If Greek theology develops from the plural to the singular, Hellenized and Babylonian Judaism move in the opposite direction. For whereas the abstract Socratic piety challenges Greek polytheism, the Hebrew traditions of angels (malachim) drift away from radical monotheism. The Book of Genesis represents angels as God’s messengers, existing only in their fulfillment of this function, but the Book of Job, apocryphal writings, and various commentaries all multiply the manifest forms of divinity and give increasing independence to satan, an adversary or opposing angel. This intertextual development exposes conflicts within the diverse Hebrew traditions, conflicts that find expression in dualistic tensions at virtually every stage of Jewish thought.

Philo of Alexandria’s writings exemplify the confrontation between theological systems that are based on radically monotheistic belief and those that refer to divine intermediaries. The Greek logoi characterize Philo’s revision at the margins of rabbinic tradition. Despite strict prohibitions against representing the ineffable Tetragrammaton (YHWH), Talmudic commentaries on biblical narratives also slip toward hypostases of secondary divine beings. Postbiblical versions of

the akedah, the binding of Isaac, exemplify modes of expansion that turn mysterious passages of Scripture into more comprehensible narratives of divine intervention. The images of angels and satan may indicate literal polytheistic tendencies or only an enhanced metaphorical element.

At the same time that Hellenized Jewish thought magnifies the role of divine intermediaries in versions of scriptural narrative, a Stoic distinction affirms God's dual transcendence and immanence. Retaining the notion of an inexpressed thought (logos endiathe'tos) that is analogous to divine mind, Philo adds instances of externalized language (logos prophorikos) to representations of the heavenly court. Christian scholars have demonstrated that Philo's wisdom has affinities to the Gospel of John; Jewish mystics have been reluctant to acknowledge Philo as a forerunner.

The malach YHWH and satan

Malach, the Hebrew word for "angel," apparently derives from the root, to send (lach). Like Greek angelos, Hebrew malach is primarily a "messenger" and can refer to human messengers (as in Gen. 32:4). But God's malachim are essentially linked to the divine Word, or Logos, and are inseparable from the messages they bear from God to men. God speaks with individuals through the mediation of angeloi, or logoi. The biblical Genesis and Exodus grant no independent existence to these divine emissaries.

The angel of God (malach YHWH) first appears in Genesis 16:7-12. God has already promised Abraham an heir, but the childless Sarah offers him her servant girl, Hagar. After Hagar conceives, Sarah treats her harshly, and she flees. At this point, God's angel finds Hagar in the wilderness and echoes God's promise to Abraham: "The angel of YHWH said to her, 'I will greatly multiply your seed... Behold, you are with child and will bear a son, and you will call his name Ishmael, because YHWH has heard your affliction'" (Gen. 16:10-11). God's

angel is primarily the bearer of His message; Ishmael’s name derives from the fact of God’s having heard (shama) through the angel. When Hagar and Ishmael are turned out into the wilderness together, God hears Ishmael’s cry and again announces, through the voice of His angel, “I will make him a great nation” (Gen. 21:18). The first-person form indicates that, as in the previous passage, the angel is in some way identified with God; when the angel hears and blesses, God hears and blesses. The angel exists primarily to convey God’s Word.

Genesis 22 also suggests a conflation of God with His angel. Initiating the command to sacrifice Isaac, God calls “Abraham” (Gen. 22:1); when He annuls the command, His angel calls, “Abraham, Abraham” (Gen. 22:11). The angel serves to communicate God’s blessing: “The angel of YHWH called to Abraham a second time out of the heavens, and said, By Myself I have sworn, says YHWH, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son, that in blessing I will bless you and in multiplying I will multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens . . . because you have listened to My voice” (Gen. 22:15–18). Later interpreters find a problem in the shift from God’s initial command to the angel’s subsequent retraction. But as the angel of God exists in order to express God’s Word, there is no discrepancy.

Jacob’s dream (Gen. 28:12–15) further implies the significance of angels as divine words (logoi). Rather than describe malachim independently, as Hesiod describes daimones, this passage makes God’s words the essence of their manifestation: “He dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to the heavens; and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it. And behold, YHWH stood beside him and said, ‘I am YHWH, the God of Abraham your father, and the God of Isaac. I will give the land on which you lie to you and to your seed’” (Gen. 28:13–14). The dreamed vision of angels is essentially linked to God’s revelation. Following the Septuagint, Philo suggests that God’s angeloi are analogous to logoi.

