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Chaos and Identity: Onomatology in the Hekhalot Literature

This paper will investigate the Hekhalot literature's use of names. I hope to establish that the multiple angelic stratifications which some scholars have seen as representing a severely compromised monotheism, may also be read as a sophisticated onomatology. Doing this will provide some fascinating insights into the relationship between naming and identity.

The majority of the Hekhalot literature dates from between the second and fourth centuries CE¹ and comprises several major texts as well as some other tertiary pieces. The main texts are Hekhalot Zutarti ("The Lesser Palaces"), Hekhalot Rabbati ("The Greater Palaces"), Ma'aseh Merkavah ("The Work of the Chariot"), Merkavah Rabbah ("The Great Chariot") and 3 Enoch (also known as Sefer Hekhalot). Of these texts, it is generally held that Hekhalot Zutarti contains the oldest material, followed by Hekhalot Rabbati.² However, we are wise to take note of the caveats regarding the rigid stratification of material into individual units,³ and of the acknowledged diversity of provenance and theology. Joseph Dan has concluded that the literature "should not be viewed as a product of one school of mystics moved by a common theology".⁴ Bearing this in mind, I will endeavour to treat the Hekhalot literature as a body of textual tradition, in order to find the conclusions that exist within it.

The basic themes of the texts are the methodical ascent of either Akiva or Ishmael, their procession through the various heavens, past the angelic guardians, and finally their joining in the angelic liturgy in praise of God. In these texts, we encounter many different angelic figures which have individual names, who have general titles, and who incorporate the Name of God, the Tetragrammaton.

The theology of the Hekhalot literature is dazzlingly fluid. It is routinely impossible to determine where God begins and the angels end, and many scholars have claimed that this complex heavenly world represents a polytheistic corruption of the godhead. The question of identity is persistently provoked, as in the most famous story, where Elisha ben Abuya ascends into heaven and sees Metatron enthroned at the gates of heaven – he he-

retically proclaims, “Perhaps – Heaven forbend! – there are two powers in heaven”. My study will suggest that current scholarly opinion is too often making the same mistake in its reading of these traditions.

The Hekhalot Literature’s Evidence

“[H]e who sees this one says: ‘This one is that one,’ and he who sees that one says: ‘That one is this one,’ for the facial features of this one are like the facial features of that one; and the facial features of that one are like the facial features of this one”. (Hekhalot Zutarti §160)

In the literature angels are often described as bearing the Name of God. This is done in a variety of ways: either the letters are appellated after their own name, e.g. Akatriel YHWH, are integrated into their name, e.g. SQDHWZYH, or the letters are worn on a cloak, ring or crown.⁵ Mostly I will concentrate on the first two elements, the use of the divine name as part of the angels’ own name, and will then progress to the theme of the angels, striking similarity to God. However the last does have some bearing on the Shi’ur Qomah (Measurement of the Body) tradition. This material is spread throughout the Hekhalot corpus and focuses on Metatron’s description of the body of God. In order that the mystic should know “the measurement of our creator” he is presented with both unpronounceably arcane names and impossibly huge measurements for each of the parts of God’s anatomy. In one typical passage from MerKR, we are told “The name of the right calf is Qatqiqangabi Qangagi [...] From his knees to His thighs is 60,001,000 parasangs of height and there are some who say 120,000,000 parasangs.”⁶ It appears that in this tradition the enumeration and naming of elements in heaven are replaced by the enumeration and naming of elements of God. Instead of heaven being divided up into new names and roles, God himself is. The descriptions begin from the soles of the feet up to the features of the face and the crown on his head, often including the letters written on the crown and on his forehead. I will return to this curious tradition during my analysis.

