Dictionary Early Judaism

Edited by

John J. Collins *and* Daniel C. Harlow

WILLIAM B. EERDMANS PUBLISHING COMPANY
GRAND RAPIDS, MICHIGAN / CAMBRIDGE, U.K.

cursus on the Jews, their origins, customs, and political organization. Now lost, the *Aigyptiaca* has been partly transmitted by Diodorus. But the section on the Jews (Diodorus 40.3.1-8) is known only through a summary made by the Byzantine patriarch Photius. However, on the whole the text we possess may be considered approximately faithful to Hecataeus, even if not his *ipsissima verba*.

Hecataeus' description of the Jews represents one of the earliest passages dealing with Jews in Greek literature. They are depicted as foreigners who were expelled from Egypt because of a plague that afflicted the Egyptian population, which had been corrupted by alien rites. Under the leadership of Moses, a brave and wise man, most of the immigrants settled in Judea, at that time an uninhabited land, whereas the "most outstanding and active" among the foreigners, led by Danaus and Cadmus, eventually populated Greece. Moses founded cities, had the Jerusalem Temple built, divided the people into twelve tribes, and established political and religious institutions, as well as rituals connected to a monotheistic and aniconic cult. The Jews are also described as a people who never had a king and who were ruled by priests, a remark which makes sense in the context of the Persian period. Hecataeus' account contains numerous mistakes but also accurate pieces of information. Although he did not have access to biblical texts, he certainly had some Jewish source.

Some details in Hecataeus' description, such as the military training of youth, the division of the land in equal lots, the interdiction to sell one's individual plot, and the concern about scarcity of manpower *(oligandria)*, show that Hecataeus tends to describe the Jews in a Spartan light. Indeed, Greek patterns of thought pervade the whole excursus, rendering the entire text fundamentally Greek in outlook.

One sentence in Hecataeus' account that has received much attention is also to be understood in this perspective. The text states that Jews have laws which distinguish them from other peoples, and that, because of their expulsion from Egypt, they have chosen "a kind of misanthropic and inhospitable way of life." In other words, the Jews are implicitly compared to a well-known character of Greek comedies, the misanthrope, generally a person who had suffered at the hands of men and therefore avoided their company. In Greek literature, however, the word "misanthropic" characterizes individuals, not peoples. The peculiar use of this word in connection with the Jews reveals Hecataeus' surprise at the Jewish way of life. However, his description is not hostile and may even be considered globally positive. This may explain why a work, *On the Jews*, was ascribed to him — wrongly — by some Jewish sources.

Although many scholars have argued that Hecataeus' account of the origins of the Jews depends on Egyptian traditions such as those known through the work of the Egyptian priest Manetho, this part of his text is also best understood in the context of Greek ethnography. Diodorus' description of Egypt (in book 1), which is said to be inspired to a large extent by Hecataeus, does not contain any allusion to the Egyptian stories about lepers expelled from Egypt. Moreover, Hecataeus' account in Diodorus 40.3 does not mention the expulsion of sick or impure people. It is the Egyptians themselves who are afflicted with a plague, not the foreigners who dwell among them. Actually, Hecataeus' description of the expulsion of Jews and Greeks who founded colonies is deeply influenced by Herodotus' *Histories*, by Greek stereotypes about Egyptian hostility toward foreigners, and by Greek discussions about a possible Egyptian origin of Danaus and Cadmus. Hecataeus' interest in the Jews was limited, and his perspective, like that of other Greek ethnographers, "hellenocentric."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

K. BERTHELOT 2003, *Philanthrōpia judaica: Le débat autour de la "misanthropie" des lois juives dans l'Antiquité*, Leiden: Brill, 80-94, 101-6. • W. JAEGER 1938, "Greeks and Jews," *Journal of Religion* 18: 127-43. • D. MENDELS 1983, "Hecataeus of Abdera and a Jewish *Patrios Politeia* of the Persian Period (Diodorus Siculus 40.3)," *ZAW* 95: 96-110. • W. SPOERRI 1988, "Hekataios von Abdera," *Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum* 14: 275-310. • M. STERN 1998, *Greek and Latin Authors on Jews and Judaism*, 5th ed., Jerusalem: Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, 1:20-35. • E. WILL AND C. ORRIEUX 1986, *Ioudaïsmos-Hellénismos: Essai sur le judaïsme judéen à l'Epoque hellenistique*, Nancy: Presses Universitaires de Nancy, 83-93.

