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**Title** Angels among Us: The Use of Old Testament Passages as Inspiration for Temple Themes in the Dead Sea Scrolls

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**Abstract** A number of texts from the Qumran scrolls demonstrate the community's interest in heavenly ascent and in communion with angels. This article lays out a pattern observable in some of the poetic/liturgical texts (for example, the *Hodayot* and other noncanonical psalms) in which the leader of the community is taken up into the divine council of God to be taught the heavenly mysteries, is appointed a teacher of those mysteries, and is then commissioned to share the teachings with his followers. Upon learning the mysteries, the followers are enabled to likewise ascend to heaven to praise God with the angels. In some texts, the human worshippers appear to undergo a transfiguration so that they become like the heavenly beings. This article further illustrates how these elements can be found together in a liturgical text known as the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*; their collective presence suggests that all were part of a ritual sequence. Finally, the article argues that these same elements, or traditions related to them, can be found in passages from the Old Testament.

# ANGELS AMONG US: THE USE OF OLD TESTAMENT PASSAGES AS INSPIRATION FOR TEMPLE THEMES IN THE DEAD SEA SCROLLS

David J. Larsen

The Dead Sea Scrolls have long been popular with Latter-day Saints. Among the scrolls from Qumran are the oldest biblical manuscripts ever found, some of which differ from the texts that became a part of our Old Testament. The Dead Sea Scrolls also provide insight into the religious beliefs and practices of a community of Jews that lived in the intertestamental period. Many of the manuscripts discovered were not biblical texts but were compositions that dealt with the community's beliefs and standards of conduct, as well as their interpretation of scripture and their expectations for the fulfillment of biblical prophecy.

The Dead Sea Scrolls composition known as *Rule of the Congregation* (1Q28a/1QSa) declares that all who desire membership in the elect community need to be sufficiently worthy to be admitted, “for the holy angels are [a part of] their [congrega]tion” (1QSa II, 8-9).<sup>1</sup>

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1. Translation by Michael O. Wise, Martin Abegg, and Edward M. Cook with Nehemia Gordon, “Rule of the Congregation,” in *Texts Concerned with Religious Law, The Dead Sea Scrolls Reader, Part 1*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Emanuel Tov (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 197. Bracketed words in Qumran texts indicate places where the original text on the scroll was severely damaged or missing. Scholars have, in these cases, attempted to reconstruct the plausible original text, but the reader cannot assume that these reconstructions are always accurate.

Other Qumran texts such as the *Hodayot (Thanksgiving Psalms)*, the related *Self-Glorification Hymn*, the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, and many other liturgical and poetical texts imply a belief in liturgical communion with angelic beings and human access to the divine council in the celestial temple of God.<sup>2</sup> My research on these texts has revealed a pattern that, when pieced together, can be outlined as follows:

- an individual, often the speaker of the hymn/psalm or a leader of the community/congregation, speaks as if he has been taken up into heaven to stand in the divine council of God;
- in that setting, he is instructed in the praise of God and is taught the heavenly “mysteries,” often by God himself in a theophanic experience;
- the individual is appointed to be a teacher, often with the implication that he will teach the mysteries that he learned from God to others;
- those who follow his teachings are similarly enabled to participate in the heavenly vision and praise God together with the angels, often singing or shouting for joy; some texts suggest that they may have been subsequently clothed with heavenly robes in imitation of the heavenly beings.

I will analyze each of these points in turn, emphasizing how each is dependent on biblical passages and other traditions.

### **Ascension of the Individual to the Divine Council**

One of the best-known texts from Qumran that describes a human ascending to heaven to participate in the divine council is the so-called *Self-Glorification Hymn*, which is found in four manu-

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2. For a summary of recent research on this topic, see Angela Kim Harkins, “A New Proposal for Thinking about 1QH<sup>a</sup> Sixty Years after Its Discovery,” in *Qumran Cave 1 Revisited: Texts from Cave 1 Sixty Years after Their Discovery: Proceedings of the Sixth Meeting of the IOQS in Ljubljana*, ed. Daniel K. Falk, Sarianna Metso, Donald W. Parry, and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 101–34.

scripts from Cave 4. The speaker claims to dwell in heaven and to have incomparable glory among the heavenly beings; he occupies a “throne of power in the congregation of the gods.” The language of the text, however, arguably belongs to a human voice, not to an angelic or deific one.

James Davila calls this text “an unambiguous case of ascent and enthronement mysticism, in which a human being ascends to heaven and is transformed into a glorious heavenly being who takes a seat on high.”<sup>3</sup> This remarkable composition is not entirely unique in the Qumran library. A fragmentary copy of the text is found among the *Hodayot*, and a number of the hymns in this collection describe a similar situation for the protagonist—the speaker of the hymn/psalm—albeit generally in less glorified language.

