In accordance with the theme of this volume I will not deal generally with the aim and purpose of early Jewish mysticism, but confine my remarks to the special aspect of the textual transmission of the Heikhalot writings in the Middle Ages. In the space available it is not possible to survey the one hundred and twenty, or so, Heikhalot manuscripts and fragments, and, in fact, it is not necessary to do so. The complete textual material can only be of interest for a comprehensive study of copying in the Middle Ages, for the history, so to speak, of textual corruption. Moreover, those manuscripts which seem to us important for the question of the creation and re-creation of the texts, cannot be described in a few sentences, and research on the Heikhalot manuscripts is by no means exhausted. It is my intention, therefore, to deal with one manuscript only, which according to Gershom Scholem is a most important one: the famous Heikhalot manuscript of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (8128). Though I will not discuss the question of the origins and early history of Jewish mysticism, I do, however, wish to demonstrate that a careful study of the manuscripts is a basic requirement for further research in this field. Otherwise the researcher may be misled. The over-creative medieval copyist is a danger to the over-creative scholar of today. I hope that a few examples will serve to illustrate this point.

1 This paper was written in connection with the Heikhalot project supervised by Professor Peter Schäfer at the Institut für Judaistik of the Freie Universität Berlin. Professor Schäfer provided the impulse for my own research as well as to that of my colleagues in the Heikhalot project. Much that I shall say here is the result of common research undertaken with my colleague Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker. Cp. our articles 'Magische Traditionen der New Yorker Hekhalot-Handschrift JTS 8128 im Kontext ihrer Gesamtredeaktion', Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge, 17 (1989), 101-49, and 'Magische Traditionen der Oxford Hekhalot-Handschrift Michael 9 in ihrem Verhältnis zu MS New York JTS 8128, Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge, 19 (1992), 169-83. I am grateful to Aubrey Pomerance for his assistance in shaping the final English version of this paper.

2 Jewish gnosticism, Merkabah mysticism, and talmudic tradition, second edition (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965), 102f.
Since Gershom Scholem's pioneering work on Jewish mysticism in general, and on Merkavah mysticism in particular, there has been an increasing interest in this field of Judaic studies. Following the publication of Peter Schäfer's Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur and Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur, which contain the most relevant material under discussion, more and more attention has been given to the textual situation as we find it in the manuscripts. Both these volumes clearly show that differences exist both between the European manuscripts themselves, as well as between these manuscripts and the oriental Heikhalot fragments of the Genizah. This fact immediately raises the question of how the transmission of Heikhalot literature evolved. The study of the manuscripts leads us to those circles within medieval Jewish society in which the Heikhalot writings were copied. Without their interest in Merkavah mysticism we would know little about the yoredei merkavah in the rabbinic period, among whom the Heikhalot literature originated. In this case our knowledge would be dependent on the few fragments from the Cairo Genizah, some quotations from rabbinic, as well as from geonic literature and from the polemical writings of the Karaites (which would probably have been our single most important source). The situation would have been similar to that

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4 In collaboration with M. Schlüter und H.G. von Mutius edited by P. Schäfer (Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum, 2), (Tübingen: J.C.B. Mohr, 1981); quotations in this paper are cited according to the sections of this edition.  
5 Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum, 6 (Tübingen, J.C.B. Mohr, 1984).  
8 Cp. in particular the famous responsum of Sherira und Hai Gaon, ed. Lewin, Osar ha-ge'onim, vol. IV/2 (Hagigah), (Jerusalem, 1931), 10ff., and the study on this subject by E.E. Hildesheimer, Mystik und Agada im Urteil der Gaonen R. Scherira und R. Haj (Berlin, 1931).  
9 We should, by the way, pay more attention to their writings, especially in connection with the question of textual transmission. The Sefer milhamot Adonai of the Karaite Salmon ben Yeruham (The book of the wars of the Lord, ed. I. Davidson [New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1934]), a bitter attack on rabbinic Judaism, contains lengthy quotations from the Sar ha-torah and Shit'ur gomah traditions.
of the gnostic writings, which were known to us mainly from the polemics of the Church Fathers until the extraordinary discovery of the hidden gnostic library at Nag Hammadi.\textsuperscript{10} But since there was a continuous stream of mystical tradition in Judaism from its very beginning in ancient times up to the circles of the Hasidim in medieval Germany and of the Qabbalah in Provence and Spain, the question arises: How was the mystical tradition transmitted and how was its character changed? Did later copyists substantially interfere with the earlier writings? And if so, how significant are the changes introduced in the material?

The analysis of the manuscripts is, of course, only the first stage in literary research into Heikhalot literature. With regard to the history of the text, further questions arise. These pertain not only to the relationship between the various medieval manuscript collections, but above all to the relationship between the Heikhalot treatises themselves which are contained within these collections. The treatises generally accepted as belonging to the Heikhalot corpus display considerable differences in content, aim and literary character. Nor do the collections necessarily stem from the same time and the same circles.

In one treatise, the ascent or descent of the mystic is dealt with in detail, including, especially, its technical aspects (knowledge of names and seals, tests and dangers).\textsuperscript{11} In another, description of the ascent flows into description of the heavenly liturgy\textsuperscript{12} or into an adjuration ritual.\textsuperscript{13} In some passages, the connection between the ascent and its visual elements (e.g. the beholding of the ‘king in his beauty’), is stressed.\textsuperscript{14} In one place the individual parts of the body of the godhead, from the feet to the head, are determined in concrete measurements and given secret names.\textsuperscript{15} In another, elements of the ascent tradition, particularly the secret names, appear in the adjuration of the ‘Prince of the Torah’ (\textit{Sar ha-torah}), a ritual which aims at acquiring knowledge of the Torah or providing protection against

\textsuperscript{10} It should be noted that in recent research a relationship between the Nag Hammadi writings and Heikhalot literature has been suggested several times.

