

# Introduction

## *Angelic Greetings or Shalom Aleichem*

Peace be upon you, ministering angels, angels of the Most High,  
Of the King, the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

Come in peace, angels of peace, angels of the Most High  
Of the King, the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

Bless me in peace, angels of peace, angels of the Most High,  
Of the King, the King of kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.

Depart in peace, angels of peace, angels of the Most High,  
Of the Kings of Kings, the Holy One, blessed be He.<sup>1</sup>

—TRADITIONAL HEBREW SONG

Although many Jewish households begin the Sabbath by singing “Shalom Aleichem” (lit. “Peace be upon you”) and welcoming the angels to their home, few people dwell on the literal meaning of this song’s words. This popular seventeenth-century Hebrew song greets the angels of God beginning with “the ministering angels” and, alternating with calling them “the angels of peace,” welcomes them to the home in peace, asks for their blessing, and wishes them a peaceful departure.<sup>2</sup> The song’s most common melody was composed in Brooklyn in 1918, but

1. My translation of “Shalom Aleichem,” following Israel Davidson’s notes: “of the King of Kings” could also be translated “from the King of Kings,” emphasizing that the angels are sent from God. Davidson attributes this piyyut to the Kabbalists (*Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry* 3:1268, p. 465). Brettler observes that the verbs *come*, *bless*, and *go* relate to the order of these verbs in Deut 28:6 (*My People’s Prayer Book*), 68.

2. Already in the eighteenth century, Jacob Emden (d. 1776 and known as *Ya’avetz*) was trying to correct the language of this piyyut, suggesting the *mem* in *mi-melech* be deleted (Davidson, *Thesaurus of Mediaeval Hebrew Poetry* 3:1268, p. 465).

it is sung by Jews around the world.<sup>3</sup> Despite the ubiquity of this song in Jewish domestic life, Christian conceptualizations of angels have become so powerful and pervasive that people often do not realize that angels have a firm biblical and Jewish pedigree. Twentieth-century scholarly accounts of Judaism's pure, monotheistic origins, taught in seminaries as well as the academy, have obscured the role of angels in the Bible, classical Jewish texts, and Jewish ritual practice.<sup>4</sup> This book aims to reveal the significance of angels in the foundation of classical Judaism.

The book makes three interrelated arguments. First, it argues that conceptualizations of angels were an integral part of late ancient Judaism and Jewish society. Descriptions of angelic beings can be found in every layer of biblical text, and, in the Hellenistic period, Jewish myths enlarged the role of angelic beings so that, by late antiquity, the praise of the seraphim was as sacred as the biblically commanded Shema prayer, the angels Michael and Gabriel were as familiar as the patriarchs and matriarchs, and guardian angels were as surely present as shadows on a sunny day. Contrary to common understanding, angels were not coupled with demons in the late antique Jewish imagination; they were imagined on their own terms and as independent beings. Angels served as intermediaries, role models, and guardians, with descriptions and invocations of them appearing in a range of contexts, including in ritual-magical, exegetical, liturgical, and mystical sources.

This book's second argument—as well as its methodological contention—is that considering additional sources provides a fuller account of the role that angels played in ancient Jewish culture. An array of sources from antiquity attests that people took for granted that the invisible realm was crowded with mediating beings: angels could be found at home, on the streets, in the synagogues as well as in the multilayered heavens. Scholarship of ancient Judaism has focused primarily on rabbinic texts, and scholars of rabbinics have, for the most part, explored other dimensions of rabbinic textual production, deploying literary, legal, ritual, exegetical, and comparative methods. Recent scholarship has shown, however, that rabbinic texts do engage meaningfully with theological questions.<sup>5</sup> This book argues that one neglected theological topic is angels in rabbinic literature. Moreover, and just as importantly, rabbinic texts only capture one dimension of late antique Judaism. Considering rabbinic and biblical sources alongside material evidence and seemingly less authoritative sources such as magical spells and synagogue poetry produces a more accurate picture of ancient Jewish thought about angels,

3. Frühauf, *Experiencing Jewish Music in America*, 22.

4. See Kaufmann's influential *The Religion of Israel*, discussed in the conclusion.

5. See Weiss, *Pious Irreverence*.

in part by capturing the output of more than just a small group of elite men, as has often been the case in previous scholarship. Indeed, angels appear frequently in incantation bowls, mystical sources, and liturgical poetry that existed alongside, in conversation with, and in tension with rabbinic sources.

