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The Liturgical Communion of the *Yahad* with the Angels

The Origin of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice Reconsidered

Michael R. Jost | ORCID: 0000-0001-6140-5624

Faculty of Divinity, University of Cambridge, Cambridge, UK

mrj43@cam.ac.uk

Abstract

Since the discoveries of the first Dead Sea Scrolls, the motif of a communion with the angels has been repeatedly emphasized and discussed as a characteristic of the self-understanding of the community behind these writings. Of particular interest in this discussion are the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q400–407; 11Q17; and Masik ShirShabb). However, the origin of the so-called Angelic Liturgy is still an unresolved question in scholarship. In this article we will try to figure out the relationship of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice to the sectarian literature by analyzing the communion with the angels described therein. I will demonstrate that this composition has the most explicit connections to the liturgical communion with the angels that is uniquely found in undisputed sectarian texts. The Angelic Liturgy is then not so much the source, but much more an example of the liturgical development inside the *yahad*.

Keywords

angels – liturgical communion – sectarian literature – Angelic Liturgy – Maskil – Qumran – dead sea scrolls

It is widely accepted that the *yahad* viewed itself as participating in a kind of communion with the angels. Since the finds of the first Dead Sea Scrolls, this motif has been repeatedly emphasized and discussed as a characteristic of the community behind these writings.¹ Now that all the Dead Sea Scrolls have been published and several studies on these writings with a view towards this topic have already been written, preliminary conclusions can be drawn for the liturgical understanding of the community as well as for the contextualization of the different compositions inside this collection, especially of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q400–407; 11Q17; MasikShirShabb). However, the origin of the so-called Angelic Liturgy is still an unresolved question in scholarship. The ten copies found at Qumran and Masada underline the importance and spread of it. Nevertheless, this cycle of 13 songs is singular. No comparable composition from early Judaism has survived in terms of content and form, which makes it difficult to judge the broader context in which it was written. It is therefore not surprising that different proposals were offered.²

This question can be approached from different perspectives, including observations related to paleography, linguistics, or content. It is not possible to discuss all these aspects in this article. However, we will try to figure out the relationship of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice to the sectarian literature by analyzing the communion with the angels described therein. So, in the first part of my article I will present different taxonomies of angelic communion in the Dead Sea Scrolls that have been proposed in previous research, and I will suggest certain corrections to the previous research in order to describe the angelic community in these texts as precisely as possible. In the second part I focus on the liturgical communion with the angels that is uniquely found in undisputed sectarian compositions, and then I compare these characteristics with the *Shirot Olat ha-Shabbat*. On the basis of these observations, I draw conclusions in the third part of the article about the provenience of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. I will demonstrate that this composition, which is in its entirety unique in the early Jewish literature, has the most explicit connections to the liturgical communion with the angels in sectarian literature from the

1 Barthélemy, “La sainteté,” 203–16. For an introduction and history of research, see Frey and Jost, “Gottesdienst und Engel,” 1–21.

2 Some argue for a pre-sectarian, priestly-scribal composition linked to Jubilees or the Aramaic Testament of Levi (e.g. Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, 5), others argue for a pre-sectarian priestly composition linked to the Sadducees (e.g. Stettler, “Astronomische Vorstellungen,” 115–16), and yet others for a sectarian composition (e.g. Falk, *Daily, Sabbath, and Festival Prayers*, 126–30).

Dead Sea Scrolls. The Angelic Liturgy is then not so much the source, but much more an example of the liturgical development inside the *yahad*.³

1 Taxonomy of Angelic Communion

Various proposals have been made for the categorization of the textual evidence of angelic communion, since obviously not all texts describe the same kind of communion with the angels. A comparison of the various proposals that have been offered in research so far demonstrates the manifold significance of the angelic communion within the collection of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

As early as 1966, Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn arranged the testimonies of an angelic communion from three points of view:⁴ First, he names the presence of the angels in the war camp as help in the Holy War in the War Rule (1QM). He concludes that this writing shows that the idea of the communion with the angels cannot be separated from the idea of the war communion as a completely independent complex of traditions. Second, there are statements about the exclusion of cultically impure members from the worship communion because of the presence of angels, which are found in eschatological rule texts.⁵ These statements from group-specific texts offer access to the self-understanding of the Qumran congregation as a community shaped by special holiness. Third, Kuhn refers to a priestly communion with the angels. These references not only mention the communion with the angels as an exclusionary feature, but also describe it positively. Various sections in 1QH^a have to be considered. Also, in the Rule of Blessings, the relationship between angels and priests is clearly described as a liturgical communion (1QSb 4:22–26). In addition, passages like 1QSb 3:5–6 and 1QSb 3:25 can offer hints at a priestly communion with the angels. The Community Rule (1QS 11:7–9) formulates a further aspect of the communion with the angels when it describes the community as the true sanctuary of God (cf. 1QS 5:6; 8:5–10; 9:5) and in this way extends the liturgical worship communion with the angels to the entire congregation of the elect in the present (i.e., the *yahad*). Compared to Kuhn's sources, there

3 In this article I draw on the much broader research of my doctoral thesis, which is published by Mohr Siebeck: Jost, *Engelgemeinschaft*.

