The Temple Within

The Embodied Divine Image and its Worship in the Dead Sea Scrolls
and Other Early Jewish and Christian Sources

by

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The celestial temple is a central motif of Jewish apocalyptic literature and of the "merkabah" mystical traditions preserved in the "bokhahut," "palaces," or "temples" writings of the rabbinic and immediately post-rabbinic periods.1 In these sources, the ascent into heaven is conceived as a journey through the courts of a cosmic temple to the innermost sanctuary where God appears in the form of a vast man-like figure of fire or light, called the "Power" (מאר), "Glory" (גילה), or "King" (מלך), seated upon the Throne of Glory (יколо ים), also called the "chariot" (כרו).2 This imagery is deeply rooted in the Hebrew biblical tradition.3 The term merkabah is derived from 1 Chr. 28:18, where it refers to the "chariot of the Cherubim" that carried the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. In Isaiah 6, a central text of the merkabah mystical tradition, the prophet encounters the enthroned deity in the Holy of Holies of the temple:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a high and exalted throne, and the train of His robe filled the temple. Above Him stood the seraphim. Each one had six wings: two covering his face, two covering his feet, and two with which he flew. And they were calling to one another: "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of Hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory!" At the sound of their voices, the doors of the temple were closed and the Lord filled with smoke.4


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"...it was shown to me in a vision - behold, there were clouds in the vision calling me, and thunderbirds were crying out to me, and stars and lightning flashes were hastening me and driving me on, and words, in my vision, were bearing me aloft; (9) and they lifted me upwards and carried me into heaven. And I was in the court of the wall, built of hewn stones, with towers of fire surrounding it, and it began to terrify me. (10) And I went into the courts of fire and approached a great house built of hewn stones; and the walls of the house were like smooth ashlar, and they were all of new stone, and the floor was of snow. (11) And the ceiling (was) like shining stars and lightning flashes and between them were fiery cherubim; and their heaven was (made) watery. (12) And a flaming fire surrounded the wall; and the doors were ajar with fire. (13) And I went into the house, hot as fire and cold as ice, and there was in it no sustenance for life, and fear overcame me and trembling seized me. (14) And, shaking and trembling, I fell on my face. And I saw in my vision, and beheld another house greater than this one, with its door wide open before me, all built of tongues of fire. (15) And in every respect it excelled in glory and honor and greatness, so that I was unable to express its glory and its greatness. (16) And its floor was of fire, above which were shining flashes and glowing stones; and its ceiling was of blazing fire. (17) And I looked and saw a lofty throne; and its appearance was, as it were, crystal, and its wheels were like the shining sun; and there was the sound of cherubim. (18) And from beneath

[12] EUSEBIUS. Thus MATTHEW BLACK, ed. and transl., The Book of Ezekiel or 1 Ezekiel: A New English Edition (SVTP 7; Leiden: Brill, 1985) 33, and see ibid., 147. Most other translations "were making me fly."


[14] Gk. καὶ οἱ πύλες ... καὶ τὰ τεῖρα (see BLACK, The Book of Ezekiel, 147) "in upper storeys were ..."


[16] Gk. καὶ δειμαίνει τούτων τούτων χαρονίας καὶ χαραξίας παλουν ὑπολογίας. Thus also the Ethipic ms., one of which makes on some lines the word "conceit" (see e.g. BRIG. in 1975, 120, n. 14). CHARLES (APOT 1:197) and their heavens was (clear at) water. BLACK (The Book of Ezekiel, 147) argues that the text is corrupt and suggests a different original: ἱστός ἔτη, "celestial vesture," but there is no basis for this emendation.

[17] Gk. καὶ τὸ τοῦτο τροφή γίγνεται σῶς ἐν σώματι. The Ethipic versions read either "no pleasure of life in it" or "nothing in it" (see BLACK, The Book of Ezekiel, 147; and BLACK, APOT, 1:20-21, n. 14).

[18] Following the Ethipic text preferred by most translators. The Greek and some Ethipic ms. reverse the order: ἡ ὁμοιομορφότατος καθαραῖται μοσοῦ καὶ δῶς χαρακτήρα τούτου, but see BLACK, The Books of Ezekiel, 148.

[19] Gk. τοῦ δὲ τοῦτον σώματα ... (thus also the Ethipic text). BLACK (The Books of Ezekiel, 33, c. 148); "and its upper chambers were ..."


[21] Thus the Ethipic versions. Gk. καὶ προετοῖς ὡς ἀγγέλοις φωτεινῶς καὶ ὡς χαρακτήρας καὶ (there was) a wheel like the blazing sun and 2... of cherubim. CHARLES (APOT 1:197) points out that the Ethipic text assumes Gk. δὸς χαρακτήρ, in place of the corrupt ὡς χαρακτήρ, and adopts the alternative emendation ὡς δουλείαν: "vision." BLACK (The Book of Ezekiel, 147, c.}
the throne issued rivers of basking fire, and I was unable to look at it. And the Great Glory was sitting upon it, and his garments were brighter than the sun, and whiter than any snow. No angel was able to enter this house or to see his face, on account of its splendor and its glory, and no flesh could look at him. A flaming fire was round about him, and a great fire stood before him, and none of those who surrounded him could come near him. Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. He needed no counsel, for his very word was a death. But the most holy angels who are near him turn not away nor depart from him at night. As for me, until then I had been prostrate on my face, trembling and trembling, but the Lord called me with his own mouth and said to me, "Come here, Enoch, and bear my word." And one of the holy ones approached me, and raised me to my feet and led me to the door, and I bowed my face down here.

Here, Enoch's journey to heaven leads him into a temple whose threefold structure corresponds closely to that of the earthly sanctuary in Jerusalem. The two "houses," one within the other, correspond to the sanctuary building (72) and the Holy of Holies (73) within. The surrounding wall (verse 9, according to the Ethiopic text) of white marble corresponds either to the wall surrounding the inner courts of the temple, or, to the balustrade (740) beyond which no gentile was allowed to pass. The wheels of God's throne (verse 10) identify it as Ezekiel's "merkabah," and the Cherubim mentioned in the same verse are clearly identical with Ezekiel's Living Creatures. The structure of this celestial temple involves a curious reversal of normality: the inner of the two "houses" is larger than the outer.

I have argued elsewhere that the threefold structure of the temple in 1 Enoch 14 reflects a cosmology of three heavens, which is also attested in other parts of the early Enoch literature. According to the majority of commentators, an early form of The Testament of Levi employed a similar three-tiered cosmology, although the number of heavens was increased to seven in later versions.

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Here, again, the highest heaven, the dwelling place of "the Great Glory" (ἡ δόξα ἡ μεγάλη), is called "the Holy of Holies." As observed by Himmelfarb, in the extended version of the text the chambers of the temple are identical with the higher celestial levels.

In the later apocalypses, the three-tiered cosmology is largely displaced by a more complex model of seven heavens. As Himmelfarb has shown, the idea that the universe is a temple, corresponding in structure to the temple in Jerusalem (or, at least, to the ideal form thereof), continues to pervade this literature. A similar idea is expressed by Philo:

The whole universe must be regarded as the highest, and, in truth, the holy temple of God. As sanctification has its abode in the heavens, the most holy part of the substance of existing things; as it were offerings it has ears, as priests it has angels, ministers of His power...

The Qumran sectarian, who believed the temple in Jerusalem to have been defiled and its cult perverted by a corrupt and illegitimate priesthood, evidently attached great significance to the

n. 14 above) again suggests an Aramaic original: רדוי (cf. 3:8, 3:10, etc., "watchers."). MILK suggests that Gk. ὄρος ("mountain") here means "boundary stone" and reflects an Aramaic original רדוי, and its idiom, , but admits that this reconstruction is "very hypothetical" (see MILK and BLACK, The Books of Enoch, 199-200).