For example, in numerous places of 1QHodayot<sup>a</sup> the speaker thanks God for having delivered him from suffering and for having “raised” him “to the eternal height,” or heavenly realm. The speaker expresses gratitude to God.

I thank you, Lord, that you have redeemed my life from the pit, and that from Sheol-Abaddon You have lifted me up to an eternal height, so that I walk about on a limitless plain. I know that there is hope for one whom you have formed from the dust for an eternal council . . . that he might take his place with the host of the holy ones and enter into community with the congregation of the children of heaven (1QH<sup>a</sup> XI, 20-23).<sup>4</sup>

Similarly, the speaker praises God for having purified him from sin “that he might be united with the children of your truth and in the lot with your holy ones,” that he “might be raised up from the dust to the council of [your] t[ruth] . . . so that he may take (his)

3. James R. Davila, “Exploring the Mystical Background of the Dead Sea Scrolls,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, ed. Timothy H. Lim and John J. Collins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 438.

4. Based on the translation by Carol Newsom in Hartmut Stegemann and Eileen Schuller, *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XL: 1QHodayot<sup>a</sup>* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2009), 155.

place before you with the everlasting host and the [eternal] spirit[s]" (1QH<sup>a</sup> XIX, 14-16).<sup>5</sup>

The parallel collection from Cave 4 contains many similar expressions. 4QHodayot<sup>a</sup> 7 ii, 8-9 reads, "(God) lifts up the poor from the dust to [the eternal height,] and to the clouds he magnifies him in stature, and (he is) with the heavenly beings in the assembly of the community."<sup>6</sup> The repeated suggestion that the individual has been lifted "from the dust" recalls the biblical story of the creation of Adam in Genesis 2:7, where the first man is formed from the dust of the ground and is subsequently placed in the Garden of Eden. Crispin Fletcher-Louis notes that "much of the *Hodayot* is a sustained and extended meditation on the anthropology of Genesis 2:7." As some texts indicate, only after he is formed from the lowly dust is he elevated to a higher, more glorious state when God places him in the garden. Fletcher-Louis observes that Eden parallels the Jewish temple in some texts and asserts that "the movement of Adam (and Eve) into Eden becomes a paradigm for entry and full inclusion of the Israelite in the Temple and in the holiness that it gives God's people."<sup>7</sup>

The Qumran authors are demonstrably dependent on other biblical passages aside from Genesis, particularly on those having to do with kingship motifs, including the biblical psalms. An expression very similar to the line from 4QH<sup>a</sup> 7 quoted above appears in 1 Samuel 2:8 ASV (which some scholars refer to as a royal psalm): "[God] raises up the poor from the dust . . . to make them sit with princes, and inherit [a] throne of glory" (cf. Psalm 113:7). The raising-from-the-dust motif signifies the election of a ruler from among the common people, as we see in the words of God to King Baasha of Israel: "I exalted you out of the dust and made you leader over my people Israel" (1 Kings 16:2 ESV). According to Walter Brueggemann,

5. Translation by Newsom in *DJD XL*, 248.

6. Based on the translation in Esther Chazon et al., eds., *Discoveries in the Judean Desert XXIX: Qumran Cave 4 XX, Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part 2* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1999), 100.

7. Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam: Liturgical Anthropology in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 108.

“To be taken ‘from the dust’ means to be elevated from obscurity to royal office. . . . Since the royal office depends upon covenant with the appropriate god, to be taken from the dust means to be accepted as a covenant-partner.”<sup>8</sup> In the Qumran scrolls, therefore, the speaker of these hymns, who is likely the leader of his congregation or community, places himself in the position of the ancient Israelite king from the biblical texts.

Psalm 89 closely, albeit not explicitly, associates the covenant made with the king and the activity of the angels in the divine assembly. In verses 3-4, the Lord makes a covenant with David, “the one I have chosen.” The verses that follow describe the angelic praises sung in heaven. Although the psalm does not state that David has been lifted up to heaven to witness this angelic worship, other so-called royal psalms do suggest that he is elevated to the heavens.

God declares in Psalm 2:6 that he has “set (his) king upon (his) holy hill of Zion,” and Psalm 110:1 envisions the royal figure being invited to sit at God’s right hand, presumably in the heavenly temple. Psalm 18 is evidently the inspiration for many such “exalted heights” passages in the *Hodayot*. In language comparable to the text of 1QH<sup>a</sup> XI, 20-23, Psalm 18:4-6 (REB) records the recollections of the languishing king:

The bonds of death encompassed me and destructive torments overtook me, the bonds of Sheol tightened about me, the snares of death were set to catch me. When in anguish of heart I cried to the LORD and called for help to my God, he heard me from his temple, and my cry reached his ears.

