

In sum, Josephus' version of the Amalek episode attests to his noteworthy ability to tell stories designed, at different levels, to please both of his mutually antagonistic publics.

From Earthly Temple to Heavenly Shrines

Prayer and Sacred Song in the Hekhalot Literature
and Its Relation to Temple Traditions

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"A prayer of the prophet Habbakuk, upon *shigyonot*." "A prayer" – this ought to read "a praise"! But any person who frees his heart from worldly activities and meditates on *Ma'aseh Merkavah* is considered by the Holy One, blessed be He, as if he were praying all day, as it is said, "A prayer." And what does *shigyonot* mean? As it is written, "Be infatuated [Heb. *tishgeh*] with love of her always" – this refers to *Ma'aseh Merkavah*.

Sefer ha-Bahir sec. 68

The mystical-poetical works known collectively as Hekhalot and Mer-kavah literature remain on the whole a closed book to readers and students, although the first scholarly studies were published more than a century ago.¹ Despite the impressive research of recent years, many puzzles remain unsolved, such as the origins of Hekhalot literature, the time and *milieu* of its composition, the identity of its authors and the motives that inspired them to write it.² Since the earliest efforts of modern scholars in this area, such basic questions as the very definition of Hekhalot literature, the significance of its unique stylistic features and its ties with

¹ The pioneering studies of Hekhalot literature in the 19th century were: H. Graetz, "Die mystische Literatur in der gaonäischen Epoche," *MGWJ* 8 (1859), pp. 67–78, 103–118, 140–153; Ph. Bloch, "Die *Yordei Merkava*, die Mystiker der Gaonenzeit und ihr Einfluss auf die Liturgie," *MGWJ* 37 (1893), pp. 18–25, 69–74, 257–266, 305–311; M. Friedländer, *Der vorchristliche jüdische Gnosticismus*, Göttingen 1898; L. Zunz, *Die gottesdienstlichen Vorträge der Juden*, Berlin 1832.

² Modern Hekhalot research dates from the work of Gershom Scholem: *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1941, 40–79 (hereafter: Scholem, *Trends*); idem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkavah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, New York 1965 (hereafter: Scholem, *Merkabah*). For research of the last few decades see below, nn. 9 and 12.

contemporary traditions have been disputed. Some authorities date its composition to a late phase of the Gaonic period, while others consider it to be remnants of mystical lore from the end of the Second Temple period, an integral part of rabbinic literature.³ Each school has found its proponents and opponents; some scholars, though admitting certain points of contact between Hekhalot literature, on the one hand, and tannaitic and amoraic literature, on the other, prefer to underline the considerable disparities;⁴ and this has led a few writers to support earlier proponents of a late date.⁵ Others point to links with Qumran, apocalyptic literature, ancient liturgy and the rabbinic world in general, arguing for a relatively early origin.⁶ The chronological gap between the different schools may be ascribed to the fact that Hekhalot literature departs so radically from other literary traditions of late Second Temple times and the Mishnaic and Talmudic periods, by virtue of both its language and editorial structure and the spiritual message it conveys.⁷ The historical allusions contained in the Hekhalot tracts, purporting to refer to the tannaitic period, conflict with accepted views of the persons and events involved; they are therefore believed to be pseudepigraphic, representing a metahistorical outlook.⁸ Questions of textual identity, the nature of the works involved and the mutual relationships among them

³ See Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 45, 72–73; idem, *Merkabah*, pp. 9–13, 24; for a historical survey of research into Hekhalot literature see Y. Dan, *Ha-Mistikah ha-Ivrit ha-Kedumah*, Tel Aviv 1989, pp. 7–14 (hereafter: Dan, *Ha-Mistikah*); for a partial bibliography of the subject, updated to the mid-1980s, see D. J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, Tübingen 1988, pp. 567–573 (hereafter: Halperin, *Chariot*).

⁴ E. E. Urbach, "Ha-Masorot 'al Torat ha-Sod bi-Tekufat ha-Tannaim," in *Mehkarim ha-Kabbalah u-ve-Toledot ha-Datot Muggashim le-G. Scholem*, Jerusalem 1965, pp. 1–28; D. J. Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, New Haven 1980, pp. 3ff., 183ff. (hereafter: Halperin, *Rabbinic Literature*); idem, *Chariot*, ch. 1, ch. 9, pp. 360ff.

⁵ M. S. Cohen, *The Shi'ur Qomah. Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism*, Lenham 1983.

⁶ On the Qumran connection see below, nn. 21–22; on the links with apocalyptic literature see I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden/Köln 1980 (hereafter: Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*); on the relationship with rabbinic literature see Scholem, *Merkabah*, pp. 9–13, 24; Urbach (supra, n. 4); Halperin, *Rabbinic Literature*; I. Chernus, *Mysticism in Rabbinic Judaism*, Berlin/New York 1982; on the connection with ancient liturgy see below.

⁷ See R. Elijor, "Yihudah shel ha-Tofa'ah ha-Datit be-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot: Demut ha-El ve-Harhavat Gevulot ha-Hassagah," in Y. Dan (ed.), *Ha-Mistikah ha-Yehudit ha-Kedumah (Proc. First International Congress on the History of Jewish Mysticism = Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-Mahashevet Yisra'el 6/1–2 [1987])*, pp. 13–64 (hereafter: Elijor, *Demut ha-El*).

⁸ See Y. Dan, "Tefisat ha-Historiah be-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot ve-ha-Merkavah," in *Be-Orah Mada' – Mehkarim be-Tarbut Yisra'el muggashim l-A. Mirsky*, Lod 1986, pp. 117–129.

are also disputed;⁹ and the same is true of the relationship of Hekhalot literature to post-biblical and rabbinic literature.¹⁰

The scholarly world, preoccupied with the historical difficulties attending the very definition of Hekhalot literature, its departure from the more familiar patterns of traditional writing and its doubtful editorial identity, has devoted little attention to the circumstances of its composition. Neither have there been any attempts to suggest an overall contextual explanation for its unique spiritual qualities. Its peculiar stylistic features have gone all but unnoticed, and little thought has been given to the nature of the mystical impulse that inspired its creation. It is my intention here to suggest a possible explanation of some of the most prominent characteristics of the mystical section of this literature.¹¹

⁹ See the synoptic edition of the various works comprising Hekhalot literature by P. Schäfer in Zusammenarbeit mit M. Schlüter und H. G. von Mutius, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, Tübingen 1981 (hereafter: *Synopse*); see ib., pp. x–xvii for a detailed list of previous editions up to the end of the 1970s, indicating the correspondence between the paragraphs of the new edition and the chapter divisions of earlier editions. See also P. Schäfer (ed.), *Geniza Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, Tübingen 1984 (hereafter: Schäfer, *Geniza Fragmente*); for an evaluation and critique of these anthologies see Y. Dan, "Kitvei ha-Yad shel Sifrut ha-Hekhalot ve-ha-Merkavah," *Tarbiz* 53 (1984), pp. 313–317; R. Elijor, "Schäfer's Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 77 (1986–1987), pp. 213–217; Y. Dan, "Hekhalot Genuzim," *Tarbiz* 56 (1987), pp. 433–437; R. Elijor, "Schäfer's Geniza Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 80 (1989), pp. 142–145. For critical editions of individual Hekhalot tracts see R. Elijor (ed.), *Hekhalot Zutarti, Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-Mahashevet Yisra'el*, App. I, Jerusalem 1982 (hereafter: Elijor, *Hekhalot Zutarti*); P. Alexander (ed.), "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch," in J. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, I, New York 1983, pp. 223–315 (hereafter: Alexander, Enoch); M. S. Cohen (ed.), *Shi'ur Qomah. Texts and Recensions*, Tübingen 1985 (hereafter: Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*). For a description of the various works of Hekhalot literature and their redaction see Scholem, *Merkabah*, pp. 5–7; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, pp. 127–134. For the question of the various traditions involved in Hekhalot literature see the studies cited above in nn. 2–5, 7, and below, n. 12. For the problems involved in defining the parts of Hekhalot literature, naming the works and determining their interrelationships, as well as questions occasioned by their complex stratified structure, developmental stages and the highly diverse nature of the genre, see P. Schäfer, "Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 14 (2) (1983), pp. 172–181; idem, "Tihumah shel Sifrut ha-Hekhalot," *Divrei ha-Kongress ha-'Olami le-Madda'ei ha-Yahadut*, 9/III, Jerusalem 1986, pp. 87–92; idem, "Ba'yat ha-Zehut ha-'Arikhatit shel Sefer Hekhalot Rabbati," *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-Mahashevet Yisra'el* 6/1–2 (1987), pp. 1–12; and cf. Gruenwald's criticism of Schäfer's position: I. Gruenwald, *From Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*, Frankfurt a. M. 1988, pp. 175ff. (hereafter: Gruenwald, *Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*).

¹⁰ For the conflicting arguments see below, n. 13.

¹¹ The mystical section of Hekhalot literature includes *Hekhalot Rabbati* (also known as *Sefer Sheva' Hekhelei Kodesh, Hekhalot de-R. Yishma'el*; cf. *Synopse*, paras. 81–276); *Hekhalot Zutarti* (ib. paras. 335–374; 407–426); *Ma'aseh Merkavah* (ib. paras. 544–596); *Sefer Hekhalot* (= 3 Enoch; ib. paras. 1–80); *Shi'ur Komah* (ib. paras. 376–377, 468–484); and various untitled fragments relating to Metatron (*Shivhei Metatron*,

However, given the pseudographic features of the Hekhalot literature, its undefined chronological-historical setting and the dearth of independent external evidence of any relevance, this explanation is necessarily speculative. I shall also try, relying on linguistic and spiritual indications, to sketch a hypothetical portrait of the authors and outline the background of their work.

The reality described in the various texts of Hekhalot literature is a mystical, visionary reality, referring to a pseudographic tannaitic world on the terrestrial plane and to the heavenly *hekhalot* (= palaces or shrines) on the supernal plane.¹² This mystical reality can furnish no direct information as to actual, historical reality, nor can it tell us anything definite about the identity of the writers. Nevertheless, it testifies most strikingly to the supernal reality that their imagination created and to the disparity between that ideal reality and the empirical reality of their time and place.¹³ The visionary, supernal existence is intertwined in

ib. paras. 384–406, 484–488). For the characteristic features of these works see Y. Dan, "Gilluy Sodo shel 'Olam. Reshitah shel ha-Mistikah ha-'Ivrit ha-Kedumah," *Da'at* 29 (1992), pp. 12–16. The works are not always named in the manuscripts; some of the titles were indeed added arbitrarily by late editors. Quotations cited below from Hekhalot literature refer to paragraph numbers in *Synopse*.

¹² For a characterization of the mystical reality in Hekhalot literature see Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 40–79; A. Altmann, "Shirei Kedushah be-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot ha-Kedumah," *Melilah*, ed. E. Robertson & M. Wallenstein, II, Manchester 1946, pp. 1–24 (= A. Altmann, *Panim shel Yahadut*, ed. A. Shapira, Tel Aviv 1983, pp. 44–67); M. Smith, "Observations on Hekhalot Rabati," in A. Altmann (ed.), *Biblical and Other Studies*, Cambridge 1963, pp. 149–156; Scholem, *Merkabah*, pp. 20–64; and see S. Lieberman, "Mishnat Shir ha-Shirim," in Scholem, *Merkabah*, pp. 118–126; Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, pp. 98–126; idem, "Shirat ha-Mal'akhim, ha-'Kedushah' u-Va'yat Hibburah shel Sifrut ha-Hekhalot," in A. Oppenheimer, U. Rappaport & M. Stern (eds.), *Perakim be-Toledot Yerushalayim bi-Ymei Bayit Shenit. Sefer Zikkaron le-Avraham Schalit*, Jerusalem 1981, pp. 459–481; Elijor, "Demut ha-El"; J. Dan, "Three Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism," *The Seventh R. L. Feinberg Memorial Lecture in Judaic Studies*, Cincinnati 1984; Halperin, *Chariot*, pp. 11–37, 359–447; J. Dan, "The Religious Experience of the Merkavah," in A. Green (ed.), *Jewish Spirituality from the Bible to the Middle Ages*, New York 1986, pp. 289–307; Dan, *Ha-Mistikah*, pp. 154–162; P. Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, Albany 1992 (hereafter: Schäfer, *Hidden God*); R. Elijor, "Mysticism, Magic, and Angelology – the Perception of Angels in Hekhalot Literature," *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 1 (1993), pp. 3–53 (hereafter: Elijor, *Mysticism*). See further E. R. Wolfson, "Yeridah la-Merkavah: Typology of Ecstasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in R. A. Herrera (ed.), *Mystics of the Book – Themes, Topics and Typologies*, New York 1993, pp. 13–45.

¹³ For a summary of the different views of the time reflected in Hekhalot literature and its realistic historical background see Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 40–41; Scholem, *Merkabah*, pp. 1–5, 9–13; Dan, *Ha-Mistikah*, pp. 9–19; Halperin, *Chariot*, pp. 360–363. For the view that Hekhalot literature reflects a class struggle on a background of social revolution see idem, *Chariot*, pp. 377–387, 427–226; and for critiques of this view see R. Elijor, "Merkabah Mysticism, a Critical Review," *Numen* 37 (1990), fasc. 2, pp. 233–

Hekhalot literature with the beauty and majesty of nature, with wondrous phenomena and cosmic upheavals; at its core are the eternal entities of Shi'ur Komah and the Throne of Glory, the numinous essence of the Ineffable Names and the mysterious Hekhalot.¹⁴ This existence, drawing on Ezekiel's vision and the Merkavah tradition, is composed of firmaments and angels, shrines and chariots, legions and hosts, Cherubim and Serafim, Ofannim and Galgalim, beings of flame and holy Hayyot – all amazing sights of wondrous beauty, brilliance and magnificence.¹⁵ All the creatures of the Merkavah, described in this literature in a degree of detail unparalleled in any other Jewish source, officiate in the celestial shrines and participate in the heavenly ritual. They praise and exalt, glorify and magnify, intone prayers and benedictions. They sing and play musical instruments, officiate before the Throne of Glory and tie crowns to one another's heads; they are awesome in their beauty, unparalleled in their majesty, terrifying in their magnitude – described in human fashion but unutterably distant from man and his world.¹⁶

The poetic impact, liturgical inspiration and visionary language of Hekhalot literature represent a mystical world view that far transcends biblical tradition, raising serious questions as to the background and meaning of this literature and its ties with earlier tradition. The spiritual boldness required to create this arcane, visionary, heavenly world with its unprecedented angelology, the mystical freedom reflected in a new perception of the Divine Person, the highly detailed accounts of the esoteric tradition of Divine Names and angelic liturgy – none of these could have emerged ex nihilo; their origin is an enigma.¹⁷ Such preoccupation with supernal worlds, such speculation concerning the secrets of the Godhead and study of Divine Names go far beyond the limits of biblical tradition,

249; M. Mach, "Das Rätsel der Hekhalot im Rahmen der jüdischen Geistesgeschichte," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 21 (2) (1990), pp. 236–252.

¹⁴ See *Sefer Hekhalot, Synopse*, paras. 1–80; *Hekhalot Rabati, Synopse*, paras. 94–106, 152–162.

¹⁵ For an explanation of the terms used here see the sources and studies cited in previous notes. For typical examples of the celestial retinue see Alexander, Enoch; Elijor, *Hekhalot Zutarti*, pp. 24–35 and nn. 59–78; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*; Schäfer, *Hidden God*, pp. 21–36, 62–65, 129–135; Elijor, *Mysticism*, pp. 27–43.

¹⁶ On the celestial beings' sacred service see Elijor, *Mysticism*, pp. 45–51.

¹⁷ On the visionary world of the heavens and the new angelology see Dan, *Ha-Mistikah*, pp. 93–102; Elijor, *Mysticism*, pp. 22–43; Schäfer, *Hidden God*, 21–37, 62–65. On the new perception of the divine image see G. Scholem, "Shi'ur Qomah," *Pirkei Yesod ba-Havanat ha-Kabbalah u-Semaleha*, Jerusalem 1975; Elijor, *Demut ha-El*, pp. 15–31; A. Farber-Ginat, "Iyyunim be-Sefer Shi'ur Komah," in M. Oron and A. Goldreich (eds.), *Massu'ot, Mehkarim be-Sifrut ha-Kabbalah u-Mahashevet Yisra'el Mukdashim le-Zikhro shel E. Gottlieb*, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 361–394. For the importance and implications of the tradition of Divine Names see below, Sec. 4.

breaching the bounds of the Talmudic esoteric tradition as laid down in the Mishnah (Hagigah chap. 2). The sheer volume of Hekhalot literature, with its myriad descriptions of heavenly shrines and hundreds of verses purporting to represent the song of the heavenly beings and the praises uttered by the "descenders to the Merkavah," is astonishing. What circumstances could have inspired creation on such a large scale? How could its creators have contemplated so freely the secrets of the supernal worlds? Given the extent and variety of Hekhalot literature, it could not possibly have been written by a single individual. On the contrary, it was surely the work of some group or groups of persons, responding to an extraordinary experience that inspired them to violate convention.

A spiritual awakening, expressive of a radical transformation, does not generally take place in a vacuum. One can usually point to a backdrop of external and internal circumstances that stimulate the mind and echo in the depths of memory; alternatively, unexpected events may imprint themselves indelibly on reality, transforming it and inspiring creative efforts to plumb their meaning and significance. Accordingly, despite the considerable uncertainty involved in delineating Hekhalot literature, and despite one's reluctance to suggest a causal link between external, historical events and internal, spiritual arousal, it seems legitimate to attempt to associate such limit-breaking creativity with exceptional circumstances of some kind that permitted – perhaps even dictated – a new approach to hitherto forbidden realms.

