

Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum

9

Martin Samuel Cohen

The Shi'ur Qomah:
Texts and Recensions



Texte und Studien zum Antiken Judentum

herausgegeben von
Martin Hengel und Peter Schäfer

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von

Martin Samuel Cohen



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For My Father

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List of Abbreviations

BT	Babylonian Talmud
HTR	Harvard Theological Review
HUCA	Hebrew Union College Annual
JJS	Journal of Jewish Studies
JNUL	Jewish National and University Library
JTS(A)	Jewish Theological Seminary of America
M	Mishnah
MGWJ	Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judentums
PAAJR	Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research
PT	Palestinian Talmud
REJ	Revue des Etudes Juives
T	Tosefta

The Books of the Bible: Gen Ex Lev Nu Dt Jo Jud 1S 2S 1K 2K Is Jer Ez
Hos Joel Am Ob Jon Micah Nah Hab Zeph Mal Ps Pr Job Song Ruth Lam Ecc
Esther Dan Ezra Neh 1Ch 2Ch.

The Recensions of the Shi^cur Qomah:

MR	Merkavah Rabbah
SDR	Seder Rabbah Debereshit
SHQ	Sefer Haqqomah
SHS	Sefer Hashi ^c ur
SRZ	Sefer Razi'el

Guide to the Transliteration of Hebrew

Hebrew is transliterated in this volume according to the following table. When two forms are given, the first is the regularly used siglum, and the second is used in the stricter, consonantal transliteration of the mystic names that follows their vocalized forms.

א	' (+ vowel)
ב	b
בּ	v b
ג	g
ד	d
ה	h
ו	v
ז	z
ח	ḥ
ט	t ṭ
י	y
כ	k
כּ	kh k
ל	l
מ	m
נ	n
ס	s
שׁ	c (+ vowel)
פ	p
פּ	f p
צ	tz ṣ
ק	q
ר	r
שׂ	sh š
שׁ	s ś
ת	t

Introduction

The literary history of the *Shi'ur Qomah* is as shrouded in mystery as are the histories of its various sister texts in the field of pre-kabbalistic Jewish mysticism, the so-called *merkavah* (“chariot-throne”) mystic literary corpus. I shall not repeat the detail of my research into that history, which I have published elsewhere, but for the benefit of my readers who may not have had the opportunity to inspect that research, I will repeat here some of my main conclusions.¹

The assumption on the part of many scholars in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries that the *Shi'ur Qomah* is a mystic midrash, so to speak, on the Song of Songs is not borne out by the texts themselves.² The famous description of the lover found in the fifth chapter of the Song is, in fact, cited to varying extents in the various recensions of the text, but its function there is clearly to provide a literary frame for the text, and not to function as a proof-text in the traditional midrashic sense.³ Three distinct stages in the development of the surviving texts may be discerned: the final stage, which resulted in the production of the five larger and several smaller recensions of the text; the previous stage, the literary result of which was the original Urtext of which the surviving recensions are derivatives; and the earliest

¹ See my *The Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism* (Washington, D. C., 1983), pp. 51–76. The following seminal studies may be profitably consulted: Moses Gaster, “Das Shiur Komah,” *MGWJ* O. S. 37 (1893), pp. 179–185, now reprinted in *Studies and Texts in Folklore, Magic, Medieval Romance, Hebrew Apocrypha and Samaritan Archeology* (London, 1925–1928), vol. 2, pp. 1330–1353; Heinrich Graetz, “Die mystische Literatur in der gaonischen Epoche,” *MGWJ* O. S. 8 (1859), pp. 67–78, 103–118 and 140–153; Scholem, “Schiur Koma: die mystische Gestalt der Gottheit,” in *Von der mystischen Gestalt der Gottheit: Studien zu Grundbegriffe der Kabbala* (Zurich, 1962), pp. 7–48; S. Lieberman, “Mishnat Shir Hashirim,” in Scholem’s *Jewish Gnosticism Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965), pp. 111–126; and Ithamar Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden and Cologne, 1980), pp. 213–217.

