

with Metatron are among the most complicated in early Jewish angelology.”<sup>16</sup> This presentation of the titles must therefore be viewed only as a preliminary introduction to some of the major titles of this important angelic character. In view of the Enochic perspective of this project, the research will center on the evidence for the titles of Enoch-Metatron attested in *Sefer Hekhalot*, since this Merkabah text explicitly identifies Metatron with Enoch and furnishes a great variety of traditions pertaining to this connection.

The investigation of *3 Enoch* will also be supplemented by various testimonies pertaining to the roles and titles of Metatron found in targumic, mishnaic, talmudic, midrashic, and Hekhalot materials. All this scattered and sometimes puzzling evidence will be treated with equal consideration, since even the later medieval rabbinic compositions and collections might have preserved early evidence pertaining to the investigation. All scholars acknowledge that dating rabbinic macroforms is “notoriously slippery work.”<sup>17</sup> It is even more difficult to make judgments about the antiquity of the individual motifs and themes contained in these sources.

In my presentation of the data pertaining to a particular role or title, I normally will start, where it is possible, with testimonies in *3 Enoch*, a text which explicitly identifies Metatron with Enoch – the identification pivotal for this research – and then proceed to other evidence as it relates to the conceptual development of a certain office or appellation.

Finally, it should be stressed that this presentation does not pretend to offer an exhaustive treatment of any particular role or title. The provided descriptions must therefore be viewed as preliminary and tentative sketches intended to help the reader become familiar with the possible offices and appellations of Enoch-Metatron in the rabbinic and Hekhalot materials so that the reader can then be prepared for the later textual analysis of the Slavonic apocalypse.

## The Name “Metatron”

In the beginning of an investigation of Metatron symbolism, several theories about the possible etymological origins of the name “Metatron” must be presented. Despite the substantial scholarly efforts to uncover the etymology of this puzzling word, the name of this principal angel still poses

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*Mysticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994) 113, 334; idem, “Metatron and Shi‘ur Qomah in the Writings of Haside Ashkenaz,” in: *Mysticism, Magic and Kabbalah in Ashkenazi Judaism* (eds. K. E. Groezinger and J. Dan, Berlin – New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1995) 60–92.

<sup>16</sup> Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, 420.

<sup>17</sup> Himmelfarb, “A Report on Enoch in Rabbinic Literature,” 259.

an enigma for students of Jewish mystical literature. No scholarly consensus exists about the origin of the name Metatron, which occurs in two forms in rabbinic literature one written with six letters, מטטרון, and the other with seven letters, מיטטרון. Scholars offer numerous hypotheses about the possible etymology of these Hebrew lexemes.<sup>18</sup> At least nine scholarly positions deserve mention.

1. Some scholars propose that the name Metatron may be derived from מטרא, which can be rendered as “keeper of the watch,” a noun possibly derived from the root נטר, “to guard, to protect.”<sup>19</sup> Hugo Odeberg points to the earliest instance of this derivation in *Shimmusha Rabbah* where Enoch was clothed with the splendor of light and made into a guardian of all the souls that ascend from earth.<sup>20</sup> This hypothesis is shared by Adolf Jellinek, who considers נטר as a possible etymological basis for Metatron,<sup>21</sup> and Marcus Jastrow, who in his dictionary points to מטרא as a possible etymological progenitor of Metatron.<sup>22</sup>

2. Another hypothesis suggests that the name may be derived from the merging of the two Greek words μετά and θρόνος, which in combination, μετάρθρονος, can be translated as “one who serves behind the throne,” or “one who occupies the throne next to the Throne of Glory.” This hypothesis has been supported by a number of scholars, but has been rejected by Scholem, who observes that “there is no such word as *Metathronios* in Greek and it is extremely unlikely that Jews should have produced or invented such a Greek phrase.”<sup>23</sup> Scholem also indicates that in talmudic literature the word θρόνος is never used in place of its Hebrew equivalent.<sup>24</sup> He concludes that despite the attempts of some scholars to find additional proof of the etymology of the name Metatron as a combination of the Greek μέτα and θρόνος, “this widely repeated etymology ... has no merit.”<sup>25</sup>

3. A third etymological option is that the name may be derived from the Greek word σύνθρονος in the sense of “co-occupant of the divine

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<sup>18</sup> The following statement of Gershom Scholem can serve as an “optimistic” motto to any collection of the possible etymologies of the word “Metatron.” He observes that “the origin of the name Metatron is obscure, and it is doubtful whether an etymological explanation can be given. It is possible that the name was intended to be a secret and has no real meaning, perhaps stemming from subconscious meditation, or as a result of glossolalia.” Scholem, “Metatron,” *EJ*, 11.1445–1446.

