HEKHAL · READER'S EDITION



Las Moradas (El Castillo Interior)

The Interior Castle

Las Moradas · The Dwelling Places

Hekhal Targum Project (machine-assisted draft; pending scholarly review)

PROVISIONAL EDITION · MACHINE-ASSISTED · NOT YET REVIEWED BY A CREDENTIALED EDITOR

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> What this is: a machine-assisted, provisional translation. Every rendering choice and every unresolved reading is recorded in the apparatus beside the text. If you read the original and something looks wrong, write to community@hekhal.org; corrections are credited.

The Interior Castle (*Las Moradas*) is the central work of Teresa of Ávila's spiritual theology and the experiential heart of the Carmelite contemplative tradition. Composed in five months in 1577 under obedience to her confessor and while the Carmelite reform she had built across Spain was under institutional attack, the work organizes the contemplative life around a single decisive image: the soul as a castle of seven concentric dwelling places, with the King at the center.

Teresa's seven *moradas* are the structural skeleton of an extended phenomenology of interior prayer, moving from the active forms a practitioner can cultivate (the first three dwellings) through the hinge into infused contemplation (the fourth) and onward to the spiritual marriage of the seventh. The sixth dwelling place, the longest, is the most unusual document on locutions, visions, and the criteria for discernment in the mystical literature of any tradition.

The structural parallel to the **Heikhalot** literature, seven heavenly palaces, concentric architecture, progressive initiation, the divine presence at the terminus, is the most important comparative argument the Hekhal corpus makes. Teresa almost certainly did not know the Heikhalot texts. The parallel is structural, not documentary. Two traditions arrived at the same architectural metaphor for the interior life. The map of the interior is not one tradition's invention; it is what the interior looks like when mapped carefully, from any direction.

CROSS-REFERENCES

- Sefer ha-Bahir, the Sefirot as parallel architectural metaphor for the divine interior.

- Mystical Theology, the Dionysian apophatic inheritance Teresa works within and against.
- Apophasis (ἀπόφασις), the negative-theological mode Teresa accepts and exceeds in the sixth dwelling.
- Mysterion (μυστήριον), the initiated mystery; spiritual marriage as its consummate form.

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The Interior Castle

LAS MORADAS

CANONICAL

SPANISH · 1577 · CASTILE

PROLOGUE · FIRST DWELLING PLACES

Section summary by Hekhal Editorial. No published English translation is reproduced.

Prologue Teresa opens with a self-deprecating note on writing under obedience: the task is difficult, she is ill, and she will write what she

PRÓLOGO · PRIMERAS MORADAS

Pocas cosas que me ha mandado la obediencia se me han hecho tan dificultosas como escribir ahora cosa de oración.

"Few things which obedience has lai upon me have been so difficult as th present task of writing about matter of prayer.": *Prólogo*

remembers from earlier accounts now lost to her. She introduces her organizing image: the soul as a castle, "*una hermosura grande*," a great beauty, made of a single diamond or clear crystal, with many dwelling places and the King at the center. The image is offered as a way of speaking about the interior life that does not require the reader to have prior theological vocabulary.

First Dwelling · I The first dwelling places are entered by prayer and self-knowledge. Teresa is precise that *self-knowledge* is the beginning of the journey, not because the goal is psychological insight but because the soul cannot meet what is at the center until it has begun to see what stands between it and the center. Prayer, in the first dwellings, is mostly the work of attention.

First Dwelling · II The dangers of the first dwellings are the ordinary entanglements of the active life:

◆ ◆

El Castillo Interior

"a castle made entirely of a diamond o of very clear crystal"

◆ ◆

Las Moradas Primeras

prayer · self-knowledge · the beginning o the way

Spanish original · public domain

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preoccupations, lukewarmness, the pull of habits the soul has not yet examined. Teresa describes these without moralizing; she treats them as terrain features of a place the reader is in, not faults to be ashamed of.

1

SECOND AND THIRD DWELLING PLACES

MORADAS SEGUNDAS Y TERCERAS

Section summary by Hekhal Editorial.

Second Dwelling The soul that has begun the journey now hears, more clearly, the calls that draw it inward: through sermons, through reading, through the example of others, through illness, through the small daily mercies that the inattentive miss. Teresa describes this stage as one of effortful perseverance against the resistance of one's own formed

Moradas Segundas

perseverance · interior call · the resistanc of formed habit

◆ ◆

Moradas Terceras

stable virtue · the temptation to stop · th requirement of humility

↓ ↓ ↓

habits. Prayer is still mostly meditation; consolation is intermittent.