This psalm indicates that the Lord was in his temple and that from that sanctuary God came to rescue his servant from his suffering. The psalmist says that God “reached down from on high and took

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8. Walter Brueggemann, “From Dust to Kingship,” *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 84/1 (1972): 2-3. Stephen Ricks discusses this motif in detail as it relates to the coronation of King Benjamin in the Book of Mormon; see Stephen D. Ricks, “Kingship, Coronation, and Covenant in Mosiah 1-6,” in *King Benjamin’s Speech Made Simple*, ed. John W. Welch and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: FARMS, 1999), 175-200.

me; he drew me out of mighty waters,” and he set “me secure on the heights” (Psalm 18:16, 33 NRSV). The Qumran authors readily associate God’s temple and the servant being lifted up and set in the secure place on high (in the heavenly temple). In their own writings they made this connection even more explicit.

### **Instruction in the Heavenly Mysteries**

As noted above, elevating the individual to the divine council is often associated with making a covenant between God and the individual, just as God covenanted with King David and his posterity. The authors of the texts we are examining often link making a covenant with being instructed in the heavenly mysteries. The mysteries are taught or revealed, in many cases, as part of a divine theophany—the individual claims that he has seen God, or God’s glory, and that God himself has taught him these things. In column XII of 1QH<sup>a</sup>, the speaker declares: “You have illumined my face for your covenant . . . I seek you, and as sure as dawn, you appear to me” (lines 6-7).<sup>9</sup> Later in the hymn he says, “For you have made me understand your wonderful mysteries” (lines 28-29).<sup>10</sup> In column XV, the speaker praises the Lord, saying, “I thank yo[u, O Lor]d, that you have instructed me in your truth, and made known to me your wondrous mysteries” (lines 29-30).<sup>11</sup>

In 1QH<sup>a</sup> V, 17-20 the speaker (apparently the “Instructor” from line 12) claims that he has been instructed in the “mysteries of the plan and the beginning.” These mysteries of wonder seem to include things that God has planned and carried out from before the foundation of the earth. In his rigorous study *The “Mysteries” of Qumran*, Samuel Thomas concluded that the mysteries of wonder, among other meanings, seem to signify God’s great deeds in creating the world and in delivering his people. Mortals do not readily understand these wonders, which are hidden and require special

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9. Translation by Newsom in *DJD XL*, 165.

10. Translation by Newsom in *DJD XL*, 166.

11. Translation by Newsom in *DJD XL*, 214.



revelation from God to be accessible.<sup>12</sup> While risking oversimplification of a complex theme, we might say that the mysteries revealed to the exalted individual often include God's overarching plan that has been established from the beginning, including the creation of the world and God's salvific deeds on behalf of mankind. Some Qumran texts mention "the mystery that is to be," suggesting that part of the heavenly vision may also include insights into future events. The text of 1QS XI, 3-4 reads, "For from the fount of [God's] knowledge my light has gone forth; upon his wonders my eye has gazed—the light of my heart upon the mystery of what shall be."<sup>13</sup>

A passage in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XVIII relates the revelatory event to the experience of gazing not only on the vision of the wonders, but on God's glory: "And as for me, according to my knowledge of [your] truth [I will sing of your kindness] and when I gaze upon your glory, I recount your wonders, and when I understand [your wondrous] secret counsel, I will wait expectantly] for your [ov]erflowing compassion" (lines 22-23).<sup>14</sup> Elliot Wolfson argues that in some of the Qumran writings "knowledge of divine truth is equated with visually gazing at the glory, which occasions the recitation of God's mysteries."<sup>15</sup>

The vision of God within the holy sanctuary is, of course, not uncommon in the Bible. We read in Psalm 24 that the "company" that goes up to the temple does so to "seek the face of the God of Jacob" (Psalm 24:6 NRSV). Isaiah sees the Lord on his throne in the temple and witnesses the seraphim praising his holiness (Isaiah 6:1-3). The psalmist similarly witnesses: "So I have looked upon you in the sanctuary, beholding your power and glory . . . my lips will praise you. So I will bless you as long as I live; I will lift up my

12. Samuel I. Thomas, *The "Mysteries" of Qumran: Mystery, Secrecy, and Esotericism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009), 144-45.

13. Based on the translation in Parry and Tov, *Texts Concerned*, 41.

14. Translation by Newsom in *DJD XL*, 239.

15. Elliot R. Wolfson, "Seven Mysteries of Knowledge: Qumran E/Sotericism Recovered," in *The Idea of Biblical Interpretation: Essays in Honor of James L. Kugel*, ed. Hindy Najman and Judith H. Newman (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 208, as cited in Thomas, *"Mysteries" of Qumran*, 166.

hands and call on your name” (Psalm 63:2-4 NRSV). The vision of the Lord thus elicits the singing of God’s praises.