Thirdly, examining references to angels in these diverse sources, in conversation with one another, demonstrates that rabbinic ideas about angels developed over time and in dialogue with other genres and materials. As time passed and angels became more prominent in other corpora, rabbinic writers began to accept that angels feature in other Jews' piety. Passages in the Babylonian Talmud suggest accommodation over time. This study of traditions about angels thus also reveals that the different registers of Jewish culture were, in fact, in contact in antiquity and that they evolved together: ideas about angels were exchanged and flowed between rabbis, ritual practitioners, synagogue poets, and mystics.

The fact that the function of angels was also debated by Christians and other adjacent communities in the late antique Mediterranean and Near East does not make angels any less significant for the study of Judaism. Abraham the patriarch is considered a foundational figure to Jews, Christians, Muslims, and others, and yet no one would question his significance for Jewish self-understanding. Likewise, angels were central to the religious communities of late antiquity, Jews among others. As I shall show, some conceptions of angels can be distinguished as specifically Jewish while others reflect the common beliefs of the inhabitants of the late antique Mediterranean. In the conclusion, I more broadly situate my findings about angels in Judaism in the religious landscape of late antiquity.

To return to the opening example: many of those Jews who sing "Shalom Aleichem" each Friday are unaware that it is believed to have been inspired by a tradition in the Talmud:

Rabbi Yose the son of Yehuda said: two ministering angels accompany a man on the eve of the Sabbath from the synagogue to his home, one good and one evil. And when he arrives at his house, if a lamp is lit and a table is prepared and his bed covered, the good angel says, "may it be like this on another Sabbath too" and the evil angel answers "amen" against his will. And if it is not, the evil angel says, "May it be like this on another Sabbath too" and the good angel answers "amen" against his will.<sup>6</sup>

In a few sentences, this passage manages to address many of the problems and questions associated with angels in antiquity: How do angels relate to their charges? What do they do? How do angels respond to human behavior? Equally important

6. *b. Sabb.* 119b. Whether this rabbinic tradition inspired this sabbath song or not is ultimately unknowable. In any case, "Shalom Aleichem" correctly reflects enduring Jewish interest in relating to angels.

are the questions *not* asked by this rabbi: do angels exist? What do angels look like? Who oversees them? It was obvious to the ancients that angels were subordinate to God. The other two questions may seem natural to modern readers, perhaps, but were not to ancient people, who did not dwell on the appearance of angels and accepted the reality of divine beings crowding the invisible realm.

Though found only in the sixth century CE Talmud, this short story about angelic visitation is attributed to Rabbi Yose, one of the most quoted sages in rabbinic literature and a contemporary of Judah the Patriarch, the illustrious redactor of the Mishnah, the foundational document of the rabbinic movement (ca. third century CE). The story's attribution places it in chronological and geographical proximity to the beginning of normative Judaism. This tradition imagines that angels can be found wherever Jews congregate on the eve of the Sabbath (the holy climax of the Jewish week), and that angels follow people home from these gathering places. Once at the individuals' homes, the angels observe whether ritual and domestic preparations were made for the Sabbath and recite a benediction to God that affirms human behavior—for better or worse. In doing so, the angels, both good and evil, also acknowledge their limited authority under God.

As is the rabbis' way, they do not provide straightforward theology in their foundational documents, but formulate stories, legal pronouncements, and teachings instead. These traditions may be suggestive of the attitudes, at least, of the final redactors of the Talmud. The editors of the Talmud seemed to have no problem attributing a story about the active presence of angels in Jews' life to the son of Judah the Patriarch. They transmitted a story that admitted the presence of "good" and "evil" angels, who nevertheless appear to operate within certain parameters under God's authority. I discuss this source at great length among other later rabbinic sources (see chapter 6), but for now we may note that this story answers some questions but leaves others unanswered: Why are angels at home with Jews? And what is an angel exactly?

