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

with an appendix on Jewish Magic

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Reviewers may quote brief passages.

The original version of this article appeared as an appendix to the fourth edition of A Guide to Kabbalistic Books in English: 1977-1979, by Don Karr (Ithaca: 1982), pages 37-40; it was reprinted in slightly expanded form in Collected Articles on the Kabbalah, volume 1, by D. Karr (Ithaca: KoM #5, 1985), pages 17-20. The 1985 version is reprinted below as APPENDIX 3.

The 2017 version of this article appears in Jewish Studies 52 (Jerusalem: Journal of the World Union of Jewish Studies, 2017), ENGLISH SECTION, pages 35*-112*

Merkabah (= Chariot) Mysticism developed primarily out of speculation on and expansion of the visions of Ezekiel (CHAPTERS 1, 8, and 10) and, to a lesser extent, Isaiah (CHAPTER 6) and Daniel (CHAPTER 2). This strain of mysticism meanders through the intertestamental pseudepigrapha¹ and even touches corners of gnostic and Qumran texts.²


¹ 1 Enoch 14 is particularly important. Ithamar Gruenwald (in AMM₁, page 36) says, “…it is the oldest Merkavah vision we know of from outside the canonical Scriptures. … Indeed, one can consider this particular vision a model-visions of Merkavah Mysticism” (AMM₁ = Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism—see below, 1980 • Gruenwald for the first edition, 2014 • Gruenwald for the second, revised edition, AMM₂). Gruenwald refines this statement in AMM₂ (page 75): “These are a few samples taken from what might be the oldest Merkavah vision in post scriptural sources. They contain, on the one hand, several motives [motifs?] already found in the “Merkavah” visions in Scripture, and, on the other hand, considerable features in this vision became typical of later Merkavah visions. Indeed, one can consider this particular vision a model-visions of pre-Merkavah mysticism.”


Refer to the list below: “Regarding the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,” page 16.
Merkabah material and references can be found in shreds, often more provocative than telling, in the Talmud and other rabbinic writings. However, the major concentrated expression of merkabah mysticism is the cluster of writings which has come to be called the hekhalot (= HEAVENLY HALLS) literature, which is the focus of this paper.

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

Since the ‘seventies, scholarly work on the hekhalot texts has increased dramatically, as the publication dates of the books and articles discussed below attest. Before this spate of academic activity, there were in English little more than Gershom Scholem’s attempt at a critical edition of one of the hekhalot texts to shed light on this oblique collection of writings. Even as this lament is being recalled, no time should be lost in acknowledging Scholem’s inescapable influence on this and all other aspects of the study of Jewish mysticism. Some of Scholem’s conclusions regarding the hekhalot literature have been challenged, and some of his observations on and characterizations of the hekhalot texts have come to seem convenient, imposing order on that which is, in fact, near chaos. Yet, Scholem’s writings on this subject remain some of the clearest and best supported; they have also been among the most accessible, not only in their style but in their actual availability.

As for Odeberg, his lone work is more problematic. As significant as it was, Odeberg’s treatment of Sefer ha-Hekhalot (BOOK OF THE HEKHALOT, dubbed by Odeberg “3 Enoch”) is now considered unreliable and misleading on many points. But, as contemporary scholar David Halperin has pointed out, Odeberg’s work has “proved easier to criticize than to emulate.”

Today, however, we are in pretty fair shape to study merkabah mysticism and hekhalot texts, though some of the leading scholars in this field publish in German and, of course, Hebrew. Nevertheless,

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3 Mishnah: Megillah 4:10, Haggigah 2:7, Tosafot Haggigah 2:1-7, Palestinian Talmud 77 a-d; Babylonian Talmud 11b-16a. See the books listed below: 1980 • Halperin, 1982 • Chernus, and 2009 • Schäfer.

4 A list of Scholem’s works is given below, page 4.

Morton Smith’s “Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati,” in Biblical and Other Studies, edited by Alexander Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963) was another early notice. Also, Smith translated Hekhalot Rabbati into English—a project which began in the ’forties and lasted until the ’eighties, when Smith worked on the translation in collaboration with Ithamar Gruenwald. At some point, the typescript was corrected by Scholem, who mentions Smith’s translation in Jewish Gnosticism..., page 11, note 4. This translation circulated among a few scholars in the field but was not published until recently: a full transcription of Smith’s translation of Hekhalot Rabbati is now available online at http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/HekRab/index.php. See below, “Translations & References,” § A.


6 FACERS, page 364. (See below, 1988 • Halperin).

7 For the most part in German, there is the work of Peter Schäfer and his team, which includes Margarete Schlüter and Hans Georg von Mutius. Certainly, the most significant work which Schäfer has overseen is Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1981), which presents in the original Hebrew and Aramaic an array of manuscript readings side by side. Synopse was followed by Genizah-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur by the same team (Mohr [Siebeck], 1984). Soon after, several volumes of German translations of Synopse, as Übersetzung der Hekhalot-Literatur, appeared (Mohr [Siebeck], 1987-1995). Schäfer has also published a collection of his articles—ten in German, three in English—as Hekhalot-Studien (Mohr [Siebeck], 1988).

The contents of Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur are outlined below, page 51.

Genizah-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur includes 23 texts: “six texts from Greater Hekhalot (frag. 1—6); five from Shô’ar qomah (frag. 4, 6—11); two from Lesser Hekhalot (frag. 7, 18); two concerning Metatron (frag. 9, 19); one from the Book of the Hekhalot (3 Enoch)
from the texts and studies now available in English, the persistent reader can certainly gain firm impressions of

(i) the contents of the *hekhalot* texts,
(ii) the issues captivating contemporary scholarship regarding the *hekhalot* texts,
(iii) the place of the *hekhalot* texts in the history and development of Judaism, early Christianity, and their mysticism.  

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

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(frag. 12); seven are magical adjurations and incantations (frag. 13—17, 20, 21); one refers to the *Ascension of Moses* (frag. 21), and another to *Pereq shirah* (frag. 23); and two include unique merkavah texts (frag. 8, 22), probably the most important texts offered in this collection” (—Rachel Elior, REVIEW: “Schäfer’s Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur, in the Jewish Quarterly Review, vol. 80, no. 1/2 [University of Pennsylvania, 1989, pages 142-145], page 144).


Studies in English
LISTED CHRONOLOGICALLY – 1960 to 2018

1960


The studies of Gershom Scholem form the basis of contemporary scholarship on Jewish mysticism, and, hence, provide the foundation of subsequent work on merkabah mysticism and hekhalot texts. Other works by Scholem address this subject at length:

  - LECTURE 2: “Merkabah Mysticism and Jewish Gnosticism”


  - CHAPTER 1. “Shi’ur Komah: The Mystical Shape of the Godhead”

  - pages 8-21
  - pages 373-6: § MERKABAH MYSTICISM
  - pages 377-81: § METATRON

These works (*Major Trends…*, *Mystical Shape…*, *Origins…*, and *Kabbalah*) are given notice here not only to establish the starting point for “modern” scholarship on hekhalot-merkabah mysticism but to demonstrate Scholem’s development in appraising the subject.9

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All but the first of these, which is in Hebrew, are outlined below.
1980


Refer below to 2014 • Gruenwald for the second, revised edition of this book (AMM₂).

The first half of Gruenwald’s pioneering book analyzes the major features of the merkabah tradition, beginning in Jewish apocalyptic then developing into “the literature that first gives a full-scale presentation of Merkavah mysticism” i.e., the hekhalot literature, “composed in Eretz-Yisrael (circa 200-700),” thus ending “as a creative literary stream … sometime in the Ge’onic period.”

The second half of AMM₁ describes the hekhalot texts one by one, including Re’uyot Yehezkel and Sefer ha-Razim, items not generally considered part of the hekhalot corpus.

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

Refer to Gruenwald’s article:

- “Jewish Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism,” in *Studies in Jewish Mysticism*, edited by Joseph Dan and Frank Talmage (Cambridge: Association for Jewish Studies, 1982), which is reprinted in Gruenwald’s *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism* (see below: 1988).


Halperin investigates the references to the merkabah tradition in Mishnah Hagigah 2:1, Tosefta Hagigah 2:1-7, Palestinian Talmud Hagigah 77a-d, and Babylonian Talmud Hagigah 11b-16a. Halperin states,

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

1982


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

Refer also to Chernus’ articles:


1983


See below: 1985 • Cohen.