The recitation of God’s mysteries also appears in Psalm 89, which I believe serves as inspiration for many of the poetical/liturgical Qumran texts we are examining. Although this element is not explicit in the psalm, the psalmist does announce in the first verse that he is singing of the “loving deeds of the LORD” (Psalm 89:1 REB) and that he will proclaim his faithfulness throughout all generations. After the Lord’s speech regarding the covenant with David, the psalmist then recounts the wonders of God, his greatness, his primordial victory over the mythical dragon Rahab and the raging sea, and his creation of the world (see vv. 6-14). Apparently some of the Qumran authors identified this sequence in Psalm 89 with the appearance of God associated with covenant making, which elicited the psalmist’s recitation of God’s wonders.

### Appointment as a Teacher

After God instructs the exalted individual in the heavenly mysteries, God then apparently appoints him to teach others. Samuel Thomas explains that in some of the *Hodayot* “the protagonist is called upon to translate or interpret his own experience to those under his tutelage.”<sup>16</sup> The speaker in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XII, 28-29 declares that after God had helped him understand the “wondrous mysteries” and “shown” Himself to him, God then “illuminated the faces of many” through him. In column X, 15 we read: “But you have made me a banner for the elect of righteousness and an expert interpreter [or mediator of knowledge] of wonderful mysteries.”<sup>17</sup>

The motif of the heavenly apprentice who becomes the teacher is found in the noncanonical psalms of the 4Q381 collection as well. In fragment 1, the speaker proclaims that he will tell of God’s marvels, that his words will be “fitting instruction” given “to the simple that they may understand; and to those without understanding,

16. Thomas, “Mysteries” of Qumran, 209.

17. Translation by Newsom in *DJD XL*, 142.

(that) they may know” (4Q381 1, 1-2).<sup>18</sup> Subsequent lines (2-11) reveal the content of the wonders that he is teaching, including a detailed account of God’s creation of the earth and its creatures, of Adam and Eve, of the angels, and so on—the substance of the vision of the heavenly mysteries.

Another text that uses Edenic imagery is 1QH<sup>a</sup> XVI, but here the speaker depicts himself as the keeper of the garden, an Adamic figure elected to care for the tender plants—his community—through his teachings.<sup>19</sup> Drawing on biblical passages such as Ezekiel 47 and Isaiah 5, the gardener lays out the garden (using a measuring line and plumb line, lines 22-23) and irrigates it. The author’s followers, which he describes as “trees of life at a secret spring” (lines 6-7), are watered by the words that God has given to the gardener. He uses the metaphors of “early rain,” “a spring of living water” and “a flowing river” to describe his teachings (lines 17-18). His efficacious message causes the little “plantation of fruit trees” to become a “glorious Eden” (line 21). Given the combination of Edenic imagery (including allusions to cherubim and the flaming sword), references to measuring and plumb lines, and allusions to Ezekiel 47:1-12, in all probability the author intends to place himself and his community in a temple setting, most likely the expected eschatological temple that Ezekiel envisioned. The speaker of the psalm is an agent of God sent to share the “secret waters” of God’s mysteries, which will allow his followers to dwell in the holy place.<sup>20</sup>

### Praising God with the Angels

Returning to the teacher motif in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XII, the speaker refers to a group of people that follow him, proclaiming to the Lord that

18. Translation by Eileen Schuller in Esther Eschel et al., eds., *Discoveries in the Judaean Desert XI: Qumran Cave 4 VI, Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part 1* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), 94.

19. See James R. Davila, “The Hodayot Hymnist and the Four Who Entered Paradise,” *Revue de Qumran* 17 (1996): 465.

20. See discussion in Julie A. Hughes, *Scriptural Allusions and Exegesis in the Hodayot* (Leiden: Brill, 2006), 168-71.

they have “gathered together for your covenant” and that he has “examined” them (line 25). He then explains that “those who walk in the way of your heart listen to me; they are drawing themselves up before you in the council of the holy ones.”<sup>21</sup> The individuals whom the speaker teaches listen to him and, as a result, are also permitted access to the heavenly realm.

Similar language in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XIV describes how God will “raise up” a “remnant” that he will refine and purify through his teachings (lines 11-14). As with the exalted individual, when they are taught and “[medi]tate on (God’s) mighty acts,” this remnant will then “recite for everlasting generations (God’s) wonderful deeds” (line 14). The text declares that this faithful group, “all the people of your council,” have been brought by God into his “secret counsel” and “in a common lot with the angels of the presence” (lines 15-16). They become “princes in the [eternal] lo[t]” and are compared to a great tree watered by the “rivers of Eden” (lines 17-19).<sup>22</sup> Again, the author draws on the creation account in Genesis and the temple motifs of Ezekiel 47. He envisions his community becoming princes in the divine council together with the angels of God’s presence.