#### DEFINING ANGELS

No single definition of angels holds true across all time periods or across all religions.<sup>7</sup> The term *angel* in English derives from the ancient Greek *aggelos*, which can refer to a divine or human messenger. All the inhabitants of the Greco-Roman Mediterranean believed that the gods employed messengers that mediated between

7. In Reiterer, et al., *Angels: The Concept of Celestial Beings*, almost every contribution offers an instructive definition of angels, each representing a different corpus of text or religious community from the ancient Near East and Mediterranean world. I refer to many of these essays below. Schipper's "Angels or Demons?" offers the strongest critique of attempting a general definition of angels in comparative religions.

the divine and human realm (see *aggeloi* of the *Iliad* 2.26, 2.63, and 18.165).<sup>8</sup> As in Greek, so in Hebrew, the term *mal'akh* can refer to a divine or human messenger. *Mal'akh* is related to the Hebrew word for divine work, *melakha*, a crucial term in Genesis's description of the origin of the Sabbath: "On the seventh day God finished the *work* that He had been doing, and He ceased on the seventh day from all the *work* that He had done" (Gen 2:2). Work here is *melakha*, from the triliteral root for L-A-KH, "to send" or "to work."<sup>9</sup> *Mal'akhim*, or angels, are sent out to accomplish the work of God. The last prophetic book in the Hebrew canon is not named for a prophet but simply named Malachi: "my angel" or "my messenger." In Genesis the creation of the world and the Sabbath go hand in hand; so too do divine work and God's multitude of angels (Gen 2:1 states "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all their *multitude*," with angelic beings implied). This is one clue as to the angels' function: look for them as agents in works of creation (broadly conceived), near the Sabbath (see the rabbinic tradition and song above), and as messengers from God. Less common terms in the Hebrew Bible for angelic beings include "sons of God," "holy ones," and "the heavenly host."<sup>10</sup> In the rabbinic corpus, angels are referred to as *mal'akhim* or, just as commonly, as the ministering angels (*mal'akhei ha-sharet*), with the latter term emphasizing the role of angels as servants of God.<sup>11</sup>

The stories of the Torah provided Jews with a great deal of material for conceptualizing angels, but the Psalms proved equally important. One influential verse averred that God "made his angels winds / his servants flaming fire," suggesting that angels were somehow insubstantial, fiery yet invisible (Ps 104:4).<sup>12</sup> That angels were made of fire was one of the only angelic characteristics upon which all later Jewish sources agreed.<sup>13</sup> Like the rest of the inhabitants of the ancient Near East,

8. See discussion in Speyer, "The Divine Messenger in Ancient Greece, Etruria and Rome," who notes that what Hellenistic poets and "their Roman successors say about the divine messenger often is just an imitation and variation of respective Homeric scenes and suggestions" (36). Iris and Hermes were the preeminent divine messengers.

9. For more on the ancient Near Eastern background of *mal'akh*, see Köckert, "Divine Messengers and Mysterious Men."

10. For *bnei elim* ("sons of gods"), see Ps 19:1. For *bnei ha-elohim* ("sons of the God"), see Gen 6:2–4 and Job 38:7 (discussed below). For "holy ones," see Deut 33:2. For the "host of the heavens," see Isa 13:2–5, Josh 5:13–15, and Dan 8:10–14, discussed in Quine, "The Host of Heaven and the Divine Army." Olyan devoted a monograph to the emergence of angelic brigades in ancient Judaism in *A Thousand Thousands Served Him*.

11. For "ministering angels, see *t. Soṭah* 4:1, *Mek. RI Bo* 9 (Horowitz and Rabin, 33), *y. Sanh.* 10:2, and *b. Sanh.* 96b.

12. See Kaduri, "Windy and Fiery Angels," 134–49.

13. These sources will be discussed in each corpus in turn: *Gen. Rab.* 78:1, *b. Hag.* 14a, Yannai's *qedushta* to Exod 3:1, Hekhalot Rabbati §213, Morgan, trans., *Sepher Ha-Razim*, 21; §31 of *Sefer ha-Razim*, ed. Schäfer and Rebiger.

Jews believed that the stars, moon, and sun were distant fiery divine beings, and scattered references in the Bible ensured they were understood as God's angels, fixed in the heavens but also able to exercise influence on earth.<sup>14</sup> And yet, this phrasing proved capacious enough for multiple interpretations of the changeable nature of the angels.