13 Gk. ἡ δόξα ἡ μεγάλη.
14 Gk. καὶ πᾶς ὁ λόγος ὁ ὄρος ἔρχεται (Esh. orig.).
15 Gk. καὶ ἐξ ὑμῖν τὸ ἀγάλμα t. εἰρήνης, "the holiness of the holy ones." BLACK (The Book of Enoch, 34; and see ibid., 151) reconstructs: the watchmen and the holy ones.

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prophecies of Ezekiel. It is perhaps possible that the site of the community settlement was chosen on the basis of Ezek. 47:1-12, which states that in the last days a river will flow eastward beneath the Jerusalem temple and revitalize the waters of the Dead Sea. In the Damascus Document (CD 1:16), the foundation of the sect is dated to 390 years after the exile, on the basis of Ezekiel 4:8-6:8. In the same document, the leaders of the sect are identified as a group of men who, according to Ezekiel 44:15, are to serve as priests in the restored and purified temple of the coming age.

But with the remnant who held fast to the commandments of God He made His Covenant with Israel forever, revealing to them the hidden things in which all Israel had gone astray. He unhidden before them His holy Sabbath and His glorious feasts... And He built them a sure house in Israel whose like has never existed from former times until now. Those who held fast to it are destined for life for ever and all the glory of Adam shall be theirs (היה בנו לעם פנים ותאות אברים). As God ordained by the hand of the Prophet Ezekiel, saying, The Priest, the Levite, and the sons of Zadok who kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel wandered from me, they shall offer me fat and blood (Ezek. xlix, xlix, 15).

The Priest are the convertors of Israel (קרוב וגו) who departed from the land of Judah, and (the Levite are) those who joined them (ותקִלוּ וגו). The sons of Zadok are the elect of Israel, the men called by name (כֹּל יִשְׂרָאֵל) who shall stand at the end of days.

According to this text, Ezekiel's eschatological temple already exists as a metaphysical reality. It is closely associated with the "glory of Adam" and, for the community that "holds fast" to it, it is the means of access to eternal life.

Aside from Ezech. 49:8, the earliest instances of the term merakahah in connection with the vision of the heavenly throne are found in writings which were either produced by this sectarian group or, at least, held in its possession. In 1988, JOHN STRUDEL and DEVORAH DIMANT published some fragments from Cave 4 of several copies of an extended paraphrase of Ezekiel, which they designated Second Ezekiel.10 In 1990, they published a further fragment of the same text (Q 85, fragment 4) which includes a summarised version of Ezekiel 1.11 The fragment consists of 15 lines from what seems to be the fourth column of the scroll, with the right hand margin more or less intact. I reproduce the transcription and translation of DIMANT and STRUDEL.12

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2 Cf. 2, 3, 19, 2, 9, and 22, 2-3, and see Wacholder, "Ezekiel and Ezekielanism," 195. This suggestion is in no way incompatible with the widely held view that the sect's withdrawal into the desert was partly inspired by Isa. 45:3, as indicated in the Rule of the Community (QSV VIII.12:16) (see, for example, VanderKam, The Dead Sea Scrolls Today, 1045; Garcia Martinez, "Men of the Dead Sea," in idem and Treborre Barhaba, The People of the Dead Sea, 58-59.


follows the biblical sequence with only very minor variations but, despite being much shorter than the biblical text, adds several interpretative details. At lines 6-7, Dimant and Strugnell detect the influence of Isa. 6:2, concerning the wings of the Seraphim, "...two covering his face, two covering his feet, and two with which he flew." In lines 10-12, the relationship between the terminology of the fragment and that of the biblical account becomes somewhat confusing. In line 10, the term מְדַרְבִּית (ienda), which does not occur in the biblical text, is derived from 2 Chr. 3:12, where it applies to the wings of the Cherubim in the sanctuary. At Ezek. 1:9, the wings of the Living Creatures are likewise said to be joined to each other, but here the verb used is רח. In the fragment, this verb is applied to the wheels (line 11: 'wheel joined to wheel'). In the biblical version, we read "a wheel within (תְּפָרֶשׁ) a wheel" (1:16). In the fragment, מְדַרְבִּית occurs on the next line: "in the midst of the coals, living creatures," whereas Ezek. 1:13 states simply that the appearance of the Living Creatures was like coals of fire. In short, it seems that the author is using the terminology of Ezekiel 1 but that the various terms have been displaced by the additional word מְדַרְבִּית, borrowed from 2 Chr. 3:12.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>4Q385.4</th>
<th>Ezekiel 1 (MT)</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Isa. 6:2</strong></td>
<td>The Seraphim (&quot;the Cherubim of 1 Chr. 28:18) have 6 wings.</td>
<td><strong>Ezek. 10:14-15</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The wings of the Living Creatures are joined (תְּפָרֶשׁ).</td>
<td>The Living Creatures are the Cherubim (cf. Eccles. 49:18 and 1 Esdr. 4:18).</td>
<td><strong>2 Chr. 3:12</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ezek. 10:14-15</strong></td>
<td>The wings of the Cherubim are joined (תְּפָרֶשׁ).</td>
<td><strong>1:9</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1:9</strong></td>
<td>A wheel joined (תְּפָרֶשׁ) to a wheel.</td>
<td><strong>1:16</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>1:16</strong></td>
<td>A wheel within (תְּפָרֶשׁ) a wheel.</td>
<td><strong>line 10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>line 11</strong></td>
<td>The hands of the Living Creatures are joined (תְּפָרֶשׁ).</td>
<td><strong>line 10</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>line 12</strong></td>
<td>The Living Creatures are in the midst of (תְּפָרֶשׁ) the coals.</td>
<td><strong>2 Chr. 3:12</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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to endorse this identification. It is, however, so strongly implicit in the text that it seems more probable that the equation: Living Creatures = Cherubim = Seraphim was something that he simply took for granted. This is consistent with the evidence surveyed above, which indicates that in biblical literature they are all terms for the fiery heavenly beings who guard and bear the throne or ark in the heavenly sanctuary. It contrasts, however, with the usage encountered in Jewish literature of the Second Temple period and later, including many of the pseudepigrapha, the rabbinic literature and the barbaita writings, where the three terms represent distinct categories of angel. The author of Second Esdras seems, then, to have observed the older usage encountered in scripture and not to have been influenced by the tendency towards differentiation and proliferation of angelic species, a tendency which is very characteristic of literature produced during the later Second Temple period. These observations may perhaps be indicative of an early date of composition of Second Esdras which, if so, is "pre-sectarian." This may then, be the earliest known instance of the term מְדַרְבִּית in the context of Ezekiel’s vision, antedating even Esclus. 49:8.

The most significant locus of מְדַרְבִּית material at Qumran occurs in the thirteenth Song of the Sabbath Sacrifice (סֹבֶעַ בַּתּוֹמֶר), which forms a liturgical cycle intended for performance during the first thirteen sabbaths of the year. Fragment s of ten copies of the text have survived, eight from Cave 4 (4Q400-407), one from Cave 11 (11Q11babb), and one from the Zealot stronghold of Masada (Masada 111babb). In her original study of this material, Carol Newsom believed the text to be a sectarian composition.

She has subsequently reconsidered this opinion and concluded that it is probably of extra-sectarian, even pre-sectarian, provenance. She acknowledges, however, that the evidence is not at all conclusive. Three points are held to weigh against the probability of sectarian authorship: the absence in this text of explicitly sectarian polemic; the discovery of a copy at Masada; and the frequent occurrence of the word מְדַרְבִּית, deviating from the convention of avoidance of this term which is observed in texts the sectarian origin of which is largely undisputed. Newsom rightly regards the first of these three points as indicative, on the grounds that

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41 Dimant and Strugnell (ibid.) further observe that the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice (see further below) "refer only to the Cherubim but pass in silence over the Living Creatures."

42 As will be seen below, the role of the cherubim as the guardians of Eden (Gen. 3:24) is consistent with this observation.


