

Beyond Judaisms: Meṭatron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism¹

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Abstract

My specific project in this paper is to combine several related and notorious questions in the history of Judaism into one: What is the nexus among the semi-divine (or high angel) figure known in the Talmud as Meṭatron, the figure of the exalted Enoch in the Enoch books (*1-3 Enoch!*), “The One Like a Son of Man” of Daniel, Jesus, the Son of Man, and the rabbinically named heresy of “Two Powers/Sovereignties in Heaven?” I believe that in order to move towards some kind of an answer to this question, we need to develop a somewhat different approach to the study of ancient Judaism, as I hope to show here. I claim that late-ancient rabbinic literature when read in the context of all contemporary and earlier texts of Judaism—those defined as rabbinic as well as those defined as non-, para-, or even anti-rabbinic—affords us a fair amount of evidence for and information

¹ This essay began its life as one of the hundredth series of Haskell lectures in Middle Eastern literature in its relation to the Bible and Christian teachings, entitled “The Son of Man and the Genealogy of Rabbinic Judaism,” which were delivered by me in the Spring of 2007 at Oberlin College. I am very grateful to Prof. Abraham Socher who invited me to deliver these lectures. I thank him as well for his wonderful hospitality to me during very trying times in his life. These were intended to form a manuscript of the same title to be published by Fordham University Press. At the eleventh hour, however, I realized that the argument of one of the lectures seems to me fatally flawed, and I abandoned the monograph sadly (Helen Tartar of FUP was wonderfully generous in not making me feel guilty; Helen I owe you one). This essay is, therefore, a brand saved from a fire (the rest of the salvage will be incorporated, DV, into my forthcoming, tentatively entitled: *How the Jews Came to Believe that Jesus was God*). I wish to thank the following who read early versions of this manuscript and helped me to improve it: Carlin Barton, Ra’anan Boustan, Jonathan Boyarin, two anonymous readers, and Elliot Wolfson. Alon Goshen-Gottstein also provided critical commentary, some of which I have been able to incorporate.

about a belief in (and perhaps cult of) a second divine person within, or very close to, so-called “orthodox” rabbinic circles long after the advent of Christianity. Part of the evidence for this very cult will come from efforts at its suppression on the part of rabbinic texts. I believe, moreover, that a reasonable chain of inference links this late cult figure back through the late-antique Book of *3 Enoch* to the Enoch of the first-century *Parables of Enoch*—also known in the scholarly literature as the *Similitudes of Enoch*—and thus to the Son of Man of that text and further back to the One Like a Son of Man of Daniel 7.

Keywords

Ancient Judaism, Judaisms, Meṭaṭron, Son of Man, Talmud, *3 Enoch*

Ruth Stein, *in memoriam*

“Two Powers in Heaven” as the Older Orthodoxy

When Alan Segal, three decades ago in his landmark book, *Two Powers in Heaven*, wrote about the eponymous alleged heresy, he treated it as a phenomenon external to rabbinic Judaism and “reported” on in rabbinic texts: “Not unexpectedly, the sources showed that some mysticism and apocalypticism, as well as Christianity and gnosticism, were seen as ‘two powers’ heretics by the rabbis,” and, “it was one of the central issues over which the two religions separated.” His project then was the reconstruction of the “development of the heresy.”² For him, “the problem is to

² A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports About Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA 25; Leiden: Brill, 1977), ix. In addition to Segal’s work, parts of this question, or rather various of the questions that go to make up this synthetic form of the question have been treated in M. Idel, “Enoch is Meṭaṭron,” *Immanuel* 24/25 (1990): 220-40; idem, “Meṭaṭron: Notes Towards the Development of Myth in Judaism,” in *Eshel Beer-Sheva: Occasional Publications in Jewish Studies* (Beersheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev Press, 1996), 29-44 [Hebrew]; idem, *Ben: Sonship and Jewish Mysticism* (Kogod Library of Judaic Studies; London: Continuum, 2007); N. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* (BSJS 22; Leiden: Brill, 1999); P. S. Alexander, “The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch,” *JJS* 28 (1977): 156-80; idem, “3 Enoch and the Talmud,” *JSJ* 18 (1987): 40-68; C. Morray-Jones, “Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition: Alexander’s Three Test Cases,” *JSJ* 22 (1991): 1-39; C. Rowland and C. R. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (CRINT 3.12; Leiden: Brill, 2009); G. G. Stroumsa, “Form(s) of God: Some Notes on Meṭaṭron and Christ: For Shlomo Pines,” *HTR* 76 (1983): 269-88; A. A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Meṭaṭron Tradition* (TSAJ 107; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), inter multa alia. These and other works, cited and uncited, have all played a role in the synthesis hypothesized here.

discover which of the heretical groups were actually called 'two powers in heaven' by the earliest tannaitic sages."³ Following, however, some brilliant rethinking of method in the study of Christian heresiology, in which the matter has been shifted from the histories of alleged heresies to the history of the episteme (in the Foucauldian sense) of heresy itself and its functions in the formation of an orthodox Church,⁴ we can shift our own attention from the development of "Two Powers" as a heresy "out there" to the discursive work that its naming as such does in order to define and identify rabbinic orthodoxy. Moreover, in some of the best work on the use of heresiology to produce orthodoxy among Christians, it has been shown that almost always the so-called "heresy" is not a new invader from outside but an integral and usually more ancient version of the religious tradition that is now being displaced by a newer set of conceptions, portraying the relations almost mystifyingly in the direct opposite of the observed chronologies.⁵ We can accordingly reconfigure the study of the relations among such entities as the apocalyptic literature (especially in this case the Enoch texts), the Gospels, the texts of late-ancient para-rabbinic mysticism, known as the Merkabah mysticism (the Hekhalot texts and their congeners), and classical rabbinic literature, including especially the Talmud, in the same vein, namely, as the history of the invention of a heresy, of the displacement of a religious conception formerly held by many Jews by a new-fangled orthodoxy. To forestall one kind of objection to this thesis, let me hasten to clarify that I am not arguing that the idea of a single and singular godhead is the *invention* of the Rabbis, nor that there was no contention on this question before them, but I do assert that the evidence suggests that the issue was by no means settled in biblical times nor yet even in the Middle Ages and that, therefore, the notion of a polyform Judaism (rather than orthodoxy/heresy or "Judaisms") has quite substantial legs to stand on. It is the purpose of this case study to show how the genealogy of rabbinic Judaism can be shown to be in some measure a product of such a development of a "notion of heresy," in which a rabbinic orthodoxy (not nearly, to be sure, as detailed or as precise as that of Christian orthodoxy) was formed out of

³ Segal, *Powers*, 89.

⁴ A. Le Boulluec, *La notion d'hérésie dans la littérature grecque I^{er}-III^e siècles* (Paris: Études Augustiniennes, 1985).

⁵ C. Kannengiesser, "Alexander and Arius of Alexandria: The Last Ante-Nicene Theologians," *Comp* 35 (1990): 391-403.

a much more multiform set of religious ideas and even practices of worship than “orthodoxy” would allow for.⁶

Earlier iterations of this line of argument⁷ have been misunderstood, certain scholars thinking, it seems, that I have assented to Segal, rather than dissenting from his approach (after having learned much from him, to be sure).⁸ I want, therefore, to make as clear as possible the crucial difference between my approach and that of my predecessor. Perhaps the clearest way that I can articulate the difference in our methods or approaches is that where he can imagine asking (and answering) a question about the existence of the “heresy” before the Rabbis, for me, since it was the Rabbis who invented the “heresy” via a rejection of that which was once (and continued to be) very much within Judaism, that question is, of course, impossible. This goes to the heart of our respective portraits of ancient Judaism. Where Segal seems clearly to imagine an “orthodox core” to Judaism that pre-exists and then develops into what would become rabbinism, I imagine a Judaism that consists of manifold historical developments of a polyform tradition in which no particular form has claim to either orthodoxy or centrality over others. Accordingly while I am reading many of the same texts as Segal, my overall way of putting them together is almost diametrically opposed to his and many of the individual readings are quite different as well. I say this not to engage in a

⁶ This represents a distinct refinement of the position I took in D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religions; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), perhaps even a border correction. Rather than concluding, as I did then, that ultimately the rabbinic tradition rejected an “orthodox” formation, I would now rephrase that to suggest that a virtual orthodoxy was continued (excluding, for instance, Christians who considered themselves Jews after the third century, for sure); rather, it was the concept of theological *akribeia*, precision or exactitude, that never seems to have developed among non-Christian versions of Judaism including rabbinism. This not minor shift, will, I hope deflect some of the charges of apparent triumphalism or apologetic that the formulation in the book brought in its wake. See especially V. Burrus, R. Kalmin, H. Lapin, and J. Marcus, “Boyarin’s Work: A Critical Assessment,” *Henoah* 28 (2006): 7-30, especially the essay by Joel Marcus there.

⁷ D. Boyarin, “Two Powers in Heaven; or, the Making of a Heresy,” in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel* (ed. H. Najman and J. Newman; JSJSup 83; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 331-70.

⁸ Schäfer, for instance, regards my own earlier renditions of this theory as “inspired by Segal,” while I quite clearly and explicitly disagree with him, P. Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 323 n. 367. Goshen-Gottstein mistakes me in the same way (See appendix below in this article). Idel, *Ben*, 591 clearly and precisely understood what was at stake between Segal and me.

competition with Segal's thirty-year old work. I learned much from it then and still do, and he too has moved on, but simply to make clearer the methodological difference between our projects so that readers won't have to work so hard lest they miss the point, as some earlier readers have clearly done. That out of the way, let me get on to the major theoretical intervention about Judaism that I wish to make here, moving beyond "Judaisms."⁹

Since the 1970's it has become fashionable to speak of Judaisms, rather than of Judaism. To be sure, this move was part of a salutary attempt—initially on the part of Jacob Neusner¹⁰—to open up our study of Judaism to include non-rabbinic religion as part and parcel of Judaism and thus not to write the history of Judaism as the history of the winners.¹¹ Having learned the lessons of that move, I think it is time to move beyond it, seeing Judaism as the sum of the religious expressions of the Jews.¹² We need

⁹ I should, perhaps, however, modify an impression easily gathered from my earlier work. I certainly made it seem as if my argument was that the production of rabbinic Judaism out of the multiform Judaism from which it emerged was primarily a theological matter (see Idel, *Ben*, 591-93; A. Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations and Rabbinic Literature—Shifting Scholarly and Relational Paradigms: The Case of Two Powers," in *Interaction Between Judaism and Christianity in History, Religion, Art, and Literature* [ed. M. Poorthuis, J. Schwartz, and J. Turner; Leiden: Brill, 2008], 15-44). Both of these critics of my earlier work are correct in taking me to task on this matter; there was much more going on than just a theological "conspiracy." Nonetheless, I do claim that the repeated attempt to portray "Two Powers in Heaven" as a heretical divagation from the essential and ancient norm, the "orthodox" core, of Judaism that we find in the late-ancient texts, represents classical heresiological practice, as in the rethinking of the Arian controversy that we find argued in Kannengiesser, "Alexander and Arius." The rabbinic texts are, themselves, almost telling us that they had met the heretic and he is us (viz. Rabbi Akiva). The Rabbis were apparently no more successful in defeating this deeply ancient religious idea than the Fathers were in eradicating the ancient theology that they had named "Arianism." I also believe that the Rabbis were under theological/hermeneutic pressure from interpreters of the biblical texts in question, as well they might have been, as these texts do strongly tend to support that ancient (ex hypothesi) Jewish theological mythologoumenon.

¹⁰ See, just for example, J. Neusner, W. S. Green, and E. S. Frerichs, *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹¹ A. F. Segal, *The Other Judaisms of Late Antiquity* (BJS 127; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1987).

¹² Note that this is a very different move from that of E. P. Sanders, *Jewish Law from Jesus to the Mishnah: Five Studies* (London: SCM Press, 1990), who sought to discover some constant that subtended all the Judaisms (and excluded thereby Pauline Judaism, for instance).

to more clearly distinguish among histories of the Jews, histories of Judaism, and histories of rabbinic Judaism. Getting clearer on the ways that these are separate, if obviously imbricated, projects will help to clarify some confusion (and undoubtedly, perhaps in a salutary way, introduce new confusion). If we think of “the Jews”—anachronistically from a terminological point of view—as an ethonym that includes all the people of Israel,¹³ then Judaism is all of the complex of related and contending religious forms comprehended by those folks, including the figures of Enoch, Moses, Jesus, and all.¹⁴ It is all-important, however, to emphasize that these different religious forms do not necessarily resolve themselves into separate social groups (and this is not just a failure of our knowledge); they overlap and interact.¹⁵ As much as it has been proven that the history of Judaism is not the history of rabbinic Judaism with all other forms of Judaism as either marginal, inferior competitors or worse, it is still wrong, I think, to think of separate Judaisms that belong to separate social groups. In this sense, the history of Judaism, the religion of Jews, is not the same, at all, as the social history of Jews. It is indeed part of the process of production of rabbinic Judaism as orthodoxy that it will seek to define and exclude various internal others—and not so others—as external others and members of particular groups, and scholarship should not be complicit with this at all, although it seems that positivist scholarship will somehow always be. Part and parcel of this genealogy then will be to show how muddy are the lines in the sand that supposedly divide rabbinic Judaism from its others, including but not limited to that form of Judaism that eventually is called Christianity. I return, then, to the

¹³ A better term might be, then, Israelites but it is hard to go against convention in such matters.