\textsuperscript{11} See especially the ascension traditions in \textit{Heikhalot zutarti}, sections 335ff. and 407ff., and \textit{Heikhalot rabbati}, sections 198ff.

\textsuperscript{12} See \textit{Heikhalot rabbati}, section 251.

\textsuperscript{13} See \textit{Heikhalot zutarti}, sections 417ff.

\textsuperscript{14} See sections 248, 259 (in MS New York only), 407ff., G8, fol. 2b/Z. 18ff. (\textit{Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur} [note 5], 105). Cp. further section 159, which contains a highly poetical description of the face of God.

the forgetting of the Torah with the aid of magical practices. In one text, the themes of ascent and Sar ha-torah are intertwined, whereas in another, the Torah magic appears to push the ascent tradition aside or even replace it.

Those texts in which cosmology or angelology is the major theme, and in which the cosmos is arranged and systematized according to regions (underworlds, earths, heavens), or angelic hierarchies, point in quite a different direction. A close inspection of these texts discovers manifold points of contact both between one another as well as with the above-mentioned Heikhalot traditions. Angelology and cosmology themselves can also be combined with practical magic, as is evidenced by the magical texts Sefer ha-razim and Harba de-Moshe.

These examples are sufficient to show that the Heikhalot literature represents an extremely complex and many-layered literary phenomenon. When we consider its literary character, it seems obvious that this literature is the result of the re-writing of earlier mystical texts, as well as being itself a source for further re-writing. From this point of view the transmission of the mystical tradition may be compared with the rabbinic writings, especially Midrashic literature.

As our first textual example I would like to consider the well-known pardes story. This narrative was transmitted in Heikhalot as well as in rabbinic literature and therefore became the main textual example for the relationship between Merkavah mysticism and talmudic tradition. The rabbinic version of the famous story is handed down to us in tractate Hagiga in the Tosefta (2:3–4), Talmud Yerushalmi (2:1; 77b) and Talmud Bavli (14bff.). It was

16 See especially the passage of sections 281ff., which in many manuscripts follows the ascent tradition of Heikhalot rabbati. The same theme is dealt with in the following traditions: sections 307ff. (Pereq R. Nehunia ben Ha-Qanah); sections 623ff. (adjuration of the Sar ha-panim).

17 This seems to be the clear redactional outline of Ma'aseh merkavah (sections 544ff.). Cp. also Genizah fragment T.-S. K 21.95.C., fol. 2af. (Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur [note 5], 103ff.; an unknown Heikhalot text).

18 This impression is given mainly by Merkavah rabbah (sections 655ff.) Cp. I Gruenwald, Apocalyptic and Merkavah mysticism (Leiden: Brill, 1980), 179, who argues that the sentence 'day by day it seemed to me [= R. Ishmael], as if I would stand in front of the throne of glory' (section 680), 'betrays the fact that the Sar-Torah experience was considered a substitute for the ascent unto the heavenly Merkavah'.


20 The most comprehensive angelological tradition, which contains several different systems of the angelic world, is found in the Third book of Enoch (sections 1–79).


also included in *Midrash rabbah* to Canticles (1,4) which seems to be derived from the Yerushalmi tradition. The story mentions four rabbis Ben Azzai, Ben Zoma, Aher (a pseudonym for Elisha ben Abuya), and Aqiba, who entered into *pardes* (*פָּרְדֵּס*). Of Ben Azzai it is said that he looked and died (וַיָּרֵד וַיָּמָר), of Ben Zoma that ‘he looked and suffered harm’ (וַיָּרֵד וַיִּזָּרַע נַפְשּׁוֹ) and of Aher that ‘he looked and cut down the shoots’ (וַיָּרֵד וַיִּמְנָה בְּנֵיטוּפָּיו). Only Aqiba entered in peace (וַיָּרֵד בְּשָׁלוֹם) and came out in peace (וַיַּשְׁלַח בְּשָׁלוֹם) or, according to another reading, ascended in peace (וַיַּשְׁלַח בְּשָׁלוֹם) and descended in peace (וַיַּשְׁלַח בְּשָׁלוֹם). We should however notice, as Schäfer has pointed out, that the story begins with: four entered into *pardes* (נכנסו בְּפָרְדֵּס), not ascended into *pardes* (עָלָה בְּשָׁלוֹם). In the Heikhalot literature this narrative is an integral part of the treatises *Heikhalot zutarti* and *Merkavah rabbah*. The fact that the story was included in classical rabbinic as well as in Heikhalot literature has given it a key position in scholarship and the narrative has thus been the subject of many controversial interpretations. I will mention only a few of the major positions which seem to me important for the question of textual transmission.

Scholem saw in the story a close connection with the mystical ecstatic traditions of the Heikhalot literature. The story is therefore an important basis for the assumption that Merkavah mysticism developed in rabbinic circles and goes back to tannaitic times. Against the same background a passage in 2 Corinthians (12:1ff.) of the New Testament, where Paul boasts of having been carried off into Paradise, can be explained. The ecstatic understanding of the story is evidenced by the simple fact that it belongs to Merkavah tradition. According to Scholem this interpretation is also valid for the rabbinic tradition of the narrative and is clearly testified to by a short passage which occurs only in the version from the Babylonian Talmud. Directly after the introductory sentence we read: ‘R. Aqiba said to them: When you come to the stones of pure marble (אֲדֹני שָׁעַר חָוָה) do not say: Water! Water! (יָמֶם מִים) For it is written, *None who speaks lies may endure before my eyes* (Ps. 101:7). As Scholem has pointed out, this cryptic phrase is only understandable within the context of the so-called water episode in the Merkavah tradition, namely the testing of the adept at the entrance of the sixth palace:

