A Study of the Practice and Liturgy of the Merkavah Mystics

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This thesis was begun with an intuition that a light does exist in the mystical realm for one who desires to find it, but I could see no light until this intuition was transformed into faith. It is difficult to speak of faith, and even painful to learn to experience it. He who speaks unmitigated praises of God runs the risk of being branded a mystic himself, and yet it is not possible to present a work of this sort, that concerns itself with unbounded praises of God, without acknowledging the presence of God, and giving thanks to Him for the illumination that made the difficulty and pain well worthwhile. Thus I thank and praise God, the Holy One, blessed is He, who has enabled me to initiate this study.

I must also acknowledge that my wife is to a large extent responsible for this work, for she has never been satisfied with my ordinary attempts to answer her questions concerning the nature of prayer, and thus has led me to seeking extraordinary answers. So if there is any merit in this study, it is in great measure due to Wallis' perseverance.

It was the inspired teaching of Professor Lawrence Hoffman that led me to suspect that some answers to my wife's persistant questions might be found in the Merkavah literature, and without

his steady encouragement and assistance, this work would not have been written. At the outset it was apparent that the thesis would take me beyond rabbinic sources into areas where I am still less expert, and Professor Paul Steinberg introduced me to and guided me through some of the necessary psychological texts.

I am also grateful to Mr. Philip Miller who assisted diligently in providing me with esoteric documents I would never have discovered by myself; to Mr. Ludwig Muhlfelder for his assistance in translating those documents written in German; and to Dr. Jorge Steinberg for the extraordinary patience which supported me through this confrontation with the mystical realm.

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Sometimes prayer is more than a light before us; it is a light within us. Those who have once been resplendent with this light find little meaning in speculations about the efficacy of prayer. A story is told about a Rabbi who once entered heaven in a dream. He was permitted to approach the temple of Paradise where the great sages of the Talmud, the Tannaim, were spending their eternal lives. He saw that they were just sitting around tables studying the Talmud. The disappointed Rabbi wondered, "Is this all there is to Paradise?" But suddenly he heard a voice, "You are mistaken. The Tannaim are not in Paradise. Paradise is in the Tannaim."

— Abraham Joshua Heschel

Man's Quest for God (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1954), p. 8.

I. The Conventional Approach

Merkavah mysticism is a system of speculation based upon the visions of Ezekiel. It is an esoteric tradition that has not been practiced for many centuries, and all that remains of it is a small body of literature which is referred to as midrash although it is not similar to either the aggadic or the halachic modes of that genre. This arcane midrash has been dismissed as nonsense by most scholars, though its profound influence upon the liturgy has been acknowledged.[1]

Of the inner life of the Merkavah mystics little is known. The mystical literature does not yield much to conventional analysis. Jacob Neusner has determined that these mystics experienced visions in which they saw sights that people do not regularly see and that they believed that what they saw was real. He finds it likely that these visions were the result of ecstatic states, but there is little empirical evidence of how such ecstasy was induced. The tools of logic can go no further, as Neusner admits:

> The best we can do in the end is to speculate on what the external imagery meant. The inner quality of the visions we shall never comprehend.[2]

Yet the purpose of this thesis is just this, to gain some insight into the inner quality of these visions. To do so we must use an approach other than the conventional, but first we shall review briefly what has been accomplished by conventional means.

For many years scholars have thought Merkavah mysticism to be a reaction against the rigidity of the halachah.[3] This is a misconception; the mystical literature itself indicates that knowledge and observance of the law in all of its details is a prerequisite for mystical study.[4] But this misconception stood for many years and thwarted all attempts to penetrate the Merkavah world.

Toward the beginning of this century Merkavah mysticism was attributed to the gaonim, as is clearly evident from the title of Philipp Bloch's article, "The Yorde Merkavah, the Mystics of the Gaonic Period, and Their Influence upon the Liturgy."[5] Bloch, writing in 1893, was the first to acknowledge the measure of our indebtedness to these mystics for their liturgical contributions, but he erred in dating this mystical system to the gaonim. Through an examination of this liturgy evidence was found to suggest that Merkavah origins were considerably earlier;[6] indeed the Merkavah tradition was reported in the names of several well known tannaim, beginning with Johanan ben Zakkai.[7] Yet as long as scholars held that Merkavah speculation was a reaction against the halachah, they could not accept that the tannaim were truly the originators of this mysticism. One could not very well attribute the development of the law and a rebellion against it to the same source.

Rather it was thought that these works, while attributed to the tannaim, were written much later. But as it was shown that this mysticism did not pose a threat to the halachah, the resistance against early dating disappeared. Gershom Scholem at first dated Merkavah origins to the amoraim; later he ventured to extend these origins back to the Tannaitic period,[8] and this is the view accepted today. Now that this is established, there is no longer any barrier to the discovery of Merkavah influence throughout the Tannaitic period, and its influence was pervasive. Even the Christian Paul can be seen to have been educated in the Merkavah tradition.[9]

If not a reaction against the halachah, what was the source of Merkavah speculation? Neusner suggests that the destruction of the temple was followed by a greatly intensified concentration on inwardness. Since the impact of the events from 70 - 135 C.E. resulted in general concern for personal and cosmic salvation, the mystical tradition was able to develop alongside and even within the halachic framework.[10] The mystical tradition, then, served as a bulwark to support a community that had been shattered by the loss of its fundamental institution. Yet scholars are divided on the extent to which mysticism supported communal solidarity. While some find that mystical elements were first used in the community,[11] others find that mysticism is individualistic in nature and ultimately divisive.[12] Scholem notes this conflict and cannot resolve it. He concludes that mysticism is a system that recognizes that self-knowledge is the surest way to God, and

is therefore intensely personal, but in spite of its personal nature, it leads to the formation of new social groupings.[13] The results of these investigations are ill-defined and often contradictory. Mysticism is somehow intensely personal but communal at the same time.

Such confusion and even paradox is often encountered when one treats mystical material with the conventional apparatus of scholarship. Ordinary logic is not designed to work in the realm of the extraordinary. The very attempt to define mysticism serves as an illustration of such paradox, for definition is a conventional tool, and mysticism does not yield to it. The concepts of mysticism are so fluid that they refuse to be confined by mere words. Witness this attempt by Rufus Jones:

> I shall use the word (mysticism) to express the type of religion which puts the emphasis on immediate awareness of relation with God, on direct and ultimate consciousness of the Divine Presence. It is religion in its most acute, intense and living stage.[14]

In his endeavor to reduce mysticism to rational terminology, Jones unwittingly oversteps the boundaries of the rational and begins to utilize mystical technique itself. He refers to God by a mystical name ("Divine Presence") and requires an abundance of words ("acute, intense and living") to describe something that is numinous and not readily expressible. The result is not so much a definition as it is an example of the material to be studied! Definitions such as that of Thomas Aquinas, "Cognito dei experimentalis" (the knowledge of God through experience),[15]

make use only of rational terminology but are so vague that they approach tautology. The nature of mysticism cannot be stated adequately in ordinary language. The attempt to do so is in itself a paradox, since it is an attempt to express the inexpressible.

Conventional tools such as ordinary language and logic are of little value in the study of mysticism because the mystical realm is not subject to empirical proof. It is this inability to respond to logic that has subjected mysticism (and those who study it) to the scorn of the scientific scholars of this age of reason. Graetz's treatment of the mystical is so blistering that his words seem to ooze venom. He attributes the mystical use of anthropomorphism to "the creation of an imbecile".[16] And Merkavah mysticism he dismisses as "nonsense".[17] Nonetheless the mystical realm remains, and if we ignore it for lack of empirical data, it will not necessarily ignore us, as Carl Jung relates:

> I have more than once been consulted by well-educated and intelligent people who have had peculiar dreams, fantasies, or even visions, which have shocked them deeply. They have assumed that no one who is in a sound state of mind could suffer from such things, and that anyone who actually sees a vision must be pathologically disturbed. A theologian once told me that Ezekiel's visions were nothing more than morbid symptoms, and that, when Moses and other prophets heard "voices" speaking to them, they were suffering from hallucinations. You can imagine the panic he felt when something of this kind "spontaneously" happened to him. We are so accustomed to the apparently rational nature of our world that we can scarcely imagine anything happening that cannot be explained by common sense.[18]

The illusion that everything can be reduced to elements that

can be explained by "common sense" creates a barrier to the study of materials that fall beyond such comprehension. However illusory such faith in common sense may be, the barrier the illusion creates is real. Even Jung, who understood so well the need to penetrate that barrier, was hesitant to publish his findings and expose himself to the criticism of conventional scholars. Although he formulated the notion of a "God within," which he thought to be an undeniable concept that was forced upon the conscious mind by dreams and visions, he waited fourteen years before publishing his ideas.[19]

But we cannot afford to wait. We have repressed these speculative areas for so long that the result, as Jung readily acknowledges, can be dangerous:

> Modern man does not understand how much his "rationalism" (which has destroyed his capacity to respond to numinous symbols and ideas) has put him at the mercy of the psychic "underworld." He has freed himself from "superstition" (or so he believes), but in the process he has lost his spiritual values to a positively dangerous degree. His moral and spiritual tradition has disintegrated, and he is now paying the price for this break-up in a world-wide disorientation and dissociation.[20]

This study will explore a system of numinous symbols and ideas, and hopefully it will contribute to the process of restoring to us what we have lost through our arrogant faith in reason. We will venture into a realm not subject to empirical proof, and so we will for the most part have to rely upon tools different from those generally used in Wissenschaft des Judenthums. We will find that Jung's psychoanalytic frame of refer-

ence is quite useful for our purpose, but before we can venture beyond the framework of the conventional, we have a responsibility to explore in some detail the consequences of doing so.

