Meṭaṭron in the Incantation Bowls

Part I: Jewish Incantation Bowls

With all due respect to Meṭaṭron, the extraordinary spate of studies about this figure in recent years cannot be chalked up to his importance as an archangel alone; it is because he has become a touchstone for the exploration of broader and weightier matters of history and theology, including binitarianism, Jewish-Christian relations, the development of Jewish mysticism, and more. There has been especially intense interest in the origins and early development of this angelic being,[[1]](#footnote-1) but the paucity of extant sources and their problematic condition present a major obstacle to scholarly investigation. The obvious approach, particularly in the face of this challenge, is to use the earliest epigraphic evidence of Meṭaṭron’s name: the Babylonian incantation bowls. While scholars have not exactly ignored this material until now, they have failed to exhaustively mine it. This article intends to make considerable headway in this direction by surveying nearly twenty Jewish incantation bowls that mention Meṭaṭron, and by analyzing the different conceptions of Meṭaṭron they reflect. A second, complementary article will be devoted to two non-Jewish bowls—one Syriac and one Mandaic—that mention Meṭaṭron.[[2]](#footnote-2)

A burgeoning branch of scholarship focuses on the interrelationships and shared motifs of *Hekhalot* literature and the Babylonian incantation bowls, and it has yielded fruit for both textual corpora.[[3]](#footnote-3) Incantation bowls that include motifs found in *Hekhalot* literature constitute the earliest evidence of them. The major manuscripts of *Hekhalot* texts date to the Late Middle Ages and *Hekhalot* fragments from the Cairo Geniza date to the eleventh century at the earliest; the incantation bowls, on the other hand, were crafted between the fifth and seventh centuries CE. That said, the later *Hekhalot* literature is more diverse and developed than the incantation bowls, constrained as they are by genre, purpose, and medium, such that *Hekhalot* literature often can help in deciphering puzzling aspects of the bowls.

There is keen interest in what can be gleaned from the bowls about, among other things, the archangel Meṭaṭron, a figure of great importance in Jewish mysticism and magic beginning in Late Antiquity. Though at least some of the sheer number of medieval traditions about Meṭaṭron can be reasonably assumed to have ancient origins, there is precious little documentation that can be dated definitively to Antiquity. The name Meṭaṭron first appears in the Babylonian Talmud, in three distinct contexts: a story about four Sages who entered the “orchard” (*pardes*) (*Ḥagigah* 15a), a debate between Rav Idit and a heretic (*Sanhedrin* 38b), and as a parenthetical remark within an outline of God’s daily routine (*‘Avodah Zarah* 3b). All three resist any kind of accurate dating. A rough estimate would put their consolidation between the third and fifth centuries CE, but according to the approach that sees the redactive, Stammaitic layer as very late, the same would be true of parts of these passages.[[4]](#footnote-4) These passages, especially the first, would have undergone multiple rounds of editing, only partially manifest in our textual witnesses.

The most comprehensive text to discuss Meṭaṭron is *Sefer Hekhalot* (3 Enoch, or the Hebrew Book of Enoch), which includes a detailed account of the ascent of Enoch son of Jared and his transformation into the archangel Meṭaṭron. This seems to be the first extant text to explicitly combine two figures from two ancient traditions: a human being who ascends to heaven and becomes an angel, and an angel bearing God’s name within him who descends to mankind. The dating and milieu of *Sefer Hekhalot* is subject to scholarly disagreement: some argue for an early date and situate it in Roman Palestine, others push for a late date and assign it to late eighth-century Babylonia. To make matters even more complicated, the fact that this work is a mélange of sources molded and remolded by an unknown number of hands means that even if we could confidently determine a fixed date for the composition overall, it would not help much with the particular traditions that comprise it.

In light of all the foregoing, the references to Meṭaṭron in the incantation bowls possess unique importance, for they afford us a direct look at Jewish angelology in the middle of the first millennium.[[5]](#footnote-5) Publication of the bowls began in the nineteenth century and has picked up steamin recent years, but quite a few remain unpublished. Still, newly discovered bowls continue to be published at an increasing rate. Given this state of affairs, it would be optimalto base this study on a digital corpus of the bowls and specialized databases containing the names of gods, angels, and demons.[[6]](#footnote-6) In the absence of such databases, however, this study must remain a preliminary survey of the angelology reflected in the bowls.

**1. Meṭaṭron in Jewish Incantation Bowls**

The majority of the bowls are written in a squarehand in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, with the minority written in Syriac and Mandaic.[[7]](#footnote-7) Naturally, nearly every reference to Meṭaṭron appears in the Jewish bowls, with the exception of a few isolated cases discussed below. Some bowls convey little, some confirm what we know from later literature, and some contain motifs unattested anywhere else that occasionally conflict with other sources. In this section of the article, I will survey all appearances of Meṭaṭron in the incantation bowls of which I am aware, and engage in a succinct or extendedanalysis. I will begin with the bowls that appear in the Jewish Babylonian Aramaic section of the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon and provide the text as it is transcribed there unless otherwise noted.

**1.1 Sokoloff 27, Montgomery 25, The University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology B16009[[8]](#footnote-8)**

1) אסותא מן שמיה לגוריו בר טאטי ולאחת בת דודא איתתיה דיזה מינהון כ[ל] די[וא ויתס]ון ברחמי דישמיה מיבנין דמיתין להון דיהון להון בנין ויח[ון 2) די] מיתו אישתכחון מן קודם אילי ויסתרתי (ואלי ויסתרתי) [ח]שים אתה ש[וכן במ]רום ומרכבתך על כל האפנים שלח להיה להדרבדובר [...] 3) אל ריבנהון דכל [...]תא דירחמו שים בפומי וכל ד[רכיו] דין הה ברוך אתה יהוה על דיברו חשים[[9]](#footnote-9) בשום 4) יופיאל שמך יהואל[[10]](#footnote-10) קרו לך שסנגיאל יהוה וכל ית[רא ד]שמתהון [אר]מסה מיטטרון יה בשום טיגין 5) טריגיס בלביס שנגס שדרפס אילה אינון מלאכיה דימטין לאסותא [...] בני אינשה אינון 6) יתון ויסקון באסותא דהדין ביתה וקינינה ודאיתתיה ודיב[נה] ודבנתה ודכל אינשי דביתיה 7) להדין גוריו בר טאטי מן יומא דין ולגליל עלם אמן אמן סלה הללויה

This bowl was first published in the monumental work by James Montgomery in 1913.[[11]](#footnote-11) In the volume, the texts of dozens of incantation bowls were presented in a critical edition for the first time, accompanied by a translation and detailed discussion. Unsurprisingly, the volume quickly became very influential, and to a certain extent it remains valuable today.[[12]](#footnote-12) The above transcription incorporates J.N. Epstein’s insightful emendations of many of Montgomery’s readings.[[13]](#footnote-13) The spell here is intended to protect the couple, their household, and their possessions from pestiferous demons that are particularly deadly to children. Meṭaṭron’s name appears here accompanied by the names *ywpy’l*, *yhw’l*, and *šsngy’l*, which regularly collocate together as names for the Prince of Torah.[[14]](#footnote-14) Medicinal magic seems to be an essential feature of the *Prince of Torah* tradition,[[15]](#footnote-15) and this incantation bowl provides very earlytestimony of their connection. Rebecca Lesses has suggested the following restoration of line three above: [*’wry*]*t’ dyrḥmw śym bpwmy*.[[16]](#footnote-16) If her reconstruction is correct, it strengthens the connection between this bowl and the *Prince of Torah* tradition, and is an exceptional allusion to its educational function. Although the apotropaic role of Meṭaṭron in the bowl is primary, the very title “Prince of Torah” illustrates his original instructive role. The fact that magical means of imparting knowledge is documented mainly in texts that postdate the bowls is seemingly a result of this tradition’s oral character.

Of Meṭaṭron’s names associated with his role as Prince of Torah, *yhw’l* has special status. Even without the Prince of Torah tradition, there are grounds for connecting, and even identifying, *yhw’l* with Meṭaṭron. Both names are used to describe the angel bearing God’s name within, yet it is actually *yhw’l* which has the earliest attestations.[[17]](#footnote-17) I am not convinced that Scholem adequately proved his claim, however, when he said: “Originally formed apparently in order to replace the name *yhw’l* as a *vox mystica*, [Meṭaṭron] gradually usurped its place.”[[18]](#footnote-18) Nevertheless, I do agree with him that “the most important characteristics of this angel are now transferred to Meṭaṭron.”[[19]](#footnote-19) To take one example, in the Prince of Torah tradition the name *yhw’l* appear first on the list of Meṭaṭron’s names.

Phillip Alexander argued that in this incantation the names *ypy’l* and *yhw’l* are names of God, rather than names of Meṭaṭron, as they are in most other sources.[[20]](#footnote-20) In his opinion, the second-person address of the blessing “Blessed are You yhwh” is continued by “your name is *ywp’l*, they call you *yhw’l*” (*ywp’l šmk yhw’l qrw lk*). But it is clear that the blessing terminates with the three words that follow the Tetragrammaton, for which Milik offers the most plausible reading: “about the words of the Name” (*‘l dybry hšym*). Meir Bar-Ilan[[21]](#footnote-21) has pointed to an unmistakable parallel of this formulation in *Merkavah Shelemah*:[[22]](#footnote-22) “Blessed are You yhwh who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us about the words of the Name(*‘l dbry hšm*).”[[23]](#footnote-23) According to this understanding, *bšwm ywpy’l šmk*, begins a new sentence, and the antecedent of the second-person pronominal suffix need not be the Tetragrammaton of the previous sentence. In terms of theology, it bears noting that in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, *yhw’l* is the name of the archangel sent to Abraham, yet in the prayer Abraham utters as he ascends on high, *yhw’l* designates God (17:16).

The most famous assertion about Meṭaṭron, based on a study of the bowls, is the identification of Meṭaṭron with Hermes. This linkage turns on how to restore a single, partial word, […]*msh*, which precedes the name Meṭaṭron (*myṭṭrwn*) in our bowl. Montgomery filled in the lacuna with *[’r]msh* and took it to mean Hermes.[[24]](#footnote-24) He supported this restoration with three others in which he (unwarrantedly) filled in Hermes, too. Subsequent scholars rejected two of these three readings, such that in only one place does Hermes’ name appear: “in the name of Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael; in the name of *‘s’l* *‘sy’l* the angel, and Hermes the great master(*’yrmys* *m[ry’ rb’]*).”[[25]](#footnote-25) This assertion of a connection between Hermes and Meṭaṭron relies on a reading that is far from certain.[[26]](#footnote-26) Some have argued that such a connection exists in Islamic magic,[[27]](#footnote-27) but although the Hermetic tradition in Islamic sources is richly developed,[[28]](#footnote-28) with Meṭaṭron making regular appearances in these sources, the evidence linking Meṭaṭron with Hermes is gossamer at best.[[29]](#footnote-29) Generally, one can say that Enoch, Meṭaṭron, and Hermes were each independently linked to writing and the instruction of wisdom, similar to the Babylonian Nabu and other gods, demons, and angels. This shared characteristic facilitated the merging of these figures at a later stage.

**1.2 Sokoloff, Gordon D, Baghdad Museum 6519[[30]](#footnote-30) (fragment)**

חרשין ארמאין חרשין יהודאין חרשין טיאעין חרשין פרסאין חרשין הינדואין חרשין יונאין חרשין די כיתין חרשין דמיתעבדין בשבעין לישנין בין דאיתתא ובין דגברא כולהון שביתין ובטילין מן מימריה דאל קנא ונוקים הוא דשלח עזא ועזאל ומיטטרון איסרא רבא דכורסיה אינון ייתון וינטרון דירתיה ואיסקופתיה דפרוכדד בר זבינתא

The title “great prince,” which in rabbinic literature is assigned to Michael, is borne by Meṭaṭron and other supernal angels in *Hekhalot* literature. Meṭaṭron’s association with the Throne of yhwh is variously depicted in *Hekhalot* literature: he serves the Throne;[[31]](#footnote-31) he has his own throne akin to that of yhwh;[[32]](#footnote-32) he is stationed before, behind,[[33]](#footnote-33) or under the Throne;[[34]](#footnote-34) he himself is called a “throne”;[[35]](#footnote-35) or he is identified with the Throne of yhwh.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Of great interest is the fact that Meṭaṭron is sent together with *‘Uzza’* and *‘Azza’el* to render the magic powerless and ward off *mazziqin*. The names *‘Uzza’* and *‘Azza’el* appear in the talmudic-midrashic version[[37]](#footnote-37) of the story about the angels who sinned with the daughters of men (Gen. 6:2). Can we conclude, then, that Meṭaṭron and the Enoch tradition are connected, that perhaps Meṭaṭron is even identified with Enoch? An additional echo of Enochian literature can be found in bowl B2945 published by Montgomery,[[38]](#footnote-38) in which the adjurer threatens demons with the ban that fell on Mount Hermon. A Syriac bowl from the Yale Collection (YBC 2357) reads: *wḥtymyn b‘yzqth dšmḥyz’ mry’ bgd’n’*,[[39]](#footnote-39) and *šmḥz’y*, too, is a figure known from different versions of the story about the fallen angels, and is also mentioned in the Talmud.[[40]](#footnote-40) Jonas C. Greenfield claimed that the reference to the ban that fell on Mount Hermon does not constitute evidence of familiarity with the Enoch tradition; on the other hand, he did leave open the possibility that the sending of Meṭaṭron together with *‘Uzza’* and *‘Azza’el* in some way reflects Meṭaṭron’s mission to *šmḥz’y* and *‘Azza’el*,[[41]](#footnote-41) which implicitly identifies Enoch with Meṭaṭron.[[42]](#footnote-42) My own opinion is the opposite of Greenfield’s: there is no reason to doubt that the ban on Mount Hermon comes from the Enoch tradition; at the same time, the delegation of three angels does not align with what we know about *‘Azza* and *‘Azza’el* from this tradition, appearing nowhere in its sprawling literature. This is not necessarily surprising: one can point to a number of references to *‘Uzzah*, *‘Azza’el*, *‘Uzzi’el*, and the like that bear no connection to the Enochmyth,[[43]](#footnote-43) as well as to ones that explicitly do.[[44]](#footnote-44) In those unrelated to the Enoch tradition, these angels do not distinguish themselves in any way. Our bowl, which speaks of a mission of revenge, can be compared to the following passage from *Berit Menuḥah*:

אלא שמות בפני עצמם. הראשון יוצפעחירון השני אספעחירון השלישי מפעיחרויהו שלשה שמות אדירים לעלות חימה ולנקום נקם בלי ספק ומלאכים מקבלים מהם אשר אלה שמותם גבריאל צדקיאל עזאל עוזיאל נמשכים בקו הגבורה והם שמות לקיים קללה ולהמית שונא י״ג יום זה אחר זה.[[45]](#footnote-45)

One could speculate that the placement of *‘Azza’el* and *‘Uzzi’el* on the side of *Gevurah* and *Din* (in the kabbalistic sense) and their roles as punishing angels preserve a vestige of their rebellious past, but one certainly could not apply this to Gabriel, who acts in concert with them.

