.1-7, *y. Hag* 2.1/77a-c, and *GenR* attest the continued place of creation as a privileged arena for debates about knowledge and power in late antique Roman Palestine (cf. Elijor 2004b: 201-222). That such issues remained resonant is similarly suggested by the efforts of the Babylonian sages responsible for shaping *b. Hag* 12b-13a. When considered alongside the cosmological concerns in works such as *SRdB*, the hexaemeral retelling in *PRE* may thus speak to the enduring significance of the cosmos as a site for contestation, not just in Jewish interactions with Hellenistic, Roman, and Islamic cultures (cf. Alexander 2002; Reed 2007), but also in inner-Jewish debates about the power and limits of human knowledge.

# Earthly and Heavenly Jerusalem in Philo and Paul: A Tale of Two Cities

MARK VERMAN

It is with great pleasure that I dedicate this article on heavenly Jerusalem to my dear friend and senior colleague, Professor Rachel Elior, who was born and raised in Jerusalem. The Hebrew University of Jerusalem has been her intellectual home, first as a student and for more than thirty-five years as a consummate teacher. Wherever she travels and lectures throughout the world, she transmits some of that magnificent city's spiritual energy. Rachel, may you continue to shed light for many years to come on the recondite writings of the Jewish mystical tradition that you so insightfully elucidate.

Heavenly Jerusalem is a compelling idea. Even today the city of Jerusalem is so freighted with religious significance that one can readily appreciate why the ancients ascribed to it a celestial counterpart. In recent decades there have been numerous scholarly essays on the topic. Although important primary sources have been cited and analyzed, no consensus has emerged as to their significance. Among the remaining, unresolved issues pertaining to biblical and post-biblical Second Temple writings are the following: whether or not the doctrine of heavenly Jerusalem is rooted in Biblical texts, whether or not heavenly Jerusalem is found in the sectarian writings of the Dead Sea scrolls and their antecedents, and whether the New Testament writers were influenced by their Jewish milieu in this matter. The primary focus of this current study will examine these issues and how they relate specifically to Philo and Paul. As we shall discover, each formulated the concept of heavenly Jerusalem independently and in a distinctive manner, as part of their larger intellectual enterprise.

Before beginning our discussion it would be worthwhile highlighting three seminal essays on the topic of heavenly Jerusalem, each of which broke new ground and served as a springboard for much of the subsequent scholarly exploration. The first of these is Avigdor Aptowitzer's "The heavenly temple in the Aggadah," published in two parts in 1930-1931. In all, Aptowitzer quoted liberally

from more than 80 primary sources, including biblical passages, apocryphal and pseudepigraphic writings, New Testament verses, and a wide-range of classical rabbinic texts, including targumic and midrashic literature. With the obvious exception of the as yet undiscovered Dead Sea scrolls, Aptowitz presented virtually all of the relevant sources on the interrelated topics of the heavenly Temple and heavenly Jerusalem. In general one could characterize Aptowitz's perspective as maximalist. He viewed both heavenly constructs as pervasive within Jewish writings from prophetic literature and onwards. A more modest, but nonetheless important contribution is J. A. Seeligman's "Jerusalem in Jewish Hellenistic Thought." This essay was published in 1957, and although it only addresses the theme of heavenly Jerusalem on the final page, in the body of his presentation Seeligman discusses germane phrasings from both the Septuagint and Philo on Jerusalem. A final article that warrants mention is Ephraim Urbach's "Heavenly and Earthly Jerusalem," published in 1968. As opposed to Aptowitz, Urbach championed what could be labeled the minimalist approach. He begins with the forceful assertion: "...it is a fact that the expression *yerushalayim shel ma'alah* (heavenly Jerusalem) does not appear anywhere in tannaitic literature and even in amoraitic literature it is only found in a single statement in the Babylonian Talmud" (Urbach 1968: 156). One of Urbach's most trenchant critiques of Aptowitz is his insistence that one should not lump together descriptions of the heavenly temple and heavenly Jerusalem, but rather differentiate between the two (Urbach 1968: 158-160). Whereas Aptowitz's article has been published twice in an English "translation/adaption,"<sup>1</sup> it is unfortunate that neither essay by Seeligman nor Urbach has been made available to a non-Hebrew reading audience.

## 1. Biblical Sources Reconsidered

One would be hard pressed to identify any passages in the Tanakh that explicitly refer to heavenly Jerusalem; nevertheless, there are a few suggestive verses. They are important in their own right, as well as for the role they would eventually play in adding scriptural legitimacy to formulations found in post-biblical writings. The most com-

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<sup>1</sup> Aryeh Rubinstein is credited with the translation/adaptation. He translated the main body of the text, including all of the primary sources conveniently numbered, but omitted Aptowitz's scholarly footnotes.

elling verse in this context is Isaiah 49:16: "See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands, Your walls are ever before Me."<sup>2</sup> Aptowitzer offers an intriguing interpretation of this text. He focuses on the expression *kappayim* (palms) and asserts:

The words of the prophet Isaiah make sense only if we interpret *kappayim* as meaning *shamayim* (heaven). God says through the prophet: I never could forget you. See, I have engraved you on heaven which stands forever, and there have I prepared My seat; hence, your walls are ever before Me. Thus interpreted, Isaiah says explicitly that there is a Zion in heaven. (Aptowitzer 1989: 22)

Aptowitzer interprets the verse simultaneously symbolically and literally. The "palms" of God refer to something else, i. e., heaven, and yet what is "engraved" is accorded a celestial reality, namely that Jerusalem exists in heaven. An alternative approach would be to interpret the verse entirely metaphorically, as an expression of God's ongoing commitment to Jerusalem. It is as if He tattooed Jerusalem's image unto His hands, such that every time He raised His hand to act, there would be a visual reminder of the city. This dramatic assertion is found in Second Isaiah, whose central theme is the anticipated restoration of Jerusalem. The Babylonian captivity was coming to an end, and the Persians had given the exiled Jews permission to return to Israel and rebuild their homeland. According to this historical perspective, the message of the above-cited verse is that God was engineering the restoration of Jerusalem and will see it through to completion. Whereas Aptowitzer takes the verse from Isaiah as proof that heavenly Jerusalem is found "explicitly" in the Tanakh, the alternative proposal merely views the text as symbolically affirming Divine providence over the city.

This same verse also serves as the basis of a midrash on heavenly Jerusalem with which Aptowitzer initiated his discussion. *Tanhuma Pekudei* 1 states: "From His abundant love of the one below, He made another one above, as it is said (Isaiah 49:16), 'See, I have engraved you on the palms of My hands, your walls are ever before Me.' And thus said David (Ps. 122:3), 'Jerusalem, that art built as a city that is compact together,' that is, as built by God" (Aptowitzer 1989: 20).

It is noteworthy that according to this midrash, God so loved the mundane Jerusalem that He created a celestial counterpart. This temporal sequence is surprising, as one would have expected heav-

<sup>2</sup> All translations from the Tanakh are taken from the Jewish Publication Society Tanakh translation as found in *The Jewish Study Bible* Berlin – Brettler (eds.), unless otherwise noted.



only Jerusalem to have been created first. The second verse cited in this passage, Ps. 122:3, was also commonly referenced as a proof-text in other rabbinic writings. For example, the targum on this verse expands it as follows: "Jerusalem that is built *in the firmament* like the city that is joined together with her *in the earth*" (Stec 2004: 220). Once again we find that the heavenly city is modeled after the earthly one. It should also be noted that the verb in Hebrew *hubrah*, translated as "compact/joined," can also be read as something that has a partner (*haver*), which is clearly how it is being interpreted here.<sup>3</sup>

There are several other scriptural passages that are not usually cited in discussions of heavenly Jerusalem that are nonetheless worth mentioning. After the First Temple was completed, King Solomon dedicated the Temple in a public convocation. He instructed the nation: "When Your people take the field against their enemy by whatever way You send them, and they pray to the Lord in the direction of the city which You have chosen...oh, hear in heaven their prayer" (1 Kings 8:44-45). The Talmud, *b. Berakhot* f. 30a, cites this as the basis for the Jewish practice of praying facing Jerusalem. For our purposes what is significant is the contention that by orientating oneself towards Jerusalem, one's prayers ascend to Heaven, thereby implying a linkage between the two.

An additional text is found in Third Isaiah. Therein the prophet is anticipating a new world order wherein people will live extraordinary long lives: "He who dies at a hundred years shall be reckoned a youth" (Isa. 65:20). This statement is preceded by the following description: "For behold! I am creating a new heaven and a new earth... For I shall create Jerusalem as a joy, and her people as a delight" (Isa. 65:17-18). Note that the Hebrew verb translated herein as "create" is *bor'e*, which is the verb used in Genesis chapter 1. Thus when the universe is constructed anew, Jerusalem will be recreated at that time.

From the preceding survey one can confidently conclude that although there are several verses in the Tanakh that are suggestive and were exploited by later writers, none explicitly refer to heavenly Jerusalem.

<sup>3</sup> Interestingly, in the *p. Hagigah* 3:6 this verse is interpreted as referring to Jerusalem's ability to transform all Jews into *haverim*, which the commentary *Korban ha-Edah* interprets in the technical sense (i. e. Pharisees). This also fits with Urbach's contention (1968: 156) that the Talmud Yerushalmi ignores the concept of heavenly Jerusalem.

## 2. Exploring the Dead Sea Scrolls

There is no scholarly consensus on the role that heavenly Jerusalem played in post-Biblical literature either. One finds proponents for both the maximalist and minimalist positions. An example of the former, expansive approach is found in Michael Stone's commentary on *4 Ezra*. "The phrase 'unseen city' is to be taken to refer to the heavenly Jerusalem. This notion occurs elsewhere in *4 Ezra*, and particularly in Vision 4... The idea has roots in the Bible and is widely diffused throughout the literature of the Second Temple age and after" (Stone 1990: 213-214).

On the other hand, some deny that there are any references to celestial Jerusalem in the Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, nor for that matter in early rabbinic writings. An example of the "minimalist" approach is Rivka Nir in her monograph on *2 Baruch*. "Unlike the development of a belief in the existence of a heavenly temple, *there is no image of a heavenly Jerusalem in the early Jewish sources* [emphasis is Nir's]... A heavenly Jerusalem does not at all appear in Second Temple Literature; the same holds true for early talmudic sources, that is, in the Mishnah, the Jerusalem Talmud, or the Palestinian midrashim" (Nir 2003: 26). Not surprisingly, she adduces both Urbach and Seeligman for support.

The earliest references can possibly be found in the sectarian writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls. For example, Lawrence Schiffman's suggested restoration of a fragmentary non-canonical Psalm (4Q380 1 i 2-4) reads: "[Jeru]salem [the city which the Lo]rd [chose] from eternity, [As a place of residence for] the holy ones" (Schiffman 1996: 78). If this is an accurate rendering of the text, then it implies that Jerusalem's selection by God was primordial, which might accord it a supernatural existence. However, as Eileen Schuller has indicated in the original publication of the transcription and plates of this text, the lacunae in the parchment make any reconstruction highly conjectural (Schuller 1986: 252). Even if one accepts Schiffman's reading, the assertion that Jerusalem has existed "from eternity" might be more rhetorical than doctrinal, and merely indicative of the Divine selection of earthly Jerusalem.

At the other end of the time continuum is the much discussed eschatological text referred to by scholars as *New Jerusalem*. According to Lorenzo DiTommaso, fragments of this work have been preserved in seven manuscripts (DiTommaso 2005: 3). Most of the text is devoted to a guided tour of a grandiose unnamed city, presumably Jerusalem. Edward Cook has noted: "The dimensions of the

visionary city and buildings are too large to be realistic... In modern terms these dimensions would be 18.67 miles by 13.33 miles... This new Jerusalem would have been larger than any ancient city and could only have been built by divine intervention" (Wise – Abegg – Cook 2005: 558). One of its structures is described as having been constructed entirely out of precious jewels and metals. "And all of it is built in electrum and sapphire and chalcedony, and it laths (are) gold, and its towers (are) one thousand, [... hund]red and [th]irty-two" (DiTommaso 2005: 92).

The description of a future Jerusalem bedecked with jewels will become commonplace in later midrashic sources. A possible predecessor to this *New Jerusalem* account is found near the end of Tobit. In a hymn of praise to God, Tobit effusively predicts: "The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald, and all your walls with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir" (Tob. 13:16).<sup>4</sup> Scholars generally date the narrative sections of Tobit much earlier than the sectarian writings, perhaps going back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century B. C. E., and fragments of the work were found in the Cave 4. It is, however, presumed that this hymn was appended much later, as it does not fit the style of the rest of Tobit. Accordingly, one cannot determine whether or not there was a dependence of one of these texts upon the other.

Although DiTommaso concurs with his colleagues that *New Jerusalem* is eschatological and therefore related to other Dead Sea works, such as the *War Scroll*, he is unequivocal in asserting that "the New Jerusalem of the *NJ* should not be understood as a heavenly Jerusalem and that to do so employs an understanding of the evolution of the topos which might be too influenced by the heavenly New Jerusalems of the New Testament" (DiTommaso 2005: 10). In a similar vein Florentino Martinez notes: "Despite the city's gigantic and clearly utopian dimensions and the precious quality of the materials used in the temple's construction, the city and the temple that are described in the *New Jerusalem* are not the heavenly ones, but comprise a blueprint of the celestial model in the hope that this will be constructed on the earth in the future" (Martinez 1999: 453). Not only are both DiTommaso and Martinez persuasive in claiming that

<sup>4</sup> All translations from the Apocrypha and New Testament are taken from *The New Oxford Annotated Bible with the Apocrypha*, B. Metzger – R. Murphy (eds.), unless otherwise noted.

the city described in *New Jerusalem* is earthly, one must also emphasize that in this text there is no suggestion that it has a heavenly counterpart. This only reinforces a programmatic assertion made by R. Z. Werblowsky that “there is no intrinsic and necessary connection between eschatology and the concept of heavenly Jerusalem” (Werblowsky 1968: 173).

A final text that warrants mention at this point is the so-called *Animal Apocalypse*, found in *1 Enoch* 85-90. This highly symbolic work certainly predates the sectarian scroll writings and is likely from the mid-2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C. E., if not earlier. Several fragments of the *Animal Apocalypse* were found in Cave 4, but the specific passage that a number of scholars have cited in reference to heavenly Jerusalem, was not among them. In *1 En.* 90: 28-29, Enoch describes his vision of the transformation of the “ancient house.” After all of its “pillars and all the columns were pulled out: and the ornaments of that house were packed and taken out...the Lord of the sheep brought about a new house, greater and loftier than the first one, and set it up in the first location” (Charlesworth 1983-1985, 1: 71). R. H. Charles, who published an English translation of this text in 1913, commented on it as follows: “A New Jerusalem descending from heaven is a familiar idea in Jewish Apocalypses” (Charles 1973 2: 259). Devorah Dimant partially concurs with Charles. The setting for this apocalypse is in heaven; “what is found in our vision is the building of a future Jerusalem by God Himself,” and “this is the earliest testimony for this concept” (Dimant 1983: 190). Nevertheless, she does underscore:

At the outset it is appropriate to emphasize that we do not find in the *Animal Apocalypse* any mention of the concept that either the future Temple or Jerusalem were pre-existent and awaited in heaven or some secret place until the day of redemption to descend to earth. These concepts, whether in relation to the Temple or to Jerusalem, are only known to us from sources dating near the destruction of the Second Temple or later. (Dimant 1983: 190)

One could go further. It is debatable if this text is even referring to Jerusalem per se. As W. D. Davies aptly noted: “Usually it has been taken, without discussion, to refer to the new Jerusalem; but it might be interpreted as the new Temple” (Davies 1974: 144). The use of the term “house” and the explicit mention of dismantling its pillars and columns underscore that the referent is more likely the Temple and not the city. More importantly, it must be emphasized that as Charles indicated in his captioning and footnotes on the text, the entire *Apoc-*

*alypse* describes events occurring in human history, from Adam and Eve to the eschaton (Charles 1973, 2: 250-260). Thus the setting for this work is earth and not heaven. Even God is depicted as coming down from heaven to earth to destroy the enemies of Israel in chapter 90:18: "I kept seeing till the Lord of the sheep came unto them and took in his hand the rod of his wrath and smote the earth" (Charlesworth 1983-1985, 1: 70). Given that the earthly realm is the focus, even were one to accept the questionable interpretation that Jerusalem is the referent of the term "house," it is earthly Jerusalem that is being depicted as undergoing restoration. Why would there be the need to rebuild celestial Jerusalem? Accordingly, this text does not provide good evidence for the concept of heavenly Jerusalem.

The *Testament of Dan* 5:12 is also cited by some scholars in this context. It reads: "And the saints shall refresh themselves in Eden; the righteous shall rejoice in the New Jerusalem, which shall be eternally for the glorification of God" (Charlesworth 1983-1985, 1: 810). This work is part of a larger book known as the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*. Given that some of the other sections of this corpus were found at Cave 4, including parts of the *Testament of Levi* and *Naphtali*, it is assumed that the *Testaments* as a whole were composed in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C. E. It is worth noting that earlier in chapter 5:6 the author of the *Testament of Dan* refers to reading "the book of Enoch the Righteous." Like *1 Enoch*, this text offers an eschatological vision after God is victorious in His war against Beliar and the forces of evil. Similar to the *Animal Apocalypse*, the setting for the entire conflict and its resolution is clearly mundane and not celestial, as is underscored by verse 5:13, which immediately follows the "New Jerusalem" reference. "And Jerusalem shall no longer undergo desolation, nor shall Israel be led into captivity, because the Lord will be in her midst [living among human beings]" (Charlesworth 1983-1985, 1: 810). Thus the evocative phrase "New Jerusalem" does not refer to a heavenly entity, but rather to the restored earthly Jerusalem of the eschaton.

In sum, one would have expected the sectarian writings of the Dead Sea Scrolls to be replete with speculation about Jerusalem and its heavenly origins, stemming in part from the disillusionment of the authors with the contemporary Temple establishment.<sup>5</sup> This sentiment would have been intensified by their assumption that Jerusalem and the Temple had been profaned and polluted,

<sup>5</sup> Especially instructive in this regard is Rachel Elijor's discussion of the sectarians' self-perception as a heavenly ordained priesthood (Elijor 2004b: 227-231).

as evidenced especially in works like *Miqsat Ma 'aseh ha-Torah* (MMT). Although arguments from silence are seldom convincing, the fact that the sectarian scrolls are silent on the topic of heavenly Jerusalem is quite surprising and could be adduced as support for the “minimalist” position that this concept was not prevalent at that time.

### 3. Philo, the Pilgrim Philosopher

Although we did not find solid evidence that any Second Temple writings composed in Israel discussed heavenly Jerusalem, one can see this idea in the work of Philo of Alexandria (ca. 20 B. C. E.-50 C. E.). He provides our earliest, datable references to the notion of heavenly Jerusalem. At the outset it is worth emphasizing that most scholars have only cited one or two passages from Philo in this context. Philo’s writings, however, offer a very rich and intricate tapestry of interconnections that warrant a more expansive examination to fully appreciate his original conceptualization of the topic. His reference to his own pilgrimage to Jerusalem in *On Providence* 2:64 is quite brief and occurs while describing the Mediterranean shoreline at Ashkelon: “at the time when I was on my journey towards the temple of my native land for the purpose of offering up prayers and sacrifices therein” (Yonge 1993: 755).

Philo’s most important discussion related to the theme of heavenly Jerusalem is found in his treatise *On Dreams* 2: 246-253. Therein he offers a sustained philosophical inquiry into the significance of the biblical expression “God’s city.” It is also in that context that he presents his idiosyncratic etymology of the name Jerusalem. Philo begins by quoting Psalm 46:5:

‘There is a river whose streams gladden God’s city the holy dwelling-place of the Most High.’ He asks: “What city? For the existing holy city, where the sacred temple also is, does not stand in the neighbourhood of rivers any more than of the sea. Thus it is clear that he writes to shew us allegorically something different from the obvious.” (Colson 1958, 5: 553)

At the outset Philo refers to the earthly city of Jerusalem as “the existing holy city.” Since Jerusalem is landlocked, as presumably Philo knew from his pilgrimage, the psalmist’s description of a river associated with the city must be referring to another place, namely the celestial city of God.

Philo then explains the allegorical significance of the river, which he connects to the Divine Logos. For Philo the Logos or “word” represents the Divine Mind and the matrix of Platonic Ideas that mediates between the uncreated God and the created universe. “It is perfectly true that the impetuous rush of the divine word borne along (swiftly) and ceaselessly with its strong and ordered current does overflow and gladden the whole universe through and through” (Colson 1958, 5: 553-555).

He continues by suggesting that the term “God’s city” is multi-valent. In an effort to explain why the psalmist asserted that the river brings joy, Philo posits: “For God’s city is the name in one sense for the world which has received the whole bowl, wherein the divine draught is mixed and feasted thereon and exultingly taken for its possession the gladness which remains for all time never to be removed or quenched” (Colson 1958, 5: 555). Thus, the universe, which has been infused with the Logos, is perpetually gladdened by the Divine spirit. A second association of the term “God’s city” is with a philosopher’s soul. “In another sense he uses this name for the soul of the Sage, in which God is said to walk as in a city” (Colson 1958, 5: 555). When this sage contemplates the Divine, he is thereby imbibing the Logos which is described as “the ambrosian drug” promoting constant delight (Colson 1958, 5: 555).

Having established that the city of God can be used in a variety of ways, each of which connotes an encounter with the Divine, via the Logos, Philo continues by identifying the city of God with Jerusalem itself.

Now the city of God is called in the Hebrew Jerusalem and its name when translated is “vision of peace.” Therefore do not seek for the city of the Existent among the regions of the earth, since it is not wrought of wood or stone, but in a soul, in which there is no warring, whose sight is keen, which has set before it as its aim to live in contemplation and peace. For what grander or holier house could we find for God in the whole range of existence that the vision-seeking mind, the mind which is eager to see all things and never even in its dreams has a wish for faction or turmoil? ...Know then that God alone is the real veritable peace, free from all illusion, but the whole substance of things created only to perish is one constant war. (Colson 1958, 5: 555-557)

Herein we reach the crux of the matter. According to Philo there simultaneously exists two Jerusalems, the physical and the Divine. It is precisely for this reason that Jews call their holy city by the name Jerusalem. By naming it “vision of peace,” Jews are thereby signaling what Philo conceives of as the ideal of human perfec-

tion, namely contemplation of the Divine, who embodies absolute peace.

Philo mistakenly presupposes that the first half of the name Jerusalem, i. e., *yeru*, stems from the Hebrew root *r'h*, to see.<sup>6</sup> For Philo sight is the highest of the senses, and it is for this reason that light was the first of God's creations. In *On Creation* 10:53 he writes: "Knowing that light was the most excellent of things that exist, he produced it as an instrument for the most excellent of the senses, sight: for what the intellect is in the soul, this is what the eye is in the body; each of them sees, in the one case the objects of thought, in the other the objects of perception" (Runia 2001: 59).

Philo continues by asserting that the heavenly bodies were positioned as if in Temple.

"Using as his model that form of intelligible light which was discussed in connection with the incorporeal cosmos, he proceeded to create the sense-perceptible heavenly bodies, divine images of exceeding beauty. These he established in heaven, as in a temple made of the purest part of bodily substance" (Runia 2001: 60). David Runia aptly comments that, starting with Plato, one finds the notion of heaven as a shrine or temple for the everlasting gods. "For Philo the comparison has an extra dimension on account of the temple in Jerusalem. It of course housed no images whatsoever, but in Philo's eyes it is nevertheless a clear symbol of the universe in its totality" (Runia 2001: 204). Philo's assertion of an aniconic evocation of God in the Temple is found in his *Embassy to Gaius* 36:290: "My lord Gaius, this Temple has never from the beginning admitted any man-made image, because it is the dwelling-place of the true God" (Smallwood 1970: 126).<sup>7</sup>

In this context it is worth noting an additional association that Philo makes, connecting the Divine light with the Logos and the Israelites. Earlier, in his treatise *On Dreams* 1:117-118, he discussed a detail from the narrative of the plague of darkness in Egypt.

<sup>6</sup> Philo was not alone in this respect. In *Genesis Rabbah* 56:10 the name Jerusalem is depicted as a combination of the name *yir'eh* (He will show), the name that Abraham assigned Mount Moriah in Genesis 22:14, and *Shalem*, i. e., the place from whence came King Melchizedek in Genesis 14:18 (Sperber 1982: 78). Evidently Bahya b. Asher in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century C. E. was the first to associate the dual ending of the Hebrew word for Jerusalem (*Yerushalayim*) with the doctrine of the two Jerusalems – earthly and heavenly Jerusalem; see his commentary on Num. 19:13 (Chavel 1972 3:140).

<sup>7</sup> For an edifying overview of the role of the Temple in Jewish mystical literature, from Ezekiel's vision to Merkavah mysticism see Elior 2004b:63-81. In the notes therein she makes a number of references to Philo's writings on the Temple.



“‘For the children of Israel had light in all their dwellings’ (Ex. 10:23)... understand the allegory in this manner: the practiser of virtue met with the divine word, after the mortal and human light had set.” (Yonge 1993: 375-376)

Connecting light and the Logos with the Israelites was not confined to this one biblical event. In the same way that Philo offers a fanciful etymology of Jerusalem based upon seeing, he ingeniously but erroneously associates the name Israel with the same Hebrew root for sight.<sup>8</sup> In *On the Change of Names* 12:81 he writes: “Because the name Jacob means ‘a supplanter,’ but the name Israel signifies ‘the man who sees God’” (Yonge 1993: 347). Similarly, “This race is called Israel in the Chaldean language, or, if the name is translated into Greek, ‘seeing God’” (Smallwood 1970: 54).<sup>9</sup> As E. Mary Smallwood notes, Philo is hereby suggesting that Jews are endowed with a superior intellectual capability: “although the Powers are beyond the grasp of the ordinary human intellect, they are the object of the vision of Israel, the race which ‘sees God’” (Smallwood 1970: 156).

One can readily assume that when Philo connected Jerusalem with philosophical contemplation of the Divine he was also influenced by Plato’s *Republic* 540. Therein Plato describes the ideal city-state or *polis* that is promoted by philosopher-statesmen who contemplate the Good and then implement appropriate public policies. “They must lift up the eye of the soul to gaze on that which sheds light on all things; and when they have seen the Good itself, take it as a pattern for the right ordering of the state and of the individual, themselves included” (Cornford [1967]: 262).

Philo takes this notion of the *polis* and uses it in intriguing ways, as both a *megalopolis*, i. e., a great city, and a *metropolis*, a mother city. In *On Creation* 4:19, wherein he discusses the first day of creation from Genesis, Philo suggests that the starting point for the Divine blueprint of the universe was the conceptualization of the *megalopolis*, “the great cosmic city.” “The conception we have concerning God must be similar to this, namely that when he had decided to found the great cosmic city, he first conceived its outlines. Out of these he composed the intelligible cosmos, which served him as a model when he completed the sense-perceptible cosmos as well” (Runia

<sup>8</sup> Philo would have also appreciated the start of *Midrash Kohen*, which associates the word *torah* with the Greek *teoria* i. e. seeing or theory, “in the Greek language they call vision and appearance *toriah*...that is to say that she (i. e. the Torah) was hidden and afterwards appeared and was given to Israel, for she was sequestered in the upper realms prior to the creation of heaven and earth” (Jellinek [1967] 2: 23).

<sup>9</sup> Smallwood (1970: 153) lists a dozen such references in Philo.

2001: 50). David Runia (2001: 142) has noted that this phrasing is “yet another *verbum Philonicum*... Outside Philo (and excluding patristic imitators) it is only attested for large cities, not for the cosmos.”

Whereas Philo used *megalopolis* to refer to the Divine conception of the universe, on several occasions he refers specifically to Jerusalem as the *metropolis*, mother-city of the Jewish people. In *Flaccus* 46, a treatise addressed to the Roman governor of Alexandria, Philo writes that the Jews look “indeed upon the holy city as their metropolis in which is erected the sacred temple of the most high God” (Yonge 1993: 729). Commenting on this text, Sarah Pearce (2004: 19) suggests that Philo “appears to have been the first to state that the Jews think of Jerusalem as their *metropolis*, their ‘mother-city.’” To be sure, later on she mentions that perhaps Philo was influenced by the formulation found in the Septuagint on Isaiah 1:26 (Pearce 2004: 33 and Seeligman 1957: 196), wherein the original Hebrew expression *kiryah ne’emanah* (faithful city) is expansively rendered: “a loyal metropolis, Zion” (Muraoka 2009: 461). Philo characterizes Jerusalem as the “mother-city” in his treatise *Embassy to Gaius* 36: 281. Therein he writes: “Concerning the holy city I must now say what is necessary. It, as I have already stated, is my native country, and the metropolis, not only of the one country of Judaea, but also of many by reason of the colonies which it has sent out from time to time into the bordering districts of Egypt, Phoenicia, Syria...” (Yonge 782). In this latter passage Philo explains that Jerusalem really is the “mother-city” of the Jewish people, in so far as it has engendered numerous Jewish colonies throughout the neighboring countries.<sup>10</sup>

Philo’s use of the term *metropolis* in other contexts is also illuminating.<sup>11</sup> In *On Flight and Finding* 94 he writes: “Perhaps we may say that the most ancient and the strongest, and the most excellent metropolis, for I may not call it merely a city, is the divine word, to flee to which first is the most advantageous course of all” (Yonge 1993: 329). Herein Philo is connecting the term *metropolis* with the Divine Logos. Another significant use of the term *metropolis* is from

<sup>10</sup> See also *Exodus Rabbah* 23:11 on *benot yerushalayim* (daughters of Jerusalem) from Songs 1:5: “Said R. Johanan: Jerusalem is destined to become a metropolis for all the countries, as it is written ‘Ashdot with her daughter-towns (*benotehah*)’ (Josh. 15:47)” (Sperber 1982: 109). Elsewhere, Jerusalem is portrayed as a universal *metropolis*. In *Midrash Psalms* 36.6, ed. Buber p. 251, we read: “Said R. Oshayah (= Hoshayah) in the name of R. Pinhas: Jerusalem is destined in the future to become a *mtrpolin* for all the nations, as it is said: ‘and the nations shall walk in thy light’ (Isa. 60:3)” Sperber 1982: 109; see also Werblowsky 1968: 172, which is based upon a parallel statement in the *Pesikta*.

<sup>11</sup> See Pearce 2004: 34, n. 23.

*On Dreams* 1:181. Therein he discusses the journey of the soul from its heavenly origin to the earth and back again.

For the soul, having left the region of heaven...came to the body as a foreign country. Therefore the father who begot it promises that he will not permit it to be for ever held in bondage, but that he will have compassion on it, and will unloose its chains, and will conduct it in safety and freedom as far as the metropolis. (Yonge 381)

Accordingly, in both of these texts Philo associated the term *metropolis* with the supramundane realm, whether it be the Logos or the heavenly origins of the soul.

In summation, we can now reflect back upon Philo's seminal presentation of heavenly Jerusalem in *On Dreams* 2: 246-253. Initially he discussed "God's city" and its relationship to the Logos. He then asserted that it can also be construed as the soul of the sage. Finally, he related "God's city" to Jerusalem. All three, the Logos, the soul contemplating God, and Jerusalem, are therefore interconnected. Philo also associated each with the term *metropolis*. Additionally, these elements are each individually and collectively bound up with a second set of associations, namely light, vision, Israel, and the Temple. Together all of these disparate entities originated with the ultimate source, God. Thus by analyzing Philo's theory of heavenly Jerusalem one is lead into the very heart of his philosophically oriented corpus of biblical exegesis.

#### 4. Paul, the Polemicist

Paul was the first New Testament writer to refer to celestial Jerusalem. As will be seen, the situational and interpersonal aspects of his life colored his perspective on Jerusalem, much more so than Philo. It is generally thought that he wrote Galatians around 54 C. E. Therein he refers to heavenly Jerusalem as "the Jerusalem above." "But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free and she is our mother" (Gal. 4:26). Many Pauline scholars contend that this reference to a celestial Jerusalem was a pervasive and well-known Jewish teaching at that time. Typical of this approach is Hans Dieter Betz's comment: "Assuming that the readers are familiar with it, Paul introduces without further explanation this famous Jewish concept" (Betz 1979: 246). As we have seen, there is simply no evidence to support this position. Unless we speculate that Paul had been exposed to Philo (which cannot be entirely ruled out, but is unlikely and has

yet to be established), it is more reasonable to assume that Paul conceived this idea independently.

In order to fully appreciate Paul's formulation, one must initially view it in context of Galatians, and then within the broader canvas of his entire literary oeuvre. The preceding verses in Galatians are instructive and shed light on Paul's thought process. He contrasts Abraham's two wives, "the free woman," i. e., Sarah, and "the slave woman," i. e., Hagar. He posits: "Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children" (Gal. 4:25-26).

Paul's approach, namely interpreting biblical characters allegorically, reflects his Hellenistic outlook and is methodologically similar to Philo's style of biblical exegesis. His conclusions, however, are so sardonic and derogatory that they contrast sharply with what one encounters in Philo. In a startling inversion of Jewish biblical history, Paul construes those Jews, living in Jerusalem and following the biblical commandments given at Mt. Sinai, as being descendents of the Egyptian slave woman Hagar. They are contrasted with the Galatian Gentiles to whom he is writing and who have become followers of Christ. According to Paul, these Gentiles are portrayed as the real descendents of Sarah, whose symbolic domicile is heavenly Jerusalem. (This is possibly the earliest formulation of the *Verus Israel* doctrine, a cornerstone of Christian antisemitism, whereby Jews are displaced by Gentiles as representing the "true Israel.")<sup>12</sup> It followed from the end of the previous chapter of Galatians: "And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:29).

Second Corinthians is another letter by Paul, also composed around 55 C. E. Therein he likewise discusses his two-covenant theory. Paul focuses on Moses receiving tablets of stone, which are inert and inanimate. Just like Moses who came down from Mt. Sinai with a veil over his face "to keep the Israelites from gazing at the end of the glory that was being set aside. But their minds were hardened. Indeed, to this very day, when they hear the reading of the old covenant, that same veil is still there, since only in Christ is it set aside" (2 Cor. 3:13-14). Earlier he is even more strident in asserting that "our competence is from God, who has made us competent to be ministers

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<sup>12</sup> Paul also pioneered another fundamental antisemitic proposition, namely that the Jews killed Jesus (1 Thess. 2:15).

of a new covenant, not of letter but of spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life" (2 Cor. 3:5-6). Accordingly, Paul associates the old covenant with death and the new one with life. His innovative labeling of "the old covenant" to describe the Mosaic Torah that the Jews read, in contradistinction to the "new covenant" initiated with Christ, will eventually become the primary identifier of Christianity, especially as it was translated into the Latin "novum testamentum" and hence "New Testament." Moreover, his reference to the fading glory of the Mosaic religion, which is replaced by the new dispensation mediated by Jesus, is the basis for the anti-Judaic doctrine of supersessionism. A more pointed formulation of this theory is found in the letter to the Hebrews, which is traditionally ascribed to Paul, but is considered to be a later work by contemporary scholars. "In speaking of 'a new covenant,' he has made the first one obsolete. And what is obsolete and growing old will soon disappear" (Heb. 8:13).

As opposed to Philo, who construed heavenly Jerusalem in a positive context, as the celestial origin of earthly Jerusalem's significance, Paul's theory of heavenly Jerusalem is rooted in denigration and rejection. Ultimately, it stems from the inner dynamic of his polemic against an army of enemies. As we shall see, for Paul earthly Jerusalem represents manifold dangers to his ministry and even his life. In order to better understand this central aspect of Paul's thought, it is important to briefly highlight some important milestones in his life.

Jerusalem was central to Paul's life; it was even part of his bloodline. On several occasions he mentions that he was a Benjaminite.<sup>13</sup> This assertion is highly unusual for someone living at the end of the Second Temple period. Presumably, Paul was aware that Jerusalem was assigned to the small territory of the tribe Benjamin in Joshua 18:16, an assignment reinforced by prophetic statements such as: "Flee for refuge, O people of Benjamin, Out of the midst of Jerusalem!" (Jer. 6:1). Accordingly, one can speculate that by boasting of his Benjaminite lineage Paul was underscoring his biological connection to Jerusalem.

Paul only offers general descriptions of his upbringing, such as: "I advanced in Judaism beyond many among my people of the same age, for I was far more zealous for the traditions of my ancestors" (Gal. 1:14). Luke, in Acts, has Paul claim that he was educated in Jerusalem under the tutelage of the outstanding Judaic scholar of the period: "I am a Jew, born in Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the

<sup>13</sup> See Philippians 3:5 and Romans 11:1.

feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral law" (Acts 22:3). As a self-styled zealous Pharisee, Paul acknowledges on several occasions that he persecuted Jewish followers of Jesus. Near the start of Galatians he writes: "I was violently persecuting the church of God and was trying to destroy it" (Gal. 1:13). Luke's famous account of Paul's conversion on the road to Damascus is repeated three times in Acts (9:1-22, 22:4-16 and 26:9-18). According to Luke, Paul "went to the high priest and asked him for letters to the synagogues at Damascus, so that if he found any who belonged to the Way, men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-2). Paul's description of this activity, as quoted above, is not nearly as graphic or dramatic as Luke's account. What is interesting is his depiction of the aftermath of the Divine revelation and vocation to proclaim Christ to the Gentiles. Paul insists:

[N]or did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were already apostles before me, but I went away at once to Arabia, and afterwards I returned to Damascus. Then after three years I did go up to Jerusalem to visit Cephas and stayed with him fifteen days; but I did not see any other apostle except James the Lord's brother. (Gal. 1:17-18)

Paul's claim that he did not immediately return to Jerusalem after visiting Damascus contrasts with Luke's assertion in Acts 9:26, wherein as soon as Paul started to preach about Jesus in Damascus there was a conspiracy to kill him, and he had to flee to Jerusalem to save his life. Paul's claim that he went to Arabia from Damascus is also intriguing. Why Arabia? In light of his idiosyncratic assertion that we previously saw in Galatians 4:25, that Mt. Sinai is located in Arabia, one can speculate that Paul went there on a spiritual pilgrimage, perhaps in quest of another revelation from God.

It is easy to sense Paul's profound ambivalence to earthly Jerusalem throughout the letter to Galatians. Although it was his starting point, after he abandoned his zealous persecution of the Jesus' followers, and thereby became a traitor and a religious heretic, Jerusalem became a dangerous place that he had to avoid. It is worth noting that according to Acts 7:58, before Paul set out on his initial campaign, he was present at the execution of Stephen, the first Christian martyr, who was stoned in Jerusalem for preaching about Jesus. This scene would certainly have underscored Jerusalem's potential threat to Paul's life. Nevertheless, after several years elapsed, Paul was drawn back there, because Jerusalem was where the Jesus movement was headquartered. How could he legitimately claim to be an authentic apostle of Christ, if he was totally divorced from the move-

ment's leadership? When, according to his own account, he returned after a three year hiatus, he only stayed for two weeks and confined all of his interactions to conferring with the movement's two most senior members – Peter and James (Gal. 1:18-19).

The second chapter of Galatians begins with his assertion that the next time he returned to Jerusalem was fourteen years later! It continues with Paul's version of the key event in the movement, known as the "Council in Jerusalem," which occurred in 49/50 C. E. The parallel account is found in Acts 15. This gathering was pivotal, both in terms of the history of early Christianity, as well as in illuminating the relational dynamic between Paul and his contemporaries. It is therefore essential that a detailed examination of these two distinct accounts be undertaken, thereby disclosing Paul's predicament and shedding light upon his subsequent actions. Many of the elements of these two versions are so dissimilar that some scholars have questioned whether or not they are describing the same event.

According to Acts 15:1, the impetus for the Council was a controversy that erupted in Antioch revolving around how to deal with Gentiles who wished to become members of the movement. Unnamed individuals "from Judea" demanded that the Gentiles undergo circumcision and thereby convert to Judaism. There ensued a vociferous debate, and Paul was one of several delegates sent by the community in Antioch to ascertain from the leaders in Jerusalem what to do. According to Acts 15, Paul played a relatively minor role in the Council's proceedings, but his two major nemeses, Peter and James, were pivotal.

In Acts 15 three different positions were advocated at the Council. Initially "some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, 'It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses'" (Acts 15:5). Peter spoke next: "My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers" (Acts 15:7). Peter was alluding to his experience with Cornelius, the Roman centurion, described in Acts 10. On that occasion, when Peter preached what could be described as a proto-Gospel to Cornelius and his Roman cohorts, immediately those Gentiles received "the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 10:45) and began to speak in tongues, just like the disciples originally did on Pentecost, as described in Acts 2. "So he [i. e., Peter] ordered them to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 10:48). Based upon his personal experience, Peter derived two fundamental lessons. Firstly, Gentiles need only to have faith, and need not

undergo conversion to Judaism to become followers; and secondly, Peter claimed the exclusive prerogative to proselytize Gentiles.

The third and final speaker at the Council was James. He began his presentation with the demand: "My brothers, listen to me" (Acts 15:13). After complimenting Peter on his work with Gentiles he continued: "Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood" (Acts 15:19-20). James was the indisputable leader of the community. He stated with unwavering authority "I have reached a decision" and his plan was unanimously adopted by the Council. His program requiring Gentiles to obey certain biblical commandments is a forerunner to what will become the Noahide commandments in the Talmud. Moreover, according to Acts his stipulations were recorded in letters that were sent to Antioch and elsewhere, to be delivered by Paul and the other delegates.

Although Acts does not specify the source of James' authority, Paul refers to him in Galatians as "James the Lord's brother" (Gal. 1:19). This is also confirmed in Mark 6:3 and Matthew 13:55, wherein James is positioned first in a listing of Jesus' siblings. Additional attestation of his unique role in the movement is the following excerpt from the *Gospel of Thomas*: "The disciples said to Jesus, 'We know that You will depart from us. Who is to be our leader?' Jesus said to them, 'Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being'" (Robinson 1977: 119).

Paul characterizes the events of the Council differently. "I went up in response to a revelation. Then I laid before them (though only in a private meeting with the acknowledged leaders) the gospel that I proclaim among the Gentiles" (Gal. 2:2). Subsequently he identifies these key individuals as James, Peter, and John, and then proceeds to denigrate them. "And from those who were supposed to be acknowledged leaders (what they actually were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) – those leaders contributed nothing to me" (Gal. 2:6). Paul's disparagement and total lack of respect for the movement's leadership is somewhat surprising; nevertheless, it is an attitude that permeates Galatians. He began his letter by identifying himself as "Paul an apostle – sent neither by human commission nor from human authorities, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father" (Gal. 1:1). Through these interconnected statements he wants his readers to understand and appreciate his superiority. Whereas the movement's leaders derive their status from the opinion of mere



mortals, and are therefore inconsequential, Paul is divinely commissioned. As a result, the Gentiles that he is addressing should listen exclusively to him and to no one else.

It is important to realize that Paul lacked the tangible credentials of either James or Peter. James, as we saw, was Jesus' brother and head of the community. Peter was Jesus' principal disciple. According to John 1:42, Jesus changed his name to "rock" when he first met him. "You are Simon son of John. You are to be called Cephas' (which is translated as Peter)." Matthew 16:18 is more expansive: "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."

Paul on the other hand never met Jesus. In order to succeed, he felt that it was necessary to emphasize that he received his directives not from any human source, but exclusively by means of Divine authorization. Paul's lack of personal contact with Jesus may also explain one of the most startling features of his numerous letters. In all the writings that scholars confidently ascribe to him,<sup>14</sup> Paul conveys virtually nothing about the life and teachings of Jesus! Surely Paul heard something of what Jesus did and taught on his visits to Jerusalem. The only sliver of information about Jesus' life that he offers is the brief description of the Last Supper in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. His account, however, is so compressed and mechanical that Paul is clearly reciting a traditional Eucharistic formula. Even here Paul cannot acknowledge that he is merely transmitting something that had become ritualized within the movement; rather, he prefaces his remarks with another invocation of Divine revelation: "For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you" (1 Corinthians 11:23).

Returning to Paul's report of his visit to Jerusalem, he states that everyone agreed that "we should go to the Gentiles, and they to the circumcised. They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do" (Gal. 2:9-10). Note that Paul claims that there was a formal understanding that only he would preach to the Gentiles and that Peter and the others would confine themselves to Jews. He also ignores James' stipulations regarding gentile observance of basic biblical regulations, as this runs counter to his theory that faith alone suffices. Thus Paul transformed the Council into an enthusiastic endorsement by the movement's leadership for his personal proselytizing agenda. It is probably no coincidence that Paul began his literary activity around the time of the

<sup>14</sup> Namely 1 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Romans, Philemon and Philippians; see Harris 2007: 469.

Council and possibly immediately in its wake. If the account in Acts 15 is accurate, and the movement started to disseminate James' letter regarding biblically mandated requirements for Gentile followers, Paul would have had a special incentive to counter this initiative and promote his own agenda by means of his own letters.

An additional stratagem of Paul's is evident in the next few verses: "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood self-condemned; for until certain people came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But after they came he drew back and kept himself separate for fear of the circumcision faction. And the other Jews joined him in this hypocrisy" (Gal. 2:11-13). The obvious target of this campaign of character assassination is directed at Peter, who is accused of being a hypocrite and unfit to minister to Gentiles. Even more subtle is the way in which he has also undermined James' status. Recall that in Acts 15, James did not support the demand for circumcision, yet now Paul is characterizing him as the leader of this very group.

In Philippians 3:17-20 we encounter a second reference that Paul makes to a celestial abode. It has been dated to 55 C. E., the approximate time of the composition of Galatians, and is likewise a polemic (Reumann 2008: 17). It reflects his self-perception as being under attack and needing a place where he can find shelter and a refuge to share with his true friends, his Gentile "brothers and sisters."

Imitators together of me, continue to become, brothers and sisters, and take note of those who live in this way, as you have us as example. For many live lives, about whom I have often spoken to you but now speak even with tears, as the enemies of the cross of Christ. Their final goal is destruction, their god, the belly, and their 'glory,' in what is shameful; those whose concern is earthly things. For our governing civic association exists in the heavens, from which indeed we eagerly await the savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (Reumann 2008: 566)

The key Greek term that Reumann renders "our governing civic association" is *politeuma*. After considering the suggestions of various scholars on how to properly render "this NT *hapax legomenon*," Reumann concludes that his translation "is awkward... but is truer to lexical findings: less than "the state," yet civic, with a place in the public world of the day; like an association or club with governance over members; it is in heaven, where its Lord is" (Reumann 2008: 576-577).

In the book of Acts there is another account about Paul in Jerusalem that is quite revealing. Luke writes about it from the perspective of an eyewitness who was travelling with Paul at the time. This certainly lends more credibility to the narrative. "The next day Paul

went with us to visit James; and all the elders were present" (Acts 21:18). Although they welcomed Paul, they admonished him owing to rumors that he was urging Jews living among Gentiles not to practice circumcision or to follow other Jewish customs. He was then commanded, evidently by James,<sup>15</sup> to accompany four members of the movement who were about to complete their Nazirite period of abstinence. "So do what we tell you... Join these men, go through the rite of purification with them, and pay for the shaving of their heads" (Acts 21:23-24). Paul complied with this order.

There is an earlier, related episode. "At Cenchreae he had his hair cut, for he was under a vow" (Acts 18:18). Apparently, Paul on his own initiative undertook the obligations of a Nazirite. What is puzzling about this incident is that he ended his vow outside of Jerusalem and hence did not bring a sacrifice, as biblically required by Num. 6:13-17. If factual, these accounts illustrate an important point about Paul's life. Even though he portrays himself as entirely independent and autonomous, he is nonetheless subservient to the leaders of the movement, at least when he is in Jerusalem. This in itself would be motivation for Paul to spend as little time there as possible.

Paul is certainly aware of this predicament. In one of his most revealing comments he discusses his rather schizoid existence.

For though I am free with respect to all, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I might win more of them. To the Jews I became as a Jew, in order to win Jews. To those under the law I became as one under the law (though I myself am not under the law) so that I might win those under the law. To those outside the law I became as one outside the law (though I am not free from God's law but am under Christ's law)... I have become all things to all people, that I might by all means save some. (1 Cor. 9:19-22)

Thus Paul's *praxis* was completely situational. When in Jerusalem he was willing to go to the Temple and even participate in supererogatory acts, such as the Nazirite's vow. However, when he was with Gentiles he lived as they did, unencumbered by biblical/Judaic regulations. He saw himself as being enslaved in society. Presumably, that is why he continually associated the only truly authentic part of his existence as the liberating life of the spirit in "the Jeru-

<sup>15</sup> Although in verse 20 the subject is "they," presumably referring to James and the elders, beginning with verse 23 the subject shifts to "we." In verse 25 mention is made that "we have sent a letter with our judgment" that Gentiles must follow the same regulations that were ascribed to James in Acts 15.

salem above."<sup>16</sup> Whereas in the earthly Jerusalem Paul was a rather peripheral figure in the movement, in the heavenly Jerusalem, which he construed as a voluntary *politeuma* with his Gentile brothers and sisters, he was the divinely designated leader.

The final irony in Paul's troubled life is that he died at the hands of an unsuspected enemy – Gentiles in Rome. According to traditional Christian legendary accounts he died a martyr's death, in the early 60's C. E., as part of the anti-Christian persecutions initiated by Nero.<sup>17</sup>

## 5. Conclusion

The quest for the earliest references to heavenly Jerusalem has led us to Philo and Paul, both of whom were active not long before the destruction of the Second Temple. We did not find any explicit formulations of this doctrine in either the biblical canon or in post-biblical writings prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> century C. E. Even though Philo and especially Paul had personal connections to Jerusalem, and the land of Israel more generally, both wrote in the Diaspora. While not directly discussed above, it seems that the earliest references to heavenly Jerusalem in Jewish works composed in Israel are found in texts like *4 Ezra* and *2 Baruch* that were written soon after the destruction of the temple. If in fact this is the case, the motive of these apocalyptic writers would have been fundamentally different than either Philo or Paul, and it is unlikely that they were influenced by either of them. For Jewish writers after 70 C. E., the notion of heavenly Jerusalem offered considerable consolation.<sup>18</sup> They could find comfort in the certainty that even though earthly Jerusalem no longer existed, there was a perpetual heavenly city that would one day rematerialize.

<sup>16</sup> It should be noted that Paul's eschatology is also based on this idea of being "caught up" to heaven to meet the Lord, as is evidenced by 1 Thess. 4:13-18, thought by scholars to have been Paul's earliest letter. Additionally, his account of an ecstatic experience of being "caught up" to the third heaven and receiving a private revelation is found in 2 Cor. 12: 1-10.

<sup>17</sup> See for example Eusebius in his *Ecclesiastical History* 2:25, who notes that Paul was beheaded in Rome and Peter was likewise crucified ([1959]: Vol. 1: 179).

<sup>18</sup> The Jewish-Christian writings of Hebrews 12:22 and Revelation 21:2 also explicitly mention heavenly Jerusalem. The former is more aligned with Paul's agenda, in that it too is polemical, but it lacks the personal angst of Paul's existentialist predicament and is entirely argumentative. There is no scholarly consensus on whether it was composed prior to or after the destruction of the Temple. Revelation, on the other hand, is generally assumed to post-date the Temple.

Philo discussed both Jerusalems as part of his larger philosophical exegesis of biblical texts. For Philo earthly Jerusalem was special; it was the mother-city of the Jewish nation. He appropriated the Hellenistic worldview in order to elevate Jerusalem's status and, by extension, that of Judaism itself. This was largely influenced by the theory of Platonic ideas, i. e., the notion that paralleling the mundane world is a non-corporeal celestial realm. Thus, earthly Jerusalem became the terrestrial manifestation of the transcendent holy city of God.

Paul, on the other hand, was primarily engaged in polemics when he referred to "the Jerusalem above." Although he wrote several decades after Philo, there is no evidence to suggest that he was influenced by (or had even been exposed to) Philo. Accordingly, it should be assumed that, like Philo, Paul developed his notion of heavenly Jerusalem independently, as an organic outgrowth of his thinking. Paul was under attack from various quarters and sought a safe haven. The notion of heavenly Jerusalem provided him with such an escape. Not only did it serve to free him from his earthly predicament; he was able to characterize earthly Jerusalem in such a negative fashion that it became a potent weapon with which to counterattack his enemies. The theory of two Jerusalems found explicit expression in both Philo and Paul. Despite sharing similar intellectual proclivities, they were worlds apart in their life experiences.

## II. RITUAL



# The *Book of Watchers* and the Cycle of New Year Festivals

CRISPIN FLETCHER-LOUIS

In her work on the origins of Jewish mysticism in the traditions and piety of the Second Temple, Rachel Elijor has argued that the temple and its service were inextricably connected to the order and cycles of the cosmos. She postulates “a mutual relationship between the cosmic cyclicity of the eternal, incorporeal, divine realm and the ritual cyclicity established in the material, terrestrial realm by the sacred service. The Temple was the earthly embodiment of cosmic order and cyclicity; hence the guardians of the sanctuary, the priests, discharging their duties, maintained a macrocosmic and microcosmic order in which the laws of nature were harmonized with sacred time, sacred place, and sacred service.”<sup>1</sup> In interpreting the temple and its worship in this way Professor Elijor’s work is, I think, an example of what might be described as a new history of religions approach to the Temple and biblical religion, which in some form many now take for granted, especially in the study of the Hebrew Bible. For many of us, Elijor’s basic instinct that we should tie together cosmology (myth) and temple service (ritual) really needs no justification now: all that remains is to clarify in what ways the history of the temple and its developing theology (or theologies?) of ritual and mystical experience unfolded, and how individual primary texts should be interpreted.

No doubt there are still those who are not yet persuaded that the Israelite temple had such cosmological associations, still less so that those associations cash out in the way that some of us have argued.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Elijor 2004b: 3.

<sup>2</sup> My gratitude for Prof. Elijor’s work arises not least from the fact that she and I have come independently to the conviction that the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* at Qumran describe a much closer communion of angels and human worshippers than has previously been thought. In her chapter on “Priests and Angels” (in Elijor 2004b: 165-200) she (implicitly) rejects the accepted reading of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* according to which the text describes throughout angels and priestly angels, not human worshippers in the company of the angels. She thinks, for example, that the opening section of Song I (4Q400 frg. 1) describes human priestly wor-



So it is a pleasure to offer here a short study of the *Book of Watchers* (1 *Enoch* 1-36 – hereafter *BW*) which I hope provides further evidence of the temple-cosmology connection whilst also clarifying the way that connection functioned in early apocalyptic literature of the third (and perhaps fourth) century B. C. E.

The main part of my discussion here rests on a number of (no doubt still contentious) judgments which have been covered in other publications, but which need to be reviewed briefly at the outset. (1) First, I reject the usual assumption that apocalyptic(ism) is at the very least disinterested in Torah and Temple, if not actively opposed to them. This view has held a powerful hold on the history of scholarship, not least because it sets up apocalypticism as a preparation for (one particular, but now questionable, understanding of) earliest Christianity. But the texts – the Jewish and Christian Jewish apocalypses – do not support the dualistic understanding of apocalyptic(ism) of which this Torah-Temple perspective is a part.<sup>3</sup>

(2) Secondly, the Enoch of the *BW* is a representative of the (Zadokite-led) *Jerusalem* temple priesthood whose engagement with the errant watchers echoes the treatment by the Jerusalem priesthood of northern, “Samaritan” priests in the fourth and third centuries B. C.<sup>4</sup> (4) Thirdly, the *BW* is replete, from start to finish, with cultic material; though all too often much of it is ignored.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, a case can be made for thinking that much of the *BW* is concerned with the identification of the Jerusalem temple with the location of the near-sacrifice of Isaac (Gen 22), which serves already in the Hebrew Bible as a foundational narrative for the later sacrificial system.<sup>6</sup>

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shippers alongside angels (pp. 166-167) and that the *Songs* are written in “rhythmic language, which profoundly affects the worshipper and is in fact designed to express the invisible in poetic and musical terms and thus transplant him to the supernal worlds, to inspire in him a mystical ascent to the angelic world’ (p. 169). I also argue, in my own way, that the *Sabbath Songs* are written for a kind of mystical ascent to heaven and that, throughout, the extant texts refer to both angels (in the traditional “suprahuman” sense of the word) and human worshippers – priests in the angelic, heavenly mode (see Fletcher-Louis 2002 chs. 8-11).

<sup>3</sup> See C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis n. d., 2: 1569-1607.

<sup>4</sup> See Tigchelaar 1996: 198-203; Tigchelaar 2002: 143-145; Fletcher-Louis 2002: 25-27.

<sup>5</sup> See Fletcher-Louis 2005: 1-33 (here pp. 24-25).

<sup>6</sup> See Fletcher-Louis 2005.

## The New Year Festival Cycle Substructure to the *BW*

### The Festival of Wood Offering and *1 Enoch* chapters 3 & 5

Dead Sea Scroll texts attest to an expanded festival calendar that included a festival for the offering of wood for the temple altar at the end of the 8<sup>th</sup> month (11QTS col. 23-24; 4Q409 frg 1 i 4; 4Q325 2 7, cf. Neh 10:34 and 13:31). Unlike later rabbinic tradition (and earlier Pharisaic practice?), priestly halakhah in the *Aramaic Levi Document* (4Q214b [4QLevi<sup>f</sup> ar] frgs. 2-6 & Bodleian c, Athos Greek),<sup>7</sup> in *T. Levi* 9:12, and in *Jubilees* 21:13 is emphatic that the wood to be used on the altar should not be seasoned or dry. To this effect it should come, rather, from a prescribed list of (twelve or fourteen) evergreen trees (*Jub.* 21:12, 14). And bringing it to the temple in late summer helps ensure that, unlike in later rabbinic practice, even the evergreen wood that will be used in abundance in Tishri has not been unnecessarily dried out by the intense heat of summer.<sup>8</sup>

In *Jubilees* these regulations are found “written in the books of [Abraham’s] forefathers, in the words of Enoch and the words of Noah” (21:10). And, indeed, in the *BW*, Enoch is told:

Ch. 3. Contemplate and see how all the trees appear withered, and (how) all their leaves are stripped, with the exception of fourteen trees which are not stripped, which remain with the old (foliage) until the new comes after two or three years.

5:1 Observe and understand all the trees; on all of them their leaves sprout, turn green, and cover [the trees, and all their fruits are for glorious splendour (εἰς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν, ליה)דר תש]בהה.<sup>9</sup>

These statements belong to a series of instructions where Enoch is told to examine the natural laws that govern the workings of nature – the movements in the heavens according to their (cultic) “appointed time and ... feasts (ταῖς ἐορταῖς ἀντῶν)” (2:1). Given the function of the list of fourteen evergreen trees in *Jubilees* and in the *Aramaic Levi Document* there can be no doubt that here Enoch is to engage in arboreal investigation so that he understands the proper arrangements for wood for the altar.

There are two reasons for thinking that here the *BW* has in mind not just the *type* of trees to be used on the altar but also the *right timing* of their collection for the sacrificial service. In the first place, on

<sup>7</sup> See Drawnel 2004: 78-81; 165-170; Greenfield – Stone – Eshel 2004: 124-131.

<sup>8</sup> See Delcor 1985-7: 561-69.

<sup>9</sup> 4Q201 (4QEn<sup>a</sup> ar) ii 9-10.

the evidence of *Jubilees*, the *rationale* for the use of evergreen trees in the cult is directly connected to the timing of their collection *at the end of the summer*. Secondly, in the *BW*, between the discussion of trees in chapters 3 and 5, Enoch is told in chapter 4:

And again, contemplate the days of summer, how at its beginning the sun is above it (the earth). You seek shelter and shade because of the heat of the sun, and the earth burns with a scorching heat, and you cannot tread upon the earth, or upon a rock, because of its heat.

The scorching summer heat and the character of trees are mutually interpretative matters that reflect the essentially cultic character of these chapters. Trees are to be left during the summer to provide much needed “shelter and shade.”<sup>10</sup> At the end of the summer it is obvious which are the evergreens, because their leaves have not fallen and they can now be brought near to the altar to be used as firewood. Their shade is no longer needed.

And that the wood offering is here introduced as a prelude to or at the beginning of the New Year cycle of festivals is clear when we reflect further on the reason for third century and possibly fourth century priestly concerns that the wood offered on the altar should be green. *Jubilees* says that this is because the wood must give off a decent aroma (22:13-14). The *BW* implicitly points to the symbolic significance of green wood for *fertility*. In chapters 24-25 Enoch is shown an extraordinary tree with beautiful flowers, a smell “more fragrant than any fragrance” (24:4), and copious fruit like date palms. He is told that in the future it will be planted in, or near, the Temple in Jerusalem where it will be for food for the righteous giving them longevity and a prosperous life. The wood of this tree of life, we are told, *will never wither* (24:4): it is, then, like the wood to be offered on the altar; evergreen.<sup>11</sup> The connection between the two passages in the *BW* (chs. 3-5 and 24-25) is not developed, but the underlying assumptions about the relative fertility and therefore cosmic significance of deciduous and evergreen trees is obvious. In this case the timing of an offering of evergreen wood for the altar on the Eve of the New Year festivals is not merely a practical necessity: the pre-Essene priestly calendar has here expanded, quite logically, the scope of New Year as a time when the fertility, fecundity, order and

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Philo, *De specialibus legibus* 2:207 in a discussion of the arboreal symbolism of Sukkoth.

<sup>11</sup> We should also compare Ezek 47:12, which envisions trees on the banks of the river that flows from the eschatological Temple that do not wither but bear fruit every month.

stability of the cosmos are celebrated and reaffirmed. Conceptually, the offering of evergreen trees *belongs* in the wider context of the New Year festival cycle.

The close conceptual connection between the wood offering here and the festivals of Tishri itself is perhaps also evident in the language of 5:1. M. Black has pointed out that the language – “all their fruit for glorious splendour (εἰς τιμὴν καὶ δόξαν, חש[בה] ליה[דר] עץ הדר) – perhaps recalls Leviticus 23:40, which specifies the use of “*the fruit of majestic trees* (פרי עץ הדר)” along with the branches of “leafy trees” (עץ-עבת) and willows of the brook *for the seven days of festivities at Sukkoth*, during which time Israelites created booths for themselves from branches.<sup>12</sup>

### “Rosh Hashanah” and 1 Enoch 1-5

After the festival of the wood offering, the New Year cycle proper begins on the first of Tishri with a “Day of Memorial” (e.g. 4Q319 12 2; 4Q320 4 iii 6; 4Q409 1 i 5, cf. 11QTS 25 & *Jub.* 6:23), the “Rosh Hashanah” of the rabbinic calendar. The associations between the 1<sup>st</sup> of Tishri and the opening chapters of the *BW* were studied by Lars Hartman in his 1979 monograph and have been recently endorsed by Torleif Elgvin, with support from some recently published Dead Sea Scroll texts (esp. 4QInstruction, 1/4QMysteries and 1/4QFestival prayers).<sup>13</sup>

The parallels have to do with the judgment of God, grounded in the expectation of his theophany (1 *Enoch* 1), the experience of God as creator and the call to meditate on the order of creation (1 *Enoch* 2-5), since God’s judgment of the righteous corresponds to his approval of the created order that is faithful to his commands, and his condemnation of the wicked is demanded by their arrogant disregard for creation’s order and his orders (1 *Enoch* 5:4-9). The wisdom that these chapters espouse is liturgically grounded, because Israel’s cult is cosmological. Hartman and Elgvin point to the parallel to these ideas in *Jubilees’* account of Abraham’s meditation on the order of creation and his coming to consciousness of the creator as the source of creation’s order *on the first of the seventh month* (12:16-19).<sup>14</sup> Given the association of Abraham with Enochic tradition in

<sup>12</sup> Black 1985: 112.

<sup>13</sup> See Hartman 1979; Elgvin 2003: 49-67.

<sup>14</sup> Hartman 1979: 105-106; Elgvin 2003: 61.

*Jubilees* (as elsewhere), it is reasonable to suppose that author of the *Jubilees* has one eye on the opening chapters of *1 Enoch* in *Jubilees* chapter 12.<sup>15</sup>

### Yom Kippur and *1 Enoch* 10-16

In the (third century B. C. E.) *Book of Giants* (4QEnGiants<sup>a</sup> 7 i 6), in *Jubilees* 5:3-19 and in subsequent interpretative tradition (4Q180 1 7-8; *Apoc. Abr.* 13) the punishment of the errant watchers of *1 Enoch* 10 is related to the Day of Atonement rite of cosmic purgation.<sup>16</sup> There are many reasons why chapters 10-14, which climax with Enoch entering God's presence as if he were the high priest entering the Holy of Holies at Yom Kippur in 14:8-15:1, are to be read as an anticipation of the Yom Kippur rites. D. Stökl has provided one of the fullest discussions of these parallels.<sup>17</sup> In addition to the points of correspondence adduced by Stökl and by others, we can now add the likelihood that the allusions to Yom Kippur in chapters 10-15 belong to a larger New Year cycle pattern that provides structure to the whole of the *BW*. And in fact that the points of correspondence between the *BW* and Yom Kippur occur here, in these central chapters, *not elsewhere in 1 Enoch 1-36*, lends weight to the implied reader's impression that the whole is organized around a New Year ritual framework.<sup>18</sup>

### Tabernacles

In *1 Enoch* 17-36 Enoch is taken on successive journeys around the cosmos. Cultic realities appear frequently in these chapters. For example, there is: praise (22:14; 25:7; 27:5; 36:4); Jerusalem, the site of the future temple (chs. 25-27); the places from which the incense and

<sup>15</sup> For Abraham and Enoch see further Fletcher-Louis 2005: 8-14.

<sup>16</sup> For Yom Kippur in *Jubilees* 5 see VanderKam 1999: 151-170. For Yom Kippur in the *Receptionsgeschichte* of *1 Enoch* 10-15 see Grabbe 1987: 152-167 and Fletcher-Louis 2001: 247-298 (esp. pp. 280-291).

<sup>17</sup> See discussions in Stökl 1999: 351-357. Cf. Olson 2003: 910 and Fletcher-Louis 2005: 24.

<sup>18</sup> 4Q508-9 and 1Q34 preserve Festival Prayers with some striking points of correspondence to the prayers of petition for the fallen watchers in *1 Enoch* 13. 4Q509 frg. 12 I + 13 refers to the distress of "the fallen (הַנוֹפְלִים)," who have stumbled in their sins, who lack a *maven* to restore them from distress and weeping. Other parts of this text indicate this prayer may have been for Yom Kippur (or perhaps Sukkoth).

sacred anointing oil ingredients are obtained (chs. 28-32), with a list of ingredients that is longer than the one in the Pentateuch (Exod 30:23, 34) but which has a close parallel in the list of ingredients of the incense that *Jubilees* says Abraham offered at his celebration of Sukkoth (*Jub.* 16:24, cf. vv. 20-31). Sukkoth is the next festival of Tishri after Yom Kippur and there are good reasons for thinking that in *1 Enoch* 17-36 Enoch's experience reflects some cosmological realities to the fore on this seven-day festival.

### 1 *Enoch* 17 and Cosmic Irrigation at Tabernacles

On leaving God's presence Enoch is first taken to places where there are "living waters" (17:4), "all the great rivers," "the great river" (17:6), "the gushing of all the waters of the abyss (τῆς ἀβύσσου)" (17:7) and "the mouth of all the rivers of the earth and the mouth of the abyss" (17:8). References in the context to places of darkness and a "river of fire" have led commentators to compare this section with Hellenistic cosmography (esp. the Pyriphlegethon, the Styx, Acheron and Cocytus).<sup>19</sup> However, this chapter of *1 Enoch* is also indebted to wider ancient Near Eastern cosmological traditions and has clear contemporary biblical parallels.<sup>20</sup>

In the Epic of Gilgamesh, which we know from the *Book of Giants* influenced the early Enoch tradition,<sup>21</sup> the deified flood hero Utnaphishtim is transported to "reside far way at the mouth of the rivers" (*Gilgamesh* SV 11.205). *First Enoch* 17 also reflects older Canaanite tradition where El lives at the source of the rivers, in the middle of the channels of the two Oceans. In West-Semitic tradition Hermon is well-known as the place where the upper and lower waters – the double deeps of Ugaritic texts – meet. The Biblical Psalm 42:7-8 [Eng. 6-7] reflects this well-known ancient Near Eastern tradition when it speaks of "deep (ἄβυσσος) calling to deep (ἄβυσσος)" in poetic association with "the land of Jordan and Hermon."

These parallels to *1 Enoch* 17 have been noted in the past,<sup>22</sup> but their relationship to the cosmology of Israel's temple and its festivals has been missed. There are two rituals that figure in rabbinic

<sup>19</sup> See discussion in Coblenz Bautch 2003: 82-98.

<sup>20</sup> For Israel's own "river of fire" see Isa 30:33 and Daniel 7:10-11.

<sup>21</sup> See Stuckenbruck 1997: 72-74.

<sup>22</sup> Milik 1976: 39; cf. Coblenz Bautch 2003: 96, though she concentrates on Hellenistic parallels and does not acknowledge the association of El's abode with the anti-Lebanon location of Enoch's ascent experience.

accounts of Sukkoth which are likely to be reflected here in the *BW*. One, a daily circumambulation of the altar and accompanying use of the greenery of Leviticus 23:40 (*m. Sukkah* 4:5), is first explicitly attested in *Jubilees* which ascribes the action to Abraham (*Jub.* 16:31, cf. Ps 118:27). The other – the drawing of water from Siloam and libation on the forecourt altar – is not explicitly recorded before the mishnah (*m. Sukkah* 4:1, 9-10), but can be confidently dated to a much earlier Second Temple period (cf. Zech 14:16-19; John 7:36-38; Pseudo-Philo's *Biblical Antiquities* 13:7).<sup>23</sup> Both of these are sacramental rituals designed to reinvigorate the ecosystem for a plentiful supply of rain. According to (an admittedly) late rabbinic tradition that accurately describes the much older (Biblical) cosmology assumed in the water libation, the water poured by the high priest on to the altar fulfils the language of Psalm 42:8 [Eng. 7] – “deep calls unto deep”; the water of the libation from above stimulating the water of the abyss below the altar, for a plentiful supply of rain in the coming autumn and winter months (*b. Ta'an* 25b).<sup>24</sup>

In this context it makes perfect sense that Enoch should see the “living waters” in 17:4, since these are the “living waters” which according to Zechariah 14:8 shall flow out from Jerusalem, to irrigate the land for the nations that come to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Booths (14:16-19, cf. Ezek 47, esp. v. 9). These same living waters emerge from beneath Mount Zion in *1 Enoch* 26:2-3, a little later in Enoch's journeys.<sup>25</sup> These encounters with what will ultimately become a defining feature of Jerusalem-temple-centred cosmology mean that Enoch and his descendents who are privy to his recorded revelations (including, for example, the patriarchs in *Jubilees*), are uniquely qualified to officiate at the rites of Sukkoth.

### The Seven-Fold Cycle in *1 Enoch* 36 and the Seven Days of Tabernacles

The daily vegetation-adorned procession around the altar at Sukkoth is also best explained as a ritual dedicated to ecological abundance because the altar is a symbolic instantiation of the cosmic

<sup>23</sup> See the recent discussion of the biblical roots of this ritual and its function in Rubenstein 1995: 117-131.