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23 *Hekhalot-Studien* (note 6), 240.
24 Sections 338f. and 344f. The version of the story in the only extant Genizah fragment of *Heikhalot zutarti* T-S K 21.95 B is published in *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur* (note 5), 86ff.
25 Sections 67ff.
The sixth palace (המבית) looks as though hundreds of thousands and myriads of waves of the sea poured over him [=the mystic], whereas there is not a single drop of water in it, but [this impression is given] by the radiance of the marble stones (אבנים ישרים מוהר) with which the palace is covered and the radiance [of which] is more terrible than water. And do not the servants [=the angels] stand before him [= the mystic]? If he now says, "Those waters, what is their meaning?", they immediately run round behind him to stone [him], and they say to him, "[You] fool! Now you shall not see with your eyes! Are you of the seed of those who kissed the golden calf? You are unworthy to see the king in his beauty!"... He does not depart from there before they wound his head with iron stakes.27

The ecstatic mystical interpretation of the rabbinic pardes narrative was rejected by Ephraim E. Urbach, who argued that within the framework of the tannaitic tradition, this interpretation resulted from the exegesis of the Merkavah mystics.28 Following this non-ecstatic understanding, Schäfer even tried to remove the original setting of the story from the Merkavah tradition. In his view the story originally 'was meant to demonstrate four different types of Torah teachers, and, by way of the type represented by Aqiba, to show the desirable model.'29 His explanation of the story is certainly influenced by the embellished version of the pardes narrative in Talmud Yerushalmi and Midrash rabbah to Canticles, in which the phrase about Aher’s ‘cutting down the shoots’ is interpreted as the sin of keeping young Torah students from studying Torah. The different versions of the pardes story in the talmudic tradition lead, consequently, to different interpretations by modern scholarship.

It is our present task to consider how the narrative developed within the Heikhalot tradition. In most Heikhalot manuscripts, and in the only extant Genizah fragment, the story is almost identical with the version found in the Tosefta. In the Genizah fragment and in some manuscripts it has been changed from a narrative story in the third person into a story based on personal experience told in the first person. In this textual tradition the narrative is better adapted to the context in which R. Aqiba is relating his experiences during his ascent to the Merkavah. In Heikhalot zutarti as well as in Merkavah rabbah the narrative was first linked with ascent traditions of R. Aqiba.30

It is worth noting that in these manuscripts the narrative has no direct connection with the water episode in the account of the ascent to the Merkavah. We hear nothing about the fate of the
other three rabbis, what happened to them, or why they suffered harm. The only manuscript in which the fate of all of them is described at any length is the above-mentioned famous Heikhalot manuscript of the Jewish Theological Seminary of America (8128). The traditions about the heretic Aher are identical with those in the talmudic texts. There are two completely different rabbinic traditions about Aher: in one he seduces the students from the study of Torah; in the other he makes a failed attempt to ascend to heaven. The first of these traditions was included in Heikhalot zutarti, and the other in Merkavah rabbah. In Merkavah rabbah the redactor of the New York manuscript also incorporated R. Aqiba’s warning, which derives from the Bavli tradition. This warning provides the redactional background to the attempt to link Ben Azzai and Ben Zoma with the water episode in Heikhalot zutarti. About Ben Azzai we read:

‘Ben Azzai looked into the sixth palace and saw the ethereal radiance of the marble stones with which the palace was covered. His body was unable to endure it. He opened his mouth and asked them [=the angels]: “Those waters, what is their meaning?” and he died. Of him Scripture says, Precious in the eyes of the Lord is the death of his saints’ (Ps. 116:15).

In a similar way Ben Zoma is linked with the pardes story in the New York manuscript: ‘Ben Zoma looked at the ethereal radiance of the marble stones, and thought it was water. His body could endure not to ask them, but his mind could not endure it, and he went mad. Of him Scripture says, If you find honey, eat only your fill, lest you become sated with it and vomit’ (Prov. 25:16).

On the other hand the redactor of the New York manuscript refers back from the water episode to the pardes story: ‘R. Aqiba said: Ben Azzai succeeded in reaching the gate of the sixth palace. He saw the splendour of the air of the stones of pure marble. He opened his mouth twice and said: “Water, water” (מימין ומעין). Instantly they cut off his head and threw upon him eleven

31 The manuscript was copied at the end of the fifteenth or the beginning of the sixteenth century in the circles of the German Hasidim. Cp. Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur (note 4), ix.
32 Section 345.
33 Section 672.
34 At the beginning of section 672.
35 The redactional manipulation may be based on older traditions; cf. the responsum of Sherrira and Hai Gaon (note 8), 14.
36 Section 345.
37 Section 345. In a completely different way Ben Zoma is linked with the ascent of the yored merkavah in the unknown Heikhalot treatise in the Genizah fragment T-S K 21.95.C; cp Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur (note 5), 103 (fol. 2a, lines 31ff.).
thousand iron axes. This is to serve as a sign for all time, that one must not make an error at the gate of the sixth palace.\textsuperscript{38}

The other manuscripts are uncertain as to who was involved, since they read here 'N.N.' instead of Ben Azzai. We may ask whether there is also an allusion to Ben Zoma's fate as it is described in the embellished version of the pardes narrative in this manuscript. The fate of Ben Zoma seems to be based on that version of the water episode since the following problem arises: once one knows how to avoid the fatal question, the water episode can no longer be a suitable test of the worthy or unworthy adept. The possibility of avoiding the fatal question is excluded: 'His body could endure not to ask them, but his mind could not endure it, and he went mad.'\textsuperscript{39}

