
The search for the origins of Jewish mysticism has always been one of the most exciting pursuits in the wide field between apocalypticism and rabbinic literature. The Enoch tradition provides the best example: in the background of Mesopotamian traditions about the seventh antediluvian hero the figure of Enoch has undergone significant changes from the brief mention in Gen 5 on through various Early Jewish writings up to the Hekhalot tracts of the Early and High Middle Ages. G. Scholem was the first who retraced this long tradition (1941), after H. Odeberg (1928) had carefully described the references to the apocalyptic Enoch scriptures in his edition of the Sefer Hekhalot (3 Enoch). Meanwhile the situation has changed. Today, there are new editions of far better quality for all relevant texts. They are supported by the bulk of monographic studies. Therefore, it is now possible to prove Scholem’s imaginative observations on the basis of developed source material.

Orlov takes on this task in his published dissertation (Marquette University 2003). He has repeated or deepened single aspects of this project in a series of essays (between 1998 and 2006), collecting and presenting these articles again in the volume From Apocalypticism to Merkabah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha (Leiden, 2007). Orlov’s aim is to make visible the traditions about the patriarch Enoch which lead from old oriental origins through early Jewish texts up to the appearance of Enoch-Metatron in Jewish mysticism. The structure of the book clearly offers what its title does not say immediately; namely, of particular interest to Orlov is 2 Enoch and its position within the long and varied Enoch tradition. Since Odeberg had pointed out the “transitional character” of 2 Enoch, this aspect had not been of any significance in scholarly research. The great merit of Orlov’s study is to have drawn attention to it anew. The type of Enoch, its specificity and its changes function for him as crucial criterion. His main perspective is directed retrospectively from the mystic tradition. Reading 2 Enoch not only in the context of the older material collected in 1 Enoch, but also in close connection to later Hekhalot texts, suggests an instructive approach and promises a wealth of new insight.

After a short survey of the research situation, the book is divided into two main parts. Part One describes the development of the figure of Enoch from a type of “Seventh Antediluvian Hero” up to his Merkabah-literature type. This description focuses mainly on the roles and titles which are applied to Enoch in the different Enoch-books. Here one can find numerous careful observations, presented in a clear and well-structured manner. Chapter 1 deals with the archaic Babylonian figure of King Enmeduranki in his roles as diviner, expert in secrets, mediator, scribe and priest. Chapter 2 discusses the older Enoch traditions systematically, highlighting a structural system of roles and titles found spread
throughout this heterogenic corpus. Most attention is given to the Similitudes, which culminates in Enoch's elevation to “Son of Man”; in this way transporting titles like “Righteous One,” “Anointed One” and “Chosen One” to Enoch as well. Chapter 3 focuses directly on Sefer Hekhalot and similar texts. Orlov differentiates between “old” and “new” titles and roles to denote the development beyond the early apocalyptic level or, rather, the innovative character of this new setting. Most emphasis is put on the title “Metatron” itself, which is connected with further new titles like “Prince of the Presence,” “Prince of the World,” “Sar Tora,” “Youth,” “Lesser YHWH,” relating Enoch-Metatron to the “Shi’ur Qomah”-motif. From this standpoint, Orlov now turns to 2 Enoch in Chapter Four. He endeavours to demonstrate the close relation between the figure of Enoch in 2 Enoch and the Enoch-Metatron of the Hekhalot-texts in two respects: First, already in the headline of ch. 4 Orlov formulates, “Enoch-Metatron in 2 Enoch.” Second, he dedicates a whole paragraph to looking for a link between the term “Metatron” and the obscure term “prometeia” (2 En. 43:1 in the shorter recension only). Consequently, it is not surprising that Orlov finds all the “new” titles and roles, which he had previously described in Sefer Hekhalot, also in 2 Enoch! Here the research discernibly gets onto uncertain ground. Enoch's title as “Servant of the Face” is based on 2 En. 39, a chapter which was possibly not an original part of the whole book. In favour of the title “Youth,” we have references only in the highly corrupted manuscripts B/V/A of the shorter recension—not to speak of their internal divergence (Orlov’s list of references is incomplete). The phrase “Governor of the World” is alluded to only once (in 2 En. 43:1 where we have many different textual variants) in a context without a reference to real governance. “God’s Vice-Regent,” which is ranked as “highly speculative” by Orlov himself, is based on those statements crediting Enoch with particular authority. The imagery of the “Heavenly Counterpart” is to be found again solely in 2 En. 39. Consequently, the arguments supporting the presence of all these titles within 2 Enoch requires considerable effort. The evidence is not as clear as Orlov attempts to prove.

Part Two investigates “polemical developments” mirrored by Enoch’s roles and titles in 2 Enoch. This part is definitely the most questionable. Orlov postulates a fundamental polemic situation which is to be seen in three respects: First, he puts great emphasis on “Adam polemics,” in connection with Enoch’s titles of “Youth,” “Prince of the World,” “Redeemer of the World” and “Measure of the Lord” (ch. 5). Secondly, he detects “Mosaic Polemics” in the title of “Prince of Face” (ch. 6). Thirdly, he infers “Noachic Polemics” from Melchisedek’s birth narrative in 2 En. 70–71 (ch. 7). This approach for describing the theological structure of 2 Enoch is based on highly hypothetical observations, disregarding the narrative and theological interrelations in the book. On the one hand, Orlov discovers many precious details, clearly demonstrating the embedding of the Enoch-figure of 2 Enoch in the literary context of Early Judaism. On the other hand, there is a