4 Kuhn, *Enderwartung*, 66–75.

5 1QSa 2:8–9 and 1QM 7:4–6. Also, 4Q174 3:4–5 according to the reconstruction of Steudel, *Texte aus Qumran II*, 194–95. Further 4Q266 8 i 6–9 suggest a reconstruction in this sense; see Baumgarten, “Damascus Document,” 50–51. See Harrington, “Keeping Outsiders Out,” 187–203; Dormann, *The Blemished Body*, 253–57; Olyan, *A Thousand Thousands*, 101–18 and Shemesh, “The Holy Angels are in Their Council,” 179–202.

is now much more material available from Cave 4: Berakhot (4Q286), Daily Prayers (4Q503), Songs of the Maskil (4Q510–511), Words of the Luminaries (4Q504–506), and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q400–407; 11Q17; Masik ShirShabb). All these texts together demand reconsideration of the taxonomy offered by Heinz-Wolfgang Kuhn, especially his third category, the priestly communion with the angels.⁶

A slightly different taxonomy was proposed by Moshe Weinfeld. He also considers three different aspects of “the common lot (גורל) of the member of the sect with the angels”: “joining in praise,” “having a common fate with the heavenly beings, which means to take share in eternal life,” and “taking part in the holy war side by side with the hosts of heaven.”⁷ With the second point he ponders more explicitly the eschatological perspective related to the communion with the angels, which often is overlooked. But he adds: “These three understandings of the communion of men with the angels actually intermingle. Those who join the angels in praise feel that they cast their lot with them, thus achieving eternal life, and the same applies to those who fight in battle together with the heavenly beings.”⁸ This division also does not describe the liturgical communion precisely.

Several contributions have subsequently tried to define in more detail this priestly or liturgical communion with the angels. In a paper from 1994, Bilhah Nitzan recognizes two different types of hymns “concerning the religious experience of communion between human beings and the celestial entourage”:⁹ she calls them the cosmological approach (Pss 103 and 148; 4Q286–290; 4Q504 1–2 vii 4–9) and the mystical approach. The mystical approach she divides into the celestial approach, which “elevates the praises and prayers uttered by the

6 Björn Frennesson, who wrote the first monograph on the subject of the liturgical community with the angels in the Dead Sea Scrolls, uses three similar categories, but in a different order: “a) in praise and prayer, b) in the final holy war, c) when motivating the exclusion of inadequate members or candidates for membership” (Frennesson, *In a Common Rejoicing*, 39). Michael Mach also sees similar aspects of the community with the angels: “Die präsentische Gemeinschaft mit den Engeln erscheint in Qumran in Verbindung mit den Motiven der himmlischen Weisheit, des (kultischen?) Lobpreises Gottes, der militärischen Gemeinschaft und den Vorschriften bezüglich der Aufnahme, bzw. Nichtaufnahme in die Gemeinde” (Mach, *Entwicklungsstadien*, 210). Peter Schäfer also uses three categories: “Gemeinschaft im heiligen Krieg,” “Reinheit des Lagers,” and “liturgische Gemeinschaft”; Schäfer, *Rivalität*, 33–40. See also Schäfer, “Communion with the Angels,” 37–66.

7 See Weinfeld, “Heavenly Praise,” 427–37, here 430.

8 Weinfeld, “Heavenly Praise,” 431.

9 See Nitzan, “Harmonic and Mystical Characteristics,” 164.

celestial entourage above those recited by the earthly beings”¹⁰ (Isa 6:3; Ezek 3:12; Tob 12:12; Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice), and a communionist approach, which “acknowledges the possibility that those human beings who are righteous and free of transgression [...] may recite praises in company with the angels and thus attain a spiritual experience of communion with the celestial entourage”¹¹ (e.g. 1 En. 39:7; 1QH^a 11:21–23; 4Q511 35). This distinction between a cosmological and mystical approach is quite helpful because it makes clear that belonging together in the cosmos does not yet correspond to an actual communion (in Nitzan’s choice of words: “mystical” communion) with the angels. But the term “mystical approach” itself is problematic, especially in view of the celestial approach, which does not include, in her interpretation, any communion with the angels or the heavenly world.¹² Moreover, Nitzan overlooks the eschatological perspective, and ignores therefore the difference between the present liturgical experience and the eschatological expected communion. Also, it is questionable whether the different categorization of the statements from the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice as a celestial approach and the Hodayot as a communionist approach is valid. As discussed below, the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice not only “elevates the praises and prayers uttered by the celestial entourage above those recited by the earthly beings,”¹³ but describes the reality of the liturgical communion with the angels, in which they stand, as it is also confessed in the Hodayot.

In an article from 2003, Esther Chazon offers a classification of three categories.¹⁴ She entitles an initial group of texts “Many Voices: Harmonizing with the Universe.” This includes the manuscript 4Q504. She entitles the second group “Two Choirs: Praying like the Angels,” which includes the writings 4Q286, 4Q503, and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (4Q400–407). The third category she summarizes under the heading “One Congregation: Joining the Angels.”¹⁵ As an example, Chazon mentions only the Hodayot. The distinction between the first two groups, however, seems difficult. For in the texts of the second group, the “harmony of the cosmos” also forms a guiding principle. Moreover, the assignment of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice to the second category is not very convincing, because these songs not only describe the common prayer, but also the presence of the earthly community in the heavenly service (4Q400

