SEVENFOLD HYMNS IN THE SONGS OF THE SABBATH SACRIFICE AND THE HEKHALOT LITERATURE: FORMALISM, HIERARCHY AND THE LIMITS OF HUMAN PARTICIPATION*

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Introduction

The thematic, verbal and stylistic affinities between the Qumran Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the hymnic material contained in the Hekhalot corpus have raised fundamental questions about the relationship between the liturgical traditions in the Dead Sea Scrolls and later Jewish mystical writings. Scholars have diverged widely in their assessment of both the cohesiveness of this complex of related traditions and the continuity of its development in its passage from second temple Judaism to the Hekhalot literature of Late Antiquity.1

* I am grateful to Martha Himmelfarb, Leah Hochman, Annette Reed, and Peter Schäfer for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this paper and to James Davila, whose astute editorial work greatly strengthened the final product.


3 See the assessment in Johann Mäder, “Zu Kult und Liturgie in der Qumran-Gemeinde,” REQ 14/15 (1990): 572: “The hermeneutical approach, however, has been insufficiently examined in the religious and historical context of the Qumran community.” In his later work, even Schäfer concurs with this more cautious assessment. Compare his articles from 1992 and 1987 respectively (Schiffman, “Merkavah Speculation at Qumran,” 46–7; idem, “Sifriut Ha-Hekhalot ve-Ketivei Qumran,” 133–4).


As the earliest Hebrew work that combines Merkavah-speculation, exegetical activity focused on the book of Ezekiel, and cultic-liturgical forms, the Songs offer the most exciting possibility for grounding later literary and religious developments in this earlier period. However, despite the striking correspondences between the Songs and the Hekhalot corpus, evidence for direct literary dependence between the two traditions has remained elusive. The tension between this persistent textual divide and the tantalizing parallels in these texts makes the methodological questions of comparison central to any interpretation of the evidence.


Previous scholarship has privileged comparison of the fractured and sonorous style characteristic of the “numinous” hymns that are found both in the Songs and in the Hekhalot literature. In the hopes of further expanding the range of comparative approaches, this paper will instead focus on the genre of the sevenfold hymn contained in both works. I will demonstrate not only that these hymns share a number of important features, but also that these characteristics are interdependent. The compositions are marked by an extreme formalism that includes but extends far beyond their deployment of various poetic patterns built around the number seven. These highly structured poetic constraints lend themselves in turn to a thematic emphasis on description – in particular accounts of the hierarchies and protocols of the angelic sphere. Finally, the indirect and oblique descriptive discourse that emerges from this confluence of formal and thematic interests has important implications for the way the genre positions the implied human community within the dramatic and narrative structure of the hymns. In this way, the genre thus limits the scope of human involvement in the liturgical act. Human participation is primarily presented indirectly through the detailed description of angelic praise. Like a play composed entirely of stage-directions, the sevenfold hymn records only the procedures by which the angels offer praise to God, suppressing fully the actual words of the imagined heavenly liturgy. Consequently, human participation in the liturgical act is perforce mediated, embedded as it is within its narrative function.


The central portion of the Sabbath cycle is composed of a series of shorter units. In songs 6 and 8, these shorter compositions are made up of seven parallel phrases, each of which shares a series of formal poetic features. These sevenfold hymns, in particular the two independent examples contained in song 6, exhibit a wide range of formal and thematic affinities with a hymn found in the Hekhalot corpus at §271 within the macroform *Hekhalot Rabba*.* Yet, comparison of these sevenfold compositions shows that, despite their similarities, the Qumran *Songs* and the late antique Hekhalot hymns function within discrete cultural and textual frameworks. Within the context of the Hekhalot corpus, the genre’s avoidance of direct hymnic speech and its not unrelated cautious approach to the problem of human participation carries a very different valence than they do in the *Songs*. This is in large measure because, in contrast to the Sabbath cycle’s explicit rejection of human participation, §271 occurs alongside a wide variety of compositions in which we do, in fact, hear the unmediated voice of the human community, and even the angels themselves, directly praising God. Indeed, a wide range of divergent opinions about the possibility and desirability of direct human involvement in the liturgical activities of the heavenly sphere is especially evident in the portion of the text that features the sevenfold hymn (§8271–277). It is precisely the shift in the attitudes of these hymnic collections towards the notion of human participation in the heavenly liturgy that highlights the enduring correlation between this genre and its distinctive mode of indirect praise. Only by integrating narrative and dramatic considerations into an analysis of the poetics of these compositions is it possible to address the salient question of the relationship between the genre’s formal principles and its discursive style. Ultimately, however, it is comparison of the two sets of hymnic material within their discrete literary systems that will

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allow us to refine our understanding of the notion of human participation operative in them.