The authors of these texts may again be drawing on Psalm 89 or at least on traditions alluded to in that psalm. After the psalmist reveals God’s wonders and describes the qualities of God’s throne, the text then features a group of people—those who are followers of the protagonist of the psalm—“walking” in God’s presence (see v. 18). Verses 15-16 (NRSV) read: “Happy are the people who know the festal shout, who walk, O Lord, in the light of your countenance; they exult in your name all day long, and extol your righteousness.” These happy people have arguably just received the mysteries of God and now respond to that revelation by giving the “festal shout” (Heb. *teru’ah*), which they evidently have been taught to give in response to this divine experience. This festal shout is not random shouting for joy but is something that select people *know*, or have learned.

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21. Based on the translation by Newsom in *DJD XL*, 166.

22. Based on the translation by Newsom in *DJD XL*, 196.

In the biblical texts, the *teru'ah* is a shout or a trumpet blast, usually given in the context of a temple ritual on a festival day, such as the Feast of Trumpets or the Day of Atonement.<sup>23</sup> When the foundation for the Second Temple was laid, the people sang in choruses (antiphonally) and gave a “great shout” as they praised the Lord in that liturgical setting (Ezra 3:11-13). The festal shout should probably be understood as a known part of the ceremony, much as the shofar blast was prescribed by divine directive for specific feast days.

In the apocryphal book of Sirach, chapter 50, the shout is specifically mentioned as part of the ritual. This text provides a more detailed description of the liturgy associated with the laying of the foundations of the temple when Simon ben Onias, the high priest, repairs and rebuilds the temple from the foundation up. As part of the accompanying ceremony, the text says that “the sons of Aaron shouted; they blew their trumpets of hammered metal; they sounded a mighty fanfare as a reminder before the Most High” (Sirach 50:16 NRSV).

In ancient Israel, laying the foundations of the temple was symbolically equivalent to God’s laying the foundations of the earth at creation. Taking this into account, a noncanonical psalm from Qumran provides some interesting insights into the theme of the exalted group singing praises with the angels. A noncanonical psalm labeled *Hymn to the Creator* (column XXVI on the great *Psalms Scroll*, 11QPs<sup>a</sup>) praises God for his greatness and holiness and describes his wondrous works in the creation of the world. The text is similar to the creation texts mentioned above, including Psalm 89. One element featured in this hymn that is less evident in the other texts is the reaction of the angels to the revelation of God’s deeds: “When all His angels saw, they sang for joy—for He had shown them what they knew not” (line 12). This imagery appears to draw on Job 38:7, where, after a description of God laying the foundations of the earth, including its cornerstone (using temple-building language), we are told that “the morning stars sang together, and

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23. Trumpet blast: Leviticus 23:24; 25:9; Numbers 10:5-6; 29:1. Shout: Joshua 6:5, 20; 1 Samuel 4:5; Ezra 3:11, 13; Job 8:21; Psalms 27:6; 89:15; 150:5.

all the sons of God shouted for joy” (KJV).<sup>24</sup> The Job version of this theme specifically equates the angels’ song with the shout for joy.

Furthermore, the *Hymn to the Creator* plausibly draws on Psalm 89 as well. In lines 10-11 of the *Hymn*, the author describes God and his throne in language that appears to be inspired by Psalm 89:14. Then in line 12 the angels rejoice in song after witnessing the creation. The author could be equating the angels singing with the people giving the shout in Psalm 89:15, perhaps because he is familiar with temple traditions and the idea of human communion with the angelic hosts.

### **The Ascension Liturgy of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice***

Perhaps the most striking, albeit highly debated, example from the Dead Sea Scrolls of the theme of communion with the angels is the collection of songs known as the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*.<sup>25</sup> These compositions, found at both Qumran and Masada, are a series of thirteen liturgical pieces that, according to the texts themselves, are to be recited on each of the first thirteen Sabbaths of the year. The texts are highly fragmentary, which makes their full content and purpose difficult to interpret. They appear to take worshippers on a tour of the celestial realms, describing the angels and the praises they sing to God, the structures and furniture of the heavenly temple, the vision of the throne of God, and descriptions of the glorious apparel of the angelic priests.

Although the songs were meant to be recited in a worship setting, scholars are uncertain of their specific function and of the relationship of the earthly worshippers to the heavenly beings they describe. Carol Newsom, in her critical edition of *Songs*, suggests

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24. It is also possible that the *Hymn to the Creator* does not borrow directly from Job but that both the *Hymn* and Job are drawing on the same source or a common tradition.

