

targumic traditions.⁴⁶ As to the latter, the title “Great Scribe” points to early Enochic traditions that assign Enoch scribal functions. Scholem has already drawn our attention to the Book of Jubilees (4:23), where Enoch is described as “writing condemnation and judgment of the world, and of all the evils of the children of men,”⁴⁷ yet there is much more relevant material.⁴⁸ In the Book of the Watchers, Enoch is called “scribe of righteousness,”⁴⁹ and the same holds true for the Testament of Abraham.⁵⁰ According to the Astronomical Book of 1 Enoch, the angel Uriel instructs Enoch to write down the secrets of the movements of the stars;⁵¹ and according to the Second Book of Enoch, Enoch is instructed by the angel Vrevoil to write down 366 books “about his marvelous travels and what the heavens look like.”⁵² Another honorific title—“the distinguished scribe”—is bestowed on Enoch in the Enochic fragments of the Book of Giants, found in Qumran.⁵³ Hence, it would seem that this rather late targumic reference has preserved a faint echo of certain Enoch traditions familiar from the pseudepigraphic Enoch literature—through channels unknown to us. But it must be emphasized that this particular tradition is far removed from any notion of Enoch as being elevated above the angels and transformed into a divine co-ruler with God.⁵⁴

THE CELESTIAL HIGH PRIEST

A remarkable tradition concerning a certain “Prince” in heaven is preserved in the enigmatic tractate Re’uyot Yehezqel, which many scholars seek to locate on the periphery of Merkavah mysticism:

And what is there in [the third heaven] *zevul*?

R. Levi said in the name of R. Hama bar Uqba, who said [it] in the name of R. Yohanan: The Prince (*ha-šar*) is not

dwelling anywhere but in *zevul*, and he is the very fullness (*melôo*) of *zevul*.

And before him are thousands of thousands and myriads of myriads who minister to him. Of them it is said by Daniel: As I watched, thrones were set in place, etc. [and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool. His throne was fiery flames; its wheels were blazing fire.] A river of fire streamed forth, etc. [from before him. Thousands upon thousands served him; myriads upon myriads stood attending him] (Dan. 7:9f.).

And what is his name?

Kimos (*QYMWS*) is his name.

R. Yitzhaq said: *Me'atab* is his name.

R. Inyanei bar Sasson (Sisson?) said: *Bi-zevul* (“in *zevul*”) is his name.

R. Tanhum the Elder said: *Atatyah* is his name.

Eleazar Nadwadya (Nadwad, Narwad, Nedudeya?) said: Metatron (*myttrwn*), like the name of the Power (*gevurah*).

And those who make theurgical use of the name say: Salnas (*SLNS*) is his name, *QS BS BS QBS* is his name, similar to the name of the creator of the world.⁵⁵

This passage is part of a description of the seven heavens and their inventories. It locates a “Prince,” whose name is at first not specified, in the third heaven (*zevul*). Of this Prince we learn only that he is the “fullness of *zevul*”—whatever this means: that he represents the “essence” of *zevul* or that he fills it out completely?⁵⁶—and that many angels serve him (with Daniel 7:9f. as proof text). Since his name is not explicitly mentioned, the second section of our passage asks after his name and provides a list of names, most of which are unintelligible *nomina barbara*. Only the name Metatron immediately stands out as an

unambiguous identification—all the more so as the author hastens to add that well-known specification that his name is like the name of the Power (which is, of course, God).