The texts often appear to present two separate strata in heaven: beings appellated with the Tetragrammaton such as Zoharriell YHWH God of Israel and Totrosiai YHWH God of Israel seem to be cognates representing God,⁷ whereas the second strata is populated by beings such as Metatron,

Surya and the other ‘princes.’ This is often articulated in terms of master and servant – the second strata are the servant of YHWH. However, the boundaries are consistently blurred so that we are unsure of the distinction, of which beings are actually the master and which the servant; which God and which angel, as each is given dozens of different names: Tazsh YHWH God of Israel, Zoharriel YHWH God of Israel; Uzhaya YHWH God of Israel; Shekhadhozi’ai Dehibhiron; Akatriel Yah YHWH God of Hosts; the Prince of the Presence is named as Surya, Seganzegael, Metatron, Anafiel, Yofiel, etc. However we soon find that the names cross over, that Uzhaya and Totrosiai are also Princes or angels, and Metatron is “Metatron YHWH God of Israel, God of the Heavens and God of the Earth, God of Gods, God of the sea and God of the land.” (HekhR §279). Finally, the closing passages of HekhR presents a list of princes to be called on which shatters any kind of system we may have built up, including the Prince Zehubadyah YHWH, the Prince Totrosiai YHWH and the Prince Adiriron YHWH, the mystic to conjure them by the name of Yofiel Splendour of Height.⁸

The population of the second strata are often conditioned as the angel or servant whose name is similar to his master’s. Metatron is the most well known example of such an angel, this being stated in the Bavli (b.Sanh.38b).⁹ The condition is repeated throughout the Hekhalot literature, often being called the angel “whose name is like his master’s”. Anafiel sometimes bears the Tetragrammaton after his name, and even when without is described as “the servant who is named after his master” (§244). In MMerK, we meet the character “SQDHWZYH Your servant [...] Whose name is exalted [in that he bears] the name of his Creator” (§562). Likewise, HekhZ § 420 describes MGYHShH¹⁰ who is labelled second in rank after God, their names being one.¹¹ Metatron states that all his seventy names “are based on the name of the King of kings of kings” (3En.3:2) and that all the Princes have seventy such names (3En.29:1).¹²

Some scholars have assumed a simply nominalist interpretation of this name-sharing, while others have seen a much more powerful meaning. Odeberg writes that, “The ascribing to Metatron of the Name YHWH ha-Qatan [...] denotes his Function of being God’s representative. As this representative the Most High has conferred upon him part of His essence which is in His name.”¹³ Grözinger states that, “the participation in God’s Name is participation in God’s power, and thus in the deity itself”,¹⁴ and Joseph Dan concludes that divine names “cannot be interpreted as other

than an appellation of divine power [...] not just a technical appellation of a certain created functionary angel.”¹⁵

There is another element to the texts which confuses things further: the angelic princes are often described in the same terms as God, and sometimes are explicitly confused with him. In 3 Enoch, Abuya mistakes Metatron for a second God because he sees Metatron “seated upon a throne like a king, with ministering angels standing beside me as servants and all the princes of kingdoms crowned with crowns surrounding me.” (3En.16:2); The throne he sits on is like God’s own (3En.10:1), and even his wisdom is comparable to God’s, the mysteries of the world as open to him “as they stand revealed before the Creator” (3En.11:1). As well as being directly comparable with God, Metatron is called ‘The lesser YHWH’, (3En.12:5), with direct reference to Ex.23’s “My Name is in him”. Interestingly, one recension of the tale puts Akatriel in Metatron’s place.¹⁶

Na’ar is a title often applied directly to Metatron but also used without direct reference. The term is usually understood as youth but can also mean servant. At 3En.4:10, Metatron himself explains the title as referring to his short lifespan relative to the other angels, a consequence of his mortal origins. Of course, we would be unwise to not relate this in some way to the title ‘lesser (or little) Yahweh’. The paternal implications of both are unavoidable, and at points God is said to have his right hand placed on the head of the Youth.¹⁷