<sup>24</sup> For the Sukkoth connection to the cosmic waters theme see *1 Enoch* 60:20-22, visionary revelation dated to the Eve of Tabernacles (*1 Enoch* 60:1).

<sup>25</sup> Patai 1967: 34-35; cf. Rubenstein 1995: 114, 117-131.

mountain; the earth in microcosm.<sup>26</sup> In Ezekiel 43:13-17 the altar is called the “Mountain of God (הַר־אֵל),”<sup>27</sup> and its identification with the (God-created and habitable) earth is probably also intended in the command to make it “an altar of earth (מִזְבֵּחַ אֲדָמָה),” of uncut stone (Exod 20:24-25).<sup>28</sup>

The cosmological significance of the daily procession around the altar at Sukkoth provides a structural explanation of the sequence of events in chapters 20-36 of *1 Enoch*. At first reading these chapters are disordered; an impression reinforced by some confusion in stage directions between the different versions and manuscripts. Although the structure has evidently been suppressed in the text’s later tradition history, it is nevertheless possible to discern an “original” heptadic arrangement. Chapter 20 names seven archangels and their respective spheres of responsibility. In the chapters that follow successive scenes of Enoch’s journeys elaborate on those spheres of responsibility through revelation guided by each angel.<sup>29</sup> A degree of circular motion is present throughout.<sup>30</sup> And in each section of the heptadic structure there is a focus on mountain(s) (21:3 – Uriel section; 22:1 – Raphael section; 24:1, 2 – Reuel section; 25:3; 26:2-5 – Michael section, which also has “the centre of the earth”; 28:1; 31:1-2; – Sariel section; 32:1 – Gabriel section). Given that there are connections throughout these chapters to the priest-prophet’s journey in Ezekiel 40-48 (which includes the description of the altar as *har’el*), I suggest that the seven-fold structure of Enoch’s journeys evokes the daily circumambulation of the altar at Sukkoth. Indeed, the cosmic journeys ascribed to Enoch could very well have been created out of priestly speculation (and meditation?) on the cosmic significance of the altar, the Mountain of God; the earth in microcosm.

<sup>26</sup> On the cosmic symbolism of the altar in Ezek 43 see Albright 1968: 146-148; Levenson 1985: 139.

<sup>27</sup> E. g. Beale 2004: 33.

<sup>28</sup> Ch. 21 concerns Uriel; ch. 22 concerns Raphael; 23:1-24:1 concerns Reuel; 24:2-26:5 concerns Michael; 27:1-31:2 concerns Sariel; ch. 32 concerns Gabriel see Nickelsburg 2001: 294, 296, 319 for textual emendations in case of last two angels). The seventh angel, Remiel, seems to have had responsibility for those who are “exalted” (רִימָה), a theme which is now extant in the *Similitudes* (esp. *1 Enoch* 51:4; 70:1-2; 71:4) where Enoch himself is exalted. This suggests the *Similitudes* now contains some material once at the end of the *BW*.

<sup>29</sup> See esp. chs. 34-36 and also Stock-Hesketh 2000: 27-58.

<sup>30</sup> For mountains in the seventh (lost Remiel) section now preserved in the *Similitudes* see *1 Enoch* 51:4; 52:2-6; 53:2; 60:15; 67:4; 69:17.



## Conclusion

Literarily, the *BW* follows the sequence of festivals of the New Year calendar, so as to put forward the view that those festivals reflect realities which are engrained in primeval time: the *BW* contains the *myth* corresponding to the *rituals* of the New Year. Although Enoch does not himself offer the sacrifices of the festivals, his experiences anticipate those who do. In this the *BW* shares *Jubilees'* view that certain cultic rites were in fact known before the revelation at Sinai. It provides invaluable evidence for the mindset – the cosmology and the ritual theology – of the ruling priestly classes in the early Second Temple period.

# A Different Spirituality or “Other” Agents?: On the Study of Magic in Rabbinic Literature\*

YUVAL HARARI

In an article entitled “*Haggadot Ketu’ot*,” published in 1922 in *Ha-Goren*, Louis Ginzberg wrote the following:

The same way that we feel gratitude toward our Sages for their waging the war of the intellect against the imagination, so we complain about their causing us to lose our popular literature, the product of the imagination and fantasy. Our literature contains a great deal of respectable material on the history of the development of the intellect, but not on the development of the imagination ... the Jewish scholars were students of the old *bet midrash*, and the opposition to figments of the imagination and fantasy was handed down to them as the heritage of the early generations, so that all that exceeds the bounds of the intellect is strange to them and they pass over it in silence or in scorn.<sup>1</sup>

These statements, which were applied to Aggadah by a person who regarded it with a great deal of love, also pertain well to the case of magic in Rabbinic literature and to research into it until most recent times. The distinction between the Sages and the people and, respectively, between reason and hallucination, the determination that “our Sages” waged the war of reason against imagination, and the self-identification with this war, the indication of the connection between the *Wissenschaft des Judentums* and the values of the old *bet midrash*, that is, the values of this war, and finally, noting the war tactics – repulsion, or better, silence – all of these perfectly express what we find dozens of years later in the research into magic in Rabbinic literature.

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\* This article is based on a lecture I gave three years ago at *Beit Morasha* (Jerusalem) at a conference on Spirituality in the World of the Sages. The session, dedicated to magic and the Sages’ spirituality, was chaired by Prof. Rachel Elijor, who then asked me for a printed version of the lecture. It is with gratitude and pleasure that I contribute this article to a volume in honor of Rachel. For in many respects and from the very beginning of my academic journey, she encouraged my interest in and shaped my view of Jewish magic.

<sup>1</sup> Ginzberg 1922: 32.

For magic does occur in Rabbinic literature. There is magic and there are magicians (mainly witches), and there is belief in the power of human magic. The question is what is to be done with this. Yehuda Leib Zlotnik cites in the introduction to his edition of the *Ma'aseh Yerushalmi*, a known medieval demonological tale, the statements by Solomon Judah Rapoport (Shir) in *Erekh Millin*, according to which one should reject the tradition attributing the story to R. Abraham ben Maimonides, "since this precious sage did not waste his time with fantastic hallucinations such as these, that have neither allegory or high rhetoric nor any kind of moral." Zlotnik proceeds to comment on them, "It seems to perturb this rabbi, of blessed memory, that this kind of tale occurs in Hebrew, and if he were able, he would completely obliterate it with his words."<sup>2</sup> But, apparently, to do so is no longer possible, neither regarding *Ma'aseh Yerushalmi* nor for more ancient magical and demonological traditions. And if it is not possible to uproot, eradicate, or destroy it completely, then it must be clarified. It is precisely this issue – the explanations given for the presence of magic in Rabbinic literature and, particularly, the paradigm shift that occurred in these elucidations in recent decades – that I wish to focus on briefly in this article.<sup>3</sup>

## Spirituality and the Sages

Already here, at the very beginning of the discussion, it is possible to delineate along general lines the change that has taken place regarding magic traditions in Rabbinic literature as a shift from an essentialist conception of magic to a sociopolitical perception. The former considers it a practical expression of spirituality differing from that of the Sages, a practice originating in a fabric of beliefs and values essentially at odds with that of the Rabbis and in which, therefore, they had neither spiritual nor practical part. The latter perception wishes to indicate a deep spiritual cooperation and association between Sages and magic practitioners; and to determine that, precisely because of this connection – and not owing to the conflict between reason and hallucination, or between true spirituality and boorish heresy – enmity between them was rife. This issue, of course,

<sup>2</sup> Zlotnik 1947: 18.

<sup>3</sup> For a detailed and extensively referenced version, see Harari 2010: 68-90. Research into early Jewish magic is examined there (pp. 58-121) in three contexts: Rabbinic literature, Hekhalot and Merkavah literature, and ancient magic literature.

is related to the question of the essence of spirituality in general and to that of the Sages in particular, and can be summarized in the issue of the positive added value usually ascribed to spirituality.

"Spirituality" is rooted in a concept that differentiates between spirit and matter, soul and body, and that traditionally ranks them by giving preference to the former (spirit, soul) over the latter (matter, body). Usually in Western culture the "spiritual" human capabilities, such as thought, feeling, faith, and ethical preferences, are considered preferable to physical capabilities; accordingly, aspiration toward spirituality or a spiritual way of life is considered superior to corporeal life. Yet different societies are distinguished from each other by the spiritual content that characterizes them, and toward which they preach. Thus, beyond the preference for spirituality over corporeality, each society poured defined, obligatory contents into the "spirituality" mold. From here it is but a short path to identifying spirituality not only as the very human spiritual capabilities themselves, but also as their realization according to certain patterns of thought, belief, and ethics. Societies, distinguished from one another by the spiritual pattern they offered their members, identified different systems of values and belief as "spiritual," and "spiritualized" the entire life system based on them.

According to this view, the spirituality of the Sages is a system of values, concepts and beliefs. And since, by its nature, this system is realized in countless daily behaviors in the life of matter, those actions, too, undergo "spiritualization." A definite expression of this is in the very distinction of these behaviors from the daily deeds of man by means of the term "*mitzvot*." Acts that are considered *mitzvot* are perceived as physical expressions of Rabbinic spirituality and are, therefore, expropriated from the realm of the physical and shifted to that of the spiritual.

It is easy to see that what basically derives from the distinction between human mental and corporeal functions (which many today consider inseparable aspects of general psycho-physical, human reality) overflowed into a judicial-value distinction relating to all aspects of human existence, even to perception of the entire cosmos. This differentiation divides the world, and the bearers of the spiritual potential in it (that is, human beings), into "us" (meaning the true, good, right, worthy) and "others" by means of the "spiritual" yard stick. The "spiritual," which is the good, the respected, the desired, served to mark the advantage of spirituality of a certain type, the spirituality of "us." This trend is salient in the prevailing western perception, which identifies monotheistic religions as more spiritual than the

“pagan” religions. This is so, even though the practical expressions of Jewish and Christian religiosity (in all their varieties) include physical behavioral aspects, while the practical expressions of the “pagan” religions are based on spiritual aspects (thought, faith, feelings). The “progress” or “development” of human religiosity is seen, in this case, as stages in the degree of “spirituality”: biblical religion (including its ritual sacrifices) was perceived as more spiritual than the “pagan” religions of the Ancient East, and Catholic Christianity (with its sacraments and other cultic elements) as more spiritual than “pagan” idolatry. And then, while Catholicism thought of the sacraments and other rituals as the basic foundation of spirituality (whose pattern is Christian, of course), Protestant movements strove to free themselves from these very expressions of religiosity. In their view, these were corporeal, inferior elements, dross that should be refined into the sublime, spiritual nucleus of pure faith. Obviously, these movements invented in turn a slew of alternate behaviors, which were “spiritualized” and became the legitimate expression of “pure spiritual faith.”

It was in this spirit that the early researchers of Judaism who turned their attention to magic (and whose approaches will be discussed below) understood Judaism as an expression of spirituality, and its founding sages as spiritual men. As we shall see, in the research of comparative religion – as well as in modern, evolutionist, Western thought – magic was generally identified with “primitive” rituals that characterized a low level of human development preceding that of religion. Since the Rabbis explicitly opposed magic and rejected it as a form of idolatry, it was easy for the academic scholars to seize that idea, and to claim that in the religiosity of the Rabbis there was no room for belief in magic, or for its use. In those scholars’ perception, magic and religious spirituality – that is, “developed,” “positive” religiosity, which can be respected and with which, in some cases, scholars even identify themselves personally – did not coincide; and they sought to demonstrate that the Sages’ religiosity was not harmed by belief in magic or by its practical application. They identified magic with alien rites, with the complex of customs and beliefs that constituted the religiosity of the “other.” If this complex had a spiritual element, meaning an element that related to the non-corporeal aspects of the cosmos – and indeed, belief in metaphysical power, and the performance of rituals in order to realize its implementation on earth for the benefit of people, are definite expressions of that element – this was an essentially different, inferior, “other” spirituality than that of the Sages.

The change in the perception of the Sages’ spirituality, and the place of magic in it, reflects a basic change in the view of spiritual-

ity in general and religious spirituality in particular. From the modern-secular-scientific viewpoint, the gap between the various kinds of "paganism" and the monotheistic religions (in comparison to an intra-religious perspective) has narrowed to a significant degree. Postmodern approaches have further eroded this breach, almost closing it completely. The moral-judgmental added value of "spirituality" was abandoned, and the issue of spirituality was gradually discussed in terms of the role of metaphysics in the cosmologies of different societies. The use of the spirituality-standard as a basis for evaluating human development was replaced by a comparative observation, essentially political, that sought to examine the balance of powers between agents of metaphysical faith-activity systems – which, from the distance of a scientific-empirical viewpoint, do not differ greatly from each other. Emphasis was thus diverted from the sharp distinction between "pagan" magic and the religiosity of the Sages, a differentiation that relied on the concept of the improvement and increased dominance of spirituality in Jewish religiosity, and was directed to issues dealing with the struggle between differing metaphysical concepts, equal in their "spiritual value" since they are all metaphysical, and particularly to the struggle between their agents.

From this point of view, the spirituality of magic does not differ essentially from that of religion; magic does not differ essentially from miracle; and the sage possessing metaphysical power does not differ essentially from the magician. Therefore, the question to be addressed does not concern the ideological conflict between different types of spirituality (superior/inferior, true/fabricated, and so on), but rather the sociopolitical clash between the agents of the various religious ideologies that share a common system of metaphysical beliefs and practices. The Sages' struggle against magic, then, is now seldom discussed as an expression of a campaign against a different spirituality, but rather as a fight against "other" agents of metaphysical power.

This change in the study of Judaism did not take place in a vacuum. It was linked, in my opinion, to two main factors. The first is the great amount of primary magic findings: amulets, incantation bowls, magical gems, adjuration skulls, magic recipes, and systematic treatises of magic stemming from Jewish culture in Late Antiquity and the Early Islamic period, which have been discovered and published in recent decades.<sup>4</sup> In light of them, it is no longer possible to shunt

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<sup>4</sup> The inventory of Jewish magic findings from Late Antiquity and the Early Islamic period can be divided into three parts: (a) magical objects, such as amulets, magic gems, incantation bowls, and adjuration skulls; (b) magic recipes, instructions for performing magic rites; (c) treatises on magic that encompass dozens (and some-

magic to the fantasizing, uneducated margins of Jewish society. The second factor is the deep change that occurred in the last decade in the perception of magic and its relation to religion in the comparative, historical, sociological, anthropological, and cultural studies of these phenomena. To this turning point, which I have already dealt with elsewhere in detail, I wish to devote a few introductory words as a kind of preface and background to the main topic.<sup>5</sup>

## The Study of the Magic-Religion Issue

The beginning of the scientific study of magic as a universal phenomenon resides in the evolutionist approach, which sees in everything a particular expression of a developmental process from the simple to the complex, from the lowly to the exalted, from the backward to the enlightened – and which judges everything accordingly. This approach held sway over Western European thought at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth. From the point of view of the study of culture, Western Man – or more precisely, the white, educated, Western European male – was then perceived as the zenith of human development. Naturally, his religion, or that of his environment – namely, spiritual Protestant or Anglican Christianity – was considered the most lofty, spiritually developed level of religiosity. This was only one stage lower than the supreme level of development: that of secularization and science, which the completely “cultured man” had attained. Catholicism, Islam, Judaism, paganism, and tribal rites were seen in this approach as living remnants of stages in the developmental process through which all of humanity passes. All began their way somewhere on the bottom of the ladder when they were suffused with “superstitions” and “primitive” ritual customs. Yet, while a few societies continually advanced and developed, others remained at the initial level, or at

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times more) of magic recipes within a comprehensive ideational framework. Each of these components in the corpus of “insider” evidence has its own significance: The objects attest the actual implementation of magic acts by Jews as well as – relatively limited – components in Jewish magic cosmology; the recipes inform us to a great extent of the ritual, performative aspects of Jewish magic; while the treatises root this technical knowledge in a broad cosmological framework, and expose the theoretical foundations underpinning magic activity. For an extensive survey of the magic sources, see Bohak 2008: 143-226; Harari 2010: 159-228.

<sup>5</sup> See Harari 2005b: 91-106; Harari 2010: 17-57. Cf. on this issue Styers 2004; Tambiah 1995; Cryer 1994: 42-123.

most improved only partially and were "stuck" on some evolutionary rung of development.

In the perception of religion of evolutionist scholars like Edward B. Tylor, James G. Frazer, and Herbert Spencer, no room was found for religious ceremonies of preliterate tribes. This culture of rituals they called by the name of magic, because they found in it what was customarily called by that term in *their culture* following hundreds of years of Christian theological debates. They presented magic as a phenomenon essentially different than religion, and inferior to it. The progression from the low stage of ceremonial magic rite to a more developed stage of monotheistic ritual religiosity, thence to spiritual-ethical religion, and finally to the stage of secularization and science they attributed, each in his own way, to the intellectual development of man. A psychological version of the evolutionist model was applied by Wilhelm Wundt and Sigmund Freud, who presented human development along the stages of magic – religion – science from an emotional point of view.

In the early twentieth century, a few scholars with a sociological orientation suggested a different approach to the magic-religion issue. The harbingers were W. Robertson Smith and in particular Emil Durkheim. Their view relied on a position which held that religion is always a social system into which the individual is born and in which he/she functions as a member of the community. On this foundation they formulated the distinction between religion and magic on the basis of their function as complementary ritual systems, socially differing from one another. Robertson Smith determined this difference according to the goal of the act: public – religion; private – magic. Durkheim stressed the circumstances of the performance: public – religion; secretive – magic. In both instances religion was perceived as serving the entire community, while magic was presented as a personal issue. This explanatory trend became even more extreme in the work of Henri Hubert and Marcel Mauss, who proposed distinguishing between religion and magic on the basis of an examination of the (in their opinion) paradigmatic expressions of these phenomena: sacrifice (religion) and black magic (sorcery). Their conclusion was that religion is the commanded rite while sorcery is the forbidden one. Thus, their approach posited the distinction between the phenomena on society's attitude toward the act.

Max Weber's work combined a sociological approach with a developmental aim. Weber proposed the criterion of the social organization of the interceding, ceremonial establishment as a border line between



magic and religion; while he described, at the same time, the historical development of this organization as the basis for the shift from magic to religion. Daniel O'Keefe, who took a good chunk of these theories and interpolated them into the psychological evolutionism of Wilhelm Wundt and Sigmund Freud, underscored the existence of ongoing interrelations of co-dependency and mutual contribution between magic and religion – individual ego and community.<sup>6</sup>

The sociological trend, then, is completely different than the evolutionist one. It does not see in magic and religion phenomena essentially distinct from one another, but rather different expressions of a single cosmology (in both its theoretical and ritual aspects) distinguished from each other by their social contexts.<sup>7</sup> Presenting the magic/religion question as one of the attitude of society toward the act quite clearly shifted the focus of the research to the intrasocial perception of ceremonial power and its agents. With this shift, the issue of the different tags through which society – or more precisely its spokesmen, who mediate between it and observers from the outside – labels beliefs, values, and acts common within it, as well as their agents, was brought to the fore.

Anthropological research into magic, too, developed in this direction, emphasizing yet another important facet. It negated in principle the drawing of universal conclusions from individual case studies. Researchers, it was claimed, should limit their conclusions to the specific sociocultural context that they personally examined.<sup>8</sup> At the same time, there was the repeated demand to refrain from interpreting the society under study in the light of Western cultural categories from the researcher's world. As for our issue, ever since Evans-Pritchard's demand to examine the issue of the definition of magic and religion according to the internal terms of the soci-

<sup>6</sup> The study by O'Keefe 1982 is the broadest attempt to delineate a general theory of magic as a pan-human phenomenon. This is an unusual, interesting, and ambitious attempt against the background of the prevailing agreement among scholars for many years that magic should be studied in limited, defined historical and cultural contexts. This position developed in anthropological research in response to the general discussions about magic in the first half of the twentieth century, such as those of Bronislaw Malinowsky, and Hubert and Mauss: Malinowski 1948 [1925]: 1-71; Hubert – Mauss 1902/3: 1-146 (Cf. Mauss 1972).

<sup>7</sup> For "cosmology," the "body of conceptions that enumerate and classify phenomena that compose the universe as an ordered whole and the norms and processes that govern it," see Tambiah 1985: 130.

<sup>8</sup> Evans-Pritchard's initial criticism on the generalization of local findings in the field of magic is found in Evans-Pritchard 1967 [1929]: 1-22. It is much further developed in Evans-Pritchard 1937.

ety under study, ever-increasing thought has been devoted to the very legitimization of projecting the distinction between religion and magic from the (Christian European) world of the researchers to that of those under study. This criticism went through another stage of adaptation until it was finally proposed to see the magic/religion problem as no more than an excessive semantic complication.<sup>9</sup>

This trend was warmly adopted in the second half of the twentieth century by many investigators of Greco-Roman culture. As early as the close of the 1950s, Olof Peterson drew the ultimate conclusion when he determined that "The study of comparative religion would win on clearness, honesty and stringency, the aspects of valuation would be avoided etc., if the term 'magic' were given a decent burial . . . in the scientific debate of the nature of religion."<sup>10</sup> And, indeed, in recent years many scholars have ceased using it. There has been, instead, increasingly extensive use of an alternate term: ritual power.<sup>11</sup>

By "ritual power" scholars wish to indicate all the ritual practices aimed at attaining power, whether they are public, legitimate, commanded, or most importantly, performed by the religious-social establishment of society (namely, religion); or, on the other hand, secret, private, or most importantly, forbidden by that same establishment, and performed by people defined by it as criminals (that is, "magic," for anyone who still uses this word). In this way many contemporary scholars seek to study magic in the ancient world without casting on the object of their research a judgmental value that might derive from the western semantic load of "magic" and "religion."

This change, of course, derives from increasing awareness of the political implications of the semantic differentiation between religion and magic, to the point of (almost) total annulment of its essentialist meaning. In contemporary research into magic in the ancient world, magic is generally perceived, not as something essentially different from religion, but rather as the problematic, heretical, dangerous, or illegitimate (in the eyes of the religious and political establishment) thread in the fabric of ceremonies common in society. The religious establishment thus presents "magic" propagandistically, as part of its attempt to obtain a monopoly on holiness and power.

Many articles in recent decades reinforced the recognition that an accusation of sorcery and witchcraft, rather than presents the reality

<sup>9</sup> Prominent articles in this directions are Wax – Wax 1961/2: 179-88; Wax – Wax 1963: 495-503; Hammond 1971: 1348-56.

<sup>10</sup> Peterson 1957: 119.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example: Meyer – Mirecki 1995, *passim*; Meyer – Smith 1994; Lesses 1998: 59-66.

of what the accused has done, indicates political struggles between camps: an attempt to label “the Other” as a dangerous, illegitimate possessor of power, so as to push him/her to the margins. Prominent among them is a groundbreaking article by Peter Brown. He advocates separating accusations of sorcery and witchcraft from magic activity, and explains the increase in such accusations in the fourth- to sixth-century Roman world as a derivative of the struggle between the old, declining “pagan” elites and new, rising Christian elites.<sup>12</sup> According to his argument, neither Christians nor pagans used more magic in that period than in the past, but the growing fear within the two camps of the power of “the Other” led both to make political use of the weapon of an accusation of sorcery, that is, the activation of a dangerous, destructive power, forbidden by Roman law.<sup>13</sup> “Witchcraft,” “sorcery,” “sorcerer,” and “witch” were thus perceived as political epithets intended to label “the Other” in a hostile manner, in order to delegitimize him/her in the eyes of both the establishment and the public. J. Gager’s statement, made some fifteen years ago, summarizes this trend clearly and pointedly: “the sentence, ‘X is/was a magician!’ tells us nothing about the beliefs and practices of X; the only solid information that can be derived from it concerns the speaker’s attitude toward X and their relative social relationship – that X is viewed by the speaker as powerful, peripheral, and dangerous.”<sup>14</sup>

In most current research into magic in the Roman world, then, magic is disconnected from its traditional essentialist load and placed entirely on political foundations.<sup>15</sup> Accordingly, the distinction between religion and magic is no longer examined phenomenologically, that is by means of the question, “What is the act that was carried out?” (and for our purposes: “What worldview lies at its base?”), but rather from a social point of view: “Who has performed the act?” This is a specific expression, in line with the focus of the research, of disengagement from the essentialist-evolutionist position, in perceiving the magic-religion relationship that also occurred, as indicated above, in the study of comparative religion

<sup>12</sup> For more on the political use of “*magia*” and its derivatives in the ancient world, see, for example, Segal 1981: 349-75; Aune 1980: 1516-23; Philips 1986: 2677-2773 (esp. on 2711-32); Nock 1972b: 310-30; Graf 1991: 188-213.

<sup>13</sup> On the legal attitude to magic in the Roman Empire, see McMullen 1966: 95-127; Kippenberg 1997: 137-63; Ritner 1995: 3333-79 (on pp. 3355-58).

<sup>14</sup> Gager 1992: 24-25. See also, Gager 1992: 39 n. 114.

<sup>15</sup> See, however, Henk Versnel’s objection to this attitude in Versnel 1991: 177-97.

and in anthropological research, and its replacement by a sociological explanatory model.

Now we can turn to the main substance of our essay, and indicate a parallel process that took place, and is still crystallizing, in the study of the Sages' discourse on magic.

### The Sages' War against Magic

The beginning of research into Jewish magic was based almost exclusively on rabbinic literature, and the perception reflected in it is decidedly essentialistic (meaning, one that regards magic and [Jewish] religion as essentially different phenomena). In the second half of the nineteenth century it was discussed by Gideon Brecher and David Jöel, proponents of *Wissenschaft des Judentums*, in their respective works on "magic and magical healing in the Talmud" and "superstition and the attitude of Judaism toward it" (encompassing belief in spirits and demons, magic, divination, astrology, necromancy, and medicine).<sup>16</sup> Their studies, like that of Alexander Kohut on Jewish demonology,<sup>17</sup> were based on the Mishna and the Babylonian Talmud. At the end of the century, Ludwig Blau expanded the picture somewhat when he based his monograph on "ancient Jewish magic" on the Palestinian Aggadah and Talmud as well. Moreover, in his book he presented and analyzed two Greek adjuration texts that he identified (incorrectly) as Jewish.<sup>18</sup> Blau defined magic as a practice rooted in belief in demons and their power in the world, and intended at grappling with them. In doing so, he assumed the essentialistic stance of his predecessors regarding magic, which was the dominant approach in their times.

All these scholars relied upon rabbinic literature, from which they drew expressions for magic for that period on the basis of essentialist content. That is, they used their pre-determined approach to what the essence of magic is in order to find references and expressions of the phenomenon in rabbinic literature, and to present them as conveying the Jewish magic of that time. In this way, magic was described as a phenomenon in itself, separate and distinct from the religion of the Rabbis in both its spiritual basis as well as its practical manifestations. The hostile attitude of the Rabbis to sorcery and

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<sup>16</sup> Brecher 1850; Jöel 1881-83.

<sup>17</sup> Kohut 1866: 48ff.

<sup>18</sup> Blau 1898.

sorcerers, which was expressed in both sayings and legal rulings, and which was understood by the researchers as an expression of their religious stance, is of course mentioned in these studies; but the question of the very presence of beliefs and stories about magical deeds in the Rabbinic corpus did not trouble them.

This is also the situation in Joshua Trachtenberg's book, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, in which he interpolates into his discussion of Jewish medieval magic a plethora of rabbinic traditions. He, too, used the terms "magic" and "superstition" for the defined web of beliefs and customs; perceived the Rabbis' restrained attitude toward them; and was not at all troubled by the question of the existence of these beliefs and customs in the Rabbinic corpus in some most difficult contexts.<sup>19</sup>

Efraim Elimelech Urbach and Saul Lieberman were irritated by this issue. In their studies on magic in rabbinic literature, which were written around the middle of the twentieth century, both tried, not only to describe the phenomenon, but also to explain the meaning of its existence in rabbinic discourse. The solution that they proposed, each in his own way, was to project their evolutionist-essentialist perception onto the Sages. Lieberman squirms as if held in the vise of testimonies when he describes the Rabbis' attitude to magic. He negates Blau's opinion on the relative "freedom" of the Jews of Palestine from magic, in comparison to their brethren in Babylonia, by determining in the oft-quoted passage below:

It is fundamentally an error to generalize and say that in Palestinian Talmudo-Midrashic literature fewer "superstitions" are found than in the Babylonian. To adhere to this view would mean to maintain that the Palestinian Jews were less civilized than the Babylonian, that they were not men of their time and place. Palestine, situated between Egypt on the one hand and Babylonia on the other, could not escape the influence of the wisdom of that time.<sup>20</sup>

And he went on:

The rabbis did their utmost to combat the superstitions which were forbidden by the Written Law, to eliminate the magic which smacked of idolatry, but they had to accept those charms which were sanctioned by the "scientists" of that time. The power of love charms was recognized by all nations of the ancient world, and the Palestinian Jews were no exceptions.<sup>21</sup>

<sup>19</sup> Trachtenberg 1970 [1939].

<sup>20</sup> Lieberman 1942: 110.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

Underlying these statements is a double distinction: (a) between the Jewish religion and magic, "which smacked of idolatry"; (b) between the Rabbis (who were the ideological elite) and the entire body of the Jews of *Eretz Israel*. The explicit principle in the Torah, "You shall not let a sorceress live" (Exod 22:17), which was explained in the Mishna, the Tosefta, and the Talmuds by means of the identification of guilt and execution of judgment, was apparently for Lieberman the basic axiom in the light of which all other components of the reality reflected throughout the Rabbinic corpus are to be explained – "halakhah first," as an exegetical principle. He therefore differentiated between the Sages and the people. The former were identified with religion, and its halakhic and ideological opposition to magic as an expression of foreign worship and spirituality; while the latter were identified with "superstitions which were forbidden by the Written Law." In the middle is the confusing area of the "wisdom of that time" – spiritual nonsense in which perhaps even Sages took part, precisely because they were cultured.<sup>22</sup>

Elsewhere Lieberman further explained that whatever the Sages did not succeed in weeding out, they at least tried to adapt to Judaism, meaning to assimilate it within the normative framework with which they aspired to endow the nation. In the struggle between religion and magic, truth and superstitions, the Sages and the people, the Sages did not always come out on top. They did, however, have the creative aptitude for religious invention to at least domesticate the weeds that refused to be uprooted. But alas, even so, the Sages did not completely attain their goal. So it is that Lieberman explains (and his statements demonstrate how short the distance is between description and judgment in Jewish Studies when dealing with magic):

The people could not help admiring the beautiful and the useful; they could not fail to be attracted by the external brilliance and the superficial beauty of Gentile life. The learned and pious Rabbis did their utmost to prevent the people from becoming thoroughly Hellenized; they persisted in stressing to the people the superiority of the spiritual over the physical and the final victory of the soul over the body. But it is hardly possible that the great masses of the Jewish people in the big towns conducted themselves in conformity with the idealistic views of the Rabbis. It is very unlikely that they kept consciously refusing to imitate the manners and life patterns of their neighbors, so attractive at first sight. The ignorant people of the country, on the other hand, whose economic status made it

<sup>22</sup> See further Lieberman 1942: 91-143; Lieberman 1991 [1958]: 90-96; Lieberman 1962a, 3: 79-105.

impossible to emulate the middle class in the pursuit of pleasure and elegance, adopted their neighbors' belief in magic, astrology and all kinds of superstitions in defiance of Written and Oral Laws.<sup>23</sup>

The camps described in the foregoing are clearly differentiated from one another: learned and pious rabbis, idealistic views, the soul, the spiritual, Written and Oral Law, on the one hand; and on the other, the ignorant people of the country, imitation of the neighbors, external brilliance and the superficial beauty of the Gentiles, the body, magic, and all kinds of superstitions. The true Israel, that is, what Lieberman perceived as the true essence of the message derived from Rabbinic literature, is identified with the spirit, while magic is alien to all this. Magic originates in the external material world, in the beautiful and the useful, in the culture of the Gentiles. Its infiltration and penetration into the Jewish people was mediated by those who were not educated nor reinforced by the Sages and the true, spiritual message of Judaism disseminated through them.

But another, somewhat strange nuance – as if drawn from a different historical context – was interwoven here: Lieberman binds magic with ignorance and poverty. Whoever was not able to acquire actual, concrete Greek beauty, did acquire for himself the magical, spiritual beauty, the superstitions of his neighbors. So while magic was first pushed beyond the pale of the Sages to the neutral-anonymous space of the masses, it was now again pushed further out, to the poor, ignorant, far reaches of Jewish society.

Urbach, too, in his discussion of magic and miracle in Rabbinic literature, presented Jewish society as divided into two camps – the Sages on one side, the people on the other – and contrasted between them on the basis of their faith. The Sages were described as the bearers of the pure Jewish religion, while the bulk of the nation was afflicted with foreign, magical influences. Yet he went even further when he set his view of the Sages' purity of religion on a real logical basis. His statements are arranged in such a way that arguing for his conclusion is imperative from his premises:

The Rabbinic doctrine concerning God's all-embracing power has a bearing on other concepts. It excludes the possibility of the existence of magic power capable of influencing the laws of nature and the decree of God ... The same reasoning applies to magic – it is impossible to reconcile it with the existence of an All-Powerful God.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Lieberman 1942: 91.

<sup>24</sup> Urbach 1975: 97 [first published in Hebrew in 1969].

The idea is clear: since the Sages believed in the omnipotence of God; and since it was impossible to believe in both God’s omnipotence and in human power to change reality (established and governed by God) at will through magic; it could not be that the Sages believed in the power of magic. Therefore, Urbach claims, they opposed magic and fought against it. But what about the other facet, viz., the explicit expressions of belief in the power of magic that are commonly found in Rabbinic literature? Again it is “the usual suspects” – ordinary folk and the women (!) – who provide the solution. Yet that is not enough, and Urbach admits (although this time he refrains from offering examples!) the spread of magic also among the Sages:

But there is ample evidence of the widespread practice of sorcery, not only among women and simple folk, but also among the scholars in Eretz-Israel and even more so in Babylon. In actuality, even the Sages of the Talmud and Midrash – despite their fundamental recognition that there is none besides God and that consequently witchcraft does not exist – could not ignore the facts, to wit, that broad masses of the people believed in and made use of these practices. They sought to find a compromise.<sup>25</sup>

Thus we again find magic on one side and spiritual truth on the other, and a gaping chasm between them. Once again Israel is divided, between laymen with a tendency for magic and the Sages whose way is the true faith. And in between we hear Urbach’s own voice, as it were, echoing through the Sages’ “fundamental recognition” that there is none other than God and, therefore, no magic.<sup>26</sup>

Echoes of the evolutionist-elitist approach, which binds the truth value of conceptions and the value-laden status of beliefs in a “proper” educational process, reverberate in this view – which, to this day, still has more than a few supporters. An illuminating expression of this view can be found in the introductory remarks of Mordechai Margaliot to his edition of *Sefer ha-Razim* (the *Book of Mysteries*), a Hebrew work of Jewish magic which apparently originates from the second third of the first millennium. Margaliot worked assiduously to gather and edit manuscripts of this work. Yet before he offered the fruits of his labor to his readers, he felt the need to express contrition. At the close of a long, apologetic introduction (written in the mid-1960s), he noted:

<sup>25</sup> Urbach 1975: 101.

<sup>26</sup> On Urbach’s complex, tortuous position concerning magic among the Sages, a position expressed foremost by the very division of the discussion into two separate chapters – “Magic and Miracle” and “The Power of the Divine Name” (ibid., chapters 6 and 7) – see further Harari 2010: 72-75



For some three years I have been working on writing this book, and I have invested great effort in it. Even though the content of the book is devoted to magic and sorcery, things repulsive to the soul, I did not consider it right to ignore them, but rather I felt duty bound to bring them to the learned scholarly audience, so that we can come to know what spiritual trends existed in the Rabbinic period, what the opinions of the ancient heretics were, and in contrast to them, to estimate the Sages' initiative in their war against them. Now, in light of the insipid words we find in this treatise, the statements of the Sages would shine for us seven times over, and we should know how to appreciate the activity by means of which they refined and cleansed Judaism of its dross and purified it from all remnants of idolatry. Only owing to the Sages did this heresy not become dominant as it had become among those of spiritual poverty who were steeped in magic and sorcery, with all the other levels of the nation.<sup>27</sup>

Also writing in a similar vein in the past few decades were Joshua Efron and Avraham Weinroth. Efron, in his article on the story about R. Shimon ben Shatah and the witches in the cave at Ashkelon (*y. San.* 6:4, *y. Hag.* 2:2), asserted:

Shimon ben Shatah was ready, therefore, to act in accordance with the commandment of the Torah and the halakha in order to uproot the source of the sin ... the distinguished *nasi* (head) of the Pharisees called vociferously to eradicate the dangerous nest of foreign, cancerous cultic manners that were liable to poison the soul of his nation ... a group faithful to the covenant broke forth and fulfilled the commandment of zealotness.<sup>28</sup>

Weinroth gave a particularly sharp, forceful expression to this approach by declaring that spiritualism, of which sorcery is a central component, reintroduces to our world "through the back door" fears of various types of arbitrary powers, from whose yoke the Jewish message, rooted in the rational principle of reward and punishment by God, had freed man. He sums up:

The Rabbis' war against sorcery is, therefore, an all-out war ... a review of the sources in which this war to the death of the Rabbis against spiritualism in the talmudic period is expressed, shows that, in actuality, under discussion is a war of the rational motif against the various types of charlatanism.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>27</sup> Margalio 1967: xvi.

<sup>28</sup> Efron 1988: 318-19.

<sup>29</sup> Weinroth 1996: 21-22. In this direction, see also Herr 1979/80: 64-65.

If that be the case, then not even another (foreign, beautiful, striking, impure) spirituality underpins magic, but simply charlatanism. And opposite it stands – the rationalism and spirituality of truth.

Recently, Yehuda Liebes has also chimed in, but in a more moderate way. His approach is rooted in the recognition that "a hierarchy is essential to the religious phenomenon" in which there is "major and minor," and that the (marginal) value and place of the "minor" easily become clear in light of the "major." According to Liebes, such an examination of the religious phenomenon shows that "it is right to see in magic in itself a low type of religiosity," a type that cannot be integrated in any way into "religious texts of the highest degree" if it is not first purified of its very manipulative-technical nature.<sup>30</sup> Liebes' understanding of sorcery – which, as he states, coincides with the Sages' position – is that it is none other than "invoking technical procedures, far from any love or awe, in order to force God or his angels to fulfill the desire of those using it."<sup>31</sup> To be sure, Sages are not included in this definition, even if they are rainmakers. For example,

[Honi hame'agel] supposedly uses for that [i. e. for making rain] a known magic procedure, drawing a circle around himself,<sup>32</sup> but the manipulation that he invokes towards the Heavens by means of that circle is not technical but personal-emotional. Even Shimon b. Shatah, a man of the severe establishment, recognized that ... and Shimon b. Shatah was a person who understood sorcery well and fought against it tooth and nail ... and other rainmakers are also described in Rabbinic literature, and magic is replaced in their cases by love of God and love of one's fellow man.<sup>33</sup>

So, (high) religious feelings of love and awe stand on the one side, and (low) technical magic procedures on the other, and an abyss yawns between them. And though in "the great religious works" too one may find magical elements, in any event "in such a context they lose the gist of their magic nature."<sup>34</sup> It is absolutely impossible for magic and religion to be found together, each retaining its own

<sup>30</sup> These statements occur in close phrasings in two articles: Liebes 2004: 3-7; Liebes 2005: 22-23.

<sup>31</sup> Liebes 2004: 4.

<sup>32</sup> See mTa'an 3:8 and parallel versions.

<sup>33</sup> Liebes 2004: 5-6.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid. Liebes argues with my proposal to define sorcery on the basis of the linguistic characteristics of "adjuration text." (Harari 2005, first published in Hebrew in 2002). He feels that this kind of definition "also stains with magic religious texts of the highest degree that integrate within them magic elements, which by their interpolation change their essence and join into the first religious aim, while they add their own spice to it" (ibid., p. 4).

nature. The “major tradition” of religiosity either repulses any hint of magic, or ingests it while doing away with its very nature as magic, and turns it into a spiritual element within it.

These statements, which were written not long ago, are not to be seen as only another expression of the (nuanced) view also found among the other scholars mentioned. They only offered the reader their opinion. Liebes, in contrast, is aware of the other position proposed in research in recent decades (and which will be presented below), and his words are a carefully thought out response to it. Thus, his position is an intentional, conscious harking back to the essentialist-judgmental approach to magic that prevailed in research from the time it began to deal with the subject until of late, and whose main thrust is the distinction between magic and religion as different types of spirituality, or even a complete expropriation of magic from religious spirituality in the sense of manipulative technique or pure charlatanism.

### The Sages and “*Other*” Agents of Ritual Power

Alongside the trend distinguishing between religion and magic on an essentialist basis, there developed in the second half of the twentieth century an alternate trend, differing fundamentally from the first, which was influenced by the sociological-anthropological perception of religion and magic. One may identify, seemingly at its base, a dual process: first, a fresh view of the image of the Sage, in which the supernatural aspect of his personality and activity is given much greater weight than in the past, to the point of presenting Sages as holy men in the full sense of the word, including the performative; and second, abandonment of the exegetical principle that I have termed “halakhah first” in understanding the Rabbinic discourse of magic, that is, relinquishing the preference given to the halakhic prohibition against employing sorcery as a basis for understanding the place of ritual power in the broad discourse of the Sages on this topic. Attention was now turned, therefore, to a wider range of sources – the great majority of which had been ignored in the past – and new exegetical means were applied to clarify them.

These two factors joined a central trend in the study of culture in the past few decades: the examination of the connection between ways of discourse in a given society, and the networks of power that create them and are created through them. Thus, a new concept was

born, which expropriates the distinction between magic and religion from the ideological-spiritual sphere and places it within the socio-political one. The magic discourse of the Sages is read and examined anew, this time not in terms of truth and falsehood, the spiritual and the corporeal, ours and the Gentiles', education and ignorance, but rather in an entirely different context: the Sages' aspiration for a monopoly on knowledge and power, including ritual power, in the community they strived to head.<sup>35</sup>

It seems that the breakthrough in this field stems from a few articles written by Jacob Neusner at the end of the 1960s, in which he presented the Babylonian Rabbi as a man of both law and magic. According to Neusner, in light of the attestation of a plethora of wonder workings by the Sages, they apparently do not present themselves in their literature solely as rationalist legislators:

It must be stressed, however, that the rabbi was far more than a political figure. He was believed to possess exceptional magical powers ... The rabbi emerges, therefore, as a wonder-working sage, master of ancient wisdom both of Israel and of his native Babylonia and privy to the occult.<sup>36</sup>

While elsewhere he writes:

Could a modern anthropologist spend a few years in ancient Pumbedita, Sura, or Nehardea, to study the social role of the rabbi, his resultant book would certainly be called something like "The Lawyer-Magicians of Babylonia."<sup>37</sup>

For all aspects of ritual power, then, Neusner refrained from distinguishing between the holy, wonder working Rabbi and the magician. From his point of view, under discussion were not agents of different types of cultural content, religion versus magic, spiritual versus corporeal, rational versus imaginary, and so on, but rather agents of the same cosmology, according to which men (as well as women) have the power to act in the world and to change it through ritual means. And in this worldview, with its practical implications, take part both the Sages and the practitioners of magic.

This, of course, is Neusner's own approach. Like his imagined anthropologist, he looks from the outside into talmudic-Jewish soci-

<sup>35</sup> For a broad attempt at interpreting the Rabbis' discourse of the occult in such a manner, see Harari 2010: 272-352. For a more condensed, English version, see Harari 2006: 521-64.

<sup>36</sup> Neusner 1966/7: 170-72.

<sup>37</sup> Neusner 1969: 11. In yet another article Neusner bound the ritual power of the Rabbi with Torah study and its internalization until he actually became a living Torah. See Neusner 1970: 1-18.

ety by means of its writings. Yet it is clear that the society itself, or at least the part encountered in rabbinic literature, certainly did distinguish between its holy men and the “Other” magicians.<sup>38</sup> As Neusner writes:

Jewish society, including the rabbis’ ... had long since distinguished sharply, by its own standards, between what *it* considered magic, and what *it* considered religion – neither identical with what we should class under these terms – and by *its* standards, the rabbis were not magicians ... Some of them did practice magic on the side, but this is a different matter ... The rabbis never called themselves magicians. On the contrary, they consistently and explicitly disapproved of “magic” ... But many of the things they did, especially the supernatural character alleged to have been imparted to them by their knowledge of Torah, must be seen in the context of antiquity as appropriate to divine-men or magicians.<sup>39</sup>

Neusner proposes, therefore, to differentiate between our modern standards and those of the society we are investigating. In light of the similarity that he finds, by his standards, between the figure of the Babylonian Rabbi and that of the magician, he relies upon a social theory of magic to explain the intracultural difference between them – a difference reflected in the Sages’ discourse about them. He concludes that it is not the essence of the act that defines its performer – holy man or magician – but quite the contrary: it is the social status of the performer that dictates from the outset the nature of the act – miracle or magic.

Magic, according to this perception, is a label that indicates not the type of act, but the type of performer. Even though they perform deeds identical to those of the magicians (from our etic viewpoint), representatives of the religious establishment will never be tagged as “magicians.” For the establishment, which is responsible for setting the borders of legitimacy for society, is that which dictates the use of the terms *kishuf* (“magic”), *keshafim* (“sorceries”), *mekhasheflah* (“sorcerer”/“witch”) in its writings, precisely to push beyond these boundaries those “Other” possessors of power. In the middle of the 1970s Judah Goldin expressed this succinctly as follows: “what is magic and what is not the authorities determine ... One is simply

<sup>38</sup> Magic as the aggressive, dangerous ritual practice of the “Other” has been the subject of extensive academic literature. Within the context of the Greco-Roman world, see, for example, Segal 1981: 349-75; Nock 1972b, 1: 310-30; McMullen 1966: 95-127; Brown 1970: 17-45; Gager 1992: 24-25. The positions that will be presented below are the expression of a similar trend within the context of Jewish culture in Late Antiquity.

<sup>39</sup> Neusner 1969: 11-13 (emphasis in the original).

to obey and trust the authorities."<sup>40</sup> In his description of the Rabbis' struggle against magic, political values substitute moral ones. The motivation for this struggle is depicted, not as an ideological war on the part of the establishment against spiritual pollution spread among the people, but rather as the establishments' fear of agents of ritual power as alternatives to itself and its aspiration to push them beyond the normative borders of society. The Sages, according to this perception, did not deny the power of sorcerers (both men and women), neither did they degrade it. They fully recognized it, as well as its sociopolitical implications. Their attitude to magic derived from political considerations, namely, reinforcing their exclusive position as authoritative leadership. Thus the question of magic in rabbinic literature depended upon interests that were not spiritual at all, but were closely bound up with the issue of establishment-connected legitimacy for "overpowering supernatural powers" and using them.

Another step toward deconstructing the distinction between true Jewish-religious spirituality (of the Sages' type) and magic was made by Ithamar Gruenwald, who determined that the Rabbis' spirituality itself had a fundamentally magical-mystical nuance. Gruenwald's starting point is, indeed, essentialist, for he sees in magic "a cognitive mode that organizes the way in which the religious person organizes reality."<sup>41</sup> However, this mode, with all its implications, he ascribed to the religiosity of the Sages themselves:

The human spirit operates in magic by means of the words, magic names, and other appurtenances ... words have immanent power ... regarding this, there is, in effect, no fundamental difference between the words used in prayer and those used in magic ... in other terms, the religious ritual – particularly one that is accompanied by words and unique formulations – inherently embodies a magical nature.<sup>42</sup>

Gruenwald did, indeed, try to pry the Sages out of the magic common among the surrounding nations by determining that the Rabbi's conception "is not the usual pagan magic but magic that reveals an aspect of special spirituality."<sup>43</sup> Nevertheless, he drew ultimate conclusions from the discussion of the entire body of rabbinic traditions and pointed out broad testimony on magical thought, faith, and activity among the Sages themselves.

<sup>40</sup> Goldin 1976: 122.

<sup>41</sup> Gruenwald 1996: 20.

<sup>42</sup> Gruenwald 1994: 94.

<sup>43</sup> Gruenwald 1994: 93.

Dina Stein went even further in this direction. While for Gruenwald magic invaded the Rabbis' "religiosity," Stein wishes to expose its integral part in the very essence of the Jewish faith. She does this from an original point of view, through tracing the significance of magic as a cultural symbol in general and within the context of the monotheistic experience in particular:

The nucleus of the magic experience is the sense of the gap ... the gap is a basic experiential paradigm in a disassembled, fractured world: there is a semiotic gap (including a verbal one) between the sign and the signified, there is a gap between Man and his environment, and there is a gap between Man and God. Moreover, the power of the magic language, which derives from its simultaneous ascription to three, usually separated categories – God, Man, and the object itself (the language itself) – alludes, too, to (yearning for) a unified, non-differentiated system. Magic, therefore, expresses longing for non-differential situation, non-gap situation: fantasy. From this one is to understand the centrality of the magic experience precisely within the monotheistic context, in which it aspires to bridge what Goldin termed "the empty space between God and man." Continuing that notion, magic praxis is a certain realization of that very experience, which is also found at the base of the miracle.<sup>44</sup>

This proposal, of course, is the total opposite of the logical argument that Urbach set as a basic premise regarding the Rabbis' perception of magic, as well as to the approaches of Lieberman, Weinroth, Liebes, and others, who together with Urbach sought to cleanse Judaism, in its "pure" or "major" form, from any scintilla of magic. According to Stein, precisely in the monotheistic faith – where the gap between God and Man is especially wide, the concealing of God is particularly great, and the human loneliness that derives from this is particularly harsh – there grows an especially strong yearning for magic, so as to bridge the gap. As such, magic is no different than other phenomena that function the same way. Thus the borders between incantation and prayer, sorcery and miracle, magic and religion are vague. All of them take part in a broad cultural system, at the base of which lies a painful experience of gap, and a deep yearning to bridge it.<sup>45</sup>

Many other scholars contributed to this trend, rejecting the idea of an essential, phenomenological chasm between magic and religion in the context of Rabbinic literature in various ways: by placing, at the center stage of research, magic traditions from the House of

<sup>44</sup> Stein 2004: 184-85.

<sup>45</sup> Stein 2004: 178-86.

Study; by illuminating magic-wonder aspects in the Rabbi's figure in general, and in that of certain Rabbis in particular; by indicating sympathetic-magic elements in the Sages' thought; and even by an attempt at linking magic knowledge in Rabbinic literature with that in the magic sources themselves.<sup>46</sup> Regardless of whether we are dealing with miracles, such as Rabbah's, who through his prayer brought his comrade Rabbi Zeira back to life, the very man he had slaughtered the night before when drunk during Purim (*b. Meg.* 7b); or with wonderworkers, such as R. Simeon bar Yohai, who would say "O valley, O valley, be filled with gold dinars," and it was filled (*y. Ber.* 9:2 and parallel versions); or with magic, as when R. Joshua sowed flax on a marble tablet, watered it, cultivated it, held it, and pulled on it strongly until he withdrew a witch from it by her hair, and forced her to annul her harmful sorcery (*y. San.* 7:11); ritual power is receiving ever increasing recognition as an essential, meaningful register in the discourse of the Sages. And when we cease to depict the Sages solely as persons of ethical-rational, spiritual religiosity; when we direct our gaze also to the miracle, wonder, and magic stories about Sages; when we no longer dissociate the Sages from the use of ritual power, and from the significant discussion about it; then we must also reexamine their opposition to magic and, concurrently, the connection between rhetoric and politics.

This type of examination has been applied broadly in recent decades in the gender context. Jonathan Seidel, Simcha Fishbein, Meir Bar-Ilan, Rebecca M. Lesses, Tal Ilan and Kimberly Stratton have dealt, each in his or her own way, with traditions (mainly in the Babylonian Talmud) that relate magic to women and femininity.<sup>47</sup> Common to them is a systematic approach aimed at distinguishing, and breaking the link between, an accusation of witchcraft and involvement with sorcery. Accusing women of witchcraft is not described in these studies as testimony of a reality in which, indeed, "The more women the more witchcraft" (*m. Avot* 2:7), "Most women are engaged in sorcery" (*b. San.* 67a), and "The daughters of Israel use incense for witchcraft" (*b. Ber.* 53a), but as an expression of the political trend of the male establishment that serves a patriarchal society to label the entire feminine gender, and each of the women

<sup>46</sup> Following are a number of examples from the large pool of research on these topics. Safrai 1956: 15-33; Sarfatti 1957: 126-53; Cohen 1978: 260-97; Green 1979: 619-47; Bokser 1985b: 42-92; Veltri 1997; Yassif 1999: 144-66; Bar-Ilan 2002: 383-99; Bohak 2003: 267-79; Bohak 2008: 351-425; Kalmin 2004: 210-32; Harari 2006; Harari 2010: 272-352.

<sup>47</sup> See Seidel 1992: 45-61; Fishbane 1993: 27-42; Bar-Ilan 1993: 7-32; Lesses 2001: 343-75; Ilan 2006: 214-23; Stratton 2007: 143-76.



belonging to it, as agents of illegitimate, violent, dangerous power. Accordingly, magic was linked to feminine impurity and pollution, and presented as a feminine spiritual sin parallel to and complementary of its corporeal counterpart – fornication.

Yet, through the accusations of women of both witchcraft and fornication, a day-to-day reality is exposed of feminine power over men, of masculine anxiety about that power, and of patriarchal aspiration to control it. Thus Seidel writes:

Women's impurity can defile the male body and mind and can infect the Rabbis system ... Witchcraft in the literary culture of the Rabbis becomes the psychic component and counterpart to bodily invasion and violation.<sup>48</sup>

Making feminine spiritual impurity – viz., witchcraft – known in public by speaking about it in sayings and stories has a twofold aim: to move it from the private realm to the public arena, and to fight against it by means of exposure and supervision. But make no mistake. In the end, it is not an issue of overseeing a different spirituality, but rather of overseeing the “Other” gender. Attributing witchcraft to women, therefore, does not inform us of a reality in which witchcraft was actually feminine in essence, that is, corporeal, passionate, impure – the inverse of the Rabbis’ pure, civilized, religious spirituality – but rather of masculine fear of feminine power, and of the aspiration of the patriarchal establishment to banish women to the margins of society by labeling them as witches, so as to create a social condition of subjugation and dominance. It is my view that other components in the Sages’ discourse of the occult, including demonology, divination, dream interpretation, and astrology, should be read as expressions of a sociopolitical trend, to wit, the aspiration of the Sages for power and authority.<sup>49</sup>

The pendulum of research seems to have reached its pinnacle; signs of its turning the other way round, partially, are evident. Opposing voices are raised that stress the distinctiveness of the phenomenon of magic in rabbinic thought and literature. We have already met Yehuda Liebes’ recent rejection of the very possibility that sheer magic is present in “major,” religious corpuses like the one created by the Sages. He is not alone in this camp. By way of concluding this section, I would like to point out briefly two other scholars who lately have responded more delicately and sophisticatedly to

<sup>48</sup> Seidel 1992: 50.

<sup>49</sup> See above, n. 35. See further on the attitude to the ‘Other’ in the context of rabbinical magic traditions Bohak 2003.

the widespread scholarly tendency depicted above, still striving to maintain some distance between the Rabbis and magic.

In a methodological article that follows William Good and Dorothy Hammond<sup>50</sup>, Peter Schäfer suggests applying the idea of a continuum between magic and religion, along which any ritual act is located, also to Rabbinic culture, and to see magic as one of the forces working within Jewish religion and not in opposition to it. According to Schäfer, "magic" is that part of Jewish religion which stresses the power of human supernatural action and influence in the world – in contrast to the concepts within religion, which underscore precisely the absolute power of God. Schäfer refrains from weaving the thinly defined strands of essence required for snaring magic phenomena in the entire religious culture. Yet his discussion of magic in rabbinic literature is (unavoidably) based on such a web. He reverts to binding the rejection of magic by the Sages, and the battle they waged against the magic practices prevalent among the people, as he puts it, to an ideological stance on their part: the Rabbis considered these practices idolatry that clashed with the values of faith that they upheld.<sup>51</sup>

Recently Philip Alexander, too, has anchored the Sages' opposition to magic to an ideological tendency, but from a different direction. Alexander strove to indicate an aim of dismantling the category of "magic" in rabbinic literature and of "decriminalization" and "liberalization" in the Sages' attitude to magic acts in comparison to that of the Bible. He feels that this trend can be discerned through the creation of the halakhic category of "conjuring" (*Ahizat Einayim*) within the realm of magic, on the one hand, and a certain tolerance toward the "true [i. e. effective] magic" that is performed by Sages with the help of God, on the other. Alexander consolidates the opposition to magic aired in the Talmud with another kind of "true magic," viz., the type that relies upon demonic aid. The Sages' objection to magic – that is, to "true [demonic] magic" – derived from pre-Kabbalistic ideas about the cosmic force of the powers of evil and its theurgic aspect. Ultimately, Alexander states, the struggle between the "magician-Rabbi," who relies upon God, and the other sorcerer, who uses demons, is an expression of the notion that both sides are reinforced by means of the cosmic forces assisting them, and that they, in turn, strengthen those forces. For this theological-theurgical reason, the Sages did not dismantle the category of magic altogether,

<sup>50</sup> See Goode 1949: 172-82; Hammond 1971: 1348-56.

<sup>51</sup> Schäfer 1997: 19-43.

and because of it they took part in “true magic” while simultaneously opposing it.<sup>52</sup>

These approaches demonstrate conscious reactions to views expressed in recent decades concerning the “magic of the Rabbis.” They neither undermined them nor made a full turn back to the old magic/religion dichotomy, but rather suggested fresh tools for dissolving the tension inherent in the issue of magic in the Sages’ literature. In any event, whether the scholars abandoned the phenomenological distinction between magic and religion in the context of rabbinic literature, or once again embrace it, almost all no longer associate their approach, as in the past, with a moral-judgmental stance.

### Conclusion: The Study of Ancient Jewish Magic

A moral-judgmental attitude to magic (versus religion) is also altogether absent from current research into ancient Jewish magic in general. We no longer find here revulsion from magic, nor contempt for it as an expression of low-level marginal culture, unworthy of (and actually unnecessary for) the Jewish people. Like the long-prevailing trend in the study of Greco-Roman magic – which clearly distinguishes between the hostile attitude and disparaged image it suffered in the writings of the elite, and its actual existence in reality (documented in “insider” evidence in hundreds of amulets, curse tablets, and magic gems, as well as in thousands of magical recipes in the Greek and Coptic magical papyri)<sup>53</sup> – so too we tend to differentiate today between the “official” attitude of the Rabbinic elite toward magic, and its actual existence as both cultural and social phenomena in reality. It is apparent that magic activity did take place among the Jews in the mishnaic and talmudic periods, and it is clear that the Sages opposed it. But the joining of these facts is no longer made along the axis of a value judgment drawn between the religiosity of the Sages – which was, as it were, the true Jewish religiosity, stemming entirely from spiritual motives and aimed at the Heavens – and non-spiritual, practical, foreign rites, whose purpose was geared to earth, and which existed at the fringes of Jewish society. In the study of Jewish magic, spirituality is (usually) no longer con-

<sup>52</sup> Alexander 2005: 7-25.

<sup>53</sup> There is a tremendous amount of research in this area. The following are from among the main publications of sources: Preisendanz 1973-74; Betz 1992; Meyer – Smith 1994; Daniel – Maltomini 1990-92; Bonner 1950; Kotansky 1994; Simone 2001; Gager 1992.

sidered a (valid and worthy) mode of thought and behavior aimed at correcting and improving humankind, by guiding it to spiritual elevation through eradicating its earthly desires and subjugating them to the spiritual life, but as the very metaphysical facet of the cosmology of society. This facet, as it turns out, was common to all in late Antiquity: non-Jews and Jews, men and women, laymen and rabbis, beyond this or that pattern of religiosity. Discerned through the ideology, didactics, and intercultural struggles are similar metaphysical, spiritual elements, which have both theoretical and practical expressions, on the basis of the various religious manifestations in that period – whether Rabbinic or other.

For this reason, scholars today do not tend to negate pragmatic rationality or spiritual religiosity, whether on the part of those forbidding magic or on the part of those who make use of it. At the same time, in regard to the very fact of belief in the existence of a ritual power held by man and woman, a power through which he or she can act in the world and change it, modern scholars do not distinguish between those who forbid magic and those who use it. Both camps shared a cosmology in which metaphysics, with its theoretical as well as performative aspects, was a basic foundation. Both believed in a supernatural, spiritual reality whose representatives – God, gods, angels, stars, or demons – possessed great power and had decisive influence over humankind. Both held that man, in turn, has the ability to influence these supernatural entities and to recruit them for earthly benefit. Both used rituals to effect this influence. Both acted rationally within their cosmological framework. What differentiates between them is not, therefore, the "spirituality" of the one versus the "earthiness" of the other, but the different modes of merging the spiritual and the material in the various cosmological systems.

Under this conceptual umbrella, most scholars tend today to depict a complex social reality in which the aspiration for human ritual power was effected in a mundane manner in attempts to manipulate reality and change it. Execution was carried out by various means: canonic, that is, through a life of piety, Torah and *halakhah*, as well as non-canonic, that is, through the power of "magic." The rejection of magic in rabbinic literature, which nevertheless praises the ritual power of the Rabbis themselves, should be linked, it seems, not to an essentialist-ideological differentiation between spirituality and corporeality, reason and fantasy, religion and magic, miracle and sorcery, Sage and sorcerer (who is usually female), but rather to a socio-political struggle concerning the Rabbis' aspiration for a monopoly on holiness, knowledge, and authority.

# “They Revealed Secrets to Their Wives”: The Transmission of Magical Knowledge in *1 Enoch*

REBECCA LESSES

## 1. Introduction

The *Book of the Watchers*, the first part of *1 Enoch*, expands upon the enigmatic story in Genesis 6.1-4 that tells of the “sons of God” taking human women for themselves. This article focuses on how the *Book of the Watchers*, some of the later Enochic booklets, and the *Book of Jubilees* reinterpret the biblical story so that the sin of the “sons of God” or Watchers also encompasses the transmission of knowledge forbidden to human beings, including women. In the *Book of the Watchers*, women learn the “rejected” heavenly mysteries of “sorcery and spells” from their angelic husbands, mysteries which include methods of divination by observance of heavenly and earthly phenomena. The *Book of the Watchers* sets up a gendered dichotomy between the Watchers’ human wives and Enoch; women are recipients only of rejected mysteries, while Enoch learns the true secrets of heaven from the revealing angels when he ascends to heaven alive.

In contrast with the *Book of the Watchers*, two later Enochic booklets from the second century B. C. E., the *Dream Visions of Enoch* and the *Epistle of Enoch*, omit entirely the notion that the angels teach human beings rejected heavenly wisdom. *Jubilees*, also from the second century B. C. E., initially treats the Watchers’ descent to earth positively, maintaining that their mission was to teach human beings. They sinned with women, however, and their positive mission was forgotten. The first century C. E. *Similitudes of Enoch* takes up the tradition of angelic teaching once again, but the human wives of the Watchers are not singled out as recipients of this knowledge.

Why does the *Book of the Watchers* alone report that *women* are recipients of forbidden magical knowledge from their angelic husbands? This article puts forward two suggestions to explain the difference of the *Book of the Watchers* from the other Enochic booklets.

One possible framework for understanding may exist in the influence of earlier biblical traditions that associate magic with women, in particular the prophetic tradition that holds foreign women, especially foreign cities imagined as women, guilty of sorcery and divination. Another possibility comes from recent research that has suggested a scribal context of composition for the *Book of the Watchers*. One of the notable features of the Wisdom of Ben Sira, a work of scribal wisdom from the beginning of the second century B. C. E., is that it posits a unique connection between women and evil. This particular strain of thought in scribal circles may also have contributed to the focus on women as recipients of evil magical knowledge in the *Book of Watchers*.

## 2. The Daughters of Men

Concern about women as mediators of the relationship between the earthly and heavenly worlds is already found in the biblical story of the cohabitation of the "sons of God" with the "daughters of men." Gen. 6.1-4 highlights the importance of women as the link between earth and heaven, between God (or gods) and man (or humanity).

When men began to increase on earth, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw how beautiful the daughters of men were; and they took wives from among those that pleased them. YHWH said, "My breath shall not abide in man forever, since he too is flesh; let the days allowed him be one hundred and twenty years." It was then, and later too, that the Nephilim appeared on earth, when the sons of God cohabited with the daughters of men, who bore them offspring. They were the heroes of old, the men of renown.<sup>1</sup>

In this passage, the "daughters of men" stand at the center point, between "men" and the "sons of God." They are the mediators between human and divine beings, providing a sexual and reproductive link between man and God. At the point where the "sons of God" take them from "men," they become "women" whom the "sons" choose and then "cohabit with." Despite their central position, the women do not act on their own behalf; rather, the sons of God "see," "take," choose, and "cohabit with" them. The only act that they themselves perform, rather than being the object of others' actions, is giving birth – although in this case they also give birth to

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<sup>1</sup> Translation is based on the new Jewish Publication Society translation.

or *for* the sons of God. The text is even unclear on the identity of their children. Unlike other Genesis passages that speak of giving birth, this sentence does not tell us to whom they gave birth. Instead, it turns quickly to the matter of the “mighty men, the men of renown,” so that the reader is left guessing that the women gave birth to these “mighty men,” who were perhaps so “renowned” because their fathers were divine beings. Women may stand at the central point of this narrative, but they are not important for themselves – rather, their importance lies in how they furnish a link between earth and heaven. This mediating function is one of the reasons that women are important in the *Book of the Watchers*. In addition to their role as the sexual partners of the Watchers and mothers of the destructive giants, women are significant recipients, and transmitters, of the evil teachings the Watchers pass on to them.

### 3. *Book of the Watchers*

The short tale of Genesis 6 has been subjected to great elaboration in *1 Enoch*. The *Book of the Watchers* is the first part of *1 Enoch*, comprising chapters 1-36, dated by most scholars to mid third-century B. C. E. Palestine (Nickelsburg 2001: 7; Reed 2005: 17). Chapters 1-5 are an introduction to the book, while chapters 6-16 deal with the story of the fallen angels. The figure of Enoch does not appear in the *Book of the Watchers* until chapter 12. He is not part of the introduction (chs. 1-5) or part of the original story of the sinning Watchers (chs. 6-11).

Chapters 6-16 tell the story of the angels who saw that the “daughters of men” were fair and descended from heaven to take them as wives and beget children from them. According to *1 Enoch* 6-11, the “sons of God” of Gen 6.2 were angels, the “Watchers” [עִירִיָּן] of heaven. They lusted after the “beautiful and comely” daughters of men. Their leader, Shemihazah, persuaded them to swear an oath together to descend to earth and take human women as wives and beget children. Chapters 6-11 are composed of several separate traditions of the angels’ descent that a later author has combined, but it is still possible to discern what some of these separate traditions were (Dimant 1974: 54). Chapters 12-16 seem to assume the existence of 6-11 in its present form, building upon the earlier section but introducing the figure of Enoch (not present in chapters 6-11) and presenting details about the angels that are in some cases quite different from chapters 6-11 (Dimant 1974: 22; VanderKam 1984: 129-30;

Suter 1979: 119). Annette Yoshiko Reed has demonstrated that chapters 12-16 were written as a transition from chapters 6-11 to chapters 17-36 of the *Book of the Watchers*, and that they resolve some of the contradictory traditions found in chapters 6-11 (Reed 2004: 53-56, 58-65).

Enoch is introduced rather abruptly at the beginning of chapter 12: "And before these things Enoch was taken up, and none of the children of men knew where he had been taken up, or where he was or what had happened to him. But his dealings were with the Watchers, with the holy ones, in his days" (Black 1985: 31). When Enoch was "taken up" (Gen. 5.24), he did not die, but instead dwelled with the angels in heaven, the "Watchers" and "holy ones." His task was to rebuke the fallen Watchers for their sins; he also served as their intermediary before God, and thus he is called "the scribe of righteousness."

### A. 1 *Enoch* 6-11

The tradition in chapters 6-11, in which Shemiḥazah is the leader of the sinning angels, concentrates on the sin of the Watchers – their descent from heaven, their defilement by intercourse with women, and the sins of their children, the giants, who destroy the earth. In this tradition, "there is no hint of the view that the women themselves are impure because of their human nature," (Dimant 1974: 44, my translation) and human beings do not share any guilt with the angels or the giants. The flood comes upon them because of the sins of others.

A second tradition describes how the Watchers led human beings to sin by teaching them the secrets of heaven (Dimant, 1974: 53). In this tradition, human beings are not the purely innocent victims of the angels. They make use of the skills that the angels teach them – the angels' sins cause humans to sin (Dimant 1974: 58; Reed 2005: 37-41). This tradition occurs in two forms; in the first one, the angels, led by Shemiḥazah, teach women magical arts and heavenly secrets.<sup>2</sup> According to the Shemiḥazah tradition (*1 En.* 7.1): "These (leaders) and all the rest took for themselves wives from all whom they chose; and they began to cohabit with them and to defile themselves with them, and they taught them sorcery (אִשְׁרָה, φαρμακείας) and spells

<sup>2</sup> Nickelsburg (2001: 197) comments: "The point of the passage is that various kinds of magical and divinatory practice have their source in an angelic rebellion."



(ἐπασιδὰς) and showed them the cutting of roots and herbs" (Black 1985: 28)<sup>3</sup>.

The text then details which angels taught what skills (*1 En.* 8.3):

Shemiḥazah taught spell-binding (חברו) and the cutting of roots; Hermoni taught the releasing of spells (חרש למשרא) magic (כשפו), sorcery (חרטמן), and sophistry (תושין). Baraqel taught the auguries of the lightning; Koka-biel taught the auguries of the stars (נחשי ככבין); Zikiel taught the auguries of fire-balls; Arteqif taught the auguries of earth (נחשי ארע); Simsel taught the auguries of the sun (נחשי שמש); Sahrel taught the auguries of the moon. And they all began to reveal secrets to their wives (וכולהון שריו) (לגליה רזין לנשיהון) (Black 1985: 29; Milik and Black 1976: 150).<sup>4</sup>

In the second version of the teaching tradition, another rebel angel, Asael, teaches metallurgy, weapons, and cosmetics to human beings – the arts of civilization that lead men and women, respectively, into sin. Dimant argues that these arts are reminiscent of the skills that the descendants of Cain learned, especially Tubal-cain, "who formed all implements of copper and iron" (Gen. 4.22; Dimant 1974: 54-55).<sup>5</sup>

Asael taught men to make swords of iron and breast-plates of bronze and every weapon for war; and he showed them the metals of the earth, how to work gold, to fashion [adornments] and about silver, to make bracelets for women; and he instructed them about antinomy, and eye-shadow, and all manner of precious stones and about dyes and varieties of adornments; and the children of men fashioned for themselves and for their daughters and transgressed. And there arose much impiety on the earth

<sup>3</sup> M. Black describes the Greek manuscripts as follows (M. Black, 1970: 7-9): the Gizeh fragment, also called Codex Panopolitanus, is a sixth-century papyrus from Akhmin in Egypt. It covers *1 En.* 1-32:6. The second Greek manuscript, the Chester Beatty papyrus, is from the fourth century, and covers *1 En.* 97:6-104 and 106-107. Substantial parts of *1 Enoch* are also preserved in the works of Georgius Syncellus. The Aramaic texts were found at Qumran and subsequently published in J. T. Milik and M. Black 1976.