In Genesis, then, the angel of God is inseparable from God’s Word, speech, or message. The angels in Exodus are similarly subordinate to God: if the angel of God appears to Moses in the burning bush (Ex. 3:2), it is God who calls “Moses, Moses” (Ex. 3:4) and who reveals

4Difficult passages in Gen. 18–19 and 32 lie beyond the scope of this analysis.
the future of "My people." Furthermore, concerning the angel of God’s presence that accompanies the Jews out of Egypt (Ex. 14:9 and Ex. 23:20), God announces, "My name is in him." Philo’s Greek usage indicates, then, that *angeloi* may be understood as representations of God’s *logoi*.

Later versions and commentaries hypostatize the communicative agency of God. Rather than conceive *malachim* as figures for the sendings of ineffable divinity, some postbiblical commentators literally perceive them to be semidivine beings in an elaborate cosmology. Acute tensions result from increasingly dualistic explanations of evil in terms of fallen angels.

The word *satan* probably derives from the verb meaning, "to act as an adversary," though some scholars trace it to *shut*, "to go about or deviate"; *satan*, an adversary or force of opposition, deviates and causes others to deviate. In the Pentateuch, the word *satan* occurs only once. When Balaam departs to speak against Israel, "the angel of YHWH placed himself in the way as an adversary [*l’satan*] against him" (Num. 22:22). To express God’s anger and to correct Balaam’s course, the angel appears to block Balaam’s path. Far from opposing God’s will, this *satan* is an angel that directly fulfills God’s Word.

In the Book of Job, *satan* becomes an explicit heavenly adversary. The opening chapters represent a heavenly court to which "the sons of God [*b’nai Elohim*] came to present themselves before YHWH" (Job 1:6). This representation raises the classical problem of theodicy, the existence of evil in God’s world, along with other insoluble problems of interpretation. The visual aspect of God’s court is reminiscent of 1 Kings 22:19: "I saw YHWH sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing beside Him on His right and on His left." But the reference to "the sons of God" ultimately echoes Genesis 6:2 and the associated accounts of "fallen angels."

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7 The italicized *satan* refers to the ancient Hebrew word, and is thus differentiated from the English Satan.


At the start of the story of Job, God speaks with satan. The adversary's first words explain his name in terms of his activity: "Where do you come from?" God asks, and satan responds: "From going about [m'shut] on the earth" (Job 1:7). Like Hesiodic daimones, satan wanders the earth and weighs the actions of men. To some extent, satan already takes on a more independent function than that of angels. More than the vehicle of God's communications, satan retains an identity as a heavenly being that searches out evil. In a sense, the explicit adversary of men shifts the problem of evil away from God, taking the blame for the ills of life. But in this biblical narrative, satan is only able to act insofar as God permits his action.

The "outside books" of Enoch and of the Jubilees (the Little Genesis) exemplify later additions to the canonized image of satan. In 1 Enoch 6–11 there appears a seminal account of angelic origins in the form of an expanded retelling of Genesis 6:1–4. Fallen angels have intercourse with the daughters of men, who give birth to giants. The Book of Jubilees substantially agrees with this version.

The Manual of Discipline, recovered from the Qumran caves, substantiates the traditional view that Jewish angelology shows traces of Persian influence. According to Edward Langton, the Persian dualism is first expressed in Yasna: originally "there were two primeval spirits, also called principles or things, a better and a worse." Similarly, the Manual of Discipline informs that God "created man to rule the world, and appointed for him two spirits after whose direction he was to walk until the final inquisition. They are the spirits of truth and of perversity." While this document clearly expresses a dualistic con-

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8Yet satan may only represent human doubts that result from the human inclination toward evil. As the Babylonian Talmud, Baba Batra 15b, suggests, satan is the evil impulse (yetzer hara) of men.

9Edward Langton discusses the apocryphal literature regarding angels and satan in his Essentials of Demonology (London: Epworth, 1949), 107–44.

10Compare Bernard J. Bamberger's Fallen Angels (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1952), 26–30, and Michel Testuz's Les idées religieuses du "Livré des Jubilés" (Paris: Librairie Minard, 1960), 75–86. But in the Book of Jubilees, God sends the angels to earth, where they are corrupted, while in 1 Enoch they already lust in heaven and descend in order to mate with women. Both versions clearly threaten the more abstract Mosaic representations of God and heaven.


Hebrew Angels, *satan*, and Philo’s *logoi*

ception of good and evil, and gives them the name of “spirits,” God creates this opposition. The Manual of Discipline, often attributed to the Essenes, appears to synthesize Persian and Jewish sources.

As several scholars have written detailed accounts of the Talmudic angelology, there is no need to reproduce their findings. Versions of biblical narratives supply many instances in which Talmudic and Midrashic legends develop toward increasingly dualistic expressions.