II. Warnings and Restrictions

At the very outset of the journey into the mystical realm one finds warnings and restrictions, some of which were posted as early as the second century B.C.E. The following from The Wisdom of Ben Sira reappears in the Talmud:

> Do not inquire into what is too hard for you, and do not search out things that are hidden. What has been permitted to you, you may think upon, but you have no business with things that are secret.[1]

The Tosefta further delineates the dangerous areas:

> Whoever looks into four matters should never have come into the world: what is above, what is below, what was before, and what will be.[2]

By the time of the tannaim study of mysticism was considered so dangerous that legislation was formulated to protect the community. Since Merkavah speculation is based upon the visions of Ezekiel, an effort was made to remove the book of Ezekiel from the canon, ostensibly because of discrepencies with the Torah concerning sacrificial law, but, as Zeitlin indicates, the real purpose was to undercut the foundation of mystical speculation.[3] Due to the efforts of Hannaniah ben Hezekiah the attempt failed.[4]

But is there a real danger behind the warnings and restrictions? One who inclines toward the mystical world, who studies

phenomena that are beyond the scope of verification by empirical data, subjects himself to the scorn of conventional scholars. The loneliness and isolation produced by such criticism cannot be ignored and thus represents a real danger. But why is there such criticism? There is the fear that if one ventures into these areas of speculation, the rational framework (in this instance, the halachah) will suffer as a result. These warnings and restrictions then might well be the product of scholars of the rational world, a device to hinder the study of the mystical and protect the integrity of their own framework. If so the warnings are not real in that they do not reflect a real danger to the health of the would-be mystic.

Yet, as has been shown above, there is no indication that the Merkavah mystics abandoned the halachah or were in any way a threat to it. And the warnings, although they are posted in the rational literature, appear also as an integral part of the mystical texts in such a way as to deny the possibility that they might be later insertions from the rational school.[5] But still, perhaps the aspect of danger was merely a form of aggrandizement, to make the material appear more awesome than it really was. This cannot be determined without venturing into the material itself. Since there is no way of making this determination beforehand, one is obliged to give careful consideration to the warnings and restrictions, and consider them as if they are real. This is similar to one who knows, for example, almost to a certainty,

that there is nothing the matter with a road up ahead and yet sees a sign that proclaims "OPEN TRENCH!" Should one depend upon reason and rush headlong, or should one proceed with all due caution? There may indeed be nothing wrong with the road, but on the other hand, the hazard may exist. Caution is surely warranted.

The mystical material is not of the usual scholarly fare. While one may approach it as data to be examined objectively at a distance, the numinous nature of it is to invite subjective involvement. Scholem draws a distinction between philosophy and mysticism. Philosophy ignores fear of death, evil and the stuff of myths. But mysticism accepts and struggles with such themes. It is involved with feelings. And there is a real danger that one might lose oneself in it.[6]

These then are the warnings and restrictions concerning such study.

The best known of the warnings is the story of the four who entered the orchard (paradise). Of the four, only Akiva returned from the orchard a whole person. Ben Azzai looked and died. Ben Zoma looked and was stricken insane. Aher looked and it is uncertain what befell him, he "cut the shoots" (ki-tzaitz bi-nit'iot). Surely he was damaged, for only Akiva returned whole. This story is found in several places.[7] The Babylonian recension contains an additional passage. Akiva cautions against proclaiming "Water!

Water!" when one reaches the stones of pure marble, for it is written, "Whoever speaks lies will not be estalished before my eyes." In Hechalot Rabbati there is a similar account.[8] Those who are unworthy of approaching the inner temples are crushed by thousands of bars of iron; those who err in reporting what they see are crushed as if they had been pounded by waves of water. The sensation of being crushed is most explicit.

Another story describes the death of a young boy:

> It happened that a child was reading the book of Ezekiel in his teacher's home when he had an intuitive understanding of the hashmal (ma-vin bi-hashmal). Fire came out from the hashmal and consumed him.[9]

This was considered an isolated event and it was thought unlikely that another so young would gain such intuitive (and dangerous) insight.[10]

Another report concerns the death of the soldiers of Sennacherib's army who were destroyed, according to one account, because their ears were unsealed and they heard the hayot.[11]

Do these stories reflect a real danger, a danger so great that it may even threaten life? There are indications that such a danger exists. Scholem notes that a fiery, consuming transformation is an inherent part of mysticism, and that in the higher degrees there can be a betrayal of the senses.[12] It is conceivable that one who is not stable enough to withstand such a fiery transformation may well feel crushed. The senses may convey a tumult of water, or a hail of iron bars, and while there is neither water

nor iron bars in reality, the trauma may still be overwhelming.

Jung expresses something akin to this. Great courage is required of one who risks a confrontation with himself,[13] and we shall see that mystical study leads to such a confrontation, and that it is possible for one who does not possess the necessary courage to be overwhelmed.

David Bakan, who suspects that Freud developed his theories of personality as a result of exposure to Jewish mysticism, considers this hazard similar to that involved in bringing repressed material to consciousness.[14]

Morton Smith perceives that since these groups practised in secret they were in jeopardy of being discovered by the civil authorities, but he recognizes another source of peril as well:

> These groups, because of their nature, were in danger not only from the civil authorities, but also from their own practices, which exposed them to what would be called, in our terms, serious psychological strains. In their terms, anyone who attempted the ascent while unworthy, or who did not know the names of the doorkeepers or the proper forms of behavior, would be burned with supernatural fire or crushed beneath a myriad of iron bars. Therefore the unworthy and the unprepared must not be given information which would permit them to venture into this dangerous territory. The consequent secrecy which surrounded these teachings was completely serious. To dismiss it as conventional theosophical rhetoric would be to misunderstand completely the sort of material with which we have to do.[15]

Since this material is potentially so dangerous it is not surprising to find that it was carefully restricted. One was not permitted to teach it publicly, and if it should be taught privately, even then only the chapter headings should be revealed.[16]

On those occasions when it was transmitted openly, it had the force of a weapon. This can be seen from the above legend concerning Sennacherib's army as well as the following. A certain Galilean visited Babylon and was requested to lecture on the Merkavah. When he agreed, a wasp stung him and he died. It was said that it was his own fault. He should not have presumed to lecture in public.[17] The mystical literature itself concludes that those who have risked the journey should on no account describe the secrets they have seen.[18]

There was naturally great hesitancy about beginning mystical study, even one to one, as the following story indicates:

> R. Johanan said to R. Elazar, "Come, I will instruct you in the Work of the Chariot." He replied, "I am not old enough." When he was old enough, R. Johanan died. R. Assi said to him, "Come, I will instruct you in the Work of the Chariot." He replied, "Had I been worthy, I should have been instructed by R. Johanan your master."[19]

This study was not for everyone. The student had to be endowed with the proper qualities. The Mishnah teaches that the Merkavah may not be expounded to one unless he is hacham ma-vin mi-da'ato.[20] The Tosefta imposes a similar restriction.[21] The Talmud continues in the same vein. One may teach the chapter headings, and afterward, if the student is hacham ma-vin mi-da-'ato, one may continue.[22]

A hacham is one who has mastered rational studies, specifically the halachah. But what is ma-vin mi-da'ato? Joshua Abelson renders it as "an original turn of mind."[23] Tosefta makes use of

the expression li-drosh uli-havin,[24] implying that the ability to discern (li-havin) is found in one of an inquisitive nature. In Talmud Megillah R. Judah comments on the qualities required to see the Merkavah. The sight of the eyes is not necessary. What is required is "discernment of the heart".[25]

The ability li-havin mi-da'ato refers to a subjective quality that is somewhat elusive and goes beyond the quality of being a hacham. Whereas a hacham is one who has gained rational knowledge, one who has the ability li-havin mi-da'ato is able to gain knowledge of a speculative nature, something beyond the rational realm. But while one who has the ability li-havin mi-da'ato has within himself the means of "seeing the Chariot," that alone does not qualify such a person to begin this esoteric study. The child who studied the book of Ezekiel in his teacher's house had the ability li-havin and gained insight into the Merkavah world, but the insight killed him. Why? Because he was not a hacham. He was merely a child and had not developed his rational knowledge to the point where he could confront the non-rational and remain stable. Both qualities are mandatory. One must have the ability to achieve speculative knowledge, but one must also have a sound footing in the rational world.