<sup>4</sup> See Nickelsburg 2001: 197-201 for a discussion of the exact meaning of the terms referring to various types of magic and divination. Tal Ilan (2006: 229, 231) remarks that, "The verse from Enoch indicates that at least for the author of that composition, witchcraft and sorcery were closely associated with the intimate knowledge of plants and roots. The association with plants and roots is universal, and this is true in Jewish tradition as well." Ilan draws the conclusion that the verse from *1 Enoch* meant that women were professional healers. See also her discussion in Ilan 1995: 221-225.

<sup>5</sup> P. Hanson (1977: 226-232) traces this tradition to Semitic sources, while Nickelsburg (2001: 191-193) argues that Greek traditions about Prometheus, such as those found in Aeschylus's *Prometheus Bound*, are a more likely source.

and they committed fornication and went astray and corrupted their ways (*1 En.* 8.1-2; Black 1985: 28-29).<sup>6</sup>

The Greek translation of Syncellus, which presents a slightly different version of this passage, implies that the women who learned the arts of beautification from Asael then turned around and seduced the other angels: “And the sons of men made for themselves and for their daughters, and they transgressed and they led astray the holy ones.”<sup>7</sup> In this case, when the women learned to adorn themselves with jewelry, precious stones, colored clothing, and makeup, they tempted the angels to sin with them. They are not innocent, as in the Shemihazah version, but share guilt with the angels for the downfall of humanity (Dimant 1974: 56). The prophetic image of the foreign seductive woman who engages in witchcraft (to be discussed in detail below) may have been a factor in the creation of this version. The idea that women were not innocent victims, but instead purposely lured the angels by their beauty is also found in several sources dependent upon *1 Enoch* and in rabbinic sources that incorporate earlier traditions (Nickelsburg 2001: 195-96).<sup>8</sup>

When chapters 9 and 10 of *1 Enoch* describe the punishment of the angels, the theme of secrets unjustly revealed, including the secrets of sorcery, is prominent among the reasons for their punishment. The four archangels, guardians of humanity, condemn Asael as a

<sup>6</sup> The Aramaic for *1 En.* 8.1 is (according to 4QEn<sup>b</sup> 1 i; Milik and Black 1976: 167-68): “Asa’el taught [men to] make swords of iron and breastplates of brass, [and he showed] them (metals) which are dug out, [and how] they should work gold to fashion it apt (for uses), and concerning silver, to fashion it for bracelets, [and for (other) adornments] of [women]. And] he [showed to women] concerning antimony (כוחל) and concerning eye-shadow, [and concerning all precious stones, and concerning dye-stuffs].” The Aramaic for *1 En.* 8.2 is (according to 4QEn<sup>b</sup> 1 iii; Milik and Black 1976: 170): “[And there was much wickedness] (רַיָּפּוּ) and men were acting wickedly [and erring in all their ways.]”

<sup>7</sup> Syncellus of *1 Enoch* 8:1: καὶ ἐποίησαν ἑαυτοῖς οἱ υἱοὶ τῶν ἀνθρώπων καὶ ταῖς θυγατρῶσιν αὐτῶν, καὶ παρέβησαν καὶ ἐπλάνησαν τοὺς ἀγίους. Nickelsburg (1977: 398) accepts Syncellus’s longer reading; Nickelsburg 2001: 195 argues that ‘this reading is ancient and is not an accidental variant of the reading in’ the Ethiopic and the Akhmim Greek manuscript. See also Dimant 1974: 56-57.

<sup>8</sup> T. Reuben 5 claims that the women charmed the Watchers, who appeared to them as they were engaged in sexual intercourse with their husbands, and as a result gave birth to the giants (Reed 2005: 111-12). Targum Pseudo-Jonathan on Genesis 6 says that the women painted their eyes and walked about naked to entice the angels to take them as wives. As a further development, Pirkei de-Rabbi Eliezer 22 says that it was the daughters of Cain, the offspring of the union between Eve and Samael, who enticed the angels. Nickelsburg (2001: 195-96) cites the early sources as support for his contention that the Syncellus reading is ancient.

teacher of “the eternal mysteries prepared in heaven [who] made them known to men,” presumably the arts of war and beauty that he taught to men and women, and Shemiḥazah as a teacher of “spell-binding,” which probably includes the sorcery and divination mentioned earlier.<sup>9</sup> To counter the destruction that the revelation of these secrets caused, the angel Raphael (= God heals) is told to (1 En. 10:7-8; Black 1985: 30):

Heal the earth which the watchers have ruined, and announce the healing of the earth, that I shall heal its wounds and that the children of men shall not altogether perish on account of the mysteries which the watchers have disclosed and taught the children of men. The whole earth has been devastated by the works of the teaching of Asael; record against him all sins.

In the version of the story in *Jubilees* 10:12-14, Noah himself was given the remedies for the “illnesses” and “seductions” brought by the evil spirits who came out of the bodies of the giants (*Jub.* 10:12-14). These remedies consisted of “herbs of the earth,” presumably beneficial, in contrast to the maleficent “roots of plants” and “herbs” about which the Watchers taught their wives (Wintermute 1985: 76).

## B. 1 *Enoch* 12-16

Chapters 12-16 of *1 Enoch* transform the combined traditions of chapters 6-11 in several ways (VanderKam 1984: 129; Dimant 1974: 72-29;

<sup>9</sup> P. Gizeh, *1 En.* 9.6-8: “(6) And all that you see Asael has done, who taught all injustice on the earth and showed the mysteries of eternity that are in heaven. ... (7) And Semiazas, to whom was given authority to rule those who cast spells (τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ ἄμα ὄντων). (8) And they went into the daughters of men of the earth and lay with them and they were defiled, and they showed them all sins.” Black (1985: 131) explains the Greek of *1 Enoch* 9:7 as a mistranslation: “The Greek version τῶν σὺν αὐτῷ ἄμα ὄντων (common to Sync. and G and behind Eth.) is an obvious mistranslation of חֲבוּרִין, ‘spell-binders,’ (e.g., Tg. Neoph. Dt. 18.1) which has here been confused with חֲבֵרִין = Heb. חֲבֵרִים, ‘companions, associates.’ Semihazah, who taught mankind spell-binding (8.3) is the fallen watcher put in charge of those who cast spells, i.e. magicians and sorcerers.” Nickelsburg (1977: 398) argues that the mysteries that Asael taught were “more than metallurgy and mining,” and also included other mantic and magical arts that the angels taught. Compare Syncellus; he says that Asael “(6) taught the mysteries and revealed (ἀπεκάλυψε) the eternal things in the heaven ... (8) ... and they (the angels) taught them (the women) to do hate-charms (μίσητῶν).” “Hate-charms” are intended to separate the object of one’s affections from his or her current partner so that he or she will then fall in love (or lust) with the one casting the spell.

Newsom 1980: 316-19; Reed 2004: 53-65; Reed 2005: 44-49).<sup>10</sup> One of the most noteworthy differences between them is that the miscegenation between angels and women is now described in terms of a dichotomy between spiritual and fleshly. The text sharply distinguishes between spiritual angels, eternally dwelling in heaven, and human women (and men), who are mortal, fleshly, and dwell on earth. The angels, who are clearly male in *1 Enoch*, belong in heaven, but have sought human women, who symbolize the passing, perishing nature of earth and flesh. *1 En.* 15.4 (translation from Nickelsburg 2001: 267) explicitly opposes the angels as they used to dwell in "high heaven, the eternal sanctuary," "spirits, living forever," and their present condition in which they have defiled themselves with women on the earth and have begotten flesh and blood children, "who die and perish." They have defiled themselves through sexual intercourse with women, and what is more, with the blood of women's menstruation (Nickelsburg 2001: 269, 271; Suter 1979:119). The angels are spiritual and immortal beings who have now entered the fleshly realm. Philo makes a similar point in his remarks on this verse: "But the substance (οὐσία) of angels is spiritual (πνευματική); however, it often happens that they imitate the forms of men and for immediate purposes, as in respect of knowing women for the sake of begetting [giants]" (Philo 1953: 61).

Women may be the dupes of the angels, and thus not responsible for the evil of their giant children, but they are responsible for propagating the teachings the angels gave them and causing further evil on earth. Enoch denounces the fallen angels with these words (*1 En.* 16.3): "You were in heaven, and there was no secret that was not revealed to you; and unspeakable secrets you know, and these you made known to women in your hardness of heart; and by these secrets females and mankind multiplied evils upon the earth."<sup>11</sup> It is significant that wom-

<sup>10</sup> Chapters 12-16 presuppose the two main stories that were blended in chapters 6-11, "but the writer of the new section makes significant additions to and alterations of these accounts as he brings the Watchers into direct contact with Enoch for the first time. Actually, though the finished text indicates the author's knowledge of both stories (or, rather, an editor's awareness of them), aside from 13:1-2 which is most awkward in its present context, chaps. 12-16 recapitulate and expand only the version associated with Shemihazah (without ever mentioning his name)" (VanderKam 1984: 129).

<sup>11</sup> Translation according to Black 1985: 35. Ephraim Isaac refers to the "rejected secrets" in his translation (Isaac 1983: 22). Nickelsburg (2001: 267) translates, "You were in heaven, and no mystery was revealed to you; but a stolen mystery you learned; and this you made known to the women in your hardness of heart; and through this mystery the women and men are multiplying evils upon the earth."

en are named before men in this sentence – the primary emphasis is on what *they* learned and how they multiplied evils on earth. *1 En.* 16 does not spell out what the “unspeakable” or “rejected” mysteries are, but since chapters 12-16 were written with chapters 6-11 in mind, it is probable that the “rejected mysteries” that the angels have taught women were the previously mentioned cosmetics, sorcery, incantations, the loosing of spells and cutting of roots, as well as the signs of the stars, lightning-flashes, the earth, the sun, and the moon (Nickelsburg 1977: 398). They are the opposite of the secrets of heaven that Enoch learns from God and the angels.

Chapters 6-16 of the *Book of Watchers* thus create an antinomy between the righteous knowledge that Enoch gains by ascent to heaven and the polluting knowledge that women and men gain from the descent of the Watchers to earth (Reed 2005: 48-49). Enoch is the special one who can ascend to God’s throne, speak with God, tour the heavens, and learn divine mysteries (VanderKam 1984: 131). The women whom the angels take as wives, on the other hand, learn sorcery and other “rejected mysteries.”

#### 4. The *Dream-Visions of Enoch*, the *Epistle of Enoch*, and the *Similitudes of Enoch*

Does the idea that women and men gain polluting knowledge from the Watchers continue in the subsequent Enoch booklets and later texts dependent upon the Enochic traditions? I now turn to the treatment that two second-century B. C. E. Enoch booklets, the *Dream-Visions of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 83-90) and the *Epistle of Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 94-108), give to the story of the sinning angels and their intercourse with human women. I will then discuss the latest booklet in *1 Enoch*, the *Similitudes of Enoch*, dated to the first century C. E. (Reed 2005: 17, 113).

The *Animal Apocalypse*, part of the *Dream-Visions* (*1 Enoch* 85-90), relates a history of the world in which angels are depicted as stars, and humans are depicted as various types of animals. The story of the descending angels is described as follows (*1 En.* 86.1-6; Black 1985: 73):

A single star fell from heaven, and it became transformed (into a bull, i. e., a human being), and it fed and pastured among those oxen. And after this I saw the large and black oxen (i. e., the descendants of Cain), and behold, they all destroyed their stalls and their pastures and their calves, and they began to butt one another. And again I saw in the vision, and looked towards the heavens, and behold I saw many stars descend

and cast themselves down from heaven beside that first star, and like it they became bulls amongst those cattle, and pastured among them. And I looked at them and saw, and behold, they all let out their members, like horses, and began to mount the cows of the oxen; and they all became pregnant and bore elephants, camels, and asses. And all the oxen feared them and were affrighted at them, and began to bite with their teeth and to devour and gore with their horns. And they began to devour these oxen; and behold all the children of the earth began to tremble and quake before them and to flee.

The single star represents Asael, who at *1 En.* 88.1 is "seized and cast into the abyss by one of the four archangels," which "corresponds to the action of Raphael at 10.4f on seizing Asael and casting him into the abyss" (Black 1985: 258).<sup>12</sup> After Asael, many other angels descend and transform themselves into bulls that have intercourse with the cows; this corresponds to the two hundred angels in the *Book of the Watchers* who descend with Shemihazah and have intercourse with human women. The destructive giant children of these unions are represented here by elephants, camels, and asses, who attack the oxen (= human beings). Here, as in the first story in the *Book of Watchers*, women and men are innocent victims of the Watchers and the giants; the angels engage in no teaching, and women do nothing to seduce the angels.

At the end of the *Epistle of Enoch*, Enoch tells the story of the fallen angels to his son Methuselah to explain to him the nature of his grandson Noah.<sup>13</sup> Lamech, Methuselah's son, fathers Noah, and is distressed that he "resembles the children of the angels of heaven" (*1 En.* 106.5). Lamech goes to his father Methuselah and asks him to speak on his behalf to Enoch, whose "dwelling-place is amongst the angels" (*1 En.* 106.7), and ask him about this son. In reply, Enoch tells him about the angels (*1 En.* 106.13-14; Black 1985: 100):

And I, Enoch, answered and said to him: 'Truly the Lord will make a Promise on the earth; and according as I was shown, (my) son, and informed you, in the generation of my father Jared exalted ones of heaven

<sup>12</sup> Nickelsburg (2001: 372) argues that this section is dependent on an earlier stage of the traditions in *1 Enoch* 6-8 than we currently have: "Read in light of chap. 86, the present form of chaps. 6-11 looks like a revision of a stage of the tradition in which Asael was the first angelic rebel."

<sup>13</sup> *1 En.* 106-107 probably uses older Noachic traditions. Nickelsburg (2001: 542) dates it after the incorporation of the *Epistle of Enoch* into the Enoch corpus in the first half of the second century B. C. E. and the copying of 4QEn<sup>c</sup> in the last third of the first century B.C.E. See discussion in Reed (2005: 79): it may "derive from a tale that circulated independently, whether in a 'Book of Noah' or in a more diffuse body of Noachic literature and lore."

transgressed the word of the Lord and violated the covenant of heaven. And behold, they committed sin and transgressed the law, and they had intercourse with women and committed sin with them and have married some of them, and from them begotten children, and they bore children on the earth, the giants, not beings like spirits but like creatures of flesh.<sup>14</sup>

As in the *Animal Apocalypse*, the angels' transgression of divine law consists of their intercourse with women and fathering children of flesh. The sin is entirely theirs; the women are not mentioned as responsible for the sin.

The *Similitudes of Enoch*, the second part of Enoch in the Ethiopic translation (*1 Enoch* 37-72), also contains versions of the earlier myth of the descent of the angels to the daughters of men, including traditions about forbidden secrets that the angels taught to human beings. This work is much later than the *Epistle of Enoch* or the *Book of Dreams*; it was probably composed in the first century C. E. (Black 1985: 181-89; Charlesworth 1979: 315-23; Knibb 1979: 345-59; Mearns 1979: 360-69; J. C. Greenfield and M. Stone 1977: 51-65; Hindley 1968: 551-65; and Reed 2005: 113). The "First Parable" says (*1 En.* 39.1), "And it shall come to pass in those days that exalted ones from heaven shall descend to resemble the children of the elect and holy; and their seed shall become mingled with that of the children of men."<sup>15</sup> This reference to the intercourse between the sons of God and women is not, however, the most prominent way that the *Similitudes of Enoch* characterizes the fallen angels; instead, for the most part, they are condemned for leading human beings astray and teaching them forbidden secrets (Reed 2005: 113). On the day of punishment, the angels Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, and Phanuel will cast Azazel and his host "into the burning furnace, that the Lord of spirits may exact

<sup>14</sup> This section survives in Greek and Aramaic as well as Ethiopic. The Greek can be found in P. Chester Beatty (Black 1970: 44), and the Aramaic is found in 4QEnc 5ii (Milik and Black, 1976: 209). See Nickelsburg (2001: 538) for discussion of the textual issues. On p. 546, he comments about the statement in 106:14, that the Watchers have 'transgressed the law' (ἔθως): "the Greek formulation can be related to the indictments in 15:4-7. God has established appropriate modes of conduct for spirits and for human beings, and the watchers, who are spirits, have acted like human beings and thus transgressed the accepted custom."

<sup>15</sup> Isaac (1983: 30) translates this passage: "And it shall come to pass in those days that the children of the elect and the holy ones [will descend] from the high heaven and their seed will become one with the children of the people." See Black 1985: 196 for an explanation of his emendations of the text to correspond more closely to the legend of the watchers known from the *Book of the Watchers*. R. H. Charles (1912: 74) considered this sentence to be an interpolation from an earlier book of Enoch like the *Book of the Watchers*.

retribution from them for their unrighteousness in becoming subject to Satan and leading astray those who dwell on the earth” (1 En. 54.6; Black 1985: 53). A similar general statement says, “I heard the voice of the angel saying, ‘These are the angels who descended from heaven to the earth, and revealed what was hidden to the children of men, and led the children of men astray into committing sin’” (1 En. 64.2; Black 1985: 61-62). The human beings who have been led astray will also be punished, as Enoch says to Noah (1 En. 65.6; Black 1985: 62):

A command has gone forth from the presence of the Lord of spirits concerning those who dwell on the earth that this must be their end, because they have learned all the secrets of the angels, and all the wrong-doing of the satans, and all their secret powers, and all the powers of those who practise sorcery, and the power of spells, and the power of those who make molten images of every created thing.

Enoch goes on to say (1 En. 65.10-11; Black 1985: 62):

Because of their iniquities their judgment shall be fully carried out and shall not be withheld before me; because of the sorceries which they have invented and learned, the earth and those who dwell upon it shall be destroyed. And as for those (watchers) that they will have no return (to heaven) for ever, because they have shown them (mankind) what was hidden, and they have been condemned.

The angel Michael says to Raphael that the sinning angels “will receive no mercy in the sight of the Lord, for the Lord of spirits has been angry with them because they have fashioned images of the Lord. Accordingly, there shall come upon them the sentence regarding the secrets for ever and ever; for neither idol nor man shall be accorded his (God’s) portion. But they by themselves will receive their condemnation for ever and ever” (1 En. 68.4-5; Black 1985: 64). In these passages the angels are condemned for their mating with women (although there is no mention of giant children), coming under the influence of Satan, teaching secrets to human beings, and making images of God. Human beings will be punished because they have learned angelic secrets, evil-doing from the satans, sorcery, spells, and the making of molten images. The special relationship between the watchers and their human wives is not mentioned – they do not specifically teach their wives sorcery, unlike the story in the *Book of the Watchers*. It is clear, however, that among the secrets that humans learned from the angels are spells and sorcery, so that this idea, first appearing in the *Book of the Watchers*, continues into the *Similitudes of Enoch*.

In the train of the *Book of the Watchers*, the *Book of Similitudes* also lists the evil angels and the ways that they have led humans astray



(beginning with Semyaza = Shemiḥazah),<sup>16</sup> but it also inserts a long indictment of five archangels who led humans astray in various ways (1 *En.* 69.4-12; Black 1985: 65).<sup>17</sup> In this passage, as in the *Book of the Watchers*, the angelic leaders incite their followers to mate with the daughters of men – both Yeḩon and 'Asbe'el are credited with this role, taken by Shemiḥazah in the *Book of the Watchers*, and as in 1 *Enoch* 15.4, the angels defile themselves with human women. Gādre'el takes the role of 'Asa'el / 'Azaz'el in teaching men the “weapons of death,” the “shield, and the coat of mail, and the sword.” As well, he was the angel who led Eve astray, reminiscent of the role that Satan plays in later literature (Reed 2005: 114). Reed (2005:115-16) points out that the *Book of Similitudes* here departs from the earlier Enoch literature in blaming one of the primordial fallen angels for misleading Eve. There seems to be the beginning of a transition here to the later belief that all of the sins of humankind lead back to that sin, rather than coming from the fallen Watchers.<sup>18</sup> Contrary to the high evaluation of scribes in the *Book of the Watchers*, the angel Penemue taught “sophistry” and writing, which to the author of this passage mean the death-dealing knowledge that Adam and Eve learned in the Garden (Reed 2005: 115). As Charles (1912: 138) and Black (1985: 247) point out, the afflictions that Kasdeya' showed human beings are related to the list of troubles in Psalm 91:5-6. It is interesting to note that this passage does not ascribe teaching sorcery to any of these archangels; instead, they are responsible for the illegitimate mating with women, teaching weaponry, sophistry, and writing, and illnesses that come from demons: miscarriage, snakebites, and heat-stroke, as well as leading Eve astray. There is no mention of teaching people how to make adornments, or how to make the cosmetics that

<sup>16</sup> 1 *Enoch* 69.2 gives the names of twenty-one angels, in a list which bears a great deal of similarity to 6:7.

<sup>17</sup> Black (1985: 246) argues that these five angels belong to a higher echelon in the hierarchy than the Watchers. “The writer is evidently accommodating the older tradition of the fallen angels, the watchers, as ‘evil angels’ within a later demonology where Satan and his host, the ‘satans,’ had come to occupy the highest place in the hierarchy of evil angels.” The angel 'Asbe'el (or Kasbe'el) has taken over the role of Shemiḥazah as the leader of the angels and inciter to sin with women (verses 5 and 13), and Gādre'el has the role of 'Asa'el as the teacher of the making of weapons and the arts of war. Even though the text here refers to the “sons of the holy angels,” they are clearly to be identified with the Watchers, the “sons of God” of Gen. 6.2. For discussions of the meanings of the angelic names, see Black 1985: 246-47, and Knibb 1978: 160-62.

<sup>18</sup> See discussion below of an earlier antecedent of the idea that sin comes from a woman in the book of Ben Sira.

women use, which in turn permitted them to seduce the angels. In fact, women are not singled out at all as responsible for the ills of the world – instead, Eve is the *victim* of an angel, not his seducer. We thus see that the *Book of Similitudes* is not univocal about the evils that Watchers taught human beings; this passage, unlike the ones previously discussed from the *Book of Similitudes*, does not ascribe the teaching of magic or sorcery to them.

## 5. *Jubilees*

Although the *Book of Jubilees* is not, obviously, part of *1 Enoch*, it nonetheless contains Enochic traditions that can be usefully compared to those in *1 Enoch*. *Jubilees* is a second-century B. C. E. retelling of biblical history from the creation of the world up to Moses (Reed 2005: 87). According to *Jubilees*, and contrary to *1 Enoch*, the Watchers' descent to earth was not initially an evil act (Reed 2005: 90). They descended in order to teach human beings and to act righteously: "He named him Jared because during his lifetime the angels of the Lord who were called Watchers descended to earth to teach mankind and to do what is just and upright on the earth" (*Jub.* 4.15). However, after the angels descended, they became entangled in sin. As in other accounts, their essential transgression was intercourse with human women, which defiled the angels.<sup>19</sup> The sin of the Watchers, the birth of giants, and the corruption of "all animate beings" bring on the punishment of the flood and destruction of all life (*Jub.* 5.1-4). As in *1 Enoch*, Enoch serves as the witness against the Watchers for their sins (*Jub.* 4.22). Noah's instructions for his grandsons understand the sins of the Watchers and the destructive nature of the giants as cautionary tales for human actions (*Jub.* 7.20-22; Reed, 2005: 92). Fornication, uncleanness, and injustice led to the flood; the illicit intercourse of the Watchers with women; their uncleanness after they married the women; and their destructive giant children. Since "uncleanness" is distinguished from "fornication," this may mean that they are guilty of intercourse with women during their menstrual periods or other forbidden times.

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<sup>19</sup> Reed 2005: 90-91: "By depicting their intentions as good and their descent as divinely mandated, *Jubilees* characterizes these angels not as evil so much as weak and thus disobedient." The fallen Watchers also serve as the typical example of those who transgress the rules against intermarriage, "with no thought to the maintenance of genealogical purity."

The Watchers' teaching function, mentioned originally in *Jubilees* as part of their positive mission to humanity, and which plays such a negative role in *1 Enoch*, is hardly mentioned subsequently in *Jubilees*, but there is one significant reference to the science of omens that they taught. Kainan, the son of Elam (Gen. 10.22), is taught to read by his father, and then he goes to find a place where he can have his own city (*Jub.* 8.8): "He found an inscription which the ancients had incised in a rock. He read what was in it, copied it, and sinned on the basis of what was in it, since in it was the Watchers' teachings by which they used to observe the omens of the sun, moon, and stars and every heavenly sign." In *1 En.* 8.3, the Watchers also teach these heavenly signs (נִחְשִׁים) to their wives, where they are also considered to be evil (Reed 2005: 92-93). In *Jubilees*, however, the content of their teachings consists only of methods of divination, not sorcery or any of the other evils that the *Book of the Watchers* includes, and the knowledge transmitted in *Jubilees* is received by a man, not by women. The women in *Jubilees* are the objects of the Watchers' lust, but they do not learn any of the forbidden knowledge of their husbands, nor are they blamed for seducing them to sin.

## 6. Magic and Sorcery in *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees*

Taking *1 Enoch* as a redacted whole – ranging from the third-century B. C. E. *Book of the Watchers* to the first-century C. E. *Book of Similitudes*, and including the *Book of Jubilees* as well, it is obvious that the story of the descent of the Watchers and their mating with human women is very important in the development of the Enochic tradition. The transmission of forbidden secrets to human beings, in particular sorcery, however, does not always play a role in the descent myth. It is absent from the *Animal Apocalypse* and the *Epistle of Enoch*, but is present in *Jubilees* and in the *Similitudes of Enoch*, which clearly know the version of the story told in *1 En.* 6-16. In *Jubilees*, the angels originally descend in order to teach humanity and to act righteously on earth, but they become entangled in sin. This apparently leads to their teaching sinful knowledge, namely (*Jub.* 8.8): "the omens of the sun, moon, and stars and every heavenly sign." In the *Book of Similitudes* two of the skills mentioned are taught by the fallen angels: spells and the practice of sorcery, both of which are part of the Shemihazah traditions (*1 En.* 7.1 and 8.3). The Asael tradition also reappears in the *Book of Similitudes*, in the person of the archangel Gādre'el, who teaches men how to make weapons (*1 En.* 8.1-2). The

*Book of Similitudes*, however, omits the detail that it is women in particular who learn sorcery and other rejected secrets from the fallen angel. It is only in the *Book of the Watchers* that we find the following elements coming together – angelic descent, mating with women, producing giants, and teaching women the rejected mysteries of sorcery, spells, and omens.

Why, then, do chapters 6-16 of the *Book of the Watchers* specify that it is women who learn the secrets of magic? From the comparison with this particular tradition throughout the Enoch booklets and the *Book of Jubilees*, it is clear that this detail can be left out without denying the general principle that the fallen angels taught human beings heavenly secrets that they should not know. What in particular led the authors of these chapters to single out women?

## 7. Women as Sorceresses

The image of women as knowledgeable and active in sorcery is already built up in certain biblical traditions that the composers of the *Book of the Watchers* would have known. The most detailed image of women as sorceresses occurs in several places in the prophetic corpus, while the picture is more mixed in legal and narrative material. Exodus 22.17, part of the Covenant Code, explicitly uses the feminine form in commanding, “You shall not permit a witch (מכשפה) to live.”<sup>20</sup> Deuteronomy 18.10-11 provides a more comprehensive list of forbidden ritual practitioners and practices, all of them male. They include:

... one who passes his son or his daughter through the fire, or an auger (קסם קסמים), a soothsayer (מעונן), a diviner (מנחש), a sorcerer (מכשף), one who casts spells (חבר חבר), one who consults ghosts or familiar spirits (שאל אוב וידעני) or one who inquires of the dead (דורש אל המתים).<sup>21</sup>

This passage is concerned with the ritual practitioners that the people of Israel should not consult, in contrast to the practices of the

<sup>20</sup> Y. Sefati and J. Klein (2004: 178) argue that “in biblical times it was a common belief that women were engaged in the practice of sorcery more than men. The same belief is reflected in the relevant cuneiform sources from Mesopotamia.” In their article they cite ample evidence from a variety of Mesopotamian sources that refer to women as witches far more than men. One question left unanswered in their article is whether the witchcraft reputation of women is borne out by evidence of women’s actual practices.

<sup>21</sup> Translation based on NJPS.

previous nations residing in Canaan; rather, they should depend upon God to give them a prophet like Moses, and he will tell them God's will.<sup>22</sup> Some of the terms that appear in this passage occur in the feminine in several other places, including the abovementioned Exod. 22.17 and Lev. 20.27, which decree death for both men and women who "have in them" a ghost (אוב) or a familiar spirit (ידעני).<sup>23</sup> After expelling those who act as mediums for ghosts and familiar spirits from the land (1 Sam. 28.3-28), King Saul resorted to an אשת אוב בעלת אוב (a woman who is a ghost-medium), who then brought up Samuel from the dead (Jefferis: 2007).

Several prophetic passages make a connection between evil women (or cities represented as evil women) and witchcraft or sorcery. These prophetic passages also often connect sorcery and sexual sins, and denounce foreign women (Jezebel) or cities (Nineveh, Babylon) as witches. Jezebel is accused of performing 'countless harlotries and sorceries (עַד זִנוּי אִיזְבֵּל אִמֶּךָ וְכַשְׁפִּיָּה) (2 Kgs. 9.22). Ezekiel attacks the Israelite women "who prophesy out of their own imagination (הַמַּתְחַבְּאוֹת מִלְּבָהֶן)" (Ezek. 13.17), using techniques of divination they learned in exile in Babylon.<sup>24</sup> Nahum 3.4 denounces Nineveh as a prostitute and sorceress: "Because of the countless debaucheries of the harlot (זִנוּיָהּ זִוְנָה), gracefully alluring (טוֹבֵת חֵן), mistress of sorcery (בְּזִנוּיָהּ) who enslaves nations through her debaucheries (בַּעֲלַת כְּשָׁפִים), and peoples through her sorceries (בְּכַשְׁפֵּיהָ)." Verse 5 describes her punishment in language very reminiscent of the humiliation of Jerusalem in Ezekiel 16 and 23: "I am against you, says the Lord of hosts, and I will lift up your skirts over your face; and I will display your nakedness to the nations and your shame to kingdoms." In these two cases, the harlot (Jerusalem or Nineveh) is punished through public

<sup>22</sup> VanderKam 1984: 71-73.

<sup>23</sup> See also Lev 19.31: "Do not turn to ghosts (הַאֲבֹת) and do not inquire of familiar spirits (הַיִּדְעָנִים), to be defiled by them; I am the Lord your God"; and Lev 20.6: "And if any person turns to ghosts and familiar spirits and goes astray after them, I will set my face against that person and cut him off from among his people." Passages referring only to males involved in sorcery or divination: Exod. 7.11; Deut. 18.9-18; Dan. 2.2; 2 Kgs. 21.6; 2 Chr. 33.6; Isa. 8.19-20; 44.24-25; Jer. 27.9; 50.35-36; Ezek. 21.26-28; Mic. 5.11; Mal. 3.5. Male and female passages: Lev. 20.27.

<sup>24</sup> This same passage also denounces the male prophets who have "envisioned falsehood and lying divination" (Ezek 13.6). Moshe Greenberg (1983: 240) has argued that the description of the women's divinatory methods can be explicated by reference to Babylonian techniques. Nancy Bowen (1999: 421-22) argues that Ezekiel's elaborate condemnation of these women "looks very much like a Mesopotamian magical ceremony. On the basis of both a structural and functional comparison with *Maqlû*, Ezekiel's oracle is as much an act of magic or divination as what the female prophets are engaged in."

nakedness and shaming. Isaiah 47.9 and 11-13 denounce Babylon as a sorceress, an enchanter, and one who resorts to those who predict the future by examining the skies. None of these skills can save her.

Both of these shall come upon you in a moment, in one day: the loss of children and widowhood shall come upon you in full measure, in spite of your many sorceries (כשפיד), and the great power of your enchantments (חבריד) ... But evil shall come upon you, which you cannot charm away (לא תדעי שחרה); disaster shall fall upon you, which you will not be able to ward off (לא תוכלי כפרה) and ruin shall come on you suddenly, of which you know nothing. Stand up, with your spells (בהבריד) and your many enchantments (ברב כשפיד) with which you have labored from your youth; perhaps you may be able to succeed, perhaps you may inspire terror. You are helpless despite all your art; let those who study the heavens (החוזים) stand up and save you, those who gaze at the stars (בכוכבים) and at each new moon predict (מודיעים לחודשים) what shall befall you.<sup>25</sup>

The sins that Isaiah ascribed to Babylon, figured as a woman, also occur among the magical teachings that the Watchers pass on to their human wives: *חברו* (spell-binding), *כשפו* (sorcery), and the auguries of the sun and moon that can be gained by studying the skies (compare the "gazing at the stars" and "predicting at the new moon" of Isaiah). According to Leviticus, Deuteronomy, Nahum, Isaiah, and Ezekiel, the mantic and magical arts that they denounce belong to the practices of foreign nations – the nations of Canaan, Babylonia, and Assyria, the latter two identified as female personifications of the cities of Babylon and Nineveh. Given the Babylonian antecedents of the figure of Enoch, and the connections that VanderKam (1984: 8, 52-75) has demonstrated between Jewish apocalyptic and Babylonian divination, it is important to note that just those arts that the Babylonian wise men, astrologers, and diviners practiced are those that the angels teach their human wives.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>25</sup> In Isa 44.24-25, the prophet also denounces the diviners and wise men (NJPS translation): "It is I, the Lord, who made everything, who alone stretch out the heavens and unaided spread out the earth; who annul the omens of diviners (מפר) and make fools of the augurers (קסמים); who turn sages back (משיב) and make nonsense of their knowledge." According to VanderKam (1984: 72), in Isa. 44.25 the word *בדים* should be emended to refer to a certain kind of Babylonian diviner. McKenzie (1968: 73) comments: "The *baru* priest is known from Akkadian literature, and the text is restored from this word. The sage was the professional wise man, a counselor and a spokesman of traditional wisdom."

<sup>26</sup> See also Stone 1988 on the Babylonian antecedents of much of the learning in 1 *Enoch*.

Babylon, like Nineveh and Jerusalem, is stripped naked as a mark of humiliation. Although the sins of Babylon do not include sexual sins in Isa 47.1-3, she still receives the same punishment:

Get down, sit in the dust, Fair Maiden Babylon; Sit, dethroned, on the ground, O Fair Chaldea; nevermore shall they call you the tender and dainty one. Grasp the handmill and grind meal. Remove your veil, strip off your train, bare your leg, wade through the rivers. Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your shame shall be exposed.

The denunciations of Jezebel, Nineveh, and Babylon as sorceresses and harlots create a composite image that is more detailed than that found in legal and narrative biblical passages. They link sexual seductiveness with sorcery and the evil nature of foreign women (= nations) who oppress Israel and lure them to evil ways, and in this way build upon the already established prophetic sexual image of Israel's unfaithfulness to God through liaisons with foreign nations (for example, Hos. 2.4-15; 9:1), and the figure of the "strange woman" in Proverbs 5-7 and 10. While 1 Samuel 28 portrays the medium of Endor in a sympathetic manner, as a woman who assists Saul when all others have failed him, these prophetic passages link female figures to the evil of witchcraft and divination. The prophetic image of the seductive foreign witch may provide some of the background for the connection between women and sorcery in *1 Enoch*. The next section of this article will suggest that a specific scribal milieu is responsible for the creation of the connection between the fallen angels, women, and sorcery.

## 8. Scribal Wisdom and Women

Benjamin Wright, George Nickelsburg, Annette Reed, and Randal Argall, among others, have recently suggested a scribal social context for the composition of *1 Enoch*, which may help further in understanding why women in the *Book of the Watchers* are associated with the origins of sin and evil. Nickelsburg (2005b) argues that both apocalyptic and wisdom are products of wisdom circles, and that Wisdom texts place the scribe in the role of an inspired spokesman of God and interpreter of Torah and prophets. Nickelsburg's comparison of the image of the scribe in the Wisdom of Ben Sira and *1 Enoch* shows how the titles and activities ascribed to Enoch in the Enochic booklets parallel the scribe of Ben Sira. In *1 En.* 12.3-4, Enoch is called "Enoch the scribe" and "righteous scribe" (ὁ γραμματεὺς

τῆς δικαιοσύνης),<sup>27</sup> and he is given the task of informing the fallen Watchers that the sentence had been passed against them because of their sins (1 En. 13.1). The Watchers ask Enoch to write a petition on their behalf for forgiveness from God (1 En. 13.4-6); he ascends to the divine throne, bringing with him the Watchers' petition, and God tells him how to reply to the Watchers (1 En. 15.1-16.4). God gives him the title "righteous man and scribe of truth" (γραμματεὺς τῆς ἀληθείας) (1 En. 15.1).

Wright (2005: 108) demonstrates that Ben Sira and 1 Enoch have a common interest in the calendar, dreams and visions, and esoteric knowledge. He argues (2005: 102) that the social location of the authors of two of the Enochic booklets – the *Astronomical Book* and the *Book of the Watchers* – is "among groups of priests and/or their scribal retainers, who are either supportive of or opposed to the priests who control the cult in Jerusalem." He comments (2005: 108), "These texts seem to represent competing groups/communities (and with Ben Sira and 1 Enoch competing notions of wisdom) who know about each other, who do not really like each other, and who actively polemicize against each other although not necessarily directly."<sup>28</sup> He believes (1997: 218) that the authors of the *Astronomical Book*, the *Book of the Watchers*, and the Aramaic *Levi Document* "represent groups of priests who feel marginalized and even disenfranchised vis-à-vis the ruling priests in Jerusalem." He argues (2002: 185) that Ben Sira and his opponents are not directly criticizing each, but 'operate by warning insiders to avoid the dangerous ideas of outsiders." According to Wright, Ben Sira and 1 Enoch are thus polarized against each other around certain key issues, but are united by their common interests in these issues and their importance in the search for wisdom.

Reed (2005: 60), on the other hand, and Himmelfarb (2006: 42-44), do not frame the relationship between Ben Sira and the *Book of the Watchers* in such an antagonistic way. Reed writes (2005: 60), "[B]en Sira's attitude toward apocalyptic epistemology is best seen as part of an internal debate within a single discourse of priestly scribalism." She argues (2005: 69) that production of the earliest Enochic writings fits most plausibly with scribes in the orbit of the Jerusalem Temple:

These apocalypses [*Book of Watchers* and the *Astronomical Book*] appear to have taken shape amongst scribes with certain distinctive viewpoints, but we find little basis for reconstructing already in the third century

<sup>27</sup> According to Nickelsburg 2001: 270, the Aramaic was probably סופר די קושטא.

<sup>28</sup> See also Wright 1997: 218.



B. C. E. an Enochic ‘conventicle,’ whose members saw themselves as chosen in any manner different from other Jews. Rather, the most salient feature of these apocalypses are their self-conscious scribalism and their development of a unique type of wisdom that combined ‘scientific,’ exegetical, mythic, and ethical components. One cannot underestimate the economic and social preconditions for the cultivation of such learning, nor for the continued transmission of Mesopotamian lore alongside Israelite traditions. Together with the priestly interests of both apocalypses, these factors suggest that the production of the earliest Enochic writings fits most plausibly with scribes in the orbit of the Jerusalem Temple.

Reed (2005: 43) has pointed out that the negative attitude in *1 En.* 6-11 towards the angelic transmission of secrets to human beings is surprisingly similar to the “skepticism towards the quest for hidden knowledge” in the biblical and postbiblical Wisdom literature. Both Qohelet and Ben Sira “level critiques against the apocalyptic claim to uncover the secrets of heaven.” Ben Sira warns his students (3.21-24): “Things too wonderful for you do not seek, and what is hidden from you do not investigate. On what is permitted to you reflect, for what is hidden is not your concern. In what is beyond you do not meddle, for you have been shown what is too great for you.”<sup>29</sup> He also warns against depending on dreams and visions (34.1-8).<sup>30</sup> Another verse in Ben Sira (16.7), which reveals his knowledge of the mythic account of angelic descent in the *Book of the Watchers*, occurs in his discussion of primordial sinners (Reed 2005: 70-71): “He did not forgive the primeval princes who in their strength rebelled (against) the world” (לא נשא) (לנכסי קדם המורים עולם בגבורתם) / “He did not forgive the giants of old who, in their strength, rebelled” (οὐκ ἐξίλασατο περὶ τῶν ἀρχαίων γιγάντων οἱ ἀπέστησαν τῇ ἰσχύϊ αὐτῶν).<sup>31</sup> While Ben Sira did not

<sup>29</sup> My translation. See Wright 2005: 97-98, and compare the translation in Wright 1997: 208.

<sup>30</sup> Wright 2005: 100-101.

<sup>31</sup> Hebrew is from T.S. 12.863, MS. A (Beentjes 1997: 45); T.-S. NS 38a.1, MS. B (Beentjes 1997: 53) has a variant reading, מורדים instead of מורים; Greek is from Ziegler 1965: 196. The Hebrew and Greek differ from each other in interesting ways. The Hebrew seems to turn the “sons of God” of Gen. 6:2 into the “primeval princes,” much like later rabbinic midrashim do (Reed 2005: 136-140; in *Gen. Rab.* 26:5 R. Shimon bar Yohai calls them the “sons of judges”), while the Greek refers more directly to the “giants” of Gen. 6:4 (as found in the LXX Gen. 6:4 – the γίγαντες, who were the product of the union between οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ and the daughters of men, οἱ γίγαντες οἱ ἀπ’ αἰῶνος). Skehan and Di Lella (1987: 270) comment that, “The allusion to Gen. 6:1-4 seen by the Gr (*archaiōn gigantōn*) is certainly present; but the choice (MSS A, B) of *nésikē qedem*, *princes of old*, by Ben Sira, instead of the familiar *néphilim* is conscious avoidance of the mythological overtones to the Genesis narrative so familiar from the Enoch literature and (later) Jubilees.”

make use of the angelic myth to explain the origin of evil, he knew of it and used it when it served his purpose.

There is one further realm of scribal wisdom about which Ben Sira and the *Book of the Watchers* appear to agree: from the beginning of creation, women are cosmically responsible for much of the evil in the world. Ben Sira’s negative strictures on many different types of women are well known, especially the daughter and the evil wife, about whom he has much more to say than the good wife (Skehan and Di Lella 1987: 347; Collins 1997: 66). As part of his discussion of the evil wife in chapter 25, Ben Sira describes woman as the origin of human sin and death: “From a woman sin had its beginning, and because of her we all die” (25.24).<sup>32</sup> In this case, he is probably referring to Eve and her eating from the Tree of Knowledge as the source of evil, rather than to the teachings handed down by the Watchers.<sup>33</sup> Eron (1991: 54) writes that “This is perhaps the earliest statement of the belief that the first woman’s act of disobedience was, at least, the temporal if not causal origin of sin and death.”<sup>34</sup> Collins (1997: 67) says that, “There can be no doubt that Sir. 25:24 represents an interpretation of Genesis 3, and that it is the earliest extant witness to the view that Eve was responsible for the introduction of sin and death. Even the view that Adam was the source of sin and death emerges only in literature of the first century C. E.” Levison (1985), on the

<sup>32</sup> In Hebrew: מאשה תחלת עון ובגללה גוענו יחד (Segal 1972: 155). The Hebrew is from the anthology of verses from Ben Sira (MS. C), in a manuscript first published by S. Schechter (1900), T.-S. 12.727. In Greek: ἀπὸ γυναικὸς ἀρχὴ ἁμαρτίας, καὶ δι’ αὐτήν ἀποθνήσκομεν πάντες (Levison 1985: 617).

<sup>33</sup> Attridge 2006: 1412; Skehan and Di Lella 1987: 348. As many commentators point out, the viewpoint of this verse is echoed in several passages in the New Testament, most notably 1 Tim. 2:13-14: “For Adam was formed first, then Eve; and Adam was not deceived, but the woman was deceived and became a transgressor.” (New Testament translations from Coogan: 2001). Even Paul is less harsh in 2 Cor. 11:3: “But I am afraid that as the serpent deceived Eve by its cunning...” and Rom. 5:12, which reads, “Therefore, just as sin came into the world through one man, and death came through sin,” which does not refer to Eve at all. Compare the *Book of Similitudes* (1 En. 69.6), where Gādre’el misleads Eve into eating from the Tree (although note that Eve here is not yet blamed for bringing evil into the world). Vermes (1992: 223) points out that the Wisdom of Solomon (2:24) blames the devil: “By the envy of the devil death entered into the world.” For perhaps the ultimate articulation of the idea that sin and death came into the world through Eve, see Tertullian, *De Cultu Feminarum* 1.1 (Prusak 1974: 105): “You are the devil’s gateway; you are the unsealer of that (forbidden) tree: you are the first deserter of the divine law: you are she who persuaded him whom the devil was not valiant enough to attack. You destroyed so easily God’s image, man. On account of your desert – that is, death – even the Son of God had to die.”

<sup>34</sup> Vermes (1992: 223) writes that “Jesus ben Sira firmly points a finger at Eve.”

other hand, interprets the verse as referring only to the evil wife and reads death as hyperbolically referring to the fate of husbands married to evil women. Camp (1991: 29-30) argues that the author is certainly concerned with evil wives, but that, "The skillful double entendre of 25:24, in which one cannot help but hear an allusion to Genesis 3, succinctly both re-states and authorizes his point." It is remarkable, however, that Ben Sira's attribution of death to the sin of Eve contradicts his discussion of creation in chapter 17. In chapter 17, death is not a punishment for sin, but simply part of human experience given by God (Collins 1997: 59). It seems likely that in the discussion of evil wives in chapter 25, Ben Sira's antipathy to women and their sexuality led him to assert that woman is the origin of sin and death, in contrast to his earlier conclusion that death is not a punishment for sin but is part of God's plan for humans.

In other remarks by Ben Sira, one of the important problems he sees with women is controlling them, especially daughters (42.9-14): a father must always keep an eye on his daughter, lest she fall into wicked ways. She should be kept in a room without a window that overlooks the entrance to the house. She should stay away from all men and even from married women, who might teach her about sexuality (Camp 1991: 35). In possibly his most misogynist statement, Ben Sira then writes (42.13): "From a woman comes woman's wickedness. Better is the wickedness of a man than a woman who does good." Even after she has grown up and married, her father needs to worry about whether she will be unfaithful to her husband or fail to have children.<sup>35</sup> As Camp argues (1991: 35), in this context,

"... women's wickedness" must refer to women's sexuality ... Because of the proverb (14:13a), the point moves from the particular focus on what virgin daughters will learn from married women (14:12b) to the more universal concern about goodness and evil (14:13b). Ben Sira carries through on this level in the next stich (42:14a): "Better a man's wickedness than a woman's goodness." He then returns to his teaching about daughters: "And a daughter causes fear regarding disgrace more than a son."

This last line "marks clearly the structure of Ben Sira's thinking about goodness and evil: these are inherently tied to the 'shame of women' – their sexuality."

<sup>35</sup> The version of this section of Ben Sira that is found in the Babylonian Talmud (*b. Sanh.* 100b) adds a line that is relevant to the discussion about women and sorcery (translation from Ilan 1999: 159): "When old, lest she engage in witchcraft" (Hebrew: *הזקינה שמא תעשה כשפים*, from Segal 1972: 285).

If Ben Sira's book demonstrates the presence in early second-century B. C. E. Jerusalem of at least one notably misogynist scribe, is there reason to suppose that other scribes thought as he did, including those who produced the *Book of Watchers* some time before him? In other words, is he typical, or does he carry the negative evaluation of women to an extreme that others would not have agreed with? He certainly goes beyond the negative remarks about women to be found in the book of Proverbs, and even his positive evaluation of the good wife is not linked to the figure of Lady Wisdom, as she is in Proverbs (Camp 1991, 1997, 2005). As Collins (1997: 68) remarks:

There is no precedent in Hebrew tradition for the view that woman is the source of all evil, but there is a clear Greek precedent in the story of Pandora's box. It would be too simplistic to ascribe the misogynist aspects of Ben Sira's thought to Hellenistic influence. Pseudo-Phocylides represents a more heavily Hellenized form of Judaism but does not pick up these elements. There is undoubtedly Greek influence here, but Ben Sira's personality also played a part in his selective use of Greek culture.

The negative evaluation of women *is*, however, also found in other late wisdom books. For example, Qoh. 7.26 reads "Now, I find woman more bitter than death; she is all traps, her hands are fetters and her heart is snares. He who is pleasing to God escapes her, and he who is displeasing is caught by her." He continues (v. 28): "As for what I sought further but did not find, I found only one human being in a thousand, and the one I found among so many was never a woman."<sup>36</sup>

Claudia Camp argues that Ben Sira's misogyny is not just a matter of his own idiosyncratic personality, but is part and parcel of the social system of honor and shame that he lived within. She describes honor in this social system in the following way (1997: 173):

One way is to think of it as the ability of a man to control the defining attributes of his life over against the challenge of others to subvert that control. These defining attributes can be seen as socially determined signs of value and power: one's women, one's property ..., one's political

<sup>36</sup> See discussion in Seow 1997: 264-65 and 270-75, who argues that v. 28b "was a marginal gloss that had been inadvertently incorporated into the body of the text." This comment may, however, be an attempt to escape the misogynistic implications of the text. On this point, see the discussion of a variety of interpretations in Christianson 1998, especially p. 134: "The simple fact of 'woman is more bitter than death' stares us in the face. Even if we could stretch that to mean 'woman is stronger than death,' millions of Bibles in hundreds of translations say otherwise. In other words, when it comes to tone and the naked power of language, what readings are feasible is what matters."

influence, one's body, one's reputation or name. In another sense these defining characteristics *are* oneself, for the self and its worth are, ... publicly rather than privately defined and evaluated. *Shame*, then, is the loss of control over these extensions of Self.

A man's honor (*kavod*) is intimately connected with his control of the women in his household (Camp 1997: 173): "1) honor and disgrace are acquired by men through women, especially through women's sexual misconduct"; and 2) "shame is mainly a property of women, but it governs the relationship between the sexes." Women threaten male honor in two ways: by challenging a "man's control of his physical self" and by affording a point of vulnerability through which other men can dishonor his body, so that "exposing the nakedness of a man's wife exposes his nakedness" (Camp 1997: 176). Ben Sira (Camp 1997: 180) "expresses interest in his wife's physical beauty or sexuality primarily in terms of anxiety about keeping it for himself," which "tends to keep his appreciation for his wife rather closely tied to ruminations about women's evil." In Ben Sira (Camp 1997: 182):

[T]he possibility of having an *evil wife* is ... given rather extensive treatment. The real possibility of women's evil, defined repeatedly as sexually transmitted shame, has moved from the streets of Proverbs into the heart of the man's house. Proverbs' sense of safety in the prescriptive force of marriage is absent in Ben Sira 25-26, as it is in 9:1-9, which registers so little distinction between the sexual dangers presented by different kinds of women.

The primary way a man can be shamed is by failing to control the sexual behavior of his wife (Camp 1997: 185).

Ben Sira's obsessive concern for male honor and the ways it could be subverted by women's sexuality were certainly among the lessons he taught to the young men who came to him for instruction. If this perspective was compelling to some among the elite of Jerusalem, as seems clear from the fact that his book was preserved in Hebrew and then translated into Greek by his grandson later in the second century, it does not seem unreasonable to suppose that the scribal authors of the *Book of the Watchers* were among those who agreed with him about the dangers of women's sexuality and the threat it offered even to the primordial angels. The *Book of the Watchers* and Ben Sira disagree about the precise point in primeval history that women's evil interceded and led to deterioration in the condition of the cosmos, but they agree that women had a crucial role to play in this deterioration. Both of these sources testify to a concern with the danger of women that leads beyond the construction of the figure of

the Strange Woman in Proverbs and the ordinary, mundane enforcement of patriarchal restrictions upon women.

## 9. Conclusions

For both Ben Sira and the authors of the *Book of the Watchers*, especially chapters 6-16, "thinking with women" proves to be a fruitful way to solve important social and philosophical problems. For Ben Sira, women were the cause of the vulnerability of the patriarchal household, precisely because their potentially uncontrollable sexuality could damage it beyond repair by adultery or other extramarital sexual misconduct (for example, by daughters). In addition, they gravely threatened the male goal of control over his body and emotions. They were thus both a physical and social threat. When considering the ultimate philosophical question of the origin of evil, Ben Sira also turned to women for an explanation, in this case the first woman, who brought sin and death into the world. It is significant that Ben Sira's remark on women as the ultimate source of evil is found in his diatribe against the evil wife: it explains to the reader/hearer why it was possible for wives or women in general to be so evil. It is a characteristic of theirs that goes back to the origins of humanity.

For the authors of the *Book of the Watchers*, women's sexuality also instigated the primordial sin, in this case the angels' taking women as wives and teaching them forbidden knowledge. If we accept the argument made by Nickelsburg, that the Syncellus reading of *1 En.* 8.1 is ancient, then Asael provided the technology which enabled women to seduce the other angels led by Shemihazah: eye-paint and other makeup, and jewelry of all kinds that they adorned themselves with. The sin of the women against the angels is akin to the sin of women in the human patriarchal household. They disturb the male angels' self-control, cause them to engage in forbidden sexual activity, and lead to their expulsion from the ultimate patriarchal household (in this case all-male) led by God himself. Although the *Book of the Watchers* does not offer an interpretation of Genesis 3, we might regard it as placing the angels in the same situation as Adam was. Like him, they are tempted by women, and as a consequence they are forced out of a perfect world into one where they must deal with procreation, work, and death.<sup>37</sup>

<sup>37</sup> Suter (1979: 132) points out the structural similarities between the Adam myth and the myth of the fallen angels.

If both Ben Sira and the *Book of the Watchers* stem from a scribal milieu, it is significant that in this one area, they agree that women are a source of evil, although they each fix on a different point in the biblical story – for one the Garden of Eden story, for the other the story of the fallen angels. Knowledge is crucial for both stories, since in Genesis, it is Eve's desire for wisdom that becomes her downfall. Chapters 6-11 of the *Book of the Watchers* meld together several ideas that occur separately in Ben Sira – the warning against seeking forbidden knowledge, the disdain for dreams and divination, and the association of women with the origin of evil on earth. Ben Sira does not ascribe forbidden knowledge to women – instead, he seems to be warning his male students against the search for the kind of knowledge cultivated in much of *1 Enoch*. In the *Book of the Watchers*, it is women who receive the forbidden knowledge, without even seeking it. In the *Book of the Watchers*, as in Ben Sira, we see that women's wicked ways go far beyond the mundane realities of the evil wife, or wayward daughter, or seductive foreign woman (as found in the traditional wisdom literature) – women's evil, instead, is connected intimately to the cosmic origin of evil, whether Eve's illegitimate search for wisdom, or the Watchers teaching sinful secrets to their human wives.

# The Impurity of Oil and Spit among the Qumran Sectarians

JODI MAGNESS

According to sectarian works, the points of correspondence between Josephus' description of the Essenes and the halakhah of the Qumran community include a distinctive attitude with regard to the impurity of oil and spit.<sup>1</sup> In this paper I examine the evidence for this distinctive attitude and compare it to other movements in early Judaism (including the rabbis).

## Oil and Bathing

According to Josephus, the Essenes consider oil to be defiling, and do not allow themselves to be anointed without their consent:

They think that oil is a defilement (κηλίς; "stain"); and if any one of them be anointed without his own approbation, it is wiped off his body; for they think to be unwashed is a good thing ... (*Jewish War* 2.123)

In contrast to rabbinic halakhah, the sectarians believed that stone and unfired clay vessels (like wood) can become impure if they come into contact with oil, and that oil stains on these materials can transmit impurity:<sup>2</sup>

And all the [vessels of] wood and the stones and the dust which are defiled by man's impurity, while with stains of oil in them, in accordance with their uncleanness will make whoever touches them impure (CD 12:15-17).

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<sup>1</sup> It is a pleasure to dedicate this paper in honor of Rachel Elijor, an esteemed colleague whose brilliant insights have provided much illumination and inspiration for my own research. I differ from Elijor in identifying the Qumran community as part of the wider Essene movement; see Magness 2002. I use the term halakhah despite acknowledging that it might be anachronistic and recognizing that it is unattested in the literature of the Qumran community.

<sup>2</sup> See Eshel 2000: 45-52; Baumgarten 1967: 183-93.



And the day on which they remove the dead person from it, they shall cleanse the house of every stain of oil, and wine, and dampness ... (11QT 49:11).<sup>3</sup>

Josephus' observation that the Essenes consider oil defiling therefore seems to be accurate.<sup>4</sup> Josephus adds that the Essenes forbid others to anoint them without their approval, but does not say that they avoid oil altogether.<sup>5</sup> Yadin noted that although the Essenes refrained from oiling their bodies on an everyday basis, anointing with new oil was part of the ritual of the Feast of the First Fruits of Oil.<sup>6</sup> The Essenes' attitude must be due to purity concerns, despite the fact that Josephus attributes it to a preference for being unwashed.<sup>7</sup> I believe that Josephus did this in order to present the sectarians' lifestyle as an ascetic ideal to his Roman audience.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, Hegisippus reports that James the Just (brother of Jesus) abstained from using oil, linking it with James' refusal to bathe: "he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath" (*apud Eusebius, Historia ecclesiastica* 2:23).<sup>9</sup> This could indicate that James had purity concerns similar to those of the Essenes, or might reflect his ascetic lifestyle (or both).<sup>10</sup> Whatever his motives, Josephus' characterization of the Essenes as unwashed is supported by other evidence.

<sup>3</sup> Eshel (2000: 47, 51) observes that the Temple Scroll was probably composed before the development of the Jewish stone vessel industry in the late first century B. C. E., as its legislation does not refer to stone vessels.

<sup>4</sup> See Beall 1988:45-46.

<sup>5</sup> See Tigchelaar 2003:314.

<sup>6</sup> Yadin 1983, 1:113-14, 142 (11QT 23:15). Yadin explained Josephus' observation by suggesting that even at this festival no oil was used because purified oil was not available at Qumran; also see Beall 1988: 46. In my opinion, Josephus' observation is still valid even if oil was used once a year at this festival, as Josephus says that the Essenes refrain from being anointed without their consent, but he does not say they refrain from oil altogether. In addition, Josephus' remark should be understood in light of the widespread custom of offering hospitality by anointing someone with oil. Bar-Ilan (2007: 9) argues that the Essenes considered newly pressed oil pure, but refrained from using oil during the rest of the year because its purity could not be guaranteed, and that this is the basis for Josephus's observation. Eshel (2000: 50) suggests that the sectarians considered oil more susceptible to defilement than other liquids.

<sup>7</sup> See Tigchelaar 2003: 314; Beall 1988: 45-46.

<sup>8</sup> Baumgarten (1997: 3, 58-60) notes that Josephus and Philo used terminology that was intended to make the beliefs and practices of the Jewish groups comprehensible to their (non-Jewish) readers.

<sup>9</sup> From Deferrari 1953:126.

<sup>10</sup> See Chilton 2007: 165, who connects these practices (and James' reported vegetarianism) with a Nazarite regime. For James' ascetic habits see also Eisenman 2006: 127.



In the ancient Mediterranean world, oil was used for washing, as can be seen, for example, in the deuterocanonical appendix to the book of Daniel: “She said to her maids, ‘Bring me olive oil and ointments, and shut the garden doors so that I can bathe’” (Susanna 1:17). That this was an ancient custom is illustrated by the book of Ruth, where Naomi instructs Ruth, “Now wash and anoint yourself, and put on your best clothes ...” (3:3). The Oxyrhynchus papyrus fragment 840, which presents a debate between a “Pharisee,” a priest named Levi, and Jesus also connects “anointing” with bathing:

... and you have cleansed and wiped the outside skin which the prostitutes and flute-girls anoint, which they wash, and wipe, and make beautiful for human desire (2:8).<sup>11</sup>

The Babylonian Talmud describes the use of oil in connection with bathing, specifically in hot water: “If one bathes in hot water and does not have a cold shower bath, he is like iron put into fire but not into cold water. If one bathes without anointing, he is like water [poured] over a barrel” (*b. Shabbat 41a*). The Gospels mention the use of perfumed oil in connection with the washing of feet:

And a woman in the city, who was a sinner, having learned that he [Jesus] was eating in the Pharisee’s house, brought an alabaster jar of ointment (μύρου). She stood behind him at his feet, weeping, and began to bathe his feet with her tears and to dry them with her hair. Then she continued kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment (Luke 7:37-38).<sup>12</sup>

Mary took a pound of costly perfume made of pure nard (μύρου νάρδου) anointed Jesus’ feet, and wiped them with her hair. The house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume (John 12:3).

These sources describe two different practices: the use of oil in bathing, and the washing and anointing of feet with oil. Whereas oil was used throughout the Roman world for bathing, some scholars have suggested that washing and anointing the feet with perfumed oil was an eastern and perhaps specifically Jewish custom associated with the offering of hospitality and respect.<sup>13</sup> Petronius’ *Satyricon* might allude to this oriental practice:

I am really ashamed to relate what followed, it was so unheard-of a piece of luxury. Long-haired slave boys brought in an unguent in a silver basin,

<sup>11</sup> From Bovon 2000: 715, who places this work in “a Christian setting in the second or third century” (p. 705).

<sup>12</sup> Instone-Brewer (2004: 387) notes that in this episode Jesus appears to be unconcerned with impurity transmitted by the woman applying oil to his feet.

<sup>13</sup> See for example John 13:1-20; for a discussion see Kazen 2002: 251-55.

and anointed our feet with it as we lay at table, after first wreathing our legs and ankles with garlands. Afterwards a small quantity of the same perfume was poured into the wine-jars and the lamps (70.8).<sup>14</sup>

Rabbinic literature describes a peculiar ritual involving oil:<sup>15</sup>

The House of Shammai say, “[At the end of the meal] one holds the cup of wine [for the benedictions after meals] in his right hand and the perfumed oil [for cleaning one’s hands] in his left. He recites the benediction over the wine and afterward recites the blessing over the oil.” And the House of Hillel say, “One holds the perfumed oil in his right hand and the cup of wine in his left. He recites the benediction over the oil and smears it on the head of the servant. If the servant is a disciple of the sages, [then instead] one smears [the oil] on the wall, for it is not befitting a disciple of the sages to go about perfumed” (*t. Berakhot* 5:29).

That this custom was practiced even among Jews outside Palestine is indicated by another passage in Petronius’ *Satyricon*, in which Trimalchio dries his hands on the head of a slave:<sup>16</sup>

After easing his bladder, he called for water, and having dipped his hands momentarily in the bowl, dried them on one of the lads’ hair (27.6).

These sources suggest that anointing the head and the feet with oil was a widespread Jewish custom. In Luke 7:46, Jesus reportedly criticizes Simon the Pharisee for not offering a guest the usual hospitality: “You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment.”

The sectarians apparently differed from other Jews in refusing the anointing with oil, which was a common gesture of hospitality and respect, due to purity concerns. This explains Josephus’ observation that the Essenes forbid others to anoint them without their consent. Furthermore, archaeological evidence from Qumran suggests that the sectarians did not bathe in the Roman manner, supporting Josephus’ statement that the Essenes prefer to remain unwashed. There are no above-ground bath tubs or bath houses at Qumran, nor any heated pools or bathing facilities. In contrast, the Hasmonean and Herodian palaces at Jericho and around the Dead Sea were equipped with bathing facilities, as were the mansions in Jerusalem’s Jewish Quarter.<sup>17</sup> In describing immersion before the communal meal (*Jewish War* 2.129), Josephus mentions that the Essenes “bathe (wash)

<sup>14</sup> See Clarke 1992: 262.

<sup>15</sup> See Instone-Brewer 2004: 89-91.

<sup>16</sup> See Clarke 1992: 257-58.

<sup>17</sup> See Magness 2004: 27.

their bodies in cold water (ψυχροῖς ὕδασι).” In addition, the hundreds of pottery vessels published by Roland de Vaux from Qumran include only three (piriform) unguentaria from the settlement, and none from the caves.<sup>18</sup> Unguentaria are small bottles for perfumed oil; fusiform unguentaria were the dominant type until Herod’s reign, when they were replaced by piriform unguentaria.<sup>19</sup>

The fact that only three unguentaria are published from Qumran is admittedly an argument from silence, as there is still no final report on the pottery or glass. Nonetheless a comparison with other Judean sites is instructive. There are three ceramic unguentaria published from Ein Feshkha and five from Ein el-Ghuweir (all piriform), but both sites have smaller ceramic assemblages than Qumran and were occupied for shorter periods.<sup>20</sup> Dozens of ceramic unguentaria were found at Masada, many of them in contexts dating to the First Revolt, including a local variant that is unattested at Qumran (“the Judean kohl bottle”).<sup>21</sup> Rachel Bar-Nathan publishes over twenty examples of fusiform and piriform unguentaria from the Hasmonean and Herodian palaces at Jericho, some from *miqva’ot* in the palace and others from the industrial complex.<sup>22</sup> Judean kohl bottles and ceramic alabastra are also attested at Herodian Jericho.<sup>23</sup> Fusiform and piriform unguentaria are well-represented in Jerusalem’s Jewish Quarter, and there are a few examples of Judean kohl bottles and ceramic alabastra.<sup>24</sup> No ceramic unguentaria are published from the Second Temple period village at Ein Gedi (which is interesting considering its importance as a center for the cultivation of opobalsam), although there are a few examples of glass unguentaria (“candlestick bottles”).<sup>25</sup> However, fusiform and piriform unguentaria are well-represented in the Hasmonean and Herodian period burial caves at Ein Gedi, and there is also a specimen made of alabaster.<sup>26</sup>

The rarity of unguentaria at Qumran suggests a limited use of oil for washing or anointing, whereas the absence of bathing facilities

<sup>18</sup> See de Vaux 1953: 99, fig. 3:10; de Vaux 1954: 223, fig. 4:4; de Vaux 1956: 561, fig. 5:10.

<sup>19</sup> See Bar-Nathan 2002: 57. For a juglet from a cave near Qumran that might have contained balsam oil, see Patrich – Arubas 1989: 43-59.

<sup>20</sup> See de Vaux 1959: 241, fig. 2: 1, 2, 4; Bar-Adon 1977: 11, fig. 12:7-12. For the chronology of Ein Feshkha and Ein el-Ghuweir see Magness 2004: 49-61.

<sup>21</sup> See Bar-Nathan 2006: 198-207.

<sup>22</sup> See Bar-Nathan 2002: 57-61, 165-67.

<sup>23</sup> See Bar-Nathan 2002: 61-64.

<sup>24</sup> See Geva – Rosenthal – Heginbottom 2003: 185-86; Geva – Hershkovitz 2006: 104-05, 107-08.

<sup>25</sup> See Jackson-Tal 2007: 474-506 (glass bottles).

<sup>26</sup> See Hadas 1994: 10, fig. 15:25; 16, fig. 22:5-6; 22, fig. 32:8-9; 44, fig. 69:2-3.

indicates that the community did not bathe in the Roman manner. This evidence supports Josephus' observation about the Essenes with regard to washing and the use of oil. Andrea Berlin notes that in the first century C. E. at Gamla, perfume and oil containers comprised 8.5 percent of every household's pottery (compared with only 0.1 percent in the first century B. C. E.). She attributes this phenomenon to Roman influence on the Jewish villagers.<sup>27</sup> Berlin's observation about changes in Jewish customs or practices in the first century B. C. E. and first century C. E. is important. Writing in the first century C. E., Josephus must have been struck by the Essenes' avoidance of oil, as by this time other Jews had apparently adopted the Roman custom.

### Spit and Spitting

Josephus informs us that the Essenes refrained from spitting in assemblies and to the right: "They also avoid spitting in the midst of them (*εἰς μέσσοις*), or on the right side" (*War* 2.147). Similarly, the *Community Rule* penalizes members who spit during an assembly:

"And the person who spits in the midst (*אל תוך*) a meeting of the Many shall be punished thirty days" (1QS 7:13).<sup>28</sup> Presumably the basis for this prohibition is Lev 15:8, which states that a *zab's* spit conveys impurity: "If the one with the discharge spits on persons who are clean, then they shall wash their clothes, and bathe in water, and be unclean until the evening."

The rabbis forbade spitting on the Temple Mount: "And one should not use [the Temple Mount] for a short cut. And spitting [there likewise is forbidden, as is proven by an argument] *a minori ad majus* [if you may not use it for a shortcut, you obviously may not spit there]" (*m. Berakhot* 9:5; also see *b. Talmud Berakhot* 62b-63a, where the rabbis prohibit spitting on the Temple Mount but are divided over whether it is permitted in a synagogue).<sup>29</sup> The rabbinic prohibition was motivated more by a desire to show respect for the temple than by purity concerns, as a passage in the Tosefta indicates:<sup>30</sup>

And spitting [is forbidden on the Temple Mount] by a fortiori reasoning [*m. Ber.* 9:5] [as follows]: Now if [with respect to wearing] a shoe, which is not contemptuous, the Torah said, "Do not enter [the Temple Mount]

<sup>27</sup> Berlin 2006: 142, 144, 146, 152, 154.

<sup>28</sup> See Beall 1988: 96.

<sup>29</sup> See Kottek 1983: 97-98 n. 15.

<sup>30</sup> See Bokser 1985a: 290-91; Instone-Brewer 2004: 93.

wearing a shoe," how much more so is spitting, which is contemptuous, [to be forbidden on the Temple Mount] (*t. Berakhot* 6:19).

This does not preclude the possibility that a ban on spitting in the Jerusalem temple originated out of purity concerns. Alternatively, it could be that whereas the rabbis understood this prohibition as a show of respect, the sectarians attributed it to purity concerns. The possibility that spitting was indeed prohibited in the Jerusalem temple (and is not a rabbinic fiction) is supported by evidence of a similar ban in Roman temples:

What, do you even enter our temples in such a state, where it is not lawful to spit or blow one's nose, when you yourself are nothing more than spit and rheum?" (Epictetus, *Discourses* 4.11:32).<sup>31</sup>

In some cases the rabbis considered spit a source of impurity, especially if it came from a gentile:

Our Rabbis taught, The Sages were once in need of something from a noblewoman ... They said, "Who will go?" "I will go," replied R. Joshua ... After he came out, he went down, had a ritual bath, and taught his disciples. He said to them ... "When I went down and had a ritual bath, of what did you suspect me?" "We thought that perhaps some spittle spurted from her mouth upon the Rabbi's garments." "By the Temple Service!" he exclaimed to them, "it was even so" (*b. Talmud Shabbat* 127b).<sup>32</sup>

"All drops of spit which are found in Jerusalem are assumed to be clean, except for those [found in] the Upper Market Place," the words of R. Meir (*m. Sheqalim* 8:1).<sup>33</sup>

[If there is] one [female] idiot in the village or [one] gentile woman or one Samaritan woman all drops of spit which are in the village are unclean (*m. Tohorot* 5:8).

