

**The Enoch-Metatron Tradition in the Kabbalah of Nathan Neta
Shapira of Kraków (1585-1633)**

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I, Agata Paluch, confirm that the work presented in this thesis is my own. Where information has been derived from other sources, I confirm that this has been indicated in the thesis.

Abstract

Nathan Neta ben Shlomo Shapira (1585-1633) is the most famous kabbalist stemming from the Jewish intellectual environment of Poland. His major treatise, *Megaleh Amuqot*, is among the most complex kabbalistic texts ever written. It combines variegated strata of older mystical traditions, to which the author applies diverse, often obscure modes of interpretation. For this reason, Nathan Shapira has remained one of the least studied figures in modern scholarship, despite the fact that he is generally acknowledged as the most important early-modern Ashkenazi kabbalist, whose influence on later Eastern-European mystical circles is well attested. Although there are some general accounts of Shapira's religious activity in Kraków, and references have been made to his startling mathematical mind-set, scholarship still lacks a thorough examination of his literary legacy, and a detailed evaluation of his contribution to the development of Jewish mystical thought.

My dissertation aims to integrate Nathan Shapira's kabbalah within a broad panorama of Jewish mystical traditions of the early modern period. It challenges the notion of the dominance of Lurianic ideas in Shapira's thought, arguing for a more pluralistic perspective of the historical development of the kabbalistic tradition. Recently, Yehuda Liebes and Moshe Idel have raised the possibility that Nathan Shapira's kabbalah may have belonged to a tradition that sprang from a multifaceted cultural milieu of Ashkenazi mysticism, consisting of at least two distinct major strands. Following this notion, I propose to challenge the common view that the Ashkenazi mysticism was a homogenous entity, whose influences effectively ceased after 13th century. On the contrary, I claim that the medieval mystical Ashkenazi ideas underlie much of Nathan Shapira's kabbalah. In considering medieval Ashkenazi mysticism as Shapira's formative background, I focus on the 'Enoch-Metatron' cluster of traditions, which I claim was as central to Shapira's thought as it was to his Ashkenazi predecessors.

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Preface

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For any errors or inadequacies that may remain in this work, of course, the responsibility is entirely my own.

A note on the presentation of source materials

Published English translations (with some modifications, as necessary) have been used wherever possible. All other translations from the Hebrew sources are my own.

Biblical quotations follow the *The Authorized King James Version* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998).

Zohar translation follows, where possible, *The Zohar: Pritzker Edition* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004-), with some modifications.

The transliteration of Hebrew aims to reflect contemporary Modern Hebrew pronunciation while generally following the Library of Congress' romanization system, with the following exceptions: there is no distinction between *aleph* and *ayin* (both represented by the same apostrophe and disregarded when appearing as initial letters), *tet* and *tav*, *samekh* and *sin*, *het* and *he*. Whenever the *tseire* is distinguished from the *segol* in contemporary pronunciation, it appears as *ei* rather than *e*. The consonants *vav* and *quf* are represented by *v* and *q* respectively. Consonants marked with a *dagesh* are not doubled in transliteration.

Hebrew words in transliteration are generally italicized, with the exception of those in common English use (i.e. kabbalah), where the common English spelling has been preserved.

Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah is abbreviated throughout as *MAT*, and *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim* as *MA ReNaV*. When quoting *MA ReNaV*, I refer to the most recent, London 2008 edition of the work, while quotations from *MAT* mostly follow the 2005, and occasionally the 1982-1985 Bnei Brak edition. The latter is referred to in the footnotes as *MAT*, ed. Weiss.

Introduction

Nathan Neta ben Shlomo Shapira, also known under the name of Spira, was the most famous kabbalist to emerge from the Jewish intellectual environment of early modern Poland, in which he most probably spent all of his life. His lifespan (1585-1633) coincided with the final stages of the cultural and economic ‘golden age’ of Polish Jewry, marking the peak of its intellectual influence in the Jewish world.¹ Shapira’s major kabbalistic treatises, *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim al Va-Ethanan* and *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah*, are among the most complex kabbalistic texts ever written. They combine variegated strata of older mystical traditions, to which the author applies multiple, and often obscure, modes of interpretation. Probably for this reason, Nathan Shapira has remained one of the least studied figures in Jewish historiography, despite the fact that he is generally acknowledged as the most important early-modern Ashkenazi kabbalist, whose influence on later Eastern-European mystical circles is well attested.

Although there is no detailed academic study devoted exclusively to the writings of Nathan Shapira, he features in general historical accounts of Jewish Kraków and in popular memory as a cultural hero – legendary wonder-maker who received his esoteric knowledge from Elijah the prophet himself, and main protagonist of dozens of legends. His tombstone and the site of his prayer-house – itself no longer extant – still attract a great deal of tourist attention, and his major works, both kabbalistic and halakhic, despite their density and complex structure, have been printed regularly by the Jewish presses since the 17th century, with new editions of *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* appearing in 1977, 1982-85 (the latter an edition of manuscripts containing previously unpublished material) and 2001, and of *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim* in 1992 and 2008.² On the other hand, a

¹ On Poland as the centre of the Ashkenazi intellectual world in the early modern period, see Polonsky, *The Jews of Poland and Russia*, pp. 125-136.

² *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim* first appeared in print in Kraków in 1637 and was reprinted in Fürth (1691), Zolkiev (1800), Jerusalem (1981), Bnei Brak (1992) and London (2008). *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* was first published in Lvov in 1795, where it was reprinted in 1858 and 1882. Further editions appeared in Lublin (1884, 1901 and 1924), Berdychiv (1902), New York (1977 and 1985), and Jerusalem (1980 and 2001). Unpublished manuscript material, containing

thorough examination of Shapira's literary legacy, and an evaluation of his contribution to the development of Jewish mystical thought, have not so far been undertaken in academic Jewish studies.

The present dissertation attempts to integrate the kabbalah of Nathan Neta Shapira in the academic discourse on the history of Jewish mysticism. It aims to identify the key points of Shapira's kabbalistic project, and to place them in the context of both the medieval Ashkenazi variety of Jewish mysticism and the classical kabbalah, thus incorporating the teachings of this Polish thinker in the wide panorama of the Jewish mystical tradition. Considering the medieval Ashkenazi mystical legacy as the formative influence on Shapira's kabbalah, I intend to identify the major literary sources of his thought by examining a particular cluster of traditions on Enoch-Metatron, which he chose to reuse in his own works, and which I claim was as central to Shapira as it was to his medieval Ashkenazi predecessors.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW.

Only a handful of modern scholars have dealt with the figure of Nathan Shapira – either his life or, all the more so, his kabbalistic doctrine. In a fundamental monograph on the history of the Jews of Kraków and Kazimierz, Mayer Bałaban referred to Nathan Shapira in no more than a few paragraphs, in the context of communal organization and the provision of religious education in Kazimierz during the 16 and 17th centuries.³ While his historical observations, based on documents that were still extant in the pre-World War II period,⁴ remain valuable today, his views on the kabbalistic tradition in Poland were clearly skewed by his positivist approach to Jewish history and historiography, an approach most clearly

previously unknown commentaries by Shapira, was published in Bnei Brak by Shlomo Weiss in 1982-85 and reprinted there in 1998. Shapira's halakhic commentary on Isaac Alfasi's *Sefer ha-Halakhot, Hidushei Anshei Shem*, was first published in Amsterdam in 1740 (together with the Alfasi's code) and has been frequently reprinted since then. A separate edition of this work appeared as *Megaleh Amuqot Be'ur al ha-Ri"ף; Ra"n ve-Nimuqei Yosef* (New York, 1990).

³ See Bałaban, *Dzieje Żydów w Krakowie*, vol. 1, pp. 218, 416-417, 420-421.

⁴ See Hundert, 'Ha-Historiografyah shel Krakov ha-Yehudit', pp. 15-27.

evident in one of his works that was intended for secondary school students.⁵ For Bałaban, the kabbalah of Nathan Shapira consisted of ‘sorcery and superstition’ and exerted a great deal of influence on his contemporaries. Bałaban adopted the tradition of dividing the kabbalah into the ‘theoretical’, namely the speculative-theosophical strand, with the *Zohar* as its main representative, and the ‘practical’, namely the magical strand, identified above all with Isaac Luria, with whom he associated the kabbalah of Nathan Shapira. This led him to the conclusion that as the most eminent Polish kabbalist of his time, Shapira was the major vehicle for the dissemination of Lurianic kabbalism in the Polish territories and the surrounding regions.⁶

Shmuel Abba Horodetsky, in his history of Jewish mystical movements, devoted several pages to Nathan Shapira of Kraków and his contemporaries.⁷ He, too, explained Shapira’s major work, the *Megaleh Amuqot*,⁸ in terms of Lurianic kabbalah, presenting it as devoted entirely to the questions of transmigration of souls and rectification of Adam’s sin. Horodetsky considered the work to be concerned primarily with the purification of evil and the restoration of fallen divine ‘sparks’ to their heavenly source, and he interpreted Shapira’s ingenious use of numerological associations as the product of his innate mathematical genius, which he successfully harnessed to his paramount moral and religious concerns.⁹

Another historian who focused on Shapira’s remarkable mathematical talent and numerological methodology was Yekutiel Ginzburg, who emphasized Shapira’s ability to ‘think in numbers as we think in words’, namely, his use of kabbalistic and halakhic sources as a platform for the articulation of his suppressed mathematical inclination.¹⁰ More recently, Tomasz Sikora considered Shapira’s hermeneutic method in the light of modern psychoanalytical and

⁵ See Bałaban, *Historja i Literatura Żydowska*, Lwów-Kraków 1921.

⁶ See Bałaban, *Historja Żydów w Krakowie*, vol.1, p. 232.

⁷ See Horodetsky, *Shelosh Me’ot Shanah*, pp. 129-130.

⁸ Notably, Horodetsky treated the two distinct parts of *Megaleh Amuqot* as a single text, failing to distinguish between their respective concerns.

⁹ See Horodetsky, *Ha-Mistorin be-Yisra’el*, p. 130.

¹⁰ See Ginzburg, ‘Neshamot To’ot’, pp. 488-497.

linguistic theories,¹¹ while still following Gershom Scholem's classification of Shapira's kabbalah as belonging largely to the Lurianic tradition.¹²

Scholem, the pioneering, and to this day the most influential, historian of Jewish mysticism, mentioned Nathan Shapira and his teachings only *en passant* in his monograph on Sabbatai Tsevi, where he placed Shapira in the context of the rapid dissemination and universal success of the Sabbatean movement.¹³ According to Scholem, it was the broad distribution of the Lurianic teachings, which he had defined as being acutely messianic, that paved the way for the subsequent spread of Sabbatean messianism. Scholem classified Shapira among the chief exponents of the Lurianic kabbalah in Poland, even though he admitted that *Megaleh Amuqot* could hardly be viewed as an orthodox presentation of the Lurianic system.¹⁴ Indeed, Scholem defined the 'Lurianic writings' to which the Polish kabbalists referred in their works as a 'pseudepigraphical creation', since these kabbalists could hardly have known any of the major Lurianic treatises but rather attributed their own inventions to Luria or his disciples.¹⁵ Notably, Scholem made the valuable observation that Shapira's work did not follow any particular kabbalistic method or system but rather constituted a range of interpretations of Scripture 'based on various and at times contradictory kabbalistic principles drawn from the most diverse sources'.¹⁶ Another significant observation by Scholem concerned Shapira's open interpretive approach, which treats all its sources as equally valuable. According to Scholem, this could have been based on the method of *pilpul* – a particular type of casuistic Talmudic study that was common at the time in the Polish *yeshivot*. Although Scholem referred to numerology as Shapira's main exegetical tool, he did not ascribe to it any particular source, pointing more broadly to such possible channels of influence as

¹¹ See Sikora, 'Midrash and Semiotics', pp. 197-202.

¹² See Scholem, 'Qabalat ha-Ari', pp. 367-368.

¹³ See idem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 80-83.

¹⁴ See idem, 'Ha-Tenu'ah ha-Shabeta'it be-Polin', pp. 37-38.

¹⁵ See idem, 'Qabalat ha-Ari', p. 369. On other occasions, Scholem described the Polish kabbalists as uninventive and unoriginal, which would seem to contradict his view of their 'pseudepigraphical' creativity.

¹⁶ Idem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 80.

the medieval Franco-German mystics and the Italian kabbalist Menahem Azariah da Fano. The reference to the latter again links Shapira to the ‘then current Lurianic kabbalism’, which was an essential element of Scholem’s explanation of Sabbateanism’s success. This is reflected also in Scholem’s emphasis on the preoccupation of the Polish kabbalah with the notion of evil, which he viewed as the influence of Luria’s teachings, surprisingly overlooking the possible influence of the medieval Ashkenazi mystics, who were just as intensely interested in the domain of metaphysical evil as were Isaac Luria and his followers. Thus Scholem deemed Polish kabbalah, with its messianic inclination to uproot evil from the metaphysical realm, as a link in the historical chain leading to the emergence of the Sabbatean movement, but not as an independent or an original phenomenon.

Similarly, in his monumental study of the Lurianic kabbalah and its offshoots, Yosef Avivi presents *Megaleh Amuqot* as a work which is rooted deeply in the Lurianic tradition.¹⁷ According to him, as early as the end of 16th century, Luria’s writings found their way to Ashkenaz and Poland, and thus also to Nathan Shapira in Kraków, who interpreted them in an inventive manner both in his written works and in his oral *derushim* (sermons), traces of which are to be found in *Megaleh Amuqot*.¹⁸ Among the books most often cited by Shapira, Avivi lists *Kanefei Yonah* by Menahem Azariah da Fano, the anonymous *Tehilat* (or *Hathalat*) *ha-Hokhmah*, parts of *Limudei ha-Atsilut*, the Sarugian *Perush ha-Shirim*, and Vital’s *Sha’ar ha-Kavanot*, all of which were comprised in a collection of Lurianic writings copied and edited towards the end of the 16th century by Alexander Katz of Frankfurt,¹⁹ who according to Avivi was the major figure responsible for the compilation and dissemination of Lurianic works in Ashkenaz and Poland, from whom Shapira might have acquired his own copies of these texts.²⁰ It is worth noting, however, that most of the quotations from *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* in Avivi’s short presentation of the work come from a fairly late recension of Shapira’s writings, that appeared in the first printed

¹⁷ See Avivi, *Qabalat ha-Ari*, vol. 3, pp. 555-557.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 551.

¹⁹ See on him *ibid.*, pp. 436-440.

²⁰ See *ibid.*, p. 556 and n. 21 there.

edition of the work, prepared, at least in part, by Shapira's son, Shlomo, and by later editors.²¹ This edition, therefore, may not reflect the extent and nature of Shapira's actual dependence on Lurianic teachings. Moreover, Avivi draws attention to the pervasive use of divine names throughout Shapira's works, which he considers a part of his Lurianic legacy.²² But this preoccupation is not necessarily, and by no means exclusively, Lurianic; it may well have derived from earlier strands of the mystical tradition, especially those concerned with the linguistic ontology of the divine.

Yehuda Liebes also examined some aspects of Nathan Shapira's kabbalah, in articles focusing on particular motifs that occur in the Jewish liturgy for the New Year, in a number of other prayers, and in common messianic speculations.²³ He was the first to point out the phenomenological as well as the historical connection between the medieval Ashkenazi circle of *Sefer ha-Hesheq* and the kabbalistic system of Nathan Shapira. Similar arguments have been put forward, albeit only in passing, by Moshe Idel, who highlighted certain passages in Nathan Shapira's works to further substantiate Yehuda Liebes' intuition. Idel suggested that certain clusters of ideas representing Shapira's *imaginaire* demonstrate the vitality and wide dissemination of some previously unrecognized traditions, occurring in recently rediscovered manuscripts associated with a little known medieval Ashkenazi 'prophet', Nehemiah ben Shlomo of Erfurt, who was apparently not connected to the major contemporary strand of Ashkenazi pietism, and whom Idel associated with the *Sefer ha-Hesheq* circle, highlighted by Liebes.²⁴ Idel built up a picture of a multifaceted cultural milieu of medieval Ashkenazi mystics, consisting of at least two major and several minor circles, each with its own distinct religious worldview and mystical orientation. While the Pietistic circle associated with Judah the Pious and his disciples is relatively well

²¹ Ibid., pp. 556-557. This raises the possibility that *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* underwent a late Lurianic redaction. For more on this, see below.

²² Ibid.

²³ See Liebes, 'Mal'akhei Qol ha-Shofar', pp. 171-198, esp. pp. 196-198. See also idem, 'Yonah ben Amitai', p. 291 nn. 115-117, pp. 278-288 n. 27, p. 301.

²⁴ See Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings', pp. 183-196; idem, 'Rabi Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi u-khetav yad London', pp. 6-10.

known, the second and less known circle, interested in magical and prophetic experiences but not in philosophical speculations on the divine Glory, appears to have exerted a much greater influence on the subsequent development of mystical ideas in the Ashkenazi world than has previously been assumed.²⁵

The present dissertation proposes to place Nathan Neta Shapira within this broad panorama of Jewish mystical traditions. It challenges the notion of the dominance of Lurianic ideas in Shapira's thought, following Idel in arguing for a more pluralistic perspective, free from the constraints of any 'master narrative' or a single explanatory scheme that purports to account, dialectically or otherwise, for the historical development of the whole of the kabbalistic tradition.²⁶

2. NATHAN NETA SHAPIRA'S LIFE IN KRAKÓW.

Nathan Neta Shapira was born into a well-known family of rabbinic scholars.²⁷ His grandfather, Nathan Neta Ashkenazi, was a renowned rabbinic scholar who had held the position of *reish metivta* in Grodno, Lithuania, before acquiring a rabbinical post in Poznań, where he died in 1577.²⁸ He gained his fame as the author of two widely recognized treatises: *Mevo She'arim*, which is a compendium of legal commentaries on *Sha'arei Dura*, published between 1575 and 1586 in Lublin, and *Imrei Shefer*, a supra-commentary on Rashi's commentary on the Pentateuch, published posthumously in Lublin in 1597.²⁹ His

²⁵ See Idel, 'Al ha-Perushim', pp. 157-261; idem, *Ben*, pp. 585-644; idem, 'Al Mashma'uyot ha-Munah "Qabalah"', pp. 39-74; idem, 'Ashkenazi Esotericism', pp. 69-113.

²⁶ See Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 17-34; idem, *R. Menahem Recanati ha-Mequbal*, pp. 24-32; idem, 'One from a Town', pp. 79-104. On Moshe Idel's 'phenomenological' method see Abrams, 'A Critical Return' pp. 35-46 and idem, 'Phenomenology of Jewish Mysticism', pp. 7-146.

²⁷ On Shapira's genealogical tree see *The Jewish Encyclopaedia*, vol. XI, pp. 520-523.

²⁸ The introduction to his *Imrei Shefer* indicates that he also served as chief rabbi in Lublin, but this has not been corroborated by any other source. See Nathan Shapira, *Imrei Shefer*, p. 1.

²⁹ The popularity of this work led to the publication in Venice, in 1593, of a collection of supra-commentaries on Rashi, which purported to be by Nathan Shapira. This false attribution was rejected not only by Isaac, Nathan Shapira's son, but also by other rabbinic authorities of the time. A similar forgery was published in the name of Nathan Neta Shapira in Sudytkov, where the local publishing house printed *Yismah Yisra'el*, a commentary on the *Shulhan Arukh* by Israel Kalihari,

first son, Isaac, who published many of his father's works, was himself a famous rabbinic scholar. He settled in Lublin after being invited to serve as its chief rabbi, a post he held until his death in 1623. The second son, Israel Issakhar, had lived for a time in Pinsk and later moved to Worms.³⁰ On the third son, Shlomo – Nathan Neta Shapira's father, there are virtually no data. We do not know when or in what circumstances he moved to Kazimierz, which at that time was a town independent of the city of Kraków.³¹

Nathan Neta Shapira,³² born in Kazimierz, most probably in 1585 (as noted in both the *pinkas* of the local *hevrah qadisha* and on his tombstone³³), was acknowledged as an *iluy* at a young age. Nothing is known of his educational background, though he may have attended the famous yeshiva of Meir of Lublin,

as a work penned by the author of *Megaleh Amuqot*. See Dembitser, *Kelilat Yofi*, pp. 22-25; Katzman, *Ba'al Megaleh Amuqot*, pp. 16-17, and the bibliography adduced in the footnotes there.

³⁰ This may explain why the front-page of one of the Bodleian Library manuscripts of *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* has Worms as the author's place of residence. It is most probable that this manuscript, which belonged to the Oppenheimer collection, was acquired by David ben Abraham Oppenheimer through Shapira's family in Worms. See the description of this manuscript in Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the College libraries of Oxford*, MS Bodleian no. 1841 (Opp. 119), p. 614.

³¹ Until 1800 Kraków and Kazimierz functioned as two distinct towns, although residents of Kazimierz often considered themselves to be the citizens of Kraków. See Polonsky, *The Jews in Poland and Russia*, vol. 1, p. 71.

³² In the early editions of *Megaleh Amuqot*, the author is named Nathan, without reference to his middle name Neta (see, for instance, the 1637 Kraków edition of *MA ReNaV*, where in his introduction, the author's son mentions only his father's first name Nathan). The same holds true for Shapira's signature on the approbation he provided for Shabtai Sofer's *Sidur*, which reads – 'Nathan, son of our great master and teacher, Shlomo, may his memory be blessed.' See on this Katzman, *Ba'al Megaleh Amuqot*, pp. 25-28. It should be noted that the author of an approbation (*haskamah*) in a manuscript commentary on *Tur Orah Hayim*, whose signature Shalom Weiss reproduced in his edition of *Megaleh Amuqot* (1982-85) taking it to be Nathan Neta Shapira's, almost certainly reads 'Nathan ben Shlomo Shemaryah' rather than 'Nathan ben Shlomo Shapira', as Katzman observes in *Ba'al Megaleh Amuqot*, pp. 54-55.

³³ See Hońdo, *Stary żydowski cmentarz w Krakowie*, p. 64.

who settled in Kraków and served as its chief rabbi between the years 1587-1595.³⁴

Shapira's scholarly reputation and expertise in rabbinic literature is evidenced by the fact that already at the age of thirty-two he was invited to Kraków to lead the Talmudic academy there in place of the deceased Moses Margoliot (d. 1617). At that time this post was distinct from that of the town's chief rabbi, and there is no evidence that Nathan Shapira was ever appointed to the latter post, although his tombstone inscription refers to him by the rabbinic designation *av beit din*, which some later sources have adopted. Consequently, there is a great deal of discussion on the question whether Shapira ever served as the rabbi of Kazimierz. Historians of Jewish Kraków have claimed either that he succeeded Moses Margoliot as both rabbi and *rosh yeshivah*, or that he served as *rosh yeshivah* only while occasionally also preaching in the synagogue, but without ever being appointed the community's rabbi. The latter possibility is plausible in the light of Shapira's high prestige and the authority he exerted in Kraków, which may explain why he would occasionally take over the task of preaching in the synagogue or even deciding on halakhic issues in place of the formally appointed rabbi.³⁵

The only other fact known about Shapira's life is that he married into the prominent family of Moshe Yekels Jakubowicz, a wealthy merchant of Kraków and Kazimierz, who built a small *beit midrash* for his son-in-law, the *Afn Bergel* synagogue, next to the oldest synagogue in the town. This advantageous marriage enabled Shapira to devote all his time to his studies, so that when he was offered the post of head of the local yeshiva, he reportedly refused to accept any remuneration.³⁶ Shapira's yeshiva was highly esteemed, at least in the neighbouring Ashkenazi lands, and there is evidence of students from cities such

³⁴ Interestingly, Meir of Lublin was himself a student of Isaac ben Nathan Shapira, i.e. Nathan Shapira's uncle. See Scholem's entry on Nathan Neta Shapira in *Encyclopedia Judaica*, vol. 15, c. 284.

³⁵ For the pre-World War II scholarly discussion on the history of the rabbinate in Kraków, see Katzman, *Ba'al Megaleh Amuqot*, pp. 17-18 n. 28 and pp. 22-27.

³⁶ See Bałaban, *Dzieje Żydów w Krakowie*, vol. 1, pp. 416-417, 420-421.

as Vienna and Prague who came to study in Kraków,³⁷ especially to hear Shapira's kabbalistic sermons, which he regularly preached as a *darshan*.³⁸ His close connection to Prague's rabbinical elite is evidenced by the fact that one of his daughters married Yeshayahu Hildesheim of Prague, who later became a rabbinical judge in the community of Kazimierz.

The most frequently quoted and – to the best of my knowledge – the only extensive source to shed some light on the figure of Nathan Shapira is the testimony of his son Shlomo in the introduction to the first edition of *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim* (Kraków, 1637). Apart from stating that his father 'was endowed with marvelous capacities, and had a memory the like of which is not to be found,' he also reports on Shapira's extreme piety and devotional practices, such as staying awake at night in order to atone for Israel's sins and hasten the redemption. Shlomo Shapira's introduction also provides the only reference to Elijah's revelations, which his father had allegedly experienced, but to which he himself never openly referred in any of his works.³⁹

3. CULTURAL BACKGROUND.

3.1. *Megaleh Amuqot* as a kabbalistic biblical commentary.

The main difficulty encountered when approaching Nathan Shapira's writings arises from the dense web of traditions within which he operates. His kabbalistic works consist of clusters of old motifs, which he reworks in an eclectic style, where at first glance everything seems to be linked to everything else. This

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ Traces of these sermons survive in *Megaleh Amuqot*, where Shapira notes that he had addressed some of his insights to the community of Kraków.

³⁹ See the introduction to *MA ReNaV*, p. 5: 'Once at midnight the prophet Elijah appeared to him and pronounced that ministering angels sing paeans before God with the melodies which he, Nathan, employs when he mourns the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the *Shekhinah*'. This is most probably the basis for his reputation as a kabbalistic hero of Kraków, rivalling only the mythical reputation of the famous Maharal of Prague, *Ba'al ha-Golem*. To feed the appeal of Nathan Shapira to tourists and pop-kabbalah fans, the Kraków municipality has arranged for a light to be turned every night in the so-called 'room of Rabbi Nathan Spira' at the site of his former *bet midrash*, which today is located above the premises of a local bank.

interconnectedness – the product of both his selection of earlier traditions and the manner in which he presents them – has a bearing on the substance of his work, and on the hermeneutic strategies he applies to his formative sources.

Notably, the literary *genre* Shapira adopts for the presentation of his kabbalistic ideas is the classical commentary on a Torah portion. It is a matter of debate whether this choice was governed by his sensitivity to the traditional constraints on the transmission and dissemination of kabbalistic lore. The adoption of this particular *genre* could have been prompted by the concern to stay within the confines of esotericism while at the same time enjoying the freedom it offered to convey new religious messages. A commentary on the first canonical text of the Jewish religion might have attracted the attention of many, but only the few would have been able to penetrate beneath the surface level of the text by way of active reading, which required recognition of its highly complex nature and the very specific inter-textual references of which only a minority of adepts were expected to be aware. This would have served Shapira as a defensive wall against the open disclosure of profound secrets to the wider public. However, it seems equally reasonable to assume that neither Shapira nor those in his immediate intellectual environment were particularly concerned to control the dissemination of kabbalistic teachings. Shapira's reworking of so many previous mystical traditions in his own writings may well suggest an innovative and, at least to some extent, an exoteric approach rather than the conservative posture of esotericism.

Shapira's choice of the biblical commentary as a vehicle for his kabbalistic ideas marks his entire project, which consists of highly synthesizing, eclectic scriptural interpretations. This places him within a tradition that relies on well-established canonical texts, stemming from what may be called a 'pseudepigraphic mentality'.⁴⁰ This type of 'mosaic' exegesis⁴¹ became common among the kabbalists after the so-called canonization of the Zohar, and it is

⁴⁰ See Halbertal, *Seter ve-Gilui*, pp. 8-12, 142-162.

⁴¹ See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 311; idem, *R. Menahem Recanati, ha-Mequbal*, pp. 24-32. This term can be applied also to the works of Isaac of Acre, Joseph of Hamadan, Joseph Angelet, Menahem Recanati or David Yehuda he-Hasid. On the canonization of the Zohar and the synthesizing approach to its interpretation see Huss, 'The Anthological Interpretation', pp. 1-19.

particularly typical of the mystical writings originating in the Ashkenazi milieu.⁴² It is to this exegetical tradition that Nathan Shapira's writings belong, and I propose to call his interpretive method 'hermeneutic integration'. It is based on sets of correspondences between distinct but co-existing and equally relevant strata of Jewish tradition, wherein a new way of understanding is obtained by fitting older ideas into new conceptual schemes. Although this method consists predominantly of the juxtaposition of old ideas or motifs, its originality lies in providing them with as many different contextual frameworks as possible. Such an approach is clearly an instance of poly-hermeneutics, combining fresh contextualization with variegated mystical modes of scriptural interpretation.

3.2. Print and the dissemination of kabbalah in Ashkenaz and Poland.

Shapira's eclectic, all-inclusive style of writing, with its cumulative character and tendency to synthesize diachronically distinct strands of tradition, reflects a new historical situation, marked by the intensified dissemination of ideas and the gradual dissolution of boundaries between diverse Jewish literary communities, not least those in which there was an interest in the transmission of mystical lore. This situation was brought about by the emergence of the printed book, which became increasingly accessible to a growing reading public. In the rapidly changing circumstances of the 16 and 17th centuries, kabbalistic writings were increasingly being transmitted through the medium of print.⁴³ This contributed significantly to the wide dissemination of kabbalistic teachings in diverse cultural settings, including Western Europe, Italy, North Africa and the Byzantine Empire, reaching Jewish communities under both Christian and Muslim rule. A wider and more variegated range of intermingled ideas became more widespread among the Jewish intellectual elite, which itself might have expanded as a result of social changes, increased mobility, and the relatively stable political and economic

⁴² E.g. the works of Joseph Ashkenazi and Menahem Ziyoni. On this issue see further Laura, 'The Ashkenazi Kabbalah', pp. 105-108; Kanarfogel, *The Intellectual History*, pp. 531-535.

⁴³ See Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, pp. 99-111; Gries, 'Ha-Sefer ke-Sokhen Tarbut', pp. 237-258; idem, 'Ha'ataqat ve-Hadpasat Sifrei Qabalah', pp. 204-211.

conditions that facilitated the early modern Jewish ‘golden age’, especially in Ashkenaz and Poland.⁴⁴

During the 16th and first half of the 17th century Polish Jewish publishing houses printed a number of major kabbalistic treatises, often accompanied by commentaries, such as Gikatilla’s *Sha’arei Orah* with Matatiah Delacrut’s commentary (Kraków 1600), Meir ibn Gabbai’s *Derekh Emunah*, *Tola’at Yaqov* and *Avodat ha-Qodesh* (Kraków 1577, 1581 and 1613 respectively), Shlomo Molkho’s *Sefer ha-Mefo’ar* (Kraków 1578), or an edition of *Zohar Hadash* with *Midrash ha-Ne’elam* edited by Moses Margoliot (Kraków 1603).⁴⁵ These classical kabbalistic works often reached a wide readership through the medium of popular handbook editions, as in the case of Issakhar ben Naftali of Szczebrzeszyn’s *Mahanot Kehunah* and *Mar’eh Kohen*, both providing systematic keys to zoharic symbolism, or Issakhar ben Petahyah of Krzemieniec’s *Pithei Yah*, which systematized Moshe Cordovero’s kabbalistic ‘gates’ of *Pardes Rimonim*.⁴⁶ In fact, *Pardes Rimonim* was one of the first kabbalistic treatises to be published in Kraków as early as 1592. Cordovero, who incorporated in his writings a great deal of medieval Ashkenazi mystical material alongside Abulafian thought, created a synthesis of the Spanish kabbalah and linguistic-ecstatic mystical techniques, which exerted a decisive influence on the shape of the early modern Polish kabbalah.⁴⁷ Another influential factor in Poland was the wide dissemination of kabbalistic treatises, either in print, e.g. *Sefer Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, or in manuscript, as in the case of *Sefer ha-Peli’ah*, which combined the theosophical-theurgical kabbalah with magical techniques of letter manipulation.⁴⁸ This contributed to

⁴⁴ See Ruderman, *Early Modern Jewry*, pp. 120-125; idem, ‘Kabbalah and the Subversion of Traditional Jewish Society’, pp. 169-178; Idel, ‘On European Cultural Renaissances’, pp. 43-78.

⁴⁵ On the beginnings of Hebrew printing in Kraków see Teter and Fram, ‘Apostasy’, pp. 31-66.

⁴⁶ See Elbaum, *Petihut ve-Histagrut*, pp. 193-200.

⁴⁷ See Horodetsky, *Shelosh Me’ot Shanah*, p. 85 for the *Commentary on Pardes Rimonim* by Joel Sirkes [MS Oxford 1805]. In this context it is crucial to mention the influence of Joseph Gikatilla and Menahem Recanati, which was noted by Moses Isserles in his *Torat ha-Olah* 3:4. See also Scholem, *Qabalat ha-Ari*, pp. 365-372.

⁴⁸ As Jacob Elbaum notes (*Petihut ve-Histagrut*, pp. 184-185), the end of 16th and the beginning of the 17th century in Ashkenaz and Poland were marked by an increased interest in all the diverse

shaping the interests of Polish kabbalistic circles, and provided a solid ground for the subsequent emergence of a-nomian and anti-nomian mystical tendencies in the Sabbatean and Frankist movements.⁴⁹ At the same time, early Ashkenazi mystical sources, which were considered more esoteric and therefore less printable, still circulated in manuscript.⁵⁰ All these factors in the environment of early modern Ashkenaz must have left their mark on Nathan Shapira, determining the eclectic and all-inclusive character of his kabbalistic thought.

3.3. The Ashkenazi kabbalah.

The associative method of interpretation, generating new meanings by the juxtaposition of ideas drawn from a variety of discrete contexts, has been described as characteristic of the Ashkenazi mind set.⁵¹ This mode of thinking underlies Shapira's cumulative hermeneutic strategy, which in reference to another Ashkenazi kabbalist, Menahem Ziyoni, has been aptly described as 'innovative compilation'.⁵² Shapira employs all the existing modes of scriptural exegesis, from the literal to the homiletic and allegorical, with the mystical at the fore, to create an interpretive process in which are subsumed both the mystical ideas of medieval Ashkenaz,⁵³ which have themselves preserved much older layers of mystical tradition, and the later kabbalah, including the Lurianic

variations of the kabbalah, but especially in the zoharic corpus, which heavily influenced the original homiletic and ethical literature composed at that time. On early printing in Poland and Ashkenaz, see Friedberg, *Toledot ha-Defus ha-Ivri be-Polanyah*, Tel Aviv 1932.

⁴⁹ See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, p. 389.

⁵⁰ See Idel, 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back', pp. 47-58 & 86-94.

⁵¹ See Kanarfogel, *The Intellectual History*, pp. 26-35.

⁵² See Laura, 'The Ashkenazi Kabbalah', pp. 7-17, 193. For a comparison of the Ashkenazi hermeneutic technique of *pilpul* with Nathan Shapira's kabbalistic commentaries, see also Scholem, 'Ha-Tenu'ah ha-Shabeta'it be-Polin', pp. 37-38; idem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 80.

⁵³ I follow the definition of the term 'Ashkenaz' in the early modern period as presented in Davis, 'The Reception of the Shulkhan Arukh and the Formation of Ashkenazic Jewish Identity', pp. 251-276. For the development of Polish Ashkenazi identity in the early modern period, see also Reiner, 'Temurot bi-Yshivot Polin ve-Ashkenaz', pp. 9-80; idem, 'The Ashkenazi Elite', pp. 85-98. For an inclusive approach to the term 'kabbalah', allowing for influences from multiple directions, see Laura, 'The Ashkenazi Kabbalah', pp. 26-28, 94-97.

teaching as promoted by the Italian kabbalists of the late 16th and early 17th century. Consequently, the term ‘Ashkenazi kabbalah’ is appropriate for describing specifically the kabbalistic trends that developed among the early modern Polish mystical writers, who integrated the medieval Ashkenazi mystical lore with the classical kabbalah, without distinguishing these two traditions from each other.

It has already been suggested by scholars that the Ashkenazi kabbalah had emerged in the late-Middle Ages out of a mixture of various ancient and earlier-medieval mystical and philosophical traditions.⁵⁴ While it assimilated the theosophical system of the Zohar, this 13th to 14th century kabbalistic school was still anchored in a set of typically Ashkenazi notions, e.g. of the origins of evil, demonology, angelology, and divine transcendence vs. immanence, pursuing the interpretive methodologies of the Rhineland pietists and other mystical groups active in medieval Ashkenaz at the time.⁵⁵ The same holds true for the early modern era: although the classical, mostly Sephardi, kabbalistic texts had by that time become standard in Ashkenaz and Poland, the 17th century kabbalah of *Megaleh Amuqot* is so permeated by Ashkenazi references that it cannot be understood merely against the background of either the Zoharic or the Lurianic tradition. Although Shapira was inspired by the theosophical universe of the Spanish kabbalists, he chose to preserve and explore motifs that stemmed from the Pietistic and magical traditions of medieval Ashkenaz, which did not seem to him to be inconsistent with the classical kabbalah. Rather, his integrative, all-inclusive approach suggests that Shapira accorded equal status to all the mystical texts at his disposal.

Moreover, as has already been claimed by scholars, in 16th and 17th century Ashkenaz and Poland, the kabbalah became part and parcel of the educational curriculum of the intellectual elite, even among the adversaries of

⁵⁴ See Idel, ‘From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back’, passim; idem, ‘Differing Conceptions of Kabbalah’, pp. 137-200; idem, ‘Defining Kabbalah’, pp. 97-122.

⁵⁵ See Laura, ‘The Ashkenazi Kabbalah’, pp. 192-193; Kanarfogel, *The Intellectual History*, pp. 531-536.

kabbalah, whose critique often reveals extensive knowledge of the subject.⁵⁶ At the same time, and especially in the course of the 17th century, the so-called ‘practical kabbalah’, often associated with magic and a talismanic approach to ritual, was attracting numerous followers.⁵⁷ These two strands of the mystical tradition permeated early modern Ashkenaz, but while the sophisticated theosophical kabbalah of the elites did not exert much influence on the Jewish masses, popular magical traditions and practices did infiltrate the elitist speculative kabbalah, at least to some extent. What had been interpreted by scholars as the universal spread of Lurianic kabbalistic rituals may well be accounted for by the wide dissemination of much simpler magico-mystical practices, drawn out of an old stock of religious performance techniques, such as the invocation of angelic names, manipulation of the divine name, talismanic divinatory practices and the like. This magico-mystical kabbalistic strand, with its special interest in the mystical dimension of language – so clearly observable in Shapira’s writings as well as in some parts of the Lurianic kabbalah – is in fact the continuation of a much earlier tradition, first cultivated in medieval Ashkenaz and later on in early modern Ashkenaz and Poland.

3.4. Nathan Shapira’s sources.

One of the main characteristics of Nathan Shapira’s style of writing is his reliance on multiple layers of interpretive traditions, which he incorporates in his own commentary in order to build up a new interpretive structure. His two extant kabbalistic treatises, *Megaleh Amuqot ReNav Ofanim al Va-Ethanan* and *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah*, constitute a set of individual commentaries on biblical pericopes, which may be read independently of as well as in conjunction with each other. Moreover, each individual commentary is woven out of several interpretive strands, each of which may be related synchronically to its counterpart within the larger context of the whole work.

⁵⁶ See Elbaum, *Petihut ve-Histagrut*, pp. 208-222.

⁵⁷ See Rosman, ‘Innovative Tradition’, pp. 539-545; Polonsky, *The Jews of Poland and Russia*, pp. 125-136.

The outer stratum of Shapira's writings reveals his heavy dependence on the zoharic literature, to the extent that many parts of *Megaleh Amuqot* might be considered a commentary on the Zohar.⁵⁸ In addition, Shapira openly refers, while quoting exact source references, to many classical kabbalistic books, although to none of them as extensively as to the Zohar. In both parts of *Megaleh Amuqot*, *Sefer Yetsirah* is mentioned a few times, and there are some references to Joseph Gikatilla's *Sha'arei Orah*, Abraham Galante's *Qol Bokhim*, and Menahem Ziyoni's *Perush al ha-Torah*. Interestingly, although Moshe Cordovero's kabbalah is thought to have exercised the greatest influence on the Polish kabbalists of the early modern period, Nathan Shapira seldom addresses it openly. It appears that rather than relying on Cordovero's encyclopaedic and philosophical approach to the kabbalistic tradition, Shapira prefers to draw on such works as *Sefer ha-Temunah* and *Sefer ha-Peli'ah* (to which there are altogether more than twenty direct references in *Megaleh Amuqot*) – both presumed to have been composed in the Byzantine world at some point during the 14th-century, and both preserving many older magical and divinatory traditions, combined with linguistic mysticism and a messianic-redemptive outlook.⁵⁹

The second most frequently cited source in *Megaleh Amuqot* after the Zohar is without a doubt Menahem Azariah da Fano's compilation of Lurianic teachings, *Kanefei Yonah*, and occasionally also his *Yonat Elem*, to both of which Shapira refers as the works of Isaac Luria.⁶⁰ Indeed, the Italian version of the Lurianic kabbalah as presented in da Fano's writings may well have been Shapira's only source for his knowledge of the Lurianic doctrine. This holds true for both *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim* and *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* as preserved in two late 17th-century manuscripts held at the Bodleian Library, which

⁵⁸ There are more than two hundred and twenty direct references to the *Zohar* and the *Tiqunim* in the printed editions of Shapira's two *Megaleh Amuqot* treatises, which makes the zoharic corpus the most frequently quoted source after the Bible.

⁵⁹ See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 460-461; Idel, 'Ha-Qabalah ba-Ezor ha-Bizanti', pp. 208-214, 217-218; Kushnir-Oron, 'Ha-Peli'ah ve-ha-Qanah', pp. 1-14.

⁶⁰ See e.g. *MA ReNaV*, ofan 123.

most probably transmit a very early version of the work.⁶¹ Although there are some references to ‘the Ari’s words’ in both manuscript recensions of *MA al ha-Torah* as well as in the Kraków 1637 edition of *MA ReNaV Ofanim*, both of which represent an early version of Shapira’s kabbalah,⁶² very rarely do these ‘words’ originate in any sources other than da Fano’s treatises, whilst Hayim Vital’s works are hardly quoted at all. Since references to the Ari’s teachings, especially to the multileveled structure of the divine names and its implications for the *kavanot* in prayer, appear more frequently in the 18th-century (first) printed edition of *MA al ha-Torah*, it is plausible that they found their way into this text only at a later stage of its redaction. This preliminary observation requires further investigation, as does the whole question of the Lurianic kabbalah’s penetration into early modern Ashkenaz in general and Nathan Shapira’s kabbalah in particular.

There are fewer explicit references in *Megaleh Amuqot* to Ashkenazi mystical texts than to kabbalistic works such as the *Zohar* or *Kanefei Yonah*. Shapira mentions the writings of Eleazar of Worms, as well as occasionally *Sefer Hasidim* of Judah the Pious.⁶³ Nevertheless, it is evident that his entire kabbalistic enterprise is underpinned by the Ashkenazi mystical tradition in terms of both its thematic choices and its cumulative approach to the hermeneutical process. A comparison of Shapira’s *Megaleh Amuqot* to the Ashkenazi group of texts stemming from the circle of Nehemiah (Tröstlin) ben Shlomo of Erfurt – the so-

⁶¹ See MS Oxford-Bodleian 1842 (= MS Mich. 575), dated ‘17th century’, and MS Oxford-Bodleian 1841 (= MS Opp. 119), dated ‘17th -18th century’. Both manuscripts were first published as *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* in two volumes (Bnei Brak, 1982 and 1985 respectively), edited by Shlomo Weiss. This edition of *MA* differs considerably from the one published in Lvov in 1795 by Efraim Zalman Margoliot, and from its subsequent reprints (see note 2 above).

⁶² *MA ReNaV* was printed for the first time, with an introduction by author’s son, in 1637 in Kraków. All later editions of this work, both printed and in manuscript copies, generally follow the format of this Kraków’s edition.

⁶³ The two Manuscripts of *MAT* (see note 61 above) are full of references to and comments on *Sodei Razaya*. However, this work consists not only of Eleazar of Worms’ writings but preserves also some fragments of Nehemiah ben Shlomo of Erfurt commentaries. See Segal, *Sefer Sodei Razei ha-Semukhim le-Rabi Eleazar ben Yehuda mi-Germayza*, passim; Idel, ‘Al ha-Perushim’, pp. 157-261.

called prophet of Erfurt, who was apparently active in the first third of the 13th century – reveals close affinities between the interpretive techniques marking these two bodies of writing, which are based on an unusually extensive use of numerological equivalences and letter permutations,⁶⁴ as well as on a universe of themes heavily populated by angelic figures mediating between heaven and earth. Although Shapira never openly mentions these Ashkenazi sources, he certainly integrates them in his writings, often quoting particular numerological equations without revealing their source. Thus a thorough examination of manuscripts containing the writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle yields a new perspective on Nathan Shapira's kabbalah, which is permeated by unattributed references to numerous mystical Ashkenazi texts, as well as on some layers of the kabbalistic tradition, which have so far been regarded as 'purely' Sefardi. This applies to parts of the late zoharic corpus, especially the *Tiqunim*, as well as to certain elements of the Lurianic kabbalah, as will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow, focusing on the example of the Enoch-Metatron constellation of traditions.

4. THE ENOCH-METATRON CONSTELLATION OF MOTIFS.

4.1. Enoch-Metatron in medieval Ashkenazi mysticism.

The Enoch-Metatron tradition has long been of interest to scholars of Jewish mysticism. According to Gershom Scholem, mystical speculation about the seventh patriarch Enoch and his career as the angel Metatron featured prominently in much of the ancient corpus of Merkavah mysticism.⁶⁵ Since the publication of Scholem's research on this topic, the early 'Enochic' literature and its influence on ancient forms of worship in both Jewish and Christian milieus have been the subject of numerous studies in which the 'Enochic' strand of Judaism is said either to have laid the ground for or to have paralleled the development of

⁶⁴ See Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings', p. 14, on the 'cascades of *gimatriyot*' as the main interpretative strategy of Nehemiah ben Shlomo, and idem, 'On Angels', pp. 211-244, for a description of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's main interpretive strategies, including letter permutation.

⁶⁵ See Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 43, 67-70; idem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 41-42.

Christian messianism.⁶⁶ Likewise, scholars have observed the overlap between the Jewish traditions on Enoch and the Islamic traditions on the patriarch Idris, which feature in Sufi and Jewish mystical sources respectively.⁶⁷ Paralleling this interest in Enoch-Metatron are the numerous studies devoted to the survival and resurgence of Hermetic traditions in Renaissance Europe, all associated with the figure of Hermes Trismegistos, who in many respects is the exact equivalent of Enoch. This parallel reinforces the sense that the ancient mystico-magical tradition of Enoch maintained an enduring presence and enjoyed a considerable resurgence of interest in early modern Western society.⁶⁸

For the present study of Shapira's kabbalah, the modes of transmission and development of Enochic traditions in Jewish mysticism from the Middle Ages to the early modern period are of particular importance.⁶⁹ The *heikhalot* literature, in which Enoch-Metatron features prominently, had been transmitted from the East via Italy and other minor channels to Ashkenaz, where diverse circles of pietists reworked and integrated it into new ideological frameworks.⁷⁰ Notably, the central position of Enoch-Metatron in this environment becomes visible not in the major strand of Ashkenazi mysticism, the so-called *hasidei Ashkenaz* group associated with the Kalonymide family, of which Judah the Pious and Eleazar of Worms are the most prominent representatives, but rather in the writings attributed to Nehemiah ben Shlomo, the 'prophet' of Erfurt, who was active in the late 12th and

⁶⁶ See most recently Abrams, 'Metatron and Jesus', pp. 17-35, which provides a lengthy bibliography on the subject, especially in nn. 22, 29-30, and 34.

⁶⁷ See Schneider, 'Hanokh Tofer Min'alayim', pp. 287-319; Vajda, 'Pour le Dossier de Metatron', pp. 345-354.

⁶⁸ See Alexander, 'The Historical Setting', pp. 166-176, on the link between Enoch and Hermes in ancient texts. For a survey of the Hermetic tradition in Western culture see Faivre, *The Eternal Hermes*; Ebeling, *The Secret History*; Yates, *Giordano Bruno*. On the impact of kabbalah on Western esotericism and *vice versa* see Wirszubski, *Pico della Mirandola's Encounter*, p. 232; Idel, 'On European Cultural Renaissances', pp. 58-64; Greene, *Magi and Maggidim*, pp. 161-177.

⁶⁹ See Abrams, 'Metatron and Jesus', pp. 35-36.

⁷⁰ See Idel, 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back', pp. 47-94; idem, 'Holding and Orb', pp. 19-44; Kuyt, 'Traces of a Mutual Influence', pp. 62-86.

early 13th century.⁷¹ These writings focus on two key topics: the exegesis of multiple angelic names and the figure of Enoch-Metatron,⁷² both of which are similarly prominent in Nathan Shapira's work.

As was observed by Idel,⁷³ these topics hardly feature at all among the interests of the Kalonymide circle, which was much more concerned with ethical issues and philosophical speculation, and which until recently had been regarded as the only strand of Jewish mysticism in medieval Ashkenaz.⁷⁴ An expanded definition of medieval Ashkenazi mysticism, which takes into account other mystical groups active in the same region at the same time, provides an important key to the proper understanding of such early modern Ashkenazi kabbalistic works as Shapira's *Megaleh Amuqot*. Only this inclusive approach to the development of mystical ideas in Ashkenaz can fully account for the early modern kabbalah as it developed specifically in Ashkenaz and Poland, where it drew on both classical kabbalistic texts and medieval Ashkenazi sources, preserving in particular a strong interest in esoteric traditions on language, and in the multifarious angelic-demonic realm.

The present dissertation sets out to demonstrate that Shapira's kabbalah owes many of its interpretive choices to Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings, and that, moreover, Shapira consistently and intentionally chooses precisely those interpretive stances that derive from the broadly defined medieval Ashkenazi mind-set. He incorporates this material in his commentary without quoting or drawing it directly from its medieval Ashkenazi sources. Rather, he seems to

⁷¹ See Dan, 'Anafiel, Metatron ve-ha-Bore', pp. 447-457; Farber-Ginat, 'Yunim be-Sefer Shi'ur Qomah', pp. 361-394; Wolfson, 'Metatron and Shi'ur Qomah', pp. 60-92, Abrams, 'The Boundaries of the Divine Ontology', pp. 291-321. See also the next footnote.

⁷² See Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings', pp. 183-196. On Nehemiah's writings and his peculiar mode of exegesis, see further idem, 'From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back', pp. 47-94; idem, 'On Angels', pp. 211-244; idem, 'R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi u-Khetav Yad London', pp. 6-10; idem, 'Ha-Perush ha-Anonimi le-Alfa-Beta de-Metatron', pp. 1-10; idem, 'Bein Ashkenaz le-Qastilyah', pp. 1-81; idem, 'Perushav shel R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo la-piyut', pp. 165-202; idem, 'Al R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi me-Erfurt ve-R. Itshaq Luria Ashkenazi (ha-Ari)', pp. 328-345.

⁷³ See Idel, 'Some Forlorn Writings', pp. 194-196; idem, 'Al ha-Perushim', pp. 168-173; idem, *Ben*, pp. 240-241.

⁷⁴ See Dan, *Toledot Torat ha-Sod ha-Ivrit*, vol. 5, pp. 56-91.

derive it from the later kabbalistic treatises in which it had been subsumed, such as *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* and *Kanefei Yonah*, as will be shown below.

In the chapters that follow the Enoch-Metatron cluster of motifs will serve as a test case to show how the old traditions were chosen and appropriated so as to create a new interpretive structure, and how they functioned once they were absorbed into their new frame of reference.

4.2. The Enoch-Metatron cluster of motifs in Nathan Shapira's kabbalah.

Statistically, 'Metatron', spelled either fully or in an abbreviated form, is one of the words that occurs most frequently in *Megaleh Amuqot*, with over three hundred instances, to which one can add nearly one hundred references to Enoch in connection to Metatron. By comparison, the term 'Shekhinah' occurs in the printed edition of *Megaleh Amuqot* only one hundred and fifty times, while such a classical kabbalistic, especially Lurianic, term as *Ze'ir Anpin* is mentioned no more than five times, and the term *kavanah* occurs just twice. This demonstrates the prominence of the Enoch-Metatron constellation of ideas in Nathan Shapira's thought.

A thorough examination of both parts of *Megaleh Amuqot* suggests that the phrase 'constellation of ideas' best captures Shapira's method of presenting his insights on the subject of Enoch-Metatron as a set of thematically related but autonomous motifs, which enable him to create a rich web of meanings out of numerous references to the names Enoch or Metatron in multiple contexts. He obviously draws on older traditions, kabbalistic or not, which by his time had long been established as the conventional methods of Jewish exegesis, but on that basis, he develops an extraordinary range of scriptural interpretations, expounding the theme of Metatron in at least two ways: on the one hand, he treats him as an entity distinguished by a unique ontological status, as one who has transcended mundane reality and underlies the structure of the entire universe, while on the other hand, he projects him back into the world in order to provide new insights into the canonical text as well as the nature of reality. Since the divine reality is both represented and mediated by the sacred Hebrew text – Scripture and commentary alike, the name Metatron as it appears in the sacred text underpins

the divine structure of the entire universe and mediates it to all levels of reality. In this way, 'Enoch-Metatron' becomes primarily a device or a technical tool, by means of which Shapira establishes his multiple interpretive points of reference. Consequently, the names Enoch-Metatron invariably signal the whole set of meanings that might be generated from them rather than pointing exclusively to a single referent, whether Enoch or Metatron, as a distinct personal entity. This transformation of the Metatronic *mythologoumena* from narrative into hermeneutic device opens up new vistas, which enabled Shapira to impose a multitude of new meanings on the canonical text on which he was commenting. The Metatronic constellation of motifs, which comprised the whole stock of Metatronic associations, recreated the literary 'image' as a technical tool, thereby effectively redefining the process of interpretation. At the same time, the semantic *imaginaire* ascribed to the cluster of Metatronic motifs, most of which had already crystallized in the medieval Ashkenazi environment, was considerably widened by Shapira's great aptitude for analogizing, namely, his ability to recognize the potential for forging original connections between diverse older *topoi*, often totally discrete. For Shapira's method, the traditional linguistic distinction between the semantic and the syntactic (a-semantic) strata of language⁷⁵ is far less relevant than for any other type of radical kabbalistic hermeneutics, which often breaks the surface layer of the text in search of newly desired meaning.⁷⁶

Nathan Shapira's method is distinguished by the search for the unity of the mundane and the divine, which coincides with the goal of overcoming the duality inherent in both text and language (the semantic and the syntactic, the concrete and the symbolic, etc.). Not only did Shapira construct his commentaries by inserting into the biblical narrative fixed conceptual systems (e.g. the scheme of the four worlds or the sefirotic tree), nor did he merely deconstruct the syntactic and phonetic structure of the biblical text, but he combined these two approaches, which functioned for him as equally valid hermeneutic traditions. This resulted in an accumulation of multiple interpretations, all juxtaposed with one another

⁷⁵ See Sikora, *Midrash and Semiotics*, p. 201.

⁷⁶ See Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 250-256; Afterman, 'Letter Permutation Techniques', pp. 52-77; Abrams, 'From Germany to Spain', pp. 85-101.

within each unit of commentary, even a single biblical verse. Thus Shapira's kabbalistic interpretations reveal a tendency to infinite inclusiveness, which may have stemmed from the traditional Ashkenazi approach to the canonical texts.⁷⁷ They therefore present an example of metonymical hermeneutics, where no layer of meaning (or interpretation) can be forsaken or viewed as incompatible with any other, but each reveals yet another dimension or perspective that generates an additional meaning.⁷⁸ While being deeply rooted in the Jewish tradition of biblical commentary, Shapira's kabbalah displays a clear tendency to broaden the scope of the canon by inserting in it as many conceptual propositions as possible. The biblical passages on which he comments are contextualized by means of a stream of mostly mystical traditions, read through the prism of numerous exegetical strategies, all equally as important as each other. This approach coincides with and is complemented by a metonymical representation of reality, which preserves an infinite reservoir of meanings, all available for further interpretation and reinterpretation. Hence the 'Text' as a unity of traditions possesses an unlimited potentiality for becoming one among many other 'interpretants' in a succession of interpretive moves made by each potential reader.⁷⁹

Although the density of these interpretive strategies, especially the numerological ones, was conducive to the process of continuous semiosis,⁸⁰ as can be seen from the examples provided in the following chapters, it is the Metatronic constellation of motifs that constitutes the framework of Shapira's work. It functions as a matrix which generates, and at the same time integrates,

⁷⁷ On the Ashkenazi interpretive methods see further Reiner, 'Temurot bi-Yshivot Polin ve-Ashkenaz', pp. 9-80.

⁷⁸ See Jakobson, 'The Metaphoric and Metonymic Poles', pp. 76-82, which employs a definition of metonymy as a trope; Lakoff & Johnson, *Metaphors we Live By*, pp. 35-41. In my analysis of Shapira's kabbalistic symbolism and distinctive mode of textual interpretation, I follow recent theories of hermeneutics in employing the categories of 'analogy' and 'metonymy', which best capture his treatment of sacred texts as being infinitely 'open' – susceptible of remarkably fluid attributions of meaning. On metonymy and the Jewish interpretive tradition, see Handelman, *The Slayers of Moses*, pp. 74-76, 88; Mottolese, *Analogy in Midrash and Kabbalah*, pp. 352-357, 370.

⁷⁹ This follows Charles Sanders Peirce's terminology. See Kreinath, 'Ritual', pp. 100-107.

⁸⁰ On the infinite process of interpretation of the 'open work' see Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, pp. 23-43.

the flow of diverse interpretive propositions – conservative alongside innovative – that must have been active in his mind-set. Moreover, this constellation of motifs determines the deeply Ashkenazi anchoring of the framework, and links various strands of interpretation to a broad ideological project, with its own distinctive consistency and coherence.⁸¹ To examine the Ashkenazi context of Shapira's kabbalistic writings through the prism of the Metatronic constellation of traditions is the main goal of the present dissertation.

4.3. Overview of the thesis.

The first three chapters present three selected clusters of Enoch-Metatron motifs previously developed in the writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, which exerted a great deal of influence on Shapira's kabbalah. Chapter One presents Shapira's understanding of Torah. It examines the interpretive method employed in *Megaleh Amuqot*, demonstrating that the Metatronic constellation of motifs plays a major role as a hermeneutical device applied to the biblical text in order to invest it with multiple meanings, and to open it up to the process of continuous interpretation. The next chapter scrutinizes the priestly tradition of Enoch-Metatron as it appears in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's texts, highlighting its messianic reinterpretation in *Megaleh Amuqot*. The third chapter demonstrates the manner in which the Metatronic constellation of motifs informed Shapira's notion of prayer in which he merged medieval Ashkenazi ideas with zoharic imagery.

The last two chapters elaborate on Shapira's dependence on a broader range of kabbalistic traditions. They show that *Megaleh Amuqot*'s presentation of a number of key issues, such as the nature of the divine world, the individual mystic's relation to it, and the significance of individual messianic endeavour, owe much to the later strata of the zoharic literature (*Tiqunei ha-Zohar* and *Ra'aya Mehemena*) and the Italian version of the Lurianic kabbalah, which were

⁸¹ As Daniel Abrams has observed (*Kabbalistic Manuscripts*, pp. 485-486), Ashkenazi writings may be characterized as the product of a process of constant re-writing, generating multiple renderings of a single textual tradition. This observation complements my view above of Ashkenazi esotericism as a system that favoured intertextual interpretation much more than its Spanish counterpart.

themselves heavily influenced by the mystico-magical writings of the medieval Ashkenazi mystics, especially those associated with Nehemiah ben Shlomo. These chapters highlight the continuity of the Enoch-Metatron tradition, from medieval Ashkenaz to the early modern kabbalah of Poland and Ashkenaz, via the classical kabbalistic texts, which by the 17th century had become an integral part of the kabbalistic literary canon. Thus the Enoch-Metatron constellation of motifs serves as a vehicle for exploring Shapira's dependence on Ashkenazi imagery and interpretive methodologies, which he accessed through multiple channels of both direct and indirect transmission.

Chapter 1: Yefeifiyah, Metatron and learning the Torah

1. INTRODUCTION.

Most of the kabbalistic writings of Nathan Shapira focus on the central moment in Israel's history, namely the Sinaitic revelation, when God's covenant with Israel was sealed with the divine Law. According to certain Jewish mystical traditions that were transmitted through the early apocryphal and *heikhalot* literature up to the medieval Ashkenazi mystical circles, the transmission of the divine Law to humans on Mount Sinai was made possible only through the mediation of angels. A group of Jewish mystical-magical texts, which originated in the 13th and 14th century in Ashkenaz, rendered the angel Yefeifiyah, who is but another aspect of Enoch-Metatron, as both the mediator and the teacher of Torah to men. This motif reappears in *Megaleh Amuqot* virtually unchanged and thus confirms the affinity between Nathan Shapira's commentaries and the medieval Ashkenazi mystical writings.

Moreover, the motif of Yefeifiyah in early medieval Jewish sources bears a strong magical connotation. The name Yefeifiyah appears in several manuscripts of a clearly magical background, where it is included in the lists of diverse extramundane powers to be adjured, both in order to develop extraordinary learning skills and to acquire expertise in magical operations. Although there are no explicit references to magical procedures in Nathan Shapira's writings, both his commentaries and the aforementioned Ashkenazi magical treatises regard any religious writing as a stream of names, be it angelic or divine, which is latent in both the semantic and the parasemantic substratum of the Hebrew text. Shapira's affinity with this type of literature is therefore reflected not only in his thematic choices, to which his use of the 'Yefeifiyah motif' attests, but also in the hermeneutic strategy that Shapira applies to his kabbalistic commentaries.

Finally, the image of the Sinaitic revelation of Torah, mediated by Yefeifiyah and Metatron through Moses to Israel, accentuates the messianic overtones in the kabbalistic writings of Nathan Shapira. On the one hand, it is the human figure of Moses to whom the revelation of the divine word is granted. Thus, Moses stands for the ideal righteous man who is capable of transcending

human reality and bringing the redemption to Israel. On the other hand, the messianic associations are connected to Metatron, the angel who joins the mundane and the extramundane planes of reality. The idea of combining human and divine realms in messianic times, modelled on the example of Enoch-Metatron, who joined both heaven and earth through his transformation from man to angel, was equally important in Shapira's kabbalistic commentaries, as well as in his medieval Ashkenazi sources.

The present chapter concentrates on the motif of the angel Yefeifiyah in *Megaleh Amuqot*, showing its possible sources and parallels in the Jewish mystical tradition. It intends to show that not only common thematic anchors, but also a similar perception of the canonical texts, as well as hermeneutic techniques applied to their interpretation, reflects the multileveled dependence of the kabbalah of Nathan Shapira on the medieval Ashkenazi mystical sources.