The Divine *logoi*

The Greek tradition of *daimones*, the Stoic tradition of *logoi*, and the Hebrew tradition of *malachim* come together in Philo’s writings; although Philo never profoundly influences Jewish orthodoxy, his synthesis parallels the transformations that occur elsewhere in the diaspora. While the Pentateuch refers to *malachim* as mere extensions of God, the later traditions develop toward dualistic beliefs in the evil agency of *satan* and demons (*mazziqim, shedim*). Within early Christianity, which rejects such hints at polytheistic belief, *daimones* irreversibly become demons. Philo stands in a more complex relationship to both Judaic and Hellenic sources.

*Logos*, mediating between the transcendent God and immanent world appearances, is one key word in Philo’s scriptural interpretations. Following Stoic terminology, Philo also refers to intermediary *logoi*, similar to the *daimones* of Plato’s *Symposium* 202e. In fact, Philo explicitly identifies biblical *angeli* with *daimones* and *logoi*.

But while *logos* is the term that links transcendence and immanence, it also gives rise to dualistic antitheses. The singular *Logos* stands opposite plural *logoi*; divine *Logos* contrasts human speech; God’s reason is distinct from though associated with human reason; God’s abstract *Logos* contrasts the more concrete forms of God’s *angelos*. For

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14See, for example, Augustine’s *De civ. dei* VIII, 14 and X, 9.
the tradition of Christian interpretations of Philo, dispute centers around the question: is God’s Logos impersonal or personal?\textsuperscript{15}

In connection with Socrates’ daimonion, a more central question concerns the relationship between Logos, angelos, and conscience.\textsuperscript{16}

But as some interpreters recognize, the crux of Philo’s synthesis is his use of the Stoic opposition between logos endiathetos and logos prophorikos.\textsuperscript{17} Rather than rigorously define these terms, Philo employs them loosely, in ways that can only be translated inadequately into the English-language oppositions of “internalized thought” and “expressed word,” meaning and utterance. The dualistic tensions within logos derive from this most basic opposition.

Jordan Bucher, one of Philo’s most decisive interpreters, takes the antithesis within the logos as his starting point. In the context of nineteenth-century German scholarship, his work entitled Philonische Studien inevitably considers the tension between impersonal and personal meanings of logos. He seeks a resolution, however, by establishing both sides of the logos together.\textsuperscript{18}

Bucher recognizes, furthermore, that the dispute does not revolve around two different meanings of the word logos but rather results from two different types of linguistic expression. His concise work thus begins by asking “whether Philo’s logos be merely personification or actual hypostasis” (PS 1). Rhetorically, the question is whether logos takes part in a mode of naming or functions as a personifying trope. Rather than decide in favor of either alternative, Bucher follows a “historical-pragmatic path,” pointing to the necessity of both rhetorical aspects of the logos. After reviewing the critical literature on

\textsuperscript{15}See August Grörer, Philo und die alexandrinische Theosophie (Stuttgart: Schweizerbart, 1831), pt. 1, chap. 8; Edward Zeller, Die Philosophie der Griechen, 3d ed. (Leipzig: Fues, 1881), vol. III, pt. 2, pp. 378–81; and Joseph Buschmann, Die Persönlichkeit des philonischen Logos (Aachen: M. Ulrichs Sohn, 1873). This last inquiry is obviously, and at times explicitly, motivated by the wish to find an analogue to the Gospel of John.

\textsuperscript{16}See Grörer, pp. 211–12; Friedrich Keferstein, Philo’s Lehre von den göttlichen Mittelwesen (Leipzig: Wilhelm Juranz, 1846), 70; and Max Heinze, Die Lehre vom Logos in der griechischen Philosophie (Oldenburg: Ferdinand Schmidt, 1872): “Here the Logos plays the role of conscience, is also called precisely an examiner [elenchos], and is as such the divine angel that leads us” (p. 275).

\textsuperscript{17}See Emile Bréhier, Les idées philosophiques et religieuses de Philon d’Alexandrie (Paris: Vrin, 1925), bk. 2, chap. 2; and see also Austryn Wolfson, Philo (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1947), vol. 1, chap. 4.

\textsuperscript{18}Jordan Bucher, Philonische Studien (Tübingen: Zu-Guttenberg, 1848), 5 (henceforth cited as PS). According to its subtitle, this monograph is an “effort to resolve the question concerning the personal hypostasis of the Logos in Philo’s writings in a historical-pragmatic way.”
Philo, Bucher comments that, despite a general recognition that Philo's speculation moves within the categories of thinking and speaking, no previous interpretation of Philo adequately grasps the *logos* in these terms (*PS* 19).

