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THE GLORY OF THE INVISIBLE GOD

Two Powers in Heaven Traditions and Early Christology

Introduction

The treatise *Hagiga* of the Babylonian Talmud unveils the story of a rabbinic apostate, Elisha ben Avuyah. Known also as Aher, "the Other," he received a vision of the great angel Metatron, who sat in heaven and recorded the merits of Israel. When the infamous visionary saw Metatron, whose celestial posture was strikingly reminiscent of the posture of the divine *Kavod*, he opened his mouth and uttered the following: "It is taught as a tradition that on high there is no sitting and no emulation, and no back, and no weariness. Perhaps,—God forfend!—There are two divinities!"[1] This heretical statement, which challenged God's sovereignty, would not remain unpunished. Accordingly, God banished Aher beyond the boundaries of the Tradition. As the *Hagiga* says, "a *bat qol* went forth and said: Return, ye backsliding children—except Aher. [Thereupon] he said: Since I have been driven forth from yonder world, let me go forth and enjoy this world. So Aher went forth into evil courses."[2]

This enigmatic episode, a crucial narrative connected with the so-called 'two powers in heaven' controversy, has been repeatedly invoked in scholarly debates about early Christology and monotheism. At first glance, it seems that bringing this relatively late rabbinic passage into a discussion about ancient Christian texts would be anachronistic. These scholarly efforts, however, are not completely inappropriate, since Aher's vision of Metatron provides important methodological lessons for the study of early Christological developments, yielding as it were an unexpected key that could elucidate the construction of Jesus' exalted identity as representing God's Glory (or *Kavod*) in the synoptic gospels. Although the rabbinic story is separated by several centuries from the New Testament Christological accounts, the Aher episode exhibits some interesting similarities.

First, as in early Christian developments where the Father and the Son are predestined to coexist within a single monotheistic framework, later rabbinic sources indicate that the appearance of the "second divinity" did not abolish the presence of the first. As shown above, Aher's paradoxical statement postulates a simultaneous existence of *two* powers.

Second, according to early Christian evidence, Jesus' promotion to the rank of divinity was overlaid with distinctive polemical concerns of those who attempted to uphold the old model of monotheism. Within the latter rabbinic traditions, similar distinctive polemical overtones are also markedly present.

The third and most important similarity is that both rabbinic and Christian traditions employ distinctive theophanic features within the depictions of their

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[1] I. Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Hagiga* (London: Soncino, 1935–1952), 15a.

[2] Epstein, *The Babylonian Talmud. Hagiga*, 15a.

respective second powers. Both traditions, moreover, attempt to construe the second power's authority on the basis of its possession of the theophanic attributes of the deity.

To be sure, it is not merely any theophanic feature that ultimately defines the second power. It is, rather, the peculiar ocularcentric attributes associated with the description of the divine Glory in various biblical and extra-biblical materials where the divine *Kavod* served as a normative manifestation of the deity. Thus, Elisha ben Avuyah makes his conclusion about Metatron's "divinity" on the basis of his possession of the divine seat, the famed hallmark of the divine Glory, epitomized in the symbolism of the divine Chariot. Metatron's divine status is both constructed and confused on the basis of this peculiar theophanic feature. As will become clear later in this study, early Christian accounts, including the transfiguration narratives found in the synoptic gospels, often define Jesus' identity through his possession of the ocularcentric attributes of the divine Glory.

Another important connection found in both Christian and rabbinic accounts is that the "first power" is no longer rendered according to its normative visual aesthetics, namely, as a manifestation of the divine Glory, but instead as the aural expression—the *bat qol* or the divine Voice. It is this divine Voice that both reprimands Elisha ben Avuyah in the *Hagiga* passage and confirms Jesus' role as the Son of God in the gospels' baptism and transfiguration accounts, where for the first time certain attributes of the divine Glory are transferred to him. This transferal is not coincidental, since the withdrawal of the first power into the aural invisible mode frees the symbolic space for the theophanic apotheosis of the second power. In rabbinic traditions such withdrawal has a distinct polemical flavor intended to deconstruct the second power's visual attributes. In the Christian tradition, however, it provides unique Christological opportunities for the second power's induction into the realm of the deity.

