

*The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch*¹

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The Jewish Hekhaloth-Merkabah texts can hardly be described as the world's greatest literature. They have, indeed, their flashes of inspiration, but in the end their verbosity, their tiresome repetitions and bizarre ideas leave the reader dulled and stupefied rather than elevated or enlightened. The question of their literary merit must not, however, be confused with that of their historical worth. From a literary point of view these works may not rate high, but to the historian concerned with Rabbinic ideas about God and the world, or with the structure of the Jewish religious community in the Talmudic period, or with the origins of the mediaeval Kabbalah, they constitute an exceedingly valuable body of evidence which he cannot afford to ignore.

The present essay deals primarily with one of the Hekhaloth-Merkabah texts, the so-called Hebrew Book of Enoch or 3 Enoch,² and its aim is to put this work into its historical setting. "Historical setting" may be taken as defined by the following questions: (1) Firstly, when and where was 3 Enoch written? (2) Secondly, what sort of literature is it? In the language of form-criticism, What is its *Sitz-im-Leben*? (3) Thirdly, where do its teachings stand on the spectrum of Rabbinic thought? Are they "orthodox", "fringe" or "heretical"?

1. *The Date and Provenance of 3 Enoch*

The most fundamental of these questions is that concerning the date. It is a highly complex question because of the literary character of 3 Enoch. In the first place we have to reckon with the fact that the precise extent and contents of 3 Enoch are problematic; the manuscripts and printed editions differ widely on what properly belongs to the work. Odeberg assumed that Bodleian ms 1656/2, the longest recension, is closest to the original, and that the shorter recensions are abridgements of it, but this is far from certain. An inspection of the textual tradition shows that chapters 3 — 15/16, which describe the elevation of Enoch, circulated as an independent tract (cf. e.g. Bodleian ms

¹ Based on a paper read at the first conference of the British Association for Jewish Studies, Oxford, July 1975.

² The standard edition is by Hugo Odeberg, *3 Enoch* (1928); reprinted by Ktav 1973, with a useful Prolegomenon by Jonas C. Greenfield. This edition must always be used in conjunction with the writings of Scholem, especially his *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (Schocken 1965); *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (2nd ed. 1965); "Merkabah Mysticism", *Enc. Jud.* 11, cols 1386 — 1389.

1748/2 and *Derush Pirke Hekhaloth*), and it is intrinsically probable that these chapters formed the core round which the longer recensions grew.³

Secondly, we must face the problem of the internal structure of the work: whichever form of the text we choose will prove on analysis to be composite. If, for example, we take Bodleian ms 1656/2 and excise from it certain obvious accretions (e.g. chaps 23-24 and 48BCD) we are left with a work which superficially has a clearly defined schema. Chaps 1-3 are introductory and describe how R. Ishmael ascends to heaven to "behold the vision of the Merkabah", and how he is taken under the protection of the angel Metatron. He questions Metatron who describes (chaps 4-16) how he was formerly Enoch the son of Jared, but was caught up to heaven and metamorphosed into an archangel. Then Metatron discourses to Ishmael on the organization and activities of the heavenly world (chaps 17-40). Finally, he takes Ishmael on a guided tour of the sights of heaven (chaps 41-48). All this orderliness vanishes, however, on closer inspection, and it becomes clear that the book is made up of many diverse and sometimes contradictory units of tradition. The more one analyses it, the more it breaks into fragments. Thus at one point the redactor has tacked loosely together three originally independent angelological systems (i. chap. 17; ii. chap. 18; iii. chaps 19-22, 25-29). Even in the section on the elevation of Enoch (3-15/16), which forms the kernel of the work and runs more smoothly than any other part of it, no less than three separate accounts of the taking up of Enoch have been conflated (cf. 4:2-10; 6; 7).

Odeberg, though well aware of the composite nature of 3 Enoch, failed to grasp the serious implications of this fact for the problem of dating. Since the work is built up of a number of discrete units of material, it follows that to date an isolated element in it is not necessarily to date the work as a whole: we may only have discovered the date of the small unit of material in which the element is found. From the point of view of Bodleian ms 1656/2, for example, at least three things are involved in the dating: (1) firstly, the time when each separate unit of tradition originated; (2) secondly, the date when these separate units were combined in the original form of the text; (as an added

³ Important manuscripts of 3 Enoch are: OXFORD, Bodleian 1656/2; 1748/2; 2257/4; MUNICH, Staatsbibliothek 40/10; ROME, Vatican 228/4; Casanatense 180/5; FIRENZE, Laurenziana 44/13 (18). The bibliography of the printed editions of 3 Enoch is in great confusion.

(1) The oldest printed text that I know is *Derush Pirke Hekhaloth*, a copy of which is in the Oppenheimer collection at the Bodleian. Steinschneider, *Cat. Bod.* col. 534 no. 3458 marks it as "saec. XVII?"; Cowley, *Cat. Printed Books Bod.* p.241 suggests, "Prag? c.1650?". (2) Jellinek, *Kuntres ha-maggid* (1878) p.31 states that *Sefer Hekhaloth* (= 3 Enoch) was printed in 1864 at Lvov and reprinted at Warsaw in 1875. Copies of what appear to be the Warsaw printing, without date or place of publication indicated, are in the Bodleian (Cowley, *Cat.* p.241, "*Sefer Hekhaloth*... Poland c.1820?") and the British Museum (Zedner, *Cat.* p.387, "*Sefer Hekhaloth*... Zolkiew? 1800?"). The Warsaw edition was in turn reprinted at Piotrkow in 1883 (*BM Supplementary Cat.*) (3) S. Mussajoff, *Merkabah Shelemah* (1922) fols 8bif gives a valuable text. (4) Other printed editions are: Jellinek, *Beth ha-Midrash V* (1872), pp. 170-190 (based on Munich ms 40/10); reprinted in Eisenstein *Ozar Midrashim* (1915) pp. 285-293; and Odeberg, *3 Enoch* (1928), based on Bodleian ms 1656/2.

complication it must be remembered that this combining did not take place all at once, and so the date here marks the culmination of a process involving several earlier stages); (3) thirdly, the date or dates when this original form of the text acquired its additions (mainly chaps 23-24 and 48BCD). An investigation of all these points is beyond the scope of the present inquiry. We shall confine our attention to 3 Enoch 3-15/16, the original core of the work, and attempt to date that.

For a *terminus ad quem* for these chapters we turn to the Karaite Jacob al-Kirkisani's *Kitab al-anwar wal-maraḳib* I 4.2 (Nemoy I p.31, 15ff). In the course of a bitter attack on the doctrine of Metatron⁴ Kirkisani quotes from an "Alphabet of Akiba". His quotation can be found in the current A-recension of the Alphabet (Wertheimer, *BM* II p.351.22 and p. 352,6 = 3 Enoch 48C: 2,5):⁵

Alphabet of Akiba

I took him — Enoch the son of Jared from their midst, and I brought him up . . . to the height . . . I increased above every height his stature in the midst of those that are tall of stature by seventy thousand parasangs. I magnified his throne from the majesty of my Throne, and I increased his honour from the glory of my honour.

Kirkisani

They (i.e. the Rabbanites) say in the Alphabet of Akiba that the Creator, may he be honoured and extolled, said: "I took Enoch the son of Jared and I elevated over you the height of his stature in the midst of all those who are tall of stature, and by seventy thousand parasangs I made his throne greater than my Throne, and I increased his honour more than my honour."

Kirkisani's citation is conclusive proof that the account of the elevation of Enoch in the current A-recension of the Alphabet of Akiba formed part of the Alphabet in his day.

This Alphabet account of Enoch's elevation is very closely related to the account in 3 Enoch 3-15. It appears, in fact, to be a summary of it. The Alphabet can hardly be the original source of this material, for an author presenting these ideas for the first time would hardly have chosen to cast them in the tortuous alphabetic form. There are, indeed, differences between the two accounts, the most substantial of them being that the Alphabet gives a long list of the names of Metatron, whereas 3 Enoch 3 — 15 does not.

⁴ For other objections to Metatron, see Judah Hadassi, *'Eshkol ha-kofer* (Eupatoria) chap. 30; Mas'udi, *Kitab murudj al-dhahab* XXXI (Meynard-Courteille II p.391); Ibn ḥazm, *Kitab al-fisal* I pp.223-4.

⁵ Kirkisani translates the quotation from the Alphabet into Arabic. The concluding sentence runs in Hebrew, גידלתי כסאו מהדר כסא והרבתי כבודו מהדר כבודי. Because it suited his case, Kirkisani took both instances of כן here as comparative. Kirkisani's "over you" stands against על כל in Wertheimer's text (which is translated above), but note the Hebrew variant עליכם.

However, it should be observed that there is a hiatus at 3 Enoch 4:1 in the extant manuscripts and editions. Ishmael there asks about Metatron's seventy names but receives no answer; the seventy names have probably been edited out of the text. The other differences between the two texts are very minor when set beside their large measure of agreement. They are not such as to endanger the conclusion that the short account of Enoch's translation in the Alphabet of Akiba is based on the fuller version in 3 Enoch 3-15.⁶ Since Kirkisani attests the existence of this short account c.AD 900, the longer account must be earlier still; and so we arrive at c.AD 850 as a definite *terminus ad quem* for 3 Enoch 3-15.

A *terminus post quem* emerges from an analysis of the figure of Metatron. Metatron⁷ in 3 Enoch is a highly complex entity, but he has obviously two main components, (a) Enoch and (b) the archangel Metatron. These two figures originally had nothing to do with each other; there are texts which speak in detail of Enoch's translation but know nothing of Metatron, while there are other texts which mention the angel Metatron without linking him with Enoch. The Metatron of 3 Enoch marks the confluence of two initially quite independent streams of tradition.