A ShQ passage repeated in Siddur Rabbah, Sefer Raziel and Shi’ur Qomah contains a section which describes the Youth in exactly the same terms as Metatron described God – including his crown bearing the name of Israel and his horns and fiery, rainbow-like appearance. Similarly, the Cairo Genizah fragment where an angel named Ozhayah (obviously a variant of Uzhiyah) warns of the Youth, “who comes forth from behind the throne” and whose crown, shoes, robe, splendour and glory are like his king’s but who under no account should be worshipped, whose name is Zehubadiah. In this case it is not explicitly mentioned but we know by now that his name also is “like his king’s”. Morray-Jones has reconstructed the manuscript variations in one ShQ passage pertaining to the Youth, and reasons that the phrase ZHWBDYH should be read as ‘This is the BD (of God)’.¹⁸ The word BD has a number of meanings including single/separate; stalk/shoot; and member/limb/part. We are reminded here of the Talmudic recension of Abuya’s Metatron vision, where it is said that he ‘cut the shoots’, and it has been speculated that the shoots in this instance could

refer to the severing of Metatron from God. Although the term translated as ‘shoots’ in b.Hag.15a is *Netiot*, the similarity, if a coincidence, is a very provocative one.¹⁹

Anafiel is described as the Prince before whom “all those on high kneel and fall down and prostrate themselves” (§243). The name Anafiel (‘branch of God’) is explained as referring to his crown, “which conceals and covers all the chambers of the palace of the ‘*arevot raqia*’ [he is] like the maker of creation” (§244).²⁰ This however seems rather convoluted, more of an excuse than a satisfactory explanation. The literal meaning indicates some kind of attachment or emanatory relationship: a ‘branching off’ of God.

The subtext throughout is of a very close relationship, a near-identity of the angel and God. In fact, after multiple meaningless strings of letters are given as names of God, HekkhZ compiles a long list of names including his biblical appellations and ending with Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Metatron and Shaddai. (§357–367) The only real meaning this can have, if we are to take it seriously, is that all the angelic powers are merely names of God. We find an interesting piece of corroborative evidence in 3En.48C:10, where Metatron “stands and carries out every word and every utterance that issues from the mouth of the Holy One”, thus becoming the enactor of divine will, and in this sense the master-servant roles are complete. Metatron is a virtual extension of God. Likewise, Metatron is often presented as the mediator through whom all communication must pass, and shares with Anafiel the role of protecting the other angels from the dangerously intense presence of the divine. Thus, Metatron and his cognates form a kind of buffer around the essence which can carry out its impulses at one remove. This passage helps to explain the strange similarity between God and angel: the angels appear similar to God because they are parts or aspects of God. They bear the name of God because quite simply, it is their name: in referring to the Godhead it also refers to them.

Extrapolation from the Evidence

The Hekhalot literature has often been understood as breaching the limits of monotheism, because the angelic powers seem to form a kind of pleroma where divine essence is spread among several distinct beings. Elior writes that the Hekhalot literature “seems to replace the monotheistic tradition with a polytheistic visionary myth [...] nullifying the uniqueness of the

single divine entity”²¹ and Dan describes a “pleroma – of divine powers surrounding the supreme God”.²² My reading proposes an alternative understanding. The error we make is in imposing on the texts a notion of identity which is based on the particular kind of metaphysics with which we currently think. In fact, the texts suggest an alternative metaphysics which requires a different way of thinking names and identity. In order to demonstrate this I will utilise the theory developed by Saul Kripke in *Naming and Necessity*.²³

Kripke argues that names are not descriptions so do not have sense, but only reference. The proper name is a ‘rigid designator’ in that it can only refer to one particular individual, whatever the contingent circumstances – a name refers to an essence and not to a bundle of qualities which may or may not be attached to the individual object in question. He argues that a name is not simply a linguistic entity, not merely a random collection of letters or phonemes which are attached arbitrarily to objects – rather, a name designates a reference and as such places the subject and object in relation to each other. A name therefore posits the subject as much as it does the object, for it must be located in terms of a specific referer as well as a specific referent. For this reason a name, even if historically false because the one we are using is not the one that person was known by, still cannot be incorrect because it succeeds in its function of locating the referent for *us*. He gives the example of Socrates, of which either the written or pronounced form would be completely unfamiliar to the historical figure we use it for. Still the name Socrates, for us, points to that figure. So, a name is inherently localised in the context of its use and forms a point of contact between the speaker and the spoken-of. It is worth noting that a given historical name would in fact be simply a quality of the object, and may indeed be an arbitrary sign if no one actually utilises that name in reference to them. Thus, $2+2=4$ is necessarily true, despite the fact that someone else may understand the sign 4 to mean the number seven, because it is not the signs themselves which are being discussed but the objects in relation to which those signs place *us*, *the ones now using them*. This, I would add for clarification, is the point at which signs become names: when they are used to form a link between a subject and an object. Without this employment in the action of naming, a mere sign is always arbitrary.