1984


The “three types” discussed in this brief work are (i) ascent to the divine world, (ii) the mysticism of Hebrew letters, and (iii) Sar Torah (PRINCE OF THE TORAH) revelations. *Three Types…* is reprinted in

**1985**


  See below, “TRANSLATIONS & REFERENCES,” § F. *Shi’ur Qomah*.

**1987**


  CHAPTER 3. “From the Ancient East to the European Middle Ages”—pages 77-91.


  This volume, in both the Hebrew and English sections, is devoted to *hekhalot* literature and related topics. Articles in English include

  - Chernus, Ira. “The Pilgrimage to the Merkavah: An Interpretation of Early Jewish Mysticism”
  - Goldberg, Arnold. “Quotations from Scripture in Hekhalot Literature”
  - Halperin, David J. “A Sexual Image in Hekhalot Rabbati and Its Implications”
  - Hayman, A. P. “Sefer Yesira and the Hekhalot Literature”
  - Schlüter, Margarete. “The Eulogy Hekham ha-Razim va-Adon ha-Setarim in Hekhalot Literature”
  - Van Uchelen, N. A. “Tosephta Megillah III, 28: A Tannaite Text with a Mystic Connotation?”

**1988**


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

  CONTENTS:

  Introductory Essay: The Cultural Milieu of Apocalypticism
  Chapter 1 Prophecy, Jewish Apocalyptic Literature and the Problem of the Uncanonical Books
  Chapter 2 Two Types of Jewish Esoteric Literature in the Time of the Mishnah and Talmud
  Chapter 3 Knowledge and Vision: Towards a Clarification of Two “Gnostic” Concepts in the Light of Their Alleged Origins
  Chapter 4 Priests, Prophets, Apocalyptic Visionaries, and Mystics
  Chapter 5 Angelic Songs, the Qedushah and the Problem of the Origin of Hekhalot Literature
  Chapter 6 Literary and Redactional Issues in the Study of the Hekhalot Literature
  Chapter 7 Jewish Merkavah Mysticism and Gnosticism
  Chapter 8 Jewish Sources for the Gnostic Texts from Nag Hammadi?
  Chapter 9 Aspects of the Jewish-Gnostic Controversy
  Chapter 10 The Problem of the Anti-Gnostic Polemic in Rabbinic Literature
  Chapter 11 Manichaeanism and Judaism in Light of the Cologne Mani Codex
  Chapter 12 Halakhic Material in Codex Gnosticus V, 4: The Second Apocalypse of James?
Gruenwald comments,

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

Refer also to Gruenwald's article:


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

Halperin concludes that the hekhalot tradition grew out of interpretations of mythic aspects of third-century Palestinian sermons connected with Meḥalot which combined the stories of Ezekiel’s vision and the reception of the Torah at Mt. Sinai with Psalm 68, which was interpreted to refer to Moses’ ascent to heaven.

I suggest that certain people, nurtured on the stories of how Moses climbed to heaven and seized Torah from the angels, used these images to express and to satisfy their own yearning to have Torah made accessible to them. (FACES, page 385)

These “certain people,” according to Halperin, turn out to be not the rabbis but rather ʿam ba’ares, i.e., “folk without the rabbi’s expertise,” (FACES, page 437) looking for a shortcut to Torah knowledge and wisdom.

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

Refer to Halperin’s articles:


Of the thirteen articles, ten are in German; the three in English are

1989


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

  Further, see Janowitz’ article:

1990


  *Revelation and Mystery* outlines the forerunners of merkavah mysticism (namely, ancient Judaism, apocalyptic literature, Qumran, wisdom literature, Philo, Josephus, and early rabbinic literature), which brings us to the brink of the *heikalot* literature. Bockmuehl instead follows the line of Pauline Christianity via Paul’s gospel and letters.

1991


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


1992


  After a discussion of the ironic errors of this lecture’s title, Dan identifies the “distinctively mystical elements in *heikalot* literature” as residing in only five texts: *Hekhalot Rabbati, Hekhalot Zutarti, Sefer Hekhalot* (or 3 Enoch), *Ma’aseh Merkabah*, and *Shi’ur Qomah*.


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

  Refer to Schäfer’s article:
1993


Dan reviews all of the major topics, issues, and texts in a manner which does not exclude the non-specialist. *Ancient Jewish Mysticism* expands Dan's earlier chap book, *Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism*—see above 1994 • Dan.

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


1994


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

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

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

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

Further, refer to Wolfson’s articles


1995


Deutsch gives an account of the relationship between Gnosticism and merkabah mysticism using Scholem’s written statements on these as a starting point. He surveys a range of scholarly opinion on issues surrounding these topics, drawing on many of the writers mentioned in this bibliography. Deutsch summarizes his view of Scholem on page 36:

Even though his [Scholem’s] comparative analysis of Gnosticism and Merkabah mysticism is problematic from a number of methodological perspectives, its role as an intellectual catalyst cannot be overstated.


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

1996

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

DESCENT offers a discussion of the heavenly journey, yeridah, literally “descent,” to the merkabah in various passages of the hekhalot literature. Kuyt outlines the contents of Hekhalot Rabbati, Hekhalot Zutreti, Ma‘aseh Merkabah, Merkabah Rabbah, 3 Enoch, and one of the Genizah fragments. Translated excerpts from all these texts are included.


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

  Swartz translates and analyzes the Sar Torah (Prince of the Torah) texts with an eye toward the cultural environment which produced them.

  See below, “Translations & References,” § A.

1997


  Abrams treats and translates the Sod ha-Egoz texts, “the earliest known commentaries on Ezekiel’s Chariot (Ma’aseh Merkabah),” which are, on the one hand, apparent latter-day developments of hekhalot literature while, on the other hand, “proto-kabbalistic.”


  In chapters 4 through 7, passages from Shi’ur Qomah, 3 Enoch, Razo shel Sandalphon (Secret of Sandalphon, a hekhalot-related text), and Hekhalot Rabbati are translated and analyzed.

1998


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

  In short, John, in his peculiar way, has intertwined the two aspects of Jewish mysticism, Ma’aseh Merkabah and Ma’aseh Bereit, by using the Logos-concept. By so doing, he seeks to confront and persuade the mystics of his time to come to faith in Jesus, the Logos-Son, who is the revelation of God’s glory on earth and who embodies the reality behind God’s creation. (—page 300)


  … Aseneth displays significant affinities with traditions about the adjuration of angels and ‘ascent’ to heavens as known to us from the problematic hekhalot and related materials. … Given the nature of our sources, it seems impossible to know what if any actual connections might exist between Aseneth and hekhalot traditions. But if the longer version of Aseneth in particular does stand in some self-conscious relationship to the hekhalot traditions, gender may well be a significant factor in the differences. (—page 173)


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

Refer to Lesses’ articles:


1999


Within Merkabah mysticism, God is frequently depicted as an exalted and highly remote figure. Thus, Scholem was partly right when he described the gulf between humans and the God in Merkabah mysticism. Yet, Scholem erred when he emphasized the impossibility of closing this gulf—that is, when he defined the God of Merkabah mysticism as absolutely inaccessible or transcendent. How was the distance between human beings and God breached in Merkabah mysticism? The answer to this question requires an appreciation of the paradoxical nature of the angelic vice regent. (*—Guardians of the Gate*, page 9).

Deutsch discusses Metatron in this role, with comments on Akatriel. He then examines similar figures in Gnosticism (Sabaoth) and Mandaeism (Abathur).

Further, refer to Deutsch’s article:


See in particular CHAPTER 5, “The Archangel Michael in Rabbinic and Hekhalot Literature.” This chapter’s PART 2, § c. develops “The Michael-Metatron Identification” (pages 119-121).

2000


Kanarfogel tracks the influence and use of *hekhalot* and other mystical and magical material to 12th- and 13th-century Germany and France. He argues that esoteric teachings and practices spread beyond the *Hasidei Ashkenaz* to the *tosafists*, rabbinic descendants of Rashi, who are conventionally considered to have been inclined exclusively toward study of the Talmud.

2001


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

Further, see Davila’s articles


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

2002


Thereafter, Morray-Jones offers an in-depth analysis of the “water vision episode” within the context of the hekhalot literature, i.e., Hekhalot Rabbati and, especially, Hekhalot Zutarti. An extensive appendix discusses “Solomon and the Queen of Sheba,” a story which “appears to derive from the same traditional background and to be related in some manner to the water vision episode itself” (—page 230).