(a) *Enoch*

In 3 Enoch 4:3 Metatron informs R. Ishmael, "I am Enoch the son of Jared. When the generation of the Flood sinned . . . the Holy One, blessed be He, removed me from their midst to be a witness against them in the high heavens". Implicit here is a midrash of Gen. 5:24, "Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him". The view that Enoch was caught up to heaven or Paradise without dying is the root of the rich pseudepigraphic Enoch traditions and is as old as Jubilees 4:23. Pseudepigraphic Enoch has many similarities to the Enoch-Metatron of 3 Enoch: he is a wise man and a revealer of heavenly wisdom. The description of his translation in three passages of the pseudepigrapha is especially noteworthy.

⁶ There are a number of ways in which these differences could be explained. The original summary in the Alphabet could have received some later additions; or the summarizer may have drawn some material from sources other than 3 Enoch 3-15; or else the differences may have arisen simply through the process of shortening. It is interesting that the short account of the Alphabet contains no allusion to the humbling of Metatron (3 Enoch 16). It should also be observed that there is a presumption that in the text summarized by the Alphabet the "Elevation of Enoch" was attributed, not to Ishmael (as in 3 Enoch), but to Akiba: hence its inclusion in the Alphabet of Akiba. For the differences between the two accounts see Odeberg, *3 Enoch* pp. 81-84.

⁷ On Metatron see Odeberg, *3 Enoch* (1928), pp. 79-146; idem, "Föreställningarna om Metatron i äldre judisk mystik," *Kyrkohistorisk Arsskrift* 27 (1927) pp. 1-20; idem, "Enoch", *TDNT* II pp. 556-560; Scholem, *Gnosticism*, pp. 42-55; idem, "Metatron", *Enc.Jud.* 11, cols 1443-1446; R. Margalioth, *Mal'akhe 'Elyon* (1945) pp. 73-108. The following add little or nothing to these: C. Kaplan, "The Angel of Peace, Uriel-Metatron", *Anglican Theol. Rev.* 13 (1931) pp. 306-313; H. Bietenhard, *Die himmlische Welt* (1951), pp. 143-160; M. Black, "The Origin of the Name Metatron" *VT* 1 (1951) pp. 217-219; A. Murtonen, "The Figure of Metatron" *VT* 3 (1953) pp. 409-411; E. Urbach, *Pirḳe 'Emunoth we-De'oth* (1969) pp. 118ff.

1. In Eth. Enoch 70-71 translated Enoch appears to be identified with the Son of Man. 70:1 is unclear; it could be taken to mean simply that Enoch was carried up to the presence of "that Son of Man"; but 71:14,16 is quite unambiguous; Enoch is there directly addressed as the Son of Man: "Thou art the Son of Man who art born unto righteousness".⁸ The Son of Man in the Similitudes is evidently some kind of heavenly being, but distinct from the angels. There may be an implication that in becoming Son of Man the human Enoch went through some kind of physical transformation.⁹

2. Eth. Ascension of Isaiah 9:9. Isaiah sees in the seventh heaven "... Enoch and all who were with him, stripped of their garments of the flesh and clothed in the garments of the upper world, and they were like angels, standing there in great glory". The theme of transformation is quite explicit here but its import is far from clear. Enoch is classified with the righteous dead, in a group distinct from the angels. The "garments of the upper world" must designate some kind of spiritual body which the righteous assume in heaven.

3. Slav. Enoch 22:8 (= Vaillant 9 end):

"And the Lord said to Michael: Take Enoch and strip him of his earthly garments and anoint him with the holy oil, and clothe him in garments of glory. And Michael stripped me of my garments and anointed me with the holy oil... And I looked at myself, and I was as one of the glorious ones, and there was no difference".

The idea of transformation becomes very emphatic in this text. Odeberg (3 Enoch p.55) actually takes this passage to mean that Enoch was changed into an angel of the Divine Presence, but a less dramatic interpretation, along the lines of that suggested for the parallel in Ascension of Isaiah 9:9, is much more probable.

The similarities between these texts (particularly Slav. Enoch 22:8ff) and the account of Enoch's elevation in 3 Enoch are impressive. There can be no reasonable doubt that an evolution of the figure of Enoch like that in the pseudepigrapha lies behind 3 Enoch 3-15. If such a development had not taken place Enoch could never have been identified with the archangel Metatron. We must postulate in consequence an historical link between the Hekhaloth mystics and the circles which generated these pseudepigraphic Enoch traditions.

Certain important differences between the Enoch of 3 Enoch and of the pseudepigrapha should not, however, be ignored. The celestial being into whom Enoch is transformed in the pseudepigrapha does not belong to the

⁸ Charles. *APOT II* p.237, translates in the 3rd person: "This is the Son of Man etc.", but such a rendering is impossible.

⁹ This is not explicitly stated at 71:11, as some have thought. Erik Sjöberg, *Der Menschensohn im äthiopischen Henochbuch* (1946) argues at length the thesis that "tatsächlich erhält Henoch... dieselbe zentrale Stellung in der himmlischen Welt wie sonst der Menschensohn" (pp. 147-189).

ranks of the angels, whereas Metatron is unquestionably an angel (see 6:1). Moreover, the vagueness with which the theme of Enoch's metamorphosis is treated in the pseudepigrapha stands in sharp contrast to the minute, step-by-step description in 3 Enoch. However, the very lack of precision in the language of the pseudepigrapha is suggestive. If the Hekhaloth mystics received Enoch traditions like those in Slav. Enoch 22, they could easily have interpreted them to mean that Enoch was changed into an archangel.

(b) *Metatron*

The Metatron side of the composite Enoch-Metatron figure is itself compounded of diverse elements. This is clear from an analysis of Metatron's names, three of which are particularly important.

1. YAHOEL. In 3 Enoch 48D:1 the first two names given to Metatron are, "Yahoel YAH" and "Yahoel". An angel by the name of Yahoel, quite independent of Metatron, occurs in other texts. He is found in the second heaven in *Sefer harazim* (Margalioth 2,38; 2,140), and appears as the "archangel Joel" in the Slavonic versions of the *Vita Adae et Evae* 32:1-2 (APOT II p.134) and *Apoc. Mosis* 43:4 (APOT II p.154). It is possible that the name "Yophiel", found among the names of Metatron in 3 Enoch 48D:1 and borne by an independent angel elsewhere (e.g. Ps-J Deut. 34:6), is simply a variation of Yahoel, if, as Ludwig Blau suggested (*Das altjüdische Zauberwesen* (2nd ed. 1914) p. 131), יוֹפִי was used as a surrogate for the Tetragram. The most significant reference to the name is in Slavonic *Apoc. Abraham* 10. There Abraham's heavenly guide announces: "I am called Jaoel by Him who moveth that which existeth with me on the seventh expanse upon the firmament, a power in virtue of the ineffable Name dwelling in me". Jaoel (= Yahoel) in this text has several important points of comparison with Metatron. His relationship to Abraham is the same as Metatron's to Ishmael: he is his guide, protector and illuminator. Like Metatron (3 Enoch 12:5; b.Sanh. 38b) he is identified with the angel of YHWH in whom God's name resides (Exod. 23:20-21). It should be carefully noted that in *Apoc. Mosis* 29:4 (APOT II p.148) and *Apoc. Abraham* 17 "Jael/Jaoel" is employed in direct address to God himself. This divine title is not attested either in the Bible or the liturgy (further below). Thus it appears that Metatron in 3 Enoch has absorbed the originally independent angel Yahoel.

2. THE LESSER YHWH. 3 Enoch 12:5 states that when God took Enoch into heaven He called him "The Lesser YHWH (ה' הקטן) in the presence of all his heavenly household (*familia*), as it is written, For my name is in him". Cf. also 3 Enoch 48C:7 and 48D:1. Among the names of God in the A-recension of the Alphabet of Akiba (Wertheimer *BM II* p.351 note 25) the corresponding title "Greater YHWH (ה' הגדול)" occurs. These titles "Greater YHWH" and "Lesser YHWH" functioned independently of the

Metatron traditions. Thus we encounter "The Great Jao" and "The Little Jao" in the third century Christian Gnostic work *Pistis Sophia*, and in the Gnostic *Book of Jeu*.¹⁰ In the Syriac *Gannat Bussame* we find listed among deities worshipped by unbelievers, "Adonai katon, the general of Adonai gadol, who are revered by the Israelites". The *Gannat Bussame* is probably from the tenth century, but the list where this occurs is pre-Islamic.¹¹ It is possible, as Scholem has suggested (*Enc. Jud.* 11, col. 1444), that the name *Iurba* borne in Mandean texts by a sun-spirit identified with Adonai, the keeper of purgatory, was in origin JU + RABBA. The title "Lesser YHWH" probably arose, like the name "Yahoel", in connection with speculation about the Angel of YHWH (note 3 Enoch 12:5 etc.). Indeed, it may be that "Lesser YHWH" was originally a designation for Yahoel, though Yahoel is never explicitly so called in any of our sources.

3. METATRON. Finally, there is the name Metatron itself. Odeberg (3 *Enoch* pp. 142ff) suggests the etymology (ὁ) μετὰ θρόνον, "the Throne next to the (Divine) Throne" or "the second Throne", and argues that the name must have originated in a system of world-ruling archons, in which it would have designated the chief archon standing closest to the highest God. This is rather speculative; the etymology on which it depends is, at best, only possible, and fails to account for the common, early variant מיטטרון. There may be no more point in looking for a rational meaning for this name than for the other *mysticae voces*, such as *Adiriron* or *Dafdafiron*, with which the Hekhaloth-Merkabah texts abound. A proper estimate of Metatron must begin with the fact that he bears a striking resemblance to the archangel Michael. Both these angels stand in a peculiar relationship to Israel as Israel's special heavenly advocate; both are High Priest of the heavenly tabernacle;¹² both are chief of the angels; what is said in one text about Metatron is said in another about Michael, and *Metatron* appears as a manuscript variant for *Michael*.¹³ In one crucially important text, the *Re'uyoth Yehezkel*,¹⁴ Metatron is found as a secret name of Michael. Scholem (*Gnosticism* pp.