2. YEFEIFIYAH IN *MEGALEH AMUQOT* AND IN EARLY MYSTICAL JEWISH SOURCES.

In chapter 122 of *Megaleh Amuqot*, which concerns Moses' acquisition of the Torah at Mount Sinai, the transmission of the Law is made possible only through the mediation of an angelic figure called 'Yefeifiyah, the Prince'. This chapter stands out from the rest of the commentary, as the author claims to have written it under the inspiration of a heavenly nocturnal revelation, of which he speaks openly. This practice is rather unusual for Shapira and must indicate the importance he ascribed to the message of this particular chapter.⁸² By mentioning his personal revelation, he establishes an epistemic parallel between his own experience and the revelatory experience of Moses, the figure whose unique perceptive faculties and ontological status are the subject of the whole commentary. Moreover, this rather extraordinary confession of a dream-like revelatory experience is placed in the 122th chapter of *Megaleh Amuqot*. The number 122 echoes the numerical value of Shapira's full name (amounting to 1220), which may point to a significant message somehow related to the author's

⁸² On nocturnal revelations and dreams in Jewish mysticism and kabbalah see Idel, *Mequbalim shel Laylah*, passim.

personality as viewed by the editors of the first printed version of *Megaleh Amuqot*:

It is written in the Chapters of the Palaces [*heikhalot*]⁸³ that everything Moses learned on high he forgot, until the Holy One Blessed be He sent him Yefeifyah the Prince [יפיפיה השר]. This, in my view, is alluded to by the verse ‘Thou art fairer [יפיפית] than the children of Adam [מבני אדם]’ [Ps. 45:3]. That is, the Prince of Torah, who is Yefeifyah, is called [by a name in which the Hebrew word for] ‘beauty’ is duplicated [כפל היופי], and he derived this from the sons of Adam. This secret was revealed to me in a night vision on the Sabbath of [the pericope] ‘Bereshit’ in the year 371 [1611]. The beauty [היופי] of Moses derived from the incarnation [גלגול] of the two sons of Adam. The incarnations of Moses [מש״ה] our Teacher are Seth [שת] and Abel [הבל] [מש״ה] representing an acronym of all three names.⁸⁴ After this, [Ps. 45:3 continues,] ‘grace [חן] is poured [into thy lips]’. This is alluded to by ‘Noah [נח] found grace’ [Gn. 6:8], which will be poured into your own lips as well.⁸⁵ Now, Moses gained his rays of glory⁸⁶ [קרני הוד], ‘glory’ understood as synonymous to ‘beauty’⁸⁷ from the incarnation of Seth, because [by way of numerology,] Yefeifyah the Prince [יפיפיה השר = 700] equals Seth [שת = 700], who is referred to in the Chapters of the Palaces as follows: Whenever he [Moses] remembers [what he was taught], he [the angel] is called Yefeifyah the Prince, who equals

⁸³ See *3Enoch* 48D, pp. 70-75.

⁸⁴ See *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* 69: 102a.

⁸⁵ On this subject see also *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* (later on quoted as *MAT*), ‘Noah’, p. 1; *MAT*, ed. Weiss, ‘Pekudey’, p. 210.

⁸⁶ On ‘rays of Glory’ and apotheosis (angelification) of the high Priest in early Jewish mystical tradition and its parallels in Mesopotamian and hellenistic literature see Schneider, *Mar’eh Kohen*, pp. 62-67.

⁸⁷ See *Midrash Tanhuma* on Ex. 34:29, ‘Ki Tissa’, § 37.

Seth by way of numerology. Moses achieved this through the incarnation of Seth,⁸⁸ which is alluded to by [the expression] ‘rays of glory’ [קרני הוד], that is to say, [the numerical value of the Hebrew word for ‘rays’, קרנים [which is grammatically a dual form], amounts to twice [the numerical value of a single קרן] ‘ray’ [twice קרן = 700], equalling Yefeifiyah the Prince [= 700] by way of numerology.⁸⁹

The angel Yefeifiyah, although known from both the rabbinic and the *heikhalot* sources, is not traditionally considered as a mediator of Torah to men; this role was most often ascribed to another so-called ‘Prince of the Torah’ (*Sar ha-Torah*) figure, namely Metatron.⁹⁰ However, both Metatron and Yefeifiyah were included in the list of the Princes of Wisdom, which features in the *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan* to Deut. 34:6. Moreover, there are at least two early sources that employ the name of Yefeifiyah explicitly in the context of Moses’ learning on high.

⁸⁸ This is the standard view on Moses’ incarnations according to the Lurianic kabbalah. See Vital, *Ets Hayim*, Gate 32, chapter 7, pp. 132-134; idem, *Sefer ha-Liqutim*, ‘Shemot’, pp. 140-142.

⁸⁹ *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim al Va-Ethanan* (later on quoted as *MA ReNaV*), ofan 122, p. 163:

איתא בפרקי היכלות שכל מה שלמד משה ברקיע שכח, עד ששלח לו הקב"ה יפיפי"ה השר. וזה סוד לדעתי יפיפי"ה מבני אדם, רצה לומר שר התורה שהוא יפיפי"ה, ונקרא כפל היופי, זה בא לו מבני אדם, סוד זה נגלה לי בחזיון לילה שבת בראשית שנת שע"א, היופי של משה בא לו מגלגול שני בני אדם, שהם גלגולי מש"ה רבינו ש"ת הבל, ואחר כך הוצק ח"ן, רזא דנח מצא ח"ן, היה גם כן בשפתותיך. והנה קרני הוד של משה זכה להן מגלגול ש"ת, שכן יפיפי"ה השר עולה ש"ת, כמו שהוא זוכר אותו בפרקי היכלות בזה הלשון בכל מקום כשזוכר קורא אותו יפיפי"ה השר, שהוא בגימטריא ש"ת, שזה זכה מגלגול ש"ת, והוא סוד קרני"ה הוד, ר"ל ב' פעמים קר"ן בגימטריא יפיפי"ה השר.

⁹⁰ There are several instances where the Prince of the Torah is called ‘Yofiel’, as in Schäfer, *Synopse* § 313, p. 139 or § 560, p. 213. For early instances where the confluence of Yefeifiyah and *Sar ha-Torah* occurs, resulting in the emergence of a distinct entity called *Yefeifiyah Sar ha-Torah/Sarah shel Torah*, see Idel, ‘From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back’, pp. 38-39 and p. 60; *Megilat Ahima'ats*, p. 114. On angelology in early Judaism see further Elior, ‘Mistiqaq, Magyah ve-Angelologyah’, pp. 15-55; Grözinger, ‘The Names of God and The Celestial Powers’, pp. 53-69. On various traditions of Metatron and *Sar ha-Torah* in the Enochic literature see Odeberg, *3Enoch*, pp. 79-90; Schäfer, *Hidden and Manifest God*, pp. 36, 49-53, 141-143, 151-153; Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot*, p. 384; Himmelfarb, *Ascent to Heaven*, pp. 66-69; Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 53-135; Alexander, ‘The Historical Setting’, pp. 156-180; Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 62-64, 104-106, 130-132.

Firstly, the name Yefeifiyah appears in the story of Moses' ascension on high, preserved in various texts of *heikhalot* literature. In several manuscripts containing *heikhalot* material, this story appears as the last section of the 3rd *Book of Enoch*.⁹¹ Moreover, it comes to light in a slightly modified form as an integral part of *The Alphabet of Rabbi Akibah*, an early medieval midrash that elaborates on several *heikhalot* motifs, including angelology.⁹² The following passages describe Moses' acquisition of Torah and the Laws through the angelic agency:

Why is his name called Seganzagel? Because all the storehouses of wisdom were committed into his hand; all of them were opened for Moses on Sinai, until he had learned, in forty days when he stood on the mountain: Torah, in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; the Laws [*halakhot*] in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; traditions in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; interpretations [*hagadot*] in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages; additions [*tosafot*] in the seventy aspects of the seventy languages. When the forty days passed, he forgot it all in a moment, until The Holy One, blessed be He, summoned Yefeifiyah, *the Prince of the Torah*,⁹³

⁹¹ This is the case of MS Oxford 1656/2, which served as the basis for Odeberg's edition of *3Enoch*. See idem, *3Enoch*, chapter 48D, pp. 107, 175; MS Vatican 228/3, 228/4, which was printed in Schäfer, *Synopse*, § 388 p. 164. See also Alexander, *3Enoch*, p. 225 and p. 311 n. 48Ca, where he explains two different strands of the so-called 'Alphabet of R. Akibah' traditions, which were merged into the last sections (chapter 48A-D) of *3Enoch*. Regarding the interconnection between the motifs of Yefeifiyah and Metatron, it is noticeable that the story of Moses' ascension comes after the list of Metatron's names, although this list does not include the name 'Yefeifiyah'. The list usually contains seventy names, with the exception of *Alphabet of Akibah*, printed in Kraków in 1579, which mentions seventy-two names, and Jellinek's edition of this text printed as *Sefer Hanokh* in *Bet ha-Midrash*, pp. 114-117, which mentions ninety-two names; neither of these sources provide any list of these names. In another place Jellinek's version, which was based on the Kraków edition, refers to the conventional number of seventy names: 'which I [i.e. God] took from my name and bestowed on him'. See *ibid.*, p. 115.

⁹² 'Midrash Otiyot de-Rabi Akivah ha-Shalem', ed. Wertheimer, pp. 343-418.

⁹³ Wertheimer's version adds: "as it was written, 'Of all men you are the most handsome [*yafyafita*] your lips are moist with grace, for God has blessed you for ever' [Ps. 45:2]".

and he gave it to Moses as a gift,⁹⁴ as it was written [in Deut. 10:4]: ‘The Lord gave them to me’. After that, he remembered it.⁹⁵ How do we know that he remembered it? Because it is written [in Mal. 4:4]: ‘remember you the law of Moses my servant [which I commanded unto him at Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments].’ *The Torah of Moses* refers to the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings; *statutes* refer to *halakhot* and *traditions*; *judgments* refer to interpretations [*hagadot*] and additions [*tosafot*]; all these were given to Moses at Sinai.⁹⁶ [...] These are the seventy names [...] which the Holy One, blessed be he, took from his sacred name and bestowed on Metatron [...] The angel Metatron [...] said [...] I revealed this secret to Moses⁹⁷ [...] that secret by which heaven and earth were created [...] And I [i.e. God] said to them: ‘I wished and I desired and I ordered and I entrusted it to my servant Metatron alone, for he is unique among the denizens of the heights. Metatron [brings it] out of my storehouses and passes it to Moses, and Moses to Joshua, etc.’⁹⁸

⁹⁴ On this tradition see *bNedarin* 38a: ‘At first Moses used to study the Torah and forget it, until it was given him as a gift.’

⁹⁵ Wertheimer’s version adds: ‘and did not forget it again.’

⁹⁶ See Ex. Rabba 47:1; *bBerakhot* 5a.

⁹⁷ Grammatically, the secret referred to here may be either the Torah or the secret of the names of God. However, as Philip Alexander observes, the ‘secret’ cannot be identified with Torah, since the latter was created by virtue of the former; see Alexander, *3Enoch*, p. 315 note t.

⁹⁸ Schäfer, *Synopse* §77, 79-80 pp. 38-39, following with some modifications the translation of Alexander, *3Enoch*, pp. 314-315. Cf. similar passages printed in Schäfer, *Synopse* §388 pp. 164-165 and Jellinek, *Sefer Hanokh*, p. 116:

ולמה נקרא שמו סגנוגאל מפני שכל גנזי' חכמ' מסורם בידו. וכולם נפתחו לו למשה בסיני עד שלמדו לו בארבעים יום כשהוא עומד בהר תורה בשבעים פנים של שבעים לשון הלכות בשבעים פנים של שבעים לשון. שמועות בשעים פנים של שבעים לשון. הגדות בשבעים פנים של שבעים לשון תוספות בשבעים פנים של שבעים לשון. וכיון שכלו לו ארבעים יום נשתכחו לו כולן בשעה אחת עד שקרא הקב"ה ליפיפה שר התורה ונתנו למשה במתנה שנ' ויתנם יהוה אלי. ואחרי כן נתקיימה לו ומנין שנתקיימה לו שנ' זכרו תורת משה עבדי אשר ציויתי אותו בחורב על כל ישראל חוקים ומשפטי'

In the above-quoted excerpt, the angel Yefeifyah is summoned to reveal Torah, with all interpretations and halakhic rulings, when Moses happens to forget it. However, it is Metatron who in the continuation of the story receives further secrets from God, which seem to consist of the knowledge of his own names that mirror the divine Name and possess similar creative potency.⁹⁹ Hence, it is not only the knowledge of Torah and laws that God passes down to Moses and next generations as a sign of His covenant, but also the secret knowledge of the names of Metatron.¹⁰⁰

Moreover, the close affinity between two teachers of humanity, Yefeifyah and Metatron,¹⁰¹ which surfaces in the passages above, allows for combining

תורת אילו תורה נביאים וכתובים. חקים אלו הלכות ושמועות ומשפטי אילו אגדות ותוספות וכלם נתנה למשה בסיני.
 [...] מלאך מטטרון [...] אמר [...] גיליתי רז זה למשה [...] רז שנבראו בו שמים וארץ [...] אני רצייתי ואני הישקתי ואני פקדתי ואני מסרתי למטטרון עבדי בלבד שהוא אחד מכל בני מרום ומטטרון מן בית גנוזים שלי ומוסרו למשה ומשה ליהושע וכו'.

On the chain of tradition modeled on *mAvot* 1:1 in *heikhalot* writings see Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 178-180.

⁹⁹ Scholars have noted that the seventh antediluvian patriarch features as the first sage, from whom the chain of esoteric knowledge derives and continues through the generations, already in the Mesopotamian tradition of king Enmenduranki and in the early Enochic booklets. See VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*, pp. 131, 189; Collins, 'The Sage', pp. 343-354, esp. 344-347 and 345; idem, *Seers*, p. 45; Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 23-39, 46-50.

¹⁰⁰ On magical notions in the *3Enoch* see Arbel, 'Enoch-Metatron', pp. 289-320. See also n. 105 below.

¹⁰¹ There is a long chain of tradition on Metatron as the teacher on high. In *bAvoda Zara* 3b Metatron teaches children who died at a young age: 'He sits and instructs the school children, as it is said, 'Whom shall one teach knowledge, and whom shall one make to understand the message? Them that are weaned from the milk [Is. 28:9].' Who instructed them therefore? – If you like, you may say Metatron.' Similarly, *3Enoch* 48C:12 depicts Metatron sitting for three hours each day in a heavenly classroom and teaching 'all the souls of the dead that have died in their mother's wombs, and of the babes that have died at their mother's breasts, and of the schoolchildren beneath the throne of glory [...] and teaches them Torah and wisdom, and hagadah, and tradition etc.' See Alexander, *3Enoch*, p. 313; Schäfer, *Synopse* §75, pp. 36-37. On the interconnection between these passages see Odeberg, *3Enoch*, 1.83-1.84 and Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, p. 106, who additionally points to *2Enoch* as the potential source of this tradition. As Gershom Scholem

features of these two hitherto distinct angelic beings into one in the so-called *Sar ha-Torah* figure. As a result of this fusion in the medieval Ashkenazi reworking of this motif, which will be presented in the subsequent sections of the present chapter, Yefeifiyah starts to function as one of the names of Metatron that describes his acquaintance with the secrets of Torah.¹⁰² Subsequently, Metatron turns into the highest of God's servants who both possesses a unique knowledge of divine secrets and controls their further transmission to humankind. Both these aspects of the Metatronic figure correspond to the imagery employed by Nathan Shapira in the passages of *Megaleh Amuqot*, which were quoted at the beginning of the present chapter.

Moreover, both the passages of *Megaleh Amuqot* and *The Alphabet of Rabbi Akibah* quoted above bear a strong resemblance to the final section of the so-called *Ma'ayan Hokhmah*. This text is an introduction to the either late antique or early medieval treatise *Shimushei Torah* on the practical usage of the divine names, of which the Torah was believed to have been composed. According to this story, too, Moses ascends to heaven in order to receive the Torah from the angels. However, the angelic gift described in this variant of the Moses' ascension narrative differs from the one presented in *The Alphabet of Rabbi Akibah*. While the previously quoted story focused on Moses' acquisition of Torah and other

observed, the tradition of Metatron as the teacher in the celestial academy of children contributed to shaping the legend of Gadiel, a gifted youth who became an expert in divine knowledge and teacher of the righteous, which was printed as *Seder Gan Eden* in Jellinek, *Bet ha-Midrash*, vol. 3, pp. 136-137. See Scholem, 'Meqorotav shel 'Ma'aseh Rabi Gadi'el', pp. 270-283; Weinmann, *Ethical Tales from the Kabbalah*, pp. 27-29.

¹⁰² As Andrei Orlov observes, the office of *Sar ha-Torah* in the *heikhalot* literature does not belong exclusively to Metatron, nor to any other angelic figure, but rather it is "often shared with other angels." He also argues that ascribing other angelic names to Metatron does not provide a useful explanation of attributing Metatron's titles to other angelic figures. In his view, it was possible that *Sar ha-Torah* traditions originated independently of the Metatron tradition; see Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, p. 132, which argues with earlier claims of Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, p. 182. Be it as it may, the significance of the *Sar ha-Torah* motif for later Jewish mystical tradition lies in its inclusion of all possible earlier components into the Metatron constellation of motifs. Thus, what earlier might have constituted independent traditions became subsumed within the larger framework of the Metatronic constellation of motifs.

laws from Yefeifiyah and Metatron, *Ma'ayan Hokhmah* focuses on the secret knowledge of healing procedures that were transmitted to Moses by diverse angels:

In forty days God taught him [namely, Moses] the entire Torah. When he was about to descend, he saw the terror of the angels, regiments of angels of fear and awe, angels of terror and trembling, and immediately great fear came upon him and he forgot everything [he had learned] in one moment. Then God called Yefeifiyah the Prince and [he] gave him the Torah, [which was] complete and sealed. All the angels became his companions and every one of them gave him a remedy [דבר רפואה] and a secret of names, the use of which stems from each and every pericope [of the Torah], for thus it is written: 'You ascended on high, you took captives, you received gifts for humanity' [Ps. 68:19].¹⁰³ And even the angel of death handed a remedy to him, for it is written [in Num. 17:12]: 'And he put on the incense and made atonement for the people.' This is the honoured procedure [השמוש] that the angels handed to him through Yefeifiyah, the Prince of the Torah, and Moses transmitted it to Eleazar, Eleazar to Pinhas, his son, who is Elijah, the great priest remembered for good, amen.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰³ The concept of Moses' acquisition of hidden secret of healing and magic appears already in a Talmudic story (*bShab.* 89a), but only in later *Pesiqta Rabati* 20 and *Pirqei de Rabi Eliezer*, chapter 2, the revelation of Moses was connected to the exegesis of Ps. 68:19, exactly as in *Ma'ayan Hokhmah*.

¹⁰⁴ 'Ma'ayan ha-Hokhmah', *Beit ha-Midrash*, vol. 1, pp. 58 – 59:

ולמדו הק"ב כל התורה כולה בארבעים יום וכשבא לירד וראה אימתן של מלאכי' וגדודי מלאכי אימה מלאכי זיע מלאכי חלחל מלאכי רתת מיד אחזתו חלחלה ושכחה בשעה אחת. מיד קרא הב"ה ליפיפיה שר התורה ומסר לו את התורה ערוכה בכול ושמור' וכל מלאכי השרת נעשו אוהביו וכל אחד ואחד מסר לו דבר רפואה וסוד שמות שהן יוצאין מכל פרשה ופרשה כל שמושיהן שכן הוא אומר עלית למרום שבית שבי לקחת מתנו' באדם. ואף מלאך המוות מסר לו דבר שכן כתיב ויתן את הקטרת ויכפר על העם. וזה השמוש הנכבד שמסרו לו המלאכים על ידי יפיפיה שר התורה ועל ידי מטטרון שר הפנים ומסרה משה לאלעזר ואלעזר לפנחס בנו שהוא אליהו כהנא רבה ויקירא זכור לטוב אמן.

On the grounds of the passages above, it is not entirely clear what exactly the angels handed down to Moses, but the phrase *devar refu'ah* may indicate some type of magical remedies, and suggests the practical knowledge of healing. According to the quoted passages, the magical spells, or amulets, consisting of the divine names were first passed on to Moses together with the text of the Torah, and then transmitted through the treatise to which *Ma'ayan Hokhmah* introduces. Moreover, the text suggests that not only the use of secret names, but also the technique of their derivation constituted a part of Moses revelation on Sinai. As a result, the 'complete and sealed' Torah of Moses consisted of both the 'exoteric' Torah and the 'esoteric' knowledge on magical procedures, both written down on the two tablets.

Effortless acquisition of full metaphysical knowledge, both secret and revealed, through the mediation of angels constitutes the focal point of all the above-quoted accounts of Moses' ascension. A particular interest of *heikhalot* writings in achieving excellent memory and unrivalled knowledge was in later elaboration of Moses' narrative, of which *Ma'ayan Hokhmah* is but one example, reinterpreted in a deeply magical way. As a result, divine secrets were believed to be accessible to all the addressees of Sinaitic revelation by means of practical linguistic operations.¹⁰⁵ This approach resembles Nathan Shapira's attitude towards text, in which a multiplicity of divine and angelic names derives from the biblical books, as well as from any other religious texts that according to Jewish tradition originated in the Sinaitic revelation. Chapter 108 of *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim* further exemplifies the affinity of the Moses' ascension narratives, derived from the *heikhalot* material and its later reworking, with Nathan Shapira's commentary:

We read in the *Chapters of the Palaces of Rabbi Ishmael*, Rabbi Ishmael said: 'Metatron, the Prince of the Countenance, revealed to me: "at the time when Moses ascended on high, the Holy One, Blessed be He, ordered me and gave me from his measure

¹⁰⁵ On the magical aspect of *The Alphabet of R. Akibah*, see Idel, 'Bein Ashkenaz le-Qastilyah', pp. 516-518. See also Swartz, *Scholastic Magic*, pp. 178-181; Idel, *Absorbing Perfections*, pp. 142-146.

seventy thousand parasangs of seventy thousand parasangs, and Moses learned the Torah in the seventy aspects of the seventy tongues, and the Prophets in the seventy aspects of the seventy tongues, and thus the Writings.” And in forty days Moses learned everything, but in one hour he forgot it. The Holy One, Blessed be He, sent him Yefeifyah, the Prince of the Torah, and he learned it with him until it was given to him as a gift.¹⁰⁶

The above passages, too, present Yefeifyah as the Prince of the Torah who teaches Moses at God’s command. Moreover, in the above account Yefeifyah reveals the Torah to Moses in its manifold aspects, which on the one hand correspond to the extraordinary ontological status of Yefeifyah (seventy languages corresponding to seventy measures of angelic height) and on the other hand reflect the divine stature, since the proportions of Yefeifyah derive from God’s own measurements. By highlighting the manifold structure of Torah, which mirrors the structure of the divine body, the story accentuates the completeness of knowledge that Moses obtained at Sinai thanks to the angelic revelation. In the above passages, moreover, Moses’ acquisition of knowledge appears to be gradual, for learning Torah with Yefeifyah continued for forty days. Thus, what seems to be the actual gift of God is the process of learning with an angel rather than the instant knowledge of Torah.

Furthermore, in chapter 108 Shapira explicitly refers to a *heikhalot* text, namely to *3Enoch*, in which R. Ishmael recounts his conversation with Metatron, wherein passages on Yefeifyah as *Sar ha-Torah* appear.¹⁰⁷ In addition, the final section of the same chapter refers to an angelic name, *Zagnazga’el*, as to yet another cognomen of Metatron, the Prince of the Torah. The same angelic name appears also in earlier accounts of Moses’ ascension in the context of the divine

¹⁰⁶ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 108, pp. 138-139:

איתא בפרקי היכלות דר' ישמעאל, אמר ר' ישמעאל סח לי מטטרון שר הפנים, בשעה שעלה משה למרום, צוה הקב"ה אותי ונתן לי משיעור קומה שלו ע' אלף רבוא פרסאות על ע' אלף רבוא פרסאות, למד משה התורה בע' פנים על ע' לשון, וכן נביאים ע' פנים בע' לשון, וכן כתובים. ובארבעים יום למד משה הכל, ובשעה אחת שכחה, שלח לו הקב"ה יפפי"ה שר התורה ולמדה עמו, עד שנתנה לו במתנה.

¹⁰⁷ *3Enoch* 48D, see Alexander, *3Enoch*, pp. 313-315; see also note 98 above.

treasuries of wisdom.¹⁰⁸ These similarities demonstrate Nathan Shapira's direct reliance on the *heikhalot* theme in which gaining knowledge from heaven, and especially memorizing Torah, is possible through the mediation of a special angel. However, this affinity goes beyond simple borrowing of the imagery of *heikhalot*, to which Shapira himself refers as to *Chapters of the Palaces*. The next section explores further sources of Shapira's ideas on angelically inspired knowledge, placing the medieval Ashkenazi reinterpretation of *heikhalot* motifs in the centre of his interest.

2.1. The angel Yefeifyah in the Ashkenazi medieval sources.

2.1.1. Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle.

Given that the *heikhalot* traditions underwent extensive redaction in medieval Ashkenazi Pietistic circles, it is plausible that the small cluster of motifs related to the angel Yefeifyah as Torah teacher, which derived from the *heikhalot* material, was developed more fully in the Ashkenazi setting, where Yefeifyah was more consistently portrayed as Prince of Torah.¹⁰⁹ Apparently, the association of Yefeifyah the Prince with Sinaitic revelation does not occur in the 'mainstream' medieval Ashkenazi mystical sources of the Kalonymide family, but it features in the beginning of the 13th century in the mystical commentaries on divine and angelic names by Nehemiah ben Shlomo, known as the Prophet of Erfurt. This rather neglected figure of Ashkenazi Pietistic background has been recently described as the leader of a lesser known, though no less influential, branch of medieval Ashkenazi mysticism connected to the *Sefer ha-Hesheq* traditions, and apparently distinct from the traditions of the Kalonymide family circle.¹¹⁰ In his *Commentary on the Haftarah*, preserved in MS Berlin 942, the following sentence occurs: 'Yefeifyah, which is the name of Metatron [...] has the numerical value of

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ On affinities between *The Alphabet of Rabbi Akibah* and the medieval Ashkenazi setting see Dan, *Toledot Torat ha-Sod ha-Ivrit*, vol. 3, pp. 1028-1059; Katerer, 'Otiyot de-Rabi Akivah (Nusah a-b)', *passim*.

¹¹⁰ Idel, *Ben*, pp. 198, 214; Liebes, 'Mal'akhei Qol ha-Shofar', p. 187 n. 20.

‘the end’.¹¹¹ This passage establishes an affinity between the two angelic names, Metatron and Yefeifyah. In Nehemiah’s *Commentary on 70 Names of Metatron*, Yefeifyah appears as a cognomen of the angel Metatron, equal by numerical analogy to קצה, ‘the end’, because he is the only angel who knows ‘the end’:

עמיסיה, by way of numerology, [equals] Yefeifyah, which by way of numerology [equals] ‘the end’ [הקץ = 195]. This is because there is no angel in heaven who knows the end other than him. By way of numerology [it also equals] ‘on the crown’ [על הכליל = 195] [...] By way of numerology [it also equals] ‘above the Palace’ [על להיכל = 195]. This is because he is the Prince of the Countenance before His Countenance, in the Palace of the Holy One, Blessed Be He, greater than any angel.¹¹²

In the same *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*, Nehemiah ben Shlomo introduces additional ritual associations centred on the motif of the super-mundane Temple, and these, too, are present in Shapira’s text. In the following passage from Nehemiah’s *Commentary*, the name of Yefeifyah has been elaborated in more detail:

Yefeifyah, by way of numerology, [is] ‘the end’ [קצה = 195], because he is the Prince of the Torah, which is without end, as Scripture says: ‘The measure thereof is longer than the Earth’ [Job 11:9]. He is also the one who rained down the manna upon Israel, which tastes like honey. And the Torah has been compared to honey. And they [the Israelites] said: ‘Our soul loathed [this light bread]’ [קצה = 195] [נפשנו קצה = 195] [Num. 21:5], to inform [him] that they loathed and were bored with the Torah and the manna. By way of numerology, [he is also] ‘the hidden’ [הגעלם = 195], because

¹¹¹ MS Berlin 942/8, fols. 154b-155a, following, with some modifications, the citation in Idel, ‘Some Forlorn Writings’, p. 189.

¹¹² *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, fol. 6a §52:

עמיסיה בגי' יפיפיה ו בגי' הקץ, לפי שאין מלאך ברקיע שיודע את הקץ כי אם הוא לבדו. ובגי' על הכליל [...] ובגי' ע"ל להיכל"ל. לפי שהוא שר הפנים לפנים בהיכל הקב"ה יותר משום מלאך.

he is more hidden than any of the serving angels on high. By way of numerology [he is also] 'vengeance' [נקמה=195], because the one who knows the seventy names of the Prince of the Countenance is able to wreak vengeance upon the nations.¹¹³

Among other, mostly magical, notions in this text, the analogy between the words 'end' and 'hidden' is clearly highlighted. Here, knowledge of the names of Metatron is the most hidden secret of the Torah, and it is associated with Yefeifayah, the angel whose main duty is to pass on the Law to humans.¹¹⁴

¹¹³ Ibid., fol. 5a, §36:

יפיפיה בגי' קצ"ה. לפי שהוא שר התורה שאין לה קצה. כמ"ש ארוכה מארץ מדה וגו'. וגם הוא המטיר לישראל מן שטעמו כדבש. והתורה נמשלה לדבש. והם אמרו נפשנו קצ"ה להודיע שקצו ומאסו בתורה ובמן. ובגי' הנעל"ם. לפי שהוא נעלם יותר מכל מלאכי השרת של מעלה. ובגי' נקמ"ה. כי לפי שמי שידוע את עי"ן שמות של שר הפנים יכול לעשות נקמה בגוים.

¹¹⁴ On the other hand, Nehemiah ben Shlomo's commentaries preserve the idea of Moses' acquisition of secret knowledge from Metatron, the idea that brings him close both to the Moses ascension narratives on the one hand, and to *Megaleh Amuqot* on the other. See his *Commentary on the Seventy Two-Letter Divine Name* in MS Oxford-Bodleian 1568, fol. 8a:

Because the Prince of the Presence came together with the Great God, and they revealed themselves on the Sea. By way of numerology [he equals] Moses [משה = 345], because the Prince of the Countenance went before Moses in the Sea, as it is written [in Ex. 14:2]: 'before it [נכחו] shall you encamp at the sea', [the word] 'before it' [נכחו] has the same letters as the name Enoch [חנוך], and he is Metatron, the Prince of the Countenance. [...] By way of numerology [he is] 'the book' [הספר = 345], and by way of numerology [he is] patron' [פטרון = 345], because it was by the merit of Moses, through whom God gave [them] the book, which is the Torah, which is the Patron of Israel, that they crossed the Sea, and because of Metatron, the Prince of the Countenance. And the entire Torah that Moses, our master, learned, all its arcana, mysteries, and secrets – all of it was revealed to him [i.e. Moses] by the Prince of the Countenance.

לפי שש"ה בא עם האל הגדול ונגלו על הים וכן גימ' משה לפי שש"ה לפני משה בים שנאמ' נכחו חנו על הים, נכחו אותיות חנוך, והוא מטטרון ש"ה [...] וכן גימ' הספר וכן גימ' פטרון כי בזכות משה שנתן השם הספר על ידו והיא התורה שהיא פטרוננו של ישראל עברו את הים ובזכות מטטרון ש"ה וכל התורה שלמד מ"ר הן רזיה וסתריה וסודיה נגלה לו הכל הש"ה.

See also Idel, 'On Angels', p. 223.

2.1.2. Magical traditions on the angel Yefeifiyah.

A concept of Yefeifiyah as *Sar ha-Torah*, the angel responsible for teaching, reverberates in an anonymous Ashkenazi text, which shows a resemblance to Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings:

Yefeifiyah is the great angel, standing at the entrance to the first chamber. He is also the Prince of the Torah, and it is good to call upon him three hundred times before learning, together with the name ליו, the Lord. By way of numerology he is [equal to] 'end' [קצה = 195], which alludes to the fact that he is appointed over the Torah, which has no end.¹¹⁵

This anonymous text takes over Yefeifiyah as the teacher of the Torah, together with the numerological calculation of the word 'end' (קצה = 195), as a fixed cluster of motifs. Moreover, the text adds strong magical associations to the angelic name, which on that account can be used practically by anybody who wishes to obtain a secret knowledge.¹¹⁶ Similar use of the name Yefeifiyah is preserved in several magical manuscripts stemming from the medieval Ashkenazi milieu, most of which include parts of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's commentaries:

A man who knows needs to use [i.e. direct the intention to] this name, and immediately you will understand all that your teacher tells you, be this interpretation or *novella*. This name and its tradition is tested and proven. If a man wants to acquire an open heart, sharp and witty, he should recite this name each and every day after his prayer 'He commanded us the Torah' [Dt. 33:4]: 'Let it be your will, YHVH our God, and God of our fathers, to open my heart for [lit. by, in] the Torah and make it flow as a stream [to enable me] to be

¹¹⁵ MS Strasburg 3972, fol. 58a:

יפיפיה המ"ג ועומד בפתח היכל א' והוא ג"כ ש"ה וטוב להזכיר אותו קודם לימודו ש"פ עם השם ליו האל' והוא בג' קצה"ה רמז שהוא ממונה על התורה שאין לה קצה.

¹¹⁶ On adjurations of *Sar ha-Torah* in the *heikhalot* literature, see Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, pp. 63ff.

sharp and quick to understand, to receive, to remember and to know; open my ears to listen to your Torah. I, so-and-so, son of so-and-so, adjure you, Yefeifyah, Petahiel, Patahel [...] that you open my heart for the Torah, so that it flows like a stream [to enable me] to be sharp and quick to understand, to receive, to remember and to know, and let my ears be opened to listen to the Torah.’¹¹⁷

The passage above contains a recipe for an invocation of angels who in turn would impart extraordinary learning skills to man’s mind. According to this passage, one’s desire to possess full knowledge of Torah can be satisfied by means of magical procedures. In this context, the name Yefeifyah features at the top of the list of invoked angelic beings responsible both for the learning of Torah and its understanding. The same idea reappears elsewhere in the same manuscript, with Yefeifyah as the first among the angelic teachers of Torah:

Open up my heart to enlighten me, and seal the words of Torah in my heart – I, so-and-so, son of so-and-so, in the name of Elijah, [in the name of] יהו, היה, יה, יה, והיה, והיה, והיה, והיה, יהוה, יהוה, amen amen amen, selah selah selah. [I call upon]: יה [...]ה: in the name of the king, [the one] who ruled and will rule, צרצריה פרשיה דרשיאל and שטורקיהיאל באליהו הנביא הקליה וחוטום פרצירי אשמדי הורקל

¹¹⁷ MS British Library 752, Add. 15299, fol. 89b:

צריך אדם שידע תכוון בזה השם ומיד תדע כל מה שיאמר לך הרב הן פירוש הן חידוש. וזה השם והקבלה בחון ומנוסה. אם ירצה ירצה אדם להיות לב פתוח וחריף ומפולפל יאמר בכל יום ויום זה השם לאחר תפילתו 'תורה ציוה וגו': יהי רצון מלפניך יי' אלהינו ואלהי אבותינו שתפתח לבי בתורתך ויהיה כמעין לפלפל למהר ולהבין ולקבל ולזכור ולידע ואזני תפתח לשמוע תורתך ומשביע אני פב"פ ובן פלוני עליכם יפיפיה פתחאל פתחאל [...] שתפתחו לבי בתורה ויהי כמעין נובע לפלפל למהר ולהבין ולקבל ולזכור ולידע ואזני תפתחו לשמוע בתורה.

On magical practices to gain knowledge see Harari, 'La'asot Petihat Lev', pp. 303-347; idem, 'Dat, Kishuf ve-Hashba'ot', pp. 52-56; Kadari, 'Talmud Torah, Mistiqah ve-Eskhatologyah', pp. 187-188.

every secret of the prayer will be performed, in the name of
the Blessed Name, who will reign forever and ever.¹¹⁸

This adjuration, too, is aimed at gaining knowledge of Torah and ranks Yefeifiyah first among the angelic beings to be adjured. In this instance, however, the list of invoked angelic names is considerably longer than in the previously quoted passage. Moreover, some of these names enlisted in the passage above relate to a particular hermeneutical operation and seem to have been invented for the sake of the adjuration. For instance, Derashiel seems to serve as the angel of interpretation (*derush*), while Parshayah appears to function as the angel of the biblical pericope. In addition, this magical adjuration demonstrates that in the medieval period such names as Petahiel or Yefeifiyah were part and parcel of the established tradition, whereby the help of angels was indispensable for the process of learning and interpreting Torah.

Finally, the imagery of Yefeifiyah and Metatron as teachers reappears in a poem by an Ashkenazi writer, which is modelled on the same ideas as Nehemiah ben Shlomo's *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*:

Metatron the mighty angel who turned into fire from flesh/
Teaches ethics as he is appointed over the children of light.

Yefeifiyah, the angel of the Torah, collects Black fire/ In
order to link a diadem to the letters of the Torah.

The foundation of His world is called by the name Tsadiq/
By the utterance of his speech he shakes the world.¹¹⁹

According to this passage, both Metatron and Yefeifiyah preside over the divine knowledge, although it is Yefeifiyah upon whom the secrets of Torah are

¹¹⁸ MS British Library, Add. 15299, fol. 44b:

תפתחו ית לבי ותחכמון ותנעלון פתגמי אוריית' בלבי הרי [...] אני פב"פ בשם אליהו יהו היה יה יה והיה והיה והיה היה הו
וה היה אא"א סס"ס. ה[...] אל יפיה פתחאל בשם מלך מלך ימלוך תלמודיה דרשיאל פרשיה צרצריה שטורקיההאל
באליהו הנביא הקליה וחוטום פרצירי אשמדי הורקל וכל סוד תפילה שתעבדי בשכמל"ו.

¹¹⁹ *Shirei Amitai*, pp. 114, quoted after Idel, *Kabbalah in Italy*, pp. 316-317. On the chronology of this text and the *Commentary on 70 Names*, see Idel, *From Italy to Ashkenaz and Back*, pp. 60-85.

bestowed. This instance further substantiates the claim that the motif of Yefeifyah as the teacher flourished in certain medieval Pietistic circles associated with Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle. Moreover, these ideas found their way to Ashkenazi magical treatises where the adjuration of Yefeifyah was one of the main means to increasing one's ability to memorize the Torah.¹²⁰ As a consequence, at a certain stage the tradition that evolved around the commentaries of Nehemiah ben Shlomo merged with the magical literature. This combination of magic with mystical commentaries was made possible on the grounds of perceiving Jewish canonical texts as a reservoir of names to be derived by radical interpretive strategies, such as numerology or anagrammation. The same approach features in the kabbalistic commentaries of Nathan Shapira who combined seminal motifs of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's texts with similar radical hermeneutical operations. The next chapter explores these affinities based on the example of chapter 122 of *Megaleh Amuqot*.

3. YEFEIFYAH, METATRON AND ACQUIRING THE TORAH IN MEGALEH AMUQOT.

In Nathan Shapira's commentary, Yefeifyah is similarly associated with the qualities of learning and teaching, as the bearer of the most hidden and ultimate knowledge of Torah, which consists of names of the divine:

This is alluded to by [the verse]: 'it is hid from the eyes of all living' [Job 28:21], for the Torah was hidden from Moses our Teacher, who comprises all living creatures, [and] from the 'fowl of the heaven' [Job 28:21], even though Moses learned Torah from the fowl of the heaven, which is Metatron [= 314], who is called עוף ['fowl' = 156+1×2 = 314]¹²¹ [...] And the numerical value of the word 'Torah', when spelt in the following manner: טז-ש"ג-אז-ג-אז-אז [counting only the numerical

¹²⁰ Or even to more advanced pneumatic states, such as preaching in ecstasy. See Idel, 'Bein Ashkenaz le-Qastilyah', pp. 475-554; Goldreich, *Shem ha-Kotev*, pp. 85-92.

¹²¹ On the connection between Yaho'el (one of Metatron's cognomens) and eagle (or phoenix) see Schneider, *Ha-Masorot ha-Genuzot*, pp. 173-180.

value of the final letter in each cluster, א ש ו ך is $[313+1 = 314]$, the same as] the hidden [aspect] of Torah, which by way of numerology is Metatron [מטטרון = 314], because the Torah was hidden from Metatron himself. This is why he is the [most] hidden [aspect] of Torah. The heaven [השמים = 395] amounts, by way of numerology, to Yefeifyah [יפיפיה = $2 \times 195 = 390$, plus the 5 letters of the Hebrew word for heaven], because the Torah was hidden from both of them, from the fowl [see Job 28:21], who is Metatron, and from 'the heaven', which is Yefeifyah. According to my interpretation, this verse [Job 28:21] means that the Torah was hidden from Moses our Teacher, who comprises all living creatures, all sixty thousand faces, until the fowl of heaven came [down], who is Yefeifyah ('fowl, or rather, 'from fowl, in Hebrew is מעוף [= 196] has the same numerical value as Yefeifyah [יפיפיה = 195] plus one), and he taught Moses the secrets of Torah.¹²²

According to this passage, knowledge of the Torah was equally hidden from humans and angels until the Sinaitic revelation, which – just as in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings – amounts to the acquisition of the divine names. Hence, the highest level of knowledge is knowledge of Metatron's status on high, and those of his qualities that are revealed through his various cognomens. Metatron's names thus become the 'final interpretant.' They underlie the continuous discourse, where various numerological operations reveal Shapira's predominant mode of thinking about (and by means of) the text, which he considers to be an all-encompassing

¹²² *MA ReNaV*, ofan 122, p. 164:

וזה סוד ונעלמה מעיני כל חי, שנעלמה התורה מן משה רבינו שהוא כלל כל חי, מעוף השמים, אף על פי שלמד משה תורה מעוף השמים שהוא מטטרון שנקרא עוף [...] וכן מספר של תורה כזה ת"ו וא"ו רי"ש ה"א, נסתר של תורה בגימטריא מטט"רון, שכן מן מטט"רון בעצמו נסתרה התורה, לכן הוא בנסתר של תורה. השמ"ים בגימטריא יפיפיה, שנעלמה משניהם התורה, מעוף שהוא מטט"רון, השמ"ים הוא יפיפיה. ולפי דרכי יהיה פירוש הפסוק כך, שהיתה נעלמה התורה ממש רבינו שהוא כלל כל חי כלל כל ס' רבוא פרצופים, עד שבא עוף השמים שהוא יפיפיה, (מעוף בגימטריא יפיפיה עם המלה), ולמד משה נסתרות של תורה.

reality, a reality that functions as his hypertext. Thus the semantic layer of the text (represented by names), together with its para-semantic level (represented by numbers, letter permutations, vocal and homoiophonic associations), becomes the only route to mystical cognition. It is on this topic that Nathan Shapira elaborates in chapter 122, discerning multiple equivalences between the numerical values of קרן (both equal 350) and חנוך בן ירד, who has 'double-the-spirit' (700, which is 2×350) as his main exegetical tool:

It is precisely from Seth [שת] that Moses' rays of glory derived, for the esoteric meaning of 'the skin of Moses' face sent forth rays' [Ex. 34:35] alludes to Enoch son of Yered, because by way of numerology, Enoch son of Yered [בן ירד = חנוך = 350] amounts to 'ray' [קרן = 350]. And during all those 120 days when Moses was in heaven, he could not learn from Metatron, who is Enoch son of Yered, as he was learning and forgetting, until the Holy One, blessed be He, sent him Yefeifyah the Prince, who has a double portion of [Metatron's] spirit [cf. 2Sam. 2:9]. [Only] then did he [Moses] understand the fear of the Lord and found the knowledge of God [see Pr. 2:5], because Yefeifyah the Prince really does have a double portion of spirit, for Enoch son of Yered equals [no more than] 'ray' [קרן = 350], while Yefeifyah the Prince has twice [the value of] 'ray' [קרן = $350 \times 2 = 700$].¹²³

These numerological associations render Metatron, Enoch son of Yered and Yefeifyah equal in terms of their ontic status, while also connecting them to the motif of Torah transmission. In this context, the basic human incapacity to master the secrets of the Torah can be overcome by means of knowledge of a proper

¹²³ Ibid.:

ש"ת דייקא שממנו היו קרני הוד של משה, כי סוד קרן עור פני משה הוא סוד חנוך ב"ן יר"ד, שכן חנוך ב"ן יר"ד בגימטריא קר"ן, וכל אותן ק"ד ימים שהיה משה ברקיע לא היה יכול ללמוד על ידי מטטרון שהוא חנוך בן ירד, כי למד ושכח, עד ששלח הקב"ה לו יפיפי"ה הש"ר שפי שנים ברוחו, אז הבין יראת ה' ודעת אלהים מצא, שכן יפיפי"ה השר באמת פי שנים ברוחו, כי חנוך ב"ן יר"ד עולה קר"ן, אבל יפיפי"ה הש"ר עולה ב' פעמים קר"ן.

angelic name to be adjured.¹²⁴ At the end of chapter 122, Shapira introduces a third designation of Yefeifyah:

And also: ‘One cherub on the one end’ [Ex. 25:19], which alludes to Metatron, but the word ‘the end’ [קצה] hints at Yefeifyah, who will come and teach me, because he, too, has a double portion of Enoch’s spirit.¹²⁵

The association of ‘end’ (קצה), which has the numerical value of 195, through Yefeifyah, who shares the same numerical value with the figure of Metatron, is an idea we have already encountered in the short passage quoted above from Nehemiah ben Shlomo’s commentary on the *Haftarah* and in the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*. It is clear from many other examples that in presenting his own arguments, Nathan Shapira reused numerological calculations that were prevalent in the early Ashkenazi mystical writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo, and that he did so mostly for the same exegetical and ideological reasons.¹²⁶

3.1. Metatron and Sinaitic revelation – messianic implications.

Other terms and numerological calculations, drawn from the Enoch-Metatron constellation of motifs, recur regularly in Shapira’s writings and reveal, time and again, his heavy reliance on the traditions of Nehemiah ben Shlomo and the *Sefer ha-Hesheq* circle. For example, the numerical value of 195, extracted from the name Yefeifyah, which is associated with Enoch son of Yered, and which we encountered above in Shapira’s work, already occurs in *Sefer ha-Navon* by Nehemiah ben Shlomo:

¹²⁴ Whose appropriateness depends in addition on one’s own cycle of incarnations. See also Vital, *Sha’ar ha-Gilgulim*, Haqdamah 33, pp. 92-93. The concept of ‘incarnation’ (*gilgul*) is elaborated at length in both *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* and *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim*, also with regard to prayer. This subject requires a separate study and given the limitations of the dissertation, cannot be examined here in detail.

¹²⁵ Ibid.:

כן גם כן כרוב אחד מקצה מזה שנרמז על מטטרון, קצה"ה נרמז על יפיפי"ה, יבא וילמוד אותי שגם לו יש פי שנים ברוחו של הנוך.

¹²⁶ See Liebes, ‘Mal’akhei Qol ha-Shofar’, pp. 194-196.

And these are the seven words that build up, from all its four corners, the Throne of Glory upon which [is] the Lord [יהוה] according to the initial letters [of the words]: His Precious One, Hidden and Uniquely Concealed' [יקרו הנעלם ונסתר]. 'Uniquely Concealed' – even he [Metatron the Yefeifyah] is concealed in the face of the Throne of Glory, [as] by way of numerology, [his name has the same value as] 'the concealed' [הנעלם = 195], as it is written: 'O thou that dwell in the concealed of the Most High, and abide in the shadow of the Almighty' (Ps 91:1).¹²⁷

A similar cluster of motifs appears in Nehemiah's *Commentary on the Haftarah*, further demonstrating the extent to which Nathan Shapira drew on this type of material in his commentary:

And because he revealed the end to the Messiah, and he also revealed it to the Creature [...], the numerical value of הקץ ['the end' = 195] amounts, by way of numerology, to נקמה [= 195], for Metatron, as well as the Creature and the Holy One, blessed be He, will wreak vengeance on the nations of the world. And by way of numerology, [this corresponds to] [הנעלם הגדול] 'the great hidden one' [הנעלם = 195] sits on it.¹²⁸

The motif of the hidden name, prevalent in both commentaries, bears clear messianic connotations, drawing on the link between the Sinaitic revelation, the redemptive acquisition of the names of Metatron (which can be identified with the secrets of Torah), and the revenge wreaked upon the nations of the world.

Further affinities between the medieval mystical material of non-Kalonymide Ashkeanzi origin and Nathan Shapira's commentary concern the

¹²⁷ *Sefer ha-Navon*, MS Oxford-Bodleian 1921 (MS Opp. 742), fol. 40a-b, published in Dan, *Iyunim be-Sifrut Hasidut Ashkenaz*, p. 126.

¹²⁸ MS Berlin 942/8, fol. 155a:

ובגימטרייא הקץ לפי שנגלה לו הקץ של משיח וגם הוא גילה לחיה [...] ובגימטרייא נקמ"ה כי מטטרון וגם החיה והקב"ה יעשו נקמ"ה באומות העולם. ובגימטרייא הנעלם הגדול יושב עליה.

themes of Moses' revelation at Sinai and Israel's Rosh ha-Shanah liturgy, wherein the double meaning of the word *qeren/qarnayim* (both ray/s and horn/s) generates multiple intersections within the web of ritual associations:

פצפציה [which is one of the 70 names of Metatron] has the same numerical value as 'year' [שנה = 355]. [This is] to inform you that he was flesh and blood, and he was Enoch, son of Yered. And the lifetime of Enoch was 365 years, and the solar year consists of 365 days. And there are 365 windows in heaven. Each day the sun goes through one window, and the one who governs them, by way of numerology, is 'he is the Name of Yah' [יה = שם = 355], because he is called by the name of the Holy One, Blessed Be He. By way of numerology, [he is] 'the horn' [הקרן = 355], because when Israel blow the ram's horn, he immediately brings out the merits of Abraham and Isaac, and then the Holy One, Blessed Be He, is filled with mercy over Israel, and rebukes Satan, who accuses against them.¹²⁹

By condensed numerological operations, which extend beyond and overcome the narrative plane of the biblical text, the commentary ties one of Metatron's names with the idea of man's apotheosis, portraying Metatron as the leading heavenly force within the human world. This is made possible by the underlying numerical structure of the narrative, which is the subject of the commentary. Metatron as the force sustaining the world features many times in the Ashkenazi mystical sources:

Metatron, by way of numerology, [is] the Almighty [שדי]
[both terms amounting to 314], because he said to the world:

¹²⁹ *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, § 20, p. 223:

פצפציה בגיל שנ"ה. להודיעך כי הוא היה בשר ודם והיה בן ירד ושני חיי חנוך שס"ה שנים, כי שנות החמה שס"ה ימים. ושס"ה חלונות הם ברקיע. ובכל יום יוצא החמה מחלון אחד והוא מושל עליהם. ובגיל ש"ם י"ה לפי שהוא מקרא על שם הקב"ה. ובגיל הקר"ן לפי שכשישראל תוקעין בקרן בשופר מיד הוא מוציא זכיותיהן של אברהם ויצחק. ואז הקב"ה מתמלא עליהם רחמים וגוער בשטן המקטרג עליהם.

‘enough’ [די].¹³⁰ And Metatron bears [סובל] the world by his great might.¹³¹

It is therefore Metatron, as an aspect of the divine, who maintains and nourishes all worldly existence, and possibly also suffers the burden of human sins (bearing in mind the double meaning of the Hebrew *sovel*), depicted as something resembling the Hellenistic figure of Atlas.¹³² Even if he does not quite reach the level of full divinity, he facilitates man’s ascent from the human to the supermundane sphere, a theme which appears within the context of the New Year rituals in both Nehemiah’s and Nathan Shapira’s texts. This near-transparent transfer of clusters of ideas surrounding Enoch-Metatron from the Ashkenazi sources to the conceptual framework of Nathan Shapira’s kabbalah must be accounted for by Shapira’s absorption of crucial exegetical structures, together with their accompanying ideological implications, from Nehemiah ben Shlomo’s mystical commentaries. The Ashkenazi Pietistic imagery, especially in the context of the angelic world, enables him to make exegetical moves of a more radical character.

In the previously quoted passage from chapter 122 of *Megaleh Amuqot*, multiplication and division by two (of names, numbers, natural phenomena, worlds, and the whole of creation) recurs as the most frequent means of interpretation. The issue concerns the ambivalent status of Metatron (who has both a human and an angelic nature), Yefeifyah (who parallels Metatron but has a ‘double portion’ of his spirit), and multiple other analogical cognomens corresponding to Metatron both numerically and spiritually. Metatron’s names underlie the structure of the text at both its semantic and its para-semantic levels, as well as the ontological structure of the universe, which is similarly subdivided

¹³⁰ See *Midrash Tanhuma* on Gen. 17:1ff (‘Lekh lekha’) § 19.

¹³¹ *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, § 24, p. 224:

מטטרון בגי' שד"י. לפי שאמר לעולם די. ומטטרון סובל את העולם בכוחו הגדול.

¹³² See Idel, *Ben*, p. 646. It is worth comparing this passage with another fragment from Nehemiah ben Shlomo’s *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron* (*Sefer ha-Hesheq*, § 50, fol. 6b): ‘Because he sustains the pillar, which is called righteous, and the entire world is suffering with him.’ [לפי שהוא סובל את העמוד אשר צדיק שמו וגם כל העולם כלו סובל עמו]. See *Ibid.*, p. 663 n. 20. See also Wolfson, *Through a Speculum That Shines*, p. 259 n. 304.

into various levels. As the universe is continuously being sustained by the super-angel Metatron, the existence of all the subdivisions of the universe is made possible by the multi-faceted nature of Metatron, who is to be perceived, not as a single unified entity, but rather as a ‘Metatron constellation’. In Shapira’s writings, it is this Metatron who by his double nature underlies the whole of creation, thus maintaining it predominantly on the linguistic level. Hence, it is Metatron who maintains and bears the world, just as his name underlies and corresponds to the Torah at its textual level. Multiple Metatronic associations give rise to the continuous task of mystical interpretation, considered as the highest level of knowledge obtainable by humans. Shapira’s most frequent interpretive move is to insert the Metatronic constellation quite freely into the biblical passage on which he is commenting, thereby evoking multiple connotations, which are suggested to him by the immediate context, and reshaping them into a code consisting of a stream of names, which in turn give rise to further interpretations.¹³³

In the pivotal part of chapter 122 provided below, Shapira again invokes the idea of *qeren* (and its dual form, *qarnayim*), while introducing another biblical verse (Hab. 3:4) to broaden the parallel structure of associations between the various names of Metatron:

The secret [meaning] of [the verse] ‘rays [קרנים] hath He at His side, and there is the hiding of His power’ [וקרנים מידו לו] וישם הביון עזו, Hab. 3:4] is highly esoteric: Moses, who was in heaven, was learning the Torah from Metatron, who is Enoch son of Yered, but he kept forgetting. Then it [the Torah] was given to him as a gift by means of ‘rays hath He at His side’, that is, by means of two rays, namely Yefeifiyah the Prince [= 700], whose numerical value amounts to twice the value of the word ‘ray’ [קרן = 350×2 = 700]. But what Moses learned from Enoch son of Yered is called ‘the hiding of his power’, that is, the Torah, which is

¹³³ See Idel, *Olam ha-Mal’akhim*, pp. 149-152.

called 'power' [עזון, see *bZev.* 116a], was hidden and concealed by Enoch son of Yered [חנוך בן ירד], as is alluded to by the [Hebrew] word [for] 'hiding' [חביון].¹³⁴

The doubling of both the signifiers and the signified is achieved here by the semiotic correlation of the word 'rays' [קרנים] and the phrase 'the hiding of his power' [חביון עזון]. The dual form of קרנים yields twice the numerological value of the singular קרן, namely $2 \times 350 = 700$, whereas חביון, by means of the three radical letters that form its stem [ח-ב-י], can be read as an acronymic reference to חנוך בן ירד [= 350], while at the same time alluding to yet another name associated with this figure, *Yefeifiyah ha-Sar*, which similarly amounts, by way of numerology, to twice the value of $[2 \times \text{קרן} = 2 \times 350 = 700]$. This completes the triangular structure of dual analogies infused by Shapira into the scriptural text. The double meaning of each of the key words points to the duality of its referent, which underlies the immediate, surface textual facet. In the context of the passage cited above, the word קרן stands, therefore, at the cross point of interpretive lines, which interweave all the figures associated with Enoch-Metatron, and fits the Ashkenazi motif of the name חביון עזון into the numerological structure of the scriptural text on which Shapira is commenting.¹³⁵

The ambivalent nature of Enoch-Metatron, whose name underlies every level of the text, raises the question of apotheosis – the capacity to overcome human nature and to extend its ontic status, which was the fate of all the apothetic figures appearing in Shapira's commentary: Enoch, Elijah, Moses and the Messiah:

¹³⁴ *MA ReNaV Ofanim*, ofan 122, pp. 164-165.

וזה סוד וקרנים מידו לו ושם חביון עזון, רזא עילאה איכא הכא, משה שהיה ברקיע למד תורה על ידי מטטרו"ן שהוא חנוך בן ירד, אבל למדה ושכחה, אבל ניתן לו במתנה על ידי קרנים מידו לו, ר"ל על ידי שני קרנים, דהיינו על ידי יפיפיה השר שהוא עולה ב' פעמים קרן, אבל מה שלמד על ידי חנוך בן ירד שם חביו"ן עזון, ר"ל התורה שנקראת עזון, היתה נסתרת ונחבאת על ידי "חנוך בן ירד, כגרמו במלת חביו"ן.

¹³⁵ The motif of קרן reappears several times in Shapira's writings in connection to its double meaning – horn and ray (especially in the context of the scattered light of the shattered vessels, a Lurianic image of the divine sparks contained in the Creation). This image for Shapira is paired with the exegesis of Hab. 3:4. See *MAT*, ed. Weiss, 'Shemot', p. 7; 'Yitro', p. 114; 'Pekudey', p. 214.

With regard to the two cherubs in heaven [see Ez. 10], he said of the first: he is your servant Metatron, who is a faithful servant; and of the second he said: [he is] your greatness [גדלך = 57], which [refers to] ‘the son’ [הבן = 57], for by way of numerology, Elijah [אליהו = 52] equals ‘son’ [בן = 52].¹³⁶

The apotheotic, messianic connotations of the passage emerge clearly from the association with both Elijah and ‘son’.¹³⁷ Similar connotations are discernable in the medieval Ashkenazi tradition deriving from Nehemiah ben Shlomo:

ראם, [= 239], by way of numerology, is ‘wild ox’ [ראם], i.e. the three Hebrew consonants constituting the word ראם equal 241], as it is written: ‘and his horns are the horns of the wild-ox, with them he shall gore the peoples’ [Dt. 33:17]. אר"ם is [an acronymic reference to the angels] Rafa’el, Uri’el [in Hebrew spelled אוריאל] and Mikha’el, who are the camps of the Shekhinah, and in the time-to-come, they will help the messiah. This is the whole reason why Scripture says: ‘rays hath He at His side, and there is the hiding of His power’ [Hab. 3:4]. ‘Rays’, by way of numerology, are [equal to] ‘Elijah the Prophet,¹³⁸ and [the Hebrew letters constituting] ‘there is the hiding’ [are contained within] the letters of ‘messiah the Son’, who will comprise all by this name. The [Hebrew] letters that make up this name of Uri’el [אוריאל] are [the same as those that appear in the phrase]: ‘but the face of Uri’el shall not be seen’ [יראו לו], as in the verse on which it is based]: ‘and

¹³⁶ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 122, p. 165:

על אלו הב' כרובים שברקיע, על הא' אמר עבדך הוא מטטרון שהוא עבד נאמן, על הב' אמר גדלך שהוא ה"ב, שכן אליהו בגימטריא ב"ן.

¹³⁷ On this issue see below, chapter 2, section 4.2, pp. 96-108.

¹³⁸ Both קרנים [rays] and אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב [Elijah the Prophet Fondly Remembered = 400]. See Idel, ‘Al ha-Perushim’, p. 238.

thou shall see my back parts, but my face shall not be seen'
[Ex. 33:23].¹³⁹

A similar association of the word קרן with 'wild ox' appears in a fragment from the *Commentary on Piyut 'El Na Le-Olam To'arats'*, most probably also by Nehemiah ben Shlomo:

[מטטרון], by way of numerology, is 'pedestals', and this is what has been said about it: he seats and nourishes the entire world, 'from the greatest to the smallest' [lit. קרני ראם, from the horns of the wild ox to the eggs of louses].¹⁴⁰

Various recensions of these Ashkenazi mystical texts contain the same ideas, built on the same numerological equivalences, which Nathan Shapira subsequently employs in his commentary.¹⁴¹ For both commentators, the juxtaposed verses from Habakuk and Deuteronomy bear a clear messianic and eschatological message, especially the name חביון, which parallels the explicitly messianic concept of *mashiah ben*, and the equally explicit messianic analogy between קרניים and *Eliyahu ha-Navi*, with the two sets of concepts linked together through their common numerological value of 400. Notably, both Nehemiah ben Shlomo and Nathan Shapira convey the ultimate messianic message through Metatronic exegesis. The names of Metatron function as the organizing principle in these commentaries, and they constitute the final purpose of the entire interpretive project. They conjoin the human and the transcendent planes by analogy to the dual ontic status of Enoch-Metatron as an earthly man who was elevated to the

¹³⁹ *Razi'el ha-Malakh*, p. 197:

חקב טנע בגי' רא"ם, לפי שנאמר 'וקרני רא"ם קרניו בהם עמים ינגח'. רא"ם: נוטריקון רפא"ל אוריא"ל מיכא"ל הן מחנות של שכינה והן עתידין לעזור למשיח. וזהו כל מה שני' 'וקרנים מידו לו ושם חביון עזו'. קרנים בגי' אליהו הנביא, שם חביון אותיות משיח בן הוא יהיה הכל בשם זה. אורי"אל ר"ל לפני אורי"אל ל"א ירא"ו 'וראית את אחורי לפני לא ירא"ו'.

Another version of the same text (*Commentary on the 42-Letter Name*) is contained in MS British Library 752, Add. 15299, fol. 108a-b. See also Idel, 'Al ha-Perushim', p. 234.

¹⁴⁰ Cited in Idel, 'Perusho shel Rabi Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi la-Piyut 'El Na Le-Olam To'arats', p. 18.

¹⁴¹ See also a magical reworking of this motif contained in MS Warsaw 9, fol. 175a.

heavenly sphere, thereby alluding to the prospect of individual human redemption, which lies within the potential capacity of the righteous man.

4. CONCLUSIONS.

The present chapter has explained the importance of the medieval Ashkenazi mystical writings of the circle of Nehemiah ben Shlomo of Erfurt for understanding the background of Nathan Shapira's kabbalistic commentaries. The aim of my investigation was to establish the links between these two supposedly distinct mystical traditions on both thematic and hermeneutical grounds.

This study has found that the small cluster of motifs related to Yefeifyah and Metatron as teachers of Torah, which originated in the ancient Jewish mystical circles, developed more fully in the commentaries of Nehemiah ben Shlomo and reverberated in some strands of the Jewish magical tradition of Ashkenazi origin. Furthermore, the same cluster of ideas was incorporated into Shapira's kabbalistic reservoir of motifs, preserving also the messianic connotation that was drawn from earlier sources. As such, the cluster of Yefeifyah-Metatron motifs exerted a decisive influence on Shapira's view of the function of the angel Metatron in Jewish redemptive history.

Moreover, the magically inclined sources identified in the present chapter, which appear as later elaborations of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's texts, could have contributed to shaping Shapira's perception of the biblical text. In Shapira's view a string of biblical angelic and divine names was to be unveiled by means of radical hermeneutical operations, with numerology at the fore.

The present chapter has shown that the idea that the Metatronic constellation of motifs, of which 'Yefeifyah-Metatron' is a part, functions in Shapira's work as both a cluster of images, from which spring most of the elaborations on the messianic and ritual dimensions of meaning in relation to the righteous individual, and as a technical hermeneutical device, leading to the 'final interpretant' in the continuous process of exegesis, even though, as an inherently multi-faceted tool, it can never close the exegetical discourse, but only triggers it incessantly.