Refer to Morray-Jones’ articles


2003


Arbel’s summary of hekhalot and merkabah literature and scholarly approaches to it is not as engaging or detailed as, for instance, the introduction in Davila’s Descenders to the Chariot (see 2001 above).
However, Arbel nicely treats the question, “What is MYSTICAL about hekbal-merkabah mysticism?” i.e., what are its “mystical” characteristics and intentions?

FROM THE SUNY PRESS CATALOGUE (Spring 2003):

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

See also Arbel’s articles


2004


Elior details the traditions and literature leading up to the hekbalot texts. She writes,

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

Elior attempts to show that merkabah/ hekbalot mysticism grew out of practices described in the writings of the Qumran sect.

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

Find also the “devastating critique of most of [Elior’s] major theses” (—quoting Peter Schäfer, The Origins of Jewish Mysticism, page 14, note 51) by Martha Himmelfarb in “Merkavah Mysticism since Scholem: Rachel Elior’s The Three Temples,” in Weg Mystischer Gotteserfahrung: Judentum, Christentum und Islam / Mystical Approaches to God: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, edited by Peter Schäfer (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2006). Ironically, Elior reiterates arguments from The Three Temples in a paper which appears immediately before Himmelfarb’s in the same volume (see the last entry on the list of Elior’s articles immediately below).


Also, see Elior’s articles


2005


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


  *PART ONE, “Evolution of the Roles and Titles of the Seventh Antediluvian Hero in Mesopotamian, Enochic, and Merkabah Tradition” [Chapter Three deals primarily with *Sefer Hekhalot* (3 ENOCH)]

  PART TWO, “Polemical (Adamic, Mosaic, and Noachic) Developments and Their Role in the Evolution of Enoch’s Roles and Titles in the Slavonic Apocalypse (= 2 ENOCH)”

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

Find Orlov’s article,


2006

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

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

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Regarding the Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice and other “mystical” texts from Qumran:

- ______. Reclaiming the Dead Sea Scrolls: The History of Judaism, the Background of Christianity, the Last Library of Qumran (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1994): Chapter 22, “Mysticism and Magic.”


In an effort to determine the relationship of Paul’s ascent in 2 Cor. 12 to other early ascent accounts, a range of texts is considered, including 4QBerakhot and the Slavonic Enoch. Hekhalot literature, in particular Sefer Hekhalot (3 ENOCH) and Hekhalot Rabba, is discussed in CHAPTER 8.

Note Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones’ objections to Gooder in The Mystery of God, pages 402-404 (listed below: 2009 • Rowland/Morray-Jones).

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

**CONTENTS:**

Abbreviations

Preface

Part 1: Hermeneutics and Experience

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

Part 2: Communal Identities

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

Part 3: Cosmology

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

Part 4: Apocalypticism

• Frances Flannery-Dailey, “Lessons on Early Jewish Apocalypticism and Mysticism from Dream Literature”
• Kelley Coblentz Bautch, “Situating the Afterlife”

Part 5: Practices

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

Bibliography

Contributors

Indices


Smith’s CHAPTER 3, “Jewish Mysticism,” concentrates on the early development of merkabah mysticism in the pseudepigrapha, Philo, Qumran literature, and Revelation. From his research on the first-century ascent material, Smith concludes that Paul’s letter to the Colossians is a response to the “super-spirituality” of ascent practitioners, for “such practices showed a faith that was more dependent on human effort than divine grace, and was thereby a denial of Paul’s gospel.” (—page 73)


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

Toward the end of CHAPTER 4, Halbertal writes,

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


In the introduction to the articles in PART TWO, Orlov writes

It should be noted that 2Enoch, the Apocalypse of Abraham, and the Ladder of Jacob represent a unique group of texts that share a theophanic and mediatorial language that, in my view, is as different from the mainstream of early apocalyptic and pseudepigraphic writings as it is from later Hekhalot materials. This group of materials gives evidence of the lost practical and literary development that could very well represent an important transitional stage in early Jewish mystical testimonies, serving as a bridge from the matrix of early Jewish Apocalypticism, as it was manifest in early Enochic literature, to the matrix of early Jewish mysticism as it became manifest in rabbinc Merkabah and Hekhalot materials. The articles gathered in this volume intend to illustrate this transitional character of the Slavonic pseudepigraphic evidence by exploring theophanic and angelological imagery found in 2Enoch, the Ladder of Jacob, the Slavonic version of 3 Baruch and other pseudepigraphical texts preserved in Slavonic. It appears that the theophanic and angelological developments found in these documents occupy an intermediary stage between Second Temple Apocalypticism and Hekhalot mysticism and thus exhibit its own distinctive, one might say ‘proto-Hekhalot,’ mystical mold. (—page 105)


The major divisions of this 685-page volume could form three books:

PART I THINGS INTO WHICH ANGELS LONG TO LOOK: APPROACHING MYSTICISM FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE JEWISH APOCALYPSES (Christopher Rowland)
PART II  DIVINE NAMES, CELESTIAL SANCTUARIES, AND VISIONARY ASCENTS: APPROACHING THE NEW TESTAMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MERKAVAH TRADITIONS (Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones)—includes “A Version of Hekhalot Zutarti” (see notes below, TEXTS & REFERENCES, § B)

PART III  THE BODY OF GLORY: APPROACHING THE NEW TESTAMENT FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF SHIUR KOMA TRADITIONS (Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones) (see notes below, TEXTS & REFERENCES, § F. Shi‘ur Qomah)

• Schäfer, Peter. The Origins of Jewish Mysticism (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009).

Many scholars have dealt with Merkavah mysticism and its ramifications for classical rabbinic Judaism … as well as with the origins of the Kabbalah in the Book Bahir, but very few have paid full attention to the evidence of the Hebrew Bible, the apocalyptic literature, Qumran, and Philo. It is this gap between the Hebrew Bible and Merkavah mysticism that the present book wishes to address in a systematic and reflective manner. (ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS—page xi)

In his introduction, Schäfer surveys previous research on the forerunners of Merkavah mysticism, in particular the studies of Gershom Scholem and Rachel Elior (see above, 1965 • Jewish Gnosticism… etc., and 2004 • The Three Temples). He commences with Ezekiel (CHAPTER 1), then to the Enoch literature and related material (CHAPTERS 2 and 3). The section on Qumran (CHAPTER 4) addresses “Communion with Angels” while the section on Philo (CHAPTER 5) concentrates on “The Ascent of the Soul.” CHAPTER 6, “The Rabbis I,” takes up the “Cycle of Seven Stories” from the Tosefta (the four who entered pardaot, Ben Zoma on the upper and lower waters, etc.); “The Rabbis II” (CHAPTER 7) discusses the Merkavah passages in YERUSHALMI and BAVLI (the same Haggad sections considered by Halperin—see above, 1980 • Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature). CHAPTER 8 treats “The Merkavah Mystics,” focusing, in particular, on Hekhalot Zutarti. CHAPTER 9 offers Schäfer’s conclusions and observations.

See also, Schäfer’s article

2012


ABSTRACT from Brill’s website:

This book focuses on the additional liturgical and alternative readings of Targum Ezekiel, the so-called Targumic Toseftot. The critical text, translation, and commentary are presented with special reference to the long segments of unique mystical lore that are preserved in the Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel 1, the chapter which describes the prophet’s vision of the celestial chariot. This unique manuscript material sheds light on a relatively dark chapter in the reception history of early Jewish mystical lore, being closely related to the Hekhalot literature, and to the Shi‘ur Qomah tradition in particular. The volume concludes with a systematic treatment of the Targumic Toseftot to Ezekiel in relation to their Aramaic dialect, date and provenance, as well as their historical and social setting.

Damsma takes up not only “The Order of the Heavens in Rabbinic Literature” but also “The Order of the Underworlds….”

“[T]he role of Jewish apocalypticism in Hebrews has been vastly underappreciated, and the role of Jewish apocalyptic mysticism, even more so. In the field of New Testament studies generally, the aforementioned sporadic engagement with Jewish apocalyptic traditions appears to have passed, at least for the moment, and it is now more common for NT scholars to draw upon these rich and fascinating traditions in an attempt to elucidate the NT documents. Moreover, certain major recent publications suggest that research in this area will no longer be able to so easily marginalize the mystical dimension of apocalyptic traditions. Numerous desiderata remain, however, and among them is the role of Jewish apocalyptic mysticism in the epistle to the Hebrews, the subject of the present study.” (INTRODUCTION, page 2)

The “certain recent publications” that Barnard refers to are *The Mystery of God…* by Christopher Rowland and Christopher R. A. Murray-Jones and *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* by Peter Schäfer (both listed above: 2009).