44 Newsom, Songs 1.3-5.

...a religious sect may have other needs as a community that do not have to do explicitly with defining the boundaries between itself and the larger religious community from which it has separated.\textsuperscript{47}

With regard to the second point, a variety of theories are able to account for the presence of a sectarian document at Masada. If discovery outside Qumran were held to be proof of non-sectarian authorship the unambiguously sectarian Damascus Rule would likewise be excluded. The remaining objection, deviant use of the term דתת, carries greater weight, although the term also occurs in the Songs of the Maktil (4Q510-51). This text appears to be very closely related to the Sabbath Songs, but NEWSOM nonetheless believes it to be a sectarian composition "... composed under the strong influence both of the Hexateuch and the Sabbath Songs."\textsuperscript{48} In this case, she explains the anomalous occurrence of דתת on the grounds that

...the Songs of the Maktil are conceived of as words of power. In such a context the use of a normally restricted divine name is readily explicable.\textsuperscript{49}

This point, however, applies equally to the Songs of the Sabbath Sanctuary, which involves the summoning or adjuration of angelic companies to assist in the performance of the worship of the heavenly temple and, if the interpretation advanced below is correct, in the ritual construction of that temple. The fact that the Sabbath Songs also seems to be related to the explicitly sectarian Qiddulei\textsuperscript{50} further strengthens the case for its sectarian origin, as does the formulaic use of the expression לְגִלְגָּל כְּלִי as part of the heading of each song.\textsuperscript{51} Nonetheless, NEWSOM concludes that:

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. Appropriated by the Qumran sect, this document became an important text in the community ... At some point, probably during the first century B.C.E., the Songs of the Maktil were composed, under the strong influence of both the Hexateuch and the Sabbath Songs.\textsuperscript{52}

Arguably, the theory that the Sabbath Songs is a sectarian composition has the advantage of economy over NEWSOM's somewhat tentative hypothesis. As she herself remarks, the text clearly implies the existence of a highly organized worshipping community.\textsuperscript{53} To deny its sectarian provenance thus requires us not only to postulate the existence of another, unknown religious group. Even if she is right, moreover, the influence exerted by the Sabbath Songs indicates that the sectarian attributed a high importance to it. This inference is confirmed by the existence of multiple copies of the Sabbath Songs at Qumran. Thus, whether or not they are sectarian in origin, they provide us with valuable evidence of the sect's beliefs and practices. NEWSOM is therefore right to observe that, even if the actual composition text is ascribed to non-sectarian sources, it nonetheless 'functioned as an adopted or naturalized text within the sectarian perspective of the Qumran community.'\textsuperscript{54}

Each song begins with a summons to praise God, addressed to the angels, and goes on to describe the performance of the angelic liturgy. The heavenly temple is divided into seven sanctuaries (תִּכְנֹת or, in two instances, תִּכְנָנָה), also called paths (ところ), each under the presidency of an angelic Prince. The first five songs of the cycle deal with the angelic priestly councils of the lower dehors and create the framework of a ritual journey through the courts of the temple towards the sacred center. As observed by NEWSOM, the language of Songs 6-8, at the heart of the cycle, is characterized by a repetitive and hypnotic quality, suggestive of an increase in intensity of devotion.\textsuperscript{55} In these songs especially, the number seven occupies a major role:\textsuperscript{56}

[Psalm of praise (72:1) by the song of the seventh of the chief princes,]

a mighty praising to the God of holiness with [seven] words of woodness [praise-songs]

and he will sing praise to the King of holiness seven times with [seven words of] woodness [praise-songs] 

Seven psalms of His blessings; seven psalms of the magnification of His righteousness; 

seven psalms of the evaluation of His kingdom; seven psalms of the praise of His glory; 

seven psalms of thanksgiving for His wonders; seven psalms of thanksgiving for His wonders; 

seven psalms of rejoicing in His strength]

If the sixth song marks a transition, corresponding to entry from the outer courts of the temple into the sanctuary proper, the seventh song, at the heart of the cycle, takes us into the Holy of Holies. Here, instead of a single call to the angels to worship God, we find a series of seven such calls. These are almost certainly addressed to the angelic councils of the seven dehors. The temple itself is portrayed as an animistic structure, and its architectural features and appointments as angelic entities who participate in the praise of God:

Sing praise to the mighty God with the choicest spiritual portions, that shew may be [wordly together with divine joy, and [for them be] a celebration with all the holy ones, that there may be wooden songs together with [demon] joy. 

With these let all the foundations of the holy of holies praise, the uplifting pillar of the supreme library above, and all the corners of its structure. 

Sing praise to God who is Distrustful in power, tall [you spirits of knowledge and light] in order to [exalt] together the splendidly shining firmament of [His] holy sanctuary.

\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 180.
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid., 184.
\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 185.
\textsuperscript{50} See further below.
\textsuperscript{51} E.g., 4Q510 11:30. רְדֵ֣י יִשְׂרָאֵל. See further NEWSOM, Songs, 3.
\textsuperscript{52} NEWSOM, "Sexually Explicit," 184.
\textsuperscript{53} Ibid., 184, n. 13.
\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 185.
\textsuperscript{55} 4Q196:12:13. רְקֵ֣ים לְהֹלֶּל; 111Q196:12:1-9.7:7 לְהָלֹל לְהֹלֶל. 
\textsuperscript{56} NEWSOM, Songs, 15. See further below.
\textsuperscript{57} Ibid., 13-14.
\textsuperscript{58} Masada ab7161:16-22 (Song 6), trans. NEWSOM, Songs, 174-175. Supplements to the text based on other fragments are shown within square brackets. Uncertain supplements are indicated. Indiscernible letters are indicated by '}', and lacunae by '_'.
It is important to observe that, according to this passage, the innermost sanctuary of the heavenly temple is also the highest heaven. This is indicated by the parallel expressions "firmament of his holy sanctuary" and "firmament of the uppermost heaven." The uppermost heaven, moreover, is said to have beams and walls. As in 1 Enoch and The Testament of Levi, the courts and chambers of the temple are, in fact, the celestial levels. The temple is not in heaven: its seven "sanctuaries" are heavens. At the end of the song, we encounter a plurality of arkhatot. This is a poetic way of expressing the angels who participate in the temple's worship:

And all the crafted furnishings of the debar (to join) with woodwork pineus in the debar [...] of wonder, debar to debar with the sound of holy multitudes. And all their crafted furnishings [...] And the chariot (3:270) of His debar give praise together, and their cherubim and their(...) ophanim bless wondrously [...] the chief of the divine structure. And they praise Him in His holy debar.

The fact that the Cherubim are associated with yafannim (Wheels) clearly identifies them as Ezekiel's Living Creatures.4 The plural cherubim, also encountered in Songs 11 and 12,12 are seemingly angelic entities.3 NEWCOM observes that the praise of these multiple markhatot may well be related to the expression "debar to debar with the sound of holy multitudes," in which case the markhatot are involved in the process of "relaying" the praise of God from the lowest debarim to the higher ones. This might mean that there are seven markhatot, one in each sanctuary or heaven. The image of a throne or markhatab in each of seven heavens occurs elsewhere, for example in The Ascention of Isaiah and in the markhatah midrash, The Visions of Ezekiel.46 On the other hand, Ps. 68:18 states that "the chariots of God are twenty thousand and two thousand" (60:1:1:327) and a midrashic tradition attributed to rabbis of the third and fourth centuries, and to a mysterious "band that came up from Babylonia," takes this to mean that...

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46 Origen Allusions to Psalms 68:19 in connection with the "opening of the heavens" at Jesus' baptism, and with the gift of the Spirit to the apostles at Pentecost.49 HALPERIN concludes:

... Origen knew the Jewish stories of Moses' ascension; he knows that their germ and nucleus in Psalm 68:19, and he knows that they are connected, through this verse, to Ezekiel's markhatot. By replacing the ascension bapzus with Ephesians 4:10-12, he let Jesus take the place of Moses as the hero who sends heaven and brings back gifts for humanity, including the institutions of a new covenant and the help of the angels.50

It should be observed, however, that the claim concerning Christ's status which HALPERIN correctly attributes to Origen did not originate with him, since it is already implicit in Eph. 4:8-12, where the spiritual gifts given to men by the ascended Christ are the pentecostal commissioning gifts of...