There was no wavering in this matter. One's credentials in the rational world had to be impeccable before study of the Merkavah was permitted. One had to achieve eight moral qualities before the study could begin, and there was complaint that such a state of perfection could not be achieved.[26] In addition it was

thought that one had to have the qualities of a king, or a high priest, or the Sanhedrin, lest such study shorten one's life.[27] Similarly, in the Talmud, five attributes were required of one who would study mysticism. He had to be a captain of fifty (which is interpreted as one who has mastered the Humash). He had to be a man of rank (one for whose sake favor is shown in an entire generation). He had to be a counselor (one who knows how to determine the intercalation of the years). He had to be a cunning charmer (so that all become dumb when he begins to teach Torah). And finally he had to be a skillful enchanter (one who is worthy to receive the whispered words of Torah).[28] In short, he not only had to be well-grounded in rational study, he had to be a master of it. Abelson summarizes the prerequisites in this fashion:

> The organic life, the self, conscious and unconscious, must be moulded and developed in certain ways; there must be an education, moral, physical, emotional; a psychological adjustment, by stages, of the mental states which go to the make-up of the full mystic consciousness.[29]

In all likelihood the dangers of study in the mystical realm are real. Only a person possessing qualities out of the ordinary should face them. A sound footing in the rational world is necessary before going on, for the encounters in the non-rational world can readily dislodge one who stands on a weak foundation.

Of the four who ventured into that orchard, only Akiva was qualified and emerged whole. It requires some temerity, then,

to venture through the interface beyond the rational world, and leave the warnings behind.

III. The Mystical Framework

The world which we ordinarily perceive is revealed to us by our senses and consists of elements which respond in orderly fashion to natural law. Speculation that there may exist another "world" which obeys a different law would seem at first to fly in the face of conventional scholarship. Yet the mystics claim to experience a realm of angels and demons, streams of fire and flying chariots, none of which have any place in the real world, for all contravene the laws of nature. If these unnatural phenomena exist at all, they must belong to some other realm, and if they are experienced, then there must be some form of communication between that other realm and this.

In the mystical framework two universes exist. One is this world (ha-olam ha-zeh) which God created, and which obeys natural law. The other universe existed prior to creation and is the world of God,[1] a realm which responds to a different order. The other world continues to exist alongside this one, and it is called ha-olam ha-ba. The expression ha-olam ha-ba is generally understood to mean "the world to come" after this one ceases to exist, "the next world" in chronological sequence.

But the mystical framework understands "next" not in the sense of time, but rather in its alternative meaning of "adjacent." Ha-olam ha-ba is the adjacent world which exists alongside this one but separate from it and utterly different. In this adjacent universe there might well be angels and streams of fire, fore there natural law does not prevail.

If the realms are of such different natures, how is there to be any communication between them? Angels were thought to have the ability to travel between the spheres. They belonged to the other realm, and while they might transmit messages to this world, they could touch nothing, not even the ground.[2] The angels who were Abraham's guests had no need of food or drink since such substance is necessary only in this world; they merely appeared to eat.[3] The slightest contamination of one realm with the substance of the other was enough to break the link of communication.[4]

Mystics, unlike angels, had no wings. How could they dare to aspire to the angelic feat of traversing spheres? The transition was accomplished by means of a secret technique;[5] one who had mastered it was likened to a man who had a ladder in his house and was able to climb to the higher realm whenever he chose.[6] But the image of a ladder may be misleading, for it implies an ascent, and although one might imagine the heavens above and the earth below, the Merkavah mystics did not ascend to the other world; they descended. They were known as the

yordai merkavah, those who go down toward God's throne. It is a paradox, as Scholem notes; the mystics do not deny that the realm of God is exalted above the realm of man, but they insist that the ascent to this heavenly sphere is really a descent!? Morton Smith and Scholem attempt to resolve the paradox by relating this descent to the practice of "going down before the ark," since the ark containing the scrolls of the law may be likened to the throne of God,[8] but the argument is tenuous. Bloch was more likely nearer the truth when he cited an explanation from Sefer Ha-bahir: the descent involves getting down to the bottom of one's opinion. But Bloch, limited by the parameters of the tools he used, had to reject this, for it is not logical to make a descent to something that is abstract. Instead he prefers the explanation of Hai Gaon who attributed the use of the word to the feeling that results from the mystical practice of putting one's head down between one's knees.[9] Wertheimer is not troubled by the abstraction and notes that penetration of a mystery requires a descent into the depths thereof.[10] And, finally, Jung uses the term in a personal sense, not so very different from that of Wertheimer or Sefer Ha-bahir, a descent into one's own depths,[11] and it is this sense that the Merkavah mystics intended when they referred to a descent.

This journey into the depths proceeds through seven temples, and although each is contained within the next, each gains in scope and majesty. This is another paradox. How can that which

is contained be greater than the container? In the real world this cannot be, but in the mystical world, each temple is more awesome than the one left behind, and the dimensions grow until they become cosmic. The journey becomes progressively more perilous. At the door of each temple stand an ever increasing number of guards, and special formulae must be recited to gain entrance. Each confrontation is more terrifying than the last. At any moment one might be overwhelmed completely.

If the descent involves so many dangers, why risk it? There are powers to be gained from the process of the descent that are of use in this world. The foremost of these is insight into the character of man, an ability to discern the truth about others and oneself. As a smelter melts down silver and determines its essential quality, so the mystical traveler learns to determine the essential quality of men.[12] In addition, one who masters these secrets may attain riches; the great will seek out his company.[13] These tangible rewards were considered as logical consequences of such penetrating insight.

For one who completes the descent and stands ultimately opposite God's throne there is a joy so overwhelming that it threatens to split one open.[14] More than the powers to be gained, this joy is the goal that makes the risks worthwhile.

These are the basic elements of the mystical framework. It encompasses many concepts which have no place in modern rational thought. And yet there are those who even today make a similar descent into the depths - the depths of one's

own mind, which is likened to a maze of passages and chambers.[15] One who makes such a descent hopes to achieve a union of the conscious and unconscious contents of the mind. A journey is the symbol that represents man's striving towards this union, and the reward for achieving it is a sense of completeness.[16] The journey is fraught with difficulty. At any moment the traveler may be overcome. But if he is successful, he emerges whole, as Akiva emerged whole from the orchard.

The present day descent is the process of psychoanalysis. Merkavah mysticism and psychoanalysis differ ultimately in their goals since one is not likely to enter analysis in order to stand in the presence of God. And they differ in framework, since free association is not the technique of inducing mystical visions. Even so it is remarkable how much the two disciplines have in common. Just as the aspiring mystic must possess certain qualities before he can begin the descent, so must the aspiring analysand. One who is severely imbalanced is not qualified, nor is one whose powers of discernment are not adequate. Psychoanalysis is rarely successful among psychopaths.[17] Jungian analysis is found to work best among middle-aged people.[18] As in the study of mysticism, balance and maturity are required. Mystical tradition and analysis are given to only one at a time. One is not likely to acquire either discipline alone; the mystic did not learn to penetrate the other world without a companion to guide him,[19] and so the analyst

serves as guide and guard for the patient making a descent into the unconscious. Such careful observation is necessary, for in analysis as in mystical descent, the confrontations are of such magnitude that they can easily overwhelm.

The visionary experience is not unique to mysticism. It is common in psychoanalysis as well, but while the fact of such experience is undeniable, it is difficult to explain.[20] The problem is that language is insufficient to describe what is happening.[21] The vision is experienced in symbols which are expressions of an intuitive idea that cannot be formulated in a better way. The vision is an attempt to express that which transcends the spoken word.[22] The substance of visions does not yield to documentary analysis.

The rewards of the psychoanalytic experience are similar to those of mysticism. One who completes analysis has achieved great personal insight, and this insight is useful in understanding others. One who masters the discipline may attain riches, and the great may seek out his company.[23]

Is it possible that the Merkavah mystics were practicing something akin to psychoanalysis some seventeen centuries before Freud? The systems have different points of focus. Psychoanalysis is oriented toward science; mysticism to religion. But the descent into the Merkavah world has much in common with a descent into the unconscious. The evidence is undeniable.

> "... (the) symbol is an expressible representation of something which lies beyond the sphere of expression and communication, something which comes from

> a sphere whose face is, as it were, turned inward and away from us.[24]

The above might well have been written by a psychologist of the Jungian school, but these words are those of Gershom Scholem who tries to explain how a mystical symbol operates. If properly understood, these symbols may provide a momentary insight into a transcendental reality. But Scholem stops short of recognizing this inward sphere as the unconscious. Jung does not write of the Merkavah mystics, but he does write of their contemporaries, the Christian Gnostics, and finds that the idea of the unconscious was not unknown to them.[25] It may well be that the Merkavah mystics achieved an integration of personality, a union of their conscious and unconscious minds, through the process of approaching the throne of God.

IV. Confrontation, Reconciliation and Transformation

Since the material of the mystical visions does not respond to conventional treatment, we must develop other means of analysis. Angels, streams of fire, garments of glory and fiery snakes do not obey the laws of nature; rather their properties are those of the dream world, where transmutations and violations of natural law become ordinary. Perhaps these mystical elements will respond in some meaningful way to one of the psychoanalytic systems that work upon the fabric of dreams.