Barnard does say, however, “Although I have made occasional reference to the Hekhalot literature, this study is not an attempt to explore the relationship between Hebrews and the Hekhalot traditions” (INTRODUCTION, page 21).

2013


Part IV: Hekhalot and Magical Studies (pages 327-713)

- Kuyt, Annelies. “Visions in Hekhalot Literature: Reflections on Terminology”
- Shavit, Yaacov. “‘He was Thoth in Everything’: Why and When King Solomon Became Both *Magister omnium physicorum* and Master of Magic”
- Bohak, Gideon; and Geller, Mark. “Babylonian Astrology in the Cairo Genizah”
- Salzer, Dorothea M. “How to Use the Hebrew Bible to Harm Your Neighbor: The Use of Biblical Quotations in Curse Texts Found in the Cairo Genizah”
- Bohak, Gideon; and Herrmann, Klaus. “*Tefillat Rav Hammuna Sava*: Genizah Fragments and Medieval Manuscripts”
- Hirschfelder, Ulrike. “*Torat ba-Mashiach* in the Context of Apocalyptic Traditions in Ashkenazi Hekhalot Manuscripts”
- Rebiger, Bill. “Non-European Traditions of Hekhalot Literature: The Yemenite Evidence”

Another article of interest within *Envisioning Judaism*, Volume 1:

- Boustan, Ra’anan S. “The Contested Reception of *The Story of the Ten Martyrs* in Medieval Midrash” (pages 369-393)


**CONTENTS:**

- Ra’anan Boustan, “Introduction”

**PART I. THE FORMATION OF HEKHALOT LITERATURE: LINGUISTIC, LITERARY, AND CULTURAL CONTEXTS**

- Noam Mizrahi, “The Language of Hekhalot Literature: Preliminary Observations”
- Peter Schäfer, “Metatron in Babylonia”
• Alexei Sivertsev, “The Emperor’s Many Bodies: The Demise of Emperor Lupinus Revisited”
• Klaus Herrmann, “Jewish Mysticism in Byzantium: The Transformation of Merkavah Mysticism in 3 Enoch”
• David M. Grossberg, “Between 3 Enoch and Bavli Haggigah: Heresiology and Orthopraxy in the Ascent of Elisha ben Abuyah”
• Moulie Vidas, “Heikalot Literature, the Babylonian Academies, and the Tannaim”

PART II. THE TRANSMISSION & RECEIPTION OF HEKHALOT LITERATURE: TOWARD THE MIDDLE AGES
• Peter Schäfer, “The Hekhalot Genizah”
• Gideon Bohak, “Observations on the Transmission of Hekhalot Literature in the Cairo Genizah”
• Ophir Münz-Manor, “A Prolegomenon to the Study of Hekhalot Traditions in European Piyyut”

PART III. EARLY JEWISH MYSTICISM IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: THEMES & PATTERNS
• Reimund Leicht, “Major Trends in Rabbinic Cosmology”
• Rebecca Lesses, “Women and Gender in the Hekhalot Literature”
• Andrei A. Orlov, “What is Below?” Mysteries of Leviathan in the Early Jewish Accounts and Mishnah Haggigah 2:1”
• Michael Meerson, “Rites of Passage in Magic and Mysticism”
• Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Rethinking (Jewish-)Christian Evidence for Jewish Mysticism”


(INTRODUCTION, page 19).

See my comments on Davila’s Hekhalot Literature in Translation below on page 24.


Between Temple and Torah reprints twenty of Himmelfarb’s papers originally published between 1984 and 2011. Refer, in particular, to the section entitled “Heavenly Ascent,” which contains


Himmelfarb observes,

A first attempt at reading through the hekhalot literature can be an unsettling experience, and not only because of the difficulties inherent in the texts. Anyone whose picture of this literature was shaped primarily by Scholem’s account comes to it expecting to find the continuation of the tradition of heavenly ascent from the Jewish apocalypses. For while Scholem by no means ignored other aspects of the hekhalot literature, he consistently places ascent at its center. Thus it comes as a surprise to discover how small a place descriptions of heavenly ascent occupy in these texts.

(—Between Temple and Torah, page 257)

With the surge of books treating the *hekhalot* covered in the previous pages, which all of necessity refer to the first edition of Gruenwald’s work, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* itself fell out of print, became difficult to find, and grew prohibitively expensive to obtain. However, for Brill simply to reprint the book would have proven the original edition to be out-of-date on more than a few points in light of all of the important work done on *hekhalot* literature since 1980. Yet, for Gruenwald to compose a wholly new book in response to the research of the intervening years would sacrifice the solid presentation he offered in his original effort. Hence, a revised edition, the two editions being perfect bookends to a field—and a career—devoted to apocalyptic, ancient ritual, and mysticism.

It was my privilege to read and comment on the final draft of the second edition of *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* before publication. My role was primarily to make suggestions regarding form and clarity in English.

While not penned by me, the publisher’s description shows traces of my hand:

This is a new and revised edition of the book first published 1980. It contains new introductory and concluding chapters as well as a bibliography and updated index. Furthermore, substantial corrections, updates, and changes have been made in the original text. The changes concern matters of language and style, they nuance the line of argumentation, and they update the discussion of major issues. The new chapters fill several scholarly gaps that have opened since the initial publication of this book in 1980. The new introductory chapter explores new venues and issues in the study and assessment of the *hekhalot* literature and relevant passages in apocalyptic literature, and this in light of epistemological and ontological considerations. The concluding chapter discusses the ritual praxis of the experience of the *hekhalot* mystics and its affinity to magic, and this in terms of new approaches to ritual theory.10


In the Hekhalot literature, God is both transcendent and present; but this dualism must be understood epistemologically. God is not so transcendent as to be unimaginable, unthinkable, unknowable, but what we can know of God must be tempered by a knowledge of our own minds’ tendency to reduce and compress information into a subjective form. That is to say, all human knowledge of God takes the shape of human knowledge, which is linguistic: it is language-shaped. This does not invalidate it. This bringing into the subjective realm, or making-knowable of the divine is essential in any theology which claims revelation. However, the knowledge must not be mistaken for the thing-itself. (—page 94)


While he focuses on the image of the heavenly double in works like the Animal Apocalypse, Book of the Watchers, 2 Enoch, Ladder of Jacob, and Joseph and Aseneth, Orlov persistently draws the *hekhalot* material into the discussion, especially *Sefer Hekhalot (= 3 Enoch).*

Reviewer Alexander Kulik states (on the back cover),

[This book] is particularly important for many scholars who do not have control of the Slavonic originals of the Ladder of Jacob and 2 Enoch. Orlov also draws on a broad range of unfamiliar sources, including Manichaean and Mandaean materials, which were often neglected by experts who previously investigated the heavenly counterpart imagery.


In this work, Andrei A. Orlov examines Jewish apocalyptic traditions about the angel Yahoeel, tracing their conceptual impact on the development of later rabbinic and Hekhalot beliefs concerning the supreme angel Metatron. The author argues that the figure Yahoeel, who became associated in Jewish apocalypticism with the distinctive aural ideology of the divine Name, provides an important conceptual key not only for elucidating the evolution of the Metatron tradition, but also for understanding the origins of the distinctive aural ideology prominent in early Jewish mystical accounts. Andrei A. Orlov suggests that the aural mold of Jewish apocalypticism exercised a decisive and formative influence on the development of early Jewish mysticism. (—Mohr book description)

Orlov states in his introduction,

...one of the tasks of this study will be the exploration not only of the ideological proclivities of Hekhalot materials, wherein Metatron’s mediatorial profile came arguably to its conceptual fore, but also a thorough investigation of the peculiar apocalyptic mold found in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, from which Yahoeel’s figure appears in full blown conceptual complexity.

The comparative analysis of the imagery found in an early Jewish apocalyptic text, which was preserved by Eastern Orthodox Christians in its Slavonic translation, and the traditions attested in some Hekhalot macroforms circulating in later Jewish rabbinic and mystical circles, inevitably raise the question of the possible channels of transmission between these different ideological and cultural milieus. This issue, without a doubt, represents a most difficult challenge for students of early Jewish mysticism, as it had already been encountered by Gershom Scholem, who faced the great difficulty of attempting to provide historical links between apocalyptic traditions and later molds of Jewish mystical tradition, including Hekhalot literature. (pages 4-5)

In that Orlov focusses on Metatron, the primary *hekalot* text he treats is *Sefer Hekhalot*, often called 3 Enoch.