The most plausible explanation for the emergence of this new esotericism is apparently a visionary eruption which, drawing on a sanctified ritual tradition, refused to accept a cruel, arbitrary reality in which the cultic center, the focus of religious worship, no longer existed. Denying the historical reality of destruction and annihilation, this eruption created a new spiritual world that rested on a mystical-ritual fulcrum, a surrogate for the no longer extant Temple. This spiritual world was, on the one hand, associated with heavenly shrines and the vision of the Merkavah, the Divine Chariot; on the other, it involved a transferal and elevation of the priestly and Levitical traditions of Temple worship to the supernal regions. Upon careful examination of Hekhalot literature one is led to suggest that the eternity and solemn beauty ascribed to the heavenly shrines, and the continuation of Temple worship in the firmament by the angels and the beings of the Merkavah, constituted, as it were, a foil to the finality of destruction, to the abolition of the priestly and Levitical cult in the earthly Temple; they answered an ur-

gent need – to perpetuate the destroyed Temple and its rites in the heavenly shrines.¹⁸

True, it is clear from prophetic tradition, post-biblical literature and Qumran writings that visions of a celestial Temple and angelic rites do not necessarily depend on destruction or loss. Indeed, they not infrequently reflect, directly or indirectly, a negative attitude to the earthly sanctuary – criticism of the Temple service and priestly conduct, sometimes even open rejection of the earthly Temple and those who served in it; for the relationship between the earthly Temple and its priests, on the one hand, and the heavenly shrine and its angels, on the other, is one of analogy, drawing various parallel lines of identification and rejection between the two.¹⁹ However, as I propose to show below, it was in reaction to the destruction of the earthly Temple that the creators of the tradition of the "descent to the Merkavah" and the "ascent to the Hekhalot" conceived the heavenly shrines, as depicted in the Hekhalot literature, in a degree of detail and variety unparalleled in any Jewish literary work of Late Antiquity. These constructs of the imagination arose as a spiritual response to the sense of loss, desolation and deprivation caused by the horrors of reality.²⁰

¹⁸ Johann Maier has compared the emergence of Ezekiel's Merkavah vision, not long after the destruction of the First Temple, to the appearance of the Merkavah tradition after the destruction of the Second Temple, but his view has not been discussed seriously and there has been no follow-up. See J. Maier, *Vom Kultus zur Gnosis. Bundeslade, Gottesthron und Markabah*, Salzburg 1964, pp. 95–148. Gruenwald also pointed out the important role of ritual parallels from a Temple context in the emergence of Merkavah mysticism or, at least, in certain common techniques of Merkavah mysticism; however, he did not link the two areas as a matter of principle. See I. Gruenwald, "Mekoman shel Masorot Kohaniyot bi-Yziratah shel ha-Mistikah shel ha-Merkavah ve-shel Shi'ur Komah," in Y. Dan (ed.), *Ha-Mistikah ha-Yehudit ha-Kedumah* (supra, n. 7), pp. 65–120, esp. p. 87. For the link between the emergence of ancient Jewish mysticism and the destruction see also idem, *Apocalypticism to Gnosticism*, pp. 125ff.

¹⁹ See Isa 6:1–3; I Kings 23:19; II Chron 18:18; 1 Enoch ch. 14; 2 Enoch; *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, and cf. the sources cited below, nn. 21–22. Compare Malachi 2:7, which links priests and angels: "For the lips of a priest guard knowledge, and men seek rulings from his mouth; for he is an angel [Heb. *mal'akh*] of YHWH of hosts"; and cf. the comparison of the Priest of the Congregation and the Angel of the Countenance as far back as Qumran, see D. Diamant, "Benei Shamayim – Torat ha-Ma'akhim be-Sefer ha-Yovelim le-'Or Kitvei 'Adat Qumran," in M. Idel, D. Diamant & S. Rosenberg, *Minhah le-Sarah, Mehkarim be-Filosofiyah Yehudit ve-Kabbalah Muggashim le-Sarah Heller Vilensky*, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 97–118 (hereafter: Diamant, Benei Shamayim), esp. pp. 111–112. For various contacts between the earthly Temple and the heavenly shrine see A. Aptowitzer, "Bet ha-Mikdash shel Ma'lah 'al pi ha-Aggadah," *Tarbiz* 2 (1931), pp. 137–153, 257–277; and cf. below, n. 21. Maier (supra, n. 18) pointed out that priestly traditions about heavenly counterparts of the terrestrial Temple are the source of the apocalyptic literature dealing with the Divine Throne and Chariot.

²⁰ For the significance of the destruction of the Temple – the focus of national life and the people's spiritual and ritual center – see S. Safrai, *Ha-'Aliyah la-Regel bi-Ymei*

This response could have occurred during the generations immediately following the destruction, when the impact of the events themselves was still fresh and developments in the practical world demanded compensation in the spiritual realm. The above suggestion does not claim, therefore, to set unambiguous chronological/historical limits, but rather to trace the relationship of a certain reality to the spiritual world described in Hekhalot literature and to determine the meaning of the continued identification with the heritage of the earthly Temple; for there is no doubt that Hekhalot literature is replete with direct and indirect allusions to the world of the priests and the Levites in the Temple. Its liturgical sections bear the clear imprint of the priestly and Levitical service; its language is strongly influenced by certain aspects of the sacred service and by literary traditions of the Temple rites. Thus, though one may dispute the actual relationship between the historical circumstances (the destruction and abolition of the Temple service) and their indirect literary expression (the tradition of the Hekhalot and the Merkavah), one cannot ignore the focal position of the ritual and liturgical heritage of the Temple in Hekhalot literature.

The mystical literature that emerged after the destruction did not materialize in a vacuum; but neither did it emerge fully formed as an immediate or delayed reaction to the historical crisis of the loss of the Temple cult alone. It also reflects crucial developments in religious consciousness that took place in the post-biblical period – in particular, religious creativity in certain priestly circles.²¹ The varied religious cur-

ha-Bayit ha-Sheni, Jerusalem 1965, pp. 8, 146–148, 178; M. D. Herr, "Yerushalayim, ha-Mikdash ve-ha-'Avodah ba-Mezi'ut uva-Toda'ah bi-Ymei Bayit Sheni," in Oppenheimer, Rappaport and Stern (eds.), *Perakim etc.* (supra, n. 12), pp. 166–178. On various views of events after the destruction see G. F. Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, Cambridge 1927, I, pp. 85ff.; S. J. D. Cohen, "The Significance of Yavneh: Pharisees, Rabbis, and the End of Jewish Sectarianism," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 55 (1984), pp. 27–53; and cf. also B. Boxer, "The Wall Separating God and Israel," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 73 (1983), pp. 349–374; M. Stone, "Reactions to the Destruction of the Second Temple," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 12 (1981), pp. 193–204. For the uncertainty as to the priests' fate after the destruction see G. Allon, *Mehkarim be-Toledot Yisra'el bi-Ymei Bayit Sheni u-vi-Tekufat ha-Mishnah ve-ha-Talmud*, I, Tel Aviv 1957, pp. 255–259.

²¹ On changes that took place in religious consciousness in the post-biblical period, particularly in the increased role attributed to angels and the status self-awareness of the priests, see M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Age*, I, Philadelphia 1974, pp. 233ff.; A. F. Segal, "Heavenly Ascent in Hellenistic Judaism, Early Christianity and their Environment," in *Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt* II (23:2), Berlin-New York 1979, pp. 1333–1394. Major portions of Qumran literature bear an unmistakably priestly imprint: *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, *The Damascus Covenant*, the books of I and 2 Enoch, *Testament of Levi*, *Book of Jubilees*, etc. See Charlesworth, *Pseudepigrapha*

rents that left their stamp on the outlook of the creators of the Hekhalot and Merkavah literature may be associated with apocryphal literature and Qumran writings, the tradition of the books of Enoch and alternative priestly traditions, on the one hand, and with heavenly liturgy and visionary conceptions of the heavenly Temple and angelic priesthood, on the other.²²

Hekhalot literature, which reveals the influence of biblical and post-biblical traditions about the heavenly Chariot, the celestial shrines and the heavenly cult, on the one hand, and of mythical elements of unknown origin relating to divine forces and supernal princes, on the other,²³ expresses a profound identification with the reality of the hea-

(supra, n. 9), in the introductions to the works just mentioned. For the link between priests and angels at Qumran and the perception of the heavenly Temple see C. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition*, Atlanta 1985, pp. 1–81 (hereafter: Newsom, *Songs*); Diamant, *Benei Shamayim*, pp. 97–118. For the central role of priests and Levites in the hierarchical structure of the Qumran sect, which considered itself a substitute for the Temple, see now Y. Schiffman, *Halakhah, Halikhah u-Meshihuyot be-Kat Midbar Yehudah*, Jerusalem 1993, p. 316. For angels at Qumran see M. J. Davidson, *Angels at Qumran*, Sheffield 1992. S. F. Noll, 'Angelology in the Qumran Texts,' Dissertation, Manchester 1979. – For the significance of the identification of the heavens as a Temple and the role of the angelic priesthood as the personnel of the heavenly Temple in apocalyptic literature, see M. Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven in Jewish and Christian Apocalypses*, New York & Oxford 1993 (hereafter: Himmelfarb, *Ascent*). For the views of angels in Second Temple literature see: S. M. Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands Serve Him: Exegesis and the Naming of Angels in Ancient Judaism*, Tübingen 1993; M. Mach, *Entwicklungsstudien des jüdischen Engelglaubens in vorrabbinischer Zeit*, Tübingen 1992.

²² On the links between Hekhalot literature and Qumran literature see Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 43–46, 54; J. Strugnell, "The Angelic Liturgy at Qumran – 4q Serekh Shirot 'Olat Ha-Shabbat," *Vetus Testamentum* 7 (suppl.) (1960), pp. 318–345; and cf. Scholem, *Merkabah*, pp. 29, 128; Newsom, *Songs*, pp. 39–58; C. Newsom, "Merkabah Exegesis in the Qumran Sabbath Shirot," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38/1 (1987), pp. 11–30; L. H. Schiffman, "Merkabah Speculation at Qumran: The 4q Serekh Shirot 'Olat Ha-Shabbat," in J. Reinharz et al. (eds.), *Mystics, Philosophers and Politicians. Essays in Jewish Intellectual History in Honor of Alexander Altmann*, Durham 1982, pp. 15–47; Y. Schiffman, "Sifrut ha-Hekhalot ve-Kitvei Qumran," in *Ha-Mistikah ha-Yehudit ha-Kedumah* (supra, n. 7), pp. 121–138, and further references ib.; Elior, *Mysticism*, pp. 17–22, 43–44; J. Baumgarten, "The Qumran Sabbath Shirot and Rabbinic Merkabah Tradition," *Revue de Qumran* 13 (1988), pp. 199–213. For links with apocalyptic literature see Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, pp. 29–72; Alexander, Enoch, Introduction; Halperin, *Chariot*, pp. 63–113; M. Himmelfarb, "Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the Hekhalot Literature," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 59 (1988), pp. 82–86.

²³ For the role of biblical traditions in shaping the world of the authors of Hekhalot literature, through such terms as Merkavah, *hekhal*, song (*shirah*), purity, Kedushah, Cherubim, priests and Seraphim, and the elaboration of these traditions, see below in this article. On the mythical ideas underlying the notion of *Shi'ur Komah* and the supernal forces in the pleroma, which bear names of unknown origin, see Elior, *Mysticism*, pp. 27–43.

venly vision, based on mythopoetic recollections of a religious ritual that had been extinguished by the destruction of the earthly Temple. This was a visionary reality based on a mystical transformation of the Temple and the priesthood, perpetuating the ritual heritage of the earthly Temple in the heavenly shrines. Accordingly, the basic notions of Hekhalot literature and the earthly and heavenly protagonists of the Merkavah tradition are intimately bound up with the numinous significance of the Temple and its worship and with the secrets of its priesthood's ritual heritage.

In order to substantiate these theses, I shall discuss in succession several names, expressions, terms and concepts, occurring repeatedly in Hekhalot literature, whose roots lie in the priestly service, in the Temple and its rites. On these grounds, I propose that the authors of this literature were inspired directly by priestly tradition and belonged to circles whose concern was to preserve and consolidate a visionary and ritual tradition associated mythopoetically with the Temple service.

1. Hekhal and Hekhalot

The two names used to describe this literature in the different traditions, Hekhalot and Merkavah, are directly related to certain key elements in the real, terrestrial Temple: Hekhalot recalls the *hekhal*, the central part of the Temple (generally translated as "sanctuary" or "shrine"), accessible exclusively to the priests and Levites, who performed the sacred service there; and Merkavah, "chariot," alludes to the *devir* or Holy of Holies, the inner sanctum of the Temple, which the High Priest alone was permitted to enter, and to the *kapporet*, the cover of the Ark, as described in Scripture: "The weight of refined gold for the incense altar and the gold for the pattern of the chariot – the cherubs – those with outspread wings screening the Ark of the Covenant of the Lord" (I Chron 28:18).²⁴ The word *hekhal* is in fact used most commonly in the

²⁴ On the term Merkavah/Chariot and its theological significance see S. Japhet, *I & II Chronicles. A Commentary*, London 1993, pp. 494–497. Cf. Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 39ff. For the term "pattern [or: image] of the chariot" cf. Exodus 25:8–9: "And let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them. Exactly as I show you – the pattern of the Tabernacle and the pattern of all its furnishings..."; and cf. I Chron 28:18 in comparison with Exodus 25:17–22: "You shall make a cover of pure gold... Make two cherubim of gold... The cherubim shall have their wings spread out above, shielding the cover with their wings..." And cf. also, concerning the link between the cover and the Cherubim spreading their wings over the ark, Ex 37:7–9; Num 7:89; I Kings 8:7; II Chron 5:8; and see below, n. 26. The Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath*

Bible to refer to the Temple, while the plural, *hekhalot*, reflects a world view originating in post-biblical and Qumran literature, according to which the heavens are essentially a Temple containing a varying number of *hekhalot* = shrines, *merkavot* = chariots and *devirim* = Holies of Holies.²⁵ The Chariot of the Cherubim is the upper part of the Ark of the Covenant, called the *merkavah*, chariot, or *kapporet*, cover, seen as the Throne of God, the place where He reveals Himself in the Temple. The same word is used to refer to Ezekiel's vision,²⁶ which – as we shall see – is intimately connected with the First Temple and its destruction.

The two protagonists of Hekhalot literature, R. Ishmael b. Elisha and Metatron, the "Prince of the Presence," are also portrayed in an unmistakably priestly context. R. Ishmael, the terrestrial protagonist, is the *tanna* described in the Babylonian Talmud (Berakhot 7a) as the High Priest who entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement to burn incense.²⁷ In *Hekhalot Rabbati* he is described, in terms similar to those used in the Talmud, as a priest burning an offering on the altar; as depicted there, he frequents the Temple, at the third entrance to the House of the Lord, and he convenes the Sanhedrin in the Chamber of Hewn Stone (*Lishkat ha-Gazit*). In the introduction to *Sefer Hekhalot* he

Sacrifice include the phrase "the image of the chariot throne"; see Newsom, *Songs*, p. 463.

²⁵ See *Enziklopediah Talmudit*, Jerusalem 1959, IX, pp. 40–61, s. v. *hekhal*, and cf. Concordance, s. v. *hekhal*, *hekhal YHWH*. For the perception of the heavens as a Temple and references to discussions of the terms Hekhalot, Merkavot, *devirim*, see Newsom, *Songs*, Concordance, pp. 402–404, 408, 430; and cf. Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, pp. 4–6.

²⁶ For the term "he who sits on the Cherubim" see Midrash Tanhuma, Va-Yakhel 7; Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* (Loeb ed.), London & New York 1930, III, vi, 5 [137] (p. 381). Cf. N. H. Tur-Sinai, "Merkavah ve-Aron," "Kapporet u-Keruvim," in his *Ha-Lashon ve-ha-Sefer ... Kerekh ha-Emunot ve-ha-De'ot*, Jerusalem 1956, pp. 2–24, 25–28; M. Haran, "Ha-Aron ve-ha-Keruvim," *Erez-Yisra'el* 5 (1959), pp. 83–90; and cf. Re'uyot Yehezkel, ed. I. Gruenwald, *Temirin*, I, Jerusalem 1972, p. 134: "And what is the name of Merkavah? For to the Cherub that is in it he rode and descended to [...]. He mounted on a Cherub and flew..." See *Sefer Hekhalot*, *Synopse*, para. 37: "And how many Merkavot does the Holy One, blessed be He, have? He has Merkavot of a Cherub, as Scripture says, He mounted on a Cherub and flew." – For the link between Ezekiel's vision and the Merkavah see M. Z. Segal (ed.), *Sefer Ben Sira ha-Shalem*, Jerusalem 1959, 48:6–10. And cf. *The Wisdom of Ben Sira* (Anchor Bible ed.), transl. P. W. Skehan, New York 1987, 49:8: "Ezekiel saw a vision and told about varieties of chariot [Heb. *zēnē merkābā*, lit.: "kinds of chariot"]." Cf. Halperin, *Chariot*, p. 48. And cf. David Kimhi's commentary to I Kings 7:13, on the words "The structure of the wheels was like the structure of chariot wheels": "This chariot is the Holy Chariot that Ezekiel saw in his prophetic vision, and Solomon saw in his wisdom what Ezekiel saw in his prophecy."

²⁷ The Hebrew term used in the Mishnah to denote the Holy of Holies is *lifnay ve-liftnim*, literally: in the innermost part (see Babylonian Talmud Yoma 61a).

is described as being permitted, by dint of his Aaronide ancestry, to enter the heavenly shrines. Other passages of Hekhalot literature, too, refer to his priestly origins and to the privileges thus bestowed upon him.²⁸

Metatron, the heavenly protagonist of Hekhalot literature,²⁹ also appears in apocryphal literature, the Midrash and Genizah documents as a High Priest who offers sacrifices on the heavenly altar.³⁰ He is also the

²⁸ R. Ishmael b. Elisha, who lived in the first half of the second century, was one of the sages of Yavneh, a colleague and disputant of R. Akiva. He was a priest (Ketubbot 105b) and a pupil of Nehunyah b. Hakanah. Hekhalot literature also portrays R. Ishmael as a priest, a disciple of Nehunyah b. Hakanah and colleague of R. Akiva. A *barayta* in Berakhot 7a describes him as High Priest. For his priestly attributes in Hekhalot literature cf. *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopse*, para. 151: "R. Ishmael said: Once I was offering a burnt-offering upon the altar, and I saw Akhatriel YH YHWH of Hosts seated on a high and lofty Throne..." This should be compared with the aforementioned *barayta* (Berakhot 7a). Ishmael b. Elisha may have been perceived in mystical tradition as the last high priest to serve in the Temple before the destruction, and as the first high priest to ascend in the Merkavah. Judah Halevi (*Sefer ha-Kuzari* I:65) already identifies R. Ishmael b. Elisha the High Priest with the R. Ishmael of the Hekhalot and the Merkavah. And see further Scholem, *Trends*, p. 356. On the third entrance to the Temple see Jer 38:14, and cf. *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopse*, para. 202. For R. Ishmael's priestly origins see further *Synopse*, paras. 3, 586, 681. On his service in the Chamber of Hewn Stone in the Temple see *ib.*, para. 678. R. Ishmael figures in the great majority of Hekhalot works. His colleague R. Akiva, who does not appear in all traditions, is not a priest, but his entry into the "grove," as described in Tractate Hagigah of the Babylonian Talmud, and his ascent to the heavenly shrines, described in terms similar to those of Moses' ascent to the heavens and associated with the tradition of Divine Names, entitle him to minister at the sacred service in general and make him privy to the tradition of mystical Names in particular. On R. Akiva's entry into the "grove" and ascent to the heavens "by means of a Name" see Hagigah 14b and Rashi ad loc. cf. C. R. A. Morray-Jones, "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate," part I: The Jewish Sources, *HTR* 86:2 (1993) pp. 177-217. For his similarity to Moses see Elior, *Hekhalot Zutarti*, p. 61. R. Ishmael forms a link between the traditions associated with the song of the descenders to the Merkavah, who assemble in the terrestrial Temple, and those concerning song in the heavenly shrine (see *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopse*, paras. 94, 202).

