

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.

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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 Merkavah 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. Friedlander, *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 ba-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-Olamit 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 pseudepigraphic 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 pseudepigraphic 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 Sheni. Sefer Zikaron 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.

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 Rabbati*, *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*, Jerusalem 1994, pp. 301–304. For the importance of the implications of the tradition of Divine Names see Elijor, *op. cit.*

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-Mal’akhim be-Sefer ha-Yovelim le-’Or Kivvei ‘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. Safray, *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-Meshihyut 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 Serek Shiroi ‘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 Shiroi,” *Journal of Jewish Studies* 38/1 (1987), pp. 11–30; L. H. Schiffman, “Merkabah Speculation at Qumran: The 4q Serek Shiroi ‘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 Shiroi 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, *hekhhal*, 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-lifnim*, 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 1: The Jewish Sources, HTR 86:2 (1993) pp. 177–217. For his similarity to Moses see Elijor, *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. Aptowitz, "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 Aptowitz, *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, II. 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, Yahael, Akhatriel, the Prince of the Countenance, Enoch, Ozahiah and the “youth,” as well as many other names. On Metatron’s seventy names see *Enoch*, *Synopsis*, paras. 386–388. For “the dwelling-place of the youth whose name is Metatron cf. *Synopsis*, 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 *Synopsis*, 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*, *Synopsis*, 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 pronunciation 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, *Emunot 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 Elijor, *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,” *Semiotics* 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 (*Musaf*). 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-loshim Shanah*, ed. M. Ribalov, New York 1952, pp. 255–262; M. Weinfeld, “Nekadesh et Shimkha 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-Yisrael*); 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, Ofanim 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 Benei 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 v'ha-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 Merkavah; 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-Avodatam be-Mikdash Yerushalayim ba-'Asor ha-Shanim ha-Aharon she-Lifnei Hurban Bayit Sheni*, Jerusalem 1966; cf. Y. Kaufmann, *Toledot ha-Emunah ha-Yis'el'it*, 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 pronunciation of Divine Names see below, Sec. 4.

⁴¹ Elior, *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 Meforashim*, 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 tannaïtic

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 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. *nehmah*) 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 servants 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 Aptowitz (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