There is also a discussion about spitting in the Palestinian Talmud:

Rabbi Halaphta ben Shaul stated: "It is a bad sign if one lets wind during one's prayer. That means on one's bottom, but not on one's top." This parallels what Rabbi Hanina said: "I saw Rabbi yawning, belching, putting his hand on his mouth, but not spitting." Rabbi Yohanan said, "one

<sup>31</sup> From Gill – Hard 1995: 281. I thank Professor Will Deming of the University of Portland for bringing this passage to my attention.

<sup>32</sup> From Oppenheimer 1977: 65, who notes that the impurity of a gentile is similar to that of a *zab*. Also see Lightstone 2007: 292-93. According to Christine E. Hayes (2002: 195), "Early rabbis chose to stigmatize intimate relations with unconverted gentiles by attributing to them an ability to defile Israelites by means of their spit-  
tle and urine."

<sup>33</sup> Alon (1977: 152) says that this is because according to the Palestinian Talmud the fuller of the gentiles was in the Upper Market.

may even spit so that one's cup should be clean; forward is forbidden, behind oneself is permitted. To one's right is forbidden, to one's left is permitted; that is what is written (Ps. 91:7): 'On your left hand side will fall a thousand.' Everybody agrees about the one who spits towards the stele [pulpit in a synagogue], that he is forbidden to do so." Rabbi Joshua ben Levi says, "he who spits in the synagogue is like one who spits into his own eye." Rabbi Jonah spat and rubbed out. Rabbi Jeremiah, Rabbi Samuel bar Halaphta in the name of Rav Ada bar Ahava: "He who prayed should not spit until he walked four cubits." Rabbi Yose bar Rebbi Abun said, "similarly he who spat should not pray until he walked four cubits" (p. *Talmud Berakhot* 3:5).

Here again the rabbis are concerned with showing respect to holy places or while praying. R. Yohanan's statement forbidding spitting to the front or right recalls sectarian practice. However, whereas the rabbis banned spitting while praying, the sectarians refrained from spitting to the front and right in their assemblies. This seems to be an example of the sectarians universalizing a practice that otherwise was observed in a restricted or limited manner, prompting Josephus' remark. Perhaps the sect associated the left side not only with a superstitious sense of evil but with impurity, as reflected in the prohibition of the *Community Rule* against gesticulating with the left hand (1QS 7:15), which was used to clean oneself after defecation.<sup>34</sup>

Whereas spitting on the Temple Mount may have been forbidden, or at least frowned upon, there seems to have been no general prohibition against spitting in public. According to Mark 14:65, those present at Jesus' trial spat on him: "Some began to spit on him ..." In fact, biblical law (Deut 25:5-10) requires a childless widow to spit in her brother-in-law's face if he refuses to marry her (the *halitzah* ceremony).<sup>35</sup>

The Romans used saliva for protection against the evil eye, as Pliny describes:

I have however pointed out that the best of all safeguards against serpents is the saliva of a fasting human being, but our daily experience may teach us yet other values of its use. We spit on epileptics in a fit, that is, we throw back infection. In a similar way we ward off witchcraft and the bad luck that follows meeting a person lame in the right leg. We also ask for forgiveness of the gods for a too presumptuous hope by spitting on the ground three times by way of ritual, thus increasing its efficacy, and

<sup>34</sup> See Kottke 1983: 90-91; Wise 1990: 202; Sanders 1990: 349 n. 10.

<sup>35</sup> Whereas rabbinic halakhah requires the widow to spit on the ground, the scholion to the Megillat Ta'anit suggests that some groups observed this injunction literally; see Noam 2005: 61.

of marking early incipient boils three times with fasting saliva (*Natural History* 38.7.36).

Similarly, Jesus reportedly used saliva in his miraculous healings:

He took him aside in private, away from the crowd, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spat and touched his tongue (Mark 7:31).

He took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the village; and when he had put saliva on his eyes and laid his hands on him, he asked him, "Can you see anything?" (Mark 8:23; also see the healing of a blind man in John 9:1-12, in which Jesus mixes saliva and dirt to make mud, which he puts on the man's eyes).

To conclude, the spit of certain people such as the *zab* and gentile was considered impure, and presumably was avoided by Jews who were scrupulous in the observance of purity. The Qumran sect extended the prohibition against spitting in the Jerusalem temple to their assemblies, presumably because they conceived of their community as a substitute temple.



# “The Likeness of Heaven”: The *Kavod* of Azazel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*

ANDREI ORLOV

... Now observe a deep and holy mystery of faith, the symbolism of the male principle and the female principle of the universe ... there is the line where the male and female principles join, forming together the rider on the serpent, and symbolized by Azazel.

*Zohar* I.152b-153a

## Introduction

Chapter 14 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, a Jewish pseudepigraphon written in the first centuries C. E., unveils an enigmatic tradition about the unusual power given to the main antagonist of the story, the fallen angel Azazel.<sup>1</sup> In the text, Abraham’s celestial guide, the angel Yahoel, warns his human apprentice, the hero of the faith, that God endowed his chief eschatological opponent Azazel with a special will and with “heaviness” against those who answer him. The reference to the mysterious “heaviness” (Slav. *тягота*) given to the demon has puzzled students of the Slavonic apocalypse for a long time. Ryszard Rubinkiewicz has previously suggested that the Slavonic term for “heaviness” (*тягота*) in this passage from *Apoc. Ab.* 14:13 possibly serves as a technical term for rendering the Hebrew word *Kavod*.<sup>2</sup> Rubinkiewicz has further proposed that the original text most likely had כבוד, which has the sense of “gravity” but also “glory,” and had

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<sup>1</sup> On the Azazel traditions, see De Roo 2000: 233-241; Fauth 1998: 514-534; Feinberg 1958: 320-331; Görg 1986: 10-16; Grabbe 1987: 165-79; Helm 1994: 217-226; Janowski 1982; Janowski 1995: 240-248. Jürgens 2001; Kümmel 1986: 289-318; Levy 1998; Loretz 1985; Maclean 2007: 309-334; Milgrom 1983; Rudman 2004: 396-401; Shea 2002: 1-9; Stökl Ben Ezra 1999: 349-366; Stökl Ben Ezra 2002: 493-502; Stökl Ben Ezra 2003; Strobel 1987: 141-68; Tawil 1980: 43-59; Weinfeld 1983: 95-129; Wright 1987.

<sup>2</sup> *Apoc. Ab.* 14:13 reads: “... Since God gave him [Azazel] the *heaviness* (*тяготой*) and the will against those who answer him ...” Rubinkiewicz 1987: 150.

the following rendering: “the Eternal One ... to him [Azazel] he gave the glory and power.” According to Rubinkiewicz, this ambiguity lays at the basis of the Slavonic translation of the verse.<sup>3</sup>

It is quite possible that, given the formative influences the Book of Ezekiel exercises on the *Apocalypse of Abraham*,<sup>4</sup> the authors of the text might indeed have known the *Kavod* technical terminology, which plays such an important role in the great prophetic book. Yet the transference of this peculiar theophanic imagery to an ambiguous character of the story is quite puzzling, since the *Kavod* symbolism represents a very distinctive attribute reserved in the Jewish biblical and pseudepigraphic traditions almost exclusively for the celestial and translated agents to signal their divine status. Could this strange tradition about the glory of Azazel suggest that the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse sought to envision the fallen angel as a kind of negative counterpart of the Deity, who enjoys his own “exalted” attributes that mimic and emulate divine attributes?

A closer look at the pseudepigraphon reveals that such a dualistically symmetrical symbolism is not only confined to the description of the fallen angel and his unusual attributes. It also represents one of the main ideological tendencies of the Slavonic apocalypse. Several scholars have previously noted this peculiarity of the theological universe of the Slavonic apocalypse, which unveils the paradoxical symmetry of good and evil realms: the domains which, in the Abrahamic pseudepigraphon, seem depicted as emulating and mirroring each other.

It has been previously argued that the striking prevalence of such dualistic symmetrical patterns permeating the fabric of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* can be seen as one of the most controversial and puzzling features of the text.<sup>5</sup> It should be noted that the dualistic currents are present mostly in the second, apocalyptic portion of

<sup>3</sup> Rubinkiewicz points to the presence of the formulae in the Gospel of Luke 4:6 “I will give you all their authority and splendor ...”

<sup>4</sup> Rubinkiewicz provides a helpful outline of usage of Ezekielean traditions in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. He notes that “among the prophetic books, the book of Ezekiel plays for our author the same role as Genesis in the Pentateuch. The vision of the divine throne (*Apoc. Ab.* 18) is inspired by Ezek 1 and 10. Abraham sees the four living creatures (*Apoc. Ab.* 18:5-11) depicted in Ezek 1 and 10. He also sees the wheels of fire decorated with eyes all around (*Apoc. Ab.* 18:3), the throne (*Apoc. Ab.* 18:3; Ezek 1:26), the chariot (*Apoc. Ab.* 18:12 and Ezek 10:6); he hears the voice of God (*Apoc. Ab.* 19:1 and Ezek 1:28). When the cloud of fire raises up, he can hear ‘the voice like the roaring sea’ (*Apoc. Ab.* 18:1; Ezek 1:24). There is no doubt that the author of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* takes the texts of Ezek 1 and 10 as sources of inspiration.” Rubinkiewicz 1987: 87.

<sup>5</sup> Collins 1998: 229.

the text, where the hero of the faith receives an enigmatic revelation from the Deity about the unusual powers given to Azazel.

Reflecting on these conceptual developments, Michael Stone draws attention to the traditions found in chapters 20, 22, and 29, where the reference to Azazel's rule, which he exercises jointly with God over the world, coincides "with the idea that God granted him authority over the wicked."<sup>6</sup> Stone suggests that "these ideas are clearly dualistic in nature."<sup>7</sup>

John Collins explores another cluster of peculiar depictions repeatedly found in the second part of the *Apocalypse*, in which humankind is divided into two parts, half on the right and half on the left, representing respectively the chosen people and the Gentiles. These portions of humanity are labeled in the text as the lot of God and the lot of Azazel. Collins argues that "the symmetrical division suggests a dualistic view of the world."<sup>8</sup> He further observes that "the nature and extent of this dualism constitute the most controversial problem in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*."<sup>9</sup>

Ryszard Rubinkiewicz, while denying the presence of "absolute" or "ontological"<sup>10</sup> dualism in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, admits that the pseudepigraphon exhibits some dualistic tendencies in its ethical, spatial and temporal dimensions.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Stone 1984: 418.

<sup>7</sup> Stone 1984: 418. Stone further makes a connection here between dualistic tendencies found in *Apoc. Ab.* and the traditions from the Qumran documents. He observes that "the idea of joint rule of Azazel and God in this world resembles the doctrine of the Rule of Community, according to which there are two powers God appointed to rule in the world (cf. 1QS 2:20-1)." Stone 1984: 418. It should be noted that the connections between the dualism of the Slavonic apocalypse and the Palestinian dualistic traditions have been recognized by several scholars. Already Box, long before the discovery of the DSS, argued that the dualistic features of the Slavonic apocalypse are reminiscent of the "Essene" dualistic ideology. Thus, Box suggested that "the book is essentially Jewish, and there are features in it which suggest Essene origin; such are its strong predestinarian doctrine, *its dualistic conceptions*, and its ascetic tendencies." Emphasis added. Box – Landsman 1918: xxi.

<sup>8</sup> Collins 1998: 229.

<sup>9</sup> Collins 1998: 229.

<sup>10</sup> "In the *Apocalypse of Abraham* there is no ontological dualism. The created world is good before the eyes of God (22:2). There is no other God in the universe, than "the one whom" Abraham "searched for" and "who has loved" him (19:3). There is evil in the world, but it is not inevitable. God has full control over the world and he does not permit the body of the just to remain in the hand of Azazel (13:10). Azazel is wrong if he thinks he can scorn justice and disperse the secret of heaven (14:4). He will be banished in the desert forever (14:5)." Rubinkiewicz 1985: 684.

<sup>11</sup> He observes that "... dans l'Apocalypse d'Abraham il n'y a pas trace d'un dualisme absolu ... Mais le monde révèle un certain dualisme. D'abord on découvre

Yet, in contrast to Rubinkiewicz's opinion, George Box sees in these spatial and temporal dimensions the main signs of the "radical dualism" of the apocalypse. He maintains that "the radical dualism of the Book comes out not only in the sharp division of mankind into two hosts, which stands for Jewry and heathendom respectively, but also in the clearly defined contradistinction of two ages, the present Age of ungodliness and the future Age of righteousness ...."<sup>12</sup>

Another distinguished student of the Slavonic text, Marc Philonenko, in his analysis of the symmetrical nature of the positions of Yahoel and Azazel,<sup>13</sup> notes the peculiarity of the interaction between these two spirits, one good and one malevolent. He observes that their battle does not occur directly, but rather through a medium of a human being, Abraham. Abraham is thus envisioned in the pseudopigraphon as a place where the battle between two spiritual forces is unfolded.<sup>14</sup> Philonenko sees in this anthropological internalization a peculiar mold of the dualism that is also present in the Qumran materials, including the *Instruction on the Two Spirits* (1QS 3:13 – 4:26), where the Prince of Light and the Angel of Darkness are fighting in the heart of man.<sup>15</sup>

The aforementioned scholarly suggestions about the dualistic tendencies of the apocalypse, which seems to envision a symmetrical correspondence between the divine and demonic realms, the worlds of God and of Azazel, are intriguing and deserve further investiga-

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un dualisme spatial. Il y a la terre et l'Eden, la mer et les eaux supérieures, les hommes situés à gauche et les hommes situés à droite dans le tableau (XXI, 3-7). Il y a aussi un dualisme temporel: celui qui oppose le monde present (XXXII, 2) et le monde de la justice (XXIX, 18); le jour et les ténèbres (XVII, 22s.), l'humanité d'avant Abraham et l'humanité d'après Abraham (XXIV-XXV). L'humanité postérieure à Abraham est elle-même divisée entre le peuple de Dieu et les nations (XXII, 4-5; XXIV, 1). Il existe encore un dualisme éthique: on trouve des justes, mais aussi des méchants (XVII, 22; XXIII, 12); l'homme a le désir du mal (XXIII, 13), mais aussi celui des œuvres justes (XXVII, 9) ..." Rubinkiewicz 1979: 149.

<sup>12</sup> Box – Landsman 1918: xxvi.

<sup>13</sup> Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 31.

<sup>14</sup> Philonenko also draws attention to the expression found in *Apoc. Ab.* 14:6: "Since your inheritance are those who are with you, with men born with the stars and clouds. And their portion is you, and they come into being through your being." Philonenko sees in this expression a connection with the astrological lore found in some Qumran horoscopes which expresses the idea that the human beings from the time of their birth belong either to the "lot" of light or to the "lot" of darkness. Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 32. Philonenko also sees the dualistic opposition between the "age of justice" (въ вѣцѣ праведнемъ) and the "age of corruption" (во глѣннѣ вѣцѣ). In his opinion all these instances represent remarkable expressions of a dualistic ideology.

<sup>15</sup> Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 32.

tion. The current study will attempt to explore some dualistic symmetrical patterns found in the Slavonic pseudepigraphon, concentrating mainly on the peculiar theophanic imagery surrounding the figure of the main antagonist of the text, the demon Azazel.

### The Inheritance of Azazel

The traditions about the two eschatological lots or portions of humanity found in the second part of the text have captivated the imagination of Slavonic apocalypse scholars for a long time. In these fascinating descriptions, students of the Abrahamic pseudepigraphon have often tried to discern possible connections with the dualistic developments found in some Qumran materials, where the imagery of the two eschatological lots played a significant role. Indeed, in the Dead Sea Scrolls one can find a broad appropriation of the imagery of the two portions of humanity, which are often depicted there in striking opposition to each other in the final decisive battle. It has been frequently noted that the peculiar symbolism of the eschatological parties often takes the form of dualistic symmetrical counterparts, as these groups are repeatedly described in the Dead Sea Scrolls, through metaphoric depictions involving the dichotomies of darkness and light, good and evil, election and rejection. This dualistic “mirroring” is also often underscored by the symbolic profiles of the main leaders of the eschatological “lots,” whose peculiar sobriquets often negatively or positively reflect, or even polemically deconstruct, the names of their respective eschatological rivals: Melchizedek and Melchireša<sup>c</sup>, the Angel of Light and the Prince of Darkness.

The peculiar imagery of the eschatological portions of humanity is also manifested in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. Graphic depictions of the two lots are widely dispersed in the second, apocalyptic, part of the pseudepigraphon. Scholars have previously noted that the peculiar conceptual elaborations that surround these portrayals of the portions appear to be reminiscent not only of the eschatological reinterpretations and terminology found in the Qumran materials,<sup>16</sup> but also of the peculiar imagery of sacrificial lots prominent in the

<sup>16</sup> Thus, for example, Marc Philonenko noted that the word “lot” (Slav. часть) appears to be connected to the Hebrew גורל, a term attested multiple times in the Qumran materials. Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 33. On the two lots, see also Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1982: 418; Rubinkiewicz 1987: 54.

Yom Kippur ritual,<sup>17</sup> the ordinance described in detail in the biblical and rabbinic accounts.<sup>18</sup> Thus it has been previously observed that the word “lot” (Slav. *уацмб*) found in the Slavonic text appears to be connected to the Hebrew גורל, a term prominent in some cultic descriptions found in biblical and rabbinic accounts,<sup>19</sup> as well as in the eschatological developments attested in the Qumran materials.<sup>20</sup>

Similar to the Qumran materials, where the lots are linked to the fallen angelic figures or translated heroes (like Belial or Melchizedek), in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* the portions of humanity are now tied to the main characters of the story – the fallen angel Azazel<sup>21</sup> and the translated patriarch Abraham.<sup>22</sup>

It is also noteworthy that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, similar to the Qumran materials,<sup>23</sup> the positive lot is designated sometimes as the lot of the Deity – “my [God’s] lot”:

And the Eternal Mighty One said to me, “Abraham, Abraham!” And I said, “Here am I!” And he said, “Look from on high at the stars which are beneath you and count them for me and tell me their number!” And I said, “Would I be able? For I am [but] a man.” And he said to me, “As the number of the stars and their host, so shall I make your seed into a company of nations, set apart for me in my lot with Azazel.”<sup>24</sup>

While the similarities of the *Apocalypse of Abraham* with the Qumran materials were often noted and highlighted in previous scholarly studies, the differences in the descriptions of the eschatological lots and their respective leaders have often been neglected. Yet, it is quite possible that the dualistic imagery of the eschatological por-

<sup>17</sup> For the Yom Kippur traditions in *Apoc. Ab.* see Grabbe 1987: 157; Fletcher-Louis 2001: 282; Helm 1994: 223; Lourie 2009; Stökl Ben Ezra 1999: 349-366; Stökl Ben Ezra 2002: 493-502; Stökl Ben Ezra 2003: 94.

<sup>18</sup> See Orlov 2009: 79-111.

<sup>19</sup> For the גורל terminology see Lev 16:8-10.

<sup>20</sup> See for example, 1QS גורל בליעל (the lot of Belial); גורל קדושים (the lot of the holy ones). 1QM גורל בני חושך (the lot of the sons of darkness); גורל חושך (the lot of darkness). 11Q13 צדק מל [כין] גורל מל (the men of the lot of Melchizedek).

<sup>21</sup> *Apoc. Ab.* 13:7: “... And he said to him, ‘Reproach is on you, Azazel! Since *Abraham’s portion* (часть Авраамя) is in heaven, and *yours* is on earth ...” Kulik 2004:20; Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 66.

<sup>22</sup> *Apoc. Ab.* 10:15: “Stand up, Abraham, go boldly, be very joyful and rejoice! And I am with you, since *an honorable portion* (часть вѣчная) has been prepared for you by the Eternal One.” Kulik 2004: 18; Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 60.

<sup>23</sup> This identification of the positive lot with the lot of God is also present in the Qumran materials. Cf. 1QM 13:5-6: “For they are the lot of darkness but the lot of God is for [everlast]ing light.” García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1997-1998: 135.

<sup>24</sup> *Apoc. Ab.* 20:1-5. Kulik 2004: 25.

tions might receive an even more radical form in the Slavonic apocalypse than in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Indeed, it seems that the Slavonic pseudepigraphon attempts to transfer to the antagonist and to his lot some of the notions and attributes which in the Qumran materials remain reserved solely for the domain of the positive portion of humanity. One such notion includes the concept of “inheritance,” the term that plays an important role both in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Slavonic apocalypse.

Thus, the passage found in chapter 14 of the pseudepigraphon unveils the following enigmatic tradition about the very special “inheritance” given to the fallen angel Azazel:

*Since your inheritance (достояние твое) are those who are with you, with men born with the stars and clouds. And their portion is you (ихъже часть еси ты).*<sup>25</sup>

The striking feature of this account is that in *Апос. Аб. 14:6* the concept of the eschatological “lot” or “portion” (Slav. часть)<sup>26</sup> of Azazel appears to be used interchangeably with the notion of “inheritance” (Slav. достояние).

This terminological connection is intriguing since the two notions, “inheritance” and “lot,” are also used interchangeably in the Qumran passages that deal with the “lot” imagery. Thus, for example, 11Q13 speaks about “inheritance” referring to the portion of Melchizedek that will be victorious in the eschatological ordeal:

... and from the *inheritance* of Melchizedek, fo[r...] ... and they are the *inheritance* of Melchizedek, who will make them return. And the d[ay of aton]ement is the e[nd of] the tenth [ju]bilee in which atonement shall be made for all the sons of [light and] for the men [of] the lot of Mel[chi] zedek.<sup>27</sup>

In IQS 3:13 – 4:26, in the fragment also known as the *Instruction on the Two Spirits*, the imagery of inheritance is tied to the concept of the lot of the righteous:

... they walk in wisdom or in folly. In agreement with man’s inheritance in the truth, he shall be righteous and so abhor injustice; and according

<sup>25</sup> Kulik 2004: 21; Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 68.

<sup>26</sup> Although here and in *Апос. Аб. 10:15* the Slavonic word “часть” is used for designation of the “lots,” *Апос. Аб. 20:5* and *Апос. Аб. 29:21* uses the Slavonic word “жребий” for their designation of the “lot.” Cf. Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 82, 102.

<sup>27</sup> García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1997-1998: 1207-1209.

to his share in the lot of injustice, he shall act wickedly in it, and so abhor the truth.<sup>28</sup>

In 1QS 11:7-8 and CD 13:11-12, this concept of inheritance is once again connected with participation in the lot of light, also labeled in 1QS as “the lot of the holy ones”:<sup>29</sup>

To those whom God has selected he has given them as everlasting possession; and he has given them an *inheritance* in the lot of the holy ones. (1QS 11:7-8)<sup>30</sup>

And everyone who joins his congregation, he should examine, concerning his actions, his intelligence, his strength, his courage and his wealth; and they shall inscribe him in his place according to his *inheritance* in the lot of light. (CD-A 13:11-12)<sup>31</sup>

In these last two texts the concept of “inheritance” appears to be understood as the act of participation in the eschatological lot, rendered through the formulae “inheritance in the lot” (Heb. נחלתו בגורל).<sup>32</sup> The same idea seems to be at work in the aforementioned passage from *Apoc. Ab.* 14:6, where “inheritance” is understood as participation in the lot of Azazel.

Yet despite the similarities, one striking difference between these texts is discernable: while in the Qumran materials the “inheritance” appears to be connected with the divine lot, in *Apoc. Ab.* it is unambiguously tied to the lot of Azazel.

This transference of the notion of “inheritance,” the concept which plays such an important role in the Qumran ideology, under the umbrella of the lot of Azazel in the *Apoc. Ab.* is striking. It brings the dualistic ideology of the Jewish pseudepigraphon on an entirely new conceptual level in comparison with the dualistic developments found in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

This new conceptual advancement appears also to have had a strong influence on the profile of the main antagonist of the text, the fallen angel Azazel, who, in comparison with the eschatological opponents of the Dead Sea Scrolls, now becomes not just one of the characters in the gallery of many eschatological opponents, but the adversary *par excellence*. In this respect, Lester Grabbe suggests

<sup>28</sup> García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1997-1998: 75-79.

<sup>29</sup> In IQM 14:9 the terminology of inheritance is invoked again. There the remnant predestined to survive is called “the rem[nant of your inheritance] during the empire of Belial.” García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1997-1998: 137.

<sup>30</sup> García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1997-1998: 97.

<sup>31</sup> García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1997-1998: 573.

<sup>32</sup> García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1997-1998: 572.



that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* seems to be referring to the “basic arch-demon complex under the name of Azazel.”<sup>33</sup> In his opinion, in the Slavonic apocalypse “Azazel is no longer just a leader among the fallen angels but *the* leader of the demons. Figures originally separate have now fallen together while the various names have become only different aliases of the one devil.”<sup>34</sup>

Such mythological consolidation affecting the profile of the main eschatological opponent both advances the dualistic thrust of the Slavonic apocalypse and helps to secure Azazel’s confrontational stand not only toward Yahoel and Abraham but, more importantly, toward the Deity.

### The Theophany of Azazel

The second, apocalyptic, section of the Slavonic pseudepigraphon begins with a series of arcane portrayals unveiling the striking appearance and the spectacular offices of Abraham’s celestial guide, the angel Yahoel. Yet, in comparison with these disclosures about the great celestial being, the figure of another important character in the story, the main adversary of the text, the fallen angel Azazel, is shrouded in a cluster of even more ambiguous and enigmatic descriptions. For unknown reasons, possibly viewing the arch-demon’s figure as providing one of the conceptual clues to understanding the mystery of the theological universe of the text, the authors of the pseudepigraphon appear very reluctant to unveil and clarify the exact status of their mysterious antihero, instead offering to their readers the rich tapestry of arcane traditions embroidered with the most recondite imagery that can be found in the apocalypse.

Yet despite the aura of concealment that envelops the cryptic profile of the arch-demon, the cosmic significance of this perplexing character peeps through various details of the story. Thus, the very first lines of chapter 13, which introduce Azazel to the audience, appear to hint at him as a figure with a very special authority. His bold descent on the sacrifices of the hero of the faith does not appear coincidental; the authors of the Slavonic apocalypse may want to signal to their readers that Azazel is not merely an abandoned, demoted creature, but rather an object of worship, veneration, and sacrificial devotion, who possibly possesses an exalted status and place

<sup>33</sup> Grabbe 1987: 158.

<sup>34</sup> Grabbe 1987: 158.

that negatively replicate and mimic the authority and position of the Deity.

Many previous studies have shown conceptual links between Azazel and Abraham,<sup>35</sup> as well as parallels between Azazel and Yahoel.<sup>36</sup> Yet despite the significance of these comparative studies, which have been able to clarify conceptual symmetry between positive and negative protagonists of the story, scholars have often neglected another portentous parallelism found in the text – that is, the correspondence in the roles and attributes between the Deity and the demon. The initial sign of this baffling dualistic symmetry appears already to be hinted at in the depictions of the eschatological lots, where the portion of Azazel is explicitly compared with the lot of the Almighty. Yet this juxtaposition between the fallen angel and the Divinity can be considered as rather schematic. In this correspondence between the two portions of humanity, one belonging to God and the other to the demon, one might see a merely metaphorical distinction that does not intend to match fully the status and the attributes of the Deity with the condition of Azazel; rather, it simply hints at the demon's temporary role in the eschatological opposition. A closer analysis of the text, however, reveals that the comparisons between God and Azazel have much broader conceptual ramifications that appear to transcend a purely metaphorical level, as the depictions of both characters unveil striking theophanic similarities. An important feature in this respect is the peculiar imagery of the epiphanies of both characters unfolding in the special circumstances of their fiery realms.

It is intriguing that in the text, where the theophanic manifestations of the Deity are repeatedly portrayed as appearing in the midst of flames, the presence of Azazel is also conveyed through similar imagery.

It has been previously noted that the imagery of fire plays an important conceptual role in the Slavonic apocalypse.<sup>37</sup> It is often envisioned there as the substance predestined to examine the authenticity of things and test their eternal status. The *Apocalypse of Abraham* 7:2 relates that “the fire mocks with its flames the things that perish easily.”<sup>38</sup> Both animate and inanimate characters of the story, including the infamous idols and their blasphemous makers, are depicted in the text as undergoing fiery probes – the ominous tests that often lead them into their final catastrophic demise. Thus,

<sup>35</sup> Orlov 2009: 79-111.

<sup>36</sup> See Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 31; Harlow n. d.

<sup>37</sup> See Orlov 2008: 33-53.

<sup>38</sup> Kulik 2004: 15.

by means of fire, the young hero of the faith “tests” the wooden stature of his father, the idol Bar-Eshath, which the flames turn into a pile of ashes. Further, the craftsmen of the idolatrous figures themselves are not exempted from the fiery probes’ scrutiny. The first haggadic section of the text concludes with the blazing ordeal during which the workshop of Terah is obliterated by fire sent by God. Later, in the second, apocalyptic, section of the work, the patriarch Abraham himself undergoes multiple fiery tests during his progress into the upper heaven. All these remarkable instances of the fiery annihilations of certain characters of the story, and miraculous survivals of others, do not appear coincidental. Scholars have previously noted that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, as in several other apocalyptic texts, including Dan 3 or Ezek 28, fire serves as the ultimate test for distinguishing inauthentic and idolatrous representations of the Divinity from its true counterparts. In accordance with this belief, which often envisions the endurance of the “true” things in the flames, the very presence of the Deity is repeatedly portrayed in the text as situated in the stream of fire. Thus, already in chapter eight, which marks a transition to the apocalyptic section of the work and narrates the patriarch’s response to the divine call in the courtyard of Terah’s house, the divine presence is depicted as “the voice of the Mighty One” coming down in a stream of fire.<sup>39</sup> This self-disclosure of God in the midst of the theophanic furnace becomes, then, a standard description adopted by the author(s) of the apocalypse to convey manifestations of the Deity.<sup>40</sup>

In view of these peculiar theophanic tenets of the pseudepigraphon, it is intriguing that some eschatological manifestations of Azazel, similar to the epiphanies of the Deity, are depicted with fiery imagery.

Although in chapter 13 the patriarch sees Azazel in the form of an unclean bird, the apocalypse makes clear that this appearance does not reflect the true appearance of the demon, whose proper domain is designated several times in the text as situated in the subterranean realm.<sup>41</sup> What is striking is that in the antagonist’s authentic abode,

<sup>39</sup> *Apoc. Ab.* 8:1: “The voice (глас) of the Mighty One came down from heaven in a stream of fire, saying and calling, ‘Abraham, Abraham!’” Kulik 2004: 16; Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 54.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, *Apoc. Ab.* 18:2 “And I heard a voice (глас) like the roaring of the sea, and it did not cease because of the fire.” Kulik 2004: 24; Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 76.

<sup>41</sup> Box reflects on the peculiarities of Azazel’s true abode, noting that “over against Jael stands Azazel, who here appears as the arch-fiend, and as active upon the

in the belly of the earth, the domicile of the great demon is fashioned with the same peculiar visual markers as the abode of the Deity – that is, as being situated in the midst of the theophanic furnace.

Thus, in Yahoel's speech found in chapter 14, which reveals the true place of the chief antagonist, the arch-demon's abode is designated as the furnace of the earth.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, Azazel himself is portrayed as the "burning coal" or the "firebrand" of this infernal kiln.<sup>43</sup> This depiction of Azazel, glowing in the furnace of his own domain, is intriguing. It evokes the peculiar memory of the fiery nature of the divine abode which, in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, is portrayed as the upper furnace. The fiery nature of the heavenly plane is underlined multiple times in the text. It is notable that the seer's progress into the domain of the deity is portrayed as his movement into the fiery realm. Thus, in *Apoc. Ab.* 15:3, the transition of the hero and his guiding angel through the border of the heavenly realm is portrayed as an entrance into fire: "...and he carried me up to the edge of the fiery flame. And we ascended like great winds to the heaven which was fixed on the expanses."<sup>44</sup>

Then, in chapter 17, the readers again encounter this terrifying presence of the celestial furnace as the flames envelop the visionary and his celestial guide on their progress to the abode of the Deity:

And while he was still speaking, behold, a fire was coming toward us round about, and a sound was in the fire like a sound of many waters, like a sound of the sea in its uproar. (*Apoc. Ab.* 17:1)<sup>45</sup>

In 18:1, upon his entrance into the celestial Holy of Holies, the visionary again passes another fiery threshold: "... while I was still reciting the song, the edge of the fire which was on the expanse rose up on high."<sup>46</sup>

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earth (chap. xiii), though his real domain is in Hades, where he reigns as lord (chap. xxxi). Box – Landsman 1918: xxvi.

<sup>42</sup> Already George Box noticed the fiery nature of the demonological imagery found in the Slavonic apocalypse, where Azazel is portrayed as the fire of Hell. Box reflects on this fiery theophany of Azazel, arguing that "... in fact, according to the peculiar representation of our Apocalypse, *Azazel is himself the fire of Hell* (cf. chap. xiv. 'Be thou the burning coal of the furnace of the earth,' and chap. xxxi. 'burnt with the fire of Azazel's tongue')." Box – Landsman 1918: xxvi.

<sup>43</sup> See *Apoc. Ab.* 14:5 "Say to him, 'May you be the fire brand of the furnace of the earth! (главьнею печи земная)'" Kulik 2004: 21; Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 68.

<sup>44</sup> Kulik 2004: 22.

<sup>45</sup> Kulik 2004: 22.

<sup>46</sup> Kulik 2004: 23.

The fiery apotheosis reaches its pinnacle in chapter 18, where the patriarch sees the Deity's heavenly throne room. There, in the utmost concealed theophanic locale, the seer beholds the very seat of the Deity fashioned from the substance of fire: "And as the fire rose up, soaring higher, I saw under the fire a throne [made] of fire and the many-eyed Wheels" (*Apoc. Ab. 18:3*).<sup>47</sup> This fiery nexus of the divine presence paradoxically parallels the fiery nature of the antagonist's subterranean abode.

This striking imagery brings us back to the Azazel tradition found in *Apoc. Ab. 14:5*, where, according to some scholars, the demonic presence is fashioned as the fire of Hell.<sup>48</sup>

This identification of Azazel's essence through the imagery of the subterranean flames is intriguing in view of the aforementioned conceptual currents, in which fire serves as a distinctive theophanic medium expressing the very presence of the Deity. Similar to the Deity who is depicted as the fire of heaven enthroned on the seat of flames, the demon is portrayed as the fire of the underworld.

In this respect, it is also noteworthy that, similar to the divine Voice, the main theophanic expression of the Deity in the book, which is depicted as coming in a stream of fire, Azazel's aural expression, is also conveyed through similar fiery symbolism. Thus, *Apoc. Ab. 31:5* speaks about "the fire of Azazel's tongue" (Slav. огонь языка Азазилова):

And those who followed after the idols and after their murders will rot in the womb of the Evil One – the belly of Azazel, and they will be burned by the fire of Azazel's tongue (палими огнемъ языка Азазилова).<sup>49</sup>

It is also interesting that, like the fire of God that destroys the idols and idolaters alike in its flames,<sup>50</sup> the fire issuing from Azazel has power to destroy those who "follow after the idols." Though it is not entirely clear in this context if the fire of Azazel is the fire of God, since in *Apoc. Ab. 31:3* the Deity says that he has destined those who "mocked" him "to be food for the fire of hell, and ceaseless soaring in the air of the underground depths."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>47</sup> Kulik 2004: 24. See also *Apoc. Ab. 18:13*: "And above the Wheels there was the throne which I had seen. And it was covered with fire and the fire encircled it round about, and an indescribable light surrounded the fiery people." Kulik 2004: 24.

<sup>48</sup> Box – Landsman 1918: xxvi.

<sup>49</sup> Kulik 2004: 35; Rubinkiewicz 1987: 202.

<sup>50</sup> Cf. *Apoc. Ab. 31:2-3* "And I shall burn with fire those who mocked them ruling over them in this age and I shall commit those who have covered me with mockery to the reproach of the coming age." Kulik 2004: 35.

<sup>51</sup> Kulik 2004: 35.

## The *Kavod* of Azazel

Our previous exploration of the features of the text's infamous antagonist showed that the authors of the apocalypse appear to envision Azazel as the one who possesses theophanic attributes mimicking the attributes of the Deity.

The impressive cluster of enigmatic traditions about the attributes and offices of the fallen angel that closely resemble their divine counterparts reaches its new paradoxical shape in chapter 23, where the hero of the faith receives a vision of the protological scene portraying the demon's corruption of the Protoplasts.

Before examining this puzzling scene, something must be said about the peculiar arrangement of the patriarch's vision, during which the exalted hero of the faith literally gazes into the abyss from the heights of his most exalted position near the Throne of the Deity. This enigmatic setting seems to provide further support for the dualistic framework of the text with its repeated parallelism of the lower and upper realms.

In the beginning of this mysterious vision, the Deity orders the seer to look beneath his feet and "contemplate the creation." The apocalypse then portrays Abraham looking beneath the expanse at his feet and beholding what the text calls the "likeness of heaven."<sup>52</sup> This reference to the "likeness of heaven" (Slav. подобие неба)<sup>53</sup> has baffled the imagination of many scholars<sup>54</sup> because of the authors' decision to situate, under the category of the "resemblance of heaven," the vision of the corrupted domain belonging to Azazel:

And I looked beneath the expanse at my feet and I saw *the likeness of heaven* (подобие неба) and what was therein. And [I saw] there the earth and its fruits, and its moving ones, and its spiritual ones, and its host of men and their spiritual impieties, and their justifications, (and the pursuits of their works,) and the abyss and its torment, and its lower depths, and the perdition which is in it. And I saw there the sea and its island(s), and its animals and its fishes, and Leviathan and his domain, and his lair, and his dens, and the world which lies upon him, and his motions and the destruction of the world because of him. (*Apoc. Ab. 21:2-4*)<sup>55</sup>

In this arcane vision, which the patriarch receives from the highest heaven gazing down into the abyss, the reader encounters another

<sup>52</sup> Kulik 2004: 26.

<sup>53</sup> Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 84.

<sup>54</sup> Cf., for example, H. Lunt's comment in Rubinkiewicz 1985: 699.

<sup>55</sup> Kulik 2004: 26.

er dazzling illustration of the dualistic vision of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*.

Yet the most puzzling disclosure in the cluster of these mysterious expositions about the “likeness of heaven” follows further along in chapter 23, where the visionary beholds Azazel’s appearance under the paradisaical Tree.

The *Apocalypse of Abraham* 23:4-11 unveils the following enigmatic tradition that draws on peculiar protological imagery:

And I looked at the picture, and my eyes ran to the side of the garden of Eden. And I saw there a man very great in height and terrible in breadth, incomparable in aspect, *entwined* (съплетшася) with a woman who was also equal to the man in aspect and size. And they were standing under a tree of Eden, and the fruit of the tree was like the appearance of a bunch of grapes of the vine. And behind the tree was standing, as it were, a serpent in form, but having hands and feet like a man, and wings on its shoulders: six on the right side and six on the left. And he was holding in his hands the grapes of the tree and feeding the two whom I saw entwined with each other. And I said, “Who are these two *entwined* (съплетшася) with each other, or who is this between them, or what is the fruit which they are eating, Mighty Eternal One?” And he said, “This is the reason of men, this is Adam, and this is their desire on earth, this is Eve. And he who is in between them is the Impiety of their pursuits for destruction, Azazel himself.”<sup>56</sup>

In this vision, which the patriarch receives while standing at the place of God’s theophany near the divine Throne, Abraham beholds Azazel’s protological manifestation in the lower realm, where the demon’s presence is placed in the midst of the protoplasts. The depiction is also interesting in that it renders the abode of Azazel through the primordial imagery of the Tree situated in the Garden of Eden.

There are no doubts that the text offers to its audience the portrayal of the infamous Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil – the arboreal symbol of the protological corruption of the first human couple. The peculiar features of the scene, and the reference to the “grapes of vine” as the fruit of the Tree, bring to memory the cluster of familiar motifs associated in the Jewish lore with the legendary paradisaical plant. While some features of the scene look familiar, others are not. One novel detail baffling the reader’s imagination is the portrayal of Azazel *between* the intertwined protoplasts under the Tree.

This intriguing tradition has long puzzled students of the Slavonic apocalypse. Although the imagery of the intertwined Protoplasts is

<sup>56</sup> Kulik 2004: 27; Philonenko-Sayar – Philonenko 1981: 88.

known from Jewish and Christian lore about the serpentine Eve,<sup>57</sup> the depiction found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* appears to unveil some novel, perplexing symbolism. Some scholars have noted an erotic dimension in this portrayal, suggesting that the demon and the intertwined protoplasts form here some sort of a *ménage à trois*.<sup>58</sup> What might be the theological significance of this ominous intercourse involving the demonic spirit and the human couple?

Is it possible that, in this scene depicting an enigmatic union of the arch-demon and the protoplasts, one might have not merely a scandalous illustration of the protological corruption of the first humans, but also the disclosure of one of the most mysterious and controversial epiphanies of Azazel? If it is indeed possible, then here, as in some biblical and pseudepigraphic accounts, the erotic imagery and the symbolism of the conjugal union might be laden with theophanic significance.

Moreover, if the epiphanic angle is indeed present in the protological scene, the arboreal imagery also appears to contribute to this theological dimension. In this respect, the peculiar details of Azazel's position between the protoplasts *under the Tree* might be invoking the memory of a peculiar theophanic trend related to another prominent plant of the Garden of Eden, the Tree of Life.

In Jewish lore the Tree of Life often has a theophanic significance described as the very special arboreal abode of the Deity. In these traditions God is depicted as resting on the cherub beneath the Tree of Life. These traditions are found in a number of apocalyptic and mystical accounts. Thus, for example, the Greek version<sup>59</sup> of the *Life of Adam and Eve* 22:3-4 connects the theophany of the Deity with the Tree of Life:

As God entered [the Garden,] the plants of Adam's portion flowered but all mine were bereft of flowers. And the throne of God was fixed where the Tree of Life was.<sup>60</sup>

<sup>57</sup> On the traditions of the serpentine Eve in Jewish and Christian literature, see Sergey Minov's article in this volume.

<sup>58</sup> Thus, for example, reflecting on the imagery found in *Apoc. Ab.* 23:4-11, Daniel Harlow suggests that "the three of them appear in a *ménage à trois*, the man and woman entwined in an erotic embrace, the fallen angel in serpentine guise feeding them grapes ..." Harlow n. d.

<sup>59</sup> On various versions of the *Life of Adam and Eve*, see Stone 1992; de Jonge – Tromp 1997.

<sup>60</sup> Anderson – Stone 1999: 62E. The Armenian and Georgian versions of *LAE* 22:4 also support this tradition: "He set up his throne clos[e] to the Tree of Life" (Armenian); "and thrones were set up near the Tree of Life" (Georgian). Anderson – Stone 1999: 62E.



A similar tradition is also found in 2 *Enoch* 8:3-4, where the Tree of Life again is described as the abode of God:

And in the midst (of them was) the tree of life, at that place where the Lord takes a rest when he goes into paradise. And that tree is indescribable for pleasantness and fine fragrance, and more beautiful than any (other) created thing that exists. And from every direction it has an appearance which is gold-looking and crimson, and with the form of fire. And it covers the whole of Paradise (2 *Enoch* 8:3-4, the longer recension).<sup>61</sup>

The tradition of the Divinity dwelling on the cherub under the Tree of Life was not forgotten in later Jewish mysticism, where God's very presence, his *Shekinah*, is portrayed as resting on a cherub beneath the Tree of Life. 3 *Enoch* 5:1 unveils the following tradition:

R. Ishmael said: Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, said to me: From the day that the Holy One, blessed be he, banished the first man from the garden of Eden, the *Shekinah* resided on a cherub beneath the tree of life.<sup>62</sup>

A striking feature of this account is that here, like in the classic Ezekielian accounts, the cherubic creature represents the "angelic furniture" that functions as the seat of the Deity.

It is also intriguing that in later Jewish mysticism it is not only the Tree of Life but also the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil that receives similar epiphanic re-interpretation, being envisioned as the symmetrical theophanic locale with its own cherubic servants.

Thus, for example, the *Book of Zohar* I.237a unveils the following enigmatic tradition about the symmetry of the upper and lower cherubim, explicitly associating the former with the Tree of Sin and Corruption:

Adam was punished for his sin, and brought death upon himself and all the world, and caused that tree in regard to which he sinned to be driven out along with him and his descendants for ever. It says further that God "placed the cherubim on the east of the garden of Eden"; these were the lower cherubim, for as there are cherubim above, so there are cherubim below, and *he spread this tree over them*.<sup>63</sup>

This passage is striking since it brings to memory the Tree of Knowledge found in the Slavonic apocalypse, which provided the shadow for the protological couple holding in their midst the presence of Azazel. It is noteworthy that in the passage from the *Zohar* the Tree

<sup>61</sup> Andersen 1985: 114.

<sup>62</sup> Alexander 1985: 259.

<sup>63</sup> Sperling – Simon 1933, 2: 35.

of Knowledge is now unambiguously associated with the angelic servants, designated as the "lower cherubim."

Keeping in mind this cryptic tradition about the cherubic servants, it is now time to return to the protological scene found in the Slavonic apocalypse. The subtle allusions to the cherubic imagery might also be present in Azazel's epiphany in *Apoc. Ab.* 23:4-11, where he is depicted under the Tree of Knowledge in the midst of the protoplasts. What is intriguing in the description of Azazel here is that the presence of the evil spirit is manifested in the connubial union of the intertwined couple.

It should be noted that the imagery of the intertwined primordial couple holding the presence of the spiritual agent is quite unique in the Adamic lore. Yet it invokes the memory of another important theophanic tradition of the divine presence, where God's presence is portrayed through the imagery of the intertwined cherubic pair in the Holy of Holies.

The treatise *Yoma* of the Babylonian Talmud contains two passages that offer striking, if not scandalous, descriptions of the intertwined cherubim in the Holy of Holies. Thus, *b. Yoma* 54a reads:

R. Kattina said: Whenever Israel came up to the Festival, the curtain would be removed for them and the Cherubim were shown to them, whose bodies were intertwined with one another, and they would be thus addressed: Look! You are beloved before God as the love between man and woman.<sup>64</sup>

This arcane passage relates an erotic union of the cherubic angelic servants holding the presence of the Deity. One might see here later rabbinic innovations which are far distant, or maybe even completely divorced, from the early biblical tradition of the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies.

Still, scholars have previously noted that already early biblical accounts hint at the ambiguous "proximity" of the famous cherubic pair. Rachel Elior notes that in some biblical materials "descriptions of them usually imply a posture characterized by reciprocity or contact: 'they faced each other,'<sup>65</sup> or also 'their wings touched each other'<sup>66</sup> or were even joined<sup>67</sup> together."<sup>68</sup> While the early traditions about the cherubim found "both in the Bible and elsewhere, imply

<sup>64</sup> Epstein 1935-1952, 3: 255.

<sup>65</sup> Exod 37:9.

<sup>66</sup> 1 Kings 6:27; Ezek 1:9.

<sup>67</sup> 2 Chr 3:12.

<sup>68</sup> Elior 2004b: 67.

varying degrees of proximity and contact – later tradition was more explicit, clearly indicating the identity of the cherubim as a mythical symbolization of reproduction<sup>69</sup> and fertility, expressed in the form of intertwined male and female.”<sup>70</sup>

In *b. Yoma* 54b the tradition of the intertwined cherubim is repeated again:

Resh Lakish said: When the heathens entered the Temple and saw the Cherubim whose bodies were intertwined with one another, they carried them out and said: These Israelites, whose blessing is a blessing, and whose curse is a curse, occupy themselves with such things! And immediately they despised them, as it is said: All that honored her, despised her, because they have seen her nakedness.<sup>71</sup>

Rachel Elior argues that the description of the intertwined cherubim found in the Talmud suggests “a cultic, mystical representation of

<sup>69</sup> In later Jewish mysticism the imagery of the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies was interpreted as the conjugal union between male and female. Thus, in *Zohar* III.59b the following tradition can be found: “R. Simeon was on the point of going to visit R. Pinchas ben Jair, along with his son R. Eleazar. When he saw them he exclaimed: A song of ascents; Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity” (Ps. CXXXIII, 1). The expression ‘in unity,’ he said, refers to the Cherubim. When their faces were turned to one another, it was well with the world – ‘how good and how pleasant,’ but when the male turned his face from the female, it was ill with the world. Now, too, I see that you are come because the male is not abiding with the female. If you have come only for this, return, because I see that on this day face will once more be turned to face.” Sperling – Simon 1933, 5: 41. Another passage from the *Zohar* III.59a also tells about the conjugal union of the Cherubim: “Then the priest used to hear their voice in the sanctuary, and he put the incense in its place with all devotion in order that all might be blessed. R. Jose said: The word ‘equity’ (*mesharim*, lit. equities) in the above quoted verse indicates that the Cherubim were male and female. R. Isaac said: From this we learn that where there is no union of male and female men are not worthy to behold the divine presence.” Sperling – Simon 1933, 5: 41.

<sup>70</sup> Elior 2004b: 67.

<sup>71</sup> Epstein 1935-52, 3: 257. *Zohar* III.67a, which describes the actions of the high priest on Yom Kippur, also attests to the same tradition when it portrays the “wrestle” of the Cherubim in the Holy of Holies who are “beating their wings together.” The passage then describes the high priest entering the Holy of Holies bringing the incense that “pacifies” or “reconciles” the “wrestling” of the angelic creatures. Sperling – Simon 1933, 5:60. See also: *Zohar* I.231a “Now at sunset, the Cherubim which stood in that place used to strike their wings together and spread them out, and when the sound of the beating of their wings was heard above, those angels who chanted hymns in the night began to sing, in order that the glory of God might ascend from below on high. The striking of the Cherubim’s wings itself intoned the psalm, ‘Behold, bless ye the Lord, all ye servants of the Lord... lift up your hands to the sanctuary, etc.’ (Ps. CXXXIII). This was the signal for the heavenly angels to commence.” Sperling – Simon 1933, 2: 340.

myths of *hieros gamos*, the sacred union or heavenly matrimony...<sup>72</sup> It is also apparent that this arcane imagery of the Cherubic union has theophanic significance, as it expresses in itself the manifestation of the divine presence – the feature especially evident in *b. Yoma* 54a, with its motifs of the removal of the curtain and the revelation of the Cherubim on Yom Kippur. It is therefore clear that the tradition of the intertwined cherubim is envisioned here as a theophanic symbol.

In view of these developments, it is quite possible that this theophanic dimension of the conjugal union might be also negatively evoked in the depiction of the intertwined protoplasts in chapter 23 of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. Could it be possible that the erotic ordeal of the protological couple holding in their midst the presence of Azazel somehow serves as a negative counterpart to the Cherubic Couple holding the divine presence in the Holy of Holies? Can Adam and Eve be understood here as the “lower cherubim” overshadowed by the Tree of Knowledge, the Adamic tradition explicitly articulated in the *Zohar* 1.237, and maybe already hinted at in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*?

What is also fascinating in the veiled description in chapter 23 is that the mysterious shape of Azazel situated under the Tree appears in itself to point to the unity of the cherubic couple, as his form combines some attributes of the two cherubim joined together.<sup>73</sup> The passage says that the demon has twelve wings – six on the right side of his body and six on the left side:<sup>74</sup>

And behind the tree was standing, as it were, a serpent in form, but having hands and feet like a man, and wings on its shoulders: six on the right side and six on the left.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>72</sup> Elijor 2004b: 158. In relation to this union of the angelic creatures in the Holy of Holies, Elijor further noticed that “the grammatical relationship between the Hebrew words for the Holy of Holies – *kodesh hakodashim* – and for betrothal – *kidushin* – suggests an ancient common ground of heavenly and earthly union.” Elijor 2004b: 158.

<sup>73</sup> Similar to the “Living Creatures of the Cherubim,” the demon is also portrayed as a composite being which combines zoomorphic and human features – the body of a serpent with hands and feet like a man.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* 13: “Sammael was the great prince in heaven; the *Hayyot* had four wings and the Seraphim had six wings, and Sammael had twelve wings ...” Friedlander 1965: 92. Cf. also Georgian *LAE* 12:1 “My [Satan’s] wings were more numerous than those of the Cherubim, and I concealed myself under them.” Anderson-Stone 1999: 15-15E.

<sup>75</sup> Kulik 2004: 27.

It is noteworthy that earlier in the text, when Abraham sees the “Living Creatures of the Cherubim” in the heavenly Throne Room, he reports that each of them has six wings:

And under the throne [I saw] four singing fiery Living Creatures ... and each one had six wings: from their shoulders, (and from their sides,) and from their loins. (*Apoc. Ab.* 18:3-6)<sup>76</sup>

These baffling attributes of the demon are intriguing. In view of the aforementioned theophanic traditions, it is possible that Azazel here attempts to mimic the divine presence represented by the cherubic couple in the Holy of Holies by offering his own, now corrupted and demonic version of the sacred union.<sup>77</sup> Here the Adversary, who according to the Slavonic apocalypse appears to have his own *Kavod*,<sup>78</sup> given to him by God, possibly intends to fashion his own presence in a dualistic symmetrical correlation with the divine theophany which takes place between two intertwined angelic creatures.

## Conclusion

In conclusion of our study of the dualistic tendencies found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, we should say that the exact nature and possible sources of these conceptual developments remain shrouded in mystery. A number of studies have previously sought to explicate the dualistic tenets found in the Slavonic translations of several pseudepigraphical works, including the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and *2 Enoch*, through their alleged connections with the Bogomil movement, a dualistic sect that flourished in the Balkans in the late middle ages.

<sup>76</sup> Kulik 2004: 24.

<sup>77</sup> This imagery of Azazel posited between Adam and Eve might serve also as a profound anthropological symbol which possibly signifies the division of the Protoplast. Azazel might be envisioned here as the primordial knife separating androgynous proto-humanity and dividing it on the male and female sides.

<sup>78</sup> In this respect it is intriguing that several versions of the *Primary Adam Books* attest a tradition about the “glory” of Satan that the antagonist had even before his demotion. Latin *LAE* 12:1 “... since on account of you I was expelled and alienated from my glory, which I had in heaven in the midst of the angels.” Armenian *LAE* 12:1 “... because of you I went forth from my dwelling; and because of you I was alienated from the throne of the Cherubim who, having spread out a shelter, used to enclose me ...” Georgian *LAE* 12:1 “(it was) through you that I fell from my dwellings; (it was) by you that I was alienated from my own throne.” Anderson-Stone 1999: 15-15E.

These studies argued that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* might contain Bogomil dualistic interpolations.<sup>79</sup> Recent scholarship, however, is increasingly skeptical of such radical proposals and generally finds little or no connection between the aforementioned pseudepigrapha and the Bogomil movement.<sup>80</sup>

Our research helps further question the validity of the “Bogomil hypothesis,” noting the conceptual complexity of the dualistic tenets in the Slavonic apocalypse and their reliance on authentic Jewish traditions. The consistency and paramount significance of these developments for the overall conceptual framework of the pseudepigraphon suggests that they do not represent secondary additions and interpolations, but rather embody the main theological tendency of the Slavonic pseudepigraphon. This peculiar ideological trend shows remarkable similarities to the Palestinian dualism reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls and the dualistic currents manifested in the later Jewish mystical literature.

In view of these portentous developments, it is quite possible that the *Apocalypse of Abraham* in itself can represent an important conceptual bridge between the early Palestinian dualistic currents found in the Qumran documents and their later rabbinic counterparts. Additional investigation of the dualistic profile of the text’s chief antagonist will further clarify the true extent and nature of these significant theological advancements in the Slavonic apocalypse.

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<sup>79</sup> Ivanov 1925 [1970].

<sup>80</sup> Turdeanu 1981; Andersen 1987: 41-55.

# Mystical Motifs in a Greek Synagogal Prayer?

PIETER W. VAN DER HORST

## Introduction

The work called *Apostolic Constitutions* (henceforth: AC) is a late fourth-century church order, most probably compiled in Syrian Antioch in the 380s.<sup>1</sup> Its eight books deal with a wide variety of subjects (Christian behavior, ecclesiastical hierarchy, widows, orphans, martyrs, schisms, the Eucharist, prayers, ordinations, discipline, etc.). It has long been recognized that many of the prayer texts in books 7 and 8 have Jewish precedents and that several of these prayers even have a Jewish *Vorlage*. There is a consensus nowadays that the six prayers in AC 7.33-38 are christianized versions of the first six of the Seven Berakhot for Shabbat.<sup>2</sup> There is no consensus, however, regarding the degree of christianization of these prayers. Some advocate a maximalist position (Kohler, Bousset, Goodenough), others a minimalist one (Fiensy), and again others steer a middle course (Van der Horst). But apart from that point of disagreement, all scholars agree about the existence of a Jewish *Vorlage* for these six prayers, and they have good reasons to do so. Every single prayer text in AC 7 has at least one verbal parallel to one of the Hebrew Seven Benedictions for Shabbat. To give just one clear instance: the second prayer, in AC 7.34, ends with a clause in which God is called “the reviver of the dead” (*ho zôopoios tôn nekrôn*), just as the corresponding Hebrew berakhah (also the second, *Gevuroth*) ends with God as *mechayyeh ha-metim*. As Fiensy rightly puts it, “These verbal similarities and equivalentents would be striking enough if they appeared in isolated prayers. But, coming as they do in a prayer collection, and appearing for the most part in their proper order, they constitute a convincing corpus of evidence to suggest that AC 7.33-38 is a Greek version of

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<sup>1</sup> The most recent and best critical edition is the one by Metzger 1985-1987. Volume 3 contains the text and French translation of book 7, into which the prayer texts under discussion here have been incorporated.

<sup>2</sup> Kohler 1924: 387-425; Bousset 1979: 231-286; Goodenough 1935: 306-358; Fiensy 1985; van der Horst – Newman 2008: 1-93.

the Hebrew Seven Benedictions."<sup>3</sup> It is unknown when the Greek translation and reworking of these berakhot was undertaken, but that must have taken place between 150 and 350 C. E., most probably in the third century C. E.<sup>4</sup>

The third prayer in this collection (AC 7.35) stresses God's holiness and his being praised by holy ones in the Trisagion, Israel's liturgical union with these holy ones, and God's kingship. It also has the characteristic combination of quotes from Isa. 6:3 and Ezek. 3:12. These elements qualify it as the Greek parallel to the third berakhah of the Seven Benedictions, *Qedushah*. As we shall see, the Greek form displays several elements that occur also in liturgical texts from Qumran and in Hekhalot treatises. For that reason, a closer investigation of this prayer seemed to be a fitting tribute to Rachel Elior, who has done so much to enrich our understanding of the Hekhalot literature.

In this contribution, I will first present the entire text of the prayer in AC 7.35 in my own translation. In this translation, the patently Christian elements are *italicized*, the phrases that arguably belong to the Jewish source are in bold type, and what remains in regular type is the category of *dubia*.<sup>5</sup> In the following explanatory notes I will refrain from discussing at length the problems of how to disentangle the Jewish *Grundschrift* from its Christian redaction, and I will focus mainly on §§ 3-4, because these paragraphs form the most important section for our purposes. It will be shown that here we have an originally Jewish text in which, even after its Christian reworking, several ideas and elements in the phraseology stand in a tradition that dates back to the Second Temple period and later resurfaces in Jewish mystical treatises from late antiquity.

## Translation

AC 7.35

(1) **Great are you, O Lord almighty, and great is your power, and of your understanding there is no measure.**<sup>6</sup> O Creator (and) Saviour, you who are rich in favours, patient and bestowing mercy, you

<sup>3</sup> Fiensy 1985: 134.

<sup>4</sup> For details about the dating see van der Horst – Newman 2008: 21-27.

<sup>5</sup> For the arguments underlying these distinctions the reader is referred to my commentary in van der Horst – Newman 2008.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ps 146[147]:5.



do not withhold salvation from your creatures. For you are good by nature,<sup>7</sup> yet you spare sinners and call them to repentance. For your warnings are full of compassion. How could we subsist if you were to demand us to be judged quickly, when after having experienced so much patience on your part we are scarcely able to free ourselves from our weakness?

(2) Your power is proclaimed by the heavens and your steadfastness by the earth, even though it is shaken because it is hanging upon nothing.<sup>8</sup> The sea, which in its raging waves shepherds an innumerable company of living beings, is bound by the sandy beach and trembles before your will, and therefore it compels all to cry out: "How great are your works, O Lord! You have made all things in wisdom. The earth is full of your creation (Ps 103[104]:24)."

(3) A fiery army of angels and intellectual spirits say: "Only One is holy to Phelmouni" [or: "... say to Phelmouni: "Only one is holy""] (Dan 8:13), and **the holy seraphim, who together with the six-winged cherubim sing for you the song of victory, cry out with never-silent voices: "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of your glory! (Isa 6:3)." And the multitudes of the other orders – angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities, and powers – say with a loud voice: "Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place (Ezek 3:12)."**

(4) **Israel, your earthly assembly** (that was taken) out of the gentiles, **emulates the powers in heaven day and night when it sings** with an overflowing heart and a willing soul: "**The chariot of the Lord is ten thousand-fold thousands of thriving ones; the Lord is among them at Sinai, at the holy place (Ps 67[68]:18)."**

(5) Heaven knows the one who fixed it upon nothing, in the form of a vault, like a cube of stone,<sup>9</sup> the one who united earth and water with one another, the one who poured out the air that nourishes living beings, and conjoined fire with it for warmth and comfort in darkness. One is struck by the choir of stars that points to the one who counted them<sup>10</sup> and shows the one who named them, as do the living beings to the one who gave them life and trees to the one who makes them grow. All these things which have been made by your word manifest the strength of your power.

<sup>7</sup> The inherent goodness of God's very nature is not a biblical but a Greek philosophical idea.

<sup>8</sup> The idea that the earth is hanging upon nothing has a Greek cosmological background.

<sup>9</sup> See Isa 40:22 and Job 38:38 LXX.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Ps 146[147]:4.

(6) For that reason every human being should send up from the bottom of his heart a hymn (of thanks) for all that to you *through Christ*, since it is thanks to you that he has power over all things.<sup>11</sup>

(7) For you demonstrate your goodness by your benefactions, and your generosity by your deeds of compassion, you the only almighty one. For when you want to do something, the ability to do it is yours. For your eternal might cools flames, muzzles lions, tames sea monsters, raises up those who are sick, overturns powers, and overthrows an army of enemies and a people that is counted among the arrogant.<sup>12</sup>

(8) You are the one who is in heaven, the one who is on the earth, the one who is in the sea, the one who, though being in finite areas, is himself infinite.<sup>13</sup> "For there is no limit to your greatness (Ps 144[145]:3)." For this oracle is not ours, Master, but your servant's, who says: "And you will know in your heart that the Lord your God is a God in heaven above and upon earth below, and there is no other beside him (Deut 4:39)."

(9) For there is no God except you alone,<sup>14</sup> no holy one except you, Lord, the God of knowledge,<sup>15</sup> the God of the holy ones, the Holy One above all holy ones. "For the holy ones are under your hands (Deut 33:3)." (You are) glorious and highly exalted, invisible by nature, and inscrutable in judgments. Your life is in want of nothing; your continuity is unchangeable and unfailing; your activity is untiring; your greatness is unlimited; your beauty is everlasting; your habitation is inaccessible; your dwelling place is immovable; your knowledge is without beginning; your truth is unchangeable; your work is unmediated; your power is unassailable; your monarchy is not in need of a successor; your kingdom is without end; your strength is irresistible; your army is great in numbers.

(10) For you are the Father of Wisdom, the one who as a cause founded the creation through a mediator, the supplier of providence, the giver of laws, the fulfiller of needs, the avenger of the ungodly and the rewarder of the righteous, *the God and Father of Christ and the Lord of those who are pious towards him, whose promise is reliable, who is incorruptible in his judgment, whose opinion is immutable, whose loyalty is unceasing, whose gratitude is eternal, through whom every rational and holy creature owes you worship worthy of you.*

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Gen 1:28.

<sup>12</sup> For the various motifs in this line cf. Dan 3 and 6; Jonah 2; 2 Kings 5 and 19.

<sup>13</sup> Again a typically Greek concept.

<sup>14</sup> Echoes of Isa 45 etc.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Sam 2:3 LXX.

## Comments on §§ 3-4

(3) In this paragraph God's holiness is emphasized as in the *Qedushah*. "The fiery army of angels and the intellectual spirits say: 'Only One is holy for Phelmouni'" (καὶ στρατὸς ἀγγέλων φλεγόμενος καὶ πνεύματα νοερά λέγουσιν· Εἷς ἅγιος τῷ Φελμουני). Other translations have: "(...) the intellectual spirits say to Phelmouni: Only one is holy." The Greek is a quote from Dan 8:13, where the visionary sees angels ("holy ones") and hears "a holy one speaking and another holy one answering him, whoever he was," where the Theodotion version has the words quoted here, εἷς ἅγιος τῷ Φελμουני = "one holy one (said) to Phelmouni." The Greek translators (Theodotion, Aquila and LXX)<sup>16</sup> seem not to have understood the Hebrew *palmoni*, "a certain one," and hence transliterated it. Be that as it may, both in the Hebrew and in the Greek biblical text *palmoni*/Phelmouni is the one addressed, but in the context of our prayer that no longer seems to be the case, since the word order militates against it: λέγουσιν "εἷς ἅγιος" τῷ Φελμουני would be very odd Greek. However, the alternative is also problematic, for it is hard to discover what the composer of the prayer could have meant by "Only One is holy to Phelmouni." The whole phrase is probably to be attributed to the compiler, since in other passages where he inserts quotes from Daniel he uses the Theodotion version as well.<sup>17</sup> The angels are here called a "fiery army" (στρατὸς ... φλεγόμενος) because angels were often thought to have a body of fire (on the basis of Ps 103[104]:4 ὁ ποιῶν τοὺς ἀγγέλους αὐτοῦ πνεύματα καὶ τοὺς λειτουργοὺς αὐτοῦ πῦρ φλέγον).<sup>18</sup>

"The holy seraphim, who together with the six-winged cherubim sing for you the song of victory, cry out with never-silent voices: 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth, heaven and earth are full of your glory!'" (ἅγιος, ἅγιος, ἅγιος Κύριος Σαβαώθ, πλήρης ὁ οὐρανὸς καὶ ἡ γῆ τῆς δόξης σου). Apart from some minor elements, the passage does not show traces of the compiler's vocabulary, and hence most probably was in the source. The words "the song of victory" (τὴν ἐπινίκιον ᾠδὴν) do appear in other early Christian liturgies as well and may have replaced another expression in the source. That seraphim and cherubim are mentioned here in combination has to do with the fact that seraphim are mentioned in Isaiah 6, as the

<sup>16</sup> See Reider – Turner 1966: 249.

<sup>17</sup> Fiensy 1985: 177 gives references.

<sup>18</sup> For a discussion of this motif see Olyan 1993: 29, 71-73.

six-winged angels who sing the Trisagion quoted here, and that the angels who are mentioned in the context of Ezek 3:12, quoted immediately hereafter, are identified as cherubim in Ezekiel 10; the same combination occurs in 2 *Enoch* 21.1. The quote of Isa 6:3 is not exact, for the Hebrew and also the Greek versions of the biblical text have only “the earth is full of your glory” (not: heaven and earth), but most early Christian liturgies have the formula “heaven and earth are full of your glory.”<sup>19</sup> So “heaven and” may also be an addition by the compiler.<sup>20</sup> The various versions of the *Qedushah* (known as the *Qedushah de-Amidah*, the *Qedushah de-Yotser*, and the *Qedushah de-Sidra*<sup>21</sup>) always follow the biblical text, so the probability that the compiler added the words familiar to him from his own Christian liturgical tradition seems to be great.<sup>22</sup> Some scholars, however, argue that the formula “heaven and earth” in quotations of Isa 6:3 occurs in early Jewish sources as well, e. g., *T. Isaac* 6:5, 24; 2 *Enoch* 21:1.<sup>23</sup> These documents were preserved in Christian circles, however, and may thus have been altered so as to make them conform to Christian liturgical usage. Yet the possibility can certainly not be excluded that the formula “heaven and earth” does derive from a Jewish source,

<sup>19</sup> See on this change Werner 1959: 282-287. At p. 285 Werner asserts that the Targum on Isaiah demonstrates that the reading “heaven and earth” has a Jewish origin, but this reading is not found in any edition of Targ. Isa. What he probably means is that the Thrice Holy is diversified in the Targum as holy in heaven, holy on earth, and holy in eternity (“And one would receive from the other, saying ‘Holy in the high heavens, the place of his residence, holy on earth, the work of His might, holy in eternity, The Lord of Hosts! The splendor of His glory fills all the earth!’”), but that is not the same as the formula “heaven and earth are full of his glory.” On the many variant forms in which Isa. 6:3 is quoted see also Newman 2004: 123-134; Baumstark 1923: 18-32; Gruenwald, 1988: 145-173. Note that Isa 6:3 is also quoted partially in the angelic song in Rev 4:8.

<sup>20</sup> In the formulation in 1 *Clement* 34:6 πλήρης πάσα ἡ κτίσις τῆς δόξης αὐτοῦ the words “the entire creation” could be taken to be the equivalent of “heaven and earth.” For further discussion see Baumstark 1923; Newman 2004; and Flusser 1963: 129-152, esp. 131-2. See also van Unnik 1983: 326-361; Spinks 1991: 25-54; Levine 2000: 540-544.

<sup>21</sup> On these three forms of the *Qedushah* see Spinks 1991: 39-45; Elbogen 1967: 61-67; Werner 1970: 318-370, esp. 334-349; Nulman 1996: 188-191; Elior 1997: 217-267, here esp. 233-234 n. 36, 255 n. 73.

<sup>22</sup> *Contra* Fiensy 1985: 178, who appeals to Flusser for his position, but Flusser 1963: 132 n. 2, says about AC 7.35: “[D]a das ganze Gebet christlich überarbeitet ist, könnte natürlich das Trishagion an den christlichen Ritus angeglichen sein.” In the same note Flusser tentatively suggests that perhaps originally “heaven and” figured in the *Qedushah* but that the text was later corrected towards the biblical wording. That must remain speculation. See also Lietzmann 1979: 674.