²⁹ For the many-faceted figure of Metatron see H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*, New York 1973² (hereafter: Odeberg, *Enoch*), pp. 79-146 (the new edition includes an introduction by J. C. Greenfield); Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 67-70, 366; *idem*, *Merkabah*, pp. 43-55; S. Lieberman, *Sheki'in*, Jerusalem 1939, pp. 11-16; *idem*, Appendix to Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic*, pp. 235-239; R. Margaliot, *Mal'akhei 'Elyon*, Jerusalem 1964, pp. 73-108; E. E. Urbach, *The Sages. Their Concepts and Beliefs*, transl. I. Abrahams, Jerusalem 1975, I, pp. 138-139; II, pp. 743-744 (hereafter: Urbach, *Sages*); M. Bar-Ilan, "Kisse H' - Mah shemi-Tahtav, Mah sheke-negdo u-mah she-ezlo," *Da'at* 15 (1985), pp. 21-35, esp. pp. 33-35. On Metatron in Hekhalot literature see Y. Liebes, *Het'o shel Elisha: Arba'ah she-Nikhnesu la-Pardes ve-Tiv'ah shel ha-Mistikah ha-Talmudit*, Jerusalem 1990², pp. 18ff.; Schäfer, *Hidden God*, pp. 29-32; for an up-to-date bibliography for Metatron see Mach, *Entwicklungsstudien* (supra, n. 21), pp. 394-396.

³⁰ On Enoch as High Priest and ancestor of the priestly dynasty see 2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch 71:32, in J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), *The Old Testament Pseudepi-*

High Priest who enunciates the Ineffable Name at the climax of the heavenly rites; his audience responds aloud, with exactly the same benediction as once uttered in the earthly Temple when the High Priest pronounced the Ineffable Name on the Day of Atonement.³¹

grapha, I, Garden City, NY, 1983, p. 208 (on the Jewish origin of this work see Scholem, *Merkabah*, p. 17); and see Jubilees 4:25 (in J. H. Charlesworth [ed.], *ib.*, II, Garden City, NY, 1985, p. 30): "And he offered the incense which is acceptable before the Lord in the evening (at) the holy place on Mount Qater." Enoch is also described as a priest in the Ethiopian Book of Enoch and in the Aramaic Book of Levi; see Himmelfarb, *Ascent*, p. 25. Metatron took Michael's place as High Priest of the heavenly Temple and is known as the "youth (or lad, Heb. *na'ar*) who serves in the sanctuary." Cf. *Bemidbar Rabba*, Naso, 12: "R. Simon said: When the Holy One, blessed be He, told Israel to build the Tabernacle, he motioned to the ministering angels that they, too, should make a Tabernacle. So when it was built below, it was built on high, and that is the Tabernacle of the youth whose name is Metatron, in which he offers up the souls of the righteous to atone for Israel during their exile." In this connection see A. Aptowitzer, "Bet ha-Mikdash shel Ma'lah etc." (supra, n. 19), p. 257. On Michael performing priestly duties at the altar see Bab. Talmud, Zevahim 62a: "They saw an altar of masonry and Michael the Great Prince standing and sacrificing upon it." Cf. also in the Talmud's account of the seven firmaments, Hagigah 12b: "Zevul, in which are Jerusalem and the Temple and an altar of masonry and Michael the Great Prince standing and offering up a sacrifice upon it," and cf. Menahot 110a. See also *Seder Rabba di-Bereshit*, *Synopse*, para. 772: "Above the firmaments there are seven shrines of fire and seven built altars of flame and seven camps of angels standing and seven of legions, prepared and standing, and Michael the Great Prince standing among them at their head as high Priest, clothed in the garments of the High Priesthood, and offering up a pure sacrifice of fire on the altar and burning incense on the incense altar...." See also Aptowitzer, *op. cit.*, pp. 257-259. For the identification of Metatron and Michael cf. *Sefer Zerubavel*: "I am Metatron, the Prince of the Countenance, and Michael is my name, and He appointed me to oversee His people and His loved ones" (Y. Eisenstein, *Ozar Midrashim*, Jerusalem 1969, p. 159; and cf. Y. Even Shemuel, *Midreshei Ge'ulah*, Jerusalem 1954, p. 73). On Metatron as High Priest, see further L. H. Schiffman & M. D. Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, Sheffield 1992 (hereafter: Schiffman-Swartz), pp. 25-28, 145-147, 156-157, esp. p. 145:

I adjure you

[Metatron], more beloved and dear than all heavenly beings,
[Faithful servant] of the God of Israel, the High Priest, chief of
[the priest]s, you who poss[ess seven]ty names; and whose name
[is like your Master's]... Great

Prince, who is appointed over the great princes

Who is the head of all the camps (T-S. KI 168, ll. 39-45).

In the *Alfa Beta de-Metatron* (Odeberg, *Enoch*, p. 32) Metatron is described as clad in eight garments, the standard number of garments of the High Priest; see Alexander, *Enoch*, p. 265 n. 12a, p. 303.

³¹ Scholem pointed out that the figure of Metatron in Hekhalot Literature includes elements previously identified with the angel Yahoel, "whose name is like that of his Master," and the angel Michael, who was considered priest in the upper regions and prince of the universe. In Scholem's view, the book known as *Re'uyot Yehezkel* is the earliest and most important source for the identification of Michael and Metatron, as it describes Metatron taking Michael's place in Zevul. See Scholem, *Merkabah*, pp. 44-46; and cf. the argument that the figure of Metatron is a composite of Michael, Enoch

Both R. Ishmael, the high priest and ascending mystical priest, and Metatron, the angelic high priest and Prince of the Presence, perform the sacred service – one in the earthly Temple and the other in the heavenly shrines. Both represent transitions and transformations between the terrestrial and supernal worlds, possible links between the divine and the human. For Metatron is none other than Enoch, son of Jared, a human being transformed into an angel (see Gen 5:24), an earthly priest converted into a heavenly, angelic priest, who serves in the supernal shrines and instructs the “descenders to the Merkavah” in the secrets of the heavenly Temple and the angelic service; while R. Ishmael is the last earthly high priest who ascends as mystical high priest from the earthly Temple to the heavenly shrines, descends to the Merkavah and observes the sacred service in heaven, participates in the angelic chant and returns to instruct the “descenders to the Merkavah” in the details of the divine service. The Hekhalot tradition lists in detail the esoteric knowledge without which no human being may approach the sanctuary or learn the secrets of the Merkavah, the secrets of the heavenly Temple, that Metatron reveals to Ishmael; it attributes to both, *inter alia*, a knowledge of the order of the heavenly world, the Names of God, the secrets of Shi’ur Qomah, and the texts of the angelic liturgy.

2. Prayer and Sacred Song in Hekhalot Literature

The writers of the Hekhalot literature, who call themselves “descenders to the Merkavah,” built complex ritual bridges between the earthly community, now deprived of its ritual center, and the celestial beings who

and “the lesser YHWH”: P. S. Alexander, “The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (1977), p. 162; cf. Odeberg, *Enoch*, pp. 79–96. In Hekhalot literature, Metatron is a composite of features ascribed in different traditions to different angels. Different Hekhalot tracts refer to him as Michael, Yahoel, Akhatriel, the Prince of the Countenance, Enoch, Ozahiah and the “youth,” as well as many other names. On Metatron’s seventy names see *Enoch, Synopse*, paras. 386–388. For “the dwelling-place of the youth whose name is Metatron” cf. *Synopse*, para. 390, and cf. Alexander, *Enoch*, p. 303. For Metatron’s priestly functions, officiating in the sacred service and attending the Throne of Glory, see *Synopse*, paras. 100, 385, 389, 390, 398, 399, 626. On the relationship between R. Ishmael the High Priest and Metatron see *Midrash ‘Aseret Harugei ha-Malkhut*, R. Margaliot, *Mal’akhei ‘Elyon* (supra, n. 29), p. 106, and cf. *ib.*, pp. 85ff. Metatron is identified with the “angel of the Lord” of Exodus 23:21 and called “the lesser YHWH”; see *Sefer Hekhalot, Synopse*, para. 15; and see Sanhedrin 38b. For the significance of the similarity between Metatron and God see Elijor, *Mysticism*, pp. 37–43; Dan, *Ha-Mistikah*, pp. 81–92. On the question of dual powers see A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, Leiden 1977; and see Liebes (supra, n. 29).

perpetuated the cult in the heavens. They created liturgical prototypes drawn directly from the ceremonial priestly tradition and the numinous Temple service. They were not concerned, however, to preserve the sacrificial rite itself or the priestly laws, perhaps because these had already been committed to writing – in considerable detail – in the Torah and the Mishnah; perhaps because the sacrificial rites had been abolished, while the accompanying liturgy could be continued; or perhaps because the writers of Hekhalot literature belonged to circles which had frowned on the sacrificial cult and were therefore reluctant to perpetuate it.³² On the other hand, they considered it necessary to preserve all the vocally and orally expressed ceremonial and numinous elements that had been denied written documentation because of their esoteric nature: the musical and vocal tradition of the Temple, on the one hand, and the tradition of Names and benedictions accompanying the Temple rites, on the other. The ritual and liturgical prototypes described in detail in the different traditions recorded in Hekhalot literature maintained a mythopoetic link with the sacred ritual, with a mystical and visionary abstraction of the destroyed Temple and those who served in it. The main thrust of this visionary abstraction was to transfer the relevant components of the priestly ritual – liturgy, song, music, blowing of trumpets and recitation of the Kedushah prayer – from the terrestrial to the supernal plane, on the one hand, and, on the other, to perpetuate in heaven various numinous ceremonies associated with the priestly blessing, the pronouncement of the Ineffable Name and the use of Divine Names, all practiced in the Temple.³³ The liturgical and ritual prototypes associated with this visionary abstraction of the Temple service are represented in Hekhalot literature by three interrelated modes of prayer: mystical prayer, shared prayer and heavenly prayer. Below I shall

³² It is not without interest that the sacred service in the Temple as described in the book of Chronicles involves only song and music, without sacrifices; see S. Japhet, *Enunot ve-De’ot be-Sefer Divrei ha-Yamim u-Mekoman be-Olam ha-Mahashavah ha-Mikra’it*, Jerusalem 1977, p. 197. The Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Service* also picture a heavenly Temple without sacrificial rites; see Newsom, *Songs*, pp. 39–58. It is also noteworthy that although the sacrifices occupied center stage in the terrestrial Temple cult, they are referred to only rarely in the apocalyptic literature, and then primarily as good deeds of righteous persons, offered together with incense or in prayers recited at the altar.

³³ Associations with the priests and the Temple in Hekhalot literature were pointed out, from differing standpoints, by Maier and Gruenwald (see supra, n. 18). See also Chernus’ proposal to compare pilgrimage to the Temple to ascent to the Merkavah (the Hebrew verb used for pilgrimage is *aliyah*, lit.: ascent); see I. Chernus, “The Pilgrimage to the Merkavah: An Interpretation of Early Jewish Mysticism,” *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought*, VIa-b (1987), pp. 1–35 (English section).

briefly describe these three modes and their main features, going on later to render a detailed account of the background and significance of each mode and the common denominator of all three.

Mystical prayer is prayer uttered during the descent to the Merkavah or the ascent to the Hekhalot, thus expressing the transition from earthly to heavenly existence. Recited by the descenders to the Merkavah, who learn it from the heavenly beings, it describes the magnificence and beauty of the heavenly shrines and the rites performed there. In this prayer, the descenders to the Merkavah try to imitate the rites of the heavenly beings, which, as described, are clearly inspired by the service of the priests and Levites in the Temple.³⁴ These rites are associated with the language of the liturgical song that accompanied the Temple ritual, on the one hand, and the numinous language of the esoteric Names used at the climax of the sacred service, on the other. Descent to the Merkavah was conditional upon the recitation of mystical prayer, which involved a knowledge of the Divine Names and of the heavenly procedure of song, music, Kedushah, benediction and praise; it also required initiates to purify themselves and acquire esoteric knowledge of the celestial hierarchy, which was based on a scale of relative proximity to the Holy of Holies in the supernal shrines. Mystical prayer was reserved for exceptional individuals, who constantly purified and sanctified themselves, emulating the models of heavenly ritual which in turn had been inspired by the earthly Temple service. The "descenders to the Merkavah" learned mystical prayer from one another in their closed circles; it was recited not at definite times but only on the occasion of descent to the Merkavah.³⁵

Shared prayer is the prayer of two corresponding communities – the company of the angels on high and the congregation of human worshippers on earth, which together recite the Kedushah prayer and extol the Creator. The Kedushah of Hekhalot literature, like that of the conven-

³⁴ See Elior, *Mysticism*, pp. 43–51.

³⁵ For examples of mystical prayer see *Hekhalot Zutarti*, *Synopse*, para. 421; *ib.*, 470; *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, 544–546, 548, 551–553, 558, 564, 569, 585–592, 593–596; *Merkavah Rabbah*, 656, 707–708. For the different aspects of mystical prayer in Hekhalot literature see the studies cited above in n. 2. On the poetic and formal characteristics of prayer in the Hekhalot see the series of papers by J. Maier, "Attah hu Adon," *Judaica* 22 (1966), pp. 209–233; "Hekhalot Rabbati xxvii, 2–5," *Judaica* 21 (1965), pp. 129–133; "Poetisch-liturgische Stücke aus dem 'Buch der Geheimnisse'," *Judaica* 24 (1968), pp. 172–181; "Serienbildung und 'Numinoser' Eindruckseffekt in den poetischen Stücken der Hekhalot Literatur," *Semitics* 3 (1973), pp. 36–66. And see further M. D. Swartz, *Mystical Prayer in Ancient Judaism. An Analysis of Ma'aseh Merkavah*, Tübingen 1992; M. Bar-Ilan, *Sitrei Tefillah ve-Hekhalot*, Ramat-Gan 1987 (hereafter: Bar-Ilan, *Sitrei*).

tional prayer book, is based on the proclamation of the Seraphim in the heavenly shrine as heard by Isaiah in his vision; it describes the song of the angels as they praise the Creator with verses from the books of Ezekiel and Psalms. However, unlike the fixed Kedushot familiar from the prayer book, the Kedushot of Hekhalot literature feature varying formulas and unfamiliar elements. The Kedushah prayer interlinks the lower and upper worlds, merging the heavenly panegyrics with the Jews' praises on earth. Solemnized daily at the Morning and Afternoon Services, both in the heavenly shrines and in terrestrial prayer assemblies, Kedushah expresses the sanctification of God by His servants singing His praises, the celebration of His kingship by angels and humans glorifying Him in concert. The Kedushah occurring in the Yozer benediction – thought by some scholars to be of ancient origin and initially associated with the Temple³⁶ – is seen in Hekhalot literature both as a

³⁶ The daily prayer-book contains several Kedushot, which differ from one another in their function and wording: the Kedushah of 'Amidah; the Kedushah of Yozer; "Kedushah de-Sidra"; the Kedushah of the Additional Service (*Musaq*). The Kedushah of 'Amidah occurs in the third of the Eighteen Benedictions – the benediction proclaiming God's holiness – and is recited during the cantor's repetition of the prayer in the Morning, Afternoon and Additional Services. The Kedushah of Yozer is part of the benediction "Yozer Or" before the Reading of Shema'. Another Kedushah, known as "Kedushah de-Sidra," is recited in the prayer entitled "A redeemer shall come to Zion." The Kedushah opens with the formula, "We will sanctify Your name in the world, just as they sanctify it in the highest heavens," or "We will reverence and sanctify You according to the beautiful prayer of the holy Seraphim who sanctify Your name in the Sanctuary." The perception of the Kedushah prayer as a liturgical partnership between the upper and lower worlds dates back to the Qumran sect and apocryphal literature. On the liturgical partnership between members of the terrestrial congregation and the celestial host see *Megillat ha-Hodayot*, ed. Y. Licht, Jerusalem 1957, III, 19–23. On the angels (known in Aramaic as 'irin, messengers) who recite the Kedushah cf. Ethiopian Enoch 39:12–13. On various versions of the Kedushah at Qumran see M. Weinfeld, "Ikkevot shel Kedushat Yozer u-Pesukei de-Zimrah bi-Megillot Qumran u-ve-Sefer Ben Sira," *Tarbiz* 45 (1976), pp. 15–26; M. D. Flusser, "Jewish Roots of the Liturgical Trishagion," *Immanuel* 3 (1973–74), pp. 37–43; D. Spinks, "The Jewish Sources for the Sanctus," *The Heythrop Journal* 21 (1980), pp. 168–179; A. Libreich, "Ha-Shevah be-Siddur ha-Tefillah," in *Sefer ha-Yovel shel ha-Doar bi-Melot lo She-lashim Shanah*, ed. M. Ribalow, New York 1952, pp. 255–262; M. Weinfeld, "Nekadesh et Shinkha ba-'Olam," *Sinai* 54 (vol. 108) (1991), pp. 69–76. Scholars differ as to the time of composition of the Kedushah and its origin, which they have defined as "most obscure," failing to discern its ancient origin and the mystical parallels in Hekhalot literature; this was because they ascribed Hekhalot literature to a late period – the end of the Gaonic period. On the problems involved in researching the Kedushah see I. M. Elbogen, *Ha-Tefillah be-Yisra'el be-Hitpattehutah ha-Historit* (transl. Y. Amir, ed. Y. Heinemann), Tel Aviv 1972, pp. 47–54 (hereafter: Elbogen, *Ha-Tefillah be-Yisra'el*); A. Altmann, "Shirei Kedushah be-Sifrut ha-Hekhalot ha-Kedumah," *Panim shel Yahadut* (supra, n. 12), pp. 44–67, 264–268; Y. Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah bi-Tekufat ha-Tanna'im ve-ha-Amora'im*, Jerusalem 1964, pp. 23, 145–147 (hereafter: Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah*); *idem*, "Kedushah u-Malkhut shel Keri'at Shema' u-Kedushah de-'Amidah,"

liturgical partnership between the lower and upper worlds, which exult in God and magnify His praises by proclaiming His sanctity and uniqueness, and as a mystical abstraction of a rite once performed in the Temple and associated with the sanctification and praise of God's name. This mystical abstraction, a detailed representation of the Kedushah recited in the supernal worlds by the beings of the Merkavah, stands at the center of heavenly prayer.