**1.3 Ashmolian Museum 1932.620[[46]](#footnote-46)**

According to the description of Cyrus Gordon, the inscription on this bowl is divided into four quadrants, and the faded script is difficult to read. In the first quadrant, Gordon discerns the following words among the others: *wḥtymy […] b‘zqtyh dšlmwh br dwyd mlk’ dyśr’l bšwm ‘za w‘z’l*. Meṭaṭron’s name appears in the fourth quadrant. Let us now turn to the reading of Jozef Milik:

9) אסיריתון וחתימיתון 10) בשום מטטרון איסרא רבא 11) דהוא ממוני על כל ראשי שרית[א][[47]](#footnote-47) 12) ובשום יחיאל[[48]](#footnote-48) איסרא {אי}רבה די הוא 13) מרחק[[49]](#footnote-49) [...] בשמיה על ימא דסוף

As we saw in the previous bowl, here too Meṭaṭron is the “great prince” who battles magic and demons together with the great prince *yḥy’l* (*yhw’l*?) and an angel that drove Pharaoh’s chariots into the Red Sea.[[50]](#footnote-50) The title “prince” (*śar*) has many meanings, but in this context the sense of “military leader” fits best, as in: *wnglh ‘lyw mṭṭrwn* *śr* *sgy* *yhwh* *śr ṣb’ yh’*.[[51]](#footnote-51)

**1.4 Sokoloff 61, Gordon L, The National Museum in Washington 207963[[52]](#footnote-52)**

בת אימי בשמיה בשמיה קדיש{ין} ובשמיה דמיטטרון איסרא רבה דכליה עלמא ובשמיה דרפאל איסרא דאסותא כולהין אמן אמן מוברך

Similar to the preceding bowls, this incantation is intended to keep magic and demons at bay. Meṭaṭron (*myṭṭrwn*), the great prince of the entire world, and Raphael, the prince of all healing, are mentioned in the sealing. Meṭaṭron’s appellation here has received considerable attention, given its bearing on the discussion of the “prince of the world” mentioned in the Talmud and other sources[[53]](#footnote-53) and his connection to Meṭaṭron.[[54]](#footnote-54) Based on the extant references, I do not think we can determine the stance of the rabbis of the Talmud and Midrash on this matter, even if some of their contemporaries—such as the author of this spell—referred to Meṭaṭron as the “great prince of the entire world.” It bears noting that in another bowl, the title “great prince of the world” is bestowed upon the angels *mglglg* and *yhw’l*:[[55]](#footnote-55)

מגלגלג סרה רבה דעלמה דהוא רב ושליט על עיבדת רזי עלמה...

אכריזון אכליסין די בני אינשא על יד יהואל סרה רבה דעלמה דיקום בתרעי בבי ויקירי וידכר שמך אנתא מגלגלג סרה רבה דעלמה ושמיה דיהואל סרה רבה דעלמה וישבע בישמה הדין

This example somewhat weakens Meṭaṭron’s exclusive claim to the title “prince of the world.” It is further possible that “great prince of the [entire] world” is more modest than the terser “prince of the world” and can be predicated of a number of angels. We should likewise take into account the identification made between *yhw’l* and Meṭaṭron. A general point should be made here that these spells contain exhibit a phenomenon similar to what Max Müller termed Kathenotheism, namely, during the moment of adjuration the angel invoked merits all of the supernal titles, even those consistently attributed to other angels.

The question of the meaning of “prince of the world” is no less important than the question of the identity of the angel bearing the title. Most of the sources indicate that the main task of the “prince of the world” is to represent and defend the lower realm before the Holy One, although governance of the world and dominion over the supernal ministers of the nations and the cosmos are also part of his duties. If this interpretation of the title is correct, then Meṭaṭron as arch-defender and Raphael as dispenser of all remedies make a natural pair.

**1.5. Sokoloff 63, British Museum BM 136204[[56]](#footnote-56)**

בחומרתיה דמיטטרון סרא רבא דמיתקרי אסיה רבא דרחמי מברכי אשונא [[57]](#footnote-57)דההוא כביש שידין ודיוין וחרשין בישין ועובדין תקיפין מן ביתיה ומן איסקופתיה דבהרם גושנסף בר אשתר אנהיד אמן אמן סלה

In this bowl, in addition to Meṭaṭron’s usual title of the “great prince,” we find him in the role of the “great healer of mercy,” which recalls the description of Raphael in the previous bowl. Many bowls published by Montgomery have an opening invocation of “my lord of healing” or “the great healer of mercy,” which refers to God;[[58]](#footnote-58) here, however, the appellation is transposed onto Meṭaṭron.

**1.6. Sokoloff 116, M.C. Wiseman[[59]](#footnote-59)**

וחתמנא יתכון בחתמא רבא דשריא דגבריאיל ומיכאל ורפאיל [...]איל ושמישיאיל ושליטאל ומטטרון דאתון ממני על כל [...]

This very lengthy spell, intended to heal and protect from *mazziqin*, includes a mention of Ashmedai’s signet-ring. The formula quoted above appears right before the sealing, and lists seven princes: the familiar triad of Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael come first, and Meṭaṭron comes last. This heptad of angels is mentioned in many sources beginning in the Second Temple period. Within this spell one cannot determine if the head of this group is Gabriel, mentioned first, or Meṭaṭron, mentioned last, immediately before the sealing. In many cases, as in the next bowl, Meṭaṭron clearly heads the heptad.

**1.7 Sokoloff 120, The Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, VA.2416[[60]](#footnote-60)**

אשבעיתינכון במלאכין קדישין ובישמיה דמיטטרון מלאכה דכיה נידריאל ונוריאל והוריאל וססגביאל והפכיאל ומהפכיאל אילין אינון שבעה מלאכין דאזלין ומהפכין שמיא ימא דתיזלון ותיהפכון וארעה וכוכבי ומזלי וסיהרא וחרשין בישין ומעבדין תקיפין ונידרא ולוטתא ושיקופתא ואשלמתא ושיפורי ושמתתא דאית ליה בביתיה ובפגריה ובגושמיה לאבא בר ברכיתא דתיזלון ותיתהפכון על כל

Metatron heads the heptad of angels here. The function of the final two are reflected in their names. The adjective “pure” (*dkyh*) here usually is attributed to the Name of God in magical and other contexts; perhaps Meṭaṭron merited this description because of his special connection to the Tetragrammaton. The verb from the root *h-f-k* used here already appears in the sense of rendering curses and sorcery powerless in Biblical Hebrew (Deut. 23:6), and is common in the incantation bowls. The same language is used to describe the divine destruction of Sodom and the plagues of Egypt, both of which entailed the overturning or violation of the natural order. The practitioner recruits these angels who possess unbridled power over the cosmos in order to fight against sorcery.

**1.8. Sokoloff B 57, Schøyen Collection MS 2053/36[[61]](#footnote-61)**

בי[שמי]ה דמן דיב[רא] ע[ל]מ[א ובי]שמי[ה] דמיטטרון [---] סר הפנים דהוא מזיעא לכל בנ[י] מרו[מא] עי[ן] אין סיני סיני [יהו אחי]ש אחיש הגריפט קפ[ר ---]

This incantation bowl, like the three that follow it, uses a divorce formula to banish demons, spirits, and liliths: *upwqw wtsbwn gyṭ[yk]wn*. Although the writing of the lines above is very unclear, it can be reconstructed using parallels. Three bowls with nearly identical texts have been published and are cited below (secs. 1.9–1.11).[[62]](#footnote-62) Discussion of elements shared by bowls 1.8–1.11 is reserved for the next section; here, we note only that the title “Prince of the Countenance,” so well-known from *Hekhalot* literature, does not appear in the parallels below.

**1.9. Sokoloff B 61, Schøyen Collection MS 2053/214[[63]](#footnote-63)**

בישמיה דמן דיברא עלמה ובישמיה דמטטר[ו]ן גנוניה דהוא מזיעה דכל בני מרמה עין אין {x} סיני סיני יהו אחיש אחישה אגריפט קפר נגו מפעיה קפר נגיס מוקון מוטון [א]וטמון ופיס[ק]ון אנטר גריניס מור ואמירון אפסוני אגמוני פלד זמא איקלא קנ[י]נ[י]

Meṭaṭron is the Creator of the universe’s second-in-command, who is mentioned right after the king in **נוסחות הרשמיות**.[[64]](#footnote-64) The appellation *gnwnyh* (*gnwn’*) is exceptionally interesting. It is translated as “his protector” in the edition of the bowls of the Schøyen Collection.[[65]](#footnote-65) The semantic fields of Aramaic *ginnuna’* and Hebrew *ḥuppah* are nearly identical: a bridal chamber or bridal canopy, and, via semantic widening, any similar sort of covering spread out to show respect or to protect.[[66]](#footnote-66) Although the sense of “protector” can be explained as an outgrowth of the latter meaning, the only attestation of it is the formulation “Meṭaṭron, His protector” (*mṭṭrwn gnwnyh*) found in bowls 1.8–1.11. Perhaps we should understand the invention of this new meaning of *gnwn’* as necessitated by the difficulty of conceiving of Meṭaṭron as a bridal canopy, the usual sense of the word. But it seems to me that we should try to explain *gnwna’* as applied to Meṭaṭron in exactly this usual sense. In Aramaic and Hebrew Jewish literature, as well as in Syriac Christian literature, *gnwn’* as a bridal canopy or chamber has a very rich symbolism with abundantmystical and metaphorical nuances.[[67]](#footnote-67)

The bridal canopy or chamber (*ginnuna’-ḥuppah*) symbolizes mutual feelings of love and joy; God’s unification with man, the nation, or the congregation; divine protection over them; God’s proximity at the giving of the Torah, during the sacred service, or within the vision of the Chariot;[[68]](#footnote-68) the repose and dignified station of the righteous in the World to Come;[[69]](#footnote-69) and so on and so forth. The bridal canopy (*ḥuppah*) is the Garden of Eden, the Tabernacle, the Temple—the main habitation of God when He is closest to the world:

"באתי לגן" אין כתי' כאן אלא "באתי לגני". לגנוני. במקום שהיא עיקרה[[70]](#footnote-70) מתחלה. עיקר שכינה בתחתונים היה. הה'ד "וישמעו את קול י'י אלהים" וגו'.[[71]](#footnote-71)

This exegesis relates to two different times and places: Paradise at the genesis of the universe, and the Tabernacle during the Israelite sojourn in the wilderness. Both are designated as a bridal canopy (*ginnuna’*). The Garden of Eden was the bridal canopy joining the Holy One and the lower realm at the dawn of creation; the Tabernacle served as the bridal canopy for the Holy One and the Congregation of Israel in the wilderness. This identification of the Tabernacle with the bridal canopy is only implied, apparently so as not to becloud the central image of the union between the Holy One and the Congregation of Israel. Unlike this imagery, which has a solid scriptural foundation, the various images in rabbinic literature are more fluid and change shape to fit theological sensitivities. In the following parable, the Holy One is the bride’s father but the groom’s identity is never revealed.[[72]](#footnote-72) One also cannot tell if the world is imagined as the bridal canopy or as the bride. Be that as it may, the language of affection alludes to the intimate relationship between God and the universe:

למלך שהוא משיא את בתו ועשה לו[[73]](#footnote-73) חופה. וסיידה וכיירה וציירה. וראה אותה וערבה לו. א[מר]. בתי בתי. הלווי תהא החופה הזו מעלה חן לפני בכל עת כשם שהעלית חן לפני בשע' הזאת. כך א[מר] הק[ב"ה] לעולמו. עולמי עולמי. הלווי תהא מעלה חן לפני בכל עת כשם שהעלית חן לפני בשעה הזו.[[74]](#footnote-74)

As mentioned above (sec. 1.2), Meṭaṭron is appointed over—or is even identical to—the Throne of Glory, and the same can be said concerning his relationship to the Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant. Meṭaṭron’s essential characteristic is that God’s name resides within him, which is precisely how the Tabernacle is described in Deuteronomy. In this sense, one can say that Meṭaṭron is the bridal canopy of the Holy One and the world. An enlightening parallel to this appears in fragments of a composition preserved in the Taylor-Schechter Collection of the Cairo Geniza, which bears close ties to *Hekhalot* literature (K 21.95.A). The fragment was edited by Peter Schäfer in a volume of *Hekhalot* fragments from the Geniza,[[75]](#footnote-75) and then again by Gideon Bohak, who argued that it forms part of an unknown *Hekhalot* work that he was able to reconstruct from fragments held in various collections.[[76]](#footnote-76) The manuscript is dated to sometime in the tenth or eleventh century,[[77]](#footnote-77) and according to Bohak’s reconstruction it comprises only the first part of a larger composition. In the continuation, we will have cause to quote it extensively, but here we only cite what is pertinent to *ginnuna’*:

זה [מטטרון] ששמו בשום הקדש ברוך הוא [...] אמר לו משה מה תשמישך ומה בידך אמר לו אני הוא אהבה גנוניה אכסניה למלאכי מרום[[78]](#footnote-78)

Although Meṭaṭron’s name appears in the reconstructed part of the text, he is undoubtedly the speaker in this fragment. Meṭaṭron was the one revealed to Moses in the burning bush. In response to Moses’ question regarding his mission and station, Meṭaṭron presents himself as follows: *any hw’ ’hbh gnwnyh ’ksnyh lml’ky mrwm*. One possible role of *gnwnyh* is to explain the transition from angelic revelation in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2) to the revelation of God Himself (Ex. 3:4 and on).