See also: Hecataeus, Pseudo-

KATELL BERTHELOT

Hekhalot Literature

The writings that make up the Hekhalot corpus represent the earliest freestanding collections of Jewish mystical, magical, and liturgical traditions. This diverse body of materials resists easy geographic and chronological classification. Written primarily in Hebrew and Aramaic, Hekhalot literature developed very gradually in the major centers of Jewish learning — Byzantine Palestine and Sassanian Persia. While the corpus does contain some literary traditions from the "classic" rabbinic period (ca. 200–600 C.E.), it seems to have emerged as a distinct class of texts only toward the end of late antiquity, likely between 600 and 900 C.E. (Boustan 2006). Moreover, Hekhalot literature never reached a closed or definitive form, but continued to be adapted by Jewish scribes throughout the Middle Ages and into the early modern period (ca. 900–1500 C.E.).

The term "Hekhalot" comes from the Hebrew word for the celestial palaces or temples *(hêkālôt*, pl. of *hêkāl)* within which God is said in this literature to reside and through which the visionary ascends toward him and his angelic host. The form of religious praxis and experience described in Hekhalot literature is often also referred to as "Merkabah mysticism" because it draws on and develops long-standing speculative and ecstatic traditions concerning the prophet Ezekiel's vision of the divine chariot-throne (the merkavah of Ezekiel 1, 10).

HEKHALOT LITERATURE

The Variety of Interests and Genres

It must be stressed, however, that the majority of the Hekhalot corpus does not in fact address the theme of the visionary ascent. At least as prominent within many Hekhalot compositions are prescriptions for adjurational techniques designed to gain the assistance of various angelic intermediaries for often quite practical aims. The Hekhalot corpus also encompasses a wide and eclectic range of other literary genres, most importantly: exhaustive catalogues of the limbs of God's gigantic body (the *Shiur Qomah*); cosmological speculation; physiognomic and astrological material; and vast numbers of poetic compositions detailing the liturgies performed by the angels in heaven and by Israel on earth. Heterogeneity in both literary form and religious sensibility is a constitutive feature of virtually all Hekhalot compositions.

The nature of the relationship between the two principal axes of the corpus — narratives in which a human actor ascends to heaven, and adjurational material designed to bring angelic beings down to earth — remains a subject of great debate among scholars. The groundbreaking writings of Gershom Scholem on Hekhalot literature accord temporal and thematic priority to the ascent narratives (Scholem 1954; Scholem 1965). For Scholem, these heavenly journeys directly continue the form of ecstatic mysticism already attested in earlier Jewish (and Christian) apocalyptic writings, such as *1 Enoch* 14, Daniel 7, and Paul's second letter to the Corinthians 12:1-4. By contrast, Scholem viewed the incorporation of "magico-ritual" elements into the corpus as a belated development that marked the degeneration of its original "mystical" impulse. More recently, however, scholarship has emphasized the degree to which ritual practices pervade every aspect of Hekhalot literature — and are inseparable from its larger religious program. Indeed, in both heavenly ascent and angelic adjuration, movement between the earthly and heavenly realms is achieved primarily through the meticulous performance of ritual speech and action.

Pseudonymous Attribution

As in much late antique rabbinic literature, the authorial voice of Hekhalot literature is anonymous and collective. Hekhalot texts employ figures from the legendary rabbinic past as their primary protagonists and spokesmen — most commonly, R. Ishmael, R. Akiva, and R. Neunya ben ha-Qanah (second century C.E.). These rabbinic authorities not only serve as the main characters in the narrative portions of this literature; Hekhalot texts directly attribute to these rabbis their instructional content as well. This framework of pseudonymous attribution both constitutes the primary organizational structure of Hekhalot texts and serves as their central authorizing strategy by anchoring them in the increasingly hegemonic rabbinic tradition.