¹⁴ For a precisely opposite view, arguing for a “normative Judaism,” as a phenomenological entity, see E. E. Zuesse, “Phenomenology of Judaism,” *The Encyclopaedia of Judaism* (ed. J. Neusner, A. J. Avery-Peck, and W. S. Green; Leiden: Brill, 2005), 3:1968-86. Phenomenology in this case seems to mean deciding in advance that rabbinic Judaism is Judaism, *tout court*, marking its central norms as definitional for Judaism, and then writing out other Jews as they deviate from those norms. This may be good philosophy—I don’t know—, it bears little relation to critical, historical scholarship. Furthermore, much in Zuesse’s “factual” account of Christianity is simply false historically, reading back later forms into earlier periods, but maybe that too is phenomenologically acceptable, since I suppose Christianity too must have a time-and-place transcendent phenomenological essence.

¹⁵ As recently as Boyarin, “Two Powers,” I was completely enthralled by the notion of “Judaisms.”

study of Judaism, a reconfigured post-Judaisms Judaism that comprehends all of the forms of religious expression of the Jews without centralizing, marginalizing, or reifying any of its forms. In what follows, then, I shall be reading certain key religious texts in the Babylonian Talmud as integral expressions of a polymorphous Judaism of which rabbinic Judaism is, in part, a special articulation, in part, simply a post factum rhetorical construct.¹⁶

Meṭaṭron, the Son of Man

In the Babylonian Talmud Sanhedrin 38b, we read:

Rav Naḥman said: A person who knows how to answer the *minim* [sectarians or heretics]¹⁷ as Rav Idi,¹⁸ let him answer, and if not, let him not answer. A certain *min* said to Rav Idi: “It is written, ‘And to Moses he said, come up unto the YHWH [Exod 24:1].’ It should have said, ‘Come up to me!’”

If YHWH is speaking and he says to Moses, Come up to YHWH, the implication seems to be, according to the *min* that there are two persons up there, or, as the Rabbis usually name the heresy: “Two powers in heaven.” But:

He [Rav Idi] said to him: “This was Meṭaṭron, whose name is like the name of his master, as it is written, ‘for My name is in him’ [Exod 23:21].”

“But if so, they should worship him!”

“It is written, ‘Do not rebel against him’ [Exod 23:21]—Do not confuse him with me!”

“If so, then why does it say ‘He will not forgive your sins’?”

¹⁶ This is nearly opposite to the position taken, e.g., by J. Fraenkel, *Sipur Ha-Agadah, Ahdut Shel Tokhen Ve-Tsurah: Kovets Mehkarim. [Agadic Narrative]* (Sifriyat Helal ben Hayim; Tel-Aviv: Ha-Kibuts ha-meuhad, 2001), 339 who draws a firewall between the Rabbis and the Hekhalot literature and explicitly regards the classical rabbinic literature as nearly totally isolated from the surrounding religious worlds.

¹⁷ The precise meaning of this term (I’m speaking now on the lexical level) has been much contested. As I have written elsewhere I believe that it is related to Justin Martyr’s *genistai* and *meristai* as names for Jewish heresies and thus, almost literally, just means sectarians without defining the content of their dissension.

¹⁸ This is the correct reading of the name, according to manuscript evidence.

“We have sworn that we would not even receive him as a guide, for it is written ‘If Your face goes not [do not bring us up from here]’ [Exod 33:15].” (*b. Sanh.* 38b)¹⁹

This extraordinary bit of rhetoric needs some glossing and then a deeper consideration of how to read it than it has received so far.²⁰ The *min* produces a seemingly compelling argument that there are two powers in heaven, and this the primary, perhaps sole, focus of rabbinic heresiology.²¹ Following then the above-mentioned well-known principle in the study of heresiology that most often what is now called heresy is simply an earlier form of a religion which has now been discredited by an important and powerful group of religious leaders, we might well hypothesize that such belief is both ancient and entrenched in Israel.

So let us see what these *minim* are made to claim here. God has been addressing the Jewish People as a whole (in Exod 23), informing them that he will send his angel before them and instructing them how to behave with respect to this angel. He then turns to Moses and tells him to come up to YHWH (the Tetragrammaton), implying quite strongly that “YHWH” of whom he speaks is not the same “YHWH” who is the speaker of the verse: Two YHWHs.²² This is, in fact, precisely the sort of argument that a Justin Martyr would have produced from Scripture to argue for a “second person” (the Logos). It is, moreover, very much reminiscent of the talk about the Name of the Lord of Spirits in the *Parables of Enoch*, and, if Steven Richard Scott’s interpretation of that text is accepted, that Name is the Name of the Son of Man and thus Meṭatron.²³ And so

19) אמר רב נחמן: האי מאן דידיע לאהדורי למינים כרב אידיית – ליהדר, ואי לא – לא ליהדר. אמר ההוא מינא לרב אידיית: כתיב +שמות כ"ד+ ואל משה אמר עלה אל ה', עלה אלי מיבעי ליה! אמר ליה: זהו מטטרון, ששמו כשם רבו, דכתיב +שמות כ"ג+ כי שמי בקרבן. – אי הכי ניפלוח ליה! – כתיב +שמות כ"ג+ אל תמר בו – אל תמירני בו. – אם כן לא ישא לפשעכם למה ליה? – אמר ליה: הימנותא בידן, דאפילו בפרונוקא נמי לא קבילניה, דכתיב +שמות ל"ג+ ויאמר אליו אם אין פינד'הלכים וגו' (text from Bar Ilan Rabbinic Texts Project).

20) For previous readings, see Segal, *Powers*, 68-69, whose interpretation is quite close to mine in large part and Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, 49. For a much older reading, see R. T. Herford, *Christianity in Talmud and Midrash* (New York: Ktav, 1978), 285-90.

21) See appendix below for discussion of an opposing position recently argued by Goshen-Gottstein, “Jewish-Christian Relations.”

22) The medieval Bible commentary of Ibn Ezra solves this problem by referring to other verses in which a speaker refers to himself by his own name.

23) S. R. Scott, “The Binitarian Nature of the *Book of Similitudes*,” *JSP* 18/1 (2008): 55-78, esp. 71-72. On the Name as belonging to the second person, see Stroumsa, “Form(s),” 283, comparing Christ to Meṭatron.

the *minim* conclude that there is a second power in heaven. Rav Idi, in refuting them, turns back to the previous chapter and remarks that verse 21 there explicitly says, "My name is in him [that is, in the angel]."²⁴ Meṭaṭron, that angel, therefore, could be called by the name "YHWH," and it is to him that Moses is being instructed to ascend. What this amounts to is the Rabbi proclaiming that there are not two divine powers in heaven but only God and an angel whom God Godself has named God as well.

At this point, the *min* responds by saying that if Meṭaṭron is indeed called by the ineffable name, then we ought to worship him as well; in other words, that Rav Idi's own answer can be turned against him. To this, Rav Idi retorts that the verse also says "Do not rebel against him," which by a typical midrashic sleight of hand can be read as "Do not substitute him," that is, even though Meṭaṭron is called by God's name, do not pray to him. *Al tamer bo* [Do not rebel against him] has been read as *Al tamireni bo*: Don't substitute him for me. The very verse in which Israel is enjoined to obey the second YHWH has been turned by a pun into its exact opposite. The *min* says if that is what is meant, then why does it continue in the verse and say that he, Meṭaṭron, will not forgive sins? The *min* is arguing that if the people are being warned not to rebel against Meṭaṭron, because he is as powerful as God, then it makes sense to tell them that he will not forgive their sins if they do rebel, but if he is no God at all, then it is otiose to tell them that he will not forgive sins. Only if he has the power to redeem sins does it make sense to declare that he will not forgive their sins if they rebel against him. (Of course, the rabbinic reading is: Don't confuse him with me for he cannot redeem sins but only I can. The "heretical" reading, I'm afraid, is much stronger and more adequate to the language.) In other words, the *min* argues that Meṭaṭron seemingly has precisely the redeemer features that are characteristic of his direct ancestor, Enoch the Son of Man, or for that matter Jesus, the Son of Man as well, including the power to forgive sins (Mark 2:10). According to the sectary, the verse must read: He has the power to forgive sins but will not for those who rebel against him. Two Powers in Heaven, indeed.

²⁴ Segal makes the interesting point that in its original form the protagonist must have been named not yet Meṭaṭron but some theophoric name, such as (I suggest) Akatriel, or Anafiel-YHWH, as we find later in the Merkabah texts.

I would suggest, moreover, that, in typical midrashic fashion, another verse underpins this comment of the *min*. Joshua 24:19 reads: “It will be very difficult for you [lit. you will not be able to] to worship YHWH, for He is a holy God; He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your sins and your iniquities.” In other words, the logic would run: if there it remarks of YHWH that he will not forgive sins and iniquities, then if the same language is being used here, ought it not indicate that the divine figure being spoken of has the same attributes as YHWH?²⁵ Moreover, if there the context is one of worshipping YHWH, then here too worship of Meṭatron, the second Lord or lesser Yahu, would seem to be implicated as well. The comparison is rendered even stronger when we notice that exactly the same context is involved in both the Exodus and the Joshua verse, namely the expulsion of the Canaanites from the land of Israel and the warnings to the people of Israel to be worthy of this benefit and to worship YHWH, or their sin will not be forgiven at all. It certainly seems as if the verse in Exodus can be read as equating Meṭatron to YHWH and therefore demanding worship for both figures.

To this the Rabbi answers that “we” the Jews, through our leader Moses, already have declared that we do not even want him, Meṭatron, to be our guide in the desert, as the cited verse says: “If *Your* face goes before us not.” In other words, the angelic regent was of such non-importance that, far from considering him worthy of being worshiped, Moses would not even accept him as guide. In order to escape the seemingly ineluctable conclusion that there is indeed such a second divine figure, Rav Idi proposes to read the verse as if saying, “Be careful before him and obedient to him. Do not confuse him with me, for he will not forgive your sins, though my name is in him.” Aside from the fact that this translation renders the verse considerably less coherent in its logic, the *min* argues that it makes this angel seem absolutely insignificant, hardly worthy of mention, to which Rav Idi answers (and this is his brilliant move) that indeed that is so. The Israelites have already registered their rejection of any interest in this insignificant angel when they insisted that God Himself must go before them and no other, thus dramatizing the rejection of the Son of Man theology, a rejection that the Rabbis themselves perform. Although much of what I’ve just said can be seen in Segal’s analysis of this text as well, it is here that there is a parting of the ways between us, for he writes,

²⁵ Segal, *Powers*, 131-32, shows that this verse was a locus for controversy between Rabbis and others independently of this particular text.

based on the comparison with the Gospel that “if we take the literature in the New Testament as characteristic of some kinds of heresy in the first century,” then, “it seems clear therefore that some varieties of the heresy go back to the first century, even if the rabbinic texts do not.”²⁶ I would propose rather that the Gospel text is evidence that these religious ideas were present among Jews in the first century and are being first named and excluded as heresy in the rabbinic text, in other words that there is no a priori reason to regard this as heresy in the first century at all before the talmudic intervention. Do not worship a second God as (many of) you have been accustomed to doing so far is the burden of the Talmudic narration of the interaction with the *min*.

Let me draw out the implication of this reading a bit more. It is important to note that Rav Idi does not deny the existence of Meṭaṭron; he does not finally, cannot it seem, deny even the power of Meṭaṭron, of his capabilities as Second God. What he claims, rather, is that Israel has rejected such *worship*, even refused to entrust Meṭaṭron with leading them in the desert. Or as the Haggadah has it: Not by means of an angel, and not by means of an agent, and not by means of the Logos (that one’s only in old manuscripts). You may exist, Meṭaṭron, say the Rabbis, but we will not worship you. Somebody, it would seem was doing just that.

Meṭaṭron and Enoch

Where Did Meṭaṭron Come From?

In order to answer this question, *3 Enoch*, a relatively late Hebrew mystical apocalypse from the end of late antiquity (the last gasp as it were of the Enoch tradition) and probably roughly contemporaneous with the final production of the Babylonian Talmud itself will prove of crucial importance. One of the most important investigations of this text is that of Philip Alexander.²⁷ In this article, “The Historical Setting of the Hebrew Book of Enoch,” Alexander argues that a pivotal development that is found in this text is the combination of Enoch and the archangel Meṭaṭron, arguing that “these two figures originally had nothing to do with each other; there are texts which speak in detail of Enoch’s translation but

²⁶ Segal, *Powers*, protasis on p. 70, apotasis on p. 71.

