

And a double Ofan ch[eeers] 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. Knohl, *Mikdash ha-Demamah. 'Iyyun be-Rovdei ha-Yezirah ha-Kohanit 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. *hagurei*) 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'" (I 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 worshipers, 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 theological 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*] *Synopse*, 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* I: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 Kedushot 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 Kedushot 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 pronouncement 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[o]ly H[o]ly H[o]ly! 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. Elijor, *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, Synopse*, 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, Synopse*, 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 formerly" (Jer 7:12). It was also the only place where the priests were permitted 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 Hekhalot/shrines, and appointed the creatures of the Merkavah, which continually 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 transformed 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 – traditions that involve esoteric knowledge, liturgical song, recitation of the Kedushah prayer, pronunciation of the Divine Names and self-purification. 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 worship 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, Synopsis*, para. 94.

⁸⁹ *Hekhalot Rabbati, Synopsis*, 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.