² This theory was first advanced, I believe, by Adolf Jellinek, in the *Bet Hammidrash* vol. 6 (Leipzig, 1878; rpt. Jerusalem, 1967), p. xxxii–xxxiii, and was advanced by Scholem and Lieberman. In addition to the article cited in note 1, see Scholem’s *Major Trends in Jewish Mysticism*, 3rd ed. (New York, 1941), pp. 63–67; Idem, *Jewish Gnosticism*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965), pp. 36–42; Idem, *Kabbalah* (New York, 1974), pp. 16–17; and idem, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (Berlin, 1962), pp. 17–18.

³ The text does use prooftexts in the traditional midrashic style, but these are never drawn from the Song; the author vastly prefers Isaiah and the Psalms.

stage, of which the tangible result was the mystic information itself which received its first literary formulation in the Urtext. For reasons which I have tried to describe and document as fully as possible in my book, I came to the conclusion that the Urtext was composed sometime in the early gaonic period in Babylonia.⁴ This date allows us to explain the fact that the text seems to have been composed after the final stages of redaction of the Babylonian Talmud, yet early enough to have been known to the great if obscure liturgical poet, Kallir, and long enough before the time of Saadia Gaon and his archenemy, the Karaite Salmon b. Yeruhim, for the tannaitic authenticity of the text not to have been considered an open question.⁵ Locating the text in Babylonia, on the other hand, allows us to explain certain anomalous features of the text, including, among others, the literary use of the persona of R. Nathan, the closeness of some sections of the text to the language found on the magic bowls, themselves of certain Babylonian provenance, the fact that all the earliest locatable citations of the text are in the works of Babylonian authors and the relationship of the text of the *Shi'ur Qomah* to the even more obscure *Razza Rabba*, with its apparently unimpeachable Eastern provenance.⁶ Whether the original fund of information was itself Babylonian, or whether it was originally of Palestinian provenance, as the text itself seems to suggest by introducing R. Aqiba and R. Ishmael as its major tradents, cannot be known in the absence of any secondary testimonia.⁷

It appears that various groups of mystic practitioners in late Jewish antiquity selected various aspects of the Biblical testimony as the meditative stuff of their contemplative journeys towards communion with the god-head. Thus the Palestinian rabbis whose mystic endeavors are described in the Talmuds seem to have engaged in direct exegesis of the opening chapters of Ezekiel and Genesis in order to commune with the divine presence. The

⁴ See my *Shi'ur Qomah: Liturgy and Theurgy in Pre-Kabbalistic Jewish Mysticism* (Washington, 1983), pp. 66–67.

⁵ Saadia's responsum is preserved in a number of sources: the *Commentar zum Sepher Jezirah von R. Jehudah b. Barsilai*, ed. S.J. Halberstam (Berlin, 1885), pp. 20–21; Gabriel Pollak, *Halikhot Qedem* (Amsterdam, 1847), pp. 69–71; B. M. Levin, 'Otzar Hagge'onim, vol. 1 (Haifa, 1928), pp. 15–18 and Y. Kafih, "A Fragment of an Ancient Yemenite Composition Regarding the Shi'ur Qomah" (Hebrew), in *The Jews of Yemen: Studies and Researches* (sic), ed. Yeshayahu and Tobi (Jerusalem, 1975), pp. 407–410. Salmon b. Yeruhim inveighs against the *Shi'ur Qomah* in the antepenultimate and penultimate chapters of his *Book of the Wars of the Lord*, ed. I. Davidson (New York, 1934), pp. 114–124. Cf. Salmon's remarks published by Jacob Mann in his "Karaite Settlements in Jerusalem," in his *Texts and Studies in Jewish History and Literature* (New York, 1972), pp. 83–86.