Third Dwelling The third dwelling is where many serious practitioners stop. Teresa is candid about the trap: the soul has reached a stable virtuous life, observes the moral law, prays regularly, and could remain there indefinitely without further interior movement. The danger is not vice but complacency. What is needed at this stage is not more effort in the same direction but a willingness for the soul's centre of gravity to shift, which requires a humility the third-dwelling soul finds difficult.

The hinge The transition from the third to the fourth dwelling is the central structural event of the *Interior Castle*. What changes is not what the soul does but what is being done in the soul. The acquired prayer of the first three dwellings, which the practitioner can produce

THE HINGE

acquired prayer → infused prayer

"oración adquirida → oración infusa"

4

by their own effort, gives way to an infused prayer that the soul receives without being able to produce it. Teresa is precise about this transition; missing it is missing the book.

3

FOURTH AND FIFTH DWELLING PLACES

MORADAS CUARTAS Y QUINTAS

Section summary by Hekhal Editorial.

Fourth Dwelling Teresa introduces the *prayer of quiet* (*oración de quietud*), the first form of genuinely infused prayer. The will is gathered into a stillness that the practitioner could not have produced by effort. The intellect may continue its activity at the surface; the deeper faculty has been touched by something it did not seek and does not control. Teresa distinguishes this

Moradas Cuartas

oración de quietud

”the prayer of quiet”: the first infused form

◆ ◆

Moradas Quintas

oración de unión

”the prayer of union”

◆ ◆

carefully from acquired recollection that resembles it; the criteria for distinguishing them are pastoral and precise.

Fifth Dwelling The fifth dwelling describes the *prayer of union* (*oración de unión*) in its early forms. The soul is carried briefly into a union with God that suspends ordinary faculties. Teresa uses the image of the silkworm becoming a butterfly: the practitioner who has built a cocoon by their own effort discovers that the cocoon was preparation for something they could not have anticipated. The new creature is not the old one improved; it is a different creature.

Two registers The fourth and fifth dwellings are described in a register that distinguishes Teresa from most prior writers in the Christian mystical tradition. She is not describing doctrine; she is describing experience, and she is doing so with

el gusano de seda → la mariposita

the silkworm becomes the butterfly

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attention to what cannot be willed and what can be wrongly identified. The phenomenological precision of these chapters is what the rest of the book builds on.

5

SIXTH DWELLING PLACES

Section summary by Hekhal Editorial. The longest section of the work.

VI · Locutions The sixth dwelling place, the longest in the work, treats the phenomena that arise as the soul approaches the center: locutions (interior, exterior, imaginative), visions (intellectual and imaginative), raptures, flights of the spirit, and the trials that accompany them. Teresa is not performing mystical experience. She is establishing criteria for *discernment*: how to distinguish genuine interior movement from

MORADAS SEXTAS

Moradas Sextas

la morada más larga: the longest dwellin

◆ ◆

hablas interiores

interior locutions

visiones imaginarias e intelectuales

imaginative and intellectual visions

arrobamientos · vuelos del espíritu

raptures · flights of the spirit

self-deception, pathology, or demonic counterfeit.

VI · Discernment The criteria are psychological before they are theological: the genuine experience leaves lasting effects (humility, charity, courage); the false leaves agitation, vanity, or a preoccupation with the experience itself. Teresa's discernment doctrine is the most sophisticated psychological assessment of mystical phenomena in the Christian tradition, and it has made the *Interior Castle* a reference point for contemporary psychiatric and psychological literature on religious experience.

VI · Trials The trials of the sixth dwelling are severe: interior aridity, the sense of abandonment by God, the misunderstanding of confessors, illness, persecution, the fear of being deceived. Teresa names each from experience. The dwelling is not consoling. It is the place where the

◆ ◆

DISCERNMENT

criteria psychological before theologica

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soul's attachments to its own consolations are dismantled.

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SEVENTH DWELLING PLACES · SPIRITUAL MARRIAGE

Section summary by Hekhal Editorial.

VII · Spiritual Marriage The seventh dwelling is the goal. Teresa calls it *matrimonio espiritual*, spiritual marriage, and is careful to distinguish it from the earlier experiences of union that might suggest premature arrival. What is distinctive is not intensity but **stability**: not an experience that comes and goes but a condition of the soul that persists through ordinary activity, illness, the full range of what a human life involves.

VII · Stability The mystic who has reached the seventh dwelling

MORADAS SÉPTIMAS · MATRIMONIO ESPIRITUAL

Moradas Séptimas

Matrimonio Espiritual

spiritual marriage: the goal

◆ ◆

no intensidad sino estabilidad

not intensity but stability

◆ ◆

"the destination is not a state that removes the mystic from the world

does not live in continuous ecstasy. They live in continuous groundedness in the presence at the center. This turns out to be compatible with reforming religious orders, founding convents, writing letters to kings, and being perpetually ill. Teresa is describing her own life. The destination is not a state that removes the mystic from the world but a foundation that makes fuller engagement with it possible.

