

Is Enoch Metatron?

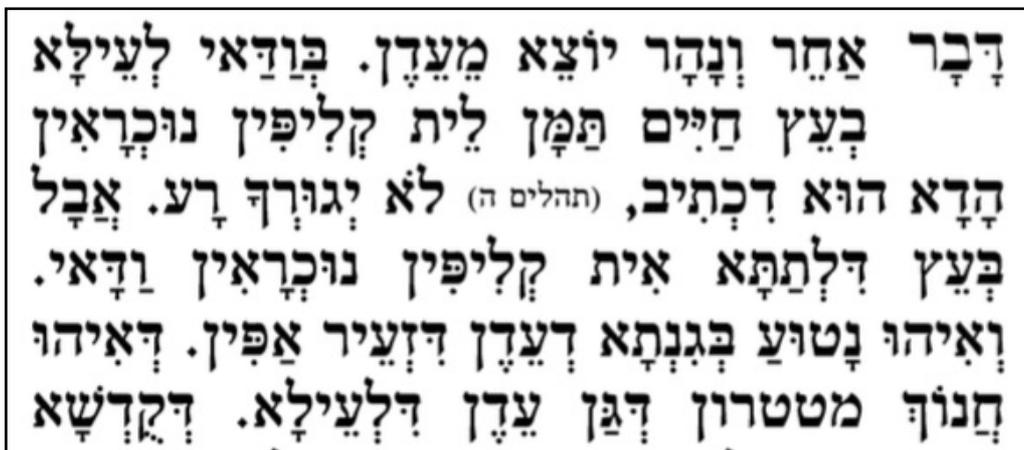
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Some Messianic Jewish romanticists imagine that Yeshua is to be found in rabbinic literature under the name of the heavenly being/angel called Metatron (מטטרון) and/or Youth (נער). They claim that Jewish mystical tradition supports their belief. [For an overview of possible etymologies for the **non-Hebrew** origin of the name Metatron¹.

However, the truth is that within the Jewish mystical tradition is a teaching that *Enoch is Metatron*. Would these same messianics peddling the teaching that Yeshua is Metatron also say that He is Enoch? Or, do they sweep this part of their sacred mystical texts under the rug? In other words, why not come right out and say that *Yeshua is Enoch*? What is holding them back?

Enoch as Metatron in Medieval Jewish Mystical Texts



scan from *Sefer HaZohar Menukkad, Vol 1, p. 153* (cited below)

3 Enoch 3:1-4:2 (3 Enoch is a late talmudic era, Babylonian text composed in Hebrew)

R. Ishmael said: Then I questioned the angel Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence. I said to him, “What is your name?” He answered, “I have seventy names, corresponding to the seventy nations of the world, and all of them are based on the name of the King of the kings of kings; however, my King calls me ‘Youth.’” R. Ishmael said: I said to Metatron, “Why are you called by the name of your Creator with seventy names? You are greater than all the princes, more exalted than all the angels, more beloved than all the ministers, more honored than all the hosts, and elevated over all potentates in sovereignty, greatness, and glory; why, then, do they call you ‘Youth’ in the heavenly heights?” He answered, “Because I am Enoch, the son of Jared...” (trans. by P. Alexander)

Otzar Chayyim, by R’ Isaac of Acre (13th century Spain)

She [the soul] will cleave to the divine intellect, and it will cleave to her
and she and the intellect become one entity, as if somebody pours out a jug of

1. See Orlov - <http://www.marquette.edu/maqom/metatronname.html>

water into a running well, that all becomes one. And this is the secret meaning of our sages: 'Enoch is Metatron.' And this is the secret meaning of the phrase a 'a fire devouring fire.' (trans. by Moshe Idel)

Zohar (Aramaic, 13th century Spain)

Rabbi Shim'on opened, and said, "You on high, listen! You below, gather together! These are the masters of the yeshiva which is on high and below. Eliyahu, with an oath upon you, get permission and descend here, for a great battle is at hand. Enoch Metatron,² descend here! You and all the masters of the yeshiva under your authority (lit., hand)." (Bereshit 24a)

And this is (the tree) planted in the garden of Eden of Ze'ir Apin, who is Enoch Metatron of the garden of Eden on high... (Bereshit 26b-27a)

Metatron: B.C. or A.D.?