Essentially the name then, is a metaphor for presence, something which must always be particular. Presence must always be presence-to and cannot

be removed from the subject. The name brings the object into the world of the subject and presents a particular face. We can see here the triple roles of the angels, who are named with God's name, who appear like God, and who are often referred to as *sar ha-pannim*, representative of God's presence.²⁴

We can conclude that while different names can be used of the same essence (thereby defining different relationships), one name cannot refer to more than one essence – although the same sign can mean different objects for different subjects, each proper name defines a single object for the subject. The Tetragrammaton as a name then cannot be a mere signifier, and is not arbitrary. Its use in the texts must always point to the same essence, and therefore any 'beings' of whom the Tetragrammaton is appellated must be articulations of God, included in the divine essence. We can see that the prefixed names before the Tetragrammaton afford a kind of particularisation, a specific quality of God.²⁵ This is most obvious in Akatriel, whose name indicates crown. The name Akatriel YHWH would then mean, Crown of God. Likewise, Zoharriel YHWH would mean the Brightness of God – or God experienced as brightness – and Metatron YHWH, whose name may descend etymologically from the Greek *meta-thronos*, may well refer to the role of the Youth as one who is specifically related to the throne.²⁶ Thus, while many have seen the proliferation of angels during this period in Jewish history as a corollary of the increasingly transcendent God, we can now see that it is in fact a positing of linguistic entities, names, as an epistemic level in between essence and other, such that each is protected while allowing the ability of the subject and object to meet epistemically. To use a particular name of God is bring forth that aspect of God's nature, while the whole remains concealed.

In HekhZ, as R. Akiva ascends and enters the presence of God, he hears a voice from beneath the throne. The voice asks, "what man is there who is able to ascend on high [...] to behold his splendour [...] And who is able to explain, and who is able to see?" (§349–350). The text then juxtaposes three scriptural references to the experience of God: Ex.33:20 "For man may not see me and live"; Deut.5:21–24 "That man may live though God has spoken to him"; and Is.6:1 "I beheld my Lord seated upon a high and lofty throne". The text then immediately asks, "What is his name?" This passage suggests that although he cannot be directly perceived, the revelation of God's name provides a route toward the divine and the possibility of a real relationship. In the context of the Hekhalot tradition which so em-

phasises the use of names and the adjuration of God with manifold names, it is obvious that it is the names which themselves are the desideratum, and the purpose of the human traveller.

However, this is not to equate the names with the essence of divinity. This passage also stresses that there is something not perceivable, something which is so beyond the finite human mind as to constitute an existential threat to it. The essence itself is not merely translanguistic – it is ineffable. God in himself is never seen in the Hekhalot literature even if he is described. ShQ offers abundant descriptions of God without ever admitting the sense that he has been experienced. Not only are names not descriptions, but they must refer to something which is beyond the possibility of description: any nature which can be totalised is not an essence but a description, for it is solely technical and constituted. An essence must be singular not complex for it is what provides the unity to which qualities adhere. An essence therefore is always transcendent, which is to say that it is hidden. However, the essence which cannot be known can be known of, made known, through the name, which in positing another necessarily posits such an essence to which it refers. The name is not merely a quality but goes to the heart of the object in its referential function – it is linked with the essence. The name therefore acts paradoxically as both condition and concealer: it is the action which establishes an object as another and therefore allows for knowledge of it, yet in doing that prevents the object from being known by providing its inviolable integrity. We can think then of the name as a surface or a skin, which provides the possibility of contact at the same time as an opaque resistance. Interestingly, the lack of sense which for Kripke defines names is also derivative of language in its magical function: nonsense words are “the symbol par excellence of magical language”.²⁷ This being the case, naming is the essential magical action, for it literally creates identities. As soon as a name is used there is an ineffable something more than it, which it represents.²⁸ Janowitz writes that in HekhR, “to know the names of angels is to know how to invoke them”.²⁹ If the name creates identity, and this identity must be thought in terms of relationship – i.e., presence – then naming does in fact manifest the power of that angel, bringing it into the world of the subject.