VII · Conclusion The closing chapters describe the fruits of spiritual marriage: a desire for nothing except what God wills, a forgetfulness of self, an unfailing peace, and an apostolic orientation: the soul that has reached the center is given back to others. Teresa ends the work with the same self-deprecation she began it with, asking the sisters at her convents to pray for her.

but a foundation that makes fuller engagement with it possible”

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APPARATUS · HEIKHALOT ↔ MORADAS

The flagship cross-tradition parallel.

The Heikhalot tradition · 3rd-7th c. CE

The mystic ascends through **seven heavenly palaces** (היכלות, *heikhalot*), each guarded by angelic beings who must be satisfied for passage to be granted, toward the divine throne (the *merkavah*) at the center. The journey is called a *descent* (*yeridah*) in a terminological paradox the scholarship has never resolved: the ascent through the palaces is a movement into depth.

Teresa's Interior Castle · 1577

The soul is a castle of **seven dwelling places** (*moradas*), traversed inward toward the King at

THE MAP OF THE INTERIOR

Heikhalot · seven palaces

היכלות · ז׳ היכלות

heavenly palaces · ascent through gates

↕

Moradas · seven dwellings

Las Siete Moradas

interior castle · descent toward the King

Structural, not documentary

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the center. The structural parallel to the Heikhalot is precise: seven stages, concentric architecture, progressive initiation, the divine presence at the terminus, the dangers of premature or unprepared approach.

Teresa almost certainly did not know the Heikhalot texts. The parallel is **structural, not documentary**. Two traditions, separated by a millennium, arrived at the same architectural metaphor. The map of the interior is not one tradition's invention.

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▽

Teresa of Ávila · An orientation

In the summer of 1577, in the Castilian city of Ávila, a sixty-two-year-old Carmelite nun who had spent the previous two decades reforming her order across Spain, founding seventeen convents while fighting ecclesiastical opposition, navigating the Inquisition, and carrying on an extensive correspondence with Philip II, sat down under obedience to her confessor and wrote a book in five months. She wrote it while ill, while the reform she had built was under institutional attack, while John of the Cross was imprisoned in Toledo by the unreformed Carmelites and composing in a jail cell the poems that would become the *Dark Night* and the *Spiritual Canticle*. She wrote it, she said, because she could not remember what she had written in an earlier account of her prayer life that the Inquisition had confiscated and she had been asked to write again. The book she produced was not a restatement of the earlier one. It was

something she had not written before and that no one had written before her.

Teresa of Cepeda y Ahumada called it *Las Moradas*, the Dwelling Places, or the Mansions. The English title *The Interior Castle* comes from the organizing image she uses to introduce it: the soul is a castle or a diamond or a clear crystal, and inside it are many dwelling places, and at the center of those dwelling places is the King, and the journey of the contemplative life is the journey inward through the concentric chambers toward the presence at the center. The image is not decorative. It is doing structural work that connects, across a distance of a thousand years and a significant cultural gulf, to the most ancient Jewish mystical literature that gives Hekhal its name.

The Heikhalot texts, composed in the late antique Jewish world somewhere between the third and seventh centuries, describe the mystic's ascent through seven heavenly palaces, each guarded by angelic gatekeepers who must be satisfied before passage is permitted, toward the divine throne at the center. The word *heikhal* (היכל), the inner sanctuary of the Temple, is the word for each of these palaces. The mystic who makes this ascent is called a *yored merkavah*, a descender

to the chariot, in a terminological paradox that the scholarship has never entirely resolved: the ascent through the heavenly palaces is called a descent, possibly because the journey inward is understood as a movement into depth rather than height, possibly because the terminology preserves traces of an older practice. Teresa's seven *moradas* are seven dwelling places in an interior castle that is the soul itself, traversed inward toward a presence at the center. The structural parallel is precise: seven stages, concentric architecture, progressive initiation, the divine presence at the terminus, the dangers of premature or unprepared approach.

Teresa almost certainly did not know the Heikhalot texts. She was a *conversa* on her father's side, her grandfather Juan Sánchez de Toledo having been prosecuted by the Inquisition for secretly practicing Judaism after his formal conversion, and her family's Jewish heritage was a documented biographical fact she lived with carefully in Counter-Reformation Spain. Whether that heritage transmitted to her, through family practice or cultural memory, anything of the Jewish mystical tradition that used the palace architecture as its central organizing metaphor is a question that cannot be answered with the available

evidence. The parallel is structural, not documentary. It demands attention precisely because it is not a case of influence: two traditions, separated by geography and confession and a millennium of diverging history, arrived at the same architectural metaphor for the interior life and organized around it a remarkably similar phenomenology of progressive approach toward a center that the ordinary self cannot sustain.