<sup>19</sup> Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 1.125.

<sup>20</sup> Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 1.126.

<sup>21</sup> A. Jellinek, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Kabbala* (Leipzig: C.L. Fritzsche, 1852) 4.

<sup>22</sup> Jastrow, *A Dictionary of the Targumim, the Talmud Babli and Yerushalmi, and the Midrashic Literature*, 767.

<sup>23</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends*, 69.

<sup>24</sup> Scholem, *Major Trends*, 69.

<sup>25</sup> Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 91.

Throne.”<sup>26</sup> Odeberg criticizes this etymology because “there is not a single instance in any known Jewish source of Metatron being represented as the co-occupant of the divine Throne.”<sup>27</sup> Saul Lieberman, however, in his examination of the etymologies of the name,<sup>28</sup> provides new reasons for accepting this option.<sup>29</sup>

4. Another hypothesis proposes that the name may be associated with the Persian Mithras. Odeberg lists a number of parallels between Metatron and Mithras, highlighting their similar celestial functions. He suggests that the depiction of Mithras as the Guardian of the World, the Mediator for the Earth, the Prince of the World, and the Witness of all thoughts, words, and deeds recall similar titles and activities of Metatron.<sup>30</sup>

5. The name may also be derived from the Latin *metator* (a leader, a guide, a measurer, or a messenger), which transliterated into Hebrew characters produces מַטִּיטוֹר or מִיטטוֹר. This etymology was supported by several famous Jewish medieval authorities, including Eleazar of Worms and Nachmanides.<sup>31</sup> Scholem criticizes this hypothesis, arguing that “there is nothing in the authentic sayings about Metatron that justified the derivation of the name from *metator*.”<sup>32</sup>

Despite Scholem’s skepticism, Philip Alexander has recently drawn attention to this etymology. Clarifying the origins of the term, he points to the Latin word *metator*, which occurs also in Greek as a loanword under the form *mitator*, and sometimes designates the officer in the Roman army whose mission was to be a forerunner, i.e., to go ahead of the column on the march in order to prepare a campsite.<sup>33</sup> In view of this designation, Alexander suggests that the appellation “may first have been given to the angel of the Lord who led the Israelites through the wilderness: that angel acted like a Roman army *metator*, guiding the Israelites on their way.”<sup>34</sup> He also proposes that it is quite possible that Enoch himself could be viewed by

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<sup>26</sup> Philip Alexander points to a possible equivalent to *sunthronos*, the Greek term *metaturannos*, which can be translated as “the one next to the ruler.” Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 243.

<sup>27</sup> Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 1.137.

<sup>28</sup> S. Lieberman, “Metatron, the Meaning of His Name and His Functions,” in: I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden: Brill, 1980) 235–241.

<sup>29</sup> Peter Schäfer supports this hypothesis. He observes that “most probable is the etymology of Lieberman: Metatron = Greek metatronos = metathronos = synthronos; i.e. the small “minor god,” whose throne is beside that of the great “main God.” Schäfer, *The Hidden and Manifest God*, 29, n. 70.

<sup>30</sup> Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 1.132.

<sup>31</sup> Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 1.127–128.

<sup>32</sup> Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 43.

<sup>33</sup> Alexander, “From Son of Adam to a Second God,” 107; Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 243.

<sup>34</sup> Alexander, “From Son of Adam to a Second God,” 107. See also, Urbach, *The Sages: Their Concepts and Beliefs*, 1.139.

adepts as *metator* or forerunner since he was the one who showed them “how they could escape from the wilderness of this world into the promised land of heaven.”<sup>35</sup> Alexander stresses the fact that *metator* is clearly attested as a loanword in Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic gives additional strength to this etymology.<sup>36</sup>

6. Still another possible etymological source for the name “Metatron” is the Greek μέτρον, “a measure.” Adolf Jellinek may well be the first scholar to suggest μέτρον as an alternative explanation of Metatron, on the assumption that Metatron was identical with Horos.<sup>37</sup> In his recent article Gedaliahu Stroumsa provides some new convincing reasons for the acceptance of this etymology. These reasons focus on the fact that Metatron not only carried God’s name but also measured the Deity and was thus viewed as God’s *Shi’ur Qomah* (the measurement of the divine Body).<sup>38</sup> Stroumsa argues that “renewed attention should be given to μέτρον and/or *metator* (a conflation of the two terms should not be excluded) as a possible etymology of Metatron.”<sup>39</sup> Matthew Black, in a short article devoted to the origin of the name Metatron, expounds upon an additional facet of this etymology. Black traces the origin of the word “metatron” to a previously unnoticed piece of evidence found in Philo’s *QG*, extant in Armenian, where among other titles of the Logos, the term *praemetitor* can be found. Black suggests that *praemetitor* could be connected with the term μετρητής, the Greek equivalent of the Latin *metator*, “measurer,” applied to the Logos.<sup>40</sup>