Finally, another similar feature involves a pronounced emphasis on the visionary experience in the construction of the second power's identity in both Christian and rabbinic accounts. In *Hagiga*'s passage it is Aher's apprehension, or his vision, of Metatron that creates a fatal mistake about the status of the second power. Some scholars have argued that in early Christian tradition, the religious experience, which included the visionary experience, also played a crucial role in the construction of Jesus' divine identity.[3]

With respect to the paramount importance of theophanic traditions in both rabbinic and early Christian accounts of the "two powers," it is shocking that this particular symbolic dimension has not played a significant role in recent scholarly debates about the methodological value of the two powers traditions for our understanding of early Christological developments. Often scholars fail to note that in both corpora the two powers are portrayed in a similar way, appearing in two theophanic modes:

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[3]   Larry Hurtado has suggested that "if we seek a factor to account for the striking innovation constituted by the incorporation of Christ into a binitarian devotional pattern, that is, if we seek an answer to the question of why Christ-devotion assumed the proportions it did and so quickly, I propose that we have to allow for the generative role of revelatory religious experiences." L. Hurtado, *Lord Jesus Christ: Devotion to Jesus in Earliest Christianity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 74.

the manifestation of the first is portrayed as an epiphany of the aniconic Voice, while the second appears as the celestial Form, frequently bearing attributes of the divine Glory.

In my recent book, *Yahoel and Metatron: Aural Apocalypticism and the Origins of Early Jewish Mysticism*,[4] I offered a new perspective on the two powers, arguing that these debates depict a historical tension between ocularcentric and aural theophanic paradigms. My study attempted to demonstrate that in rabbinic and Hekhalot materials dealing with the two powers controversy, the second power is often portrayed with the theophanic attributes of the visual *Kavod* paradigm, while the first power, representing the true deity, is depicted as completely stripped of such attributes.

The affirmation of tension between visual and aniconic trends in the two powers in heaven materials may provide crucial lessons not only for understanding Jewish mystical traditions, but also for clarifying some of the earliest Christological developments. These traditions could especially aid our understanding of the construction of Christ's novel divine attributes and functions within the framework of Jewish monotheism.

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[4] A. A. Orlov, *Yahoel and Metatron: Aural Apocalypticism and the Origins of Early Jewish Mysticism* (TSAJ 169; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017).

Part One

Two Powers in Heaven Traditions
in Jewish Accounts

Rabbinic traditions regarding the two powers in heaven, along with their alleged relevance for understanding the formation of early Christology, have been the subject of vigorous discussion in the last several decades. Setting the stage for these recent debates was the seminal study of Alan Segal, "Two Powers in Heaven."[1] Reflecting on the essence of the rabbinic debates about two powers or authorities, Segal proposed that "the basic heresy involved interpreting scripture to say that a principal angelic or hypostatic manifestation in heaven was equivalent to God."[2]

Segal argued for the early existence of these conceptual currents, suggesting that they were "a very early category of heresy, earlier than Jesus, if Philo is a trustworthy witness, and one of the basic categories by which the rabbis perceived the new phenomenon of Christianity."[3] Throughout his study, Segal consistently argued for the early roots of these traditions, claiming that "the extra-rabbinic evidence allowed the conclusion that the traditions were earlier than the first century."[4]

Postulating an early date for the two powers controversy, Segal advocated the importance of these debates for our understanding of early Christological developments. He argued that "the relationships between these traditions of angelic mediation and Christianity are significant enough to call for a more complete study of the problem as background for Christology than has yet been attempted."[5] Notably,

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[1] A. F. Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven: Early Rabbinic Reports about Christianity and Gnosticism* (SJLA 25; Leiden: Brill, 1977).

[2] Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, x.

[3] Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, ix. Segal argues that "apparently, even within Christianity the 'two powers' controversy was evidenced" and "the language of the 'two powers' controversy becomes especially important within the church's struggle to refine Christology." Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 215. He further notes that "there is warrant to believe that 'two powers' heresy was manifested in some kinds of Christianity in the first century." Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 218. Yet, Segal doubts if the terminology "two powers in heaven" should be applied to early Christian developments: "perhaps the term 'two powers' is anachronistic as applied to the first century." Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 215.

[4] Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, x.