10 Nitzan, “Harmonic and Mystical Characteristics,” 166.

11 Nitzan, “Harmonic and Mystical Characteristics,” 167.

12 See Wolfson, “Mysticism,” 185–202.

13 Nitzan, “Harmonic and Mystical Characteristics,” 166.

14 See Chazon, “Human and Angelic Prayer,” 36–43.

15 Chazon, “Human and Angelic Prayer,” 43–45.

2:6–8). She only considers the Hodoyot for the third category “One Congregation: Joining the Angels,” but obviously we find the same topic in 1QS and 1QSB. Due to this omission, the importance of this third group is underestimated. Finally, the eschatological perspective also remains overlooked. 4Q511, for example, is not even mentioned by Chazon.¹⁶

For a taxonomy that takes into account the missing points, I therefore propose a distinction between a cosmological, liturgical, and eschatological communion with the angels. The cosmological communion is limited to the harmony and relation of the earthly and heavenly spheres in praise of God, whereas heaven and earth are mentioned as different places. Hence, we can read in 4Q504 1–2 viir 4–9: “Praise for the sabbath day. Give thanks [...] his holy Name for ever ... [...] all the angels of the holy vault and [...] to the heavens, the earth and all its schemers [... the] great [abyss], Abaddon, the water and all that there [is in it ...] all its creatures, always, for centuries [eternal. Amen. Amen.]”¹⁷ (cf. 4Q511 10 11–12). We find this kind of communion in the writings 4Q286, 4Q503, and 4Q504 from the Dead Sea Scrolls, and it is comparable with Psalm 29, 103, or 148 and the common Sabbath rest in Jub 2:17–22. Heaven and earth belong to the same cosmos, which is subject to a common rhythm, which can be principally recognized by the course of the sun. Where this rhythm is followed, the cosmos comes into a state of harmony as a polyphonic choir. The bond between human, sun (and stars and moon), and angels is therefore connected with holy times, so that the whole cosmos meets in the temporal expression of praise.¹⁸

The liturgical communion goes beyond this cosmological communion. The angels and the earthly worshipers not only pray at the same time separated in heaven and earth but build one community in the same place. Therefore, the ritually impure must leave the congregation, for the holy angels are part of it (1QSa 2:3–9). We also find this kind of communion in 1QS, 1QSB, and 1QH^a. For example, we read in 1QH^a 11:21–22: “The depraved spirit you have purified from great offence so that he can take a place with the host of the holy ones, and can enter in communion [or: in the *yahad*] with the congregation of the sons of heaven.”¹⁹ There seems to be no need to define the way into this presence

16 Similarly, the critique of Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 103–4.

17 Translation García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 1017.

18 So the commentary on 4Q503 10 2 from Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 65: “We had, then, three choirs praising God—the angelic priests, the luminaries (sun, moon, stars), and the earthly community, who are called upon to ‘answer and say, ‘Blessed!’”

19 Translation García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 165.

of God in the heavenly world.²⁰ Obviously, God grants this communion with the heavenly world to the earthly elected people and the community does not need to spell out the details. Therefore, the liturgical use of the texts does not aim at the attainment of an angelic communion. But, in the worship songs and prayers, the actual presence of God and communion with the heavenly world is performed.²¹ Ruth Tuschling formulates correspondingly: “the liturgy is not only (statically) the link with heaven; it is (actively) the means of sanctification and of incorporation into heaven.”²² Further, humans and angels share analogous priestly functions, which reinforces the idea of this kind of communion. We find this in the blessing of the sons of Zadok in 1QSb 4:24–26: “May you be like an angel of the face in the holy residence for the glory of the God of the Hos[ts ... You shall] be around, serving in the temple of the kingdom, casting the lot with the angels of the face and the Council of the Community [...] for eternal time and for all the perpetual periods.”²³ It is not just a cohabitation in the same presence before God, but angels and earthly priests build together an active communion (see also 1QH^a 19:13–17).²⁴

Finally, the third category is that of the eschatological communion, which describes a hoped-for communion with the angels beyond the present earthly limitation and affliction (for the individual righteous and elect ones e.g. 1 En. 39:6–7). In several compositions we can observe a progressive eschatological view. The *Hodayot*—a collection of various psalms—describe the present contested time, in which the person who is praying is aware of his lowliness (e.g. 1QH^a 20:24–35), but end with an eschatological figure, who has overcome earthly struggles (the so-called Self-Glorification Hymn). The same can be observed in the Rule of Blessing (1QSb), which contains blessings for different addressees in the present time, but finally also for the eschatological Messiah.²⁵ This double perspective appears also in the Songs of the Maskil.

20 I avoid the term “mystical,” because there are further ideas connected with it, not all of which would be fulfilled (e.g. the motive of ascension, so called *via mystica*).

21 Contrary to Dimant, “Men as Angels,” 470: “Thus, the communion of the Qumranites with the angels, referred to in several scrolls, should be understood as an analogy rather than an actual communion.”