Finally, heavenly prayer is associated with the vision of the Merkavah and the tradition of the Temple service. Its complex liturgical polyphony represents the sanctification of the deity and His enthronement in the upper worlds by the beings of the Merkavah. Similar in structure to Kedushah, recited by the Seraphim, Ofannim and holy Hayyot, it comprises song, music, praise, Kedushah, enunciation of Names and pronunciation of the Ineffable Name, and elevation and crowning of the Name. Heavenly prayer is based on the priestly tradition of Names and the Levitical Temple song, which also involved praising, singing, playing musical instruments and uttering Holy Names. Revolving around the pronunciation, sanctification and elevation of God's Name, it is recited daily in the upper worlds, with imposing ceremony and solemnity; it provides a backdrop for the entire worldview that pervades Hekhalot literature.³⁷

This tripartite division is rather arbitrary, for heavenly prayer – the pivot of Hekhalot literature – is generally known to human beings only

in Y. Heinemann, *Iyyunei Tefillah* (ed. A. Shin'an), Jerusalem 1981, pp. 12–21; E. Fleischer, "Le-Nussahah ha-Kadum shel Kedushat ha-'Amidah," *Sinai* 63 (1968), pp. 229–241; idem, "Li-Tefutzatan shel Kedushot ha-'Amidah ve-ha-Yozer be-Minhagot ha-Tefillah shel Bnei Erez-Yisra'el," *Tarbiz* 38 (1969), pp. 255–284; E. Werner, "The Genesis of the Liturgical Sanctus," in H. Westrup (ed.), *Essays Presented to E. Wellesz*, Oxford 1966, pp. 19–32; idem, "The Doxology in Synagogue and Church. A Liturgico-Musical Study," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 19 (1945–46), pp. 292–308 (hereafter: Werner, *Doxology*); idem, *The Sacred Bridge. The Interdependence of Liturgy and Music in Synagogue and Church During the First Millennium*, London-New York 1959; idem, *The Sacred Bridge*, II, New York 1984 (hereafter: Werner, *Bridge*); L. Hoffman, *The Canonization of the Synagogue Service*, Notre Dame 1979. Concerning the origins of the Kedushah of Yozer in the Temple see Libreich, *op. cit.*, p. 255; and compare Baumstark's thesis that the "Yozer" prayer in general reflects a type of prayer common in the post-Exilic Temple service: A. Baumstark, *Comparative Liturgy* (transl. F. L. Cross), London 1958, p. 50; Werner, *Doxology*, pp. 293ff.; Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah*, p. 146. For the origin of "Hallelujah," which, being shared by angels and humans in the Temple, is frequently compared to Kedushah, see Werner, *op. cit.*, pp. 324–328. And see recently M. Mach, "Kedoshim Mal'akhim – ha-El voha-Liturgiah ha-Shemeymit," in *Massu'ot* (supra, n. 17), pp. 289–310. On the Kedushah in Hekhalot literature, which differs from the standard versions of Kedushah, see Gruenwald, "Shirat ha-Mal'akhim ..." (supra, n. 12), and below, Sec. 5.

³⁷ See Scholem, *Merkabah*, pp. 20–30, 101–102; Altmann (supra, n. 36); and see also below.

through its descriptions in the mystical prayer of the descenders to the Merkavah; while references to shared prayer are relatively infrequent, since the bulk of Hekhalot literature does not treat this dual ceremonial as a whole, but concerns itself primarily with the prayer of the descenders to the Merkavah, that is, of a small number of initiates, representatives of the community at large, whose prayer is modeled on angelic prayer. At the same time, Kedushah itself, the central element of heavenly prayer, is also a characteristic element of shared prayer. Nevertheless, although these different modes of prayer are indeed intertwined, there are good grounds for distinguishing between them and considering each separately, as they represent different facets of the world of the Merkavah and its ties to the cultic heritage.

My object here is to discuss a feature common to all three modes of prayer: their strong ties with traditions associated with the Temple and the priestly service; to point out the role of "heavenly prayer" in perpetuating the numinous essence of the Sacred Service; to examine the similarities and differences between "heavenly prayer," which is recited exclusively by the heavenly creatures, and "shared prayer," which figures in both terrestrial and celestial worlds; and to characterize a crucial aspect of "mystical prayer" in the circles of Merkavah mysticism – the desire to imitate angelic prayer, which was itself modeled on the priestly service.

3. Heavenly Prayer

The liturgical polyphony reverberating through the heavenly worlds receives considerably more attention than the other modes of prayer in the different Hekhalot traditions.³⁸ Hekhalot literature devotes detailed accounts to the beauty and splendor of the heavenly choirs and the unceasing worship of the celestial beings; in no less detail it describes the denizens of the upper worlds praying and intoning the Kedushah, singing and exulting, playing music and "tying crowns" to one another's heads, expressing enthusiasm and praise. Their names, their positions, hierarchies, the texts of their benedictions and their functions in the

³⁸ For examples of the liturgical polyphony of the prayer of the celestial beings see *Sefer Hekhalot, Synopse*, paras. 30, 31, 34, 42, 71; *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, paras. 94, 95, 99, 101, 103, 126, 152–162, 168–171, 175, 181–189, 197, 268–270, 273–274, 306, 405–406, 418, 469–470, 475, 486–488, 498, 526, 530–540; *Ma'aseh Merkavah, Synopse*, paras. 546, 552–553, 555–556, 564–565, 582, 588–592, 714, 745, 773, 795–798, 816–817, 819–820, 850, 966, 972, 974. On the hymns in Hekhalot literature see Altmann, "Shirei Kedushah ..." (supra, n. 36), pp. 1–24; Scholem, *Trends*, pp. 57–63.

heavenly choirs are recounted with a poetic power and eloquence, in a degree of detail surpassing that of earlier liturgical and angelological traditions. The attentive reader of these accounts of the heavenly liturgical polyphony will realize that they were created by juxtaposing and interweaving elements taken from three main sources: Ezekiel's vision of the Merkabah; Isaiah's vision of the Seraphim singing their threefold "Sanctus" in the celestial Temple; and the Levitical and priestly musical traditions of the earthly Temple, as embodied in various passages of the biblical books of Psalms, Nehemiah and Chronicles and described in the Mishnaic tractates of 'Arakhin, Sukkah and Tamid.³⁹

In the various traditions of Hekhalot literature, all the components of the heavenly Chariot proclaim God's holiness in the threefold formula of the Seraphim of Isaiah 6:3, in the rushing and tumult of the wings of the Hayyot and the Ofannim in Ezekiel's vision (Ezek 1:24; 3:12-13; 10:8), and in the chanting and music-making of the priests and Levites in the Temple (II Chron 5:12-13; Ps 98:4-6; 149:3; Neh 12:27-47). They participate in the heavenly ceremony in the supernal shrines, intoning the two languages reserved for the sacred service: the Levitical songs and music that once accompanied the sacrificial rites; and the enigmatic Divine Names enunciated by the priests delivering their benediction at the close of the ritual and by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement.⁴⁰

I have shown elsewhere that the writers of Hekhalot literature interpreted Ezekiel's inaugural vision as a visionary abstraction of terms originally denoting the cultic objects of Solomon's Temple, as described in detail in I Kings (7:23-37; 8:6-9) and II Chronicles (3:7-14; 4:3-5, 14-15).⁴¹ Ezekiel the priest, exiled to Babylon with Jehoiachin in 597 BCE, who may have witnessed the Babylonian king carrying off from Jerusalem "all the treasures of the House of the Lord," stripping off "all

³⁹ Ezek 1:10; Isa 6:1-4; Neh 12:27-47; I Chron 15:16, 19-24, 28; 16:5-11; Ps 149:3; 150:3-5; 81:3; II Chron 5:12-13. And see further Mishnah, 'Arakhin 2:6; Sukkah 5:4. On the relationship between Levitical song in the Temple and the Psalms see Mishnah, Tamid 7:4. And cf. Safrai, *Ha-'Aliyah la-Regel* (supra, n. 20), pp. 17-18.

⁴⁰ For the cultic aspects of the Temple service in the Second Temple period see Safrai, *Ha-'Aliyah la-Regel*; A. Büchler, *Ha-Kohanim va-Avodatan be-Mikdash Yerushalayim ba-'Asor ha-Shanim ha-Aharon she-Lifnei Hurban Bayit Sheni*, Jerusalem 1966; cf. Y. Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yisr'elit*, II, Jerusalem & Tel Aviv 1960, pp. 474, 476; Maier (supra, n. 18), pp. 27-33, 61-93. And cf. further M. Haran, *Temples and Temple Service in Ancient Israel*, Oxford 1978. On the priestly benediction as a remnant of the Temple service see Elbogen (supra, n. 36), pp. 54-57; Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah*, pp. 78-79, and see below. On the High Priest's pronouncement of Divine Names see below, Sec. 4.

⁴¹ Elijor, *Mysticism*, pp. 23-26.

the golden decorations in the Temple of the Lord" (II Kings 24:13), experienced his vision in the fifth year of the exile of Jehoiachin. In that vision he saw a mystical transfiguration of the golden "pattern of the chariot - the cherubs" (I Chron 28:18) which had stood in the Holy of Holies, and a visionary abstraction of the bronze structures in the Court of the Temple. He describes the lions, oxen, Cherubim and Ofannim - all inanimate cultic vessels forged from burnished bronze in the shape of animals and winged creatures, set on wheels [Heb. *ofannim*], spokes and hubs, which once stood in the sanctuary, their faces turned toward the four points of the compass. These vessels, all associated in the Temple cult with various phases of the sacred service, were metamorphosed in Ezekiel's vision into four winged creatures, sparkling with the luster of burnished bronze, with faces of a lion, an ox, an eagle and a human being; these creatures stood on four Ofannim/wheels, with the appearance of "two Ofannim/wheels within one another," facing all four cardinal directions (Ezek 1:4-11, 15-21). A similar metamorphosis transformed the golden "pattern of the chariot - the cherubs" in the Holy of Holies (I Chron 28:18) and the winged Cherubim, overlaid with gold, which stood in the *devir*, their wings touching one another (I Kings 6:23-28; II Chron 3:1-13), "standing up on their legs" (ib. 3:13), which became sacred creatures, winged and radiant, "each one's wings [touching] those of the other" (Ezek 1:4-11), each having "a single rigid leg" (ib. 1:6). In the second version of the vision they became four-faced, winged Cherubim standing on four Ofannim/wheels, all recalling appurtenances of the Temple that the prophet saw in his "visions of

⁴² The following components of Ezekiel's vision (Ezek chs. 1-10) also figure in the description of the Temple: Ofan/wheel, Ofannim/wheels, Cherubim, *Hayyot/oxen*, wings, lion(s), bronze; see I Kings 7:25-37 and the sources cited in the text here. The metamorphosis of Ezekiel's vision, as suggested here, agrees with Freud's celebrated account of the meaning of dreams and visions: "If you wish to understand the full causal contexts of a given detail in a dream or in any mental construct, you must take care first to detach it from its overt, immediate contexts.... It turns out that the entire sequence of associations that emerged separately from the various elements are also clearly connected to one another." In other words, analysis of the items appearing in a vision, having been detached from their overt contexts and broken down into separate elements, indicates that many of the items mentioned in the vision parallel items associated with the Temple and the cult objects. Ezekiel himself, borne back to the courts of the Jerusalem Temple in his vision (8:3), explains the identity between the holy creatures he saw in his first vision and the Cherubim that once stood in the Temple: "Now the cherubs were standing on the south side of the House.... The cherubs ascended; those were the creatures that I had seen by the Chebar Canal.... They were the same creatures that I had seen below the God of Israel at the Chebar Canal; so now I knew that they were cherubs" (10:3, 15, 20). On the Temple connection of the Cherubim see *Encyclopaedia Biblica* IV, cols. 238ff., s.v. "Keruv, Keruvim" (Heb.). Ezekiel's ties with the Temple are also obvious from chaps. 40-47 of his book.

God" (ib. 10; 8:3).⁴² Ezekiel's vision also endows this complex cultic structure with multidirectional motion, an appearance of splendor, adding rushing winds and beating wings, clouds and flashing fire, radiance and torches – and the whole structure is maintained in the visionary portrayal of the heavenly Merkavah. The authors of Hekhalot literature, however, take these same creatures, Cherubim and Ofannim – which now, by virtue of Ezekiel's prophetic vision, possess motion and emit sounds and flames – and subject them to a mystical transformation and ritual personification, picturing them as heavenly priests and Levites officiating in the ceremonial rites of the heavenly shrines, where they perform the heavenly service, blow trumpet blasts and fanfares, sing and chant and play musical instruments before the Throne of Glory.

The Mishnaic tractate Tamid – one of the oldest sections of the Mishnah, probably first compiled not long after the destruction of the Second Temple and based on the testimony of eye-witnesses to the Temple rites⁴³ – describes the priests sounding their trumpets at the climax of the High Priest's service:

⁴³ Tractate Tamid of the Mishnah is phrased in archaic Hebrew, involving expressions rarely encountered elsewhere in the Mishnah; it ends with the words, "This was the rite of the Daily Burnt-Offering, in the service of the House of our God." See Y.N. Epstein, *Mevo'ot le-Sifrut ha-Tanna'im*, Jerusalem 1957, pp. 27–31; and cf. H. Albeck, *Shishah Sidrei Mishnah Me'orashim*, Seder Kodashim, introduction to Tractate Tamid, pp. 291–292; Seder Mo'ed, introduction to Tractate Yoma, p. 216.

⁴⁴ Our English versions of passages from the Mishnah, both here and subsequently, largely follow H. Danby's translation (London 1933). In the present passage we depart from his version (ib., pp. 588–589), translating the phrase *take'u ve-heri'u ve-take'u* as "They blew a blast, a fanfare and a blast," which seems to us better to convey the solemn, ceremonial spirit of the original Hebrew; we shall proceed similarly below whenever we feel that Danby's translation does not express the special meaning needed here. – The priests' musical instruments were rams' horns (*shofarot*), trumpets and horns; cf. Tosefta, Sota 7:15: "On that day the priests stood on the walls and at the barriers, golden trumpets in their hands, and blew blasts and fanfares; if any priest did not hold a trumpet, it was rumored that he was perhaps not a priest." See Büchler (supra, n. 40), p. 71. Cf. further the priestly phraseology already alluded to, in Mishnah Sukkah 5:4: "Two priests stood at the upper gate ..., with two trumpets in their hands. At cock-crow they blew a blast, a fanfare and a blast When they reached the Court [of Women] they again blew a blast, a fanfare and a blast" Compare the description of the priests blowing their trumpets while the High Priest was officiating, Ben Sira 50:16 [22–23]: "The sons of Aaron would sound a blast, / the priests, on their trumpets of beaten metal; // A blast to resound mightily / as a reminder before the Most High" (Anchor Bible ed., supra, n. 26, p. 547); and see also Mishnah Sukkah 5:4 and Tamid 7:3. On the myriads of horns and thousands of trumpets and rams' horns in the heavenly shrines see *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopsis*, para. 231. On "blowing the horn" in the seventh Hekhal see ib., para. 250; on the herald who "blows a blast, a fanfare and a blast" in the seventh Hekhal see *Hekhalot Zutarti*, ib., para. 408. Several tannaitic

When the High Priest was minded to burn the offering, he used to ascend the Ramp... Then he walked around the Altar... And two priests stood at the table of the fat pieces, with two silver trumpets in their hands. They blew a blast, a fanfare and a blast (Tamid 7:3).⁴⁴

Hekhalot literature describes the service in the heavenly shrines in similar language; there, however, the Ofannim replace the priests and it is they who blow their trumpets at the climax of the rite:

And in the seventh shrine Ofannim of light sprinkle pure *foliatum* and balsam / and a double Ofan blows a blast, a fanfare and a blast.⁴⁵

At the end of the rite, after the trumpet blasts, the priests would bless the congregants in the Temple (Mishnah Tamid 7:2). In the supernal shrines, too, the same order is followed:

And horns emerge from beneath His Throne of Glory
Retinue after retinue, and blow a blast and a fanfare and bless.⁴⁶

While in the Temple it was the task of the Levites and the singers (Neh 7:1, 44; I Chron 9:33; II Chron 5:12) "to praise and extol the Lord" (I Chron 23:30), to sing, play their instruments and raise their voices in exultant hymns of praise during the sacrificial rites, in the supernal shrines it was all the denizens of the Merkavah who gave thanks and praise and participated in a ceremony of song which presumably replaced the sacrifices; the *middot* of the bearers of the Throne, the Ofannim of the Chariot, the cherubim and the holy Hayyot are those who sing and chant and trill:

For in six voices they sing before Him,
The *middot* of the bearers of His Throne of Glory,
The Cherubim and Ofannim and holy Hayyot aloud,
Each outdoing his fellow and different from his predecessor.⁴⁷

sources indicate that in Second Temple times trumpets were blown only in the Temple; see Mishnah, Rosh ha-Shanah 1:4, and cf. the *barayta* in the Babylonian Talmud, ib. 30a.

⁴⁵ *Hekhalot Zutarti*, *Synopsis*, para. 411. For the priests blowing trumpets see Num 10:8, 10; Josh 6:4, 8, 9, 13, 16; on trumpets in the Temple see II Chron 5:13: "And as the sound of the trumpets, cymbals, and other musical instruments, and the praise of YHWH, 'For He is good, for His steadfast love is eternal,' grew louder, the House, the House of YHWH, was filled with a cloud." Cf. Neh 12:35, and see also II Chron 29:26–28: "When the Levites were in place with the instruments of David, and the priests with their trumpets ... All the congregation prostrated themselves, the song was sung, and the trumpets were blown – all this until the end of the burnt offering."

⁴⁶ *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopsis*, para. 192.