⁶ On the *Razza Rabba*, its Oriental provenance and its special relationship to the *Shi'ur Qomah*, see Scholem, *Re'shit Haqqabbalah (1150–1250)* (Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, 1948), pp. 195–283 and idem, *Ursprung und Anfänge der Kabbala* (Berlin, 1962), pp. 96–99.

extra-Talmudic literary corpus provides us with other examples of the ways in which the Biblical text was transformed into the stuff of meditative communion with the godhead; it is to this class of text that the *Shi'ur Qomah* belongs, along with its sister texts of *merkavah* mysticism. The author of the Urtext seems to have drawn on a fund of mystical and obscure names and numbers which were presented as the names and dimensions of the various limbs and physiognomical features of the anthropomorphically conceived godhead. This information was provided, according to the text, to the mystic, portrayed here through the personae of R. Ishmael, R. Aqiba and R. Nathan, all historical personalities of the second century C. E., by the celestial vizier, Metatron. We may assume that these numbers and names were first developed and recorded by a now anonymous mystic who, as part of his mystic communion with God, perceived himself to have experienced a sort of intellectual communion with the celestial lad, Metatron, who offered, as it were, a sort of informational commentary to the sensual experience of communing with God by gazing on the godhead seated on the chariot-throne.⁸

This mystic information was thus transformed from the informational result of one mystic's experiences into the meditative stuff of later mystic generations. In other words, the authenticity of the original experience allowed the tangible results of that experience – the facts and the figures – to serve as the meditative spring-board for others' mystic journeys. This feature of the results of one mystic's experiences being presented as the recommended meditative stuff for others' mystic attempts at divine communion is a regular feature of *merkavah* literature, albeit one not often taken into account in evaluating the natures of these texts. This original literary formulation was the Urtext, and was presented, as far as can be determined, in a strongly theurgic context in which the mystic data was presented, not overtly as the stuff of mystic meditation, but rather as an elaborate daily prayer-text, the faithful recitation of which would provide the mystic with a

⁷ The whole question of locating the various schools of early Jewish mystic endeavor is quite admirably dealt with by David J. Halperin in his *The Merkavah in Rabbinic Literature* (New Haven, 1980). There is, of course, no *a priori* reason to assume that R. Aqiba and R. Ishmael were *not* the important figures in the mystic school, so to speak, as which they seem to be presented in the literature. R. Aqiba is specifically listed in a *baraita* preserved in *BT Hagigah* 14b as the leading mystic tradent of his generation. If the *Shi'ur Qomah* attributions are pseudepigraphic, then they were certainly chosen to suggest a textual provenance in tannaitic Palestine.

⁸ For the role of Metatron in the *Shi'ur Qomah*, see my book, pp. 124–137; cf. J. Dan, "The Concept of Knowledge in the *Shi'ur Qomah*," in *Studies in Jewish Religious and Intellectual History Presented to Alexander Altmann on the Occasion Of His Seventieth Birthday*, eds. Stein and Lowe (University, Alabama, 1979), pp. 67–73.

long life, a portion of the world to come, prosperity, fame and wisdom.⁹ To give the theurgy a proper liturgical frame, appropriate Biblical verses were apparently chosen to be recited after the mystic data itself.¹⁰

At a later date, the various editors who are responsible for the surviving recensions added standard *merkavah* hymns and prose passages to make of the text a more regular *merkavah* text. These recensions are discussed in detail below.