22 Tuschling, *Angels and Orthodoxy*, 131.

23 Translation García Martínez and Tigchelaar, *Dead Sea Scrolls*, 107.

24 See further Angel, *Otherworldly and Eschatological Priesthood*, 113–18.

25 This view is contested and depends on the interpretation and relationship to 1QSa. If one understands 1QSa as a futuristic-eschatological text, which is immediately followed by 1QSb, then the blessings possibly formulate a liturgy for the messianic endtime (so Schiffman, *Eschatological Community*, 76). However, contrary to this perspective on the messianic time of salvation, the Rule of Blessing nevertheless occasionally sees the congregation in distress (1QSb 1:7; 3:7; 5:23). Furthermore, there are no clear statements that

In the first part of the composition the situation of the person who is praying seems to be one of distress, because this person seeks shelter in his tribulation in his communion with the angels (4Q511 8 4–12). In another song, however, the eschatological time can also be expected, in which there will be no more tribulation and the humans and angels will form the eternal sanctuary (4Q511 35 1–5, also 1QM).²⁶ In 4Q181 the community is called to an eternal life in communion with the angels. But they belong already in the present time to the heavenly destiny. David Flusser therefore rightly concludes that “[t]he concept of the unity of the Essenes with the heavenly beings is both present and eschatological.”²⁷

2 The Liturgical Communion of the Yaḥad

If one now examines this classification from the perspective of the distinction between sectarian and non-sectarian literature, interesting observations can be made.²⁸ The writings I have listed under cosmological communion undoubtedly belong mostly to the non-sectarian or pre-sectarian literature. However, in

would suggest a futuristic connotation for 1Qsb 1:1–3:19. Rather, the Rule of the Congregation also regulates how to deal with ritually impure people who are excluded from the meetings because of the presence of angels (1Qsa 1:19–22; 2:8–9). Therefore, Hartmut Stegemann says “that 1Qsa was composed for the present affairs of its author and of his Yaḥad, for a time when the evil was not yet destroyed within Israel.” (Stegemann, “Some Remarks,” 495) One attempt to connect these observations is to assume a current use of the Rule of Blessing to anticipate the messianic age (cf. Metso, *Serekh Texts*, 55; Vermes, *Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 387). Against this assumption speaks however that the *yaḥad* knew to differentiate between the present eschatological and future messianic time. The community took the view that Zadokite priests are currently in service, but that the royal Messiah is still expected. Even if one interprets 1Qsa eschatologically, the collection of 1QS and 1Qsa shows that rules for the present and future could be handed down together, so that this combination of perspectives seems possible for 1Qsb. Therefore, the interpretation of Stegemann is more convincing, who distinguishes the blessings eschatologically and does not assign them all to the same perspective. According to his interpretation of 1Qsa only the final section of 1Qsb is future-orientated (Stegemann, “Some Remarks,” 500). For elaboration see Jost, *Engelgemeinschaft*, 122–24.

26 See also Angel, “Reading the Songs of the Sage,” 202.

27 Flusser, “Resurrection and Angels,” 569.

28 This differentiation between sectarian and non-sectarian literature has been described in several articles, including Newsom, “‘Sectually Explicit’”; Chazon, “Is *Divre ha-me’orot* a Sectarian Prayer?”; Dimant, “Sectarian and Non-Sectarian Texts”; Zanella, “‘Sectarian’ and ‘Non-Sectarian’ Texts”; Lange, “Kriterien essenischer Texte”; and with caution also by Hempel, “Kriterien.” This distinction was criticized by García Martínez, “Aramaica Qumranica Apocalyptica.” Nonetheless, most researchers are still working with it, see e.g. the textbook by Stökl Ben Ezra, *Qumran*.

this paper I am primarily interested in the second category, that is, the liturgical communion with the angels. This communion is characterized not only by simultaneous prayers and songs, but also by being together in the presence of the heavenly world and is found exclusively in the sectarian literature, namely in 1QS, 1QSB, and 1QH^a, as well as in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice 4Q400–407.²⁹ Three additional observations strengthen the impression that there is an idea of liturgical communion with angels that is unique to the *yahad*. After discussing these I will return to the question of how the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice fits in this ideological context.

2.1 *The Liturgical Communion in Sectarian Literature*

First it should be noted that the liturgical communion with the angels, as described in the sectarian literature, is closely connected with the figure and the task of the Maskil.³⁰ All texts that explicitly speak of a liturgical communion with the angels assign a particular liturgical function to the Maskil (1QS, 1QSB, 1QH^a, and 4QShirShabb, with an eschatological perspective also in 4Q511).³¹ By contrast, the cosmological communion seems to be independent of the figure of the Maskil, because this figure is not mentioned in the Daily Prayers 4Q503 or in the Words of the Luminaries 4Q504 (see also 4Q286).³² Conversely, the Maskil is mentioned only four times in texts that lack the explicit reference to angels (4Q171, 4Q298, 4Q421, and 4Q461), but these texts are at times extremely fragmentary. So, one can see that the presence of the angels in the earthly communion is thoroughly linked to the figure of the Maskil. However, this figure is not to be understood as an individual, a unique (historical) person, but as representative of the community, authorized for this leading task by the communal and liturgical regulations, as I have argued elsewhere.³³ This is why the experience of the angelic communion is not individual; rather, all members participate in this communion.³⁴

29 Certainly, there are later compositions where similar ideas can be found, such as the rabbinic blessing *Qedusha* said in the *Yoser* (see Chazon, “Liturgical Communion,” 95–110) or the Hekhalot literature.

30 See Jost, “Yahad,” 220–22.

31 It has to be considered that the term Maskil is mentioned in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice only in the superscription and not within the songs themselves, as is also the case in 4Q511. Therefore, the possibility remains that the link to the Maskil depends on redactional activity and is not integral to the work.

32 A special case is the War Rule (1QM), wherein the angels play an important role—as is typical for the sectarian literature—but the Maskil is not mentioned. But the fellowship with the angels can also be found in it.