I. The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice: Textual History and Communal Setting

The Sabbath cycle, composed of thirteen songs, was discovered in nine separate manuscripts at Qumran. Yigael Yadin identified a tenth amongst the textual remains of the Masada excavations. Although only a fraction of the text has been recovered and many of the manuscripts preserve only fragmentary readings, the impressive philological and editorial work of Carol Newsom and others has yielded significant sections of continuous text as well as evidence for the cycle’s overall thematic development. Paleographic analysis dates the earliest manuscript copies to the late Hasmonaean period (c. 75–50 B.C.E.), while the latest copies from Qumran date from the middle of the first century C.E. The large number of manuscripts of the Songs found at Qumran suggests that the cycle should be viewed within the larger literary and historical context of the Qumran community, especially in light of the wide variety of thematic and formal features it shares with sectarian material. The cycle was apparently recited in the community during the thirteen Sabbaths of the first quarter period of the 364-day calendar used at Qumran. Nevertheless, it is possible that the cycle was not initially of sectarian origin, as suggested by the copy found at Masada. Thus, while it is undoubtedly the case that the sect served as one of the text’s primary sites of transmission and performance, we should be careful not to overemphasize absolute conformity between the cycle and other liturgical and hymnic material found at Qumran. This paper, therefore, analyzes the cycle primarily on its own terms, but makes use of other materials from Qumran where they seem to address similar themes and motifs.

A number of heuristic labels have been applied to the Songs: cultic-liturgical, exegetical-meditative, or quasi-mystical. Yet, whatever its ultimate Sitz im Leben, on a strictly generic level the cycle is made up of a series of “liturgical invitations.” Bilhah Nitzan has rightly assigned the Songs to this category, noting that the cycle does not represent a conventional liturgy in which the actual words of praise or petition are specified. Thus, although the Songs seem to be intended for recitation, they, like other such hymns, are primarily structured around the order and manner of praise. Each of the songs begins with a call to praise followed by descriptive material ranging from the activities performed by the angels to the architectural features

1 Q400, 401, 402, 403, 404, 405, 406, 407; 11QShirShab; and MaslK. For a useful and concise review of these manuscripts, see Davila, Liturgical Works, 85–86 (note that Davila accidentally misspells the number of manuscripts of the Songs).

2 Carol Newsom, in her most comprehensive treatment of the question of the work’s origins, argues that the Songs was produced outside the sect, but came to play an important and influential role within the community (“‘Secturally Explicit’ Literature from Qumran,” in The Hebrew Bible and its Interpretors [ed. W. Propp, B. Halpern, and D. Freedman; Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1990], 167–187).

3 Maier argues that numerical month designations in the Exodus indicates that the cycle was limited to the Nisan season (Johann Maier, “Shir ‘Olat hash-Shabat: Some Observations on their Calendrical Implications and on their Style,” in The Madrid Qumran Congress: Proceedings of the International Congress on the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid 18–21 March, 1991 [ed. J. Trebilco and L. Vegas Montaner; STDJ] 11, 1–2; 2 vols.; Leiden: Brill, 1992], 2:546–552). In contrast, Newsom entertains the possibility that the cycle could have been recited throughout the four parallel periods of the year (Newsom, Songs, 19–20). Christopher K. A. Murray-Jones argues that the cycle climaxes in the twelfth song, which would have been recited immediately following the covenant renewal ceremony held on the Feast of Weeks according to the community’s calendar (Christopher K. A. Murray-Jones, “The Temple Within the Embodied Divine Image and its Worship in the Dead Sea Scrolls and Other Early Jewish and Christian Sources,” SBLSP 37 [1998], 399–431, esp. 410).

4 Maier, “Shir ‘Olat hash-Shabat,” 552–53, deemsphasizes the experiential and exegetical nature of the cycle, preferring to focus on its liturgical function within the Qumran community. He has argued forcefully that the cycle functioned as an accompaniment to scriptural readings (“Begleittext”) performed within the Qumran community by the appropriate priestly watches as a replacement for the cultic sacrifices of the Sabbath (“Kultersatz”). See also Daniel K. Falk, Daily, Sabbath, and Festivals of the Dead Sea Scrolls (STF) 27; Leiden: Brill, 1998, 137–38.

5 Carol Newsom, “Merakah Exegesis in the Qumran Shabat Song,” JJS 38 [1987]: 11–30. Newsom emphasizes the importance of the exegetical-meditative aspect of the cycle, locating with remarkable acuity exegetical activity in the twelfth song of the cycle based on intertextual use of Ezekiel 1, 3 and 10; Psalm 68; Exodus 19–20; Daniel 7–9–10.


7 Compare passages such as Ps 148, 150:1–2, and the Song of the Three Young Men (Daniel LXX 3:29–68) in which the various categories of heavenly and earthly creatures are called upon in a hierarchical order to praise God.

architectural structures increasingly come to dominate the singing of praise. The general trajectory within song 7 - from praising angels to praising architectural structures - mirrors the narrative arc of the entire cycle in its movement away from the human community towards the increasing angelification of temple architecture. This virtually unique form of "architectural" participation is achieved by the progressively intensified identification between the animate angelic beings described in the first half of the cycle and the animated temple structures of the second half. Thus, although on the whole the middle section of the work emphasizes rigid order and hierarchy, it presages the fragmentation of formal poetic structure and the concomitant expansion of the circle of participation in liturgical praise. Songs 6-8 demarcate a coherent dramatic scene in which God, the chief angels and the angelic multitude, along with the animated architectural features of the heavenly sanctuary, all play central roles.