What Hekhal proposes in placing these two traditions in explicit structural comparison is not that they say the same thing. They do not. The Heikhalot mystic ascends through hierarchies of angelic beings and divine fire in a cosmological journey that is simultaneously interior and celestial, and the tradition is as concerned with danger and protection as with arrival. Teresa's journey is through psychological states, prayer forms, resistances, consolations, and trials that are recognizably the experiences of a specific woman in a specific religious context, described with a phenomenological precision that has no parallel in the Heikhalot literature. The differences are as significant as the parallel. What the parallel suggests is that the concentric palace architecture is not an arbitrary metaphor but something closer to a natural form, a

shape that the interior life tends to take when pressed far enough, a structure that appears when the cartographic impulse turns inward and tries to map what it finds there. This is the Hekhal editorial position on cross-tradition convergences stated most concretely: the map of the interior is not one tradition's invention. It is what the interior looks like when mapped carefully, from any direction.

Teresa's seven dwelling places are not seven equal stages. The first three are characterized by what she calls acquired prayer, the forms of interior life the practitioner can cultivate through their own effort: recollection, meditation, active contemplation. The transition between the third and fourth dwelling places is the central hinge of the book, and Teresa is precise about what changes there. In the fourth dwelling place something begins to happen that the practitioner is not doing. The prayer of quiet, the prayer of union in its initial forms, are given rather than achieved. The soul that has prepared itself as thoroughly as it can is now in a position to receive something it cannot produce, and the rest of the *Interior Castle* is a phenomenology of what being in that position feels like, what it does to the personality, what trials it involves, and what it is approaching.

The sixth dwelling place is the longest and the most demanding section of the book, and it is where Teresa's particular genius as a spiritual writer is most fully displayed. She is describing locutions, visions, intellectual and imaginative, the experiences of someone whose prayer has become so intense that the boundary between ordinary consciousness and something else has become genuinely porous, and she is describing these things with a combination of theological precision and personal candor that makes the sixth dwelling place one of the most unusual documents in the mystical literature of any tradition. She is not performing mystical experience. She is trying to establish criteria for discernment, to give her readers tools for distinguishing genuine interior movement from self-deception, pathology, or demonic counterfeit. The criteria she develops are psychological before they are theological, and they hold up under examination with a sophistication that has made the *Interior Castle* a reference point for contemporary psychological and psychiatric literature on religious experience.

The seventh dwelling place is the goal. Teresa calls it spiritual marriage, and she is careful to distinguish it from the earlier

experiences of union that might suggest arrival prematurely. What is distinctive about spiritual marriage, in her account, is its stability: not an experience that comes and goes but a condition of the soul that persists through ordinary activity, through illness, through the full range of what a human life involves. The mystic who has reached the seventh dwelling place does not live in continuous ecstasy. They live in continuous groundedness in the presence at the center, which turns out to be compatible with reforming religious orders, founding convents, writing letters to kings, and being perpetually ill. This is Teresa's most important phenomenological claim and the one that makes the *Interior Castle* most useful as a map: the destination is not a state that removes the mystic from the world but a foundation that makes fuller engagement with it possible.

Teresa died four years after completing the book, in 1582, while traveling between convents. The reform she built survived the institutional opposition that had threatened it throughout her active years. John of the Cross, who had been her collaborator and her confessor and who shared her understanding of the Carmelite contemplative vocation at the deepest level, outlived her by nine years and wrote the

systematic theological account of the journey she had described experientially. The two together constitute a unified Carmelite contemplative theology that is the most complete account of the Christian mystical path available in any tradition, and the *Interior Castle* is its experiential heart: the document written from inside the journey by someone who made it and came back to say what she found.

The *Interior Castle* reaches the modern reader through three principal streams of reception: the Carmelite tradition's internal commentary (organized around the relationship between Teresa's text and John of the Cross's parallel systematization), the modern Catholic spiritual-theology tradition (Garrigou-Lagrange, Stein, von Balthasar), and the academic literary-critical tradition that places Teresa among the major Spanish-language prose writers of the early modern period.

The standard scholarly English edition is **Kavanaugh and Rodriguez**, *The Collected Works of St. Teresa of Avila*, vol. 2 (ICS Publications, 1980; under copyright). **Edith Stein**'s mid-twentieth-century Carmelite reading and **Rowan Williams**'s *Teresa of Avila* (1991) are the most influential modern theological treatments. The

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Colophon

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