In the treatment of dreams one turns first to Freud who understands the dream to be an expression of an infantile wish. The symbols of the dream serve to distort the underlying desire which may be reprehensible to the conscious mind. The source of these symbols is the personal experience of the dreamer.[1] But this approach to the dream world will be of little assistance in penetrating the visions of the mystics, for the source of mystical symbolism must transcend individual experience. As we have noted, mysticism is not only personal but communal in nature. Many shared these symbols. To under-

stand the essence of mystical symbolism, one needs a framework that embraces a common source of symbolic material, a well from which all can draw, one that runs deeper than the contents of a single conscious mind. Since Freud does not go beyond the life history of the individual,[2] we must look elsewhere.

Erich Fromm's categorization of symbols will assist us in our search. He determines that there are three classes of symbols: conventional, accidental and universal.[3] A national flag is a conventional symbol. It has meaning bestowed upon it by the community, but it is not this sort of communal symbol we are seeking. The conventional symbol exists on a conscious level; there is nothing esoteric or mystical about it. The accidental symbol relates to unconscious material, but it is personal in nature. If the connection between a symbol and what it represents depends upon chance experience, then it is accidental. One must have access to that experience to understand the symbol. This is Freud's use of the term. If however there is an intrinsic relationship between the symbol and what it represents, then it is universal. Comprehension of the universal symbol is not dependent upon knowledge of convention or chance experience. When Jung writes of symbols, he intends only this last category,[4] and it is here that we might hope to understand the nature of mystical symbolism.

Jung finds that dreams do other work than express infantile desires; They are also self-representations of the unconscious.[5]

They serve as messages to indicate what is necessary to complete a union between the consious and unconsious mind, and they do this in symbolic form. The ultimate source of this symbolism is the collective unconscious. Jung suggests that a psychic heritage parallels our biological heritage, and just as man has physical roots that extend back to an ultimate common denominator, so our psychological roots extend back to an ultimate collective unconscious, and the representations that may be found there are intrinsically available to all regardless of convention or accidental experience.[6]

The personal unconscious is only a superficial layer which serves to cover an inner cosmos, a collective unconsious which is infinite in scope.[7] Jolande Jacobi, a disciple of Jung, describes it in this fashion:

> The collective unconscious as suprapersonal matrix, as the unlimited sum of fundamental psychic conditions accumulated over millions of years, is a realm of immeasurable breadth and depth. From the very beginning of its development it is the inner equivalent of Creation, an inner cosmos as infinite as the cosmos outside us.[8]

If the mystics descended into this internal universe, then it is conceivable that each of the seven temples could become greater in scope and more majestic, even though it is contained within the previous temple. The cosmos within can be as infinite as the cosmos without. The closer one comes to the center of this inner universe, the greater it seems. And reports from this inner realm would encompass cosmic ideas, ideas such as

those which Jungians find expressed occasionally in "big dreams,"[9] or ideas such as those the Merkavah mystics expressed in their visions.

In this internal cosmos numinous points of focus are encountered which the Jungians refer to as complexes and archetypes. Complexes are feeling-toned manifestations of the personal unconscious; archetypes are found in the collective unconscious, and are universal. A complex, for example, may make its presence known to the conscious mind in the form of a phobic object; a boy caught up in the oedipal situation might develop a phobia to divert his attention from the uncomfortable feelings of ambivalence he has towards his father. The phobic object is the symbol that represents this personal complex. The archetype runs deeper than the complex. Whereas not all boys develop a phobia in this fashion, all do have a female counterpart to their overt male nature, and this female archetype (the anima) will make itself known to the conscious mind by assuming a female symbolic form in dreams. These archetypes surpass rational comprehension. They can never be visualized directly, but only indirectly. The symbol is the means by which the archetype becomes discernable. Symbols are grounded in the unconscious archetype, but their manifest forms are molded by the ideas acquired by the conscious mind.[10] Archetypes are always present, but without a proper framework, the symbolic representations of the archetypes are not readily

apparent. Jungian analysis is one such framework; Merkavah mysticism is another.

The purpose of a Jungian analysis, or of a mystical journey, is a reconciliation of the two worlds, an integration of the personality which results in a dissolution of neuroses, a process of healing which transforms one into a person of greater capabilities, finer insight, and more personal power. But before the reconciliation there must be a confrontation. The relationship between the conscious and the unconscious forms a complementary pair of opposites.[11] Symbols are the natural attempts to reconcile opposites in the psyche. They are grounded on one hand in the conscious and on the other in the unconscious, and they represent a bridge between the two worlds. They are the mediators between the hidden and the manifest.[12] They are the means of communication between ha-olam ha-zeh and ha-olam ha-ba. The successful reconciliation of opposites releases energy that had been required to control the tension of the confrontation. Coming to grips with the archetype results in a freeing of psychic energy, and this new-found energy leads to the development of new personal powers.[13]

The mystic is concerned with those archetypes that are related to the Deity and have their symbolic expression in the form of angels, chariots, thrones, garments of God and the like, even in the measurements of the body of God. But these are only symbols, and the most that symbols can do is to describe

the unknowable essence of God.[14] They present a God-image, but they are not God themselves. Jung writes concerning the mystical use of symbols:

> These utterances on the nature of the Deity express transformations of the God-image which run parallel with changes in human consciousness, though one would be at a loss to say which is the cause of the other. The God-image is not something invented, it is an experience that comes upon man spontaneously - as anyone can see for himself unless he is blinded to the truth by theories and prejudices. The unconscious God-image can therefore alter the state of consciousness, just as the latter can modify the God-image once it has become conscious.[15]

The mystic symbolically constructs a God-image which relates the archetype of the unconsious to the manifest world. This symbol is the means by which a union of the two worlds is made. It is a process which takes place within the mind of the mystic. Yet reconciliation of the opposites and the resultant transformation is not entirely within the mystic's control. Ultimately an act of "grace" is required. McClelland notes that the patient in psychoanalysis has a sense of being healed by something outside of himself, and this power that comes from outside the self McClelland equates with God.[16] The mystic also has this sense of a power outside the self. One must struggle to reach the gate of the seventh temple, but the final journey to the throne of God can be accomplished only by an act of grace.[17] The transformation cannot take place without the active consent of God.

But though grace is ultimately necessary, one should not

suppose that the entire mystical descent, the process of confrontation and reconciliation, can be done without effort. One must endure the "torments of Hell" before becoming worthy of such grace. Scholem describes the pain and agony in this fashion:

> The dangers of the ascent through the palaces of the Merkabah sphere are great, particularly for those who undertake the journey without the necessary preparation, let alone for those who are unworthy of its object. As the journey progresses, the dangers become progressively greater. Angels and archons storm against the traveller "in order to drive him out"; a fire which proceeds from his own body threatens to devour him. In the Hebrew Book of Enoch there is an account of the description given by the Patriarch to Rabbi Ishmael of his own metamorphosis into the angel Metatron, when his flesh turned into "fiery torches." This transition through the opening stage of the process of mystical transfiguration is an ineluctable necessity. According to another fragment, the mystic must be able to stand upright "without hands and feet," both having been burned.[18]

It should not be surprising that Jacobi finds that fire in dreams is symbolic of transformation and rebirth.[19]

Jung has provided us with the apparatus necessary to understand the mystical realm. The cosmos to which the mystics descend to all intents and purposes parallels Jung's collective unconscious. The confrontations the mystics encounter with fiery angels, streams of fire, flaming snakes and ultimately the blazing garment of God, are symbolic representations of archetypes grounded in the collective unconsious. These symbols are the means of relating the inexpressible numinosity of that world to the manifest reality of this. By confronting these archetypes the mystic hopes to reconcile the opposition that exists between the two

worlds and to free the energy he had used in maintaining this opposition for more constructive purposes. However he risks being overwhelmed and consumed by the intensity of the confrontations. He must assume on faith that the struggle will yeild positive results and that ultimately an act of grace will grant him the transformation which he cannot attain by his own powers.