Alongside the view of angels as messengers of fire and wind, coexisted the imagining of angels as fantastic hybrid beings (so-called "Mischwesen") like the cherubim and seraphim.<sup>15</sup> Among the cultures surrounding ancient Israel, the cherubim and seraphim had distinguished iconography; no Israelite would confuse the fierce winged-lion cherub in the temple with the snake-like seraph. These animalistic features of cherubim and seraphim connoted power and the ability to ward off evil in ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt.<sup>16</sup> Though references to these creatures is found throughout the Hebrew Bible, it is the visions of Isaiah and Ezekiel, especially the verses that became part of the liturgy, that left a lasting impression in Jewish conceptualization of these divine beings who surrounded God's throne.<sup>17</sup> In time, the differences between these divine beings seem to have become blurred and forgotten in the minds of Jewish interpreters, who understood all of these different hybrid creatures as angelic beings worthy of imitation in liturgical practice and prayer.

By late antiquity, the rabbis commented that cherubim referred to beings with youthful faces, much like the cupids popular in Greco-Roman art.<sup>18</sup> Where the prophet Isaiah saw only the six-winged seraphim reciting "Holy, Holy, Holy" in the ancient Jerusalem temple, the late antique liturgical poet Yannai would imagine the cherubim, ophanim, holy creatures as well as "angels" in general reciting this praise of God, equating the various categories of these divine beings. Similarly, in incantation texts ritual practitioners did not dwell on the appearance of invisible beings but tended to be explicit about their invocation of God's subordinates, calling them *mal'akhim* before listing their names and describing what they hoped the angels would do for their clients.

14. For biblical references to angels as stars, see Job 38:7 and 38:31–33; Isa 40:26 and 45:11–12; Ps 147: 4.

15. On these figures in their Near Eastern context, see Hartenstein, "Cherubim and Seraphim." Cherubim, ophanim, and hayyot, appear together in Ezek. 10. For cherubim, see also Gen 3:24; Exod 25:18–22; Psalm 99:1. For seraphim, see also Isa 6:2; Num 21:8.

16. Hartenstein, "Cherubim and Seraphim," 157.

17. For a recent overview of the Mesopotamian parallels to winged biblical figures, see Noegel, "On the Wings of the Winds."

18. See *b. Hag.* 13b, discussed in chap. 6. For an analysis of cherubim from the angle of the rabbinic visuality, see Neis, "Heterovisuality, Face-Bread, and Cherubs" in *The Sense of Sight in Rabbinic Culture*.

Psalms and other biblical stories attest to the ancient Israelite belief that angels served ordinary persons, pious households, and the people of Israel on behalf of God. Psalm 91:11 assured hearers that God “will command his angels concerning you / to guard you in all your ways. On their hands they will bear you up / so that you will not dash your foot against a stone.”<sup>19</sup> This verse suggested angelic intervention on behalf of the individual with God’s approval. Biblical stories demonstrated that angels had appeared to the meritorious patriarchs and matriarchs, but also to disconsolate figures like Hagar, the mother of Ishmael, comforting her when she was expelled and abandoned with her son in the wilderness. The book of Tobit illustrated how an angel might intervene to protect a pious household with Raphael in disguise as a helpful relative. The Exodus story affirmed that God sent an angel to guard the nation of Israel in the wilderness (23:20), and the book of Daniel reaffirmed angelic protection of the nation with Michael fighting on behalf of Israel in the heavens against the angelic representatives of Persia and Greece (10:13–21). Late antique Jews believed that angels were available to ordinary men and women and they were aware that angels were a cross-cultural phenomenon.

The Hellenistic Jewish philosopher Philo explained that those beings whom the philosophers called *daemons* Moses called angels (*De Gigantibus* 1:6). This description highlights the neutral disposition of angels, who could be sent on beneficent or maleficent missions by God. As I shall show in the following chapters, both early and late rabbinic traditions agree with Philo on this point: there were angels of good (or peace) and angels of evil and destruction. Philo and the rabbis insisted on a divinely guided universe, where no invisible being could be out of step from God’s plans. The existence of demons was also taken for granted by the peoples of the Near East, including the ancient Israelites, who were castigated for turning to demons in the Torah and in prophetic texts.<sup>20</sup> In my reading of the evidence, later Jews did not confuse angels of evil with demons; they had a different terminology and the rabbis even offered several etiologies for demons, which are not discussed in relationship to angels.<sup>21</sup> Demons were distinct and diverse beings, also at home

19. For reception history, see Breed, “The Example of Psalm 91.”

20. van der Toorn provides a great overview of demons in the Bible in its Mesopotamian context through analysis of Isa 34:14, Deut 32:23, and Hb 3:5 in “The Theology of Demons in Mesopotamia and Israel.” In Deut 32:17 and Lev 17:7, the people of Israel are castigated for sacrificing to *shedim* and to *se’irim* respectively.