33 See Jost, “Yahad,” 216–18.

34 Several contributions have already shown that the Maskil should be understood as an

Second, all these texts explicitly describe a communion with the angels in a local sense. The earthly and heavenly beings meet in the same place. The earthly priests are “in the Abode of Holiness” and “in the temple of the kingdom” (1QSb 4:25–26). The person who prays in 1QH^a 11:21–23 is raised up by God to an eternal height (העליתני לרום עולם) and takes his “place with” (במעמד עם) the host of the holy ones or as 19:16 reads: “So that he may take (his) place before you with the everlasting host and the [eternal] spirit[s].”³⁵ Thus, the idea goes beyond the idea of a praise of heaven and earth, because not only is their praise related to one another, but the earthly congregation and heavenly beings stand together and build one communion. Therefore, the criteria for exclusion from the community because of the presence of angels can also be added here, which in the opposite way assert a local presence of the heavenly beings (1QSa 2:8–9; 1QM 7:4–6; 4Q174 3:4–5).³⁶ All these writings undoubtedly belong to the sectarian literature. On the contrary, this communion in a local sense cannot be found in demonstrably non-sectarian literature. The Daily Prayers know the cosmic dimension of praise. But the earthly community and the heavenly beings belong to different spheres, which is why the angels witness “for us in the holy of holies” (4Q503 15 5). The same applies to the Words of the Luminaries, where the angels are located in the firmament and heaven and earth are explicitly distinguished (4Q504 1–2 viir 4–9).

Third, all these texts describe the liturgical performance of a community. It is not some kind of individual mysticism, but it depends on participation in the community. This community builds the foundation of the House of Holiness (1QS 11:8; in an eschatological perspective 4Q511 35 3) and performs its identity as a true priestly community in its liturgical gatherings. The idea of the angelic communion is therefore essentially—but not exclusively (e.g. community in war 1QM)—connected with cultic gatherings, which is why the texts that speak of it are predominantly liturgical in genre. For this reason, the meaning of the liturgy for the community must be taken into account when interpreting the motif of communion with angels. The cultic assemblies are identity-forming for the *yaḥad*. The community that comes together in the holy times constitutes the self-conception of the *yaḥad*.³⁷ This connection becomes particu-

ideal figure, and not as a certain individual person; see Angel, “Maskil, Community, and Religious Experience”; Elgvin, “משכיל, *maskil*”; Newman, “Thanksgiving Hymns.” This is in line with the works of Newsom: *The Self as Symbolic Space*; eadem, “Religious Experience”; see also Harkins, *Reading with an “I” to the Heavens*.

35 Translation by Carol Newsom in Stegemann and Schuller, DJD 40:248.

36 For literature see n. 5.

37 Collins, “Prayer and the Meaning of Ritual,” 84–85.

larly clear in the Rule of Blessing (1QSb): Through the blessings, guided by the Maskil, the different groups are put into their position and their ministry, which applies even to the priests, and the community is constituted in the presence of God.

To sum up, it can be said that the liturgical communion in a local sense and in relation to the figure of the Maskil is unique for group-specific texts, but without claiming that group-specific texts cannot also represent a cosmological or eschatological communion (as 4Q286 or 4Q511). In the next section, I compare these observations to the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice.

2.2 *The Liturgical Communion and the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*

This cycle of 13 songs had an important role in the Qumran movement, which is evident from the fact that we have at least 9 copies of it (and one at Masada). These manuscripts are very different in format. Some are very small (4Q403) such that “the minute script and narrow lines make it difficult to imagine as useful in the course of a liturgical performance. It is more likely as a scholar’s personal copy for study.”³⁸ Other scrolls are large and expansive (4Q400 and 4Q405), useful in the course of a liturgical performance. Although the function of the songs is controversial, the exegetical observations show that the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice are not about the description of a single theme or action. Instead, through the recitation led by the Maskil they reveal the reality of the heavenly service during the time of the Sabbath sacrifice. They thus point to a liturgical performance.³⁹ In the second song the speech in the first person plural shows that the whole earthly community is involved. The praying community is astonished by the fact that their priesthood is in the dwellings of the heavenly angels and that as such they themselves are in the presence of the angels.⁴⁰

6 How shall we be accounted [among] them? And how shall our priesthood (be accounted) in their dwellings? And q[...] 7 their holines[s? What (is)] the offering of our tongue of dust (compared) with the knowledge of the divine [...] 8 [...] for our [exu]ltation, let us exalt the God of knowledge [...]

4Q400 2 6–8

38 Falk, “Material Aspects,” 69–70.

39 Reference to the Sabbath sacrifice in the title of the songs does not reveal the theme of this composition, but the determination of the time when these songs has to be performed.

40 Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, 21 and 23.

Here, the same communion with the angels is expressed in a local sense, as it is typical for the sectarian literature.⁴¹ All members of the community take part in it, as is the case in 1QS 11:7–8 and 1QH^a 11:20–24; 19:13–17. We can observe further parallels in content in comparison with 1QH^a 19:13–17:⁴²

For the sake of your glory you have purified a mortal from sin so that he may sanctify himself for you from all impure abominations and from faithless guilt, so that he might be united with the children of your truth and in the lot with your holy ones, so that a corpse-infesting maggot might be raised up from the dust to the council of [your] t[ruth], and from a spirit of perversion to the understanding which comes from you, and so that he may take (his) place before you with the everlasting host and the [eternal] spirit[s], and so that he may be renewed together with all that i[s] and will be and with those who have knowledge in a common rejoicing.⁴³