V. Quaternity

If Jung's conception of the collective unconsious is correct, then archetypes are universal, and the symbolic representations of these archetypes should manifest themselves in the lore and literature of all cultures. Establishing such a common denominator is the only means of verifying the existence of this unconscious realm, since it lies beyond the scope of empirical proof. Much of Jung's work is an examination of the religions and cults of the East and West, and he does indeed find a common thread. One symbolic representation that all cultures seem to utilize is the organizing principle of quaternity. Concerning the presence and effect of this principle, Jung writes:

> ... of this there can be no question whatever. The one and only thing that psychology can establish is the presence of pictorial symbols, whose interpretation is in no sense fixed beforehand. It can make out, with some certainty, that these symbols have the character of "wholeness" and therefore presumably mean wholeness. As a rule they are "uniting" symbols, representing the conjunction of a single or double pair of opposites, the result being either a dyad or a quaternion. They arise from the collision between the conscious and the unconscious and from the confusion which this causes (known in alchemy as "chaos" or "nigredo"). Empirically, this confusion takes the form of restlessness and disorientation. The circle

> and quaternity symbolism appears at this point as a compensating principle of order, which depicts the union of warring opposites as already accomplished, and thus eases the way to a healthier and quieter state ("salvation"). For the present, it is not possible for psychology to establish more than that the symbols of wholeness mean the wholeness of the individual. On the other hand, it has to admit, most emphatically, that this symbolism uses images or schemata which have always, in all the religions, expressed the universal "Ground," the Deity itself. Thus the circle is a well-known symbol for God; and so (in a certain sense) is the cross, the quaternity in all its forms, e.g. Ezekiel's vision, the Rex gloriae with the four evangelists, the Gnostic Barbelo ("God in four") and Kolorbas ("all four")...[1]

All forms of quaternity (squared circles, mandala structures) have the meaning and the function of a center of the unconscious personality.[2] Quaternity is the fundamental organizing principle; it draws opposites together toward eventual reconciliation and integration, and leads ultimately to a sense of wholeness. This principle is fundamental to Jung's work, and to the work of his disciples. Aniela Jaffe equates the squared circle or mandala with the totality of the psyche so that it becomes a symbol of the self.[3] Jacobi extends quaternity to its elevated forms (eight, sixteen, sixty-four, etc.); forty is a number of totality.[4]

Jung established that the principle of quaternity was used independently in a wide variety of religions and cults, but the Merkavah literature was not available to him. If his theories are correct, surely a principle as fundamental as this should be evident in the Merkavah world as well.

The number four is used many times in the Book of Ezekiel.

Four creatures came out of the fire, and each had four wings and four faces, those of a man, an ox, a lion and an eagle. Since the Merkavah visions are extrapolations of the vision of Ezekiel, it is not unexpected to find that this usage of the number four is continued. The four images inscribed upon the throne of God are those of a man, an ox, a lion and an eagle.[5] But in addition there are four aspects of God as King.[6] The hayot stand on the four sides of the throne,[7] and the angels stand in ranks according to the four quadrants of God's glory.[8] If one charted the arrangement of the heavenly hosts, the result would be a mandala very much in accordance with the principle of quaternity.

The very language of the mystical realm depends upon the number four. The songs and hymns of praise are regularly classified into four categories.[9] The "Great Seal and Crown" which must be presented to gain admission to the seventh temple consists of four words of power, which Morton Smith deciphers as chaos, uranos, ges, despotes (chaos, heaven, earth, Lord), the four components of totality.[10] Many of the magical names of God Himself derive from the number four, for He is the one of the Four Letter Name (e.g. Totorosia, from tetra).[11]

Elevated forms of four are much in use. Eight qualities are required of those who desire to descend. Eight names are given for the angel Metatron.[12] In one report there are eight guards at the gate of the seventh temple, and in another there are 64 (4^3). The hayot have 256 (4^4) faces and 512 eyes.[14]

The cosmic dimensions contain a myriad of fours and its multiples.[15] Throughout Hechalot Rabbati the number four plays an essential part; the emphasis upon quaternity is unmistakable. But one might wonder, now that the prevalence and importance of the number four is established, how it is that the most important number in the structure of the Merkavah world is seven!?

Only seven temples are mentioned in Hechalot Rabbati, each more awesome than the last. But as one progresses through the mystical realm, less may be said openly about it. One may recall the names of the guards of the first six gates, but not of the seventh.[16] Merkavah mysticism is an esoteric doctrine that was transmitted in its greatest part orally; not everything could be put into writing. Jungian emphasis upon quaternity would virtually demand the existence of an eighth temple. Could it be that there was an eighth and final stage to the mystical journey, an ultimate goal that was forbidden to reveal to one who was not initiated into the mystery?

In the last chapter of Hechalot Rabbati reference is made to a secret name that is equated with the "Great Seal," which, as we have seen above, consists of the four components of totality. The ultimate secret name is azbogah (אזבוגה), which is composed of three pairs of consonants, each pair having the numerical value of eight. In later manuscripts this name is referred to as Shem ha-Sheminiyut, and according to Scholem, is parallel to the Ogdoas, the secret eighth heaven of the Gnostics.[17]

In all likelihood then there is an eighth heaven within the Merkavah framework, but the existence of this ultimate goal is hidden and cannot be revealed in writing except by veiled hints. Only one immersed in the Merkavah discipline, or one knowledgable in the mechanisms of Jungian archetypal symbols, would know to search for this secret realm.

VI. The Means of Descent

Angels have wings to travel between realms. The Merkavah itself is a flying chariot, a vehicle that can pass from that world to this. But what vehicle do the mystics have? What is their means of descent?

Most scholars suggest that the visions are the result of auto-hypnosis induced by ascetic discipline, especially the practice of lowering the head between the knees.[1] In the last chapter of Hechalot Rabbati, an ascetic program is prescribed for those who desire to learn the "Secret of the Torah." One must launder one's clothes, take a careful bath, and sit twelve days alone in a room, eating and drinking only once a day, and even then eat only bread he baked himself and water he drew himself; he must taste no vegetables. During these twelve days he observes a schedule of fasting and prayer, calling twelve times to each of the angels and princes, referring to each by its secret name. There are twelve such angels and four princes. Ultimately he makes use of the "Great Seal and Crown," and then all three aspects of Torah are available to him - the written, the oral and the mystical.[2]

The last chapter of Hechalot Rabbati is part of a later addition which constitutes a special tract known as Sar Torah.[3] It resembles the first thirty-nine chapters in the use of quaternity and secret names, but differs in that it is concerned in some detail with ascetic practice. Of the forty chapters of Hechalot Rabbati, only this one, a later addition, deals with asceticism. The other thirty-nine chapters consist in the greatest part of extraordinary language - repetitious hymns of praise, lists of secret names, and passwords (hatimot). So while ascetic discilpline was no doubt used to facilitate descent into the Merkavah world, it would be an error to consider it the only, or even the primary means of descent.

In its early development, psychoanalysis used hypnosis as a means of revealing the unconscious content of the mind, but hypnosis was largely replaced by free association in the waking state.[4] A web of words provides the framework in which the unconscious may be explored. This is not ordinary language. The words that come up out of the depths are laden with significance and are difficult to express. They are representations of an internal conflict, a burden that requires great effort to raise to consciousness, but the very expression of the conflict in symbolic terms is the means by which the conflict can be resolved. As we have seen, the symbol itself is the healing process. Hypnosis appears to be a more esoteric technique than the use of symbolic language, but just as it is not the primary apparatus

of psychoanalysis, so hypnosis induced by ascetic practice is not the primary technique of mystical descent. The mystics depended far more upon the use of language than they did upon fasting, isolation, and the lowering of the head between the knees.

Mystical language is puzzling to conventional scholars. Scholem recognizes that ordinary speech is inadequate to express mystical concepts, yet the mystics seem to glory in words, inventing new ones when necessary in their attempt to express the inexpressable.[5] Bloch does not know what to make of the long lists that appear to be nothing but repetition of words, similar in meaning and sound, that offer nothing to the thought process.[6] But this super-abundance of words has both meaning and effect.

Because words are conventional symbols that apply to this world, they are not intended to describe the ineffable points of numinosity that exist in the other. The only way one might hope to express the experience of such a numinous archetype is to surround it with every pertinent word, so that the sum total of the words might produce an extraordinary sense. In some instances the list may convey exaggeration; the fear one experiences as a result of the confrontation with an archetype from the other world is not an ordinary fear, for example, but all of this: יראה (כוכא) ואימה ורתת ואחיזת עיניים ובהלה ומבוכה ושכחה ואבדן עצות.[7] On other occasions the word list attempts to describe the nature of the archetype itself, to define what is beyond definition, and what emerges is not an image of the archetype, but

the feeling one experiences when confronting it. This is a word list associated with the "Throne of Glory":

א. כיון שעומר לפני כסא כבודו פותח ואומר שירה שבסא כבוד משורר בכל יום ויום תהלה ושירה וזמרה ברכה ושבח והלל וקלום תודה והודיות נצוח גמן וגעין גילה צהלה שבחז ושעין רננית נועם עונה גאוה נוה אבת צדק ואשר סגולה (א) פאר וענו (ב) עלון ועלוז ועלני וגרת ובנרת ונהרת ושלוה והשקט ישלום שאנן בטח ושובה והיבה (ג) וחבלה חן וחסד ויופי תואר חמודה הדר (ד) הבלת זיו זהר זכות זרח הופע עיטור נוגה אור ענף כנוף פלאות וישע רוקח כסולה מאוד אדירות עזרות עריצות כח גובה ויקר הוק ממשלה ואמיץ ורצוי רוממה (ה) והדון עוז וגבורה וחוג (ו) קדושה ומהרה ונקיון גאות גדולה ומלכות הוד (ז) כבוד ותפארת להתרוממ"ל ה' אלהי ישראל [8]