There has been a certain amount of discussion in recent literature regarding the whole question of Urtexts in general in the literary corpus of the *merkavah* texts. Originally, it was presumed, by Scholem and by others, that the texts were all more or less normal literary compositions that could, at least theoretically, be traced back to an original text which was composed in the usual way – by a specific author and at a particular historical moment. Others, notably Peter Schäfer in his recent synoptic work and in several recent essays, have pointed out that this may be an incorrect assumption.¹¹ The great manuscripts, it is observed, do not really present the works that have been hewn from their quarries as separate literary works with titles, chapter divisions and clear conclusions. Rather, the great manuscripts: Munich mss. 22 and 40, Oxford ms. 1531, JTS ms. 8128, as well as the Dropsie, Budapest and Vatican manuscripts, seem merely to present vast compendia of traditions grouped together according to various principles, but not actually organized as literary texts. This suggests that perhaps the actual presentation of these groupings as literary texts unto themselves may in fact be a late medieval phenomenon and that the historically correct setting for these traditions is without their scribally imposed literary frames. This may be the case for a large number of secondary texts – and there are two recensions, so to speak, of the *Shi'ur Qomah* found in JTS ms. 8128 and in Munich ms. 22 that are unique and which seem to fit this model. They have no parallels because they are not real literary works, merely loci of *shi'ur qomah* traditions within vast compendia of *merkavah* materials.

On the other hand, it seems clear that, if the *Shi'ur Qomah* traditions did, in fact, continue to be preserved within the unedited mass of *merkavah* material,

⁹ Cf. *Sefer Haqqomah*, the most important recension of the text, lines 120–123: “R. Ishmael said, “When I recited [the *Shi'ur Qomah*] before R. Aqiba, he said to me, ‘Whosoever knows the measurement of his Creator and the [physical] glory of the Holy One, blessed be He, is secure in this world and the world to come. He lives long in this world, and long and well in the world to come.’”

¹⁰ The liturgy was principally drawn from Psalms 24, 29, 91 and 93.

¹¹ See Peter Schäfer's introductory remarks to his *Synopse der Hekhalot Literatur* (Tübingen, 1981), pp. V–VI, and idem, “Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature,” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 14 (1984), pp. 172–181.

there also were very early attempts to provide the text with a literary setting – these attempts are the five recensions which survive. Certainly by the tenth century, and even by the ninth, if we can accept the recent dating of *Midrash Mishle*, the material existed in some literary format.¹² Still, the question of an Urtext remained elusive when I conducted my research, I being unable to determine if there ever had actually existed a single text of which the various recensions were derivatives, or whether the recensions themselves are merely various attempts to collect loose traditions preserved within the vast compendia by forcing them into literary frames.

I now believe that I have found a single manuscript copy of what is, perhaps, the Urtext of the *Shi'ur Qomah*. This is British Library ms. 10675 (Gaster ms. 187), an extremely old text, dating back, perhaps, to the tenth or the eleventh centuries C. E. The manuscript is complete in four leaves, and is written in square Hebrew script, with the unique feature of *tagin* or coronets being used to decorate some of the letters, not unlike in a ritually proper Torah scroll. There are several reasons, aside from the extreme age of the manuscript that recommend this text as the elusive Urtext.

Firstly, the text, rather unusually, is given the title *Shi'ur Qomah*, which, although it is not actually used as the title of any of the recensions, is clearly the name of which the others (e. g. *Sefer Hashi'ur* or *Sefer Haqqomah*) are reflexes.¹³ We have posited that *Shi'ur Qomah* must, in fact, have been the name of the Urtext. Secondly, the superscription, citing Is 60:21, “I shall begin to write the *Shi'ur Qomah*. All Israel has a portion in the world to come, as it is stated [in Scripture], ‘And your people, entirely righteous, shall inherit the earth forever, [they are] the shoot I planted, the splendid work of my hands [Is 60:21],” is the precise literary formula used to introduce a liturgical reading of *Mishnah*, in the usual case, *Mishnah 'Avot*.¹⁴ Since the reader is enjoined to read the text daily “as a *mishnah*” (*Sefer Haqqomah*, line

¹² On the dating of *Midrash Mishle*, see Burton L. Visotzky, *Midrash Mishle: A Critical Edition of the Text . . .*, diss. Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1983. The author of the *Midrash Mishle* seems quite clearly to have known the *Shi'ur Qomah* as a literary text that may be studied, like other midrashic texts. See *Midrash Mishle* 10:17–20, ed. Buber (Vilna, 1893), pp. 66–67 and cf. the text in Jellinek's *Bet Hammidrash*, vol. 6, pp. 152–153.

