

Dictionary Early Judaism

Edited by

John J. Collins *and* Daniel C. Harlow

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

Heavenly Figures

A final category of eschatological agents includes various heavenly figures. The idea of God acting through angels is common in the Hebrew Bible, but these were not eschatological figures. In Daniel 7 (ca. 165 B.C.E.), however, an eschatological heavenly deliverer is clearly in view. In the context of a vision about four beasts who represent oppressive earthly kingdoms, “one like a son of man” comes from the heavenly throne and receives “dominion, glory, and kingship” (Dan. 7:13-14). The precise identity of the “son of man” figure is a matter of long-standing scholarly discussion. The traditional interpretation, rarely defended today, asserted that this figure was the Davidic messiah. Another view holds “one like a son of man” to be no more than a symbol of the Jewish people, noting that the Jewish people also receive dominion and kingship (7:27). A more likely interpretation, however, sees “one like a son of man” as an angelic figure who serves as the heavenly representative and advocate of the Jewish people, probably to be identified with the archangel Michael. This last view is supported not only by Michael’s role in Dan 12:1 (cf. also 10:13), but by the fact that in apocalyptic literature angels are regularly depicted as human beings (“son of man” = human being) and that the role of “one like a son of man” parallels that of the angels, called “the holy ones of the most high” (7:18). In any event, God’s redemption does not come through a human agent but a heavenly being.

The angel Michael plays an analogous role in the Qumran *War Scroll*, which states that in the eschatological war against the Children of Darkness, God will raise up the kingdom of Michael and kingdom of Israel (1QM 17:7-8). Similarly in 1QM 13:10, the Prince of Light — a designation for Michael — assists the Children of Light against Belial and his lot. But in contrast to Daniel 7, in the *War Scroll* the archangel Michael works in concert with human agents, the Children of Light. In another Qumran text, 11QMelchizedek, a heavenly figure named Melchizedek plays a role in the eschatological scenario. Based on the jubilees legislation in Lev. 25:13 and its prophetic interpretation in Isa. 61:1, the text states that Melchizedek will proclaim liberty and forgiveness of sins — a Day of Atonement — for the Sons of Light. Then on the basis of Ps. 82:1-2, which states that *‘elohim* will hold judgment, it asserts that Melchizedek will judge and destroy Belial and his lot. Here Melchizedek has both royal and priestly characteristics and is probably to be identified as the archangel Michael.

Two further heavenly figures, specifically called messiahs and modeled on the Danielic son of man, are found in the *Similitudes of Enoch* (1 *Enoch* 37-71) and 4 *Ezra* 13. The *Similitudes* (first century C.E.) refer to a heavenly judge and redeemer variously called Son of Man, Chosen One, Righteous One, and Messiah. This figure is angelic (46:1-2) and appears to be preexistent (48:3). His role is to represent and vindicate the righteous and to condemn the wicked (cf. 62:1-15). The characterization of this figure draws on Daniel 7 and the texts about Davidic kingship (Psalm 2; Isaiah 11) and the Servant of the Lord (Isaiah 42; 49; 52-53). It is

often held that Enoch, the recipient of the apocalyptic revelation, is identified with the Son of Man (1 *Enoch* 71:14). But since earlier passages distinguish these figures (cf. 70:1), the matter remains under debate. 4 *Ezra*, an apocalypse composed in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E., presents a vision of a Man from the Sea (chap. 13) who flies on the clouds of heaven and with a fiery stream from his mouth destroys all those assembled against him (cf. Isa. 11:4). He then gathers a peaceable people. In the interpretation of the vision, this figure is identified as “he whom the most high has been keeping for many ages, who will himself deliver his creation” (4 *Ezra* 13:26). Standing on Mt. Zion, this heavenly messiah will judge and destroy the nations (cf. Ps. 2:4-9) and gather in the exiles of Israel.