²⁷ Alexander, “Historical Setting.”

know nothing of Meṭaṭron, while there are other texts which mention the angel Meṭaṭron without linking him with Enoch. The Meṭaṭron of *3 Enoch* marks the confluence of two initially quite independent streams of tradition.”²⁸ But, of course, this is the story of the Son of Man of the *Parables of Enoch* too. There too, two originally independent figures, translated Enoch and the Son of Man have been conflated.²⁹

The *Parables of Enoch* themselves are not necessarily or even probably to be seen as sectarian. In a very important recent paper, Pierluigi Piovanelli has used rhetorical analysis “in order to reconstruct the profile of the implied audience and community” of the *Parables of Enoch* and compellingly argues that the producers of this document did not belong to an embattled and oppressed sect but identified themselves, in fact, in some important sense with Israel as a whole. His interpretative assumption is that the “kings and the mighty” who are the declared enemies of the author(s) of the *Parables* are gentile (probably Roman) rulers.³⁰ Piovanelli has posed the question of the connections of the *Parables* to Qumran, on the one hand, or to *3 Enoch*, on the other. It seems to me that Piovanelli is right to stress these different alternatives, not only as mere matters of literary history but as powerful and significant indicators of the social location of the group that formed the text. Whether or not the text was in Hebrew or in Aramaic seems to me irrelevant, and the connections with *3 Enoch* compelling ones. Piovanelli’s demonstration of the non-sectarian nature of the book is thus of signal importance.

In his landmark article, Alexander also argues that Enoch’s transformation into divine Son of Man in the *Parables* and especially *2 Enoch*³¹

²⁸ Alexander, “Historical Setting,” 159. On the origins of Meṭaṭron himself, Alexander points us to H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (New York: Ktav, 1973), 79-146 and G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition* (2d ed.; New York: Jewish theological seminary of America, 1965), 42-55 inter alia. See Idel, “Enoch”; idem, “Meṭaṭron”; Stroumsa, “Form(s).”

²⁹ For my reading of this text, see “The Birth of the Son of Man: From Simile to Redeemer in *3 Enoch*.” See on this also Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, 32. For Meṭaṭron as Enoch, see Idel, “Enoch.”

³⁰ P. Piovanelli, “‘A Testimony for the Kings and Mighty Who Possess the Earth’: The Thirst for Justice and Peace in the Parables of Enoch,” in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables* (ed. G. Boccaccini; Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2007). J. C. Greenfield and M. E. Stone, “The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes,” *HTR* 70 (1977), 51-56, at 56-57 argue that it is a sectarian work but I find the arguments of Piovanelli persuasive.

³¹ This text, once referred to as the “Slavonic Enoch” cannot be so styled any more, since Coptic fragments have now been found for it.

enabled the later Merkabah and Kabbalistic identifications of Enoch with Meṭaṭron, the highest of the angels, arguing that “if such a development had not taken place, Enoch could never have been identified with the archangel Meṭaṭron.”³² We can thus take the roots of that transformation back to *1 Enoch*, that is to the *Parables* and emphasize the generativity of that transformation in the production of both rabbinic (para-rabbinic) and Christian Jewish Christology. As Alexander concludes, “We must postulate in consequence an historical link between the Hekhaloth mystics and the circles which generated these pseudepigraphic Enoch traditions.”³³ A genetic relationship, or better, a genealogical relationship between the Son of Man of the Gospels and Meṭaṭron of late ancient Judaism cannot be gainsaid, in my opinion.³⁴

Once more, my question is not to what group did the *min* (that one conversing with Rav Idi, or any other one) “really” belong but, rather, what are the Rabbis seeking to accomplish by representing a *min* who argues in this way? This suggests to me that in their project of producing an orthodoxy for Judaism, the Rabbis were disowning a common (how common, I think, we will never know) Jewish practice of worship of the second God, actually named within mystical texts, the lesser YHWH [My name is in him], Meṭaṭron, who is Enoch, the Son of Man.

Segal would have it that “other groups beside Christians were making ‘dangerous’ interpretations of that verse [Dan 7:9].” For Segal, the “enemy” is outside, external, marginal to the rabbinic community and religious world: “Identifying the specific group about whom the rabbis were concerned in this passage cannot be successful.”³⁵ He still worries that “determining the identity of the group of heretics in question remains a serious problem,”³⁶ as if there *necessarily were* a real, if unidentifiable, group of external heretics, as opposed to internal religious traditions, to whom the texts refer. In contrast to this fairly common, if not ubiquitous, way of presenting the matter, it is my contention that the Rabbis are effectively expelling the Two-Powers theology from within themselves by naming it as *minut*, heresy. The Enoch traditions were indeed, and continued to be right into and through late antiquity, the province of Israel *simpliciter* including early Jesus groups and not of a sect within Israel (of course this

³²) Alexander, “Historical Setting,” 160.

³³) Ibid.

³⁴) Stroumsa, “Form(s).”

³⁵) Segal, *Powers*, 71.

³⁶) Ibid., 55.

doesn't mean that they were of interest to all Jews or all Jewish groups). The Rabbis indeed seek by means of various halakic rules "the exclusion of [the body of esoteric doctrine], as having no proper place in the public institutions of Judaism."³⁷ In contrast, however, to Alexander's own view which sees these exclusions as reflecting accepted norms, I would read them—some would say perversely—as an index of how widespread, and not esoteric at all, these traditions remained.

Suppressing the Son of Man

One very rich example of such rabbinic expulsion of these ancient religious traditions and ideas is from the fourth-century midrash, the *Mekilta d'Rabbi Ishma'el* to Exod 20:2:

I am YHWH your God [Exod 20:2]: Why was it said? For this reason. At the sea He appeared to them as a mighty hero doing battle, as it is said: "YHWH is a man of war." At Sinai he appeared to them as an old man full of mercy. It is said: "And they saw the God of Israel" (Exod 24:10), etc. And of the time after they had been redeemed what does it say? "And the like of the very heaven for clearness" (ibid.). Again it says: "I beheld till thrones were placed, and one that was ancient of days did sit" (Dan 7:9). And it also says: "A fiery stream issued," etc. (v. 10). Scripture, therefore, would not let the nations of the world have an excuse for saying that there are two Powers, but declares: "YHWH is a man of war, YHWH is His name." He, it is, who was in Egypt and He who was at the sea. It is He who was in the past and He who will be in the future. It is He who is in this world and He who will be in the world to come, as it is said, "See now that I, even I, am He," etc. (Deut 32:39). And it also says: "Who hath wrought and done it? He that called the generations from the beginning. I, YHWH, who am the first, and with the last am the same" (Isa 41:4).³⁸

This passage clearly projects to the exterior "The Nations of the World," the hereticized view that there are Two Powers in Heaven; it may even have in mind here Christians in this designation.³⁹ This suggests the pos-

³⁷ Alexander, "Historical Setting," 167-68.

³⁸ H. S. Horowitz and I. A. Rabin, eds., *Mekilta d'Rabbi Ishmael* (Jerusalem: Wahrman, 1970), 220-21.

³⁹ See discussion in Segal, *Powers*, 33-42 whose argument is, unfortunately, somewhat vitiated in my opinion by a lack of precision in interpreting how the midrash works. I am persuaded that in earlier iterations of this argument, I was mistaken in asserting that this

sibility that it was nascent Christianity that provided one of the impulses to so thoroughly delegitimize what I have every reason to believe was an earlier theological option even within rabbinic circles (See the story of Rabbi Akiva just below). Note that this does not mean that I read the passage as a polemic against Christianity, nor that the Rabbis identified Christians as Two Powers heretics any more than Athanasius, for instance, really thought that Arius was a Jew.⁴⁰ Be this as it may, it is the passage from Daniel that is alluded to, *but not cited* in this anti-“heretical” polemic, the “Son of Man” passage so pivotal for the development of early Christology, that is the real point of contention here and the reason for the citation of the verse Exod 20:2. Although in Daniel read on its own, it certainly seems that the thrones are multiple and set up for the Court, it is clear from here as well as from other passages that late-ancient Jews read the thrones as two, one for the Ancient of Days and one for the One Like a Son of Man. There are, moreover, two descriptions of God as revealed in the Torah, one at the splitting of the Red Sea and one at the revelation of the Ten Commandments at Sinai. In the first, God is explicitly described as a warrior, that is, as a young man, as it were, while at the latter, as the Rabbis read it, God is described as an elder, full of wisdom and mercy. This is, as Adiel Schremer has correctly observed, derived from the continuation of the verse not cited, in which it says explicitly “And they saw the God of Israel and his underneath which appeared to that as white sapphire,” and thus old.⁴¹ Schremer goes on to argue, however, that all that the Rabbis of this midrash seek by citing the Dan 7 passage is another instance of God as an elder and that the rest of that context in Daniel is irrelevant to them.⁴² This seems unlikely to me for two reasons. First of all, the matter of the multiple thrones is already present in Dan 7:9 and quoted in the midrash, and we know from other texts that this was

term definitely means Christians here (For both points [Segal’s partly mistaken reading of the midrash and my own mistaken assumption that Nations of the World means Christians], see A. Schremer, “Midrash, Theology, and History: Two Powers in Heaven Revisited,” *JSJ* 39 [2008]: 230-54).

⁴⁰ R. Lorenz, *Arius Judaizans? Untersuchungen zur dogmengeschichtlichen Einordnung des Arius* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1979).

⁴¹ Schremer, “Midrash, Theology, and History,” 17. I had, indeed, entirely missed this point in my own earlier treatment of this text.

⁴² He thus argues that my interpretation of the passage as being troubled by the doubling of the Godhead implied by Dan 7 is a fantasy on my part, that I have written my own midrash, as it were.

also troubling to the Rabbis (see below).⁴³ Secondly, the citation of 7:10 “And it also says: A fiery stream issued,” etc. (v. 10) is totally otiose on Schremer’s reading. It is especially otiose in the form “and it also says” which should either be support for the first verse or a contradiction of it. Verse 10 is neither. I argue, using Schremer’s own correct notion that an “etc.” frequently hides and reveals the real force of the midrashic quotation, that citing v. 10 *etc.* is meant to include the whole following verses including the truly troubling vision of “One like a Son of Man.” To be sure, it is a bit of a stretch from v. 10 to v. 13, a stretch that I argue is an attempt to conceal more than reveal the real argument of those who would support “Two Powers in Heaven” from here. It would be, moreover, quite strange to assume that a text that is explicitly concerned with those who might say that there are two powers in heaven would cite Dan 7 where the “danger” of so “misreading” is palpable and *naively* ignore that danger. On my view, we thus now have two instances of the difficulty: one from Exodus and one from Daniel, for both of which the verse Exod 20:2 comes as a remedy.

The problem is the doubling of descriptions of God as Elder (זקן judge) and youth (בחור man of war) as implied in Exodus and the correlation of those two descriptions with the divine figures of Ancient of Days and Son of Man from Daniel, which together might easily lead one to think that there are Two Powers in Heaven, indeed that God has two persons, a Old person and a Young person. These were, of course, crucial loci for Christological interpretations. The citation of God’s Name in Exod 20:2, at the beginning of those same Ten Commandments, thus answers possible heretical implications of those verses by insisting on the unity of YHWH in both instances. The text portentously *avoids* citing the Daniel verses most difficult for rabbinic Judaism, 7:13-14: “I saw in the vision of the night, and behold with the clouds of the Heaven there came one like a Son of Man and came to the Ancient of Days and stood before him and brought him close, and to him was given rulership and the glory and the kingdom, and all nations, peoples, and languages will worship him. His rulership is eternal which will not pass, and his kingship will not be destroyed.”⁴⁴ Much more than the varying metaphors with which YHWH

⁴³) These are, to be sure, later texts, so there is no absolute proof here but they are, nonetheless, suggestive.

⁴⁴) For another instance in which, also in a polemical context, the Rabbis avoid citing the really difficult part of Dan 7, see Segal, *Powers*, 132.

is represented, it is this verse which would—and did—give rise to “the Nations of the World” claiming that there are two powers in heaven. Not citing them, is, accordingly to be understood as an enactment of the suppression of this view even more powerful than the explicit repression of the view that the midrashic text thematizes.

Furthermore, in a talmudic passage to be discussed immediately below (*b. Hag.* 14a), Rabbi Akiva himself is represented as identifying the “Son of Man,” that is the occupant of the second throne, with the heavenly David, and thus with the Messiah, before being “encouraged” by his fellows to abandon this “heretical” view.” The Targum identifies the Son of Man as the Messiah.⁴⁵ This would suggest the possibility that there were non-Christian Jews who would have identified the Messiah himself (necessarily incarnate) as the Son of Man. Altogether, in this extended passage of rabbinic literature which deals most extensively (if somewhat obliquely) with Son of Man traditions, namely the second chapter of *b. Hagiga*,⁴⁶ we find, on my reading some compelling evidence that such traditions were extant within the circles that produced the Babylonian Talmud itself and that *3 Enoch* cannot be separated from those circles at all. Let us then have a look at this text.

Let me be clear that in my view this is not evidence for early Palestinian rabbinic traditions, the *object* of the narratives of the Babylonian Talmud, but rather to the subjects of the enunciation of the narratives and their traditions that I assume were formed in late antiquity and in Babylonia, not to the Rabbis who are told about but to the Rabbis who did the telling.⁴⁷

⁴⁵ S. O. P. Mowinckel, *He That Cometh: The Messiah Concept in the Old Testament and Later Judaism* (trans. G. W. Anderson; Oxford: Blackwell, 1956), 357. See also M. Idel, *Messianic Mystics* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 89.