The word *’hbh* is always an abstract noun, so it is bizarre to find it as the name or appellation of an angel, similar to Greek eros. On the other hand, we do find *’hbh* as a personal name and as a magical term, one of the names of the *Shi‘ur Qomah* in *Shiv‘ata de-Eliyahu*.[[79]](#footnote-79) Possibly, the original form here was *’hbyh*—on the pattern of *gnwnyh* and *’ksnyh*—and a *yod* was omitted. All of these possibilities notwithstanding, the basic meaning of the word ought not be ignored—it evidently denotes here the love between God, Meṭaṭron, and the supernal host. God’s love of Meṭaṭron is emphasized many times in 3 Enoch and other texts, as is the love of the angels for Meṭaṭron. An example of the latter appears in a Geniza fragment from the Antonin Collection (RNB Antonin B 186), which is not only part of the same manuscript as the fragment in the Taylor-Schechter Collection (K 21.95.A) but the very same composition:[[80]](#footnote-80)

מרגיויאל זה מטטרון גיותאל זה מטטרון טנאריאל זה מטטרון שקדחוזיי זה מטטרון הוז[ה]יה זה מטטרון דן דמשמש לעיליא ו[משמש] לתחתאי גנוזיה[[81]](#footnote-81) זה מטטרון ססנגיא זה מטטרון סבריא זה מטטרון ‏ובאהבה שאוהבין אתו כל צבא מרום היו קוראין אתו זיותאל עבד יהוה אלהי ישראל ברוך הוא יהוה יהוה [...] חסד ואמת. ברוך שם כבוד מ'ל'ו.[[82]](#footnote-82)

There is a parallel to these lines in a very early Geniza fragment:[[83]](#footnote-83)

מיטטרון ששם שמו לשמונה שמות. מרגבייאל גיבתאל א[..]אל כתריאל הוזהייה זה מיטטרון מי[..]אל יהויאל[[84]](#footnote-84) יופיאל סין סכין סב[..] יהו זה מיטטרון. באהבה שי[..] אוהבים אותו כל צבא המ[ר]ום [...] היו קוראים אותו זיפתיאל ל[..][[85]](#footnote-85) זבוריאל. "יהוה יהוה אל רחום וחנון ארך אפים ורב חסד ואמת". ברוך י'י חכם הרזין ואדון השרים.[[86]](#footnote-86)

The descriptor following *gnwnyh* is *’ksnyh lml’ky mrwm*. In rabbinic literature, *’ksnyh* means not only lodgings but the owner of lodgings. Yet, we need not invoke this meaning to understand its application to Meṭaṭron: in the same way Meṭaṭron is a bridal canopy in which the *Shekhinah* resides, so too he serves as an *’ksnyh* for the angels on high, the place in which they all gather like groomsmen. One can tie *’ksnyh lml’ky mrwm* to the conception of Meṭaṭron as encompassing all of the angels, especially the seventy angels that represent his seventy names or facets.

The juxtaposition of *’hbh*, *gnwn’*, and *’ksnyh* confirms our claim that *gnwn’* here means bridal canopy.[[87]](#footnote-87) As we have seen above, even when one can clearly identify the imagery of a bridal canopy and a holy union, the identity of the bride and groom and the specifics of the imagery can remain obscure and elusive. Therefore, sometimes the imagery of the bride and the bridal canopy bleed into each other,[[88]](#footnote-88) particularly due to the essential connection made in rabbinic literature between spouse and house. Similarly, the image of Meṭaṭron as a bridal canopy can transform into imagery of Meṭaṭron as a bride.[[89]](#footnote-89) We posited above that God’s bride at the beginning of all things was the universe, and Meṭaṭron is its “prince” and representative.[[90]](#footnote-90) The gendering of Meṭaṭron as feminine was not foreign to the kabbalists, some of whom identified Meṭaṭron with *Shekhinah*.[[91]](#footnote-91) In this context, it is interesting to compare Meṭaṭron and Mary the mother of Jesus, who was considered the ultimate point of contact and connection between God and the world.[[92]](#footnote-92)

For the next descriptionof Meṭaṭron, *mzy‘h dkl bny mrmh*, there exists an interesting parallel in the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. When *yhw’l* first appears to Abraham, he introduces himself with the following sentence, the earliest explicit reference to an angel bearing God’s name within:[[93]](#footnote-93)

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| אנכי יהואל אשר נקראתי על שם המרעיש[[94]](#footnote-94) את הנמצאים אתי על המרחב השביעי על הרקיע, כוח באמצעות השם המפורש[[95]](#footnote-95) השוכן בתוכי.[[96]](#footnote-96) | Азъ есмь Іоаль сы именованъ отъ трязоущаго cоущая съ мною на седмеи широтѣ на тверди сила посред<ѣ>емъ <(не)>изгл<агол>емаго слежаше имене въ мнѣ. |

The ability of *yhw’l* to make the heavenly beings quake is an expression of the power of the Name placed within him, an explanation that is similarly apt for Meṭaṭron.

Following the titles and appellations of semantic significance on our bowl comes a string of *nomina barbara*.Particularly noteworthy is *pysqwn* and a number of additional names (*mwqwn*, *mwṭwn*, *’wṭmwn*) that consistently accompany it. Most of the time that *pysqwn* appears in incantation bowls, magical texts, and *Hekhalot* literature, it is a cognomen of Meṭaṭron.[[97]](#footnote-97) One such text is Geniza fragment T-S K 21.95.A, cited above in the discussion about *gnwnyh*. This fragment offers parallels to many bowls discussed above and to be discussed below,[[98]](#footnote-98) which is grounds for surmising that it documents a stage in the consolidation of *Hekhalot* literature that occurred roughly when and where the magicians were writing the bowls. In light of this, the parallels between the bowls and this fragment warrant intense scrutiny. The same applies, to some degree, to the other fragments that Gideon Bohak determined to be part of this manuscript and specific composition.[[99]](#footnote-99)

According to Bohak, fragment K 21.95.A comprises the first part of this composition.[[100]](#footnote-100) The body of the composition begins with these words: “R. Eliezer would expound the Merk[avah…] based on what Moses had seen.” This is an expanded version of the famous aggada about Moses’ ascent to heaven and his confrontation with the angels. On the first few of days after his ascent, Moses struck a defensive posture in the face of the angels and the other creatures composed of ethereal fire.[[101]](#footnote-101) On the third day, however, Moses bested the angels with his arguments, such that they began to reveal to him their secrets, especially the techniques for adjuration. Moses was worried about learning this lore they proffered, until *śr psnyq*[[102]](#footnote-102) came and encouraged him:

והיה משה מפקפק בדברים ואומר הדברים הללו למה עד שבא אצלו שר פסניק ששבעים קרנים שלאש יוצאת מ... [וא]מר לו בן עמרם בן עמרם אל תפקפק בדברים שהזכות ממהרת והזכות מקדמת ולא לכל אדם אלא לך בלבד שהייתה במחשבה

Emboldened by the words of *psnyq*, Moses requests that the angels reveal their adjurations to him, and even God is about to reveal His secrets to him. But the time for sanctifying God interrupts, and it is immediately followed by a raging supernal inferno that frightens Moses. *Psnyq* reappears, but this time he presents himself in full:

לאחר מיכן בא רוח פיסקון ועמד ביניהם והיו כל השרים מזדעזעין מלפניו אמר לו משה משה אני הוא שנגליתי עליך ביום שנדבר עמך קונך שר [וי]רא מלאך יי׳ וגר ואני הוא שאמרתי לך שלנעליך וגר [וא]ני הוא סניגרון פיסקון איטמון סניגרון שני סוגר דברים מלמעלן ואני הוא פסניק פיסקון שני[[103]](#footnote-103) פוסק דברין בסנהדרין אטמון שהכל נאטמין מלפני מיכן אמר רבי יהושע זה הוא שאמר עליו הכתוב ה[נ]ה מלאכי כלך[[104]](#footnote-104) לפניך וגו'[[105]](#footnote-105) ויאמר יהוה אל השטן וזה הוא שאמר עליו הכתוב [וי]הוה המטיר על וגר יכול שתי רשויות בשמים אלא זה [מטטרון] ששמו בשום הקדש ברוך הוא וכשבא אצל יהושע אמר [לו] ע֯ת֯ה באתי אמר לו אני הוא שאמרתי למשה רבך של נעליך אף אתה של נעליך אמר לו משה מה תשמישך ומה בידך אמר לו אני הוא אהבה גנוניה אכסניה למלאכי מרום.

The angel is called (*rwḥ*) *psqwn* since he quiets (*mafsiq*)and cuts off the discussion in the heavenly court; *snygrwn* since he closes (*soger*) cases by a power invested in him from on high;[[106]](#footnote-106) and *’yṭmwn* since he obstructs (*’oṭem*) the mouths of the prosecuting angels. He is the angel revealed to Moses in the burning bush and to Joshua at Jericho. He is the one who accompanied the Israelites during their exodus from Egypt. He is the one called by the Tetragrammaton in Zech. 3:2 (“And yhwh said unto Satan, yhwh rebukes you, O Satan; even yhwh that has chosen Jerusalem rebukes you: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?”) and Gen. 19:24 (“Then yhwh rained upon Sodom and upon Gomorrah brimstone and fire from yhwh out of heaven”). This interpretation is a response to the claim that these verses seem indicative of binitarianism, in which two independent entities bear theTetragrammaton. The charge is defused by claiming that the first Tetragrammaton refers to Meṭaṭron, loyal servant of the Lord, who bears the name of the One he serves.[[107]](#footnote-107) The role of the “angel of yhwh” in Zech. 3, in which he rebukes Satan in the name of yhwh, fits the meanings attributed to *pysqwn*, *’ṭmwn*, and *sgrwn*. A paraphrase of Zech. 3 appears in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* 13:7-15, in which Abraham assumes the role of Joshua the High Priest, Azazel that of Satan, and *yhw’l* that of the angel of yhwh. We see yet again the equation between the roles of *yhw’l* and Meṭaṭron. In the incantation bowls, too, *yhw’l* silencesthe accusers:

בשום גבריאל גבר תקיף דקטל כל גיברי כולהון דנצחין בקרבא ובשום יהואל דסתם פום כל גיב[רי כ]להון בשום יה יה יה צבאות[[108]](#footnote-108)

A different aspect of *psqwn* is highlighted in another Geniza fragment that includes the work *Shiv‘ata de-Eliyahu*, seven adjurations based on names revealed to the prophet Elijah:[[109]](#footnote-109)

משביע אני עליך [בשם האל הגדול הגבור והנורא חבר יה אמץ יה יה חזק יה שומר בפרוש ובקדושה]. ״רוח גדולה חזק מפרק הרים ומשבר סלעים״ וגו׳ עד ״דממה דקה״. הלט לט הלט לט ארעי מט אדם ימט טייח אני שייח לפני דטום דטום רטון רטון פרטוטים סמטוטים פריניי פריטיי לוט לאום ואין אבא. [מ׳ מ׳ טבטוח לבט לבטר רטוס וחתוס ממוט פאר צר פאר טרח טרח לוט איטאק איטאק]. ״וילט פזיו באדרתו ויצא ויעמוד פתח המערה״ וג׳. ״ויאמר קנוא קנאתי״. [״ומשה עלה״ ״ונגש״ וג׳].ספסקין [סרגון] סריון ומחקון תקפון שקפון חלטון צידנין צדך צידוניה בגלמוציה אפרהון קלהון יופיאל מטטרון מטטרון. לכ[ך] אני משביע ברוח פיסקונית [כ]שבסוד העליון ובמחיצה הפנימית המנטלת את הכרובים. [אפרחון] קלהון יופעיאל מיטטר[ון] מטטרון.[[110]](#footnote-110)

...

שמה עלי תגה [מפורש] ובהיכל נורא וברדא י[ד] יפרש בגויה [בגלים] וביצריה בגה אלומץ. בכורסיה דיתיב [עלוי] מיטרון מטטרון מלאכא דעל מכתב ״כי שמי בקרבו״. אלה יה ביה אשה שה בשה אשר שר בשר אורו דבור. [ראוה הוה יד יה ביה] או אמץ מץ במץ. אבץ בץ בבץ. אבק בק בבק. אפק פק בפק. אפץ פץ בפץ. קלקש בקש. קול פיגרי רגש קול [רעש] דממה דקה. הים קול חשמל [וג׳]. חשמלה רבה דמלל מן גי להבי אשתא.[[111]](#footnote-111)

We learn from this that the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt* is found in the supernalmysteryand innermostprecinct;[[112]](#footnote-112) it is the spirit of the *ḥayyah* that moves the Chariot (cf. Ezek. 1:20-21); it is the *ḥashmal*[[113]](#footnote-113) in the whirlwind, the great cloud, and the infolding fire (cf. Ezek. 1:4); it is the still small voice[[114]](#footnote-114) within the great and strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire (cf. 1 Kgs. 19:11-12). This inner spirit has the power to silence the thunderous but more external manifestations of divine power. The role of the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt* is discussed in the Babylonian Talmud:

אמר ליה אביי לרב דימי האי קרא במערבא במאי מוקמיתו לי[ה] ׳אל תצא לריב מהר. ריבך ריב את רעך וסוד אחר אל תגל' אמ׳ לו בשעה שאמר לו הק׳ב׳ה׳ <> ליחזקאל לך אמור להן לישראל 'אביך האמרי ואמך חתית' אמרה רוח פסקונית לפני הק׳ב׳ה׳ רבונו שלעולם אם יבואו אברהם ושרה ויעמדו לפניך אתה מכלים אותם. ריבך ריב את רעיך וסוד אחר אל תגל. ומי[[115]](#footnote-115) אית ליה רשותא כולי האי איך דאמ' ר׳ יוסי בר׳ חנינה שלש שמות יש לו פיסקון איטמון סיגרון. פסקון: שפוסק דברים כלפי מעלה. איטמון: שאוטם עונותיהן של ישראל. סיגרון: כיון שסוגר שוב אינו פותח.[[116]](#footnote-116)

Rav Dimi quotes a Palestinian interpretive tradition, according to which a *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt* interrupted God as He spoke to Ezekiel and reproved Him for His tone of speech by citing a verse from Proverbs. Abayye is shocked: How can the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt* address the Holy One in such fashion? Rav Dimi supports his interpretation of the verse by relying on a dictum of R. Yose b. R. Ḥaninah about three names of the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt*, which imply that it has the authority to cut off whoever brings accusations against the Jewish people (according to Rav Dimi’s reasoning, even the Holy One Himself!). From this passage we can conclude that the tradition about the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt* was known in Roman Palestine by the fourth century at the latest. The Talmud informs us that Abayye was familiar with the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt*, yet he was still surprised by the authority granted it in Rav Dimi’s interpretation. Now, even if the extreme power of the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt* displayed in Rav Dimi’s homily was ultimately accepted in Babylonia,[[117]](#footnote-117) it still remained foreign to the world of Babylonian magic.[[118]](#footnote-118) It was enough for the practitioners and writers of the bowls that the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt* would silence Satan and other accusing angels—they had no grievance against God. According to our reading of the Talmud, “Does it have authorizationto such an extent?” is Abayye’s question, and “yes, since R. Yose said” is Rav Dimi’s answer. Another possible reading that I find less reasonable assigns both question and answer to the anonymous Stammaitic layer, making the attribution to R. Yose b. R. Ḥaninah pseudepigraphic. According to this, one could argue that only the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt* stems from the Palestinian tradition; the names *psqwn*, *sygrwn*, and *’tmwn* and their accompanying interpretations are the product of a later Babylonian development. An interesting question is whether the Talmud is aware of the connection between Meṭaṭron and the *rwḥ* *pysqwnyt* or *psqwn*, *sygrwn*, and *’tmwn*. If the answer is affirmative, then this *sugya* disagrees with *Sanhedrin* 38b, where Meṭaṭron is deprived of the power to pardon sins.[[119]](#footnote-119) Although technically speaking there’s a difference between forgiving sins and eliminating guilt by the authority of *pysqwn*, practically they are similar enough.