[5] Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 208. Elsewhere in his monograph, Segal notes that "besides the obvious relevance of these findings for understanding the rabbinic movement, this study has ramifications for Christian historians in two important areas: (1) the development of Christology

his hypothesis attracted the attention of several contemporary experts of early Judaism and Christian origins.[6]

Another scholar who has likewise acknowledged the importance of the two powers traditions for understanding of early Jewish and Christian accounts is Daniel Boyarin. According to Boyarin, "there is significant evidence (uncovered in large part by Segal) that in the first century many—perhaps most—Jews held a binitarian doctrine of God."[7] Like Segal, who advocated early pre-Christian roots of the two powers traditions, Boyarin maintains that the concept of a second and independent divine agent can be traced to the Hebrew Bible.[8]

Another scholar who has engaged in dialogue with Segal's legacy is Larry Hurtado. Applying some of Segal's ideas to his research on early Christian devotion, Hurtado concludes that

> although we do not actually have first-century Jewish documents that tell us directly what Jewish religious leaders thought of Christian devotion, there seems to be every reason to assume that the attitude was probably very much like the one reflected in slightly later Jewish sources, which apparently reject cultic devotion to

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and (2) the rise of Gnosticism. On the subject of Christology, the rabbinic information emphasizes the scriptural basis for Christological discussion." Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, x.

[6]   J. Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1991), 158; D. Boyarin, *Border Lines: The Partition of Judaeo-Christianity* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004), 128–47; idem, "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. H. Newman; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 331–70; idem, "Beyond Judaisms: Meṭaṭron and the Divine Polymorphy of Ancient Judaism," *JSJ* 41 (2010): 323–65; J. D. G. Dunn, *The Partings of the Ways Between Christianity and Judaism and Their Significance for the Character of Christianity* (London: SCM, 1991), 228–29; 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. J. Schwartz, and J. Turner; JCPS 17; Leiden: Brill, 2009), 15–44; L. W. Hurtado, *One God, One Lord* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1988); J. F. McGrath, *The Only True God: Early Christian Monotheism in Its Jewish Context* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2012); J. F. McGrath and J. Truex, "Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism: A Select Bibliography," in: *Early Jewish and Christian Monotheism* (ed. L. T. Stuckenbruck and W. E. S. North; JSNTSS 263; London: T&T Clark, 2004), 235–42; E. Osborn, *The Emergence of Christian Theology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 24–29; J. Painter, *The Quest for the Messiah* (2nd ed.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 225; A. Schremer, "Midrash, Theology, and History: Two Powers in Heaven Revisited," *JSJ* 39 (2008): 230–54; idem, *Brothers Estranged: Heresy, Christianity and Jewish Identity in Late Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); S. Scott, "The Binitarian Nature of the Book of Similitudes," *JSP* 18 (2008): 55–78; M. S. Smith, *God in Translation: Deities in Cross-Cultural Discourse in the Biblical World* (FAT 57; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 294; L. T. Stuckenbruck, *Angel Veneration and Christology: A Study in Early Judaism and in the Christology of the Apocalypse of John* (WUNT 2.70; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); Y. Y. Teppler, *Birkat HaMinim: Jews and Christians in Conflict in the Ancient World* (TSAJ 120; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 345; R. M. M. Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy: A Study in Their Development in Syria and Palestine from the Qumran Texts to Ephrem the Syrian* (STAC 40; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007), 104–5; S. G. Wilson, *Related Strangers: Jews and Christians* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 79; M. de Jonge, *God's Final Envoy: Early Christology and Jesus' Own View of His Mission* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 141.

[7]   Boyarin, "Two Powers in Heaven; Or the Making," 334.

[8]   Boyarin, "Two Powers in Heaven; Or the Making," 339–40.