⁴⁷ *Ib.*, *Synopsis*, para. 103. (The poetic structure and layout here and hereafter is my own. – R.E.) On the song sung daily by the Throne of Glory see ib., paras. 251, 260. On "all manner of song and music" in the upper regions see ib., para. 236; on the wheels of the Chariot singing before the Throne of Glory see *Sefer Hekhalot*, *Synopsis*, para. 30;

Glorious Ofannim trill before Him in joy and gladness
 And holy Cherubim sing a gracious song.
 The holy Hayyot intone in song with the secret of their mouths;
 Their wings are like lofty waters,
 They recount the greatness of Your Name, Rock of Worlds.⁴⁸
 Beginning of praise and genesis of song,
 Beginning of rejoicing and genesis of music,
 Sung by the singers who daily minister
 To YHWH, God of Israel, and His Throne of Glory
 ...Of praise and song of each and every day,
 Of rejoicing and music of each and every season,
 And of *higgayon* issuing from the mouths of holy ones
 And of *niggayon* gushing from the mouths of servants.⁴⁹

Ma'aseh Merkavah. *Synopse*, para. 564. – For the Hayyot praising, extolling and reciting the Kedushah prayer see *Sefer Hekhalot, Synopse*, paras. 31, 71. On songs of praise sung by the Cherubim see *ib.*, para. 34. On Seraphim uttering “song, panegyric, glory, power and pride to glorify their King with all manner of praise and holiness” see *ib.*, para. 42. The Hebrew words *shir, shirah* (song), *meshorer/meshorerim* (singer[s]) and their cognates occur hundreds of times in Hekhalot literature; see P. Schäfer et al., *Konkordanz zur Hekhalot-Literatur, II (lamed-taw)*, Tübingen 1988, pp. 648–649. On the role of the song in Hekhalot literature see K. E. Grözinger, “Masoret ve-Hiddush bi-Tefisat ha-Shir ba-Zohar,” *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-Mahashevet Yisra'el* 8 (1989), pp. 348–351 and detailed bibliography *ib.*

⁴⁸ *Ma'aseh Merkavah, Synopse*, para. 593. The emphasis on “pleasant (Heb. *nehumah*) song” and “intone in song ... their mouths” is in keeping with the tradition that the Levites’ music was sung: “And they did not utter [song] with harp and lyre, but with the mouth alone” (Mishnah, ‘Arakhin 2:6). On the song that the Levites used to sing in the Temple see also Mishnah, Tamid 3:8. Although the Levites also played various musical instruments in the Temple, as implied by many biblical and Mishnaic traditions (see below), the major element of their duties was “making their voices heard” (I Chron 15:16ff.; and cf. II Chron 5:12–13). – For an expression recalling “their wings like ... waters” see *Ma'aseh Merkavah, Synopse*, para. 596: “as the sound of many waters is the sound of their wings.” The word here translated as “lofty,” Heb. *zihayon*, is typical of the panegyric tone of Hekhalot literature; it generally appears as part of a longer expression, such as “with pride of height and dominance of loftiness (*zihayon*),” see Y. Zelikovich-Nadav, “Shimmushei Lashon be-Sefer Hekhalot Rabbati,” M. A. Thesis, Jerusalem 1953, pp. 11–12.

⁴⁹ *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, paras. 94–95. For the expression “princes who serve” or “ministering angels” cf. other typical derivatives of the root *sh,r,t*, “to serve, minister,” generally reserved for the priesthood: “They shall be servitors in my Sanctuary,” Ezek 44:11; “They served at the Tabernacle of the Tent of Meeting,” I Chron 6:17; “He appointed Levites to minister before the Ark of YHWH, to invoke, to praise, and to extol YHWH God of Israel,” *ib.* 16:4; “The priests who minister to YHWH are the sons of Aaron ...,” II Chron 13:10; “... to be His ministers and to make offerings to Him,” *ib.* 29:11; “the priests, the ministrants of the sanctuary who are qualified to minister to YHWH ... The Levites, the servants of the Temple,” Ezek 45:4–5. The words *higgayon* and *niggayon* have the connotation of making music; cf. Ps 92:4: “With *higgayon*, with voice and lyre together.”

The heavenly choirs, like those of the Levite singers, not only sing and chant but also play instruments. The lyres, timbrels and cymbals, trumpets and horns, on which the Psalmists played music for the glory of God and to accompany the priestly and Levitical service in the Temple, are transformed in Hekhalot tradition, becoming the instruments of the celestial protagonists of Ezekiel’s vision. Playing on these instruments, the Hayyot, Ofannim and Cherubim sing and chant, praise and extol, blow trumpet blasts and fanfares and utter their blessings in the supernal shrines. Biblical traditions describe the music of the Temple and the labor of the Levites, who played their lyres, harps and percussion instruments; we read there of the priests blowing their trumpets, in honor of the Ark of the Lord or in the Temple: “All the Levite singers ... dressed in fine linen, holding cymbals, harps, and lyres, were standing to the east of the altar, and with them were one hundred and twenty priests who blew trumpets” (II Chron 5:12–13); “The Levites ... the singers, with musical instruments, harps, lyres, and cymbals, joyfully making their voices heard ... Also the singers ... to sound the bronze cymbals ... with harps on *alamot* ... with lyres on the *sheminit* ... the priests sounded the trumpets” (I Chron 15:16, 19–24); “... the Levites ... with song, accompanied by cymbals, harps, and lyres ... and some of the young priests, with trumpets” (Neh 12:27, 35).⁵⁰ The Mishnah, too, speaks of the music in the sacred service: “... and the Levites with lyres, harps, cymbals, trumpets and musical instruments ... and they utter song” (Sotah 5:4). These scenes are transferred to the heavenly shrines, now referring to the holy Hayyot playing lyres, the Cherubim accompanying their song with cymbals, and around them the Ofannim beating timbrels and blowing their trumpets:

From the sound of His Holy Creatures playing their lyres,
 From the sound of His Ofannim joyfully beating their timbrels,
 And from the sound of His Cherubim songfully clashing their
 cymbals.⁵¹

⁵⁰ See Ps 81:3; 149:3; 150:3–5; and cf. Neh 12:27: “At the dedication of the wall of Jerusalem, the Levites, wherever they lived, were sought out and brought to Jerusalem to celebrate a joyful dedication with thanksgiving and with song, accompanied by cymbals, harps and lyres”; I Chron 15:19–23; 16:5–6; II Chron 5:12–13. For the hymns and songs accompanying the sacrifices see II Chron 29:27; Ben-Sira 50:14–16; and see Newsom, *Songs*, p. 18. See further, for the song sung by the Levites in the Temple, Mishnah, Tamid 3:8; 7:3–4. For vocal and instrumental music in the Temple see Werner, *Bridge, II*, pp. 1–25; on the prayers accompanying the sacrifices see Aptowitzer (*supra*, n. 19), pp. 261–262; M. Greenberg, *‘Al ha-Mikra ve-‘al ha-Yahadut. Kovez Ketavim*, Tel Aviv 1985, p. 180; *idem*, “Tefillah,” *Encycl. Biblica VIII* (1982), cols. 910–917.

⁵¹ *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, para. 161. See Gruenwald, *Shirat ha-Mal’akhim*, p. 468. For lyres, timbrels and cymbals in the Temple cf. sources cited in the previous

And a double Ofan ch[ee]rs like a fowl, the horn held in two branches,
And blows a blast, a fanfare and a blast.⁵²

The heavenly choruses also accompany their song with harps and shofarot (rams' horns), in addition to the lyres, cymbals, timbrels, trumpets and horns mentioned in these passages. These instruments, once used in the sacred service in the earthly Temple, are taken over by the celestial beings officiating in the heavenly shrines as they discharge their priestly duties.⁵³

The vision of the Chariot, the Merkavah, revealed to the exiled priest Ezekiel shortly after the destruction of the First Temple, is seen by the authors of Hekhalot literature as a framework for their mystical worldview after the destruction of the Second Temple. Ezekiel, torn from the proper venue of his priestly duties, who "saw visions of God" in "the fifth year of the exile of King Jehoiachin" (Ezek 1:1-2), transformed the cultic Temple vessels into visionary entities in the celestial shrine and the golden "pattern of the chariot – the cherubs" from the Holy of Holies (I Chron 28:18) into the sublime heavenly Chariot/Merkavah of the Cherubim and the holy Hayyot. The writers of Hekhalot literature, for their part, grappling with the chaotic reality of loss and desolation after the destruction of the Second Temple, also endeavored to recreate the ruined Temple in their mind's eye, to perpetuate in their vision the numinous aspects of the Levitical and priestly service. Like Ezekiel, who preserved the numinous essence of divine majesty through mystical metamorphosis of cultic elements, the "descenders to the Merkavah" tried to preserve the memory of their bygone world in their vision, to order the chaos through a magnificent liturgical-mystical metamorphosis and to perpetuate the now discontinued ritual tradition in the heavenly shrines through mythopoetic abstraction. With Ezekiel's vision to inspire them as a conceptual prototype, they replaced the ruined earthly Temple with

note; see further I Chron 13:8. For cymbals see Mishnah, Tamid 7:3; 3:8; and cf. Mishnah, Middot 2:6: "And there were chambers beneath the Court of the Israelites ..., and there the Levites used to place their harps and lyres' and cymbals and all instruments of music." For celestial beings playing instruments and singing cf. Revelation 15:2. For timbrels and pipes and the singing in the supernal worlds cf. 2 Enoch 6:27; for rams' horns blown by the angels and the song of the heavenly messengers (Heb. *'irim*) see ib. 7:13. The trumpets were generally reserved for the priests, as stated previously, but in the Mishnaic passage cited above they are entrusted to the Levites; and see further *Encycl. Biblica* IV, cols. 470-471.

⁵² Schäfer, *Geniza Fragmente* (supra, n. 9), p. 105 ll. 10-11 (my completion of the text, R. E.).

⁵³ For the angels playing on high see Gruenwald, *Shirat ha-Mal'akhim*, pp. 467-469; M. Bar-Ilan, "He'arot la-Mahazor be-'Inyenei Mal'akhim," *Or ha-Mizrah* 35/1 (124), Tishrei (1986), pp. 7-12.

eternal, supernal shrines. In their minds, moreover, the visionary entities originally associated with the cult of the terrestrial Temple became the functionaries of the cult in the heavenly shrine. Thus, the inanimate Ofannim/wheels of some of the cultic appurtenances of Solomon's Temple (I Kings 7:32), metamorphosed in Ezekiel's vision into the Ofannim/wheels of the Chariot/Merkavah (Ezek 1:15-16; 10:9-13), are mystically personified in the Hekhalot tradition by the animate Ofannim who blow their blasts and fanfares in the sacred service on high, emulating the ministry of the priests on earth; the winged Cherubim described in detail in some of the cultic objects of the First Temple (I Kings 8:6-8; II Chron 3:10-14) and figuring in the vision of the Chariot as visionary entities (Ezek 10:8-22), become the Cherubim who sing, play cymbals and officiate in the heavenly shrines, imitating the Levites' labors. The heavenly ceremony is described through a new ritual metamorphosis of the visionary entities of the supernal Chariot; the Cherubim, Ofannim and holy Hayyot, originally associated with the First Temple and its rites, are portrayed in Hekhalot literature in mythopoetic terms, which transfer the priests' and Levites' ministry in the earthly Temple to the eternal, supernal spheres:

The holy Hayyot likewise devote themselves, sanctify and purify themselves more than them

And each and every one bears one thousand thousand crowns of various luminaries on its head

And they clothe themselves in garments of fire

And wrap themselves in raiment of flame

And cover their faces in lightning.

Why do the holy Hayyot and glorious Ofannim and majestic Cherubim Purify and sanctify and clothe and wrap themselves ...?

Because the Merkavah is before them...

And they all stand in terror and fear, in purity and sanctity

And utter song, praise, hymn, rejoicing and extolling in unison,

In one utterance, in one mind and one melody.⁵⁴

The Merkavah beings are described in terms deriving from Temple worship in general – but in particular from the various rituals prescribed to protect one against the dangers attendant upon approaching the Sanctuary. Self-sanctification and self-purification, wearing sacred vestments, donning a crown engraved with God's name, standing in purity and singing in unison – all these are explicitly mentioned in various contexts

⁵⁴ *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, paras. 184-185. Cf. also *Sefer Hekhalot, Synopse*, para. 54, for a description of the angels bathing, purifying and clothing themselves, standing and singing; and see ib., paras. 181, 811, 814-816, 916.

of the priestly and Levitical service in the Temple.⁵⁵ The ceremonial chant in unison, the approach to the Sanctuary, are conditional upon meticulous and intricate preparations; as described in the Bible: "When the priests came out of the Sanctuary – all the priests present had sanctified themselves ... – all the Levite singers ..., dressed in fine linen, holding cymbals, harps, and lyres, were standing to the east of the altar, and with them were 120 priests who blew trumpets. The trumpeters and the singers joined in unison to praise and extol the Lord; and as the sound of the trumpets, cymbals, and other musical instruments, and the praise of the Lord ... grew stronger ..." (II Chron 5:11–13). As noted above, we find a similar account of the heavenly liturgical ceremony in Hekhalot literature:

⁵⁵ Expressions associated with purification and ritual immersion occur hundreds of times in Hekhalot literature; see *Concordance* (supra, n. 47), s. v. *tahor, tohorah, tehorim, tevilah, tovelim*. For the word *mittaharim*, "purify themselves," cf. Neh 13:22: "I gave orders to the Levites to purify themselves and come and guard the gates ..." See also ib. 12:30: "The priests and Levites purified themselves." On the source of rite of purification cf. Lev 16:4; and see Y. Knoch, *Mikdash ha-Demamah. 'Iyyun be-Rovdei ha-Yezirah ha-Kohanim she-ba-Torah*, Jerusalem 1993, pp. 142–145. The priests were not permitted to enter the Temple or embark on their tasks without first immersing themselves; on ritual immersion and self-sanctification in the Temple see Mishnah, Tamid 1:2, 4; 2:1; and cf. Yoma 3:3. – For "raiment of flame" cf. the priestly vestments mentioned in Ex 28:1–29, 40–43; Ex 39; Lev 16:4; Neh 7:72. Cf. Ezek 42:14, 44:17–19; and compare "those wondrously arrayed for service" in *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 4Q405 23 ii 10. The High Priest's costume is mentioned in Ben-Sira 50:11 (Anchor Bible ed., p. 546): "Wearing his splendid robes / and vested in sublime magnificence"; the Mishnah, Tamid 1:1, refers to the prescribed sacred vestments that the priests wore while officiating; Josephus, too (*Ant* III, vi–vii), describes them in detail. For the crowns worn by the holy Hayyot cf. the "holy diadem" of the High Priest, Ex 39:30; Lev 8:9. For the "magnificent ephodim" of the angelic singers (*Sefer Hekhalot, Synopse*, para. 57) compare the High Priest's ephod, ex 39, and the ephodim mentioned in *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* 4Q405 23 II 5; cf. Newsom, *Songs*, p. 335. For "girt (Heb. *hagurci*) in pride" (ib.) compare "and wind (Heb. *hagarta*) turbans upon them," "girt with a linen sash," referring to the sacral vestments of Aaron's sons, the priests (Ex 29:9; Lev 16:4). The angels bear the Ineffable Name on their heads – "On his head a crown of holiness, with the Ineffable Name inscribed thereon" (*Sefer Hekhalot, Synopse*, para. 38), like the High Priest, upon whose frontlet the words "holy to YHWH" were inscribed (Ex 39:30). And cf. Josephus, *Ant* III, vii, 6, who describes the "plate of gold, bearing graven in sacred characters the name of God." For rabbinic views of the Name engraved on the frontlet see Bab. Talmud, Shabbat 63b. For the verb "to stand" (Heb. root *'ayin, mem, dalet*) in this context cf. "All the Levite singers ... were standing to the east of the altar," II Chron 5:12; "The priests stood at their watches ...," ib. 7:6; and see Num 7:2; Deut 18:7; Ps 134:1; Neh 12:44; and cf. I Chron 6:18: "And those were the appointed men (Heb. *'omedim*) and their sons." And compare: "The herald used to proclaim every morning in the Temple: Priests, stand at your tasks and Levites at your platforms and Israel at your stations" (Bab. Talmud, Yoma 20b); cf. Jer. Talmud, Shekalim 5:1; cf. Mishnah, Tamid 7:3.

And they all stand in terror and fear, in purity and holiness
And utter song, praise, hymn, rejoicing and extolling in unison,
In one utterance, in one mind and one melody.⁵⁶

After their self-sanctification and self-purification, after properly clothing themselves, the heavenly creatures stand in order of ascending sanctity and present themselves for their sacred labors. They take part in the liturgical unison in the heavens, where they sing together, utter songs of praise and hymns of thanksgiving, in language reminiscent of Ezekiel's visions and the Temple ritual. The utterance of songs in unison is of crucial significance, leading as it does to the climax of the heavenly ceremony:⁵⁷

Said R. Ishmael: YHWH, YHWH, a God compassionate and gracious,
God of Israel
On the Ofannim and on the Hayyot and on the wheels of the Chariot
and on the Seraphim
All standing in one mystery, of one mind, in unison
And the Ofannim and the holy Hayyot and the majestic Ofannim and
the enflamed Seraphim and the wheels of the Chariot
Speak with a loud voice, with a great rushing sound, mighty and strong
With a great rushing sound, they say:
Blessed be the name of the glory of His kingdom to all eternity
From the place of the house of His Presence.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, para. 185. For other traditions in Hekhalot literature concerning unison chants in the upper worlds see *Sefer Hekhalot, Synopse*, paras. 57–58, 67; *Hekhalot Rabbati*, ib., para. 187; *Ma'aseh Merkavah, Synopse*, para. 553. And see further below, n. 58.

⁵⁷ See Ezek 1:5–15, 16, 22–23; 3:12–13; 10:2–17; Mishnah, Yoma 6:2.