In the Gospels, Jesus refers to himself as the Son of Man, often in a context of eschatological judgment and deliverance (cf. Mark 13:26-27; Matt. 10:23). He is therefore characterized as a heavenly figure whose identity and role are similar to those of the son of man figures in Daniel 7, 1 *Enoch* 37-71, and 4 *Ezra* 13. Moreover, like the figures in the *Similitudes of Enoch* and 4 *Ezra*, Jesus is identified as both “messiah” and “Son of Man.” On the other hand, Rev. 14:14 reflects a tradition in which “one like a son of man” is clearly an angel and distinct from Jesus.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

J. J. COLLINS 2010, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2d ed., Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
 • J. H. CHARLESWORTH, ED. 1992, *The Messiah*, Minneapolis: Fortress.
 • J. A. FITZMYER 2007, *The One Who Is to Come*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
 • R. A. HORSLEY AND J. S. HANSON 1985, *Bandits, Prophets, and Messiahs*, San Francisco: Harper & Row.
 • J. NEUSNER, W. S. GREEN, AND E. S. FRERICHS, EDs. 1987, *Judaisms and Their Messiahs at the Turn of the Christian Era*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
 • G. W. E. NICKELSBURG 2003, “Agents of God’s Activities,” in idem, *Ancient Judaism and Christian Origins*, Minneapolis: Fortress, 89-117.
 • G. S. OEGEMA 1998, *The Anointed and His People*, Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.
 • K. E. POMYKALA 1995, *The Davidic Dynasty Tradition in Early Judaism*, Atlanta: Scholars Press.
 • S. SCHREIBER 2000, *Gesalbter und König*, Berlin: de Gruyter.
 • A. YARBRO COLLINS AND J. J. COLLINS 2008, *King and Messiah as Son of God: Divine, Human, and Angelic Messianic Figures in Biblical and Related Literature*, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.
 • M. ZETTERHOLM, ED. 2007, *The Messiah in Early Judaism and Christianity*, Minneapolis: Fortress.

See also: Mediator Figures

KENNETH E. POMYKALA

Metatron

Metatron is the name of a principal angel that in Jewish angelology occupies a unique place: the divine vice-regent and the lesser manifestation of the divine name (YHWH *ha-qātôn*, “the lesser YHWH”). 3 (Hebrew) *Apocalypse of Enoch*, also known as *Sefer Hekhalot*, portrays

Metatron as the replica of the Deity whose crown, garments, throne, and even corporeality imitate the divine attributes. The Babylonian Talmud (*b. Hagigah* 15a) accentuates the uniqueness of Metatron's position by noting that he alone is allowed to be seated in heaven because he is the celestial scribe who records the good deeds of Israel. According to this talmudic passage, a vision of the seated Metatron led R. Elisha b. Avuyah to the erroneous belief that there are "two powers in heaven" because he mistook the angel for a second deity.

The origin of the Metatron tradition is shrouded in mystery. Some scholars trace it back to Enochic lore, noting that in rabbinic and Hekhalot materials many early roles and titles attributed to Enoch in apocalyptic writings have been transferred to Metatron. Metatron's origins, however, cannot be explained solely with reference to Enoch, because Metatron also assumed many of the titles and functions assigned to Michael, Yahoel, Melchizedek, and other exalted angelic figures in early Jewish apocalyptic writings.

A classical study by Gershom Scholem (1971) distinguishes two basic strands of Metatron speculation that were fused in rabbinic and Hekhalot literature. These include lore relating to Enoch and lore associated with Yahoel and Michael. One strand, which is reflected in talmudic passages, identifies Metatron with Yahoel as the representation of the divine name and knows nothing of his transfiguration from a human being into an angel. The other identifies Metatron with the figure of Enoch. This identification is made in *Sefer Hekhalot* (also known as *3 Enoch*), which offers the most detailed description of the transformation of Enoch into the principal angel Metatron. *Sefer Hekhalot* gives Enoch-Metatron the title *na'ar*, "youth," because he was transformed by God into a celestial creature and thus became the youngest of the angels. Metatron's scribal duties and judicial functions also reflect a connection with Enoch.