¹³ See my book on the *Shi'ur Qomah*, pp. 77–81.

¹⁴ See, e. g. Baer's *Seder 'Avodat Yisra'el* (Rödelheim, 1868), p. 271; and cf. A. Guttmann, “Tractate Abot – Its Place in Rabbinic Literature,” *JQR* N.S. 41 (1950), p. 191. The liturgical reading of *Mishnah 'Avot* is itself apparently a product of gaonic Babylonia. See *Siddur Rav Sa'adia Ga'on* (Jerusalem, 1941), pp. 122–123; *Seder Rav 'Amram Ga'on* (Warsaw, 1865), p. 32 and L. Zunz, *Der Ritus des synagogalen Gottesdienstes*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1919), pp. 85ff. Far more tantalizing is the possibility that the formula has its origins in the liturgical reading of the *Shi'ur Qomah*, and was only subsequently applied to the recitation of *M 'Avot*. It is certainly more germane preceding the *Shi'ur Qomah*, which actually promises its readers a portion in the world to come, than as an introduction to *M 'Avot*.

127), it seems that this heading reflects the text in its liturgical manifestation. We have concluded that, although the various surviving recensions are, in fact, regular *merkavah* texts that describe the mystic's experience of communion with his God, the Urtext itself seems to have been essentially liturgical-theurgic in nature, and seems to have been composed precisely to be recited rather than simply studied.¹⁵ This superscription guarantees the fact that the scribe correctly took his text to be one for recitation as liturgy, not mere study. Most important of all is the question of content. The manuscript in question, which is complete in four leaves comprising only 129 lines, begins after the superscription with a version of the long Ishmaelian text found in the *Sefer Haqqomah* on lines 47–104.¹⁶ There follows the famous conversion table for transforming celestial into terrestrial measurements. There then follows, on lines 97–122, a long version of the Nathanian text found on lines 108–119 of the *Sefer Haqqomah*, and finally, the text concludes with two short *baraitas*, so to speak, given in the name of R. Ishmael and including the authority of R. Aqiba, extolling the virtues of both knowing the *Shi'ur Qomah*, and, more explicitly, of reciting it “as a *mishnah*” on a daily basis. These are precisely the sections that are common to all the recensions, and which presumably must stem from the Urtext.

The absence of the Aqiban text from the manuscript is somewhat surprising, but can be explained. The brief Aqiban text, which we find on lines 12–24 of the *Sefer Haqqomah* was apparently preserved outside the Urtext, and is to be found, anomalously enough, in such works as *Hekhalot Rabbati* and the *'Otiot Derabbi 'Aqiva*.¹⁷ Why these lines were omitted from the Urtext, if British Library ms. 10675 is, in fact, a copy of the Urtext, can no longer be known, of course, but it is not difficult to imagine how, given their preservation in other midrashic and *merkavah* texts, they were seized upon by some of the redactors of the various recensions and included in those secondary works.

The *Sefer Haqqomah* recension of the *Shi'ur Qomah* is a freestanding work, unincorporated into any longer work. It is extant in two versions, one short and one long. The long version is quite similar to the *Sefer Razi'el* version, but enough distinctions do exist – including, of course, the fact that the *Sefer Razi'el* texts are found as part of the *Sefer Razi'el* – to allow us to consider them separately.¹⁸ Although our original tendency was to take the short

¹⁵ See I. Gruenwald, *Apocalyptic and Merkavah Mysticism* (Leiden and Cologne, 1980), p. 215.

¹⁶ British Library ms. 10675, lines 7–92.

¹⁷ *Hekhalot Rabbati* 12:1, ed. Wertheimer, p. 87. and *'Otiot Derabbi 'Aqiva*, text A, ed. Wertheimer, p. 370.