**1.10. Sokoloff B 63, Schøyen Collection MS 2053/250[[120]](#footnote-120)**

בישמיה דמן דיברא עלמא ובישמיה דמיטטרון גנונא דהוא מזיעא על כל בני מרומא אין אין סיני סיני יהו [א]חיש ואחישה אגריפט קפר נגיר {מ[-]י} מפעיה קפר נגיס מחן מטן אוטמון ופיסקון אנטר גריניס מיר ואמירום אסנה אגמוני פלדימ[ה]איקלה קניני

**1.11. National Museum of Iraq, IM 148241[[121]](#footnote-121)**

דתיסבון גיטיכון ... ותזלון לאתר אוחרן בישמיה דמן דיברא עלמה ובישמיה דמטטרון גנוניה דהוא מזיעה דכל בני מרמה עיין איין סיני סיני יהו אחיש אחישה אגריפט קפר נגו מפעיה קפר נגיס מיקון מיטון אוטמון ופיסקון אנטר גריניס מיר ואמירום אסנה אגמוני פלדימ[ה]איקלה קניני

**1.12. British Museum, BM 91730[[122]](#footnote-122)**

בשום [...] ורחמיאל מלאך ונטריאל מלאך וגבריאל מלאך ומיכאל מלאך ורפאל מלאך ומטטרון אסרא רבא ו[... ...]א תקיפא

In this incantation, Meṭaṭron is the last member of the angelic heptad, coming after Gabriel, Michael, and Raphael, yet the appellation “great prince” (*isra rabba*)clearly indicates that he is in charge of the group. We therefore can infer that the same is true of the bowl in sec. 1.6.

**1.13. Sokoloff 123, Moussaieff Collection, 1[[123]](#footnote-123)**

כי חסננא אנא[[124]](#footnote-124) ובעי(נ)א דאמ(יכי אגיתיא) דימלי מ(נסבנתא[[125]](#footnote-125) מן) דיתיב על ארבע כרובים ולהון שיתין וארבע פרצופין וקאים ל(יה) זנפיאל שר(פ)א ומשמיש ליה זבפיאל שפרא וקאים קדמוהי מיטטרון סר הפנים מן בר (מחיא) חופניאל וקטניאל (עננין וערפילין ה)דמין (לי) ח(זינא לביש ענני זו... כרסי) וסנדלי נורא בידיה נקיט ותנינא מר

Shaul Shaked analyzed this bowl a quarter of a century ago, in a groundbreaking study concerning the connection between *Hekhalot* literature and the Babylonian incantation bowls. Since its publication, evidence of this connection has been piling up, but most pieces pertain, quite naturally, to the magical aspects of the *Hekhalot* text. This bowl, by way of contrast, is closer to the Merkavah tradition, and bears traces of midrashic preoccupation with Ezekiel’s vision—especially of the Chariot—and similar texts. One of the motifs here is recurring treatment of the manifold faces of the Chariot. This notion appears in the Targum to Ezek. 1:6, in which the number of faces is 64, and in *Hekhalot Rabbati*,[[126]](#footnote-126) where the number is 256. This latter numbers appears to be the total number of cherub faces according to the bowl. These numbers come from a midrashic reading of Ezek. 1:6-11. Since the bowl was written for a woman (Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh) for the healing of the 252 limbs of her body, the seven orifices of her head, et cetera, it would seem that the practitioner intended to establish a correspondence between the limbs of her body and the faces of the Chariot. *Sefer Hekhalot* (3 Enoch)[[127]](#footnote-127) seems to confirm this theory, as it gives the number of faces of the *ḥayyot* as 248 and the number of their wings as 365, like the number of (male) limbs and the number of sinews, respectively. In the lines cited above, the practitioner seeks to subdue the demons that rule the body of Mahdukh daughter of Newandukh by the power of the names given him by the Rider of the Chariot.[[128]](#footnote-128)

The description of the Chariot in this incantation is a synthesis of the visions in Ezek. 1, Isa. 6,[[129]](#footnote-129) and Dan. 7.[[130]](#footnote-130)

**1.14. Moussaieff Collection, 164[[131]](#footnote-131)**

בשום זהובארי יהוה אילהא דישראל[[132]](#footnote-132) ובשום זבוריאל[[133]](#footnote-133) יהוה אלהא דישראל ובשום מיטטרון שר הפנים ששים עבד כשים רבו שנאמר כי שמי בקירבו בשום שנים עשר שמות ובחתמא רבה דיחתימין ביה שמיא וארעא ובשום אשמדי מלכא דשידי ובעיזקתא דשלמה בר דויד מלכא דישראל

As we have already seen, the title “Prince of the Countenance” that is so characteristic of *Hekhalot* literature is very common in the incantation bowls. The phrase “for the name of the servant is like the name of the Master” is a more explicit formulation of the phrase “his name is like the name of his Master,” which appears in the Babylonian Talmud (*Sanhedrin* 38b) and other places. But there is no need to posit that the writer of the bowl relied on the Talmud. The two sources both belong to an ancient tradition documented already in the *Apocalypse of Abraham* and based on the verse “for My name is within him” (Ex. 23:21), which itself is cited in the bowl. The names *zhwb’ry* and *zbwry’l* in this incantation appear to be names of God which are distinct from the name of Meṭaṭron, although sometimes they are included among his names, too. See for example Bowl MS 2053/27 (below, sec. 1.20).

**1.15. Yeshayahu Zadok Collection[[134]](#footnote-134)**

ומצירן בשמיה דק[דוש] קדוש קדוש דהוא זקיף טורי ומכיך [י]מא דהוא [רמ]א אידיא בימא ותיוהא רבה ברביתא דהוא גבלה לאדם מן עפרא ואשלטה בכל ביריתא בשום מי[טטר]ון אמן אמן סלה

Although the name Meṭaṭron is unaccompanied by any appellation in this bowl, its placement near the sealing alludes to his special status. Based on the general thrust of the incantation, man’s dominion over creation is particularly manifest in his ability to subdue *mazziqin*. Meṭaṭron’s connection may be as man’s helper, who assists him in realizing his dominion.

**1.16. National Museum of Iraq, IM 56544[[135]](#footnote-135)**

בשום מיטטרון בשום צי צי צי צי צי צי צי בשום יה יה יה יה יה יה יה

Here as well the name of Meṭaṭron appears in the sealing. According to Christa Müller-Kessler, the word *ṣy* is an acronym of *ṣeva’ot yh*, but it seems more likely that the *ṣadi* is substitutes for *he* according to the ’ṬBŠ system of letter substitution, such that *ṣy* is a variant of *hy*. Repetition of the letter combination *hy* or the name *yh*—sometimes seven or fourteen times—is very common in incantations.[[136]](#footnote-136)

**1.17. British Museum BM 117826[[137]](#footnote-137)**

מטטרון קדוש

This partially preserved bowl is intended to banish demons from the house of Ḥanina bar Rav Yatma.[[138]](#footnote-138) A bound figure is depicted in the center of the bowl. To its right, the word *Meṭaṭron* is written from top to bottom; to its left, the word *Qadosh* is written from bottom to top. These words are not part of the incantation itself and cannot possibly be connected to the figure in the middle, unquestionably a demonic entity.[[139]](#footnote-139) I propose that they represent the power that prevents the demonic figure from getting free.

**1.18. Vorderasiatisches Museum, VA.Bab.2785b[[140]](#footnote-140)**

dq dq mṣ mṣ the mighty and awesome one, who revealed himself to Moses in the bush and Meṭaṭron[[141]](#footnote-141)

This bowl is unpublished. From the quotation it is unclear whether the “angel of the Lord” revealed in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2) is identical to Meṭaṭron, as in the Geniza fragment cited above, or only mentioned alongside him. *Mṣ* is clearly a substitution for *yh* using ’ṬBŠ, which is exceedingly common in the incantations. The word *dq* is a good example of ’ṬBŠ substitution being performed on something other than holy names; in this case, the letters of the ’ṬBŠ sequence themselves serve as magic words.[[142]](#footnote-142) The bowl’s purpose is to shut the mouths and close the hearts of a long list of human rivals (thirteen names!). The spell comes very close to aggressive magic, although the person who commissioned it might have argued that his intent was solely defensive.[[143]](#footnote-143)

**1.19. Schøyen Collection MS 2053/27[[144]](#footnote-144)**

“God’s chariots are myriads upon myriads, thousands upon thousands; the Lord is among them as in Sinai in holiness” (Ps 68:18). I adjure you and beswear you, zḥw bryh zḥw bzḥw bryh ʾh bʾh[[145]](#footnote-145) is your name, nʿyr is your name, Meṭaṭron is your name, your name, you have seventy-one names and you are called kynwyh. I adjure you, you, Bagdana, that you may come and slaughter and roast the demon and the mevakkalta demon and the lilith and the gazzanita demon who appear in house of… By the name of the one whose name is ḥqk, who is called ḥqryn.[[146]](#footnote-146)

This bowl also has not been published, but scholars have quoted lines from it in the original[[147]](#footnote-147) and in translation. The adjuration of Meṭaṭron begins by reciting his names accompanied by the refrain “your name” (*šmk*). God is addressed in such a mannerin penitential and similar prayers. *Hekhalot* literature includes passages with lines of Meṭaṭron’s names followed by the refrain “his name” (*šmw*).[[148]](#footnote-148) The names *zhw bryh* are quite closed to *zhwb’ry* in Moussaieff Bowl 164 (above, sec. 1.14), and are even closer to the name *zhwbdyh* appearing in Geniza fragment Sassoon 522.[[149]](#footnote-149) As noted above,[[150]](#footnote-150) this fragment, T-S K 21.95.A, and Antonin B 186 all belong to a *Hekhalot* composition that reflects a remarkable affinity to the angelology of the incantation bowls. In this fragment, we find not only the name *zhwbdyh* but also the congomenon *n‘r* and the matter of 71 letters:

וקורא לנער אחוז ביה זהובדיה וכי יה והובד אה וה דיעי[[151]](#footnote-151) מלהטת אש [...] ערבות זה שמו שלנער הנזהר בדברים הללו חביב מלמעלן ואהוב מלמטן [מארי]ך ימים ומתקבל על כל הבריות ומוצל מדינה שלגיהנם ממראה מתניו <ולמעלה> דומים זה לזה וממראה מתניו ולמטה אינן דומים זה לזה כבוד <אלהים הסתר> דבר שלא תטרד מן העולם שמו כשמו ושם השר[[152]](#footnote-152) כשם [... שב]עים ושתים אותות ושם הנער שבעים ואחד[[153]](#footnote-153) דלא יליף קטלה [חי]יב ודישתמש בתגא חלף[[154]](#footnote-154)

The sentence “whoever is cautious in these matters…is saved from the judgment of Gehenna” is a blessing upon the recipient of the Unique Name,[[155]](#footnote-155) and in our text the secret name of God is the name of the *n‘r*. In the continuation, the appearances of the *n‘r* and of a figure never explicitly identified are said to be similar.[[156]](#footnote-156) Seemingly, the basis for this is a comparison between the two descriptions of the Chariot in Ezekiel:

וארא כעין חשמל כמראה אש בית לה סביב ממראה מתניו ולמעלה וממראה מתניו ולמטה ראיתי כמראה אש ונגה לו סביב (יח' א כז).