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46 The puzzling attribution, "some (members) of a party that came up from Babylonia said ..." (3b, 342-344) occurs only in YERK. Suggested emendations of bab have included babah ("a text...") and babah (in a tradition ...). See further: SAUL LIEBENBERG, "Milam Sear ha-Sifrin," Aperitif D. of SCHRITT, Jewish Commission, 122, no. 20; WILLIAM G. BRAGG and ISRAEL J. KAPITIN, tr., Psalms de Sao Kahanah. 8. Kahana's Complimentations of Essays for Sabbath and Festal Days (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1975) 243, n. 58; JACOB NEUMAN, tr., Targum de Sao Kahanah: An Arithmetical Translation (2 vols.; BJS 122:2; Atlanta Scholares Press, 1987) 1:211; see also note 82 below.


48 3M, 3:315; 3M, 311.


51 HALPERIN, Fara, 336.
the Holy Spirit. This observation in turn suggests that the shabu’ot stories of Moses’ heavenly ascent are much earlier than the third century CE.\footnote{See further: WAYNE MEERS, "Moses as God and King," in JACOB NEUSNER, ed., Religion in Antiquity: E. R. Goodenough Memorial Volume (Numen Supplements 14; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 105-110 (for the rabbinic sources, see 109).}

HALPERIN points out that "the voice of the camp" must be derived from Exek 1:24 ("... like the sound of many waters ... like the sound of a camp ...)". The strange word ἔσπασον ("repeated") in the LXX, he says, reflects the equally puzzling προφορά of Ps 68:18.\footnote{HALPERIN, fn 24, 58.}

The presence of this "midrash" in the LXX leads HALPERIN to conclude that the origins of the merkabah/Sinai exegetical complex, including the use of Ps 68:18 as a link between the two, go back to a pre-Christian Alexandrian Jewish community.\footnote{See especially, HALPERIN, "Merkabah Midrash" (note 67 above).}

The language of the text as a whole is very similar to that of the Sama'ah Synagogue, and the reference to a plurality of merkabot should be noted.\footnote{See further: WAYNE MEERS, "Moses as God and King," in JACOB NEUSNER, ed., Religion in Antiquity: E. R. Goodenough Memorial Volume (Numen Supplements 14; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 105-110 (for the rabbinic sources, see 109).}

NITZAN identifies allusions to the merkabah descriptions of Daniel 7, 1 Enoch 14 and, indirectly, Exek 1:26-27 and 8.2. There are detailed allusions to biblical lists of divine attributes occurring in contexts associated with renewal of the Sinai covenant (Exod. 34:6-7, Deut. 10:17, 21), and to descriptions of the Sinai theophany in Moses' final blessing (Deut. 33:2-3, 26-27). Allusions to Psalm 68 are also evident, especially in the second fragment.\footnote{See further: WAYNE MEERS, "Moses as God and King," in JACOB NEUSNER, ed., Religion in Antiquity: E. R. Goodenough Memorial Volume (Numen Supplements 14; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 105-110 (for the rabbinic sources, see 109).}

According to scholarly reconstructions of the Qumran calendar, the fifteenth day of the third month would fall either on one or one day after the eleventh sabbath of the sect's cyclic year.\footnote{See further: WAYNE MEERS, "Moses as God and King," in JACOB NEUSNER, ed., Religion in Antiquity: E. R. Goodenough Memorial Volume (Numen Supplements 14; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 105-110 (for the rabbinic sources, see 109).} It is therefore interesting to observe that one of the two or three surviving fragments of the eleventh Sabbath Song, like QQRexbkh, makes reference to a multitude of angelic merkabot, which are mentioned not once but several times:

Community's covenant, which occurred on the fifteen day of the third month, at Shabu'ot.\footnote{See further: WAYNE MEERS, "Moses as God and King," in JACOB NEUSNER, ed., Religion in Antiquity: E. R. Goodenough Memorial Volume (Numen Supplements 14; Leiden: Brill, 1968), 105-110 (for the rabbinic sources, see 109).} The first fragment begins as follows:

1. The seat of Thy glory and the fruitfulness of Thy honor in the [heights of Thy standing and treading] place of
2. The holiness; and the chariots of Thy glory, their cherubim and their epiphanies (whelks) with all [their] councils.

NITZAN identifies allusions to the merkabah descriptions of Daniel 7, 1 Enoch 14 and, indirectly, Exek 1:26-27 and 8.2. There are detailed allusions to biblical lists of divine attributes occurring in contexts associated with renewal of the Sinai covenant (Exod. 34:6-7, Deut. 10:17, 21), and to descriptions of the Sinai theophany in Moses' final blessing (Deut. 33:2-3, 26-27). Allusions to Psalm 68 are also evident, especially in the second fragment.

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2. HALPERIN, fn 24, 58.

3. HALPERIN, fn 24, 58.

4. See, especially, HALPERIN, "Merkabah Midrash" (note 67 above).


6. QQRexbkh 11.81 (NITZAN, "QQRexbkh", 56 [text] and 57 [translation]).

7. Thus also NITZAN, Songs 2, and idem, "Secularly Explicit," 180.


9. If MILLER'S reconstruction of the sect's calendar, based on that in 1 Enoch 72:50 and 72:51, is followed, the eleventh sabbath falls on the fourteenth day of the third month, but if the model advocated by JAMES C. VANDERKAM is adopted, it falls on the fifteenth (MILLER, Tanz, 107). Vanderkam, The Dead Sea Scrolls Today (Garden City/London: Eerdmans/SPCK, 1994) 114-116. Unfortunately, the date-markings that have survived in the fragments of the Sabbath Song manuscripts are insufficiently complete to resolve this problem.
A passage in the later kabbalistic literature tells of vast numbers of angelic markhazot who, with their accompanying ‘flames’ (יהושע), relay God’s praises from the lowest sanctuary to the highest:

8. Aggai said:
Who is able to conceive of the seven markhazot? Or to behold the uppermost heaven? Or to see the immemorial chambers? Or to say, ‘I have seen the chambers of the LORd’?

In the first markhazah stand 40,000 fiery chariot-thrones and 400,000,000 flames, mingling among them.

In the second markhazah stand 1,000,000,000 fiery chariot-thrones and 400,000,000 flames, mingling among them.

In the third markhazah stand 2,000,000,000 fiery chariot-thrones and 40,000,000 flames, mingling among them.

In the fourth markhazah stand 30,000,000,000 fiery chariot-thrones and 40,000,000 flames, mingling among them.

In the fifth markhazah stand 40,000,000,000 fiery chariot-thrones and 400,000,000 flames, mingling among them.

In the sixth markhazah stand 400,000,000,000 fiery chariot-thrones and 20,000,000,000 flames, mingling among them.

In the seventh markhazah stand 1,000,000,000,000 fiery chariot-thrones and 400,000,000 flames.

Like ākāshā, a radiant substance of glorious colours, wonderfully hued and purely blended, are the splendours of the living sékhvah that move conversationally with the glory of the wondrous chariots (8ff. ZE 11.17ff.). There is a sound of silent bliss in the tumult of their movement, and they praise his holiness while returning on their paths. When they rise up, they roar marvellously, and when they stand still, the sound of joyful praise falls silent, and there is silence of divine blessing in all the camps of the Śabāb. And the sound of their praises [...] from among all their divisions [...] and all the numbered ones praise, each in his turn.36

The second half of the Sabbath Songs cycle is evidently based on the description of the ideal temple in Ezekiel 40-48, and NEWCOM is clearly right to connect the passage shown above with the vision described in Ezek. 43:1-5, where the Glory on the merkabah returns to the Holy of Holies:

3 Then he brought me to the gate that faces eastward, 4 and behold, the Glory of the God of Israel coming from the east. His voice was like the sound of many waters, and the earth was illuminated by His glory. And the vision that I saw was like the vision that I had seen when He came to destroy the city, and like the vision that I had seen by the River Khabur, and I fell upon my face. 5 Then the Spirit lifted me up and brought me to the inner court, and the Glory of the LORD filled the House.