Song 6th includes two adjacent, but independent, poetic units, a cycle of the praises of the seven chief princes of the angels and a cycle of their blessings. The chief princes (םגנ וְנָכָּה) in this composition are most certainly angelic figures who lead seven companies of angels. These two hymns share a wide variety of thematic and formal features. Both emphasize the importance of a hierarchical and sequential process of liturgical action. This heavily systematized representation of praise offered to God by the heavenly entourage enhances the already ritualized atmosphere of the cycle. Yet, these units are not static. For its effectiveness, each depends on its manipulation of highly controlled verbal variation, in particular the use of synonyms for the act of praise itself. In this way, the units generate a tension between the repetition of formulaic syntactic structures and...
the spontaneity of irregularity. Moreover, when taken as a unit, these hymns draw a direct parallel between the praise offered God by the chief princes and the blessings offered in God’s name by the chief princes to the rest of the angelic host. This movement serves to evoke an inclusive depiction of the supernal assembly in which the chief princes function as active hinge figures, mediating between God and the wider community of lower angelic beings.

II. The Praise of the Seven Chief Princes

The praise of the seven chief princes (4Q403 1 I, 1–9; Mas1k II, 1–22) contains seven parallel liturgical proclamations concerning the recitation of hymns of praise to God. Each of these liturgical phrases is characterized by a theme word designating the type of praise offered in each (e.g., “blessings,” “magnification,” etc.). These designations are recapitulated in nominal form at the end of the hymn in a condensation of the entire composition.

Seven psalms of his blessings; seven [psalms] of the magnification of his righteousness, seven psalms of the exaltation of [His] kingship; [seven] psalms of the praise of His glory; seven psalms of thanksgiving for His wonders; [seven] psalms of reparation [ing] in His strength; seven psalms of praise for His holiness.22

As we shall see, this “précis” form is typical of this genre of descriptive hymns of praise. Yet, alongside its fixed verbal constituents, this hymn is remarkable for its deployment of formal variation, and the productive tension it develops between its static and dynamic elements.

The formal poetic patterns are parsed in Table 1 below. This table breaks the hymn into the seven constituent units built around the praise offered by the successive chief princes (first, second, third, etc.). In addition, each of these seven units is broken into three sections, marked 1, 2 and 3 under the leftmost column (“element designation”). Each of these phrases is in turn broken down into three phrases marked a, b, and c according to their function in the phrase, which is described in the column to its right. For example, the designation 1a indicates that phrase 1a serves as the “title of praise” (function “a”) within “section 1.” It is important to note that these

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrase Designation</th>
<th>Function of Phrase</th>
<th>First Prince</th>
<th>Second Prince</th>
<th>Third Prince</th>
<th>Fourth Prince</th>
<th>Fifth Prince</th>
<th>Sixth Prince</th>
<th>Seventh Prince</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>theme 1 (underlined)</td>
<td>key word</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>theme 2 (stressed)</td>
<td>key word</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1a: THL + theme 1 (nominal)</td>
<td>title of praise</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1b: tongue + ordinal number</td>
<td>instrument of praise</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1c: subjective</td>
<td>actor: addresser</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2a: theme 1 (3 + 7 only)</td>
<td>title of praise</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2c: divine epithet + theme 2</td>
<td>actor: addresser</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a: theme 1 (verbal form)</td>
<td>act of praise</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c: divine epithet + theme 2</td>
<td>actor: addresser</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3b: 7-fold, 7-fold (static) + DHR</td>
<td>song of praise: instrumental</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3a: theme 1 (verbal form)</td>
<td>act of praise</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3c: divine epithet + theme 2</td>
<td>actor: addresser</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַدְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>לֵלְכַדְבַּךְ</td>
<td>דַּעַדְבַּךְ</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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22 4Q403 1 I, 7–9 (Newsom, “Shirot,” 260).
function designations (a, b and c) do not appear in the same order in all three sections, further enhancing the tension between fixity and variation, which is vital to the poetic motion of the composition. This tension can most clearly be seen in the contrast between the static use of the numeric designations and the dynamic use of progressive enumeration. For instance, the “tongue” (־מִית) with which the praise is spoken (phrase 1b) builds to its logical climax as it progresses through the ordinal numbers. In contrast, the other numerical designations in the hymn (2b and 3b) use as their constant the number seven, which in each case modifies the medium of praise. At the same time, the phrases containing the static number designation vary in their use of the two theme words that mark each of the seven proclamations.

Alongside this tension within each of the seven units, the composition exhibits significant variation amongst these units. Scholars have noted that each proclamation contains two parallel statements: a noun phrase describing the type of praise to be recited and a verbal clause declaring its actual recitation. For example, in the psalm of the fifth chief prince, the nominal phrase “seven wondrous thanksgivings” is immediately followed by the statement “he will give thanks.” In each proclamation, a single theme word is used in parallel constructions. This twofold structure constitutes the inner logic of each of the seven phrases from which the composition is built. The potentiality of the noun phrase is set in motion by its verbal realization.