ואראה והנה דמות כמראה אש ממראה מתניו ולמטה אש וממתניו ולמעלה כמראה זהר כעין החשמלה (שם, ח ב).[[157]](#footnote-157)

After the warning to maintain secrecy,[[158]](#footnote-158) the reader is taught to distinguish between the name of the *n‘r* and the name of the second figure: the name of the *n‘r* has 71 letters, while the name of the second figure has 72. This is followed by a saying of Hillel the Elder, which in this context means that whoever does not learn to distinguish between the names or uses them inappropriately is liable to die. In a parallel passage in European manuscripts,[[159]](#footnote-159) the difference of appearance derives from the verse ואתא מרבבות קודש (Deut. 33:2), from which the *Mekhilta*, *Sifre*, and Babylonian Talmud[[160]](#footnote-160) learn that God has a different visage from the angels; therefore, the figure to which the *n‘r* is compared is none other than God Himself. The *’t’* – *h’wt* exposition therefore pertains to both the distinguishing characteristic and the extra letter in the 72-letter name. Another verse in the background here is God’s statement after the revelation at the burning bush: “this is My name forever, and this is My memorial unto all generations” (Ex. 3:15), which according to the exposition means that the Unique Name must be concealed and only the cognomen may be revealed.[[161]](#footnote-161) The *n‘r* is the visible form of the *deus absconditus*, the cognomen of the hidden name, as the parallel to this passage states explicitly: “‘this is my name forever, and this is my memorial etc.’ *wqwr’ ln‘r zh wbryḥ*[[162]](#footnote-162) *wkynwy zh zkr<y>*.[[163]](#footnote-163) It turns out that the connection between the 72-letter name of God and the 71-letter name of Meṭaṭron resembles the connection between the Unique Name and the cognomen. This appears to be the reason why Meṭaṭron is called *kynwyh* and has 71 names in the incantation bowl.[[164]](#footnote-164)

The bowl attests that the identification between Meṭaṭron and *n‘r*, so widespread in the *Hekhalot* and other later literature, is actually very early. Bohak’s reconstructed *Hekahlot* composition, however, reflects a more complicated state of affairs. On the one hand, the *n‘r* is mentioned about a dozen times and Meṭaṭron seventeen, and they are clearly distinct: in some parts where Meṭaṭron is mentioned the *n‘r* is absent, and vice versa. On the other hand, the two figures are also undeniably connected: they both constitute the angelogical manifestation of the Unique Name revealed to Moses in the burning bush. It therefore seems reasonable to explain the alternation as a stylistic choice, the author varying his diction for purposes of variety. Bohak already noted the contrast between the intensive use of neologisms in the mystical sections of the work, and the simple and straightforward prose of the practical sections.[[165]](#footnote-165) According to our analysis, the author generated additional, more sophisticated distinctions.

The analysis that follows relies on Bohak’s edition (following his pagination); an alternative organization of the fragments would yield, of course, a different account.

(A) The composition itself begins with the story of Moses’ ascent on high, where Meṭaṭron is active. The style is written in a high register replete with strange, invented words (pp. 419-424).

(B) The text shifts to describing the upper realm and the angelic liturgy, which integrates prayers and incantations (pp. 424-430). Meṭaṭron is mentioned only once (p. 427). The style is mostly poetic with some strange words, although some passages are composed in midrashic style.[[166]](#footnote-166)

(C) The description of the upper world continues: the Throne’s description is based on Dan. 7:9-10. The style is again midrashic, contains almost no strange words, and neither Meṭaṭron nor the *n‘r*[[167]](#footnote-167) are mentioned (pp. 430-435).

(D) After a lacuna of a few pages, there appears a text belonging to the *Shi‘ur* *Qomah* tradition, which includes the figure of the *n‘r*. The continuation includes the liturgy of the *n‘r* and his enunciation of the Unique Name (pp. 435-436).

(E) The text continues with aspects of the Unique Name and the connection between this name and the *n‘r* (pp. 437-438).

(F) As Bohak noted, the transition (p. 438) between Feinberg 14, 2v and Antonin B 186 2r is uncertain. If we assume continuity, then immediately after the Unique Name is transmitted to the *n‘r*, a question follows: “how does he use it?” This is followed by transmission of an incantation that mainly consists of references to Meṭaṭron[[168]](#footnote-168) (pp. 439-440). If we assume discontinuity and missing pages, the name at the top of Antonin B 186 2r is that of Meṭaṭron, and the separation between Meṭaṭron and the *n‘r* is preserved. After the end of the adjuration of Meṭaṭron (p. 440) come two short omissions: one approximately four lines long that begins in the middle of a sentence and mentions the *n‘r*, and the other a passage of three lines concerning the “seal of Rabbi Yiśra’el.” The composition ends here.

I believe that this sketch of the work demonstrates that its author or editor purposely set up a distinction between Meṭaṭron and the *n‘r*, but for stylistic rather than angelogical reasons.

This bowl gestures towards an overarching traditionaccordingwhich God and the *n‘r*-Meṭaṭron are so similar that they become nearly identical. When versions of this tradition are interpreted in the Geniza fragments, they are accompanied by insistent warnings against blurring the distinction between them, and by the requirement to keep these matters under wraps to avoid danger. The danger resulting from indistinguishability includes the visual—“from the appearance of his loins and above they resemble each other…”—and the nominal—“his name is like His name…72 letters and the name of the *n‘r* is 71.” One should take notice of the fact that of the two polemical mentions of Meṭaṭron in the Babylonian Talmud, one (*Ḥagigah* 15a) deals with the visual factor and the other (*Sanhedrin* 38b) with the nominal. It seems, then, that the Talmud is responding to conceptions similar to those reflected in the bowl and the Geniza fragments discussed above, but it formulates them more radically so it can polemicize againsta straw man.

**2. Dubious/Rejected Readings**

**2.1. Hilprecht Collection HS 3012[[169]](#footnote-169)**

עדריאל עדריאל ועדרים עדריאל עדראל וזירקנים וזירקנים וזירק{ט}נים ושם מ<יט>טרון[[170]](#footnote-170) דיבדירה ואיל עידריה יהוה חיא ויסתום פומיה דססדרמין בת בבר

Müller-Kessler translates: “and the name of Meṭaṭron in his abode, and with the assistance of God, the living yhwh, and may he shut the mouth of*dssdrmyn bt bbr* (the name of a demoness?).”[[171]](#footnote-171) According to the proposed reading, this is an interesting and unique description of Meṭaṭron, but some of the readings and interpretations seem dubious to me. Although different alphabetical characters resemble one another on most of the bowls, here the problem is even more acute.

In a new edition of the bowls held in the Hilprecht Collection that will be published shortly,[[172]](#footnote-172) James Nathan Ford proposes new readings of this bowl.[[173]](#footnote-173) For our purposes, his reading *mṭwn* (a magical name) in lieu of *mṭrwn* is of utmost importance. Though the reading is not certain and Ford himself records alternatives,[[174]](#footnote-174) his assertion that it not be read as *mṭrwn* is absolutely persuasive.

**2.2. Digs at Bijan, Inv. 14/83[[175]](#footnote-175)**

אשבעית עליך [מ]טתרו[ן]

The bowl was found in the Abbasid stratum (2nd half of 8th cent.) during a salvage dig in Bijan, an island located in the Euphrates, due to flooding from the Haditha Dam (1982-1983). This is one of the relatively few bowls found in situ during the digs, and is also one of the latest. The line which the editor supposed contained the name of Meṭaṭron is written radially on the otuside surface of the bowl. I find it difficult to accept this reading on the basis of the surviving letters: [...]*ṭtrw*[...].[[176]](#footnote-176) So far as I am aware, the spelling *mṭtrwn* does not appear in magical bowls or in later magical or mystical literature. We do find the spelling ميتطرون (*mytṭrwn*) in Islamic magic,[[177]](#footnote-177) but this does not justify the proposed restoration here.

**3. Conclusion**

We have assessed the approximately twenty Jewish bowls on which the name of Meṭaṭron appears. The editors of bowls about to see publication have informed me of about five additional bowls bearing this name. To make a very rough estimate, Meṭaṭron seems to appear on between two to three percent of the bowls. I do not have precise data about the frequency of other angelic names, but my impression is that Meṭaṭron is one of the most common.[[178]](#footnote-178) The spelling *myṭṭrwn* appears on eleven bowls, whereas *mṭṭrwn* appears on six. This datum reflects the orthographical inconsistency of the bowls, the preference for phonetic spellings over historical ones, and the general tendency towards plene spellings[[179]](#footnote-179); it is not sufficient evidence to confirm the claim that *myṭṭrwn* is the original spelling. Likewise, nothing indicates that the bowl writers attached any significance to changes in spelling, as *Hekhalot* literature[[180]](#footnote-180) and other later corpora do.

The vast majority of the bowls analyzed above are apotropaic in purpose.[[181]](#footnote-181) While not their sole purpose, it was still perhaps the most common of all. In keeping with this, Meṭaṭron is a healer, a defender, a warrior. He battles the forces of evil to banish them from or bar their entry into the body or house of the client. His role as healer is expressed sometimes through his partnership with Raphael (1.4), and sometimes he is called “the great healer of mercy” (1.5). His role as healer is linked to his position as “Prince of Torah” (1.1).

In some incantations, one cannot deduce Meṭaṭron’s exact place in the hierarchy of angels. Nevertheless, those bowls that directly or indirectly touch on this attest to Meṭaṭron’s supremacy. He heads the seven archangels, which sometimes include Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael; Meṭaṭron is called “prince of the entire world,” which primarily means that he represents and defends the world before God.

The bowls offer early evidence of many traditions about Meṭaṭron that are known from *Hekhalot* literature. Among others, Meṭaṭron is given the appellations *psqwn*, *sgrwn*, and *’ṭmwn*, which indicate that he silences the prosecutors andshuts down all accusations. The *rwḥ psqwnyt*—called *psqwn*, *sgrwn*, and *’ṭmwn* as well—also appears in the Talmud as a Palestinian tradition originating in the third to fifth centuries, but the connection is not made to Meṭaṭron.[[182]](#footnote-182) More interesting is *gnwnyh*, an appellation given to Meṭaṭron in incantation bowls and *Hekhalot* material from the Geniza. According to our suggestion, *gnwnyh* means that Meṭaṭron serves as the bridal canopy for God and the world. In the same vein, there is a bowl that identifies Meṭaṭron with the *n‘r* and *kynwy*. The term *n‘r*, which appears many times in *Hekahlot* literature, has been construed in various ways. The bowl uses it in a unique sense that is linked to the *Shi‘ur Qomah* tradition, in which the *n‘r* is the celestial high priest with a special connection to the Unique Name. When Meṭaṭron is referred to as *kynwy*, it is in a similar sense.

I think one can argue that Meṭaṭron went from originally being the angel bearing the name of God to the Prince of Torahbased on the linkage between the Torah and the name of God. And it was from his role as Princeof Torahthat his apotropaic-protective role emerged as an offshoot.

The *Hekhalot* composition from the Geniza that Gideon Bohak has reconstructed includes a very high concentration of parallels to the texts of the incantation bowls. These parallels occur in both parts of the work: the section dedicated to Moses’ confrontation with the angels on Mount Sinai and to the secrets transmitted to him there, and the section that describes the angelic liturgy and the *n‘r*’s enunciation of the Unique Name. Putting together the evidence from the incantation bowls with the Geniza fragments demonstrates that they reflect a tradition concerning Meṭaṭron that was contemporary with the Talmud, predating the later developments.

Let me conclude with a few words about what is not written in the bowls. There is nary a mention of Enoch, nor any link between Meṭaṭron and the Enoch tradition, and certainly no equation of Meṭaṭron with Enoch, even though there are faint echoes of the Enoch tradition, such as the rebellion of the angels and the ban on Mount Hermon. Similarly, the argument for a connection between Meṭaṭron and Hermes in the bowls is pure and unfounded speculation.