In the secondary literature the readings of the New York manuscript have been used to prove the close connection between the pardes story and the ecstatic water episode. Pierre Lenhardt and Peter von der Osten-Sacken, for example, quote the embellished Talmud Bavli and New York manuscript version of the story with the intention of connecting the 'mystic' Paul and the 'mystic' Aqiba with one another. Consequently, they attempt to mitigate the textual tensions which have been caused by the redactional process.\textsuperscript{40} The fact that Ben Azzai cries out 'Water, water' does not fit the scriptural verse (Ps. 116:15) which is associated with him in the pardes story. According to the water episode Ben Azzai is a descendant of those who kissed the golden calf; according to Ps. 116:15, however, he is a saint of God.\textsuperscript{41} Whatever one might assume lies behind the original setting of the story, the readings of the New York manuscript seem to be the result of an embellishment after the story was included in the framework of the Heikhalot tradition. Such a strong redactional reworking is not to be found elsewhere in the transmitted manuscripts.

These observations on the pardes story give rise to the question whether a clearly defined redactional shape is perceivable behind the entire Heikhalot material of this manuscript. The next textual example takes us one step further. As Schäfer has pointed out, the ascent of the adept in Heikhalot literature, and especially in Heikhalot rabbati, does not culminate in a vision, but rather in the

\textsuperscript{38} Section 410.
\textsuperscript{39} Section 345.
\textsuperscript{40} P. Lenhardt and P. von der Osten-Sacken, Rabbi Akiva. Texte und Interpretationen zum rabinischen Judentum und Neuen Testament (Arbeiten zur neutestamentlichen Theologie und Zeitgeschichte, 1), (Berlin: Institut für Kirche und Judentum, 1987), 124ff., here at 129f.
\textsuperscript{41} Cp. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism (note 2), 15f.
Merkavah mystic’s participation in the heavenly liturgy. Standing before the divine throne, the mystic sings the songs which the ‘throne of glory sings daily’. There is no doubt that the heavenly journey which culminates in the liturgy is a major redactional interest of Heikhalot rabbati, which is clearly expressed at the very beginning: ‘R. Ishmael said: What are the songs which one who wishes to behold the vision of the Merkavah must sing in order to descend safely and to ascend safely?’

This redactional structure recurs again in the angelological and cosmological traditions of the Third book of Enoch and the Seder rabbah di-bereshit. The comprehensive description of the angelic world in the Third book of Enoch is connected with a full portrayal of the celestial Qedushah. Seder rabbah di-bereshit contains two major liturgical traditions corresponding to its two main topics. Its account of the creation of the world ends in a heavenly Sabbatical liturgy in which the princess of the Sabbath is enthroned. And its description of the whole universe with its endless enumerations of the different upper and lower worlds, heavens and heavens of heavens above, culminates in a celestial Qedushah similar to that in the Third book of Enoch. New themes are here introduced, such as the midrashic tradition of Israel’s priority during the prayer. The following quotation derives from this liturgical tradition of the Seder rabbah di-bereshit:

Happy is Israel who is more beloved by the Holy one, blessed be He, than the ministering angels. When they wish to say the praises at first, they surround the throne of glory as mountains of fire and hills of flames. But the Holy one, blessed be He, tells them: ‘Fall silent (נ鮎 אֱלֹהִים) every angel, every Seraph, every Ofan, whom I have created, until I have heard and listened to the prayer, the voice of the songs, praises and prayers, (because) the favoured songs are those of Israel’ (2 Sam. 23:1). This teaches that the songs and praises of Israel are more pleasant before the Holy one, blessed be He, as Scripture says (Job 38:7), When the morning stars sang together – this is Israel; And all the divine beings shouted for joy – these are the angels.

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42 Hekhalot-Studien (note 6), 286ff.
43 Section 251.
44 Section 81.
46 Sections 849ff.
47 Sections 527ff. = 787ff. = 807ff. = Batei Midrashot (note 8), vol. 1, 45ff. (here with the introductory formula ‘R. Ishmael said’).
49 Another reading: ‘all songs’ (ח вместо לוב). Cp. the reading of MS New York below.
50 Section 809 and parallels.
The motive of the redactor of the New York manuscript for incorporating this *Seder rabbah di-bereshit* passage within *Heikhalot rabbati* was apparently the concluding sentence of a liturgical passage in which God praises the *hayaot*:

'So fall silent (וי נאני), voice of my creatures whom I have created, so that I can hear and listen to the prayers of my sons'.

The exegetical operation is based on the catchword 'Fall silent' (וי נאני) which is testified both in the *Seder rabbah di-bereshit* and in the *Heikhalot rabbati* tradition. Because the *hayaot ha-godesh* are the sole objects of the divine praise in the hymn in *Heikhalot rabbati*, the redactor of the New York manuscript inserts the ministering angels in this liturgical passage in accordance with the above-quoted *Seder rabbah di-bereshit* version. Prior to the redactional revision, the beginning and the end of this passage (section 173) read as follows: 'Every day when the dawn approaches, the king sits adorned and blesses the *hayaot*: "To you, *hayaot*, do I speak ... so fall silent, voice of my creatures/all my creatures whom I have created, so that I can hear and listen to the prayers of my sons'.

The extended New York manuscript version, artistically interwoven with the *Seder rabbah di-bereshit* passage, reads:

'Every day when the dawn approaches, the ministering angels wish to say the praises first. They are surrounding the throne of glory as mountains of fire and hills of flames. The king sits adorned and blesses the *hayaot*: "To you, *hayaot*, do I speak ... So fall silent, all my creatures, every angel, every Seraph, every *hayyah*, every Ofan, whom I have created, until I have heard and listened to the beginning of all songs, praises and prayers, (because) the favoured songs are those of Israel" (2 Sam. 23:1).