⁴⁶ There are other parallels as well, for instance, shared and extensive interest in meteorological phenomena.

⁴⁷ In his very interesting and important article, Adiel Schremer has proposed that the original context for talk of “Two Powers in Heaven” goes back to the second century and as a response to the Roman defeat of the two rebellions of the Jews (Schremer, “Midrash, Theology, and History”). Much of his argument is, to my mind, highly speculative and less than convincing (further detail will have to await another context), but there is certainly one early text that suggests a context in theodicy for the topos. The *Sifre* to Deut 32:39 reads that verse as denying three views: (1) that there is no power in heaven; (2) that there are two powers in heaven; and (3) that there is indeed only one but that he really has very little power at all. In a highly clever but hardly ineluctable (or refutable) move, Schremer reads this as a continuation of a previous passage in the context of the

One of the most evocative and revealing of these texts involves the just mentioned “heresy” of Rabbi Akiva in a discussion about the “Son of Man” passage from Daniel:

One verse reads: “His throne is sparks of fire” (Dan 7:9) and another [part of the] verse reads, “until thrones were set up and the Ancient of Days sat” (7:9). This is no difficulty: One was for him and one was for David.

As we learn in a *baraita* [non Mishnaic tannaitic tradition]: One for him and one for David; these are the words of Rabbi Akiva. Rabbi Yose the Galilean said to him: Akiva! Until when will you make the *Shekhinah* profane?! Rather. One was for judging and one was for mercy.

Did he accept it from him, or did he not?

Come and hear! One for judging and one for mercy, these are the words of Rabbi Akiva. (*b. Hag.* 14a)

As we see from this passage, the second-century Rabbi Akiva is portrayed as interpreting these verses in a way that certainly would seem consistent with “Two Powers in Heaven,” which, given its context, should be identified, I suggest, with speculation about the Son of Man as a second, youth-

midrash in which a story of Titus trying to kill God is recounted and then argues that the context for our passage about no power, two powers etc. is a refutation of those who would hold that the destruction of the Temple shows that God is “dead,” as it were. While, as I have said, this is very clever and *possible*, it hardly constitutes evidence sufficient to refute the clear evidence for rabbinic trouble with those—I emphasize within—who believe in a dual Godhead. It is certainly possible that at the time the *Sifre* was produced (and I am much less sanguine as to its hoary antiquity than Schremer but this is an old methodological argument), Two Powers in Heaven was not yet even a name for that belief and that it is only later (but not much, for by the time of the *Mekilta* that I have discussed just above it certainly was) applied to that accepted belief now being excluded as heretical and given a name. But, once again, I emphasize what should have been clear anyway: I think that the real struggle over this name took place in late antiquity and not in tannaitic times at all. Hence, my suggestion which I advance much more cautiously now in the light of several responses including most recently Schremer’s that there is necessarily a border-setting move with respect to the Church going on in this rabbinic turn to Orthodoxy. It might, indeed, be, as several responders suggested a more general mood of turning to versions of “Truth” (including even in the philosophical schools) that was as much the catalyst as the specifically Christian version of this, but, nonetheless, the *product* of these two activities was a virtual conspiracy to divide the theological world between Jews who don’t believe in a dual Godhead and Christians who insist on it, each group of religious leaders excluding from their own number those who hold earlier views and marking them as belonging to an-other, a heresy.

ful divine figure alongside the Ancient of Days. A comment of John Goldingay's will help to make this point:

For the anointed one to be a heavenly figure would be a novel idea; by definition, the anointed one is an earthly descendant of David. The visionary portrayal of him coming with the clouds of the heavens might simply signify that he comes by God's initiative and as his gift, without suggesting that he is in himself other than human... Nevertheless, if the humanlike figure is the anointed, the anointed as Daniel pictures him now has a very transcendent dimension. If the idea of the anointed moves between a God pole and a human pole, the humanlike figure is at the former.⁴⁸

The tanna'im cited in the Bavli both read Dan 7 in this way: The second throne is for a second divine figure (the Shekhinah) which Rabbi Akiva identifies as David. We have, here then, both binitarianism and an incarnation, which latter raises Rabbi Yose's dander. It is highly unlikely, *pace* Alan Segal (cautiously), that we are dealing here with a "genuine" tradition about Rabbi Akiva from early in the second century, this on general methodological grounds. Let me elaborate my reading of the passage. Although, as I have suggested, the text (and other rabbinic texts) carefully, gingerly avoid actually citing the Son of Man passage in these very verses, it is on these verses that they indeed rely. The portrayed Rabbi Akiva's point is that one of the two thrones (as per his tradition of reading) was for the Ancient of Days and one for David, thus the Son of Man. The crux is his identification of David, the Messiah, as the "Son of Man" who sits at God's right hand, thus suggesting not only a divine figure but one who is incarnate in a human being as well⁴⁹—"Are you the Messiah? I am and you shall see 'the son of man' sitting on the right hand of power and coming in the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62). Hence, his objector's taunt: "Until when will you make the Divine Presence profane"?!, that is, imply that the Son of Man has become incarnate in the human figure of the Davidic Messiah.⁵⁰ Rabbi Akiva seems to be projecting a divine-human,

⁴⁸) J. Goldingay, *Daniel* (WBC; Dallas: Word, 1989), 170.

⁴⁹) Segal, *Powers*, 47.

⁵⁰) For precisely this combination, see *4 Ezra* 12:32 in which it is insisted that the heavenly "Son of Man" comes from the posterity of David, "even though it is not apparent why a descendant of David should come on the clouds" (A. Yarbro Collins and J. J. Collins, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 2008], 207)!

Son of Man, who will be the Messiah. His contemporary R. Yose the Galilean strenuously objects to Rabbi Akiva's "dangerous" interpretation and gives the verse a "Modalist" interpretation.

"Rabbi Akiva" s interpretation grows out of precisely the same kind of conflation of Messiah, Son of David with the Redeeming, divine Son of Man of Dan 7 that we find in Mark, producing similar Christological results. Supporting this interpretation (at least in the Babylonian Talmud; perhaps stemming from earlier Palestinian usages) we read the following passage in *b. Sanh.* 98a:

Rabbi Alexandri said: Rabbi Yehoshua the son of Levi raised a contradiction: It is written [Dan 7] and behold with the clouds of heaven there came one like a human being, and it is written [Zech 9] poor and riding on a donkey! If they are righteous, with the clouds of heaven; if they are not righteous, poor and riding on a donkey.⁵¹

Obviously the Talmud does not speak of two Messiahs here; it is hard to imagine anyone claiming they did⁵²—notwithstanding the fact, of course, that there are two Messiahs according to the Rabbis, Ben Yosef and Ben David. But it is clear that Dan 7 had been given a messianic reading and that there was tension felt between the Messiah of Dan 7 and the Messiah of Zech 9, between the Messiah as a divine figure and the Messiah as a humiliated human being, expressed in good rabbinic fashion as a contradiction between verses resolved in a totally topical fashion in the text.⁵³ The tension and the potential it bears for an incarnational reading is

⁵¹ אמר רבי אלכסנדר: רבי יהושע בן לוי רמי, כתיב +דניאל ז' + ואור עם עניי שמיא כבר אנש אתה, וכתיב +זכריה ט' + עני ורכב על חמור! – זכו – עם עניי שמיא, לא זכו – עני ורכב על חמור.

⁵² Pace D. R. Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 19 who quotes the passage quite out of its own context as a midrash on the two verses on the way to his misleading conclusion that "Rabbi Joshua was discussing the timing of the Messiah's advent, not his nature."

⁵³ Directly *contra* M. Casey, *Son of Man: The Interpretation and Influence of Daniel 7* (London: S.P.C.K., 1979), 87. Of course, the rabbinic tradition insisted on a corporate interpretation of the Son of Man (Casey, *Son of Man*, 80-84); the point here is *not* that Rabbi Akiva represents the dominant and accepted rabbinic tradition but that he represents some sort of dissident or underground counter tradition (and remember this almost certainly has little to do, in any case, with the "historical" Rabbi Akiva) which is being explicitly discredited in this text in favor of the developing standard rabbinic theology and reading. This point has similarly been misunderstood by Hare, *The Son of Man Tradition*, 18.

nonetheless there. It is this tension, I think, that motivates the controversy between the figures of Rabbi Akiva and Rabbi Yose in the *Hagiga* text as well. Of course, the Talmud itself must record that Rabbi Akiva changed his mind in order for him to remain “orthodox.” The Son of Man, aka “Two Powers in Heaven,” is thus not foreign even at the very heart of the rabbinic enterprise. Even a figure like Rabbi Akiva has to be “educated” as to the heretical nature of his position, suggesting once again that any absolute difference between mystical circles that embrace such theological notions and rabbinic circles that have always, as it were, rejected such malignant influence, has to be withdrawn once and for all. This is what the editors of the Talmud would want us to believe but a different reality is easy to perceive behind their very efforts to convince.

In another late-ancient Hebrew text of mysterious provenience known as “The Visions of Ezekiel,” Meṭaṭron is also posited as a secondary divine figure on the grounds of Dan 7:9f. At least according to one view expressed there, “His name is Meṭaṭron, like the Name of the Power,”⁵⁴ thus recalling the Sanhedrin passage with which I began. Furthermore, the particular emphasis here on God being named, “the Power,” might also suggest a connection with thoughts of more than one power in heaven, or it might not.

In any case, this is the same figure who in other late-ancient Jewish mystical texts is sometimes called “The Youth” נער, i.e., that figure known by other Jews (e.g., Jesus) as the “Son of Man,” the young divine figure as opposed to the Ancient of Days.⁵⁵ This text helps us to bring the ends of

⁵⁴ I. Gruenwald, “‘The Visions of Ezekiel’: Critical Edition and Commentary,” *Temirin* 1 (1972): 101-39, at 128-29 [Hebrew]. See discussion in Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, 45-46 and literature cited there. On the text itself, the best discussion is perhaps that of A. Goldberg “Pereq Re’uyot Yeḥezqē’el: eine formanalytische Untersuchung,” in *Mystik und Theologie des Rabbinischen Judentums. Gesammelte Studien I* (ed. M. Schlüter and P. Schäfer; TSAJ 61; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 93-147. I am grateful to Peter Schäfer for referring me to this article in an otherwise singularly ungracious note, Schäfer, *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, 323 n. 367. In the wake of Goldberg’s article, I have removed the attribute “mystical” from my casual description of the text, but I must confess: I still don’t understand what part of “late-ancient” Schäfer doesn’t understand. The best discussion of this passage remains that of Scholem, *Gnosticism*, 45-48 in my opinion.

⁵⁵ Segal, *Powers*, 67 n. 21, which seems to me spot on. In other words, both of the ancient explanations of this term, namely that he is the youngest of the angels or that he is a servant are both, it would seem, apologetic etymologies. As I learn from Stroumsa, in a Nag Hammadi text known as the *Paraphrase of Shem*, the “son of the incorruptible and

the argument offered here together. Putting together the different bits and pieces that other scholars have constructed into a new mosaic, I would suggest that we have a very important clue here to follow. From the text in Daniel, as read by the Rabbis themselves, it would seem clear that there are two divine figures pictured, one who is ancient and another one who is young. "Son of Man" here in its paradigmatic contrast with the Ancient of Days should be read as youth, young man (as it is even in the rabbinic texts that deny that it represents a second person).⁵⁶ The usage is similar to "sons of doves" meaning young of the dove as in Num 6:10. It should be noted that the figure of the "Youth" appears as well (at least once) in texts accepted into the rabbinic canon itself, such as *Num. Rab.* 12:12 and explicitly denoted there as Meṭaṭron. We end up with a clear indication of a second divine person, called the Youth (Son of Man). When he is called or calls himself the "Son of Man," this is a citation of the Daniel text.⁵⁷ He is called the "Youth," i.e., the "Son of Man" in contrast to the "Ancient of Days." These traditions all understand accordingly that two divine figures are portrayed in Dan 7, whom we might be tempted to call the Father and the Son. Evidence for this concatenation of Enoch, Meṭaṭron, and the Son of Man can be adduced from the *Parables of Enoch* at 1 *En.* 71, in which Enoch is explicitly addressed as the Son of Man. If Enoch is the Son of Man and Enoch is Meṭaṭron, then, it follows (if not with airtight logic) that Meṭaṭron is the Son of Man. The direct connection of that risen Enoch to Meṭaṭron in 3 *Enoch* fully establishes the nexus between the Son of Man and Meṭaṭron.

infinite light," is called Derdekas (CG VII, 8:4-25), which is certainly the Babylonian Aramaic word *dardeka*, which means a youth, and not a servant (Stroumsa, "Form[s]," 275 n. 31). The notion that this Youth is called the Youth because he is the youngest of the angels is in clear contradiction with the supreme dignity afforded the figure of Meṭaṭron throughout. On the figure of the Youth, see also Orlov, *The Enoch-Meṭaṭron Tradition*, 222-26.

⁵⁶ I am anticipated and confirmed in this view now by Idel, *Ben*, 131, tacitly reversing the claim of his much earlier Idel, "Meṭaṭron," 36.