NEWSOM comments:
I would suggest that the author of the Šabbašt, still following the outline of Ezekiel 40-48, first described the entrance of the heavenly temple and then gave an account of the entry of the divine chariot into the temple and the appearance of its glory then, an account modelled after Ezek 43:1-5 but enriched with details from Ezekiel 1 and 10.37

HALPERIN suggests that the 'sound of divine silence' in the twelfth song is derived from the account of God's appearance to Elijah at 1 Kgs. 19:11,38 but, given the fact that this liturgical composition is clearly based on an idealized form of the temple-cult tradition,39 the reference is more likely to Hab. 2:20.

But the LORD is in his Holy Temple; let all the earth keep silence before him!

and/or to Zech. 2:17 (2:1):

Be silent, all flesh, before the LORD, for he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

The behkhalot texts likewise speak of a moment of awesome stillness at the climax of the heavenly liturgy, when the tumultuous sound of the angelic worship falls silent, and the divine Glory descends upon the merkabah. A striking example occurs in the šiv’ur gamah ('dimensions of the nature') section of the Siddur Rabbiṭ Dīlmahk, where the angelic High Priest, here called the 'Youth' (1511) enters beneath the throne and summons the divine Glory to appear:

And the angels who are with him (the Youth) come and encircle the Throne of Glory. They are on one side, the Living Creatures are on the other side, and the Shekhinah is in the center. And one living creature rises above the Throne of Glory and draws near to the Seraphim, then alights upon the tabernacle of the Youth and says in a low voice, a voice of silence: 'The Throne above shall I exalt above him! At once, the Wheels are silent, the Seraphim are still, the troops of Watchers and Holy Ones are thrust into the Rivers Dene, the Living Creatures turn their faces to the ground, and the Youth brings fire of deadness and purifies in their ears, that they do not hear the voice that is spoken, and so that he alone remains. And the Youth calls Him the Great, Mighty, Awesome, Majestic, Strong, Powerful, Pure, Holy, Sublime, Precious, Honoured, Clean, Guiltless, Beloved, Wonderful, Exalted, Uplifted and Glorified God.40

There are several points of contact between this passage and the twelfth song from Qumran. In both, we find the same dynamic quality, and the same paradoxical combination of sound and silence. The proclamation of the Living Creatures parallels that of the Cherubim in the song. In the song, the Cherubim 'rise up' and 'settle', as does the living creature in the šiv’ur gamah piece. Both texts are describing the same climactic moment in the celestial liturgy. It should be observed that the šiv’ur gamah passage is, like the Sabbath Shıroth, a liturgical text and designed for recitation.41

The thirteenth and final song of the Qumran cycle describes the sacrifices performed before the divine throne by the angelic High Priest, and their ritual vestments. NEWCOM describes the purpose of the cycle as a whole as 'something like the praxis of a communal mysticism',42 which aimed to produce an intense experience of being present in the heavenly temple and participating in the worship of the angels.43

She comments:

During the course of this thirteen week cycle, the community which recites the compositions is led through a lengthy preparation. The mysteries of the angelic priesthood are encountered, a hypnotic celebration of the biblical number seven produces an anticipatory climax at the center of the work, and the community is then gradually led through the spiritually animate temple until the worshippers experience the holiness of the merkabah and of the Sabbath sacrifice as it is conducted by the high priests of the angels.44

42 NEWCOM, Songs, 19.
43 Elliott Wolfson ('Mysticism and the Poetic-Liturgical Compositions from Qumran: A Response to Bilha Katraná,' JQR 85 [1994] 185-202) questions the application by NEWCOM and Nitzan of the adjective 'mystical' to this material, preferring to limit the term to the practice of the heavenly ascent. Since, however, religious ritual has the capacity to embody both mystical meaning and mystical experience, this arbitrary semantic restriction seems unjustified. In any case, the ritual cycle of the Sabbath Songs is, according to the above analysis, very closely related to the ascetic tradition and therefore contains a 'mystical' dimension even if Wolfson's narrow definition were to be accepted.
44 NEWCOM, Songs, ibid.
These songs, then, enabled the community to gain access to the heavenly temple and to join with the angelic hierarchy in its worship before the throne. By performing the liturgical cycle, the worshippers undertake a "ritual journey," which involves an "ascent" through the seven dehíras (songs 1-7), followed by a detailed tour of the celestial temple, moving inward toward the center, where the Glory manifests upon the throne. It may also be admitted to think of this as a process of "ritual construction." The performance of this liturgical cycle, presumably combined with intensive visualisation of the images described, would have had the effect of "building" the celestial temple in the personal and collective imagination of the participants. The imperative formulation of the early hymns indicates that they are calling on the angels to participate with them in this ritual "temple-building" project. The process of construction culminates in song 11, performed immediately beforehand the community's covenant at the feast of Shain'te. On the two sabbaths following this act of rededication, in songs 12 and 13, the divine Glory is called upon to indwell the temple that has been constructed by the now reconstituted community, and to receive the sacrifices offered there. As observed above, this is the descent of the Divine Glory in the Holy of Holies, described in song 12, that forms the true climax of the cycle. The sacred structure within which this manifestation occurs has been constructed by means of this extended ritual performance. The worship of the holy community and its celestial, angelic counterpart is, so to speak, the substance of which the temple is composed.

The idea that this spiritual temple is ritually constructed in and through the act of worship may perhaps be inherent in the very language and terminology of this remarkable liturgy. In addition to the emphasis on song and music that pervades the text, we have observed that, especially in the latter part of the cycle, this music is produced not only by the angels and the human worshippers, but by the architectural components of the temple itself, which appears to be living a structure.

The term "dehíra, used of the seven courts or chambers of the temple, appears in Scripture to the Holy of Holies, and is probably derived from a common root with the Arabic word for "back" or "part behind." The King James Bible, however, renders the term by "oracle," a mistranslation which goes back via the Vulgate (osculum) to Aquila (χήραρχηστρόσ) and which is based on the mistaken assumption that this word is derived from the root יד, "to speak." It seems not impossible that the author of the Sabbath Songs may have made the same verbal association and interpreted the word יד as indicative, in addition to its straightforward meaning, of "speech" or "utterance." If so, the phrase: "... dehíra dehíra with the sound of holy multitudes ..." implies that the courts or sanctuaries of the temple are formed by the "utterances" of the angels and the worshipping community, and that the heavenly temple is conceived as a structure composed of living sound. Elsewhere in the Scrolls, as is now widely recognized, the community itself is identified with the temple.

Murray-Jones: The Temple Within

When these are in Israel, the Council of the Community shall be established in truth. It shall be an Everlasting Plantation, a House of Holiness for Israel, an Assembly of Supreme Holiness for Aaron ... It shall be that tried wall, thatperfectcornerstone, whose foundations shall neither rock nor sway in their place (Isa. xxvi. 16). It shall be a Most Holy Dwelling for Aaron, with everlasting knowledge of the Covenant of justice, and shall offer up sweet fragrance. It shall be a House of Perfection and Truth in Israel that they may establish a Covenant according to the everlasting precepts.

The hierarchically ordered community thus embodies the living structure of the cosmic temple and its members are incorporated into that celestial reality:

He has joined their assembly to the Sons of Heaven to be a Council of the Community, a foundation of the Building of Holiness, and eternal Plantation throughout all ages to come.

The expression "eternal plantation" reflects an ancient tradition according to which the temple, and especially the interior of the sanctuary building (corresponding to the sixth and seventh dehíras of the Qumran model) is identified with the primordial Garden of Eden, which was also the future Paradise of the righteous. Incorporation into the structure of the temple confers "advance membership" of the world to come and is, at the same time, a return to humanity's original state of angelic purity. Thus, those who are admitted to this spiritual community... are destined to live for ever and all the glory of Adam shall be theirs.