¹⁰ "Great Jao", *Pistis Sophia* 86 (Schmidt-Till GCS 2nd ed. 1954, p. 126,14); 140 (214,13); *Book of Jeu* 50 (316,14). "The Little Jao", *Pistis Sophia* 7,8 (7,35; 8,11).

¹¹ Bidez-Cumont, *Les Mages Hellénisés* II (1938) p.115.

¹² 11QMelch describes Melchizedek as an exalted, heavenly being. In view of his priestly role in the Bible he may have been regarded at Qumran as the High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary, and possibly identified with Michael, to whom that office is assigned in Rabbinic texts (b. Hag. 12b); see A.S. van der Woude, "Melchisedek als himmlische Erlösergestalt", *Quätestamentische Studien* 14 (1965), pp. 354-373. *Yalqut hadash*. Mal'akhim no. 19 (Warsaw (1879) p.122) certainly makes this equation: מיכאל נקרא מלכי צדק . . . כהן לאל עליון שהוא כהן שלמעלה. However, 11QMelch is too fragmentary to admit of any certainty.

¹³ Cf. b. Sanh. 38b (Metatron) with Ps-J Exod. 24:1 (Michael); Tanh. *Wa-'ethhanan* 6 (ed. Buber 7a) (Metatron) with Mid. Mishle to 14:34 (ed. Buber 39b) (Michael v.l. Metatron). Further, G.F. Moore, "Intermediaries in Jewish Theology", *HTR* 15 (1922) pp. 72ff.

¹⁴ New edition by Ithamar Gruenwald in *Temirin: Texts and Studies in Kabbala and Hasidism*, ed. I Weinstock, I (1972) pp. 101-139.

44-45) assigns this short work to the fourth century AD. It is patently composite and as a whole can hardly be as old as that, but the latter half, which reports the views of certain fourth century Palestinian masters about the seven heavens and their contents, is almost certainly of that date. Under the third heaven, called *Zebul* in this text, we find the following entry (Gruenwald p.128,71 ff);

"What is there in Zebul? R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama bar 'Ukba, who said in the name of R. Yoḥanan: The Prince dwells nowhere but in Zebul . . . And what is his name? *Kimos* is his name. R. Isaac said, *Me'atah* is his name. R. 'Inyanei bar Sisson said, *Bizbul* is his name. R. Tanḥum the elder said, *'Aṭayyah* is his name. Eleazar Nadwadaya said, *Miṭatron*, like the name of the Power. Those who make use of the Name say, *Ḳas Bas Bas Ḳebas* is his name, like the name of the Creator of the world."

There can be no doubt, as Jacob Mann pointed out (*Ha-zofeh le-hokhmah Yisra'el* 5 (1921) p.251, n.5), that the anonymous "Prince" here is Michael (cf. b. Meg. 12b), and so *Miṭatron*, *'Aṭayyah*, *Kimos* etc., are all his mystical names. Thus the similarities between Metatron and Michael stand explained: Metatron and Michael were originally one and the same; *Michael* was the angel's common, exoteric name, *Metatron* one of his esoteric names. Metatron and Michael are not identified in any of the Hekhaloth-Merkabah texts. In 3 Enoch 17 Michael is listed separately as the Prince in charge of the seventh heaven. At some point, therefore, the original connection between Metatron and Michael must have been obscured, and Metatron developed as an independent angel, though he carried with him many of the attributes of Michael. This analysis of Metatron's development helps to account for the curious fact that in all the comprehensive angelological systems in Hekhaloth literature, including the three in Hebrew Enoch itself, there is no proper place for Metatron. He would not have needed one, of course, until he had diverged from Michael. This must have been a comparatively late development which took place after these systems had been formed.

In summary, then, it appears that Metatron in 3 Enoch embodies three major and originally independent figures — Enoch, Yahoel/Lesser YHWH and Michael/Metatron. We can only speculate how and why these figures were combined, but it is a fair guess that Enoch, Yahoel and Metatron grew independently to be so similar in the heavenly hierarchy that some circle or circles that were recipients of all three traditions could not resist the urge to simplify matters by fusing all three figures into one.

The latest element of the Enoch-Metatron conglomerate to emerge was undoubtedly Metatron. This name is unknown to the pseudepigrapha or to Tannaitic literature. *Sifre Deut.* 32:49 (338) has nothing to do with Metatron, contrary to what Odeberg (3 *Enoch* pp. 91-92) thinks.¹⁵ Metatron is

¹⁵ Finkelstein (*Siphre ad Deuteronomium* (1939) p.388) gives the best text:

mentioned only in the later midrashim (Lam. R. Proem. 24; Num. R. 12:12) and in late strata of Targum Ps-J. (to Gen. 5:24; Deut. 34:6). The one dated reference to him in the Talmud, b.Sanh. 38b, is attributed to a mid-fourth century Babylonian master. The earliest occurrence is probably in the fourth century *Re'uyoth Yehezkel*, in which Metatron has still not diverged from Michael.

By the mid-fourth century Metatron/Michael may have already absorbed Yahoel/Lesser YHWH, if Scholem is right in maintaining that Rab Idi's remark in b.Sanh. 38b that Metatron's name is "similar to that of his Master" is "incomprehensible except when it is understood to refer to the name Jahoel" (*Gnosticism* p.41). This explanation, however, like the traditional one that *Metatron* by gematria is the same as *Shaddai* (Rashi to Exod. 23: 21), is too rationalistic. It can hardly account for the parallels in the *Re'uyoth Yehezkel*, "*Mitatron*, like the name of the Power . . . *Qas Bas Bas Qebas* . . . like the name of the Creator of the world". The natural sense of the words is quite simply that *Metatron* was also a name of God. 3 Enoch 48D:1 (cf. 3:2) asserts that the Holy One took seventy of his own names and put them on Metatron. In *Apoc. Abraham* we have already noted the parallel phenomenon of *Jaol* being used to designate both God himself and an archangel. In a Jewish incantation text (discussed below) we find Metatron's names *Yahoel* and *Yophiel*, and possibly even *Metatron* itself, applied to God.

It is not clear when Metatron absorbed the Enoch traditions. In an unattributed stratum of the Babli (b.Hag. 15a) it is stated that "permission was granted to Metatron to sit and write down the merits of Israel". This scribing role of Metatron may have been taken over from the Enoch traditions which portray Enoch as the heavenly scribe (Jubilees 4:23; Ps-J Gen. 5:24). It is intrinsically unlikely that Metatron absorbed Enoch till he had diverged from Michael. The problems of equating a long-established angelic figure such as Michael with Enoch would have been very formidable.

In the fourth century Metatron was still identified with Michael. We must allow some time to elapse for him to diverge from Michael and to take in the Enoch traditions. We can posit, therefore, c.AD 450 as a reasonably firm *terminus post quem* for the emergence of the full-blown Enoch-Metatron of 3 Enoch, though we must bear in mind that he marks the culmination of a

מטטרון על הקדוש ברוך הוא היא היתה. לו מטטרון למשה וגי' מטטרון is a corruption of מיטטור, from Latin *metator*, probably via the Greek loanword *μηττωρ* (note the form *μηττωρ* in the papyri). By etymology a *metator* is "one who measures". In military parlance it designated the officer responsible for marking out the limits and divisions of the camp. In late Latin it has the derived sense of someone who goes ahead to prepare the way (*Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* (Teubner) VIII col. 878, 66ff). Scholars have failed to observe the nicety with which the word is used in Sifre. Like a military *metator* God's finger traced for Moses the borders of the Land and the allotments of the tribes, before they entered the Land.

process of evolution which began in Maccabean times, if not earlier. Thus we arrive at the conclusion that 3 Enoch 3-15 was composed between c. AD 450 and c. AD 850. Further analysis may enable us to narrow these limits a little, but in the present state of our knowledge it is probably self-delusion to think that we can be much more precise.

Odeberg's opinion (3 Enoch p.37) that 3 Enoch was composed in Babylonia appears to be correct. Hekhaloth mysticism certainly had its roots in Palestine (in particular 3 Enoch is indebted to Palestinian apocalyptic circles for its traditions about Enoch), but it reached its full flowering in Babylonia. This view is confirmed by certain Aramaic incantation texts discovered in Babylonia and Persia.¹⁶ These contain spells inscribed on bowls, which were supposed to protect their owners from demons or sorcery. They belong to the world of crude magic, but that world was evidently open to influence from the Hekhaloth circles. Indeed, in Talmudic Babylonia it would have been very hard to draw the line between the magician and the mystic, and there were doubtless some who played both these roles. It should be borne in mind that Hekhaloth literature itself contains an irreducible element of primitive magic. In the incantation texts we meet angelic names already familiar to us from Hekhaloth literature, and others of the same type. There are also motifs drawn straight from Ma'aseh Merkabah such as "the wheels of God's chariot", the *Ophanim* and the *Hayyoth* (see Montgomery *AIT* no.8, 13-14 — reading with Epstein, *REJ* 73 (1921) p. 37, גלגלי רכובו אופנים עומדים החיות, משתחות באש כיסאו). Metatron is invoked on the bowls as a powerful guardian angel and healer. His most common title, the "Great Prince" (טראאיסרא רבא) (C.H. Gordon, *Orientalia* 20 (1951) p.307,5), is found in Hekhaloth literature attached to Michael, to Metatron (Odeberg, 3 Enoch pp. 55-56), and to the higher angels (3 Enoch 18:4ff). It originated evidently in Aramaic and became so wide-spread and stereotyped that its Aramaic form was used even in Hebrew texts (see e.g. 3 Enoch 18:5 ff). On the bowls it is frequently augmented: "Metatron, the Great Prince of God's Throne" (C.H. Gordon, *Archiv Orientalni* 6 (1934) p.328, D11) — an allusion, perhaps, to the idea that Metatron was in charge of the Merkabah (3 Enoch 48C:4); or, "Metatron, the Great Prince of the whole world" (C.H. Gordon, *Archiv Orientalni* 9 (1937) p.94, L 12-14) — which recalls the concept of the "Prince of the World" (*sar ha-'olam*) in the Hekhaloth texts (3 Enoch 30:2). On a Mandaean bowl we find, "Metatron . . . who serves before the Curtain (ברגדא)" (W.S. McCullough, *Jewish and Mandaean Incantation Texts in the*

¹⁶ The largest single collection was found at Nippur and published by J.A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur* (1913). For alternative readings see J.N. Epstein, "Gloses Babylo-Araméens", *REJ* 73 (1921) pp. 27-58; 74 (1922) pp. 40-72. These bowls were found *in situ* and so can be approximately dated. They belong to the third to the seventh century AD (Montgomery *AIT* p.103). For more recent work see B.A. Levine, "The Language of the Magical Bowls", in J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* V (1970) pp. 343-75.