Chapter 2: The ‘youth’ as a redemptive figure in *Megaleh Amuqot*

1. INTRODUCTION.

The appellative *na'ar* is one of the most common cognomens for the Enoch-Metatron figure in the Jewish rabbinical and mystical tradition.¹⁴² Through continuous exegetical developments its meaning has become blurred, though its main semantic field relates to the sense of ‘youth’, ‘lad’. Among Nathan Shapira’s most frequently occurring Metatronic names, *na'ar* plays a seminal role for the entire interpretive process. His exegetical strategy is to use the elementary term as a building block with which to construct a broader literary conceit. For him, Metatron is a compound, in which one atom, in this instance ‘youth’, is enclosed within a larger cluster of atoms that surround it like an envelope. To grasp the implications of this structure is to unfold all the layers of meanings contained within this cluster, wherein the figure of Metatron is interpreted in the kabbalistic tradition.

The motif of ‘youth’ as a special figure has its origins within the *heikhalot* material, but has been developed by medieval Ashkenazi Pietistic circles. In some of these circles the ‘youth’ evolved into a key-idea, having been combined with the concepts of messiah and the son of God. Various kabbalistic schools took over this fixed group of motives, which focused on the apothotic figures of Enoch and Elijah, to convey messianic meanings. The present chapter aims to present those elements of the ‘youth’ concept in Nathan Shapira’s kabbalistic writings that connect his thought to the Ashkenazi Pietistic background, unveiling a notable affinity between these two types of *imaginaire*. Moreover, I intend to identify and map out a web of these affinities pointing to Shapira’s Ashkenazi predecessors,

¹⁴² The bibliography on the topic is monumental. The following are the most frequently quoted studies, which have given rise to fruitful debate: *3Enoch*, pp. 82, 188-192; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 43-55; Abrams, ‘Boundaries of Divine Ontology’, p. 295; Segal, ‘The Ruler of This World’, p. 47 n.12; Orlov, ‘Celestial Choirmaster’, *passim*; Idel, *Ben*, pp. 130-148. On earlier occurrences of the term ‘youth’ in Hebrew religious literature see Avigad, ‘The Contribution of Hebrew Seals’; Fossum, *The Name of God*, pp. 281-282; Corbin, *Alone with Alone*, pp. 275-276, 280-281.

and suggesting the relevance of this tradition to the later Hasidic notion of the messiah as 'youth'.

In his kabbalah, Nathan Shapira concentrated on all the focal points of earlier mystical traditions that refer to the term *na'ar*. This accumulation of earlier traditions is by no means accidental, nor does it stem from Shapira's mindset alone. Rather, his web of associations ensues as an expansion of the earlier Ashkenazi tradition, which was cumulative in itself. The early Ashkenazi tradition saw in the super-angelic figure of Enoch-Metatron a divine son – a human being who had achieved the highest rank in the heavenly realm. Enoch-Metatron therefore became a model for the individual who, by virtue of his extraordinary righteousness, experienced the paternal relationship with God. In Nathan Shapira's writings, this alliance of man and God maintains the cosmic order, for God manifests Himself through individuals of special status. In Shapira's economy of thought this is the most significant role that was played by several 'youth' figures in the biblical narratives – young men such as Joseph, Moses and Joshua, who had been entrusted with the mission of leading Israel from exile to liberation. At the same time, the term 'youth' signifies for Shapira those who perform or partake in ritual acts on high, which would lead to the ultimate redemption from the state of exile, both spiritual and physical, with the figure of the High Priest at the fore. In this instance, a special connection unfolds between Metatron-the youth and the priestly liturgy performed by the High Priest on Yom Kippur, for the High Priest is infused with the attributes of *na'ar* as both heavenly servant and Metatron – two aspects which are subsequently merged into one, this giving rise to a ritually redemptive tradition of the Enoch-Metatron figure.

In both treatises of *Megaleh Amuqot* the designation *na'ar* appears more than two hundred times, associated with a wide range of distinct concepts, and it is statistically one of the most frequent designation of Enoch-Metatron in any context. All possible traditional associations serve Shapira as building blocks for constructing further tiers of interpretation. This is a specifically kabbalistic form of *derush* (in the vein of e.g. Menahem Azariah da Fano), starting from the basic meaning, which is latent in the biblical text, through midrashic and Talmudic dicta associated with it, to the *heikhalot* reservoir, biblical commentaries (including

Maimonides), up to the Zohar and Lurianic kabbalah. For this reason, the term *na'ar* is attached to such diverse ideas as:

- Enoch who was transformed into an angel, based on the biblical phrase: *hanokh la-na'ar* (Prov. 22:6)

- a primordial being, serving as a prototype and ruler of creation, grounded in a Talmudic discussion concerning 'the prince of the world' (*sar ha-olam*)

- a servant of the highest status in the heavenly realm. In this sense *na'ar* becomes a technical term, designating the most important official in God's retinue, whose function may be attributed to a variety of other select figures. This in turn leads to an exegetical grafting of biblical phraseology onto the kabbalistic map of the spiritual world. Thus, following the terminology of the Zohar and its Lurianic elaboration, Metatron is said to govern the third of the four worlds – the world of cosmic Formation (*olam ha-yetsirah*), and the whole hierarchy of the sefirotic tree is linked to the *na'ar*, an appellation attributed to various biblical figures corresponding to particular *sefirot*;

- a ritual performer who conducts the liturgy on earth as well as in heaven, connecting the two levels to each other; High Priest with his own altar, who is responsible for the atonement of sins

- deliverer of redemption, by analogy to various biblical figures who led the people from exile to The Land of Israel; manifestation of the divine ('*little Yah*') who appeared as a rescuer at the Red Sea; a redemptive force leading to ultimate redemption at the end of days, often coupled with the prophet Elijah and other messianic figures.

The present chapter explores Shapira's use of the term 'youth' in parts of *Megaleh Amuqot*, presenting as its most plausible context the Ashkenazi Pietistic traditions of the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*.

2. NA'AR IN THE EARLY JEWISH SOURCES.

2.1. Beloved and pure servant – the biblical usage of the term.

The biblical text employs the term *na'ar* in reference to both tender age and high status. Both usages are often interrelated, as in most cases *na'ar* is a youth who finds favor in the eyes of his elders, especially his father and God. This is the case with the relationship between Abraham and Ishmael (Gen. 21:12: 'And God said unto Abraham: 'Let it not be grievous in thy sight because of the lad'; or Gen. 21:17: 'And God heard the voice of the youth'), Israel and Joseph (Gen. 37:2: 'Joseph being seventeen years old was feeding the flock with his brethren, being still a youth even with the sons of Bilhah, and with the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives'), Israel and Jehuda (Gen. 44:30: 'therefore when I come to thy servant my father, and the lad is not with us; seeing that his soul is bound up with the lad's soul'), or Moses and God (Ex. 2:6: 'and behold a youth that wept'). Consequently, it appears that the term *na'ar* does not define only a person's age, especially since that age is never specified in the biblical text;¹⁴³ but also, and perhaps primarily, his exceptional status in relation to his superiors, most frequently his father. Thus the primary meaning of the term evokes the archetype of the son-father relationship and paternal love.

When the term refers to age, it echoes two seminal biblical passages, Prov. 22:6 ('Train up a child [*na'ar*] in the way he should go, and even when he is old, he will not depart from it') and Ps. 37:25 ('I have been young [*na'ar*] and now am old'). Both passages emphasise the paradox of human existence – a continuity of life in the face of unavoidable change through time, and ultimately death. These two meanings – of continuity and break – were similarly employed by some midrashic commentators to convey an eschatological message, where the term 'youth' comes to signify the qualitative changes that humanity will undergo in the messianic era.¹⁴⁴ Here, the notion of 'youth' as an especially favoured figure is endowed with the quality of purity as its most significant feature.

¹⁴³ The Tosafists attempt to define 'youth' as one who is able to walk. See *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot* on Gen. 37:2, p. 6.

¹⁴⁴ See *Bereshit Rabbati*, p. 172, where the term *na'ar* is explained as 'shaken out of sin' (namely, ritually clean) in the world to come, connecting the term with eschatological notions. The same

In the same way, Nahmanides, in his *Commentary* on the Pentateuch, realized the polyvalence of meanings infused into the term *na'ar*, and highlighted its reference to the favored status of the figure.¹⁴⁵ On the other hand, the reference to educating the 'youth', in the verse from Proverbs opens the term to the interpretation that highlights man's capacity for changing his status in the world. This remains dependent on patronage and the paternalistic relationship, as the superior figure confers knowledge upon the lesser one, however, the motif serves as a model for subsequent interpretations, where the 'youth' himself often becomes teacher to those who follow him. In this sense, the term *na'ar* takes on the more technical meaning of someone occupying an official position.¹⁴⁶ Thus, the appellative turns into a name in which the valence of 'servant' becomes more distinct.¹⁴⁷

2.2. *Na'ar* as angelic being officiating on high in 3 *Enoch* and its parallels.

The so-called *heikhalot* literatures, which originated in various ancient Jewish circles but flourished in the Middle Ages in the redaction of Ashkenazi writers,¹⁴⁸ had a decisive influence on the adoption and development of the 'youth' *imaginaire*, particularly by mystically oriented authors.¹⁴⁹ The affinity of the term 'youth' with the concept of 'sonship', on the one hand, and the appearances of Metatron as a high-ranking heavenly functionary, on the other, have been discussed in detail by Moshe Idel, who pointed to various rabbinical and early mystical corpora wherein these ideas are developed.¹⁵⁰ For instance, various recensions of the so-called *Shi'ur Qomah* texts preserved an early tradition

idea reappears in the Rosh's *Commentary on Genesis* 42:1, this time clearly as an exegetical result of combining it with Ps. 37:25.

¹⁴⁵ Ramban, *Commentary on the Torah*, pp. 447-451.

¹⁴⁶ See *Ba'alei ha-Tosafot* on Exodus 2:6, where this explanation is based on the juxtaposition of *na'ar* and *eved* in the story of Moses-the youth and the enslaved Israel in Egypt.

¹⁴⁷ See 3*Enoch*, p. 112; Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 50; Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, p. 422.

¹⁴⁸ See notes 70-71 above.

¹⁴⁹ On the term 'youth' in *heikhalot* literature see especially Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 402-410, 424-427, 491-494; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*, pp. 128-129, 131-134.

¹⁵⁰ Idel, *Ben*, pp. 130-132. See also the relevant bibliography to this subject adduced there.

according to which the ‘youth’ is the angelic prince (*sar*), serving on high as a member of the angelic retinue. The term *na’ar* in this context clearly refers to the name of a distinct angelic being, and from time to time it is used also in reference to Metatron, although at this stage the two figures are not yet fully conflated.¹⁵¹

In other types of *heikhalot* texts, the name Metatron becomes the standard designation of the supreme angel, to whom other cognomens, including ‘youth’, are also attributed. Thus, *na’ar* functions as a nickname, which has been added to Metatron as the proper name of an angel. Such an interpretation was preserved in *3Enoch*, to which many commentators, either explicitly or not, have turned in providing the framework for their understanding of the ‘youth’ figure. The introductory part of the so-called ‘Enoch-Metatron’ section of the following text explicitly equates the term *na’ar* with one of the names of Metatron – the patriarch Enoch who was transformed into an angel:

R. Ishmael said: In that hour I asked Metatron, the angel, the Prince of the Presence: ‘What is thy name?’ He answered me: ‘I have seventy names, corresponding to the seventy tongues of the world, and all of them are based upon the name Metatron, angel of the Presence; but my King calls me ‘youth’.¹⁵²

The underlying idea of the passages quoted above is that upon his transformation into an angel, Enoch acquired seventy names deriving from the seventy names of God, and this created a close affinity between him and God, highlighted by the special name, ‘youth’, by which only the King, i.e. God, can call his chosen one. This formulation differs from the one that follows it in the next part of the book according to most manuscripts, where the more common, age-related reasoning for calling Metatron ‘youth’ is offered:

¹⁵¹ On *na’ar* and Metatron as two separate beings according to other examples from *heikhalot* material see Davila, ‘Melchizedek’, pp. 261-262.

¹⁵² *3Enoch* 3, p. 5:

באותה שעה שאלתי את מטטרון מלאך שר הפנים אמרתי לו מה שמך? אמר לי: שבעים שמות יש לי כנגד שבעים לשונות שבעולם וכולם על שמו של מטטרון מלאך הפנים אבל מלכי קרא אותי נער.

Cf. also the translation of the verse by Philip Alexander, *3Enoch*, 3:2, p. 257.

R. Ishmael said: I asked Metatron and said to him: Why art thou called by the name of thy Creator, by seventy names? Thou art greater than all the princes, higher than all the angels, beloved more than all the servants, honored above all the mighty ones in kingship, greatness and glory: why do they call thee 'Youth' in the high heavens?"

He answered and said to me: "Because I am Enoch, the son of Yered. [...] And because I am small and a youth among them in days, months and years, therefore they call me 'youth' [*na'ar*].¹⁵³

The last verse in the answer to R. Ishmael's question, although consistent with the story whereby Enoch was chosen from among the wicked people and transformed into an angel, seems to be a secondary addition,¹⁵⁴ while the main explanation for Metatron's special status, as pointed out by Idel, is the pleasure God takes in Metatron's service on high: 'I took more delight in this one than in all of you, so that he shall be prince and ruler over you in the heavenly heights.'¹⁵⁵ Thus *3 Enoch* preserves both interpretive possibilities, which were already inherent in the biblical use of the term *na'ar* as both 'boy' (beloved by his father) and 'servant' (entrusted with a special mission). Both meanings include the more technical sense of the term 'youth' as a figure chosen for a special office or an exceptional mission by dint of enjoying an intimate relation with the divine. This interpretation follows the suggestion of those scholars who claimed that the appellative *na'ar* does not always refer to Enoch-Metatron, but rather may be

¹⁵³ *3Enoch* 4, p. 8, 12:

אמר ר' ישמעאל, אמרתי לו למטטרון מפני מה אתה קורא בשם קוניך בע' שמות ואתה גדול מכל השרים וגבוה מכל המאלכים וחביב מכל המשרתים ונכבד מכל הצבאים ורם מכל האדירים במלוכה ובגדולה ובכבוד. ומפני מה קורין אותך בשמי מרומים נער? משיב ואמר לי: מפני מה שאף הוא חנוך בן ירד [...] ומתוך שאני קטן ונער בניהם בימים ובחדשים ובשנים לפיכך היו קורין אותי נער.

¹⁵⁴ It is consistent with the tradition of calling Enoch 'the youth' preserved in *2Enoch*. See Orlov, 'Celestial Choirmaster', pp. 3-29 and Segal, 'The Ruler of the World', p. 47.

¹⁵⁵ See Idel, *Ben*, p. 135. Cf. Alexander, *3Enoch*, 4.2, p. 258 n. 1; Schäfer, *Synopse*, § 6.

associated with more than one figure.¹⁵⁶ As will be shown below, both meanings of the term have been exploited by later mystics and kabbalists, including Nathan Neta Shapira, for whom the mysterious mission of Metatron as 'youth' was bestowed upon various other righteous figures.

2.3. Metatron as primordial 'youth' and High Priest: variants of the *Shi'ur Qomah* tradition.

An important part of the 'Metatron-youth' imagery has been preserved with a mid-16th century Italian manuscript containing variegated *heikhalot* materials, which had been handed down together with various kabbalistic treatises and Ashkenazi mystical texts.¹⁵⁷ One segment of the manuscript, which appears twice between pages 168a and 171b, has already attracted scholarly attention and was printed in the *Synopse* edition of the *heikhalot* literature.¹⁵⁸ Its significance to the current discussion lies in the connection of Metatron as 'youth' to the role he plays in the upper world:

And His [God's] hand rests on the youth, the mighty and blessed. The king says: 'He has many attendants standing before the youth.' The youth prostrates himself before the One, whose name is אה"י, and enters. [They] say after him the blessing, 'blessed be the great and mighty and awesome God [lit. the angel]; when he walks they follow Him.' [...] And the youth is the one who is written with seven letters, seven sounds, and seventy names, and [who is] placed in the innermost chambers [i.e. the Holy of Holies]. The Holy One, Blessed be He, did not give permission to use him to anyone

¹⁵⁶ See *3Enoch*, p. 68-69; Davila, 'Melchizedek', p. 262; Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 313; Idel, *Ben*, pp. 124-132.

¹⁵⁷ See Steinschneider, *Die Hebraischen Handschriften*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁸ Schäfer, *Synopse*, § 468-488, pp. 188-191. See also Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, Appendix 3, pp. 491-494, where the author summarizes most of this 'narrative' in the parallel version of MS JTS 8128.

[...] but Moses. His stature fills the entire world, and He calls him 'youth'.¹⁵⁹

In comparison to *3Enoch*, elements of more original valence appear in the two passages quoted above, which are replete with characteristic lists of attributes of special angels, such as the Prince of the Countenance who governs the lower angelic orders. The 'youth' functions here as a substantial component of the created order, if not as yet its comprising substance. He fills the whole of the created world and his name, which is equal to his essence, was written with 'the same letter by which heaven and earth were created'.¹⁶⁰ The intimate relation between him and the divine is highlighted by the image of God putting His hand on (or embracing) 'his' youth.¹⁶¹ Moreover, the text unfolds partially as an interpretation of two biblical images, that of God revealing the name of the great angel in Ex. 23:21 ('My name is in him') and the vision of the enthroned divine entity in Ez. 1:27. By linking these two passages, the 'youth' is doubly identified with God, both morphologically, as resembling the divine body 'from waist down', and morphominally, as sharing his name with the divine. The attribution of the name 'youth' to Metatron seems to be a secondary development, as Metatron is only one of the 'youth's seventy names, associated with the function of Prince of Torah, and appearing alongside such names as Yofi'el and Sasnaga'el,

¹⁵⁹ MS Munich 22, fols. 170b-171a:

וידו מונחת על נער עוזו וברוך. ואומר המלך רבים לו ועומדים לפני הנער. והנער משתחוה לפני אהי"ה שמו ונכנס. אומרים אחריו ברוך האל הגדול הגיבור והנורא כשהוא מהלך מהלכין אחריו. [...] והנער זה הוא שנכתב בשבעה אותות בשבעה קולות בשבעים שמות ונתון בחדר חדרים [...] ולא נתון הקב"ה רשות להשמש בו [...] אלא למשה לבדו. קומתו מלא העולם וקורא אותו נער.

Part of this manuscript, including the passages quoted above, was printed in Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*, Appendix 7, pp. 202-203. See close parallels to this text in MS JTS 8128, *ibid.*, Appendix 8, pp. 208-210 and MS Oxford-Bodleian 1531, printed in Schäfer, *Synopse*, p. 191, cf. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 102; Schäfer, *Synopse*, p. ix n. 12.

¹⁶⁰ This image seems to resemble the Talmudic imagery of *bYevamot* 16b, where Metatron is called 'the Prince of the World', with the implication that he was created by God at the beginning of the creative process. See Stroumsa, *Savoir et Salut*, p. 57; Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 131; Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, p. 46.

¹⁶¹ On the image of God embracing his 'son' see Boyarin, *Border Lines*, pp. 129-130; Idel, *Ben*, p. 134.

the Prince of Hidden Wisdom. *Na'ar* is the one who ritually pronounces the divine name at the proper time of prayer, acting thereby as the High Priest.¹⁶² What stands out is the ritual-liturgical background of this part of the manuscript, where the main focus of the narrative is on the 'youth' being praised in heaven just as Israel praise God, for he is the one who receives the divine blessing and distributes it to the people.

A close parallel to this ritualistic vision of the heavenly world is found in the midrashic passage describing the so-called 'tabernacle of the youth':

Rabbi Simon said: when the Holy One, Blessed be He, ordered Israel to build up the tabernacle, he alluded to the ministering angels so that they also erect a tabernacle. And at the time when the tabernacle was build down on earth, it was also build on high, and this is the tabernacle of the youth [*mishkan ha-na'ar*], whose name is Metatron, on which he sacrifices the souls of the righteous in order to atone for Israel in the days of their exile. That is why it is written 'this tabernacle', for the other tabernacle has been erected with him.¹⁶³

The text above develops the idea of the 'youth' as High Priest who offers sacrifices on high. It takes on more redemptive overtones, for the ultimate task of the heavenly priesthood is to provide atonement for Israel's sin, which resulted in exile. One of the significant developments in this variant of the theme is the connection between the sacrifice of the righteous and the figure of the High Priest. This link echoes the Temple ritual of the Day of Atonement,¹⁶⁴ which has been

¹⁶² On ritual notions in early Enochic literatures see Alexander, 'From Son of Adam to a Second God', pp. 102-104; Orlov, 'Celestial Choirmaster', pp. 3-29; Schneider, *Mar'eh Kohen*, pp. 118-144.

¹⁶³ *Num. Rabba* 12:12:

א"ר סימון בשעה שאמר הקב"ה לישראל להקים את המשכן רמז למלאכי השרת שיעשו אף הם משכן ובעת שהוקם למטן הוקם למעלן והוא משכן הנער ששמו מטטרון שבו מקריב נפשותיהם של צדיקים לכפר על ישראל בימי גלותם ולכך כתיב את המשכן שמשכן אחר הוקם עמו.

¹⁶⁴ See Lev. 16:16-22.

infused with an eschatological redemptive quality. The ritualistic connotations of the youth-Metatron are associated with the Yom Kippur liturgy, an association that reappears frequently in later texts of Ashkenazi mystical provenance.¹⁶⁵ Moreover, there is a strong interdependence between the image of the righteous and the 'youth' who ministers over them as High Priest, a role that in itself implies the notion of perfect righteousness.¹⁶⁶ This connection may also result from a stronger reading of the midrashic text wherein the name Metatron is taken to be ascribed not to the 'youth' himself, but to the whole phrase 'the tabernacle of youth'. This type of reading makes possible the association of Metatron in his role of supreme angel and God's beloved 'youth' with the process of atonement and redemption. Notwithstanding this, both the *heikhalot* and the midrashic texts seem to preserve a tradition on the ritual function of the 'youth' figure as being linked to the redemptive process by way of mediating between the human and the divine planes.

3. 'YOUTH' IN NATHAN SHAPIRA'S WRITINGS AND ITS MEDIEVAL ASHKENAZI PARALLELS.

3.1. *Mishkan ha-na'ar*.

The association of the heavenly priesthood with Israel's redemption underlies many of the medieval Pietistic writings associated with Nehemiah ben Shlomo of Erfurt's circle, whose numerous writings appear to have had a bearing on later messianic-redemptive traditions in the Ashkenazi world, including Nathan Shapira's. One of the most widespread treatises stemming from Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*, is an elaboration on the *heikhalot* mythologoumenon of the Prince of the Countenance, a heavenly being who has seventy (or, in some instances, seventy-two) names, thus sharing this extraordinary feature with God Himself. Although this family of medieval Ashkenazi texts seldom employs the exact phrase *mishkan ha-na'ar*, they build

¹⁶⁵ On this issue see chapter 3 below, section 2, pp. 112-120.

¹⁶⁶ See Idel's comparison (Idel, *Ben*, p. 171 n. 89) of the notion of *mishkan na'ar* from the *heikhalot* literature with the similar rabbinic idea, which appears in *bBerakhot* 7a.

upon the priestly-redemptive imagery of its midrashic source in *Num. Rabba* 12:12, reusing the idea of the sacrifice of the righteous in the heavenly retinue:

יהו"ה מל"ך [יהו"ה מל"ך] has the numerical value of 'YHVH king' [יהו"ה מל"ך] = 116], because he orders the angels to praise the king of the Glory [...] And he is also called by the name of his Master, for it was written: 'provoke him not, for my name is in him' [Ex. 23:21].¹⁶⁷ [...] And its numerical value equals 'the burnt offering' [העול"ה = 116], for he was flesh and blood, and then he was made an angel on high. And there is another reason [why] he is [equal to] העול"ה, [this is] because he is the High Priest who sacrifices the souls of the righteous on the altar on high.¹⁶⁸

This passage is an explanation of one of Metatron's names,¹⁶⁹ *Itmon*, which has the same numerological value as the Hebrew for 'the burnt offering'. The paragraph quoted above is structured as a tripartite unit, although only two of the parts relate to Metatron's heavenly priesthood. The first part elaborates on the notion of him sharing the name of God while quoting the famous Talmudic dictum that warns against exchanging the angel for God in envisioning the world on high. The second part invokes the Enochic tradition whereby it was Enoch, a human being, who achieved supreme status in the heavenly world. The idea of men who are elevated to serve as High Priests in the upper world is clearly a continuation of the line of thought which can be traced back to the *heikhalot* literature, even if the exact phrase *mishkan ha-na'ar* does not appear explicitly in this account. On the other hand, there is a strong emphasis on the High Priest's earthly origin and his connection to the process of atonement by means of the

¹⁶⁷See *bSanhedrin* 38b, which reads Ex. 23:21 as 'do not confuse me with him'. On various interpretations of this idea see Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gates*, pp. 49-77.

¹⁶⁸ *Sefer Ha-Hesheq*, § 13:

איטמון בג' יהו"ה מל"ך. כי הוא מצוה למלאכים לשבח למלך הכבוד. [...] וגם הוא נקרא ע"ש רבו כמ"ש אל תמר בו כי שמי בקרבו. [...] ובג' העול"ה לפי שהיה בשר ודם ונעשה אח"כ מלאך למעלה. ועוד ענין אחר הוא העולה, לפי שהוא הכהן גדול המקריב נפשות הצדיקים על גבי במזבח למעלה.

¹⁶⁹ Or in variant manuscript versions, the name of the Prince of the Countenance.

offering he makes of the righteous. A similar idea reappears further in the same text:

מרג"ש by way of numerology equals to 'prominent prince' [ש"ר דגו"ל = 543], because he goes out to war with Israel holding their banner. As it was written: 'I am sending my Angel before you' etc. [Ex. 23:20]. By way of numerology he is 'the prince of joy' [שר גי"ל = 543], for he is the prince of Israel and he always helps them to gain the upper hand [lit. to merit]. This is why it was written: 'Jacob will rejoice, and Israel will be happy' [Ps. 14:7]. By way of numerology he is equal to 'great prince' [שר גדו"ל = 543], for there is no angel in heaven who is as great as he is, and he is greater than all of them. By way of numerology [he equals] 'in Israel' [בישראל"ל = 543], for all that he is concerned with is to gain favor for Israel. By way of numerology [he equals] 'with an upward swing' [בתנופ"ה = 543], because the Prince of the Countenance is the High Priest in heaven and he sacrifices the souls of the righteous, and the prayers of Israel – he swings them up and ties the crown for the Holy One, Blessed be He.¹⁷⁰

¹⁷⁰ *Sefer Ha-Hesheq*, § 43:

מרג"ש בג' ש"ר גדו"ל, כי הוא הולך עם ישראל במלחמה עם הדגל, כמ"ש הנה אנכי שולח מלאך לפניך. ובג' שר גי"ל, לפי שהוא שר של ישראל ועוזר להם בכל פעם לזכותם. ולכן כתיב יגיל יעקב ישמח ישראל. ובג' שר גדו"ל כי אין מלאך ברקיע ששר גדול הוא כמוהו. והוא גדול מכלם. ובג' בישראל"ל לפי שכל ענייניו להפך בזכותן של ישראל. ובג' בתנופ"ה לפי ששר הפנים הוא כהן גדול ברקיע ומקריב נפשות של צדיקים. ותפלתם של ישראל הוא מניף אותם וקושר כתר להקב"ה.

See the version contained in one of the earliest manuscripts of this treatise, MS Roma Angelica 46, fol. 37a:

מרג"ש equals 'with the upward swing' [התנופ"ה = 543], because the Prince of the Countenance is the High Priest [כהן גדול] in the heaven who sacrifices souls of the righteous and the prayers of Israel – he swings them up to the crown [which rests] on the head of the Holy One, Blessed be He.

Numerological operations allow the author to establish a connection between the people of Israel and the supreme angel, who not only conducts them in regular ritual, but who also provides and oversees the burnt offerings in the name of his people. When viewed through the Ashkenazi lenses, the figure of the angelic High Priest gains the features of a leader who supports and conducts the nation on the path to redemption, a semi-divine mediator who actively intervenes in favor of the people.¹⁷¹ At this point, there is no longer any differentiation between the two Enoch-Metatron traditions which Scholem and Idel have pointed out, and which may have originated independently of one another: one which places Metatron-the youth already at the time of the creation, and the other, in which the patriarch Enoch gains angelic stature at the time of his apotheosis.¹⁷² The conflation of both these traditions is already evident in the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*, where the angelic role of Israel's supporter, as well as that of heavenly functionary and a High Priest, is bestowed upon a figure of human origin.

In a similar vein, a description of the priestly offering being made by the God-like figure appears in a treatise found in the same manuscript (MS Munich 22) that contains the *Shi'ur Qomah* passage cited in the section 2.3 above. The text, which is a variant of the *Commentary on the 72-Letter Name*,¹⁷³ is an elaboration of the three-letter root combinations constituting the divine name, each designating an aspect of the divine:

כהן גדול [‘High Priest’ =
118], for he entered the Holy of Holies on the Day of
Atonement, and he killed a multitude, and offered the incense,
as is the custom of the priests.¹⁷⁴

מרג"ש בגימ' התנופה לפי ששר הפני' הוא כהן גדול ברקיע. הוא מקריב נפשות הצדיקי' ותפילתם של ישר', הוא מניף אותם לכתר בראשו של הק'.

¹⁷¹ See Idel, *Ben*, p. 18; Schneider, *Ha-Masorot ha-Genuzot*, p. 266.

¹⁷² See Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 49; Idel, *Ben*, pp. 130-133.

¹⁷³ This treatise most probably originated in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, but is preserved in various later recensions, see Idel, 'On Angels', pp. 223, 239 n. 83.

¹⁷⁴ MS Munich 22, fol. 230a:

הע"ם גי' כהן גדול לפי שהוא היה לפני לפני בים כיפורים הוא הרג המון שהקריב הקטרת כמנהג כוהנים.

Although this passage does not mention Metatron by name, its style is clearly modeled on the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*, as the whole treatise employs similar numerological calculations, on which the interpretation is largely based. Each letter-triplet making up the seventy-two letter divine name, which is the subject of Nehemiah's commentary, designates an aspect of the divine presented in terms of an angelic power. The passage quoted above, which conjures up the image of the High Priest on the Day of Atonement presiding over the angelic rite, does not explicitly refer to Metatron-the 'youth', but the function of the High Priest on that day is associated with him, and the title 'High Priest' derives from the three-letter divine name. The implicit assumption of the text is that this role, which is in fact an aspect of the divine, is delegated to a particular angel. Further on in the same text the idea of angelic High priesthood reappears with reference to another angel, Michael:

מ"ל"ה by way of numerology equals 'priest' [כה"ן = 75], because Michael is the High Priest who offers sacrifices. And [it is good to] invoke him every day. By way of numerology מ"ל"ה [equals] 'night' [לילה = 75], and it is good to invoke him at night while walking alone.¹⁷⁵

The priestly role is ascribed in this passage to the angel Michael, who in a much earlier tradition functioned as both the High Priest in the heavenly temple and as the elevated 'youth'. As Gershom Scholem convincingly argued,¹⁷⁶ traditions centered around the figure of Michael were incorporated quite early into the Enoch-Metatron *mythologoumena*, and thereafter this began to function as a fixed cluster of interrelated images of the 'youth', Michael, Enoch and Metatron, wherein each of them is associated with the priestly function.

This part of the commentary has a direct, but shorter parallel in MS Bar Ilan 1040 (previously MS Mussayef 69), fol. 55a, which consists of a magical rendering of the same treatise, including adjurations and practical usages of the angelic and divine names.

¹⁷⁵ MS München 22, fol. 230a:

מ"ל"ה גימט' כה"ן לפי שמיכאל כהן גדול מעלה קרבנות. ו[...]. מזכירו בכל יום. ובג' לילה וטוב להזכירו בלילה ההולך יחיד.

¹⁷⁶ Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, pp. 42-50.

Another fragment of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron* elaborates further Metatron's High priesthood in connection with the idea of the 'youth':

אססיה by way of numerology equals 'toddler' [עול"ל = 136], because he was flesh and blood, and he was the youth to his father and mother, as a toddler. אססיה by way of numerology equals 'double' [כפול"ל = 136], because he is above the Throne of Glory and he doubles over the curtain upon the Throne.¹⁷⁷

The passages quoted above from the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron* reflect a conflation of two aspects of the 'youth' – the ritualistic and the apothotic. The first emerges from the numerological operation based on the meaning of the root כפל ('to double').¹⁷⁸ The same numerological calculation functions, moreover, as a nexus of the human origin and the divine stature of the super-angelic figure, whose double nature is hinted at by the root 'כפל' ('double'), and echoes the story of Enoch ben Yered's ascension on high and his transformation into Metatron, the 'youth'-angel. The passages manipulate several motifs that compliment each other while preserving all of them distinctly, without imposing a super-narrative that would give preference to any one of them. The figure of the Prince of the Countenance, whose names are the main subject of the

¹⁷⁷ MS Roma Angelica 46, fol. 36b:

אססיה בגי' עול"ל לפי שהוא היה בשר ודם והיה נער לאביו ולאמו כעולל. אססיה בגי' כפול"ל לפי שהוא מעל כסא הכבוד וכפול להיריעה על הכסא.

See the version of *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, § 41, printed in *Sodei Razaya*, pp. 227-228:

אססיה [...] by way of numerology equals עול"ל, because at the beginning he was flesh and blood, and he was [as] a youth to his father and his mother, like a toddler. By way of numerology [he also equals] כפול, because he is the Prince of the Countenance on high, doubled at the throne of Glory. And he also doubled the veil over the throne.

בגי' עול"ל לפי שהיה בתחילה בשר ודם והיה נער לאביו ולאמו כמו עולל. ובגי' כפול"ל לפי שהוא שר הפנים למעלה כפול אצל כסא הכבוד וגם כפול להיריעה על הכסא.

¹⁷⁸ See Ex. 26:9: 'And you shall double over the sixth curtain in the forefront of the tent.'

[כפלת את היריעה הששית אל-מול פני האהל.]

Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron, is associated with the priestly ritual in heaven, with the concept of the supreme angel as a being of human origin, and with the apotheotic movement from the earthly to the heavenly level of reality. Moreover, the term *na'ar* appears in the text as an explicit indication of the 'father-son' relation between God and this redemptive figure. In fact, it appears as an exact counterpart of the term 'son', as if it was to be read as its synonym ('he was a youth to his father and mother'). Thus, in the majority of this text's variants, the association between the priestly ritual, the figure of the 'youth' as son, and Metatron as a man who has been transformed into an angel is firmly established as a cluster of contiguous and equally relevant traditions, which were subsequently to circulate in multifarious configurations.

The 'youth' motif features also in other Ashkenazi commentaries of late 13th century, which on the one hand employ imagery similar to Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings, but on the other hand, provide it with new meanings paralleling the earliest kabbalistic terminology. An anonymous treatise, written probably by Moshe Azriel ben Eleazar ha-Darshan – the Ashkenazi writer who was well acquainted with Nehemiah's texts,¹⁷⁹ includes a passage on Metatron status within the godhead:

Metatron is called *חַיְגֵרוֹן* which by way of numerology [is] 'help' [*עֲזָרָה*, both amount to 277], because he cannot do anything without the help of the Holy One, Blessed be He, contrary to those who say that the Prince of the Countenance is the Shekhinah and the Shekhinah is called the Prince of the Countenance. But this is not the case, for the Prince of the Countenance is, by the power of the Shekhinah, appointed as the ruler and judge of the whole world, but heaven forefend to say about the Prince of the Countenance that he is the Shekhinah, or that the Shekhinah is the Prince of the Countenance. However, you can also find those who call the Shekhinah Metatron, which is not an error, and this is another secret that was explained in the name of Rabbeinu

¹⁷⁹ Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabalah*, p. 204; Idel, 'On Angels', in various loc.

Tam, of blessed memory, which he found in those books.
All of them [i.e. the secrets] were explained in the book of
Nehemiah ben [Shlomo], of blessed memory.¹⁸⁰

The above passage brings out a possible identification of Metatron with the last sefirah, which in turn leads to recognizing this entity as an inherent part of the divine. On the one hand, the author rejects such a possibility, on the other hand – he acknowledges Nehemiah ben Shlomo's interpretation, although diminishing its radical character. In the following passages, the commentator elaborates on Metatron's place regarding the tenth sefirah against the background of the 'youth' ritual on high:

There are nine sefirot, and the tenth sefirah is called *yud*, and it influences the youth, as we say: 'The hand of the Holy One rests upon the head of his servant, whose name is Metatron, and the youth comes and prostrates before the Holy One.'¹⁸¹ Here is the evidence and the response to those who say that the youth is [to be identified with] the Shekhinah. [...] 'When the youth enters under the throne of the Glory, the Holy One supports him by means of the light of his face.'¹⁸² This is another proof that he is not [to be identified with] the Shekhinah, as he needs to be supported, whereas the Shekhinah does not need to be supported, but only [needs] the influx [from above].¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabalah*, p. 201:

מטטרון נקרא חייגרין גימ' עז"ר לפי שאינו יכול לעשות מאומה אם לא שיהא הקב"ה בעזרו, לאפוקי מדאומר ששר הפנים הוא השכינה והשכינה נקרא שר הפנים. ואינו כן אלא שר הפנים מכח השכינה הוא ממונה שליט ושופט על כל העולם. אבל חלילה לומר על שר הפנים שהוא שכינה או בשכינה שר הפנים. אבל אם תמצא שקורא לשכינה מטטרון שה אינו טעות וזהו סוד אחר שמפורש בשם ת"ם זצ"ל שמצא בסיפרי כך. כולם מפורשים בספר נחמיה בה"ר זצ"ל.

¹⁸¹ *Merkavah Shelemah*, fol. 39b. Cf. *Shi'ur Qomah* passages quoted in the section 2.3 above.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ This text features in several manuscripts: MS Roma Angelica 46, fol. 11b, printed in Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabalah*, p. 202; MS Berlin 942, fol. 130a. See also Abrams, 'Ha-Shekhinah ha-Mitpalelet', pp. 516-517:

According to the passage above, Metatron as the ‘youth’ serve to explicate this angel’s dependent status, and his lower position with regard to the divine Presence. Thus, in this text this is the Shekhinah, identified with the last sefirah, which is superior to the ‘youth’ and on which the ‘youth’ is somehow dependent. The text may have served as a polemic against viewing Metatron as part of the divine, but also against any ritual action directed toward the angel, instead of God. Moreover, this text recognizes the world of angels and the sefirotic system as two ontologically separate orders. In a similar vein, these passages reappear in Menahem Recanati’s *Commentary on the Ten Sefirot*,¹⁸⁴ where the ‘youth’ as the

הרי כאן ט' ספירות ובספירה העשירית היא היוד והיא משפעת לנער כמו שאומ' ידו של הק' מונחת על ראש משרתו ששמו מטטרון ובנער בא ומשתחוה להק'. מכאן יש ראייה ותשובה לאותם שאומרים שהנער היא השכינה. [...] וכשנכנס הנער תחת כסא הכבוד הק' מחזקו באור פנים. גם כאן יש ראייה שאינו השכינה הואיל וצריך לחזקה והשכינה אינה צריכה לשום חזקה אלא להשפיע.

¹⁸⁴ Menahem Recanati’s *Commentary on the Ten Sefirot* in MS Kiriath Ono (Private) 1/24, fols. 794b-795a:

We call this [i.e. the tenth] measure ‘the kingdom’ and it is the ‘sapphire’. It influences the youth, who is Metatron, and the youth opens his prayer with saying ‘Adonai’. The hand of the Holy One, blessed be He, rests on the head of his servant Metatron, and the youth comes and prostrates before the Holy One, Blessed be He. This is the reason why they call him the Prince of the Countenance. When the youth comes under the Glory, the Holy One, Blessed be He, lightens him up in the light of his face, and he [the youth] serves in the Holy of Holies, for he is the High Priest. And he was written between the letters without the letter *yud*, as Metatron. [...] Then, one of the beasts ascends to the Shekhinah, and the beast is the cherub. [...] And the beast descends on the tabernacle of the youth with the sound of light silence. This is the throne of the Glory, namely, the Glory is the Shekhinah who sits on the throne of His Glory. [...] And the youth brings fire of silence and puts it into the ears [of the beasts] so that they would not hear the voice of the Shekhinah.

ועל מדה זו אמ' הממלכה והיא הספיר ה' והיא משפעת לנער זה מטטרון והנער פ'ת אדני אמ' ידו של הקב"ה מונחת על ראש משרתו מטטרון והנער בא ומשתחוה להקב"ה זה שאמ' עליו שר הפנים וכשהנער בא תחת הכבוד הקב"ה מחזיזו באור פניו ומשומש לפניו ופנים ל' כי הוא כהן גדול ונכתב בן אותיות בלא יו"ד מטטרון (...) וחיה אחת עולה על השכינה והחיה הוא כרוב (...) ויורדת החיה על משכן הנער בקול דממה דקה זו כסא הכבוד כלומר הכבוד זו בשכינה יושב בכסא כבודו (...) והנער מביא אש חרישית ונותן באוזניהן שלא ישמעו קול השכינה.

This manuscript contains also *The Commentary on the Twenty-Two Letters of Metatron*, authored most probably by Nehemiah ben Shlomo of Erfurt. See Weinstock, ‘Alfa Beta shel Metatron u-Ferushav’, pp. 51-76; Idel, ‘Ha-Perush ha-Anonimi le-Alfa Beta de-Metatron’, pp. 255-264.

High Priest officiates on high, but is subordinate to the Shekhinah. The tabernacle (*mishkan na'ar*) becomes the place of union between Metatron-the 'youth' and the Shekhinah, signifying the unification of lower and upper divine aspects, upon which the angel's name changes to its full spelling (i.e. Mitatron, with the letter *yud* which denotes the tenth sefirah).¹⁸⁵ Thus, Metatron-the 'youth' before the descent of the Shekhinah reflects the outer cover of the divine, and signifies the separation of various divine aspects. In this sense, the image of *na'ar* features in Nathan Shapira's writings, in which the angel is one of the Shekhinah's garments.¹⁸⁶ On the other hand, this is the 'youth's' redemptive power by which diverse levels of creation will be unified, which renders Metatron- the 'youth' the active power in the world.

3.2. *Mishkan ha-na'ar in Megaleh Amuqot.*

While introducing the idea of the contraction of the divinity (*tsimtsum*) as preparation for the creation, Nathan Shapira puts forward the figure of Metatron as a vital element of this process, which he describes in the language of *heikhalot* imagery:

Note that the Shekhinah garbs herself with these two garments. The esoteric meaning of this is hinted at in [Ecc. 10:16]: 'Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a boy [*na'ar*]' . About this it is written in the midrash [Tanhuma on] 'Naso' [18]: The Holy One, Blessed be He hinted to the ministering angels on the day when the tabernacle was to be erected, that was the tabernacle of Metatron, who is called 'youth', to atone for Israel in the days of their exile.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁵ On this concept see further at note 493.

¹⁸⁶ See section 3.2 below.

¹⁸⁷ *MAT*, 'Naso', p. 442:

דייקא שמתלבשת השכינה בתרין לבושים אלו בסוד אי לך ארץ שמלכך נע"ר ועז"א במדרש נשא רמז הקב"ה למלאכי השרת באותו יום הוקם את המשכן משכן של מטטרון שנקרא נער לכפר על ישראל בימי גלותם.

The well-known motif of the ‘youth’ serving on high has been transformed in this passage into a crucial element of the process of creation, one of two materializations of the divine within created reality, and into the external aspect of the divine Presence.¹⁸⁸ The underlying idea is that the redemption will follow the process of change governed by Metatron, in which the power of harsh judgments as manifested by Israel’s exile will wane, while the power of Metatron will rise, in his function of ‘youth’, appointed over the heavenly tabernacle to provide atonement for Israel’s sins. This picture combines the classical kabbalistic notions of the power of harsh judgments with the *heikhalot* imagery, wherein a supreme angelic being, who serves as God’s instrument of action in both the creation and the redemption, materializes within a novel framework. In a similar vein, Shapira presents the concept of the youth as a redemptive force, leading Israel to a higher level of existence, in the context of the ritual blowing in the *shofar*. The cultic imagery has strong theurgic connotations: a concrete human action in the world below has a direct influence on a parallel level of heavenly reality, where a leading angelic being performs the same action:

And his [the priest's] voice was heard when he came to the holy place by means of those three sounds, namely the three sounds of the *shofar*. In the *Zohar* on Rut [*Zohar Hadash* 7]: there were three sounds of the night [Is. 66:6]: ‘Hark! an uproar from the city, Hark! it cometh from the temple, Hark! the LORD renders recompense to His enemies.’ These are the three sounds of the ‘other side’, three watches of the night against three watches of the day. At the time of the erection of the tabernacle these three sounds were heard, having been transformed into the finest splendor. Then Israel, too, were divided into three classes – of priests, levites and [ordinary] Israelites [Prov. 25:4]: ‘Take away the dross from the silver, and there comes forth a vessel for the

¹⁸⁸ This view is in concert with the double spelling of Metatron’s name – as Metatron and Mitatron – as hinting at the double status of the divine Presence in the world.

refiner.’ As we find in the *midrash* on this pericope,¹⁸⁹ priests are on the level of the world of Creation, Levites – of the world of Formation, and Israelites – of the world of Action.¹⁹⁰

In the above passage, since the ritual is a consequence of the configuration of the worlds, the action taken on earth inevitably has its parallel on high. The same idea is elaborated further in the same chapter of *Megaleh Amuqot*, where Shapira introduces Metatron as the Priest on high:

The angel of [the world of] Creation transmits the influx to Metatron, the Prince of [the world of] Formation [שר היצירה] =820], which by way of numerology is twice the value of [the word] ‘holy’ [קדו"ש = 410, 2 x 410 = 820]. For it was said: ‘You will be Holy’ [Ex. 15:26]. That is to say, ‘holy’ was said twice, because it is received from both Creation and Formation. As Scripture says [Ps. 85:9]: ‘I will hear what God the LORD will speak; [...] Surely His salvation is nigh [קרוב = 308] them that fear Him’ – [and קרוב] by way of numerology equals Metatron [spelled as מטטרון = 308], because on the same day the tabernacle of that youth [משכן] [דההוא נער] was erected.¹⁹¹

The salvific valences of Metatron are dependent here on his function as the ‘youth’ in the angelic sphere, an image that is directly taken from the *heikhalot*

¹⁸⁹ I was not able to locate the precise source of this reference.

¹⁹⁰ *MAT*, ‘Naso’, p. 442-443:

[...] ונשמע קולו בבואו אל הקודש על ג' קולות אלו הם ג' קולות השופר ובזוהר רות ג' קולות של לילה קול שאון מעיר קול י"י מהיכל קול י"י משלם גמול לאויביו הם ג' קולות של סטרא אחרא ג' משמורות של לילה לקביל ג' משמורות של יום ובשעת הקמת המשכן נשמע ג' קולות אלו שנתהפכו להדר נאה משובח אף היו אז ישראל נחלקין לג' קיטרין כהנים לוויים ישראלים הגו סיגים מכסף ויצא לצורף כל"י שלם כדאי' במדרש בזו הפרשה כהנים מדריגת עולם הבריאה לוי עולם יצירה ישראל עשייה.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*:

מלא"ך הבריאה ישפיע למטטרון שהוא ש"ר היצירה בגי' ב"פ קדו"ש ז"ש קדושים תהיו ר"ל ב"פ קדוש שמקבלין מן בריאה ויצירה ז"ש אשמעה מה ידבר האל אך קרו"ב ליריאו ישעו בגי' מטטר"ן כי אותו יום איתוקם משכן דההוא נער.

literature, but one that Shapira enriches by making Metatron lead the process of the redemption. This in turn is a consequence of Shapira's systematic arrangement of reality according to the Lurianic scheme. In this vein, the constellation of images centered around the 'youth' figure is linked to the redemptive actions undertaken within the domain of Metatron who, on the one hand, rules the angelic world (the world of Formation), and on the other hand governs the period of Israel's exile, the current state of the Jews. The implication is that the elevated status of Metatron in the present time, as well as the ritual activities of Israel which are channeled through Metatron in order to influence the higher realm, aim to bring about the final redemption. Once again, the priestly dimension of Metatron's status is directly connected to salvation, while at the same time resonating with his intermediacy as the 'youth' who shifts from one level of reality to the other.

Shapira derives similar priestly notions of Metatron from the image of him offering the righteous souls at the tabernacle on high, a concept which had already appeared in the medieval Ashkenazi texts quoted above, and which may have been transmitted either independently or through the channel of the zoharic corpus. Thus we read in Shapira's commentary on the pericope 'Va-yetse' as follows:

Metatron is called High Priest, as it is written in the Zohar [2:159b], [...] who offers the souls of the righteous on high like a sacrifice, as well as the people of Israel and their prayers, for prayer, too, is like a 'sacrifice'.¹⁹²

While explicitly based on the Zohar, the passage quoted above refers to the early topos of the angelic High Priest who serves as mediator between the people of

¹⁹² *MAT*, 'Va-yetse', p. 119:

ומטטרון נקרא כהן גדול כמ"ש בזוהר [...] שמקריב למעלה נשמותיהם של צדיקים כמו קרבן ואישי ישראל ותפלתם כי גם התפלה הוא כמו קרבן.

The same concept, revealing its reliance on ancient *mythologoumena*, appears in connection to the angelic name Michael, e.g. *ibid.*, 'Pinhas', p. 576.

Israel and God, delivering the prayers of the righteous at the times of the daily service, and providing the atonement for Israel's sins.

4. ENOCH AND 'SON' IN THE REDEMPTIVE PROCESS.

4.1. Early Ashkenazi mystical traditions.

The motif of the priestly ritual conducted by the supreme angelic being in the temple on high has been preserved in several Ashkenazi medieval treatises dealing with divine and angelic names, presented in various formulations, and, as it seems, handed down by several different commentators, each pursuing his own slightly differing agenda. In most of these variants a concept of the angelic High Priest is connected to the figure of 'youth' as 'son'.¹⁹³ Moreover, the redemptive dimension of the 'youth's' roles, as presented in Nathan Shapira's writings, points to the medieval Ashkenazi common ground from which the tradition might have evolved. The mystical-magical material of medieval Ashkenazi provenance grew around three major themes, each related to the others by means of numerological and anagrammatic operations: Elijah's revelation as based on *bBava Qama* 60b (identified below as [A]), Enoch and the exegesis of Ex. 14:2 [B],¹⁹⁴ and the service of the High Priest [C]. The following passage comes from the *Commentary to the 70 Names of Metatron*:

יהוה והיה¹⁹⁵ by way of numerology equals ב"ן ['son' = 52], because he was a man, that is Enoch, son of Yered. By way of numerology [it also equals] 'in all' [בכ"ל = 52],¹⁹⁶ because he bears the whole world, and he leans on the finger of the Holy One, Blessed be He. He is hinted at in the glorious Name [יהוה], which equals twice twenty six [= 52]. [A] By way of numerology it equals also 'Elijah' [אליה"ו = 52] and

¹⁹³ See Schneider, *Mar'eh Kohen*, pp. 145-165.

¹⁹⁴ On the Enochic exegesis of Ex. 14:2, which originated in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle see Idel, 'On Angels', pp. 223-227.

¹⁹⁵ I.e. Double Tetragrammaton, whose numerical value is 52.

¹⁹⁶ On the concept of the name בכל in relation to the word בן see Rashi's commentary on Gen. 24:1 and the relevant bibliography adduced in Idel, *Ben*, p. 249 n. 23.

also Yaho'el [ל' יהוא"ל = 52],¹⁹⁷ and 'as a heart' [ב' כל"ב = 52], for he is the heart of the world. And all of his names allude to him being appointed over the Torah, and the Torah begins with [the letter] ב and ends with [the letter] ל, which form the word לב ['heart', whose numerical value amounts to 32]. This points to the thirty-two paths of wisdom by which the world was created, as we find in the Book of Formation [*Sefer Yetsirah*].¹⁹⁸ [C] He is the Prince of the World [שר העולם],¹⁹⁹ who by way of numerology equals אנה [ana = 52], because he is the priest. And when the High Priest was pronouncing the Ineffable Name [אנה השם],²⁰⁰ he would first summon the Prince of the Countenance, that is אנה, and only then he would turn to the glorious Name.²⁰¹

The text features two important themes, which would later be echoed in Nathan Shapira's writings: the prophet Elijah as teacher of Torah – a Torah which in its structure resembles the world of angels, and the 'Prince of the World' who is

¹⁹⁷ On the angel Yaho'el see Scholem, *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, pp. 68-69; Schneider, *Mar'eh Kohen*, pp. 167-267 and Idel, *Ben*, chapters 1 and 2, with relevant bibliography adduced there.

¹⁹⁸ See *Sefer Yetsira*, pp. 59-60. This reference to *Sefer Yetsirah* points to the likelihood of a late redactional stage of the original sources from Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle who seldom mention this work.

¹⁹⁹ *bSanhedrin* 38b.

²⁰⁰ According to *mYoma* 3:8, the High Priestly ritual on the Day of Atonement included the prayer which began with the word of imploration (אנה – 'please'), after which the the Divine Name was pronounced:

וכך היה אומר, אנה ה'--עויתי פשעתי חטאתי לפניך, אני וביתי; אנה ה'--כפר נא לעוונות ולפשעים ולחטאים, שעויתי ושפשעתי ושחטאתי לפניך, אני וביתי.

²⁰¹ *Sefer Ha-Hesheq*, ed. Epstein, § 59:

יהוה והיה בגי' ב"ן. לפי שהיה אדם שהוא חנוך בן ירד. ובג' בכ"ל לפי שהוא סובל את העולם כלו הוא נשען באצבע הקב"ה ורמז בו השם הנכבד שתי פעמים עשרים ושישה. גם בגי' אליה"ו. גם יהוא"ל. גם כל"ב. לפי שהוא לב של עולם. גם כל השמות רמוזים הם שהוא ממונה על התורה והתורה מתחיל בב' וסיימו בלמ"ד. הם אותיות ל"ב. מורה על ל"ב נתיבות חכמה שבו נברא העולם כדאיתא בספר יצירה והוא שר העולם. בגי' א"נא כי הוא הכהן וכשהיה הכהן גדול אומר אנה השם. היה קורא תחילה לשר הפנים וזהו אנה, ואח"כ אל שם הנכבד.

assigned to the priestly office on high. Both of these functions are presented as equally important by means of radical hermeneutical operations, so that the parasemantic features of the text have a decisive bearing on its meaning. The numerological calculation of 52, as well as the anagrammation of the name Elijah (יהואל and אליהו), function to bring out the redemptive aspect of Torah revelation by a designated angelic figure, one who has been assigned this task. According to the *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron*, Torah revelation is a cosmogonical process in which the supreme angel plays a crucial part, both as its blueprint (by virtue of his own association with the structural features of the Torah) and as the force that triggers and supports it (by virtue of his organic relationship with God). Thus, by dint of all these functions the Prince of the Countenance, namely Metatron, becomes the first addressee of the High Priestly service on the Day of Atonement, as a preliminary to the rite addressed to God Himself. This arises from the numerological operation that identifies Metatron with the term ‘son’ (בן = 52) while closely linking him to the priesthood on the one hand, and to Elijah and his theophoric counterpart Yaho’el, on the other.²⁰²

However, this passage of the *Commentary of the 70 Names of Metatron* is preserved also in a slightly different version, which sets the Metatronic traditions in a broader conceptual framework:

יהואל by way of numerology equals ‘son’ [בן = 52], because he was a son of man, that is Enoch son of Yered. [B] Yaho’el [יהואל] by way of numerology equals ‘at the sea’ [בים = 52], because it is written ‘before it [נכחו] shall you encamp at the sea’ [Ex. 14:2], as ‘before it’ [נכחו] is [made of the same letters as] Enoch [חנוך], who revealed himself at the sea [בים]. [A] And by way of numerology [he is] ‘in all’ [בכל = 52] [...] ²⁰³ [C] And he is the Prince of the World, which by way of numerology is equal to אגא [= 52], because

²⁰² On the association of Yaho’el with the divine ‘son’ (*sar ha-shalom*) in the Second Temple period and early medieval Jewish literature see Schneider, *Ha-Masorot ha-Genuzot*, pp. 167-267, esp. pp. 216-218, 266-267.

²⁰³ The rest of part [A] is identical to [A] in the previous quotation and is therefore omitted here.

he is the High Priest, and when the High Priest used to say אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם, he would first summon the Prince of the Countenance, and only then the blessed glorious Name.²⁰⁴

The numerical value of the name Metatron as twice the value of the Tetragrammaton and as 'son' (both amounting to 52) unfolds as an interpretation of Ex. 14:2 [B], of the name of Elijah [C], and of the High Priest ritual [C] on the Day of Atonement, thus presenting a fuller elaboration of the theme than in the previous quotation. The differences between the passages in these two recensions seem to be more telling than the similarities. There is no reference to *Sefer Yetsirah* in the second version, and therefore less emphasis has been placed on Metatron's share in the process of creation. Instead, the revelatory experience comes to the fore through the mystical exegesis of the biblical verse in which Israel is granted vision of the divine while crossing the sea at the time of the Exodus. The implicit nature of this revelation becomes clear within the broader perspective of this passage, which is primarily concerned with the status of Metatron: it was this angel who appeared to Israel and effected its salvation by virtue of his twofold affiliation with God, the substantial and the theophoric (as twice the numerical value of the Tetragrammaton and as Yaho'el). This interpretation is corroborated by the insertion of Enoch's name into the verse (Ex. 14:2), by means of the anagrammatic operation, which turns the word נִכְחוּ into חֲנוּךְ. The circle of associated images is thus broadened to include Enoch, who is a 'son' of human origin, whose appearance at the sea resembles that of the 'youth' from the *heikhalot* texts,²⁰⁵ and whose salvific powers the text is concerned to bring out. The ritualistic overtones of these images arise from Israel's revelatory experience at the sea: the priestly prayer (אֲנִי הַשֵּׁם) is addressed to the angel,

²⁰⁴ *Sefer Beit Din*, fol. 7a-8b:

יהואל בגימ' ב"ן, לפי שהיה בן אדם, חנוך בן ירד. יהואל בגי' בים דכת' נכחו תחנו על הים. ומנכחו יוצא חנוך, לפי שנתגלה על הים. בגימ' בכ"ל [...] והוא שר העולם. בגימ' אנ"א, לפי שהוא כהן גדול וכשהיה כהן גדול אומר אנ"א השם, הוא היה קורא תחלה לשר הפנים ואח"כ להשם ית' הנכבד.

²⁰⁵ See Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 420-427.

because both the revelation and the redemption were brought about by him.²⁰⁶ This cluster of traditions associating Enoch-Metatron-‘son’ with Elijah’s revelation and the temple ritual becomes a fixed reservoir of images anchored in the exegesis of a particular biblical verse, which places the super-angelic figure at the heart of the processes of both creation and redemption. As will be shown below, this exegesis of Ex. 14:2 along the lines of the Ashkenazi-Pietistic tradition continues to generate mystical interpretations until the late 17th century.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁶ This passage therefore differs from other medieval Ashkenazi conceptualizations of the entities that mediate between the Divine and His creation. There is no allusion to the divine Glory, nor any attempt to attenuate the binitarian cult of God and Metatron, which corroborates the view of Idel, *Ben*, pp. 645-647, that these texts originated within non-Kalonymide Ashkenazi mystical circles.

²⁰⁷ Another manuscript version of the same *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron* contains similar concepts, albeit set within a different sequence of images (MS Berlin Tübingen 239, fol. 112a – printed in Dan, *Torat ha-Sod*, pp. 220-221):

Yaho’el [יהואל] [consists of] the letters of Elijah [אליהו] and ‘my God’ [אלוהי], because to whomever Elijah reveals himself, it is all by virtue of Yaho’el. Know that Yaho’el is a judge in the firmament above all the ministering angels, and as a ruler he is second to [lit. comes after] [no one but] the Holy One, Blessed be He. If you begin with the middle of Yaho’el [יהואל] and place it next to the letter י [‘yud’] of the Prince of the Countenance, you will find Eliyahu [אליהו]. And if you begin with the middle of Elijah [אליהו], you will find Yaho’el [יהואל]. [B] By way of numerology it equals ‘son’ [בן = 52], because he was a son of man, Enoch son of Yered. By way of numerology [this equals] ‘at the sea’ [בים = 52], as it is written ‘before it [נכחו] shall you encamp at the sea’, and from the word ‘before it’ [נכחו] appears Enoch [חנוך], because he revealed himself to Israel at the sea together with the Holy One, blessed be He. [...] [C] By way of numerology Yaho’el equals אבא, because when Israel shouted at the sea, the Prince of the Countenance was [sent as] a messenger to help them.

יהואל אותיות אליהו ואלוהי, כי לכל מי שיתגלה אליהו הכול מכוח יהואל. ודע כי יהואל שופט ברקיע, למעלה מכול מלאכי השרת והוא אחר הקב"ה מושל. ותתחיל באמצע יהואל ותנהו אצל י' של שר הפנים ותמצא אליהו, ותתחיל באמצע אליהו ותמצא יהואל. הוא בגימ' ב"ן לפי שהיה בן אדם חנוך בן ירד. יהואל בגי' ב"ם דכתי' נכחו תחנו על הים. ומנכחו יוצא חנוך לפי שנתגלה לישראל עם הקב"ה על הים. [...] יהואל בגימ' אבא כי כשישראל צעקו על הים שליח היה שר הפנים לעזור להם.

The parts marked here by [B] and [C] closely parallel those from the previous version, where the exegesis of Ex. 14:2 was directly associated with the priestly ritual through the revelation to Israel at the sea. However, the novelty here lies in the introductory section, which explains the process of anagrammatizing and points to the textual plane of divine names that underlies the order of

Another recension of the same *Commentary on the Seventy Names of Metatron* transmits the same cluster of images grounded in the exegesis of Ex. 14:2, while offering a novel reading of its substantial part:

Yaho'el [יהואל] has [the same] letters as 'Elijah' [אליהו] and 'Elohi' [אלוהי], all amounting to 52 [...] [B] And by way of numerology [it also equals] 'son' [בן], because he was a son of man, Enoch son of Yered. By way of numerology [this equals] 'at the sea' [בים = 52], as it was written: 'before it [נכחו] shall you encamp at the sea'. From [the letters of] 'before it' [נכחו] [the name of] Enoch [הנוך] emerges, because he revealed himself to Israel with the Holy One, Blessed be He, at the sea. [A] [Yaho'el] by way of numerology [equals] 'as heart' [כלב], because he is all heart. He barks the Torah like a dog [כלב] and he teaches the Torah to infants in their mothers' wombs,²⁰⁸ as it was written [bBaba Kamma 60b]: when Elijah comes to the city, the dogs frolic. [C] Yaho'el [יהואל] by way of numerology [equals] אגא, because when Israel shouted at the sea, he sent them the Prince of the Countenance to help them. Yaho'el [יהואל] by way of numerology equals to יהוה והיה, and the glorious Prince who is appointed over a woman who is in difficulty giving birth sends the Prince of the Countenance to save her.²⁰⁹

creation. That is to say, the parasemantic attributes that the angelic and divine names share with certain elements of the creation point to their equal ontological status. This introduces the notion that knowledge of angelic or divine names has the power to bring about divine revelation. Such an understanding of the nature of these names points to the magical overtone of these texts, which may account for their limited dissemination in print.

²⁰⁸ bAvodah Zara 3b.