The date and provenance of Re'uyot Yehezqel, wherefrom our passage derives, is much debated among scholars. Whereas Scholem (followed by Gruenwald) takes it for granted that the tractate is part and parcel of the Hekhalot literature and hence of Merkavah mysticism,⁵⁷ Halperin has conclusively argued that “not only is the *Visions of Ezekiel* not a *Hekhalot* text; it is, by and large, very unlike the *Hekhalot*.”⁵⁸ This line of reasoning is followed by Goldberg, who—on the basis of a detailed form-analytical analysis—concludes that it is a late rabbinic midrash and definitely not a “mystical text.”⁵⁹ No one doubts, however, that it is of Palestinian origin. The names of the rabbis quoted are all of Palestinian provenance and, following the framework established by these names (none of which is later than ca. 300 C.E.), Gruenwald has concluded that the tractate must have been written in the fourth or, at very latest, early fifth century.⁶⁰ Halperin casts doubt on the usefulness of the rabbinic names for establishing the date of the tractate and raises the possibility that these names are fictitious and lead us nowhere; in fact, he contends, a number of aspects would indicate that the tractate is a late text.⁶¹ But Halperin qualifies this statement with regard to precisely the passage in question, which, he quite rightly observes, is different from the bulk of the material assembled in the tractate and which he identifies as an early Palestinian source or even—because of its affinity with certain Hekhalot texts—an early “proto-*Hekhalot*” composition.⁶² Hence, the rationale for dating our particular passage seems to go in circles and ultimately depends on its interpretation (if it be true that it is indeed uncharacteristic of the tractate’s gist). What then is the message of our passage?

I will begin by stressing the fact that the Prince dwelling in *zevul* is anonymous: the explanation in the second part, clearly referring to Metatron, may well have been added by an editor who felt it necessary to provide the Prince with a moniker. But application of the name Metatron is by no means imperative—quite the contrary. If we didn't know from the second part of our passage that the Prince was Metatron, we would conceive a very different name, namely, Michael. For we possess a close parallel to Re'uyot Yehezqel's schema of the seven heavens and its inventories in the famous sugya in b Hagiga (12b) and related texts.⁶³ There it is stated, anonymously:

Zevul is [the heaven] in which [the heavenly] Jerusalem and the Temple and the Altar are built, and Michael, the Great Prince, stands and offers up thereupon an offering.

This is the locus classicus for *zevul's* inventory: it contains the heavenly Temple with Michael, the celestial High Priest, performing the sacrifice in heaven. Scholem has suggested, therefore, that the Prince in our passage in Re'uyot Yehezqel is indeed Michael, not Metatron, who offers the heavenly sacrifice⁶⁴ (the only difference being that according to b Hagiga *zevul* is the fourth heaven, whereas in Re'uyot Yehezqel it is the third heaven)⁶⁵ and that our passage reflects a stage in which Michael is identified with Metatron (similar to the identification of Metatron with Ia'el)⁶⁶ as made explicit in the second part. The straightforward message of the first part would then be: Michael/Metatron functions as the celestial High Priest in the heaven called *zevul* and, in order to support his duties, he has thousands and myriads of angels at his behest who attend his performance of the heavenly sacrifice (Dan. 7:9f.).

Yet the quotation of Daniel 7:9f. in our Re'uyot Yehezqel passage complicates matters. The verse speaks of the "Ancient of Days," no doubt God, who takes his seat on his heavenly throne and has thousands and myriads of angels serving him. Hence, if we apply this to the Prince in *zevul*, we can only conclude that the Prince Michael/Metatron is identified with the Ancient of Days, that is, with God; in other words, that Michael/Metatron is not only a second divine power next to God but even serves as God's surrogate. Such a message is unheard of. To be sure, we know of texts that conceive Metatron as God's viceroy,⁷¹ but nowhere is it said that Metatron (let alone Michael) can be equated with God. I don't believe, therefore, that such an unduly literal reading of our passage in Re'uyot Yehezqel makes sense. The most likely explanation of the text is that the quotation from Daniel is meant to prove that Michael/Metatron, during his celestial duties, is served by the host of angels—and certainly not that *he* is the "Ancient of Days."

On this level, therefore, our passage is still quite "innocent." It is interested in Metatron's function in heaven, clearly as an angel, and not in his relationship with God. But one can see how it might give rise to other more dangerous speculations. Once Michael is identified with Metatron and the Metatron traditions sneak in, a Pandora's box is opened: one might then consider that the plural of "thrones" in Daniel 7:9f. might refer not just to God's throne but rather to one throne for the "Ancient of Days" and another for David/the Son of Man or Metatron;⁷² or consider the dangerous implications resulting from the insight that Metatron's name is like the name of his master.⁷³ The first implication could easily be read into the quotation of Daniel 7:9f., and the second one is even made explicit in the second part of our midrash.

So what do we make of this interpretation of the Re'uyot Yehezqel passage? Do we have here a relatively early (fourth cen-