⁵⁷ Although Scholem famously interpreted "youth" in these contexts as "servant," there is, therefore, little warrant for this interpretation. D. J. Halperin, "A Sexual Image in Hekhalot Rabbati and Its Implications," *Jerusalem Studies in Jewish Thought* 6 (1987): 117-32, at 125.

No Sitting in Heaven

Recognizing this connection, we can make others and further interpret a great talmudic crux, for the narrative of Rabbi Akiva's redemption from heresy is followed in the text of *Ḥagiga* by the even more well known story of Elisha ben Abuya's apostasy. This famous heretic, upon seeing a vision of the glorious being named Meṭaṭron sitting at the right hand of God, concluded that there are "Two powers in heaven," the arch-heresy of the Talmud.⁵⁸

According to the Talmud:

Our Rabbis have taught: Four went into the *Pardes*, and who are they? Ben 'Azzai and Ben Zoma, Aḥer, and Rabbi Akiva... Aḥer chopped down the shoots. Rabbi Akiva came out safely...

'Aḥer chopped down the shoots': Of him the verse says, "Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin" [Eccl 5:5]. What does this mean? He saw that Meṭaṭron had been given permission [רשות] to sit and write the good deeds of Israel. He said, but it is taught that on high there will be no sitting, no conflict, no "back,"⁵⁹ and no tiredness! Perhaps, G-d forbid, there are two powers [שתי רשויות]! They took Meṭaṭron out and whipped him with sixty whips of fire. They said to him: "What is the reason that when you saw him, you did not get up before him?" He [Meṭaṭron] was given permission to erase the good deeds of Aḥer. A voice came out from heaven and said: Return O backsliding ones [Jer 3:14/22]—except for Aḥer.

He said, "Since that man has been driven out of that world, let him go out and enjoy himself in this world!" He went out to evil culture. He went and found a prostitute and solicited her. She said, "But aren't you Elisha ben Abuya?" He went and uprooted a radish on the Sabbath and gave it to her. She said, "He is an other [Aḥer]." (*b. Ḥag.* 15a)

This remarkable story, as can well be imagined, has excited much scholarly attention. Yehuda Liebes emphasizes correctly that it is impossible to see this as a narrative of a real Elisha who joined a heretical sect.⁶⁰ Segal

⁵⁸) Below I shall discuss a very different interpretation of this material by A. Goshen-Gottstein, *The Sinner and the Amnesiac: The Rabbinic Invention of Elisha Ben Abuya and Eleazar Ben Arach* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2000): 89-111. I hope to make good here a real lacuna in my earlier treatments, namely, as Goshen-Gottstein puts it himself, Boyarin having "curiously ignored" this text in my earlier publications.

⁵⁹) See below for explanation of this term.

⁶⁰) Y. Liebes, *The Sin of Elisha: Four Who Entered Pardes and the Nature of Talmudic Mysticism* (Jerusalem: Academ, 1990), 12 [Hebrew].

nically observes that “in its present context [the story] is an etiology of heresy. It explains how certain people, who had special Meṭaṭron traditions, risk the heretical designation of ‘two powers in heaven.’”⁶¹ This can be pushed a bit further. As J. Rendell Harris observed as early as 1917: “We now begin to see that the controversy between Arius and Athanasius is not a mere struggle of an orthodox Church with an aggressive and cancerous heresy: the heretic is the orthodox conservative, and the supposed orthodox champion is the real progressive.”⁶² The structural comparison with Christian etiologies of heresy and heresiarchs suggests that, like those, Aḥer represents older theological traditions which have been anathematized as heresy by the authors of the story.⁶³ Almost certainly underlying Aḥer/Elisha’s vision of Meṭaṭron is the same passage in Daniel that “misled” Rabbi Akiva, taking the “One like a Son of Man” as a separate person. The latter’s error was hermeneutical/theological, the former’s is visionary/theological, but the error is essentially precisely the same, the assumption that the second throne is for a second divine figure. Let me now argue for that conclusion.

The cause of Aḥer’s turn to heresy as we have it in the Bavli is very very puzzling. On the one hand, it is clear that it is the fact of Meṭaṭron’s sitting that causes Aḥer to fall into error but on the other hand, his own speech about this seems incoherent, or nearly so, as he remarks that “but it is taught that on high there will be [no standing,]⁶⁴ no sitting, no [jealousy], no conflict, no ‘back’ and no tiredness!”⁶⁵ How is this list connected with the fact that Meṭaṭron was sitting, other than the sitting itself, and what in it caused Aḥer to consider the possibility of Two Powers in Heaven? On the one hand, there are indications—at least in most witnesses—that the sitting evoked thoughts of competition between God and Meṭaṭron, but directly contradicting that is the suggestion that Meṭaṭron sat because he was tired, which would certainly suggest his mor-

⁶¹ Segal, *Powers*, 62.

⁶² J. R. Harris, *The Origin of the Prologue to St. John’s Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1917), 49.

⁶³ For comparison to an actual observable historical instance within late ancient Christianity, see V. Burrus, *The Making of a Heretic: Gender, Authority, and the Priscillianist Controversy* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

⁶⁴ Following several mss.

⁶⁵ For discussion of the various recensions of this list, see Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, 50-51, following in part Alexander, “3 Enoch and the Talmud.”

tality, not his divinity!⁶⁶ Alexander suggests that the list has been imported from another text (which is not extant) in which it is asserted that “God and the angels are without body parts or passions. In rather Platonic fashion it defined the heavenly world as the negation of all that we know and experience here on earth.”⁶⁷ We can build a bit further on this crucial insight. Michal Bar-Asher Siegal remarked of this list that it is hermeneutic in character as well as Platonic.⁶⁸ Each of the elements in the list refers to a verse: thus, for standing, we find Num 12:5, where the verse reads: “And YHWH came down on a column of cloud and stood in front of the Tent.” Or for another striking example, when the verse of Job 25:2, “He makes peace in his heaven,” is taken to mean that there is conflict, תחרות in heaven by the early midrash [*Sifre Bamidbar* 42], using in this case exactly the same word as that which our text denies. Similarly we can find verses that suggest, imply, or actually impute, jealousy, tiredness, and sitting, of course.⁶⁹ The crux, “back,” is now neatly solved as well. Referring to the back of God that Moses allegedly saw [Exod 33:23], the text denies the literal existence of that as well.⁷⁰ Our statement comes, Maimonidean *avant le figure*, to indicate that these are all metaphorical and not literal statements, and no more. The original point of the statement was simply that God has no body and thus none of these characteristics that seem implied by the biblical text.

Alexander further remarks correctly that in the Bavli the implication of this text has been distorted and made to seem as if what we learn from it is that angels can't sit. He suggests, moreover, that the version of Munich 95 which does not mention Meṭaṭron as sitting at all is to be preferred as the oldest. He proposes that since the version of Munich 95 left the reason for Aḥer's error unfathomable, later redactors “seized on the element ישיבה [sitting] in the quotation . . . and interpreted it in the light of the

⁶⁶ For all of these puzzlements, see Alexander, “3 Enoch and the Talmud,” 58. On this last point, cf. Fraenkel, *Aggadic Narrative*, 342, who quite cleverly makes sense of the whole list, from sitting through conflict to tiredness, but does not notice apparently that there is a built in contradiction in the list as he reads it. His interpretation of the conflict or competition as between different angels and not as rivalry with God quite misses the point in my opinion, as well.

⁶⁷ Alexander, “3 Enoch and the Talmud,” 61.

⁶⁸ Personal communication.

⁶⁹ For tiredness, see God's resting on the seventh day. God is, indeed, described as a “jealous” God; see, for example Num 20:4.

⁷⁰ Elliot Wolfson made a similar suggestion to me with respect to this element also.

idea that angels in heaven do not sit.”⁷¹ The bottom line of Alexander’s reconstruction is that the alleged earliest text is so cryptic as to be unintelligible and the later text-forms are incoherent.

In his article, Alexander has discussed too the connection between our passage and its parallel in *3 Enoch*. Here is the text in his translation:⁷²

Rabbi Ishmael said to me: The angel Meṭaṭron, Prince of the Divine Presence, the glory of highest heaven, said to me:

At first I was sitting on a great throne at the door of the seventh palace, and I judged all the denizens of the heights, the *familia* of the Omnipresent, on the authority of the Holy One, blessed be he. I assigned greatness, royalty, rank, sovereignty, glory, praise, diadem, crown, and honour to all the Princes of Kingdoms, when I sat in the heavenly court. The Princes of Kingdoms stood beside me, to my right and to my left, by authority of the Holy One, blessed be he.

But when Aher came to behold the vision of the Merkabah and set eyes on me, he was afraid and trembled before me. His soul was alarmed to the point of leaving him because of his fear, dread and terror of me, when he saw me seated upon a throne like a king, with ministering angels standing beside me like servants, and all the Princes of Kingdoms crowned with crowns surrounding me.

Then he opened his mouth and said: “There are indeed two powers in heaven!” Immediately a heavenly voice came out from the presence of the Shekhinah and said: “Return, backsliding children—except for Aher!”

Then ‘Anafī’el YHWH, the honoured, glorified, beloved, wonderful, terrible, and dreadful Prince came at the dispatch of the Holy One, blessed be he, and struck me with sixty lashes of fire and made me stand upon my feet.⁷³

These two texts are clearly closely related. Most scholars from Urbach to Alexander to Goshen-Gottstein make the *3 Enoch* version dependent on the Talmudic story, while a few dissent.⁷⁴ I will file a brief here for the

⁷¹ Alexander, “3 Enoch and the Talmud,” 63.

⁷² Ibid., 54-66.

⁷³ Ibid., 63-64.

⁷⁴ The *3 Enoch* version dependent on the Talmudic story: E. E. Urbach, “The Traditions About Merkabah Mysticism in the Tannaitic Period,” in *Studies in Mysticism and Religion, Presented to Gershom G. Scholem* (ed. E. E. Urbach, R. J. Z. Werblowsky, and C. Wirszubski; Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1967), 1-28 [Hebrew]; Alexander, “3 Enoch and the Talmud”; Goshen-Gottstein, *Sinner. Dissenters*: C. Morray-Jones, “Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition”; Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*. See discussion below in body of the text.

dissent.⁷⁵ The Enoch version, which is coherent and intelligible, is the source for the talmudic version which is not.⁷⁶ Alexander argues that the text in *3 Enoch* has been based, not only on the Bavli, but specifically on the latest recension of it. One would have to assume that an incomprehensible text led to an incoherent one and out of the incoherent one, a brilliant redactor or rewriter produced the powerful coherent narrative of *3 Enoch*. I propose rather that that perfectly coherent and powerful narrative that we find in *3 Enoch* (without claiming necessarily that this is its original home) was the earlier form of this narrative, distorted in all of the recensions of the Talmud for a particular rabbinic ecclesiastical reason. I agree with Alexander that the purpose of the author of *3 Enoch* was to validate Meṭatron speculation while that of the Talmud was to delegitimize that very speculation; I simply disagree as to whose intervention came first. In the Enochic version of the story, Meṭatron himself emphasizes that he was seated on a throne and judging on the authority of the Holy One. I think it highly likely that this statement of authority to sit is a marked allusion to the very enthronement scene in Dan 7 which has been the pumping heart of the tradition. Aḥer's confusion is occasioned precisely by this allusion which he gets too: Is it possible that the interpretation of those verses from Daniel so current in Israel and lately declared heretical is true?! Perhaps there are indeed Two Powers in Heaven (although, to be sure, in the Enochic version there isn't even that moment of doubt: Aḥer simply declares that there are Two Powers in Heaven). In the talmudic version of the story which deliberately—in my view—obliterates the throne, all that is left is the sitting, so tame as, according to Alexander, to be explicable as “a posture, he has adopted, it seems, because he functions as the recording angel in the heavenly law court.”⁷⁷ In short, I suggest that

⁷⁵ This does not preclude the possibility of secondary “contamination” from talmudic sources in the tradition of *3 Enoch* but it does suggest that the Merkava traditions, including this one about Meṭatron, developed semi-independently of the talmudic tradition and engaged in various forms of interaction with that tradition. For a similar perspective, see Morray-Jones, “Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition,” 34-39.

⁷⁶ *Pace* Alexander, “3 Enoch and the Talmud,” 65. There is, to be sure, yet another possibility, namely that the Enoch text preserves an earlier version of the talmudic text and that the version in the Talmud has been tampered with by later editors. This may indeed be the correct solution, but I'm not sure it would appreciably change my argument.

⁷⁷ Alexander, “3 Enoch and the Talmud,” 56. I, accordingly, could hardly disagree with Alexander more when he says, “The cause of Aher's blasphemy may not have been what Meṭatron was doing, but rather his glorious appearance,” *ibid.*, 62. For another example of one holding Alexander's view on this matter, see Idel, “Enoch,” 225, who totally elides the “sitting” which to my mind is the very crux of the matter.

the list of standing, sitting, necks, and tiredness is a kind of camouflage of the original issue which is thereby hidden in plain sight.