Careful recitation of such lists conveys a sense of something beyond the ordinary. Repetition of such lists has the effect of a mantra and can alter the state of consciousness, even to the point of inducing a trance. One means of descent given in Hechalot Rabbati is the repetition of the long magical name of Suria, one of the ministering angels, 112 times! Scholem finds that this kind of recitation, though it is "curiously bare of meaning," may yet have a profound impression and create a state of ecstasy. Repetitious hymns such as the following have a "mechanism comparable to the motion of an enormous fly-wheel."[9]

יג. כיון שאדם הפנים נכנס לסלסל ולסדר לכסא כבודו ולחכין מקשב לאביר יעקב אלף אל"ף (א) כתרים קושר לאופני הוד (ב) לכל אחד ואחד מהם בראשו אל"ף אלף פעמים כורע ונופל ומשתטח לפני כל אחד ואחד מהן. שני אלפים כתרים קושר לכרובי כבוד לכל אחד ואחד מהן בראשו ושני אלפים פעמים כורע ונופל ומשתטח לפני כל אחד ואחד מהן. שלשת פעמים אלפים כתרים קושר לחיות הקדש לכל אחד ואחד מהן בראשה ושלשת אלפים פעמים כורע ונופל ומשתטח לפני כל אחת ואחת מהן. ששה אלפים כתרים קושר לנוגה אור לו ולשבונת אלפים אלפי אלפים ורוב ריבי רבבות[פנ] כתרים ששה אלפים פעמים כורע ונופל ומשתטח לכל אחד מהן. שנים עשר אלפים כתרים קושר לבוק לו וששה עשר אל"ף אל"פי אלפים רוב רובי ריבי ריבי רבבות רבבות כתרים שנים עשר אלפים פעמים כורע ונופל ומשתטח לפני כל אחד ואחד מהן[פנ]. [10]

ד. תעלוך לעולמים (לא) מלך רחום וחנון כולחן וכחלן מגלגל ומעביר התזדר
בכל שיר (לב) תתרומם על (ג) ככא כבודך תתיקר על כל (גא) תמרהך (גב)
תתקדם בכל רגעות השתבח בכל התשבחות התהלל בכל התהלות תתגדל
לעולמים תתקדש לעולמי עד מטטרוניא"י ה' אלהי ישראל. ה' (גג) מי (קיג) כמוך.
טיטרוסיא"י ה' אלהי ישראל בעל גבורות לך מטטרוניא"י ה' אלהי ישראל (גד)
יהלל כבא כבודך לך יהגו גאות רבות עוז והפארת לך יהוקו לך יאמצו לך
יהדשו לך ירננו לך ישיחו לך יבזבז לך ישבחו לך ירוממו לך יפארו לך יגדלו
לך יגלו לך יהדרו לך יתלו לך יקלסו (קיד) לך יקדשו לך מטטרוניא"י ה אלהי
ישראל מטרתך יכתירו כתרים לך וישירו לך שיר חדש (קיה) ויכליכון לנצח
נצחים תקרא אחד לעולם ועד כי אתה ה' אלהי ישראל גבור חיל ורב
להושיע אל חכם למשלתך חכם למלכותך ערוך אתה ה' חכם הרוים (קיו)
ואדון המתרים אמן ואמן (קיז).[11]

Repetition of word lists and mantra-like hymns may induce a trance and prepare the mystic to encounter the numinous points of focus in the other world, to stand in confrontation with the symbolic personifications of these archetypes. Recitation of the names of these symbolic personifications is the mechanism used to establish the confrontation.

These are not ordinary names, but rather names of great power. Even in this world, one who knows a name has some power over the person to whom the name belongs. Voicing a name can draw someone out of a crowd, and, even in the absence of the subject, expressing the name can bring the image of the person to consciousness. So he who masters the names of these archetypal personifications learns to focus his attention upon them and confront them.

There is no shortage of names in the mystical literature. Just the list of the guards to the temple gates provides a substantial number.[12] These names are not those in common usage.

As Morton Smith notes, the names are compounds of abstract nouns plus a divine name.[13] Thus Dumiel is the personification of "Divine Silence," and Hadriel is the personification of "Divine Majesty." There is no more appropriate way to refer to the ineffable numinosities of the other world!

Recitation of hymns may alter the state of consciousness to permit these symbolic manifestations to be summoned by name, but once the confrontation is established, it must be resolved, and there are words that have the power to effect a reconciliation of these warring opposites of different worlds. The names of power are not used lightly, for they involve one in a struggle of epic proportions. At first the mystic is on the verge of being overwhelmed, but as he repeats the confrontation again and again, he finds that he can stand in the presence of the archetype more and more easily, until finally the conflict is resolved, and the archetype can be accepted without a struggle. At this point the mystic pronounces a hatimah, a seal, a series of words which sums up the struggle and seals it. The confrontation no longer exists; it is reconciled, and the mystic is ready to proceed to the next gate, and the next confrontation. The word hatimah is used in the liturgy for that which comes at the end of a blessing. It is a brief recapitulation of the blessing, a recitation of its essence, and it serves as a final seal. In psychoanalysis, the confrontation with the traumatic experience that has caused the neurosis must be worked through again and

again until it is finally resolved. The initial confrontation is an enormous struggle, but each succeeding one is less difficult, and eventually the patient can stand against this experience without any struggle at all. At that point he can refer to the confrontation using just a few token words. The encounter has been stripped of its tension, and he is ready to move on to the next point of unresolved conflict.

These confrontations, whether in analysis or in a mystical descent, are worked through aloud; verbalization is necessary. The deeper one descends, the greater the encounters become. Beginning in the personal unconscious, they continue down into the collective unconscious, and there they become cosmic in nature. The hatimot that seal these confrontations also become more significant, and this broadening process of confrontation and reconciliation continues until the "Great Seal and Crown" is expressed, the combination of four words which represents the four aspects of totality, and this is the ultimate reonciliation, for it is a statement of completion, of wholeness.[15]

VII. The Liturgy

Ordinary recitation of the Merkavah language accomplishes little, for this language is not ordinary, but laden with numinosity. When correctly expressed, however, these words become symbols of enormous weight that emerge from the depth of one's being. They are unmasked only by a complete humility, such that the slightest vestige of pride becomes an insurmountable barrier. Among the means of achieving the necessary humility are hymns of praise, since recognition of cosmic greatness renders one small in comparison, and has the effect of stripping one of pride. The liturgy of the Merkavah mystics is liturgy of unbounded praise and of the utmost awe. It is liturgy of such power that it has been incorporated even into the most rational of siddurim. It is liturgy that scours the soul.

Hechalot Rabbati begins with a question: "What is unusual about the hymns of one who desires to gaze upon the Merkavah, to make a safe descent and a safe return?" Philipp Bloch finds that these hymns are unusual in that they are heaps of meaningless praise, seemingly in violation of Talmudic law which forbids such excessiveness.[1] Yet we will find when we examine the answers

provided in the text that the praise is neither meaningless nor excessive; abundant praise is necessary to achieve a safe descent and a safe return.

That the opening statement of the text touches upon the liturgy rather than any other aspect of the Merkavah world testifies to the importance of the liturgy as a means of descent. These hymns differ from conventional liturgy in that they are ascribed to sources in the other world. These are the hymns of the ministering angels, those who serve God every day,[2] and while these songs may appear to be overelaborate according to the rules of this world, they are a natural manifestation of the other realm where different criteria apply. The Talmudic warning that whoever heaps too much praise on God will be destroyed[3] applies to this world only. In the other world it is quite the reverse; he who does not heap praise upon God will be destroyed.

The language of these angelic hymns is extraordinary; it speaks to the emotions with an implicit certainty. There is nothing hidden in these words to one who is receptive to their sense.[4] Ordinary language consists of conventional symbols which have meaning only because societies assign special meaning to them. The language of these hymns, however, consists of universal symbols, which emanate not from the convention of societies, but from the collective unconscious. There are no gradations of meaning in symbolic language of this sort; understanding is intuitive and certain, or there is no understanding at all. If one cannot learn

to tell the praises of God in this clear language, then one cannot make a successful descent.[5]

There are various degrees of hymns for the various stages in the mystical journey. The question is asked, "What is the difference between the hymns of those crowned in glory and the still higher songs?" Distinctions are made between the hymns of those who stand in the inner chambers, the hymns of those who serve the chariot, and the hymns of man.[6] At the final stage of descent, when the mystic stands before the throne of God, he has no choice but to sing, for every element about the throne resounds the praises of God.[7]

It is the notion that every element must sing that leads to the abundance of acrostics in the mystical writings. Words when used as universal symbols are not dumb renderings of assigned meanings; each springs alive with a numinosity of its own, and each of the letters which constitute the elements of these symbols must sing the praises of God. So in Hechalot Rabbati we find a multitude of alphabetic acrostics. Ha-aderet vi-ha-emunah was taken whole from the Hechalot into the Yom Kippur liturgy.[8] Several of the important acrostics of the daily service are attributed to Merkavah sources, and many other of the mystical acrostic hymns convey such grace and power that they too might well be incorporated into the liturgy.[10]

Idelsohn notes that in addition to the acrostic nature of these hymns there is also a peculiar meter, a four beat signature.[11]

It is this rhythm which produces the mantra-like effect. Scholem finds that this rhythmic structure is used in the alenu, and by reason of this and several Merkavah expressions, he attributes it to Merkavah sources.[12] By the same token emet vi-yatziv may be found to have its origins in the Merkavah.[13]

Idelsohn also notes that those passages indulging in the glory of God are likely to have their origins in this early mysticism, and he adds yishtabach and baruch she-amar to the list of Merkavah contributions.[14] In a similar vein, the responses to the qaddish[15] and ayn kelohaynu[16] can be traced back to Merkavah sources.