Jesus as constituting an example of the worship of "two powers in heaven," that is, the worship of two gods.[9]

Several other scholars have followed suit, noting the ability of rabbinic debates concerning two powers to shed light on early Christological developments. James Davila effectively sums up these scholarly hopes by suggesting that the two powers traditions associated with the Metatron figure "might help us understand the rise of the worship of Jesus."[10]

While some experts think that the two powers traditions can provide us with crucial insights for understanding early Christological developments, others have expressed their reservations about the value of these later conceptual currents for understating early Christology. James McGrath surveys these doubts in his recent study "The Only True God." In it, McGrath offers nuanced skepticism about the relevance of the aforementioned rabbinic debates, suggesting "there is good reason to conclude that certain conceptualities later condemned as two powers heresy would not have been controversial in the first century."[11] He concludes by stating "it is anachronistic to interpret Jewish and Christian documents from this period as reflecting 'two powers' heresy."[12]

While one can certainly agree with McGrath that a straightforward application of later rabbinic debates to the Second Temple Jewish and Christian ideological environments appears problematic, the terminology of "two powers" can be methodologically useful in analyzing binitarian developments found in early Jewish and Christian angelology and pneumatology. This language is especially helpful for the study of early Jewish and Christian theophanic accounts in which God appears alongside a second mediatorial figure, who at times paradoxically emulates the deity's attributes. In this respect, the notion of the "second power" allows us to approach the attributes and functions of a novel mediator without assigning an exclusive divine status to this agent. These traditions, moreover, are crucial for understanding the earliest Christological developments, especially those that feature a sudden and paradoxical delegation of various functions and attributes of the deity to Jesus.

Furthermore, it should be noted that, in modern debates regarding the relevance of the two powers traditions for the study of early Judaism and Christian origins, the focus is often exclusively placed on the "oppositional" nature of the two powers traditions. This dimension is certainly prominent in later rabbinic and Hekhalot accounts, where the second power, in the form of the supreme angel Metatron, is clearly situated in polemical opposition to the first power represented by the deity. Scholars are often overfocused on this polemical tension between the two powers, having utilized it as an interpretive framework for understanding the long-lasting tensions between the

[9] Hurtado, *One God, One Lord*, 1–2.

[10] J. R. Davila, "Of Methodology, Monotheism and Metatron: Introductory Reflections on Divine Mediators and the Origins of the Worship of Jesus," in: *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism: Papers from the St. Andrews Conference on the Historical Origins of the Worship of Jesus* (ed. C. C. Newman et al.; JSJSS 63; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 16.

[11] McGrath, *The Only True God*, 71.

[12] McGrath, *The Only True God*, 95–96.

adepts of Christian devotion and their opponents. These previous investigations often failed to ascertain the existence, and thus value, of other complementary interactions and relationships between the two respective powers, utilizing instead only the oppositional characterization.

Yet, already Alan Segal in his seminal study reflected on the nature of the relationships between the two powers, whether complementary or oppositional, noting that "the earliest heretics believed in two complementary powers in heaven while only later could heretics be shown to believe in two opposing powers in heaven."[13] Segal's attention to the complementary two powers template is significant for the study of early Christian accounts, precisely because it appears to play a major role in the construction of Jesus' divine identity.

While in the oppositional two powers template the second power is often deconstructed and demoted, in its complementary variation it is built up and exalted. In this respect it is not coincidental that in many New Testament accounts, including stories of Jesus' baptism and transfiguration, his exalted identity is constructed in conjunction with aural manifestations of the deity, who, through his assuring voice, affirms the mediator's distinctive stand. With this in mind, a close investigation of early occurrences of the complementary two powers template, as found in early Jewish and Christian evidence, could shed a unique light on early Christological developments. In short, these currents may provide an important methodological perspective that enables us to witness the construction of a new divinity.

Along this same trajectory, it is also significant that the early complementary appearances of the two powers, much like their later oppositional counterparts, unfold in the midst of peculiar theophanic imagery. In previous scholarly debates these theophanic peculiarities were largely neglected by the majority of disputants. As previously noted, Alan Segal proposed that the gist of the qualms surrounding the rabbinic two powers traditions was an issue of the second power being found equivalent to God.[14] While postulating such relationships, scholars often paid little to no attention to the means by which such equivalency was advanced in various earlier and later two powers traditions. Yet it is clear that many of the tools used to postulate equivalency are connected to special theophanic imagery applied to respective mediatorial agents, thereby demonstrating a sharing of attributes and functions. Moreover, such theophanic qualities, by which the second power is often inducted into the realm of the deity, by themselves often create boundaries between the respective powers, signaling their proper place in the divine hierarchy. This is especially noticeable in the dual or joint theophanies in which two powers appear together. As is often the case in such combined theophanies, each power is associated with a particular theophanic mold that attempts to underline its unique status while simultaneously distancing it from the other power, thus demonstrating its superior place in the celestial hierarchy. Regularly, subtle changes in the depiction of the theophanic attributes of the divine protagonists—that is, when the second power suddenly assumes the features formally attributed to the first power—are intended to signal the ever-changing status of this new authority,

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[13]   Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, x.