The same tradition occurs in a variety of rabbinic sources, where the righteous in the world to come are divided into seven hierarchical classes, and where the Garden of Eden is described as a series of seven concentric celestial chambers, built of gold, silver and precious stones. This...
imagery appears to be derived at least in part from the language of Ezekiel’s prophecy against the king of Tyre (Ezek. 28:12-14):

You were the seal of perfect proportion, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone adored you: Ruby, topaz and emerald, chrysolite, onyx and jasper; sapphire, turquoise and beryl.
Your settings and montures were made of gold; they were prepared on the day of your creation.
You were the overshadowing cherub,210 for this I appointed you.
You were upon God’s holy mountain; you walked among fiery stones.

It has long been recognized that behind this passage there lies a version of the primordial Paradise tradition which is independent of, and possibly older than, that preserved in Genesis 2:1-3.211 The description, then, referred originally to the primordial Adam, who is the embodiment of the Divine Image or “seal of perfect proportion,” and is here identified with the golden cherub whose outstretched wings overshadowed the Ark in the Holy of Holies of the temple. That the rabbinic awareness of this meaning of the passage is confirmed by several sources.212

By about the first century CE, the seven-level cosmology had largely displaced the three-tier model, although Paul, in 2 Corinthians 12, equates Paradise (i.e., the Holy of Holies) with the third heaven.213 The sevenfold model is most commonly found in Rabbinic sources,214 although alternative traditions which enumerate two or three heavens are also sometimes mentioned.215 A correspondence between the cosmos and the structure of the temple is implied at m. Keth. 1:6-9, which lists ten areas of increasing holiness in Jerusalem, three outside the temple and seven within. Differing opinions are expressed about the precise divisions between these areas, but all agree that


See additional: RABBI 2:53b.


214 For example: Lev. R. 29:14; ARNH (6) 37; Porshut Rabbi 20.4; Midrash ha-Gadol to Exod. 7:1.

215 For example: Midrash Tikkun I to Ps. 114:2; and Deut. R. 2.32 (to 6:4).

there were seven levels of holiness in the temple. According to R. Jose, these levels were as follows: (1) the area within the balustrade (YAH), from which gentiles were excluded; (2) the Court of Women; (3) the Court of Israel; (4) the Court of the Priests; (5) the area between the altar and the entrance to the sanctuary; (6) the sanctuary building; and (7) the Holy of Holies.216

This sevenfold conceptual structure doubtless reflects the seven planetary spheres of Greek cosmology and/or the seven heavens encountered in Sumerian and Babylonian magical texts.217 Since the sacred space of the temple is conceptually arranged in concentric “areas of holiness” around the Ark or chariot on which God’s Glory is enthroned, it may be that the sevenfold structure also embodies “the appearance of the likeness of the Glory of the LORD,” as described at Ezek. 1:28:

As the appearance of the bow that is in the cloud on the day of rain, so was the appearance of the radiance that surrounded him.

In other words, the seven heavens or courts of the temple may correspond to the bands of the rainbow-colored aura that surrounds the Glory on the throne. This hypothesis perhaps helps to explain an image encountered above, in the twelfth song of the Qumran cycle:

Like brass, a radiant substance of glorious colours, wonderfully pure and blended, are the spirits of the living, ‘shophim that move continuously with the glory of the wondrous chariot.218

A similar description of the 'hashmal is encountered in Hekhalot Zattri:

It is like the appearance of fire (Ezek. 1:27), but it is not fire. Rather, it is like fiery flames of all kinds of colors mixed together, and the eye cannot see their likeness.219

The 'hebhalut writings represent the continuation and adaptation of these traditions within rabbinic Judaism. They are so called because they describe, and give instructions regarding, a visionary journey through seven concentric “palaces” or “temples” (hebhalut, corresponding to the dekhir of the Sibghah Shiro) to the celestial Holy of Holies, where the Glory appears on the merkabah.220 The methods employed by the “merkabah mystics” included the recitation of hymns


218 4Q450 20:12-22.6, 9, 18.8-9, 20.8, 303.8.


220 This is only a partial description of the contents of this literature, emphasizing the elements that are significant for the purposes of this study, and not a comprehensive definition of the genre. For a range of viewpoints, see: SCHREIBER, Major Texts in Jewish Mysticism (3d ed., 1994; reprinted New York: Schocken, 1961) 43-79; TzEHALAM CHAGNOUARD, Apotheosis and Merkabot Mysticism (ACJU 14; Leiden: Brill, 1980) 98-234; SCHAFER, Gekonoh Scholam Kavaddered: The Aim and Purpose of Early Jewish Mysticism, 12th. Sacks Lecture (Oxford: Oxford Centre for Postgraduate Hebrew Studies, 1986; reprinted as The Aim and Purpose of early Jewish Mysticism in idem, Hekhalot Studies [TSJ 19; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1984] 277-95; idem,
and prayers which are very similar in content and tone to those found in the Sukkah Shtrou, though often with the addition of long strings of nomina barbara. These hymns, some of which are said to have been revealed to R. Aqiba by the angels, must be known and recited correctly by the adept if he is to make the ascent in safety. He must also know the names of the angelic gatekeepers of the hokhmat, and show them the correct magic seals, on which are inscribed the secret names of God. As in the apocalypses and the Sukkah Shtrou, the chambers of the temple (the seven hokhmat) are identical with the celestial levels.

In one important respect, however, the temple and the cosmos are structural opposites. The temple's areas of holiness are concentric upon the Holy of Holies. "Ascend" of the level is therefore conceptualized as a journey "inwards," to the center. The ascent into heaven, on the other hand, proceeds outwards, away from the earth, so that the sphere of greatest holiness is assigned to the periphery. This "dimensional shift" may perhaps help to explain why, in 1 Enoch 14, the "inter" house is greater than the "outer."

A similar apparent confusion of dimensional relationships is encountered in the hokhmat literature. The journey through the hokhmat to the merkhabah is described both as an "ascend" (employing the verb הָשָׁלַל) and, somewhat disconcertingly, as a "descent" (employing the verb תָּלִּל). These two terminologies appear to be virtually interchangeable but the mystics themselves are always called "descenders to the chariot," even where the narrative verb is "to ascend." Various explanations of this puzzling terminology have been offered. Here, mention should be made of Alan F. Segal's suggestion that the conception of the journey as a "descent" may be associated with the "feal" position, that, according to Haid Gaon of Pumbeditha (writing in the eleventh century CE) was adopted by the hokhmat practitioners:


The hokhmat Rabbi 6.3 (Scholar, Synagou, $10.6)

10 According to 1 Enoch 18.3 and Menahem hokhmat 64, all seven hokhmat are located in the highest heaven, but three texts are not typical of the corpus as a whole. See further Michael Z. Aran, "Paradise Revisited. Part I," 177, note 8.

11 Segal, Jewish Cosmology, 20, n. 1), suggests that the language of "descent" may be derived from the rabbinic expression הֶשָּלַל, referring to the center in the synagogue who "goes down before the ark." Dan (Two Types of Ancient Jewish Mysticism, 20), believes it to be derived from Cane: 6.111 ("I went down into the mystic garden.")

Halelur (Farm, 226-227) relates it to midrashic traditions about the "descent" of the Israelites to the Red Sea. Guy C. Stroumka (Hidden Wisdom: Eccentric Traditions and the Roots of Christian Mysticism [New York: Schocken, 1977] 34, 138) submits that it may be borrowed from the Greek and Hebrew traditions of descent (avantaj) into the underworld.

12 Wolfson, "Yehodah and Merkhabah: Typology of Ectasy and Enthronement in Ancient Jewish Mysticism," in Robert A. Ferretta, ed., Mystics of the Book: Themes, Topics, and Typologies [New York: Lang, 1993] 134-144; and Wolfson, Through a Speculum That Shines: Vision and Imagination in Medieval Jewish Mysticism [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994] 82-85 argues that the expression הֶשָּלַל is a metaphor for the entrance to the heavenly throne room, and to his personal environment, and not to the visitation to the temple as a whole. Annelies Kuyk ("Once Again: Yehodah in Hekhalot Literature," 778 14 [1990] 45-49; and idem, The Descender in the Chariot: Towards a Description of the Terminology, Place, Function and Nature of the Yehodah in Hekhalot Literature [TNTA 45. Tübingen: Mohls-Beacock, 1995]) offers a very detailed analysis of all of the "descent" passages in the Hekhalot Corpus in which she attempts, with limited success, to define the range of phenomena covered by the terms הָשָׁלַל, תָּלִּל, etc., but makes no attempt to explain what this strange terminology may have meant.