Royal Ontario Museum (1967) D 5-6), which may be linked to the Hekhaloth tradition about Metatron as the heavenly High Priest (3 Enoch 15B:1), and certainly alludes to his status as "Prince of the Divine Presence". The "Curtain" is, of course, well known from both Hekhaloth literature (3 Enoch 45:1) and the Talmud (b. Yom. 77a; b. Ber. 18b).¹⁷

One bowl, Montgomery *AIT* no. 25, deserves particularly close attention. It is quite remarkable how many parallels there are in its seven lines to the Hekhaloth texts. In line 2 we should read with Epstein, *REJ* 73 (1921), pp. 53-54, האופנים, על כל האופנים, אתה שוכן במרום ומרכבתך על כל האופנים, "you dwell on high and your Chariot is over all the Ophanim". In 1.4 we find יופיאל — which occurs as one of Metatron's names in 3 Enoch 48D:1 (see above). In the same line Montgomery reads the name יחיאל, but we could, and probably should, read it as יהואל — another of Metatron's names in 3 Enoch 48D:1 (see above).¹⁸ Line 4 has also the name שסניאל which, Montgomery maintains, is not attested in Jewish texts, but it is undoubtedly one of the many variants of the angelic name ססניאל found in 3 Enoch 18:11-12 (cf. the last of Metatron's names in 3 Enoch 48D:1 — סססניאל). Moreover, the use of the name here in combination with the Tetragram is precisely what we find in 3 Enoch 18:11-12. In form the names given to Michael by "those who make use of the Name" in the passage from *Reuyoth Yehezkel* quoted above. In line 5 Montgomery restores the word before מיטטרן as ארמסה. This is almost certainly correct, as is the derivation he proposes for ארמסה from *Hermes* (see *AIT* pp. 99, 123-124). It is not quite enough to say that the use of the name here does not imply any conscious reference to Hermes. This is true enough, but we should also note the significant fact that of the hundreds of divine and angelic names that are found in Hekhaloth and Kabbalistic texts this is one which does not occur. Moreover, there is still the question of how the Greek god's name got into Jewish magic. The juxtaposition with Metatron may provide a clue. Perhaps there were Jewish circles that identified Metatron with "Thrice Greatest Hermes"; the equation would be rather apt. There is some iconographic evidence for the identification of Michael with Mercury (and so (?) with Hermes); see U.F. Kopp, *Palaeographia Critica* IV (1829) pp. 203-212; cf. III pp. 355-357; cf. B.H. Lueken, *Der Erzengel Michael in der Ueberlieferung des Judentums* (1898) p.28. The equation of Enoch and Hermes is certainly well documented. Mas'udi, *Kitab murudj al-dhahab* III (Meynard-Courteille I p. 73) writes: "Lud was succeeded by his son Akhnukh (= Enoch) who is none other than the prophet Idris. The Sabaeans hold that he

¹⁷ For a parallel cf. *Mass. Hekh.* 7 (*BHM* II p.46,5 from bottom):

ופרוכת פרוסה לפניו ושבעה מלאכים שנבראו תחלה משרתים לפניו

¹⁸ Cf. the ms variants for יהואל/יהואל in *Sefer ha-razim* 2,38 and 2,140 (Margalioth pp.126,131).

is the same as Hermes". Cf. Bar Hebraeus, *Chron.* (Bedjan pp. 5-6): "The ancients Greeks say that Enoch is Hermes Trismegistos".

The structure of lines 3-5 on the bowl is of particular interest to us. In the alternative transcriptions of Montgomery and Epstein these lines run as follows:

Montgomery

(3) ברוך אתה יהוה על
דיבריה שים בשום (4) יופיאל
שמך יחיאל קרי לך
שסניאל יהוה וכן יה...
שמהת... [ארמסה מיטטרן
יה בשום טינין (5) טריניס
בלביס שנגס שדרפס
אילה אינן מלאכיה
דימטין לאסותא [לכל]
בני אינשא.

Epstein

(3) ברוך אתה יהוה על
דיברו חשים בשום
(4) יופיאל שמך יחיאל
קרו לך שסניאל יהוה
וכל יתרא [דשמהתן
[ארמסה וכו]

I am not convinced that either Montgomery or Epstein has solved all the problems of decipherment here. However, it seems certain that the 2nd person pronouns in line 4 must pick up the vocative אתה ברוך, and so the two names *Yophiel* and *Yahoel* which are borne by Metatron in 3 Enoch are here predicated of God. The possibility should even be considered that *Metatron* is used on this bowl as a divine name. The central part of the incantation appears to be made up of a *berakhah* in which God is invoked in a long series of magical names. This *berakhah* probably extends down to מיטטרן יה. It is followed by an invocation of angels introduced by the standard formula, "in the name of...". We may have a parallel construction on the amulet from Asia Minor discussed by Scholem in *Gnosticism* Appendix A. He reads line 8 of this as, ... (?) למרבת — "Blessed be Meta(t?)ron in the name of LMRBT (?)...". Once again Metatron may be a secret name of God, and so we would have a *berakhah* followed by an invocation of angels, prefixed by the formula, "in the name of...".

2. *The Sitz-im-Leben of 3 Enoch*

Though some Hekhaloth-Merkabah teaching has found its way into the classic, exoteric Rabbinic texts (notably into b. Hagigah),¹⁹ it constituted

¹⁹ For the present I assume that Hekhaloth mysticism forms a continuum with the esoteric tradition of the Talmud. For justification of this assumption see below, sect. 3

essentially a body of esoteric doctrine which had no proper place in the public institutions of Judaism. Its exclusion from the synagogue was effected by the ruling that forbade the use of Ezek. 1 as a haftarah (m. Meg. 4:10)²⁰. Moreover, it is unlikely that it was taught as part of the normal curriculum in the Beth ha-midrash: m. Hag. 2:1 lays down that "the Merkabah may not be expounded before even one person, unless he is a sage and understands of his own knowledge". In b. Shabb. 80b the cautionary tale is told of a Galilean who announced that he would lecture on the Merkabah in the academy and was stung by a wasp and died.²¹ Even the teaching of the classic foundation texts of Jewish mysticism — Gen. 1 and Ezek. 1 — was restricted in the Beth ha-sefer. Origen (*Comm. in Cant. Prologus*) says that these texts (plus Canticles and the end of Ezekiel) were "deferred till the very last" in the teaching of boys. Jerome in the parallel (*Comm. in Ezech. I praef. and Ep. 53 ad Paulinum*) is more precise: they were not studied till the age of thirty. (Cf. the recommendation in b. Hag. 14a (cf. 13a) that the study of the esoteric tradition should not be undertaken before fifty.) This, then, was doctrine studied in secret, taught in secret and practised in secret. m. Hag. 2:1 envisages the adept functioning in extreme isolation, or at most with one other person, but there is evidence for the existence of conventicles of Merkabah mystics. This is the clear implication of Hekh. R. 13ff discussed below. Moreover, certain physiognomic texts published by Scholem and Gruenwald point in the same direction. These belonged originally to the Hekhaloth tradition. It is probable that physiognomy was not only studied as an esoteric subject in its own right, but was put to the practical use of controlling admission into the conventicles.²² Though the esoteric tradition was not taught openly in the academies, yet when we envisage all the circumstances, it is hard to see how its transmission could have been entirely outside the academies. What probably happened was that an established master communicated the doctrine to the inner circle of his pupils, who would have formed a mystical conventicle round him.

²⁰ And so it could neither be read nor translated. R. Judah, however, permitted it as a haftarah, and it became the standard haftarah for the first day of Shabu'oth; see b. Meg. 31a.

²¹ Cf. b. Pes. 50a. Scholem, *Gnosticism* p. 58, appealing to Gen. R. 3:4, "as I heard in a whisper, so I told it to you in a whisper", argues that "to whisper" was a technical term for transmitting esoteric doctrine. In y. Bez. 61a.3, however, the same formula is used with regard to the transmission of halakhah. On this Levy (*Wörterbuch über die Tal. und Mid. II* p. 497b) comments: "Die betr. Halacha war näm. von den Gelehrten nicht allgemein angenommen". In b. Hag. 13a the *nebon lahash* of Is. 3:3 is taken as meaning "instructed in a whisper", i.e. one acquainted with esoteric teaching.