²⁰⁹ MS Roma Angelica 46, fol. 36a:

יהואל הוא אותיות אליהו ואלוהי [...] בגי' ב"ן לפי שהוא היה בן אדם, חנוך בן ירד. בגי' בי"ם כמ"ש נכחו תחנו על הים. ומנכחו יוצא חנוך לפי שהתגלה לישראל עם הקב"ה על הים. יהואל בגי' כל"ב לפי שכולו לב. ומנבח בתורה ככלב ומלמד

While the statement of the relationship between Elijah and Yaho'el, as well as part [B] that follows it, seem to be identical to the comparable passages in the versions quoted previously, section [A] was expanded to include an allusion to *bBava Qama* 60b, an insertion which links the nature of Elijah's revelation with the ultimate meaning of the Torah. This motif seems to be an addition to the commentary, which develops a new cluster of ideas, with the revelation of Torah at its center, mediated through Enoch-Metatron and Elijah-Yaho'el – the two apothotic angelic figures of human origin. Through the double meaning of כלב the range of interpretations expands, allowing for further associations: the revelatory experience at the sea bears a semblance to the revelation at mount Sinai, for Israel's conduct at the sea brings about the intervention of the supreme angel, who is designated as both Israel's lover and supporter ('all heart') and teacher of the Torah (barking it 'as a dog'). It is worth noting that also Metatron teaches Torah to unborn infants,²¹⁰ which suggests a different idea of son, shifting 'sonship' from Metatron himself to the children (i.e. the 'sons', or 'infants') of Israel, who are chosen to be recipients of the Torah.²¹¹

תורה לתנוקות במעי אמן כמ"ש אליהו בא לעיר כלבים שוחקים. יהואל בגי' אנ"א כי כשישראל צעקו על הים שולח היה להם שר הפנים לעזור להם. יהואל בגי' יהוה יהוה ושר הנכבד הממונה על אשה מקשה לילד שולח שר הפנים להצילה.
The closest parallel to this version of the passage is contained in MS JTS 2026 (fols. 7b-8a), an 18th-century Ashkenazi/Italian compilation of various mystical-magical texts, which transmits variegated traditions of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle.

²¹⁰ *bAvodah Zara* 3b.

²¹¹ Another elaboration of this topic occurs in the writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, as is evident from the fact that in one of the earliest manuscripts containing a variety Nehemiah's texts, the following reading is affixed to the numerological equation of 'sons' and 'dogs' (MS Cambridge Add. 858.2, fol. 75b):

'Why do the nations of the world call the Jews 'dogs' [כלבים]? Because according to what is written [in Dt. 14:1]: 'You are the children [lit. sons, בנים] of the Lord, your God.' [The word] 'Sons' [בנים = 102] equals the numerical value of the [word] 'dogs' [כלבים = 102].

מפני מה אומות קוראים העולם ליהודים כלבים? תירץ לפי שנ' בנים אתם ליי אלוהיכם. בנים בגי' כלבים.

This numerological equation of 'sons' and 'dogs' is drawn from the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron* (the part identified as A in the previous quotations). The close relation between God and Israel is here expressed as a relationship between father and sons. The superior status of Israel, ensuing from this intimate relation with God, can never be lost, and is transparent even at the moment of their humiliation by the gentiles. Nevertheless, the implicit polemic in this passage is

Another hermeneutical operation seems to have been a typical exegetical move in the medieval Pietistic circles which later reverberated in the writings of Nathan Shapira. This is the reading of the Enoch-Metatron figure into Ex. 14:2 in conjunction with Torah revelation and/or Israel's redemption. *Sefer Razi'el ha-Malakh*, an anonymous book of magical and angelological content, probably of medieval Ashkenazi origin,²¹² echoes some parts of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's traditions, while inserting them into new contexts, showing the diversity of trajectories that this type of imagery could follow. Within a stream of elaborations on the divine names, the book contains a commentary on the 42-Letter Divine Name:

In connection to this, Scripture says: 'rays hath He at His side; and there is the hiding of His power' [Hab. 3:4]. The letters [of the words **שם הבין** form the words] 'messiah son' [משיח בן], and he will be [known] by this name. **יגל פזק** by way of numerology equals 'in the cherub' [בכרוב = 230]. This name is engraved on the cherub on high, and each and every day the Holy One, Blessed be He, rides him, as Scripture says [II Sam. 22:11]: 'and he rode upon the cherub, and did fly, and he was seen on the wings of the wind'. [...] And there is no angel with him other than the angel Prince of the Countenance, who rides with Him on the clouds of the Glory, [B1] as Scripture says [Is. 57:3]: 'each walks in its uprightness' [נכחו], the letters of 'its uprightness' [נכחו] [form the name] Enoch [חנוך].²¹³

grounded in the reservoir of associations created by the same numerological equations of 52, which had already been juxtaposed several times in the medieval Ashkenazi texts emanating from Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle. See Marcus, *Rituals of Childhood*, pp. 26, 76.

²¹² See Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, pp. 123-124; Idel, *Golem*, pp. 124, 129.

²¹³ *Razi'el ha-Malakh*, pp. 195-196.

וזהו מה שנאמר קרנים מידו לו ושם חביון עזו אותיות בן משיח והוא יהיה בשם זה [...] יגל פזק בגימטריא בכרוב, שם זה חקוק על כרוב למעלה וכל יום ויום הקב"ה עליו רוכב שנאמר: וירכב על כרוב ויעוף וירא על כנפי רוח. [...] ואין שום מלאך עמו, כי אם מלאך שר הפנים הוא רוכב עמו בענני כבוד, שנאמר הולך נכחו אותיות חנוך.

This passage elaborates on the redemptive quality of the knowledge of divine names. Moreover, it offers a typical Enochic reading of Is. 57:3, which constitutes a close parallel to the interpretation of Ex. 14:2, as in both instances the name Enoch is derived from the letters making up the word נִכְחוּ.²¹⁴ This exegetical operation provides an Enochic-Metatronic context for biblical verses that are devoid of Enochic connotations in their original context. What is more, the Enochic reading of these verses invokes the idea of divine revelation through the mediation of the supreme angel. Thus, the revelation of the divine is understood to be indirect, amounting to the appearance of God's hypostasis. This idea joins together the images of Messiah-'son'-supreme angel as a cluster of redemptive notions, all associated with Enoch-the 'youth'.

4.2. 'Youth', Elijah and 'son' in Shapira's kabbalah.

The 'youth' as a redemptive figure reappears in *Megaleh Amuqot* several times. In Shapira's vision of history, he leads Israel to redemption, conditioning their ascent from a state of degradation to salvation. The motif of the 'youth' in Shapira's work appears in the context of traditions that originated in the medieval Ashkenazi *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*. His exegesis intersects these traditions where the numerological value of 52 is manipulated so as to facilitate an Enochic reading of Ex. 14:2 and juxtapose it with the motifs of 'dog' and 'son'. As was pointed out in section 4.1 of the present chapter, all of these motifs featured in the medieval commentaries of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle.

Cf. Ms. Warsaw 9, fols. 175b-176a. This manuscript transmits many pieces of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle texts, though reinterpreted in a magical manner, as can be read in an example from the *Commentary on the 42-Letter Name*: 'רוי"אל by way of numerology equals חקד טנע, and he is the angel to be adjured by this name, and he can annul the sentence. A feast, an immersion and an exceeding purity is needed.' [חקד טנע בגי' רוי"אל הוא מלאך להשביע בשם זה יכול לבטל גזירה וצריך תענית]. This is a different version of a more common reading of the name חקב טנע wherein the numerological equation amounts to 239. This spelling is preserved in *Merkavah Shelemah*, fol. 26a, which collects various versions of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's *Commentary on 42-Letter Divine Name*. Further on this commentary, see the next chapter below.

²¹⁴ The technique of *otiyot* (change in the order of letters in the word interpreted as the divine or angelic name) is, next to *gematria*, the main exegetical method used in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's commentaries, see Idel, 'Piyut Lo Yadua', p. 238; Idel, 'On Angels', pp. 221-244.

The following passage from *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* elaborates on the story of Israel's Exodus, which is presented as being made possible by the 'youth':

Pharaoh asked: 'Who will be the leader, and by whose merit will they come out of Egypt?' Moses replied: 'We will go with our young and our old' [Ex. 10:9]. With the word 'with our young' [בנערינו] he [Moses] alluded to him [Pharaoh] [that this referred to] two [figures], Moses and Joseph, for about Moses Scripture says [Ex. 2:6]: 'and the voice of a crying youth' [והנה נער בוכה], and about Joseph [it says]: 'and he is a youth' [והוא נער]. But [the word] 'with our old' [זקנינו] referred to one person [only], namely to Abraham, as we have already explained that Moses [coming out of Egypt] needed to take Joseph and Abraham with him. On these three branches [i.e. Abraham, Joseph, and Moses] Scripture [Ps. 80:9] says: 'Thou didst pluck up a vine out of Egypt'. For this reason Moses needed to remind [them] of the second Passover, which is the 'youth', at the time of the first Passover, which is Abraham, because [as was written in Ex. 14:2]: 'before it [נכחו] shall you encamp at the sea'. Once the letters making up the word 'before it' [נכחו] are reordered, it becomes הנוך – Enoch, as was written [in Ex. 14:16]: 'And lift thou up your rod', for the rod of Moses is Metatron, who is alluded to in [Ps. 37:25]: 'I have been young and now I am old' [נער הייתי וגם זקנתי]. This is why he needed [to take] both of them, the youth and the old one.²¹⁵

²¹⁵ MAT, 'Bo', *derush* 4:17, ed. Weiss, p. 66:

ושאל פרעה מי יהיה המנהיג, ובזכות מי יצאו ממצרים. השיב משה בנעורינו ובזקנינו נלך, רמז לו בנעורינו תרין על משה ויוסף דגבי משה איתמר והנה נער בוכה וגבי יוסף והוא נער, ובזקנינו חד על אברהם קאמר שהוצרך משה ליקח עמו יוסף ואברהם כמו שאמרנו ובשלשם שריגים אלו [אברהם יוסף משה] גפן ממצרים תסיע ומזה הטעם הוצרך משה להזהיר על פסח שני שהוא נער בשעת פסח ראשון שהוא אברהם כי נכחו תחנו על הים בהיפך אתיות חנוך ז"ש ואתה הרם את מטך כי מטה משה הוא מטטרון שהוא סוד נער הייתי וגם זקנתי לכן הוצרך לשנים אלו נער וזקן.

The passage above draws on the biblical meaning of the term ‘youth’ – *na’ar*, which refers to an individual who is not only young but one who has been chosen to perform a special role. In Shapira’s work, this is the ‘youth’ who was chosen to lead Israel from exile, whom he identifies with both Joseph and Moses, to both of whom the biblical narrative refers as ‘youths’. What enables him to introduce Enoch into the story of the Exodus is Ps. 37:25, which the mystical tradition takes to be an allusion to the transformation of Enoch into the angel Metatron.²¹⁶ A whole array of biblical references, employing the term *na’ar* in diverse contexts, is taken to convey the same meaning of angelic intervention in Israel’s flight from Egypt. Shapira links ‘youth’ with the Enochic-Metatronic sense by means of Ex. 14:2 – the verse which in the medieval Ashkenazi texts of Nehemiah ben Shlomo’s circle was always understood as alluding to Enoch’s revelation at the Red Sea. This interpretation, which had already become standard, is reinforced in Shapira’s work with the image of Metatron as Moses’ rod, by means of which he led Israel to redemption.²¹⁷ The passage reflects the transformative dimension of Enoch, whose ascent from the human to the divine world was part and parcel of the transformative quality of the Exodus.²¹⁸ In the heavenly world, Enoch-the ‘youth’ represents the potency of change and redemption, whereas on earth he signifies human leadership. In Shapira’s commentary, each of these dimensions of

A similar view occurs further on in the same part of *MAT* (4:18, ed. Weiss, p. 66):

Abraham was called ‘great’, ‘a great man among the Anakims’ [Josh. 14:15], while Joseph was the smallest among the tribes [Genesis Rabba 33:10]. Scripture says [Job 3:19]: ‘The small and the great are there alike’, and this is why Israel were freed from slavery, for [it was written in the same verse]: ‘and the servant is free from his master’. This is why they [Abraham and Isaac] were needed both together. The first Passover is the greatest Shabbat, and the second Passover corresponds to Joseph, who was the small one.

אברהם גדול נקרא, אדם גדול בענקים, ויוסף הוא קטונתן של שבטים, והכתוב אומר קטן וגדול שם הוא, בזה יצאו ישראל מן עבדות ז"ש ועבד חפשי מאדוניו לכן הוצרכו אלו השנים להיות ביהוד, פסח ראשון הוא שבת גדול, ופסח שני לקביל יוסף שהוא קטן.

²¹⁶ See Ziyoni, *Commentary on the Torah*, ‘Bereshit’, pp. 25-26.

²¹⁷ See Zohar 1:27a. For more on this idea, see chapter 5 below, section 4, pp. 210-223.

²¹⁸ On the Exodus in relation to the transformation of the configuration of *Ze’ir Anpin* in the Lurianic system see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 331-332.

the 'youth' is the mirror image of the other. His interpretation of the revelation at the sea thus presents the 'youth' as playing a vital role in the redemption both above and below.

The interpretation of Ex. 14:2, which points to the name of Enoch, recurs in *Megaleh Amuqot* several times. In the commentary on the pericope 'Beha'alotekha', the Exodus is directly connected to the esoteric meaning of the name Enoch. As a consequence of his transformation from man to angel, having transcended earthly existence, Enoch became the herald of the redemption, capable of elevating to their heavenly source the divine sparks, which according to the Lurianic Kabbalah are dispersed throughout the creation, while on the human level his transformation amounted to overcoming and uprooting evil, which is an inherent part of the creation:

חנ"ך by way of numerology equals 658, as it is the acronym of [the words] חמ"ר נח"ש כל"ב [ass, snake, dog, whose combined numerical value amounts to 658]. The initial letters [of these words] constitute the name of חנוך [Enoch], who is the great Prince, the angel of God who walks before the camp of Israel.²¹⁹ He is hinted at [in the verse] 'before it [נכחו] shall you encamp at the sea' [Ex. 14:2], where the word נכחו, by reordering the letters, becomes חנוך [Enoch]. As against this, there was also an ass, a snake, and a dog on 'the other side', for Egypt is called an ass, and pharaoh is the great snake who is also called dog, as was written in the Zohar [3:238a].²²⁰

In the passage above, the notion of evil, which belongs to the 'other' or the 'left-hand' side of the creation, is associated with 'dog' (כלב) without recourse to the

²¹⁹See Ibn Ezra's *Commentary on Ex. 14:15*.

²²⁰*MAT*, ed. Weiss, 'Beha'alotekha', p. 118:

חנוך בגימטריא תרנ"ח שהוא כמנין חמ"ר נח"ש כל"ב שהוא ר"ת חנוך שהוא שר הגדול מלאך אלוהים ההולך לפני מחנה ישראל נרמז במלת נכחו תחנו על הים שהוא בהיפך אותיות חנוך שגם לעומת זה היה בסטרא אחרא חמ"ר נח"ש כל"ב כי מצרים נקרא חמר ופרעה הוא הנחש הגדול הנקרא ג"כ כלב כ"ש בזוהר פ' בשלח.

word's numerological value of 52, which so often features in the medieval Ashkenazi writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo; rather, Shapira is drawing on a semantic layer of the word 'dog', which traditionally associates it with the power of impurity.²²¹ On the other hand, he is in line with the medieval Ashkenazi writings of Nehemiah's circle when his allusion to 'dog' in this passage follows the Enochic interpretation of Ex. 14:2.²²² Thus the realm of 'dog', which in Shapira's work is the evil aspect of the creation, is the reverse image of the realm of Enoch. However, the 'dog' (i.e. evil) is alluded to in Enoch's name and inherent in his nature, as he is an angel of human descent and essence. As a consequence, the redemption, understood in terms of transcending evil, is guaranteed by an angelic leader who is himself at least in part bound with evil.²²³

Elsewhere, however, *Megaleh Amuqot* does exploit numerological calculations that enable him to apply to diverse biblical verses an exegesis associating Enoch with the motifs of 'dog' and 'son' by means of their common numerical value of 52. While this type of Enochic exegesis follows the pattern of the medieval Ashkenazi commentaries, it derives its fresh conceptualization from the Lurianic kabbalah. According to the Lurianic school, the created universe is made up of four 'worlds', each governed by a specific divine name associated

²²¹ See *mYoma* 8:6.

²²² The interpretation of the word נוכח as pointing to Enoch is not limited to Ex. 14:2; Shapira inserts it wherever the term נוכח appears. See, for instance, *MA ReNaV*, chapter 110, p. 143:

'He that dwells in the secret place of the most High' [Ps. 91:1]. The Holy One, Blessed be He, is 'the most High', above all created things. [In Ps. 57:3 Scripture says]: "I will cry unto God most high", because: "YHVH is the highest" [Ps. 47:3]. That is to say, because he attributed left for himself the measure of the 'most high' [= 166], therefore he is a great king. This secret is explained in the verse [Prov. 4:25]: "let your eyes right on [נוכה]". [If] the letters [that make up] נוכח are reordered, [they yield the name] הנוך [Enoch].

יושב בסתר עליון, הקב"ה הוא עליון על כל הנבראים, אקרא לאלהים עליון, כי ה' עליון הוא, ר"ל מאחר ששייר לעצמו מנין עליון, לכן מלך גדול הוא. ורזא דא מבואר בפסוק עיניך לנוכה יביטו, נוכח בהיפך אתון חנו"ך.

²²³ Moses Cordovero holds a similar view of evil as an inherent element of the messiah. See Sack, *Be-sha'arei ha-Qabalah shel Rabi Mosheh Cordovero*, pp. 97-98; cf. Scholem, *Sabbatai Tsevi*, pp. 57-58

with a particular sefira.²²⁴ The state of the worlds deteriorates gradually, but they will be 'repaired' in the messianic future:

In part 4 of *Kanefei Yonah*²²⁵ it was taught that at the time of the First Temple, the face of a lion was established [on the altar],²²⁶ but at the time of the Second Temple, it was the face of a dog [see *bYoma* 21b]. This signifies that in the days of the Second Temple, the nourishment of Israel derived only from the name 'son',²²⁷ in the world of Action, whereas in the days of the First Temple, the nourishment [of Israel] was [equal to] four-times [the numerical value of] the name 'son', [deriving] from [all] four worlds: Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action.²²⁸ This is because, by way of numerology, [the word אריה meaning] 'lion' equals [216, namely] four-times [the numerical value of the name] 'son' [בן = 52, and $4 \times 52 = 208$], but [since the product of] 4×52 [is the same as the numerical value of] 8 Tetragrammatons [יהוה = 26, and $8 \times 26 = 208$], [add this 8 to 208 and] you get 216, which is the numerical value of 'lion' [אריה = 216].²²⁹

²²⁴ See Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 169-170.

²²⁵ Menahem Azaria da Fano, *Kanefei Yonah* 4:2, p. 333.

²²⁶ See Zohar 1:6a.

²²⁷ This is the divine name that the zoharic tradition identifies with the sefirah *Tiferet*, or The Small-Conuntenanced one (*Ze'ir Anpin*) in the Lurianic configuration of divine countenances. See Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 139-142; Magid, *From Midrash to Metaphysics*, pp. 24-29; Idel, *Ben*, pp. 377-506.

²²⁸ On the system of four worlds see Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 131-138, Magid, *From Midrash to Metaphysics*, pp. 29-30.

²²⁹ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 124, pp. 166-167:

איתא בכנפי יונה חלק ד' שבבית ראשון היה פני אריה, ובבית שני פני כלב. הכוונה לפי שיניקת ישראל בבית שני לא היתה רק משם של ב"ן בעשייה, אבל בבית ראשון היתה היניקה ד' פעמים ב"ן מן ד' עולמות אצילות בריאה יצירה עשייה, שכן ארי"ה הוא ד' פעמים ב"ן בגימטריא ר"ח, ובוד' פעמים ב"ן יש ח' הויות, הרי רי"ו כמנין ארי"ה.

On the association of Elijah with the name 'son' as a double Tetragrammaton, which occurs in writings emanating from Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, see Liebes, 'Mal'akhei Qol ha-Shofar', p.

The numerological equation of ‘dog’ and son’ signifies the degeneration of the world through history, from the time of the First Temple to the time of the Second. The name ‘son’, associated with the lowest of the four cosmic worlds, marks the gradual distancing of the creation from its source in the divine, as the time of ‘dog’, which ‘son’ governs, is the time of evil’s interference in the creation, when Israel’s connection to the divine was reduced to a single aspect of God, the one signified by the name ‘son’.

Shapira elaborates on this interpretation, invoking Talmudic sources, in which ‘dog’ is associated with the redemptive figure of Elijah through their common numerological value of 52:

Moses wanted to enter the Land of Israel to remove the power [כה] of Esau, who is [nourished by the impure animals] כלב [dog] and חזיר [pig] [whose initial Hebrew letters, כ and ה, form the word כה – ‘power’]. For it was taught about Esau [Gen. 27:5]: ‘To hunt for meat and bring it’. We explain this [as referring to] the dog [meat], which brought Esau his power, [the power of] ‘dog’. And David, who derived his nourishment from the name ‘son’, prayed [Ps. 22:21]: ‘Deliver my soul from the sword ...’ – from all the forces of judgment – ‘...mine only one from the power of the dog.’ It is not for nothing that the Gemara says [bBaba Qama 60a]: ‘when dogs howl, [this is a sign that] the Angel of Death has come to town. But when dogs frolic, [this is a sign that] Elijah [the prophet] has come to town’, because [bBerakhot 4b] ‘Elijah is in four’ [אליהו בארבע], that is to say, he is in the world of Action, which is the fourth world in the sequence of the worlds of Emanation, Creation, Formation and Action, where [namely, in the world of Action] the [numerical value of] the name ‘son’ [בן = 52] equals [the

192 n. 67. In *Tiqunei Zohar*, fols. 110a and 127a, the double Tetragrammaton appears to refer either to the double image of supernal and lower man or to the configuration of Father and Son.

numerical value of] ‘Elijah’ [אליהו = 52]. And opposite them, on the outside, is the image of ‘dog’, whose [term of] pregnancy is 52 days, which is equal to [the numerical value (52) of the word כלב] ‘dog’. This [i.e. ‘dog’] was the source of nourishment of the Median kingdom, which lasted 52 years.²³⁰

In this passage, too, ‘dog’ signifies the evil side of the creation, whose power symmetrically mirrors the power of the good side, identified with ‘son’, and the nexus between Elijah, dog and son is based on their common numerical value of 52.²³¹ Already in the medieval Ashkenazi *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*, Elijah was alluded to as the counterpart of both ‘son’ and ‘dog’.²³² He was paired with Enoch-Metatron to bring about the revelation of the Torah and to lead Israel to redemption. In Shapira’s work, however, Elijah is additionally connected to the lowest of the four worlds (governed by ‘son’), in which evil (‘dog’) prevails, although it is in his power to raise the creation to a higher level. Thus the cluster of redemptive associations connecting Elijah, ‘son’ and ‘dog’ features in both the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron* and in *Megaleh Amuqot*, but in Shapira’s work, these associations feature as an elaboration on the Lurianic scheme of the four worlds:

Moses wanted [to reestablish] on the altar the face of a lion [אריה], which has the same numerical value [of 216] as four-times the value of ‘son’ [4 x 52 = 216]. Similarly, the [combined] numerical values of [the word] נא and the full

²³⁰ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 124, p. 166:

רצה משה לכנס לארץ ישראל להעביר כ"ח של עשו שהוא כל"ב חז"ר, שכן איתמר גבי עשו לצוד ציד להבי, ומתרגמין כלב, שהביא לו כח שלו שהוא כלב, ודוד שהיה יניקה שלו משם של ב"ן, התפלל הצילה מחרב נפשי על כל כחות הדין וביחוד מיד כלב יחידתי, ולא למגנא אמרו בגמרא כלבים צועקים מלאך המות בעיר, כלבים שוחקים אליהו בעיר, כי אליהו בארבע רצה לומר בעולם העשיה שהוא עולם הרביעי בסוד אצילות בריאה יצירה עשיה, דתמן שם של ב"ן כמנין אליהו, לקבליהון דמות כל"ב בחוץ שהריונו נ"ב יום כמנין כל"ב, משם היתה יניקת מלכות מדי שהיתה נ"ב שנה.

²³¹ See Liebes, ‘Mal’akhei Qol ha-Shofar’, pp. 185-195.

²³² See section 4.1 of the present chapter, pp. 88-96, where the medieval Ashkenazi allusions to Elijah and ‘dog’ are identified as variants of part [B].

names of its constituent letters [51+106+111 = 268] is the same as [the combined numerical values of the words] dog [כלב = 52] and lion [אריה = 216, namely 52+216 = 268]. For the intention [of Moses] when he said ‘let me go over’ was to let go of the [face of the] dog and replace it with the [face of the] lion [on the altar],²³³ so that there would be no ‘dog face’ in the world but rather four-times ‘son’ [4 x 52 = 208], which has the same numerical value as ‘lion’ [אריה = 216].²³⁴ As the Holy Ari said:²³⁵ ‘The lion alludes to four times [the numerical value of the name] ‘son’.²³⁶

All the numerological operations in this passage present Moses – the ‘youth’ at the time of the Exodus – as attempting to overcome the power of evil (signified by

²³³ See Zohar 3:224b and 2:65a. A similar depiction of Enoch as one of the redemptive figures appears in *MAT*, ed. Weiss, ‘Purim’, 1:21:

‘The word מאח [...] alludes [as an acronym] also to [the words] ‘temple’ [מקדש], ‘lion’ [אריה], and ‘boar’ [חזיר]. The first Temple was brought down by a lion, which is Nebukhadnezzar [according to *bMeg.* 11a]; the second Temple – by ‘the boar out of the wood’ [Ps. 80:14], which is Esau [see *Gen. Rabba* 65:1]. Similarly, all the saviors are alluded to here [in the acronym מאח]: in the Midian kingdom – [these were] Mordechai [מרדכי], Ester [אסתר], and Harbona [חרבונה] of blessed memory; in Greece – Matattiah [מתתיהו], Eliezer [אליעזר], and Hasmonai [חשמונאי]; in Edom – Messiah [משיח], Elijah [אליהו], Enoch [חנוך].’

וזה נרמז במלת מאח [...] וגם מקדש אריה חזיר, בית ראשון נחרב ע"י אריה זה נבוכדנצר, בית שני ע"י חזיר מיער זה עשו וכן גם כן נרמזו בו כל הגואלים, במדי, מרדכי אסתר חרבונה, ז"ל, ביון, מתתיהו אליעזר חשמונאי, באדום משיח אליהו חנוך.

²³⁴ The numerical value of ‘lion’ (= 216) exceeds that of ‘four times son’ (= 208) by 8. This is remedied by adding to the latter $4 \times 2 = 8$, which represent four instances of the two letters that make up the word בן.

²³⁵ See Vital, *Ets Hayim*, 39:8-9.

²³⁶ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 124, p. 167:

בא להתפלל ולהעביר כח הכלב מן העולם. וזה נרמז במילת אעברה נא, תמלא אותיות נ"א כזה נו"ן אל"ף, תמצא תמן ארבע"ה ב"ן ארי"ה, ר"ל מילת אעברה בהיפוך אותיות ארבעה, שרצה משה שיהיה פני אריה על המזבח שהוא ארבעה פעמים ב"ן כמנין ארי"ה, וכן המספר של נ"א עם המילוי של נ"א, הרי תמן כל"ב ארי"ה, שכוונת אעברה רוצה אני להעביר כלב אריה, שלא יהיה פני כלב בעולם רק ארבעה פעמים ב"ן שהוא מנין ארי"ה, כמ"ש האר"י ז"ל שסוד ארי"ה הוא ארבעה פעמים ב"ן.

the face of the 'dog' on the altar) and to restore the primeval order of the world (signified by the 'face of the lion'), which is the ultimate purpose of the redemptive figure.²³⁷

The link between Elijah and the 'dog' reappears towards the end of the same chapter:

The dogs see Elijah,²³⁸ who – according to the esoteric tradition – belongs to [the world of] Making, [where] he presides over all the servants who obey his will. That is why they [i.e. the dogs] frolic, because it is from there [i.e. from the world of Making] that they draw their nourishment. This is the reason why he [Moses] said: 'for what God is there in heavens or on earth that can do according to your works' [Dt. 3:24]. This [i.e. the words 'your works'] refers to the name 'son', which presides over [lit.: is in] the world of Making, from where all the masters of harsh judgments suckle.²³⁹

In this passage, Elijah and the dogs share the same ontological status within the lowest of the four worlds, on the basis of the implicit parasemantic equation of their names (the numerical value of 52). Moreover, both Elijah and the dogs are governed by the same divine aspect, designated 'son', which shares the same numerical value with them. The 'son' aspect of the divine (which in the Lurianic kabbalah's configuration of divine countenances is paralleled by *Ze'ir Anpin* – the 'small-countenanced one') is appointed over the time of exile, marked by the rupture within the godhead that is reflected in the state of separation between the

²³⁷ On the messianic capacities of Moses in the Lurianic kabbalah see Magid, *From Midrash to Metaphysics*, pp. 103-110. On the Passover in connection to the redemption see Freedman, *Man and the Theogony in Lurianic Cabala*, pp. 198-206.

²³⁸ See *bBava Qama* 60a.

²³⁹ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 124, p. 167:

לפי שהכלבים רואים את אליהו שהוא מסוד העשייה שר על כל משרתים עושי רצונו, לכן שוחקים שמשם הם ניזונים. ולכן אמר אשר מי אל בשמים ובארץ אשר יעשה כמעשיך, שהוא על שם של ב"ן שהוא בעולם העשייה, ושם יונקים כל מרי דדינא.

various divine names. According to Shapira, who follows Luria here, the exilic state of Israel is signified by the numerical value of the double Tetragrammaton ($2 \times 26 = 52$), which corresponds to the value of the name 'son', whereas the redemption is signified by four-times the numerical value of 'son' ($4 \times 52 = 216$), alluding to the unification of the world of Action – the lowest of the four worlds, over which the 'son' presides – with the three worlds that lie above it, thereby reaching the very highest of the divine realms. In the passage quoted above, the first stage in the process of the redemption, taking place within the lowest level of the creation, will be prompted by the messianic figure, whose role is to subdue the forces of evil that inhere in the universe, and to raise the creation to the higher level of existence – the level at which it will enjoy full divine nourishment. This messianic process is depicted in terms of the transposition of a succession of savior-figures (here Elijah, Moses and 'son') from the lowest to highest level of reality, which in the sefirotic realm corresponds to the ascent of Tiferet (the sixth sefirah) to the source of the emanation.

The idea of leading the world from impurity to salvation, or figuratively, from exile to the Land of Israel, appears time and again in *Megaleh Amuqot*, where in the process of transcending evil, Elijah and Enoch feature as the paradigmatic redemptive figures. In the following passage, which has already attracted the attention of scholars, there are two redemptive figures, Elijah and Enoch, coming together to bring peace upon the world. Enoch features here as the first messiah – the son of Joseph, by whose transformative capacities the world is able to purify itself:

The Holy One, blessed be He, showed Moses 1000 weekdays,²⁴⁰ and the two messiahs also amount to the sum of 1000, for [by way of numerology], 'Messiah son of Joseph' [משיח בן יוסף] is [the same as] 'an infant [תינוק] who suckles from his mother's breast' [*b*Berakhot 3a], [both of which amount to] 566, and in the messianic future, 'Messiah son of David' [משיח בן דוד] will be spelled out fully [...]

²⁴⁰ Zohar 2:227b.

[and] amount to 434, which together with ‘Messiah son of Joseph’, who amounts to 566, would yield 1000. [...] As Scripture says [Song 8:12]: ‘our oxen are laden’ [ואלופינו ומסובלים]. This refers to the two messiahs, who allude to the sum of one thousand [אלף], since they are ‘laden’ with suffering for the sake of Israel, as Scripture says [Is 53:4]: ‘Surely, he has borne [נשא] our illness’, and when they come together, then ‘there is no breach’ [Ps. 144:14], ‘[each one] for its fruit [...] will bring a 1000 [pieces] of silver.’²⁴¹

In this passage the ‘infant’, namely Enoch the ‘youth’, is integrated in the configuration of messianic redeemers, Son of Joseph and Son of David.²⁴² He is the first messiah, Son of Joseph, whose incarnation will commence the messianic process. This idea reverberates in later Jewish mysticism, in the thought of Nahman of Bratslav,²⁴³ where, in line with the calculations of *Megaleh Amuqot*, the Josephite messiah is expected to appear in the year [5]566 (i.e. 1806)²⁴⁴ in the bodily form of the ‘youth’.²⁴⁵ The image of an infant messiah, which was

²⁴¹ *MAT*, ‘Va-yikra’, ofan 29, p. 321:

הראה הקב"ה למשה אלף יומין דחול וגם תרין משיחין הם עולים לחשבון אלף כי משיח בן יוסף הוא תינו"ק יונ"ק משד"י אמ"ו בגי' תקס"ו ומשיח בן דוד לעתיד לבא יהי' מלא [...] עולה תל"ד עם משיח בן יוסף שהוא עולה תקס"ו הרי אלף זה [...] וז"ש ואלופינו מסובלים שהם על ב' משיחים שסודם אלף שהם סובלים עבור ישראל כמ"ש אכן חליינו הוא נשא כשיזדווגו יחד אזי אין פרץ יבא בפריו אלף כסף:

²⁴² A very similar notion appears in *MAT*, ‘Tazri’a’, p. 353.

²⁴³ See Green, *Tormented Master*, pp. 193, 215 n. 14; Mark, *The Scroll of Secrets*, pp. 134-144. Zvi Mark’s work deals with *Megaleh Amuqot* as a source for Nahman of Bratslav’s messianic ideas, but throughout his discussion of the messiah as a ‘child’, an ‘infant’ or a ‘youth’ in Nahman’s *Secret Scroll*, where he offers a number of earlier child-messiah models, Mark fails to mention the model of Enoch-the youth, which may have come to Nahman through Nathan Shapira.

²⁴⁴ The numerical value of משיח בן יוסף [Messiah son of Joseph] by way of numerology equals 566, which in Hebrew letters is rendered as קסות, the year 1806.

²⁴⁵ See Mark, *The Scroll of Secrets*, pp. 120-155. Cf. Nahman of Bratslav’s story of the blind beggar, where the main protagonist is modeled on Enoch, the ‘youth’ who transcends both time and mundane reality: ‘I am very old, but still I am young. I have not yet begun to live; yet despite that I am very old. This is not just my own claim; I have proof for this from the great eagle. Etc.’ (*Sipurei Ma’asiyot* 243, cited in Mark, *The Scroll*, p. 153).

incorporated in the Bratslavian *imaginaire*, echoes Nathan Shapira's notion of the messianic 'youth', which he in turn most likely derived from the medieval Ashkenazi Pietistic sources on Enoch-Metatron. The Bratslavian interpretation represents the furthest link in a long chain of mystical traditions depicting the messianic development of the 'youth' as a supreme angelic figure – in some instances a divine hypostasis, who governs the people of Israel, presides over their liturgy and rituals, mediates between the human and the divine realms, and ultimately effects the redemption from exile. These traditions originated in the *heikhalot* literature, were elaborated more fully in medieval Ashkenazi Pietistic circles, and in various forms penetrated early-modern kabbalistic and hasidic thought. The early mystical sources accentuated the notion of Enoch – the 'youth' as an angel of human origin, who mediates between earth and heaven – the site of the encounter between man and God. In the later renditions of this motif, the emphasis shifts to the salvific qualities of the 'youth', who becomes a human incarnation of the messiah and is expected to trigger the redemptive process on earth. Shapira in turn places the Enoch-'youth' constellation of ideas in the 'in-between' sphere: his Enoch intercedes on behalf of Israel on earth and leads them out of exile, but at the same time his actions mirror the gradual unification of all realms with their divine source.

4. CONCLUSIONS.

The term *na'ar* features in *Megaleh Amuqot* more than 250 times (in the printed versions alone). It is the appellation that Shapira uses most frequently in connection to the Metatronic constellation of ideas. The term takes on several meanings, which depend as much on the particular course of Shapira's commentary as on the Lurianic framework in which it is set. And yet despite Shapira's evident reliance on Lurianic concepts, his commentaries preserve, and further develop, certain associations that were current in medieval Ashkenazi mystical circles, chief among them the 'youth' *mythologoumenon*.

Among the numerous occurrences of the 'youth' in *Megaleh 'Amuqot*, those that associate him with the High Priesthood, 'sonship', and the redemption are among the most frequent. Moreover, in developing the 'youth' motif Shapira

employs patterns of interpretation that are most typical of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's medieval Ashkenazi circle. These include the 'Enochic' exegesis of Ex. 14:2, the motif of 'dog' and Elijah, and various computations based on the numerical value of 52. By so doing, Shapira establishes his works as carriers of the mystical-magical lore of medieval Ashkenaz upon which he drew extensively, either overtly or not. These traditions, with their special interest in Enochic exegesis, exerted more influence on later Jewish mystical circles than has previously been assumed, notably on the messianic concepts of Bratslavian Hasidim.

The 'youth' figure – as *na'ar* or *ben* – in Shapira's work serves not only as a symbolic reference to the divine realm, which is how it would be viewed through the Lurianic lenses, but also as a radical hermeneutical device prompting the interpretative process to proliferate in multiple directions. This brings Shapira's mode of thinking closer to the medieval Ashkenazi commentaries of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, both of whose exegetical and homiletic approach he adapted and expanded.

Chapter 3: The triad of angels as a medium of prayer

1. INTRODUCTION: METATRON IN THE HEAVENLY LITURGY.

The liturgical aspect of the Enoch-Metatron constellation plays a pivotal role in Nathan Shapira's kabbalistic writings. In his works Metatron appears as the High Priest who serves in the heavenly Temple, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, but also as the leader of daily human worship. Both the priestly and the liturgical imagery associated with the angel Metatron originated in the *heikhalot* literature, in which Metatron oversees the angelic liturgy before the Throne of Glory.²⁴⁶ However, in *Megaleh Amuqot* Shapira significantly broadens the liturgical scope of the Metatronic constellation by applying a medieval mystical and kabbalistic vocabulary to the angelic role in mediating human prayer.

As Martin Cohen has pointed out in the context of *Shiur Qomah*, Metatron's role on high, wherein he 'is more the heavenly choirmaster and beadle than the celestial High Priest', is 'entirely liturgical'.²⁴⁷ Not only does Metatron lead the angelic liturgy, but he also presides over human liturgical activity. Furthermore, in the *heikhalot* literature Metatron is assigned the task of preparing the 'descenders to the Chariot' to take part in the angelic rite in front of the Throne of Glory.²⁴⁸ Andrei Orlov has noted, on the basis of *2Enoch*, that both the priestly and the liturgical functions of Metatron can be associated with the priestly office of Enoch, the seventh antediluvian patriarch.²⁴⁹ This link between the human and the angelic realms of Metatron's priesthood is even more evident in *3Enoch*, in which, as Nathanael Deutsch has remarked, Metatron functions as a 'mythological prototype of *merkavah* mystics'.²⁵⁰ In his view, the parallel between mystic and supreme angel constitutes a model to be emulated during the mystical experience, viewed in terms of 'angelification' and 'enthronement' of the

²⁴⁶ See *3Enoch* 7, 15b; *Heikhalot Zutarti* (Synopsis § 390); *Shi'ur Qomah* (Synopsis § 385).

²⁴⁷ Cohen, *Shi'ur Qomah*, p. 134.

²⁴⁸ See *3Enoch* 1:9-10, and cf. Alexander, *3Enoch*, p. 132.

²⁴⁹ Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 70-75; 113-120; Cf. *2Enoch* 18:8.

²⁵⁰ Deutsch, *Guardians of the Gate*, p. 34.

mystic.²⁵¹ All these observations were already referred to in the previous chapter, alongside the discussion on the priestly and messianic dimensions of the ‘youth’-Metatron figure.²⁵²

In *Megaleh Amuqot* the issue of ritual is seldom introduced in the prescriptive terms of a mystical manual, a *genre* that was adopted by some kabbalists.²⁵³ Rather, Shapira’s views on the matter are woven into his kabbalistic commentary (*derush*), which follows the logic and sequence of the biblical narrative. However, most frequently, it is through the Enoch-Metatron cluster of motifs that Shapira inserts ritualistic and liturgical notions into the biblical text on which he is commenting. Thus Metatron stands for the model leader who joins together the liturgy and ritual action in heaven with its counterpart on earth. As such he is associated with the High Priest, the Temple service and the cultic objects (such as the altar and the priestly garments, as well as the mezuzah, talit and phylacteries), and most importantly – with the daily order of prayers.

Moreover, Metatron is the entity that receives Israel’s prayers while also transmitting them to the higher levels of the divine world. These processes are expressed in Shapira’s work through hypostatic imagery whereby Metatron features as both the central figure in the created world and as a channel mediating between various sefirotic levels, serving as a vehicle for the divine influx. In some instances he appears as the supreme angel – a central entity in the heavenly world, who is in charge of the entire Jewish rite, while on other occasions he is identified with prayer itself and as such constitutes the means by which humans can affect the divine world. In each of these cases, in the context of either the priestly or the regular daily ritual, Metatronic associations are crucial to Shapira’s kabbalistic commentaries.

²⁵¹ Ibid.

²⁵² See chapter 2 above, pp. 65-109.

²⁵³ The most famous examples of this *genre* are Abraham Abulafia’s manual of kabbalistic techniques, *Hayei ha-Olam ha-Ba*, as well as several other works belonging to the so-called ecstatic strand of kabbalah. The Lurianic writings also abound in descriptions of the minutiae of kabbalistic ritual, e.g. Hayim Vital’s *Sha’ar ha-Kavanot* or the latter part of his *Sha’ar Ru’ah ha-Qodesh*. See also Idel, *Studies in Ecstatic Kabbalah*, pp. 14-18; idem, *Hasidism*, pp. 81-86.

Although most of the Metatronic themes associated with ritual and worship originate in the *heikhalot* imagery, Shapira's works reveal a strong reliance on medieval Ashkenazi antecedents, which would have reached him either directly or through the mediation of later kabbalistic writings, zoharic or Lurianic. The present chapter investigates these themes in *Megaleh Amuqot*, tracing their medieval Ashkenazi background and major parallels in the kabbalistic tradition.

2. ELIJAH-SANDALFON IN THE ASHKENAZI ROSH HA-SHANAH LITURGY.

The resemblance between the Rosh ha-Shanah motifs in *Megaleh Amuqot* and the medieval Ashkenazi writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo of Erfurt has been observed by Yehuda Liebes, who suggested that these writings exerted a common formative influence on the Ashkenazi New Year liturgical poetry and on Nathan Shapira's work.²⁵⁴ Following this observation, Moshe Idel has discerned the same sequence of numerological associations featuring in both Nehemiah ben Shlomo's and Nathan Shapira's texts, all relating to the Rosh ha-Shanah liturgy, and demonstrating a close relationship between these two Ashkenazi thinkers.²⁵⁵ The affinities between them are evident in the following excerpt from *Megaleh Amuqot*:

The esoteric meaning of 'Sandalfon' [as] 'one wheel on earth'²⁵⁶ is contained in the esoteric meaning of [the phrase] 'Elijah in four'.²⁵⁷ That is to say, Elijah is in the fourth world, the World of Making. This was hinted at in the statement of our Sages who said:²⁵⁸ Elijah [who is] Remembered for Good [ז"ל= זכור לטוב]. That is to say, the words זכור לטוב [= 280] allude to the place from which the Holy spirit was going to raise Elijah

²⁵⁴ See Liebes, 'Mal'akhei Qol ha-Shofar', pp. 177-184; Idel, 'Al ha-Perushim', p. 239-240.

²⁵⁵ Idel, 'Al ha-Perushim', p. 340.

²⁵⁶ *bHagigah* 13b; *Pesiqta Rabbati* 20.

²⁵⁷ *bBerakhot* 4b.

²⁵⁸ *bBerakhot* 3b.

[to heaven], that is, to the place of Sandalfon [= 280], who[se name], by way of numerology, has the same value as [the words] זכור לטוב.²⁵⁹ But [in the case of] ‘Elijah in four’, that is to say, when we spell out [the expression ז"ל אליהו הנביא fully,] with four words, namely, as we say it in the grace after meals: זכור לטוב, אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב, a different matter is alluded to, [i.e.] that Elijah governs the ‘four’, that is, the four hundred men of Esau.²⁶⁰ [...] ²⁶¹ For God said about Enoch that he is in the World of Formation, and [He said] ‘because I have enough’ [Gen. 33:11] in reference to Elijah, who is in the World of Making, that he will come with the Messiah Son of Joseph, as was explained in the verse: ‘His glory is like the firstling of his bullock’ [Dt. 33:17]. This is the Son of Joseph. [But the phrase] קרני ראם קרניו [‘His horns are like the horns of the ram’, Dt. 33:17] refers to Elijah the prophet, זכור לטוב, who is alluded to by the initial letters of the words קרני ראם קרניו. The esoteric meaning of [the acronym] קר"ק²⁶² is that on New Year’s day, during the sequence of [the ram’s horn (*shofar*) blasts referred to by the acronym] קר"ק, one should direct one’s intention to [the expression] זכור לטוב [fully spelled out with four words], since this [four-word expression] corresponds to the number [4 referring to the fourth world, the World of Making], over which he is appointed. For indeed, he belongs to the third blast [of the ram’s horn], which esoterically alludes to [the World of] Making, as the sequence of three blasts alludes to the

²⁵⁹ See the analogous reasoning in da Fano, *Yonat Elem* 15, p. 24.

²⁶⁰ Cf. Gen. 32:6: ‘We came to your brother Esau, and also he comes to meet you, and four hundred men with him.’

²⁶¹ Shapira elaborates here on numerological equivalences pointing to Enoch-Metatron’s rule over the World of Formation and Elijah’s rule over the World of Making.

²⁶² This is an acronym of *teqi’ah, teru’ah, teqi’ah* (counting the second letter in each word, as the first one is the same in all three), which is the sequence of shofar blasts during the New Year service.

three worlds [of Creation, Formation, and Making], but when one includes in the count the World of Emanation, then altogether they make up four worlds, and Elijah is in the fourth, that is to say, in the World of Making, which is the fourth world.²⁶³

According to Idel, the above text corroborates Liebes' observation of Shapira's acquaintance with medieval Ashkenazi commentaries on the sequence of shofar blasts during the New Year's Day service.²⁶⁴ In the passages quoted above,

²⁶³ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 250, pp. 252-253.

סוד סנדלפון אופן אחד בארץ בסוד אליהו בארבע, ר"ל אליהו הוא בעולם הרביעי עולם העשייה, ונרמז במ"ש רז"ל אליהו ז"ל זכור לטוב, ר"ל במלת זכור לטוב נרמז באיזה מקום רוח ה' ישא את אליהו, דהיינו במקום סנדלפון שהוא בגימטריא 'זכור לטוב שהוא במספר שוה. אבל אליהו בארבע, ר"ל כשכותבים ארבע תיבות כמו שאנו אומרים בברכת המזון אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב, שם נרמז ענין אחר שאליהו הוא המושל בארבע, דהיינו בארבע מאות איש של עשו [...] כי אמר אלהים על חנוך שהוא בעולם היצירה, וכי יש לי כל על אליהו שהוא בעולם העשייה, שהוא יבא עם משיח בן יוסף כמבואר בפסוק בכור שור הדר לו, וזה בן יוסף, קרני ראם קרניו, זה אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב, שכן נרמז בר"ת 'קרני ראם' קרניו, שהוא סוד קר"ק שצריך לכוון בראש השנה בסדר קר"ק על אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב דסליק הכי בחושבנא שהוא ממונה עליו, שכן הוא בסדר השלישי שהוא בסוד עשייה בשלישה סדרים שהם סוד שלשה עולמות, אבל כשחושבים עולם האצילות עמהם, אזי ארבע עולמות הם אליהו הוא בארבע, ר"ל בעשייה שהוא עולם הרביעי.

²⁶⁴ Similar numerological equations occur in the writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, for example, in 'Commentary on the piyut "Hayot Meruba'ot ha-Kise"', MS Cambridge 858.1, fol. 13a:

And who is appointed over the [shofar] blasts? Over the blast the angel presides and he raises it before the Throne of Glory. Over the first blast שרף [= 580] is appointed, and he is Sandalfon. And you should know that 'blast' [תקיעה = 580, without counting the final letter] by way of numerology [equals] שרף [= 580] as well as 'tefilin' [תפילין = 580]. [This] teaches that [he, i.e. Sandalphon] conducts the sound of the shofar to the head of the Holy One, Blessed be He, and [it] teaches that the blast goes before the Holy One, Blessed be He [...] קר"ק amounts [by way of numerology] to four hundred, and [this] teaches that he [i.e. Sandalfon] proceeds from a firmament, a firmament whose measure is four hundred, on to the head of The Place [i.e. God]. [The acronym] קר"ק [whose numerological value is 400] by way of numerology equals שטניאל [= 400], and this is the name of the angel of death.

ומי ממונה על התקיעות: כי על התקיעה מלאך ממונה ומוליכה לפני הקב"ה. על התקיעה ראשונה ממונה שרף והוא סנדלפון ותדע תקיעה בגי' שרף ובגימ' תפילין. מלמד שמוליך הקול של שופר על ראש הקב"ה ומלמד שהתקיעה הולכת לפני הקב"ה [...] קר"ק חשבונו ד' מאות ומלמד שהולך מן ריקע וריקע שהוא ד' מאות על ראש המקום. קר"ק [תקיעה תרועה תקיעה] בגימ' שטניאל והוא שם של מלאך המות.

Shapira indeed employs the same numerological equation as the one we encountered in the medieval commentary on the New Year piyut, between the words ‘Elijah the Prophet [who is] Remembered for Good’ and the acronym קר”ק, which stands for the sequence of shofar blasts, both amounting to 400.²⁶⁵ He moreover draws on the motif of the ‘two horns’ [קרנים], which often figures in his writings in a messianic context, wherein the horns represent a pair of angels that will accompany the Messiah at his advent in the future-to-come.²⁶⁶

Cf. *Mahzor la-Yamim ha-Noraim*, ‘Rosh ha-Shanah’, pp. 216-217. Similar phrases appear in *Merkavah Shelemah*, fol. 25b, which has already been identified as stemming from Nehemiah ben Shlomo’s circle. See Liebes, ‘Mal’akhei Qol ha-Shofar’, p. 173-174, 177; Idel, ‘Al ha-Perushim’, p. 240; Green, *Keter*, p. 57 n. 26.

²⁶⁵ In MS Cambridge 858.2, fol. 63b, *Commentary on the Piyut ‘Ha-Ohez’* (a liturgical hymn recited during the New Year service), probably written by Nehemiah ben Shlomo, similar equations, based on the value of 400, appear in connection with Metatron’s names:

קר”ק [=400] by way of numerology equals ‘Elijah the Prophet [who is] Remembered for Good [אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב = 400], and he lifts up the [sound of] קר”ק [i.e. *teqi’ah*, *teru’ah*, *teqi’ah*]. יש”ע יה”ה [= 400] – this is the name of the Prince of the Countenance, Metatron.

קר”ק בגי’ אליהו הנביא זכור לטוב, והוא מעלה את הקר”ק, יש”ע יה”ה כך הוא שם של שר הפנים מטטרון.

On this commentary and its authorship, as well as its influence on the Lurianic liturgy and on Nathan Neta Shapira of Kraków, see Idel, ‘Perushav shel R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo la-Piyut’, pp. 165-202, esp. 184-192; idem, ‘Al R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi me-Erfurt ve-R. Itshaq Luria Ashkenazi (Ha-Ari)’, pp. 328-345. Cf. Also MS Jerusalem 8 476, fol. 37a, and the *Sidur Naftali Hirtz Treves*, p. 4b.

²⁶⁶ Cf. *Razi’el ha-Malakh*, p. 154, published as ‘Commentary on the 42-Letter Name’ of Nemehiah ben Shlomo’, in Idel, ‘The Commentaries’, p. 234:

הקב טנע [in some recensions of this text the phrase reads הקד טנע, which better fits the numerological equation], by way of numerology is ראם, as Scripture says: ‘and his horns are the horns of the ram’, with them he shall gore the peoples’ [Dt. 33:17]. ראם is [an acronymic reference to the angels] Rafael, Uriel [in Hebrew spelled with an *alef*, אוריאל] and Michael, who are the camps of the Shekhinah, and in the Time to Come, they will help the Messiah.’

הקב טנע בגימטריא רא”ם, לפי שנאמר וקרני רא”ם קרניו בהם עמים ינגח. רא”ם, רפא”ל אוריאל”ל מיכאל”ל, הן מחנות של שכינה, והן עתידין לעזור למשיח.

Cf. also Ms. Oxford-Bodleian 388, fols. 82b-85a. The motif of ‘horns’ and its numerological associations is, according to Idel, rarely to be found elsewhere in the Jewish mystical tradition, but

In addition to these numerological equations that shed light on the medieval Ashkenazi sources of Shapira's messianic ideas, the passage quoted above introduces a ritual context, within which the intention of prayer during the New Year service should be directed to the appropriate angelic entity. In Shapira's text the structure of the liturgy corresponds to the structure of the upper world, each part of which is linked to one of the angelic names by means of numerological associations. Thus in the passage quoted above, the prayer that accompanies each sound in the sequence of shofar blasts during the New Year service corresponds to an equivalent entity within the heavenly world. Drawing on Charles S. Peirce's semiotic terminology, this relation between prayer and angelic names resembles a definition of the indexical sign, that is, a sign in which the signifier (i.e. the prayer) is causally correlated to the signified (i.e. an angelic name).²⁶⁷ In other words, in Shapira's kabbalistic interpretation, which follows the path of the medieval mystical writings associated with Nehemiah ben Shlomo, the words making up the prayer text invest each of the angelic names with ritual efficacy.²⁶⁸

Moreover, in Shapira's works the parasemantic and syntactic facets of a biblical or liturgical text determine the intention of prayer. Thus, in *Megaleh Amuqot* the correspondence between the sequence of words in a liturgical text and the angelic names to be invoked during the prayer is established primarily by means of various numerological and linguistic operations. The numerological equations, although derived from the Ashkenazi mystical tradition, give rise to a

it features several times in the writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo. Although Idel agrees that some of the motifs that appear in *Megaleh Amuqot* may not have stemmed directly from the extant versions of Nehemiah's text (as they appear in print for the first time, e.g. in *Sefer Razi'el*, in the late 17th century), he points to the possible existence of other works by Nehemiah, in which the concepts, images and terms appearing in *Megaleh Amuqot* may have already been developed in association with each other, and thus would have been readily available to Nathan Shapira. See Idel, 'Al ha-Pershim', pp. 240-241. For more on the motif of 'horns' in Nathan Shapira's works, see chapter 1 above, section 3.1, pp. 56-64.

²⁶⁷ See Peirce, *Collected Papers*, vol. 2, p. 228. Within the ritual-liturgical praxis, it is this intention that establishes an indexical relation between the words of prayer and their referents.

²⁶⁸ See Kreinath, 'Ritual: Theoretical Issues in the Study of Religion', pp. 106-107.

new ontological structure, wherein the order of the divine worlds, which reflects the descending levels of divine reality, plays a crucial role. Each level of reality, described in terms of the sequence of four worlds (Emanation, Creation, Formation and Making), corresponds to one part of the series of shofar blasts as well as to a specific angelic name. This correspondence determines the intention of the prayer during the rite and directs it, on the one hand, to a particular level of the divine realm, and on the other hand to a specific angelic name. Thus Shapira employs numerological equivalences stemming from the medieval writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle within the same liturgical context from which they were originally derived.

Not only does Shapira preserve all the primary connotations of the numerological equivalences upon which he draws, but he also enriches them with much more elaborate references, as in the following passage from *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah*, which again addresses the issue of the shofar blasts while employing the imagery associated with Elijah:

That is why Pinhas, who is Elijah²⁶⁹ [...] was able to defeat the Midianite kings by [virtue of] donning the phylacteries.²⁷⁰ First, he blessed over the arm, which is the tefilin of the hand, then [over] the crown of the head, which is [the tefilin] of the head. The point of the matter is the esoteric meaning of the word עת"ק [= 570],²⁷¹ which by way of numerology amounts to [the value of the word] תפלין [= 570]. This is why [Scripture] says about Pinhas: 'But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of a ram' [Ps. 92:10], for with regard to the wicked the horn was taken away, as Scripture says: 'for, lo, thine enemies shall perish' [Ps. 92:9]. But [the verse] 'my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn

²⁶⁹ On the Lurianic tradition that Pinhas was an incarnation of Elijah, see Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* 32, pp. 303-307; da Fano, *Kanefei Yonah* 3: 111, pp. 297-298.

²⁷⁰ See *Song of Songs Rabba* 84:4.

²⁷¹ This word comes from Ps. 75:5: 'Lift not up your horn on high: speak not with a stiff [עתק] neck', which Shapira quotes earlier in the same chapter of the commentary.

of a ram' [corresponds], as Scripture says, [to]: 'His horns are like the horns of the ram' [Dt. 33:17], [for] the initial letters [of each word in this verse] constitute the acronym קר"ק [= 400], which esoterically alludes to the sequence of the [shofar] blasts, over which זכור [הנביא] which [= 400] is appointed, [for the value of all these words] by way of numerology is 400.²⁷²

In the above passage the sequence of actions performed while donning the phylacteries, first of the arm and then of the head, corresponds to the sequence of shofar blasts on Rosh ha-Shanah. Shapira joins these two distinct ideas on the basis of the medieval Ashkenazi commentaries on the New Year liturgy,²⁷³ where the term 'Tefilin' becomes one of the names of the angel Sandalphon, who is appointed over the first shofar blast (*teqi'ah*). In Shapira's work, Pinhas appears as an incarnation of the prophet Elijah, and both figures are associated with the angel Sandalfon. Although the connection between Pinhas and Sandalfon is not overt, it is clear that here, as in many other instances in *Megaleh Amuqot*, Shapira is following a tradition, which identified Pinhas and the prophet Elijah with the earthly incarnation of this angel, both of them having reached his ontological level.²⁷⁴ Thus Shapira's association of donning the phylacteries with the blowing of the shofar is justified not only by the common ritual context of both, but also by a string of numerological equations inherited from the medieval Ashkenazi commentaries of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle.

In the above passage from *Megaleh Amuqot*, the donning of the tefilin parallels the blowing of the shofar, since both actions relate to the angel Sandalfon and to Elijah, both of whom signify the World of Making, that is, the level of

²⁷² *MAT*, ed. Weiss, 'Pinhas', p. 257:

ולכן פנחס שהוא אליהו [...] זכה לטרוף מלכי מדין בהנחת תפילין בתחלה ברך על זרוע שהיא תפילין של יד ואחר כך קדקד שהוא של ראש, וטעם הדבר לפי שסוד עת"ק בגימטריא תפילין ולכן גבי פנחס אמר ותרם כראים קרני לפי שגבי רשעים נלקח הקרן כ"ש הנה אויבך יאבדו, אבל ותרם כראים קרני כ"ש קרני ראם קרניו ר"ת קר"ק שהוא סוד סדר תקיעה שממונה עליהם אליהו זכור לטוב בגימ' ת'.

²⁷³ See above, notes 264-265, and Liebes, 'Mal'akhei Qol ha-Shofar', p. 173.

²⁷⁴ Cf. *MA ReNaV*, chapter 122 & 124. See also Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, 24:14, p. 414; Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim* 32, pp. 303-307.

human action. Hence the blowing of the shofar is deemed to be as instantly effective as was the ritual of donning of the tefilin by Pinhas. This is achieved by means of the parasemantic and therefore ontological interconnection between, on the one hand, Sandalfon, Elijah and Pinhas, and on the other hand certain stages of the ritual, which refer to both the angelic and the human levels of reality.²⁷⁵

Moreover, it is important to note that in most instances, Shapira associates the tefilin with the angel Metatron, following the medieval Ashkenazi Pietistic tradition whereby the divine name Shaday, which is visually formed by the knot of the tefilin, and the angelic name Metatron have the same numerical value of 314.²⁷⁶ Only in a few cases does Shapira replace Metatron in this context with the angel Sandalfon, following the *heikhalot* tradition where Sandalfon is the angel who ties the phylacteries on God's head.²⁷⁷ In general, Shapira rarely blurs the distinction between the Metatronic and the Sandalfonic constellation of motifs, but in the passage quoted above, he connects the tefilin to Sandalfon and to the world of Making over which he presides, rather than to Metatron and 'his' world of Formation. In this instance, it seems that what determined Shapira's interpretative choice was the medieval Ashkenazi commentary associating the tefilin with one of Sandalfon's names, an association which evolved from the *heikhalot* imagery of Sandalfon.

²⁷⁵ On the 'performative' effect of the ritual see Tambiah, 'A Performative Approach to Ritual', pp. 113-69, esp. p. 121, where he states that certain rituals 'enact and incarnate cosmological conceptions', and p. 130, where he claims that cosmological constructs underlie rites, which in turn act out cosmological conceptions. See further Bell, *Ritual Theory, Ritual Practice*, pp. 41-46; Lesses, *Ritual Practices to Gain Power*, pp. 161-173; Janowitz, *The Poetics of Ascent*, pp. 83-99.

²⁷⁶ Cf. *MAT*, 'Vayikra', ofan 8, fol. 2b. The connection between Metatron and the tefilin is made also in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*, §§39 and 46. See also the introduction to *Sodei Razaya* by Eleazar of Worms, pp. 2-3, where the name Shaday appears on the tefilin in reference to the hidden numerical value of 500, the number of years separating heaven from earth, which equals the height of the great angel who stretches between these two realms, and who, according to *bHagigah* 13b, is called Sandalfon.

²⁷⁷ This idea appears in *Ma'aseh Merkavah*, published in Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 112; Schäfer, *Synopse*, 582, and similarly in *Synopse* § 655 and 550, based on MS JTS 8128. See Green, *Keter*, p. 54.

Like the commentaries originating in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, both passages quoted above from *Megaleh Amuqot* employ multiple biblical verses in which the word 'horn(s)' appears alongside the image of the shofar blasts. As has already been pointed out, 'horn' not only signifies the shofar as an instrument; it also carries messianic connotations.²⁷⁸ In both Shapira's text and his medieval Ashkenazi sources, 'horn' refers to Elijah and his appearance alongside the Messiah in the future-to-come. Moreover, in Shapira's works, both Sandalfon and Elijah are consistently associated with the fourth world, the World of Making. The act of blowing the 'horn' therefore refers to the lowest of the four worlds and to the messianic figure that emerges from it. It may be assumed that the preliminary messianic activity, signified by the appearance of Elijah and associated with the redemptive restoration of the fourth world, ensues from the properly intended prayer that accompanies the rite of blowing the shofar. Thus the New Year prayer and the shofar blasts are invested with an efficacy that parallels that of Pinhas' donning of the phylacteries, which according to the midrashic interpretation of the biblical narrative, brought about an immediate positive effect.

These excerpts from *Megaleh Amuqot* demonstrate that Shapira adopted the medieval Ashkenazi association of Elijah and Sandalfon with the shofar blasts. He placed this association within a new linguistic frame of references, and developed around it an elaborate structure of parallel angelic and human worlds, while still preserving its original messianic import and liturgical context.

3. MEDIATION OF PRAYER THROUGH ANGELS.

3.1. The three worlds.

In *Megaleh Amuqot*, the three worlds emanated from the highest divine source are usually signified by three angelic names: the world of Creation by Akatriel,²⁷⁹ the

²⁷⁸ See Idel, 'Al ha-Perushim', pp. 237-238 and above, chapter 1, pp. 70-79.