There is another support for this conclusion as well. The word translated “permission” would be much better translated as authority, power, or sovereignty, as it is the same word, רשות that appears in that very heretical thought of Aḥer’s “Perhaps (G-d forbid), there are Two Powers” [רשויות שתי] and, indeed, bears close comparison with the Greek ἐξουσία too, as shown by Segal.⁷⁸ Far better, I think, to translate “Two Sovereignities in Heaven.” The same word that is used to indicate the authority or sovereignty given Meṭatron to sit and write the virtues of Israel [רשות] is used to indicate the name of the alleged heresy. I suggest, therefore, that it was the combination of sitting, suggesting the enthronement, and authority or sovereignty to sit and judge that is represented as both Aḥer’s mistake, bringing the talmudic text very very—and crucially—close to the *3 Enoch* version, in which it is the fact of Meṭatron’s enthronement which leads to the idea of Two Sovereignities.⁷⁹ Both versions, *3 Enoch*’s and the Talmud’s as I interpret it, go back to Dan 7:13, and the talmudic רשות is the equivalent in Hebrew of the שלטן awarded the “One like a Son of Man,” where the Septuagint gives ἐξουσία. When Aḥer saw that sovereignty had been awarded to Meṭatron to sit, it is no wonder that he concluded (even tentatively) that there are Two Sovereignities in Heaven, namely precisely God and that “One Like a Son of Man,” to whom sovereignty [שלטן] had been awarded in Daniel. Whether called Meṭatron or David, Enoch or Jesus, the second divine figure is the Son of Man. Locating this “heretical” interpretation right at the heart of the rabbinic academy and indeed among some of its leading figures strongly suggests that these views had been current in the very Jewish circles from which the Rabbis emerged and the views were eventually anathematized by them and driven out. Meṭatron is scourged with sixty *pulse* of fire. As we learn from *b. B. Meṣi’a* 47a, this practice [whatever it quite means in terms of realia] represents a particularly dire form of anathema or even excommunication. The dual inscription of excommunication in the narrative, that of Meṭatron on the one hand and of his “devotee” on the other, suggests strongly to me that it is the belief in this figure as second divine person that is being anathema-

⁷⁸) See too Segal, *Powers*, 7 n. 8.

⁷⁹) Indeed, it would be strange to find the word רשות here and claim that it is not connected with the רשויות שתי, which is, after all, only the plural of the exact same noun. See Goshen-Gottstein, *Sinner*, 110, anticipating this point.

tized (although somehow the Rabbis seem unable to completely dispense with him—he was just too popular it would seem). I would take this story as a further oblique recognition and allegorical representation of the fact that this “heresy” was once comfortably *within* “Judaism” and has only lately become *Aḥer*, “Other.”⁸⁰

Following Alexander’s insight that the phrase “but it is taught that on high there will be [no standing,]⁸¹ no sitting, no [jealousy], no competition, no ‘back’ and no tiredness!” is an import into the text from another context entirely (albeit a very early import), the weak explanation for Elisha’s error given by the Talmud can be understood as part of the very process of camouflage of the real reason for Elisha’s “confusion,” which is identical to that of *3 Enoch*. In the version in *3 Enoch*, it is the sitting on a throne and with it the imputation of sovereignty that so discomfits Elisha that he becomes *Aḥer*, the Other one, the one who is Other to himself. This is the case in the Talmud’s version as well if we remove the “import” from the text and reconstruct a proto-talmudic version, which would then read:

He saw that Meṭaṭron had been given permission [רשות] to sit and write the good deeds of Israel. Perhaps, G-d forbid, there are two powers [שתי רשויות]!

This reconstruction would make absolutely clear the good reason for Elisha’s “error.” In the Talmud as we find it, this factor has been so modified as to render the text nearly unintelligible. Such a state of affairs is only explicable, in my view, on the assumption that the clearer text has been muddied on purpose and Meṭaṭron’s place on the throne next to YHWH left behind. I thus precisely reverse (a kind of reverse philology, as it were) the order of the events from Alexander’s reconstruction: The version in *3 Enoch* is the oldest one extant (whether or not it originated in the tradition of that book or was imported from a common source between the Bavli as we have it and *3 Enoch*). It focused exactly on the

⁸⁰) The position I am taking here bears comparison with W. Bauer, G. Krodel, and R. A. Kraft, *Orthodoxy and Heresy in Earliest Christianity* (ed. G. Krodel; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1971), except that we must avoid entirely such absurd formulations as heresy precedes orthodoxy, as if there are real entities and not merely the constructions of particular politically powerful religious parties at particular historical moments. On the derivation of the name *Aḥer*, none of the explanations proffered so far are convincing to me including the most recent one of Goshen-Gottstein, *Sinner*, 64-69.

⁸¹) Following several mss.

question of the second throne which perfectly explains Aḥer's reaction: There are two powers in heaven!

According to my reconstruction a text very like this underlies the Talmud's version as well: Meṭaṭron had been given רשות to sit and write, and Elisha concluded quite plausibly that there are שתי רשויות. In order to suppress any such possibility—much as it did in the case of Rabbi Akiva discussed above—, the Bavli imported the “Platonic” text about sitting and standing and necks and tiredness and thus obliterated the throne, making Aḥer's response a barely intelligible reaction to a contradiction between a tradition that angels don't sit and Meṭaṭron's sitting. It is not clear in any case how this contradiction about the postures of angels would lead Aḥer to conclude (or even speculate) that there are Two Powers in Heaven, whereas finding Meṭaṭron on a Godly throne with sovereignty surely would do that. To my mind, an interpretation such as mine that regards the sitting as the crux of the matter from the beginning to the end of the tradition (however attenuated and blurred in the talmudic versions—on purpose I warrant) is superior to hypotheses that submit that the sitting motif was born ex nihilo in a later redaction of the Talmud.⁸² Quite the opposite: The version in Munich 95 that doesn't mention sitting seems to me to be a fairly simple sort of scribal error, the omission of a word, and nothing else; this is particularly attractive as a philological suggestion since the words “to write” למכתב and “to sit” למיטב differ in but one letter, easily allowing a haplography. As Prof. Lieberman, OBM used to say: every scribal error is a lectio difficilior.⁸³

The “sitting” is indeed the crux, as it invokes the Dan 7 passage as interpreted midrashically together with Ps 110:1, e.g., in Mark 14:62 with the “Son of Man” sitting at the right hand of God, the source of Rabbi Akiva's “error” as well. The ascription to Meṭaṭron in this text of both judicial and scribal roles, precisely those given to the Son of Man as early as the *Parables*, strongly support this connection as well, although to be sure, these roles are not extant in the *3 Enoch* text. The talmudic text cannot, in my view, be isolated or insulated from the Enoch tradition as represented in *3 Enoch*; it is engaged in a massive struggle, as it itself seems to under-

⁸²) Pace Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, 66-67, but Deutsch's view is already a big step forward.

⁸³) This renders Alexander's redactional theory considerably less “inescapable,” than Morray-Jones, “Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition,” 23 imagines and to which Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, 54 assents.

stand, with such highly ancient and well-rooted elements of Jewish religiosity as the second Throne, and a second divine person who absorbs the translated Enoch. It is simply, then, not the case that the so-called pseudepigraphic literature had no legs in later Judaism and was only preserved within Christian circles.⁸⁴ This is a highly contested question, of course, and I am staking out a strong position on this contested question. I would propose that these apocalyptic traditions remained vital among Jews without making any absolutely clear distinction between the Rabbis and other Jews on this point, imagining that alongside of other developments within late-ancient Jewish culture, various forms of apocalyptic writing also continued and developed new forms, interacting in differing ways with other streams of rabbinic and para-rabbinic tradition including those that sought to suppress those apocalyptic traditions.⁸⁵

The Enoch text is at as much pain to clarify that Meṭaṭron worship does not constitute a theological assertion of Two Powers as the Bavli is.⁸⁶ Alon Goshen-Gottstein is accordingly fully correct in his conclusion that the whipping of Meṭaṭron is not a punishment of the angel but a demonstration to Aḥer that Meṭaṭron is not an independent power but a subordinate one.⁸⁷ Adducing parallels from other rabbinic texts, he shows how various angelic figures are humiliated when there is a danger that humans might think them second and coequal divinities.⁸⁸ Those talmudic witnesses that gloss this as a punishment to Meṭaṭron for not standing up when Elisha got there, must then represent secondary, late interventions in the text which have simply misunderstood it as a punishment, and, indeed, are only found in the later witnesses to the text.⁸⁹ These late text forms cannot, then, almost by definition be the source of *3 Enoch*, which clearly did understand what the whipping of Meṭaṭron meant. Even the notion that Meṭaṭron was indemnified for this humiliation via a retaliation

⁸⁴ See on this point also Idel, "Meṭaṭron," 30.

⁸⁵ Important in this regard is Morray-Jones, "Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition." I take no, absolutely no position on the question of mystical or hermeneutical experience.

⁸⁶ Cf. Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, 72.

⁸⁷ Goshen-Gottstein, *Sinner*, 106.

⁸⁸ See already S. Lieberman, "Meṭaṭron, the Meaning of His Name and His Functions," in *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (ed. I. Gruenwald; AGJU 14; Leiden: Brill, 1980), 235-41, at 239.

⁸⁹ See on this very point, Fraenkel, *Aggadic Narrative*, 344 n. 107, with whom I totally agree here. This late text form, which Alexander considered the basis for the *3 Enoch* text, apparently only takes shape in the late middle ages.

against Aḥer for having caused it, which is found in all the versions of the talmudic text, seems secondary to the sanguine narration by the angel himself of his having been whipped to debunk Elisha's erroneous conclusion.

Goshen-Gottstein has argued with some force that the "perhaps" of the Talmud is intelligible as part of a fixed form in which an authority says "Perhaps, G-d forbid, x is the case" and then is disabused of his erroneous notion. According to his complete rereading of the entire text, Elisha ben Abuya did not sin at all but merely made a momentary error of judgment which was immediately corrected as in the typical form of talmudic stories that include, "Perhaps G-d forbid..."⁹⁰ Although his comparison to the talmudic topos is a brilliant insight that cannot be gainsaid (and one that completely discredits notions of this formula simply having been added by later, overly pious glossators), its implication can, nonetheless, be overturned in the following fashion: As part of his strategy in shifting the story from pro-Meṭaṭron to anti-Meṭaṭron as it were, the redactor of the Bavli used the existing topic of "Perhaps G-d forbid," in order to produce a powerful refutation of the Two Powers thesis: Even the "heretic" didn't quite believe what he saw and thought. As Goshen-Gottstein himself realizes this adaptation of that topos is, in any case, not at all a perfect or even very good fit for the Meṭaṭron narrative. The pattern is always one in which the pious speaker expresses a fear that something untoward or shocking is true and is then disabused of this notion and thus comforted, ending with a pious declaration on his part.⁹¹ Almost the exact opposite happens here! Either we must accept this as a parody of the usual formula

⁹⁰ Goshen-Gottstein, *Sinner*, 107-10.

⁹¹ Goshen-Gottstein, *Sinner*, 108. Here is a typical example of the topos:

תלמוד בבלי מסכת פסחים דף נו עמוד א
 דאמר רבי שמעון בן לקיש: +בראשית מט+ ויקרא יעקב אל בניו ויאמר האספו ואגידה לכם.
 ביקש יעקב לגלות לבניו קץ הימים, ונסתלקה ממנו שכינה. אמר: שמא חס ושלום יש במטתי
 פסול, כאברהם שיצא ממנו ישמעאל, ואבי יצחק שיצא ממנו עשו. אמרו לו בניו: שמע
 ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד. אמרו: כשם שאין בלבך אלא אחד – כך אין בלבנו אלא אחד.
 באותה שעה פתח יעקב אבינו ואמר: ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד.

Rabbi Shim'on the son of Lakish said: "Jacob called to his sons and said I will tell you" (Gen 49:1). Jacob intended to reveal to his sons the end of days but the Shekhinah departed from him. He said Perhaps, G-d forbid there is in my tribe an impurity like that of Abraham from whom Ishmael went out or my father Isaac from whom Esau went out! His sons said to him: Hear O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. They said, just as in your heart this is only One, so in our hearts, there is only One. In the same moment, Jacob our father opened and said: Blessed is the Glory of his Kingdom forever and ever.

or as a brilliant adaptation of it designed precisely to deflect the power of Elisha's heretical outburst. I think, thus, that Goshen-Gottstein's perception of this parallel is a powerful insight but that it bears out the opposite of that which he wishes it to.