<sup>23</sup> See Böttrich 1994-1995: 10-36 (with the criticism by Löhr 2003: 383 n. 96).

since one of the *Hodayot* from Qumran clearly alludes to Isa 6:3 with the words, “Your holy spirit (...) *the fullness of heaven and earth* (...) your glory, the fullness of ...” (1QH VIII 12 [formerly XVI 3]). Moreover, both the (admittedly later) Old-Slavonic and the Hebrew versions of the *Prayer of Jacob* have “heaven and earth” in their quote of the Trisagion, as does the longer recension of 2 *Enoch* 21:1.<sup>24</sup> On balance the overall situation remains too uncertain, however, to justify printing the words “heaven and” in bold type as having belonged to the Jewish source. Another difference with Isa 6:3 is that the biblical text describes the praise of God by angels in the third person (“his glory”),<sup>25</sup> whereas here it has become a direct address of God in the second person (“your glory”), a trait more often seen in Christian versions of the Trisagion.<sup>26</sup>

“And the multitudes of the other orders – angels, archangels, thrones, dominions, principalities, authorities, and powers – say with a loud voice: ‘Blessed be the glory of the Lord from his place’ (Ezek 3:12 εὐλογημένη ἡ δόξα Κυρίου ἐκ τοῦ τόπου αὐτοῦ).”<sup>27</sup> It is precisely this combination of quotes from Isa 6:3 and Ezek 3:12 (and their distribution over two different groups of angels) that is the characteristic core of the *Qedushah* and is to be found as early as the Tosefta treatise *Ber.* 1.9 and also in later Hekhalot treatises such as 3 *Enoch* § 2, *Hekhalot Rabbati* § 197, and *Ma’aseh Merkavah* § 555.<sup>28</sup> Even though this is now generally regarded as a proof of the origin of this prayer as a form of the *Qedushah*, it should be noticed, however, that in the same period that the AC were compiled, the Antiochene

<sup>24</sup> See Leicht 1999: 140-176, esp. 151 and 175. The Slavonic Text is to be found in the second chapter of the *Ladder of Jacob*; see Lunt in Charlesworth 1983-1985, 2: 401-411, here 408; the Hebrew version was first published in Schäfer – Shaked 1997, 2: 27-78. It is also to be kept in mind that the expression “God of heaven and earth” occurs already in Gen 24:3, 7, and that the designation “God who created heaven and earth” occurs *passim*; see Habel 1972: 321-337. Note also Jer 23:24: “Do I not fill heaven and earth? says the Lord.” For other ways of quoting Isa 6:3 in free and inexact forms in ancient Jewish documents see Böttrich 1994-1995: 29-32.

<sup>25</sup> Thus also in the prayer in AC 8.12.27. The two recensions of 2 *Enoch* 21.1 also vary between “your glory” and “his glory” (see Böttrich 1994-1995: 19).

<sup>26</sup> See Böttrich 1994-1995: 12; Newman 2004: 124. This feature, however, is also paralleled in the Hebrew and Slavonic versions of the *Prayer of Jacob*; see Leicht 1999: 175.

<sup>27</sup> On the question of whether or not the reading with *barukh* (blessed) is a scribal mistake for *berum* (on high) see Halperin 1988: 44-5.

<sup>28</sup> Perhaps this combination is found already in Qumran texts such as 4Q405 (= 4Q*Shir-Shabb*). See Chazon 2003: 42-43. Cf. also Chazon 1999: 7-17. On the antiquity of this combination see also the discussions by Falk 1998: 138-146, and Spinks 1991: 53-54. For its occurrence in Hekhalot literature see, e. g., Swartz 1992: 129 (on *Ma’as. Merk.* § 555-556), and van der Horst 1999: 37 with n. 16 (on *Sefer Hekhalot* 2).

Church Father John Chrysostom quoted this very same combination of biblical verses in his first sermon against Christian judaizers (*Adv. Jud.* 1.1 [without “heaven and’”). This observation cannot fail to make the *communis opinio* somewhat less certain. It is counterbalanced, however, by the striking fact that, whereas the biblical text of Ezek 3:12 does not explicitly state that it is the angelic beings who recite the blessing, this is made explicit in the Targum to this verse (by adding *we’amerin*), exactly as is done here in our text (λέγουσιν).

Lists of angelic powers are to be found in both early Jewish and Christian sources (e. g., *1 Enoch* 61.10, 71.7-9; *T. Adam* 4; 1 Pet 3:22),<sup>29</sup> so the phenomenon in itself does not point in a certain direction, but the sequence of θρόνοι, κυριότητες, ἀρχαί, and ἐξουσίαι seems to be too much of a quote of Col 1:16 to go unsuspected. Since “archangels” further appears only in the compiler’s material, we may conclude that the whole list is his work.<sup>30</sup> Fiensy’s attempt to save “angels” and “powers” is not convincing, since after “the multitudes of other orders” it would be futile to name only two. Bousset, too, thinks the list of angelic powers may be from the Jewish source (with reference to *1 Enoch* 61.10) and suggests that Col 1:16 may draw upon such a list, but that is not convincing.<sup>31</sup> The concept of an angelic liturgy has ancient roots and is attested in many early Jewish sources, especially in a wide variety of apocalyptic and mystical documents (*2 Enoch* 8.8, 17.1, 20.3; *4QShirot ‘Olat ha-Shabbat*; 11Q5 xxvi [Hymn to the Creator]; and *passim* in the *Hekhalot* literature).<sup>32</sup>

(4) This whole paragraph derives from the Jewish source, apart from the phrase “with an overflowing heart and a willing soul” (καρδία πλήρει καὶ ψυχῇ θελούσῃ) which “looks like a stock phrase since it appears in *AC* 8.6.12 and 8.16.5” (Fiensy 178).<sup>33</sup> The formula ἐκκλησία ἡ ἐξ ἐθνῶν may look like a Christian formula at first sight, but it may also be an expression for God’s having chosen Israel from among the gentiles (*bachar banu mikkol ha’ammim*); the expression remains of doubtful provenance, however. The epithet “earthly” (ἐπίγειος) is added here in order to stress that the people of Israel forms the earthly counterpart of the heavenly powers (= the angelic orders) in their common liturgy, which is conducted in unison by angels above and the people of Israel below. Ἀμιλλωμένη usually means “com-

<sup>29</sup> See Fiensy 1985: 69 n. 9, for other references.

<sup>30</sup> Moreover, “angels” is text-critically uncertain.

<sup>31</sup> Bousset 1979: 437.

<sup>32</sup> Fiensy 1985: 69 n. 10, gives more references (but not all of them relevant). See now especially Elior 2004b: 165-200, 232-265.

<sup>33</sup> But cf. already 2 Macc 1:3 καρδία μεγάλη καὶ ψυχῇ βουλομένη.

peting, emulating," but here it indicates that Israel strives to join in and keep in harmony with the angelic choirs in their heavenly liturgy.<sup>34</sup> This motif of the coordination of heavenly and earthly liturgy, of the united praise between the earthly and heavenly communities, is well-known in the early history of Jewish worship. It occurs already in the Qumran *Hodayoth* and in 4QShirot 'Olat ha-Shabbat.<sup>35</sup> Consider, e. g., 1QH XI 21-23: "He [a purified human being] can take a place with the host of the holy ones [= angels] and can enter in communion with the congregation of the sons of heaven [= angels]. You cast eternal destiny for man with the spirits of knowledge [= angels], so that he praises your name in the community of jubilation." And the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, e. g., 4Q400 2 1-7: "... to praise your glory wondrously with the gods of knowledge [= angels] and the praiseworthiness of your kingship with the holiest of the holy ones [= angels]."<sup>36</sup> See also 4Q401 frg. 14 and 4Q503 frgs. 7-9, 11, 15, 30. The motif occurs in rabbinic literature as well, e. g., b. *Hullin* 91b: "The ministering angels do not begin to sing praises in heaven until Israel sings below on earth."<sup>37</sup> It is moreover a recurring theme in the later mystical *Hekhalot* literature;<sup>38</sup> see, e. g., *Hekhalot Rabbati* § 101: "Within the 185 000 parasangs no creature can approach that place, because of the spurts of fire which dash forth from the mouths of the Cherubim and Ofanim and Holy Creatures while they are opening their mouths to say *Qadosh* when Israel says *Qadosh*, as it is said, 'Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of his glory'" (cf. *ibid.* § 260).<sup>39</sup> What Daniel Falk says about the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* could equally be applied to the community behind the present prayer: "[T]he group behind these songs felt the Sabbath to be an occasion on which it was especially suitable to express unity

<sup>34</sup> For the variant forms of joint human-angelic liturgy see Chazon 2003: 34-47 (there older literature).

<sup>35</sup> See Newsom 1998: 173-401; Schiffman 1982: 15-47; Chazon 2003: 43-45; Chazon 1999: 10-11; also Schäfer 1975: 36-40; Schäfer 2006: 37-66. For the debate on whether or not the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* are mystical songs see also Hamacher 1996: 119-154. The best recent introduction and survey is Alexander 2006: esp. 13-73.

<sup>36</sup> Translation by García Martínez-Tigchelaar 1997-1998: 167.

<sup>37</sup> By quoting this passage from the Talmud I do not imply that I see the rabbis as a conduit between the people of the Dead Sea scrolls and the *Hekhalot* mystics. I agree with Halperin and Elior that they were not.

<sup>38</sup> See Elior 1997; Elior 2004b: 232-265; Swartz 1992 *passim*. Note what Swartz says about the role of prayer in Merkavah mysticism: "The prayers which formed the basis for *Ma'aseh Merka'vah* were not meant primarily to lift the worshipper from earthly contemplation to heavenly ascent, but to express his participation in an earthly liturgy corresponding to the angelic liturgy" (Swartz 1992: 7).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. also *Apoc. Abr.* 17.

between the earthly and heavenly community in worship by reciting descriptions of the angelic praise with heavy reliance on the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel and focusing on the themes of God's holiness and kingship."<sup>40</sup>

The quote from Ps 67[68]:18 ("The chariot of the Lord is ten thousand-fold thousands of thriving ones; the Lord is among them at Sinai, at the holy place") also plays an important role in early Jewish angelological and mystical speculations, if only because God's chariot (*rekhev*) is prominent in this verse.<sup>41</sup> We find this passage quoted in, for example, *Sefer Hekhalot* (3 *Enoch*) § 37: "He [God] has the chariots of twice ten thousand, as it is written, 'The chariots of God are twice ten thousand, thousand of angels.'"<sup>42</sup> But see also the angelological discussion of this verse in *Pes. Rabb.* 21.8.

## Conclusion

By way of conclusion I wish to address the question of whether what we have here is a mystical prayer. The question mark in the title of this contribution already indicates my strong reservations in this respect. There can be little doubt after the previous paragraphs that several of the motifs found in this synagogal prayer play a prominent role in the mystical texts of late antique Judaism. But our prayer does not give us any cause to think that this Greek form of the *Qedushah* had its *Sitz im Leben* in mystical circles. Not only does the fact that the other Jewish prayers in AC 7.33-38 do not display any mystical elements militate against this conclusion; the prayer itself seems to give indications that the "mystical motifs" did not function in a mystical *Sitz im Leben*. The most important indication is that § 4 says: "Israel, your earthly assembly, emulates the powers in heaven day and night when it sings." The fact that the text so emphatically states that it is Israel *on earth* (ἐπίγειος) that coordinates its praise with the liturgy of the angels *in heaven* (κατ' οὐρανόν) seems to preclude any notion of a mystical ascent to heaven where the believers join the angels in their heavenly liturgy. What Esther Chazon states about 4Q503 also applies to the prayer under consideration, namely, that it "lacks *merkavah* speculation, is completely devoid of any mysti-

<sup>40</sup> Falk 1998: 145. See also Nitzan 1994a: 276-282, 367-369.

<sup>41</sup> Halperin 1988: 143-149, 288-289, 316-318, 501-504; also Olyan 1993: 50-51. On divine thrones and chariots see Arbel 2003: 112-117.

<sup>42</sup> On this translation of this Psalm verse see Charlesworth 1983-1985, 1: 308 note c.



cal form, content, or function and fails to reveal priestly roots. This finding indicates that joint praise was not limited to the context of *merkavah* mysticism.<sup>43</sup> This sober judgment of an expert in the early history of Jewish prayer and liturgy confirms my impression that the “mystical” elements in our prayer are of a literary nature: they take up motifs from a prayer tradition that in some of its phases may have had a mystical nature. But in the synagogues of Syrian Antioch, where these prayers functioned on the Sabbath in the period when the compiler of the *Constitutiones Apostolicae* adopted and adapted them in order to obviate the needs of his judaizing Christian parishioners,<sup>44</sup> these “mystical” phrases were probably no more than literary remnants or echoes of a mystical tradition that had its earliest attestations in the Dead Sea Scrolls and later resurfaced with new mystical potential in Merkavah circles.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Chazon 1999: 16.

<sup>44</sup> See van der Horst 2000: 228-238.

<sup>45</sup> See Elior 2006b: 1-18.

### III. TRANSFORMATION



# “A Chariot of Light Borne by Four Bright Eagles”: Eve’s Vision of the Chariot in the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve*

DAPHNA ARBEL

Visions of the chariot-throne (*merkavah*) and of celestial palaces occupy a central role in the work of Rachel Elijor. Examining priestly traditions of the Temple, liturgical literature from Qumran, apocalypses of the Second Temple period, and later *hekhalot* texts, Elijor’s scholarship has treated these issues in the context of the crystallization of early stages of Jewish mysticism, and the continuing priestly attempts to transport their worship from the lost earthly temple into supernal visionary sanctuaries.<sup>1</sup> Her studies have treated visions of the chariot-throne and heavenly palaces as associated with visionary experiences, revelations, mystical beliefs, exegetical speculations, internalized sacred practices, poetic-mystical expressions, and continuing priestly spiritual-ritualistic traditions. In this paper I would like to honor Rachel Elijor by treating the notions of visions of the chariot-throne and celestial temples from yet another perspective.

My focus is on a narrative scene from the apocryphal work known as the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* (*GLAE*).<sup>2</sup> This work, written some-

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<sup>1</sup> Elijor 2009; Elijor 2006c: 749-791; Elijor 2006a: 83-103; Elijor 2004a; Elijor 2004b; idem, Elijor 1999: 101-158; Elijor 1997: 217-267.

<sup>2</sup> Numerous apocryphal works, composed between the 3rd and 7th centuries, narrate the *Life of Adam and Eve* after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden. This narrative, which has survived in Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic, and Coptic, gained an enormous popularity and influence in antiquity. Most scholars concur that the text was written originally in Greek and that all of the six versions stem from some form of a Greek *Vorlage*. Yet, as Johannes Tromp has shown, there is no fixed Greek text, but rather a series of extant witnesses to a textual tradition. Moreover, the twenty-six manuscripts of this text can be dated only approximately and are uniformly late. On the Books of Adam and Eve (including the Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic, and Coptic versions) manuscripts, editions, translations, relationship of texts, and dates, see discussions and references in Anderson, Stone, and Tromp 2000; Anderson and Stone 1999; de Jonge and Tromp 1977; Stone 1992. On the *Greek Life of Adam and Eve* see Bertrand 1987; Eldridge 2001; de Jonge 2000b: 239-249; de Jonge and Tromp 1977: 18-20, 31-35, 45-55; Johnson 1985:

where in the period 100-300 C. E., includes one very short and highly unusual passage, found in *GLAE* 33-34, that abandons Eve's characteristic portrayal throughout the narrative as the primary transgressor and presents her as one who gazes at the glory of God and his chariot, sees angelic rituals in the celestial temple, and beholds great mysteries before God. In the following discussion I will not focus on exegetical, phenomenological, mystical, and experimental aspects that are often associated with these notions or on the relation of this depiction of Eve to the lives of real historical women in antiquity. Rather, I will examine this passage in light of the broader cultural discourse that is associated with visionary experience, and advance three interrelated suggestions.

First, I suggest that this depiction of Eve in *GLAE* 33-34 betrays affinities with formulaic tropes and patterns of representation found in a variety of Qumranic, pseudepigraphic, and *merkavah* traditions. These often describe visions of the chariot-throne, heavenly temples, and divine secrets as associated with a series of typically male "ideal figures," such as patriarchs, prophets, members of holy communities, and seers, that are considered worthy, credible, and highly regarded in their respective groups. Second, I consider ideological and gendered aspects that seem to be associated with this *GLAE* representation of Eve. In particular, I suggest that by employing the language of visionary experience and utilizing these stock themes and tropes, the *GLAE* 33-34 implicitly casts Eve as one of these ideal figures and associates her with their virtues. In so doing, it abandons typical portrayals of Eve as an inferior sinner, and subtly reconstructs her as a figure of high status, visionary abilities, and spiritual standing. Finally, I conclude by considering the account of Eve's vision in *GLAE* 33-34 within the complete redacted *GLAE* narrative and its multiple traditions of Eve.

## I. The Visions of Eve: *GLAE* 33-34

Before I develop my examination further, it is useful to present a brief outline of the thematic progression of the *GLAE*. This text, like other versions of the primary Books of Adam and Eve, draws on the Genesis account of Adam and Eve as well as on other traditions. It expands the account of the first couple's transgression and devel-

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249-295; Levison 1988; Levison 2001; Nagel 1974; Sharpe 1969; Sweet 1993; Tromp 2005. On conflicting representations of Eve in the *GLAE* see Arbel 2010.

ops additional traditions around their lives after the expulsion from Paradise. These are described in several sections: an introduction, the murder of Abel by Cain, the birth of Seth (1:1-5:1); Adam's illness (5:1-6:3); Adam's account of the transgression (7:1-8:2); Eve and Seth's failed quest for the healing oil of life (9:1-14:2); Eve's account of the transgression (14:3-30); Adam's death and burial, Eve's visions, Eve's death and burial (31-43).

The short scene of Eve's vision is set in the broader account of Adam's death (*GLAE* 31-46) that describes how, after his passing, Eve confesses her sins and prays to God in order to intercede for Adam's soul in heaven. The angel of humanity then directs her to behold the assumption of Adam's spirit (31-32:4), and Eve becomes privy to three visions. She sees a chariot of light borne by four bright eagles descending to the place where Adam is lying (33:2-33:3); she gazes at angelic rituals of incense offerings at the heavenly temple (33:1-5); finally, she observes two great and fearful mysteries before the presence of God and, being overwhelmed with fear, she weeps (34:1a).

The account of Adam's death develops further and provides additional details concerning heavenly sights and visions that are seen by both Eve and her son Seth. The present paper, however, is concerned solely with the above-cited passage in which Eve is featured as the main protagonist, as well as the exclusive beholder of visions. This is indicated several times through the recurring employment of the verb ἰδοῦ ("to behold") that emphasizes the visionary context of Eve's own spectacles<sup>3</sup>: Eve beholds God's chariot of light (33:2); she beholds the angelic ritual of incense in the heavenly temple (33:4); and finally she beholds two divine, fearful mysteries (34:1). The description reads as follows:

Even as Eve prayed on her knees, behold, the angel of humanity came to her, and raised her up and said: "Rise up, Eve, from your penitence, for behold, Adam your husband has gone out of his body. Rise up and behold his spirit borne aloft to meet his Maker." And Eve rose up and put her hand on the face [of Adam], and the angel said to her, "Lift up your hand from that which is of the earth." And she gazed steadfastly into heaven, and beheld a chariot of light, borne by four bright eagles, [and] it was impossible for any man born of woman to tell the glory of them or behold their faces; and angels going before the chariot; and when they came to the place where your father Adam was, the chariot halted and the Seraphim were between the father and the chariot. And I beheld golden

<sup>3</sup> Compare, for example, the language of visions in the Septuagint Versions of Ezekiel 43:3, Daniel 7:13, and Zechariah 1:8.

censers and three bowls, and behold all the angels with (AFTER?) censers and frankincense came in haste to the incense-offering and blew upon it and the smoke of the incense veiled the firmament. And the angels fell down to God, crying aloud and saying, "JAEL, Holy One, have pardon, for he is Your image, and the work of Your holy hands." And then I, Eve, beheld two great and fearful mysteries before the presence of God and I wept for fear... (32:3-34:1a)<sup>4</sup>

Several scholars have offered observations on this description, paying particular attention to the themes of the chariot and the offering of incense in the temple. For instance, Michael Eldridge has suggested that the description of the chariot that bore Adam's soul on his upward journey points to familiar Hellenistic Greek themes regarding the transportation of the soul after death by means such as winds, wind-gods, eagles, phoenixes, winged horses, and chariots of the sun.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, Anne Marie Sweet has suggested that this is a psychopompic chariot carrying Adam's soul to heaven. Sweet has also treated this theme in the context of Eve's repentance, suggesting that Eve's vision of the chariot emphasizes that her penitence was indeed accepted.<sup>6</sup> In a similar vein, Timo Eskola has argued that this scene is cultic, related to Jewish atonement before the throne.<sup>7</sup> Treating the theme of the angelic incense offerings, John Levison has suggested that this ritual symbolizes the offering of prayers in the heavenly sanctuary.<sup>8</sup> Marinus de Jonge and Johannes Tromp have examined this theme in the context of the origin of the *GLAE*, and suggested that the incense offerings and aromatic fragrances in the *GLAE* reflect an ancient Jewish tradition.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, Rivka Nir has maintained that this offering expresses the idea of Christian forgive-

<sup>4</sup> See Tromp 2005: 160-163: ἔτι εὐχομένης τῆς Εὐας, ἰδοὺ ἦλθεν πρὸς αὐτὴν ὁ ἄγγελος τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος, καὶ ἀνέστησεν αὐτὴν λέγων· ἀνάστα, Εὐά, ἐκ τῆς μετανοίας σου. ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ Ἀδάμ ὁ ἀνὴρ σου ἐξῆλθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ. ἀνάστα καὶ ἴδε τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἀναφερόμενον εἰς τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτὸν τοῦ ἀπαντήσαι αὐτῷ ... ἀναστᾶσα δὲ Εὐά ἐπέβαλεν τὴν χεῖρα αὐτῆς εἰς τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῆς, καὶ ἀτένισασα εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν εἶδεν ἄρμα φωτὸς ἐρχόμενον ὑπὸ τεσσάρων ἀετῶν λαμπρῶν ὧν οὐκ ἦν δυνατόν τινα γεννηθῆναι ἀπὸ κοιτίας, ἢ εἰπεῖν τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν, ἢ ἰδεῖν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν καὶ ἀγγέλους προσάγοντας τὸ ἄρμα. ὅτε δὲ ἦλθον ὅπου ἔκειτο ὁ πατὴρ ὑμῶν Ἀδάμ, ἔστη τὸ ἄρμα καὶ τὰ σεραφίμ ἀνὰ μέσον τοῦ πατρὸς καὶ τοῦ ἁρματος. εἶδον δὲ ἐγὼ θυμιατήρια χρυσοῦ καὶ τρεῖς φιάλας, καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι μετὰ λίβανον καὶ τὰ θυμιατήρια ἦλθον ἐν σπουδῇ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον καὶ ἐνεφύσουν αὐτά, καὶ ἡ ἀτμίς τοῦ θυμιάματος ἐκάλυπεν τὰ στερεώματα. καὶ προσέπεσαν οἱ ἄγγελοι τῷ θεῷ βωῶντες καὶ λέγοντες· Ἰαήλ, ἅγιε, συγχώρησον, ὅτι εἰκὼν σου ἐστὶν καὶ ποίημα τῶν χειρῶν σου τῶν ἁγίων. εἶδον ἐγὼ Εὐά δύο μεγάλα καὶ φοβερὰ μυστήρια ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ. καὶ ἐκλαυσα ἐκ τοῦ φόβου ...

<sup>5</sup> Eldridge 2001: 43-44.

<sup>6</sup> Sweet 1993: 156.

<sup>7</sup> Eskola 2001: 112.

<sup>8</sup> Levison 1988: 171.

<sup>9</sup> de Jonge and Tromp 1977: 69-70. See also Bertrand 1987: 36.

ness and underlines the Christian nature of the *GLAE*.<sup>10</sup> While these studies have raised significant observations, little scholarly attention has been directed towards elucidating the descriptions of the three juxtaposed visions together, or toward their significance for the characterization of the figure of Eve in the *GLAE*.

In this paper, by contrast, I suggest that this seemingly simple depiction of the visions Eve is said to have beheld – God’s chariot-throne, angelic rituals in the celestial temple, and divine mysteries – as well as the response of awe, weeping, and fear that follow these visions, are linked together. Evidently, these themes are not integral to the biblical account from which the *GLAE* partially draws. Yet, as I will demonstrate below, these themes are closely linked with widespread traditions and formulaic patterns of representation that are embedded in a variety of sources from the broad cultural world in which the *GLAE* originated, and are characteristically associated with esteemed seers, privileged visionaries, members of holy communities, worthy mediators, exceptional mystics, and other ideal figures.<sup>11</sup> By drawing on these stock themes and patterns of representation, the *GLAE* appends to its description of Eve’s visions additional intertextual meanings. It associates Eve with these ideal figures and their intrinsic worth to implicitly characterize her as an esteemed figure.

The scope of this paper does not allow a comprehensive and systematic investigation of all relevant and varied evidence. Thus, I confine myself here to select examples. Because of the difficulty in accurately dating the *GLAE* and its many manuscripts, it is impossible to make firm claims about its direct cultural and literary contacts with other sources. Instead, I will adopt the approach suggested by Moshe Idel: “Only an attempt to collect the relevant material from the many bodies of literature can facilitate the reconstruction of early conceptions or an intellectual system not explicitly found in any of the extant texts.”<sup>12</sup>

## II. “A Chariot of Light Borne by Four Bright Eagles”

A variety of sources, from the late Second Temple period to late antiquity, have employed images and themes related to the chariot-throne vision. These sources include, for example, Qumran fragments of Enoch (4Q204), the Aramaic *Testament of Levi* (4Q213), and Pseudo-Ezekiel (4Q385); the *Book of the Watchers*; the *Similitudes of*

<sup>10</sup> Nir 2004: 32-34.

<sup>11</sup> George Nickelsburg and John Collins have constructed a set of ideal or exemplary figures featured in the literature of early Judaism. Inevitably, no general typography has been advanced, but the authors noted the predominance of righteous figures from past, future, and contemporaneous Jewish experience. See Nickelsburg and Collins 1980.

<sup>12</sup> See Idel 1990: 238.



*Enoch*; the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Dramatist (frg. 6, lines 8-10); the *Apocalypse of Abraham* (18:3, 12-13); the *Ladder of Jacob* (2:7-18); the *Latin Vita of Adam and Eve* (25:2-3); the *Testament of Abraham* (10:1; 11:4); the *Testament of Isaac* (6:4-5); the *Fourth Book of Ezra* (8:20-25); the *Testament of Job* (33:9 52:4-7); and the *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature. In many depictions, images from Ezekiel's awe-inspiring vision, described in Ezekiel chapter 1, were combined with themes from Ezekiel's visions described in chapters 3, 10, and 43, as well as with themes from Isaiah 6 and Daniel 7, and came to be known technically as the "vision of the chariot-throne" (Hebrew: מֵרֶכֶב; Greek: ἄρμα).<sup>13</sup>

Despite obvious discrepancies in the diverse descriptions, a large number of idiosyncratic traditions reveal several common formulaic conceptions around the vision of the chariot-throne.<sup>14</sup> First, the chariot-throne is envisioned as both God's mode of transportation and his throne in the heavenly sanctuary. Second, most descriptions emphasize the overwhelmingly radiant, blazing appearance of the chariot-throne, its movement or wheels, the fabulous creatures – *hayyot* – on its four sides, each bearing one of four faces (human being, lion, ox, and eagle), and the angels and cherubim that accompany it. Third, visions of the chariot-throne are typically ascribed to esteemed figures – historical or pseudepigraphical – who are routinely characterized by their

<sup>13</sup> The term chariot, ἄρμα / *merkavah*, is not explicitly mentioned in Ezekiel's first-person account in chapter one but is derived from 1 Chr 28:18, which refers to "the chariot of the cherubim" that carried the ark of the covenant in the holy of holies. The term chariot was applied to Ezekiel's vision later, by the priest and author Yeshua Ben Sira in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century B. C. E., who recounts how Ezekiel "saw a vision and described the different orders of the chariot" (Ben Sira 49:8). In a similar vein, the Septuagint replaces the Hebrew term for "vision" with the Greek term for "chariot," and it renders Ezekiel 43:3 as "the vision of the chariot [ἄρματος] which I saw was like the vision which I saw at the river Chobar," whereas in the Masoratic text Ezekiel says, "The vision I saw was like the vision I had seen ..." Accordingly, in post-biblical tradition the vision of God's heavenly throne came to be known as the vision of the chariot – the *merkavah*. We can see this tendency, for example, in Pseudo-Ezekiel from Qumran (4Q385), which employs the term "chariot" to describes the throne vision of Ezekiel: "The vision which Ezekiel saw ... the gleam of the chariot and four living creatures" (frg. 4:5-6 in: García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1998). On the image of the chariot-throne see Halperin 1988; Elior 2004b: 63-81; Eskola 2001: 1-123.

<sup>14</sup> Here I do not treat the ongoing discussion about whether literary descriptions of visions of the chariot-throne reflect authentic and genuine visionary experiences. For views in favour of seeing literary apocalyptic or *hekhalot* texts as records of visionary experience, see Merkur 1989: 119-148; Rowland 1982: 215-234; Stone 1990: 31-33. For arguments against these views, see Himmelfarb 1992: 95-114. On integral links between interpretative activities and revelatory experiences, see Wolfson 1994: 74-124.

respective communities as worthy, exemplary, and credible “ideal figures,” able to see, observe, and behold such overwhelming visions.<sup>15</sup> Manifestations of these conceptions are abundant.<sup>16</sup>

For example, devotional texts from the Qumran community, such as the liturgical cycle known as the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (*shiroi olot hashabbat*), demonstrate how typical visions of the chariot-throne are associated with virtuous worshipers.<sup>17</sup> The cycle contains 13 songs, each with preset instructions for the Sabbath sacrifice that are directed to the instructor (*maskil*).<sup>18</sup> As Carol Newsom has convincingly demonstrated, the Sabbath Songs include the liturgical worship of the angelic priests in the celestial temple, through which the community of worshipers established an experiential link with the angels in heaven. Although the Sabbath Songs do not describe direct visions of the chariot-throne, as one finds in Ezekiel and later in apocalyptic and *hekhalot* and *merkava* sources, they nonetheless can be seen as a quasi-mystical liturgy, designed to evoke a sense of being present in the heavenly temple, participating in the angelic liturgy, and seeing the brilliant chariot-throne of God.<sup>19</sup> The following description, from the twelfth Sabbath Song, demonstrates how typical imagery of the luminous chariot-throne and its angelic entourage is employed in this context:

The cherubim fall before Him and bless. They bless when they raise themselves. A voice of quiet of God is heard and tumult of chanting; at the rising of their wings. A voice of quiet of God. They are blessing a structure of a throne-chariot above the firmament of the cherubim and they chant the effulgence of the firmament of light from beneath His glo-

<sup>15</sup> On seeing visions, see Halperin 1988b: 317, 333-335; Idel 1988: 90; Wolfson 1994: 62, 110, note 154.

<sup>16</sup> References to chariots/thrones often appear in the context of privileged, righteous figures ascending to heaven, so the study of the chariot-throne tradition is often focused on the ascent theme. See, for example, Halperin 1988a: 47-67; Halperin 1988a; Himmelfarb 1992; Segal 1980; Smith 1981: 403-429; Tabor 1986; Wolfson 1993: 13-44; Wolfson 1994. The present discussion of the chariot-throne tradition will not treat the theme of heavenly ascent.

<sup>17</sup> On *shiroi olot shabbat* and the *merkava* images, see Baumgarten 1988: 199-213; Davila 2000a: 249-264; Davila 2000b: 87-90; Dimant and Strugnell 1988: 331-348; Elior 2004b: 78-8; Halperin 1988: 49-55; Newsom 1987: 11-30; Nitzan 1994b: 163-183; Schiffman 1982: 15-47; Schiffman 1987: 121-138; Scholem 1965: 128; Scott 1997: 104..

<sup>18</sup> On the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* (4Q400-407) see Newsom 1985; García Martínez – Tigchelaar 1998: 804-837; Eshel et al. 1998: 173-401.

<sup>19</sup> Newsom 1985: 17, 52, 64, 59, 71. Compare Crispin Fletcher-Louis’s convincing suggestion that the Songs represent instructions for the sacrifice of Sabbath worship led by the priests of the Qumran community, who conceived of themselves in an angelomorphic manner: Fletcher-Louis 2002: 252-394.

rious seat and when the *ophannim* go, the angels of holiness return. They go out from between His wheels of glory. (4Q405 20-21)<sup>20</sup>

Noteworthy in this passage is the reference to a glorious, brilliant chariot-throne that is seen by virtuous worshipers in a visionary context, as well as the depiction of the cherubim which both draws on and slightly alters the imagery of Ezekiel's vision.<sup>21</sup> In a similar manner, an early Enochic tradition depicted in the *Book of the Watchers* ascribes a typical vision of the chariot-throne to Enoch, the legendary seventh antediluvian patriarch.<sup>22</sup> Characterized as an exalted scribe and priest, "the righteous man whose eyes were opened by God," Enoch's first-person testament reads: "and I saw in my vision ... and I was looking, And I saw a lofty throne; Its appearance was like crystal and its wheels like the shining sun, and its [guardians] were cherubim" (14:14, 14:18-20).

Literature from the Common Era likewise contains characteristic accounts about visions of God's luminous chariot-throne, which Enoch and other righteous patriarchs and esteemed seers beheld. For instance, descriptions in the *Similitudes of Enoch* present Enoch's vision of God's chariot-throne guarded by seraphim, cherubim, and *ophannim* (e. g., 39:12, 40:2-10, 71:5-7).<sup>23</sup> In 2 *Enoch* 22, Enoch's vision of a "supremely great and not made by hands" chariot-throne is recounted, surrounded by the armies of the angelic hosts, cherubim, and seraphim (22:2).<sup>24</sup> Similarly, the *Ladder of Jacob* ascribes to the pious patriarch Jacob a vision of the chariot-throne, the four-faced cherubim that carry it, and the six-winged seraphim who sing hymns and utter the *trisagion* (2:7-15).<sup>25</sup> In the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, it is the devout, faithful Abraham who beholds visions of God's lumi-

<sup>20</sup> I have followed Davila's translation in Davila 2000b: 147. See his commentary and discussion, 147-152.

<sup>21</sup> As Halperin points out, most works that include chariot-throne visions alter Ezekiel's vision in minor or major details. See Halperin 1988: 71.

<sup>22</sup> The best translation of 1 *Enoch* currently available is Nickelsburg and Vanderkam 2004. For discussion on the *Book of the Watchers'* provenance, dates, editions, and related issues, see Davila 2005). On Enoch's vision, see Himmelfarb 1992: 9; Nickelsburg 1981: 575-600.

<sup>23</sup> For editions of the *Similitudes* (1 *Enoch* 37-71), see Black 1985 (in consultation with James C. VanderKam); Knibb 1978 (in consultation with Edward Ullendorff 1978; Isaac 1983: 5-89, esp. 29-50. For discussion of the *Similitudes'* provenance, dates, editions, and related issues, see Davila 2005: 132-137.

<sup>24</sup> On 2 *Enoch*, see Andersen 1983: 92-221. For the various views on the origins of 2 *Enoch*, see Orlov 2005; Orlov 1998: 71-86.

<sup>25</sup> On the *Ladder of Jacob*, see Hunt 1985: 401-11. On the visionary context, see Orlov 2004: 2.59-76.

nous fiery chariot-throne, carried by living creatures (18:12-13).<sup>26</sup> Yet another conventional vision of the chariot-throne is credited to the lawful Isaac in the *Testament of Isaac*, which depicts God on a chariot of seraphim, surrounded by the hosts of heaven (6:26-27).<sup>27</sup> A last example comes from the *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature, from late antiquity and the early Middle Ages, which demonstrates the longevity and permanence of the vision of the chariot-throne theme and its conventional images.<sup>28</sup> Here visions of the chariot-throne are associated with the legendary patriarch Enoch, as well as with honored "historical" figures such as Rabbi Akivah and Rabbi Ishmael, and with virtuous, devoted members of the *merkavah* circle.<sup>29</sup> All seek to "see visions of God's chariot/throne," "gaze upon the visions of the *merkavah*," and "glimpse the chariot," which is envisioned in typical images as a brilliant and glorious, "high and sublime, frightful and terrible throne" carried by awe-inspiring holy creatures.<sup>30</sup>

The foregoing brief survey suggests that a variety of different sources associate visions of God's chariot-throne with a range of ideal figures. These traditions doubtless attest a wide spectrum of variations and modification in the employment of the chariot-throne tradition and its recipients, and evidently reflect the diverse circumstances, purposes, and ideologies of their respective authors and communities. Nonetheless, these common distinct features can be viewed as recurring formulaic tropes. The standard features include images of God's luminous chariot-throne, the awe-inspiring four creatures that carry it, and its angelic entourage. These traditions also attest a standard characterization of the beholders of these visions of the chariot-throne as superior chosen figures, be they patriarchs, priests, scribes, prophets, seers, or members of pious communities.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>26</sup> On the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, see Rubinkiewicz 1983: 689-705; Kulik 2004; Himelfarb 1992: 61-66; Rowland 1992: 213-237, esp. 219-222; Weitzman 1994: 21-33.

<sup>27</sup> On the *Testament of Isaac*, see Stinespring 1983: 906-911.

<sup>28</sup> On the *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature, see Alexander 1977: 156-180; Arbel 2003; Boustan 2005; Dan 1998; Davila 2001; Deutsch 1995; Elijor 2004b; Gruenwald 1980; Halperin 1988: 359-455; Morray-Jones 1992: 1-31; Schäfer 1992; Reed 2005: 233-272; Scholem 1954: 40-79; Scholem 1965; Swartz 1996; Wolfson 1994: 74-124.

<sup>29</sup> Schäfer et al. 1981: § 354. Compare Synopse 93, 199-201, 224, 234.

<sup>30</sup> On seeing visions of the chariot-throne in the *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature, see Synopse §§ 1, 81, 93, 198, 259, 335, 403, 545, 554, 557, 579, 592, 688. On visions of the living creatures, see Halperin 1988: 388-396; Herrmann 2005: 105-107; Schäfer 1992: 21-7, 62-4, 129-132.

<sup>31</sup> Compare the *Testament of Job* that describes Job's daughters who, after inheriting the magical cords, were able to gain insight into the transcendent heavenly reality and behold the ascent of his soul, taken up and brought to heaven by the angel in a chariot: "... they saw the gleaming chariots which had come for his soul..."

The images, themes, and terms embedded within the short depiction of Eve in the *GLAE* 33-34 resonate with the formulaic hallmarks of the chariot-throne visions, as the following few lines suggest:

And she [Eve] gazed steadfastly into heaven, and beheld a chariot of light, borne by four bright eagles, (and) it was impossible for any man born of woman to tell the glory of them or behold their face; and angels going before the chariot.

As noted earlier, *GLAE* 33:2, 33:4, and 34:1 employ the verb “to behold” (ιδού), and thus highlight the visionary context in which Eve sees the chariot-throne vision, analogous to standard depictions of chariot-throne visions. *GLAE* 30:2 utilizes the Greek term *arma* that is commonly used as a technical term for God’s chariot-throne in parallel typical descriptions of chariot-throne visions. *GLAE* 33:2 places emphasis on the typical spectacular appearances of God’s chariot that normally cannot be seen, and highlights its quality of light. The same passage also refers to angels going before the chariot-throne and to the overwhelming four eagles that carry it.<sup>32</sup> Evidently these four eagles are different from Ezekiel’s four creatures with their multiple faces, but their number is the same, and each of Ezekiel’s has one face of an eagle. In a similar manner, a passage in 3 *Enoch* of the *hekhlot* and *merkavah* literature also envisions eagles as the creatures of the chariot.<sup>33</sup> Lastly, the reference to an angelic convoy in *GLAE* 33:3 is reminiscent of a formulaic chariot-throne vision.

Explicit details of Eve’s characteristics are not given in this short account. Yet I contend that her portrayal as the exclusive receiver of the lofty vision of the chariot-throne subtly associates her with a long line of righteous “ideal figures.” Moreover, this unique depiction seems to convey specific ideological, gendered perspectives, as it implicitly represents Eve as an esteemed individual, worthy of

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After these things the one who sat in the great chariot got off and greeted Job, as his three daughters and their father looked on, though certain others did not see. And taking the soul he flew up, embracing it and mounted the chariot and set off for the east ... (52:7-11). See discussions in van der Horst 1998: 73-92; Collins 1974: 42, 43-44.

<sup>32</sup> On the angels, eagles, and God’s chariot, see Pinero 1993: 191-214; esp. 195, 197.

<sup>33</sup> See Synopse § 3. This image is introduced in the context of Rabbi Ishmael’s ascent to heaven in the hope of beholding God’s chariot-throne: “Then the eagles of the chariot, the flaming *ophanim* and the cherubim of devouring fire asked Metatron: Youth, why have you allowed one born of woman to come in and behold the chariot?” Alexander 1983: 257. It also is noteworthy that one Armenian version of the *Life of Adam and Eve* replaces the eagles with “four fiery beasts,” presumably in conformity to Ezekiel 1, as Halperin has suggested (1988: 101).

beholding sublime visions of God’s chariot-throne that are normally not accessible to most humans.

### III. “And the Smoke of the Incense Veiled the Firmament”

Formulaic descriptions of visions of the heavenly temple and the angelic ritual therein, attributed to Eve in *GLAE* 33, are also commonly ascribed to several select worthy figures, as a variety of Qumranic, pseudepigraphic, and *merkavah* traditions show. For example, in the Sabbath Songs from Qumran discussed above,<sup>34</sup> members of the Qumranic community are said to recite the Songs during a thirteen-week cycle, experiencing the holiness of the chariot in the heavenly temple as well as the Sabbath rituals conducted there by the priestly angels. Enoch’s vision in the *Book of the Watchers* is also said to have been conceived in the context of the heavenly Temple, the “great house which was built of white marble” (14:10), in which God’s chariot-throne was placed in an innermost chamber that appears to be the Holy of Holies.<sup>35</sup> Visions of the celestial sanctuary are recounted in other Enochic traditions such as the *Book of Dreams* (1 En. 83-90), the *Testament of Levi* (5:1-2; 3:6), and the *Book of Jubilees*.

This last source also mentions specific rituals of incense offerings that are particularly significant to this discussion of Eve’s visions. *Jubilees* 3:27 associates the first morning ritual of incense and the offering of pleasing fragrance – frankincense, galbanum, stacte, and aromatic spices – with Adam. It further links the evening incense sacrifice to the righteous Enoch, who is portrayed as a priestly figure serving in the heavenly temple: “He burned the evening incense of the sanctuary which is acceptable before the Lord on the mountain of incense” (2:28). As several scholars have convincingly demonstrated, here the Garden of Eden is perceived as a temple, and Enoch is seen as the one who performs the priestly rites in this temple.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>34</sup> *Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice*, for example, depicts heaven as a temple which is referred to as *hykl* (temple) (4Q400 frg. 1, col. 1.13); *debir* (sanctuary) (4Q403 frg. 1, col. 2.13); *mškn* (tabernacle) (4Q403 frg. 1, col. 2.10); *mqdš* (sanctuary) (4Q405 frg. 23, col. 2.11); and *qwdš* (holy place) (4Q400 frg. 1, col. 1.14). For discussions of the heavenly temple, see, for example, Davila 2002: 1-19; Fletcher-Louis 2002: 393-399; Morray-Jones 1998: 400-431; Newsom 1985: 39-72.

<sup>35</sup> Himmelfarb 1991: 63-78; Himmelfarb 1987: 210-217; Himmelfarb 1992: 32-33; Maier 1963: 18-40, esp. 23; VanderKam 1989: 87-88; Nickelsburg 1981: 575-600, esp. 579.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, Ego et al. 1999; Elio 1997: 217-267; Elio 2004b: 63-81, 165-200; Himmelfarb 1991: 63-78; Himmelfarb 1987: 210-217; Maier 1963: 18-40, esp. 23;

Other sources, as Martha Himmelfarb's studies have amply shown, similarly highlight the significance of incense offerings and aroma sacrifices in the celestial sanctuary.<sup>37</sup> The author of Revelation, for example, describes John's vision of angelic sacrifice of incense:

And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and seven trumpets were given to them. Another angel with a golden censer came and stood at the altar; he was given a great quantity of incense to offer with the prayers of all the saints on the golden altar that is before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, rose before God from the hand of the angel. (Rev 8:2-4. Compare 5:8)

Similarly, the opening of the thirteenth Sabbath Song from Qumran speaks of the "sacrifices of the holy ones" (11QShirShabb frg. 8-7.2), as well as "the odor of their offerings" (frg. 8-7.2) and "the odor of their drink offerings" (frg. 8-7.3). The *Testament of Levi* refers to visions of angelic celestial incense sacrifice – intended to atone for sins – that were conducted in God's dwelling place in the uppermost heaven.<sup>38</sup> This is noted by Levi, the third son of Jacob and Leah and the ancestor of all priests, who describes his vision of the celestial incense offering in a personal testimony, as follows:

In the uppermost heaven of all dwells the Great Glory in the Holy of Holies superior to all holiness. There with him are the archangels, who serve and offer propitiatory sacrifices to the Lord on behalf of all the sins of ignorance of the righteous ones. They present the Lord a pleasing odor, a rational and bloodless oblation. (3.7)

References to heavenly incense (*ketoret*) offerings are also suggested in several *hekhalot* traditions, especially in the *b. Berakot* 7a, as well as in *Hekhalot Rabbati*, which describes the vision of Rabbi Ishmael in the role of a high priest who serves in the celestial inner sanctum of God and presents a burnt offering on the altar.<sup>39</sup>

These examples demonstrate standard traditions about worthy individuals who experienced the heavenly temple and witnessed its celestial rituals of incense and spice offering. In my view, an analogous tradition is present in the *GLAE* 33.4. Similar to representations

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Maier 1964: 127-8; Nickelsburg 1981: 575-600, esp. 576-582; VanderKam 1995: 117; VanderKam 1989: 2.28, 2.43.

<sup>37</sup> Himmelfarb 1992: 33-36; Himmelfarb 2004: 103-122; Himmelfarb 2006: 56.

<sup>38</sup> On the *Testament of Levi*, see Kee 1983: 782-828; Himmelfarb 1992: 30-32, 36-37.

<sup>39</sup> Synopsis § 151: "Rabbi Ishmael said: I was once offering a burnt offering on the altar and saw Akatriel Yah, the Lord of Hosts, seated upon a high and exalted throne ..." For discussion, see Elijor 2004b: 245.

of Levi in the *Testament of Levi*, and John in Revelation, Eve gives a first-person testament about her vision:

And I [Eve] beheld golden censers and three bowls, and behold, all the angels with (AFTER?) censers and frankincense came in haste to the incense-offering and blew upon it and the smoke of the incense veiled the firmament. And the angels fell down to God, crying aloud and saying, "JAEL, Holy One, have pardon, for he is Your image, and the work of Your holy hands." (33:4-33:5)

Drawing on a familiar pattern of representation, this passage presents Eve as the direct beholder of the angelic incense offering in the celestial sanctuary that is intended to atone for Adam's sins. Here too, the *GLAE* does not overtly present Eve as a righteous figure. Yet indirectly it associates her with exceptional notions of virtue, righteousness, prestige, and credibility through construing her in parallel with ideal figures exclusively selected to behold the celestial sanctuary and witness its angelic rituals of incense offerings.

#### IV. "Two Great and Fearful Mysteries Before the Presence of God"

The themes of divine mysteries and revelation of secret knowledge are obviously wide-ranging. They include, for instance, astronomical, cosmological, and calendrical issues, matters related to primordial and eschatological times, the mysteries of the Torah, the names of God, the secrets of Wisdom, the heavenly worship, and other "revealed things."<sup>40</sup> For our discussion, however, the exact nature of the various components of "mysteries" as well as the manners in which terms such as *mysteries*, *raz*, *sod* are applied are less significant than the standard perception that knowledge of divine origin, which is normally hidden or inaccessible to humans, is revealed to select virtuous figures in unique circumstances.

Second Temple sources recount recipients of mysteries such as the prophet Daniel, the leaders of Qumran sects (1QS 11:4-5), and the *maskil*, who in 1QS 9:18-19 is stipulated to teach the community the "mysteries of wonder and truth" (*razi pele vemet*). In a similar man-

<sup>40</sup> The notion of mysteries in early Judaism has been the subject of considerable study. See, for example, Bockmuehl 1990; Brown 1968; Collins 2003: 287-305; Elgvin 1998: 115-150; Goff 2007: 30-79; Himmelfarb 1992: 72-94, 110-114; Stone 1976: 414-452; Rowland 1982: 9-14.



ner the elect speaker in the *Hodayot* celebrates his appointed role as the teacher of revealed mysteries: "You have set me like a banner for the elect of justice, like a knowledgeable mediator of wondrous mysteries" (IQH 10:13). Mysteries are assumed to be revealed to other righteous figures such as Enoch, Baruch, and Ezra. Enochic sources available in Aramaic refer to mysteries disclosed to Enoch, who in turn declares: "For I know the mysteries of the holy ones, for the lord showed [them] to me and made [them] known to me ..." (1 *Enoch* 106:19; 4QEn 5 ii 26-27; cf. 93:2; 103:1). Similarly, 1 *Enoch* 41:3 presents Enoch's testament regarding his exceptional attainment of celestial wonders and mysteries: "And there my eyes saw the secrets of the flashes of lightning of the thunder ... and the secrets of the clouds and of the dew ..." (cf. 59:1; 69:16-25; 71:3). In 1 *Enoch* 52:2 we find a similar testimony about revealed mysteries: "there [in the west] my eyes saw the secrets of heaven, everything that will occur on earth ..." (cf. 5:8; 48:1; 49:1). 2 *Enoch* 24:2-4 likewise portrays Enoch as the recipient of awesome mysteries, inaccessible even to the angels and revealed to Enoch by the Lord himself: "... and not even to my angels have I explained my secrets, nor related to them their composition, nor my endless and inconceivable creation which I conceived, as I am making them known to you today."<sup>41</sup>

In 4 *Ezra* 14:5, the Lord is also said to reveal mysteries to the esteemed seer Ezra.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Baruch, the scribe of the prophet Jeremiah, declares his visions of divine mysteries after the destruction of Jerusalem: "[the Most high] showed me visions ... and made known to me the mysteries of the times and showed me the coming of the periods" (2 *Baruch* 81:4, cf. 44:14; 85:8).<sup>43</sup> In the late *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature, only the most merited and qualified visionaries are able to behold divine mysteries. One such figure is Enoch:

The Holy One, blessed be he, revealed to me from that time onward all the mysteries of wisdom, all the depths of the perfect Torah and all the thoughts of human hearts. All mysteries of the world and all the orders of nature stand revealed before me as they stand revealed before the creator. From that time onward I looked and beheld deep secrets and wonderful mysteries...<sup>44</sup>

<sup>41</sup> On mysteries in 1 *Enoch* and 2 *Enoch*, see Orlov 2005: 48-40, 188-200, 101-104.

<sup>42</sup> On mysteries and revelations in 4 *Ezra*, see Merkur 1989: 119-148; Stone 1991: 65-78.

<sup>43</sup> On 2 *Baruch*, see Klijn 1983: 615-52. For research and studies, see Davila 2005: 126-131.

<sup>44</sup> Synopse § 14; Alexander 1983: 264.

In turn, Enoch is depicted as disclosing mysteries to other worthy visionaries such as Rabbi Ishmael and Moses, whose elevated status is further reinforced by this revelation.<sup>45</sup>

Once again, in different traditions the theme of revealed mysteries is associated with a wide range of issues and serves various purposes. Nonetheless, most traditions employ a standard rhetoric of secrecy and revelation, and convey a recurring formulaic view on the disclosure of divine mysteries only to select righteous "ideal figures." These figures – patriarchs, priests, scribes, prophets, and visionaries – are perceived as creditable by their respective communities, and thus are prototypes of righteous individuals worthy of becoming privy to God's mysteries. It is fascinating to note how the *GLAE* evokes the theme of divine mysteries and associates Eve with this group. Reminiscent of first-person statements associated with other eminent ideal figures, Eve's first-person testament in the *GLAE* expresses her direct personal visions of divine mysteries in similar terms:

And then I, Eve, beheld two great and fearful mysteries before the presence of God and I wept for fear ... (32:3-34:1a)

What exactly these mysteries entail remains ambiguous in this laconic statement. Yet, rather than detailing the nature and content of these mysteries, this description poses an ideological stance about Eve. Here she is aligned, intertextually, with other worthy receivers of mysteries and emerges as a feminine figure of significant standing and rank, worthy of beholding concealed mysteries.

This correspondence is further emphasized by Eve's mention of awe, fear, and weeping. As Martha Himmelfarb has shown, such emotional reactions are often part of standard depictions of privileged seers' encounters with the divine.<sup>46</sup> The *Book of Watchers*, for instance, describes Enoch's terror-stricken reaction when he faced God: "fear covered me, and trembling got hold upon me. And as I quaked and trembled, I fell upon my face" (14:13-14). Similarly, Enoch reports the fearful nature of his encounter with God: "and I became terrified and I fell on my face" (2 *Enoch* 21:2).<sup>47</sup> The *Book of Dreams*

<sup>45</sup> On revelations of mysteries in the *hekhalot* and *merkavah* literature, see Orlov 2005: 101-104; Arbel 2006: 355-379.

<sup>46</sup> Here I follow Himmelfarb's observations that the weeping in this context is not presented as a technique to achieve revelations but as a response to revelations. See Himmelfarb 1992: 107. On fear and trembling as a reaction to revelations, see Nickelsburg 1981: 580-581; Himmelfarb 1992: 16.

<sup>47</sup> Compare Enoch's similar reaction to the two angels of God in 1:9.

describes Enoch's weeping, which accompanies his awe-inspiring vision: "this is the vision which I saw ... Then I woke up and blessed the Lord ... And I wept with great weeping, and my tears could not stop, till I had no more endurance left, and flowed down on account of what I had seen ..." (90:40-41). Similar imagery of fear and awe is repeatedly found in hekhalot and merkavah passages, such as the following description of the experience "everyman" is expected to undergo in the celestial realm: "and whenever one wishes to descend to the merkavah ... this man enters and stands at the threshold of the gate to the seventh palace ... and that man then trembles, shakes and shudders. He is stricken and faints and he falls backwards."<sup>48</sup> Like previous examples, these parallels shed light on conventional patterns commonly used in diverse accounts of ideal figures and their experiences. By employing similar patterns the *GLAE* seems to present Eve as a figure of equal standing and exemplary merit.

## V. Conclusion: The *GLAE* and Eve Traditions

In this paper I have examined the unique account of Eve's visions set out in the *GLAE* 33-34, and demonstrated how it appeals to the language of visionary experience and thus deploys formulaic tropes, well-known themes, as well as standard patterns of representation embedded in the broader cultural discourse of antiquity in which this text emerged. These conventional themes and patterns include visions of God's chariot-throne, of celestial rituals, and of divine mysteries, and are typically associated with a series of worthy, superior "ideal figures" from a variety of Qumranic, pseudepigraphic, and *merkavah* traditions from the late Second Temple period to late antiquity. I have further proposed that by evoking these stock themes and tropes, the *GLAE* 33-34 implicitly casts Eve as one of these ideal figures and associates her with their virtues.

Evidently, this account of a visionary Eve in *GLAE* 33-34 is not consistent with her depiction in *GLAE* 1-14 as a culpable agent of transgression and sin. It also diverges from her portrayal in *GLAE* 15-30 as an exonerated figure.<sup>49</sup> In a period when dominant theo-

<sup>48</sup> Synopsis § 247. Compare similar descriptions of awe, fear, and trembling associated with Rabbi Ishmael. Synopsis §§ 2, 124, 580.

<sup>49</sup> As John Levison has demonstrated, several text-forms of *GLAE* 15-30 present the story of the sin from Eve's perspective and portray her as an exonerated sinner in an attempt to win the audience's empathy. See Levison 1989: 135-150. Compare with his more nuanced studies: Levison 2000: 251-275; Levison 2001: 21-46.

logical Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions characterized Eve as the innate sinner and blamed her for introducing transgression and death into the world, this portrayal of Eve is particularly exceptional.<sup>50</sup> How can it be explained? And how does this short narrative scene function within the complete, unified *GLAE* narrative? Levison and Tromp, among other scholars, have demonstrated that the *GLAE* is not a unified text but rather a collection of brief, self-contained tales that were later integrated into the *GLAE* narrative in an attempt to create a coherent narrative whole.<sup>51</sup> Accordingly, the account of Eve's vision could have developed as a separate unit, circulating in the cultural world in which the *GLAE* emerged and in turn integrated into its framework.

But how does this unique characterization of Eve relate to the rest of the *GLAE* narrative? As scholars have demonstrated, the *GLAE* developed in everyday discourse and can be seen as a collection of popular founding stories that convey beliefs, truths, and traditions shared by authors/redactors and audiences. For example, Levison has posited that the *GLAE* was inspired not only by a specific theology, but also by daily life concerns related to human realities.<sup>52</sup> Tromp has similarly emphasized both the everyday life setting in which the *GLAE* emerged and its fluid, hybrid traditions and founding stories that developed as part of living and continuous storytelling, both orally and in written form: "the *GLAE* is a compilation of stories and mini-stories, which may have had their original context in everyday discourse," reflecting "a living oral narrative tradition" shared by both Jews and Christians.<sup>53</sup>

The complete *GLAE* narrative does not therefore represent one authoritative view or a systematic religious doctrine. Instead, it incorporates and juxtaposes several overlapping cultural traditions and tales, and thus provides rare access to a fluid, multifaceted cultural discourse, which includes conventional as well as well as alternative traditions, ideologies, and accounts about Eve. In other words, the *GLAE* does not reconcile competing traditions and ideological stances but rather incorporates and weaves together overlapping views. These include dominant traditions about a sinful Eve, other atypical traditions about an exonerated Eve, as well as alter-

<sup>50</sup> For numerous Jewish and Christian characterizations of Eve as the ultimate sinner, see references in Kugel 1998: 100-102; Kvam, Shearing, and Ziegler 1999: 41-155.

<sup>51</sup> Levison 2003: 1-16; Tromp 1997: 25-41; Tromp 2004: 205-223.

<sup>52</sup> See Levison 2003: 15.

<sup>53</sup> See Tromp 2004: 205, 218.

native traditions about a credible Eve, a figure of visionary abilities and elevated standing who, comparable to esteemed cultural “ideal figures,” is worthy of beholding supreme visions of God’s chariot-throne, celestial rituals, and divine mysteries.

# “Messianic Movements in the Period of the Crusades”

JOSEPH DAN

## I

The study of messianic phenomena in Jewish history is one of the most complex and difficult subjects facing the historian. There are three specific obstacles that a historian must overcome when dealing with this subject, obstacles not found in the study of other historical, ideological and religious topics. The first is the absence of an equivalent to the term “messianism” in the terminology used by scholars concerning non-Jewish phenomena, indicating that European historians did not employ in their studies the concept which is so central to many periods in Jewish history. The second obstacle is the deep connection between Jewish messianism and Christianity. This religion is essentially a messianic movement which developed within Judaism in ancient times, and the many aspects of its development are closely connected with parallel Jewish religious phenomena, yet at the time vast differences exist between the two. The third obstacle is that concerning this subject historians are prone to succumb to prejudices, apologetics and the imposition of ideological pre-conceptions on the facts and texts describing the phenomenon. It is very difficult not to be sensitive to the implications of messianic faith, negative or positive, when studying such a subject, because messianism includes events and attitudes which are meaningful, one way or another, for every person. This article is a study of one clear example of the power of this obstacle.

Concerning the terminology, in the last few decades we find an increase in the use of the term “messianism” in historical (as well as political) discussions which are not directly related to Jewish phenomena, and some scholars use it as a historical term which can be applied to any context. Still, the term retains its specific ties to Judaism, and has not become a standard tool in the arsenal of historical study. There is no parallel to it in European languages, because of the simple reason that if one is to translate it to English, French or Ger-

man the result is: Christianity. "Christos" is the Greek equivalent to the Hebrew "messiah", yet the meaning is completely different. The Hebrew term is a general one and can be related to any person, while the Greek term became a title of a single person who lived and died in a particular time and place. Thus, for instance, the study of "Christos" – Christology, has a distinct meaning in the history of Catholic theology, vastly different from the Hebrew "*meshihiut*." European historians, therefore, did not have a general term for all aspects of messianism, and used a series of partial terms, like eschatology, millennialism, chiliasm, Parousia, apocalyptic and others, to denote aspects of what in Hebrew will be included within the general term "messianism". This absence of a comprehensive term in European languages for all phenomena connected with speculations and activities concerning the End of Days created the impression that messianism is mainly a Jewish subject, while in fact it may be more central to Christianity than to Judaism. One result of this is that writers who seek to demonstrate how "normal" and "rational" Judaism is tend to marginalize or even ignore the messianic element in Jewish thought and history.

The second problem, the impact of Christianity on Jewish study of messianism, is most evident in the custom which was dominant until the last few decades to relate to a Jewish messianic figure as "false messiah". The "real" messiah has not come yet, and anyone described by this term until his coming is a false messiah – especially, of course, the founder of Christianity. Every Jewish "pretender" to the role of a messiah is suspect of intending to repeat the calamity that the first such figure inflicted on Judaism. Most nineteenth-century Jewish historians, and many writers in earlier centuries, regarded with suspicion and even hatred anything which may resemble the bitter experience of the emergence of Christianity. When a Jewish scholar gives the title of "false messiah" to the subject of his study he distances himself and declares that he, as a person, is uninvolved in the phenomenon he describes. The implication of such an attitude is that while one has to study everything, there is a limit to the attention that should be given to something that essentially is "false."

The third obstacle, that of pre-conceptions and prejudices, is clearly a personal one and it differs in the case of every individual scholar, yet some elements are shared by writers of particular schools and ideological trends. Two such pre-conceptions had meaningful impact on the study of the subject of messianism as a whole. One is the belief that messianic movements are characterized by the activity of multitudes of ignorant, uneducated people. Intellectuals do

not succumb to such unreasonable ideas. The messianic leaders, the "pretenders" and "false messiahs" are essentially crooks and swindlers lead the ignorant uneducated believers astray, making use of their innocence and their tendency to believe in superstitions. The second common element of prejudice concerning messianism – a more prevalent and potent one – is the belief that Jewish messianism appears in periods of great suffering and persecutions, when Jews are in great danger, when their very lives are threatened, and when they are destitute and lose hope of survival in the harsh circumstances that are imposed on them by the authorities and the surrounding society. Facing martyrdom and massacres, Jews are prone to believe in what in normal circumstances they would undoubtedly reject – the illusion of messianic deliverance. This conception is used as a kind of "alibi" to explain why Jews – the most reasonable and logical people – lose their sanity and succumb to the hallucinations of messianic pretenders. Jews should not be blamed for it: it is the responsibility of the gentile society that inflicted upon the Jews so much agony and suffering. From a historical point of view, this preconception creates a constant link between messianic phenomena in Judaism and periods of persecutions, exile and martyrdom.<sup>1</sup>

## II

Descriptions of Jewish history in Europe in the Middle Ages usually emphasize the appearance of many messianic phenomena in the period of the Crusades, especially in the context of the beginning of that movement and the first Crusade in the last years of the eleventh century. The crusaders, on their way to the Holy Land, destroyed Jewish communities in Northern France and Germany, especially in the Rhineland, forcefully converting many Jews, driving others to martyrdom and massacring thousands. These cataclysmic events, so the historical narrative goes, were the cause of the emergence of numerous messianic movements, that were the Jewish spirituals response to the hardships. The association of the suffering of European communities in that period with messianic phenomena was regarded as the

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that in the twentieth century another ideological preconception appeared in the study of Jewish messianism. Some historians tended to associate messianic phenomena with a kind of "pre-Zionistic Zionism", and interpreted them as expressions of the prevailing Jewish quest for association with the Land of Israel and the re-establishment of Jewish independence.



ultimate example of the inherent connection between Jewish suffering and Jewish messianism. A. Z. Eshkoly, the historian of Jewish messianic movements, devoted an extensive chapter to the description of these events, presenting and analyzing in detail the relevant texts.<sup>2</sup> The most important study of this subject, on which Eshkoly relied, is an article published by Jacob Mann, entitled "Messianic Movements in the Time of the Early Crusades."<sup>3</sup> This article was regarded as an authoritative summary of the subject, and served as a corner-stone for all discussions of Jewish religious history in that period. The author, Jacob Mann, was an accomplished, distinguished scholar who dedicated most of his efforts to the study of the Cairo Geniza and utilizing its documents to a detailed presentation of the history of the Jews in that period. He is rightfully regarded as a meticulous, careful scholar who analyses primary sources and interprets them systematically, using efficiently the methodologies of scholarly study.

Mann's study of Jewish messianism in the period of the Crusades is clearly designated to point out the importance of the Geniza documents to the study of Jewish history in the early Middle Ages. Mann believed that introducing the Geniza documents to the analysis of every social and cultural phenomenon will bring radical change and better understanding, and he was right in that. Many of the documents included in Mann's article are derived from the Geniza, and it is easy to understand the author's enthusiasm when he was able to integrate them in the detailed picture of the events of that crucial period. Mann was confident that the study of the Geniza documents is the beginning of a new era in the study of Jewish medieval history, and developments in the next three generations proved him right. Indeed, it is impossible to imagine the study of Jewish society, family, commerce, prayer, literature, thought and other subjects without the wealth of material discovered in Cairo. Mann was one of the pioneers in this most meaningful process, and his work was highly regarded by his contemporaries and the following generations.<sup>4</sup> In the conclusion of his article Mann stated:

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<sup>2</sup> Eshkoly 1987: 162-164, 176ff.

<sup>3</sup> Mann 1925: 243-261; Mann 1928: 335-358.

<sup>4</sup> One thing, however, should be emphasized. Eighty years ago, when Mann wrote this study, it was impossible to learn anything from the absence – that is, that something which is not referred to in the Geniza documents did not exist. At that time those treasures were not catalogued and were not yet studied comprehensively, and no one could guess what can be found there and what is absent. Today, after a century of intensive study of the Geniza, one may point out the significance of the fact that hardly any documents relating to the present subject were found, so that Mann's compilation can be regarded as exhaustive.

"This is the last messianic movement that we know about<sup>5</sup> during the century of the first three Crusades. It is strange that during the five years of the "holy war" conducted by Salah a-Din against the Christians, that is, from 1187, when Jerusalem was conquered, until 1192, when the third Crusade was concluded, we do not hear about a new messianic movement. Who knows, maybe new documents will be found about such a movement. Or maybe the bitter experience of the past stopped the spread of new messianic hallucinations.<sup>6</sup> Indeed, as far as we know now, no new false messiah appeared until the end of the thirteenth century, when the famous kabbalist, Rav Abraham Abulafia, believed that he is not only a prophet but also as the messiah. We have surveyed eight messianic movements in the various parts of the diaspora during eighty years, since the beginning of the first Crusade. A new chapter has opened in our history by the discoveries in the Geniza. Some links are still missing in our understanding of the development of these events, but a general overview is now available. It is easy to despise and pour ridicule over these movements and to judge the false messiahs and those who proclaim the coming of the messiah as liars or crazy people. Of course, hallucinations and intense spiritual excitement were combined with political inaptitude by the masses to think that from the huge conflict between the ruling religions the redemption of Israel will emerge. Yet before passing judgment, we have to penetrate deep into the spirit of the people, and to understand why multitudes of our people in several countries were led astray by such movements. From the picture we tried to present here it is obvious that the spirit of mystery<sup>7</sup> was very active in our people at that time. Computations of the time of the redemption and other hallucinations concerning the deliverance combined with the strong wish of the people to view the 'return of the crown to its ancient place.' They found in the events around them confirmation to their wishes, when the turmoil between the nations among which the Jews lived increased, both in the Muslim countries and the Christian ones. We learn here once more how much can be learned from the ancient pages of the Geniza."<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> He refers to the messianic movement in Yemen mentioned in Iggeret Teiman attributed to Maimonides. See below.

<sup>6</sup> This sentence can be read as assuming that maybe the Jews of Yemen, Kurdistan and Morocco were deterred, because of the bitter experience during the first Crusade, from initiating another messianic movement when Salkah a-Din was fighting the crusaders in these years. Mann, however, hoped that maybe other documents will be found in the Geniza that will indicate that another wave of messianic activity did occur. The author therefore is confident that every Crusade, by its nature, evokes Jewish messianic activity in countries remote from where the events were occurring, and also remote from the European Jewish communities that suffered the persecutions.

<sup>7</sup> Mann used here an unusual term – *ruah ha-mistorin*, probably referring to mystical beliefs and superstitions.

<sup>8</sup> Mann 1928: 351-352.

It should be noted that Mann presents here eight messianic movements, each of which, according to him, engulfed masses, multitudes of Jewish believers. Yet among these eight phenomena only the records concerning one – that of David Alroi in northern Mesopotamia, described by Benjamin of Metudela – relates that a mass of people followed the messianic figure. This account is cast in legendary terms, and cannot be regarded as a historical document. It is evident that Mann viewed every reference to a messianic claim in our sources as an indication of a mini-Sabbatian event – a “false messiah”, a prophet, and a mass of ignorant, enthusiastic followers. His reference to Abraham Abulafia, in a later period, is a good example. We know that Abulafia did not have any followers, and his messianic endeavor was that of an individual.

The title Mann gave to his study refers to a period of less than a hundred years, from the end of the eleventh to the end of the twelfth centuries. In fact, however, he analyzed in detail all the messianic and apparently-messianic phenomena from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries, a period of more than five hundred years. The sources he used were apocalyptic literature, Rabbinic and Karaitic writings, Islamic and Christian traditions, and some very late sources, even from the sixteenth century. He analyzed the Book of Zerubavel and other apocalyptic works which followed that visionary text, as well as descriptions and computations of the time of the End of Days in the works of Saadia Gaon, Rabbi Abraham bar Hijja, Rabbi Judah ha-Levi and Maimonides. He used quotations from liturgical poetry, as well as the chronicles describing the events during the period of the Crusades in Europe. This wealth of material is impressive, yet the title of the study should have been – “References to messianism in Jewish culture from the seventh to the thirteen centuries”. Mann, however, chose to include all this material under a title referring specifically to the period of the first Crusades.

Three questions should be asked concerning this presentation: 1) Where, exactly, did the movements Mann describes appear and operate? 2) How are the phenomena that have no connection to the Crusades relevant to the subject? 3) Concerning the phenomena that are dated in the century which is indicated in the title, how are they connected to the historical circumstances of the Crusades? Mann discussed in detail the group of the “Mourners of Zion,” a group, mainly consisting of Karaites, who dedicated themselves to mourning the destruction of the Temple and praying for its reconstruction. This was a meaningful religious phenomenon, but how is it connected to the Crusades? It was founded before the ninth century, and perished

when Jerusalem was conquered by the crusaders. In this case, the Crusading movement did not cause this messianic phenomenon to emerge, but exactly the opposite: it put an end to it. Another detailed discussion in Mann's study is dedicated to Ovadia ha-Ger, and Norman who converted to Judaism,<sup>9</sup> and Mann suggests that he was a Crusader, despite the fact that there is no indication of this in the relevant documents. Mann counts the conversion of this individual as one of the "messianic movements", a conclusion that can hardly be justified. He cited a reference to a messianic event in Morocco – but failed to connect it in any way to the Crusades. Among the score or more events, rumors and legends mentioned by Mann there is hardly a handful that are related in any way to the Crusades, and it is doubtful whether more than one or two of them can be designated as "movements". One of the main sources used by Mann is the list of messianic phenomena mentioned in Iggeret Teyman, attributed to Maimonides.<sup>10</sup> This epistle includes a series of legends, rumors and historical events relating to different countries in various periods, and it does not include any reference that connects all of them, or even a single one among them, with the Crusades. Mann used also the story related by Rabbi Benjamin of Tudela, the famous traveler, about David Alroi, as mentioned above. This messianic event occurred in Kurdistan, and the source does not connect it with any historical occurrence, yet Mann did not hesitate to introduce it in his article by the sentence: "At that time there was great excitement in Europe and Anatolia because of the second Crusade (1146-47), and we have to turn to the east in order to hear about a new messianic movement in the people of Israel, the one [headed] by David Alroi."<sup>11</sup>

It may be argued that an article dedicated to the study of messianic movements in the period of the Crusades need not be limited to phenomena directly connected with that historical event but may include examples from the whole period. Yet Mann stated in his introduction to the article strongly and unambiguously his belief

<sup>9</sup> See his discussions in Mann 1928: 336-339.