The sixteen chapters of Mechanics... are in two sets: Part I, Magic, and Part II, Mysticism. These chapters are based on Swartz’ papers which were previously published in a variety of journals and compendia.

Each section of the volume begins with a survey of the main issues and types of evidence ... and programmatic essays on the concepts of magic and mysticism.... The two sections then proceed to studies in the evidence for each category, with an eye to sorting out the problems raised by the textual and material dimensions of the subject..., and especially the complex network of symbols, effects, and internal logic that drives each one.... These studies emphasize close readings of ritual and literary-historical studies as ways of analyzing them. Each section concludes with a translation of a brief text which exemplifies some of the dynamics described in the body of the book. (—INTRODUCTION, page 1)

The texts given are *The Book of the Great Name* (Schäfer, Synopse, §§ 489-495—see below, The “Core Group” of *Hekhalot Texts*, § A) and “The Seal of the Merkavah” (AKA the “Ozhayah fragment”—Schäfer, *Genesis-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, pp. 97-111).

Swartz’ surveys of issues and scholarship at the heads of the two sections are excellent—and the most up-to-date—introductions to ancient Jewish magic and mysticism.
Translations & References

The Hekhalot Corpus

The number of *hekhalot* texts in translation has grown, albeit slowly, over the years, culminating with James R. Davila’s *Hekhalot Literature in Translation* (2013—see above, page 21), which includes all of the major works except

- 3 Enoch, for which Davila defers to P. S. Alexander’s “excellent English translation” (—Davila, page 7) in Charlesworth’s *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*
- Masekhet Hekhalot, in that “it is doubtful that this text should be included in the Hekhalot corpus” (—*ibid.*, page 9)
- much of the *Shi’ur Qomah* corpus, given that “its relationship to the other Hekhalot texts is somewhat tangential” (—*ibid*). Davila refers the reader to the work on *Shi’ur Qomah* by Martin Cohen 1983 and 1985.

Here we enter directly into the question of what is and what is not a member of the *hekhalot* family; the canons offered by various scholars differ. For instance, Schäfer’s *Synopse* includes some items which many commentators find dubious, namely, THE SWORD OF MOSES and *Seder Rabba di Bereshit*. One well-known text, THE VISIONS OF EZEKIEL, while almost always included on lists of *hekhalot* texts, is clearly of a character different from the so-called “core group.” Davila’s exclusion of *Masekhet Hekhalot* from the canon is certain to draw some criticism.

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

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

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

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

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11 See *Appendix 2*, below, on the contents of *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*.
12 *Masekhet Hekhalot* is a mixture of *hekhalot* and other materials, which its author/compiler blends and alters rather freely. There is indeed an after-the-fact quality to this text.
The “Core Group” of Hekhalot Texts

§ numbers given in braces { … } are section (microform) numbers established in Synopse zur Hekhalot Literature (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1981)
Refer to APPENDIX 2 below on the contents of Synopse.

A. Hekhalot Rabbati [THE GREATER PALACES] (HR) {§§ 81-277}
Sar Torah [PRINCE OF THE TORAH] {§§ 278-306}

Translations:
• HR chapters 1-30 {§§ 81-86, 92-113, 117-173, 178-192, 196-260, 269-306}, the most comprehensive translation, which includes The Story of the Ten Martyrs {§§ 107-121}; the First (called the David Apocalypse) {§§ 122-126}, Second {§§ 130-139}, and Third Apocalypses {§§ 140-151}; some Sh’iur Qomah material {§ 167}; and the Sar Torah appendix {§§ 278-306}, was translated by Morton Smith from an unpublished edition (based on MS New York 8128—the primary MS used by Schäfer et al in Synopse) prepared by Gershom Scholem and Chaim Wirszubski. My annotated transcription of this translation is online at http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/HekRab/index.php
• HR {§§ 81-121, 152-173, 189-277} and Sar Torah {§§ 281-306}, in Davila, Hekhalot Literature in Translation.
• HR chapters 15-29 {§§ 206-298}, prepared by Lauren Grodner—which includes §§ 281-287 from Sar Torah—in David R. Blumenthal’s Understanding Jewish Mysticism (New York: Ktav Publishing House, 1978), where it is referred to as “Pirkei Heikalot.”
• HR chapters 1, 2, and 16-26, in Aryeh Kaplan’s Meditation and Kabbalah (York Beach: Samuel Weiser, 1982).
• Sar Torah {§§ 278-280 and §§ 281-306 (from HR mss), §§ 307-314 (which fall outside the text usually incorporated into HR), §§ 560-570 (which appear in Ma’aseh Merkavah), and §§ 675-697 (from Merkavah Rabba)}, along with other Sar Torah rituals and related texts, in English translation in Michael Swartz’ Scholastic Magic, CHAPTERS 4 and 5.
• HR chapters 5 and 6 {§§ 107-121} (The Story of the Ten Martyrs up to the First Apocalypse), “annotated translation” = APPENDIX C of Ra’anan Abusch’s dissertation, FROM MARTYR TO MYSTIC (listed above: 2005 • Boustan).

References to HR run throughout the following: Gruenwald’s AMM 1-3, Schäfer’s HMG, Kuyt’s DESCENT, and Lesses’ Ritual Practices. See also
  “Chapter four investigates the early mystical treatise Hekhalot Rabbati, which captures the worldview of those Jews most preoccupied with angels. Jewish mystics strove to live in synchronicity with the angels, to achieve angelic status, and even to command the angels.” (from the abstract)
• Boustan, Ra’anan S. From Martyr to Mystic: Rabbinic Martyrology and the Making of Merkavah Mysticism (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005).


• Wolfson. SPECULUM, chapter 3.

Helen Spurling treats the David Apocalypse {§§ 122-126} among the “Hebrew Visions of Hell and Paradise” in Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: More Noncanonical Scriptures, Volume 1, edited by Richard Bauckham, James R. Davila, and Alexander Panayotov (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2013). She notes (page 701), “This work is found embedded in manuscripts of the mystical Hekhalot literature, usually in a work called the Hekhalot Rabbati, but it clearly is a separate composition.” It constitutes the first of three apocalypses which appear in the midst of HR (as in Smith’s translation).
Often appended to HR in manuscripts is “The Book of the Great Name” {§§ 489-495}.
For an introduction and translation, see Michael D. Swartz, “The Book of the Great Name,” in
Judaism in Practice from the Middle Ages through the Early Modern Period [PRINCETON READINGS IN
RELIGION], edited by Lawrence Fine (Princeton – Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2001);
also in Swartz, The Mechanics of Providence, CHAPTER 9. Portions are translated by Ithamar
Gruenwald in From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism, pages 267-270.

B. Hekhalot Zutarti, or Zutarti [THE LESSER PALACES] (HZ) {§§ 335-374, 407-419}
Editions and Translations: Two editions of HZ in the original Hebrew and Aramaic have
appeared (i) Schäfer’s Synopsis, and (ii) a problematic “critical edition” by Rachel Elior (Jerusalem:
Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1982). For a review of these two, see David Halperin’s “A

HZ in English is in James Davila’s Hekhalot Literature in Translation.

Also in English, Christopher R. A. Morray-Jones offers “A Version of Hekhalot Zutarti” in The
above, 2009• Rowland/Morray-Jones), stating (pages 268-269),

The version of HekhZ that follows includes all of the material included by both Schäfer and Elior
(§§ 335-374 and 407-419) plus § 375 (included by Elior but not by Schäfer) and the Akiva ‘postscript’
(422-424). § 347 (Ms. Munich 40 only), where the copyist has mistakenly repeated the first words of §
337, is disregarded.

Owing to the redactional complexity of the HekhZ macroform, it cannot be claimed that this
version represents an ‘original’ or ‘authoritative’ text of HekhZ. Schäfer’s contention that no such
text ever existed is basically correct. It is therefore necessary to take account of the different sources
and layers of literary activity found in the manuscripts, including the distinctive literary tradition
represented by passages of Ms. New York. It can, however, be said that the materials included in this
version are the basic ingredients of the early HekhZ literary tradition, that they were amalgamated
with each other in something like this form during the early centuries of the common era, and that at
least some of the materials preserved in this collection must be very old indeed.

In Transparent Illusion, Morray-Jones’ analyzes in detail two sections of HZ: the “ancient midrash
… which includes the water vision episode” (§§ 407-412) in CHAPTER THREE, and the “throne
midrash” (§§ 368-375) in CHAPTER EIGHT, section 2.