It is impossible, in any case, to accept Goshen-Gottstein's implication that Elisha/Aḥer's actions were not considered a grave sin, a sin of blasphemy or heresy, for otherwise, why would a voice declare that all can repent except for Aḥer? If his only fault was "a purely Jewish form of individual antinomianism," then why would he any more than any other sinner in Israel not be permitted to repent? Indeed, it is only if he concluded that there are Two Sovereignities in Heaven that the unwonted severity of his punishment can be explained. It seems clear to me, then, that "certainly," **יִשְׁרָאֵל** must be accepted as the "original" (pre-stammaitic) reading and that the Stamma of the Bavli has brilliantly commuted the worst of Elisha's sin (leaving, however, the punishment incoherent). Indeed, his exit to antinomianism is portrayed as the result of his unforgiveability, not the cause. He surely has committed the sin of blasphemy (against the Holy Spirit) which cannot be forgiven. I, like, Goshen-Gottstein, harbor no fantasies of a quest of the historical Aḥer—nor do I imagine that there ever was, necessarily, such a creature—,⁹² and I agree that he is not portrayed in any sense of having gone over to another "religion" or become a gnostic or whatever,⁹³ but within the diegesis itself, it is clear that his "error" with respect to Two Powers is that which causes him to be prevented from any redemption and that that sentence is what conduces to his antinomianism.⁹⁴ At the same time, by shifting this from **יִשְׁרָאֵל** [certainly]

⁹² It is at this point that I most definitely part company from C. R. A. Morray-Jones, "Paradise Revisited (2 Cor 12:1-12): The Jewish Mystical Background of Paul's Apostolate Part 1: The Jewish Sources," *HTR* 86 (1993), 177-217 and all who are with him in trying to figure out the real heresy or error or sin of the real Elisha ben Abuya and side most definitely with Goshen-Gottstein, *Sinner*.

⁹³ Goshen-Gottstein, *Sinner*, 111.

⁹⁴ For a somewhat similar reading see Morray-Jones, "Hekhalot Literature and Talmudic Tradition," 30. There remains one point to deal with. Goshen-Gottstein argues that the "certainly" of the *3 Enoch* version only makes sense as a response (founded on a misunderstanding of the topos) of the "Perhaps G-d forbid" of the talmudic version. This is, I concede, a strong argument although not as much of a knockout punch as Goshen-Gottstein imagines. If the question of Two Powers is, as I imagine, alive and kicking in the background of this story, and especially with respect to the Son of Man, Meṭaṭron, then Aḥer's expression of surprised, shocked certainty is not at all out of place. **יִשְׁרָאֵל** would mean something like "indeed." This meaning is attested as well for rabbinic Hebrew. On this

to אַמֶּשׁ [perhaps], the final talmudic text has also implied that no Rabbi, even a heretical one, could ever have really believed that there are Two Sovereignties in Heaven.

Naming Meṭatron

Recognizing the centrality of occupancy of the throne for Meṭatron, moreover, enables a firmer decision about the meaning of his name than has been admitted until now. Meṭatron's name is indeed legion: Among the suggestions offered are derivations from the name of the god Mithra, from the Aramaic root *ntr*, to guard, from Latin *metator*, from Greek μετατύραννος, μέτρον, and even from *Matronita*, taken as related to mater, "the mother." These various explanations, some traditional Jewish ones going back to the Middle Ages, some developed by modern scholars, are explored at length by Hugo Odeberg in the introduction to his excellent *editio princeps* of *3 Enoch*.⁹⁵ All of them are shown to be wanting, and there is no need to rehearse in this context what has been adequately established.

There remains one possibility, and this was the conclusion to which Odeberg came, namely the derivation from the two Greek words μετά and θρόνος. This derivation, first suggested by a Christian writer on Jewish theology in the 16th century and accepted in different variations by many scholars since, was rejected in 1941 by no less than Gershom Scholem in his celebrated *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, on the grounds that there is not "the slightest suggestion that the author (of Sepher Hanoch) saw any connection between the name of the archon and his throne."⁹⁶ This is not in any way a decisive argument, being at best an argument from silence. What is decisive in my opinion is the strong association of the figure with a throne, the throne, or a second throne, on which he sits, either alongside of YHWH or even as his appointed regent in place of YHWH, and μέτα here could go both ways (depending on the truncated

reading, the Bavli's transforming of this "indeed" into "perhaps" is its own clever move in the setting up of its misadaptation of the topos of "Perhaps, G-d forbid." The evidence from "The Visions of Ezekiel" becomes particularly relevant here, for it provides an important explicit link between Meṭatron and Dan 7 with its enthronement of The One Like a Son of Man here and not the opposite of "perhaps."

⁹⁵ Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 125-36.

⁹⁶ G. G. Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism* (New York: Schocken, 1954), 68-69.

case of the original Greek form). This strong and crucial association of the figure with the Throne and the frightening heresy of Two Powers in Heaven as associated with sitting on the throne makes the otherwise philologically plausible derivation from *μετά* and *θρόνος*, entirely likely, if not quite provable. Any of the variations of *μετὰ θρόνου*, *μετὰ θρόνον*, *μετάθρονος*, or *μεταθρόνιος* all work fine for my purposes, and I can only agree with J. Fr. von Meyer, who writing in 1823, “thinks that the Jewish conception of *Meṭaṭron* forms an exact counterpart of the Christian conception of the Son of God, [and] hence points to Rev. 3:21 as a parallel.”⁹⁷ Despite Scholem’s animadversions, ratified by Black, I must conclude that Odeberg was exactly right in his determination.⁹⁸ Since quite clearly, this explanation connects our translated-into-*Meṭaṭron* Enoch with traditions of the divine throne and the divine investiture of a second, usually junior, divinity with the insignia of judgeship, scribeship, and rulership, together with an invitation to sit on a throne as well, we can connect all of the medieval forms of the *Meṭaṭron* with the earliest traditions of the One Like a Son of Man and hence with the Son of Man himself.⁹⁹ These notions must be, then, among the oldest, most venerable inheritances of the Jewish People’s religious imagination which at least some of the Rabbis (perhaps all; perhaps this what defines rabbinism in some sense) are seeking (unsuccessfully as it happens) to suppress in the name of the creation of a rabbinic orthodoxy towards the end of late antiquity.

The famous statement at the end of the narrative of the four who went into Pardes to the effect that Rabbi Akiva came out safely [lit. in peace],” while Aḥer died in infamy, would, then be reinterpreted by me to represent a Rabbi Akiva who turned away from “heresy” to orthodoxy and an

⁹⁷ Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 136.

⁹⁸ Ibid., 138-41. Cf. P. S. Alexander, “From Son of Adam to a Second God: Transformation of the Biblical Enoch,” in *Biblical Figures Outside the Bible* (ed. M. E. Stone; Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 1998), 87-122, at 107 n. 31, making a not dismissable case for the derivation from *metator/mitator*, the fore-runner, i.e., the angel who preceded the People of Israel in the desert, guiding them on their way. I remain convinced, nonetheless, that the etymology proposed in the body of the text is more compelling. See also Lieberman, “*Meṭaṭron*” who quite settles the issue in this direction, in my opinion: *Meṭaṭron* is the “One Beside the Throne,” or the “The One on the Throne Beside.” As Lieberman points out, in *3 Enoch* itself [48 (Odeberg, *3 Enoch*, 66)], God is made to say, “and I made him a throne next to my throne” (Lieberman, “*Meṭaṭron*,” 235)! For a recent summary of the opinions, see Orlov, *The Enoch-Meṭaṭron Tradition*, 92-96.

⁹⁹ See also Idel, “*Meṭaṭron*,” 33 in this regard.

Elisha who remained adamant in the old traditions. The drama of *this* parting of the ways *within* Enochic Judaism, as it were, surely is to be set in late antiquity and not before. With this formulation I am raising something of a challenge to the notion that there is a separate Enochic tradition that is antithetical to and absolutely other to a Mosaic tradition.¹⁰⁰ There is no reason to assume that we are talking about the real Rabbi Akiva and the real Elisha ben Abuya here, nor about early second-century realities, and everything, in fact, that we know of rabbinic literature and its practices of ascription militates against such a conclusion. What we have before us, in my view, is a virtual allegory of different historical trends within historical Judaism, those who remained faithful to old ways—not, once again, the *only* old ways—continuing to believe in the Son of Man and were declared heretics and those who turned from such beliefs and adopted the new, improved, “purer,” rabbinic Judaism, itself, of course, also a continuation of *other* old ways.¹⁰¹ It should be noted, however, that both groups are apparently observers of the same basic halakic norms, at least by late antiquity, and this is, after all, precisely what the Hekhalot literature would lead us to expect.¹⁰² If the Enochic traditions, as they extend from the *Parables* forward into *3 Enoch* and into Meṭaṭron litera-

¹⁰⁰ The position that I am thus questioning is primarily that of G. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways Between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1998) who has set out the agenda in such productive ways, including allowing generously and graciously for dissent. Cp. also Alexander, “From Son,” 87: “Certain Jewish intellectuals of the Second Temple period came to regard [Enoch] as a major figure of sacred history. They attributed to him an important body of revealed doctrine and elevated him to a position which equaled, and indeed rivaled, that of Moses, the lawgiver of Israel. They started a tradition which continued evolving with surprising vitality down to the Middle ages and which constantly challenged the dominant Mosaic paradigm of Judaism.” In my view, Mosaic and Enochic Judaism, far from parting ways, became intertwined very early on (if not *ab origine*; this much I will concede), and any challenge that Enochic traditions posed was entirely from within and not from something outside of Torah Judaism.

¹⁰¹ These qualifications have been introduced in response to readers who remarked (correctly) that I was implying that the theological position eventually adopted by the Rabbis was itself an innovation. This is palpably wrong. My argument is not, then, that all Jews held a Two Powers view originally and then that was declared heresy but rather that there was a variety of theological positions around this question and the effort of the Rabbis was to promote one of the earlier options while declaring the others heretical. I am grateful to an anonymous reader for keeping me from going down this particular garden path.

¹⁰² S. Lieberman, “The Knowledge of *Halakha* by the Author (or Authors) of the *Heikhalot*,” in Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, 241-44.

ture, represent indeed the common religious heritage of much of Israel—again, not all—and not particular sectarian formations, as I am convinced they do, then the evidence just offered for such theology in the heart of the rabbinic socio-cultural world is rendered even more cogent. I would go so far as to suggest (but in a very tentative and preliminary fashion) that on the basis of the rabbinic material adduced it is the Son of Man, Enoch, Meṭaṭron, Christ, who is always at issue when “Two Powers in Heaven” is broached in rabbinic literature. The talmudic Rabbis, it would seem, sought, if not surely to get rid of Meṭaṭron, to ensure that Jews not regard him as in any sense a second, even if lesser, version of YHWH. (As Moshe Idel has shown amply and fully: they did not succeed.)¹⁰³

The Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism

Meṭaṭron’s own polymorphy has been well remarked by scholars already.¹⁰⁴ What I am trying to bring out in this rereading of the archive is that Meṭaṭron is the site that marks the polymorphy of ancient and medieval Judaism. Some of the components of this argument, nay many of them, can be found in bits and pieces in earlier work. What I hope to have added to this conversation, is a fuller emphasis on the role of Dan 7 and of the multiple and overlapping conversations taking place across the broad spectrum of Jewish religious imagination, a spectrum that no longer will allow talk of separate (even if equal) Judaisms.¹⁰⁵ The idea of polymorphous Judaism as a single cultural-religious system tends to shift the way that the question of the history of Judaism can be asked even more than it does the way that it might be answered. One doesn’t ask from this standpoint whether this or that Jewish text *influenced* the Gospels, nor whether or not a particular text is or is not “Christian” or Jewish, apocalyptic, mystical, or rabbinic but rather the ways that we can see, increasingly

¹⁰³ Idel, *Ben*, esp. 595. See also D. Abrams, “The Boundaries of Divine Ontology: The Inclusion and Exclusion of Meṭaṭron in the Godhead,” *HTR* 87 (1994): 291-321.

¹⁰⁴ Stroumsa, “Form(s),” 281; E. R. Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Literature* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 39 and see G. Stroumsa, “Polymorphie divine et transformations d’un mythologème: *l’Apocryphon de Jean*’ et ses sources,” *VC* 35 (1981): 412-34.

¹⁰⁵ The same mistake would be made were we to consider Kabbala and Halakic Codes evidence for different Judaisms in the Middle Ages or Early Modern period. See R. J. Z. Werblowsky, *Joseph Karo, Lawyer and Mystic* (Scripta Judaica; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962).

see, the commonalities of tradition histories that cross over these borders including those that would only later harden into separate “religions.”¹⁰⁶ Rather, for example, than thinking of Enochic and Mosaic Judaisms (or priestly and pharisaic Judaisms),¹⁰⁷ we need to think of converging and diverging strands and moments, of eddies and currents, whirlpools and backwaters, in the vast river of the religious practices and beliefs of the ethnic group that we have come to call Jews. We will have to adopt a family-resemblance or polythetic approach to the very construction of the category Judaism, and, even then understand that this is at best a heuristic category.¹⁰⁸ Crucial in this revised voyage of exploration is the study of the Enochic literature and Enoch traditions from the early Roman period *Parables of Enoch* right through into the late-ancient *3 Enoch*, which I propose that we read as an integral, if not fully integrated, tributary of the river of “mainstream” Judaism (by which, it should be clear by now, I don’t mean rabbinic Judaism).

It will not do, any longer, as I hope I have shown, to draw sharp—or even blunt—distinctions between types of Judaism as we proceed on our study of the histories of ancient Judaism. No more “Judaisms” then but an archaeology of ancient Judaism that considers the highways and byways, the stream and the eddies, as all part of one non-triumphalist flowing flux of religious creativity.