¹⁸ See below regarding these manuscripts.

version as the “original” version and the long version and the *Sefer Razi’el* recension as two versions of an expanded, secondary reworking of the text, it does not seem to be justifiable to presume the additional material in the long version is always interpolation; in fact, there are good reasons (see below) for thinking that some of the extra passages in the long version *were* original and were omitted, for some reason, in the shorter version. In other words, although the *Sefer Razi’el* recension is intimately related to the long version of the *Sefer Haqqomah*, the short and long versions of that work are themselves no less intimately related.

We have used fourteen manuscripts in establishing our critical apparatus. Of these, four present the short recension, seven present the long version and three present fragments, of which two seem to be fragments of the long recension. The nature of the third fragmentary text precludes its absolute identification as one or the other version.

The four manuscripts that present the shorter version of the text are Oxford ms. 1791 (ff. 58a–93b), a fifteenth century German manuscript;¹⁹ Guenzburg ms. 90 (ff. 150a–152b), an Italian manuscript from perhaps the fourteenth century;²⁰ and Cambridge ms. Add. 405,4 (ff. 338a–341a), an Italian manuscript from the sixteenth or seventeenth centuries.²¹

The manuscripts which offer the longer version are Oxford ms. 1915 (ff. 2a–13a), a later manuscript in a Spanish cursive hand, possibly of North African provenance;²² Oxford ms. 1960 (ff. 23b–27b), a seventeenth or eighteenth century German manuscript;²³ Oxford ms. 2257 (ff. 16a–20a), an older German manuscript which attributes the entire text to R. Eleazar of Worms;²⁴ JTS ms. 1892 (ff. 1a–8a), an approximately fifteenth century Provençal text; JTS ms. 1990 (ff. 41a–44a), a sixteenth century Italian manuscript;²⁵ Guenzburg ms. 131 (ff. 2a–12b), a perhaps fifteenth century

¹⁹ The first section of the manuscript was written at Molsheim (Germany) in 1434. See Neubauer, *Catalogue of the Hebrew Manuscripts in the Bodleian Library and in the College Libraries of Oxford* (Oxford, 1886), col. 561.

²⁰ The Guenzburg collection is housed at the Lenin State Library in Moscow. I am grateful to the Institute for Microfilmed Hebrew Manuscripts at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem for making a microfilm of this manuscript available to me. See S. Sach’s unpublished catalogue of the Guenzburg collection, p. 20. A xerox-copy of this hand-written catalogue is in the library of the Jewish Theological Seminary in New York. The scribe’s name seems to have been Aḥimaatz b. Paltiel.

²¹ The Cambridge manuscript is apparently a copy of the Guenzburg manuscript, owing to its later date, identical provenance and the presentation of the name Aḥimaatz b. Paltiel in the slot where most of the other manuscript texts indicate that the reader is to insert his own name.

²² Cf. Neubauer, *Catalogue*, col. 624.

²³ Cf. Neubauer, *Catalogue*, col. 639.

²⁴ Cf. Neubauer, *Catalogue*, col. 785.

²⁵ The scribe of this text was quite confused about the nature of the text, and separated the

Spanish manuscript;²⁶ and Munich ms. 40 (ff. 132b–138b), a fifteenth or sixteenth century German text.²⁷

The fragmentary texts are Oxford Heb. C. 65 (ff. 6a–b), a Genizah text, presented here as an appendix;²⁸ Oxford ms. 1102 (ff. 102–b), a sixteenth century German prayerbook;²⁹ and Oxford ms. 1816 (ff. 100b–101a), a late sixteenth or seventeenth century German manuscript that presents an abridgement of the *Sefer Haqqomah*.³⁰ As was noted above, two of these texts, the first and the last, are fragments or abridgements of the long version of the text.

In addition to these manuscripts, we have two manuscripts which, although not part, strictly speaking of the *Sefer Haqqomah* tradition, seem to be quite clearly related to it and derived from it. These texts are presented below as appendices, and are introduced individually. These are Sassoon ms. 522 (f. 2), a Genizah text, and British Library ms. 10384 (= Gaster ms. 238; f. 183a.)