²² According to Iamblichus, *De vit. Pyth.* XVII 71.74 Pythagoras used physiognomy as one of the means to determine those fit to enter his religious community: *προσθεώρει δὲ καὶ τὸ εἶδος καὶ τὴν πορείαν καὶ τὴν ἄλλην τοῦ σώματος κίνησιν, τοῖς τε τῆς φύσεως γνωρίσμασι φυσιογνωμονῶν αὐτοῖς σημεῖα τὰ φανερά ἐποιεῖτο τῶν ἀφανῶν ἡθῶν ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ.*

For the Jewish physiognomic texts see Scholem, "Hakkarath ha-panim ve-sidre sirtutin", *Sefer*

The master taught the initiates not merely certain doctrines about the heavenly world, but also the techniques by which they could attain to the vision of the Merkabah. The ascent had to be made in a condition of purity and was prepared for by fasting and bathing (see e.g. Ma'aseh Merkabah I and 19 (Scholem, *Gnosticism* pp. 103, 111); Responsum of Hai Gaon, B.M. Lewin, *Ozar ha-geonim — Hagigah*, p. 14,9). The ascent was actually achieved by repeating magical names or formulae, or set hymns and prayers, specimens of which are preserved in the Hekhaloth texts. The master warned the initiate of the dangers of the ascent; there was a strong tradition that the passage of the gate of the Sixth Hall was especially perilous (see e.g. b. Hag. 14b).

A highly interesting passage in Hekh. R. 13ff (*BHM III* 93ff) illustrates many of these points. The story it reports is clearly apocryphal, but this should not blind us to the historical reality that does lie behind it. It gives us a remarkable insight into a session of a conventicle of Merkabah mystics.

The story goes that when Neḥunya b. Ha-kanah, the teacher of R. Ishmael, saw that wicked Rome had taken counsel to destroy the mighty ones of Israel he decided to reveal "the secret of the world as it appears to one who is worthy to gaze on the King and on the Throne in its glory and beauty" (13:1). Neḥunya instructed Ishmael to bring before him "all the mighty ones of the College and all the nobles of the Academy", in other words all the leading scholars of the day (14:1). Ishmael did so, and the company assembled at the great third gate of the House of the Lord. (The incident is supposed to have taken place before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. The choice of a holy, priestly spot for Neḥunya's ascent to heaven is noteworthy.) The scholars came and sat down before Neḥunya, while all their students stood at a distance, cut off from them by fiery globes and flaming torches. (The separation of the inner circle from the mass of students should be observed.) Then R. Neḥunya began to expound to them in order all the matters of the Merkabah. He described the technique of ascent: "When a man wants to descend to the Merkabah he must call on Suryah, the Prince of the Divine Presence, and conjure him one hundred and twelve times by Totrosi'i YHWH". Neḥunya himself began to make the ascent, describing the stages as he went. He passed through five of the heavenly Halls, giving the requisite seals to the Gate-keepers as passwords, but when he reached the gate of the Sixth Hall he announced that there the Gatekeepers attempt to destroy "those

Assaf (1953), pp. 459-95; idem, "Ein Fragment zur Physiognomik u. Chiromantik aus der Tradition der spätantiken jüdischen Esoterik", *Liber Amicorum. Studies in Honour of C.J. Bleeker* (1969), pp. 175-193; I. Gruenwald, "Further Jewish Physiognomic and Chiromantic Fragments", *Tarbiz* 40 (1970-71) pp. 301-319. The Qumran horoscopes (4Q186), which should be compared with Hippolytus *Ref. Haer.* IV 15, contain a great deal of physiognomy linked to astrology. They were probably not mere literary exercises, but were used for purposes of discrimination.

who go down to the Merkabah, and those who do not go down to the Merkabah". This remark puzzled the audience. They turned to Ishmael and said, "You control the light of Torah just like R. Neḥunya b. Ha-ḳanah. See if you can bring him back to sit with us from the vision of the Merkabah which he beholds, so that he may tell us who are 'those who descend to the Merkabah' and who are 'those who do not descend to the Merkabah'" (18:1). R. Ishmael then took a cloth and by a highly elaborate procedure brought it into a state of very marginal ritual impurity. He laid it on Neḥunya's knees, and Neḥunya was at once dismissed from before the Throne of Glory. The company put their question to him and Neḥunya replied: "Those who do not descend to the Merkabah are the men whom those who descend take and cause to stand above them;²³ they make them sit before them and say to them: Observe, see, hear and record all that I say and all that we hear from before the Throne of Glory. Now if those men are not fit, then the Gatekeepers of the Sixth Hall attack them. Be careful, therefore, to choose for yourselves fit men, well-trying members of the fellowship" (18:4). The narrative then returns to the gate of the Sixth Hall and the description of the ascent is completed.

The correct understanding of this important passage will only be reached by a comparative approach. Some light is thrown on it by modern anthropological studies of "possession" in various cultures scattered across the world. Still more illuminating are the points of comparison and contrast with a phenomenon of the ancient world contemporary to Hekhaloth mysticism — the practice of theurgy, described in the Chaldean Oracles and in the writings of Iamblichus, Proclus and Psellus.²⁴ These comparisons could be pursued at some length, but for the present a few observations must suffice.

From the description it appears that Neḥunya went into some kind of trance when he ascended to the Merkabah. Psellus (quoting from Proclus' lost commentary on the Chaldean Oracles, *Pselli script. min.* I, Kurtz-Drexl p.248, 19ff) distinguishes two types of trance among the ancient theurgists: in the first type the medium's normal consciousness was totally extinguished, whereas in the second, in some mysterious way, it seemed to persist and he was able to observe his own state of trance. These two types correspond closely to the somnambulistic and lucid forms of possession so thoroughly documented

²³ In the phrase *ומעמידין אותם למעלה מהם*, *עמד* cannot have its basic sense for the text continues *ומושבין אותם לפניו*. I think that *העמיד למעלה מן* here must have the meaning, "to put in charge of". The ecstatic needed someone to make sure that in his abnormal state of mind he did not do himself a mischief. Cf. *Pselli script. min.* I, Kurtz-Drexl, p.248, 28: *παντελους γαρ της εκστασεως γενομένης, ἄλλου πάντως χρεία τοῦ ἐφεστῶτος τοῖς κατοχοῖς καὶ ἠφοντος*.

²⁴ For modern anthropology on "possession" see I.M. Lewis, *Ecstatic Religion* (1971), with bibliography; and for Theurgy, Th. Höpfer, PW s.v. "Theurgie" (1936); S. Eitrem, "La Théurgie chez les Neo-Platoniciens et dans les Papyrus Magiques", *Symbolae Osloenses* 22 (1942), pp. 49-79; E.R. Dodds, *The Greeks and the Irrational* (1951), pp. 283-311; Hans Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles and Theurgy* (1956).

by T.K. Oesterreich.²⁵ Neḥunya's trance was apparently of the former sort. This is suggested by the fact that it was not possible for the onlookers to communicate with him normally. Ishmael had to "bring him back" by magical means. Moreover, it was necessary to have someone to record all that he said during the trance, presumably because he could remember little or nothing after the trance was over. The impure cloth used to bring Neḥunya back recalls the *ἀπόλυσις* (a technique for terminating a trance) of the Greek theurgical and magical texts.²⁶

It is not clear how we are supposed to take the "fiery globes" and the "flaming torches" which cut off the sages from their pupils. Fiery apparitions are mentioned again in connection with the exposition of the Merkabah in b.Hag. 14b: "R. Eleazar b. Arakh began his exposition of the Work of the Chariot and fire came down from heaven and encompassed all the trees of the field." The language may be merely figurative, but it is curious that Iamblichus and Proclus record fiery phenomena at theurgical séances; they regarded these appearances as vitally important for authenticating the communications received by the mediums. Auditory effects are also recorded. In this connection we should note carefully Hekh. R. 18:4 (*BHM* III 97, 14): "Observe, see, hear and record all that I say and all that we hear from before the Throne of Glory". The abrupt change of person may betray the expectation of sound effects during the trance.²⁷

It is important to note that the voice which was heard during Neḥunya's trance was taken to be his own. In theurgy and magic in the Greek world (as, indeed, in mediumistic trances in most other cultures) the voice would normally be regarded as belonging to a spirit or god who had taken possession of the medium, and not to the medium himself.²⁸ There is no hint, however, of the notion of possession in the Jewish text. Neḥunya's state is interpreted as an "excursion of the soul" from the body through the heavens to the Throne of God. Neḥunya's trance belongs to the "classic" shamanistic pattern of ecstasy, as defined by Eliade — with one curious exception. The shaman is usually silent during the excursion of his "soul" (if voices are heard they belong not to him but to a spirit who has entered his body in his soul's absence). It is only when he returns that he tells what he saw. The Jewish text, rather illogically, maintains that the soul is in excursion and yet the voice that speaks belongs to the subject who is in trance.²⁹ The possibility of theological influence on this interpretation of the state of trance would be worth exploring.

²⁵ T.K. Oesterreich, *Possession* (1930), pp. 26-90.

²⁶ The *ἀπόλυσις* was sometimes merely a word of dismissal, but at other times a technique, such as the aspersion of blood, was used to terminate the séance; see e.g. Preisendanz *PGM* II 178; IV 1056; Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles* pp. 39ff.

²⁷ Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational* pp. 298-9; Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles* pp. 240-6.

²⁸ The medium was known strikingly as the *δοχεύς* or *κάτοχος*; see Dodds, *Greeks and the Irrational* pp. 295ff; Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles* pp. 38ff; 227ff.

²⁹ Mircea Eliade, *Shamanism: Archaic Techniques of Ecstasy*, trans. W.R. Trask (1964) p.499.