Bucher thus begins anew by noting a linguistic distinction: "The external word (whether it be spoken or written) carries a doubleness in itself: on the one hand, something internal, the thought, which shall come to expression and representation; but on the other hand, also an external and sensuous form, in which every inner thought sees the light of day" (*PS* 19–20). In order to achieve a reinterpretation of Philo's thought, Bucher sets theological and cosmological beliefs aside, concentrating instead on a basic dichotomy in language. The realm of the internal thought is that of sense; the external form is an audible or visible sign. This verbal antithesis becomes the model of Philo's cosmology: "Completely analogous are also the appearances of the visible world, external signs, so to speak a grand sequence of letters, behind which a secret sense, the divine world of ideas, is concealed" (*PS* 20). Because the visible world is analogous to a sequence of letters (*Buchstaben*), an education in reading these signs is required for the recognition of the divine world of ideas behind external appearances. The externalized forms of word and world reveal and conceal the divine Word and world of ideas. *Logos* permeates the opposition. Like kabbalistic authors, Bucher writes, Philo understands the world as "a divine expression" (*ein göttlicher Ausspruch*) (*PS* 21). Thus the dialectics of *logos* must be realized, not simply reconciled.

Sense (*Sinn*) and written sign (*Schriftzeichen*) correspond to interiority and exteriority, thought and sensuous form, ideas and appearances, divine speaking and the divinely spoken. In other words, *logos* is the mediating unity of active and enacted speech, God's *legôn* and *legomenon* (*PS* 24–26). While *logos* is the mediating term between divine and worldly spheres, it is identified with both poles of the opposition.

Philo's central dialectic consists of *logos endiathetos* and *logos pro­phorikos*. Just as men may precede speech by thought, so God's speech, the world, is preceded by God's thought, the ideas. Bucher recognizes no essential difference between these two aspects of *logos*: "What a person speaks aloud, he has previously spoken inwardly.... But a distinction between *external* and internal speaking is grounded on the observation that thinking is an inner speaking, an inward-turned
speaking; for we do not think without words, and there is no clear, complete thought without word” (PS 29). Bucher observes that thinking is basically an inner speech, or an “inwardly turned speaking” (ein inwendiges Sprechen). Philo and Bucher follow the Platonic definition of thinking as “the internal dialogue of the mind with itself” (Sophist 263e). One might speculate on relationships between this inward dialogue and Socrates’ daimonion.

Bucher opposes the view that a conception of the doubled divine Logos gave rise to the belief in a doubled human logos (PS 30). According to Bucher, the distinction is originally present in human languages such as Greek, which employs logos in contexts referring to both “thinking” and “speaking.” Philo allegorizes the opposition of logos endiathetos and logos prophorikos and infers a distinction in the “sphere of the absolute” (PS 32). Personifications of the divine Logos should thus be understood allegorically; for Philo, angeloi synthesize Stoic forces and Platonic ideas (PS 42).

Because Philo’s works are structured primarily as scriptural interpretations, not as theoretical treatises, his thought has a fragmentary character. Yet he returns often to certain biblical figures: Adam and Eve, Cain and Abel, the Nephilim, Abraham and Isaac, Hagar, Jacob, Joseph, Moses and Aaron, Balaam. Philo conceives these diverse personalities as externalizations of God’s activity and hints at systematic meanings through allegorical interpretations. Similarly, the word of God (rheîma theou) contains a tension between logos endiathetos and logos prophorikos. While Philo presents himself as an interpreter of texts, he seeks to demonstrate that God’s transcendence and immanence are equivalent to mind and appearance, divine thought and letter.

But logos does not always appear in the singular form. In connection with the biblical account of Jacob’s dream, Philo associates logoi with the angels that ascend and descend; logoi are like ambassadors to God. In turn, Philo notes that logoi and angeloi are different names for what “other philosophers call daimones.”19 De gigantibus 6 similarly