The differences between the long and short versions of this recension concern length alone; that is to say that the parts that present common material seem quite definitely to represent the same textual tradition. There are, specifically, four extra passages that characterize the long version: these are the *Lekhah Haggedullah Vehaggevurah* passage presented in the variant readings to line 46, which is essentially supplicatory in nature and which presents a version of the famous 'En Kelohenu hymn; the *Tifarto Mal'e Hakkol* passage presented in the variant readings to line 150, which describes the role of Metatron in the celestial worship service; the 'El Bema'amarekhah hymn presented in the variant readings to line 171, and the long concluding passage beginning with the expression *Lev Yere'av Lahqor* and given below in the variant readings to line 219. It is quite hard to determine whether these four passages are to be taken as interpolations into the text of the long version, or as omissions in the short version. There does not seem to be a single answer; the fact, for instance, that the 'El Bema'amarekhah hymn concludes with the identical benediction that concludes the passage immediately before it in the long version, suggests that the two were composed as alternate texts, but

first sections from the rest of the text, presenting them as the final paragraphs of a preceding work.

²⁶ Cf. the remarks of Sachs in his unpublished catalogue, p. 20; see above, note 20.

²⁷ Cf. M. Steinschneider, *Die Hebräischen Handschriften der K. Hof- und Staatsbibliothek in München* (Munich, 1893), p. 26.

²⁸ Cf. G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic Tradition*, 2nd ed. (New York, 1965), p. 36, note 1.

²⁹ Cf. Neubauer, *Catalogue*, col. 538.

³⁰ See Neubauer, *Catalogue*, col. 607. The author does not mention that he is consciously presenting an abridgement of the text.

that the author of neither expected both texts to be used. On the other hand, the description of the seventh heaven in the *Sefer Harazim* begins with material found towards the end of the short version and continues with no break whatsoever into the “interpolated” passage found in the long version after line 219.³¹ Certainly those two pieces – and, it seems likely that the original location of the entire piece was in *Sefer Harazim*, where it is far more germane – had a single literary history. In a third category is the *Tifarto Mal’e Hakkol* passage which utterly alters our understanding of the material that follows it in the long version from the simple meaning we would assign to it without the presence of that section. The section essentially switches the thrust of the rest of the text from the godhead to Metatron. Whether one sees this passage as an interpolation or not almost depends on whether one is prepared to see the *Shi’ur Qomah* as originally describing Metatron – as there is at least some reason to believe – and only later assigned to the God of Israel, or whether one sees the metatronization of the text, so to speak, as a later (although very early) attempt to soften the radical anthropomorphism of the original text.

The name, *Sefer Haqqomah* ‘The Book of the [Divine] Body’ is derived from the generic name, *Shi’ur Qomah* ‘the measurement of the [divine] body.’³² Although some texts offer variations on the name, for example, *Sha’ar Haqqomah* (Oxford ms. 2257, f. 16a), enough texts do bear the title so as to guarantee its authenticity.

We have chosen to present Oxford ms. 1791, despite its relative lateness, as our base manuscript, for two major reasons. Firstly, it presents the short version, which seems, at least *a priori*, to be the more original. Although Oxford ms. 1606 also presents the short version, and is probably older, age in and of itself seems an unimportant criterion when one considers the relative age of the text itself against the age of even the oldest manuscript. If the *Sefer Haqqomah* is a product of the gaonic age, then there seems to be little reason to value a manuscript written six centuries after the composition of the text over one written eight centuries later. Certainly, it is reasonable to imagine that the later scribe might have had an earlier and more reliable text before him than did the scribe who preceded him by a mere two centuries. We have chosen ms. 1791 over ms. 1606 because the scribe indicates that he was copying from the hand-written copy of R. Eleazar of Worms (c. 1165–1230), a leading figure of the Ashkenazic pietist movement, who knew and

³¹ *Sefer Harazim*, ed. Margoliot (Tel Aviv, 1966), pp. 107–109.