Many important passages from HZ are translated and discussed in Halperin’s FACES and

References: AMM1,2, FACES, HMG, DESCENT, Ritual Practices, Scholem’s Jewish Gnosticism, and
• Arbel, Daphna. “Pure Marble Stones or Water? On Ecstatic Perception, Group Identity, and
Authority in Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature,” in Studies in Spirituality, Volume 16 (Kampen: Kok
Pharos, 2006), pages 21-38
• Saldarini, Anthony J. “Apocalypses and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Rabbinic Literature and Mysticism,” in
Semeia 14—outline of apocalyptic content in HZ, page 195.
• Swartz, Michael D. “Three-Dimensional Philology,” in Envisioning Judaism; analysis of an HZ mss. on
pages 545-549, and The Mechanics of Providence, CHAPTER 12.

13 Davila, in Hekhalot Literature…, page 38, 40, and 189, refers to §§ 489-495 simply as “an Aramaic magical handbook.”
C. *Sefer Hekhalot* [BOOK OF PALACES] = Hebrew Book of Enoch = 3 Enoch (3E) {§§ 1-80}

Translations (listed chronologically):


- Dan, Joseph. *The Heart and the Fountain*, CHAPTER 3: 3E CHAPTERS I-XVI.

- Lumpkin, Joseph B. *The Books of Enoch: The Complete Volume Containing 1 Enoch (The Ethiopic Book of Enoch), 2 Enoch (The Slavonic Book of Enoch), and 3 Enoch (The Hebrew Book of Enoch)* (Blountsville: Fifth Estate, 2010).

  The back cover of Lumpkin’s *Books of Enoch* claims that “[u]ntil now, the Hebrew Book of Enoch has not been available to the general public since 1928,” indicating no knowledge of either the 1973 Ktav reprint of Odeberg or Alexander’s translation within Charlesworth’s *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (1983), which contains all three “Books of Enoch” with full scholarly treatment, pages 5-315. In fact, Lumpkin’s version of 3E appears to be merely a slight reworking of Odeberg’s translation and notes.


References: AMM1-25, HMG, *Ritual Practices*, and the following articles by P. S. Alexander:


See also the following books and articles.


- ______. *Yabbeel and Metatron* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017); Chapter III “deal[s] extensively with the Hekhalot materials, and especially with Sefer Hekhalot” (—page 141).

- Saldarini, Anthony J. “Apocalypses and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Rabbinic Literature and Mysticism,” in *Semeia* 14; an outline of apocalyptic content in 3E (citations following Odeberg) appears on pages 192-193.
See above, 2006 • Paradise Now: articles by Rebecca Lesses and Daphna Arbel; and Schäfer’s Origins of Jewish Mysticism: § 3 Enoch (pages 315-327).

D. Merkabab Rabba [The Great Chariot] (MR) {§§ 655-708}

A complete MR in English is offered in Davila’s Hekhalot Literature in Translation. Some few paragraphs of MR are translated in

- APPENDIX ONE of Janowitz’ Poetics of Ascent {§§ 675-678}, noted above.
- Swartz’ Scholastic Magic {§§ 675-676, §§ 680-687}
- Cohen’s Shi’ur Qomah {§§ 688-708}; see below: F. Shi’ur Qomah.

We must then turn to Schäfer’s HMG, Kuyt's outline in DESCENT, and Lesses’ references in Ritual Practices.

Gruenwald’s chapter on MR in AMM_{1,2} begins with a description of material which may represent a sub-genre within hekhalot literature, namely, a portion of the Sar ba-Panim (ShP, PRINCE OF THE PRESENCE, or COUNTENANCE) {§§ 623-639}. Peter Schäfer treats ShP as an independent text in “Die Beschworung des Sar ba-panim: Kritische Edition und Übersetzung” (THE ADJURATION OF THE COUNTENANCE: CRITICAL EDITION AND TRANSLATION), originally published in Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge, vol. 6 (1978); reprinted in Schäfer’s Hekhalot-Studien. Of course, Schäfer’s translation is in German, but all is not lost. The same text has been put into English a number of times; refer to Section O, below.

Back to Gruenwald: Unlike AMM_{1}, AMM_{2} goes on to systematically describe the text, quoting it frequently. Indeed, the account of MR in AMM_{1} greatly improves on the parallel section of AMM_{2} and addresses the issues posed in Schäfer’s Hidden and Manifest God and in the article just mentioned from Hekhalot-Studien.

Refer also to Anthony J. Saldarini’s “Apocalypses and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Rabbinic Literature and Mysticism,” in Semeia 14, page 192, for an outline of apocalyptic in MR.

E. Ma’aseh Merkabah [Work of the Chariot] (MM) {§§ 544-596}

Translations:

- Dan, The Heart and the Fountain, CHAPTER 2:
  §§ 554-555 (= Janowitz’ Section 6; Swartz’ pages 231-233)
  §§ 583-586 (= Janowitz’ Sections 24-26; Swartz’ pages 242-243)
- Davila, Hekhalot Literature in Translation, translates §§ 544-596
- Janowitz, Naomi. The Poetics of Ascent, translates §§ 544-596
- _______. Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism, translates §§ 544-596
- _______. Scholastic Magic, translates §§ 571-578

References: Along with the five books listed under “Translations,” the last three of which offer a full analysis of the text, see AMM_{1,2}, HMG, Ritual Practices, and the following articles:


• _______. “Three-Dimensional Philology,” in Envisioning Judaism; analysis of MM MSS. on pages 542-545.

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

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

Translations:


• Morray-Jones, Christopher R. A. *The Body of Glory: Approaching the New Testament from the Perspective of Shi’ur Qomah Traditions*, which is Part III of *The Mystery of God* (see above, 2009)• Rowland/Morray-Jones

• Orlov, Andrei A. “The Watchers of Satanai [or Satanael]: The Fallen Angels Traditions in 2 (Slavonic) *Enoch*,” § III. THE TRANSITIONAL TEMPLATE AND ITS AFTERLIFE IN THE SHI’UR QOMAH AND HEKHALOT ACCOUNTS, in

• Saldarini, Anthony J. “Apocalypses and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Rabbinic Literature and Mysticism,” in *Semeia*, outline of apocalyptic content in SQ on page 196.


• Segol, Marla. “Israel’s Name at the Site of the Circumcision: Eros and Magic in the *Shiur Qomah*,” in *Societas Magica Newsletter*, Issue 33 (Societas Magica, Spring 2016), pp. 1-6.


Texts Associated with the Hekhalot Corpus

The texts listed in the following set (G-J) are those which are usually included in summaries and lists of hekhalot literature.

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

Translators:
• Halperin, David. FACES: Chapter VIII, § A.

References: The best source for information on RY is Halperin’s FACES. Refer also to Anthony J. Saldarini’s outline of the apocalyptic content in RY, following the Cairo Geniza text published by Gruenwald in Temirin I (Jerusalem: Kook, 1972), pages 101-139, in “Apocalypses and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Rabbinic Literature and Mysticism,” Semeia, page 195. Gruenwald provides a full description of RY in AMM1,2.

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

Gruenwald’s chapter (AMM1,2) on MH begins with these encouraging words: “Masekhet Hekhalot is the most frequently published Hekhalot text we have.” Alas, this comment reflects the state of the text in Hebrew, though there are two German translations: (i) by August Wunsche in Aus Israelis Lehrhallen III (1909); and (ii) by Klaus Herrmann, Massakhet Hekhalot: Edition, Übersetzung und Kommentar [TEXTEN UND STUDIEN ZUM ANTIKEN JUDENTUM, 39] (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebeck], 1994). There is also a French translation by Nicolas Sed within his “Deux documents sur la kabbale: Le Commentaire sur le Sepher Yesirah de Moise ben Nahman et le Traite des Heykalot,” in Documents oubliés sur l’alchimie, la kabbale et Guillaume Postel, offerts, a l’occasion de son 90e anniversaire, a François Secret par ses élèves et amis, “Scientific editor”: Sylvain Matton (Geneva: Librarie Droz, 2001).

Gruenwald’s chapter describes the contents of MH in some detail.

MH is listed in Anthony J. Saldarini’s “Apocalypses and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Rabbinic Literature and Mysticism,” in Semeia; an outline of MH’s apocalyptic content is on page 196.