The final sentence of this liturgical tradition in *Heikhalot rabbati*, which caused the redactional manipulation in the New York manuscript, seems to be in a certain discordance with the context of this passage (and further with the entire unit which, after the extensive *Seder rabbah di-bereshit* parallel, continues in section 189). One could even ask whether it departs from the contextual and structural character of the text, at the centre of which stands the praise of God by the *hayaot*. The final sentence abruptly concludes this hymnic passage and has no connection with its continuation (section 189) which is contextually and

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51 Until section 188.
52 Another reading: 'all my creatures' (לה instead of לוע).
53 Section 173.
54 The same redactional operation was carried out in the Vatican Heikhalot MS ebr. 228 by a later hand, which also introduced nearly a hundred further textual changes in this manuscript. Cp. K. Herrmann, 'Die Glossen der Handschrift Vatikan ebr. 228. Ein Beitrag zur Textgeschichte der *Hekhalot Rabbati*', Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge, forthcoming.
formally closely parallel. This and the fact that this 'crucial final sentence is (unfortunately) somewhat corrupt' is perhaps an indication of a secondary expansion of the text which may have led the redactor of the New York manuscript to a tertiary manipulation. This then led to an interpretation of the liturgical theme of this Heikhalot rabbati unit in the sense of a shift of emphasis: the praise of Israel appears alongside the heavenly praise. The motif of the rivalry between angels and men, the central focus of rabbinic interest, is thereby introduced into this unit of Heikhalot rabbati. This theme, present only in Heikhalot rabbati, is broadly developed in the hymnic passage at the end of Seder rabbah di-bereshit and combined with midrashic traditions of this motif, which, like Seder rabbah di-bereshit, are related to Job 38:7 and 2 Sam. 23:1.

Thus the question arises whether one must go a step further in the evaluation of the historical and redactional connections. The theme of the rivalry between angels and men was apparently not as central as has often suggested by secondary studies. More precisely: it was only the later redactors, here those of the liturgical traditions, for whom the theme of the priority of Israel was of central importance. The sentence beginning with 'Fall silent' could be removed from Heikhalot rabbati without destroying the coherence of the passage where it is now found. The continuation is connected to what goes before through strict parallelism: the response to God's praise of the hayyot during the morning prayer is the hayyot's praise of God during the Minhah prayer. The discordance with the Heikhalot rabbati passages in which the simultaneous praise of Israel and the angels, or even the priority of the angelic song, is assumed, would thus disappear. Israel introducing the angels' praise is not in accordance with these traditions. Similarly, the yored merkavah joins in the song of the throne, which is made up of music and singing, and does not sing a song to the throne.

The question whether one can resolve these discrepancies within the Heikhalot literature on the level of literary and redactional criticism is cautiously answered by Karl Erich Grözinger: 'Therefore, there exists in the mystical texts an unbalanced discordance between simultaneity and angelic preference on the one hand, and succession and the preference of Israel on the other. This discrepancy in the transmitted state of the

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55 Schäfer, Hekhalot-Studien (note 6), 267.
56 Section 189; without MS New York's unique material.
57 It is noteworthy that we can observe such a fundamental change in the undoubtedly later liturgical traditions of the Third book of Enoch. Here R. Ishmael is singing in front of the divine throne prior to the response of the hayyot; cf. section 2.
texts can hardly be explained as an earlier or later stage, nor as a result of the combination of different literary layers. The observations on the redaction of the New York manuscript show that different concepts of the angelic songs are certainly to be taken seriously as critical literary and redactional criteria. They furthermore lead to the assumption that the midrashic traditions of Israel's priority during the singing were connected secondarily with the liturgical themes of the Heikhalot literature.

The redactional moulding of the liturgical material of Seder rabbah di-bereshit is, consequently, not complete. In almost all manuscripts of this Seder rabbah di-bereshit recension, the liturgy concludes with the praise of the divine name TWTRWSYY, which plays a prominent role in Heikhalot rabbati. The hymn itself is for the most part identical with one of the song fragments of Heikhalot rabbati, where it belongs to the so-called songs of the divine throne. As was the case with the above-mentioned liturgical passage, the redactor of the New York manuscript here also recognized the thematic connection with Heikhalot rabbati and inserted the corresponding Seder rabbah di-bereshit passage before the Heikhalot rabbati parallel. Furthermore, this passage is augmented by an additional hymnic passage based upon the Hebrew alphabet. In the context of this redactional framework one gains the impression that the remnants of different drafts are evident in the utilized material, since the transitions here have not been clearly smoothed out. Only the openings of the songs of the divine throne are introduced (sections 251–257 in the other manuscripts) and are abruptly interrupted with the phrase, reminiscent of a stage direction, ‘... and so on until: sanctified is TWTRWSYY, the Lord, for ever and ever’, which corresponds exactly to the end of this liturgical passage (section 257). In the New York manuscript the complete wording of the songs is first attached to the examination of the mystic (the ‘water’ episode) who has descended to the throne of glory. Why? Is this merely a redactional trick or even a redactional blunder? The answer is to

59 Another tradition of MS New York (sections 146ff.) suggesting that ‘the penitants (המשטח הליים) are greater [before the Holy one, blessed be He] than the ministering angels’, points in the same direction. This passage was also partly inserted into MS Vatican ebr. 228 by a later hand (sections 315ff.).
60 Sections 539f. = 819f.
61 Section 268.
62 End of section 267 = 540 = 820.
63 Beginning of section 267.
64 Here sections 260–266.
65 Sections 258f.
be found at the beginning of the songs of the throne, in which the redactor of the New York manuscript has the mystic once again participating (section 260): ‘One who is allowed to descend to the Merkavah, when standing before the throne of glory, begins a hymn which the throne of glory begins daily.’ This is an extension of the original form which reads: ‘When he stands before the throne of glory ...’ The reason for the abrupt ending is that the contextual discordance in Heikhalot rabbati, which is based on the mystics arrival at the throne of glory prior to the examination (the water episode’), caused the redactor of the New York manuscript to place the songs of the throne after the examination and to connect it to the explicit instruction that only the ‘worthy’ mystic can join in the songs.