[14]   Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, x.

paradoxically predestined for promotion into the realm of the deity. Sometimes the release of the authorial space guarded by the peculiar theophanic attributes is even more radical. In some accounts, the first power is completely withdrawn from the visual dimension of the ocularcentric theophany by assuming the aniconic aural mode. This latter pattern persists in early Christian accounts in which the deity is presented as the aniconic Voice while Jesus assumes the former anthropomorphic features of the deity. The exaltation of the new authority occurs when the first power surrenders its former symbolic space for a new guardian of the ocularcentric trend by withdrawing into the distinctive aural mode. This tradition is paramount for our understanding of early Christological innovations. In order to better grasp these Christological developments, we now turn to consider several early Jewish accounts in which two powers appear together in distinctive theophanic settings.

"Two Powers" Appearances in Early Jewish Accounts

In early Jewish sources, several theophanic accounts depict God alongside a second celestial manifestation that fashions or emulates his attributes. Such dual imagery is present in the Book of Daniel, the *Book of the Similitudes*, the *Exagoge* of Ezekiel the Tragedian, *2 Enoch*, the *Apocalypse of Abraham*, and the *Ladder of Jacob*, as well as other biblical and extra-biblical narratives. Features of some of these accounts, like the one found in the Book of Daniel, and possibly the memories of others, were often invoked in later rabbinic and Hekhalot two powers debates.[15] Such allusions indicate that the rabbinic authors intuitively saw early seeds of the two powers controversy rooted in these early visionary accounts.

Nevertheless, the application of the two powers terminology to early Jewish texts is regarded by some as an anachronistic application that could distort the intended original meaning of these sources. Others might argue, as I intend to do here, that such a move could provide a novel methodological framework that would enable a better understanding of "joint theophanies" and their divine protagonists. In this respect, the notion of the *second* "power" or "authority" appears to be especially helpful, since it provides a new perspective and an additional exegetical dimension often intentionally marginalized or eradicated in the traditional "orthodox" lines of interpretation. Applying the terminology of "power" to the second manifestation, in my opinion, represents a helpful provisional category for exploring early Jewish and Christian "dual" theophanies. In these accounts an exact status of the second mediator who appears along with the deity often remains uncertain, and it is difficult to establish

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[15] Segal points out that Daniel 7 became pivotal in several rabbinic texts that dealt with two powers in heaven traditions. He suggests it happened because "two different manifestations of God present in Daniel's vision might trouble the rabbis." Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, 43. Elsewhere, Segal notes that "a common proof-text against the heresy is Dan 7:9ff. However, it is also likely to be the locus of an heretical argument since the passage describes two different figures in heaven in Daniel's night vision." A. F. Segal, "Judaism, Christianity and Gnosticism," in: *Anti-Judaism in Early Christianity, Vol. 2, Separation and Polemic* (ed. S. G. Wilson; Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1986), 136.

whether he represents a divine, angelic, or corporeal entity. In this respect, the category of the second power can provide a helpful conceptual framework for the mediatorial protagonist's enigmatic identity. In the light of these benefits, I will use the "powers" terminology in my analysis of the dual theophanies found in the pertinent early Jewish and Christian texts. Additionally, the two powers terminology is useful because within these accounts one can see peculiar transferals of power and authority between the theophanic dyad, whereby crucial attributes of divine sovereignty and authority represented by the divine throne or crown are suddenly transferred from the first power to the second.