<sup>10</sup> Concerning this epistle and the question of its authorship see Davidson 2005: 487-494.

<sup>11</sup> Mann 1928: 341. In the conclusion of his discussion concerning this narrative Mann wrote: Only if we assign an early date to this messianic movement and bring it into contact with the second Crusade, we shall understand its true cause!" (Mann 1928: 343). However, there is no evidence for such a connection, and the exclamation mark in the end of the sentence is not a convincing substitute to historical documentation. Mann did not raise the question why the only Jewish community in the world that responded to the second Crusade in a messianic manner was that of Kurdistan.

that there was one fundamental connection that brings together all the materials that he assembled:

All this [the persecutions and martyrdom of that time] is well known. But what we have lost in time is the memory of the excitement, the uplifting of the soul, that flourished in the Diaspora because of the great events taking place in the lives of the nations, the glowing hopes that took hold among the many layers of Jewish society, that the time of the redemption has arrived, and 'heels of the messiah' have been seen. In the exited imagination of the masses of the Jews the great conflict between the two dominant religions concerning the Land of Israel seemed to them as the beginning of the 'End of Days'. The vast legions of the nations of Europe who assembled to storm the Land [seemed like the wars] of Gog and Magog. The great dangers that the Jewish communities had to face in all the lands that the Crusaders reached, and the massacres, were regarded as the sufferings of the era of the messiah. No less than eight different messianic movements [appeared] in various communities of the Diaspora during the hundred years of the first three Crusades...<sup>12</sup>

These are well-written expressions of deep emotion, but they are not accompanied by any kind of documentation in the scores of pages of the article.<sup>13</sup> Its first part is dedicated to the centuries preceding the Crusades, so that the events narrated in them cannot be regarded to the "uplifting of the soul" because of the "great events" of the march to the Holy Land. Most of those phenomena that did occur within the framework of the hundred years indicated by Mann bear no witness to any connection with the Crusades. Events that occur at the same time are not necessarily connected by the same ideology or religious context. There is no evidence that the Jews in Babylonia, Yemen and Morocco shared the same "uplifting of the spirit" as did they persecuted, massacred and martyred brothers in Europe. It should be emphasized that the facts presented by Mann are accurate, based on reliable sources, and one cannot claim that the author misinterpreted them. The only problem is that he integrated them into a context that does not exist in the documents.

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<sup>12</sup> Mann 1925: 244.

<sup>13</sup> Mann also avoided discussing the question why the chronicles that describe the persecutions, the martyrdom and the forced conversions of Jews did not refer to a messianic reason or context in order to explain the tragic events. The study of these documents may prove the opposite: that the victims of the persecutions did not connect the events related to the Crusades with any messianic expectation.

### III

Mann referred in the beginning of the article to eight "messianic movements" at the time of the first Crusades. In the article itself he did not present them as a list. Following is an attempt to present the eight events that Mann described as messianic movements:

- 1) The first event was presented by Mann with some hesitation: "Maimonides informs us, in his Yemen Epistle, about a messianic movement in France in the cycle of 256, near the time of the first Crusade. He wrote: "...before him, about thirty years, a person stood in France and pretended to be the messiah, and performed miracles, and, according to what is said about this, the French killed him and killed with him a large crowd of the people of Israel." The question is the chronology. According to the sequence in the source, this happened several years before the first Crusade, yet Mann remarks: "The numbers may not be accurate, because there often are scribal mistakes, and the language indicates that the numbers are approximations...most probably this happened near the time of the first Crusade, when rumors about it began to spread and excited the imagination of the masses. France was the first country in which the idea of the conquest of the Holy Land from the Muslims was preached, so there is no surprise that there appeared the first messianic movement." (Mann 1925: 252). We have here an unconfirmed, unsupported rumor, its time and place are vague, and yet it is crowned as the "first messianic movement".
- 2) The second event is attested by a tragic letter sent from Greece to many communities, which relates the events of the first Crusade in Greece, especially in Salonica. This letter became known as the "Byzantium Scroll."<sup>14</sup> This is detailed document, that combines description of the sufferings of the communities which the Crusaders passed in their way from Europe to Asia, with expression of waiting for the redemption and the miracle that saved the Salonica community at that time. It is possible that the document was written in 1096, and there is no doubt that it includes an authentic description of the events of that time. The writer describes the Crusaders and presents the ideas that guide them, and it is a most important and reliable historical document. Mann presented his conclusions from the analysis of this letter: "The letter before us is one of the many letters which were sent, undoubtedly, from many

<sup>14</sup> See the detailed analysis by Eshkoly, who followed Mann (Eshkoly 1987: 176-180).

communities in Byzantium itself and other countries about the enormous messianic movement that engulfed all layers of Jewish society in the lands of the Balkan when the Crusaders arrived. It is wonderful that the Christians in Byzantium were also carried away by this movement, and they also had dreams and visions and witnessed miracles, and they accepted the delusion that the Messiah of the Jews will soon appear." However, we have no evidence that many such letters were sent, and Mann did not supply any proof of this. We have no evidence that there was "an enormous messianic movement that engulfed all layers of Jewish society. Mann found only one document that he presents as supporting his assumptions: a letter found in the Geniza, which was probably sent from a community in Syria to Damascus. In this letter the Damascus community is warned that there is an imminent dangers from the Europeans who are approaching and may cause great harm (Mann 1925: 260-261). This letter does not contain any reference to messianism, and cannot serve as supporting evidence to the existence of an "enormous messianic movement."

- 3) The third "movement" is mentioned in one sentence in the Yemen Epistle attributed to Maimonides. It relates that "a false messiah stood in Muslim Spain, in Cordova, about 1117-1118, about which we do not have any other sources" (Mann 1928: 336).<sup>15</sup>
- 4) A Karaite messiah that Ovadia ha-Ger met in the Land of Israel. The Norman convert to Judaism described the event in his autobiography. It happened in 1122: At that time in the month of Elul, a man who was a priest (Cohen) from the sons of Israel who are Karaites, his name was Shlomo, he came on his way to Dan and told the Jews there and to Ovadia ha-Ger that in two and a half months God will assemble his people, Israel, from all the countries to Jerusalem, the holy city". Ovadia was in doubt concerning this prophecy, and argued with him: "I have heard that you are from the seed of Aharon the Priest... and I did not hear that Israel seek the redemption to come by a person from the tribe of Levi, but by the prophet Elijah and the king Messiah from the seed of David the king of Israel" (Mann 1928: 336-337). Mann concludes his discussion of this subject stating: "We do not know to what extent this Shlomo succeeded to mislead the masses to believe in him as a messiah. It seems that Ovadia did not believe in him,

<sup>15</sup> Mann quoted the Yemen Epistle concerning this event in the first part of his article: "Before that, about ten years, a person stood in Andalusia in the city of Cordova and praised himself that he was the messiah, and it almost cost the lives of many Jews because of him" (Mann 1925: 252).

both because he was a priest and because he was a Karaite. It is interesting, however, that messianic delusions penetrated also to the circles of the Karaites" (Mann 1928: 338).<sup>16</sup>

- 5) It is not clear whether Mann included Ovadia ha-Ger himself in his list of "messianic movements". He presented his story in detail in the article, and connected his conversion to Judaism with the events of the first Crusade.<sup>17</sup>
- 6) A messianic movement in Morocco: "A few years after the appearance of Shlomo the Karaite a new messianic movement occurred in Fess, the capital of the Maghreb, about which we know only the few words included in the Yemen Epistle by Maimonides... [it states] that a person of the West, in Fess, today forty-four years (that is, about the year 1127-28), stood and announced that the messiah will come at that year. His word was false, and evils were inflicted on Israel because of him, this was told to me by someone who saw it all." Mann concluded from this quotation from the Epistle that "[that person] probably captured the hearts of the masses, the movement spread and grew, until the government began to persecute the Jews because of it." Mann did not offer any evidence to support this conclusion. He complained that the report "did not explain to us the causes of this movement. It is easy to think that a false messiah or someone who proclaims the coming of the messiah is just a crook, and those who believe him are idiots and ignorants, yet in order to understand properly the historical facts [we have to consider] the cravings of the masses, which are derived from causes connected with processes going on at that time in the surrounding society." Mann insisted in his comments to this phenomenon that it was caused by the movement that followed Mohammad ibn Tomerat, the Muwwahadin, which spread in Islamic countries and its believers conquered North Africa and Spain. He concludes, without any hesitation, that "here we see once more how the events in the surrounding

<sup>16</sup> Mann emphasized the last words. This is somewhat surprising, because in the first part of the article he dedicated a detailed discussion to the group of the Mourners of Zion, which consisted mostly of Karaites, and identified it as a messianic movement that preceded the era of the Crusades. Shlomo ha-Cohen therefore is not the first example of Karaite messianism, according to Mann.

<sup>17</sup> The autobiography of Ovadia was the subject of numerous studies since Mann wrote his article. See, for instance: Prawer 1976: 272-295; Golb, 1981: 77-107. A large volume of studies on the subject, most of them in Italian, were published following a conference (de Rosa – Perani 2005). Scholarly interest in Ovadia increased after a musical text by him was discovered, which is an important document to the history of Jewish music. See, for instance: Adler 1969: 395-408.



society influenced to a very large extent the Jewish communities, who listened closely and awaited any sign which will indicate the approaching redemption" (Mann 1928: 339-340). Needless to say, Mann really concluded a great deal from one opaque sentence relating the words of one person.

- 7) The movement of David Alroi is discussed in great detail and holds a central place in the picture that Mann was drawing. Judging by the space that Mann dedicated to its description, this was the most important messianic movement in that period. He quoted the full text of the report written by Benjamin of Tudela. Concerning the chronology of this movement, Mann insisted that the time suggested by Graetz – 1160 – is wrong, and that it happened ten years earlier. He stated: "only if we accept that this messianic movement happened earlier, and we bring it into contact with the second Crusade, we shall understand correctly what was its cause!" It seems that Mann viewed this connection between Alroi and the second Crusade as one of the most important contributions of his article to the study of Jewish history. According to him, the events in Kurdistan should be understood on the background of the struggle between the northern Christian domains, Edessa and Antioch, and the Muslims in Syria and Mesopotamia. This was viewed, according to Mann, as the wars of Gog and Magog which precede the appearance of the messiah (Mann 1928: 344). He discussed in detail the information concerning this movement found in the writings of a Jewish convert to Islam, Shmuel Almu-gribi, and tries to connect to this event another, seemingly unrelated, document from the Genizah (Mann 1928: 341-343).
- 8) Mann connected the appearance of the messiah in Yemen, the one who was the reason for the question addressed to Maimonides to which the Epistle is a response, with the background to the messianic movement headed by David Alroi. The question was asked by Rabbi Jacob ben Nethanel Alfaiomi, and the subject is discussed briefly also in Maimonides's letter to the rabbis of France (Mann 1928: 331-332). It seems therefore the messianic pretender in Yemen was that community's response to the second Crusade. It is not clear whether this is indeed the list of eight messianic movements to which Mann referred, yet these are the events discussed in his article. Analysis of this list indicates that despite Mann's great efforts he could not find even a single messianic event which occurred during the period of the first three Crusades in the countries where the persecutions of the Jews were the worst – France, Germany, especially the Rhineland, and England. The scores of sources we have

concerning the events of this period do not include any evidence of messianic activity. Mann's descriptions and discussions of these tragic events of the time may create the impression that there is some connection between them and the "messianic movements" that he presented, yet no document supports such a conclusion. All these "movements" relate to phenomena that occurred in Greece, Yemen, Mesopotamia, Morocco, Spain and the Land of Israel.

Another conclusion derived from this list is that only two of these eight phenomena can be described with some justification as "movements". These are the Byzantium Scroll and the David Alroi movement. The other examples relate to one person expressing some messianic claims or expectations, and there is no indication that "masses" followed him or even paid any attention to him. Calling these events "messianic movements" is an exaggeration unsupported by the evidence. The assumption that in every community there were "multitudes" of eager, ignorant people waiting for someone to kindle their imagination, led Mann to endow every vague rumor with the characteristics of a vast movement.

Studying Mann's comprehensive presentation we can reach the conclusion that during the century of the first Crusades there was one, only one, event in which the persecutions by the crusaders are associated with a messianic movement – it is the event described by the Byzantium Epistle that relates the tragic events in Salonica. All other sources, Jewish, Christian and Muslim, that describe the events of that century, make no connection whatsoever between the Crusades and Jewish messianism.

#### IV

The characteristics of a messianic movement that are apparent in Mann's discussions seem to be closely related to those of the Sabbatian movement, headed by Shabatai Zevi and his prophet, Nathan of Gaza. The enormous religious upheaval was associated by Jewish historians in the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries with the massacres that occurred in Poland in 1648/49. The events Poland and the Ukraine at that time were the deadliest in the history of Diaspora Jewry before the twentieth century, and historians found in them the cause for the messianic eruption in Turkey in 1666. When Mann wrote his study this was the accepted view among Jewish intellectuals. Later, however, Gershom Scholem's detailed studies of the Sabbatian movement proved it to be completely wrong.

Gershom Scholem wrote on the first page of his monograph on Shabbatai Zevi and the Sabbatian movement, after he posited the question what were the causes that brought about this event:

“The usual, somewhat simplistic explanation posits a direct historical connection between the Sabbatian movement and certain other events of the same period. According to this view, the messianic outbreak was the direct consequence of the terrible catastrophe that had overtaken Polish Jewry in 1648...and had shaken the very foundations of the great Jewish community in Poland. The destruction had, in fact, surpassed anything known of earlier persecutions in other countries. This explanation was plausible enough as long as it could be maintained – as, indeed, it had until now – that the Sabbatianism as a popular movement started as far back as 1648...”<sup>18</sup>

Scholem goes on to point out the other factors that should be taken into consideration, and emphasizes that there is no basis to the claim that Sabbatianism, began in 1648. In many other discussions of the subject in this book he stressed that Sabbatian leaders did not refer to the catastrophe in Poland, and that Polish rabbis were among the last to join the messianic movement. From a historical point of view, this was the most prominent attempt by Jewish historians to present a link between persecutions and messianism, and it was a complete failure. Mann’s position was different from that of the historians dealing with the origins of Sabbatianism. They had before them a terrible series of persecutions on the one hand and a major messianic movement, the largest in Jewish medieval and modern history, on the other. They tried to connect the two, but failed. Mann was studying a major series of persecutions of the Jews in the era of the Crusades, but there was no messianic movement to which he could connect it. He thus assembled the bits and pieces of information he could glean from various sources and tried to present a kind of “Sabbatian” response to the tragic events in central and western Europe. He had some success: many historians of Judaism in the Middle Ages accepted his thesis that there was a vast messianic response to the persecutions of the Crusade period, and thus strengthened the image that suffering and messianism are linked to each other in Jewish history. It seems, however, that when his study is analyzed in detail, it is found to even be less substantiated than the imaginary link between Sabbatianism and the horrors of 1648.

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<sup>18</sup> Scholem 1973: 1-2.

# Jesus Revealed: The Dynamics of Early Christian Mysticism

APRIL D. DECONICK

Like its sibling Judaism, Christianity understands itself as a revealed religion, as a religion that was not only disclosed through direct and immediate divine-to-human communication, but whose dogma reveals to humans the Hidden God and his will. With such a self-identity, mysticism can scarcely be far away. Yet early Christian mysticism traditionally has been understood as a relatively late Platonic and philosophical product of patristic theology, marked particularly by Denys the Areopagite who, in the late fifth century, taught the apophatic way, where the soul escapes the created order to unite with the Unknowable God.<sup>1</sup> The first generations of Christianity and their foundational memories and narratives are casually brushed aside as “background” to a mysticism arising later from Christianity’s fusion with neo-Platonism.<sup>2</sup>

Although it is true that a particular strand of Christianity fused with neo-Platonism produced the type of mysticism taught and practiced by Denys, it is also true that long before Denys lived there was a rich tradition of Christian mysticism already in place, a mysticism that grew out of even older Jewish mystical traditions as I have described elsewhere.<sup>3</sup> It was this Christian brand of early Jewish mysticism that was the root structure which produced and sustained the new movement. It was this Christian brand of early Jewish mysticism which eventually yielded a pliable branch for a neo-Platonic graft to take hold, such as it did in the teachings of Denys.

In many ways we are dealing here with the problem of semantics. When historians of Christianity talk about mysticism, it is defined by them in such a way that it explains a certain data set, particularly

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<sup>1</sup> Louth 1981: 159.

<sup>2</sup> Louth 1981. Cohn-Sherbok-Cohn-Sherbok 1994. Although McGinn does not wish to neglect the Jewish origins of Christian mysticism, his treatment of the Jewish materials hinges on fourteen pages before turning to a discussion of the Greek materials: McGinn 1992: 9-22.

<sup>3</sup> For a treatment of the major characteristics of early Jewish and Christian mysticism, see DeConick 2006b: 1-24.

the medieval Christian monastic one, where the devotee through monastic practices gradually purges the darkness from the soul, experiences a spiritual death, ascends and unites with a god who is described as "love."<sup>4</sup> There is a need for a definition that is less culturally-specific and less historically-descriptive than the Christian monastic one, a definition which will open up the exploration so that the texts themselves (rather than the definition) will be allowed to circumscribe the specifics of the phenomenon.

For comparativists who study mysticism across different religions, it is essential to operate with a less culturally and historically restrictive definition, such as mysticism is the direct experience of the Ultimate Reality.<sup>5</sup> This type of comparative definition appears to have grown out of the psychological and philosophical work of William James, who divorced the mystical experience from the mystical praxis. James used the term to describe what was, for him, the core of religion – a unitive individualistic religious experience of the Absolute that produces an altered state of consciousness and leads to a change in the person's awareness and orientation. These experiences were not sought through an established praxis, but rather came upon the individual unbidden.<sup>6</sup> This separation of experience from praxis is useful on one level because it keeps the conventional monastic definition from circumscribing the specifics of the phenomenon. But it poses analytical problems on another level, when we want to recognize a praxis that might be involved. So I recommend working with a more nuanced understanding of mysticism, such as mysticism is the solicitation and participation in a direct immediate experience of the Ultimate Reality. Although I would distinguish mysticism from the mystical experience itself, which is the direct immediate experience of the Ultimate Reality solicited or not, I would do so only with the full recognition that the mystical experience is the heart and soul of mysticism. It is so critical, so central, that mysticism would not exist without it.

What if we were to set aside the Christian monastic definition of mysticism momentarily and begin to examine, those claims to immediate and direct premortem experiences of God found in the early Christian sources, especially the foundational ones? What type of mysticism would we recover? What specifics would emerge? What would we find that makes it characteristically Christian?

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Underhill 1911; Egan 1996: xvi-xxv.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Carmody-Carmody 1996: 10-14. Even some of these comparative treatments reflect and favor the Christian monastic ideal: cf. Happold 1963: 18-122; Johnston 1995.

<sup>6</sup> James 1911.

## 1. Apocalyptic Experiences

To describe their direct immediate premortem experiences of God, the early Christians did not use the word "mysticism," which derives from the Greek word *myeô*, "to be initiated." Although they do sometimes speak of the revelation of "mysteries" (*mystêria*), the first Christians call their direct immediate premortem experiences of God "apocalypses" (*apocalypseis*) or "revelations." The most famous but not the earliest example comes from the last book in the New Testament canon. The elaborate detailed visions of the heavenly realm and the descriptions of eschatological events given to John of Patmos are described as "the revelation of Jesus Christ."<sup>7</sup> As such, this biblical book mimics the form of other contemporary Jewish apocalypses, in which the otherworldly journeys of various seers are described. It is characteristic of the apocalypse as a genre to focus on two dimensions of the revelation: the immediate premortem journey, ascent, or vision of the seer; and the revelation of secret knowledge particularly as it pertains to world events and cosmic endings.<sup>8</sup>

Among the early Christians, the claim to apocalyptic experience reaches far beyond the production of a "new" Jewish apocalypse like Revelation. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he writes that he does not preach a gospel learned from another person. He received it "through a revelation of Jesus Christ."<sup>9</sup> In fact, he bases the authority of his apostleship and mission on this experiential claim. Paul describes in another letter a typical Jewish mystical ascent journey in which "a man in Christ fourteen years ago" ascended to the third heaven where Paradise was located, and he heard the secrets that cannot be told.<sup>10</sup> Was this the "revelation of Jesus Christ" that he had referred to in his letter to the Galatians? Paul certainly introduces the story as an example of the ongoing "visions and revelations of the Lord" which he boasts of for himself.<sup>11</sup> So if it was not his initial vision, it may well represent one example among many that Paul claimed to have had. When stories about Paul's initial revelation are recounted in secondary sources like Acts, it is imagined by the storytellers in visionary and auditory terms, although not ascent.<sup>12</sup> In all descriptions, it is an event of rapture rather than intentioned invasion.

<sup>7</sup> Rev 1:1.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Rowland 1982.

<sup>9</sup> Gal 1:11-12. Cf. Segal 1990.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. Morray-Jones 1993a and Morray-Jones 1993b.

<sup>11</sup> 2 Cor 12:1-4, 7.

<sup>12</sup> Acts 9:3-8; 22:4-16; 26:9-18.

The author of the letter to the Ephesians mentions that he has written previously about his revelation, which made known to him a mystery that had been hidden away until it was revealed to the apostles and prophets via the Spirit. He claims that it is his job now to make everyone see this mystery, which has been hidden in God for the ages. This mystery, the wisdom of God, is Christ the Power, who is described as the fullness of God beyond measure. This revelation is experiential between the believer and God, involving the inner workings of the Spirit who effects the indwelling of Christ and his love.<sup>13</sup> The mystery is so profound, the author explains, because it means that Christ and his church are wedded lovers, a point that may be developing the assertion that Paul himself betrothed the Corinthian congregation to Christ as a pure bride to her husband.<sup>14</sup>

This testimony from Ephesians aligns with Paul's claim that his revelatory experience was an experience he thought all Christians would ultimately share. Paul sees this shared revelation as immediate and ongoing, as well as futuristic and eschatological, describing those in his congregations as people who are "expectantly awaiting a revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>15</sup> The author of Hebrews too writes that Christ will appear a second time, not to deal with sin (since he already did this when he sacrificed himself), but for the salvation of those who are expectantly awaiting him.<sup>16</sup>

These immediate and ongoing revelatory experiences were conceived by Paul to be constant gifts of the Spirit given to the community, gifts which were to be openly shared at church gatherings, together with the congregants' other prophecies, teachings, and hermeneutics.<sup>17</sup> Ephesians preserves a prayer addressed to "the God of our Lord Jesus Christ" who is "the Father of the Glory," that he may grant the Spirit of revelation for the enlightenment of the minds of the believers so that they may know the riches of their glorious "lot." This "lot" is possible because of the greatness of God's power, which raised Christ from the dead and exalted him to the heights, Christ whose body is the church, the pleroma of God who fills everything.<sup>18</sup>

Paul understands himself to be a servant of Christ and a steward of the mysteries of God.<sup>19</sup> He imparts to believers the hidden wisdom

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<sup>13</sup> Eph 3:3-19.

<sup>14</sup> Eph 5:32; 2 Cor 11:1-2.

<sup>15</sup> 1 Cor 1:7.

<sup>16</sup> Heb 9:27-28.

<sup>17</sup> 1 Cor 14:26; 2 Cor 14:6, 26, 30.

<sup>18</sup> Eph 1:16-23.

<sup>19</sup> 1 Cor 4:1.

of God in a mystery. Had this mystery been known to the “archons,” they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory, he says. This is the mystery that no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor mind conceived, except for the believers whom God loves.<sup>20</sup> Paul insists that what has been invisible, ineffable, and inconceivable is immediately revealed to believers via the Spirit, while remaining unknown to the powers that rule this world.<sup>21</sup>

In the Synoptics we find a similar tradition. The mystery of God’s kingdom is given only to the believer, while the unbeliever sees without perceiving and hears without understanding. This teaching is framed as Jesus’ own words.<sup>22</sup> Related to these words of Jesus must be those other well-circulated words in which Jesus proclaims that what is hidden will be revealed, because there is nothing hidden that will not be made known.<sup>23</sup> *Quelle* (“Q”) records a prayer in which Jesus thanks the heavenly Father for hiding “these things” from the wise and revealing them to the babes. Jesus declares himself the Son who alone knows the Father and alone reveals the Father to those Jesus chooses.<sup>24</sup>

The idea that the “mystery” is “revealed” to Christians while simultaneously kept from unbelievers appears to have been a very old and prominent Christian teaching. Paul says that “the light of the knowledge of the Glory of God in the face of Christ” has shone in the hearts of believers, but it is kept from unbelievers. In their case, “the god of this aeon” has blinded their minds to keep them from seeing “the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the Image of God.”<sup>25</sup> Only the believer is able to behold face-to-face the Glory of the Lord, and be gradually transformed into that Glory by degree, while the unbeliever stares absently at a veil that conceals the splendor of the Glory.<sup>26</sup> This transformation is a mystery that will be completed at the eschatological moment when death is swallowed up in victory at Jesus’ return appearance.<sup>27</sup> According to Colossians, our “life” is immediately hidden with Christ in God. When Christ appears, so will our “life.” Then we ourselves will appear as glorified beings.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> 1 Cor 2:7-10.

<sup>21</sup> 1 Cor 2:10.

<sup>22</sup> Mark 4:11-12; Matt 13:11-17; Luke 8:10.

<sup>23</sup> Mark 4:22; Matt 10:26; Luke 12:2; GTh 5.1-2, 6.4-5; Ps. Clem. *Rec.* 3.13; *Keph* 65.

<sup>24</sup> Matthew 11:25-26; Luke 10:21-22.

<sup>25</sup> 2 Cor 4:4-6.

<sup>26</sup> 2 Cor 3:18.

<sup>27</sup> 1 Cor 15:51-55; 1 Thess 4:15-17.

<sup>28</sup> Col 3:3-4.



Thus, in the Pauline traditions, the eschatological return of Jesus was framed as the last apocalypse, when Jesus would be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire.<sup>29</sup> This teaching, like the revelation of what is hidden to believers, is cogent with the remembered words of Jesus, that on the day when the Son of Man will be revealed, God's fiery judgment will rain down from the heavens.<sup>30</sup> His revelation, in the other Synoptic narratives, is described as a vision of the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven in power and glory.<sup>31</sup> A vision of the coming Kingdom of God is also anticipated.<sup>32</sup>

In the epistle attributed to Peter, the immediate and ongoing nature of the revelatory experience of Jesus Christ takes the backseat to the eschatological revelation. The congregation is told that an immortal, pure, permanent "lot" is being kept for them in heaven, yet is ready to be revealed to them during the days of the eschaton. This yet-to-come "revelation of Jesus Christ" will bring with it "grace." What is this revelation? Since the congregants are praised for loving Jesus and believing in him even though they have not yet seen him, this immortal fate is delivered to them through some kind of vision, called here "a revelation of Jesus Christ."

The author of this letter is confident that this immortal fate had already been revealed to the former prophets, since they spoke about the sufferings of Christ and his glorification. This fate has already been preached to the congregants by their leaders. Under the influence of the Holy Spirit who was sent down from heaven, these leaders already had taught believers "the things that angels long to have a glance at," but it is only at the eschaton that the believers will be able to possess their immortal permanent fate, when Jesus is revealed to them in the skies.<sup>33</sup>

The Petrine letter concludes with the note that the author himself already shares in the Glory that is about to be revealed to the congregants.<sup>34</sup> This personal claim relies on the well-known tradition that the glorified Jesus appeared to Peter in a vision following the crucifixion and that Peter's knowledge of Jesus' messiahship was revealed by God, not by flesh and blood.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>29</sup> 2 Thess 1:7.

<sup>30</sup> Luke 17:30.

<sup>31</sup> Mark 13:26; Matthew 16:28; 24:30.

<sup>32</sup> Mark 9:1; Luke 9:27.

<sup>33</sup> 1 Pet 1:3-13.

<sup>34</sup> 1 Pet 5:1.

<sup>35</sup> 1 Cor 15:5; Luke 24:34. Matt 16:17; cf. Mark 8:27-33; Luke 9:19-22. Cf. *Ps-Clem Hom.* 17.18.

These mystical experiences were understood by the early Christians to guarantee the authority, legitimacy, and authenticity of the teachings of the leaders of the movement, a point which the Pauline author of Colossians tries to sink at least in terms of the visionary claims of his Christian-Jewish opponents.<sup>36</sup> At the same time, the Christian-Jewish traditions preserved in the *Pseudo-Clementine* corpus, which understand Paul to be the Apostate, show sharp polemic against Paul's claims to visions and the authority granted to him because of those claims.<sup>37</sup>

When we track early Christian testimonies about their immediate, direct, premortem experiences of God, experiences which they call "apocalypses," we discover that these experiences were perceived to be effected via the Spirit which indwelt them and altered them. The experiences transmitted what was hidden with God, which was perceived by them to be the mystery of immortal life, and identified as the power of Christ. These experiences were ongoing and participatory, as well as eschatological. But first and foremost, they were visionary, with important auditory and noetic qualities involved as well.

## 2. Jesus' Appearances

Jesus' postmortem "appearances" are a common feature in the literature, although even the vision of him before his death as the Glory is preserved in the transfiguration stories and allusions to them.<sup>38</sup> The Christians also preserved traditions of apostolic visions associated with Jesus' call of the disciples, his prayer in Gethsemane, and his crucifixion.<sup>39</sup> Paul transmits the earliest tradition of postmortem visions, recounting that Jesus appeared (*horaô*) to Peter ("Rocky"), the Twelve, more than five-hundred brothers, James, all the apostles, and finally to himself.<sup>40</sup>

Paul speaks of his own ecstatic experiences as "visions and revelations of the Lord."<sup>41</sup> One of these visions involved a heavenly journey where he heard humanly ineffable utterances.<sup>42</sup> He states in defense

<sup>36</sup> Col 2:18.

<sup>37</sup> *Ps.-Clem Hom.* 19.16-19.

<sup>38</sup> Mark 9:2-8; Matt 17:1-8; Luke 9:28-36; 2 Peter 1:16-18; *Acts John* 90.

<sup>39</sup> *Acts John* 88-89; *Gos. Sav.* 114.60-61; *Acts John* 97.7-10; *Apoc Pet* (NHC VII, 3) 81.

<sup>40</sup> 1 Cor 15:5-8.

<sup>41</sup> 2 Cor 12:1.

<sup>42</sup> 2 Cor 12:2-4.

of his own apostleship and by comparison to Peter (“Rocky”), the other apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, “Have I not seen Jesus our Lord?”<sup>43</sup>

The secondary descriptions of Paul’s initial revelation provide embellishments that Paul himself never mentions. In one case, Paul hears a voice who identifies himself as Jesus, but sees nothing but blinding light. It is reported that those with Paul heard the voice, but saw no one.<sup>44</sup> In another report, those with Paul saw the light, but did not hear the voice.<sup>45</sup> In the third report, Jesus tells Paul that he appeared to Paul so that Paul would serve him as a witness to the vision of Jesus he has seen and to those future visions in which Jesus will appear to him.<sup>46</sup> One such vision, reported second-hand by the author of Acts, is remembered as happening to Paul in the Temple following his Damascus experience and baptism. During prayer, he “fell into ecstasy” and saw the Lord, receiving a commandment from him to quickly leave Jerusalem and go far away to the Gentiles.<sup>47</sup>

The early Christian literature is filled with claims to waking and dream visions of Jesus-postmortem. On occasion, the epiphany leads to prostration, grasping at his feet, and worship.<sup>48</sup> The experience sometimes includes a heavenly ascent.<sup>49</sup> There are occasions where Jesus is viewed through an open heaven as an exalted angelic figure.<sup>50</sup>

It is through these visions of the afterlife-Jesus that certain admonitions, commandments, and (sectarian) teachings are delivered orally to the seer by Jesus.<sup>51</sup> These words of Jesus serve several func-

<sup>43</sup> 1 Cor 9:1.

<sup>44</sup> Acts 9:3-9; cp. *Acts Thom* 27: the Lord “appears” to a group of initiates, but they do not see his form, only hearing his voice, because they were not able to bear his light.

<sup>45</sup> Acts 22:6-11.

<sup>46</sup> Acts 26:16.

<sup>47</sup> Acts 22:17-21.

<sup>48</sup> Matt 28:9, 17; Luke 24:30-31; John 20:17 (?), cp. Matt 28:9; Rev 1:17; *Ep. Apos.* 12.

<sup>49</sup> *Ap. Jas.* 15.6-30; *Gos. Sav.* 100:2-6, 113:1-16; *Passion of Perpetua* 4.8. Cf. 2 Cor 12:2-4.

<sup>50</sup> Acts 7:55-56; Rev 4:1-6:17; cf. Rev 11:19, *Ap. John* 1.30-33

<sup>51</sup> Mark 16:9-14: Mary Magdalene, two walkers, the Eleven; Matt 28:9-10, 17: Mary Magdalene, the other Mary, the Eleven; Luke 24:13-31, 34, 36-49: two on road to Emmaus, Peter, the disciple-collective; John 20:14-29: Mary Magdalene, the Eleven, Thomas; Rev 1:10-18: John of Patmos; *Gos. Pet.* 10:39, 14:60: Roman soldiers guarding the tomb, Peter, Andrew, Levi; *Gos. Mary* 10.10-23: Mary; *Ap. Jas.* 1.30-35, 2.34-35: James, Peter, the Twelve; *Gos. Heb.* in Jerome, *de Vir Ill* 2: James; *Acts Thom.* 1, 11, 27: Judas Thomas, bride and bridegroom, group of initiates before baptism; *Ep. Apos.* 10-11: Sarah, Martha, Mary Magdalene, the disciple-collective, Peter, Thomas, Andrew; *Gos. Sav.* 100:36-51, 107:4-30; 113:1-16: John, the disciple-collective (?);

tions. They give authority to the leaders of various Christian communities, particularly when Jesus' words directly commission them to preach the gospel and bequeath them with the spirit.<sup>52</sup> His words are used to correct opinions that some Christians did not like and rebuke unwanted behaviors, especially targeting the opinion of earlier believers who understood the visions of Jesus' resurrected body to be visions of a ghost or spirit.<sup>53</sup> They also are used to indoctrinate certain beliefs that were proving a challenge for conversion or adherence, such as the idea that the Messiah should suffer and die as a criminal.<sup>54</sup> Christological indoctrination seems to have been a priority, so christological assertions are common.<sup>55</sup> The words of Jesus delivered in visions are also words of comfort, particularly relevant at a time when the imminence of the eschaton and Jesus' return were being questioned. So we find in his words assurances of his continual presence in the community, eschatological predictions about judgment and resurrection, and other prophecies.<sup>56</sup> One of the most significant functions that the words of Jesus have in the vision setting is as revelation of the "mysteries" to those perceived worthy of the mysteries. In these cases, Jesus often delivers sectarian teachings as postmortem sayings and mythological instruction.<sup>57</sup> To provide extra legitimacy for his words, the seen-Jesus frequently commands the seers to write down the private revelations they have just received from him.<sup>58</sup>

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Herm. *Sim* 10.1.1: Hermas; *Ap. John* 1.30-2.25: John son of Zebedee; *Soph. Jes. Chr.* 90.15-17: the Twelve, and seven women; *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 134.10-17; *Passion of Perpetua* 4.8, 10.8: Perpetua; *Acts Pet.* 5, 20, 21: Peter, Theon at baptism, sons of Zebedee, blind widows; Hippolytus, *Haer* 9.13.2-3: Elchasai; *Codex Manichaicus Coloniensis* (CMC) fr. 1: Mani.

<sup>52</sup> Commissions: Mark 16:15-18; Matt 28:19-20; John 20:21, 23; *Acts Thom.* 1:1-2; *Ep. Apos.* 19, 30, 41-42, 46; Herm. *Sim* 10.4.1-4; CMC fr. 1; cf. *Gos. Sav.* 113.11-12. For Paul, see earlier discussion in this section. Bequests of the Spirit: Luke 24:49; John 20:22; cf. *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 140.8-10, 16-21.

<sup>53</sup> Resurrection: Luke 24:37-43; John 20:27-28; *Gos. Sav.* 107.4-38; *Ep. Apos.* 11-12. Other: Mark 16:14; John 20:17, 29; *Ap. John* 2.9-12; *Gos. Sav.* 107.24-39; *Ep. Apos.* 11, 24; *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 135.7-8.

<sup>54</sup> Luke 24:25-27, 44-48.

<sup>55</sup> Rev 1:17-18; *Gos. Heb.* in Jerome, *de Vir Ill* 2; *Ap. John* 2.13-15; *Ep. Apos.* 10, 13, 16-17, 19; *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 134.17-18; *Acts Pet.* 20.

<sup>56</sup> Presence: Matt 28:20; *Ap. Jas.* 2.22-26. Eschatological predictions: Rev; *Ep. Apos.* 16-18, 21, 25-29, 34-39, 43-44. Other prophecies: *Ep. Apos.* 31-33.

<sup>57</sup> Postmortem sayings: *Gos. Mary* 10.14ff.; *Ap. Jas.* 2.29ff.; *Gos. Sav.* 107.39-52; *Acts Thom* 12; *Ep. Apos.* 43, 47-50. Mythological instruction: *Ap. John* 2.16ff.; *Soph. Jes. Chr.* 92.6ff.; *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 135.8ff. Sectarian teaching in general: CMC fr. 1.

<sup>58</sup> Rev 1:19; *Ap. John* 31:29-35; cf. *Ap. Jas.* 1.9-12, 29-32.

### 3. Christocentric Mysticism

The mystical experiences of God reported and remembered by the early Christians are remarkable in the centrality they afford Jesus. Their mystical experiences are Christocentric. The afterlife-Jesus is the main object of their revelations, both immediate and future. When his afterlife appearance is described, it is variable, often even shifting in the same vision. He is unrecognizable when first encountered.<sup>59</sup> Questions arise whether he is a spirit or ghost.<sup>60</sup> He is mistaken for a gardener, his brother Judas Thomas (known to be his Twin), and the apostle Paul.<sup>61</sup> He is described as an old grey-haired shepherd.<sup>62</sup> A slain lamb.<sup>63</sup> A child.<sup>64</sup> Simultaneously he appears differently to two seers: as an elderly man bearded and bald, and as youth with a beard only beginning to grow.<sup>65</sup> He appears to people as they were able to see him: to the small as small, to the angels as angel, to humans as human, to his disciples in glory and greatness.<sup>66</sup> Visions of him are associated with a blinding light.<sup>67</sup> His body is resurrected or magnificently glorified, sometimes unbearably so.<sup>68</sup> His immense height is mentioned.<sup>69</sup> He is perceived to be a great spectacular angel whose resemblance cannot be described.<sup>70</sup> He is the Paraclete-angel who appears like lightning, after the fashion of the frightening luminous angels reported in Jewish apocalypses.<sup>71</sup> He is a luminous "youth" who becomes an old man before being recognized in his triple form as Father-Mother-Son.<sup>72</sup> He is the angelic Son of Man fully robed with hair of white and eyes of fire.<sup>73</sup> One minute he is as tall as the heavens,

<sup>59</sup> John 20:14; Luke 24:16.

<sup>60</sup> Luke 24:37.

<sup>61</sup> John 20:15; *Acts Thom* 11, 34, 39, 88; *Acts Paul* 21.

<sup>62</sup> *Passion of Perpetua* 4.8.

<sup>63</sup> *Rev* 4:6-8.

<sup>64</sup> *Acts John* 88; *Gos. Sav.* 107.58-60; *Acts Pet.* 5.

<sup>65</sup> *Acts John* 89; cf. *Acts Pet.* 21, where he appears differently to different blind widows.

<sup>66</sup> *Gos. Phil.* 57.28-58.10; *Acts Pet.* 20.

<sup>67</sup> *Acts* 9:3-9; 22:6-11; 26:12-18; 2 Cor 4:4-6; *Soph. Jes. Chr.* 91.10-16; *Ap. John* 2:1-2; *Ep. Pet. Phil.* 134.10; *Acts Thom* 27; *Acts Pet.* 21.

<sup>68</sup> *Luke* 24:36-43; *John* 20:19-20, 24-27; *Gos. Sav.* 107.12-23; *Soph. Jes. Chr.* 91.10-16; *Acts John* 90.

<sup>69</sup> Bk Elchasai in Hippolytus, *Haer* 9.13.2-3; *Passion of Perpetua* 4.8, 10.8; *Herm. Sim* 9.6.1; cf. *Gos. Pet.* 10.39.

<sup>70</sup> *Soph. Jes. Chr.* 91.10-16.

<sup>71</sup> CMC fr. 1.3, 24, 46-55.

<sup>72</sup> *Ap. John* 2.1-15; cf. *Acts Thom.* 27.

<sup>73</sup> *Rev* 1:12-19.

naked with white shining feet, and the next he is a small man.<sup>74</sup> He is "Jesus Christ who is with you forever."<sup>75</sup> He is the polymorphic Jesus, appearing in many forms.<sup>76</sup>

Obviously these polymorphic descriptions of the afterlife-Jesus serve Christological functions. In some contexts, they communicate Jesus' transcendence over death, while in other contexts, they assert that Christ is not constrained by the material world.<sup>77</sup> In some cases, these descriptions of the seen-Jesus are highly stylized, keying old scriptural passages to Jesus' appearance in order to make even more specific Christological statements. His appearances are described after the fashion of glorious radiant angels like the ones described in Daniel 10:5-9 and the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah* 6:11-15. His future appearances are imagined as Daniel's Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven.<sup>78</sup> Other prophetic texts flesh out the imagined details of this eschatological Jesus-vision.<sup>79</sup>

What is most significant about the Christocentric nature of the early Christian visions is how the vision of Jesus was understood to function as the *visio dei*. While God the Father remains shrouded and invisible, the afterlife-Jesus appears in his stead. Quite early in Christian literature, he becomes known as the "image of the invisible God," as the corporeal revelation of the Hidden God.<sup>80</sup> His appearance on earth functions to make visible to human beings the invisible God who is inapproachable and hidden, a God whom no one has ever or can ever see.<sup>81</sup> Jesus is conceived to be the "form" of God in which the "fullness of deity dwells bodily."<sup>82</sup> Jesus is the only one who has ever seen God, and thus the only one who can reveal God.<sup>83</sup> Visions of him reveal the Father.<sup>84</sup>

This Christology where Jesus' appearance is God's appearance is particularly developed in the Johannine material.<sup>85</sup> The author understands that Jesus is God's Glory who pretemporally was the luminous Logos living in the bosom of the Father. As such he is the

<sup>74</sup> *Acts John* 90.7-11.

<sup>75</sup> *Ap. John* 2.1-15

<sup>76</sup> *Act Thom* 48, 153; Origen, *Against Celsus* 2.64.

<sup>77</sup> Foster 2007: 1-34.

<sup>78</sup> Daniel 7:9-14, particularly the Septuagint version.

<sup>79</sup> Munoa 2002: 303-325. Cf. Isa 13:10; 27:13; 34:2-4; Ezek 32:7; Zeph 1:14-16; Zech 9:14.

<sup>80</sup> Col 1:15.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. 1 Tim 1:17, 6:14-16; 2 Clem 20:5; Herm. Vis. 1.3.4; *Diogn* 7.2.

<sup>82</sup> Phil 2:6; Col 2:9.

<sup>83</sup> John 1:18.

<sup>84</sup> John 14:9; cf. 12:45.

<sup>85</sup> DeConick 2001a: 107-117.

only one who has ever or will ever see the Father. Christ is cast as the Glory in heaven, the manifestation of God seen by Isaiah and described by Isaiah as a throne vision of the "Lord."<sup>86</sup>

The Johannine author historicizes this Christology so that in real time, Jesus is God descended from heaven, God tabernacling with humans.<sup>87</sup> The mysticism that asserts itself in the Gospel of John centers on the historical presence of the Glory of God in the person Jesus. The gospel opens with the community's claim that they have seen his Glory.<sup>88</sup> The Glory of Jesus is shown in his person, his signs and wonders, and his crucifixion.<sup>89</sup> Jesus asserts that "the Father and I are one" and "believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me."<sup>90</sup> The person Jesus is the visible manifestation of the invisible God.<sup>91</sup> This vision-centered revelatory Christology is extensively developed by second-century Christian theologians fond of the Gospel of John, such as Irenaeus of Lyons and Valentinian teachers.<sup>92</sup>

What made possible the kind of Christology where Jesus is apprehended as the visible body of God on earth? This understanding of Jesus was built upon two related scriptural complexes. One complex includes a number of passages about the weightiness or manifestation of YHWH, called his Glory (MT: *kavod*; LXX: *doxa*).<sup>93</sup> The starting point for the framing of Jesus as the visible Glory appears to have been Exodus 33:20 when YHWH tells Moses, "You cannot see my face, for human beings shall not see me and live." In this foundational story, God replaces a direct vision of himself with a vision of his Glory's backside, rendering himself distinct yet indistinct from himself. Ezekiel 1:26-28 was tied in, since it describes Ezekiel's vision of God as a vision of the Glory of the Lord, a human-like form with a gleaming body encased in fire and enthroned in heaven.<sup>94</sup> A number of other passages, which associate the revelation of the *Kavod* with the future restoration of Israel and God's Judgment, completed the complex.<sup>95</sup> So the tradition complex that emerges focuses on the hiddenness of God.

<sup>86</sup> Isa. 6:1; John 12:39-41.

<sup>87</sup> John 1:1-18. DeConick 2001a: 109-132.

<sup>88</sup> John 1:14, 16.

<sup>89</sup> John 1:14; 2:11; 11:40; 12:23, 28; 13:32; 17:1,4-5.

<sup>90</sup> John 10:30, 14:11.

<sup>91</sup> John 1:18.

<sup>92</sup> Cf. DeConick 1999: 321-325; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 4:20; *Gos. Truth* 38.15; cf. Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.1.1; 1.2.1-5; Clement of Alexandria, *Exc.* 6.1-7.1, 3, 5; 26.1; *Gos. Truth* 16.35-17.1; 19.11-20.15; 24.10-15; 37.36-38.24; 39.4-10; *Tri. Trac.* 66.14-15, 67.17-19.

<sup>93</sup> Fossum 1999: 348-352.

<sup>94</sup> Quispel 1980: 1-13.

<sup>95</sup> Isa 42:8; 43:6-7; 48:10-11; 58:8; 59: 19; 60:1-3; Ezek 28:22; 39:13, 21.

Direct viewing of God will bring death to creatures who attempt to gaze upon him. So he manifests himself in a bodily form that is luminous, even angelic. The Glory and the Lord himself were indistinguishable.<sup>96</sup> God manifests himself as his Glory enthroned in heaven and seen by the prophets. The Glory will be revealed in the last days when God's Judgment comes upon the world.

The second scriptural complex included a number of passages that mention the Angel of YHWH as the human-like divine being who bears the Name YHWH.<sup>97</sup> Like the *Kavod*, the YHWH angel was understood to be interchangeable with God or operating with God's power and authority.<sup>98</sup> Likewise, the YHWH angel was associated with God's Judgment.<sup>99</sup> Consequently in the period Jewish literature, it is common to find *Kavod*-like angels sitting on heavenly thrones as the eschatological Judge and God's vicegerent.<sup>100</sup>

With reference to these scriptural complexes, Jesus was associated with the Glory. He was framed as the anthropomorphic manifestation of God and the Angel of the Lord, who bore God's Name and Image.<sup>101</sup> It was in this way that Jesus became understood as the visible image of the invisible God. So visions of Jesus were powerful mystical experiences of God himself, experiences that were understood by the early Christians to be life-altering and (apo)theophanic.

#### 4. (Apo)theosis

Although the visions of Jesus appear to have fulfilled a number of social and religious functions among the Christians who reported them, at the heart of the "revelation of Jesus Christ" was a soteriological assertion. The mystical encounter with Jesus transfigured the seer. A Christocentric (*apo*)theosis took place. The Gospel of Philip phrases it succinctly: "You saw Christ, you became Christ...What you see, you shall become."<sup>102</sup>

<sup>96</sup> Ezek 9:3-4.

<sup>97</sup> Exod 23:20-21.

<sup>98</sup> Gen 16:7; Exod 3:2-7. Gieschen 1998: 51-69.

<sup>99</sup> Zech 3:1-7; Isa 66:15-16; Mal 3:1-5.

<sup>100</sup> *1 En* 45:3, 55:4, 61:8, 62:2, 69:29; *T. Ab. Rec A* 11:4, 12:5; *Apoc. Abr.* 11:3. For Metatron references, see Orlov 2005.

<sup>101</sup> Fossum 1995. Cf. Matt 18:20, 28:19; John 1:12, 2:23, 3:18, 5:43-33; 10:25; 14:10-13; 12:28; 15:21; 17:6, 11, 26; 20:31; Acts 2:17-21, 38, 5:41, 9:14, 16; 15:26; 21:13, 22:16; Phil 2:9; James 2:7; Heb 1:4, 13:15; Rom 10:9-13; 1 Cor 1:2; 2 Tim 2:22.

<sup>102</sup> *Gos. Phil.* 61.30-31, 34-35.



The basis for this assertion is the ancient belief that there is an actual identification of the seen-object with the seer. This belief is linked to ancient physiological knowledge about the operation of the eye. As early as Plato, we find the suggestion that the vision of an object touched the eye and then was transmitted to the psyche or soul. The vision of the object was imprinted on the soul like a stamp of a signet ring on a block of wax.<sup>103</sup> This belief underpinned the piety and performance of the Greek mystery religions which celebrated the *epopteia*, the vision of sacred objects and the god or goddess enshrouded in light, as well as the Greco-Egyptian “way of immortality” known as Hermetism, where the process of (*apo*)*theosis* is achieved via visions of the self as Mind.<sup>104</sup> This Hellenic idea so penetrated the culture of the ancient world that it was considered common knowledge among the ancients and needed no explanation.

In our earliest Christian literature, Paul embraces the vision of Jesus Christ as life-altering, straight down to the convert’s core being. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 3:16-18 that at conversion a veil is lifted off the convert’s face. With unveiled faces, Christians look into a mirror and see that their own reflections are the Glory of the Lord, that they are being transformed into his Image by degrees of glory. Paul says that this gradual transformation into the Glory is made possible through the power of the Spirit of the Lord, who indwells the faithful. He mentions in another letter that now we see dimly in a mirror, but there will be a time when we will see “face to face” and have full knowledge.<sup>105</sup>

Since Paul had identified God’s Spirit as the spirit of Jesus Christ, he understood Christians as those people who, because they were possessed with his spirit, had taken on “the same form as the Image of his Son.”<sup>106</sup> He addresses the struggling Galatians as a congregation he is suffering with “until Christ is formed in you.”<sup>107</sup> Paul claims that because Christ dwells in him, he has been crucified with Christ. “It is no longer ‘I’ who live,” he says, “but Christ who lives in me.”<sup>108</sup> He applies this same rationale to other Christians, explaining that if the Spirit of Christ is in them, although their bodies are dead due to sin, their spirits are alive due to righteousness.<sup>109</sup>

<sup>103</sup> Plato, *Theaet.* 191a-196c. Cf. Achilles Tatius, *Leuc. Clit.* 5.13.

<sup>104</sup> DeConick 2001a: 42-49; DeConick 2005: 210-211. Cf. *Disc.* 8-9 57.6-7, 33-58.22, 25-29, 60.25-61.2, 63.10-11.

<sup>105</sup> 1 Cor 13:12.

<sup>106</sup> Rom 8:29. Cf. Gal 4:6.

<sup>107</sup> Gal 4:19.

<sup>108</sup> Gal 2:20.

<sup>109</sup> Rom 8:9-10.

Paul commands people to be transformed by the remaking of their minds. Paul explains that we are to be remade in full accord with Christ Jesus and of one and the same mind with him, because “we have the mind of Christ” indwelling us.<sup>110</sup> According to 2 Corinthians 5:17, “If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature. The old has passed away, behold, the new has been made.”<sup>111</sup> Similarly, Colossians 3:9-10 reads, “You have put off the old humanity with its practices and have put on the new which is being remade in knowledge according to the Image of its creator.”

For Paul, this gradual ongoing process of (*apo*)*theosis* via Christ would not be completed until the eschaton when the glorified body would ultimately replace the flesh as the fulfillment of the promise of the resurrection. The glorified body was the body resurrected, which was the Image of the man from heaven, Christ Jesus.<sup>112</sup> Paul taught his parishioners to wait for “the Lord Jesus Christ, who will change our lowly body to have a form like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.”<sup>113</sup>

The (*apo*)*theosis* that Paul experiences as ongoing (and expects in the future) is possible not only because the visionary is identified with the seen-object as the faithful peer at the Glory in the mirror. There is a possessive dynamic involved too, where the embodiment of the spirit of Christ Jesus results in identification with him. Since he is YHWH-Manifest, the Glory of the Lord, and the Image of the invisible God, the indwelling of his spirit has a very powerful transformative effect on the possessed. Its residence within the believer works to transfigure the believer into that very same Image of God. The believer is glorified by degree, until the glorification is fully actualized at the eschaton when the transfiguration into a spiritual or resurrected body is finalized. Once all believers are Images of God like Christ and the last enemy, death, is destroyed, Paul can say that God finally will be “all in all.”<sup>114</sup>

Even though there are different emphases featured, the Johannine tradition is very similar to the Pauline in respect to its understanding of Jesus as God-manifest on earth. While Paul emphasizes that *Jesus* is the manifestation of God, the Johannine tradition emphasizes that Jesus is the manifestation of *God*. This difference in emphasis has caused some confusion in scholarship and the advancement of

<sup>110</sup> Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 2:16; Philippians 2:1-5

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Gal 6:15.

<sup>112</sup> 1 Cor 15:42-49.

<sup>113</sup> Phil 3:20-21.

<sup>114</sup> 1 Cor 15:23-28.

the flawed opinion that Paul is advocating “Christ mysticism” which centers on the Christ as distinct from God the Father, while John is focusing on “God mysticism” which does not have such a distinction.<sup>115</sup>

But this is not the case. For Paul the most significant part of the *Kavod* Christology is that *Jesus* is where God has been manifested and localized. If we conform ourselves to Jesus, we experience a similar (*apo*)*theosis* and localization of God. The Johannine author wants to stress the second half of that equation – *Jesus is God revealed on earth*. Because of this emphasis, he makes very explicit that, during the lifetime of Jesus, the historical vision of him was the vision of God.<sup>116</sup> Even the angels in heaven must descend to earth to see the manifestation of God which is located in the historical figure Jesus!<sup>117</sup>

As a *visio dei*, the vision of the historical Jesus according to John was immortalizing: “For this is the will of my Father that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him should have eternal life.”<sup>118</sup> The Father is “in” Jesus and Jesus is “in” the Father because Jesus is the Glory. This Glory can be transferred to the disciples so that they too can be “in” Jesus and God, so that all of them can be “one.” How does this happen? Jesus prays that they may see Jesus’ Glory since the Father remains unknown. He will manifest the Father’s Name and love to them, so that Jesus can be “in” them.<sup>119</sup>

How do you go about “seeing” Jesus after he is dead and gone when the author of John is very clear that flights to heaven are prohibited?<sup>120</sup> Like Paul, the Johannine author understands that the Spirit of Jesus plays a role in the Christian community. Since Jesus is gone, the Spirit replaces the historical Jesus as God’s manifestation on earth. The author calls this sent-Spirit “another Paraclete,” implying that the historical Jesus was a previous Paraclete. So in Jesus’ absence, the next Spirit of Jesus will be sent to abide with the community, manifesting himself as God’s love in and among the faithful.<sup>121</sup> This is worked out more fully in the Johannine epistles where it is stated that while no one has ever seen God, if we love one another, God lives in us. We can be certain, the presbyter writes, that “we live in him and he in us, because

<sup>115</sup> Schweitzer 1931, 1953, 1998.

<sup>116</sup> John 14:7, 9; DeConick 2001a: 113-121.

<sup>117</sup> John 1:51. Cf. Rowland 1984.

<sup>118</sup> John 6:40. Cf. 14:19.

<sup>119</sup> John 17:20-26.

<sup>120</sup> John 1:18; 3:13; 5:37; 6:46.

<sup>121</sup> John 14:16, 18, 22-23.

he has given us his own Spirit."<sup>122</sup> It was also used by Montanus as an explanation for the ecstasies that he and his prophetesses Maximilla and Priscilla experienced: he had been possessed by the Spirit and was the voice of the Paraclete sent by Jesus after his death.<sup>123</sup>

At the end of the Johannine gospel, Jesus blesses with life eternal those who have "not seen" but "believe."<sup>124</sup> Throughout the gospel, the concept of faith in Jesus is repeatedly linked with the visionary experience to the extent that faith and vision not only become correlative concepts, but faith replaces vision and functions as a form of transfiguring vision.<sup>125</sup> This concept is developed in the Johannine epistles where it is stated that anyone who confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, "God lives in him and he in God."<sup>126</sup>

The transfiguring vision of Jesus, however, remains in play as an eschatological event too. According to the Johannine epistles, his appearance at the end of time will result in our ultimate transfiguration. Although the presbyter is confident that "we are God's children now," he is equally confident that whatever form we will take when "he appears" will be like him "for we shall see him as he is."<sup>127</sup>

The type of mysticism that is developed in the Johannine literature appears to be directly responding to and critiquing another form of mysticism familiar to the author of the *Gospel of Thomas*.<sup>128</sup> Thomazine mysticism was an open-heaven mysticism, which encouraged the faithful to ascend to heaven and gaze upon the Living God and his Son before death in order not to die.<sup>129</sup> The Syrian Christians who wrote the *Gospel of Thomas* transmit traditions about the ascent passage through the spheres, enjoying Paradise, throne room etiquette, visionary meetings with heavenly doppelgangers and the Living God and his Son, and transfigurations into the primordial Man.<sup>130</sup> They will enter the kingdom when they have remade their bodies into God's image – "eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image in place of an image."<sup>131</sup>

<sup>122</sup> 1 John 4:12-13.

<sup>123</sup> See Marjanen 2005: 198 n. 39 for discussion of the numerous sources.

<sup>124</sup> John 20:29-31.

<sup>125</sup> DeConick 2001a: 125-127.

<sup>126</sup> 1 John 4:15.

<sup>127</sup> 1 John 3:2-3.

<sup>128</sup> DeConick 2001a: 86-108.

<sup>129</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 59. Cf. DeConick 1996; DeConick 2005: 212-237; DeConick 2008: 206-221.

<sup>130</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 15, 18, 19, 22, 37, 50, 59, 84, 114.

<sup>131</sup> *Gos. Thom.* 22.

In order to commune with the Living God and his Son, this particular Christian community had combined this open-heaven mysticism with a call to an encratic praxis to control the body of passions. This form of mysticism appears to have strong roots in early Alexandria, as evidenced by its later development in the works of Clement of Alexandria.<sup>132</sup> Since it is likely that the Syrian Christians were in communication with the Alexandrian community via the missionary route that physically connected them, the mysticism that emerges in the Thomasine gospel probably developed in dialogue between their leaders and early Alexandrian teachers.<sup>133</sup> The result was a practical theology that taught that the human being indwelled with the Spirit could conquer the body of passions, and through righteous living could recreate in its place the virtuous body of the prelapsarian Adam. It was believed that the person could ascend and reside in Paradise, and elicit visions of Jesus and God through an encratic regime and meditative praxis. Eventually this would bring the person face-to-face with his or her own God-Image, a vision that restored the soul to its original glorious state. This form of mysticism is a precursor to the mysticism that pervades later Eastern Orthodoxy.<sup>134</sup>

## 5. Democratization of the Mystical

One of the most fascinating dynamics of early Christian mysticism is the evidence for the “democratization” of the mystical via the establishment of sacraments that make the presence of God regularly available to *all* believers. Baptism, anointing, and the eucharist were all understood to affect the transformation of the soul and the integration of the Spirit and/or the Christ into the soul. As early as Paul, these rituals were understood to reintegrate the person into the divine immediately and ontologically. Baptism washed clean the person, making the person righteous and providing sanctification through the indwelling of the Spirit and the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>135</sup> Because the baptized have put on Christ, all gender, religious, and social distinctions are gone.<sup>136</sup> Since the faithful were

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<sup>132</sup> DeConick 2005: 225-231.

<sup>133</sup> DeConick 2005: 232-237.

<sup>134</sup> DeConick 2008: 206-221.

<sup>135</sup> 1 Cor 6:1-11.

<sup>136</sup> Gal 3:27-28.

baptized in one Spirit, they are now one body.<sup>137</sup> This sacramental ideology appears to be an extension of the early stories about Jesus' own baptism and the gift of the spirit associated with it.<sup>138</sup>

Paul develops this old baptismal theology by ruminating on the implications of being possessed by Christ's Spirit. If we have his Spirit in us and have become part of his body, then we have experienced everything that he experienced, including his death and resurrection. This is why Paul says that when the faithful are baptized into Jesus Christ, they are baptized into his death, are buried with him, so that they are also resurrected like him to walk a new life glorified.<sup>139</sup> He understands that we carry within our bodies the "transcendent power belonging to God" which is Christ's spirit. Accordingly, we carry within our bodies "the death of Jesus" so that "the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies."<sup>140</sup>

Paul has a similar interpretation of the eucharist. He understands that drinking the blood of Christ and eating his body effects union with him. He claims that this operates on the principle that the person who eats the meat of the sacrificed animal is united with the god to whom that sacrifice was offered, whether Jews who make the offering on YHWH's altar, or the pagans who do so at the table of demons.<sup>141</sup>

The Johannine author knows that baptism and eucharist are powerful mystical experiences that bring God's presence to the faithful in lieu of the historical absence of Jesus.<sup>142</sup> For this community, entrance into the Kingdom of God is dependent on "water and spirit" which effect a personal rebirth.<sup>143</sup> Through baptism, Jesus as the Spirit becomes present for the initiate. He is the "living water" which wells up to eternal life.<sup>144</sup> Furthermore, Jesus is the "bread of life" which has "come down from heaven."<sup>145</sup> This bread is his "flesh" which, when eaten by the faithful, provides immortality to them.<sup>146</sup> The same is true of his blood.<sup>147</sup> How does this work? The incorporation of a sacred substance as food unites the faithful with that sub-

<sup>137</sup> 1 Cor 12:13.

<sup>138</sup> Mark 1:10, Matt 3:16; Luke 3:22; *Gos. Heb.* in Jerome, *Comm. Isa.* 4.

<sup>139</sup> Rom 6:3-5.

<sup>140</sup> 2 Cor 4:7-12.

<sup>141</sup> 1 Cor 10:14-22.

<sup>142</sup> DeConick 2001a: 128-131.

<sup>143</sup> John 3:5.

<sup>144</sup> John 4:10-14.

<sup>145</sup> John 6:35, 41, 51.

<sup>146</sup> John 6:51.

<sup>147</sup> John 6:56.

stance. So when Jesus' flesh and blood have been consumed, he has been incorporated into the person.<sup>148</sup>

The text is clear, however, that believers are not eating the flesh nor drinking the blood of the historical Jesus, because Jesus himself has ascended to heaven and his flesh had been transformed into a glorified body. What they are eating is something transfigured, something made divine via the Spirit – it is “flesh” made sacred by the descent of the spirit which joins with it during the ceremony in the same way that the Logos did at the incarnation.<sup>149</sup> Because the Spirit is made assimilable via Jesus' divinized flesh and blood, the flesh and blood of the faithful who have eaten it mystically unite with him. By eating Jesus, his spirit is able to fuse with matter and begin the process of their own divinization. The incorporation of Jesus' sacred flesh results in the immortalization or resurrection of the flesh of the faithful who have eaten it.

In later traditions, this understanding of the eucharist persists. Ignatius understood it to be “the medicine of immortality” because it is the antidote for death, allowing the faithful “to live in Jesus Christ forever.”<sup>150</sup> Eating and drinking the flesh and blood of Christ unites the worshiper with him.<sup>151</sup> Similarly Justin Martyr says that the incorporation of Jesus' sacred body nourishes and transforms our own flesh and blood into the flesh and blood of Jesus.<sup>152</sup> He also thinks that the occasion of the eucharist provides the faithful with a vision of Jesus as was prophesied by Isaiah, “Bread shall be given to him, and his water sure. A King with glory, you shall see.” The act of the eucharist is conceived by Justin either to be itself a vision of Jesus or to prepare the faithful for a later vision of him.<sup>153</sup>

The Valentinians develop the mystical aspects of the baptismal and eucharist rituals in remarkable ways. In the first place, they appear to have performed a “second baptism” in order to bestow the Spirit. This ceremony involved anointing and, according to them, brought about their “redemption” by affording them the name “Christ” rather than merely “Christian”!<sup>154</sup> Since Messiah or Christ means “anointed one,” they argued that they are newly begotten as “Christs” by the Holy Spirit via the two baptisms (in water and with

<sup>148</sup> John 6:56.

<sup>149</sup> John 6:60-63. Cf. Schweitzer 1998: 274.

<sup>150</sup> Ignatius, *Eph.* 20.

<sup>151</sup> Ignatius, *Phld.* 4.

<sup>152</sup> Justin, *1 Apol.* 66.

<sup>153</sup> Isa 33:16-17 LXX in Justin, *Dial.* 70.4.

<sup>154</sup> *Gos. Phil.* 67.20-27.

oil) when they are united with the perfect light of the Spirit.<sup>155</sup> At the eucharist, they call upon Christ as the “Perfect Man” who is bread brought down from heaven to nourish the humans with the “food of Man.”<sup>156</sup> During the meal, believers receive Jesus’ “flesh,” which is Jesus’ resurrected or transformed body known as the “Perfect Man.” The cup is filled with the “Holy Spirit” belonging to the “Perfect Man.” When the believer partakes in the eucharist, the believer receives the “Living Man” as clothing, uniting with the Perfect Man sacramentally.<sup>157</sup> Thusly garbed in his body (which was invisible to the archons!), believers could anticipate an unhindered journey through the heavenly spheres at death in order to reunite with their angelic twins.<sup>158</sup> The ritual appears to have effected some kind of immediate preliminary union with the divine self as well since the words of thanksgiving used in ceremony included this prayer: “O You who have united (with us) the perfect light as the Holy Spirit, unite too the angels with us, the images.”<sup>159</sup> Marcus’ eucharist service also included a prayer petitioning immediate union with the angelic bridegrooms.<sup>160</sup>

The Christians believe that these rituals were effective because they relied on the power of the invocation of the secret Name of God (YHWH) which had been given to Jesus, a tradition that appears to be part of the foundational Christian movement known as early as Paul.<sup>161</sup> The pronunciation of the Name effected forgiveness of sins, healing, and salvation. Its efficacy was based on principles common to ancient magic where appeals for intercession and healing were often made by employing the powerful secret names of deities and angels.

Speculation about the exalted Name given to Jesus and its secret permutations became the backbone of many esoteric Christian lodge movements. In Valentinian traditions, IAO was used as the secret

<sup>155</sup> *Gos. Phil.* 69.5-15, 70.5-10.

<sup>156</sup> *Gos. Phil.* 55:11-14. Cf. DeConick 2001b: 239-245.

<sup>157</sup> *Gos. Phil.* 56:33-57:9; 70:5-10.

<sup>158</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.21.5; *Gos. Phil.* 76:23-30; 86:6-11.

<sup>159</sup> *Gos. Phil.* 58.11-16.

<sup>160</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.13.3.

<sup>161</sup> Phil 2:9-11; Rom 6:11; Eph 1:15-23; 2 Thess 1:12; Matt 10:22; 18:5, 20; 19:29; 28:19; John 1:12; 2:23; 3:18; 5:43-44; 10:25; 12:28; 14:12-13; 15:16; 16:23-24, 26; 17:6, 11, 26; 20:31; Acts 2:14-38; 3:6, 16; 4:12, 17-18, 30; 5:28, 41; 8:12; 9:13-16, 21; James 2:7; 5:14; Heb 1:2-4; Rev 19:11-16; *Didache* 10.1; *Gos. Thom.* 13; 1 *Clem.* 58.1; 59.2; 60.4; *Herm. Sim* 9.14.5; 9.16.3-4; Justin, 1 *Apol* 61; *Gos. Phil.* 54.5-8; *Gos. Truth* 38.7-40.29; Clement of Alexandria, *Exc.* 22.4, 6-7; 26.1; 86.2; *idem.*, *Strom.* 5.38.6-7; *Mart. Ascen. Isa.* 8.7; 9.5; *Odes Sol.* 39.7-8; 42.20; *Acts Thom.* 27, 163. Cf. Gieschen 2003: 115-158.



password to gain access to the divine world.<sup>162</sup> There is evidence that some Valentinians used Aramaic prayers that contained secret names of power associated with Jesus, including *Messias* and *Nazarênos*.<sup>163</sup> Marcus the Valentinian claimed to have received the esoteric pronunciation and numerical meaning of the Name of Christ Jesus directly from the pleromic angel Aletheia who appeared to him in a vision. He is reprimanded for misusing the Name previously because he had been ignorant of its real power and meaning.<sup>164</sup> Monoimus the Gnostic speculates extensively on the Name of the Son as “a single stroke,” the letter iota.<sup>165</sup> Sethian Christians chanted their own variations of the Name, including *Iêieus* and *Iesseus Nazareus Iessedekus*, while also intoning various permutations of IAO.<sup>166</sup> They complain about the misuse of the Name of Jesus by conventional Christians in their baptismal and eucharist ceremonies.<sup>167</sup> The Naasenes and the Basilidians pass on the secret name of Jesus as *Kaulakau* which they derived from the Hebrew passage in Isaiah 28:10.<sup>168</sup>

This speculative tradition appears to have been known more generally among Christians who connected their investiture of the Name of Jesus with Ezekiel 9:4 where YHWH demands that his “mark” (*taw*) be put on the foreheads of the faithful.<sup>169</sup> Since *taw* is also the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter *taw* was thought to be the mark of YHWH.<sup>170</sup> As the last letter of the alphabet, it was considered shorthand for the Name of YHWH.<sup>171</sup> This Name abbreviation was familiar to the Christians who knew the LORD as the *alpha* and *omega* of the Greek alphabet, and Christ as “the first and the last.”<sup>172</sup> Significantly, in ancient Hebrew script, a Hebrew *taw* looked like two crossed lines, which the Christians recognized as a cross.<sup>173</sup> It is quite likely that the mark *taw* as the *stauros* was their understanding of the secret Name of Jesus put on the initiate at the time of baptism.