⁵⁸ *Ma'aseh Merkavah, Synopse*, para. 553. For the instrumental and vocal unison of the priests and Levites see II Chron 5:13: "The trumpeters and the singers joined in unison to praise and extol YHWH." For different traditions of songs sung in unison in the heavenly shrines cf. the various Enoch tracts: "They all speak with one voice, blessing, glorifying, extolling, sanctifying the name of the Lord of the Spirits. And he will summon all the forces of the heavens, and all the holy ones above, and the forces of the Lord – the cherubim, seraphim, ophanim, all the angels of governance They shall lift up in one voice, blessing, glorifying, extolling They shall all say in one voice, 'Blessed (is He) and may the name of the Lord of the Spirits be blessed for ever and evermore'" (1 Enoch 61:9–11; Charlesworth ed., p. 42). And cf. ib. 39:12–13. See Scholem, *Merkabah*, pp. 30, 129; see 2 Enoch 19:6: "And in the midst of [the angels] are 7 phoenixes and 7 cherubim and 7 six-winged beings, all having but one voice and singing in unison" (Charlesworth ed., p. 134). In the daily "Yozer" benediction worshippers say, "... proclaim with awe in unison aloud ..., all respond in unison and exclaim with awe" For further examples and an analysis of the development of the concept see Weinfeld, "Nekaddesh etc." (supra, n. 36); idem, "The Heavenly Prayer in Unison," in *Meqor Hajjim (Georg Molin Festschrift)*, Graz 1983, pp. 427–437. For the description of the Ophanim and holy Hayyot exclaiming "with a great noise, a noise of great rushing, mighty and strong," cf. the account of the priestly service in Ben-Sira: "A blast to resound mightily / as a reminder before the Most High" (Ben-Sira 50:23). For

4. The Tradition of the Names

The liturgical song, sung in sublime unison by the Ofannim and holy Hayyot, Seraphim and Galgalim/wheels "in one mystery, of one mind," is but a prelude to the central part of the celestial ceremony, that is, the explicit pronunciation of the Ineffable Name, its enunciation, benediction, elevation and enthronement. This heavenly ceremonial parallels, on the one hand, the High Priest's pronunciation of the Ineffable Name at the climax of the service in the earthly Temple on the Day of Atonement, and the benedictory response of the worshippers, who fall to their knees and prostrate themselves upon hearing the Name, on the other. The benediction recited by the denizens of the Merkavah at the close of the ceremonial refers to the Tetragrammaton, in wording similar to the liturgical formula that was recited in the earthly Temple upon hearing the Ineffable Name pronounced by the High Priest. The Mishnah describes the Day of Atonement service in detail, counting ten occasions on which the Ineffable Name was pronounced at the climax of the ceremony:

[The High Priest] then came to the Scapegoat [lit.: the he-goat to be sent away]... And thus he used to say: O the Name [Heb.: *Ana ha-Shem*], Thy people, the House of Israel, have committed iniquity, transgressed and sinned before Thee. O by the Name, atone, I pray you, for the iniquities and transgressions and sins.... And when the priests and the people who stood in the Temple Court heard the Ineffable Name come forth from the mouth of the High Priest, they used to kneel and bow themselves and fall on their faces and say, Blessed be His name, whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever (Yoma 6:2).

The Babylonian Talmud provides further details:

Our Rabbis taught: Ten times did the High Priest pronounce the Name on that day [= the Day of Atonement]: three times at the first confession, thrice at the second confession, thrice in connection with the Scapegoat, and once in connection with the lots. And it already happened that when he pronounced the Name, his voice was heard as far as Jericho (Yoma 39b; cf. Tosefta Yoma 2:2).

The Ineffable Name was enunciated during the confession, in the formula "O the Name", and when the High Priest prayed for atonement, the Name was said in the formula of an oath or invocation: "O by the Name [Heb.: *ba-Shem*], atone, I pray You...." The Talmud associates

the liturgical formula "Blessed be His name, whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever" (Mishnah, Yoma 3:8), recited in the Temple as a response instead of "Amen," see Tosefta, Berakhot 6:22 (Lieberman ed., p. 39), and Tosefta, Ta'anit 1:12 (ib., p. 327); and cf. Werner, *Doxology* (supra, n. 36), pp. 283-285, and references cited there.

the first occasion with historical developments in the esoteric tradition of Names and the care that was exercised in pronouncing Sacred Names, even in the Temple:

Our Rabbis taught: At first, the twelve-lettered Name used to be entrusted to all people. When unruly persons increased, it was confided to the pious of the priesthood, and the pious of the priesthood would pronounce it indistinctly [lit.: "swallowed it"] during the chanting of their brother priests.... Rav Judah said in the name of Rav: The forty-two lettered Name is entrusted only to him who is pious and meek.... And he who knows it, is heedful thereof, and observes it in purity, is beloved above and popular below, feared by men, and inherits two worlds, this world and the World to Come (Kiddushin 71a).

According to a Gaonic tradition, the Name enunciated by the High Priest on the Day of Atonement was that of forty-two letters: "And Rav Hai said: The High Priest did not say the words 'O the Name,' but he said the forty-two lettered Name."⁵⁹

The passages just quoted from the Mishnah and the Talmud do not specify which Names were enunciated; neither do they provide any indication of their nature or their pronunciation. Nevertheless, even though the Names are only alluded to – in contradistinction to the Hekhalot tradition, which treats the subject in great detail – the text clearly testifies that the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name was one of the climaxes of the Sacred Service: it was entrusted exclusively to the High Priest, once a year, on the Day of Atonement, in the Holy of Holies. Moreover, it hints at the existence of an esoteric tradition of enunciating the Sacred Names, related to the ritual tradition of the Temple, to which the priests were privy. It was forbidden to all but the priests in the Temple to pronounce the Ineffable Name; this prohibition, and the well-known admonition to refrain from the use of Sacred Names – "He that makes worldly use of the Crown shall perish" (Avot 1:13), interpreted in Avot de-R. Natan as referring to profane use of the Ineffable Name – allude to the esoteric nature of the Name of God and the traditions of its pronunciation, and indicate the special importance ascribed to it in the priestly service. Moreover, we thus have evidence that the letters (consonants) of the Name and their vocalization, which de-

⁵⁹ For the formula "O the Name" see Urbach, *Sages*, I, pp. 130-131; II, pp. 738-739. For the 42-lettered name see ib., pp. 132-133; and cf. J. Trachtenberg, *Jewish Magic and Superstition*, New York 1987, pp. 94-95; L.H. Schiffman, "A Forty-Two Letter Divine Name in the Aramaic Magic Bowls," *Bulletin of the Institute of Jewish Studies* 1 (1973), pp. 97-102. On the tenfold pronunciation of the Ineffable Name on the Day of Atonement see also Tosefta, Yoma ch. 2.

termined its pronunciation, were thought to possess supreme numinous significance.⁶⁰

The writers and editors of such works as *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Hekhalot Zutarti*, *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, *Shi'ur Komah* and *Shivhei Metatron* disregarded the prohibition on pronouncing and using the Sacred Names; they wrote lengthy discourses about the tradition of the Names and their divine nature, specifying the ceremonials that accompanied the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name. The tradition of the Names in Hekhalot literature is based on two premises: first, that the essence of God is embodied in His Ineffable Name; second, that the divine creative force is embodied in unintelligible letter combinations which come to be identified with a mysterious divine utterance. Heavenly and terrestrial existence come into being through the unfolding and revelation of this mysterious divine utterance; the divine words with which the world was created are perceived as Names with creative power, as letters linking heaven and earth. The Name encompasses the arcane divine essence, the creative force hidden in the letters and the vocal element that binds the terrestrial and celestial worlds.⁶¹ This tradition, ritually associated, it seems, with the High Priest's service in the Temple, listed the various Sacred Names; it described a visionary abstraction of the rites attendant upon the pronunciation of the Names; and it put various "Explicit Names" in the mouth of Metatron, the celestial High Priest, at the climax of the heavenly ceremony:

⁶⁰ For the Ineffable Name and the significance of its revelation in biblical priestly tradition cf. Knohl (supra, n. 55), p. 139. On the numinous element in the Ineffable Name see R. Otto, *The Idea of the Holy*, Oxford 1958, pp. 74–75; on the connection between the theurgical tradition of the enunciation of the Name and its mystical significance see E. R. Dodds, "Theurgy and its Relationship to Neoplatonism," *Journal of Roman Studies* 37 (1974): 55–69. The prohibition on the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name was a tannaitic law, according to which only the priests in Jerusalem were permitted to articulate the Name "YHWH" with the proper vocalization, while all others should use the substitute word "Adonai" (Mishnah, Sotah 7:6; Sifre Num 39:43; Sifre Zuta to Num 6:27; Bab. Talmud, Sotah 38a). And see Schiffman, *Halakhah, Halikhah* etc. (supra, n. 21), pp. 214–221. For the mystery and awe surrounding the Ineffable Name and its pronunciation, as well as the Names in general in Talmudic tradition, see further Bab. Talmud Nedarim 8b; ib. 7b; Sanhedrin 55b–56a; iv. 60a, and cf. Rashi ad loc.: "The four-lettered Name is a Name, how much more so the forty-two-lettered Ineffable Name." And see further Avot de-R. Nathan, Long Version, ch. 12: "Any person who makes [profane] use of the Ineffable Name has no part in the World to Come"; "And these are the persons who have no part in the World to Come: ... Abba Saul says, Also whoever pronounces the Name as it is written," Mishnah, Sanhedrin 10:1. And see Bab. Talmud, Avodah Zarah 17b–18a and Rashi ad loc.

⁶¹ See Elior, *Mysticism*, pp. 11–12 and references cited ib.

And the youth [= Metatron] comes and prostrates himself before the Holy One, blessed be He, You and his [your?] Name are My Name. And he says: "Blessed are You, YHWH our God, King of the Universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments ... And Who has revealed his mysteries to us and taught us to understand His great and awesome Name. Blessed are You, YHWH, Who reveals some of His mysteries to Israel." And he says, "Blessed be the Glory of YHWH from His place. YHW HW HW AHY YH YHW" And that youth whose name is Metatron brings whispering fire and places it in the ears of the Hayyot, so that they should not hear the voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, speaking, and the Ineffable Name that the youth whose name is Metatron pronounces at that time in seven voices in the name of the Living and Pure and Venerated and Awesome YHWH, I am that I am, the Living, YHWH, YWAY, HKH HH WH HWH WHW HH HY HH HH YHY HYH YHY YHWH This shall be my Name for ever, this my appellation for all eternity.⁶²

A dialog takes place in the upper Hekhal between "the voice of the Holy One, blessed be He, speaking," which is inaudible to all but Metatron, "who serves before fire devouring fire," and the seven voices of Metatron, who pronounces the Ineffable Name, inaudible to all but God. The Names uttered by Metatron are combinations of letters or sound units, devoid of any intelligible semantic significance, undifferentiated in meaning; they are in the nature of inscrutable vocal patterns, incomprehensible formal entities. The divine voice heard by Metatron is probably similar.

The Ineffable Name (Heb. *ha-shem ha-meforash*), which itself is merely a euphemistic substitute for the most secret Name, can be heard only by the High Priest and by God Himself, as "whispering fire," and deafens the denizens of the Merkavah. In the ceremony in the earthly Temple, too, the Ineffable Name was known only to the High Priest and concealed from his auditors, as we learn from a *barayta* in the Jerusalem Talmud, which points out that the word *le-'olam*, "for ever," in the verse "This shall be my Name for ever" is derived from the same root as the Hebrew verb "to conceal" or "to disappear"; hence the Ineffable Name, having been pronounced in the Temple by the High Priest, immediately "disappeared" from the hearers' memories:

⁶² [*Shivhei Metatron*] *Synopsis*, paras. 384, 390. For the difficult phrase we have translated as "You and His Name are My Name," cf. "My Name is in him," Ex 23:21, which is interpreted as referring to God's Name given to Metatron; cf. "He is His name and His Name is He" below (near n. 83), referring to the link between God and His Name. Cf. Odeberg, *Enoch*, p. 93. For the third benediction of the Amidah prayer – the blessing of God's Holiness – and its parallels in Hekhalot literature, see Bar-Ilan, *Sitrei*, p. 145; and cf. further ib., pp. 144–152.

Ten times did the High Priest pronounce the Name on the Day of Atonement. ... Those close by used to fall on their faces, while those farther away used to say, "Blessed be His Name, Whose glorious Kingdom is for ever and ever." None of them departed the place until it [= the Ineffable Name] had disappeared from their memories. "This shall be my Name *le-olam*" – [read instead:] "This shall be my name *le'alem*" [= to disappear] (Jerusalem Talmud, Yoma 3:7).

At the end of the ceremony, as described in the Mishnah, the entire congregation prostrated themselves upon hearing the Ineffable Name: "And when the priests and the people who stood in the Temple Court heard the Ineffable Name come forth from the mouth of the High Priest in holiness and sanctity, they used to kneel and bow themselves and fall on their faces and say, Blessed be His name, whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever" (Yoma 10:2). This liturgical formula, which replaced the standard "Amen" in the Temple, reappears in Hekhalot literature as the supernal creatures' response to the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name. They too would prostrate themselves, "and say after him, 'Blessed be His name, whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever'."⁶³

Hekhalot literature conceives of the Divinity as a system of Holy Names woven about the Ineffable Name; the Ineffable Name itself is seen as inexplicable units of sound, embodying a supreme concentration of the divine power that created the Universe. In other words, the Ineffable Name transcends any linguistically defined meaning; it is the source of the essence, vitality and unity of Creation, the pivot of the mystical-theurgical knowledge associated with the being and oneness of Creation.⁶⁴ The enunciation of the Ineffable Name in unison, at the climax of the Merkavah beings' song of praise to God, possesses paramount theurgical significance. This is implied and in fact explicitly stat-

⁶³ *Synopse*, loc. cit. For a description of the congregation prostrating themselves upon hearing the Ineffable Name enunciated by the High Priest, see Ben-Sira 50:19–21 (Anchor Bible ed., p. 547): "As the high priest completed the service at the altar / by presenting to God the sacrifice due; / Then coming down he would raise his hands / over all the congregation of Israel: / The blessing of the Lord would be upon his lips, / the name of the Lord would be his glory. / Then again the people would lie prostrate / receiving the blessing from the Most High." A few lines before (v. 17), the text refers to the congregation bowing down upon hearing the trumpets: "Then all the people with one accord / would quickly fall prostrate to the ground / In adoration before the Most High, before the Holy One of Israel."

⁶⁴ On the role of the Ineffable Name in Hekhalot literature and the significance of the tradition of the Divine Names see K. Grözinger, "The Names of God and the Celestial Powers; Their Function and Meaning in the Hekhalot Literature," *Mehkerei Yerushalayim be-Mahashevet Yisra'el* 6 (1987), English Section, pp. 53–86; Elijor, *Demut ha-El*, pp. 17–24.

ed in Hekhalot literature, in unmistakably priestly contexts, recalling the association with liturgical traditions of praise that prescribed the psalms sung to accompany the daily Temple service (Mishnah Tamid 7:4; Sukkah 5:4). There is also an intimate bond with the priestly benediction that was recited upon termination of the daily sacrificial offering (Mishnah, Tamid chs. 5–6). The glorification of God's name in song and music, accompanying the sacrificial rites, and the benediction with the Ineffable Name, recited as a closing ceremony, were an integral part of the priestly and Levitical service in the Temple.

Thus, we read in the Bible at the close of the priestly benediction (Num 6:22–27): "Thus they shall link My Name with the people of Israel, and I shall bless them" (ib. v. 27). Similarly, in the book of Psalms: "Let them praise the Name of YHWH, for it was He who commanded that they be created... Let them praise the Name of YHWH, for His Name, His alone, is sublime" (Ps 148:5, 13); "Let them praise His Name in dance; with timbrel and lyre let them chant His praises" (ib. 149:3).

According to the tradition cited in the Mishnah, the significance of the benediction is implicit in the very pronunciation of the Ineffable Name, particularly in the Temple service: "After what manner was the blessing of the priests? ... In the Temple they used to pronounce the Name as it was written, but in the provinces by (using) a substituted word [= *Adonai*]" (Mishnah, Sotah 7:6). And the Talmud *ad loc.* states that the priests used to bless the people with the Ineffable Name – "Another authority has taught: 'Thus shall you bless the people of Israel' [Num 6:23] with the Ineffable Name."⁶⁵

The priestly benediction was recited in the Temple on the steps of the Sanctuary, at the climax of the ritual, after the daily burnt-offering had been sacrificed and incense burned. Recited after the end of the various

⁶⁵ The passage cited here (Sotah 7:6) reads in full as follows: "After what manner was the blessing of the priests? In the provinces it was pronounced as three blessings, but in the Temple as a single blessing; in the Temple they pronounced the Name as it was written, but in the provinces by a substituted word; in the provinces the priests raised their hands as high as their shoulders, but in the Temple above their heads, excepting the High Priest, who raised his hands only as high as the frontlet. ..." And see Rashi *ad loc.* (Bab. Talmud Sotah 38a): "'But in the Temple above their heads': because they blessed the people with the Ineffable Name and the Divine Presence was above the joints of their fingers. 'Who raised his hands only as high as the frontlet': because the Name was inscribed thereon." The passage is repeated almost verbatim in Mishnah, Tamid 7:2.

prostrations and blessings, its main element was, as we have stated, the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name as written.⁶⁶

The Hekhalot tradition reveals the essence of the relationship between the Ineffable Name and the priestly benediction. It holds that all three verses of the benediction are in effect linked with the pronunciation of the Name, as their very recitation involves the enunciation of the Name:

That is the Ineffable Name that issues from the priestly benediction. Know that from the threefold priestly benediction in the Torah issues the Ineffable Name with which the priests used to bless the people of Israel in the Temple. Therefore, our rabbis, of blessed memory, said: It is forbidden to look upon the priests when they raise their hands [in blessing] in the Temple, because they used to bless Israel with the Ineffable Name and would conceal the name in the melody of their brothers the priests.⁶⁷

While the Talmud speaks of the connection between the priestly benediction and the angelic blessings in general terms,⁶⁸ the Hekhalot tradi-

⁶⁶ See previous note. On the priestly benediction in general see B. M. Lewin, *Ozar ha-Ge'onim*, Hagigah, IV, Responsa, Jerusalem 1932, pp. 20–24; Y. Heinemann, "The Priestly Blessing is Neither Pronounced Nor Translated," in: idem, *Iyyunei Tefillah* (supra, n. 36), pp. 90–98. Cf. Tosefta, Sotah 13:8: "After the death of Simeon the Righteous his brethren [the priests] refrained from blessing in the Name." After the sages had forbidden the enunciation of the four-lettered Name, the priests used the twelve-lettered and forty-two-lettered Names, see Bab. Talmud, Kiddushin 71a (cited above, just before n. 59). And cf. Maimonides, *Guide of the Perplexed* 1:62. On the rabbinic prohibition on pronouncing the Name and the injunction to replace it by a substitute see Urbach, *Sages*, I, pp. 124–134; II, pp. 733–740; G. Allon, *Mehkarim* (supra, n. 20), II, pp. 194–205. For the numinous nature of the enunciation of the Ineffable Name in the Temple cf. Bab. Talmud, Hagigah 16a: "Whoever looks at three things will be blinded. ... He who looked at the priests when the Temple existed, when they used to stand on the platform and bless Israel with the Ineffable Name." For the restriction of the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name to the Temple alone, see Yoma 69b.

⁶⁷ *Synopse*, paras. 981–982; cf. Bab. Talmud, Kiddushin 71a.