The posture described by Hai corresponds to that of Elijah on Mount Carmel at 1 Kga. 18: Rabbinic sources state in passing that the first-century miracle worker Hanina b. Dosa adopted the same position when praying for the life of Yohanan b. Zakki's son. Gershon Scholl found an intriguing parallel in a nineteenth-century account of a Chinese trance-somnambulist.

The idea that the Jerusalem temple embodies or reflects the structure of the universe is widely documented in rabbinic sources and in Josephus. The Talmud, Targum Interlinear, and Foundation Stone beneath the altar possesses the attributes of an embodiment or "world-nest." Just as the Holy of Holies is said to be the source of the light that shone forth on the first day of Creation, so the Foundation Stone, immediately outside the sanctuary, is identified with the primordial mound that emerged the midst of the waters of chaos on Day Three.

Josephus, moreover, tells us that the court at the entrance to the sanctuary represented the firmament, which was created on Day Two. Several midrashic sources add a further dimension to this model:

In the hour when the Holy One, blessed be He, said to Moses: And make me a sanctuary, Moses said: How shall I know how to make it? The Holy One, blessed be He, said: Do not be afraid. Just as I created the world and your body, so shall you in the tabernacle.

Wherein do we know that this is so? You find in the tabernacle that the frame is fixed into the bases, and in the body the rods are fixed into the walls, and so in the world the mountains are fixed to the foundations of earth. And in the tabernacle, the frame were covered with gold, and in the body the rods are covered with gold, and so it be in the World.
world, the mountains are covered and coated with earth. In the tabernacle there were bolts in the frames to keep them upright, and in the body limbs and tiers are extended to keep a man upright, and in the world trees and plants as extended in the earth. In the tabernacle there were curtains covering its top and both its sides, and in the body the man skin covers his limbs and his ribs on both his sides, and in the world the heavens cover the earth on both its sides. In the tabernacle there was the will dividing the sanctuary from the Holy of Holies, and in the body the diaphragm divides the heart from the stomach, and in the world it is the firmament that divides the upper waters from the lower waters, as it is said: "... and let it divide the waters from the waters" (Gen. 1:6).

As RAPHAEL PATAI has demonstrated, this three-way correspondence between the world, the temple, and the body of man, is well-documented in the midrashic literature. More succinctly, Michael Tadmor's states:

The temple corresponds to the whole world and to the creation of man who is a small world (תנניריה מיי נני יי יי תונניר). All this seems strongly to suggest that the הָרִישָׁה, in making the "ascent" through the levels of the heavenly temple to עֵינָיָן הָרִישָׁה, the highest firmament, could also be conceptualized (at least in some circles) as "descending" within the temple of his own body to the Holy of Holies within, where, as in the outer temple, the divine Glory (or Image of God) was believed to dwell. If Israel is right to associate this posture with the "downward" direction of the merkabah practice, this would suggest that the "ascent" through the heavens could also sometimes be understood to be a "descent" within the "temple" of the body.

The body of the Glory is the subject of the שֶׁהֶר בָּהָר liturgies of the merkabah tradition, which involve the repetition of the secret names and vast measurements of the limbs and measurements of that body. The following is a fairly typical example:

Rabbi Huna says:

The son of Israel is the measure of the body of the Holy One, blessed be He, who lives and endures for ever, throughout all eternity, may His Name be blessed and His memorial be exalted!

The soles of His feet fill the whole universe in its entirety, as it is said: "Heaven is My throne, and the earth My footstool." (Ps. 68:7). The height of His soles is three thousand myriad pasures; the name of His right sole is רֶמֶּשׁ גִּבְּרָה הַשָּׁרָה אָלֶּה, and the name of the left is רֶמֶּשׁ גִּבְּרָה הַשָּׁרָה אָלֶּה.

From the soles of His feet to His ankles is one thousand myriad and five hundred pasures; the name of His right ankle is רֶמֶּשׁ גִּבְּרָה הַשָּׁרָה אָלֶּה, and the name of the left is רֶמֶּשׁ גִּבְּרָה הַשָּׁרָה אָלֶּה.

From His ankles to His knees is nineteen thousand myriad pasures; the name of His right calf is רֶמֶּשׁ גִּבְּרָה הַשָּׁרָה אָלֶּה, and the name of the left is רֶמֶּשׁ גִּבְּרָה הַשָּׁרָה אָלֶּה.

From His knees to His thighs is twelve thousand myriad pasures; the name of His right knee is רֶמֶּשׁ גִּבְּרָה הַשָּׁרָה אָלֶּה, and the name of the left is רֶמֶּשׁ גִּבְּרָה הַשָּׁרָה אָלֶּה.

From His thighs to His neck is twenty-four thousand myriad pasures; the name of His innermost loins is רֶמֶּשׁ גִּבְּרָה הַשָּׁרָה אָלֶּה, and upon His heart are engraved seventy names. [these and further measurements of limbs and members follow].


In the following passage of the text, we learn that these measurements are not in human pasures (or Persian miles) but Divine ones, each being 120,000 times the length of the universe, and the reader is thus left in no doubt that God is a very big fellow indeed! The key to this apparently absurd material, which is obviously not intended to be taken literally, is a three-way pun on the Hebrew word הָרִישָׁה, which is taken to mean to mean (a) majesty, (b) praise and (c) giant size. The underlying idea seems to be that the praise of the created universe, the angels, the community of Israel and the mystic himself is actually the 'substance' of the glorious form in which God manifests himself upon his throne. In other words, the worship of Creation is what makes God visible and by "magnifying" God the mystic causes Him to appear in His Glory.

As Peter Schafer has emphasized, participation in the angelic liturgy was a primary goal of the merkabah practitioners:

The Merkabah mystic represents in his person the participation of Israel in the heavenly liturgy and simultaneously conforms for the earthy congregation that it stands in direct contact with God in its synagogue liturgy.

The mystical practice of ascent to the heavenly temple thus maintains the connection between God and his people that had formerly been provided by the earthly temple in Jerusalem. The merkabah practitioner in the innermost hekal, who worships before the throne, performs the mediatorial function of the High Priest in the Holy of Holies.

Recent research has drawn attention to the theme of transformation in the apocalyptic and merkabah traditions. There are numerous references in the Apocalypses, the hekalim writings, and the midrashic traditions of the heavenly ascent, to the metamorphosis of the mystic's body into a purified angelic or super-angelic form of fire or light, which embodies or reflects the Image of the Divine Glory and, like that Glory, expands to fill the universe. This is frequently associated with the idea that the mystic "assumes" or "is clothed with" the Divine Name. This transformation was held to be extremely dangerous, should the mystic prove unworthy, but it seems to have been a central goal of the mystical endeavour. This motif is found in several Gnostic sources, and is surely the background of the language of "glorification" which is encountered in the letters of Paul and other early Christian writings. It seems that the vision of the Glory entailed the transformation of the visionary into an angelic likeness of that Divine Image.

As we have seen, the interior of the temple was identified with the Garden of Eden or Paradise. One who enters this Garden, therefore, recovers "the Glory of Adam," and is conformed to the Image of God. According to rabbinic tradition, the unfallen Adam's body was, like the
manifest Glory of the sh'wra qomah, so great that it filled the universe. This explains the expansion of the visionary's body when he enters the temple and worships before the throne. The body of the Glory, which both fills and contains the universe, is therefore greater than the temple in which it dwells:

But will God in truth dwell with man upon earth? Behold, heaven and the heavens of heaven cannot contain thee! How much less this house that I have built (2 Chr. 6:16).