According to Howard Jackson’s analysis of ShQ, “By their very nature numbers, even numbers reckoned in units of googols, function to delimit, and with that they confine what they measure”.³⁰ The same is true of names, which function to relativise objects: they place them in relationship and

articulate essence within the particulars of a situation and an individual or group who knows the name. The name becomes the shadow cast by an invisible object.

The function of a name then is to condense and reify. The name in representing an object necessarily draws on the essence, yet it does so within the field of subjectivity because a name can never be objective; to do so would be to become a quality, a mere sign. Thus a name forms a trajectory between the object and the subject, linking them in a single field of referential action. The name forms the manifestation of the object in relation to the particular subject, a trace which the object leaves, a scar on the surface of consciousness; an effect without compromising the externality of the essence.³¹

When the text claims that “no (mere) creature can comprehend him [...] we have no measure in our hand, only the names are revealed to us” (§699)³² it states that the names are not the end-point of God, but that they are the end-point of human understanding. The names are not the identity of God, but are what is revealed to humans. This reflects the statement of Merkr§355–6, “He is hidden from every eye and no man may see Him [...] His image is hidden from all”,³³ while endlessly describing the pseudo-angelic beings who populate heaven. ShQ then is in fact attempting to delineate not the essence of God, but the limitations which human understanding places on our perception. It relates that there is a very definite *sense* of perceiving the divine, one given in names – but this is not to be equated with the essence of God himself. Metatron articulates God into words (names) and numbers (descriptors) in order that God can be experienced, and so provides a kind of buffer around the divine essence. We see here the same notion expressed by Adorno when he writes that the concept is always “entwined with a nonconceptual whole. Its only insulation from that whole is its reification – that which establishes it as a concept”.³⁴ In order to be made conceptual, that which transcends thought becomes reified into symbols (names), which by their nature exist as the point at which subject and object meet.

All these names, these points of reference or designators for God are not his essence; the dark ground of God transcends these, but the names form a surface, a shifting kaleidoscopic surface admittedly, but still a boundary which intimates a beyond. The essence, the dark ground or internality extends behind this surface of names, which in fact are particular points of view on God, each an individual relationship. Thus the pleroma some

scholars have discussed is one not of beings but of names: God, like every non-totalisable object, is hermetically sealed within a polygon of names – from every angle which we approach him we find a new name or variation, a new surface which refracts the essence in different hues.

Joseph Dan writes that, “The mysticism of the names, numbers and letters is a mysticism of contact with the divine essence through its revelation in earthly symbols”.³⁵ In this context, to say earthly is to say psychological. The divine essence, which we know well cannot be conceived in itself (which is to say, cannot be *within* the world), must take some form when it enters consciousness. In order to be present in human life the unrepresentable and unseeable God must be compressed into some form which, while distinct from God, can still act as a vessel. Dan distinguishes this from the mysticism of the human’s ascent, and the descent of the divine to the earthly mystic – however it does seem to also be a descent, albeit one more abstract or idealistic: the divine manifests into something conceivable by the finite minds of corporeal beings. It is thus a conceptual or ideological descent, of the formless into form. The tortured language we find represents how in the process of emerging through the veil, into consciousness, the object (God) is twisted and broken into words – words that are themselves twisted and broken by the weight of what they are trying to express.

The Single Name

There is a tension between Kripke’s theory and some later Kabbalistic ideas. One (unstated) implication of Kripke is that there can never be just one name, because even if the same sign is used by every person or group, each different perspective or use, makes it a different name because it defines a new relationship. One of the most intriguing implications of Kripke’s theory is that the signs which are used for names are ultimately unrelated to them because the name can *only* be the use of the sign as a relationship.³⁶ However it is sometimes said that God’s truest name is one never given to humanity, his secret name for himself. These are not as contradictory as they may appear, and discovering how they fit together will provide some intriguing new insights into the metaphysical function of names.