7. Joseph Dan has recently proposed that the name “Metatron” may be connected with the function of this angel as the bearer of God’s name. In Metatron’s lore this principal angel is often named as the “lesser YHWH,” that is, the lesser manifestation of the divine Name. Dan takes the “him” in Exodus 23:21, “because my name is within him,” as referring to Metatron,<sup>41</sup> suggesting that “he has within himself God’s ineffable name, which gives him his power.”<sup>42</sup> Dan further proposes that, in view of the phrase “my

<sup>35</sup> Alexander, “From Son of Adam to a Second God,” 107.

<sup>36</sup> Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 243.

<sup>37</sup> Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 1.134.

<sup>38</sup> Stroumsa, “Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Metatron and Christ,” 287.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 287.

<sup>40</sup> M. Black, “The Origin of the Name Metatron,” *VT* 1 (1951) 218.

<sup>41</sup> *b. Sanh.* 38b: “Once a *Min* said to R. Idith: It is written, *And unto Moses He said, Come up to the Lord*. But surely it should have stated, *Come up unto me!* – It was Metatron [who said that], he replied, whose name is similar to that of his Master, for it is written, *For my name is in him.*” The phrase is also used in *3 Enoch* 12:5 (*Synopse* §15) in the context of the explanation of Metatron’s title the “lesser YHWH”: “He [God] sets it [crown] upon my head and he called me, ‘The lesser YHWH’ in the presence of his whole household in the height, as it is written, ‘My name is in him.’” Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 265.

<sup>42</sup> Dan, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, 109.

name is within him,” the name Metatron might be construed as related to the four letters of the divine Name.<sup>43</sup> He observes that “it appears that the reference here is to the letters *tetra*, i.e., the number four in Greek, a four-letter word in the middle of the name Metatron.”<sup>44</sup> Dan, however, cautiously points out that this etymology cannot be explored sufficiently for verification.

8. In the introduction to his recent French translation of *3 Enoch*, Charles Mopsik suggests that the etymology of the name “Metatron” can be linked to the biblical Enoch story and might derive from the Greek terminology found in the Septuagint rendering of Gen 5:24, “Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him.” Mopsik observes that in the Septuagint version of Gen 5:24 and Sirach 44:16, the Hebrew verb לקח (“to take”) is rendered by the Greek verbs μετέθηκεν or μετετέθη.<sup>45</sup> He argues that the most significant part of the term “Metatron” (מטטרון) is the first three consonants of this word, namely, *MTT* (מטט), since the suffix *RON* (רון) is a technical addition which represents a common feature of the various angelic names in Jewish angelological writings. Mopsik concludes that it is possible that the three consonants for the most meaningful part of the name Metatron, מטט, are transliterating in one form or another the Greek μετετέθη. Keeping in mind these linguistic parallels, Mopsik suggests that the name “Metatron” could designate “the one who has been translated” and thus would be in direct relation to the Enoch story and his translation to heaven.<sup>46</sup>

9. One also cannot dismiss the possibility that the name “Metatron” may have no etymological parallels. Several scholars observe that this name does not necessarily have an etymology since, for example, it “could be gibberish, like the magical names *Adiriron* and *Dapdapiron*, with which the Hekhalot-Merkabah texts abound.”<sup>47</sup>

In conclusion it should be noted that the text of the Slavonic apocalypse also appears to contain a testimony pertaining to the name Metatron. This evidence, however, will be examined in detail later in the section of this study dealing with the analysis of *2 Enoch* materials.

<sup>43</sup> In respect to this etymology, it is noteworthy that one Aramaic incantation bowl identifies Metatron with God. Alexander observes that “the possibility should even be considered that Metatron is used on this bowl as a divine name.” Alexander, “The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch,” 167. For a detailed discussion of this inscription see Cohen, *Liturgy and Theurgy*, 159; Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, 358–9.

<sup>44</sup> Dan, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, 109–110.

<sup>45</sup> C. Mopsik, *Le Livre hébreu d'Hénoch ou Livre des palais* (Paris: Verdier, 1989) 48.

<sup>46</sup> Mopsik, *Le Livre hébreu d'Hénoch ou Livre des palais*, 48.

<sup>47</sup> Alexander, “3 Enoch,” 1.243; idem, “The Historical Settings of the Hebrew Book of Enoch,” 162.