A world-renowned historian of the Jewish mystical tradition, Moshe Idel, argues that within that heritage there are "remnants of a myth which preserves the role of primordial man, the 'Supernal Adam' or Adam Qadmon, with his place being taken by Enoch who became Metatron."³ Did this Enoch/Metatron tradition come before Yeshua's ministry (suffering, death, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father), or after?

Idel writes,

Repression of Jewish mysticism concerned with primordial man could have been connected to opposition to Christianity and especially to the notion of Jesus. A well-known passage in Paul connects Jesus as "the last Adam" with the "first Adam" and "first man" (in the Greek of 1 Corinthians 15:45-47, both translations of the single Hebrew term used to designate Adam). It is a fact, however, that the Kabbalah that developed the concept of the Supernal Adam flourished precisely in Christian regions, where speculation on this topic grew at the expense of speculation about the Merkavah... In areas under Islamic influence, by contrast, nothing of the kind came to the surface during the hundreds of years preceding the growth of the Kabbalah in Europe.⁴

As cited in my blog post on the Baal haTurim and Enoch, Jewish mysticism historian Peter Schäfer refines Idel's speculation as to why the Enoch/Metatron tradition would actually flourish in Christian rather than Muslim regions. The answer is that it provided an inoculation against the Gospel! Simply put, Jews in Islamic realms had other fish to fry. But Jews attracted to the Good News of our ascended Savior Yeshua, who were hearing the preaching of believers in Yeshua in their midst, would be told by rabbinic anti-missionaries "the truth" that real Jews have Enoch who is Metatron, and that there is no need for the Gospels or for Yeshua. Schäfer writes, "...I am inclined to locate 3 Enoch's (as well as the rabbis') Metatron

2. * some MSS only have "Enoch" here. See HaSulam

3. Idel, "Enoch is Metatron," *Immanuel* 24/25 (1990), pp. 220

4. Ibid., pp. 222-3 - For Idel's fuller treatment in English, see: *Enoch Who Became Metatron* (http://www.etrfi.info/immanuel/24/Immanuel_24_222.pdf)

in the cultural context of (late) Babylonian Judaism and to regard it as a response to the New Testament message of Jesus Christ”⁵.

In his March 2016 lecture series at Yale University, Daniel Boyarin calls Schäfer’s position “extreme.” Rather, Boyarin suggests, we should understand the development of the Metatron tradition as part of a rabbinic enterprise to control an earlier, and apparently popular, apocalyptic binitarian theology. While Schäfer sees Metatron as the talmudic response to the Gospel, Boyarin says the rabbinic Metatron teachings were the culmination of centuries of mystical speculation about a possible second power in heaven.

There is value in both sides of the argument. We have plenty of evidence that the Babylonian Talmud knows of and responds to claims of the Gospel. Even Boyarin concedes this point, and has published extensively on the issue. The question then is, where to find the balance between influence/response/polemic between more or less stabilized religious groups (Schäfer) and centuries-old, independent Jewish tradition development unconcerned with competing claims (Boyarin). Though I have benefited much from Boyarin’s ideas, in this case I lean toward Schäfer. I believe that ideas stick around only because there are institutions that keep them current. To me, it seems that Boyarin envisions mystical-Enoch (and later, Metatron) texts being copied, preserved, and discussed apart from any ideological commitment; that is, he suggests that these “apocalyptic” texts were certainly valued by Jews, but just not enough to affect or lay claim to their way of life. Instead, I would say that the reason we find an “apocalypse” in Bavli Haggigah 14a is precisely because the rabbis saw first hand the power of such ideas in the real lives of Jews. The Gospel was a threat to be mitigated.

One thing is clear: just as the early followers of Yeshua stuck to the task of communicating His Gospel at any worldly cost, so too those in Messiah today must continue articulating the truth about Who Yeshua is.

Metatron, A.D.

Once again, let me state this clearly. The later Jewish Enoch/Metatron traditions developed *well after* and, in part, as *a response to* the preached message concerning our risen Lord, Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus the Christ!

Anyone trying to sell you on the idea that “Yeshua is Metatron” is deceived.

5. *The Origins of Jewish Mysticism*, p. 330