This analysis of the milieu of Hekhaloth-Merkabah literature helps us to understand its character in a number of ways. Firstly, it would appear that the mystics and the mystical circles worked in considerable isolation. We have already noted that there was a great deal of reticence about airing these ideas in public, and it is unlikely that there was easy intercourse between the various individuals and groups. Indeed, it appears to have been the practice to give the initiate merely an outline of the mystical doctrine which he was left to fill in from his own experience.³⁰ It is probable, consequently, that the mystical traditions received quite different shape in the different groups. This would explain why there is so much confusion and inconsistency in our extant Hekhaloth-Merkabah texts (e.g. in the matter of the names, organization and offices of the angels). They probably represent an attempt to fuse together the traditions of several different groups.

Secondly, the reference to the stenographers who recorded what Neḥunya said raises the question of whether some of the material in the extant Hekhaloth-Merkabah texts may not have originated in the pronouncements of the mystics in trance. Some of the angelic names and the magical formulae certainly look like glossolalia.

Thirdly, our analysis shows that the séance lies at the very heart of this literature. Scholem rightly observes, "These texts are not Midrashim i.e. expositions of Biblical passages but a literature *sui generis* with a purpose of its own. They are essentially descriptions of a genuine religious experience for which no sanction is sought in the Bible. In short they belong to one class with the apocrypha and the apocalyptic writings rather than with traditional Midrash" (*Major Trends*, p.46).

Scholem attempts to press this point further. It is a fact that some of our extant Hekhaloth texts (such as Hekh. Zut.) have a high theurgical content and no midrash, whereas others (such as Mass. Hekh. and 3 Enoch) are lacking in theurgy and have a considerable exegetical element. He regards the presence of theurgy and the absence of exegesis as marks of an early text. This is a doubtful judgement. Scholem himself recognizes that there was an exegetical element in the tradition right from the outset in that "the vision of

"The specific element of shamanism is not the embodiment of 'spirits' by the shaman, but the ecstasy induced by his ascent to the sky"; p.507: "We must conceive of Asiatic shamanism as an archaic technique of ecstasy whose original ideology (was) belief in a celestial Supreme Being with whom it was possible to have direct relations by ascending into the sky". Lewis's criticism of Eliade's definition of shamanism (*Ecstatic Religion*, p.49f) does not rob the distinction between a state of trance perceived of either as "possession" or as "soul-excursion" of its value. The Chaldean theurgists knew of an "ascent of the soul" in addition to the states of "possession" which they describe; see Lewy, *Chaldean Oracles* pp. 177ff.

³⁰ y. Hag. 77a.46 speaks of imparting only ראשי פסוקים, b. Hag. 13a of ראשי פרקים (on which see Maimonides, *Moreh Nebukhim* III 5). Cf. Hekh. R. 2:4 (*BHM* III p.84,22), ראשי פסוקים (1. ראשי); see Scholem, *Gnosticism* p. 25 n. 14.

the celestial realm . . . originally proceeded from an attempt to transform what is casually alluded to in the Bible into direct personal experience" (*Major Trends* p.46). Moreover Biblical imagery and ideas (largely as given shape in the circles of the early apocalyptists) formed the matrix of the ecstasies' experiences, and run as an invisible substratum beneath all the texts. There can be little dispute about the logical primacy of the mystical experience, but it is very probable (if not, indeed, inevitable) that from early on in the movement both "theoretical" and "practical" approaches to the Merkabah were followed. The former concerned itself with meditating on the ecstasies' experiences, reducing them to some sort of coherence, and providing them with an interpretation. Without this interpretative framework it is hard to see how Hekhaloth-Merkabah mysticism could ever have evolved and developed. If we are to believe t. Meg. 4(3):28, already in the middle of the second century AD, there were those who expounded the Merkabah who had never actually seen it for themselves. The essential accuracy of this statement is proved by such early texts as 1 Enoch 14:8-25, 2 Enoch 20-21, Test. Levi 2-5, and Rev. 1:12-17 and 4:1-11 — all of which handle traditional themes of Ma'aseh Merkabah without a trace of theurgy. Greek theurgy, too, had both its contemplative or theosophical and its practical or strictly theurgical sides.³¹

3. The "Orthodoxy" of 3 Enoch

Up to this point we have worked on the assumption that Hekhaloth literature is closely related to the esoteric tradition referred to in the Talmuds. This is a reasonable assumption. Like Hekhaloth mysticism, Talmudic esotericism is concerned with the same broad themes of Ma'aseh Merkabah (see b. Hag. 11b-16a; y. Hag. II, 77a.12ff). Moreover, though the Talmuds are reticent about the more arcane aspects of the subject, they let slip now and then cryptic allusions which presuppose the fuller form of the teaching found in the Hekhaloth texts.³² After the researches of Scholem and Lieberman there can be no doubt that Hekhaloth mysticism and Talmudic esotericism belong to one and the same mystical movement. It should be noted carefully that this esoteric tradition was at home at the very heart of the Rabbinic communities. Rabbis of impeccable standing, such as Rab (see b. Hag. 13b),³³ are known to have studied it, and mastery of its intricacies was regarded by some as an achievement outshining mastery of halakhah (b. Sukk. 28a; Mid. Mishle 10, Buber 34a).

The Hekhaloth texts themselves vigorously assert their links with Rabbinic tradition. For the most part they ascribe their teachings either to R. Ishmael

³¹ See especially S. Eitrem, *Symb. Os.* 22 (1942) pp. 51-52.

³² S. Lieberman, *Shek'lin* (1939) p.12; Scholem, *Gnosticism* pp. 14-16, and passim; Lieberman, "Mishnath Shir ha-Shirim", Appendix D of Scholem's *Gnosticism* (pp. 118-126).

³³ See J. Neusner, *A History of the Jews in Babylonia* II (1966) pp. 180-187.

or to R. Akiba. It is possible that these two masters were claimed as authorities by two different mystical schools, but these schools cannot have been far apart for in some texts both Ishmael and Akiba are cited together.³⁴ Basically the appeal was back to the circle of Yoḥanan b. Zakkai's disciples. Nehunya b. Ha-kanah, Ishmael's teacher, is sometimes mentioned (in Hekh.R. 13:1 he has the leading part), and he was held to have been a pupil of Yoḥanan (b.BB 10b, but contrast m.PA 2:8). Akiba, too, could be reckoned as a spiritual descendant of Yoḥanan, since two of his early teachers, Eliezer b. Hyrcanus and Joshua b. Ḥanania, were Yoḥanan's pupils (cf. ARN.A, Schechter p.29, with m.PA 2:8). Yoḥanan himself is credited in the Talmud with mystical teachings (b.Hag. 13a/14b).³⁵ There is probably an element of truth in these claims. Jacob Neusner has demonstrated how essential mystical experience could have been in Yoḥanan's religious life.³⁶ Whether or not we concede in full the mystics' claims, it is evident from their appeal to the authority of such ancient and venerable masters that they were concerned to assert the respectability of their doctrines. They moved within the Rabbinic communities and considered it important to proclaim their loyalty to Rabbinic Judaism.

Odeberg and Scholem are fully justified in regarding the Hekhaloth texts as basically "orthodox". They must certainly be judged to be such if measured by the simple yardstick of whether they are monotheistic and show due respect for Torah.³⁷ Yet it is hard not to sense a tension between certain aspects of the esoteric tradition and the theological ideas which are given prominence in the classic exoteric texts of Rabbinic Judaism — the Talmuds, the major midrashim, and the older prayers of the Siddur. Thus the enormous emphasis in Hekhaloth literature on the transcendence of God is surely rather unusual. God's presence is manifested on the Throne of Glory in the Seventh Hall

³⁴ See, e.g. Ma'aseh Merkabah (Scholem, *Gnosticism* Appendix C). It is interesting to note that in this text Ishmael is subordinated to Akiba. In Hekh.R. 14:2ff, however, he plays the more dominant role.

³⁵ See E. Urbach, "Ha-masoroth 'al torath ha-sod bitkuphath ha-tanna'im", *Studies in Mysticism and Religion presented to G.G. Scholem* (1967), pp. 1-28 (Hebrew section); N. Séd, "Les traditions secrètes et les disciples de Rabban Yoḥanan b. Zakkai", *Rev. Hist. des Rel.* 184 (1973) pp. 44-66. It is probable that there was a group of mystics who appealed to the authority of Jonathan b. Uzziel, a supposed contemporary of Yoḥanan, and they may have been rather hostile to those who claimed to follow the teachings of Yoḥanan and his disciples. This is probably the implication of b.Sukk. 28a; see the analysis of J. Neusner, *Development of a Legend* (1970), pp. 90-91; further, *The Rabbinic Traditions about the Pharisees before 70* I (1971), pp. 206-208. Jonathan is a shadowy figure in the Talmud, but he was evidently held in some esteem in Babylonia, since the official Targum of the Prophets was attributed to him (b.Meg. 3a). He is mentioned in Hekh.R. 14:3 as one of those whom Nehunya b. Ha-kanah initiated into the mysteries of the Merkabah. We should also note that Jewish magicians in Babylonia appealed to the authority of the early Palestinian master Joshua b. Perahya (a contemporary of Jesus); this fact emerges not from the Talmud, but from the incantation bowls; see e.g. Montgomery, *AJL* 8:6,8,11; 9:2; 17:8,10; 32:4 (?).

³⁶ See most recently his *First Century Judaism in Crisis* (1975), pp. 126ff.