²⁷⁹ This angelic name is known from *bBerakhot* 7a, wherein it signifies a manifestation of the divine presence in the Temple vis-à-vis the priest Ishmael. Akatriel's name occurs a number of times in the *heikhalot* literature, for example in *Synopse* 501, 597, 667, and in *3Enoch* 15b, p. 21f. In these early sources, the name has been explained either as a designation of God's crown (see Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 53) or as the name of the crowned manifestation of God (see

world of Formation by Metatron, and the world of Making by Sandalfon.²⁸⁰ Each of the three angels is appointed over the world associated with his name and assumes a function connected to that particular level of reality.²⁸¹ Since the worlds, from the highest to the lowest, deteriorate in terms of proximity to their supernal divine source, the hierarchy of angels is sequenced from the most potent to the least. In many instances in *Megaleh Amuqot*, this sequence of three angels features in a liturgical context, wherein it is assigned the task of mediating Israel's prayer:

[There are] three princes of the Countenance who receive all the prayers of Israel: Katriel, Metatron, Sandalfon. [...] The Torah is [formed out of] sixty myriad letters, for the word ךמס [which is the name of the letter ס representing the number 60,

Green, *Keter*, pp. 62-64). On the changes in the meaning of the name Akatriel in the medieval Jewish tradition, see Abrams, 'From Divine Shape to Angelic Being', pp. 43-63.

²⁸⁰ The name Sandalfon appears in *bHagigah* 13b and refers to the angel who 'binds crown to his Master'. On this passage, see Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, 130-136; Green, *Keter*, pp. 22-23. Sandalfon appears numerous times in the *heikhalot* materials, as well as in later Jewish mystical and kabbalistic sources. Arthur Green claims that Sandalfon nearly vanishes from later, post-medieval Jewish angelology, where he is subsumed in the figure of Metatron. This claim cannot be sustained, as in 17th-century Ashkenazi kabbalistic works, such as Nathan Shapira's *Megaleh Amuqot*, Sandalfon certainly occupies an important position. As Green correctly notes, Sandalfon and Elijah are merged into one figure in Naftali Bacharach's *Emeq ha-Melekh*, but this cannot be viewed as an exception; it is but one instance of what must have been a tradition of the Ashkenazi kabbalah prior to the publication of *Emeq ha-Melekh* in 1648 (11 years after the publication of the first edition of *Megaleh Amuqot*), whose author seems to have been aware of Nathan Shapira's writings. This tradition, stemming from medieval Ashkenazi mystical sources in which Sandalfon featured as Elijah's counterpart, was adopted also by the Safedian kabbalah, where Enoch and Elijah were transformed into the angels Metatron and Sandalfon respectively. See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim* 24:14, p. 416; da Fano, *Kanefei Yonah* 3:91, p. 285.

²⁸¹ Metatron and Sandalfon often appear as a pair in the kabbalistic tradition. In Lurianic kabbalah, Metatron governs the third world, the world of Formation (*Yetsirah*), and Sandalfon presides over the fourth, the world of Making (*Asiyah*). See *Kanefei Yonah*, 3:67-68, 4:35, 5:42. On Akatriel as the 'head' (*rosh*) or 'crown' (*atarah*) of the second world, the world of Creation (*Beri'ah*), see *ibid.*, 2:71, p. 168 and 4:36, p. 354. On the triad of angels governing these three worlds see *ibid.*, 3:69, p. 273.

and which, when it is fully spelled out, constitutes the acronym of [סנדלפון, מטטרון, כתרִיאל] alludes, from the bottom up, to the three princes of the world, and to the three worlds [of] Creation, Formation, Making.²⁸²

In this passage, the three angels establish continuity between the human and the divine realms, serving as mediators of Israel's prayer. Their three names, joined together in the acronym סמ"ך, form an uninterrupted unity that points to the unity of the entire Torah, since Shapira associates them with the letter *samekh* which represents the number 60 and thus alludes to the sixty myriad letters which the whole Torah is traditionally believed to comprise.²⁸³ As a result, the Torah, which reflects the absolute wholeness of the divine on both the linguistic and the ontological levels, becomes a token of the unity of the divine worlds, paralleled by the unity of the angelic triad of Sandalfon, Metatron and [A]katriel. This unity is what ensures the efficacy of human prayer, which is conveyed to heaven in three consecutive stages, each denoted by one of the three angels. The following passage elaborates on this idea, placing it in the context of the Yom Kippur liturgy:

²⁸²MAT, 'Pinhas', ed. Weiss, p. 74:

ג' שרי הפנים המקבלין כל צלותין דישראל כתרִיאל מטטרון סנדלפון [...] תורה ס' רבוא אותיות כי במלת סמך נרמזין מלמטה למעלה ג' שרי העולם מג' עולמות ב"ע .

See also *ibid.*, pericope 'Vayikra', ofan 47, p. 9:

[Ps. 91:1 says]: 'shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty' [...]. There are three levels [included] in this verse, paralleling the three worlds of Creation, Formation and Making, which are hinted at in the initial letters of the words יושב בסתר עליון ['dwells in the secret place of the most High', Ps. 91:1]: Creation, Formation and Making.

בצל שדי יתלונן [...] הנה ג' דרגין בהאי קרא לקביל ג' עולמות ב"ע נרמזין בר"ת י"ושב ב"סתר ע"ליון ב"ריאה י"צירה ע"שיה.

²⁸³ For a different view of the letter 'samekh' see Eleazar of Worms, *Sodei Razaya*, 'Sefer Alpha-Beta', the letter 'samekh', pp. 81-87, where the 'samekh' signifies the angel Michael. On p. 84 of the same work, the numerical value of the fully spelled out name of the letter סמ"ך [60+40+20 = 120] equals that of the phrase 'this is Michael' [מיכאל זהו], which amounts to 120 if זהו is spelled with a final ם as זהוא. Michael, considered to be the High Priest and the most prominent of the angels on high, especially in the *heikhalot* literature, is often paired in Eleazar's writings with the angel Gabriel, but Metatron, Sandalfon and Akatriel are never associated with the letter ס.

There is a host [of independent meanings] in each and every letter [of the Hebrew alphabet]. The letter סמך [samekh] hints at the three worlds of Creation, Formation and Making, [and at] the three [angels] who bind crowns,²⁸⁴ from below upwards [namely, from the lowest to the highest of the worlds]: Sandalfon, Metatron, and Katriel.²⁸⁵ [...] He gave us three expressions [לשונות] of expiation, forgiveness and atonement [כ"פרה מ"חילה ס"ליחה], whose initial letters [in reverse order, namely 'from below upwards'] form the acronym סמ"ך, because by means of these three Satan is subjugated [...] Moses, who lived for 120 years, is surely signified by [the letters] ס, מ, ך [whose combined numerical value is 120]: [for] 20 [כ] years [he lived] in Egypt, [for] 60 [ס] in Kush and Midian, and [for] 40 [מ] in the desert. This signifies the three worlds.²⁸⁶

The passage employs the idea of the multiple meanings of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, which allows for each letter to refer to a variety of angelic figures, this leading to the Torah being viewed as a text consisting of a string of angelic names.²⁸⁷ Similarly the liturgical text, or indeed, any other Hebrew religious text, has its referents in the angelic world, for the angelic names share with it the same ontological source, that is, the Hebrew alphabet. Thus prayer

²⁸⁴ On the ancient Jewish motif of binding crowns (or diadems) to God by means of prayer, see Green, *Keter*, esp. pp. 33-48.

²⁸⁵ In *Megaleh Amuqot* the name Katriel is sometimes spelt with an initial letter aleph as Akatriel, and sometimes deficiently as Katriel, depending on the numerical and linguistic operation being applied.

²⁸⁶ *MAT*, 'Tavo', p. 623:

בכל אות ואות יש בו צבא בפני עצמו ובאות סמ"ך נרמז ג' עולמות בי"ע ג' קושרי כתרם מלמטה למעלה סנ"דלפון מ"טטרון כ"תריאל [...] נתן ג' לשונות כ"פרה מ"חילה ס"ליחה נוטריקון ס' מלמטה למעלה כי בג' אילו מכניעין ס"טן [...] משה שחי ק"ך שנה סי' הלא הוא כמ"ס ך' במצרים סמ"ך בכוש ובמדין מ' במדבר סי' ג' עולמות.

²⁸⁷ See Idel, 'On Angels', pp. 211-244.

becomes operative on high through having its referents in the appropriate angelic names, which in turn refer to their corresponding divine realms.²⁸⁸

Moreover, Shapira introduces in this passage a vocabulary connected to the Day of Atonement (כ"פרה מ"חילה ס"ליחה), which by means of parasemantic correspondence is associated with the angelic triad of Metatron, Sandalfon and [A]katriel. By inference, these angelic names not only refer respectively to the worlds of Formation, Creation and Making, with which the three angels are traditionally linked, but they also invest them with the power to atone for evil, which is indicated by their association with the three terms connoting atonement. Hence the three angels are linked to the ritual of prayer, in which evil (i.e. sin embodied in Satan) is overpowered by means of the absolution to which their names allude.

The idea of angels who subdue Satan before the Throne of Glory resembles the early *heikhalot* and later medieval Ashkenazi imagery of the angels who advocate on high on behalf of Israel, with Metatron serving as a heavenly judge who pleads for the Jews against Satan and raises Israel's prayer to God on the Day of Atonement.²⁸⁹ The triad of angels who intervene on behalf of the Jews appears

²⁸⁸ Drawing again on Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory of indexical signs to describe the efficacy of ritual as represented in Shapira's kabbalah, the name of an angelic figure serves as a semiotic object (i.e. the 'signified') of a particular part of the liturgy (i.e. the sign) that refers to the divine worlds (i.e. the 'interpretant sign') in a relation decoded by the ritual action, i.e. the prayer. See Kreinath, 'Ritual: Theoretical Issues in the Study of Religion', pp. 100-107.

²⁸⁹ This imagery is to be found in the version of *Sefer ha-Hesheq* published in *Sefer Bet Din*, fol. 197a, § 8:

Tagri'el [טגריאל = 253] by way of numerology [equals] 'in mercy' [ברחמים = 300], because he is appointed over the measure of mercy, and it is good to invoke him during prayer. And [his name] by way of numerology [equals] Heman [הימן = 105; see 1Chr. 15:17], because he is the High Priest above, and he has 'a golden bell and a pomegranate [Ex. 28:34].

טגריאל גימט' ברחמים כי הוא ממונה על מדת הרחמים וטוב להזכירו בעת התפלה וגימ' הי"מן כי הוא כהן גדול למעלה ויש לו פעמון זהב ורמון.

Notably, the numerological equations in the above passage do not work very well, which may point to a later phase of reworking Nehemiah ben Shlomo's ideas, when numerological associations became less important in the interpretive process but were preserved in order to maintain the original style of the commentary. Alternatively, the numerological equations may

also in an early medieval midrash, where each element of the tripartite structure of the *Qedushah* prayer, referred to as מלכה, ברכה, קדושה, corresponds to a particular angel (Qemuel, Hadarniel and Sandalfon respectively) who raises it to a higher divine realm.²⁹⁰ According to the *Pesikta Rabbati* text, the crown made out of Israel's prayers first enters the world of angels, then the throne of Glory, until it finally reaches God's head. Sandalfon, who corresponds to the throne of Glory (*merkavah*), receives the crown that reaches him from below and raises it further by pronouncing the Tetragrammaton, which action hints at the High Priestly liturgy on Yom Kippur, when the High Priest would similarly pronounce the Ineffable Name of God. As Idel has pointed out, this midrashic text, as well as several sources clearly modeled on it, may have served as a background for the medieval 'Piyut for Yom Kippur' stemming from the circle of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle. In this text, the Day of Atonement marks the unique time of the prayer's triadic ascent onto God's head, which is envisioned as the process of 'crowning' God's head with a wreath of prayers.²⁹¹ Notably, in the passage from *Megaleh Amuqot* quoted above, Shapira similarly describes the tripartite structure of the divine world, which parallels the triad of angels who bind the 'crown' of prayers to God. This observation again points to the Ashkenazi school of Nehemiah ben Shlomo as the probable source of Shapira's interpretative inspiration.

have been corrupted in the course of manuscript transmission. The same imagery occurs again *ibid.*, fol. 199a, § 36:

מי"טון [= 115] by way of numerology [equals] יעלה [= 115], and this is why, on the Eve of Yom Kippur, we recite [the liturgical poem which which opens with the line] 'Let our prayer ascend from eventide' [יעלה תחנונינו מערב]. This refers to the Prince of the Countenance, before whom we plead to raise our prayers upwards, to the head of the Holy One, Blessed be He.

מי"טון גימ' יעלה וזהו שאנו אומרים בליל יו"ה יעלה תחנונינו מערב זהו שר הפנים שאנו מחלים פניו להעלות תפילותינו למרום בראש של הקב"ה.

²⁹⁰ See Idel, 'Piyut Lo Yadu'a', pp. 251-252. Cf. *Pesiqta Rabbati* 20; *Arugat ha-Bosem*, vol. 3, pp. 80-81; Ziyoni, *Commentary on the Torah*, fols. 70a-b. On the *Pesiqta Rabbati* passage see also Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 289ff, 317-319; Grözinger, *Ich bin der Herr, dein Got!*, and Green, *Keter*, pp. 25-29.

²⁹¹ Idel, 'Piyut Lo Yadu'a', p. 255.

3.2. Akatriel, the uppermost angel.

Although each of the three angelic figures, Metatron, Sandalfon and Akatriel, was traditionally associated with ‘binding the crown’ to God’s head,²⁹² in Shapira’s works it is Akatriel who occupies the dominant position at the top of the three angelic realms, thereby reaching up to the uppermost divine sphere. The angel Akatriel occurs in *Megaleh Amuqot* several times, usually in association with Ps. 91:1:

This is the esoteric meaning of [Ps. 91:1]: ‘He that dwells in the secret place of the most High’ [יושב בסתר עליון]. ‘In the secret place’ [בסתר = 662] by way of numerology [equals] Akatriel [אכתריאל = 662] and it [i.e. the word סתר] is an acronym of the words סוף תוך ראש [‘end’, ‘middle’, ‘beginning’]. Sandalfon [who is] in [the world of] Making is the end, Metatron [who is] in [the world of] Formation is the middle, and Akatriel [who] is in [the world of] Creation [is the beginning].²⁹³

The above passage employs the motif of the angelic triad, in which Sandalfon holds the lowest, Metatron the central, and Akatriel the uppermost position. The elevated position of Akatriel ensues from the association of his name (אכתריאל = 662) with its numerological equivalent ‘in the secret place’ (בסתר עליון = 662), derived from Ps. 91:1. This numerological association, which occurs in *Megaleh Amuqot* on multiple occasions, was not an original invention of Shapira but derives from his medieval Ashkenazi sources, emanating from Nehemiah ben Shlomo’s circle,²⁹⁴ where the same association appears mainly in a liturgical context. For instance, a verse from a ‘Piyut for Yom Kippur’ by Nehemiah ben Shlomo reads:

²⁹² The motif of crowning God’s head with prayers was elaborated in Green, *Keter*, passim.

²⁹³ *MAT*, ed. Weiss, ‘Shemot’, *derush* 6, p. 24:

סוד יושב בסתר עליון. בסתר גימט' אכתריאל שהוא נוטריקון סוף תוך ראש, סנדלפון הוא סוף בעשיה, מטטרון הוא תוך ביצירה, אכתריאל בבריאה.

²⁹⁴ See Idel, ‘Al ha-Perushim’, p. 194 n. 271 and idem, ‘Piyut Lo Yadu’a’, p. 238.

God, Lord of hosts, Akatriel the merciful, who is hinted at in [Ps. 91:1] 'in the secret place of the most High'.²⁹⁵

This verse was modeled on a passage from the *Havdalah of Rabbi Akivah*, a text which exerted a strong influence on Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle:

'Let the delight of יי, our God be upon us. Establish the work of our hands upon us and establish the work our hands. He who dwells in the secret place of the most High, in יא"ו, shall abide in the shadow of the Almighty. צבא"ות said to יי, my refuge and my stronghold. מיכא"ל, my God in whom I trust. גבריא"ל, for he will save you from the fowler's trap. מלטיא"ל – from the destructive plague [...] When he knows my name ח"י, Akatriel will call upon me, and I shall answer.'²⁹⁶

Regarding the above passage, Gershom Scholem remarked that already in Talmudic times Ps. 91, which is the source of much of this passage, was called 'Song of afflictions' and ascribed anti-demonic powers.²⁹⁷ In a similar vein, MS Warsaw 9, which consists of various magical-mystical treatises, including some of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings, contains Ps. 91:1 as a protective magical formula in the prayer to the angel Metatron.²⁹⁸ Numerological associations between Ps. 91:1 and a sequence of angelic names occur also in a magical invocation contained in MS British Library Add. 15299, which similarly preserves several texts belonging to Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle:

²⁹⁵ MS Oxford-Bodleian 1812, fol. 144a, published in Idel, 'Piyut Lo Yadu'a', p. 248:

חי יה ייי צבאות אכתריאל הרחמן, מרומז בסתר עליון.

²⁹⁶ The relevant passage was published in Scholem, *Shedim*, p. 154:

ויהי נועם יוי אלהינו עלינו ומעשה ידינו כוננה עלינו ומעשה ידינו כוננהו. יושב בסתר עליון ביא'ו בצל שדי יתלונן צבא"ות אמר לייוי מחסי ומצודתי מיכא"ל אלהי אבטח בו גבריא"ל כי הוא יצילך מפח יקוש מלטיא"ל מדבר הוות [...] כי ידע שמי ח"י אכתריא"ל יקראני ואענהו.

Cf. Nehemiah ben Shlomo, *Commentary on 70 Names of Metatron* in Hamoi, *Sefer Bet Din*, § 29, fol. 195b.

²⁹⁷ See Scholem, *Shedim*, p. 154 n. 6.

²⁹⁸ MS Warsaw 9, fol. 110b.

ביט [...] is the shadow of the Shekhinah, and he is 236 myriad thousand parasangs, and over the Shekhinah is אנשׂראל [Anashrael]. This is [the meaning of Ps. 91:1]: 'He who dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.' 'Dwells' [יֹשֵׁב = 318] by way of numerology [equals] Azriel [= 318]; 'in the secret place' [בְּסֵתֶר = 668] by way of numerology [equals] Akatriel [= 668]; 'most High' [עֲלִיּוֹן = 166] by way of numerology [equals] Panahel [= 166]; 'under the shadow' [בְּצֵל = 122] by way of numerology [equals] Yedahael [= 120]; 'Almighty' [שֵׁדִי = 314] by way of numerology [equals] Metatron [= 314]; 'shall abide' – [these are] the camps of the Shekhinah which surround Him, and the shadow that He shows to the prophets is called Anashrael.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁹ MS British Library, Add. 15299, fol. 46a:

ביט [...] והוא צל שכינה וגבוה רלו אלף רבוא פרסה ועל שכינה אנשׂראל, זהו יושב בסתר עליון בצל שדי יתלונן: יושב בגימ' עזריאל בסתר בגימ' אכתריאל עליון בגימ' פנהאל בצל בגימ' ידעהאל שדי בגימ' מטטרון יתלונן מהנות לשכינה שהם סביב לו והצל שהוא מראה לנביאים אנשׂראל שמו.

Notably, the cluster of letters ביט, which appears numerous times in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings, occurs in a similar manner also in the works of Shimshon of Ostropole (*Sefer Dan Yadin* 4:6 & 13:11), who declared himself to be Nathan Shapira's follower. See the Ostropoler's letter, in which he claims that Nathan Shapira appeared to him in a dream, in MS Oxford-Bodleian 1793, fol. 38a and in Liebes, 'Mysticism and Reality', p. 229 n. 19. Cf. also MS Cambridge 858.2, fol. 62 b, *Commentary on the Piyut 'Ha-ohetz'*, which offers yet another example of the prevalence in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle of the numerological association between Ps. 91:1 and the angelic name Akatriel:

'He who dwells' [הֵן = 85] by way of numerology [equals] אלהי"ם [= 86] [...]; and 'in the secret place' [בְּסֵתֶר = 662] by way of numerology [equals] אכתרי"אל [= 662]; 'in the shadow' [בְּצֵל = 122] by way of numerology [equals] יהו"ה אלהים [= 122], and it emerges from the verse: 'I will give them an everlasting name that shall not be cut off' [Is. 56:5]. The phrase 'shall not be cut off' [אשר לא יכרת] is an anagram of 'Prince Akatriel' [שר אכתריאל], and this is the name of the Shekhinah.

הלן בגי' אלהי"ם [...] בסת"ר בגי' אכתרי"אל בצ"ל בגי' יהו"ה אלהים ויוצא מאותו פסוק שם עולם אתן לו אשר לא יכרת אותיות שר אכתריאל וזהו שם של שכינה.

Similarly, the same association of Ps. 91:1 with Akatriel appears in a medieval pre-kabbalistic commentary, which preserves ideas paralleling those of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle:

When the diadem is on the head of the Creator, it is called Akatriel, and then the crown is hidden from all the [other] sacred angels and [it is] concealed by [lit. 'in'] five hundred thousand myriad parasangs, so that they ask each other: 'where is the place of His glory?' And in reference to this David said [Ps. 91:1]: 'He that dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty'. 'In the secret place' [בסתר = 662] by way of numerology [equals] Akatriel [אכתריאל = 662]; 'under the shadow of the Almighty' [בצל שדי יתלונן], an anagram of]: 'by the prayer of Shaday we will rest' [בצלות שדי גלון].³⁰⁰

³⁰⁰ *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*, MS Oxford-Bodleian 1567, fol. 5a:

וכשהעטרה בראש הבורא אז נקראת העטרה אכתריאל ואז הכתר היא נסתרת מכל המלאכים הקדושים ונסתר בת"ק אלפים רבבות פרסאות ואז שואלים זה לזה איה מקום כבודו ועליו אמר דוד יושב בסתר עליון בצל שדי יתלונן בסתר גימ' אכתריאל בצ"ל שדי יתלונן אותיות בצלו"ת שדי ג' גלון.

A similar passage, which belongs to Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings, appears in MS JTS 1786, fol. 49a:

About him David said: 'He that dwells in the secret place of the most High, who abides under the shadow of the Almighty' [Ps. 91:1]. 'In the secret place' by way of numerology [equals] Akatriel; 'shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty' [is an anagram of] 'in the prayer of the Almighty we will rest'. And it is also an anagram of 'he has the prayer of the child' [צלות דנין יש לו], because the prayer is a prayer to the Holy one, Blessed be He, as a bride in the presence of the groom is called 'king's daughter'.

ועליו אומ' דוד יושב בסתר עליון בצל שדי יתלונן בסתר ג' אכתריאל בצל שדי יתלונן אותיות בצלות שדי גלון. וכן אותיות צלות דנין יש לו לפי שהתפילה היא צלות להקב"ה ככלה אצל החתן ונקראת בת מלך.

On *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* see Dan, 'The Ashkenazi Hasidic Gates of Wisdom', pp. 183-189; idem, *Torat ha-Sod*, pp. 44-57, 118-129; idem, 'The Emergence of Mystical Prayer', pp. 112-115; Segal, *Sefer Sodei Razaya ha-Semukhim*, passim. On the similarities between this passage and Nehemiah ben Shlomo's *Sefer ha-Navon* see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 193-195, esp. p. 193 n. 158, where he attributes the above passages to Eleazar of Worms, comparing them to the

Another association between Akatriel and Ps. 91:1, stemming from Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings, appears in the context of prayer in MS Oxford 1812:

ההוה by way of numerology [equals] ב"ט, [both amounting to 21] and likewise אהיה, because this is the name of the Shekhinah, as Scripture says: 'Then I was always [אהיה] by him, [as one] brought up [by him]' [Prov. 8:30], which refers to prayer [and] to the sound of prayer, which ascends on high, as Rashi has explained [the verse]: 'And there was a voice from the firmament that [was] over their heads, when they stood [and] had let down their wings' [Ez. 1:25], which is to be understood as the sound of Israel's prayer, because the prayer ascends to the firmament, which is over their heads; it goes forth and settles on the head of the Holy One, Blessed be He, forming a diadem for Him, as Scripture says: 'He that dwells in the secret place of the most High' [Ps. 91:1]. 'In the secret place' [בסת"ר] by way of numerology [equals] Akatriel [אכתריאל], because the prayer sits as a diadem in his place and it is the crown for the head of Akatriel Lord, God of Israel. [...] And the diadem of the Holy One, Blessed be He, [is] 60 myriad thousand parasangs corresponding to the 60 myriad of Israelites, and the name of the diadem is Sari'el, which is an anagram of Israel, which by way of numerology [ישראל = 541] equals 'prayer of one father' [541 = א"ב אה"ד], because one patriarch arranges the prayers into a diadem. [...] And Metatron, the Prince of the Countenance, binds crowns [...] as is written in the *Book of the Holy Palaces*.³⁰¹

anonymous Ashkenazi *Sefer ha-Navon*, which he subsequently connected to Nehemiah ben Shlomo (see idem, 'Some Forlorn Writings of R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo'). For Idel's attribution of at least parts of *Sefer ha-Hokhmah* to Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, see idem, 'Al ha-Perushim', pp. 193-199, 212-222.

³⁰¹ MS Oxford-Bodleian 1812, fols. 101b-102a (cf. also MS JTS 1786 fol. 43a), which reads:

In all these passages the numerological equation of 662 is consistently used to associate the name Akatriel with that part of Ps. 91:1 that points to the hiddenness of God. By virtue of this association, Akatriel stands on the highest and most concealed level of the divine world, to which he has direct access through nothing other than prayer, for he places on God's 'head' a crown or a diadem made out of Israel's prayers. In other words, in the Ashkenazi commentary quoted above, Akatriel signifies the culmination of ritual action, achieving direct contact with the divine realm through the mediation of prayer.

In a similar vein, Nathan Shapira evokes the motif of Akatriel by using the same numerological calculations and extracting from them very similar connotations to those that are latent in the medieval sources.³⁰² In the passages from *Megaleh Amuqot* quoted above, Akatriel is the highest (*rosh*) of the angels appointed over the sequence of three divine worlds. His name signifies the upper realm connected to and situated just below the world of Emanation, a realm in which the divine presence is so intense that it is utterly concealed from the perspective of ordinary humans. Thus Shapira reuses the semiotic connection between Akatriel and the 'secret place' of Ps. 91:1, which had already been established in the medieval Ashkenazi mystical texts quoted above. Moreover, following the medieval 'angelic' exegesis of Scripture, Shapira reads Akatriel's name back into the biblical text, and uses it as a starting point for further interpretations. As a result, the angelic references, which serve him as a primary

הוה גי' בי"ט וכן גימ' אהיה לפי שהוא שם השכינה שנ' ואהיה אצלו אמון והיא צלותא וקול התפילה העולה למעלה כמו שפרש"י ויהי קול מעל הרקיע אשר על ראשם בעמדם תרפינה. פ' ויהי קול תפילתם של ישראל כי תפילה הולכת למעלה על הרקיע אשר על ראשם והולכת ויושבת בראשו של הקב"ה ונעשת לו עטרה שנ' יושב בסתר עליון בסת"ר גי' אכתריאל כי התפילה יושבת כעטרה בדוכתיה והיא כתר לראש אכתריאל יי אלהי ישראל [...] והעטרה של הקב"ה ס' רבבות אלף פרסאות כנגד ס' רבוא של ישראל ושמא[ה?] של העטרה שרי"אל אותיות ישראל הוא גי' תפיל"ה א"ב אח"ד לפי שאב אחד מסדר מן התפילות עטרה [...] ומטטרו"ן ש"ה קושר כתרים [...] כדאית' בספר היכלי קודש.

The phrase 'Book of the Holy Palaces' is, according to Idel, a typical reference to *heikhalot* literature in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings. See, for instance, *Sefer ha-Navon*, pp. 124, 126, 127, 129, 131-133. Cf. also Idel, *Al ha-Perushim*, pp. 194-195.

³⁰² It is worth noting that the above association of Akatriel with Is. 56:5 appears also in *Megaleh Amuqot*, ed. Weiss, 'Shemot', derush 6, p. 24, where it is quoted in the name of Menahem Recanati. See also Idel, 'Al R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo me-Erfurt', pp. 330-332, 344-345.

conceptual grid to be cast on the biblical text, are subsumed in a secondary, kabbalistic grid or conceptual frame of reference. In this way, Shapira appropriates the numerological correspondence between Akatriel and 'secret place' (= 662), acquired from the Ashkenazi medieval tradition, while grafting it onto the kabbalistic conceptual scheme of the four worlds, in which Akatriel corresponds to the world of Creation.

Menahem Kallus has observed³⁰³ certain evocations of the medieval Ashkenazi *Sefer ha-Hokhmah*'s 'Commentary on Piyut 'Ha-Ohez''³⁰⁴ in the Lurianic theurgical prayer rite, specifically in several *yihudim* and *kavanot* preserved by Hayim Vital.³⁰⁵ In Kallus' opinion, corroborated by Moshe Idel,³⁰⁶ some of the *yihudim*, whose authorship Vital attributes to Luria in his early life, are based on the Ashkenazi commentaries on the 72 divine names, which Idel has identified as Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings. Idel similarly argues that Nehemiah ben Shlomo's commentaries may have been subsumed in the Lurianic kabbalah. In reference to a passage from Hayim Vital's *Sha'ar Ha-Kavanot*, he claims that elements of Nehemiah's commentaries, preserved in manuscripts and in some Ashkenazi prayer books, were copied *verbatim* by the young Luria into his own Mahzor for Yom Kippur. Later on, Luria's notes on God's multiple names were interpreted by his followers as his own commentary and thus began to function as a manual of *kavanot*.³⁰⁷ In the case of Nathan Shapira, however, the two phases of the process by which the medieval Ashkenazi tradition was subsumed in the kabbalistic scheme are visible concomitantly. His interpretation not only reshapes the Ashkenazi imagery into the kabbalistic frame of reference but it actually preserves the Ashkenazi web of meanings alongside the kabbalistic terminology. As a result, the meaning of Shapira's commentaries cannot be fully retrieved without reference to the medieval Ashkenazi semiotic reservoir. This

³⁰³ See Kallus, 'The Theurgy of Prayer', pp. 178-179.

³⁰⁴ For a list of manuscripts where this commentary appears see Hollender, *Clavis Commenatatorium*, pp. 569-572; Idel, 'Perushav shel Nehemiah ben Shlomo la-Piyut', pp. 165-166.

³⁰⁵ See Vital's *Sha'ar Ruah ha-Qodesh* 3, p. 952.

³⁰⁶ See Idel, 'Al R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo me-Erfurt', pp. 330-333.

³⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 330-333, 340-341.

view of Shapira's work is comparable to Menahem Kallus' evaluation of the Lurianic prayer rite, which he describes as 'an exercise in concentrated devotional symbolic prayer-magic that artfully makes use of previously existing hermeneutical material, such as name traditions, the laws of letter-transformation, and the symbolic meanings and implications of divine names and their associations, in creating a compact dynamic contemplation exercise, employing multivalent symbol-transformations [...] It may be construed as a process of symbolic communication between the different imminent divine aspects of the cosmos.'³⁰⁸ Shapira similarly re-creates already existent hermeneutical methods in order to construct a structure of prayer that addresses the multi-leveled divine realm on the basis of multiple and dynamic equivalences between the linguistic and the transcendent planes of reality.

Although Shapira applies the numerological equation of 662 to a new frame of reference, he preserves its original association with the liturgical rite while presenting it in Lurianic theurgical terms. As a result, Akatriel's name comes to signify the divine realm that is affected by prayer, which indicates that the 'crown' of prayers that is being 'bound' in the 'secret place' refers to a level as high as the world of Creation. Hence, in the hierarchical order of the four worlds, Akatriel's name denotes the liminal point between the world of Creation, which is the uppermost divine level that is susceptible to the influence of human ritual, and the world of Emanation, which lies beyond it as the sphere of ultimate divine transcendence.

3.3. Metatron.

3.3.1. Metatron as the central angel.

According to *Megaleh Amuqot*, within the triad of angels who attained superior rank in the heavenly world, Metatron enjoys a privileged status. Although Akatriel, whose name denotes the world of Creation, refers to the highest accessible level of the divine realm, it is Metatron who nevertheless holds the dominant position:

³⁰⁸ Kallus, 'The Theurgy of Prayer', p. 182.

This was alluded to in [Ex. 3:2]: ‘And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him’. Who was this angel? [This] is the angel in whose heart letters of fire are engraved, and he is the middle one in relation to the three princes of the Countenance who dwell in the three worlds of Creation, Formation and Making. [...] Now, this angel is in the middle, like the human heart, which is situated in the middle [of the body], as Scripture says [Ex. 3:2]: ‘out of the midst of a bush’, namely, specifically ‘out of the midst’. Moreover, by way of numerology, [the phrase] ‘out of the midst’ [מתוך = 466] equals ‘the world of Formation’ [עולם היצירה = 466]. Metatron is the prince of the world of Formation, where they sit facing each other: the great prince Michael on the right, and Satan on the left, that is, Michael was on the good [side] of Metatron [while] Satan was on his evil side, because ‘out of the midst’ [מתוך = 466] by way of numerology amounts to [the combined value of] Michael and Satan [מיכאל ושטן = 466].³⁰⁹

In this passage, Shapira accentuates Metatron’s central position in the upper worlds through a string of numerological operations. Since he is situated in the middle of the hierarchy of three worlds, Metatron, who signifies the world of Formation, functions as the mediator between the human level of the world of Making and the worlds that lie above it. This mediating function is exemplified by what Shapira takes to be Metatron’s appearance in Ex. 3:2, which in his view refers to a vision of Metatron as a manifestation of the divine.³¹⁰ Moreover, the above-quoted passage from *Megaleh Amuqot* emphasizes the mediating capacities

³⁰⁹ *MAT*, ed. Weiss, ‘Shemot’, *derush* 6, p. 24:

וזה נרמז בכאן וירא מלאך ה' אליו, מי היה המלאך אותו המלאך שיש בלבו אותיות של אש חקוקות, והוא אמצעי לג' שרי פנים שהם בג' עולמות ב"ע. [...] והנה זה המלאך הוא באמצע כמו שהלב של אדם שהוא באמצע, ז"ש מתוך הסנה, מתוך דייקא, וכן מתוך הוא בגימטריא עולם היצירה. מטטרון הוא שר של עולם היצירה, דתמן יושבים זה כנגד זה, מימין שר הגדול מיכאל, משמאל שטן, זה היה מיכאל טוב דמטטרון, שטן מצד רע דמטטרון, שכן מתוך [בגימ'] מיכאל ושטן.

³¹⁰ A similar view was presented in chapter 2 above, section 4, pp. 88-108, based on the example of Ex. 14:2, in which, according to both Shapira and the medieval Ashkenazi tradition, Metatron appeared on the sea together with God, in his capacity of Israel’s savior.

of Metatron by placing him in-between two other entities that represent archetypal good and evil, i.e. Michael and Satan respectively. This image indicates the liminal status of Metatron, who not only stands at the junction between two morally and ontologically distinct planes of reality, but who also himself comprises both good and evil. In Shapira's numerological terminology, the value of Metatron's central position (תורך = 466) amounts to the combined values of Michael and Satan (466). This numerological correspondence points to Shapira's view of the ontological status of evil in the created world. According to him, evil is comprised within Metatron and thus spreads out from the level of Formation,³¹¹ which is regarded by Shapira as the world of angels or, in kabbalistic terms, as the realm of the seven lower sefirot. Metatron as the median figure mediates between the realm of the lower sefirot and the created world beneath them, thus channeling all contact between man and the divine. Furthermore, due to Metatron's median position between good and evil, the ritual conducted through his mediation is operative in the process of atonement for sin, as demonstrated above.³¹² Since he shares the ontological root of the demonic side of creation, Metatron is considered able to operate in the domain of evil and to counter its influence.³¹³ His 'in-between' position accounts for the central place he occupies in liturgical or ritual action:

In the word 'in a flame' [בלבת, Ex. 3:2], according to Rabbi Hiyya's technique of אטב"ה,³¹⁴ [...] the word שע"ה was alluded to, which is the esoteric meaning of חשמ"ל: [the letter] ל of [the word] לבת substitutes for [the letter] ע, [the letter] ב substitutes for [the letter] ה, [and the letter] ת substitutes for

³¹¹ On this topic see below, chapter 4, pp. 187-204 and chapter 5, pp. 234-241. Cf. also *MA ReNaV*, chapter 147, and *Kanefei Yonah* 3: 54, pp. 260-261.

³¹² See pp. 125-126 above.

³¹³ This position of the evil side accords with Shapira's messianic concept, where the figure of Messiah is modelled on the Enoch-Metatron constellation, which comprises both good and evil, as it has both a divine and a human origin.

³¹⁴ A technique which sequences the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in pairs, each pair amounting to the numerical value of either ten (e.g. ט-א) or a hundred (e.g. י-צ), with the exception of the letters נ and ה, which are grouped together. See *bSukkah* 52b, where this technique is exemplified.

[the letter] ש, which is the esoteric meaning of חשמ"ל³¹⁵, as according to the book *Sodey Razaya*,³¹⁶ the prayer of Israel first ascends by way of חשמל, and then Metatron raises it to the upper veil [פרגוד]. Consequently, the prayer goes through these three places [...] and the Holy One, Blessed be He, showed this to Moses [as Scripture says]: 'And the angel of the LORD appeared unto him' [Ex. 3:2]. This was Metatron 'in a flame of fire' [בלבת אש].³¹⁷

The above passage connects the image of Metatron, on the one hand with the angelic manifestation of Ex. 3:2, and on the other hand with the daily prayer of Israel. In both cases Metatron appears as the middle and thus the central figure.³¹⁸ Shapira employs the literal meaning of the phrase 'out of the midst' to denote Metatron's presence 'within' the material world, while at the same time juxtaposing parasemantic facets of the same word [בלבת] with their numerical counterparts, in order to incorporate in his commentary several earlier mystical interpretations of Metatron's position in heaven. In the passage above, the three levels (*Hashmal, Metatron, Pargod*), through which Israel's prayer passes before reaching God, signify both angels serving on high and discrete stages on the prayer's route to the throne of God.

³¹⁵ Cf. *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, fol. 44a:

'And the numerical value of חשמל is שעה [= 378], that is to say, [there are] 378 modes of splendor that spread out from beneath the Throne of Glory and the veil that is before it.'

וחשבון חשמ"ל עולה שעה"ל ור"ל שעה"ל מיני זוהר היוצאים מכסא הכבוד והפרגוד אשר לפניו.

³¹⁶ This is a reference to *Sodei Razaya*, 'Sefer Alpha-Beta', pp. 150-151.

³¹⁷ *MAT*, ed. Weiss, 'Shemot', *derush* 6:28, p. 32:

רמז במלת בלבת שהוא באטב"ח דר' חייא שעה"ח שהוא סוד חשמ"ל, ל' של לבת הוא תמורת ע', ב' הוא תמורת ח', ת' הוא תמורת ש', שהוא סוד שעה"ח חשמ"ל דאיתא בספר סודי רזי שתפילתן של ישראל תחילה עולין בדרך חשמל, ואחר כך לוקח אותן מטטרון, עד שהוא באה בפרגוד העליון, ונמצא שדרך ג' מקומות אלו הולכת תפילה, [...] וזה הראה הקב"ה למשה וירא מלאך ה' אליו, זה מטטרון בלבת אש.

³¹⁸ On Metatron as the ontological centre of the world see Idel, *Ascensions on High*, pp. 86-93.

3.3.2. The middle prayer.

As we have seen, in *Megaleh Amuqot*, the tripartite process of the prayer's ascent parallels the motif of the angelic triad of Sandalfon, Metatron and Akatriel, as well as the tripartite division of the upper worlds. In each instance of this tripartite structure, Metatron features as the central and most active component, accounting for the efficacy of prayer and thus for the unity of lower and upper realms. The numerological connection between Metatron, 'the field' [השדה], and 'prayer' [שוח], which appears in Shapira's *Megaleh Amuqot*, featured already in the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron* by Nehemiah ben Shlomo, wherein Metatron facilitates human prayer:

[The name] Metatron [מטטרון = 314] by way of numerology [equals] Shaday [שדי = 314] [...]. And by way of numerology [it also equals] 'meditate' [שוח = 314], for he is appointed to receive prayers, as according to the *Book of Palaces*,³¹⁹ there is one angel in the firmament who receives the prayers, and we do not know who he is. This is the Prince of the Countenance. [His name], by way of numerology, [equals] 'the field' [השדה = 314], because there is no prayer other than in the field, as Scripture says: 'And Isaac went out to meditate in the field' [Gen. 24:63], and there is no meditation other than prayer, as Scripture says: 'A prayer for the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed and pours out his mediation [שיח] before the Lord [Ps. 102:1]. And he is appointed to receive the prayers of Israel. [...] And it is good to invoke him.'³²⁰

In this passage, Metatron becomes the actual recipient and thus the object of human prayer. Since he constitutes a God-like entity, to whom the power of

³¹⁹ See above, n. 301.

³²⁰ *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, § 24, p. 224:

מטטרון בגי' שדי [...] ובגי' שו"ח, לפי שהוא ממונה לקבל תפילות. ותניא בספר היכלות, מלאך אחד יש ברקיע שמקבל התפילות. ואין אנו יודעים מי הוא. וזהו שר הפנים. ובגי' השדה, לפי שאין התפילה כי אם בשדה כמ"ש ויצא יצחק לשוח בשדה. ואין שיח אלא תפילה, שנאמר תפלה לעני כי יעטוף ולפני ה' ישפוך שיחו. והוא ממונה לקבל תפלתן של ישראל. [...] וטוב להשביע אותו.

hearing prayers is delegated, human prayer should be directed to Metatron in order to be effective.³²¹ As Efraim Kanarfogel points out,³²² the involvement of angels in prayer and theurgy was an important element of the medieval Ashkenazi mind set.³²³ In his own discussion of the daily prayer, Nathan Shapira preserves the same numerological associations between prayer and Metatron that featured in the medieval *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*:

Metatron is alluded to in the word 'to pray' [לשוח]. [...] This is why [the word] לשוח was said in reference to Isaac, for by way of numerology it [equals] Metatron [= 314], who is in the world of Formation, and the field [השדה = 314] is there, because by way of numerology it equals Metatron.³²⁴

As a dynamic element of creation, Metatron functions as God's messenger and, as in Ex. 3:2, a manifestation of the divine in the human realm. He stretches out to both the human plane of existence and its divine source, effectively joining the two together. For this reason, Metatron is placed at the center of Israel's devotional activity during prayer:

The word לשוח ['to meditate' or 'to pray', as in Gen. 24:63] alludes to the time at which Isaac went out to pray in the field. [...] The word לשוח alludes to the esoteric significance of Metatron, [...] for he is the servant who went out towards Isaac together with Rebecca. [This is] because the [combined] numerical value of the names Rebecca and Isaac [יצחק+רבקה = 515] equals [the numerical value of] 'prayer' [תפלה = 515]. And the three princes of the Countenance who connect the three

³²¹ The issue of directing prayers both to and through angelic beings appears in several medieval Ashkenazi commentaries. See *Seder Selihot*, pp. 11-12, 35-36, 189-190; *Sefer Gimatriyot*, pp. 11, 16-18, 61; *Mahzor la-Yamim ha-Nora'im* 1:125-126.

³²² Kanarfogel, *Peering through the Lattices*, pp. 131-132.

³²³ On the cult of Enoch-Metatron in the Jewish tradition, see Idel, *Ben*, pp. 645-670.

³²⁴ *MAT*, ed. Weiss, 'Hayei Sarah', p. 47:

ונרמז במלת לשוח סוד מטטרון [...] לכן אמר אצל יצחק לשוח שהוא בגי' מטטרון שהוא בעולם היצירה תמן השדה שכן השדה בגימ' מטטרון.

[daily] prayer services of Israel to the Holy One, Blessed be He, [are]: Akatriel, the prince of [the world of] Creation, at the morning service, Metatron, the prince of [the world of] Formation, at the afternoon service, and Sandalfon, the prince of [the world of] Making at the evening service.³²⁵ Metatron is situated in the middle, and this is the esoteric meaning of [the words] ‘in the midst’ [תוך, as in Lev. 22:32]: ‘I will be hallowed in the midst [תוך] of the children of Israel’, because ‘in the midst’ [תוך = 426] by way of numerology [equals] ‘the name of God’ [שם אלהים = 426], which is the attribute of Isaac. This is why ‘to pray’ [לשוח] was said in reference to Isaac, as by way of numerology, שוח equals Metatron [both amounting to 314], who is in the world of Formation, and this is where the field [השדה] was, because, by way of numerology, ‘the field’ [השדה = 314] [equals] Metatron.³²⁶

This passage addresses the central position of Metatron in the ritual of prayer. As in other excerpts from *Megaleh Amuqot* quoted above, Metatron’s name is numerologically juxtaposed with the word תוך, which takes on the meaning of ‘in the midst’, namely ‘at the center’. The same word is similarly linked to the phrase שם אלהים (‘the name of God’ or rather ‘the divine name Elohim’), which in sefirotic terms represents the power of harsh Judgments (*Gevurah*) and figuratively stands for the patriarch Isaac. However, in the above passage Metatron is not only directly identified with the word תוך, but he is also associated with prayer and meditation (שוח), that is, with the process ensuring Isaac’s union

³²⁵ See da Fano, *Kanefei Yonah* 3:68-69, pp. 272-273. Cf. *MAT*, ed. Weiss, ‘Qorah’, *derush* 21:4 and the reference below.

³²⁶ *MAT*, ed. Weiss, ‘Hayei Sarah’, p. 47:

וזה נרמז במלת שוח באיזה זמן יצא יצחק לתקן תפילה בשדה [...] ונרמז במלת לשוח סוד מטטרון [...] שהוא העבד שיצא לקראת יצחק עם רבקה, שכן יצחק רבקה בגימ' תפלה, ושלשה שרי פנים המקשרים להקב"ה ג' תפלות של ישראל, בשחרית אכתיאל שר הבריאה, במנחה מטטרון שר היצירה וערבית סנדלפון שר העשיה. נמצא מטטרון באמצע והוא סוד תוך ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל, שכן תוך בגי' שם אלהים שהוא מדת יצחק לכן אמר אצל יצחק לשוח שהוא בגי' מטטרון שהוא בעולם היצירה תמן השדה שכן השדה בגימ' מטטרון.

with Rebecca. This association is achieved by the equal numerological values of the combined names Isaac and Rebecca (רביקה + יצחק = 426) and the word ‘prayer’ (תפילה = 426). In sefirotic terms, Isaac marks the realm of *Gevurah*, which is God’s severe Judgments, whereas Rebecca represents the Shekhinah. Since Metatron’s name is numerologically equal to the word שוה, which connotes prayer, it signifies the unification of the sefirotic realms marked by the union of Isaac and Rebecca. In other words, Metatron’s name, corresponding to the daily prayer rite, prompts the Shekhinah to limit the power of harsh Judgments in the world.

The passage quoted above establishes a correspondence between the three daily prayer services (*shaharit*, *minhah* and *arvit*), the triad of angels (Akatriel, Metatron and Sandalphon), and the names of the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob). This correspondence is based on the Talmudic discussion regarding the set times of prayer,³²⁷ and its elaboration in the Zohar, which reads as follows:

Come and see: Isaac certainly instituted afternoon prayer. Just as Abraham instituted morning prayer – corresponding to the rung to which he cleaved – so Isaac instituted afternoon prayer, corresponding to the rung to which he cleaved [...] Now, if you say ‘until dark’, come and hear what is written: ‘Woe to us, for the day is fading, shadows of evening are spread!’ [Jer. 6:4]. ‘The day is fading’ from receiving morning prayer, as is written: ‘God’s grace endures all day’, for then the sun is in the East. As soon as the sun inclines, descending westward, the time of afternoon prayer arrives. Already ‘the day is fading, shadows of evening’ approach, and severe Judgment arouses toward the world. ‘The day is fading’ – rung of *Hesed*; ‘shadows of evening spread’ – rung of severe Judgment. Then the Sanctuary was destroyed and the Temple was burnt.³²⁸ So we have learned that one should

³²⁷ See *bBerakhot* 26b, according to which the morning service was set by Abraham, the afternoon service by Isaac, and the evening service by Jacob.

³²⁸ See *bTa’anit* 29a; cf. Zohar 1:230a.

be conscientious about afternoon prayer, when severe Judgment looms over the world. Jacob instituted evening prayer, arraying Her, nourishing Her with all She needs.³²⁹

This zoharic passage elaborates on the tripartite division of the daily prayer, which accords with the sequence of the sefirotic dominion over day and night: the morning is governed by the sefirah *Hesed*, the afternoon by *Gevurah*, and the evening by *Tiferet* as it unites with Shekhinah (night). According to this sequence, the threefold liturgical performance provides the required balance between the three divine spheres. A proper observance of the rite at the proper time of day stimulates the proper flow of divine powers to the world and thereby ensures the efficacy of the rite. A similar association between the three daily services and the divine powers appears in the following passage from *Megaleh Amuqot*, although significantly, in Shapira's interpretation, the divine powers are represented not in sefirotic terms but by the three angelic names:

[These are] the three prayers: the morning prayer [is raised] by Akatriel, the afternoon prayer by Metatron, and the evening prayer by Sandalfon. One should be most careful regarding the afternoon prayer, since it is set in the middle,³³⁰ and this is the esoteric meaning of [1 Sam. 1:12]: 'She spoke in her heart', that is, she prayed at the time of the afternoon prayer³³¹ [...]

³²⁹ See Zohar 1:132b, ed. Matt, vol. 2, pp. 245-246:

ותא חזי, צלותא דמנחה אתקין לה יצחק ודאי, כמה דאתקין אברהם צלותא דצפרא, לקבל ההוא דרגא דאתדבק בה. וכן יצחק אתקין צלותא דמנחה לקבל ההוא דרגא דאתדבק בה [...] ואי תימא עד חשכה, תא חזי דכתיב: ואי [נא] לנו כי פנה היום כי ינטו צללי ערב. כי פנה היום, לקבל צלותא דצפרא דכתיב חסד אל כל היום דהא כדין שמשא איהו לסטר מזרח. כיון דנטה שמשא ונחתא לסטר מערב, הא כדין איהו זמן צלותא דמנחה וכבר פנה היום ואתו צללי ערב ואתער דינא קשיא בעלמא. ופנה היום דאיהו דרגא חס"ד, ונטה צללי ערב, דאנון דרגא דדינא קשיא. וכדין אתחרב בי מקדשא ואתוקד היכלא. ועל דא תנינן דיהא בר נש זהיר בצולתא דמנחה, דאיהו זמנא דדינא קשיא שריא בעלמא. יעקב אתקין צלותא דערבית, דהא איהו אתקין לה וזן לה בכל מה דאצטריך ודאי.

The passage goes on to comment on Jacob, who signifies the sefirah *Tiferet*, and the evening prayer, identified with the Shekhinah: 'for She has no light of Her own at all. So evening prayer is optional, being already included in daytime prayer in order to shine.'

³³⁰ See *bBerakhot* 9b.

³³¹ See *bTa'anit* 29a.

The vision of the angel of the LORD also occurred at the time of the afternoon prayer, because at that time, the one who binds the ties [of prayer] on high is Metatron. [This is] the time of the attribute of harsh Judgments, which is fire, and the time when 'Isaac went out to meditate in the field' [Gen. 24:63], 'for the shadows of the evening are stretched out.' [Jer. 6:4].³³²

According to this passage, the afternoon prayer is held in the highest regard. As in the zoharic passage quoted above, the superior status of *minhah* ensues from its association with severe Judgments, the divine attribute that the afternoon prayer is meant to limit and channel. However, in Shapira's text, *minhah* relates to Metatron, for both the angel and the prayer represent the 'middle' and thus the central point of the sefirotic world. As in the biblical narrative of Hannah (1Sam. 1:12) referred to in Shapira's text, it is Metatron who accounts for the efficacy of the afternoon prayer, since he is the highest instance of the mediation of human prayers at the most dangerous time of day, when harsh Judgments rule the world.³³³ Thus both in biblical times and in the present, the afternoon prayer is the

³³² MAT, ed. Weiss, 'Shemot', *derush* 6:23, p. 31:

[ג'] תפילות שהם שחרית על ידי אכתריאל, מנחה על ידי מטטרון, ערבית על ידי סנדלפון. ותפילת המנחה צריך לזוהר בה ביותר, שהיא נתונה באמצע והוא סוד והנה מדברת על לבה אימת התפללה בשעת המנחה [...] וכן בכאן המראה של מלאך ה' היה בשעת המנחה, שאז שקושר קשרים למעלה הוא מטטרון, זמן של מדת הדין שהוא אש, שאז ויצא יצחק לשוה בשדה, כי ונטו צללי ערב.

³³³ A similar association between the afternoon prayer and Metatron, referred to as 'the youth', appears in MAT, ed. Weiss, 'Bo', *derush* 4:12, p. 62, where due to his liturgical functions, Metatron is invested with the salvific capacity of overpowering sin, symbolized by going out of 'the vale':

The prayers ascend through the level of Joseph, as Scripture says [Gen. 44:34]: 'For how shall I go up to my father, and the youth [be] not with me?' [And scripture also said:] 'And the youth was' [והוא נער] [Gen. 37:2], [and:] 'Train up a youth' [חנוך לנער] [Prov. 22:6]. This was [revealed] in the vision of the three men, who were the three patriarchs [see Zohar 1:120b] corresponding to the three prayers. That is why [Scripture says]: 'and [he] gave [it] to the youth and he hastened to dress it' [Gen. 18:7], for he bound ties to his Master, and 'he sent him out of the vale of Hebron' [Gen. 37:14]. The word מעמק ['out of the vale'] is an acronym of [the phrase] 'Metatron crowns His full stature' [קומתו מלא]. [עוטר מלא].

central part of the daily prayer cycle because its connection to the harsh Judgments impels man to be particularly careful when performing it. In the zoharic text, diligent performance of the afternoon prayer is intended to maintain all the divine powers in balance, and to prevent the attribute of severe Judgments from overpowering the rest of the sefirot. Shapira, on the other hand, connects the afternoon prayer to Metatron, who in his view stands beyond the sefirotic realm. In the excerpt from *Megaleh Amuqot* quoted above, Metatron features as a hypostatic entity, distinct from the sefirotic levels, and thereby effectively mediating between them.

3.3.3. Metatron as the voice of prayer.

Although Metatron normally signifies the afternoon prayer in Shapira's works, he is occasionally linked either to prayer in general or specifically to the evening prayer:

The Ari wrote that the 42-letter divine name should be recited after the *Shema* of the evening prayer, to raise the soul upwards.³³⁴ Similarly, the verse [Ps. 63:5] 'Thus will I bless

התפילות עולות דרך דרג' דיוסף, כ"ש איך אעלה אל אבי והנער איננו איתי, והוא נער, חנוך לנער, והיה במראה ג' אנשים שהם ג' אבות לקביל ג' תפילות, לכן ויתן וימהר אל הנער וימהר לעשות אותו, שהוא קשר קשרים לרבו, וישלחהו מעמק חברון, מעמק נוטריקון מטטרון עוטר מלא קומתו.

The same idea occurs again *ibid.*, 'Vayeshv', *derush* 57:2: 'Prayers do not ascend on high except through the gate keeper [who is] חנוך לנער [Prov. 22:16, lit. 'train up a youth'] [...] Through Joseph the righteous the blessings rise to the righteous Head.'

אין תפילות עולים רק דרך שומר השער חנוך לנער [...] דרך יוסף הצדיק עולה ברכות לראש צדיק.

The imagery here has its parallel in *Tiqunei Zohar* 70:137b, where Metatron, who corresponds to the biblical Joseph, is addressed in the angelic liturgy:

The angels of the right-hand-side blessed him and said: '[All that the LORD said] we will do and be obedient' [Ex. 24:7], that is, as Scripture says [Ps. 103:20]: 'Bless the LORD ye his angels that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.' And this is Metatron, corresponding to Joseph below.

מלאכיא דסטרא ימינא ברכו ליה, ואמרו נעשה ונשמע, הדא הוא דכתיב ברכו יהו"ה מלאכיו גבורי כח עשי דברו לשמע בקול דברו, ודא מטטרון, לקבליה יוסף לתתא.

³³⁴ Cf. *Peri Ets Hayim*, 'Sha'ar ha-Shabat' 12, p. 414; *Kanefei Yonah* 3:19, p. 230; 3:29, p. 241, where the intention of prayer directed to the 42-letter name is linked both to the two 'youths',

you while I live' alludes to the *Shema*, and in [Ps. 63:6] 'I will lift up [my hands] in Thy name' [בשמך אשא], the word אש"א [alludes to] the 42-letter name, [as it is] an acronym of 'forty two letters' [א'רבעים ש'תים א'ותיות]. Alternatively, Metatron will come, who is the ladder placed on earth, whose head reaches the heavens, and about whom Raba bar Hana said³³⁵ [...] that he was a bird that stood in the water up to its ankles while its head reached up to the heavens. This is [Ecc. 10:22] 'a bird of the air shall carry the voice' [קול = 136], which by way of numerology equals 'ladder' [סולם = 136]. He is called [Ps. 50:11, 80:14] 'bird of the field' [זיז שדי]³³⁶, and by way of numerology שדי [= 314] equals Metatron [מטטרון = 314].³³⁷

In this passage, Metatron features as the channel through which the human soul connects to the divine realms. The mediating function of the angel is highlighted by the image of 'ladder', stemming from Jacob's dream in Gen. 28:10, by dint of which the angelic and the human realms conjoin. Likewise, the ladder corresponds numerologically to 'voice', which signifies the sound of the evening prayer. The same numerological operation occurs many times in the medieval commentaries of

Metatron and Sandalfon, and to the name טפטיפיה, which apparently stems from Nehemiah ben Shlomo's writings. Cf. also Da Fano, *Sefer Ma'ayan Ganim*, 1:7c, where the same idea occurs in reference to the three angels, Sandalfon, Metatron and Akatriel, signifying the three sefirot: *Malkhut*, *Tiferet* and *Binah* respectively. See on this Idel, 'R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi al Magen David', p. 54.

³³⁵ See *bBava Batra* 73b.

³³⁶ זיז is an obscure biblical term, generally understood, from its context in Ps. 50:11, as referring to a bird. However, Shapira reads שדי as the divine name Shaday rather than *saday* meaning 'field', which does not alter the numerological value of the word equaling that of Metatron.

³³⁷ *MAT*, 'Vayetse', p. 119:

וכתב האר"י שצריך לומר שם של מ"ב אחר ק"ש של ערבית להעלות הנשמה למעלה. וכן נרמז כאן כן אברכך בחיי זה ק"ש ובשמך אש"א הוא שם של מ"ב אש"א נוטריקן א'רבעים ש'תים א'ותיות או יבא מטטרון שהוא סלם מוצב ארצה וראשו מגיע השמימה אשר עליו אמר רבה בר בר חנא [...] שהוא עוף שעמד עד קרסולו במים וראשו מגיע עד השמים שהוא עוף השמים יוליך את הקול בגי' סלם ונקרא זיז שדי" מטטרון".

Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle, especially in the *Commentary on the 70 Names of Metatron*:

אסטם [...] by way of numerology [equals] סלם [= 130],³³⁸ because when Moses our teacher, peace be upon him, ascended on high, he [i.e. the angel] erected this ladder for him out of the mist. [...] אסטיה [= 136] by way of numerology [equals] קול [= 136], because he is above the holy creatures, and the creatures sing with a pleasant voice, as Scripture says [Ez. 1:24]: 'the noise of their wings like the noise of great waters, as the voice of the Almighty [שדי]'. שדי [= 314] by way of numerology [equals] מטטרון [= 314], as Scripture says [Ez. 1:25]: 'And there was a voice from the firmament that was over their heads'. This is the voice of the Prince of the Countenance.³³⁹

Here the numerological operations serve to present Metatron as the supreme figure, presiding over the sound of the angelic prayer service, but at the same time he is the ladder that connects heaven and earth, man and God, representing God in the world, especially at the time of prayer. In Shapira's commentary, as we saw above, Metatron was similarly introduced as the 'ladder' that mediates between the lower and the upper realms, as well as the voice of human prayer. Together with the use of the 42-letter divine name, the ritual described by Shapira is reminiscent of a magical operation whereby divine and angelic names are invoked in order to bring about the immediate effect of intervention on behalf of humans.³⁴⁰

³³⁸ This numerological equation does not seem to work well.

³³⁹ *Sefer ha-Hesheq*, § 37, pp. 226-227 and § 41, p. 227:

אסטם [בגי' סל"ם, לפי שכשעלה משרע"ה למרום העמיד לו סלם זה מערפל [...] אסטיה בגי' קו"ל, לפי שהוא למעלה מן החיות הקודש והחיות ישוררו בקול ערב ע"פ שנאמר קול כנפיהם כקול מים רבים, כקול שדי. שדי בגי' מטטרון. וכתוב ויהי קול מעל לרקיע אשר על ראשם. זהו קולו של שר הפנים.

³⁴⁰ Allusions to the magical use of the 42-letter divine name occur in numerous commentaries that originate in Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle. On their appearances in the Lurianic kabbalah, see Idel, 'R. Nehemiah ben Shlomo ha-Navi al Magen David', pp. 46-61, especially p. 54 n. 265.

Although Shapira's text operates within the framework of theurgical references stemming from the Lurianic kabbalah, it preserves traces of a magical understanding of the Metatronic figure, according to which this angelic entity can be invoked by means of ritual performance. This understanding of Metatron integrates the Ashkenazi and the zoharic notions of prayer, allowing both the sefirotic and the angelic imagery to coexist on the same level. It preserves Metatron's hypostatic, semi-divine status, making him the focus of human worship, while at the same time highlighting his centrality to the sefirotic dynamics as mediator of the flow of divine energy.³⁴¹ Although this sefirotic framework downplays the binitarian overtones of the Metatronic constellation, which were latent in the medieval Ashkenazi writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo, Metatron still dominates Shapira's notion of ritual and presides over the most important part of the daily liturgical rite.

4. CONCLUSIONS.

The present chapter focused on Nathan Shapira's use of the Enoch-Metatron cluster of motifs in the context of ritual and liturgy. As was demonstrated, the liturgical role of Metatron in *Megaleh Amuqot* is modelled on the *heikhalot* literature, where this supreme angel features as a heavenly choirmaster and High Priest who conducts the liturgy on high. This imagery, originating in the ancient Jewish mystical sources, was highly elaborated during the Middle Ages in mystical and kabbalistic writings, which in turn exerted a great deal of influence on Nathan Shapira's works.

The example of the Rosh ha-Shanah liturgy demonstrated that in Shapira's writings, the intention of ritual, on which its efficacy depends, is determined by the parasemantic correspondences between its referents. Although Shapira was innovative in deploying these parasemantic elements in the context of prayer, the 'indexical' relation between the rite and its referents reveals his heavy reliance on the Ashkenazi mystical commentaries stemming from Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle.

³⁴¹ On binitarian aspects of the Metatronic motif in medieval Jewish mysticism see Idel, *Ben*, pp. 645-670.

It was further suggested that the medieval Ashkenazi traditions on Metatron as mediator of Israel's prayer and a manifestation of the divine, with whom the individual may connect through performance of the prayer rite, may have influenced the role of angelic names in the development of Lurianic theurgical prayer. This is reflected in *Megaleh Amuqot* in the analogy between the structure of prayer, the structure of the divine world, and the structure of the angelic hierarchy. This analogy is what enables the tripartite sequence of daily prayers to activate its corresponding tripartite sequence of heavenly realms.

In Shapira's *Megaleh Amuqot*, the motif of Metatron occurs in the context of the daily ritual cycle. Metatron features as a median and thus the central figure in the economy of the ritual. He is the intermediary channel of communication between man and God. At the same time, the Metatronic associations in *Megaleh Amuqot* point to the inner life of the godhead, and to the mutual reliance between the human and the divine, which depends on human ritual performance. Accordingly, performance of the ritual at the proper time and with the proper 'intention' ensures its efficacy. Since *Megaleh Amuqot* associates the liturgical rite with the realm of Metatron, it is probable that this association reflects Shapira's reliance on the mystical-magical tradition of the medieval Ashkenazi commentaries on holy names, both angelic and divine, which preserved the ancient *heikhalot* idea of a supreme angel who acts as the recipient of human prayer.