James Davila did not include MH in Hekhalot Literature in Translation, stating that “it is doubtful that this text should be included in the Hekhalot corpus” (page 9).

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

In 1968-1969, Ithamar Gruenwald published (in Hebrew) “New Passages from Hekhalot Literature,” in Tarbiz, vol. 38, no. 4; these were the newly-discovered Geniza fragments. These were published subsequently in Peter Schäfer’s Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur (see note 7 above), and a selection has been put into English by James Davila, in Hekhalot Literature in Translation. See also Michael D. Swartz, The Mechanics of Providence, CHAPTER 16, for a fragment called “The Seal of the Merkavah.” (pp. 279-287).
Further see FACES, DESCENT, Ritual Practices, Swartz’ Scholastic Magic, and

- A paper by Gideon Bohak and Klaus Herrmann in Envisioning Judaism (pages 637-655) treats “Tefillat Rava Hammona Sava: Genizah Fragments and Medieval Manuscripts,” saying of the Tefillat,

In spite of its obvious connections with the Hekhalot literature, it happens not to be attested in any of the European manuscripts used by Peter Schäfer in his Synopsis zur Hekhalot Literatur, and has thus remained outside the scholarly limelight. (page 637)

J. Fragments on Physiognomy, Chiromancy, and Metoposcopy

A number of these fragments have been published by Gruenwald (in Tarbiz, vol. 40, 1970) and Scholem in Sefer Assaf (Jerusalem: 1953) [Hebrew]. One fragment is discussed and translated into German by Schäfer in “Ein neues Fragment zur Metopskopie und Chiromantik” (in Hekhalot-Studien). Not only is there next to nothing of these texts in English translation, but Gruenwald in AMM1.2 never really gets around to detailing their contents, though he does address the problems attending these shreds of texts.

Refer to
- Scholem’s article, “Chiromancy,” in Kabbalah.

The list of hekhalot texts up to this point contains all items listed by Scholem in Jewish Gnosticism (pages 5-7), plus the Genizah fragments, which Gruenwald includes in his account in AMM1.2. Gruenwald also addresses the following:

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

Translation:

References:
- AMM1, pages 225-234; AMM2, pages 255-263.


The following items are frequently associated with the bekhalot cluster:

I. Baraita de Ma’aseh Bereshit, OR Seder Rabbah di Bereshit [TEACHING ON THE WORK OF CREATION, or GREAT ORDER OF CREATION] (BMB) {§§ 428-467, §§ 743-820}

Translations:

• In David Meltzer’s Secret Garden, pages 3-20. This translation appears to have been done from the French of N. Sed: “Une cosmologie juive du haut moyen age: La Bêraita di Ma’aseh Béreshit,” in Revue des Etudes juives, vol. 123 (1964); also in Sed’s La mystique cosmologique juive (Paris: Éditions de l’École des hautes etudes en sciences sociales, 1981). Peter Schäfer points out (in a note to the article “In Heaven as It Is in Hell”—listed immediately below—page 233, note 4) that “Sed did not, however, have all the relevant manuscript evidence at his disposal.”


References:


M. Harba de Moshe [SWORD OF MOSES] (HdM) {§§ 598-622, §§ 640-650}

Translations:


References:

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

Translations (excerpts):


O. *Sar ha-Panim [PRINCE OF THE PRESENCE, or COUNTENANCE] (ShP) {§§ 623-639}*  

Translations:
• Michael Swartz in *Scholastic Magic* (described above, page 11) on pages 135-147.

Further, see
• Lesses, Rebecca. *Ritual Practices*, pages 190-203 and numerous other references, e.g., ShP is outlined and its contents analyzed in *Ritual Practices*, pages 415-17.

Refer to § D above (MR).

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

• Halperin’s FACES, pages 278-283.
• Saldarini, Anthony J. “Apocalypses and ‘Apocalyptic’ in Rabbinic Literature and Mysticism,” in Semeia; outline of apocalyptic content in TE, pages 196-197.

Q. Beraita d’Niddah [TEACHING OF THE MENSTRUANT] (BdN)

In Forsaken: The Menstruant in Medieval Jewish Mysticism (Waltham: Brandeis University Press: 2011), Sharon Faye Koren writes (page 36),

Saul Lieberman was the first scholar to associate the strict purity laws of the BdN with the legal philosophy formulated in Hekhalot literature, and Michael Stone [Scholastic Magic, pages 182-185] and Rebecca Lesses [Ritual Practices, pages 134-144] have noted a connection between the BdN and the ascetic rituals required for Sar Torah adjurations. I believe that there is an even stronger connection. The BdN not only informs the ascetic rituals in some Hekhalot texts but also independently reflects a mystical consciousness. The authors of traditions in the BdN, like the authors of Hekhalot literature, were trying to discover a viable spiritual solution to a Judaism without a Temple.

On all this, there is also Jennifer Brown’s “No Menstruating Mystics: The Intensification of Niddah Laws after the Destruction of the Second Temple and Their Application in the Hekhalot Literature,” in Axis Mundi, an online journal edited and maintained by Religious Studies graduate students at the University of Alberta (2005-2006—at https://sites.google.com/a/ualberta.ca/axis-mundi/ > ARCHIVES).

R. Sefer Zeb Sefer Toledot Adam [THIS BOOK OF THE HISTORY OF ADAM] (SZ)

SZ is a mystical midrash on Genesis from the Geonic period which includes passages on the celestial realm and physiognomy which are very close to passages in hekhalot literature, in particular 3 Enoch. Among the German Pietists, SZ was likely viewed as a text in the hekhalot corpus.


In Hekhalot Literature in Translation, James Davila includes a chapter on shorter hekhalot texts (“Some Shorter Macroforms”) which “may be counted as macroforms in their own right” (—Davila, page 350). These include

- The Chapter of Nebuniah ben HaQanah {§§ 307-314}, which has also been translated and analyzed by David Halperin in FACES (pages 378-380) and Michael Swartz in Scholastic Magic (pages 67-74), even previously by Davila in Descenders to the Chariot (pages 110-113), and translated by Rebecca Lesses in Ritual Practices (pages 412-415)
- The Great Seal—Fearsome Crown {§§ 318-321}
- The Ascent of Elisba ben Avuyah {§ 597}, also covered briefly by Halperin in FACES (page 410)
- Sar Panim {§§ 623-639, sources for which have been outlined above in Section O
- The Youth {§§ 384-400}, also treated elsewhere most significantly by
  - Davila in The Dead Sea Scrolls in their Historical Context, edited by T. Lim et al (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000), pages 249-264,
A Selection of Books & Articles


Himmelfarb, Martha. The Apocalypse: A Brief History [BLACKWELL BRIEF HISTORIES OF RELIGION SERIES] (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010); see especially CHAPTER 6, “Tours of Paradise and Hell and the Hekhalot Texts.”


“The articles in the ‘Heavenly Ascent’ section consider the relationship between the ascent apocalypses of the Second Temple period and later works involving heavenly ascent, particularly the hekhalot texts”—from the book description at the Mohr Siebeck website.


Smith, Morton. “Ascent to the Heavens and the Beginning of Christianity,” in


Stroumsa, Guy G. “Mystical Descents” in


Appendix 1:  
Jewish Magic

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

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

A “Jewish Magic Bibliography” which, at 134 pages, is far more extensive than mine here—and which is not limited to English sources—has been prepared by Alex Jassen, Mary Gates, and Jacob Rennaker, under the supervision of Scott Noegel of University of Washington [Seattle]—online at http://faculty.washington.edu/snoegel/JewishMagicBibliography.pdf

Works to 2010 are divided according to period and topic.

There is also a bibliography of “Practical Kabbalah” at http://kabbalah.fayelevine.com/biblio/biblio-standard.php

F. Levine, the apparent author of the PRACTICAL KABBALAH site, notes of this bibliography,

I select my sources very carefully, sticking as exclusively as possible with translations of original material and works by noted Judaic scholars (fiction excepted). In order to truly understand this complex tradition, I strongly suggest you stay away from certain 19th-century occult and 20th century-to-current “New Age” interpretations, as well as titles which mix Kabbalah with other religious, mystical and occult genres. For a quick point of reference, examine how “Kabbalah” is spelled; with only a couple of exceptions in my experience, purely Judaic sources spell the word with a “K”, not a “Q” or a “C.” Also check a book's bibliography: Does it have one? If so, are the sources peer-reviewed journals, original texts, and academic books spanning a significant period of time?

You will not find any information here about the Hermetic Order, the Society of the Golden Dawn, Christian Kabbalah, Freemasonry, etc.