³⁷ Odeberg, *3 Enoch* pp. 39-41; Scholem, *Gnosticism* pp. 9-13.

within the Seventh Heaven; his real abode is remoter still, for, according to one tradition, above the Seventh Heaven are 955 heavens through which he descends to the Throne of Glory (Mass. Hekh. 7, *BHM* II p.45, 25). This concept of transcendence is expressed in very concrete, cosmological terms. The "dimensions of the heavens" is a standard motif of the esoteric texts: "The distance from the earth to the firmament is a journey of five hundred years. The thickness of the firmament is a journey of five hundred years", and so on, right up to the Throne of Glory — one unimaginable distance is piled on top of another until the mind succumbs to a sense of the unutterable remoteness of God (b.Hag. 13a: Mass. Hekh. 4, *BHM* II p.43,8;3 Enoch 22C; but contrast the quasi-scientific calculations in b.Pes. 94a). God's transcendence is also emphasized in the story in 3 Enoch 5:10-14 about the removal of the Shekhinah to highest heaven in the generation of Enoch.³⁸

The transcendence of God is stated often enough in the classic Rabbinic texts — sometimes, paradoxically, in the same breath as his immanence — but several differences should be noted. Firstly, the language is rarely, if ever, as extreme as this. Secondly, there are very few statements in Hekhaloth literature which might soften the extreme assertions of God's transcendence. And finally, and most significantly, the concept of God's physical transcendence is integral to the mystical tradition: it forms the indispensable presupposition of the doctrine of the adept's ascent through the heavens to reach the presence of God.

The void left by God's withdrawal to the heights of heaven is filled in the Hekhaloth texts with hosts of angels who mediate between God and the world. The most impressive of these angelic figures is Metatron who, according to 3 Enoch 10:3-6, was installed as God's Viceregent: "The herald went out into every heaven and announced concerning me, 'I have appointed my servant Metatron as a prince and a ruler over all the princes of my kingdom and over all the denizens of the heights.'³⁹ Any angel and any prince who has anything to say in my presence should go before him and speak to him. Whatever he says to you in my name you must observe and do". The higher orders of the angels are spoken of in Hekhaloth literature in language that one would expect would be reserved for God alone, and they bear the Tetragram as part of their names. Again Metatron, "the lesser YHWH", is the extreme case (3 Enoch 12:5). Some of the angels were appointed to guard the

³⁸ The theme of the withdrawal of the Shekhinah from the earth is common enough in midrashic literature (see e.g. Lam.R. Proem.24), but it is seldom phrased in such uncompromising terms as here. R. Abba b. Kahana similarly speaks of the withdrawal of the Shekhinah to the Seventh Heaven (Gen.R. 19:7, and parallels), but he "softens" the severity of this statement by adding that its real home was in this world, and that it came down again in the time of Moses (it had gone up from the earth after Adam sinned).

³⁹ The text adds an "orthodox gloss": "apart from the eight great, honoured and terrible princes who are called by the name of YHWH their king".

approach to God's Throne. Direct access to God's presence appears to have been regarded as the privilege of the small band of ecstasies who knew the technique of ascent through the heavens and how to get past the fierce guardian angels. It hardly needs demonstrating that these are not ideas that are thrust forward in the liturgy or the classic midrashim.

The way in which the study of Ma'aseh Merkabah was hedged about with safeguards reflects a measure of unease about it. It was forbidden, as we saw, to divulge the teaching in public or to initiate anyone into it who was not a sage in his own right. Admonitory tales were told about what happened to presumptuous young scholars who studied or expounded the "Work of the Chariot" — one perceived the *hashmal* and died (b.Hag. 13a), another was smitten with leprosy (y.Hag. 77a.46). The example of one notable teacher, Elisha b. Abuya (Aḥer), who immersed himself in mystical speculation and landed in heresy, was held up as a warning to all (t.Hag. 2:3; b.Hag. 15a; see below). It would appear that some considered the teachings of Ma'aseh Merkabah to be susceptible of serious misunderstanding and sought to neutralize this danger by insisting that they be approached by way of a rigorous training in traditional law.

There is good evidence that at least two of the traditions in 3 Enoch would have aroused opposition in Rabbinic circles. In the whole of the two Talmuds and in the Tannaitic midrashim not a single mention of Enoch is to be found (see Ginzberg, *Legends V* p.156 n.58). In view of the importance that Enoch had for early Jewish apocalyptists it is hard not to take this silence as censorious. This impression is confirmed when we examine what Rabbinic notices there are of Enoch; for the most part they are pointedly critical. The criticism is aimed usually at cutting off at the root the kind of development of the figure of Enoch that we have noted in the pseudepigrapha and in 3 Enoch, by denying that Enoch ascended into heaven without dying.⁴⁰ It would seem reasonable, therefore, to infer that there would have been Rabbinic criticism of this facet of the teaching of 3 Enoch.

We should also mark closely the Talmudic references to Metatron. Two out

⁴⁰ See e.g. the opinion of R. Abbahu in Gen.R. 25:1. Other Rabbis were concerned with denying to Enoch any special righteousness (ibid.). The Targumim are divided: Ngl. (to Gen. 5:23) stresses that Enoch died: Ps-J states that "he was taken up and ascended into heaven (אֵיתְנַגֵּד וְסָלֵק לְרִקְיָע) and his name was called Metatron, the Great Scribe". N. is ambiguous: "Enoch served in truth before the Lord and it is not known where he is for heaven", as in Ps-J; on the other hand it may be used euphemistically for "die"; see Lieberman, *Hellenism in Jewish Palestine* (2nd ed. 1962) pp. 13-15. O. is particularly interesting. The standard text of Gen. 5:24 (as represented by BM Ms Or. 2363) reads: הַלֵּיךְ חֲנוּךְ בְּדַחְלָתָא דִּי וְלִיתְהוּי אַרְיִי אֲמִיתִיהּ יִי. But *Biblia Hebraica*, Ixar 1490 (partially supported by some other early editions) has יִי אֲמִיתִיהּ יִי לֹא אֲמִיתִיהּ יִי. S.D. Luzzato, *Oheb Ger* (Cracow 1895) p.24 takes this as the original O text. It may, indeed represent an unrevised O tradition.

of the three times he is mentioned a note of criticism is sounded.⁴¹ In b.Sanh. 38b a controversy between Rab Idi⁴² and a heretic (*min*) is recorded: "Once a heretic said to Rab Idi, 'And he said to Moses, Come up to the Lord', but surely it should have said, 'Come up to me'". The heretic here was probably using a casuistical interpretation of Exod. 24:1 to prove the existence of two powers. Rab Idi replied: It was Metatron who said that,⁴³ whose name is similar to that of his Master, for it is written, 'My name is in him (Exod. 23:21)'. But if so, the heretic objected, we should worship him! Rab Idi countered: It says in the same passage, 'Be not rebellious against him ('*al tammer bo*'), which is interpreted by '*al tikre* to mean, 'Do not put him (Metatron) in my place ('*al temireni bo*'). But why, then, asked the heretic, does it say, 'He will pardon your transgressions (Exod. 23:21)?' Rab Idi retorted *ad hominem*: 'In truth, we do not accept him (Metatron) even as a messenger (*parvanka*),⁴⁴ for it is written, 'If thou in person go not with us . . . (Exod. 35:15)'. Two points should be noted from this exchange. Firstly, it was Rab Idi who introduced the figure of Metatron, not the heretic. And, secondly, Rab Idi rejected any suggestion that Metatron holds an exalted position: he is not even an intermediary, let alone a second power.

b.Hag. 15a is still more hostile. Commenting on the experience of the arch-heretic Elisha b. Abuya (Aḥer) when he entered Pardes it says:

"Aher saw that Metatron was given permission to sit and write down the merits of Israel. He said: It is taught that in heaven there is no sitting, no rivalry, no neck and no weariness. Perhaps — God forbid! — there are two powers. Thereupon they led forth Metatron and smote him with sixty lashes of fire, saying, 'Why did you not stand up when you saw him?' Then permission was granted to strike out the merits of Aher and a *bath kol* went forth and said, 'Return erring sons — except Aher!'"

The essence of Aḥer's apostasy is seen here as lying in his mistaking of Metatron as a second power. His punishment is indeed heavy, for his merits are struck off the record and the possibility of repentance is denied him. In

⁴¹ The neutral reference, b.AZ 3b, speaks of Metatron as the heavenly teacher of children who die in infancy.

⁴² Wilna ed. has "Idith", but Cod. Munich 95 preserves the correct text "Idi".

⁴³ Scholem (*Enc. Jud.* XI 1444; cf. *Major Trends* p.366 n. 107) suggests on the basis of *Kitab al-anwar* 14. 13 (Nemoy I p.35,10), "They say in the Talmud that Metatron is the 'little Lord' and that his name is like the name of his master" that Kirkisani must have consulted a text of the Talmud which read, "This is Metatron, who is the Lesser YHWH". This reading would have a strong claim to be regarded as original: it makes the heretic's deduction, "Then we should worship him!", very apposite. However, Kirkisani may have simply misquoted the Talmud and attributed to it something which he found in fact in either the *Alphabet of Akiba* or the *Book of Ishamel*, both of which he mentions in the immediate context.

⁴⁴ *Parwaka* (*parwanka*) is used in the gnostic *Hymn of the Soul* 1.16 (Bevan, *Texts and Studies* 3 (1897) p.13) to designate the two messengers who accompany and protect the soul on its journey from the east. It is curious that the Pahlavi *parwanag* (Nyberg, *Manual of Pahlavi II* (1974) p. 152) = "messenger, guide", roughly corresponds to the general sense of the Latin *metator* (see fn.15 above). Is there implied here an early attempt to derive *Metatron* from *metator*?

addition. Metatron himself is publicly humiliated — lest anyone should repeat Aḥer's mistake. The criticism could hardly be more pointed.