It is remarkable how great our debt is to the Merkavah mystics. It is especially remarkable that so many of these hymns, devoid of rational content, are so firmly established even in the Reform liturgy. Although they are recited outside of their intended framework, they still convey a numinosity which attracts and holds the attention of the most rational among us, even among those who do not understand the meaning of the Hebrew words. The rhyme, the assonance and the rhythm suffice. But when these hymns are recited within the proper framework, their numinosity and power are greatly amplified, for the conventional words become weighty symbols that are not confined by a synagogue's walls, but resound throughout the heavens. The most important of the Merkavah responses, and the most significant element of their liturgical legacy, is the qedushah, and its use in the Merkavah world serves

as a good example of the force such liturgy can convey.

Scholars are unanimous in attributing the qedushah to the Merkavah mystics.[17] Bloch shows that the qedushat ha-shem is the high point of the amidah. There are many more variations of the qedushah than there are of the other blessings. There are special forms for private and public worship, for weekdays, sabbaths and holidays, for the morning and musaf services.[18] What purpose does this most significant prayer in our liturgy serve?

The qedushah is one of the elements that spans the distance between the two worlds. When Israel recites the qedushah in this world, the angels recite it in the other world.[19] The ministering angels may not begin to sing the praises of God in heaven until Israel has sung the praises of God on earth.[20] When all of Israel sings the qedushah, then Metatron and his entire angelic company join in, and the two worlds are in harmony.[21] As a symbol of this ultimate integration, God kisses the image of Jacob inscribed on his throne.[22] It is a moment of union, of reconciliation of the two realms.[23]

But this is not a qedushah that is recited casually. No mere recitation of words will effect such a union. This qedushah comes as an eruption with enough explosive force to bridge the gap between the two worlds. If follows a hymn of praise that builds to a fever pitch and then bursts forth like a spontaneous halleluyah.[24] The mystic recites long acrostics, mantra-like

redundancies until every element of his being is attuned to the glory of God, and, then, when his soul is scoured and bare, he voices the charged words, and the spark of the qedushah leaps across to touch the throne of God, if not God Himself; and if the tradition is to be trusted, at that instant, by an act of grace, God touches back!

Notes.

Chapter I:

1 - Louis Ginzberg rejects mystical tradition utterly and states that only the halachah gives us a mirror of those times. Geonica (2 vols., New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1909), I, p. ix.

I.M. Elbogen recognizes Merkavah contributions to the liturgy, but attributes these to mere enthusiasm and no significant process. Ha-tefilah bi-yisrael bi-hitpahutah ha-historit (Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1972), p. 282.

A.Z. Idelsohn finds the mystical world so unconventional as to be in essence "a negation of life." Jewish Liturgy and Its Development (New York: Sacred Music Press, HUC-JIR, 1932), p. 47.

2 - Jacob Neusner, A Life of Yohanan ben Zakkai (2nd ed.; Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), pp. 134-135,137.

3 - Elbogen, Ha-tefilah bi-yisrael, p. 282.

Gershom G. Scholem, Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism (New York: Schocken, 1941), pp. 8-9.

4 - Hechalot Rabbati, 21:4. The primary text used in this thesis is Hechalot Rabbati, two editions of which are readily available. One is in J.D. Eisenstein, ed., Ozar Midrashim (New York: J.D. Eisenstein, 1915), which is a reproduction of the text that appears in Jellinek, Beit Ha-midrash. The other is in S.A. Wertheimer, ed., Batei Midrashot (Jerusalem: Ktav Vasefer, 1968). The Wertheimer text includes later additions. The Jellinek text is free of additions, but contains many corruptions. See G. Scholem, "Merkabah Mysticism," Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971), XI, pp. 1386-1389, concerning criticism of the various Merkavah texts. Text notations in this thesis refer to Batei Midrashot. Wertheimer provides in his notes corresponding chapter notations of the Jellinek edition, and indicates where the texts differ. An edition of Hechalot Rabbati has been prepared by Scholem and Wirszubski, but has not been published, according to Morton Smith, "Observations on Hekhalot Rabbati," Biblical and Other Studies, ed. A. Altmann (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), pp. 142-160.

Scholem also notes that these mystics observed the halachah. Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1960), pp. 10-12.

5 - Philipp Bloch, "Die Yorde Merkavah, die Mystiker der Gaonenzeit, und ihr Einfluss auf die Liturgie," MGWJ, XXXVII (1893), pp. 18-25, 69-74,256-266,305-311.

6 - Ginzberg showed that the qedushah of the yotzer, which Bloch had already determined to be a Merkavah contribution, was certainly pre-Gaonic. Geonica, I, pp. 129-133.

7 - G.F. Moore, Judaism (2 vols.; Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1927), I, pp. 411-412.

8 - Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, pp. 8, 24.

9 - Ibid., pp. 14-19.

J.W. Bowker, "Merkabah Visions and the Visions of Paul," Journal of Semitic Studies, XVI, No. 2 (1971), pp. 157-173.

10 - Jacob Neusner, "Jewish Use of Pagan Symbols after 70 CE," The Journal of Religion, XVIII, No. 4 (October, 1963), pp. 285-294.

11 - Bloch, MGWJ, XXXVII, p. 261.

12 - Elbogen, Ha-tefilah bi-yisrael, p. 457, note 44:8.

Joshua Abelson, The Immanence of God in Rabbinical Literature (London: Macmillan, 1912), p. 340.

13 - Scholem, Major Trends, p. 18.

14 - As quoted in Scholem, Major Trends, p. 4.

15 - From Thomas' Summa Theologiae, as quoted in Scholem, Major Trends, p. 4.

16 - Heinrich Graetz, History of the Jews (6 vols.; Philadelphia: JPS, 1894), III, p. 152.

17 - Ibid., p. 153. "This theory, which was a compound of misunderstood Agadas, and of Jewish, Christian, and Mahometan fantastic notions, clothed itself in mysterious obscurity, and pretended to be a revelation. In order to answer the inquiry whence

it had acquired this wisdom which enabled it to scoff at Judaism, in other words, at the Bible and the Talmud, it quotes alleged divine instructions. As there is no nonsense, however apparent, which cannot find adherents when earnestly and impressively enunciated, this doctrine of mystery, which was based upon a grossly material conception of God, found many followers."

18 - Carl G. Jung, "Approaching the Unconscious," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung, et al (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 45.

19 - Carl G. Jung, Psychology and Religion: West and East, trans. R.F.C. Hull, Vol. XI, Collected Works, ed. G. Adler, et al (New York: Pantheon, 1958), pp. 58-59.

20 - C.G. Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols, p. 94.

Chapter II:

1 - Ecclesiasticus III:21, 22; Haggigah 13a.

2 - Toseftah Haggigah II:7

3 - Solomon Zeitlin, "An Historical Study of the Canonization of the Hebrew Scriptures," American Academy for Jewish Research Proceedings, III (1931-1932), pp. 121-158.

Haggigah 13a.

4 - Shabbat 13b

5 - Hechalot Rabbati 12:3, 26:1,2.

6 - Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 36-37.

7 - Haggigah 14b; Tosefta Haggigah II:3; J. Haggigah II.

8 - Hechalot Rabbati 26:1,2.

9 - Haggigah 13a.

10 - Zeitlin shows that as a result of this event an attempt was made to restrict the book of Ezekiel to those of a mature age, but the attempt was not successful. AAJRP, III (1931-1932), pp. 123,127.

11 - Sanhedrin 95b.

12 - Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 51-53.

13 - Carl G. Jung, "Archetypes of the Collective Unconscious," trans. R.F.C. Hull, vol. IX, part 1, Collected Works, ed. G. Adler, et al (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), p. 20.

14 - David Bakan, Sigmund Freud and the Jewish Mystical Tradition (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Co., Inc., 1958), p. 70.

15 - A. Altmann, ed., Biblical and Other Studies, p. 155.

16 - Haggigah 13a.

17 - Shabbat 80b.

18 - Hechalot Rabbati 12:3.

19 - Haggigah 13a.

20 - Haggigah II:1.

21 - Tosefta Haggigah II:1.

22 - Haggigah 13a.

23 - Joshua Abelson, Jewish Mysticism (London: G. Bell and Sons, 1913), p. 36.

24 - Tosefta Haggigah II.1.

25 - Megillah 24b.

26 - Hechalot Rabbati, 15:2, 16:1.

Scholem, Major Trends, p. 48.

27 - Hechalot Rabbati, 2:4.

28 - Haggigah 13a, 14a.