21. According to *m. ’Abot* 5:6, demons (*mazzikin*) were created by God at twilight on the sixth day. A later tradition in *b. ’Erub.* 18b blames Adam, asserting he begat “spirits, demons, and liliths” (cf. Gen 5:3). Post-Talmudic midrash offers yet another origin story for demons: the mating of Adam and the first woman, later known as Lilith. See Harari, “The Sages and the Occult,” 536. *Gen. Rab.* 1:3 is the earliest rabbinic text to collect interpretations about when the angels were created, debating whether angels were created on the third or fifth day, based on reading angels as winds or birds.

in the ancient Near East, and later linked to the Hellenistic Jewish myth of fallen angels on the one hand and in conversation with local traditions about demons in Persian Babylonia on the other hand.<sup>22</sup> Though people today may think of angels and demons as inseparable, angels had an independent existence in ancient Judaism. Indeed, though some of the sources analyzed in this book involve demons, most do not.

In the Jewish texts of the Hellenistic period, we find reference to angels by the names of Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael.<sup>23</sup> In the book of Daniel 10:20–21, Michael and Gabriel are called “princes” (*sar*), a title that will be used for top-ranking angels in the Hebrew mystical texts as well. In Greek texts, chief angels become known as archangels (“ruling angel”).<sup>24</sup> In later Jewish interpretation, Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael were identified with the three anonymous men who visited Abraham at Mamre and foretold that he and Sarah would have a son (Gen 18).<sup>25</sup> This proved to be one of the most influential and popular stories about angels in antiquity, shared among Jews, Christians, polytheists, and later Muslims.<sup>26</sup> The location became a pilgrimage site in late antiquity.<sup>27</sup> Michael, Gabriel, and Raphael became part of the shared culture of the Mediterranean world: they can be found in the rabbinic, liturgical, ritual, and mystical texts of late antique Jews but also in the Christian and Hellenistic-Egyptian polytheistic texts more broadly.<sup>28</sup> This trio of angels can be found in incantation texts of late antiquity alongside other angelic names that are unpronounceable, recognizable only by their location in lists of angelic names or their “-el” suffix. From extant sources, we can see that Gabriel and Michael proved to be the most commonly invoked angels among Jews.

Late antique Jews did not feel the need to define the category of angels, nor did they write an angelology or attempt to place divine beings in a hierarchy. And yet a modern reader may need a general definition of angels before proceeding any further into the findings of this book. From an etic perspective, for the Jews of

22. See Bohak, “Conceptualizing Demons in Late Antique Judaism”; and Martin, “When Did Angels Become Demons?” Also see Gafni, “Babylonian Rabbinic culture,” esp. 244–46. For demons in incantation bowls, see Hunter, “Who Are the Demons?”

23. Michael and Gabriel have small but important roles in Dan 10 (ca. 164 BCE) while Raphael is at the center of the book of Tobit, which likely dates to the third or second century BCE. Tobit is the only text to revolve around the angel Raphael, whose name contains the root verb for “to heal” in Hebrew.

24. As Berner observes in “The Four (or Seven) Archangels,” the term archangel is found not in translations of the Hebrew Bible, but in Greek translation of 1 En 20:8 and 4 Ezra 4:36 as well as 1 Thess 4:16, and Jude 9 (396).

25. See Yannai’s interpretation of Gen 18 in chap. 5. In Christian interpretation, one of these visitors to Abraham was understood as the pre-incarnate Jesus (Cline, *Ancient Angels*, 107–8).

26. Jones begins his book *Angels* with this story and its cultural significance.

27. Cline, “Mamre,” in *Ancient Angels*, 107–18.

28. Sanzo and Boustán, “The Shared Magical Culture of Late Antiquity.”



late antiquity, angels were subordinate yet powerful divine beings, usually invisible to the human eye, who were ever present both in the heavenly and earthly realms and who could intervene for good or ill in human life in accordance with human behavior and God's will. Angels were an integral part of the religious landscape in antiquity, one deeply grounded in the biblical heritage, and yet, as I shall show, the significance of angels in people's lives varied greatly based on personal and familial preference, local custom, communal practice, religious ideology, and regional factors. My corpus-by-corpus approach will demonstrate this variation, even as I highlight what is particularly Jewish about angels, and the ways Jews argued and exchanged ideas about angels in late antiquity. Only much later Jewish and Christian medieval angelologies would seek to overcome these deeply local and diverse perspectives on the invisible realms.<sup>29</sup>