No scholarly consensus exists about the etymology of the name Metatron, which occurs in two forms in rabbinic literature, one written with six letters, *Mttrwn*, and the other with seven, *Myttrwn*. One suggestion is that the name derives from Lat. *metator* ("leader, guide"). Since talmudic materials identify Metatron with the "angel of the LORD" mentioned in Exod. 23:21, some scholars believe that the appellation may originally have been given to this angel, who led the Israelites through the wilderness like a Roman army *metator*. Another suggestion is that the name is based on Gr. *tetra* (four), construed as related to the four letters of the divine name, the Tetragrammaton. Still other suggestions relate the name to Gr. *metatyrannos* ("the one next to the ruler") or Gr. (*ho*) *meta thronou* ("next to the [divine] throne").

Metatron's proximity to the Deity is expressed in his appellation the "Prince of the Countenance" (*sar hapānim*). He is the only one allowed to behold the divine face and go behind the heavenly curtain. In some Hekhalot and Shi'ur Qomah materials, Metatron is depicted either as a celestial choirmaster or a heavenly priest who has his own celestial tabernacle.

Metatron's leading role in heaven as God's secretary and vice-regent, and possibly his demiurgic role, is expressed through another prominent office, the Prince of the World (*sar hā-ōlam*), who is responsible for conveying divine decisions to the seventy (sometimes seventy-two) princes controlling the seventy nations of the earth. In Hekhalot and Shi'ur Qomah tradition, Metatron also functions as a heavenly guide, protector, and agent of revelation to the famous tanna'im, R. Akiva and R. Ishmael.

Although scholars usually date the origins of speculation about Metatron to the rabbinic period, it is possible that the shaping of the exalted profile of this principal angel began already in the Second Temple period as a polemical response to traditions about exalted patriarchs and prophets.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- P. S. ALEXANDER 1985, "3 (Hebrew Apocalypse) of Enoch," in *OTP* 1: 223-315. • J. DAN 1993, *The Ancient Jewish Mysticism*, Tel Aviv: MOD Books, 108-24. • I. GRUENWALD 1980, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden: Brill, 195-206. • M. IDEL 1990, "Enoch Is Metatron," *Immanuel* 24 25: 220-40. • S. LIEBERMAN 1980, "Metatron, the Meaning of His Name and His Functions," in I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism*, Leiden: Brill, 235-41. • C. MOPSIK 1989, *Le livre hébreu d'Hénoch ou livre des palais*, Paris: Verdier. • H. ODEBERG 1928, *3 Enoch, or the Hebrew Book of Enoch*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. • A. ORLOV 2005, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck. • P. SCHÄFER 1993, *The Hidden and Manifest God*. Albany: State University of New York Press. • G. SCHOLEM 1971, "Metatron," *EncJud* 11: 1443-46. ANDREI A. ORLOV

Mezuzot → Phylacteries and Mezuzot

Michael, the Archangel

The only explicit reference to the angel Michael (Hebr. *mikā'el*, "who is like God?") in the Hebrew Bible occurs in the book of Daniel (written between 167 and 164 B.C.E.), where he functions as the angelic patron and protector of Israel. Thus in Daniel 10 Michael assists the angel Gabriel in fighting the angelic prince of Persia; he is called "one of the chief princes" (10:13) and "your [Daniel's] prince" (10:21). Similarly, Dan. 12:1 declares that "at that time Michael, the great prince, the protector of your people, shall arise."

Postexilic Jewish Literature

The earliest postexilic reference to the archangel Michael outside the Hebrew Bible appears in the *Book of the Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1-36, ca. third century B.C.E.). Michael is identified as one of the archangels, whose number in early Jewish texts is usually four (e.g., *1 Enoch* 9:1; 40:9; 54:6; 71:8-9; 1QM 9:14-16; *Sib. Or.* 2.215; *Apoc. Mos.* 40:2). In several texts, he continues his biblical role as the angelic guardian of Israel (e.g., *1 Enoch* 20:5; 1QM 17:6-8).