29 - Abelson, Jewish Mysticism, p. 37.

Chapter III:

1 - Creation out of nothing is then equated to creation out of God.

Can God then be nothing? Scholem shows that there is no contradiction, for God is that which has no positive attributes and is therefore "nothing." Major Trends, p. 25.

2 - Hechalot Rabbati, 3:3.

3 - Moore, Judaism, I, p. 405.

4 - Hechalot Rabbati, 20:2.

5 - Hechalot Rabbati, 16:1.

6 - Hechalot Rabbati, 15:2.

7 - Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 46-47.

8 - A. Altmann, ed., Biblical and Other Studies, p. 150.

Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, p. 20, note 1.

9 - Bloch, MGWJ, XXXVII, pp. 22-24.

10 - Wertheimer, note to Hechalot Rabbati 1:1.

11 - C.G.Jung, Collected Works, IX, part 1, p. 17.

12 - Hechalot Rabbati, 1:2,3; 2:1.

13 - Hechalot Rabbati, 30:3.

14 - Hechalot Rabbati, 9:5, 10:1.

15 - M.-L. von Franz, "The Process of Individuation," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung, et al (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 170.

16 - J.L. Henderson, "Ancient Myths and Modern Man," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung, et al (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 149.

17 - David McClelland, The Roots of Consciousness (New York: D. Van Nostrand and Co., 1964), p. 124.

18 - C.G. Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols, p. 274.

19 - Even R. Elazar was not capable of learning the discipline alone. Haggigah 13a.

20 - Carl G. Jung, "Gnostic Symbols of the Self," trans. R.F.C. Hull, vol. IX, part 2, Collected Works, ed. G. Adler, et al (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 202.

21 - McClelland, Roots of Consciousness, p. 131.

22 - Jolande Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol in the Psychology of C.G. Jung (New York: Pantheon, 1959), p. 89.

23 - McClelland, Roots of Consciousness, p. 120.

24 - Scholem, Major Trends, p. 27.

25 - C.G. Jung, Collected Works, IX, part 2, pp. 190-191.

Chapter IV:

1 - Sigmund Freud, The Interpretation of Dreams, trans. James Strachey (New York: Avon, 1965).

2 - Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol, p. 88.

3 - Erich Fromm, The Forgotten Language (New York: Grove Press, 1951), pp. 13-14.

4 - Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/ Symbol, p. 81.

5 - Jolande Jacobi, "Symbols in an Individual Analysis," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung, et al (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 285.

6 - C.G. Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols, pp. 71-72

7 - C.G. Jung, Collected Works, IX, part 1, p. 3.

8 - Jacobi, Complex/Archetype/Symbol, p. 59.

9 - Ibid., pp. 127-129.

10 - Ibid., pp. 30-52, 74-75.

11 - C.G. Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols, p. 297.

12 - Ibid., p. 99.

Jacobi, Complex/ Archetype/ Symbol, pp. 96-99.

13 - Ibid., pp. 67, 73, 100, 115-116.

14 - C.G. Jung, Collected Works, IX, part 2, p. 188.

15 - Ibid., p. 194.

16 - McClelland, Roots of Consciousness, pp. 132,143.

17 - Hechalot Rabbati 22:2.

18 - Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 50-51.

19 - C.G. Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols, p. 296.

Chapter V:

1 - C.G. Jung, Collected Works, IX, part 2, pp. 194-195.

2 - Ibid., p. 204.

3 - Aniela Jaffe, "Symbolism in the Visual Arts," Man and His Symbols, ed. Carl G. Jung, et al (New York: Doubleday, 1964), p. 240.

4 - C.G. Jung, ed., Man and His Symbols, p. 297.

5 - Hechalot Rabbati, 27:2-5.

6 - Hechalot Rabbati, 3:3.

7 - Hechalot Rabbati, 13:4.

8 - Hechalot Rabbati, 10:2, 12:4.

9 - Hechalot Rabbati, 2:5, 3:1, 13:2.

10 - A. Altmann, ed., Biblical and Other Studies, p. 146.

11 - Hechalot Rabbati, 14:4.

12 - Hechalot Rabbati, 28:2.

13 - Hechalot Rabbati, 17:1, 24:3.

14 - Hechalot Rabbati, 23:5, 24:1. The Wertheimer account depicts the hayot as having 512 eyes but 296 faces, this last obviously an error. Jellinek reports 256 faces.

15 - Hechalot Rabbati, 12:1.

16 - Hechalot Rabbati, 23:1.

17 - Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, pp. 65-66.

Chapter VI:

1 - Scholem, Major Trends, p. 48-49.

Elbogen, Ha-tefilah bi-yisrael, p. 282.

Abelson, Jewish Mysticism, p. 49.

2 - Hechalot Rabbati, 40:3-5.

3 - Scholem, "Merkabah Mysticism," Encyclopaedia Judaica (1971), XI, pp. 1386-1389.

4 - O. Spurgeon English and Gerald H.J. Pearson, Emotional Problems of Living (3rd ed.; New York: W.W. Norton and Co., Inc., 1955), p. 566.

5 - Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 15, 62.

6 - Bloch, MGWJ, XXXVII, p. 259.

7 - Hechalot Rabbati, 24:3.

8 - Hechalot Rabbati, 25:1.

9 - Scholem, Major Trends, pp. 57-60.

10 - Hechalot Rabbati, 13:1.

11 - Hechalot Rabbati, 25:4.

12 - Hechalot Rabbati, 17:2-7.

13 - A. Altmann, ed., Biblical and Other Studies, p. 145.

14 - The concept of hatimah is not unique to Merkavah mysticism but is found in other cultures as well. Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, pp. 32-33.

15 - Hechalot Rabbati, 22:2, 40:4,5.

Chapter VII:

1 - Bloch, MGWJ, XXXVII, pp. 260-261.

2 - Hechalot Rabbati, 2:5.

3 - Megillah 18a.

4 - Hechalot Rabbati, 3:2.

5 - Hechalot Rabbati, 9:1.

6 - Hechalot Rabbati, 9:4. See also the Jellinek edition, 7:4.

7 - Hechalot Rabbati, 25:1.

8 - Hechalot Rabbati, 28:1. Also 24:4 is an acrostic hymn similar to ribon kol ha-olamim for Shabbat morning, according to Wertheimer.

9 - Bloch attributes el baruch gadol da'ah to the Merkavah, MGWJ, XXXVII, p. 305. Also el adon of Shabbat morning, Ibid., p. 306.

10 - Notably Hechalot Rabbati 26:4,5, as follows:

> ד. אתה הוא אדון הגדול הגבור והנורא (כג) הברוך הגבור הדגול ההדור
> תותיק הזכאי החסין הטהור הישר הכביר הלבוב הטהיה הנחמד הסיד הענו
> הפודה הצח הקדוש הרחמן השומר התוכך ארך אפים ורב חסד ואמת.
> ה. אתה הוא אדון אלהי האלהים ואדוני האדונים אתה הוא גדול לך מגדילים
> כל בעלי גדולה. אתה הוא (כד) גבור לך כגבורין כל בעלי גבורה. אתה הוא
> נורא לך מוראין כל בעלי יראה (כה) אתה הוא צדיק לך מצדיקין כל בעלי
> צדקה. אתה הוא (כו) חסיד לך מיחלין כל בעלי חסידות. אתה הוא קדוש
> לך מקדישין כל בעלי קדושה. אתה הוא נאמן (כז) לך מאמינים כל בעלי
> אמונה.

11 - Idelsohn, Jewish Liturgy, p. 135.

12 - Scholem, Jewish Gnosticism, pp. 27, 105.

13 - Hechalot Rabbati, 25:2,3.
Bloch, MGWJ, XXXVII, p. 311.
Elbogen, Ha-tefilah bi-yisrael, p. 282.

14 - Idelsohn, Jewish Liturgy, p. 135.

15 - Hechalot Rabbati, 9:2, 25:4.
Bloch, MGWJ, XXXVII, 264-265.
Elbogen, Ha-tefilah bi-yisrael, p. 282.

16 - Hechalot Rabbati, 4:5.
Bloch, MGWJ, XXXVII, p. 311.
Idelsohn, Jewish Liturgy, p. 32.

17 - Bloch, MGWJ, XXXVII, pp. 305-311.
Elbogen, Ha-tefilah bi-yisrael, p. 14.
Idelsohn, Jewish Liturgy, p. 32.

18 - Bloch, MGWJ, XXXVII, pp. 308-309.

19 - Hechalot Rabbati, 4:1, 11:1.

20 - Hullin 19b.

21 - Hechalot Rabbati, 7:2.

22 - Hechalot Rabbati, 11:2.

23 - Because of the union between God and Israel, the qedushah has the power of temporarily averting a divine decree, according to Morton Smith in A. Altmann, ed., Biblical and Other Studies, p. 143. The responses of the qaddish also act as the qedushah in this regard, Hechalot Rabbati, 6:3.

24 - Eric Werner, "The Doxology in Synagogue and Church," HUC Annual, XIX (1945-1946), p. 323-326.

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