As shown in Table 1, however, the double structure does not characterize the entire genre. While the hymn generally follows this pattern, it diverges from it in a number of crucial cases. In two crucial instances, the hymn deviates from this twofold pattern. In the praise of princes 3 and 7, the proclamation breaks down into 3 separable sections of 3 phrases each (1a–b–c, 2a–c–b, 3a–c–b) rather than 2 units with 4 and 3 phrases respectively (1a–b + 2c–b, 3a–c–b), as in the other five units. Rather than a 4+3 metrical rhythm, the proclamations of princes 3 and 7, have a 3+3+3 metrical pattern. This contrast between the twofold and threefold structure is laid out in the analysis in Tables 2a (the third chief prince) and Table 2b (the fourth chief prince).

Table 2a. Praise of Third Chief Prince (4Q403 1 I, 1): Unit Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm of exaltation (title)</th>
<th>1a: title</th>
<th>1b: instrument</th>
<th>1c: addressee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>an exaltation &lt;of His faithfulness&gt;</td>
<td>2a: title</td>
<td>2c: addressee</td>
<td>2b: instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to the King of angels</td>
<td>3a: action</td>
<td>3c: addressee</td>
<td>3b: instrument</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with its seven wondrous exaltations</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>he will&gt; exalt the God of lofty angels seven times with seven words of wondrous exaltation.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2b. Praise of Fourth Chief Prince (4Q403 1 I, 2-3): Unit Structure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Psalm of praise by the tongue of the fourth</th>
<th>1a</th>
<th>1b (1c)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>to the Warrior who is above all heavenly beings with its seven wondrous acts of power and he will praise the God of power seven times with seven words of wondrous praise.</td>
<td>2a(3a)</td>
<td>2c(3c)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2b(3b)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This reconstruction is supported by my poetic analysis, since, if we read מַעַן, we expect it to be followed by the modifier שְׁלֹשׁ and, most likely, also element 2a, for which there is not enough room in the line. Concerning the possibility that elements 1c and 2a did occur in the preceding line we must remain entirely agnostic, since we have no basis on which to reconstruct the section between the end of the first fragment of song 6 (Masik II, 1–6) and the beginning of the praise of the seventh chief prince. I prefer to reconstruct the words preceding line 1 of the fragment simply as רְאוּ הַנָּחַל. Contrast the reconstruction in Davila, *Linguistic Works*, 116f-7.

24 See Newsom, *Songs*, 131: “The text of 4Q403 1 i 1 is haplographic. MasShirShab 117 must have contained elements D–F, though unfortunately this material is lost in the lacuna. The schematic reconstruction is modeled after the psalm account of the seventh chief prince. The word שְׁלֹשׁ appears to be preserved in 4Q403 3 i 13.”

25 For discussion of this twofold pattern, see especially Nitzan, *Qumran Prayer*, 299.

26 4Q403 1 I, 3-4 (Newsom, “Shirah,” 260).

27 The first line of the praise of the first chief prince is missing in all available fragments, although Masik II, 1–6 seems to begin in the middle of this unit. Newsom has reconstructed this fragmentary first line in the following manner: יִמְצָא וַיִּקְרֵא אֶל לֶאֶבֶן favoring over הָעַלָּאֵת (Newsom, “Shirah,” 244).
The twofold pattern, here exemplified by the proclamation of the fourth chief prince, suits well the dramatic setting of the hymn in which two parties are involved, God and the group of chief princes. Yet, those proclamations structured in this twofold pattern lack two important elements present in proclamations 3 and 7. These threefold proclamations repeat the nominal use of the theme word in element 2a. More importantly, the designation "of the chief princes" is found only in the threefold structure of proclamations 3 and 7. Aside from this designation, the composition nowhere indicates the identity of those who sing these praises to God. This genitive construction with ְָּנֶּכֶּד is, therefore, crucial to the basic meaning of the hymn. Without it, we would not be able to grasp the relationship between the actors in the hymn and the recipient of the praise. Of course, we might anticipate that the praise of the seventh chief prince, as the culmination of the hymn, would deviate from the dominant twofold pattern. Yet, the hymn's typological use of the number seven does not account for the deviation from this pattern in the third proclamation. It seems that for the author of the hymn the sevenfold structure composed of threefold phrasing serves as the model for a perfectly balanced composition. The twofold structure, lacking as it does all mention of the pivotal actors in the liturgical performance and limping along in its imbalanced rhythm, seems provisional alongside the more comprehensive arrangement. By setting apart the third and seventh proclamation, the work highlights the importance of the typological numbers 3 and 7, which were central to the author's conception of order in the heavens. By subtly replacing the twofold pattern with the more stable threefold one, the hymn prefigures in its formal structure the three-tiered image of the heavenly community realized in the second portion of song 6.

III. The Blessings of the Seven Chief Princes

Unlike the previous composition, the blessings hymn found in the second half of the sixth song (4Q403 1 I, 10–29; 4Q404 1–2; 4Q405 3 II, 1–19; Mas1k II, 23–26) maintains a regular structure throughout. Despite a few minor discrepancies,29 each of the seven units of which the hymn is composed can be divided into a threefold pattern; each

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29 These variations are noted in Newsom, Songs, 196.
section is demarcated by the verb “to bless” (elements 1b, 2b and 3b). As in the previous table, I have categorized each phrase according to both the section in which it occurs (1, 2, and 3) and its function (a, b, c, d, e and f). Each of these phrases is composite, made up of both variable and fixed elements.