⁶⁸ "When the priests bless the people, what do they say? R. Zera said in the name of R. Hisda: 'Bless YHWH, O his angels, mighty creatures etc.; bless YHWH, all His hosts, His servants who do His will; bless YHWH, all His works, through the length and breadth of His realm; bless YHWH, O my soul' (Ps 103:20–22)" (Bab. Talmud, Sotah 39b). For the connection between the people's response to the priests and the angelic response see Midrash Tanhuma, Kedoshim 6; for midrashim stating that "Blessed be His name, etc." is also the response of the angels in heaven see Bereshit Rabba 65:21 (Theodor-Albeck ed., p. 739). Y. Heinemann and M. Weinfeld pointed out the relationship of the Shema' to the Kedushah: the Shema' is recited by the Jews on Earth and evokes the response "Blessed be His name, etc." at the same time as the angels utter their Kedushah in heaven and recite the blessing, "Blessed be His name, etc." See *Midrash Devarim Rabba* (ed. S. Lieberman), Jerusalem 1974³, p. 68: "The reading of the Shema' is beloved [of God], as it was entrusted to Israel: for they praise first and thereafter the ministering angels, who say 'YHWH is our God, YHWH is One,' and thereafter the angels say, 'Blessed is His Name, whose glorious kingdom is

tion traces a detailed relationship between the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name at the peak of the priestly benediction in the Temple and its enigmatic pronunciation at the climax of the rites performed in the heavenly shrines by the angels and the denizens of the Merkavah:

Mighty is Your Name throughout the Earth
In the heavens You established Your throne
You set Your seat in the upper heights
You placed Your chariot in the supreme regions
Your sanctuary in the mists of purity
Legions of fire glorify Your renown
Seraphim of fire utter Your praise
Ofannim and Holy Hayyot stand before You
With Ofannim of glory and Seraphim of flame and the wheels of the
Merkavah
With a great tumult and thunder
They pronounce the Name TTRWSY YY one hundred and eleven
times
And say, TTRSY TTRSYF TTRSY' TTRGY'
TTRSYH YHWH, holy is your Name in the highest heavens
Lofty and supreme above all Cherubim
May Your Name be sanctified in Your holiness :
May it be magnified in magnitude, wax strong in strength
May Your domination extend to the end of generations
For your strength is for all eternity
Blessed are You, YHWH, mighty in power, great in strength.⁶⁹

Thus, through an esoteric process, the pronunciation of God's name and the singing of His praises, both central to the priestly rites in the Temple, as well as the recitation of the priestly benediction, which involved enunciation of the Ineffable Name, became the focus of the angelic service in the heavenly shrines: "How great is your power, O servitors of our God, in that you pronounce and enunciate the remembrance of His name before Him in unfathomable and unmeasurable heights, in full voice and strength";⁷⁰ "And all the legions and Seraphim that stand before You praise and exalt Your Name and the wheels of the Merkavah utter song before You And the ministering angels that stand before You sanctify your holiness ... And in Your Name they recall everything that You have created in Your world. Who is like You?" Great is Your Name

for ever and ever" (Weinfeld, *Nekaddesh* etc. [supra, n. 36], p. 75). See further Heinemann, *Iyyunei Tefillah*, p. 13.

⁶⁹ *Ma'aseh Merkavah, Synopse*, para. 590. For "TTRWSY YHWH, God of Israel," also called "TTRWSYH" or "TWTRWSAY" in variant readings, and his central position in Hekhalot literature, see *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, paras. 195, 206, 219; *Hekhalot Zutarti*, ib., paras. 414, 416; *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, ib., paras. 539, 540, 590, 977.

⁷⁰ *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, para. 168.

for ever And who can sing the praises of Your great Name, which is great for ever and ever May You be blessed more than the entire heavenly host ... who stand before You and sing before You every day and offer praise to Your great, mighty and revered Name, for there is none like You in the heavens or on Earth."⁷¹

The writers of Hekhalot literature, describing the parts of the Merkavah as anthropomorphized heavenly beings, perpetuated the numinous significance of the earthly sacred service in their rites; these rites were modeled on the Temple service on earth, using the language of the mythopoetic tradition of the liturgy and the ritual of the pronunciation of God's Name. The ruined Temple was thus memorialized and restored in the celestial shrines by a mystical mirror-image; the priestly service – sanctification, purification, standing, blowing trumpet blasts and fanfares, benediction and pronunciation of the Ineffable Name – and the Levitical labors – chanting of praise, singing and playing musical instruments – were, as it were, continued in a duplication of the earthly ritual by their celestial counterparts, namely, the Holy Hayyot, Cherubim, Ofannim, Seraphim and angels. These traditions pervade the vision of the descenders to the Merkavah, in the diverse traditions that comprise Hekhalot literature.

5. Shared Prayer and Heavenly Prayer

This visionary metamorphosis produced a continuity of novel significance, as the service performed in the heavenly shrines was in turn juxtaposed, at least partly, with the earthly ritual. Some of the traditions that come together in Hekhalot literature associate the celestial service and its combination of Merkavah vision and Temple ritual with the Kedushah prayer recited on earth. Indeed, the beings of the Merkavah are pictured as an immense heavenly chorus ministering before God, blessing and chanting, playing music and singing praises, paralleling the terrestrial worshipers who raise their voices in praise and recite the Kedushah:

From the sound of the music of His Hayyot's lyres
From the sound of the song of His Ofannim's timbrels
And from the sound of chanting of His Cherubim's cymbals
A voice swells up and emerges
In a great tumult in holiness [Heb. *kedushah*]
When Israel say before Him: Holy, Holy, Holy.⁷²

⁷¹ *Ma'aseh Merkavah, Synopse*, paras. 592–594.

⁷² *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, para. 161.

As far as the link between Jewish prayer on earth and angelic prayer, the identity of those reciting the Kedushah and the occasions on which it is recited in heaven and on earth are concerned – two distinct and conflicting traditions have left their mark on Hekhalot literature. The Kedushah prayer, founded on the calls of the Seraphim in the Temple and on various verses of praise ascribed to the supernal beings (Isa 6:3; Ezek 3:12), is recited in the synagogue during the third benediction of the Amidah prayer (the blessing of God's Holiness – *kedushat ha-Shem*), when it is repeated by the cantor at the Morning, Afternoon and Additional Services. It is also a part of the *Yozer* benediction preceding the recitation of the *Shema*, and in the prayer "A redeemer shall come to Zion." In the Merkavah world, however, the Kedushah prayer – the focus of the celestial ritual – is recited in a variety of formulas and versions, at different times, by the Seraphim and the Holy Hayyot, divorced from any specific prayer. It is the different times of the prayer, as well as the different identities of the worshipers, that create the external distinction between "shared prayer" and "heavenly prayer"; but the crucial, essential difference lies in the association of Kedushah with the Temple and with the priestly tradition of the ceremonials accompanying the pronunciation of the Ineffable Name.⁷³

⁷³ Concerning the Kedushah see above, n. 36. Hekhalot literature contains numerous Kedushah prayers with non-standard formulas; studies of the Kedushah in its early stages have tended to ignore these variants because of the erroneous dating of Hekhalot literature. The Hekhalot Kedushah are in fact different not only in wording but also in structure from those generally known, and they are not associated with regular prayer services. Ph. Bloch (supra, n. 1) argued that the Kedushah first emerged among the "Descenders to the Merkavah," but dated the development to the Gaonic period. See Heinemann's addenda to Elbogen, pp. 52–53, where he points out: "In light of the studies of Scholem, Altmann and Lieberman [cited above in nn. 2 and 12], the link between the Kedushah and Hekhalot literature has come to light." And cf. Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah*, p. 146, who states that no contemporary scholars question the genesis of the Kedushah prayers among the "Descenders to the Merkavah" and agrees with Scholem and Lieberman that the roots of Hekhalot literature lie in the tannaitic period. The role of the Kedushah in Hekhalot literature and its relations with the standard Kedushah have been discussed from various points of view in the scholarly literature. See Altmann, *Shirei Kedushah* ... (supra, n. 36); Gruenwald, *Shirat ha-Mal'akhim*, pp. 459–481; M. Bar-Ilan, "Kavvei Yesod le-Hithavvutah shel ha-Kedushah ve-Gibbushah," *Da'at* 25 (1990), pp. 5–20; E. Fleischer, "Tefillat Shemoneh 'Esreh 'Iyyunim be-Ofyah, Sidrah, Tokhnah u-Megammoteha," *Tarbiz* 62 (1993), pp. 210–222. – Libreich, Baumstark, Kohler and Werner (see supra, n. 36, near its end) argued that Kedushah was incorporated into the *Yozer* benediction at a very early date – in fact, the time of the Temple (see Elbogen, *Ha-Tefillah be-Yisra'el*, p. 52, and Heinemann, *Ha-Tefillah*, p. 146 n. 133). Werner, *Bridge*, II, p. 21, does in fact suggest that the Kedushah was an important and integral part of the Temple service; but this suggestion was overlooked by most scholars and there was therefore little, if any, follow-up – see below.

The two traditions to which we have alluded differ in their relative significance within Hekhalot literature and in the trends they represent. The first tradition, relating to "shared prayer," describes the recitation of Kedushah by the celestial beings in the heavenly shrines at the very same time it is being recited by terrestrial worshipers in prayer assemblies and study houses; sometimes the earthly prayer in fact precedes the angelic. This tradition may center either on the Kedushah or on poems and songs of praise; the references to it are few and far between.⁷⁴ The second tradition, relating to "heavenly prayer," describes the recitation of Kedushah in the upper worlds by the Hayyot, Cherubim, Seraphim and Ofannim, independently of any terrestrial event or ceremony; the accounts in fact recall the priestly benediction in the Temple. There are about one hundred distinct references to this tradition.⁷⁵

According to the first tradition, the earthly Kedushah is significant because it is recited simultaneously with the celestial ceremonial and in fact interacts with it. This idea, which invests terrestrial prayer with a special aura, lends it new meaning, for it juxtaposes the regular recitation of Kedushah by human worshipers with its angelic counterpart. The tradition linking the angelic and the earthly Kedushot dictates specific times for their recitation and intertwines the prayer of the celestial hosts with that of the people of Israel:

There is no being that can reach that place
Because of the surging fires that flicker and emerge
From the mouths of the Cherubim and the mouths of the Ofannim and
the mouths of the Holy Hayyot
Who open their mouths to say, Holy
When Israel are saying Holy before Him
As Scripture says, Holy, Holy, Holy! YHWH of Hosts!
His Glory fills all the earth!⁷⁶

This tradition, explicitly linking the recitation of Kedushah in the heavens and on earth, is actually referred to only in the passage just cited. Other traditions referring to earthly prayer tell of God's great pleasure in hearing the Jews reciting Kedushah, but they say nothing of simulta-

⁷⁴ Prayer common to the lower and the upper worlds is mentioned in *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, paras. 101, 126, 163–164, 172–174, 178–180; and again, in similar terms, *ib.*, paras. 527–531, 807–809. For the last quotations in paras. 178–180 see Ps 99; Bab. Talmud, Hullin 91b, and cf. *Synopse*, paras. 54–57. Concerning this shared prayer see Scholem, *Trends*, p. 62. P. Schäfer has recently argued for the central role of shared prayer in Hekhalot literature, but he seems not to have considered its secondary position in relation to heavenly prayer, in which human prayer has no part. For the significance of the role ascribed to human prayer see P. Schäfer, "The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism," in: *Hekhalot Studien*, Tübingen 1988, pp. 287–288.

⁷⁵ See n. 37 above.

neity with the angelic rite. We also read that the song of Jews on earth is preferred over the celestial song – the wording is somewhat similar to that of the Talmudic passage Hullin 91b; but the Hekhalot references to such matters allude only obliquely to Kedushah.⁷⁷

The second tradition is, as we have intimated, much more prominent; it refers exclusively to the celestial Kedushah, recited around the Throne of Glory, entirely ignoring the terrestrial Kedushah. This one-sidedness is further emphasized by the fact that no specific time is stipulated for the angelic rite and accordingly there is no reference to a link between it and the earthly Kedushah, which is traditionally said at set times in definite places. Possibly, this tradition does not consider the Kedushah recited in terrestrial prayer assemblies a substitute for the Temple rite, which the celestial Kedushah is supposed to represent in the Hekhalot context; it therefore disregards the terrestrial rite. Alternatively, perhaps this is just the tendency of Hekhalot literature to concentrate on celestial existence, overlooking earthly reality. An example of such a Kedushah, interweaving the liturgical traditions of Psalms and Chronicles with the visionary traditions deriving from Isaiah and Ezekiel, may be found in various versions in Hekhalot literature:

Seraphim, Seraphim of flame, stand around Your Throne
Each singing, "Extol Him who rides the clouds, YH his Name,
Exult in His presence, blessing, praise and acclaim, hymn and thank-
offerings
Praise, glory, prayer, extolling, humility and loving-kindness
To the Master, the Mighty One, the Sovereign ...
In their mouth is song and on their tongue hymns
They sleep not, neither by day nor by night
But they shine like light, song and praise ...
And they all repeat your threefold holiness, with threefold Kedushah
As Scripture says, Holy, Holy, Holy! YHWH of Hosts!
His Glory fills all the Earth!⁷⁸

⁷⁶ *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, para. 101.

⁷⁷ "Be silent for me, O voice of all the creatures I have created, that I may hearken and listen to the voice of my children's prayer.... This teaches us that Israel's hymns and praises are pleasing to the Holy One, blessed be He" (*Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, paras. 173–174); and cf. *ib.*, para. 163. See further: "For the ministering angels are not permitted to utter song first on high until Israel open their mouths in song first in the lower world" (*ib.*, para. 788). And cf. Bab. Talmud, Hullin 91b: "The ministering angels do not utter song on high until Israel utter it in the lower world." God's preference for Israel's prayer dictates the chronology: Israel's prayer precedes that of the angels and in fact is a precondition for it; however, according to this tradition, the prayers of each one of the two communities are significant only for their counterparts.

⁷⁸ *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopse*, paras. 270–273. Cf. Revelation 4:8, for a description of the holy Hayyot (following Ezekiel 1) full of eyes (as in Ezek 10:12): "And they rest not day and night, saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and

As mentioned, in the overwhelming majority of Hekhalot traditions there is no link between the heavenly and terrestrial Kedushot. The supernal Kedushah is not recited at a fixed time; it may take place at any time of the day, for the prayer of the celestial beings is independent of the terrestrial order of service, unrestricted by any earthly schedule. Moreover, the voices of those who recite the heavenly Kedushah are entirely different from those of their terrestrial counterparts, and Hekhalot literature is mostly at pains to widen the distance. The terms of praise and acclamation uttered by the celestial choirs express divine supremacy, the enthronement and kingship of God and His eternal sanctity. These speaking and singing voices terrify their hearers and express the reverence invoked by the numinous ceremonial, creating the *mysterium tremendum* of the heavenly shrines. The description of this awe-inspiring splendor, which delineates the sacred realm and underlines the remoteness implied thereby, echoes the fate of the four sages who "entered the grove":

For in six voices do the *middot* of the bearers of His Throne of Glory sing before Him
 The Cherubim and Ofannim and Holy Hayyot,
 Each in a voice surpassing the other and different from its predecessors:
 The first voice – anyone who hears it forthwith moans and swoons away,
 The second voice – anyone who listens to it forthwith loses his way and never returns again,
 The third voice – anyone who hears it is seized by convulsions and forthwith dies,
 The fourth voice – anyone who listens to it, the skull of his head and his spine are forthwith broken
 And the extremities of his ribs fall apart,
 The fifth voice – anyone who hears it forthwith spills out like a ewer and becomes all blood,
 The sixth voice – anyone who listens to it, his heart is forthwith seized by trembling
 And his heart is agitated and overturns his innards and his gall within him turns to water.
 As Scripture says, Holy, Holy, Holy! YHWH of Hosts!⁷⁹

There are repeated accounts in this literature, from different perspectives, of the celestial choirs. The descriptions are sometimes merely brief

is to come." On the continuous recitation of the Kedushah, night and day, cf. Gruenwald, *Shirat ha-Mal'akhim*, p. 470; Bar-Ilan, *Kavvei Yesod* (supra, n. 73), p. 9.

⁷⁹ *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopse*, paras. 103–104.

enumerations of the different voices reciting the familiar verses,⁸⁰ on other occasions we read complex formulas, rendering in minute detail the celestial polyphony and its distribution among the seven Hekhalot, with their fiery chariots and tongues of flame responding to one another with the various verses of the Kedushah and other formulas unique to Hekhalot literature. This antiphonal song is couched in set formulas, some enunciated by the chariots in each Hekhal, representing a visionary abstraction of ritual expression, others articulated by flames rising from one shrine to the next in ascending order, representing a mystical abstraction of the Divine Names. The sublime tone of the liturgy and its ceremonies expresses the remoteness of the heavens, as well as surrender to the supremacy and kingship of God. The numinous proceedings culminate in the Sanctification of the Name, namely, the ceremonial pronunciation of the Ineffable Name and the benediction "Blessed be His Name, Whose glorious Kingdom is for ever and ever" – all rites once performed in the Temple.

There are different versions of the Sanctification of the Name, or the raising of the Divine Name from Hekhal to Hekhal, in the various traditions. The ceremony generally consists of four ritual elements, all associated with the visionary abstraction of the earthly Temple and its sacred service: 1) There exists a permanent cosmic structure, hierarchically ordered – the seven Hekhalot – containing a permanent ritual element, namely, the Merkavot or celestial figures that minister to God. 2) A dynamic element, embodying the Divine Names, called sometimes flames (Heb. *shalhaviyot*) and sometimes crowns, is borne aloft through blessing and prayer. 3) Permanent benedictory formulas are recited by both bearers and borne. 4) At the climax of the celestial ceremony, the Ineffable Name is pronounced, with the usual response: "Blessed be His Name, Whose glorious Kingdom is for ever and ever." Sometimes the ceremony describes the great commotion and agitation that seize the heavens upon the utterance of Kedushah – almost, one might say, a symbolic realization of cosmic destruction and renewed creation.⁸¹

⁸⁰ "R. Ishmael said: Three groups of ministering angels utter song each day; one says, Holy, and one says, Holy Holy, and one says, Holy Holy Holy is YHWH of Hosts, the Earth is full of His glory. And the Ofannim and holy Hayyot respond after them, Blessed be the Glory of YHWH from His place" (*Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopse*, para. 197).

⁸¹ See *Sefer Hekhalot*, *Synopse*, para. 56. Like the doorposts of the Sanctuary, which trembled at the sound of the Seraphim's voice while the Kedushah was being said (Isa 6:3–4), in the supernal worlds "When the ministering angels say, holy, all pillars of firmaments and their sockets are shaken and the gates of the shrines of 'aravot in the firmament are agitated and the foundations of the universe and the heavens tremble" (loc. cit.).