Both passages deal with holiness, knowledge, and a self-consciousness of sinfulness. Reading the rhetorical questions in 4Q400 2 in connection to 1QH^a 19:13–17 shows that the questions are not to be understood as self-abasement,⁴⁴ but as an expression of amazement at one's own position among the angels, in which one is actively involved in the divine service. To these ideological parallels one can add the metaphorical speech of the temple. The temple is in the *Shirot* as in sectarian literature more than just a place for the community: It is a living entity (4Q405 23 i 7–8; 1QS 8:4–10; 11:8–9; 4Q511 35).⁴⁵

In favor of a liturgical understanding of this composition is also the fact that the content of the songs is not determined by an individual, but by a communal-cosmological perspective.⁴⁶ It is not the experience of an individual that is described in these songs, but rather the heavenly reality at the time of the Sabbath sacrifice. This also explains the predominantly descriptive content of the songs in spite of the liturgical use. So, it is noticeable that the text

41 The communion in a local sense is implied in the formulation “in their dwellings” (במטעוניהם). The preposition ב, which does not express a comparison but usually indicates a certain localization, points in this concrete case to the location of the earthly priesthood among the angels. See Jost, *Engelgemeinschaft*, 175.

42 See also Newman, “Priestly Prophets,” 46.

43 Translation by Carol Newsom in Stegemann and Schuller, *DJD* 40:248.

44 Against Nitzan, “Harmonic and Mystical Characteristics,” 182–83.

45 “The heavenly temple is not so much a locus of angelic life as its semantic and conceptual foundation.” Boustan, “Angels in the Architecture,” 212.

46 Schuller, “Some Reflections on the Function,” 174.

never quotes exactly the content of the praise of the angels. Only the heavenly place and the liturgical setting are described.⁴⁷ The songs thus allow an immediate visualization of the heavenly realms. New insights for a liturgical use have recently been published by Noam Mizrahi, building upon text-critical, linguistic, and prosodic analyses of the sixth Sabbath song. He concludes that this song reflects “a liturgical practice of antiphonal performance” corresponding to “the twofold construction of each stanza.”⁴⁸ For all these reasons a liturgical use can hardly be denied and the communion with the angels as performed in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice is “not simply a matter of abstract conceptualization but rather an essential element of actual mystical (or mystical-like) experience, and it also played a vital role in constructing the social identity of the sectarian community (or communities) who apparently practiced this liturgy.”⁴⁹

To sum up, the combination of the role of the Maskil, of special liturgical times (Sabbath), and of the expectation of the community to be in the presence of the heavenly sphere during the liturgical performance reveals strong ideological parallels with typical sectarian literature.⁵⁰

3 The Origin of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice Reconsidered

All these observations indicate that it is necessary to conduct a new reexamination of the question whether this cycle of 13 songs is a Qumranic or pre-Qumranic composition. The answer to this question in the past 30 years has depended profoundly upon the work of Carol Newsom. In her publication of the manuscripts from Cave 4 in 1985, she supported the hypothesis “that the scroll of the Sabbath Shiroṭ is a product of the Qumran community.”⁵¹ In 1990 she thoroughly reconsidered this question and came to a different conclusion: “The most plausible explanation seems to be that the Sabbath Songs alone originated outside of and probably prior to the emergence of the Qumran community.”⁵² She confirmed this assessment in a new edition of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice in 1999, following the criteria “distribution of copies of the *Sabbath Songs*, internal evidence from the contents of the *Sabbath Songs*, and

47 See Allison, “The Silence of Angels”; Reymond, “Poetry of the Heavenly Other.”

48 Mizrahi, “Earthly Liturgy,” 139.

49 Mizrahi, “The Cycle of Summons,” 65–66.

50 Contrary to Hamidović, “La contribution des *Cantiques de l'holocauste du sabbat*,” 317.

51 Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 4.

52 Newsom, “‘Sectually Explicit,’” 184.

the relationship between the *Sabbath Songs* and other literature from Qumran which is more clearly of sectarian origin.”⁵³ To this day, her assessment determines the scholarly consensus.⁵⁴

However, all these three types of evidences can be interpreted in multiple ways. There are various observations which suggest an interpretation of the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice as non-Qumranic. There are parallels to 4Q503 and 4Q504, which are generally considered to be pre-Qumranic. Moreover, conceptual differences between the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the other sectarian texts can be perceived. Thus, the primary focus on the heavenly worship is unique. The hierarchization of angels is rather unusual for Qumran texts, but not unknown, as well as the frequent use of the term Elohim in the Songs. Further, there is no polemic against other groups. If one also considers the peculiarities of the language⁵⁵ and the lack of typical sectarian terms such as יחד and עצת היחד, a pre-Qumran origin seems plausible.⁵⁶ Thus, Newsom concludes: “If the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice did not originate at Qumran, one should likely seek its origin among the priestly-scribal circles responsible for texts such as Jubilees or the Aramaic Testament of Levi (1Q21; 4Q213–214; 4Q540–4Q541). In those documents, too, one of the characteristic motifs is the comparison of priests with angels.”⁵⁷

Despite these observations, the connections between the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice and the sectarian literature from the Dead Sea are much more explicit. Newsom had emphasized precisely this point in the first edition: “As intriguing as the possibility of a pre-Qumran Sabbath Shirot is, there is some evidence which makes a Qumran origin more likely. Most important is the very close relationship between the Shirot and another document whose Qumran provenance can be easily demonstrated, the as yet unpublished 4QBerakot.”⁵⁸

53 Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, 4–5; see also Newsom, “Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,” 887–89.