This hymn shares a number of important similarities with the previous one. Most noticeable is a passage at the close of the main body of the hymn which recapitulates its foregoing action: “And all the [chief] princes [will bless together] the divine [god]s in [His holy name with] all (27) [their] sevenfold [testimonies. And] they will bless those appointed for righteousness and all the bles[ed . . . bles]sed for e[ve]r [. . .] (28) to them.”

Yet, since the composition is not characterized by the use of theme words, the recapitulation is not as extensive. In fact, paronomasia is employed in the blessings of only princes 3, 4, 6, and 7. And, where it does turn up, it is only employed in the first section of the unit. This relatively restricted use of variation is further emphasized by the recurrent use of נָשָׁה, which is incorporated into a number of fixed expressions throughout the hymn (e.g., element 2e: נַשָּׁה לְדֹרְךָ). Thus, the blessings hymn subordinates to its rigid phraseology the modes of variation so characteristic of the preceding composition. The few deviations from the established pattern are no more than minor shifts within the predictable pattern (e.g., phrase 3e in units 4 and 5). Those deviations that do perform a significant function within the composition (such as phrases 2f, and 3f, which clarify the function of the blessing and the identity of the recipients) are located primarily towards the culmination of the hymn in the praise of the sixth and seventh princes.

This remarkably rigid and stable threefold structure should in large measure be read as a formal expression of the hymn’s dramatic action, the reciprocal three-way exchange among the hymn’s primary actors. Unlike the praise of the seven chief princes, which restricts its dialogue to two actors, the giver and the recipient of praise, the blessings of the seven chief princes incorporate the broader community of angels into its dramatic setting. The seven chief princes are introduced in the first element of the song (1a), followed imme-

11 4Q403 1 I, 23 (Newson, “Shirot,” 261).
13 4Q403 1 I, 22. For the use of this phrase, see especially 1QS II, 2; CD II, 15-16; 1QM XIV. 7. Davila writes: “With small variations, the phrase “those whose way is sound” appears often in the Qumran Literature... always referring to human beings, especially the sectarian. Presumably it applies to human beings here as well” (Liturgical Works, 121-2).
14 4Q403 1 I, 27. In 1QSa II, 2, the phrase מְשַׁלַּחְוֵ֑ון יְהִי הָעָ֖ם is applied to members of the covenantal community (the yehud).
because they make explicit use of semantic fields drawn from the human sphere. It remains unclear whether such phrases refer to human or angelic figures. This problem is especially acute in the case of the blessings hymn, which lacks any explicit statement concerning the identity of this group. Moreover, this question proves particularly important for establishing the relationship between the human narrators of the sevenfold hymns and the liturgical action they describe. Are we then to imagine a closed community in heaven? What place does the human community have in this liturgical drama?

In an attempt to answer specifically these questions, Crispin H. T. Fletcher-Louis has developed a new interpretative paradigm for the Songs, arguing 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.” Building upon the possibility that the Qumran community and, in particular, its priesthood conceptualized itself in angelic and even divine terms, Fletcher-Louis interprets the use of a common semantic field to describe both humans and angels as evidence for their ultimate identification.

This view seems to assume that linguistic identity can in some sense be taken to constitute ontological identity. This assumption, however, is especially problematic in the Songs, in which language functions primarily as a mode of representation and the imagined realms are perforce described as mirroring the earthly reality of the author(s).

In fact, the Songs themselves explicitly reject the idea that the boundary between the human and the angelic is permeable. The one intersection of the part of the human community in the entire cycle is an articulation of anxiety precisely concerning the limits of human knowledge and the human capacity to participate in the heavenly praise along with the angels: “(6) But [...] how shall we be considered [among] them בְּמַעַל וְשָׁלֵם? And how shall our priesthood be considered [in their dwellings]? And [our] holiness their (7) holiness? [What] is the offering of our tongues of dust אֶת הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְאֶת הַתּוֹנָה?”

Newson notes that “the one explicit reference to angels (…וּבְּמַעַל וְשָׁלֵם) in 4Q403 1 18-19 is a damaged reading.” (Newson, Songs, 196).

10 4Q400 2. 5-8. Translation from Newson, “Shirah,” 188.

11 Contrast especially the phrase בְּמַעַל וְשָׁלֵם in 4Q403 1 II. 26. For the systematic use of “tongue” as the primary instrument of praise, see also 4Q403 1 II. 6; 4Q403 1 II. 26-29; 4Q403 1 II. 36-37 and pasuk.

found at the Dead Sea, most notably a fragmentary hymn that has been termed the “Self-Glorification Hymn” by Esther Eshel, the text’s primary editor. According to Eileen Schuller, this poetic composition is found in two separate recensions at Qumran, the first in three manuscripts (4Q27 6 III, 1-2 + 7 I, 5-23 [= 4QH], 4Q471b, and 1QH X XCVI, 6-14) and the second in a closely related, but distinct, text, 4Q491 11 I. A fifth fragment, 4Q431 (= 4QH), written in a hand very similar to 4Q471b, contains a hymn that follows the “Self-Glorification Hymn” in that manuscript. This complex textual situation has raised important questions concerning both the place of this material within the wider Hadayot corpus and the redactional activity it underwent in its transmission within the Qumran community. From her synoptic analysis of these fragments, Deborah Dimant has concluded that the first person “Self-Glorification Hymn” was initially an older, independent unit that was juxtaposed with a second-person plural address and thereby incorporated into a new textual complex.