25. Because of the highly fragmentary nature of the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, conclusions drawn from these texts are necessarily speculative. Scholars debate the original content and function of these compositions.

that “the recitation of these Sabbath songs was a major vehicle for the experience of communion with the angels as it is alluded to in the Hodayot.”<sup>26</sup> According to this line of thought, these songs, being more than a literary theme, present an actual ritual/liturgy that somehow provides the worshippers with a sense of being in communion with heavenly beings. Newsom describes how the liturgy may have functioned:

Its purpose . . . is better described as the praxis of something like a communal mysticism. During the course of this thirteen week cycle, the community which recites the compositions is led through a lengthy preparation. The mysteries of the angelic priesthood are recounted . . . and the community is then gradually led through the spiritually animate heavenly temple until the worshippers experience the holiness of the merkabah (throne of God) and of the Sabbath sacrifice as it is conducted by the high priests of the angels.<sup>27</sup>

Esther Chazon views the songs as “an earthly liturgy recited by a congregation of human worshippers who invite the angels to praise God,” implying “that the human congregation is joining them in prayer.”<sup>28</sup> James Davila argues that “these songs were meant for liturgical use” and that “the participants in this weekly cultic drama must necessarily have taken on the roles of these angelic priests and so have undergone a process of temporary transformation or angelification on some level.”<sup>29</sup> Crispin Fletcher-Louis sees *Songs* as a “conductor’s score” for a more concrete ritualized heavenly ascent rather than merely a descriptive heavenly tour. For Fletcher-Louis,

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26. Carol Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: A Critical Edition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1985), 17-18.

27. Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 18-19.

28. Esther G. Chazon, “Liturgical Communion with the Angels at Qumran,” in *Sapiential, Liturgical and Poetical Texts from Qumran: Proceedings of the Third Meeting of the International Organization for Qumran Studies, Published in Memory of Maurice Baillet*, ed. Daniel K. Falk, F. García Martínez, and Eileen M. Schuller (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 99.

29. Davila, “Exploring the Mystical Background,” 443.

the main focus of *Songs* is not so much on suprahuman angelic beings, but on “the Qumran community members who now have a heavenly, angelic and divine identity.” These texts portray the ritual exaltation of the human community to heaven where its members experience a vision of God’s throne and are transformed into an angelic state.<sup>30</sup>

Håkan Ulfgard, in his study comparing *Songs* to the biblical book of Revelation, describes his view of their function and how they relate to other Qumran texts:

They may have been intended to convey to the earthly worshippers the experience of being present at the continuous heavenly liturgy before the throne of God, which means an attitude found also e.g. in the Thanksgiving Hymns and the Rule of the Community (cf. 1QH III, 21-23; XI, 13, 25; 1QS XI, 7-8).<sup>31</sup>

My research supports Ulfgard’s assertion that the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* contain themes parallel to concepts in the *Hodayot*, including those that I have outlined in this paper. The pattern that I suggest can be pieced together from the *Hodayot* and is laid out in these liturgical compositions as a concrete ritual drama. An in-depth analysis of all thirteen of the Sabbath songs is not within the scope of this paper, but I will summarize here the most relevant themes that compare to the pattern I have outlined.

The first song of the series describes the establishment, by God, of the heavenly priests who serve in the celestial temple and the call for them to praise God. The title of the song declares that it is “for the *Maskil*,” the “Enlightener” or “Instructor,” whose job it was to teach the members of the community and direct them in wor-

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30. Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis, “Heavenly Ascent or Incarnational Presence? A Revisionist Reading of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,” in *Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers* (Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 367-99, emphasis omitted.

31. Håkan Ulfgard, “The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the Heavenly Scene of the Book of Revelation,” in *Northern Lights on the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the Nordic Qumran Network 2003-2006*, ed. Anders K. Petersen et al. (Leiden: Brill, 2009), 255-56.



ship. According to 1QS IX, 18-19 the Instructor was to “lead them in knowledge, thereby instructing them in the mysteries of wonder; if then the secret Way is perfected among the men of the community, each will walk blamelessly with his fellow, guided by what has been revealed to them.”<sup>32</sup> This role is very similar to the role of the speaker of the *Hodayot* hymns previously examined. The speaker in 1QH<sup>a</sup> X, 15 declares that God had “made me a banner for the elect of righteousness and an expert interpreter of wonderful mysteries.”<sup>33</sup> It appears that the *Maskil* in *Songs* fits the role of the individual in the first three points of the pattern outlined in the beginning of this paper: he would previously have been lifted up to the divine council himself, learned the mysteries, and consequently been appointed (as the *Maskil*) to teach these mysteries to others.

At first glance, song 1 seems to be an anomaly in describing the mortal *Maskil* calling angelic beings to worship. But Fletcher-Louis points out that this language would be more appropriate for the “conductor of a mortal choir, much less for a purely angelic one,” and notes that in other Qumran texts “the Instructor teaches, directs and leads the community members in worship; never the angels.”<sup>34</sup> His conclusion is that “much of the language within the Songs, though not all, refers to the Qumran community members who now have a heavenly, angelic and divine identity.”<sup>35</sup> In other words, in most instances when the songs refer to the angelic priests, Fletcher-Louis believes that the mortal priests are being described and that as part of this Sabbath liturgy these mortals have undergone a transformation from human to angelic beings.