19De Somn. I, 141-42. I have consulted and modified translations of Philo’s works that appear in F. H. Colson’s and G. H. Whitaker’s Philo, 10 vols. (London: William Heinemann, 1929-42). Philo is one of Heidegger’s most striking unacknowledged predecessors. Not only does Philo base his work on a distinction between onto-theological and ontic-existential logos; he asserts that logos is “the house of God” (De Mig. Abr. 2-4) and discusses God’s Lichtung as the archetype of visible light. As Bucher (PS 21) and others have recognized, Philo’s teaching shares images of light with kabbalistic mysticism. Furthermore, like the later kabbalistic sources, Philo writes that “a garment
explains that "those which other philosophers call daimones, Moses customarily calls angels." Philo both follows the tradition of Hesiodic daimones and suggests the Platonic myth of the Symposium 202e, when he adds that God has given to the logos "the chosen right to stand on the boundary and distinguish the Creator from the created. This same logos both acts as suppliant to the immortal for afflicted mortality and as ambassador of the ruler to the subject" (Quis Rer. Div. 205). Philo moves in the direction of visual representation when he describes the role of the logos as an ambassador. At the same time, Philo insists on the final unity of God's Logos with the logoi that are active as divine power, God's emanations. Though he returns to the Hesiodic and Platonic daimones, Philo gives them a new allegorical form in scriptural contexts.

God's relationship to his Logos and logoi thus parallels the opposition between logos endiathetos and logos prophorikos. Ethical questions arise when Philo illustrates this dialectic by means of biblical types: Abel and Cain, Moses and Aaron, Adam and Eve (Quod Det. 35–37, 126–27). Philo associates greater perfection with the logos endiathetos, which explains his special interest in ascetic Jewish sects. The two modes of logos correspond to two human types: "Many reason [logizontai] flawlessly but are betrayed by bad interpretation, that is, by bad logos... Others, however, have been most formidable in interpretation but most foul in giving advice, such as the so-called sophists" (De Mig. Abr. 72). Sophistry accounts for Abel's defeat by Cain: Abel, "though he had the advantage of a faultless understanding, yet through lack of training in speaking is worsted by Cain" (ibid., 74).

The doubleness of logos thus suggests an inevitable conflict between perfection and imperfection, good and evil. To account for the existence of worldly evil, Philo has recourse to a sharper separation of Logos from logoi, and of God's angelos from angeloi. When God creates

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is a symbol of logos" (De Somn. I.102). God is like an architect whose blueprint, the logos, informs the world (De Opif. 17–20). Compare Genesis Rabbah on Gen. 1:1.

20Conceived abstractly, this boundary logos is analogous to Heidegger's "ontological difference" between Being and beings.

21Outward expression is not merely an evil. Other passages insist that, just as Cain and Abel are brothers, so the body is brother of the soul; expressed language (prophorikos logos) is "closest kin to mind [nous]" (De Fug. 90). Moses requires the assistance of Aaron to express the perfect Logos. For the sake of human understanding, there must occur a kind of fall from divine mind to logos prophorikos.
man, His work is partially performed by angels; scripture states, "Let us make man" (Gen. 1:26) in order that "man's right actions might be attributed to God, but his sin to others" (De Conf. Ling. 179). Philo simplifies his analysis, however, by avoiding discussion of evil angels. Instead, he focuses on the work of God's angel as an elengchos, an examiner, appearing to oppose Balaam.

What does it mean for the divine Logos to enter a human soul? Philo wavers between the tradition of Mosaic revelation on Mount Sinai and the Platonic tradition of abstract revelation through wisdom (sophia). A logos comes to Philo at difficult moments of interpretation: "But I have sometimes heard an even more authoritative logos, from my own [eiōthuias] soul, which is often god-possessed and gives prophetic utterance concerning things of which it can have no knowledge" (De Cher. 27). The god-possessed (theolepteisthai) soul is at the origin of inspiration, enthusiasm. Philo insists that God "speaks" without voice; personifications of God are falsifications that only heuristic ends justify: "the logos [= hieros Logos?], longing to educate those whose lives are without knowledge, likened Him to man. . . . For this reason it has ascribed to Him face, hands, feet, mouth, voice, anger and indignation, and even armour, arrivals and departures, movements up and down" (De Somn. I.234–35). Representations are useful only to dull people who are "not able to conceive of God at all without a body, people whom it is impossible to instruct otherwise than in this way, saying that as a man does so, God arrives and departs, goes down and comes up, makes use of a voice" (ibid., 236). Such comments imply that the educated could entirely avoid the metaphorical prophorikos, and thus Philo allies himself with an asceticism of language.