Schiller, “4QHodavot,” 199-208.

Schuller, “The Classification Hadayot and Hadayot-like (with Particular Attention to 4Q222, 4Q135a, and 4Q440), in Sopher, Liturgical, and Poetic Texts from Qumran, 123-93.

Eshel maintains that the “Self-Glorification Hymn” was initially a separate composition, which was subsequently interpolated into the Hadayot corpus (Eshel, “4Q471b,” 191-4). For differing opinions concerning the relationship amongst these various fragments as well as of these fragments to the Hadayot corpus, see Martin G. Abegg, “4Q571: A Case of Mistaken Identity?” in Pursuing the Text: Studies in Honor of B. Z. Weiss on the Occasion of his Seventieth Birthday (ed. J. C. Reeves and J. Kampen; JSOTSup 184; Sheffield; JSOT, 1994); 136-83.

Dimant, “Synoptic Comparison,” 161; 4Q491 and 4Q27 share not only the transition from a first person hymn to a second-person plural address, but also the actual and preceding lines... It would mean also mean that the two distinct literary units were already juxtaposed in the textual tradition reflected by the two texts. Thus, these texts indicate the complexity, and perhaps the antiquity, of the textual and literary history lying behind these works.

50 For differing opinions on this question, see Baillet, DJD 7, 7-22; Morton Smith, “Ascent to the Heavens and Deification in 4QPtah,” in Archeology and History in the Dead Sea Scrolls: The New York University Conference in Memory of Engel (ed. E. W. Schubert; Sheffield; JSOT, 1990); 181-88; see also a revised version of this paper; idem, “Two Ascended to Heaven – Jesu and the Author of 4QH,” in Jesus and the Dead Sea Scrolls (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1999); 709-201; John J. Collins, “A Throne in the Heavens: Apotheosis in Pre-Christian Judaism,” in Deity, Eternity, and Other Worldly Joys (ed. J. J. Collins and M. Fishbane; Albany; N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1995); 43-56; Martin G. Abegg, “Who Ascended to Heaven? 4Q491, 4Q27, and the ‘Teacher of Righteousness,’ in Eschatology, Messianism, and the Dead Sea Scrolls (ed. C. A. Evans and P. W. Flint; Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1997); 61-73. Most recently, Eshel argued that the ascended figure should be identified as the eschatological high priest (Eshel, DJD 29, 124-7).


4Q471b 1.

4Q471b 4.

4Q471b 6.
with the angels" (אramid האלים א équipé). And, whereas the speakers in the Songs doubt the purity of their tongues, the speaker here wonders "who could measure the flow of my lips (וְדָלַשׁ עָלֵי) who can associate with me in speech (יִרְשָׁה לְאָזְרֵךְ)". The singular speaker of this hymn is accorded precisely the exalted status and function that the communal collective denies itself in the Sabbath cycle. The polemic contained in the Songs need not be seen as a refutation of the specific claims put forward in this hymn. Certainly we need not seek theological uniformity in the collection, especially considering the possible nonsectarian nature of the Sabbath cycle. Yet, even if we are to view these two texts as parts of a unified system, we should be careful not to conflate their intended meaning by seeking a stable notion of "angelification" or "participation" throughout the Qumran corpus. The "Self-Glorification Hymn" explores the special and unique status of one exceptional figure, whereas the Songs seek to articulate a hierarchical relationship between the human narrators and the angelic actors in the heavenly liturgical drama.

Although comparison between works within the broader corpus of materials found at Qumran can often unlock the meaning of individual works, this approach just as often lead to pitfalls in interpretation. My formal analysis of the Songs has demonstrated the coherence between the literal genre of the cycle and its theological stance concerning the role of the human in liturgical acts of praise. In so far as the human community functions as the implied narrators of the heavenly drama, they do participate in the liturgy, but only in this limited sense. This form of participation in no way constitutes experiential or ontological transformation. In fact, the descriptive and indirect discourse of the hymns lends a voyeuristic quality to the Songs. The human narrators stand outside the threefold drama depicted in the sixth song of the cycle. Through its use of highly formal patterns of description, the hymn maintains the rigid internal boundaries within the celestial community and between the heavens and the earth. The structure of the sevenfold hymn thus serves an essential function in shaping the significance of the work. In order to grasp more fully the nature of the sevenfold hymn, the following section will explore the way this form maintains its essentially descriptive character within a vastly different literary setting.

IV. Sevenfold Praise in the Hekhalot Corpus: §78 §77 §78
(Hekhalot Rabbati §271)

The hymn analyzed in this section, "You are Lord" (§271), is contained in the Hekhalot literature, the earliest independent corpus of Jewish mystical writings. This composition falls at the end of the most stable and prevalent configuration of the macroform Hekhalot Rabbati, §§81–277. In this context, it is found embedded in a short collection of primarily liturgical compositions (§§268–277). A fragment detailing the alternate names of the angel Metatron (§277), which concludes with a benediction, marks the end of this section. In fact, most of the compositions which comprise this portion of Hekhalot Rabbati (except §268 and §277) are first attested in the oldest identifiable fragment of the Hekhalot corpus found amongst the textual remains of the Cairo Geniza, T.-S. K 21.95.S, although often only in partial form and in a radically dissimilar order. This fragment, written on a leather scroll (megillah), was likely copied before the 9th century. Johann Maier is the last scholar to have subjected any of these hymns to thorough formal analysis. To my knowledge, the formal and discursive features of the sevenfold §271 have never been compared to those of the Qumran Songs.