Chapter 4: Metatron and the Godhead

1. INTRODUCTION.

Jewish mystical lore has preserved various views on the ontological status of Metatron. In the early rabbinic writings, the figure of Metatron was associated with the supreme angelic being, whose identification with God constituted heresy. The Talmudic story of the four who entered Pardes (*bHagigah* 14b-15a) identifies Elisha ben Avuya, ('Aher') as the one who 'mutilated the shoots', i.e., professed belief in Metatron as the second divine power in heaven. The nature of Aher's sin in early Jewish tradition has been extensively discussed in the scholarly literature.³⁴² While some scholars have interpreted Aher's 'mutilation of the shoots' as human disobedience, which drove man to transgress the boundaries between the sacred and the profane,³⁴³ others have understood Elisha's 'heresy' as an act of misconstruing the nature of God, either by elevating the angel Metatron to the status of God,³⁴⁴ or by separating Metatron, an inherent aspect of the divine, from God's unity.³⁴⁵ As Daniel Abrams has noted, the latter interpretation of Elisha's story may be found in the mystical and kabbalistic lore as early as the 13th century, and can be viewed as the continuation of a much older hypostatic, though organically homogeneous, understanding of the

³⁴² See Stroumsa, 'Aher: A Gnostic', pp. 808-818; Segal, *Two Powers in Heaven*, p. x; Hayman, 'Monotheism – A Misused Word in Jewish Studies', pp. 1-15; Halperin, *The Merkabah in Rabbinic Literature*, pp. 77-78; idem, *Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 31-37, 202-205; Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', pp. 283-298.

³⁴³ Yehuda Liebes (*Het'o shel Elisha*, chapters 1-3) interpreted Elisha's heresy as resulting from his arrogance, which prompted him to enter the Pardes. Gershom Scholem (*Jewish Gnosticism*, p. 127) suggested reading Elisha's story literally, where 'mutilating the shoots' means destroying God's orchard. Other readings present Elisha's sin as tantamount to revealing secrets of the divine realm. See e.g. Urbach, 'Ha-Masorot al Torat ha-Sod', pp. 13-14. For a summary of various interpretations of Elisha's story, including a discussion on binitarian traditions at the intersection of Jewish mysticism and early Christianity, with a relevant bibliography, see Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', p. 296, esp. n. 14, and idem, 'Metatron and Jesus', pp. 17-35.

³⁴⁴ See Segal, *Two Powers*, pp. 60-73; Halperin, *Faces of the Chariot*, pp. 202-25.

³⁴⁵ See Mopsik, *Le Livre Hebreu d'Henoch*, pp. 30-37; Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', p. 296, esp. n. 16-17; Fossum, *The Name of God*, p. 310.

divinity.³⁴⁶

The early Jewish mystical sources, with *3Enoch* at the fore, refer to Metatron as a divine hypostasis, or else as an independent angelic figure, distinct from the godhead but capable of rising up to the divine realm. Later on, some of the medieval Ashkenazi sources developed this idea, viewing Metatron as an independent angelic being of semi-divine status (as in the writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle or Eleazar ha-Darshan's *Sefer ha-Yihud*),³⁴⁷ while others, informed by kabbalistic doctrines, placed Metatron at the borderline between the angelic and the divine realm (as in the case of the 'Special Cherub' literature³⁴⁸ or – somewhat differently – in Moshe Azriel ben Eleazar ha-Darshan's *Commentary on Shi'ur Qomah*),³⁴⁹ and in some cases they identified Metatron with the Shekhinah or the last sefirah, *Malkhut* (as, apparently, did Moshe Azriel's opponents, whom he addressed on this point in his commentary).³⁵⁰ In the kabbalistic tradition, Metatron was either integrated in the sefirotic scheme, where he was identified with various aspects of the godhead,³⁵¹ or else he was incorporated in the angelic sphere located just below the sefirotic tree.³⁵²

In Nathan Shapira's *Megaleh Amuqot*, which draws upon both the

³⁴⁶ See Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', pp. 296-297, and the bibliography adduced there in nn. 17-21.

³⁴⁷ Idem, 'Ha-Shekhinah ha-Mitpalelet', pp. 509-33, idem, 'Sefer ha-Yihud', pp. 147-160 and idem, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', pp. 302-305.

³⁴⁸ Ibid., pp. 305-309. Cf. Dan, *The Special Cherub Circle*, passim.

³⁴⁹ See Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', pp. 310-311, esp. note 70, and Scholem, *Reshit ha-Qabalah*, pp. 212-214.

³⁵⁰ See Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', pp. 298-311, and Wolfson, 'Metatron and Shi'ur Qomah', pp. 6-92.

³⁵¹ Cf. for example Nahmanides' view on the integration of the divine manifestations within the divine structure, examined in Pines, 'Ha-'el, ha-Kavod, ve-ha-Mal'akhim', pp. 1-14; Wolfson, 'The Secret of the Garment in Nahmanides', pp. 25-49; Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', p. 297. On the integration of the two-cherubs into the sefirotic system, and its male-female polarization, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 132-134, 230.

³⁵² See Abrams, 'The Boundaries of Divine Ontology', pp. 311-321; Mopsik, *Le Livre Hebreu d'Henoch*, pp. 49-57. Cf. the early observations on Metatron in kabbalah by Odeberg in his *3Enoch*, pp. 111-124.

mystical Ashkenazi and the kabbalistic traditions, the status of Metatron is highly ambivalent. On the one hand, a whole constellation of Metatronic motifs refers to a lower divine manifestation or a semi-divine recipient of human prayers, which is quite distinct from the godhead. On the other hand, Metatron is often located within the sefirotic scheme, thus constituting an innate part of the divine organism. As an integral element of the sefirotic tree, Metatron transmits the divine influx and catalyses intra-divine processes, while as an extra-divine entity he connects the lower parts of the creation with the divine. This twofold function, mirroring Metatron's own twofold human-angelic nature, is reflected further in his ambiguous name, spelled in Hebrew either with six letters (מטטרון) or with seven (מיטטרון).³⁵³ Moreover, Metatron's ambiguous human-angelic status allows Shapira to bridge the clear-cut division between the human and the divine realm. Following various kabbalistic traditions, he employs the Enoch-Metatron cluster of motifs to blur the borders between distinct cosmic levels, and all the more so, to point the way to their unification.

The present chapter demonstrates the centrality of Metatron to Shapira's notion of the divine ontology, and illustrates his use of the Metatronic constellation of motifs in reference to the godhead. The first part of the chapter focuses on the 'Metatron-shoe' cluster of ideas, which associates Metatron with evil and places him outside the divine pleroma. The second part examines the theme of Metatron-the shoemaker, whereby the human Enoch, himself external to the divine organism, bridges the gap between the created world and the divine by performing the theurgical act of intentional prayer. In this case, Enoch-Metatron represents the channel that connects man to God while also linking to each other the ontologically distinct realms of earth and heaven. He thus provides for both individual-human and national-cosmic redemption.

2. METATRON AS GARMENT AND AS SHOE.

2.1. Metatron as the garment of exile.

In many parts of *Megaleh Amuqot* Metatron features as an entity which divides

³⁵³ See Abrams, 'Ha-Shekhinah ha-Mitpalelet', n. 38 and Goldreich, *Me'irat Einayim*, pp. 79, 112, 114-115.

the world of the divine from the world of creation. According to kabbalistic tradition, this division ensues from Adam's sin, which occurred during the creational process, and determined the indirect nature of human contact with God:

It happened to them [the Israelites] just as it happened to Adam [after the sin], that they were not able to attain [God] except by way of [God] 'speaking unto him [Moses] [...] from between the two cherubs' [Num. 7:89], who are [the letters] *mem* and *samekh*, which stayed on the Tablets by [virtue of] a miracle'.³⁵⁴ They refer esoterically to Metatron and Sandalfon, who are esoterically represented by [the word] מסוה ['veil', in Ex. 34:34], which is mentioned in reference to 'the skin of Moses' face shone' [Ex. 34:35]: the letters וה [of the word מסוה, which commonly denote the sefirot *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*] refer esoterically to the two Tablets, while the letters מס [of the word מסוה stand for] Metatron [and] Sandalfon.³⁵⁵

According to this passage, it is possible to experience the divine in the created world only through an intermediary entity, which regulates human relations with God.³⁵⁶ In Shapira's commentary, this mediation assumes dual form, following

³⁵⁴ This refers to the Talmudic account of the two Tablets, across which the letters of the Law were engraved. The only two letters of the Hebrew alphabet whose shape is a fully closed circle or a square are [the final] *mem* and the *samekh*. Once these letters were fully carved out on the surface of the stone Tablets they were bound to fall off it if not for the miracle that kept them in place. See *bShab.* 104a; *bMeg.* 3a.

³⁵⁵ *MAT*, 'Terumah', p. 310:

אירע להם כמו לאדה"ר שלא יוכלו להשיג רק מבין שני הכרובים מדבר אליו שהם מ' וס' שבלוחות שהיו עומדין בנס שהוא סוד מטטרון וסנדלפון הוא סוד מסוה"השל קרן אור פני משה ו"ה הם סוד שני לוחות מ"ס מטטרון סנדלפון.

The two Tablets of the Law are similarly associated with Metatron, Sandalfon, and the 'veil' in *MA*, 'Vayetse', pp. 116-117.

³⁵⁶ Cf. *Peri Ets Hayim*, 'Tefilah' 3, p. 6: 'It is known that this shoe [i.e. Metatron] is an aspect of the screen dividing between the world of Emanation and the world of Creation [...] and all the lights of Emanation pass through this screen.'

the idea of the two mythical cherubs who embodied the divine presence in the earthly Temple.³⁵⁷ In the passage quoted above, the two cherubs are identified with the angelic pair of Sandalfon and Metatron – the two Princes of the Countenance, whose names allude, by linguistic association, to the two tablets of the divine Law. Thus for Shapira, the two angels, Metatron and Sandalfon, represent the two tablets of the Law. In this context, they signify not only the indirect revelation of God to Israel by means of the divine words that make up the Law, but also the ontological status of the Law given to Moses, which serves as a ‘veil’ through which alone the divine can be revealed to humans.³⁵⁸ Consequently, both the text of the divine Law and the two angels with whom it is identified serve as the means by which the divine is mediated to the world.

In the following excerpt from *Megaleh Amuqot* the nature of these mediated divine manifestations is explained further:

This is the esoteric meaning of [Ex. 25:8]: ‘Let them make me a sanctuary’, for at the time when the First Temple stood, the Holy One, Blessed be He, clothed [His Presence] with holy garments, which are the Sabbath garments according to the

ונודע כי זה הנעל הוא בח'י המסך המפסיק בין עולם האצילות לעולם הבריאה [...] ודרך מסך זה עוברים כל אורות אצילות.

Cf. also *Ets Hayim* 42:13, p. 310, in which the status of ‘shoe’ is rather low in the hierarchy of the divine world. Here *hashmal*, which by way of numerology equals *malbush*, i.e. garment, surrounds both *Ze'ir* and *Nuqba* on all sides, while ‘shoe’ is placed below the divine couple. Further in the same work, Metatron features on the level of ‘Tiferet of Creation’ as one of the screens which separate between two of the worlds, Formation and Creation, filtering the divine light as it descends from one to the other. On the meaning of the divine garment in Jewish mystical tradition, see Scholem, ‘Levush ha-Neshamah’, pp. 297-306; Cohen, *Sod ha-Malbush*, passim; Idel, *Golem*, pp. 148-162; Sack, ‘Al Sefer Levushei ha-Adam’, pp. 343-351, Wolfson, ‘The Secret of the Garment in Nahmanides’, pp. 25-49.

³⁵⁷ See Ex. 25:19.

³⁵⁸ See Idel, ‘PaRDeS: Some Reflections on Kabbalistic Hermeneutics’, p. 260, where he notes that ‘the external appearance of God is involved in the constitution of the written text’, and mentions a midrashic idea according to which God’s skin, which is white fire, corresponds to white light, i.e. the light surrounding the Hebrew letters and emanating from God’s garment, which illuminated Moses on Sinai.

esoteric meaning of [Ex. 28:2]: ‘And thou shall make holy garments, for glory and for beauty.’ But in the time of exile [the divine Presence is clothed with] weekdays garments, which are an esoteric reference to the [foot-coverings] shoe and sandal, and it is in reference to this that Scripture says [Ex. 25:8]: ‘that I may dwell amongst them.’ ‘Amongst them’ means that the Shekhinah clothes herself with these two garments, according to the esoteric meaning of [Eccl. 10:16]: ‘Woe to thee, O land, when thy king is a child [נער].’³⁵⁹

According to this passage, the weekdays, signifying the exile and marked by Israel’s sins and transgressions, are the time when the revelation of the Shekhinah – the divine presence – in the world is indirect, mediated through her two coverings, the sandal and the shoe, which in Shapira’s writings are always associated with Sandalfon and Metatron. On the other hand, the Sabbath and the ‘holy garments’ signify the time of the Shekhinah’s direct presence, when Israel’s sins were being atoned for by means of the Temple rituals.³⁶⁰

³⁵⁹ MAT, ‘Terumah’, p. 310:

ז"ס ועשו לי מקדש בזמן שב"ה קיים אזי מלביש הקב"ה בגדי קודש שהם בגדי שבת בסוד ועשית בגדי קודש לכבוד ולתפארת אבל בימי הגלות בגדי חול שהם סוד מנעל וסנדל ז"ש ושכנתי בתוכ"ם דייקא שמתלבשת השכינה בתרין לבושין אלו בסוד אי לך ארץ שמלכך נע"ר.

³⁶⁰ Moses Cordovero’s notion that the Sabbath and the time of divine union are equal in terms of their capacity for suspending the exile is based on the *Tiqunei Zohar*. See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, 16:4, p. 202:

It appears several times in the writings of Rabbi Shimon bar Yohai, in the *Tiqunim* and in the rest of his books, that *Malkhut* receives her nourishment through Metatron, the messenger. [...] On weekdays and in exile the [heavenly] door, governed by this angelic prince, is closed and locked, but on the Sabbath and Yom Kippur, it is the time of freedom and jubilee. [...] However, this hints that the exile is the disappearance of the Shekhinah within Metatron, as was alluded to already in the *Tiqunim*.

וזה מה שפעמים נמצא בדברי הרשב"י בתיקונים ובשאר ספריו שמלכות מקבלת מזון ע"י שליח מטטרו"ן [...] ובימות החול והגלות הדלת סגור ונעול מתנהג על השר הזה. ובימות השבתות וי"ה אז הוא חירות ויובל. [...] אמנם לרמזו אל שהגלות היא העלם שכינה בתוך מטטרון נרמז עוד בתקונים [56:30].

Cf. Cordovero’s commentaries in Avraham Azulai’s *Or ha-Hamah*, 3:32c, and also in his *Tefilah le-Moshe*, fol. 217b. See also the similar idea in Vital’s *Sha’ar ha-Pesuqim*, ‘Tetse’, pp. 199-201,

Shapira's imagining of the Shekhinah in exile, represented by the rule of Metatron and Sandalfon, bears a certain resemblance to an idea that appears in both the *Ra'aya Mehemena* and *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, whereby the Torah in its present form reflects the withdrawal of the divine presence from the world. According to these zoharic texts, at the time of exile the Shekhinah wears 'black garments', which are associated with the *sitra ahra* – the negative side of the creation – and with the plain, literal meaning of the Torah, while the mystical meaning of the Torah represents the Shekhinah in her 'bright clothes' and signifies her liberation from her present state of exile.³⁶¹ Thus we read in *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*: 'The Shekhinah is *PaRDe*'S in exile, and she is the kernel within. We call her 'the nut' [...] The Shekhinah is the fruit inside.'³⁶² In other words, the exile of the Shekhinah refers to all the existing modes of interpreting the Torah, which means that the process of interpretation maintains the Torah's separation from its divine source. For Shapira, the two angels, as the two garments of the divine presence, signify God's indirect contact with the world in exile, which can be mediated only through the Torah in its present form. On the other hand, the union between the upper cherubs – 'glory' (*Malkhut*) and 'beauty' (*Tiferet*) – signifies the time of redemption, when all the discrete aspects of the godhead would be fully unified.³⁶³ Consequently, exile marks the separation between

where the wearing of shoes signifies the weekdays, the time of flaw on high, when the divine male has to be covered in order to separate himself from his female counterpart. On Yom Kippur, however, there is no need for this covering, since the union between them can be achieved in full, i.e. without any garments. This reasoning explains the prohibition on wearing shoes on the Day of Atonement, since the taking off of the shoes by man signifies the preparation of the divine male and female for their full 'conjugal' union. For similar ideas see also *Peri Ets Hayim*, 'Tefilah', 3 pp. 4-6.

³⁶¹ See Zohar 3:279b (*Ra'aya Mehemena*), and cf. *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* 21:60b. See also Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 1091.

³⁶² *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* 24:69a-b:

כן כגוונא דא שכינתא איהי פרדס בגלותא ואיהי מוחא מלגו, אגוז קרינן ליה, [...] ואיהי שכינתא איבא מלגא.

³⁶³ Similarly, in *MAT*, 'Terumah', ed. Weiss, p. 168, the two angels featuring as the letters *mem* and *samekh* of the Law envelop the divine in the world, signifying separation between the sefirot and pointing to the need for their reunion:

Or it can be said, as was said in the Zohar [2:176a], that in the days when the First Temple

upper and lower cherubs, or in kabbalistic terms, between the upper and lower sefirot, signifying disharmony within the godhead.

The excerpt from *Megaleh Amuqot* quoted above refers to the zoharic interpretation of the two cherubs as the divine couple of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.³⁶⁴ This echoes the Talmudic idea (*bBava Batra* 99a) that the face-to-face position of the two cherubs signifies the ideal condition of the world, whereas a break from this symmetric alignment points to the divine withdrawal from the world. Similarly, in kabbalistic terms, the state of union between the two cherubs

existed, the Holy One, blessed be He, made holy garments 'for glory and for beauty' [Ex. 28:2], which refer esoterically to *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, but since the destruction [of the Temple] the world is conducted by way of profane garments, which are [the letters] *mem* and *samekh* of the Tablets. [This is] the esoteric meaning of Metatron and Sandalfon, and the esoteric meaning of 'children [to be] their princes' [Is. 3:4], who are the two cherubs. [...] This secret was hinted at in the verse [Ex. 25:8], where first He said: 'let them make me a sanctuary', [...] while in reference to the time when there was no longer a temple, [He said] 'that I may dwell between them' [Ex. 25:8], which alludes to those two cherubs. This is why He said 'between them' [בתוכם], with the final *mem*, for *Tiferet* clothes itself with Metatron and *Malkhut* with Sandalfon.

או יאמר איתא בזהר בזמן שבית המקדש קיים הקב"ה מלביש בגדי קודש לכבוד ולתפארת, שהוא סוד תפארת ומלכות, אבל לאחר החורבן העולם מתנהג בבגדי חול שהם מ"מ וסמ"ך שבלוחות סוד מטטרון וסנדלפון וסוד ונתתי נערים שריכם שהם תרין כרובין [...] וסוד זה מרומז בפסוק מתחלה אמר ועשו לי מקדש, לי [...] אבל בזמן שאין ביהמ"ק אז שכנתו בתוכם רמז על תרין כרובין אליו, לכן אמר בתוכם, מ' סתומה שתפארת מתלבשת במטטרון ומלכות בסנדלפון.

³⁶⁴ Zohar 2:176a, ed. Matt, vol. V, p. 529:

Rabbi Yitshak said, 'I will make boys their princes, and babes shall rule them [Is. 3:4]' – as is written: 'You shall make two cherubim of gold [Ex. 25:18].' It is written 'Enthroned on the cherubim' [1Sam. 4:4], and it is written: 'He mounted a cherub and flew' [2Sam. 22:11]. 'Enthroned on the cherubim' – when He settles to dwell completely, it is written: 'Enthroned on the cherubim.' 'He mounted cherub' – one, for the King is not seated on His throne. 'Enthroned on the cherubim' – two. Rabbi Yose said, 'Woe to the world when one cherub turns his face from his fellow, for look at what is written: 'their faces toward each other' [Ex. 25:20] – when there is peace in the world!

אמר רבי יצחק, כתיב ונתתי נערים שריהם ותעלולים ימשלו בהם, היינו דכתיב ועשית שנים כרובים זהב, כתיב יושב הכרובים, וכתיב וירכב על כרוב ויעף. יושב הכרובים כד שריא לאתיישבא בשלימותא כתיב יושב הכרובים [...] כתיב וירכב על כרוב חד דלא אתיישבא מלכא בכרסייה, יושב הכרובים תרי. אמר רבי יוסי, ווי לעלמא כד חד כרוב אהדר אנפיה מחבריה, דהא כתיב ופניהם איש אל אחיו, כד הוי שלמא בעלמא.

Cf. also Zohar 2:278a-b.

indicates the perfect unity of the divine pleroma, whereas discordance between them indicates a breach within the sefirotic scheme. Alluding to the Talmudic interpretation of cherub as child,³⁶⁵ Shapira argues that an incomplete or immature divine constellation governs the worlds at the time of exile. In other words, the separation between the cherubs points to the rule of Metatron, the ‘youth’ (*na’ar*), who governs the present era of exile, which is associated with Israel’s atonement for sins: ‘On this day the Tabernacle was erected, the Tabernacle of Metatron, who is called the ‘youth,’ to atone for Israel in the time of exile.’³⁶⁶

Metatron and Sandalfon feature in *Megaleh Amuqot* as the lower pair of cherubs, constituting a vehicle for the Shekhinah, the lowest divine manifestation. As such, they are not themselves identified with any part of the sefirotic scheme but rather they represent the separation of the lowest divine configuration from its supernal source. Thus, Metatron and Sandalfon symbolize the degraded condition of Israel in exile, which is reflected in the imperfect form of the Law as it now stands.

2.2. Shoe as the power of evil.

2.2.1. *Halitsah* – the separation of Sandalfon and Metatron.

In all the previous excerpts from *Megaleh Amuqot*, the two cherubs were portrayed as intermediaries between God and man, while at the same time embodying God’s ultimate nature and obscuring it from human cognition. In addition, they were identified with Sandalfon and Metatron and featured in a strictly hierarchical order, as they do throughout Shapira’s writings. According to

³⁶⁵ *bSukkah* 5b: “What does cherub [*keruv*] mean? Rabbi Abbahu said, ‘*ke-ravya*, like a child, for in Babylonia they call a child *ravya*.”

ומאי כרוב? אמר רבי אבהו: כרביא שכן בבבל קורין ליונקא רביא.

On the interpretation of this motif in sexual terms in the tradition of the *Iyun* circle, see Wolfson, *Circle on the square*, pp. 64-65.

³⁶⁶ *MAT*, ‘Terumah’, p. 310:

באותו יום הוקם את המשכן משכן של מטטרון שנקרא נער לכפר על ישראל בימי גלותם.

On the relationship between the ‘youth’ and the divine presence in the Ashkenazi mystical tradition, see above, chapter 2, section 4.1, pp. 88-96.

the kabbalistic tradition, Metatron, associated with the upper world of Formation, dominates Sandalfon, who is commonly linked with the lower world of Making.³⁶⁷ This angelic hierarchy has further consequences for Shapira: Sandalfon and Metatron, represented by the two foot coverings, sandal and shoe, serve respectively as the lower and upper covering of the divine. In *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah*, they create a hierarchy connecting, and effectively mediating between, heaven and earth, in a manner resembling the biblical image of Jacob's ladder (Gen. 28:11-16).³⁶⁸ Shapira develops this image by distinguishing between the lower world of Making and the upper world of Formation, to which he refers as the domains, respectively, of Sandalfon and Metatron:

[‘According to Rabbah, in the name of Rav Kahana, in the name of Rav:] If Elijah should come and declare that *halitsah* may be performed with a shoe, he would be obeyed; [were he, however, to declare that] *halitsah* may not be performed with a sandal, he would not be obeyed, for the people have long ago adopted the practice [of performing it] with a sandal’ [*bYabamoth* 102a]. On the other hand, [‘according to Rav Yosef, in the name of Rav Kahana, in the name of Rav: ‘If [he declares that] *halitsah* may not be performed with a shoe, he would be obeyed’ [*ibid.*]; whether we say this or that, the shoe and the sandal allude to Metatron and Sandalfon: one is a shoe and one is a sandal. And the esoteric meaning of *halitsah* is to remove [the shoe] from the world of Making, where evil

³⁶⁷ See also *Kanefei Yonah* 3: 65.

³⁶⁸ See, for example, *MAT*, ‘Shelah Lekha’, p. 470:

[...] ‘A ladder set up on the earth [and the top of it reached to heaven]’ [Gen. 28:12] – the three Princes of the Countenance [...] Sandalfon Metatron Akhatriel.

ס"לם מ"וצב א"רצה ג' שרי פנים [...] ס"נדלפון מ"טט א"כתריאל.

On the image of the ladder in the Jewish mystical tradition, especially with reference to kabbalistic anthropology, see Idel, *Ascension on High*, esp. pp. 54-56, 86-93; Idem, *Hasidism*, pp. 143, 205, 331 n. 265; Altmann, ‘The Ladder of Ascension’, pp. 1-32; Ogren, *Renaissance and Rebirth*, pp. 53, 148-149.

prevails over good. However, the esoteric meaning of the shoe is the world of Formation, where evil and good are equal, though [they are] not mixed but rather each exists independently, and we do not engage with it [i.e. with the world of Formation] but only with the world that is closest to us, known esoterically as the world of Making.³⁶⁹

In the passage above, the sandal represents Sandalfon and the lower World of Making, while the shoe signifies Metatron and, implicitly, the higher divine potency within the World of Formation. Moreover, the shoe stands not only for the external covering of the divine but also for the embodiment of evil in the universe. Consequently, *halitsah*, i.e., the removal of the shoe in the levirate marriage ritual, signifies the elimination of evil or, in other words, the purification of the world. Thus *halitsah* represents the world's progress from a state of complexity, in which the elements of evil and good are intermingled, to a state of simple 'oneness', in which there is nothing but good alone.

According to the excerpt quoted above, evil and good enjoy an equal but independent status in the world of Formation, which lies beyond the reach of human cognition. Consequently, human redemptive activity is confined to the lowest level of the creation, the world of Making, in which good is intermingled with evil,³⁷⁰ while the higher realm, the world of Formation, which is linked to

³⁶⁹ *MAT*, 'Shelah Lekha', p. 470:

אם יבא אליהו ויאמר חולצין במנעל שומעין לו אין חולצין בסנדל אין שומעין שכבר נהגו העם בסנדל ולא ידך לישנ [אין] חולצין במנעל שומעין לו בין למר ובין למר מנעל סנדל הם סוד מט"ט וסנדלפון א' נעל וא' סנדל וסוד חליצה לחלוץ מן עולם העשייה דתמן הרע יותר מן הטוב אבל סוד מנעל הוא סוד עולם היצירה ושם רע וטוב שניהם שוים ואינו מעורב רק כל אחד בעצמו ואין אנו עוסקין בו רק בעולם שקרוב לנו סוד עשייה.

³⁷⁰ In a similar vein, Shapira presents Metatron as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, namely, as being equally comprised of good and evil. For him, Metatron must comprise evil because he came into being in the process of the expansion of the four worlds that followed the emergence of evil. See *MAT*, ed. Weiss, 'Shelah Lekha', p. 161; *MA ReNaV*, chapter 108, 112. See also chapter 5 below, section 2.2, pp. 188-194. By contrast, in most Lurianic expositions of this theme, Metatron is linked exclusively to the side of good, while evil is assigned to the realm of Samael. See e.g. *Ma'alot ha-Torah* 5:

Metatron, is inaccessible to the influence of human action. Since man is unable to affect this high cosmic level, he is required instead to act on the lower level of the world of Making, by purifying it through the separation of evil from good, which results in the withdrawal of Metatron from the domain of Sandalfon. Thus, on the level of the world of Making, human intervention can prevent evil from subduing good. This is symbolized by the ritual of *halitsah*, where the removal of the shoe represents the elimination of evil.

2.2.2. *Halitsah* – the unification of Sandalfon and Metatron.

A different notion of *halitsah* appears in a kabbalistic manuscript text containing a Lurianic-Sarugian passage, which may well underlie Nathan Shapira's imagery of sandal and shoe.³⁷¹ According to this passage, Adam's sin created a tear in the

The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is in *Malkhut*. This was posed as a question, for everything that is below *Malkhut* clings to her, and this is essentially Metatron. Rashb'i wrote in the *Tiqunim* [*Tiqunei Zohar* 53: 87b]: "The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is below. The Tree of Knowledge of Good is Metatron, and of Evil is Samael". He hinted here that to the angels, who are the [divine] chariot, hardly any impurity cleaves other than the little that surrounds them, in the sense of [Ps. 12:9] 'The wicked walk on every side'. But they themselves are attached to the good aspect of the Tree of Knowledge, which receives the good from the supernal good that is attached to the Tree of Life.

עץ הדעת טוב ורע במלכות, זהו על דרך השאלה, כי כל מה שלמטה מהמלכות מתייחד אליה ועקרו במטטרון. וכתב הרשב"י בתיקונים, עץ הדעת טוב ורע איהו לתתא, עץ הדעת טוב דא מטטרון, ורע דא סמאל, עד כאן. על זה רמז בכאן, שבסוד המלאכים שהם מרכבה אין דבוק בהם שום טנופת, רק מעט דהיינו בערך מה שסביבם רשעים יתהלכון, אבל הם בעצמם נשענים בעץ הדעת בבחינה שהוא טוב, המקבל טוב מטוב העליון הדבוק בעץ החיים.

On Itshaq Ayziq, the author of *Ma'a lot ha-Torah* – a student of Menahem Mendel of Shklov – and his concept of Metatron see Liebes, 'Talmidei ha-Gera, ha-Shabeta'ut ve-ha-Nequdah ha-Yehudit', pp. 6-10 (pluto.huji.ac.il/~liebes/zohar/gaon.doc).

³⁷¹ See Idel, *Olam ha-Mal'akhim*, pp. 115-116. This passage was identified by Idel as a paraphrase of a passage from the Lurianic *Sefer ha-Liqutim*, copied in the 16th century in Italy by Barukh ben Moshe ben Barukh, who seemingly was under the influence of Israel Sarug's kabbalah. See *Ibid.*, p. 115. Cf. also Benayahu, *Yehasim she-bein Yehudei Yavan li-Yehudei Italyah*, pp. 189-193. The passage identified by Idel as Lurianic-Sarugian employs the Sarugian term *malbush* ('garment') in the sense of the covering of entities that lie below the sefirotic tree rather than above it, which is how *malbush* is usually employed in the Sarugian kabbalah. On Sarug's kabbalah see further Scholem, 'R. Israel Saruq', pp. 214-243; Tamar, *Mehqarim*, p. 163; Meroz, 'Faithful Transmission versus Innovation', pp. 257-274, esp. 157-158; eadem, 'Contrasting Opinions', pp. 191-202;

divine garment (*malbush*), which enabled the external forces of evil to cleave to and draw their vitality from the divine source. For this reason Enoch was appointed to undo the consequences of Adam's sin by sewing up the hole in the divine garment, which led to the reinforcement of evil in the world:

Metatron is called shoe, for he is the garment of *Ze'ir* in the manner of a shoe. About this the Sages said that 'if a woman performed *halitsah* with a sandal, her *halitsah* is invalid' [*bYebamot* 102a]. This is the secret of levirate marriage, the marriage of Metatron, for when we say that there is death on high, God forbid, we refer to the concealment of the light when it clothes itself with Metatron, who is the Prince of the Countenance. He is the one who undergoes levirate marriage in uniting with Sandalfon. For this reason, 'if a woman performed *halitsah* with a shoe, it is valid', since the shoe is [intended] for the male. [...] And it is this shoe that Adam tore, [which allowed for] the sanctity to spill out and for the [impure] 'external forces' to suckle from it.³⁷²

In this passage, Metatron-the shoe signifies a protective covering or 'garment' which surrounds the divine realm and prevents the evil forces that lie outside it from drawing divine nourishment through the tear in the 'garment' caused by Adam's sin. In this context, Metatron assumes a male identity, whereby his role is to reconnect with his female counterpart, signified by Sandalfon. Thus the union of Sandalfon and Metatron repairs the damage caused by Adam's sin and prevents the reinforcement of evil powers in the world below, while at the same time – facilitating the union of male and female within the godhead above.

Shatil, 'The Kabbalah of R. Israel Sarug', pp. 158-187; Idel, 'Bein Qabalat Yerushalayim', pp. 165-173.

³⁷² MS Vatican 569, fols. 61b-62a:

כי מטטרון נקרא נעל שהוא מלבוש לזעיר בבחינת נעל ולזה שז"ל חלצה בסנדל חליצתה פסולה והוא סוד ייבום הזווג של מטטרון כי מה שאנו אומרים מיתה למעלה ח"ו הוא התעלמות האור והתלבשותו במטטרון הואה"ש והוא המייבם ע"י זיווגו בסנדלפון לזה חלצה במנעל כשרה לפי שנעל הוא לזכר [...] והמנעל הזה הוא שפרץ א"ה ויצאה הקדושה לחוץ וינקו החיצונים ממנה.

Moreover, not only does Metatron mediate between the male and female, or the upper and lower, sefirotic levels, but as a liminal entity he also separates the forces of good from the forces of evil. Thus, when the ceremony of *halitsah* is performed by man with a shoe, it represents both the conjugal union of male and female divine configurations and the line of demarcation between the cosmic forces of good and evil.³⁷³ In this respect, the Sarugian passage quoted above accords with Shapira's understanding of *halitsah* as symbolizing the withdrawal of evil from the world. In both cases, the shoe symbolically points to the origin of evil, which does not belong in the divine realm itself but rather arises 'independently' at a particular moment in the history of the world, signified by Adam's sin.

2.2.3. Evil as shoe.

Like the author of the Sarugian passage quoted above, Shapira resorts to the motif

³⁷³ A similar kabbalistic explanation of the ceremony of *halitsah* appears in the Lurianic *Sha'ar ha-Pesuqim*, 'Tetse', pp. 199-201, where the male is *Ze'ir*, who clothes himself with Metatron in order to connect to his female partner *Nuqba*. Thus Metatron denotes the means by which the supernal coupling is made possible. In this instance, the shoe represents not the separation between male and female but rather a conduit for their union:

'The esoteric meaning is that when there is, God forbid, a defect on high and *Ze'ir* does not couple with his *Nuqba* in the World of Emanation, he descends to the world of Formation, dwells in Metatron and clothes himself with him, so that through him he couples with *Nuqba*. This resembles a man who has died and was reincarnated, concealing himself in the form of his brother, who is called a *yavam* [i.e. the brother of a deceased childless husband], and through him he [i.e. the dead husband] couples with his wife. As you know, each descent from world to world, from an upper to a lower world, is called 'death', in the esoteric sense of [Gen. 36:31]: 'And these are the kings who reigned in the land of Edom', as is well known. Thus the meaning of *halitsah* is that we put on this shoe on his [i.e. the *yavam*'s] foot, so that he would be able to return and ascend to his place on high by means of this shoe. For this reason, the *yavam* no longer has any connection to his wife by way of the esoteric meaning of *halitsah*.'

הסוד הוא, כי כשיש ח"ו פגם למעלה ואין זעיר מזדווג עם נוקביה בעולם האצילות, יורד למטה בעולם היצירה, ומקנן במטטרו"ן, ומתלבש בו, ועל ידו נעשה הזווג בנקבה. והוא כדמיון האדם שמת, ומתגלגל, ומתעלם באחיו הנקרא יבם, ועל ידו מזדווג באשתו. וכמו שידעת, כי כל ירידה מעולם לעולם, מעולם עליון לעולם תחתון, נקרא מיתה, בסוד ואלה המלכים אשר מלכו בארץ אדום כנודע. ולכן ענין החליצה הוא, כי אנו משימים הנעל הזה ברגלו, שיוכל לחזור לעלות למקומו למעלה, ע"י הנעל הזה, ועי"כ אין ליבם עוד זיקה באשתו בסוד החליצה.

of the shoe in order to describe the position of evil in the creation. In *Megaleh Amuqot* he presents the relation between shoe and sandal as reflecting the dynamics of intra-divine processes during the exile, namely, in the period when God is separated from the world by barriers, which denote the expansion of evil within the creation. Consequently, human redemptive activity entails the removal of the barriers, signifying evil, that separate the godhead from the creation. This amounts to the purification of the human world, the world of Making, from evil, which constitutes a part of the divine creation but is located outside the godhead itself and functions as its external covering. This is precisely the position of Metatron, who similarly represents an external covering of the divine.³⁷⁴ In Shapira's texts, the purification of the world from evil and its liberation from the state of exile are independent of the godhead and wholly dependent on the redemptive activity undertaken by humans.

In the following passage from *Megaleh Amuqot*, Moses and Joshua aspire to annihilate evil by taking off their 'shoes' and thus entering the Land of Israel, the land of redemption:

Behold, in the beginning of his mission God said to Moses:
 'put off thy shoes' [Ex. 3:5], since they [i.e. the shoes]
 esoterically represent the two cherubs [in the worlds of]

³⁷⁴ This view of Shapira's coincides with the Lurianic idea, expressed i.e. by Vital in *Ets Hayim*, 39:1, pp. 225-226, whereby evil (the *qelipah*) originated in the process of the creation through the polarization between its highest and lowest levels resulting from the limitation of the divine light. As such, it differs from the powers of Judgment (*dinim*), which exist as an essential force within the divine in its pre-emanational state. On the interpretation of evil in the Lurianic kabbalah, see the important discussion in Menahem Kallus, 'The Theurgy of Prayer', pp. 73-113. According to Kallus, and contrary to the earlier views of Scholem and Tishby, the evil powers are 'a necessary by-product of the differentiation of the higher from the lower, and on the other hand, they represent the challenge faced by the lower levels to reintegrate the lower with the higher, which is in itself the completion of the process of *Tiqun*.' Thus, not only do the 'Judgments' and the forces of evil have a different origin but they also have a different teleological function: while the Judgments are anchored in the divine infinite as a condition of its fullness, the existence of evil 'dross' in the created world challenges the process of its restoration to a state of perfection. Cf. Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 267; idem, *Kabbalah*, pp. 111-113; Tishby, *Torat ha-Ra*, pp. 39-45.

Making and Formation. [The letters] מ[mem] and ס[samekh] on the Tablets, which are Metatron and Sandalfon, [point to] the initial letters of [the words] מנעל [shoe] and סנדל [sandal]. [...] Now Moses asked for a world that is all good, in which there is no 'shell' [of impurity], and that is why [he said]: 'let me go over' to the Land of Israel, 'the good land [...] that goodly mountain' [Dt. 3:25], so that I may merit a world that is entirely good. God replied to him [Dt. 3:26-28]: 'Let it suffice thee [...] But charge Joshua and encourage him' to ascend from the world of Making to the world of Formation, 'and strengthen him' additionally with the two cherubs, because 'he shall go over' and 'he shall cause them to inherit' [the land], since he will grasp the two cherubs that you see.³⁷⁵

Here Shapira, once again, employs the imagery of shoe and sandal to represent the external layers of the divine creation. At the same time, they point to the dichotomy of the lower and upper worlds signifying the divine Law, understood as an intermediary between creation and the redemption. The Law, identified with Sandalfon and Metatron, namely, with the evil 'foot coverings', must be cast off by Moses and Joshua – both representing the messianic leader – in order to facilitate the redemption. This image coincides with the *Tiqunei Zohar's* depiction of the Torah in the form acquired after Adam's sin as a representation of all the impurities of the world, in contrast to the primeval Torah, which had served as the blueprint of the creation but was subsequently hidden by the external 'garments' of impurity.³⁷⁶ The dynamics of the hidden and the revealed Torah in the *Tiqunim* often correspond to the dichotomy of the written and the oral Torah, the former represented in positive, and the latter in negative terms:

³⁷⁵ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 54, pp. 62:

והנה מתחלת שליחותו אמר הקב"ה למשה של נעליך, שהם סוד ב' כרובים בעשייה וביצירה. מ"ס בלוחות שהם מ"ט טרון ס"נדלפון, ר"ת מ"נעל ס"נדל, והנה ביקש משה לעולם שכולו טוב ואין שם קליפה, לכן אעברה נא אל ארץ ישראל ארץ הטובה ההר הטוב, ואזכה לעולם שכולו טוב. השיב לו הקב"ה רב לך [...] צו את יהושע [...] וחזקהו מן עולם העשייה לעלות לו ליצירה, ואמצהו גם כן בתרי כרובין, כי הוא יעבור והוא ינחיל, שיהיה לו השגה בתרין כרובים אשר אתה רואה.

³⁷⁶ See Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, vol. 3, pp. 1089-1096.

In exile, the Mishnah, that is, Metatron, rules and is second [*mishneh*] to the king. The second sits in the place of the consort [i.e. Shekhinah]. This is the significance of [Prov. 30:23] ‘A handmaid that is heir to her mistress’. In the time of Moses the consort ruled, not the handmaid. After Moses died, and Joshua the ‘youth’ succeeded, the handmaid ruled instead of *Malkhut*.³⁷⁷

As pointed out by Isaiah Tishby, the present supremacy of the ‘handmaid’ hints at the rule of Lilith, the evil ‘handmaid’ who usurped the rightful place of her mistress, the divine Shekhinah.³⁷⁸ Thus the world associated with Metatron denotes divine impotence and the supremacy of evil.³⁷⁹ In other words, according to this zoharic text, the world in which the oral Torah prevails reflects the exilic state of the divine, signified by the current dominance of Metatron, while the revelation of the hidden Torah is assigned to the time of full unification within the godhead, signified by the withdrawal of Metatron from his dominant position in the world. Shapira similarly associates the two tablets of the Law with Metatron’s rule and the dominance of evil in the world, while associating pure goodness with the union between the world of Making and the world of Formation, signified by the union between the two cherubs, and – by inference – the revelation of the hidden Torah, which will take place in the messianic future. Thus the redemption, symbolised by entrance to the Land of Israel, is associated with the unity of disparate worlds conditioned by the withdrawal of evil from the world and the unveiling of the hidden Torah by the messianic figure, signified by Moses who takes off his shoes before encountering God.

³⁷⁷ *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, ‘Haqdamah’, 14b:

דבגלותא משנ"ה דאיהו מטטרו"ן שלטא, ואיהו משנה למלך, באתר דמטרוניתא יתבא משנה, ודא איהו ושפחה כי תירש גבירתה. וביומי דמשה לא שלטא שפחה אלא מטרוניתא לבתר דמית משה וירית יהושע דאיהו נער, באתר מלכותא שלטא שפחה.

³⁷⁸ Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 1095-96.

³⁷⁹ In *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* 24:69b, the husks of darkness as the outer garment of the Shekhinah are associated with the literal meaning of the Torah, subject to the power of evil. Shapira takes over this image and equates the Shekhinah’s external garment with the evil power of Metatron.

Shapira clearly adopts the imagery of *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* and weaves it into the context of the messianic project of the redemption. In the passages from *Megaleh Amuqot* quoted above, Israel are brought back from exile by means of individual messianic effort, which is translated into national experience. According to Shapira, the liberation of reality from the forces of evil results in the re-creation of a unified divine world, and this in turn facilitates an unmediated experience of the divine.

2.2.4. The male-female encounter.

The excerpts from *Megaleh Amuqot* referred to so far had all employed that version of the 'myth of unification' that concerned the collective redemption of Israel.³⁸⁰ However, the dynamics of the relationship between Sandalfon and Metatron point also to a more individualistic perspective on the unification of the divine worlds, in terms of the dynamic relation between the configurations of *Ze'ir* and *Nuqba*, or between the sefirot *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*. In the following passage, Metatron and Sandalfon are invested with a strong sexual identity, pointing to the male and female facets of the godhead, whose union creates a potential route (the 'ladder') to the divine:

Throughout the six days of the week, the world is governed by those two cherubs, the shoe and the sandal, as Scripture says [Gen. 28:12]: 'angels of God', who are the six days of the week. [...] In reference to Metatron he [Jacob] said: 'This is the gate of heaven' [Gen. 28:17], because *Ze'ir* nestles within Metatron, but Matronita nestles within Sandalfon, as Scripture says: 'the house of God' [ibidem]. In my opinion, this esoteric meaning was hinted at by the very word 'ladder' [*sulam*], [in which] the letter *samekh* is on one side, the letter *mem* is on the other, and the *lamed*, which is 'a tower flying in the air' [Rashi on *bSanhedrin* 106b] is in the middle. These are the

³⁸⁰ See Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, pp. 148-149.

mem and *samekh* that remained on the Tablets [of the Law] by virtue of a miracle, and they are Metatron and Sandalfon.³⁸¹

Here the pair Sandalfon-Metatron represents a flawed state of the universe, signified by the six working days and marked by the condition of exile, in contrast to the perfected universe, which is signified by the Sabbath and marked by the unification of disparate worlds. At the same time, however, the angelic pair represents also a mode of overcoming the state of separation prevailing in the exilic universe. They achieve this by creating a chain that links the upper to the lower realms. In this capacity Sandalfon and Metatron serve as channels for the divine influx and as vehicles of unification within the divine. In the above passage, they feature as the external layers of the divine couple, the male *Ze'ir Anpin* (the Lesser Countenance), associated with the sefirah *Tiferet*, and the female *Matronita* or *Nuqba*, associated with the sefirah Shekhinah or *Malkhut*. The union between the two angels thus conditions the *hieros gamos* between the divine configurations of *Ze'ir* and *Nuqba*.

Although Shapira never incorporates ritual instructions *verbatim* in his texts, the identification of Sandalfon and Metatron with ritual opens up the possibility of isomorphic human re-enactments of the divine unification on the earthly level. Hence the conjugal union which the individual mystic performs on Friday night aims to re-establish union between the divine configurations, and thus to create an ontological space for the human-divine encounter. While signifying the divided state of the universe, the two angels become a conduit for its reunification, which ultimately depends on human action:

The Holy One, blessed be He, placed the two cherubs [as follows:] Metatron in the world of Formation and Sandalfon in the world of Making. If [there is a flow of] female waters below, these two cherubs are stirred [into action], and the

³⁸¹ *MAT*, 'Vayeshv', p. 189:

כל ו' ימי השבוע שהעולם מתנהג ע"י תרין כרובין אלו מנעל וסנדל ז"ש מלאכי אלקים דייקא שהם ו' יומין דחול [...] על מטטרון אמר וזה שער השמים כי זעיר מקנן במטטרון אבל מטרוניתא מקננא בסנדלפון ז"ש בית אלקים ולדעתי סוד זה נרמז בתיבת סולם בעצמו סמ"ך מזה הצד מ' מזה הצד ל' שהוא מגדל פורה באויר באמצע והם מ' וס' שבלוחות בנס היו עומדין שהוא מטטרון וסנדלפון.

world depends on them, for otherwise it would not be able to exist. This is the esoteric meaning of the verse: 'remember, o Lord, thy tender mercies' [Ps. 25:6], which refers to Sandalfon, and 'thy lovingkindness' [ibid.], which refers to Metatron, for they are of [this] world, since the Holy One, blessed be He, had raised them from this world, because Elijah is in Sandalfon, Enoch is in Metatron, and they trigger the [flow of] female waters on high.³⁸²

The passage above describes the mutual dependence of the lower and upper realms. Notably, the lower is the one that plays the crucial part in effecting unification between the two levels. Shapira employs the image of progression from below upwards to highlight the dependence of the interplay between divine powers on the trigger that comes from the human plane, the lowest level 'below'. On the basis of the isomorphic structure of the lower and the upper realms, unification within the upper realm, which is effected by the cherubs, Metatron and Sandalfon, is accomplished in the lower realm by the righteous individual who is modelled on the ideal figures of Elijah and Enoch. Metatron and Sandalfon thus represent not only the union, within the worlds of Formation and Making, of the sefirotic male and female, *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, but also the ideal figures of the righteous individuals Enoch and Elijah, who are instrumental in bringing about union within the divine realm. Here, as in the previously cited excerpts from *Megaleh Amuqot*, both Metatron and Sandalfon remain below the divine realm, but they represent, through the association with Elijah and Enoch, a mode of affecting the divine realm which is indispensable for its unification. This unification may take place not only as a national-redemptive event entailing a restructured creation and the liberation of Israel from exile, but also, on a more

³⁸² *MAT*, 'Terumah', ed. Weiss, p. 168-9:

העמיד הקב"ה הב' כרובים מטטרון ביצירה וסנדלפון בעשייה, שהם אין מיין נוקבין לתתא מתעוררין תרין כרובין אלין, והעולם עומד עליהם, שזולת זה לא ה' לעולם יכולת להתקיים, וזה סוד הפסוק זכור רחמיה ה', לקבל סנדלפון, והסדיך לקביל מטטרון, כי מעולם המה, שהעמיד אותן הקב"ה מזה העולם שכן אליהו הוא בסנדלפון, חנוך הוא במטטרון, והם מעוררין מיין נוקבין לעילא.

personal-redemptive level, as an internally transformative experience of the individual.³⁸³

3. THE SHOE AND THE SHOEMAKER.

3.1. The shoemaker in *Megaleh Amuqot* vs. Cordovero's writings.

The dynamics of human influence on the divine are reflected in the well-known kabbalistic theme of Enoch the shoemaker, which Shapira, too, often employs:

Metatron is Enoch the shoemaker of the generation of the flood, who with each and every stitch recited [the blessing]: 'Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom, forever and ever'. The initial letters [of this phrase, **ב ש כ מ ל ו**] by way of numerology equal [the numerical value of the combined names of] Enoch [and] Metatron [הנוך מטטרון = 398].³⁸⁴

In the above passage, Metatron is identified with the antediluvian patriarch Enoch, who overcame the gap between the human and the divine. The process of Enoch's angelic transfiguration is triggered by his recitation of the blessing on the Name of God. Thus a normative ritual act, which does not necessitate any unusual mental strength or piety, effects the unification of the earthly Enoch with the heavenly Metatron. For Shapira, this is possible on the basis of a pre-existent linguistic level of reality, on which the union of Enoch and Metatron shares the ontological status of the words that make up the blessing on the Name. This idea clearly draws on the earlier kabbalistic tradition whereby the prayers of Enoch-the shoemaker had transformed him into an angel. According to *Me'irat Einayim* by Isaac of Acre, Enoch-the cobbler always performed his work while blessing God in order to cleave to Him.³⁸⁵ Hence, by dint of his devotional acts, Enoch

³⁸³ For this type of personal redemptive experience, described by Idel as 'subjective metastasis', see Idel, *Kabbalah and Eros*, pp. 148-149.

³⁸⁴ *MAT*, 'Shemot', p. 264:

מט"ט הוא חנוך תופר מנעלים בימי דור המבול ועל כל תפירה אמר ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד ר"ת בגימ' חנוך מטטרון.

³⁸⁵ On Islamic parallels to the Enoch-the shoemaker motif, which appear prior to Isaac of Acre's account in various stories on Idris the prophet, see Schneider, 'Hanokh Tofer Min'alayim', pp.

managed to transcend his earthly reality.³⁸⁶ In a similar vein, this motif features in Moses Cordovero's *Pardes Rimonim*, where Enoch-the cobbler sews shoes with the intention of reconnecting the divine female *Shekhinah* with her male counterpart *Tiferet*. By stitching the leatherwork he creates channels that link the lower to the upper levels of reality.³⁸⁷ For Cordovero, the transformed Enoch serves as a vehicle for the lowest sefirah, *Malkhut*, who ascends thanks to his angelic agency. However, Cordovero notes another tradition on Enoch-the cobbler, whereby he himself rises up the sefirotic tree to a level that is higher than that of *Malkhut*:

According to this explanation, it was appropriate for him to become a chariot for *Malkhut*, although we saw that according to another explanation, Sandalfon was called a sandal and

287-319. Schneider argues that the core of Isaac of Acre's story belongs to the pre-Islamic period, and its origin lies most definitely in the East, probably Babylonia, from where it reached both Islamic circles and the medieval Ashkenazi Pietists at the formative stages of their respective developments.

³⁸⁶ See Goldreich, *Me'irat Einayim*, p. 47, and Idel, *Olam ha-Mal'akhim*, p. 107:

I asked my teacher Yehuda ha-Darshan Ashkenazi, of blessed memory: 'What was it about Enoch that made him merit all this? About Elijah, blessed be his memory, the matter is known, but why Enoch?' He replied that according to a tradition he had received, Enoch was a cobbler, that is, he used to sew shoes, and with each and every hole he made in the leather with an awl, he would bless the Blessed Name wholeheartedly, with perfect concentration, and would then draw down a blessing for the emanated Metatron. He never forgot to bless, not even with a single hole, but rather he would always do this, so much so that he vanished out of this abundance of love, 'for God took him' [Gen. 5:24] and granted him the name Metatron, and his status is very high.

ושאלתי את פי מורי הרבי יהודה הדרשן אשכנזי ז"ל: מה היה עניין חנוך שעל ידו זכה לכל זה כי עניין אליהו ז"ל ידוע אבל חנוך למה. אמר כי קבל שחנוך היה אושכף כלומר תופר מנעליים ובכל נקיבה ונקבה שהיה נוקב במרצע בעור היה מברך בלב שלם ובכוונה שלמה לשם ית' וממשיך ברכה למטטרון הנאצל ומעולם לא שכח אפילו בנקיבה אחת מלברך אלא תמיד היה עושה כן עד שמרוב האהבה איננו, כי לקח אותו אלהים וזכה להקראות מטטרון ומעלתו גדולה עד מאוד.

³⁸⁷ See Schneider, 'Hanokh Tofer Min'alayim', p. 288 n. 4, where he notes that a similar notion of the power of blessing appears in both Isaac of Acre's story and in Ashkenazi Pietistic writings, e.g. *Sodei Razaya*, 'Perush al ha-Tefilah', p. 41, although the latter attribute to the blessing the expansion of the divine powers on high rather than the drawing of the divine energy downwards. See also Wolfson, *Along the Path*, pp. 170-171; Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 71-73.

Metatron a shoe. He [Sandalfon] was connecting to Metatron and bestowing on him [the divine influx], which in turn gave rise to the bestowal [of the influx] on the *Shekhinah*. This is why he [Sandalfon] had the merit of becoming a chariot for Metatron, [by way of] measure for measure. In respect of this it was said [that] he was a cobbler, and with each and every stitch he would bless [God], because he was uniting Metatron with the attribute [i.e. sefirah], and thereby he was bestowing [the influx] on *Malkhut*.³⁸⁸

Cordovero distinguishes here between two traditions, one associating Metatron with the lowest sefirah *Malkhut*, and the other associating him with Sandalfon. According to the latter tradition, the whole process of unification among the sefirot is triggered from below and proceeds upwards, first generating the divine influx on high and then drawing it down to the lower realm. The process begins with the activation of the female *Malkhut*, signified by Sandalfon, and leads to her reconnection to the male *Tiferet* via the intermediary ninth sefirah, *Yesod*.³⁸⁹

³⁸⁸ Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim* 22:4, p. 278:

ומן הראוי היה שיהיה מרכבה למלכות לפי זה. אמנם ראינו מי שפירש כי הסנדלפון נקרא סנד"ל ומטטרו"ן מנעל והוא היה מחבר ומשפיע למטטרו"ן ומשם היה סיבה שיושפע אל השכינה ולפיכך זכה להיות מרכבה למטטרו"ן מדה כנגד מדה, וז"ש תופר מנעלים היה ובכל נקיבה ונקיבה היה מברך כי היה מיוחד מטטרו"ן עם המדה ואח"כ היה משפיע למלכות.

³⁸⁹ See Idel, *Olam ha-Mal'akhim*, p. 111-112, pointing out that in his earlier works, such as the *Pardes*, Cordovero views Metatron as a channel connecting *Malkhut* to *Tiferet*, and equal to the ninth sefirah, *Yesod*, whereas his later commentary on the *Zohar*, *Or Yakar*, reflects a tradition associating Metatron with the lowest sefirah, *Malkhut*. It seems reasonable, however, to see in the *Pardes* version of the shoemaker theme only a quotation from an anonymous source and not Cordovero's own earlier view, for in all other instances in the *Pardes*, Metatron features only in connection to *Malkhut*. Moreover, in *Reshit Hokhmah*, authored by Cordovero's disciple Elijah da Vidas, Metatron also features as an entity that lies below the sixth sefirah *Tiferet*. In this text da Vidas explains the view of the *Ra'aya Mehemena*, that 'Metatron is a horse on which *Tiferet* rides. Just as the horse is below and the rider is above it, so, too, Metatron is the horse of *Tiferet*' (*Zohar* 3:258a, *Ra'aya Mehemena*). Thus da Vidas connects Metatron to *Malkhut*, the last sefirah, for it is through him that all the sefirot become manifest in the world, like 'the soul which clothes itself in a body' (*Reshit Hokhmah*, 'Sha'ar ha-Qedushah', chapter 4, p. 29). On the Cordoverian view of *Malkhut*, see further Raviv, *Decoding the Dogma*, pp. 454-456.

This releases the divine influx, which flows down through Metatron onto the *Shekhinah-Malkhut*. At the same time, on the earthly level, Enoch-the shoemaker represents Metatron as an ideal righteous man, who is charged with the redemptive role of triggering the flow of divine influx down to the lower worlds. Although Cordovero acknowledges this variant version of the tradition whereby Metatron himself reaches beyond the realm of the tenth sefirah, in his own view Metatron is a subservient entity and a mere vehicle, located below the sefirotic realm and acting only as a catalysing force on the last sefirah, *Malkhut*:

Sandal: The sandal is Sandalfon, who is a sandal for *Tiferet*, whereas *Malkhut* wears the shoe, which is Metatron. *Tiferet* must therefore wear the sandal, [which means that] the union [between *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*] is incomplete, because he is in his clothes and she is in her clothes.³⁹⁰

According to this passage, not only is Metatron associated with the lowest sefirah, *Malkhut*, and placed below Sandalfon, who now features as the sixth sefirah, *Tiferet*, but the union of male and female achieved by his action is described as being incomplete: he does not channel the sefirotic flow but rather constitutes an obstacle that obstructs it. Thus according to Cordovero, the union triggered by Enoch from below is necessarily incomplete. This view presents Metatron-the shoe as a screen that separates the *Shekhinah* from the upper divine realm. Cordovero further elaborates on this idea in *Or Yaqar*:

And similarly all those who are emanated, even Enoch-Metatron, effected a restoration only down below, according to the esoteric meaning of shoe and sandal, as we have already explained in respect of Enoch who was sewing sandals, and in the book *Pardes Rimonim*.³⁹¹

³⁹⁰ Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, Gate 23:15, p. 362:

סנדל הסנדל הוא סנדלפון שהוא סנדל לתפארת בהיות המלכות נעולה במנעל שהוא מטטרו"ן. כי אז בהכרח יתלבש הת"ת בסנדל והיחוד אינו גמור כי הוא בבגדו והיא בבגדה.

³⁹¹ *Zohar im Perush Or Yaqar*, vol. 11, p. 103 (cf. Goldreich, *Me'irat Einayim*, p. 398):

Here the influence of Enoch-Metatron, which signifies the impact on the upper worlds of the righteous individual's devotion, reaches only as high up as the lowest of the divine gradations. As we have already seen, Cordovero firmly associates the Enoch-Metatron constellation of motifs with the realm of Shekhinah – the divine presence within the human world. Similarly, Enoch's devotion, which in Cordovero's writings belongs to the theme of Enoch-the cobbler, plays only the small role of triggering the chain reaction that culminates in the provision of divine nourishment for the lower worlds. Consequently, there is hardly any scope for the elevation of the righteous Enoch to a higher level of the sefirotic hierarchy. In a similar vein, Cordovero's disciple, Moshe Zacuto, explains the 'Enoch-the cobbler' motif in his short commentary on the name Metatron:

Metatron: it is known that *Ze'ir Anpin* clothes himself with him, who is signified esoterically by [the letter] *vav* [of the Tetragrammaton]. And *Malkhut* [is clothed] with Sandalfon, according to the esoteric meaning of the letter *dalet* [...]. Know that they comprise the three worlds of Creation, Formation, and Making. [...] In each of the worlds of Creation, Formation and Making [they] are constituted in a way that signifies esoterically a [divine] countenance. [...] And in the world of Formation the unification is between *Malkhut* and *Kadosh*, who signifies Enoch son of Yered, and is the esoteric meaning of 'Enoch was a shoemaker.'³⁹²

Contrary to the view of Cordovero, Zacuto in the above passage associates *Malkhut* with Sandalfon, not Metatron. He apparently follows a different kabbalistic tradition, which connected Metatron to the male sefirah *Tiferet*. As a

וכן כל הנמשכים אפילו חנוך מטטרון לא תקן אלא למטה בסוד מנעל וסנדל כפירשנו חנוך תופר סנדלים היה וכדפירשנו בספ"ר.

³⁹² Moshe Zacuto, *Sefer Erkhei ha-Kinuyim*, 'Mem' (following MS Cincinnati 538):

מטטרון. ידוע שבו מתלבש ז"א שהוא סוד ו'. ובסנדלפון [מתלבש] המל' בסוד ד'. ודע כי הם כוללים ג' עולמות בי"ע, [...] ובכל א' מעולמות בי"ע נעשים בסוד פרצוף [...] וביצירה הזווג מו"ק. וזוהי בחינת חנוך בן ירד. וסוד חנוך תופר מנעלים היה.

result, Metatron features in his work as a vehicle for the male divine configuration of *Ze'ir Anpin*, which refers to the level of the sixth sefirah, *Tiferet*. Nevertheless, the status of Metatron remains rather low, for his potency extends only to the world of Formation. As in Cordovero's writings, the unification achieved by Enoch-Metatron, in the sense of the devotional act performed by a righteous individual, affects only the lower levels of the creation. It makes possible the union between the lowest sefirah, *Malkhut*, and the human realm by means of reuniting it with the benign 'side' of the creation.

3.2. Enoch-the shoemaker in the Lurianic kabbalah.

Shapira's image of Enoch, whose cleaving to God signifies the extraction of particles of divine sanctity from the material world in which they have been scattered, corresponds to the Lurianic imagery, wherein Enoch's actions compensate for Adam's sin:

It was in reference to this that the sages, of blessed memory, said that Enoch was a cobbler who closed what Adam had opened, and covered the light of the [world of] Creation.³⁹³

According to this excerpt, Enoch's shoemaking amounts to atonement for Adam's sin, which had introduced a flaw in the creation.³⁹⁴ By his stitching Enoch repairs and closes the rapture that allowed the divine light to spill out and be scattered throughout the material universe.³⁹⁵ His shoemaking thus points to the rectification of an order of creation, which became flawed in the course of the cosmogonical process. This places Metatron at the junction of the material and the divine realm, where he is charged with the restorative task of separating good from evil:

³⁹³ *Sefer ha-Liqutim*, 'Noah' 1, p. 39:

ז"ש ז"ל חנוך תופר מנעלים היה, שסתם מה שפתח אדה"ר וכיסה האור של הבריאה.

³⁹⁴ See Idel, *The Angelic World*, p. 114.

³⁹⁵ It is worth noting that Idris, the Islamic counterpart of Enoch, is depicted as a mythical hero who sews a spiritual garment for the mystics and is generally recognized as the patron of tailors. See Schneider, 'Hanokh Tofer Min'alayim', pp. 317-319.