This work makes no ontological claims as to the existence of angels but chronicles how ancient Jews believed in angels and made them into real presences in their everyday lives. These beliefs were anchored in biblical texts, in popular myths, and in dialogue with the other inhabitants of the ancient Near East. Angels were a particularly attractive mediating force because they could be used to circumvent established hierarchies even as they drew on the deep wells of inherited traditions. This book uncovers how angels made their way into the foundational practices and worldviews of ancient Jews and makes sense of why angels continue to play such a significant role within and without institutional Jewish settings.

#### METHODOLOGY AND SCHOLARSHIP

This book's interest in ancient Jewish "beliefs" about angels poses a tricky methodological challenge: How can modern historians know the intentions of ancient subjects? This study does not claim to uncover the thoughts of ancient Jews. Rather, each extant story, ritual incantation, liturgical piyyut, or mystical tradition about angels is treated as an example of one tradition once expounded in a rabbinic study house, one ritual object produced in a practitioner's workshop or performed in the home, one prayer recited in the synagogue, or one passage recited for mystical purposes. By placing each source in its historical and cultural context, insofar as is possible given our limited data from antiquity, I reconstruct the assumptions about angels that underpin rabbinic narratives, incantations, liturgical poems, and mystical texts about angels. Beliefs about and practices involving angels, just like any other Jewish beliefs or practices, were imparted and taught to

29. Jewish angelologies can only be found after the tenth century CE. For Christian angelology, see Muehlberger, *Angels in Late Ancient Christianity*, 207, in conversation with Frankfurter, "An Architecture for Chaos," in *Evil Incarnate*, 13–30.

ancient Jews in particular settings, and we can use these extant examples to think about how they were taught.<sup>30</sup>

In each chapter, I describe the particular methods and problems pertinent to each genre of evidence under examination, but I begin here with a few general remarks about my approach overall. The sources cannot be treated as transcripts, of course, or fully representative of a conversation in the homes or streets of ancient Jewish towns. Rabbinic attributions to named figures cannot be taken at face value or dated with any certainty. And yet traditions associated with leading figures may reveal what disciples of the rabbis wished to associate with their predecessors and may be indicative of later rabbinic attitudes toward angels. As I shall show, rabbinic traditions critical and supportive of engagement with angels are associated with some of the most famous historical rabbis.

In the 1960s and '70s, scholars of classical Judaism took note of the number of traditions about angels in rabbinic texts, and they paid special attention to the theological implications of traditions about angels in rabbinic literature.<sup>31</sup> However, lack of diachronically and synchronically precise studies elided tensions among various rabbinic corpora, which I hope to draw out over the course of three chapters on rabbinic texts. This book differs from previous surveys in that it tackles the biblical and rabbinic evidence in conversation with neglected sources, thus placing the “normative” sources and authorities in proper perspective. The emphasis on rabbinic religiosity in modernity has obscured the extent to which angels played an important role in the life of ancient Jews. By bringing other sources on angels into view, this book provides a very different description of Judaism than has been offered before, decentering the rabbis and showing their approach to the divine as one possibility among other equally Jewish options. I intentionally begin this book with ritual evidence from the sixth century CE, showing that angels feature prominently in Jewish ritual sources and not just in opposition to demons. After detailing the Babylonian and Palestinian ritual evidence, I turn back to the earliest rabbinic sources from the third century CE and then trace them diachronically forward. The rabbinic evidence may still occupy three chapters of this book, but in this arrangement, the rabbis are properly framed by other Jewish voices from ritual, liturgical, and mystical sources, who all had as much, if not more, to say about angels. This book shows the rabbis in conversation with ritual practitioners and synagogue leaders and argues that they accepted the influence of other Jews in shaping their own prayer and practices involving angels.

In recent decades, specialists in more neglected areas of Jewish studies such as magic, mysticism, and liturgy have demonstrated the contributions of their

30. My approach was in part inspired by Robert Orsi's theory that religion is fruitfully studied as a “network of relationships” (*History and Presence*, 9).

31. Urbach, *Hazal* (trans. *The Sages*); Schäfer, *Rivalität zwischen Engeln und Menschen*.