Further evidence of uneasiness about the Hekhaloth-Merkabah traditions may be found in the editorial tendency which can be detected in our current text of 3 Enoch. An editor (or editors) has subjected the material which he received to an "orthodox" redaction. Most obviously there is the fact that the work contains a version of the humbling of Metatron, which has been added to it later (see 3 Enoch 16); and there are other modifying glosses of the same type (see fn. 39 above). This editorial tendency becomes quite patent when we read 3 Enoch against the whole corpus of Hekhaloth literature and observe the elements of the tradition that are left out. For example, there is a marked absence of Shi'ur Qomah speculation. 3 Enoch is noticeably circumspect about the appearance on the Throne of Glory. Though the description of the Throne and its attendant angels is most detailed, it shrinks from visualizing a manifestation of God on the Throne.⁴⁵ The very pointed avoidance of theurgy may be related to the same "orthodox" reworking. An important aspect of the practical side of Hekhaloth mysticism was the technique for getting past the guardian angels of the various Halls, and knowing the names of those angels was an essential part of the technique. In 3 Enoch, however, R. Ishmael rushes through the six outer Halls in one verse (1:1), without any indication of how he does it, and no mention is made of the guardian angels. At the door of the seventh Hall there is a hint of a challenge from the door-keeper Kaḏpi'el (1:3),⁴⁶ but Ishmael manages to get past him by a very simple and direct prayer to God, pleading the merits of his priestly ancestor Aaron. Sound theology and little magic! We noted earlier evidence that the names of Metatron had been edited out of 3 Enoch 6:1: these would have had a theurgical use. Finally there is a total absence of Merkabah hymns such as abound in Hekh.R. In themselves these hymns seem innocuous, but it is clear that their recitation was used for theurgical ends. Hekh. R. prefaces its collection of them with the words: "What is the wording of the songs that a man must recite who wishes to behold the vision of the Merkabah, to descend in peace and to ascend in peace?" (1:4; 2:5 = Wertheimer *BM* I² pp. 57,1 and 60,1).

Scholem writes: "If what these (Hekhaloth) texts present is Gnosticism — and their essentially Gnostic character cannot in my opinion be disputed — it is a truly rabbinic Gnosis, and the illuminations and revelations granted to the adepts are such as conform to the Jewish hierarchy of beings" (*Jewish*

⁴⁵ Shi'ur Qomah provoked bitter criticism both inside and outside the Jewish camp. See A. Altmann, "Moses Narboni's 'Epistle on the Shi'ur Qomah'", *Jewish Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies*, ed. Altmann (1967), pp. 225-288.

⁴⁶ Bodleian ms 1656.2 has *Kaḏpi'el*, but the correct text must be *Kaḏpi'e'l* as in Munich ms 40 (cf. Jellinek *BHM* V p.170.6) and Hekh. R. 20 (*BHM* III p.98.22). The name is presumably derived from the root קָפַץ = "be angry"; cf. *Qeḏef* as the name for an angel of destruction in Ps-J Num. 17:11; PRE 45; Mid. Ps. 6:7.

Gnosticism p.10). This is a problematic judgement: so much stress must be placed on the qualifying "truly rabbinic" as to leave in doubt the accuracy of the term "Gnosis". If "Gnosticism" be defined from the standpoint of what are agreed Gnostic texts, then we must recognize that certain fundamental differentia of the classic Gnostic systems are missing from Hekhaloth literature. Rabbinic "Gnosis" is not soteric, nor does it involve dualism or a plurality of opposed principles. In Gnosticism the ascent of the soul is accomplished after death, or at the end of time: there is little or no evidence of the ascent being anticipated in mystic ecstasy in this life. In Hekhaloth literature, on the other hand, the ascent is made during lifetime, and followed by descent. Hekh.R. 13:2 (*BHM* III p.93,11) and 20:3 (*BHM* III p. 98, 31) compares knowing the technique of ascent to having a ladder in one's house; one can go up and down it at will. Finally, there is no obvious "redeemer figure" in the Jewish texts.⁴⁷

It is indeed true that there are aspects of Merkabah mysticism which have their analogues in Gnosticism. Thus the structure of the world in both systems is very similar. At the pinnacle of being stands the Unknown God and beneath him a second power (the Demiurge/ *Yozer bere'shith*). (In Gnosticism the Unknown God and the Demiurge are opposed, but in the Hekhaloth texts the *Yozer bere'shith* is simply the unknown God manifested on the Throne.) According to both, man is separated from God by spheres under the control of hostile angel-archons past whom the soul must find its way to the bliss of the heavenly world. However, we must maintain a balanced perspective on such similarities: the outlines of this picture constitute an exceedingly common religious world-view in late antiquity, found, to greater or lesser degree, in Roman Mithraism, in the Hermetica, in Neoplatonism (especially from Iamblichus onwards), and in texts of uncertain affinity such as the "Great Magical Papyrus of Paris".⁴⁸

There is undoubtedly a strong Jewish component in Gnosticism and some of the Jewish elements in Gnosticism appear also in the Merkabah texts: the most striking case is "the Lesser Jao"/"Lesser YHWH". But there are many ways in which these links could be explained. One might suppose that Gnosticism and Merkabah mysticism interacted contemporaneously on each other either directly or through the mediation of a third party (say genuine dualistic Jewish Gnosticism or Jewish magic). It is also possible that both sprang from a common root (perhaps Jewish apocalyptic or pre-Christian

⁴⁷ I am not suggesting that a system must have all these elements to be properly called "Gnostic"; what I am arguing is that a system which has *none* of these elements is very dubiously Gnostic. For an attempt to define Gnosticism briefly, see Werner Foerster, *Gnosis* I (1972) pp. 1-23.

⁴⁸ Preisendanz, *PGM* IV; Festugière, *Hermès Trismégiste* I (1944), pp. 303ff; Morton Smith, "Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati", *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (1963) pp. 158-60.

Jewish Gnosticism). These hypotheses are not mutually exclusive. However, until the relationships between Merkabah mysticism and Gnosticism have been more fully explored it is premature, in view of the fundamental cleavage between the world-views of the two systems, to categorize the Jewish texts as "Gnostic".

It nevertheless remains possible that there *was* a form of Merkabah teaching which had a genuinely Gnostic character. The Hekhaloth-Merkabah structures could be given a Gnostic interpretation, and Rabbinic criticism of some of the elements in the Merkabah tradition may be aimed at such a Gnostic form of the teaching. The story about Aḥer and the humbling of Metatron seems to involve a criticism of those who elevated Metatron into a second power (b.Hag. 15a). Rab Idi's injunction, "Do not put Metatron in God's place" may have the same point (b.Sanh.38b). It is natural to think of Gnosticism as the precise kind of dualism in question here, and since "Metatron" is not found in any extant non-Jewish text, the dualists alluded to are presumably *Jewish Gnostics*.⁴⁹

From this discussion of the orthodoxy of 3 Enoch several conclusions emerge. (1) The Merkabah mysticism of Hekhaloth literature (including 3 Enoch) emanated from circles belonging to Rabbinic Judaism, and may be described broadly as "orthodox". (2) Even in this form, however, its teachings drew the criticism of some Rabbinic authorities. (3) There was probably a less "orthodox" form of the teaching, which may have constituted a genuine dualistic Jewish Gnosis.

⁴⁹ It has, of course, often been argued that at least some of those termed *minim* in Rabbinic texts were dualistic Jewish Gnostics, but solid proof of this view is lacking. Lieberman, "How much Greek in Jewish Palestine?", *Biblical and Other Studies*, ed. A. Altmann (1963), pp. 135-141, attempts to show that the Rabbis were well enough acquainted with Gnostic ideas, but his examples are forced.

*Lifnim Mishurat Hadin II**

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III A. *Shurat hadin* in Mishna

The term *shurat hadin* appears only once in the corpus of the Mishna.

"If a man makes his slave security (hypoteca) for his debt to another man and he emancipates him, according to the *shurat hadin* the slave is not liable for anything, but to prevent abuses his master is compelled to emancipate him, and he gives a bond for his purchase price. Rabban Simeon b. Gamaliel says that he does not give a bond but he emancipates him."⁷³

The problem posed in this Mishna is premised on the existence of the institution of hypothecary obligation, of which the specific security (the PWTYQY) is one sort. Whether this form of security is Biblical in its origin or not,⁷⁴ the essence of its function is to permit the creditor to collect his debts even from land which his debtor has sold or otherwise alienated since the creation of the debt and the security.⁷⁵ It would follow from this, that the emancipation of a slave, which constitutes no more than the transfer of ownership into the slave's own hands,⁷⁶ should have no effect whatsoever on the status of the security interest which belongs to the creditor of the slave's prior owner.⁷⁷ Thus, the consequence of following the basic undifferentiated *din* of security interest would be that the slave, now free, would remain bound by lien to the creditor, subject to "collection" if his former master fails to pay his debt.

The *shurat hadin* of our Mishna, according to which "the slave is not liable for anything" is clearly, then, distinct from the undifferentiated *din*. The Gemara in the Babylonian Talmud identifies the *shurat hadin* with a statement by Raba which constitutes a basic limitation on the undifferentiated *din*: "...according to the dictum of Raba, that sanctification, leaven and emancipation release from a creditor's lien."⁷⁸ This limitation on the effectiveness of a lien would of course produce the result specified in our Mishna, complete release of the slave from any liability under the lien.

* For Part I, see *JJS* 26 (1975), pp. 86-104.

⁷³ Mishna Gittin 4:4 (40b) Soncino translation Gittin, p. 173 slightly modified.

⁷⁴ For dispute as to this see B.B. 175b.

⁷⁵ B.B. 175b; Gulak, *Yesodei Hamishpat Haivri*, vol. 1, pp. 149-165; and Rambam, *H. Malveh ve-Loveh*, 1:4.

⁷⁶ See Kiddushin 22b.

⁷⁷ Such is in fact the case in Roman Law. Buckland, *The Main Institutions of Roman Private Law*, Cambridge, 1931, p. 323.

⁷⁸ Gittin 40b.