³² I have discussed these names at length in my book on the *Shi’ur Qomah*, pp. 77–81; see above, note 1. *Qomah* here is a pun and means both “body” (as at Song 7:8) and “height.”

respected the text.³³ Eleazar was not only the last great teacher of the Ashkenazic pietists and the student of Judah the Pious, the author of the *Sefer Hasidim*, but was also a major tradent in the transmission of ancient mystical texts. Whether these texts came to Germany with the Kalonymus family (of which Eleazar was a scion), or whether he merely had access to manuscript sources not generally available to the public, the fact is that there are citations from *merkavah* literature liberally sprinkled throughout Eleazar's literary oeuvre.³⁴ Furthermore, the Kalonymus family itself maintained a rather precise version of its chain of mystic tradition, tracing its mystic traditions back to Babylonia through the shadowy figure of Abu Aaron, who brought the traditions from the East to Lucca in Italy.³⁵ Given our strong feeling that Graetz was right in assigning the *Shi'ur Qomah* to gaonic Babylonia, it should be clear that a manuscript copied from Eleazar b. Judah's private transcription of the text must be elevated in our esteem above any other texts that are merely older.³⁶

The *Sefer Hashi'ur* recension of the text, complete in JTS ms. 1886 in just 76 lines, is quite distinctly apart from its sister texts and yet also clearly part of the same tradition. The text is extant in three manuscripts: JTS ms. 1886 (ff. 37b–39a), a fourteenth or fifteenth century Spanish and Provençal manuscript,³⁷ JTS ms. 1904 (ff. 1b–3b), probably an eighteenth century North African manuscript, and Mossayef ms. 145 (ff. 57a–58b), probably a fifteenth century Spanish text.³⁸ The Mossayef text was transcribed by Mos-

³³ See the *Sefer Haroqeah Haggadol*, laws of repentance (Jerusalem, 1967), pp. 20–21 and his *Sode Razaya*, ed. Kamelhar (Bilgoraj, 1936), pp. 31–36.

³⁴ See J. Dan's article on Eleazar in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. 1972, vol. 6, cols. 592–594. Cf. I. Marcus, *Piety and Society: The Jewish Pietists of Medieval Germany* (Leiden, 1981), pp. 67–68 and p. 162, n. 48.

³⁵ The document tracing this mystic history was first published in Joseph Del Medigo's *Metzaref Lehokhmah* (Basel, 1629–1631), p. 14b and, more recently, by Neubauer in the *REJ*, 23 (1892), pp. 230–231. A translation according to Paris ms. 772 (p. 60a) was prepared by J. Dan and published by him in his article on the Kalonymus family in the *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, ed. 1972, vol. 10, cols. 719–720. On Abu Aaron, see Neubauer's article cited just above; and also Dan in *Tarbiz* 32 (1963), pp. 153–159 and Scholem in that same issue of *Tarbiz*, pp. 252–265. Cf. further H. Gross in *MGWJ* 49 (1905), pp. 692–700.

³⁶ See Graetz' "Die mystische Literatur der gaonischen Epoche," *MGWJ* 8 (1859), pp. 67–78, 103–118 and 140–153.

³⁷ The *Sefer Hashi'ur* is written in the Provençal hand. The first Spanish hand is quite old, possibly as old as the thirteenth or fourteenth centuries, and is very similar to the hand of Solomon b. Saul Ben-Albagli, the scribe who copied JTS ms. R. 15, which contains the Talmudic tractate 'Avodah Zarah, in Ubeda, Spain, in 1291. Other portions of the manuscript are written in later Spanish and Oriental cursive scripts.

³⁸ The dates given for these manuscripts are all educated guesses based on various paleographic and codicological reasons; none has either colophon or date.