Sometimes the ceremony reduces to a mystical vision of crowns and Ineffable Names, of flames or Divine Names of unfathomable meaning, which hover in the heavenly shrines; at other times the focus of events is the unspeakable splendor of the celestial choir reciting the verses of the Kedushah, or the visionary abstraction of ritual and liturgical elements. However, it is clear from the diverse descriptions that the crucial moment in the Kedushah is the pronouncement of the Divine Name, whose incomprehensible letters and secret vocalization encompass the eternal divine essence. The name is pronounced in an exalted, poetic context, culminating in the praise and sanctification of God's Name by the celestial beings, as expressed in the words of the vision of the Seraphim in the Temple and the vision of the Chariot, and in the liturgical formulas once used in the earthly Temple. In the Kedushah cited below, the ceremony of the sanctification of the Name is seen as the elevation of flames from Hekhal to Hekhal, through the recitation of the verses of the Kedushah by the fiery chariots standing in each of the seven Hekhalot. The recitation of the verses of the Kedushah generate the rising movement of the flames, scattering and reassembling from Hekhal to Hekhal. The elevation of the flames, which are simply a mystical abstraction of the Divine Names – as stated explicitly at the beginning of the hymn: “and Your Name is wrapped in the fire of flames of fire and hail” and possibly an allusion to the daily Burnt Offerings in the Temple – ends with the pronouncement of the Ineffable name and the standard response once heard in the Temple.

In the first Hekhal chariots of fire say,
 H[oly] H[oly] H[oly]! YHWH of Hosts! His Glory fills all the Earth!
 And their fiery flames scatter and reassemble in the second Hekhal
 And say, H. H. H.! YHWH of Hosts! His Glory fills all the Earth!
 In the second Hekhal chariots of fire say,
 Blessed is the Glory of YHWH in His place.
 And their fiery flames, too, scatter and reassemble in the third Hekhal
 And say, Blessed is the Glory of YHWH in His place.
 In the third Hekhal chariots of fire say,
 Blessed be His Name, Whose glorious Kingdom is for ever and ever
 from the place of the house of His Presence.
 And their fiery flames scatter and reassemble in the fourth Hekhal and
 say
 Blessed be His Name, Whose glorious Kingdom is for ever and ever
 from the place of the house of His Presence
 In the fourth Hekhal chariots of fire say,
 Blessed be YHWH who lives and prevails for ever and ever, mightier
 than the whole chariot.

And their fiery flames scatter and reassemble in the fifth Hekhal and
 say
 Blessed be YHWH who lives and endures for ever and ever, mightier
 than the whole chariot.
 In the fifth Hekhal chariots of fire say,
 Blessed be the holiness of His kingdom from the place of the house of
 His Presence.
 And their fiery flames scatter and reassemble in the sixth Hekhal and
 say,
 Blessed be the holiness of His kingdom from the place of the house of
 His Presence.
 In the sixth Hekhal chariots of fire say,
 Blessed be YHWH Master of all might and ruler over the whole
 chariot.
 And their fiery flames scatter and reassemble in the seventh Hekhal
 and say,
 Blessed be YHWH Master of all might and ruler over the whole
 chariot.
 In the seventh Hekhal chariots of fire say,
 Blessed be the King of Kings YHWH Master of all might.
 Who is like the living and enduring God? His praise is in the highest
 heavens
 The Kedushot of His kingdom are in the highest heavens, His might is
 in the innermost chambers
 Holy on this side and Holy on that, all continually uttering song
 And pronouncing the Name of GHWZYY YHWH the God of Israel
 And saying, Blessed is His Name, whose kingdom is for ever and ever
 From the place of the house of His Presence.⁸²

The heavenly ceremony in Hekhalot literature involves sanctification of the Divine Name through its elevation, pronouncement and benediction

⁸² *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, *Synopse*, para. 555. Cf. Elior, *Hekhalot Zutarti*, p. 24 ll. 85–99; pp. 64–65 ll. 85–99. We may hear at this point an echo of the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, which are also concerned with the heavenly Temple and the angelic priests, known as the priests of *korev*. The *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* also feature a seven-fold division, into Chariots and flames that praise and sing, and they are no doubt of a priestly origin, as shown by Newsom (*supra*, n. 22). On flames burning and ascending from bridge to bridge see also *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopse*, para. 198; and cf. *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, *ib.*, para. 552, for a hymn describing the Name of God as wrapped in flames: “Be magnified and sanctified O King of Kings of Kings / who sits in the chambers of a Sanctuary of flames of fire and hail / and Your Name is clad in the fire of flames of fire and hail.” For the expression “the House of His Presence” cf. “Let them make Me a Sanctuary, that I may dwell among them” (ex 25:8), and cf. the phrase “House of the Divine Presence” as an epithet for the Temple in Numbers Rabba 7. – The work *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, published by Scholem as an appendix to his book *Jewish Gnosticism* (*supra*, n. 2), has recently been the subject of two studies: N. Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent. Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text*, New York 1989; Swartz, *Mystical Prayer* (*supra*, n. 35).

by the denizens of the heavens. The essence of God in this literature is identified with His Name, as stated by R. Nehunyah b. Hakanah, R. Ishmael's mentor: "And His name is sanctified for His servants, He is His name and His Name is He, He is in Him and His Name is in His name."⁸³ Hence the immense ritual significance ascribed to the recitation of the Kedushah prayer by the supernal beings – similar to the significance attributed to the pronouncement of the Ineffable Name in the Temple.⁸⁴

As we have seen, the celestial Kedushah is a polyphonic ceremony which arouses tumultuous activity on high; it involves the elevation of Names, the crowning of the deity and the pronouncement of the Ineffable Name. Essentially, it consists of an ascent through a sacred hierarchy: a series of benedictions, Names or crowns are raised from Hekhal to Hekhal, and at the peak of the celestial ceremony, when the seventh Hekhal is reached, the Ineffable Name is pronounced. The conclusion of the Kedushah is the liturgical formula originally uttered by the people in response to the High Priest's enunciation of the Ineffable Name (Mishnah, Yoma 6:2). There is thus a clear association between the Kedushah, in which the angels bless God at the climax of the heavenly ceremony and pronounce the Ineffable Name, and the priestly benediction with which the priests used to bless the people at the climax of the Temple rites, also pronouncing the Ineffable Name.

Other Kedushot in Hekhalot literature elaborate the mythopoetical details of the celestial ceremony, again in a manner recalling the climax of the earthly Temple service. As against the High Priest's pronouncement of the Ineffable Name in the Temple during his confession, in the celestial rite it is the Ineffable Names that hover and ascend upon hearing the Kedushah. Like its terrestrial counterpart, the celestial rite ends with the listeners – the heavenly hosts – prostrating themselves upon hearing the Ineffable name:

When the ministering angels say, Holy,
All the Ineffable Names inscribed with a fiery pen on the Throne of
Glory
Soar like eagles with sixteen wings
And surround and encircle the Holy One, blessed be He, on all four
sides, the place of the Glory of His Presence

⁸³ *Ma'aseh Merkavah, Synopsis*, para. 588. Compare "His Name is like His Might, and His Might is like His Name; He is His Power and His Power is He, and His Name is like His Name" (ib. para. 557). Compare the angels speaking of the identity between God and His Name, ib., para. 392.

⁸⁴ See above, nn. 60 and 66.

And the angels of the host and servants of the fire and Ofannim of
might
And Cherubim of the Divine Presence and Holy Hayyot and Seraphim
and Er'elim and Tafsarim
And Cherubim of fire and legions of devouring flares and battalions of
torches
And hosts of burning fire and holy princes
Crowns tied to [their heads], royally attired, cloaked in glory
Dressed in grandeur, girt with glory, swathed with pride
They fall on their faces three times and say,
Blessed be His Name, whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever⁸⁵

To my mind, there can be no doubt of the association between the last lines of this Kedushah and the Mishnaic passage already quoted previously: "And when the priests and the people who stood in the Temple Court heard the Ineffable Name come forth from the mouth of the High Priest, they used to kneel and bow themselves and fall on their faces and say, Blessed be His name, whose glorious kingdom is for ever and ever" (Yoma 6:2). Thus, the apex of the heavenly ceremony is a mystical metamorphosis of the earthly rite to the world of the Merkavah, a mythopoetic abstraction of the liturgical ritual performed in the Temple. The ceremony is perpetuated on high by a solemn chant, by ecstatic recitation of the Kedushah and pronouncement of the Ineffable Name in awe and trembling by the visionary denizens of the Merkavah; while the figures of the latter are inspired by Ezekiel's vision and the phraseology of Psalms, on the one hand, and by the costume and ministry of the priests and Levites on earth, on the other. The denizens of the Merkavah praise and extol, sing, bless, sanctify and glorify God's Name, following the pattern of the terrestrial Temple rites, celebrating the eternity of the Divine Name in the celestial shrine, lauding the splendor of God's Throne and the beauty of His Chariot in the supernal Hekhalot. In fact, the beings of the Merkavah, chanting their paeans of praise in the ongoing ceremony, perpetuating the sanctity and majesty of God by their repeated enunciations of the Ineffable Name in the heavens, seem to be defying the terrestrial reality which arbitrarily wiped out the sacred hymns, obliterated the obeisances to the Divine Name and destroyed the earthly Temple:

And You have established in glory and praise a magnificent song of
praise
And all the angelic legions and Seraphim standing before You
Praise and glorify Your Name

⁸⁵ *Sefer Hekhalot, Synopsis*, para. 57. Cf. Odeberg, *Enoch*, p. 53; Gruenwald, *Shirat ha-Mal'akhim*, p. 463.

And the wheels of the Chariot utter song before you
 And You have established Your Throne of Glory, song and merit,
 and the ministering angels that stand and sanctify the holiness of Your
 Name

Extol Your might

And say, YHWH of Hosts, Shaddai, YHW, lives for ever.
 Your kingdom stretches from one end of the universe to the other
 And they enunciate Your name ...

And this is the prayer:

Blessed are You YHWH, the One God,
 Who created the universe with His One Name,
 Who formed all things with one utterance.
 High in the heavens did You establish Your Throne,
 You placed Your Chariot in the supernal firmament,
 You placed Your Inner Chamber in the heavenly vault,
 You planted [Your Sanctuary] among Ofannim of Glory.
 Legions of fire glorify Your Name,
 Seraphim of fire exult in Your praise:
 They are all infused by a still, small voice,
 They utter praise as they walk,
 They walk in awe, clothed in fear,
 Burdened with pride to extol the Creator of all things,
 Full of eyes on their rims.

Their appearance is like that of lightning,
 Their countenance is pleasing, their mouth delicious,
 One over against the other they bear and speak,
 Bearing and speaking pure Hayyot, Holy, Holy, Holy.
 The ministering angels recite before You,
 The sun's orb shines from their faces,
 Their radiance shines like the radiance of the sky,
 Their wings outspread, their hands outstretched,
 As the sound of rushing water is the sound of their wings,
 Fiery torches extrude and emerge from the orbs of their eyes,
 With a sound of great tumult they utter song before You,
 Full of radiance, emitting brightness, their radiance shines.
 Beauteous as they go, rejoicing as they come, happy as they stand,
 Their light is pleasing before Your Throne of Glory,
 In awe they do Your will,
 Offering Your great, mighty and awe-inspiring Name.
 Grandeur and glory, enunciating the Name of Your Kingdom in joy
 and gladness,

For there is none like You and none like your priests and none like
 your pious servants,
 And there is nothing like Your great Name for ever and ever to all
 eternity

Raging at the sea and it dries up, gazing upon the earth and it heaves,
 Quickening the dead, reviving the dead from their dust.

Great is Your Name for ever,
 Mighty is Your Name for ever,
 Holy is Your Name for ever,
 The One God YHWH is One YH YH.⁸⁶

The Temple was the earthly abode of God's Name, as the Bible has it,
 "... for building a House where My Name might abide ... toward this
 House, toward the place of which You have said, My Name shall abide
 there" (I Kings 8:16, 29); or "where I had established my Name for-
 merly" (Jer 7:12). It was also the only place where the priests were per-
 mitted to pronounce the Name as written and to bless the people with
 the Ineffable Name. After the destruction, so believed the authors of the
 Hekhalot hymns, God made His Name an abode in the supernal He-
 khalot/shrines, and appointed the creatures of the Merkavah, which con-
 tinually praise His Name and enunciate the Ineffable Name as written,
 to serve it and guard it. The tradition of Divine Names associated with
 the Temple and the sacred service, originally entrusted to the priests,
 who employed it in the ritual accompanying the climax of the earthly
 ceremonies, became an angelic tradition, preserved in the heavenly
 shrines, where it was again used ritually at the peak of the celestial rites.
 Similarly, the poetic and musical traditions of the Levites and priests, as
 practiced in the liturgical proceedings in the earthly Temple, was trans-
 formed into the tradition of songs of praise and glorification chanted by
 the creatures of the Merkavah in the Hekhalot.

6. Mystical Prayer

In Hekhalot tradition it was the angels who revealed the traditions that
 enabled R. Akiva and R. Ishmael to descend to the Merkavah – tradi-
 tions that involve esoteric knowledge, liturgical song, recitation of the
 Kedushah prayer, pronunciation of the Divine Names and self-purifica-
 tion. Conversely, the prayer of the descenders to the Merkavah emulates
 the angelic service. As I have shown elsewhere in detail,⁸⁷ Merkavah
 literature proposes a twofold juxtaposition: the priestly and Levitical
 service as against the angelic service, on the one hand; and angelic wor-
 ship as against the worship of the descenders to the Merkavah on the
 other hand. The mystical ritual of the descenders to the Merkavah is

⁸⁶ *Ma'aseh Merkavah, Synopsis*, paras. 592, 596. See Ps 103:19–22.

⁸⁷ On the imitation of the angelic service by the descenders to the Merkavah see
 Elijor, *Demut ha-El*, pp. 49–50 nn. 50 and 56, 56a; idem, *Mysticism*, pp. 48–51.

modeled on that of the angels in the heavenly shrines, while the latter, in turn, is envisaged as a mystical abstraction of the service performed by the priests and the Levites in the earthly Temple. Mystical prayer is the prayer of the descenders to the Merkavah, who chant the angelic hymns, as testified by R. Ishmael in the opening passage of *Hekhalot Rabbati*:

What are the songs that a person sings and descends to the Merkavah?
He begins and recites the beginnings of the songs:
Beginning of praise and genesis of song,
Beginning of rejoicing and genesis of music,
Sung by the singers who daily minister
To YHWH, God of Israel, and His Throne of Glory.⁸⁸

Hekhalot tradition is quite particular about the heavenly source of the hymns sung by the descenders to the Merkavah: "All these songs were heard by R. Akiva when he descended to the Merkavah and grasped and studied them before [God's] Throne of Glory, where they were sung by His servants."⁸⁹

All the prayers in Hekhalot literature, recited in a state of mystical elation, were learned – so the authors of that literature asserted – from the liturgy of the angels ministering before the Throne of Glory. Indeed, the bulk of mystical prayer as represented in Hekhalot literature, just like the Kedushah prayer, consists of descriptions of the angelic rites and songs sung by the denizens of the Merkavah in the heavenly shrines. As we have shown, the angelic rites were based on the pattern of the priestly and Levitical service in the Temple, except that these are clothed in a ritual and poetic abstraction of the numinous tradition of Divine Names and of liturgical hymnology; thus the service, prayer and rites performed by the descenders to the Merkavah form, as it were, a bridge linking the memories of the priestly service to its angelic sequel.

In Hekhalot literature, the descenders to the Merkavah experience mystical ecstasy when they repeat the angelic prayers, learn the songs and hymns of the celestial beings, recite the heavenly Kedushah and the various prayers involved in offering praise to the Divine name and pronouncing it. The descenders to the Merkavah, rendering in their prayer a detailed description of the prayer of the Merkavah creatures, engage in the celestial ceremony by dint of their mystical prayer and participate in the heavenly service and song; for "descent to the Merkavah" is equivalent to "ascent to the celestial shrine," or observation of the angelic rites and participation in the heavenly service taking place in the seven super-nal shrines. Descent to the Merkavah is indeed a mystical metamorpho-

⁸⁸ *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopse*, para. 94.

⁸⁹ *Hekhalot Rabbati*, *Synopse*, para. 106; and cf. *ib.*, para. 260.

sis of a ritual heritage that sought to close the gap between the earth and the heavens; the use of Divine Names, singing of hymns, knowledge of celestial secrets and secrets of the Merkavah, as well as the maintenance of a hierarchical order of divine ministry and rites of purification – all these were common to the angels and the descenders to the Merkavah and stemmed from a visionary abstraction of the order of the earthly Temple service. It was the priests who maintained the bond between heaven and earth through sacrificial rituals and other numinous and liturgical ceremonies, thus serving as the people's ritual messengers until the destruction of the Temple. Likewise, the descenders to the Merkavah saw themselves as the people's mystical messengers, maintaining the link between the terrestrial and celestial worlds after the destruction. With their mystical prayer, emulating the celestial service, they created a visionary bridge leading from the numinous aspects of the priestly ritual in the now ruined Temple to the angelic ritual in the heavenly shrines, which perpetuated the visionary abstraction of the terrestrial ritual and elevated it till it transcended the bonds of time and place.

The ties of Hekhalot and Merkavah tradition with the tradition of the Temple and the priestly and Levitical service are extremely complex; they strive to extend, through mystical abstraction, the numinous essence of the priestly and Levitical traditions that had disappeared when the Temple was destroyed. These ties – the very foundation of the spiritual world and mystical/ritual character of Merkavah tradition – left their imprint on the language of Hekhalot literature; they were woven into the mystical world of the Hekhalot and played a crucial role in shaping Merkavah traditions after the destruction of the Second Temple. Hekhalot literature is not an extension of the whole of the priestly tradition, but only of its mystical and ritual elements that possessed a vocal, liturgical and numinous character. These elements were thought by the authors of Hekhalot literature to be of the utmost significance; it was therefore of crucial importance to transplant them from the earthly Temple to the heavenly shrines, the Hekhalot, and to preserve them there in the rites performed by the denizens of the Merkavah. The elements in question are not uniformly represented in the diverse sections of Hekhalot literature. Rather, they constitute a central factor in the language and metaphor of the world of that literature as a whole. It follows that the spiritual world of Hekhalot literature and the limits of its historical background cannot be understood unless one realizes the role of the priestly heritage as a major source of influence on this literature as a whole and on its mystical section in particular.