But Philo constantly reverts to the deceptive illusions he condemns. For instance, when God gave the ten commandments (logous, chrēmous), He expressed Himself without the medium of voice: "I think that on this occasion God created a miracle most appropriate to the holy by summoning an invisible sound to be constructed [dēmiurges-thenai] in the air, more marvelous than all the instruments [organon] and fitted with perfect harmonies. . . . , a rational soul [psychēn logikēn] full of clearness and distinctness" (De Dec. 33). A new personification enters the description: "The power [dynamēis] of God drove forth the newly created voice [phōne], breathing on it [epipneusa], kindling it, and spreading it far and wide, and made it more luminous at the end [telos] by placing another hearing far better than that which works
through the ears in the souls of every man” (ibid., 35). The figure of an “invisible sound” carries Philo’s account beyond the range of the senses, creating for the reader a novel kind of hearing. Prototype of the ordinary logos, the ten commandments are expressed by divine mind and impressed on human reason without undergoing the distorting effects of air. God’s Logos appears to communicate directly with the internal logos endiathetos of men.

Philo writes as an enemy of figuration and of the logos prophorikos in general. His writings abound in visual imagery and are grounded on methods of allegorical interpretation, however, and he cannot maintain his distance from the ways in which language bears (prophero) meaning. If “inappropriate” figuration is inescapable, Philo can only encourage a strict distinction between allegorical and literal interpretation. Writing errs, and reading can only seek to swerve again and again from error. Philo ultimately succumbs to the logos that carries his words beyond the asceticism he wishes to proffer.

Encounters with satan

Postbiblical retellings of the story of Abraham and Isaac also move beyond the univocal divine call to representations of diverse angelic and satanic interventions. The increasing predominance of satan in later accounts suggests that, as Blake commented concerning Milton, many an exegete “wrote in fetters when he wrote of Angels and God, and at liberty when of Devils.” We need not draw Blake’s conclusion that they were “of the Devil’s party without knowing it,” but the question remains: How did satan penetrate the canonical tale of Abraham’s last trial?

The akedah, the story of the binding of Isaac, is “fraught with background [hintergründig],” and postbiblical commentators repeatedly add to the minimal details of the original. Because these additions take the form of aggadah, or legend, they are not bound to the stricter constraints of halakah, normative law. Retellings that date from

22William Blake, “The Marriage of Heaven and Hell.”
about 200 B.C.E. to 700 C.E. reveal the changing attitudes of their distinct contexts. The interpreters obviously rely on preexisting notions of the heavenly court and revise the narrative according to their angelological assumptions. These versions of the *akedah* also respond directly to each other and embody a complex tradition of intertextual relations.

Three versions of the binding of Isaac illustrate the developing traditions of Jewish angelology and demonology: the Book of Jubilees 17–18, Sanhedrin 89b, and Midrash Tanchuma, Vayirah 22–23. With the exception of the early Book of Jubilees, these works are central to the rabbinic canon.

The Book of Jubilees suggests some of the earliest major additions to Genesis 22. This pseudepigraphic work claims to be an angel’s revelation to Moses on Mount Sinai; as a result, the retelling of Genesis occurs in the first-person form. Genesis 22 thus becomes part of the angel’s narrative, as when “I called to him from the heavens, saying: Abraham, Abraham” (chap. 18).

The shift to an angel’s narrative is accompanied by additions to the role of an accusing spirit. According to the the Book of Jubilees, the Prince of Mastema \(^{26}\) inspires Abraham’s last trial: “the Prince Mastema came and said before God: Behold, Abraham loves Isaac his son, and delights in him above all things else. Bid him offer him...”

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For a fuller bibliography on Midrash, see the notes to David Stern’s “Rhetoric and Midrash: The Case of the Mashal,” *Prooftexts*, 1 (1981), 261–91.

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\(^{26}\) In the Ethiopian text, this evil spirit is at various points called the “Prince Mastema,” the “Prince of Mastema,” and the “Prince of the Mastema.” The name derives from the Hebrew root meaning “to accuse.” The dark prince is thus a prince of accusation, or prince of the accusations, perhaps leader of a group of evil spirits.
as a burnt offering on the altar, and You will see if he will do this command, and You will know if he is faithful in everything wherein You try him” (chap. 17). In Genesis 22, only God is named as initiator of the command; here Mastema follows the satan of the Book of Job and provokes the test. This alteration makes God’s action more comprehensible: in response to evil powers that doubt Abraham, God resolves to demonstrate Abraham’s piety by means of a test. Yet as in the Book of Job, the acknowledgment of evil powers has a subversive tendency to relativize God’s mastery over the world.

In this early revision, the Prince of Mastema is clearly subordinate to God. He can only propose the test and later suffer humiliation when Abraham is strong: “And the Prince of the Mastema was put to shame” (chap. 18). Mastema’s “shame” indicates the presence of an extensive heavenly court.