The third textual example belongs to the Shi’ur qomah tradition, which speculates on the measurements and secret names of the divine body. This was a highly controversial literature, first attacked by the Karaites, who expressed their indignation about the explicit anthropomorphic description of God. It was again attacked by the medieval philosophers, such as Maimonides, who considered it an invention of Byzantine aggadists. On the other hand it was defended by scholars such as Yehuda Halevi, Abraham ibn Ezra, Moses Narbonni and others. The medieval Hasidim and Qabbalists used it as a profound source of their own theosophical speculations. The controversy over Shi’ur qomah continued within modern scholarship. Heinrich Graetz even called it ‘anti-Jewish’ and saw its origins in the ‘Islamic extravagances’ of the ninth century. Philipp Bloch attempted to mitigate this speculation, arguing that it was originally written for educational purposes, to teach ‘little schoolboys’. However, Adolf Jellinek already realized that Shi’ur qomah was an integral part of Jewish mysticism, and he suggested that it was based on the figure of the beloved as described in Cant. 5:10ff. Moses Gaster made the most important observation, comparing Shi’ur qomah with gnostic Marcos’ description of the ‘body of truth’ in the second century. Scholem emphasized this early dating (‘under no circumstances later’), and added further proof texts. Despite the fact that the

66 Cp. the above-mentioned Sefer milhamot Adonai of Salmon ben Yeruham (note 9).
67 'Die mystische Literatur in der gaonäischen Epoche', Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums, 8 (1859), 67-78, 103-18, 140-53; here at 118.
68 Die Geschichte der Entwicklung der Kabbala kurz zusammengefaßt (Trier, 1894), 17.
70 'Das Schiur Komah', Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums, 37 (1893), 179-85, 213-30; here at 179.
71 Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala (Studia Judaica, 3), (Berlin: de Gruter, 1962.), 17.
Shi‘ur qomah was a highly controversial literature, or perhaps due to this, it was copied again and again. It is thus one of the best attested Heikalot texts in the European manuscripts as well as in the oriental fragments from the Genizah. A small passage of Shi‘ur qomah is included in Heikalot rabbaṭi\(^{73}\) and it is a keystone of Merkavah rabbah.\(^{74}\) Several independent recensions of this speculation are also extant.\(^{75}\)

The existence of different recensions always leads to the same question: which is the original recension, the shorter one or the longer, or is there a common source? The answers differ as often as the recensions. Although this debate has only just begun in the research on Heikalot literature, controversy has already arisen. Scholem assumed that Shi‘ur qomah was an original part of Merkavah rabbah, which was later transmitted as a separate unit.\(^{76}\) Martin S. Cohen, who published a critical edition of several recensions, identified a different Shi‘ur qomah text as the Urtext. According to him, the Urtext can be identified in MS London 10675 (= Gaster MS 187), a manuscript of the tenth or eleventh century, which contains the only extant copy of Shi‘ur qomah in its original version.\(^{77}\) A careful analysis of this manuscript has, however, shown that it is not older than the eighteenth century.\(^{78}\) Apart from the fact that MS London is a very young textual witness, and the secondary character of many of its readings can easily be proved,\(^{79}\) this manuscript belongs to a stream of Shi‘ur qomah traditions which are clearly to be distinguished from the above mentioned Merkavah rabbah version. To the same stream of tradition belong two very old Genizah fragments.\(^{80}\)

The fact that in all the manuscripts preserved the secret names of the limbs are for the most part corrupted beyond recognition, is the main problem in the relationship between the different recensions, and in the question of which recension is ‘original’. The measurements given for the limbs may be based on actual dimensions, and the relative measurements, comparing the proportions of several limbs, make this very probable.\(^{81}\) In the end,
we should not be looking for an *Urtext* but rather for a statue, or at least for the proportions and measurements used for statues and paintings of human beings.\(^{82}\)

It is my present task to consider the question of how a medieval copyist handled the different recensions.\(^{83}\) In the New York manuscript, the whole *Shi‘ur qomah* tradition was remodelled. The most striking feature of this redaction is again the profound knowledge of the different *Shi‘ur qomah* traditions attested in the manuscripts, which the copyist combined with one another. The starting point of the redaction is a common tradition in *Heikhalot zuarti\(^{84}\)* and *Shi‘ur qomah\(^{85}\)* about the names of the divine sword, the rainbow (in reference to Ezek. 1:27), the four legs of the throne and the four *hayyot ha-qodesh*, which in the *Shi‘ur qomah* tradition are identified with the four legs of the throne. In the New York manuscript both traditions are carefully combined, the various secret names are joined together, and the more embellished *Shi‘ur qomah* text is incorporated into *Heikhalot zuarti*. In the course of this redaction further material concerning the divine throne and its surroundings was introduced,\(^{86}\) as well as further *Shi‘ur qomah* material which is found in three other manuscripts of the *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur* in a completely different context.\(^{87}\) This redactional process is continued in *Merkavah rabbah*. Those passages of the first-mentioned *Shi‘ur qomah* text, which are close to *Merkavah rabbah*, were incorporated there.\(^{88}\) The different names are again assembled, though sometimes they are simply tacked on. Thus we find in this textual tradition ten names for the five fingers of one hand and ten names for the five toes of one foot.\(^{89}\) In the end, the entire *Shi‘ur qomah* tradition, well known from many medieval manuscripts as an independent textual unit, was entirely absorbed into the New York manuscript and dissolved, as it were, into other Heikhalot treatises.

