Book Reviews

Andrey A. Orlov, (2017) *Yahoel and Metatron. Aural Apocalypticism and the Origins of Early Jewish Mysticism*. (Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism. 169). Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, XII+238 p.

The book is dedicated to the study of some most complicated and important problems of the Jewish apocalyptic and angelology. Principal topics of the study are such crucial figures of apocalypses, pseudepigrapha and Jewish exegesis, as the supreme angels Yahoel and Metatron.

Beginning in the last centuries before the Christian era, ideas about the transcendence of God intensified in the Jewish religion. In this connection, the concepts of the heavenly powers as mediators between the transcendent God and the world, have become more and more developed. Typical characters of this kind are the Supreme angel and the *angelus interpres* in apocalyptic literature. Both Yahoel and Metatron belong to this category.

The author traces the connection and continuity between the legends about the angels Yahoel and Enoch-Metatron in the Jewish and early Christian tradition, as representatives of two different ideologies — the aural ideology of the *Shem* (Name) and the visual one of the Form (Image) or *Kavod* (Glory). As the author shows, both angels are the result of the development of “aural” theology of the *Name* and at the same time, in some way, visual replacement and embodiment of the incorporeal and invisible “aural” deity.

The main task of the book is to make a comparative study of these two figures and their ideological contexts and, as far as possible with the existing material, to follow the development of the lines of continuity from early apocalyptic writings to later Jewish rabbinic literature and the writings of *Hekhalot* (*Palaces*). This study should demonstrate the influence of the aural apocalypticism on the development of early Jewish mysticism.

The author uses a wide range of written sources, which include apocryphal writings, pseudepigrapha, magical texts, Talmud and rabbinic literature, canonical and apocryphal early Christian writings. The main texts studied are the *Revelation of Abraham*, with the central figure of Yahoel, 3 Enoch and

Hekhalot literature, where Metatron plays the same role. Special attention should be paid to the analysis of the *Revelation of Abraham* and 2 Enoch, which have come down to us in the Slavonic language and therefore have not been sufficiently studied by the Western scholars of Jewish mysticism.

In the Chapter I, *Antecedents and Influences*, the author shows how theology of the aural image, the theology of the Name and Voice going back to Deuteronomy, interacted with the anthropomorphous visual and corporeal (ocularcentric) theology of the Image and Glory of God. On this basis developed Jewish and Christian conceptions of the angelic mediators of the Name, mediators between God and the world, such as the archangel Michael, the “Angel of the Lord” or Yahoel, Son of Man in 1 Enoch. These characteristics are peculiar to a number of biblical characters in the apocrypha. Finally, in early Christian literature, the same features are found in Christ. This chapter explored several celestial and human figures who in early Jewish and Christian traditions were envisioned as mediators of the divine Name. Orlov demonstrated that many of these elaborations were closely connected with the imagery of the Angel of the Lord – a crucial figure at the very beginning of the biblical ideologies of Name. The stories of these heavenly and human figures exhibit various modes of the Name’s mediation, including the reception or transmission of the divine Name, the clothing with the divine Name, or the “embodiment” of the Name. It plays a prominent role in the development of the profiles of both Yahoel and Metatron in their respective apocalyptic and *Hekhalot* contexts.

The central subject of the chapters II and III are the supreme angels Yahoel and Metatron-Enoch, who play the same role respectively in the pseudepigraphon *Revelation of Abraham* and in the literature *Hekhalot*, first of all in the 3 Enoch. In both of them Orlov sees a vivid manifestation of a developed aural theology, which prevailed over the visual one presumably in the first centuries AD.

Both chapters are structured according to the same scheme: the author analyzes the properties and functions of these characters (such as the role of a mediator and bearer of the divine Name, heavenly high priest and celestial choirmaster, guide and guardian of the apocalyptic visionary, revealer of mysteries, protector of humanity etc.) in the broad context of the apocryphal and mystical literature.

In the *Conclusion* the author summarizes his research: in these images he sees the development of an extensive tradition of the doctrine of the heavenly angelic mediators. Revealed parallels and lines of development indicate the close conceptual ties between early apocalyptic traditions and later Jewish mystical currents.

In general, the monograph of Orlov seems to be very successful. The topics are carefully researched, and the author's observations and conclusions are interesting and well-founded. It can be said that the book outlines new ways in the study of the problems raised. The advantages include the fact that the author constantly quotes and analyzes the opinions of previous researchers on considered topics and problems.

However, I would like to make some comments. The lists of properties and functions of both angels in the Chapters II and III, in my opinion, are too finely divided. This often leads to repetitions and tautology. The lists could be more generalized in order to achieve clearer systematization.

Perhaps, it would be necessary to expand the scope of the study, since most of the listed functions are typical of the character of intermediary angel in general.

The parallel between the name Metatron and Tetragrammaton seems to be artificial and less convincing than other possible explanations for the origin of the name of the angel.

Despite this, the book is an excellent sample study. It can be recommended both to specialists and to a wide circle of readers.¹

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