All of the hymns contained in this discrete textual unit are characterized by highly formal poetic features. §271, however, is unique for its use of the number seven as a structuring principle. This composition

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55 This line is fullest in 4Q491 11 7 /Biblet, DJD 7, 26-9. Eshel reconstructions 4Q471b frag. 1c using 4Q491 (Eshel, DJD 29, 429).
56 4Q471b 5–6, reconstructed from 4Q491 11, 10.
57 See footnote 3 above.
59 Schäfer has published this as fragment G1 in his Genize-Fragmente zu Hekhalot-Literatur (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1984), 9–32. On the implications of this fragment for the formation of the Hekhalot corpus as a whole and of Hekhalot Rabbati in particular, see Schäfer, "Zum Problem der redaktionellen Identität von Hekhalot Rabbati," 70–72; also see the English summary of this section in idem, "Tradition and Redaction in Hekhalot Literature," 10–12.
60 Schäfer, Genize-Fragmente, 10.
consists of two sections. The first is a short introduction, which prefigures the structure of the cycle to follow: the seven theme-words used in the hymn are listed as substantives in apposition to the main title of God, i.e., Lord (יהוה). In fact, this introductory précis lends an added dimension to these theme words, which are used as substantives nowhere else in the composition. The final line of the introduction, forms an inclusio, recapitulating the first line. The phrase “You are Lord” thus functions as a title, which introduces the main fixed element of the hymn, but is not included in the body of the hymn. In this way, the hymn can be read as an expansion on the “lordship” of God. This introductory section functions in very much the same way as the concluding summaries so typical of the sevenfold hymns of the Songs, in this case adumbrating the form and content of the hymn that follows.

The second part of the composition forms the main body of the hymn. This seven-part song details the praise offered to God by a series of figures. As in the Sabbath Songs, the actual words of praise are not given; instead the order of praise is described. Each of the seven phrases which make up the hymn contain three units. Each unit has a constant element and a variable element constructed from the unit’s theme word. The poetic structure of these phrases can be expressed as a simple formula: constant 1 + variable 1, constant 2 + variable 2, and constant 3 + variable 3; or, more precisely, ʾattah hu + theme word as predicate (masculine singular), lekha + theme word in participial form (masculine plural), and koʾl beʾelle + theme word in nominal form (abstract noun). This can best be seen in Table 4 below.

The formal similarities between this hymn and the earlier hymns of the sixth Sabbath song are striking. In addition, the hymns share a common vocabulary of praise. Some of this vocabulary has roots in the second temple period. For example, the first two elements of this hymn, יְהֹוָהִי and יְהֹוָהּ, are also the first two elements of the liturgical series found in 1 Chr 29:11. Even more noticeable, however, is the common emphasis on the fullness and comprehensiveness of the liturgical activity. Both the “blessings” hymn and the Hekhalot hymn make the systematic use of the word ʾez. This sense of inclusiveness is further enhanced by the comprehensiveness of the formal structure.

As in the “blessings” hymn, the identity of those offering praise to God is left indeterminate. While it is true the phrase יְהֹוָהִי is

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### Table 4. The Sevenfold Structure of Hekhalot Rabbati §271

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Hymn</th>
<th>Introductory précis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. You are Lord, the great (1)  
   the mighty (2)  
   and the awesome (3), the righteous (4), the pious (5), and the holy (6), and the faithful (7), | 1. title phrase |
| 4. You are Lord, the God of gods and Lord of Lords. | 4. inclusio expanding on title phrase |
| 5. You are great, (1A)  
   they declare You great, (1B) all the great ones. (1C)  
You are mighty, (2A)  
   they declare You mighty, (2B) all the mighty ones. (2C)  
You are awesome, (3A)  
   to You rejoice (3B) all who rejoice. (3C)  
You are righteous, (4A)  
   they declare You righteous, (4B) all the righteous ones. (4C) | 5. 7 threefold units:  
   1. ʾattah hu + variable (predicate)  
   2. lekha + variable (m. pl. partic.)  
   3. koʾl beʾelle + variable (nominal) |

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61 I follow the version of the text found in MS V228 of Schäfer’s Synopsis, except for the first phrase יְהֹוָהִי יְהוָה נְנוֹרָה, which is given in a shortened form יְהוָה נְנוֹרָה. Several of the other versions deviate from the strict formal pattern, leaving out a phrase and placing the elements out of order (e.g., M22) or incorporating foreign material (e.g., M40 which adds הָגָה to some phrases. The order of the verbs of praise in V228 corresponds exactly to G1 B/16 27 (Schäfer, Genizah-Fragmente, 13).  