Davila, however, argues that Fletcher-Louis’s hypothesis ignores the need for angelic priests in the heavenly realm to correspond to the human ones. He suggests the songs must be referring

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32. Based on the translation in Parry and Tov, *Texts Concerned*, 37.

33. Translation by Newsom in *DJD XL*, 142. See discussion in Thomas, “Mysteries” of *Qumran*, 146-47; see also Fletcher-Louis, “Heavenly Ascent,” 2, and Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 3. Other helpful Qumran texts that describe the role of the *Maskil* include 1QS III, 13-15 and IX, 12-14.

34. Fletcher-Louis, “Heavenly Ascent,” 2.

35. Fletcher-Louis, “Heavenly Ascent,” 3, emphasis omitted.

not only to the human priests, but to the angelic priests that have subsumed their mortal counterparts:

The macrocosmic cult was understood to be staffed by angels, but the participants in this weekly cultic drama must necessarily have taken on the roles of these angelic priests and so have undergone a process of temporary transformation or angelification on some level.<sup>36</sup>

The correspondence of the human and angelic priests in this text becomes apparent if we take into account Judith Newman's suggestion that, according to the calendar of the *Temple Scroll*, "the song for the first Sabbath coincides with the week in which new priests are ordained (11Q19 XV, 3)."<sup>37</sup> Newman brings this to bear on song 1, arguing that the establishment of the hosts of angelic priests in that song corresponds to the initiation of new priests in the human community.

In 4Q401 14 ii, 1-8, a fragment that has been designated as part of song 2, God apparently strengthens the angelic priests (or newly ordained mortal priests)—also called princes here—that they may realize the mysteries of God's wondrous acts and proclaim the "hidden things" they learn from the "utterance of (his) lips." My reconstruction of this fragmentary text is somewhat speculative, but it suggests that God possesses the mysteries, that the angels/mortal priests must receive help from God, and that God teaches them "hidden things." Davila notes that in a number of Qumran texts, "the 'secret things' are the hidden teachings revealed to the members of the sect (e.g., 1QS V, 11; CD III, 13-14)."<sup>38</sup>

Songs 3-6 mention a procession into, or perhaps out of, heaven (song 4), an account of a war in heaven (songs 4-5), and the blessings and praises of the heavenly beings (song 6). In song 7 the par-

36. Davila, "Exploring the Mystical Background," 443.

37. Judith H. Newman, "Priestly Prophets at Qumran: Summoning Sinai through the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*," in *The Significance of Sinai: Traditions about Sinai and Divine Revelation in Judaism and Christianity*, ed. George J. Brooke, Hinday Najman, and Loren T. Stuckenbruck (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 46.

38. James R. Davila, *Liturgical Works* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2000), 110.

ticipants enter the holy of holies of the celestial temple, in which, Newman asserts, “the divine King and Creator is made manifest in the throne room of the Temple.”<sup>39</sup> She describes the seventh song as “an expanded depiction of Isaiah’s temple throne vision in Isaiah 6,” with an allusion to Ezekiel 3:12-13—both prophetic call narratives.<sup>40</sup>

I suggest that song 7 is comparable to the previously described theme of exalted individuals gazing upon God (or God’s glory) in conjunction with the revelation of the mysteries. In God’s throne room, the participants in this liturgy receive information regarding God’s actions at creation—part of the mysteries described in other Qumran texts. Newman observes that this revelation comes “at the center of the seventh song, which is thus the center of the liturgical cycle,” indicating that this revelation is especially significant to the worshippers’ experience.<sup>41</sup>

Following the established pattern, the angelic/mortal participants sing or chant with joy and recount the wonders that have been revealed to them: “Sing (or chant) with joy, you who rejoice with rejoicing among the wondrous godlike beings. And chant (or recount) His glory with the tongue of all who chant with knowledge; and [recount] his wonderful songs of joy” (4Q403 1 i, 36).<sup>42</sup> Again, this is the expected ritual reaction to the revelation of the mysteries of creation. As Newman puts it, the seventh song is a “perceptual experience that stimulates the witnessing angels to ‘proclaim,’” including “a recounting of the divine mysteries on the part of the holy ones, understood in the song to be the angels and Qumran priests.”<sup>43</sup>

Songs 8 through 10 describe not only the angels’ continued praises, but also the details regarding the veil of “the inner chamber of the King” (song 10). Songs 11 and 12 take us through the veil into the dwelling place of God. Those present worship God on his

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39. Newman, “Priestly Prophets,” 48.