54 So for example Angel, *Otherworldly and Eschatological Priesthood*, 85–87. Nevertheless, he concludes: “We can therefore be reasonably certain that sss reflects the religious views/practice of the Qumran community at the date of the documents, despite ambiguity about their provenance.”

55 García Martínez describes these peculiarities as “dominated by nominal and participial sentences with elaborate construct chains, the omnipresence of constructions with the preposition *l-*, many lexical novelties, and peculiar syntax”; García Martínez, “Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 181. Interestingly he sees in these peculiarities the indication “that the original composition should not be dated very much earlier than the oldest copy.” See also Hamidović, “La contribution des *Cantiques de l’holocauste du sabbat*,” 309–11.

56 Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, 4–5 and Newsom, “Sectually Explicit,” 182–83.

57 Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, 5.

58 Newsom, *Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice*, 2; confirmed also in Newsom, *Angelic Liturgy*, 5 and 9.

So, she refers especially to Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice's relationship to 4Q286, which explicitly names the *עצת היחד* (4Q286 7 ii 1). Obviously, there are strong parallels in form and content, although in this composition we cannot find the same liturgical communion expressed. Fragment 7 is highly fragmentary, but seems to point to the fact that the earthly congregation praises God from the earth and the angels from heaven, as we find it also in the tradition of biblical Psalms (Pss 103 and 148).⁵⁹ All the more striking is the ideological proximity to sectarian literature and the liturgical self-understanding as standing in the presence of the angels in the heavenly world, as we find it exclusively in 1QS, 1Sb, and 1QH^a. Therefore, García Martínez rightly states that “[t]he idea of communion with the angels, which we find to be characteristic of the Qumran community, provides the most illuminating setting for the composition.”⁶⁰

Moreover, the connection to Jubilees, to which Newsom gives more importance in later publications, is much weaker than to the sectarian literature. The communion with the angels described in Jubilees is not the same as we find it in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice. In Jub 2:17–22 (cf. also 4Q216 col. 7) the angels and the earthly community are called to celebrate the Sabbath together. This text offers an explanation of the assignment of heavenly and earthly Sabbath celebrations, which can serve as a basis for the idea of a common worship with the angels. However, a communion with the angels in a local sense is not in view, as it is not in view in the Aramaic Testament of Levi (1Q21, 4Q213–214; 4Q540–4Q541). Jubilees is only interested in the cosmic dimension of the Sabbath and the order of the common activity of God, his angels, and his people on this day.⁶¹

Furthermore, it is also necessary to grasp more precisely what is meant by a priestly-scribal context for the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, even though the exact nature and number of priestly or priestly-affiliated groups in the 2nd Temple period is a bigger topic that demands further exploration than is possible here.⁶² But, as Noam Mizrahi has shown, from a linguistic point of view

59 “To conclude, 4QBerakhot is further evidence of the worship by humans and angels together, not in a heavenly sanctuary separate from and above the earth, but on earth and in heaven simultaneously” (Church, *Hebrews and the Temple*, 121). See also Nitzan, “The Textual, Literary and Religious Character.”

60 García Martínez, “Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 183.

61 Doering, *Schabbat*, 63–64.

62 See also Hamidović, “La contribution des *Cantiques de l'holocauste du sabbat*,” 314–15. He also challenges the relationship to Jubilees: “On ne peut suivre, cependant, la datation des *Cantiques de l'holocauste du sabbat* au III^e siècle avant notre ère, ‘if not earlier’ selon C. Newsom et J.H. Charlesworth, avec le livre des *Jubilés* et le *Testament araméen de Lévi* sous prétexte de caractéristiques communes: un milieu rédacteur sacerdotal, la compara-

the differences from the biblical priestly literature are important, so that one may deny the priestly provenance completely, or one may “maintain the argument that the Songs stems from a priestly provenance, but this would entail a profound and far-reaching change of the definition of this notion as applied to the Second Temple period. If the Songs is a priestly work, then it represents a cultural phenomenon and a social circle that are divorced from a special connection to the communities underlying biblical priestly literature.”⁶³ In this respect, the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice can be easily situated in the Qumran writings and the often suggested pre-Qumranic priestly-scribal context has to be reconsidered.⁶⁴

Finally, the absence of the term יחד should not be overstated. Other common terms, such as עדה and משכיל, place the composition alongside the sectarian literature, as Devorah Dimant has shown.⁶⁵ Furthermore, the use of the term סוד demonstrates strong parallels between the Shirot and the Serekh texts. In 1QS and 1QSB the *yahad* is described as the foundation (סוד) of the temple, which also involves the idea of communion with the angels (1QS 8:5; 11:8). The related term יסד is frequently found in the first song of the Shirot, where it refers to God’s foundation of the heavenly cult.⁶⁶

4 Conclusion

Based on these considerations, we can arrive at two different conclusions. First, one could interpret these observations in such a way that the song cycle is understood as a pre-sectarian composition that had a particularly forma-

ison des prêtres avec les anges. La comparaison des prêtres avec les anges est, certes, rare dans la littérature juive antérieure à l’ère chrétienne, mais on ne peut s’appuyer sur ce seul motif car les contextes de ces trois écrits sont bien différents et des nuances peuvent être apportées sur la relation pensée entre les prêtres et les anges. De plus, la reconnaissance d’un milieu sacerdotal rédacteur du livre des Jubilés demeure débattue” (ibid., 315), with reference to Hamidović, *Les traditions du jubilé à Qumrân*, 33–35.