If it is true that the "descent to the merkabah" was sometimes conceptualised as a journey within or into the "temple" of the practitioner's own body, then the Divine Image or "Glory of Adam" enthroned at the center must likewise be much greater than the outer "house." The last three chapters of Hekhalot Rabbati, at the climax of the mystical ascent, contain a series of hymns which are said to be uttered by the Throne of Glory in the presence of God each day, and which the mystic himself is instructed to recite. This implies that he is identifying himself with the merkabah and asking God to be enthroned upon or within him. In other words, he is offering himself as a bodily "vehicle" for the manifestation of the Divine Image or Glory. I suggest that the "descent within" and the "ascent without" may best be understood as two aspects or dimensions of a single transformational process, not mutually exclusive conceptual alternatives. He who enters the Holy of Holies gains access to the highest heaven, since the courts of the temple are in symbolic reality the levels of the cosmos. Since this same structure obtains within the "temple" of the human body, the process of the heavenly journey may be enacted both within and "outside" of the body of the practitioner, who may thus be said both to "descend" and to "ascend." These observations may perhaps explain the cryptic utterance of Paul, when he states twice that he ascended into Paradise (i.e., the heavenly Holy of Holies) either whether in the body or outside of the body, I do not know; God knows! (2 Cor. 12:2-3). If Paul is, in fact, referring to the dual process of descent/ascend, he apparently means that it makes no difference, since the Holy of Holies at the center of the temple is the celestial palace of the Glory, whom Paul of course identifies with Christ.

The image of the body as a temple occurs several times in the New Testament. At Jn. 2:19-21 (and, probably, parallels142), Jesus' body is compared with the Jerusalem temple:

"The Jews then said to him, 'What sign can you show us for doing this?' Jesus answered them, 'Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up.' The Jews then said, 'This temple has been under construction for forty-six years, and you will raise it again in three days?' But he was speaking of the temple of his body."

At 1 Cor. 6:19, Paul calls the body of the individual Christian "a temple (voc) of the Holy Spirit." Elsewhere, he makes the same statement of the church, which is also very frequently called Christ's body. We recall that at Qumran, the community regarded itself as the embodiment of the celestial temple. The same theme occurs at Eph. 2:14-16:

For he is our peace, who has broken down the middle wall of partition, the enmity, having abolished the Law of the commandments, (as expressed in ordinances (tov touv taw evkatoj ev baptoymen), that he might make (eisprp, properly: "create") the two into one new man, making peace, and that he might reconcile the two to God in one body through the cross, having taken the enmity by means of it."

Here, Christ is a both a new Creation and a resurrected body. Christ has abolished "the Law (του του των εμουσων) and ordinances (των των εμουσων)," which formerly divided one section of the body of humanity from the rest. This is also expressed in temple imagery ("the middle wall of the partition"). Thus, the gentiles are no longer excluded from the worship of the holy community. This metaphor, which is developed in some detail in the following verses, reflects the structural imagery of the merkabah tradition: "body" and "temple" are complementary expressions of the same paradoxical reality. The Glory of the Lord, the Divine Image, is enthroned at the center within but at the same time comprehends all things within itself (2:21-2). 143

(Christ Jesus) in whom the whole structure, being joined together, grows into a holy sanctuary in the Lord, 'in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling-place of God in spirit.'

This interweaving of body and temple imagery appears to be deeply indebted to the traditions that we have been considering. Finally, consider Eph. 4:4-13:144

There is one body and one spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling (one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all). But to each one of us was given grace according to the measure (kata to pleroma) of the gift of Christ. Therefore it is said: When he ascended on high, he made a captive of captivity; he gave his gifts to men (Ps. 68:18). When it says: he ascended, what does it mean but that he also descended into the lower parts of the earth? The one who descended is the one who ascended far above all the heavens, that he might fill all things. And he gave some to be apostles, and some to be prophets, and some to be evangelists, and some to be shepherds, and some to be teachers, for the equipping of the holy ones for the work of ministry, for the building up of the body of Christ, until we all come to the unity of the faith and the full knowledge of the Son of God, as a man of complete maturity, as the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (66; ενομεν διαθεσης του θεοσυλλογικου του Χριστου).

Here, Christ is identified with the Divine Glory that fills the universe (cf. Isa. 63). The members of his Church participate in that spiritual-bodily transformation, which is described in terms that are highly reminiscent of the sh'wra qomah (verses 7 and 12). The paradoxical dimensional relationships of verses 6 and 9-10 also echo the merkabah tradition. Christ, his church, and its individual members have become the Body of God's Glory. In this new and "glorified" creation, the former distinction between "sacred" and "profane" is abrogated, and the purity laws associated

142 See, for example: A.Sadd. 390; Gen. 8:1, 21.3.
143 Schürer, Synagogues, §§25-27.
145 1 Cor. 3:9-17; 2 Cor. 6:16.

with the temple cult are therefore rendered meaningless (cf. Heb. 10:1-13). Since the very structure of the temple, with its ascending degrees of purity and danger, is conceived as both a barrier and a means of approach between the holy and the unholy, it is rendered obsolete by the convergence of heaven and earth in one spiritualized transformed "body," made mystically one with the fullness of the everlasting Glory. Thus Revelation 21:

"And I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will tabernacle with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them." I saw no temple in the city, for the Lord God, the Almighty, is in its temple and the Lamb." And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminates it, and its lamp is the Lamb. "Nothing unclean will enter it, nor any practitioner of abomination and falsehood, but only those written in the Book of Life of the Lamb.

Summary of Conclusions:

According to the Hebrew Bible, the earthly temple is the embodiment of a celestial archetype: the heavenly palace and throne-room of the LORD. In Isaiah’s vision, the distinction between these two levels of reality seems to disappear. In the literature of the Second Temple period, this symbolic correspondence acquires cosmological significance. The cosmos itself is now conceptualized as a temple, and the earthly temple reflects this structure. Its seven (or three) courts and chambers, centered on the Holy of Holies, correspond to the celestial levels. In the apocalyptic merkabah tradition, the visionary ascends to heaven by entering a temple whose interior is greater than its exterior, an image which expresses the opposing dimensional structures of the temple courts and the (three or seven) heavens, which are nonetheless considered to be identical. There, he participates in the angelic worship of the "Great Glory," enthroned in the central chamber, and is himself transformed into an angelic likeness of that Glory. There is some evidence in the later sources to suggest that this "ascent to heaven" may also sometimes have been conceptualized as a "descent" within the "temple" of the visionary’s own body. The fourfold correspondence of temple, cosmos, community, and God is represented in Figure 1 below.

Many of these ideas are encountered in the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, a liturgical text the performance of which may be interpreted as the ritual construction by the worshiping community, in association with the angelic hosts, of a seven-tiered temple, which is identified with that of Ezekiel. This temple not merely reflects but actually embodies the structure of the cosmos, for its seven sanctuaries are the seven heavens. The completion of construction of this imaginary temple on the eighth sabbath coincides with or immediately precedes the annual ceremony of the renewal of the soul’s covenant at Shabathai, partially preserved in 4QpHabak, following which the divine Glory on the merkabah descends to indwell the temple and receive the pure sacrifices offered in it (songs 12-13). If this analysis is correct, a unified liturgical framework links the Sabbath Songs to

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4QpHabak. It is perhaps legitimate to suspect that the Songs of the Malakh may also belong within this framework.

Despite repeated references to the recovery of Adam’s lost glory, the theme of correspondence between the temple and the body is not developed in the Qumran sources. Instead, we find an emphasis on the embodiment of the temple archetype in the structure of the community as a whole. The rabbinic writings, in contrast, posit a three-way correspondence between cosmos, temple, and body but make no reference to the correspondence between temple and community. All of these themes, however, are taken up and developed in combination by the Christian writers, who regarded their Savior-Messiah as "a great High Priest who has gone through the heavens" (Heb. 4:14), and for whom the image of the holy community as both body and temple was of central importance in the formulation of their faith.