40. Newman, “Priestly Prophets,” 49.

41. Newman, “Priestly Prophets,” 50.

42. Based on the translation in *DJD XI*, 271.

43. Newman, “Priestly Prophets,” 56-57.

chariot-throne. Song 11 mentions multiple chariot-thrones, specifically a seat that is “like” God’s throne.

Davila mentions that these two songs draw heavily on Ezekiel’s chariot-throne vision in Ezekiel 1 and also on Psalm 68:17-20. Davila notes that these two scriptural passages were used at the time in the Jewish Festival of Weeks (Shavuot), which celebrates the divine theophany and giving the covenant, or Torah, at Sinai. He explains that songs 11 and 12 would have been performed before and after this celebration, which marked the Qumran community’s annual covenant-renewal ceremony.<sup>44</sup> Newman observes that this ceremony “included the yearly evaluation of members and initiation of new members into the *Yahad* (community).” “The initiate,” she says, “was required to swear an oath . . . to turn toward the torah of Moses.”<sup>45</sup> The initiates, or individuals exalted to participate in the angelic liturgy, are thus examined and covenant that they will obey God’s revealed teachings. This concept is very similar to the passage in 1QH<sup>a</sup> XII in which the speaker refers to a group of followers. He proclaims to the Lord that they have “gathered together for your covenant” and that he has “examined” them (line 25). This sequence is also reminiscent of Exodus 24, in which Moses delivers the words of God to the people of Israel, they covenant to be obedient, and the elders of Israel are permitted to see God.

The thirteenth and last song of the series describes the participants, apparently still in the celestial holy of holies, as they perform their priesthood duties while wearing their priestly vestments. These priestly garments are described using the language of Exodus 28, including the ephod (apron) and breastplate (apparently containing the engraved stones of the Urim and Thummim). Davila notes that the text “seems to indicate that multiple angels wore the high-priestly uniform.”<sup>46</sup> Fletcher-Louis cites evidence “that the Qumran community believed the garments of Exodus 28 should be worn si-

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44. Davila, *Liturgical Works*, 90.

45. Newman, “Priestly Prophets,” 61.

46. Davila, *Liturgical Works*, 159.

multaneously by more than one priest.”<sup>47</sup> This follows his hypothesis that the angels mentioned in the text are to be understood as exalted human priests.

Similarly, Newman cites a Qumran interpretation (4QpIsa<sup>d</sup> 1, 3-5) that understands Isaiah 54:11-12 as alluding to “the twelve chiefs of the priests who enlighten through their use of the Urim and Thummim [considered part of the high priestly vestments].” Newman adds, “A liturgical cycle whose calendrical beginning can be correlated with a ceremony consecrating new priests thus rightly closes as a group of priestly figures are elevated to their proper role and prepared for service.”<sup>48</sup> This highlights the significance of the vestment of these priests in heavenly garments. Just as Moses came down from Mount Sinai clothed in glory after having spoken with the Lord and having received his law, the Qumran priests have been vested in their garments of glory in imitation of the heavenly beings and have been instructed and authorized to “reveal the mysteries of the divine purpose in creation and history, past, present, and future.”<sup>49</sup>

## Conclusion

The pattern outlined in the beginning of this paper describes a belief in the ability of individuals and groups to ascend to the heavenly council to be taught the divine mysteries. This pattern can be traced in a number of Qumran documents, especially in the more liturgical and poetical works such as the *Hodayot* and other collections of noncanonical psalms. The revelation of these mysteries inspires the witnesses to shout or sing for joy upon learning of God’s wondrous deeds at creation. The worshippers are clothed in heavenly garments and divinely commissioned to share this revealed knowledge with others.

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47. Fletcher-Louis, *All the Glory of Adam*, 358.

48. Newman, “Priestly Prophets,” 67. In other words, each priest would wear his own set of priestly vestments.

49. Newman, “Priestly Prophets,” 71-72.

The Qumran authors apparently found inspiration in the biblical texts and possibly also in known temple traditions for these concepts. The authors allude to, or draw upon, passages from the prophets as well as from royal and temple texts such as the psalms and the Garden of Eden narrative. They saw themselves as priests anointed to carry on the prophetic tradition of Moses, Isaiah, Ezekiel, and others.

The essential features of this pattern are seen not only in some texts of the Qumran sectarians, but also in their ritual. This patterned ritual is implied in the series of liturgical songs known as the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*. Most scholars believe these songs were performed as a weekly drama that led its practitioners through a heavenly experience comparable to my proposed model. The climax of the weekly Sabbath liturgy coincided with the Festival of Weeks, in which the community remembered the giving of the law on Sinai and entered into, or renewed, their covenants with God. As Moses and the elders of Israel ascended Sinai into the Lord's presence, and as festival pilgrims ascended the holy mountain to the Jerusalem temple for the same purpose, the Qumran community similarly saw themselves as being permitted to ascend on high into the celestial temple of God.

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