The theophanic settings of early two powers accounts are indeed fluid. In some, the deity appears as an anthropomorphic being, in others, he is presented as an aniconic voice. Of course, the deity's appearances as visual or audial representations are not entirely surprising here, since already in the earliest biblical theophanies God had revealed himself both as the anthropomorphic extent[16] and as the divine voice.[17] Moreover, in some paradigmatic Exodus accounts, the deity chooses to reveal himself simultaneously in various theophanic modes, both aural and ocularcentric. On the surface, the deity's revelation in aural and ocularcentric modes appears to be very similar to Jewish and Christian joint theophanies that attest to the simultaneous existence of both theophanic molds. What is different, however, in comparison to the Exodus accounts, is that in the dual theophanies these molds are no longer associated with one God but are instead applied to the respective powers. Often in such accounts God becomes confined solely to the aural mode, while the second power absorbs the whole legacy of the ocularcentric trend formerly possessed by the deity. We should now proceed to a close investigation of these conceptual developments.

Daniel 7

One of the foundational witnesses to the two powers in heaven traditions is found in the Hebrew Bible. Thus, chapter 7 of the Book of Daniel narrates the appearance of two enigmatic celestial figures—the first under the name Ancient of Days, and the second bearing the title Son of Man. In later rabbinic discourses this theophany will be seen as a controversial symbolic well that generated a panoply of heretical opinions. Dan 7:9–14 reads:

> As I watched, thrones were set in place, and an Ancient One took his throne, his clothing was white as snow, and the hair of his head like pure wool; his throne was fiery flames, and its wheels were burning fire. A stream of fire issued and flowed out from his presence. A thousand thousands served him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood attending him. The court sat in judgment, and the books were opened. I watched then because of the noise of the arrogant words that the horn was speaking. And as I watched, the beast was put to death,

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[16]   Ezek 1; Isa 6.

[17]   1 Kgs 19:11–13.

and its body destroyed and given over to be burned with fire. As for the rest of the beasts, their dominion was taken away, but their lives were prolonged for a season and a time. As I watched in the night visions, I saw one like a human being coming with the clouds of heaven. And he came to the Ancient One and was presented before him. To him was given dominion and glory and kingship that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that shall not pass away, and his kingship is one that shall never be destroyed.[18]

Scholars have noted that despite its use of unique mythological imagery, the theophanic language of this passage is nevertheless deeply rooted in prophetic and apocalyptic traditions. For example, John Collins says "the scene as a whole belongs to the tradition of biblical throne visions, attested in such passages as 1 Kgs 22:19; Isaiah 6; Ezekiel 1; 3:22–24; 10:1 and paralleled in writings of the Hellenistic period such as *1 Enoch* 14:18–23; 60:2; 90:20."[19] Yet while some features of the account certainly perpetuate familiar conceptual lines found in other earlier biblical and extra-biblical theophanies, it also manifests a striking departure from these earlier patterns by attempting to depict the deity *in conjunction* with another celestial "power." Such novelty in the portrayal of the deity along with the second mediatorial figure, upon whom divine attributes are also conferred, can be understood as a portentous paradigm shift in the history of the Jewish theophanic tradition.

An important symbolic dimension that still ties the Danielic account to the long-lasting tradition of Jewish biblical and extra-biblical theophanies is its explicit anthropomorphic tendencies. In order to better understand this portentous symbolic dimension, a short excursus on its conceptual origins is necessary.[20]

Scholars have noted that biblical anthropomorphism received its most forceful expression in the Israelite Priestly ideology,[21] where God is depicted in "the most tangible corporeal similitudes."[22] Already in the initial chapters of the Pentateuch one

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[18] All biblical quotations are taken from the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) unless otherwise indicated.

[19] J. J. Collins, *Daniel* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 300.

[20] The conceptual origins of the biblical anthropomorphism cannot be determined with certainty. Some scholars argue that the anthropomorphic position was not entirely an invention of the Priestly tradition, but stemmed from early pre-exilic sacral conceptions regarding divine corporeal manifestations, influenced by ancient Near Eastern materials.

[21] James Barr observes that

> because the priestly *Kabod* conception is thus connected naturally with the circumstances in which the cult operated, we can see that it is not just a part of the developed priestly thought as found in P, but goes back to an earlier time; and in particular we note this kind of divine manifestation in the old story from the very beginning of the Solomonic temple (1 Kgs 8:12–13).
>> J. Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament," in: *Congress Volume: Oxford 1959* (ed. G. W. Anderson; VTSup 7; Leiden: Brill, 1960), 35.

[22] M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 191.