Kripke claimed that names must refer rather than describe. To be able to describe is to have complete access, an object must be open and apparent, with no hidden aspect. Description then reduces to a flat plane – to perfectly

describe is to murder by a process of identification, i.e. to reduce a non-conceptuality to its concept. A concept which is articulated, constituted of parts and nothing more, because to have a unity is to have an internality of some kind, a transcendent aspect which is not statable. The flat world of perfect description is without play of meanings or alternative interpretation. As Derrida points out, several voices are necessary to speak – multiplicity is essential, even or especially for God, who must be approached from multiple perspectives.³⁷ This is not to make God multiple (the error which R Abuya makes in understanding Metatron as a second god) but to accept the multiplicity of human understanding, which of course can never reach the oneness *behind* the names.

Likewise then, the ideal of a single name is a kind of death, a disintegration: both of the object and of language itself. Of language, because all speech which intends to describe is translation, of fact into word, and the single name commands a single immediate understanding, without perspective because it claims itself as the only perspective. The word and the fact then are equated in description: there is no difference whatsoever between object, concept, and description. The single name in fact desires (the impossible, contradictory) communication without language, or knowledge *without* name. This immediacy is a flatness, absolute knowledge without any play or interaction. The desire for identity and the flatness which comes with identity, the object being identical to itself and thus knowable in its entirety: without any transcendent element, subsumed in the subject and dis-integrated. This single name which is the absence of name thus leads inexorably toward a destruction of otherhood via absolute knowledge. The nameless other is dead and inert, surfaceless and therefore open to view; broken into pieces; lacking integrity. This idolatry of objects, of parts, kills the multivalent truths of relation, reducing all expression to a flat voice of facts: a place of absolute consistency where everything is apparent and nothing hidden.

I have posited a formlessness at the heart of objects. The *tohu ve-bohu* which God formed into discrete entities by the magical process of naming remains, the *prima materia* which still constitutes objects remains but is now concealed within order, hidden behind a name. This formlessness in fact is that which guarantees irreducibility. Because there is a concealed element not subsumable under any description, which can only be referred to and never totalised by rational language, it is formlessness which is at the heart of all identity. The essence refuses form and is thus inarticulate;

the name being both the articulation or calling into particularity, and paradoxically that which provides the possibility of inexpressible essence. With identity, chaos is locked away and concealed behind the name. It is confined within named existence and articulated/divided into multiple relations. Chaos remains but is safe and invisible, for it has become essence.

Then, is the internal essence of God also chaos, *tohu ve-bohu*? I am compelled to agree with Scholem who calls God “ultimate formlessness”.³⁸

If any internal essence is precisely that without form, that which admits a single name because it is knowable only to itself, then God’s secret name for himself would be, as Spinoza claimed, matter. That which is, the unconditioned. Janowitz claims that the Hekhalot literature presents an alternative creation where God speaks his own name, as opposed to Genesis where he speaks the names of the world – but here we find that these two are in fact the same.

Conversely, to know the single name at the heart of an object is to flatten that object, to reduce it to identity, in other words *to become it* because it is no longer othered. To know God’s secret name then, is apotheosis: exactly as happened with Enoch, who became the little Yahweh and thus an aspect of God, and as Abraham Abulafia claimed is the ultimate goal of the Kabbalist mystic: “he will be called the angel of the Lord; his name will be similar to that of his Master, which is Shaddai, who is called Metatron, *sar ha-panim*.”³⁹

Conclusion

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

Shi’ur Qomah warns against the *qomatose* – a reductionist belief in only the immediately present, the body which is mechanical and divisible,

without seeing the wholeness which constitutes and allows for identity. For an object to have integrity it cannot be constituted but must transcend. In doing this, we are given a devastating but subtle critique of idealism: if the name (that present in the mind) is the essence, God can be dissected and corporealised so that he is present but dead, inert before us; and so, *not* present; apparent but not present. The message is that a God constituted by names and numbers is not God. If we could gain God through this process, then what in fact would we have gained, and what more would we have lost? If truths were about names, if names were descriptions rather than pointing to something inexpressible beyond them, then we are left with a reductionist metaphysics, an atomism where everything is statable in terms of the lowest common denominator. But objects, especially if that object is also a subject, must have an independence: they must transcend and at some level be concealed from view, withdrawing from the mind's eye which divides and compartmentalises them out of existence.