<sup>162</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer* 1.4.1; Epiphanius, *Pan.* 31.35.4.

<sup>163</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer* 1.21.3; *Gos. Phil.* 56.4-15.

<sup>164</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.14.4; 1.15.2.

<sup>165</sup> Hippolytus, *Haer.* 8.12.1-15.2.

<sup>166</sup> *Gos. Eg.* III 66.9-22.

<sup>167</sup> *Gos. Jud.* 38.5, 26; 39.11-17; 40.4-5; 55.22-24.

<sup>168</sup> Irenaeus, *Haer.* 1.24.5-6; Hippolytus, *Haer.* 5.8.4.

<sup>169</sup> Cf. Rev 7:2; 13:17.

<sup>170</sup> Origen, *Selecta in Ezechielem* 9; Tertullian, *Against Marcion* 3.22; Shabb 55a.

<sup>171</sup> Finegan 1978: 220-260.

<sup>172</sup> Rev 1:8, 17.

<sup>173</sup> Origen, *Selecta in Ezechielem* 9. Finegan 1978: 225, 228.

## 6. The Cosmic Drama Internalized

A dynamic that cannot be overemphasized is the relationship that early Christian mysticism has with eschatology and the drama of cosmic endings that the Christian Jews anticipated to fully play out in their lives. This was a drama that depended on a standard Jewish myth about the nature of human beings and the predicament of human existence. Since the Genesis story teaches that God created human beings in his Image so that they enjoyed living directly in his presence, ancient readers speculated about what exactly happened that this was no longer the case and what actually needed to happen in order for it to be the case again. Most Jews thought that Adam had made a bad choice, which separated him from God, either tarnishing his original state or losing it entirely. This meant that piety was the key to restoration and salvation. If the person lived in obedience to God's Law, upon death or the eschaton, the person would be restored to the original created state as God's Image and live again in paradise. This they taught by way of their eschatological doctrine of the resurrection of the dead, the restoration of the person in a glorious angelic-like body reflecting God's Image.<sup>174</sup>

Some Jews felt that the lost Image could be restored, at least provisionally, before death – that paradise and its fruits could be had now. Literature from the Dead Sea, reports about the Therapeutae, and the writings of Philo demonstrate that some Jews were involved in communal practices to achieve this mystical transformation of the body in the here and now – the immediate inclusion of the faithful in the community of angels.<sup>175</sup> What these people were doing is making present the eschatological encounter with God and all the promises that went along with that encounter, including the promise of the glorified body. This meant that the traditional rewards normally reserved for the Last Day became available to the faithful in the Now, including the revelation of God's mysteries and encounters with God that resulted in the devotee's immediate (*apo*)*theosis*.

It would not be correct, however, to envision mysticism and eschatology as oppositional in a combative sense. Rather they are twin dimensions of apocalypticism, better understood as opposite ends of the same continuum. In the case of eschatology, it views salvation and transformation on a cosmic level as a future apocalyptic real-

<sup>174</sup> DeConick 2006b: 18-22; Segal 2004.

<sup>175</sup> DeConick 2006b: 21 n. 66.

ity. In the case of mysticism, it views salvation and transformation on a personal level as an immediate apocalyptic reality. Eschatology is mysticism externalized and postponed. Mysticism is eschatology actualized in the Now on a personal level, often internalized. Yet these two ways of viewing the human being's relationship to God do not work in opposition to each other, but together, even in tandem. Rarely, if ever in early Christian literature, do we find one without the other. The matter usually is one of focus or emphasis, whether the eschatological or the mystical dominates.

Thus we find in the earliest Christian literature both eschatology and mysticism operating seamlessly as partners, beginning with the early memories of Jesus. He is remembered as a prophet, anointed with the Holy Spirit. In this way, he is recalled as the exemplar mystic whom God's Spirit indwelt at his baptism and transfigured into a luminous angel on the mountain. A major focus of his teaching was the immediacy of God. He was remembered as a teacher who spoke about the future but imminent end of the world, when God's Judgment would occur and God's Kingdom would be established. Simultaneously, he was remembered as a teacher who informed his followers that God's Kingdom was already accessible to them, that it had been sown like a mustard seed in the earth. He had come to reveal to them directly and immediately what is hidden – the mystery of the Kingdom and knowledge of the Father.

This dual message allowed early Christian mysticism to develop in fascinating directions, especially when the immediacy of the eschaton was called into question after long years of waiting for an event that became the Non-Event. When the Kingdom did not come, the early Christians re-evaluated their traditions to explain the Non-Event and make meaningful again their remembrances of Jesus' apocalyptic words.

There were several strategies tried, and all of them were successful to some extent. Paul appears to have emphasized the fact that Christians were already experiencing a divine transformation as the result of the indwelling of Christ's Spirit at their baptism. Revelations of Christ Jesus should be expected as part of their contemporary experience. The transformation, however, would be fully actualized at the eschaton when the final revelation of Christ Jesus in the clouds of heaven occurred. Paul's solution was to understand the restoration to God's image progressively, as a number of stepping stones paving the way to the final moment of full actualization. In this way, both the mystical and the eschatological dominate the religious experience.

The authors of the Synoptic gospels assure their readers that the eschaton will be a reality that must be prepared for regardless of when it will happen. It is rationalized in Matthew that not even the Son knows when it will come (so be ready and waiting!) and in Luke that it has been delayed in order to develop the church mission and fully engage proselytizing. In these cases, the eschaton is understood to be underway, although postponed. This meant that the cosmos was already experiencing alteration as the Kingdom or Church replaced the kingdoms of this world. The cosmos was changing as God or his Spirit broke into the world, making immediate and direct encounters between him and the faithful possible. But the restoration of the Image was reserved mainly for the day of the resurrection. This solution allowed the eschatological to dominate while the mystical simmered in the background.

The early Christians begin to consider the implications that Jesus was the first of those to be resurrected from the dead. Since this was the case, had the end of the world already started? Many of them thought so, which led them to view their own lives as eschatologically actualized. They were living in the era of the End, and all the promises of the eschaton were theirs already. With the collapse of their eschatological expectations, more and more they rely on the mystical dimension of apocalypticism. Some, like the Syrian Christians represented by the Gospel of Thomas, shift their theology away from an eschatology that is futuristic and cosmic to an immediate personal mysticism that hinges on pre-mortem ascent and vision garnered through an encratic regime that transformed their bodies and allowed them to invade Eden.<sup>176</sup> The Johannine Christians went so far as to collapse back into the historical life of Jesus the future eschatological drama, so that the coming of the Son of Man, the Judgment, and the establishment of God's Kingdom already occurred during Jesus' lifetime. Although there is still an expectation of a future coming of Jesus and the final transforming vision of him, this takes the back seat to the teaching that already they have been judged, already they have been saved, already God has been revealed to them through Jesus and his Spirit.<sup>177</sup> In this case, the mystical dimension trumped the eschatological and the cosmic drama was played out as an internalized pageant.

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<sup>176</sup> DeConick 2005.

<sup>177</sup> John 1:12; 3:13, 17-21; 5:24; 6:62; 11:26.

## 7. The Mystery Uncovered

The mysticism that pervades the foundational early Christian movement is Christocentric. It focuses on the “revelation of Jesus Christ” which is understood to be the disclosure of the mystery that has been hidden with God for the ages. What is the mystery revealed? That Christ Jesus is the Power and Fullness of God.

It was taught that all Christians *experienced* this revelation, whether in an ongoing or future manner. The experience began with baptism with the indwelling of the Spirit. It continued in the life of the community and the sacraments where Jesus and the Spirit were encountered regularly. Christ’s ultimate revealing would be eschatological and visionary.

The revelation of Jesus Christ resulted in *(apo)theosis*, where the believer morphed into Christ as God’s Image and (eventually) achieved the “lot” of immortality. This *(apo)theosis* was dependent on the fact that the revelation of Jesus Christ functions as a *visio dei*, where the vision of Christ Jesus substitutes for the vision of God. This theology was dependent on the tradition that YHWH is a hidden unseen God who manifests as the *Kavod* and YHWH Angel, beings which are essentially God’s equivalents. Encounter with Jesus is encounter with God. And its effects on the faithful are life-altering. The faithful are transfigured into the same Image that Christ is, which means that they too become God-manifest. There is some speculation in the literature that the Father himself might be revealed eschatologically, but in the now it is Jesus as God’s Image who is met by the faithful, and it is he that they become.

# Aseneth: Ascetical Practice, Vision and Transformation<sup>1</sup>

CELIA DEUTSCH

## 1. Introduction

Rachel Elijor's work probes Jewish mystical traditions from antiquity to the present. In relation to early Judaism, her command of the sources, ranging from Bible to Dead Sea Scrolls to *Heikhalot* literature, has enriched the conversation in innumerable ways and helped us to engage the material from new perspectives. She is interested in women's presence and absence in the texts, and so it seemed fitting to this author to turn to *Joseph and Aseneth*, an Egyptian Jewish novel written sometime between the first century B. C. E. and the early second century C. E. In *Joseph and Aseneth* the female protagonist engages in a series of performances allowing her to cross boundaries between celestial and terrestrial, between visionary world and life world.<sup>2</sup> There are ascetical practices: fasting, night vigils, eating certain foods and abstaining from others, solitude, sexual abstinence, dispossession of material goods and removal of beautiful garments, reciting prayers, mourning and weeping. In the narrative, these practices serve to fashion an imaginary, cognitive, affective and bodily self, and prepare the subject for vision and transformation. In the words of Richard Valantasis, such performances are "intended to inaugurate a new subjectivity, different social relations, and an alternative symbolic universe."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> I am grateful to my colleagues in the SBL section on Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Early Christianity to whom I read the original paper at the Annual Meeting, Washington, D. C., November 18, 2006. I am also grateful to Prof. Elizabeth Castelli (Religion Department, Barnard College/Columbia University, New York City) for her reading of the material. It goes without saying that the flaws in this article are my own.

<sup>2</sup> On the term "life world," see Osiek 1999: 16-17. I use "vision world" to refer to that which pertains to the realm of metaphor, imagination and vision.

<sup>3</sup> Valantasis 1995: 797; Castelli 2004: 235, note 27; Wills 2006: 902-904.

## 2. Dating and Literary Form

*Joseph and Aseneth* defies easy categorization or dating.<sup>4</sup> I accept the consensus view that it is an Egyptian Jewish document dated some time between the first century B. C. E. and the early second century C. E.<sup>5</sup> Conversion and intermarriage are primary concerns for the author(s) behind the text(s). There is debate about which reconstruction represents the earlier form of the text, the shorter<sup>6</sup> or the longer.<sup>7</sup> I will be using the longer text in this paper, not only because I accept the majority view that it is earlier, but also because it develops more fully the visionary motifs present in the shorter text.<sup>8</sup> I have used the English translation of Christoph Burchard<sup>9</sup> as well as his recently published critical edition of the longer Greek text.<sup>10</sup>

Literarily, *Joseph and Aseneth* is best understood as a Jewish novel or romance that evokes the Greco-Roman form.<sup>11</sup> It is composed of two loosely connected narratives: chapters 1-21, a love story, and 22-29, an adventure tale.<sup>12</sup> Chapters 1-21 narrate the meeting of Joseph and Aseneth, Aseneth's repentance, her ascetical preparation, and the commissioning vision that prepares the way for her marriage to Joseph. The second part (chapters 22-29) recounts a series of events in the lives of Joseph and Aseneth, with the material again focusing the reader's attention on Aseneth. These chapters appear to reflect tensions facing the Egyptian Jewish community.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>4</sup> For widely different positions on these and other matters, see the discussions of dating, provenance, and the text critical issues in Kraemer 1998: 3-16; Gideon Bohak 1996: xiii; for a summary of the discussion of these issues, as well as the socio-historical background, see Chesnutt 1995: 65-93.

<sup>5</sup> Collins 2005: 101-112.

<sup>6</sup> Philonenko 1968: 3-26; Standhartinger 1995: 222-223; Kraemer 1998: ix.

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Burchard 2005: 83-96, esp. 94; Bohak 1996: xiv; Chesnutt 1995: 65-69.

<sup>8</sup> On the visionary *tendenz* of the longer text, see Standhartinger 1995: 108-125.

<sup>9</sup> Charlesworth 1983-1985, 2: 177-247.

<sup>10</sup> Burchard – Burfeind – Fink 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Wills 1995: 171; Pervo 1991: 145-155. Other Jewish novels include *Esther* (LXX), *Tobit*, *Artapanus*, *Judith*, *3 Maccabees*. On the parallels between *Joseph and Aseneth* and Greek novels, see Philonenko 1968:43-48.

<sup>12</sup> Gruen 1998: 92; Barclay 1996: 205. Contra Wills who believes that rather than dividing the text into two narratives, one should understand it as representing two layers with the romance-adventure tale "overwhelmed ... by the symbolic conversion story;" (Wills 1995: 184). Portier-Young (2005: 133-157) understands the two sections of the book to be related by the theme of mercy.

<sup>13</sup> Collins 2005: 106-108.

### 3. The Story Begins

*Joseph and Aseneth* opens with all the drama one would expect from a Greco-Roman novel. Joseph, the foreign king appointed by the Pharaoh, comes to visit the estate of Pentephres, a priest of Heliopolis and chief of all the Pharaoh's satraps and nobles. Pentephres recognizes Joseph and Joseph's God, welcoming him as the "Powerful One of God" (*ho dunatos tou theou*, 3:4). He tells his beautiful daughter Aseneth that he will give her in marriage to Joseph, whom he describes as a man who worships God (*theosebēs*) and self-controlled (*sōphrōn*) and a virgin like you today, and Joseph is (also) "a man powerful in wisdom and experience, and the spirit of God is upon him (*anēr dunatos en sophia kai epistēmē kai pneuma theou estin ep' autō*) and the grace of the Lord (is) with him" (4:7).<sup>14</sup>

Aseneth, who has rejected all previous suitors, responds similarly to her father's intentions regarding a match with Joseph. Unlike her father, she sees Joseph as "an alien and a fugitive" who was "sold (as a slave)" and was caught sleeping with his mistress. He was imprisoned only to be released because of his ability to interpret dreams – like an old woman (4:9-11).

The sight of Joseph, however, persuades Aseneth of his merits. His chariot and apparel – white linen tunic and purple robe interwoven with gold, crown, staff and olive branch (5:4-5) – evoke the image of Helios.<sup>15</sup> Aseneth's response to Joseph in 6:1 recalls those of visionaries in biblical and early Jewish apocalyptic texts. She was "strongly cut (to the heart), and her soul was crushed, and her knees were paralyzed, and her entire body trembled, and she was filled with great fear."<sup>16</sup> The two meet – carefully chaperoned, of course (8:1)! Joseph cannot allow Aseneth to kiss him for she is a "foreign woman" (*gunaika allotrian*, 8:1, 5).<sup>17</sup> Joseph blesses Aseneth and prays for her conversion (8:9-11). She withdraws to her own quarters, overcome with emotion. Inspired by Joseph's blessing, "she wept with great and bitter weeping and repented of her (infatuation with the) gods whom she used to worship, and spurned all the idols ..." (9:2).

After a solitary meal, Joseph announces that he is departing and will return on the eighth day. He says explicitly that he leaves on

<sup>14</sup> The author's description of Joseph evokes the biblical character, but also the description of Daniel and his companions (Dan 1-2).

<sup>15</sup> Kraemer 1998: 163-167.

<sup>16</sup> E. g., Dan 8:17; 1 *Enoch* 14:8-15:1; 71:1-11; 2 *Enoch* 1:7 j and a; 21:2; 22:4; *Apoc. Zeph.* 6:4-7, 14; 4 *Ezra* 4:12; 5:14-15; 10:25-33; *Apoc. Abr.* 9:1-10:3.

<sup>17</sup> Burchard translates *allotria* as "strange."



the first day of the week, recalling the first day of creation (9:5). God is Creator (8:9; 12:1-2; 20:7),<sup>18</sup> and the story of Aseneth is the story of a new creation, the text implies, in keeping with earlier allusions to the Genesis narratives with mentions of garden, spring, river and trees (2:12).

#### 4. Aseneth and Ascetical Performance: Transformation Enacted

This is the narrative context for Aseneth's withdrawal with its accompanying practices, followed by the vision of the heavenly Man. Aseneth secludes herself within her own private room in her quarters. She does not allow even her servants to see her. The architecture of the narrative suggests the "graded holiness" ascribed to the Jerusalem Temple in Ezekiel 40-46, according to which entrance is progressively restricted as one moves into the complex.<sup>19</sup> Heliopolis, the "City of the Sun," gives way to the court which then leads inward to tower, then to Aseneth's room and finally her bed.<sup>20</sup> At this point, however, the tower represents a kind of anti-holiness, for it is a place of idolatry, housing Egyptian gods "without number" (2:2). There, in the first (outer) chamber, Aseneth sacrifices to those gods (2:3; cf. 10:12-13). The curtain that hangs at the window of the bottom floor is called *katapetasma* (10:2), with the author using the rare word employed in the Septuagint for the curtain in the Tabernacle, and then the Jerusalem Temple.<sup>21</sup> The curtain, however, may also allude to the curtain that hangs before the statue of Isis.<sup>22</sup> Aseneth's chamber is still an idolatrous sanctuary to be transformed.

Aseneth's seclusion in her quarters recalls other Egyptian texts. There is fragmentary evidence for Chaeremon's descriptions of the solitude of the temple priesthood (frg. 10.6; frg. 11). Second-century B. C. E. papyri bear witness to the Greek Ptolemaios living as a recluse in the Great Serapeion.<sup>23</sup> There is also the temporary with-

<sup>18</sup> In *Jos. Asen.* 2:12, the garden, spring, river, and trees evoke Paradise (Gen 2:8-14); 4:2 with a possible allusion to Gen 2:9; see Chesnutt 1995: 145-149.

<sup>19</sup> Bohak 1996: 72.

<sup>20</sup> Bohak 1996: 71.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 71-72; for the Tabernacle, see Exod 26:31-37; Lev 16:2,12-13, 15; for the Temple, see 2 Chr 3:14; Sir 50:5; 1 Macc. 1:22; 4:51; also Mark 15:38.

<sup>22</sup> Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, XI.20 (LCL). On Egyptian mystery religions as a context for *Joseph and Aseneth*, see Kee 1983: 394-413; Philonenko 1968: 89-98.

<sup>23</sup> Lewis 2001: 74-87.

drawal of the fictional Isis initiate Lucius (*Metamorphoses* XI.19). Aseneth's withdrawal also has echoes in Jewish sources. Philo describes a Jewish community living at Lake Mareotis, near Alexandria, where members spend most of their week secluded in their dwellings for study and contemplation (*Contempl.* 24-25, 30). And, in the Jewish world beyond Egypt one finds evidence in the apocalyptic literature for such withdrawal.<sup>24</sup>

For seven days Aseneth fasts from food and drink, and gives away the food brought to her. She loosens her hair, pours ashes on her head, puts on mourning garments and weeps. Aseneth divests herself of her beautiful clothing and possessions, giving them to the poor. She throws away her idols. Transformation had already begun with the recognition of Joseph as son of God (6:3, 5), and the prayer to Joseph's God for forgiveness (6:7-8). It develops with the further articulation of repentance (9:1). Now that conversion is enacted progressively in ascetical practice and it will be confirmed by the heavenly Man.

Fasting, sackcloth and ashes, unbinding the hair, weeping and crying – practices central to the narrative in 9:1-13:15 – are all part of the rituals of mourning in biblical texts. They are used, by extension, in times of national crisis.<sup>25</sup> They come to signify, as well, penitence and humiliation. Some apocalyptic texts suggest that periods of fasting and mourning, as well as seclusion or incubation were practices undertaken as preparation for revelatory experience.<sup>26</sup>

Philo tells us that the community at Lake Mareot not only practiced ascetic withdrawal, but maintained a frugal diet (*Contempl.* 34-37). Apuleius describes the initiate preparing for the revelation of Isis and her mysteries by fasting (*Metamorphoses*, XI.23), and Chaereon describes the temple priests as sometimes fasting and otherwise eating abstemiously (frg. 10.6-7; frg. 11). There is extensive evidence that this is the case in the magical papyri and visionary materials, both gentile and Jewish, of the third century and later.<sup>27</sup> There are also references to specific periods for fasting, whether seven days, or ten.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>24</sup> 1 *Enoch* 13:7; 4 *Ezra* 14:23, 36, 37-48; *Apoc. Abr.* 12:1; 2 *Bar.* 21:1-3.

<sup>25</sup> For sackcloth, see Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 3:31; 2 Kgs 6:30; Neh 9:1; Lam 2:10; Jdt 4:10; 1 Macc 2:14; 3:47. For fasting, see 1 Sam 31:13; 2 Sam 1:12; 2 Sam 12:16-23; Judg 20:26; for fasting in relation to revelatory experience, see Exod 34:28; 1 Sam 28:20; 1 Kgs 19:8; for ashes, see 2 Sam 13:19; Esth 4:1, 3; Esth LXX 14:1; Dan 9:3; Job 2:8.

<sup>26</sup> Dan 10:2-3; 4 *Ezra* 5:13; 2 *Bar.* 9:2; 21:1-3; See Himmelfarb 1993: 104-110.

<sup>27</sup> E. g., PGM IV:52-85 (Betz 1992: 38); *Sepher ha-Razim* 2:36-37 (Morgan 1986: 46); 4:25-26 (Morgan 1986: 69); Kraemer 1998: 96-97; see Lesses 1998: 117-160; Swartz 1996: 153-166; Idel 1988: 75-88.

<sup>28</sup> For seven days, see 2 *Bar.* 9:1-2; 12:5; 20:5-6; 21:1-2; 4 *Ezra* 9:23-27; 12:50-13:1. For ten days, see Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*, XI.23. For forty days, see *Apoc. Abr.* 12:1-2.

The gestures are performative; they *enact* the transformation taking place as the practitioner fashions a new self. Mourning practices suggest and actualize the passage from death to new life.<sup>29</sup> Aseneth has repented. She destroys and throws away her idols. She throws away her food, then the sacrificial foods and libation vessels, all of which are associated with idolatry (10:12-13; 11:8-9). Aseneth puts off her rich garments and the jewelry engraved with idols' faces and names, and clothes herself in a black mourning tunic and sackcloth, enacting the death and repentance requisite for rebirth and change of identity.<sup>30</sup>

Just as she had stripped herself of her beautiful garments and jewelry, so Aseneth strips the temple-room adorned with idols where she had previously offered sacrifice. She cries out, first silently (11:3-14, 16-18) and then aloud (11:19-13:14), her unworthiness, repentance and new resolve. In a way similar to the Greek Esther (14:1-15:2), Aseneth's prayer, accompanying the mourning practices, is the utterance of the "decentered self" in its "out-of-self experience, in which the self views and condemns itself," recognizing its need for salvation.<sup>31</sup>

These performances both induce and enact a new mode of consciousness. Fasting, lack of sleep, seclusion and isolation, weeping – all of these practices alter consciousness, as does oral recitation. And Aseneth, we are told, "laid her head into her lap" (11:1-2), taking the Elijah posture, a position that similarly causes alteration of consciousness.<sup>32</sup> Seclusion is also a means of sensory deprivation, and is another means of altering consciousness and thus preparing for a vision.

These performances also enact a state of liminality, separating Aseneth "from her social environment and from her past."<sup>33</sup> Aseneth is in that threshold place where she is neither one thing nor the other. She laments that she is hated by all – by her family for destroying the traditional gods, by those around her for rejecting her suitors, by Joseph's God who is "a jealous and terrible god toward all those who worship strange gods" (*theous allotrious*, 11:7).

The assertion of parental rejection is strange at first reading, for Aseneth's parents do not reject her.<sup>34</sup> The claim, rather, echoes

<sup>29</sup> Wills 2006: 909.

<sup>30</sup> See Joseph's reference to Aseneth's rebirth in 8:11.

<sup>31</sup> Wills 2006: 906, 908-910. On confession and disclosure of the self as an ascetical act, see Foucault 1988: 41.

<sup>32</sup> The "Elijah" posture; see 1 Kgs 18:42; cf. Arbel 2003: 29-33. On the relation of fasting, vigil and prostrations to altered states of consciousness, see Bushell 1995: 556-557.

<sup>33</sup> Douglas 1988: 36. On ritual and liminality, see e. g., Turner 1969: 94-130.

<sup>34</sup> Pervo believes that 11:3-4 reflects Aseneth's role as the prototypical convert, and represents the "alienation change of religion may bring" (1991: 151).

Aseneth's liminal status reminding us of the separation from family manifest in other materials. This might be permanent, as seemed to be the case with the Therapeutae and Therapeutrides at Lake Mareot (*Contempl.* 18) and the temple priesthood described by Chaeremon (fragment 11), or temporary (*Metamorphoses*, XI.18). Separation from family, actual or perceived, suggests the forming of new social relations as well as symbolic universe through ascetical practice.

And so we see Aseneth. Still in her father's house, secluded in her room, Aseneth has left her "place" in her family through her repentance of idolatry, as well as by her ascetical performances, but she has not yet "arrived" at the new status of marriage and inclusion in the people Israel. Both literally and metaphorically, Aseneth has not yet moved to Joseph's house, the house of Israel's God.<sup>35</sup> The formation of new social relations is not yet complete.

Aseneth's fast embodies her repentance of her idolatry and its accompanying food practices (8:5; 10:13). Fasting also allows the heroine to *perform* her liminal status between idolatry and membership in the people Israel. She no longer eats from the food of the gods' table (11:8-9; 12:5); the creation of a new symbolic universe has begun. Like Joseph who cannot share table fellowship with idolaters (7:1), Aseneth can no longer share table fellowship with her family. But she has not yet come to share in the "bread of life" and "cup of blessing" for which Joseph prays on her behalf (8:11). That meal – bread, cup and honeycomb – will be given her by a heavenly visitor (15:5; 16:15; 19:4). She will be anointed with the "ointment of incorruptibility" (15:5; cf. 8:5), with bread, cup and anointing signifying the whole of the Jewish way of life.<sup>36</sup>

The meal reminds the reader of those other meals characteristic of the mystery religions. Lucius, for instance, tells of the feast that celebrates his "birth" as an initiate of Isis (XI.24). Closure of the liminal state embodied in Aseneth's fast will be located in the vision-world in the meal given her by the heavenly visitor and in the life-world in the dinner prepared by Aseneth (20:1-4) and then in the wedding feast hosted by the Pharaoh (20:9; 21:8).<sup>37</sup>

The sensory deprivation of seclusion, fasting, keeping vigil, induce altered states of consciousness in which visionary experience

<sup>35</sup> For all the portrait of a strong and independent heroine, the basic structure of the narrative is profoundly patriarchal and interestingly complicated; Kraemer 1998: 213-215.

<sup>36</sup> Chesnutt 2005: 113-132.

<sup>37</sup> At least on the face of it, the wedding feast, hosted by a pagan ruler would seem to be ruled out by Joseph's initial refusal to share table fellowship with pagans.

may occur. Exercises such as the change of clothing, taking the Elijah posture, and oral recitation of prayers have a psycho-physical impact in fixing the attention, and focusing imaginative and cognitive activity. But liminality itself also creates alterations in modes of perception. A state in which one is betwixt and between removes the habitual boundary markers by which a person defines herself. Liminality is, in some ways, an “empty” place where things can “happen.” In Aseneth’s seclusion, she is between paganism and Judaism, between the gods of her ancestors and the God of Israel, between the house of Pentephres and that of Joseph, between the people of her birth and Israel, between heavenly and earthly.

### 5. Vision and New Identity: Aseneth as Priestly Seer and Jewish Matriarch

We are thus prepared for a vision to occur. An unnamed visitor appears, identifying himself as “chief of the house of the Lord and commander of the whole host of the Most High” (*ho archōn tou oikou kuriou kai stratiarchēs pasēs stratias tou hupsistou*, 14:8).<sup>38</sup> The narrative that follows has parallels in some contemporary Jewish and Christian conversion narratives.<sup>39</sup> Even the title “chief of the Lord and commander of the whole host of the Most High” evokes the angelic beings of early Jewish materials and later *hekhalot* texts.<sup>40</sup> The pattern of our narrative is similar to the biblical call/commissioning narratives.<sup>41</sup> But it also recalls the use of that pattern in apocalyptic literature.<sup>42</sup> Recounting the circumstances, appearance of the revealer figure, reaction (including fear, prostration, etc.), response and reassurance, message and/or commission are common features of such narratives.<sup>43</sup>

<sup>38</sup> In 21:21, Aseneth calls the heavenly Man “chief of the house of the Most High” (*tō archonti tou oikou tou hupsistou*). Burchard follows Philonenko’s identification of the title with Michael (OTP, 2:225, note k and p). See Philonenko (1968: 178). Philonenko cites *T. Abr.* A,7; A 19; 2 *Enoch* 33:10; *PGM XIII*, 928 as evidence for associating the title with Michael. However, in both the long and short versions of *Jos. Asen.*, the visitor remains unnamed. Indeed, in the long version, he refuses to reveal his name to Aseneth when she asks (15:12x).

<sup>39</sup> E. g. *T. Job* 2-5; *Apoc. Ab.* 1-11; Dan 4; Acts 9:1-19; 22:6-16; 26:12-18; Charlesworth 1983-1985, 2: 184.

<sup>40</sup> E. g., *b. Hag* 15a; 3 *Enoch* 16:1-3; cf. Morray-Jones 1992: 8; Kraemer 1998: 125.

<sup>41</sup> E. g., Isa 6:1-13; Jer 1:4-19; Ezek 1:4-3:15; 1 Sam 3:2-14;

<sup>42</sup> E. g., 1 *Enoch* 12-16; 71:1-17; 2 *Enoch* 21-23; 4 *Ezra* 14:1-48; *T. Levi* 2:5-5:7.

<sup>43</sup> Cf. Nickelsburg 2005a: 80.

Sometimes, as in our text, the seer is addressed by her or his name.<sup>44</sup> In some vision narratives, there is a demand by the visionary that the heavenly figure reveal his identity.<sup>45</sup> Occasionally narratives recount a change of appearance or clothing.<sup>46</sup>

Aseneth sees an angelic figure "in every respect similar to Joseph, by the robe and the crown and the royal staff" (14:9). As commander in chief of the heavenly armies, the Man occupies the position in the heavenly court corresponding to that held by Joseph in Pharaoh's court.<sup>47</sup> The heavenly Man, however, has an appearance that marks him as an angelic figure: "his face was like lightning, and his eyes like sunshine, and the hairs of his head like a flame of fire of a burning torch, and hands and feet like iron shining forth from a fire, and sparks shot forth from his hands and feet" (14:9).<sup>48</sup> But the heavenly Man is also "a man in every respect similar to Joseph by the robe and the crown and the royal staff."

The Visitor is an angelic figure but he is "like Joseph." Joseph is an earthly figure, but in 6:1, the sight of Joseph clad like Helios and riding in his chariot produces the fear and trembling associated with visionary experience in the materials cited earlier. Aseneth now recognizes Joseph as the "sun from heaven ... come to us on its chariot" and "son of God" (6:2-3). He is an earthly figure, but he is in the image of Helios. He is also an angelic being preparing us for the vision of the heavenly Man in the central section of the novel.<sup>49</sup>

The vision is not a conversion vision.<sup>50</sup> As one author summarizes, "Repentance, a creedal confession, renunciation of paganism with all its pomps and ways, and adoption of Jewish practice, especially in the matter of diet, are marks of her conversion."<sup>51</sup> Rather the vision of the angel *confirms* Aseneth's transformation.<sup>52</sup> She responds to his

<sup>44</sup> E. g., Gen 15:1; 22:1; 1 Sam 3:2-14; Jer 1:11; Dan 9:22; 10:11; 1 Enoch 15:1; 4 Ezra 14:1; Apoc. Abr 9:1.

<sup>45</sup> E. g., Jos. Asen. 14:7-8; Gen 32:29; Exod 3:4-6, 13-15. On the biblical and early Jewish parallels to Aseneth's vision, see Standhartinger 1995: 111-125.

<sup>46</sup> E. g., 2 Enoch 22:8-10 A and J; T. Levi 8:2-10. Philonenko suggests a comparison between Aseneth's cincture and those given to Job's daughters in T. Job 46:7-50:3 (1968: 179-180).

<sup>47</sup> Charlesworth 1983-1985, 2: 225, note p; Philonenko 1968: 88.

<sup>48</sup> For similar descriptions of God and other heavenly figures, see Ezek 1:26-28; 1 Enoch 14:20-22; Apoc. Abr 11:2-3. Cf. Kee 1983: 407-408.

<sup>49</sup> Brooke 2005: 166-167. On angelomorphism in *Joseph and Aseneth*, see also Fletcher-Louis 2002: 29-31.

<sup>50</sup> Standhartinger 1995: 112.

<sup>51</sup> Pervo 1991: 152.

<sup>52</sup> Chestnutt 1995: 137.

appearance as she had to Joseph, with fear and trembling and falling on her face (15:11).

Use of the commissioning story to frame the account of Aseneth's revelatory experience casts her in the role of prophet and seer. She has already been compared, in *appearance*, to Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel (1:5). She "had nothing similar to the virgins of the Egyptians, but she was in every respect similar to the daughters of the Hebrews" (1:5). Sarah, Rebecca and Rachel – all matriarchs and all women of signal beauty.<sup>53</sup> In addition, Rachel is the mother of Joseph (Gen 35:24).<sup>54</sup> Aseneth will become Joseph's wife, a mother in Israel.

The text implies comparison with the matriarchs in a second way. Sarah and Rebecca are both seers; Sarah hears the three visitors from her place behind the tent flap (Gen 18:9-15), and Rebecca is told by the Lord of her twin sons' fates (Gen 25:21-23). One of those sons – Jacob – himself is a visionary (Gen 28:10-17; 31:10-13; 32:22-32), and will find a place in *Joseph and Aseneth* (22:1-10). The expansion of Rebecca's prophetic role in *Jubilees* 25:1-3, 11-23, suggests at least some traditional expectations regarding the matriarchs as visionaries and prophets.<sup>55</sup>

So we are told from the beginning of the narrative, not only that Aseneth is exceptionally beautiful, but that she is *unlike* her Egyptian counterparts. Even before her conversion, Aseneth's physiognomy evokes that of the matriarchs and so, for all her initial resistance, we are not surprised at the conversion that makes her not only Joseph's wife and matriarch, but daughter of Jacob. Husband and father-in-law are both seers.<sup>56</sup> The description tells us that she will be a source of life for the people Israel. And the use of the commissioning narrative form tells us that Aseneth will be a model for the community, bearing witness to the hidden things and acting as spokesperson for God.

The content of the angel's message has to do with the performances that continue the enactment of Aseneth's conversion: the instructions to change her garments and to wash in "living water,"<sup>57</sup> and the meal (14:12-13; 15:1-6). The angel's message also specifies new roles:

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Gen 12:11-16; 24:16; 29:17.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Barclay 1996: 214.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Chestnutt 1991: 108-111.

<sup>56</sup> On Joseph, as dream-visionary see Gen 37:5-11; as inspired interpreter of dreams, Gen 40:1-23; 41:1-39; in *Jos. Asen.* – Joseph is inspired (4:8; 6:6; 19:10-11), a visionary (15:9; 19:5-7) and interpreter of dreams (4:10). Jacob is a visionary and dreamer (Gen 28:10-17; 31:10-13; 32:22-32; 35:1-4, 9-15; 46:1-4; *Jos. Asen* 22:7).

<sup>57</sup> "Living water" may refer to running water, used in purification rites; cf. Lev 14:5; Zech 14: 8; see *Sepher Ha-Razim* 4:5 (Morgan 67). Cf. Philonenko 1968: 179; PGM III: 691-92; IV: 42-44; VII 439-443; Kraemer 1998: 102. Chesnutt (1995: 126-127) believes that the washing has no ritual significance here.

Aseneth will be Joseph's wife (15:7-10). She will receive a new identity with a new name: "City of Refuge, because in you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High, and under your wings many peoples trusting in the Lord God will be sheltered, and behind your walls will be guarded those who attach themselves to the Most High God in the name of Repentance" (15:7).

## 6. Aseneth: a Heavenly and Earthly Being

In her new identity, Aseneth becomes a heavenly/earthly being. She will assume a role correspondent to that of the angel Repentance or Metanoia, with a particular care for converts (15:7-8; 17:5; 19:5-9).<sup>58</sup> Preparing for Joseph's arrival she washes her face, and sees that it has become "like the sun and her eyes ... like a rising morning star" (18:9).

Aseneth's new name "City of Refuge" suggests her role as the paradigmatic convert.<sup>59</sup> It alludes to prophetic traditions that signify Jerusalem as city of refuge for converts.<sup>60</sup> These traditions "envision the mother city as a refuge to faithful Jews, to proselytes, and to strangers from many nations."<sup>61</sup> As Jerusalem is the city of refuge for gentile and Jew alike, so Aseneth will be matriarch for all who repent, gentile as well as Jew.

Aseneth has a heavenly counterpart, the angel Metanoia, the guardian of all virgins; she intercedes on Aseneth's behalf (15:7). Aseneth will exercise a corresponding earthly role on behalf of all those who repent.<sup>62</sup> In this intercessory role Metanoia and Aseneth are associated with the figure of personified Wisdom.<sup>63</sup> In 8:1, 5, Aseneth had been the "foreign woman," recalling the "foreign woman" who stands in opposition to Lady Wisdom in Proverbs.<sup>64</sup> Now she is transformed in Lady Wisdom's image. Aseneth calls her seven virgins and together they stand before the Man, who blesses them, calling them the "seven pillars of the City of Refuge," evoking Wis-

<sup>58</sup> Philonenko 1968: 88.

<sup>59</sup> Chestnutt 1991: 113.

<sup>60</sup> Jer 27:1-5 (LXX); Isa 54:15 (LXX); 55:5-7 (LXX); Portier-Young 2005: 137.

<sup>61</sup> Portier-Young (2005: 136) notes that the LXX for Num 35:15 renders the Hebrew *ger* ("stranger") with *proselutos* ("convert").

<sup>62</sup> Kraemer 1998: 137.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Prov. 8:1; on the parallels between Wisdom and Metanoia, see Kraemer 1998: 21-27.

<sup>64</sup> Prov. LXX 2:16; 5:20; 6:24; 7:5. In Prov 6:24 and 7:5, the foreign woman is associated with adultery; on the "strange" or "foreign" woman in Proverbs, see Camp 2000: 40-71.



dom's house in Prov 9:1.<sup>65</sup> Aseneth will provide a home for all those who repent just as Wisdom provides a home for would-be sages.

Aseneth's change of name is another feature of commissioning. It suggests a change of status "from individual to collective and matriarchal or foundational status."<sup>66</sup> The association with personified Wisdom indicates that her new role will also have a scribal element, something that will be confirmed by her association with Levi as the narrative progresses.<sup>67</sup>

Through various ascetical performances Aseneth refashions herself. She does not make the ascent; rather, the heavenly Man descends to speak with her.<sup>68</sup> Nonetheless, his appearance makes it clear that in the vision, Aseneth crosses the boundaries between earthly and heavenly. This is confirmed in 18:9 by her altered appearance. It is this visionary boundary-crossing that allows her to cross socio-religious boundaries from the pagan world to the people Israel, from the house of Pentephres to the house of Joseph.

Aseneth's vision is framed in language that is redolent of adjuration rituals such as those found in the Greek magical papyri, the *Sepher Ha-Razim* and various *Hekhalot* texts. Some of those texts specify a period of time in which the person must fast, abstain from sexual contacts, purify himself with water, seclude himself.<sup>69</sup> There are prayers and adjurations to be recited. The *Sefer Ha-Razim* refers to the use of honey in the rituals.<sup>70</sup> And sometimes there are special garments to be worn.<sup>71</sup>

Aseneth's ascetical practices, prayers and the vision that follows might thus be understood in the framework of late antique adjuration practices. But there is no adjuration of the angel.<sup>72</sup> Rather, her soliloquies in 11:3-13 and 16-18 and long prayer in 11:19-13:15, represent confession, repentance and a prayer for God's mercy. That prayer ends with a promise to be Joseph's servant and a prayer for his protection (13:14-15). A better parallel for the joining of prayer and angelophany is Dan 9-10, where the seer acknowledges Israel's sin and prays for forgiveness, and then sees the "man Gabriel."<sup>73</sup>

<sup>65</sup> Kraemer 1998: 26; Portier-Young 2005: 145.

<sup>66</sup> Nickelsburg 2005a: 336; cf. Gen 17:5, 15; Isa. 62:4-5; Matt 16:17-19.

<sup>67</sup> Portier-Young 2005: 146.

<sup>68</sup> There is no ascent in 4 *Ezra* or 2 *Baruch*.

<sup>69</sup> Kraemer 1998: 89-109. On the practices associated with adjuration, see Lesses 1998: chapters 3 and 4.

<sup>70</sup> *Sepher Ha-Razim* 1: 186 (Morgan 1983: 38), 2: 97 (Morgan 1983: 51).

<sup>71</sup> *Sepher Ha-Razim* 4:46 (Morgan 1983: 70); PGM III: 691-692; IV: 42-44; IV: 209-214.

<sup>72</sup> Brooke 2005: 174-175.

<sup>73</sup> Collins 2005: 110.

Other evidence of ascetical performance in relation to prayers expressing the practitioner's unworthiness might be found elsewhere among Jewish novels. For example, in the Greek additions to Esther, the protagonist removes her beautiful garments, puts on mourning apparel and loosens her hair, covering her head with ashes and dung. She then gives voice to her helplessness and unworthiness, and that of the whole people. She begs God's mercy and the divine assistance in her appearance before the king (Esth 14:2-19 LXX). Judith prostrates herself, puts ashes on her head and uncovers her sackcloth. She acknowledges Israel's sinfulness and her own weakness as a vulnerable widow, begging God's help in saving her people (9:1; 10:1-4).<sup>74</sup>

Earlier we noted that *Joseph and Aseneth* must be understood in the context of the apocalyptic material. In that context, Aseneth is a seer. At the point at which Aseneth attributes finding the honeycomb to the Visitor, he declares:

Happy are you, Aseneth, because the ineffable mysteries of the Most High have been revealed to you (*makaria ei su Aseneth dioti apekaluphthē soi ta aporrēta mustēria tou hupsistou*), and happy (are) all who attach themselves to the Lord God in repentance, because they will eat from this comb. For this comb is (full of the) spirit of life (16:14).

The heavenly Man has come in response to Aseneth's prayer, although she has not requested such a visit. The narrative thus reminds readers of Gabriel's appearance to Daniel (Dan 9:1-23). It also finds similarity to Lucius' quest in the *Metamorphoses*. There Isis appears to him in a dream-vision, in response to his prayer for deliverance (XI.1-3). She instructs him to participate in the festivities to be held in her honor and to enter her service as an initiate (XI.3-6). Lucius will receive instruction from a priest whom she will instruct (XI.6, 21-22).

Aseneth has confessed her ignorance and sin, asked for mercy, prayed for Joseph's well-being, and committed herself to fidelity to him (12:1-13:14). The Man has come to reveal Aseneth's new task, and to initiate her into her new identity through a ritual meal. He is, in some ways, a mystagogue, and Aseneth is a disciple.<sup>75</sup> Although the heavenly Man has not instructed Aseneth in the practices of mourning, fasting, seclusion, and prayer,<sup>76</sup> he now instructs her regarding the performances signifying the transformation that has occurred,

<sup>74</sup> Wills 2006: 908.

<sup>75</sup> Contra Pervo 1991: 151.

<sup>76</sup> Chestnutt (1995: 121) notes her autonomy in the chapters relating to her prayer of repentance.

and the meaning of her new identity, announcing her name “City of Refuge.” The mysteries revealed to Aseneth have to do with her conversion – the traditions of the Jewish people and worship of the God of Israel – and new identity, the ritual and eternal life.<sup>77</sup>

## 7. Aseneth the Sage

While there is little interest in Jewish law disclosed explicitly in *Joseph and Aseneth*, the honeycomb suggests the scribal nature of this material. Certainly, there is a possible allusion to the use of honey in adjuration rituals.<sup>78</sup> But it is possible that the honey also alludes to the manna in the desert wandering that tastes like honey (Exod 16:31) and is called the “bread of heaven” and “bread of angels” in Ps 77:24-25 (LXX).<sup>79</sup>

The honeycomb also evokes traditions concerning wisdom,<sup>80</sup> particularly as it is associated with Torah. The language of Ps 18 (LXX) may stand behind the figure of Joseph on his chariot.<sup>81</sup> That psalm also extols God’s law, telling us that the divine ordinances are “far more desirable than gold or costly stones, and sweeter than honey or honeycomb” (Ps 18:11 LXX).<sup>82</sup> Psalm 118:103 (LXX) describes God’s word: “sweet to my throat are your words, more than honey and honeycomb to my mouth.” Psalm 118 (LXX) identifies God’s words with Torah, framing the comparison of God’s words to honey, with references to God’s law (vs. 97), commandment (vs. 98, 100, 104), testimonies (vs. 99), and ordinances (vs. 102).

Sirach 24:19-20 has Lady Wisdom, identified with Torah, say: “Come to me, you who desire me, and eat your fill of my produce for the remembrance of me is sweeter than honey, and my inheritance sweeter than the honeycomb” (RSV).<sup>83</sup> Sirach 24:19-20 refers to a meal, but in Prov 9:1-6 there is an earlier tradition, about Lady Wisdom, whose house has seven pillars, offering bread and drink that

<sup>77</sup> Chestnutt 1995: 137.

<sup>78</sup> See *Sefer Ha-Razim* 1: 178 (Morgan 1983: 38); 2: 97 (Morgan 51). Honey is also associated with birth (Isa 7:15), and with conversion (*Ep. Barn.* 6:17); see Hubbard 1997: 97-110; Bohak (1996: 1-18) believes that the first honeycomb refers to the Jerusalem Temple and the second to the Oniad temple at Leontopolis.

<sup>79</sup> Hubbard 1997: 98.

<sup>80</sup> Kraemer 1998: 26; Portier-Young 2005: 145-147.

<sup>81</sup> Ps 19 (18 LXX):4b-6; see Humphreys 2000: 108.

<sup>82</sup> *Epithumēta huper chrusion kai lithon timion polun kai glukutera huper meli kai kērion.*

<sup>83</sup> Regarding the relationship of Psalm 19 (18 LXX) and Sir 24 to the image of the honeycomb in *Joseph and Aseneth*, see Humphreys 2000: 97.

is developed in Sir 15:3, specifically in relation to Torah. The significance of meal and honeycomb as reference to wisdom is confirmed by the concluding words of Aseneth's song, praising Joseph "who brought me to the God of the ages and to the chief of the house of the Most High, and gave me to eat bread of life, and to drink a cup of wisdom ..." (21:21). Aseneth eats the honeycomb, which reminds us of the manna of Israel's desert wandering and the sweetness of wisdom, of Torah. The image suits the context both of conversion and of discipleship.

## 8. Aseneth and Her Teachers

Aseneth is disciple to a heavenly Man, evoking the relation between seer and angelic teacher/interpreter in so many of the apocalyptic texts.<sup>84</sup> But we see her as disciple to an earthly teacher as well. Pentephres, the priest of Hierapolis, calls Joseph "a man powerful in wisdom and experience ... (*dunatos en sophia kai epistēmē*, 4:7).<sup>85</sup> Aseneth acknowledges him as the source of wisdom in her conversion. In his kisses Joseph gives the spirit of life, the spirit of wisdom and the spirit of truth (19:11).

Joseph is an earthly teacher, but he is also described as a heavenly figure as we noted earlier, the sun who has come on a chariot, shining "like a light upon the earth," whom Aseneth recognizes as a "son of God" (6:3, 5). Joseph, for his part, does not, on his return, recognize Aseneth, so amazing is her beauty (19:4). During his absence she has undergone conversion, suggested in her physiognomy.<sup>86</sup> Joseph's initial inability to recognize Aseneth suggests the radicality of the transformation (19:4). She has become a heavenly being. In solemnizing the marriage, Pharaoh acknowledges Aseneth as "daughter of the Most High and a bride of Joseph" (21:4).

The heavenly Visitor first acknowledges her as one who has received the revelation of secret things, and instructs her in the con-

<sup>84</sup> E. g., Zech 1:7-21; 4:1-6:8; Dan 7:15-27; 10:2-11:1; 11:2-12:13; 1 *Enoch* 19:1-3; 21:1-10; 25:1-7; 2 *Enoch* 1:1-24:2; 4 *Ezra* 4:1-5:20; 5:31-6:34; 7:1-61; *Apoc. Abr.* 10:4-17:21; Rowland 2002: 200; Collins 1998: 99, 109-113.

<sup>85</sup> The description of Joseph as sage is driven by the biblical text where Joseph is sage and seer; see Gen 41:33, 39. In Gen 41:33 Pharaoh describes Joseph as *anthropon phronimon kai suneton*. See also Dan 1-6, where Daniel and his companions are courtiers who are sages and seers.

<sup>86</sup> *Jos. Asen.* 18:9; 19:4; 20:6-7. Late antique philosophical, rhetorical and literary sources "interpreted character by physical appearance" (Shaw 1998: 38).

tinuation of the process of conversion. Joseph is cast, in part, as an earthly sage, teaching Aseneth through his behavior. He acknowledges her transformation. There is another earthly teacher, however, in the second part of the book, chapters 22-29. There we are told that, of all Joseph's brothers, Aseneth has a particular attachment to Levi "because he was one who attached himself to the Lord, and he was a man of understanding (*suniōn*)<sup>87</sup> and a prophet of the Most High and sharp-sighted with his eyes, and he used to see letters written in heaven by the finger of God and he knew the unspeakable (mysteries) of the Most High God (*ta arrēta theou tou hupsistou*) and revealed them to Aseneth in secret, because he himself, Levi, would love Aseneth very much, and see her place of rest in the highest, and her walls like adamantine eternal walls, and her foundations founded upon a rock of the seventh heaven" (22:13).

The author uses the same kind of language in describing the angel revealer and Levi in their relation to Aseneth. The heavenly Man acknowledges Aseneth as receiving the "ineffable mysteries of the Most High" (*aporrēta musteria tou hupsistou*, 16:14). And the author tells us that Levi has access to the "unspeakable" realities of God (*arrēta*, 22:13). He teaches these to Aseneth "in secret" (*kruphē*). In the vision text, the mysteries have to do with conversion, rebirth, and the significance of the accompanying rituals in which the Visitor instructs Aseneth. In other words, the mysteries are about "how to obtain eternal life."<sup>88</sup> Here, in chapter 22, Aseneth, the daughter of Pentephres priest of Heliopolis, becomes a disciple of Levi, the eponymous Jewish priest who is her brother-in-law.

There are earlier intimations that Aseneth's new life will bring priestly associations. After Joseph's visit is announced, Aseneth prepares to greet her parents. She retires to her chamber and puts on a fine linen (*bussinēn*) robe interwoven with violet (*huakinthou*) and gold, along with a golden girdle and sandals, and jewelry engraved with the faces and names of the Egyptian gods (3:6). The colors of her garments signify great wealth and remind readers of Helios, but they also evoke the colors of Aaron's vestments (Exod 28:6; 35:6; 39:2-5, 24, 28 LXX).<sup>89</sup> But Aseneth is *Egyptian*. Even her jewelry tells us that she serves other gods, and her quarters are described as a temple where she offers sacrifice (10:10-13).

<sup>87</sup> In 1:3 Burchard translates this term as "understanding." I prefer "understanding" in 22:13, in consonance with the usage in 1:3.

<sup>88</sup> Chesnutt 1995: 137.

<sup>89</sup> The colors of Aseneth's clothing also remind readers of the curtains in the Tabernacle and the Temple; see Exod 26:1, 31, 36; Josephus, *War* 5:54 (#212).

Joseph first enters the scene clad “in an exquisite white tunic, and the robe which he had thrown around him was purple (*porphura*), made of linen interwoven with gold ... (5:5). As is the case with Aseneth, Joseph’s purple linen robe reminds readers not only of Helios, but of the robes worn by Aaron In the process of conversion, Aseneth exchanges her linen, blue and gold garments for a black mourning tunic and sackcloth (10:10). The heavenly Man who visits her after her confession to Joseph’s God, tells her to put on a new linen robe and twin girdle (14:12). The bees that emerge from the honeycomb shimmer with the colors of Aaron’s vestments – and the garments of Aseneth and Joseph. The bees are white, and their wings are “like purple and like violet and like scarlet (stuff) and like gold-woven linen cloaks (16:18).” The bees producing the honey that symbolizes Torah are somehow priestly.<sup>90</sup>

Later, in obedience to the Man’s command, Aseneth puts on her wedding finery, including fine gold jewelry and a golden crown and a bride’s veil (18:6; cf. 15:9-10). Aseneth is transformed from a daughter of the family of Pentephres, priest of Helios, to a daughter of the priestly people of Israel.<sup>91</sup>

We are thus prepared for Aseneth to become Levi’s disciple. The brief description in chapter 22 includes language that describes Levi in the terms of an apocalyptic seer: the sapiential, prophetic<sup>92</sup> and revelation terms, the scribal imagery. The language of revelation, hidden knowledge, heavenly texts, recalls apocalyptic texts such as *1 Enoch*, *2 Enoch*, *4 Ezra*, and others. Levi’s vision of letters recalls Dan 5, as well as numerous references to visions of heavenly books, or to books received in visions.<sup>93</sup>

There are other early Jewish traditions portraying Levi as a visionary whose offspring will be priests, judges and scribes (*T. Levi* 2:1-5:7; 8:1-19). In *Jub.* 31:11-17, Jacob blesses Levi and his descendants, assigning to them the roles of prophecy, judgment, teaching and blessing. Playing on the root of Levi’s name, the author says that Levi himself is the one who will be “joined to the Lord” (31:16), and that he and

<sup>90</sup> Bohak 1996: 11-14.

<sup>91</sup> Exod 19:6.

<sup>92</sup> *Joseph and Aseneth* also describes Levi as a prophet in 23:8-9.

<sup>93</sup> E. g., Exod 32:32-33; Ps 69:28 (LXX); Isa 4:3; Ezek 3:1-3; Zech 5:1-4; Dan 12:1; *1 Enoch* 47:3; 72-81; 82:1-2; 89:61-71; 90:14, 17, 20, 22; 103:1-2; 104:1; 108:7; *2 Enoch* 22:11A and J; 23:4, 6A and J; *Apoc. Zeph.* 3:5-7; *T.Ab.* A 12:4-11; *Jub.* 1:5-6; 4:17-19; 30:20-22; 32:21-26; *2 Bar.* 24:1; *Prayer of Joseph*, fragment B and C (OTP, 2:714); 1QM 12:1-2; Lk 10:20; Rev 4-5, 10:1-10; 20: 15. On the ancient near eastern context, see Koep 1952; Widengren 1950. The image of the book is also significant in Ezek 3:1-3; Zech 5:1-4; Rev 4-5, 10.

his sons will eat from God's table. Finally, 4Q541 1 and 2 speak of Levi as inspired sage who "understands the depths and utters enigmas" (4Q541 2). 4Q541 9.i describes Levi as priest and inspired teacher. He is a visionary whose "eternal sun will shine and its fire will burn in all the ends of the earth; above the darkness it will shine" (4Q541.9.i.3-4).<sup>94</sup>

The immediate context in *Joseph and Aseneth* suggests that the letters Levi sees are a correlative of the "unspeakable" realities of the Most High God. The author tells us that Levi taught those "unspeakable" things to Aseneth in secret because he loved her and would "see her place of rest in the highest, and her walls like adamantine eternal walls, and her foundations founded upon a rock of the seventh heaven" (22:13).

Levi – priest, sage, seer – in other words, would teach Aseneth the "unspeakable things," the practices culminating in the ascent. The text suggests that this instruction is the most likely referent of the "letters written in heaven by the finger of God" and that Levi will teach Aseneth to read those letters as well. Some have noted rightly that there is no description of Aseneth making the ascent or descent through the heavens.<sup>95</sup> However, in 22:13 the text suggests that Levi will instruct her in these matters in a time beyond the narrative's events.

The "unspeakable" mysteries of 16:14 and 22:13 find an echo in the mysteries. The priest instructs Lucius from sacred books, written in hieroglyphics, that are stored in "the secret place of the temple" (*opertis adyti*; XI.22). Later, in the process of initiation, the priest presents Lucius to the goddess and transmits "certain secret things unlawful to be uttered" (*secretoque mandatis quibusdam quae voce meliora sunt*, XI.23).

The heavenly Man had already acknowledged Aseneth's receiving secret knowledge, and now we learn that Levi will instruct her further, in the "unspeakable" things of the letters. If indeed, the referent of the letters is the "unspeakable" realities, then the text would seem to present an oxymoron. Levi knows the unspeakable things of God. The interpreter can only surmise at the referent of the expression. And Levi sees divinely written letters. Letters are a kind of speaking and one expects them to articulate, clarify. But here, those letters, that written speaking, partake of the "unspeakableness" of the

<sup>94</sup> On traditions about Levi, see Elior 2004b, Elior 2005: 173-180; on Qumran traditions and angelomorphism in *Jos. Asen.*, see Brooke 2005: 160-165.

<sup>95</sup> Collins 2005: 110; Chestnutt 1995: 207-216.

divine realities. And those same unspeakable realities partake of the articulation of written speech.

Unspeakable realities and written speech find their meaning in this context, in designating Levi as priestly seer and Aseneth his disciple. The author plays on the Hebrew root of Levi's name, when he says that he "attached himself to the Lord" (*proskeimenos*).<sup>96</sup> Aseneth attaches herself to God in her conversion (16:14).<sup>97</sup> She too is signified as one who will see letters written in heaven, know unspeakable realities and make the ascent. The text expresses Levi's wish that her walls be "like adamantine eternal walls, and her foundations founded upon a rock of the seventh heaven" (22:13). Joseph has prayed that Aseneth enter into God's rest, eternal life (8:11). The angelic revealer has told Aseneth that her new identity would be as "City of Refuge, because in you many nations will take refuge with the Lord God, the Most High ..." (15:7; 19:4). And, as had the Heavenly Man, so Joseph has acknowledged Aseneth's commissioning as "City of Refuge:"

Blessed are you by the Most High God, and blessed (is) your name for ever, because the Lord God founded your walls in the highest, and your walls (are)adamantine walls of life because the sons of the living God will dwell in your City of Refuge, and the Lord God will reign as king over them for ever and ever. For this man came to me today and spoke to me words such as these concerning you ... (19:8-9).

In 22:13, Levi's wish, like the Visitor's address and Joseph's acknowledgement, speaks of Aseneth as a city. Within the narrative, life-world intent corresponds to vision-world commission. But the life-world desire establishes that new identity in a vision that includes heavenly text.

Angelic revealer, patriarch-priest-prophet, sage-visionary-husband are all instructors for the woman who will become matriarch and priestly seer. Textual or scribal images occur in reference to all three of Aseneth's instructors. The heavenly revealer tells Aseneth that he has written her name in the book of the living (15:4).<sup>98</sup> In answer to her request that he reveal his name, the angel tells her that God has written his name in "the book of the Most High" with the

<sup>96</sup> Bohak 1996: 49. In the biblical text, Leah names her son Levi saying "this time my husband will be joined to me" (Gen 29:34),

<sup>97</sup> Chestnutt 1991: 114-115.

<sup>98</sup> For other references to a heavenly book, the book of life or the book of the living, see Exod 32:32-33; Isa 4:3; Dan 12:1 *Jub* 30:20-22; 36:10; 1QM 12.1-2; Lk 10:20; Rev 20:12, 15; Charlesworth 1983-1985, 2: 226; Philonenko 1968: 182; Koep 1952.



other unspeakable names (15:12x). Joseph looks at Aseneth's hands "and they were like hands of life, and her fingers fine like (the) fingers of a fast-writing scribe" (20:5).<sup>99</sup> Levi not only reads the letters written in heaven, his prophetic ability allows him to read what is written on the human heart (23:8). Just as Levi teaches an ethic of forgiveness in the role of the sage (23:9; 29:1-6), so too will Aseneth (28:14-15).

Written text is thus a metaphor for destiny, the human heart, beauty, revelation. Aseneth's new identity as member of the people Israel, matriarch, seer is learned in the instruction of human beings who will be husband, kin and apocalyptic seers, as well as an angelic revealer figure. In the world of the narrative, ascetical practice makes possible the transgression of the boundaries between life world and heavenly world. That allows for life-world boundary transgression between the pagan community and the people Israel, paternal house and house of Joseph, and the assuming of new roles. Within the world of the text, the boundaries of life-world and heavenly world blur in instruction and the construction of a new identity through ascetical practice and visionary experience.

## 9. Transformation and Social Context

In *Joseph and Aseneth*, we see a tale of conversion. In this story, inner transformation is fostered and enacted by a series of performances, including ascetical and ritual practices. And inner transformation is prepared and mirrored by external performance and appearance.

Aseneth cleanses her quarters of the images and foods that mark those chambers as a place of idol-worship. They are transformed into a place of repentance, prayer and visionary encounter. Family meals signifying religious practice and social boundaries and ritual meals in the temple-chamber give way to fasting and then a ritual meal as instructed by the heavenly Man, a meal prayed for by Joseph in 8:11. With the anointing, that meal signifies the whole of the Jewish way of life. Aseneth's eating of the vision-meal enacts the conversion begun with her repentance; she has become a Jew. The new social configuration is formalized in the meal she prepares for Joseph in her father's house in 20:1-4, and then in the wedding feast given by Pharaoh in 21:2-8. The seven days of that banquet bring to closure

<sup>99</sup> This may allude to Ps 44: 2 LXX. There, however, the reference is to the scribe's pen.

the process that had begun with the seven days of Aseneth's withdrawal and fast.

In *Joseph and Aseneth*, the daughter of the priest of Heliopolis becomes a daughter of the house of Israel, a worshipper of Israel's God. The allusions to Aaron's robes in the vision suggest a priestly element in relation to her new identity. Interestingly, there is a burial inscription from Tell el-Yahudiyyeh, naming "Marin, priest (*hierisa*), good and a friend to all."<sup>100</sup> Tell el-Yahudiyyeh is the site of Leontopolis in the nome of Heliopolis. Some believe that it is the location of the Oniad temple.<sup>101</sup> Others dispute that, arguing that the temple was located in or near the city of Heliopolis.<sup>102</sup> Whatever the precise location of the temple of Onias, the inscription's existence is intriguing. While there is no way of knowing what function Marin exercised or if the title *hierisa* referred simply to her family, the fact that *hierisa* in other contexts always means "priest" suggests that this is the case in the Marin inscription.<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, there is some evidence for women's cultic roles in biblical and rabbinic sources,<sup>104</sup> and women served as priests in Egyptian temples.<sup>105</sup> Thus it is very possible that Marin indeed served as priest in the Leontopolis temple.<sup>106</sup>

Certainly, the text describes Aseneth with the sort of priestly allusion that is used of Joseph in our narrative, and that one finds so often used of apocalyptic seers in early Jewish literature.<sup>107</sup> The priestly motif is emphasized in the portrayal of Aseneth as Levi's disciple as well as sister-in-law. In the narrative the gentile worshipper of the Egyptian gods becomes a seer in Israel and one who knows the ineffable mysteries available only in revelatory experience.

Aseneth's enacts her transformation, not only in ascetical practices and prayer. She changes her clothing. She had dressed in fine garments including jewelry engraved with the images of Egyptian gods in order to greet her parents (3:5-6). After her initial meeting with Joseph and his blessing, she removes her finery and dons a

<sup>100</sup> Brooten 1982: 73.

<sup>101</sup> E. g., Brooten 1982: 74; Richardson 2004: 168-174.

<sup>102</sup> E. g., Bohak 1996: 29; Bohak acknowledges that, given the condition of the site of Heliopolis, it is unlikely that ruins of the temple will be found.

<sup>103</sup> Brooten 1982: 99; Richardson 2004:174.

<sup>104</sup> Brooten 1982: 78-95; Richardson 2004: 175-179.

<sup>105</sup> Pomeroy 1984:55-59.

<sup>106</sup> Richardson 2004: 174-179. Richardson makes a plausible argument that the rabbinic objection to Onias' temple on the grounds that he wore women's garments when he went to the altar is an ironic reference to women priests serving there; 165-166; cf. *t. Menah.*13.II.1.

<sup>107</sup> Himmelfarb 1993: 29-46.

black mourning tunic. She then throws her finery and all images of Egyptian gods out the window (10:8-13). Her clothing expresses her mourning and repentance of her former idolatrous practice.

In the vision, the heavenly Man instructs Aseneth to remove her black tunic and sackcloth, and dress in a new linen robe and the twin girdle of virginity and to remove the veil from her head (14:12-15:2). Then, in response to the heavenly Man's further instructions, Aseneth prepares to meet Joseph by putting on her wedding dress and jewelry (15:10; 18:5-6). In both vision world and life-world of the narrative, Aseneth washes herself in "living water" (14:15; 18:8-9).

That final ablution brings Aseneth the realization that her face is now "like the sun," and that her beauty has intensified in the course of her inner transformation (18:8-9). She, like Joseph, is "like the sun." The transformation is confirmed by her foster-father, who is alarmed at her beauty, and then "was filled with great fear and fell at her feet," responding as to a vision in the pattern of biblical and apocalyptic narratives (18:10-11). Aseneth has become, not only a Jew and a seer, but a heavenly being like Joseph and the Visitor.

The novel *Joseph and Aseneth* takes the briefest of mentions of Aseneth in Gen 41:50-52 (LXX), and answers the implied question: How did an Egyptian woman, daughter of a priest of Helios, become a matriarch in Israel? Some features of the narrative are controlled by the biblical text, brief as it is (Gen 41:50-52). But those features, like the novel as a whole, have a social context. Thus, the novel is set in Heliopolis because that is where Pentephres serves as priest, according to the LXX.

Gideon Bohak makes a convincing case that *Joseph and Aseneth* originates in the nome of Heliopolis, in the Jewish community around the Oniad temple there.<sup>108</sup> While I do not believe that this requires his specific dating – the middle of the second century B. C. E.<sup>109</sup> – such a setting would explain the interest in the priestly features of gentile and Jewish parties alike. It would also serve to legitimate the cult of the Oniad temple – possibly including women's priestly activity – by absorbing it into the patriarchal and matriarchal history. Joseph and Aseneth are not priests of the sun god. Rather, they possess qualities that make of them heavenly beings and priests of Israel's God.

The development of Aseneth's character also allows the tradents to legitimate their own teaching concerning treatment of converts and enemies. They authorize their teaching by reading it into the matri-

<sup>108</sup> Bohak 1996; Fletcher-Louis 2002: 29-31.

<sup>109</sup> Bohak 1996: 101.

archal/patriarchal narrative and by having it legitimated through visionary experience. The matriarch is portrayed as heavenly teacher and earthly sage.

Aseneth's conversion is affirmed in a vision that not only establishes her status as a Jew, but commissions her as "City of Refuge" with a particular care for converts. That may possibly reflect tension over the status of converts in the Egyptian Jewish community. Equally important, however, is Aseneth's association with Wisdom in that commissioning. This joins the scribal imagery, the reference to her long fingers, and the acknowledgement of her possessing "ineffable mysteries." In the life-world of the narrative, she is disciple of Levi the eponymous priestly scribe and visionary, who sees heavenly letters, discerns human hearts, and transmits ethical teaching. All of this is within a social context, both gentile and Jewish, that valorizes sacred texts and their interpretation, as well as the functions of sage and sacred scribe.<sup>110</sup>

Particularly in a social world that honors text work as a religious practice, reading can be understood as an ascetic action. Read aloud, *Joseph and Aseneth* is a performance reaching a climax in the penitential prayer and vision. Certainly, as a novel, it served the purposes of entertainment. Wills points out the irony if this occurred in the context of "drinking and festivity."<sup>111</sup> But oral performance of *Joseph and Aseneth* could also serve in the spectrum of practices deployed in the transformation of the self, providing readers with text to be read into their own lives.<sup>112</sup>

We noted various places in which the text of *Joseph and Aseneth* finds parallels in mystery religions or magical texts. We do not imply that *Joseph and Aseneth* represents a Jewish "mystery" cult. Rather, it would appear to us that the authors, like Philo, Clement and other Egyptian Jewish and Christian thinkers, used the language of mystery religions to frame their own considerations about the experience of the divine.<sup>113</sup>

Ancient descriptions of mystery cults, as well as theurgic texts, indicate widespread use of meditative and ascetical techniques, extended periods of solitude and assuming certain bodily postures as means of inducing altered states of consciousness. In all these sacred texts are both used and produced. Two other sources are informative, Philo's

<sup>110</sup> See Deutsch 2006: 309-311; Frankfurter 1998: 238-264.

<sup>111</sup> Wills 2006: 911.

<sup>112</sup> Foucault 1988: 27; Castelli 2004: 70-78. Foucault and Castelli are speaking of letters, essays and autobiographical writing, rather than novels.

<sup>113</sup> On the use of mystery language in Philo and Clement, see Deutsch 2008: 83-103.

*De Vita Contemplativa*, and the Chaeremon fragments, both from the first century. The Therapeutae and Therapeutrides are significant because they supply an example of Jews, both men and women, leading a life based on the contemplation and interpretation of the sacred text. They use ascetical practices and other performances, including liturgical celebration, to induce altered states of consciousness.<sup>114</sup> The Chaeremon fragments give evidence of a temple priest in first century Alexandria whose life is not only focused in the temple cult, but also in ascetical practice and interpretation of sacred texts. Whether or not women priests were engaged in similar practices is not evident.<sup>115</sup> There is, however, evidence for women serving as priests and for education among upper-class women.<sup>116</sup>

## 10. Conclusions

I do not assume that the tradents behind *Joseph and Aseneth* knew the Therapeutae and Therapeutrides, or Philo's treatise about them. We do not know if they read the apocalyptic literature produced in the land of Israel or Egypt, nor do we know if they had contact with the Qumran community. There is no way to demonstrate a knowledge of Chaeremon's work. Certainly the tradents must have known something of the mystery religions and magical practices for these were widespread in the Mediterranean world. All of this material is most significant, I believe, not for answering questions of cause and effect or of literary dependence, but for understanding a broader cultural context for the production and reading of *Joseph and Aseneth*. It provides us with intimations of the resources available to Jews in Ptolemaic and Roman Egypt that would allow them to interpret the Genesis reference to Aseneth in a way that included ascetical transformation of the self, visionary experience, and allusions to text work. The narrative thus produced allowed its readers access to the ascetical transformation creating "a new subjectivity, different social relations, and an alternative symbolic universe," in the words of Valantasis with which we began this essay.

<sup>114</sup> See Deutsch 2006: 287-311.

<sup>115</sup> On women priests in Alexandria, see Pomeroy 1984: 55-59.

<sup>116</sup> Pomeroy 1984: 59-72; Criboire 2001: 74-101.