Enoch came and repaired what Adam had distorted, and for this reason he was taken to heaven. When he was taken he was 365 years old, which corresponds to the [number of] days in the solar year, which amount to 365, and these are [harsh] ‘judgments’ [דינים]. He [Enoch] came and ‘repaired’ them, and afterwards he was taken [to heaven]. It is known that [the word שמש for] ‘sun’ refers [only] to the outward aspect of the sun [literally ‘the sun’s pouch’ – נרתק החמה], not to the essence of what its name conveys. Rather, it is the [sun’s] light that spreads in the world that is called שמש, while its [inner] essence is called חמה. It was in reference to this that the Sages said that in the messianic future, ‘God will take the [inner] sun [חמה] out of its ‘pouch [נרתק]’ [bNedarim 8b; Zohar 3, 17a (*Ra’aya Mehemena*)]. Thus the ‘pouch’ is the outward aspect of the sun, which by way of numerology [שמש = 640] equals twice the value of the 320 ‘judgments’ [דינים], as it is well known. Enoch came and rectified those judgments [...] When the Sages said that Enoch was a cobbler they were referring to his sewing of the sun’s pouch [נרתק של החמה], which is the [outward aspect of the] sun [שמש]. In other words, he would tie up the judgments [דינים], subdue and sweeten them, by virtue of which he earned the merit of taking Adam’s light, and [Gen. 5:24] ‘God took him’.³⁹⁶

According to the above text, Enoch earned the privilege of being ‘taken’ by God by his restorative actions, which subdued the influence of evil in the world. In

³⁹⁶ *Sefer ha-Liqutim*, ‘Bereshit’ 3, p. 34:

חנוך בא ותיקן מה שעוות אדה"ר ולזה לקח לזיהרא: וכשנלקח היה שס"ה שנה שהם כנגד ימות החמה שהם שס"ה והם דינים. ובא ותיקן אותם ואח"כ נלקח. וידוע הוא כי השמש הוא נרתק החמה ועוד שהשמש אינה עצמות השם שלה, אלא האור המתפשט בעולם נקרא שמש, והעצמות שלה נק' חמה. ולזה ארז"ל לעת"ל הקב"ה מוציא חמה מנרתקה, א"כ הנרתק הוא השמש ושם"ש הוא גימטריא ב"פ ש"ך דינים כנודע וחנוך בא ותיקן אותם הדינים [...] ומ"ש חז"ל חנוך תופר מנעלים היה, ר"ל, היה תופר הנרתק של החמה שהוא השמש, ר"ל היה קושר הדינים וכובש אותם וממתקם, ומפני זה זכה ולקח הזיהרא של אדה"ר, ולקח אותו אלהים.

Lurianic terms, Adam's sin consisted of tearing the protective garment of the divine realm, which enabled evil to penetrate it and adhere to the divine light. Enoch's stitching repaired the tear and restored the protective covering of the light, which prevented evil from drawing on the divine energy. As we have seen, Enoch is obliged to 'close' what Adam had 'opened', thereby withholding the divine nourishment from the evil 'side'.³⁹⁷ This Lurianic text reveals a broad mythical perspective on Enoch's action, emphasizing its consequences for the entire creation. In this sense Enoch's performance has clear redemptive overtones, since its goal is to mend the current state of the world, in which evil prevails over good, and thus to free the world from the influence of evil. This aspect of the Lurianic version of the theme is missing from the earlier Cordoverian parallel, but it indicates an acquaintance with the traditions which presented Metatron as both a shoe and a protective screen, i.e. the meeting point between good and evil.³⁹⁸

Menahem Azariah da Fano, another Luria-oriented kabbalist, whose writings were widely distributed in early modern Ashkenaz,³⁹⁹ emphasizes this active restorative facet of 'Enoch the cobbler' as follows:

He [Enoch] was a shoemaker in practice [...] And through his faith Enoch was intending with his shoes to connect the lower worlds so that they would be established at the feet of the *Shekhinah* [...]. With each and every stitch he would focus on

³⁹⁷ See Idel, *Olam ha-Mal'akhim*, p. 115. Idel suggests that the tradition on the rapture that split the divine organism may have originated in the 13th-century kabbalistic idea on two holes in the sefirah *Yesod* – the divine phallus, one transmitting divine seed (i.e. nourishment) and the other transmitting urine (i.e. waste). Similarly, in the Lurianic imagery, this split enables the divine to bestow both good and evil on the world.

³⁹⁸ See also *Sefer ha-Liqutim*, MS Vatican 569 [above, n. 272], in which the Enoch-the shoemaker motif is rendered in sefirotic terms, resembling Cordoverian thought. According to this interpretation of the theme, Metatron is the shoe sewed by Enoch, featuring as a protective cover for *Ze'ir Anpin*, and facilitating his coupling with *Nuqba*. See *ibid.*, fol. 61a: 'Enoch was a cobbler – the explanation is that Metatron is called a shoe because he enclothes *Ze'ir* by way of a shoe.'

ז"ל חנוך תופר מנעלים היה ופי' כי מטטרון נקרא נעל שהוא מלביש לזעיר בבחינת נעל.

³⁹⁹ See Avivi, *Qabalat ha-Ari*, vol. 2, pp. 555-556.

the intention of his devotion and say: ‘Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom, forever and ever’, for this verse connects and unifies all the upper palaces, as is known, and [the numerical value of] its initial letters [is 398, which equals that of] Enoch-Metatron.⁴⁰⁰

In this passage da Fano recognizes devotional prayer as the factor that led to Enoch’s transformation into Metatron. By comparison with the previously quoted excerpts from the Cordoverian and Lurianic kabbalah, da Fano’s interpretation is innovative inasmuch as it stresses the performative [בפועל – ‘in practice’] dimension of Enoch’s work, by dint of which it becomes a theurgical act that affects not only the human but also the divine reality. Enoch’s stitching operates on both the literal and the figurative level. On the literal level he is an individual craftsman who performs his skilled work with perfect devotion, while on the figurative level he stands at the intersection of the upper and the lower realm, which he achieves by means of extreme piety and intense devotional practice.⁴⁰¹ Moreover, a numerological operation enables da Fano to link Enoch-Metatron’s name with the first blessing accompanying the recitation of the *Shema*. The same calculation appears in another of his works, where he presents Sandalfon and Metatron as sandal and shoe:

Enoch, son of Yered, was a shoemaker. This means that he connected [the world of] Formation, which is a shoe, with the [world of] Making, which is a sandal, and both of them together are called shoes. [He did this] by purifying the [world of] Making and rendering it equal to [the world of] Formation. And the reason for wearing the sandal is to integrate them both

⁴⁰⁰ Da Fano, *Asarah Ma’amarot*, ‘Em Kol Hai’ 3:22, fols. 53b-54a:

והוא היה תופר מנעלים בפועל [...] והיה חנוך באמונתו מכויין בהם לקשור העולמות התחתונים שהיו תקונים לרגלי שכינה [...] ועל כל תפירה ותפירה היה מכויין ואומר ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד שיש בפסוק זה קשר ויחוד כל ההיכלות עליונים כגודע וראשי תיבות שלו בגימטריא חנוך מטטרון.

⁴⁰¹ Cf. Schneider, ‘Hanokh Tofer Min’alayim’, p. 319, where he notes that in some Islamic sources Idris’ sewing is interpreted as a spiritual-meditative activity, a mental practice that leads to mystical cleaving to God.

[that is, the World of Formation and the World of Making, signifying Metatron and Sandalfon]. For these two worlds were separated from each other because of the sin of the generations, and that righteous individual [Enoch-Metatron] strove to reconnect them. With each and every hole that he made [in the leather] with the awl he would say: 'Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom, forever and ever,' and the initial letters [of this phrase in Hebrew] are the same as [the letters that make up the Hebrew phrase] 'Peace be with you', which by way of numerology equals Enoch Metatron. There is no doubt that even now, in heaven, Enoch does not detract from this praise [of God], and Elijah, who came after the giving of the Torah, greets him with the [Torah] verse [Dt. 6:4] 'Hear [o Israel, the Lord is our God, the Lord is One].'⁴⁰²

The above excerpt is a longer version of the previously quoted passage from da Fano, in which 'Enoch-Metatron' was numerologically equated with the blessing accompanying the *Shema* prayer. However, in this version da Fano introduces two additional elements: the rationale for Enoch's shoemaking and the figure of Elijah-Sandalfon. Both these motifs are interconnected, for according to da Fano, the primordial sin, which separated God from humans and led to the emergence of disparate levels of creation, necessitated mediation between them through various angelic figures. Thus mediation by Sandalfon and Metatron arises from Adam's sin and marks the state of separation between the human and the divine. What da Fano emphasizes in the passage above is that the human world must be purified in order to rise to a higher level and be reunited with God. By the same token, the connection between the upper and lower levels is established by means of the ritual of human prayer, so that the trigger for unification must come from

⁴⁰² Da Fano, *Me'ah Kesita* 100, p. 54b:

חנוך בן ירד תופר מנעלים היה פירוש מחבר יצירה שהיא מנעל ועשיה שהיא סנדל ושניהם יחד נקראו נעלים בהזדוּכך העשיה והשואתה ליצירה והוא טעם נעילת הסנדל לכלול שניהם ולפי ששני העולמות האלה נפרדו זה מזה בעון הדורות השתדל אותו צדיק לחברתם ועל כל נקיבה שהיה נוקב במרצע אומר בשכמל"ו ור"ת הללו הן הן אותיות שלום כך בגי' חנוך מט"ט ואין ספק שגם עתה במרום אין חנוך גורע משבחו כלום ואליהו שהיה אחר מתן תורה מקדמו בפסוק שמע.

the human level below. In this way, da Fano highlights the sequential character of the unifying process, which starts at the lowest level and proceeds upwards.⁴⁰³ Moreover, the unification of the worlds has consequences for both the personal-human and the universal-cosmic level. On the personal level, the extreme devotions of the righteous individual result in his ascent and inner transformation, as demonstrated by the transfiguration of Enoch and Elijah into angels. On the cosmic level, the effort of the individual changes the ontological configuration of the divine worlds, which would ultimately lead to the redemption of the whole of creation. Both these levels are, according to da Fano, dependent on human endeavour through prayer and worship. The same idea reappears in Nathan Shapira's *Megaleh Amuqot*:

[The verse] 'And he took from the stones of that place' [Gen. 28:11] [points to] the esoteric meaning of the twelve words that make up [the two six-word phrases] 'Hear [O Israel etc.]', [which signifies] the upper unification, and 'Blessed [be The Name etc.]', [which signifies] the lower unification. This is the reason why [Jacob] took twelve stones 'and put them for his pillows' [ibid.] The [numerical value of the] initial letters of the [lower] unification, 'Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom, forever and ever', which Jacob established, is [equal to the numerical value of the names] Enoch-Metatron, the lower unification.⁴⁰⁴

In this passage, Shapira discerns two types of 'unification', 'upper' and 'lower', which he associates respectively with the recitation of the *Shema* formula and its attendant blessing. This idea is modelled on the zoharic notion of the two unifications, one 'upper' and one 'lower', binding together two corresponding sets of six 'sides' or 'aspects', each signified by six words comprising, respectively, the *Shema* prayer and its accompanying blessing:

⁴⁰³ See Idel, *Olam ha-Mal'akhim*, p. 118.

⁴⁰⁴ *MAT*, 'Vayetse', p. 116:

ויקה מאבני המקום סוד י"ב תיבות של שמע יהודא ועילאה וברוך יהודא תתאה לכן לקח י"ב אבנים וישם מראשותיו ראשי אתוון של יחוד ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד שתיקן יעקב הוא חנו"ך מטטרו"ן יהודא תתאה.

‘Once He unites above in six aspects, She too unites below with six other aspects, so that there will be oneness above and oneness below, as is said: ‘YHVH will be one and His name one’ [Zech. 14:9]. One above in six aspects, as is written: ‘Hear O Israel! YHVH our God, YHVH is one’ (*Shema Israel YHVH Eloheinu YHVH ehad*) [Deut. 6:4] – six words corresponding to six aspects. One below in six aspects: *Barukh Shem Kevod Malkhuto le-Olam va-Ed* – six other aspects in six words. ‘YHVH one’, above; ‘and His name one’, below.’⁴⁰⁵

In the Zohar, the two sets of six ‘aspects’ or ‘extremities’ signify, on the one hand, the sefirot surrounding *Tiferet*, and on the other hand, the six angelic spheres around the Shekhinah. The unification of the six sefirot with *Tiferet* and the angelic domain with Shekhinah prepares for the full union of the sefirot themselves. Likewise, each element of the six-partite structure of the sefirotic system corresponds to the structure of the *Shema*, whose first two lines consist of six words each. Accordingly, the ritual of prayer recitation constitutes, by dint of this structural analogy, a theurgical act that affects the divine configuration.⁴⁰⁶ In Shapira’s text, the same idea appears in connection with Jacob’s dream (Gen.

⁴⁰⁵ Zohar 2:133b-134a (the English translation above follows Matt, *Zohar*, vol. V, p. 240. Cf. Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 1025):

כיון דאיהו אתיחד לעילא בשית סטרין, אוף הכי איהי אתיחדת לתתא בשית סטרין אחרנין, בגין למהוי אחד לעילא ואחד לתתא, כדאתמר יהיה י"י אחד ושמו אחד, אחד לעילא בשית סטרין, דכתיב שמע ישראל י"י אלהינו י"י אחד, הא שית תיבין לקבל שית סטרין אחד לתתא בשית סטרין בשכמל"ו, הא שית סטרין אחרנין בשית תיבין, י"י אחד לעילא, ושמו אחד לתתא.

⁴⁰⁶ See Zohar 2:134b (the English translation follows Matt, *Zohar*, vol. V, p. 239. Cf. Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 1027-1028):

Just as they were unified – the mystery of the upper world in *one*, and the mystery of the lower world in *one* – so too must we unify the upper world in *one* and the lower world in the mystery of *one*, this in six aspects and that in six aspects. Accordingly, six words here in the mystery of six aspects, and six words there in the mystery of six aspects. ‘YHVH is one, and His name one.

וכמה דאינון אתיחדו רזא דעלמא עלאה באחד ורזא דעלמא תתאה איהו אחד אוף הכי אנו צריכינן ליחדא עלמא עלאה באחד וליחדא עלמא תתאה ברזא דאחד, דא בשת סטרין ודא בשת סטרין, ובגין כך שית תיבין הכא ברזא דשית סטרין, ושית תיבין הכא ברזא דשית סטרין, יהו"ה אחד ושמו אחד.

28:11-18), which the midrashic tradition has associated with twelve stones, the number symbolically corresponding to Israel's tribes.⁴⁰⁷ Shapira follows the zoharic association between the first twelve words of the *Shema* prayer and the unification of cosmic worlds, but he does not acknowledge the more complex, 'classical' Lurianic view on the fourfold cycle of the *Shema* recitation, each instance of which corresponding to four levels of the upper unification, which in turn enable the lower divine configurations to unite.⁴⁰⁸ According to this Lurianic idea, the ultimate intention of the prayer is to reunite the sefirotic constellations with their infinite divine source above. Shapira clearly omits this detailed elaboration on the intention of the *Shema* prayer, but he inserts the Enoch-Metatron figure into the context of *Shema* recitation, which points to his acquaintance with the Lurianic imagery preserved in da Fano's *Asarah Ma'amarot*. In his own interpretation, Shapira resorts to the zoharic idea of the *Shema* being structured as 'six opposite six', which correspond to the sefirotic arrangement of *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*, blending this idea with the theme of Enoch-the cobbler, and clearly modelling himself on da Fano's writings:

Since Jacob had established the unification of 'Blessed be the Name of His glorious [etc.]', which points esoterically to Enoch son of Yered the shoemaker who, with each and every stitch would say 'Blessed be the Name of His glorious [etc.]', the Holy One, blessed be He, later showed him [Jacob] the secret of the ladder – which is Metatron – with 'the angels of God ascending and descending on it' [Gen. 28:12]. For [there are] six words in the upper unification [of the *Shema*] and six words in the lower unification [of 'Blessed be the Name of His glorious etc.']. The angels of God from the lower unification were ascending, and then [Jacob] said [Gen. 28:16]: 'The Lord is in this place', for the angels of the Holy One, Blessed be He

⁴⁰⁷ See *Yalqut Shim'oni*, 'Genesis', 37:143.

⁴⁰⁸ Cf. Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Kavanot*, 'Sha'ar Qeri'at Shema', esp. p. 155. See also Kallus, 'The Theurgy of Prayer', pp. 251-274; Fine, *Physician of the Soul*, pp. 235-239.

[from the upper unification] were descending, 'because the sun was set' [Gen. 18:11], six opposite six.⁴⁰⁹

This passage combines the shoemaker's theme with the motif of Jacob's ladder, since both the shoemaking and the ladder signify the connection between the human and the divine, established by a devotional act.⁴¹⁰ Shapira clearly states that Enoch's transformation into Metatron corresponds to the image of a ladder and represents prayer. Jacob's ladder, on which the angels are both ascending and descending, consists of six steps that lead both up and down. They correspond to the six words comprising the *Shema* prayer, which represents the upper unification, while at the same time corresponding also to the six words comprising the 'Blessed be the Name of His glorious kingdom' blessing, which represents the lower unification. This convergence of the upper and the lower coincides with the zoharic idea of the union between the male and female sefirot,⁴¹¹ but the angelic ladder also points to the apotheosis of Enoch and his transformation into a supreme angel, as according to Shapira, Metatron is the

⁴⁰⁹ MAT, 'Vayetse', p. 116:

ולפי שיעקב תיקן יחוד ברוך שם כבוד שהוא רזא דחנוך בן ירד שהוא תופר מנעלים ועל כל תפירה א' ברוך שם כבוד לכן הראה לו הקב"ה אח"כ סוד שלם שהוא מטטרון שמלאכי אלקים עולים ויורדים בו כי ו' תיבן ביחודא עילאה ו' תיבן ביחודא תתאה מלאכי אלקים מיחוד' תתאה עולים ואח"כ אמר אכן יש ה' במקום הזה שמלאכים דקב"ה יורדים לתתא. כי בא השמש שש"ה מול שש"ה.

⁴¹⁰ See Idel, *Hasidism*, pp. 143-145.

⁴¹¹ Zohar 2:133b (the English translation follows Matt, *Zohar*, vol. V, p. 238. Cf. Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 1023):

YHVH, our God, YHVH is one', in one unification, with one aspiration, without any separation; for all those limbs become one, entering into one desire [...] At that moent Matronita prepares and adorns Herself, and Her attendants escort Her to Her husband in hushed whisper, saying: 'Blessed be the name of His glorious kingdom for ever and ever!'

This is whispered, for so must She be brought to Her husband.

יהו"ה אלהינו יהו"ה אחד, ביחודא חדא ברעותא חדא בלא פרוודא, דכל אינון שייפין כלהו אתעבידו חד ועיילין בחד תיאובתא [...] בההיא שעתא מטרוניתא מתתקנא ומתקשטא ועיילין לה שמשאה בלחישו סגי לגבי בעלה ואמרי ברוך שם כבוד מלכותו לעולם ועד דא איהו בלחישו דהכי אצטריך לאעלא לה לגבי בעלה.

ladder itself.⁴¹² Thus Shapira offers two distinct interpretations of Enoch's devotional work. Firstly, it is a theurgical act that alters the structure of the divine, and secondly, it is a transformative act that alters the devotee himself. As a consequence, the ritual of prayer becomes a means to achieving a mystical connection with the divine and at the same time to affecting its inner structure, which ultimately leads to the rectification and redemption of the cosmic order.

3.3. Cordoverian and Lurianic influences on the shoemaker motif in *Megaleh Amuqot*.

As we have seen, Shapira appears to have followed quite closely ideas set forth in the writings of Menahem Azariah da Fano.⁴¹³ Nevertheless, it is evident that his multiple sources for the Enoch-the-cobbler constellation of motifs included also Cordoverian and Lurianic texts of non-Italian origin.

In Shapira's writings Metatron, as part of the Enoch-the-cobbler constellation of motifs, is placed mostly within the realm of the sixth sefirah, *Tiferet*, or else he is identified with the male configuration of *Ze'ir Anpin*, which corresponds to *Tiferet*. As the central point within the sefirotic scheme, Enoch-Metatron thus represents the connection between the upper and lower realms. This is quite different from the conceptualisation of Metatron in Cordovero's writings, where he is associated as a female with the tenth sefirah *Malkhut* rather than with the sixth sefirah, the male *Tiferet*. However, like Shapira, Cordovero views Metatron as a conduit for the divine influx. As Moshe Idel has suggested, this view may have its origin in Joseph of Hamadan, who located Metatron within the sefirotic system as the ninth sefirah *Yesod*, whose main function is to transmit the influx between *Tiferet* and *Malkhut*.⁴¹⁴ This interpretation is reflected in *Pardes Rimonim*, where Cordovero notes a tradition on Metatron's high status within the divine world. Although he does not follow this tradition in his other works, the *Parde's* version of the shoemaker motif may have been one of the

⁴¹² Notably, zoharic and post-zoharic kabbalistic tradition associates Metatron with the number six. According to this tradition, Metatron consists of six sefirot, which together constitute a central axis of the divine organism. See da Vidas, *Reshit Hokhmah*, 'Sha'ar ha-Qedushah', p. 29.

⁴¹³ See above, pp. 208-215.

⁴¹⁴ Idel, *Olam ha-Mal'akhim*, p. 112.

sources that shaped Shapira's view on the sefirotic status of Enoch-Metatron. Moreover, like Cordovero, Shapira attributes to Enoch's shoemaking the effect of unifying the cosmic worlds.

According to Shapira, the unification of the worlds is achieved by means of intentional prayer, which is symbolically represented by Enoch's 'stitching'. This prayer affects the divine realm by virtue of converging with it on the linguistic plane of reality. This idea is based on the notion that the pre-existent words making up the prayer have their direct counterparts within the divine organism, and this enables them to achieve immediate effect on all planes of reality – a notion that brings Shapira close to da Fano's version of the shoemaker motif.

In *Megaleh Amuqot* Enoch-the shoemaker not only represents a particular gradation within the sefirotic scheme, as he does in Cordovero's writings, but he also points to the theurgical dimension of devotional acts, as in the Lurianic version of the same motif. Moreover, as in da Fano's texts, in *Megaleh Amuqot* the structure of the shoemaker's prayer consists of numerological coefficients, which stretch across multiple symbolic associations, investing the prayer with its transformative function.

4. CONCLUSIONS.

Megaleh Amuqot presents Enoch-Metatron as a liminal entity, both separating and conjoining the opposing poles of reality. He features as a dynamic principle, which connects the human with the divine while at the same time actively mediating the intra-divine dynamics. In Shapira's vision of the divine ontology, Enoch-Metatron not only represents a particular sefirotic gradation but also a channel of transmission that mediates the divine to the created worlds, usually placed between the lower male-female configurations of *Ze'ir* and *Nuqba*.

The divine reality mediated through the Enoch-Metatron channel belongs to the exile, a period in which the creation is contaminated by sin and thus separated from its divine source. On the other hand, Metatron's rule points to the possibility of atoning for sins and attaining redemption by means of devotional acts. Shapira conceives of Metatron as an intermediary entity that came into being

at the time of the creation, and who signifies the impurities that appeared in the course of the creative process once the divine infinity entered materiality. As a liminal entity, Metatron features as both the gate through which impurity penetrates the divine sphere, and the shield that protects the divine sphere from impurity.

In a similar vein, Enoch-the shoemaker represents the idea of a distinguished individual who stands at the junction of earth and heaven, endeavouring to reconnect them. His endeavours, which consist of his intentional prayer, suggest that the realm of impurity and sin may be transcended by means of individual ritual practice, which has the power to affect the structure of the whole of creation. For Shapira, the Enoch-Metatron-the-cobbler motif encapsulates the in-between state of the creation, still fluctuating between good and evil, and striving for redemption through the theurgical acts of the righteous individual, namely the mystic.

Chapter 5: Metatron and Moses

1. INTRODUCTION.

The interconnectedness of Metatron and Moses is central to the Metatronic constellation of motifs in Nathan Shapira's *Megaleh Amuqot*. Both Metatron and Moses traditionally represent the righteous individual whose primary mission is to mediate between heaven and earth.⁴¹⁵ In the medieval Ashkenazi renderings of the *heikhalot* literature, the two figures are linked to each other on the basis of the linguistic association between them, whereby the name משה (Moses) constitutes an acronym of the phrase מטטרון שר הפנים (Metatron Prince of the Countenance).⁴¹⁶ In the kabbalistic tradition both Moses and Metatron are commonly placed on the level of the sixth sefirah, the central point of the divine emanational system.⁴¹⁷ In addition, some kabbalistic commentators regard both Moses and Enoch – the future Metatron – as an incarnation of Abel, or of Abel and Seth,⁴¹⁸ while others view them as a representation of Adam's luminous 'coat of skin' or his divine

⁴¹⁵ On this see above, chapter 4, pp. 148-150, 157-173.

⁴¹⁶ See *Merkavah Shelemah*, fol. 43a. Scholars have already noted that in Second Temple Judaism, the so-called Mosaic tradition responded to and eventually superseded the Enochic tradition. Thus the features first attributed to Enoch, i.e. his righteousness, wisdom and ability to overcome his earthly status, were passed on to Moses who, in such texts as *4Ezra* 14, *2Apocalypse of Barukh* 59, or the *Exagoge* of Ezekhiel the Tragedian, begins to feature as the supreme hero, replacing Enoch in the imagery of the ideal or even the angelified leader of Israel. See Alexander, 'From Son of Adam to a Second God', pp. 108-110; Himmelfarb, 'A Report on Enoch in Rabbinic Literature', pp. 259-269; Meeks, 'Moses as God and King', pp. 358-368; Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition*, pp. 254-303. In later kabbalistic writings, Enochic and Mosaic traditions merge together to a great extent, this leading to the appearance of the Metatron-Moses cluster of motifs, which is evident in the *Tiqunei Zohar* and in subsequent kabbalistic works that draw on its ideas.

⁴¹⁷ On the status of Metatron in the sefirotic hierarchy see chapter 4 above. In Abulafia's kabbalah, *Metatron Sar ha-Panim* as a personification of the Agent Intellect both parallels the name of Moses (*Mosheh*) and embodies the Divine Name (*ha-shem*). See Abulafia, *Imrei Shefer*, p. 81; idem, *Sitrei Torah*, p. 186; idem, *Sheva Netivot ha-Torah*, p. 18. See further Scholem, *Major Trends*, p. 140; Idel, *The Mystical Experience*, pp. 116-119; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 240; idem, 'Metatron and Shi'ur Qomah', p. 91.

⁴¹⁸ See Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, Haqdamah 33, pp. 92-93, Haqdamah 34, pp. 96-97. See also above, n. 124 and 460.

soul, originally derived from the eternal divine light but broken from it in the process of the creation of worlds.

In Shapira's writings, the position of Moses in relation to Metatron is more dynamic and appears at times to be self-contradictory. In much of *Megaleh Amuqot* Metatron is presented as being ontologically equal to Moses, but in some instances he features as a more exalted entity, while in others Moses supersedes him both metaphysically and historiosophically, as a prefiguration of the ultimate redeemer who plays an active part in the messianic process. This notion of Moses' superiority seems to stem from Shapira's reliance on the *Tiqunei Zohar* and *Ra'aya Mehemena*, wherein Moses consistently features as the dominant redemptive figure, capable of liberating the world from the exilic constraints that Metatron's dominance symbolically represents.

In *Megaleh Amuqot*, the interdependence of Metatron and Moses is highly ambivalent. Although both figures occupy the same position within the divine ontology, corresponding to the configuration of *Ze'ir Anpin* in the world of Formation, on the historiosophical plane, Moses is the one who must eventually subdue Metatron in order to accomplish the redemption of Israel. However, Shapira also places Metatron within a hierarchical succession of redemptive episodes in Israel's history, where he prefigures Moses, and both of them herald the advent of the final redeemer.

These divergent views of the relationship between Metatron and Moses can hardly be reduced to a single dominant narrative. They are the product of Shapira's hermeneutical approach, with its predilection for incorporating in his commentary multiple interpretations absorbed from a variety of discrete sources. The present chapter examines several such clusters of interpretation, which highlight Shapira's reliance on a variety of earlier traditions, while also shedding light on his concept of the history of Israel's redemption.

2. METATRON AND THE TREE OF KNOWLEDGE.

2.1. Cordovero on the Tree of Knowledge.

In *Megaleh Amuqot*, Metatron's name denotes, both symbolically and rhetorically, a realm in which good and evil are intertwined. As for Cordovero and Luria, for

Shapira this realm unfolds as the world of Formation, the third in the sequence of the created worlds and the first to be susceptible to the influence of evil. The same symbolic logic, common to Cordovero and Luria, gave rise to Shapira's image of Metatron as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is based on a zoharic statement: 'Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: good is Metatron, Samael is evil.'⁴¹⁹ According to the zoharic imagery, Metatron is an element of good within the Tree of Knowledge, rivaled by Samael who represents the element of evil. This unequivocal association of Metatron with the element of good springs from the notion that all angelic beings originate in the divine Mercy, which is associated with good. Thus, according to the Zohar, Metatron constitutes only one half of the Tree of Knowledge.⁴²⁰

In a similar vein, the Metatronic symbol of the Tree of Knowledge was understood and employed by Moses Cordovero, for whom both the world of Formation and Metatron signify the liminal point between the domains of good and evil. In this imagery, the world of Formation is comprised of pure divine light, which is surrounded, but not directly influenced, by the forces of impurity.⁴²¹ Consequently, Samael, not Metatron, is the one who reigns over the realm of impurities (*qelipot*), judgments (*dinim*), and the left-hand-side of the creation, just as was suggested by the zoharic statement quoted above.⁴²² Although in some of Cordovero's writings, Metatron is associated with the negative aspect of the Tree of Knowledge, this association arises from his auxiliary function of providing humans, who exercise free will, with the

⁴¹⁹ Zohar 3:282b:

עץ הדעת טוב ורע, דאיהו טוב מטטרו"ן, רע סמא"ל.

⁴²⁰ On a similar notion of the Tree of Knowledge in Abulafia's *Maft'e'ah ha-Shemot*, where the serpent, embodying evil, cleaves to the Tree, see Sagerman, *The Serpent Kills or the Serpent Gives Life*, p. 240, and Berger, 'The Messianic Self-Consciousness of Abraham Abulafia', p. 57. See also Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 79-80, where he discusses a tradition about Amaleq as an evil serpent, likened to Metatron and Sandalfon in Gikatilla's kabbalah. There, according to Scholem, evil is inherent in the Tree of Knowledge as a potential, which is realized through human sin.

⁴²¹ See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, Gate 16, pp. 198-199.

⁴²² See Cordovero's *Shi'ur Qomah*, quoted in Sack, *Be-Sha'arei ha-Qabalah shel Rabi Moshe Cordovero*, p. 350.

opportunity of choosing good over evil. Since he also inflicts fair punishment on those who make the wrong choice, it is clear that his evil aspect is harnessed to the service of good and does not exist independently within the Creation.⁴²³ Rather, Cordovero puts Metatron in charge of just judgment, which is rooted in the benevolent side of the divine structure.⁴²⁴

2.2. Shapira on Metatron as the Tree of Knowledge.

In *Megaleh Amuqot* Shapira presents Metatron as the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil *per se*, that is, an ambivalent entity comprising equal shares of good and evil:

Metatron is the prince of [the world of] Formation – this is the esoteric meaning of *talit* [prayer shawl], and that is why the prayer shawl covers most of a man[’s body]. Similarly, *Ze’ir* nestles within [the world of] Formation, his upper half covered by *Imma*. For this reason Metatron is called the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil: his upper half is good, [while] his lower half is evil.⁴²⁵

⁴²³ See Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 76-77.

⁴²⁴ See Cordovero, *Pardes Rimonim*, Gate 25: 3, pp. 419-420; Gate 24: 10, pp. 407-409. See also Sack, *Be-Sha’arei ha-Qabalah shel Rabi Moshe Cordovero*, pp. 256-257. In *Pardes Rimonim* Cordovero admits that because Metatron parallels the sefirot (either *Tiferet* or *Malkhut*), some commentators have been misled into thinking that the sefirot themselves are the source of evil; in fact, he argues, Metatron constitutes only the outer layer of the sefirah he parallels, i.e. its ‘garment’, to which alone evil cleaves. Abulafia, too, views Metatron as a positive entity, as opposed to Sandalfon who embodies negativity, even though the two of them constitute a single unified body. For all this, see Sagerman, *The Serpent Kills or the Serpent Gives Life*, pp. 197-205.

⁴²⁵ *MAT*, ‘Shelah’, p. 485:

מטטרון שר היצירה רזא דטלית לכן הטלית עד רובו של אדם מכסה כן זעיר דמקנן ביצירה מכוסה מחציו ולמעלה מן אימא לכן נקרא מטטרון עץ הדעת טוב ורע מחציו ולמעלה טוב מחציו ולמטה רע.

Cf. also Zohar 3:228a (*RM*), where Metatron, similarly associated with the prayer shawl, represents the recitation of prayer and the keeping of the commandments that issue from the rule of the Mishnah, and thus from the Tree of Knowledge. See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, p. 73.

The passage above symbolically compares the prayer shawl, *talit*, to Metatron, basing the similarity between them on the equal division into upper and lower parts, which corresponds to the evil and good 'sides' of the creation. Similarly, the connection to the supernal configuration of *Imma* gives rise to the bestowal of good upon the lower configuration of *Ze'ir*, that is, the realm of Metatron. Analogically, the lower part of *Ze'ir*, which is devoid of the supernal influx, is regarded as the site of evil. In this respect, Metatron and the whole world of Formation are assumed to have been equally divided into evil and good. Similarly, in another passage, Shapira portrays the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil as being half good and half evil, like Metatron, who is also symbolized by the prayer shawl worn by man.⁴²⁶ This again corresponds to the situation of *Ze'ir Anpin* within the world of Formation, where his upper half extends towards the 'side' of good, drawing nourishment from the sefirah of *Binah*, the supernal Mother, while his lower half is contaminated by the 'side' of evil. By the same token, that part of the human body which is covered by the prayer shawl corresponds to the good 'side' and the union of *imma ila'a* (the Supernal Mother) and *Ze'ir*, while the exposed part of the body stands for impurity, a place to which the *sitra ahra* cleaves when there is no union between the upper sefirot. In depicting Metatron as a bipartite entity, Shapira clearly follows the later strata of the zoharic literature, *Ra'aya Mehemena* and *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, in which the Tree of Knowledge signifies the polarity of good and evil, as opposed to the Tree of Life, which stands for good alone.⁴²⁷ In the words of the Zohar, the realm of the Tree of Knowledge is half sweet and half bitter, as it 'suckles' from both the right- and the left-hand-side of its divine source.⁴²⁸

In a similar passage, Shapira associates Metatron with the world of Formation and the divine name of 45 (מ"ה), which according to him are equally

⁴²⁶ *MAT*, ed. Weiss, 'Shelah', p. 161.

⁴²⁷ See Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 73-75.

⁴²⁸ See Zohar 1:35a: 'The Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil suckles from both sides, and knows them as one knows both the sweet and the bitter.'

אבל עץ הדעת טוב ורע מאי הוא, אלא בגין דינקא מתרין סטרין וידע לון כמאן דיניק מתקא ומרירא.

See also Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, p. 41.

comprised of good and evil, thus incorporating both the left and the right ‘side’ of the creation:

'Thy servant' [Dt. 3:24] – this is an esoteric reference to Metatron in the [world of] Formation, where the name of 45 [is located], in which there are 28 letters: 14 letters on the right [corresponding to] 'thy greatness' [ibid.], and 14 letters on the left [corresponding to] 'thy mighty hand' [ibid.], which are the 28 letters of the first verse in Genesis, by which the heaven and the earth were created. It is in reference to this that Scripture says: 'for what God is there in heaven or in earth' [Dt. 3:24], 14 letters of the right, by which 'my right hand spanned the heavens' [Is. 48:13], and 14 letters of the left, which are 'thy mighty hand' [Dt. 3:24] by which 'Mine hand also hath laid the foundations of the world' [Is. 48:13]. 'Also' – this refers to the measure of severe Judgments 'that can do according to thy works' [Dt. 3:24] by means of the right hand of heavens, [and] 'according to thy might' [ibid.] – by means of the left hand.⁴²⁹

In sefirotic terms, the above passage presents Metatron as an intermediary instance, in which the powers of both *Gevurah* – the domain of severe Judgments

⁴²⁹ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 112, p. 147:

את עבדך, הוא סוד מטטרון ביצירה דתמן שם של מה שיש בו כ"ה אתוןן, י"ד אותיות מימין את גדלך, י"ד אותיות משמאל את ירך החזקה, שהן הן כ"ה אותיות של פסוק ראשון של בראשית שנבראו בו שמים וארץ. ז"ש אשר מי אל בשמים ובארץ, י"ד אותיות של ימין בהם וימיני טפחה שמים, י"ד אותיות של שמאל שהם ירך החזקה בהם אף ידי יסדה ארץ, אף דייקא, שהיא מדת הדין בחזקה, אשר יעשה כמעשך על יד ימין של שמים, כגבורותיך על יד שמאל.

See also ofan 106, where Shapira describes the ‘forty-nine gates of understanding’ transmitted to Moses (based on *YSanhedrin* 4:2) in terms of the mixed right and left of the sefirotic tree, which correspond to the ambivalent nature of the creation ruled by Metatron: ‘And the matter of Metatron [is alluded to in the statement [*YSanhedrin* 4:2]] that 49 [מ"ט] gates of Understanding [*Binah*] were handed down to Moses. Metatron esoterically refers to the 49 [מ"ט] aspects of impurity and purity.’

וענין מטטרון, סוד מ"ט שערי בינה נמסרו למשה. מטטרון, הוא סוד מ"ט פנים טמא וטהור.

For a similar image, see *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, ‘Haqdamah’ 7b; *Zohar* 2:115a (*RM*).

– and *Hesed* – the domain of Mercy – have merged. Moreover, not only does Shapira thus place Metatron at the centre of the sefirotic system, he also attributes to him the capacity for creation, on the basis of the fact that the numerical value of the first verse of the Torah, by which God created the world, is the same as that of the divine name ה"מ, which corresponds to the world of Formation, the realm of Metatron. Creation, which emerges from the first biblical verse, is marked by the interplay between the expansive measure of Mercy (*Hesed*) and the restraining force of Judgment (*Gevurah*), which is why creation is ascribed to the level of Metatron, who appears as a mediator between the expansive and the restraining creative powers of the divine.⁴³⁰

It can be inferred from this that for Shapira, the return to a state in which the world is completely purged of evil, and thus free from the rule of Metatron

⁴³⁰ In *MA ReNaV*, ofan 25, p. 35, the good side of Metatron similarly coincides with the divine Mercy, which qualifies him to act as God's faithful servant:

This may be the reason why Moses composed the prayer in two verses. The first verse mentions Metatron, who is called the faithful servant of the Lord, as Scripture says [Dan. 9:17]: 'Now, o Our Lord, hear the prayer of thy servant', which was said about Metatron, who was mentioned in the first verse [of Moses' prayer in Dt. 3:24]: 'thou hast begun to show thy servant' – this is Metatron, to whose hand you gave all the goods of his master' [Gen. 24:10], for He put all the keys in his [Metatron's] hand, and because of this he [Moses] said [Dt. 3:24] 'thy greatness and thy mighty hand', which comprises two sides. This was Aher's error when he saw Metatron and thought that, God forbid, there are two authorities [in Heaven] [*bHagigah* 15a]. Regarding this [Moses] said [Dt. 3:24]: 'for what God is there in heaven or in earth', for even though his [Metatron's] name is like the name of his master, and all the good of his master is in his hands, as Scripture says: 'thy mighty hand', even so, Scripture says [Dt. 4:35]: 'there is none else beside Him', you alone are God in heaven and on earth.

ואפשר שלכן סידר משה התפילה על ב' רתיבין שהם ב' פסוקים, בפסוק ראשון זכר את מטטרון שנקרא עבד נאמן של הקב"ה, כמ"ש בפסוק ועתה אלהינו שמע אל תפילת עבדך, שהוא נאמר על מטטרון שזכר בפסוק הראשון אתה החלות להראות את עבדך, זה מטטרון שנתת לו כל טוב אדוניו בידו, שמסר לו כל מפתחיו בידו, על זה אמר את גדלך את ידך החזקה כלול מתרין סטרין, שבזה טעה אחר כשראה מטטרון וקחשיב ח"ו ב' רשויות הן, על זה אמר אשר מי אל בשמים ובארץ, אף על פי ששמו כשם רבו וכל טוב אדניו בידו כמ"ש את ידך החזקה, אפילו הכי אין עוד מלבדו כתיב, אתה אל בשמים ובארץ לבדיך.

For the idea of limitation as a creative force and a prerequisite for the act of creation, see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, p. 82. On the tension between good and evil, corresponding to God's Mercy and Judgment, see *ibid.*, pp. 73-75.

and the power of Judgment he comprises, is the fulfillment of the original plan of the creation, marking its eschatological goal.⁴³¹ This concept underlies the imagery Shapira employs in the following passage:

In this world Moses was on the level of Metatron, who esoterically refers to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, which is in the world of Formation. But Moses wished to ascend and achieve the world of Creation, where Akhatriel is located. For this reason he [Moses] wanted to enter the Land of Israel, which is called 'the land of the living' [Is. 38:11], and there to reach the level of the Tree of Life, which esoterically refers to the world of Creation. Because of this [Moses] pleaded [Dt. 3:24]: 'O Lord God' etc., behold, [when I was] outside the Land, you showed me that I am on the level of the faithful servant, namely Metatron, who is comprised of good and evil, which is why he is called Metatron, for he refers esoterically to [Moses'] rod [מטה], the letter ט of Metatron pointing to good [טוב], and the [letter] ר pointing to evil [רע].⁴³²

⁴³¹ For the idea of redemption as liberation from the influence of evil, see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 77-78; Idel, 'Multiple Forms of Redemption', pp. 32-33.

⁴³² *MA ReNaV*, ofan 14, pp. 24-25:

משה היה בזה העולם במדריגת מטטרון, שהוא סוד עץ הדעת טוב ורע שבעולם היצירה, ורצה משה להשיג ולעלות בעולם הבריאה דתמן אכתריאל, לכן רצה ליכנס לארץ ישראל שהיא נקראת ארץ החיים, ושם יבא למדריגת עץ החיים שהוא סוד עולם הבריאה. ועל זה אמר ה' אלהים וגו', הנה אתה הראת לי בחוץ לארץ שאני במדריגת עבד נאמן שהוא מטטרון שהוא כלול מטוב ורע, שכן נקרא מטטרון שהוא סוד מטה, ט' של מטטרון מורה על טוב, ר' מורה על רע.

Similarly, ofan 14 reads further:

Moses wanted to reach the level of the third of the three princes of the Countenance, whose name is Akatriel, which ends with the [divine] name 'el' [...] For this reason [he said:] 'let me go over and see the good land' [Dt. 3:25], which by way of numerology [equals] 'Prince of the Creation' plus one [this equation does not seem to work out]. The [land was called] 'Good' because the world of Creation is called the world which is all good, and that is why [Moses] longed for the Land of Israel, which is 'the land of the living', and Moses intended to establish good and to uproot evil.

In the above passages, Shapira employs the opposition between the Tree of Life and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. The Tree of Life, signified by the angel Akatriel, extends to the world of Creation, or in other terms, to the realm of purity, untouched by evil.⁴³³ Likewise, Moses' effort to enter the Land of Israel signifies the endeavor to reach beyond the present condition of the creation, and points to the first messianic attempt to bring Israel closer to their divine source, which is situated beyond the realm of the Tree of Knowledge. Consequently, with an equal share in both the left and the right 'side' of the creation, Moses features as a counterpart of the demiurgic Metatron. Thus, Shapira envisions Moses as an active participant in the process of purifying the world from evil, one who paves the way to the redemption by overcoming the pitfalls associated with the realm of the Tree of Knowledge.

Likewise, the opposition between the two Trees stands in *Megaleh Amuqot* for the opposition between the two Torahs, the Tree of Life denoting the perfect, unchangeable Written Torah, and the Tree of Knowledge, associated with Metatron, denoting the imperfect Oral Torah, with all its conflicts and inconsistencies.⁴³⁴ Hence Moses' plea (Dt. 3:23-26), to which Shapira refers in the passage quoted above, signifies his striving to reunite the Oral with the Written Torah and thereby to repair a fundamental flaw in the creation. In *Megaleh Amuqot*, Shapira fully follows the *Ra'aya Mehemena* and *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, where the messianic time is said to engender an essential change in the nature of the Torah, which in the present time is subject to constant degeneration,

והנה רצה משה להגיע עד מדריגת שר השלישי מג' שרי פנים ששמו אכתריאל, מסיים בשם אל, [...] לכן אעברה נ"א ואראה א"ת הארץ הטובה, בגימטריא שר הבריאה עם הכולל, הטובה דייקא כי עולם הבריאה נקרא עולם שכולו טוב, ולכן נתאוה לארץ ישראל שהיא ארץ החיים, ונתכוון משה לתקן הטוב ולהעביר הרע.

⁴³³ According to kabbalistic tradition, the soul of Moses derives from *Binah*, the third sefirah down, symbolizing also the Divine Mother, the secrets of Torah, and the world-to-come, which in Shapira's parlance is to be identified with the realm of Akatriel. See Zohar 1:135b, 1:238b, 3:100a. Cf. also *Sefer ha-Temunah*'s notion that the messiah is related to *Binah* (*Sefer ha-Temunah*, 29b, 57b-58a), on which see Idel, 'The Jubilee in Jewish Mysticism', pp. 85-87; idem, 'Multiple Forms of Redemption', pp. 48-51; idem, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 187-197; Sack, *Be-sha'arei ha-Qabalah shel Rabi Mosheh Cordovero*, p. 267 n. 2.

⁴³⁴ See Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, pp. 59-79.

whilst in the world to come it will re-emerge as the ultimate, unchangeable absolute.⁴³⁵ However, in the literature of *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, Moses, the ‘faithful shepherd’ (*ra’aya mehemena*), is the redemptive figure who initiates the messianic era and thus provides a full understanding of the true nature of Torah,⁴³⁶ while in *Megaleh Amuqot* Moses is denied access to the Land of Israel and stays bound to the realm of Metatron and the Tree of Knowledge, where good and evil are polarized. In other words, Moses remains tied to the entanglements of the Oral Torah, and he is doomed to die and be buried in the domain of dichotomy and conflict.⁴³⁷ Hence, while in both the *Tiqunei Zohar* and *Megaleh Amuqot*, Moses features as a prefiguration of the messiah, in *Megaleh Amuqot* he does not play the role of the final redeemer.⁴³⁸ As was pointed out above, in Shapira’s thought Enoch-Metatron appears several times as the initial messianic figure, identified with the child or the ‘youth’.⁴³⁹ It would seem that Moses falls into the same category of pre-messianic figures, associated with the Enoch-Metatron cluster of motifs.⁴⁴⁰

2.3. Moses and the Tree of Knowledge.

The interrelation between Moses and Metatron comes to the fore in Shapira’s comment on Moses’ plea to enter the Land of Israel (Dt. 3:23-36). Drawing on the association of Metatron with the Tree of Knowledge, equally comprised of good

⁴³⁵ See Scholem, *On the Kabbalah*, pp. 66-77; Tishby, *The Wisdom of the Zohar*, p. 1086; Idel, ‘Torah Hadashah’, pp. 68-76; Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 252. On the polarity of Oral and Written Torah as reflecting female and male aspects, see *ibidem*, pp. 133, 139-141.

⁴³⁶ Goldreich, ‘Berurim’, pp. 459-496. On the relation between Metatron, Moses and the redemption, see more below.

⁴³⁷ Cf. Zohar 1:17a-b and Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 73-75.

⁴³⁸ See Liebes, *Messiah of the Zohar*, p. 165 n. 12; Goldreich, ‘Berurim’, pp. 461-462.

⁴³⁹ See above, chapter 2, section 4.2, pp. 96-108.

⁴⁴⁰ In two instances in *MAT*, ‘Va-yehi’, Moses is identified with the messianic ‘Shiloh’ on the basis of the equal numerical values of $\text{שׁוֹלוֹה} = \text{מֹשֶׁה}$. The messianic connection between Moses and ‘Shiloh’ derives from *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*. See Goldreich, ‘Berurim’, pp. 460-465. On the idea of auxiliary messianic figures preceding the advent of the ultimate redemption see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 174.

and evil, Shapira identifies Moses' messianic role as his striving to change Metatron's ontological makeup by expelling evil from the Tree of Knowledge and thus from the human world:⁴⁴¹

He [Moses] said 'the goodly mountain' [Dt. 3:25] in order to repair the Tree of Knowledge – an esoteric reference to Metatron – so as to make good prevail and overcome future evil [ר"ע הב"א], as becomes evident when one reorders the letters that make up the word אעבר"ה [let me go over]. [...] And God answered him, 'let it suffice thee' [Dt. 3:26]. What was it that should have sufficed? Specifically the good, [that is to say], you have already strengthened the measure of good for Israel in the world.⁴⁴²

According to this passage, Metatron symbolically marks the realm of exile, i.e., the territory that lies outside the Land of Israel, which is accessible to the powers of evil. The image of Moses striving to enter the Holy Land thus signifies his opposition to the powers of evil associated with Metatron. Just as the opposition between the present world and the world-to-come represents the dichotomy

⁴⁴¹ On the history of the kabbalistic notion that evil draws nourishment from the good side of the creation, see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, p. 77.

⁴⁴² *MA ReNaV*, ofan 103, p. 129:

על זה אמר ההר הטוב, ולתקן עץ הדעת שהוא סוד מטטרון, שיהיה הטוב גובר ולהעביר ר"ע הב"א, כמבואר בהיפוך אתון של אעבר"ה [...] השיב לו הקב"ה רב לך, מה רב טוב דייקא, כבר הגברת מדת הטוב על ישראל בעולם.

The same idea appears again in *MA ReNaV*, ofan 14, p. 25:

It may be in reference to this that he [Moses] said: 'thou hast begun' [Dt. 3:24], for at the beginning, when Moses came to this world, it was written about him: 'when she saw him that he was a goodly child [Ex. 2:2]. For this reason Moses said [ibid.] 'thy greatness'. As Rashi has explained, this means the measure of your goodness. But Moses wanted to uproot evil from the world, and that is why he said 'that goodly mountain', for he sought to strengthen the good part of the world. God answered: 'let it suffice thee', [namely,] you have already strengthened the power of good sufficiently.

ואפשר שעל זה אמר אתה החלות, שמתחלה כשבא משה לעולם כתיב ביה ותרא אותו כי טוב, לכן אמר משה את גדלך, פירש רש"י זו מדת טובך, ורצה משה להעביר הרע מן העולם, לכן אמר ההר הטוב הזה, שביקש להגביר חלק הטוב בעולם, והשיב הקב"ה רב לך כבר הרבית להגביר כח הטובה.

between exile and the Land of Israel, or between evil and good, so the relationship between Metatron and Moses represents the opposition between the state of the world before and after the redemption. Similarly, in the following passage, the Land of Israel signifies the redemption, to which Moses leads Israel by overcoming the power of evil, i.e., the realm of Metatron:

For this reason Moses asked [Dt. 3:25] 'let me go over', [i.e.,] I want to dispose of the 'mighty hand' [Dt. 3:24], from which all the nations of the world draw their nourishment. And I want to bring the remote closer, and to dispose of evil, so that I may see the good land' [ibid.]. [He used] the word 'good' specifically [to indicate] that Metatron would draw nourishment from good and not from evil, which is why Scripture says: 'that goodly mountain' [ibid.] – specifically 'goodly' and not evil. But God answered [Dt. 3:26]: 'let it suffice thee' [רב לך]. With the word רב He alluded to what is written⁴⁴³ on the verse [Dt. 28:6]: 'Blessed shall thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shall thou be when thou goest out'. This verse speaks of Moses: 'Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in' – into this world, for you have 'brought the remote closer'. [This refers to] the daughter of Pharaoh who converted to Judaism. 'Blessed shall thou be when thou goest out' – out of this world, [for] you have brought closer the one who was remote [i.e. the messiah].⁴⁴⁴

In this passage Moses, as a prefiguration of the messianic figure, attempts to alter the ontological makeup of the world. He wants to shift it from the present state of

⁴⁴³ See *Deuteronomy Rabba*, 'Ki Tavo' 7:5 on Dt. 28:6.

⁴⁴⁴ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 187, p. 252:

לכן ביקש משה אעברה נא, רוצה אני להעביר עתה את יד החזקה שממנה יונקים כל אומות העולם, ורוצה אני לקרב רחוקים ולהעביר הרע, ואראה הארץ הטובה, מלת הטובה דייקא, שיהיה יניקת מטטרון מטוב ולא מרע, וז"ש ההר הטוב הזה טוב דייקא ולא רע. השיב הקב"ה רב לך, במלת רב רמז לו מה שכתוב על פסוק ברוך אתה בבאך וברוך אתה בצאתך, פסוק הזה מדבר במשה ברוך אתה בבואך לעולם הזה, שקרבת לרחוקה שהיא בת פרעה שנתגיירה, ברוך אתה בצאתך מן העולם הזה, קרבת גם כן מי שהיה רחוק.

comprising equal measures of good and evil to the future state of the redemption, when it will comprise nothing but good, represented by the biblical images of ‘the good land’ and ‘the goodly mountain’.⁴⁴⁵ The passage provides an insight into Shapira’s vision of the redemptive process: thanks to Moses’ capacity for transforming evil into good, signified by Pharaoh’s daughter’s conversion to Judaism, he comes to represent a redemptive force by which the present world would be transformed into the world-to-come.⁴⁴⁶ This vision of the redemption coincides with the messianic concepts articulated by the author of *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, for whom the present state of the world, marked by the dominance of the Oral Torah and signified by Metatron as the Tree of Knowledge, emerged as a result of the sin of the ‘mixed multitude’, which eventually led to the loss of the original divine Law.⁴⁴⁷ The redemptive process therefore requires the elimination of the root cause of Israel’s sin, that is, the elimination of the ‘mixed multitude’.⁴⁴⁸ For this reason, in the *Tiqunim*, the redemptive capacity of Moses is manifested in his ability to take revenge on the ‘other nations’, understood by the author as the seat of the forces of evil. Shapira similarly envisages the conversion of the gentiles as the annihilation of the source of evil, which not only conditions but also inevitably engenders the redemptive process.⁴⁴⁹

⁴⁴⁵ Scholem (*On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 83-84) claims that in the later, especially the Lurianic kabbalah, evil is inherent in God even above the sefirotic level, and therefore it cannot be uprooted. See also Tishby, *Torat ha-Ra*, pp. 55-59. For the convincing counter-argument that evil is not understood as being imminent in the divine, whether in one of its stages of emanation or beyond it, see Kallus, ‘The Theurgy of Prayer’, pp. 73-83.

⁴⁴⁶ See Idel, ‘Multiple Forms of Redemption in Kabbalah’, pp. 32-33.

⁴⁴⁷ See Goldreich, ‘Berurim’, p. 486.

⁴⁴⁸ See Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 47-48; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 126-132.

⁴⁴⁹ The notion that ‘bringing the remote closer’, as in the case of Pharaoh’s daughter, is a preliminary step towards the redemption may be taken as an indication of Shapira’s favorable attitude to gentiles. However, this evaluation of the gentiles’ capacity for being integrated in the category of ‘good’ is incompatible with Shapira’s generally anti-Christian sentiments, to which Yehuda Liebes has pointed as a main characteristic of *Megaleh Amuqot*. See Liebes, ‘Mal’akhei Qol ha-Shofar’, *passim*. On the different meaning of this terminology in Abulafia, see Idel, ‘Al Mashma’uyot ha-Munah ‘Qabalah’, pp. 42-45; Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, pp. 121-123.

In a similar vein, the image of Moses conveys a redemptive-messianic meaning through his intention to rectify Adam's sin. Thus in the following passage from *Megaleh Amuqot*, commenting on Dt. 3:24-25, the divine name מ"ה (45) corresponds to both Metatron's and Moses' restorative mission – the rectification of Adam's sin. Shapira, following the Lurianic imagery, connects the divine name of 45 (מ"ה), which corresponds to the letter ו (vav) of the Tetragrammaton and signifies the male sefirah *Tiferet*, with the illumination of the divine configuration of *Ze'ir Anpin* in the world of Formation (*Tiferet de-Atsilut* in Lurianic parlance):⁴⁵⁰

That is why I [Moses] also ask: 'let me go over' [Dt. 3:25]. I want to enter the Land of Israel and there to repair the name מ"ה, which is in the world of Formation. This is comparable to him [Moses] saying right at the start specifically: 'thy servant' [Dt. 3:24], which refers to the faithful servant, namely Metatron, who is in the world of Formation. For by way of numerology, 'Metatron' [מטטרון] plus one [314+1 = 315] equals 'Formation' [יצירה = 315], which is where the name מ"ה is located, whose nourishment comes from the letter vav of the name of 4 [letters, namely the Tetragrammaton]. And when you add the vav [= 6] of the Tetragrammaton to the name מ"ה [= 45], you find [that it amounts to 45+6 = 51, which] is the esoteric meaning of the expression [Dt. 3:25] 'let me' [נא = 51]. As Scripture says [ibid.]: 'let me go over', I want to cross over to the Land of Israel, to undo the harm caused by Adam, who damaged the letter ו of the [Ineffable] Name, which is in the world of Formation, the place of 'thy servant', who is Metatron. There, the numerical value of the name מ"ה [45, when it is combined with the numerical value, 6, of the letter ו] equals 51 [נא]. For this reason [Moses said:] I need to see the Land, of which it was said 'And see the Land, what [מ"ה] it is' [Num. 13:18]. [The word] 'What' [מה]

⁴⁵⁰ See Vital, *Ets Hayim*, Gate 3: 1, p. 49; Kallus, 'The Theurgy of Prayer', pp. 136-139.

indicates that there he would be able to undo the harm caused by Adam, who damaged the name מ"ה [= 45].⁴⁵¹

The passage above renders Moses' plea to access the Land of Israel (Dt. 3:24-25) as a string of divine names. According to Shapira, the denigrated state of the present world, which is governed by Metatron ('thy servant' of Dt. 3:24), ensues from Adam's sin, which amounts to the damage he caused to the third letter of the Tetragrammaton (*vav*, corresponding to the world of Formation, third down in the sequence of worlds). This led to a state of imbalance between the divine configurations (*partsufin*) signified by a spelling of the divine name as מ"ה.⁴⁵² The name מ"ה, whose numerical value is 45, corresponds to the third letter of the Tetragrammaton, and by way of numerology parallels both Metatron and the world of Formation. Hence, Adam's sin damages both the status of the Tetragrammaton and the status of the world of Formation, thus implicitly disharmonizing also Metatron's realm, which as a result becomes susceptible to the influence of evil. Through a chain of numerological operations, Shapira identifies Moses' plea to enter the Land of Israel with his attempt to restore the third letter of the Tetragrammaton, which had been violated by Adam. This restorative process would enable the world of Metatron to be nourished entirely from the 'side' of good, and thus allow him to ascend to the level of redemption,

⁴⁵¹ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 146, pp. 197-198:

לכן מבקש אני גם כן אעברה נא, רוצה אני ליכנס לארץ ולתקן שם של מ"ה שהוא בעולם היצירה, כמו שאמר מתחילה עבדיך דייקא, שהוא על עבד נאמן שהוא מטטרון שהוא בעולם היצירה, שכן מטטרון עם הכולל בגימטריא יציר"ה, דתמן שם של מ"ה שיניקתו מאות ו' של שם בן ד' כשתצרף ו' של שם עם מ"ה, תמצא סודו נ"א. ז"ש אעברה, רוצה אני להעביר לארץ ישראל לתקן קילקול של אדם הראשון שפגם בו' של שם שהוא בעולם היצירה מקום עבדך שהוא מטטרון, דתמן מילוי שם של מ"ה, הרי נ"א, לכן צריך אני לראות את הארץ דאיתמר ביה וראיתם את הארץ מ"ה היא, מ"ה דייקא, תמן יהיה יכולת בידו לתקן קילקול של אדם הראשון שפגם בשם של מ"ה.

⁴⁵² For the origin of different ways of spelling the letters of the Tetragrammaton, see *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, 'Haqdamah' 7a, 8a, 10a, 10: 25b, 19: 41a, 22: 68a, 56: 89b and 69: 116a. For the Lurianic interpretations of four main spellings of the Tetragrammaton (the letters making up the name signifying the numerical values of 72, 63, 45 and 52), see *Etz Hayim*, Gate 5:1, pp. 61-64. See also Kallus, 'The Theurgy of Prayer', pp. 134-135.

symbolized by ‘crossing over to the Land of Israel’.⁴⁵³ Since Adam’s sin had damaged the realm of Metatron by introducing evil into ‘his’ world of Formation, the restorative actions of Moses prefigure the redemption in the sense of the return of Metatron and ‘his’ world’s to a source of nourishment which is purely good, denoted by the full four-letter spelling of the Tetragrammaton. Notably, in this instance it is not Metatron who repairs the breach in the divine world caused by Adam’s sin, but rather Moses, who intends to repair the breach in Metatron’s realm, and thus to mend the defective state of the world. This concept corroborates Shapira’s notion of Metatron as the Tree of Knowledge, since his dominance, which opened the door to the influence of evil in the world, was a consequence of Adam’s sin.⁴⁵⁴ Therefore, both Metatron and Moses feature in Shapira’s thought as mutually dependent figures: both are associated with Adam’s sin and, as will be shown directly below, both are interconnected morphonominally. However, since Metatron bears the mark of evil, it is Moses who often surpasses Metatron as the first redeemer who frees the world from the influence of sin.

⁴⁵³ Notably, in Shapira’s commentaries, the Land of Israel always signifies the world of redemption. The territories that lie outside it, coinciding with the realm of *qelipat nogah*, do not undergo the redemption itself, although their existence stimulates the process of spreading holiness within the unholy void. For the similar attitude adopted by one of Shapira’s followers, see Naftali Bacharach, *Emeq ha-Melekh*, ‘Haqdamah’, p. 1-3. See also Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 173. The imbalance between left and right in the sefirotic tree was viewed in the earlier kabbalah, e.g. in Meir ibn Gabbai’s *Avodat ha-Qodesh*, as contributing to the overgrowth of evil in the world. See on this Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 73-75; Idel, ‘Multiple Forms of Redemption’, pp. 51-57.

⁴⁵⁴ See Zohar 1:35a, where, following *Tana de-vei Eliyahu*, chapter 5, the Tree of Knowledge is said to have emerged as a result of Adam’s disobedience, which gave rise to death. For this reason the Tree of Knowledge is called alternatively the Tree of Death. See also Zohar 1:12b, 51a-53b, 221a-b; Scholem, *Major Trends*, pp. 231-232, 236, 404-405; Tishby, *Wisdom of the Zohar*, pp. 1:373-1:376.

3. *MOSHEH* – METATRON SAR HA-PANIM.

3.1. Metatron as Moses' mentor.

Although Shapira attributes certain messianic capacities to both Moses and Metatron, the hierarchical relation between them is not always as clear as might be suggested by the passages quoted from *Megaleh Amuqot* in the previous section. In some instances, Shapira's depiction conforms to the imagery of the early Enochic literature, wherein Metatron is a semi-divine entity guiding Moses – the paradigmatic righteous man – through the heavenly realm.⁴⁵⁵ Admittedly, their common morphonominal features – the name משה is an acronym of the phrase מטטרון שר הפנים⁴⁵⁶ – inextricably bind the two figures together, but in some cases Metatron is clearly placed above Moses in the hierarchy of the divine *pleroma*. For instance, in the following passage Shapira explains that Moses gained his name as a result of Metatron's mentorship:

Metatron made a diadem for the prayer of Moses, who said 'Hear, o Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord' [Dt. 6:4]. The angels asked [Metatron], 'who is the one who makes a noise in the worlds?' and Metatron answered, 'this is Moses, pride of the house of Jacob. The secret of Moses' name [i.e. its being an anagram of *Metatron Sar ha-Panim*] is that it points to the unification of *Shema Yisra'el*, which came to us through the pride of the house of Jacob at the time when Jacob said 'Gather yourselves together, sons of Jacob' [Gen. 49:2], who all began to recite that verse, saying: 'hearken [unto] Israel' – our father' etc. [see Rashi on *bPesahim* 56a].⁴⁵⁷

⁴⁵⁵ See Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron Traditions*, pp. 260-261.