Modern scholarship has paid more and more attention to the magical tradition in the Heikhalot literature. There is no doubt that magic is an integral part of the Merkavah tradition. For the ascent to the divine throne the *yored merkavah* has to use seals with secret

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\(^{82}\) Cp. the statement of R. Aqiba in *Heikhalot zuarti*, section 352: ‘He [=God] is, so to say, as we are, but he is greater than all things, and his glory is that he is hidden from us’.


\(^{84}\) Sections 367ff.

\(^{85}\) Sections 925ff.

\(^{86}\) Sections 370-374 (beginning); see below.

\(^{87}\) Sections 468ff. = 728ff. Cp. the text-critical analysis of section 376 in my article ‘Text und Fiktion’ (note 79), 117ff.

\(^{88}\) Sections 688ff.

\(^{89}\) Cp. section 702. Different readings of the measurements are often introduced by ‘another reading’ (פְּרוֹפָּה).
names, otherwise he would not be able to overcome the gatekeepers at the entrances to the seven palaces. The whole Sar ha-torah tradition is based on an adjuration ritual, in which the adept tries to obtain more comprehensive knowledge of the Torah or to protect himself from forgetting the Torah. There are many other magical traditions woven into the Heikhalot literature, which are connected with Moses and with the revelation of the divine name. The centrality of the magical element within the Merkavah tradition is, however, a matter of debate. Certainly not every scholar wants to go as far as Halperin, who argues that the Heikhalot tradition represents the magical 'revolutionary manifesto' of the 'Jewish masses', the 'am ha-'ares. He argues that the authors of the Heikhalot writings wished to demonstrate 'their own struggle with the rabbinic élite for a place of honor within Jewish society - an unequal and frustrating struggle which they waged with magic as their chief weapon'. Apart from the fact that this thesis maintains that Merkavah mysticism changed its character completely during the Middle Ages, being transformed from exotericism to esotericism, as well as from the manifesto of a mass movement to the property of an élite circle of German Hasidim, the magical tradition in the Heikhalot writings seems to be more differentiated. Halperin's starting point is, however, not magic, but the synagogue exegesis and interpretation of the Merkavah. This fact is in his view the basis for the ascension tradition of Moses to Mount Sinai as well as the Merkavah tradition. The link between these two elements is rooted in the synagogue reading of the first chapter of Ezekiel as the Haftarah for Shavu'ot. He argues, therefore, 'that Hekhalot tradition goes back to the Sinai-ascension haggadot' which are connected 'with the popular synagogue tradition of merkabah interpretation'. The New York manuscript is a useful source for his argument, since it contains material which seems to prove the connection between the different traditions. It is characteristic that Halperin uses a unique passage of magical material from the New York manuscript as his main evidence in the chapter 'The Hekhalot and Shabu'ot Cycle'. The quotations from Ex. 19 (Sinai) and Ezek. 1 (Merkavah) in this passage are, according to him, a clear indication 'that Sinai and merkabah belong together'.

A careful analysis of the New York manuscript shows us how the different traditions were combined. At the beginning of the purely magical work The sword of Moses (רמב נוני) the redactor

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90 Cp. The faces of the chariot (note 6), 385.
91 Ibid., 450.
92 Ibid., 387.
93 Ibid., 409.
of this manuscript appears to reveal to us his intention. The introductory sentence, ‘This is the sword of Moses which was handed over to him at the burning bush’, is augmented in the New York manuscript by the gloss: ‘It [the sword] was also handed over to R. Ishmael in the Work of the Merkavah’. Later in the text this assertion is repeated. The sentence ‘the sword was revealed to Moses in the burning bush’ is again enlarged: ‘And when was it handed over to R. Ishmael? When he ascended to the Merkavah’. The intention to connect the ascent tradition of the Merkavah with those traditions revolving around Moses and the revealed divine name is evident. This redactional intention makes it easy to explain why many other traditions of magical names (such as names of 12, 14, 22, 42 and 70 letters), their revelation to Moses and their magical applications are included in the New York manuscript. The magical texts of the New York manuscript were mostly inserted in the writings Heikhalot zutarti and Merkavah rabbah. The magical character of both these treatises was certainly the cause of this redactional manipulation. The entire magical material was not published in the Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur. The unpublished passages were edited by Claudia Rohrbacher-Sticker and myself.

I would like to touch, finally, upon another unique text in the New York manuscript, which has nothing to do with magic. On the contrary, this tradition, which was included in Heikhalot zutarti together with the above-mentioned Shi’ur qomah material, has close connections with the rabbinic Merkavah tradition as well as with certain Heikhalot writings. The multiplication of the wings and faces of the hayyot ha-qodesh can be linked with the embellished targum of the first chapter of Ezekiel, as well as with similar speculations in Heikhalot zutarti and Heikhalot rabbati. The description of the blue colour of the throne has parallels in the talmudic tradition, where it is attributed to R. Meir. The portrayal of God, sitting on his throne behind the celestial curtain, surrounded by the seven highest and first created angels, with his divine insignia, the sceptre, in his hand and the crown with the engraved name on his head, exercising his power over life and death, runs parallel to the fourth chapter of Pirqe de-Rabbi Eliezer.