# “You Are Gods”: Multiple Divine Beings in Late Antique Jewish Theology

NAOMI JANOWITZ

Rachel Elijor, in her groundbreaking study *The Three Temples*, paints a detailed and convincing picture of priestly “secessionist” traditions (Elijor 2004b). At the center of their image of worship lies “their claimed affinity with the ministering angels” (Elijor 2004b: 200). These angel-identified priests join the ranks of numerous bewildering and ambiguous characters from late antique texts who appear to be semi-divine, angel-like, divine agents, mediators, and gods of some sort.<sup>1</sup>

These figures clash with long-held notions of “ancient Jewish monotheism,”<sup>2</sup> leading Peter Hayman to abandon the term “monotheism” altogether (Hayman 1991).<sup>3</sup> John Dillon, one of the most masterful interpreters of late antique philosophy, tries to preserve what he calls Jewish and Islamic “hard monotheism” but finds the best example to be none other than the gnostics (Dillon 1999: 69). In honor of Rachel Elijor’s fearless reconstruction of lost Jewish theology, I will consider first the possible impact of recent studies on gender for the classification of human and divine beings in Philo and rabbinic literature and then turn to Michael Frede’s compelling study of pagan monotheism as a guide for conceptualizing a new view of late antique Jewish monotheism (Frede 1999).

## Part 1: Lessons from Late Antique Gender Analysis

Many scholars have drawn attention to the basic gender instability found in late antique religious texts.<sup>4</sup> Manhood in rabbinic Judaism,

<sup>1</sup> References to various types of divine beings are collected and classified in Charlesworth 1980; Davis 1994; Steinberg 2003; and Fletcher-Louis 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Among many uses see Hurtado 1998: 19.

<sup>3</sup> He argues that “it is hardly ever appropriate to use the term monotheism to describe the Jewish idea of God, that no progress beyond the simple formulas of the Book of Deuteronomy can be discerned in Judaism” (Hayman 1991: 2).

<sup>4</sup> See Darling 1991, Miles 1989, Meyer 1985, Castelli 1986, Moore – Anderson 1998 and Hall 1993.

as in the general society, was an “achieved state” (Satlow 1996).<sup>5</sup> Being a man was achieved primarily on the basis of self-restraint and control. Women, unlike men, generally do not exhibit self-control, but a woman who is able to do so became a man. As noted by Brent Shaw, the basic lesson of the martyrdom stories in Fourth Maccabees is that knowledge and logic “enable one to control the body” (Shaw 1996: 277). This ability to have power over one’s body contrasts with passivity and simple acceptance of death without a struggle. This later stance was viewed as feminizing and thus as shameful.

Martyrdom was simply the most dramatic example of this gender shifting since martyrdom gives a woman an opportunity to show her self-control under the most distressing circumstances. Some women would grieve for their children and cry out to try to save them, but a manly woman urges them on to martyrdom.<sup>6</sup>

Male and female are therefore not so much binary opposites as points spread out on a continuum, a continuum on which movement in both directions is possible. This schema is, in the terms of Thomas Laqueur, the “one-sex theory,” which dominated western culture until the Eighteenth century (Laqueur 1990). Instead of viewing men and women as opposites based on anatomical sexual differences, in the one-sex model women were viewed as inferior, inside-out men. The female body was a “less hot, less perfect, and hence less potent version of the canonical [male] body” (Laqueur 1990: 34-35).<sup>7</sup>

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Continuum of Single Gender

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Female	less female-like → more male-like	Male
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A woman could become a man, for example, by heating herself up, since it was the retention of heat which keeps men being men. Women are failed men already in the womb, because as Peter Brown explains, “The precious vital heat had not come to them in sufficient quantities in the womb. Their lack of heat made them more soft, more liquid, more clammy-cold, altogether more formless than

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<sup>5</sup> Satlow’s theory of gender employs the nature/culture divide; women are born women and that nothing can be done about it. A different conceptualization of gender is offered here.

<sup>6</sup> These themes are especially vivid in 2 and 4 Maccabees, where the mother is the epitome of self-control (Moore – Anderson 1998).

<sup>7</sup> This is not to say that men and women were viewed as being exactly the same, but that difference was not a “set of absolute opposites but a system of isomorphic analogues” (Clover 1992: 14).

men" (Brown 1988: 10). The reverse was also true. Men sank down into the state of being woman-like as their progressive loss of heat threatened to make them "womanish" (Brown 1988: 19). Men who became women thereby began to menstruate and lactate more than the usual, very small amount suitable to a normal man. Virginity was another method for advancement, and one more generally available than martyrdom. A virgin female is as close to being male as a female can be; a virgin male is then the highest form of maleness.<sup>8</sup> As the female becomes closer to maleness, she in turn is transforming into a more divine mode of existence as well.

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Continuum of Gender

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Female → virginal female → male → virginal male → divine male

[men with no self-control]  
moving down

[female martyrs]  
moving up

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Gender implicates bodies, which add another level to the schema. While this scheme can be articulated in numerous different ways, the general pattern emerges something as follows:

Material world	Intelligible world	Beyond language
Fleshly bodies	less fleshly bodies more divine bodies	no bodies

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It might appear tempting to solve the "multiple divine beings" dilemma by adding another level, a continuum from human to divine.

Human	Divine
humans	→ gods → highest divinity

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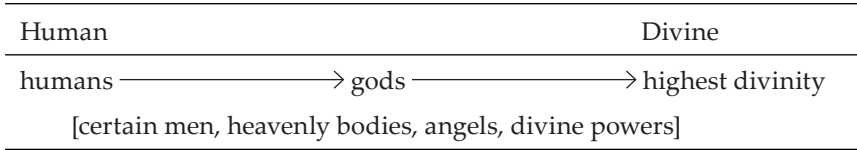
This schema appears to offer a solution to Philo's self-contradictory writings where he seems to be setting up a great divide between human and divine only to then deny it (Runia 1988: 77). Under the rubric of the term "gods," Philo includes "certain men, heavenly bodies, angels, divine powers, even God himself" (Runia 1988: 56). These

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<sup>8</sup> This is slightly different from the view of Castelli 1991. Virginity is gender neutral while being male is not.



are now not so much clear and distinct classes of beings as readings about where a being falls on the human/divine continuum.



The lens through which Philo interpreted Biblical texts was his notion of the ascent of the soul, which articulates with movement between human and divine poles. The general pattern of ascent was central to Philo's thought and appears throughout his writings (*Her.* 69, *Mos.* 1:189, *Post.* 30-31, *Spec.* 4.112). The soul, or at least the soul of the wise man, is able to not only ascend, but to move beyond the material world to the world beyond language. Thus the sage becomes "truly divine" based on a God-inspired frenzy (*Fug.* 168).

Philo argued that God laid down a road that leads out of the lower world into "the upper region of virtue" (*Post.* 30-31). The mind of the sage "comes to a point at which it reaches out after the intelligible world" (*Opif.* 69-71). While located in the material world, the sage's mind "learned to gaze and soar upwards ... and searches for the divine" (*Mos.* 1.189.90). The transformational ascent beyond the material world is an experience open to all wise men who know how to live in accordance with the rules the deity set down.<sup>9</sup>

This schema makes sense of Philo's complex portrayal of Moses. In Philo's view, Moses was the prime model of "likeness to god," or as David Winston calls him, the "Super-sage."<sup>10</sup> Moses was the descendent of a series of remarkable progenitors: Isaac was both begotten by the deity (*Leg.* 3.219) and a son of God (*Mut.* 131). Moses,

<sup>9</sup> While at points in his discussion Philo sounds as if he is talking about any wise sage, the greatest models of ascent are the patriarchs and Moses whom Philo anachronistically labels Jews.

<sup>10</sup> Artapanus' compared Moses with Hermes (Eusebius *Praep. ev.* 7.7) and Ezekiel the Tragedian described the deity offering Moses his throne (van der Horst 1983). Ezekiel's portrayal of Moses would have been rejected by Philo, according to Runia, since such a direct depiction of the deity giving Moses his throne would have been too open to misinterpretation (Runia 1988: 60). Ezekiel is not a philosopher, however, and some of the subtle points which Philo might have thought were important in a theological discussion might have been less important in a dramatic presentation of the story of Moses. Artapanus and Ezekiel are using strategies distinct from that of Philo, but they were engaged in the same kind of undertaking. They are all trying to describe the extent to which Moses is not simply a human being but is closer to a divine being on the continuum of beings.

in turn, was even more remarkable than his remarkable relatives, higher than Abraham and Isaac (*Post.* 173).

Two descriptions of Moses' ascent depict his movement on the schema, first his ascent at Mt. Sinai (*Mos.* 2.66-71) and second his ascent at the time of his death (*Sacr.* 8-10). In these ascents Moses abandoned his body and his being became only mind (*Mos.* 2.288). It took a great deal of vigilance and work from the very start for his soul to make this transition, and it was only possible because his soul had not transformed itself down the ladder to the bottom in the first place. Unlike most men, "[h]e had been able to purge his soul of all desire" (*Migr.* 67). He was sinless in a way "that only a divine man can be" (*Virt.* 177).

Moses' prophetic mind "becomes divinely inspired and filled with God," evidence that "such men become kin to God and truly divine" (*QE* 2.29). The holy soul is divinized<sup>11</sup> by ascent through the heavens beyond the world to where there is "no place but God" (*QE* 2.40). Goodenough argued that Moses was able to mate with a spouse whose true spouse is God because he had at that point himself become divine (Goodenough, 1969: 201-02). Philo explains this in detail, writing "The place the great ruler occupies in the whole cosmos is occupied by the human mind in man" (*Opif.* 90). Moses' nature was such that it was possible to think about him as divinity moving down the continuum instead of a human going up. In one of Philo's most dramatic statements he claims that Moses was given as a loan to earth (*Cher.* 7).

Moses' path is open to others, though exactly how many is not clear. Philo himself was initiated by Moses into the Great Mysteries (*Cher.* 48) as part of his "ascent" (Meeks, 1967, p. 121). Philo's identity is not restricted to the person-in-the-body his contemporaries encountered. The same divine spirit that inspired Moses also inhabits Philo's body and inspires him, permitting him to violate some of the notions of "human" as well.

Not everyone who claimed to be divine was in fact divine. According to Philo, the Roman Emperor Gaius Caligula's claim to divine status had to be rejected out of hand not because the claim was impossible but because he was the wrong human to make it. While Gaius used divine symbolism on his statues as an attempt to present himself as divine, for Philo, Gaius's evil deeds demonstrated that he

<sup>11</sup> The text is preserved only in Armenian so we cannot be sure of the specific Greek term. Marcus speculates in his translation that Philo may have used "theophores-thai" (Marcus 1953: 82).

was not a likely candidate for a special relationship with divinity. Gaius's appeal to divine status was just an excuse for murdering his relatives (*Legat.* 68). The point Philo wanted to emphasize was that a man walking around in the flesh acting badly does not make himself into a god by dressing up in Hermes' sandals. Philo condemned Gaius's claims not because Gaius' use of divine symbols was meaningless but because it was meaningful and improper for Gaius to use them (Goodenough 1969: 257 citing *Legat.* 98-113).

It was in this context that Philo wrote "the corruptible nature of man was made to appear uncreated and incorruptible by a deification which our nation judged to be the most grievous impiety since sooner could God change into a man than a man into God" (*Legat.* 118). Here Philo asserts "an absolute different metaphysically between humans and gods,"<sup>12</sup> reasserting the basic categories found in the locative framework as outlined by J. Z. Smith (Smith 1978). "Human" was defined in opposition to "divinity;" humans die while gods do not. Being a hero was accepting mortality and living a life of courage in the face of that mortality.<sup>13</sup> The "hero-who-failed" to win immortality lived out his life with respect to the gods and seeking immortality through his great name.

The religions of later antiquity, however, reflect the rise of the utopian framework, where being a hero means breaking through the boundaries that once were thought to define and give meaning to human life in context of the cosmic order. Philo's Moses represents these emerging utopian figures who can escape from the old boundaries including death and mortal status. By cutting right across the old definitional limits of the human/divine categories, the new hero threatens to completely destroy the categories. Pushed to its logical limit, the continuum schema makes nonsense out of the vary notion of categories, leaving scholars endlessly trying to pin down figures who by definition do not fit neatly into any category since they are in the process of transforming up and down the scale of divinity. It is a grim realization that the categories human/divine do not have the power they had in the locative framework and no longer function to define what it means to be human or divine.

The utopian model, however, can never exist without being in opposition to the locative framework, a point emphasized by both Gill (Gill 1998) and Droge (unpublished). Escape can only take place when it is clear what is being escaped from; categories can only be

<sup>12</sup> Droge n. d.: 11.

<sup>13</sup> Droge, following Smith, points to the example of Gilgamesh.

violated when the ends of the continuum continue to have some substantive meaning. Given a closer look, Philo's schema is clear evidence that the human and divine are ultimately not collapsed into one category but have been reworked. Just as the utopian framework functions only as a rebellion or reaction to the structures in place in the locative worldview, the utopian model demands that the continuum have some type of anchoring at the ends.

Philo's theory of divine birth presents an excellent example of a commitment to redone locative categories retained in a utopian schema. These stunning claims are rarely discussed, and when they are, discounted as mere allegory.<sup>14</sup> Philo's discussion opens with the line from Genesis spoken by Adam, "I have gotten a man through God," which Philo takes to mean that Adam did not directly "know" his wife (*Cher.* 40). After warning his readers "Let those who babble depart," Philo reveals a secret: "Without supplication or entreaty did Moses, when he took Zipporah the winged and soaring virtue, find her pregnant through no mortal agency" (*Cher.* 47). Philo presents the argument, based on a careful reading of Biblical texts, that all of the matriarchs were infertile until they were impregnated by the deity.<sup>15</sup>

This positive view of human-divine intercourse would appear to be a direct violation of the locative notions of staying-in-place, contradicting stories such as the negative outcomes of divine being/human intercourse in Genesis 6. Yet, for Philo, it is possible to read this story as solidifying the categories at some level because the intercourse produces a third type of being. Thus Aristotle, according to Iamblichus, reported that the secret teaching of Pythagoras was that he represented a third sort which was neither deity nor human (*Life of Pythagoras* 6.31). Similar language appears in many some later Jewish and Christian texts. Aristides, for example, claimed a biological connection with divinity based on the status of Christians as a "third race" with a divine Jesus as their progenitor (*Apology* 2:2, 16.4).

Since the matriarchs and Moses' wife had supernatural conceptions based on divine paternity, their children (and thus the children of Israel) were semi-divine themselves. This is a very dramatic example of the social construction of birth-by-descent, which does not completely dissolve the locative categories but fundamentally

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<sup>14</sup> For an interesting exception see Harrison 1995. Melford Spiro makes the suggestive argument that Aboriginal disavowal of knowledge of the father's paternity is a cultural attempt to render the child's hatred of the father unconscious, sometimes also done by positing a grandiose father instead (Spiro 1968). Accordingly, Philo's divine birth theory has a grandiose dimension.

<sup>15</sup> All of the matriarchs were virgins who conceived via the deity (*Cher.* 45-46).

reworks them. The implications of this claim are quite far-reaching, but only for Jews. The children of Israel, *as a descent group*, are not simply the offspring of normal humans whether or not each Jew is wise enough to understand this point. Philo's quasi-biological divine paternity theory was a strategy for making Jewish identity distinct and superior from standard human identity. The discourse of identity-by-birth permitted him to concretize a special status in a "natural" terminology.

The exact same tension exists throughout rabbinic texts, with scholars emphasizing, depending on interest, either the moments when human/divine appear to be fixed in some way or the violations of boundaries. Rabbinic texts are full of citations which place (some) Jews across the human/divine division. The verse "You are gods" (Psalm 82:6) is understood by numerous rabbinic exegetes to present Jews as being, at certain times and place, boundary-crossers.<sup>16</sup> Israel was created immortal like the deity (*Num. R* 16:24). They did not even have to defecate since they do not eat normal human foods.<sup>17</sup> Originally they did not have sexual intercourse, since they had no need to produce additional members of the group. Israelites would not have had children if they had not sinned with the golden calf and thus lost status their status as "elohim" (*Avodah Zarah* 5a). Paralleling Sinai, on the Day of Atonement the divine status of Jews is revealed, since at that moment they recite the formula "Blessed is the name of his glorious kingdom."

Specific historical and liturgical moments exist when the Jews are transformed into their true divine status; these moments are not relegated to a future end-of-time period or after death existence. It is hard to imagine what sense is left to the old locative categories. Yet not all people are part of the transformational schema. Much like Philo's Moses model, the end of the spectrum is defined by a collection of types of "humans," that is non-Jews, non-rabbinic Jews and even rabbinic Jews most of the time. The vast majority of people the vast majority of time have either lost their capability of demonstrating divine status or never had it in the first place.<sup>18</sup>

The question which still remains open is how to define the other end of the spectrum, that is, what is divinity? The locative world-

<sup>16</sup> Many of these citations are discussed in Sternberg's dissertation on angel identification in rabbinic literature (Steinberg 2003).

<sup>17</sup> According to *b. Yoma* 75b, sublime food does not result in feces.

<sup>18</sup> Any claims to such status found among non-rabbinic Jews or non-Jews is roundly denounced as "minut," a catch-all term for the theologically errant. See Janowitz 1997.

view easily accommodates a multitude of divine beings, while the rise of the utopian worldview takes place against a slow but steady shift to seeing one god as primary. This primary god is differentiated from other similar beings by several very specific characteristics, especially his role as the creator of all existence and his role in endowing the other divine beings with their superior status. These characteristics, then, are central to whatever it is that late antique Jewish monotheism comes to entail.

## Part 2: The Strategies of Late Antique Monotheism

Everyone in the ancient world was a polytheist (West 1999). The Israelite deity was characterized by having a heightened sense of jealousy towards the other gods, far from a monotheistic claim.<sup>19</sup> Monotheistic concepts were forged and debated stretching from the early Greek and Hebrew proto-monotheistic thought (the “Yahweh-only” movement) to its solidification in Islamic theology (7th c. C. E.). In broad brushstrokes, early monotheistic thought gained a push in the sixth century B. C. E. when thinkers like Xenophanes argued for one eternal primary substance. At the same time when Xenophanes was articulating a philosophical basis for monotheism, the “wishful polemic” of Second Isaiah, to use Morton Smith’s phrase, argued that Yahweh was still in charge of the Israelites’ fate.<sup>20</sup> This claim spurred monotheistic rhetoric from another, more nationalistic, direction.<sup>21</sup> It is also in Second Isaiah that the deity is first referred to by the Persian cosmological name “King of Heaven.”

With these international trends towards more monotheistic ways of describing the creator deity, the main deity continued to share power with a multiplicity of other supernatural powers. “Creeping monotheism” in the depiction of this deity involved many theological difficulties; the notion of a special link between a specific, “chosen” people and their deity had to be adjusted as the national god was increasingly seen as the only deity. Other gods and angels continued to populate the divine sphere but their relationship with the increasingly powerful main god had to be reconceptualized.

<sup>19</sup> This point, first emphasized by Morton Smith, has become a standard of modern scholarship on the Hebrew Scriptures.

<sup>20</sup> This alignment of cosmological descriptions of the deity with a specific form of political propaganda occurs both in Second Isaiah and contemporary Persian thought (Smith 1996).

<sup>21</sup> See Bickerman and Smith 1979: 119 for this formulation.

Despite the general stereotype of polytheism, much Greek philosophical thinking adopted a monotheistic tone at the same time as Israelite thought did, as pointed out decades ago by Martin Nilsson in his discussions of "late Greek religion" (Nilsson 1943). Nilsson's claim is echoed closely and strengthened in Frede's more recent delineation of pagan monotheism (Frede 1999).

Aristotle outlined in *Metaphysics Lambda* the theory of the so-called Unmoved Mover (Frede 1999: 44ff). This figure functioned as the main god, and most importantly, all of the other gods were in some sense subordinate to his power. For Aristotle, the lower gods operate in a secondary sphere of power, dependent on the main gods for some of the characteristics which defined them as gods. In the Stoic case, being material, the lower gods were subject to death, with only the main god totally above any destruction at all. For Platonists, the main god made the other gods immortal by divine grace, gifting them with immortality and bliss. They thus all have a derivative participation in special characteristics which belong primarily only to the main god (Frede 1999: 49).

humans	semi-divine beings gods	highest deity
mortal	immortal by gift	immortal by nature

By the first century B. C. E. international trends towards monotheistic ways of describing the creator deity had continued far enough to clash with textual depictions (biblical, Plato) of the deity as the organizer of pre-existent matter. Just as monotheistic thought developed slowly from more than one impetus, so too did centralizing the existential and creative power of the deity. In this social context explicit discussion of *creatio ex nihilo* first emerged. Given the fact that the texts people were interpreting contained references to primordial matter and given the "creeping" nature of the changes, a motley divergence in late antique creation theories is to be expected. Second Maccabees 7:28's claim that the deity did not make the heaven and earth out of "ta onta" (things that exist) is often cited as the first instance of *creatio ex nihilo*.<sup>22</sup> Later Christians did in fact read this statement as evidence of the doctrine; it was one of the few such statements Clement and Origen could find.<sup>23</sup> However, David Winston translates the phrase

<sup>22</sup> 2 Maccabees is usually dated at the end of the second century B. C. E.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Clement *Strom.* V.90.1, Origen *Princ.* 2,1,5 and *Comm. Jo.* 1:17 and *Shepherd of Hermas* 1:1.

“ta onta” as “the visible world of particulars.”<sup>24</sup> The implication of the 2 Maccabees quote is closer to “God did not fashion heaven and earth from formed things but from some unformed primordial matter (1971:187).”<sup>25</sup> In these texts the deity operates according to ancient Greek norms and does not contradict the ambiguous Biblical texts as well.<sup>26</sup>

Philo was a good enough reader to recognize that neither Plato’s *Timaeus* nor the Hebrew Scriptures was entirely clear on the question of the origin of matter. Overall Philo tolerates quite a bit of confusion on this point, speaking with much less clarity than we find comfortable.<sup>27</sup> If in some texts we find Philo embracing what Winston calls a “double-creation theory,” creation of matter and then of the world, Philo does so ambiguously (Winston 1971: 199 n. 140). Pre-existent matter seems to be presumed in *De opificio mundi* 5.21, which lacks any explanation for the origin of matter.<sup>28</sup> The now-familiar phrase “formless matter” appears in *Her.* 140 and *Spec.* 1:328. On the other hand, Sorabji (1983: 203-209) finds in *Prov.* 1 and 2, which he considers the most sustained treatment of the issue, the thesis that the deity began the cosmos and matter simultaneously.<sup>29</sup> In *On the Confusion of Tongues* Philo states that “God created space and place simultaneously with bodies” (136) Given that some middle Platonists call matter by the term “space,”<sup>30</sup> this reference appears to argue that the deity created matter.

The issue of the eternity of the world, and hence matter, was still broadly accepted. Philo’s treatise *On The Eternity of the World* outlines numerous current arguments for the eternity of the world. Dillon notes that this essay is evidence that the issue of creation must have been “very lively” (Dillon 1977: 133). Epicurus and Peripatetics such

<sup>24</sup> David Winston cites in particular Diogenes of Apollonia for this meaning (Winston 1971: 187 n.185).

<sup>25</sup> Here Winston extends the arguments of Wolfson 1948: 302-303 and Weiss 1966. Cf. May 1994: 6-7. This reading is similar to, for example, the creation of the world “out of formless matter” in the Wisdom of Solomon 11:17. The Wisdom of Solomon was written sometime during the later decades of the first century B. C. E. On the creation imagery, in addition to Winston 1971 see Grant 1952: 138.

<sup>26</sup> Winston points to the term “formless matter” in Aristotle *Phys.* 191a, 10, Plato *Tim.* 50d and Posidonius in *Doxographi Graeci* 458

<sup>27</sup> See the important discussions by Wolfson 1948: 300-310, Sorabji 1983: 203-209, and Dillon 1977: 158-159. May 1994: 9-22 has additional bibliography.

<sup>28</sup> Cf. *Her.* 160.

<sup>29</sup> Unfortunately *De providentia* survives only in Armenian. See Sorabji 1983: 208 n. 286. The phrase “from the non-existent” appears in *De vita Mosis* 2.267 and *Spec.* 2.225.

<sup>30</sup> Albinus *Intr.* 8, 16:26 Hermann; Aristotle *Phys.* 209 b 11 following Grant 1952: 141.



as Strato denied any role in the creation of the world by the deity.<sup>31</sup> Yet Philo shared his vague claim that the deity created matter with a growing crowd of contemporaries. Other references from the first century B. C. E. connect the deity with the creation of matter. Stead, for example, directs us to Cicero's comments that the deity could not have made anything without matter (Stead 1979: 548).

For Cicero, while discussing the nature of the gods, thus speaks: first of all, therefore, it is not probable that the matter from which all things arose was made by divine providence, but that it has, and has had, a force and nature all its own. (Lactantius *Inst.* 2.8.10)

Cicero defends primordial matter, making it likely that the opposite view circulated.

A century after Philo etiquette has changed and Tatian acts as if it is an insult (committed by the Greeks) to mention matter in the same breath with the deity. This is still not an explicit claim that the world was created from nothing; in fact the origin of matter is not stated.<sup>32</sup> Winston raises the possibility that Tatian has an emanation theory whereby the deity creates the world out of himself (1986:88 n.1). We can see the usefulness of this idea; once articulated, the idea that God created the world out of himself will become very popular. It permits one to remain a modified Platonist, clinging to the basic idea that it is impossible to make something out of nothing, but it also nicely finesses the question of primordial matter.

A more direct statement of *creatio ex nihilo* occurs in Theophilus' *Ad Autolycum*, composed in the last decades of the second century close to when Tatian was writing. Much of Book 2 is devoted to a lengthy exegesis of Genesis where in passing Theophilus claims that Greeks denigrate the deity by making matter equal with him.

What would be remarkable if God made the world out of pre-existent matter? Even a human artisan, when he obtains material from someone, makes whatever he wishes out of it. But the power of God is revealed by his making whatever he wishes out of the nonexistent, just as the ability to give life and motion belongs to no one but God alone. (*Autol.* 2:4.10)

As with Tatian, Theophilus' point was highly polemical. Greeks did not try to denigrate their deity by positing eternal matter. Hermo-

<sup>31</sup> Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 10.76; Cicero. *Nature of the Gods* 1.35, Luc. 121, cf. Grant 1952: 128.

<sup>32</sup> May argues that Tatian's view that the deity created matter is "the decisive step to the final formulation of the doctrine of '*creatio ex nihilo*,'" a stance May takes perhaps because he wants both Tatian and *creatio ex nihilo* to represent the "orthodox" position (May 1994: 154).

genes clearly believed that matter was not equal to the deity, even if it was eternal; we learn this from Tertullian himself who explains and dismisses this opinion. Posidonius could wax at length about the power of the deity and not see primordial matter as a threat.<sup>33</sup> Theophilus also fails to note that others, including Biblical authors, Jews and Christians, place matter alongside the deity. His polemical emphasis on Greeks may have been constructed to deflect this very problem.

As should be clear by now, we must tread very lightly here and not build too facile an argument about the origin or purpose of the first extant explicit formulations of *creatio ex nihilo*. The fact that they are preserved in these Christian apologists does not mean these writers invented the idea. Much of Theophilus' extensive discussion of Genesis reads as a defense of Judaism and is thought by some scholars to be borrowed from previous Jewish writers.<sup>34</sup>

It is easy to give Tatian and Theophilus too much weight because parallel material in rabbinic texts is so difficult to date. One of the results of the complex redactional history of these texts is that rabbinic development of creation imagery is shrouded in textual controversy.<sup>35</sup> Not surprisingly, some rabbinic arguments assume the existence of primordial matter and others, the opposite.<sup>36</sup> It is impossible to date all the discussions, but *creatio ex nihilo* does not clearly appear in the earlier rabbinic texts (e. g. Mishnah). Some of the cases where we do find rabbis invoking this doctrine are debates and polemical encounters, just as they were in Christian texts. Outside of debates, many midrashic stories presuppose for example, pre-existent matter, or pre-existent matter personified as a monster.<sup>37</sup>

Tempting as it may be to see a strange conspiracy of orthodox Jews and Christians united against heretical primordial materialists of all

<sup>33</sup> For Posidonius' denial of *creatio ex nihilo* see Diogenes Laertius *Lives* 7.148, Diels *Dox* 462:14.

<sup>34</sup> See Grant 1970: xiv. May notes, for example, the Jewish-influenced *Apostolic Constitutions* VII 34 ff and its lengthy description of the deity as creator (May 1994: 77).

<sup>35</sup> For a collection of rabbinic stories about creation see Urbach 1975: 184-213.

<sup>36</sup> After surveying the texts, Winston concludes "...there is no evidence that the normative rabbinic view was that creation was *ex nihilo* (Winston 1971: 191)."

<sup>37</sup> For rabbinic arguments which accept primordial matter see Bar Kappara in *BerRab* 1:5 and Judah b. Pazzai in *jHag* 2:1. (cf. *ShRab* 15,7,22; Sh. R. 50:1 and *KohRab* 13:15). The deity creates the world from two coils of fire and snow (attributed to Rabbi Yohanah *BerRab* 10:3 (Cf. Rav in *Hag* 12a and *BerRab* 4:9). Winston also notes that the phrase "I will return the world to *tohu v-bohu*" points to pre-existent matter (1971:188 n. 10). For pre-existent water see *ShRab* 15:22 (God must trample Ocean to create, cf. *ShRab* 24:1) and *BabaBat* 74b.

stripes, it is not clear that rejection of specific creation doctrines is a neat dividing marker between orthodox and heretic. Basilides is labeled a heretic but rejects primordial matter. Nor, on the flipside, is Tatian very good evidence for orthodoxy. His polemical attack on primordial matter must be placed in the context of his other comments about creation. That is, believing in *creatio ex nihilo* does not stop him from making a distinction between a creator god and higher or First God, as seen in his claim that "Let there be light" was spoken by the demiurge (CC 6:52).<sup>38</sup> Ironically, his adoption of the idea of more than one creative power is the main doctrine *creatio ex nihilo* was supposed to be in opposition to. In his case, this was not true. Nor is Hermogenes an isolated heretic; some of his ideas about matter reappear in other Christian writers including Chalcidius and Gregory of Nyssa.<sup>39</sup> Even when the *ex nihilo* doctrine emerges, it is not embraced uniformly or consistently by any one group.<sup>40</sup>

Belief in pre-existent matter was slow to change, which is not surprising given the conservative attitudes towards cosmologies common in religious traditions. At the end of the second century C. E. the Christian thinker Hermogenes posited that the word "earth" in Genesis 1:1 designated some type of primordial matter, proof that this reading was still present in Christian circles.<sup>41</sup> For such thoughts he was roundly denounced as a heretic by Tertullian. He claimed that positing the existence of primordial matter diminished the power of God (*Herm.* 1). Hermogenes no doubt did not think that he was diminishing the deity but Tertullian developed his rhetorical flourish on this basis.<sup>42</sup>

So too some rabbis attempted to draw a clear line where there is none, urging us (often with great success) to equate belief in primor-

<sup>38</sup> Clement of Alexandria *Eclogae propheticae* 38; Origen, *De oratione* 24.

<sup>39</sup> Chalcidius *Comm. Tim.* 319, p. 342 17/19 Wrobel.

<sup>40</sup> See Grant 1952: 135-152. Clement in the lost *Hypotyposes* presupposes primordial matter (Frg. 23, GCS 3:202). For medieval belief in primordial matter see Wolfson 1948: 302 n. 337.

<sup>41</sup> Hermogenes' ideas must be reconstructed from Tertullian's attacks in *Against Hermogenes* (*Herm.*). Tertullian's treatise was probably written sometime between 198-207 C. E. (Waszink 1956: 13). On the term "earth" in Gen. 1:1 referring to primordial matter, see especially *Herm* 23-29.

<sup>42</sup> Similarly, to accept the rabbinic polemical anecdotes at face value (heretic=primordial matter, orthodox=creation from nothing) is to ignore that outside of the polemical encounters, particularly in esoteric settings, rabbis discuss their own suspicious-sounding ideas about creation. Whether these "orthodox" notions are themselves strictly *ex nihilo* and monotheistic depends on one's point of view. Modern scholars who state that belief in primordial matter is inherently a heretical stance are simply repeating the polemical stance of some early Christian and Jewish thinkers.

dial matter with being beyond the limit of acceptable belief. Because the trend was away from primordial matter, being associated with it left a thinker open to attack.

During the first centuries charges flew fast and furious against any belief that could be interpreted as a retrograde appeal back to out-of-date polytheism. For these charges to work, the attacks had to distort the opponents' complex depiction of divinity by a willful misreading. The Christian cults of the martyrs raised pagan concerns about worshipping bones (Eunapius) and Julian claimed that Christians worship "many wretched creatures." While Jews found Trinitarian theology suspiciously polytheistic, Justin thought that Jews believe in a second god and his problem is simply to convince them that the second god is Jesus.<sup>43</sup>

These battles continue in modern scholarship. Much is made of the deification of the Roman emperors, contrasted with the presumably stricter monotheistic claims of Jews and Christians. Yet the implications of this deification are not simple, nor is it clear that when it is discussed in Jewish and Christian texts these depictions are accurate.<sup>44</sup> The question of whether Julius Caesar was considered a god in his lifetime can be answered with a clear yes and no. The best witness, Cicero, who is a contemporary, unlike many other reports, clearly felt that Caesar was the focus of too many honors, which elevated him too much. Cicero was willing to conceive of a human as a gift sent down to humanity from the god, but at the same time to resent some of the specific actions taken to raise Caesar's status.

The post-death deification of Augustus might have been thought to affect the senate (can humans make someone into a god?) but the texts show deification to be the language of flattery (Nock 1972a). Nock, in his seminal article on the deification of Roman emperors, searches for evidence that individuals expected the deified emperors to be "divine agents" and mediating figures (Nock 1972a). The evidence is surprisingly scanty.

Generations after Aristotle clarified the role of the Un-Moved Mover and the Yahweh-only party won, the characteristics given to the secondary gods by the primary god threaten to displace him, making havoc with modern attempts to locate a "unique mode of

<sup>43</sup> Philo also accepts the idea of a second god (*Somn.* 1, 227-9, 1, 230-35). Justin says that sectarians see the plural reference to "Let us make man..." as a reference to angels (*Dial.* 62c,1-2) yet those who believe in angels would reject the sectarian label.

<sup>44</sup> The inaccuracy of Christian critiques of pagan philosophy is central to Frede's critique.

eneration" of a divine agent or mediator (Hurtado 1998: 19). Secondary-level gods often act as if they are primary, taking on some role in creation as the primary god escapes still further into Unmoved status or offering those who worship them some sort of rewards.<sup>45</sup> The strategic use of claims about monotheism were dependent not on essential religious doctrine that distinguished traditions from each other, but on the philosophical possibilities that had been laboriously worked out by those specialists who adopted contemporary definitions of divinity. These were far from identical to the theology of the ancient Israelites, outlawing any essential, ahistorical Jewish theology. But they did fit in well with other late antique monotheistic claims, all of which were dependent on a sort of sleight of hand: look at the main god and ignore the other divine characters behind the curtain.

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<sup>45</sup> Multiple creative powers are found, in Philo (*De opificio mundi* 74-77 among others), in rabbinic texts (*Gen. Rab.* 8.4 in the name of Hanina) and in Tatian.

# Transcribing Experience

ALAN F SEGAL

## a) Rachel Elior's Inspiration

It is a pleasure to contribute an article in honor of Rachel Elior. Her scholarship and her friendship have always been a goad and a stimulus to further thinking and research. In fact, the best way to express the inspiration she has offered to scholarship is to begin by looking at work on how experience is transcribed in recent books to which she has contributed.

## b) Two Recent Volumes on Religious Experience

Of particular interest are two recent books published in the Symposium series of the Society of Biblical Literature. The first to be published was *Paradise Now: Essays on Early Jewish and Christian Mysticism*<sup>1</sup> and the second was *Experientia: Volume 1: Inquiry into Religious Experience in Early Judaism and Early Christianity*.<sup>2</sup> Both are fine volumes which discuss how religious experience is mediated in Jewish and early Christian tradition. One should begin by asking some more general questions about experience in general. The person who most claims that ability in the two books is Steven Wasserstrom in "The Medium of the Divine" (pp. 75-82). Unfortunately, it is the least successful of any article in the two volumes. One should review what is wrong with it before going on to discuss in the new exciting parts of the study of religious experience in the first few centuries.

## c) Steven Wasserstrom

Steve assumes that his role is to represent comparative religion. Why he construes his job in this way is not clear to me. Perhaps it was the

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<sup>1</sup> DeConick 2006a.

<sup>2</sup> Flannery – Shantz – Werline 2008.

imminent separation of the SBL and the AAR. He clearly did not realize that most of us in this seminar belong to both and speak to both audiences. And, indeed, he too belongs to a philological community of the study of early Islam, at least he did when he was a student in the Centre for the Study of Religion at Toronto where I was teaching as well. I think, but I do not remember for sure, that I taught a course on gnosticism which he attended. But that was a long time ago.

But alone among all the contributors of the two books, he decides that he does not want to change the character of his talk from the informal one he presented to a more formal paper. Actually, all the rest of us presented papers that already were available with footnotes in draft.

He agrees with all of us that anyone else's experience is beyond our reconstruction. But that, of course, is the beginning of the puzzle, not the end of it. But then, at least a dozen articles, not mine alone, deal with the social and cultural background of how experience can be construed in a social context. Alone of all the articles, some of which (see the excellent work of Colleen Schantz in this regard) are far more interested in the biological aspects of religious experience than I am, he decides to criticize my use of RISC (religiously interpreted states of consciousness) as "neurological futurism," I guess assuming that my point is to claim that all experience will be unlocked by neurology. I guess this substitutes for reading a long series of very carefully argued papers. There is no basis for thinking he has read any of them. And there is no basis for this in my writing but he has decided that I can serve that purpose, which dismisses "as science fiction." This is simply shoddy scholarship and a very bad, in fact embarrassingly bad caricature of what most of us do when we write for an AAR audience as well as an SBL one.

There is no evidence that he has read my work either. He has just assumed that RISC (religiously interpreted state of consciousness) is "neurological futurism." The reason that I use it rather than RASC (religiously altered state of consciousness), which is the more familiar term, is that I want to underline that the experience is interpreted by the adept and the other actors in the society before we, as scholars, get our chance to deal with it. Whatever psychological state is being described, it might be considered a religiously altered state of consciousness in some societies but not in others – like dreams, for instance. It might also be considered a religiously altered state of consciousness by some people in the society and not by others. The other variations ought to be clear as well. He says:

Let us accept, for the moment, scientific promises that we can understand religious experiences of others. Let us speculate with them that current and near future alternatives of empiricism and naturalism provide sufficient analytic oomph (sic!) for understanding experience. I worry about the perils of such naturalistic explanation – especially of what Alan Segal calls Religiously Interpreted States of Consciousness. Segal’s neurological futurism promises entrée into mysteries of the brain and visions inherent in the nervous system. Of course, for insiders a shift from experience to consciousness, as posited by RISC theories arising from cognitive science or neurophysiology, still dissipates native delight in belonging to a community that shares certain experience. Furthermore, as “experience studies” penetrates nervous systems and “consciousness,” dangers of exploitation increase considerably. Designer pharmaceuticals, for instance may “reproduce ancient ecstasies. In other words, “religious experiences could be reduced to mere “technique.”

But enough science fiction. (pp. 79-80)

Of course, he could not have read my article in this volume because he never saw it. And he has already told us that he never re-edited because he wants to “retain the informal voice and lack of extensive apparatus.” He cites two articles but never specifies where in the articles he finds these ideas expressed because he never bothered to look. Clearly, one person’s informality is another’s laziness. My article in this volume is a detailed discussion of how Paul figures his own religious experience and has nothing to do with neurology. There is not a single mention of it. In the previous volume, which was not published when he wrote, I wrote about the narrative voice of the *Hekhalot* texts. There is some discussion of neurological research, a great deal of which is cautionary (p. 35), especially of the concept known as the “Oceanic Feeling” especially when it is meant to be coterminous with “mysticism.” It seems to me to agree with his cautionary advice as well.

I wrote up my critique because the *Hekhalot* literature has little to do with the so-called “Oceanic Feeling.” I try to show that the mystical experiences present in *Hekhalot* literature have nothing to do with the “Oceanic Feeling” and instead probably come from training other parts of the brain through mystical praxis to produce a journey to heaven. The point of it is to show that RISC is neurologically similar to all other experience and, thus, the labelling of “religiously altered states of consciousness” is a social judgment that arises after the experience is evaluated by the agent and by the society in different cultures and in completely different ways. Hence, I prefer RISC to RASC. One culture’s vision is another culture’s mistaken idea about what meditation is about. Actually, nothing in my articles can be



construed by a fair reader as having anything to do with the “science fictionism” which Steven Wasserstrom fears. His entire screed, and it is clearly a litany of charges that he takes out whenever he hears something like RASC, has nothing to do with my writing in these places. I am so glad for the AAR that it has decided not to abandon the SBL entirely after all. It is clear how much some of its members still need to read texts and also to relearn to read articles carefully.

#### d) Should One Delegitimize Any Talk About Experience?

Assuming that somewhere in this careless essay, there actually is a serious question, I think one should probably explore whether any of the current languages of description of various mystical experiences should be categorically denied credence. Let me take, as a short example, current practitioners’ language to describe Vipassana meditation as opposed to one of Wasserstrom’s despised neurological scientists’ recent books, a very popular book called as promiscuously as possible: *How God Changes Your Brain: Breakthrough Findings from a Leading Neurologist*.<sup>3</sup> I want to compare this with what Vipassana meditators say about the values of their meditation.

Vipassana meditation is a Buddhist meditation that appears to have been popularized in the United States by the teachings of S. N Goenka.<sup>4</sup> As a meditation directed by Siddhartha Gautama himself, at least within the Buddhist tradition, it has a central role in the life of practitioners. It is a style of meditation in which the mind is emptied by concentrating on breathing. Trivial thoughts, insignificant thoughts distract the mind, according to these Buddhist teachings. Not understanding those thoughts, a roaming mind runs back and forth and does not perceive properly. But by letting these stray thoughts go, the mind is restrained. An awakened one has overcome them completely so they do not arise to distract the mind. Then the mind is freed to perceive what actually exists – thus, the name Vipassana, which means “perceiving what is.” It is also quite often translated as “insight” meditation. I suppose that this is the most popular Buddhist meditation practiced around the world.

A great many medical benefits are also claimed by practitioners. The meditation clears the mind of extraneous thoughts and thus allows the practitioner to concentrate on the sensate feelings that

<sup>3</sup> Newberg – Waldman 2009.

<sup>4</sup> Fleischman – Henderson 2000; Hart 1987: 17-20.

affect the practitioner and to judge them to be unnecessary for true enlightened life. As a result, the body heals and the mind heals and in a successful adept, enlightenment follows.<sup>5</sup>

Strangely enough, Andrew Newberg, in his *How God Changes Your Brain*, suggests that there are medical and spiritual benefits from this apophatic meditation. He singles out advanced Vipassana meditators as examples. It seems clear that the meditators' Serotonin levels change. Unfortunately, the medical records are incomplete: some meditators increase, others decrease. More interesting is that meditators have a significantly higher level of GABA, by as much as 27%. This substance is associated with lower levels of depression and anxiety, which no doubt explains why meditation leaves the adept feeling significantly relaxed and feeling well. The point of Newberg's discussion is not, however, to praise Vipassana meditation. Instead, it is to suggest that a secular alternative to religious meditation, a meditation technique he calls "the relaxation response" has quite similar effects on the mind. He most explicitly denies that it will be possible to take a pill and experience God. He nevertheless favors the techniques of secular and religious meditation, which he suggests have strong and important effects on the brain, including improved cognitive functioning for both relaxers and meditators. One would hardly call this case demonstrated beyond the shadow of a doubt but it should not be entirely dismissed either. It is a suggestive study.

But then comes an even more interesting discussion. He distinguishes between objectless meditation as described by Vipassana above and those meditators who envision a god or divine figure in their meditations. In what is clearly an elaborate speculation, Newberg contrasts objectless meditators, in whom he tries to demonstrate a more tolerant and pluralistic attitude than meditators or simply believers with a very explicit picture of God or symbols for religion meditators. In the West, this difference in meditative strategy would be called *apophatic* (via negativa) meditation, as opposed to *kataphatic* meditation, which holds an image in place. He bases this on a series of perceptions about how people store images of other people in their brains (taken from CAT and SPECT scan data) and how they answer on a series of questionnaires that he offered to experimental subjects. The questionnaire, he called, the Survey of Spiritual Experiences<sup>6</sup> Certainly, this takes the study of meditation and, in particu-

<sup>5</sup> Fleischman – Henderson 2000: 23.

<sup>6</sup> To review the questionnaire or to take it, go to <http://www.neurotheology.net>.

lar, Vipassana meditation, to an entirely different level. Again, I do not regard the question as demonstrated but it is suggestive of the effects of various kinds of meditations. Since the distinction occurs both in the native Western tradition and in this neurological literature, we may find that it is useful to us, as I will try to show.

What do these two different approaches – neurological vs. native adept – to the question of Vipassana meditation have in common? For one thing, they both make significant claims for the spiritual and emotional health of meditators. But they are an entirely different type. The meditators themselves report experiences in which they are psychologically and spiritually healed by their practice. The researchers are making specific claims about the nature of the citizens who envision God in one form or another. I do not think that any claim can be taken without a good deal more critical thinking. But I can hardly see how one kind of perception is appropriate to academic discourse while the other is not. Surely our job as researchers in the phenomenon of religion is to use and critically evaluate every kind of data to which we can gain access?

### e) *Unio Mystica* in Early Jewish Mysticism

Moshe Idel traces the beginning of the notion that Jews did not seek *unio mystica* in their mystical experience to the writings of Edward Caird, who wrote in 1904.<sup>7</sup> The lack of *unio mystica* in Jewish mysticism was one of the foundational beliefs of Gershom Scholem in his two most famous books on Jewish mysticism.<sup>8</sup> Scholem posited that the world's mysticism was virtually the same but that Jewish mysticism was different. This is a bold and, it turns out, unsupportable hypothesis. Moshe Idel in his famous book, cited above, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* shows what many had already discovered – namely, that Scholem was simply unable to place Jewish mysticism accurately within the phenomenology of world mysticism. Idel shows that in ecstatic Kabbalah the word *devekut* refers to a mystical experience which has a great deal to do with *unio mystica* (p. 61). Also in these texts, the first explicit discussion of *unio mystica* comes from Isaac of Acre, who explicitly compares the mystical experience with the mixing of pure waters into a single substance. He also mentions that the state of *devekut* can be achieved by *hitbodedut*, meditation. (He also

<sup>7</sup> Idel 1988: 59.

<sup>8</sup> Scholem 1960; Scholem 1941.

says, quite interestingly, that this is the true meaning of the phrase: "Enoch is Metatron," p. 67).

This raises an interesting issue, because the phrase "Enoch is Metatron" has a long history in earlier Jewish mysticism. For Rabbi Isaac of Acre it is, no doubt, a reference to *Sefer Hekhalot*, the document known in English as *3 Enoch*, in which the man Enoch is transformed into the angel Metatron. But this tradition of angelic transformation goes back to the early stages of the Enoch tradition. In the *Parables of Enoch*, now part of *1 Enoch* (*1 Enoch* 37-71), Enoch becomes the son of man (*1 Enoch* 71). In this form the tradition is certainly relevant to the formation of the *kerygma* in the New Testament, the claim that the Jesus who died on the cross has been resurrected and is enthroned as the Son of Man in heaven. It is he to whom God has given power and authority to bring judgment to the world (Daniel 7:13 together with Psalm 110:1 and Psalm 8:4).

One person who has been excited by some implications of bringing *unio mystica* back to the first century is Philip Alexander, who sees it as the backbone of the mystical experience related in the Dead Sea Scrolls and, in particular, in the document known as *The Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice*.<sup>9</sup> He interprets each use of the Hebrew word *Yahad* to refer to *unio mystica* (p. 101). This is a most bold hypothesis, because the term has hitherto been understood to describe the community itself. Of course, it is undeniable that there are ascents to heaven in Dead Sea Scroll literature and the associated pseudepigraphical literature of the time.<sup>10</sup> And, as we have seen, it is also undeniable that these same traditions posit that human beings, upon being raised into heaven, are transformed into angels. But is this the same thing as *unio mystica*?

I think not. For one thing, we would want to make use of the very simple distinction used by Newberg and Waldman in their preliminary studies on the distinction between kataphatic and apophatic mystical experience.<sup>11</sup> It makes a big difference whether meditation has a physical object or face as its goal, as in angelic transformation,

<sup>9</sup> Alexander 2005.

<sup>10</sup> e. g., *1 Enoch* 6-11, *1 Enoch* 12-16, Philo and Early Christianity, *2 Enoch*, *The Apocalypse of Araham*, *The Testament of Levi*, *The Testament of Abraham*, *The Latin Life of Adam and Eve*.

<sup>11</sup> One of the clearest critics of universal mystical experience and the development of specific criteria for the mystical content of ascent and merkabah mysticism in Judaism has been Daphna Arbel. See Arbel 2003: 7-20. Arbel points out in detail that the imagery of Merkabah mysticism quite often originates in Babylonian mythical and ritual discourse. She particularly points out the creative interplay between Babylonian and Jewish culture in the Greco-Roman period, and she is

or whether it is complete *via negativa* as in Vipassana or the apophatic vision of Western mysticism. Becoming transformed into an angel is a different experience from the *unio mystica* in my estimation. The *unio mystica* of later Judaism demands a theory of soul leaving the body and becoming part of its same substance in the godhead. But as we know the earlier phenomenon of transformation into angels, which goes back to very earliest times, does not.

We all know that no such consistent theory is present in the great stories of transformation in the first century. Even such a great mystical adventurer as Paul is unclear what actually goes to heaven. "Whether in the body or not, I do know know. God knows," says Paul twice about the mystical adventurer of 2 Corinthians 12:2-3. I would suggest, once we recognize that Judaism does contain and train for *unio mystica*, that we stop trying to fit all mystical experience into one rubric, *unio mystica*. We should instead let the mystical experience of the transformation into angels describe its own culturally and socially determined details. There are more RISC experiences than are described by one theological category.

#### f) Merkabah Mysticism: A Different Kind of RISC

In his recent book, *Ascensions on High in Jewish Mysticism*, Moshe Idel points out that ascensions on high form a central part of all Jewish mystical experience.<sup>12</sup> I also have been pointing this out for some time.<sup>13</sup> In the Festschrift for Julia Ching, I explicitly compared the experience of Merkabah mystics with that of Taoist ascenders.<sup>14</sup> This pattern has often been called "shamanism," and it is a RISC activity in a variety of cultures. But one has to be careful, because Mircea Eliade sought to impose a single form on all shamanistic experiences. One of the scholars most interested in developing this phenomenological rubric into a critical understanding of Merkabah mysticism is James Davila. It is a fine study, but it must be remembered that each society designs works carefully to design the kind of RISC that is important to it.

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right, because this can be demonstrated in detail. But actually there are plausible connections even much earlier.

<sup>12</sup> Idel 2005: 28.

<sup>13</sup> Segal 1977; Segal 1986; Segal 1990; Segal 1987; Segal 2004.

<sup>14</sup> Shen – Oxtoby 2004: 35-56. Some of the material that follows will resume important arguments in that article.

As Davila points out, one way to describe the relationship between these two religious phenomena is with the term *shamanism*. Shamanism is, in fact, a term that has been used widely to describe eastern religious traditions, ancient religious tradition, and more recently for Merkabah.<sup>15</sup> It is most often linked with healing practices; the goal of the adept was to achieve such perfect health that he could live forever. Healing was not particularly part of the Merkabah mystic's imagery, unless you count *anomie* due to the loss of the Temple and the State as a state that must be healed, which is a significant perception about one purpose of the text.<sup>16</sup> However, in the ordinary way of understanding shamanism as an adept who goes to heaven to effect a physical healing from a disease, no specific physical healing is performed; instead, the journey was undertaken to answer some difficult question in interpreting suffering in Jewish history, and the answer is presented as a theodicy, especially answering why Israel appeared to have fallen to such unfortunate circumstances.

Yet, in each case, shamanism may be used to describe the religious experience of the adept. In particular, it refers to an adept's willingness to enter a religiously interpreted state of consciousness (RISC), to journey to heaven, and sometimes to bring back boons for a person or society (*e. g.* a healing, or a theodicy). In the case of Taoist ascent, which I studied in the Ching article, the journey affects longevity and can even effect immortality. In the Jewish case, the journey normally confirms immortality, promised in other sources, by offering an eyewitness confirmation that the promises of the Bible (especially Daniel 12:3) are true. In both cases, the journey is also understood as valuable for its own sake – as a precious religious experience and even more as a process which in itself transforms a person to an immortal being. I will use the term “heavenly journey” as a short-hand to suggest this culturally rich “shamanic” experience. In the Jewish case and the Taoist case, the heavenly journey itself seems to signify the achievement of the religiously altered state of consciousness.

Yet there is little historical relationship between the two kinds of Shamanism. Shamanism is a tradition of long standing importance in the public and personal life of Asia. In China it goes back to the

<sup>15</sup> See Davila 2001: 25 to end and Kohn 1993: 81 to end. Shamanism is used quite freely and frequently to describe a variety of traditions, both high and local, in Asian religions. Davila's book, on the other hand, represents an innovation in the study of early Jewish mysticism, but it is a justifiable one. See also Smith 1997; Huntingon 1998; Harner 1973; Merkur 1985; Drury 1989; Ripinsky-Naxon 1993; Kendall 1985; Merkur 1993.

<sup>16</sup> Lewis 1989.

warring states period, and the Han at least. It may even be evidenced in the neolithic (Xia and Shang) periods.<sup>17</sup> It was favored by the court. By contrast, Merkabah Mysticism was an esoteric and quite private tradition that characterizes Jewish mysticism only from (at the very earliest that we can trace) the early second century B. C. E., the early Christian period C. E., and enters its heyday in the Gaonic period in Babylonia in the third to eighth centuries C. E. If one includes also dream visions, then the Jewish material goes through the Hebrew Bible but can be historically instantiated to the book of Daniel (165 B. C. E.) where Daniel is described as an interpreter of dreams. The Taoist texts are traceable at least to the Song.<sup>18</sup>

The immediate methodological question which arises is: What is the meaning of the term shamanism in our inquiry? One possible answer could be that it is a religious and cultural form that diffused in pre-historical times from central Asia Southward into India Eastward into China, Westward as far as Greece and Northward to the circumpolar peoples.<sup>19</sup> It is my opinion that diffusion is unlikely here as an explanation. If both can be termed shamanism, I am not claiming any historical connection between the two phenomena. Unlike Eliade, who sometimes claims that the shamanistic disciplines spread out from central Asia, I would make no claims associating Taoist ascent with Merkabah Mysticism. In fact, I would rather claim that the almost world-wide diffusion of shamanism has more to do with the operation of the brain.

A second possible definition is to refashion shamanism into a universal element of religious life – like ritual, mysticism, prayer, or gnosticism – and detach it from its original historical home. It is that latter way in which I intend to use it. Like the terms mysticism and gnosticism, this process of using the term critically will inevitably lead to certain ambiguities, because this definition does not necessarily deny the previous definition, at least in more limited cases.

I propose we call off the quest for finding an unlikely historical relationship between Merkabah mystical shamanism and Taoist shamanism and turn to exploring what it might mean to say that they are independent religious phenomena with deep similarities and important differences. In other words, I propose that we can profitably compare Taoist mystical ascent traditions with the Jewish ones from the point of view of the underlying religious experience itself.

<sup>17</sup> See Kohn 1993: 249; See also Saso 1989.

<sup>18</sup> See Kohn 1993: 271.

<sup>19</sup> One person whose name is significantly associated with this understanding of the term is Mircea Eliade, especially in Eliade 1964.

In order to clarify what I mean by the religious experience, we must digress into a third religious experience because a brain researcher has related his experiences while meditating in it. I am not proposing that Taoist or Merkabah meditation is the same as Zen; to the contrary, I will propose that Taoist and Merkabah heavenly ascent is similar in a way, but that they are both quite different from Zen. But the report of a Zen meditator will help us understand where the differences and similarities come from.

In his book on Zen and brain functioning, James H. Austin relates various Zen states to perfectly normal or trainable aspects of brain activity.<sup>20</sup> In one interesting place, he narrates a vision which came to him in Zen meditation – it was a clear vision of a red maple leaf in its full fall colors – which deeply impressed him in clarity and lucidity. He remembered that it was an image which he had actually seen in normal sight through the close-up lens of his single lens reflex camera as he attempted to photograph the maple leaf's brilliant colors in Japan. He uses this event as a model for RISC.

James Austin suggests that this is an extraordinary but still a natural function of the mind, stimulated by Zen meditation, even giving a quite detailed explanation of the physical processes in the brain which led to the vision. Special as this experience appeared to him, his Roshi reproved him for being distracted from the true nature of Zen meditation, which was apophatic, not kataphatic. He should not look for visions; they were a trap and a distraction. In other words, visions were not a state desirable for Zen meditation and so this red maple leaf vision was forcefully denigrated by his Zen Roshi.

But let us speculate about what this experience might have meant in another context. If this experience had occurred in an apocalyptic community, by an adept learning a different tradition of meditation, the vision would probably have been evaluated in a much more positive way: to an apocalypticist this could have meant that Canada's destiny, symbolized by the maple leaf, was about to change, perhaps to take over world dominance. This suggests forcefully that religious experiences are normal but primary processes in the brain, strongly influenced by the cultural context in which they occur; that the group itself through its leaders and experts decides what is a valid or invalid experience; and that adepts learn which experiences to invalidate or valorize. It is not too much to suggest that in the process they also learn how to generate the correct kind of physical states and extinguish those that are considered unhelpful.

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<sup>20</sup> Ariès 1982: 469-480.



The issue of consciousness and the evaluation of religiously interpreted states of consciousness (RISC's) is an iceberg underlying our whole discussion.<sup>21</sup> So we must look at some of the consequences of RISC. A group of new brain imaging techniques – CAT scans, MRI's and SPECT's – have made the operation of organs in the brain evident to us in a non-invasive way, so that we can ask the subjects what they are experiencing and note the correlation with blood flow and hence, we hope, brain functioning. On this basis, neurologists and philosophers who follow the study of the brain have agreed that what we experience as consciousness is an emergent property composed of the operations of a variety of brain organs which we normally seamlessly and unconsciously integrate into a single experience. Since it is made up of such a variety of mental and physiological operations, it is much more varied and variable experience than we normally acknowledge, though it is made up of a finite group of components. Everyone has had the experience of “a bad day” because of a hang-over or lack of sleep or caffeine withdrawal or overwork or over-exercise, but these are only a few of the innumerable physical stimuli which can affect the various organs in our brain out of which our consciousness emerges in a still mysterious manner. In theory we ought to be able to map all these vague feelings of malaise with the functions of various organs in the brain. But none of these will ever express what consciousness actually feels like; it will only describe the physical processes underlying it.

The fact that there are actually a series of finite, independent, and different processes which combine to yield consciousness makes the issue of consciousness and religiously interpreted consciousnesses a bit less complicated but no less miraculous. This is, of course, what keeps any physiological explanation from being reductionism. Since we normally experience consciousness as a seamless unity, the composite nature of consciousness only increases the mysterious character of our mental lives and the *emergent* or *Gestalt* nature of consciousness. But here is the kicker. We do not interpret these physical stimuli in a vacuum. They are mediated by the cultural categories taught to us by our societies and religions. The individual experience will depend both on the physiological state and the cultural

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<sup>21</sup> Hopkins – Richardson 1970; Armstrong – Markus 1960 though not to imply any agreement with his major points but only to suggest various possibilities in the development of consciousness and especially in the imposition of RISC within it. See more recent studies of consciousness for more plausible theories: Chalmers 1996; Armillas 1948; Arieti 1976; Arkes 1986; Hope 1960; Aron 1962; Aron 1968.

training as to what the state means and expresses, a much more complicated and varied issue than the physical state itself.

Religiously interpreted states of consciousness (RISC's) would be that part of our mental life that society or the individual categorizes as religious. Obviously, these are socially determined and differ in different societies. Some RISC would merely be experiencing various religious rituals and ceremonies without any necessary extreme changes in consciousness, but we know that some religious rituals and acts have been designed to affect our consciousness. Some RISCs would entail relatively rare and specially interpreted mental states like prophecy or specific meditative states, which are many and must be rigorously taught to the specifications of the individual group. Obviously the category would differ in different societies, and it might well occasion conflict in a society, as the use of glossolalia and other charismatic gifts in church services has occasioned conflict and denominational strife in the Christian religion.

There are, then, a variety of different organic states which may be labelled as religious in a specific society and trained for within the tradition. RISC has been used to justify the existence of a variety of metaphysical locations – like heaven or the underworld – as well as a variety of different mental states and a variety of different behaviors, some viewed as subversive by others, others viewed as conducive to societal health and regeneration. There is an implicit notion within these social judgments that some kinds of consciousness are appropriate while others are manifestly insane or at least abnormal. Under the circumstances, I think we should assume that even some accusations of insanity, like charges of magic and witchcraft, are importantly socially determined; actors may assert insanity or demon possession or witchcraft when they want to devalue the behavior of others. I suspect that over time we will come to see insanity as a group of specific neurological abnormality while a wider variety of issues will become sociopathic.<sup>22</sup>

In the case of merkabah mysticism, there is an explicit heavenly journey. The Merkabah literature also expresses the great joy and ecstasy of the heavenly journey, pointing out the angels and stars

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<sup>22</sup> Even horrible mass murder can be seen as sociopathic, the result of learned but rational behavior, instead of psychopathic behavior. The terrorists who killed thousands at the World Trade Center and the bombers who killed hundreds in Oklahoma City did not seem insane. They made rational decisions about how to kill themselves and the most possible civilians. They rather seem to have been so indoctrinated into a religious or ideological system that they were unable to appreciate that human life was more valuable.

responsible for earthly weather and various events on earth. The highest joy, however, is saved for the redemption of Israel by the hand of the messiah, which the adept can experience at the end of the heavenly ascent:

Then the Holy One, blessed be he, will reveal his great arm in the world, and show it to the gentiles: it shall be as long as the world and as broad as the world, and the glory of its splendor shall be like the brilliant light of the noonday sun at the summer solstice. At once Israel shall be saved from among the gentiles and the Messiah shall appear to them and bring them up to Jerusalem with great joy. Moreover, the kingdom of Israel, gathered from the four quarters of the world, shall eat with the Messiah and the gentiles shall eat with them, as it is written,

The Lord bares his holy arm  
in the sight of all the nations,  
and all the ends of the earth shall see  
the salvation of our God.

and it also says,

The Lord alone is his guide,  
with him is no alien god:

and it says,

The Lord will be King of the whole world.

(3 *Enoch* 48A:10, tr. P. Alexander in: Charlesworth 1983-1985, 1: 302.)<sup>23</sup>

The joy of this literature is that Israel will regain its honored place among the nations and God will be recognized by all. The ecstasy of the adept is the demonstration of the realized eschatology. This is clearly as dependent on Jewish history as is the Taoist example on their history in the Chinese court.

In the Merkabah literature, there is a famous crisis, which the Merkabah mystic must pass. It happens in the sixth palace. There, the adept sees the tessellated marble tiles of the palace and is tempted to exclaim that they are water. But he who says "water, water" is lost because untruth is never tolerated in heaven. The tradition therefore suggests a different kind of terror that awaits the adept and tells him how to avoid it.

Now, no one would blithely assume that the kinds of mystic adventurers in Merkabah mysticism were having the same RISC as those who seek *unio mystica*. The experience is quite different, but it can be also traced to perfectly normal and trainable phenomena that are available to the brain (see my essay in *Shen*, pp. 45-49). And these are different in turn from the experiences of the Taoist ascenders:

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<sup>23</sup> Charlesworth 1983-1985, 1: 302.

They visit different kinds of heaven, seeking different kinds of bliss and needing to avoid different kinds of pitfalls. What the literature expresses is the suggestion of what these adventurers will experience as they travel.

But there is a difference between the two comparisons. On the one hand we are talking about two completely different RISC experiences, *unio mystica* versus shamanistic ascent. In the other case, we are dealing with two different cultural expressions of the same "shamanistic ascent" RISC. One cannot expect that any two cultures will populate the same heaven. Underlying the two ascents, let us posit, is the same or quite similar physiological and neurological conditions. But the cultural interpretations make the experience into something understandable in its own tradition. In both traditions, we see expressions of the goal and warnings about the dangers along the way.

Shamanism or ascent or whatever one wants to call this particular pattern of neurological events in the brain (produced by training) therefore has two aspects – a mental state which is part of our human physiology and a complicated cultural tradition that seeks to explain and also to train for and produce these extraordinary experiences. There is training to express exactly how to produce the RISC and the training is culturally specific. The point in both cases is similar. These are real and very intense physical experiences. Those who have them need no further demonstration of the proof of the religious systems that they practice. Indeed, in many cases, the accomplishment of these practices demonstrates that the adept has attained to the highest level of spiritual fulfillment that is available in earthly life and that each can expect special forms of immortality in the coming life, whether it occurs in kings or commoners, rabbis or students, it is a transforming life experience. Indeed, we can even trace a kind of history of the development of this kind of mystical experience within pseudepigraphical Judaism. We see one instantiation of the paradigm in the literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls and a slightly different one in the letters of Paul. We then can see the ascent material develop into the texts of the Hekhalot literature in succeeding centuries. There are clearly further developments and responses of Jews to their historical circumstances. For example, the ascent and transformation literature of the early centuries of the Christian era are transformed in Babylonia to cohere more fully with the shamanistic model of RISC experience that we find in early Sassanian religion. Ascent RISC finds a very comfortable home in Zoroastrian Iran.

### g) Some Techniques for Transmitting on RISC: Reading and Ritual

So we come to the last topic for discussion in this short inquiry. And it brings us back to the beginning, where we discussed the techniques for achieving RISC. Of course, we cannot be sure that the exact same experience is held by each Vipassana meditator, for example, or each Zen or Merkabah meditator. And we must make allowances for the development of the tradition and for the importance of innovation itself because we have already seen that these mystical experiences can be studied historically as they develop over time. That would suggest that the experience and its significance changes over time.

In the study of Jewish mysticism, scholars have concentrated on the reading of texts as one great educator. I have studied this process of transmission myself in many places. It seems clear that each of our mystical adventurers seeking RISC are reading the texts available and that they have a certain and very complicated effect on the development of the mystical tradition. But it is not the exact same tradition; nor is it the result of exegesis. I believe that that point has been very well made in my works<sup>24</sup> as well as in the works of Christopher Rowland.<sup>25</sup> One can also see the significance of this perception in the work of Elliot Wolfson.<sup>26</sup>

What has been insufficiently studied, but is clear from this inquiry, is the role that ritual plays in the transmission of RISC experience. No, we cannot be sure that each mystic is having the same experience. In the end, that is not a very interesting question. It is rather like asking whether what I see as red is the same as what you see as red. They may be completely different but in society and culture we learn to identify what we see with the same thing that other people are calling "red." That agreement by means of social transaction is what is important in the end.

We do know the ritual context of Merkabah Mysticism in Sassanian Iran. Our historical data is extremely famous, coming from a *responsum* of Rabbi Hai Gaon:

Many scholars thought that one who is distinguished by many qualities described in the books, when he seeks to behold the Merkabah and the palaces of the angels of high, he must follow a certain procedure. He must fast a number of days and place his head between his knees and

<sup>24</sup> Segal 2004.

<sup>25</sup> Rowland 1982.

<sup>26</sup> Wolfson 1995.

whisper many hymns and songs whose texts are known from tradition. Then he perceives within himself and in the chambers [of his heart] as if he saw the seven palaces with his own eyes, and it is as though he entered one palace after another and saw what is there. And there are two *mishnayot*, which the *tannaim* taught regarding this topic, called the *Greater Hekhalot* and the *Lesser Hekhalot* and this matter is well known and widespread. Regarding these contemplations, the *Tanna* taught: "Four entered Paradise" – those palaces were alluded to by the term *pardes*, and they were designated by this name...For God...shows to the righteous, in their interior, the visions of His palaces and the position of His angels.<sup>27</sup>

This must surely be one of the most exciting reports to come down to us from early rabbinic Judaism. Coming from the end of the Geonic period, this report can hardly be taken as a description of the ascent tradition in New Testament times. We can note that the Gaon gives these traditions the authority of *Mishnah*, having been transmitted by *Tannaim* and, thus, he dates them to the period ending at the beginning of the third century and gives them the subsequent respect which such traditions deserves. What it tells us in this context is that eventually the Jewish tradition does take account of the ritual setting out of which RISC comes. It also happens once the Gaon makes clear that this experience is not a bodily trip to heaven but an experience that happens to mystics "in their interior." It is hard to know what rituals might have accompanied heavenly journey in earlier periods. But at least we have a fixed point for the development of specific rituals and techniques of achieving RISC in this place. There can be no doubt in this case that the RISC is involved in a specific school of mystical experience in which ritual as well as texts are being transmitted to adepts and their pupils. The person most responsible for understanding Merkabah within the context of the ritual of the Ancient Near East must be Daphna Arbel.<sup>28</sup>

The same is true with regard to other forms of RISC around the world. When people are taught to meditate in the Vipassana tradition, they are taught with the same rituals: sit in the same position, empty your head of passing thoughts, once the mind is empty, concentrate on the sensate and "what truly is" will arise. This is an objectless meditation.

The RISC developed in Jewish tradition is not objectless meditation. It involves an extremely elaborate heavenly landscape, full of

<sup>27</sup> Quoted, with a few changes, from the version in Idel 2005: 33, which in turn is dependent on the translation of Scholem 1941 [1995] 49. The Hebrew text may be found in Levin 1932: 14-15.

<sup>28</sup> Arbel 2003. See also Sanders 2006: 57-79 and Elior 2006a: 83-104.

unexpressible beauty and unspeakable dangers. The object of the ascent to heaven was angelic transformation, among other things. One could look forward to wisdom and religious verification as well. It is loaded with heavenly imagery mediated by text and tradition. But it too has a ritual dimension. We know that in the Qumran community special time was devoted to meditation as well as the religious services of the *Yahad*, which were devoted to worship together with the angels in a fixed manner. Later on, in the Hekhalot Literature, we know that mystics could be seated before an audience while they narrated their heavenly journeys and manipulated spells and physical amulets, also called gnostic gems, to help them get successfully through their journeys to the particular goal for the seance. Many different physical manipulations, and even speaking to the group, were required of the successful ascending adept. It is hard to imagine that this took place in anything approaching full trance. We do not know what kind of trance they achieved, or whether it stayed the same over time or developed over time. It is not so different from the kinds of physical manipulation that we associate with the Chinese heavenly journey, or even in a different way, like various of the more energetic yogas like Kundalini yoga. And we can be sure that there was a social and communal aspect to the RISC, as we find in contemporary pentecostal Christianity. I am not saying it is the same experience. I am only saying that RISC can be achieved in social contexts as well as individual meditation. But we can be sure that this is what counted for RISC in the Jewish mystical society of the time and this is what the young meditator wished to achieve.

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