63 Exodus 34:6. Though present in all major manuscripts, the phrase is outside the formal constraints of the composition. It is entirely absent from the version found in G1 at B/18.
Table 4 (cont.)

| You are pious, (5A) | נדב דוד (מפורש) נדב דוד
| all the pious ones. (5C) |
| You are holy, (6A) | נדב דוד
| all the holy ones. (6C) |
| You are faithful in your words, (7A) | נדב דוד
| by all the faithful ones. (7C) |

applied to humans in other portions of the Hekhalot corpus, the use here is most closely paralleled in a hymn from earlier in Hekhalot Rabbati:

Be elated, be elated, you elevated ones (ברנמר רוחות)!
Be exalted, be exalted, you sublime ones (ברנמר וינה)!
Be mighty, be mighty, you mighty ones (ברנמר נמר)! Be proud, be proud, you proud ones (ברנמר נקרי)!
Because elevation and might, pride and sublimity are for the king of the world alone and for all his attendants (idores). For it befits the attendants of his pride to be proud, and the bearers of his throne are worthy of being mighty.

This fourfold hymn bears striking resemblance to the sevenfold hymn here under consideration. Although less artful in its variation, each of the four phrases contains three units in which the theme word is used in both its nominal and its verbal form. This hymn, however, leaves no doubt that the phrase here refers to God’s angelic attendants (idores), who are said to bear up God’s throne. In light of this usage, it is doubtless the case that in §271 those who offer praise are likewise the angelic host.

Despite the similarity in angelological terminology between these two hymns, there remains a crucial difference: in §271 it is the angels who offer praise, but in §167 they serve as the very objects of veneration. In both cases, it is the human community that functions as narrators. However, in one case the discourse is indirect and descriptive, while in the other the human voice participates directly in the praise. This disparity between these two hymns corresponds to the widely divergent judgments offered in the Hekhalot corpus concerning the appropriateness of human participation in the angelic liturgy and the possibility for human mediation between the heavenly and earthly spheres.

Immediately following the hymn in §167, the text makes an unequivocal statement: “A decree from heaven upon you, descend to the chariot, if you do not report what you have heard and if you do not testify what you have seen on the countenance, countenance of elevation and of might, of pride and of sublimity.”

However, this declaration is contested within the macroform Hekhalot Rabbati and even within the very microform containing this sevenfold hymn. For example, §274 asserts that it is the obligation of all creatures to offer praise to God. However, a parallel passage found in a Geniza fragment assigns this same responsibility to “the House of Israel in all their dwelling places” as well.

By contrast, in §276, the text cautions: “Who can speak (about) one of your thousands upon thousands of myriads upon myriads of mighty deeds?” The implicit answer: neither human beings, nor angels. In yet another formulation, §307 declares: “Who can recount the wonders of God ( Retrieves found in the King of Kings? Only the service-angels (alav)!”

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65 I supply this reading from MS M22, MS V228, along with all the other manuscripts published in the Synopse, read כל אתה נדב, “to long for.”
66 In particular, see §§147–8: כל אתה נדב are said to be more beloved of God than הדות נדב.
67 §167. I follow the reading in MS M22 in Schäfer’s Synopse.
The implication here is that it is the task of angels, and not of humans, to offer praise to God.

**Conclusion**

This modest comparison of several select hymns from the *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice* and the Hekhalot corpus suggests that the genre of the sevenfold hymn carried with it an implicit answer to the question of human participation in the heavenly liturgy. I have argued that the oblique, descriptive discursive style of this genre was well suited to the emphasis on organization and hierarchy characteristic of formulaic poetic structures. In this way, the sevenfold compositions we have looked at offer the human community an opportunity to participate in the heavenly liturgy drama, while at the same time asserting a fundamental boundary between human beings and the angelic host they describe. Despite the increasing emphasis in the Hekhalot literature on the permeability of the boundary between heaven and earth and between the human and the angelic, the sevenfold hymn retained its primarily indirect character. I have argued that in the highly specific form of the sevenfold praise there exist important similarities between the poetry of the Qumran sectarian and of the Hekhalot authors. In particular, the location of the human participant within the cosmological structure imagined in the hymn, the relative directness of the poetic discourse, and even the symbolic significance of the formal sevenfold arrangement of the hymns point to a significant continuity between these compositions.

I have shown that literary influence need not be conceptualized as a process that can occur only at the poles of oral tradition and concrete textual dependence. Instead I have pursued a model of influence that takes seriously the mediating force exerted by formal poetic structures in conjunction with notions of literary genre. These alternative media are all the more potent as agents of continuity within a ritual-liturgical tradition, in this case one whose performance history is virtually unrecoverable. Both of these compositions apparently belonged to a continuous tradition of postbiblical religious poetry, the sevenfold invitation to praise. I believe that this more cautious approach reveals that, although the *Songs* did not serve as a direct link in the evolution of Hebrew mystical poetry throughout Late Antiquity, they – like the Hekhalot hymns – can serve as snapshots of a widespread, dynamic and tenuous process of development. As I have shown, a certain style of indirect and descriptive speech constituted an intimate component of this liturgical genre. In our search for continuity in the history of Hebrew religious and mystical poetry, it is necessary to attend not only to isolated formal or thematic features of the disparate compositions, but also to their larger literary and cultural contexts.