63 Mizrahi, “The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,” 57.

64 “But anyone who claims that the Songs is affiliated with ancient priestly literature needs to explain why the author of the Songs refrains from using the classical priestly stock of expressions [...] and prefers to use nonpriestly terms. If he was a descendent or an heir of ancient priestly circles, how could he transform and obscure the transparent wording of technical instruction [...] in such a radical way that its relation to the original context can hardly be recovered?” Mizrahi, “The Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice,” 56–57.

65 See Dimant, “The Apocalyptic interpretation,” 44 n. 49; Dimant, “The Vocabulary of the Sectarian Texts,” 95.

66 See also Newman, “Priestly Prophets,” 44–45.

tive influence on the Qumran literature.⁶⁷ On the basis of this theory, we can explain the references made by the sectarian literature to this writing, as well as the differences in language and content between the sectarian works and this one. The Angelic Liturgy would then be less a fruit of the *yahad* than the source of the idea of a liturgical communion with the angels in the *yahad*, which would then have been taken up into various rule (1QS and 1QSb) or liturgical texts (1QH^a and 4Q511). But the question of the origin of this composition would remain open, because its ideological and liturgical context remain otherwise undocumented outside the sectarian literature. A simply non-sectarian designation is not very satisfying, however, since “every text whose composition cannot be placed at Qumran must have originated elsewhere,” as Carol Newsom correctly states.⁶⁸ Therefore, the explanation of a non-sectarian origin also requires a plausible explanation of the context in which this cycle has been composed.

Second, one could argue that the formal, phraseological, and content-related peculiarities of this composition do not point to a pre-Qumran origin for the text, but instead result from the special and unique function of the composition.⁶⁹ This could explain the appearance of the Maskil and some typical vocabulary of the sectarian literature, as well the strong connections to the other writings of the *yahad*, such as the 1QS, 1QSb, the Hodayot, the Songs of the Maskil, and the Berakoth (4Q286). But foremost, the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice with their focus on the liturgical communion with the angels in a local sense led by the Maskil have a plausible context of origin. This characteristic binds this composition very closely to the typical ideology of major sectarian texts and therefore strongly suggests a sectarian origin for the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice as well.⁷⁰ In fact, it could even be regarded as a culmination or

67 So Newsom, “Sectually Explicit,” 181: “To sum up so far, the Sabbath Songs seem to have been influential within the Qumran community, judging both from the number of copies extant and from their influence on other Qumran compositions.”

68 Newsom, “Sectually Explicit,” 178.

69 This includes the peculiarity of the use of Elohim, to which Carol Newsom gives much weight in her reevaluation. As she correctly notes, the frequent use in the Songs of Sabbath Sacrifice is rather unusual for sectarian literature. Nevertheless, the term can be found in 1QSb 4:25 and often in 4Q511. All the more, in this extraordinary composition “the use of a normally restricted divine name is readily explicable.” Newsom, “Sectually Explicit,” 182–85 (citation 185).

70 For sectarian origin argue García Martínez, “Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls,” 183; Dimant, “The Vocabulary,” 95, and Dimant, “The Apocalyptic,” 44 n. 49. Without doubt also John Strugnell with the knowledge of only four manuscripts, “The Angelic Liturgy,” 319: “It is certainly, as numerous linguistic affinities show, a sectarian composition.” More

summit of the idea of liturgical communion.⁷¹ In the Hodayot (1QH^a) and the *Serekh ha-Yaḥad* (1QS), the liturgical communion with the angels is described from a personal perspective. In the Blessings (1QSB) this communion asks for this special blessing for the community and for the priests. In the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice this communion is revealed and experienced through the performance of these songs at the time of the Sabbath sacrifice. It is not only about a literary description of heavenly events, but about songs of the earthly community standing in the context of heavenly reality, in which the members are actively involved through the performance led by the Maskil.⁷²

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cautiously discussing this possibility are Alexander, *The Mystical Texts*, 96–98; Falk, *Daily, Sabbath, and Festival Prayers*, 126–30.

- 71 Otherwise, for Strugnell, the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice do not represent the summit but "the original theology of the sect" (Strugnell, "The Angelic Liturgy," 319). This statement, however, is in tension with his interpretation of this cycle as a sectarian composition. Together these interpretations would signify that already in the beginning, this kind of angelic community has been written out in its most elaborate form, which seems to me less convincing. After all, a small—but methodologically not unquestionable—hint for the interpretation as a summit could be seen in the fact that the oldest copy of the *Shirot Olat ha-Shabbat* is dated to about 75–50 BCE (4Q400 and 4Q407), and therefore somewhat younger than the oldest copies of the Community Rule from Cave 4 (end of the second century BCE) or Cave 1 (100–75 BCE). Several manuscripts, on the other hand, date from c. 50–1 BCE (4Q401–405; see Qimron and Charlesworth, *Rule of the Community*, 2). The most recent manuscripts date rather late, from 50 CE (11Q17 and Masik). This spreading indicates the importance of the composition in the community less at the beginning than in its later development (also suggested by García Martínez, "Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls," 181, 183).
- 72 I wish to thank Jörg Frey, Benjamin Schliesser, and Noam Mizrahi for commenting on an earlier draft of this article, as well as for the helpful comments of the anonymous reviewers and Molly Zahn, and last but not least Jacob Cerone for reviewing the English of this paper.

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