1. For example, the following articles have seen publication in the past two years alone: Yakir Paz, ‘Metatron is Not Enoch: Reevaluating the Evolution of an Archangel,’ *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 50 (2019), pp. 52-100; Daniel Boyarin, ‘The Quest of the Historical Metatron: Enoch or Jesus,’ *A Question of Identity*, Berlin 2019, pp. 153-162; Adiel Schremer, ‘Parvanka: The Mandaean Context of an Anti-Heretical Polemic in the Babylonian Talmud,’*Tarbiz* 85 (2018), pp. 205-231 (Heb.). Abundant material of relevance to this topic can be found in John Reeves and Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, Volume I: Sources From Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, Oxford 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. I devote my forthcoming article to the Syriac bowl (VA 3383): ‘Metatron in a SyriacIncantation Bowl,’ and see further below, n. 136. The labels used in the body of this article to describe the bowls— “Jewish,” “Syriac,” and “Mandaic”—refer mainly to the script, as the dialectal differences are so blurred that scholars tend to speak of the bowls’ Aramaic *koiné*; see Tapani Harviainen, ‘A Syriac Incantation Bowl in the Finnish National Museum, Helsinki: A Specimen of Eastern Aramaic “Koiné”,’ *Studia Orientalia* 51 (1978), pp. 1-30. This is all the more true of the religious and cultural milieu that produced the bowls; see Shaul Shaked, ‘Jesus in the Magic Bowls; apropos Dan Levene’s “...and by the name of Jesus...”,’ *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 6 (1999), p. 315. See further Hannu Juusola, *Linguistic Peculiarities in the Aramaic Magic Bowl Text*s, Helsinki 1999, pp. 1-3. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Jonas C. Greenfield, ‘Notes on Aramaic and Mandaic Magic Bowls,’ *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 5 (1973), pp. 149-156; Phillip S. Alexander, ‘Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch,’ *Journal of Jewish Studies* 28 (1977), pp. 165-167; Shaul Shaked, ‘“Peace Be upon You, Exalted Angels”: on *Hekhalot*, Liturgy and Incantation Bowls,’ *Jewish Studies Quarterly* 2 (1995), pp. 197-219; Rebecca Macy Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power: Angels, Incantations, and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism*, Harrisburg 1998, pp. 351-362; James R. Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot: The People Behind the Hekhalot Literature*, Leiden 2001, pp. 217-228. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Cf. Paz, ‘Metatron is Not Enoch,’ p. 4. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Greenfield and Milik were the first to dedicate discussion to Meṭaṭron’s appearance in incantation bowls, based on isolated examples: Greenfield, ‘Notes,’ pp. 150-156; Jozef T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*, Oxford 1976, pp. 128-134. More detailed treatments appear in Lesses, *Ritual Practices*, pp. 351-362;Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*, esp. p. 219 n. 12. Many other scholars have only discussed this parenthetically or have been satisfied with merely listing (approximately ten of) the bowls: Peter Schäfer, *Der verborgene und offenbare Gott: Hauptthemen der frühen jüdischen Mystik*, Tübingen 1991, p. 29 n. 71; idem, ‘Metatron in Babylonia,’ in *Hekhalot Literature in Context: Between Byzantium and Babylonia*, ed. R. Boustan et al., Tübingen 2013, p. 39. See now Paz, ‘Metatron is Not Enoch,’ pp. 14-17. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. Similar to the prosopographical database for the bowls: https://web.archive.org/‌‌web/20130923044840/‌https://sharepoint.soton.ac.uk/‌sites/vmba/lists/‌prosopography2/vmba.aspx. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Approximately 60% of the roughly 2,000 known bowls were written in Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, about twenty-five in Mandaic, and fifteen in Syriac; see Dan Levene, ‘Incantation Bowls, Babylonian,’ *The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*, ed. R. S. Bagnall et al., Malden MA 2013, vol. 6, p. 3438. As noted above (n. 2), this classification is chiefly script-based. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Photographs of the bowl can be found on the museum website: https://www.penn.museum/collections/object/303320. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. Or *dybry hšym*; see below, near n. 21. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. Montgomery reads *yḥy’l*, as does the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon. Both readings are equally plausible graphically, but *yhw’l* is supported by parallels. See Greenfield, ‘Notes,’ p. 156 n. 40; Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden (1980) 2014, pp. 222-223 n. 12. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. James A. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts from Nippur*, Philadelphia 1913. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. The history of scholarship on the bowls, beginning with the first publication in 1853, has been recounted many times already and need not be retold here. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. J.N. Epstein, ‘Gloses babylo-araméenes,’ *REJ* 73 (1921), pp. 53-54. Additional discussions of this bowl appear in: Milik, *The Books of Enoch*, p. 130; Alexander, ‘Historical Setting,’ pp. 165-167; Shaked, ‘Peace Be upon You,’ pp. 201-203; Lesses, *Ritual Practices*, pp. 354-359; Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*, pp. 217-220. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. See Shaked, ‘Peace Be upon You,’ pp. 201-203; Lesses, *Ritual Practices*, pp. 354-359; Gideon Bohak, ‘New Fragments of *Hekhalot* Literature from the Cairo Genizah,’ *Te‘udah* 26 [=Myth, Ritual and Mysticism: A Festschrift for Ithamar Gruenwald] (2014), p. 661 (Heb.). It is worth noting that a few bowls identify the Prince of Torah with Michael; see Davila, *Descenders to the Chariot*, pp. 220-221. His claim that the appearance of the word *gyn’h* in the sense of genius attests to the influence of Arabic جني (p. 221 n. 18) is not persuasive. See now the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, http://cal.huc.edu/­bablex.php?­coord=70700057104&­word=7. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Cf. Michael Schneider, **האל, המלאך והשטן: עיונים באנגלולוגיה ודמונולגיה**, pp. 250-256. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. Lesses, *Ritual Practices*, p. 356. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. See Gershom Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, New York 1941, pp. 68-70; Moshe Idel, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism*, New York 2007, , index, s.v. ‘Yaho’el’; Michael Schneider, *Scattered Traditions of Jewish Mysticism*, Los Angeles 2012, pp. 167-267 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 70. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Ibid., p. 68. [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. Alexander, ‘Historical Setting,’ p. 167. This is also the position taken by Martin Samuel Cohen, *The Shi‘ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism*, Lanham 1983, p. 159. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. Meir Bar-Ilan, *The Mysteries of Jewish Prayer and Hekhalot*, Ramat-Gan 1987, pp. 148-149 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Akiva Parush, *Merkavah Shelemah*, Jerusalem 1920/1, fol. 43b. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Note that this blessing ends with the transmission of the Unique Name of the *n‘r*/ Meṭaṭron; see below, **p. 14**. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, pp. 99, 123, 150, 196. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. CBS 16007, Sok. 7, AIT 7 (Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*,p. 146), parallel to CBS 16081, Sok. 8, published by David W. Myhrman, ‘Aramaic Incantation Text from Nippur,’ *Le Monde Oriental* 2 (1906), pp. 207-219: *wbhrmys mry’ rbh*. The continuation of the incantation mentions *’brks rbh*, i.e., Ἀβρασάξ, identified with Hermes in PGM VIII.49. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. Compare the alternative reading of James Nathan Ford cited in Paz, ‘Metatron is Not Enoch,’ p. 16 n. 64. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Nathaniel Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity*, Leiden 1999, p. 169. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Kevin van Bladel, *The Arabic Hermes: From Pagan Sage to Prophet of Science*, Oxford 2009. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Carra de Vaux’s survey of Islamic amulets (*Hastings’ Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol. III, p. 458), mentions parenthetically that in the Book of Andahriush the Babylonian(كـتـاب انـدهـريـوش الـبـابـلـى, Codex Paris 2630), Meṭaṭron is sometimes associated with Jupiter and at other times with Mercury (*‘uṭārid*). The angel permanently appointed over Mercury is Michael, and Meṭaṭron steps in this role only as his substitute. Besides, the connection to Mercury does not automatically entail a connection to Hermes and the Hermetic tradition. It is possible that one of the amulets from the Cairo Geniza (T-S K1.128, Lawrence SchiffmanandMichael Swartz, *Hebrew and Aramaic Incantation Texts from the Cairo Genizah*, Sheffield 1992, pp. 128-130) may allude to such a connection, for the practitioner adjures “Mercury, whose name is *‘uṭārid*” in the name of Meṭaṭron. Since one of his requests is “to reveal to me all the secrets of the universe,” *‘uṭārid* may be serving here as Hermes’ representative. See Ortal-Paz Saar, *Jewish Love Magic from Late Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, Leiden 2017, pp. 226-227. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Cyrus H. Gordon, ‘Aramaic Magical Bowls in the Istanbul and Baghdad Museums,’ *Archiv Orientální* 6 (1934), p. 328 (CAIB 52). [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. Peter Schäfer, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*,Tübingen 1981, 10-11, 19. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. Ibid., 13. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Compare the popular etymology of the name Meṭaṭron, a combination of μετα and θρόνος. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Schäfer, *Synopse*, 385, 398. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Ibid., 386, 387 according to MS Munich 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Cf. Michael Schneider, *Appearance of the High Priest: Theophany, Apotheosis and Binitarian Theology from Priestly Tradition of the Second Temple Period through Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, Cherub 2012, p. 126 (Heb.); idem, **האל, המלאך והשטן: עיונים באנגלולוגיה ודמונולגיה**… [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. BT *Yoma* 67b. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. *AIT*, No. 2, p. 123. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. Marco A. Moriggi, *Corpus of Syriac Incantation Bowls: Syriac Magical Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia*, Leiden 2014, p. 23. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. For an explanation of this name see Moshe Idel, ‘SHMYHZH: Shamhazay/ Shamhaza'y/ Shmayya'a + Haze'/ Shmayyahaze',’ *Lĕšonénu*78 (2016), pp. 37-42 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. *Midrash Abkir* in *Yalqut Shim‘oni*, Genesis, *remez* 44. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Greenfield, ‘Notes,’ pp. 151-152. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. For example, Ashm. 1932.6230 (below, sec. 1.3), B16007 (above, sec. 1.1), T-S K 1.162. See Milik, *The Books of Enoch*, p. 130 n. 3. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. For example, Moussaieff Collection 163.18: "היכדין דאיתכבישו הנון דעל פוקדן דמריהון עברו עזאל ועזאל ועזזיאל ואישתלחו מלאכי עליהון מן קדם אלהא וכבשינון על טור[א דחשוכא] ואהדרו אפיהון לאפי דחשוכא"; Dan Levene, *A Corpus of Magic Bowls*: *Incantation Texts in Jewish Aramaic from Late Antiquity*, London 2003, p. 126; idem, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts from Late-Antique Mesopotamia*, Leiden 2013, p. 111. See further Gershom Scholem, ‘Havdalah of Rabbi Akiva,’ in*Devils, Demons and Souls*, ed. Esther Liebes, Jerusalem 2004, p. 176 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Oded Porat, *Sefer B'rit ha-Menuḥa (Book of Covenant of Serenity): Critical Edition and Prefaces*, Jerusalem 2016, pp. 252-253 (Heb.). Elsewhere (p. 231), we encounter an iteration of the Enoch myth concerning *‘Uzza*’ and *‘Azza’el*, combined with the kabbalistic conception of the emanation of the Left Side. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. Cyrus H. Gordon, ‘Aramaic Incantation Bowls,’ *Orientalia* 10 (1941), pp. 279-280; Milik, *The Books of Enoch*, pp. 129-130. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Milik translates *r’šy šryt[’]* as “chiefs of the Service.” Although I have doubts about his reading, I am unable to consult the bowl. In any case, I would have translated “chiefs of the troops” (construing *šarita’* in the sense of *mašrita’*). [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Although I do not have a photograph of the bowl available for scrutiny, I suspect that it should read *yhw’l* or *yhy’l*, as is true of most instances in which scholars previously, and mistakenly, read *yḥy’l*; see Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem 1998, p. 163. [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. Perhaps *mdḥq*; cf. *bšmyh dyhwq yhwq rbh dydḥq mrkbtyh ‘l ymh dswf*, in Shaul Shaked, James Nathan Ford, andSiam Bhayro, *Aramaic Bowl Spells: Jewish Babylonian Aramaic Bowl*s, Vol. 1, Leiden 2013, pp. 60, 72, 80, and, similarly, bowl B16917 in Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*, 14, p. 183, where it should read *ddḥyq* instead of *drḥyq*. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. This motif appears in various bowls; see previous note. [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. *Hekhalot Zutarti*, in Schäfer, *Synopse*, 341. [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. Cyrus H. Gordon, ‘Aramaic and Mandaic Magical Bowls,’ *Archiv Orientální* 9 (1937), pp. 93-94. [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. BT *Yevamot* 16b, *Sanhedrin* 94a, *Ḥullin* 60a; *Exod. Rabbah* **טב-נב**; *Midrash Alfa-Betot*, in *Batei Midrashot*, vol. 2, Jerusalem 1953, p. 426; Schäfer, *Synopse*, 47, 56 (3 Enoch), 386 (in MS Munich 40). [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. See Hugo Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*, New York 1973, pp. XXXI, XXXVIII, 26-28, 50, 104-106, 123,149; Gershom G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition*, New York 1965, pp. 43-50; idem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, Philadelphia 1987, p. 214-215 n. 26; Andrei A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, Tübingen 2005, pp. 127-130; Idel, *Ben*, pp. 128-132; Peter Schäfer, *The Jewish Jesus*: *How Judaism and Christianity Shaped Each Other*, Princeton 2012, pp. 123-126; Scholem, *Reshit ha-Kabbalah*, Jerusalem 1948, pp. 77 and 235-236 n. 8; Yehudah Liebes, “De Natura Dei: On the Development of the Jewish Myth,” in *Studies in Jewish Myth and Messianism*, trans. Batya Stein, Albany 1993, **pp. ??**. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Dan Levene and Siam Bhayro, ‘“Bring to the Gates ... upon a good smell and upon good fragrances:” An Aramaic Incantation Bowl for Success in Business,’ *Archiv für Orientforschung* 51 (2005-6), pp. 242-246. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. Cyrus H. Gordon, ‘Two magic bowls in Teheran,’ *Orientalia* 20 (1951), p. 307; J. B. Segal, *Catalogue of the Aramaic and Mandaic Incantation Bowls in the British Museum*, London 2000, p. 99. [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. This expression is odd, and Gordon’s translation—“that bless the season”—does not fit the context. It is preferable to assume that *’šwn’* is a metathesis of *’nwš’*, namely, “people” or “mankind” (*’nwš’* appears in Daniel and Enoch). Perhaps the third letter should be read as a *yod*; cf. the *yod* of *mbrky*. [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. See Montgomery, *Aramaic Incantation Texts*,p. 97. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. Markham J. Geller, ‘Two Incantation Bowls Inscribed in Syriac and Aramaic,’ *BSOAS* 39 (1976), p. 426. [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. Joseph Wohlstein, ‘Ueber einige aramäische Inschriften auf Thongefässen des Königlichen Museums zu Berlin,’ *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 9 (1894), p. 11; Levene, *Jewish Aramaic Curse Texts*, p. 46. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, p. 254. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. The editors of the bowls cited below in secs. 1.8–1.10 note that there seven more bowls bearing similar texts that await publication (ibid., p. 253). [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ibid.*,* pp. 266-267. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Cf. below, sec. 1.14, and also *Hekhalot Rabbati*: “take two seals in your hands, one of *ṭwṭrws’y* yhwh the God of Israel, and one of *swry’* Prince of the Countenance” (Schäfer, *Synopse*, 219). [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, pp. 243-244. James Nathan Ford notes that the same expression appears in three unpublished bowls from the Alexander L. Wolfe Collection, among other loci. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. Michael Sokoloff, A *Dictionary of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic of the Talmudic and Geonic periods*, Ramat Gan 2002, pp. 296-297. In the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, s.v. *gnwn*, *gnwn****ˀ*** (<http://cal.huc.edu/oneentry.php?lemma=gnwn%20N>), there is an entry for “covering, protection,” and it is noted that this meaning appears in incantation bowls and other texts of Late Jewish LiteraryAramaic. Practically speaking, examples from this latter dialect, i.e., from late translations (<http://cal.huc.edu/‌show1dialectKWIC.php?‌lemma=gnwn‌&pos=N‌&texts=81>) add nothing to the meaning of “canopy.” [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. See Geo Widengren, *Mesopotamian Elements in Manichaeism*, Uppsala 1946, pp. 108-122, esp. 112, 120 n. 1; Tryggve Kronholm, *Motifs from Genesis 1-11 in the Genuine Hymns of Ephrem the Syrian with Particular Reference to the Influence of Jewish Exegetical Tradition*, Lund 1978, p. 78; Sebastian P. Brock, ‘Passover, Annunciation and Epiclesis: Some Remarks on the Term Aggen in the Syriac Versions of Lk. 1:35,’ *Novum Testamentum* 24 (1982), pp. 222-233; idem, ‘An Anonymous Hymn for Epiphany,’ *Parole de l’Orient* 15 (1988-1989), pp. 169-200; idem, ‘The Bridal Chamber of Light: A Distinctive Feature of the Syriac Liturgical Tradition,’ *The Harp* 18 (2005), pp. 179-191; Kathleen E. McVey, ‘The Sogitha on the Church of Edessa in the Context of Other Early Greek and Syriac Hymns for the Consecration of Church Buildings,’ *ARAM* 5 (1993), pp. 329-370; Dan D.Y. Shapira, ‘“Tabernacle of Vine”: Some (Judaizing?) Features in the Old Georgian Vita of St. Nino’, *Scrinium* 2 (2006), pp. 290-304; Michael Peppard, *The World’s Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria*, New Haven 2016, pp. 193-199; Schneider, *Appearance of the High Priest*, pp. 89-90; idem, *Scattered Traditions*, pp. 19-21. Greek, Christian, and Gnostic literatures made similar use of the parallel terms νυμφών and παστός; see below, **n. 90**. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. JT *Ḥagigah* 77a. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. BT *Bava Batra* 75a. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. *Cant. Rabbah*: *‘yqry*. [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. *Pesiqta de-Rav Kahane*, **1,6,4,** ed. Mandelbaum, p. 6; *Cant. Rabbah* 5, 1 1; cf. Zvi Meir Rabinowitz, *Liturgical Poems of Rabbai Yannai*, vol. 2, Jerusalem 1987, pp. 55-56 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. This homily expounds Gen 1:31: “And God saw everything that he had made, and behold, itwas very good.” The world may be the daughter and handiwork of the Holy One, but after the work is complete, God sees the world in a new light, and having discovered its beauty He falls in love with it. I believe that this was the intent of the homilist who chose [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Theodor-Albeck: *lh*. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. *Gen. Rabbah* 9.4, acc. to MS Vat. ebr. 60. Cf. Theodor-Albeck, p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. Peter Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, Tübingen 1984, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. Gideon Bohak, ‘The Hidden *Hekhalot*: Towards Reconstructing an Unknown *Hekhalot* Composition from the Cairo Genizah,’ *Tarbiz* 82 (2014), pp. 407-446 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. Ibid., p. 412. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. T-S K 21.95.A, in Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, p. 17.See below, where textual notes are supplied for the fuller quotation. [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. T-S K 21.95.P; Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente* , p. 143. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. According to Bohak, ‘Hidden *Hekhalot*,’ pp. 410-416. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. In the Ma’agarim online database of the Academy of the Hebrew Language: *gnw?n? yh*. The fourth letter is definitely a *zayin*, as deciphered by Schäfer and Bohak, but it is possible that *yh* is written separately from *gnwz*, for we find *gnwz yh* earlier in the very same fragment (fol. 2r, l. 20). Whatever the case may be, it is undoubtedly a variant of *gnwnyh*. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. According to Bohak, ‘Hidden *Hekhalot*,’ p. 440. Cf. Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, p. 165. [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. T-S K 21.95.S, Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, p. 17. According to Malachi Beit-Arié, this text was written prior to the tenth century (ibid., p. 10). [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Schäfer has *yhry’l*, but the correct reading is in the Ma’agarim database. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. I assume it should be read as *l[pny]*. The lacuna after the letter *lamed* has enough space for between three and five letters. In a parallel text in *Hekhalot Rabbati* (Schäfer,*Synopse*, 277, acc. to MS Vat. ebr. 228): ומתוך אהבה שהיו אוהבין אותו במרום היו קורין אותו במחנות קדושים מטטרון עבד יוי ארך אפים ורב חסד. בא'י חכם הרזים ואדון הסתרים. אמן ואמן.. Based on this, it makes sense that our Geniza fragment would also exhibit a shift from the names of Meṭaṭron to appellations of God. As such, *zbwry’l* is God’s and not Meṭaṭron’s name. See below, n. **131**. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, p. 17. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. In the *Odes of Solomon*, *’hbh* is described as a bridal canopy: ܐܝܟ ܕܪܥܗ ܕܚܬܐ ܥܠ ܟܠܬܐ܆ ܗܟܢܐ ܢܝܪܝ ܥܠ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܝܕܥܝܢ ܠܝ܂ ܘܐܝܟ ܓܢܘܢܐ ܕܡܬܝܚ ܒܝܬ ܚܬܢܐ܆ ܗܟܢܐ ܚܘܒܝ ܥܠ ܐܝܠܝܢ ܕܡܗܝܡܢܝܢ ܒܝ܂. Translation: “Like the arm of the bridegroom upon the bride, such is my yoke upon whomever knows me. Like a bridal canopy (*gnwn’*) stretched out in the house of those being wed, so is my love (*’hbty*) upon whomever believes in me.” It is possible that this is a midrashic exposition of Songs 2:4: “He brought me to the banqueting house, and his banner over me was love.” Cf. Michael Lattke, *Odes of Solomon*: *A Commentary* (Hermeneia), Minneapolis 2009, pp. 582, 590-591; [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. As in the citation from *Gen. Rabbah* above. [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. One can reach a similar conclusion by identifying Meṭaṭron with the Throne of Glory and the Ark of the Covenant, as both are famously depicted as female and like a bride. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. All the more so according to Yehuda Liebes (see above, **n. 52**), who believes that the “prince of the world” is the personification of the world. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. See especially R. Moses Nahmanides and his kabbalistic school, *Sefer ha-Navon*, R. Nehemiah b. Solomon**…**; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 187 n. 214, 214-215, 299; Elliot Wolfson, ‘By Way of Truth: Aspects of Naḥmanides’ Kabbalistic Hermeneutic,’ *AJS* *Review* 14 (1989)**…**;Moshe Idel, ‘Additional Remnants from the Writings of R. Joseph of Hamadan,’ *Da‘at* 21 (1988), pp.**???** (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. For Syriac Christianity, see, e.g., Sebastian P. Brock, *Bride of Light: Hymns on Mary from the Syriac Churches*, Kottayam 1992, p. 59. For Byzantium, compare the words ofProclus, archbishop of Constantinople: ἡ παστὰς ἐν ἧι ὁ λόγος ἐνυμφεύσατο τὴν σάρκα, ἡ ἔμψυχος τῆς φύσεως βάτος, ἣν τὸ τῆς θείας ὠδῖνος πῦρ οὐ κατέκαυσεν; “the bridal chamber in which the Word took the flesh in marriage; the living bush of human nature, which the fire of a divine birth-pang did not consume” (Nicholas Constas, *Proclus of Constantinople and the Cult of the Virgin in Late Antiquity: Homilies 1-5, Texts and Translations*, Leiden 2003, p. 136). [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. This passage has rightfully drawn a great deal of scholarly attention; see Scholem, *Major Trends* [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. One can also translate as “terrifying” or “shudder-inducing.” The Dictionaryof the Russian Language of the 11th–17th Centuries proposes interpreting the word to mean “causes motion” (Словарь русского языка XI–XVII вв., Вып. 30, Москва 2015, стр. 214), but this meaning is unattested anywhere else and does not fit the context. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Some of the manuscripts have the reading *nehegeh*, which reflects the literal translation of *meforash*, whereas others read *lo’ nittan le-higgui*, a free rendering based on the sense, or a copyist’s interpolation based on apophatic theology. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. The sentence is complicated, especially in its latter half. Various readings and interpretations have been proposed, most notably: Ryszard Rubinkiewic, *L’Apocalypse D’Abraham: en vieux slave. Introduction, texte critique, traduction et commentaire*, Lublin 1987, pp. 128-131; Alexander Kulik, *Retroverting Slavonic Pseudepigrapha: Toward the Original of the Apocalypse of Abraham*, Leiden 2005, pp. 17-18, 55-56 n. 14. An analysis of the various interpretive possibilities and the basis for my proposed reading can be found in the annotated and elucidated Hebrew translation I have prepared of the *Apocalypse of Abraham*. [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. In Bowl M 155 of the Moussaieff Collection, *psqwn* appears without any connection to Meṭaṭron. [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. This also includes the Syriac incantation bowl which I discuss in the complementary study. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. See above, **n. 78**, and below, **n. 146**. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. Bohak, ‘Hidden *Hekhalot*,’ pp. 413-414. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. These fiery creatures have bizarre names not found in any other source, so they are likely invented. In general, such words are used in the composition whenever the author wants to create an air of mystery. See Gideon Bohak, ‘New Fragments of *Hekhalot* Literature,’ pp. 663-664 (Heb.); idem, ‘Neologisms in *Hekhalot* Literature,’ *Jewish Studies* 52 (2017), pp. 77-96 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. For the Iranian etymology of this name, see Shaul Shaked, ‘A Persian House of Study, A King’s Secretary: Irano-Aramaic Notes,’ *Acta Or. Scient. Hung.* 48 (1995), pp. 181-183; Claudia A. Ciancaglini, *Iranian Loanwords in Syriac*, Wiesbaden 2008, p. 235, and the article cited in n. 2. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. It should read: *š’ny*. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. It should read: *ylk*. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. The quote is from Ex. 32:34. The use of this verse is puzzling, because it speaks of the angel that is supposed to lead the people after the Golden Calf, since God has declared that He Himself will not do so. According to the narrative in Ex. 33, however, Moses succeeds in annulling this decree. Now, there are two basic approaches to the relationship between the angel of Ex. 23:20-23 and the angel of Ex. 32:34 and 33:2. The first assumes they are one and the same, and claims that it was Meṭaṭron, who bears the name of his Master, that Moses rejected. The second posits that the angel of Ex. 32:34 and 33:2 was a regular angel that Moses rejected, but not Meṭaṭron, the Prince of the Countenance who bears God’s name. Even if we concede that those espousing the first approach can explain that Meṭaṭron was rejected to lead the people in the wilderness but not to perform his other tasks, it does not explain the quote from Ex. 32:34 in a text that seeks to praise Meṭaṭron. I find it much more logical to posit that the author intended Ex. 23:20 (“Behold I send an angel before you”) and Ex. 23:23 (“For my angel shall go before you”) but misquoted from memory. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. Of course, this is a midrashic etymology tacked onto the original meaning of συνήγορος, an advocate. [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. This may be an echo of the Roman practice of calling a slave by the *praenomen*and*nomen* of his master and a *cliens* by that of his *patronus*. In Latin, the name of a slave’s master appears in the genitive (“of so-and-so”) and is occasionally accompanied by the word *servus* (“slave”); in Hebrew, however, the relationship is not transparent due to syntactic ambiguity. Is *mal’akh ’elohim* in the genitive, meaning “the angel of God,” or is it an apposition, “the angel, God”? Likewise, does *mṭṭrwn* *yhwh* mean “Meṭaṭron of yhwh” or “Meṭaṭron, yhwh”? And so forth. In any case, the primary emphasis is on Meṭaṭron’s lofty standing which flows from his close association with God and his cleaving to him: “This is comparable to a commoner who says the servant of a king is a king. Stay close to the fire and you will be warm” (*Sifre Deuteronomy*, sec. 6, p. 15; BT *Shevu‘ot* 47b). It is self-evident that this is nothing but an interpretation in the spirit of Roman law of a phenomenon rooted in a mythical-ontological conception of the name in general and of the name yhwh in particular. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Naveh and Shaked, *Amulets and Magic Bowls*, p. 160 **72** (Israel Museum, No. 80.1.1); Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, p. 141 (MS 2053/280); James Nathan Ford, ‘Notes on Some Recently Published Magic Bowls in the Schøyen Collection and Two New Parallels,’ *Aula Orientalis* 32 (2014), p. 248 (collection of Mr. Akram Sawalha). [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, pp. 141-142; Peter Schäfer and Shaul Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, Bd. II, Tübingen 1997, pp. 32-48. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. T-S K 21, 95p, 1a.10-18. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Ibid., 1b.10-14. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Cf. Bohak, ‘Hidden *Hekhalot*,’ p. 425. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. The connection between the still small voice and the *ḥašmal* is likely based on the interpretation of *ḥš* as silence and *ml* as voice. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. For the connection between the still small voice, on the one hand, and the Tabernacle and liturgy of the *n‘r*, on the other, see Schäfer, *Synopse*, 390, 399. In a parallel Geniza fragment (Sassoon 522 = Feinberg 14) the motif of *ḥšml*/*ḥšmlh* is added to this (see below, **p. 14** with **n. 155**). [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. MS Herzog reads *nmy*, but all other manuscripts, including the Geniza manuscript (Oxford: Heb. c. 21/20-21), and printings read *wmy*. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. BT *Sanhedrin* 44b, based on MS Herzog. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. It is worth pointing out that earlier in the same aggadic unit the Talmud relates how Joshua and Phineas railed against Heaven (ibid., 44a). [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. And even to the world of *Hekhalot* literature. In this connection, it is instructive to compare *poseq devarim kelappe ma‘alah* here with *soger devarim mi-lema‘lan* in T-S K.21, 95.A. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. We should further note the opinion that maintains the *śar ṣeva’ yhwh* to whom Joshua bows down is identical to Meṭaṭron (T-S K 21, 95.A) fits the approach of the heretic against whom Rav Idit polemicizes in BT *Sanhedrin* 38b. [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, pp. 270-272. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. Ali H. Faraj, *Coppe magiche dell’antico Iraq, con testi in aramaico giudaico di età ellenistica*, Milano 2010, no. 4, p. 52, tavola 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Segal, *Catalogue*, p. 59. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Shaked, ‘Peace be Upon You,’ p. 207. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. Shaked has *’nh*, but based on the photograph the last letter appears to be an *alef* (ibid., p. 208) [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Shaked translates: ‘For I am strong (?) and request [...] (from him who) sits on the four cherubim,’ even as he notesthat ‘the reading and interpretation of this phrase are uncertain’ (ibid., p. 211 with n. 76). He refrains from translating the words *d’myky ’gyty’ dymly mnsbnt’*. I very tentatively propose translating them as follows: ‘I seek to fell the haughty (*’gyty’* being a metathesis of *g’yty’*) for I have received (as a gift) words from the One who is enthroned etc.’ I should note that the apotropaic spells Moses received in heaven are called “gifts,” based on the verse: ‘You ascended on high, you led captivity captive, you received gifts for men’ (Ps. 68:19). [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. Schäfer, *Synopse*, 245; Genizah fragment TS K 21.95.I, and cf. ibid., p. 354. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. Ibid., 32. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. See above, n. **123**. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. Two seraphs [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. Cf. Dan. 7:10 for the words *mšmyš* and *q’ym qdmwhy*. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. Dan Levene, ‘“If You Appear as a Pig”: Another Incantation Bowl (Moussaieff 164),’ *Journal of Semitic Studies* 52 (2007), pp. 59-70. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. It is written *ysr’l*, but there is a mark over the *samekh* indicating that it ought to be replaced by a *śin*. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Levene read it as *zkyry’l*, but it seems to me that the third letter is a *waw* and not a *yod*; the second letter can just as likely be a *bet* as a *kaf*; and the fourth letter can be a *resh* or a *dalet*. The reading of Paz (‘Metatron is Not Enoch,’ p. 18) is as plausible as *zbwry’l*, and even *zkwry’l* cannot be ruled out. That said, *zbwry’l* unmistakably appears in a very early Geniza fragment (see above, **n. 84**). With a confidence we do not possess today, Gershom Scholem asserted that *zbwry’l* and *zbwdy’l* are corruptions of *zhrry’l* (*Major Trends*, p. 363 n. 57). Moshe Idel considers the triliteral root *z-b-d* (“gift”) an allusion to Meṭaṭron’s status as the son of God; see Idel, *Ben*, pp. 141-144. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. James Nathan Ford and Alon Ten-Ami, ‘An Incantation Bowl for Rav Mešaršia Son of Qaqay,’ *Tarbiz* 80 (2012), p. 222 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. Christa Müller-Kessler, *Die* *Zauberschalentexte in der Hilprecht-Sammlung, Jena und weitere Nippur-Texte anderer Sammlungen*, Wiesbaden 2005, pp. 14-15. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. A line of seven *yh*s appears in Mandaic and Syriac bows discussed in the **complementary article**; see W.S. McCullough, *Jewish and Mandaean Incantation Bowls in the Royal Ontario Museum*, Toronto 1967, p. 30; Siam Bhayro et al., *Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin*, Leiden 2018, p. 55. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. Segal, *Catalogue*, p. 88. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. See Shaul Shaked, ‘Rabbis in Incantation Bowls,’ *The Archaeology and Material Culture of the Babylonian Talmud*, ed. M. J. Geller, Leiden 2015, p. 107. [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Segal, *Catalogue*, p. 32 n. 52. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Bhayro et al., *Aramaic Magic Bowls in the Vorderasiatisches Museum*, p. 147. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. Cf. Geniza fragment T-S K 1.162: “in the name of *mṣ mṣ* the great, mighty, and awesome who revealed himself to Moses in the bush”; Schäfer and Shaked, *Magische Texte aus der Kairoer Geniza*, Bd. III, p. 67. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. See Gershom Scholem, *Elements of the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, trans. Yosef Ben-Shlomo, Jerusalem 1980, pp. 163-164 (Heb.); Yuval Harari, *Early Jewish Magic: Research, Method, Sources*, Jerusalem 2010, p. 181 (Heb.); Joseph Naveh and Shaul Shaked, *Magic Spells and Formulae: Aramaic Incantations of Late Antiquity*, Jerusalem 1993, p. 95; Gideon Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History*, Oxford 2008, pp. 161-162, 232, 338. [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Shutting the mouths and mindsof rivals would have been an effective preemptive move to take prior to legal proceedings (see below, **n. 169**), but it is somewhat hard to imagine this with thirteen plaintiffs. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Shaked et al., *Aramaic Bowl Spells*, pp. 25-26. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. The phrase *’h b’h* appears in incantation bowls and Geniza fragments, including the *Hekhalot* composition reconstructed by Bohak (‘Hidden *Hekhalot*,’ p. 441). [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. The name *ḥqrwn* (*ḥyqrwn*) is one of the names linked to *pysqwn*; cf. Schäfer, *Synopse*, 691, 947; Geniza fragment Ox. Bodl. Heb. c.65, 6 (Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, p. 115). See Gershom Scholem, *Reshit ha-Kabbalah*, p. 201. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. Alon Ten-Ami, ‘Ashmedai in Babylonian Incantation Bowls,’ *Pe‘amim* 133-134 (2013), p. 199 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. And similarly with the refrain “they call him” (*qore’im lo*) and “this is Meṭaṭron” (*zh mṭṭrwn*). [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. Today in the Feinberg Collection, NY Feinberg 14-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. Above, **p. 8**. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. According to the Ma’agarim database; Bohak reads: *dr‘y*. [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. In the missing part of the page, there is room for two short words at most. If we follow the reading of *śr*, we would have to fill in the rest as follow: *šm hśr kšm [hn‘r zh šb]‘ym wštym ’wtwt wšm hn‘r šb‘ym w’ḥd*. According to this reading, the fragment distinguishes between the *śr* and the *n‘r* (and not between the Holy One and the *n‘r*), which calls to mind the distinction between “Meṭaṭron the Prince of the Countenance” and “Meṭaṭron the Angel of the Countenance” (see below, **n. 166**). However, there is no mention of the *śr* in this fragment or its parallels, so I think it should be read as *n‘r*. Based on the photograph in Peter Schäfer’s edition (*Hekhalot-Studien*, Tübingen 1988, p. 111), this reading is plausible and fits the context. The reconstruction is therefore as follows: *šm hn‘r kšm [rbw zh šb]‘ym wštym ’wtwt wšm hn‘r šb‘ym w’ḥd*. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. Gideon Bohak quotes the eclectic version of *Shi‘ur Qomah*’s conclusion in *Sefer Razzi’el*: *wšmw šl n‘r ‘”b* (72) *’wtywt* (‘*Bereshit Reshit* in *Gematria*: New Sources for the Study of the Jewish Esoteric Tradition in the Talmudic and Gaonic Periods,’ *Tarbiz* 83 [2015], p. 517 [Heb.]). Nevertheless, the Geniza text and context make it clear that *‘”’* (71) *’wtywt* is the superior reading. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. Bohak, ‘Hidden *Hekhalot*,’ pp. 437-438; Schäfer, *Hekhalot-Studien,* p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. BT *Qiddushin* 71a. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. A few manuscripts (see Schäfer, *Synopse*, 400) refer to this second figure as *peloni*, and others explicitly identify it with God (Martin Samuel Cohen, *The Shiʻur Qomah: Texts and Recensions*, Tübingen 1985, pp. 123, 124, 163, 175, 178; *Merkavah Shelemah*, fol. 43b). In MS Sassoon(Feinberg), too, the topic is the difference between the *n‘r* and the Holy One, as mentioned above in **n. 150**. At the same time, the fact that the differences between the two figures are rooted in the different number of letters in their names reminds us of the differences between the two states of the *n‘r* and the two states of Meṭaṭron. It says that the difference between the *n‘r* and the second figure is rooted in one letter: 71 for the former and 72 for the latter. The continuation states that the name of the *n‘r* when ascending is 26 (or 6) letters and when descending it is 27 (or 7) letters. This is reminiscent of the duality of 6/7 letters in *mṭṭrwn/myṭṭrwn* or *śr hpnym*/*ml’k hpnym* (see below, **n. 166**). It is possible, then, that the difference here does not concern God and an angel, but two states or forms of the theophanic angel. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. See above, **n. 112**. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)
158. According to BT *Ḥagigah* 13a, the warning that “one may not expound” refers specifically to this verse. [↑](#footnote-ref-158)
159. Schäfer, *Synopse*, 400. [↑](#footnote-ref-159)
160. *Mekhilta de-Rabbi Yishma‘el,* Shira 1, ed. Horovitz-Rabin, p. 120; *Sifre Deuteronomy*, sec. 343, ed. Finkelstein, p. 398; BT *Ḥagigah* 16a. [↑](#footnote-ref-160)
161. *Ex. Rabbah* 1.14. [↑](#footnote-ref-161)
162. *Zh wbryḥ* is nothing but a variant of *zḥw bryh*; I estimate that this formulation somehow was derived from *zh zkry*, numerologically equivalent to *zhw zhwb’ry*. [↑](#footnote-ref-162)
163. Schäfer, *Synopse*, 399-400, acc. to MS Munich. [↑](#footnote-ref-163)
164. Bohak (‘Hidden *Hekhalot*,’ p. 438 n. 247) noted the parallel between 71 names and 71 letters. The fact that the bowl speaks about names and the *Hekhalot* about letters does not, in my estimation, undermine this equation, because the substitution between names and letters, and more specifically between 70/71/72 names and an identical number of letters, is frequently encountered. [↑](#footnote-ref-164)
165. Cited above, **n. 99**. [↑](#footnote-ref-165)
166. Although a few lost pages intervened between T-S NS 329.977 (425) and Bodl. Heb. E.77.39 (426), there is no appreciable stylistic difference between the two passages. [↑](#footnote-ref-166)
167. On a badly preserved page, EN 2630.15, 1r, l. 3 reads: [...]נ֯ער שנ' בכל [...] (Bohak, ‘Hidden *Hekhalot*,’ p. 432), and Bohak adds (ibid., n. 186): “I have been unable to identify the verse cited here.” I propose reading the word as צ֯ער and reconstructing the whole line as follows: [כל זמן שישראל שרוין בצער אף הוא שרוי ב]צער שנ' בכל [צרתם לו צר] (*Eikha Zuta*, 7, based on the Ma’agarim database; cf. Salomon Buber, *Midrash Zuta*, Vilna 1894/5, 27b). This reconstruction is confirmed by neighboring formulations: שישראל שרוין ברווחה (l. 5) and להן (although it should probably read: לתן) תורה לישראל לבש לבושין לבנין (l. 8). [↑](#footnote-ref-167)
168. Gideon Bohak brought to my attention a distinction between *myṭṭrwn śr hpnym* and *mṭṭrwn* *ml’k hpnym*: משביע אני עליך מיטטרון שר הפנים / אומר אני עליך מטטרון מלאך [ה]פנים // גוזר אני עליך מיטטרון שר הפנים / מקיים אני עליך מטטרון מלאך הפנים // וחותם אני עליך מיטטרון שר הפנים (Antonin B 186 2r l.15-18; Bohak, ‘Hidden *Hekhalot*,’ p. 439). A fragment from *Shi‘ur Qomah* (Bodl. Heb. c.65.6; Schäfer, *Geniza-Fragmente*, p. 117) written in the same period as the composition under discussion, and with significant overlap in content, reads as follows: זה הוא מיטטרון שר הפנים שניכת[ב] [ב]אות אחת שבה נבראו [שמים וארץ] וחתמה בטבעת אהיה-אשר-אהיה [ונ]כתב בשש אותות ובשבע אותות ובעשרים ושתים אותות. [ובשבעים] שמות ובשבע קדושות (cf. Schäfer, *Synopse*, 389). Gershom Scholem surmised that the 6 and 7 letters refer to the defective and plene spellings of the name Meṭaṭron (‘An Inquiry in the Kabbala of R. Isaac ben Jacob,’ *Tarbiz* 2 [1931], pp. 215-216 [Heb.]), which is confirmed by the fragment in the Antonin Collection. What emerges from the citations above is that the two names refer to two aspects, functions, or states of Meṭaṭron, and not to two different angels. The kabbalists elaborated upon this distinction according to their different systems of thought. [↑](#footnote-ref-168)
169. Müller-Kessler, *Zauberschalentexte*, p. 82, Tf. 17 on p. 223. [↑](#footnote-ref-169)
170. Müller-Kessler’s emendation is based on context. For the spelling *mṭrwn*, compare B Antonin 186, 2r l.20; Bohak, ‘Hidden *Hekahlot*,’ p. 439. [↑](#footnote-ref-170)
171. This hostile figure seems like less of a demoness and more of a human rival; therefore, this spell can be categorized as aggressive magic, similar to VA.Bab.2785b (above, sec. 1.18). This is Ford’s opinion (see below, **n. 171**). It is possible that this spell was written in advance of a legal proceeding in order to gum up the arguments of his female opponent in court (Ford in the name of Bohak). [↑](#footnote-ref-171)
172. James Nathan Ford and Matthew Morgenstern, *Aramaic Incantation Bowls in Museum Collections, Vol 1: The Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection of Babylonian Antiquities, Jena*, Leiden 2020. [↑](#footnote-ref-172)
173. I would like to thank Prof. James Nathan Ford who sent me the relevant pages of the edition currently in preparation (pp. 46-52) in response to doubts I expressed about my own reading of the bowl. [↑](#footnote-ref-173)
174. I originally thought to read it as *mṭrwwn* (based on the photograph in Müller-Kessler’s edition), but Ford’s suggestion is more likely, particularly in light of the close-up of the word in his edition. [↑](#footnote-ref-174)
175. Michał Gawlikowski, ‘Une coupe magique araméenne,’ *Semitica* 38 (1990), pp. 137-145. [↑](#footnote-ref-175)
176. I also think the reading of the *waw* is doubtful**.** [↑](#footnote-ref-176)
177. E.g., the Book of Andahriush the Babylonian, mentioned above, n. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-177)
178. Second only to the trio Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael. [↑](#footnote-ref-178)
179. Juusola, *Linguistic Peculiarities in the Aramaic Magic Bowl Text*s, pp. 30-31, 45-52; Elitzur Bar-Asher Siegal, *Introduction to the Grammar of Jewish Babylonian Aramaic*, Münster 2013, pp. 38, 40. [↑](#footnote-ref-179)
180. See above, n. **166**. [↑](#footnote-ref-180)
181. Bowl VA.Bab.2785b (above, sec. 1.18) is an exception, as it straddles the border of aggressive magic. Bowl HS 3012 can also be categorized as aggressive, but according to the revised reading it does not mention Meṭaṭron. The roles of Meṭaṭron in the magical material of the Geniza are more varied; see, e.g., Yuval Harari, ‘Metatron and the Treasure of Gold: Notes on a Dream Inquiry Text from the Cairo Genizah,’ in *Continuity and Change in the Magical Tradition*, ed. G. Bohak, Y. Harari and S. Shaked, Leiden 2010, pp. 289-319, and the literature above in n. 29. [↑](#footnote-ref-181)
182. That *mṭṭrwn-psqwn* stands bythe congregation of Israel is expressed in the famous liturgical poem “Le-Va‘alha-Tif’eret”by Benjamin b. Zeraḥ (southern Italy, mid-11th cent.): לְנִקְרָא רִאשׁוֹן וְאַחֲרוֹן / מֶלֶךְ אַדִּירִירוֹן // מַבִּיעִים סֶלֶד וָרוֹן / בְּטֹהַר וּבְכִשְׁרוֹן // וְאִתָּם מְטַטְרוֹן / פִּסְקוֹן אִטְמוֹן סִגְרוֹן // וַאֲנִי חֲבַצֶּלֶת הַשָּׁרוֹן / מִשְׁתַּחֲוָה פְּנֵי אָרוֹן (*Maḥazor Pesaḥ*, ed. Yonah Frankel, Jerusalem 1993, p. 450). On the author, see Avraham Fraenkel, ‘Kingdoms and their Harsh Decrees in Medieval Italian Jewish Poetry,’ *Tarbiz* 82 (2014), pp. 295-299 (Heb.). [↑](#footnote-ref-182)