Sanhedrin, one of the sixty-three tractates of the Babylonian Talmud, retells the story of Abraham and Isaac in the traditions of the Book of Jubilees and the Book of Job: “Satan spoke before the Holy One, blessed be He: Master of the Universe! You graced this old man with the fruit of the womb at the age of a hundred, yet of all the banquet he prepared, he did not have one turtle-dove or pigeon to sacrifice before You” (Sanh. 89b). Satan’s intervention appears as an explanation of Genesis 22:1. Its purported origin is an oral tradition based on the words of Rabbis Johanan and Jose b. Zimra, but the Book of Job and the Book of Jubilees are written precedents.

Sanhedrin adds a further event that significantly extends satan’s range of activity. Previously, the evil instigator had appeared before God’s assembly, as in the Book of Job: “Now there was a day when the sons of God came to present themselves before YHWH, and satan also came among them” (Job 1:6). In the second part of Sanhedrin’s revision, satan comes to earth and speaks directly to Abraham. Many of satan’s words are citations from the speech of Eliphaz in Job 4, and as a result, the human or superhuman nature of this accuser remains ambiguous:

Satan anticipated him on the way and said to him, “If one attempts a word [da’var] with you, will you be weary? [. . .] Behold, you have instructed many, and you have strengthened weak hands. Your words

27Compare Genesis Rabbah 55:4, where the accusation is alternatively attributed either to Abraham himself or to God’s ministering angels.
have upheld a stumbler. [...] But now it has come upon you, and you are weary” [Job 4:2-5].

He [Abraham] said to him, “I will walk in my integrity” [Ps. 26:1].
He said to him, “Is not your fear of God your foolishness [kislatecha]?” [Job 4:6].
He said to him, “Remember, who that was innocent ever perished?” [Job 4:7]. [Sanh. 89b]

In this contest of scriptural citations, the accuser could be a false friend like Eliphaz, or a satanic manifestation, or both. The satan ultimately claims to possess inside information, “from beyond the partition,” God’s inner secrets, but Abraham repulses him with the rejoinder: “It is the penalty of a liar, that even if he tells the truth, he is not listened to” (ibid.). The Talmudic account brings satan down to earth and places him in direct confrontation with Abraham. Transformed from an accuser within God’s court into a tempter among men, satan is on the way to becoming an independent force of worldly evil. Of course, the interpreters introduce satan to emphasize his spectacular failure: despite all efforts to spoil the fulfillment of God’s command, Abraham remains unmoved. 28

Quotation is the primary rhetorical device of Sanhedrin’s revision. In the new context, words from Job and Psalms become satan’s accusations and temptations. Satan undermines Abraham by revealing hidden meanings, as in the question, “Is not your fear of God your foolishness?” In Job 4:6, this question signifies, “Is not your fear of God your strength?” Satan uncovers and exploits a further meaning of the Hebrew kislatecha.

The satan of Tanchuma, a fuller expansion of the akedah, frees himself from his subservient origins in the divine assembly. This account does not mention the initial accusation against Abraham; instead, it represents satan’s independent work as deceiver and tempter. Tanchuma follows the pattern of Sanhedrin, but without the scriptural allusions:

Satan anticipated him on the way and appeared to him [Abraham] in the form of an old man.
He said to him, Where are you going?
He said to him, To pray.

28 In Genesis Rabbah 56:4, however, samael (another name for satan) succeeds in partly unsettling Isaac. Here the demonic agency oversteps the purported goal, to test Abraham’s piety.
He said to him, And someone who is going to pray, why does he carry fire and a knife in his hand and wood on his shoulder?

He said to him, In case we stay a day or two and we slaughter, cook, and eat. [Tanch., Vayirah 22]

Whereas Sanhedrin leaves satan’s form mysterious, Tanchuma specifies that satan appears “in the form of an old man.” To Abraham, then, the tempter seems to be merely another human being.

Tanchuma’s satan plays a devious trick of disparate voices, in order to suggest that the trial has been commanded, and not merely provoked, by the tempter: “He [satan] said to him [Abraham]: Old Man, wasn’t I there when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to you, ‘Take your son’? And an old man like you will go and lose a son that was given to him at the age of a hundred! Haven’t you heard the parable of one who lost what he had in his hand, and begged from others? And if you answer, I will have another son, then listen to the tempter [masteen], destroy a soul, and you will be guilty” (ibid.). Abraham is aware of the deception and responds: “Not the tempter, but rather the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, said to me, ‘Take now your son.’” But while Abraham thus affirms the authenticity of God’s command, his encounter with the tempter (masteen) suggests dualistic tendencies.29

The sequence of satanic interventions outlines a development toward increasingly dualistic speculation. Not only do the later interpreters give special importance to satan’s efforts; they also hint that satan may not be entirely subordinate to God. At the same time that stories about demons flourished, suspicions also increased. When God’s angel calls from heaven to annul the command, Tanchuma represents Abraham in the position of demanding a dialogue with God. The mediated call now appears insufficient:

An angel of YHWH called to him from the heavens, saying:

Abraham, Abraham!