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95 See sections 344ff., 498, 502ff., 571ff.
96 ‘Magische Traditionen der New Yorker Hekhalot-Handschrift’ (note 1), 124ff.
97 Sections 370-374 (beginning).
98 Sections 354 and 245.
This chapter has often been linked with similar descriptions in the gnostic writings. The unique tradition of the New York manuscript was, therefore, used by Halperin to establish the relationship between rabbinic, Heikhalot and gnostic traditions.\footnote{100} Comparing this text with the gnostic writings *On the origin of the world* and *The hypostasis of the archons*, he even argues that 'Hekhalot Zutarti thus shows here a trace of direct Gnostic influence'.\footnote{101}

This passage was undoubtedly included in the *Heikhalot zutarti* version of the New York manuscript because of its connection with the description of the throne in this treatise, and in the *Shi'ur qomah* tradition, which, as we have seen above, was also incorporated here. The question again arises: Do we know anything about the older sources of this tradition? Does this text help us to explain the development of Heikhalot tradition and its relationship to rabbinic as well as to gnostic writings? In the esoteric collection *Sodei razayya* by Eleazar of Worms there are several allusions to this tradition,\footnote{102} and from these it is obvious that this tradition derives from an old, unknown commentary on *Sefer yesirah*. The text quoted by Eleazar of Worms is also preserved in two fragments from the Cairo Genizah.\footnote{103} The text of the commentary included in the New York manuscript corresponds to this passage, which explains the fourth *sefirah* as 'fire from water'. According to *Sefer yesirah* fire is the basic element for the creation of the throne and the highest angelic groups. Here is not the place to discuss the question of the origins of the different traditions on which this explanation of the fourth *sefirah* was based. However, this textual example shows us once again that we must be very careful not to use a single tradition of the Heikhalot literature in order to reconstruct the history of Merkavah mysticism.

In conclusion, the analysis of the New York manuscript serves as an example of the medieval transmission of the Heikhalot literature. To be sure, its redaction is not exemplary for all

\footnote{100} *The faces of the chariot* (note 6), 511ff.
\footnote{101} Ibid., 517.
\footnote{102} See *Sodei razayya*, ed. Kamelhar, 30, and particularly the unpublished section in MS München Cod. hebr. 81, fol. 132af = MS London British Library Add. 27199 (Margoliouth Catalogue no. 737), fol. 197bff.
\footnote{103} T-S K 1.7 and T-S AS 142.7, copied in the tenth or eleventh century. I would like to thank Professor Malachi Beit-Arié for the dating of the fragments at the conference *Artefact and Text*. A full transcription of the different textual versions is presented in my article, "'Feuer und Wasser'. Zum Fortleben eines unbekannten *Sefer Yesira*-Kommentars in der Hekhalot-Literatur', Frankfurter Judaistische Beiträge, 20 (1993), 49-95.
Heikhalot manuscripts and is perhaps even unique in its consistent remoulding of the various textual traditions. In any case, this example illustrates that the medieval esoteric manuscript collections cannot be uncritically drawn upon in order to answer the question ‘Who are and are not the yoredei merkavah?’ This question is already posed explicitly in the Heikhalot literature, and is as old as the literature itself. It is raised in a much discussed passage which belongs to the ascent tradition of Heikhalot rabbati and which is the only direct reference to the composition of Merkavah texts. It is, therefore, particularly interesting for our formulation of the question. The behaviour of the gatekeepers at the sixth palace, of whom it is said ‘they annihilate yoredei merkavah, but not yoredei merkavah who (descend) without permission’, raises precisely this question. Whereas here it appears that the angels destroy the worthy yoredei merkavah instead of the unworthy, the text goes on to say the exact opposite: ‘Who are yoredei merkavah and are not yoredei merkavah, whom the gatekeepers of the sixth palace were harming, while they were not touching the yoredei merkavah in any way. What is the difference between these and the others?’

The answer with which R. Nehunia ben Ha-Qanah provided his yoredei merkavah colleagues upon his return from the vision of the Merkavah, though not explaining the behaviour of the angels, who threaten here the worthy yored merkavah, furnishes nevertheless a clear statement about both groups.

We [the havurah] asked him [R. Nehunia ben Ha-Qanah]: Who are yoredei merkavah and are not yoredei merkavah? He said to us: Those [the ‘not yoredei merkavah’] are people who were taken by the yoredei merkavah, placed above them, seated before them and instructed by them: “Look, see, hear and write down everything we say, and everything we hear before the throne of glory.” But these people are not suitable for this task. Therefore the gatekeepers at the entrance of the sixth palace were harming them. Be careful that you choose worthy people who are suitable members of the group.

Thus according to this passage it is the incompetent and unworthy scribes of the yoredei merkavah who have provoked the hostile behaviour of the gatekeepers. The text thereby issues a stern warning to the bearers of Merkavah mysticism to deal carefully with the material entrusted to them. Our analysis of the New York manuscript has attempted to describe part of this process of transmission in the Middle Ages, and has shown how a later ‘scribe’ handled the inherited Merkavah material. He moulded the traditions in an individual and free manner. Whether

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104 Sections 244ff.
105 Section 225.
106 Section 228.
his transcription is responsible for the behaviour of the angels at the sixth palace is something we do not know. He preferred to remain on earth and draw upon older traditions. If we apply the doctrine of the *Heikhalot rabbati* passage just quoted to modern research, then it would appear that not all theses of contemporary scholarship regarding early Jewish mysticism would withstand the dangers of the sixth palace and allow safe arrival at the Merkavah. To quote from the portrayal of the *yored merkavah* at the gate of the sixth palace: the modern scholar, just as the mystic, must heed the warning not to call out prematurely ‘Water, water’ (מִים מִים) where ‘there is not even a single drop of water to be found’.

107 Section 259 = 408.