Appendix: A Contraindication

In a recent publication (which he was kind enough to show me before it appeared), Alon Goshen Gottstein has fundamentally and directly challenged the assumptions on which much of my analysis is based as exposed

¹⁰⁶ G. Hasan-Rokem, “Narratives in Dialogue: A Folk Literary Perspective on Interreligious Contacts in the Holy Land in Rabbinic Literature of Late Antiquity,” in *Sharing the Sacred: Religious Contacts and Conflicts in the Holy Land First-Fifteenth Centuries CE* (ed. G. Stroumsa and A. Kofsky; Jerusalem: Yad Ben Zvi, 1998), 109-29.

¹⁰⁷ Pace, e.g., R. Elior, *The Three Temples: On the Emergence of Jewish Mysticism* (Portland, Or.: Littman Library of Jewish Civilization, 2004).

¹⁰⁸ This is, in part, a response to one of the anonymous readers of this text who suggested that my thinking dissolves the category “Judaism” entirely. It does do so on a “checklist” version of categorization but hardly on a family-resemblance model. For the latter, see C. Kronfeld, *On the Margins of Modernism Decentering Literary Dynamics* (Contraversions; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) and discussion in Boyarin, *Border Lines*, 22-26, but see too D. Boyarin, “Rethinking Jewish Christianity: An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category (to Which is Appended a Correction of My *Border Lines*),” *JQR* 99 (2009): 7-36.

in earlier versions of the present argument.¹⁰⁹ I will accordingly take some space here to engage his arguments in, I hope, a constructive way and from him and from me, the matter will be clarified (at least somewhat). In particular I want to show some ways in which Goshen-Gottstein seriously misconstrues my argument, in hopes that in this context I shall be able to make it clearer and more perspicacious. Goshen-Gottstein strongly assents to Steven Fine's methodological point of departure: "In my own work, I search out every other possible interpretation and weigh these carefully before ultimately accepting or rejecting the Christian influence model."¹¹⁰ Goshen-Gottstein, for his part, simply assents to this practice as good "careful" methodology, and, moreover, describes it as value and emotion free, as opposed to methods that assume alleged "Christian influence." As he writes, "it should be acknowledged that constructing a model of Jewish-Christian relations that minimizes contact and maximizes the recognition of parallel activities accords with the methodological call for care and minimizing contact sounded above by Steven Fine."¹¹¹ It is totally mysterious to me why a view that seeks to "minimize contact" between "Jews and Christians" is ipso facto more "careful" than a view that seeks to understand in a more complex way the evident fact that "Christians" simply were Jews at least in the beginning (and in some places for longer than in other places) as well as taking into account the palpable evidence for at least some direct contact later on. Perhaps it is the case, as I would suggest, that no work in a field like this (as in many others but perhaps more so here) is value-free or more conservative or careful than others.¹¹² If, as I suppose, and try to show in my book,¹¹³ there is significant evidence for ongoing contact between the groups that latterly call themselves Jews and Christians, then methodological care would dictate a search for the effects of that contact and not an aprioristic polemical denial of them.¹¹⁴ The question that needs to be addressed is the plausibility, given all that we know, that this interpretation or that one

¹⁰⁹ Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations."

¹¹⁰ Cited *ibid.*, 20.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 26.

¹¹² It is remarkable that after imputing a methodological disinterest to himself and his mentor, Steven Fine (in contrast to the alleged ideological biases of his interlocutors), Goshen-Gottstein goes on for several pages to detail the gains for contemporary Jewish-Christian relations of his claim for parallel contact-free religious developments of "the two communities."

¹¹³ Boyarin, *Border Lines*.

¹¹⁴ *Pace* Goshen-Gottstein, I hardly think the Rabbis could ever be characterized as "disinterested" ("Jewish-Christian Relations," 27); perhaps he meant "uninterested."

is a better fit for the texts, to which question I now turn more directly. Goshen-Gottstein's case study in the article is specifically on the topic of the present essay of mine and explicitly directed against my views and methods, so it is imperative that I engage it in this context.

Goshen-Gottstein has somehow misread my work to imply that the issue of "Two Powers in Heaven" "stands at the heart of the parting of the ways."¹¹⁵ My argument is entirely opposite from such a notion, since I am suggesting strenuously that binitarian/ditheistic notions of godhead are a shared retention between later Jews and Christians of an earlier theological approach and not one formed in one of the later communities and either accepted or rejected by the other one. Where Segal imagines, as I have said above, actual Others with which the Rabbis are polemicizing, I am suggesting that this is one of the means by which rabbinic Judaism constructs its own religious identity by projecting elements of its own inherited religious traditions as being perilous encroachments from outside. (I did suggest that by naming those who did not believe in Two Powers as heretics, a figure like Justin was effectively producing Judaism as not-Christian and by naming Two Powers believers as *minim*, the Rabbis were doing the same favor for Christianity. Each was projecting an internal conflict outward; this has nothing to do with a "parting of the ways.") Although Goshen-Gottstein claims to distinguish my approach from that of Segal, in fact, he practically conflates them and thus argues—in arguing against me—with a straw man.

This fundamental misunderstanding leads to all of the other misreadings of my position in his essay. He thus writes:

It is worth noting that while Segal explores a wide range of options, in his attempt to pinpoint the polemic, Boyarin seems to have narrowed the battle to one principle opponent, the Christians. I have not found in Boyarin's work an account of why, in reconfiguring Segal's earlier work, he limits its relevance to Christianity, while ignoring gnostics, whom Segal sees as serious contenders for the title of polemic partners in most of the rabbinic sources he discusses.¹¹⁶

The very terms in which this animadversion are couched makes clear enough Goshen-Gottstein's misconception. I have never claimed "polemi-

¹¹⁵) *Ibid.*, 30.

¹¹⁶) *Ibid.*, 32.

cal” intent against an already given group in my discussion of this issue but rather offered as a hypothesis that it was the growing importance of the church as an institution in late antiquity that partly prompted a rabbinic rejection of the traditional readings of Dan 7 and the theological implications that they had produced, including the idea of a second divine “person” if you will and his coming to earth in the form of the Messiah. This led, as I hope to have shown above, to some very labored—even special pleading—interpretation of some biblical texts, labored interpretations that are explicitly marked within the rabbinic texts as being designed to eliminate the possible “misreading” of the biblical texts as conducing to “Two Powers in Heaven.”¹¹⁷ The conflict is internal, not with any already-given external group.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁷ Others of Goshen-Gottstein’s arguments are simply also the product of misunderstanding. He fails completely to understand my use of the term “energy” (*ibid.*, 38), arguing that since there are only a relatively small number of occurrences of the term, “Two Sovereignities,” this does not constitute a major issue for the Rabbis. And further that since they occur nearly always in a hermeneutical context, this is just midrash as usual for the Rabbis and one cannot infer anything meaningful from it about the thoughts or concerns of the Rabbis engaged in the production of these midrashim (This is an overstatement of Goshen-Gottstein’s case but a fair enough inference, I think, from what he says). My original argument is, in fact, *dependent* on these being in hermeneutical contexts, since my point is that they were intended to deflect historically actual and plausible interpretations of the verses—and not, by any means, only or primarily by so-called Christians. I certainly do not see here evidence for an alleged “rabbinic tendency to explain phenomena that have their own conceptual evolution by appeal to polemics,” *ibid.*, 39 n. 5, unless the very “conceptual evolution” leaves the “unevolved” as targets for a polemical redescription as heretics, which is, of course, precisely my argument. Goshen-Gottstein seems to have the curious idea that these interpretations are not what he calls “eisegetical,” and, therefore no evidence for particular concerns on the part of the midrashists: “The fact is that the few sources that do employ the formula do so through exegesis, not through eisegesis; in other words, the formula is applied in a very reasonable and limited manner, in accordance with what seems to be its hermeneutical purpose, without in any significant way exceeding it” (*ibid.*, 40). This statement simply flabbergasts me. “The formula is applied in a reasonable manner,” means exactly what? That the biblical texts that seem to suggest the possibility of Two Sovereignities really do mean to counter that possibility. Or perhaps it means that there is a real danger of so “misunderstanding” these verses (but no-one—unaccountably—ever has, so we’d better make sure to suggest that possibility), and that when it says, for instance, “I am the Lord,” the purpose is to discredit that as yet totally unrealized danger of “misinterpretation.” Compare that with my simple reading to the effect that there are verses in the biblical text that suggest more than one divine figure in heaven, that some Jews (or many) had read them in this fashion, and that the Rabbis are producing labored interpretations to discredit such readings. The “energy” of which I speak is precisely the

I believe that this reframing of my intentions from the beginning, perhaps more clearly articulated in the present article (I hope), obviates Goshen-Gottstein's other supposed objections to my hypothesis, namely (1) the hermeneutical context of most Two Powers discourse among the Rabbis, and (2) the alleged objection that "Why, then, would the rabbis choose to confront Christianity by means of a formula directed at the wrong theological formulation of faith?," namely binitarian rather than trinitarian.¹¹⁹ On my account, properly read, that the "polemic" is an inner-polemic directed against "Jewish" readings of the Bible and older Jewish theological traditions,¹²⁰ which were never, of course trinitarian,

various contortions of interpretation that are produced in order to discredit the "Two Sovereignities" interpretation of the given verses, viz "Don't rebel" changed to "Don't exchange" (admittedly in a context where Two Sovereignities is not explicitly mentioned but what does that matter?). This further addresses Goshen-Gottstein's worry that when passages about Two Sovereignities do occur in tannaitic literature, it is in the midrashim and not the Mishna or Tosefta in which they appear. This can be answered easily with two answers. Perhaps the terminology, "Two Sovereignities" is a somewhat later invention, somewhere between the production of the Mishna and the tannaitic midrashim a hundred or so years later, or, more compellingly, one would precisely expect to see a hermeneutical argument in midrash and not in legal texts. It can hardly surprise Goshen-Gottstein that an important discussion about G-d would take place in hermeneutical contexts, can it? I am not sure to what end Goshen-Gottstein intends his argument about "centrality." I don't believe that there is anything in my writing (Boyarin, "Two Powers") that indicates that the question of Two Sovereignities was a constant concern of the Rabbis but only that the evidence of its usage suggests that when encountered, it was of sufficient concern that hermeneutical energy was deployed to displace it. I did, indeed, offer the hypothesis that this was at least in part, perhaps in large part, caused by a pressure to make clearer the distinction between the "minim" and "us" occasioned by the growing importance of Christianity as a powerful institution, a position not unlike Goshen-Gottstein's own.

¹¹⁸) My own account is thus strikingly like Goshen-Gottstein's presentation of his own model, advanced by him as an alternative to mine. See below note 120. Incidentally, there is, in fact, little reason to even think that the Rabbis would have distinguished "Christians" from so-called "gnostics," since that term itself is a Christian heresiological category! See M. A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument for Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); K. L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003).

¹¹⁹) Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations," 33.

¹²⁰) Goshen-Gottstein's suggestion that there is no polemic here at all runs aground on the explicitly marked polemical formulae within these texts, *ibid.*, 35. On the next page, in fact, Goshen-Gottstein refers to these as "internal statements," which is exactly my stance, as he would have realized had he read my work more carefully. Where there is a parting of the ways between me and Goshen-Gottstein is in his absolute denial that there were Jews, seemingly at any time, who actually entertained notions of a double godhead in

both of Goshen-Gottstein's objections are adequately displaced (not refuted since I suggest that both objections are simply misdirected). To put a fine point on it, it is never, on my view, about "combating Christianity."¹²¹ Indeed the force of my reading of the Rav Idi passage would entirely disappear if I had read it as being an attack on Christianity and not an inner-Jewish (or even inner-rabbinic) argument. In short, I agree generally with Goshen-Gottstein that the Rabbis were "fighting no battle [with Christianity] at all,"¹²² although this formulation involves an obvious exaggeration given the explicit attacks on Christianity that we find in the Babylonian Talmud.¹²³ I also totally agree with him that "One would seek in vain to identify to whom or against whom these texts are addressed, as there is no specific recipient."¹²⁴

connection with readings of Dan 7; this stance strikes me as simply an apologetic denial of the evidence before our eyes.

¹²¹) Ibid., 33.

¹²²) Ibid., 34.

¹²³) See P. Schäfer, *Jesus in the Talmud* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007) and my animadversions in D. Boyarin, "Nostalgia for Christianity: Getting Medieval Again," *Religion and Literature* (2010).

¹²⁴) Goshen-Gottstein, "Jewish-Christian Relations," 36. Oddly, very oddly to me, at the very end of Goshen-Gottstein's essay he shows that he has precisely understood my argument, namely that what was later named *minut* was once comfortably at home with Jewish monotheism and was somewhat arbitrarily excluded later on under the pressure of various circumstances: "Boyarin's discussion is so helpful in showing us the arbitrariness of what is recognized as theologically acceptable," *ibid.*, 42. I am thus even more confused as to why he would identify my position with that of Segal, argue against me strenuously, and then come nearly precisely to my own position. Curiouser and curiouser. In any case, I hope here to have paid an old debt of lack of sufficient attention to his frequently brilliant work. Where, I think, we absolutely totally disagree is on our respective evaluations of Steven Fine's challenge that we ought only look for contextual explanations of phenomena when all non-contextual explanations have been discarded.