Delimiting the Corpus

Scholars have yet to reach a consensus concerning precisely which criteria mark a text as a Hekhalot composition or how best to delimit the corpus. Numerous texts, such as the late-antique magical handbook *Sefer ha-Razim* or the posttalmudic martyrology *The Story of the Ten Martyrs*, share certain narrative, formal, or thematic affinities with Hekhalot literature, while differing from it in other important respects. No generalizations are possible; research should be conducted on a case-by-case basis to determine how specific compositions fit within the general discursive matrix of Hekhalot literature. The following compositions, however, are generally considered to belong to Hekhalot literature proper: *3 (Hebrew) Enoch* or *Sefer Hekhalot; Hekhalot Rabbati* ("The Greater [Book of Celestial] Palaces"); *Hekhalot Zutarti* ("The Lesser [Book of Celestial] Palaces"); *Ma'aseh Merkavah* ("The Working of the Chariot"); *Merkavah Rabbah* ("The Great [Book of] the Chariot"). All of these compositions can be most easily consulted in Schäfer's *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur*, a synoptic edition of seven medieval manuscripts that contain the Hekhalot corpus in a variety of textual forms and configurations (Schäfer 1981).

Embedded within or appended to the major building blocks of the corpus are a number of generically distinct texts. Most significant are a series of relatively autonomous adjurational complexes known as the *Sar ha-Torah* ("Prince of the Torah") texts, which promise the practitioner assistance in acquiring and retaining knowledge of Torah. Similarly, the *Shiur Qomah* ("The Measure of the Height [of the Divine Body]") forms a distinct class of texts that are incorporated in a variety of ways into larger Hekhalot compositions.

In addition, more than twenty fragments of Hekhalot texts have been retrieved from the Cairo Genizah (Schäfer 1984). Most of these fragments reflect versions of material found in the medieval manuscripts, though a few represent previously unknown Hekhalot compositions. Significant differences exist between the materials contained in the Genizah fragments and those that crystallized in the European manuscript tradition; this disparity between the "Oriental" and "European" branches of the literary tradition strongly suggests that Hekhalot literature existed in a variety of forms and was transmitted along multiple regional trajectories.

Composition and Redaction

The compositional and redactional processes that produced both the individual Hekhalot compositions and the corpus as a whole were enormously complex. The Hekhalot manuscript tradition is characterized by extreme fluidity. It has, therefore, not proved possible to reconstruct either a fixed *Urtext* or a finally redacted form for most of the major Hekhalot compositions — and, in all likelihood, such stable beginning and end points of the transmission process never existed. Peter Schäfer has made the compelling case that Hekhalot literature cannot simply be divided into stable "books" or "works," but represents a relatively open-ended set of both longer and shorter textual units that remained in flux as they were transmitted and actively refashioned by medieval scribes and scholars (Schäfer 1988).

Sociocultural Contexts

The heterogeneity, fluidity, and pseudonymity of Hekhalot texts have created formidable obstacles for studying the sociocultural context(s) out of which this literature emerged. Scholem — and others in his wake — situated Hekhalot literature squarely within the main currents of rabbinic Judaism, even tracing its origins back to the second-century circles of R. Akiva himself. Others have mounted precisely the opposite argument, finding in this literature the voices of non- or anti-rabbinic Jews. Most significantly, David Halperin has argued that Hekhalot literature was produced by the Jewish "masses" *(ʿammei hā-ʾāretz)* who, finding themselves dispossessed by the emergent rabbinic dispensation, longed to acquire mastery of the Torah through more immediate "magical" means than through many years of study (Halperin 1988).

In the only thorough sociological analysis of Hekhalot literature published to date, Michael Swartz argues that the promises of textual mastery and perfect memory in the *Sar ha-Torah* texts in particular reflect the aspirations of the "secondary elites" who served late-antique Jewish communities as minor ritual functionaries (Swartz 1996). These relatively low-status scribes were profoundly influenced by the scholastic culture of the rabbis, while at the same time being excluded from (full) access to rabbinic institutions of learning. Their position at the margins of the rabbinic movement would thus account for the palpable tension within Hekhalot literature between the rabbinic values it embraces and its very nonrabbinic emphasis on the revelatory power of ritual-liturgical practice. In this view, the creators of Hekhalot literature deployed rabbinic figures and discourses with the aim of appropriating rabbinic authority for themselves.