Why twice? Because he was hurrying and was going to kill him.

And he said to him:

29 In a moment of supreme deception, the satan of Vayosha also ascribes the trial, not to God, but to the tempter: “Unfortunate one! Wasn’t I there when the tempter [masteen] said to you, ‘Take your son, your only one, whom you love, and offer him up to me as a burnt offering’? And an old man like you will lose such a sweet son, a youth whom the Holy One, blessed be He, gave you at one hundred years of age?” At the same time that he conceals his identity, satan maintains that he commanded the sacrifice.
Do not stretch forth your hand to the lad.  
He said to him, Who are you?  
He said to him, An angel.  
He said to him, When He said to me, “Take now your son,” the Holy One, blessed be He, Himself, spoke to me. And now, if He wishes, let Him speak to me. [Tanch., Vayirah 23]

At this late stage of Midrashic development, the distinction between God and His angel has been established; Abraham no longer recognizes God's will in an angel's call. The terrible fear is, of course, that Abraham may confuse the voice of God with the voice of satan. This latter-day Abraham was perhaps the first to express dissatisfaction with God's angel and to demand an audience with God Himself.

The mystery and "background" of Genesis 22 reflect the theology of the Hebrew Bible. "After these things, God tested Abraham": despite all efforts of later interpreters, the reason for the test eludes our understanding. The true YHWH cannot be known, and no divine motives can be established as the reason for Abraham's last trial. Later aggadic versions of Genesis 22 remove aspects of its mystery, when "after these things" comes to mean "after the words of satan," who accuses Abraham before God, and the three days' journey include satan's temptations.

The successive expansions of the akedah thus manifest increasing modifications of the initial, radically monotheistic account. The ineffable God becomes more accessible when represented in form similar to a Persian king who sits enthroned before his court. Instead of attributing the test to a negative aspect of God, of course, postbiblical retellings introduce satan to take the blame. At first Mastema must present his accusations before God and must receive approval in order for the trial to begin; later, satan appears to achieve virtual independence and is capable of entering into subversive dialogue with Abraham and Isaac. To some extent, the expanded akedah reflects the demonology that had developed during the time of its successive revisions. Postbiblical versions of the akedah justify their existence through their vivid representation of scenes, but they also drift away from the strictest monotheism of YHWH.

The propensity to believe in "two powers in heaven" has always been perceived as a threat to rabbinic Judaism. Thus Philo's double logos and the legends of angels and satan have never been comfortably accepted by the rationalistic strands of Jewish religious thought. Yet
the ascetic practices of the Essenes and Therapeutai found expression in Christianity, and the logos endiathetos, a figure of inward-turned language and prototype of confession, is the distant forerunner of modern mono-logos. Skeptical of proffered speech and inclined to solitary study of Scripture, the ascetic Jewish sects developed belief in the God within, a logos partaking of the divine.

The representation of angels as God’s messengers, to the extent that it gives concrete forms to aspects of God, is unacceptable from the standpoint of the most literal interpretation of Jewish law. An ascetic component of Judaism consequently turns theological language “inward” toward logos endiathetos. The radical expression of Philo’s linguistic asceticism is his neo-Platonic polemic against the sophists; the conflict with dualistic tendencies centers around the anthropomorphic views of satan and angels. Like Socrates’ daimonion, satan is a figure of turning, deviation. The daimonion turns Socrates away from false steps; the satan turns men away from God by causing them to deviate from the strictest monotheism. But the real error is to read satan literally, as a metaphysically existing evil angel, rather than as a figure for the worldly evil that confronts men. Avodah zarah, idol worship, thus appears as a problem of mistakenly literal interpretation. Postbiblical commentaries containing the word satan are not intrinsically suspect; rather, overliteral interpretations of this satan (and of God’s manifestations) lead men astray.

Despite ascetic leanings, then, Philo and many Hebrew sources show a double interest in stories of angels and satan. The logos of Judaism is at war within itself, retaining its secrets while concealing its concealment by pretending to proffer what it cannot give.30

30The decision of modernity has been to read angeloi and satan in an allegory that empties these words of spiritual content. Eighteenth-century English aesthetics illustrates the displacement of spiritual daimôn and radical monotheism by psychological genius and radical monologue.