At this site, see Levine’s article, “Why Practical Kabbalah Isn’t Considered ‘Magic.’”

The bibliography below does not include works on the Christian Raziel traditions or Solomonic grimoires. On these see Sepher Raziel – Liber Salomonis: A Sixteenth-Century English Grimoire, edited by Don Karr and Stephen Skinner (Singapore: Golden Hoard Press, 2010): Skinner’s excellent foreword on the various Raziel traditions (pages 13-23) and my survey of printed works in English on Solomonic magic (page 25-42); the latter is also online at Colin Low’s Hermetic Kabbalah: http://www.digital-brilliance.com/contributed/Karr/Solomon/index.php
Jewish Magic—A Selection of Sources in English

Titles in **bold type** are noted as principal works or collections on Jewish magic.


Bohak, Gideon; and Herrmann, Klaus. “‘Tefillat Ravn Hamnuna Sava: Genizah Fragments and Medieval Manuscripts’


- VOLUME 1, pages 288-337, “The Sword of Moses”
- VOLUME 1, pages 338-355, “Wisdom of the Chaldeans”
- VOLUME 1, pages 365-368, “A Note on a Hebrew Amulet”
- VOLUME 1, pages 387-461, “Samaritan Phylacteries and Amulets”
- VOLUME 2, pages 1005-1038, “Two Thousand Years of a Charm against a Child-Stealing Witch”


Goldmerstein, L. “Magical Sacrifices in the Jewish Kabbala,” in Folklore 7 (London: The Folklore Society, 1896); includes a translated extract of Sefer Raziel Hamalakah.


Hirschman, Jack. The Book of Noah [TREE TEXTS: 1] (Berkeley: Berkeley/Tree, 1975); selections, including two hymns, from Sefer Raziel.


Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia: “May These Curses Go Out and Flee” (Leiden – Boston: Brill, 2013).


Smith, Morton. “The Jewish Elements in the Magical Papyri,” in
• Society of Biblical Literature 1986 Seminar Papers, no. 25; and
• (idem) Studies in the Cult of Yahweh, Volume 2 (see above)
Societas Magica Newsletter, Issue 10, Spring 2003: JEWISH MAGIC: A PERSPECTIVES SYMPOSIUM (online at http://www.societasmagica.org/), which contains the following articles:
• Kanarfogel, Ephraim. “Magic in the Rabbinic Culture of Medieval Ashkenaz”
• Lesses, Rebecca. “Jewish Magic and Multiculturalism in the Ancient World”
• Schwartz, Michael D. “A Magic All Its Own”
____________. Issue 19, Spring 2008 (online at http://www.societasmagica.org/), which contains


Vukosavović, Filip. Angels and Demons: Jewish Magic through the Ages (Jerusalem: Bible Lands Museum, 2010).


APPENDIX 2

Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur

In Zusammenarbeit mit Margarete Schlüter und Georg von Mutius

herausgegeben von Peter Schäfer

[Text und Studien zum antiken Judentum herausgegeben von Martin Hengel und Peter Schäfer 2]

(Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1981)

Of the “Textcorpus” in *Synopse*, the first five “undisputedly belong to the Hekhalot literature” (Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, page 7):

1. Hekhalot Rabbati (including Sar Torah)
2. Hekhalot Zutrati or Zutreti
3. Ma’aseh Merkavah
4. Merkavah Rabba
5. 3 Henoch (3 Enoch), also called Sefer Hekhalot
6. Shi’ur Qomah
7. Seder Rabbi deBere’shit, also called Baraita de Ma’aseh Beresbit
8. Harba deMoshe

Not contained in the *Synopse* manuscripts but counted as affiliated with the Hekhalot literature are

9. Re’uyyot Yehezqel
10. Hekhalot fragments
11. Masekhet Hekhalot
12. Sefer ha-Razim
13. Physiognomic fragments
14. Pereq Shirah

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Appendix 3

[THE 1982 VERSION OF]

Notes on the Study of Merkabah Mysticism
and Hekhalot Literature

pages 37-40

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

1. Merkabah mysticism is the name of a mystical movement within Judaism’s Talmudic and Gaonic Periods (ca. 100-1000 C.E.). This school produced what is called the Hekhalot literature.

2. This mysticism, ma’aseh merkabah (work of the chariot), is mentioned in the Mishna itself (in Hagigah 2:1):

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

   (quoted from Lipman, Eugene. THE MISHNAH, ORAL TEACHING OF JUDAISM. [New York:] Schocken, 1974, page 150)

3. Implied in this quote is that merkabah mysticism, though guarded, was not outside of the rabbinic tradition. One gets the impression that it was even thought of as the supreme mystery.

4. Just as the work of creation comprised mystical speculation on the first part of Genesis, work of the chariot comprised mystical speculation on, and amplification of, the first chapter of Ezekiel.

5. The literature of this school describes the mystical journey through various heavens and palaces (hekhalot) leading to the ultimate vision of the throne and chariot, and, in some cases, “the figure in the form of a man” (Ezekiel 1:26).

6. It is not the purpose of this short paper to go into detail about the development of the merkabah school or the contents of the Hekhalot texts. To a greater extent than I am capable, this work has already been done. My purpose is to inform the reader of where to look for information on the various facets of study pertaining to merkabah mysticism. I have limited myself to English sources.

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

MAJOR TRENDS IN JEWISH MYSTICISM (1941, Schocken repr.) Lecture

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

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

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

KABBALAH (as above), articles:
Meditation, pages 369-72.
Metatron, pages 377-81.

[Add to these

Gruenwald, Ithamar. APOCALYPTIC AND MERKAVAH MYSTICISM (1980, E.
J. Brill).

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

[Bokser, Ben Zion. THE JEWISH MYSTICAL TRADITION 1981 Pilgrim
Talmudic “work of the chariot” segments are translated and
introduced.]

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

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

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

9. In JEWISH GNOSTICISM… Scholem lists eight texts belonging to the
Hekhalot literature. I shall list them here, adding one (Shiur
Qoma), indicating research sources, if any exist:

2
a) The Visions of Ezekiel, a mystical midrash on Ezekiel 1:1, see:

Jacobs, Louis. JEWISH MYSTICAL TESTIMONIES (1977, Schocken) 
Chapter Three: The Riders of the Chariot and Those Who Enter the Heavenly Halls. Introduction and text of Visions...


b) The Lesser Hekhalot, possibly the oldest. In English, there are only spot translations in Scholem’s JEWISH GNOSTICISM... and MAJOR TRENDS...

c) The Greater Hekhalot, the best covered of the texts for our purposes. Besides spot translations (see Scholem as listed in b) there are


[Kaplan, Aryeh. MEDITATION AND KABBALAH. (1982, Weiser) pages 41-54. Kaplan introduces the Greater Hekhalot and translates Chapters 1, 2, and 16-26.]

In Hekhalot Rabbati, R. Nehuniah is pulled out of his ecstasy by his disciples by making him ever-so-slightly ritually impure. This tale is given scholarly treatment in Schiffman’s article.

Smith, Morton. Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati, in BIBLICAL AND OTHER STUDIES, ed. A. Altmann (Harvard U. Press, 1963). This [article] summarizes and analyzes the contents [of Hekhalot Rabbati], presenting a translated excerpt of The Great Magical Papyrus of Paris for the sake of comparison. (M. Smith has translated The Greater Hekhalot in its entirety, but it has not been published. Indeed, it exists, as far as I know, in typescript, with corrections jotted in the margins and scribbled over the text by Gershom Scholem.)

d) Merkabah Rabbah. I know of no English sources for this.

e) A titleless Hekhalot. Scholem gives a transcription of this text in Hebrew in an appendix to JEWISH GNOSTICISM..., but I know of no other sources for information on this.

f) Chapter on physiognomics and chiromancy, published in Hebrew by Scholem, but no English translation. See, however, Scholem’s article: “Chiromancy” in KABBALAH.
g) Book of the Hekhalot, called also 3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch. One of the latest of the texts. Full scholarly treatment and translation of this appear in

Odeberg, Hugo. 3 ENOCH or THE HEBREW BOOK OF Enoch (1928, Ktav repr. [1973])

h) The Treatise of the Hekhalot, the latest of the texts. Published, and translated into German, but not into English.

i) Shiur Qoma, a strange treatise listing the dimensions and secret names of the deity’s various members. See


For scholarly studies on Shiur Qoma, see

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

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

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


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