Whatever its precise social background, Hekhalot literature advocates a religious ideology that seems to be at odds with the conception of power and authority articulated in classic rabbinic literature. A number of scholars have argued that Hekhalot literature transmits "priestly" traditions that have their roots in the Second Temple period, prior to the emergence of the rabbinic movement. We have seen above that the centrality of the motif of heavenly ascent within the Hekhalot corpus and Second Temple apocalyptic literature has led some to view both groups of sources as literary expressions of a common tradition of ecstatic mysticism. More recently, Rachel Elior and others have suggested that the imaginative depictions of the heavenly cult that fill Hekhalot literature reflect the religious orientation of actual priestly groups that (may have) played an influential role within the synagogue communities of late-antique Palestine (Elior 2004).

Relation to Second Temple Literature

Hekhalot literature provides important evidence for the historical continuity and change in early Judaism and early Christianity. For example, Hekhalot literature shares clear thematic and generic affinities with a wide variety of texts found at Qumran, especially among liturgical, ritual, divinatory, demonological, and physiognomic sources (Swartz 2001). Scholars, however, disagree sharply about the historical significance of these similarities. For example, it has been argued that the Hekhalot hymns build upon the type of liturgical traditions found in the Qumran *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,* with their distinctive "numinous" style and exegetical elaboration of Ezekiel's throne-vision. At the same time, the apparent absence of a *direct* literary relationship between these texts, as well as important differences in their ritual-liturgical settings, caution against drawing facile conclusions concerning socio-historical or even phenomenological continuities between them. The use of categories such as "mysticism" and "magic" should not be allowed to overshadow analysis of concrete formal and thematic similarities *and* differences across the various corpora. Still, the task of situating Hekhalot literature within the larger landscape of early Judaism is only in its infancy.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

R. S. BOUSTAN 2006, "The Emergence of Pseudonymous Attribution in Hekhalot Literature: Empirical Evidence from the Jewish 'Magical' Corpora," *JSQ* 13: 1-21. • J. R. DAVILA 2001, *Descenders in the Chariot: The People behind the Hekhalot Literature,* Leiden: Brill. • R. ELIOR 2004, "*Hekhalot* and *Merkavah* Literature: Its Relation to the Temple, the Heavenly Temple, and the 'Diminished Temple,'" in *Continuity and Renewal: Jews and Judaism in Byzantine-Christian Palestine,* ed. L. I. Levine, Jerusalem: Yad Ben-Zvi, 107-42 (in Hebrew). • I. GRUENWALD 1980, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism,* Leiden: Brill. • D. J. HALPERIN 1988, *The Faces of the Chariot: Early Jewish Reponses to Ezekiel's Vision,* Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck. • M. HIMMELFARB 1988, "Heavenly Ascent and the Relationship of the Apocalypses and the Hekhalot Literature," *HUCA* 59: 73-100. • P. SCHÄFER 1988, *Hekhalot-Studien,* Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck. • P. SCHÄFER 1981, *Synopse zur Hekhalot-Literatur,* Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck. • P. SCHÄFER 1984, *Geniza-Fragmente zur Hekhalot-Literatur,* Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck. • P. SCHÄFER 2009, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism,* Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck. • G. G. SCHOLEM 1954, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism,* New York: Schocken, 40-79. G. G. SCHOLEM 1965, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition,* New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America. • M. D. SWARTZ 1996, *Scholastic Magic: Ritual and Revelation in Early Jewish Mysticism,* Princeton: Princeton University Press. M. D. SWARTZ 2001, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and Later Jewish Magic and Mysticism," *DSD* 8: 182-93.

See also: Mysticism RAʿANAN S. BOUSTAN

Heliopolis

The city of Heliopolis in Egypt was an important cultic and religious center in Pharaonic times (its Egyptian name, *Iunu,* reemerging in the Hebrew Bible as *ʾÔn*), but it was in a state of decline in the last millennium B.C.E. Herodotus, who visited it in the fifth century B.C.E., observes that the Heliopolitans "are said to be the most learned of all Egyptians," but he has little to say about the site or its temples (Herodotus 2.3, 59, 63).