⁴⁵⁶ See Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 240.

⁴⁵⁷ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 109, p. 141:

עשה מטטרון עטרה לתפלתו של משה שאמר שמע ישראל ה' אלהינו ה' אחד, ושאלו המלאכים מי הוא זה המרעיש עולמות, השיב מטטרון זה משה גאון בית יעקב, רזא דמלה בשם משה נרמז בו יחוד של שמע ישראל, שהוא בא לנו מן גאון בית יעקב, בשעה שאמר יעקב הקבצו בני יעקב, שפתחו כולם באותו פרק ואמרו שמע ישראל אבינו וכו'.

In the above passage, Metatron cedes his usual duties of celestial worship to Moses, whose prayer thereby acquires a superior capacity to unify. As was demonstrated above,⁴⁵⁸ in Shapira's thought Metatron's name is the one that normally points to the theurgical practice of unification, associated with the daily recitation of the *Shema* prayer. Yet here, the same quality is ascribed to Moses, who is subordinate to Metatron and dependent on his capacity for effecting unifications within the upper realms. Thus Moses is the one who recites the prayer of unification, but the prayer acquires its unifying potency by virtue of Metatron, whose own name and title (מטטרון שר הפנים) are acronymically represented by Moses' name (משה) and who therefore underlies Moses' ability to effect the 'unification of *Shema Yisra'el*.'⁴⁵⁹

3.2. Metatron and Moses as *tiqun adam*.

In various kabbalistic traditions, both Moses and Metatron stand for either the 'incarnation' (*ibur*) or the 'restoration' (*tiqun*) of Adam.⁴⁶⁰ Shapira similarly takes Moses to represent Adam, which he does on the grounds of numerology, as the numerical value of Moses' name (משה = 450) equals ten-fold the numerical value of Adam's (אדם = 45x10 = 450).⁴⁶¹ This numerological affinity brings together

⁴⁵⁸ See above, chapter 4, section 3.2. pp. 173-182. See also Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 174; Meroz, 'Ge'ulah be-Torat ha-Ari', pp. 287-291, 352-355.

⁴⁵⁹ On redemptive notions of the recitation of the *Shema* see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 174.

⁴⁶⁰ For this standard conceptualization of the idea of Moses' incarnations in Lurianic kabbalah, see Vital, *Sha'ar ha-Gilgulim*, 'Haqdamah', 33. On the Lurianic view of Adam's soul see Scholem, *On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead*, pp. 228-241.

⁴⁶¹ According to the Lurianic tradition that follows Genesis Rabbah 12:6, at the time of the redemption the original cosmic structure of Adam will be reinstated. Since each individual soul derives from the supernal soul of Adam, the rectification of every individual's soul is a prerequisite for the perfection of the upper world. This view obliges all of Israel to participate in the redemptive processes of rectification which not only result in national redemption but first and foremost facilitate the re-establishment of the original structure of the transcendent realm. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 172. Cf. also *Sefer ha-Peli'ah*, chapter 22. Similarly, in *MA ReNaV*, ofan 25, p. 35, Shapira compares the status of Moses to that of Metatron through the connection of both of them to Adam: 'Moses also asked to become Metatron, who also was a son of man [*ben adam*], and 'God took him' [Gen. 5:24] when he was still alive.

וביקש משה גם כן שיהיה הוא מטטרון, שהוא היה גם כן בן אדם ולקח אותו אלהים בעודו בחיים חיותו.

not only Moses and Adam but also Moses and all men (בני אדם) or rather, in this context, all male Jews who qualify to make up the quorum of ten required for public prayer. In a passage from chapter 112 of *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim*, the praying congregation of Israel engenders not only the presence of the Shekhinah among the people but also the presence of Metatron, who has the quality of being 'in-between', i.e., among the worshippers.⁴⁶² On the other hand, Metatron's position 'in between' places him in the World of Formation, that is, on a higher spiritual level than Moses, who stays connected to the lowest of the four cosmic worlds, the World of Making:

That is to say, ten men are called a congregation, for the *Shekhinah* does not rest upon fewer than ten men, as Scripture says [Lev. 22:32]: 'I will be hallowed among the children of Israel' [see *bMeg.* 23b]. 'Among' means that Moses was below the level of Metatron, who is in the world of Formation, and who is the middle one of the three Princes of the Countenance, alluded to by [the terms] head, middle, end.⁴⁶³

In the above excerpt, Moses is explicitly placed beneath the spiritual level of Metatron, because he is attached to the congregation of Israel and ontologically connected to the present world, namely to the world of Making.

3.3. Moses and Metatron on a par.

Notwithstanding the above, throughout *Megaleh Amuqot* Shapira often ascribes to Moses the same spiritual capacities that he associates with Metatron. In the following passages, Moses' spiritual and therefore also his ontological level in the divine world are presented as being virtually equal to those of Metatron. By means of a numerological operation, Metatron is associated with the virtue of

⁴⁶² Underlying this view is the idea of the involvement of the whole community in the processes that would eventually lead to the final redemption. See Meroz, 'Ge'ulah be-Torat ha-Ari', pp. 287-291, 352-355.

⁴⁶³ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 112, p. 148:

ר"ל י' בני אדם נקראים קהל, ואין השכינה שורה פחות מעשרה בני אדם, שנאמר ונקדשתי בתוך בני ישראל, תוך דייקא, שכן משה למטה ממדרגת מטטרון שהוא בעולם היצירה, שהוא אמצעי לג' שרי פנים בסוד ראש תוך סוף.

goodness,⁴⁶⁴ as well as with the righteous Joseph, the biblical ‘youth’ (*na’ar*), and with Moses. Subsequently, all these apparently discrete associations become interrelated by virtue of being destined to rectify the sin of Adam.⁴⁶⁵ Following this numerological logic, the epithet ‘good’ is applied equally to Moses and Metatron:

Then God answered him, 'let it suffice thee', because you have already [attained] the level referred to esoterically by [Ex. 2:2]: 'she saw him that he was a goodly child.' This is [also] the esoteric meaning of 'the child [Moses] wept' [Ex. 2:6]. [However], one cannot say that the voice of Moses was like the voice of a ‘child’ [i.e. ‘youth’], for God forbid that Moses should have been in any way deficient [see *bHullin* 24a], as the Levites are disqualified [from Temple service] by a [deficiency of] voice. Rather, the [term] ‘youth’ refers esoterically to Metatron. For this reason he was called משה, [whose name is] an acronym of [the phrase] שר הפנים [Metatron Prince of the Countenance], and if this is so then you [Moses] have already attained the same level [as Metatron].⁴⁶⁶

According to this passage, Moses had attained Metatron’s spiritual level by sharing his attribute of goodness. Moreover, he also shared Metatron’s epithet of ‘youth’. For this reason one may regard the status of Moses and Metatron as being equal. For Shapira, the attribute of ‘youth’ links the two figures together

⁴⁶⁴ According to the method of the ‘small calculus’, the Tetragrammaton equals 17 and amounts to the value of the Hebrew word for ‘good’ (טוב).

⁴⁶⁵ This view underlies the idea of the metempsychosis of the messiah’s soul. See Idel, ‘Multiple Forms of Redemption’, p. 32; idem, ‘The Secret of Impregnation’, pp. 349-368; idem, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 189-190.

⁴⁶⁶ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 176, p. 233:

ואז השיב לו הקב"ה רב לך, כי כבר יש לך אותה המדרגה בסוד ותרא אותו כי ט"ב וזה סוד והנה נע"ר בוכה, ואי אפשר לומר שהיה קולו של משה כנער, כי חס ושלוש שהיה משה בעל מום, כי הלויים נפסלין בקול, אלא והנה נער הוא סוד מטטרון, ולכן נקרא משה ר"ת "מטטרון" שר הפנים, ואם כן כבר יש לך אותה המדרגה.

and indicates their analogical status. Thus the youth's voice signifies also Moses' instrument of action, i.e. the channel that links him to God, which he controls by virtue of the linguistic association between his name and Metatron's angelic title. Similarly, while commenting on a zoharic passage, Shapira equates Metatron to Moses:

It is written in the *Ra'aya Mehemena*⁴⁶⁷ that Moses was named after the acronym of the phrase 'Metatron Prince of the Countenance', to demonstrate that the level of Moses reaches only to the top of the level of Metatron Prince of the Countenance on high, who is hinted at by his [i.e. Moses'] name, but not any higher. For this reason 'speak no more unto me of this matter' [Dt. 3:26], [i.e.] of ascending any higher, to the world that is all good.⁴⁶⁸

This elaboration on the zoharic text again points to the morphonominal relation between Moses and Metatron, thus establishing their interdependence. The zoharic text itself, which underlies Shapira's thinking here, states – in a clearly eschatological context – that Moses was the only one allowed to 'make use' of Metatron for the purpose of bringing about the messianic advent.⁴⁶⁹ While this statement makes Metatron subservient to Moses in his instrumental capacity of advancing the redemptive process, it also alludes to the messianic dimension of both figures, which operate on the same level as they transform the world by

⁴⁶⁷ Zohar 3:219a.

⁴⁶⁸ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 14, p. 25:

כן כתוב ברעיא מהימנא שנקרא משה, על שם נוטריקון של מלות "מטטרון" שר"ה הפנים, יראה בו שמדריגת משה אינו עולה רק עד סוף מדריגתו של מטטרון שר הפנים למעלה שרמוז בשמו ולא יותר, ולכן אל תוסף דבר אלי עוד להעלות יותר לעולם שכולו טוב.

⁴⁶⁹ Zohar 3:219a. Similarly, *MA ReNaV*, ofan 212, p. 294, invokes the instrumental role of Metatron, following the correspondence between their names:

While he was in this world Moses did not merit to make use of [anything] other than the 'rod of Moses', which is Metatron. For regarding him, Moses said: 'thou hast begun to show me thy servant', specifically 'thy servant' – that is Metatron.

והנה בזה העולם לא זכה משה להשתמש רק במטה משה שהוא מטטרון, כדאמר עליו משה אתה החלות להראות את עבדך, עבדך דייקא שהוא מטטרון.

turning it from evil to good.⁴⁷⁰ According to Shapira, despite his endeavors, Moses fails to inaugurate the ultimate redemption, envisaged as the complete unification of worlds and the withdrawal of evil; he merely initiates the redemptive process, which allows him to reach as high as the level of Formation but not beyond it. Thus, on the one hand, Moses and Metatron participate equally in the gradual process of rectifying the worlds in preparation for the final redemption,⁴⁷¹ and on the other hand, neither Metatron nor Moses is allowed access to the realm of complete goodness, as both of them signify only the interim process of cosmic transformation.⁴⁷²

3.4. Moses as the supreme leader.

When Shapira elaborates on the messianic capacities of Metatron and Moses, he often presents the latter as the dominant figure. In one instance, he explains

⁴⁷⁰ The equal level of Metatron and Moses is hinted at in *MA ReNaV*, ofan 168, p. 223, wherein both share the measure of 18 parasangs, the distance between heaven and earth. The numerical value of 18 corresponds to the double letter *tet* of Metatron's name, as well as to the 9 cantillation and 9 vocalization marks given to Moses together with the Torah on Mount Sinai:

As Scripture says: 'Thy servant' [Dt. 3:24], because the measurement of the [divine] stature is an esoteric reference to Metatron. [...] Then God answered him 'let it suffice thee', because you have already reached the mystery of this measurement of 18 [after Genesis Rabbah 69:7, where the distance between the upper and lower temple is said to measure 18 parasangs], because you are the two [Hebrew] letters *tet* of [the name] Metatron, which, as is stated in the Zohar, are the 9 accents and 9 vocalization marks, for your level is that of 'the righteous one of 18 worlds' [a numerological reading of *יה* in the expression *צדיק חי עולמים* (Righteous One - Vitality of the Worlds') of Zohar 1:132a].

ו"ש את עבדך, כי שיעור קומה הוא בסוד מטטרון [...] ואז השיב לו הקב"ה רב לך, כי כבר אתה בסוד שיעור קומה זה של י"ח, כי אתה ט"ט מן מטטרון כדאיתא בזוהר, שהם ט' טעמים ט' נקודות, כי מדרגתך הוא צדיק ח"י עולמים.

⁴⁷¹ On the Lurianic redemption as a slow, multi-staged process entailing the gradual revelation of kabbalistic secrets as a prerequisite, see Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 182, and cf. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 52; Sack, *Be-sha'arei ha-Qabalah shel Rabi Mosheh Cordovero*, pp. 232-233.

⁴⁷² This notion coincides with the image of the Messiah who actively participates in the redemptive process as it features in some strata of the zoharic literature. See Liebes, *The Messiah of the Zohar*, pp. 4-12. For the opposite concept of the incarnation of Moses as *ra'aya mehemena* – the supreme messianic figure, presiding over both Son of David and Son of Joseph, see Goldreich, 'Berurim', pp. 472-474.

Moses' superiority to Enoch and Elijah – both clearly messianic figures – as resulting from his own mortality.⁴⁷³ For Shapira, Moses' death points to suffering, comparable to the suffering of the first messiah, the martyred Son of Joseph.⁴⁷⁴ Whereas Enoch and Elijah were taken to heaven while still alive, Moses was destined to die and, by means of partaking of death, which ontologically belongs to the realm of evil, he played a greater part in the transformation of evil to good. This is in line with the zoharic view, which places the righteous human above the spiritual level of angels.⁴⁷⁵

Moreover, in several parts of his commentary, Shapira bases Moses' superiority to Metatron on numerological calculations. Thus, the phrase מטטרון שר הפנים (Metatron Prince of the Countenance) has the numerical value of 999, whereas Moses, whose spiritual roots are in the sefirah of *Binah*, which is associated with the sun (חמה, שמש, הרם = 961),⁴⁷⁶ as well as being related to the

⁴⁷³ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 25, p. 35:

Behold, in the first verse [of his prayer] [Moses] yearned for the level of Metatron. In the second verse Elijah is recalled, who is in the world of Making. It is in reference to this that he [Moses] said [Dt. 3:25]: 'let me go over', so that he would acquire the level of Elijah, who was impregnated in the souls of Nadav and 'Avihu, and who also had the merit of ascending to heaven while alive. Let me be as one of them, so that I may see the Land, for when I am in the Land of Israel, I shall also merit of not dying. And God answered him: 'let it suffice thee', your level is higher than that of Metatron and Elijah, who did not experience death, as was explained in the *Pardes* [fol. 207a].

הנה בפסוק ראשון נתאוה למדריגת מטטרון. ובפסוק שני זכור את אליהו שהוא בעולם העשייה. זה שאמר אעברה נ"א, שיזכה למדריגת אליהו שהיה מעובר בנשמת "נדב ואביהו, וזכה גם כן לעלות בחיים ברקיע, יהיה אני כאחד מהם ואראה את הארץ, כי כשאהיה בארץ ישראל, אזכה גם כן לזה שלא יהיה בי מיתה. והשיב לו הקב"ה רב לך, מדריגה שלך הוא יותר גבוה מן מטטרון ואליהו שלא טעמו מיתה, כמ"ש הפרדס.

⁴⁷⁴ On the notion of the messiah's martyrdom, see Meroz, 'Ge'ulah be-Torat ha-Ari', pp. 31-32, 297-298, 360; Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 174; idem, 'Multiple Forms of Redemption', pp. 47, 55.

⁴⁷⁵ See Zohar 1:29a, 1:158a, wherein the angels are placed outside the divine throne and therefore do not participate in the union of the sefirot, while the righteous may cleave to the sefirah *Yesod* and be nourished by it thanks to the sefirotic reunion. Cf. *MA ReNaV*, ofan 168, and see n. 473 above.

⁴⁷⁶ In *Kanefei Yonah* 4:17, commenting on Is. 64:4, Moses derives his nourishment from the sun (חמה), which parallels the divine name Elohim, signifying *Binah* (בינה).

letter *mem* (מ = 40), has the higher numerical value of [961+40 =] 1001.⁴⁷⁷ This numerological calculation reappears in *Megaleh Amuqot* in a messianic context,⁴⁷⁸ in which Metatron is presented as being subservient to Moses:

According to Scripture, Moses ‘besought the Lord at that time’ [Dt. 3:23], [referring to] what would take place ‘at that time’, [namely,] in the future, [when] ‘thou hast begun to show thy servant’ [Dt. 3:24] the redemption from Egypt. Moreover, [the phrase] ‘to show thy servant’ alludes to Metatron, the faithful servant, who is referred to esoterically as Joseph, and to Moses, who is an esoteric reference to Metatron [who, in turn, is signified by] the diminutive א [at the end] of [the word] ויקרא [with which the Book of Leviticus begins]. This is [indicated by the numerical value of the phrase] שר הפנים [Metatron, Prince of the Countenance], which amounts to 1000 minus 1, pointing to Moses, who merited [the association with] Metatron, and who intimated [by beseeching the Lord ‘at that time’] that he was esoterically [associated with] Messiah Son of Joseph.⁴⁷⁹

⁴⁷⁷ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 142, p. 191:

And God answered him [Dt. 3:26]: ‘Let it suffice thee’. The measure of Moses is greater than that of Metatron, the Prince of the Countenance, which amounts to the numerical value of 1000 minus 1. [...] But Moses, with all these three names [of the sun], together with the forty days during which he obtained the level of *Binah*, which is called *mem* [= 40], amounts to 1 plus 1000. That is why [God said] ‘Speak no more unto me [ibid.]’.

והשיב הקב"ה רב לך, גדולתן של משה היא יותר מן מטטרון שר הפנים, שהוא עולה לחשבון אלף חסר חד, אבל משה בג' שמות אלו עם המ' יום שזכה בהם לבינה הנקראת מ"ם, הוא עולה אחד על אלף, לכן אל תוסף דבר.

⁴⁷⁸ I follow Idel’s terminology in ‘Multiple Forms of Redemption’, pp. 29-30, where he distinguishes between ‘messianic’ and ‘redemptive’ ideas, the former involving the messiah in the redemptive process, the latter referring to salvation in a more general sense.

⁴⁷⁹ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 252, p. 359:

וביקש משה בעת ההוא כתיב, מה שיהיה בעת ההיא, הרי לעתיד אתה החלות להראות את עבדך גאולת מצרים, וגם להראות את עבדך, רומז על מטטרון עבד נאמן שהוא סוד יוסף, ומשה בסוד מטטרון ויקרא (א) אלף זעירא, שהוא מטטרון שר הפנים שעולה אלף חסר חד, אל משה שזכה משה למטטרון, ורמז משה שהוא סוד משיח בן יוסף.

In the above passage, the redemption from Egypt points to the redemptive potencies of Metatron, the divine servant, who in Shapira's terms parallels the biblical Joseph, since both Metatron and Joseph represent the aspect of 'youth'. While explaining the significance of the irregularly small letter *aleph* as it features in the Masoretic text of Lev. 1:1, Shapira draws linguistic and numerological analogies to juxtapose Metatron as Joseph with Metatron as Moses. Thus the *aleph* of *va-yikra* (= 1000) owes its extraordinary diminutive form to the fact that it represents Metatron's name together with his angelic title (מטטרון שר הפנים), whose numerical value of 999 is smaller than the 1000 value of the standard *aleph*. God's call to Moses (*va-yikra*), in which the name of the angel appears in the form of the diminutive *aleph*, bestows Metatron's capacities upon Moses. Also, a circular association between Metatron and Joseph on the one hand, and between Metatron and Moses on the other, connects Moses to the figure of Messiah Son of Joseph. By means of these juxtaposed associations, Shapira construes Moses as a messianic figure subduing the realm of Metatron – a realm marked by the polarity of good and evil – and thus initiating Israel's progress towards the redemptive state of unification.

Another passage, in which Shapira comments on Moses' spiritual superiority to Joshua, explains indirectly Metatron's inferiority to Moses:

If that is the case, then why did he reveal to Joshua only 96 [the numerical value of the word צו in Dt. 3:28], which equals *El Adonai* [אל אדני = 96]?⁴⁸⁰ To this the Holy One Blessed Be He replied: 'let it suffice thee', that is to say, Metatron Prince of the Countenance, who is the master of Israel, is imprinted on no other human but Moses, as is stated in the *Ra'aya Mehemena*: You, Moses, make use of Metatron, the Prince of the Countenance, as he is inscribed in your name.⁴⁸¹ Because of this [God] said: 'let it suffice thee', that is to say, you can

⁴⁸⁰ This notion ensues from Moses' connection to a higher divine name than Joshua's, as Moses is associated with 'El YHVH and the world of Formation, while Joshua is associated with 'El 'Adonai and the world of Making. See Kallus, 'The Theurgy of Prayer', pp. 136-139.

⁴⁸¹ See Zohar 3:219a.

make use of the master of Israel, who is the 'rod of Moses', who is Metatron, about whom [Moses] said: 'thy mighty hand' [Dt. 3:24], since he is yours, for he is inscribed in your name.⁴⁸²

In the above excerpt, Shapira follows the *Ra'aya Mehemena* by emphasizing the mutual relation between Metatron and Moses. Both these figures belong to the same level of the divine world, signified by the appropriate divine name. Here Metatron signifies the divine 'mighty hand', which is associated with severe Judgment originating in the left-hand-side of the divine body. Thus Metatron's name points to the harsh aspect of the divine, which provides sustenance to the forces of evil in the world. However, Moses, who represents the ideal mystic, is capable of suppressing Metatron's power, due to the linguistic, and therefore the ontological, connection between them. According to Shapira, who employs a zoharic vocabulary, Metatron denotes a realm over which Moses' power extends. This invests Moses with a messianic dimension as an individual who controls the divine aspect of severe Judgments, namely, the realm of evil, transforming it into Mercy, namely the realm of pure good. These capacities of Moses are represented symbolically by his 'rod,' which features as both an instrument of transformation and an allusion to the realm of Metatron. Consequently, not only does Metatron designate the realm that is to be transformed, but he also stands for the transformative instrument *per se*, which is wielded by Moses and is subject to his will.

4. THE ROD OF MOSES.

Moses' rod, with which he performed miracles before Pharaoh, divided the Red Sea, and brought forth water out of the rock, comes to the fore as a crucial element of *Megaleh Amuqot's* symbolic grid. According to early rabbinic

⁴⁸² *MA ReNaV*, ofan 100, p. 125:

ואם כן למה לא גילה ליהושע רק צ"ו שהוא א"ל אדנ"י. על זה השיב הקב"ה רב לך, ר"ל מטטרון שר הפנים שהוא רבן של ישראל, לא אתרשים בשום בר נש רק במשה, כדאיתא ברעיא מהימנא אנת משה נשתמש במטטרון שר הפנים דאיהו אתרשים בשמך. ועל זה אמר רב לך, ר"ל אתה יכול להשתמש ברבן של ישראל שהוא מטה משה שהוא מטטרון, שעליו אמר את ירך הזוקה, לפי שהוא לך שהוא אתרשים בשמך.

tradition, Moses' rod was among the ten items created on the eve of first Sabbath, just before the end of God's creational labour.⁴⁸³ Moreover, in both midrashic and kabbalistic sources, this rod is said to have been inscribed with the ineffable name of God, to which it owed its supernatural powers.⁴⁸⁴ Both these traditions might have laid the ground for the later association of Moses' rod with Metatron, who according to early mystical sources was not only created in the first week of the Creation but also comprised the divine name.⁴⁸⁵ Likewise, a midrashic tradition deems the rod of Moses a primordial entity which the righteous individual of each generation comes to possess, a notion that connects Moses with Adam and Enoch.⁴⁸⁶

In Shapira's writings, the rod of Moses appears invariably as a symbolic token of Metatron, representing both the metaphysical dualism and the moral ambivalence of the time of exile. Metatron as 'the rod' stands, on the one hand, for the magico-mystical connection between the spiritual and the material level of the creation, and on the other hand, for the influence of evil on the present world. Moreover, it marks the process of the world's transformation, representing the tension between the divine attributes of severe Judgment and Mercy.⁴⁸⁷ In both these senses, while drawing heavily on the imagery of the *Tiqunim*, Shapira employs Moses' rod as a symbol of transformation, charged with redemptive-restorative capacities.⁴⁸⁸

As one of these symbolic representations, Shapira envisions Metatron-the rod at the junction between Israel and God. In this sense Moses draws nourishment from the upper worlds and bestows it upon all the Israelites through

⁴⁸³ See *mAvot* 5:6.

⁴⁸⁴ See *Deuteronomy Rabbah* 3:8; *Midrash Tehilim* 114:9; *Zohar* 1:6b.

⁴⁸⁵ See *3Enoch*, p. 107 and the references adduced there; *Zohar* 2:28a, 2:48a; *Sefer ha-Yashar*, 'Shemot', p. 307.

⁴⁸⁶ See *Pirquei de-Rabi Eliezer*, chapter 40; *Targum Yerushalmi* on Ex. 2:21.

⁴⁸⁷ For the sources of the idea of the rod as an instrument of Mercy, see *3Enoch*, p. 107; Scholem, *Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 220 n. 37.

⁴⁸⁸ See Goldreich, 'Berurim', pp. 486-487.

the miraculous power of the rod.⁴⁸⁹ Moreover, the rod creates a state of union between the present world of exile and the *Shekhinah*:

The esoteric meaning of the 'seal' is 'Moses was ten [י] cubits [tall]' [*bBerakhot* 54b], the rod in his hand [was] 'ten [י] cubits long, and [he] leapt ten [י] cubits [into the air]' [*ibid.*]. These [three *yuds*] are an esoteric reference to the three worlds, for Moses stood in this world of Making, and the rod in his hand was Metatron [i.e. the world of Formation]. 'Ten cubits [are mentioned] because the י [=10] of Metatron [i.e. the additional י when Metatron's name is spelled Mitatron – מיטטרון] was his water that sprang up, esoterically referred to in [Gen. 2:21]: 'And he took one of his ribs', which is the י of the rock, as is stated in the *Tiqunim*,⁴⁹⁰ and 'he closed up the flesh instead thereof' [Gen. 2:21], that is to say, Moses was called [Gen. 6:3] בשגם הוא בשר ['for that he also is flesh'],⁴⁹¹ for the Lord gave the *Shekhinah* to the rod, and she is his bride. [And 'he leapt up' another] 'ten cubits' – in the world of Creation.⁴⁹²

⁴⁸⁹ Cf. *MAT*, 'Huqat', pp. 528-529: 'The esoteric meaning of 'and the rod of Aharon was budded, among their rods' [Num. 17: 8, 6]: all the rods of the children of Israel suckled from Aharon's rod, which is also the rod of Moses, which Moses took from before the Lord to speak to the rock [Num. 20:8].

סוד והנה פרה מטה אהרן בתוך מטותם של כל מטות ומטות של בני ישראל יניקה שלהם מן מטה אהרן שהוא ג"כ מטה משה אשר לקח משה מלפני י"י לדבר אל הסלע.

Cf. Abulafia's interpretation of the changeability of Moses' staff as referring to the process of letter permutation and the transformation of mystical consciousness in Wolfson, *Abraham Abulafia*, p. 59; Sagerman, *The Serpent Kills or the Serpent Gives Life*, pp. 214-216.

⁴⁹⁰ See *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* 21:46a.

⁴⁹¹ *Zohar* 3:216b. The biblical *hapax legomenon* בשגם has the same numerical value as the name משה (= 345) and is understood as a designation of Moses (see Rashi on *bHulin* 139b).

⁴⁹² *MAT*, 'Huqat', p. 529:

סוד חות"ם משה הוי י' אמין ומטה שבידו י' אמין ושורר י' אמין הם סוד ג' עולמות כי משה שעמד בזה עולם העשייה ומטה שבידו הוא מטטרון י' אמין כי י' של מטטרון הוי סלקי נביעי דיליה ברזא ויקח אחת מצלעותיו שהיא הי' מן סלע

According to this passage, the separation between the upper and lower levels of the divine world parallels the withdrawal of the letter *yud*, representing the tenth sefirah *Malkhut*-Shekhinah, from its union with Metatron, who stands for the ninth sefirah *Yesod*, this withdrawal leaving Metatron a deficient dry ‘rock’.⁴⁹³ Moses, who stands for the world of Making, connects the Shekhinah with the upper reaches of the divine world through the level of Metatron, the world of Formation, whose capacity for effecting the unification of worlds is signified by the spelling of his name with a *yud*.⁴⁹⁴ To achieve this Moses makes use of his instrument of unification, Metatron-the rod, who unifies all the worlds comprised in the ‘seal’ (*hotam*) inscribed upon it.⁴⁹⁵ Although in the above passage Shapira elaborates on the theosophic issue of the reunification of the sefirotic realm, he also incorporates magical notions into his main symbolic grid. The ‘seal’, by means of which Moses unifies the worlds, resembles the image of the divine name inscribed upon his staff. Indeed, Shapira employs such an image when he attributes the transformative powers of ‘Moses’ rod’ to the fact that the 42-Letter divine name was engraved upon it.⁴⁹⁶

כדאי' בתיקונים ויסגור בשר תחתונה ר"ל משה נקרא בשגם הוא בשר כי הקב"ה מסר השכינה למטה והיא כלה דיליה י' אמין בעולם הבריאה.

⁴⁹³ On the letter *yud* as a representation of the union between *Abba* and *Imma*, as well as a concept of ‘withdrawal’ bearing sexual connotations, see Giller, *Reading the Zohar*, pp. 74-75, 85-86. See also Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, pp. 63-73. Cf. Scholem’s observation (*Origins of the Kabbalah*, p. 429 n. 151) on the affinities between *yud* as Active Intellect and Sophia in Jacob ben Sheshet’s *Meshiv Devarim Nekhohim* (fol. 20b), which parallel the association of the *yud* with Metatron and *Shekhinah*. On similar ideas in Abulafia, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, p. 377 n. 18.

⁴⁹⁴ A similar notion appears in *MAT*, ‘Be-har’, where the state of union achieved on the seventh day, signified by the full spelling of Metatron’s name, is compared to a jubilee. The relationship between the Sabbath and Metatron similarly features in the Hebrew writings of the author of *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*. See Gottlieb, *Ha-Ketavim ha-Ivriyim*, p. 107. On various meanings of the letter *yud* in the kabbalistic tradition, see Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives*, pp. 63, 129, 133.

⁴⁹⁵ On the ‘seal’ as a sign of unification between the male and female divine aspects, which is also associated with circumcision, see Zohar 2:114a. Cf. Wolfson, *Language, Eros, Being*, p. 373 and p. 591 n. 5.

⁴⁹⁶ *MAT*, ‘Yitro’, ed. Weiss, p. 106, following *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* 21: 42a-43a.

A similar idea appears in some of the magical treatises inspired by the Ashkenazi commentaries stemming from Nehemiah ben Shlomo of Erfurt's circle. These made their way into *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* – Shapira's explicitly acknowledged source in the passage quoted above.⁴⁹⁷ As Amos Goldreich correctly observed, the medieval magico-mystical Ashkenazi commentators and the author of the later strata of the zohar had much in common in terms of the sources that inspired their imagery and their messianic outlook. According to Goldreich, it is specifically the symbol of Moses' rod that points to a possible link between these two bodies of literature. The rod appears in a similar context in both, where the magical use of angelic names is identified with the mystical experience of acquiring a full understanding of the Torah, alongside the supernatural capacity for interpreting it both orally and in writing.⁴⁹⁸ Notably, in both cases this experience relies on establishing man's connection with the heavenly realm, which largely depends on a proper invocation of three angelic names, including Metatron.⁴⁹⁹ This sheds light on Shapira's juxtaposition of Metatronic symbolism with the tradition of Moses' mystico-magical capacities. For instance, in a passage commenting on pericope 'Emor', Shapira connects Moses with the Oral Torah using a string of numerological coefficients. Subsequently, he relates the numerical value of 960 to the number of hours during which Moses learnt the Oral Torah (*matnitin*) on Mount Sinai, while taking the number 50 [*hamishim*] days to refer to the duration of Israel's exodus from Egypt, on the basis of a hyper-literal reading of Ex. 13:18: 'and the children of Israel went up harnessed [*hamushim*] out of the land of Egypt':

During those 50 days – in which there are 12000 eons that refer esoterically to the [acronym] אב"י"ע [signifying the

⁴⁹⁷ Cf. Sagerman, *The Serpent Kills or the Serpent Gives Life*, pp. 246-248, on Abulafia's magical notion of the mental unification of Sandalfon and Metatron, the corporal and spiritual aspects of the creation symbolized by Moses' rod and by various spellings of the divine name. I am grateful to prof. Moshe Idel for pointing me to possible affinities between Abulafia's concept of the 72-Letter Divine Name and Nehemiah ben Shlomo's *Commentary on the 72-Letter Divine Name*, discussed in chapter 2 above, section 3.2, pp. 78-79.

⁴⁹⁸ See Goldreich, 'Berurim', pp. 484-486; idem, *Shem ha-Kotev*, pp. 77-94.

⁴⁹⁹ Idem, *Shem ha-Kotev*, p. 65 nn.

worlds of *יצירה* (Creation), *בריאה* (Emanation), *עשייה* (Formation) and *עשייה* (Making)], which in reverse order forms [the acronym *ע"ב"ע* standing for] *עולמות* [worlds], *ב"ב* [12], and *אלף* [a thousand] – the soul went out into this world, and for this reason it is called soul [*נשמה*, comprising the letters *נ* + *משה*]. [This refers to] Moses, who stood up with the rod in his hand, which is Metatron, and who killed the Egyptian, who is the serpent, together with his entire camp. With what did he kill him? With the 50 letters of the *Shema*, esoterically referred to by [Ex. 2:12]: 'And he looked this way [*כה* = 25, which is the amount of the] letters of the unification [recited] during the morning service, 'and that way [*כה* = the 25] letters of the unification [recited] during the evening service.' 'And he slew the Egyptian and hid him in the sand [*חול*]' [ibid.] – these are the weekdays [*חול*] that govern him; 'and hid him in the sand [*חול*] – as Scripture says about Balaam, 'he smote the ass with a staff' [Num. 22:27]: the numerical value of the one is the same as that of the other, since by way of numerology, 'with a staff' [*במקל* = 172] is [the same as] 'he hid him in the sand' [*ויטמנהו בחול*] = 172].⁵⁰⁰

In the above-quoted passage, Moses, who comprises all the souls of Israel, facilitates their reconnection to their supernal divine source by means of his rod.⁵⁰¹ Moses' rod becomes a symbol of transformation,⁵⁰² by virtue of which the

⁵⁰⁰ *MAT*, 'Emor', p. 401:

ובתוך אותן חמשים יום שיש בהן י"ב אלף עולמות סוד אבי"ע למפרע ע"ולמות י"ב אלף יצאה הנשמה לזה העולם לכן נקראת נשמה נ"שמה משה דקאים במטה שבידו שהוא מטטרון והרג את המצרי שהוא נחש וכל משיריוהו במה הרגו בנ' אתון של שמע בסוד ויפן כ"ה אתון דיחודא בשחרית וכ"ה אתון דיחודא בערבית ויך אותו ויטמנהו בחול הם יומין דחול שמושלים בו ויטמינהו בחול"ל כד"א אצל בלעם ויך את האתון במקל חושבנא דדין כדין במק"ל בגי' ויטמינהו בחול"ל.

⁵⁰¹ See *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* 69: 111b-112a; Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, p. 52.

⁵⁰² Cf. Sagerman, *The Serpent Kills or the Serpent Gives Life*, p. 239. In *MA ReNaV*, ofan 101, Moses is able to overpower evil specifically because of his connection, through the rod, to the

evil forces may be overpowered. Because Moses' rod instantly evokes the image of the serpent, it helps explain the bipartite nature of Metatron as an entity that is both involved in and opposed to evil. Consequently, Moses' actions similarly acquire an ambivalent nature: he sins when he makes inappropriate use of his rod, but he also leads Israel to redemption under the aegis of the 'brazen serpent'.⁵⁰³ In Shapira's view, the rod constitutes an instrument of magical transformation, which operates in the realm of evil signified by the 'serpent' (or the 'weekdays', which are governed by the serpent and come to represent it). It thus serves as a measure of punishment.⁵⁰⁴ However, the 'rod' not only facilitates the annihilation of the wicked, it also changes the metaphysical nature of the creation by dint of its connection to the words of prayer. Thus, instead of the Divine Name (השם, which corresponds to משה), Moses' rod (מטה משה = 399) is inscribed with the fifty words making up the *Shema* (שמע) prayer, which homiofonically parallels the word שמה, which amounts to 345, and together with the number of its 50 constituent words adds up to the numerical value of 'soul' (נשמה = 399), signifying the mystical reconnection of Israel to their source in the supernal

forces of evil. Thus, the 120 days which Moses spent on Mount Sinai point to the number of judgments (*dinim*, the forces of evil), as well as to the numerical value of God's 'mighty' [חזקה = 120] hand of Dt. 3:24, which signifies harsh Judgments, the left-hand side of the sefirotic tree, and Metatron. Consequently, Moses' lifetime of exactly 120 years signifies the neutralization of the 120 forces of evil, with which he was inherently connected. See *MA ReNaV*, pp. 126-127.

⁵⁰³ On possible Christian influences on this kabbalistic motif, see Sagerman, *The Serpent Kills or the Serpent Gives Life*, p. 232 and Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God*, p. 131, where he discusses similarities between the brazen serpent, the messiah and Jesus on the one hand, and the image of the 'inner altar', which instantly evokes the symbolic of Metatron, the High Priest in the divine temple on high.

⁵⁰⁴ See also *MAT*, 'Be-har', p. 410:

And I will give children [to be] their princes' [Is. 3:4]. For this reason 'babes shall rule over them' [ibid.], because governance is in their hands, and they are called 'weekday garments'. Regarding them Scripture said: 'he hid him in the sand [חול, meaning both 'sand' and 'weekdays']' [Ex. 2:12], for the Egyptian governed him, who was the serpent and his camp, and Moses killed him with the rod that was in his hand, which was Metatron.

ונתתי נערים שריהם לכן תעלולים ימשלו בהם כי ההנהגה על ידיהם והם נקראים בגדי חול עליהו איתמר ויטמנהו בחול"ל שמושל בו המצרי שהיה נחש ומשירייתו והרגו משה במטה שבידו שהיה מטטרון.

soul.⁵⁰⁵ Hence, in the passage above the rod becomes a token of the theurgical efficacy of prayer, by means of which the human and the divine realms may be unified. It thus initiates and participates in the process of redemption.⁵⁰⁶

Furthermore, in *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* Moses' rod, whose appearance initiates the process of the redemption, was also compared to a 'quill' (*qulmus*), by virtue of which its possessor⁵⁰⁷ breaks through the surface of the present Torah, exposing its ultimate understanding and thus bringing about the final redemption.⁵⁰⁸ In a similar vein, Shapira applies the same symbol of Moses' rod to point to both the poor condition of the Torah in the present and the new understanding of the Torah at the conclusion of the world's messianic transformation, thereby connecting the process of transformation with Metatron's

⁵⁰⁵ The return to the source of origin amounts to both the individual and the collective redemption. Here the recitation of the *Shema*, which in Lurianic kabbalah allows for the participation of the whole congregation of Israel in the redemptive process, is substituted with a more talismanic view, according to which it is not the actual practice of prayer, but the letters constituting the prayer text that provide for its efficacy. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 174; idem, 'Multiple Forms of Redemption', p. 52 n. 95.

⁵⁰⁶ See Idel, *Multiple Forms of Redemption*, pp. 44-47, where he observes that in some forms of theosophical-theurgical kabbalah, such as the later strata of the zoharic literature, the national redemption complements the idea of individual perfection. In fact, the general cosmic reparation is conditioned and generated by a restorative action performed by an ordinary individual associated with the religious elite. This view coincides with the Lurianic notion of the redemption as presented by Idel, who claims that as in Abulafia's messianic theories, the Lurianic kabbalah was much more oriented toward developing the spiritual aspects of messianism rather than its socio-political consequences. This turned the process of restoring the divine world to a state of perfection (*tiqun*) into the major aim of the kabbalah, rendering the Messianic advent its indirect consequence. This view holds true also for Shapira's vision of the redemption. See further Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, pp. 174, 179; idem, 'Multiple Forms of Redemption', pp. 41-42, 50-51.

⁵⁰⁷ I.e. the author of the *Tiqunim* himself, according to Goldreich's interpretation ('Berurim', p.485). Cf. Tishby, *Meshihiyut*, p. 91; Liebes, 'Ha-Zohar ve-ha-Tiqunim', pp. 251-301.

⁵⁰⁸ *Tiqunei ha-Zohar* 21:43a speaks of the difference between Moses, the first Messiah, and his final incarnation: 'During the first [redemption] - in the sea, in matter; during the final redemption - everything in the sea of the Torah. His rod, with which he splits the sea, is 'quill', since upon it the arm of God appeared.'

בקדמיתא בימא בההוא חמר, בפורקנא בתרייתא כלא בימא דאורייתא, מטה דיליה דקרע ביה ימא דא קולמוס בגין אתגלייא זרוע יהו"ה.

name, which is inscribed on the rod. In a passage quoted earlier from *Megaleh Amuqot*⁵⁰⁹, the withdrawal of the supernal *yud* – the tenth sefirah – leaves the world in the realm of Metatron (‘rock’). This image derives from the *Tiqunim*, wherein the creation of the Oral Torah ensues from Moses’ disobedient striking of the rock as described in Num. 24:21, which corresponds to a violent casuistic interpretation of the original divine Torah. This causes separation between the true inner meaning of the Torah and the distorted (‘Oral’) tradition instigated by Moses:

You are the one of whom it says: ‘And he struck the rock’ [Num. 24:21]. For the Blessed Holy One instructed you to speak to the rock, and you did not do so, for if you had done it through speech they would be studying the Torah with no doubt, with no question and dispute. Because it says of you: ‘And he struck the rock’ and nothing came of it but single drops, so the masters of the Mishnah are like those who strike the rock. Their tongues are like a hammer striking the rock; they decide many *halakhic* questions, which accumulate drop by drop.⁵¹⁰

Like the author of *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, Shapira ascribes the poor condition of the world in the present to the dominance of the Oral Torah, associated with Moses’ rod, i.e. Metatron:

Moses’ rod was Metatron, and therefore this pericope [‘Huqat’] contains a grievance against the Oral Torah, the spoiled bread which at first was mild for them but has now become spoiled in their bowels, since the striking of the rock caused [only] a few single drops to come out, which is why it was said that this was caused by the ‘rock of dissent’ [1Sam.

⁵⁰⁹ See above, at n. 493.

⁵¹⁰ *Tiqunei-Zohar Hadash* 98a, as quoted in Giller, *The Enlightened Will Shine*, p. 68.

23:29]. 'This is the water of strife' [Num. 20:13], which is the dissent of all Israel.⁵¹¹

According to the above passage, the emergence of the Oral Torah has obstructed Israel's understanding of the divine word and provoked their preoccupation with its exoteric layer. Both Shapira and the author of the *Tiqunim* employ the image of a few single drops coming out of the rock rather than a full flowing spring. For Shapira, this corresponds to obstruction in perceiving the true nature of the Torah, and therefore to the metaphysical separation between Shekhinah and *Ze'ir*, whose influx is blocked at present within the realm of Metatron. In another part of *Megaleh Amuqot* Shapira ascribes rule over the present era to Moses' rod, i.e. Metatron, who is subjugated to Moses:

Regarding this world, which is governed by the rod of Moses – an esoteric reference to Metatron, who is called servant – it [the world] is governed by Moses, to whom the five books of the Torah were handed through the 49 [מט] gates of Understanding [*Binah*], which were handed down to Moses on Sinai, as stated in the first chapter of [tractate] Rosh Ha-Shanah [*b*Rosh Ha-Shanah 21b]. This is the esoteric meaning of the rod of Moses. Look at the word 'rod' [מטה], made up of the letters מט + ה, and you will find there the five [ה] books of the Torah [handed down] through the 49 [מ"ט] gates which Moses received, since Moses governed by means of Metatron, as is explained at length in [Menahem] Tsiyoni's [*Commentary on the Pentateuch*], pericope 'Shemot' [fol. 23b].⁵¹²

⁵¹¹ *MAT*, 'Huqat', p. 526:

כי מטה משה הי' מטטרון וא"כ גם תרעומת פרשה זו הי' על תור' שבע"פ לחם הקלקל שמתחילה הי' להם קל רק עתה נתקלקל במיעיהם מאחר שבהכאת הסלע גרמו טיפין זעיר שם לצאת איתמר כי סלע המחלוקת גרם המה מי מריב' שהם מחלוקת של כל ישראל.

⁵¹² *MA ReNaV*, ofan 212, p. 294:

על זה העולם שהנהגה על ידי מטה משה, שהוא סוד מטטרון שנקרא עבד, ומתנהג העולם על ידי משה שנמסרו לו חמשה חומשי תורה על ידי מ"ט שערי בינה שנמסרו למשה מסיני כדאיתא בפרק קמא דראש השנה. וזהו סוד מטה משה,

According to the above passage, Moses leads Israel by means of the Torah. However, the Torah that he possesses is flawed, having been transmitted through 49 (corresponding to the letters מ"ט of the name מטטרון – Metatron) rather than fifty gates of Understanding, the number that would have signified completeness.⁵¹³ Thus the rod (מטה) stands for the mediated state of the divine Law, inscribed upon the second pair of Tablets, which govern the present world. Elsewhere Shapira interprets Moses' rod (מטה משה = 399) as a designation of Enoch Metatron (399 = חנוך מטטרון) as well as of the Oral Torah, which corresponds to the veil surrounding Moses on Mount Sinai. In this instance, however, the 'rod' signifies both the 'side of evil' as represented by the Oral Torah, and its opposite, represented by the 'angels of Mercy', both designations amounting to the numerical value of 399:

'Evil' [רע] is an esoteric reference to the Oral Torah, which by way of numerology equals Enoch Metatron [חנוך מטטרון = 398] plus one [= 399],⁵¹⁴ and this, by way of numerology, equals 'angels of Mercy' [מלאכי רחמי"ם = 399], because the rod [of Moses, מטה משה = 399] changes according to the merit of the generation: it is a rod in response to merit, [but] sometimes the rod turns into a serpent in response to guilt.⁵¹⁵

תסתכל בחיבת מטה, ותשכח תמן חמשה חומשי תורה על ידי מ"ט שערים שזכה בהם משה, לפי שהיתה הנהגת משה על ידי מטטרון כמו שהאריך בזה בציוני פרשת שמות.

⁵¹³ According to *bRosh ha-Shanah* 21b: 'Fifty gates of Understanding [*binah*] were created in the world, all of which were given to Moses except for one, as Scripture said: "You made him little less than God" [Ps. 8:6]'. In kabbalistic tradition, the Jubilee, which occurs every 50 years, represents the sefirah *Binah*, called the supernal Mother. It signifies redemption, especially in the context of the exodus from Egypt. See *Zohar* 1:21b, 47b, 50b; 3:262a. See also n. 13 above. For similar imagery in the Hebrew writings of the author of *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, see Gottlieb, *Ha-Ketavim ha-Ivriyim*, p. 167.

⁵¹⁴ This numerological operation does not work out, since Oral Torah [תורה שבע"פ] amounts to 1063, while the numerical value of Enoch-Metatron [חנוך מטטרון] is 398. The closest equivalent term to Oral Torah, which Shapira may have had in mind, and which would better, if not quite, fit his numerological equation, is Mishnah [משנה], amounting to 395.

⁵¹⁵ *MAT*, 'Qedushim', p. 386:

According to this passage, the rod functions equally as harsh Judgment and as Mercy, alternating between good and evil as it stands for the divine equity. Similarly, in the following passage the rod functions not only as a measure of punishment but also as a scale by which Israel's merits and guilt will be weighed up to be determined at the end of time, and at the same time also as a measure of God's ultimate Mercy:

The esoteric meaning of Metatron, as is stated in the *Tiqunim* [25: 70b] is that it inclines towards Mercy for the righteous and towards blame for the wicked. The rod turns into a serpent and the serpent into a rod, and this rod is kept in store [for the future], if Israel merit.⁵¹⁶

In this passage, the rod functions simultaneously as a gauge of Israel's conduct (merit or iniquity) and the measure (mercy or blame and harsh judgement) adopted towards them by God.⁵¹⁷ This image is based on a Talmudic dictum, which according to Shapira conveys the inner meaning of Moses' rod, whereby

ר"ע סוד תור' שבע"פ והוא בגי' חנוך מטטרון עם הכולל והיא בגי' מלאכ"י רחמי"ם כי נתהפך המטה, לפי זכות הדור מטה כלפי זכות לפעמים המטה לנחש כלפי חובה.

⁵¹⁶ *MAT*, 'Qorah', p. 508:

סוד מטטרון בתיקונים מטה כלפי חסד לצדיקים מטה כלפי חובה לרשעים מטה נהפך לנחש ונחש למטה והנה מונה מטה זה למשמרת אם ישראל זכאין.

⁵¹⁷ In *MAT*, 'Purim', p. 657, the two aspects of the rod point to two other opposites, Israel and Amaleq, representing good and evil respectively. Inevitably, the redemptive notion hinted at by the rod's inclination towards merit qualifies Israel for the final redemption and Amaleq for damnation. In this instance, the rod becomes an instrument of vengeance over the 'other nations':

'For Israel and Amaleq are the two scales [of the balance], and when the right scale goes up then the second one goes down [as] the rod [מטה = 54] of Moses, which by way of numerology equals Gehinom [מטה x 2 = 108 = גיהנם], to the *Nuqba* of the great abyss.'

לפי שישראל ועמלק הם ב' כפות וכשכף ימין עולה למעלה ראש אזי כף שניה יורדת מטה משה שהוא בגימטריא גיהנם, לנוקבא דתהומא רבא.

A similar notion of the fire of Gehinom, with which Metatron punishes those who had sinned by 'mutilation of the shoots' (i.e. heresy), is preserved in a Hebrew treatise by the author of *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, on which see Gottlieb, *Ha-Ketavim ha-Ivriyim*, 'Ma'amar 1', p. 56.

when Israel press the scale of merit down, the rod inclines towards blame, while when they press it up the rod inclines towards mercy.⁵¹⁸ Similarly in the following passage, Shapira presents the 'rod' as a symbol of the process of world rectification (*tiqun*), in which Israel actively partake.⁵¹⁹ According to this view, the present condition of the world, determined by the 'rod', is not static but constantly subject to change resulting from its susceptibility to the influence of the forces of evil, which is again signified by the 'rod', i.e. by Metatron and the Oral Torah.⁵²⁰ Hence the role of Moses is to reverse the process which began with the sin of Adam, and which figuratively introduced the 'serpent', namely the 'rod', into the world:

About this [Moses] said: 'let me go over', I want to pass over the letters נ"א [the acronym *nun aleph* signifying] נחש אדם [serpent Adam]. He meant to say that Adam brought the serpent into the world. Consequently, the letters *nun aleph* in reverse order [are the acronym *aleph nun*, standing for נ' אורח [the letter nun], which is the dross of the serpent, and from there all evil comes into the world. [...] Similarly the Gemara says [*bBerakhot* 54a]: 'from there judgment descends to the world', and that is why [Deut. 3:25: 'let me [...] see the good land', for there the good part will overpower and eliminate evil from the world.⁵²¹

⁵¹⁸ *bRosh ha-Shanah* 17a.

⁵¹⁹ On a similar notion of 'fallen' sparks of divine light, which are inherent in each generation, and in the 'uplifting' of which back to their source every generation must take part, see Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, pp. 60-65; Idel, 'Multiple Forms of Redemption', p. 64. According to Idel, the fact that the messianic claims made by certain kabbalists were independent of any messianic theorising allowed for the survival of kabbalistic structures even in cases where their messianic promise failed to come true. In his view, the Lurianic as well as Shapira's kabbalah were not messianocentric systems of thought, even though the redemptive processes were their main focus. See Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 175; idem, 'Multiple Forms of Redemption', pp. 66-69.

⁵²⁰ Idel, *Messianic Mystics*, p. 182, and cf. Scholem, *Sabbatai Sevi*, p. 52; Sack, *Be-sha'arei ha-Qabalah shel Rabi Mosheh Cordovero*, pp. 232-233.

⁵²¹ *MA ReNaV*, ofan 71, p. 83:

According to this excerpt, Moses' task of uprooting evil amounts to transcending the divine level of harsh Judgment, from which the metaphysical 'serpent' draws its nourishment. Just as Metatron, represented by Moses' rod, enables the metaphysical change of evil into good and of punishment into reward through his connection to the evil realm, so Moses, through his own connection to sin and death, which are signified by his breaking of the Tablets and striking of the rock in the biblical narrative, plays a part in overcoming the evil power of the serpent.⁵²² In Shapira's thought both Metatron and Moses are symmetrically interconnected and placed within the context of Israel's redemptive history, since both are directly linked to the present condition of the world, while also being active participants in its process of transformation.

5. CONCLUSIONS.

In Nathan Shapira's *Megaleh Amuqot* both Enoch-Metatron and Moses feature as paradigmatic messianic figures, whose interdependence indicates that they play an equal part in Israel's redemptive history. Both figures are associated with the motif of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, but while Metatron signifies the duality and discord of the present world, which are connected to the evil aspect of the Tree, Moses represents the messianic striving to reunite the world with its upper source, signified by the good side of the Tree of Knowledge, or else by the Tree of Life.

Moreover, Moses and Metatron are mutually dependent by virtue of the morphonominal connection between them. On the one hand, both are incarnations of Adam's soul, and thus both are engaged in undoing the metaphysical and ethical outcomes of his sin. On the other hand, in accordance with the imagery of *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, Shapira places Metatron on the flawed side of the creation, whose limitations Moses transcends. This reflects Shapira's view of Moses' superiority to Metatron in the hierarchy of redemptive figures, although this

על זה אמר אעברה נא, רוצה אני להעביר אותיות נ"א נ"ח א"ד, רצה לומר אדם הראשון הביא נחש לעולם, ולמפרע נ"א א"ות נ', שהוא סוספיתא דנחש ומשם באים כל רע לעולם, [...] וכן אמר בגמרא, שמשם יורד דין לעולם, לכן ואראה את הארץ הטובה, ששם יהיה חלק הטוב גובר להעביר הרע מן העולם.

⁵²² See Meroz, 'Ge'ulah be-Torat ha-Ari', pp. 297-298, 360.

image of Moses in *Megaleh Amuqot* is interchangeable with its antithesis, whereby Metatron is the one who prevails over Moses. As a result, in the present condition of the flawed world, Metatron's rule remains unchallenged, but in the messianic future, which is modeled on the experience of the Exodus, Moses will emerge supreme.

While the author of *Tiqunei ha-Zohar*, whom Shapira often follows, tends to locate the beginning of messianic times within his own historical horizon, Shapira avoids such speculations. Rather, he presents the set of messianic figures as mutually dependent and equally engaged in shaping the historical plane of reality, without any clear reference to his own historical situation. However, Shapira seems to associate his own time with the realm of Metatron. On the one hand, it is similarly marked by polarity and polyvalence of meanings, signified by the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil and the Oral Torah, and on the other hand, it is identified with the preliminary messianic endeavors of Messiah son of Joseph, who initiates and facilitates the process of the redemption, and with whom both Metatron and Moses are associated. The realm of Metatron, which constitutes the present world, thus denotes Shapira's own *interim* period, which precedes the advent of the ultimate messianic figure.

In *Megaleh Amuqot* the gradual process of redemption commences with the exodus from Egypt and continues to unfold in response to the theurgical acts that are performed by righteous individuals modeled on the figure of Moses. The theurgic capacities of Moses (and therefore, of any other righteous individual) are magico-mystical in nature, and derive from his Metatronic associations, of which the rod is the best symbolic representation. These capacities enable him to shape the realm of Metatron, namely, the present condition of the world. Metatron signifies the hermeneutical openness that generates multiple possibilities of interpreting the Torah, but at the same time he stands for the aspiration for unity of meaning, beyond differentiation, which represents true freedom and the ultimate redemption.

Conclusions

The kabbalah of Nathan Neta Shapira, which might be viewed and has been described by some as being merely eclectic and lacking in originality, should be recognized as the product of a methodologically consistent hermeneutics which has been consciously applied. Shapira's highly original contribution to the development of Jewish mysticism lies in his marked preference for redeploying and integrating in his kabbalistic works esoteric sources of early Ashkenazi provenance. His use of radical modes of hermeneutics, where the discourse is organized by mathematical operations, as well as his resort to the Enoch-Metatron imagery and related *heikhalot mythologoumena*, demonstrate Shapira's affinity with the medieval Ashkenazi mystical lore of Nehemiah ben Shlomo's circle. It was most probably this channel of transmission that made possible the diffusion of Metatronic traditions among the early modern Polish kabbalists, a diffusion which was much wider, and which exerted a much deeper influence, than has generally been assumed in scholarship.

Selected clusters of Metatronic traditions in *Megaleh Amuqot al ha-Torah* and *Megaleh Amuqot ReNaV Ofanim al Va-Ethanan* were perused and found to contain abundant evidence that while Shapira clearly relies on classical kabbalistic concepts, his writings are also heavily infused with quotations from and references to the corpus of texts attributed to Nehemiah ben Shlomo and his circle. Without recognizing Shapira's frequent resort to this repository of medieval Ashkenazi traditions, it is impossible to gain a full understanding of his framework of interpretive associations.

The first chapter, which analysed Shapira's redeployment of the 'Yefeifyah-Metatron' cluster of images, similarly demonstrated a close affinity between *Megaleh Amuqot* and the corpus of texts associated with *The Commentary on Seventy Names of Metatron*, penned in the course of the 13th and 14th century by Nehemiah ben Shlomo of Erfurt and his followers. The analysis highlighted the exact correspondence between these late-medieval texts and Shapira's, in terms of both their messianic notions and numerological strategies.

An examination of the ‘youth’ *mythologoumenon* in the second chapter pointed to the messianic conceptualization of Metatron-*na’ar*, which had existed as a continuous tradition stretching from medieval Ashkenaz, where it featured in the writings of Nehemiah ben Shlomo and his circle, right up to the late 18th–early 19th century Hasidism of Nahman of Bratslav, for whose own messianic doctrine Shapira’s *Megaleh Amuqot* has proved to be an important source. Moreover, Shapira’s reliance on esoteric traditions originating in medieval Ashkenaz is evidenced not only by his messianic interpretation of the concept of Metatron as *na’ar* but also by his technical use of this term as a hermeneutic device, with which to deconstruct and thus to extract fresh meanings from the canonical Hebrew texts he is interpreting.

The third chapter brought to the discussion a ritualistic and performative perspective, demonstrating that Shapira’s attitude to prayer was largely built upon the ideas developed in the medieval Ashkenazi milieu. Thus certain elements of the view whereby prayer should be mediated by, and in some instances even directed to, a particular angelic figure, primarily Metatron, can be found in both *Megaleh Amuqot* and the writings stemming from Nehemiah ben Shlomo’s circle. Admittedly, Shapira’s approach coincides to a large extent with the understanding of prayer that emerges from at least some Lurianic texts, especially certain parts of an early commentary on the prayer book stemming from Isaac Luria himself. This coincidence shows that he derived many of his ideas from the various kabbalistic sources that were available to him, but at the same time, his writings on prayer demonstrate a clear preference for the typically Ashkenazi *mythologoumena*, with the theme of angelic mediation at the fore.

The last two chapters explored the relation between Shapira’s writings and the classical ‘Sefardi’ kabbalah, using the example of two ‘Metatronic’ clusters of motifs: Enoch-the shoemaker and Moses-Metatron. Chapter four focused on Enoch-the shoemaker, demonstrating the ‘in-between’ position of Enoch-Metatron in the divine world, where he constitutes a channel for both, the human influence on the divine and the flow of divine influx into the human world. Moreover, as a liminal instance, Metatron stands at the border between the upper and lower divine configurations (or the upper and lower *sefirot*), as well as

between the heavenly and the earthly, and between exile now and redemption in the world-to-come. As such, Metatron represents the penetration of external impurities into the divine sphere and at the same time also the protective layer that guards it against the influence of evil. Serving as a liminal, mediating entity, Enoch-Metatron represents the human potential for overcoming evil and gaining access to a sublime level of reality.

The fifth and last chapter continued to explore the messianic dimension of the Metatronic constellation of motifs by examining the relation between Moses and Metatron. In this cluster of images, Metatron serves as a representation of external reality, connected to the impure side of the creation, since he is perceived as an ambivalent entity, marked by an ontological and ethical bi-polarity. But at the same time, Shapira places Metatron on the level of Moses, designating for both of them the role of first messiah (Son of Joseph), i.e. an individual who, by means of theurgical action, triggers the redemptive process without being able to bring it to conclusion, although he is deemed to be meritorious enough to be allowed to partake of the ultimate unification of the divine realm at the time of the final redemption.

Both the Enoch-the shoemaker and the Moses-Metatron clusters of motifs clearly show that in shaping his notion of the redemptive process, Shapira adopted a variety of Metatronic ideas stemming from multiple sources, above all the zoharic corpus and the Lurianic kabbalah of Menahem Azariah da Fano. Nevertheless, he juxtaposed these kabbalistic ideas with clusters of medieval Ashkenazi concepts, creating a mixture of traditions in which no single distinct strand is ever subsumed in any of the others. Rather, Shapira preserves all the semantic and para-semantic features of his early Ashkenazi sources, adding this old repository of Metatronic motifs to his kabbalistic framework of references.

The research undertaken here has shown the kabbalah of Nathan Shapira to be a complex phenomenon drawing on diverse strands of mystical tradition. It contributes to a better understanding of the heterogeneous nature of the kabbalah in general, and draws attention to the survival of forgotten Ashkenazi mystical traditions. The Ashkenazi kabbalah that emerges from Shapira's works is distinguished by the accumulation of diverse approaches to the traditional task of

interpreting texts, a characteristic trait of the wider Ashkenazi intellectual environment. Moreover, the term ‘Ashkenazi kabbalah’ was shown to describe a particular phenomenon that emerged from the mystical traditions known to medieval Ashkenazi circles. It was quite distinct from the kabbalah that developed in the Sefardi setting, which was philosophically informed and more inclined to systematization. In terms of both genre and hermeneutical method, the Ashkenazi kabbalah conformed to the Ashkenazi synthesizing or eclectic mode of thinking, which made no effort to harmonize discrepancies between discrete strands of tradition, this giving rise to structures resembling ‘mosaics’ of interpretation. Late Ashkenazi kabbalists, such as Nathan Shapira of Kraków, who adopted this all-inclusive approach to tradition, found it natural to merge their Ashkenazi legacy of magical and linguistic speculations with ‘classical’ kabbalistic theosophical imagery.

Nehemiah ben Shlomo’s esoteric tradition consisted of religious ideas, which were apparently reserved for a very limited circle of recipients. They never achieved wide dissemination by public instruction, especially not since they concerned magico-mystical speculations on the power of divine and demonic names. Texts consisting of such esoteric traditions resisted print and, until the 17th century, survived in manuscript form only. However widely these manuscripts circulated, they could reach no more than a limited audience, and consequently they remained alive in the tradition only to a limited extent. Nathan Shapira’s reuse of these traditions can be regarded as the reintegration of Ashkenazi mystical interests in kabbalistic practice, which led to the diffusion of esoteric Ashkenazi materials through the medium of print. Nevertheless, manuscript versions of these texts must be compared to first printed editions. To peruse all the extant manuscripts, to map out the variegated traditions circulating in the Ashkenazi setting from the medieval to the early modern period, remains a desideratum.

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