Thus we can understand the proliferation of meaningless and unpronounceable 'names' with which the Hekhalot literature provides us – even the apparently random collections of letters can be names, if they are used as such. But all the names used of God are names used relatively and are conditioned also by the finite human perspective. Even the Tetragrammaton is not God's internal nature but a name given to humans to use of him. In the Hekhalot literature we see evidenced a theory of naming where identity and name are interrelated, but beings are also divisible into an infinity of names. The unity is irreducible, and cannot be reduced to the names that it comprises, yet these names are the knowable manifestation of the ineffable unity which stands behind them.

Notes

- 1 This dating, first made by Gershom SCHOLEM (*Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965) has been almost unanimously supported, the one exception being Martin Samuel COHEN (*The Shi'ur Qomah. Texts and Recensions*. Tubingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1985). However Joseph DAN claims his rejection is "incomplete and unconvincing" and "cannot be accepted" (*Jewish Mysticism Volume I. Late Antiquity*, Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc, 1998, p. 214).
- 2 For recent discussion of this, see Christopher ROWLAND and Christopher R.A. MORRAY-JONES: *The Mystery of God. Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament*,

- Leiden: Brill, 2009, p. 233, and Peter SCHÄFER: *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009 – who switches HekhR and HekhZ in priority.
- 3 See, e.g. David J. HALPERIN: “A New Edition of the Hekhalot Literature” in *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 104.3, (1984), p. 543–552.
 - 4 *Jewish Mysticism I*, 1998, p. 233.
 - 5 The gigantic fiery prince Keruvi’el wears a crown of holiness “with the sacred name engraved upon it”. (3En.22:5). Akatriel (whose name likely means crown of God) often has his name engraved on God’s crown. At 3En.13 God writes on Metatron’s crown the letters by which heaven and earth and their elements were created. Similarly, Metatron bears the letters “with which were created heaven and earth and sealed with the [signet] ring of Ehyeh Asher Ehyeh” (Sefer Raziel 261–2). In HekhR Anafiel holds the signet ring bearing the seal of heaven and earth (§242). These letters can only be the letters of the name of God, a reference to the tradition that God created the world via his own name – e.g. Bereshit Rabba 12:12 and also “Creator of his world in his one name, fashioner of all by one word” (MMerk §596).
 - 6 These divine parasangs are each several thousand times the width of the universe.
 - 7 DAN argued, based on his interpretation of a single passage (§96), that Zoharriel, and by implication Totrosiai, must not be identified with the supreme God, although they clearly stand above all creation (*Jewish Mysticism I*, 1998, p.102). His chain of reasoning is difficult to accept: the sole passage in which Dan finds a distinction between Zoharriel and God varies between manuscripts, and in every other occurrence the names are unequivocally used as titles or conditions of ‘YHWH God of Israel’.
 - 8 3En.18–27 combines no less than twenty three separate Princes with the divine name. However, it goes on to claim that while the Great Law Court is in session, “only the great princes who are called YHWH by the name of the Holy One, blessed be he, are permitted to speak” (3En.30:1); there are apparently 72 such princes, “not counting the Prince of the World” (3En.30:2).
 - 9 With less explanation, in b. Berakhot 7a, Rabbi Ishmael b. Elisha reports seeing ‘Akatriel Yah YHWH of Hosts, seated upon a high and exalted throne’ within the Heavenly Temple.
 - 10 This name varies across the manuscripts, but appears to me to be one of the second variety, that incorporates the letters of the Tetragrammaton. Possibly, the original was MWYHShH – the remaining letters being ShM, name.
 - 11 This part of the tradition extant only a fragment from the Cairo Genizah.
 - 12 Cf HekhR §240, where the nominal formula used by the guardians of the gates “is derived from the name of the king of the universe”.
 - 13 Hugo ODEBERG: *3 Enoch*, London: Cambridge University Press, 1928, p. 188.
 - 14 Karl Erich GRÖZINGER: “The Names of God and the Celestial Powers: Their Function and Meaning in the Hekhalot Literature” in *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought VI*, ed. Joseph DAN, Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1987, p. 62.
 - 15 *Jewish Mysticism I*, 1998, p. 54.
 - 16 §597; Nathaniel DEUTSCH concluded that this is the original version of the story (*Guardians of the Gate*, Leiden: Brill, 1999).
 - 17 E.g. Sefer RAZIEL 240 and parallels.
 - 18 *Mystery of God*, 2009, p. 524.

- 19 Moshe IDEL has offered an alternative interpretation of this word, concluding that the original form is a theophorism formed from the letters of the Tetragrammaton and the root ZBD (*Ben. Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*, London/New York: Continuum, 2009, p. 141–144). This certainly links with traditions involving Metatron/Youth with the divine name, however on balance, Morray-Jones' explanation based on the textual variants seems less open to alternative explanations.
- 20 Cf. 3En.18:18
- 21 Rachel Elior: "Mysticism, Magic, and Angelology. The Perception of Angels in Hekhalot Literature" in *Jewish Studies Quarterly* I, (1993), p. 3–53, at p. 34.
- 22 *Jewish Mysticism I*, 1998, p. 54.
- 23 Saul A. KRIPKE: *Naming and Necessity*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1980.
- 24 There is a long tradition coming out of the Second Temple period of the Name as a hypostasised entity denoting God's presence in the world: see especially Jarl E. FOSSUM: *The Name of God and the Angel of the Lord*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1980, and Robert HAYWARD: *Divine Name and Presence. The Memra*, Totowa: Allanheld, Osmun & Co., 1981.
- 25 GRÖZINGER has pointed out that Irenaeus of Lyons argued that heretics misunderstand the many names of God as being separate entities. Any "angelic figure is nothing else than the function expressed in its name, a hypostasis of this function" ("Names of God", 1987, p. 56).
- 26 Daniel BOYARIN, among others, argues that the Youth motif is based on Dan.7's 'one like a son of man' who is enthroned alongside God ["Beyond Judaism: Metatron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism" in *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 41 (2010), p. 323–365.]
- 27 JANOWITZ: *Poetics of Ascent*, 1989, p. 90.
- 28 Thus, we can understand the process described in Genesis, of God's naming the world into existence.
- 29 Naomi JANOWITZ: *The Poetics of Ascent. Theories of Language in a Rabbinic Ascent Text*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, 53fn43.
- 30 Howard M. JACKSON: "The Origins and Development of Shi'ur Qomah revelation in Jewish Mysticism" in *Journal for the Study of Judaism*, 31.4 (2000), p. 373–415, at p. 380.
- 31 It would be wrong to call this a representation, as it does not share in the form of the object – the object itself is without form, this being a condition of manifestation. To have form is to be limited and therefore knowable.
- 32 Also repeated through most ShQ passages.
- 33 Cf HekhZ§159, "no creature can recognize, neither the near nor the far can look at him".
- 34 Theodore ADORNO: *Negative Dialectics*, London: Routledge, 1973, p. 12.
- 35 *Jewish Mysticism I*, 1998, p. 64.
- 36 JANOWITZ notes that sometimes in the Bavli, "any word used to refer to the deity is, in fact, a Name and thus prohibited" (*Poetics of Ascent*, 1989, p. 27); also, regarding the textual structure of MMerK: "The density [...] results in almost every word and phrase being a semantic equivalent of the divine Name." (ibid., p. 89) If God created all that exists by speaking his own name, his name should be every possible combination

of letters and is the inner nature of all things – so, not only all of language but every sound and every thing refers to God. Cf. MMerk §592, “Everything you created in your world recites to your name.”

- 37 “[I]t is always necessary to be more than one in order to speak [...] exemplarily, when it’s a matter of God” (*On the Name*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1995, p. 35).
- 38 Gershom SCHOLEM: *On the Kabbalah and its Symbolism*, New York: Schocken, 1996, p. 8.
- 39 From *Hayye ha-Olam ha-Ba*, Cited in IDEL: “Enoch Is Metatron” in *Immanuel* 24/25, (1990), p. 220–240, at p. 236